

Germany 2000 –
A Question of Identity

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Submitted to the graduate degree program in Theater and Film and the

Faculty of the Graduate School of the University of Kansas

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master's of Arts

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Date Defended 12 June 2007

The Thesis Committee for Baerbel Goebel-Deigert certifies

That this is the approved version of the following thesis:

Germany 2000-
A Question of Identity

Committee:

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Date approved: 06-12-2007

Abstract

This work presents a detailed discussion of three nationally significant events in German history (WWII, the 1954 Soccer World Cups, Germany's reunification 1989/1990). This is reflected in *The Downfall* (2004), *Sophie Scholl – The Last Days* (2005), *The Miracle of Bern* (2003), *Germany – A Summer Tale* (2006), *Berlin Blues* (2003), *Sun Ally* (1999) and *The Life of Others* (2006). They represent a sense and essence of Germany, defining the country expressively as a nation and Germans as one people amidst European Union, Globalization, and the War on Terrorism.

How do young German filmmakers investigate Germany's negative past imagery? Who constructs contemporary ideology in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG)? More specifically, how was the self-perception of the nation informed in the past and who regulates the imagery displayed now?

Germany has begun construction of an identity not founded on guilt, but interrogating it.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

I don't think that any other country has had such loss of faith in its own images, stories and myths as we (Germany) have. We, (...) have felt this loss most keenly: in ourselves as the absence of a tradition of our own, as a generation without fathers; and in our audiences as confusion and apprehension. This defensive attitude on the one hand and lack of self-confidence on the other have been so slow to dissolve, but the process, which will take a few more years yet, may one day create the feeling again that images and sounds don't have to be something imported, but can deal with this country and can even stem from it. –

Wim Wenders¹

The Representation of Identity

Recently Germany, began interrogating what has long been a sense of national guilt, guilt over their labor and death camps, their torture and murder of millions. The films I chose are symptoms of the country's attempt to recreate themselves through a redefinition of its past. This work will demonstrate how three nationally significant events/topics in German history -WWII, the 1954/2006 Soccer World Cups, and the fall of the Berlin Wall/Germany's reunification 1989/1990- are reflected in the following films: *The Downfall* (Der Untergang, 2004), *Sophie Scholl – the Last Days* (2005), *The Miracle of Bern* (Das Wunder von Bern, 2003), *Germany – a Summer Tale* (Deutschland – Ein Sommermaerchen, 2006), *Berlin Blues* (Herr Lehmann – Oder Scheiss der Hund

Drauf, 2003), *Sun Ally* (Sonnennallee, 1999) and *The Lives of Others* (Das Leben der Anderen, 2006). They reflect a sense and essence of Germany that may not be exhibited on a global scale, but define Germany expressively as a country and Germans as one people amidst a growing European Union, Globalization, and the War on Terrorism. The idea of globalization and the loss of national identity is not new to Germans. They have been trying to forget their nationality for a long time, but newer trends in German cinema offer a different option for dealing with the past and accepting it as part of our national heritage.

A personal note is in order here; I grew up in West Germany, where it takes only minutes to cross the borders to Luxemburg, the Netherlands and Belgium. Germans work in these countries and their citizens work in Germany, tourism between these nations is steady and dislike of Germans innate. I was raised to remember, to feel guilt as a German for what my country did during the Third Reich. And others of my age in Luxemburg, or the Netherlands, or Belgium were brought up to remember, to never forget to be careful around Germans. I was nine years old when a clerk in Luxemburg refused to sell me a soda. He said he would not serve Prussians. I will address how Germany, by current socio-political shifts, nation building, and national identity under the influence of transnational agendas and globalization, now seeks topics and/or characters within historical material that can be considered safe.

Since I left Germany I noticed, more so than before, that some German directors are creating films offering a perspective of Germany's past that differs from both their earlier German presentation as well as Hollywood's perception and representation of the nation. Not all filmmakers in Germany do this, but I seek out those that demonstrate a

sense of self-awareness, when telling stories of the nation they call home. These directors are different in that they reflect an interpretation of events that recognizes history, but is not shackled to its commonly understood connotations. I chose films that reflect this change of self-perception and deal with this material as their prime subjects. Each film has received attention on its own, yet it appears that the three events in German history and their reflection in contemporary film have not been discussed juxtaposed to each other.

The *German Cinema Book*, discusses popular film and touches upon aspects of identity, as do most works addressing films about the Third Reich. My work however, seeks to trace the struggle of German cinema to makes sense of the nation's past in order to inform a German-self in the present. By linking films depicting historically vital moments in Germany that span over four decades I discuss the presentation of national history through German directors. I base my work in scholarly work and use articles from journals and newspapers alike, researched critics' work in Germany as well as the US, and include extracts from interviews/commentary with and by directors and producers.

Film Choices

The Downfall questions characterizations of Hitler; the *Miracle of Bern* is a journey from questioning the past to inviting a new future; and the films about the Berlin Wall, *Sun Alley* and *Berlin Blues* respectively, investigate the relationship not between East and West, but between a people and its boundaries. The way in which the material is addressed in these films marks an important shift for Germany as a whole. Their

respective genres, structures, and formal visual approaches are an important aspect of my analysis.

Frankly speaking, the world is focusing on a different image of evil these days. The political and economic problems ensuing after the events of September 11 in 2001 are the focus of screen environments today.² Film's, both fictional and documentary in origin, reframe the events of that day, discuss the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, the oil problems and political debates that have arisen since. Thus, the current thematic interest of American media frees Germany from its screen-role as a well-cultivated stereotypical villain. This representation was partly created by the vast amount of American media released in Europe since the end of WWI.³ It is important to review Germany and its films in its historical context to demonstrate how these films function. These films represent the most important eras of German history and combined they speak to the nation's attempt to find a new identity by revisiting its past. These films do so without placing blame but by creating multifaceted characters.

Chapter Overview

Chapter 2 examines *The Downfall*'s documentary style production and worldwide reactions to the film, while linking it to other historically important and U.S. produced depictions of WWII. *The Downfall* retells the events occurring during the last days of the Nazi-regime. These are the days during which France, the US, Great Britain and Russia encircled Berlin. The film focuses on Hitler's last days in the Fuehrerbunker. It bases its script on two non-fiction works, one by a historian and another by an eyewitness. The characterization of Hitler as a human being clearly marks the most important change for

Germany's way to deal with this subject. The worldwide controversy, as reflected by various articles and reviews I will present, demonstrates how identity construction is anything but fixed, yet it does need shifts in the dominant ideology permitting changes in the ideological apparatus. The film's production mode, the fact that the material was dealt with so cautiously and with documentary like precision, will inform this particular chapter. I read this movie as a hybrid docudrama that is more concerned with the documentary reality and a factual basis than it is with the idea of vilification for audience entertainment or education. The director does not ignore his viewers and the need for entertainment though, utilizing Hollywood style editing and narrative structure.

Chapter 3 discusses the 1954 Soccer World Cup in Switzerland through the refracting lens of the 2005 film *The Miracle of Bern*. I utilize a Bordwell-ian methodology and analyze the film from a neo-formalist point of view. Bordwell applied a bottom-to-top approach when analyzing films, identifying their actual contents before utilizing theoretical methodologies. Working in this fashion avoids a stereotyping of the film through common notions bound to such topics as the postwar era and soccer as such. The film retells the events from varying characters' point of views, especially a family with a father just returning from a POW camp in Russia. *The Miracle of Bern* heavily depends on style and form to tell its story. Here, audience perception is guided by tight graphic constructions in each frame, expressing the evolution from failure to empowerment. Color, film stock, footage, angles, art-direction, acting and composition (vectors, directionality, angles etc.), especially in the soccer scenes, create the film that "made grown men weep." It does so, through both its subject matter and the steadily progressing mise-en-scene. The director forms a vision of despair and defeat and slowly

creates one of hope and victory in the end.⁴ Soccer and specifically this World Cup win, appear prophetic to the FRG's future. After the beaten country won the final game in Bern, it was a question of months until the German Economic Miracle (Deutsches Wirtschaftswunder⁵ 1955 – 1970s) seemed to alter Germany's fate. When this film was made in 2005, the country faced another time of hardship. Its position in the European Union began weakening, the financial gap between the former East and West had widened again, unemployment was at an all time high, and trust in the nation's government was unstable. At the same time, the prospect of the FRG-hosted 2006 Soccer World Cup created an air of hope and the release of *The Miracle of Bern* reminded its audiences of the possibilities that lay ahead by referencing the past.⁶

Chapter 4 discusses what has come to be commonly referred to as Reunification Cinema,⁷ which addresses the divided Germany and the Berlin Wall. The division and reformation of Germany has to be viewed from both angles, meaning West and East German vantage points. Leander Haußmann directs both *Sun Ally* and *Berlin Blues*. *Sun Ally* is a coming of age story taking place on the east side of the wall, focusing on a group of youngsters about to finish the German equivalent to high school. The film is humorous and ends with allusions to the GDR's past tradition of popular musical production. *Sun Ally* expresses an "eastalgia"⁸ and East German memory of the GDR. Eastalgia directly references nostalgia and expresses the betterment of the historic facts of the GDR after the Wall fell and the people of the former eastern states experienced a harsh disillusionment. *Berlin Blues*, tells the story of a bartender in West Berlin. *Berlin Blues*, however, is quite different with its drab color scheme and darker, verbal humor. Its treatment of the GDR's existence equals omission and is a remarkable reflection of how

the West often did omit the East from its life. I place special attention on the importance and visibility of the Berlin Wall. I also believe that a before-and-after approach is necessary to ask the correct questions to comprehend how national identity was divided, where this construct is today, and what the term 'unified' in the new Germany for the German people means. I, therefore, will also briefly examine the East German production *Born in '45 (Jahrgang '45, 1965)*. The film is about a young couple failing at matrimony and then seeing the possibility of reuniting. Yet *Born in '45* really tells the story of young adults that are lost in this newly constricted world with its promises for a glorious future. This film was banned from screens in the GDR and its funding was withdrawn before it could be finished. Therefore, the film has been available in its final version only since 1991.

Chapter 5 will discuss three films, *Sophie Scholl (2005)*, *Germany - A Summer's Tale (2006)*, and *The Lives of Others (2006)* as the most recent depictions of the three historical events I discussed in the previous chapters. To reiterate these are WWII, the Soccer World Cup of 1954 and the reunited Germany, important interests/events of German identity. The newest films show their main characters in a positive light. Sophie Scholl stands and exists as proof for inner-German resistance towards the Nazis. The memory (here meaning that which is remembered by the public in Germany) of the GDR is facts-based yet softened by a protagonist/antagonist who redeems himself. Sophie Scholl was one of the founders of the White Rose movement in the Third Reich. A friend, her brother, and herself were executed for creating and distributing pamphlets that called for a peaceful resistance to Hitler's regime. The film depicts the interrogations and trial, as well as the process of the swift execution after she was found guilty.

Germany – a Summer Tale is a documentary film about the 2006 Soccer World Cup that addresses not only soccer but asks how Germany as a people found its national pride and then buried it once the festivities were over. Germany's third place in the important 2006 Cup is filmed unobtrusively, without commentary, a documentary that is utterly human but only briefly references nationality and the state of Germany in one single side comment. The FRG's struggle with the search for an identity is symptomatic of the technologically advanced age we live in. Its citizens are used to swift changes in self-awareness. From happily singing their anthem, proud of whom they are during the Cup, they change to people whose village committees demand the removal of flags in their citizens' gardens. This documentary depicts national pride as a problematic issue in German national identity.

The Lives of Others, as mentioned above, addresses the issue of spying on your neighbors; your fellow citizens. How did this affect morality, individuals, and national self-understanding?

It should be noted that most popular, mainstream films produced in Germany and dealing with the German past are produced for a foreign market. This is important because while catering to the needs of the market this practice clouds the very German-ness inherent in the films. Körte, journalist with the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, writes

Germany cannot afford too much nostalgia anyhow. The 7.5 million Euros, that Soenke Wortmann's *Miracle of Bern* cost, the 12 to 13 million *The Downfall* will cost, which is currently being filmed in St. Petersburg, can only be spent by

someone who is certain about selling the film also internationally. A correctly produced “period piece”, said *The Downfall*’s producer Bernd Eichinger once, could not be refinanced by the German speaking market.⁹

The films addressed in this work then, speak from a German perspective about German history but clearly alter the national voice where necessary in order to attract distributors and viewers in foreign markets.

Tracing The Crisis’ Roots

It will be helpful here to contextualize briefly my material to understand both my selection of films and the origins of Germany’s identity crisis. In its 20th century history, Germany’s national identity underwent several important redefinitions.¹⁰ Germany’s cinematic identity through that same century, while in constant flux, was unable to escape the (global) memory of the First and Second World Wars. As early as 1938, in an America not yet in the war, a number of feature films, shorts, animated films and documentaries such as the *March of Time*’s episode *Inside Nazi Germany* began forming visual representations of the possible future threat across the Atlantic Ocean. In 1940, Charlie Chaplin satirized Hitler in his film *The Great Dictator*. In 1942, Tex Avery’s cartoon *Blitz Wolf* showed a Hitler-esque Wolf attacking the three little pigs’ house with massive bomb power. *The Nazis Strike* (Frank Capra, 1943) was yet another documentary picturing the enemy. The term documentary in this case, naturally should not be confused with reality. Documentary footage was and is edited, cut, arranged and scored to create

the intended message.¹¹ The Office of War Information (OWI), altered the contents of fiction films to suit their need of deploying the ‘correct’ information for propagandistic purposes, even after the war ended. Now it became important to spread the victor’s message through the defeated nation and to the greatest point possible (I believe the word I choose is accurate) assimilate the former enemy. Thereby turning the enemy into an allied entity rather than allowing it to remain a beaten opponent.¹²

Recent global events and international political alignments have led to a considerable discussion in European Union nations of their own self-defining policies by the public and politicians alike. The question is: how can a form of national identity be preserved in not only the European Union, but also in a world engulfed by Globalization and Transnationalism? During the Cold War, aligning one’s country, especially Germany, on either side of the binary seems to have subdued the national identity question.

Capitalist versus Communist and East versus West became common ways to structure screen interpretations of good versus evil as seen in mainstream adventure, quest and action films, but also comedies. Germany itself was split up among the allied powers, with approximately a fourth of its landmass under Russian occupation. The Allies agreed on the division of Germany and its capitol Berlin in 1944. Russia attempted, by blocking land and waterways between the zones, to pressure the other powers into leaving Berlin whole and in its occupation zone. France, Great Britain, and the US kept their respective areas occupied and military bases manned, in both Berlin and the remainder of Germany. They agreed to unite their territories and allow the Federal Republic of Germany to form in 1949. Four years after the surrender, on May 8 the three

western Allies accepted the constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany, and on May 23 the FRG voted on their first parliament. Germany was now split in two and Berlin took an even more complex path as it was dissected between capitalist and communist interests. Berlin, according to occupation contracts, was neither part of the FRG nor the GDR. The Eastern part of town however, slowly but surely took on the role of the GDR's capitol and albeit separate from the FRG, West Berlin, largely, held equal rights to the states of the FRG. The town however was not truly incorporated into West Germany; its location within the GDR made that problematic politically and emotionally. West Berlin became "special territory".

In December 1947, the Socialist Union Party of Germany (the SED) in the Soviet Occupation Zone (SBZ) started a movement for "justice by the people". In March 1948, the first German Citizen's Council, with some of its participants from the western zones, met. Otto Grotewohl chaired the meeting that led to the first draft of a constitution for a German Democratic Republic.¹³ It seems commonly accepted that the GDR's first election was fixed. Still, the SED only managed to receive 66.1% of the votes. Elected into power the previously mentioned council took charge and filled all positions at the head of the state. The GDR was founded.

Berlin was a city in crisis. In 1958, the Soviet government requested Berlin be made a free city, and asked the Western Allies to withdraw their troops. One of the reasons for this request was the massive amount of emigrants into West Berlin. As a result, cementing Germany's separation, the Berlin Wall was erected. In some places there were really two walls with a barrier in-between, mines, watchtowers, and guards.

Germany's Crisis Today

Recent events, namely the global media driven attention focusing on the Middle East, enable the FRG to reflect upon its history. It is ultimately history, national history, which creates a national focus in film. I use the term myth in my work, especially in chapter two, in its subcategory of national folklore, as coined by Paul Monaco in *The Power of Myth in Literature and Film*. After 1945, Germany cultivated a constant fear of patriotic displays through this national folklore. The FRG applies this to its identity suffering from an eternal guilt. The guilt effectively eliminated positive forms of self-characterization of nationhood within the German film-industry. This work is a necessary and important discussion of the ideological power of film for it demonstrates how socio-politically conscious directors construct a sense of national self on screen.

