To my friends
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I especially would like to thank my committee members, Dr. Babara Mennel and Dr. Galili Shahar, for their comments, helpful feedback and general support. Further, I would like to show my gratitude to all faculty members of the Department Languages, Literatures, and Cultures at the University of Florida for their inspiring courses and personal encouragement during the last years. Also, I like to thank the Verband der Deutsch-Amerikanischen Clubs. Its generous support made it possible for me to study two years in the United States and write this thesis. Last but not least, I thank my family for all they have done for me.
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How is space used in film to tell a story and what is the meaning of this particular use? This thesis aims to answer these questions by examining three German post-Wall Films, namely Dominik Graf’s *The Red Cockatoo* (*Der rote Kakadu*, 2006), Wolfgang Becker’s *Good Bye, Lenin!* (2003), and Florian von Donnersmarck’s *The Lives of Others* (*Das Leben der Anderen*, 2006). Applying different concepts of private and public sphere, I argue that the filmic image of the GDR is that of a state where public and private places, both spaces expressing individual freedom, slowly vanish and are substituted with a new space of in-betweenness or Thirdspace, a term used by Edward Soja. The films employ space to create their particular image of the GDR.

The action of *The Red Cockatoo* takes place shortly before the construction of the Berlin Wall. It contrasts two artistic identities and exemplifies their continuous loss of personal freedom. The spatial center and meeting place for both is the so-called “red cockatoo,” a youth club and bar in Dresden. The director Dominik Graf links the surveillance and closure of the bar with the ongoing arrangements for the construction of the Wall and thus demonstrates that the loss of public space is connected with the lack of personal freedom. The loss of public space leads to the mistrust of a generation...
that will later be responsible for the fall of the Berlin Wall. *The Lives of Others* portrays life in the GDR during the 1980s, when, according to the film, traces of a public sphere remain but an overall surveillance has destroyed the private sphere. Oscillating between distance and closeness, places of in-betweenness, or, from a filmic perspective, real-imagined places appear and question the binary private and public. Illustrating a world after the fall of the Wall and the GDR, *Good Bye, Lenin!* imagines a re-creation of spaces of the GDR, developing a nostalgic image of the past. My reading of *Good Bye, Lenin!* relies on Jean Baudrillard’s concept of the simulacrum to explain how the protagonist works with propaganda and a bricolage of Western products to transform the private sphere into a place that is real and unreal at the same time. Finally, the main character’s imagination of a utopian GDR restores the role of the artist as a free thinker, a role called in question by the two previous films, thereby showing that the figure of the artist can rewrite history with the help of space.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

In the past decades, the analysis of space has literally overcome the borders of its discipline. Originating from geography, the study of space has become an important part of cultural studies in the past thirty years. One reason for the breakthrough of the spatial perspective in social and literary studies is the French philosopher’s Henri Lefebvre’s groundbreaking work *The Production of Social Space*. A dedicated Marxist, Lefebvre wrote a “critique of space” (Lefebvre 92), which aimed at uncovering the hidden forces of producing space. These forces are hidden because, for Lefebvre, spaces “conceal[s] their content” (92) as part of a capitalist ideology.

Lefebvre categorized space into natural space and social space. Important for this work is the second category, the production of social space. Social space, as Lefebvre argues, is based in and originating from society at the same time. He states that social space is manifold in its inclusion of everything that is produced in society, including social relationships. The content of social space is “everything that there is in space, everything that is produced either by nature or by society, either through their co-operation or through their conflicts. Everything: living, being, things, objects, works, signs and symbols” (101). Consequently, space embodies the modes of its own production. It is

not the thing in itself, not a thing among other things, nor a product among other products: rather, it subsumes things produced, and encompasses their interrelationships in their co-existence and simultaneity—their (relative) order and/or (relative) disorder. (73)

What we take from Lefebvre’s initial thoughts into film studies without following his whole line of arguments into an economic analysis and critique of capitalism is to understand that space embraces all things and relationships inside its realm. Applied to
film, to interpret space means to connect the filmic space with the content it embodies. Therefore, as Lefebvre puts it, the task of analyzing space can only lie in “uncovering the social relationships embedded in it” (89). In contrast to Lefebvre, I am less concerned with the origin of (filmic) space, albeit how filmic space is produced by the director. My approach in this work differs significantly from Lefebvre's in that respect. Rather than analyzing space from a philosophical or social point of view, I will adopt a spatial perspective to understand how space produces and conveys meaning in film. While Lefebvre’s approach examines space with philosophic means, my approach is merely the spatial analysis of film.

Taking a spatial approach is justified by the close relation between film and space, although the importance of space for film is debated. According to Eric Rohmer, film is a spatial art and cinema the art of space. While Rohmer was only concerned with the film in its wholeness, taking a spatial point of view to analyze film means to analyze the space depicted in film, the filmic or diegetic space. Film depicts spaces through the whole mise-en-scène, everything that appears before the camera and its arrangement, including setting, lightening, make-up and staging. On the level of editing, spaces are connected or constructed through the montage of different camera shots.

The specific feature of the diegetic space is that it conveys meaning on its own. This meaning might support, contradict, undermine or even transcend that of the plot. To understand space as a social space, thereby following Lefebvre, is the key to uncover this hidden meaning of diegetic spaces. Interpreting diegetic space as a social space implies that it is mediated by different social relationships. These relationships are just as manifold as in “real” space. Diegetic space cannot be reduced to a product of
social relationships in film; instead it produces and is produced by social relationships. Since the social relationships are inherited by the fictional, filmic spaces are just as manifold as in its non-fictional counterpart, I will focus on the social relationships in space. These offer most potential for my interpretation as they connect the films' protagonists with the space they are placed in. Although Lefebvre might understand these social relationships differently, my attempt is to define them as an entity one can discover and analyze in film. I will define the social relationships embedded in diegetic film in the most common sense of the word "social", namely the relation between two humans or their relation to the society they live in. A diegetic space, in this sense, conveys information about a character and is created and used by a character as well.

The center of my work is the examination of three German post-Wall films with the help of a spatial approach. These films are The Red Cockatoo (Der rote Kakadu, 2006) by Dominik Graf, The Lives of Others (Das Leben der Anderen, 2006) by and finally Good Bye, Lenin! (2003), filmed by Wolfgang Becker. All films deal with a historic period in the history of GDR, also including its aftermath. As one can say, the former state of the GDR was a state representing a unique relationship between space and power. The state’s most famous (and spatial) symbol for the power over its citizen was the Wall, a border that constrained people to immobility and limited their personal freedom. All three films address a general lack of personal freedom in the GDR in different ways, which is expressed by and through space.

Before I start my analysis, I shortly want to address some possible misconceptions to avoid misunderstandings with film scholars. A difficulty and at the same time a misunderstanding in the analysis of space, one which also Lefebvre criticizes, lies in its
easy accessibility. Some scholars believe that space is as easy to analyze as it is to ignore. Space, as Henry Lefebvre mentioned, creates “the illusion of transparency” (27). Nothing seems to be hidden and everything is visible through design. Although everything we see in film is a construction, the space of a plot is similarly taken for granted or seen as something logical or naturally inherent to the plot. Not to fall into this trap requires changing one’s perspective from the plot to space in film.

To use Lefebvre’s view, one has to shift one’s attention from real to imagined spaces without forgetting their connection. This change lies in the acceptance of space as the main area of analysis. The difference to other approaches is that one interprets the meaning of the portrayed space and then, only in a second step, at it connections to the plot of the film. While a film scholar with a different approach would start to analyze a scene by looking at plot, protagonists and setting in this chronological order, I conceptualized plot as a part of space. From this point of view, the spatial structures become the starting point for a scene. The spatial background limits the variety of the action through its accessibility for the characters, it influences the actions of the protagonists and already conveys meaning before the dialogue or action has even started. With space as view point on film, the attention shifts from protagonists and their actions to the background. Suddenly, the mise-en-scène and the setting become more important than the bodies in the front. It is not only important which content space produces and envelops but even more how it conveys meaning. I might summarize this point by comparing it to Marshall McLuhan’s famous quote: “The medium is the message” (Luhan 569). In this work, I propose: Space is the message.
CHAPTER 2
BETWEEN PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SPACE (THE LIVES OF OTHERS)

In the following, I examine the filmic space in Donnersmarck’s Das Leben der Anderen (2006). Space, in this sense, may be understood as room in general, as well as socially constructed places, inter-connections between them and places of transition. I show how the mise-en-scène, everything that appears before the camera and its arrangement, is organized to grant the viewer a deeper understanding of the plot and its characters by describing them through their ascribed places. Instead of giving a detailed description of the whole, I consider particular scenes and interpret elements of the mise-en-scène, as it consists of setting, lightening, colors and staging. The Lives of Others utilizes space as a subtle filmic device, which reveals the character’s secret drives and wishes. The places constructed by and in the film do not stand for themselves but are part of a greater arrangement mirroring the main conflict of the plot. Eva Horn, in her analysis of The Lives of Others, identifies the plot as a clash between the private and the political realm, between individuals and collectives, which are, according to Horn, not separated from one another: “This is also why the blurring of these spheres appears either as a tragedy […] or as corruption” (131). The differentiation between the private and political sphere also organizes the spatial arrangement of the film, which constantly shifts between places of the private and the political sphere, creating a universe of oppositions. While describing the places and their differences, I categorize them, similar to Horn, but from a spatial perspective. I begin with Hannah Arendt’s concept of the private sphere and borrow Jürgen Habermas’ term of the sphere of public authority to differentiate between private places and places belonging to the state. I argue that a
clear differentiation between those spheres is made impossible through parts of the filmic space itself. While the State security agent Wiesler’s secret surveillance room is an ideal example for a place of “in-betweenness”, oscillating between both spheres, the observed apartment of the writer Dreyman and his girlfriend is, in Edward Soja’s words, a real-imagined place or a Thirdspace (Soja 6). The depiction of space in the film presents itself in the playful illusion of private space, which hints at the absolute extinction of private space in the GDR. Although it might be a contradiction, it is a necessary step to explain both spatial categories. Only if we understand that the film plays with spatial oppositions—and their later deconstruction—we will get to the core of the politics of *The Lives of Others*.

