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(continued on last page)

Projecting History

*German Nonfiction Cinema,
1967–2000*

NORA M. ALTER

Ann Arbor

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For My Two As

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Introduction

The documentary idea after all demands no more than that the affairs of our time shall be brought to the screen in any fashion which strikes the imagination.

—Noël Burch, *Theory of Film Practice*

Nonnarrative is but another part of cinema, perhaps all the more devious for claiming to be above the deceptive means with which it makes its point.

—Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality*

The term *nonfiction* in the title of this book, *Projecting History: German Nonfiction Cinema, 1967–2000*, deliberately breaks from the prevailing dual system of traditionally opposed terms: fiction and documentary. This divergence is intended to suggest the *raison d'être*—and justification—for addressing a subject matter that has apparently been thoroughly explored: postwar films in Germany. Indeed, the genre of “nonfiction” film, rarely taken into account by critics, underpins the architecture of this study. This broad category, generally understood to refer to films that do not deal with fictional topics, accommodates scientific reports, travel narratives, newsreels, documentaries, family mementoes, nonnarrative and experimental films, and hybrid works known as essay films. But I am using the term *nonfiction* specifically to refer to films in which the fictional element colors the documentary material. While borrowing many features of documentaries and actuality films, including the appearance of filming “reality,” the nonfiction films studied here do not claim to offer an objective—hence, true—vision of that reality. They do not disguise—indeed, they prefer to display—their artificiality, their artful and often biased manipulation of the “factual” images, celebrating these qualities. In sum, they are not content with merely recording events. Rather they put a spin on these events and use them to convey a message, an idea, a point of view. Since

nonfiction films, composed through the selection, timing, and montage of documentary images, do not fit into either of the two traditional categories of cinema—fictional features (or narrative films) and documentaries (or nonfictional and nonnarrative films)—such works are generally overlooked and neglected by scholars and critics alike. I seek to redress that imbalance not by rewriting any part of the available extensive criticism of postwar German cinema but rather by adding to it and thereby presenting a revised and reshaped picture of a discrete “nonfiction” unit that is close to, but not entirely part of, dominant feature film production.

Since the 1980s a concerted effort has taken place to study what is heralded as the first German avant-garde since Expressionism: “New German Cinema.” Several significant scholarly studies have been published (in English) that put postwar German film on the international film-studies map. These include (in chronological order) Timothy Corrigan’s *New German Film* (1983, reissued in 1994), Eric Rentschler’s *West German Film in the Course of Time* (1984), Anton Kaes’s *From Hitler to Heimat* (1989), and Thomas Elsaesser’s *New German Cinema* (1989).¹ Several volumes focusing on women and gender in German films followed in the 1990s, including Julia Knight’s *Women and the New German Cinema* and the two-volume *Gender and German Cinema*, edited by Sandra Frieden and others.² A number of recent studies have also examined various aspects of German film from a variety of theoretical perspectives: postcolonialism, autobiography, feminism and fascism, cultural studies, gender studies, music, and now former East German film.³ Monographs

1. Timothy Corrigan, *New German Film: The Displaced Image* (1983; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994); Eric Rentschler, *West German Film in the Course of Time: Reflections on the Twenty Years since Oberhausen* (Bedford Hills, N.Y.: Redgrave, 1984); Anton Kaes, *From Hitler to Heimat: The Return of History as Film* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989); Thomas Elsaesser, *New German Cinema: A History* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1989). See also Rentschler’s two edited anthologies, *German Film and Literature: Adaptations and Transformations* (London: Methuen, 1986), and *West German Filmmakers on Film: Visions and Voices* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1988).

2. Julia Knight, *Women and the New German Cinema* (New York: Verso, 1992); Sandra Frieden, Richard W. McCormick, Vibeke R. Petersen, and Laurie Melissa Vogelsang, *Gender and German Cinema: Feminist Interventions*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Berg, 1993).

