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| **Film-Philosophy**International Salon-Journal (ISSN 1466-4615)Vol. 9 No. 15, March 2005  |
| Amresh Sinha Same Old New German Cinema:Julia Knight's \_New German Cinema: Images of a Generation\_  Julia Knight\_New German Cinema: Images of a Generation\_London: [Wallflower Press](http://www.wallflowerpress.co.uk/), 2004ISBN 1-903364-28-0124 pp. There are a plethora of books on the topic of New German Cinema, and the latest in the field, Julia Knight's \_The New German Cinema: Images of a Generation\_, is certainly the least original. Still, it is not an altogether insignificant work for newcomers to the topic. The book is published by Wallflower Press as part of its Short Cuts series, introductory-level texts addressing the basic areas of film studies. Thus the nature and scope of these books are suited to the pedagogic interest of the faculty to expose students to the field. Certainly, it is a daunting task to cram in a space of only 124 pages the entire history of the New German Cinema. And it is to her credit that Knight has managed to incorporate the significant aspects of economic, social, cultural, and institutional factors that aided the birth and growth of the New German Cinema in such a short format. The book certainly provides useful information, but it eschews any serious philosophical or theoretical engagement with the material, making its usefulness to any but the most uninitiated questionable. Knight admits, 'it is clearly impossible within this introductory study to offer a fully comprehensive overview and the analysis of the cinema's origins' (4). But even within the confines of the project, some originality is called for. The book relies heavily on the existing literature by scholars in the field, most notably Thomas Elsaesser, John Sanford, Eric Rentschler, and Anton Kaes. And, unlike John E. Davidson's \_Deterritorializing the New German Cinema\_, [1] which reassesses the field from a cultural-studies point of view, and Richard W. McCormick's \_Politics of the Self\_, [2] a philosophical discourse on the relationship between feminism and postmodernism in German literature and film, Knight's book offers no new perspective. If those books are \*broadening\* the horizon of the New German Cinema, then Knight's latest in this genre is limiting the discourse to an already well-traversed path. Knight structures her book around three major questions: How did the New German Cinema come into existence? Why did these films make such an impression on the international cinema? And what caused the New German Cinema's demise? In the first chapter, Knight outlines the historical circumstances that led to the emergence of the New German Cinema. It begins with a strong critique of the Allied \*handling\* of the West German film industry immediately after World War II. The systematic dismantling of the German film industry by the American culture industry for both political and economic reasons had a devastating impact on German film culture in general. After the creation of two separate German states in 1949, the identity of a resolute German cinema disappeared. The GDR quickly organized its film industry along the party line; in the Western zone, the production companies were busy dubbing and marketing French, British, and especially American films, or Nazi entertainment films deemed innocuous by the censors. Old Hollywood movies, many of which had been banned in the Third Reich, were now being dubbed into German. The American films quickly became standard fare of many movie houses. By 1950, of the 85 motion picture distribution firms operating in the Federal Republic of Germany, most had ties with American companies.  The history of German cinema from 1945 to early 1960s has its own share of ignominy. The films of the 1950s can be best described as 'escapist', because they refused to deal with the realities of the events of the Nazi era. Many didn't even go to the movies because of its 'tainted' history. And those who went preferred mindless entertainment and German films that avoided at all cost a confrontation with contemporary issues. In the absence of what Alexander Kluge has called the positive history of Germany and the lack of genuine mourning (Trauerarbeit, in the Freudian sense), the nation as a whole, gripped with the melancholia of loss, withdrew and found solace in the sentimentality of Heimatfilm, a genre of idyllic tranquility in the German countryside, a favorite amongst the Nazis, which still somehow retained its innocuous status, or took refuge in the escapist genres of romantic comedies, operettas, Edgar Wallace thrillers, and Karl May Westerns. Despite a brief respite in 1955, when the Heimatfilm attracted record audiences, the German cinema