Homemade Men in Postwar Austrian Cinema

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HOMEMADE MEN IN POSTWAR AUSTRIAN CINEMA

Nationhood, Genre and Masculinity

Maria Fritsche

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Thanks to the many reruns of Austrian films on national television, the images of pre- and postwar Austrian cinema have accompanied me from an early age. My interest on the postwar era had grown while I was investigating the life of Austrian soldiers during the Second World War. I came to wonder how a society that was so deeply unsettled by the war and by its involvement in terrible crimes could (ostensibly) recover so quickly from its wounds and the wounds it had inflicted on others. Studying the developments of Austrian society after the Second World War, and familiarising myself with the dominant discourses of the time, I realised that Austrian cinema must have played an important role in shaping postwar society by evaluating and modifying societal norms and values.

Yet it was only after I had left Austria and started studying postwar cinema in more depth while living in England that I came to understand why Austrian cinema held such an appeal to contemporary audiences and learnt which multiple functions it fulfilled in postwar society. Looking at a subject from a distance usually enables one to form a clearer, more complete picture. So my new perspective from across the English Channel granted me many revelatory insights into postwar Austrian cinema and its complex relationship with society which I otherwise would not have had. This monograph thus combines a 'close-up' with a 'long shot' perspective, bringing together an intimate knowledge of the films with a detached, analytical view of the film industry and postwar society. The result of this scholarly endeavour is presented here to the interested reader.

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INTRODUCTION

In the Austrian costume comedy *Die Deutschmeister* (The Deutschmeister, 1955), a case of mistaken identity leaves the slightly quirky Baron Zorndorf, played by comedian Gunter Philipp, accidentally engaged to Countess Nanette. The night before, Zorndorf has fallen for the naïve charm of country girl Constanze Hübner (Romy Schneider) at a masquerade. Mistaking her for the offspring of wealthy Countess Burgstetten, he comes the next morning to ask for her hand in marriage. To his dismay he finds out that Burgstetten's daughter, Nanette (Susi Nicoletti), is not the same girl that he met the night before. Yet Countess Burgstetten, delighted at having finally found a suitor for her daughter, immediately busies herself arranging the engagement, leaving Zorndorf little choice but to stand by his proposal in order to save face. Nanette cannot remember any encounter with Zorndorf, and convinces herself that she must have been sleep-walking; she then questions him over a glass of champagne about the night they spent together, in order to find out why he is so eager to marry her. When Zorndorf, feeling slightly uncomfortable with Nanette's advances as she moves closer and closer, truthfully denies that he kissed her during their first encounter, she replies, rather indignantly: 'What kind of man are you? To *what* did I get engaged?'[1]

This scene, from one of the most popular Austrian costume films of the 1950s, is a useful illustration of contemporary views on masculinity and allows us to analyse how masculinity was treated in popular cinema. The dialogue shows that Nanette expects her partner to take the initiative in sexual matters – a form of behaviour that is typically regarded as masculine in Western culture. The fact that he does not meet these expectations suggests he might be somehow deficient in masculine attributes. To Nanette, Zorndorf's apparent lack of sexual interest is more than just an indicator that he is not a very masculine man: it signals that he is no man at all, which is why she refers to him as a thing – 'to *what* did I get engaged?' The fact that his appearance (he looks like a man) does not match his behaviour (he does not try to kiss her) causes tension. To resolve this confusion, Nanette sets out to test his manliness by then pulling him over and kissing him. His immediate, somatic and involuntary reaction – a strand of hair pops up, a metaphor for sexual arousal – reassures her, as well as the audience, that Baron Zorndorf is a 'real' – that is, heterosexual – man.

Significantly, *Die Deutschmeister* is a costume film, a genre that, with lavish costumes and high emotional content, has traditionally attracted female audiences.[2] Like in *Die Deutschmeister*, Austrian historical costume film often presents men as passive, which is a result both of generic and cinematic traditions and of Austria's particular political situation at the time. Masculinity could be mocked in *Die Deutschmeister* because men's position of power was secure by 1955. This had not always been the case. Masculinity, as this book will show, was an issue of major concern in postwar Austria, as the Second World War had caused dramatic social shifts and destabilised traditional gender relations in Austria. Men have traditionally been looked upon as pillars of society and nation, and so the loss of men's political, economic and symbolic power following the military defeat and occupation of the country was perceived as a threat to social order.[3]

This book will show how popular cinema tackled the pressing issues of masculinity and national identity, in order to establish how cinema intervened in and shaped popular discourses and thus helped to stabilise and modernise Austrian society. It investigates whose views cinema endorsed, promoted or contested, and asks whether the film industry largely followed its own (economic or artistic) agenda or allied itself with other social institutions, and for what purpose. My analysis demonstrates that due to the precarious economic conditions of the domestic film industry, as well as the specific political context of Allied occupation and the people's desire for national independence, popular cinema acquired a key role in formulating ideas about Austrian nationhood and masculinity.