3. For postcolonialism, see John E. Davidson, *Deterritorializing the New German Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999); for autobiography, see Barbara Kosta, *Recasting Autobiography: Women’s Counterfictions in Contemporary German Literature and Film* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994); for feminism and fascism, see Susan E. Linville, *Feminism, Film, Fascism: Women’s Autobiographical Film in Postwar Germany* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998); for cultural studies, see Gerd Gemünden, *Framed Visions: Popular Culture, Americanization, and the Contemporary German and Austrian Imagination* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998); for gender studies, see Alice A.

have focused on individual directors such as Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Werner Herzog, Alexander Kluge, and Wim Wenders.⁴ Several anthologies have been devoted to German film, including *Perspectives on German Cinema* (1996) and *Triangulated Visions: Women in Recent German Cinema* (1998).⁵ These English-language volumes are highly informative and offer exceptional examples of scholarship and interpretation in the fields of German studies and film studies, outshining much of what has been published in Germany.

Yet the picture of German postwar film produced by these studies is surprisingly homogenous: they focus almost exclusively on narrative feature films that privilege the so-called New German Cinema. This priority is in part indicative of the extraordinary flowering of talent in the context of New German Cinema. Directors such as Herzog, Kluge, Fassbinder, Ulrike Ottinger, Helke Sanders, Helma Sanders-Brahms, Volker Schlöndorff, Wenders, Hans Jürgen Syberberg, and Margarethe von Trotta have made some of the most memorable fictional films of their era. Although these filmmakers are known primarily for their narrative work, most have also made significant contributions in the area of nonfiction. However, due in no small part to their popularity and accessibility—both in terms of reception and availability—feature films attract more scholarly and critical attention. Furthermore, most film theory has generally converged on narrative feature films, which has only increased the allure of this genre for scholars.

The reevaluation of film that has taken place in the past decade has recognized that this bias ignores a large body of films. As a result, there

Kuzniar, *The Queer German Cinema* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000); for music, see Caryl Flinn, *The New German Soundtrack* (Berkeley: University of California Press, forthcoming, 2003); for East Germany, see Sean Allan and John Sanford, eds., *DEFA: East German Cinema, 1946–1992* (New York: Berghahn Books, 1999).

4. Thomas Elsaesser, *Fassbinder's Germany: History, Identity, Subject* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1996); Wallace Steadman Watson, *Understanding Rainer Werner Fassbinder: Film as Private and Public Art* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996); Timothy Corrigan, ed., *The Films of Werner Herzog: Between Mirage and History* (New York: Methuen, 1986); Peter C. Lutze, *Alexander Kluge: The Last Modernist* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998); Roger Bromley, *From Alice to Buena Vista: The Films of Wim Wenders* (London: Praeger, 2001); Roger F. Cook and Gerd Gemünden, eds., *The Cinema of Wim Wenders: Image, Narrative, and the Postmodern Condition* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997).

5. Terri Ginsberg and Kirsten Moana Thompson, eds., *Perspectives on German Cinema* (New York: G. K. Hall, 1996); Ingeborg Majer O'Sickey and Ingeborg von Zadow, eds., *Triangulated Visions: Women in Recent German Cinema* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998); see also Randall Halle and Maggie McCarthy, eds., *German Popular Film* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, forthcoming).

has been an explosion of studies on nonfiction and documentary film.⁶ At the same time, the latter are gaining popular acceptance and slowly entering into mainstream theaters. Ironically, this shift is taking place at the same time that new possibilities of digital manipulation have discredited even further whatever truth claims the documentary image was still thought to make. I do not think that this is a coincidence. Rather, the popularity of the genre of documentary film has increased in direct proportion to the decrease in this genre's indexical link to actuality. Since documentary films' truth claims are more tenuous than ever, viewers can take in such films the same way they do fully fictional feature films. In addition, major technological advances following from the development of the video recorder camera (or portapak) and digital editing systems have made it much easier to produce nonfiction films. The relatively inexpensive, widely available technology enables virtually anyone with a minimum of expertise to make actuality films (especially videotapes). Identification with the process of production in this way has surely also contributed to the increased interest in nonfiction cinema in the theaters.

