

International Adventures

Film Europa: German Cinema in an International Context

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INTERNATIONAL ADVENTURES

German Popular Cinema and
European Co-Productions in the 1960s

Tim Bergfelder



Berghahn Books
New York • Oxford

Published by
Berghahn Books
www.berghahnbooks.com

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First paperback edition published in 2006

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Bergfelder, Tim.

International adventures: German popular cinema and European co-productions in the
1960s / Tim Bergfelder.

p. cm.

Includes biographical references.

ISBN 978-1-57181-538-5 (hbk: alk. paper)--ISBN 978-1-57181-539-2 (pbk. : alk. paper)

1. Motion picture industry--Germany (West)--History. 2. Motion pictures--Germany
(West)--History. 3. Coproduction (Motion pictures, television, etc.) I. Title.

PN1993.5.G3B37 2004
384'.8'0943--dc22

2004052961

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from
the British Library.

Printed on acid-free paper

ISBN: 978-1-57181-538-5 hardback
ISBN: 978-1-57181-539-2 paperback

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book began as a research project at the University of East Anglia in the early 1990s. I would like to thank Charles Barr for his support, inspiration, and advice in helping me to bring the initial project to completion. Andrew Higson and Erica Carter provided insightful and constructive criticism, important suggestions for redirection, and encouragement, which significantly helped to transform the original thesis into this book. Hans-Michael Bock, Sabine Hake, and the editorial team at Berghahn proved invaluable in giving the manuscript its final shape, and they added detailed information and corrected a number of factual inaccuracies. My special thanks to Eric Rentschler and Anton Kaes and all the participants of the 2002 German Film Institute at Dartmouth College, the experience of which gave my manuscript a number of new dimensions in the final stages of writing. Many other colleagues and friends have contributed to this book through suggestions, helpful advice, and comments at conferences, in research seminars, and in private discussions. Particular thanks are due to Deniz Göktürk, Joseph Garnarz, and Peter Krämer; to colleagues and friends at Southampton; and to Bill Marshall, Robynn Stilwell, Mette Hjort, Maggie McCarthy, and Randall Halle, who have commented on earlier versions of material appearing in this volume. I am grateful to the School of Modern Languages at the University of Southampton for granting me a semester's study leave for completing the book.

A number of archives and institutions were crucial in tracing primary and secondary sources. I am grateful to the staff at the British Film Institute, the library staff at the University of East Anglia and the University of Southampton; Evelyn Hampicke from the Bundesarchiv/Filmarchiv in Berlin (now Potsdam); everyone at CineGraph (Hamburg); and Rüdiger Koschnitzki and Claudia Dillmann at the Deutsches Institut für Filmkunde (now Deutsches Filminstitut) in Frankfurt-on-Main. The DIF was also invaluable in tracking down and supplying the illustrations in this book. I have been unable to trace or contact the copyright holders of these images. If notified the publisher will be pleased to rectify any errors or omissions at the earliest opportunity. I fondly recall my meeting with the late Horst Wendlandt, who granted me a lengthy interview in 1993 and who supplied me with promotional material about his company Rialto.

My greatest personal debt is to my mother and my brother – this book is dedicated to them.

All translations from German in this book are, unless otherwise indicated, my own. Italicised film titles indicate original release titles. Film titles that are not italicised indicate a literal translation (by myself) of the original title in those cases where no English release title exists, or alternatively where no English release title could be traced.

Shorter, or alternative, versions of parts of this book have previously appeared in the following publications: *Cinegraph. Lexikon zum deutschsprachigen Film. Lieferung 29*, ed. Hans-Michael Bock (Munich 1997); *Musicals – Hollywood and Beyond*, eds. Bill Marshall and Robynn Stilwell (Bristol 2000); *Cinema and Nation*, eds. Mette Hjort and Scott McKenzie (London and New York 2000); *The German Cinema Book*, eds. Tim Bergfelder, Erica Carter, and Deniz Göktürk (London 2002); *Light Motives. Popular German Cinema*, eds. Maggie McCarthy and Randall Halle (Detroit 2003).

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

A cinema full of people implies base instincts (Vlado Kristl).¹

When I began, over a decade ago, to embark on a study of the West German film industry in the 1950s and 1960s, its popular genres and its international dimensions, my research was motivated by what I perceived to be significant gaps and critical misconceptions in histories of German cinema. Much of postwar West German film, from the end of the 'Third Reich' to the consolidation of the New German Cinema in the early 1970s, was, at least in terms of academic analysis and especially in the anglophone context, an almost complete *terra incognita*, reduced to a few dismissive comments in standard textbooks and histories. Timothy Corrigan's summary of the first two postwar decades of West German film production as a domestically moribund and internationally irrelevant 'Bavarian cottage industry' was perhaps the most quoted of these generalisations.² The fact that a particular historical period has not been analysed in any depth is of course not enough reason on its own to claim its importance. However, the long-standing neglect of postwar West German cinema between 1945 and the late 1960s is harder to understand when one discovers that the cinema before Oberhausen was far from being the fatally ailing industry usually portrayed in historical accounts. During the 1950s, for example, national cinema attendance figures for domestic productions experienced an all-time peak, while the decade also witnessed an upsurge in productivity. These facts on their own do not give any indication about the quality of the films of the period in question, of course, but at least they suggest the significance of this medium for its target audiences at the time, and as such should merit the attention of anyone interested in the way films function in their immediate social and historical context. A closer look at the 1960s, meanwhile, reveals that, despite the legendary declaration of the Oberhausen Manifesto in 1962 of the death of 'Daddy's cinema', for most of the decade it was the commercial cinema of popular indigenous and European genre cycles that dominated West Ger-

man screens and audience preferences, until it was eventually sidelined in the early 1970s, not by the internationally acclaimed films of the New German Cinema, but by Hollywood. This, though, is hardly the impression that one gains from reading a survey of West German cinema in the 1960s, published in the early 1990s, which spends roughly five pages out of thirty-seven on the 90 per cent of the decade's releases (the period's popular genres), and the remaining thirty-two pages on the handful of debut films of the emerging *auteurs* of the New German Cinema.³ While the author cannot completely ignore the popular films' domestic dominance in the 1960s, he summarily dismisses them with the somewhat illogical argument that 'the financial success of these series concealed how bad cinema's situation actually was in Germany'.⁴