The fact that Austria has a long cinematic tradition, and that its films once enjoyed great popularity inside Austria, in Germany and in some other neighbouring countries, has almost been forgotten. As has the fact that Austrian artists also left their imprint on other European cinemas and on Hollywood through co-operation, exchange of personnel and the (voluntary as well as forced) emigration of filmmakers, scriptwriters, musicians, actors and designers.[4] After the Second World War, Austrian film productions continued to draw large audiences in Austria, at least up to the late 1950s; it also remained successful in West Germany, traditionally Austria's main export market. The unbroken popularity of Austrian films in postwar Germany dumbfounded external observers, such as the US High Commissioner for Austria, who tried to explain the films' appeal by suggesting that 'the Austrian films, though artistically inferior, were in a lighter vein, whereas most of the German films, though artistically better, were serious and gloomy'.[5]

The Austrians' well documented preference for domestic over foreign productions after the war suggests that Austrian cinema offered something unique to its audience. So what was the appeal of Austrian cinema? Did it lie in the strong stylistic and personal continuities with pre-1945 cinema, which rewarded the audiences' longing for the familiar? Were audiences attracted by the genres of historical costume film, *Heimatfilm*, musical comedies and melodrama, which were typical of Austrian cinema? Was it in the way Austrian cinema engaged with pressing social issues, such as conflicted gender relations, the rapid modernisation of society or the trauma of war, by making light of gender troubles or by presenting the challenges of modernity in an optimistic light? Or was it that Austrian cinema evaded complicated subjects by glossing over the traumatic Nazi past, substituting it with images of a glorious imperial history or showcasing a rural idyll untainted by war or modernity, thereby providing reassurance or escape?

By analysing the aesthetics, narratives and themes of the films produced in the first decade after the war, then, I want to establish what made Austrian cinema so attractive to contemporary audiences; after all, it was the immense appeal of Austrian cinema which gave wide publicity to the notions of masculinity and national identity it advertised. To be sure, its attraction did not lie in artistic invention. Unlike other European cinemas Austrian cinema more or less continued where it had broken off in 1945.[6] It did not follow the German lead in trying its hand at what came to be known as the (short-lived) genre of the 'rubble film'.[7] Nor was the old guard of Austrian filmmakers inspired by Italian neorealism to find new forms of artistic expression; the two young filmmakers, Harald Röbbeling and Kurt Steinwendner, who attempted a neorealist approach, became targets of heated controversies and their films failed at the box office.[8] The influence of French and Hollywood *noir*-cinema, too, was very limited; it provided inspiration for two crime films but left no lasting imprint on Austrian cinema. Experimental or avant-garde cinema did not exist in Austria until the 1950s: Wolfgang Kudranovsky and the above-mentioned Steinwendner took the first hesitant steps in avant-garde cinema in 1951 with their filmic interpretation of Edgar Allan Poe's poem *Der Rabe* (The Raven), and Peter Kubelka, who presented his first film, *Mosaik im Vertrauen* (Mosaic in Confidence), in 1955, became Austria's pioneer in experimental cinema.[9] Yet the fact that most Austrian filmmakers did not seek novel forms of expression after the war did not impede the films' commercial success in the 1950s.

The period between 1945 and 1955 marked not only the last heyday of commercial Austrian cinema, but was also a most momentous historical period, as 1945 marked the end of German dictatorship and 1955 the regaining of national independence. Austria, from 1938 a part of Nazi Germany, came out of the Second World War as a defeated country whose economy and social structures lay in ruins, and whose future as an independent state was uncertain. With the ruling Nazi elites overthrown, a sizeable part of the population gone due to casualties and imprisonment and the Allied Forces now holding supreme power, society was in turmoil.[10] Apart from the urgent need to rebuild the economy and infrastructure, issues of both gender and national identity emerged as fields of particular concern. As in postwar Germany, men had lost their status as 'protectors, providers and procreators'.[11] Women had taken over men's roles during the war, which resulted in conflict when the men, often traumatised by the experiences of war and perhaps imprisonment, finally returned.[12] Men's loss of power was the subject of intense debate in the media, as well as in political, medical and Church circles, albeit often addressed indirectly in discussions about divorce rates, the issue of fraternisation, the problems of war veterans or the so-called youth problem.[13] The way in which the issue of masculinity was addressed, namely as a normative ideal that had become destabilised, and which needed to be strengthened in order to guarantee the functioning of society, suggests that there was much more at stake than domestic peace: the issue of masculinity was entangled with the question of political autonomy and the desire to instil a sense of Austrian identity in the people.

John Tosh's argument that in periods of emerging national identity the 'dominant masculinity is likely to become a metaphor for the political community as a whole' seems a fitting description of the national discourse in postwar Austria.[14] The question of nationhood occupied a prominent place in political and media discourses after the war. As a union with Germany was no longer desired (or opportune) after the downfall of the Third Reich, Austria's elites made considerable efforts to highlight the differences between Germany and Austria and promote a unique Austrian identity. This construction of an Austrian nation was first of all directed at the Austrian people, many of whom still considered themselves (at least culturally) German; although an Austrian sentiment existed in parts of the population, a clear concept of Austrian nationhood had yet to be actively produced. Furthermore, Austria's political and cultural elites also sought to convince the international community that Austria was different from Nazi Germany, an 'innocent victim' rather than a perpetrator, and thus deserving of being granted a better treatment.[15]

Due to the historical intertwining of nation, citizenship and masculinity, the latter played an influential role in the national rebuilding process.[16] Within the specific context of social destabilisation and confusion over national identity, the issue of masculinity acquired double significance: on the one hand, the dominant masculine ideal as embodiment of the nation needed to be strengthened in order to stabilise social order; on the other hand, this traditional ideal had to be adapted to changing political and economic circumstances and infused with new 'national' values in order to foster identification with the emerging Austrian nation. Popular cinema, as this book will show, played a key role in this nation-building process in that it formulated and promoted national ideals of masculinity, and thereby decisively shaped the discourse on nationhood.