What, then, might explain the neglect of this genre by German film studies? Emerging in the 1960s as a revolt of the postwar generation against Hollywood and "daddy's cinema," the New German Cinema immediately thrived. Its reputation only grew as it embraced (and was embraced by) successive waves of fashionable avant-gardes: radical or moderate feminism, new historicism, gender studies, postmodernism, and the like. New German Cinema's avant-garde, experimental style

6. Ian Aitken, ed., *The Documentary Film Movement: An Anthology* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998); Erik Barnouw, *Documentary: A History of the Non-Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); Richard M. Barsam, *Nonfiction Film: A Critical History*, rev. and exp. ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992); John Corner, *The Art of Record: A Critical Introduction to Documentary* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996); John Corner, ed., *Documentary and the Mass Media* (London: Edward Arnold, 1986); Jane Gaines and Michael Renov, eds., *Collecting Visible Evidence* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999); Barry Keith Grant and Jeannette Sloniowski, eds., *Documenting the Documentary: Close Readings of Documentary Film and Video* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998); William Guynn, *A Cinema of Nonfiction* (London: Associated University Presses, 1990); Kevin MacDonald and Mark Cousins, eds., *Imagining Reality: The Faber Book of Documentary* (London: Faber and Faber, 1998); Bill Nichols, *Blurred Boundaries: Questions of Meaning in Contemporary Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994); Michael Renov, *Theorizing Documentary* (New York: Routledge, 1993); Alan Rosenthal, ed., *New Challenges for Documentary* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); William Roth, *Documentary Film Classics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Dai Vaughan, *For Documentary* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Diane Waldman and Janet Walker, eds., *Feminism and Documentary* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999); Charles Warren, ed., *Beyond Document: Essays on the Nonfiction Film* (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1996); Brian Winston, *Claiming the Real: The Documentary Film Revisited* (London: British Film Institute, 1995).

was particularly appealing to intellectuals and critics. Yet it self-consciously remained on the periphery of dominant film production (that is, Hollywood and its clones), which may explain why an even more marginal and ambitious filmic practice was ignored. Already on the periphery, why should a critic or scholar go beyond to the outermost circles of that map?

But there is another reason for the neglect of nonfiction German film, inherently intertwined with historical circumstances. Here it is revealing to note that this genre frequently summoned predecessors such as Hans Richter's experimental films of the 1920s, Walter Ruttmann's *Berlin, Symphony of a Great City* (1927), and Robert Siodmak's and Fred Zinnemann's *People on Sunday* (1929). Significantly, all of these films were made before 1930—before, that is, the formidable entry of documentary filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl. Her almost instant domination of the field (she claimed her films were not documentary newsreels)—the way in which her practice formed the ground rules for how nonfiction films should be produced, received and critiqued—extended well beyond the Third Reich. If the New German Cinema directors had a father to kill, nonfiction filmmakers were confronted with a devouring mother. And it is Riefenstahl's triumph that her films continue to fascinate and command a great deal of attention and criticism.⁷ Understandably, Riefenstahl's dominance in this genre has colored the field and led to a critical silence about other nonfiction productions.⁸ This study seeks to give them voice by taking up the interrupted dialogue of the 1920s and early 1930s concerning the possibilities and potentiality of nonfictional production.

The Nazi past played a special role in the postwar German imaginary, as many struggled to deal not only with this period's unprecedented crimes against humanity but also with the physical and psychological pain felt by the nation. In contrast to the nearly silent generation of the immediate postwar years, those crippled by what Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich referred to as an "inability to mourn," politically active artists and intellectuals in the 1960s took up the challenge to master and work through their problematic recent history.⁹ New German Cinema

7. See, for example, Barnouw, *Documentary*; Barsam, *Nonfiction Film*; Grant and Sliowski, *Documenting the Documentary*.