In part, the deliberate neglect in critical writings on New German Cinema of the preceding era of film-making can be explained by a partisanship of those critics for the *auteurs* of the 1970s, who never tired of articulating their antagonism towards the West German films and film-makers of the 1950s and 1960s. The New German Cinema's rejection of the old guard of German film producers was theoretically informed by the cultural pessimism of the Frankfurt School, and consequently the indigenous commercial cinema became either the ghostly projector of a haunted national psyche that Siegfried Kracauer had evoked in *From Caligari to Hitler* or the embodiment of Adorno's and Horkheimer's reviled and tainted culture industry.⁵ Moreover, the rhetoric of the New German Cinema was often instinctually informed by an élitist disdain for lowbrow forms of mass entertainment *per se*, a disdain that originated in the cultural hierarchies of the German *Bildungsbürgertum* (educated bourgeoisie), the social class the majority of New German Cinema's *auteurs* and critics emerged out of, and which, despite many New German film-makers' ostensible anti-bourgeois politics, significantly shaped their aesthetic values. Symptomatic in this respect are the tone and wording of the previously mentioned survey of the 1960s, which denounces the popular films of the period as *naiver Rummel* (naïve fairground attraction), *greller Klimbim* (garish junk), and *Kinderkram* (child's stuff).⁶

To a certain extent, the New German Cinema's antipathy towards 'Daddy's cinema' centred primarily on the fact that it was 'Daddy's', and only secondarily on its merits or otherwise as 'cinema'. In other words, this was a symbolic act of rejection of a politically compromised parental generation, projected wholesale, and without taking hostages, on to the films, film-makers, and not least (as avant-garde director Vlado Kristl's comment above amply documents) the audiences of an indigenous popular cinema.⁷ What was originally meant as a polemical intervention, carefully orchestrated for dramatic effect in the context of the cultural politics in the 1960s and 1970s, became subsequently transcribed, including exaggerations, half-truths, and outright inventions, as 'objective', and endlessly reproduced, history. As a result, German cinema's history was condensed,

and appeared to be reducible, to three emblematic moments – ‘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’.⁸

Left out of this ideal trajectory was not just postwar West German cinema before Oberhausen. The cinema of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) from the late 1940s to the end of the 1980s, too, was for a long time a barely known entity, often relegated to the status of a strange and eccentric sideline, out of which very occasionally an *auteur* of stature (e.g. Konrad Wolf) emerged. Only after the end of DEFA as a viable film company and the end of the GDR as a separate German state has the history of East German cinema come out of the shadows, and over the last decade, it has become one of the most prolific areas of research in German film studies.⁹ The cinema of the Federal Republic in the 1950s and 1960s, in contrast, characterised by hierarchies of popular genres and stars and reliant on a strategy of formulaic repetition rather than aesthetic or narrational experimentation, could hardly, even with the best intentions, be reclaimed as innovative. The period appeared to lack *auteurs*, or better it lacked *Autoren* in the German sense of the word as arbiters of high culture and art cinema, since the more flexible criteria of either the French or American *auteur* theories might well have been utilised to rehabilitate the careers and *oeuvres* of such industry stalwarts as Hans Deppe, Harald Reinl, Jürgen Roland, or Alfred Vohrer, to name but a few possible candidates. Indeed, the only West German directors active and reasonably prolific in the commercial industry in the 1950s and 1960s who have, until recently, been critically analysed at any length are Helmut Käutner and Wolfgang Staudte.¹⁰ Significantly these are two film-makers whose most important work is commonly perceived to predate the 1950s and 1960s, who were not tied to particular popular genres, and who frequently produced what could be termed ‘prestige’ pictures. It is worth remembering that most studies of German cinema until relatively recently were primarily text, or *Autoren*, based, with few analyses of film economics, studios, producers, or popular genres. The preference of exclusively text-based modes of critical analysis, however, has proved to be a particular stumbling-block for the evaluation of the 1950s and 1960s, where individual texts and directors mean ultimately less than, or at least are impossible to comprehend without a knowledge of, the generic and industrial regimes, let alone the wider cultural and social contexts, these texts and film-makers were part of.

This leads me to the third reason why the films of the 1950s and 1960s have been perceived as lacking in substance and worth, namely their alleged absence of political commitment, and their diffuse relation to issues of national representation. It is indeed undeniable that most popular West German genres of the 1950s and 1960s, from the *Heimatfilm* with its seemingly intact rural communities and scenic landscapes, to the

Gothic thrillers, exotic adventure films, and westerns of the 1960s, are escapist in their ideological function for contemporary audiences and resolutely non-realist in their mode of representation. As such, these genres do not lend themselves easily to the kind of critical approach that perceives films as a direct and mimetic reflection of specific national developments, and which only values those films that didactically engage in a critical, or 'progressive', political discourse *vis-à-vis* the social and political realities of the time.¹¹ With some notable exceptions, the 'real' postwar West Germany, its economic, industrial and social reconstruction, its positioning in the politics of the Cold War, and its gradual processing of the Nazi trauma and concomitant guilt, is conspicuously absent in the popular genres of the period, and can, at best, be read only obliquely in the period's films' narratives and visual representations.¹² Moreover, while the films of the 1950s, in particular the *Heimatfilme*, may still conform to conventional notions of national cinema in their overall indigenous mode of production and in their (however inauthentic and clichéd) references to indigenous cultural traditions and iconographies, the films of the 1960s, frequently realised as multinational co-productions and set in an imaginary American Wild West, or in an equally constructed Gothic Britain, Asia or Africa, challenge the very validity of national cinema as a means of classification.

