

THE GENERATIONAL OTHER: CHILDREN IN GERMAN CINEMA 1945-2005

By

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To Danny and Julia, Dad and Mom

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The *generational other* is revealed through the relationships between the child protagonists, their adult counterparts in the films, and the adult audience. The *generational other* is explored in a survey of German fiction films from 1946 through 2003, divided into three postwar generations that represent their eras (these dates represent the earliest and latest dates for the films discussed): postwar cinema (1946-1957), New German Cinema (1966-1980), and post-Wall cinema (1998-2003). The concept of a *generational other* is based on the two dimensions of human development beyond the physical: the psychological, in which the child gains an understanding of self that leads to the formation of a personal identity, and the social, in which the child enters the social order and develops a connection to the collective identity. My analysis of the connection between the child protagonist and adult audience relies on psychoanalytic theory and scholarship on fairy tales.

## CHAPTER 1 THE GENERATIONAL OTHER

My dissertation introduces the concept of *the generational other* explored through the relationship between the adult audience and child protagonist(s) in a discussion of German fiction films from 1946 through 2003. I organize the films into three postwar periods:<sup>1</sup> postwar cinema (1946-1957), New German Cinema (1966-1980), and post-Wall cinema (1998-2003). The concept of a generational other begins with the two dimensions of human development beyond the physical: the psychological, in which the child gains an understanding of self that leads to the formation of a personal identity, and the social, in which the child enters the social order and develops a connection to a collective identity. To explore these developmental paths, I will turn to psychoanalytic theory for an explanation of the basis for of the formation of the self and other and scholarship on fairy tales for their connection to the socializing process, especially within German culture. These two theoretical fields reveal developmental processes and how they connect the child protagonist to the adult audience.

Current scholarship on the child in German films focuses on the child's role in relationship to gender identification after the World War II. Robert Shandley and Jaimey Fisher explore the male child's place in overcoming the postwar crisis of masculinity and Barbara Kosta explores the female child, usually in a postwar mother-daughter relationship, in what I see as the second generation's crisis of *female* identity. Shandley writes that in the rubble films a crisis involving a child often leads to the restoration of masculine power, but in a film such as Gerhard Lamprecht's *Irgendwo in Berlin*

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<sup>1</sup> The dates listed here are the earliest and latest dates for the films I discuss from each era. Problems with defining these eras and their timespan are briefly discussed in each chapter.

(*Somewhere in Berlin*, 1947) (which I discuss in Chapter 2), Shandley claims the goal of the film is to reaffirm paternal authority, which emphasizes an attribute that contributed to the rise of National Socialism – following the strong father figure. Fisher describes the child (most often the male child) in postwar films in a regulatory function, acting as the catalyst for an adult's change in behavior and in postwar society as a distraction. In *Disciplining Germany* (2007) he traces the important but overlooked role that children had during the Nazi regime through areas of postwar reconstruction such as dealing with guilt, re-education, and children in rubble films. The focus on children and their issues in postwar Germany, he argues, was caused by the population's resistance to confronting their own challenges. At one point, he does briefly suggest that the youth could be an other, but he develops that other as one that must be mastered, or "disciplined," to fit into the society and culture as constructed by the adults (52-53). Kosta suggests that in films of the seventies and eighties the female child often offers an autobiographical reflection of the adult filmmaker exploring a feminist perspective of history that suggests its place in the private as well as public realms. Kosta has explored female protagonists in literature and film throughout her publications. In *Recasting Autobiography* (1994) she focuses on texts and films which present an autobiography of a parent, particularly the mother, from the perspective of the child, usually the daughter, as "an act of mourning" and as a recognition of culturally-determined gender identification (9). Later she explores the removal of gender and cultural boundaries in post-wall Germany through her co-edited book *Writing Against Boundaries* (2001). I argue that focusing on the child's otherness by age and maturity uncovers a different aspect of Germans' postwar experience. Focusing on the

generational other reveals a power that the child commands over its counterpart, the adult (including the audience), placing the adult in a weaker position traditionally held by the young and allowing the adult to simulate a fresh beginning in constructing an identity.

The generational other appears in German films from the end of World War II through today as an expression of the German collective working through its Nazi past and the traumas of war through identity development. The period between the end of World War II and the late fifties was comprised of physical, economic, social, and psychological rebuilding. While the political forces worked to repair the infrastructure, German society attempted to work through the trauma of war and the burden of responsibility, a process revealed in postwar cultural productions including film. Physical and economic development began immediately with debris removal and rebuilding of infrastructure, but working through the social and psychological damage has been a lasting process, continuing even today. Each subsequent generation has had to come to terms with Germany's responsibility for World War II as well as the traumas suffered because of it and what that has meant for each generation's identity as German. The first generation, those who experienced the war personally, emerged from the traumatic experience with the burden of moving society forward while being heavily tethered to the guilt, whether active or passive, associated with being German at that time. The second generation, those who experienced the war secondarily through their parents and society either because they were not yet born or because they were infants or very young children, had to come to terms with the effects with National Socialism and World War II on their identity development even though they were personally not part of it.

Their collective identity was tainted by the sins of their parents' generation, causing these young Germans to experience the nation's loss as a trauma that exposed the faults of the older generation through blame and ideology, exemplified by feminist and anti-authoritarian movements in West Germany. The third generation, the grandchildren of those who experienced the war, is not only distanced from it by time, but also by their parents' (the second generation's) melancholic connection to the war and by the third generation's own significant historical events: experiencing the end of the Cold War and the reunification of Germany not only as a joyous end to tyranny, but also as a complete change in their worldview and the loss of the parts of childhood that helped build a collective identity (both in the East and the West). This third generation also has had to cope with a rapidly globalizing world and the changes globalization has brought to German society.

The generational other comes out of the idea of the gendered and ethnic others that have been major research foci since the nineteen seventies. The child-adult relationship mirrors these configurations of male-female and colonizer-colonized; the child is the adult's other and vice versa. As with all relationships of otherness, power is the significant binding force. Tim Morris explains that in the adult-child power dynamic "all interactions between adults and children involve negotiations of cultural power. We have power over others because we are more adult than they are. Or we are more adult than others are because we have power over them" (4). Unlike the gendered and ethnic others, however, children's power in this relationship is validated through their abilities to master inadequacy, to cross the borders of adulthood and childhood during times of war and trauma, and to go through the process of psychological and social

development. The child's connection to the future also threatens the adult; because children will experience the future beyond the current adult generation, the younger generation can revise history using its own memories and experiences, thus threatening to render the adult generation powerless and even forgotten.

Children's power to transcend many boundaries, even those of age, is recorded throughout post-World War II publications by physicians, psychologists, and organizations for protecting children. In an UNESCO publication from 1949 on Children's Communities (i.e., safe houses), Elisabeth Rotten acknowledges that the children have "aged before their time" and have been "forced into premature independence" (2). Also, historian Dorothy Macardle observes in her 1951 book on the experience of European children during the war that children are connected to adults through their similar experiences: "Not only does the child share with his elders the shocks of battle and bombing, fatigue and illness, hunger and cold, but the anxieties of his parents, however disguised, overshadow his spirit and cause him untold distress" (13). These observations published in the aftermath of the war express the reality of the child's ability to cross generational borders during traumatic times via psychic and physical afflictions.

Because war disrupts the classification of powerful adult and powerless child, postwar adult audiences can identify with child protagonists in their attempt to reconstitute themselves and their society. The postwar German population experienced the trauma of war individually and collectively, and though they undoubtedly brought this about themselves, their need to work through such a severely disrupted consciousness caused a return to the early stages of social and psychological development.

Reconstructing a broken society causes its adult members to find themselves back in a situation they experienced in childhood – the need to develop a sense of self, personally as identity and collectively as society and culture.

The cultural and social influence on child development forms the basis of Lev Vygotsky's body of scholarship on cultural-historical psychology and child development. First, Vygotsky's insistence on the absolute difference between adult and child physiologically and psychologically suggests that our attempts to describe the child in terms of adults reveals our tendency to relate difference, i.e., otherness, to ourselves (Luria and Vygotsky 87-88). "For centuries people have failed to realize fully that the child, by virtue of both his physical appearance and his psychology, is a very special type of being, qualitatively different from the adult, and that special attention is needed when dealing with the activity of the child as well as the laws that govern his life" (89). Second, cultural experiences affect specific modes of development. According to Luria and Vygotsky, the adult is a product of his or her environment. For children, the development of the connections to one's environment is a lengthy process that consists of stages. Children begin to relate to the world through their mouths and hands before they connect visually (91-94). It is not, however, until the thorough development of language, and thus thinking, that "the child's reality-based experience become[s] strengthened and sufficiently autonomous" (95). This takes many years, but in the meantime the child perceives its world without boundaries ("between reality and fantasy, present and past, between that which exists and that which is merely desired") (94). During language acquisition, the child's cognitive processes appear in its egocentric monologues that follow its articulated thoughts which seem random to adults. This

process of learning about the world through mouth, skin, and eyes and then signifying the learned parts of the world through language constitutes cultural development. The child masters and then uses external objects (“tools”). Out of this early development “intermediate processes make their appearance in the child’s behavior, altering that behavior through the use of stimulus-symbols” (117). These “intermediate processes” are provoked by specific socio-cultural influences (language, behavior, etc.).

Because children are themselves experiencing entrance into the social order, their behaviors, even as represented on screen, highlight aspects of the process of social development and acclimation that can be helpful to adults who have experienced a complete collapse of their society. Children are living, observable expressions of the psychological and social processes of human development.

### **Child**

Those who study children’s culture know that defining the term “child” poses a challenge because quantifiable *age* is a poor proxy for *maturity*, which cannot be measured directly. For my dissertation a *child* is an individual who has not yet fully matured and completed his or her transformation into autonomous adulthood. The oldest protagonists in the films I examine are in their early twenties and thus not traditionally classified as children, but they are included because they remain strongly connected to their parents for their well-being, i.e., they have not yet completed the transition to autonomous adulthood. On the other hand, some of the more independent protagonists that display maturity and autonomy must still be considered children because of their young age and their connection to authority.

## Psychoanalysis

The notion of an *other* is rooted in psychoanalytic theory. The theory of the generational other corresponds to the understanding of gendered and ethnic others. However, unlike the *dividing* power in those relationships, power in the relationship of the generational other allows for a *synthesis* of the observer and the observed. This synthesis occurs because unconscious processes happen to children in their early stages of development and to postwar adults who essentially are in a similar state of development.

The adults are faced with postwar trauma and the need for a new identity. The two basic stages of identity formation – pre-lingual and lingual—occur in Jacques Lacan’s “mirror stage” and Sigmund Freud’s *fort/da* game, respectively. Lacan contends that the “mirror stage” is the first moment of self-identification of the infant in his or her environment.<sup>2</sup> The game that Freud observed and reported in his essay “Beyond the Pleasure Principle” combines the lingual part of the identification process with trauma mastery, the two most important elements for a discussion of the postwar psychological condition. The issue of postwar trauma and Germans is taken up by Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich in their study of the postwar melancholy of the adult collective (*The Inability to Mourn*, 1967) as the outcome of infantile psychic defense mechanisms, providing a connection between postwar adult audiences and the psychological development of the child. Nicolas Abraham’s theory of the “transgenerational phantom” as a gap left by an unrepaired trauma that can transfer from one generation to the next

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<sup>2</sup> Lacan developed and presented his ideas about the “mirror stage” in 1936, 1948, and 1949 before publishing “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the *I* as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience” in the collection *Écrits* published in 1966.

explains how these problems of dealing with trauma and developing a satisfactory identification continue in the generations beyond the immediate postwar.<sup>3</sup> The interconnectedness of these concepts of identity formation and trauma creates the basic psychoanalytic framework with which I approach the generational other.

In the “mirror stage,” the uncoordinated, and therefore fragmented, infant experiences identification with and alienation from the image in the mirror because he or she recognizes the image as self and as apart from the self. This event of primary identification introduces two psychic elements of the infant’s unconscious – the ego and the ideal-ego, essentially the psychic manifestations of the subject and his or her misrecognition of the self in the image. The ego, how the subject sees him- or herself as from the outside as an object, develops because of the ideal-ego, the imaginary projection of the self (D. Evans 51-52). According to Lacanian theory, identification with the image helps create the ego and evokes a sense of mastery, but because this takes place in “the imaginary order” the child in the image is not “real” nor is it representative of something that is lost (and therefore “symbolic”). In the imaginary, the human connects to the image rather than symbolically through language. Lacan’s treatise on the “mirror stage” argues that the specular image helps the child realize him- or herself in the environment (*Écrits* 3). Through this realization, the child develops an identification with the image in the hope of the self being as whole as it is in the image (*Écrits* 4, D. Evans 115).