Scholars as published in *The New German Cinema Book*, other books researching German film and academic film journals still show an interest in the New German Cinema¹⁴ with works by Rainer Werner Fassbinder, the Heimat (Homeland film) genre set in idyllic German mountain landscapes, and popular German films in a broader sense, such as the 1990's revival of German comedy. Films belonging to these genres, groups produced since the postwar era are researched and studied, as demonstrated in Halle and McCarthy's book *Light Motives*.^{15 16} There is also a growing interest in what has been termed the Turkish Diaspora Cinema in Germany, the internationally most prominent possibly Fatih Akin's *Head On* (2004) and *In July* (2000). Questions about national identity arise, but I have yet to find a work that investigates Germany's self-understanding of its own history that works with the three major post war events in the

German conscious and is not limited to an essay format. All the films I chose were distributed in mainstream cinemas, were successful at the German box office, and the majority of production participants on all levels were German. The films are based on what Raymond Williams calls “structures of feeling” present in the German population and create a base for memory and identity construction.¹⁷

Audience identification is the main premise aiding me in highlighting the contrasts/similarities of depictions global/national and now/then, which inspired this work in the first place. Germany’s understanding of itself, as a nation, is rooted in media’s production of national images and their perception. I will have traced representational shifts in as great a detail as possible in this brief work, and will have explored the distribution, politics, history and international referents of these films. Attempts to change former perceptions, of Germans in general and their past respectively, were and remain rare. Production companies are no longer influenced as before by foreign ideology as they were during the time of Allied occupation. With the European Union, it appears, has come a sense of detachment from the U.S. and a revived interest in maintaining a national sense of self.

Films like *The Downfall* still create upheavals and debates in Germany itself, yet they are also of interest to a larger foreign community. When films such as the currently promoted *Hostel 2* advertise to American audiences with German, Russian and Czech voiceovers, it cannot be ignored that the choice to use these former “enemy languages” to advertise a horror film, whose subject is the victimization of young American women, is hardly random. It is important to see how modern German cinema works against this through liberating itself from the negative images of its past.

Methodology

There are many ways to frame a conversation about ideology and deployment of such in a national setting. I think of the hierarchy found in Louis Althusser's work on *Ideological State Apparatuses* (1970).¹⁸ Following Althusser's argument, the channel for the dominant ideology, keeping the productive flow of any society stabilized, depends clearly on the amount of exposure ideology receives in society. In other words, the apparatus with the most influence, most exposure is the one that occupies most of our time. Media can be found in most of our inhabited spaces and should rank number one in ideology deployment. While Althusser placed the educational system at the top, clearly we have to rethink that ranking today. Depending on social standing and family structure children and young adults average between 4 and 8 hours of television watching a day, according to studies from both the U.S. and the German-language station ORF in Austria.¹⁹ This does not include the other media channels, such as high-speed internet. In the last century, media thus rose to the top of the list, surpassing education and invading it. Media surrounds us constantly and is more all-encompassing than other influences, such as school systems, parental guidance or simply larger private communities. There should be no question about the ability of cinema, television and advertising, to influence our understanding of the past.

When I speak about identity, I talk about the sense of self as a nation, which is formed by media, much in the sense of Benedict Anderson's work on *Imagined Communities*. As I understand his work the nation understands itself as such entity only through mediation of uniting events, especially when these events are part of a nationally experienced past. Anderson, addresses the capitalist interest of print media in growing

markets and ties the created information and its distribution to both nationalism and imperialism and his model applies directly to cinema, TV and new media today. Louis Althusser examined what he termed *Ideological State Apparatuses*, to determine how ideology is deployed within a society.²⁰ According to him ideology is to ensure that a national system functions not only in its current state but provides the education, or manipulations, necessary to ensure future generations maintain the state. This is important here because it alerts us to the shifts in state ideology. We can determine this shift by interrogating media and cinema. The essence of the ideology deployed here however, is not informed by production needs of the country, which was Althusser's main example. In the films discussed here the search for an identity free of the guilt of the past is a search for a morality booster it seems, and a lesson about good and bad as told in not only German oral traditions. Paul Monaco has reframed the term myth and termed it national folklore, directly addressing this moral function of film. Framing my work in this fashion, I interrogate the films' narratives and their productions in a neo-formalist fashion.

Neo-formalism to say it with John Blewitt's words "recognizes film as being more than a medium for communicating meaning or for purely passive entertainment or contemplation."²¹ Bordwell's approach to film allows for a reading of film and its narrative and aesthetics first, and thus the film's analysis is based on the material itself before it is contextualized. I apply Althusser's theoretical framework to Bordwell's neo-formalism. Both methodologies combined, allow for an in depth reading of the films I selected on not only an aesthetic level, but a socio-political one as well. Extending Anderson's work by utilizing it here for the film medium, I not only investigate the

distribution of German media in foreign markets and vice versa to explain the world-wide influence of media on national identity. I explore its perception within as well as without the country in question, focusing on the struggle of a country that seeks to ignore part of its past and thus identity while attempting to maintain and recreate the sense of self.

I believe that it is important to begin with what a film offers by itself before connecting it to the broader picture and in this case Germany's quest to form an identity for its new position as part of the European Union and a world that by means of technology dilutes nationality as such. Although it was not often without problem, I attempted not to impose an outward-in reading upon the films, but rather built the discussion from the bottom up.

Chapter 2

The Power of Reality:

Oliver Hirschbiegel's *Downfall*

Downfall is a moral tale of redemption in its different forms, as much docudrama of the battle between rigidity and flexibility as that between good and evil. So many armored characters collapse that the film could be re-titled *100 Suicides and a Lucky Escape*, yet flexibility triumphs in an ending that is optimistic. - Steve Illife²²

Depicting The Monsters

The Downfall (Der Untergang, 2004) revisits, mainly from the perspective of Hitler's secretary, the final days of the Third Reich surrounding Hitler and his entourage. The film's narrative opens with Traudl Junge and other young secretaries walking through the woods, led by a young officer. They enter a waiting hall and are instructed on how to behave in front of and address the Führer. Once Hitler enters the screen, the camera frames his office in Dutch angles, forcing the audience to look through tight doorframes seeing Hitler in his office, a dog at his feet.²³ We briefly see Hitler and his adjutant from the secretaries' point of view, a low-angle view that grants Hitler the size and stature he lacked in real life.²⁴ The image created here, which may be read as deceiving/threatening as well as humanizing (through the affection shown for his dog and interaction with the women) is dismantled though the course of the film. The audience learns of his health interest and discipline. Later, viewers see his trembling hands, hidden

behind his back. This indicates a nervous problem and today, as Hirschbiegel explains in his commentary, we know about Hitler's trouble with Parkinson's disease. He is vulnerable and human like everyone else. His calm and commanding exterior, his impeccable hair and attire slowly but steadily deteriorate until we see him lose the remainder of self-control as the inevitable fall of Berlin becomes obvious. As the film continues, we see fear grip even the mighty Adolf Hitler; the monster is scared. The film does not reduce his monstrosity, but deconstructs it seriously and carefully. The man of power shows his inferiority complex, his paranoia. Hitler regains his composure after his irascibility can no longer be hidden from his staff. Final orders have to be given; defeat has to be acknowledged. His calmness then however, is eerie and sickening. He marries his long time love affair Eva Braun and then they kill themselves together. Magda and Joseph Goebbels, his closest friends and supporters, follow suit, having already killed their own children. Magda Goebbels' letter to her older son is read in the film and shows her conviction. She states that she does not want her children to have to live in a world without National Socialism.

Oliver Hirschbiegel's film *The Downfall* received varying forms of criticism for its treatment of Hitler, his staff, and friends and the end of the Third Reich. It is a complex reconstruction of the events taking place before the Allied forces' victory in May 1945. The film that generated international controversy retells the last days of the Third Reich, mainly from the view of those inside the Führer's bunker beneath the Reichstag in Berlin.

The main controversy in *Downfall* stems from the portrayal of Adolf Hitler, which works against the traditional imagery and, thus, what is commonly understood as

the politically correct interpretation by critiques, politicians and historians alike. This is the first mainstream and widely distributed theatrical fiction film in Germany in over fifty years to focus on his character as a main protagonist. While documentary films have pertained to him and fictional films have utilized his character, foreign countries have dealt with this subject more often than Germany.²⁵ However, Hitler has the lead has never been humanized and depicted as an animal loving, non-smoking, vegetarian, women's man. Here is a man who surrounds himself with people who stood by him until the end, especially Goebbels. The carefully created demon of the 20th century screen deteriorates in front of our very eyes. At first Hitler is the Führer at his strongest, in his glamour and loved by his people and followers. Children sing and die for him willingly. The women around him adore him, the men do as he orders, and he is in control. As the Third Reich faces the beginning of its end, so does Hitler's character and so does his strength.

Hitler's persona is now a binary system in itself, understood as both mythic-evil²⁶ and a deity-like creature for Neo-Nazis and followers in Europe and the United States alike. Germany has been on a globalized media-tour since the Great War. Therefore, the re-writing of visual concepts of Hitler received international attention. *The Downfall* questions the ultimate evil's existence and creates multiple lines of interpretation in a binary system. The binary system here is the one innate to myth and oral tradition, according to Claude Levi-Strauss in his work on the *Structural Study of Myth* (1958). Following his argument, it is human nature to maintain stark stereotypical opposites to deploy a basic ideology of good and bad to the public.²⁷ Removing these elements thus leads to a string of questions. Who are we left to condemn and whom are we supposed to

side with if all characters have become multifaceted rather than divided into the formulaic opponents black and white?

The Downfall has received a good deal of criticism for its humanizing portrayal of Hitler and its omission of Holocaust references and imagery, all the while it earned praise for both its relocation of common²⁸ points of view regarding this topic and its intelligent representation of the events preceding the Third Reich's unconditional surrender. The film's international reception by critics speaks to its importance. They automatically contextualize the film. There are no works on the film to be found that do not automatically deal with the historic content and question of authenticity. Roger Ebert deals with perceptions of Hitler in his review, utilizing fellow critics' work. He cannot omit a discussion entailing moral and historic meaning and content of *The Downfall*. There is no discussion to be found of the film's production, visual style, performances unless they are linked directly to WWII and Hitler. Bruno Ganz's performance lacks nothing and is realistic, even intimate. Peter Bradshaw of the *Guardian* wrote that "Perhaps the most uncomfortable taboo that *Downfall* breaks is having Hitler played by a gusto, by a German-speaking actor (Ganz is Swiss)... the guttural authenticity of Ganz frankly blows them away." Ebert cites David Denby and Stanley Kauffman and thus creates an angle for discussion based on the film's narrative, but links the discussion and the narrative to history and its meaning as reflected through this film.

The Downfall... has inspired much debate about the nature of the Hitler it presents. Is it a mistake to see him, after all, not as a monster standing outside the human race, but as just another human being? David Denby (in), the *New Yorker*

(wrote): ‘Considered as biography, the achievement [if that’s the right word] of ‘Downfall’ is to insist that the monster was not invariably monstrous – ... We get the point: Hitler was not a supernatural being: ‘he was common clay raised to power’ by the desire of his followers. But is this observation a sufficient response to what Hitler actually did?’ (And) Stanley Kauffman, *New Republic* (wrote): ...‘Downfall’, apparently faithful to the facts, evokes – torments us with – a discomfiting species of sympathy or admiration.²⁹

After quoting his colleagues responses to the film, Roger Ebert finally inserts his opinion into the article. “Admiration I did not feel. Sympathy I felt in the sense that I would feel it for a rabid dog, while accepting that it must be destroyed. I do not feel the film provides “a sufficient response to what Hitler actually did,” because I feel no film can, and no response would be sufficient.”³⁰ His actual criticism then is not about the film. He does not inform us whether he thinks the film is worth viewing, with good or bad composition, etc, he only refers to the film as an artifact of history and that it was unsuccessful in capturing history justly. At the same time, his last comment may beg the question: “Should film address this specific event, this specific character in history?” We perceive our world through media and have come to depend on screens processing information about past times for us, because directing and editing among other production practices inevitably pre-process everything for the consumer. We face the omission of Holocaust references and since we have begun to connect Hitler, the Third Reich and WWII to the genocide directly, this is problematic. To introduce that into this film’s storyline, however, would have falsified facts and steered this film into the realm

of pure fiction, while this work is decidedly kept in the realm of a docu-drama. The Holocaust, besides destroying evidence of its existence, at this point of Hitler's career, was of no importance to his followers, if we believe the film. Logically the choice to limit references to the Holocaust here make sense, the inevitable defeat certainly ranking higher than much else on Hitler's schedule. If I were to interpret their actions and take reports of Hitler's final statements into consideration, I do believe the suicides were motivated by fear of worse than death. In a report by witnesses, associates and employees, Hitler was mortified by the mutilation of Mussolini and wanted to avoid a similar fate as much as the possibility of open humiliation and torture in Russia. Playwrights have used this knowledge and it is discussed in Joachim Fest's book *Inside Hitler's Bunker*, which *Downfall* is based on, as well.³¹ One must also consider the Prussian nature present in many soldiers that had fought in the First World War. They had been demoted once, through capitulation.

Ebert mainly speaks to the problem of humanizing Hitler, as do the critics he quotes. It has become a problem to humanize Hitler. In myth, evil is dehumanized, reinforcing the binary between good and evil by including audiences on the positive side of the binary. Film takes the place of oral tradition and tells the myths including the binaries of good and evil that are innate to myth, as Levi-Strauss understood it. *The Downfall* creates characters of depth and shaded areas that do not allow a character's prosecution as easily. Can mainstream audiences see this film and be expected to begin doubting former conceptions of the Holocaust and Hitler? Is it possible that in truth we fear these events will reoccur if we no longer demonize the bad? Does humanity need this form of control

through media? An article in the *New York Times* speaks to the audiences' position and how the film invites the viewer to identify with accomplices.

The most disturbing aspect of "*Downfall*" – and the reason it has been attacked in Germany – is the way it allows the audience's sympathy to gravitate towards some of these characters. Next to the Goebbels and to Hitler, many of the others don't look too bad. In part, this is a result of the conventions of film narrative, which more often than not invite us to identify with someone on screen, even if nobody especially admirable.

While adhering to a "convention", the possibility to identify with war and Holocaust participants here creates a problem. There are simply no good, or innocent, characters here, foregrounded enough to identify with. The director chooses to force the audience into aligning oneself with a person attached to a greatly negative image, to say it politely.

Modes of Production, Aesthetics and Composition

Hirschbiegel uses a private interview with Hitler's secretary and author of *The Blind Spot*, Traudl Junge, as bookends to the fictional core of the film. As in a Bertolt Brecht play, one of the main characters thus steps forward and directly addresses the audience. The audience is told what Traudl Junge feels. However far removed memory and perception are from actuality, personal recounts, however untrustworthy to begin with, move the film from fiction into a realm of documentary-realism at its beginning and

end. The film successfully merges properties of both fiction and documentary-like filmmaking. This docudrama questions history by re-appropriating it and by structuring its production like a documentary, bound by spatial confinements as well as time. To appropriate the documentary filmmaker John Grierson, who was among the first to define documentary, *Downfall* is an educational and “creative treatment of reality”.³² What defines this film as such are the technical aspects of its production and detail in recreation.

Oliver Hirschbiegel attempts to remain as close as possible to the facts and believable artifacts, such as photographs, diaries, etc. This affects his mode of production, art direction, framing, and character work with his actors, as we will see. *The Downfall*'s script is based upon two non-fictional works of literature. Both books, rooted in eyewitness accounts, are a mix of personal recollections and collected original artifacts. Among these artifacts is military and personal correspondence to and from the bunkers inhabitants.

Traudl Junge's book gives her personal recount of the last days prior to the capitulation of Germany. She published her memoirs under the title *Until the Final Hour (Bis zur letzten Stunde)*. The intricate creation of life in- and outside the bunker beyond Junge's grasp depended on the work of Joachim Fest. *Inside Hitler's Bunker (Der Untergang)*, which was an attempt to re-construct this period in as truthful a manner as possible, raised the same issues and created a similar discussion, as did the film at its release.³³

Hirschbiegel insisted on practical lighting. According to an interview with him, he states “in order to create a true-to-the-facts film, I could not rely on non-diegetic

lighting.”³⁴ The aforementioned bunker stage built to scale takes the realism even further. Hence, the area was extremely confining to the crew and actors. This lack of space, the lighting, and handheld camera work generate the utmost sense of reality and make us feel as though we are really in the bunker.

Questioning the Past

Committing to this degree of authenticity proved more complicated on the location shoots. The opening address also teaches the audiences how to interpret the film. It allows viewers to construct an idea of who the German people were at the time and who Hitler himself was. The audience is asked to do so by relying on the honesty of a survivor, one that lives to tell her story. The following excerpt from the film opening, parts of the interview conducted with Traudl Junge just before her death leaves the audience with sympathy for the then young secretary.

I have the feeling that I should be angry with this child³⁵, with this childish young thing, or I shouldn't forgive her for not realizing the horrors, the monster, before it was too late, for not realizing what she was getting into. How could I agree to it, so impulsively? I was not an enthusiastic Nazi. When I came to Berlin, I could have said, no... It's very hard to forgive myself for doing it.”³⁶

The mentioning of her Nazi-ties or the downplaying of them has been heard innumerable times when one defends his or her actions during the Third Reich's grip of Germany. She speaks to her inability to forgive herself and, yet, she excuses her own

actions simply by calling herself a “childish young thing.” Almost as if, she cannot truly be held accountable. The audience then has to ask if they can hold her accountable. All the while, the interview reflects on the conscience of participants in the war efforts in a more general term. The power of eyewitnesses on film is a trademark of documentaries and among that genre’s strongest assets. The final words of Traudl Junge are most important for German audiences and their coming to terms with and understanding their past. Junge here simply accepts that she is to blame for not taking action, but also that she cannot change the past.

Of course, the terrible things I heard from the Nuremberg trials about the six million Jews and people of other groups who were killed were facts that shocked me deeply. But I wasn’t able to see the connection with my own past; I was satisfied that I wasn’t personally to blame and that I hadn’t known about these things, I wasn’t aware of their extent.

But one day I went past the memorial plaque, which had been put up for Sophie Scholl in the Franz-Joseph-Strasse, and I saw that she was born the same year as me, and executed the same year I had started working for Hitler.