What all of this suggests is that the study of the popular cinema of the 1950s and 1960s requires different critical parameters from the ones that have been traditionally employed. Although German film criticism has generally been slow in reacting to international trends in film theory and history, there is now a growing body of work, which has moved on from an exclusively *auteur*-based analysis of selected, aesthetically as well as politically worthy, masterpieces towards the study of genres, stars, studios, producers, audiences, and cultural contexts, or in other words has moved from a traditional film aesthetics towards a sociology of cinema. Meanwhile, a number of publications initiated by conferences organised by the Hamburg-based research centre CineGraph in the early to mid-1990s has opened the debates of German national cinema up to a wider international academic community and focused its research on the interrelations between German and various other European film industries.¹³ In this, CineGraph's efforts have been mirrored by the (so far four) conferences on popular European cinema at the University of Warwick, in Punkaharju (Finland), and in Stockholm; and the publications that have resulted from these, which have significantly shifted the debate on transnational collaboration, at least in the European academic context.¹⁴ In terms of interpreting these phenomena, critical paradigms have developed from an indebtedness to the Frankfurt School's cultural pessimism towards greater nuances with regard to the potentially progressive and liberating functions of popular culture, which has often been facilitated by the engagement with anglophone academic traditions such as cultural and film studies, but also by a revisionist reinterpretation of Weimar film theory.¹⁵

Among these new interventions, a number of important revisionist studies on the West German cinema of the 1950s and 1960s have been published since the 1990s. In Germany, of particular significance were two volumes on German postwar cinema published in 1989 and 1991 by the Deutsches Filmmuseum in Frankfurt.¹⁶ The two volumes deal respectively with the period 1946 to 1962 and 1962 through to the 1970s. While one may want to question this chronological break (it seems to have been dictated solely by the caesura of the Oberhausen Manifesto, which, at least in its immediate influence on production and reception patterns, was in retrospect more a symbolic than a real turning-point), the books' selection of essays on genres, stars, and film economics have been hugely influential in engendering a re-evaluation of the period. Equally important was the publication of Claudia Dillmann's study on Artur Brauner and his Central Cinema Company (CCC), a groundbreaking investigation into one of postwar cinema's most resilient producers, but even more importantly the beginning of a long-term project of archiving Brauner's extensive business correspondence, which has become a unique and invaluable resource for anyone studying the commercial industry of the 1950s and 1960s.¹⁷

However, perhaps the most crucial intervention on the cinema of the postwar period, and the most wide-ranging in its implications, has been, at least in the German academic context, Joseph Garnarcz's *Populäres Kino in Deutschland. Internationalisierung einer Filmkultur, 1925–1990*.¹⁸ In this impressive and exhaustive *Habilitationsschrift*, Garnarcz takes issue with one of the most persistent myths of German cinema, namely, that following the Second World War, or earlier, the indigenous film infrastructure was taken over by Hollywood distribution companies and that audience preferences immediately followed suit. The notion of an encroaching colonisation and Americanisation and the concomitant irrelevance and impotence of the indigenous film industry had first been argued by Thomas Guback and Kristin Thompson, and was later supported by Thomas Elsaesser, surveying the prehistory and industrial preconditions of the New German Cinema.¹⁹ Although articles prior to Garnarcz's thesis had already doubted the received wisdom of this scenario,²⁰ it was down to Garnarcz to systematically prove, by drawing on contemporary sources, such as data from exhibitors and box-office success rankings, that German audiences on the whole resisted American domination until the early 1970s, and up to this point preferred either indigenous productions and stars (until the late 1950s) or a mix of German and European films (throughout the 1960s). Garnarcz not only fundamentally revised the perception of the postwar West German industry from being the butt of condescending jokes to being a serious subject of study, but also questioned the all-too-familiar scenario of Hollywood's unbroken cinematic hegemony in Europe, with fundamental consequences for the study of European cinema and its relationship to the American film industry in a wider sense.

In the anglophone context, too, some influential new research on post-war German cinema has been undertaken over the past decade. Heide Fehrenbach and Robert Shandley, for example, have shed new light on the early postwar years.²¹ Fehrenbach's book provides a largely institutional history, documenting the way in which the American military authorities during the occupation and, later on, pressure groups such as Germany's two churches exerted their influence on the selection, distribution, and exhibition of films in the late 1940s and 1950s. Fehrenbach's account provides invaluable and fascinating new insights into the legal and ideological wranglings between the various groups involved in assuming control over the West German media after the war. Fehrenbach positions their strategies, values, and, not least, objections within the context of the Cold War on the one side and the reconstitution of national German identity on the other. As an institutional history, Fehrenbach's book tends to adopt a slightly top-down approach, in which the intentions and aims of the American military, the churches, the imperatives of the Cold War, and the agenda of the West German Federal government are mapped perhaps too neatly on to the supposed reception by German cinema audiences (I shall expand on this point in the second chapter of this book). None the less, Fehrenbach's solid historical research has contributed more to an understanding of the postwar period than many exclusively text-based studies that have preceded her work.