went through a progressively downward spiral. During Konrad Adenauer's chancellorship (1949-1963) the international reputation of the West German cinema steadily declined until it was regarded as among the worst in Europe. Its reputation had sunk so low that in 1961 not a single German film was deemed worthy of the Federal award for quality film, and in the same year the Venice Film Festival rejected all German entries. As Knight notes, the progressive decline in box-office receipts reached its all-time low in 1963, when it fell by more than 50 percent (11). Of course, many factors contributed to this decline, most prominently the advent of television, along with the rise of suburbia and a sizable increase in car ownership in a rebounding West German economy. But it became clear that the state of German cinema was in a precarious situation. If it had to survive, then government intervention would be necessary. Against this background of American hegemony, the inception of the New German Cinema took place at the Oberhausen Festival in 1962. In a celebrated manifesto, twenty-six filmmakers, writers, and artists, headed by Kluge, protested against the government policy of quality ratings for subsidies, which they argued could never help the home industry to compete with the lavish Hollywood cinema. The Oberhausen manifesto proclaimed: 'The old cinema is dead. We believe in the new'. The fundamental principle behind this manifesto was that filmmakers should have autonomy in giving shape to their film ideas without having to take legal or serious financial risks. Filmmakers were to retain control over the direction and the entire production process, including the unrestricted commercial exploitation of their films. The signatories of the Oberhausen Manifesto launched an aggressive lobbying campaign of the West German government, which resulted in its most significant achievement: the formation in 1965 of the 'Kuratorium Junger Deutscher Film' (Board of Young German Film), an institution funded by the Federal Ministry of the Interior.  The Kuratorium was set up to provide interest-free loans for the first features of promising young directors. Government subsidies for German cinema began in 1955, as part of the struggle against American domination. At that time, the government gave quality ratings to films that provided producers with tax exemptions. The problem with this system, however, was that the government-appointed committee that gave the ratings seldom awarded them to films that were critical of the status quo or that drew attention to Germany's agonizing past. As a result, instead of promoting quality cinema, the ratings system created an environment that fostered mediocrity and conformity.  The Kuratorium was founded with an aim to stimulate 'a renewal of the German film' (19) and bring prestige back to the once proud tradition of Lang and Murnau. The new German film was to be free of the usual conventions of the industry, free of influence from commercial partners, and free of the control of interested parties. Kluge's \_Yesterday Girl\_ (\_Abschied von gestern\_, 1966), funded by the Kuratorium, won the Silver Lion at the Venice Film Festival, thus becoming the first film to win an international award after the inception of West Germany as a nation. It became the lightening rod for the numerous successful films produced by the Kuratorium in the subsequent years. 1966 was truly the year of breakthrough -- the \*annus mirabilis\* of the New German Cinema, as John Sandford called it. [3] The New German Cinema became a common staple on the international film circuit, winning numerous awards.  The funding of the Kuratorium by the Federal government did not go unopposed, however. The commercial film industry charged it with unfair competition. Although the Kuratorium continued to function, lobbyists from the film industry succeeded in bringing about a revision of government policy that was more favorable to the commercial film industry. In 1968, a new law was enacted, the 'Film Promotion Act' (FFG), which provided a levy on every cinema ticket sold in the FRG. This money was then transferred to film production. The commercial industry, making the same old formula films, reaped a financial bonanza. A great majority of films made in the early 1970s were sex films or Heimatfilms. In contrast to the Kuratorium's intent to fund the first features of non-established filmmakers, the new law strongly favored high-grossing commercial work. It became structurally impossible for young German filmmakers to obtain subsidies from the government. These young filmmakers turned to television stations like WDR to produce their films, which spawned an altogether new genre of Arbieterfilme (Worker films), focusing on the lives and the contemporary experiences of the working class. The popularity of the genre even attracted names like Fassbinder, who started a long collaboration with WDR. But the nature of the ad hoc contractual relationship made the situation rather arbitrary and tenuous. 