

# The Other Planet Fassbinder

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I

*It is impossible to talk about the meaning of life without using the wrong words. Imprecise words. But these are the only words we have. So let's start!*

These were the words with which Rainer Werner Fassbinder began a conversation in late June 1977 with author and dramaturg Horst Laube,<sup>1</sup> a kindred spirit from his Frankfurt days. The interview was to serve as a companion piece to an edition of plays published under the title of *Theaterbuch 1* the following year.<sup>2</sup> The two met in the breakfast room of the Schweizerhof Hotel in Berlin, where Fassbinder was staying while he served on the jury of the 27th Berlin International Film Festival. It was relatively early – six in the morning – but at eight Fassbinder had to view the first film in the festival's competition section, and he had risen a bit earlier to have sufficient time for the interview. The festival's new director, Wolf Donner,<sup>3</sup> had put together a promising program for the year's competition, including not only several New German Cinema films, but the first Russian entry.<sup>4</sup> A sense of renewal was in the air. In the area of foreign policy, the Federal Republic of Germany was pursuing a policy of rapprochement with the German Democratic Republic and the Soviet Union. It was only inside the country that there were rumblings of unrest. The first generation of the Red Army Faction (RAF)<sup>5</sup> – Andreas Baader, Gudrun Ensslin, Jan Carl-Raspé, Holger Meins, and Ulrike Meinhof – had thrown the country into a state of alarm with their leaflets, banks robberies, and targeted attacks. After their arrest in spring 1972, preparations were made for the most spectacular criminal trial in postwar German history – the Stammheim trial.<sup>6</sup> The proceedings finally got underway in January 1976 after an initial ten-month period in which evidence was heard and numerous motions were filed charging

procedural irregularities and court bias. In the meantime, second-generation RAF members who were still at large had launched additional attacks and kidnapped figures that represented the state. In April 1975, six RAF terrorists took hostages in the West German embassy in Stockholm, demanding the release of their imprisoned RAF leaders. After they shot two diplomats and a mistakenly detonated bomb set the entire embassy building on fire, the cycle of violence escalated: in the following years there were murders and dead on both sides. A period of agitation and hysteria began in the Federal Republic of Germany: the *bleierne Zeit*, or “leaden times.” The great majority of the German population had no real understanding of the RAF’s aims, but they also feared the state, which was tightening restrictions on the democratic order and making every individual feel its own uncertainty. The state used the climate of fear to suggest to the public that it had to be protected from an even greater threat, using every means possible. Anyone suspected in any way of condoning or supporting the anarchists’ and terrorists’ goals – and of damaging democracy and the state – was branded a “sympathizer.” What democracy was and how it was to be defined was determined by those in power. The aims of the ’68ers – often lumped together with those of the RAF – were increasingly marginalized and described using erroneous labels such as “left-wing fascism.”<sup>7</sup> The boundaries between enemy, sympathizer, and those committed to learning the truth became more and more blurred.

This was also true in the much-needed debate on the causes and consequences of the Holocaust – and on the fact that Nazi criminals were serving as decision-makers in public office. Anyone who wanted to discuss these issues was muzzled or placed under surveillance by the authorities. Any prominent person, intellectual, poet, philosopher, or artist who held left-wing political views brought suspicion upon themselves – above all the author Heinrich Böll.<sup>8</sup> In his books and writings, Böll described the causes of the German war crimes, their suppression, as well as their effects on present-day life in the Federal Republic of Germany. As early as 1972, Böll caused a domestic scandal when he appealed for fair treatment of RAF members in an essay entitled “Does Ulrike Want Mercy or Safe Conduct?” (“Will Ulrike Gnade oder freies Geleit?”). He also used the article to examine Ulrike Meinhof’s character and development. Afterward Böll was decried as an “intellectual sympathizer” with terrorism, especially in conservative circles. Böll also showed an interest in these themes in his stirring 1974 novel *The Lost Honor of Katharina Blum, Or: How Violence Develops and Where It Can Lead*.<sup>9</sup> Böll’s comments in the preface are typical: “The characters and plot of this narrative are fictitious. If the portrayal of certain journalistic practices bears similarities with the practices of the *Bild-Zeitung*,<sup>10</sup> these similarities are neither intentional nor accidental, but inevitable.” In expedited proceedings, the German government quickly passed a series of laws that challenged the principles of the democratic legal system.<sup>11</sup> *Radikalenerlass* (Anti-Radical Decree)<sup>12</sup> and *Rasterfahndung* (dragnet investigation)<sup>13</sup> were among the words I learned in my youth. And what I will never forget are the television surveys in which people were asked their views on both the Stammheim

trials and the RAF prisoners and advised: “Do them in,” “gas them,” “gun them down on the run,” or “throw them over the Wall” (into East Germany). Thirty years after the end of the Second World War, in the wild, constantly changing, and culturally exciting 1970s, in a period marked by increasing social progressiveness, the Federal Republic of Germany was still not at peace.

## II

*If there is anything, then there is movement. See? And things evolved in such a way that at some point a solar system emerged that now no longer moves because it moves in a regulated way. If it is to be set in motion again, there has to be something that destroys something else. That is the reason why people were created.*

(Rainer Werner Fassbinder, 1977)

Horst Laube had turned on his tape recorder. He was listening intently to Fassbinder talk about the background to his play *Garbage, the City, and Death* and its origins while he served as artistic director of the Theater am Turm during the 1974–75 season.<sup>14</sup> And above all about the “scandal” unleashed by the play after distribution began of the first edition in spring 1976.<sup>15</sup> Since that time and until it was officially premiered in Germany in 2009, no other postwar German play had provoked this type of debate, a debate whose causes had nothing to do with Fassbinder.<sup>16</sup> On the contrary: they were linked to a fundamental German problem – in particular, to the relationship between Germans and Jews in the Federal Republic of Germany. Thirty-three years after the end of the Second World War, there had evidently been no real reconciliation between these groups. Otherwise a fictional Jewish character in a theater play – portrayed on the same level as a Nazi murderer and criminal, yet identifiable as a metaphor – would not have provoked such a heated response from respected feuilleton reviewers. An important point: during the original conflict in 1976 – that is, while Fassbinder was still alive – those attacking him were not Jews, but conservative voices in the country who did not want a debate on Germany’s past or the relationship between Germans and Jews. And they had a simple reason: questions demand answers – and trigger additional questions. Fassbinder was paraded about as an anti-Semite so that the anti-Semitism that existed among many members of the population could go unexamined.

In his play Fassbinder, as author, portrays a character called the “Rich Jew” – a real estate speculator – with all his strengths and weaknesses. He is not a one-sided figure who is only “good” or only “bad.” An artist and author who really has something to say will always engage with the society and time in which he lives: Fassbinder took a close look at the world and recognized what was happening around him. It was impossible to disregard the wounds inflicted on German cities by the war and the subsequent reconstruction efforts with all their eyesores, especially in Frankfurt. The Jewish residents and building owners in Frankfurt’s

Westend district, which had been laid out as a stately residential area in the nineteenth century, had been expelled during the Second World War, murdered in the extermination camps, and dispossessed of their property by the Nazis. As is completely understandable, the majority of Holocaust survivors and their descendants no longer wished to live in Frankfurt. After protracted restitution proceedings, the Rothschild family, for example, sold three-quarters of its real estate holdings to the city of Frankfurt and the rest to an insurance and trading company. This company tore down the old buildings and built high-rise complexes, which led to a run on the surrounding properties and to rampant real estate speculation. Compounding the problem was the extensive damage done by bombs, the rubble of the war and the postwar periods, as well as the need to close gaps in the urban landscape. The small size of the city center, which included Westend and the adjoining train station neighborhood, made these vacant lots highly desirable for banks. The city of Frankfurt took an interest in these developments since, with its growing financial center, it aimed to become a substitute capital of the country. Encouraged by these developments, the owners of the adjacent buildings did everything in their power to get rid of their tenants, since they paid relatively low rents for apartments in spacious nineteenth-century buildings. After the vast damage caused by the air attacks of the Second World War and the horrors of the Holocaust, another wave of destruction hit Frankfurt. On many of the fences that went up around vacant lots passers-by could read graffiti in large letters: "Jews are speculating here, and the city is protecting them." But the fact was that the real estate speculators who were plying their trade with a shallow awareness of history came from all faiths, and they were all supported by the Frankfurt building authority under Mayor Rudi Arndt (known as "dynamite Rudi" to his opponents). The result was violent street battles and squatters occupying the buildings.

Fassbinder's play deals with the first battle over buildings in Frankfurt and the background to this struggle.<sup>17</sup> This is made clear by stage directions on the first page: "On the moon, because it is just as uninhabitable as the earth, especially the cities." The dialogues are explosive – there is no denying that. And they can be read as anti-Semitic. But the words that Fassbinder, as author, puts into his characters' mouths do not reflect his own views. Many reviewers have been unable or unwilling to make this distinction. A heated discussion was begun by Joachim Fest,<sup>18</sup> who accused Fassbinder of being a "left-wing fascist."<sup>19</sup> All the critics who put pen to paper after Joachim Fest cited his article in the *FAZ* newspaper as the main source of a chain of evidence demonstrating (or better: attempting to demonstrate) Fassbinder's anti-Semitism.<sup>20</sup> Suddenly Fassbinder's play, based on the structure of Greek tragedy, was accorded its own reality and point of view. Writers in German feuilletons raced to offer their personal interpretations, which could be categorized according to whether they viewed the play from a "right-wing" or "left-wing" interpretative angle.

