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“Die Mauer im Kopf”:
Aesthetic Resistance Against West-German Take-Over

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Liberal Arts
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ABSTRACT

Even 24 years after the Fall of the Berlin Wall, modern day Germans are still preoccupied with the contentious dynamics of the post-Wall unification process. Concern with geo-political fractiousness is deeply rooted in German history and the reason for Germany's desire to become a unified nation. The Fall of the Wall, and the subsequent rejection of socialism, was a chance to recover and unify what was perceived to be an "incomplete" nation. Yet, despite these actions, social unity between East and West Germans has never occurred and the Wall still persists as a metaphorical barrier in the minds of German citizens. Thus, the unification process should be critically evaluated so that the lingering (social) disunity between East and West Germans may be better understood and potentially remedied.

This thesis examines how two post-Wall films, *Good Bye, Lenin!* (2003) and *Berlin is in Germany* (2001) reveal patterns that explain the lingering disunity between East and West from an underrepresented lens: an East German perspective. I do so by investigating whether these films offer insights into the culture of the former GDR, which was ideologically, institutionally, and socio-economically divided from the West for over 40 years. This argument is supported by an analysis of how *Good Bye, Lenin!* and *Berlin is in Germany* confront the audience with a new (East German) hero who has to navigate a "foreign" terrain and is expected to adapt to and embrace this entirely new culture. Both films allude to the East German sentiment of longing for GDR culture and values as an

attempt to maintain an East German identity while being threatened by overpowering
“colonization” by the West.

INTRODUCTION

Even 24 years after the Fall of the Berlin Wall, contemporary German citizens are still preoccupied with the contentious dynamics of the post-Wall unification process. Concerns with geo-political fractiousness are deeply rooted in German history and still affect citizens' present day attitudes toward a unified nation. The Fall of the Wall and the subsequent rejection of socialism was assumed to provide chance to recover and unify what was perceived to be an "incomplete" nation; yet, despite these actions, social unity between East and West Germans has never been fully realized and in the minds of many German citizens, the Wall still persists as a metaphorical barrier. After two decades of unification efforts, questions about the post-Wall unification process provide a context rife with opportunities for a cultural studies analysis, because such an analysis can inform the reasons explaining the lingering social disunity between East and West Germans so that this existing problem may be better understood and potentially remedied. Scholarly research about post-Wall dynamics mainly focuses on the positive outcomes of the unification process or construes the action taken after the Fall of the Wall as the "best solution" given the urgency and pressure of decision-making under contentious political, economic, and social conditions. These arguments, however thorough, have neglected to address how post-Wall relations between West and East Germans implicate East Germany's cultural stigma as "Jammer Ossi" (the lamenting East German) and the way in which this stigma hinders the country's true unity.

Since 1989, the German word “Wende” (meaning change or turning point) has been used to describe the unification process after the Wall fell. German films since the *Wende* as a result, have been preoccupied with the nation’s social problems, as well as political debates, by combining popular aesthetic appeal with a critical focus on contemporary German society. In light of a shared Nazi past of “guilt,” post-Wall filmmakers have attempted to reflect on current German history by producing films that mirror a changing German society, and have therefore focused primarily on the challenges of East and West Germans to become one nation after the Fall of the Wall.

As a result, the majority of film scholars have devoted much attention to the themes that characterize post-Wall German cinema. As such, most examinations either focus on the notion of nostalgic construction of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) past (presented in films such as *Good Bye, Lenin!* (2003) and *Sonnenallee* (1999)) or on the concept of “Ostalgie” (The German term “Ostalgie” describes the longing for an extinct East German culture and its products, experienced mostly by East Germans). However, only a very small collection of the existing scholarly literature pays attention specifically to the cinematic response depicting the current dilemma of nation-building by representing the cultural differences of the two formerly separated societies. In this literature, scholars focus on how post-Wall unification affected East Germans, as they were expected to assimilate with (dominant) West German ways, and on the sense of disorientation and displacement that East Germans were subjected to because of the dramatic physical changes (such as massive construction sites, closings of many stores, renaming of streets) that occurred within their “Heimat.”

In this thesis, I propose to contribute scholarship to this gap in research in this emerging area by examining how two post-Wall films, *Good Bye, Lenin!* and *Berlin is in Germany* (2001) reveal patterns that explain the lingering disunity between East and West from an underrepresented lens: an East German perspective. I will do so by investigating whether these films offer insights into the culture of the former GDR, which was ideologically, institutionally, and socio-economically divided from the West for over 40 years. This argument is supported by an analysis of how *Good Bye, Lenin!* and *Berlin is in Germany* confront the audience with a new (East German) hero who has to navigate a “foreign” terrain and is expected to adapt to and embrace this entirely new culture. Both films allude to the East German sentiment of longing for GDR culture and values as an attempt to maintain an East German identity while being threatened by overpowering “colonization” by the West.

My analysis provides close readings of how both films focus on the overthrow of the GDR and the loss of its citizens’ culture; however, I will also distinguish how *Good Bye, Lenin!* attempts to construct a narrative of the GDR’s past, whereas *Berlin is in Germany* mainly focuses on effects of the GDR’s past in a contemporary German context; thus, the analysis of these two films offers a wider perspective on the underlying reasons informing the two cultures’ lack of national unity. The primary purpose of this analysis is to challenge the common assumption that the Wall itself was responsible for dividing German culture. Using the films as context for a new, unique discussion, I show how deeper analysis reveals that the difference in cultures and the West’s deliberate expunging of East German culture is the real cause of disunity after 1989. Thus, my title “Die Mauer im Kopf”: Aesthetic Resistance against West German Take-Over” suggests that the border in (East and West)

Germans' minds lives on. I argue that the act of physically dismantling the Wall, therefore, did not inhibit the pervasive biases about the Otherness on both (East and West) sides of Germany. The argument that I make throughout my thesis represents an emerging area of interest for many cultural studies/historical scholars (Conradt & Langenbacher; Gysi); however, it is timely in a larger context as well, considering that in 2010 Germans elaborately celebrated the 20th anniversary of the Fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the GDR. This anniversary initiated a dialogue of reflection about whether the unification was a success or failure (whether economically, politically, or socially). Political science scholar Rebecca Pates argues in her study "Der Ossi" that many Germans, and especially the media, frequently depict the "Jammerossi (whining East German)" and disapprove of the dissatisfaction that is often expressed by East Germans because of their opinions about the current state of societal inequality in Germany. However, looking back to the events of November 9th, 1989 and reconsidering the storming crowds and destruction of the Berlin Wall by the citizens of Berlin, one can interpret more critically the way politicians and legislators reacted. Given the necessity of initiating reform as quickly as possible, to ensure a safe and economically sound nation for its people, decision-makers were forced to respond – nearly immediately – to avoid a crisis, and as such, they had to implement decisions without careful attention to the potentially (negative) implications. Claims, such as former Federal Finance Minister Thilo Sarrazin's, that "there was nobody there who could come up with solutions," widely circulate as reasons justifying the actions that were undertaken after the Fall of the Wall.

On the other hand, a variety of scholars focus on depicting positive aspects of the unification in post-Wall Germany. Ruth Wittlinger and Steffi Boothroyd's "A 'usable' Past at

Last? The Politics of the Past in United Germany” suggests that the changes that occurred in the nation were actually fruitful, as they allowed an easier identification with the German nation as well as a focus on positive aspects of Germany history, such as the peaceful East German revolution of 1989.

While these readings briefly address the subject of inequality, they seem to largely ignore the consequences of this inequality in contemporary Germany, even 20 years after unification. The lingering issue of the East/West conflict is often de-emphasized and labeled as “problem of the East Germans” or in more extreme cases, is ridiculed, as the general perspective of the West is that East Germans received “everything” and are still dissatisfied.

But how is the depiction of the unification process and the East/West conflict in post-Wall German cinema to be understood and applied to this contemporary problem? A commonly held scholarly opinion of post-Wall cinema in the 1990s suggests that these films lack a critical social standpoint as well as a definitive political commitment, as Erich Rentschler writes:

Journalists, cineastes and intellectuals at large have frequently rebuked German filmmakers for ignoring the nation’s social problems and political debates. Contemporary productions, they tell us, studiously and systematically skirt the ‘large’ topics and hot issues: the messy complications of post-wall reality, thematics like right-wing radicalism, chronic unemployment, or the uneasy integration of the former GDR into the Federal Republic. (262)

In his 2013 monograph, *Postwall German Cinema: History, Film History, and Cinephilia*, Matthias Frey explains emerging patterns for evaluating the shift in critical representation of the GDR past, as well as the implications of its citizens' future in a unified country. One approach sees post-Wall German films merely as products feeding popular taste and responding to fashionable topics, such as "ostalgie" (a longing for GDR culture and goods experienced by East Germans in post-Wall Germany). Other approaches suggest that a change in discourse, moving from an emphasis on a historical context where the German is perpetrator to one of victimhood offers, "conciliatory retro-scenarios of the Nazi period in which contemporary German spectators behold conforming fantasies of identification with Jewish victims ..."

Jennifer Kapczynski criticizes what she believes to be naïve historicism in post-Wall German films by pointing out their deficiencies, namely, "stylistic practices that regularly remind audiences they are witnessing the unfolding of a highly mediated past – one to which they do not have direct access, but rather must work to perceive."

However, the critical and commercial success of post-Wall films since the millennium, such as *Good Bye, Lenin!* and *Berlin is in Germany*, could be seen as a recovery of German cinema. In *Post-Wall German Cinema and National History*, Mary-Elizabeth O'Brian claims that "the cinema provides an important forum in which notions of German history and national identity can be consumed, negotiated, and contested."