'The Film and Television Agreement' (1974) between the government and television networks (ARD and ZDF) was promulgated to safeguard the Autoren film production. Under the new law, the networks set aside 34 million marks for film production for a period of four years, from 1974-78. The films produced in the 1970s with the help of this Agreement marked a full maturation -- that is, the transition of Young German Cinema, as it was known in its early period, to the New German Cinema. This is the period that gave the world some of the best-known films by Fassbinder, Herzog, and Wenders, including Fassbinder's \_Fear Eats the Soul\_(\_Angst essen Seele auf\_, 1973), which received the International Critics' Prize at the Cannes Film Festival in 1974, and Schlondorff's \_The Tin Drum\_ (\_Die Blechtrommel\_, 1979), which won the 1979 Academy Award for Best Foreign Film. The economic, social, and political circumstances in the Sixties and Seventies in West Germany cultivated the conditions for Autor cinema. The American critics emphasized the role of these directors, whose films displayed deeper affinities to Hollywood conventional cinema than the Autoren filmmakers like Kluge, Syberberg, or Straub and Huillet, whose films were regarded too abstract and experimental to become popular in America. Film critics like Andrew Sarris of \_The Village Voice\_ and Gerald Clarke of \_Time\_, at the height of New German Cinema's popularity in the mid-1970s, ignored the experience of the filmmakers' struggles with the institutional framework of production and thus failed to actively trace out the concept of the auteur within the New German Cinema, leading to a confusion of the definition of the term. The concept of Autor for the Kuratorium and for Kluge meant 'an individual defense against pressure from economic and social power structures'. [4] Equally important was the investment of the concept of Autor in the field of film academics and training. An important feature of the training at the Ulm film school (founded by Kluge and Edgar Reitz) was that students should not become specialists stuck in the \*culinary\* thinking of the film industry, but Autoren, 'who would differ from specialists in having a greater responsibility' and in conceiving film as a 'general medium of expression of intelligence and human experience'. [5] Both the French politique des auteur of the \_Cahiers du Cinema\_ and the German Autor theory are equally concerned with the domination of economic discourse in commercial film production, and they particularly cultivate the idea of the film being an extension of the director's creative personality, bestowing primacy to the author over the text. However, as Knight points out, there is an important distinction: the French auteur theory is applied \*retrospectively\* to the director's entire oeuvre, while the German Autor theory confers that status on the filmmaker both conceptually and institutionally \*before\* he or she has even made a first film. To that one must add another important distinction. Whereas the \_Cahiers\_ approach was concerned with the distinctiveness and instant recognizability of individual works, the Autoren stressed the primacy of thematic originality, the film as the vector of ideas. As Kluge had said, the idea of Autor was a programmatic principle, which was to be achieved not just by arguing for a particular relation of director to film, but by setting up new, legal, contractual, and institutional relations and special forms of training. It is the contention of most of the new German filmmakers that Hollywood films try to persuade the audience to give up their own experience and follow the more organized experience of the film. In Kluge's words, 'if the film is active, the spectator becomes passive'. [6] For Kluge the real cinema shapes in the viewer's head. It is the viewer's imagination that animates the screen with his own experience. In other words, Autor cinema mediates between the formal structure of the experience of its producer (in terms of the historical reality of the production process), and the imagination of the spectator, whose reception of it depends on the horizon of his expectation and experience. It no longer aims at distorting or colonizing the experience of the spectator, which the Hollywood imperialistic films have done so far. The problem is largely addressed in Wim Wenders's \_Kings of the Road\_ (\_Im Lauf der Zeit\_, 1976), which specifically deals with the colonizing of the German unconscious by American films.  