

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

A CRITICAL HISTORY OF POST-NEW GERMAN CINEMA, 1988 TO 1995

by

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ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF ARTS

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This thesis is a study of German cinema of the late 1980s to mid 1990s. The complex relationship between this period of German filmmaking and the earlier body of German films collectively known as the New German Cinema is fundamental to the thesis, and is reflected in the choice of term 'post-New German Cinema' in its title.

Post-New German Cinema is considered from a variety of perspectives. The starting point of the thesis is an examination of how certain paradigms within contemporary film historiography impact upon the narration of German film history. Post-New German Cinema is then considered in terms of economic, industrial and political structures which have underpinned this form of cultural production. Following this, discourses in which notions of post-New German Cinema have been constructed by various writers and institutions are discussed in detail. Finally, major tendencies within post-New German Cinema are identified and explored in a series of case studies examining key figures and texts.

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PREFACE

ENGAGING WITH THE AFTERMATH OF NEW GERMAN CINEMA

The original starting point for this thesis was a simple question: what had become of the New German Cinema? An interest in New German Cinema led me to question what had happened to the group of directors who had come to be associated with its catch-all name. As I began to undertake research for this thesis, I therefore wished to address a series of questions such as, when, if at all, had this era of FRG film-making come to an end? Why had it in fact "ended"? Who had decided that it had "ended"? What type of cinema had succeeded it? Why did contemporary German cinema attract so little interest now in Anglo-American academic discourses? Had directors of the New German Cinema exerted any lasting influence on any FRG film-makers who emerged after their period of prominence? In retrospect, many of these questions, although pertinent, now seem quite simplistic to me. Nevertheless, I would hope that this thesis would still go a long way towards addressing each of them.

I initially chose the term "post-New German Cinema" as a working title for this thesis, but I have decided to retain it for a number of reasons. For Anglo-American readers interested in film, the term is intended to perhaps raise some similar questions to those with which I began this thesis such as, "whatever happened to the New German Cinema?" or "what came after it?" During the course of this thesis however, I will employ the term "post-New German Cinema" in other ways. Specifically, the prefix "post" is meant to invoke a key paradigm which informs this entire research project, namely that "post-New German Cinema" implies elements of departure from, as well as continuities with, the New German Cinema.

In the title of this thesis, I have appended the dates "1988-1995" to the term "post-New German Cinema". I must emphasise that these dates are meant to be arbitrary and are emphatically not intended to constitute any sort of fixed periodisation: they do not mean that I consider the New German Cinema to have been suddenly and dramatically usurped by a new "movement" around 1987 or 1988. In fact, my term "post-New German Cinema" is not meant to signify a unified movement at all. The fact that the period 1988 to 1995 also encompasses fundamental changes to the German polity in the form of the collapse of the GDR in 1989 and unification in 1990 will undoubtedly imbue the dates I have chosen with additional potential significance for some readers. However, I wish to maintain that this is first and foremost a study of "post-New German Cinema" rather than "post-Reunification" or "post-Cold War" German Cinema. The catalyst for this thesis, as I have already mentioned, has been a desire to study the German film industry of the late 1980s and early 1990s (in the broadest sense of this term) in relation to its own past, and people's perceptions and memories of that past. I shall outline this historiographical approach at greater length in Chapter One.

Since beginning postgraduate research, I have become more and more convinced that auteur criticism has enjoyed an unhealthy dominance in film studies, and especially within German film studies. Within this field of research, discussion of the manifold texts which

comprise the meta-text "German cinema" (not only actual film texts but also the multi-authored texts of directors' and stars' careers), has been governed by this mode of criticism more than any other. Auteurism has acted as a primary agent in determining which films are held to be worthy of discussion: film texts which are not generally regarded as the product of an ostensibly great creative mind or as part of a significant film "movement" are often marginalised. Popular genre films of the 1970s such as Ein komischer Heiliger (Klaus Lemke, 1978) which could not easily be categorised as "New German Films" are a case in point. Moreover, the ideology of auteurism has sometimes served as an epistemological barrier to alternative forms of film criticism, as my initial indifference to other theories testifies. As Chapter One illustrates, I advocate an eclectic approach to film studies which still allows for the incorporation of insights of the auteur theory school without altogether capitulating to its influence, or for that matter that of any other single Theory of film.

As I gradually withdrew from an auteurist position in my thinking about cinema, since it was proving to be an inadequate means of dealing with the object of my research, new questions emerged, and existing questions came to be framed in somewhat different terms, as will be evident in the composition of this thesis. Moreover, I came to realise that my starting point itself demanded re-evaluation: in the same way that modernist art is not synonymous with modern culture as a whole, so the labels "*Autorenkino*" and "New German Cinema" do not adequately account for all filmmaking in the FRG from the 1962 Oberhausen Manifesto to the early 1980s. "German cinema" was (and had for a long time been) a far more diverse field of cultural production than had been commonly assumed by some academics outside the FRG. As a consequence of these insights, my research became less centred upon prevailing understandings of German cinema in the late 1980s and early 1990s as a move away from a director-dominated art cinema. Instead, I began to investigate this cinema in its own right as a highly complex and varied field of cultural production. An important aspect of this was to consider post-New German Cinema in economic and industrial terms, which is the subject matter of Chapter Two.

German films of the late 1980s and early to mid 1990s form a body of texts which has been largely disregarded by Anglo-American branches of film criticism and cultural studies to date. This trend has not gone unnoticed: Silberman (1995: ix) has observed that

"Historical overviews of world cinema emphasize three German contributions to the international canon: the innovative use of the camera in expressionist films of the early twenties; the unprecedented politicization of the entire cinema apparatus during the Third Reich; and the emergence of a "new wave" cinema in the seventies that combined innovative aesthetics with socially conscious narratives. The focal points in the history of German cinema have been the object of intense and sophisticated investigation, but at the same time the efforts to highlight these historical contributions have produced gaps."

In this research project, it is my intention to consider one of the "gaps" which Silberman shows to have been created by historians of the German cinema. The particular gap which

concerns me in this historical narrative is the one between the ostensible end of the New German Cinema in the 1980s, and the mid 1990s.

While a flurry of studies of the New German Cinema have been published (and on occasion, revised) in Britain and America between the mid 1970s and the present day¹, most do not choose to extend their scope very far into the period with which I am concerned. In these film histories, a broad consensus emerges. The "New German Cinema" is generally held to have been ushered in by the 1962 "Oberhausen Manifesto" (regarded as a declaration of intent by idealistic young film-makers), to have attained a peak of cultural significance and critical interest in the mid-to-late 1970s, and to have been in rapid decline, or even to have "died" during the early-to-mid 1980s. A general agreement exists then among historians of the New German Cinema that this particular "era" of German national cinema long ago drew to a close. Discussion of what followed in its aftermath has however received little attention in British and American film studies, as I will show in Chapter Three.

The principal objectives of this research project are therefore to attempt to account for the neglect of contemporary German cinema by film historians and cultural theorists, and more importantly, to undertake a critical film history of post-New German Cinema.

Groundwork for this thesis consisted of compiling a detailed filmography of German cinema features made between 1988 and 1995 (this is included at the end of the thesis); viewing relevant films on video, at arthouse and mainstream cinemas in the UK and Germany, and at film festivals (London and Berlin); examining reviews, journal and magazine articles and items in the American, British and German cinema trade press; and considering appropriate critical and film theories relating to the period. The latter fell into two categories: firstly, critical work on the nature of contemporary culture and society in Germany and Europe; and secondly, writings on historiography and film historiography.

In the light of my reading and viewing, the following areas seem to me to be especially pertinent to the body of texts that I have chosen to study, and therefore set the agenda for the start of this thesis. Firstly, critical methodologies which are best suited to undertaking this project; in other words, the nature of film historiography in the late twentieth century, and issues confronting film historians at this time (Chapter One). Secondly, the conditions of production, distribution and exhibition for post-New German Cinema (Chapter Two). Thirdly, the ways in which notions of post-New German Cinema have been constructed within various discourses (in Germany and elsewhere), and the global reception of German films of the late 1980s and 1990s (Chapter Three). Finally, film modes which have predominated in the geographical territory of the FRG during this time and the reasons I would propose for this (Chapter Four).

¹ Examples include Corrigan (1994), Elsaesser (1989), Franklin (1983), Green (1988), Knight (1996) and Sandford (1982).

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CHAPTER ONE

FILM HISTORIOGRAPHY AND GERMAN CINEMA

In this chapter, I aim to establish the methodological basis of this research project. The object of my studies, German cinema from 1988 to 1995, constitutes a period of cultural production within a specific artistic medium (the feature film) at a specific historical moment (post-Cold War) in a specific geographical region (Germany)¹ and as such, could potentially be discussed from any number of different academic perspectives². For example, German cinema of the late 1980s to mid 1990s could be examined in terms of how it relates to the rapidly changing global sociopolitical climate of the period (especially the radical social and political changes of 1989 and 1990 in the GDR and FRG), or to other manifestations of German or "Western" culture of the time, or of how it contributes to the historical development of either German culture, or the medium of cinema, or indeed German cinema. While I hope to touch on all of these issues to at least some extent in the chapters that follow, none constitutes the principal *raison d'être* of this project.

In this thesis, I have chosen to approach my subject matter from a different perspective than those mentioned above. For me, questions of film historiography are of primary concern. I conceive this research project to be first and foremost an exercise in film history writing, and I aim to take account of and reflect contemporary debates in film historiography in writing it - historiographical considerations will be foregrounded throughout. It is my contention that questions of historiography have often been inadequately interrogated in the field of German Film Studies in the past, to the detriment of this academic discipline. Film history writing does not boast a large body of theoretical work unlike certain other specialisms within Film Studies, such as film spectatorship. Within film historiography, the auteurist school of film criticism has also tended to predominate, marginalising alternative approaches, and consequently impeding a better understanding of German cinema's development over time. For all of these reasons, this chapter addresses this and other aspects of film historiography - a necessary process before writing a history of the period 1988 to 1995 in German cinema.

In the discourse of cinematic research, the practice of film history writing is certainly in need of a greater degree of theorising than has previously been the case, as the very limited number of works on the subject listed in my Bibliography testifies. A consensual "common sense" approach which has been subjected to little methodological problematisation has

¹ I would qualify this statement by noting that films made by figures associated (for whatever reason) with Germany, or which are part-financed by monies originating in Germany have also been regarded by some film writers as constituting "German films". I will discuss this matter at greater length later in this thesis.

² It should be noted at this juncture that throughout this thesis, I employ the terms "cinema" and "film" in their broadest possible senses to encompass film-makers, the cinematic apparatus, film texts, film audiences, and the social and economic conditions of production, distribution, exhibition and consumption of films.

traditionally held sway among many film historians, and it is this with which I particularly wish to take issue in this chapter.

Before proceeding with my analysis of film history writing in these terms, an important clarification needs to be made. Following Nash & Neale (1977: 77), I would like to suggest that the relationship between film and history can take three principal manifestations: "the history of cinema, history in cinema, and cinema in history". In other words, the relationship may be articulated in three major ways: the narration of cinema's development, cinema's narration of (versions of) history, and cinema's participation in the development of (versions of) history. In my account I will limit myself to addressing the first of these articulations, although this is not to deny that each are worthy of debate³.

It is therefore my intention in this chapter to interrogate film historiography (which I define as the methodologies which have been employed in the narration of cinema's development). Having offered my critique of existing film historiographical practices, I propose a number of paradigms of a film historiography which take account of relevant insights offered by historians and theorists of other backgrounds and disciplines. These paradigms will then form the basis of the historiographical practices that I employ in my account of the post-New German Cinema from Chapter Two onwards.

The writing of film history now occupies a contested territory between at least four larger (but overlapping) academic discourses: Film Studies, history, post-structuralist critical theory, and cultural studies. The writing of film histories cannot be said to be the preserve of any one of these discourses, as it is a practice which has been undertaken by academics with expertise in each of them (and various combinations thereof). However, before the 1970s (the period before critical theory and cultural studies began to grow in influence within academic circles), discursive practices appropriated from the discourses of Film Studies and history went comparatively unchallenged in the narration of film history.

Traditional Forms of Film Historiography

According to David Bordwell (1996: 27), "Film history as a scholarly pursuit is of even more recent vintage than film theory and criticism". Until the 1970s, the field of film historiography was very much dominated by what Thomas Elsaesser (1986: 246) has termed "the surveys and overviews, the tales of pioneers and adventurers", wherein evaluation of the creative activities of film-makers, the aesthetic nature of film texts, and the technological development of the cinematic apparatus formed the principal agenda for historical discussion,

³ Writings on cinema's narration of (versions of) history include Short, K.R.M. (ed.) 1981. *Feature Films as History* (London: Croom Helm), and Sorlin, P. 1980. *The Film in History* (Oxford: Blackwell); for more on cinema's participation in the development of (versions) of history see Rosenstone, R.A. 1995. *Visions of the Past. the Challenge of Film to Our Idea of History*, London: Harvard UP, and *Wide Angle*, 8 (2), "Film and Social History".

and accounts of the role of film audiences were most conspicuous by their absence, except anecdotally⁴. This school of film historiography is discussed at some length below.

The "surveys and overviews" school of film history to which Elsaesser refers is very much a part of the empiricist tradition of historical discourse - film histories of this type were (and often still are) written from an implicit assumption that Truth is resident somewhere "out there", fully formed, waiting to be gauged by our senses (Allen & Gomery, 1985: 233). Empiricism posits Truth (and therefore knowledge) as existing entirely of itself and already fully formed, and the critic (or historian), whose role is misleadingly self-construed as "invisible" and "neutral", is implicitly reduced to a largely passive collector of observable data. In spite of this, empiricist historiography establishes a simple teleology of the historian as an authoritative source of wisdom about a potentially all-knowable past, and the historical narrative as an exercise in exposition of knowledge that the historian succeeds in "discovering" about that past. Furthermore, the historian's role and authority are rarely questioned by those who would unquestioningly adhere to the empiricist creed, with variations between accounts by different empiricist historians being attributed to the extent of the skills that each is capable of displaying in "uncovering" historical "truths".

In the "surveys and overviews" school of empiricist film historiography, I would argue that the following narrative practices have been the most widespread: a tendency to categorise film histories in terms of movements or eras; the widespread use of the narrative device of focussing on major events; and a prevailing desire to canonise ostensibly significant figures and films. A good example of all of these tendencies within the tradition of German film history writing would be Manvell and Fraenkel's 1971 work The German Cinema, for a long time a standard text for university courses in German film history.

Surveys and overviews invariably arrange texts in discreet periods, whether by common "modes of film practice"⁵ ("Art Cinema"; "Genre Cinema"); by genre ("The *Heimat* Film"; "The Road Movie"); by the geographical origin of film texts ("Weimar Cinema"; "East German Cinema"); by grouping together a series of contemporaneous film-makers to whom a distinguishing set of characteristic styles, techniques or values are attributed ("the *Autorenkino*"; "New Hollywood directors"); or even by the technological status of the cinematic apparatus at a given point in the past ("The Silent Era"; "The Sound Film"). After being "identified" by the film historian, the proposal of an era within this form of film history is traditionally couched in the language of the authoritative pronouncement of a Major Event, for example, "The Coming of Sound" (this is an archetypally empiricist strategy). Over time, a degree of consensus is conventionally reached among film historians with regard to "important" eras of film history as J.C. Ellis (1995: vii) notes:

⁴ The most famous of these was perhaps the tale of film audiences fleeing in terror at the sight of Gorky's footage of an onrushing train in the 1890s.

⁵ This is Bordwell's term; cf. Bordwell, D, Staiger, J. & Thompson, K. 1985. *Classical Hollywood Cinema*, London: Routledge.

"Among film scholars and critics, it is generally agreed that for brief periods certain countries made seminal contributions to the development of film and content. Of course, there are brilliant individual film makers who exist outside the construct and countries whose achievements are parallel. Even admitting the Procrustean limitations of any kind of historical scheme, this one has proven serviceable and does permit variation and amendment with relative ease."

The potential for straightforward "variation and amendment" of surveys and overviews by film historians as time passes is in my view not as great as Ellis suggests. It has taken a considerable body of research in recent years to even begin to overturn very long-established understandings of early cinema (i.e. that of the 1890s and 1900s), for example⁶. Moreover, wholly empiricist overviews of "World Cinema History", the most prominent purveyors of the methodology I have described, are not only remarkably stagnant, but are also marked by conservatism and Hollywood- and Euro-centrism: virtually every published American and Western European example of the last two decades has incorporated sections on the beginnings of cinema, American silent film, Soviet Montage, German Expressionism, early American sound films, Italian Neo-Realism, the French New Wave, New German Cinema and New Hollywood Cinema⁷.

I am not arguing here for a wholesale abandonment by film historians of the narrative device of constructing movements and eras in film histories; rather, I am suggesting that the film historian needs to reflect on the inherent danger of such devices, namely, that they can become an instrument that stifles debate and inhibits understanding, rendering film histories as totalising narratives. The theorist Jean-Francois Lyotard (1984: 37) expresses his misgivings on this matter as follows:

"The grand narrative has lost its credibility, regardless of what mode of unification it uses, regardless of whether it is a speculative narrative or a narrative of emancipation."

Lyotard claims that contemporary times (for him, "the postmodern") are marked by a widespread scepticism in the credibility of metanarratives (totalising explanatory systems of thought). Although he concedes that narrative per se is still viable and fundamental, he is of the opinion that all "grand narratives" (for example, Christianity and liberalism) and even ostensibly progressive narratives grounded in Marxism have become discredited since they have not delivered their promised utopias. Conceptions of humankind as a universal, collective subject are also rejected by Lyotard, as they fail to take account of difference (race, gender, class and so forth). It is this exclusionary tendency of master narratives, which silence or exclude other discourses in order to privilege homogeneity over heterogeneity,

⁶ Elsaesser (1996) is an important contribution to German film studies in this regard.

⁷ See Mast (1985), Bordwell & Thompson (1993) and Ellis (1995). These three standard texts display a striking degree of consensus as to which moments in world cinema history are to be regarded as the most significant for film historians.

universalism over pluralism, their own version of "Truth" over others', to which Lyotard particularly objects.

The writing of film history, by its very nature, constitutes an act of narrative production. Lyotard's proclamation of the death of metanarratives (but not that of narrative itself) clearly holds profound implications for all film historians. For example, exclusionary narrative techniques, such as those employed in film history narratives which are presented as self-evident "truth", have clearly lost much of their credibility, and it is consequently incumbent on film historians to take account of this; for example, by avoiding exaggerated or homogenising claims and sweeping generalisations. These are tendencies which have been particularly pronounced within much film history writing, including several narratives of German cinema's past, as I shall show during the course of this thesis (histories of the New German Cinema are a notable case in point, as Chapters Three and Four demonstrate). Moreover, I aim to counteract these metanarrational devices in my own approach to film historiography, which I set out later in this chapter.

A long-standing conceptualisation of history has linear time punctuated or shaped by a series of events that are held to be particularly significant by the historian. Straw (1991: 238) contends that most film historians have adopted this teleological model:

"traditional historiographical practice would take the event as given, usually under the evidence of a proper name or categorical label [...] and regard the relationship to such an event of existing documentation as a purely transparent, referential one."

This practice has exerted a strong influence upon empiricist surveys and overviews common to much film history writing. Histories of the cinematic apparatus have often been demarcated by allegedly significant technological "inventions" (the cinematograph, sound, colour), while film texts have sometimes been grouped according to perceived artistic innovations (camerawork, lighting, editing). Event-based histories of cinema emerging from non-academic (especially popular and journalistic) discourses, which often prioritise capitalist ideologies of social or artistic success (lists of award winners) and economic excess (the spiralling production costs and box office receipts of Hollywood blockbusters), have also had a tangible impact on this school of film historiography. The film text itself has also been treated as an "event" of sorts for a variety of reasons, such as alleged aesthetic value, cost, notoriety, or popular appeal. This tendency is most pronounced in the "masterpiece" school of film historiography, which I will consider shortly when I discuss canonisation.

Conceptualisations of history as the sum of achievements of a few "great men" have their origins in both the conservative ideology of individualism and in Romanticist idealisations of the autonomous creative artist. The ideological proximity of the following assertions made by, respectively, the early 19th Century conservative thinker Thomas Carlyle

(quoted in 1995: 1) and the late 20th Century American film historian Gerald Mast (1985: 3), is indicative of the enduring influence of this particular philosophy of history:

"as I take it, Universal History, the history of what man (*sic.*) has accomplished in this world, is at bottom the History of the Great Men who have worked here. They were the leaders of men, these great ones; the modellers, patterns, and in a wide sense creators, of whatsoever the general mass of men contrived to do or to attain; all things that we see standing accomplished in the world are properly the outer material result, the practical realisation and embodiment, of Thoughts that dwelt in the Great Men sent into the world: the soul of the whole world's history, it may justly be considered, were the history of these."

"A study of eighty-five years of film history has led me to make one basic assumption: no truly great film has ever been made without the vision and unifying intelligence of a single mind to create and control the whole film. Just as there is only one poet per pen, one painter per canvas, there can only be one creator of a movie."

Most early film histories focusing on the technological development of the cinematic apparatus very much belonged to the "great men" tradition; much attention centred on "who" had "invented" the cinema⁸ (here, discourses of nationalism also played an important role⁹). Later, the patriarchal "great men" tradition of historical discourse certainly partially informed the *auteur* theory within the discourse of Film Studies, whereby the unifying creative vision of an individual (usually male) director was constructed and (generally) celebrated by the (usually male) film historian¹⁰. The star system, also predicated upon the fetishization of autonomous creativity, led to the publication of a number of star histories in both popular and critical discourses. One notable consequence of the "great men" tradition has been the creation by film critics and historians of a canon of "great" directors and stars in many empiricist film histories. Within German Film Studies, this has been particularly evident: discourses around male directors such as Fritz Lang and F.W. Murnau (Weimar Cinema) and Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Werner Herzog and Wim Wenders (New German Cinema) have been very prominent in determining prevailing conceptions of German filmmaking as a whole.

In many surveys and overviews of film (as in parallel histories of literature, music and fine art), a canon of "great artists" and "major films" has been established and perpetuated. The canonization of films is most evident in the "masterpiece" school of film history referred to above. Here, certain film texts regarded as possessing timeless aesthetic qualities are

⁸ Allen and Gomery (1985: 109-130) provide a helpful introduction to "great men" histories of technological development in a cinematic context.

⁹ The centenary of cinema, which occurred during the 1990s, re-opened these debates, and it was apparent that the passing years had scarcely altered their traditional frame of reference: an event was held by the British Film Institute in 1995 at which the relative claims of different countries to the "invention" of cinema were debated, for example.

¹⁰ The "great men" historiographical tradition was not the only reason for the development of *auteurism*. As Straw (1991: 238) notes, *auteurist* film histories were initially viewed as a much-needed response to the reductionist "forest" accounts of early American cinema which appeared in the 1910s and 1920s.

problematically isolated from their historical context and elevated to a state of historical transcendence by the film historian. Allen and Gomery (1985: 75) have noted the masterpiece school's "tendency to hold aesthetic aspects of the cinema apart from all others, particularly economic". The canonization process is fundamentally ahistorical, de-emphasising the cultural, social, political and economic contexts in which films originate, in favour of often superficial aesthetic evaluation. It is in short a highly paradoxical narrative choice for a film historian, whose principal task is surely to situate filmmaking in a historical context.

The criteria for a person or text's inclusion in a canon have been an enduring matter of conjecture within and between different (both critical and official) discourses¹¹, yet as the vast majority of potential candidates for inclusion (here, film actors, actresses, directors, producers and texts) are necessarily omitted in all canons, it may be argued that exclusion is the canon's principal distinguishing feature. According to Citron (1993: 15), "canons exert tremendous power [...] Their tenacity and authority create the ideology that they are timeless". However, Citron continues, this ideology crucially serves to obscure both the social and historical conditions under which canons are created, and the social values which are, and continue to be, encoded in them. For example, the glaring absence of female directors from many film canons is seldom attributed to patriarchal forces which have sought (and continue to seek) to deny female creativity¹²; within German film canons, female directors have been either entirely absent, or treated in a tokenist manner (figures such as Leni Riefenstahl and Margarethe von Trotta are a case in point). This double bind - that canons pretend to be "beyond time", while maintaining this illusion over time - certainly has the effect of compounding canons' entrenched position within discourses around cinema.

The political question as to who is in control of canons (i.e. who enjoys the role of gatekeeper to a given canon) is much less clear-cut. While film critics (both in the academy and in journalistic circles) may have held the keys to the canons of "great films" and "great directors" for some time, their privileged position is now subject to attack on a number of fronts. Programme schedulers of commercial television channels (which are becoming ever more numerous with the advent of cable, satellite and digital television), who are primarily concerned with viewing figures and advertising revenues when selecting feature films for broadcast, themselves create canons through their programming choices which often display marked contrasts with those maintained by Film Studies academics. In the case of German cinema for example, a 1994 poll of German film historians, archivists and journalists (source: Goethe-Institut, London) yielded a "Top Ten Most Important Films" which included only one

¹¹ One interesting question for further research is the contrast between strategies of canon-formation adopted by film histories informed by the various dominant discursive traditions mentioned previously (film studies, history, cultural studies and critical theory).

¹² The racist omission of black artists and texts from "Western" canons has also been exposed, e.g. by Toni Morrison in her lecture "Black Matters" (reprinted in her 1992 collection *Playing in the Dark. Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*, London: Harvard University Press, pp.4-5).

work, The Blue Angel (Josef von Sternberg, 1931), which has been regularly transmitted on German terrestrial and satellite television channels in recent years.

My initial remarks with regard to film canons need to be qualified, since the relative youth of cinematic canons, coupled with the slow process by which canons are (self)-perpetuated, has contributed to film's marginal, even contentious, position within both official and academic discourses. As Collins (1993: 86) observes of American cinematic canons, the legitimacy of film and television as a subject of study has been attacked by conservatives (most notably, by a Secretary of Education during the Reagan administration) for these media's alleged destruction of literacy and subsequent negation of the potential reception of canonical literary works. Film canons are thus a fascinating site of political struggle, because their paradoxical marginality (how can a canon - an authoritative list of exemplary works of art - be marginal?) simultaneously foregrounds and problematises the process of canonization itself.

I will now briefly consider other traditional forms of film historiography. Only a handful of pre-1970s economic histories of film exist (see Allen and Gomery, 1985: 259-261), many of which are either hagiographies of movie moguls in the "great men" tradition, or broadly uncritical business histories of Hollywood studios. Of the few critical economic analyses to have emerged from this period, the best-known is F.D. Klingender and S. Legg's 1937 Marxist critique of the Hollywood film industry, entitled Money behind the Screen (London: Lawrence & Wishart). However, economic and industrial analyses have grown in importance for film historiography in more recent times, as I shall shortly explain.

A tradition of "reflectionist" histories of film also existed prior to the 1970s, which "posited cinema as the mirror of the social" (Butler, 1992: 414). One of the earliest and best-known examples of this school of film historiography was Siegfried Kracauer's 1947 "psychological history" of Weimar cinema, From Caligari to Hitler. While this historical narrative is undoubtedly an important *Ur-text* within German Film Studies, such film histories do fall within the second category of relationship between film and history mentioned previously, i.e. cinema's narration of (versions of) history, so I will not discuss this text any further in this context.

Recent Developments in Film Historiography

Since the 1970s, film historiography has undergone some quite significant changes, and has also been affected by concurrent developments in other academic disciplines. Film studies' belated move into the academy since the late 1960s has drastically improved research conditions for film historians in America and Europe; for example, archives have become increasingly accessible, more theoretical writings have been translated, and a greater amount of research funding has become available. This improvement in the status of Film Studies as a whole has also contributed to an increase in the level of inter-disciplinary debate between Film Studies and other fields within the Humanities. For example, professional historians

with a background in other fields of research have begun to take the practice of film history writing rather more seriously than had previously been the case, when Film Studies as a whole was often regarded as a frivolous pursuit. Furthermore, the agenda of film history has noticeably widened, with histories of business aspects of the movie industry, of film exhibition, and of developments in cinematic style increasingly appearing on publishers' book lists¹³. The improvement in academic respectability achieved by film history writing, combined with the plethora of innovative writings across a range of critical discourses of recent times (feminism, post-structuralism, post-colonialism and so on) which implicitly or explicitly attack traditional historiographical practices, has in short helped to bring about some reassessment of the prevailing methodologies employed by film historians.

If there is one matter of broad consensus in post-1970s critical writing which concerns (or is applicable to) film historiography, it is that the most common form this field of study has taken - the overview or survey - demands to be much more thoroughly interrogated as academic research. This rejection is symptomatic of a general loss of faith in wholly empiricist forms of historiography, which is in turn part of the wider "incredulity towards metanarratives" diagnosed by Lyotard. I now examine how doubts cast on empiricism as an ideology and methodology by these new critical theories have necessitated a valuable rethinking of the writing of film history.

Empiricist historiography can only ever offer a partial account of its subject matter, despite its totalising pretensions. Film histories belonging to this tradition have tended to be related by means of metanarratives (sweeping grand narratives) which are presented as self-evident, hence stifling debate. As we have seen, auteurist or star studies serve to make their version of film history more "manageable" by the exclusionary practice of canon formation, while event-driven histories relegate "unimportant" events to (at best) footnotes or (at worst) oblivion. Recent years have seen the discrediting of the entire empiricist project by some theorists for shortcomings such as these, and the viability of alternative approaches has been hotly debated.

A key text in these controversies is Hayden White's lengthy 1973 work *Metahistory*, a "history of historical consciousness in nineteenth-century Europe", which purports to show that the past has no inherent, fixed meaning, as is sometimes assumed within empiricist historiographies, and that "history" (in its traditional usage) is essentially a constructed text (or set of texts). It follows from the assumption that the past is without inherent meaning, White argues, that history writing can take two forms: the chronicle which imposes only limited meaning on the past (by highlighting certain events in a particular sequence) and is in essence open-ended, and the story which does attempt through its narrator to "make sense of" the past, and adds a degree of closure to aspects of the past. In other words, the latter is a narrative like any other, and is as much a fabrication, or work of fiction, as the novel. Keith

¹³ See Bordwell (1996: 26-29).

Jenkins (1995: 142) makes the helpful clarification that for White, "history is a narrative the contents of which are as much imagined or invented as found".

Jenkins (1995: 143) also reads White's insights in Metahistory and his later writings (many of which qualify and / or reassess his original assertions) as a call to arms for historians informed by contemporary critical theories to attempt to develop a "'deconstructive' history that would signal ... its 'resistance to bourgeois ideology' by refusing to attempt a narrativist mode for the representation of its 'truth.'" Jenkins continues that historiographies after White should manifest themselves as "histories of rupture and discontinuity and of difference and 'the other.'" These proposals are taken up later in this chapter. Another possible application of White's valuable formalist analysis of historiography would be for historians of film (or historians working in any other field) to depart from the prevailing practice of fashioning seamless narratives and to instead consciously foreground and problematise the modes that White outlines so that their accounts could no longer be construed as being in any way "self-evident".

As White's notion of "modes of ideology" indicates, underlying and shaping every instance of history writing are a whole set of ideological assumptions which may be viewed collectively as a philosophy of history. For example, Allen and Gomery ascribe to (film) historians "the goal of explaining change and stasis over time" (1985: 5). For White and his followers, even this ostensibly simple contention would be premised on the underlying assumption that there exist two dominant, but opposed, philosophies of history: namely eternal stasis or incessant change. This type of philosophy of history may in fact be traced back at least as far as Kant, who discerns three potential conclusions which might be drawn from the study of historical writing, as White (1987: 65) relates:

"These [conclusions] were that (1) the human race was progressing continually; (2) the human race was degenerating continually; and (3) the human race remained at the same general level of development continually."

The apparently mutually incompatible Kantian positions described by Allen and Gomery are all potential products of an empiricist historiographical framework, as these superficially simple formulae are in fact further examples of totalising metanarratives. To reiterate: for Lyotard and other critical theorists, master narratives of this type are no longer tenable, not only because of their inherent reductionism, but more importantly, because they deny the chaos and pluralism inherent to contemporary life, or as Chambers (1990: 110) puts it, "The pretensions of a historiography, of a his-story, fragment under the multiple impact of other stories."

A further fundamental difficulty of empiricist historiography thrown into relief by theorists such as White and Lyotard is its conception of The Past as an external phenomenon which may be comprehended through "objective" study. Remarkably, the role of the person(s)

responsible for carrying out this study has only relatively recently been widely critiqued in historical discourse. Allen and Gomery (1985: 8) remark

"In recent times historians have [...] become aware of the influence on historical interpretations by the pressures, concerns, tendencies, and frames of reference of the historian's age and culture. Culture conditions the way historians look at the world, what they think is worth writing about, what they take for granted, and how they analyze data. These cultural or ideological factors express themselves not only in the historian's conscious method and philosophical positions, but more importantly in areas the historian might not even be aware of: those vague, unarticulated notions of 'how things are supposed to be', 'the way people act in most cases', and 'how the world works'."

Some academics working in the discourse of Film Studies have made a valuable interjection into debates regarding film historiography by drawing attention to the emphasis made elsewhere as to the constructedness of history within discursive traditions; as Nash & Neale contend, "History [...] is neither the past as such, nor yet a discourse in which the past is revealed, but rather a set of discourses in which the past is constructed" (1977: 77). Research of this nature has (somewhat belatedly) served to focus attention on the agent of history's construction, the historian.

As has proved to be the case with so many other executors of power, the historian's implication in dominant white, bourgeois, male ideologies (for a long time dominant in academia) has begun to be exposed by (among others) Lacanian, feminist and post-colonialist research. On this point, Ginette Vincendeau (1985: 73) highlights the need for a "problematization of 'the historian', as well as the object of historical research, in terms of class, race and gender." Until very recently, film historians have circumvented these issues by consistently failing to explicitly acknowledge the philosophy of history to which they adhere (Allen and Gomery, 1985: 8), and in this regard they do appear to lag behind their counterparts working within other fields of historically-oriented research.

Although film histories of the "great men" tradition still proliferate in many discourses around cinema, especially in the form of *auteur* and star studies¹⁴, there has been a greater emphasis in recent years on film-making as a communal form of artistic production.

Within the discourse of Film Studies, this has led to a rather belated acknowledgement of the role of film spectators as creators of meaning, and the concurrent development of "reception theory". In historically-oriented debates within this area of research (which constitutes a significant departure from the ahistorical "masterpiece" tradition), the ways in which spectators participate in the construction of a film text's meaning

¹⁴ The canon of "great directors" has now been opened up a little to include some of those previously marginalised (i.e. black and female auteurs), although this practice often seems tokenist - note the disproportionate amount of attention Spike Lee and Jane Campion have received in the last decade, to the detriment of other black and female directors.

in different historical and cultural contexts is examined. The text thus becomes a fluid site, open to a variety of readings by different viewers (distinguished by race, class, gender and so on) at different points in time and in different social and cultural milieus.

In early film historiography, the text's privileged status was generally unquestioned, as I have shown. Post-structuralist critical theory exposed the text as merely "a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture" as Barthes famously put it (1968: 146), thereby redrawing the contours of debate for all critical discourse (not least Film Studies and history). This had the consequence of leaving film historiography in a temporary methodological limbo.

Within Film Studies, these difficulties were in part addressed by attempts to study film audiences. Within academia, these were dominated during the early 1970s by psychoanalytically-derived models which sought to theorise an abstract "spectator position" in relation to film texts, where "spectatorship was identified as purely a function of the individual film text" (Judith Mayne, 1993: 4). A central concern at this time was the "subject", the position supposedly accorded to the film viewer by film texts and cinematic institutions. In recent years, however, much critical work has problematised and marginalised this way of discussing media audiences by ascertaining how films are viewed by actual cinema-goers (as opposed to constructed subjects), and how patterns of reception are affected by difference (class, race, gender, sexual orientation and so on), a question (initially at least) disregarded by psychoanalytical theories of spectatorship. This recent "ethnographic turn" in reception studies by critics such as Janet Staiger (1992), Jackie Stacey (1994) and Ien Ang (1996) appears to have arisen out of a Lyotardian mistrust of the conception of a universal subject as described above. As a consequence, the greater consideration by film writers in recent times accorded to the diverse meanings produced by the readers of texts (that is, film audiences) has provided a viable alternative to the traditional construction of meaning by a critic which is then claimed to be "inherent" to specific texts. As Ang (1996: 4) asserts,

"studying media audiences is not interesting or meaningful in its own right, but becomes so only when it points towards a broader critical understanding of the peculiarities of contemporary culture."

Reception studies consequently represents an important new avenue of research within Film Studies which, I would argue, also deserves to exert a stronger influence on film historiography. I will develop this point later in this chapter, and make extensive use of certain elements of reception studies in Chapter Three.

Although late 20th Century critical theories have in retrospect had many beneficial effects on the discipline of film historiography, as I have started to demonstrate, these emerging discourses initially served to marginalise the study and practice of film history in Anglo-American Film Studies in the early and mid 1970s, almost certainly because traditional film historiography was made to look somewhat "old fashioned" by these radical

new approaches to the study of culture. During this period, traditional film historiography was more ignored than condemned for its outmoded assumptions and largely uncritical methods. Post-structuralist, Althusserian, Lacanian and feminist debates instead determined the principal agenda within Film Studies, leaving questions of history largely though not entirely unaddressed.

The marginalisation of historiography within Film Studies was not an isolated phenomenon: questions of history did tend to suffer neglect within humanities research in general during the early 1970s, which was at least partially attributable to growing academic interest in nascent critical discourses such as Cultural Studies. However, the end of the decade witnessed something of a "return to history", originally within more established disciplines such as literary studies (whether this represented a progressive or reactionary development has been hotly debated). This period has since come to be strongly associated with the contested term "New Historicism". H.A. Veese, in a much-cited attempt to map out the contours of New Historicism, has identified five "key assumptions" which "continually reappear and bind together [its] avowed practitioners" despite the apparent heterogeneity of their approaches (1989: xi), these being

- "1. that every expressive act is embedded in a network of material practices;
2. that every act of unmasking, critique, and opposition uses the tools it condemns and risks falling prey to the practices it exposes;
3. that literary and non-literary 'texts' circulate inseparably;
4. that no discourse, imaginative or archival, gives access to unchanging truths nor expresses inalterable human nature;
5. finally, [...] that a critical method and a language adequate to describe capitalism participate in the economy they describe."

New Historicist research as defined by Veese is clearly informed by critical theory (especially the work of Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault), and the "assumptions" he lists also share much common ground with some versions of the postmodern. This is quite ironic, given that for some, the postmodern is characterised by the end of history itself. For Anton Kaes (1989a: 216), an advocate of the New Historicists, their attempt at a "return to history" builds on the work of theorists of the postmodern such as Lyotard because it

"blurs the lines between high art and mass culture, between past and present, between the canonized and the marginal, and between the 'simulated' and the 'real'. Both New Historicism and postmodernism believe in discontinuity and disjuncture, in radical pluralism and the decentering of authority, including the authority of the author as the autonomous, supreme creator."

The blurring of binaries to which Kaes refers is certainly reflected in methodological terms in New Historicist writings, bearing out Veese's fifth "assumption" that the languages employed in critical discourses are only adequate insofar as they participate in that which they

describe. Two defining characteristics of New Historicist texts are therefore what the critic Geertz has termed "thick description", whereby totalising methods are abandoned in favour of an intricate interweaving of insights from a plethora of discourses; and secondly, painstaking reconstructions of specific historical discourses which the historian seeks to "re-enter" in his or her research.

During the 1980s and 1990s, the term New Historicism continued to be associated with the field of research in which it originally gained currency (literary, and especially Renaissance, studies), but it has since entered usage in many other academic discourses. The term "New Historicism" now appears to be generally understood as a catch-all label connoting a historically-oriented methodology informed by critical theory, and it is in this sense that I will employ it in the remainder of this thesis.

In the context of my discussion, the question arises as to the impact that New Historicist criticism (in the most general sense of the term) has had on Film Studies and film history writing. As I have already remarked in this chapter, the relatively young discourse of Film Studies tends to lag somewhat behind other, longer-established fields of research as regards methodological practices, and, regrettably, many examples of film history writing (which has existed within academia for an even shorter length of time than Film Studies) continue to be framed in wholly empiricist terms.

Anglo-American narratives of the New German Cinema published since the early 1970s are a good example: the majority of histories (especially the earlier ones) construct a canon of notable auteurs (generally male directors) and their films¹⁵, while even those that offer a revisionist feminist re-reading of the period tend to employ this methodology¹⁶. What is even more striking than this is the degree of homogeneity in most studies of this category of cinema in terms of the type of narratives they construct, as Schneider (1996: 34) notes:

"Despite often pronounced differences in their theoretical underpinnings and applied methodology, most of these books are structured along the same narrative pattern. An introductory chapter describes the German situation in the early 1960s as one marked by an accumulation of conditions that not only had turned it into a cultural wasteland but also presented the most formidable obstacles to any attempts at change. At the same time, the remaining chapters of these books dwell on, precisely, the impressive and laudable efforts of the "New German" directors to overcome these obstacles and redeem the situation."

It may be seen from Schneider's comments that the outmoded empiricist framing of most histories of the "New German Cinema" invariably give rise to the Whitean "mode of emplotment" of a conventional romance narrative in which heroic young male auteurs rescue the troubled maiden of German national cinema from her desperate plight (i.e. the artistic ruin

¹⁵ See Sanford (1982), Franklin (1983) and Corrigan (1994).

¹⁶ See Knight (1992a) and Fischetti (1992).

of popular filmmaking) in the 1960s. Accounts such as these, while being highly communicative, do serve primarily to narrow the parameters of research in the field of study in question because the use of such a strong and distinctive narrative often proves to be very enduring. Even the determined challenge to prevailing conceptions of this period of German cinema as the domain of the male auteur in the late 1970s by feminist film-makers, critics and historians merely tended to do no more than broaden the established canon by adding female auteurs such as Margarethe von Trotta and Helke Sander, and film texts such as Die bleierne Zeit (1981) and Die allgemeine reduzierte Persönlichkeit (1979) to the established construct "New German Cinema". The female auteurs were again often presented, in Whitean terms, within a conventional romance narrative, except that in this case the bastion of patriarchy within the New German Cinema was overcome, as opposed to the lack of artistic credibility in the older narratives mentioned above.

It is only with Thomas Elsaesser's 1989 book New German Cinema: A History that a non-empiricist, even New Historicist rethinking of film historiography of this era appears to have taken place for the first time within German Film Studies. Elsaesser undertakes an elaborate Foucauldian archaeology of the New German Cinema, intermingling a problematised auteurist critique with political and economic analysis (addressing film funding, distribution, exhibition and reception), as well as insights derived from postmodern and critical theory. On occasion, his style of writing also bears some resemblance to the "thick description" which is characteristic of New Historicist texts. However, a narrative such as Elsaesser's is still all too unusual within film history writing. It is to be hoped that the departure from empiricist historiography attempted here will prove to be a model for future film histories.

Conclusion

Paradigms of a Contemporary, Critically-Informed Film Historiography

A caricature of some critical theories would claim that the present time is characterised by the end of history itself, with "history" being a mere fabrication of empiricism, serving only to rearticulate and endlessly reproduce dominant ideologies. By implication then, it might be argued that to even speak of a "contemporary film historiography" is highly problematic. However, films continue to be conceived, financed, produced, distributed, exhibited, consumed, remembered and forgotten, and the particular nature of these (and other) exchanges and the conditions which predetermine and shape them continue to change over time. Consequently, competing narratives of the development of film (in all senses) are still of value, even if a single metanarrative of Film History is not, and it is this possibility that I intend to pursue in the remainder of this research project.

By way of a conclusion to this chapter, I would like to propose four paradigms of a contemporary film historiography, based upon my discussion of critical theories, cinema and historiography in this chapter. In Chapter Two I will attempt to construct an account of post-New German Cinema based upon these paradigms.

The first paradigm I would suggest is a decentering of authority. This entails a conscious destabilisation of the film historian's role through an articulation of positionality (how the film historian's own class, race, gender, ideological affiliations, assumptions, etc. impact upon the historiography) and of methodology (the film-historical and film-historiographical context), a foregrounding of the constructedness of the film history being written (following White's formalist critique of history writing), and an emphasis on the possible consequences of the research (its potential for being accepted as an authoritative, prescriptive version of "the past", for example).

A decentering of authority also demands a destabilisation of methodology, most urgently as regards the undermining of prevailing notions of authorship of film texts: an unproblematised auteurist approach to the study of cinema is no longer tenable, as I have stated previously. Film histories should also seek to be more inclusive, drawing on work from all areas of Film Studies and other relevant research. In other words, they should be better informed by reception theory and studies of spectatorship than has been the case in the empiricist tradition, giving greater weight to film audiences as creators of meaning.

The second paradigm, following Lyotard, is an avoidance of metanarrational devices. Unified linear development narratives predicated upon events or "great men" (or women) rather run against the grain of contemporary thought, where greater emphasis is often placed on discontinuity and rupture than on continuity and flow. Following New Historicist thick description techniques, a tapestry comprised of partial, relativised accounts from a range of perspectives (aesthetic, political, social, economic, to name but a few) would instead provide the historical-contextual underpinning of a critically-informed film historiography. Individual film texts, for example, would be treated as a fundamentally fluid site where a multitude of different discourses may be played out at specific historical moments. This should not be taken to mean that traditional approaches to the study of film texts should be abandoned wholesale; rather that they should be read against fresh insights from new avenues of research within Film Studies.

The third paradigm I would propose is a problematisation of dominant binaries. Oppositional constructions such as art cinema versus popular film are proving increasingly inadequate to describe the processes of production, distribution, exhibition and consumption of films, confirming the prevailing hypothesis that binary distinctions such as that between "high" and "low" culture are being blurred. Similarly, film history writing also needs to acknowledge that constructions of national or supra-national cinemas (Hollywood vs Europe) are also becoming deeply problematic in an age of cultural crossovers, international coproduction and multinational exhibition and distribution.

The last paradigm of a critically-informed film historiography I would suggest is an articulation of pluralism. The most radical of the four in terms of its break from the empiricist

tradition, this would require an adoption of practices which counteract the ahistorical, exclusionary and prescriptive process of canon formation. This would not merely entail an end to lists of "significant" film texts, stars and auteurs, but a concerted attempt to account for difference in film-historical terms. Consideration of the ways in which cinemas or aspects of cinema have been marginalised geographically, politically, socially, economically, or in terms of race or gender in different historical-cultural contexts would then be accorded a new centrality.

CHAPTER TWO

THE POST-NEW GERMAN FILM INDUSTRY

Introduction

In this chapter, I present an economic and political analysis of the post-New German film industry, before considering post-New German films in terms of their reception in Chapter Three, after which I discuss a series of film texts and figures I associate with post-New German Cinema in Chapter Four. I have a number of reasons for choosing this particular structure for my narrative of post-New German Cinema, which I will shortly outline in the section below.

I have already asserted that it is deeply problematic to establish any fixed periodisation in a film historiography. The variety of dates which have been put forward when the New German Cinema is alleged to have "ended", most notably 1982, when Rainer Werner Fassbinder (for many its key director) died, and a conservative government was returned to power for the first time since the 1960s, are very much a case in point. Most obviously, such a pedantic choice of cut-off point would mean that canonical films of the New German Cinema such as Wim Wenders' Paris, Texas (1984) and Der Himmel über Berlin (1987), Edgar Reitz's Heimat (1984), Margarethe von Trotta's Rosa Luxemburg (1986), and Werner Herzog's Cobra Verde (1988) would of necessity be denied the label "New German Films", when in fact all have been discussed as such by film critics and historians.

I wish to emphasise that the dates I have chosen simply denote an eight-year period of film-making in Germany which occurred at a point in time shortly after the New German Cinema's period of pre-eminence. The dates are not intended to have any significance beyond this, nor are they intended to be in any way prescriptive of an era of post-New German Cinema. In this regard it certainly goes without saying that the year 1995, with which my analysis ends, is not meant to in any way signal the conclusion of the post-New German era. Rather more mundanely, it represents the point at which I had no choice but to conclude my primary research and commence work on this thesis.

The close proximity of this piece of research to the period with which it deals is naturally precarious. Any trends that I identify (or, more accurately, construct) in my analysis of post-New German Cinema in what follows may well continue beyond 1995 or they may equally prove to be short-lived or illusory.

The Post-New German Film Industry

In Part One of this chapter, "The German Film Market", I examine the FRG's film marketplace (by which I refer to the market for theatrical releases of films) between 1988 and 1995 in a European and global context. I begin by scrutinising data regarding the FRG film market during these years provided by film industry bodies, the international film trade press

and other commentators on the industry. I then focus on the performance, position and status of post-New German films within this marketplace. Here I consider patterns of film-going in Germany, specifically with regard to the domestic performance of indigenous film productions in competition with other film texts in the marketplace, and in the process attempt to contextualise Germany and post-New German cinema's role in the global film market .

In Part Two, "The Infrastructure of the post-New German Film Industry", I examine the underlying structures which caused post-New German films to come into being: here, issues of film funding and subsidy are of paramount concern. I highlight what I regard as broad developments in the industry's infrastructure, in particular the changing conditions of funding of post-New German Cinema at regional, federal and European levels between 1988 and 1995.