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<sup>3</sup> Abraham explores the “transgenerational phantom” with Maria Torok in three essays published in *The Shell and the Kernel*: “Notes on the Phantom: A Complement to Freud’s Metapsychology,” “Story of Fear: The Symptoms of Phobia – the Return of the Repressed or the Return of the Phantom?,” and “The Phantom of Hamlet or The Sixth Act, preceded by the Intermission of ‘Truth’.”

Freud's observations of the *fort/da* game expose the child's mastery over loss through representational play and overcoming trauma through entry into the symbolic order (using language). Freud recounts watching a toddler hide a toy while making the basic vowel sound in the word *fort* (away). This was the most commonly played part of the game, though Freud also observed that sometimes the boy would reveal the hidden object while saying *da* (here). In playing the game, the boy could master the loss of his mother when she went out by making himself an active part in a representation of the disappearance rather than taking on a passive role. The child's ability to move from the passive, weaker position to the active, dominant position to overcome a trauma parallels my argument about the generational other in which the child protagonist takes the active, dominant position over the adult audience which becomes situated in the passive, weaker position. Freud's position as the adult watching and learning from a child also presumes this generational relationship even though he responds by analyzing the behavior, unlike an audience who relates to the child protagonist in its attempt to rebuild its own collective identity and social structure and work through trauma to master its loss. In the game not only is the trauma handled through representational mimicry (i.e., play), the child's use of language brings the trauma into the realm of what Lacan comes to call "the symbolic order" (the order of language, Law, and culture, i.e. the areas that separate humans from their basic biological, natural, and animalistic form) and therefore manages a satisfying outcome for the subject.

If, as Dylan Evans suggests, this game expresses "the child's entry into the symbolic order," it also means that according to Lacan the child has passed through the Oedipus complex, completing the second process of identification. Lacan explains the

Oedipus complex as a series of three steps that take the child from the imaginary order to the symbolic order. First, the child recognizes the mother's lack and a desire to fill it. The child then tries to become the object of her desire and make up for the lack. Second, the child recognizes that the Law (the principles behind social relations) denies the mother the object to repair her lack (the phallus), therefore seeing the father as competition. Finally, realizing that the father possesses the phallus that represents the mother's lack, the child becomes satisfied with not having to fulfill this role and he or she identifies with the father (D. Evans 127-129). The final identification with the father develops the ego-ideal to act as "the guide governing the subject's position in the symbolic order" and the child succumbs to this order of language, Law, and culture (D. Evans 52).

Identity formation and overcoming trauma happen in the act of articulation. In Lacanian psychoanalysis, *transference* labels the process of bringing the traumatic event into language in a manner that leads to working through it successfully. The use of an other to enter the symbolic also makes the process of transference an important part of the generational relationship. "Each time a man speaks to another in an authentic and full manner, there is, in the true sense, transference, symbolic transference – something which takes place which changes the nature of the two beings present" (Lacan, *Seminar*, 109). Therefore, transference can be thought of as using an other to come into language. Freud's observation of the *fort/da* game and Lacan's ideas about the "mirror stage" highlight two remarkable moments of human development associated with what Lacan calls the imaginary and symbolic orders and which both play a role in identity formation and the subject's ability to cope with trauma in general.

Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich study these processes with a more specific focus on the psychology of postwar (West) Germany. According to the Mitscherlichs, Germans were mired in a melancholic relationship to their past because they had not yet mourned the loss of their ego-Ideal (Hitler, not as the person himself, but his ideal persona as *Führer*) (23). The loss could not be mourned because of the collective psychic defense mechanisms that wartime and postwar traumas triggered. For my purposes it is important to note here that these mechanisms of “repression, denial and projection” are originally *infantile* defense mechanisms (17). The Mitscherlichs repeatedly reference these three mechanisms in their work underscoring the psychological proximity of the postwar German audience to the position of child, especially in regard to psychological and social development. The Mitscherlichs address the problem of describing adults who have lived through Nazism and the war as infantile or child-like (17). They stand by their assessment not to dismiss or diminish the culpability of the adult population of this time and place in history, but to express that the traumatic experiences of war and loss of ego-Ideal place a subject in a similar psychological position as young humans who are first developing their sense of self and other.

The Mitscherlichs report three collective reactions to trauma that are manifestations of those infantile defense mechanisms. First, the response to the horrific crimes of the Nazis in the name of Germans and Germany came by way of a “de-realization” of the recent past (28). This “emptying of reality” was a way for the ego to prevent complete disintegration of itself. Second, the ego’s need to take on some form of identity that was not self-destructive led to identification with the victor (28). “The

victors could acknowledge reality without feelings of devaluation and could mourn... the most urgent task for their psychic apparatus was to ward off the experience of a melancholy impoverishment of the self” (24). Third, the collective reconstruction effort took on manic qualities despite being credited to a strong and efficient German work ethic (13, 28).

The inability to mourn left gaps in the unconscious that caused psychic stress in later generations. This phenomenon is explained by Abraham’s concept of the transgenerational phantom as a psychic element found within a subject’s ego but which was not created for that subject. The phantom alludes to a gap that was left over from “a narcissistic injury or even catastrophe [of] the parents” (174). The phantom begins as an unconscious element never brought into the symbolic by the parent, but which the child “senses” as an unspeakable gap (174). The phantom can manifest itself in the progeny through “the choice of hobbies, leisure activities, or professional pursuits” or “expressed in phobias..., obsessions, [or] restricted phantasmagorias” (175-176). The extraction of the phantom, the ‘putting words onto it,’ does not happen through traditional analysis because the subject is unaware of its presence and has no reference to which it can connect since the initial trauma was not the subject’s own. The analyst can only recognize it through generally talking around it and its accidental appearance (175). The words that eventually come to reveal the phantom “are often the very words that rule an entire family’s history and function as the tokens of its pitiable articulations” (176). Abraham’s concept explains the presence of a gap in the unconscious that affects the collective German ego still today because the guilt and trauma that was repressed by the past generations has transferred into the unconscious gaps of the subsequent

generations. Although the three generations since World War II have each worked to exorcise the phantom, its presence continues to exist in the collective unconscious.

### **Fairy Tales**

In traditional German culture, like many others, fairy and folk tales have acted as a tool for social development. Germany in particular is connected to this tradition because of the important efforts of the Grimm brothers to document the stories. Fairy and folk tales are an integral part of the German cultural fabric. According to Jack Zipes:

Germany has incorporated folktales and fairy tales in its literary socialization process so that they play a most formative role in cultivating aesthetic taste and value systems...there is no doubt that folktales and fairy tales participated heavily in the creation of beliefs and norms and symbolically reflected changes in the social orders of Germany. (137)

It is no wonder, then, that facing the need to rebuild their identity and society after World War II, the Germans incorporate structural and content elements of fairy and folk tales in productions highlighting a child protagonist. These elements connect the reality of postwar Germany with this genre of fantasy and its socializing process. In fact, Max Lüthi remarks that “folktales capture the interest of the educated even more during rationalistic eras than at other times” because of their value as “light reading matter,” meaning “everything is taken in more easily...and is thus assimilated more completely” (*The European Folktale* 116). I attribute this ease not to the tales’ lightness or entertaining qualities but rather to the repetition of developmental and socialization features of the fairy and folk tale that have already been experienced by the population during childhood.

The structure of fairy tales, Zipes argues, impresses nineteenth-century German bourgeois principles onto the development of the young. These principles, he contends, were still influential in the twentieth century, thus becoming part of the social and

psychological development of many generations from their telling, publication, and reading into the years of World War II, making them just as significant in the postwar years. He summarizes their structure in *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion* (2006): To begin, something happens to the protagonist or the family structure, causing the protagonist to leave home. The hero's task is to venture into the world and return home in order to reconstitute familial and social order. The male and female heroes take on different characteristics during their travels, but their goals ultimately lead to the same ending – restoring patriarchal society. The male “learns to be active, competitive, industrious, cunning, and acquisitive,” while the female “learns to be passive, obedient, self-sacrificing, hardworking, patient, and straight laced” (70).

While Zipes offers a contemporary summary of the structure, Russian scholar Vladimir Propp formulized and codified the structural elements of the fairy and folk tale via functions of the “*dramatis personae*” in his 1928 work *Morphology of the Folktale*. He isolated 31 components, which are listed below using their short “definition” as given in the 1968 translation:

- *absentation* – a family member goes from home (could be death of parents)
- *interdiction* – the hero is told not to do something
- *violation* – the rule is broken
- *reconnaissance* – the villain asks a question or is questioned
- *delivery* – the villain gets an answer or information is revealed
- *trickery* – the villain persuades, uses magic, or deceives
- *complicity* – the hero is persuaded or affected by magic or deception
- *villainy or lack* – the villain causes harm; a family member lacks something
- *mediation* – harm or lack becomes known, the hero responds
- *beginning counteraction* – (if the hero is a seeker) hero decides counteraction
- *departure* – the hero leaves home
- *the first function of the donor* – the hero is tested in preparation for help
- *the hero's reaction* – the hero responds to the test
- *provision or receipt of a magical agent* – the hero receives a magical agent
- *spatial transference between two kingdoms, guidance* – the hero must travel
- *struggle* – the hero and villain meet in combat

- *branding, marking* – the hero is marked for identification
- *victory* – the villain is defeated
- *(no definition given)* – the misfortune or lack is repaired
- *return* – the hero starts to return
- *pursuit* – the hero meets obstructions
- *rescue* – the hero avoids the danger
- *unrecognized arrival* – the hero arrives at home or another place unrecognized
- *unfounded claims* – “a false hero presents unfounded claims” (60)
- *difficult task* – the hero must endure an ordeal
- *solution* – the hero manages the ordeal
- *recognition* – “the hero is recognized” (62)
- *exposure* – the false hero or the villain is revealed
- *transfiguration* – the hero undergoes a change in appearance
- *punishment* – “the villain is punished” (63)
- *wedding* – the hero marries and is rewarded with power and/or money

Lüthi went beyond Propp’s explication of the elements of the fairy and folk tale, focusing on the nature of the fairy tale and its characters as reflections of humanity. He offers a psychological perspective on the structural elements. In *The European Folktale: Form and Nature* (1947), he suggests that the fairy tale seems timeless and global because of its characteristics. The central character of a fairy tale is the hero who, according to Lüthi, knows no difference between his or her own world and the unknown (the supernatural, for example), allowing the hero to “transgress boundaries” (*European Folktale* 54, *Fairy Tale as Art Form* 141). The story itself is a choreography – “a form of literature that knows no chance” (*European Folktale* 54). Finally, the motifs are “realistic...drawn from the sphere of social life: courtship, wedding, poverty, orphanhood, widowhood, childlessness, abandonment of children, fraternal conflict, or loyalty of brothers and sisters, of friend and friend, of servant and master” (*European Folktale* 66). For the postwar audience, unrestricted boundaries represent a chance to change and offer freedom, but a “choreographed” story also limits the hero’s chances of

losing control. And the motifs represent aspects of the main arena of social structuralization — the family, which is also central to early psychological development.

Bruno Bettelheim suggests that fairy and folk tales are a vital part of human psychological development because they combine elements of fantasy with elements of reality. They participate in the socialization of the child because they offer a playground on which children can play out psychological problems and solutions. “The child fits unconscious content into conscious fantasies...they offer new dimensions to the child’s imagination which would be impossible for him to discover as truly on his own” (7). Bettelheim also argues that they “direct the child to discover his identity” through challenges and risk (24). The solution the child reaches, then, has two “therapeutic” purposes: to create a personal identity and prepare psychologically for participation in society (25). The fairy and folk tale’s goal to reconstitute the family and therefore the social structure correspond to the needs of postwar German society.

The generational other as a theoretical perspective uncovers further layers of the traumatic effects of National Socialism and war on the collective adult populations in the three generations since World War II. Psychoanalytic theory describes the processes of identification, mastering trauma, and overcoming loss, processes which are explained by theorists through instances of a child’s psychological development, therefore making important connections between child and adult when the adult has experienced the traumatic loss of national or collective identity. In addition, theories of fairy tale structure and purpose reveal aspects of films that create a link to childhood for the adult audience

and a repetition of the socializing qualities they have experienced when they were young.

The following chapters develop the generational other through 13 German films from 1946 to 2003. Chapter 2 categorizes six films from the first dozen years after the war into three categories: rubble film, social criticism film, and films about rebel youths. In these films the child protagonists openly reflect on the psychological and social developmental issues of the immediate postwar period. Five films from the New German Cinema are the subjects of Chapter 3. Here the child protagonists represent different aspects of the phantom that affected the second generation's attempts at creating a collective identity. Chapter 4 explores two films from the late 1990s and early 2000s. The children in these films contend with identity formation in post-wall Germany which is affected by Germany's history in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and its developing role in Europe. All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

Through my study I hope to introduce the generational other as a theoretical concept worth further exploration. The relationships between the child protagonist and adult audience in these German films provide a new perspective through which to explore the complex path Germans have taken to come to terms with the past.