Gender as a Category of Analysis

However, in order to establish how popular cinema engaged in this complex process of social reorganisation and nation building, and to understand why it represented masculinity in particular ways and repressed or omitted other possibilities, we need to assess the significant role of gender as a defining element of relationships of power. Gender, as a cultural construction, 'designates social relations between the sexes'; it also, as the feminist theorist Joan W. Scott argues in her seminal article 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis', signifies relationships of power.[17] Hence, 'changes in the organisation of social relationships always correspond to changes in representations of power', which explains why in postwar Austria the established elites were so concerned about the destabilisation of traditional gender relations.[18]

Feminist historians were the first ones to explain the unequal distribution of power between men and women, by pointing to the constructedness of gender. Nira Yuval-Davis insists that gender 'should not be understood as a "real" difference between men and women, but as a mode of discourse' which defines the social roles of subjects on the basis of constructed differences.[19] Research into women's history showed how men and women were assigned specific gender roles and characteristics on the basis of biological differences, which granted or withheld access to political and economic power. By providing historical evidence that gender is socially created, feminist historians rebutted the claim upon which the legitimacy of patriarchy rests, namely that masculinity and femininity are natural and thus unchangeable. Anthropological and historical research have provided ample evidence that masculinity and femininity are not fixed entities, but mean different things to different people at different times.[20]

Gender is a relational category that interacts with concepts such as class or race, but also with other categories, such as age, religion or national or regional affiliations, the result of which is a wide variety of gender concepts and identities.[21] Because gender identities and gender ideals are varied and pluralistic, it is necessary to speak of masculinities and femininities in the plural. Gender is also relational in the sense that it seems impossible to speak about masculinity without speaking about femininity – it is, at least superficially, a matter of binary opposition. This idea, however, has been challenged and complicated by feminist theorists like Scott or Judith Butler, who questioned the 'fixed and permanent quality' of a binary opposition and called for a 'genuine historicization and deconstruction of the terms of sexual difference'.[22] By arguing that gender and even the biological sex itself are products of a cultural discourse which turns the material body into an embodiment of norms, Butler triggered a controversial but inspiring discussion about the validity of the binary system.[23] This debate serves to show that masculinities and femininities are neither one-dimensional nor fixed categories, but nuanced, unstable constructs that are open to change.

How do the abstract concepts of masculinity and femininity, which are produced and shaped through discourses (including the cinematic discourse), become 'real' and meaningful to individuals and societies? Construction, as Butler reminds us, is not a single act but a 'temporal process which operates through the reiteration of norms'.[24] Candace West and Sarah Fenstermaker have developed the theory of 'doing gender' to illustrate how individuals appropriate gender norms through socialisation and constant interaction with others. The concept of doing gender, which is based on the assumption that gender identities need to be affirmed on a daily basis, emphasises that the production of gender is neither a unidirectional process, from top to bottom, nor reducible to individual agency.[25] While masculinities and femininities are constructed within an institutional context and inscribed onto the individual, for example, through education, military service or the media, the practice of acknowledging and identifying with these norms also reproduces, reinforces or subverts the conditions in which gender is produced.[26] West and Fenstermaker highlight the element of human agency in the construction of gendered identities, and thus move a step away from earlier theories that ascribed considerably more power to discourses and institutions.

The power of cinema to produce gendered subjects and affirm the patriarchal system is highlighted by feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey in her seminal (and controversial) article 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', published in 1975. Based on Jean-Louis Baudry's theory of the ideological effects of the cinematic apparatus, Mulvey introduced the concept of the 'male gaze', according to which cinema imposes the look of the male protagonist on the audience.[27] According to Mulvey, mainstream cinema operates in such a way that the spectator (whether male or female) has no choice but to identify with the gaze of the active male protagonist, which forces the female character into passivity and turns women into a 'sexual spectacle'.[28]

The concept of the male gaze was helpful in reconsidering how cinematic codes and conventions reinforce gender norms. However, it also caused fierce controversy because it denied that women possess an active gaze or can experience pleasure by looking at other females or at males.[29] The concept was also criticised for setting the gaze of the heterosexual white man on white women as the absolute norm, thereby ignoring other structures of oppression in mainstream cinema and the victimisation of other groups.[30]

Presenting mainstream cinema as an ideological apparatus that objectifies women to secure patriarchy obscured the system of dominance and suppression that exists among men. This is where the emerging field of theories of masculinities, and in particular R.W. Connell's influential concept of hegemonic masculinity, has covered new ground.[31] Based on Antonio Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony, Connell argues that different categories of masculinity are situated within a hierarchical system in which all compete for dominance and power; the form of masculinity that achieves the hegemonic position subordinates other masculinities in order to assert its position.[32] Connell thus makes clear that hegemonic masculinity is 'always constructed in relation to various subordinated masculinities', and that some masculinities are sidelined or even suppressed. What manages to sustain this system is the demarcation from women and their subordination, which unites all forms of masculinities, even those at the margins.[33]

Hegemonic masculinity, it needs to be pointed out, is less a social practice than a cultural ideal – an ideal that, nevertheless, has real power to shape society because it embodies the 'masculine norms and practices which are most valued by the politically dominant class'.[34] In order to win the consent of the majority, hegemonic masculinity needs to convince it of the desirability of its norms. Influence is exerted on a number of levels, and although the pressure is usually subtle, it is so powerful that even marginalised men aspire to the ideal of normative masculinity in order to overcome their exclusion, as Jürgen Martschukat and Olaf Stieglitz point out.[35] Tosh hence describes hegemonic masculinity aptly as those 'masculine attributes which are most widely subscribed to – and least questioned – in a given social formation'.[36]