Robert Shandley, in contrast, adopts almost the opposite approach to that of Fehrenbach. Concentrating exclusively on the cycle of *Trümmerfilme* (rubble films) made between 1946 and 1949, his book is inevitably more based on textual and generic analysis than Fehrenbach's. Shandley's main argument, too, is to revise earlier conceptions of the postwar years, in particular the role the rubble films played in Germany's coming to terms with the Nazi past. Shandley rejects the suggestion, frequently made during the 1970s and 1980s, that it is only with the advent of the New German Cinema that issues of the Nazi past were articulated in German films. Shandley does indeed make a strong case, even though not all of his close textual readings are uncontentious, such as his analogy of postwar films with the generic mode of the western.²²

One of the possible reasons why the *Trümmerfilm* and the years from 1945 to 1950 more generally, have proved attractive to scholars, and why this era has been at the forefront of a wider historical revisionism of the postwar period is that these are subjects that can be reconciled with familiar research topics in German Studies – the Nazi past and its legacy, a cultural mode of intense soul-searching, national identity, and the threat (or liberation) of Americanisation. The 1950s and 1960s, in comparison, are still relatively under-researched, perhaps precisely because they do not conform in the same way to traditional research agendas in German studies. In many aspects the blatant and often shrill consumerism of the period does not match any of the above issues at all and may therefore require dif-

ferent critical emphases and frameworks. Erica Carter has suggested one such avenue with her study on the (re)construction of gender positions in the 1950s in a variety of media, from magazines and fashion to films, thus placing her filmic examples within a wider, intertextual, force field of consumer choices and behaviour.²³ Johannes von Moltke's ongoing research of the *Heimatfilm*, meanwhile, has extended the parameters of his subject by stressing the continuities of the genre across different periods, and in this follows more recent insights in German film history that the trajectory of the indigenous cinema is marked far more than has previously been assumed by continuities than by ruptures.²⁴

Interventions such as the ones mentioned above still remain fairly isolated and do not necessarily indicate that there has been a radical paradigm shift in preferences, priorities, or conceptualisations of German cinema in general. A case in point is the anthology *Perspectives on German Cinema*, comprising a selection of essays primarily compiled from the journal *New German Critique*.²⁵ Contributions on popular cinema, even for the ever-popular Weimar period, are scarce in what is after all a fairly extensive tome. The only article dealing with West German cinema of the 1950s (or, indeed, the whole period between 1945 and the Oberhausen Manifesto) is also the only one that attempts a radical review of precisely the kind of German film historiography that is likely to have informed the editors' choices for this anthology.²⁶ Significantly, Tassilo Schneider's 'Reading Against the Grain: German Cinema and Film Historiography' comes with a number of intellectual 'health warnings'. The anthology's editors preface Schneider's essay with a number of questions, including the following: 'How does Schneider's call for greater scholarly focus on Nazi and post-Nazi German cinemas, which he designates the products of an extreme ontological lapse, ultimately reinscribe the opposite notion, "low culture", toward a likewise problematic aestheticising of World War II and the Holocaust?'²⁷ Leaving aside for a moment Schneider's own position, this quote is revealing. Apart from the highly dubious implication that a 'scholarly focus on Nazi cinema' automatically equals an 'aestheticising of World War II and the Holocaust', what is perpetuated here is a rather questionable, if familiar, symmetry between 'low culture' and Nazism and an equally problematic conflation of Nazi cinema with what is tellingly reduced to as 'post-Nazi' cinema, as if German history and cinema after 1945 possessed no identity (or indeed identities) beyond the legacy of the 'Third Reich'.

Schneider's argument, expressed in a number of articles in the early to mid-1990s and expanded in his as yet unpublished Ph.D. thesis, deserves further, and detailed, attention here.²⁸ This is not only because of its highly polemical, and remarkably accurate, diagnosis of the state of German film historiography and because it provides one of the most insightful, intelligent, and passionate accounts of the 1950s and 1960s and its popular genres in English so far, but also because Schneider's argument is ultimately

trapped in the same paradigms it seeks to overcome. Schneider argues that German cinema, similarly to other European national cinemas, has been almost exclusively equated in critical discourse with 'art' cinema and *auteurs*, whereas American cinema is synonymous with popular cinema and genres. Thus, whereas the study of Hollywood has increasingly privileged cinema's social, historical, and industrial determinants and its international reach (and the textual polysemy of its films), national film cultures in Europe have been discussed according to paradigms of culturally discrete artistic movements, determined textual or formal meanings, and individual creativity. According to Schneider, however, the analysis of German cinema differs from the treatment of other national film industries, in that aesthetic criteria have been conflated with notions of national identity. Schneider notes that:

discussion of German cinema has always suffered from a rarely acknowledged inherent contradiction: the presupposition that they are dealing with a cinema of singular artistic 'masterpieces' (which have been chosen by the critic on the basis of their aesthetic relevance, in fact their very singularity, or uniqueness) has never prevented writers from using the very same texts as a basis from which to embark on rather ambitious attempts to assess Germany's cultural history, to construct an image of its national identity and self-understanding, and to diagnose the social and psychological condition of its movie-going inhabitants.²⁹

For Schneider, the obvious culprit and reference point for this kind of approach is, not surprisingly, Kracauer and the Frankfurt School, against whose verdicts German 'cultural criticism has been held hostage'.³⁰ Yet Schneider reserves his strongest criticism for a largely Anglo-American historiographical tradition associated with, and supportive of, the New German Cinema, which, according to Schneider, has helped to muddy and falsify German film history.

