

# European Film, 1970-1990

- Rainier W. Fassbinder, *The Marriage of Maria Braun* (1979)
- The New German Cinema (Fassbinder, Herzog, Wenders)
- Soviet filmmaking: Tarkovsky

# Rainer Werner Fassbinder (1945-1982)

- Fassbinder's short life & enormous productivity (over 40 films in 14 years)
- The New German Cinema of the 1970s
- Avant-garde/experimental roots meet pop culture passions
- Multiple styles, from classicism to camp
  - Earlier films: generally experimental and alienating
  - Later films: often more straightforward in narrative and in audience identification
- Gay sexuality
- Critique of German history and society
- Sympathy for victims and underdogs
- Melodrama

# Melodrama (1)

- Literally means “drama with music”
- “A drama, such as a play, film, or television program, characterized by exaggerated emotions, stereotypical characters, and interpersonal conflicts” (American Heritage Dictionary)
- Melodramatic (American Heritage Dictionary):
  - “Exaggeratedly emotional or sentimental; histrionic”
  - “Characterized by false pathos and sentiment”
- Melodrama vs. tragedy
- “Women’s pictures”: melodramas traditionally aimed at a female audience

# Melodrama (2)

- Characterized by an “exaggerated rise-and-fall pattern in human actions and emotional responses... Drama is subsumed into décor, color, gesture, and composition which express emotional and psychological predicaments” (Thomas Elsaesser)
- Stylization: strong emphasis on *mise en scène*; the décor as symbolic condensation of the action
- A quicker and more extreme fluctuation in emotional states than is usually considered to be ‘realistic’
- A stress on inferiority, victimization, inability to take control of situations, inability to express or realize oneself
- Sentimentality = inadequacy of emotional expression
- Impotent gestures & hysterical outbursts replace effectual action
- Discontinuity of action vs. hypercontinuity of domestic spaces

# *The Marriage of Maria Braun* (1979)

- Hanna Schygulla
- Emulation of Hollywood melodrama
  - Missing husband
  - Ups and downs of Maria's career
  - Love and ambition
- Maria's career parallels German history
  - Devastation of World War II
  - "Economic miracle" of the 1950s
  - Repression of crimes of Nazi past
- From innocence to cynicism
- Fassbinder's visual style

# The New German Cinema

- 1970s: Germany's answer to the French New Wave of a decade before
- R. W. Fassbinder
- Werner Herzog (1942- ): visual splendor and romantic obsessions (*Aguirre, The Wrath of God*, 1972)
- Wim Wenders (1945- ): road movies, genre films with a philosophical twist (*Wings of Desire*, 1987)
- Others: Margarethe von Trotta, Volker Schlöndorff, Helke Sander, Ulrike Ottinger
- More recently: Doris Dörrie, Tom Tykwer

# Later Soviet Cinema: Tarkovsky

- Cultural thaw after Stalin's death in 1953
- Expanded, freer filmmaking in the 1960s
- Andrei Tarkovsky (1932-1986)
  - *Andrei Rublev* (1969)
  - *Solaris* (1972)
  - *Stalker* (1979)
  - Final films made in the West (*Nostalghia*, 1983; *The Sacrifice*, 1986)
- Tarkovsky's themes: spirituality, emptiness and longing, love and transcendence
- Tarkovsky's style: slow-moving, long shots, long takes, widescreen scene painting