The misuse of the term "left-wing fascist" with respect to Fassbinder appeared in an article in *Die Zeit* entitled "Fassbinder, a Left-Wing Fascist? A Poet and a

Thinker Disgraces Himself” (“Fassbinder, ein linker Faschist? Ein Dichter und ein Denker blamieren sich”).<sup>21</sup> According to this journalist, although the work was a “protest drama” that went on a “poetic rampage,” it was not left-wing literature by a long shot. Other writers – even Joachim Fest himself – argued that the play’s contents reflected political conditions in Frankfurt in the early 1970s. To defuse the situation, Frankfurt publisher Siegfried Unseld recalled the edition of plays, entitled *Rainer Werner Fassbinder Stücke 3*, and asked Fassbinder to write a counter-statement, promising him that his work would be redistributed to stores once the matter had quieted down. Although Fassbinder issued this counter-statement, the publishing house never made good on its promise but pulped the entire run.<sup>22</sup> The actual issue – i.e., the question of whether anti-Semitism had existed or continued to exist in Germany – was no longer addressed. Worse still, the discussion that conservative forces in politics and the arts feared, a discussion that they believed could derail the normalization process or expose its weaknesses, was never conducted.<sup>23</sup> This increased Fassbinder’s fears of a new fascism in Germany, and until his death he felt profound grief that he had been so misunderstood. Noteworthy is that, in the surveys inspired by Fassbinder’s play, eighty percent of those questioned said that anti-Semitism still existed in the West German population.<sup>24</sup>

When Fassbinder was asked whether he, as author, had been too biased in the way he approached the topic, he answered in the negative, saying that he viewed the character of the Rich Jew in an absolutely positive light. The Rich Jew, he explained, was the only character in the entire play capable of love. Fassbinder also emphasized that his work was a stage play and that playwrights had to be given the chance to explore an issue using risky, even questionable methods: “Otherwise, you’ll just end up with the same dead stuff like everything else on the German theatrical scene.” He added: “The play shows disregard for certain safety precautions .... I have to be able to react to reality without regard for the consequences. If I can’t do that, I can’t really do anything anymore.”<sup>25</sup> If we examine the collected articles and essays that have appeared over the years – particularly the texts that contain heated responses to the renewed attempts to premiere the play in Germany – it becomes evident that, apart from the question of whether the work is to be judged as brilliantly or poorly written (which is indeed addressed by the writers), it was simply premature for 1976. A play in which the main character is a German-Jewish construction magnate called the Rich Jew by its author – such a play was a provocation. At this point neither Jews nor Germans had managed to fully understand historical processes. Traumatized emotions were also involved, since both perpetrators and victims of the Holocaust were still alive.

Nevertheless, Joachim Fest pursued surrounding political issues, claiming that “No matter what form fascism has taken up to now, it has always been free of anti-Semitic feeling. It was only the Soviet Union’s policies toward the Israeli state, which coldly mobilized anti-Semitic sentiment, that spread the idea in the left-wing scene in West Germany that anti-Semitism was an element of the world revolution and had nothing to do with the hatred of Jews in the Third Reich.” He

also explained his “evidence” in greater detail: these developments gave left-wing anti-Semites an easy conscience, which, as he wrote, was proof of a “genuine left-wing fascism.” Although this chain of evidence is absurd, it more or less reflected the arguments mustered by the well-educated conservative camp in the West German population in the 1970s. As co-editor of the *FAZ* (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, a powerful newspaper), Joachim Fest had the power to engage in polemical attacks based on misinterpretation. And the person who bore the brunt of the attack was finished forever. Although this was not entirely true in the case of Fassbinder, Rainer was deeply wounded. He participated in an additional conversation at Westdeutscher Rundfunk (WDR), a German public broadcast station, but never discussed the matter afterward. On a number of occasions he hinted that he wanted to go abroad or take up residence there, and he ultimately did so in late 1976, renting a small house at 6 Rue Cortod in Montmartre, Paris. It was no longer of interest to anyone in Germany that Daniel Schmid’s film *Shadow of Angels*,<sup>26</sup> adapted from Fassbinder’s play *Garbage, the City, and Death*, premiered in Cannes in 1976 and ran in movie houses in Paris and New York. Nor was it of interest that, in 1978, the Schauspielhaus theater in Frankfurt once again attempted to put *Garbage, the City, and Death* on its program as one of a combination of two independent productions by Brecht’s student Peter Palitzsch.<sup>27</sup> The second play was Shakespeare’s *Othello*, with Fassbinder playing Iago. This plan never came to fruition, however, since Fassbinder withdrew from the Shakespeare production. While I was editing the film *In a Year with 13 Moons*, which had been shot in Frankfurt, Rainer rehearsed his role every day, but it turned out that his interpretation of Iago as a “lustful wire-puller and rogue” was incompatible with the director’s. He asked to be released from his commitment, which evidently dampened Palitzsch’s interest in the idea of combined productions.

The next official attempt to stage the play was undertaken under the direction of Ulrich Schwab at the Alte Oper in Frankfurt in 1984 and it failed at an advanced stage. One year earlier, in 1983, Schwab had spoken with representatives of the Jewish community in Frankfurt, chaired by Ignatz Bubis,<sup>28</sup> and held out the prospect of allowing the Jewish community to use the opera house for its events if it would agree to the premiere. As is understandable, the Jewish community did not wish to get involved in this kind of “deal.” An additional difficulty was that Schwab had already signed contracts with the planned directorial team and actors without consulting the Alte Oper’s board, even though he intended to use the opera’s stage for the play. As general director, he felt this option was open to him, but the board disagreed. A substitute space was found – the subway station under construction in front of the Alte Oper in Frankfurt – but there were objections for safety reasons. We were given the chance to view the closed station, and I still remember the concept developed for the space by dramaturg Heiner Müller,<sup>29</sup> the director, and also the actor Volker Spengler, who was chosen to play Franz B. in the play.<sup>30</sup> It would have been the ideal site for the premiere, brilliantly meeting the staging requirements for the first scene: “On the moon, because it is just as uninhabitable

as the earth, especially the cities ....”The new artistic director of the Schauspielhaus theater in Frankfurt, Günther Rühle,<sup>31</sup> presented his program one year later and once again announced the premiere of Fassbinder’s drama. From that point on, the protests and debates – the loud “fors” and “againsts” – went down as the “Fassbinder scandal” in German cultural and theatrical history. But it is important to note that it was not until 1985 that protest came from the Jewish population in Frankfurt and even later from Jews in other cities. Writing about the play, the Jewish community in Frankfurt explained: “Because of [the play’s] anti-Semitic tendencies, the board of directors of the Jewish community feels it strains efforts to come to grips with the period of National Socialism. The disparaging image of the ‘rich Jew’ in Fassbinder’s play exhibits traits familiar from *Der Stürmer* and is an insult to the Jews living in Frankfurt.”<sup>32</sup> The occupation of the stage during the play’s first dress rehearsal was “coordinated” by Hilmar Hoffmann, head of Frankfurt’s cultural affairs department,<sup>33</sup> and Michael Friedman, chairman of the cultural committee of the Jewish community.<sup>34</sup> Consideration was shown to the community’s conservative members. In order to ensure a large turnout for the sit-in, the Jewish community gave its members additional tickets that it had printed for the dress rehearsal set to take place on December 14, 1985.<sup>35</sup> Fassbinder’s play evidently served to unify and strengthen the Jewish community, which had previously acted cautiously in dealings with the outside world and was internally divided over many important issues.

A few months earlier, when Ronald Reagan had paid his first visit to the country to mark the fortieth anniversary on May 8, 1985, of Germany’s capitulation, Jewish citizens had voiced little criticism, despite the fact that his visit to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp was combined with a stop at a military cemetery in Bitburg, Germany, where members of the Waffen SS were also buried. Nor had they raised their voices when Helmut Kohl<sup>36</sup> spoke of the “mercy of late birth” that his and younger generations enjoyed, making it sound as if there was a sort of “expiration date” for the crimes of National Socialism. This was nearly fifteen years after Willy Brandt had knelt down in front of the memorial to the Warsaw ghetto uprising.<sup>37</sup> The conciliatory gesture that Chancellor Kohl had planned for the victorious powers was provocative and highly naive, and not at all compensated for by the preceding visit to Bergen-Belsen. The visits to both sites were intended to signal reconciliation between the former war opponents, but the dead in the military cemetery (including fallen members of the Waffen SS) could not be treated in the same manner as Holocaust victims. Kohl’s affront angered the open-minded members of the German population, but it did not lead to major protests on the part of the Jewish community. To this day I doubt that Fassbinder’s play could ever have caused the same offense as the Christian Democrat government had given under Chancellor Helmut Kohl.