Drawing on debates from Anglo-American genre criticism, Schneider suggests that 'methodological strategies developed in the study of popular American cinema ... provide us with a more comprehensive understanding of these texts and their relationship to social, cultural, and ideological contexts'.³¹ According to Schneider, critical practice needs to focus on textual (and wider generic) features and to extrapolate from these not only a relationship to a defined social and historical context, but also the expression or manifestation of particular 'ideological conflicts'. Schneider is careful not to suggest that interactions between texts and ideology are easy or unambiguous to determine, yet he queries reception studies or audience research as a methodological framework:

In order to account for a particular audience's response to a specific body of films at a particular time and place, it might be necessary to address not only the particular generic texts in question, but also their context, specifi-

cally their interrelationship with (and their audience's consumption of) other cultural products or signifying practices. Such an endeavour, however, is bound to fall victim to all the theoretical problems that any attempt to reconstruct historical audiences and their reading practices is subject to. In order to avoid these problems, I suggest a different route of analysis, one which conceives of popular postwar German cinema as a function of specific generic determinants which, in turn, emerged in response to specific ideological pressures.³²

During the 1990s, the advantages and limitations of textual versus contextual analysis as a tool of film criticism were widely debated in Anglo-American film academia, without much resolution, and creating two distinctive camps in the process. Certainly, reception-based approaches have initiated a significant reorientation in the academic writing on American cinema history³³ and have been commonly applied to the study of television. For the critical evaluation of European, and particularly German, cinema, however, textual-based models have remained far more common.³⁴ While I agree with Schneider that reception-based models do pose methodological problems, the same (if not more so) applies to the potential arbitrariness and ahistoricity of textual readings. Thus, while Schneider may be right about the 'theoretical problems' of reconstructing historical audiences, there are, arguably, equally problems with his own suggestion that films 'respond' to 'ideological pressures'. For example, in Schneider's account, the 1950s represent a period in which a patriarchal social order 'had' to be reestablished and relegitimated in West German society. To this context, genres such as the *Heimatfilm* responded by presenting patriarchal authority figures and, more generally, by a 'thematic preoccupation with familial struggle, problems of parental authority/legitimacy, and generational conflict'.³⁵ Schneider's only evidence for his assumptions over societal conflicts, however, is deduced from the films' narrative constructions.

In a similar vein Schneider sees the 1960s as a period in which West Germany's 'economic miracle' of the previous decade begins to show signs of social divisions. Therefore, for Schneider, 'what distinguishes the films of the 1960s from those of the previous decade is a significant realignment of narrative positions and functions along gender and class lines'.³⁶ The fact that many of the popular genres in postwar West German cinema frequently neither are set in nor explicitly refer to contemporary West German society, is for Schneider a 'function of an ideological effect worked out in generic terms: far from simply evading or suppressing German social reality, the genres that dominated German theaters in the 1960s worked, on the contrary, to open up narrative spaces within which the contradictions of that reality could be articulated and negotiated'.³⁷

This correlation of shifting generic and narrative features with wider shifts and trends in postwar West German society is both suggestive and productive. One may question, though, the way in which the ideological

pressures of the two decades can be so succinctly compressed into a narrative of 'patriarchal relegitimation' (which, in principle and methodology, does not differ that much from the historical narratives of earlier accounts). Secondly, although Schneider sees contemporary social and political agendas as being coded within and mediated by specific generic conventions, he shares the assumption with his predecessors that an explicitly 'national' meaning (however hidden or camouflaged) can be extrapolated from popular films by way of textual analysis without much recourse to the social conditions and contexts in which these texts were produced and consumed (not to mention the subsidiary texts of marketing and promotion and the intertextual references that accompanied them).

In this book, my argument is meant to contribute to a hopefully ongoing exploration of the 1950s and 1960s, not to provide a definitive account of the period. While it is necessary to study the development of the West German industry from 1945 into the 1950s in order to understand the emergence of industrial and generic patterns in West German film culture after the Second World War, the main emphasis of the text and its core case-studies, centres on the 1960s. This is partly to 'liberate' the popular cinema of the decade from the critical limbo in which it has been placed owing to the previously mentioned traditional chronology, which sees the period simply as the dawn of the New German Cinema. The 1960s, however, also hold another attraction in that their products may be used to question the critical tenets of national cinema. Thus, rather than seeing the developments of the West German film industry in the postwar era as an exclusively national concern, my book attempts to place this history within the wider parameters of European film history. The 1960s provide an interesting case study in this respect, because it is a period of intense cultural hybridisation and internationalisation in European cinema at large, in terms both of production practices and industrial contexts, and of audience preferences. It is in these aspects that the national film history I am describing hopefully expands into a transnational one, or at least intersects with the histories of other national cinemas such as those of France, Great Britain, or the former Yugoslavia. Overall, my book sets out to identify transnational processes and practices at both an international and a localised level. While there are admittedly a number of different contexts through which this interaction between the international and the local might have been studied, I have chosen in this book to focus specifically on and to write a history of the hitherto under-researched areas of production practices and distribution patterns and particular areas of contemporary reception. I am well aware that, even in dealing only with these issues, I am covering the proverbial tip of the iceberg.³⁸

My approach has been particularly influenced by the work of scholars in reception studies and new American film history.³⁹ Analyses based on studies of reception and research into audience preferences and negotiations may help to retain and sometimes even reinforce a sense of cultural

specificity, and yet they undermine the notion of an essentially and a priori knowable audience, 'national' or otherwise. However, given the complexity of theoretical, methodological, and logistical issues, one of the central aims of my book is to suggest not a single critical methodology (and thus becoming entangled into the textual/contextual controversy I outlined above), but to propose a number of frameworks according to which both national specificities and transnational interactions during the 1960s may be revisited. The study of popular genres requires attentiveness both to the material contexts of production, distribution, and exhibition and to the textual operations of the films themselves. The issue of co-productions demands the acknowledgement that economic considerations interact with specifically national developments, but that they are equally informed by the dynamics of an international media market. The context of diasporic communities, meanwhile, which I discuss in chapter 8 in relation to the producer Artur Brauner and his work with remigrant directors, needs to account for the various political, personal-biographical, and economic determinants of such experiences, and there is a need to find a critical mode that is able to convey these trajectories.