In response to the existing literature on post-Wall film analysis, I will argue that German disunity is "consumed, negotiated, and contested" in German post-Wall cinema by closely reading two German films, *Good Bye, Lenin!* and *Berlin is in Germany*. The purpose of this analysis is to provide a more critical understanding and explanation of the potential

reasons for how filmmakers have imagined the post-Wall past and how they have constructed the issues of loss of culture and identity as experienced by former citizens of the GDR.

The primary sources for this thesis will be two post-Wall German films, *Good Bye, Lenin!* (2003) and *Berlin is in Germany* (2001). Both films are mostly set in East Berlin and feature an East German protagonist who represents “the foreigner” in his own country. Even though there is considerable scholarship focusing on these films, due to their commercial success (especially *Good Bye, Lenin!*), most of this existing research has focused solely on the filmmakers’ treatments of the concepts of nostalgia or “ostalgie” and have neglected to critically examine the cause of German disunity: the West Germans’ “colonization” of citizens of the East. I specifically chose these two films because they address similar themes, such as the idea that there is no home for the East Germans to return to, and also because they provide insights into cultural differences, such as their contrasting depictions of the challenges East Germans faced after the Fall of the Wall.

Inspired by Dümcke and Volmer’s “colonization” theory and Benedict Anderson’s text *Imagined Communities*, I want to introduce a new argument that investigates how these films explain the primary cause of social disunity in Germany. In order to accomplish this, I address the sense of extreme disorientation experienced by East Germans as they are assumed to be “at home” in a country that is suddenly foreign to them.

Of significant importance for my research is Dümcke and Vilmar’s *Kolonialisierung der DDR: kritische Analysen und Alternativen des Einigungsprozesses*. In this work, the authors critically challenge the existing two debates about the post-Wall unification process in economic, political, and cultural contexts. The current debate about the post-

Wall unification process is, on one hand, justified to have been the only way things could have been managed in such a pressing state of turmoil and uncertainty. Furthermore, this perspective relies on the defense that no model of “ideal” management of this type of situation existed at that time, so new ways had to be developed and implemented – and without time for deliberation or contestation. Dümcke and Vilmar respond to this conversation by focusing their analysis on the decision-making process itself, versus an emphasis on constructing positive responses to reunification. They argue against the major perspectives by suggesting that alternative decisions were, indeed, possibilities. By providing specific examples of how the GDR has been colonized by West Germany, they identify mistakes that could have been avoided and that need to be addressed retrospectively in order to more critically understand the cultural context of contemporary disunity between East and West Germans.

Dümcke and Vilmar have thoroughly construed the “Colonization” argument (of East Germany by West Germany) and given a plethora of evidence for this position; therefore, I do not intend to offer further historical proof in this thesis. Instead, I solely rely on this theoretical evaluation to find further reasoning for describing how the colonization of East Germans, specifically evidenced in the systematic elimination of East German culture and ideology (and, therefore, national identity) is depicted in the two films I analyze.

Furthermore, I intend to define the term “nation” as a “socially constructed community, imagined by people who perceive themselves part of that group” based on a concept developed in Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities*. By explaining the formation of a nation as Anderson does, I intend to suggest that East and West Germany had, throughout history, evolved into two different peoples and that the forced

ethnogenesis to solve political issues was an imposition of Western values, power, and structures. This imposition is shown, for example, in *Berlin is in Germany*, when Stöhr depicts the renaming of all East German streets in Berlin with West German names and when the film's protagonist, Martin, makes paper planes out of his East German money as it had become worthless because it has been replaced by Western bills.

The two films I analyze within this thesis provide excellent contexts for the specific themes I focus on because they highlight alienating developments, such as the abrupt rejection and disappearance of all East German goods (in response to the destruction of the Wall) and most importantly, the denial of East German identity by the West and the resulting response of "ostalgie" experienced mostly by East Germans. By choosing an East German hero who is forced to navigate through what is, to him, a "new world" and depicting West Germans' disaffirmation of East German culture, the audience is exposed to a more powerful experience, the perspective of "The Colonized," than any historical text could potentially offer.

Discourse pertaining to the colonization of the GDR has been neglected in the past 15 years of scholarly literature on the subject; therefore, my intention is to re-purpose this topic and apply it as framework to the two films, in order to present a unique counter-argument that can hopefully inform the country's existing cultural challenge for a truer nationalism. I do not seek to disregard the other two directions of discourses; however, based on the new wave of German post-Wall historic films that aim to understand and analyze the German unification process and the reasons for the resulting cultural disunity of these two peoples, it is simply not beneficial to focus solely on the positive aspects of the unification process. Furthermore, the common justification that "more was not possible"

hinders efforts for discussing any alternatives that could have been implemented at the time, and continues to hinder progress toward the resolution of contemporary German disunity amongst East and West Germans.

My thesis addresses two themes in the main chapters: in chapter one “Who are you?” I examine the East German condition and specifically, how East German identity is contested by West Germans (as depicted in the two films). I discuss specific examples within the film that depict the stamping-down of East German culture and therefore, East German identity. I also address how German cinema changed in post-Wall Germany specifically as a way of responding to the lingering desire of East and West Germans to mutually understand each other.

In chapter two, “Where are you?” I focus my analysis on how the unification process caused a severe disorientation of East Germans, spatially and emotionally. Since *Berlin is in Germany* is set in the present – it isn’t historically situated like *Good Bye, Lenin* – it illustrates how the disorientation as well as the dislocation of East Germans is not an issue of the past but rather lingers in the present.

In the conclusion, I justify why it is so imperative to critically examine post-Wall German films to more critically understand the post-Wall unification process, and to speculate about what the negotiation of East German identity means both at the present and in the future. I will conclude by arguing that post-Wall German films can be used as educational tools, as they can be “consumed, negotiated, and contested” by a larger audience than any textbook.

CHAPTER ONE:

Who Are You?

We all write and speak from a particular place and time, from a history and a culture which is specific. What we say is always “in context”, ‘positioned’ (Hall)

In order to examine the post-colonial condition of East Germans, and to suggest reasons explaining why their identity is contested by West Germans as evident in the films *Good Bye Lenin!* and *Berlin is in Germany*, it is necessary to attempt to define the complicated concept of “identity.” Despite the vastly increasing interest of cultural/film studies scholars in defining “identity,” (Rentschler) current definitions mostly reflect the now-dated (1950s) work of psychologist Erik Erikson. Erikson’s definition posits that identity is a process in which a person constructs their sense of self through various stages in their life, dictated mostly by age and maturation. However, although this theory is seminal to the discipline of psychology and arguably one of the most influential psychoanalytical findings of the century, for the purposes of narrowing my argument here, I have chosen to work from a more contemporary, relevant definition, cited in 2011 by Simon Clarke in “Culture and Identity.” In this work, he explains:

...the notion of identity as shaped not just in relation to some other, but *to* the Other, to another culture. The notion of cultural identity becomes much stronger and firmer when we define our ‘selves’ in relation to a cultural Other. We start then to see ideas around ‘ways of life’, ‘us’ and ‘them’ ... (2)

According to Clarke, identity is therefore defined by differences amongst people in relationship with one another; it doesn't focus primarily on an individual's development of self in isolation, as Erikson's theory does. Through the lens of the Frankfurt school, and in particular supported by the work of Franz Fanon and Slavoj Zizek, Clarke further argues that identity is socially and psychologically constructed, citing that, "in constructing our cultural identity both socially and psychologically, we tend to construct, play with and destroy the identity of others" (525).

What is most relevant to my project is his argument that people's constructions and perceptions (regardless of whether they are fiction or fact) of the way they imagine their world and the way others exist in it has actual effects in real life. The primary examples I use to illustrate this argument are the films *Good Bye Lenin!* and *Berlin is in Germany*.

These films provide ideal examples of the ways in which identity is negotiated by East German citizens as a result of post-Wall cultural biases and stereotyping. For instance, in similar scenes in both films – the dinner party – the ways in which the protagonists, Martin and Alex, are perceived and thus treated by others have specific repercussions for their agency and power. In both instances, the main characters' physical inferiority (e.g., clothing) "marks" them as less significant individuals, ultimately discrediting their participation with others (in particular, West Germans). While fictional, these characters' challenges – as East Germans who have seemingly become unwelcome foreigners in their own land – reflect the disorientation experienced by East German citizens as inferior "guests" in their own home.

In "Imagined Communities," Benedict Anderson's argument about the concept of community supports the films' illustrations of the identity crises experienced by East

German citizens, as they are attempting to navigate their once-familiar homeland.

Anderson explains that a nation is a socially constructed and imagined community, in which people share affinities, such as language or behavior, but in fact never know every single member of the group/nation (and are therefore engaged with “imagined” relations). The implications of this theory are that a nation is perceived as a product of modernity – created as a means to political/economic ends. This suggests that a nation isn’t predetermined; it is flexible and constructed. More specifically to my project, though, is the way in which nation-states establish and alter their identities in regard to policies, such as immigrants and migration.

If we accept that a person’s – and even a nation’s – identity can be defined by demonstrating differences amongst people, then the argument proposed in my thesis – that East Germans are identified as “Other” and also perceive of themselves as such both in contemporary film and in reality, has theoretical leverage. *Good Bye, Lenin!* and *Berlin is in Germany* reveal patterns that explain the lingering disunity between East and West from an underrepresented lens: an East German perspective. Both films confront the audience with a new (East German) hero who has to navigate a “foreign” terrain and is forced to adapt to this new culture. They imply that the East German sentiment of longing for GDR culture and values is an attempt to maintain an East German identity while being threatened by the overpowering “colonization” by the West. *Good Bye, Lenin!* focuses on the period of time immediately following the Fall of the Wall and the hectic transition and reorientation involved in negotiating a new system and place. The pervasive theme of a “gesamtdeutsch (all-German)” future becomes ironic because of the exclusion and ostracization of East Germans’ affinities (Clarke). *Berlin is in Germany*, however, takes place 14 years after

unification and focuses on contemporary East-West German issues that, according to Hannes Stöhr (the director), depict the East German as the new foreigner and subsequent “Other,” (as opposed to the West German), representing a much more negative interpretation of the unification process.