Gramsci's assumption that hegemony is established by cultural means rather than by the application of brute force points to the influential role of cultural media in sustaining the hegemonic ideal. By endorsing the views held by the ruling elites and presenting them as desirable, popular cinema often allies itself with those in power and helps to promote consensus in order to gain recognition. The broad consensus, in turn, does not allow cinema to stray away too far from the hegemonic views which the majority has adopted as its own.[37] Gramsci does not deny the subversive potential of institutions such as cinema, broadcasting or the press: under certain circumstances, cinema may contest dominant ideologies and social practices. After all, the position of hegemony is never secure and can be challenged at any time.[38] We thus have to be careful not to view cinema as a simple propaganda tool of dominant ideology. As Sue Harper points out in her illuminating study *Picturing the Past*, films have a range of functions apart from providing pleasure and textual comfort for their audience. Films may secure the power of the ruling elite by winning over marginalised groups, for instance, through incorporating them into the narrative. They may also strengthen a 'politically centrist position by excluding dissident groups or discourses'.[39] We thus need to ask whom cinema addresses, and how. Is it inclusive in the sense of making concessions to differences of class, age, religion or regional affiliation – an inclusivity that is reflected in a diversity of representations? Or does it marginalise or repress alternative possibilities and thus enforce a homogeneous view of society, which bolsters the position of those in power but might leave parts of the audience dissatisfied? Scott points out that gender is created first of all on the symbolic level, which is why it is crucial to investigate which culturally available symbols film uses, which symbolic representations it invokes to define gender norms and how it limits and contains the 'metaphoric possibilities' of symbols through interpretation.[40]

Film and Society

The relationship between popular cinema and society is clearly a complex one. Films, as Anton Kaes notes, comment on society, but they are also agents in that 'they intervene in on-going debates and often give shape to dominant discourses'.[41] Robert Allen and Douglas Gomery's suggestion that films 'derive their images and sounds, themes and stories ultimately from their social environment' implies that cinema is not simply an instrument of ideological domination, but both the product and instigator of discourse.[42] It responds to the 'fears, hopes and hidden anxieties' of a society by offering reassurance and orientation; not necessarily by promising a better world, but by limiting choices or by promoting role models.[43] The success of the *Heimatfilm* genre after the war arguably was down to the fact that it gave the audiences a glimpse of an unspoilt world that was governed by simple rules and that knew no confusion over women's or men's roles.

The desires, fears and concerns of a society can be traced by deciphering the fictional world of film. This means investigating the various layers of meaning in the filmic text, in particular the aesthetics, narrative modes and choice of themes. It involves studying the factors that shape cinematic representations – that is, the filmic traditions and modes of production which impact on the content and style of films, as well as producers' economic interests and market strategies or the aesthetic conceptions of those involved in the making of a film.[44] The audience's positive or negative response at the box office also affects future film productions. Last but not least, cinematic representations are influenced by the degree of control the film industry is subjected to, for example, through censorship, the amount of financial support it receives from governmental authorities or private investors and the cultural prestige a society ascribes to popular cinema.

In order to understand which social and political functions popular cinema fulfils, apart from providing entertainment, it is necessary to establish its status in society and its relation to the ruling elites. A state that ascribes a high economic value and level of influence to its cinema, as was the case in postwar Austria, will attempt to mobilise the support of the film industry through financial support, favourable legislation or specific forms of recognition – whether a film industry is willing to play to the wishes of those in power is again largely (but not solely) dependent on strategic considerations, such as the need for funding or the desire to increase one's social status. Although Austria's governing elites were unable (and largely also unwilling) to provide any financial backing, they nevertheless considered Austrian cinema to be a matter of national importance, as the regular presence of high-ranking officials at film premieres illustrates.[45] The elites saw Austrian cinema as a lucrative source of income, as well as a useful tool to foster the people's identification with the new nation. The film industry, on the other hand, fighting for economic survival, first of all looked towards governmental institutions for support, especially with regard to the taxation of cinemas and the lifting of export restrictions. As can be glimpsed from the lively and ongoing discussions in the trade papers, the industry was in agreement with the governing elites that its films should promote a positive image of Austria, assuming that this would also increase box-office takings, both in the domestic and export markets.

However, the controversies over films such as Fritz Kortner's gloomy depiction of the late Austro-Hungarian Empire in *Sarajevo* (1955), G.W. Pabst's discussion of anti-Semitism in *Der Prozess* (The Trial, 1948) or Harald Röbbeling's social-problem film *Asphalt* (1951) show that the consensus was not total. These films were exceptions to the norm, but they indicate that conflict existed over how to interpret history and/or social reality: on the margins of the dominant cinematic discourse, they are thus as important as the discourse itself, as they illustrate the variety of views that actually existed in Austrian cinema; the controversies they provoked also show why their interpretations could not win through.

Austrian Cinema – a National Cinema?

Like any other national cinema, Austrian cinema negotiated notions of nationhood – that 'distinct, familiar sense of belonging which is shared by people from different social and regional backgrounds'.[46] However, in postwar Austria the question of nationhood acquired perhaps an even greater significance than in other national cinemas because of the urgency with which the issue was debated. National cinema plays a key role in the construction and affirmation of national identity, and, as Andrew Higson suggests, it does so by homogenising internal differences and contradictions and by 'standardising' and 'naturalising' conceptions of the national.[47] Jill Forbes and Sarah Street argue that the 'double address' of national cinema, which makes films appeal to both domestic and foreign audiences, helps to reinforce a sense of national identity by promoting clichés which reflect back on domestic audiences.[48] According to Georg Tillner, the popular clichés of waltz, charm and *Gemütlichkeit*, which Wien-Film sold successfully as embodiments of the Austrian or Viennese spirit to the Germans during the era of the Third Reich, also strongly shaped the national discourse in postwar Austria.[49] Austrian audiences, encouraged by a political leadership that was keen to win recognition for the nation from the Allied Forces, often internalised these stereotypes, which were promoted through the media, education and political discourse.