This book does not propose any overriding and generalising claims for the period under discussion that could be summarised into a snappy conclusion. There are, however, a number of concerns that run through the various parts of this book. The first is the realisation how impossible it is to compartmentalise the history of German cinema into decades, since every genre, every production company, and every cultural source extends, from the vantage point of the historical period in question, into the future as well as into the past. The extraordinary longevity not only of specific genres, but also of endlessly recycled stories, over decades, in some cases approaching a century, emerges as one of the enduring patterns in German popular culture, which, despite frequent claims to the contrary, has remained remarkably independent, despite the powerful influences of Americanisation and globalisation. Independence, though, should not be mistaken for national parochialism, and does not preclude international cross-fertilisation. The second theme that runs through the book has to do with the textuality of these generic formats. What unites such seemingly disparate genres as the *Heimatfilm* of the 1950s, the Gothic Horror of the Edgar Wallace series, the Karl May western, and the exotic adventure films and spy thrillers is their creation of an escapist utopia that deliberately does away with national constraints. Notable, too, is their particular approach in both narration and *mise en scène* to space and time. In these stylistic and narrational characteristics, the genres again point backward to the cinema of attractions of the silent period, and they point forward to what we now define as post-modern devices.

In terms of overall structure, this book divides into two major sections. Part One (Industrial and Cultural Contexts) aims to provide a materialist history of West German postwar cinema from 1945 to the 1960s. Chapter 2

outlines the macroeconomic situation of both the West German and the international film industry that facilitated and encouraged national producers and distributors to embrace 'internationalist' practices. I look at the way in which the West German film industry not only consolidated itself internally after the Second World War and responded to its decentralisation enforced by the Allied powers, but also at the way in which the West German film industry corresponded to wider developments in the relationship between European cinema and Hollywood. Drawing on contemporary surveys and comments as well as recent academic studies of the immediate postwar period, I also consider the reception of indigenous and foreign films by West German audiences. Critical evaluations of the immediate postwar reconstruction of German cinema have frequently emphasised the 'renationalising' aspects of this process. What interests me, however, is how, already in the first postwar years, ideological and political concerns about a 'national film culture' competed with public and industrial demands for internationalisation.

In chapter 3 I document how West German film policy in the 1950s was balanced between the political agenda of the West German government to reinstate a national film industry and the increasingly international composition of the West German film market. I discuss the influence that closer European integration, and particularly the aftermath of the Treaty of Rome, had on financing, subsidies, and production strategies of the West German film industry. This chapter also covers prevalent perceptions and discourses in different national film industries about the cultural as well as economic potential and merit of an international mode of production. Drawing on contemporary debates in West German and British trade papers, I suggest that marked differences existed in different industrial contexts regarding the practices of co-productions and the transnational transfer of labour.

Chapter 4 introduces the West German distribution sector and charts the developments and changing strategies of the two most significant distribution companies, Gloria and Constantin, while chapter 5 discusses the relationship between the film industry and the emergent mass medium of television. The 1950s and 1960s witnessed gradually changing media preferences from cinema to television. Consequently, an understanding of the development of the film industry in this period is incomplete without an understanding of how these two media interacted. I argue that, in its generic priorities and in its marketing, the West German transnational cinema of the 1950s and 1960s was in a constant dialogue with television, and vice versa. Like the film industry, television pursued a strategy of internationalisation, by promoting Hollywood films within a framework of cultural education, by creating a demand for American TV formats, and by promoting an idea of Europe through trans-European co-production strategies.

Whereas Part I is concerned with macroeconomic factors, Part II looks at specific genres and production companies in greater detail. The pro-

ducer Artur Brauner, whom I discuss in chapter 6 is one of the pioneers of international collaboration among West German producers of the postwar period. The trajectory of his short-lived British subsidiary, CCC-London, illustrates the risks of adapting to different production practices and of second-guessing explicitly national, rather than international, audience preferences or market demands. Brauner quickly abandoned his British subsidiary and refocused his activities on co-productions in a continental European framework. The case of Brauner, an exiled Polish Jew with a number of international contacts based on similar experiences, also illustrates how the practice of inter-European cooperation interlinked with a dispersed and diasporic Eastern European film community and with the legacy of the political upheavals of the Second World War. I look at the trajectories of a number of former exiles, predominantly directors (Gottfried Reinhardt, Ernst Neubach, Fritz Lang), who worked for Brauner during this period. My argument is that these patterns of remigration were largely motivated by an attempt to internationalise film production and to revive the generic strategies of the Weimar period.

Chapters 7 and 8 are concerned with production company Rialto's Karl May and Edgar Wallace adaptations, the two longest and most successful generic cycles of the West German film industry in the 1960s. In these two chapters I focus on the close relationship between popular literary fiction and popular cinematic genres during this period, as well as going back to the origins of this relationship. I am particularly interested in how this relationship was exploited in terms of promotional strategies. The two genres, moreover, also interlinked with other developments in consumer culture. As in other national contexts, West Germany of the 1960s experienced the contradictory influences of a proliferating youth culture (often informed by American role models) and, on a more general level, shifting leisure habits, which included greater mobility and increased spare time. These general shifts in social behaviour significantly informed the stylistic and promotional patterns and the reception of popular film genres. My discussion of the Karl May and Edgar Wallace series emphasises their interaction with areas such as tourism and youth culture.