But let me return to the Fassbinder scandal: the official premiere of *Garbage, the City, and Death* did not take place until May 2009, at Theater an der Ruhr in Mülheim. The play was produced together with other dramas by Fassbinder in a

program entitled *FASSBINDER*. By contrast, there have been twenty productions outside Germany since 1987, the most recent being the play's Irish premiere in 2010 at the Smock Alley Theatre, established in 1662. The sense of release brought by the German premiere in Mühlheim an der Ruhr has given people a new perspective on the conflict in Germany. This is a positive development in a rapidly changing world that currently has yet other taboos to deal with.

### III

*The plan of the powerful was not made by the powerful. It is a result of our causal thinking, which always aims to establish value systems and promote meaning. All of history and all mythologies are the result of these planned causal chains. If we now destroy the various planets in the system, the regulated forces will no longer be in harmony and everything will collapse.*

(Rainer Werner Fassbinder, 1977)

But let me return to the events that led to the above reflections: in May 1974 Fassbinder arrived in Frankfurt am Main and staged *The Irrational Are Dying Out*, a new play by Peter Handke, at the Schauspiel theater. The literary adaptation *Effi Briest* had already been completed, and Fassbinder continued shooting *Fox and His Friends*. Shooting had in fact begun in 1972, but was interrupted when the main actor, Wolfgang Schenck, suffered a heart attack; it was taken up again in autumn 1973. The film premiered at the Berlinale in June. But the most important piece of news was this: Fassbinder had accepted an offer from the city of Frankfurt to take over the artistic direction and co-management of the Theater am Turm (TAT) in the 1974/75 season.<sup>38</sup> He would continue the model of *Mitbestimmung* (collective decision-making) that had been introduced at both of Frankfurt's municipal theaters in 1970.<sup>39</sup> He had also accepted the meager monthly salary of 3000 DM (or around \$1100) that everyone in the ensemble was paid. However, Fassbinder had set one condition: he wanted to bring his *antiteater* group along with him, as well as the new stars of his most recent film and television productions.<sup>40</sup> Hilmar Hoffmann, head of the cultural affairs department in Frankfurt, had pulled off a coup. Describing the first press conference, Hoffmann writes: "As was customary in Frankfurt, every new artistic director first underwent a public inquisition. ... Fassbinder played along on the condition that I was always present in order to cover the 'cultural policy shit' .... He answered one question about the program ironically, muttering 'group psychology' .... When a female journalist tried to show off her knowledge as a theater expert, asking a slew of questions, Fassbinder said ... 'You may know something about f--ing ... but you know nothing about theater' .... This was followed by an astonished silence and, after a moment, a storm of indignation [was directed] against the head of the cultural affairs



department, who had allowed ‘someone like that’ to represent the moral institution of theater.” Hoffmann tried to placate tempers by citing Fassbinder’s genius status, saying this lapse should not carry as much weight as would be the case “with ordinary people.”<sup>41</sup>

For the public, management of the theater was associated with Fassbinder’s name, but internally everyone was (or was supposed to be!) equal. This meant that every ensemble member, stagehand, and technician had a say in the selection of pieces and the action on stage. And perhaps one additional point: Frankfurt was the only city in Germany to have officially introduced the collective decision-making model, a product of the democratization movement that followed on the heels of the ‘68 movement in Germany. This model was also a product of the increasingly exciting German theatrical scene – particularly under Peter Stein,<sup>42</sup> who, with his Schaubühne troupe in Berlin, was the first theater director to practice the collective form of collective decision-making in the country. Its introduction in Frankfurt prompted Claus Peymann, artistic director at the Theater Am Turm (TAT) since 1965, to leave the theater.<sup>43</sup> Various directorial teams had come and gone, but they had been unable to assert themselves and left before their contracts were up. With his image as an all-round man who was creative in multiple fields and also something of an *enfant terrible*, Fassbinder was the new beacon of hope. Many people secretly wished he would create an exciting new alternative to the less experimental Schauspielhaus theater, applying and bringing to life the democratic model of theater that was based on the idea of “freedom through art” (Hoffmann’s famous motto was “Culture for everyone!”).

And Fassbinder? This engagement at a theater funded by the city provided him with the opportunity to take another shot at the project on which his *antiteater* had foundered in Munich in 1970. He had even greater hopes that he would be able to land his long-time ensemble a permanent engagement beyond his tenure as artistic director, since his actors were to be integrated into the existing ensemble. Then they would pursue their own projects on the basis of a self-developed and strengthened identity that had been “emancipated” from him. After all, everyone knew that Fassbinder would not abandon his film work. What is more, at the age of twenty-nine, Fassbinder had already made twenty-five films, including such pioneering works as *The Merchant of Four Seasons*, *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant*, *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*, as well as the legendary five-part working-class series *Eight Hours Are Not a Day* and the two-part science fiction film *World on a Wire*, shot for German television. And his star was rising in the international film scene – his name had become a trademark. He was already planning new film projects, inspired by actual conditions in the city of Frankfurt, such as those described in *The Earth is Uninhabitable Like the Moon* (*Die Erde ist unbewohnbar wie der Mond*), a novel published in 1974 by his friend Gerhard Zwerenz.<sup>44</sup> He had written a screenplay based on this novel and submitted it to the German Federal Film Board for a project grant.<sup>45</sup> In other words, filmmaking remained his mainstay, and the preliminary work for upcoming projects ran parallel to his current work. Furthermore,

Fassbinder never gave up the idea of a jointly developed artistic process in which everyone involved in a project took responsibility for his or her individual field, including the commercial end. This meant that he did not always want to be in charge of all areas. For Fassbinder, there was a clearly defined “we” in collaboration, which had to lead to mutual trust. This trust required clear agreements, agreements that determined the line of approach taken by each individual. Developing concepts, finding material, transforming it quickly into a presentable screenplay, drawing up shooting schedules and budgets, outlining content, forecasting and precisely determining costs in advance – these were Fassbinder’s great strengths. They provided the foundation upon which a set, well-functioning team could resolve all other issues – if it stuck to the agreements.

Of course, as a director – and often as a producer – Fassbinder was responsible for the overall results. Regardless of whether the participants worked together as friends or as fellow professionals, Fassbinder’s work style had a clear goal from the outset: he recognized individual talents and had the unique ability to make everyone aware of his or her positive traits. When he believed in a person, that person was capable of everything. He had already worked in this fashion at the Action-Theater in 1967, as part of a young and diversely gifted ensemble that was full of enthusiasm and imagination, and that created exciting theater in a small store on the Müllerstrasse in Munich. Even at that time, Fassbinder was a person who could pool talent and lead people in a focused direction. The fact that he was a novice did not seem to diminish his confidence in leading people. When applying for the Berlin Film Academy, which had been set up in 1966, he was asked how he imagined his future profession as director. He responded: “I can imagine making a rapid series of inexpensive films with a well-rehearsed team ... in order to create further opportunities to put my ideas into action.”<sup>46</sup> At that time he had already written texts, poems, and shorter plays, shot two short films, and trained to be an actor. But for the time being these achievements did not get him very far. The problem in the mid-1960s was that there was no functioning educational system for film production in West Germany, never mind a comprehensive educational system for the craft of filmmaking. The only chance was to study film, but Fassbinder had not been accepted.

It was not a favorable situation for anyone wanting to become a director in Germany. The reasons are obvious: After the Allies had broken up the state-affiliated centralized film production system after 1945 – embodied by companies such as the former UFA – film production licenses were awarded only to small companies, and it took a long time for a new film production industry to get a foothold in West Germany. Cinematic treatments of the war and its causes – as exemplified by the so-called *Trümmerfilme* (rubble films)<sup>47</sup> – drew audiences only until around 1949. After the total destruction of the country and its division by the Allies into eastern and western sectors, the population had no desire to see such films. Companies that depended on revenues to recover production costs relied on entertaining productions, particularly *Heimatfilme* (films featuring the homeland),<sup>48</sup>

*Schlagerfilme* (popular musicals), filmed operettas, social comedies, as well as war and doctor films. Although most of these films were commercial successes and produced many stars, there were only a few high-quality artistic productions among them. When the new medium of television emerged in the early 1960s, it stole audiences away from cinemas. Whereas cinema visits totaled 670.8 million in 1959, they fell to 172.2 million in 1969.<sup>49</sup> This decline forced many production and distribution companies into bankruptcy as banks refused to provide them with additional loans and guarantees. The market consolidated, leaving behind production companies that concentrated solely on conventional genre films such as Westerns, spy and sex films, as well as film series based on the work of authors like Karl May (whose popular American Indian hero was known as Winnetou) and Edgar Wallace. The early 1970s saw the rise of the *Lümmelfilme* (“lout” films)<sup>50</sup> adapted from the novels of Johannes Mario Simmel.<sup>51</sup>

Understandably, then, the sophisticated, socially critical New German Cinema needed to assert itself in one decisive move in order to set itself apart from “Grandpa’s cinema.” The Oberhausen Manifesto, published on February 28, 1962, marked the movement’s birth.<sup>52</sup> It was followed by productions by the second-generation filmmakers of the New German Cinema, who included, alongside Fassbinder, such artists as Volker Schlöndorff, Werner Herzog, Wim Wenders, and Werner Schroeter. They, too, recognized the intellectual basis of the appeal and were prepared collectively “to take economic risks. The old film is dead. We believe in the new one.” The movement got off to a highly successful start in France with Schlöndorff’s film *Young Törless*, and it was continued by the other directors and their quickly produced films. The successes abroad, in particular, showed that an exciting young Germany was capable of continuing the tradition of high-quality German cinema dating to the 1920s/30s. The goal was now to set up a sales and distribution network tailored to the new films.<sup>53</sup> It was only through the Film and Television Agreement, which was signed in 1974 and is still in effect today, that a sustainable film industry gradually emerged in the Federal Republic of Germany, one that was financed in diverse ways by the state and was capable of producing films of a high artistic quality.