In the following, I explain this spatial dichotomy between the private and public sphere and its importance for an appropriate interpretation of *The Lives of Others*. I draw on Hannah Arendt’s definition of the spatial differences between the private and the public sphere. She traces the political importance of a private sphere back to the ancient Greeks, who differentiated between the polis, the public sphere, and the household, the private sphere. Hannah Arendt elicits the same distinction when she criticizes the modern entanglement of public and private sphere. For Arendt, the private sphere consists of self-contradicting notions of the domestic sphere of the family on the one hand, and loneliness (“Verlassenheit”) on the other. The intimate character of the domestic place distinguishes itself from that of the public sphere. Its main feature is “the absence of others” (“The Vita Activa”, 205). Arendt’s understanding of space is not only characterized by a stable place, in the way she argues for a definition of places which is
marked by social construction, that is to say the family. Thus, I concentrate on the way that different filmic places are shaped by their inhabitants.

Additionally, Arendt calls the private sphere a place of secrets, referring to the intimate acts of birth and death. Arendt’s notion of the private sphere applies to the reading of this film, since she sees the public sphere as one in decay in modernity, but traces still remain in the film’s depiction of the GDR. I add to the private/public dichotomy what Jürgen Habermas calls the sphere of public authority to contrast it with the private sphere. The sphere of public authority is more important for the plot than the places of a public sphere. For Habermas, the birth of this new sphere goes back to the beginnings of the nation state:

The representative public sphere yielded to that new sphere of "public authority" which came into being with national and territorial states. [...] Public authority consolidated into a concrete opposition for those who were merely subject to it and who at first found only a negative definition of themselves within it. These were the "private individuals" who were excluded from public authority because they held no office. (104)

Thus, the sphere of public authority and the private sphere are clearly separated from each other. Indeed, private individuals have no direct relation to the state. It develops into an anonymous “other,” opposed to the individual, in Arendt’s eyes into an anonymous state apparatus. These categories frame my analysis of the different places in these films, following the state security agent Wiesler’s perspective or his surveillance-victims, the Eastern playwright Dreyman and his partner Christa-Maria Sieland, a famous theatre actress of the GDR.

*The Lives of Others* shows us the overall presence of a surveillance state. The film opens with a prisoner brought to an interrogation room. Low-key lightning, a long, endless hallway and a fisheye lens evoke a Kafkaesque atmosphere. The GDR is
exemplified by the prison Berlin Hohenschönhausen in the opening sequence proposing that all GDR citizens were prisoners in a larger sense as well. The interrogation room itself is tidy and functional, while grey and green colors are predominant. One finds no décor besides a picture of Erich Honecker—the always watching Big Brother. The camera then directs our view to a hidden listening unit, before the interrogation process starts. Spatial signs of individuality and human emotion are nowhere to be found. The interrogation room echoes Max Weber’s description of a rational bureaucracy:

> Its specific nature which is welcomed by capitalism develops the more perfectly the more bureaucracy is ‘dehumanized’, the more completely it succeeds in eliminating from official business love, hatred, and all purely personal, irrational and emotional elements which escape calculation. Even torture is a part of the rationalized interrogation process. (216)

Another place that represents rational bureaucracy is the huge Stasi-archive. While the interrogation room serves as an example for asymmetric power relations between the state and its citizens, symbolized by the interrogator and his helpless victim, the latter represents the immense knowledge of a state mistrusting its citizens. The concept of a state with absolute knowledge, which makes him superior to every individual, is spacialized through the place of the archive. In *The Lives of Others*, the presentation of this room is kept in cold colors. The archive as a whole consists of a gigantic machine containing thousands of names sorted by numbers. Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck ends the scene with a wide shot, showing the room is a machine, albeit part the anonymous rationalization process. Ultimately, the film constructs the sphere of public authority of the GDR through a set of rooms visualizing what otherwise would remain invisible, the image of an inhuman bureaucratic system.

In contrast to this sphere, Donnersmarck’s depiction of the private sphere is more ambiguous since the film includes two domestic places sharing the notion of “absence
of others.” The first is that of the observed playwright Georg Dreyman, the second one that of Wiesler. The first domestic space is Dreyman and his partner Christa-Marina Sieland’s shared apartment, in which they form the core of a typical family. Their domestic place is an apartment in East-Berlin, which emphasizes the couple’s higher status concerning prosperity and education. Full of books, the place affirms our perception of Dreyman as a famous intellectual of the GDR. The writing desk is the center of Dreyman’s life and his workplace at the same time. Several awards on the wall prove his importance. The apartment’s interior, in contrast to the rooms of the state, expresses individuality and high culture.

If we apply Arendt’s concept of space, the film depicts the private sphere as a traditional domestic place framed by a feeling of security and shelter as well as of secrets, exemplified by Sieland’s drug addiction and, later, Dreyman’s hidden typewriter. The home emphasizes an intimate relationship between both protagonists. It is home where both share intimacies and love. Thus, leaving home equals ending the vulnerable relationship. As Dreyman asks Sieland to end the affair with the minister, he begs her not to leave the apartment: “And I’m asking you not to go. You don’t need him. […] Stay here.” The spatial meaning of these words corresponds with their emotional undertone, namely not to end the relationship. Space, therefore, is used to create bonds and enable a dualistic world view of “us vs. them”.

The second private sphere that the film creates is Wiesler’s apartment. Emptiness is an appropriate term to describe his current state of mind. His apartment looks clinical and impersonal, just as functional and empty as an interrogation room. If the bed is the center of the couple’s apartment, it is the TV-screen delivering state propaganda in
Wiesler’s domestic space. The apartment is a mental map of his state of mind, of his efficiency as well as of his desperation. That Wiesler starts to question the system and sympathizes with his victims, may already be known from the outer emptiness which mirrors his inner one. Wiesler has a home without him feeling “at home”. This notion of homelessness derives from a failure of the GDR not being able to offer a satisfying socialist world view. Wiesler’s environment forgot about the GDR as a place to live the idea of equality and only acts for its own goods. It is primarily this lack of personal meaning that drives him to be disloyal to the state. In one scene, he invites a prostitute to his apartment.

After they had sexual intercourse, he literally begs her to stay a bit longer but she denies and answers him she is also ordered to please the other customers. Although the prostitute might fulfill his instinctive needs, she is not able to give him the feeling of personal closeness or “fill” his empty room with meaning. Her remark, “A bunch of other guys live here,” shows that Wiesler’s longing for emotional closeness does not constitute a singular case but a broader phenomenon typical for the totalitarian state: Loneliness. Arendt argues that the totalitarian state “is new in that it is not content with isolation and destroys private life as well. It bases itself on loneliness, on the experience of not belonging to the world at all, which is among the most radical and desperate exercises of man” (The Origins of Totalitarianism, 475). Instead of places providing its citizens with meaning, the decaying totalitarian state fails to offer meaning. Additionally, it isolates the individual so that the private sphere cannot fill the emotional lack the state has created.
The Lives of Others offers a unique spatial explanation for Wiesler’s changeover. The state-imposed equalization, which fails to accept spatial borders and denies difference, leads to the disappearance of private space and consequently of privacy as well. It is this lack of disparity out of which a new form of social relationship originates, even if it is one-sided: The state agent’s spatial isolation is the answer why he sympathizes with his victims in an act of an inverted Stockholm syndrome. The will to control includes its own resolution. As the state, in the personification of Wiesler, interferes with his enemies’ lives and ignores the last refuge of freedom, it risks moving so close to the victim that the two spheres unite. Wiesler’s superior position as a double agent lies in this balance between closeness and distance, symbolized by an attic room, used for the purpose of surveillance. Pulling the strings in the background, he is literally above things.

The attic room does not fit into either category, neither into the private sphere nor into the sphere of public authority. Far and close at the same time, it bridges the gap between the Stasi Agent and the author’s apartment. It is a place of “in-betweenness.” Truly, it is part of the domestic sphere because it is a part of the house, in which Dreyman’s apartment is located. However, it does not belong to the private sphere since it is used for purposes commissioned by the state and therefore is part of the sphere of public authority. The notion that Wiesler’s assignment only serves private purposes, namely the elimination of an unwanted competitor, and that he switches sides, only adds to the space’s position of “in-betweenness.”

While Wiesler’s spatial isolation distances himself from the outside world and gives him control over his victims, it also develops a longing for love. This one-sided
relationship is made possible through the observation room in the attic, which enables Wiesler to emotionally connect with his love-interest Sieland. Wiesler’s increasing curiosity in his victims is just as influenced by his aural observations, as it is enforced by spatial connections, which are further intensified through Wiesler’s spatial actions. With chalk, he draws a floor plan of the couple’s apartment on the floor in the attic, thereby mimicking its spatial construction. In connection with his listening device and his headphones, he can now establish an aural and spatial connection through a map. The map serves as a connecting device, mediating between two different places. Christian Jacob and Edward Dahl stress this function.