The Karl May and Edgar Wallace series furthermore illustrate in interesting ways how specifically national cultural expectations and a more transnational imagination could interact and how such 'international' narrative formulae were received in different markets. The Karl May films adapted the novels of a German author of the late nineteenth century and represented, for its German audiences, a specifically indigenous imagination of the American Wild West. In Britain and America, however, the Karl May series was received according to the parameters of the Hollywood western. The Edgar Wallace series adapted the work of an early twentieth century British crime novelist and reformulated it according to current German perceptions of Britain. In their historical, geographical, and cultural setting, the Karl May and Edgar Wallace series distanced themselves

from the social and political context of postwar West Germany. In this respect, these popular genres can be seen as escapist and as articulating a more general evasion of Germany's contemporary situation and recent past. At the same time, it was precisely the series' strategy of blurring cultural distinctions and historical specificities that made these cultural forms internationally viable.

Chapter 9 looks at other industrial variants informing transnational activities. Whereas Rialto and Artur Brauner's CCC represented established and financially relatively stable outlets, there were a large number of smaller-scale (or B-film) producers who also participated in transnational ventures. I introduce a number of selected case-studies (among them Wolf C. Hartwig's company Rapid and the Anglo-West German connections of the British producer Harry Alan Towers). I look at the various generic formulae these producers pursued over the 1960s (from exotic adventure films and spy thrillers to soft porn), and how these generic formulae fitted international modes of financing and production. Chapter 10, finally, provides both a conclusion and an outlook on what subsequently to the 1960s became of the generic formats and protagonists of the preceding chapters.

Notes

1. Quoted in Joe Hembus, *Der deutsche Film kann gar nicht besser sein. Ein Pamphlet von gestern. Eine Abrechnung von heute*, Munich 1981, p. 264.
2. Timothy Corrigan, *New German Cinema. The Displaced Image*, Austin 1983, p. 2.
3. Norbert Grob, 'Film der sechziger Jahre. Abschied von den Eltern', in *Geschichte des deutschen Films*, ed. Wolfgang Jacobsen, Anton Kaes, and Hans-Helmut Prinzler, Stuttgart and Weimar 1993, pp. 211–248.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 214.
5. On the influence of Kracauer, Adorno, and Horkheimer on the historiography of German cinema, see Tim Bergfelder and Erica Carter, 'Introduction', in *The German Cinema Book*, ed. Tim Bergfelder, Erica Carter, and Deniz Göktürk, London 2002, pp. 1–12.
6. Grob, in Jacobsen et al., *Geschichte des deutschen Films*, pp. 214 and 218.
7. Kristl's contempt for mass audiences has remained consistent over the years. The title of one of his films in the 1980s was *Tod dem Zuschauer* (Death to the Spectator, 1983).
8. Marc Silberman, *German Cinema. Texts in Context*, Detroit 1995, p. ix.
9. See, e.g., '*Sie sehen selbst, sie hören selbst*': *Die DEFA von ihren Anfängen bis 1949*, ed. Christiane Mückenberger, and Günter Jordan, Marburg 1994; *Das zweite Leben der Filmstadt Babelsberg, DEFA 1946–1992*, ed. Rolf Schenk, Berlin 1994; *DEFA: East German Cinema, 1946–1992*, ed. Seán Allan and John Sandford, New York and Oxford 1999; *Moving Images of East Germany*, ed. Barton Byg and Betheny Moore, Washington 2002.
10. See *Käutner*, ed. Wolfgang Jacobsen, Hans-Helmut Prinzler, Berlin 1992; and *Staudte*, ed. Eva Orbanz, Hans-Helmut Prinzler, Berlin 1991.
11. Exemplary for this kind of approach are, e.g., Barbara Bongartz, *Von Caligari zu Hitler – von Hitler zu Dr. Mabuse? Eine 'psychologische' Geschichte des deutschen Films von 1946 bis 1960*, Münster 1992, and Kirsten Burghardt, 'Moralische Wiederaufrüstung im frühen deutschen Nachkriegsfilm', in *Positionen deutscher Filmgeschichte*, ed. Michael Schaudig, Munich 1996, pp. 241–276.