Thomas Elsaesser categorises Austrian cinema as a national cinema due to Austria's long cinematic tradition and the 'special kind of continuity in its themes and genres over a lengthy period'; Austrian cinema boasts 'distinctive cinematic and aural signifiers', such as the Viennese dialect and Viennese stereotypes, as well as the typical genres of operetta films, musical biopics and musical comedies.[50] The 'Viennese' film, so called because of its celebration of a mythologised Vienna, and best represented by Willi Forst's costume melodramas, became the trademark of Austrian cinema in the 1930s and throughout the era of the Third Reich.[51] Austrian cinema did not break free from these cinematic traditions after the Second World War, but showed strong stylistic continuities. While they were in fact more diverse than often acknowledged, the films produced after 1945 displayed characteristics which contemporaries regarded as typical of Austrian cinema: a light-hearted narrative style, an emphasis on music and on the beautiful landscape, recurring motifs of Vienna (such as the waltz and a distinctive local charm), particular gestural codes and a standardised Viennese accent. Pondering which formulae might sell best abroad, a representative of the film industry concluded in 1950 that Austrian cinema offered something which 'others are not capable of', namely: 'musicality, charm, a light touch'.[52] A contemporary writer, offering a satirical analysis of the representation of romance in different national cinemas in the West German paper *Frankfurter Allgemeine* in 1953, mused that 'the lovely love film only exists in Austria', traditionally featuring a girl with a diminutive name, a father played by Hans Moser or Paul Hörbiger and a musical genius such as Schubert, Beethoven or Strauss as a fiancé, with all complications resolved in a beautiful, open setting and accompanied by a cheerful, touching melody.[53]

The film producers and Austria's political and cultural elites were united in the belief that Austrian cinema should convey a positive image of Austria. By constructing as well as reinforcing existing cultural myths, popular cinema fulfilled two tasks at the same time: it provided a source of shared identification for Austrians, many of whom were still confused about their national affiliation, and it ensured that Austrian cinema was a recognisable brand.[54] Nationhood was inscribed not only in the filmic texts, but also on the level of consumption: Austrian audiences, as one critic insisted in 1955, '*naturally* … like Austrian films best, as the number of cinema visits show'.[55] This strong identification with filmic traditions across all levels of society, the distinct aesthetics and themes of Austrian film and its specialisation in certain genres are evidence that Austrian cinema was a cinema in its own right – close to but still distinct from German cinema, at least until the mid-1950s.

The notion of national cinema, however, is not unproblematic. This goes in particular for Austrian cinema, whose claims in this regard have been disputed by international – and especially by German – scholarship, which tends to classify Austrian films, especially those produced in the first decades after the Second World War, as German, and considers Austrian cinema to be a mere sub-category of German cinema.[56] Undoubtedly, many links exist between German and Austrian cinema, as the following chapter illustrates: a shared language, a long tradition of economic cooperation and exchange of personnel, as well as the persistent, strong historical and cultural links between the two countries. The common language and the frequent screenings of Austrian films in German cinemas and, subsequently, on West German TV, mean that Austrian film has certainly become a part of the German cultural heritage. Nevertheless, to consider Austrian cinema simply as a variation of German cinema disregards its clear differences, and overlooks its influential role in Austrian society in the first half of the twentieth century.

There is further controversy: employing the concept of national cinema inevitably leads to the debate on transnational versus national cinema. Advocates of transnationality question the validity of the term 'national cinema', which presupposes a unity in the films produced in a particular nation-state and assumes that these films display cultural characteristics typical of that nation.[57] The argument put against the idea of a national cinema is that film is a commercial product of mass entertainment that seeks to penetrate national borders in order to maximise its profits. International film distribution and co-operation between different national industries, as well as the more-or-less universally understood visual language, make film a very mobile medium. Bergfelder, for example, argues that the steep rise in multinational co-productions and a preference for foreign settings in West German cinema in the 1960s 'challenge the very validity of national cinema as a means of classification'; he thus considers West German film from the 1960s onwards as transnational and part of a European cinema.[58]

So what about the close ties between the Austrian and the West German film industries? From the 1920s onwards, the Austrian film industry relied on the German market, and there were periods when German financiers invested strongly in Austrian film production. However, in the period covered here – the time between the end of the Second World War and the regaining of national independence in 1955 – Austrian cinema was, at least in the immediate postwar years, strongly inwardly oriented and largely cut off from the German market due to strict trade restrictions imposed by the Allied Forces. The situation only changed after a trade agreement was reached with the newly independent West Germany in 1950, which facilitated exports and opened the doors to German investors. This resulted in a gradual increase in Austrian-German co-productions, which reached an average of about one fifth of the overall film production in Austria in the mid-1950s; still, in about half of these productions Austria assumed the dominant role and provided the main artistic and creative input, through the use of Austrian directors, actors and technical personnel. Thus, up to the mid-1950s, about 90 per cent of domestic output was still initiated and dominated by Austrians.

Around the mid-1950s, however, this changed considerably, as West German distributors who financed films by granting distribution guarantees gained more influence and the exchange of personnel between the two industries intensified. The German and Austrian film industries became more intertwined, financially as well as artistically, producing remakes and sequels of each other's films.[59] It was only around this time that Austrian cinema acquired a transnational, or, more precisely, a binational quality. Both film production and film aesthetics increasingly lost their national imprint, making a distinction between Austrian and West German film more difficult. Cinema's rapid decline in Austria in the early 1960s was not a direct result of this close and almost exclusive cooperation with West Germany, but this interconnection was certainly influential in its demise in that the Austrian industry ignored aesthetic trends outside the German-speaking market, such as the emergence of the French New Wave, and underestimated the impact of technical developments such as the quickly growing popularity of television.