And at that moment I actually sensed that it was no excuse to be young, and that it would’ve been possible to find things out.”²²

These words of Traudl Junge make clear her process of accepting her own chosen ignorance has taken place. The film’s actual narrative, nestled within the interviews, takes a toll on the audience and the film’s characters, and Traudl Junge directly speaks to

that journey very. It was a choice not to act, not to question the regime and after reflecting on the last days and her participation, in the Third Reich she sees fault in that. The audiences then, considering how the opening and final address speak directly to them, are asked to reevaluate their own understanding, participation and ignorance of the subject. Germany as a country has taken responsibility for its actions on several levels. Trials, memorials, laws, financial donations to Israel and the families that were affected and destroyed by the Holocaust, the prominence of the Central Council of Jews³⁷ do not permit the past to evaporate into an oblivion, but instead are constant reminders to the FRG to never walk that path again.³⁸

The material and its ties to reality and eyewitnesses, however, are but a small part of the film's realistic feel. The film's production relies on documentary-like footage, intended to look realistic, although every one of scenes within the narrative has been staged. This footage is fashioned by utilizing few effects and technical supports, minimum soundstage use and lighting, false scenery etc. The lighting, which many see as the most important aspect of filmmaking³⁹, relies on practicals wherever possible.⁴⁰ Bunker walls although set pieces, are not removable, ceilings do not disappear to allow for a more comfortable production or interesting shots.

Realistic sceneries, as much as possible in a fiction film, weigh heavily in a film depicting a virtually destroyed city. Extensive location scouting took *Downfall* to Leningrad/Petersburg for the filming of outdoor sets. One of Germany's more prominent architects designed large portions of the town's historic districts. Peter Behrens (1868 – 1940) also designed many houses in Berlin at the time. Petersburg has not changed much since the forties, due to socialism's chronic financial trouble. Berlin however changed

greatly since the Wall fell and thus Petersburg grants original sets although in the wrong city. An area Peter crosses in the film is covered with rubble and bodies. This site was found as it is seen in the film, destroyed in the 1940's and left untouched until the time of production. Hirschbiegel staged images to look like photographs taken after Berlin fell and used documentary footage to place vehicles and dead bodies in the correct places. He found historians specializing in the variety of uniforms of the Third Reich, found original maps used by Hitler's military and weaves fictional conventional filmmaking in neatly to allow the audience to be entertained. Mostly sound makes this possible. Swing and jazz play at Eva Braun's party (she was an avid collector)⁴¹, Hitler plays classic music, the children sing German folklore songs for their uncle Hitler, all interrupted by explosions and screams of the wounded and horrible stretches of silence that drive the suspense. *Downfall* breaks barriers without ignoring its audience. The degree of reality with which these barriers are destroyed and at the same time the careful choice of altering the facts, as in whose deaths to show on screen, affect perception. The recollections of either side carry importance for an attempt to construct history, but the *Downfall* attempts to reconstruct it closer to its origins, unaltered by the growth of the Nazi-myth in the past six decades.⁴²

The fact that most of the events shown are rooted in original documents and eyewitness reports lends the *Downfall* a degree of validity. Why would the filmmakers go through the additional trouble? They hindered their production to increase the movie's level of authenticity. Truly creative interpretation and creation of events are restricted mainly to compressing accounts of varying people to allow for a smoother narrative,

creating fictive characters to stand in for many and an ending that leaves the viewer with a hopeful notion, foreshadowing the Germany to come.

Changing Our Understanding Of The Past

It is not uncommon to use films as political education tools. This use is clearly followed in Lynn Rapaport's article discussing *Schindler's List*.⁴³ He mentions that media diffuses our overall perception of the past, thus rendering factual history non-existent. The audience, in the case of *Schindler's List*, is influenced through media channels first and upon financial success this input is redirected, via school-kits containing the film and 'learning materials', to our educational systems, using the two prioritized apparatuses to deploy ideological constructs. The OWI began this process even before the FRG declared war on the USA in WWII. The OWI's influence in the 1940s, set the media tone that led to the commodification of WWII related stereotypes that younger German people easily accepted.⁴⁴

Seeing these stereotypes unhinged and the fabula, "a chronological cause and effects chain of events occurring within a given duration at a spatial field"⁴⁵ to cite Bordwell's term here, representing a new view on WWII as part of mythic discourse, makes it safe to say that Nazi imagery is dispersed widely in national folklore of most kinds in film and television. But commodification has removed the term from its original connotations and renders it almost meaningless.⁴⁶ Mainstream filmmaking began recently to include highly diverse depictions of Nazis into its films, such as in *The Pianist* (Roman Polanski, 2002). Although still coded in terms of the Second World War, the imagery slightly shifted overall, even in Hollywood. This is interesting when we take into

consideration that books like Bette Greene's *Summer of my German Soldier* (first published in 1973) was banned in certain school districts in the mid-eighties.

Returning to the concept of myth and national folklore as explained earlier in Monaco's essay, the world as constructed through ideology has to have a counterpoint to the good and depends on binaries and opposition; in short, the world needs a villain along with its hero. I believe that due to recent events, 9/11 and its follow-ups respectively, the position of the stereotypical villain has shifted to the Muslim-Fanatics-Other rather than Fascist or Communist Other that occupied the 'western' minds for the better part of a century. Albeit Muslims have been utilized as screen villains during the history of cinema as well, see Jack G. Shaheen's work *Reel Bad Arabs – How Hollywood Vilifies a People* (2003) the German villain appears to have moved from the primary position only after the events of 9/11. The media are a tool for propaganda as we all know and political agenda's in film have not stopped existing after the OWI. Nicholas Mirzoeff mentions the government committees formed solely to address television's future trajectory after the World Trade Center was destroyed.⁴⁷ In addition, while mainstream filmmaking is often considered liberal, films like *300* are attacked for their right-wing socio-political context.

I both use truth and reality in the case of *Downfall* as the truth in Foucault's sense of the term: What is true is decided and enforced by those that are part of the dominant powers. Thus, truth is what is acceptable; reality is based on artifacts that aren't easily refuted, but are clearly created in part by the force in charge. History is written by the winners. This is why I apply Foucault's work here, the winners have manipulated the 'truth' of national identity in Germany by heavily inserting their media into the nation's cultural discourse. Reality, especially in the *Downfall*, is the compelling illusion of

perceiving actual accounts through a legitimate source. The filmmakers desire to create for the audience the possible belief that they receive an unaltered report of history, as they can believe more easily in the realm of documentary. Reality in general, is always portrayed in a subjective fashion. The seemingly best way to avoid that would be to base your story in as many different sources as possible. Accounts that speak about things similarly yet stem from varying sources are most valid.

This is catered to by the interviews of Traudl Junge mentioned previously. Deployed by the dominant power, truth and reality do not exist as unalterable entities, but are in flux. Films such as *Downfall* question not only the past itself, but, by altering dominant perceptions and visual opinions, they change the very concepts of dominant discourse. Hirschbiegel and producer Bernd Eichinger's ultimate goal, according to their own words in the DVD special features, was to produce characters that are not fraught with ridicule and overpowering manic disorders. They wanted to represent the horrors as they were, removed from contemporary and global retrospective perceptions. Thereby they allowed for a freer viewing and openness to reevaluate the events and persons in question with less baggage. Although the memory is there, *Downfall* invites a different look at the last days of Hitler's Germany and at characters that were not explored as greatly in film before, such as the military doctor or the children fighters.

One of the characters created to be a societal stand in, is the boy Peter. He lives in Berlin, has lost his mother and is about to lose his father, who struggles to keep Peter from sacrificing his live for Hitler. Reports speak to the fact that the Fuehrer gave the iron cross to a group of youngsters who fought tanks of the invading Russian army on his last birthday, April 20 1945. Peter is among them, proud as the others to receive this

honor. Children like him fought adamantly after Russians had encircled Berlin, to the day the city fell. He meets Traudl Jung in the latter part of the film, a hopeful ending. There is a German child, in the eyes of the audience, who broke the ban Hitler had over him. While he had been proud of his acts and is now fleeing the destroyed city, his character is an example of Germany's salvation. Peter's leaving of Berlin and earlier 'desertion' is the personified dream of a new non-fascist future for the country. The woman and child find a bicycle and ride down a tree-lined street in one of the last shots, which has immense visual power. This is the story of the sanctified survivors. Almost religiously glorifying the beginning of a new Germany, while with bike and clothing reveling in a romanticized past it evokes a sense of pride, heads held high after defeat.

Among other moments that are based on loose reports is the depiction of an apparently abandoned hospital. Dozens of elderly people simply have been left behind, to die either in the bombings or in artillery fire or left to the mercy of an enemy-army. I feel that this, albeit not clearly referable, reflects the Holocaust. This enforces not only an Anti-Semitic cleansing; it is a denouncement of all humanity. We here have an eradication of life, which was not up to par and sub-standard to the NSDAP (National Socialist Worker's Party of Germany) ruling. "Like Jews, [millions of non-Jewish, inferior women and men] were seen as 'ballast' and 'parasites' to the 'body' of *Volk* and race, though Jews were seen as threatening this body from the outside, and other inferior beings were seen as threatening it from the inside".⁴⁸ The Nazis considered genetically, physically, mentally ill people, homosexuals and gypsies 'unfit life'. The Nazis often left behind those who could not help themselves. Human life was worthless, if unsanctioned by Hitler and his minions. The only other strong reference to the Holocaust is found in

Hitler's dictation to Alfred Speer. In his last will and testament, he addresses the need to eradicate the Jewish people as one of his final wishes for Germany's future. The Holocaust has been marginalized and ends as a defeated man's useless last wish. Audiences are reminded of the past, but there is no guilt placed upon them. The film reframed that part of Germany's past.

This Is How Defeat Looks

The Downfall first presents its characters as polished. As the story unfolds, they begin slowly to wither, until the final scenes create emotionally and graphically deserted, ruined spaces and men and women drained of life. The events in the bunker have a stark, high/contrast setting, framed and lit almost entirely by practicals, foreshadowing their future is waiting in the dark. All active players in the film and their respective storylines create a coherent and multifaceted depiction of Berlin in May 1945, with a diverse demographic among the players. Women and men of different convictions, class, civilian and military, children and elderly are shown. To be realistic, and keeping the setting of the events in mind, there obviously are only characters of Caucasian origins. *Downfall* evokes the common depictions of Germans, but does so by subtle and realistic presentations avoiding exaggerated stereotyping.⁴⁹ The character's humanity is dangerous. If humans we may identify with are capable of these actions, they may re-occur. Believable action is more threatening than the outrageously brutal or horrific action removed from reality. What this film tells us then, is that WWII was not merely a dark time in history, but it could still happen today, people are still 'human', easily scared and feeling threatened by the "Other."

Hirschbiegel did not follow this formula of realism faithfully though, yet his deviations make evil's defeat less spectacular. Because this is a fictional work, Hirschbiegel was able to gloss over some of the events taking place in the bunker, such as the murder-suicides. Hitler, Eva Braun, and others commit suicide. Magda Goebbels murders her children. The children and the Hitler's take cyanide to die. These scenes, although in process and chronologically correct, are highly unrealistic. Death occurs fast, appears relatively pain free and does not show much physical response. Cyanide binds oxygen faster than blood cells and thus in effect suffocates the body's cells. The death is painful, takes several minutes, often without loss of consciousness, and causes cramping.⁵⁰ The deaths here are almost peaceful and pretty, maybe even heroic. Hitler's and the Goebbels' death are not filmed. Hirschbiegel states that he did not want these characters to appear "heroic".

The question whether or not he then makes a statement here as to who could be considered a hero and a victim and who should not becomes evident. Filmmakers always insert their opinion and construct their worlds on film. Not permitting Hitler a 'good' death makes a clear statement, one not many have picked up on. Some written work quoted here simply is too busy discussing the humanizing impersonation of the devil, top to bottom, to see such details. Of course, it is an interesting directorial decision not to show those that an audience may wish to see in pain suffer in their death.

For example, the deaths of Magda Goebbels' children immediately reminded me of the Greek tragedy *Medea*, both in the events themselves and their staging. The actor, Corinna Harfouch, according to the director's commentary provided on the DVD release, had to stop the scene several times before she was able to compose herself and finish the

takes necessary to wrap the scene. Magda Goebbels, often understood as the Third Reich's first Lady, is clearly shown in a negative light, yet as patriotic and a believer in a higher cause at the same time. She had to force her oldest daughter to take the sleeping poison she gave to all her children. Accounts by the chemist who mixed the drinks and also bruises found on the dead girl's body corroborate this.⁵¹ The daughter's resistance is downplayed in the film. Again, the director resisted a chance to make events horrifying without altering the facts that would have spoken to the truth. The filmmakers wish to create a movie that allows for a more neutral observation of the months leading to the Third Reich's defeat may have caused him to downplay what would not have been a falsification of reality.

Addressing The Audience

The film always stays within striking distance of the conventional narrative, yet the movie's alternating paces between bunker scenes and the other storylines forces the audience to look differently. The cuts are fewer and the sequences longer. What affectively keeps a moderate tempo here is the change of location and personal account. Yet the audience has a chance to see minute details such as Hitler's shaking hands. They see this footage long enough to question its meaning, at least in a world of ideal perception.

Innovations in film equipment always provoked stylistic and philosophic shifts in what constitutes cinematic reality. Documentary footage of WWII is still often used in films and shows speaking about the Second World War, but the viewers (including viewers of *The History Channel*) certainly have grown accustomed to cinemas's and

television's contemporary look, and re-enactments have become a standard practice to tie the perceived facts into the screen's representational realm. Why then should a film like *Downfall* not receive the label documentary? Why should we not understand it as a film deploying historic knowledge, serving as an educational tool to the global audience? Thus, Germany now is able to reevaluate its past and take responsibility for its actions without dooming what cannot be changed, without cursing their own roots. Audiences are invited to question former models of WWII on film.

The books and accounts *Downfall* is based upon are merged successfully into a network of characters and events and offer a diverse view of 'history', not by a single interpretation, but by blending the memory of diverse individuals. Audiences will find a likeable character more easily as the *New York Times*' article pointed out. Both producer Bernd Eichinger and Hirschbiegel were aware of the ideology installed over decades and their attempt to shift it.⁵² They actively attempt to relocate a discussion of WWII and Germany, reshape national identification with the subject, and allow for an alternative view that does not re-write history but seeks to question our perception of it.

The Film and its Background

To understand this film in context it is unavoidable to touch on a few statements made prior to this point. Undoubtedly, prior documentaries and fiction films have shown a tendency to depict Hitler and the people surrounding him, as well as the German people, as psychopathic, insane, monstrous, and pathologically brilliant. It is a message that creates an international image of the FRG's national identity. What Benedict

Anderson termed *Imagined Communities*, created through media and imperialism, is a contemporary issue. Thus the FRG is accustomed to, and inevitably learned to identify with, its often stereotypical screen persona(s) put forth in WWII and Holocaust films as well as less serious mainstream films such as *Indiana Jones I* (1981) and *III* (1989). Germany, through these films, accepts a representation of German identity imposed by foreign filmmakers and production companies.

After WWI, Germans faced deprecation from the victors, inflation starved entire families, and jobs were scarce. The worldwide depression had affected Germany with a similar force as America. Seeing the need for change, they ‘invented’ a new Germany in the Weimar Republic, which did not last long. Based on the country’s vulnerability, the fascist promises fell on fertile ground. They formed yet another German nation, the third within 30 years, the Third Reich. The humiliation felt by the German people after their capitulation was abused by Hitler to gain power and inevitably lead to further humiliation and shame after the Third Reich had ended. This regime, carefully regulating its citizens, formed a new political and national identity. With the post WWII occupation and the Allied forces splitting the country in two, the old identity had to give way for yet another.

Generic depictions of Nazis deploy the imagery of the personified evil. In today’s media world, the term Nazi has become highly commodified. Not all cinema and media does so, but I highlight some examples to demonstrate how the commodification has become common enough practice. Comedies such as *Seinfeld*, *Miss Congeniality*, and *Bridget Jones*, to name but a few, use Hitler or the term Nazi as comic relief without thematic connections between film, plot, and term. In addition, cartoon characters visit the Holocaust in humorous fashion as seen in episodes of the *Family Guy* and the

Simpsons, by ridiculing Germany's loss of memory concerning this era, Nazis, Hitler or even the death camps. TV dramas like *Law and Order* repeatedly fight murdering Nazis on a serious level. Action films have used the Nazi/Evil German as über-villains to be defeated by their heroes *Indiana Jones* and *Die Hard*'s John McClane. Other films may disguise the imagery, but uniforms as seen in *Star Wars* directly link the villains and their army assemblies to images deeply ingrained in the viewers mind, such as the parading German troops in Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will*. The latter stands in stark contrast to the visual representation in *Downfall*. Hirschbiegel's film has no grand armies marching, no images of grandeur.

Lastly, as Robert MacDougall points out in his article *Red, Brown and Yellow Perils: Images of the American Enemy...*⁵³ the villains from the Soviet Union were crafted in the German image. Audiences could decode and identify these old images of new enemies more easily, because they were already "trained" in recognizing the enemies characteristics. Media utilized proven imagery to fuel a new front against a new fiend. Films shape and maintain screen identities. The power of images lies in their accessibility and potential for manipulation of reality. Media in this case specifically does so, via a past decoded through a myth of personified evil, the ultimate enemy.⁵⁴ This enemy is bad to its core, according to the prime audience's morality and ideology. It cannot be saved or turned into good. The threat generated by this opposition to the dominant ideology is great. Destruction appears as the only possibility for the heroes in the story, with which viewers commonly identify.