8. Individual films such as *Germany in Autumn* have been widely discussed and debated. But with a few exceptions, there has been no extensive study of nonfiction cinema. An anomaly is Barton Byg's tour de force, *Landscapes of Resistance: The German Films of Danièle Huillet and Jean-Marie Straub* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

9. Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich, *Die Unfähigkeit zu trauern* (Munich: Piper, 1967); on films and recent German history, see Eric L. Santner, *Stranded Objects: Mourning, Memory, and Film in Postwar Germany* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990); Kaes, *From Hitler to Heimat*.

addressed the past with an aggressive platform that called for radically different films about a new vision of history. The systematic preference for (narrative) feature films implied, among other things, that history should be depicted in terms of fictional though typical individual lives by means of personal guilt or redemption. With some exceptions, this fictionalized “history as film” reduced complex historical and political events to highly individualized and personal stories.

Most of the nonfiction films I have chosen to discuss do not depict individual protagonists. Rather, they focus on political-economic forces and structures. The films address basic problems of German history, including its overall “peculiarity” within the European context, and, in particular, the specific ways in which the National Socialist legacy continues to haunt Germans. The process of mastering or working through the troubled German past that I scrutinize in these nonfiction films is subject to a double perspective: as a national cinema in centripetal relation to internal German problems (including terrorism, the divided state, and reunification) but also as a transnational cinema in centrifugal relation to external problems such as the ways that, under postindustrial conditions, global images of totality (and hence imaginary structures of communities larger than a nation) proliferate and remain politically viable. Within this national-transnational structure, I examine not only how the nonfiction genre develops within Germany but also how the films are in dialogue with nonfiction films produced elsewhere and thereby contribute to a transnational genre that stands fundamentally opposed to Hollywood feature film production.

My account provides an alternative to Corrigan’s claim in *New German Film: The Displaced Image* that the New German filmmakers have not lived up to the radicalism of their initial project of social criticism: “Like the old order they once engaged, these filmmakers, inadvertently in most cases, have arrested audience expectations at the borders of their own films and have in many ways closed the channels of an ongoing dialogue with pertinent social issues.”¹⁰ While Corrigan’s assertion may be true of much traditional narrative film production in Germany, it is less true of German nonfiction cinema, including that produced by otherwise traditional filmmakers. The reasons for this are ultimately linked to issues of production and funding. First, new technology has made it easier for established filmmakers to shoot low-budget nonfiction films without having to apply to film-funding boards. This increased freedom from financial ties and obligations has also enabled a significant amount of artistic experimentation and play. Hence, it is important to emphasize that most of the films

10. Corrigan, *New German Film*, 187.

under consideration, with the exception of those made in the former East Germany, did not have expectations for a large public or even box office release.

Methodologically, I have found Bill Nichols's analysis of nonfiction films in *Representing Reality* (1991) to be productive. Nichols shows that although nonfiction films and films with a fictional narrative are structurally and ideologically similar, the "differences—if not distinctions," between the two genres are more significant.¹¹ More specifically, I shall show that despite their sometimes easy accessibility and seeming straightforwardness, nonfiction films contain crucial encoded moments that are simultaneously visible and audible to some viewers and invisible and inaudible to others. Nonfiction filmmakers often cleverly use this mechanism of im/perceptibility in canny attempts to control their films' reception. Intentions are a complex matter, however, and the dialectical collision of the visual and the audible often prevents political critiques or simple messages from being received. Political meanings tend to come together indirectly and often in surreptitious ways in films, fiction and nonfiction alike. Thus, not only thematic but also formal and technological elements of production must be examined to comprehend the various meanings of any nonfiction film. Meaning is just as much the product of subject matter as it is of film craft and techniques, including the use of camera, editing, and voice-over for the purpose of constructing and manipulating the point of view and viewer's identity (whether positively by identification or negatively by abjection). To present German cultural politics or individual films from an exclusively thematic or, for that matter, purely formal or technological perspectives is to deny their complexity.