The composition of this chapter should not be taken to mean that I am simply proposing to impose an orthodox Marxist base-superstructure model of economic activity as a metanarrative of post-New German film production, employing the totalising methods that some film writers have occasionally appropriated from political and economic theory when constructing histories of national cinemas. I must emphasise that I do not feel such an approach is invalid per se - in fact I myself will pragmatically make use of appropriate elements of this methodological framework where I feel it is illuminating to do so - rather, I would hold that its propagation by some as a totalising explanatory mode for critical discourse in this domain is misleading and often inaccurate. To return to my initial point, the following account of the industry from a political and economic point of view is presented as a further set of perspectives on German film-making between 1988 and 1995, whereby it is my hope that productive links may be forged between the alternative approaches undertaken in each chapter.

In this chapter, and especially in Part One, a considerable amount of statistics about the German film industry are put forward¹ as the basis for a number of my arguments. I would hold that it is as yet fairly unconventional for writers on film and for other cultural critics working in the humanities (as opposed to the social sciences) to make extensive use of statistical information, which probably derives from widespread misgivings towards so-called "empirical data". On this point, I acknowledge the importance of interrogating the ways and means in which data was originally collected and collated, and the need to ensure that unsustainable claims are not made for any of the data I cite.

My methodological justification for quoting statistics is threefold. Firstly, the ways in which data about the film industry circulates constitute a further interesting and important

¹ See Appendices One and Two.

source of information about the nature of post-New German Cinema, which has often been neglected by film historians, and this is an oversight that I want to help to redress. Secondly, it is actually helpful to invoke statistics in order to deconstruct and destabilise some of the wild claims (most frequently arising from ideologies of artistic "success") which have been made in the specific case of German Cinema (especially the auteur school of film criticism and film history writing). Lastly, reference to the discourse of audiovisual media data meets my requirement set out in Chapter One of constructing diverse interlinked perspectives on post-New German Cinema.

It is moreover possible to have a certain degree of confidence in the relative accuracy and validity of the data about the FRG's film industry at the time at which I write. According to the European Audiovisual Observatory (hereafter referred to in this chapter as the EAO), "the film industry, despite some methodological uncertainties and gaps in information, is still the [audiovisual media] sector with the best statistical records" (1996: 66). The EAO hold that there are several reasons which contribute to this (1996: 66): cinema is the longest-established sector in the audiovisual media; supporting structures put in place by public authorities throughout Europe "encourage the development of statistical machinery"; and the relatively high degree of homogeneity in the film business facilitates broad and accurate data collection.

It should be noted that where data is absent from any cells of the tables from Appendices One and Two which are referred to in this chapter, this should be taken to imply that none was available at the time of compilation of the source report in question, or that the absent data was simply not in the public domain at all at the time of writing this thesis; a certain time-lag between data-gathering and processing, and the public dissemination of statistics is naturally unavoidable. It is particularly regrettable in this respect that even at the time of writing this chapter in late 1997 to mid 1998, some of the data relating to 1995 had yet to enter the public domain.

PART ONE: THE GERMAN FILM MARKET

In this section of this chapter, I make an initial attempt at a general contextualisation of post-New German film production in relation to its principal (indigenous) film market. I also compare the size and composition of the German film market with that of others in the global cinema industry by analysing further statistical information. In the argument I am gradually constructing, this process is intended to serve as a means of locating post-New German filmmaking as I see it within the international context of the global cinema industries.

In the following account, I mainly rely on data taken from two sources: the MEDIA Salles Research Group's 1995 report on European Cinema (1995), which offers statistics for

1989 through 1994, and the EAO's *Statistical Yearbook '97* (1996), from which I have gleaned supplementary information about 1995. Both reports, as their titles suggest, seek to present a wide-ranging overview of national film markets in Europe during the time-frame with which I am concerned. The two institutions which produced the reports - MEDIA Salles and the EAO - are best described as initiatives of the pan-European political elite of the 1980s and early 1990s. MEDIA was founded by the European Union in 1986 with the broad remit of supporting the audiovisual media industries of Europe, while the EAO, a joint venture by the European Commission, the European Council and Eureka among others, aims to facilitate the exchange of information within and about the industry as well as taking steps to improve the compatibility and comparability of this information across Europe².

Data was collated from a variety of sources in each report. National exhibitors' associations appear to have been held by each body to be the most reliable source (see MEDIA Salles, 1995: xi). The two studies have been selected for my account below for the high degree of correspondence between their statistical analyses: most notably, both rely on data submitted by the national association of cinema exhibitors in Germany, the *Hauptverband Deutscher Filmtheater e.v.*³.

A comparison of the two institutions' data does however reveal a handful of underlying methodological inconsistencies. These predominantly derive from differing approaches to conceptualising what precisely constitutes a "European" or "other" film from the internal perspective of individual European nations' respective film markets (this applies to Germany as much as to any other nation). Since the texts grouped in these categories are of only marginal significance to my research, I have chosen to omit them where there is a conflict of data, thereby sidestepping the issue of compatibility between the two studies altogether by only reproducing data which may be shown to be consistent and therefore consensual and reasonably reliable. This has been achieved by identifying categories in which identical data appears where the reports overlap.

Drawing on Appendix One, it is clear that during the mid-to-late 1980s, the market share of indigenous film productions in Germany had recovered somewhat from its (then) post-war low of between 10% and 15% in the late 1970s and early 1980s, stabilising at a level of around 20%. Table 1 shows that the market share of domestically-produced films in the period with which I am concerned (1988 to 1995) was marked by the beginning of a renewed downturn in 1989. This was followed by a prolonged trough between 1990 and 1995 in which German films struggled to achieve more than a 10% domestic box office take. It was only in the two years following this slump, 1996 and 1997, that the market share percentage

² These and other film-related bodies established by the European polity since the 1980s are discussed at greater length later in this chapter.

³ In both the EAO and MEDIA Salles reports, comparable organisations are the primary sources of data about other film markets, which is important for consistency's sake, as I shall also shortly consider the German film market in relation to other European markets.

started to approach its pre-1990 levels: the EAO report that during the first 6 months of 1996, the market share of indigenous productions in Germany somewhat unexpectedly reached 19.5% (1996: 92)⁴.

Appendix One also shows that the downturn in the proportion of the national film-going audience attending German-made productions between 1988 and 1995 was accompanied by an increasing dominance of the FRG box office by American films. Elsaesser (1989: 9) makes the important assertion in his history of New German Cinema that

"The economics of the West German cinema have to be seen in the wider context of the United States' film industry. This is true of every Western European country since 1945 [...]"

The sustained improvement in the FRG box office share of American films from the late 1980s onwards, which is shown to have been strongly consolidated between 1989 and 1995, ensures that Elsaesser's contention is if anything even more applicable to post-New German Cinema than it was to its New German predecessor. Prevailing notions of post-war German national cinema have always been especially problematised by the persistent prominence of Hollywood films in the German marketplace, especially since the early 1970s, as Gancarz (1994) has convincingly demonstrated (see below), and this prominence reached an all-time peak between the late 1980s and mid 1990s. Hollywood films' FRG market share increased from its 1980s average of around 60% to a consistent 80% to 87% share during the period 1990 to 1995, at the expense of both domestic and "other" productions. What is remarkable about this trend is that an improvement in the performance of Hollywood films was achieved, arguably rather unexpectedly, with a declining number of annual American releases in the German film market. This would appear to imply that Hollywood studios (and in turn, their German distributors and exhibitors) made a concerted effort during the early 1990s to concentrate their resources on achieving higher ticket sales for a smaller number of American blockbuster films. The ensuing poor performance of indigenous (and "other") films in comparison with Hollywood productions in both absolute and relative terms is unmistakable. An annual average of around 60 German-made films were consistently outperformed by their American counterparts throughout the period 1988 to 1995: the annual number of German theatrical releases of US-made films was just over double that of German-made films throughout this period at around 145, yet the American films claimed an average of eight times as much box office revenue per year during this time.

The above-mentioned analysis of the German performance of Hollywood films by Gancarz (1994) encompasses the period 1925 to 1990.⁵ In his account, Gancarz attempts to

⁴ The near-tripling of indigenous films' German market share during the first two quarters of 1996, while almost certainly being a statistical anomaly attributable to the near-simultaneous release of features by Germany's two most popular directors (Detlev Buck and Sönke Wortmann) as well as that of the long-awaited sequel to Werner: Beinhart, led to numerous reports in the media of a "renaissance" of German cinema, e.g. Unattributed. 1996a.

⁵ In the next section of this chapter, "Top Grossing Films in Germany, 1988 - 1995", I attempt to update

correct what he regards as a prevailing misconception that Hollywood films have been dominant at the German box office ever since the birth of the industry. He notes that the annual volume of Hollywood releases has tended to be double that of German-made films since World War Two, whereas the two figures were more or less equivalent prior to the National Socialist era (1994: 96). Here, I would argue that available data clearly shows that this post-war ratio has remained constant for post-New German Cinema. However, by analysing admissions data and star popularity polls, Gancarz also shows that the German public had an indisputable preference for German films over Hollywood productions until the early 1970s. The nub of his argument is that a decisive change in German tastes in film, which had been gradually brewing since the 1950s, finally occurred around 1971; as of this point, Hollywood films began to dominate at the German box office (1994: 95):-

"Statistics on the commercial success of films in Germany indicate that from 1925 to 1971, German film audiences preferred German-made films. In fact, American films had trouble finding a foothold in the German film market. During the 1970s this trend reversed itself: German films underwent a process of Americanisation, and the demand for American films grew rapidly, practically shutting out German films from their own domestic market. [...] The German film industry defined film convention until the beginning of the 1970s, after which the American film industry took over."

He also contends that (1994: 113)

"the process of Americanisation is not limited to Germany, and [...] the process of Americanisation has affected not only film standards but also film production and film criticism."

The validity of such arguments will be considered in more detail in the next two chapters when post-New German film texts are specifically addressed.

A comparison with the theatrical performance of domestically-produced films in other European countries in this period is certainly instructive. Again drawing on Appendix One, it is evident that the indigenous box office performance of German films in competition with Hollywood productions was broadly in line with that of other European national cinema industries in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Indeed, most indigenous films faced a struggle to gain even a 10% annual share of their domestic markets in Western Europe; in the smaller countries which had little domestic film production to speak of (Switzerland, Portugal, Luxembourg), the national cinema had an almost negligible market presence. What is also notable is that the market share of indigenous productions in this period was somewhat higher in those European countries where some form of systematic public funding of film production takes place (e.g. France, Germany and Italy) than in those countries where no substantial funds are drawn from the public purse to subsidise domestic filmmaking (e.g. the UK,

Republic of Ireland and Belgium). The much-publicised system of quotas in France which has the effect of restricting the distribution and exhibition of Hollywood productions (and was furthermore the principal sticking point in the GATT negotiations⁶ during the early 1990s) also tangibly bolstered the market share of that nation's indigenous films in these years.

Until this point in this section, I have considered the German film industry between 1988 and 1995 in terms of the market share enjoyed by domestic and American productions in film theatres, along with the broader European context of the attendant patterns of film-going. I now turn to the relative size of the German film market. The global magnitude of the German and European markets (in terms of cinema attendance) need to be taken into consideration in order to fully account for the trends I am seeking to establish in this analysis. Appendix One also shows the position of Germany's film market within the economy of the global cinema industry in the early 1990s in terms of gross annual box office takings.

Ilott (1996: 9) states that

"Within Europe, there are five big territories: France, the UK, Germany, Italy and Spain [...] Of these, France and the UK are by far the biggest, each of them accounting for about 25% of the European total. Germany accounts for about 16%, which, given the size of the country, is a very low figure."

While this may be the case for the film market as a whole (which encompasses theatrical, television and video sectors), I would argue that the available data indicates that between the early and mid 1990s, audience revenues in Germany began to easily outstrip those of the UK, with the end result that Germany had strongly consolidated its position as the second-largest theatrical market among Western European nations by 1993, posting annual increases in domestic film-going unmatched by any of its near neighbours in this four-year period. The question of whether this apparent trend of increased cinema-going in Germany⁷ is attributable to demographic changes or other socio-cultural developments is an important issue; matters such as these are however also rather beyond the remit of this thesis.

In the early 1990s, Europe and other export territories were clearly regarded as an under-exploited market of ever-increasing importance by Hollywood during a period of unpredictable fluctuations in levels of cinema attendance by American film-goers. Germany's strong performance in terms of film-going reinforces the impression that American studios, distributors and exhibitors devoted considerable efforts to maximising the German

⁶ The GATT negotiations of the early 1990s were an attempt by the most powerful industrialised nations, in accordance with the prevailing "free market" economic orthodoxy of the time, to remove protectionism (in the form of trade barriers and tariffs) from international trade. Cinema proved the principal sticking point in the negotiations; following concerted efforts by the French government who wished to protect their film industry, audiovisual media were excluded from the final agreement. See Nagel, J. 1994. 'Gefährliche Liebschaften. Der europäische Film nach den GATT-Verhandlungen', *film-dienst*, 47 (2), 4-8.

⁷ To the best of my knowledge, ticket prices remained stable during this period.

performance of Hollywood productions in the early 1990s, as was amply evident from the data collected in Table 1. A comment by Neckermann (1991: 109) confirms the American studios' perception of the West German film market in the late 1980s:

"Die Bundesrepublik Deutschland ist für die USA mit einem Exportmarktanteil von 8,7 v.H. im Jahr 1989 einer der wichtigsten Kino-Exportmärkte [...] sie ist [...] der viertgrößte Absatzmarkt nach Japan, Kanada und Frankreich"

At this point, I will briefly consider the distribution of post-New German films in the UK. As well as indicating the status of this body of films in a local export territory, it is also of direct significance for this research project, as my degree of access to German films has necessarily impacted upon the writing of this thesis.

Films of German origin seldom found distribution at all in Britain outside film festivals between 1988 and 1995, with an average of around one or two German films per year achieving even a limited cinematic release during this period in Britain, as Appendix Two shows. This may be partly explained by the ongoing demise of arthouse cinemas in the UK at the time, as Ilott (1996: 16) explains:-

"Of the big European markets, the UK offers the least comfort to producers from other European countries. Indeed, the market for any non-English language films in the UK has all but disappeared, even on television. All that's left is the dwindling art-film circuit. This doubtless reflects the huge impact of video on the UK market, but it may also have something to do with the 'multiplex effect'. The UK is the most multiplexed cinema market in Europe."

Against this backdrop of declining interest in, and unfavourable conditions for non-English-language products at the UK box office between 1988 and 1995, I would suggest that there was a further developing trend towards an increasingly long interval between a film's respective German and British release dates (as shown in Appendix Two), which would rather appear to suggest that the release of a German film onto the British market was not generally regarded as a high priority even by distributors of foreign-language products, which were also declining in number during this period, according to Ilott.

The list of those films which did achieve UK distribution is split fairly evenly between those films directed by film-makers associated with the New German Cinema in Britain (such as Herzog, Wenders, Verhoeven, von Trotta and Meeraupfel), and those who have emerged during the late 1980s and early 1990s (such as Vilsmaier, Levy, Wortmann, Dietl and von Garnier). A single film from the dying days of the GDR (Coming Out) also obtained distribution. Of the films made by New German Cinema directors after 1989, only two Wenders features and one by von Trotta secured a British distributor, although Reitz's 26-hour epic Die zweite Heimat did receive a terrestrial television broadcast on BBC2. Recent films by Herzog, Sander, and Sanders-Brahms have been altogether ignored, and even

Lisbon Story, the 1995 feature by Wenders, Germany's best-known living director, has to date failed to find a distributor in the UK. Of the films by "new" directors, two are thematically linked to well-known German films which had been previously released in Britain: Stalingrad had the same production team and a similar subject matter to Das Boot (Wolfgang Petersen, 1982), a fact which was highlighted in the advertisements accompanying its release, while Kaspar Hauser narrates a legend made familiar to British cinema audiences by Werner Herzog's 1974 feature Jeder für sich und Gott gegen alle (The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser). The popular comedies Schtonk!, Abgeschminkt! and Der bewegte Mann, were, I would argue, rather more representative of the dominant mode of popular German genre films of the period (this will be discussed in Chapter Four).

In the UK, as in the international film market as a whole, German films have therefore suffered a marked downturn in prestige since the heyday of the New German Cinema. Although rarely seen outside the confines of art cinemas in Britain and the USA in the late 1970s and early 1980s, German films of the time (and their directors) did achieve a greater degree of distribution, attracting much interest from cinéastes, and regularly won awards at film festivals, culminating in a Best Foreign Film Oscar for Volker Schlöndorff's Die Blechtrommel in 1980, and a prize for best director for Werner Herzog's Fitzcarraldo at the 1982 Cannes Film Festival. Since the early 1980s, international film festival accolades for German films have however become extremely rare as the national cinema's status apparently diminished in the eyes of film festival programmers and audiences. Between 1985 and 1995 the only German films to receive major international festival accolades were Wim Wenders' Der Himmel über Berlin (1987) and its sequel In weiter Ferne, so nah! (1993), both of which won the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival.

The lack of international accolades for German films in recent years has been matched by a waning of Anglo-American interest in German cinema from the mid 1980s onwards. It would appear that for many British and American writers on film, German cinema of this time was not even deemed to be worth discussing, as I shall show in Chapter Three. That German films were largely "off the agenda" by the late 1980s and early 1990s, is borne out by their frankly poor record of distribution in Britain shown in Appendix Two.

I will now move from a macro- to a micro-analysis of post-New German films' domestic performance, examining developments in the German film market between 1988 and 1995 which are pertinent to this thesis in a rather more detailed manner than in the section above. Here I consider the performance and status of post-New German films in their indigenous market by examining the top grossing films in Germany between 1988 and 1995.

I begin by considering a version⁸ of the Top Ten films at the German box office for each year to illustrate the relative status of leading German-made productions in their Hollywood-dominated domestic market (this process usefully throws into relief the inherent difficulties in employing the category "German-made film", as I shall shortly discuss). These Top Tens are to be found in Appendix Three. It is worth pointing out here that potential applications for a research method of this type are far wider than they might at first appear. Garncarz (1994: 99) for example has established that an analysis of annual Top Ten box office statistics for the German film market can provide a helpful means of identifying broader trends in the marketplace; in other words, the annual Top Ten may serve as a surprisingly accurate barometer for the composition of the market as a whole:-

"One finds that from the total ticket sales for the films in the Top Ten, the division of sales for American vs. German films parallels the division of ticket sales for German vs. American films in the entire market. The discrepancy between the two sets of statistics is astoundingly small."

The analysis which follows will in part help to establish whether or not Garncarz's above claim holds for the period 1988 to 1995.

Firstly, I will deal with each category of ostensibly "German" films in turn, as set out in Appendix Three, before going on to make some general observations about the Top Ten data for 1988 to 1995.

My first category is the majority German-funded film, usually with a German director and predominantly German cast, or made by a German animation team, mainly or exclusively filmed in Germany, in German. The films in this category were as follows:-

- 1988: Ödipussi (Loriot, 1987)
Man spricht deutsch (Gerhard Polt, 1988)
- 1989: Otto - Der Außerfriesische (Otto Waalkes & Marijan Vajda 1989)
Herbstmilch (Joseph Vilsmaier, 1988)
- 1990: Werner - beinhart (Gerhard Hahn, Michael Schaak, Niki List, 1990)
- 1991: Pappa ante portas (Loriot, 1990)
- 1992: Otto - Der Liebesfilm (Otto Waalkes, 1992)
- 1994: Der bewegte Mann (Sönke Wortmann, 1994)
- 1995: Der bewegte Mann (Sönke Wortmann, 1994)

Here a discernible downward trend in the number of German-funded films featuring a predominantly German cast appearing in the annual Top Ten between 1988 and 1995 is quite evident. In 1988 and 1989, two films per year in this category number among the ten leading

⁸ I use the term "version" here advisedly: several different organisations produce varying sets of statistics on film ticket sales. A full explanation for this may be found in Appendix Two.

films at the domestic box office, in 1990, 1991 and 1992, the number is reduced to one, while between 1993 and 1995 only a single production of this type achieves a Top Ten ranking, although it does feature in two consecutive year's lists.

Three distinctive genres of film appear in this list. Five of the eight films are vehicles for comedians best known for their television appearances (Otto Waalkes, Lorient, Gerhard Polt), while two genre films (a *Heimat* film, *Herbstmilch*, and a romantic comedy, *Der bewegte Mann*) and an animated feature based on a popular comic book (Werner) also appear. Here the key roles played by television and literature in post-New German Cinema are strongly evident. This analysis would also seem to indicate that commercially successful post-New German films at least sit firmly within the tradition of genre cinema. Seven of the eight films are furthermore comedies, indisputably the dominant genre of post-New German Cinema. Six of the eight films are moreover derived from non-film media (television comedy programmes and comic books), which illustrates that the post-New German film industry was often predicated on other distinctive forms of German popular culture, which served as a means of gaining audience recognition for particular narratives and characters, and in turn supplying saleable subject matter for the industry. The issues raised here will be taken up in the next two chapters.

My second category is the majority Hollywood-financed film with a German director and predominantly American cast, filmed in the USA, in English. The following films of this type appear on the list of Top Tens set out in Appendix Three:-

1988: *Ich und er* (Doris Dörrie, 1988)

1995: *While you were sleeping* (Jon Turteltaub, 1995)

1995: *Stargate* (Roland Emmerich, 1995)

It is quite revealing that of these three features, only Dörrie's 1988 film was widely fêted within Germany as a "German film", coming as a long-awaited and much-hyped follow-up to her surprise 1985 Number One box office hit *Männer*. This, like the other two films, was filmed in America and features a Hollywood cast. I have included the other two films in this list, despite the fact that I can find no record of them ever being referred to as "German films", to highlight the often arbitrary nature of the monicker "German film" where there is a major Hollywood involvement in a German director's film project.

An initial period of domestic fame appears to be a minimum prerequisite for a German director's Hollywood work to be acknowledged in this way by the German press and film critics; Emmerich's film-making career in Germany in the early 1980s was extremely brief and largely unheralded by the film press, while Turteltaub's lowbrow German comedies, the popular television presenter Thomas Gottschalk vehicles *Trabbi goes to Hollywood* (1990) and *Highway Chaoten* (1991) were not construed by the media or film press as the

works of an auteur, in marked contrast to the appraisal received by Dörrie, despite the fact that she also mainly works in the genre of popular comedy.

It also bears mentioning that the historical moment in which Männer appeared is also significant. In 1985, a discernible vacuum was perceived to exist within the FRG's film industry following the death of Fassbinder in 1982 and the declining image of the *Autorenkino* since that date. This, combined with a growing critical interest in Film and German Studies in the work of female German film-makers at this time (see Chapters Three and Four), all served to bolster Dörrie's persona as an auteur. The varying perceptions of the three American-made films by the film press additionally serve in retrospect to illustrate to what extent Germany's once broadly-discussed tradition of auteur cinema had slipped from the agenda of international film critics and commentators in the seven years between the release of Ich und er in 1988 and Stargate and While you were sleeping in 1995.

My third and final category is the European coproduction with some German funding, usually with an international cast or animation team, often filmed in English. The coproductions listed in Appendix Three that were held by some to be products of FRG cinema were:-

1989: Asterix - Operation Hinkelstein (Gerhard Hahn, 1989)

1990: The Never-Ending Story 2 (George Miller, 1990)

1993: The House Of The Spirits (Bille August, 1993)

I would argue that the three films named above - an animated feature, a fantasy film and a literary adaptation with a Hollywood cast respectively - are fairly representative of international coproductions with a significant degree of German financial, technical or artistic involvement released between 1988 and 1995. The box office success of the animated feature Asterix - Operation Hinkelstein, made by many of the same animators who constructed Werner - beinhart, was attributed by some members of the German film press to the fact that German film animation, something of a cottage industry within the broader post-New German film industry, was beginning to attain technical standards at least approaching those of the larger Hollywood animation studios⁹. The Never-Ending Story 2, the first sequel to Wolfgang Petersen's 1984 feature, similarly built on expertise within the specialist field of animatronics within Germany. The singular German contribution to The House of the Spirits, a big-budget international costume drama filmed on location in a number of countries, appears to have been providing finance (no German actors, production or technical crew were involved, and the vast majority of filming took place outside Germany) yet the film was nevertheless widely heralded as "German" by the film press, once again illustrating the essentially arbitrary nature of the term "German film".

⁹ Startling audience figures attained by the second Werner film in 1996 lent greater momentum to such claims.

To conclude, I have examined what I would term the superstructure of the post-New German film industry in Part One of this chapter. This has involved scrutinising the performance record of "German" films (allowing for the fact that this is a very contested and fluid concept because of a lack of consensus as to what marks a film as "German") in their domestic theatrical market, both from a historical perspective, and in the context of the European and global film marketplace.

I would argue that available data indicates that the FRG film market came under increasing domination by Hollywood films between 1988 and 1995. This resulted from American production companies and distributors placing greater emphasis than ever before on their export markets in the wake of disappointing box office revenues from the American theatrical market in the late 1980s. In the face of increasingly vigorous American competitors, German films struggled more than ever to maintain a foothold in their domestic market during this period (a common experience for European national cinemas at this time), managing only an average of approximately 10% market share. German films did however fare if anything marginally better on average than the products of other European national cinemas, but not as well as films made in other European countries with comparable centralised subsidy systems. It also bears mentioning that post-New German films began to show something of an upturn in performance towards the mid 1990s, a fact that was widely heralded in the film and general press (see Chapter Three).

In Part One, I have additionally identified some of the ways in which the FRG film marketplace situated post-New German films, as well as identifying those genres and categories of what are held to be "German films" which performed strongly at the domestic theatrical box office between 1988 and 1995: predominantly films featuring television comedians, popular comedies in general, the work of Hollywood-based German directors, and international coproductions. In Chapters Three and Four, I consider issues raised by these observations at greater length.

In Part Two, I attempt to highlight developments in the infrastructure of the post-New German film industry, which is an important means of contributing to an understanding of these superstructural developments.

PART TWO:

THE INFRASTRUCTURE OF THE POST-NEW GERMAN FILM INDUSTRY

In Part Two, I foreground the infrastructure of the post-New German film industry which I will construct as being one of the principal agents in helping to bring about many of the superstructural market trends I outlined in Part One of this chapter.

Here, my primary intention is to begin to show how infrastructural developments in the industry between 1988 and 1995 may have assisted in shaping and informing post-New German film-making. The historical origins of this infrastructure will also be considered to enable me to put forward better-informed reasons why the industry developed in the way it did in this period. I will further elaborate on the themes constructed here in the remainder of this thesis, when I discuss a broad range of post-New German film texts (Chapter Four), and the ways in which they have been perceived within different discourses (Chapter Three). I will begin by considering the historical origins of the funding of post-New German Cinema.

Film funding is a highly charged, political issue, in which advocates of different modes of cinema have traditionally sought to secure the most favourable set of funding conditions possible for their particular type of filmmaking practice. At its simplest level, this has consisted of commercial filmmakers (primarily concerned with delivering economic profits on film productions which are targeted at large audiences) competing for film funding with film artists or auteurs (who have generally sought subsidies to make more personal films for smaller, niche audiences). I, like some other critics who have written on this subject, employ this over-simplified yet powerful dichotomy as the basis for the discussion of film funding which follows. I acknowledge that I use this hyperbolic narrative technique firstly in order to bolster my argument that funding controversies of the post-New German Cinema are founded on long-established sets of hard-fought debates within post-war Germany; and secondly, in order to gain a clearer understanding of the underlying reasons for the specific developments which occurred within the culture of film funding in post-New German Cinema.

Public subsidy of filmmaking in West Germany began during the early 1950s when the CDU government first issued *Ausfallbürgschaften* (guaranteed credits) to the cinema industry in an effort to stimulate post-war film production.¹⁰ Film production certainly increased as a result of this major financial injection in the first half of the 1950s - Bordwell and Thompson (1993: 483) characterise it as a "minor boom" - but this government film policy was for some controversial: concerns were widely voiced by film critics of the day (such as Enno Patalas and Friedrich Luft¹¹) as to the artistic merit of the films that were being released, many of which belonged to popular genres such as the often-reviled *Heimat* film. The establishment on 20th August 1955 of the *Filmbewertungsstelle Wiesbaden* (the FBW), an evaluative body comprised of industry members and civil servants which issued (and to this day continues to issue) so-called quality ratings for film releases, was intended by the government to redress this perceived artistic deficiency by furnishing further aid to the

¹⁰ Prinzler (1993: 537-8) notes that the principle of guaranteed credits was approved by the *Bundestag* on 31st March 1951; the state agreed to meet 35% of a feature film's production costs. By 1953, DM9.2m in credits had been issued to a total of 93 feature films; while by 1955, around DM21m in guaranteed credits had been dispensed. For a full account of the early days of film funding by the state in West Germany, see Elsaesser (1989: 18-27).

¹¹ These critics are cited in Ott's account of FRG cinema of the 1950s and 1960s (1986: 235-240).

industry in the form of tax relief for highly regarded, "quality" productions (Prinzler, 1993: 537). What "quality" entailed in practice was simply left to the discretion of the FBW, but the often contentious ratings they issued amounted to the registering of official approval - in the sense of an economic endorsement by the West German government and film establishment - for individual film texts. Clearly therefore, the FBW introduced at least an element of covert censorship by the state, despite the ostensible prohibition of this by the German constitution (*Grundgesetz*, Article 5)¹². I would argue that the introduction at this stage of the concept of the "quality" film was to have far-reaching implications for future developments in film funding in the FRG (including post-New German Cinema), as I will show in due course.

It is now generally held by historians of West German film funding, such as Franklin (1983), Elsaesser (1989) and Prinzler (1993), that the first steps towards a more coherent subsidy system were taken in the early 1960s as a result of lobbying by young independent filmmakers. The most widely cited instance of this in histories of film funding in West Germany¹³ is a 1962 document termed the Oberhausen Manifesto¹⁴, in which several of these filmmakers, who included now well-known figures such as Alexander Kluge and Edgar Reitz among their number, lambasted West Germany's film establishment and called on the government of the day to lend support to alternative (i.e. non-mainstream or non-commercial) forms of filmmaking, which they claimed should be allowed to exist free of the constraints of supply and demand in the theatrical marketplace. Their arguments principally rested on what the signatories regarded as the necessity of overcoming the ostensible artistic and (recent) economic failure of commercial filmmaking in Germany.

On 1st February 1965, the *Stiftung Kuratorium Junger Deutscher Film* was set up by the government in response to this campaign. The *Kuratorium* (as I shall refer to it from here onwards) was originally a state-run institution which dispensed interest-free loans of up to DM300,000 to aspiring filmmakers (Franklin, 1983: 31) from its total annual budget of DM5m (Prinzler, 1993: 542), and it provided the necessary means for many filmmakers now associated with the first wave of New (or "Young") German Cinema to make their debut feature films¹⁵. The enduring aim of the Kuratorium, which still has a role (albeit a modified one, as I shall mention shortly) in promoting contemporary debut films today, is described by Gerber (1992: 98) as follows: "Das Kuratorium will jungen deutschen Autoren den Einstieg

¹² Elsaesser (1989: 20) contends that "The so-called quality incentive worked as an additional means of censorship, economically penalising politically inopportune films."

¹³ This narrative of the development of film funding in West Germany may be found, with very little variation, in virtually every published history of the New German Cinema: see for example Elsaesser (1989: 20-25), Corrigan (1994: 3-5), Franklin (1983: 26-31) and Prinzler (1993: 541).

¹⁴ "The Oberhausen Manifesto" refers to an open letter co-signed by 26 independent filmmakers on 28th February 1962 at that year's Oberhausen Festival, a forum for new short films. The document (reprinted in Prinzler & Rentschler (Hg.) 1988: 29) proclaims the death of a discredited commercial German cinema ("Der Zusammenbruch des konventionellen deutschen Films") and argues a case for the public funding of more experimental, artistic films, free of market constraints.

¹⁵ These included Alexander Kluge (*Abschied von gestern*), Volker Schlöndorff (*Der junge Törless*) and Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet (*Nicht Versöhnt*), each of whose debut films was completed in 1966.

erleichtern." Here it is particularly notable that the ideology of the *auteur* was indelibly enshrined from the outset in post-war West Germany's first formalised system of subsidies for the cinema. This, I would argue, has impacted upon much legislation and debate that has followed in this domain, as I shall demonstrate. This has also had profound consequences for the way in which German films are conceived, constructed and received. The preference given to first-time directors has moreover noticeably contributed to general perceptions of the industry; as I attempt to show in Chapters Three and Four, this trend continued in post-New German Cinema, where an ever-growing number of filmmakers faced a greater struggle than ever to gain access to funding for their second film than for their first, leading to a so-called "*Debütantenschwemme*" (a glut of filmmakers who only had one film to their name).

The founding of the *Kuratorium* in 1964 was not generally welcomed by the traditional film establishment in West Germany, despite it bringing about an overall increase in annual production volume, firstly since the body had come into being as a consequence of lobbying by activists firmly opposed to the mainstream, and more tellingly, since the body awarded them public monies which were strongly coveted by the established entertainment film industry itself¹⁶.

The broadly negative entertainment industry reaction to the founding of the *Kuratorium*, together with the recent general clamour for greater subsidy for the cinema, soon provoked a response from West Germany's grand coalition¹⁷ government in the form of the first *Filmförderungsgesetz*¹⁸ (hereafter FFG), the "film subsidy bill", and the concomitant establishment of the *Filmförderungsanstalt* (hereafter FFA), the German Federal Film Board, both of which came into being on 22nd December 1967.

The bill represented a clear trade-off between the differing cultural agendas of conservative and socialist-liberal politicians forced by the electorate to work in tandem in government (the former tending to be more sympathetic to the mainstream film industry, the latter to the young independents). The bill was also ostensibly designed to act as a counterweight to the *Kuratorium* while also somehow appeasing both of these conflicting interest groups¹⁹. However, the original FFG did not in fact counterbalance the *Kuratorium* at all, instead, it subtly and fundamentally undermined it. To achieve this, the FFG

¹⁶ Bordwell and Thompson comment (1993: 484-485): "the German film industry saw the support for independent directors as a government subsidization of competition and lobbied successfully both to cut the Kuratorium's budget and to get a law passed limiting financing to those directors who had already made one successful film. As a result, government funding swung away from young directors toward more traditional projects."

¹⁷ The term "Grand Coalition" refers to the joint SPD-CDU administration of 1966 to 1969, necessitated by the hung parliament produced by the 1966 general election.

¹⁸ The original bill's full title is *Das Gesetz über Maßnahmen zur Förderung des deutschen Films* (BGBl, I, S. 1352).

¹⁹ Franklin (1983: 32) asserts "Obviously less responsive than the Kuratorium to film quality and more attuned to box-office success, the Film Subsidies Board resulted from a compromise between the lobbies of the New German Cinema and the traditional, commercial entertainment industry."

incorporated legislation which drastically altered the nature of the *Kuratorium* itself; firstly, there was a reduction in the amount of funds that were allocated to the organisation, which effectively meant that smaller grants than before were available to New German filmmakers; and secondly, the *Kuratorium* was removed from the governance of the federal state to that of the *Länder*²⁰.

While it is true that many of the often experimental "Young German Films" had caused some controversy due to their social criticism, the government's official rationale for transferring responsibility for the *Kuratorium* to the *Länder* was legalistic: since cultural matters are uniquely mandated to be the concern of the *Länder* rather than the state in the FRG by its written constitution, the *Grundgesetz* (Basic Law), the *Kuratorium* should be placed under regional rather than federal jurisdiction (interestingly, this represented an implicit admission that the *Kuratorium* in its original form had been an unconstitutional body). By somewhat belatedly detaching the *Kuratorium* from the government's area of responsibility, a constitutional grey area - the legitimacy of the *Kuratorium* as a federal body in view of the *Grundgesetz* was therefore resolved. The government was also careful on this occasion to act within its constitutional limitations by not incorporating "artistic quality" criteria into the funding guidelines of the FFA, some of whose members were state representatives officially forbidden from legislating on so-called cultural matters. However, there was no denying that the reduction in the *Kuratorium*'s grant essentially represented a rejection of the form of oppositional film-making which it had hitherto supported²¹.

To return to the government's "version of events", the principle of cultural subsidy by the *Länder* is firmly enshrined in the *Grundgesetz*²². The unambiguous constitutional support thereby given to regional film funding in Germany might be interpreted as altogether excluding even the possibility of a centrally-administered equivalent; indeed, there is no constitutional principle in German law which explicitly allows for a federal system of film funding. Federal film funding is in fact justified only by a single act of parliament (the FFG) which is based on an assumption that German cinema as an industry of the FRG may (conveniently) be regarded as a purely economic concern of its federal government. There is arguably some constitutional basis for this, as Hentschel (1992: 15) clarifies:

²⁰ The *Länder* collectively put forward an annual sum (initially DM750,000) for investment in cinema from 1969 onwards (Hundertmark & Saul, 1984: 14).

²¹ Kreimeier (1973: 203), in an Althusserian analysis of the post-war West German film industry, regards these changes as an unambiguous ideological manoeuvre: "Die 'Nachwuchsförderung', die die Bundesregierung bis 1967 über das 'Kuratorium Junger Deutscher Film' betreibt, wird ersatzlos gestrichen, als ersichtlich wird, daß einige der geförderten 'Jungfilmer' sich nicht widerstandslos den Mechanismen der herrschenden Ideologieproduktion beugen wollen."

²² Hentschel (1992: 12) notes, "Der umfassendste und durch das Grundgesetz am besten abgesicherte Hoheitsbereich der Länder ist der Kulturbereich - die durch Art. 30, 70 ff. und 83 ff. Grundgesetz garantierte 'Kulturhoheit der Länder'. Nach diesen Bestimmungen haben auf kulturellem Gebiet die Länder allein das Sagen! [...] Diese verfassungsrechtlich garantierte Hoheit der Länder zur Regelung kultureller Belange umfaßt als Kehrseite der Medaille die Pflicht zur Förderung der Kultur. Die Länder sind aufgerufen, die Kunst zu erhalten, zu pflegen und finanziell zu unterstützen."

"[...] auch der Bund agiert auf der Bühne der kulturellen Filmförderung, obwohl das Grundgesetz dies nicht ausdrücklich zugelassen hat. Dabei beruft sich der Bund auf eine angebliche Verpflichtung zur gesamtstaatlichen Repräsentation. So betreibt der Bundesminister des Innern seit über 30 Jahren eine eigenständige kulturelle Filmförderung unter Einsatz beträchtlicher Haushaltsmittel. [...] Bisher haben wir uns ausschließlich auf den Film als kulturelles Phänomen konzentriert. Aber auch die Funktion des Films als Wirtschaftsfaktor hat öffentliche Aufmerksamkeit gefunden und zu besonderen Förderungsstrukturen geführt. Sieht man dieses zweite Gesicht des Kinofilms, so läßt sich eine Gestaltungshoheit des Bundes auf Art. 74 Nr. 11 Grundgesetz stützen. Hiernach besitzt nämlich der Bund die Kompetenz zur konkurrierenden Gesetzgebung für das Recht der Wirtschaft einschließlich der Filmwirtschaft. Das Filmförderungsgesetz (FFG) wurde als ein solches Wirtschaftsförderungsgesetz konzipiert."

I will now begin to examine the enduring implications of the FFA and FFG for post-New German Cinema. While the legal underpinning of film funding was sharply demarcated in principle between regional forms ("cultural" support) and federal forms ("economic" support), by means of the separation of the *Kuratorium* and the FFG and FFA in 1967, there was and is in practice inevitably a cultural and economic component to *any* award of public funding to a film project in Germany, regardless of its source (Hentschel, 1992: 23). In other words, both the probable economic viability and the likely cultural status of a film must be implicitly or explicitly taken into consideration by all funding bodies, regional or federal, when deliberating over an award; moreover each funding decision taken necessarily impacts in specific ways upon the economic performance and cultural profile of German cinema.

I would hold that the division of funding into "cultural" and "economic" awards derived from the *Grundgesetz* and enacted by the FFG was a defining moment for West German, and therefore post-New German Cinema. Rather than attempting to heal the bitter divisions between the *Autoren* and the film establishment, which was a necessary first step if an economically viable domestic film industry were ever to be built up, the FFG instead markedly widened the chasm between the groups. Furthermore, the legislation consolidated the traditional culture vs. commerce dichotomy as a defining paradigm of German and post-New German cinema, a matter which I will consider in more detail in Chapter Three.

The transfer of responsibility for the *Kuratorium* from the state to the collective responsibility of the *Länder* was an important symbolic event in two further senses. Firstly, the actual principle of regions within the Federal Republic providing film funding was introduced; this was to have long-term implications, as I shall elaborate. Secondly, from the perspective of New German film producers, the breaking up of the *Kuratorium* had significant administrative repercussions, in that it clearly entailed approaching a greater number of fund-awarding bodies than before in the search for film funding from the public purse, calling for a much greater time investment in the pursuit of funding, and a greater sensitivity to the demands of new funding committees. For New German and then post-New German filmmakers, these problems were progressively magnified as the number and varying

types of funding bodies further increased over time (I will consider the emergence of additional funding bodies further later in the chapter). The struggle to attain funding also provided subject matter for several filmmakers²³.

I will now consider what are generally held by film historians to be other pertinent passages of the 1967 FFG legislation. Most prominent among these for many commentators, such as Elsaesser (1989: 22), was the decision to impose a levy on all cinema tickets sold in West Germany in order to fund the FFA. Many felt that this decision was "heavily slanted in favour of the commercial film industry" (Elsaesser, 1989: 29), given that this was precisely what the mainstream film establishment had been demanding for some time. Being a federal institution, the FFA was essentially accorded the task of improving the economic performance (rather than the cultural profile) of West German films, which in a majority of cases, commentators assumed, would favour makers of entertainment films aimed at a broad audience, rather than less profitable or loss-making art films targeted at a smaller, discreet audience. Not surprisingly, the legislation met with strong criticism from figures associated with the New German Cinema, who argued that it merely consolidated and perpetuated an unsatisfactory film industry status quo in which commercial films of questionable artistic merit predominated, and moreover undermined the position of independent filmmakers by weakening the *Kuratorium*.

It should be evident from my account up to this point that West Germany's first film subsidy bill made a major contribution to cementing the dichotomy of "profitability versus quality" in debates surrounding film funding. It is my contention that the after-effects of this damaging and untenable opposition laid down in 1967 still continued to be felt over two decades later in discussions about the funding of post-New German filmmaking. Two terms, each derived from the twin criteria set out in the first FFG, may be observed to have dominated the agenda where the funding of post-New German Cinema was concerned: firstly, *Wirtschaftlichkeit* (referring to a proposed film's economic or commercial potential, or profitability) and secondly, and more ambiguously, *Qualität* (a film's quality, a loaded term which could, crucially, be interpreted either as its "artistic merit" or its "entertainment value"). The term *Qualität* in particular had been rendered a very contested term both within funding committees and in debates on film funding in the FRG by the beginning of the Kohl era, and a certain degree of semantic confusion and scope for arbitrary decision-making by funding committees inevitably ensued.

A number of important adjustments were made to the FFG in the 1970s. A change of government in 1969, when the SPD / FDP coalition gained an absolute majority in the *Bundestag* for the first time in post-war West Germany and ended the "Grand Coalition" with the CDU of the mid-to-late 1960s, soon brought about a significant amendment to the FFG on

²³ For example, *Der kleine Godard an das Kuratorium junger deutscher Film* (Hellmuth Costard, 1978).

9th August 1971²⁴ by an administration which looked far more sympathetically than its erstwhile coalition partner on those filmmakers who opposed the West German political and film establishment. In this legislation, the already loaded term "Qualität" was applied rather more rigorously to films of "artistic merit", and several legal loopholes such as one which, rather controversially, had inadvertently allowed a number of pornographic films to gain access to public funding, were finally sealed.

The 1971 amendment to the FFG served to benefit the New German Cinema by giving its directors and producers greater access than ever before to public funds, and thereby "showed the Social Democratic government firmly committed to an alternative film culture with state intervention present at virtually all levels." (Elsaesser, 1989: 30). Hundertmark & Saul (1984: 15) describe this legislation as "eine vorsichtige Öffnung in Richtung des qualitätvollen Films". This change of emphasis in government policy has been justifiably credited by most historians of the New German Cinema with the subsequent production boom years of this "movement" during the mid 1970s, when the number of German films in this category as a proportion of total national film production certainly increased, and the New German Cinema accordingly attained significant international recognition and acclaim with this new prominence.

The first of the amendments to the FFG was additionally notable for encouraging investment by West Germany's public television stations ARD and ZDF in feature films. ARD and ZDF subsequently played an increasingly important role in the funding of New German Cinema during the 1970s, and both channels benefited in kind, firstly by receiving the rights to broadcast the films in which they had invested following their theatrical release, and secondly, by commissioning several New German directors for television productions²⁵. Further legislation during this period such as the two *Film / Fernsehabkommen* (1974 and 1980) increased the interdependence of television and cinema²⁶. By the early 1980s, such was public television's investment in domestic cinema that Hundertmark & Saul (1984: 12) were moved to claim that, "Das Fernsehen ist quasi zum größten deutschen Kinofilmproduzenten geworden". Television - as a source of both film funding and employment - was to become even more crucial to post-New German filmmakers, as I shall shortly discuss.

I now turn my attention to regional film funding in the FRG prior to 1988. Film funding by the FRG's *Länder* progressively grew in importance for German film-makers from the moment that "cultural" film funding was placed under the collective jurisdiction of the

²⁴ The first amending bill's full title is *Das Gesetz zur Änderung des Gesetzes über Maßnahmen zur Förderung des deutschen Films* (BGBl. I, S. 1251).

²⁵ Notable examples include Fassbinder (*Berlin Alexanderplatz*, 1980) and Reitz (*Heimat*, 1984).

²⁶ Further amendments to the original film subsidy bill were enacted by the SPD government on 27th February 1974 (*Zweites Gesetz zur Änderung des Gesetzes über Maßnahmen zur Förderung des deutschen Films*, BGBl. I, S. 437) and 11th December 1978 (*Drittes Gesetz zur Änderung des Gesetzes über Maßnahmen zur Förderung des deutschen Films*, BGBl. I, S. 1957). These were intended to consolidate the 1971 amendment, while responding to criticism from New German filmmakers and the broader film industry.

federal states in 1967, as detailed above. By the early 1980s, regional film funding bodies had been established in most of the *Länder* to dispense money for the ostensible "cultural" (as opposed to "economic") development of German cinema.

The first *Land* to establish a film funding body was Berlin, which initially provided an annual investment of DM15m for film production in the city and surrounding region from 1977 onwards (Hundertmark & Saul, 1984: 18). This very much set the tone in years to follow for other *Länder*, which generally heralded public cinema subsidy as a means of job creation and a boost in investment for the local economy, as well as a cultural imperative. Bavaria and Hamburg followed Berlin's lead in 1979, and North Rhine-Westfalia's *Filmbüro* was set up in 1980 (Hundertmark & Saul, 1984: 18-19). In all cases, regional funding of the cinema was understood to be essentially "cultural", complementing the ostensibly "economic" film funding supplied by the state-appointed body. However, this ideology was irrevocably disturbed in 1982 when Hamburg began to dispense "economic" film funding, in the same manner as the federal state, and moreover set a budget for this equal to that of the city's already-established "cultural" counterpart, the *Filmbüro*²⁷. As the 1980s progressed, other *Länder* followed suit. The consequences of these developments for post-New German Cinema will be addressed shortly.

As I have stated previously, the principal focus of this thesis is post-New German Cinema, implying films that were produced in the wake of the so-called New German Cinema in the FRG. However, as the time-frame I have set for this film history is 1988 to 1995, which includes the collapse of the GDR during November and December 1989 and its subsequent incorporation into the FRG with German Reunification on 3rd October 1990, and as this section furthermore seeks to address developments which contributed to the ways in which all post-New German films of this period were funded (of course including those emanating wholly or partly from the new *Bundesländer*), the nature of film funding in the former East Germany must now be considered in greater detail.

The body of films produced during the lifetime of the GDR, and the manner in which they were financed, both occupy a unique location within German cinema as a whole, as Giesenfeld (1993: 6) observes: "Innerhalb der deutschen Filmgeschichte kommt dem DEFA-Film [...] eine Sonderstellung zu: er entstand unter nichtkapitalistischen Bedingungen". All feature films produced in the GDR emanated from the state-owned film production company DEFA ("Deutsche Film Aktiengesellschaft"). DEFA was actually the first film production company to be established in post-war Germany, and was licensed by the occupying Soviet forces on 17th May 1946 (Prinzler, 1993: 535). It became the GDR's single centralised film production company, wholly owned and financed by the state, like every other sector of the economy at this time. The former East Germany's film industry, like all other industries in the

²⁷ Information derived from publicity materials entitled "Hamburg Film Fund" supplied by the FilmFörderung Hamburg GmbH at the 1996 Berlin Film Festival (*Berlinale*).

communist state, was therefore 100% subsidised (Gersch, 1993: 323). Jungnickel (1990: 47) notes that DEFA film production averaged 16 to 18 features per annum, while during DEFA's lifetime, 1946 to 1992, a total of almost 750 feature films were funded, the vast majority of which were produced at the famous Babelsberg film studios in Potsdam near Berlin (Unattributed, 1996b: 3). Small production units or working groups acted as the communist equivalent of capitalist production companies or studios, but were coordinated centrally by the *Ministerium für Kultur* (Ministry for Culture), rather than enjoying any great autonomy.