## CHAPTER 2 CHILDREN IN POSTWAR CINEMA

This chapter examines the use of children and youths in German films from the immediate postwar period into the late fifties. I discuss Gerhard Lamprecht's *Irgendwo in Berlin* (*Somewhere in Berlin*, 1946), Roberto Rossellini's *Deutschland im Jahre Null* (*Germany Year Zero*, 1947), Wolfgang Staudte's *Rotation* (1949), Robert Stemmle's *Toxi* (1952), Georg Tressler's *Die Halbstarken* (*Teenage Wolfpack*, 1956), and Gerhard Klein's *Berlin Ecke Schönhauser* (*Berlin - Schönhauser Corner*, 1957). The child protagonists in these films reveal the social and psychological condition of the adult audience and embody the process taken by adults to rebuild their society and collective psychology. Child protagonists could serve this purpose at this time first because war disrupts generational distinctions, thereby allowing adults to identify with the children more easily, and second because tools for social and psychological development were already embedded in German culture via the socialization tradition of fairy and folk tales, whose structural elements can be found in the films' narratives.

### ***Irgendwo in Berlin and Deutschland im Jahre Null***

Gerhard Lamprecht's *Irgendwo in Berlin* and Roberto Rossellini's *Deutschland im Jahre Null*,<sup>4</sup> two significant rubble films with child protagonists, explore the war's effect

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<sup>4</sup> *Deutschland im Jahre Null* is often excluded from studies on German rubble films because it was made by Rossellini, an Italian Neo-realist filmmaker. The film is part of his "War Trilogy," but its content and the context in which it was made allow inclusion in studies of the German rubble film and especially in my study of children in postwar German film. In Shandley's book on rubble films, he writes about 17 rubble films, but excludes Rossellini's film. In the book he defines the rubble genre as "[the] films that take the *mise en scène* of destroyed Germany as a background and metaphor of the destruction of German's [sic] own sense of themselves" (2). Rossellini's film satisfies this definition even though Rossellini is not a German filmmaker, but facts about the film's production support the inclusion of his film in a study on rubble films. The film was made in the German language with Germans as actors and shot throughout destroyed Berlin. In 1972, Rossellini sold the film to Audio Brandon in its Italian dubbed form, making it the only easily accessible version until very recently (Tag Gallagher, personal correspondence). In January 2010, the Criterion Collection released this film (along with the other films of the "War Trilogy") in

on the families and lives of their pre-adolescent male protagonists in the setting of destroyed Germany. Through the child protagonists these films reveal the beginning of the relationships that the two Germanies (East and West) will come to have with their past. Gustav, Willi, and Edmund proleptically assume the positions of East and West German memory. Each film contains elements indicating how each country will respond to the questions of memory as they work through their guilt and trauma and to the development of a post-Nazi cultural identity.

*Irgendwo in Berlin* follows the experiences of two boys, Gustav and Willi, in a small neighborhood of rubble-filled postwar Berlin. Gustav lives with his mother and near his uncle while Gustav's father, a German soldier, waits for release from a prisoner-of-war camp. Orphaned Willi lives with a shopkeeper and her black marketeer tenant who play the role of his foster parents. The two boys spend their days playing war with the other neighborhood kids and protecting the auto repair garage owned by Gustav's father, which has been bombed into rubble. As the boys wish, Gustav's father eventually returns, but he is thin and weak from malnutrition and psychological stress. Willi wants to help Gustav's father by anonymously giving him a mass of good food that his foster father had hidden to sell on the black market. Willi's theft of the food from his foster father is exposed and he runs away to hide. While he avoids the adults, the neighborhood children taunt him, challenging him to climb a destroyed building through which he falls. A woman from the neighborhood takes him in to nurse him, but he eventually dies. After his death the neighborhood experiences positive changes—the

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its original German language form, recognizing the important place this film hold in German cinematic history.

black marketeer is caught and arrested and Gustav's father begins to rebuild his shop with the help of the neighborhood children.

Although the poignant scene of a boy falling from a bombed-out building appears in both films, *Deutschland im Jahre Null* tells a different story. The pre-adolescent boy Edmund lives with his family—an old and ailing father, his adult brother hiding from authorities because he was a soldier, and his teenage sister, whose age and health make her the only member of the family who can earn money and therefore provide food and shelter. Edmund tries to find work, but because of his age nobody will offer him a job, no matter how menial. His only opportunities include thieving with two other children he knows from the street and creating mischief for payment from his former teacher, a Nazi. The teacher entices him with illusions of luxury – the teacher lives in a co-op with other Nazis who live relatively decadently, especially when compared to Edmund's home. While spending time together, the man tries to influence Edmund with Nazi ideology, convincing him that the strong survive and the weak only hinder the strong. Edmund takes this lecture as advice and he decides that poisoning and killing his sick father would unburden the family. But the night he commits this crime the family unravels. As the undertaker arrives, Edmund runs away and wanders the streets of Berlin throughout the night. In the morning, fatigued and stressed, he falls out of a shelled-out building to his death. Unlike *Irgendwo in Berlin*, *Deutschland im Jahre Null* ends here, without reconstituting the family and community.

The differences in the re-establishment of film industry in the Russian-occupied zone and the American/British/French-occupied zones begin revealing the separate trajectories the Allies took to institute denazification and physical and social

reconstruction. The Soviets eagerly licensed and produced films for the denazification agenda because they believed that the power of film to influence the masses would be a key tool in their efforts to pull Germans out of the rubble and ruins and back into a productive society (Kaes 10). DEFA (Deutsche-Film AG) was founded in 1946, before the declaration of East Germany as a nation, but eventually became the center of East German film production. The Western Allies saw the lack of a German film industry at the end of World War II as an opportunity to import their own films into the West German market (Kaes 10). They also distrusted the idea of a national German film because of its tainted recent history as the means of propaganda under the Third Reich (Kaes 10). Therefore, many of the films influencing the people in West Germany came from other countries, especially the United States, France, and Italy (Kaes 10). The postwar film industries, encouraged by the separate zones, began the distinct paths East and West Germany took on their journey to reconcile with the past and develop a cultural identity.

Immediately after World War II the Soviet agenda of denazification incorporated a strong antifascist propaganda which used film as the most important device for relaying messages to the masses. The cultural and national identity of the eastern zone developed through a Soviet-induced association with antifascism; the East Germans accepted the new authority by virtue of its *not-being* fascist (Byg 205, 207). This so-called *nicht-Identität* is the basis for East Germany's collective response to their connection to National Socialism. Karsten Dümmel explores this idea in his book about the GDR identity in novels of the seventies and eighties, writing that the East Germans see themselves as "*nicht-faschistisch, nicht-bourgeois, nicht-volksfremd,*

*nicht-nihilistisch-skeptizistisch-dekadent, nicht-formalistisch-modern*” (not fascist, not bourgeois, not exclusive, not nihilistic-skeptic-decadent, not formalist-modern) as an antithesis to the “described fascist identity” (29). Therefore, the East Germans based their developing collective identity on negating their former one. The Soviet-controlled state established itself on the view that fascism stems from late capitalism and as long as the socialists resisted the bourgeois West, they would be less likely to relapse into fascism. “Not-being” capitalist meant “not-being” fascist, thus connecting the prescribed *nicht-Identität* and the legitimacy of the East German state.

Barton Byg also suggests that the complete reversal and rejection of their recent identity allowed East Germans to identify more as victors, as antifascists, and less as victims (206). DEFA used humanistic cultural values as an antidote to Nazism in their films to satisfy political aims supporting the idea of a mass resistance to National Socialism, counteracting the tendency toward despair and apathy (Byg 206). Therefore, the Soviet-influenced films of the eastern zone focused on the causes and effects of National Socialism (Kaes 11).

In *Irgendwo in Berlin*, each character propagates the traits which the Soviets suggested the (East) Germans adopt. The main protagonist, Gustav, is at heart a good boy. He protects his father’s garage so that when he returns (and Gustav is sure he will), they can work together to rebuild the garage. Gustav’s optimism stands out. Gustav’s character embodies the forward-looking and hopeful citizen that contributes to social reconstruction and the qualities of friendship, truth, and goodness. He represents the one character to emulate that leads to a successful future. Willi, on the other hand, is not perfect. He has the potential to be as good as Gustav, but circumstances force

him to compromise these qualities to survive. He aids his black marketeer foster father in exchange for food and shelter, and he steals food to help Gustav's father recover, hopefully propelling a chain of events that also leads to the recovery of the neighborhood. Willi's mistakes and bad judgment, however, overshadow his persistence and strong will because his mistakes take up the most screen time. The reverent portrayal of Willi's death forces the audience to regard his reckless behavior as a reaction to the forced situation in which he lives, therefore reproaching the behavior and character of those like his foster father whose greed and selfishness weaken society.

While the boys themselves represent a particular Soviet-inspired ideology, their families represent possible postwar outcomes. Gustav's mother expresses the persistence and hope expected of German women. She insists that her husband will return because she does not receive official notification of his death. She faithfully trusts the officials and waits. She repairs and readies his clothes and home. Her behavior influences the optimism of Gustav, Uncle Kalle, and Waldemar, a stranger who meets the family. Her only failure is her inability to supervise her son, which is a reflection of the circumstances. Gustav's father, who first appears as a vagrant wandering the rubble streets, returns from a prisoner-of-war camp. Since a young, healthy, male character would have to be a soldier, the only way to distance him from National Socialism was to make him a victim, a prisoner of war. This situation does not assume that he either went to serve willingly or reservedly, but it does seem to distance him from culpability. Now the family includes a malnourished, weary *Heimkehrer* (returned soldier). The other member of the family, the father's stand-in while he was away soldiering, is Uncle Kalle. His role in the war remains unclear, but he says he got

through it by working. His work ethic and his responsibility for Gustav and his mother exemplify the characteristics of a strong male figure in society. Uncle Kalle is one of the few men not sacrificed on the front and who sees his duty to care for the people left behind.

Willi's foster family is the antithesis of Gustav's family. They are crooked, uncaring, and abusive. The shopkeeper and her tenant participate in the black market, showing the audience how the subversive black market weakens society through its acceptance of thievery, disrespect for the authorities, and general family dysfunction. One of the most difficult aspects of restoring order and government was establishing authority. After the recent destruction caused by Nazi authorities, who appeared strong and dedicated, the Soviets had to convince Germans of legitimate Soviet authority. One of the ways to incorporate respect for authority into cinema was to associate distrust of authority with a criminal character, inviting audience members to distance themselves from such a position and instead align themselves with the authority.

The redeemable characters employ an optimistic air, a good (German) work ethic, and a strong sense of community. They help each other look to the future, either with words, objects (food), or deeds (neighborhood cleaning). However, lurking in this optimism is the negated gap of identity (*nicht-Identität*, the refusal to identify with themselves as citizens of Nazi Germany), a repressed identity. Focusing on positive qualities permits overlooking culpability and may have eased the transition to a successful postwar reconstruction of society, but would appear in later generations as feelings of mistrust, guilt, and betrayal.

The West did not immediately reconcile with its Nazi past. Anton Kaes suggests that the immediate reaction was admonishment (18), then, as Bruce Murray writes, the tendency to identify with the victim, followed by recognition and highlighting the resistance movements (25). Rossellini's film *Germany Year Zero* explores the first two – admonishment and victimization – within the Köhler family.

Edmund Köhler, the 12-year-old boy in *Germany Year Zero*, an anti-hero, finds himself in situations unsavory for children. Like Gustav from *Irgendwo in Berlin*, Edmund wants to do good, but as he attempts to help his family, Nazis and the children they influence take advantage of his loyal nature. The Nazi characters continue to indoctrinate him even after the war is over, prompting a series of events that lead to crime and death. Because he is a child, he is not held responsible for his criminal actions, but he ultimately pays with his life for the situation in which the postwar, post-Nazi German society has put him. His death, unlike Willi's, is completely tragic; it does not exhibit a gleam of hope. The neighborhood bystanders do not react to the fallen boy. The other children (and adults) continue in their ways and do not learn from his tragic death. Edmund's life parallels the West German view of victimization; in this view, the West Germans were put into a situation over which they, supposedly, had no control. (This idea is, at the core, false since the people elected Hitler and the National Socialists into power; the citizens had little control, however, once Hitler seized ultimate power.) The West Germans used the notion of living in a situation in which you have no control, like Edmund, as the route from identification with the perpetrator to identification as victim.