As a reconstruction of a visible space or the construction of an invisible space, in both its process and its result the map is a projection of a mental schema on a medium, the materialization of an abstract intellectual order extracted from the empirical universe. (30)

But a map is more than that. Jean Molino literally calls it a symbol distancing itself from reality. Reality is circumvented with the map as a “detour” (32). One can follow this argument in the way the state agent does not want to confront reality but a world he imagines. If we follow Henry Lefebvre’s argument that every social space is a constructed one, Wiesler’s effort lies in the mimicry of his victim’s life. When Wiesler is drawing a map of Dreyman’s apartment and retracing its walls and borders, he is in fact mapping out his opponents life and even its secrets. This map serves the idea of creating a new social space connecting all three persons. The observant wants to gain the perspective of the observed.

Another connection between both places is the machine. Wiring Dreyman’s apartment, in this way connecting it with a listening device in the attic, transforms both rooms into a machine. Cross-cutting the action in the two rooms, mostly to show
Wiesler’s emotional reactions to the actions taken by Dreyman, the scene’s composition supports the impression of a secret connection. With his listening and control device Wiesler can control his victims and influence their next steps. The machine also enforces a power difference between both places. From his space in-between, Wiesler can exercise his power without having to fear any consequences. The listening and control device combines knowledge and power and creates an aural connection enabling him to be a part of the couple’s private life.

Throughout the film, Wiesler increasingly mimics Dreyman, captured by a spatial frame. In one of the film’s scenes we can observe the couple in bed, peacefully falling asleep after an argument. The intimate connection between them is made clear through close physical contact: Dreyman’s head is resting on Sieland’s shoulder. Then, we see the State security agent in his surveillance room, also falling asleep. A match-cut between the scenes, which shows Wiesler and Dreyman in a similar position, indicates that the state agent merges with the author with the help of sound and the spatial connection of the floor plan, a map of Dreyman’s apartment that Wiesler draws in the attic room. From Wiesler’s perspective, Dreyman serves as his avatar to establish an intimate connection with Sieland. That he can neither touch nor talk to her does not seem to bother him at all. In resemblance to the player of a computer game, he is able to put himself in the position of his opponent.

Arendt’s definition of the lonely man in totalitarianism explains Wiesler’s situation. Accidentally he finds an opportunity to act out his longing for intimacy. His position of distance and closeness enables him to bridge the gap by setting up aural and spatial connections. The existence of a place in-between suggests that we are witnessing a
simulation of a private sphere since only its status of “in-betweenness” allows Wiesler to be a part of it. Being under constant surveillance, Sieland and Dreyman unknowingly act as if one’s own four walls would still offer shelter and privacy. Instead, the private sphere is an illusion subverted by the state agent, who seemingly enjoys the voyeuristic view. Having this said, the main criteria for the public sphere, the “absence of the other”, is not given.

Our view on the private sphere, and thus private place, is exposed as a simulation or at least as an imagined space, a Thirdspace. For Edward Soja, the term Thirdspace […] can be described as a creative recombination and extension, one that builds on a Firstspace perspective that is focused on the “real” material word and a Secondspace perspective that interprets this reality through “imagined” representations of spatiality. (6)

If we take for granted that Dreyman’s apartment is the Firstspace and its space is rooted in the “real”, at least in the fictional world of the film, we may add that it is the state agent's Secondspace perspective that interprets this reality with the help of his senses and combines both to a completely new Thirdspace. This is further supported by filmic evidence, even though Donnersmarck only allows the viewer a few visual clues. In one of the scenes we see Sieland showering, after she refused to talk to Dreyman about her affair with Minister Hempf. The first shot shows Wiesler’s listening to the sounds delivered by his headphones. In the next one, we see his surveillance apparatus, indicating that there is noise in the bathroom. Only in a second step we follow Wiesler’s reaction and after the next cut we are in the bathroom. For the viewer alone, the wobbling needle is absolutely unnecessary because we are shown later that Sieland is in the bathroom. Instead, it is the state agent who has to follow the events by trying to make sense of the sounds delivered through the wire. The filmic sequence that
organizes the action shows exactly how Wiesler’s surveillance system works. First, he listens to the noise, second, he looks at the needle and in a third step we inherit his perspective and follow his imagination. What appears to be a private place is in fact a now-made-public through the spectator’s eye.

Almost everything we see of the couple’s private life is blurred with Wiesler’s imagination. Not only the fact that the celebrity couple is under surveillance makes their place a mixture of real and imagined place, but rather also our unreliable perspective relies on the Stasi Agent’s mediation. One shall also not forget that Wiesler develops artistic skills while the plot progresses. In the end, he even imagines a plot for a theatre play never written. This way, it is no surprise that Dreyman’s apartment is only a stepping stone for the state agent’s fantasy. The place “in-between” he finds himself in, is therefore more than just a place. Only from here he is able to imagine what goes on in the apartment below and can slip into Dreyman’s role to satisfy his emotional needs.

Consequently, the private sphere in Arendt’s definition, “the absence of others,” does not apply here. What we see instead is the illusion of private space from a state agent’s perspective. In another scene, Wiesler is coming back from his encounter with Sieland. Since he missed the last hours of that day, he is forced to reimagine the scene with the help of his partner’s observational notes. After an argument, Sieland returns to Dreyman and they have sexual intercourse. Again, the action in the apartment is cross-cut with Wiesler reading. He is actively imagining, even dreaming this scene.

The film does not only contrasts private spaces and spaces of public authority, but also offers a remainder of a public sphere, which is depicted rather as a space of freedom than one of public debate. The film’s depiction of the public sphere is similar to
that of private space because both are transcended and called into question simultaneously. From a social perspective, the modern city has forced the individual to wear a “mask” to deal with the overwhelming stimuli of modernity, finding a balance between the self and others.

The public sphere is the place where individual masks are displayed, compared and reshaped. In the same way that public space is articulated through the display of the building fronts, public sphere is the place of social fronts of individuals. Indeed, the facade of the buildings plays the same role as the masks of individual (albeit as a fixed rather than an easily changeable one): a boundary between the private and the public realms, a medium of representation and communication, a tool of hiding and suppressing what needs hiding. (Madanipour 126)

We encounter these masks in the filmic place of the bar, where Wiesler and Sieland meet for the first time. In his attic room, he has listened to an argument which revolves around Sieland’s indecision whether to continue to act and be blackmailed or to decide to give up her vocation for Dreyman and stay by his side. To continue his observations, Wiesler has an interest in restoring the couple’s relationship to continue his observations. Thus, after the argument, he follows Sieland to a bar and starts a conversation, with the aim to convince her to return to her partner.

The film establishes a typical public space, according to Ali Madanipour’s definition, in which both protagonists are wearing masks and it adds another complex layer. Not only does the bar, but the whole film becomes a theatrum mundi at this time. Although people in public places all wear a mask to protect their privacy, the agent’s mask does not only hide his privacy but also his profession. While the actress does not act, her counterpart plays a role which by far exceeds the one society forces people to play in public places.
With this masque, Donnersmarck playfully risks the plausibility of the whole film and breaks the fourth wall. Several double entendres, for example Wiesler’s “I’m a big fan of yours.” rather addresses the viewer than Sieland, since only we as the informed viewer may understand the intended, almost sarcastic, ambiguity of these words. Since the film consists of the dualism between the couple and their observer, a scene like this puts the already established suspense into danger, which lives from Sieland’s unawareness that she is being watched. The plot balances on the threshold between stretching its muscles through a clever interaction, and, on the other hand, displeasing its audience, which might not believe Sieland’s naivety.

But nevertheless this scene succeeds because it takes place in a bar and the film can rely on our associations connected with the particular place. Viewers are aware that wearing social “masks” in public place is quite common. The bar is a special place because it combines private anonymity with public interaction. Only here, in public, are two previously (supposedly) unknown strangers able to come together and share their thoughts. Furthermore, we generally understand the bar to be a relatively open place free from social constraints, where differences in social status are not as important. Understanding this, both characters seem to partly lose their social roles and seem to step outside of the plot. To rephrase Marx, space determines consciousness.

To conclude, The Lives of Others deals with poststructuralist concepts of space (Thirdspace) as well as it utilizes traditional ones, only to deconstruct these through the storyline develops. Thus, traditional spatial oppositions, the space of state and private space, are blurred. New places of “in-betweenness”, one might think of the surveillance-room, question these binaries. In Donnersmarck’s dystopian vision of the GDR, it is
primarily the state which interferes with private space, thereby improving and extending its realm of control. Susan Gal also shares this assumption: “As is well known, the aim was elimination of the “private” through the extension of state control into activities, spaces, and relations deemed “private” (86). But it is not the Thirdspace that questions the dichotomy of private and public sphere; in fact, the film suggests that a private sphere is non-existent.
CHAPTER 3
THE LOSS OF PRIVATE SPACE (THE RED COCKATOO)

Dominik Graf’s film The Red Cockatoo (Der rote Kakadu) takes place in the GDR, shortly before the building of the German Wall. The consequences of the growing tensions between the GDR and the West become comprehensible on an individual level through the three young protagonists within the film. The film itself is a coming-of-age story and focuses on the young painter Siggi and his love-interest, a poet Luise. The group also includes the wild daredevil Wolle. While Wolle works in a factory and lives a hedonist lifestyle, Luise and Siggi resemble each other in their love for the arts and their dreams and struggles to become an artist. Not by accident, the film’s plot resembles Francois Truffaut’s Jules et Jim, the love of two men for one woman. Different from Truffaut’s work is that Luise is already married to Wolle, a fact that does not keep her from flirting and falling in love with Siggi. From the outset, Luise’s sympathy for the rather rude and careless-acting Wolle constitutes a mystery to the viewer, until the film indicates that both attempted to commit suicide for unknown reasons. I argue in the following that The Red Cockatoo is an accented film, according to Hamid Naficy’s definition.