One type of film within the nonfiction genre, the essay film, deserves particular mention here since several of the productions under consideration in this book are of this sort.¹² The essay film was first formally articulated by avant-garde filmmaker Hans Richter just prior to his 1940 departure from Europe. In "Der Filmessay: Eine neue Form des Dokumentarfilms" (The Film Essay: A New Form of Documentary Film), Richter proposes a new genre of film that would enable the filmmaker to make the "invisible" world of thoughts and ideas visible on the screen.¹³ Unlike the documentary film, which presents facts and information, the essay film produces complex thought that at times is not grounded in real-

11. Nichols, *Representing Reality*, xi.

12. To date there is no book-length English study on the essay film. In German, see Christa Blümlinger and Constantin Wulff, eds., *Schreiben Bilder Sprechen: Texte zum essayistischen Film* (Vienna: Sonderzahl, 1992).

13. Hans Richter, "Der Filmessay: Eine neue Form des Dokumentarfilms" [1940], in *Schreiben Bilder Sprechen*, ed. Blümlinger and Wulff, 195–98.

ity but can be contradictory, irrational, and fantastic. This new type of film, according to Richter, no longer binds the filmmaker to the rules and parameters of the traditional documentary practice, such as chronological sequencing or the depiction of external phenomena. Rather, it gives free reign to the imagination, with all its artistic potentiality.¹⁴ The term *essay* is used because it signifies a composition that is in between categories and as such is transgressive, digressive, playful, contradictory, and political.¹⁵ Richter cites his own production, *Inflation* (1928), as an early example of what an essay film might look like. The genre was further formulated in the late 1940s and 1950s in France by Alexandre Astruc, whose influential essay, “La caméra-stylo” (1948), promoted a type of filmic “writing just as flexible and subtle as written language.”¹⁶ Developments in Germany in the 1980s, with *Filmkritik* commentary, as well as in France in the 1970s, with the self-reflexive cinema vérité and the work of “essayists” Jean-Luc Godard and Chris Marker, continued to delineate the main features of the essay film as a genre—or, rather, as a nongenre, since, like Adorno’s literary “heresy,” it strives to transgress structurally and conceptually traditional boundaries.¹⁷ To a certain extent, contemporary German filmmakers

14. “In diesem Bemühen, die unsichtbare Welt der Vorstellungen, Gedanken und Ideen sichtbar zu machen, kann der essayistische Film aus einem unvergleichlich größeren Reservoir von Ausdrucksmitteln schöpfen, als die reine Dokumentarfilm. Denn da man in Filmessay an die Wiedergabe der äußeren Erscheinungen oder an eine chronologische Folge nicht gebunden ist, sondern im Gegenteil das Anschauungsmaterial überall herbeiziehen muß, so kann man frei in Raum und Zeit springen: von der objektiven Wiedergabe beispielsweise zur phantastische Allegorie, von dieser zur Spielszene; man kann tote wie ebendige, künstliche wie natürliche Dinge abbilden, alles verwenden, was es gibt und was sich erfinden läßt—wenn es nur als Argument für die Sichtbarmachung des Grundgedankens dienen kann” (Richter, “Der Filmessay,” 198).

15. For a theorization of the essay as form, see Theodor W. Adorno, “Der Essay als Form,” in *Noten zur Literatur I* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1981); Georg Lukács, “On the Nature and Form of the Essay,” in *Soul and Form* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1980).

16. See Alexandre Astruc, “The Birth of a New Avant-Garde: La Caméra Stylo” [1948], in *The New Wave: Critical Landmarks*, ed. Peter Graham (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1968), 17–23. Also see his *Du stylo à la caméra et de la caméra au stylo* (Paris: L’Archipel, 1990). Astruc argued that the fate of the avant-garde hung in the balance. The essay film was a historical necessity because “the cinema is now moving toward a form which is making it such a precise language that it will soon be possible to write ideas directly onto film” (“Birth,” 19). Astruc’s notion of literal inscription of texts on the celluloid was to be enriched by other ways of inscribing ideas on films.