In order to illuminate this unique cultural condition, I compare two scenes from each film, focusing my analysis on the specific markers (e.g., clothing, dialect) that identify East Germans’ otherness and thus stigmatize them as inferior to West Germans’ cultural practices.

In both films, a dinner party scene is particularly rich with setting and dialogue that explicitly highlights the East German protagonists as “Other” and as a minority within the majority culture. As I argue below, this particular cultural condition is unique because as a result of the Fall of the Wall, East Germans – as German citizens in their own right – experience a deeply personal and profound disorientation: their homeland becomes physically different and culturally foreign, yet they are expected to immediately, willingly assimilate because of their shared identity with the West as “German.”

Berlin is in Germany

The first scene I analyze occurs in *Berlin is in Germany* when the main character, “Martin” (Jörg Schüttauf) joins, without invitation, a dinner party hosted by his ex-wife, Manuela (Julia Jäger), originally from East Germany. Also present are her new partner, “Wolfgang” who is from West Germany and another couple, Pierre (from France) and Pierre’s girlfriend, who is from West Germany. This scene is particularly interesting because the director, Stöhr, infused his *mise-en-scène* with visual and narrative evidence to emphasize Martin’s differences in appearance, language, behavior, and way of life (thus

culture) from the other party guests. The way in which Stöhr works to contrast Martin with the other guests leads his audience to think that due to Martin's differences, he is inferior to the West Germans present, working to underscore his "Otherness." For instance, when Martin enters the frame and dining room setting, all of the guests are already sitting at the table. During a formal introduction via handshake, it is immediately noticeable that Martin is dressed in an inferior, informal way as compared with the other four guests: he is wearing white sneakers, blue jeans, a white shirt, and a blue jeans jacket. This attire is clearly a fashion statement more suitable to the 1980s than the present. On the other members of the party, we see contemporary fashions, such as dress shirts in dark colors and discreet patterns. When Pierre, the only "real" foreigner, introduces himself, Martin pauses for a short while and repeats his name twice, giving the audience the impression that he has never heard that (ostensibly exotic) name before. The camera's focus on Martin, as he pauses to comprehend Pierre's name, reveals to the audience that Martin is not only different in his appearance, but is also differentiated – othered – by his intellect and naïveté.

A few moments later, at the dinner table, each couple is seated facing one another and Martin, in contrast, is located at the end of the table with the consequence that he is further disconnected – again, physically – from the group. He has no partner and nobody across the table to look at; therefore, he seems to be the "5th wheel" and is arguably "odd" both because of his cultural difference and because he is lacking a "better half;" while the couples appear as harmonious sets, he is set off by his singleness.

Additionally, the viewer is immediately informed about Martin's status as an outsider because he is framed in the very center of a wide/straight-on shot that implies he is under special scrutiny (which also extends to his status among the guest who treat him

like an animal in a zoo). The position of Pierre and Wolfgang – as both are sitting vis-à-vis at the table, slightly turned towards Martin so that the audience can only see their backs – further reinforces that Martin is not only the focus of attention because of his physical otherness, but also the object of scrutiny and the stranger or “Other” to be inspected.

After being seated, Martin is asked whether he wants to eat dinner: “Paella. Das isst man so in Spanien (Paella. That’s what one eats in Spain),” says Manuela. At this moment, it is interesting that she has to explain to him that paella is a Spanish dish, which suggests that Martin is not as culturally sophisticated as she is. The notion of cultural superiority is further reinforced when Martin answers in a strong Berliner dialect: “Joa, schmeckt jut. Schmeckt echt jut. (Yes, tastes good. Tastes really good).” At this point, Martin is not only physically othered by his clothing and lack of a partner but additionally, because of his dialect. His use of dialect serves as an aesthetic and intellectual marker of inferiority: aesthetically, he sounds unrefined, and consequently, appears less intelligent. Recent linguistic scholarship reinforces this argument, citing Germans’ contemporary opinions about dialects:

Dialekte sind altmodisch und klingen ungebildet. Wer etwas erreichen will, muss Hochdeutsch sprechen – so eine verbreitete Meinung (Dialects are dated and make a person sound uneducated. Whoever wants to achieve something, needs to speak High German - according to wide spread opinion [in Germany]). (Goethe-Institut, n.pag.)_

Martin is therefore shown not only as an “Other” physically, but intellectually as well.

In addition to undermining Martin’s dialect, Martin also quotes the Russian writer Alexander Pushkin at another point during the dinner, which underscores that Martin grew

up in East Germany and in an educational system that valued an ideologically skewed view of the world. Historically, West Germans were reared to speak English as a second language and focused on Western literature and philosophy, whereas East Germans were instructed in Russian and in the Russian as well as Soviet classics. An article in *Der Spiegel* (1990) explains that Russian had been a requirement in East German schools from fifth to at least 10th grade from 1948 until the Fall of the Wall, when Russian language education became a “Randprogramm” (side program). After unification, an “Anti-Russian-Trend” began and almost all students living in the East decided to take English to be more competitive in the job market, since all West Germans were educated in English and participated in the global capitalist market. Furthermore, the Russian language came to be seen as a scapegoat for criticism of the former socialist educational system, which was accused of imposing its ideology onto students (“Immer nur Komsomol”). In light of this historical/contextual information, the implications of this scene, as well as the Pushkin quote in *Berlin is in Germany*, can be appreciated for their symbolic significance. In addition to Martin’s performative otherness and the filmic tools employed, such as the camera’s positioning and focus, affect the viewer’s understanding of Martin as a symbolic character. When Martin quotes: “Wo der Tisch voll Speisen war, dort steht ein Sarg (Where there used to be a table full of food, a coffin now stands),” the camera’s position changes from a medium shot to a close-up of Martin’s face. This close-up shot makes it possible for the viewer to see that as he is saying the word “Sarg” (coffin), he is also turning to Wolfgang. Stöhr then cuts to a close up of Wolfgang’s frowning face replete with pinched lips and pierced glance. The direction of Wolfgang’s gaze indicates to the audience that he is looking back at Martin and understanding that this remark was aimed specifically at him. When Martin proceeds to

mention the poet's name, Alexander Sergeyevich Pushkin, Stöhr cuts to a close up of Manuela, who quickly follows up Martin's quotation with a wry smile and a toast, suggesting that she is uncomfortable with Martin's odd comment as it reveals his different, East German identity or culture, implying that it is something to be ashamed of. Contrary to Martin and Wolfgang, who are gazing at their "opponent," the close up of Manuela suggests that she is avoiding her guests' gaze; she looks at her wine glass instead. Manuela is depicted as feeling ashamed for Martin and perhaps she believes that she, too, is negatively implicated because of her former association with him. Instead of feeling guilty about the party's treatment of a "fellow" German and defending her former husband, she is turned into a guilty bystander.

Stöhr reinforces Martin's isolation, as well as otherness, in this scene through Martin's inappropriate behavior during dinner: while the four "Western" guests display impeccable table manners, sitting with straight backs at the table and occasionally sipping their wine, Martin sits hunched forward, leaning on his elbows, and speaking with his mouth full. The scene concludes the way it started: a medium shot shows Martin framed in the center, all guests slightly turned towards him with their backs to the audience, continuing their observations until the conclusion of the gathering. Martin is never able to penetrate their closed circle and remains firmly at the periphery. As a final act, Martin loses all dignity and while answering a question about his specific location during the Fall of the Wall, he stands up, intoxicated, and concludes his account by screaming out loud that he rose up against the GDR regime but, as if to undermine his own account of defiance, falls onto the floor. Manuela is the only one to react – she gets up to assist him immediately; however, the other three guests do not move. Pierre and his wife stare with disbelief in

Martin's direction and Wolfgang turns his head away from Martin's position on the floor. At this point in the film, Martin is no longer visible in the frame, as he is lying on the floor behind the table. The lack of a reaction from the non-Easterners and Martin's absence from the frame visually suggest the guests' indifference toward Martin's existence and well-being and confirm his isolation from the group; whether he is present or absent does not appear to matter. If we now reconsider Martin's Russian quote, "Where there used to be a table full of food, a coffin now stands," it becomes clear that the protagonist has fallen into this proverbial coffin; not only has the Russian and Soviet cultural legacy been extinguished in the newly united Germany but also the "Ossi" (slang for East German citizen) has been killed off.

If one considers Anderson's concept of a nation as a socially constructed community in which its members appreciate shared interests, despite a lack of acquaintance with individual members it becomes clear that Stöhr's film suggests an extra-national relationship between East and West Germans. During the duration of this scene, the audience is shown that despite public declarations of each other's support, East and West Germans do not share affinities that could form the basis of a unified Federal Republic of Germany due to more than 40 years of separation and the development of different cultural values; thus the film highlights that assumptions of shared interests, language, and behavior simply because of a shared space (i.e., the nation) are naïve and even false. The concept of nation as constructed predates Anderson's shared community and is illustrated in Ernest Renan's 1882 essay *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation? (What is a nation)*. He describes a nation as:

a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things, which are really one, constitute this soul and spiritual principle. One is in the past, the other, the present. One is the possession in common of a rich trove of memories; the other is actual consent, the desire to live together, the will to continue to value the undivided, shared heritage (...) To have had glorious moments in common in the past, a common will in the present, to have done great things together and to wish to do more, those are the essential conditions for a people. We love the nation in proportion to the sacrifices to which we consented, the harms that we suffered. (n.pag.)