I problematize both authorship and autobiography by positing that the filmmakers’ relationship to their films and to the authoring agency within them is not solely one of parentage but also one of performance. However, by putting the author back into authorship, I counter a prevalent postmodernist tendency, which either celebrates the death of the author or multiplies the authoring effect to the point of de-authoring the text (4).

This accented film portrays the landscape of Dresden, secondly, as characterized by social relations of power and combining closed and open “spatiotemporal topoi to create a new Thirdspace being both” (212). Through the choice of setting, the fictional landscape of Dresden can, in the first part of the film, be interpreted as the paradisiacal
homeland which, due to an unknown perpetrator, is then in the second part conquered and turned into a hostile exile for the protagonists Siggi, Luise and Wolle. While the first part of the film shows us a cultural landscape, which embodies a cultural variety, natural places of freedom and new spaces to be conquered, the second part changes the former open landscape into a landscape of terror and surveillance. The trope of entrapment marks the end of the protagonists’ former freedom which was deeply connected with the landscape itself. Since the open structure signifies a paradisiacal homeland and the closed one a hostile exile, the film features a Western perspective and portrays the East, shortly before the fall of the Wall, as a place characterized by terror and surveillance and thus without the opportunity to change. On the surface, it seems like the film offers different spatial strategies how to deal with the ongoing changes of landscape and seems to value them as equally legitimate: While Siggi and his friend Luise remain together until the circumstances become unbearable, they split up in the end. Siggi flees to the West to escape a state which he calls a prison; the young poet Luise, who is characterized as immobile through her injury, remains behind the Wall suggesting that the political conditions can only be changed from the inside.

Arguably, the two protagonists are associated with two different spatial strategies, namely Siggi’s mobility to flee to the West and Luise’s immobility as she stays the GDR. The film does not endow those two strategies with equal value. Through the spatial connotation of the landscape as a homeland, which is forever lost, now infused by violence and turned into an exile, the film privileges Siggi’s decision to leave over Luise’s decision to stay in East Germany. The film portrays Luise’s decision as a naive and hopeless dream. The film’s Western bias becomes visible through the use of space.
Characteristic for the film are Siggi’s words, which describe the development of the cultural landscape: "The landscape is so beautiful but they are transforming it into a prison."

Additionally, the film also depicts a failure of place as mediation between two cultures, more precisely the GDR’s missed chance to incorporate Western influences into the Eastern culture to please the youth. This can be seen in a part of the cultural landscape, the spatial center of the film *The Red Cockatoo*. “The red cockatoo” is a bar and jazz club in Dresden. All three protagonists regularly meet in this club. In connection to the previous arguments, the bar presents a metaphor anticipating the failed mediation between two generations representing two cultures. The cultural fight for dominance expresses itself foremost in the music played in the club. The place is characterized by music. As the younger generation is looking for a place to listen and dance to Western rock and roll and jazz, shielded from the presence of the GDR’s state police, the older generation present in the club uses “The Red Cockatoo” as well to promote the Eastern culture with Russian dances.

To analyze the spatial structure of the film, I define the space shown in the film as cultural landscape. This stresses the strong connection between the protagonists and the landscape itself and recognizes that landscape is a space of power, a fact that explains how the landscape changes in the course of the film even though it still looks the same on the surface. Mariusz Czepczynski stresses this aspect by defining “cultural landscape as an entity reflecting relationships” (2). Thus, cultural landscape means both. It represents a stage for the protagonists to act on. On the other hand, the users of the cultural landscapes are shaping its particular form. In other words, one analyzes the
landscape by defining the relationships of its users *with and within* the landscape. Applied to *The Red Cockatoo*, to grasp the importance of the filmic cultural landscape can only be done by looking at the landscape itself and its connection with the three protagonists Siggi, Luise and Wolle. The use of the term "cultural landscape" highlights the combination of power and landscape. Cultural landscape is understood as an entity permeated with social power.

The idea and practice of landscape is embedded within a system of power relations and suggests that it is exercised as a form of cultural power. Cultural landscape clearly intersects with senses of community, group belonging, history, power and identity, and so in concrete political situations may be drawn upon in the face of specific external threats. (Czepczynski 41)

The ongoing change in the film, from a landscape portrayed as calm and innocent, to a threatening landscape of surveillance and fear, implies the idea that the unknown forces of the state finally decide to exercise their power over the protagonists. For Naficy, cultural landscape may become “a medium of competition and contestation between groups, evident in the requisition and conversion of significations from the dominant culture by subordinate groups as forms of resistance” (Naficy 26). On the surface, the look of the landscape remains unchanged while power relations inside the landscape change. In the end, the cultural landscape becomes a “Panopticum” in that sense, that it becomes a space of surveillance. Michel Focault describes it as an important mechanism, for it automatizes and disindividualizes power. Power has its principle not so much in a person as in a certain concerted distribution of bodies, surfaces, lights, gazes; in an arrangement whose internal mechanisms produce the relation in which individuals are caught up. (202)

The cultural landscape and the question of power become inseparable from each other. It is especially the strange gaze that permeates the landscape and invokes a
feeling of claustrophobia, also visible in the actions of Siggi, who begs Luise to escape with him to East Germany. Besides the surveillance of the landscape, power is further executed in the cultural landscape through the closure of the “red cockatoo”, a meeting place for the protagonists. Also the increasingly restrictive conditions the protagonists have to suffer from cannot be separated from the change of the cultural landscape; Wolle is sent to prison and Luise gets a prison sentence. Rather, these exercises of power show how the film interrelates with the cultural landscape.

The changes in the cultural landscape in the film are presented in the cultural landscape with the help of the setting. As explained before, cultural landscape consists of the landscape itself, the relationship the users develop to the landscape and also with each other. The users of this landscape in the film are the three protagonists Siggi, Luise and Wolle. The landscape becomes readable with the help of several oppositions, which are depicted in the choice of the setting: the countryside, buildings and their interior organized these into spatial oppositions, such as public and private, inside and outside, center and periphery and, finally, open and closed.

The terms “open” and “closed” derive from Naficy. He uses these terms exclusively to describe accented films. I suggest that a reading of The Red Cockatoo as an accented film is productive for finding out which perspective the film takes. This will later become important when I analyze the spatial structure of the landscape and consequently the film from a spatial perspective. One feature of accented films Naficy identifies is the characters’ accent, which situates them as citizens of their country: “At its most rudimentary level, making films with an accent involves using on-camera and voice-over characters and actors who speak with a literal accent in their pronunciation”
(24). For a German viewer, the main protagonist’s accent is audible from the beginning on. Siggi’s accent identifies him as a person raised in East Germany while the setting of Dresden gives more evidence to this thought. As an accented film, *The Red Cockatoo* emphasizes visual fetishes of homeland and the past [...], as well as visual markers of difference and belonging (posture, look, style of dress and behavior), they equally stress the oral, the vocal and the musical—that is, accents, intonations, voices, music and songs, which also demarcate individual and collective identities. (24–25).

To be more precise, *The Red Cockatoo* falls into the category “accented border film.” Naficy identifies seven characteristics which constitute border films. Since only, as Naficy states, “more than one of these characteristics [must be] present” (239) to constitute a border film, I will only apply two different characteristics and see how they describe the content of the film. The first feature is described by Naficy as follows: “The plot involves significant journeying and border crossing and use of border setting” (239). I consider Siggi’s final decision to leave the East and start a new life in the West, shortly before the Wall is built, journeying across the upcoming border. Particularly the final scene, as Siggi is standing at the Wall waiting for Luise, uses the border setting to exemplify the pain of leaving one’s previous homeland behind. While the border guards are trying to keep everyone from crossing, the film prominently addresses the NVA officer’s Conrad Schumann’s famous jump over the barbed wire by depicting an anonymous man jumping over the Wall as well.

Another characteristic Naficy describes sis connected to this scene: “The story makes significant reference to the borderlands or the problems of ethnic or national identity” (239). National identity plays a central part in the film. What Sigg andi Luise share is their love for their homeland. For Luise, this love cannot be separated from a feeling of national identity and the believe in the GDR citizens to build a better state. In
contrast, Siggi's love for his homeland and his identification with the nation does keep him from fleeing to the West only at the beginning of the film. As Luise remains in the East due to her feeling of identity, Siggi does not see an alternative to leaving a state becoming a prison.

That of the homeland tends to emphasize boundlessness and timelessness, and it is cathected by means of fetishization and nostalgic longing to the homeland's natural landscape, mountains, monuments, and souvenirs. The representation of life in exile and diaspora, on the other hand, tends to stress claustrophobia and temporality, and it is cathected to sites of confinement and control and to narratives of panic and pursuit. While the idyllic open structures of home emphasize continuity, these paranoid structures of exile underscore rupture. (5)

One of the first scenes introduces us to the open structure in the first half of the film, although not dealing with landscape itself but with footage of a space flight. While we are listening to a German radio reporter, enthusiastically describing the propaganda event, the pictures we see resemble the footage shown at the beginning of Good bye, Lenin! It is documentary footage in a colorful style similar to pop-art, presents us the first Russian flight into space 1961 with the Soviet cosmonaut Juri Gagarin. In contrast to the second part of the film, these pictures invoke a feeling of freedom and progress since they also show the reaction to the event from people all over the world. They contain the utopia of an Eastern society equally advanced as the West. Judged critically, the film seems to use this footage as a rather ironic statement. Put at the beginning of the film, the endless freedom of spaces contradicts the, in the sense of the word, limited space of the protagonists and further of the GDR's citizens after the construction of the Wall.