In the quest for postwar identity, West Germans also leaned towards admonishment as a way to appease their sense of guilt. The film represents this by not punishing the wrongdoers. The Nazis have suffered either no punishment or only a minimal one: Edmund's brother only receives a reprimand for not coming forward about his soldiering, the housing residents are only fined for their overuse of electricity, and his teacher is never apprehended for his crimes. Edmund's fall and ultimate death is the only strong punishment and is doled out not by authority, but by chance.

The members of Edmund's family reflect the different generations of the postwar society. Edmund's father, Mr. Köhler, lay ill, unable to care for his family. We know from the father's own words and from Edmund's reunion with his former teacher that Edmund's father opposed the fascist government. (Mr. Köhler refused to let Edmund join the Hitler Youth.) Edmund's father represents the past that prevents the younger generations from focusing on the future and reconstruction through his weakness and illness that tether the children, Edmund and his siblings, to him. Mr. Köhler's death should lessen the responsibilities of the remaining family, therefore making it easier for them to survive. Instead, Edmund's responsibility for his father's death causes the family to break apart. One might argue that this break-up does lessen responsibility for Edmund's siblings, Eva and Karl Heinz, because it eliminates the burden of caring for the father and Edmund, but the brother and sister go their separate ways as well, finalizing the family's complete disintegration. This isolationist trajectory of the members of the young generation suggests an ineffective approach to a revival of German society. Not only is the past, represented by the father, removed, but his abrupt and violent absence causes the basic social unit, the family, to fall apart. The representative

of the past, Mr. Köhler, and the representative of one possible future, Edmund, cannot exist in this postwar world. Only Eva and Karl-Heinz's mere day-to-day survival remains.

Eva supports the family in its postwar state of disrepair. She works day and night to care for her sick father, her unfocused young brother, and her cowardly older brother. One might see her as the only hope for the family. She goes out in the evening to collect cigarettes from men in exchange for a dance in order to sell them on the black market, but she does not go so far as to prostitute herself. Later, when she and Karl-Heinz are arguing about money, she threatens to become a prostitute as a response to his unwillingness to report himself as a former soldier and therefore earn rations and be allowed to work. He fears persecution even though he was an unwilling soldier who took part in the war in the name of duty. Admitting his service would allow him to obtain a work permit and ration book, thus relieving some of the strain on his family and especially his sister. Eva and Karl-Heinz must navigate their conflicts with honesty, innocence, and hard work -- virtues necessary for rebuilding the debauched Nazi society. Because they are poles of these virtues, they must separate at the end. Eva must continue in her virtuous ways and Karl Heinz must come to terms with his dishonesty (living in hiding), guilt (as member of the military), and his unwillingness to work for the survival of the family. In this they represent the gendered response to the postwar experience.

These two films are not about working through the Nazi past, but of working towards the future. *Irgendwo in Berlin* leaves the audience with hope for the future. *Germany Year Zero* leaves the audience in despair. These two disparate messages provide a framework with which to understand what will become the East German and

West German memories of and modes of identification with the Nazi regime, the Second World War, and even the Holocaust. The boys who meet disastrous ends, Willi, from *Irgendwo in Berlin*, and Edmund, from *Deutschland im Jahre Null*, not only represent developing national consciences, but, because the boys are both associated with corruption and criminality, their deaths do not represent a desperate future but rather an end to a guilty past.

Despite the desperate reality of these films, they also give the audience a point of connection through structural elements that would be familiar to the audience, elements of the fairy tale. Like the confounded reality of postwar Germany, the fairy tale characteristics in these films are also mixed up. The elements explored by Propp, Lüthi, and Zipes are there, though sometimes rearranged, and the characters contain traits of the hero and the villain. This confusion made manifest in the fairy tale structures reflects the traumatic disorder of the postwar period.

*Irgendwo in Berlin* uses playfulness and fairy tale elements to express the ambiguity between adult and child in the postwar period. "Somewhere in Berlin" presents a child's world, a playground of the fantastic and unreal, displayed from the introductory cartoonish music and 'game' of cops and robber to the final scene with 'magic' gates opening to a new world. The strange and magical qualities of the peripheral characters in this land mimic the villains and magical helpers in childhood's fairy and folk tales. Waldemark, the thief, is magical and sly, although not *really* dangerous. The painter is a mysterious and wise old man. Gustav's encounters with these figures contain those fairy tale characteristics. Waldemar appeals to the audience as a connection to the trickster and the villain. He also connects adults to child's play

with his magic, a distraction for the war-fatigued characters and audience. Mr. Eckmann represents that part of German society and history connected to culture and art. He is also compassionate and fair, helping the widow with her son and taking in Willi after his foster father kicks him out. He reprimands the boys for their destruction of his painting, but treats them fairly. He parallels the wise and mysterious helper found in fairy tales.

This film also references playing and games to connect the adults in the audience with the child protagonists. The opening scene of the film can be explained as a game of “cops and robber,” beginning when several townspeople from the marketplace chase Waldemar who they believe stole some money. He tries to hide from them and eventually succeeds, only to be caught by Gustav and trapped in the shelled remains of his father’s garage. Shortly after that scene, Willi’s foster father refers to his dealings in the Black Market as child’s play. When Gustav’s father returns and tries on his old clothes, they are too big for him because he has lost weight from starvation and malnutrition during his time away, but the baggy clothes make him look like a child playing dress up. Later, Gustav’s Uncle Kalle even refers to himself and Gustav’s father as “boys.”

The elements of Propp’s fairy tale structure appear in this film despite its distance from fantasy. In this film characters embody the hero, the villain, and the helper, and sometimes a structural element is experienced through more than one character and in non-sequential narrative moments. This is not uncommon in these films whose stories are not told as fairy tales, but which contain the genre’s elements anyway.<sup>5</sup> To begin, a *family misses a member*. Here, Gustav’s father is away and Willi’s parents are dead. An

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<sup>5</sup> The italicized words in this subsequent paragraph refer to Propp’s morphology as listed in Chapter 1.

*interdiction* is declared in the beginning; Gustav's mother scolds the neighborhood children for playing with firecrackers in the rubble and forbids them to continue. Next, a *rule is broken*. This happens several times. The children still play with firecrackers, Waldemar steals money, and Willi steals food. The villain *gathers information* about a hero and uses it to *trick* him. Waldemar finds out that Gustav's father is gone and gets himself invited into Gustav's home where he is given food and hides his stolen money. At this point the elements begin to appear out of Propp's linear order. Gustav's father *returns home unrecognized* and is met with the common postwar challenges. His *lack* is made known – he is malnourished and weak. Willi is forbidden to get into his foster father's stash of goods, but he does so anyway to help Gustav's father eat well. When his foster father discovers the boy's *deception* he attempts to beat him, but Willi runs away. Here he is *tested* by the other children and responds by climbing the ruins. He falls and gets *help* from the old painter and the widow with her mentally-disturbed soldier son. The foster father is eventually *defeated* when he is found out and arrested for black marketeering. As a villain Waldemar *causes harm* to which the hero must respond. Gustav and his dad find the money Waldemar hid in their home and they go to return it, only to be accused of stealing it themselves until they are able to convince others that they did not steal it. Eventually all the wrongs are put right. *The villains are punished and the familial order is reconstituted.*

Rossellini's neo-realist film initially defies a relationship to fairy and folk tales, but elements of Propp's folktale morphology nevertheless do appear in the film. Edmund's relationship with the villain, Mr. Henning, his former teacher, comes from this tradition. Following Propp's structure, Edmund is sent from home to sell a scale for one of his

housemates. He fails and then bumps into the teacher on the street. Mr. Henning “makes an attempt at reconnaissance” and “receives information about his victim,” which means that he asks about Edmund’s family and how they are faring, but with malicious intent. The teacher never liked Edmund’s father because he would not let the boy enroll in the Hitler Youth. Mr. Henning’s deception and Edmund’s acceptance of it causes Edmund to unknowingly help the villain (National Socialism). And, finally, the villain’s advice leads to the death of Edmund’s father. Because the hero does not return home triumphant and ready to head the family, the ‘happy ending’ which Propp describes as integral to fairy and folk tales does not occur in this film, yet that does not take away from the strength of these structural elements. Despite the effort of the filmmaker to create a film using realism, he does not escape these connections to the fairy tale tradition.

Elements from the fairy and folk tale tradition are not the only connection between the worlds of adulthood and childhood. Edmund, a child, wavers between two worlds to which he cannot belong: adulthood and childhood. He is consistently branded with the terms *Kind* (child) and *Junge* (boy) yet continually given adult responsibilities. The film opens as he is denied work digging ditches because he is not old enough to work. Later, when the adults in his family’s cooperative living arrangement try to find money to pay for electricity, they refer to Edmund using the terms mentioned before, *child* and *boy*, but then turn to him and ask if he has any cigarettes that they can sell. Later in the film, after their father’s death, Karl-Heinz and Eva discuss where they will stay the night when Edmund chimes in that he will go off by himself. Karl-Heinz responds, “You forget that you are still a little boy,” followed by Edmund’s retort, “Did you think of that when I

was going around looking for food,” referring to his efforts to work and support the family while Karl-Heinz chose to stay in hiding. However, he does not participate in children’s activities, such as playing with other children in the neighborhood or going to school either. In fact, his past is even cut off from the collective pursuits of childhood since he did not belong to the Hitler Youth. His dress during the last sequence of the film illustrates his belonging to the two worlds of childhood and adulthood. During close ups he seems to be wearing an adult-looking suit jacket, but when the camera pulls away, he is also wearing shorts, like a little boy. He cannot be simply a child because the family needs him to help support them all, but his age, inexperience, and naïveté do not allow him to handle the world as an adult.

The scene in which Edmund prepares the poisoned tea for his father significantly represents Edmund’s blurred identity. At dinner the family discusses their predicament. Edmund’s father scolds Karl-Heinz for not coming forward and suggests that he is not a man. As their father continues, Eva and Edmund leave the table. Eva washes the dishes and Edmund goes off to get the tea. At the moment Edmund is shown putting the poison into the tea cup, we hear Edmund’s father shout to Karl-Heinz “Prove that you are a man.” Just after that, we see Karl-Heinz with his head down in shame and Edmund bringing in the tea. The speech that Edmund’s father gives seems to affect Edmund the same way as his brother, except that he receives the message without the agitation. The father’s lecture to Karl-Heinz unknowingly supports Edmund for his ‘responsible,’ man-like behavior, that is, he does something to change their circumstances instead of remaining passive and cowardly.

The borderlessness between childhood and adulthood also appears in the adult characters through childish qualities and references to childhood. Mr. Henning, Edmund's former teacher and a Nazi, lives in a playful world. He and his housemates do not work because they have excuse notes (like Edmund had for his absence from the Hitler Youth). At Edmund's introduction to the housemates, they are doing gymnastics in the parlor and 'dressing up' (wearing nice clothes; the women are using nail polish, a decadence in postwar Germany). At the tram stop, one of Henning's old acquaintances suggests, "we were once men." This statement can be interpreted several ways, but ultimately it suggests that they were one thing and now they are the other. Also, Eva tells Karl-Heinz that he has "come through it all" and "now life is in front of [him]," alluding to the beginning stage of life: childhood. Even the title suggests a point of beginning—*Germany Year Zero*. Although this designation of postwar Germans as infantile or childlike is complicated by their adult knowledge and complicity in the terrors of the Nazi state, it is still necessary because of the child's place in the socializing process.

### ***Rotation and Toxi***

The rubble film period ended in 1948 and other genres emerged. Films focusing on social reconstruction began appearing after the physical rebuilding had taken place for several years. Films such as *Rotation* and *Toxi* offered a venue to work through changes in German society. *Rotation* explores the destruction of the family and its recuperation through its central theme of forgiveness. *Toxi* explores the importance of tolerance, as represented through the appearance of dark-skinned child in a bourgeois German family. Again, these films offer the adult audience a chance to work through social changes via child protagonists and their experiences.

*Rotation* contains elements of both the rubble film and the films concerned with contemporary social changes of the late 1940s and early 1950s. It tells a story of social reconstruction in which rubble plays an important part of the *mise en scène*. Although the main child character does not carry the story as in the films discussed above, he is integral to the social commentary. *Rotation* addresses generational differences from the outset. The film opens with the print machine and then the machine of war – a constructed scene of the Battle of Berlin. Within the empty and partially destroyed street, an old woman runs across. She loots bread from a bakery and runs away with it. At the moment she passes the camera, a bomb explodes and the frame cuts to an image of her hand, splayed on the ground, still holding the bread. Her death, so striking in its portrayal and timing at the beginning of the film, encapsulates the rejection of the old generation. The scene then cuts to a placard with dialogue: “*Es begann vor 20 Jahre*” (It began 20 years ago) as two young lovers are shown at the beginning of their courtship. Soon after, the film cuts to Lotte and Hans’ wedding, where the theme of generational angst continues, Lotte’s brother toasts the couple: “the old generation leaves behind the dusty useless relics,” intensifying the confrontation and bias between generations.