12. See, e.g., Fritz Göttler, 'Westdeutscher Nachkriegsfilm. Land der Väter', in Jacobsen et al, *Geschichte des deutschen Films*, pp. 171–210.
13. See, e.g., *London Calling. Deutsche im britischen Film der dreissiger Jahre*, ed. Jörg Schöning, Munich 1993; *Schwarzer Traum und weiße Sklavin: Deutsch-dänische Filmbeziehungen 1910–1930*, ed. Manfred Behn, Munich 1994; *Fantaisies russes: Russische Filmemacher in Berlin und Paris 1920–1930*, ed. Jörg Schöning, Munich 1995; *Hallo? Berlin? Ici Paris! Deutsche-französische Filmbeziehungen 1918–1939*, ed. Sibylle Sturm and Arthur Wohlgemuth, Munich 1996.
14. See, e.g., *Popular European Cinema*, ed. Richard Dyer and Ginette Vincendeau, London 1992; *Encyclopedia of European Cinema*, ed. Ginette Vincendeau, London 1995; see also Tim Bergfelder, 'Reframing European Cinema. Concepts and Agendas for the Historiography of European Film', *Lähikuva*, no. 4 (Popular European Cinema Issue), Winter 1998, pp. 5–18.
15. Bergfelder and Carter, in Bergfelder et al, *The German Cinema Book*, pp. 7–8.
16. *Zwischen Gestern und Morgen. Westdeutscher Nachkriegsfilm 1946–1962*, ed. Jürgen Berger, Hans-Peter Reichmann, and Rudolf Worschech, Frankfurt am Main 1989; *Abschied von Gestern. Bundesdeutscher Film der sechziger und siebziger Jahre*, ed. Hans-Peter Reichmann and Rudolf Worschech, Frankfurt-on-Main 1991.
17. Claudia Dillmann-Kühn, *Artur Brauner und die CCC. Filmgeschäft, Produktionsalltag, Studiogesichte 1946–1990*, Frankfurt-on-Main 1990. Apart from Dillmann-Kühn's book, there are very few studies of individual postwar film producers. Another exception is *Luggi Waldleitner. Fast ein Leben für den Film*, ed. Carola Hembus, and Monika Nüchtern, Munich 1983.
18. Joseph Garncarz, 'Populäres Kino in Deutschland. Internationalisierung einer Filmkultur, 1925–1990' (Habilitationsschrift, University of Cologne 1996). See also his 'Hollywood in Germany: The Role of American Films in Germany' in *Hollywood in Europe. Experiences of a Cultural Hegemony*, ed. David W. Ellwood and Rob Kroes, Amsterdam 1994, pp. 94–135.
19. Thomas Guback, *The International Film Industry*, Bloomington 1969; Kristin Thompson, *Exporting Entertainment. America in the World Film Market 1907–1934*, London 1986; Thomas Elsaesser, *New German Cinema*, London and Basingstoke 1989.
20. See, e.g., Martin Loiperdinger, 'Amerikanisierung im Kino? Hollywood und das westdeutsche Publikum der fünfziger Jahre', in *Theaterzeitschrift*, no. 28, Summer 1989, pp. 50–60.
21. Heide Fehrenbach, *Cinema in Democratizing Germany. Reconstructing National Identity after Hitler*, Chapel Hill 1995; Robert R. Shandley, *Rubble Films. German Cinema in the Shadow of the Third Reich*, Philadelphia 2001. For yet another perspective on the same period, see Ursula Hardt, *From Caligari to California. Eric Pommer's Life in the International Film Wars*, Providence and Oxford, 1996.
22. Shandley, *Rubble Films*, pp. 31–46.
23. Erica Carter, *How German is She? Postwar West German Reconstruction and the Consuming Woman*, Ann Arbor 1997.
24. Johannes von Moltke, 'Evergreens. The Heimat Genre', in Bergfelder et al., *The German Cinema Book*, pp. 18–28.
25. *Perspectives on German Cinema*, ed. Terri Ginsberg and Kirsten Moana Thompson, New York 1996.
26. Tassilo Schneider, 'Reading Against the Grain. German Cinema and Film Historiography', in Ginsberg and Thompson, *Perspectives*, pp. 29–48.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
28. Tassilo Max Schneider, 'Genre and Ideology in the Popular German Cinema 1950–1972', (PhD diss., University of Southern California 1994).
29. Schneider, in Ginsberg and Thompson, *Perspectives*, pp. 30–31.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

31. Tassilo Schneider, 'Somewhere Else. The Popular German Cinema of the 1960s', *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature*, no. 40, Bloomington 1992, p. 76.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 79.
33. See e.g., Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film*, Cambridge 1991; Janet Staiger, *Interpreting Films. Studies in the Historical Reception of American Cinema*, Princeton 1992; Barbara Klinger, *Melodrama and Meaning. History, Culture, and the Films of Douglas Sirk*, Bloomington 1994; Thomas Austin, *Hollywood, Hype and Audiences. Selling and Watching Popular Film in the 1990s*, Manchester 2002.
34. Exceptions include Jackie Stacey, *Star Gazing. Hollywood Cinema and Female Spectatorship*, London 1994; Annette Kuhn, *Cinema, Censorship and Sexuality*, London 1988; Sue Harper, *Picturing The Past. The Rise and Fall of the British Costume Film*, London 1994. In German film criticism, see, e.g., Helmut Korte, *Der Spielfilm und das Ende der Weimarer Republik: Ein rezeptionshistorischer Versuch*, Göttingen 1998.
35. Schneider, 'Somewhere Else', pp. 80–81.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 81.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 80.
38. For example, I could have dealt with a number of other protagonists who were equally (perhaps in certain aspects even more) important to the ones I have chosen to cover, including producers such as Luggi Waldleitner, Franz Seitz, or Kurt Ulrich.
39. Staiger, *Interpreting Films*.

PART I

Historical and Cultural Contexts

Chapter 2

FROM RUBBLE TO PROSPERITY: RECONSTRUCTION OF A NATIONAL FILM INDUSTRY

1945–1949: Continuities and New Beginnings

In histories of German cinema the years between 1945 and 1962 have frequently figured as a period of missed opportunities and meek and unsuccessful attempts to break with the past, as a period of American political colonialism and cultural colonisation, and as the beginning of a 'crisis' in the West German film industry which to some extent is seen to have persisted to the present day.¹ Judging by the basic economic indicators, and particularly considering the extent of devastation within the German film industry in 1945, the recovery of the German film sector after the war was in fact remarkable. While the resumption of German film production was initially rather slow, by 1954 West Germany had become the world's fifth-largest producer. Distribution companies and exhibition outlets doubled in number within less than two years after the end of the war. Audience figures rose from 150 million in 1945 to 474 million in 1950, and these trends were sustained well into the 1950s (audience figures reached their peak in 1956 with 817 million). In 1960 cinema admissions in Germany were still the second highest in Europe (Italy being in first place, the U.K. in third place, followed by Spain and France).² The development of the German film market in the first ten postwar years thus differed significantly from economic patterns in other countries.

In the United States and Britain, the film industries emerged from the war in a financially prosperous position. In both countries, box-office earnings reached an all-time peak in 1946. Yet both Hollywood and the British film industry experienced an almost immediate and sharp decline thereafter. Hollywood was faced with the economic pressures of decartelisation (the Paramount decree in 1948), political problems (the ramifications of the House Un-American Committee, or HUAC, hearings), and rapidly changing habits of leisure and consumption (including the steady rise of televi-