Knight's criticism of Autorenkino is consistent with her feminist politics. The New German Cinema came under severe attack for undermining the role of women directors within the movement, especially by \_Frauen and Film\_, a feminist journal established by the filmmaker Helke Sander. Knight also tries to wrest the concept of Autorenkino -- the subsidizing of film as cultural property and recognizing the institutional power of director as auteur -- from Kluge and his colleagues (which she does not fully explore), and instead place it in the wider context of a national cultural movement to establish FRG as the sole legitimate heir of the authentic German culture in opposition to the culture of GDR. The political and cultural necessity that prompted the West German government to use the New German Cinema as its cultural ambassador to promote and export German culture, through its embassies and cultural organizations like the Goethe Institute, was not purely motivated by economic interests. It was mostly to establish its national identity abroad. Knight pursues this analysis and downplays the concept of Autorenkino formulated in the Oberhausen Manifesto and later explained by Kluge in a number of articles he wrote on this subject. Her objection extends over to the directors for commercially exploiting the term for their own publicity. In addition, Knight is critical of New German film directors' promotion of the cinema as an institution of self-representation and self-expression. The principle of Autorenkino, for Knight, goes beyond the process of subsidizing of film as culture and recognizing the filmmaker as an artist -- a process that came out of the Kuratorium and Kluge's lobbying work.  Knight provides a careful and detailed analysis of how the New German Cinema developed its own system of distribution and exhibition for its survival. The government subsidies from various institutions went to distribution and exhibition networks as well. It became quite apparent that funding of production itself wasn't sufficient to ensure its existence. In order to distribute their own films, a collective of thirteen filmmakers, including Fassbinder and Wenders, formed a distribution company in 1971, 'Filmverlag der Autoren' (Film Publishing House of the Auteurs), modeled on American-style distribution agencies. The early 1970s proved to be a financial disaster for German cinema at home, despite its international success. Popularity abroad simply didn't translate into commercial success at home. Knight provides some insightful facts and figures to corroborate this, but once again all the empirical data are derived from other sources. The unpopularity of the New German Cinema was attributed to its refusal to take the audience's need for entertainment seriously, to its noncommercial bent, and to its penchant for ambiguous narrative structure -- what David Bordwell calls 'art cinema'. It didn't take the spectator into the equation and produced films that the audience found intellectually too challenging, too abstract, and boring. A number of opinion polls taken in the early seventies revealed that, as Elsaesser notes, 'the audiences who had seen films by Young German filmmakers were unable to name common characteristics or identify what the label stood for. But not only was there no brand recognition, many spectators felt 'irritated' or 'annoyed' by the films' flippancy and lack of seriousness. The elliptical story-telling made them feel 'intellectually inferior'.' [7] The anti-establishment nature of many of these films didn't curry much favor with American distribution companies, who preferred the standard fare of Hollywood-type films. Thus the search for a German audience became inevitable. You can't have a national cinema without a national audience. To address this crisis, to quell the hostility of German critics who were gleefully writing its obituaries almost since its inception, the New German Cinema shifted its emphasis from Autoren cinema to a cinema of audience, taking a decisive turn toward more narrative-oriented cinema. This decision was crystallized in the Hamburg Manifesto in 1979, signed by 60 directors, declaring its solidarity with the spectator, conceding the authority from the Autor to the spectator.  The very existence of New German Cinema was based on a radical displacement of the old hegemonic order of images that severely undermined the participation of the viewer in his/her capacity to become a meaningful interlocutor in the cultural discourse of nation, its politics and representation. For once the image on the screen was not supposed to control us, make us stupefied and mute, but this new experience that the modern directors of the German films were supposed to usher in was a uniquely distracted image of a new era of political struggle.  