17. Filmmaker Harun Farocki was involved as a coeditor of *Filmkritik*, notably during the influential 1983–84 period. But as early as 1979, German filmmakers’ Hamburg declaration acknowledged the need for a synthesis between the “feature film” and “documentary . . . films that reflect on the medium,” anticipating two major traits of the essay film, self-reflexivity and the (equivocal) use of objective images to tell a subjective message (“The Hamburg Declaration” [1979], in *West German Filmmakers on Film*, ed. Rentschler, 4). Such a program challenged Siegfried Kracauer’s influential separation of cinema into realistic and

who work in the genre of the essay film—and generally within the category of nonfiction film—are genealogically linked to the violently interrupted project of the historical avant-garde.

The period covered in this book, 1967–2000, starts at the height of student protest and activism in West Germany. Film production also underwent significant transformations in the mid-1960s, including the birth of New German Cinema. The endpoint of my project corresponds not only to the end of the century but also to the end of a number of practices of audiovisual production and distribution current in the twentieth century. Everything has changed with recent developments in the field of computer technology, as digitally generated images proliferate. National cinemas are also becoming obsolete as new forms of transnationalism come to dominate production, distribution, and consumption.

Yet I do not seek to give a comprehensive overview of nonfiction film production in Germany in the second half of the twentieth century. Rather, I have selected only a handful of filmmakers, all of whom have achieved a considerable degree of success or mastery in their filmmaking careers: Walter Heynowski and Gerhard Scheumann and Winfried and Barbara Junge (the leading East German documentarists); Fassbinder, Schlöndorff, and Wenders (the leading German feature filmmakers); Ottinger (a maker of feminist films that problematize gender constructions); Ophüls (an international documentary filmmaker); and Farocki and Kluge (the top essay filmmakers). Their works all explore the potentiality of this genre in between fact and fiction, and I argue that these explorations are encouraged, even mandated, by the political unconscious of their topics—whether terrorism or reunification. The films produced are highly demanding of spectators, requiring that they actively work to coproduce meaning.

formalistic films, with documentary falling more toward the former than the latter. See Krauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), 33–37. For French cinema vérité, see Birgit Kämper, “*Sans soleil*—ein Film erinnert sich selbst,” in *Schreiben Bilder Sprechen*, ed. Blümlinger and Wulff, 33–59. From its inception, essay film theorists and practitioners have followed the example of the written essay (dating back at least to Montaigne and Bacon and extending to De Sade, Leopardi, Nietzsche, Lukács, Adorno, Benjamin, and Barthes), which entails resisting the temptation to situate the essay in stable generic terms. The essay has also been described as not merely “between” other genres but as their repressed *Urform*. See Réda Bensmaïa, *The Barthes Effect: The Essay as Reflective Text*, trans. Pat Fedkiew (1986; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987). Because it is a genre that resists closure, tends to be nonlinear in argumentation, and is often openly personal, it has been perceived as particularly well adapted to feminism. See Ruth-Ellen Boetscher Joeres and Elizabeth Mittman, eds., *The Politics of the Essay: Feminist Perspectives* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993). See also the special issue “Versuch über den Essayfilm,” *Augenblick* 10 (1991).

The first chapter, “Excessive Requisites: Vietnam through the East German Lens,” explores the little-known nonfiction Vietnam films produced between 1968 and 1978 by the East German film collective Heynowski and Scheumann. The contrast between these films and coeval Western documentaries demonstrates how communist ideology and politics generated a concrete documentary aesthetic that differed from the Western standard of the 1960s and 1970s. In light of the then official dictate that anti-imperialist filmmakers had to “practice solidarity with their weapon: camera,” I question the relationship between war and documentary filmmaking. What happens when the war becomes a form of documentary and the documentary a form of war? As a case in point, what happens when the human body is graphically represented in the context of war, as for example, when U.S. pilots were interviewed by Heynowski and Scheumann in a prisoner of war camp outside of Hanoi? This leads me to the problematic of identity and identification as it emerges from the representation of one body and culture by another: in this case, North Americans and Vietnamese viewed through the East German lens.