The first time we meet the child, Helmut, comparatively late in the story, he is a baby and his uncle brings him a playpen. This scene’s importance lies in the two interpretations that explain how this film fits into the reconstruction of the German collective psychology. First, from the adults’ point of view, the playpen protects the child from the world around him as well as from himself and his own naiveté. From the child’s point of view, however, the playpen can represent imprisonment by adult authority.

These two possible interpretations of the playpen, based on the different points of view captures the focus on the generational conflict. The shot of the baby behind the (playpen) bars echoes the image of the father behind (prison) bars at the end of the war, suggesting the shared experience of war.

A second interpretation in the context of psychoanalytic theory appears in the latter half of the scene after the mother sets the baby down and walks into the next room to get the playpen. The baby notices her absence and begins to cry. As explained in the *fort/da* game analyzed by Freud, the baby has not mastered his mother's absence. This step, clearly highlighted by the filmmaker, reminds viewers of their own need to collectively master their traumatic loss. By returning to such early childhood development, this film begins trauma work at the core of psychological development.

The next two scenes in which the son appears occur just a little later. Both scenes show the boy in a situation of play guided by adults and meant to prepare Helmut for his role in adulthood as predatory patriarch through the sexual play of pouncing on the mother and the violent play of training for war. First, the family appears tranquil and progressive in its portrayal of gender roles, starting with the father asking the son for help cleaning the dishes. The chore is interrupted, however, as the father leads him in play by surprising and pouncing on the mother who has gone to the bedroom to tidy up. In the middle of this predatory game, a noise outside distracts the boy and he goes to the window. While the son focuses on the events outside, the parents continue to play their predator-prey game. At this point, the camera cuts to the events the boy sees—the SS has come to take their Jewish neighbors away. When the parents are finally distracted enough from their play to discover what their son is witnessing, they quickly

shut the window and curtains -- shocked, scared, and bewildered. This is the son's first time witnessing the crimes of his country and of his parents – both the crimes against Jews and the denial of them.

The second scene juxtaposes the tenderness and innocence felt for the boy in the pouncing/witnessing scene. At school, a new figure has replaced the authority of his parents – the National Socialist teacher. Part of his education, as we are shown, is military training. The boys throw what appear to be grenades. As soon as the son throws his, the film cuts to stock footage of a grenade exploding, connecting these boys to the reality of the adult world they are being groomed for.

These two scenes intersect the two worlds of adulthood and childhood in play. While children often play house or participate in some sort of battle play, the grave reality of these scenes amplifies the play to a more prescribed, preparatory training of the powerful adult male predator. After witnessing the removal of his neighbors and the battle play has turned to military training, play has lost its innocence, marking Helmut's entrance into the world of adults.

The only major Nazi character in the film is the boy, a misguided child, perhaps making it easier for a contemporary audience to offer forgiveness. As a Nazi youth, the boy turns in his father for possessing anti-party propaganda and becomes a soldier. In the last battle, however, he and a fellow soldier take shelter from the fighting in an abandoned tailor's shop. The fellow soldier casts his Nazi ties for plain clothes he finds hanging in the shop. The boy watches in disbelief as he sees his comrade give up his ideology so easily, uncertain if it was there in the first place. The boy must then question his entire education. He had done everything he was told was right – fight for the

fatherland and report non-believers (even his own father) to authorities. At this point the son must confront the situation around him and decide for himself. The film concludes with the son asking for forgiveness and showing his father (and the audience) that he is moving forward. He has a serious girlfriend and he is looking toward the future. The father, alone because the mother died trying to find her husband and son during the final battle, embraces the son with full forgiveness. At the very end the boy and his girlfriend meet at the same tracks and spend a day in the country as his parents did “twenty years ago.” This sequence ends with the son’s final words that “life cannot repeat itself.” Altogether, this sequence blatantly spells out to the audience that they need to forgive, move on, and prevent the madness from happening again, a message sent through the character of the boy because his connection to childhood and its natural innocence can provide a smoke screen for the absolute culpability of the National Socialist government and society.

Besides handling guilt, postwar society also needed to come to terms with the intolerance that allowed for the rise of National Socialism. While some early postwar cinema dealt with anti-Semitism, otherness was also explored in alternative terms. In the film *Toxi*, Stemmler uses a dark-skinned girl to explore German society’s path towards tolerance. Toxi’s mother was a single German woman, who has died, and her father is an absent African-American soldier. Her ailing German grandmother cannot take care of her and leaves her at the doorstep of a former employer, a bourgeois Hamburg family, on the night of the matriarch’s fiftieth birthday. The parents of the family and their unwed daughter accept Toxi into their care, but the married daughter and her husband disapprove of Toxi’s presence because of her physical difference. The

son-in-law attempts to take her to an orphanage only to realize how much he and the family care about her and returns home with her. The family discovers who left her on the doorstep and why and, at the end, she is reunited with her real father.

This film challenges an audience that is apprehensive of difference because of the influence of Nazi racial ideology. In her 1999 dissertation “Representing the Afro-German in Early West German Cinema,” Angelica Fenner argues that “there is a place for Toxi within a society on the threshold of the economic miracle and the delirium of accelerated consumerism, but her role is not restricted to that of boosting the Gross National Product but also includes that of promoting certain socio-sexual structures within society” (73).<sup>6</sup> Toxi’s role is, then, twofold. She not only helps the white German adult audience handle the new members of their formerly closed community, but also resituates the peacetime social order.

In some instances the film is almost anthropological<sup>7</sup> in its attempts to explore the physical attributes of Toxi. The camera investigates her body during a scene in which she has just taken a bath and again when she shows the paleness of the palms of her hands. Other scenes are clearly sociological. When Toxi explains, questions, or reacts to the racism around her in a sophisticated manner, audience members are asked to reflect on their treatment of others. These aspects of the film clearly provoke the audience members to question their fears and apprehensions about difference.

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<sup>6</sup> In 2011, Fenner published the book *Race Under Reconstruction in German Cinema: Robert Stemmle’s Toxi* (U of Toronto P) based on her dissertation.

<sup>7</sup> Anthropologists have worked toward a definition of ethnographic film, and while much is still being debated, particular visual characteristics have been accepted: performance, nudity, anthropometric poses, and the return gaze (Griffiths xix-xxix).

Toxi's presence forces the unwed daughter and her boyfriend to seriously discuss marriage and beginning a family. Fenner concludes, "The audience can similarly bask in a hortatory surface discourse embracing progressive gender roles, economic optimism, and a controlled measure of ethnic diversity (DPs and Jewish refugees being glaringly absent), while the actual filmic imagery exclusively reinforces the white nuclear family as normative social unit..." (Fenner 75). *Toxi* is a film about racism and otherness but also a film about reconstructing the broken family.

This film's goal reminds us, then, of the purpose of fairy tales in German society as part of the process of social development. And one can follow Propp's morphology in this particular film as proof of the comfort the fairy tale's structure affords the German collective conscious. The family unit is immediately disrupted by an alteration within and the family must decide what to do. The villain gathers information, deceives, and removes the heroine from the home, only to be defeated as she returns. At the conclusion of the story, the heroine's appearance changes and her familial situation is altered positively under the assumption that it will stay that way. Toxi's arrival jostles the family construction and the family must decide what to do with her. After seeing the unsatisfactory conditions of the orphanage, the family decides to keep her. The racist son-in-law, angry at the family's agreement to foster Toxi, plots a way to get rid of her. He lures her by offering her a surprise and together they slip out early in the morning before anyone awakes. The 'magic' that assists Toxi is mere coincidence. The car breaks down on the way and they stop and get some breakfast at a nearby café where Toxi mentions that it is her birthday. In a mix-up leaving the cafe, they lose each other and the panic sends him throughout the city only to discover her in safety and realize

how much he cares for her as a child who needs a family. After they have returned, the film moves into the Christmas season and Toxi is literally given a new face. The children play the role of the three kings and she is made up in 'whiteface.'<sup>8</sup> By this point, also, the family has contacted Toxi's father and he arrives to collect her, thereby immediately transforming the familial situation. The film concludes with the understanding that the reunification with her father is concrete, lasting, and happy. The threat of the other is eliminated and the social order can be stabilized. These two films have used child protagonists as the vessels through which the German audience aligns with victimhood, innocence, and forgiveness. Both films also focus on the importance of reforming the nuclear family as the key to moving forward.

### ***Die Halbstarcken and Berlin Ecke Schönhauser***

In the later 1950s, films about rebellious adolescents appeared in Germany as a response to influential American films about young rebels. German rebellious youths were infatuated with James Dean and Marlon Brando and their portrayals of the heroes in *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955, dir. Nicholas Ray) and *The Wild One* (1953, dir. Laslo Benedek), respectively. *Die Halbstarcken* is a West German study of rebellious youth and the innocents who get caught up in an adventurous and parent-free lifestyle. *Berlin Ecke Schönhauser* also studies rebellious youths, but in East Germany, and finds that, although they can be trouble, they are mostly not responsible for their situations and they can become productive members of East German society. Like the other films of the postwar era, these films concern postwar social reconstruction, but they concentrate

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<sup>8</sup> I use the term 'whiteface' in reference to 'blackface,' a theatrical technique that began in American vaudeville shows. A white actor would paint his or her skin with black make-up in order to evoke a caricature of an African-American character. Awareness of the exploitive nature of blackface contributed to its demise as theatrical entertainment. For more information on blackface see: *Black Like You: Blackface, Whiteface, Insult and Imitation in American Popular Culture* by John Strausbaugh (Penguin Group, 2006).

on youth development and portray their arguments by mimicking the American genre that affected how some postwar teenagers expressed their rebellion, but which also enter the German consciousness with structures pulled from fairy tales.

*Die Halbstarken* was made in West Germany to warn the public about these problem children. In fact, the film begins with this text:

*Die Mehrheit der Jugend hat mit der Erscheinung der Halbstarken nichts zu tun. Die Minderheit aber fällt auf, und deshalb spricht man von ihr.*

*Dieser Film berichtet über die Taten einzelner Jugendlicher und ihres kriminellen Anführers, im Zwielficht von Erlebnisdrang und Verbrechen. Die Geschehnisse entsprechen tatsächlichen Ereignissen der jüngsten Vergangenheit und sollen eine Warnung sein für alle jungen Menschen, die in Gefahr sind, auf Abwege zu geraten.*<sup>9</sup>

The film tells the story of a group of hoodlums and their innocent recruits. The film opens as the teenagers gather at the local swimming pool, where two estranged brothers meet. Freddy, the hoodlum, left home after disagreements with his father. Jan is the younger, better behaved son who takes care of his mother and avoids his angry, indebted father. Freddy flaunts some high-priced goods, intriguing Jan with his success on the streets. Freddy and his hoodlum friends beat up the pool manager when they are told to stop smoking and Jan runs away with them during the fracas. Freddy takes Jan to the gas station where he has a job and where sits a car that Freddy claims he will buy the following day. There he also meets Freddy's girlfriend, Sissi, and Jan stays and talks with her while Freddy goes to take care of business for something that is going to

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<sup>9</sup> The majority of youths have nothing to do with the phenomenon of the young hooligans. The minority, however, stands out, and therefore is being discussed. This film reports the doings of individual youths and their criminal leaders at the dim border between adventure and crime. The incidents are based on actual events of the recent past and should serve as a warning to all youths who are in danger of heading down the wrong path. [my translation]

happen “tonight.” Jan eventually goes home and tells his mother that he saw Freddy and that Freddy is doing well. The father hears this and gets angry at Jan and the mother. Jan runs out to find Freddy. If Freddy has enough money to buy the car, Jan thinks Freddy would have enough money to pay off their father’s debt, stopping the father from abusing Jan and the boys’ mother. Jan finds Freddy buying a gun and ends up proving he is good at firing it, so Freddy agrees to let him participate in the night’s events in exchange for Freddy’s help with their mother. During the night’s secret event, an attempted robbery of a postal truck, a number of mishaps occur, causing Freddy to fail at stealing the money. The chaos that ensues ends when the police shoot and kill Freddy.