In chapter 2, Knight demonstrates how the politics of race, gender, class, and identity -- with specific 'textual analysis' of individual films -- became the major themes in the New German Cinema. The 'contemporary relevance' of the New German Cinema, asserts Knight, lies in its 'counter-representation' of the social and political issues that were largely ignored by the films of the 1950s (48). For instance, racial prejudice and intolerance, a growing concern with American cultural imperialism, confrontation with the Nazi past, the spread of violence and terrorism in the 1970s, and the influence of the student and women's movements became the fundamental tenets on which the critique of West German society was formulated in the public sphere through these films. But was the criticism a result of self-guilt, a torment of the repressed past, or was it a revisionist response to re-present history in order to take hold of one's own story from the clutches of an institution like Hollywood and tell it from a multiple rather than a homogeneous perspective? Many stories as opposed to one story became the maxim of remembering, of memory in the New German Cinema. Perhaps this is best illustrated by one of Kluge's characters, Gabi Teichert, who comments in \_The Patriot\_ (\_Die Patriotin\_, 1977-79) -- in what could be a statement of Kluge's own project -- 'What else is the history of a country but the vastest narrative surface of all? Not one story but many stories'. How can one speak of German history, especially contemporary German history (pre-unification Germany) without saying a word about the Gastarbeiter? The theme of latent racism in West German society appeared in numerous films of the New German Cinema as a strong reminder of its continuing Nazi legacy. Knight discusses two of those films -- \_Fear Eats the Soul\_ by Fassbinder and \_Shirin's Wedding\_ (\_Shirins Hochzeit\_, 1975) by Helma Sanders-Brahms -- both explicitly engaged with the plight of the Gastarbeiter in West Germany after reconstruction. The term Gastarbeiter was applied to immigrant workers, mostly from Turkey, who came to assist in West German reconstruction during the 1950s and afterward settled down, but were never recognized by the German society as its own. Both Fassbinder and Sanders-Brahms had quite successfully treated this subject matter in earlier films. Fassbinder's \_Fear Eats the Soul\_ is, however, not only one of his best films, but also his most internationally well known. Sanders-Brahms's \_Shirin's Wedding\_, on the other hand, is a relatively unknown film about a Turkish woman's tragic saga in West Germany. Both films are supposed to critique the racist mentality of the West German populace, and thus, according to Knight, they are less concerned with the actual experience of the Gastarbeiter and more with the country's own guilt. Knight gives broad outlines of the plot developments of the films -- with some recycled comments on the strategies of mise-en-scene, along with the customary reference to cinematic homage to Douglas Sirk -- but in terms of providing a serious analysis, the writing doesn't venture beyond the implications of cross-cultural conflict and its detrimental effect on 'the country's image as a new political democracy' (53).  The theme of remembering and mourning Germany's recent past, the intertwining of the public and the private, became a preoccupation in the films of some of the New German Cinema directors after the events of 1977, which rattled the whole country. In a section called 'The Violence of Politics' Knight provides a lucid account of the historical background of the period, ranging from the student protest movements in 1960s to a growing opposition to Vietnam War and American foreign policy; the disaffection with the Leftist SPD for joining the conservative Christian Democratic party (CDU) in the Great Coalition, with Kurt Georg Kiesinger, a former Nazi, as its Chancellor; the rising incidents of terrorism sponsored by Baader-Meinhoff's Red Army Faction (RAF); the hijacking of a Lufthansa plane to Mogadishu, Somalia, and the subsequent storming of the plane by an antiterrorist squad that killed all the terrorists along with a score of the hijacked passengers, followed by the suicides/murders of Andreas Baader, Gudrun Ensslin, and Carl Raspe, all members of RAF in the maximum security prison in Stammheim the next day; and the kidnapping and slaying of the ex-SS member Hanns-Martin Schleyer, chairman of Mercedes Benz, in retaliation by the terrorists in the autumn of 1977. But the tendency to treat film criticism as little more than glorified plot description persists unimpeded throughout the book. In her subsequent analyses of the portrayal of increasing terrorist violence and