Conclusion

There is a degree of 'it is human, it may happen again', rather than the incomprehensible horror of Nazi Germany we all are accustomed to on the screen. The film's last images allude to the current prospective future of a country that may not forget the past, but take a bike ride on a Sunday afternoon and smile while the wind is blowing in their face.

The Downfall marks but one aspect of German identity construction in the age of the rapidly changing European Union; that of looking back onto ones past and attempting to make sense of it all. The new identity of a contemporary Germany asked for a redefinition of German citizens' part in the Third Reich and Hirschbiegel's *Downfall* catered to this need.

Thus, it is not surprising that German filmmakers would investigate other moments of significance in the nation's history. Beaten after WWII the German people found themselves once again in the process of picking up the pieces. With the country's ruins, its occupation by the Allied forces, and following separation the FRG, western Germany especially, needed a positive event to energize the young republic and push it into Germany's Economic Wonder (Das Wirtschaftswunder) of 1955 that lasted into the early seventies. Soccer, a game with tradition in the entire nation, came to Germany's rescue. Although the republic's politics led to this boom, Soccer remained named in the same breath.⁵⁵

Chapter 3

Realism Against a Nation's Depression

Soenke Wortmann's *The Miracle of Bern*

“Just four years after being permitted to compete once again, West Germany qualified for the 1954 World Cup in Switzerland, jinked through to the final against Hungary and won 3-2: the Miracle of Bern. For many Germans it was a sign of special grace and a divine endorsement of their re-admission not merely to Fifa but to the human race.”⁵⁶

National Pride After Defeat

The title *The Miracle of Bern* (Soenke Wortmann, 2003) “... refers to one of the (three widely accepted) major events in the German consciousness during the second half of the 20th century. (The others were the currency reform in 1948 and the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989.) Brought to their knees by WWII -- and essentially citizens of an occupied country existing on foreign aid -- Germans rediscovered a measure of self-respect on July 4, 1954, when they won the World Cup in Bern, Switzerland.”⁵⁷

It is vital, to understand that Germany in 2003 was in a state of self-doubt. The country was in economic recession, unemployment soared, the nation's ranking in the European Union dropped, and politicians were unmasked as cadgers left and right. Soenke Wortmann's film reminds the audience of worse times, yet the ending, with its roots in reality, promises a brighter future. In addition, the fact that the FRG was to the 2006 Soccer World Cup should not be ignored. The position of host comes with prestige,

money, and jobs. After a runner-up position in the 2002 Cup there was the possibility of the national team winning the event in the home country.

The year of Germany's success in Bern in 1954 is significant. The new Republic of Germany 'celebrated' its fifth anniversary. Soon afterwards, the European economical treaties with the US, as well as Germany's employment strategy began to take root and pushed the country from a nation in ruins into the economic boom that lasted into the seventies. Many name the World Cup as the beginning of the country's financial upsurge.⁵⁸

Although only the Western Germany entered the Cup's main event, the GDR was equally affected. Accounts of prison guards allowing the inmates to listen to radio transmissions and bars and work places airing the game, demonstrate this. One account describes the events in a ward for political prisoners. A prison warden believed the defeat of the West German team inevitable and allowed his political inmates to listen to the final game. He was certain that the defeat of the FRG would reflect well on the superiority of the GDR's system. The unexpected outcome caused a stir inside prison walls and, reportedly, all over eastern Germany.⁵⁹

Short Lived Success

When the boom went into remission roughly 15 years later, Germany struggled with terrorism (Red Army Fraction). The 'rebellion' questioned the country's dependence on the western Allies. It led to great political unrest. A newly soaring unemployment rate divided the country politically.

During the 1970s and 80s recession, public TV's children's programming, often addressed the period of war indirectly, much as the Heimatfilm.⁶⁰ Albeit often ignored for its superficial appearing content, scholars have recently begun to question the genre's underlying functions. Authorities are questioned, morals are at the center of attention, and the will to fight village traditions is stimulated as if the Heimat genre is attempting to create a sense of opposition rather than submissiveness towards the leaders.

Set in rural areas and focused on civilian pressures⁶¹, the short stories were nestled into the everyday life of the characters in television series like *New Stories from Uhlenbusch* (Neues aus Uhlenbusch). International co-productions such as *Red Zora* (Rote Zora, 1973) appear to copy their subject and style from Italian realism, addressing poverty and injustice towards the common people. Stories portrayed in these and similar series not only enable a nation's children to look at the past and feel sorrow and remorse, but they also foreshadow a positive future and instill a positive moral attitude.

The series mentioned above recall how the nation overcame worse times before. I would argue that *The Miracle of Bern* functions in a similar fashion. It reminds a fragile Germany in 2004 of the possibilities ahead, specifically using soccer to foreshadow the 2006 Cup expectations.

Visualizing The Journey

The Miracle of Bern spins its plot around the Soccer World Cup of 1954 in Switzerland. The events left Germany victorious, the guilt and daily reminders of the Third Reich removed for a while. The film opens with grey and blue color tones. A hill on which we see smoke rising from an industrial chimney rises up on the screen. The dirt

and grime are almost tangible to the audience, the indiscernible rain sickly muting the colors on the screen. At first glance the film creates the illusion that warm colors, especially red, are omitted from this story location altogether. A closer look, however, reveals that the color red is used infrequently in the Ruhr areas, yet decidedly only in reference to soccer and a better future. There is a sense that there is not much life in what we soon find out to be the Ruhr area, Germany's prime industrial region.

The slow paced, grey and foggy opening scenes set a tone of despair, grime, poverty. The smokestack puffs out dirty clouds, both a symbol of industrialisation at the time and a clear graphic marker for the living area of the lower class. Subtitles guide the audience step by step.⁶² The viewers are taken by their hands. This makes the precision of the images we see painfully obvious, but it binds the audience to the characters without need for constant re-orientation.

The camera moves from the landmark of industrial achievements to a lone tree. In this tree we see a group of youngsters who are on the lookout with their binoculars, with their knees dangling or drawn to their chins. They are waiting and the camera, adopting the binocular's position, frames the clouds. Considering the re-occurring theme of church, specifically the Catholic Church, in the film, the framing of the smoke from the stack the boys look at is interesting. It is as if they wait to receive notice about the vote on the pope. They see a lone bird fly towards them and run towards a pigeonry. Their pants are typically short, socks pulled up, buttoned shirts and suspenders complete the picture. The one appearing the oldest eagerly tears a note from one pigeon's leg and Mattes, a younger boy, reads out what soon is discovered to be a soccer score. The results of a soccer game, not the pope, are the driving force in this film. The young boys' hurry and impatience to

get to the note reflect a need for something to root and hope for. Soccer has turned into a need, a want, your team's win eagerly awaited, its loss bemoaned. The oldest kid is wearing a dirty red sports sweater. The color almost indistinguishable. He reads the score and is the one linked directly to soccer, solace and hope in this scene, which turns into a theme throughout the film. The children are devastated, especially Mattes, the story's anchor, when they have to find out that the favorite team lost. We do not see the match, as see only one professional match in the movie, the final game in Bern. Wortmann delivers each game's score on the way to the national team's success via a different medium. First by pigeon, and then by television, radio, hand written cards, and an audio recording of a game's final minutes.

The fair haired and slender boy Mattes (short for the German form of Matthew, Matthias), crushed by the loss of his favorite team arrives late for dinner. In a dimly lit live-in-kitchen his mother, brother, and sister are waiting and poke good-natured fun at him. The brief introduction to the characters is interrupted by Mattes seeking solace in his rabbit hutch. Then we see the families source of income, a bar. The sister works serving tables, the brother reminds customers of paying their tabs, and Mattes collects abandoned cigarettes, combines them into new ones and thus provides income as well. Bruno, the older brother, puts a socialist poster on the wall and talks about his position as head of the house while his father, who we hear about for a first time, is in Russian imprisonment. The poverty and need for all family members to work together are obvious, and a one-armed man at the bar, the figure in the background, all indicate that the family is one of many in a dire situation. The one armed man cannot find a job, he is a veteran. Women and children struggle to manage daily life in which the former supporters of the family

have disappeared in the voids of war. The absence of a father here is important. War has a tendency to decimate the numbers of men and leaves women and children behind, even though global mediated memory tends to avoid the subject of such victims of the aftermath.

Every family member has a clearly assigned role, but how the family is constructed here is beyond a simple personal realm. Within a few scenes, we learn about the situation of single mothers and their position in Germany. We see that young children like Mattes have dreams like everyone else, and that the sons and daughters that experienced the end of the war are aware of the past and are furious yet helpless. They face a history that cannot be unwritten. But the journey this family takes shows the audience that the future can be changed, no matter the past.

Heroes, Jesters and Villains

Wortmann wisely chooses to take this moment to introduce the character to whom the film is dedicated, Helmut Rahn. The German soccer player shot not only the final goal in Bern but a total of two against Hungary in the last game of the Cup. We see Mattes wake and follow his hero, carrying his bags - a common practice at the time that allowed young boys to see stadium games for free and was understood as quite an honor. Rahn plays in his favorite team but also in the National Eleven⁶³. The music is now upbeat, as opposed to the darker notes heard in the film's opening sequences. It is playful theme with strings and a piano, fast paced while we watch the soccer training from Mattes' perspective. There is a lightness to these images that almost denies the cold and unwelcoming sense of colors and weather that mirrors the opening scene, and Mattes still

sports a smile on his face when he comes home. The off field area is populated by ‘knowledgable’ observers, locals who, if we listen to them, could all be the team’s next trainer. The side remarks are humorous, the bystanders talk as if trainers but cannot perform the sport themselves, yet important to understand the character’s later reactions at the progress of their national team in Switzerland. The relationship between sport viewers and players is dynamic although no direct interaction occurs.

Helmut Rahn’s team is Red-White Essen (Rot-Weiss-Essen) and their jerseys are red; a hint again at the importance of this color of passion. Red in some statistics ranks as favored by every fifth German and is said to psychologically symbolize “luck, happiness, energy, love, hate, passion, (and) wrath (...).”⁶⁴ The field’s backdrop is comprised of muddy playing fields and more smoke stacks. While Mattes is smiling at his hero we fade into his family’s kitchen.

While he walks down the hallway the music changes; the piano, note by note, sharply disengages the naïve lightheartedness we felt before. The table is now close to the screen’s edge, which positions us in Mattes’ empty chair before our eyes are led skillfully to a letter lying close to his mother’s folded hands. Again the setting is dark, with scarce lighting illuminating the kitchen table where his family awaits Mattes, questioning him about his whereabouts and late arrival. The questions are rhetorical however. The scene is shot with a wide angle lense first, in which the tight arrangement of the mother and two oldest children creates an image of a close-knit family in an open space. They seem lost. The mother turns the letter in her hands. A brief glimpse on the stamp confirms that this letter was sent on behalf of the German military. All faces are drawn closely to the camera, the eyes puzzled, uncertain of how to proceed. Only then is the letter opened; but

the news is good. Mattes' father is returning home. Yet, his mother is the only one to emit some degree of happiness. What we see on the faces is uncertainty and the music reflects that, it is jumpy but not erratic, it is calm but not soothing. Only after we hear the mom exhale "Soon we'll be a real family again. (pause) Are you not happy?" and see the children's reaction it becomes clear that the late return of the father will be problematic.

Now we are introduced to the film's comedic relief. Not allowing us to indulge in the depression created by such unexpected reactions, the movie rips us out of reality, or the realism we see portrayed here and that we know from such films as DeSica's *Bicycle Thief*. The colors are vibrant, oranges and reds clashing with the 1950s smooth round lines in furniture, women's clothing, accessories. A woman in a modern and bright swooping dress, as seen in movies from the US at that time, for example *All that Heaven Allows* (1955), swoops down the staircase. Her manner, loud voice, open smile indicate and forward manipulation of her husband indicate that she is the source of authority in this marriage. We learn that her husband, Paul Ackermann, is a sports reporter, that her father bought the house, and will buy them their honeymoon, too. The Ackermann's reflect the upper-middle class, the generation that came of age soon after the war.

When the scene transitions from the kitchen table to this chic, modern, and angular glass building representative of the 1950s upper class, the director almost offends by the images' brightness, the glowing reds sported by Anette, Paul's wife, in clothing, make up and jewelry in extreme contrast to the prior scenes. The two worlds couldn't be any different. The young couple that was in their early teens when Germany surrendered versus those that partook in the regime's madness as adults. This brief intermezzo, as we soon find out, was quite necessary for the pacing of the film, since we find ourselves back

in the Ruhr area and at a decrepit old train station, yet another visual theme, in a matter of seconds.

The waiting area alongside the tracks is filled with people holding pictures of their loved ones or themselves at a younger age; there are nuns and nurses handing out food, a brass band welcoming the late returnees. When we finally see the father, he embraces his daughter confusing her with his wife. In his mind, she has not aged. It is this love for detail that tells a story more than words. The actors' work is impeccable throughout. The person that returns home does not know any of the things or people surrounding him, he treats the ground as if it is made from cotton. He looks at his wife with hardly any sign of recognition, more resignation at the time lost, the life spent.

Bruno says that the Russian "kicked us in the ass because we attacked with no good reason." He cannot forgive his father for actively taking part in the Nazi's war or not returning from the same. He cannot take his side and this eventually leads to Bruno leaving the family. Little does he seem to understand that Hitler made the very same promises as the socialists to better life for the German people. He cannot foresee the GDR would simply become yet another fascist regime with spies in every house. Bruno is also the one who explains to his father that soccer is not the only thing that makes a difference in Mattes' life, but that the Boss, Rahn, has become a father figure for his younger brother. Confrontation however, is unavoidable. The father wants to return discipline to the family, which he feels has not been part of life, and he wants to sell the pub once his imprisonment money arrives and he returns to his job.

When the family sits down for dinner reunited for the first time there is a clear visual division between the returned soldier and the family that has survived the ruins of

war by creating their own family dynamics. The father sits on the right hand side. The scene is dark. Between the man and his family to the left, weaker, side of the screen is a window that provides the scene's only light. It almost draws the eye of the viewer to the area outside, wants us to look away from this uncomfortable family gathering. There is a rift that has to be bridged. It is very clearly the war, which only ended for the POW with his return, that stands between them, makes them unequals.

The Route To Happiness

The main themes have been introduced within the first third of the film, in a classic three act structure albeit one split among three different levels of interest: the family in Essen, the young reporter couple, and the national soccer team. Here the film begins to cut more frequently between the three aspects of the story, the three locations. The team is getting ready to leave and, because technically, and economically important, we even see the pitch and resulting purchase of the new screw-studded soccer shoes by Adi Dassler, what we today know as Adidas. His screwable studs for soccer shoes became key to the final game on that rainy and muddy day. While waiting to leave Essen in a train going to the training camp, Rahn asks Mattes to understand how hard returning home must be for his father. Thus, there are two train sequences in close proximity; One returning a stranger and one taking away a friend. However, both start Mattes' journey into change. His father, who earlier proclaims that soon he'll again work at the mine, steers into more troubles. His compensation for the time at the POW camp is a lot less than expected, due to German bureaucracy. When he returns to his job he suffers from a panic attack; his daughter and eldest son have issues with him returning as head of the

house and the youngest, who had not met his father before the war, dissappoints him and does not trust him.

We learn that Ackerman is covering the Cup, his wife will come with him, and that the German people begin to pay interest to the national team's progress and beginning defeat. They follow each game, the bars are crowded, smokey and the different perspectives shown among the patrons presumably depicts a relative variety of impressions as they realistically may have been in 1954. While Wortmann leaves the formal behind at this point, and the picture perfect scenes of Switzerland's beauty and tranquility certainly affect this sense of realism as well, it is the attempt to truthfully reconstruct, in a non-sensationalist and almost transcendental fashion at times, the slow progression of Germany from Nazi state and war loser to a country getting ready to stand up and change its outlook.

The games begin. The German team and Ackermann and his wife have arrived in Switzerland and prepare themselves for the first game. Switzerland as shown here, is filled with red flowers; red flowered wall paper and bedding in the hotel rooms. The hotel pages wear red, the windows of the hotel are lined with red flowers, and on top of the hotel the red Swiss flag moves swiftly in the wind beneath a bright blue sky. The national team has taken a first step into a bright blue future.

Mattes also prepares for the games in a way. His father explains to him that it is not enough to strive to become a copy of his favorite player, but that one must find his own strength to be good at what one does. He advices that Mattes should be a defensive player, not act in the position that the Boss fills. Thus while Mattes was not only chosen last when playing with his friends, but allowed to partake only when there was an uneven

number of players, he immediately sees the results. Being himself has brought him a spot in his friends' soccer games.

