

BOYDELL & BREWER

Spring 2022

THE CAT HAS NINE LIVES

HESTER BAER

Summary

Restores the first German feminist film, long neglected, to its rightful status as a classic forebear of more recent cinefeminism, demonstrating that the film is as relevant today as it was upon its 1968 release.

Key Points

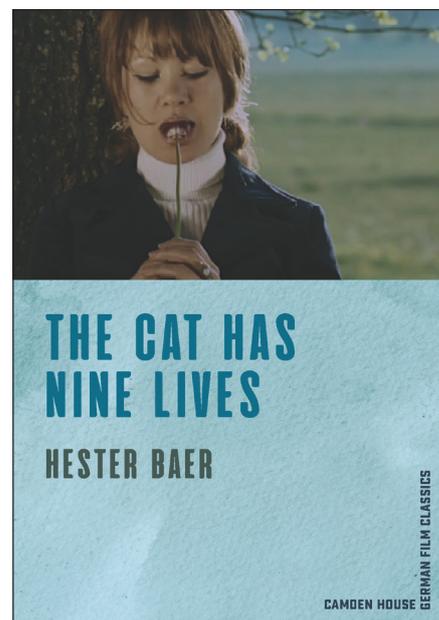
- Imaginatively visualizes changing constellations of gender and sexuality
- Examines the question of desire and self-determination through five characters, who each embody different aspects of women's experience, subjectivity, and fantasy
- Now widely available, the film is ripe for treatment, especially in light of the #MeToo age

Description

Acclaimed as postwar Germany's first feminist film, Ula Stöckl's *The Cat Has Nine Lives* disappeared from view shortly after its 1968 premiere when its distributor went bankrupt. Although it laid the groundwork for the flourishing feminist cinema that emerged in West Germany and beyond during the 1970s, Stöckl's vibrant film long remained largely unknown. Yet it is as fresh and relevant today as it was when it debuted half a century ago. Revived at the 2019 Berlin International Film Festival (Berlinale), *The Cat Has Nine Lives* is now available for the first time on DVD with English subtitles. Posing the question, "Women have never had as many possibilities to do what they want as they have today, but do they know what they want?," Stöckl's film follows the intertwined stories of five characters to explore the possibilities for and limitations on women's subjectivity, desire, friendship, work, and artistic expression in a society defined by gender inequality. Restoring this singular film to its rightful place as a German film classic, Hester Baer argues that *The Cat Has Nine Lives* forms an important aesthetic and theoretical precursor to the unfolding cinefeminism of later decades.

The Author

HESTER BAER is Professor of German Studies at the University of Maryland, where she is a core faculty member in the Cinema and Media Studies and Comparative Literature programs and an affiliate in the Harriet Tubman Department of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies.



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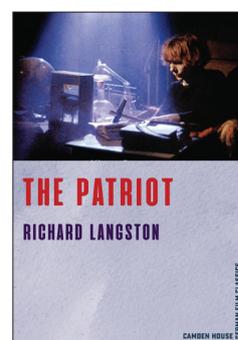
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Above, Fig. 3: Haptic visuality: Anne (Kristine de Loup) pokes holes in beauty standards.



Left, Fig. 6: The dialog between Anne and Sachs (Alexander Kaempfe) indexes everyday sexism.



Right, Figs. 24a-b: A humorous take on the utopian possibilities of cinema: Kirke transforms men into swine.