#### IV

*And suddenly there is movement and, with it, “something.” But we stand about, we who create values. That is what we are here for. We are not able to accept the opposite of what is. So we are not even close to freedom.*

(Rainer Werner Fassbinder, 1977)

Fassbinder applied his method of producing films to his work at the TAT ensemble. For his (purely formal) application in November 1973, he wrote a statement of

purpose, explaining that, in a group that he was familiar with, he wanted to “gain experience in the theatrical work focused on ourselves and our environment, convey this experience to the audience, and develop ideas with them.”<sup>54</sup> The ensemble would present the upcoming productions under annual themes and select the plays accordingly. A selection of works was planned under the general heading of “group psychology” – Fassbinder mentions, among others, Émile Zola’s *Germinal* and “a play about Frankfurt.” Regarding the organization of work, he writes: “It must be ensured that the authority of the single decision-making committees is clearly delineated and respected. For us, *Mitbestimmung* (collective decision-making) is not an end in itself, but the requirement for rendering the theatrical work transparent and enhancing the quality of the product.” The productions were already chosen for the first half-year between September and December 1974. There is no detailed description of the “play about Frankfurt.” Fassbinder knew that the TAT ensemble had already collected material and had been working on a concrete project. He wanted to support it and encouraged the initial approaches, while a working group continued to develop it. The debut production at the TAT, *Germinal*, drew tentatively favorable press reviews. As for the next production, *Miss Julie*, which featured Fassbinder in the role of the servant, reviewers criticized the fact that the five-person team – billed as “stage design and costumes,” “production council,” “production dramaturgy,” “with the assistance of,” “created by,” and “direction” – had only managed to stage a “slow-paced tragedy.”<sup>55</sup>

Rainer later told me of his unspeakable anxiety during the daily performances. Before each one, he implored Margit Carstensen, the actress playing Miss Julie, to use her frequent headaches as an excuse to take a sick day so that the performance could be called off. But Margit, who epitomized discipline and professionalism, firmly refused to fulfill his desperate request. The main source of Rainer’s fears – as he readily admitted to me – was the fact that the entire TAT ensemble blamed him for the productions the press claimed were flops. *Uncle Vanya* was the next play for which Fassbinder took sole responsibility as director. The press wrote: “tribulations, tears” and concluded with the remark: “We will have to wait and see what the group has learned from the work. This theatrical season in Frankfurt – a sore trial of our patience.”<sup>56</sup> Nevertheless, Fassbinder did not let these reviews completely spoil his mood. Although his film project *The Earth is as Uninhabitable as the Moon* did not receive funding from the German Federal Film Board – which meant the project could not be carried out – he constantly had proposals and ideas for new films.

Starting in 1970, Fassbinder had produced films independently or on commission from WDR, and this broadcast company had always been open to new projects. Some time earlier, Asta Scheib, a young housewife and mother of two, had sent him a short story in the hope that he would film it.<sup>57</sup> He had read her story and was excited – the topic was perfect for him. It captured what he experienced every day at the TAT but was packaged in a neutral narrative about a young woman who becomes addicted to medication because of the demands of daily life and her

fear of failing (the story would become *Fear of Fear*). For not only was Fassbinder the most productive filmmaker of the New German Cinema, he was also one of the star directors of German television, able to wear both hats comfortably and to meet the high standards of each medium. His previous TV films had regularly stirred debate, which was why television audiences went to see his cinema films. In fact, WDR had begun promoting creative young filmmakers early on, since it wanted to use their stories and talents for television. It had, for example, supported Wolfgang Petersen, who shot his first films in Germany for the broadcasting company.<sup>58</sup> If filmmakers kept within their budgets and the productions brought WDR recognition and high ratings, doors were always open to them. This was why Fassbinder suggested the project *Fear of Fear* – based on Asta Scheib's story – to his commissioning editor at WDR, Peter Märthesheimer,<sup>59</sup> and also to the director of the teleplay department, Günter Rohrbach.<sup>60</sup> At the same time Fassbinder encouraged Scheib to work with him on the screenplay. In just a few days, he received the go-ahead, and WDR soon began making preparations for the film, which was produced in spring 1975.

Before work on this project began, Fassbinder had sufficient time to prepare the TAT ensemble for its upcoming themes, but he continued to be afflicted by a paralyzing fear. The diverse political wings of the ensemble, constantly revolting against him – engaged in endless debate and launching destructive attacks on one another – were more than he could cope with. And perhaps his subconscious was trying to tell him that, given the extremely complex collective work at the TAT, this time he would not be able to live up to his wunderkind image. And then there was the real-life political situation in the city around him: the daily battles over buildings, the real estate speculation, and the property developers and construction contractors who were evidently being protected and supported by the city. There was also the population's fight to preserve the original district of Westend. The city had begun to seethe and boil. Fassbinder wanted to examine the city's tangible "wounds" on stage as soon as possible, and he asked his co-artistic director, Kurt Raab, to press ahead with the Frankfurt project.

After shooting the film *Mother Küsters Goes to Heaven* in just twenty days, Fassbinder had the ensemble present the results of its work – a play with the title *Bahnhofsrevue* (*Train Station Revue*). However, Fassbinder was not convinced that the play exploited the full potential of the theme and pointed to its weaknesses. The discussions must have been quite intense, as is reflected in the (unfortunately incomplete) ensemble minutes.<sup>61</sup> At any rate, agreement could not be reached on a solution that was acceptable to Fassbinder. This motivated him to write a play of his own, and he suggested juxtaposing it with the ensemble's play as an additional production. Fassbinder then quickly wrote a text on a short trip abroad, calling it *Garbage, the City, and Death*. It was, in his view, just a rough draft, but good enough to serve as a basis for rehearsals. An edition was printed for rehearsals by Verlag der Autoren, the publishing house that acted as Fassbinder's representative for sales of the theatrical production rights. The edition included a note

that the play was approved for publication only on the day of its premiere. Perhaps it was mere chance, or perhaps it was the real-world result of the decreed *Mitbestimmung* model, but the text evidently fell into the hands of outsiders before the planned premiere. In the end, it did not matter. Despite the increasingly hostile attitudes toward Fassbinder among members of the old ensemble – and especially among the left-wing actors, who now openly revolted – he began rehearsals. But soon the enormous pressure exerted by the city, whose representatives felt the productions were not successful enough since Fassbinder was too busy with other projects, discouraged him from continuing. In addition, a spate of rumors made the rounds that the play he was rehearsing at the TAT was anti-Semitic, and intrigues were made public that spurred the local press to engage in all manner of speculation. For the first time in his life, Fassbinder lost his nerve. He left the city, giving Hilmar Hoffmann the opportunity to sack him without notice.

## V

*If the certainty of having to die became physically palpable early on, the individual would lose his existential pains – his hatred, envy, and jealousy. He would no longer be afraid. Our relationships are cruel games that we play with each other because we do not recognize our end as something positive.*

(Rainer Werner Fassbinder, 1977)

I do not doubt that Hilmar Hoffmann attempted to stand up for Fassbinder, but I also suspect that Fassbinder did not want to remain artistic director under the circumstances. Nevertheless, his premature departure was potentially damaging to the reputation both of the city and its cultural manager, given that it was the third such departure in five years. This is why Hilmar Hoffmann had to make a scapegoat out of Fassbinder in order to get rid of him without calling negative attention to himself. So what did he do? He bided his time. Up to this point he had given Fassbinder everything he had been promised prior to his engagement (such as time off to shoot his films), and he had also helped him secure funding for his new film project *Satan's Brew*, which Fassbinder, as director and producer, had submitted to the German Federal Film Board with his production company Tango-Film. As a member of the funding committee, Hoffmann was highly influential, and he knew that after funding was approved Fassbinder would once again request a leave of absence to shoot the film. Fassbinder put in his request, but this time Hoffmann rejected it. Fassbinder then threatened to step down as artistic director of the theater, though offering to continue working as a stage director.<sup>62</sup> When his offer was not accepted, Fassbinder left the city, thus giving the head of the cultural affairs department grounds to terminate his contract.