We may be transfer this meaning to Germany, still investigating the film under the national identity lens. A beaten young nation told to assimilate to the formula of the winning power is here told that a country cannot simply copy the USA or any of the other Allied forces. Soccer is a part of German national pride, something unharmed they were, and are again, successful at. The film here shows that this is a nation needing its own voice again and its own strength. Mattes' sister is pulled out of a dance hall, where her father finds her dancing with a British soldier, the occupier. She keeps trying to explain to him that she was just dancing, enjoying herself, but her father does not listen. The father's attempt to forbid his daughter to have any contact with the British soldiers here also speaks to the actual occupation and does not simply deal with a father's protectiveness over a maturing daughter. The issues that arose at the time are still there today in areas that house American military bases. Wherever there is an Air Force or Army base there are young women unhappy about their position in life and who see the GI's as an opportunity to leave; the cultural transition when these women leave Germany is not always easy.⁶⁵

One very interesting scene takes place in church, it is the first church scene in the film. Mattes lights a candle in what is clearly a Catholic Church. The cross near the altar is red and the warmth of the candles is in stark contrast to the grimness outside this holy refuge. The candle in a Catholic Church is usually lit to wish someone well or to ask for health or success. The scene is very dark, the light of the candles shines weakly against the drab background. His father sits praying in the pews, watching him; he lowers his

eyes, possibly ashamed to be there, and Mattes doesn't see him when he leaves. The search for hope via religion is certainly common in times of despair. We enter this place again a little later, when Mattes' father seeks a conversation with a priest. First the priest begins to talk about soccer, then lets the returnee express his fears of no longer fitting in and making things worse for his family not better.

When Germany plays the first game, the pub is fairly busy, with patrons scattered at the tables. The entire family is working, with the exception of Mattes' father, who just sits alone and watches his family. Mattes gives his father a cigarette free of charge. A gift to his father that will diminish the income. He takes his son outside to ask him why he lit the candle. There is a hint that makes us know he wanted his child to wish him well and that he was touched by this. Upon finding that the candle was lit for the Boss, he cannot contain his anger and hurt. He hits Mattes in the face. The boy begins to whine and his father, quick to yell at him for doing so, threatens him even more. "German boys do not cry." Mattes runs home and repeats these words to his rabbits. He is forbidden to leave the house for days. One of his friends brings him the soccer score written on a white board and the next game his brother Bruno brings him a radio. Things begin to look up in the family as well.

The family sits around the dinner table, the father brings gifts for everyone, although it is the mother's birthday he wishes to give everyone a gift. Everyone speaks about the delicious food, thanking him for making this a special day and for the gifts. Mattes gets a soccer ball. A ball that is round and not pieces of cloth tied together like the one the children played with before. When he runs outside he stops at the rabbit cages to show his pets his new pride and joy, but find the cages empty. Unsuspecting the boy looks

for his furry friends; yet, it does not take long for Mattes to find out he just had his pet rabbits for dinner. He walks past the trash cans and the sound of the flies draws him to them. He lifts up the lid and the camera shows us the heads still connected to the rabbits' skin. The boy screams, shrieks, breaks down, and the parents yell at each other. The father has no understanding. The mother follows her youngest son. The two sit at the river; The water washing away their pain one may say. They have a calm conversation in which the boy asks his mother why his father is mean. The mother explains that what is happening is no ones fault. It is neither his nor his father's fault that his father was forced to be in Russia. This relieves the individual of the pain of the past and any ensuing guilt. Mattes' mother steps close to him and asks Mattes to give it time, to understand his father's side. That it will take patience.

Although this may be less common among women's experience's at the time, she did yell at her husband, explaining to him that the family was a family and a happy one as such before he returned, that he needs to take their life into consideration not only lament his own. She accuses him of being the undisciplined one. This is such an interesting juxtaposition and demonstration of reasoning; it is so analytical and, thus, so German. Tolerance has become the brainchild of and a life force for this country. We see here a strong advocate for that way of life. Everyone needs to consider others before themselves. It is important to apply reason and rationality instead of irrational condemnation.

These scenes are intercut constantly with scenes from the soccer field and hotel in Switzerland as well as of Ackerman and Anette. One scene briefly brings these two realms together. Some players have snuck out to get a beer. The Ackermann's decide not

to use this for a story, but help Rahn to return to his hotel standing behind their nation, taking a stand for many instead of their own career. There Sepp Herberger, the team's trainer, sees the Boss returning drunk. It was established earlier that he was everything but lenient to players jeopardizing the team. Herberger is ready to send him home, but he cannot leave the hotel because a Swiss cleaning lady mops the floor and Herberger is polite and sits down while she finishes. "When else would I do this?" she responds upon being asked why she cleans this late. Herberger asks what she'd do if one of her most loved children makes a mistake and she asks why there always has to be punishment. Their conversation changes from actual dialogue into a back and forth of adages. One proverb chases the next. All of them making perfect sense in themselves, as proverbs do, but also saying something else between the lines. There is nothing new to add to how we deal with relationships and life at large. Sometimes we have to let our emotional response take over and see past our selfs. We cannot ignore the past, therein maybe the origin of good or evil things. Acceptance is often a better way of addressing the past then assigning blame or deciding on punishments.

This addresses Germany and its history. We need to accept, but there is nothing new to be said it seems, no one left to be punished, no need to assign blame over and over again since it has been established. The lighter sequences in Switzerland foreshadow a shift in the film, where Germany's burden is transferred from the family to the players in Munich. The family is making a turn for the better; both Ackermanns now are invested deely in soccer, placing a personal bet on the German team. The wife sides with the national team and bets that they'll win. The wager appears trivial and humorous; the winner of the challenge may name their future children. Now the team struggles and

becomes the film's main and is clearly connected to the future of a nation, the new generation. An internet web site reported that as was the case in 1954, after the 2006 World Cup there was a rise in pregnancies. This wager of the Ackermann's reflects on the nation's new belief in the future's possibilities.

We now mostly see Mattes' family immersed by growing numbers of costumers, reflecting the growing interest in the Cup, as Germany climbs towards the final. They experience a diffusion of blame. Richard, Mattes' father, speaks about his imprisonment.

Unbelievably he speaks about Russians sheltering him on his march home; he does not omit that the Russians did not have anything themselves and that he can no longer blame them. He also admits that, after a few years, he no longer thought of his family or home. Home ceased to exist, ceased to be something real, becoming a faded memory. This is so important because audiences are not used to hearing this. We expect to hear testimony of undying love and that the thought of family was the only thing that kept someone alive. Yet that puts pressure on the family, pressure on the ones that did not feel that pain. Blame is indirectly placed. Richard no longer partakes in this; he accepts his past and moves on. He takes responsibility for his life. Also remarkable is that this confession is set in as homely an environment as possible in a 1950s German home. The daughter iron shirts, the mother prepares food for dinner, and Mattes and his father peel potatoes. The family he forgot over hunger and despair reminds him of what he lost and may set in motion this avowel that leads to a family having a new chance for bonding.

Richard borrows a car from the priest he confided in and takes Mattes to the stadium. Their physical journey is a reverse in color scheme. The bright and tree lined streets lead into a big raincloud beneath them in a valley. We have come full circle with

the opening shot, yet the outlook is no longer one of despair, but the hope of turning the ruins into a new country. Creative geography, used here since the time needed to travel would differ from what we see in the movie, deviates from the realistic timbre of the movie's first two thirds. Yet the journey of father and son could not feel more real. They stand at a mountain top near the road, relieving themselves, when they seem to have made a real connection for the first time. Trust is present and the fact that they urinate together exaggerates that point.

Soccer was a main problem between the two characters. Mattes prays for the boss and the team, does not play as well as his father, and tries to run away to Switzerland. At the same time soccer now is the strongest uniting force for father and son, after both realize where the other stands and how it is problematic to create a bond with someone you simply do not know, but are supposed to love. We saw Mattes play with his friends, observed by his father; as Mattes evolves as a player, when taking his father's tips into consideration, so does the national team. Sepp Herberger, the coach, received many threats after losing the tournament's first game 8-3 to Hungary. These real letters are read aloud in the film, as Herberger reportedly used them to motivate his players for the important game against Turkey.⁶⁶ At this point it is quite clear that this is no longer just Mattes' story. It is transformed into the story of an underdog-country rather than an individual. The hope invested in the sport is important and so is the mistrust by those characters in the film that have not regained hope after the war yet. The faces of the believers are superimposed on the screen, lit with beaming eyes and their chins up.

A Visual Journey

The color scheme melts together more and more during the movie's latter scenes. The faces in the pub increase and move together until we have a massive crowd of faces, staring wide-eyed at the television screen. No longer are the spaces in the Ruhr empty and dead, until the final game, when the streets are empty and the crowds are pulled to the television screens and radio shops. The faces are bright, the lights in the pub have become warm and orange in glow. Rain brings the German team a wanted advantage and also a feeling of the Germany they left behind.

As the story unfolds in its main act and its three locations, it constructs parallels as much as it enforces visual differences. The children's playing areas turn from street to mud field and finally grass begins to grow on the kicking field and the livelessness turns into life affirmation reminiscent of spring, although this is the summer. And the playing field at the training camp is a bright field of thick green grass, nothing like the mud field that is Rot-Weiss-Essen's home.

"The film has three distinct "looks," established by d.p. Tom Faehrmann's color grading and production and costume design by Uli Hanisch and Ursula Welter: Drab grays and blues represent the family's Ruhr Valley mining roots; sharp, pristine lensing signifies the Munich sports reporter's middle-class 1950s house; and a picture-postcard, pastel look connotes the Swiss sections."⁶⁷ Besides the team and Mattes, the reporter's wife also changes. Her former disinterest in soccer turns into her vividly leading the stadium crowd's cheers for the German team. This connotes the change in what soccer meant to many, including women, before 1954 and what it stood for after Germany's success. The patrons at the little pub, torn between belief and disbelief of what is

happening on the television, is another way of seeing soccer as a clear extension of nationhood. One character says: "We lost the war, we will lose the cup and then Germans will be once more the world's laughing stock."⁶⁸ To be German meant to distance yourself from your nation's past like Bruno did who finally decides to move to the GDR and openly demonstrates his disgust for anyone with ties to the Nazis.⁶⁹

Soccer – Band-Aid For The Soul

Germany, the masses of people, become one nation during the final game and when receiving the returning champions at a scene at a train station in one of the film's latter scenes. All of these angles, including Mattes' father's who has lost everything, and doesn't smile until he kicks the ball around for a while and decides to take his son to the final game in Bern to cheer for the Boss, become pieces of the puzzle. They are the answer to the question of why a round piece of leather can mean everything to those that have no pride, no hope, no future, and no thrive left in them. It attempts to explain, why Germany believes that "Soccer is King."⁷⁰

When father and son arrive in heavy rain, Richard sends Mattes ahead, knowing that he'll be quicker alone and will find a way in more easily. All Mattes does when he reaches the stadium is stand to the side, catch the ball, and pass it back to Rahn who looks at him disbelievingly and returns to the field. The scene may be out of proportion to reality, but the soccer scenes themselves are not. Extensive searches to find actual soccer players, and screen compatible ones, made it possible to reenact as closely as possible the events occurring in the final game on July 4 1954. The camera stays close to the player's feet, with fast cutting exaggerating the perception of pace and slowing down the play of

the Hunagrian rivals. The cutting here forces the audience not only to be amazed by either side's skill level, but it also tempts an admiration for the pace with which the German players master the field. The extreme low angle enforces a sense of majesticness onto the players. But there is an eerie silence amongst all the jubilant fans in the stands. Just a very calm happiness. Accoustically there is no exageration in Germany's win itself. When the team celebrates the blow of the whistle and thus the won championship, Faehrmann angles the camera nearly entirely from the ground up against a now blue sky, with few clouds.

When Mattes and Richard, among hundreds of others, stand on the train tracks waving at their team, the chaos becomes tangible for the first time. The fans at the televisions and radios, the faces crying in disbelief and relief are cut into scenes of the teammates on the train and their flag waving fans outside. Ackermann finds out he is going to be a father when his wife tells him that "Dante" may now need a little calmer time. This name is in reference to the *Divine Comedy* and thus speak to Germany's transformation from Hell, via Purgatory to Paradise, or from the Thrird Reich to the post war years and finally the economic boom. Ackermann decides to leave and not interview the team just yet; he takes off, throwing down his train access card and, in perfect movie magic manner, Richard and Mattes can manage to pick it up and have the chance to personally congratulate the Boss.

Mattes tells his father, while waiting for Rahn, that his father is an incredible man, one to be proud to know. He passes on a letter from his oldest brother to his parents. His brother left it behind the night he left, but did not want it handed to his parents before now. Reading it, Richard breaks down and begins to sob, without a single tear showing.

He starts being self-deprecating, but his son looks at him and tells him that “sometimes German boys do cry.”

The frame changes and we see a beautiful landscape left and right of the train tracks. Fields, trees and small roads. The train quickly enters the frame and drives into the sunset; the streets next to the tracks become lively. The tracks run from the bottom left to the upper right corner of the frame, an uplifting, energetic motion enriched by the train’s movement into the sun. Horsecarts, bicycles, walkers, and field workers surrounded by luscious greens and the warm glow of the diminishing sunlight, by magic hour, stand in stark opposition to the film’s opening shot that held no promises and moved in the opposite direction down a smoke stack. The credits run beside this image, never truly interfering with the hopeful picturesque frame that draws in the audience.

Conclusion

The look of the film never seems epic or grand, although the story certainly is. Soon the film stands for an entire nation’s as well as personal resurrection of pride. Peter Körte of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ) is not alone in believing that Wortmann failed in this endeavor. Körte says that the film is nothing but a short-lived deflection from reality.

The Miracle of Bern, costing roughly 7 million Euros and being the most expensive German film this fall, is (...) nothing but a comfortable nostalgic trip, the simulation of a past, which few that will see it, can remember. It is a historic sampling vaguely summoning a jerk. One, which is believed to be needed at this

time. (...) *The Miracle of Bern* is the German counterpart to the American miracle-horse film *Seabiscuit*, whose therapeutic effects are to be an ailment to the depression plagued American soul.⁷¹

The film successfully portrays the country after the war, the country-to-city divide, and the beginning of the economic boom with a soccer game as the main event propelling the nation into a new existence. *The Miracle of Bern* thus becomes a coming of age story, a Bildungsroman, for the nation. The director crosses class, gender, regional and generational lines while investigating the effects of a simple game on an entire people. Wortmann utilized mainstream techniques to paint a journey, visualizing it rather than telling it. This effects-mainstreaming was much to Körte's dislike.

Wortmann, who loves pathos and knows the best formulas for it stem from Hollywood epics, helps himself to plenty: The camera soars into the air, the music orchestral swelling – but instead of Hollywood, that creates nothing but the Heimat-look of the fifties. (...) to detail oriented the story's veracity disappears. In this way, the film disenchants the naïve cinema magic of that specific moment.

Although I agree with Körte's observation that the details overpower the story's overall drive, I believe that the mixture of Hollywood epic and Heimat⁷² not only make this film stand out, but bridge the gap between the Third Reich past and economic boom future that is at the film's core. The journey here is a visual journey, as saturation of

colors increases; lighting evolves to a stage almost achieving ‘happy end’ brightness and camera framing opens up to the welcome in a new future.

In the film’s final moments we are granted vast German landscapes in extreme long shots and pans, in a style celebrating the open spaces as presented in the American western film. Wim Wenders’ film *Paris, Texas* (1984) reflects these cinematic spaces of the American Western perfectly. A train sets out towards the horizon, on its way to home and better times. In 1954 that was an uncommon sight, the possibility to see a brighter future residing in the troubled Germany. To use a shot familiar from the American films, seen for example in John Ford’s *The Searchers* (1956), whose morals Germans were taught to emulate, is a good choice at the dawn of German Rock’N’Roll and petticoats. Nevertheless, this is not where the viewers’ journey begins.

The realism fades at the end of the film, but the combination of “Heimat” and “Hollywood” makes this film appealing to audiences without the director selling out on its German tradition of soccer and the negatively tinted postwar era. Some see the *Miracle of Bern* as “a slickly packaged, invigorating crowd-pleaser centered on a postwar German family and a sports reporter at the time their country won soccer's World Cup, "*The Miracle of Bern*" doesn't require knowledge of or interest in the game to connect emotionally with spectators.”⁷³

Körte further states that “the odd thing about Wortmann’s film is the fact that it does touch you as long as you are in your theater seat, but that as soon as one asks himself what it was that affected, the emotion becomes insipid. All that remains is a wooden father-son-story – and a grandiose choreography.”⁷⁴

The actual 'miracle of Bern' and soccer as such is an all German memory and game. But what truly affected Germany, both countries formed after the war, was not two opposed teams of players, not a breathing, living thing. The Berlin Wall, separating the city into East and West and built in 1961, became synonymous with Germany's division along the fronts of the Cold War.

Chapter 4

Split Personality-

Divided We Stand

The fierce ideological divide between capitalist and communist Germany in the 1950's and 1960's was determined for both sides by the exigencies of the Cold War and super-power rivalry. Germans were mere pawns in the East-West game, a fact which could only increase the sense of political apathy and social amnesia.⁷⁵

The Divided Country In Context

Sun Ally (1999) and *Berlin Blues* (2003) both films by Leander Haußmann, display different approaches on constructing the separated past of the divided Germany. These coming of age comedies allow the audience to briefly glance at both the FRG and the GDR before the Wall fell. How the cement line crawling through a formerly connected city is understood in reflection demonstrates how German identity varies between the filmmakers, story-tellers and witnesses of lives in the GDR and the FRG.

Although both films were produced ten or more years after the nation was reunited, they still tell the story of the respective country's existence during the separation. The films are entertainment, but because of that are capable of speaking about the subject more freely and make statements that otherwise would go unheard by a large group within the FRG's population. Because these films are understood as comedy, as entertainment, they also remain under the radar of many scholars. I believe that both

examples I chose here make deliberate statements about the two nations and why they could not exist by themselves. The movies illuminate flaws of the respective systems and clearly address very current problems, such as the idolization of the East by former GDR citizen's and the denial of the West about the era as such and the GDR as a nation.