In *Berlin is in Germany*, the “glorious pasts” that East and West Germany may have had in common appear as too far in the past to be tapped in the present. Furthermore, judging by the film’s depiction of the ignorant way Martin is treated, it is not foreseeable that a “common will in the present” to do great things in the future is possible.

Comparing the behavior, and specifically the table manners, of the East and West Germans in this scene, the 1960s term “Positivismusstreit” (the dispute about methods and value judgments of the social sciences, primarily in Germany) and the resulting concept of “Sekundärtugend” (secondary virtues) is immediately useful for understanding traditional (East and West) German ways of raising and educating children and young adults. These secondary virtues were understood to be character traits implemented for the practical handling of everyday life. However, these virtues are often criticized for neglecting to vouch for their own ethical merit. In “Contemporary Ideas in a Traditional Mind-Set,” Astrid Mignon Kirchhof suggests that these secondary virtues were implemented as “social rehabilitation [from the horrors of the Second World War]” (Kirchhof 40). Originally borrowed from the catalog of Prussian virtues, some of these virtues are politeness,

restraint, and orderliness, which are still esteemed in contemporary Germany, and are especially obvious with regard to table manners.

Since the East German in this film is depicted as behaving like a peasant who is unaware of the most basic social skills, it is necessary for my argument to elaborate about potential reasons explaining Stöhr's decision (consciously or unconsciously) to depict this character in this unfortunate light. Rather than suggesting that Stöhr purposefully cast Martin as a character who represents the uncivilized "Ossi," though, I suggest that it's possible that as a West German, Stöhr may have allowed his own prejudices to interfere with what is otherwise a portrayal of an affable protagonist. In support of this suggestion, I point to evidence that potentially contradicts Stöhr's suggestion that in the East, a less-refined attitude toward etiquette was part of the social norm. For instance, in an article in *Die Zeit*, Susan Gaschke explains that in the former GDR, behavior, effort, collaboration, and tidiness were mercilessly graded within the classroom, unlike Western educational institutions, which had given up teaching and acknowledging secondary virtues in schools in the 1970s. In addition, another lengthy 1990 *Der Spiegel* article titled "Viele DDR-Bürger leiden unter den schlechten Manieren von Touristen aus der Bundesrepublik" [Many citizens of the GDR suffer under bad manners of tourists coming from the FRG] lists many examples supporting that East Germans demanded stricter manners than West Germans. Noteworthy is also the first sentence of the article: "Nach Ansichten von Stephanie Heim, 19, sind DDR-Bürger 'irgendwie andere Menschen'" [According to Stephanie Heim, 19, GDR citizens are 'somehow different']. In *Berlin is in Germany*, however, this difference is depicted in exactly the opposite way. Filmmaker Stöhr's West German identity might lie at the core of this depiction; however, in addition to reinforcing unjustified stereotypes, the

depiction of the East German as the “Other” or specifically the “loser,” in this story, also has ideological implications. If the East German is portrayed as a misbehaving brute, then it becomes more reasonable to demand that the East Germans behave like the sophisticated West Germans and adopt West German values. In “Ossis sind Türken” [East Germans are Turks] Toralf Staud explores the reasons justifying why it makes sense to compare East Germans to immigrants and how this comparison helps dissolve most East-West German conflicts. He claims that the majority of East and West clashes can be explained as issues of West Germans’ demand (as the majority of the population) for East Germans’ assimilation and conversely, the East German “immigrants” asking permission to preserve, at the very least, some of their historical identity (Staud n.pag.).

This comparison perfectly characterizes the scene analyzed above. Martin, the immigrant, displays his brutish socialist/Russian-infused culture and ends up defeated and degraded on the ground. Manuela, on the other hand, has assimilated into her new West German surroundings, and is subsequently trying to distance herself from Martin, implying that his cultural identity is inappropriate and unwelcome in her new place.

Good Bye, Lenin!

The negative portrayal of East Germans is similarly evident throughout another “post-Wende” film and one that enjoyed great popularity in German cinemas: *Good Bye, Lenin!* (Wolfgang Becker). A particular scene in *Good Bye, Lenin!* proves a similar pattern in the portrayal of East Germans in post-Wall German cinema. Toward the end of the film, “Alex” (Daniel Brühl), the main protagonist, is shown in a taxi in East Berlin, giving the driver the destination “Wannsee.” It is noteworthy that the driver in this scene is or looks like a former East German astronaut and Alex’s childhood hero, Sigmund Jähn. Jähn

appears in other scenes of the film, in a series of flashbacks that were shot using video equipment of the past (colors are faded, edges are rounded, etc.). These flashbacks provoke nostalgic sentiments and possibly even insinuate glorification of the GDR, as they are, within the narrative, used to show the “good old days” of Alex’s happy childhood in the GDR. The film leaves to the viewers’ discretion whether the taxi driver is indeed the cosmonaut or whether he merely looks like him. What is important, however, is the fact that it is absolutely plausible that even a cultural icon like Jähn could now be reduced to a mere taxi driver. Within the taxi, the audience now sees the former GDR hero driving “ein kleines stinkiges Lada Taxi [a tiny, smelly Lada taxi],” as Alex narrates it, clearly indicating that his idol has been relegated as a “ghost of [his] past,” an icon not shared by the newly unified nation. This scene also reinforces the sentiment evidenced within *Berlin is in Germany*, that the GDR and West Germany experienced different pasts that cannot be magically merged or disregarded because of unification.

The more practical purpose of the taxi ride is for Alex to visit his estranged father, who had supposedly abandoned his family in East Berlin to live a “new life” in Wannsee, an affluent district in the West. During the ride to West Berlin, Alex’s voiceover comments on the experience and alludes to the cosmonaut driver:

So flogen wir durch die Nacht, wie durch die Weiten des Cosmos. Lichtjahre entfernt von unserem Sonnensystem. Vorbei an fremden Galaxien mit unbekanntem Lebensformen landeten wir in Wannsee. [And so we flew through the night as if gliding through outer space, light years from our solar system. We passed strange galaxies harboring unknown life forms and landed in Wannsee].

The content of this narration, inspired by the presence of Alex's childhood hero, is not merely a nostalgic way of describing the drive from East to West Berlin, it is Alex's recapitulation of the feelings he has about his estranged father and the perceived spatial and cultural disconnection that exists between them. It pinpoints Alex's central concern of the West "harboring unknown life forms" that are "light years" away from his part of the city.

This cultural and spatial separation of East and West Berliner neighborhoods is cleverly depicted in the scene in which Alex first enters his father's house. Similarly to Martin in *Berlin is in Germany*, Alex also enters a West German household, uninvited. Here, too, a dinner party is in progress. What is immediately noticeable when comparing the scenes within these two films is the similar mise-en-scène and more specifically, the similarities between the main characters' wardrobe. Alex, like Martin, also wears blue jeans and a blue jeans jacket, the outfit of choice for young people in the 70s and 80s, but a relic of the past in the new millennium. Considering now that both filmmakers chose blue jeans to represent the East Germans, it is useful and necessary to evaluate this significant symbolism: what does the characters' clothing insinuate about their cultural otherness?

Besides representing fashion trends of particular decades, the potential symbolism of blue jeans is an issue wrought with contention among scholars: while some literature suggests that Germans' choice to wear denim reflected their political rebellion against the "political paternalism of the state" (Menzel 5), other scholars disagree, contending that wearing denim represents the desire to blend in; to become less conspicuous. I would contend that historical context plays an inherently persuasive role in determining personal and national identity – and in this case, for explaining the significance of East Germans'

choice to wear blue jeans before and after the Fall of the Wall. In “Jeans und Pop in der DDR” [Jeans and Pop [culture/music] in the GDR] Rebecca Menzel explains that in the 1970s, blue jeans were considered a product of the (Western) ideological enemy of the GDR; therefore, they were typically worn by the youth to rebel against the political paternalism of the state (5). So while West Germans might have worn jeans to revolt against parental authority and regulation, against the Nazi generation, for East Germans – on the other hand – there was more at stake than generational conflict: during the Wall’s existence, according to Menzel, wearing jeans signaled opposition to a totalitarian socialist system. However, this rebellious attitude changed after the Fall of the Wall and the end of the socialist regime in the East. After the Fall, wearing jeans no longer seemed to be an act of defiance but rather, a desire to blend in and an attempt at being comfortable in one’s skin. This is reflected in anthropologist Daniel Miller’s article, “A Manifesto for the Study of Denim,” in which he evaluates the various reasons for why people decide to wear blue jeans. In order to determine these reasons, he conducted an ethnographic experiment within two streets of London, where immigrants are the primary population. His research specifically focuses on the population wearing inexpensive denim, as designer jeans denote expressions of class and represent a minority of the denim worn by this population. His study concludes with the following observation:

Migrants use jeans to become ordinary in the same way that non-migrants use them to become ordinary. To avoid status competition at school in the absence of a uniform, parents encourage their children to wear jeans. In college, when students wish to become part of a community without being marked, they wear jeans. When coming from work to relax, our participants

wear jeans. Jeans can be dressed up without being too dressy but also dressed down. They resolve contradictions and deflect offense or argument. They allow people to relax into a comfortable state of ordinariness, which is not to be denigrated as a failure to become special but is an achievement in its own right. (Miller 27)

As I argue that cultural and ideological differences between East and West Germans and the take-over of West Germans (a non-violent colonization) included forcing Western values and concepts upon the new citizens, the treatment of migrants and immigrants can be compared to the treatment of East Germans, in the sense that both groups have to navigate a non-familiar culture, one that is foreign to their previous experience.