the repressive measures of the West German government to counter terrorist attacks -- in such films as \_The Lost Honour of Katharina Blum\_ (\_Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum\_, 1975) by Margaretha von Trotta and Volker Schlondorff, and \_Germany in Autumn\_ (\_Deutschland im Herbst\_,1978), a collective film, directed by Kluge, Fassbinder, Schlondorff, and others -- Knight once again indulges in cryptic synopses of the films with limited critical commentary. \_The Lost Honour of Katharina Blum\_, based upon Heinrich Boll's quasi-autobiographical novel of the same title, is a film about a woman whose life is ruined by the police and the media because of her accidental meeting with a terrorist suspect. Although Boll wrote the novel in response to the way the West German popular media hounded him after he wrote a sympathetic article on the trial of Baader-Meinhoff, the film touched a raw nerve with the public and became an instant success. \_Germany in Autumn\_, on the other hand, dealt with the issue of terrorism in a variety of different forms. It consists of many episodes, each reflecting a particular stance, and together constituting a collective work of mourning. Its interweaving of real and documentary footage with fictional material gives it a highly elliptical and experimental character, which obviously wasn't accessible to the general public when it was released. As a result, it failed at the box office. Nonetheless, it remained an important contribution to the discourse of memory and mourning in the New German Cinema. Knight provides a paragraph each on various filmmakers' individual contributions but she fails to acknowledge Kluge's fingerprints on its formal structure and organization. Knight explores the necessity and obligation to remember in New German Cinema under the heading 'Remembering the Past'. After a prolonged and uncomfortable silence, the new generation of postwar filmmakers felt that they needed to ask questions about their parents' past, and they also needed to distance themselves from that past in order to tell their own stories without being subjected to a contaminated history. But to do so, they had to go back to that which they had not yet confronted. Two factors contributed to this crucial turn toward memory and history in West German society: first, the events of 1977, already alluded to above, and second, the immense popularity of an eight-hour American television series, \_Holocaust\_, that was shown on West German television in 1979. The telecast of \_Holocaust\_, a fictional film starring Meryl Streep and James Wood, was watched, as Knight informs us, by more than 50 percent of the adult population in West Germany, and caused a cathartic outburst of emotional response amongst the population. For once the taboo was lifted and thousands came forward with their recollections of the Nazi crimes and collaborations in public and private. \_Holocaust\_ also caused much consternation among the German intelligentsia, which viewed the series as a trivialization and cheap commodification of the Holocaust. Many articles were written about how Germany should be represented in history, but the most memorable response to this Hollywood production came out in Reitz's sixteen-hour, two-part television series \_Heimat\_. Both Reitz's \_Heimat\_ and Helma Sanders-Brahms's \_Germany, Pale Mother\_ (\_Deutschland, bleiche Mutter\_, 1979-80) -- two films that Knight analyzes -- are 'semi-autobiographical' and set in the Nazi era, but the crucial absence of the Holocaust in these films is extremely disturbing, to say the least. In Sanders-Brahms's film, the historical reality of the Nazi period is suppressed in favor of the experience of the everyday reality of the German people, whose lives were largely untouched by the political events of that period. In Reitz's \_Heimat\_, a prolonged work of mourning, there is not even a single image of Jewish suffering, and no mourning for Auschwitz. Although Knight finds this crucial absence 'incredible' and rightly chastises both films for 'avoiding any exploration for who should bear the responsibility for the Nazi atrocities' (72), she never really questions the premise of these films. Instead, she admires their authenticity in depicting the other side of the story that has been largely eclipsed by the centrality of the Holocaust in determining the German national identity. The attempts to rewrite history in the New German Cinema reveal an increasing reliance on the testimonials of the participants from the perspective of the Third Reich, and despite their ironic and critical stance, these works can still be seen as an effort to assimilate the unique status of the Holocaust into a larger catastrophe that somehow undermines the necessity of