The outcome of this power play was an unfavorable one for Fassbinder, but in retrospect it marked a positive turning point in his life. Outsiders may have seen this episode as a total failure for Fassbinder, given that he had been unable to secure a permanent engagement for his troupe and had also failed to premiere his play *Garbage, the City, and Death*. But it was a salutary experience for him all the same. In the process he must have come to the realization that he expressed during the early morning breakfast with author Horst Laube at the Schweizerhof Hotel in Berlin – a realization that, read in context, is one of his most beautiful and revealing thoughts: “Our relationships are cruel games that we play with each other because we do not recognize our end as something positive. The end is concrete life!”<sup>63</sup> And he took this insight fully to heart. It became the most important theme in his future works: the development of the German middle classes that led to German fascism and whose effects continued to be felt in the West Germany of the 1970s. Together with fellow director Daniel Schmid, he soon wrote a screenplay based on his play. The resulting film, *Shadow of Angels*, was shot in Vienna in October 1975, with Ingrid Caven cast as Roma B., Klaus Löwitsch playing the Rich Jew, and Fassbinder in the role of the pimp Franz B. In May 1976 the film was presented at the Cannes International Film Festival, causing the Israeli delegation to leave in protest. These were the effects of the original scandal triggered by Joachim Fest, which had been raging in German feuilletons for two months and which was continuing to have an impact. Then, in 1977, Fassbinder’s appointment to the Berlinale jury similarly caused protests among conservative members of the Jewish community in Germany, influencing other decisions related to his current film projects. At the height of the manhunt for terrorists, for example, WDR saw the necessity of protecting its reputation as a “neutral” public broadcaster and stopped production of a multi-episode TV series adapted from Gustav Freitag’s novel *Debit and Credit (Soll und Haben)*, a novel with anti-Semitic content. Fassbinder had been asked to direct the series, which had been developed by Peter Märthesheimer and Herbert Knopp.<sup>64</sup>

Anyone reading the press attacks on Fassbinder and the failed WDR project will find it difficult to believe that, despite all the opposition – or perhaps because of it – Fassbinder subsequently engaged even more intensely with the two projects that would prove centrally important in the coming years, as well as working on new screenplays and other undertakings.<sup>65</sup> The first was *The Marriages of Our Parents*, for which Fassbinder had written a twenty-four-page synopsis in mid-1975 entitled *The Men of Maria Braun*.<sup>66</sup> The second was the development of a screenplay for a multi-episode TV series that had been close to his heart for quite some time: Alfred Döblin’s *Berlin Alexanderplatz*. Fassbinder drew on resources that distinguished him in situations like these: he pulled himself up by his own bootstraps and cast off everything that might have sapped his strength. He devoted himself even more resolutely to his upcoming work.

It was precisely at this time, in the spring of 1975, that I met him. The first time I saw him was in a Chinese restaurant on Tengstrasse in Munich, but we did not

have any direct contact. He was sitting with a man who talked incessantly at him. I would not even have known who he was, had not my companion – a fellow student from the Munich School of Political Science – mentioned his name. I knew the name Fassbinder, but I had only seen one of his films, *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*, and I was not familiar with any of his theatrical work. Furthermore, at that time, I was in the midst of my own cinematic journey, which had just taken me to the land of Italian neo-realism: Lucchino Visconti was my absolute favorite, followed closely by Roberto Rossellini, Federico Fellini, Pier Paolo Pasolini, and Francesco Rosi. In the realm of literature, I had just discovered postwar German authors, above all Heinrich Böll. My interest in political and contemporary literature had led me to enroll at the School of Political Science in addition to working as an assistant film editor and editing my first documentary. I wanted to gain insight into the Germany into which I had been born, to learn about the people's souls and biographies, about their longings and fates. I had absorbed many of the '68ers' slogans in my youth, but I did not see things in such an obstinate, dogmatic way. Nor had I read their ideological fathers – Herbert Marcuse, Martin Heidegger, and Ernst Bloch. And I did not have the slightest idea about Marx and Engel. At the ripe age of nineteen, I made my own choices when it came to intellectual fare. And I read everything I could get my hands on: so-called serious literature, light fiction, and also complex non-fiction works. I also went to see films of my own choosing, and in this I was strongly influenced by my family background. My stepfather was a producer and director of so-called *Kulturfilme* – the educational documentaries that were made in the late 1950s and 1960s to cinematically portray “explosive” issues such as sex education in marriage and related health topics. Since my stepfather did not earn enough money in this profession, he worked as a projectionist on the weekends and started taking me along with him when I was five.

Films gave me nearly everything that drove and motivated me in life and were a source of inspiration in my search for life's meaning. Most importantly, they helped me answer the question: Why are we Germans the way we are? Before my first distant encounter with Fassbinder, *Germany Year Zero (Germania anno Zero)* by Roberto Rossellini was the film that I had last seen in my quest to answer this question. On that day in Munich, I certainly did not know that the young man sitting on the other end of the restaurant – born in Germany, year zero – had been grappling with these issues for a long time. As he sat there hunched over the table, his arms crossed, not saying anything but giving his full attention to his companion, he was only a man whom I observed, fascinated, from a distance. In contrast to me, my companion recalled more than just one of Fassbinder's films, and he continued his explanations, claiming that Rainer was a crazy man who churned out films at a speed that was astonishing to outsiders and that people said he was totally wild. This only increased Fassbinder's appeal in my eyes. At that time I had not yet heard about the attacks and discussions in which Fassbinder was embroiled. I had not encountered them as a regular reader of *Die Zeit* or in connection with my studies in political science.



A few months later, I met Fassbinder face to face in an editing room at Bavaria Studios. I was working as an assistant film editor on his new film *Chinese Roulette* and we had an appointment to show him the first cut. I was not nervous in any way, since it was quite common to meet directors in the studio. When Fassbinder walked into the room on that June day in 1976, saying a friendly “hello” in my direction and giving the editor a lively peck on both cheeks, his manner showed no trace of the attacks and defeats of the past few months. Or was I being naive? I think not. After he had taken a look at the first three edited rolls of film, laughing on occasion when he was tickled by what he saw, he quietly got up, turned around, cast a friendly glance in my direction, smiled, and said: “Good job.” And left. Without breaking furniture, shouting, or going berserk. On the contrary: he giggled and was visibly fascinated by what he had shot. After he had left, I took a small piece of white paper and, in a kind of trance and burst of youthful romanticism, I wrote: “Chinese Roulette – Un autre chef d’oeuvre de Rainer Werner Fassbinder.” I stuck the note in the name plate holder on the outside of our editing room door. The next time Rainer came, he read it and smiled affectionately in my direction.

## VI

*Destruction is when the concept no longer exists, when it no longer has any meaning, when there is a reality that makes it disappear. What people invent then will be really exciting*

(Rainer Werner Fassbinder, 1977).

After his experiences in Frankfurt and the vehement public repercussions against his play, Rainer fundamentally changed his life. He recognized that these forms of destructiveness actually represented an opportunity. Whereas I had just been a shy observer of his personality and working style at the start of our relationship, during the following project – the two-part TV production *The Stationmaster’s Wife* – I was directly involved in the scoring of the film and the editing of the cinema version. He flirted heavily with me during the work, which I honestly admit confused me. His next film project, *Despair (A Journey into Light)*, was already in preparation when *Bolwieser* entered the editing phase, and shortly before the TV version was mixed, Fassbinder in passing asked me in the most charming manner whether I would like to work on his first English-language production, *Despair*, which featured Dirk Bogarde in the leading role. I have often spoken of the famous “night of despair,” and it always sounds a bit like a fairy tale: a young woman is asked by the director to work with him on re-editing the first three-hour cut of a film. On the one hand, this was an affront to the editor who was already involved, but on the other, it was Fassbinder’s film and this was his only alternative if he wanted a cut for which he could take full responsibility when it was screened for the

producers. Since the first editor was unwilling to work after five p.m., he could not have made any other choice.

On that day, July 5, 1977, Fassbinder came directly from his work on the Berlinale jury in Berlin. After inspecting the first few rolls, we began cutting the film from the very first scene, roll by roll. All that I had requested from the production department in advance were some drinks and a snack for what would probably be a long evening. At that time, there was no cafeteria at Bavaria Studios that kept its doors open for longer working days, nor any other restaurant near the studio complex. Naturally, I could not have foreseen that this wondrous night would go on until the next morning and that the near-silent meshing of our abilities would shape our work together. That night I learned how to recognize quickly where dramaturgic weaknesses lay and how to take three hours of wonderful material with an exceptional leading actor (incidentally, it was Tom Stoppard's first screenplay) and to transform that material into an outstanding story in a more compressed yet perfectly comprehensible form. These are the miracles of life that cannot be planned in advance and can only be described with the word "magic." It soon became clear that we fit together in every way. When Rainer had the idea to shift around or shorten scenes, I had the same idea and began work before he said anything. Anyone who has experienced a joint artistic process will be familiar with this kind of "divine" harmony. Film editing is one of the most sublime disciplines in filmmaking. And every time I discuss this topic in seminars, I become even more aware of how important that night's collaboration with Rainer was for me. The next morning we were infused with the strength and beauty of our work – of the harmonious way we had considered and grasped the material. The feeling we had is best illustrated by a sentence from another film I edited for Fassbinder, *In a Year with 13 Moons*: it was as if a "trembling of the soul on the verge of fulfilling a sacred yearning" had taken hold of both of us and led us beyond the boundaries of fear.