The next scene unfolds a panorama depicting an open cultural landscape. The establishing shot presents a landmark of Dresden to the viewer, the “Zwinger,” part of
the former Dresden fortress. The building itself was completely destroyed in the Second World War and then finally rebuilt in the GDR. Hiding the traces of War, the landmark “emphasize[s] continuity” (Naficy 5) and denies rupture. After the establishing shot, we see the protagonist Siggi for the first time in the film. He is sitting on a lawn in front of the “Zwinger,” drawing a picture of the skeleton of a goose. The voice-over that underscores the scene belongs to Siggi himself, who introduces us to the upcoming events. The whole scene evokes an idyllic and peaceful setting. In the background, we see a blue sky, a colorful, small garden and a marble statue. While the setting elicits “timelessness,” the topic of Siggi’s monologue contradicts this impression. Siggi looks at the statue and refers to its name as “time steals beauty”—words which refer to the end of the film and his future loss of his love Luise. Siggi already comments on the result of this future disillusionment by saying “And the only thing that remains is a piece of socialist everyday life.” The scene ends with another ambivalent shot. An airplane, otherwise a metaphor for unlimited freedom, is shown in the sky. But it is not a passenger plane but a military plane, thus standing for war or, alternatively, for the rising tensions between the East and the West.

The following scene is ambiguous in the way to present us an open and closed structure at the same time, expressed through the cultural landscape. The scene introduces us to all main characters and depicts some topics like rebellion, youth and surveillance which will be repeatedly addressed in the film at a later point in time. Siggi is walking through a huge park and recognizes a group of young people silently dancing. Here, Siggi has his first encounter with Luise, who is watching the scene as well. She explains that the music is coming up soon. The young people dancing,
supposedly between twenty and thirty years old, are wearing leather jackets, skirts and have so-called “popper”-haircuts. Their appearance imitates a Western look and lifestyle, namely that of the American youth of the 50s. In a second-long shot, shortly before the music starts, the camera depicts a man in the distance and introduces us to the theme of surveillance. The man is supposedly a Stasi Agent hired to observe the group. A few seconds later, a young boy arrives with a record player under his arm. With the recorder, he starts to play *Jailhouse Rock*, sung by Elvis Presley. Suddenly, the Stasi Agent appears and destroys the record player. As the young people around him are trying to stop him, the police men arrive and break up the event violently. Siggi, Luise and her boyfriend Wolle flee in panic.

Although the park represents a “natural landscape” (Naficy 5) and falls into the category of the homeland, power and surveillance permeates it. Siggi becomes an eye-witness of how the GDR youth is peacefully rebelling against the state.

Young people sought to utilize space and place as sites of resistance, often finding other spaces […] the body as a site of resistance in style subcultures; state defined youth spaces such as clubs or work; new places in the neglected spaces of old buildings and neighborhoods; private spaces in homes and among friends; state controlled public spaces; and the free spaces offered by GDR churches. (Smith 291)

The youth prefers Western consumer goods and pop-music rather than Russian cultural products. It seems as if the state neither understands the youth’s demand nor is it able to cope with the youth’s acts of rebellion. The rebellion has to take place out in the open because there is no other place to go to. The music played, Elvis Presley’s “Jailhouse Rock,” may be read as an ironic comment on the situation of the GDR’s citizens in a larger scale. They feel imprisoned because they have no place to go. Consequently, music and dance function as two instruments to oppose the state’s plan to control and
homogenize the youth’s cultural taste. The open landscape itself provides the basis for this rebellion. Still, there lies a sense of freedom in the openness of this park, whose space allows such a large gathering. On the other hand, this space is already observed by a GDR’s state agent. The park becomes a battlefield of power, as the police arrive to end the gathering. The relatively open space transforms into a “site of confinement and control” (Naficy 5), a battle that the state and his executive forces win. To summarize, this scene already points at a transformation of the landscape from open to closed, from homeland to exile.

In between the transformation from homeland to exile stands “The Red Cockatoo.” After having met Luise in the park, Siggi puts all his efforts into seeing her again. Finally, they meet in “The Red Cockatoo”, a jazz club in Dresden. “The red cockatoo” embodies a place of freedom. The place is separated into different booths to have private conversations. Besides that, the bar consists of a dance floor, a bar and a stage where a band plays live music. It is primarily the music which connotes the club’s notion as a Thirdspace between two cultures. The film depicts a young band playing rock and roll and jazz for the youth present, as well as they are also playing Russian dances for the older generation.

It is the cultural preference for certain musical styles, where a generational gap becomes visible. While the older, or parent generation between forty and fifty years is dedicated to the Eastern culture, the young generation, among them the three protagonists, is rather interested in rock and roll. Clubs, as “The Red Cockatoo”, were small spaces of freedom for the GDR’s youth to express their resistance against the cultural dominance of the East. “The red cockatoo” in the film is a place of subversion.
A second way in which young people used space was by subverting places specifically defined by the state as youth spaces, either by ignoring the state's claims to control it or by sidelining the state's intentions. A ruling that only forty per cent of music played at discos could be from non-socialist countries was often ignored by DJs, or the music was played in the breaks. (Smith 293)

On the other hand, “The Red Cockatoo” represents not only a place of resistance but also a place of cultural and social mediation. In “The Red Cockatoo”, two generations can still come together to celebrate. Although the younger people in the film make fun of their parent generation as they dance to rather “old-fashioned” music, there remains a certain sense of coming together in a public place. As the older and younger generation drift apart due to their political and cultural convictions, “The Red Cockatoo” is a place mediating between two generations torn in between two different cultures.

Without a satisfying reason, the dualism of cultures turns into the clash of cultures half-way through the film. The film offers the viewer a few clues why the two cultures get out of balance between. While the political tensions between East and West Germany seem to grow, the film frequently depicts military vehicles rushing out of Dresden, the “carefree” manner in “The Red Cockatoo” changes, too. As Wolle urinates into a glass of a GDR Stasi Agent in the club, this action is later answered with disproportional violence at the turning point of the film. Siggi and his friends are sitting at a table and are watching the crowd, as Siggi gets an anonymous call telling him to leave the cockatoo as soon as possible. The caller also tells him that the Stasi is looking for Wolle, who is just sitting alongside Siggi. The camera then pins into one of the booths in the club, where the aforementioned Stasi Agent is sitting and having a drink. Still, the film does not indicate if the following event is driven by personal revenge of the officer or rather represents the anonymous forces trying to silent every enemy of the state. As
Wolle and Luise try to flee out of the club, they are surrounded by agents of the GDR’s secret police. Outside, Siggi is beaten up and the GDR official takes personal revenge on Wolle. Later, Wolle is taken away to prison without his friends knowing why.

The following closure of the “red cockatoo” marks a change in the depiction of landscape, from homeland to exile, and is the turning point of the film. It is also the end of a place of mediation that formed the basis to bring the Eastern and Western culture, as well as two different German generations, together. According to Naficy, the characteristics of the exile are that it stresses “claustrophobia and temporality, and it is cathected to sites of confinement and control and to narratives of panic and pursuit” (Naficy 5). Two scenes demonstrate this transformation well. As time seems to stand still in the open spaces and The Red Cockatoo, the events seem to accelerate after Wolle’s imprisonment. Now, Siggi and Luise spend more and more time together. To ease Luise’s pain, he invites her to spend the evening swimming in the river Elbe near Dresden. What would have otherwise depicted an open space in the first half of the film, is now a closed space as it is seems to have become a site of control. Although the camera depicts the two protagonists at all times, it switches back and forth between a rather “neutral” perspective and one of suspicious gazes. At the same time that Luise and Siggi are swimming, they are being watched from the other side. After a fast zoom on this suspicious person from Siggi and Luise’s perspective, the camera takes his perspective to watch them. The importance of his gaze is further intensified by the binoculars he is having in his hand. Surprisingly, the young couple does not talk about or specifically address the gaze of their suspected observer. Siggi gives a present to his love Luise. Illegally, he has printed a book containing all of Luise’s poems. Angry that
Siggi puts their freedom in jeopardy; Luise throws the book into the Elbe and asks Siggi to leave. After Siggi is gone, she walks into the river, crying, to pick up the book. The scene ends with a medium shot of the observer looking at Luise collecting the pages of the book. Now, one can even see his face. Compared to the beginning, this space has lost its innocence. Especially for the viewer it remains unclear if the person is a Stasi Agent or just a man watching birds. Slowly, the atmosphere of the landscape has developed into one of surveillance and suspicion.

The second place, demonstrating claustrophobia, consists of the interrogation room, which the film depicts in a similar manner to *The Lives of Others*. The Stasi Agents even use similar techniques to gather information. Siggi encounters the same Stasi Agent who ordered to beat Wolle up. After the Stasi Agents asked from where Siggi received the money to finance his luxury lifestyle in the cockatoo, they leave him alone for hours in this claustrophobic room. To make Siggi believe that one of his friends has betrayed him, they put a fake file containing personal information on the table. As Siggi falls into the trap and reads the file, other state-agents observe him through a hole in the Wall. In the last part of the film, these depictions of a space of the state dominate, signifying claustrophobia and surveillance. The former cultural landscape, always put in relation to a feeling of freedom, turns into a Panopticum where everyone can always and anywhere be observed.