The two brothers reflect the difficulty of developing a postwar identification. Both boys offer the audience something to connect with; Jan is a good boy who wants to protect his mother and bring the family back together and Freddy has the characteristics of the popular American rebel youth – he’s cool and popular – and seems to have or is able to get a pretty girlfriend, money, and power. At the core, both boys reject paternal authority, particularly Freddy who rebels against social rules and laws. The boys want the same thing: a stable family and opportunity. Because the father has ultimately caused the family’s destruction by going into debt and taking out his frustrations on the mother and sons, the boys’ plight is familiar to the audience as victims of an overbearing and unjust father figure. The boys, then, represent different responses to the father’s injury to the family. Both sons try to avoid confrontation with the father, but one follows the rules and stays with the mother, while the other breaks the rules and leaves the mother. The boys are both eventually proven to be weak, a point connecting

their responses to the audience's range of responses under Nazism – complicity by inaction and deadly refusal.

*Die Halbstarken* falls in line with Jack Zipes' interpretation of the Grimms' structure of the fairy tale. Jan must leave his role as the good son (home) "because power relations have been disturbed" – his father is emasculated by the debt owed to his brother-in-law. To return to the status quo, Jan tries to get the money for his father from his estranged hoodlum brother, Freddy, who lets his brother in on the plan to steal from the postal service. Through the planning and preparation for the evening's robbery, Jan wanders with and without Freddy through the town, meeting several characters along the way. Freddy, his girlfriend, and the boys' father all have the potential to be the villain who misguides the youth. However, because this is not an actual fairy tale, i.e. no happy ending, the trajectory must veer from its traditional course. The female counterpart to the different brothers is Sissi. She starts off as "passive, obedient, self-sacrificing, hard-working, patient, and straight-laced" and her goal is to obtain wealth, but, unlike the tradition, she does not need a man to secure it for her. She tries to get the brothers to do it, but because of Jan's refusal she turns the brothers against each other and gets her way anyhow. Sissi is a misfit. She has no place in the fairy tale; therefore the characters who follow her in this story can never return home, that is, return to the patriarchal social order, which is why Freddy must die. The family's connection to her must vanish for the family to be whole again.

Another film about troublesome youths appeared the year after *Die Halbstarken* and was produced by East Germany's major film company, DEFA. *Berlin Ecke Schönhauser* is about a group of school dropouts, three boys and a girl, who hang out

the corner of Schönhauser street. Dieter was orphaned in the war and has a brother on the police force. He works in construction, but refuses to join the Free German Youth with his coworkers. Kohle comes from an abusive, lower-middle-class family and is fascinated with the movies he sees across the street in West Berlin. Karl-Heinz comes from a well-to-do family, but he does not work. He is involved with stealing IDs and selling them for Western money. Angela's father died during the war and she lives alone with her mother. She has to leave some evenings so that her mother can entertain her lover, her boss. The adolescents are interested in rock-n-roll, motorcycles, and Marlon Brando. The film follows these kids through a short time in their lives in which their future is determined by their actions and choices. Karl-Heinz ends up in prison, Kohle dies, Angela finds out she is pregnant, and Dieter clears up the story at the end, leading the audience to believe that his life and hard work will continue.

Even though the film is not a fairy tale, it uses fairy and folktale elements to convey social guidelines. As in other films discussed earlier, Propp's structural elements apply. All of the teens in this film portray a characteristic of the hero. Angela begins the tale by leaving home. Then, when the kids have gathered, they commit a violation by breaking a street lamp and Karl-Heinz deceives Kohle by not settling up on the dare. Dieter lacks what he wants – a motorcycle. The end of the film follows Propp's formula: departure, the first function of the donor, the hero's reaction, provision or receipt of a magical agent, spatial transference between two kingdoms, guidance, struggle, branding, victory, return, difficult task, solution, recognition, transfiguration, wedding.<sup>10</sup> Dieter and Kohle flee after they think they have accidentally killed Karl-Heinz. At a refugee camp in

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<sup>10</sup> These are all the subheadings for Elements 11-18, 20, 23, 25-26, 29 from Propp's morphology.

the West, Kohle describes how he can make himself sick from a concoction of coffee and tobacco (magical agent) so that he cannot be sent back. Dieter chooses not to participate and the next morning he finds Kohle dead and, saddened, he leaves the camp. On the way out Dieter has a fight with the fellow refugee who likely caused Kohle's poisoning. The end of the fight leaves Dieter branded as a tough guy, not to be reckoned with, and he returns to the East, to the police station. His difficult task is telling the chief how the events occurred. The solution to all of the situations unfolds as Karl-Heinz goes to prison, Kohle is dead, Angela discovers she is pregnant, and Dieter intends to marry her. Dieter is also recognized as innocent. The film ends with Dieter leaving the police station as the police chief says "Make a fresh start, boy" even though he is actually making the transition into adulthood (becoming a father, a husband, and a worker). This end not only reconstitutes the family as is the goal of the fairy and folktale, but it also applies to the blurred boundary between adulthood and childhood that is typical of the generational other in postwar German film.

These youths live at a literal crossroad in their lives and in their neighborhood. Not only do the vague definitions of adult and childhood appear in the chief's words at the end of the film, but also through the scene at the very beginning of the film when Angela's mother prepares to meet her lover. She is getting dressed up and putting on make-up. As Angela leaves, she questions her mother "Back at twelve? As usual?" in the tone of a parent reminding her child of curfew, but reversing the role; Angela must stay out until twelve, not return by then. Angela leaves so that her mother can meet with her lover, but between the mother's preparations and Angela's comment as she leaves, the two seem to have switched familial and generational roles. Later, when Angela goes

to a club with Dieter, Karl-Heinz, and another girl, the theme of blurred distinctions appears in the singer's song about "here and there" and "now and then," further driving the ambiguity that represents so many things in this movie, including age.

Klein and Tressler's cinematic "studies" focus on this fluid relationship between parents (adults) and children. In *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels*, Uta Poiger explores *Berlin Ecke Schönhauser* as a social study (124). According to Poiger, the reviewers of the film found that it explored "the psychology of youth" and placed the blame of the youths' behavior on the single (likely widowed) mother, step-fathers, "parents who were not paying enough attention to their children," and the West's attraction of "weaker characters" (126). I argue that the parents' generation had stunted or even reverted their adulthood during World War II and in the postwar period and had not yet matured enough to complete the process of social development.

If the point, then, is for the adult audience to learn from the child protagonists in these films, what can or should the adult audience learn? *Irgendwo in Berlin* appeals to the playful, optimistic side of childish behavior. Through play and fantasy the audience can conclude that the goal to return to a normal way of life is worthwhile because of its therapeutic and reconstructive benefits. According to this film dwelling on the past does not allow one to move forward. While *Deutschland im Jahre Null* may seem, initially, pessimistic, Rossellini claims it has an optimistic message. The death of Edmund is not the death of the future, but rather the death of the past. By blurring Edmund's identity with adulthood, the film connects him to the war and to the philosophies and ethics of National Socialism. *Rotation* offers the audience a vessel through which they can start to work through the guilt of the Nazi influence on German identity, one of the steps

towards aligning with victimhood that becomes a common reaction in postwar Germany. *Toxi* uses the childhood need for acceptance to make the audience realize that they need to be open and accepting. The film also tries to discount the racist ideology and ignorance from which the country has just emerged by offering curious images explaining her physically and commentary, some by Toxi herself, explaining her sameness. *Berlin Ecke Schönhauser's* hero, Dieter, becomes the ideal model for the wayward East German youth. He is good at heart, but has found himself in a situation of borders – between places, times, and different statuses. Unlike Edmund in *Germany Year Zero*, Dieter is connected with the future and cut off from the past. The film ends with his renewal from youth orphan to adult parent. *Die Halbstarken* does exactly what its warning at the beginning suggests, showing the effect of straying from the path of the nuclear family and thus disrupting the foundation of society. All of these films offer an optimistic view of the future, but require their audience to grow up psychologically and socially. To reconstruct their lives, the adults must reclaim their power and look ahead. They must reaffirm the difference between childhood and adulthood. These films, then, may appeal to the childish nature of the adult audience, but invoke their mature side for hope and action.

### CHAPTER 3 CHILDREN IN NEW GERMAN CINEMA

A new era of postwar West German national cinema began in 1962 with the Oberhausen Manifesto, in which filmmakers rejected their postwar predecessors and insisted on new film industry practices. These filmmakers wanted to break away from traditional industrial practices that they perceived as corrupt and offer a “new language of films.” The filmmakers ended their manifesto with the declaration: “The old film is dead. We believe in the new one.” Scholars and critics have offered other starting points, such as particular films, years of peak film production, or important establishments within the industry;<sup>11</sup> others simply try to define New German Cinema by its subject matter, by a certain group of filmmakers, or by its style.<sup>12</sup> Scholars and critics have varying ideas of the end of New German Cinema.<sup>13</sup> The complexity of defining the era and the unifying factors of New German Cinema parallel the complexity and variation with which the filmmakers themselves attempt to create an identity for West

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<sup>11</sup> Hans-Günther Pflaum and Hans Helmut Prinzler (1993) suggest that the significant event for the changes in cinema occurred with the establishment of the *Kuratorium junger deutscher Film* (Council of Young German Film) in 1965 (10). Anton Kaes (1992) and Sabine Hake (2002) both distinguish “Young German Film,” which appears in the early to mid-sixties, from “New German Cinema.” Kaes claims *Der Junge Törleß* (dir. Volker Schlöndorff, 1966) as one of the first films of “Young German Film” and Hake identifies “Young German Film” by “three basic tendencies: the return to social realist forms and documentary influences; the revival of avant-garde and experimental practices; and the critical engagement with popular culture and other modern mass media” (9, 149, respectively). John E. Davidson (1996) claims the showing of Volker Schlöndorff’s *Der Junge Törless* and Alexander Kluge’s *Abschied von Gestern* at the 1967 New York Film Festival inaugurated the international recognition of Germany’s new cinema and new directors.

<sup>12</sup> Any book-length study about New German Cinema wrestles with the problem of defining New German Cinema. See Thomas Elsaesser’s *New German Cinema: A History* (1989), Bruce Arthur Murray’s “The New German Cinema’s Historical Imaginary” (Murray and Wickham, 1992), and Timothy Corrigan’s *New German Film: The Displaced Image* (1994).

<sup>13</sup> Some, like Corrigan, consider 1977’s collaborative film *Deutschland im Herbst* a “symbolic pole for the central years of what is commonly called the New German Cinema” (xv). As suggested by Elsaesser some critics and scholars see Fassbinder’s death in 1982 as the end of this period of German cinema. John E. Davidson claims that the end of the Cold War is also the end of New German Cinema (*New German Cinema*; 9, 68).

German cinema after World War II and, as I argue, for themselves as West Germans after the war.

Because it has been so difficult to define the New German Cinema in precise terms, scholars, critics, and even filmmakers choose to point out the commonalities. Hans-Günther Pflaum suggests that “the search for *Heimat*... is the central motif since the days of the Oberhausen Manifesto” (85). Within their searches for *Heimat*, New German filmmakers explored a number of other themes. Anton Kaes states: “In its beginning the New German Cinema was engaged in a critical project of providing images that polemically challenged the existing amnesia as well as the repression of the past; the filmmakers insisted on questions of responsibility, guilt, and the legacy of history for the present” (197). Elsaesser’s lengthy investigation of New German Cinema summarizes the common themes of this period: “Loneliness, homelessness, isolation, fear and failure” (*New German Cinema* 211). He also connects isolation and fear with guilt and responsibility through the main protagonists of New German films (*New German Cinema* 293). These themes suggest melancholy and vagueness, symptoms of the generation’s crisis of identity.

Defining the era by commonalities led to the recognition of a shift in New German Cinema in the mid-1970s that was a symptom of the second generation’s path of identity development. In his contribution to *Framing the Past*, Elsaesser claims that, up until this shift, films of the New German Cinema “avoid[ed] reference to any precise temporality of events...Yet barely half a decade later...appeared set to have its identity firmly located in a brooding obsession with Germany’s recent past as a nation”

("Historical Imaginary" 280-281). Kaes connects this path of identity development, or "quest," to childhood and traditional German tales:

a quest that could entail a *return to personal childhood memories or an exploration of German myths*...A new focus on individual life stories and the history of everyday life (rather than political history), an emphasis on subjective memory, a differently nuanced concern and empathy with the Germans as victims, and, connected with this, a characteristic shift from aggressive male protagonists to silently suffering female main characters whose violated bodies stand as emblems of a devastated Germany. (198, my emphasis)

Elsaesser finds that the main area in which these new foci unfold is the family, which is unsurprisingly the area of the generational other (*New German Cinema* 216). He also finds that "the New German Cinema...predominantly rearticulated the past as family melodrama, psychic trauma, and repetition compulsion," thus bonding the traumatic effects of the war and Nazi era with the family, the first social unit to affect identity formation ("Historical Imaginary" 293).