The next chapter, “Framing Terrorism: Beyond the Borders,” examines the 1978 omnibus production *Germany in Autumn*, made by nine West German filmmakers in direct response to incidents of terrorism in West Germany in the 1970s and their distorted representation in the mass media. I use this film as a transitional work between the East German perspective of Heynowski and Scheumann (including their notion that the war in Vietnam builds on the legacy of National Socialism) and more recent concerns about right-wing trends in the West. From that angle, I draw attention to the role the hybrid nature of the film—part archival footage, part fictional re-creation—plays in conveying the complexity of terrorism. Another notable feature of the film is the way it employs the representation of women defying the state in its analysis of political violence. Throughout the chapter, I pay particular attention to moments of slippage between fiction and nonfiction and to the blurring of canonical boundaries between factual reports and imaginary scenes. The destruction of these (and other) traditional forms, in the context of this film, metaphorically functions as a quasi-terrorist assault on formal cinema.

Chapter 3, “The Political Im/perceptible,” focuses on film essayist Harun Farocki’s *Images of the World and the Inscription of War* (1988–89). As it articulates formalistic aesthetics with politico-economic history, especially in the context of the Cold War, Farocki’s complex and quasi-philosophical film creates a dialectic between a not-so-distant past, scarred by the Holocaust and the Algerian War, and a present-day Germany wedged between the Cold War superpowers. After discussing Farocki’s work as an example of the contemporary essay film, I present the film as a

modernist investigation of the nature of vision, visibility, and visibility in relation to new technologies of image production and reception. Picking up on the political thread of the previous chapters, I analyze the film as a direct confrontation with the fascist past. Farocki's text becomes an inscription of war, advocating the recourse to radical solutions through the logic of the political im/perceptible.

Chapter 4, "Global Politics, Cinematographic Space: Wenders's *Tokyo-Ga* and *Notebooks on Cities and Clothes*," considers Wenders's two essay or "diary" films as symptomatic of his theory of film. Geographically, these films point to the nexus among Germany, France, and Japan, with the United States as an absent signifier. Both films testify to a fascination with Japan. This is especially strong with regard to Tokyo and the way a highly developed form of technoculture has been overlaid on a ritualized traditional culture in this megacity. Wenders is particularly interested in probing the tension in Japan between the modernist ideal of originality and the postmodern sway of simulation and simulacra.

Chapter 5, "Reunification in a Decentered Lens: Ottinger and Ophüls," examines two relatively marginal films that feature unorthodox representations of a major political event: the reunification of Germany. In a radical departure from her usual style of filmmaking, Ulrike Ottinger's *Countdown* is haunted by the specter of Weimar and the Third Reich as it counts down the ten days before monetary reunification. Marcel Ophüls's *November Days* interweaves phenomena of the Third Reich and current neo-Nazism in a musical comedy that satirizes a prodigal son's return to his father's Germany, which now seeks a place within the larger European context. The film indirectly raises the still nebulous question of what will happen to East German artists now that their world has fundamentally changed?

The epilogue, "History in the Making: The Children of Golzow Project," begins to answer Ophüls's question. It follows a remarkable film project that two former East German filmmakers, Winfred and Barbara Junge, have been carrying out since 1961, documenting the lives of the people of Golzow. The Junges' forty years of filmmaking offer a record of a small town's history along with glimpses into Germany's progress toward reunification. While chronicling the life of a group of children as they mature into adults, the films also provide glimpses of the profound impact postwar modernization and the demographic move to Western cities has had on (former) East Germans. The Golzow Project is particularly important in this context because it shows the changes that took place in documentary filmmaking practices from the early 1960s to the late 1990s and thereby sums up the thematic and formal evolution of non-fiction German film.