German films of the early 1990s, such as the prior mentioned "Trabbi" films *Go Trabbi Go* (1991) and *Trabbi Goes to Hollywood* (1991) addressed the time right after dismantling the Wall. They often utilized a road-movie⁷⁶ style, which, in keeping with the American roadmovie tradition, is used to symbolize the journey of characters and the openness of possibilities ahead. The American road movie is a contemporary discussion of the American frontier, the future possibilities and joins automobile and cinema, both technological advances that changed societies inevitably. The German movies do the very same thing, pushing to find the boundaries in the newly experienced open world and moving towards an unknown future.⁷⁷ They shared a controlled but positive outlook on what was expected to lie ahead. The films I discuss here reflect on the time during separation more than the time after the Wall fell. Both movies on which I center my discussion are adapted from novels written by men in their, then, mid-thirties. This is interesting to note, because the history depicted still is tangible and its authors were so very young at the time of the described events. These films discuss a past Germany is coming to terms with - the divided nation. Still they clearly discuss, and not only in reference, unification and its effects. Peter Körte writes of *Berlin Blues*:

Because 1989 was the cesura that modeled western biographies as well, it appears borders and generation spanning in retrospect. A form of safety line has been

established to the era of the late 80's: (those years) are so far that they can hurt no one, and they are so close that the sentences and images can still be cross-faded with memory. These genre-images are those of a country which disappeared, on either side of the Wall."⁷⁸

The two nations that once were and are again Germany, developed their own identities. The Cold War and its characteristic lack of information flow between the two systems hindered the formation of a uniform sense of a national German identity, because the media was separated. Although the city of Berlin, with the availability of Western media in the GDR's capital, appears to have a special standard, its divide was even greater than that of the two nations themselves. The Wall stood as constant reminder of both countries' past and the political "disagreement" between the Allies. Moreover, the Wall influenced the city's population, functioned as a symbol of death, a mockery for the citizen's of East Berlin, and a canvas for an impressive graffiti-exposition in the West. West Berlin, albeit free from communist boundaries, was caged in by the enemy-brother. Both West and East Berliners were physically restrained from moving freely in their own town.

We have to view this era in German history from two angles: that of the East and West, and each pre- and post- Wall. The current visualization, however, takes precedence in my work.

In her book *That Was The Wild East – Film Culture, Unification and the "New" Germany*, Leonie Naughton explains how the countries (FRG and GDR) reacted to the unification. She collected data about expectations prior to the fall of the GDR and

discusses films from the early nineties addressing the post-Wall era. Naughton also interrogates business relations and the history of the DEFA. Early on it becomes obvious that former GDR citizen's expectations in post-unification life could not be fulfilled. Unemployment, unequal pay, and an overpowering unknown capitalism, were only the beginning of a feeling of contempt between the two former nations. East and West Germany found themselves unable to find their connective tissue. The GDR remained always at a loss in comparison to its big brother. Naughton labels the GDR Germany's "stepchild". The media coverage in the West glorified the union. With few exceptions the FRG dismantled life itself as well as Eastern television and broadcasting systems. One of these exceptions is the children's program *Our Sandman* (1958-), which is highlighted in *Good Bye Lenin!* (2003).

This lack of East media streaming into West outlets is one of the reasons why the unification and its incurring changes did not quite as obviously affect the West as it did the East. The West did not lose its identity. It embedded into itself a nation and a character. It did so by assimilating the new "partner" rather than sharing the experience and compromising in a newly formed country. The Federal Republic assimilated the GDR without giving up equal parts of its own identity and thereby suffocated the Democratic Republic's attempts to maintain part of their decades long history. While the West perceived its living standards as what should be aspired to, it clearly ignored other models and appeared ignorant to the needs for a successful transition from one system to the other. The FRG evidently attempted to delete the Democratic Republic's influence and history. A new market for Western products had opened and so the landscape of the GDR changed on every level conceivable.

While the FRG took over production facilities in the early post Wall years, a massive amount of media concerning itself with the unification flooded not only Germany's screens. In Germany though, documentaries in the subgenre of "wall films" sprang up by the dozen and films, usually comedic in nature, dealing with this subject soared to unusual heights at the German box office. Naughton argues that this "overexposure of events surrounding unification was extreme enough to result in a profound and widespread public aversion to references to this immediate chapter of German history." I believe that it certainly explains the gap of media coverage and public interest between the early nineties and the fall of the Wall's tenth anniversary in 1999. Also, films made during this gap deal with the time during the country's division rather than unification. A "disillusionment," as Naughton calls it, on either side led to widespread statements such as "Build the Wall Back Up!" ("Baut die Mauer wieder auf"). Later the unfulfilled desires resulted in the formation of Eastalgia (German word-play on nostalgia/Ost-algia). Eastalgia, or in the German translation Ostalgie, reflects on the GDR era as a time of wonder, naivete and innocence. Revivals of drinks, foods, and clothing became a market unto itself and the internet serves as a forum for trade and discussion.

Both countries lost their former identity and the rift still is tangible. The early years of the unified Germany and the issue of the two nations growing together however, are, with exceptions such as *Good Bye Lenin!*, on the fringes of contemporary German filmmaking. The latter years utilizes the post-wall time as a vehicle to Germany's superimposed Eastalgia as much as filmmaking truly discusses the changing existence of the former GDR's citizen's. Germany's films concerned with the country's division tend

to place the focus on only one side of the Wall at a time and create a binary in which citizen's of 'the other' Germany are negatively depicted.

Sun Ally

Sun Ally tells the story of a group of youngsters graduating from high school. This is the story of their summer and their youth to remember. They have to decide whether or not they want to serve in the military. Not serving, we are soon informed, is not really an option unless they are willing to be punished. The punishment surfaces as a loss of opportunities, scholarly or work related, and greatly limits the person's future. It appears that serving in the armed forces is a stipulation for success in the GDR. This discussion becomes a front for the lack of political interest on the film's surface. We join a typical nuclear family. The parents are middle aged with an adult daughter and their son Michael is the film's main protagonist, who slowly embarks on the quest for adulthood. In a sense, this film is not much different from American films telling the story of the last great summer of youth, the first big love or the coming-of-age such as *Stand By Me* (1986), *Almost Famous* (2000), *Mallrats* (1995), *My Girl* (1991) or *Napolean Dynamite* (2004). What separates this story from the mass of personal recounts available on screen and in written format, are its location, political judgement, and nostalgia that is in fact Eastalgia. The latter refers not only to an age of innocence that is personal and universal, but to a country that never will be again. A positive light illuminates all angles in this film, and where a critique of the system is offered, humor lightens the statement to keep the film humorous and uncontroversial. However, soon we will see that the film stimulated controversy.

Sun Ally remains uncontroversial on its surface and removed from context. The national identity displayed here references a political idea that, in reality, never worked quite right. The film reenforces this lightness by giving the audience a non-realistic ending that is a salute to the GDR film industry's popular seventies genre, the musical. The musical reflected the optimistic state the new country was in and aided to deliver socialist ideas to the public via uplifting song and dance rather than utilizing pointed fingers. *Sun Ally* remains nostalgic and good-humored and thus allows for rhetorical side swipes and satirical commentary that otherwise may have resulted in a loss of audience. Germany favors comedies among its national film product as the work of many scholars, among them Tim Bergfelder, appears to prove.⁷⁹

Michael tells us his story in voice-over narration. This technique distances the audiences from the movie and clearly indicates that the events we are about to see lie in the past. Michael lives on Sun Ally, a fictitious street that the wall split. One end of the street is in the GDR and the other is in the Federal Republic. As I mentioned before, this film as well as *Berlin Blues* and others that came to theaters roughly around the turn of the century, share a disinterest in the two countries merging, and so we never set foot on *Sun Ally*'s western end.

There are in fact a total of four instances where the West is brought, or willingly comes, to the East. Binaries as obvious as East and West make it easy to define one's own identity through the depiction of the perceived "enemy". Leonie Naughton states that "differences between the inhabitants of the two Germanies often appear more pronounced than any similarities they may share."⁸⁰ Thus, I begin by determining how

this enemy is represented in its few appearances and how that representation reflects on the East German identity from a 1999 perspective.

In the first few frames we see Michael's bedroom, filled with Western posters and slogans. Talking to the audience in direct address, explaining about the street's divided nature, he leaves his house. The street appears abandoned; later a shot referencing Western films shows tumbleweeds blowing over the empty road. Shrill voices and whistles fade in and we see, on top of the Wall, gazing, staring, laughing at the film's narrator, a group of West German tourists. Their comments are understood easily, no translation is necessary. An overweight, long-haired man in his twenties asks Michael to look up, wave, say something. He offers Michael a banana if he complies, diminishing him to a mere attraction, like an ape at a zoo. Bananas were extremely rare in the GDR and, thus, were, similar to silk stockings, a status symbol and an item of desire. The interaction of the West and East here is defined by rank, something that the socialist state clearly wished to abandon. The Westerners on their high stands, erected on the western side of the wall to allow a view of the East, staring at the Easterners (calling them "Ossis", a common derogative) below, pull the audience onto Michael's side. Capitalism is inhuman, the film says. This statement would certainly have pleased the men in charge of the GDR's film production.

In the film *Born in '45 (Jahrgang '45)* (1965/1990), a movie that SED (Sozialistische Einheits Partei Deutschlands, the GDR only political party) officials stopped in 1965 and could only be finished in 1990, a group of young adults, uncertain of where their future will carry them, sit in the sun at an open plaza. Their discussion about what their lives in this system will bring is muted, but as a bus full of West German

tourists arrives it is exactly their silence that works to the GDR's advantage. The subtleties of this film were seemingly too subtle for release in the Democratic Republic. The camera takes its time to pan across the double-decker tour bus and its passengers. The frame is wide open, in an extreme long shot, and it is almost impossible to make out any facial expressions on one of the distant passengers. The tourists are de-individualized. What we can see is their clothes, their made-up faces, their styled hair, and their relentlessly clicking photocameras. The cameras appear focused directly at us. These passengers infiltrate both the audiences' and main characters' privacy and exploit the sunny calm moment that preceded the Western invasion. The silence on the part of the GDR is calm, unthreatening, and almost benevolently smiling at the tourists' foolish. Through camera movement, distance, and framing of the photocameras taking the audiences picture, we identify with the group of youngsters rather than the tourists. In both instances the differences between the voyeurs and the exploited is obvious and the common connotation allows audiences to side with the East rather than the West.

The Westerners' behavior in the story about the inhabitants of Sun Ally is marked as despicable and the audience is fully set up to side with the character of the author's/director's choice. This way of illustrating a story's insiders and outsiders is quite common in films and has been used in this specific context before as seen in the example of *Born in '45*. The Western capitalist world does intrude on our characters in *Sun Ally* more or less directly at a later point.

One of Michael's friends, a music lover, wants to purchase a Rolling Stones record on the black market. However, the record, purchased for an outrageously high price, is taken from him. It is broken, and he is left without the money and without the

music, he is left without his dream of the other world with his tool for emotional escape. Capitalism is ephemeral, this seems to say, and overpriced. Yet it is a border guard that is to blame for the loss of music. This scene and the film's final scene which I discuss below, led to an arraignment for the director.

The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, a prominent national newspaper, reported on January 27 2000 that,

the organisation *Help*, who seeks justice for politically persecuted people, pressed charges against the director of *Sun Ally*, Leander Haußmann, for the defamation of the Wall victims. ...the charges are based in paragraph 194... which prosecutes the defamation of members of a group that was hag-ridden under despotic rule. A group of young adults...”dance in front of the Wall of death – but not after the fall of the Wall, but at a time where this Wall was bloody reality.” A shot-down escapee is made to cry by Haußmann – “but not for the attempted murder, not because of the pain, not out of fear of the imminence of Stasi arrest, but because the bullets perforated also his Rolling Stones album.”⁸¹

While the charges led nowhere, the music becomes a central part of the narrative and was quite successful with CD releases after the movie's release. We follow the group while “hanging out” and listening to forbidden songs. We see them dance and sing and how music turns into a revolutionary symbol. Michael is in love with a neighbor's daughter, who is seeing a Western boy. He drives into Sun Ally in a new car every time we see him. He wears fashionable clothes and appears rich and successful in the capitalist

world. When, towards the film's end, he is losing the girl to Michael, he has an accident involving the Rolling Stones fan and gives him 50 DM (West German currency). Capitalism in the form of this visitor pays up to cover his car accident. Money again wins over courage and morality. But the music lover also wins and can purchase a new Rolling Stones album.

As the Westerner drives up to the border, his car is subject to a random search and the trunk is filled with illegal weapons. In farcical fashion, he cries while explaining that he is just a hotel page and valet on lunch break, taking the car for a stroll. Michael's opponent loses more than just the girl. Greed and arrogance, we are told, do not pay, not in the GDR. The national image here states clearly that materialism is negative and the socialist system made it possible to see a person, rather than his or her possessions. The citizens of the former GDR are the film's heroes. But political discussions remain more or less hidden in the film's more humorous sections and function only as part of the story.

There is the uncle visiting from the West. He wears the previously mentioned silk stockings beneath his trousers; they are a gift for Michael's mother. In addition, he smuggles coffee and other little trinkets into the house. Although this gesture should make him a positive character, his costume and make-up used alter the image of a good natured relative. The gelled hair, sweaty appearance, and his drab clothes make him an unlikely candidate to gain audience sympathy. The character appears arrogant and fails to deliver a positive image of West Germans. All the while his existence references the very personal separation many families experienced through and after Germany's division. Again, the scene's farcical tone clouds the commentary. The 'brother' to the West is portrayed as a voyeur on the Wall, a black-market criminal, an imposter, and an arrogant

big wig wiseacre benefactor. Considering the binary system, we now see East Germany's construction as the opposite to the West. The GDR is the victim of exploitation, honest, and driven in nature, even humble.

There is only one instance of West Germans that appears almost commentary free until it affects Michael's mother. A group of tourists are about to leave the East at the border control station in Sun Ally. We saw them in a tour bus earlier, but only briefly. One of the older women realizes that she lost her passport and is led away by the guards. This is a perfect segue to discuss the depiction of the East German self in this film.

Michael's mother finds the lost passport and soon realizes that she looks similar to the owner. First she hides the passport for a while, but she repeatedly returns it and, longingly holds it. The camera frames her in close ups and extreme close ups, makes her indecisiveness personal, her struggle tangible to the audience. When her son's struggle and her own personal life are at a low point she makes up her mind and locks herself in the bedroom. While she sits at her vanity the camera remains at a distance, observing her transformation. She ages herself with make up, adds a beauty spot, and does her hair; she transforms into the Westerner. Ultimately she cannot go through with her plan. She turns around moments before passing the border, her 'freedom' in sight. She cannot rid herself of her conviction, her family, or her identity enough to leave the GDR, which no longer is a place you have to flee from, but home.

The young adults here show an equally strong belief even though they rebel. Their rebellion however is hardly more than juvenile and does not lead to change, but affirms a system that, albeit restricting, shows an affection for its inhabitants and participants. It will be helpful to return to the black market record that was purchased twice. Michael has

his girl; his mother remains in the eastern part of the street; the decision military is somewhat lost in a summer's tale, and it is time to listen to the Rolling Stones album. Michael and his friend sit in bliss on his bed, surrounded by all the images of Western culture we thought were out of reach for those in the east. Yet, here they are, maybe worth more exactly because they are not as easily acquired. The record player needle is carefully lifted into position and lowered in extreme-slow-motion so as to not scratch the valuable vinyl. It only takes seconds for both boys to look at each other, startled, and Michael's young friend to become hysterical. They have been set up.

They now realize the expensive album from the street is not by the Rolling Stones but by Dynamo 5. Michael calms his friend and tells him that as long as they believe it to be the band, it will be. It is a matter of perspective that changes your outlook on life and reflection on the past. The pair climb out the window and begin dancing on the balcony railing. They take off their shirts and play air guitar while the street fills with the film's characters. It is a vibrantly sunny day in Sun Ally and the crowd, including Michael's family and friends, the border guards, his teachers, and his girl friend all begin to dance in formation. This is not only a salute to the DEFA's popular musicals, but also grants this view of East Berlin a grand and bright side it so often was denied previously. Yet the formerly mentioned controversy is also understandable, although the dancing guards remove the crowd scene from a possibly reality driven plane. This is clearly a fantasy sequence. The song they sing is called *The Letter* by Dynamo 5:

“Gimme a ticket for an aeroplane,
ain't got time to take a fast train.

Lonely days are gone, oh I am going home,
my baby just wrote me a letter!”

The text indicates the flight from home and journey to a new life, but the new life is found at the protagonist’s front door step. The film cries out with its dancing masses in the streets; all is well, in the world of Eastalgia.

This nostalgia was to be contained and controlled since the West felt threatened by it and by the weakening pride in the achievement of unification. The process cost both nations financially and it was important to maintain a positive outlook about the new Germany among the tax payers. As Naughton points out “The minister of finance... criticized East Germans for their selective memories.” He suggested that showing the citizens in the East films about the improvements would “...remind East Germans about their deprived pasts and ... stop them from grumbling.” This makes the dichotomy of memory ever more separate. The song that leads *Sun Alley*’s final credits, written and performed by East German Nina Hagen, is poignant here. The lyrics read:

You forgot the color stock my (dear) Michael
Nobody will believe us how beautiful it was
You forgot the color stock, by my soul,
Everything is blue and white and green,
And later it is not true anymore.

The creation of a memory, the fashion in which the past is kept alive, depends on

how it originally is perceived. Young adults certainly will have a different memory of the unification than those adults settled in life complete with responsibilities and suddenly thrust into an unknown system.