Generational discontent and its influence on identity appear in the language used to explicate the genealogy of New German Cinema. References to film from the 1950s as *Papas Kino*, the use of "old" and "new" as descriptors of past and current films and their makers, and the use of paternal terms for the earlier pre-Nazi generation of Weimar filmmakers all highlight the influence *generation* has on this group's attempt to create an identity, whether for themselves or for their cinema. Pflaum and Prinzler claim "the pioneers of the New German Film were all virtually fatherless in artistic terms,"<sup>14</sup> but the generation of these "pioneers" not only had to create its cinematic identity because of the gap in filmic predecessors caused by Germany and German national cinema

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<sup>14</sup> This statement is also found in Hans Günther Pflaum's essay "Auf der Suche nach Heimat" from *Film in der BRD*, ed. Heinz Müller, 1990, as "*Die jungen filmmacher der Bundesrepublik hingegen waren, in künstlerischer Hinsicht, eine vaterlose Generation*" (15).

under the Nazis, but also had to work towards a national and personal identity destroyed by the same cause (89).

In my dissertation, *New German Cinema* is defined as the movement headed by young filmmakers who were born during or just after World War II, who attempted to reconcile their identity with that of their parents whose guilt of witnessing and participating in the Nazi era caused a rupture in the construction of a German identity for the younger generation. The nearly twenty-year span during which these films were made, from the mid-sixties until the early eighties, was a time in Germany when the second generation entered adulthood. In trying to find their own identity, the members of this generation uncovered the guilt of their parents' generation. The group from Oberhausen decided to break from the traditional parental authority and rescue German cinema from what they called "Papas Kino" and return international artistic recognition to German film, unseen since the Weimar period. Not only was this a reaction to Hollywood-style musicals and melodrama and the German *Heimat* films, but it was also a reaction to the postwar traditionalism that became a dominant way for West Germans to work through their tainted past. This generation questioned the German past in its attempts to create an identity, requiring coming to terms with Germanness and German culture, which suffered due to appropriation by the Nazis.

The younger generation, powerless against its parents' role in the development of a National Socialist Germany, worked through this impotence by returning to familiar stories, such as *Der junge Törless*, a 1906 book by Robert Musil, and *Die Blechtrommel* by Günther Grass (1959); by filming its own stories in (semi-)autobiographical films; or by referencing familiar tales such as *Alice in Wonderland* and the story of Kaspar

Hauser, a feral child from the Nineteenth century. The films discussed in this chapter—*Der junge Törless* (*Young Törless*, dir. Volker Schlöndorff, 1966), *Alice in den Städten* (*Alice in the Cities*, dir. Wim Wenders, 1974), *Jeder für sich und Gott gegen alle* (*Every Man for Himself and God Against All*, dir. Werner Herzog, 1974), *Die Blechtrommel* (*The Tin Drum*, dir. Volker Schlöndorff, 1979), and *Deutschland bleiche Mutter* (*Germany Pale Mother*, dir. Helma Sanders-Brahms, 1980)—rely on child and child-like protagonists to act as the spectator's other through which the adults can recognize and articulate their inherited guilt and move towards a functioning postwar German identity.

### **Literature in New German Cinema**

Fairy tales play a role in films of the New German Cinema, but this generation of filmmakers has taken the connection between identity development and fairy tales as a traditional socializing tool further, referring to other, more mature national literary traditions as well. Sabine Hake suggests that the appropriation of literary sources during New German Cinema occurred because of “a middle-class phenomenon propelled by the desire...of moving beyond the high-low culture divide and of elevating film to the level of other arts” (160). Beyond the articulated goal of these filmmakers to bring German film back to its height of artistic success, the role of traditional literature in a new context (*postwar* German cinema) connects to the deeply rooted seeds of culture, on which these filmmakers rely to help them produce a cinema of significance and an identity they can embrace. Wolfgang Gast calls “filming literature” “*eine Grundform kultureller Überlieferung und Traditionsbildung*” [a basic form of cultural tradition and traditional development] (12). He also reminds us that not only are the artists changing the medium in which they tell the story, but they are also giving the story significant additional meanings due to the context in which it is being filmed (14). The

*Literaturverfilmung* (film adaptation) that took place during the New German Cinema, therefore, occurred because of more than the filmmakers' need to reclaim the artistry of German cinema; it also occurred because the filmmakers and their audience needed to base their developing national identity on cultural products that escaped the Nazi stain.<sup>15</sup>

Like fairy tales, stories and genres from the German literary canon were familiar to the spectators, creating a situation in which the audience follows the story (and for the purposes of my project, the child protagonist) as it is told anew through the context of a postwar state mired in an identity crisis. Kaes suggests that familiar structure allows “these films [to] interpret national history for the broad public and thus produce, organize, and homogenize public memory” (196). In his history of New German Cinema, Elsaesser interprets this creating a public memory as “a mode of dealing with both positive and negative experiences in a form where fact, desire and memory enter into a single image or coherent narrative, unifying existence for those who live at the margins of history or in opposition to it” (*New German Cinema* 214). He highlights the myths of Barbarossa, Siegfried, Parsifal, and Faust as examples, explaining that these “myths...can be seen as fables of identity, promises of reconciliation, the assertion of unity in the face of and as protest against fragmentation and division” (214). In this “national experience [of literature],” proposes Elsaesser, one finds “obsess[ion] with wholeness, unification and identity” as well as symptoms “of a history marked by division, particularism, regionalism and decentredness, punctuated by brief and usually

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<sup>15</sup> I would be remiss to neglect mentioning other, more practical reasons for using literature as sources. Pflaum and Prinzler claim budgetary constraints, industry executives' preferences of “safe literary material,” and even political influences (31). Hake also reports funding as an issue for using literary sources, but she also suggests the system for choosing screenplays leaned itself to “literary biases” (161).

disastrous periods of centralized military-bureaucratic rule” (214). By using known stories and genres, and therefore structures, films based on literature act as a unifying force in overcoming the breakdown of the German national identity.

Filmmakers of this generation were influenced by Romanticism because, as Elsaesser suggests, the artists of the period experienced a similar attempt to break from tradition (*New German Cinema* 212). “Quite logically, it [the ‘German question’] led many of them to a rediscovery and revaluation of a specifically Romantic tradition – that of Utopian idealism and radical subjectivity” (Elsaesser, *New German Cinema* 212-213, 306). The rebelliousness and the need to discover their German self left the filmmakers of the New German Cinema in a philosophical, and possibly psychological, position similar to the Romantics. Alongside this connection to Romanticism, the *Bildungsroman* also finds its way into discussions about some New German films, especially those discussed in this chapter. The *Bildungsroman* narrates personal growth, focusing on the hero’s inner self and that inner self’s relationship to the hero’s outer world. It is no wonder, then, that some of the films from New German Cinema include elements of the *Bildungsroman* and are sometimes described as such or even as anti-*Bildungsroman* (Corrigan 134). Because the collective German identity was stunted by its connection to the recent past, artists turned to familiar modes of identity formation, especially canonical literature that followed protagonists with the same goals.

### ***Der junge Törless***

*Der junge Törless* is often recognized as the first film of New German Cinema. The film is based on Robert Musil’s novel by the same name and it follows Törless through a short time at his boarding school in rural Austria around the beginning of the Twentieth century. Törless becomes enmeshed in the problems of his friends Beineberg and

Reiting. Basini, a classmate, owes Reiting some money, but he does not have it. Basini steals from Beineberg to get the money and gets caught by the boys. Reiting, Beineberg, and, by alliance, Törless decide to take Basini's retribution into their own hands, leading to acts against Basini that both intrigue and disturb Törless. As Reiting and then Beineberg torture and humiliate Basini over several days and nights, Törless questions how his friends' behavior can become so brutal and cruel, while Basini becomes complacent. At the same time, Törless wonders about his own behavior as complicit witness. Törless' greatest struggle, he says, is trying to understand these changes based on what he has been taught about humans and reason. The film ends with Basini's thefts and the boys' misbehavior coming to the attention of the faculty of the school and Törless leaving the school after finding the authorities' response to the situation superficial.

Scholars and critics have claimed that this film constitutes a parable of the passive culpability meant to remind spectators of the path through National Socialist cruelty to their current postwar state. This has come to be accepted as the most popular interpretation and is even included in the introductory insert of the Criterion Collection's 2005 release of the film: "it uses the novel as a refractive lens through which to examine contemporary German history and, more exactly, the violence and psychological strain that have linked public and private life in modern Germany." This view is supported by earlier statements by Eric Rentschler, Elsaesser, and Kaes.<sup>16</sup> The film's connections to

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<sup>16</sup> From Eric Rentschler's chapter "Specularity and Spectacle in Schlöndorff's *Young Törless*": "*Young Törless* took part in the definitive postwar project in Germany, that of 'coming to grips with the past' (*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*), in an oblique, yet decisive manner, portraying with its study of young cadets in an Austrian military academy predispositions that would become dominant structures during the Third Reich" (177). From Thomas Elsaesser's *New German Cinema*: "Schlöndorff in the 1960s had worked into his film heavy allusions to authoritarianism and Facism" (90). From Anton Kaes' *From Hitler*

its contemporary spectators and their national and cultural history make it a representative example of its usefulness to its generation. Making those connections through an adolescent protagonist necessitates the film's inclusion in my investigation of the generational other.

The characteristic of borderlessness in the *adolescent* protagonists in this film epitomizes the dichotomy of the adult's and child's worlds. The adolescents in the film are neither quite children nor quite adults. Through this unsettling confusion of the protagonists' generational identity, spectators are unable to connect firmly with the protagonists, therefore offering a less confrontational way to experience the culpability of witnessing torture. During the opening scene at the train station, Törless' father asks Beineberg to look after his son despite their similar age while Törless' mother refers to her son as her "little child." Together, the comments initially set up the confusing dual identities of the young characters. If they are peers, how can one be the care-giver and one be the child? Then, as the youths walk to their school, they encounter peasants and townsfolk with whom they play and flirt. In the town, as one person tries to walk through the group, the boys join and lift up their hands like children pretending to be a bridge. The townsfolk refer to them as "boys," "young ones," or "children." In town, one woman calls them "*die jungen Herren*" (the young gentlemen). Their professors, on the other hand, talk to them and treat them as children even when they want to discuss something as mature as philosophical questions. When Törless visits his professor of mathematics to discuss imaginary numbers, the professor offers him candy and tells him he is just too young and ignorant for such numbers to make sense. He must simply

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*to Heimat*: "The story is used to reflect the history of the many intellectual conformists during National Socialism who stood by silently as atrocities were committed" (9).

accept them in order to do calculations and maybe when he is older and more learned he will understand them. A similar situation occurs at the end of the film when Törless discusses his role in the events involving the other three boys. He tries to speak to the faculty on a mature level, but they simplify his ideas and redirect his concerns by asking if he is a man of science or religion in order to guide him to the right educational path. Of course, Törless denies both, and they refuse his philosophical reflections.

When the boys are away from the school, the distinction between adult and child is further blurred. For example, during their first extended break from school, the boys are sitting at a restaurant in town drinking, smoking, and reading the newspaper – behaviors associated with the adults of the upper class. However, in the middle of this, Törless asks Beineberg what he wants to be (when he grows up), once again showing on screen and in dialogue this doubling of identity that these protagonists take on. The dichotomy of identities continues when they leave the restaurant to visit Bozena, a prostitute. She greets them: “What sweet boys have come to me?” and “Nice of you to visit me. Or did the man in you bring you here?” Bozena also compares them to her baby, all while stroking and kissing them. Her words clearly address them as boys, but her behavior with them and the fact that they are in her domain interpolate them as adults.

Although all the boys are placed in both realms, Törless becomes the focus of this ambivalence. He is an outsider and only part of the other boys’ complex relationship because of his association with Beineberg. Elsaesser suggests that the outsider character in Schlöndorff’s films “gives the spectator the illusion that s/he shares the hero’s singular perspective” and is an “ideologically significant stand-in for the spectator,

inviting identification, but one that can entail quite a radical experience of otherness” (*New German Cinema* 132). Törless is an outsider in a number of ways. He does not agree with Beineberg’s perspective, nor Reiting’s, nor theirs together, nor even Basini’s. He does not belong to the traditional educational structure as he constantly questions it, and therefore is outside the traditional cultural structure as well. Törless’s placement as an outsider, albeit on the inside as voyeur, offers a character with which the audience can identify – he is a passive observer of the offenses happening in front of him, like the spectators who observe what is on screen. In the context of postwar Germany, he serves as a reminder of the legacy of culpable passivity that occurred in Nazi Germany.