It is the change of the cultural landscape and loss of personal freedom in the East which make Siggi to escape the GDR days later. “The Red Cockatoo” reopens and Siggi and his friends are taken to court for rather trivial reasons. The situation escalates as Wolle tries to escape and is seriously wounded by a policeman. Due to this brutality
and the state’s exposure of another crime he committed, Siggi plans to leave the GDR. In escape from the Stasi Agents, he visits Luise for a last time to convince her to come with him. Although she promises to follow him to the West later, he never sees her again. The film ends with Siggi watching the completion of the Wall, still waiting for her to join him in the West.

To explain the change in the cultural landscape, I argue that the depicted space in the film is not neutral but rather expresses protagonist Siggi’s relationship to the space he has to act in. In his last conversation with Luise, Siggi makes the rather unusual statement “Everything here is so beautiful but they are transforming it into a prison.” This statement contrasts an aesthetic judgment with the criticism of the totalitarian GDR regime. The statement summarizes Siggi’s political and personal experiences with the state so far. For him, the cultural landscape keeps his beauty on the surface (he says “is so beautiful” in the present tense and not “was so beautiful” in the past), while the relation between him and his country radically changes. His personal perception of space lead is his main reason to flee to the West, as this quote proves:

Personal attitudes and feelings towards cultural landscape are seen as a crucial component of post-modern culture. The inner landscape or the imprinted setting within us, oriented by a personal 'cognitive map', leads us and often determines our spatial behaviour. (Czepczyński 28)

For Siggi, this “perceived” landscape becomes a prison. The ongoing change foremost expresses itself in an increase of direct and, more important, invisible indirect violence (“into a prison”) directed against him and the other protagonists. To Siggi, the forces behind this change are perceived as something unfamiliar and anonymous (“they”). It remains rather unclear if he refers to the government or the GDR’s secret police. Having the feeling that every single one of his steps is watched and observed,
for him, the state becomes an invisible and omniscient force of power. The state of the GDR becomes a Panopticum, used as a metaphor by Michel Foucault to describe a particular place designed to observe the prisoners without their knowledge.

Siggi’s aforementioned quote may also be understood as the film’s effort to gender the landscape as beautiful but at the same time vulnerable in the beginning. This way, in the process of increasing indirect violence, the police symbolize the male perpetrator, who does not only threaten the protagonist but also violently conquers the landscape to turn it into a prison. Throughout the film, agents of the state are constantly depicted as invaders, creating a lack of personal freedom, privacy and security wherever they appear. The cultural landscape and the protagonists are intertwined in that sense that both share the same notion often ascribed to youth, namely naturalness, freedom and innocence. To give another example, the beginning of the film depicts the state police’s attempt to break up a meeting of the youth in a park; the anonymous forces of the state are depicted as brutal invaders into a paradisiacal place.

In this perceived landscape, the homeland is clearly understood as paradisiacal. In contrast, the exile is judged negatively. If one understands space as a tool to tell and judge history, the cultural landscape depicted in *The Red Cockatoo* tells the story of an artist who made the right decision.

Cultural landscape, as social construction, is a form of spatial and cultural negotiation between representation of the past and imagination of the future. The past is mainly facilitated by histories and memories, whereas the future is conditioned by contemporary powers. Interpretations of history, together with past and present depictions of power, are an integral part of landscape discourse, especially in post-traumatic landscapes. (Naficy 40)

Although the film seems to value the two protagonists’ decision to stay in or escape the GDR equally, the analysis from a spatial point of view has a quite different
result. In the depiction of landscape, the film takes a Western perspective on the beginning of the GDR. The construction of the Wall coincides with a change of the cultural landscape that turns it into an exile for the protagonists. The ongoing political events in the background have an influence on the landscape itself. Even if not explicitly mentioned, all protagonists share a strong connection to their home, the “Heimat.” By portraying the cultural landscapes, the state’s increasing urge of control is unmasked as an attempt to invade a place which does not belong to him, but to the people. As the cultural landscape changes in the second part of the film, there seems no other rational choice than leaving the GDR. It is portrayed as the only valuable action. By portraying the changing cultural landscape as a dangerous exile at the end of the film, the film leaves us no room to interpret Luise’s decision to stay and try to improve the political system as reasonable. As paradise turns into hell, fleeing to land of freedom, The West, represents the only possible reaction.
CHAPTER 4
SIMULATED SPACE (GOOD BYE, LENIN!)

In contrast to the two previous films, space in Good Bye, Lenin! is used as space a tool to create and deceive. The main protagonist, Alexander Kerner, creates a simulacrum, a fake reality, to revive his lost childhood in the GDR with the help of space. The film portrays Alexander Kerner, his family and its tragedies. Alex and his sister Ariana grow up in the former GDR. Although their father flees to the West and leaves the rest of the family on their own, Alexander and Ariana spent a happy childhood. They grow up in a surrounding where their mother, Christiane Kerner, is very engaged in the system of the GDR. She conducts a choir and voluntarily helps her neighbors. After a huge leap in time, Alexander and his sister are shown as grown-ups. While his sister is rather undecided and uninterested in politics, Alexander has become a critic of the GDR’s system. In the key scene of the film, the camera follows Alex and shows him taking part in the so-called “Montagsdemonstration” (Monday demonstrations) meant as a protest against the political leader and the SED. By accident, Christiane Kerner becomes an eye-witness of how her son is beaten up by the state police during the demonstration. She then suffers a heart attack from the shock of seeing her son fighting against a system she herself has supported her whole life. Just as she is lying in hospital, the Wall comes down and the GDR is history.

After she wakes up in hospital, the shock has developed into a trauma since she cannot remember the preceding events. To prevent his mother from having a second, eventually fatal, heart attack, Alex does not tell her the historic events and rather sets up a simulation in his mother’s room to make her believe that the GDR still exists. The main protagonist Alexander Kerner simulates a world only for his sick mother who had a
heart attack and is unable to leave her bed and her room. For most of the time, Alex is successfully keeping up his simulation. A visit of the whole family to the “Datsche”, a small apartment outside Berlin, reveals that Alex was not the only one keeping the truth from his loved ones. While the whole family is sitting together, she makes a confession. She tells Alex and his sister that their father has never abandoned the family completely but tried to stay in contact with his wife and the children by writing letters. She hid the letters to cover the truth.

I propose that Good Bye, Lenin! is a postmodern film. Postmodern films are, according to Tim Woods, shaped by a "pastiche of other genre and styles [...]", a 'flattening' of history, a style which presents the past in the present; or are 'retro' cinema, or nostalgia film [...], self reflexivity of technique" and finally a "celebration of the collapse of the distinction between high and low cultural styles and techniques" (215). These elements are all part of Good Bye, Lenin! but I especially want to focus on the aspect of self-reflexivity and its connection to Baudrillard's theory of simulacra and simulation.

First, Good Bye, Lenin! is self-reflective in its way of depicting the production process of images and thereby stressing its own importance. It uses different medial styles to create a coherent picture of a state long gone. Second, Good Bye, Lenin! places television at the center of its medial narration. Alex adopts and copies the style of the Aktuelle Kamera to create his own fake GDR news show, a copy of Aktuelle Kamera. He is doing so by using recorded entertainment shows and finally becoming his own producer Alex keeps his mother in a status of nescience as well as the GDR’s media kept its viewers uninformed. In the following, I use Baudrillard’s theory of the
simulacra and simulation to explain Alex's actions in Good Bye, Lenin!. It lies in the nature of signs why Alex's plan for his mother ultimately fails, just as the GDR-television finally failed in its propagandistic efforts. Due to the power of the Western capitalist signs covering the East as well, the entire simulation remains incomplete because the signs, with which Alex used to “produce” his own reality, destroy it at the same time. He is not able to not manage to isolate his mother completely from the outside world. Therefore, Good Bye, Lenin! questions Baudrillard’s thesis of a simulation and the blurring of reality and fake.

The element of self-reflexivity already appears in the first minutes of Good Bye, Lenin!. The film begins with an exposition, a “home video” showing Alex's family. The first image is subtitled “Unsere Datsche, Sommer 78“ and marks the video for the knowing viewer as a home video filmed in the GDR, since the word “Datsche” is of Russian origin (it describes a summer residence). The quality of the images we see reminds us also of the low quality of Super-8 cameras, affordable cameras that were used at that time by amateurs. The movie itself depicts typical “happy holiday” pictures of the Kerners. Even if the parents of the children are nowhere to be seen, Alex calls the male voice behind the camera “Daddy”. The pictures and the music evoke a feeling of nostalgia. This “home video” style is not only used to create a certain atmosphere but also to remind the audience of their past and in doing so bonding them closer to the film.

The home movie ends with Alex, proudly presenting his T-shirt with a sky rocket on it—a leitmotif throughout the entire film. The video merges into the second medium used: a series of symbols and photographs of East Berlin: “Hammer und Sichel,” the
“trabant” and different tourist sights of Berlin, like the “Messeturm” and the “Palast der Republik,” revive our public memory of the GDR. The GDR is represented in “washed-out” photographs resembling old postcards. Buildings and places thus become spatial representations of a past no longer in existence. We, as the viewers, are tourists who see these public markers. In our case, the sights “Alexanderplatz” and “Messeturm” become symbolic markers for the GDR. These markers also stand for the city of East-Berlin which in turn is a marker, too, of the GDR.