East Germans' choice to wear blue jeans could be motivated by the desire to be ordinary, to feel comfortable, and thus to blend in. But in the scene in *Good Bye, Lenin!*, discussed above, it becomes clear that Alex, like Martin, does not blend in. In *Good Bye, Lenin!*, the Caribbean-themed party that is in progress consists of a live band playing inconspicuous Caribbean music, with numerous guests dressed in suits, ties and evening gowns, holding nicely decorated cocktail glasses, and greeting each other with a polite "Guten Abend" (Good evening). Alex responds with a "Guten Tach" speaking with a dialect that makes him appear ignorant and out of place. Upon entering through the front door and asking where Herr Kerner is, he is immediately told, "the buffet is outside," rather than given a coherent answer, indicating that the guests assume that Alex is attending the party only for the food. The Caribbean theme and the foreign word "buffet" not only illustrate a West German penchant for exotic and foreign cultures, but also their finesse and insight

into other cultures' traditions and foods. It also highlights the urge to display this inter-cultural sophistication.

The camera follows Alex on his way from the front door to the living room, as he searches for his father. The camera continuously alternates from his point of view to the point of view of the other guests. Due to these shot/reaction shots, the audience is able to see the guests standing in groups and comfortably chatting and laughing with each other. On the other hand, Alex, who is visibly walking uncomfortably through the gathering, is visually and literally isolated.

When Alex pauses for a moment to look around the room, an off-screen sound of the German children show "*Sandmännchen*" interrupts his search. This show is of particular cultural and metaphorical significance as its development parallels the East-West division and unification. In 1959, this children's show and its basic storyline was shown as separate productions in West and East German television. In 1989 the East German version continued to be shown on TV in a united Germany and a new generation of Germans experienced it as a program for all Germans. Upon hearing the *Sandmännchen* tune and drawn to this familiar sound, Alex enters the TV room and finds his two younger half-siblings watching the show. Suddenly, Alex is not the outsider anymore and his newfound comfort is visible on his relaxed facial expressions. After his half-sister asks him to sit next to them, all three are framed in a medium shot sitting closely and harmoniously next to each other and watching what seems to be a cultural production they share, since all are familiar with this version of the *Sandmännchen*. The tranquility of the scene is interrupted, however, when Alex's half-brother mentions that there is an astronaut in the picture. Alex answers that where he comes from, an astronaut is called a cosmonaut. When his half-

brother then inquires further about his origins, Alex responds that he is “from another country.” Alex’s attempt to assert his cultural difference and his alterity of language exemplify Staud’s argument that the immigrant continues to strive to maintain his (different) identity within the dominant culture.

For various reasons, *Sandmännchen* provides a boundary object (Star & Griesemer), representing the complicated ideological tension in the East/West (or class) conflict. “Boundary objects” are things – in this case, a television show – that represent different meanings in different social worlds, despite the fact that they share the same shape/form (393). The theoretical concept of the boundary object works well here as a way of explaining how *Sandmännchen* works as a symbol of East/West differences and the implications of unification; the East Germans’ struggle for social currency/credibility.

For instance, in “Sandmännchen in Ost und West. Wir müssen die gegnerische Sendung treffen“ [Sandman in East and West. We must hit the Opponent’s show], Heike Hupertz recalls how East and West Germany engaged in a race to possess the rights to this object; to broadcast the show first. The show, as Hupertz explains, even alters the different appearance of the “Sandman” figure and features different stage props, in order to convey political-ideological meaning (e.g., the East used important rockets symbolizing the pride accompanying Sigmund Jähn as the first German in space.). The key term “opponent,” in the title of the article, clearly reflects the mindset of East and West Germans in 1959 and exemplifies once more how these two nations competed against each other. Hupertz concludes the article by suggesting that the East-*Sandmännchen* is one of the very few “Wendegewinner” [winners after the fall of the Wall]. Here again, it is important to emphasize the language that is used in the article: the author refers to winners, reinforcing

again the perception of a competition between the two nations. As Jennifer Kapczynski argues in “Negotiating Nostalgia: The GDR Past in *Berlin is in Germany* and *Good Bye, Lenin!*” the *Sandmännchen* scene (described above) is “*Ostalgie* [the longing for the GDR culture, products, or past in general] as a *gesamtdeutsch* phenomenon” and that “both East and West “consume” the GDR past” (84). Furthermore, Kapczynski claims that Becker illustrates how *Ostalgie* is also a West “capitalist marketing strategy” (84) but it is questionable whether one can speak of an “*Ostalgie* marketing strategy” when referring to a children’s show that aired on public television and with presumably no inherent commercial value.

In this scene, Alex’s “Otherness” is again reinforced when his father enters the room and sits down on the sofa with his three children. The two half-siblings immediately surround their father: one is sitting on his lap and the other closely next to him, while Alex sits alone on the other side of the sofa. The camera then contrasts close-up shots of the father with his two children with a close up of Alex, further emphasizing that both parties are separate and do not belong together, despite their inhabitation of the same space and their biological connection.

When father and son reunite in the TV room after the father delivers a speech to his guests, they are sitting on a sofa facing the audience. Framed at a medium distance, which emphasizes their contrasting clothing, another parallel to *Berlin is in Germany* emerges: Alex is dressed in jeans clothing from head to toe, whereas his father is wearing an elegant black suit, a black shirt, as well as an expensive watch on his wrist. What might be a depiction of an emotional reunion between a young son and his older father becomes the

juxtaposition of the sloppy East German intruder and furthermore, the naïve person who would dare to disrupt a dinner party for which he is obviously not appropriately dressed.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that both films' protagonists, Martin and Alex, seek refuge in children's company at some point during the evening. In *Berlin is in Germany* Martin asks to see his son Rocco immediately after being asked a question about his profession, seemingly as to avoid being asked further questions and thus escaping judgment. Similarly, Alex is drawn to his young siblings when he recognizes the music of the *Sandmännchen*, after wandering lost and forlorn, searching for his father through the unfamiliar house.

Alex and his father, Robert, are also shown in contrasting postures in the TV room. Robert is sitting upright, with a straight back, and Alex is shown leaning against the sofa and somewhat hunched over. During their short conversation, they remain in this position, occasionally looking at each other but more often avoiding each other's gaze; their alignment appears forced and the two figures resemble strangers, sitting neutrally side-by-side in a waiting room. Both Alex and Martin face well-postured West Germans in these similar scenes in which Germans – as outsiders and insiders – confront one another.

These particular scenes represent poignant moments in which the main characters try but ultimately fail to maintain their individual identities, and battle the conceptions of West Germans' biases against them. In these films the protagonists appear to act out historical post-Wall German unification during which East Germany was dispossessed, based on erroneous assumptions of what constitutes national identity and how it is constructed. Whereas individual identities can collaboratively make up a nation, my argument here is that identity, and concomitantly national identity, is constructed in a far

more complicated and multi-layered process. National identity cannot be conjured up at will to serve a political trajectory; it is tied to the ways in which cultural and ideological differences among individual groups influence one another. It goes beyond a shared geographic space and language to encompass a larger range of issues. Moreover, national identity is constantly in flux because of the historical contexts that are defining and re-defining it. For a post-Wall German context, then, West Germans' presumed authority and superiority, based on economic strength and reinforced by filmic representations of post-unity difference, negatively affects and precludes both sides' perception and acceptance of German national unity.

CHAPTER TWO

Where Do You Go?

The ache for home lives in all of us, the safe place where we can go as we are and not be questioned (Maya Angelou)

Whereas chapter one discusses East German “otherness,” as exemplified in post-Wall German cinema by means of the East German characters’ distinctive speech, inferior physical appearance, and “odd” behavior, this chapter focuses on how German unification, or rather the “West German Take-Over,” brought forth a spatial transformation that resulted in either unsettled ground or in a disorientation of the East Germans’ sense of (home) place. More specifically, within this chapter I illustrate how East Germans not only had to integrate into a German society that was foreign to them, but also how their once-familiar country and family homes became suddenly unfamiliar. In “Ossis sind Türken,” Strauf explains the phenomenon of East Germans’ sudden de-familiarization with their country and abrupt displacement into a newly nationalized German state:

Tatsächlich aber sind die Ostdeutschen [...] aus einem völlig anderen Land gekommen. Sie ließen ihre Heimat hinter sich, gerieten in einen fertigen Staat, in eine gesetzte Gesellschaft, die nicht auf sie gewartet hatte, die sie kaum mitgestalten konnten, in die sie sich einzupassen hatten [...] Das Außergewöhnliche ihres Migrantendaseins ist bloß, dass sie ausgewandert sind, ohne sich fortbewegt zu

haben. Das neue Land ist zu ihnen gekommen, nicht umgekehrt. [However, in reality East Germans [...] came from a completely different country. They left their home country behind, came into a pre-conceived state, into a demure society, that had not waited for them, which they were not able to contribute to, but rather had to adapt to [...]] what is remarkable about their migration status is that they migrated without having moved. The new country had come to them, not vice versa]. (1)

Good Bye, Lenin! and *Berlin is in Germany* depict all East Germans almost identically in terms of their appearance, speech, and way of life. Furthermore, both films address their sense of disorientation similarly. In both films, the audience is confronted with the male East German protagonist who is wrestling to continue existence after the disappearance of his home country, in a world that has become unknown to him. Both films make strong references to everyday reality as presented by mass media, specifically television. During a substantial portion of *Berlin is in Germany*, Martin carries a TV and frequently explains that “Det kenn ick nur aus’m Fernseh’n” [I only know that from TV], suggesting that East Germans are trying to make sense of the new, progressive world through the medium of television. However, this concept becomes complicated because throughout the film, Martin’s TV screen often remains blank, implying that ultimately, he is on his own and needs to discover the new world without any mediation. What is perhaps even more symbolic, though, is that whenever Martin turns on his TV, the coverage depicts current events or topics that are completely unfamiliar to Martin; therefore, he is confronted with a mediated new reality without the benefit of physical interaction. This becomes especially apparent in a scene, which depicts Martin in a toy store shopping for an item he had seen

on TV for his young son. When the sales associate asks Martin if the item he wants to buy is a Game Boy, he replies:

Nee aber keen Tamagotchi. Dat hab ick och ma so'n Bericht im Fernseh jesehn. Also find ick völlig absurd. Ja so'n elektronisches Haustier füttern find ich total pervers. Nee, nee das is so'n Ding wo man mit beeden Händen druffdrücken muss. Aber vielleicht is' es besser wenn ick einfach nur'n Fußball koofe, wa [No, but not a Tamagotchi. I have seen a TV report about it. I find it totally absurd. I think feeding an electronic pet is perverted. No, it's a thing that you have to use with two hands. But maybe I should just simply buy a soccer ball, right?]