A transnational perspective on cinema has the undisputable advantage of bringing into focus the cultural exchange of ideas and styles and the economic 'interpenetration' of otherwise seemingly distinct national film industries; it also highlights the historical variability and cultural hybridity of national cinemas.[60] However, recognising the benefits of a transnational approach does not necessarily mean discarding the concept of national cinema as a whole, as long as it remains clear that national cinema is not a stable or closed entity, but a negotiated space often without firm boundaries. National cinema is always subject to other cultural influences and responds to wider international developments, both artistic and technological, by appropriating these trends or by countering them. Most film industries seek to maximise profits by accessing new markets, but an industry also needs to keep up with the international (usually Hollywood) standard of filmmaking to secure the domestic market against competition.[61] Thus, drawing a strict line between transnational and national cinema may not be possible at all because of the 'fluid, contingent and hybrid quality of any cultural formation'.[62]

We can, however, establish how open and flexible a national cinematic culture is, and how it engages with the nation and its cultural heritage. Whether a cinema should be considered as national also depends on who is in control of the production, distribution and exhibition of films. Other important questions are whether the film industry, or the state as a subsidising or legislative body, actively promotes domestic productions, and whether audiences prefer national productions over foreign ones. The national can also be located in the filmic texts themselves, which evoke national characteristics through their visuals, narratives, themes or symbols.[63] So, rather than just identifying the national through aesthetics or determining it on the level of production and consumption, all these elements need to be taken into account when applying the term 'national cinema'. The fact that this book considers postwar Austrian cinema as a national cinema in its own right does not mean that it fetishises the national or celebrates Austrian cinema as superior. Nor does it, as the next chapter will show, ignore the 'cultural cross-breeding' across borders, or the consequences of Austrian economic dependency on the West German market.[64]

The body of films made between 1946 and 1955 constitutes the primary source of this book. During that period, 212 feature-length films were produced; I was able to analyse 140 films, almost two-thirds of this total output – a solid basis from which to draw valid and representative conclusions. Because my main research questions involve uncovering patterns and themes, I opt for a broader, generic approach rather than focusing on a few selected films. Analysing representations of masculinity in different genres allows me to uncover differences and similarities; such an approach gives due consideration to generic and cinematic traditions that shape representations of masculinity, and factors audience expectations into the analysis. Masculinity, as mentioned earlier, is a relational category and constructed in differentiation from femininity. Cinematic representations of masculinity can thus never be investigated in isolation, but need to be analysed in how they are differentiated from, and overlap with, concepts of femininity, as well as how they relate to the definitions of gender roles and gender relations cinema proposed. The reason why some chapters pay more attention to femininity than others is largely due to the dominant themes and conventions of the chosen genres. Masculinity, however, lies at the centre of this study, largely because scholarly interest in women has produced some insightful studies on the representation of women in Austrian cinema, whereas the analysis of masculinities is largely uncharted territory.[65]

This book explores the role of popular cinema in a society in transition. Analysing the cinematic discourses on masculinity and the way they are interwoven with other popular discourses, this study brings into view the changing notions of gender and acceptable gendered behaviour, and thus helps to understand how popular cinema is involved in the construction of gender norms. This is crucial to establish whether cinematic representations of masculinity were the products of social consensus, or whether they conflicted with the masculine ideals endorsed by Austria's political or cultural elites.[66] Yet Tosh has rightly cautioned that studying discourses and representations may become 'a curiously detached kind of cultural analysis'.[67] Discourses are always historically specific, and therefore the meaning and influence of cinematic representations of masculinity can only be assessed within their wider historical context and with regard to other contemporary discourses, such as those on Austria's involvement in Nazi crimes or on the role of women. In order to be able to make valid assumptions about how the films were understood and which meanings they carried for contemporary audiences, the analysis has to be firmly grounded in the social, political and economic context from which the films emerged.

This book seeks to bridge the gap between the textual and contextual levels by giving equal consideration to the filmic texts and to the context in which they were produced and consumed. To establish the significance of cinematic representations it is essential to investigate which films were particularly popular with audiences and which films were rejected. Studies focusing on cinema audiences, such as Harper's analysis of exhibition patterns of local British cinemas in the 1940s, or Robert James's investigation of the cinema-going habits of the British working-class in the 1930s, have demonstrated how much audience taste varies in terms of class, sex or location.[68] For Germany, Joseph Garncarz's evaluation of box-office rankings and statistical data has provided hard evidence of the audience's preference for domestic films in the 1950s and 1960s, and thus revised the theory of a total dominance of Hollywood cinema in Europe.[69] Hester Baer's analysis of the West German film magazine *Film und Frau* (Film and Woman) shows how the magazine not only aimed to meet the tastes of 1950s female audiences, but also tried to train the artistic eye of the female spectator.[70] It is, of course, very difficult to ascertain what audiences really thought or liked about a film; even oral-history studies, such as Annette Kuhn's interview-based analysis of cinema-going habits in 1930s Britain, cannot reconstruct the actual feelings of contemporary audiences.[71] However, analysing contemporary film reviews and trade journals and assessing the coverage in fan magazines and daily newspapers – as, for example, Janet Thumin and Janet Staiger have done in their studies on British and Hollywood cinema respectively – can uncover which cinematic representations were acceptable and which provoked controversy.[72] Thus, as Thumin aptly puts it, 'if we cannot meet the audience, we can reconstruct the discursive contexts of their cinema going and their readings of films'.[73]

A look at the trade journal *Österreichische Film und Kinozeitung* reveals that in postwar Austria the main debates revolved around three related topics: the financial and critical success of Austrian films in the domestic and international markets; the financial difficulties of the Austrian film industry; and the problems it faced with regard to export regulations and restrictions imposed by the Allied Forces. In contrast, the general press coverage, although also expressing a strong interest in the financial problems of the film industry, debated at length the possibly damaging effect of films on young people and the question of censorship. The Austrian film and fan magazines *Film*, *Mein Film*, *Funk und Film* and *Illustrierter Filmkurier*, on the other hand, ignored these issues, and instead catered to those fans who looked for information on the private lives of their favourite film stars, thereby giving equal consideration to national and international films and stars. Analysing these materials reveals the often contradictory emotions that cinema triggered in Austrian society, and demonstrates how the debates surrounding the medium of film interconnected with contemporary discourses on youth, the role of women and the influence of US American culture.