remembering (Eingedenken), the specific Jewish form of remembering history. The apologetic tendency in \_Heimat\_ and \_Germany, Pale Mother\_ comes extremely close to echoing the revisionist sentiments of the new historians that Habermas critiqued in the famous Historian's debate (Historiker-Streit). Her readings of both the films are highly indebted to Kaes's thoughtful and provocative analyses in his book, \_From Hitler to Heimat\_, [8] and a closer look into Eric Santner's \_Stranded Objects\_ [9] would have provided a more enlightening approach to the treatment of the (lack of) Holocaust in Reitz's \_Heimat\_. In another section of the same chapter, Knight maneuvers through the charted region of American imperialism in an impressive manner. She comments on the changes in attitudes toward America in the seventies, when the postwar generation started to feel more and more uncomfortable with the presence of America in Germany. On the one hand, its own past was too repugnant to turn to, but the presence of the American culture industry was a sore reminder of Germany's lack of national identity. Thus a desire to obliterate and expunge a historical legacy through assimilation to another culture became a way of everyday life for the new generation. The immersion in American culture produced a love/hate relationship among the West German youth. Against this background of American hegemony, the New German Filmmakers looked for an alternative network of production, distribution, and exhibition possibilities to create their own identity, which was more palatable to the German people. But the relationship between German filmmakers and Hollywood films was more ambivalent than one simply of antagonism, as is quite evident in the films of Fassbinder and Wenders. Knight uses Wenders's \_The American Friend\_ (\_Der amerikanische Freund\_, 1977), based on Patricia Highsmith's novel \_Ripley's Game\_, to demonstrate this feeling of love/hate, this ambivalence, of Germans toward Americans. The character of Jonathan in the film is both fascinated and repelled by the American Ripley, who symbolically stands for the presence of the United States in West Germany. The basic premise of Knight's review can be traced back to Timothy Corrigan's excellent book, \_New German Film: The Displaced Image\_. [10] Knight further explores the question of 'ambivalence' in Herzog's \_Stroszek\_ (1976), which is a dire indictment of the American dream and an illustration of the victimization of German immigrants in a soulless consumer society. One wonders what caused her to select \_Stroszek\_ to stress the notion of 'ambivalence', when there is obviously none. The chapter ends with feminist film criticism in West Germany, which was closely aligned with the 1970s literary movement known as the 'New Subjectivity', which proclaimed that 'Personal is Political'. Knight's previous book, \_Women and the New German Cinema\_, written more than a decade ago, was an attempt to unmask the myth of the New German Cinema as a movement of extraordinarily talented (male) filmmakers. She called it the divided history of the New German Cinema, an allusion to Rentschler's earlier formulation, the contested ground between 'the male mainstream and extremely active feminist film culture'. [11] That book drew attention to the glaring absence of the works of women filmmakers in the academic discourse of the New German Cinema. The 'invisibility' of the women filmmakers is no longer the concern of this book, because here the feminist filmmakers and their films are already accorded the same legitimation and weight as their male counterparts. No longer are Juta Bruckner, Ulrike Ottinger, Helke Sander, Helma Sanders-Brahms, Monika Treut, and Dorris Dorrie -- who directed \_Men\_ (\_Manner\_, 1986) one of the most successful films in West German history -- merely treated as marginalized, peripheral directors; their contributions are set alongside the celebrated male 'star' directors we all know. But I must also add that Knight herself accords scant attention to some of the other marginalized directors, such as Werner Schroeter, Werner Nekes, Rosa von Praunheim, Herbert Achternbusch, and Harun Farocki, although to her credit she does mention Turkish immigrant director Tevfik Baser. There is also not a word on what is now known as Post-Wall Cinema, the inheritors of the New German Cinema according to some leading scholars in the field.  