This perhaps inevitably raises the question as to whether the verb "coordinated" in the previous sentence might be better replaced with "controlled". When evaluating virtually any aspect of the cinema of the GDR, it has become customary that the issue of censorship is raised at an early stage, such is the domination of prevailing historical debates on GDR cinema by this contentious paradigm, as Giesenfeld (1993: 5) notes. I would hold that the issue of censorship (in all of its manifestations, including pre- and post-censorship) accordingly permeates any discussion of film funding in the GDR and the new *Bundesländer* of post-1990.

It is evident that as a state-run institution in a communist country, DEFA was subject to regular monitoring and control by the politburo. Jungnickel (1994: 48) emphasises the extent of state influence even at the pre-production stage of a DEFA feature film, for example:

"Wenn das Studio das Drehbuch abgenommen hatte und danach von der HV-Film (Hauptverwaltung Film des Ministeriums für Kultur) die Freigabe erwirkt hat, können für die geplante Produktion Kosten ausgelöst werden."

The East German state also laid down strict guidelines as to the composition and content of DEFA films, as is evident for example in the following anonymous SED²⁸ pronouncement of October 1948, which is cited by Gersch (1993: 329):

"Der Spielfilm soll getragen sein von einem fortschrittlichen und optimistischen Geist der Menschen neuen Typs, er soll indirekt der politischen und ökonomischen Aufklärung [...] dienen."

Before attaining a theatrical release, a DEFA film had to furthermore meet with the official approval of a so-called "film minister" (Jungnickel, 1990: 56):

"Die staatliche Abnahme findet in Ost-Berlin statt. Bei dieser letzten Hürde hat der 'Filmminister', ein Stellvertreter des Ministeriums für Kultur, das letzte Wort."

²⁸ The SED was the ruling communist party in the GDR.

Clearly, East German films were subjected to state influence that was not merely financial in nature. This influence was subject to a degree of variation, depending on the political climate of the moment, but was always a matter of concern for filmmakers. SED officials frequently issued directives as to the filmic style and textual content deemed ideologically appropriate for the time; in all cases a positive, optimistic presentation of working-class life in the GDR was demanded. Social criticism was generally taboo, although it was sometimes tolerated if it was moderate in nature. Politburo members additionally criticised DEFA films on numerous occasions during the lifetime of the GDR for ostensibly falling short of the required standards they had laid down, or for being artistically inappropriate or politically inopportune, as Gersch (1993) repeatedly shows in his thorough account.

Some of the most widely-discussed DEFA films in contemporary German film studies are in fact those that received outright bans by the SED regime. Most notoriously, a total of twelve films (some of which were only semi-completed) were banned at one sitting of the SED committee dealing with film affairs in 1965. Gersch (1993: 342) describes this draconian measure as "die [...] massivste Zensurmaßnahme der deutschen Filmgeschichte". Several of the banned films were later retrieved from the vaults, and where necessary, reconstructed following the collapse of the GDR in late 1989. A number of previously-banned films, the best-known of which was *Spur der Steine* (Frank Beyer, 1966), went on to receive a theatrical release in the FRG in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

These observations about the censored film text in the GDR do however merit a degree of contextualisation. As I have already mentioned, film funding in the FRG was also inextricably linked with the issue of censorship despite an ostensible prohibition of *Zensur* in the nation's constitution, albeit in a more covert way than in the GDR, since the awarding of grants or loans to filmmakers always required at least partial consent at some stage by state or regional officials which necessarily impacted upon the production of the film text in question. Meanwhile the FBW, which issued so-called quality ratings, openly rewarded films which were deemed to meet with "official" approval (especially in its early years). While control of the film sector by the state was undeniably more stringent in the communist GDR than in the FRG, it may therefore be misleading to overstate the usefulness of the loaded term "censorship" as an explanatory device here.

The role played by film funding in the GDR may be comprehended in further ways, such as that suggested by Giesenfeld (1993: 6) below:

"Abgesehen von seiner Rolle als massenbeeinflussendes Propagandainstrument war der Film eines der Felder des Wettbewerbes mit der Bundesrepublik (ein anderes war der Sport), wo es eine reelle Chance gab, sich als überlegen zu zeigen. Gleichzeitig reihte sich der DEFA-Film aber auch ziemlich bewußt in die europäische Oppositionsbewegung gegen den marktbeherrschenden Hollywood-Film ein, indem er deren Konzept des Autorenfilms (in die Variante der 'Arbeitsgruppe') übernahm."

As Giesenfeld demonstrates, it is utterly misleading to caricature GDR cinema simply as an ongoing struggle between DEFA filmmakers and censorious state officials. Rather, the desire of filmmakers and politicians alike to use film as an instrument for articulating opposition to capitalist West Germany and the perceived imperialism of Hollywood cinema, should not be forgotten.

This opposition to the capitalist West by filmmakers was by no means absolute, however, as Giesenfeld's comments indicate. In fact, a certain empathy developed with fellow West German and European filmmakers in the face of increasing domination of the European box office by Hollywood films. This was most evident in a prevailing conception of film authorship quite similar to that of the New German Cinema, which evolved in parallel with the West German model. DEFA filmmakers' frequent preference for dividing themselves into so-called working groups (*Arbeitsgruppen*) of like-minded directors (in effect, production companies in all but name within the GDR's ostensibly monolithic state-run film industry) invites a number of interesting comparisons with the West German *Autorenkino* for example. A similar collective identity was manifest in a number of collaborative ventures of the New German Cinema such as the collective production and distribution company *Der Verlag der Autoren*²⁹, which was comprised of a number of leading directors³⁰, and in a series of jointly-authored films such as *Deutschland im Herbst* (1978), *Der Kandidat* (1980) and *Krieg und Frieden* (1982).

Certain interesting parallels existed between the FRG's New German Cinema and the East German DEFA in terms of the public funding they received. In each case, the government (or regional government) provided a substantial injection of funds for an often oppositional cinema - namely, a grouping of filmmakers broadly opposed in a general political sense to prevailing systemic practices, for the former, popular West German genre cinema of the 1950s, the FRG's entertainment film establishment, and for some, the FRG's political status quo; and for the latter, Western (German) capitalism and Hollywood cinema.

I will now examine the ways in which the funding of both DEFA and the New German Cinema became increasingly compromised during the late 1980s and early 1990s, and how post-New German film funding evolved.

Post-New German Film Funding

"By the end of the decade [the 1980s] the political changes in Germany were re-configuring the terrain for cinema culture. Unification suddenly introduced new competitors (the large pool of talented filmmakers from East Germany seeking state and television funding), an expanded television broadcasting system (new stations in

²⁹ The *Filmverlag der Autoren*, ostensibly modelled on the literary publishing collective *Verlag der Autoren*, was established on 18th April 1971 (Prinzler, 1993: 546).

³⁰ Founding members included Hans W. Geissendörfer, Peter Lilienthal, Hark Bohm and Wim Wenders.

the East), and a different public sphere. At the same time the nineties political agenda for European integration suggests that traditional national cinemas may be a thing of the past. The DEFA studios were bought out by a French multinational with the intent of producing European film and television programming, while the ongoing negotiations on international free trade relations (GATT) pit the American information and entertainment industries against a persistent but splintered European notion of cultural autonomy."

Silberman (1995: 232)

Jan Dawson (1980) once memorably characterised the New German Cinema as being founded on "A Labyrinth of Subsidies", and I would maintain that this description applies equally, if not more so, to the funding of post-New German Cinema, not least because of an overall increase in available subsidies, legislative changes made to regional and federal film subsidy, a proliferation of new funding bodies in the 1980s and 1990s, and the expansion of the FRG's territories with the addition of the new *Bundesländer* in 1990. Hentschel (1992: 11) employs a jungle metaphor³¹ to portray film funding in the FRG in the 1990s.

"Filmförderung wird in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland auf vielen Ebenen und mit unterschiedlichen Intentionen betrieben. Dies mag auf den ersten Blick verunsichernd erscheinen. Manche haben dies beklagt und von einem 'Dschungel' gesprochen, der sich kaum durchdringen lasse. Einige behaupten gar, die Kreativität der Filmschaffenden leide unter dieser Vielfalt. Sicherlich ist richtig, daß in den letzten Jahren nicht nur das finanzielle Volumen der Fördermittel ganz erheblich gestiegen ist, sondern auch überall im Lande sich neue Fördertöpfe mit eigenen Richtlinien und eigenen Vergabegremien aufgetan haben."

Further contributory factors to the undoubted complexity of post-New German film funding include shifts in ideologies underpinning film funding and funding bodies in the FRG; institutional and structural changes made to existing federal and regional film funding schemes in Germany during the 1988 to 1995 period; in connection with this, the emergence of new types of funding bodies, often in the form of joint public - private ventures in these years; the evolving role of television as a partner in the process of funding post-New German Cinema; and the increasingly important role played by European Union subsidies and other trans-national private funding initiatives in German film-making in the 1980s and 1990s. I will attempt to evaluate the significance of each of these many developments in the sections that follow.

I will now consider the widely-perceived sense of crisis regarding the system of funding for the New German Cinema since the 1980s, which is well expressed in the following quotations:-

"Auch wenn es weiter Autorenfilme gibt und geben muß, das Modell des Autorenfilms bzw. das Modell des neuen deutschen Films ist angesichts der Qualität der gegenwärtig hergestellten deutschen Filme und aufgrund

³¹ This particular metaphor is often invoked with regard to film funding in the FRG, e.g. by Hundertmark & Saul (1984: 10).

der sich rapide verändernden Rahmenbedingungen nicht sonderlich attraktiv und kaum ein Modell für die Entwicklung der neunziger Jahre."

Berg & Hickethier (1994: 8)

"Eine Stimmung geht offenbar zu Ende. Es ist der Trend zur Subventionskultur, zur Gremien- und Förderungskunst, die einen Film hervorbrachte, der stolz darauf war, daß er von allein nicht laufen konnte."

Karasek (1995: 7)

Between the mid 1960s and the early-to-mid 1980s - the generally-agreed lifetime of the New German Cinema - it gradually became clear that the now increasingly multi-layered system of subsidies for West German films was consistently failing to deliver economically viable productions to the domestic theatrical marketplace, notwithstanding the often impressive performance of New German films at international festivals and awards ceremonies in the late 1970s and early 1980s. So-called New German films rarely succeeded in breaking even commercially, let alone in yielding a profit in their own country, and in the vast majority of cases they owed their existence solely to the (for some) overly generous film subsidy system; as Elsaesser (1989: 36) strikingly puts it:

"Many of the films one now thinks of as the lasting achievements of the New German Cinema never made the Top 50 in their own country. "

Elsaesser also cites the critic Grüber (1981), who paints a bleak portrait of the New German Cinema's box office performance as a whole (1989: 34):

"Of the approximately 300 productions that could be counted as 'New German Cinema' about six were commercially successful in German cinemas and just about broke even: *Effi Briest* by Fassbinder, *Kaspar Hauser* by Herzog, *Katharina Blum* by Schlöndorff, *The Baker's Bread* by Erwin Keusch, *The Marriage of Maria Braun* by Fassbinder, *The Tin Drum* by Schlöndorff."

It is evident that the perpetual financial losses incurred by the overwhelming majority of New German films had steadily eroded the credibility of the system of public funding for the cinema in West Germany by the early 1980s, regardless of the occasional international plaudits for some of its productions. In its original form, the FFG had stipulated that public film funding was to take the form of repayable loans; it was anticipated that a film's economic profits could be re-invested and contribute to the growth of the film industry. However, experience had proved that loans to New German filmmakers could rarely if ever be repaid as these films seldom gained even a foothold in the FRG's mainstream film theatrical marketplace. New German films were in fact generally exhibited only in art cinemas (*Programmkinos*) to relatively small audiences. Put simply, as Elsaesser (1989: 319) says, "in all the years and despite hundreds of films the German cinema still lacked an adequate industrial and technical infrastructure". In the light of all this, West Germany's film subsidy system not surprisingly became subject to intense scrutiny with the return to power of the

Christian Democrats on 1st October 1982 when the SPD's main coalition partner in government, the FDP, chose to switch allegiances.

As I demonstrate in Chapters Three and Four, historians of the New German Cinema have most frequently attributed its ostensible demise to the death of Rainer Werner Fassbinder and the return to power of the conservative CDU / CSU, both events occurring in the same calendar year, 1982. The so-called "SPD-Staatsfilm", as some labelled the films of the *Autorenkino* on account of the support they received from the sympathetic SPD regime of the 1970s³², was always likely to meet with a degree of hostility from a conservative-led government. In histories of the New German Cinema, it is generally held that the new conservative-liberal³³ coalition government, in adherence with the prevailing free market ideology of the 1980s, rapidly undertook a programme of systematic media deregulation³⁴ during these years. It is furthermore generally argued that a direct consequence of the Christian Democrats' more market-led media policy was a gradual undermining of the New German Film's previously rather privileged position within the national and international art cinema market, since this was almost wholly based on market-defying public subsidy.

I will now attempt to evaluate the validity of these claims by examining what I regard as key infrastructural developments, namely the development of different models for post-New German film funding. I will consider the changes to existing legislation and the founding of new funding bodies in the 1980s and 1990s, and seek to establish whether or not the perceived "demise" of New German Cinema may in fact be significantly attributed to developments such as these.

Certain pieces of legislation are generally held to be of particular importance by commentators on the post-New German film industry. Foremost among these are further amendments made to the 1967 *Filmförderungsgesetz* (FFG) by the conservative-liberal administration of the 1980s and 1990s. The Kohl government's first parliamentary attempt to alter West Germany's film subsidy laws took the form of the *Erstes Gesetz zur Änderung des Filmförderungsgesetzes*, which came into effect on 18th November 1986. Knight (1996: 424-5) claims that in this and subsequent film-related legislation of the Kohl administration, "film policy was revised to clearly favour commercial projects over any form of artistic experimentation". In most histories of New German film funding, the decision of Interior Minister Zimmermann to revoke the funding award made to the Bavarian avant-garde director Herbert Achternbusch for his film *Das Gespenst* in 1983 on account of its alleged

³² Elsaesser (1989: 317) raises the question as to whether or not the New German Cinema was "An Invention of the Social-Liberal Coalition" (referring to the SPD / FDP government).

³³ By this I refer to the CDU / CSU / FDP coalition.

³⁴ The opening up of the FRG's television market to private companies, which brought about the emergence of populist satellite television stations such as SAT1 and RTL, and thereby led to increased competition, is often held up as an example here.

blasphemous content is also held to be a very significant event³⁵ and an indication of some governmental antipathy towards non-commercial and oppositional cinema, as I will show in Chapter Three.

The most recent *Filmförderungsgesetz* (Film Subsidy Law), or to give it its proper title, the *Zweites Gesetz zur Änderung des Filmförderungsgesetzes* (Second Law amending the Film Subsidy Law) was enacted by the *Bundestag* on 21st December 1992, and came into effect on 25th January 1993; its intended duration was for six calendar years, expiring on 31st December 1998³⁶.

The ostensible *raison d'être* for this further revision of the FFG by the Kohl government was a necessary updating to incorporate the five new *Bundesländer* into the recently expanded FRG's film subsidy system. However, other important new measures are also contained in the bill; Prinzler (1993: 558) describes a further central aim of the legislation as being "mit modifizierten Maßnahmen die Wirtschaftlichkeit des deutschen Films zu stärken".

Financial prudence and consideration of a proposed film's potential economic performance are certainly key concerns of the legislation. For example, *Paragraph 33 (2)*³⁷ requires the submission of a script, proposed cast list, financing plan, distribution contract and concrete proposals for the film's distribution in the FRG, in order that an award may even be considered by the FFA. This represents a determined effort on the part of the legislators to minimise the possibility of a film being made which subsequently fails to gain a general release, as was so often the case with New German productions, the majority of which were shown only in *Programmkinos* to tiny audiences, and in some cases, on a single occasion on the big screen (at one time the bare minimum requirement to secure funding).

The formula "die Qualität und Wirtschaftlichkeit des deutschen Films zu verbessern" also appears on numerous occasions throughout the document, for example in *Paragraphe 32 (1)*, *33 (3)*, and *47 (1)*. The repetition of this aspiration for federal film subsidy, which superficially seems intended to articulate a desire to provide for the funding of artistically noteworthy as well as economically profitable films, also greatly reduces the prospect of a film proposal which is not likely to make a working profit from receiving funding at all.

Film subsidy in the new *Bundesländer* was subject to considerable change after Reunification. As in West Germany, the frequent failure of GDR-made films to attract domestic audiences was a matter of considerable concern both for the filmmaking community and for state representatives during the 1970s and 1980s. However, discussions were couched

³⁵ For Berghoff (1991), this event gave rise to an entire research project on the legality of film funding in Germany.

³⁶ The complete text of this bill is available at this internet site - <http://www.ffa.de/FFG/>.

³⁷ See <http://www.ffa.de/FFG/>.

in rather different terms in East and West Germany, where quite different politico-cultural agendas prevailed. Instead of regarding the financial losses caused by the poor box office performance of publicly-subsidised films as a mark of serious economic failure, as was increasingly the case in the West, debates on the East German public's general disinterest in the output of its national film industry were conceived somewhat differently by the film industry and state, as Giesenfeld (1993: 6-7) explains:

"[...] Dabei haben gewiß auch Zuschauerzahlen eine Rolle gespielt. Nur wurde das Fernbleiben der Kinobesucher nicht als kommerzieller Verlust gewertet, dem mit allen möglichen Mitteln entgegengearbeitet werden mußte, sondern als Abbruch der Kommunikation, als Scheitern auf der künstlerischen Ebene - und auf ihr wurden die Gegenmaßnahmen diskutiert."

The entire dynamic of the communist state's perceived relationship with its citizens, upon which the ideology of film as "communication" enounced above (and by extension the *raison d'être* for film funding by the state) was wholly dependent, was thrown into crisis in November 1989 when the GDR collapsed. From this point on, market forces dictated film production in East as well as West.

Following the demise of the GDR in Autumn 1989, and the subsequent integration of all its former territories into the FRG on 3rd October 1990, the Bonn government swiftly set about privatising all of the former East Germany's nationalised industries in the early 1990s, including its entire film industry, which consisted of the DEFA production company and Babelsberg studios. The institution set up to carry out this task was the *Treuhandanstalt*. On 25th August 1992, the *Treuhandanstalt* sold the Babelsberg studios to the French company CIP (*Compagnie Immobilière Phénix*), a subsidiary of the conglomerate CGE (*Compagnie Générale des Eaux*) for DM130m. CIP pledged to invest DM410m in the studios by the year 2000, and re-established the studios under the name "Studio Babelsberg GmbH" (Prinzler, 1993: 558) under the management of West German celebrity director Volker Schlöndorff.

At the time of writing I regret that it is still rather too soon to adequately assess subsequent developments at Babelsberg and in the former GDR. It is possible to assert that funding of East German cinema by the FFA swiftly replaced that by the old communist regime in the early 1990s. Meanwhile, the ongoing establishment of regional film bodies in line with the old *Bundesländer* (discussed below) completed the transformation of Eastern German film funding as a small part of the broader project of converting a state economy into a capitalist market economy as the 1990s progressed.

I now turn my attention to the most significant developments in regional film funding in the old *Bundesländer*, that is, the territories of the former West Germany. As was the case for their New German counterparts of the 1970s and 1980s, post-New German film producers were able to apply for funding from a wide variety of public sources, both federal and regional, and any funds they were awarded could take the form of grants or loans; up to 100%

of a film's budget could in fact be met by these means in Kohl-era Germany (Hentschel, 1992: 23).

Between 1988 and 1995, considerable reconfigurations in institutional film funding took place within the *Länder* of the FRG. New regional funding bodies continued to be launched, existing ones adjusted their working practices and remits in response to the fluctuating demands of regional politicians, the film market and their clients, and relationships between these *Länder*-appointed public bodies, private capital and other media institutions became progressively more entwined. As a consequence of these simultaneous developments at many different levels, it would be misleading to attempt to construct a general statement regarding a single dominant model for regional film funding during this period; it would be more accurate to state that a range of competing models were in evidence during this time, from which any sort of consensus as to the most appropriate form of regional film funding was yet to emerge. Instead of elaborating a misleading unified model of regional film funding for 1988 to 1995, I shall therefore focus on a series of case studies of different film funding bodies which operated in the FRG during this time in order to highlight some ongoing developments.

My first case study is the Filmstiftung Nordrhein-Westfalen GmbH³⁸ (hereafter FNW), which was established on 27th February 1991, forming what Prinzler (1993: 557) terms the "finanzkräftigste Landesfilmförderung in der Bundesrepublik". The regional government of North Rhine-Westphalia and the public television WDR (the latter based in Cologne) were the original partners³⁹ in this private limited-liability company, as its chief executive Dieter Kosslick explains in an interview with Holloway (1994: 5):-

"The Filmstiftung functions as a private company (..) Its two partners are the Landesregierung Nordrhein-Westfalen (State Government of Northrhine-Westphalia) and Westdeutscher Rundfunk (WDR Cologne, linked to the ARD / First German Television network). Both have a 50% share. For this reason, the Filmstiftung draws upon different sources and sources of funding. There's the so-called "Landesmittel" (state financing); funds donated by the Landesregierung (state government) (..) If the Filmstiftung dispenses funds out of the WDR coffer, however, then WDR receives the rights for 6 years with a further option for the rights in German-language territories. Up to now, this manner of funding through variable financing means is found only in the case of the Filmstiftung."

The FNW⁴⁰ set out to offer funding at all stages of the creation of a feature film, from the initial script to post-production and the distribution and exhibition of the finished product.

³⁸ Information derived from publicity materials supplied by the Filmstiftung Nordrhein-Westfalen GmbH at the 1996 *Berlinale*. The FNW's webpage may be found at this internet address: <http://www.filmstiftung.de>.

³⁹ In 1997 three further television channels became co-partners in the Filmstiftung Nordrhein-Westfalen GmbH : the public channel ZDF, and the private channels Pro Sieben and SAT1.

⁴⁰ All references to FNW documentation in the remainder of this section are taken from its 1996 publicity materials and webpage (mentioned above).

Between 1992 and 1994 the FNW awarded grants amounting to DM120m to film producers, scriptwriters, distributors and film theatre owners. The targeting of subsidies was extremely diverse: money was also made available for the renovation of local film theatres, and even the production of radio plays, for example. The allocation of all funding awards was however notionally dependent on at least some of the subsidy being re-invested in the local economy of North-Rhine Westfalia. The principal stated aim of the institution was to create employment in the region through making good films. However, this is not altogether borne out by their record of film funding in the 1990s - this body appears to have devoted considerable resources to international coproductions, as well as locally-made works. Films prominently cited within the FNW's 1995/6 publicity materials include only one ostensibly "German" feature film: Der Unhold (Volker Schlöndorff, 1995); the FNW also dispensed funds during this period to films such as Dead Man (Jim Jarmusch, 1995) and Land and Freedom (Ken Loach, 1995).

One particularly interesting aspect of the FNW's publicity is its claim to combine "wirtschaftliche und kulturelle Zielsetzungen" for the first time by a funding body in the FRG, and its boast that "Mittlerweile sind fast alle regionalen Filmförderer nach dem gleichen Prinzip organisiert". An acknowledgement by a regional funding body that both art and entertainment films had a role to play in the German film market was clearly novel and welcome, as my previous discussion of regional film funding practices should demonstrate. However the implication that the FNW pioneered such a way of thinking as that outlined above is questionable, given that the deep-set divisions within German filmmaking between "Kultur" and "Wirtschaft", between the *Autoren* and the *Altbranche*, or between art and entertainment, and the industry's concomitant failure to find any sort of middle ground, had for some time been regarded by many commentators as a root cause of the industry's problems.

My second case study is the Filmboard Berlin-Brandenburg GmbH (hereafter FBB), which was founded in the summer of 1994, and was unique in being the first film subsidy board to represent two separate German *Länder*: Berlin and Brandenburg. It also represented probably the most commercially-oriented regional film subsidy board to have ever emerged in the FRG at the time when it was founded. The manner in which it was initially structured partly indicated a will to overcome many of the media criticisms commonly levelled at film funding in the FRG, such as those which will be discussed in Chapters Three and Four (principally, the frequent economic losses incurred by West German films, and the alleged inefficiency of film funding committees).

First of all, the FBB did away with decision by committee: it rather broke the mould in regional (and for that matter federal) film funding in the FRG by leaving all funding decisions to the sole discretion of a single person, the managing director of the Filmboard, as

opposed to a committee or series of committees. Secondly, great emphasis was placed by the FBB on so-called "Professionalisierung"⁴¹ ("professionalisation"), which in practice meant that the managing director needed to be firmly convinced of a film's ability to compete in the theatrical marketplace in order to make a funding award. All the following citations are taken from the FBB webpage (<http://www.filmboard.de>):-

"Die Filmboard GmbH fördert in der Regel nur Filmproduktionen, wenn dafür ein Verleihvertrag vorliegt, weil die Filmboard will, daß die geförderten Filme tatsächlich in die Kinos kommen. [...]

Damit ein Projekt von uns gefördert wird, muß klar sein, daß es für dieses Projekt ein Publikum, eine Zielgruppe gibt. Auf der anderen Seite muß diese Zielgruppe aber auch wissen, daß die Filme, die für sie gemacht werden, existieren und in den Kinos laufen."

The FBB additionally emphasises its "Erfolgsorientierung" (success orientation) in its publicity material on its website:-

"Die Filmboard Berlin-Brandenburg GmbH fördert erfolgsversprechende Projekte: anspruchsvolle, künstlerische Spielfilme und Dokumentarfilme genauso wie populäre Unterhaltung. Die Projekte müssen ihr bestimmtes Publikum finden. Sie müssen für einen bestimmten Markt gedacht sein."

In an interview with Holloway & Holloway (1995: 5-6), the FBB's managing director Klaus Keil states the institution's priorities in unambiguous terms: "we prefer to subsidize fewer films with a bit more funding". He continues,

"it's a fact that for us at the Filmboard the decisive point is whether the films, once produced, can then actually be seen, can really reach a public. By that I mean, every film should be made for a specific public, conceived for a specific market. And it should prove successful in this marketplace.

Success means an audience. Success means box-office. Success means Golden and Silver Bears, Lions, Palms. Success means both. And: every film, every project, should be so conceived that in theory it can at least recoup its production costs. Thus: success doesn't mean pure economic gain, but one shouldn't ignore the possibility of economic gain. For that matter, filmmaking is just too costly and too precious a medium. In Germany this way of thinking has been ignored or played down for too long a time. To change the status quo, to make German cinema successful again, this is why we are here."

Keil singles out Chantal Akerman's A Couch in New York as "a fine example of linking commercial prospects with artistic ambitions", while Stille Nacht (directed by Dani Levy), Geh doch rüber (Alexander Ries) and Nur über meine Leiche (Rainer Matsutani) are praised as "artistically ambitious films [which] are also commercially oriented and geared to an audience. In short they represent a new identity in German cinema" (Holloway & Holloway, 1995: 6).

⁴¹ This term is repeatedly emphasised on the FBB's webpage.

The practice of partially funding cinema films by means of television station finance (both public and private), whereby the television channels in question acquire some or all of the broadcasting rights for these productions, is long-established in Germany. During the 1970s and 1980s, the publicly funded terrestrial television stations ARD and ZDF also provided employment for several directors associated with the New German Cinema. Indeed, the importance of television money to the New German Cinema was considerable; some of the best-known works of the *Autorenkino* - notably, Fassbinder's Berlin Alexanderplatz (1979-1980) and Reitz's Heimat (1984) - are in fact television series. This association of film directors and television broadcasters continued into the late 1980s and early 1990s. ARD instituted a regular slot for productions by new filmmakers entitled *Wilde Herzen*, while German directors also worked extensively for the more recently established satellite broadcasters SAT-1 and RTL, who broadcast a large number of made-for-television films, often featuring actors and actresses who also worked in German cinema.

The financial entwining of German cinema and television impacted considerably on post-New German filmmaking. Almost every film which reached FRG cinemas between 1988 and 1995 had at least some financial involvement by a television broadcaster. In the period 1988 to 1995 there was also a noticeable trend of German cinema feature films increasingly featuring popular domestic television stars such as Götz George, Mario Adorf, Thomas Gottschalk and Billie Zöckler, and comedians who had achieved much of their fame through television such as Otto Waalkes, Lorient, Didi Hallervorden, Gerhard Polt and Helge Schneider. The role played by television funding in the making of these films, and the recognition factor these stars offered domestic audiences were fundamental developments in post-New German Cinema.

A plethora of significant European film committees, programmes and funding bodies were established in the 1980s and early 1990s. I shall briefly outline when each was founded, and give details as to its ostensible role.

Between 1983 and 1985 the body EURIMAGES was set up. This was a French initiative intended to foster European coproductions by offering free conditionally repayable loans, as well as subsidies for film distribution (Kosslick, 1994: 54-5). In 1986, the MEDIA Programme was established to fund the audiovisual industries in Europe through a variety of targeted projects such as training programmes, marketing promotions and subsidies for the distribution, exhibition and archiving of European films (Kosslick, 1994: 51-3). This initiative also sought to bring European funding bodies under one roof and led to the development of a European production fund to assist films from a particular European country to be shown in others. In 1988 to 1989 the EFDO (European Film Distribution Office) was founded (Kosslick, 1994: 53-4). This institution invests in the distribution and exhibition of films which must be shown in at least three European countries.

Further European film funding bodies were established between 1988 and 1995. The European Script Fund, which was based in London, provided up to DM80,000 for a single film, on the condition that a producer would put up the same amount of finance for the project (Kosslick, 1994: 44), while EURO AIM was a similar body intended for smaller-scale projects (Kosslick, 1994: 46).

Other trans-European film funding initiatives took place outside the jurisdiction of the EU. In 1988, the then Berlin Kultursenator Volker Hassemer established the European Film Prize, which was christened FELIX. This was rather ambitiously intended to provide a European rival for the American Oscars, but also granted a number of financial awards to European films. The first ceremony took place on 26th November of the same year (Prinzler, 1993: 556). Excerpts of the annual awards ceremony were shown on the public television channel ZDF and the French-German satellite "cultural channel" ARTE, as well as in other European countries (Wetzel, 1993a: 4).

The granting of financial awards or prizes to films at some point following their release (effectively retrospective film funding) generally constitutes the most visible form of film funding in the FRG, as the requisite prize-giving ceremony frequently generates extensive media coverage. This practice is well-established in the FRG, where the first federal film prize was awarded on 6th June 1951 (Prinzler, 1993: 537). For post-New German film-makers, film prizes, like all other film subsidies, were available from a greater number of sources than ever before in the lifetime of the FRG. Most funding bodies, whether federal or regional, and the majority of the FRG's film festivals offered prizes during this period.

An analysis of which films received prizes at which specific historical moments between 1988 and 1995 should provide a reliable indicator as to the particular type of films which were meeting with official approval at these specific junctures. It is also productive to correlate the list of award winners between 1988 and 1995 below with the films which performed strongly at the German box office in their year of theatrical release which I discussed in Part One of this chapter. By employing these two strategies I will attempt to establish if a particular trend in funding preferences may be discerned for this period.

The most prestigious prize for German films to be awarded in the FRG is the *Filmband in Gold*. The winners of this prize from 1989 to 1995 were as follows:-

<u>Year</u>	<u><i>Filmband in Gold</i></u>	<u>Director</u>	
1989	Yasemin	Hark Bohm	
1990	Letzte Ausfahrt Brooklyn	Uli Edel	
1991	Malina	Werner Schroeter	
1992	Schtonk!	Helmut Dietl	
1993	Kleine Haie	Sönke Wortmann	}
	Der olympische Sommer	Gordian Maugg	} <i>Filmband in Silber</i>

	Wir können auch anders	Detlev Buck	}
1994	Kaspar Hauser	Peter Sehr	
1995	Der bewegte Mann	Sönke Wortmann	

In 1993, no one film was awarded the *Filmband in Gold*, instead three were awarded the *Filmband in Silber*. It should be noted that the decision not to award the *Filmband in Gold* at all in 1993 was regarded by many journalists as an unmistakable admission by the awards panel of a dearth of top quality post-New German films that year.

It is striking that none of the films listed above succeeded in reaching the FRG's annual Top Ten, with the single exception of Der bewegte Mann, which managed this feat twice. The award of the *Filmband in Gold* to Der bewegte Mann in 1995, following the film's large box office revenues, was regarded by some commentators as confirmation that economically successful film-making was increasingly meeting with official favour, at the expense of "culturally significant" cinema⁴². These comments might appear to be justified if one takes into account that Der bewegte Mann was the only post-New German feature film to reach the annual Top Ten in its domestic market in its respective year of release between 1988 and 1995 and be awarded the *Filmband in Gold*. However, it might conversely be argued that the film's impressive box office performance and the prestigious award it received were coincidental, and one-off occurrences; whether this event could be construed to mark a new trend would furthermore depend on further analysis of film awards made in subsequent years. Regarding the award to Der bewegte Mann as a uniquely symbolic event is also rather misleading, since it is not the only comedy by a young director to appear on the list above - another Wortmann film, Kleine Haie, and Detlev's Buck's Wir können auch anders had for example received the lesser joint award of the *Filmband in Silber* two years previously. Another film comedy, Helmut Dietl's Schtonk!, had also won the *Filmband in Gold* in 1992. Nevertheless, a new openness to popular films on the part of the awards panel was implicit in their choice of film receiving these awards in the early 1990s. It is undeniable that fewer and fewer *Autorenfilme* were receiving film awards in this period - of the list above, only Malina and Der olympische Sommer could be regarded as belonging to this tradition.

I would like to conclude this chapter by citing a telling observation from the New German Cinema director Wim Wenders, quoted in Berg (1993: 45-46)

"Der Fassbinder, in den neunziger Jahren wäre der wahnsinnig geworden, denn er hätte ja immer drei Jahre gebraucht, um einen Film zu finanzieren. Damals konnte er jedes Jahr vier oder fünf machen."

Sweeping infrastructural changes occurred at virtually all levels in post-New German Cinema between 1988 and 1995. Major political changes (not only German Reunification, but also the

⁴² One magazine article in this category is discussed at greater length in Chapter Three: Karasek (1995).

ongoing renegotiations of relationships between the *Länder*, federal government and Europe), ideological conflicts (monetarism versus social democracy, public versus private finance), and technological developments (new developments in the symbiotic relationship between television and film) certainly contributed to the proliferation of funding bodies within Germany and across Europe, and the attendant competing models of film financing with which post-New German filmmakers were forced to wrestle. As Wenders states above, the prolific auteur Fassbinder would probably have despaired under such demanding conditions for German film producers.

Two conflicting paradigms lay at the heart of debates about post-New German film funding, and the ensuing infrastructural developments which occurred during this time. Firstly, notions of the enduring importance of a distinctive national film culture as a justification for film funding *per se*, or what Schneider (1991: 22) has described as "die Überzeugung [...], daß es einen deutschen Film geben müsse, koste es auch mehr als es bringt" continued to hold sway on the whole. However, a second incompatible notion derived from monetarist economics also began to generate considerable momentum in the Kohl era: the enshrining of economic viability and accountability where public spending is concerned as arguments for rationalising film funding (i.e. lending far greater weight than before to the likely economic profit a film could deliver) or even abolishing film funding altogether (in the case of those who felt that film production should be able to survive in a free market to justify its existence) - although the voices of the latter were as yet few in number in the FRG, if not elsewhere in Europe (notably the Thatcher and Major governments in the UK).

I would argue that post-New German Cinema undeniably witnessed a greater emphasis being placed on a proposed film's commercial viability by national and regional film funding committees between 1988 and 1995, although funds for art films were certainly still available, despite the protestations of some of the *Autoren*. It has been argued by many commentators that this development, what might be described in shorthand terms as a shift to the commercial, has markedly changed the profile of German national cinema. This hypothesis will be considered in Chapters Three and Four.

CHAPTER THREE

IDENTIFYING POST-NEW GERMAN CINEMA

Introduction

In this chapter, I build on Chapter Two's industrial / economic analysis of what I term "post-New German Cinema" by considering this concept in terms of its construction by and reception within different discourses.

When film historians fabricate historical narratives about the cinema (to put it in Whitean terms), it is very often the case that they overly subordinate the primary data which they have gathered and collated, and upon which they necessarily depend (for example, statistical, financial, and technical information, film texts, reviews from film magazines, journal articles by other critics, existing film histories), to their own subjective reactions to this data (their opinions of particular films or statistics, of others' film histories or writings and so forth), to distinctive or overlapping ideologies and methodologies which drive or shape their narratives (such as a Marxist base - superstructure model of the industry, or an auteurist conception of film-making) and, perhaps most of all, to their particular narrational skills in manipulating this data. During the course of this process, the primary data inevitably becomes submerged beneath the powerfully narrated "story", as White would describe it. This key process, if it is not problematised by the (film) historian, can have the negative effect of bolstering the (film) historian's position of authority over his or her research and readership.

In this chapter, I will seek to deconstruct the "stories" about post-New German Cinema that film historians and other figures have "told" - this approach also sits firmly within the branch of Film Studies known as reception studies. Indeed, in this discussion of my sources, my methodology is influenced by (though by no means a facsimile of) that employed by film historians such as Janet Staiger, who have undertaken extensive critical historical research on the role and nature of specific published discourses about specific cinemas for specific readerships at specific historical moments (this was also discussed in Chapter One).

German Cinema viewed from outside

Within discourses about film, any discussion of post-New German Cinema is of necessity not only shaped by debates about New German Cinema, but also by controversies about German cinema, and the relationship of German cinema to cinema in general. Within debates about global cinema, the category of "German cinema" carries with it a distinctive set of associations and assumptions for different discourse groups. To illustrate this I cite Thomas Elsaesser's introduction to a collection on early German cinema (1996: 7), in which he raises the important question

"What is German Cinema? One immediately thinks of certain labels and names that mingle notoriety with fame: Expressionism and THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI, Ufa and METROPOLIS, Marlene Dietrich and Leni

Riefenstahl, film emigration and *film noir*, Joseph Goebbels and JUD SÜSS, THE MARRIAGE OF MARIA BRAUN and *New German Cinema*. Taken together, such names stand for very contradictory values and entities; CALIGARI may stand for 'film and the visual arts'; Ufa for nationalist hubris and Alfred Hugenberg or for the failure of Europe to challenge Hollywood in the twenties, while Fassbinder, Herzog and Wenders (like Pabst, Murnau and Lang before them) stand for the German film artist and film *auteur* par excellence."

The institutions, figures, events, movements, texts and concepts that Elsaesser chooses to highlight here are fairly representative of those to have been foregrounded in the long tradition of Anglo-American scholarship which has enquired about the nature of German cinema from the perspective of the outsider to this field of cultural production (although Elsaesser's role in these debates is ambivalent as he is himself a German emigré). My own work on German cinema, undertaken by a British academic, is clearly situated within this historical critical trajectory, and all the institutions, figures, events, movements, texts and concepts which Elsaesser mentions or alludes to above form part of the backdrop of research to which I must respond, whether explicitly or implicitly, in whole or in part, in this chapter and thesis.

The film archivist and historian Jan-Christopher Horak has observed that the dominant mode of German film historiography is predominantly a product of Anglo-American academia¹. For a considerable time, he has argued, the only writers on film from Germany to achieve broad circulation of their ideas were two emigrés: Siegfried Kracauer (*From Caligari to Hitler*) and Lotte Eisner (*The Haunted Screen*)². Horak isolated a further point of divergence between Anglo-American and German perspectives on German cinema: in Germany, the study of film has traditionally been the preserve of film museums and film journalism, while in Britain and the United States, German film historiography is very much a project for academia.

The category of "German cinema" has consequently developed in contrasting ways and in rather different research milieus within and outside Germany, and it is ultimately the work of Anglo-American academics that has tended to set the agenda for global discussions about German cinema. The contrast in the study of German films between Germany and Britain / America is nevertheless such that I have taken the decision to analyse debates about post-New German Cinema in the respective geographical regions separately below.

At this point, I would like to propose that one key paradigm in Anglo-American research has been particularly central in shaping broader debates about German cinema. In his much-cited *New German Cinema: A History* (1989), Thomas Elsaesser proposes that a clash

¹ Horak made these comments at a panel discussion held at London's Goethe Institute on 3rd October 1996 entitled "How do we see German cinema?". The other panellists present were the film critics Thomas Elsaesser and Erica Carter.

² Here it is notable that Elsaesser - also on the panel that evening - is a further, contemporary example of a German emigré to have achieved particular prominence in discourses about German cinema.

between culture and commerce is a defining issue at the heart of German national cinema. In discourses about German cinema, I would hold that authored cinema ("high culture") has been elevated above popular or commercial filmmaking ("entertainment films" or "low culture"), especially by Anglo-American writers on film³, but also by German writers influenced by the argumentation found within discourses such as the Frankfurt School. The notion of the "authored film" has been the centrepiece of Anglo-American, and therefore (given its hegemonic position) global conceptualisations of German cinema. For example, at the 1996 Goethe Institute panel discussion mentioned previously, Elsaesser contended that German cinematic history is punctuated by the emergence of around three significant auteurs in each of its decades. The work of many early Anglo-American writers on film celebrates what they regard as "the art of the film in Germany", to quote Manvell and Fraenkel (1971: 128), and it is a Romantic conception of the author as supreme creative agent which has provided ideological underpinning for such notions of German film "art".

Since I have rejected auteurist conceptions of cinema insofar as they purport to furnish a totalising Theory of film, my research project necessarily attempts to go rather against the grain of much Anglo-American work on German cinema from the past. In recent years however other writers, especially German emigrés such as Elsaesser (1989) and Kaes (1989b) who are strongly influenced by poststructuralist thought, have also departed from or sought to problematise any use of an auteurist methodology when constructing histories of German cinema, and it is from critics such as these and their accounts that I particularly draw inspiration in what follows.

In the section that follows, in which I consider published accounts of post-New German Cinema in detail, I firstly present and then attempt to evaluate the varying domestic and international reactions that German cinema of the late 1980s to mid 1990s has elicited. I have restricted the scope of my literature search for published opinions about this subject for reasons of comprehension on my part to those emerging from the German-speaking and English-speaking worlds. Furthermore, I have chosen to deal with German and Anglo-American perspectives on post-New German cinema separately, for the reasons outlined above.

In my view, the New German Cinema (itself a term of Anglo-American coinage⁴) received a great deal of generally positive criticism from Anglo-American and continental European film critics and writers on film during the 1970s and early 1980s⁵, as well as a series of prestigious awards at several high-profile international film festivals and awards

³ For example, Manvell and Fraenkel (1971), who condemn virtually all German popular films while praising Germany's tradition of art cinema.

⁴ The equivalent German term, *Der neue deutsche Film*, was effectively a translation of the English phrase which had been imported back into German film discourses.

⁵ Broadly affirming analyses of the New German Cinema include Sandford (1982) and Franklin (1983).

ceremonies⁶. The films themselves were also quite frequently shown in art cinemas, in film clubs, and occasionally on television stations in both the UK and USA. Meanwhile, accusations of elitism and self-indulgence were often levelled at the very same films by German film critics, especially from the mid 1970s onwards, while domestic audiences for these internationally-fêted films were, with a handful of exceptions⁷, invariably restricted to small *Programmkinos* and late programming slots on public television channels. In other words, the New German films were very much a minority taste at home and abroad.

PART ONE: GERMAN PERSPECTIVES

At the time of writing, no sustained or book-length analytical study on any aspect of post-New German Cinema has been published in German⁸, although the subject has been the focus of a good deal of popular debate, and discussion within the film industry itself in Germany. A number of historical overviews of German cinema have incorporated chapters on 1980s German cinema which deal in part with this subject (Pflaum & Prinzler, 1992; Neumann, 1993; Rentschler, 1993). A number of articles on the state of late 1980s and early 1990s German cinema have also appeared in the film press (Iversen, 1995; Thienhaus & Roth, 1995; Koll, 1995), the daily and weekly press (Seidel, 1994; Karasek, 1991 and 1995; Unattributed, 1993a and Unattributed, 1996a), the film trade press, and media journals (Kürten, 1991; Wetzel, 1993b). In this section I construct what I regard as some general trends to be found in some of these accounts.

Pflaum and Prinzler's analysis of cinema in the FRG (1992) may be regarded as a quasi-official narrative, as their study was commissioned and funded by the German government. Pflaum and Prinzler's account seems to be the product of an unreconstructed auteurist conception of cinema; more than half of their text is set aside for a list of profiles and filmographies of 100 individual post-war German auteurs. Pflaum and Prinzler appear to regard the post-New German Cinema as a period of decline in which what they see as the artistic and political achievements of the *Autorenkino* were betrayed by a trend towards a more commercial brand of filmmaking. The 1980s, they argue, were characterised by a large number of directors making their debuts, with few of them going on to make any further films, and many others taking several years to deliver a second feature (1992: 140):

⁶ For example, *Die Blechtrommel* (Volker Schlöndorff, 1979) won the 1980 Oscar for Best Foreign-Language Film, and *Der Himmel über Berlin* (Wim Wenders, 1987) won the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival in 1987.

⁷ Among New German films, only *Die Blechtrommel* (Volker Schlöndorff, 1979) and *Lili Marleen* (Rainer Werner Fassbinder, 1981) reached the annual Top Ten at the domestic box office in their year of release: see Garncarz (1993).

⁸ The first to be published appeared more than one year after I began to write this chapter: Amend, H. & Bütow, M. (Hg., 1997).

"Die achtziger Jahre haben zwar eine Vielzahl neuer Regisseure im deutschen Kino hervorgebracht, von denen einige mit bewegenden Debütfilmen auf sich aufmerksam machen konnten; dennoch ist es dieser Generation von Filmemachern nicht gelungen, den Vorgang des großen Aufbruchs zu wiederholen oder zu variieren, der zu Beginn des "Neuen deutschen Films" stattgefunden hat. Kaum eine oder einer hat sich eine Form der Reputation verschaffen können, die ausreichen würde, schon wegen des Namens des Regisseurs auf eine weitere Arbeit neugierig zu machen."

In Pflaum and Prinzler's view, economic pressures imposed on the system of state subsidies for the cinema by the conservative coalition government in the 1980s led to new directors encountering often insurmountable difficulties in obtaining state funding for their work after making debuts which consistently failed to yield a sufficient profit to placate film subsidy committees (1992: 140). This, they contend, created a situation in which no new director succeeding in making a name for him or herself, which for Pflaum and Prinzler in the above quotation appears to constitute the essential precondition for heightening public interest in a (European) national cinema and ensuring its continued survival.

Among the films that were made in the 1980s and early 1990s, Pflaum and Prinzler identify a number of significant trends. The first of these is the demise of the short film (which was conventionally shown before a main feature). For Pflaum and Prinzler, this led to several films being made which were in effect shorts extended to feature length (no examples are given).

Pflaum and Prinzler's secondly identify a trend towards genre filmmaking. The merits or otherwise of this claimed development are not considered. Instead, the authors problematically and in my view unsuccessfully attempt to locate genre films they clearly admire within the corpus of authored films of the New German Cinema. Films including Dominik Graf's thrillers Die Katze (1987/8), Tiger, Löwe, Panther (1988), and Der Spieler (1990) and Oliver Herbrich's Erdenschwer (1988) are discussed, with each attracting praise for in some way "drawing on" films of the New German Cinema. However, the authors fail to specify which New German films have supposedly provided inspiration for Graf's work, and other connections that are proposed are insubstantial at best. Herbrich's films are linked only very tenuously to Herzog's oeuvre, for example - Pflaum and Prinzler remark in their narrative that both have adapted Georg Büchner's play Woyzeck!

The malign influence of Hollywood is the third "trend" within post-New German Cinema to be discussed by Pflaum and Prinzler (1992: 142):-

"eine weitere Tendenz innerhalb der neuesten deutschen Produktion [...] Haben die Regisseure einmal eine gewisse handwerkliche Raffinesse erreicht, so begnügen sie sich mit leeren Geschichten und streben nach dem perfekten Kalkül des amerikanischen Kinos."

German directors working in Hollywood such as Roland Emmerich and Carl Schenkel, as well as those who make popular genre films in Germany, such as Petra Haffter and Doris Dörrie, are bracketed together as the principal targets for Pflaum and Prinzler's charge of artless commercialism. They remark tersely, "Ganz offensichtlich ist für viele junge Filmemacher auch der Erfolgsdruck an der Kinokasse zu groß geworden" (1992: 142).