Berlin Blues

The notion of struggling against forced forms of maturation is very much *Berlin Blues*' subject. The film tells the story of Frank Lehman, called only Herr Lehman (Mr. Lehman) even by his friends. He is 29 years old and a bartender in West Berlin in 1989. He sleeps during the day, works at night, and has no perspective in life, no plans for the future. This is made clear in phone conversations with his mother. Music is dealt with quite differently in this film and it appears that the two films stand on different sides of the Wall itself. Michael Althen writes about the film that,

you could say that *Berlin Blues* is the counterpart to *Sun Alley* in every way. Its heroes are not that young any more, their dreams are confined to the next beer, and music for that matter, as we already read in the novel by Sven Regener "...meant nothing to him. In his opinion it was useful in bars only, to allow people to yell at each other in peace."⁸²

The film begins with Herr Lehman making his way home one morning after work. He encounters a snarling dog, unwilling to let Frank pass. Herr Lehman sits down and shares his schnapps with the dog until a couple of police officers come by, who stop Herr Lehman's deep discussion with the drunken dog. The opening sets the pace for a slow yet

witty and neurotic comedy. On the film's surface, the story does not seem to discuss the East/West issue. The film unravels slowly and contains a sub plot that mirrors the former film's coming-of-age tribulations, yet Herr Lehman faces these problems just before turning 30. The visibility of the GDR is limited in *Berlin Blues*, yet the sporadic use of imagery and references speaks loudly for West Germany's position. At the end of the GDR, there was little media coverage, little discussion of the neighbor to the east. The city of West Berlin was nestled into the GDR, yet it was part of the West. The color scheme of *Berlin Blues* differs a great deal from that of *Sun Alley*. Although the city on both sides of the Wall is rather subdued in color, there is vibrancy to *Sun Alley*'s characters' and apartments, in short their private spheres. Herr Lehman's world is a mixture of drab grays and blues. Even in indoor scenes, we cannot shake the feeling that it has just stopped raining. The story is equally uneventful. The love story ends before it truly begins, sex is not highlighted, and the bar atmosphere is clouded with smoke and filled with stereotypical characters the audience most likely would not show an interest for in real life. Lehman's best friend's suicide attempt is noted, but no discussion, no healing is offered. The film's overall feeling is one of a few witty people stuck in a dead end situation. Maybe that is how West Germany, and West Berlin particularly, felt before the union or how it sees its existence in hindsight. From the Western point of view, there clearly is ignorance towards the East, yet overall the unification is glorified still.

Peter Körte wrote that *Berlin Blues* is not about much of anything; "and much of anything would not even work." This quality, he states, this uncluttered narrative style makes the film

...congenial, because (it)... does not want to show, what actually was, or how it could have been better... If (this)...film [was] nostalgic, (it)... would have a more intensive glow. Moreover, one cannot allege that there is a desire erupting for a world that never existed in this form. In *Good Bye Lenin!* that fantasy world was created in 79 square meters, staged as such and labeled by the hero at the end.⁸³

Not so in *Berlin Blues*. The realistic feel results from the lack of lighting, scenery, and oft used handheld camera. However removed to the fringes it is the facts that the story is set in 1989 and East Berlin and the Wall are important. It is impossible to exclude or separate that from our main character's life.

Frank's parents decide to visit him in Berlin. When they arrive, they ask him to bring a couple of hundred of West Marks to an aunt in the East the next day. Again, we are reminded that families are separated and, again, it is the Eastern family in need of Western assistance and benevolence. Lehman agrees to carry the money over and makes a date with his girlfriend, who agrees to meet him under the world clock. The world clock is one of Berlin's landmarks, a horizontally rotating cylinder that indicates the time in city's all over the globe. It creates a sense of openness and mobility, contrary to East Berlin's reality.

The date with his girlfriend, his trip to the East itself, has profound consequences for the protagonist. First, he is stopped at the border. The money he carries makes him suspicious and so border control asks him to step into an interrogation room. The scene portrays the East Berlin officers as dimwitted and the lower ranked officers as easily controlled by their superiors. Yet their interference keeps him from making the

rendezvous with his girlfriend before she leaves East Berlin. Secondly, due to missing the appointment, he walks into a diner just in time to see his girl having a date with one of his regulars. Losing the short-lived perspective he has gained through the relationship sets in motion a slow process of realization. Herr Lehman needs to think about the future and his life. The aforementioned suicide is, although understated, a reminder of his own mortality. The emptiness of Frank's life, as displayed throughout the film never truly changes, but he makes the choice to turn his life around at the film's latter end.

... Lehmann, the good person behind the counter, whom everyone likes, is born on Nov. 9.⁸⁴ The irony develops from the fact that the native son of SO 36⁸⁵ is disturbed by world history on his 30th birthday. As Frank Lehmann sits in a bar in Oranienstraße and downs bottomless amounts of beer, and stares apathetically at the miniature TV, on which the Wall opens suddenly, he just says: "Now, let's drink up first!" Then, he has to end up in the rapture (at the Wall) and run into all of his friends. What he will do now he does not know; that he no longer wants to stand behind the bar counter is at least the end of his era, of which he suspects that it had not been so glamorous (after all).⁸⁶

Conclusion

This passage of Peter Körte's review also sums up West Germany as such. Unsure where to go from here, yet understanding that the time of the West and the East is over, the FRG had a multitude of reactions as did Herr Lehmann. The realization that the nation had been stuck, unable to move forward, did not lead to a clear plan for the future,

just the notion that the past was gone forever and not as grand as we thought. The film uses a lot of dark humor, especially in these last scenes. Black humor “in post wall film must be seen in the context of the triumphant march of neo-liberalism. This...form... calls forth shifting, self-affirmative stances rather than a self-righteous one or self-critical ones.”⁸⁷ And it is this loss of self-critique, the character’s and country’s evident self-affirmation in that the East created feelings of inequality.

A film so removed from political agency on its surface, states Körte, “still cannot usually be without the fall of the Wall, exactly because it means so little to the Western heroes.”⁸⁸ The existence of both Lehmann and the Western nation changes forever the moment the Wall comes down. Although celebrations are afoot, there is a lack of interest. This lack of interest, as we have seen before and Leonie Naughton makes very clear, lead to the former West eliding the former East as such, simply annexing territory and people. The separation of the two country’s sides is ongoing. On a recent visit to the Luxemburg border, I heard Westerners refer to the former East as “Dark Germany.” There is still a divide, economically as well as politically. It certainly would be problematic to review the time of the two German nations in one film and integrate both experiences equally and unbiasedly; yet the division of historical memory disrupts the country as it is today. “An island-existence ends in *Berlin Blues*, without a new life beginning (elsewhere).”⁸⁹

Highlighting the effort of German media to maintain a national identity on screen, in my final chapter, I include three mainstream German films from the past 18 months, one for each historic cycle mentioned above. Brief discussions of how audiences perceive these newer films and how they interact on the plane of national identity will conclude this work.

Chapter 5

History Revisited

German National Identity in the European Union

We will not have come to terms with the past until the causes of what happened then are no longer active. Only because these causes live on does the spell of the past remain, to this very day, unbroken.

-Theodor Adorno⁹⁰

History on Life Support

German history and passions, WWII, soccer, and the country's division, remain of interest to popular German film. Every year films addressing these events/subjects are released and every year a few of them rise to the top of the box office as did the ones mentioned in this chapter. In fact, after 2000, German film has had a growing share at the box office and, in 2006, national cinema reached a 25% share of the market for the first time in decades.⁹¹ I suspect, the European Union has changed, German filmmakers urgency to create national cinema speaking for a national identity on a bigger scale. The struggle to maintain a national identity and the audiences' increasing interest in German film is visible in the today's German cinema landscape. Films interrogate and investigate the past.

In the past two years, three historically relevant films released by German filmmakers addressed each instance discussed in the prior chapters. *Sophie Scholl – The Last Days* (2005), *The Lives of Others* (2006), and *Germany: A Summer Fairytale* (2006)

reached massive audiences on both national and international screens.⁹² The first two films were nominated for Oscars in 2005 and 2006; and *The Lives of Others* won the 2007 Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film.

WWII Heroes

Sophie Scholl is the story of a young student who spoke out against the Nazi regime and after five days of questioning, an example trial judge sentences Sophie, her brother, and a friend to death. The film begins when the resistance group “The White Rose” ended. Sophie and her brother Hans place leaflets in which they speak out against the war in a main building of their university campus. A janitor catches them and reports them to the faculty who, in turn, informs state police. The film devotes itself completely to Sophie Scholl; the camera stays close to her at all times. Much like the *Downfall*, newly uncovered interrogation files and eye-witness memoirs by such as Sophie Scholl’s prison cellmate made the new angle on previously filmed material possible. Handheld shots and camera movements that do not call attention to themselves as well as the sober performances, create much of the same realistic feel we see in *Downfall*. In addition, the confinement of the characters in this film is very real. The interrogation office, a prison cell and an overcrowded courtroom are *Sophie Scholl*’s main locales, reminiscent of and echoing the confinement felt in the bunker’s tight spaces. What truly lifts the performance and film above earlier treatments of the subject is the story’s intimate quality. The members of the White Rose are the German resistance, but it is the portrayal of Sophie’s belief in good that allows audiences to truly identify with the character and her mission.

Sophie Scholl tells the story of heroism of the lie, of the truth that's found in falsehood, of the attempt to save a brother, friends, parents, with whichever weapon is at hand and until the end. Sometimes a light effect says more than a historic protocol. ...Sophie hears the bombers of the Allies. She glows. The reverberations of the explosions reflected on her face. We begin to understand that the honor, for which Sophie Scholl will die the next day, is our own.⁹³

The film aligns the audience with Sophie and allows Germans to believe in an existing and functioning resistance during the Nazi era. This had been depicted before, but usually the resistance groups' efforts were marked as unsuccessful and unorganized, in short a failure. The film allows a sense of pride for these young Germans, who were in the Hitlerjugend and once believed in National Socialism, yet appear to have had an impact, albeit a short-lived one. The level of authenticity and personal interaction, the very humanization of previously stereotyped figures works in this film as much as in *The Downfall*. Due to its subject, what the latter set into motion was, due to its subject, of greater global interest; this film is less controversial. *Sophie* is a new definition of German history and, thus, enables a national identity relieved of some of its WWII burden. It reminds the audience that there were, in fact, some German people who neither ran away nor submitted themselves to the dictatorship, but that stood instead and fought. Something German film, literature and drama often belittle or altogether ignore.

Fighting For Freedom

The Lives of Others, by Florian Henkel von Donnersmarck, takes this concept of resistance to the next level in its exculpatory tale of a Stasi member who attempts to save

his victims from prosecution. A surveillance officer begins to hide facts about his victims, but he does so cowardly, not facing the regime. He is punished for his actions and is demoted before the GDR ceases to exist. I choose the term exculpatory because the film recently has come under attack for doing just that. *Lives* creates a hero who begins as a monster and who, ultimately, allows the audience to forgive the actions of SED members in the former GDR.

Some have questioned the premise on which the film is based. In particular, they have taken exception to the sympathetic portrayal of Gerd Wiesler, the Stasi man who sees the error of his ways and protects rather than destroys his quarry. Anna Funder, author of the book *Stasiland* and an acknowledged authority on the GDR of the 1980s, has expressed her discomfort at the film's "rotten core", and she points out that there is no record of a Stasi agent ever behaving in this way.⁹⁴

The controversy here once again reminds one of the discussions after the release of Hirschbiegel's film. The divided Germany is its subject matter and it is interesting to see that the characters here are well balanced between East and West. Again, a few visitors from the West are benefactors to the GDR citizen's, but the characters are not portrayed as arrogant. The movie shows pre- and post- unification and grants a brief look at the life a Stasi snitch may lead in the new Germany. In comparison to his former SED system position, his new job as an advertisement mail carrier is degrading. The film, because of its somewhat unrealistic portrayal, is positive yet confined within its stark borders of de-saturated colors. A life-affirming story is told in lifeless streets, buildings, and faces. It is both forgiving and hopeful that everyone receives what they deserve.

Donnersmarck's script is constructed as precise as a clockwork. It shows the good in evil, the sensation of chill, the tragic paired with salvation, guilt and expiation. It is political in so far that the state does not allow the private to be private. When all loose ends are tied up, when all survivors made peace with their fate, then the audience is also at peace and its consternation is well-tempered. *The Lives of Others* risks nothing. ...This is a film of consensus that the industry had to order wouldn't it already exist. It is not a film you would or could dream of. It hurts no one.⁹⁵

Here Germany reflects on a past without truly discussing its core nature. As was the case in *Berlin Blues* and *Sun Alley*, it is clear that the era of the GDR and FRG is problematic in its cinematic reflection up to this point. The rift created in national self-understanding has not yet mended and the media reflects that. There are two very different sets of public memory working against a uniform understanding of German nationality even from a contemporary stand point. The complexity of *Lives'* characters validates the film and its effect on audiences. Not basing your fictive world in a black and white scheme allows for characters that the audience cannot easily judge. Christopher Schuette remarks in an article for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* that this makes it impossible to create heroes of legendary proportions, yet it stimulates direct identification.⁹⁶ In other words, although the film is excusatory and furthers understanding on the audiences' side, it ignores neither the story and its players' negative origins, nor the fact that humanity is simply put, not good. As noted above, the two

Germany's have shared only one historic event occurring during the separation with an equal interest and emotional response, the win of the 1954 soccer World Cup in Bern, Switzerland.

National Pride Revived

Although there has not been another recent film dealing with the events of 1954, the recent 2006 soccer World Cup hosted by Germany in various stadium locations all over the country, changed the nation's appreciation of their heritage and even instilled a national pride. Only a few months after the Cup ended with Germany's third place ranking, Soenke Wortmann's film *Germany: A Summer Fairytale* opened in over 400 theaters in Germany. Wortmann filmed most of his documentary footage on the fly and, using a handheld mini-DV camera, was granted full access by Germany's head coach Jürgen Klinsmann.⁹⁷ The surreal uprising of national pride can only be described as unheard-of since the end of WWII. All images available on the net, in magazines, newspapers, and on television show masses of people assembling to support their team, their nation, their country. They carry the German flag, sing the anthem, and root for the national team while openly booing the opponents.⁹⁸ Reportedly, Germany felt pride when the Cups of 1974 and 1990 were won, yet since these events were telecast, did not take place in the country, and were held during Germany's separation, the circumstances prevented excessive celebrations as seen in the summer of 2006.

The nation re-interpreted its own existence through a national sport, and when the summer had passed, many went to see *Germany: A Summer Fairytale* reliving the events and emotions. The *Miracle of Bern* and *Summer* both appeared in a time of desperation.

The nation has little in its recent past to pride itself on and soccer is a uniting factor across the Federal Republic's former Cold War "I think the team moved the whole country,"⁹⁹ Wortmann said in a recent interview with Reuters.

"It wasn't just a fleeting moment. It was such a wonderful thing and Germany's a different country now because of it. The mood was so special. I think it'll have a lasting impact."¹⁰⁰ The events in Bern seemed to have a lasting effect on Germany, enabling it to move forward and leave behind a crippling past long enough to regain its strength. A form of historical amnesia provided this strength's foundation, yet it also permits healing. I was told that in my home village, and many others, only weeks after the Cup had ended, a pamphlet was sent out to each household stating that the flags in the gardens and lining the streets were to be removed within seven days.¹⁰¹ The village council members decided it blighted the village's appearance in the eyes of tourists. The symbols of national pride are gone, yet Wortmann's film as well as the other films I discussed here indicate that Germany is slowly creating a form of counter-history on screen. A new way to understand national identity through the vehicle of history, which for decades was used to deploy stereotypes. The Germany of WWII as represented by German cinema is no longer understood as one breathing entity of Nazis, no longer seen as the pure mythic evil.

Germany has found its way to national pride in an international competition. Soccer revived a country that had been on its knees and scared of the future. It did so not only once but twice. Germany now knows its uniting power, its country's heart. Moreover, it is that heart that bridged the gap between the capitalist and communist

Germany's at a time when nothing else could. Furthermore, it aided in creating a sense of only one Germany today.

Conclusion

I believe the detour Germans took on either side of the Wall, the different memories and national identities stemming from the separation, will need more time to find a balanced form on screen. Yet, films such as *Lives of Others*, demonstrates that stereotypes are moving to the fringes of German film and a national understanding of German history is rising. WWII, the Cold War, and (in the case of Germany) soccer will be returning stars at the German box office and will keep telling a story outside their own. This is still the story of a nation trying to come to terms with a history that was, and is, of global importance and thus became the world's history as much as their own. Germany is a country that is struggling to find a national identity worth holding onto in a European Union that threatens to destroy national individuality as it exists now by merging language, laws, traditions, and economies. This is a story I am eager to follow in the future, as Germany may cement a national identity forever bound to the images of its past for future Germans or lose the battle against the EU and overpowering international interests.

I have analyzed these films for their aesthetic form and narratives, their reception by scholars and critics as well as in context with the historic events they refer to. It is vital to see the way in which German cinema addresses the most revealing events in the country's past, not for each historic era by itself, but in a more general approach investigating representations of a collection of major shifts within the nation state. We

reach an understanding of shifts in national identity on film only by creating an overview of various historic events and their treatment by the country's own cinema. Germany clearly began to redefine its history and thus its sense of self after the united nation had a decade to heal around the turn of the century. The FRG while struggling within the EU creates a new definition of German identity for the future by re-investigating its past.