The introduction of Good Bye, Lenin! shows us Thirdplaces between fiction and reality. It is no coincidence that the first image of Good Bye, Lenin! is, if we consider the first home movie and the titles as an exposition with no relevant connection to the plot itself, a TV-screen. The connection between the introduction titles and the beginning is artistically well done. A bust of Lenin, still in the titles, merges into a skyrocket while the background changes from blue to red. After a zoom we see a reporter announcing the GDR is on a mission into space. The viewer becomes aware that he is looking at news footage on a TV-screen. His idiom is unmistakably of East-German heritage and therefore a sign of the GDR. For the first time, we see the main character Alexander. Our view, directed by the camera, is merged with the footage on a screen. Fiction and non-fiction cannot be separated anymore. By mixing fictional and non-fictional elements, Good Bye, Lenin! uses the element of non-fiction to connect its viewers to the GDR’s past by evoking public memories. We, as the viewers, believe that these pictures are truthful because we have seen them on television before. But just as the fictional images, they are a construction and tell their own story.
Newspaper headlines, the home video and non-fictional TV-footage of the GDR-television guarantee a certain amount of authenticity, and, concerning the plot, particularly plausibility. Logical gaps in the plot, just consider a son who takes his dangerously ill mother home, overlay non-fictional elements. The home movie and TV-footage allow the viewer, especially the one with East German heritage, to link his own experiences to the characters in *Good Bye, Lenin!* and to identify with them. But *Good Bye, Lenin!*’s excessive use of medial narration cannot fully be explained by its utilization to drive the main plot forward. The question why TV is depicted so often as an object of close examination and voyeurism can only be answered satisfyingly if we claim that the medial representations, especially television, are not just means to an end—but, in fact, are standing in the center of *Good Bye, Lenin!*

In *Good Bye, Lenin!*, the protagonist Alex wants to create a coherent simulation, a kind of “living room” GDR for his mother who is at first unable to leave her bedroom without help. His aim is to keep her illusion, namely that the GDR still exists, intact. Speaking with Baudrillard, Alex tries to construct his own simulacra for his mother, “a genetic miniaturization that is the dimension of simulation” (Baudrillard 2). His theory is helpful because *Good Bye, Lenin! is all about the relation between signs and reality. The important point is that in *Good Bye, Lenin! the main protagonist simulates the past (the GDR) while it ceased to exist. Hiding the post-Wall present from his mother, Alex revives the past by supplying his mother with signs which once referred to the GDR. But because the system does no longer exist, its signs (one of the most famous examples in *Good Bye, Lenin! are the “Spreewaldgurken”) are empty and refer to nothing else than
to themselves. Alex’s simulation starts out with signs which lost their referential. A fact that proves the thoughts of Jean Baudrillard:

[T]he age of simulation thus begins with a liquidation of all referential — worse: by their artificial resurrection in systems of signs, which are a more ductile material than meaning. (2)

This way, Alex creates a simulacra, “real without origin or reality” (1) for his mother, since the origin is gone. For Christiane Kerner, the simulacrum seems to be everything and the simulation a total one. Baudrillard calls this a “hyperreal henceforth sheltered from […] any distinction between real and the imaginary” (2–3). Later, I discuss why Alex finally fails in establishing the simulation. Baudrillard's theory of simulacra and simulation can only help to understand what kind of simulation Alex is creating and how he is working with the media to produce, or reproduce, signs. The difference to Baudrillard's theory is also the reason why Alex's simulation has to fail: even if he tries to, his self-referential system of signs is, in contrast to the theory of Baudrillard, not a total one covering every aspect of life. Unavoidably, Alex's system is open to disturbances. The fake world he creates for his mother, powered by signs of the perished GDR, is hard to keep consistent while the signs of capitalism and the West— advertisements and brands—cover the East and proclaim a system change. Too often Christiane Kerner recognizes the signs of the system change. Literally, she only has to look out of the window to see a new banner for Coca-Cola.

Alex desperately tries to find a way to hide the Western signs undermining his simulation. He tries to keep the capitalistic brands out of his mother's sight. In one scene of the film, the previously mentioned Coca-Cola banner is enrolled on the building just behind his mother's window. Alex reacts by closing the curtain, in this way keeping her from recognizing the beverage brand. The more successful way for Alex is to
redefine those signs of capitalism and to incorporate them into his sign system simulating the GDR. In another attempt, he replaces the Western label “Moskauer Gurken” on a cucumber glass for the East German label “Spreewaldgurken” to fool his mother into his false reality.

One can say that in these acts of resistance against the capitalistic domination lies a deeper meaning, namely questioning capitalistic logic by doubting its superiority. If Christiane Kerner is really unable to taste the difference between East and West German products, then the difference between both lies only in the labeling of these products, or in other words: it is all about the brand. In this way *Good Bye, Lenin!* criticizes capitalism’s promise of salvation and progress but also acknowledges its power to serve dreams and expectations to the people.

Without a doubt, Alex’ most important tool is the television; not only for redefining signs but also for reanimating the GDR through its television. It becomes clear for Alex that he cannot trick his mother by showing her old entertainment shows recorded on video tapes the whole day. Hence, the process of manipulation advances and Alex becomes his own television producer with the help of his friend Dennis. Alex leaves the role of a passive consumer behind to discover that his own images have the power of manipulation.

As I looked into the sky, I became aware that truth is just a questionable thing which I could easily adjust to my mother’s perception. I only had to study the language of “Aktuelle Kamera” and awake Dennis’ [Alex’s friend] ambitions to become a director.

Alex doubts that there is a common truth. Instead, he understands reality as something to be played with. By imitating a real news show, Alex creates a fake reality with a limited budget. His imitation of the GDR news show *Aktuelle Kamera* embodies
lots of parodist moments because, as every good parody, it surpasses the original.

Successfully, he manages to combine the *Aktuelle Kamera*’s characteristic features of seriousness and exaggerating propaganda. After Alex’s mother discovered the Coca-Cola banner, Alex reveals in his version of *Aktuelle Kamera* that Coca-Cola is in fact an East-German product. The signifier, the Coca-Cola banner, now refers to a modified signified. Alex “steals” the signs to make them his own.

By showing Alex’s imitation of the GDR news, *Good Bye, Lenin!* raises the question what reality constitutes. Carole-Anne Tyler states:

> Characterized by irony, hyperbole, parody, italicization, pastiche, and quotation, mimicry is evidently the quintessential postmodern practice, reappropriating a "canonical" text so as to call attention to the gap between the sign and the referent, the signifier and the signified. The problems with reading or "getting" mimicry are similar to the problems with reading other postmodernist texts. How can parody or irony be distinguished from sincere imitation or the real thing? (23–24)

Although *Good Bye, Lenin!* evokes a feeling of nostalgia in parts of the film, I think that the depiction of GDR’s news television through its diegetic counterpart is highly satirical and not a pastiche, a mere copy. The film does employ nostalgia to grab the viewer’s attention; it also subtly ridicules the GDR’s propaganda. Alex’s imitation of life with the help of television does not just copy but changes its meaning to the point where it exposes the simplicity and obviousness of propaganda. I follow Linda Hutcheon’s definition of the parody to prove this argument.

> Quotation or borrowing like this is not meant to signal only-similarity. It is not a matter of nostalgic imitation of past models; it is a stylistic confrontation, a modern recoding which establishes difference at the heart of similarity. No integration into a new context can avoid altering meaning, and perhaps even value. (8)
With his parody of the GDR news, Alex also reveals its constant repetition of the same propagandistic reports. Even before Alex and Dennis start their own television program, the quality of the GDR's news television is evaluated as repetitive:

Dennis: “Show her something old!”

Alex: “What exactly do you mean?”

Dennis: “GDR news shows on video.“

Alex: “News from last year? She would definitely understand what’s going on.”

Dennis: “I don't think so. Anyway, it is always the same.”

The most obvious element of satire is the depiction of the GDR news as amateurish and cheap, thus the confrontation of the GDR's news quality with its counterpart. While Alex and Dennis are filming their first full news episode, a picture in the background falls to the ground. All in all, the news program is depicted as boring and of cheap production quality. It seems an easy challenge for Alex and his friend to simulate the news: The typical introduction titles (a ticking clock and the “AK” logo), and one reporter (in the common look of a GDR citizen and an unmistakably East German accent) seem to be sufficient to fake the GDR’s most famous news show. Also Alex and Dennis use old news footage with their own voice-over to give these images a new meaning.

Reading the depiction of the GDR news as a parody to reality has serious consequences on a broader level of interpretation. Drawing the analogy, Alex's mother is at Alex's mercy as the people in the GDR were to the council of ministers, which controlled and censored GDR’s television:

There was a relatively high level of newspaper consumption in East Germany, and nearly universal ownership of radios and televisions. This
made the public media important instruments of socialization and political propaganda. (Naughton 85)

Christiane Kerner is not allowed to exit her room, as well as the GDR was a prison for its residents. Television, newspapers and other media from the Western opponent was not tolerated but not allowed. By parodying the *Aktuelle Kamera, Good Bye, Lenin!* exposes the technical weakness of the GDR's television program and its failure in its propagandistic efforts.

Representative of GDR citizens, Christiane Kerner recognizes the simulation as a simulation and the main role television plays in it. She is thus not as naive and uninformed as she seems to be in the beginning. In contrast to the first dialogue between Alex and his mother: “Nothing has changed here.“ ”What should have changed?” the film is much more unambiguous about the state of knowledge of Christiane Kerner. There is a number of scenes in which it becomes clear that she is aware of Alex’ action to keep her from the truth. In the most important scene of the film, Alex stages a great finale for his mother. Again, he redefines the signs by giving them new meaning with the help of a voice over. In Alex’s version of the GDR’s history, the people from the West come in thousands to cross the border and leave the capitalistic West behind to start a new life in the socialist East under the former East German cosmonaut Sigmund Jähn. The following voice-over underlines the images showing people crossing the Wall and celebrating unification. This scene is also the most impressing one because it highlights again the parody. Alex and his friend formulate criticism, not on the GDR, but on capitalism and a consumer society:

    Shortly before the Fall oft the Wall, thousands of West Germans seized the opportunity to visit the GDR for the first time. Many want to stay. They are looking for an alternative for the hard battle of survival in the capitalistic
system. Not everyone one to join in with career addiction and aggressive marketing. Not everyone wants to fight his way through life.