Pflaum and Prinzler devote a good deal of attention to contemporary art cinema. They select a number of art and other (in their view) significant films which they regard as continuing the good work of the New German Cinema. They contend that if directors fail to make films which are "ähnlich konsequent" in the future, German filmmaking will lose what they hold to be its unique identity - one of quality arising from diversity (1992: 148):

"andernfalls könnte aus der gepriesenen Vielfalt des neuen deutschen Films schnell ein Kino der Einfalt werden. Wie schnell man dem Einfluß der Unterhaltungsindustrie verfallen und Konturen, Kanten und Ecken einer bedeutungslosen Gefälligkeit opfern kann, dafür liefern auch Entwicklungen in den deutschen Fernseh-Programmen ausreichende Hinweise. Ohne den einstigen Mut zum Risiko in allen Bereichen wird das Kino als Kultur nicht überleben können."

To summarise, I would argue that Pflaum and Prinzler's brief account of the post-New German Cinema is marked by a central paradox: they offer a robust defence of the aesthetic and artistic ethos and legacy of the *Autorenkino*, while dismissing commercial filmmaking (and its alleged model of Hollywood cinema) out of hand, all the while disregarding the provocative and ambivalent use of popular narrative modes by some directors associated with the New German Cinema (most notably, Fassbinder's melodramas). They then further undermine their own position by problematically attempting to forcibly incorporate examples of popular genre films (which they cannot bring themselves to dismiss as being crassly commercial) into the New German canon. Their history of post-war German cinema is nevertheless regarded as a standard text within German Film Studies, and their work has appeared in English translation, as well as in German. Consequently, their views may be seen to be of potentially substantial influence in terms of the formation of others' conceptions of post-New German Cinema.

Neumann (1993), a journalist who is highly critical of the New German Cinema, views the post-New German Cinema in a somewhat different light. His narrative is broadly predicated on an analysis of the economic performance of German films in their home marketplace. Neumann foregrounds German films' gradually diminishing domestic market share in the period from the mid 1950s to the late 1970s⁹, and lays the blame squarely at the door of directors of the New German Cinema and their advocates for the national cinema's

⁹ Neumann notes that in 1955 German films' market share was around 50%. In the early 1970s it had fallen to around 30%, and by 1975, when legislation improving funding arrangements for New German films had been approved by a sympathetic SPD government (as discussed in Chapter Two), it had declined to 12.9%, a level at which it was to remain for years to come.

subsequent slump into a single figure percentage market share during the 1980s. In marked contrast to Pflaum and Prinzler, he argues that the New German Cinema and its advocates had a catastrophic effect on the industry not only in economic terms, but also in terms of public perceptions of German cinema: the sympathy and assistance given to self-reflexive auteur filmmaking during the 1970s by supportive state funding bodies did not meet with similar levels of enthusiasm from the German public who largely refused to watch this brand of filmmaking, and began viewing proportionally more Hollywood films. Neumann holds that popular distrust of domestic filmmaking became firmly entrenched during this period, and persisted into the 1980s and early 1990s (1993: 250-1).

Neumann posits that the film funding legislation enacted in 1975, for which directors of the New German Cinema had lobbied (as I described in Chapter Two), created an economically unviable cycle of elitist, self-reflexive filmmaking which was state-sponsored, and ultimately ideologically implicated in a pro-government ideology (here he cites a magazine headline from the early 1980s: "*Vom Förderungskino zum SPD-Staatsfilm*"). These economic structures, Neumann asserts, upon which the New German Cinema almost wholly depended from the mid 1970s until the early 1980s, were comparable to those of the planned economies of the former Soviet-bloc nations of Eastern Europe¹⁰. For Neumann, long-term investment in the industry, as well as recognition of the forces of supply and demand in the media marketplace, were simply not factors as far as film production was concerned. In fact, the New German Cinema had found an alternative means of self-legitimation (1993: 249):

"Mangels Publikumszuspruchs, der wesentlichen Legitimation einer Gesamtproduktion (wenn auch nicht jedes einzelnen Films), hat der deutsche Film seit dem Oberhausener Manifest 1962 aus Eigenlob, wohlfeilem Kritikerjubiläum und Film und Festivalprämierungen seine Rechtfertigung ziehen müssen."

One defence of late 1970s German filmmaking offered by its advocates is that it was characterised by diversity, as my discussion of Pflaum and Prinzler above has shown. Neumann attacks this argument and holds that the reverse was in fact true: German national cinema was actually marked by homogeneity. For him, German commercial filmmaking was suffocated by an industry which was imbalanced in favour of art or avant-garde cinema, which in the case of the New German Cinema degenerated into "ein lähmender Inner-Circle-Diskurs um den Film als Vehikel für inhaltlich und formal extrem subjektivistische Selbstreflexionen", as Neumann puts it (1993: 261).

Neumann notes that the extent of domestic public apathy towards German films which persisted during the 1980s is actually masked in the aforementioned market share statistics by the fact that German cinema's domestic market share would have been even

¹⁰ A common scaremongering ploy of Cold War era conservatives is echoed here, whereby the interventionist economic policies of democratic left-of-centre Western parties are caricatured as being indistinguishable from those of East European communists' planned economies.

lower had it not been for the handful of commercial films produced by the *Altbranche* or "old guard" of producers during this period. The commercially-oriented *Altbranche* producers had been reviled by idealistic young filmmakers in the early 1960s, and had seen their revenues from government funds plummet in the early 1970s as this younger generation of directors and producers gained political and financial power and influence which culminated in the body of films known as the Young and then New German Cinema. In the 1980s, Neumann continues, a period when commercial filmmaking was more likely to be encouraged by newly-installed conservative state officials, this older generation of producers again had greater access to public funds for their projects, and it was the *Altbranche* who were almost solely responsible for bolstering the very low market share of German films in the 1980s. Films featuring popular entertainers such as Lorient, Didi Hallervorden, Thomas Gottschalk and Otto Waalkes achieved far higher audiences than any New German film could attain (1993: 251-3); one, *Otto - der Film* (Otto Waalkes, 1985) managed a total national audience of over 10 million, whereas probably the most successful of the *Autorenfilme*, Wim Wenders' *Paris, Texas* (1984), achieved barely a tenth of that figure. *Otto - der Film*'s producer was Horst Wendlandt, who had made a series of *Edgar Wallace* films in the 1960s, a series of films that had been a target of fierce criticism by the *Autoren* and their supporters (1993: 253).

For Neumann, a further branch of filmmaking which bolstered German cinema as a whole in economic terms during the 1980s was the international coproduction. Producers such as Dieter Geissler and Bernd Eichinger were especially prominent in this regard, with their films sometimes achieving high international box office receipts (1993: 253). Films in this category included *The Name of the Rose* (Jean-Jacques Annaud, 1986) and *The Never-Ending Story* (Wolfgang Petersen, 1984).

In the early 1980s, Neumann contends, leading figures of the New German Cinema chose to ignore the increasingly unfavourable circumstances in which they attempted to make films (1993: 260):

"Wenn auch die Kritik am deutschen Film im Laufe der achtziger Jahre immer lauter wurde, die Aktiven selbst zeigten sich zunächst durchaus zufrieden mit den Unzulänglichkeiten des Neuen Deutschen Films. Dessen kleinteilige, antiindustrielle Herstellungsweise korrespondierte zu offensichtlich mit ihrem Selbstverständnis als 'Autoren'."

Notwithstanding such bravado, New German filmmakers were confronted by a series of major setbacks in the early 1980s: international film festivals began to look with less favour on their films, *Programmkinos* which had traditionally exhibited New German films began to die out as a result of market pressures, and even those that remained increasingly overlooked them in favour of more popular American films which could guarantee their survival (1993: 258). However before long, Neumann contends, some of the *Autoren* succumbed to the prevailing pressure from funding bodies to make films with a greater popular appeal. Here,

Neumann argues that films by Dörrie (most notably, her 1985 romantic comedy *Männer*) and Geissendörfer (his 1983 psychological thriller *Ediths Tagebuch*) may be read as attempts at genre films by New German Cinema directors (1993: 262)¹¹. Such ventures were in Neumann's view doomed to commercial failure in the long-term during the 1980s as the New German Cinema had failed to develop a star system and mystique necessary to sustain popular genre cinema, unlike the comparable French *Nouvelle Vague*, which had succeeded in establishing both (1993: 260-262).

For Neumann, the death of the director Rainer Werner Fassbinder on 10th June 1982 only confirmed the breakdown of the New German Cinema both as a loose grouping of directors (who had lost their figurehead), and as a distinctive set of cultural and artistic values which lent this group a collective identity (1993: 265):

"Sein überraschender Tod markierte den Endpunkt einer Ära. In seiner Person hatte sich die radikale Subjektivität des Autorenkonzepts, der aufklärerische Impetus der sechziger Jahre und der Kommunikationsaspekt des Publikumskinos vielleicht zum einzigen mal im Neuen Deutschen Kino nachhaltig versöhnt."

From my perspective, Neumann's analysis is helpful in that it exposes some of the weaknesses in the argumentative strategies of advocates of the New German Cinema; for example, his analysis of box office takings by German films in particular destabilises the often ill-founded claims of "success" which supporters of authored art film such as Pflaum and Prinzler have attributed to the New German Cinema.

Like Neumann, Rentschler (1993) also chronicles the audience disinterest encountered by New German films of the early 1980s. Rentschler, who writes from the perspective of an American academic, establishes that the reputation of German films among the German public throughout the 1980s (and continuing into the 1990s) was a very poor one, much as it had been since the late 1960s. From his perspective, the New German Cinema, which briefly achieved global renown among cinéastes in the 1970s, had become a "Synonym angestrenzter Ernsthaftigkeit" (1993: 285) a decade later. Furthermore he argues that German national cinema's so-called diversity, held by many to be its main strength in the 1970s while interest in it peaked, came to be regarded as its principal weakness in the 1980s when many film critics complained of a lack of a unifying identity in its corpus of films. During this decade, Rentschler continues, the products of national cinemas throughout Europe became increasingly marginalised in the media marketplace by the formidable box office performances of Hollywood films, and the German film market proved to be no exception, so that talk of a "crisis" in German cinema became commonplace.

¹¹ I would take issue with this particular point, and will explain my reasons for this in Chapter Four.

Like Neumann, Rentschler sets up a very clear demarcation of the "ending" of the New German Cinema (1993: 286):

"Das Ende des Neuen deutschen Films wird gewöhnlich in Zusammenhang mit dem Tod von Rainer Werner Fassbinder und der Amtszeit des Innenministers Friedrich Zimmermann gebracht."

For Rentschler, a supportive SPD government had nurtured the development of the New German Cinema during the 1970s, but the inauguration of a CDU-CSU-FDP coalition government in late 1982 effected fundamental changes in national film culture. In Rentschler's account the year 1982 has further significance as an *annus horribilis* for the New German Cinema than the death of Fassbinder ("die schlagende, vibrierende Mitte"¹²) and a fatal change of government; for the last time, he argues, a significant number of German films received major festival awards¹³. Moreover an event of great symbolic import occurred at the June presentation of the *Bundesfilmpreis*, which indicated a fundamental shift in power relations in German cinema: not only the signatories of the Oberhausen manifesto, but also Luis Trenker, a veteran producer / director in the tradition of German popular filmmaking, were commended for their "*langjähriges und hervorragendes Wirken im deutschen Film*" at this event (1993: 286). The insertion of this anecdote into Rentschler's narrative serves to reinforce the importance of the pivotal year 1982 for his account of German cinema history by further intensifying the opposition he seeks to draw between the New German Cinema and popular filmmaking: it was, he implies, a year in which commercial filmmaking in Germany began its comeback, at the New German Cinema's expense.

Having established the malevolent attitude of the newly-installed conservative government (represented by the "villain-in-chief", CSU *Innenminister* Zimmermann) towards the SPD-supported New German Cinema in his narrative, Rentschler then proceeds to narrate the first "showdown" between the two. Rentschler claims that Zimmermann had implicitly declared war on the *Autorenfilm* by reportedly asserting the right of tax payers to *Unterhaltungskino* for their hard-earned money (1993: 288). In 1983, Rentschler continues, Zimmermann took action for the first time against the New German Cinema. The final instalment of a film prize awarded to the director Herbert Achternbusch the previous year was withheld, since his film *Das Gespenst* was held to be blasphemous by Zimmermann and his colleagues. This action met with outrage from the directors and advocates of the New German Cinema, who mounted protests at that year's Munich Film Festival and a film awards ceremony in Berlin. However for Rentschler these were brief, and ultimately trifling skirmishes. He contends that a united front of filmmakers opposing government film policy proved to be very short-lived as internal differences among the group emerged and the impotence of their position became clear to them. Rentschler then examines how resentment

¹² Here, Rentschler quotes the German film critic Wolfram Schütte (1993: 288).

¹³ Rentschler (1993: 286) notes that Werner Herzog won the prize for Best Direction at the Cannes Film Festival for *Fitzcarraldo*, and Alexander Kluge received a Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival for his life's work, while Wim Wenders' *Der Stand der Dinge* won the same festival's competition.

at the new less favourable conditions for New German filmmakers informed film texts which appeared in the aftermath of these events such as Echtzeit (Hellmuth Costard and Jürgen Evert, 1983), Der Stand der Dinge (Wim Wenders, 1982) and Dorado (One Way) (Reinhard Münster, 1983).

Rentschler contends that "Minister Zimmermann allein war nicht das Problem - ebensowenig waren es solipsistische Autoren" (1993: 290). From the perspective of many film critics in Germany, the German version of the auteur film had by now run its course, primarily because it had failed in the task of engaging the emotions as well as the brain, with its directors being more inclined to lecture than entertain (1993: 292). At this point in his narrative, Rentschler highlights the emergence in the 1980s of a number of German filmmakers who, he claims, took not the New German Cinema but New Hollywood films¹⁴ as their inspiration. These included new directors such as Doris Dörrie, Dominik Graf and Reinhard Münster as well as more established figures such as Hark Bohm¹⁵. For Rentschler, this development signified a sea change in German national cinema: a shift away from auteur cinema towards genre filmmaking (1993: 294). Here, his account of the displacement of New German Cinema is almost indistinguishable from Neumann's.

Rentschler is largely dismissive of German genre films of the 1980s, which he condemns for being "an Hollywood orientiert" (1993: 294). He further generalises that many of these genre films are shallow, over-stylised and tainted by narcissism; here, Robert van Ackeren's films Die Venusfalle (1988) and Die wahre Geschichte von Männern und Frauen (1992) are singled out for criticism. Very few German genre films reached a broad public, Rentschler continues, and those that did, such as Otto - der Film (Otto Waalkes, 1985) are generally chided by the author for a dearth of artistic merit. The international coproductions of Bernd Eichinger and Dieter Geissler are also briefly mentioned as examples of new popular filmmaking, but receive little comment from the author.

After a short account of the popular filmmaker Doris Dörrie's career - which is again broadly negative, being construed as one of commercial and artistic decline after the unexpected box office and critical success of her romantic comedy Männer (1985) - and that of other German emigré directors who have worked in Hollywood (Wolfgang Petersen, Uli Edel, Percy Adlon) - Rentschler perversely devotes most of the remaining two-thirds of his account of 1980s German cinema to the (implicitly heroic) efforts of those directors most closely associated with the New German Cinema, whose (apparent) decline and demise he had described at the beginning of his account. Wim Wenders, "für viele [...] *die einzige verlässliche Hoffnung* für den deutschen Film" (1993: 314; my emphasis) merits the lengthiest section of all (1993: 314-317), providing further indication (if it were needed) that

¹⁴ The term "New Hollywood" is conventionally employed to refer to the films of figures such as Martin Scorsese and John Cassavetes.

¹⁵ Here it is interesting that Rentschler diverges from Neumann's account by locating Dörrie outside the New German Cinema. This issue will be considered further in the next chapter.

Rentschler's personal sympathies lie firmly with the project of the New German Cinema (although he is less blinkered as to its contribution to its own demise than Pflaum and Prinzler). It is this ideological position, I would argue, that ultimately determines his narrative of 1980s German cinema in his account. The clearest illustration of his standpoint occurs towards the end of his narrative, when Rentschler describes his astonishment that New German filmmakers appeared to exert remarkably little influence among German directors who followed in their wake (1993: 317).

The last section of Rentschler's narrative considers filmmakers who made their debut films during the 1980s. Like Pflaum and Prinzler, Rentschler remarks that many directors made a well-received first film but then struggled to build a career as a filmmaker; he discusses the respective fates of Maria Knilli, Pia Frankenberg and Reinhard Münster (1993: 317-318). From Rentschler's perspective, the situation continued to worsen for new directors. In his view, no directors managed to establish themselves from the late 1980s onwards with the possible exception of the popular filmmaker Sönke Wortmann, who is viewed as being a figure with a moderately malign influence, and is damned with faint praise (1993: 319):

"Die Generationsstudien des Regisseurs, bestechend durch einfühlsame Darsteller und lakonische Dialoge, ließen Kritiker von einem 'Wortmann-Effekt' sprechen: 'flott, nett, Glätte ohne Tiefe'. Sonst fielen sogenannte 'Lichtblicke' kaum auf."

Instead of considering any filmmakers working in popular cinema, Rentschler seeks to foreground "Nachwuchstalente, die ihren eigenen Vorstellungen folgten" (1993: 319), thereby implying that for him, only the work of strong-minded auteurs working outside mainstream cinema is worthy of serious discussion when considering German cinema. The work of directors that he would categorise as such, including Michael Klier, Wolfgang Becker, Jan Schütte, Uwe Schrader, Monika Treut and Christoph Schlingensief, is then briefly assessed (1993: 319-321).

Rentschler concludes by arguing that a German film industry could not be said to exist in the 1980s and early 1990s, at least insofar as the term "national industry" is conventionally used: a formulation of this kind would imply that Germany had established a distinctive culture of film production organised around a homogenous driving conception of its purpose. This, Rentschler contends, was patently not (or was no longer) the case; instead, filmmaking activity in Germany was characterised by a high degree of fragmentation, with a number of discernible trends of film production in this particular geographical region (1993: 322):

"Es gibt gegenwärtig keine deutsche Filmindustrie und auch das Bewußtsein einer nationalen Filmkultur ist im Schwinden [...] Überblickt man das Spektrum deutscher Spiel-filmproduktion der letzten zehn Jahre, so findet man ungleichzeitige Erscheinungen, die selten aufeinander Bezug oder voneinander Kenntnis nahmen:

- Unterhaltungsfilme für den breiten Publikumsgeschmack, die, von ein paar Ausnahmen abgesehen, nur in bescheidenem Maße Gewinne erzielten und kaum mehr als mäßige Unterhaltung boten;
- Autorenfilme einer älteren Generation, die aus der Mode kamen und zunehmend unter kritischen Beschuß gerieten;
- internationale Co-Produktionen, die nach der optimalen Qualitätsformel suchten und daher immer eklektischer wurden;
- neue Arbeiten, die nur gelegentlich eine beginnende Karriere versprachen."

Rentschler's account of post-New German Cinema employs similar narrative strategies and is underpinned by a similar philosophy of cinema to that of Pflaum and Prinzler, but has the merit of being more even-handed. His decision to broadly disregard the work of popular filmmakers, although acknowledging their emergence, is however unfortunate, and one that I will seek to redress in the remainder of this thesis.

I have deliberately discussed the three overviews covered in this section at some length because they serve to delineate the parameters of debate about post-New German Cinema in academic discourses about film in Germany in the 1990s. The three overviews share many common features (most notably, agreement regarding the point at which New German Cinema was sent into terminal decline: the death of Fassbinder and inauguration of a new CDU-CSU-FDP government in 1982), and also indicate the dominant debates in discourses about the subject, for example: how economic pressures on film funding made the *Autorenkino* less viable, and whether or not this was to the benefit of German filmmaking; whether or not post-New German films could be construed as having artistic merit; and the influence of Hollywood filmmaking on post-New German Cinema.

I will now contrast the construction and reception of post-New German Cinema within these texts with those of a second mediated German discourse: film magazines.

Germany's film magazine market is characterised by diversity, ranging from popular magazines with a large readership which are available at many newsstands (such as the market leader *Cinema*), to less widely-circulated ones intended for cinéastes (such as *epd-film* and *film-dienst*), to critical film journals written for a predominantly academic or activist audience (such as *Frauen und Film*). I shall restrict my comments below to the first two categories of film magazine; this is because Germany's critical film journals have offered little if any analysis of the subject of post-New German Cinema to date.

The German film magazine with the highest circulation is *Cinema*. Its coverage of cinema is primarily concerned with films that achieve success at the domestic box office, for the most part therefore mainstream Hollywood productions, although German films with a popular appeal are also reviewed and considered. It is comparable with the British film magazine *Empire*, however there are some substantial differences between the two, as will be evident from my account below.

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, *Cinema* laid strong emphasis on nurturing a "fan culture" around cinema, with film stars often appearing on its glossy cover pages and in lengthy profiles and / or interviews within the magazine, miniaturised film posters in the form of postcards being included as "free gifts" in each issue, letters pages allowing readers to voice their opinions about current releases and stars, and competitions in which cinematic memorabilia could be won. The majority of these elements of the magazine were dominated by Hollywood films and stars, but German cinema was also granted a good deal of coverage, not least because the magazine aimed to review all films released every month. Although it is fair to say that the magazine's reviewers clearly valued entertainment as the most important criterion in their critiques of films, it would be misleading to caricature this position: non-mainstream releases were not necessarily treated harshly by default. A review of Sierra Leone (Uwe Schrader, 1987)¹⁶ for example describes the film as

"eine einfühlsame optische Studie bundesdeutscher Realität ganz unten, gesehen durch die Augen eines Außenseiters, einst ein Insider, der plötzlich klarsieht."

The art film Malina (Werner Schroeter, 1990) meanwhile is lavished with praise¹⁷, being described as

"einer der mutigsten deutschen Produktionen der letzten Jahre [...] ein intellektuelles Feuerwerk, das alle Sinne zugleich fordert."

Despite this even-handedness in its treatment of non-commercial cinema, the magazine was wholeheartedly committed to advancing the cause of popular cinema in Germany between 1988 and 1995. A January 1989 article by the editor-in-chief of *Cinema*¹⁸ makes this abundantly clear, heralding a "Komödienboom im deutschen Kino" in the late 1980s, which he claims was launched by the hit romantic comedy Männer (Doris Dörrie, 1985):-

"Vor vier Jahren sorgte Doris Dörrie mit 'Männer' für frischen Wind in der deutschen Filmlandschaft. Humorvolle Unterhaltung und gehobener Wortwitz rückten an die Stelle literarischer Strenge und grüblerischer Verbissenheit, die zuvor in wesentlichen Teilen das Erscheinungsbild des seminaristischen Teutonenkinos geprägt hatten. [...] Vom Tiefsinn kaum noch eine Spur, der deutsche Film zeigt sich plötzlich von seiner lockeren Seite."

Notably, Dörrie (and her film Männer) is yet again presented as being a key figure for the renaissance of popular German cinema in the 1980s. Two colourful charts, one plotting the

¹⁶ cf. 1988. 'Sierra Leone' [Review], *Cinema*, 1, Heft 116, 115.

¹⁷ nz. 1991. 'Mailina' [Review], *Cinema*, 1, Heft 152, 68-70.

¹⁸ Rosner, H. 1989. 'PROGRAMM JANUAR '89. Komödienboom im deutschen Kino', *Cinema*, 1, 128, 31.

respective market shares of German comedies and dramas in the late 1980s (the audience for comedies is shown to be far larger than that for dramas), and the other comparing the number of productions of each genre in the same period (production of comedies has ostensibly overtaken that of dramas), are provided as supporting evidence for the analysis proposed in this article.

Publications of *Cinema* during the period with which I am concerned are interesting in terms of their attempts to legitimise German cinema as a popular cultural medium. This process can moreover be read as part of an effort to fully effectuate the analysis of the national film industry set out in the quotation above. A review of *Rama Dama* (Joseph Vilsmaier, 1990)¹⁹ for example, is captioned "Der deutsche Heimatfilm lebt!", and additionally constructs the genre as undergoing a welcome renaissance in the late 1980s and early 1990s:-

"Lange Zeit war dieses Genre zu Recht verpönt. Denn Altproduzenten aus den vierziger und fünfziger Jahren hatten mit banalen Alpenkomödien und feuchtseidenden Bauerndramen schnelle Kasse gemacht und den Ruf des deutschen Films ruiniert. Erst Mitte der achtziger Jahre griffen deutsche Regisseure wieder heimatbezogene Stoffe auf. Filme wie 'Der Mond ist nur a nackte Kugel', 'Heimat', und natürlich 'Herbstmilch' gaben mit ihrem poetischen Realismus dem Heimatfilm eine neue Qualität."

Cinema also sought to lend credibility to popular German cinema among its readership by occasionally giving particular films the "special treatment" conventionally reserved by the magazine for Hollywood blockbusters. The January 1988 edition for example prominently featured the German thriller *Die Katze* (Dominik Graf, 1987/8) throughout the magazine, with the headline "Die Katze: Ein Bulle wechselt die Fronten" on the cover, a competition to win a gun used in the film (!) on the first page²⁰, a reference to the film as one of the month's highlights on the index page of new releases²¹, and a six-page photospread and synopsis included as a feature article in the magazine²².

In terms of post-New German Cinema, I would argue that the magazine *Cinema* certainly strove to make home-grown popular genre films more acceptable for film audiences in Germany by giving a good number of them favourable coverage alongside prominent American films. This was a new development within post-1970s German film magazine publishing. As I have shown, the extensive, enthusiastic coverage accorded to *Die Katze* would have been unthinkable for an *Autorenfilm*, and is more reminiscent of that employed by the magazine for a Hollywood blockbuster. Meanwhile, the article advocating *Rama Dama* and *Herbstmilch* as successful new interpretations of the maligned but popular *Heimat* film

¹⁹ nz. 1991. 'Rama Dama' [Review], *Cinema*, 1, 152, 78-81.

²⁰ Unattributed. 1988. 'Die Ausrüstung der "Katze" zu gewinnen', *Cinema*, 1, 116, 3.

²¹ Unattributed. 1988. 'PROGRAMM JANUAR 1988. Ein tierischer Monat: Katze, Hai und Kamel', *Cinema*, 1, 116, 23.

²² rf. 1988. 'Die Katze', *Cinema*, 1, 116, 93-100.

aims to rebuild this genre's long-lost respectability for German film fans. Consequently, I would hold that popular film magazines such as *Cinema* played a dual role for post-New German Cinema, simultaneously reflecting and participating in the renaissance of German popular filmmaking in the 1980s and 1990s.

The German film magazines *epd film* and *film-dienst* differ in tone from *Cinema* in that they are written for a cinéaste audience and attempt a more analytical approach to film than *Cinema*, which is aimed at the casual film-goer. Both devoted a considerable amount of coverage to post-New German Cinema in the late 1980s and early 1990s, for reasons which I shall shortly discuss.

Both *film-dienst* and *epd film* are funded by publishers founded by the established Christian churches in Germany; the former is a Catholic publication, the latter Protestant. With regard to their origins, Fehrenbach (1995: 124) notes:

"Sharing a common goal and philosophy for the social role of film in postwar Germany, these confessional groups modelled new strategies for influencing commercial film production and policy. Early in the postwar period, both Catholic and Protestant churches created organizations to deal with film questions."

These organisations gained power and influence relatively quickly because the governing allied forces regarded the Christian churches as being significantly less tainted by Nazism than other national institutions, in part because they had retained a modicum of independence from the totalitarian state between 1933 and 1945.

One component of the churches' policy on cinema was to establish film magazines for their members, and *film-dienst* (originally *Filmdienst der Jugend*) was accordingly established in 1946, while *epd-film* (*Evangelischer Film-Beobachter*), first appeared in 1948. Issues of both magazines published between 1988 and 1995 bear traces of their origins and sponsors, in the form of articles reporting on church discussions about the cinema for example, but the broader discourses of the magazines are generally consistent with Anglo-American magazines for cinéastes such as the British *Sight and Sound*.

Regular analysis of the national film industry has been high on the agenda of these two magazines for Germany's cinéastes in recent years. This is not altogether surprising because of the vested interest of each magazine's backers: both the Catholic and Protestant churches are represented on film funding committees. German films featured at the annual Berlin International Film Festival (the *Berlinale*) regularly give rise to discussion about the current state of the industry in *epd Film* and *film-dienst*, for example. In a report on the 1995 festival for *epd Film*, Thienhaus & Roth (1995: 19) surmise that German cinema of the time lacked a unifying identity:

"Deutsche Regisseure, das zeigte die Berlinale, beschäftigen sich wieder mit ihrem eigenen Land, aber sie tun es häufig unentschlossen, ohne Perspektive. Ihren Filmen fehlt ein Zentrum, eine Quelle der Inspiration, ihre Anstrengung trifft ins Leere, sie sind heimatlos, finden keine Identität."

The German films at that year's *Berlinale* are characterised by "Erschöpfung und Mittelmäßigkeit" for Thienhaus and Roth (1995: 19), and this is attributed to the economic pressures imposed on domestic filmmaking in Germany (1995: 20).

An article from the following summer by Löhndorf (1996) on a symposium about German film represents a further example of *epd Film's* concern with the health of the national cinema. Löhndorf describes what she views as a new mood of optimism among those involved in German filmmaking in the first few months of 1996, largely on account of the box office success of a handful of domestic productions. Löhndorf then reports on a range of issues of the day which were addressed at the symposium, including the role of actors' agents, American film distributors, and multiplex cinemas.

The Catholic film magazine *film-dienst* also regularly published pieces considering the state of German cinema. The subtitle of an article by Koll (1995: 10) - "Vom weiteren - unfreiwilligen - Niedergang deutscher Kinofilme im Jahr 1994" - emblematically makes evident a tendency in each magazine between 1988 and 1995: film journalists bemoaning the low or decreasing market share and / or international standing of German films, while singling out those films which for them give grounds for encouragement to the industry. Koll writes in the same vein:

"Im verborgenen und unter fast völligem Ausschluß einer desinteressierten Öffentlichkeit hat sich indes eine kleine Zahl deutscher Filme von bemerkenswerter Qualität entwickelt - Filme obendrein mit einprägsamen jungen Gesichtern, die andernorts Star-Qualitäten hätten."

In this article, Koll praises the films *Die tödliche Maria* (Tom Tykwer, 1994) and *Adamski* (Jens Becker, 1994) for their narrative constructions and casts. With regard to the latter, the formulation of "star quality" is frequently applied in the conditional tense in both *epd film* and *film-dienst*, with features on German directors, actors and actresses often emphasising that their careers have suffered on account of the country of their birth: they could have been stars had they been born elsewhere.

Continuing in this vein, an Iversen article in *film-dienst* (1995: 7) isolates three areas of German film production which may be viewed as "strengths":

"Der deutsche Film scheint nämlich auf drei "Geschäftsfeldern" erstaunliche Stärken zu besitzen:

1. Die Blödelkomödien der arrivierten Satiriker und Humorstars (Otto, Werner, Loriot, Polt) [...]
2. Die Gesellschafts- und Beziehungskomödien ("Schtonk", "Männer", "Der bewegte Mann") [...]
3. Die Literaturverfilmung (Grass, Allende, Proust)."

This list makes interesting reading in that the first two categories firmly belong to traditions of German popular comedy and popular film, while the third would conventionally be associated with the realm of high culture, although a film cited in the second category, *Der bewegte Mann*, could also be categorised as a *Literaturverfilmung* as it is based on a popular comic book (this is discussed further in Chapter Four). From my perspective this list is significant as it serves to foreground a tension in writing about cinema in German film magazines which is prevalent in other discourses about German film (and German culture as a whole), namely the dichotomy between commercial and art cinema referred to earlier in this chapter. Debates as to which of these authenticates German cinema propel much of the discourse of German film journalism for cinéastes, as well as wider discourses about German cinema; this will also be considered at greater length in the next chapter.

The desire for a strong national cinema is also forcefully articulated by Iversen and in other *film-dienst* and *epd-film* articles of the period. It is particularly striking in this particular example that a German film magazine for cinéastes is prepared to actually acknowledge popular filmmaking in Germany as a strength; in previous years (particularly for supporters of the New German Cinema), it had often been regarded as a source of embarrassment. However, Iversen's choice of the term "Blödelkomödie" reveals a marked ambivalence about this acknowledgement of popular film's role.

It would hardly be controversial in the light of the above analysis to claim that the ideology of patriotism pervades much of the writing in both *epd film* and *film-dienst*, again, I would argue, resulting from both magazines indirectly representing the interests of the churches - to which they owe their being and which also play a significant role within state film institutions - as much as their film journalists' personal or collective beliefs. German filmmaking is viewed as (naturally) having the potential to achieve "success" (whether in terms of domestic box office takings or critical acclaim from overseas), but is "held back" for a variety of reasons (audience apathy, economic problems and so forth), for example. I would hold that ideologies of national pride also inform much writing on German film in other discourses which are discussed later in this chapter.

I will now consider a further important body of writing on post-New German Cinema: the German film trade press. The most widely-read film trade journal within the German film industry between 1988 and 1995 was the long-running publication *Filmecho* / *Filmwoche*, which was primarily concerned with the interests of the nation's film exhibitors. Since its coverage of German cinema altered in a number of notable ways between these dates, I have chosen to isolate three separate years of its production in the analysis that follows: 1989, 1992 and 1995.

A number of characteristics distinguish *Filmecho* / *Filmwoche*'s coverage of post-New German Cinema throughout the period 1988 to 1995. In the journal's distinctive "yellow

pages" section, detailed weekly box-office charts for Germany, the USA, UK and France were featured, as well as regional listings of films that were being exhibited in Germany at the time. Another common feature of the journal between 1988 to 1995 was the inclusion of a large number of photograph-dominated reports from German film premieres and awards ceremonies, as well as articles on the activities of production companies, regional and national funding bodies, classified advertisements and some film reviews. For a film trade journal, all of these features are quite conventional; since such a publication's purpose is to publicise films which are expected to attract specific audiences, and to inform its readership within the film industry as to developments which will affect it. However, the emphasis on the regional distribution of film here is (I think) unique to *Filmecho / Filmwoche*; this may be attributed to the federal make-up of the FRG which places a special emphasis on regional identities (although it should be noted here that traditions of emphasising regionalism within Germany pre-date the creation of the FRG). I would hold that one further category of text found within the pages of *Filmecho / Filmwoche* during these years may also be regarded as significant.

On occasion (approximately once a month), and increasingly so from 1992 onwards, the journal included an essay provided by the *AV-Mediendienst*²³ about issues raised by a feature film of recent vintage. These texts are subheaded, "Sonderdruck der Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung in Zusammenarbeit mit der Zeitschrift *Filmecho / Filmwoche*". The presence of these essays is, for the purposes of my narrative, indicative of at least some discreet governmental influence within the pages of *Filmecho / Filmwoche*. While the journal was not publicly funded, and was ostensibly produced by the industry for the industry, contributions such as these *AV-Mediendienst* essays do illustrate the uniquely intimate relationship between film production companies and public film funding bodies in Germany at the time. The seemingly automatic inclusion of a lengthy polemic penned by a government agency would be unthinkable in an independently-produced film trade journal in Britain (such as *Screen International*) or the United States (such as *Variety*), where the public-funding of film production is rather scarce, being restricted to very small-scale projects rather than big-budget feature films.

In the *AV-Mediendienst* essays of 1988 to 1995, discussion of feature films made in Germany or the USA predominates. German films featured between 1989 and 1995 include Das Heimweh des Walerjan Wrobel (Rolf Schübel, 1990), which is captioned "Thema: Jugend / Nationalsozialismus / Polen"²⁴, Der Brocken (Vadim Glowna, 1992), captioned "Thema: Deutschland / Soziale Beziehungen / Wiedervereinigung"²⁵ and Stilles Land

²³ *AV* is an abbreviation of "Audiovisueller".

²⁴ Köhler, M. 1992. 'Das Heimweh des Walerjan Wrobel' [AV-Mediendienst-Single], *Filmecho / Filmwoche*, 7, 14 Feb, 65-7

²⁵ Köhler, M. 1992. 'Der Brocken' [AV-Mediendienst-Single], *Filmecho / Filmwoche*, 16, 17 Apr, (inside back cover).

(Andreas Dresen, 1992), similarly captioned "Thema: DDR / SozialeVerhältnisse / Wiedervereinigung"²⁶.

I have chosen to highlight the treatment of Margarethe von Trotta's 1994 film Das Versprechen by the *AV-Mediendienst* as exemplifying this institution's relationship with German cinema, because this film's subject matter (German Reunification) suits my purposes of analysing the essays' ideological approach to German national cinema particularly well. On the occasion of this film opening the *Berlinale* in 1995, an *AV-Mediendienst* article was patriotically published to mark this "Glücksfall für den deutschen Film"²⁷. The director was also interviewed:-

"AV-Mediendienst: Die Mauer in den Köpfen ist nach dem Mauerfall gewachsen. Könnte Ihr Film eine Annäherung bringen?

von Trotta: Schön wäre es, wenn er Verkrustungen aufbrechen könnte. Aber ich bin skeptisch, ob ein Film so etwas leisten kann."

This brief exchange provides a good illustration of the *AV-Mediendienst*'s attempts to hijack discourses around a publicly-funded film as a vehicle for articulating a governmental standpoint on an "issue of the day", in this case, unification and its social consequences (to the slight bewilderment of von Trotta!) Pronouncements on this theme in particular, which is invoked in three of the four essays about German films to be printed in 1992 and 1995, were clearly regarded by the *Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung* as being of special importance at the time - for the journal's readership and for the nation. The essay's intentions here in my view recall the 1980s magazine headline cited by Neumann (1993) describing the New German Cinema as the "SPD-Staatsfilm". In this example, the government appointee writing in the journal *Filmescho / Filmwoche* unambiguously articulates a longing to interpret Das Versprechen as a "CDU-Staatsfilm" - at this historical moment, at least. The emphasis placed on the potential of von Trotta's film to provide a means of "Annäherung" of people from the West and East is very revealing - such a process was much desired by an ailing conservative coalition government attracting considerable criticism for the economic consequences of rushing through Reunification earlier in the decade.

Filmescho / Filmwoche's 1989 coverage of German cinema clearly demonstrates the journal's apparent remit to strongly emphasise any "success" achieved by the industry. A report from the Cannes film festival²⁸ notes that

"Selten war der deutsche Film so stark repräsentiert wie in diesem Jahr. Dies sowohl in künstlerischer als auch kommerzieller Hinsicht. Deutsche Filme in allen offiziellen Sektionen, deutsche Filme aber auch auf vielen

²⁶ Twele, H. 1992. 'Stilles Land' [AV-Mediendienst-Single], *Filmescho / Filmwoche*, 42, 16 Oct, 35.

²⁷ Köhler, M. 1995. 'Das Versprechen' [AV-Mediendienst-Single], *Filmescho / Filmwoche*, 6, 10 Feb, 91-2.

²⁸ Zander, H. 1989. 'Deutsche Filme präsent wie selten zuvor: It's a miracle', *Filmescho / Filmwoche*, 28, May 5, 3-5.

Plakatwänden entlang der Croisette. Die Produzenten haben wohl etwas von den Amerikanern gelernt, vielleicht existiert aber auch mehr Vertrauen in die eigene Ware."

Other articles which celebrate "German film successes" include a transcription of an entire speech commemorating the fortieth anniversary of filmmaking in the FRG²⁹, and a two-page photo-spread entitled "Das Premierenergebnis 1989" about the film *Letzte Ausfahrt Brooklyn* (Uli Edel, 1989)³⁰. Over the course of the year, this film and *Das Spinnennetz* (Bernhard Wicki, 1989) are regularly mentioned by the journal and are consistently celebrated as outstanding achievements of the industry, the former for its large budget and the Hollywood stars it can number among its cast, and the latter for being the final work of a well-known German director (Wicki's film receives a glowing review on its release³¹ and an *AV-Mediendienst* essay on the theme of "Zeitgeschichte Faschismus" a fortnight later³²).

In these articles, an emphasis on post-New German Cinema's "strengths" is again prominent, as was also the case with *epd-film* and *film-dienst*. However, rather less discrimination as to what constitutes a "strength" is in evidence in the pages of *Filmecho* / *Filmwoche*. For this trade journal, the number and status of attendees at a film's premiere or the size of a film's budget appear to dictate the amount of coverage a particular film receives. This is hardly surprising, given that the journal is primarily intended for film exhibitors.

More critical pieces also appeared in the journal during this period, however. An article on the imminent arrival of multiplex cinemas in Germany³³ argues

"Aus der Sicht des Besuchers stellen sie einen Fortschritt dar, der durch häufigeren Besuch honoriert wird. Eine Bedrohung bilden sie für den örtlich konkurrierenden Anbieter der gleichen Dienstleistung, nämlich der Filmvorführung."

Discussion of the positive and negative aspects of multiplex cinemas continued in the journal throughout the 1990s. Here, a genuine concern for the future well-being of Germany's small film exhibitors (almost certainly a large proportion of the journal's readership) is strongly evident.

Several articles cover the privatisation of the DEFA film studios in Babelsberg during the first half of 1992, with this news story receiving increasingly high profile coverage during this period³⁴. The narrative describing the sale of the studios is couched in emphatically

²⁹ Albrecht, G. 1989. '40 Jahre Film in der Bundesrepublik', *Filmecho / Filmwoche*, 29, 26 May, 8-18.

³⁰ Unattributed. 1989. 'Das Premierenergebnis 1989', *Filmecho / Filmwoche*, 59, 20 Oct, 8-9.

³¹ Hellmann, C. 1989. 'Das Spinnennetz' [Review], *Filmecho / Filmwoche*, 50, 8 Sep, 18. This contrasts strongly with the review published by *Screen International*, discussed later in this chapter.

³² Unattributed. 1989. 'Zeitgeschichte Faschismus: Das Spinnennetz', *Filmecho / Filmwoche*, 54, 23 Sep, 27.

³³ Backheuer, R. 1989. 'Die Multiplexe kommen (Fortschritt oder Bedrohung?)', *Filmecho / Filmwoche*, 19, 7 Apr, 3-7.

³⁴ These include Unattributed. 1992. 'Rund 300 Kaufangebote für den DEFA', *Filmecho / Filmwoche*, 7, 14

triumphalist terms, reflecting the industry's smug satisfaction at the incorporation of the former GDR's best-known cinematic asset into the FRG's film market economy. For example, on its completion, the privatisation of DEFA is greeted as an unmitigated triumph, with the headlines of two separate articles in August unambiguously declaring the process "perfekt"³⁵. Articles about the studios in the latter half of 1992 tended to be production reports on the first feature films to be made in Babelsberg since privatisation³⁶; a similar reporting strategy was employed by other film trade journals (such as *Screen International*) at the time, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

In 1995, more film reviews were featured than in previous years, and discussion of German films was accorded a higher profile by the journal. One reviewer, Manfred Sanck, makes a number of interesting comments demarcating what he regards as the dominant genre of the 1990s. In a review of Nur über meine Leiche (Rainer Matsutani, 1995)³⁷, Sanck notes that:

"Der charakteristische deutsche Kinofilm der 90er Jahre scheint eine Beziehungskomödie mit Katja Riemann zu sein."

For Sanck, the romantic comedy exerts an unhealthy dominance over German cinema of the time. In a review of the thriller Bunte Hunde (Lars Becker, 1995)³⁸ he comments:

"Beckers Film schlägt eine willkommene Schneise in das gegenwärtige Dickicht von Beziehungskomödien und Klamotten."

Comments such as these, while being interesting in their own right (indeed, these issues will be taken up in Chapter Four), are also perhaps indicative of an apparent attempt by *Filmecho* / *Filmwoche* to reach a broader readership in the mid 1990s, i.e. one beyond the confines of people working in the film industry. This impression is compounded by changes made to the "look" of *Filmecho* / *Filmwoche* between 1988 and 1995: for example, a higher proportion of photographs and graphics, as well as more modern typefaces, were included so that the journal was much closer in terms of style and design to a publication such as *Cinema* by the end of this period.

Feb, 4; win. 1992. 'DEFA: Deutsch-französische Pläne', *Filmecho* / *Filmwoche*, 12, 20 Mar, 11; v.der Decken, N. 1992. 'DEFA - Countdown läuft', *Filmecho* / *Filmwoche*, 14, 3 Apr, 3; v.der Decken, N. 1992. 'Trend im DEFA-Verkauf', *Filmecho* / *Filmwoche*, 18, 2 May, 3; v.der Decken, N. 1992. 'Paris-Düsseldorf-Babelsberg', *Filmecho* / *Filmwoche*, 22, 29 May, 3.

³⁵ win. 1992. 'Babelsberg: Vertrag ist perfekt', *Filmecho* / *Filmwoche*, 33, 14 Aug, 4; v.der Decken, N. 1992. 'DEFA-Verkauf perfekt', *Filmecho* / *Filmwoche*, 35, 18 Aug, 3.

³⁶ v.der Decken, N. 1992. 'Zwei Koffer in Berlin', *Filmecho* / *Filmwoche*, 32, 7 Aug, 4; Unattributed. 1992. 'Die Tigerin und DEFA', *Filmecho* / *Filmwoche*, 41, 9 Oct, 11.

³⁷ Sanck, M. 1995. 'Nur über meine Leiche' [Review], *Filmecho* / *Filmwoche*, 34, 27 Aug, 34.

³⁸ Sanck, M. 1995. 'Bunte Hunde' [Review], *Filmecho* / *Filmwoche*, 32, 11 Aug, 44.

This convergence is perhaps unsurprising, given that both the film trade journal *Filmecho* / *Filmwoche* and general film magazine *Cinema* shared increasingly similar concerns by the end of the 1988 to 1995 period, namely, to maximise sales by foregrounding films with great popular appeal. For *Filmecho* / *Filmwoche*, the arrival of multiplex cinemas in post-Reunification Germany in particular ensured that coverage of films which would attract the largest audiences were by now of greatest interest to the majority of distributors and exhibitors - the bulk of its readership.

The state of the German film industry has attracted a good deal of coverage by the daily and weekly press in recent decades, and the period 1988 to 1995 proved to be no exception. However, comments about the film industry in the daily and weekly press were largely restricted to brief conjecture appearing in film reviews in the arts sections of newspapers, or to industrial reports about specific media concerns (such as production companies, film studios, multiplexes and distributors) in the economics pages of the same.

A February 1994 article in the neo-conservative *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* by Seidel about that month's *Berlinale* is a good example of the type of discourse I describe. While the first half of Seidel's article discusses the standing of the *Berlinale* on the international festival circuit and the interest it attracts within the city of Berlin, the author then offers a seven-line "potted history" of the previous forty years of German cinema before lambasting domestic filmmakers and film funding committees for their failure to consistently deliver (1994: 1; my emphasis)

"der gute Standard, die solide Ware, wie sie massenhaft aus Hollywood in unsere Filmtheater kommt und von den Zuschauern honoriert wird."

The newspaper's right-wing political stance, which fetishizes the role of the market, certainly fuels this tirade, while the unsupported assertions which merely reflect, reproduce and perpetuate a general media consensus about German cinema are also archetypal of much print journalism.

There were however a number of exceptions to the general trend of insubstantial comment and conjecture about Germany's cinema in its popular press between 1988 and 1995. Journalists writing in the country's long-established weekly *Der Spiegel*, and especially its leading film critic Karasek, for example, devoted somewhat lengthier pieces than in many other media publications to analysis of the German film industry, and did so at regular intervals. I shall consider a selection of these articles, to which I fortunately had ready access during my research, as a body of texts which for my purposes comprise a larger meta-text: a set of statements about Germany's film industry by the country's most widely-read weekly news magazine.

In the first *Der Spiegel* article I have chosen to highlight, the starting point of which is a joint review of the films *Karniggels* (Detlev Buck, 1991) and *Allein unter Frauen* (Sönke Wortmann, 1991), Karasek (1991) explores the notion that German films are highly provincial. Karasek asserts the potential ambivalence of this quality, seeing it as the Buck film's strength and the Wortmann film's weakness in terms of their respective degrees of originality, narrative motivation and textual coherence.

In an unattributed article printed two years later, *Der Spiegel* proclaims that the national film industry is now dominated by the genre of popular comedy: "Im deutschen Kino schlägt die Stunde der Komödianten" (1993a: 212). This, the writer notes, is the only category of domestically-produced films to attract sizeable domestic cinema audiences. After formulating a list of German directors who have scored recent box office hits (Buck, Wortmann and Peter Timm), the writer attacks Germany's system of public funding of films for failing to yield a sufficient number of commercially successful films, and charges the work of New German Cinema directors such as Wim Wenders, Werner Herzog and Rainer Werner Fassbinder (who lobbied for the establishment of this form of funding system in the 1960s) with being overly earnest and lacking in humour. However, the contemporary popular comedies which the article purports to examine are then criticised for their dearth of insightful social criticism (which the writer regards as a characteristic of Hollywood films, which are once again held up as a model), for their subsequent "Harmlosigkeit", for the films' allegedly rather laboured comedy, and lastly (echoing Karasek's 1991 article) for their provinciality. These final two criticisms are moreover implicit in the article's title: "Dick und Doof vom platten Lande".

In 1995, Karasek pens a further article in response to the award of the prestigious *Filmband in Gold* award to the popular comedy *Der bewegte Mann* (Sönke Wortmann, 1994) by a jury comprised of German film critics (as discussed in Chapter Two). Karasek (1995, 7; emphasis in original) asserts that

"Das ist das Signal einer ziemlich radikalen Wende [...] 'Der bewegte Mann' ist ausgezeichnet worden, nicht *obwohl* er sechs Millionen Zuschauer in die deutschen Kinos gelockt hat. Sondern *weil* er, neben dem US-Import 'Forrest Gump', der Publikumshit des Jahres ist."