I am well aware that an approach that aims to identify patterns, and which traces the interconnectedness of discourses, carries the risk of achieving comprehensiveness at the expense of analytical depth; each genre-led chapter is therefore complemented with detailed case studies to illustrate my argument. The book's structure reflects my historicist approach to film. The first chapter analyses postwar Austrian audiences and their preferences, the historical developments in the film industry and the economic and political conditions of film production after the war, and assesses the role of cinema within wider society. The chapter opens with an analysis of audience taste and discusses why Austrian cinema specialised in certain genres and neglected others, such as crime, war and social-problem films. The second part briefly describes the developments in the Austrian film industry up to 1945, investigates the modes of film production and distribution and considers the economic and artistic challenges the film industry faced after the war. It also shows how the occupying Allied Forces intervened by controlling the distribution of films and restricting exports to West Germany, and discusses the impact of the industry's continuing dependence on the West German market. The last part looks at the role of popular cinema within its wider social context by analysing how cinematic discourse responded to issues of major concern in postwar Austrian society.

Chapter Two is devoted to historical costume film, which was one of the most popular genres in postwar Austria. This film genre arguably fulfilled three major functions: promoting a new Austrian identity, glossing over the dark Nazi past with images of a glorified, multi-cultural Empire, and popularising the image of a 'cultured', 'softer' Austrian masculinity to demarcate it from 'hard' German masculinity. By analysing depictions of the military man I seek to demonstrate how the genre – expressed through the popular figure of Austrian musicality – helped to depoliticise the military and substantiate the claim that Austria was a victim of Nazi aggression, and not a perpetrator.

Chapter Three considers *Heimatfilm,* a genre that is regarded as archetypal of 1950s Austrian and West German cinema. Even though *Heimatfilm* has attracted considerable scholarly interest, a focus on representations of masculinity can still produce new insights into the social functions of the genre. Centring on the discourses of purity and dirt, and guilt and repentance, my analysis shows how the films took up pressing social issues and helped the audience to work through these problems. Through the portrayal of archetypal male figures, Austrian *Heimatfilm* helped to ease the specific guilt of the Austrian nation and a more general guilt about men's actions in the Second World War.

Chapter Four looks at tourist film – a type of film that is not an industrial category, but a term I apply retrospectively to describe those films that deal with the holiday experiences of urban tourists. Because of its focus on the landscape, tourist film has often been categorised as a sub-genre of *Heimatfilm*, and has thus been awarded very little critical attention. I argue that it is important to look at the tourist film as a critical category in its own right, not only because it displays crucial differences in narrative patterns and visual style from *Heimatfilm*, but also because it fulfilled a very different function. Focusing on the genre's dominant narrative themes of mobility and modernity, I will show that tourist film, unlike any other genre in postwar Austria, promoted modern masculinities and equal gender relations, if only for a limited time.

Chapter Five covers comedy, a genre that has often been neglected as an object of study, even though it accounted for the largest share of films produced in postwar Austria. In response to Jean-Pierre Jeancolas's suggestion that humour is 'inexportable', I discuss the double address of Austrian comedies which made them appeal to both German and Austrian audiences.[74] Focusing on the dominant narrative themes of mistaken identity and troubled gender relations, I explore how comedy addressed pressing social issues and thus engaged in popular discourses on fatherhood, consumerism or gender relations. The chapter also reveals the ambiguous and often contradictory role of Austrian comedy: while it promoted new, liberal father figures, it also endorsed traditional patriarchal structures and female submission; it thus played a crucial part in the stabilisation of society that was accompanied by a return to more conservative gender roles from the late 1940s onwards.

Finally, Chapter Six ties the different strands of analysis together, and asks how postwar cinema shaped popular notions of gender and national identity. By tracing the developments in Austrian cinema after the country gained national independence in 1955, this concluding chapter discusses the reasons for the demise of Austrian cinema in the 1960s and its inability to respond to international trends in filmmaking. It also analyses why it failed to leave an impact on future generations of filmmakers, and why the new Austrian cinema that started to emerge in the 1970s and gathered in strength in the 1990s cut itself off from older cinematic traditions and pursued new forms of artistic expression. Answers to these questions can be found in the development and economic and artistic orientation of the Austrian film industry, which is the topic of the next chapter.

Notes

1. My emphasis.
2. See S. Harper. 1997. 'Bonnie Prince Charlie Revisited: British Costume Film in the 1950s', in R. Murphy (ed.), *The British Cinema Book*, London: BFI, 133.