It becomes clear to the audience that Martin does not understand what the sales associate is suggesting and furthermore, that he did not fully comprehend the toy commercial he had seen on TV, either. Martin cannot properly articulate the name of the item nor what its purpose is. He only remembers how to use it and imitates it to the sales associate by using another toy's controller. His idea of buying a soccer ball seems to be his way of surrendering after so much confusion and complication about the more technologically advanced toy. It is possible that Stöhr may be alluding to his personal opinion here, considering that the "good old soccer ball" is a toy that is more universal and pedagogically useful, as it is, in the majority of cases, used by a group of children/adults; thus promoting social interaction. The Game Boy, on the other hand, is for an individual person's solitary enjoyment. Additionally, the Tamagotchi and the Game Boy are both Japanese products, drawing viewers' attention to the implications of globalization and the inundation of domestic markets with foreign products. The many different versions of the Tamagotchi and the Game Boy available on the market suggest that capitalism stops at

nothing – not even children. Since capitalism is a product of the West, Martin expresses here yet another moment of alienation and disenfranchisement.

The implicit suggestion that Western ideology and capitalism is taking over is visually reinforced, when Martin is in the center of the frame of a medium shot, standing in front of a robotic dog that is visible only from its back and side. Its head, with an open mouth and jagged teeth, is pointing towards Martin's throat. Because of the camera angle, the robotic dog (which is actually rather small in reality; sitting on top of a shelf) appears to be the size of Martin's upper body, giving the impression that it is about to attack him. Martin, on the other hand, is standing partly hidden by the toy dog with uncombed hair and a partially unbuttoned shirt, seeming confused, lost, and about to be taken over by the toy dog; the "beast" of capitalism.

Overall, the TV helps and hinders Martin at the same time. He is able to access shows about current events or commercials about the newest products on the market, but this information gives him no currency for navigating through this new country. The TV, along with other modes of technology (such as the airplane that frequently flies overhead) reminds him that in theory, he has newfound possibilities; however, in reality, he is disoriented (or displaced) as he is without means for pursuing those possibilities. From Martin's perspective, the new possibilities seem like nagging reminders that he is "The Other" and the baggage of this social stigma hinders his opportunity to attain work; hence, restricting him from moving freely wherever he wants to. As Jennifer Kapczynski explains, because a Western ideology is permeating the country, East Germans find themselves polarized, in a sense, between nostalgia and nowhere (80): they are "going nowhere and

with nowhere to go the old days of the GDR travel restrictions seem suddenly appealing” (94).

The television also plays a symbolic role in *Good Bye, Lenin!*, as Alex, the protagonist, uses the TV to create false newscasts which are meant to trick his mother into thinking that the Wall is still standing. What inadvertently happens, however, is that he constructs a fictional GDR, a “DDR, die ich mich gewünscht hätte [GDR that I had wished for],” as Alex’s voice-over comments at the end of the film. Within this voice-over narration, the audience learns about Alex’s relationship with his mother, whom has since died, and the GDR:

Ein Land, das es in Wirklichkeit nie so gegeben hat. Ein Land, das in meiner Erinnerung immer mit meiner Mutter verbunden sein wird [A country that in reality had never existed in this way. A country that in my memory I will always associate with my mother].

By equating his mother with the GDR and her death with the disappearance of the GDR, Alex seems to suggest an extremely close relationship between an individual and her/his home country or nation, implying that the loss of this nation brings forth emotional trauma.

Stöhr’s and Becker’s films accomplish two different things by using TV or media within their films: In *Berlin is in Germany*, the TV (the device itself as well as the shows it features while it is on) evokes current issues related to unification rather than reconstructing a GDR past. Additionally, the TV is a metaphor for a new world that communicates its ideas, products, and ways of life more anonymously. Through this new, anonymous network, Martin also gains access to a world that has become more complicated: the good old soccer ball is replaced by a Tamagotchi, an electronic “pet” that

needs to be fed and taken care of in an artificial, cyber-world. On the other hand, in *Good Bye, Lenin!*, Becker uses the TV as a medium that encourages the audience to understand that allegiance to one's nation (or homeland) is part of a complex relationship and the memories of this relationship will accompany the citizen far beyond the dissolution of this construct. Becker uses this strategy frequently by inserting flashbacks via home movie footage of Alex's childhood. As a result, the audience sees how Alex is trying to make sense of the end of his home country and to make the transition to a unified nation. Alex acts out this transition by creating fake broadcasts for his mother; symbolic of the nostalgic longing for his childhood home. Both films, however, share a conclusion: the audience is told where Alex and Martin come from, but where they are going is unknown, leaving the audience – as the protagonists – in an unsettled and displaced state.

The theme of disorientation is also depicted in the filmmakers' attention to the physical changes within the city of Berlin following unification, changes which contribute to the disconnection of both protagonists with their once familiar surroundings. No longer at home and not welcome in the newly unified country, the "Ossi" has become the "Zoni" (one who lived in the "Zone," a derogatory term that is used to describe the former GDR area as part of a continued Russian occupation), who is lower on the class ladder even than the foreigner, according to Stöhr's film. This becomes evident in one scene, when Peter, Martin's best friend, talks about his hardship to gain employment in unified Germany. He explains that anyone else, even the foreigner, would be considered first.

Throughout *Berlin is in Germany*, Stöhr shows the audience specifically how Martin has become a foreigner in his own country. The effects of this inferiority are apparent immediately, at the beginning of the film, when Martin is released from prison. In the

beginning of this scene, an officer hands him the three items he had owned before unification: his ID, his driver's license, and his wallet. Now, fourteen years later, all of these items are somehow useless pieces of paper. The ID of the GDR "(...) Ausweis der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik ist längstens bis zum 31. Dezember 1995 gültig [... is valid at the utmost until December 31st, 1995] ("Vertrag zwischen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik –Bundesrecht" n. pag.). After that date, citizens of the former GDR were required to obtain new IDs – the same ones citizens of West Germany had already been using – alluding once again to the presumption that the spirit of West Germany and its constitution (*das Grundgesetz*) had the right to assume dominance over the new members of the unified Germany, instead of establishing new laws and documents for all citizens.

The second item that is returned to Martin on the day of his release, his wallet, contains DDR Mark (GDR Marks), a currency which became invalid on June 30th, 1990. It is important to note that once this change was initiated, former GDR citizens were required to exchange their money for Deutsche Marks within a strict deadline and with a diminished value (2 to 1). In fact, both films illustrate the process of exchanging currency after the Fall of the Wall. In *Berlin is in Germany*, we see Martin making little paper planes with it; since he was released from prison after 1990, he did not have the chance to exchange his money, rendering it useless. In *Good Bye Lenin!*, Alex's family hides their money in his apartment but when they decide to exchange it, his mother cannot remember where she had hid it. After remembering the hiding place, only mere days after the exchange deadline had expired, the bank teller refuses an exchange, leaving Alex angrily throwing their money onto the street.

The last item that Martin receives upon his release is his GDR driver's license. However, when Martin attempts to take a taxi driver certification, having lived in Berlin his whole life and therefore, knowing the city, he now struggles to find his way around, as most of the streets in East Berlin have been renamed. In a recently published article in *Die Welt*, titled "Wie die Deutschen ihre Vergangenheit entsorgen" [How Germans dispose of their past] Alan Posener discusses Germans' compulsion to rename streets and squares after every historical change, in order to replace the signs, both physical and metaphorical, of the past: "Man kann mit der Vergangenheit leben. Oder sie entsorgen wie stinkenden Restmüll. In Deutschland ... bevorzugt man von jeher die zweite Variante [One can live with the past. Or dispose of it like stinking trash. In Germany ... one has always favored the second option]." Posener elaborates that every political system in Germany (e.g., National Socialists, East Germany's government, etc.) imposed their ruling personages symbolically onto their people via street-naming and notes that all of these street names disappeared (and replaced with endorsements of the newest leadership) with the extinction of their political control. Posener concludes:

Der deutsche Umbenennungsfuror ist kein Zeichen demokratischer Gesinnung. Er belegt nur den Wunsch, geschichtslos zu sein. Dieser Wunsch aber ist – das hat George Orwell in "1984" gezeigt – im Kern totalitär [The German renaming-furor is not a sign of a democratic disposition. It simply proves the desire to live with no history. This wish however, is – as George Orwell has shown in "1984" – totalitarian at its core]. (n.pag.)