Karasek's wry remark about the changing status quo - a popular German film is no longer automatically held to be a poor film by critics - once again indicates that a dissipation of the traditional mistrust of popular modes of film is occurring within post-New German Cinema. For Karasek, this award also epitomises a wider ongoing cultural change in Germany in which the public funding of "elitist" art (such as the *Autorenkino*) is being undermined. He invokes the image of a pendulum, which in the early 1960s swung away from popular filmmaking in the direction of auteur cinema, but which now appears to be swinging back towards popular entertainment films. He contends that contemporary popular films might now either exhibit contempt for the German people, by pandering to the worst excesses of

popular taste (as was the case in 1950s filmmaking in his view), or else "respect" the public. How this so-called respect for audiences might manifest itself is not explored.

A 1996 article in *Der Spiegel* on the state of German cinema rather stands out from those discussed above, as it is far longer than any other published in the magazine's previous decade, taking up some nine complete pages, and meriting special mention in the magazine's table of contents. The article is additionally very wide-ranging for a popular magazine article, engaging with some issues of German film history, assessing relations between the German, European and American film industries, examining developments in film funding, distribution and exhibition within Germany, and offering short profiles of German directors, actors, actresses, producers, and distributors (including two interviews). For the purposes of my research into post-New German Cinema, this has been a very valuable source, all the more so given the very small number of other published works on this subject³⁹.

The apparent reason for the article's great length and scope is the fact that at the time of it being written, the domestic German market share of home-produced films had shown a marked increase during the first nine months of that year, almost doubling its percentage of the previous year. This upturn in the national cinema industry's economic performance is attributed by the article to a new wave of keen young filmmakers, fresh from Germany's handful of film schools, who are succeeding in producing popular, entertaining films (above all comedies) which are in turn being enthusiastically consumed by domestic audiences⁴⁰. The emergence of a new wave of popular filmmaking is likened to that of the New German Cinema in the early 1960s, with an outmoded cinematic establishment being usurped by younger, more passionate figures. The irony of this is made quite clear: it is the directors of the New German Cinema, who once attacked the entertainment films of "*Opas Kino*", who are now being swept away by a new generation of popular filmmakers. This is a very similar argument to that evoked by Karasek's image of the pendulum.

In all of the *Der Spiegel* articles discussed above, the magazine's power to set the agenda for discussion about German cinema is clear. The magnitude of the magazine's readership and its central position within German culture has the potential to accord each article the status of an authoritative pronouncement in any debate, film-related or otherwise. Here, the frequent subtle shifts of position with regard to the merits or otherwise of German auteur and popular films are moreover very noticeable, and this for me is the principal dichotomy at the heart of the magazine's coverage of German filmmaking.

³⁹ I am grateful to Peter Niesen of the Goethe Universität, Frankfurt, for originally bringing this article to my attention.

⁴⁰ The audience figures achieved by Peter Timm's *Ein Mann für jede Tonart* (1993: 0.5m), Katja von Garnier's *Abgeschminkt!* (1993: 1.1m), Sönke Wortmann's *Der bewegte Mann* (1994: 6.5m) and *Das Superweib* (1995: 2.3m), Rainer Kaufmann's *Stadtgespräch* (1995: 1.7m) and the animated feature *Werner - Das muß kesseln* (1996: 4.3m to date) are highlighted in a graph purporting to show German films' rapidly increasing domestic market share.

In Part One, I have considered the construction of notions of post-New German Cinema in a variety of discourses within Germany. A broad consensus as to some general tendencies as to the nature of post-New German Cinema is, I would argue, strongly evident. The traditional dichotomy of popular and auteur / art cinema continued to be the dominant paradigm within these debates, with most commentators observing that something of a renaissance of popular film making, at the expense of the *Autorenkino*, was taking place. However, there were also some interesting and perhaps surprising shifts within different discourses as to whether or not such a development was a welcome one; an indication in my view that popular filmmaking was gaining a greater degree of respectability for the German film industry and many commentators alike during this period. A continued sense of frustration, particularly in institutions close to or indeed part of the German film establishment, that German national cinema was nevertheless still overshadowed by imported American films, was also frequently articulated however.

In Part Two, I turn my attention to Anglo-American discourses around post-New German Cinema.

PART TWO: ANGLO-AMERICAN PERSPECTIVES

Before considering Anglo-American contributions to debates about post-New German Cinema, I will briefly attempt to contextualise my analysis of this subject. Anglo-American perspectives on German cinema of the 1980s and 1990s were inevitably shaped in part by the reduced distribution that German films of this period received in Britain and America, which I discussed in Chapter Two.

The rarity of a German film release in Britain was such that when a German feature actually appeared on British screens, it often gave rise to some form of comment in the film and popular press about the current state of German cinema (e.g. Klib, 1992). To date, the only lengthy English-language account of post-New German cinema to be published in Britain has been Hughes & Brady (1995), while in the USA, the only regular in-depth English-language analysis of German cinema has been provided by Kindred's annual reports on the German film industry in the trade magazine *Variety*; a number of English-language articles on post-New German Cinema also appeared in the trade journal *Kino*, published by British film critics living in Berlin, and in the international film trade journal *Screen International*, a UK publication.

Hughes and Brady's account of post-New German Cinema (1993) is conceived in a rather different way than my own, as shall become evident. They purport to examine documentary and feature films which specifically relate and / or respond in a variety of ways to the German *Wende*, i.e. the events of Summer 1989 to Autumn 1990: they refer to the mass anti-government demonstrations in the GDR, the fall of the Berlin wall, the opening of

borders with West Germany, the accompanying collapse of the entire political system of the GDR, democratic elections, and the FRG's swift reaction to these events which amounted to a virtual re-annexation of some of pre-war Germany's former Eastern territories (currency union, reunification and finally all-German elections in December 1990).

Hughes and Brady identify three institutional developments of particular significance for German filmmaking which then took place in the aftermath of this turbulent period (1993: 276-277): the privatisation of the East German film production company DEFA by the *Treuhand* agency; amendments made to the film subsidy laws in 1992 to include the former territories of the GDR, and to allow for the funding of films with higher budgets; and the exclusion of film as a cultural medium from the 1993 GATT agreement on international trade relations.

All these changes, Hughes and Brady argue, served to intensify the ongoing conflict in Germany between those who advocate publicly-funded subsidies for the arts (including cinema) in the name of national culture or "heritage" and those who "wish to open the industry fully to market forces" (1993: 277). This line of argument once again invokes the dominant paradigm within German Film Studies of culture versus commerce (as identified by Elsaesser, 1989). Following these initial observations, Hughes and Brady then discuss a series of film texts to which they have managed to gain access⁴¹. Some films pertinent to the questions Hughes and Brady pose about German film and the *Wende* are necessarily omitted from their account because they did not receive a UK theatrical release, most notably *Stilles Land* (Andreas Dresen, 1992). Other films addressing the *Wende* which were released after the (apparently rushed) publication of their paper, especially *Das Versprechen* (Margarethe von Trotta, 1994) have also rather diminished its use-value.

One of the first films to be examined in Hughes and Brady's narrative is paradoxically a film produced in and financed by Hollywood, the thriller *In the Line of Fire* (1993), starring Clint Eastwood. This feature is discussed on the flimsy basis that it was directed by the German emigré director Wolfgang Petersen, and we are told anecdotally that another German director, Katja von Garnier, was invited to document the making of the film. Here, Hughes and Brady point out the irony in the export of a Hollywood film directed by a German to Germany, where it competed with German films for German box office takings (1993: 278). The relevance of these anecdotes to "German film after the *Wende*" seems rather tenuous at best. In my reading of this paper, the authors actually have a semi-repressed desire to write *In the Line of Fire* into the corpus of German cinema (even the German export title is cited), perhaps reflecting their frustration at the dearth of available texts. This becomes clearer when the third item in their list of possible paradigms of what constitutes German cinema is considered (1993: 278):

⁴¹ I deliberately omit to mention the documentary films which are considered by Hughes and Brady, as these fall beyond the remit of this thesis.

"When, therefore, is a film a German film? When it is funded in Germany? When it is made by a German director? What is the nationality of a co-production? Does the nationality of a film matter in a global industry? Could the German film industry on its own come up with an international blockbuster? Is it the role of government subsidy to finance the attempt to make a commercially successful film? In what circumstances does film, as a form of cultural expression, need a specific audience with a specific cultural heritage? These questions dogged German filmmaking in the early 1990s..."

These are important questions, but Hughes and Brady fail to spell out which (combination) of the above positions they wish to adhere to in their paper, and as a consequence their work risks being rather unfocussed and even inconsistent. For example, at the beginning of their narrative, the feature film Das Boot (Wolfgang Petersen, 1981) is classified as "Germany's most successful and prestigious recent film export" (1993: 277). This would presumably imply that bigger global box office hits such as The Never-Ending Story and The Name of the Rose, both international coproductions which have often been labelled as "German films", are not therefore held to be "German" by these authors, and that the relevant paradigm cited above has been rejected. However, an international coproduction is actually the very first "German" feature film to address the *Wende* that they choose to discuss; this is Salmonberries (Percy Adlon, 1991). Having highlighted the difficulty in defining "a German film", Hughes and Brady use the label in a completely arbitrary manner in the remainder of their account.

Hughes and Brady claim that, "Initially, unification appeared to offer the German feature film much needed topical subject matter" (1993: 285). In what follows, an unambiguous yearning for a revival of politically-engaged topical filmmaking in the tradition of the New German Cinema is strongly articulated. The German films addressing the *Wende* with which they are confronted prove a disappointment however, "a curious mix of light entertainment and political timidity" (1993: 285). Hughes and Brady tend to praise films such as Salmonberries and Liebe auf den ersten Blick (Rudolf Thome, 1991) which in their view do not "indulge in the facile images which were soon to become the well-worn clichés of unification" (1993: 286), while chiding films as diverse as Apfelbäume (Helma Sanders-Brahms, 1991) and Trabbi goes to Hollywood (Jon Turteltaub, 1990) for their "patronising" portrayal of East Germans as "simple, almost mindless provincials" (1993: 286). Hughes and Brady note the prevalence of comedies in post-*Wende* German cinema, and speculate that

"Perhaps it was the fear of an overly didactic, moralizing tone that led so many directors to resort, often rather desperately, to humour when confronting the disappointments of post-unification Germany."

No further explanatory comments are made with regard to the very large corpus of comedies that have appeared in the 1990s; instead plot synopses of a handful are provided, including the avant-garde Das deutsche Kettensägenmassaker (Christoph Schlingensief, 1990) and Der Brocken (Vadim Glowna, 1991).

Having again expressed their disappointment at the general lack of response by New German Cinema directors to the *Wende* (1993: 291), Hughes and Brady nevertheless devote a lengthy section to those films that this so-called "group" actually did make in the period 1989 to 1993, regardless of textual content. This is followed by sections considering cinematic representations of World War Two during this period - rather tenuous parallels are drawn between 1945 and 1989, the latter date being dubbed "the second *Stunde null*" (1993: 292) - and the "diversity of cinema in the 1990s"; neither section contribute greatly to addressing the stated subject matter of Hughes and Brady's paper.

If nothing else, Hughes and Brady's disjointed account does illustrate the current lack of a frame of reference for Anglo-American academics working on post-New German Cinema: little work has been done in this field and simply extending existing debates - on the directors of the New German Cinema, or representations of the Third Reich, as Hughes and Brady do, for example - altogether fails to adequately account for developments of the later 1980s and early 1990s.

The British film magazine *Sight and Sound*, which is supported by the British Film Institute, occasionally made reference to the German film industry between 1988 and 1995 as part of its general coverage of European national cinemas. During the late 1970s and early 1980s, a period in which the New German Cinema received a good deal of attention from British film journalists and other writers on film, *Sight and Sound* had by contrast published a considerable number of articles on the subject⁴². With the waning of interest in this tradition of German cinema (in which magazines such as this participated), both in Germany and abroad, *Sight and Sound* dedicated progressively less space to the subject from the mid 1980s onwards. An article by Green (1988) was the last published by the magazine to consider directors associated with the New German Cinema (here, Wim Wenders, Werner Herzog and Percy Adlon) as having any form of unifying identity. Even this was becoming ever more tenuous as these directors were, as the article's title notes, "Germans abroad". Green's article rather draws a line under the New German Cinema in British film journalism (if not British academia), with Green observing (1988: 126)

"With the return to a conservative political order in the 80s, sights are set on economic viability in German films rather than experimental dynamics or social controversy. Aspects of change are the attempts to revive screen comedy (for example, Doris Dörrie's *Men*) and a growing internationalism."

The brief mentions of film comedy and internationalism here are quite prophetic, as each were of considerable importance for German cinema of the early-to-mid 1990s, as Chapter Two illustrated.

⁴² For example, Dawson (1979), Dawson (1980), and Fisher (1985).

A brief comment in an editorial four years later by Dodd (1992: 3) further underlines the fact that the New German Cinema was no longer regarded by these film journalists as even being on the agenda for discussion:

"now that German film-makers such as Wenders and Syberberg are no longer recognised, post unification, as their country's authentic conscience, they are deprived of a role and can even sometimes be dismissed as 'harmless nutcases'."

During the period 1990 to 1995, only a handful of articles in *Sight and Sound* address any aspect of contemporary German cinema at length, these being an interview with and profile of the director Wim Wenders⁴³, a report on the making of Edgar Reitz's television film *Die zweite Heimat*⁴⁴ and an article on the privatisation of the Babelsberg film studios⁴⁵. The editorial decision to include material of this type indicates that German cinema was conceived by journalists working for *Sight and Sound* between 1988 and 1995 almost exclusively in terms of narratives of its own past. Here I refer firstly to the tradition of auteur film-making associated with Weimar Cinema and the New German Cinema, to which Reitz and Wenders belong, and secondly to Babelsberg as an enduring symbol of the Nazi past and Cold War; these studios, located in the former GDR, invoke both eras, and are also strongly associated with several canonical films made during the Weimar period. Put another way, no emerging trends discerned in contemporary German filmmaking were deemed by the editorial board to merit a single article between the late 1980s and early 1990s. Here it is also notable that the decision of many British film writers to conceptualise German cinema in terms only of its past bears striking similarities with the conventional practice in much British print journalism to read current events involving Germany in terms only of the nation's past, specifically the period 1933 to 1945.

In the absence of many article-length features, coverage of post-New German Cinema by *Sight and Sound* was restricted to short items in the two to four-page "News" section at the beginning of the magazine, entitled "In the Picture" between 1988 and early 1993, and "The Business" from May 1993 onwards. These included reports on the activities of the film production cooperative *Filmverlag der Autoren*⁴⁶ (which had been established by New German Cinema directors during the early 1970s), the dwindling finances of the Berlin Film Festival⁴⁷, and a Hollywood deal struck by the head of the production company *Neue Constantin*, Bernd Eichinger⁴⁸.

⁴³ Donohue (1992).

⁴⁴ Angier (1990/91).

⁴⁵ Lanouette, J. 1992. 'Whose studio is it anyway?', *Sight and Sound*, 1 (11) (NS), 28-30.

⁴⁶ Unattributed. 1993. 'The business', *Sight and Sound*, 3 (9) (NS), 5.

⁴⁷ Unattributed. 1994. 'The business', *Sight and Sound*, 4 (7) (NS), 4.

⁴⁸ Unattributed. 1994. 'The business', *Sight and Sound*, 4 (6) (NS), 4.

Screen International is a British film trade journal which offers some coverage of the German film industry, featuring reports on developments in the industry such as amendments to the system of film funding and the activities of media concerns, as well as film reviews, details of films in production, and reports on German film festivals (in particular, those at Berlin and Munich) and the reception of German films at other international festivals. In what follows, I will examine issues of the journal from the years 1989, 1992 and 1995 as examples of *Screen International*'s output on post-New German Cinema. I have selected three different years, as substantial changes occurred in the journal's coverage of German cinema in the period 1988 to 1995. A further reason for isolating these particular three years is to facilitate comparisons between my respective accounts of coverage of post-New German Cinema by *Screen International* and by its German equivalent *Filmecho* / *Filmwoche*.

Screen International's German correspondent for 1989 was Mike Downey, who was responsible for writing articles on all the above-mentioned aspects of post-new German Cinema. A review of Peter Timm's 1988 film *Fifty, Fifty* reveals much about Downey's perspective on German films⁴⁹:-

"If the large proportion of comedies and near comedies that were produced in 1988 are anything to go by, Germans are finally sloughing off their propensity for the turgid and the mundane."

In this and other reviews during 1989, Downey (like the writers in *Filmecho* / *Filmwoche*) generally writes positively of the potential box office appeal of any popular films he reviews. The Spring box office performance of the *Heimat* film *Herbstmilch* (Joseph Vilsmaier, 1988) even merits an article of its own, for example⁵⁰.

I would propose that entertainment films form the first of three types of German film that Downey conceptualises. The other two may be discerned from the following review of Bernhard Wicki's 1989 film *Das Spinnennetz*⁵¹:-

"Another turgid tale of inter-war German doom and gloom, and set against the predictable backdrop of the rise of fascism in decadent Berlin, Bernhard Wicki's swansong sets the German cinema back a good 30 years - as if the New German Cinema never even existed."⁵²

From my reading of this and other reviews by Downey in 1989, I would suggest that this journalist divides German cinema up into three types of feature film. The first category is entertainment or popular films: these tend to be received positively by Downey if they appear

⁴⁹ Downey, M. 1989. 'Fifty Fifty', *Screen International*, 689, Jan 28-Feb 4, 82.

⁵⁰ Downey, M. 1989. 'Autumn Milk proves a popular German tonic', *Screen International*, 700, Apr 15-21, 24

⁵¹ Downey, M. 1989. 'The Spider's Web / Das Spinnennetz', *Screen International*, 723, Sep 23-29, 6.

⁵² Downey's opinion of the film stands in marked contrast to the lavish praise by the *Filmecho* / *Filmwoche* reviewer Christian Hellmann mentioned previously (Hellmann describes *Das Spinnennetz* as Wicki's "meisterhaftes Spätwerk [...], das sich in der Güte nur mit einem epischen Bilderbogen wie Bertoluccis '1900' vergleichen läßt").

to be potential hits, thereby enhancing the standing of the national cinema with the German public and providing him with further subject matter. The second category for Downey is what he terms "dull", "mundane" or "turgid" films: these are films which seem to conform to Downey's worst stereotypes of the nature of German filmmaking, with the adjective "turgid" being the most frequently employed marker of this. The third category of German films for Downey is the New German Cinema tradition: as the citation from the review of Wicki's film suggests, Downey seems to approve of the project of the New German Cinema for countering the apparent German tendency to make films which bore him. Moreover, he often employs the formulation "German quality films" as a synonym for films of the New German Cinema⁵³. The international art-house box office potential of New German films is also emphasised here.

Few films recognisably belonging to the New German Cinema tradition were released in 1989, but coverage of the directors most associated with it persisted in *Screen International*. For example, in the long issue dedicated to the Cannes Film Festival, a profile of the jury chairman Wim Wenders is included⁵⁴, while Downey claims in a later issue that Rudolf Thome's 1988 film *Der Philosoph* was "the hit of the Directors' Fortnight"⁵⁵ (despite failing to actually win any awards!)

The most prominent articles about the German film industry to appear in *Screen International* in 1989 deal with plans by CIC and UA to open multiplex cinemas across Germany; on two separate occasions, an article of this nature appears on the front page⁵⁶ (the amount of coverage devoted to multiplexes is comparable with that in *Filmecho* / *Filmwoche*). The effect of the prominence accorded to this coverage is to convey the impression that Germany is belatedly falling into line with other Western countries by encouraging this form of exhibition of films.

A similar narrative strategy is employed in the 1992 texts of *Screen International*. Articles about the proposed privatisation of Eastern Germany's Babelsberg studios appear on three separate occasions on the front page of the trade journal⁵⁷ and inside its covers several more times, thereby rendering this the principal German film news story of the year in the journal. Interestingly, German reunification was deemed sufficiently newsworthy by *Screen International* that it appears to have led to the appointment of two correspondents, Martin Blaney and Andrew Horn, to cover film activity in the new Germany. Both continue to

⁵³ Downey, M. 1989. 'US films take major share of German box office receipts', *Screen International*, 696, Mar 18-24, 12.

⁵⁴ Downey, M. 1989. 'Germans hit the foreign trail', *Screen International*, 703, May 6-12, 248-250.

⁵⁵ Downey, M. 1989. 'Germans look back at Cannes', *Screen International*, 708, Jun 10-16, 11.

⁵⁶ Downey, M. 1989. 'German admissions fuel multiplex mania', *Screen International*, 697, Mar 25-31, 1; Downey, M. 1989. 'Multiplex mania hits West Germany', *Screen International*, 735, Dec 16-22, 1.

⁵⁷ Blaney, M. 1992. 'Fears grow of DEFA shotgun wedding', *Screen International*, 843, Feb 7-13, 1; Blaney, M. 1992. 'Film-makers lobby for French DEFA plan', *Screen International*, 856, May 8-14, 1; Blaney, M. & Horn, A. 1992. 'CGE clinches DEFA deal', *Screen International*, 858, May 22-28, 1.

invoke the recent political changes during 1992 by choosing to highlight films made at the newly privately-owned Babelsberg studios, with the production of the very first post-privatisation film to be made there, John Schlesinger's *The Innocent*, meriting a front-page photograph and feature⁵⁸ (the production of this film is also highlighted by *Filmecho / Filmwoche*).

Space for film reviews was more restricted in 1992 than in 1989, with very few reviews of German features appearing in *Screen International*, as a result of which it is much harder to determine Blaney and Horn's perspective on German films as texts than was the case with Downey in 1989. In the "Production" section of the journal however, alterations to the layout of the journal had taken place. Each issue in 1992 provides special features on individual films which are complete or near completion, and the editorial decisions as to which new films should be highlighted every week are potentially revealing. The above-mentioned Babelsberg film *The Innocent* is again featured in this section⁵⁹, as are others made at this studio such as *Der Kinoerzähler* (Bernhard Sinkel, 1992/3)⁶⁰. The editorial decision to foreground the work of two then-emerging directors, Detlev Buck⁶¹ and Sönke Wortmann⁶², in this section is also interesting, since by 1995, these two figures counted among the most prominent and certainly the most commercially successful directors of the post-New German Cinema, as I shall discuss in Chapter Four.

Screen International's 1995 coverage of post-New German Cinema was not dominated by a single news story as it was in 1989 (multiplexes) or 1992 (the privatisation of the Babelsberg studios), although these particular existing narratives of German cinema continued to appear during 1995⁶³. In this year, a single correspondent (Martin Blaney) reported on all German film-related events, indicating that the journal's editorial board at the time deemed German cinema to be of less interest than three years previously, when coverage had been markedly expanded and prioritised in the wake of unification. By 1995 the subject of German cinema had either slipped from the journal's main agenda, or was a victim of staff cutbacks.

The American film trade journal *Variety* publishes yearly reports on national cinemas, including that of Germany, in its annual books entitled "International Film Guides", which offer overviews of the year's filmmaking and film consumption around the world⁶⁴. Kindred,

⁵⁸ *Screen International*, 862, Jun 19-25, 1.

⁵⁹ Horn, A. 1992. 'The Innocent' [Production Report], *Screen International*, 865, July 10-16, 18.

⁶⁰ Horn, A. 1992. 'Der Kinoerzähler' [Production Report], *Screen International*, 888, Dec 18-24, 32.

⁶¹ Blaney, M. 1992. 'Wir können auch anders' [Production Report], *Screen International*, 880, Oct 23-29, 18.

⁶² Blaney, M. 1992. 'Run of Hearts' [Production Report], *Screen International*, 875, Sep 18-24, 22-23. Wortmann is featured in a further article: Blaney, M. 1992. 'Neue film deal for Wortmann', *Screen International*, 842, Jan 31-Feb 6, 4.

⁶³ Blaney, M. 1995. 'Germany' in Unattributed. 1995. 'Generation Plex', *Screen International*, 1013, Jun 23-29, 20-27; and Blaney, M. 1995. 'Interview with Reinhard Klooss (Joint managing director of Babelsberg Film)', *Screen International*, 1034, Nov 17-23, 48.

⁶⁴ See Bibliography for Chapter Three for publication details.

the author of these short (usually five to seven page) surveys of each year's record of film production and exhibition in Germany during the period 1988 to 1995, provides useful statistical information such as lists of the year's ten most popular films and domestic productions (as featured in Appendix Two), and the total number of cinema screens, as well as comment and speculation about the state of domestic filmmaking. This takes the form of profiles of individual films and directors (emphasis is placed on those films that have been most widely viewed, as in the other trade journals), and general comment about the overall economic performance and percentage market share of domestically-produced films in the cinema marketplace. In his report on the industry in 1995 for example, Kindred (1997) summarises what he regards as the principal trend of recent years:-

"Pragmatism is the philosophy of the young generation of German film-makers, and it's paying off at the box office. Just as the New German film-makers turned their backs on 'Grandpa's Cinema', in the so-called 1962 Oberhausen Manifesto, newcomers like farmer-turned-film-maker Detlev Buck, Sönke Wortmann and Rainer Kaufmann have rebelled in turn and replaced a cinema of auteurs with one of commercial journeymen. Their aim is to recapture the home crowd from Hollywood and, with limited budgets and other constraints, they are succeeding by giving the moviegoing public what it is supposed to want, entertainment."

These comments - which again employ a simple but memorable pendulum-like narrative structure *à la* Karasek in *Der Spiegel* as a metanarrative for post-New German Cinema - reproduce a general consensus within the film trade press by the mid 1990s about the nature of post-New German Cinema, as will be evident from my discussion of *Filmecho* / *Filmwoche* and *Screen International* in this chapter.

Weekly issues of *Variety* also review (albeit very briefly) all films shown at the world's film festivals each year, thereby covering many German films, and the journal occasionally prints articles about economic and industrial developments in the German cinematic marketplace of a type similar to those in *Screen International*.

Kino is an English-language pamphlet published an average of four times a year from Berlin by Dorothea Holloway and Ronald Holloway. It is distributed at film festivals and is available from some German film bookshops. *Kino* publicises and reviews new releases of German feature films and documentaries, offers reports on the performance of German productions at film festivals, gives details of awards and prizes received by German films, includes interviews and profiles of leading figures (principally, directors, producers and stars), and reviews books related to German cinema. The writers of these short articles take such an emphatically affirmative and upbeat stance on virtually all aspects of German filmmaking that the pamphlet sometimes reads like a sales brochure. The dominant modes in most of the reviews for example are those of hyperbolae and praise: in one issue (1996: 6), *Der Totmacher* (Romuald Karmakar, 1995) is described as "a masterfully constructed film in every respect", while reviews of *Stadtgespräch* (Rainer Kaufmann, 1995) and *Schlafes Bruder* (Joseph Vilsmaier, 1995) place particular emphasis on the minor prizes that each have won.

Negative criticism, where it appears at all, is understated. In a review of Einer meiner ältesten Freunde (Rainer Kaufmann, 1994) in the same issue for example, Ronald Holloway conceals his misgivings about the film's script by praising most of its other aspects (1996: 6)

"Little doubt, this being his feature film debut as a director, Rainer Kaufmann is a name to watch on the German scene. Particularly good at handling actors, and fascinated by the subtleties of changing relationships, he needs only an able screen-writer to team with to add a bit of screwball-comedy depth to this drama of social behaviour."

From this it will be evident that *Kino* is somewhat lacking in terms of critical comment; nevertheless, the publication has played a role in the writing of my thesis as a basic source of information about new releases.

The subject of German cinema was seldom discussed in the British news media between 1988 and 1995. Reviews of the handful of German-made films to actually receive a British theatrical release in this period did however occasionally appear in the arts review pages of the broadsheet newspapers.

The release of Sönke Wortmann's popular 1994 comedy Der bewegte Mann (*The Most Desired Man*) in the UK in 1996 for example gave rise to some revealing reviews in which film critics' deep-set prejudices about the humourlessness of German culture and cinema were laid bare. Sheila Johnston wrote in *The Independent* (25.1.96) that

"The Most Desired Man is a German comedy, though not quite as grim as that oxymoronic description suggests."

A similarly dismissive tone was struck in the same day's *The Guardian*, in which the film reviewer Jonathan Romney asked,

"Can I interest you in a German comedy? I thought not. The last one that came our way was Schtonk! and that schtank."

In November 1994, five years after the fall of the Berlin wall, the British terrestrial public channel BBC2 screened a season of programmes to mark this anniversary. This included broadcasts of the feature film Der Philosoph (Rudolf Thome, 1988) and television film Dann eben mit Gewalt (Rainer Kaufmann, 1990), as well as a special Berlin edition of the weekly late-night arts review programme *Late Review*⁶⁵. The latter featured a discussion of the recently-released East German film Burning Life (Peter Welz, 1994) by its regular panel of reviewers, the newspaper columnists Tony Parsons and Alison Pearson, and presenter Mark Lawson, who were joined on this occasion by Julius Grützke, an arts critic

⁶⁵ This programme was broadcast on 3rd November 1994 at 11:15pm.

from *Der Spiegel*. In this programme, Lawson begins by characterising Burning Life as an example of a growing tendency towards the slavish emulation of Hollywood narratives and practices in post-New German cinema:-

"As in most modern countries including Britain, one of the big decisions for artists is whether they resist or assimilate the huge influence of American culture. 'Burning Life', the first feature by the young East German director Peter Welz, doesn't put up much of a fight. It's clearly a version of 'Thelma and Louise', adding an extra layer of reflections on the tensions and opportunities of Germany since the wall came down."

Parsons, having derided Burning Life as "the worst film I've ever seen in my life [...] a real piece of garbage", continues by proclaiming the West German film industry's inherent superiority to its East German counterpart:-

"I've got enormous respect for the German (*sic*) film industry and I hope it's not going to be dragged down by incompetents coming from the East."

This view, which is apparently based entirely on his viewing of this single film, reveals rather more about Parsons' personal ideological antipathy towards Communism and East European culture than a concern for the relationship between the former East and West German film industries. Pearson broadly concurs with his condescending analysis of the "terrible impoverishment" of East German culture as the principal reason for the film's allegedly low level of artistic merit. More revealingly, she also suggests,

"I think it's to do with a broader crisis in German cinema, I mean, Fassbinder's dead, Wenders is making unwatchable films and Herzog is now completely out of his tree. It strikes me that this [film] is part of a general process of disintegration [in German cinema]."

What is most striking about this discussion between Parsons and Pearson is their unthinking identification of the category of "contemporary German cinema" with the New German Cinema, despite the fact that the most recent film within this tradition to which they are able to refer is the (then) ten-year-old Heimat; even the death of Fassbinder in 1982 is invoked in their discussion as an aspect of German cinema's so-called "crisis" in 1994! In this broadcast, the evident gap in these reviewers' knowledge about post-New German Cinema, resulting from the lack of distribution and media coverage of German films in Britain in the late 1980s and early 1990s⁶⁶, is quietly sidestepped by rekindling a decade-old debate about the death of Fassbinder and its consequences for German cinema, along with a slightly more recent controversy regarding the alleged artistic decline of two of the remaining three male auteurs most associated with the New German Cinema in the British media.

⁶⁶ Post-New German films' poor record of UK distribution is discussed in Chapter Two.

The only other English-language interventions into debates about post-New German Cinema occur in very brief form in works about German cinema in general. The following comments in a survey of West German films to be released between 1985 and 1990 by Helt and Helt (1992: xiv) are typical:-

"The German film industry will never be able to compete with Hollywood; indeed, even attempting to compete will only weaken it. The future of German cinema, if there is one at all, lies in returning to the virtues and strengths of the *auteur* film. German cinema can never achieve the perfection of Hollywood cinema, nor will it ever be able to approximate the economic power of Hollywood."

Here, as in much Anglo-American academic writing about post-New German Cinema, the authored film continues to be favoured over its commercial rival (although in this case it appears that the writers have at least viewed some contemporary popular German films) as has traditionally been the case in most English-language analysis of German filmmaking.

In conclusion, following the lengthy examination of the sources of my research into debates about post-New German Cinema above, I would now like to propose a series of paradigms around which these discourses might be mapped. It is these paradigms which will shape the remaining chapter of my thesis.

1. Commerce over Art: Success Or Failure? - it is in my view quite reasonable to suggest that a general consensus has emerged that filmmaking in Germany between 1988 and 1995 became increasingly commercially-oriented at the expense of auteurist modes of filmmaking associated with the New German Cinema. Karasek's pendulum metaphor - in which the broad trend in German filmmaking had swung away from popular filmmaking towards art cinema in the 1960s, and had started to swing back in the 1980s - appears in various guises in both German and English-language discourses. This perceived development attracted a mixed response, as I have shown. For some, especially Anglo-American devotees of the New German Cinema and writers such as Pflaum and Prinzler within Germany, it was anathema to their preconceptions of "authentic" German cinema, while for German supporters of the conservative government's film policy such as Seidel (1994: 1) the development was encouraging but as yet inadequate in that the films had failed to achieve sufficient levels of box office success in Germany. In early 1996 however, a series of box office successes by popular German films gave rise to a brief period of euphoria among German film critics, as in the case of Schumacher's report from that year's *Berlinale* for the trade magazine *Moving Pictures* (1996: 16):

"Die Spatzen pfeifen es von den Dächern. Der deutsche Film ist aus seinem kommerziellen Dornröschenschlaf erwacht und erreicht, was kaum noch jemand für möglich gehalten hätte: er wird vom großen Publikum gesehen. Was mit Doris Dörries *Männer* begann, geht mit einer neuen Erfolgsserie deutscher Komödien weiter. Die Liste ist lang: *Pappa ante Portas*, *Der bewegte Mann*, *00Schneider - Jagd auf Nihil Baxter*, *Keiner liebt mich*, *Stadtgespräch*, *Japaner sind die besseren Liebhaber*.... Eine neue Generation von Filmemachern,

Drehbuchautoren und Schauspielern [...] stellen [...] handwerklich perfekte Filme her, die vor allem eins wollen: ein Publikum finden."

The major *Der Spiegel* article on post-New German Cinema describes the alleged tendency towards entertainment films in the early 1990s as a "*Zeitenwende*, die das deutsche Kino in diesen Tagen erlebt [...] Es geht um den *unaufhaltsamen Aufbruch in die Ära des Entertainments*" (Unattributed, 1996a: 215; my emphasis). This article also characterises the changes undergone by German national cinema as the product of a "Generationenkampf" (1996a: 215) in which a new generation of young directors, led by Sönke Wortmann, defeats the leaders of the older New German Cinema in the name of delivering home-grown cinematic entertainment to the masses.

2. Genre filmmaking - to further refine the paradigm above, I invoke Rentschler's contention that post-New German Cinema has been characterised by a transition from auteur cinema to genre filmmaking ("Vom Autorenfilm zum Genrekino", 1993: 290), an observation which has been widely echoed both in Germany and abroad. The popular comedy in particular (as evidenced by the list of film's cited by Schumacher above) was particularly prominent in the early 1990s, and its re-emergence as a popular German genre was frequently traced back to the surprise box office hit *Männer* (Doris Dörrie, 1985).

3. National vs. International Film Culture - post-New German filmmaking was increasingly contrasted with that of Hollywood as a consensus developed between 1988 and 1995 that popular films predominated. Arguments became predicated on questions such as whether German filmmakers were imitating "American" cultural practices, and whether such a development was malign or benign. The position of German cinema within a global media marketplace was also a point of contention, while German film's position in a European context also became a focus of debate as proposals for social, economic and political integration in Europe (such as the Single European Market and European Monetary System) were discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR

POST-NEW GERMAN FILM-MAKERS, STARS AND FILMS

In my final chapter I consider "post-New German Cinema" in its most tangible manifestations, i.e. in terms of those people and cultural artefacts I would most closely associate with the term. This chapter thus marks a move away from examining post-New German Cinema in terms of the economic, political and industrial structures and developments which have cumulatively constituted this form of cultural production (Chapter Two), and in the sense of discourses which have jointly constructed the concept of post-New German Cinema (Chapter Three) - although it does also attempt to build on the findings of each of these contrasting approaches.

In this chapter I highlight a number of texts (including star images and marketing strategies as well as film texts) and people (such as directors, producers, actors and actresses), which I proceed to locate in historical and contextual terms, with regard to both film history and context, and social / political history and context. Again I would stress that the act of choosing these specific figures and texts should not be regarded as an exercise in canon formation, against which I raised a series of objections in Chapter One. While it is true that some of these figures and texts are discussed in this chapter partly on account of their generally perceived "significance" (i.e. the amount of attention they have received within different discourses), it is also important to note that the quality of my work as a film historian undeniably benefits from the comparatively large amount of secondary material available on these particular figures and texts. In the case of many other figures and texts I could equally well have selected on an arbitrary basis, there is simply much less information available in the public domain about them. My primary motivation in selecting the specific figures and texts discussed here is to lend my historical narrative a greater degree of credence, by providing thoroughly discussed examples of what I hold to be broader developments within German filmmaking during this period.

I have structured this chapter, like those that precede it, in two broad sections. In Part One, I construct a personal narrative of post-New German Cinema in which I describe, categorise and analyse the activities of various figures I would associate with this term. In Part Two, I present a series of case studies, in which I examine a series of texts (as defined above), in order to consider some of the issues raised by Part One in greater depth.

PART ONE:

CATEGORIES OF POST-NEW GERMAN CINEMA

The term "New German Cinema", like any concept of a film "movement", has proved to be a fundamentally problematic construct in that it inevitably masks or glosses over the diversity of filmmaking practices of the time with which it is associated. For example, the

term underwent a re-evaluation in the late 1970s when the work of female directors such as Helke Sander and Margarethe von Trotta challenged its dominant patriarchal usage by many filmmakers and film commentators. Many histories of the New German Cinema were subsequently revised to incorporate female filmmakers, and other histories highlighting women's "contribution" to the New German Cinema were also published.¹

To give a further example of particular concern here: conventional claims that "popular" or "genre" cinema was extinguished by the New German Cinema in the late 1960s and 1970s², are at best an exaggeration, at worst downright inaccurate. Even a cursory glance at film production and box office lists from this time reveals that popular or genre films continued to be made in Germany during the so-called era of the *Autorenkino*; however, such films attracted little attention from critics outside the FRG as they did not fit the New German Cinema mould. Productions by certain film-makers who were actually specialising in genre filmmaking towards the end of the term's currency, such as Doris Dörrie (romantic comedies) and Wolfgang Petersen (thrillers), to name just two prominent examples, were furthermore sometimes rather awkwardly written into the canon of the New German Cinema by some film historians (as I showed in Chapter Three), merely on the premise that the historical moment at which certain of their films were made should ultimately determine the category in which their chosen mode of film-making be made to belong, despite the often compelling textual evidence to the contrary.

Where the New German Cinema is concerned, it is also clear that even some of the work of its two most celebrated directors, Wim Wenders and Rainer Werner Fassbinder, also perhaps unexpectedly serves to destabilise the auteur paradigm to at least some extent. Both Wenders and Fassbinder on occasion worked within the conventions of popular genres, the former the thriller (*Der amerikanische Freund*, 1977), the latter the melodrama (*Angst essen Seele auf*, 1974; *Die Ehe der Maria Braun*, 1978), for example. I would argue that films such as these may be read as operating within the confines of genre cinema just as much as they may be held in some respects to constitute the creative expression of a single director. As I shall go on to demonstrate, the same holds true for a great many post-New German films, as my analysis of discourses about them in Chapter Three indicates. Furthermore, there is an additional factor which weakens the auteurist paradigm as conventionally applied within histories of the New German Cinema: after it was generally held that the New German Cinema had drawn to a close, experimental and art films of a type common to this "era" continued to appear in the late 1980s and 1990s, both from established and emerging auteurs, as I shall show shortly in an overview of the broad range of filmic modes in post-New German Cinema.

¹ Examples of the latter include Knight (1992a) and Fischetti (1992).

² I allude here to claims such as those made by Karasek (1995), which I considered in the previous chapter.

The prevailing popular versus art cinema dichotomy (Karasek's pendulum), which underlies this conception of German film, is thus revealed to be a somewhat fragile construct, despite its almost total acceptance within German film history writing of the past. While it has provided a convenient "shorthand" for film historians, I would argue that it has concealed as much as it has revealed about German cinema.

It is instructive to briefly note at this point that the auteurist paradigm within film criticism as I have described it has a distinctively European dimension. The very concept of auteurism has its origins in, and is strongly bound up with strategies of non-mainstream film production within European cinema, as a specific attempt at formulating an alternative set of film-making strategies to both Hollywood hegemony and indigenous mainstream modes which was undertaken by figures associated with the French *Nouvelle Vague* from the 1950s onwards. This enduring desire to formulate film-making strategies to compete with market-dominating Hollywood studios has been a constant, powerful imperative for all national cinemas in Europe since this time, in the FRG and elsewhere. However, a secondary issue, i.e. whether European national cinemas are best served by targeting mainstream or art-house audiences in pursuing this imperative, has remained contested at different historical moments in post-war Western Europe.

The specific group of films of the mid 1960s to early 1980s which we now refer to as the "New German Cinema" might best be regarded as a body of work in which non-mainstream approaches may be seen to have been uniquely prioritised by filmmakers and financiers in the cinematic history of the FRG. Whether or not this strategy proved to be viable in economic or filmmaking terms is an entirely different matter and the subject of much debate, as I showed in the previous two chapters. This is a subtle but important qualification of the reductive prevailing argument that auteur filmmaking unproblematically "dominated" German national cinema during this period.

In many accounts, as some of the observations by film critics cited in Chapter Two illustrate, the New German Cinema - as they understood it - began to visibly disintegrate in the early to mid 1980s. I have addressed some of the political, economic and industrial dimensions of this process in Chapter Two (the new CDU administration's programme of media deregulation combined with a more profit-oriented system of public subsidy, and an increasing prioritisation by Hollywood studios of overseas markets, for example). I have also analysed mediated discourses which participated in constructing the narrative of the New German Cinema's "death" in Chapter Three. Now I begin to directly consider the concurrent developments in terms of the actual activities of directors and other figures associated with the label New German Cinema at the time this "end" is generally held to have occurred (I shall consider figures who first emerged during the 1980s after this initial overview). In doing this, I attempt to construct an alternative historical narrative to the prevailing accounts of post-New German Cinema by focussing, insofar as this is possible, on the primary evidence.

There is a compelling case for arguing that a series of major changes affected the most famous names of the New German Cinema during the course of the 1980s. I would highlight the fate of two figures in particular as embodying this. The death of Rainer Werner Fassbinder, for many the New German Cinema's leading director because of his prolific output, distinctive directorial style and strong media presence, in 1982 at the age of 36, seemed for some to usher in the demise of the *Autorenkino* since it had suddenly lost what was for many its "figurehead". Meanwhile arguably the most prominent Oberhausen Manifesto signatory Alexander Kluge, widely regarded as something of a "father figure" of the "movement" (his 1966 debut Abschied von gestern was one of the most talked-about films of the early New German Cinema), stopped making feature films altogether in 1987 to concentrate on television work, contributing to late evening cultural affairs programmes such as 10 vor 11, News and Stories, and Prime Time. Many much less prominent directors of the New German Cinema also became inactive in the film industry or turned their back on it for one reason or another during the course of the 1980s (for example, as a result of the aforementioned newly unfavourable conditions for their type of film-making; or for other personal reasons). I shall now consider some of the film-making activities of other leading figures associated with the New German Cinema.

Some of the more fêted figures dispersed to other corners of the globe in the early 1980s. Capitalising on the many accolades which had been recently received by New German films (mentioned previously), a few were able to exploit their new-found status in international art cinema³: Volker Schlöndorff filmed in France and America throughout the decade, Margarethe von Trotta left the FRG in the late 1980s to make films in Italy, and Werner Herzog and Wim Wenders worked in a number of different countries, often with international casts. Among those who most regularly appear on canonical lists of the major directors of the New German Cinema, only Edgar Reitz, Helke Sander, Werner Schroeter and the directorial partnership of Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet continued to work exclusively in the FRG, although some of the aforementioned globe-trotting directors did also occasionally return to film there too; for example, Wenders made two films in Berlin (Der Himmel über Berlin in 1987, and a sequel, In weiter Ferne, so nah!, in 1993), while von Trotta directed the Reunification drama Das Versprechen in 1994.

I will posit that Edgar Reitz, Helke Sander, Werner Schroeter and Jean-Marie Straub / Danièle Huillet exemplify further filmmaking practices which I would identify among so-called New German Cinema directors after 1982. Reitz worked almost exclusively in the medium of television throughout the decade, maintaining the strong links forged between New German Cinema directors (notably Fassbinder) and the small screen in 1970s West Germany. Hans W. Geissendörfer, a New German Cinema director who created the enduringly popular ZDF soap opera Lindenstraße in the 1980s, is another notable example of this tendency. Reitz and Geissendörfer are interesting figures for the argument I am

³ The films of each director mentioned here are listed in the Filmography.

constructing in that they serve to destabilise dominant narratives of New German Cinema; they are often referred to as directors within this tradition, and indeed both made a number of feature films in the 1960s and 1970s, yet they achieved by far their greatest fame through these relatively big-budget television productions after the generally-agreed date of the "death" of the *Autorenkino* around 1982. Many other lesser-known figures associated with the New German Cinema also continued to work in television in the 1980s and 1990s, and the medium was of crucial importance for new figures who emerged during this time, as I shall show later in this chapter.

Sander, like a number of other female directors (notably Helma Sanders-Brahms) as well as a few male directors identified with the New German Cinema, often shunned the medium of feature film altogether in favour of documentary film-making⁴. Schroeter and Straub / Huillet meanwhile continued to make idiosyncratic films based on literary and / or mythological sources (literature was an enduring source for German films throughout the twentieth century, and for the New German Cinema in particular), which were often covered enthusiastically by international film and cultural journals⁵, in stark contrast to the majority of post-New German films, which were largely ignored by this section of the media, as I illustrated in Chapter Three.

During the period 1988 to 1995, certain directors associated with the New German Cinema who managed to continue working in Germany came to benefit from much greater coverage in the German film press than before, possibly owing to the media vacuum created by many of the now-absent "leading lights" of the movement. Rudolf Thome in particular, who was quite prolific between 1988 and 1995, as my Filmography shows, received a good deal of positive critical attention for his work, sometimes drawing favourable comparisons with contemporaries working in international art cinema such as the French director Eric Rohmer.

The films made by the even more prolific avant-garde Bavarian director Herbert Achternbusch (who has on occasion been located by film historians within the New German Cinema) following the much publicised withdrawal of funding for his allegedly blasphemous film *Das Gespenst* (1982) by CDU Minister of the Interior Zimmermann in 1983 also arguably received more extensive press coverage than before, partly as a consequence of his new-found notoriety.

Some directors associated with the New German Cinema can be regarded as having embraced more popular modes of filmmaking during the 1980s, while some filmmakers who sought to continue working as auteurs of the New German Cinema could be seen to have

⁴ Documentaries of this period by Sander include *Die Deutschen und ihre Männer - Bericht aus Bonn* (1989) and *Befreier und Befreite* (1991).

⁵ See Röhild (1993) and Petley (1990).

nevertheless adapted in various other ways to the new climate of film-funding where commercial considerations were of far greater import than before.

The film-making activities of actor / director Hark Bohm, who made several socially critical dramas in the 1980s and 1990s, of which Yasemin (1988) is probably the best known, marked a decisive move towards popular genre film-making during the period 1988 to 1995, which was a striking development, since Bohm is a figure who is closely associated with the New German Cinema. The understated comic presence that Bohm as an actor brought to films such as Fassbinder's Die Ehe der Maria Braun (1978) was now deployed for rather broader humour in screwball cameo appearances in comedies such as Beim nächsten Mann wird alles anders (Xaver Schwarzenberger, 1988), in which he plays a sweaty jogger who collapses in a heap (to overstated comic effect) at a table in a bar. It appears that Bohm very much welcomed popular German filmmaking of the 1980s and 1990s: Rentschler (1993: 292) quotes him as saying "daß es keine beständige nationale Filmkultur geben kann ohne das Rückgrat des narrativen Films" - a striking statement of approval for popular modes. Meanwhile, Michael Verhoeven, another director often identified as belonging to the New German Cinema, made a series of films combining popular forms with Brechtian distanciation techniques to address questions of guilt and resistance in the Nazi era, and the inability of Germans to come to terms with their past. These included Das schreckliche Mädchen (1990) and Mutters Courage (1994). Films such as these illustrate that any notion of a widespread "turn to the popular" by New German Cinema directors would be misleading: the degree of acceptance of popular modes varied from filmmaker to filmmaker. In this case, the incorporation of *Verfremdungseffekte* in Verhoeven's two above-mentioned films stands in marked contrast to the wholly conventional narrative modes of Bohm's Yasemin, yet all three films may be located within the tradition of popular cinema in the FRG.