But when Christiane Kerner watches Alex’s alternative version of the GDR's history, she does not only look at the screen. Instead, her eyes rest on her son Alex, expressing knowledge and admiration for his efforts to create a whole new world for her.

To summarize, the GDR's news shows and Alex' imitation prove themselves as unsuccessful for the very same same reason. They fail in establishing a coherent world of signs and thus the simulation always remains incomplete. Alex cannot hide the signs of growing capitalism from his mother while the GDR was unable to prevent their citizens from consuming Western products and media.

Although GDR society was detached from the Federal Republic and its citizens were prohibited access to the west, East Germans still had a window through which they could observe their capitalist neighbors. West German television provided East Germans with a vantage point; it extended their vision beyond the Wall to the Federal Republic and to countries even more foreign and distant. (Naughton 80)

Especially West-German television was so popular in the East that GDR officials decided to legalize consuming Western television.

Honecker himself acknowledged in 1973 that it was no longer possible to prevent East German citizens watching West German TV, and the official proscription of Western television and radio programmes was—de facto—removed. (Segal 135)

Finally, Good Bye, Lenin! criticizes the media through parody, as well as it celebrates its power as an instrument to become creative. On the one hand, media produces artificial worlds, which the GDR used to hide its propaganda. It lets us recognize that pictures may be manipulated only by giving them a new voice-over, stripping them of their context and putting them in a new connection which might have nothing to do with its previous message.
Further, the film doubts the existence of common truth of history, which only has just to be grasped and delivered to the people. *Good Bye, Lenin!*s parody of television is a deconstruction in the sense that it undermines and questions every form of propaganda. The film’s continuous effort to make fun of the GDR’s news is therefore not the most important part. The essence is that the “real” parody is the fact that all propagandistic efforts in *Good Bye, Lenin!* have no outcome. *Good Bye, Lenin!* shows a strong believe in the media’s plurality, its ability to cross borders and its ability of self-correction. Even if Alex’s mother, representing the people of the GDR, is homebound, she is; just as the people in the GDR, not as uninformed as she seems to be. Alex cannot avoid that she sees the “sign of times”. The “Staatsministerium” could not avoid that their citizens consumed multiple sources of Western media, including television, radio and newspapers.

But Christiane Kerner really wants to believe in the simulation and the work of her son and that is why she does not revolt against his will even if she knows that the reality is out there. In this way, *Good Bye, Lenin!* proves Baudrillard’s simulacra and simulation wrong in its blurring of fake and truth to a new reality. Even if nearly everything which Christiane Kerner sees is propaganda, she can still distinguish reality from simulation. The analogy ends here due to the fact that the people of the GDR did not want to believe, in contrast to Christiane Kerner, their “program producers” any more. Thus in 1989, after weeks of peaceful protest, the Wall fell due to a mistake of SED official Günter Schabowski—live on Television.
CHAPTER 4
CONCLUSION

Each of the films analyzed in this thesis interconnect notions of space and power. Although each film, its style, storyline and approach, draws a unique picture of the GDR, they offer striking similarities. Filmed in 2003, *Good Bye, Lenin!* has been one of the first films dealing with the history of the GDR in a comedic way. The film’s political ambiguity, on the one hand a mild and nostalgic view on a childhood in the GDR, on the other hand a sharp satire on the GDR’s propagandistic efforts with the help of the media, was quite a commercial success. In the film, space is used to create an illusion of the past. In the diegetic world of the film, this illusion is created to help another person who, in many ways, cannot deal with the present. The filmic space signifies the power of space to become a propagandistic tool to trick people, as well as a tool to re-create the past, evoke nostalgia and deal with trauma. Still, the depiction of space in *Good Bye, Lenin!* is much less critical of the GDR state and consequently of the abuse of space in favor of controlling people. Since the whole film is based on the idea to create a living room GDR, *Good Bye, Lenin!* focuses more on a humoristic critique of the GDR’s media system, rather than engaging the idea that the simulation of space means to control a person or a nation through the limitation of its surroundings and, therefore, its actions.

*The Lives of Others* is much more aware of the power of space, especially of its power to prepare the ground for surveillance and control. But *The Lives of Others*, released in 2006, shares with *Good Bye Lenin!*, that both present us protagonists constructing artificial places in means of satisfying their emotional needs and feelings of love and belonging. As Alex wants to reconstruct his childhood out of love for his
mother, the state agent Wiesler in *The Lives of Others* wants to be close to his love-interest and take on the role of her partner. But whereas the construction of space creates a calming feeling of nostalgia in *Good Bye, Lenin!*, this feeling is not invoked in *The Lives of Others*.

Far more than in *Good Bye, Lenin!*, space in *The Lives of Others* is ambiguous. The state agent’s Wiesler’s attic room, as a Thirdspace, allows unconstrained surveillance. In contrast to *Good Bye, Lenin!*, the protagonist's artistic creativity is absorbed in the exhausting practice of sneaking into other people’s lives. While Becker’s film featured the creation of space and film, von Donnersmarck’s work is concerned with the *surveillance* of space. With the help of a sophisticated listening post, Wiesler connects places to observe and control. His attic room is not only a Thirdspace because it is situated in-between the private sphere and the sphere of public authority but because it remains, as a space, invisible to the victims. The Thirdspace itself cannot be seen since the observed do not know that they are observed. The power of the inhabitant of the Thirdspace lies in its connectedness which allows for control, and its disconnectedness or invisibility which averts any attempts to be controlled. The power relations go top-down—but never bottom-up.

Just because Wiesler has established a certain kind of freedom and a spatial independence from the state, he is able to utilize the surveillance apparatus for his own means. As critics argued, this part of the plot is unrealistic because of two different aspects. Compared to the real conditions in the Stasi, Stasi agents did not work alone and thus “owned” a space for themselves. Also, a moral changeover was exceptional due to several dependencies, for example earning money to take care of one’s family.
Certainly, *The Lives of Others* is a morality tale that features a Stasi Agent who really is a “Mensch.” But for a spatial analysis, this aspect is not as important. The space Wiesler constructs corporates both possibilities, either to use it for a good or bad purpose. This space should be seen as a metaphor for every uncontrolled space. Its unique danger for every society expresses itself in its lack of democratic control. The state-agent shaping the Thirdspace owns the power given to him by the state while his interests are merely private. To every society, a Thirdspace like this poses a threat because its power is intransparent and not subordinated to a complex system of checks and balances.

*The Red Cockatoo*, from, 2006 shares *The Lives of Others*’ critical view of the GDR regime. In comparison to the other two films, the protagonists do not create space but are shaping space by their actions and at the same time are victims of spatial changes limiting their personal freedom. The space depicted in the film is the space of landscape, which is mediated with power. In fact, the younger, post-war generation represented by the three protagonists, is portrayed as “native” to the landscape, while parts of the war generation do not accept the youth’s will to freedom. In *The Red Cockatoo*, space is a “battlefield.” The development from an open to a closed society, restricting the protagonist’s freedom, resembles the spatial tactics used in *The Lives of Others*. The Stasi observes the three protagonists, blackmails them and threatens their spatial freedom with prison sentences. As one of the protagonists is fleeing a court room after the judge sent him to prison, he is shot in the back by a police man. In the film, the GDR’s police answers the youth’s pursuit for mobility and resistance with unprecedented violence.
The main protagonist’s decision to flee the country to the liberal West is backed by the *The Red Cockatoo*’s spatial strategy to mark the GDR as a dangerous exile in the second half of the film. It makes spatial arguments, for example constant surveillance and the imprisonment of one of the protagonists, to indicate that the GDR has already turned into a totalitarian state, even before the construction of the Wall. The older generation’s attempt to deny and fight any Western influences, visible in the closure of the bar “The Red Cockatoo,” signifies a cultural “cleaning” of society with spatial means which does not allow any freedom for critical thinking. With the protagonist’s remark on the spatial politics of the GDR, the film goes as far as to compare its system with that of the Third Reich, which immediately elicits pictures of displacement.

In conclusion, all films employ the connection of space and power to make a political argument. Compared to *Good Bye, Lenin!*, *The Lives of Others* and *The Red Cockatoo* indicate a certain shift away from the notion of place of nostalgia towards a much more radical critique of the GDR’s political system and space. *The Lives of Others* and *The Red Cockatoo* focus on the misuse of power within a certain space. While *Good Bye, Lenin!* also features artistic creation and still believes in the power of space to create new worlds, space in the other two films is only used to control or prevent other people’s actions. At least concerning these three fictional portrays of the GDR and its citizens, the relation of space is the history of a misuse of power either for private or public purposes. Although they particularly address space as an entity mediated with power, they remain skeptical of its constructive and positive use, especially in respect of the history of the GDR.
LIST OF REFERENCES


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Tim Fangmeyer was born in Germany. After studying German language and literature, politics and English at the University of Kassel, he received a stipend from the VDAC (Federation of German American Clubs) in 2008 to study at the University of Florida. He received his M.A. from the University of Florida in the spring of 2010. His interests in the field of Germanic Studies include the literature of the fin the siècle, cultural theory, and literary representations of the Other.