It would be difficult to prove whether most East Germans were for or against the renaming of the streets in East Berlin; however, considering that, "jeder Strassennamen

[wolle] auch ein Stück Erinnerung wach halten [each street name wants to bear a specific remembrance]" ("Die politische Geschichte der Straßennamen" n. pag.) the renaming of most East German streets could be seen as an affront to the socialist system. But rather than reading Germany's ever-changing street names as an ideological maneuver, or attempting to determine whether the re-naming was in the spirit of popular demand, I argue that the change of the physical landscape of the former East Germany had an impact on how citizens coped with loss and displacement as a result of West Germans' colonization.

In a relevant environmental psychological study Gerda Speller and Evanthia Lyons argue that people's constant identification with a certain place (or home) is imperative to the individual, as they define themselves and determine who they are in the world (alluding again to the question motivating chapter one, "Who are you?"). In her six-year long study (referred to as "Arkwright") Speller researches the place-identity relationship in a community that was forcibly relocated to a nearby town. Noting that the residents first supported the town relocation, as the community was hoping that facilities as well as quality of life would improve as a result, the sense of community was ultimately destroyed due to the solidarity (collectiveness) of the old town's replacement by an "individual distinctiveness" attitude of competitiveness; a symptom where "everyone wants to outdo their neighbors" (Speller 17).

The most significant finding of this study is that place can shape identity, arguing that peoples' bonds with places (in the present or the past) can account for a positive or a negative sense of self. In her conclusion, Speller recollects:

[the town of Old Arkwright's] physical structure had embodied many symbols which were invested with social meanings and importance. The loss of these represented a discontinuity for the residents; the loss of tangible connections to their identity. (20)

This insight underscores the nostalgic sentiments in the films. Specifically *Berlin is in Germany* evokes this discontinuity when the narrative highlights that many East Berlin streets have been renamed and, on a larger scale, the entire city seems transformed. For instance, when Martin returns to Berlin for the first time after imprisonment, he is sitting on a train next to a window and looking outside. The audience is afforded his perspective in a p-o-v-shot as he first enters the city. In the first shot of Berlin, the TV tower, which formerly represented the pride and greatness of East Germany, is framed in the center of an extreme long shot, as a reminder that Martin is arriving home. In fact, the TV tower perpetually appears during the film and is one of the very few identifying shots of East Germany that Stöhr offers, confirming that the area Martin is roaming is East Berlin, but where, specifically, remains unknown. The TV tower in this first establishing shot, however, is barely visible due to heavy clouds hiding it. In the forefront we see a tremendous construction site with seven tower cranes pointing in all directions. Buildings and people are not visible; the construction site dominates and hides the entire city. This continuous shot lasts for six seconds, in which, through Martin's point of view, an entire landscape of construction is visible, thus making the part of the city that Martin is traveling through entirely unrecognizable. The film then cuts to a six-second medium long shot, showing Martin sitting in the rail car, closely observing the new sight. A cut again to a long shot shows further construction sites from a closer distance, which allows the audience to see

scaffolding, building materials, more tower cranes, and entire buildings being erected, but there are still no people shown within the frame. This shot lasts for another 19 seconds, for a total of 31 seconds of construction images, a lengthy sequence that emphasizes the dramatic changes the city is going through and foreshadows the drastic adjustments Martin will have to endure. The dramatic, nondiegetic music of piercing string instruments and the dark fog over the city implies an unwelcoming environment for Martin's arrival home. In light of Speller's argument about how physical structures hold social meanings that have implications for an individual's identity, the implications of this scene – which depicts tremendous physical transformation – are rife with symbolic significance and lead to the conclusion that Martin can never go home again.

Following the construction sequence, an abrupt cut shows a long shot of Martin in the center of the frame, walking in a public square full of people, carrying his TV. Three different off-screen sounds of cell phone rings occur; like Martin, the audience automatically tries to identify the origin of the sound and expects the cell phone owner to pick up but no cell phone is visible, thus adding to Martin's confusion and even fear of the unknown and undetectable. The sound of the cell phones, that in reality should disappear in the midst of the big city sounds such as people chatting or passing trains, is exceptionally loud, implying that Stöhr wants to emphasize the new, stressful and hectic ways of a technologically adept Berlin.

The abrupt cuts from the construction shots to the view from inside the train to Martin walking in the city holding his TV is a pattern that Stöhr constantly follows: the audience never knows where Martin is going and most of the time it is unclear where he is

coming from, resulting in a confusion that not only leaves the viewer unsettled but also indicates Martin's confusion and dispossession. Kapczynski comments on this pattern:

Stöhr's editing disrupts all sense of spatial continuity, with the result that Martin seems entirely disconnected from the urban space through which he moves.

Following the lead character on his numerous travels through the landscape of Berlin, the film cuts from one journey to another with no clear indication of progression, fostering an impression of directionlessness and detachment. (91)

Although Martin is constantly in transit – either in a car, train, trolley, subway, or by foot – he never seems to arrive anywhere, literally and figuratively. Whenever there is a glimpse of hope for the amelioration of his situation) his hopes are trampled. For instance, in the scene in which he inquires about getting a taxi driver certification, he is told that ex-cons are not allowed to take the driving test, leaving him relegated to being a perpetual passenger, with dashed hopes for a new beginning, and a sense of helplessness because he cannot take control of his life/situation. Martin's situation is akin to that of his former home, because as a nation, East Germany is also relegated to the passenger seat, perpetually playing a passive rather than an active position.

Alex, the protagonist in *Good Bye, Lenin!*, is seemingly in constant transit as well. In his case, however, it is apparent that him moving back and forth between the East and West side of Berlin in an endless struggle to “unify” East and West Germans (e.g., his West German father, Robert, with his own identity as an East German) and East and West Germany (places/space). Subconsciously, he seems to be attempting to “unify” both parts of Germany in his mind. In the scene analyzed in chapter 1 where Alex takes a taxi from the hospital in the East, where his mother is staying, to the West Berliner neighborhood

Wannsee, where his father lives, it becomes apparent that the spatial separation of a once-married couple from the GDR brought forth ideological/cultural differences that resulted in entirely separate ways of life. Robert's extravagant lifestyle – with his mansion in Wannsee (a very expensive Berliner neighborhood), his fancy clothing and elegant jewelry, and exotic, Caribbean-themed dinner parties is a sharp juxtaposition to the lifestyle of Alex's mother, who lives in a small flat, which is decorated with 1970s wallpaper, in the "Plattenbau area" (the "concrete-jungle" of Berlin). These contrasts exemplify how his once-familiar and cohesive family is now so foreign and detached that his own identity – as a son and as a citizen – deconstructs and causes the type of alienation he experiences, for instance, when visiting the West and taking refuge next to the children in the TV room.

This sense of pervasive alienation is also depicted in *Berlin is in Germany*, although Martin seems to be navigating solely through East Berlin (in which the TV tower is a constant reminder) his former "Heimat [home]." After arriving in Berlin via train and failing to get on the subway because he fails to purchase a ticket from the machine, he ends up in a tram. Thus far, the audience has seen Martin in constant transit: from a train, to a tram, and then walking aimlessly, with no idea as to what his final destination is. One of the most significant shots illustrating this "homelessness" and disorientation is a scene in which a glass door with big black letters, which read "Hotel", indicates that Martin resides in a place where nobody knows him, a place that signifies the opposite of home. The hotel location also makes it clear that Martin does not have a home to go to. Throughout the film, he resides in this same hotel room, suggesting that he is a guest, not a resident, a visitor to a new and unfamiliar place.

The scene following Martin's entry into the hotel then cuts to a shot of the inside of his room. In this frame, the TV he has been carrying with him now sits askew on top of towels and wash cloths, in the very center of a nicely made bed, suggesting that it takes on the role of Martin's companion. However, due to the way in which the TV has been uncomfortably placed, it doesn't seem to be intended as a suitable replacement for a human being. The film then cuts to a close-up of Martin as he is looking out of an open window, to a p-o-v-shot of the TV tower, and back to Martin's face. Martin has a smile on his face, which insinuates that he is happy to see the familiar sight of the TV tower and perhaps content that some things are still the same. This short, pleasant moment of nostalgia is quickly interrupted, as the following shot reveals the "Plattenbau" building he is residing in, with its big letters spelling "Hotel" on top of its roof. Looking closely, the audience can see Martin in one of many windows that is right under the hotel letters, suggesting that he is alienated from his former home and now in a place of constant transit, where strangers come and go. The hotel sign reappears multiple times throughout the film as a reminder that despite Martin's effort to live a prosperous life (as all of the commercials and, on a larger scale, Western capitalism, have promised) he will remain a foreigner and at best, a guest in his own country. This idea is further reinforced in the next shot in which the audience sees a close-up of GDR Marks on the table and Martin's hands making little paper planes with them. These images strongly imply that his home has become so unrecognizable that even the once-valuable tools that provided him with the power to navigate through it have now become useless. It is important to mention a subsequent scene in which Martin receives his new (West German) passport. This scene correlates with the previous shot of Martin making paper money airplanes because both suggest that

valuable social tools must now be obtained through a new system and that East Germans can literally bring no value into the new system without “conversion” (conversion of money and power and conversion of ideology).