I would suggest that the "turn to the popular" among some so-called New German film-makers was nowhere more evident than in the decision of two of the movement's leading figures to direct sequels of previous lauded works: Reitz's Die zweite Heimat, the 1991 sequel to Heimat (1984), and Wenders' 1993 follow-up to Der Himmel über Berlin (1987), entitled In weiter Ferne, so nah!. Sequels are generally regarded by film writers as a hallmark of commercial cinema within capitalist countries, on account of their promise of profitability for a reworked version of an existing successful product, and their evocation of the "production line". The appearance of these two films consequently seemed to come as something of a surprise for those who had located Wenders and Reitz within the tradition of art cinema, in which commercial imperatives are notionally secondary to personal creative expression.

I will now proceed to construct the cinematic moment of a Wenders sequel in particular as being of special significance for my film-historical narrative. In weiter Ferne, so nah! is clearly a very unusual text in that it is paradoxically both an art film and a sequel. When Der Himmel über Berlin was originally released, the statement "*Fortsetzung folgt*"

with which the narrative concludes - suggesting on one level that the protagonists' story should be read as an enduring, eternal fable, while at another, more mundane level, leaving open the possibility of a follow-up film - had been generally regarded by film critics as something of a joke, since it seemed at the time to be humorously incongruous for an archetypally serious German filmmaker / artist such as Wenders to even entertain the idea of making a sequel, given the unambiguously commercial motives this is generally held to imply.

It matters little here whether or not the director's initial intention was in fact to make a sequel out of commercial motivation; what is striking about this example is that the ongoing development of more commercially-oriented conditions of film funding, distribution and exhibition in the FRG in the intervening period had certainly made the market for sequels, viewed by funding bodies and film theatres as a guarantor of box office revenues (due to their inbuilt audience recognition factor), more viable (hence the numerous Otto⁶ films and the aptly-named cycle The Never-Ending Story⁷, for example). Even for a director of Wenders' artistic standing in world cinema (and long track-record of successfully securing film funding from committees despite poor domestic box office returns), his decision to make In weiter Ferne, so nah! created the impression that commercial considerations had become of much more pressing importance for this figurehead of the New German Cinema in the six year gap between this film and its prequel.

While some "New German" directors either attempted a transition to international art cinema, or continued to work in Germany, or stopped making films altogether, yet others who had been labelled in this way sought to establish themselves in the American film industry in the 1980s and 1990s⁸.

Percy Adlon, who had been a filmmaker since 1979, made a name for himself in international art cinema in 1986 with his comedy Zuckerbaby. His subsequent films were made in America, sometimes with partial funding from German public television (Bayerischer Rundfunk). The first two of Adlon's American films, Bagdad Café (1987) and Rosalie Goes Shopping (1989), like the first, starred the German actress Marianne Sägebrecht and the three films (all comedies) are sometimes collectively referred to as the *Marianne-Trilogie*; each film explores German emigré identities through the central figure of Sägebrecht. The more sombre Salmonberries (1991), another American-German coproduction, similarly articulates the experiences of a German emigré.

⁶ I refer here to the series of hit films starring comedian Otto Waalkes in the 1980s and 1990s: Otto - der Film (1985); Otto - der neue Film (1987); Otto - der Außerfriesische (1989); and Otto - der Liebesfilm (1992).

⁷ Wolfgang Petersen's 1984 film has spawned two sequels to date: the first was directed by George Miller (1992), the second by Peter MacDonald (1994)

⁸ In addition to the figures discussed here, in the period subsequent to the one with which I am dealing, Wim Wenders also somewhat surprisingly returned to the Hollywood studio system to direct the thriller The End of Violence, despite his previous, widely-documented negative experiences there while making his 1982 American debut film Hammert.

Wolfgang Petersen, who had directed several television films in the 1970s, as well as working on the television crime-thriller series Tatort, enjoyed significant domestic and international box office success both with his war film Das Boot (1981) and the above-mentioned English-language children's fantasy film The Never-Ending Story (1984). As his television work had attracted a high profile in the 1970s, these two films (and by implication, their director) became associated with the latter days of the New German Cinema (Elsaesser's 1989 history of the movement makes reference to Petersen), despite belonging within the tradition of popular narrative film. In the mid 1980s, Petersen departed for Hollywood. After his first two American features (Enemy Mine, 1985; Shattered, 1990) made little impact at the box office, Clint Eastwood rescued his career by requesting his services for the hit thriller In The Line of Fire (1993). With this film, Petersen was elevated to the rank of a Hollywood A-List director, and he went on to consolidate his reputation as an accomplished maker of mainstream action thrillers with Outbreak (1995) and Air Force One (1997).

Two further figures strongly associated with the New German Cinema, the cameramen Michael Ballhaus and Robby Müller, also embarked on Hollywood careers in the 1980s⁹. I would suggest that this development could once again be seen to symbolise the ongoing demise of the German auteurist movement, as well as Hollywood's increasing dominance and absorption of foreign markets in the early 1980s, since they had been the principal cameramen used by two of the figureheads of the New German Cinema - Fassbinder (Ballhaus) and Wenders (Müller) respectively.

The principal conclusion that may be drawn from this overview of the filmmaking activities (or lack thereof) of directors associated with the New German Cinema between the mid-1980s and the mid-1990s is that no single statement would adequately account for their "fate" following their period of prominence from the late 1960s to early 1980s, despite claims to the contrary by some of the writers I discussed in the previous chapter. While it is undeniable that a noticeable paradigm shift occurred around the time of Fassbinder's death and the change of federal government in 1982, it would be misleading and inaccurate to glibly assert that all film production in the tradition of the New German Cinema simply "ended" at this point. What certainly did occur was a range of varying reactions on the part of New German Cinema directors to the ongoing political and cultural changes which were most keenly felt in 1982, ranging from outright retirement, to carrying on making the same type of films, to undertaking new approaches to filmmaking, to working in different media, or to making films in alternative geographical regions; in some cases, a combination of more than one of these strategies was adopted.

⁹ Ballhaus in fact joined forces with another German emigré, Wolfgang Petersen, to make Outbreak, a fact that was celebrated by a German television documentary in 1995.

In the following section I continue my overview of categories of post-New German Cinema by examining the activities of figures not associated with the New German Cinema tradition in the 1980s and 1990s.

Having ended the previous section by considering filmmakers originally associated with the New German Cinema who began working in the USA in the 1980s or 1990s, I now turn my attention to German filmmakers not generally deemed to belong to this tradition who were also active in America during this time. My principal reason for employing this slightly peculiar chronology is that one of the directors in question serves as a pivotal figure for my historical narrative; and some aspects of Hollywood cinema do also play an important role in my account of post-New German Cinema.

A handful of emigré German directors not previously identified with the New German Cinema sought employment in Hollywood between 1988 and 1995, and achieved varying degrees of prominence.

Carl Schenkel, who had made several obscure thrillers and dramas in West Germany in the 1980s, as well as the European coproduction Knight Moves in 1992, also directed two little-known American thrillers: The Mighty Quinn (1989) and Exquisite Tenderness (1994). Uli Edel, the director of Christiane F - Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo (1981), made the German-American coproduction Last Exit to Brooklyn (1989) before moving to Hollywood where he filmed the critically-reviled erotic thriller Body of Evidence (1993). In the early 1990s, Jon Turteltaub made two German "car comedies" featuring the television presenter Thomas Gottschalk, before going on to direct the Disney comedy Cool Runnings (1993). Turteltaub was then perhaps unexpectedly chosen to direct the smash hit Hollywood romantic comedy While you were sleeping (1995). This was the Number One film at the German box office in 1995 and performed similarly well in other territories, yet the director received scant attention from the German media for this, as I mentioned in Chapter Two. Finally, Roland Emmerich, who had made the science-fiction film Das Arche Noah Prinzip in West Germany in 1982, went on to become probably the most successful German director of all time (in terms of box office gross for his films) during the 1990s¹⁰. After building a reputation as an action film director with works such as Moon 44 (1989), Dead Reckoning (1990), and Universal Soldier (1991), Emmerich went on to direct a series of multi-million dollar budget science-fiction blockbusters, including Stargate (1995), Independence Day (1996) and Godzilla (1997).

The directors discussed here may be compared with figures from other European countries of the 1980s and 1990s working in Hollywood. Prominent filmmakers from the UK (Adrian Lyne), France (Luc Besson) and The Netherlands (Paul Verhoeven) emerged as Hollywood directors during this time, while a large number of other less famous filmmakers

¹⁰ Emmerich's film Independence Day reputedly achieved the fourth highest global box-office gross of all time.

from Europe were also active in the United States' film industry. This merely serves to illustrate late twentieth century Hollywood studios' propensity for absorbing talented filmmakers (as well as popular film styles) from around the world in order to sustain their dominance of global film markets.

A German director who had a far less happy experience of working in Hollywood than any of the above during the 1980s was Doris Dörrie, who directed the American film Me and Him in 1987. Her American filmmaking career was however rather short-lived and marked by conflict with studio bosses over her choice of source material (Alberto Moravia's controversial novel of the same title about a man who is able to communicate with his penis), along with their grave concerns regarding the way in which such provocative material should be filmed for middle American audiences, and also by disagreements with fellow German producer Bernd Eichinger over the marketing of the film.¹¹ In the wake of these traumatic experiences, Dörrie resumed her filmmaking career in Germany in the late 1980s.

In my view it is no exaggeration to state that Dörrie is a key figure for post-New German Cinema. However, there is little consensus among film historians as to whether or not she should be categorised alongside female New German Cinema auteurs such as Sander and von Trotta, or held up as a major influence on directors of popular genre cinema in the 1990s. As such, she occupies an interestingly ambivalent position within German cinema history. I will therefore discuss Dörrie further in Part Two of this chapter.

I noted in the previous chapter that some of the German film directors who worked in Hollywood in the 1980s and 1990s (especially Dörrie, Emmerich and Petersen) received a great deal of positive media coverage in the FRG (although others' German-ness was not celebrated).¹² Until figures such as Sönke Wortmann and Detlev Buck (who are discussed in Part Two) began to reach a mass audience with their films in the mid 1990s, mainstream German media coverage of domestic cinema issues was perhaps more strongly focussed on a selection of the nation's emigré directors in America than on those actually engaged in film production in Germany. This was especially the case during the period 1990 to 1993 when the German film industry was widely perceived to be in a slump, since domestic productions were struggling to reach even 10% of the national cinema audience in the face of competition from American imports, as I showed in Chapter Two.

In the early to mid 1980s, the strong box office showing in West Germany and abroad of films such as Das Boot and Männer, as well as that of international co-productions sometimes labelled "West German films" such as The Never-Ending Story and The Name of the Rose (Jean-Jacques Annaud, 1986)¹³, certainly indicated that genre cinema, in these

¹¹ See Angier (1992: 19).

¹² See Unattributed (1995b) and Netenjakob (1995).

¹³ The latter two films were listed by their makers as "German" because of the sizeable contribution from FRG film funding bodies to their production costs. However, both these movies were filmed in English and featured

examples, the war film, the romantic comedy, the fantasy tale and the historical epic, could be regarded as undergoing something of a renaissance in West Germany. It is difficult to dispute the fact that very few German films not identified with the New German Cinema tradition had achieved a similar impact in the previous decade, and so this did constitute a new trend for German filmmaking. The budgets of each of these genre films (with the exception of *Männer*) were also much bigger than for any previous "German" film. Significantly, in the eyes of many film critics and historians, these developments were inextricably linked to a concurrent downturn in the prominence of the New German Cinema and its directors. Twenty years before, the popular cinema of the day had been condemned by an emerging generation of auteurs, most famously in the document known as the Oberhausen Manifesto, leading to fundamental changes in the industry (as Chapter Two illustrated). In the eyes of many film writers and journalists, the tables now appeared to have turned, with popular film-making beginning to displace the *Autorenkino* as the dominant paradigm in German Cinema, as I described in the previous chapter, when I isolated Karasek's pendulum metaphor (1995) as typifying this school of thought.

As I have argued throughout this thesis, binary oppositions of auteur cinema versus genre filmmaking as employed in accounts such as these are rather inadequate as they often serve to impede debate within German film history writing. I will now attempt to develop an alternative approach to this discredited strategy in order to achieve a better understanding of post-New German Cinema.

It is my contention that the articulation of German cinema history has until relatively recently been characterised by the conscious or unconscious exclusion of genre film-making within academic discourses (but not within popular ones, as Chapter Three demonstrated) as a direct consequence of the auteur versus genre cinema binary. Where periods such as the 1950s and 1960s or the 1990s are concerned, when genre film modes are generally held to have been especially prevalent, serious academic consideration of these popular German films has until relatively recently been conspicuous by its absence; popular German films have traditionally tended to be discussed by academics only if their directors may be construed as artists or auteurs.

Conversely, there has again been a considerable body of writing on the subject of genre cinema during these periods (especially hagiographies of its stars) aimed at a general readership within the FRG. I would argue that there is a need for these subject matters to be more widely adopted within academic discourses. At a time when popular modes within many media and from many cultures are being increasingly viewed within American and British universities as a legitimate subject of serious research, German film studies lags rather behind the times where popular filmmaking (and popular culture as a whole) is concerned.

I shall now consider the broad range of genre films made in Germany between 1988 and 1995. I will pay particular regard to which genres were especially prevalent during these years. In the process, I will of course attempt to account for all forms of filmmaking in the FRG during this period, but will pay special regard to the prominence of comedy in the 1980s and 1990s, thereby acknowledging the persistent association of this period with this genre by many writers on film.

I have structured the following account in a way that reflects the importance of genre filmmaking for post-New German Cinema: different genres are dealt with in turn, and I devote most attention to the genres I consider to be the most significant. However, directors specialising in specific genres are also highlighted. This constitutes a narrative strategy which deliberately blurs the prevailing genre versus auteur cinema dichotomy which has been unhelpful for our understanding of German cinema. In the following analysis, I am writing from the assumption that notwithstanding the fact that genre cinema was pre-eminent in 1980s and 1990s German cinema, the auteur paradigm was still of great significance for filmmakers in terms of their conception and creation of film texts, for film distributors and exhibitors in terms of their marketing of these texts, and also for cinema audiences, in terms of their reception of these films.

What is striking about the following account is the large number of new directors who feature. It would be accurate to state that the majority of filmmakers who made their debuts within this particular time frame chose to work in genre cinema, and in very many cases, to specialise in a single genre. So while genre films were certainly being made in increasing numbers, it is still quite possible and valid to regard many post-New German filmmakers as auteurs, although for the most part, working within the conventions of popular cinema.

Following this analysis of post-New German film genres, in Part Two I will examine the work of a number of these "new" film-makers from post-New German Cinema who I hold to be sufficiently significant to be foregrounded in this manner. In the process, I will attempt to justify the choices I have made, and also consider how developments and discourses discussed in Chapters Two and Three have been played out in relation to their work, careers and perceived positions within the domain of German (and European) film.

Comedy

Film comedy was a particularly prominent film genre between 1988 and 1995. However, this was not an altogether new phenomenon for German Cinema, despite some media perceptions of this being a wholly new development in German film history. On this point, it may in fact be argued that the significance of this particular genre has traditionally been downplayed by film historians. In a paper on early German film comedies, Jan-Christopher Horak (1990: 204) notes that



"Germans are known for tragedy, for their love affair with death, not for comedy. German genre cinema in general, and comedy in particular has been completely neglected by historians"

I would like to suggest that this is no exaggeration. For a long time, it has appeared that film comedy has been all but written out of histories of German national cinema. Only when Ernst Lubitsch and Billy Wilder left for Hollywood did they receive widespread critical recognition from within Germany for their popular comedies, for example. Things are little different today: the vast majority of German comedies are virtually unknown outside Germany (and neighbouring German-speaking territories) despite their enduring domestic popularity. This fact certainly testifies to the unexportability of German film comedy, and it is also evident that the vast majority of German film critics (and in all likelihood, probably the majority of all other film critics) would be loathe to revere the talents of directors and stars of post-New German film comedies. Moreover, it is regrettable to report that deep-set Anglo-American clichés regarding Germans' ostensible (lack of a) sense of humour also seem to have occasioned a relative neglect of German film comedy even within *Germanistik* and Film Studies. I would hold that potential difficulties of comprehension and inane prejudices do not provide sufficient grounds for the virtually wholesale exclusion of the historically enduring and popular genre of German film comedy from academic discussion.

Where post-New German Cinema is concerned, there are thankfully recent signs that the traditional dearth of academic interest in German genre filmmaking and in the key genre of comedy may at last be coming to an end. In a very welcome essay studying fluctuations in the different genres of films prioritised by film funding bodies in the 1980s and 1990s for example, Pfaff (1997) shows that comedy scripts came to receive an increasing proportion of the film subsidies which were awarded between 1988 and 1995 in the FRG. This was clearly attributable to a greater consideration of a film's likely profitability than had previously been the case, as I showed in Chapter Two; in fact, according to Pfaff (1997: 70), there was a startlingly high public demand for film comedy, relative to other genres:

"die Komödie [ist] bei den deutschen Filmen das erfolgreichste Genre. Jede deutsche Komödie wird - rein rechnerisch - durchschnittlich von ca. 470.000 Zuschauern gesehen, deutsche Dramen lediglich von etwa 71.000 Filmbesuchern. Natürlich gibt es auch Flops unter den Komödien. [...] Aber die Wahrscheinlichkeit eines Erfolges für deutsche Komödien ist höher als für deutsche Kinodramen."

Pfaff goes on to highlight that the year immediately following this period (1996) was especially noteworthy in this regard, since it was the first in living memory in which film comedy production actually outstripped the production of the traditional market leader, film drama, in the FRG. As mentioned in Chapter Two, the year 1996 also saw domestic productions reach an annual market share of more than 20% for the first time in the 1990s, largely fuelled by this ostensible "comedy boom".

As Pfaff suggests, a considerable, and steadily increasing number of comedies were made in the FRG between 1988 and 1995. The momentum built up by this boost to production in turn generated media attention and the concept of a "comedy boom" was born. Many directors moreover worked *exclusively* in the genre of comedy during these years, further compounding impressions of a new trend in the eyes of film critics, historians and film-goers. These directors would include (I would argue, in order of prominence over the period as a whole) Doris Dörrie, Detlev Buck, Helmut Dietl, Peter Timm, Manfred Stelzer, Xaver Schwarzenberger, Heiko Schier, Wolfgang Büld and Walter Bannert. Some unusually prolific directors such as Ralf Huettner and Dani Levy (who worked in a range of film genres) also made several comedies as well as other genre films.

A sub-category of comedy films which proved to be especially popular with the filmgoing public and funding committees were television spin-offs featuring popular comedians or cabaret artists¹⁴. These include (again in my order of prominence) Otto Waalkes (whose films were mentioned previously in this chapter), Thomas Gottschalk (who starred in both of Jon Turteltaub's German films) Lorient, Gerhard Polt, Hape Kerkeling, Helge Schneider and Bruno Jonas. All of these films were also directed (or co-directed) by the comedy star in question, with the exception of the Thomas Gottschalk features.

A few post-New German film comedies (though probably less than one would have expected given the circumstances) directly derive comedy from recent Historical Events. Schtonk! is based on the Hitler Diaries scandal of the 1980s, Der Papagei lampoons extreme right-wing political parties in the FRG, and Wir Enkelkinder even strives to satirise forty years of post-war German history, while the brief wave of Trabbi films and farces such as Alles Lüge draw lowbrow humour from German Reunification. Other comedies like Wir können auch anders (discussed in Part Two), Tandem (in which parallels are drawn between a long-standing love triangle and FRG / GDR relations) and Stilles Land (in which an East German theatre company is taken over by West Germans), deal more allegorically with the recent past. A handful of films, such as Kein Pardon and Alles auf Anfang, portray the German film and entertainment industry itself with affectionate satire. However, the majority of film comedies belong firmly within the tradition of escapist entertainment, and vary in style from the refined intellectual humour of Pappa ante portas, to family-oriented comedies like Rennschwein Rudi Rüssel, to the slapstick farce of films such as Gummibärchen küßt man nicht and the Manta films (a further series of car comedies based on a single-joke premise).

A further sub-category of comedy within post-New German Cinema is the *Beziehungskomödie*, or romantic comedy; some films of this type (notably Katja von Garnier's Abgeschminkt!, Sönke Wortmann's Der bewegte Mann and Rainer Kaufmann's

¹⁴ A series of spin-off films starring the German television comic Didi Hallervorden in the early-to-mid 1980s set the tone for the emergence of this mode of filmmaking as a viable "brand" later in the decade.

Stadtgespräch) also attracted very large audiences. A few German directors almost exclusively made romantic comedies between 1988 and 1995, these being (again in my order of prominence) Sönke Wortmann, Rainer Kaufmann, Sherry Hormann and Pia Frankenberg. In addition to those listed here, a large number of single-film directors also made hit romantic comedies between 1988 and 1995, for example Sönke Wortmann's scriptwriter Philip Weinges, Rainer Matsutani, Michael Gutmann, Hans-Erich Viet, and, one of the most prominent romantic comedy directors of all, despite making only a single film between 1988 and 1995, Katja von Garnier.¹⁵

Since *Beziehungskomödien* were often big draws at the German box office, they also generated much media attention in the late 1980s and 1990s, as I showed in Chapter Three. It has been observed that there are a number of striking similarities between several of the romantic comedies made during this period. Firstly, an urban setting is common to almost all post-New German *Beziehungskomödien*.¹⁶ In very general terms, this both reflects increased levels of urbanisation in the FRG, and lends the films a certain collective identity.

Within the urban landscape of post-new German *Beziehungskomödien*, a very strong emphasis is generally placed on the private, domestic sphere. Comedy is then often derived from having people with strongly conflicting identities sharing this claustrophobic environment, in which difference is accentuated. Explorations of gender roles, especially issues around male identity, are particularly prominent in these films.

In two of Sönke Wortmann's films, these narrative markers provide the catalyst for the entire plot: in *Allein unter Frauen*, an unreconstructed male chauvinist is forced to flat-share with a group of hostile feminists, which leads to him becoming a caring and sensitive "new man", while in *Der bewegte Mann*, a similar male character has to live with a gay man when he discovers that he has no one else to turn to. It is worth mentioning at this point that Dörrie's 1985 film *Männer* - often held up as a template for *Beziehungskomödien* of the 1990s, as I have shown - also employs these narrative device in a very similar manner (an estranged husband shares a flat with his wife's new lover in order to spy on them). In other *Beziehungskomödien*, such a device may be used for the purpose of closure. In *Keiner liebt mich*, a white heterosexual woman takes a poverty-stricken gay black man into her flat, which enables both to cope better with the loneliness of city life, while in *Stadtgespräch*, a man's ex-wife and ex-lover find happiness when they both reject him and decide to share a home (along with various dysfunctional relatives) at the conclusion of the film.

¹⁵ Such was the impact of *Abgeschminkt!* in terms of helping to consolidate romantic comedy as a viable German film genre when it was released, that when von Garnier's second film *Bandits* was finally released in 1996, and surprised critics by not being a romantic comedy, Suzanne Weingarten (1997) in *Der Spiegel* deemed this moment to constitute "Das Ende des Lachbooms".

¹⁶ Many of the films directed by Detlev Buck (discussed in Part Two) are a notable exception.

It is interesting in additional ways that the domestic sphere features as the dominant location for these films. The domestic sphere was arguably first used as a focal point within German films by female directors of the New German Cinema such as Helke Sander in films like *Die allgemeine reduzierte Persönlichkeit*; several Rainer Werner Fassbinder films are also predominantly set within a domestic environment (most memorably in the director's contribution to *Deutschland im Herbst*, 1978). I would furthermore argue that Doris Dörrie's *Männer*, in which the urban private sphere is key to the film, amounted to a populist re-working of this specific filmmaking strategy, despite the fact that the 1970s films were far more introspective and personal works than Dörrie's hit film. Rather unexpectedly then, it is possible to establish tangible links between *Beziehungskomödien*, which were probably the most popular film genre with audiences between 1988 and 1995, and the highly personal films of certain directors of late 1970s New German Cinema. I would contend that a connection such as this once again serves to fundamentally undermine prevailing narratives of a "clean break" between the *Autorenkino* and post-New German Cinema. In my view, it is equally feasible to construct a historical narrative of late twentieth century German cinema based on an evolutionary model than the revolutionary one conventionally upheld to account for this large and diverse corpus of texts.

It would certainly be misleading to characterise post-New German Cinema solely as a cinema of comedy (or of romantic comedy), despite the steadily increasing prominence this genre had for many film critics and audiences during this period, especially in its latter years (1993 to 1995). Several other types of genre film were also attempted, most notably the drama, the thriller, the period film, and the animated film.

The Animated Film

It is a rarely acknowledged fact that the FRG became probably the leading European centre for animated feature films during the period 1988 to 1995. Although its significance for the global film industry still paled in comparison with the enduring market leader Disney and other large American animation houses, this German cottage industry nevertheless established a solid position for itself within this niche market.¹⁷ Animated films from Germany were capable of outperforming virtually all other domestically-produced films at home (the *Werner* films) and even in achieving notable audiences in export territories (the *Asterix* films), a feat that the vast majority of non-animated German productions could not match.¹⁸

Animation as an artistic mode was therefore very important for German cinema of the 1980s and 1990s. Comic books by German authors were widely read in the FRG at this time and many of these provided the source material for animated films between 1988 and 1995. A

¹⁷ See Unattributed (1992b).

¹⁸ By the mid 1990s, film-length versions of the *Asterix* comic books were being produced exclusively by German animation teams (the first of these was *Asterix in America*, 1994), whereas in the 1980s this series of films had been the product of a collaboration by several different European animation teams.

large proportion of post-New German animated films are therefore highly intertextual, strongly relying on the cult status of these very popular comic books to reach an audience in a non-print medium.

As I have mentioned previously, by far the most prominent of the comic book tie-ins was a film based on the popular Werner comic books: Werner - Beinhart, which achieved a total audience of 4.8m in the FRG - an unusually high figure for a 1990s German film. A sequel, Werner - das muß kesseln! (directed by the same team) was released in early 1996, and achieved an even higher FRG audience (in excess of 5m), a figure which is second only to that of Der bewegte Mann among German films of the 1990s. Other animated films (listed in the Filmography) also performed quite strongly at the German box office. The animators Gerhard Hahn, Michael Schaak and Niki List worked on several of these projects, often as a team. It should be noted that comic books by Ralf König also provided the source material for two non-animated, live-action films: Der bewegte Mann, which I discuss at length in Part Two, and Kondom des Grauens.

Drama

Drama continued to be an important (though arguably declining) genre for post-New German Cinema, as Pfaff (1997) has shown. Frank Beyer, Peter Sehr, Dani Levy, Peter Kern, Tom Tykwer, Romuald Karmakar, Christopher Roth, Vivian Naefe, Kai Wessel and Matthias Glasner are some of the directors who worked mainly within this genre. What is notable here is that surprisingly few directors worked exclusively (or even mainly) within this genre - for example, Levy made comedies as well as dramas, as I have mentioned previously. This lends additional weight to Pfaff's analysis that the genre of comedy was very much in the ascendancy during these years, given the considerable number of directors making only comedies.

The subject matters attempted by film dramas in post-New German Cinema were very varied. Only a handful (as was also the case with comedy) dealt directly with Historical Events of the recent past: Das Versprechen (by a New German Cinema director, von Trotta) and Nikolaikirche (a television film by veteran GDR director Frank Beyer, whose audience ratings prompted a cinematic release) are the only dramas to portray the events of Autumn 1989 of which I am aware. Several dramas did however deal with these events more obliquely, but these again generally tended to be made by established rather than "new" FRG directors (In weiter Ferne, so nah! and Salmonberries directed by Wim Wenders and Percy Adlon respectively), or by directors from the former GDR (for example, Peter Kahane's Die Architekten and Andreas Kleinert's Verlorene Landschaft). A number of dramas sought to articulate the experience of immigrants living in Germany (for example, Deutsche Frau gesucht), while films such as Yasemin and Ex represent efforts on the part of white directors to represent these experiences.

Thriller

A relatively small number of feature-length thrillers were made in the FRG between 1988 and 1995, with only a handful of post-New German Cinema directors specialising in this genre. These included Lars Becker, who is also an author of *Kriminalromane* (or *Krimis*), which form the basis of some of his films; Petra Haffter, and the prolific Dominik Graf. However, the thriller genre as a whole enjoyed a high profile within the FRG, as television thrillers such as Tatort were one of the staples of prime-time programming during the 1980s and 1990s.

Graf is an interesting figure in that he is clearly a cinéaste like many of the earlier New German Cinema directors, but has chosen to work exclusively in genre cinema. As a result, he is often presented as a pivotal figure in histories of late twentieth century German cinema, since he is generally regarded as one of the first of a new generation of directors (along with Doris Dörrie) to turn their back on the New German Cinema in favour of making popular genre films in the early 1980s.¹⁹ Neumann (1986: 145) for example enthused early in his career,

"Dominick [sic.] Graf gehört zu den interessantesten Talenten des bundesdeutschen Regienachwuchses - ihm ist es weniger um die Selbststilisierung als Autor zu tun als um handwerkliche Gediegenheit und Publikumsnähe."

Graf, like Wolfgang Petersen, is also well known for his contributions to the long-established television crime series Tatort; and he also worked on the more recent series Der Fahnder. Both of these series consistently achieved considerable television audiences between 1988 and 1995 in the FRG, as I have mentioned, and it is perhaps surprising that more spin-off films were not made, given the fact that television crime thrillers are so popular and also often positively received within the media in Germany. Graf's Die Katze (1988) was the only notable crime series spin-off between 1988 and 1995, while in the genre of comedy, numerous comparable spin-off films featuring television comics were released during the same period.

Several thrillers within post-New German Cinema (like many of their television counterparts) are highly politicised. Some for example engage in very critical ways with the contentious political issues of immigration and asylum which were hotly debated in 1990s Germany. In Lars Becker's Schattenboxer (1992), refugees are shown to be used as pawns by the criminal underworld, as well as by the political establishment, while in Happy Birthday, Türke! (Doris Dörrie, 1991), a satirical take on the thriller genre, mainstream audience expectations are frequently confounded by the central character - a Turkish-born private eye.

¹⁹ For an in-depth analysis of this, see Grob (1999).

The Period Film

As in other European countries, notably Britain (where costume dramas such as the Merchant-Ivory films are virtually synonymous with British national cinema in many export markets) and France (where films such as Jean de Florette (1986) Manon des Sources (1988), Cyrano de Bergerac (1991) and Germinal (1993) enjoy a similar status), the period film was quite popular with funding committees, filmmakers and audiences in the FRG in the 1980s and 1990s. Within post-New German Cinema, the period film, as in other European countries, was also perhaps the most exportable of all genres. As Appendix Two illustrates, period films constitute a relatively high proportion of the few 1980s and 1990s German films to have achieved UK distribution; Die zweite Heimat (Edgar Reitz, 1991), Stalingrad (Joseph Vilsmaier, 1992), and Kaspar Hauser (Peter Sehr, 1994) may all be classified as period films.

The Bavarian director Joseph Vilsmaier is by far the most prominent contemporary German exponent of this brand of filmmaking. In addition to two *Heimat* films (discussed shortly), Vilsmaier has made a war film (Stalingrad), and two period films based on contemporary novels (Schlafes Bruder and Und keiner weint mir nach). Other figures working within the period film genre in the FRG include the actor / director Klaus Maria Brandauer, Wolf Vollmar, Peter Patzak and Peter Sehr.

As mentioned previously, the New German Cinema director Edgar Reitz made a 1991 sequel to his 1984 film / television series Heimat. In the years following the release and considerable impact of the original production²⁰, a brief post-New German Cinema renaissance of the *Heimat* film occurred with the release of films such as Joseph Vilsmaier's Herbstmilch (1988), which is set during World War Two, and the same director's Rama Dama (1990), which takes place during its immediate aftermath. Christian Wagner, Uwe Janson, Jörg Graser and Jo Baier were other directors who attempted to revive the genre at this time, and most of their *Heimat* films were also set during the 1940s or 1950s. This body of films clearly contains many elements of pastiche of films of the same genre from those years. Post-New German *Heimat* films may be seen to have consciously targeted the audience for these very popular films of the past (which continued to attract large prime-time audiences when shown on German television in the 1990s); a tangible sense of nostalgia for the post-war *Heimat* film is also strongly articulated in many of them. I shall discuss the *Heimat* genre further in one of the case studies in Part Two.

Other Mainstream Film Genres

A handful of other genre films were made in the FRG between 1988 and 1995 which constituted bold (but ultimately futile) efforts to compete with Hollywood productions

²⁰ Heimat was indisputably the most widely-seen film in the New German Cinema canon, with ten million television viewers in the FRG alone. The debates it generated on representing Germany's past even merited an issue of *New German Critique* dedicated to the subject. The subsequent high level of media anticipation for the sequel to Heimat may be gauged by the number of lengthy profiles on the film in the general and film press, e.g. Angier (1990-91) and Unattributed (1992d).

boasting lavish multi-million dollar budgets. I would suggest that audience expectations of genres such as the action, horror, science-fiction and adventure film were so high in terms of special effects and production values by this time, that a sizeable production budget had become a virtual pre-requisite for a film to be regarded by audiences as a credible example of the genre in question. In other words, a certain minimum level of production values and special effects had come to effectively redefine these genres, as a result of which films made in Germany (and Europe as a whole) were simply no longer capable of competing with Hollywood in the film marketplace where these genres were concerned. Comedies, with their lower budget conventions and dependence on indigenous cultural understanding, and dramas and period films, with their ability to attract large audiences because of these genres' well-established indigenous traditions, clearly fared far better. As a consequence, examples of German films belonging to genres other than these are few and far between for the period 1988 to 1995.

The action film genre was attempted by Willy Bogner, while the director Ralf Huettner occasionally made horror films. Other directors attempted colonial adventure films set in exotic locations, for example Jürgen Bretzinger (*Schatten der Wüste*, 1989) and Peter F. Bringmann (*African Timber*, 1989). Bringmann also made headlines for the large (DM12m) budget granted to his 1994 box office flop science-fiction film *Die Sturzflieger*. This was the only science-fiction film made in the FRG between 1988 and 1995, owing to the especially high production costs required for creating convincing special effects in this film genre.

Non-Mainstream Film

Some avant-garde filmmakers continued to find the means to make experimental films in the FRG in the 1980s and 1990s, despite the increasingly unfavourable prevailing funding conditions for this mode of filmmaking. Apart from the prolific "New German Cinema" director Herbert Achternbusch, the most prominent figure of the German film avant-garde at this time was Christoph Schlingensief, who is described by Seidl (1996: 164) with some understatement as a "Provokateur". Schlingensief has been quoted as defending his often controversial films by saying they are necessary as "Wir leben in einer Zeit, die ist so lethargisch, die ist noch nicht mal reaktionär" (Kapels, 1996: 7). Other experimental directors included Lothar Lambert, Dirk Schäfer, Tania Stöcklin and Cyrille Rey-Coquais, Heinz Emigholz, and Dore O. Few attracted much attention beyond the specialist film press. Films made for, and largely viewed by minority communities or subcultures in the FRG also continued to appear between 1988 and 1995: gay and lesbian filmmakers such as Rosa von Praunheim and Monika Treut attracted attention from the film and pink press, for example.²¹

²¹ For example, *Mars* (1994) and *Knight* (1992).

Directors from the former-GDR

The body of films made by directors emanating from the former GDR is a further category of filmmaking within post-New German Cinema for which I have yet to fully account. While there were indubitably figures originally from this geographical territory working within all the modes of filmmaking discussed above from 1988 to 1995 - and I have already cited some of their films - it is also the case that within mainstream and non-mainstream cinema, these filmmakers have tended to be discussed within unified Germany as a discreet group²², despite any variance between their respective approaches to film. There are two major reasons for this. Firstly, many of these figures already had a firmly-established group identity even before Reunification: the East German film production company DEFA actively encouraged joint projects and small film production working groups comprised of several directors.²³ Secondly, all directors from the former GDR were confronted with the task of adjusting to making films within the FRG's social market economy during the 1990s, having been accustomed to a wholly state-run film industry previously, and so may be regarded as having a de facto group identity as a consequence of having to adapt to these new conditions.

Conclusion

In this overview of the broad range of filmmaking activity in Germany from 1988 to 1995, I have proposed a number of trends as characterising post-New German Cinema, each of which is intended to problematise prevailing notions of German filmmaking from this time, and to reveal my personal perspective on this subject.

Firstly, I have argued for a wide variety of activities on the part of directors associated with the New German Cinema, at a time when their working conditions and collective identity were subject to quite fundamental change. Secondly, I have discussed the range of different film genres attempted by German filmmakers during these years, whereby I have illustrated that the notion of the auteur nevertheless played a key role for the conception and reception of genre films during the 1980s and 1990s; and I have also highlighted some other (often unexpected) continuities with New German Cinema. Finally, I have conformed to the prevailing hypothesis that comedy was the predominant genre during these years, but have sought to qualify this position in a number of ways.

In Part Two I expand on these observations by examining a series of film texts and figures associated with post-New German Cinema in greater depth.

²² See for example, *Kinemathek*, 82, December 1993, entitled "DEFA NOVA - nach wie vor?".

²³ Examples of these from the late 1980s and early 1990s are the *Gruppe Roter Kreis*, whose members included Egon Günther, Roland Gräf and Evelyn Schmidt; and the *Gruppe Babelsberg* comprising Frank Beyer, Heiner Carow, Dietmar Hochmuth, Peter Kahane, Siegfried Kühn, Rainer Simon and Lothar Warneke.

PART TWO:
CASE STUDIES

I now isolate a number of filmmakers (in the broadest sense of the term) and film texts (again in a broad sense) which I wish to present as being representative of some of the trends I have constructed in my narrative of post-New German Cinema in Part One. I should hasten to add that this is not intended to be an exercise in canon formation; rather, I feel it is necessary to select some examples and consider them in greater depth in order to elaborate on my position with regard to post-New German Cinema. The reasons for the inclusion of each case study vary, consequently I will make a specific justification for foregrounding them as I discuss each in turn. Building on this, I will ultimately propose a series of defining features of post-New German Cinema for the period with which I am concerned in my Conclusion.

Männer and Doris Dörrie

I propose that Doris Dörrie is a pivotal figure for post-New German Cinema, principally on account of her film Männer (1985), although not necessarily for entirely the same reasons and in the same ways as some other commentators have perceived her, as I shall now explain. For me, Dörrie and Männer are best described as straddling the divide between what we regard as New German and post-New German Cinema.

After returning to the FRG in the wake of her unhappy American experience, Dörrie made a series of generally well-received socially critical comedies. These films were Geld (1989), Happy Birthday, Türke! (1991), Keiner liebt mich (1994) and more recently, Bin ich schön? (1998). Although each film gained respectable box office revenues in Germany for a German film, none was received with anything approaching the euphoria that had greeted her breakthrough film Männer. At the same time, Dörrie's 1985 film was becoming a frequent reference point for critics when discussing German cinema of the 1990s, since popular comedies, and in particular *Beziehungskomödien*, were proving to be a popular choice of genre for German directors and funding committees, and on occasion, gaining large audiences and great media interest, as we have seen. I now offer a re-reading of Männer in the light of these developments.

The fact that Männer was a surprise domestic and international hit in 1985, and that it represented the first romantic comedy made in the FRG to achieve a significant impact at the box office in the 1980s, has led to the film being widely regarded within the post-New German film industry and by many film historians as an epoch-making text which helped to signal the death-knell for New German Cinema and also to pave the way for a wave of popular genre films (principally, romantic comedies) in the FRG in the years that followed. The following comments by, respectively, the New German Cinema director Hans W. Geissendörfer (Unattributed, 1992a: 12) and film critic Andreas Kilb (1997: 26-8) are typical in this regard:

"Dann gab es Doris Dörries 'Männer'. Zu dieser Zeit habe ich angefangen, zu produzieren. Plötzlich landeten auf meinem Schreibtisch nur noch Komödien [...] die Inhalte der Filme haben sich geändert. Die junge Generation macht keine sozialkritischen Filme, keine Agitationsfilme mehr. Das soll sie um Himmels willen auch nicht. Die machen aber nur Händchen halten und tralala, nach der Devise viel Geld verdienen, so wenig Widerstand wie möglich."

"Als *Männer* in die Kinos kam, war der 'Junge' oder 'Neue Deutsche Film', diese wunderbare Erfindung der sechziger Jahre, gerade dabei, sich kläglich zu verabschieden. [...] [Mit *Männer*] traf [Dörrie] das [...] Generationsgefühl der achtziger Jahre. [...] Von Dörries *Männer* aus könnte man viele Traditionslinien hin zum deutschen Kino der neunziger Jahre ziehen. [...] Aber das ist überflüssig, denn in Wahrheit drehen sie alle, Doris Dörrie (*Keiner liebt mich*) eingeschlossen, nach dem *Männer*-Rezept: Sönke Wortmann genauso wie Rainer Kaufmann, Detlev Buck ebenso wie Katja von Garnier."

These two citations illustrate two widely held beliefs; firstly, that the commercial success enjoyed by Dörrie's film *Männer*, and the narrative modes it employs which led to this occurrence, acted as a catalyst for making (romantic) comedy the dominant genre within post-New German Cinema from the mid 1980s to the mid 1990s; and secondly, that the preponderance of (romantic) comedies made in the wake of this ostensible *Ur-text* constituted a decisive victory for commercial priorities - a triumph for advocates of a German cinema embraced by domestic audiences, but a "sell out" of the *Autorenkino* project for those who hold that German cinema should have serious, artistic pretensions - for which Dörrie and her film bear much of the responsibility (although changed funding priorities are clearly also key here).

I would take issue with both of these points of view. Firstly, no critic (so far as I am aware) has ever accounted for the five-year interval between *Männer*'s successful box office run and the belated appearance of similarly perceived romantic comedies of the 1990s. If the 1985 film's influence was as great as is often claimed, the wave of *Beziehungskomödien* which followed should surely have appeared much more swiftly. Delays owing to bureaucratic funding committees or a lack of suitable screenplay writers in the FRG can at best only offer a partial explanation. Secondly, I would wish to contest the viewpoint that *Männer* and other romantic comedies are automatically disqualified from being "sozialkritische Filme".

Far from arguing that *Männer* constitutes a radical departure from the films of the New German Cinema (which has become the received wisdom about the film), or an example of the "dumbing down" of German film, I would like to offer a different reading of the film and the period of its release. Principally, I would like to suggest that Dörrie's *Männer* exhibits a number of important though often overlooked continuities with films of the New German Cinema, some of which are also present in some 1990s *Beziehungskomödien*.

The framing of the text is very much a case in point. The opening titles of the film announce it to have been produced by the *Filmverlag der Autoren*, the production company founded by Wenders and a number of other New German Cinema directors in the early 1970s. First impressions alone therefore locate Männer at least within the lineage of New German Cinema. Meanwhile at the end of the film, the technical crew (cameramen, sound and lighting technicians and so on) appears to the viewer on the film's set where the two main protagonists (played by Uwe Ochsenknecht and Heiner Lauterbach) had stood only moments before in the film's closing scene (similarly, in Dörrie's 1994 film Keiner liebt mich, the director joins the technical crew on screen during the closing credits, singing Edith Piaf's "Je ne regrette rien", a song which has also featured earlier in the film; and Ich und er also ends with a musical performance sequence). These Brechtian moments, disrupting the broadly realistic modes employed elsewhere in the first two films, taken together with the aforementioned association of the *Filmverlag der Autoren* with Männer (and the audience expectations raised by this brand name), underscore the fact that the filmmaker has in fact emerged from the filmmaking tradition of the *Autorenkino*.

However, there is little doubt that Dörrie's decision to subordinate some of this oeuvre's prevailing, self-referential modes to less overtly serious, more humorous ends in Männer is indicative of an attempt to shift away from this brand of generally introspective, reflective film-making to more populist, humorous terrain. As the end sequence of Männer illustrates, this is even achieved in part by satirising some of the cinematic techniques beloved of the New German Cinema's best-known exponents (Wenders for example regularly foregrounds the filmmaking apparatus within his films, for example in the 1975 feature Im Lauf der Zeit).

As mentioned above, a further charge levelled at Dörrie is that her films have lent impetus to a brand of commercially-driven, vacuous and superficial filmmaking in the FRG, which amounts to a betrayal of the New German Cinema. However, other critics have noted the distinctive critical edge of some of her films. Unattributed (1992c: 140) for example actually invokes Fassbinder to describe her portrayal of Frankfurt in the film Happy Birthday, Türke!:

"es ist klar, daß hier deutscher Ordnungssinn als Denunziation vorgeführt, satirisch denunziert wird. [...] Seit Fassbinders bösen Frankfurt-Visionen hat [...] kein Film wie der Dörrie-Krimi den Müll, den Schrott und den Tod in Mainhattan schonungsloser ins Bild gerückt. [...] 'Happy Birthday, Türke!' ist das perfid-komische Gegenstück zum sauber gebügelten 'Tatort' deutscher TV-Provinz. Er ist manchmal zwar grell vor Bosheit, sackt aber nie in Heimat-Betulichkeit ab."

Similarly, in a review of Keiner liebt mich, Unattributed (1995c: 161) draws a clear distinction between Dörrie's oeuvre and that of some 1990s genre filmmakers:

"Zwar bürstet der Film alle Erwartungen auf flotte Gags ab - und wird diejenigen enttäuschen, die sich in einer Komödie am liebsten nur auf ein einziges Gefühl einstellen. Wer aber andere deutsche Beziehungslustspiele der letzten Zeit kennt, [...] der wird Dörries Gespür für die Abgründe des Großstadtltags zu schätzen wissen."

"The same critic goes on to praise Dörrie's "wahres Talent, [...] Gehabe bloßzustellen, Unglück zu registrieren und in all den fiesen, kleinen Lebenslügen des deutschen Bürgertums herumzubohren" (1995c: 161). I would fully concur with these comments, and would furthermore suggest that pointed social criticism is fundamental to all of Dörrie's films, not only Keiner liebt mich. The social criticism present in Männer is indeed entirely consistent with the aims of many figures associated with the New German Cinema. While Dörrie's later films Geld and Happy Birthday, Türke! respectively address the moral vacuity of consumerism, and the experiences of those living on the margins of society, Männer explores the identities, sexual mores and insecurities of German thirty-somethings (especially men). In terms of subject matter at least, this description of these three Dörrie films does bear a passing resemblance to certain films of the New German Cinema, especially those of Fassbinder such as Katzelmacher (1969), Der Händler der vier Jahreszeiten (1971) and Angst essen Seele auf (1973). Dörrie can consequently be placed within the tradition of the *Autorenkino* in that, like Fassbinder and others, she is clearly a socially-critical filmmaker, albeit with a more populist approach to filmmaking than her predecessors.

With Männer, Dörrie maintains some of the critical edge of the *Autorenkino*, but also seeks a broader audience than Wenders et al. The film certainly marks a stylistic departure from the narrative conventions of the New German Cinema. Notably, Dörrie employs so-called popular modes of audience address, such as seamless editing and a high degree of closure, instead of the oblique or self-referential modes, such as disjointed narration and a lack of dramatic action, which characterise many auteur films of the New German Cinema. These textual markers in Männer provide a clear indication that Dörrie is obeying the genre conventions of the romantic comedy. This is also evident in her incorporation of standard narrative features of the romantic comedy such as the love triangle, and in her reliance on the use of certain "types" in her characterisation.

The characterisation of the male protagonists in particular is a good example of Dörrie conforming to the genre conventions of the romantic comedy. The male characters may be regarded as embodying the values and behaviour of the generation of men who grew up in the 1960s and reached adulthood in the 1970s and 1980s, and there is a concerted attempt by Dörrie in this film to portray these men in a comic way (as the title Männer suggests) - in other words, to satirise them. It is surely no coincidence that the generation of males portrayed in the film is the same as that of the majority of figures associated with the male-dominated New German Cinema. The difficulties that the two male protagonists experience in dealing with the opposite sex and in coming to terms with the expectations placed on them by society not only echo much of the subject matter of films associated with the New German

Cinema (notably the films of Wenders and Fassbinder), but also represent a humorous implied critique of New German Cinema directors themselves.

It is especially interesting that the two male characters, Julius and Stefan, live out such contrasting lifestyles. Julius (played by Heiner Lauterbach) is married, has a fashionable job (he is a packaging designer), a large house, and is financially secure. Meanwhile, Stefan (played by Uwe Ochsenknecht) lives an "alternative" lifestyle as an unemployed artist and shares a flat with other social drop-outs. These two characters embody two distinctive "types" of men in their thirties in the 1980s - the yuppie and the hippy (although Dörrie's characterisation is more subtle than this observation might suggest). These two characters embody the choices open to men of this age in the 1980s: conformist materialism or a more idealistic existence on the margins of "decent" society. Notably, neither Julius nor Stefan find fulfilment in either lifestyle: Stefan starts an affair with a married woman and also struggles with being unemployed, while Julius' wife (the very same woman) leaves him, following which he joins Stefan in his *Wohngemeinschaft*.

I would hold that the film may be read as a parodic critique of the generation to which the male directors of the New German Cinema belong. Specifically, the lifestyle choices open to Julius and Stefan in the film resemble the career choices open to directors of the New German Cinema in the early 1980s, which I discussed earlier in this chapter: namely, acceptance of, or resistance against the increasingly unfavourable conditions for the *Autorenkino* (and 1960s idealism as a whole) at this time. In short, the film thematises the compromises and adjustments made by the 1960s generation in the consumer society of the 1980s, which affected the New German Cinema directors as much as the rest of their generation.