Today the New German Cinema no longer exists. It is too early to speculate on the causes of its demise (for many think it does exist, at least in spirit), but a few factors can always be mentioned: the loss of Fassbinder in 1982; Herzog's marginal presence in world cinema after his last important film, \_Where The Green Ants Dream\_ (1983/4), made in Australia with international financing; and Wenders's unquenchable Wanderlust. All these factors -- including Schlondorff's increasing visibility in the Hollywood scene, the shunning of Syberberg by the international film community for mythifying Fascism, and last but not least, Kluge's own departure from film to television as an alternative public sphere -- have had a devastating impact. Although a few individuals like Wolfgang Petersen, Roland Emmerich, and Tom Tyker, have become Hollywood directors, the condition of Post-Wall Cinema has not made an impact so far in the global world.  Knight's concluding chapter is devoted to examining the material causes that might have contributed to the possible demise of the New German Cinema. The specific historical circumstances of the 1960s, which brought it into existence and gave it a 'distinct' character, no longer applied to the historical and material conditions of the 1980s. The conservative Christian Democratic Party came into power in 1982 and the ultra- conservative Interior Minister Fredrick Zimmerman withdrew state funding on the grounds that New German Cinema was no longer a financially viable option for the Christian Democratic Party (CDU) and started to subsidize 'entertainment'-oriented Hollywood-type projects. Television also played a crucial role in its demise. Ironically, the television that resuscitated the New German Cinema from its financial ruination and became its 'patron saint' also created the material conditions that eventually destroyed its financial and artistic autonomy. With the increase in terrorist activities in the seventies, the political climate in West Germany radically changed and political and economic censorship was widely exercised by the right wing CDU/CSU alliance. \_The Candidate\_ (\_Der Kandidat\_, 1980), another collaborative film by Kluge, Schlondorff, and others, this time about a right-wing politician, Hans Josef Strauss -- and which received Adorno's blessings -- was 'blacklisted' by the ruling party. The state subsidy policy changed toward commercially oriented cinema. But worst of all, Knight tells us (I am sure not without a great deal of pleasure) 'the concept of the Autor, so central to the identity of the New German Cinema, diminished in importance' (104). In the end, the most glaring omission in Knight's book is its almost total neglect of philosophy. Knight obviously cannot go into deep philosophical issues surrounding the works of a Kluge or a Fassbinder, but, nonetheless, her critique of individual films (what she terms \*textual analysis\*) is anemic and lackluster. This disengagement is most egregious in relation to Kluge's films. Not once does she address the role of The Frankfurt School, which is really surprising given the huge volume of articles and books that exists in this field. This is the only book on the New German Cinema that I have read that doesn't engage these philosophers -- not one mention of Adorno and Benjamin, while Habermas's name appears only once in passing at a very late stage. On top of that, her failure to even once mention Miriam Hansen's contribution to bringing the discourse of the New German Cinema to academia is mind-boggling. [New York University](http://www.nyu.edu/)New York, USA  Notes 1. John E. Davidson, \_Deterritorializing The New German Cinema\_ (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999). 2. Richard W. McCormick, \_Politics of the Self: Feminism and the Postmodern in West German Literature and Film\_ (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991). 3. John Sandford, \_The New German Cinema\_ (New York: De Capo Press, 1994), p. 13. 4. Cited by Sheila Johnston, 'The Author as Public Institution: The 'New' Cinema in the Federal Republic of Germany', \_Screen Education\_, nos. 32/33, Autumn-Winter 1979/80, p. 73. 5. Ibid., pp. 72-73. 6. Jan Dawson, 'Alexander Kluge', \_Film Comment\_, Nov-Dec 1974, p. 54.  7. Thomas Elsaesser, \_New German Cinema: A History\_ (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1989), p. 26. 8. Anton Kaes, \_From Hitler to Heimat: The Return of History of History as Film\_ (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989). 9. Eric L. Santner, \_Stranded Objects: Mourning, Memory, and Film in Postwar Germany\_ (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), pp. 57-102. 10. Timothy Corrigan, \_New German Film: The Displaced Image\_ (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983). 11. Knight, \_Women and the New German Cinema\_ (London: Verso, 1992), p. 42.   Copyright © Film-Philosophy 2005 Amresh Sinha, 'Same Old New German Cinema: Julia Knight's \_New German Cinema: Images of a Generation\_', \_Film-Philosophy\_, vol. 9 no. 15, March 2005 <http://www.film-philosophy.com/vol9-2005/n15sinha>. |