3. Erna Appelt has convincingly demonstrated the links between gender, citizenship and nation. See E. Appelt. 1999. *Geschlecht - Staatsbürgerschaft - Nation. Politische Konstruktionen des Geschlechterverhältnisses in Europa*, Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 143–146.
4. See G. Heiss and I. Klimeš. 2003. *Obrazy Času / Bilder der Zeit. Tschechischer und Österreichischer Film der 30er Jahre*, Prague: Národní Filmový Archiv, VPS; T. Bergfelder and C. Cargnelli. 2008. *Destination London: German-speaking Emigrés and British Cinema, 1925–1950*, New York: Berghahn; J.C. Horak and E. Tape. 1986. *Fluchtpunkt Hollywood. Eine Dokumentation zur Filmemigration nach 1933* (2nd ed.), Münster: MAKS.
5. Cited by U. Halbritter. 1993. *Der Einfluss der Alliierten Besatzungsmächte auf die österreichische Filmwirtschaft und Spielfilmproduktion in den Jahren 1945 bis 1955*, unpublished master's thesis (Diplomarbeit), University of Vienna, 59, 62.
6. See W. Fritz. 1991. *Kino in Österreich 1929–1945. Der Tonfilm*, Vienna: ÖBV, 210.
7. See E. Carter. 2000. 'Sweeping up the Past: Gender and History in the Postwar German "Rubble" Film', in U. Sieglohr (ed.), *Heroines without Heroes: Reconstructing Female and National Identities in European Cinema, 1945–51*, London: Continuum International Publishing Group; R.R. Shandley. 2001. *Rubble Films: German Cinema in the Shadow of the Third Reich*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
8. See U. Döge. 2004. 'ASPHALT 1951–1953 in Österreich, Frankreich und der Schweiz', in C. Dewald (ed.), *Der Wirklichkeit auf der Spur. Essays zum österreichischen Nachkriegsfilm ASPHALT*, Vienna: Filmarchiv Austria, 63–74.
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10. See E. Bruckmüller. 1985. *Sozialgeschichte Österreichs*, Vienna: Herold, 520.
11. H. Fehrenbach. 1998. 'Rehabilitating Fatherland. Race and German Remasculinisation', *Signs*, 24(1), 109.
12. See, e.g., I. Bandhauer-Schöffmann and E. Hornung. 1996. 'War and Gender Identity: The Experience of Austrian Women, 1945–1950', in D.F. Good, M. Grandner and M.J. Maynes (eds), *Austrian Women in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Providence, R.I.: Berghahn; E. Langthaler. 1996. 'Ländliche Lebenswelten von 1945 bis 1950', in R. Sieder, H. Steinert and E. Tálos (eds), *Österreich 1945–1995: Gesellschaft, Politik, Kultur*, Vienna: Verlag für Gesellschaftskritik.
13. See I. Bauer and R. Huber. 2007. 'Sexual Encounters across (Former) Enemy Borderlines', in G. Bischof, A. Pelinka and D. Herzog (eds), *Sexuality in Austria*, New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers; Österreichisches Statistisches Zentralamt. 1959a. *Die Ehescheidung. Eine statistisch-soziologische Untersuchung*, Vienna, 41–43; For Germany see, e.g., F. Biess. 2006. *Homecomings: Returning POWs and the Legacies of Defeat in Postwar Germany*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press; Fehrenbach, 1998; M. Höhn. 2002. *GIs and Fräuleins: The German-American Encounter in 1950s West Germany*, Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press; R.G. Moeller. 1998. '"The Last Soldiers of the Great War" and Tales of Family Reunions in the Federal Republic of Germany', *Signs*, 24(1); R.G. Moeller. 1997. 'Reconstructing the Family in Reconstruction Germany: Women and Social Policy in the Federal Republic 1949/1955', in R.G. Moeller (ed.), *West Germany under Construction: Politics, Society, and Culture in the Adenauer Era*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press; R.G. Moeller. 2001. 'Heimkehr ins Vaterland: Die Remaskulierung Westdeutschlands in den fünfziger Jahren', *Militärgeschichtliche Zeitschrift*, 2(1).
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15. See E. Brix. 1988. 'Zur Frage der österreichischen Identität am Beginn der Zweiten Republik', in G. Bischof and J. Leidenfrost (eds), *Die bevormundete Nation. Österreich und die*

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16. See U. Frevert. 1996. 'Soldaten, Staatsbürger. Überlegungen zur historischen Konstruktion von Männlichkeit', in T. Kühne (ed.), *Männergeschichte - Geschlechtergeschichte. Männlichkeit im Wandel der Moderne*, Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 69–87, 80–82; Tosh, 2004, 49; S.O. Rose. 2007. 'Fit to Fight but Not to Vote? Masculinity and Citizenship in Britain, 1832–1918', in S. Dudink, K. Hagemann and A. Clark (eds), *Representing Masculinity: Male Citizenship in Modern Western Culture*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 141; A. Forrest. 2007. 'Citizenship and Masculinity: The Revolutionary Citizen-Soldier and his Legacy', in S. Dudink, K. Hagemann and A. Clark (eds), *Representing Masculinity: Male Citizenship in Modern Western Culture*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 124.
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19. N. Yuval-Davis. 1997. *Gender & Nation*, London: Sage, 9.
20. See R.W. Connell. 1996. *Masculinities*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 47.
21. J. Martschukat and O. Stieglitz. 2008. *Geschichte der Männlichkeiten*, Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 55–56.
22. Scott, 1986, 1065.
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24. Butler, 1993, 10.
25. See C. West and S. Fenstermaker. 1995. 'Doing Difference', *Gender & Society*, 9(1), 21.
26. See R.W. Connell. 1993. 'The Big Picture: Masculinities in Recent World History', *Theory and Society*, 22(5), 602.
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31. See Connell, 1996.
32. See Connell, 1996, 76–81; Connell, 1993, 603; E. Hanisch. 2005. *Männlichkeiten*, Vienna: Böhlau, 26–28, 267–274, 301–332; G.L. Mosse. 1998. *The Image of Man. The Creation of Modern Masculinity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 56–76; H. Schissler. 1992. 'Männerstudien in den USA', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 18(2), 204–205.
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34. Tosh, 2004, 48.
35. See Martschukat and Stieglitz, 2008, 65.
36. Tosh, 2004, 47.
37. See A. Gramsci. 1971 [1935]. 'Notes on Italian History', in A. Gramsci, Q. Hoare and G. Nowell-Smith (eds), *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 80.
38. Connell, 1996, 77; see also Tosh, 2004, 45; Dinges, 2005, 11.