On account of Dörrie's distinctive filmmaking strategy in *Männer*, I would argue that the director can be regarded as a figure who symbolically bridges the gap between the New German Cinema and what followed it in the 1980s and 1990s. Dörrie maintains the socially-critical tone of the *Autorenkino* in all her work, but she also distances herself from films associated with this term: she represents one of the first figures to deal with German cinema's recent past ironically, but without rejecting it out of hand, like Wortmann. With *Männer*, Dörrie also showed herself to be at the forefront of adopting popular modes, which would come to dominate the German cinematic landscape in the years to come.

Der bewegte Mann and Sönke Wortmann

The most widely viewed German film in the FRG between 1988 and 1995 was another romantic comedy: *Der bewegte Mann* (1994). The film's director, Sönke Wortmann, had become Germany's most commercially successful film director by the mid 1990s, and his profile was raised accordingly within the German media. For these reasons, I now consider this film and its maker in my second case study.

Der bewegte Mann was Wortmann's fourth feature film; his debut, Allein unter Frauen (1991), was originally a made-for-television film that secured a cinematic release after receiving an enthusiastic audience response at German film festivals. Horst (1991: 40) notes:

"Auf dem diesjährigen Münchner Filmfest [...] war es so erfolgreich, daß man nun zur Kino-Auswertung schreitet - vielleicht in der Hoffnung, hier sei endlich das junge deutsche Komödientalent geboren, das Doris Dörrie doch nicht geworden ist."

The film became a surprise hit, being seen by around 1 million German cinema-goers in 1991. The director's two subsequent films, Kleine Haie (1992) and Mr Bluesman (1992) did not attain such high audiences, although the former was generally well received by critics and won prizes at film festivals. However, Wortmann's 1994 film Der bewegte Mann achieved the highest ever theatrical audience for a German film, with its sales of 6.5m tickets ensuring that it had the distinction of being both the Number One domestic production and in the annual Top Ten at the German box office in two successive calendar years, 1994 and 1995, as I showed in Chapter Two. Wortmann's Das Superweib (1995) also made a considerable impact at the German box office in early 1996, with an audience in excess of 3 million.

Wortmann's films are certainly characterised by relatively high production values when compared to many other post-New German films, and the camerawork in his films in particular has often been praised by German film critics, such as Gräfe (1992: 26), who singles out "die exzellente Kameraarbeit" in Kleine Haie, and Schnelle (1993: 35), who writes of Mr Bluesman:

"Gut sehen sie aus, die Filme von Sönke Wortmann. Von der Lust am Erzählen zeugen ihre Bilder und von einem instinktiven Gespür für filmische Rythmen und Kompositionen. Das ist schon eine Menge im deutschen Kino, wo die Kamera immer noch viel zu oft mißbraucht wird zum Abfilmen von Hörspielen und pädagogischen Trakaten. Wortmann sieht sich als Handwerker und Profi, der sich den Geschichten unterordnet und nicht umgekehrt, er will Filme für ein großes Publikum machen."

The word *Handwerker*, or "craftsman", which is used in this review, is a term that has regularly attached itself to directors of the post-New German Cinema in general²⁴ and to this director in particular. The term has been used by many critics, and even by Wortmann himself to characterise his particular approach to filmmaking.²⁵ At one level, the term implies that the director possesses a single-mindedness and dedication to his craft; his overriding concern is to construct a coherent, well-made film in a professional manner that above all looks the part. According to many critics, this often appears to entail striving for high production values above all else. The implication here, whether spoken or unspoken, is to aim for the aesthetic

²⁴ Neumann (1986: 145) uses the term with regard to Dominik Graf for example, while some ten years later, Schumacher (1996: 16) applies the term to all popular filmmakers of the era.

²⁵ See Schnelle (1993: 35) and Koll (1993: 20).

standards set by contemporaneous Hollywood productions (which generally enjoy far larger budgets). Of all Wortmann's films, Mr Bluesman is the most overt attempt to strive for Hollywood production standards in terms of its camerawork and the use of American stars (Lloyd Bridges and BB King) in cameo roles.

It should also be noted that Wortmann (like many other post-New German Cinema directors) additionally sees himself as, and is generally seen as, a *Handwerker* rather than an *Autor*, like Wenders, Fassbinder, Herzog et al., as Schnelle (1993: 35) states:-

"Sein Credo: 'Ich lasse eben nicht meine 'gescheiterte Vaterbeziehung' in meine Filme einfließen, sondern versuche, Unterhaltung zu machen.'"

This mocking statement attributed to Wortmann suggests that for him, filmmaking is a matter of delivering a serviceable product rather than making any sort of personal artistic statement, like the directors of the New German Cinema he so clearly detests. An unsustainable pretension of neutrality on the part of the director is also clearly implicit here. On this matter, it is important to note that at another, broader, level, the term *Handwerker* simultaneously positions Wortmann within (the hackneyed image of) a longer, distinctly Germanic tradition, that of the "honest" craftsman working within a cottage industry lovingly producing a carefully-crafted handmade good for appreciative customers. This differentiates him from a *Künstler* (a more "suspect", volatile profession for the dominant culture), a category to which the directors of the *Autorenkino* would belong.

There is a further dimension to the discourse of the *Handwerker* that has built up around (and been built up by) Wortmann. It would appear that the director and those critics who praise his approach, such as Möller (1991), are trying to create the illusion that his work has no ideological content, as I mentioned above. Möller (1991: 32) for example writes with gushing hyperbole:

"Sönke Wortmann hat eine für (bundes-)deutsche Filmemacher seltene Einstellung zu seinen Charakteren: er liebt sie. [...] Wortmann zeigt sie, denunziert sie aber nicht, so daß man mit ihnen und nicht über sie lacht; ihm steht bei der Inszenierung keine Ideologie im Wege. Er beschränkt seine Regiearbeit darauf, seinen Figuren ein Umfeld einzurichten."

The long-established but fundamentally misguided notion that culture can be apolitical which is perpetuated by Wortmann and his admirer Möller brings to mind certain claims that popular 1950s West German genre films were merely apolitical entertainment films. Moreover, some of Wortmann's films allude to (or pay tribute to) these very films, notably in the opening sequences of Der bewegte Mann and Kleine Haje, which both feature period band music associated with these older films. In the case of Der bewegte Mann, it is revealing that this musical sequence was added to the screenplay by Wortmann - it does not feature in either of the Ralf König comic books upon which the film is based. Clearly, Wortmann is

keen for his films to be associated with popular German genre films of the 1950s, despite their poor reputation among film critics.

Numerous academic studies of cinema (often drawing on the writings of Althusser) have given the lie to assertions that films can ever be apolitical, showing that in fact cultural artefacts for which such claims are made are generally more political than any other because of what they seek to conceal. In the case of 1950s FRG cinema, by generally shying away from the uncomfortable recent past, filmmakers were colluding with those film-goers who preferred not to come to terms with it. It was such a conception of film which the signatories of the Oberhausen Manifesto were railing against, and it is telling that the most popular director of post-New German Cinema should have regressed to this ideological position, in part as a reaction against everything the *Autorenkino* stood for, as I shall now show.

Wortmann has elaborated on his opinions about film-making in Germany in a number of interviews, such as in the following interview with Toomey (1993: 35-6) for a British Sunday newspaper magazine article on post-reunification Germany:-

"German films tend to be rather deep and depressing. People tell me that my films are not German. Maybe that is why I am successful. [...] After the second world war German films were very simple and superficial because the good film directors had left the country during the Nazi regime. Then in the 1960s came the 'Author Cinema' movement with Werner Herzog, Wim Wenders, Fassbinder and others which was very much in one direction - depressing. [...] Films here are treated less as a business proposition than as a cultural and intellectual exercise. I am trying to make films that will appeal to a wider audience, to make people laugh and think and be more open."

Wortmann, utterly disdainful of everything the New German Cinema stands for, has chosen to satirise it on occasion in his films, despite his pretension to be making movies rather than statements. While filming a scene in *Das Superweib*, the character Will Gross, a television director who was one of the many to have been formerly accorded the kiss-of-death label "große Hoffnung des jungen deutschen Films" asks in exasperation, "Was machen wir denn hier - *Deutschland, bleiche Mutter*, oder was?" In a review of the film, Koll (1996: 25) responds,

"Nein das ganz bestimmt nicht, und auch Sönke Wortmann kommt nie in die Nähe eines mit Anspruch 'belasteten' Films. Fatalerweise aber ist ihm auch kein runder Unterhaltungsfilm gelungen."

Commercial considerations appear to have become an increasingly overriding priority for the director during the course of his career. As his career prospered during the 1990s, Wortmann displayed an increasing tendency to play it safe in his choice of subject matter and source material. His first three films had original screenplays, but the three films he has made since then have all been based on best-selling books (two of Ralf König's comic books for *Der bewegte Mann*, Hera Lind's *Das Superweib*, and most recently, Dietrich Schwanitz's *Der Campus*).

Having introduced the director in general terms, I will now consider Wortmann's best-known film, Der bewegte Mann, at greater length. My principal reason for examining this particular film text in detail is the fact that it enjoyed a bigger audience than any other German film released between 1988 and 1995. In the context of my historical narrative, in which genre cinema (and especially romantic comedy) is accorded such a prominent position, it therefore represents a key text. I will now attempt to account for its popular appeal, and discuss its position within German and European cinema of the 1990s.

Der bewegte Mann, like many of Wortmann's films, is best described as a romantic comedy which stages the contemporary insecurities of young heterosexual males. As in the director's debut feature Allein unter Frauen, the recent failure of a romantic relationship, poverty, unemployment and homelessness necessitate humiliating flat-sharing arrangements for the macho protagonist Axel (in this film, the central character lives with a gay man, while in the earlier film, his counterpart had joined a women's commune). Such are the narrative similarities between these two films, that Der bewegte Mann could almost be classed as a remake of Allein unter Frauen.

A combination of factors lay behind Der bewegte Mann's impact at the German box office. As well as being directed by Wortmann, already quite well known with the public for the minor hits Allein unter Frauen and Kleine Haie (Mr Bluesman performed rather less well), it is significant that the film stars probably the two most prominent "up and coming" German film stars of the day, Til Schweiger and Katja Riemann, who I discuss in a separate section shortly. Furthermore, the fact that the film is based on a comic by Ralf König is a further contributory factor to its status. Comic books are very popular in mainland Europe, especially in France and Germany, and König was one of the most widely read authors in this popular literary genre in the FRG during the 1990s. It is notable here that Der bewegte Mann may be located within a long tradition of German films drawing on literary sources. Within German cinema history, this form of intertextuality has been of great significance, with books often appearing to play a major role in selling home-produced films to the German public.²⁶ There has moreover been extensive academic research on adaptations of literature in German cinema.²⁷

I would argue that the influence of the film's producer Bernd Eichinger is a further important factor in the successful performance of Der bewegte Mann at the German box office. Eichinger, who has stated that his primary intention in filmmaking is to make

²⁶ Literary adaptations were an important genre for Weimar cinema, e.g. Nosferatu (F.W. Murnau, 1922) and Der blaue Engel (Josef von Sternberg, 1930). They were also among the most widely-viewed films of the New German Cinema, e.g. Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum (Margarethe von Trotta and Volker Schlöndorff, 1975) and Berlin Alexanderplatz (Rainer Werner Fassbinder, 1980).

²⁷ See Rentschler, E. (ed.) 1986. *German Film and Literature: Adaptations and Transformations*, London & NY: Methuen.

profitable popular films, was perhaps best known for successful international coproductions such as The Name of the Rose (1986) and The Never-Ending Story (1984) at the time that Der bewegte Mann was made. His involvement in Wortmann's 1994 film illustrates his dual approach to filmmaking: big budget English-language blockbusters aimed at the international market, and lower budget genre films targeted at a German-speaking audience. A second collaboration with Wortmann, Das Superweib (1995), is another example of this filmmaking strategy.

A notable aspect of Eichinger's films is his attempt to legitimise popular German films of the past, which have traditionally had a poor critical reputation in the FRG. This intention was especially evident in 1997, when Eichinger produced a series of remakes of 1950s genre films entitled "German Classics" for the television channel SAT-1. Such was his commitment to the project that he even made his directorial debut with one of these films (Das Mädchen Rosemarie, 1997).

The opening scene of Der bewegte Mann, in which a dance band plays music of the 1930s, certainly articulates contemporary nostalgia for the culture of this decade (a similar scene also appears at the beginning of the director's earlier film Kleine Haie). I would hold that Eichinger and Wortmann's intention of lending contemporary respectability to popular culture of the Weimar Republic and (more problematically) of the Third Reich is unambiguous here: tellingly, this sequence does not appear in the original Ralf König comic books on which the film is based, it has been deliberately added to the source material for the film by its director. The scene also serves to connect Der bewegte Mann with romantic comedies of the 1930s, such as Die drei von der Tankstelle (Wilhelm Thiele, 1930) and Glückskinder (Paul Martin, 1935), simultaneously legitimising films of the past belonging to this popular genre cinema, and locating Wortmann's work within the same tradition. These 1930s popular genre comedies were particularly known for their pairing of the UFA stars Willy Fritsch and Lilian Harvey; it could be argued that Wortmann is also thereby attempting to place the pairing of Til Schweiger and Katja Riemann, the two biggest stars of 1990s German cinema, within this tradition.

Comparisons may be drawn between Der bewegte Mann and other European comedies which were big hits in recent years. In the UK for example, home-grown comedies such as Four Weddings and a Funeral (Mike Newell, 1994) and The Full Monty (Peter Cattaneo, 1997) also achieved a similar impact on their target audience, far outstripping all other domestically-produced films in their year of release.

Interestingly, each of the three films exhibits striking similarities in thematic terms, with each text foregrounding representations of contemporary male identity, sexuality and class. In Four Weddings, the upper class male is shown to be in crisis, struggling to conform to polite society's expectations regarding marriage; in The Full Monty, working-class men have to take the drastic step of turning to stripping when they are faced with unemployment,

and have to come to terms with their own bodies in the process; and in Der bewegte Mann, another working-class male (this time recently made homeless and jobless) is suddenly exposed to gay lifestyles and culture. It is also notable that the traditional patriarchal order of society is shown to be in a state of flux in each film. In Four Weddings, the central character is punched to the ground by his bride-to-be, is publicly humiliated by former girlfriends at a wedding reception, and is astounded to discover that his lover has had far more sexual experiences than he; in The Full Monty, the male protagonists adopt a conventionally female role by exhibiting their bodies when stripping, and women are shown to be the new breadwinners in some working-class families; while in Der bewegte Mann, Axel is not only thrown out of his girlfriend's flat, but also perceives his swaggering machismo to be threatened by her suspicions that he has turned to homosexuality.

The persistent emphasis on fluctuating male identities in these 1990s films is accentuated by the fact that each also features gay characters, some of whom (in contrast to many popular genre films of the past) are presented as figures with whom the audience may identify. Many of the gay characters in Der bewegte Mann are admittedly little more than grotesque caricatures, but the character of Norbert (played by the versatile Joachim Krol) is an exception, as the *mise-en-scène* consistently presents him in a very sympathetic light (for example, both in terms of his anxieties about death each morning as he awakes, and of his many unrewarded acts of kindness towards Axel and Doro).²⁸ The characters Gareth and Matthew in Four Weddings and one of the dancers in The Full Monty are portrayed in a similarly benevolent manner. Meanwhile, other popular post-New German films such as Stadtgespräch and Keiner liebt mich also incorporate positive representations of homosexuality and employ similar narrative strategies.

I would contend that it is a very striking development for mainstream popular German cinema that filmmakers of this period appeared to be attempting a positive portrayal of homosexuals. This may be seen in part as a liberal attempt to counteract homophobic representations of the past within popular cinema, and it is also true to say that the characterisation of all the positively-portrayed homosexuals is perhaps more well-meaning than convincing on the whole, but I would maintain that it is a welcome development nevertheless. It is also interesting that nearly all of the post-New German *Beziehungskomödien* to achieve very large audiences feature positive portrayals of gay characters²⁹, indicating that such narratives were well-received by the public.

As Kilb (1997: 31) correctly observes, the figure of the "friendly gay" is certainly not an innovation of German cinema: this narrative device is long established in American

²⁸ Here I acknowledge that the many crude caricatures of gay lifestyles in the film do serve to partially undermine the positive portrayal of Norbert.

²⁹ Stadtgespräch, Der bewegte Mann, Keiner liebt mich and Abgeschminkt! were the only German *Beziehungskomödien* from 1988 to 1995 to achieve ticket sales in excess of one million. Of these four films, only Abgeschminkt! fails to include positively-portrayed gay characters in leading roles.

cinema (Tootsie) and French cinema (La cage aux Folles). However, he does argue that in their German manifestation, these characters are much weaker and wholly unconvincing, always subordinating their desires to the films' narrative imperative of a successfully resolved heterosexual relationship. This is a fair observation, although in my view somewhat harsh, as gay characters have also been used in this way by American and French films. Kilb goes on to chastise the characterisation of gays in post-New German Cinema, contrasting this with the far more interesting homosexual characters invented by Fassbinder in films such as Die bitteren Tränen der Petra von Kant (1972).

In the specific context of German culture, many of the gay characters in German romantic comedies of the 1980s and 1990s do admittedly appear rather one-dimensional in comparison with the psychologically complex creations in the 1970s films of Fassbinder. This is perhaps a slightly unfair comparison in that Fassbinder did not work in this genre, and the genre of the romantic comedy does not demand such subtle characterisation as some other film genres (such as Fassbinder's favourite, melodrama). Nevertheless, from a film historian's point of view, comparisons between film texts of the two eras are inevitable, and post-New German *Beziehungskomödien* fare poorly in this particular regard.³⁰

Following on from this, I now consider characterisation in the films of Sönke Wortmann in general terms, which I would argue constitutes both their defining feature and their principal weakness. In a withering review of Wortmann's Kleine Haie, Roth (1992: 29) claims that only the director's male characters are at all convincing:

"Sönke Wortmann geht es, soweit er Menschen überhaupt wahrnimmt, nur um die Männer und ihre Wehwehchen (er würde wohl sagen: ihre Seele) [...] Frauen sind Staffage oder Statisten."

Horst's review of Allein unter Frauen similarly charges Wortmann with having a Neanderthal attitude towards his female characters (1991: 40):

"der Zuschauer um die Dreißig fragt sich [...], wo denn der 1959 geborene Wortmann und sein Drehbuchautor Philipp Weinges in den letzten zehn Jahren gesteckt haben mögen. [...] Jedes Klischee, das über den Feminismus in Umlauf ist, wird hier aufgewärmt; jeder Frauenwitz, den Sie bisher nicht zu erzählen wagten - hier wird es ausgesprochen."

I would concur with the sentiments behind these comments; it is difficult to identify a single convincing female character in any of Wortmann's films. However, other reviewers, such as Lüke (1994: 23), have looked rather more benevolently on the clichéd characters which populate Wortmann's films:

³⁰ I would suggest that only in Dörrie's 1994 romantic comedy Keiner liebt mich does a convincing gay character appear.

"[Der Film läßt] nicht nur kein (Homosexuellen-)Klischee aus, sondern überpitzt sie derart, daß sich mit ihnen schon wieder spielerisch umgehen läßt."

It is undeniable that Wortmann's films are generally reliant on stereotypical characterisation. To an extent, this could be regarded as a common narrative mode within popular film comedies. Whether or not the director's characters somehow transcend this is another matter, however. Some are at the very least memorable. A case in point is the character Bierchen ("Little Beer"), played by the actor Armin Rhode. This character first appears in Wortmann's Kleine Haie, and then in a cameo role in Mr Bluesman. The character, always clad in denim and shades, and with a beer can permanently clasped in his hand, generally communicates only by grunting, and makes very brief yet often amusing appearances to rescue the leading protagonists in each film from adversity.

I would argue that this character, nonchalant and clichéd, is in many ways emblematic of German film comedies of the 1990s, just as the character Phillip Winter, who appears in several Wim Wenders films, could be regarded as an archetype of the New German Cinema. This character, always played by Rüdiger Vogler, appears in several Wenders' films, spanning most of the director's career. The character first appears in Alice in den Städten (1974), in which Winter is a photo journalist. In the 1990s, Wenders revived the character for two more feature films. In Until the End of the World (1991), the character appears as a private eye; and in Lisbon Story (1995) as a film sound engineer. In each case, the character of Winter, like many others in films of the New German Cinema, is troubled, restless, rootless and introverted. The generic shift from this figure to a character such as Wortmann's Bierchen in post-New German Cinema by arguably its most prominent director (although, tellingly, Winter, like the New German Cinema, continued to appear in the 1990s) illustrates the profound ongoing cultural shift within German cinema during this period - from strained profundity³¹ to relaxed superficiality.

I now consider another of the most prominent directors of post-New German Cinema, who may in many ways be regarded as a complementary figure to Wortmann.

Detlev Buck

Detlev Buck, like Sönke Wortmann, is best known for his work in the comedy genre. He first came to prominence in the FRG in 1984 when his debut short film Erst die Arbeit und dann received rave reviews and standing ovations at the *Berlinale*, and went on to be seen by more than 100,000 patrons in Germany's *Programmkinos*. Following this, Buck, a farmer's son, completed his agricultural training (*Landwirtschaftslehre*) before attending film school, at the *Filmhochschule* in Berlin. During this period he completed a series of short films - Normal, bitte (1986), Es gräbt (1987), Eine Rolle duschen (1987), Worauf wir

³¹ Here I paraphrase Rentschler (1993).

abfahren (1988), and Schwarzbunt Märchen (1989). The medium-length Hopnick (1989) was the film which Buck put forward for his graduation from film school (*Abschlußfilm*).

Detlev Buck's persona as a comic actor / director from the rural North of Germany has been instrumental in his films' critical and commercial reception. Buck had worked on the family farm in Schleswig-Holstein (the region where his feature-length debut Karniggels is set), prior to taking his *Landwirtschaftslehre*. His resulting "country boy" image has been carefully nurtured from the beginning of his career in his short and feature films (he appears as a farm worker in Erst die Arbeit und dann), in interviews, and through the astute marketing of the production company he co-founded with Claus Boje in 1991, the year of Karniggels' release. In interviews, such as one with Göllner (1993: 9) in the *Berliner Morgenpost*, Buck has cannily feigned surprise at the results of this carefully orchestrated and successful marketing strategy:

"Witzigerweise werden meine Filme immer ganz stark mit meiner Person verbunden. Weil ich eben so rede, wie ich rede, und weil ich bin, wer ich bin und das auch nicht ändern kann - und warum sollte ich auch? Aber so sehen die Leute dann meinen Film, und einer schrieb dann: Das ist ein norddeutscher Bauernfilm. Da kann ich nur sagen, du hast die Geschichte nicht verstanden. Der Film hat eher mit Sierra Leone zu tun als mit Norddeutschland."

Despite Buck's protestations here, his background and upbringing have certainly been fully exploited in the marketing campaigns for each of his films. His complaint that his films have sometimes been "misunderstood" by being categorised in this manner by critics is a valid one, however, as they invite wider readings than their marketing would imply, as I shall show shortly.

Buck has often been labelled by film writers and by the media as a whole as the nation's *Flachlandkomiker*, and a recurring feature of reviews of his films is references to their dry, laconic humour; for example, one reviewer has commentated, "Bucks Lacher kommen meist lakonisch und auf leisen Sohlen".³² The predominant mode of humour chosen by Buck is certainly understated irony, which has parallels with the type of comedy commonly associated with the British. Clearly, such qualities violate prevailing Anglo-American preconceptions of German humour as crude and unsubtle, making Buck's work a worthy object of attention for a German film history written by a British academic. Much of Buck's work can also be seen as part of a tradition of popular *Ostfriesenwitze*, in which a rural section of the population is mocked for supposedly being slow-witted; this is the approximate German equivalent of British jokes about the Irish, or American jokes about the Poles. However, I would argue that his comedy is rather more refined than this statement might suggest.

³² Rabius (1991: 36).

Buck's early short films were shown in the FRG's art-house *Programmkinos*, which had been the principal site of exhibition of many of the well-known New German films of the previous two decades. These early shorts attracted considerable interest on this circuit, at a time when it was in marked decline, earning Buck a reputation as a "cult" director, a not unusual phenomenon in the cultural climate of the art-house, where the director is frequently elevated to the status of artist in its attendant discourses. This had certainly been the case with the New German Cinema, which was predominantly organised around directors, not stars. Within the FRG, New German films were rarely exhibited anywhere but *Programmkinos*, and so it would be reasonable to suggest that the *Autorenkino* had become synonymous with these sites of exhibition by the 1980s. Consequently, it could be argued that the conditions of exhibition of Buck's early work placed him within the *Autorenkino* tradition by association in the minds of West German film-goers. This impression would have been compounded by the fact that Buck's first two feature-length films, *Karniggels* and *Wir können auch anders*, also began their theatrical release in the *Programmkinos*. However, the sizeable audiences these films generated merited a wider subsequent release in mainstream cinemas. *Männerpension* opened on the commercial circuit alongside the latest Hollywood offerings and for the first month of its release, outperformed them.

With steadily increasing box office receipts for each of his three feature films up to 1995, Buck had made a transition from art-house cult figure to one of the four most commercially viable indigenous film-makers in Germany by the mid 1990s (along with Doris Dörrie, Joseph Vilsmaier and Sönke Wortmann). The changing conditions of exhibition of Buck's films during his short career - a journey from the art-house to the mainstream - to some extent mirror the changes undergone by much of the national film industry during the same period.

There are also parallels here with my earlier contention that the opening and end credit sequences of Doris Dörrie's *Männer* would locate the film within the tradition of the New German Cinema for many film-goers. For me, it is revealing that two central figures of post-New German Cinema have such strong ties to the *Autorenkino*. I would hold that this lends additional weight to one of the central arguments of my historical narrative, namely, that post-New German Cinema exhibits significant continuities with, as well as the more frequently discussed departures from its predecessor.

I now consider Buck's debut feature film *Karniggels*, which I intend to use as a means of problematising some of the other prevailing assumptions about post-New German Cinema cited previously in this thesis.

It has on occasion been argued that recent German films' "turn to the popular" merely signifies a slavish adoption of Hollywood narrative modes and genres, resulting in a cinema of mediocre, low-budget facsimiles. A degree of credence may be given to such claims as regards some German films of 1988 to 1995, such as *Burning Life*, the flimsy pastiche of

Thelma and Louise which I discussed in terms of its reception in Chapter Three, as well as the handful of films in the action and science-fiction genres which I considered earlier in this chapter.

Detlev Buck's films do however generally serve to give the lie to any generalisations that German (or indeed European) genre cinema should be automatically equated with attempts to plagiarise Hollywood cinematic modes. Karniggels is initially set in a police training school, but it doesn't rely on the crude slapstick and shallow characterisations of a Police Academy film; these scenes rely on subtle observational humour, such as the ambiguous sequence in which Köppe and Nina carry out a mundane exercise of repeatedly checking whether or not a gun is loaded. Karniggels belongs to the genre of police comedy, and is played straight like The Naked Gun series, but features far fewer visual gags, and doesn't exploit an entirely witless protagonist for its comic effects. It features a murder investigation, but it makes little attempt to build tension as in the whodunnit genre (instead, Karniggels gently sends up these films); neither would it be accurate to describe the film as a full-length spoof of a Hollywood genre in the tradition of Airplane.

This is not to say that Buck's film owes no debt at all to popular American cinema. Hollywood films are in fact often alluded to, but given a witty provincial twist. In Karniggels, the portrayal of a series of murders in a quiet village brings to mind a number of American psycho-thrillers or horror movies, especially the films of David Lynch, but here, to disarming comic effect, it's cows, not humans, who are the victims, thereby reinforcing the provincality of the piece, and slyly emphasising post-New German cinema's lack of glamour, despite its best efforts to impress audiences.

Similar narrative strategies are evident in Buck's other films. In Wir können auch anders, the Western genre is invoked throughout, notably when the protagonists are forced to escape on horseback after their dilapidated truck has broken down, and also when they are bound together back-to-back around a tree-trunk.³³ Similarly, Männerpension includes a Ben Hur-style chariot race, but with prisoners and wheelbarrows in a prison courtyard, instead of charioteers and horses in a coliseum. This again constitutes a humorous allusion to the comparatively tiny production budgets available to German and European filmmakers in comparison with their Hollywood counterparts. The film reviewer Frank Schnelle (1996: 42) has identified a series of other filmic references in Männerpension; he claims that it draws on John Carpenter's Assault on Precinct 13, Luc Bresson's Pickpocket, the Hollywood prison film, and the screwball comedy. Männerpension also features a controversial act of random violence by the character Hammer-Gerd, played by Buck himself, who without warning (or apparent motivation) shoots a chicken with a pistol. Many film critics likened Buck's use of stylised violent imagery for comic effect in this scene to that of an American contemporary of

³³ Buck has also revealed himself to be a connoisseur of filmmakers from other national cinemas, admitting to the influence of the French comic / director Jacques Tati in Wir können auch anders (Unattributed. 1993b: 22).

his, Quentin Tarantino, in the then-recent Pulp Fiction (1994). However the director has dismissed this interpretation in an interview (Osswald, 1996: 28):

"UNICUM: Das Blutbad beim Federvieh wirkt wie 'Pulp Fiction' auf dem Bauernhof...

Buck: Ne, ne. Solche Stichwörter führen in die völlig falsche Richtung. Die Hühnerszene zeigt nur, daß Gerd bisweilen jähzornig wird, und ist die Vorankündigung, daß er später nochmals zulangt - seltsamerweise wird darüber viel weniger geredet als über die Hühner. [...] Das hat System, damit Story und Figuren funktionieren. Es geht mir nicht darum, jetzt mal schnell das Publikum zu schocken. Bei Tarantino ist das auf eine ganz andere Art gemacht. Und bei uns auch ganz anders gemeint."

Here it should be noted that Buck is invoking the same mantra as Wortmann, Graf and other leading figures in emphasising the overriding imperative of the post-New German genre filmmaker: constructing film narratives in a professional and cohesive manner. However, Buck seems to be much more of a cinéaste than many of his contemporaries, with each of his films being littered with cinematic references, as I have shown. The contrast between the intentions of Buck and Wortmann is quite marked here; while Wortmann has expressed his hostility to filmmaking which aims to be anything other than entertainment, Buck's films contain many allusions and references which, taken together, amount to a commentary on contemporary Germany, as I shall show in due course.

It is also evident from my discussion of Buck's films that they also make allusions to the state of cinema in the FRG. Several play on their oblique relationship with the American entertainment industry as a whole, both in terms of marketing (the alliterative slogan "Buck is back!" heralds each new film), and in the subtle deployment of provincial manifestations of American popular cultural forms: Detlef Petersen, a former member of the 1970s German rock group *Lake*, has composed an instrumental blues-rock soundtracks for each Buck feature film, while Männerpension cannily cast popular television presenter and German youth icon Heike Makatsch in a leading role. Prior to acting in this film (her first cinema role), Makatsch had worked for VIVA, a German rival of MTV.

Although his films certainly acknowledge their debt to transatlantic influences, Buck's work is equally well rooted in the traditions of German popular culture. His films accordingly occupy a very interesting position within German film history. Because of his upbringing and background, and the rural setting of much of his work, it is perhaps inevitable that some commentators have situated Buck's films within the tradition of the *Heimat* film, Germany's only truly indigenous popular film genre, which I discussed previously in this chapter. I now consider the genre at greater length, in order to better account for Buck's relationship to it.

The classic *Heimat* film had its heyday in the 1950s, when it met with commercial success and critical revulsion in equal measure. It was generally characterised by an idyllic rural setting, a strong sense of regional identity (through the use of local dialects in the film's dialogue, for example), and an unproblematic celebration of allegedly traditional rural values,

which served to circumvent the more unpalatable recent past. During the era of the New German Cinema, a series of less populist and politically more engaged *Heimat* films appeared, portraying "authoritarian feudal lords, [...] miscarriages of justice, peasant exploitation, revolutions against taxation, outlaws who help the poor and steal from the rich, and [...] farmers who, driven from their land, are pressed into mercenary armies or try to emigrate to America", as Elsaesser describes them (1989: 142). Concurrently with these revisionist *Heimat* films of the New German Cinema, a few *Heimat* films in the classic mould continued to be made, as well as several sex films which exploited the genre, such as There's No Sex Like Snow Sex (Alois Brummer, 1974).

The so-called tail-end of the New German Cinema era saw the release of Edgar Reitz's Heimat (1984), which recalled both the classic and critical *Heimat* film. Heimat took classic *Heimat* film conventions, and mixed them with modes appropriated from television soap opera and melodrama, while adopting an understated (some would argue, disturbingly ambivalent) historically revisionist stance towards the Nazi era. Since then, a number of pastiches of Reitz's Heimat appeared in the late 1980s and 1990s, such as Herbstmilch (Joseph Vilsmaier, 1988) and Wildfeuer (Jo Baier, 1990). Buck's films occupy a rather different terrain to these pastiches, however. While not conforming to the classical *Heimat* film as defined above, all Buck's films nevertheless share several characteristics with the genre.

Karniggels (1991) is a case in point. The film shares a number of textual features with the classic *Heimat* film which would seem to encourage a reading of it in terms of this genre. From its title alone (a North German dialect word for "*Kaninchen*"), Karniggels evinces a defiant provincialism; this is underlined by the rural setting, the contrasts drawn throughout between townspeople and country folk (for example, Annarina's family represent an alien urban presence in the tranquil countryside), and lesser known textual markers such as the inclusion of a musical performance sequence, when Elle plays his guitar and sings. The latter is an example of the showcasing of musical performance, which, as Heide Fehrenbach has observed (1995: 152), was a characteristic of the classic *Heimat* film's project to provide "temporary relief through entertainment and visual spectacle" during the era of the Economic Miracle in the 1950s. In this case, the musical performance is more jarring than relaxing, as it is a song about working in an abattoir.

An interrogation of Karniggels' relationship to the chequered tradition of the *Heimat* film genre, as in this example, reveals a somewhat ambivalent attitude towards it. Köppe, the central protagonist, is a country boy who wishes to be assigned to a town or city for his first posting in the police force, and his disappointment is palpable when he is instead returned to his *Heimat*. Furthermore, the idyllicism of Karniggels' rural setting is downplayed: the cinematography rarely idealises the landscape, unlike the classic *Heimat* film; in fact, the rolling fields of Schleswig-Holstein are filmed in such a way that they appear quite menacing in the dead of night when Köppe hunts for the elusive cow murderer.

The foregrounding of animals is another significant feature, and an important characteristic of Buck's mise-en-scène; in *Schwarzbunt Märchen*, cows had been the sole protagonists. In many *Heimat* films, despite the pretence that the protagonists are "at one with the land", animals frequently serve merely as markers of location, being either part of the background scenery or subordinated to human toil and endeavour. In *Karniggels*, animals are much more prominent, and in the closing credits, they even appear before humans in the cast list. The intrusion of animals frequently precludes narrative progression in several Buck films - they often appear in jarring close up without apparent narrative motivation. The abuse of animals by humans is also a recurring theme in Buck's films - the series of cow murders in *Karniggels* is just one occurrence of this - and often as a catalyst for cruel humour (Köppe's grandfather scalds moles with boiling water and beats them with a spade in *Karniggels*, while Hammer-Gerd shoots a chicken in *Männerpension*, as mentioned previously). Such textual features may be read as an implied critique of the classic *Heimat* film for merely using rural settings as pretty backdrops for heart-warming narratives. It is notable however that this critique is achieved without resorting to the overt polemicism of the New German Cinema's critical *Heimat* film (Buck's approach to filmmaking differs from that of many *Autorenkino* directors in that it relies on more subtle forms of allusion).

The classic *Heimat* film was conventionally a site where patriarchal conservative bourgeois values such as the subservience of women, the primacy of the nuclear family, obedience to the law of the land, respect for ostensibly traditional morality, and adherence to the work ethic were constructed and celebrated. In the *Heimat* film, a range of conflicts are conventionally played out in order that the prevailing ideology be put to the test. These include moral dilemmas (love versus duty), inter-generational battles (an older versus a younger generation), and the clash between "traditional" and "modern" life styles and mores (urbanism and technology are often posited as a threat to the *Heimat*). Despite the potential narrative diversity suggested by such themes, there is one constant: in the films' resolution, the authenticity of the allegedly traditional values which have been called into question is firmly reasserted.

In *Karniggels*, the moral world of the *Heimat* film is certainly invoked, but it is emphatically not reproduced or celebrated. In the early scenes of the film, Köppe, obeying the wishes of his family, has attended police-training school, and is about to embark on his career in the police force. In other words, he represents a good son, and a model citizen in a dual sense for gaining a respectable job in which he also upholds the law. However, as the narrative of *Karniggels* unfolds, the pillars of morality as articulated by the classic *Heimat* film begin to crumble. Köppe's decision to join the police force seems at best half-hearted, not least because he is patently ill-suited to the job's requirements; as a result, the work ethic is displaced by indifference. Meanwhile, we learn late on in the film that his family does not quite conform to the idealised nuclear model. The absence of his dead father and the presence of a physically weak, yet authoritarian grandfather amounts to a caricature of *Heimat*

"normality", his absent father and harsh grandfather representing a grotesque throwback to the actual contemporary social reality which was concealed by the classic *Heimat* film of the 1940s and 1950s.

When Köppe is sacked from the police force, family ties prove to be more a question of financial necessity than duty, and he soon escapes to live with Elle. Traditional gender roles are also seen to have been overturned in *Karniggels* - Nina is quite clearly more suited to police work than Köppe. Meanwhile, institutions including the police force are also shown to be discredited and lacking the respect of the general public (e.g. the scene in the supermarket when a suspected shoplifter hurls food at the policemen). The education system is a further notable example: a teacher fails to prevent his class from rioting in public, and it is the same teacher who turns out to be the cow murderer; meanwhile, Köppe is unmoved when his grandfather bemoans his wasted education in the wake of his sacking. In several of Buck's films, we witness the ritual humiliations of authority figures in uniforms. Cagli (1996: 144) has noted, "Buck hat eine Vorliebe für Loser in Uniformen". I shall now examine some of the reasons behind this characteristic feature of Buck's work in this particular film.

Köppe's relationship with the System he is employed to uphold is continually made ambivalent. His reluctance to socialise with his colleagues is early evidence of his non-conformism. His only friend, Elle, is a car thief, and when he turns him in, it seems that his action is motivated more by attraction to the stolen car's owner (Annarina) than a desire to perform his duties and fight crime. This is just the start of Köppe's fall from grace: it is quite symbolic that he is finally cornered by his colleagues at Elle's home, while the latter is on probation. It is one of the film's less subtle ironies that Köppe starts hacking cattle up for a living at the local abattoir with Elle, having been sacked from the police force, when he once investigated the mysterious cow murders with such vigour. In one scene following his sacking, it even appears that Köppe may be turning to crime when he has a meeting with a shady character who we have been led to believe is a local criminal.

Rowe (1995: 44-5) identifies "two apparently contradictory but closely related characteristics" of all narrative comedy: "anti-authoritarianism" (in Freudian terms, an attack on the Law of the Father, hierarchy and taboos - i.e. the ideology affirmed by tragedy), and "an impulse towards renewal and social transformation" (the second part of the Oedipal story: the formation of the couple). Each of Buck's three feature films to date fits this model quite well, deriving humour from the tension between anti-authoritarianism and renewal and transformation: *Karniggels* stages the relationship between a policeman and a petty thief, *Wir können auch anders* features two brothers who inadvertently commit a murder and are on the run from the police, while in *Männerpension* two prisoners participate in a resocialization programme.

Karniggels is anti-authoritarian in that the uniformed protagonist's indifference to, and violation of his role as upholder of the Law leads to his ejection from a position of authority

within the official hierarchy. Meanwhile the film satisfies the need for renewal and social transformation by finally uniting the hero and (one of) the object(s) of his desire. However, this becomes doubly comic, as the disgraced hero's amour repeats his transgression by returning to him at the end of the film after his fall from grace.

The resolution of the conflicts staged in *Karniggels* marks a point of departure from the classic *Heimat* film, and provides further indication that beneath the dry humour a fundamentally different ideology drives the film. At the end of *Karniggels*, the fact that Nina, an exemplary young police officer, unexpectedly returns to him despite the failings which have led to his sacking (not only did he drive under the influence of alcohol, but he also consorted with a criminal on probation), appears at first sight to be just another happy ending in which a couple are finally united despite the odds. David Bordwell has shown that in popular narrative cinema, "whether the happy ending succeeds depends on whether it is adequately motivated" (1982: 2). This is certainly the case with the classic *Heimat* film. However, where film comedy is concerned, narrative motivation takes on a rather different dynamic. According to Neale and Krutnik (1990: 31-2), narrative comedy "not only permits but encourages the abandonment of causal motivation and narrative integration for the sake of comic effect".

According to the narrative rules of the classic *Heimat* film then, *Karniggels*' happy ending is totally unmotivated, since the fallen hero fails to achieve redemption by mending his ways, yet still gets his girl. In other words, in terms of classic *Heimat* film ideology, vice, not virtue is rewarded. In terms of popular narrative comedy, by contrast, the arbitrary happy ending of *Karniggels* is generically conventional. The tension between the traditions of the *Heimat* film and the narrative comedy, present throughout *Karniggels*, is most fully present as the film ends.

Unlike the classic *Heimat* film of the 1950s therefore, *Karniggels*, like all of Buck's films, does not glorify a golden age that never existed, and unlike the critical *Heimat* film of the New German Cinema, it is not "burdened" by polemicism. Buck's films, like a number of other German films of the 1990s, are worth studying because they occupy a very interesting new territory: in Buck's case, this is especially true, with the director drawing on both contemporary commercial Hollywood cinema, as well as the often-overlooked indigenous popular film and comedy traditions, but at the same time remaining ambivalent to each. This illustrates the potential inherent in the best films of post-New German Cinema: the creation of a new hybrid popular German film.

Having devoted a large proportion of this chapter to prominent directors of the post-New German Cinema, I now turn my attention to another key element of this body of films: its stars.

Götz George, Katja Riemann and Til Schweiger

These three actors were arguably the most prominent in FRG cinema between 1988 and 1995, in terms of the sheer number of commercially successful films each starred in, and in terms of their exposure in the film and general press.

Götz George, by far the eldest of the three, had acted in several popular German films during the 1950s and 1960s, and he represents an important symbol of continuity with films of that time for post-New German Cinema. George made his film acting debut as a fifteen year-old in the most popular *Heimat* film of the 1950s, Wenn der weiße Flieder wieder blüht (Hans Deppe, 1953); other acting credits during this period included two Wolfgang Staudte films, Kirmes (1960) and Herrenpartie (1964) and two of the popular Winnetou series of Karl May Westerns, Unter Geiern (Alfred Vohrer, 1964) and Winnetou und das Halbblut Apanatschi (Harald Philipp, 1966). While George only had relatively minor roles in each of these films, he became firmly identified with popular German genre films in the minds of cinema-goers in the FRG as a result.

In the 1970s, George suffered a backlash within the FRG film industry, and was altogether shunned by New German Cinema directors; instead he worked mainly in television and theatre. During this decade, he had only a single feature film credit to his name: Aus einem deutschen Leben (Theodor Kotulla, 1977). During the 1980s and 1990s his film career revived spectacularly as he became Germany's best-known domestic actor, initially for his role as the investigator Horst Schimanski in the TV crime series Tatort, and subsequently for lead roles in major German film releases such as Die Katze (Dominik Graf, 1988), Schtonk! (Helmut Dietl, 1991), and Der Totmacher (Romuald Karmakar, 1995). George's forte is the genres of drama and thriller, although his role as Hermann Willié in Schtonk! did represent a rare (and generally well-received) comic appearance. The fact that he did not appear in any of the popular romantic comedies of the 1990s, yet still retained his status as the FRG's best-known actor, should once again serve to nullify characterisations of post-New German Cinema solely in terms of comedy. The revival his career clearly experienced as a result of his television work is also significant in terms of appreciating the essential role played by this medium in sustaining FRG cinema in terms of the shaping of audience expectations and providing personnel, as well as in terms of finance as described in Chapter Two.

Television also launched Katja Riemann's career in the 1980s, when she also had several theatre roles. In the early 1990s, she proved herself to be a prolific actress in a series of romantic comedies, and played a key role in helping to establish this as the dominant film genre of the period in German mainstream cinema. She starred in many of the most commercially successful and defining German films of this genre, such as Katja von Garnier's Abgeschminkt! (1992), Peter Timm's Ein Mann für jede Tonart (1993), Sönke Wortmann's Der bewegte Mann (1994) and Rainer Kaufmann's Stadtgespräch (1995). As a result she

became regarded as very much the "leading lady" of the genre during this time, repeatedly playing the role of an attractive but frustrated thirty-something single woman searching for a suitable partner. Perhaps recognising the danger of becoming typecast³⁴, Riemann sent up these roles in her appearance in Rainer Matsutani's satirical black comedy Nur über meine Leiche (1995), in which she appears as a clumsy, lonely, inhibited woman lacking any confidence in herself who resorts to recording a video for a lonely hearts agency.

Til Schweiger also made his acting debut in television. After appearing in the popular soap opera Lindenstraße and the crime series Die Kommissarin and Polizeiruf 110, he starred in several hit feature films in the early 1990s. These included Wolfgang Büld's car comedy Manta, Manta (1991), Sönke Wortmann's Der bewegte Mann (1994) and Detlev Buck's Männerpension (1995), the latter two of which achieved huge audiences, a feat later repeated by Schweiger's first film as producer (in which he also starred), Knockin' on Heaven's Door (Thomas Jahn, 1996). The brash macho image Schweiger exhibited in each of these films rapidly brought him pin-up status in the FRG. Among the thirty-something actors who populated many of the post-New German Cinema films of the 1990s, Til Schweiger unquestionably became the best-known "leading man", and along with Katja Riemann did much to establish popular genre cinema, above all comedy, during this decade. To illustrate this, I cite Kilb (1997: 30) who has caricatured German comedies of the 1990s as follows:

"Was erzählen die neuen Filmkomödien? Nichts anderes als die alte Geschichte von Männern und Frauen. [...] Ein Mann, eine Frau, zwei Männer, zwei Frauen - und immer ist die eine blond, die andere brünett, der eine ein Macho, der andere ein Softie. Und fast immer wird der eine von Til Schweiger gespielt - und die andere von Katja Riemann."

Conclusion

In this chapter I have attempted to show that the films of the post-New German Cinema, while clearly constituting a notable departure in many ways from those of the New German Cinema in the sense that they unquestionably mark a decisive shift away from auteur cinema towards genre filmmaking, do also display several often-overlooked continuities with their predecessors. It is important to take account of these aspects of the films in order to achieve a better understanding of the development of German cinema during the 1980s and 1990s.

It is possible, for example, to identify (or construct) distinctive "directorial signatures" in the films of several post-New German directors in much the same way that commentators on the New German Cinema have done, as I have shown in my analysis of the work of Sönke Wortmann and Detlev Buck. Distinctive motifs are in evidence in the film texts of leading post-New German Cinema figures such as Doris Dörrie (musical numbers feature at end of the films Männer, Ich und er and Keiner liebt mich), Detlev Buck (whose films all feature

³⁴ See Blum & Blum (1999: 118).

distinctive Detlef Petersen soundtracks), and Sönke Wortmann (the visual motif of the nude crouching male at an artists' sitting in Kleine Haie is recalled by a scene in Der bewegte Mann in which the drugged crouching naked protagonist hallucinates that he is a chicken, for example).

In terms of casting, two of these three directors also repeatedly selected from a core group of actors and actresses, which also helped to lend their films the identity of an oeuvre. In Detlev Buck's films, Sophie Rois plays a hairdresser in Hopnick and Nadine in Wir können auch anders; Ingo Naujoks plays the supporting role of Elle in Karniggels and has a minor role in Wir können auch anders; Horst Krause plays the lead role as Moritz (Most) in Wir können auch anders and the role of the *Hausmeister* at the retirement home in Männerpension; while Axel Altmann plays the prankster brother of Köppe in Karniggels, an obnoxious teenager at the roadside in Wir können auch anders, and one of the prison inmates in Männerpension. In the films of Sönke Wortmann, Thomas Heinze appears in Allein unter Frauen and Mr Bluesman in the leading role, and in a supporting role in Das Superweib; Meret Becker has minor roles in Allein unter Frauen and Kleine Haie; Joachim Krol has supporting roles in both Der bewegte Mann and Das Superweib; Til Schweiger also features in both Der bewegte Mann and Das Superweib; and Armin Rhode appears in every Wortmann film to date, playing Bierchen ("Little Beer") in both Kleine Haie and Mr Bluesman and also appearing in Der bewegte Mann and Das Superweib in other minor roles.