In addition, that night Rainer must have made up his mind about my future with him. After the film was screened for the studio heads and the executive producer Peter Märthesheimer, he was asked who would finish editing it for him. Almost in passing, without making any great fuss, he responded: "Juliane will be editing all my films!" And he was right. Up to his last film *Querelle*, we not only deepened the original experience we had during *Despair*, but we shared our daily lives with one another. The most important films in the third phase of his creative development emerged, and I was involved from the outset. Our shared life, the daily training in filmmaking, and all these early experiences have borne me up to the present. Rainer has given me strength for all the challenges I have encountered as a film editor since his death in June 1982, and I have also drawn strength from my later commitment to preserving and disseminating his works. I cannot deny that I am grateful to Rainer for all that he enabled me to experience in those early years of my life. But what is much more important – and this is something that Rainer always tried to get across – is that we not boast about our actions, but realize that something enduring can only be created if we love another person and

learn to give others support. Rainer left behind these traces of love not only in me and my life, but also in each and every one of his films. This idea is probably best expressed by a sentence from Walter Benjamin's *Theses on the Philosophy of History*: "The past carries with it a temporal index by which it is referred to redemption. There is a secret agreement between past generations and the present one. Our coming was expected on earth."

## Notes

- 1 Horst Laube (1939–1997) was a dramaturg at the Schauspiel theater in Frankfurt from 1972 to 1980. He also wrote novels, plays, radio plays, and stories, and translated plays by Shakespeare and de Musset into German.
- 2 Laube (1978: 326).
- 3 Wolf Donner (1939–1994) was a German film critic who served as director of the Berlin International Film Festival from 1977 to 1978. In 1978 Donner began holding the festival in February.
- 4 *The Ascent* (German: *Der Aufstieg*), directed by Larissa Schepitko, won the Golden Bear at the 1977 Berlinale.
- 5 The RAF saw itself as part of the international anti-imperialism movement and believed that the armed struggle against so-called U.S. imperialism needed to be fought in Western Europe as well. It initially had sympathizers in parts of the student movement (the *K-Gruppen*, or communist groups) and in other circles in the population. This is shown by actions taken to support the group and by the extensive semi-legal logistics network headed by the Rote Hilfe (Red Aid). Another indication is the long list of prominent lawyers who defended the first generation of RAF members, including Otto Schily, who later served as federal interior minister. The second and third generations of RAF largely lost this base because of the targets of their attacks. Between the 1970s and 1990s, roughly sixty to eighty members of the first to third generations formed the group's "hard core" and were active in the underground. The RAF had around 300 active supporters during its entire existence. RAF members murdered thirty-four people in terrorist attacks and hostage-takings, and twenty members of the RAF died in its operations.
- 6 The Stammheim trial of the first generation of RAF members was held in the Higher Regional Court of Stuttgart. The anarchists Andreas Baader, Ulrike Meinhof, Gudrun Ensslin, and Jan-Carl Raspe were charged with four counts of murder and fifty-four counts of attempted murder. For security reasons, a windowless courtroom was built on the grounds of the Stammheim Prison and tightly guarded. The trial ran from May 21, 1975, to April 28, 1977, and was the longest and most extensive in the postwar history of the Federal Republic of Germany. Ulrike Meinhof hung herself on May 8, 1976, before the proceedings had ended. The three remaining defendants were sentenced to life imprisonment. On October 18, 1977, they were found dead in their cells before the verdict was executed.
- 7 The '68 movement (German: *68er-Bewegung*) refers to the various international student and civil rights movements that evolved parallel to each other from the mid-1960s on. In 1968 a number of the conflicts in which these movements were involved

escalated, in particular the anti-war protests in the United States, the unrest following Martin Luther King's assassination, and the diverse civil conflicts in Europe. In Germany the '68 movement is often referred to simply as the 1960s student movement, which began in 1961 when the Socialist League of German Students (Sozialistische Deutsche Studentenbund, SDS) was expelled from the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD). Many elements in the movement became more militant and radical after the killing of student Benno Ohnesorg on June 2, 1967, during demonstrations against the Shah's visit to Germany and after the attack on Rudi Dutschke on April 11, 1968.

- 8 Heinrich Theodor Böll (1917–1985) was a writer and translator who is considered one of the most important postwar German authors. He won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1972.
- 9 In Böll's novel the maid Katharina Blum falls in love with a young man who she does not realize is a wanted criminal. While tailing him, the police come to suspect Blum of being his accomplice. From that point on, she is hounded by both the police and an unscrupulous reporter from a local tabloid, who portrays her as the criminal's lover and accomplice in his articles. Humiliated by the permanent press harassment, Katharina Blum shoots the reporter and then turns herself in to the police.
- 10 *Bild* continues to have the largest circulation of all tabloids in Germany.
- 11 The Anti-Terrorist Laws, passed in response to RAF crimes during the German Autumn (*Deutscher Herbst*), impinged on the personal rights of all German citizens.
- 12 A government resolution passed on January 28, 1972; also known as the Principles on the Issue of Anticonstitutional Forces in the Public Service (*Grundsätze zur Frage der verfassungsfeindlichen Kräfte im öffentlichen Dienst*). Under this law the state had the power to refuse or even terminate employment in the public service if a person was suspected of not supporting the free democratic order.
- 13 A method for hunting for unknown criminals that was developed in the Federal Republic of Germany in the 1970s. Investigators filter certain groups from public or private databases by looking for traits they assume apply to the wanted persons. The identified group is repeatedly filtered for various traits until a small number of people remain who can be checked.
- 14 The Theater am Turm was founded in 1953 in Frankfurt am Main and closed by the city in 2004 for financial reasons and due to city politics. Under artistic director Claus Peymann (1965–1969), the theater established itself as an alternative to bourgeois-style municipal theater and had close ties to the student movement. Rainer Werner Fassbinder served as co-artistic director for eight months during the 1974/75 season. Different directors came and went, and the theater was temporarily closed in 1978/79. In 1980 the *Mitbestimmung* model was dropped and the theater was reopened without a permanent ensemble to serve as a stage for free experimental groups and artists from all over the world.
- 15 Fassbinder, *Stücke 3* (1976: 91–128). The book edition, though initially distributed to bookstores, was withdrawn and pulped. The play has been reprinted in Laube and Landes (1978: 275–321). For the English edition, see Fassbinder, *Plays* (1992: 161–89).
- 16 The play celebrated its German premiere on October 1 and 2, 2009, at the Theater an der Ruhr in Mülheim. It was part of a three-part program entitled *FASSBINDER Nur eine Scheibe Brot/Der Müll, die Stadt und der Tod/Blut am Hals der Katze* (director: Roberto

Ciulli, dramaturgy: Helmut Schäfer). The world premiere took place in 1987 in New York (director: Nick Fracaro). Additional productions outside Germany: Copenhagen, Denmark, 1987 (director: Klaus Hoffmeyer); Malmö, Sweden, 1989; Los Angeles, U.S., 1997 (director: Frédérique Michel); Milan, Italy, 1998 (directors: Elio de Capitani/Ferdinando Bruni); Tel Aviv, Israel, 1999 (director: Yoram Loewenstein); The Hague, the Netherlands, 2002 (director: Johan Doesburg); Paris, France, 2003 (director: Pierre Maillet); and Copenhagen, Denmark, 2004 (director: Jacob Schjodt). In 2010 the play was produced at the private Holberg School of Film and Theater in Copenhagen (director: Liv Helm); an Arab refugee was cast in the role of the Rich Jew. It also celebrated a premiere in Dublin, Ireland (director: Jane Mulcahy).