Notes

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- ¹ Wim Wenders. *Wim Wenders: On Film*. Faber and Faber: London, 2001. 100-101.
- ² In the age of new media and a predominant television landscape, it would be ignorant to ignore these screens and the level of accessibility for audiences.
- ³ Andrew Higson and Richard Maltby. Film Europe, Film America: Cinema, Commerce and Cultural Exchange (1920–1939). Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1999.
- ⁴ ZDF documentary on the 50th anniversary of the Miracle of Bern, July 2004
- ⁵ Wirtschaftswunder - economic boom
- ⁶ Fall Deutschland. Das Wirtschaftswunder pt. I. Dir. Aust, Stefan and Claus Richter. ZDF. 2005
- ⁷ The term is found regularly, for example in essay collections such as *The German Cinema Book*.
- ⁸ Leonie Naughton. *That Was the Wild East*. Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2002.
- ⁹ Peter Körte. “Verwende deine Jugend - In ‘Liegen lernen’ und ‘Herr Lehmann’ geht das deutsche Kino auf Spurensuche in den achtziger Jahren.” Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung. 31 Aug. 2003, Feuilleton: 23.
- ¹⁰ 20th century alterations of boundaries, population and political framework ranged from the imperial Germany to today’s FRG. The democratic Weimar Republic of the 1920’s and the Great Depression led directly to the fascist Third Reich and WWII left Germany divided into two separate entities, one democratic, one socialist, on either front of the Cold War. The relatively recent reunification of Germany was one step taken towards the country’s attempt to redefine its identity once again in the European Union.
- ¹¹ Eric Barnouw. Documentary. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993. Barnouw discusses, among others, R.J. Flaherty’s *Nanook of the North* (1922).
- ¹² Robert MacDougall. “Red, Brown and Yellow Perils: Images of the American Enemy in the 1940’s and 1950’s.” Journal of Popular Culture 32 n4 (1999): 59-75.
- ¹³ Most references stem from West German authors and it would be foolish to ignore the tension between the two Germanys. None of the sources I found had viable proof for their claims, yet no source questioned this statement either.
- ¹⁴ New German Cinema was a movement rooted in the 1960s and coming to life in the early 1970s. It was inspired and influenced by the French New Wave and Fassbinder is one of movements most known director.
- ¹⁵ Halle, Randall and McCarthy. *Light Motives German Popular Film in Perspective*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2003.
- ¹⁶ Tim Bergfelder, Erica Carter and Deniz Goektuerk eds. The German Cinema Book. London: BFI, 2002.
- ¹⁷ Raymond Williams. Marxism and Literature. New York: Oxford University Press, 1977.
- ¹⁸ Louis Althusser. “Ideological State Apparatuses.” Warren Montag. Louis Althusser (Transitions). New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002. 77ff.
- ¹⁹ Sandra Hofferth. “How American Children Spend Their Time.” Journal of Marriage and Family. 63 (295) May 2001. JSTOR. University of Kansas Libraries. May 2007. <http://www.jstor.org.www2.lib.ku.edu>. And ---. Fernseshnutzung im Internationalen

Vergleich. Medienforschung ORF. 1 June 2007.

http://mediaresearch.orf.at/index2.htm?international/international_fernsehen.htm

²⁰ See 13

²¹ John Blewitt. "A Neo-Formalist Approach to Film Aesthetics and Education." Journal of Aesthetic Education. Vol. 31, No. 2, Special Issue: Essays in Honor of Francis Sparshott (Summer, 1997), pp. 91-96

²² Steve Iliffe. "Downfall." British Journal of General Practice. 1 July 2005. 55 (516): 554. 2 Jan 2007. <http://www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov>

²³ "Dutch Tilt - A composition with the camera viewing the scene at a diagonal. Same as a canted angle. Some nice examples can be seen in Carol Reed's "The Third Man.""
http://homepage.newschool.edu/~schlemoj/film_courses/glossary_of_film_terms/glossary.html#d April 6 2007.

²⁴ He was reportedly 5'8" or 5'9". Although this is not necessarily small, in aspects of fulfilling the requirements of the Arian race envisioned by Hitler and the NSDAP (National Sozialistische Deutsche Arbeiter Partei) it was not a desirable male height.

²⁵ The Bunker. Dir. George Schaeffer. Per. Sir Anthony Hopkins. Antenne 2. 1981
The Bunker was a USA-France co-production and aired in English, French and Russian. While this television movie airtime is 102 min. in the USA, Germany's neighboring country, the Netherlands, airs the film in 150 min.

²⁶ Following Paul Monaco's argument that 'film as myth' should be read as 'film as national folklore', I wish to extend this discussion of Hitler and Nazis on screen to 'film as global folklore' considering the global distribution of media today.

²⁷ Claude Levi-Strauss. "The Structural Study of Myth (1958)." Course Reader AMS 802. Spring 2005.

²⁸ Common representations are perceived from either the point of view of the winning forces or a post-defeat Germany. A realistic and subtle depiction of the events as experienced by Hitler and those closest to him is unseen.

²⁹ "Roger Ebert." The Downfall. 2004. 12 May 2006 <http://rogerebert.suntimes.com>

³⁰ *ibid.* 24

³¹ see 33.

³² Susan Hayward. Cinema Studies – The Key Concepts. New York: Routledge, 2000.

³³ Ian Bamforth. "Gotterdammerung in a hole in the ground". British Journal of General Practice: 404. May 2005.

³⁴ The Downfall. Commentary. Dir. Oliver Hirschbiegel. Perf. Bruno Ganz. US DVD release. 2004

³⁵ Traudl Junge here refers to herself.

³⁶ All translations from German texts/dialogue, unless otherwise noted, by this author.

³⁷ "As a corporation under public law, the principal task of the Central Council of Jews in Germany is to defend the interests of its members within society as a whole. It has faced many major challenges in the fifty years and more of its existence: the new beginning after the war, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the forging of links between Jewish communities in eastern and western Germany, and the integration of immigrants from the countries which formerly belonged to the Soviet Union. In addition to this, the Council is

actively committed to promoting mutual understanding between Jews and non-Jews.” - <http://www.zentralratjuden.de/en/topic/80.html>

³⁸ While any research of German Reparations towards Israel, the country’s inclusion of WWII in all its educational curricula and the Central Jewish Committee will grant pieces of information here, the most cohesive work investigating how reparations by Germany have been debated, understood, and arrived at can be found in Zweig, Ronald W. *German Reparations and the Jewish World*. Routledge: New York, 1987.

³⁹ See *Visions of Light* Dir. [Glassman A.](#) and [Todd McCarthy](#). 1992.

⁴⁰ Practicals are lights that are within the frame, part of the setting, and visible to the audience because part of the actual set. Thereby the lighting is relatively unaltered to reality, albeit practicals will be moved freely to achieve best results. This is problematic, since the camera “eye” cannot adjust to see light and dark as the human eye can.

⁴¹ Bernhard Frank. *Im Mittelpunkt des Weltgeschehens: Obersalzberg*. Plenck:--.1995.

⁴² See in Jean Baudrillard. *Simulacra and Simulation*. University of Michigan Press: Michigan, 1985.

⁴³ Lynn Rapaport. "Hollywood's Holocaust: 'Schindler's List' and the Construction of Memory," *Film and History*, 32, 2002.

⁴⁴ As mentioned in chapter one, the Heimat film encompassed adults and children while young adults, as seen in the NGC movement took to the US films more easily.

⁴⁵ David Jay Bordwell. *Narration in the Fiction Film*. Routledge: New York, 1987. 49

⁴⁶ Even the modern day tail of the Ugly Duckling, or comedies that proclaim to be about ‘nothing’ use the term. See Donut-Nazi: *Miss Congeniality*. Dir. Donald Petrie. 2000. or Soup-Nazi: *Seinfeld*. Dir. Tom Cherones. Fox Television. 1990-1998.

⁴⁷ Nicholas Mirzoeff. *Watching Babylon - The War in Iraq and Global Visual Culture*. New York: Routledge, 2005.

⁴⁸ Elaine Martin. *Victims or Perpetrators? Literary Responses to Women's Roles in National Socialism*. Symposium, "German Women Writers from Weimar to the Present," at the University of Maryland, 25-28 February 1993.

⁴⁹ Camera angles, lighting, score etc. can create an exaggerated emotional response from the audience by framing the character in question as overpowering, towering above the audience, angular and supplied with the right score this will result in a clearly threatening image. The characters actions or words however, could be positive; the audience would still be bound by the perception developed through cinematic rhetoric.

⁵⁰ Ask a Chemist. February 27

2007. <http://www.newton.dep.anl.gov/askasci/chem99/chem99603.htm>

Death by Cyanide – Cruel and Usual. Paper for testimony against California’s death chamber. February 27 2007. <http://www.idiom.com/~drjohn/cyanide.html>

⁵¹ See 52

⁵² All further references about Hirschbiegel’s and Eichinger’s intentions and/or production insight from Special Features. *The Downfall*. Dir. Hirschbiegel. 2004 - U.S. DVD release 2005.

⁵³ Robert MacDougall. “Red, Brown and Yellow Perils: Images of the American Enemy in the 1940’s and 1950’s.” *Journal of Popular Culture* 32 n4 (1999): 59-75.

⁵⁴The term myth, often problematic in its definition, is here used in its subcategory film as national (in this case global) folklore. Paul Monaco describes in his essay about film as national folklore how the text of one individual work is no longer at the center of scholarly interest. Instead, the contextualization of a variety of texts referring to a specific “myth” and contextualization in general gain importance in research. I here define myth as a storytelling form firmly grounded in binaries, deploying dominant morality to its consumers. Much like Claude Levi-Strauss created a model-key to interpret the reoccurrence of characters and binaries in operas and ballads to confirm the presence of myth. The simplicity of good vs. evil, the binaries that create a moral grid work for our lives that create myth, and folklore, makes it easier to deliver easily understood messages to an audience. Mass media permits the values installed in the folklore’s content to transcend regional, national, and continental borders, which thus creates a global folklore.

⁵⁵ This is evident in media coverage of anniversaries, historical documentary, entertainment reviews.

⁵⁶ See http://film.guardian.co.uk/News_Story/Critic_Review/Guardian_Film_of_the_week

⁵⁷ See <http://www.variety.com/review/VE1117921577.html>

⁵⁸ All information pertaining to the economical and socio-political state of Germany from the German documentary series Fall Deutschland Teil 1 - Das Wirtschaftswunder. Prod.1 by ZDF. 2005

⁵⁹ Oliver Merz. “Rahn schießt - Pause; Wie das "Wunder von Bern" im Zuchthaus Brandenburg wirkte”.

Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung. 04 July 2004. Feuilleton, Medien: 45.

<http://www.faz.net/archiv> 05 March 2007

⁶⁰ Johannes von Moltke. “Evergreens: The Heimat Genre”. The German Cinema Book. London: BFI, 2002. 15-18.

⁶¹ A few examples include *Neues aus Uhlenbusch*, produced between 1977 and 1982 aired on ZDF, and *Die Rote Zora*, a Yugoslavian-German-Swiss co-production of 1978, aired by the ARD. Both stations are public broadcasting.

⁶² Not only from location to location but also from soccer World Cup game to game.

⁶³ The National Eleven (Nationalelf) is the term applied to the eleven players of the national soccer team.

⁶⁴ See <http://www.beta45.de/farbcodes/theorie/heller.html> 2 April 2007.

⁶⁵ Frank Trommler and Elliott Shore. The German-American Encounter: Conflict and Cooperation Between Two Cultures, 1800 – 2000. Berghahn Books:--, 2001. 169 ff.

⁶⁶ Sönke Wortmann. Director’s Commentary. Das Wunder von Bern. German DVD release 2004.

⁶⁷ See <http://www.variety.com/review/VE1117921577.html>

⁶⁸ All translations have been performed by me.

⁶⁹ Bruno refers to the GDR as a country where: “All men are equal, there are no poor or rich people. And everyone can say what they wish to say.” In the director’s commentary, there is a dry remark by Wortmann: “Well, that didn’t work out.”

⁷⁰ Common German phrase.

⁷¹ Peter Körte. ”Ordnung und Pathos – Auch Soenke Wortmann’s Film “Das Wunder von Bern” bringt das Runde nicht in das Eckige” Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung. 12 Oct. 2003, Feuilleton: 34.

⁷² The German Heimat film is a national Genre. It may remind one of the Western films considering its panoramic views of countryside in Germany, but is defied by the term Heimat, which translates to “home” yet in a national sense. I have found that commonly the translation is loosely “homeland”, yet there is no accurate and direct translation into English.

⁷³ See 72

⁷⁴ See 72

⁷⁵ Quoted in: Olaf Hoerschelman. “Public Memory in Postwar German Cinema.” Cinema Journal 40.2 (2001): 78-97.

⁷⁶ Trabbi-comedies were especially successful in German theaters. One of the first was the journey of an East German family in their old Trabant, the GDR’s stock car. The family faces ridicule, amazement, awe and many adventures in the big unknown that is the “free-” world. Other titles include: Driving Me Crazy (1991/I), aka “*Trabbi Goes to Hollywood*”, Go Trabi Go (1991), Go Trabi Go 2 (1992), and Spiel mir das Lied vom toten Trabbi (1991)

⁷⁷ Steve Cohn and Ina Rae Hark. The Road Movie Book. Routledge: New York, 1997. 1

⁷⁸ Peter Körte. “Verwende deine Jugend - In “Liegen lernen” und “Herr Lehmann” geht das deutsche Kino auf Spurensuche in den achtziger Jahren.” Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung. 31 Aug. 2003, Feuilleton: 23.

⁷⁹ See 15

--Tim Bergfelder speaks about Germany’s national comedies and their success at the German box office in the beginning of his essay collection *the German Cinema Book*. Varying chapters, such as a chapter on German ‘Stars’ in film, speak about the audiences’ favoring comedic relief, and so does the book *Light Motives*, a discussion of German popular film.

⁸⁰ Leonie Naughton. That Was the Wild East. Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2002.

⁸¹ dpa. Strafanzeige gegen Film Sonnenallee. Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung. 27 January 2000. Berliner Seiten, BS 3.

⁸² Michael Althen. Kreuzberg Kann Sehr Alt Sein. Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung. 01 October 2003. Feuilleton 39. The author goes on to say “This is of course a joke, because Regener is the front man of the band *Element of Crime*. And it is no obstacle for Haußmann to supply his film with much better music. ... It is not important to rely on historic authenticity in (use of music), but to prolong an attitude towards life into the present day – with or without the fall of the Wall.”

⁸³ See 80

⁸⁴ November 9th is indeed a remarkable day in German history. In 1848 it is the day Robert Blum, a left-wing assemblyman was executed which set in motion the Revolution in Austria, in 1918 Maximilian von Baden announces the end of the Kaiserreich leading to the November Revolution. In 1923 the revolution set in motion bei Hitler and Ludendorff were stopped after the minister of Bavaria withdrew his accordance. The NSDAP was ordered to dissolve. The cruel events of November 9th 1938, the Reichskristallnacht, in which night civilians took to the streets and destroyed Jewish businesses and homes cannot be forgotten. The fall of the Berlin Wall on Nov. 9th makes

this day even more important in more recent Germany history. It is interesting to note that due to the importance of this day the only national day of celebration had to be moved to the date of Oct. 3rd, the formal union of the two states.

⁸⁵ SO 36 was the postal area code of West Berlin Kreuzberg, in which Oranienstrasse is located.

⁸⁶ See 80

⁸⁷ John E. Davidson "Crime and Cynical Solution – Black Comedy, Critique, and the Spirit of Self-Concern in Recent German Film". Light Motives - German Popular Film in Perspective. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2003. 259-280

⁸⁸ See 80

⁸⁹ See 80

⁹⁰ Quoted in Brad Prager. "Beleaguered under the Sea: Wolfgang Petersen's *Das Boot* (1981) as a German Hollywood Film." Light Motives – German Popular Film in Perspective. Halle, McCarthy eds. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2003. 237 - 258

⁹¹ www.auswaertiges-amt.de/diplo/en/WillkommeninD/Themen-PD/DeutscherFilm2.html

⁹² *Germany – A Summer Fairytale* has been released to Great Britain, the Netherlands and other European countries whose marked has a shared interest in soccer.

⁹³ Andreas Kilb. Heroism of the Lie. Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 24. February 2005. Feuilleton: 43.

⁹⁴ Geoffrey Macnab. The Lives of Others. BFI. Sight and Sound <http://www.bfi.org.uk/sightandsound/review/3814/> 29 April 2007

⁹⁵ Peter Körte. Der Unberuhrende. Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung. 19 Mar 2006. Feuilleton: 27.

⁹⁶ Cristopher Schuette. Menschen Veraendern Sich Doch. Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung. Rhein-Main-Zeitung, Rezension. 17 May 2006. Kultur: 46.

⁹⁷ Sönke Wortmann. *Germany – A Summer Fairytale*. Special Feature. Making Of. German DVD release. 2007.

⁹⁸ Scientific achievements, automobile technology or economical structure are a factor of pride as much as the poets and artists of the past. But there is a detachment of nationality occurring.

⁹⁹ Quoted in 102

¹⁰⁰ Erik Kirschbaum. <http://football.guardian.co.uk/breakingnews/feedstory/0,-6118871,00.html> 2 Oct. 2006. Google 24 Oct 2006

¹⁰¹ My brother received such a notice, as did my parents. Unfortunately, they did not keep a copy for me. A soccer player spoke out against this behavior of other cities' and towns' officials in a nation wide 2006 'recap' show, aired on ZDF on Dec. 27 2006.

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