Post-New German films also exhibit a series of common textual features across the oeuvres of different directors. Furthermore, within each genre attempted by German filmmakers, certain textual similarities may be observed to have emerged over time, lending them a distinctive collective identity. In the case of the romantic comedy genre, for example, I have discussed their generic urban setting, emphasis on the domestic sphere, and prominent gay characters. Parental figures are a further common feature. As Kilb (1997: 31) has shown, the presence of parental figures as confidants in these romantic comedies

"versöhnt den Zuschauer mit der Elterngeneration von '68, mit den abgelegten oder weggefaulten Idealen von sexueller Befreiung, politischer Emanzipation, sozialer Gerechtigkeit etc., mit einer Protestkultur, die zur Ikea-Wohnkultur geworden ist."

In terms of German film history, this is a very interesting observation. Some form of reconciliation with the New German Cinema (an integral part of this *Elterngeneration von '68* in terms both of its members' ages and its prevailing ideology) might be read as unexpectedly lurking in the background of 1990s romantic comedies, despite appearances to the contrary, and moreover in spite of the protestations of figures such as Wortmann that directors of his generation entirely reject this tradition of filmmaking. The work of Dörrie in particular exhibits many similarities with some films of the *Autorenkino*, as my analysis of Männer demonstrates.

Since young filmmakers of the 1990s increasingly appeared to be drawing on German films of the distant past, it is generally perceived that post-New German Cinema belongs more in the tradition of 1950s popular genre cinema than that of the *Autorenkino*. This bond appeared to have been made overt by events at the end of the 1988 to 1995 period: Wortmann cast 1950s star Lisolotte Pulver in Das Superweib, and producer Bernd Eichinger brought a series of remakes of 1950s films to German television screens in 1997 (the "German Classics" series broadcast by SAT1). However, among the young generation of directors, I would hold that a filmmaker such as Buck succeeds in recalling popular genre films of the 1950s, and simultaneously critiquing them, as my reading of Karniggels shows.

In conclusion, I would state that the auteur component of New German Cinema continued to have an important place within the 1980s and 1990s German film industry, in terms of both perceptions of it and practices within it. However, many of the narrative conventions of this "movement" were becoming less and less prevalent. While there was indeed a noticeable shift away from the *Autorenkino* in the 1980s and 1990s, continuities with, as well as departures from the New German Cinema characterise FRG films made between 1988 and 1995.

CONCLUSION

FROM STRAINED PROFUNDITY TO RELAXED SUPERFICIALITY

In this thesis I have attempted to consider filmmaking in the FRG between 1988 and 1995 from a range of interlinked perspectives, as set out in Chapter One. In writing the project I have tried to be methodologically consistent: just as I reject the totalising narratives of many histories of the New German Cinema, so I have sought to avoid the same historiographical pitfalls here. What has emerged as a result of combining these various modes of inquiry is a portrayal of a national cinema in a state of considerable flux. A distinctive set of shifts were certainly underway during these years, in terms of major infrastructural changes (Reunification; the appearance of new film funding committees in the FRG and Europe; new models of film financing; and further amendments to the *Filmförderungsgesetz*), changes in the generally preferred modes of film practice (genre cinema over auteur cinema) and in discourses surrounding the national film and its associated personalities (popular cinema was attracting greater attention than ever in the film press, at a time when Hollywood was increasingly dominant). I use the term "underway" above advisedly; it would be mistaken to assert that any of these shifts were final and absolute, or indeed that they ever could be. They instead amounted only to tendencies which would again fluctuate in subsequent years in ways that are only now becoming perceptible a few years on. Accordingly, it would be fair to say that my writing in this thesis has been premised on the assumption that an ongoing evolution (as opposed to a sudden revolution) was taking place within German national cinema between 1988 and 1995, in soundbite form, one from strained profundity to relaxed superficiality.

As genre cinema came to dominate German cinema in the 1990s - at least in terms of media perceptions and box office hits (other types of film continued to exist, despite claims to the contrary) - romantic comedy came to be the genre most closely associated with the first half of the decade in the eyes of most observers. Horak (1997: 23) has noted with regard to this preponderance of *Beziehungskomödien* that

"Diese Filme sind erfolgreich, weil sie gezielt ein jugendliches Publikum ansprechen, weil sie über den Weg der Komik die Kluft zwischen Chaoten und Schicki-Mickis, zwischen Wunschvorstellungen und Wohlstandsrealität, zwischen Lust nach Abenteuer und Sehnsucht nach emotionaler Geborgenheit auflösen. In einer Zeit, in der sämtliche moralischen Werte ins Schwanken geraten sind und sogar die deutsche Wiedervereinigung nicht die gewünschte Seelenruhe gebracht hatte, bieten die Beziehungskomödien die Gewißheit, daß das Leben gut weitergehen kann, auch wenn die Probleme nur mit Notpflastern zugedeckt werden."

Many of these films indeed strove to attain a status akin to that of the "feel-good movie" beloved of Hollywood studios by offering comforting escapism to their audiences, and in terms of audience responses in the FRG to at least some of the films, they appeared to succeed in this. For me, these films' enduring significance is that they in all probability successfully consolidated a brand identity for the genre among German film-goers which had

it seems been first established by the 1985 film Männer (which in turn became a key cultural reference point for film historians during this period). The genre also became a very welcome (and probably rather unexpected) guarantor of economic profit for a system of public funding that had become subject to increasing political pressures during the Kohl era.

However, the fact that romantic comedies were performing well in cinemas and receiving considerable media attention in the first half of the 1990s did seem to produce a certain hubris with regard to the genre within the film industry as a whole. Nowhere was this more apparent than at the awarding of the *Deutscher Filmpreis* in 1996. Broadcast for the first time live on public television in the FRG (on ARD1 on 31st May 1996 in prime time, 8.15pm), the awards ceremony was captioned "*Die Nacht der Komödianten*". The organisers clearly wished to capitalise on the lucrative "comedy boom" the industry was currently experiencing, and structured the entire event around the ostensible expectation of German film comedies sweeping the board of prizes at the ceremony. In a rather amateurish, low-budget simulacrum of the Oscars (complete with feather-clad dancers, generic tuneless fanfares and smartly-dressed celebrity presenters), clowns filled the stage throughout the ceremony and no less than three stand-up comedians provided on-stage entertainment between the various awards.

There was considerable divergence between the organisers' evident expectations and what actually transpired at the event however. Of the eight films ultimately nominated for the awards, only two were comedies (Männerpension and Stadtgespräch). The remaining films up for awards were one documentary and six dramas, including two from New German Cinema directors (Wenders' Lisbon Story and Peter Schamoni's Niki de Saint Phalle). In other categories, comedies were similarly poorly represented, indicating that although Der bewegte Mann had controversially been awarded the *Filmband in Gold* in the previous year's ceremony (as discussed in Chapter Two), the FRG's film establishment was not prepared to automatically bestow its highest honours on genre films. The only truly comic element of the ceremony was the fact that the award for best director and the prestigious *Filmband in Gold* were awarded to (the clearly embarrassed) Romuald Karmakar for Der Totmacher, an intense chamber drama based on the same source material as Fritz Lang's 1931 film M: eine Stadt sucht einen Mörder; namely, the life of the child murderer Fritz Harmann. Karmakar, after receiving the first trophy for his film from one of the on-stage clowns, pointedly stated,

"Also [...] die Nacht der Mörder sollte es nächstes Jahr heißen, habe ich gehört, [...] und ich habe mich den ganzen Abend gefragt, wie Fritz Harmann das alles gefunden hätte..."

By the end of 1995, it appeared that the prominence of romantic comedies in discourses surrounding German film and in terms of German box office impact was now perhaps starting to decline, as the accolades unexpectedly awarded to Der Totmacher may now seem to symbolise. Although romantic comedies were still very popular, German actors and actresses most strongly associated with the genre appeared to be increasingly reluctant to

become typecast. This was notably the case where Katja Riemann and Til Schweiger were concerned - neither has made a romantic comedy to date since 1995. As mentioned previously, both now chose dramatic, rather than comic roles. Comedies and romantic comedies continued to be made in the FRG, but the attention of critics and audiences now began to focus on other genres. Hit films such as Nach fünf im Urwald (Hans-Christian Schmid, 1996), Das Leben ist eine Baustelle (Wolfgang Becker, 1996) and Lola rennt (Tom Tykwer, 1998) featured many of the actors who had appeared in the earlier romantic comedies. These texts were interesting in that they all belonged to the category of drama or melodrama, yet each had many comic moments. It appeared that modes from the *Beziehungskomödie* were now being incorporated into other German film genres, just as Männer had drawn on auteur films of the New German Cinema. The evolution of German filmmaking continued apace.

APPENDIX ONE
TABLES FOR CHAPTER TWO

TABLE 1

Table 1 is entirely based on data supplied by MEDIA Salles (1995: 59) and the EAO (1996: 70, 92). Here I present statistics concerning indigenous and American theatrical releases and proportional audience market share in the German film market between 1989 and 1995 (no data is given by these two reports for 1988). In this table, as is conventional within the German film industry, market share has been calculated in terms of gross numerical audience attendance rather than gross box office revenue (as is customary practice within the American film industry, for example). In my view, it is preferable to measure audience numbers as opposed to financial revenue, as any economic distortion when comparing market share statistics (owing to fluctuations in exchange rates or inflation, for example) is largely circumvented. Please note that the statistics in Table 1 for 1989 and 1990 apply to West Germany only, while those for 1991 to 1995 are for reunified Germany.

**TABLE 1: GERMAN AND AMERICAN FILMS IN
THE GERMAN FILM MARKET, 1989-95**

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Market share of national films	16.70%	9.70%	13.60%	9.50%	7.20%	10.10%	6.30%
Market share of US films	65.70%	83.80%	80.20%	82.80%	87.80%	81.60%	87.10%
National films released	68	48	72	63	67	60	63
US films released	166	155	162	130	130	N/A	N/A

TABLES 2 AND 3

Table 2 is taken directly from the above-mentioned MEDIA Salles study (1995: 21). Unfortunately, no data is given here regarding the market share of Hollywood and other productions in the respective European nations. Leafe (1992: 41), in the BFI Film and Television Handbook 1993, has however compiled a set of statistics showing the performance of Hollywood productions in European markets between 1989 and 1991, which is reproduced as Table 3. Although this data does not cover the entire period depicted in Table 2, it nevertheless complements it to an extent by providing a useful indication as to the relative performance of Hollywood films in Germany compared with their performance in other European countries during this period.

TABLE 2: MARKET SHARES OF "NATIONAL FILMS"
(INCLUDING CO-PRODUCTIONS), 1989-94

Country	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
Belgium	2.60%	3.80%	3.10%	4.20%	5.50%	2.90%
Denmark	15%	14.70%	10.80%	15.30%	16%	21.50%
Finland	5.80%	7.60%	6.70%	10%	8%	4%
France	34.20%	37.60%	30.60%	34.90%	35.10%	27.80%
Germany	16.70%	9.70%	13.60%	9.50%	7.20%	10.10%
Greece	9%	8%	7%	2%	N/A	4%
Ireland	4.20%	1.60%	1.60%	5.30%	5.20%	3.80%
Italy	21.70%	21%	26.80%	24.40%	18%	22%
Luxembourg	2%	2%	2%	N/A	0.80%	ca0.1%
Netherlands	4.60%	3%	2.30%	13%	4.10%	0.60%
Norway	10.90%	9.70%	5.10%	6.90%	8.50%	4.60%
Portugal	1%	1%	1%	N/A	4%	N/A
Spain	7.30%	10.40%	10%	9.30%	8.50%	7.10%
Sweden	20.40%	8.90%	25.50%	28%	14.70%	15.20%
Switzerland	3%	3%	2%	3.80%	5.30%	0.90%
UK	10%	7%	13.80%	6.80%	2.50%	N/A

TABLE 3: US FILMS' SHARE OF
EUROPEAN NATIONAL MARKETS, 1989-91

Country	1989	1990	1991
Belgium	68.90%	73.50%	80.30%
Denmark	62.60%	77%	70%
France	55.30%	56.90%	58.70%
Germany	65.70%	83.80%	77%
Greece	86%	87%	88%
Ireland	85%	87%	91.50%
Italy	63.10%	69.40%	68%
Luxembourg	64%	65%	67%
Netherlands	75.60%	85.80%	83%
Portugal	67.40%	63.50%	67.80%
Spain	71.40%	72.50%	68.70%
UK	86.20%	88%	89%

TABLE 4

Table 4 was originally compiled by Bridge Media on the basis of *Screen Digest* data and cited by Ilott (1996: 13) in a study of European film budgets commissioned by the *Ateliers du Cinema Européen* for the Media Business School and *Le Club des Producteurs Européens*.

TABLE 4: GLOBAL GROSS BOX OFFICE 1990-93

Country	1990 (\$m)	1991 (\$m)	1992 (\$m)	1993 (\$m)	% of 1993
					world market
France	745.9	710.8	793.5	797.8	5.74
Germany	554.2	586.8	607.5	720.6	5.19
UK	516	517.7	613.3	538.9	3.88
Italy	537.1	524.4	597.4	477.7	3.44
Spain	291.6	294.3	388.1	310.1	2.23
Switzerland	112.7	112.3	117.6	127.1	0.91
Sweden	124.2	132.5	159.2	106.6	0.77
Netherlands	99.3	96.4	99.9	103.2	0.74
Other West Europe	429.1	424.1	421.7	405.9	2.92
Total West Europe	3410.9	3399.3	3798.2	3587.9	25.83
Total US / Canada	5271	5138.3	5240.4	5501.9	39.6
Total rest of world	3512.9	3817.9	4166.6	4802.1	34.57

APPENDIX TWO

UK THEATRICAL RELEASE OF POST-NEW GERMAN FILMS (excluding international coproductions with minority German funding) 1988 - 1995

English Film Title	Director	German	UK
<i>German Film Title (if different)</i>		release	release
Cobra Verde	Werner Herzog	1988	1988
La Amiga	Jeanine Meerapfel	1988	1991
The Nasty Girl	Michael Verhoeven	1989	1989
<i>[Das schreckliche Mädchen]</i>			
Coming Out	Heiner Carow	1989	1990
Until the End of the World	Wim Wenders	1991	1991
<i>[Bis ans Ende der Welt]</i>			
Salmonberries	Percy Adlon	1991	1991
The Second Heimat (TV broadcast)	Edgar Reitz	1991	1992
<i>[Die zweite Heimat]</i>			
Schtonk!	Helmut Dietl	1991	1992
Stalingrad	Joseph Vilsmaier	1991	1992
My Father is Coming	Monika Treut	1991	1992
I was on Mars	Dani Levy	1991	1993
Faraway, so close!	Wim Wenders	1993	1994
<i>[In weiter Ferne, so nah!]</i>			
Makin' Up!	Katja von Garnier	1993	1994
<i>[Abgeschminkt!]</i>			
Kaspar Hauser	Peter Sehr	1993	1995
The Most-Desired Man	Sönke Wortmann	1994	1996
<i>[Der bewegte Mann]</i>			
The Promise	Margarethe von Trotta	1994	1996
<i>[Das Versprechen]</i>			

APPENDIX THREE

TOP GROSSING FILMS IN GERMANY, 1988 - 1995

Since no single organisation, writer or journal was to my knowledge able to provide a comprehensive and consistent overview of the German film market during the period 1988 - 1995, I have had to rely on three separate sources for the Top Ten lists presented here, these being Kindred's annual reports for *Variety* (1989, 1990, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996 and 1997), Garncarz's essay on the performance of Hollywood films in Germany (1994) and a single issue of *Screen International* (Unattributed, 1995).

One might expect that the compilation of Top Ten statistics would nevertheless be a relatively unproblematic undertaking - a clear consensus regarding the composition of a list of the year's most successful films would surely be easily reached by an industry that compiles statistics based on admissions data rather than box office revenues. However, this is patently not the case as far as the data compiled below is concerned: slightly differing Top Tens have been produced by each of the above-named sources for the different years which concern me here. This may perhaps be attributable to varied levels of response to each survey by film theatre owners and chains, or to discrepancies in calculations made by statisticians. This notwithstanding, I have taken the decision to present Top Tens taken from *Variety* where possible for consistency's sake, as data from this single source is the most complete of the three (here, I mean that *Variety* provides the broadest sample of data). Where there are gaps in the *Variety* essays (for example, where Top Tens are altogether absent from their annual film guides, or where they fail to supply specific admissions data), I have attempted to supplement the list with data from Garncarz or *Screen International*. As a result, I must emphasise that the lists presented below almost certainly lack accuracy in some cases. I would however defend their use value in terms of their limited application in this instance, namely indicating in general terms only the position of commercially successful German films within the German film marketplace at the time, as discussed in Chapter Two.

In the compilation of admissions statistics for the period 1988 to 1995 contained below, the specific source of each Top Ten is given in each case. I have furthermore capitalised those films appearing in each annual Top Ten which have been identified by at least some film critics, journalists and other commentators on the cinema industry in the FRG and elsewhere as being in some sense "German films". The invocation of this category by these people has been very diverse, but I have identified three broad ways in which the signifier "German film" has been understood. I have capitalised the specific films in question according to the following criteria, all of which have been employed by commentators on and members of the industry:-

(i) Majority German-funded film, usually with a German director and predominantly German cast, or made by a German animation team, mainly or exclusively filmed in Germany, in German.

(ii) Majority Hollywood-financed film with a German director and predominantly American cast, filmed in the USA, in English.

(iii) European coproduction with some German funding, usually with an international cast or animation team, often in English.

All other films listed below are Hollywood productions, with the single exception of the film Four Weddings and a Funeral, a British - American coproduction.

1988 (Source: *Variety*)

	Film title	Admissions
1	Dirty Dancing	8.51m
2	The Jungle Book [reissue]	4.92m
3	Fatal Attraction	4.66m
4	ÖDIPUS (i)	4.57m
5	Who framed Roger Rabbit?	3.94m
6	Coming to America	3.74m
7	Crocodile Dundee 2	3.70m
8	ICH UND ER (ii)	3.43m
9	Rambo III	2.26m
10	MAN SPRICHT DEUTSH (i)	2.14m

1989 (Source: *Variety*)

	Film title	Admissions
1	Rain Man	5.75m
2	A Fish Called Wanda	3.64m
3	OTTO - DER AUßERFRIESISCHE (i)	3.59m
4	Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade	3.52m
5	Licence to Kill	2.47m
6	The Naked Gun	2.45m
7	Cocktail	2.41m
8	The Land Before Time	2.29m
9	ASTERIX - OPERATION HINKELSTEIN (iii)	2.24m
10	HERBSTMILCH (i)	2.18m

1990 (Source: *Variety*)

	Film title	Admissions
1	Pretty Woman	9.34m
2	Look Who's Talking	5.19m
3	The War of the Roses	4.09m
4	Dead Poets' Society	3.29m
5	Ghost	3.28m
6	WERNER - BEINHART (i)	3.22m
7	THE NEVER-ENDING STORY 2 (iii)	2.96m
8	Gremlins 2	2.57m
9	Turner and Hooch	2.27m
10	Ghostbusters 2	2.10m

1991 (Source: *Variety*)

	Film title	Admissions
1	Home Alone	6.42m
2	Dances with Wolves	6.39m
3	Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves	4.63m
4	Terminator 2: Judgement Day	4.56m
5	Not Without My Daughter	4.15m
6	The Naked Gun 2 1/2	4.07m
7	PAPPA ANTE PORTAS (i)	3.52m
8	The Silence of the Lambs	3.40m
9	Green Card	2.76m
10	Look Who's Talking Too	2.57m

1992 (Source: *Variety*)

	Film title	Admissions
1	Basic Instinct	4.41m
2	Hook	3.59m
3	Beauty and the Beast	3.27m
4	Home Alone 2	3.18m
5	J.F.K.	2.93m
6	OTTO - DER LIEBESFILM (i)	2.84m
7	My Girl	2.35m
8	Beethoven	2.33m
9	Fried Green Tomatoes	2.28m
10	Lethal Weapon 3	2.27m

1993 (Source: *Variety*)

	Film title	Admissions
1	Jurassic Park	9.12m
2	The Bodyguard	6.27m
3	Aladdin	4.67m
4	Hot Shots: Part Deux	4.36m
5	The Jungle Book	4.15m
6	Dennis the Menace	3.97m
7	Indecent Proposal	3.69m
8	THE HOUSE OF THE SPIRITS (iii)	3.07m
9	Sommersby	3.01m
10	The Firm	2.45m

1994 (Source: *Screen International* [Unattributed. 1995a] - since no admissions statistics for 1994 were provided by Kindred in his annual *Variety* report on German cinema)

	Film title	Admissions
1	The Lion King	7.53m
2	The Flintstones	6.26m
3	Schindler's List	5.97m
4	Mrs Doubtfire	5.45m
5	Forrest Gump	5.26m
6	Four Weddings and a Funeral	4.28m
7	DER BEWEGTE MANN (i)	4.01m
8	Free Willy	3.31m
9	Philadelphia	3.26m
10	The Naked Gun 33 1/3	3.15m

1995 (Source: *Variety*)

	Film title	Admissions
1	WHILE YOU WERE SLEEPING (ii)	3.97m
2	The Lion King	3.75m
3	Casper	3.41m
4	Die Hard 3	3.20m
5	STARGATE (ii)	3.00m
6	Waterworld	2.99m
7	Disclosure	2.90m
8	Apollo 13	2.76m
9	Pocahontas	2.53m
10	DER BEWEGTE MANN (i)	2.53m

FILMOGRAPHY

The filmography featured on the next few pages comprises some 400 indigenous films released between 1988 and 1995 in the FRG; an average of 50 films per calendar year.

The filmography was compiled from a wide range of sources, including film release schedules printed in daily newspapers, film magazines and *Filmecho* / *Filmwoche*, and reviews from newspapers and magazines. While I do not wish to claim that it is in any way a complete record of film releases from these years in the FRG, it does include the vast majority of indigenous films released there during this period, and forms the main basis for my discussion of post-New German Cinema in this thesis.

FILM TITLE	DIRECTOR	YEAR	GENRE
00 Schneider - Jagd auf Nihil Baxter	Schneider, Helge	94	Comedy
100 Jahre Adolf Hitler	Schlingensief, Christoph	89	Experimental
5 Bier und 1 Kaffee	Steiner, Rudolf	88	Comedy
Ab nach Tibet!	Achternbusch, Herbert	93	Experimental
Abenteuer von Pico und Columbus, Die	Schoemann, Michael	92	Adventure
Abgeschminkt!	Garnier, Katja von	92	Romantic comedy
Abrahams Gold	Graser, Jörg	90	Heimat film
Abschied vom falschen Paradies	Baser, Tevfik	89	Lit adaptation
Abschied von Agnes	Gwisdek, Michael	94	Comedy
Abwesenheit, Die / L'Absence	Handke, Peter	92	Lit adaptation
achte Tag, Der	Münster, Reinhard	90	Thriller
Adamski	Becker, Jens	93	Romantic comedy
Aetherrausch	Gengnagel, Klaus	88	Drama
Affären	Breuer, Jacques	93	Romantic comedy
Affengeil	Praunheim, Rosa von	90	Gay drama
African Timber	Bringmann, Peter F.	89	Thriller
Alexander Humboldt	Simon, Rainer	88	Drama
All out	Koerfer, Thomas	90	Thriller
Alle Juden raus	Rund, Emanuel	90	Drama
Allein unter Frauen	Wortmann, Sönke	91	Romantic comedy
Alles auf Anfang	Münster, Reinhard	93	Comedy
Alles Lüge	Schier, Heiko	91	Comedy
Als die Liebe laufen lernte	Strauven, Michäel	88	Comedy
alte Lied, Das	Stöckl, Ula; Herdin, Ulrike	91	Drama
Amigomio	Meerapfel, Jeanine	93	Drama
Amoklauf	Boll, Uwe	94	Action film
Anna Zeit Land	Hübner, Christoph	93	Drama
Antigone	Straub, Jean-Marie; Huillet, Danièle	91	Lit adaptation
Apfelbäume	Sanders-Brahms, Helma	91	Love story
Architekten, Die	Kahane, Peter	90	Drama
Asphaltflimmern	Hebendanz, Johannes	94	Road movie
Asterix in America	Hahn, Gerhard	94	Animation
Atem, Der	Schilling, Niklaus	89	Drama
Auf Wiedersehen Amerika	Schütte, Jan	93	Road movie
Aufstand der Dinge	Costard, Hellmuth	95	Drama
Auge um Auge	Ghadarkhah, Mansour	92	Drama
Avetik	Askarian, Don	92	Drama
Babylon - Im Bett mit dem Teufel	Huettner, Ralf	91	Horror
Bahmherzige Schwestern	Runge, Annelie	92	Arztfilm
Banale Tage	Welz, Peter	90	Drama
Bangkok-Story	Sydow, Rolf von	89	Thriller
Barschel - Mord in Genf	Boll, Uwe	93	Action film
Beim nächsten Kuß knall ich ihn nieder!	Blumenberg, Hans-Christoph	95	Comedy
Beim nächsten Mann wird alles anders	Schwarzenberger, Xaver	88	Romantic comedy
Besteigung des Chimborazo, Die	Simon, Rainer	88	Drama
bewegte Mann, Der	Wortmann, Sönke	94	Romantic comedy
Bis ans Ende der Welt	Wenders, Wim	91	Various
Blaäugig	Hauff, Reinhard	89	Thriller

FILM TITLE	DIRECTOR	YEAR	GENRE
blinde Kuh, Die	Schilling, Niklaus	95	Docu-drama
Brandnacht	Fischer, Markus	92	Thriller
Brennende Betten	Frankenberg, Pia	88	Comedy
Brigitta	Knöpfel, Dagmar	93	Lit adaptation
Brigitta	Köpfel, Dagmar	93	Drama
Brocken, Der	Glowna, Vadim	91	Comedy
Bronsteins Kinder	Kawalerowicz, Jerzy	91	Historical drama
Bruch, Der	Beyer, Frank	89	Thriller
Bumerang - Bumerang	Geissendörfer, Hans W.	89	Comedy
Bunte Hunde	Becker, Lars	95	Thriller
Burning Life	Welz, Peter	94	Road movie
Buster's Bedroom	Horn, Rebecca	91	Drama
Candida	O., Dore	91	Experimental
Cendrillon	Brandauer, Karin	88	Drama
C'est la vie	Cohn-Bendit, Daniel; Steinbach, Peter	91	Experimental
Charlie und Louise: Das doppelte Lottchen	Vilsmaier, Joseph	93	Comedy
Cobra Verde	Herzog, Werner	88	Adventure
Colette	Houston, Danny	91	Biography
Coming Out	Carow, Heiner	89	Gay drama
Cosimas Lexikon	Kahane, Peter	91	Comedy
Cuba Libre	Petzold, Christian	95	Road movie
Das war der wilde Osten (Go Trabi Go 2)	Büld, Wolfgang	92	Car comedy
Decadence	Berkoff, Steven	93	Drama
Denunziantin, Die	Mitscherlich, Thomas	93	Historical drama
Der Mann nebenan	Haffter, Petra	91	Thriller
Deutsche Frau gesucht	Rajai, Masud	89	Drama
deutsche Kettensägenmassaker, Das	Schlingensief, Christoph	90	Experimental
Deutschfieber	Schilling, Niklaus	92	Comedy
Domenica	Kern, Peter	93	Drama
Dr. M	Chabrol, Claude	89	Thriller
Drei Tage im April	Storz, Oliver	95	Historical drama
Du Elvis, ich Monroe	Lambert, Lothar	89	Experimental
Durst	Weinhart, Martin	92	Drama
Ebbies Bluff	Rudolph, Claude-Oliver	92	Comedy
Einer meiner ältesten Freunde	Kaufmann, Rainer	94	Romantic comedy
Einer Trage des anderen Last	Warneke, Lothar	88	Drama
Eines Tages irgendwann	Glowna, Vadim	91	Comedy
Einmal Arizona	Bücking, Hans-Günther	91	Road movie
Elektro-Lähmung	Wember, Bernard	89	Experimental
Erdenschwer	Herbrich, Oliver	88	Drama
Erdnußmann, Der	Klein, Dietmar	92	Comedy
Erfolg	Seitz, Franz	90	Lit adaptation
Eroberung der Mitte, Die	Bramkamp, Robert	94	Comedy
Erster Verlust	Dessau, Maxim	91	Drama
Es ist nicht leicht, ein Gott zu sein	Fleischmann, Peter	88	Lit adaptation
Ex	Schlichter, Mark	95	Drama
Eye of the storm	Zeltser, Yuri	90	Drama
Fabrik der Offiziere	Vollmar, Wolf	88	War movie
Fall Lucona, Der	Gold, Jack	93	Drama
Fall Ö, Der	Simon, Rainer	90	Drama

FILM TITLE	DIRECTOR	YEAR	GENRE
Fallada - letztes Kapital	Gräf, Roland	88	Biography
fast perfektes Verhältnis, Ein	Reiker, Donald	94	Comedy
Felidae	Schaak, Michael	93	Animation
Female misbehaviour	Treut, Monika	92	Drama
Fernes Land Pa-isch	Simon, Rainer	93	Road movie
Feuer, Eis und Dynamit	Bogner, Willy	90	Action film
Fifty-Fifty	Timm, Peter	88	Comedy
fliegende Holländer, Die	Schmidt, Eckhardt	91	Lit adaptation
Flirt	Hartley, Hal	95	Episode Film
Fluch, Der	Huettner, Ralf	88	Horror
Follow me	Knilli, Maria	89	Drama
Frankie, Jonny und die anderen	Viet, Hans-Erich	92	Romantic comedy
Franta	Allary, Mathias	89	Lit adaptation
Frauen sind was Wunderbares	Hormann, Sherry	93	Romantic comedy
Geheimnis, Das	Thome, Rudolf	94	Love story
Gekauftes Glück	Odermatt, Urs	88	Drama
Geld	Dörrie, Doris	89	Comedy
Georg Elser - Einer aus Deutschland	Brandauer, Klaus-Maria	89	Biography
Georgette Meunier	Stöcklin, Tania; Rey-Coquais, Cyrille	88	Biography
German Fried Movie	Boll, Uwe; Lustig, Frank	92	Comedy
Geschichtenerzähler, Der	Boldt, Rainer	89	Drama
Gewitter im Mai	Schwarzenberger, Xaver	88	Lit adaptation
Ginevra	Engström, Ingemo	91	Drama
Go Trabi Go	Timm, Peter	90	Car comedy
Gorilla bathes at noon	Makavejev, Dusan	93	Drama
Gossenkind	Kern, Peter	91	Drama
große Fest, Das	Beyer, Frank	92	Drama
Grüne Hochzeit	Zschoche, Herrmann	88	Drama
Grüß Gott, Genosse	Stelzer, Manfred	89	Comedy
Gudrun	Geissendörfer, Hans W.	91	Drama
Gummibärchen küßt man nicht	Bannert, Walter	89	Comedy
Hab' ich nur deine Liebe	Kern, Peter	88	Comedy
Hades	Achternbusch, Herbert	94	Experimental
Hallo Sisters, Die	Runze, Ottokar	90	Biography
handmaid's tale, The	Schlöndorff, Volker	90	Lit adaptation
Happy Birthday, Türke!	Dörrie, Doris	91	Thriller
Happy Weekend	Herzog, Ed	95	Comedy
Harte Zeiten	Kückelmann, Norbert	89	Drama
Heimweh des Walerjan Wrobel, Das	Schübel, Rolf	90	Historical drama
Herbstmilch	Vilsmaier, Joseph	88	Heimat film
Herr Ober	Polt, Gerhard	91	Comedy
Herz in der Hand	Janson, Uwe	90	Drama
Herzlich Willkommen	Bohm, Hark	90	Drama
Herzsprung	Misselwitz, Helke	92	Love story
Heute sterben immer nur die anderen	Kühn, Siegfried	90	Drama
Hick's Last Stand	Achternbusch, Herbert	90	Experimental
Highway Chaoten	Turteltaub, Jon	91	Car comedy
Himmelsheim	Stelzer, Manfred	88	Comedy
Hitlerjunge Salomon	Holland, Agnieszka	91	Biography

FILM TITLE	DIRECTOR	YEAR	GENRE
Homo Faber	Schlöndorff, Volker	92	Lit adaptation
House of the Spirits, The	August, Bille	93	Lit adaptation
Hut, Der	Schmidt, Evelyn	90	Comedy
I know the way to the Hofbrauhaus	Achternbusch, Herbert	91	Experimental
I was on Mars	Levy, Daniel	91	Comedy
Ich bin da, ich bin da	Achternbusch, Herbert	92	Experimental
Ich bin meine eigene Frau	Praunheim, Rosa von	92	Gay drama
Ich und Christine	Stripp, Peter	93	Love story
Ich und er	Dörrie, Doris	88	Romantic comedy
Im Jahr der Schildkröte	Wieland, Ute	88	Love story
Im Kreise der Lieben	Huntgeburth, Hermine	91	Drama
In einem Atem	Hochmuth, Dietmar	88	Drama
In weiter Ferne, so nah!	Wenders, Wim	93	Fantasy
Inge, April und Mai	Kohlhaase, Wolfgang; Denecke, Gabriele	93	Love story
Innocent, The	Schlesinger, John	93	Drama
Jadup und Boel	Simon, Rainer	88	Comedy
Jahr der Machete, Das	Schedereit, Karl	91	Drama
Jana und Jan	Dziuba, Helmut	91	Love story
Japaner sind die besseren Liebhaber	Weinges, Peter	94	Romantic comedy
Jenseits der Wolken	Wenders Wim; Antonioni. Michelangelo	95	Episode Film
Jenseits von Blau	Eichhorn, Christoph	88	Drama
Johanna d'Arc of Mongolia	Ottinger, Ulrike	88	Drama
Jungfrauenmaschine, Die	Treut, Monika	88	Drama
Justiz	Geissendörfer, Hans W.	93	Lit adaptation
Karniggels	Buck, Detlev	91	Comedy
Kaspar Hauser	Sehr, Peter	94	Historical drama
Katze, Die	Graf, Dominik	88	Thriller
kaukasische Nacht, Die	Maugg, Gordian	95	Drama
Kein Pardon	Kerkeling, Hape	92	Comedy
Keiner liebt mich	Dörrie, Doris	95	Comedy
Killing Blue	Patzak, Peter	88	Thriller
Kinderspiele	Becker, Wolfgang	92	Drama
Kinoerzähler, Der	Sinkel, Bernhard	93	Lit adaptation
kleene Punker, Der	Schaak, Michael	92	Animation
Kleine Haie	Wortmann, Sönke	92	Comedy
Knight Moves	Schenkel, Carl	92	Thriller
Komitas	Askarian, Don	88	Drama
Kondom des Grauens	Walz, Martin	95	Comedy
Kontrollleur, Der	Trampe, Stefan	94	Drama
Krücke	Grünler, Jörg	92	Lit adaptation
Kuß des Tigers	Haffter, Petra	88	Thriller
Küss mich!	Pfeiffer, Maris	95	Romantic comedy
La Amiga	Meerapfel, Jeanine	88	Drama
L'Africana / Rückkehr, Die	Trotta, Margarethe von	90	Drama
Land der Väter, Land der Söhne	Hofmann, Nico	88	War movie
Land hinter dem Regenbogen, Das	Kipping, Herwig	91	Comedy
Langer Gang	Arslan, Yilmaz	92	Drama
Langer Samstag	Müller, Hanns-Christian	92	Comedy
Laurin	Sigl, Robert	88	Fantasy
Leben für Leben	Zanussi, Krzystof	91	Drama
Lebewohl, Fremde	Baser, Tefvik	91	Drama

FILM TITLE	DIRECTOR	YEAR	GENRE
Leise Schatten	Hormann, Sherry	92	Romantic comedy
Leni	Heimer, Leo	93	Drama
Lernen können ja alle Leute	Breitel, Heide	88	Drama
Let's talk about sex [Taboo Parlor]	Treut, Monika	94	Drama
Letzte Ausfahrt Brooklyn	Edel, Ulrich	89	Lit adaptation
Letztes aus der DaDaEr	Foth, Jörg	90	Revue
Liebe auf den ersten Blick	Thome, Rudolf	91	Love story
Liebe, Leben, Tod	Allary, Mathias	95	Comedy
Liebe, Tod und kleine Teufel	Lambert, Lothar	89	Experimental
Linie 1	Hauß, Reinhard	88	Musical
Lippels Traum	Käfer, Karl Heinz	90	Drama
Lisbon Story	Wenders, Wim	95	Comedy / drama
Loosers!	Roth, Christopher	94	Drama
Ludwig 1881	Dubini, Donatello und Fosco	93	Historical drama
Lügnerin, Die	Kühn, Siegfried	92	Drama
Madame Bäuerin	Bogner, Franz Xaver	92	Heimat film
Mädchen aus dem Fahrstuhl, Das	Zschoche, Hermann	90	Drama
Malina	Schroeter, Werner	90	Lit adaptation
Man spricht deutsch	Polt, Gerhard	88	Comedy
Mann für jede Tonart, Ein	Timm, Peter	93	Romantic comedy
Männerpension	Buck, Detlev	95	Comedy
Manöver	Sanders-Brahms, Helma	88	Comedy
Manta - Der Film	Timm, Peter	92	Car comedy
Manta Manta	Büld, Wolfgang	91	Car comedy
Maries Lied	Brücher, Niko	94	Drama
Mario und der Zauberer	Brandauer, Klaus-Maria	93	Lit adaptation
Martha Jellneck	Wessel, Kai	88	Drama
Mau Mau	Schrader, Uwe	92	Erotic thriller
Mediocren, Die	Glasner, Matthias	94	Comedy
Meermanns Baumhaus	Pein, Anna Annegret	92	Drama
Meine Tochter gehört mir	Naefe, Vivian	92	Thriller
Melancholia	Engel, Andi	89	Thriller
Miraculi	Weiß, Ulrich	91	Drama
Mix Wix - ein Kapitalist gibt auf	Achternbusch, Herbert	89	Experimental
Moebius	Geschonneck, Matti	91	Lit adaptation
Moor	Bogner, Franz Xaver	89	Drama
Motivsuche	Hochmuth, Dietmar	89	Docu-drama
Mr Bluesman	Wortmann, Sönke	92	Road movie
Mute Witness	Waller, Anthony	95	Horror
Mutters Courage	Verhoeven, Michael	94	Lit adaptation
My father is coming	Treut, Monika	91	Drama
My lovely Monster	Bergmann, Michel	89	Comedy
Nacht der Regisseure, Die	Reitz, Edgar	95	Film history
Nacht des Marders, Die	Wagner, Maria Theresia	88	Drama
Neues Deutschland	Gröning; Janson; Kroske; Levy; Pfeiffer	93	Episode film
Neuner	Masten, Werner	90	Comedy
Nich' mit Leo	Gregan, Ralf	94	Comedy
Nie im Leben	Grosse, Nina	90	Drama
Nie wieder schlafen	Frankenberg, Pia	92	Romantic comedy
Niemandsland	Achternbusch, Herbert	91	Experimental
Nikolaikirche	Beyer, Frank	95	Historical drama

FILM TITLE	DIRECTOR	YEAR	GENRE
Nordkurve	Winkelmann, Adolf	92	Drama
Novalis - Die blaue Blume	Kipping, Herwig	93	Biography
Nur über meine Leiche	Matsutani, Rainer	95	Comedy
olympische Sommer, Der	Maugg, Gordian	92	Drama
Ortelsburg - Szczytno	Goedel, Peter	90	Drama
Ostkreuz	Klier, Michael	91	Drama
Otto - Der Außerfriesische	Waalkes, Otto; Vajda, Marijan	89	Comedy
Otto - Der Liebesfilm	Waalkes, Otto	92	Romantic comedy
Papagei, Der	Huettner, Ralf	92	Comedy
Pappa ante Portas	Loriot	90	Comedy
Passagier, Der	Brasch, Thomas	88	Drama
Paul Bowles - Halbmond	Schlaich, Frieder & Alberti, Irene von	94	Lit adaptation
Paura e amore / Fürchten und Lieben	Trotta, Margarethe von	88	Drama
Peanuts: Die Bank zahlt alles	Rola, Carlo	95	Comedy
Philosoph, Der [Formen der Liebe Teil 2]	Thome, Rudolf	88	Love story
Pizza Colonia	Emmerich, Klaus	91	Comedy
Pizza Express	Naefe, Vivian	88	Comedy
Prinz in Hölleland	Stock, Michael	92	Gay drama
Probefahrt ins Paradies	Wolfsperger, Douglas	92	Drama
Rama Dama	Vilsmaier, Joseph	91	Heimat film
Ratte, Die	Lemke, Klaus	93	Drama
Reise ohne Wiederkehr	Grote, Alexandra von	89	Lit adaptation
Rennschwein Rudi Rüssel	Timm, Peter	94	Comedy
RobbyKallePaul	Levy, Daniel	88	Romantic comedy
Rohe Ostern	Gutmann, Michael	95	Romantic comedy
Rosalie goes shopping	Adlon, Percy	89	Comedy
Rosamunde	Günther, Egon	89	Drama
Rosenemil	Gabrea, Radu	93	Lit adaptation
Rossini	Dietl, Helmut	95	Comedy
Rotwang muss weg!	Blumenberg, Hans-Christoph	94	Comedy
Roula	Denlen, Martin	95	Drama
Rückkehr aus der Wüste	Stephan, Bernhard	89	Drama
Salmonberries	Adlon, Percy	91	Drama
Salz auf unserer Haut	Birkin, Andrew	92	Love story
Sandmann, Der	Hofmann, Nico	95	Thriller
Schartl	Zimmerschied, Sigi	94	Experimental
Schatten der Angst	Schmidt, Konstantin	92	Drama
Schatten der Wüste	Bretzinger, Jürgen	89	Adventure
Schattenboxer	Becker, Lars	92	Thriller
Schauspielerin, Die	Kühn, Siegfried	88	Drama
Scheeweiß - Rosenrot	Ritter, Christa	92	Biography
Schlafes Bruder	Vilsmaier, Joseph	94	Lit adaptation
Schluckauf	Klick, Roland	89	Drama
Schmetterlinge	Becker, Wolfgang	88	Drama
Schnarchen Gottes, Das	Janson, Uwe	94	Drama
schreckliche Mädchen, Das	Verhoeven, Michael	90	Comedy
Schrei aus Stein	Herzog, Werner	91	Mountain film
Schtonk!	Dietl, Helmut	91	Comedy

FILM TITLE	DIRECTOR	YEAR	GENRE
Schweinegeld - ein Märchen der Gebrüder Nimm	Kückelmann, Norbert	88	Comedy
Sehnsucht	Brauer, Jürgen	89	Lit adaptation
Senkrechtstarter, Die	Rateuke, Christian	88	Comedy
serbische Mädchen, Das	Sehr, Peter	90	Lit adaptation
Serpentintänzerin, Die	Herbst, Helmut	92	Film history
Sexy Sadie	Glasner, Matthias	95	Thriller
Sieben Frauen [Formen der Liebe Teil 3]	Thome, Rudolf	89	Love story
Sieger, Die	Graf, Dominik	94	Thriller
Silence like glass	Schenkel, Carl	88	Thriller
Singles	Ziedrich, Ecki	88	Comedy
Snooze	Agha, Armin Izzar	94	Comedy
Solinger Rudi	Klein, Dietmar	91	Comedy
Sommer der Liebe	Storch, Wenzel	92	Comedy
Sommeralbum, Das	Wessel, Kai	92	Drama
Sonnengöttin, Die	Thome, Rudolf	92	Love story
Spieler	Graf, Dominik	89	Romantic comedy
Spinnennetz, Das	Wicki, Bernard	89	Lit adaptation
Spur des Bernsteinzimmers, Die	Gräf, Roland	91	Thriller
Stadtgespräch	Kaufmann, Rainer	95	Romantic comedy
Stalingrad	Vilsmaier, Joseph	92	War movie
Stargate	Emmerich, Roland	95	Sci-Fi
Stein	Günther, Egon	91	Drama
Stille Betrüger	Lotaz, Beate	89	Drama
Stille Nacht	Levy, Daniel	95	Drama
Stilles Land	Dresen, Andreas	92	Drama
Stimme, Die	Graef-Marino, Gustavo	89	Thriller
Störenfried, Der	Frickel, Thomas	92	Drama
Strass, Der	Hoentsch, Andreas	90	Drama
Sturzflieger, Die	Bringmann, Peter F.	94	Sci-Fi
Sturzflug	Näter, Thorsten	89	Adventure
Sukubus	Tressler, Georg	88	Heimat film
Superstau	Stelzer, Manfred	91	Car comedy
Superweib, Das	Wortmann, Sönke	95	Comedy
Tafelspitz	Schwarzenberger, Xaver	92	Romantic comedy
Tandem	Stephan, Bernhard	91	Comedy
Tangospieler, Der	Gräf, Roland	91	Lit adaptation
Tanz auf der Kippe	Brauer, Jürgen	90	Lit adaptation
Terror 2000	Schlingensief, Christoph	92	Experimental
Terroristen, Die	Gröning, Philip	92	Comedy
Texas - Doc Snyder hält die Welt in Atem	Schneider, Helge; Huettner, Ralf	94	Comedy
The Wonderbeats - Kings of Beat	Rudolph, Claude-Oliver	90	Musical
Tiger, Löwe, Panther	Graf, Dominik	88	Comedy
Tigerin, Die	Howard, Karin	91	Erotic thriller
Tod eines Schülers	Patzak, Peter	90	Historical drama
tödliche Maria, Die	Tykwer, Tom	94	Drama
Totmacher, Der	Karmakar, Romuald	95	Drama
Touch, The	Zanussi, Krzystof	89	Drama
Trabbi goes to Hollywood	Turteltaub, Jon	90	Car comedy
Transatlantis	Wagner, Christian	94	Adventure
Treffen in Travers	Gwisdek, Michael	88	Comedy

FILM TITLE	DIRECTOR	YEAR	GENRE
Trillertrine, Die	Lotz, Karl Heinz	91	Drama
Trip, Der	Büld, Wolfgang	95	Comedy
Tunte zum Dessert, Eine	Beiersdorf, Dagmar	92	Comedy
Überall ist es besser, wo wir nicht sind	Klier, Michael	89	Drama
Überleben in New York	Praunheim, Rosa von	89	Gay drama
Unbeständig und kühl	Nettelbeck, Sandra	95	Romantic comedy
Und die Toten läßt man ruhen	Neukirchen, Dorothea	94	Drama
Und keiner weint mir nach	Vilsmaier, Joseph	95	Lit adaptation
Undine	Schmidt, Eckhardt	91	Erotic thriller
unendliche Geschichte II, Die	Miller, George	92	Fantasy
unendliche Geschichte III, Die	Macdonald, Peter	94	Fantasy
ungewisse Lage des Paradieses, Die	Buch, Franziska	92	Drama
Unhold, Der	Schlöndorff, Volker	95	War movie
United Trash	Schlingensief, Christoph	95	Experimental
Vatanyolu - Die Heimreise	Günay, Enis; Konyar, Rasim	88	Comedy
Venus 220 Volt	Zimmermann, Ulrike	91	Drama
Venusfalle, Die	Ackeren, Robert van	88	Erotic thriller
Verbotene Liebe	Dziuba, Helmut	89	Love story
Verdacht, Der	Beyer, Frank	91	Drama
Verfehlung, Die	Carow, Heiner	91	Love story
Verfolgte Wege	Janson, Uwe	89	Heimat film
Vergebung, Die	Hoentsch, Andreas	95	Drama
Verhängnis	Kelemen, Fred	95	Action film
Verlorene Landschaft	Kleinert, Andreas	92	Drama
Versprechen, Das	Trotta, Margarethe von	94	Historical drama
Voll Normaaal	Huettner, Ralf	94	Comedy
wahre Geschichte von Männern und Frauen, Die	Ackeren, Robert van	92	Romantic comedy
Waller's letzter Gang	Wagner, Christian	88	Heimat film
Was Sie noch nie über Frauen wissen wollten	Lambert, Lothar	91	Comedy
Wedding	Schier, Heiko	89	Comedy
weißen Zwerge, Die	Schäfer, Dirk	88	Experimental
Weltmeister	Solomun, Zoran	93	Historical drama
Wer hat Angst vor RotGelbBlau	Schier, Heiko	90	Comedy
Werner - Beinhart	Hahn, Gerhard; Schaak, Michael; List, Niki	90	Animation
Wheels & Deals	Hammon, Michael	91	Thriller
While you were sleeping	Turteltaub, Jon	95	Drama
White Magic	Bogner, Willy	94	Action film
Wildfeuer	Baier, Jo	90	Heimat film
Will my mother go back to Berlin?	Peled, Micha	92	Drama
Winckelmanns Reisen	Schütte, Jan	90	Road movie
Wir Enkelkinder	Jonas, Bruno	92	Comedy
Wir können auch anders	Buck, Detlev	93	Comedy
Wohin?	Achternbusch, Herbert	88	Experimental
Wolfskinder	Fechner, Eberhard	91	Drama
Wunderjahre	Athe, Arend	91	Drama
Yasemin	Bohm, Hark	88	Drama
Zugzwang	Carriere, Matthieu	89	Comedy
Zwei Frauen	Schenkel, Carl	89	Drama

FILM TITLE	DIRECTOR	YEAR	GENRE
zweite Heimat, Die	Reitz, Edgar	91	Epic
zweite Rolle, Die	Wallen, Anthony	89	Drama
Zwischen Pankow und Zehlendorf	Seemann, Horst	91	Drama

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