- 17 The fight over buildings in Frankfurt inspired similar movements in Berlin and Hamburg in the 1980s and 1990s.
- 18 Joachim Clemens Fest (1926–2006) was a prominent historian of contemporary Germany who also worked as a journalist and author. His most important publications include the first German-language biography of Adolf Hitler, published in 1973. In cooperation with Christian Herrendoerfer, Fest produced the documentary *Hitler – Eine Karriere (Hitler – A Career)*, based on this work, and its premiere at the 1977 Berlinale caused a sensation. The biography was criticized for failing to examine the 1938 November Pogrom and completely disregarding the Nuremberg Racial Laws. It mentions the Holocaust on just three out of a total of 1280 pages. From 1973 to 1993 Fest co-edited the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ)* and also oversaw the feuilleton desk.
- 19 Today's use of the term "left-wing fascist" can be traced to Jürgen Habermas, who in 1967 warned of left-wing fascist tendencies in the anti-authoritarian Extra-Parliamentary Opposition (Außerparlamentarische Opposition, APO). Since then the term has been used primarily in polemical attacks against left-wing groups and parties. It charges that the social order envisioned by these groups and the policies used to establish it have fascist, anti-liberal, and totalitarian elements. The term lumps fascism together with emancipatory social theories and is an assault on the self-image of many left-wing groups, who in fact see themselves as anti-fascist.
- 20 See Fest (1976).
- 21 See Henrichs (1976).
- 22 "My play *Garbage, the City, and Death* has been accused of being 'anti-Semitic.' Certain parties are using this accusation to present theses and interpretations that have nothing to do with me and my work. As for the play: yes, among the many characters in the text there is a Jew. This Jew is a real estate agent; he plays a role in changing the city in ways that harm the people's living conditions; he 'does deals.' But he did not create the conditions in which these deals are done. Nor can he be made responsible for them. He only exploits existing conditions. The place where such conditions can be found in real life is Frankfurt am Main. The phenomenon itself, though on a different level, is only a repetition of conditions in the eighteenth century, when only Jews were allowed to lend money for interest, and this money-lending, which was often the Jews' only hope for survival, in the end gave ammunition to those who had more or less forced them to take up this activity and who were their real enemies. The situation is no different in the city in my play. To put it more clearly: one should examine the motives of the people who protest against a discussion of this state of affairs. They

are the real anti-Semites. One should examine why, instead of examining the real issue, they turn on the play's author, basing their arguments on words he invented for his character in order to encourage critical analysis of certain conditions .... Obviously these characters – actually it seems superfluous to say this – do not express the opinions of the author, whose attitude toward minorities should be clear enough from his other works. In fact, the hysterical tone of the discussion surrounding the play increases my fear of a new 'fascism,' which moved me to write this play in the first place." Fassbinder, "My Position" (1992: 119–20).

- 23 Diner (1985: 61–5).
- 24 Zollinger (1985: 52–6).
- 25 Fassbinder, "Philosemites" (1992: 121–3).
- 26 Schmid (1941–2006) was a Swiss theatrical, film, and opera director. Fassbinder met him in 1966 at the admissions examination for the Berlin Film Academy, which Schmid passed and Fassbinder failed. Schmid's career as a director began with the film *La Paloma*. He appeared as an actor in films by both Fassbinder (*The Merchant of Four Seasons* and *Lili Marleen*) and Wim Wenders (*The American Friend*).
- 27 After military service and a brief internment as a POW, Peter Palitzsch (1918–2004) trained as a graphic artist and then worked as a dramaturg at the Volksbühne in Dresden. Later Berthold Brecht made him his assistant at the Volksbühne in Berlin. Thanks to his productions, Palitzsch emerged as one of the most influential exponents of Brechtian theater.
- 28 Ignatz Bubis (1927–1999) was a businessman, real estate agent, and FDP politician who served as chairman of the Central Council of Jews in Germany from 1992 to 1999. He was elected to the board of the Jewish community of Frankfurt in 1966 and was involved in the real estate affair in Frankfurt's Westend district in the 1970s. In his autobiography Bubis claims that the character of the Rich Jew in Fassbinder's play *Garbage, the City, and Death* was based on his life, but this is not true.
- 29 Heiner Müller (1929–1995) is considered the most important German-language playwright of the late twentieth century. He also worked as an author, poet, theatrical director, and artistic director. Müller was president of the Berlin Academy of the Arts (East Berlin) from 1990 to 1993.
- 30 Volker Spengler (b. 1939) is a German theater and film actor who began his theatrical career under Fritz Kortner. Spengler continues to work at the Volksbühne at Rosa Luxemburg Platz in Berlin and at other theaters in Germany. Between 1975 and 1981 he appeared in several of Fassbinder's films, e.g. as Elvira Weisshaupt in *In a Year with 13 Moons* (1978).
- 31 Günther Rühle (b. 1924) served as artistic director of the theater in Frankfurt am Main from 1985 to 1990. During this time Fassbinder's *Garbage, the City, and Death* was scheduled to be produced under the direction of Dietrich Hilsdorf.
- 32 Press release from the director's office of the Jewish community of Frankfurt, Frankfurt am Main, 1985. The text shows the confusion surrounding the character in the play and the term "rich Jew." In the play Fassbinder called his character the "Rich Jew," not "rich Jew," since he wanted to emphasize that the word "rich" was not used as an adjective but as part of the character's name. *Der Stürmer* was an anti-Semitic Nazi weekly.

- 33 Hilmar Hoffmann (b. 1925) is a German cultural professional and functionary who has fought for a re-evaluation of highbrow and popular culture across many fields ("Culture for everyone!"). In 1951 he was appointed director of the adult education program in Oberhausen and in 1954 he founded the Westdeutsche Kulturfilmtage (West German Educational Film Festival), which was later renamed the Internationale Kurzfilmtage Oberhausen (Oberhausen International Short Film Festival). Hoffmann served as the city counselor responsible for culture in Frankfurt am Main from 1970 to 1990 and was president of Goethe-Institut e.V (Munich) from 1993 to 2001. He is still active in cultural institutions today.
- 34 Michael Friedman (b. 1956) is a German lawyer, politician, columnist, and television host. He served as deputy chairman of the Central Council of Jews in Germany from 2000 to 2003 and was president of the European Jewish Congress from 2001 to 2003. Friedman resigned from all his public offices after a scandal broke in which he was linked to drug abuse and forced prostitution.
- 35 The Jewish community wanted the prematurely ended production to be considered the official premiere of the play in order to put an end to all discussions about it (conversation on September 9, 2009, between Hilmar Hoffmann and the author). However, the protestors had occupied the stage at the very start of the dress rehearsal, making it impossible to present a full performance. See also Hoffmann (2003: 157ff).
- 36 Helmut Kohl (b. 1930) was the chancellor of Germany (CDU) between 1982 and 1998.
- 37 On December 2, 1970, shortly before the signing of the German-Polish Treaty, which recognized the Oder-Neisse line as the permanent border between Poland and Germany, Will Brandt (1913–1992), then chancellor of Germany (SPD) and later Nobel Peace Prize laureate, began a policy of rapprochement with Eastern Europe and reconciliation with Poland under his Social Democratic government.
- 38 Kurt Raab (1941–1988) took a degree in German studies and history and afterward worked as a prop man for film productions. When his school friend Peer Raben joined the Action-Theater in Munich in 1966, Raab followed him there and initially worked in the ticket office. He took on his first theatrical roles after Fassbinder joined the Action-Theater in August 1967. In 1968 he went with Fassbinder and Raben to the *antiteater*. Raab embodied the typical petty-bourgeois German in several of Fassbinder's films (e.g., *Why Does Herr R. Run Amok?* [1969] and *The Stationmaster's Wife* [1977]). He was also in charge of set design (e.g., *Effi Briest* and *World on a Wire*). At the Theater am Turm, Raab served as co-artistic director for the Schauspiel ensemble.
- 39 The *Mitbestimmung* model emerged in the course of the democratization process in 1970s' Germany and was an attempt to give all participants in the creative process (actors, dramaturgs, directors, and technical staff) a say in the theatrical work.
- 40 Margit Carstensen, Irm Hermann, Kurt Raab, Brigitte Mira, Karlheinz Böhm, Gottfried John, Peter Chatel, Ursula Straetz, and Ingrid Caven. Volker Spengler and Vitus Zeplichal were among the actors who joined the new TAT ensemble and later appeared in Fassbinder's films.
- 41 Hoffmann (2003: 157). In the passages quoted by Hoffmann, he uses the initial "F" for the vulgar term *ficken* (fucking).
- 42 Peter Stein (b. 1937) began his theatrical career in 1967 at the Kammerspiele theater in Munich. He caused a scandal and was dismissed without notice when he attempted to collect donations after a 1968 performance of *Vietnam Discourse* by Peter Weiss. His

career then took him to Zurich and to the municipal theater in Bremen. In 1970 Stein moved to the Schaubühne am Halleschen Ufer together with the ensemble he had put together in Bremen and Zurich. Under his direction the Schaubühne became the first theater in Germany to introduce the *Mitbestimmung* model, and many of his companions there (e.g., Edith Clever, Jutta Lamp, Otto Sander, Bruno Ganz) went on to become famous theatrical stars. Thanks to his legendary productions, he had the chance to move to a new stage in 1981: the Schaubühne am Lehniner Platz, a multi-functional facility whose technical standards are still unparalleled in the German theatrical scene today. In 1985 Stein resigned as artistic director at the Schaubühne and has worked on a freelance basis ever since. From 1991 to 1997 he was the director of non-musical theater at the Salzburg Festival, and in 2000 he staged Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Faust* in its entirety at the Hanover Expo (with all 12,110 verses). In 2007 Stein presented the eleven acts of Friedrich Schiller's *Wallenstein* in Berlin's Neukölln district in a ten-hour performance starring Klaus Maria Brandauer.