In the scene, in which Martin receives his new passport, the camera cuts to a close-up of a green passport of the “Bundesrepublik Deutschland,” which implies the beginning of a new life with a new “gesamtdeutscher” [pan-German] identity. In the following shot, however, Martin is framed on the left, sitting on a chair across his parole officer, who is seated to his right. In the center of the frame are two big windows that provide a view of the outside. Not surprisingly, we see the East German TV tower, once again, alluding to Martin’s allegiance to his East German identity, which he is not willing to relinquish even though he is now bearing a passport to the “new” Germany. Shortly after this scene, Manuela (Martin’s ex-wife) visits his parole officer in the same office. Manuela sits on the chair that Martin had been sitting on before and the officer is now seated across from her. They are sitting in the same way, in which the previous shot of Martin was frame, however, the camera positioning, and specifically the angle, is changed. The framing of Martin and the officer is straight-on, which allows the audience to see the TV tower in the center – a symbolic division between them. In the scene featuring Manuela, the camera is positioned slightly to the left, giving the effect that the TV tower is not in the frame. If we reflect back to the scenes in which Manuela has been depicted thus far – including her new relationship with a West German, speaking High German, dressing neatly in suits and hosting dinner parties for West Germans, it becomes clear that she is consciously rejecting her East German roots and trying to assimilate with the new, Western lifestyle (and perhaps succeeding). On the contrary, however, a more critical analysis of her behavior and dress

could argue that Manuela represents Stöhr's approach to depicting different "kinds" of East Germans, implying that stereotypes about East Germans who cannot assimilate should be avoided. Alternatively, it could also be argued that she represents the East German who *appears* to have negotiated a new identity, out of necessity, but still internally longs for aspects of her former life. I argue that this latter interpretation is more plausible, due to the continued affection and support she bestows upon Martin. We first see this affection when she caresses his face after he had passed out drunk on the floor. Later in the film, she even chooses Martin over Wolfgang, which clearly indicates that she still values parts of her former life. After all, Martin's imprisonment meant that he had been taken away from her by force and not by choice and the affection for him did not die over the years. This close relationship between Manuela and Martin can be compared to the relationship between Alex and his mother that I have discussed earlier. Both relationships ended involuntarily, resulting in physical and emotional trauma, which called for negotiations of a new and unfamiliar situation. This is comparable with the alienation East Germans felt, when the Wall was dismantled and a completely new home town/city was erected.

Daphne Berdahl elaborates on the idea of East Germans negotiating a new identity in her monograph *Where the World Ended*. She specifically explores how residents of a former East German border town negotiated their identity after the political/economic system collapsed seemingly overnight. What makes her work interesting and valuable for my project is that, as an anthropologist, Berdahl focuses on writing about the stories and memories of East Germans, which allows the reader to understand post-Wall changes from an underrepresented lens. Her ethnographic approach reconstructs the past through the experiences of the individuals affected, which allows the reader a better understanding of

how physical borders generate cultural implications or (seemingly trivial) daily rituals that resonate even after their political agenda has vanished. This is illustrated in *Good Bye, Lenin!* when Alex's mother, despite her potentially deadly illness, insists on having her "Spreewald Gurken." The happiness she experiences when eating the pickles suggests that regardless of the terrible situation she finds herself in, her routine, which is specifically tied to her Heimat, offers comfort.

Furthermore, Berdahl investigates how the disappearance of these borders can cause destabilization. This destabilization, in a figurative sense, is depicted in *Berlin is in Germany* when Martin comes under scrutiny at the dinner table. Suddenly, he not only has to "compete" against another German but also against the French. His fall then symbolizes his defeat and the boundaries that still exist between West and East Germans. Berdahl defines boundaries, which is an imperative concept for this project, as follows:

Boundaries – cultural, geographical, and territorial – identify people; they define who is inside and who is outside. The simple crossing of a border is a "territorial passage" that may alter spatiotemporal experience ... indeed, it is an act of definition and a declaration of identity, transforming one, in an instant, from a citizen into a foreigner (4).

The main part of her work concentrates on the consequences of dismantling the East German borders and the dramatic changes it brings forth. The changes people had to go through, according to Berdahl, were mostly felt by East Germans. She lists many examples that expose implicit notions of West German dominance by means of economic affluence and material abundance. Furthermore, she notes that, "It was clearly up to East Germans to catch up with, adapt to, and later simply adopt this system" (Berdahl 159).

Berdahl's definition of boundaries and her argument about the implications of breaching boundaries can be seen in the film scenes analyzed in this chapter. It becomes apparent that with the disappearance of the Wall, East German culture and their homes had become memories of their past. The notion of transit and, especially in Martin's case, the idea of never progressing or "getting somewhere" may symbolize the disorder and fiasco of the German unification process.

In this chapter, I have attempted to illustrate the specific ways in which the transformation and ultimately the dispossession of East Germans' homeland affected East German citizens' identity. I also pointed out how their "tools" of identity to navigate through their former home had been taken away from them, according to post-Wall German cinema. In *Berlin is in Germany*, this results in a message of skepticism about German unity, as Stöhr depicts East and West Germans as disconnected entities and moreover, the East German as the new foreigner. *Good Bye, Lenin!*, on the contrary, alludes to the issues of unification but generally seems more positive towards a "gesamtdeutsche Zukunft (all-German future)," as Alex continuously attempts to symbolically and figuratively unify both parts of his identity. Ultimately, however, it remains unclear whether his project will succeed or fail.

CONCLUSION

In Daphne Berdahl's epilogue "The Tree of Unity," she informs the reader of an anecdote that occurred in the small East/West German border town of Kella. During unification celebrations in 1990, the residents of Kella, along with West German politicians, planted the seeds for a "gesamtdeutschen Baum (all-German tree)," which was intended to symbolize the "growing together of the two Germanies" (Berdahl 226). A year later, the tree had died, taking all of the hopes of social unity between East and West Germans, metaphorically, to its grave. According to Berdahl, one citizen commented, "Of course it died" (226). This declaration reflects the negative sentiments about a unified Germany that many East and West Germans still hold today, even though the country has been unified for 24 years. The core question, which asks what happened in this first year after unification that made (specifically East) Germans feel resentful about the unified country, emerges with even greater urgency now, because of the time that has transpired since unification was attempted. Furthermore, a subsequent question – pertaining to what can be done in the future for a country that is still divided by a "Mauer im Kopf (The Wall in people's mind)" – represents my project's ultimate goal and contribution.

In October 2014, Germans will celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Fall of the Wall. This anniversary is likely to initiate (again) a reflective dialogue about whether the unification was a success or a failure. I argue that these discussions are likely to have the same results as the dialogues in 2010, which were mentioned in the introduction. The

reasons explaining this redundancy pertain to my argument that the lingering disunity between East and West won't be examined and explained from an outsider's perspective; the East German perspective. Until this day, West Germans tend to humiliate and degrade their East German countrymen by means of economic and cultural superiority. "Die Mauer im Kopf" still exists.

I have argued in this thesis that post-Wall German films (and specifically *Good Bye, Lenin!* and *Berlin is in Germany*) have been preoccupied with the nation's social issues, by combining popular aesthetic appeal with a critical focus on contemporary German society. In support of the argument pertaining to a colonization of East Germany by West Germany, I have identified specific examples of the West German take-over, depicted in the two films analyzed here. Both films offer insights into the (different/inferior) culture of the former GDR that brought forth a citizen who is ideologically, socially, and culturally different than a citizen from the West.

In chapter one, I provided evidence and an analysis of the filmic portrayal of an East German character as the "Other," and examples of how West Germans contest this character's behavior, appearance, and way of speech. I argue that national identity goes beyond a shared geographic space and language; it is tied to the ways in which cultural and ideological differences among individual groups influence one another, thus voiding Willy Brandt's idea "Es wächst zusammen, was zusammen gehört (That which belongs together, grows together)" in the East/West German context.

In chapter two, I illustrated how East Germans not only had to integrate into a German society that was foreign to them, but also how their once-familiar country and family homes became suddenly unfamiliar. I also analyze the directors' specific filmic

choices, intended to make their audiences feel unsettled, thus, evoking sympathy for the main characters.

Although both films depict the East German protagonist very similarly, illustrating their status as foreigner and referencing the East German dispossession on multiple occasions, the ultimate message however, is different: Whereas both films depict the East Germans as the “loser” of the unification process, *Good Bye, Lenin!* concludes its narration on a positive/hopeful note. At the end of this film, Alex finds employment at a West German company and his new, best friend is a West German. He also finds his once-lost father, who is residing in a beautiful West Berliner neighborhood. Alex is a happy, young, and positive person who is not dissuaded or intimidated by the Westernization of East Germany; seeing assimilation with the new country as a challenge and as a new opportunity. Although many instances of East German loss are shown, Becker leaves the audience with a good feeling about the unified country.

Berlin is in Germany, on the other hand, represents the unification process through a much more critical and problematic lens. Martin returns to his East German wife, his East German friends, his East German part of the city, but everything else has changed. He fails to gain employment and a place to reside, leaving him in constant transit, like a passenger who is pushed around. Within this film, Stöhr alludes to a Germany that has not negotiated unity in a way that is agreeable for both (East and West) Germans.

Why is it important to study German post-Wall films in order to understand the East/West German (social) disunity? By analyzing specific scenes in each of my chapters, I illustrated how they are rich in evidence that depicts East Germans as “Other,” negotiating his new status as foreigner in his/her own country. I ultimately argue that post-Wall

German films can be used as educational tools, as they can be consumed and challenged by a large audience. Furthermore, I argue that analyses of these films offer a remedy for changing the relationship between East and West Germans, as they assist in helping to understand that West Germans engaged in contesting the East German identity and way of life; subsequently expecting them to adopt Western values instead. Additionally, though, it can be argued that these films have the potential to evoke West Germans' respect for East German accomplishments as well as their issues, which would result in an improvement of social relations between the former East and West, as they continue to learn what the unification of Germany really entails.

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