- 43 Claus Peymann (b. 1937) was the artistic director of Frankfurt's Theater am Turm from 1966 to 1969. He moved to the Schaubühne theater in Berlin for the 1970/71 season, but was unable to warm up to the *Mitbestimmung* model there. His first major engagement as an artistic director was at the Schauspiel theater in Stuttgart in the period 1974 to 1979, but he came under pressure and made national headlines when he started a collection to pay for dentures for the imprisoned RAF terrorist Gudrun Ensslin. In 1979 Peymann was hired as artistic director at the Schauspielhaus in Bochum, which had previously been run by Peter Zadek (under whom Fassbinder had worked as a theatrical director during the 1972/73 season). In 1986 Peymann was appointed director of the Burgtheater in Vienna, which he ran until 1999. The "Peymann era" is considered the most creative in the theater's history. Since the 1999/2000 season Peymann has run the legendary Berlin Ensemble, founded by Bertolt Brecht in 1949.
- 44 Gerhard Zwerenz (b. 1925) learned the trade of coppersmithing before volunteering for the military at the age of seventeen. He deserted in 1944 and after spending four years in Russian captivity served in the East German People's Police (*Volkspolizei*). In 1949 Zwerenz joined the Socialist Unity Party and from 1952 to 1956 he studied literature and philosophy in Leipzig under teachers such as Ernst Bloch. During this period he also wrote articles for the *Weltbühne* magazine and cabaret texts for the Pfeffermühle ensemble. After being expelled from the Socialist Unity Party for critical remarks in 1957, he fled to West Berlin and has worked as a freelance author ever since. His 1973 novel *Die Erde ist unbewohnbar wie der Mond* provided inspiration for Fassbinder's play *Garbage, the City, and Death*. He appeared as a guest actor in Fassbinder's films *The Stationmaster's Wife*, *In a Year with 13 Moons*, and *Berlin Alexanderplatz*.
- 45 The German Bundestag passed the Film Promotion Act in 1967 in response to the crisis that had afflicted the German film industry since the early 1960s. The legislation provided for the foundation of the German Federal Film Board (FFA) in 1968. For a set price of 100,000 DM, FFA was supposed to buy the TV rights for all the films it funded and then resell them to TV broadcasters for the same amount. At that time a license to broadcast a feature film usually did not cost more than 40,000 DM, and the surplus amount was seen as a way for television broadcasters to support German film production. However, television broadcasters refused to acquire the film licenses pur-



chased by FFA, since they had no influence on the films. In June 1971 the Bundestag made a number of changes to the law. FFA was no longer required to acquire the TV rights, and television broadcasters were permitted to participate directly in the production of films and also to show these films on TV after they had run in cinemas for a period of five years.

- 46 Fassbinder, "Philosemites" (1992: 123).
- 47 The term *Trümmerfilm* (rubble films) is used to describe films made in the four occupation zones in Germany just after the Second World War. Most provided a (semi) documentary look at the situation in postwar Germany and critically examined the recent past.
- 48 Most German *Heimatfilme* (homeland films) present an intact and harmonious world. They deal with friendship, love, family, and life in a village community. They are set in the mountains of Austria, Bavaria, and Switzerland, and sometimes in the Lüneburg Heath or the Black Forest.
- 49 [http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deutscher\\_Film](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deutscher_Film) (accessed August 6, 2010).
- 50 *Die Lümmel von der ersten Bank* (*The Louts in the First Row*) is the title of a series of seven German comedies dealing with school and student pranks. The films, based on the satires and characters of author and German teacher Alexander Wolf, tell the story of a class that rebel against their stuffy teachers and outdated teaching methods using pranks and mischief.
- 51 Johannes Mario Simmel (1924–2009) was an Austrian author who initially worked as an interpreter and translator for the U.S. military government in Hamburg. He was also active as a journalist and in the 1950s wrote screenplays for German entertainment films. In the course of his career Simmel published thirty-five novels, seventeen of which were filmed for German cinema and television between 1958 and 2000. Fassbinder took an interest in Simmel's work early on, although he was regarded as a writer of trashy fiction in Germany. In 1981 Fassbinder wrote a screenplay based on Simmel's 1978 novel *Hurra, wir leben noch* (*Hurray, We're Still Alive*), which he wanted to make into a major film. In 1984, after Fassbinder's death, Peter Zadek completed the project, producing a film entitled *The Wild Fifties*, but he did not use Fassbinder's screenplay.
- 52 The Oberhausen Manifesto: "The collapse of the conventional German film finally removes the economic basis for a mode of filmmaking whose attitude and practice we reject. With it the new film has a chance to come to life. German short films by young authors, directors, and producers have in recent years received a large number of prizes at international festivals and gained the recognition of international critics. These works and these successes show that the future of the German film lies in the hands of those who have proven that they speak a new film language. Just as in other countries, the short film has become in Germany a school and experimental basis for the feature film. We declare our intention to create the new German feature film. This new film needs new freedoms. Freedom from the conventions of the established industry. Freedom from the outside influence of commercial partners. Freedom from the control of special interest groups. We have concrete intellectual, formal, and economic conceptions about the production of the new German film. We are as a collective prepared to take economic risks. The old film is dead. We believe in the new one." The manifesto was signed by twenty-six directors, including Alexander Kluge, Edgar

- Reitz, Peter Schamoni, Haro Senft, and Herbert Vesely. English translation from <http://web.uvic.ca/geru/439/oberhausen.html> (accessed August 3, 2010).
- 53 After the expanded Film Promotion Act of 1975, Germany's two public TV broadcasters (ARD and ZDF) annually provided 6.8 million DM for co-productions, 1 million DM in grants to support projects, and 1.08 million DM in other grants. After numerous changes, FFA's budget was increased to 76 million euro in 2003. The film levy was raised and the television companies doubled their contributions.
- 54 Fassbinder, "Madness" (1992: 124–5).
- 55 See Iden, "Mähliches Trauerspiel" (1974).
- 56 See Iden, "Trübsal, tränend" (1974).
- 57 Asta Scheib (b. 1939) began her career as a magazine editor and freelance journalist, working mainly for the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. Her first literary works were short stories and narratives – including "Angst vor der Angst" ("Fear of Fear"), which provided the basis for her first novel *Langsame Tage* (*Slow Days*). Scheib has worked as a freelance author and scriptwriter since 1986.
- 58 Wolfgang Petersen (b. 1941) began his career as an assistant director in Hamburg, studied theater, and in 1966 enrolled in the newly founded Berlin Film Academy. He started working for German television in 1971 and made his first film, *One of the Other of Us*, in 1973/74. Petersen's television film *Reifezeugnis* (*For Your Love Only*) ranks among the most successful episodes of the *Tatort* detective series. The TV film *Die Konsequenz* (*The Consequence*), which deals with a homosexual relationship, caused a scandal, and Bayerischer Rundfunk, the regional TV network in Bavaria, turned off its transmitters during the broadcast since it considered the topic inappropriate for its viewers. The Bavaria production *Das Boot* was the first big-budget German production, and at that time it achieved the greatest commercial success for a German-language film in the United States. It established Petersen's reputation as a director of blockbuster films.
- 59 Peter Märthesheimer (1937–2004) was Fassbinder's commissioning editor at Westdeutscher Rundfunk (WDR). In 1977 he began working as a producer at Bavaria Film and was responsible, among other things, for Fassbinder's *I Only Want You to Love Me*, *Despair* (*A Journey into Light*), and *Berlin Alexanderplatz*. In 1978 Märthesheimer began co-writing screenplays with Fassbinder (and Pea Fröhlich). On the basis of Fassbinder's drafts, he created scripts for the BRD trilogy *The Marriage of Maria Braun*, *Lola*, and *Veronika Voss*. After Fassbinder's death Märthesheimer wrote numerous film and TV screenplays for other directors. In 1994 he was appointed professor of screenwriting and dramaturgy at the Film Academy of Baden-Württemberg and in 2000 he published the novel *I Am the Other Woman*, which Margarethe von Trotta filmed in 2006.
- 60 Günter Rohrbach (b. 1928) studied philosophy, psychology, and German studies, and completed his education with a doctorate in 1957. He began working as a theatrical critic that same year and landed a job at WDR in 1961. In 1965 Rohrbach was named director of the teleplay department at WDR and he later also ran the department of entertainment and family programming. From 1979 to 1994 Rohrbach served as managing director of Bavaria Studios and he continues to work as a freelance producer today. From 2004 to 2010 he was president of the German Film Academy.
- 61 See Töteberg (1985)
- 62 Hoffmann (2003: 157ff).

- 63 Laube (1978: 324–6).
- 64 Neissel (1991: 102–10).
- 65 *I Only Want You to Love Me* (screenplay and direction), 1976; *Chinese Roulette* (screenplay, direction, and co-production), 1976; *Women in New York*, based on Claire Luce Booth's *The Women* (screenplay and direction), 1977; *The Stationmaster's Wife*, based on a work by Oskar Maria Graf (screenplay and direction), two-part television version and cinema film, 1977; *Despair*, based on a novel by Vladimir Nabokov (direction), 1978.
- 66 Fassbinder Foundation Archives.

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