As this film shows, “generation” plays an important role in a connection to the audience and to the collective problem of coming to terms with the past. Hans-Bernhard Moeller and George Lellis suggest how Schlöndorff managed to achieve the spectators’ identification with Törless cinematically, but adding the dimension of age to an approach to the film allows us to gain a clearer understanding of the strength of the generational other. Its importance contrasts with its absence in critical studies. For example, Moeller and Lellis argue that Törless’s personal and political development creates “a complex discourse about German culture and politics in the mid-twentieth century” (27). Although their analysis repeatedly refers to Törless’s adolescence, they analyze what that means for the film as a symptom of the generation’s attempts to develop a productive collective (national) identity instead of a melancholic, static collective identity. Their argument begins with the boarding school genre in which the “hero undergoes the crisis of initiation into the world of adults – a “passage” that mixes day and night, light and dark, ethics and moral corruption” (27). This statement, early in their reading of the film,

supports the understanding of adolescence as inherently confused, but they do not recognize what this can mean for the generation represented on screen and the generation of the audience which is also mired in deciphering a world stained by the same dualities of identification that plague Törless.

Of the New German films discussed in my dissertation, *Der junge Törless* is least connected to the fairy tale tradition. But its position as first in this era and the fact that it is the cinematic version of a recognized published story allow for its inclusion despite its distance from the fairy tale tradition. Several films of this era fail to reach the same conclusion as fairy tales – reconstitution of the family unit in a patriarchal order. The paralysis experienced during this generation’s attempt to create an identity begins within the family unit. Because the final point of this film is not reconstitution of the family and social order but rather the first step of dealing with guilt and trauma, i.e., articulating questions about the past, the narrative will not follow that of the fairy tale. Instead, the bond with the audience occurs in the familiarity with the story and the dual identity of the protagonists.

### ***Jeder für sich und Gott gegen alle***

*Jeder für sich und Gott gegen alle* tells the story of Kaspar Hauser, a feral and imprisoned youth from the early 19th century who is brought out of his confinement and abandoned in a town square. Several townspeople share responsibility for him until a benefactor takes him in to educate and “civilize” him. While Kaspar learns how to speak, write, and behave according to society’s expectations, he does not come to completely understand the world around him or the logic of so-called “civilized” humans.

Ursula Sampath proposes that the character of Kaspar has been connected with the powerlessness of the child throughout the tradition of his tale (52). This film,

however, subverts that connection by casting an adult actor as the young protagonist and by the ways in which Herzog portrays the character in the film. Despite actor Bruno Schleinstein's (commonly referred to as Bruno S.) obvious adulthood, his portrayal throughout the film helps the audience perceive him as a child, beginning with the first glimpse of him sitting on the ground playing with a wooden horse. This starts a sequence that sets up the adult-child power binary between the protagonist and the adults in his life. A cloaked man, obviously an adult, keeps Kaspar, a boy, imprisoned. As the adult and as the guard, the cloaked figure dominates their relationship, but the audience's focus on him is discouraged by his cover. In the following shots, however, Kaspar also resists the audience's gaze. The first time the camera closes in on his face from the front, he averts his eyes. He refuses to look forward, i.e., at the audience. Despite this dismissal of the audience's gaze and his subjugation by the cloaked figure, Kaspar carries the power in the relationship with the adult audience by so obviously denying his own returned look, leaving the spectators powerless over him.

This early sequence of Kaspar and the cloaked figure also connects the second generation's crisis of identity to Kaspar's victimhood. Kaspar's experience thus far can be said to parallel the audience's because part of Germany's recuperating process after World War II included feelings of victimization as a way of dealing with loss. The second postwar generation, to which the New German Cinema belongs, continued to express the strain of being the innocent offspring of the culpable generation through the false identification as victim. Kaspar and his audience have an undeveloped identity at this point – Kaspar's is individual, this generation of German audience's is collective. Because the audience's own identity is preoccupied by a victim-complex with its own

collective past, the spectators begin to connect with Kaspar. Despite his seeming weakness, he subverts the gaze, giving the audience reason to believe that he has some kind of power which they wish for. The spectator further connects with Kaspar during the carnival sequence which displays him as a freak of nature alongside several other human curiosities. A common analysis of this scene in scholarship connects the spectator to Kaspar both on the screen (as he is an object of the diegetic audience's look) and in the theater (as the cinematic object of the theater audience's look).

Sampath insists that Herzog intended the audience to identify with Kaspar and his fellow exhibits, not with the carnival spectators (52). Brad Prager explores the outsider as an important character in Herzog's films, suggesting that the "outsiders are placed at the centre of things, represent[ing] a self-reflective re-ordering: we know that Herzog means for us not to see Kaspar as marginal, but that it is our own behaviour – that of a society that would marginalise a well-meaning man-child such as Kaspar – which should be put on display and scrutinized. The gaze is thereby inverted" (67). The audience members are invited not to objectify Kaspar Hauser and the others, but to place themselves in the position of the object. The audience therefore becomes connected to the victim, the object.

Until the time in the film when Kaspar begins writing his autobiography and his life is threatened, the camera places Kaspar in its gaze, fostering a relationship of otherness between Kaspar and the audience, but as he begins to write his own story, i.e., to articulate his "self," the audience begins to see shots from his perspective, visually placing the audience in Kaspar's point of view and fully realizing the connection between adult audience and child protagonist. The audience began as adults looking at

a child, but the child's ability to work through obstacles during identity formation gave him power that the audience did not have in their own identity building. The line between audience and protagonist disappears, however, imbuing the audience with the youthful tools to work through trauma and identity crisis. Because the second postwar generation still had not come to terms with the past, its halted development is represented by Kaspar's murder at the time when he begins to tell his story and the camera begins to take on his point of view. When he seems to finally be able to bring his story into the symbolic and the audience has fully connected with him, the cloaked figure attacks and kills him, denying a conclusion that would reveal all. This unfulfilled development, though pessimistic, is not uncharacteristic of the New German Cinema and reflects the inability to thoroughly develop a satisfactory identity.

The appropriation of power by the figure of the child develops throughout the film in scenes of Kaspar's interaction with children that are paralleled with his interactions with adults. From both he learns about his physical self, animals, and language. Adults look foolish, ignorant, and cruel when they interact with Kaspar. Children, however, have a degree of success with him. The children around Kaspar are associated with safety while the adults are associated with terror; even the jailer and his wife scare Kaspar. These realms of safety and terror have been portrayed in the tropes of body and animals, but the influence of children and adults on Kaspar's entry into the symbolic world, which is Lacan's label for the world of language and law, is also disparate. The children teach him to recognize the self by teaching him body parts, a normal step in language and identity development. The adults, however, want him to first recognize the other, and to recognize the other as dangerous. One of the town guardsman uses

swordplay to test Kaspar and to demonstrate for the townspeople and officials that he does not recognize danger, i.e. he does not recognize the other. When he does not respond to a sword lunging at him, they encourage him to touch the flame of a candle. When Kaspar touches the flame and is burned, the camera focuses on his face, on his gaze. To prevent succumbing to the subjugation of the gaze of the spectator, and therefore losing all his power in the relationship, Kaspar deflects the audience's scopophilic power by subjecting them to his look, thus giving him as child power over the cinematic and diegetic audience as adult.

Anatomy is one trope through which the spectator can see a difference between the adults' relationship with the world and the children's. The adults inspect Kaspar's anatomy in relation to their own views of what is normal, for example, but the jailer's young son, Julius, uses Kaspar's anatomy as a way to introduce him to language and therefore to the social order. The town officials inspect his body upon their first interrogation in the stable. They catalog and record the state of his feet, his vaccination marks, and the injuries on his arms. At the end of the film, the doctors inspect his liver and his brain, noting their abnormal size and shape, respectively. Alternately, the jailer's son teaches Kaspar the names of body parts such as eyes, nose, ear, mouth, shoulder, arm, and hand. These body parts are necessary for sensing the world around him through sight, smell, sound, taste, feel. The boy even uses a mirror to help Kaspar understand these parts, which also literally puts the power to look in his own hands and references Lacan's "mirror stage," the first step into the symbolic world.

Two other instances in which the film highlights dealing with body parts include the jailer and his wife, both adults. Kaspar is frightened of them, but they treat him better

than the other adults do even though they never come to understand him. At first the jailer tries to sit Kaspar at his kitchen table to eat. Upon failing to do this himself, he calls in his son, telling him to take Kaspar's feet and they lift the foundling off the floor. Although the jailer is an adult and should therefore be inspecting Kaspar's body, he instead turns over the power to deal with particular parts of the body to the little boy who tells him where to put his feet, etc. A little later in the film, Kaspar and Julius are sitting in the tub to be washed, positing them as equals. The jailer's wife scrubs Kaspar clean as he laments "*Mutter, die Haut geht ab*" (Mother, my skin is going away). As she scrubs, she and her husband lift Kaspar to stand in the tub, revealing his naked backside to the camera, but she comforts him that he does not need to worry, she is not looking at anything, i.e., *inspecting* anything about him as the townspeople and officials do. In this she seems to position herself as care-giver rather than to take the position of the officials and townsfolk as assessors. Sampath likens these two adults to children in their relationship with Kaspar: "The children who first take the unmannered boy under their wing intuitively grasp his problems. The jailer and his wife, who are very simple people, still show a natural patience and charity" (68). Sampath connects these two adults and the children's simplicity to explain these misfit scenes that show caring adults juxtaposed to the cruel cloaked figure and the curious and objectifying town officials.

Herzog's use of animals also displays the power structure between Kaspar and adults and children. Kaspar's introduction to animals by children is a more trustworthy experience than that offered by the adults. Kaspar's scenes with animals are important because the hierarchy of provincial life pits animals as lower than children. In the context of the story, animals are the only beings lower than Kaspar in the social

structure. The figure of the horse is the first animal shown in the film and it is connected to adults throughout the film. At the beginning, the only diversion given to Kaspar in his prison is a toy horse. The townsfolk bring him to a stable and put him in with the horses for his assessment by the town officials. The horse is also important to Kaspar's entrance into language. His captor teaches him the word for horse and gives him a sentence about being a "gallant rider" like his father, both of which he repeats later in the film. Birds also have significance for Kaspar throughout the film. His first glimpse of a bird is in a cage in the jailer's house, representing imprisonment. In his first interaction with a bird, he plays with the bird using a stick, but he is gentle with it. This scene shows his attempt to have power over his own world and his own learning. Later, the figure of the bird becomes threatening when some men from the village bring a chicken into Kaspar's cell to taunt him. When they realize he is not paying attention to them, they hypnotize the chicken and use the creature's state as a way to terrorize Kaspar. Finally, the last bird in the film is also portrayed as aggressive. In the garden at Kaspar's benefactor's home, a stork is shown carrying around and then devouring a frog.

Just as with anatomy and children, Kaspar's experiences with animals and children are meant to introduce him to language, to bring him into the symbolic world. In one scene the jailer's son tries to teach Kaspar how to speak in sentences as Kaspar is shown playing with a cat. Kaspar lifts the cat up on its hind legs and walks it around the prison cell. The jailer's son kindly, but sternly, admonishes Kaspar, telling him that "*Die Katze kann nicht auf zwei Pfoten gehen*" (The cat cannot walk on two feet). This image mimics those we have seen before in the film of Kaspar's captor and the townspeople trying to manipulate his body – making him stand up, walk, and place himself at the

table – but in this instance, Kaspar is the one forcing his power unfairly onto an other. The boy's gentle reprimand acts as the alternative to a forceful one, which Kaspar experienced with the adults. Later, the figure of the cat continues to be important in Kaspar's process of language acquisition, which I will discuss in more detail later.

This film's link to Romanticism also affects the audience's connection to the young protagonist. One of the earliest studies of the New German Cinema suggests that Herzog's film is "steeped in German Romanticism, with its respect for the virtues of the 'natural', the 'wild', for the irreducible mysteries at the dark heart of life" (Sandford 54). Later scholars have further explored the film's connection to Romanticism. Prager points out the connections to Caspar David Friedrich, the Romantic painter whom Herzog claims as one of his sources and whose influence appears in the composition of the shots of landscapes and to authors Achim von Arnim, Friedrich Hölderlin, Joseph von Eichendorff, and Georg Büchner (82-83). Prager agrees with Sandford that the film's connection to nature reflects Romantic tendencies, and adds that "Herzog's 'quest' for sublimity and his employment of formal irony" also stem from Romanticism (83). Sampath claims a more specific connection of the Kaspar Hauser tradition to Romanticism through Rousseau, specifically through the treatment of Kaspar Hauser as a "noble savage" on the one hand and the misery of modern man on the other (58-78). Sampath recognizes the connection among Romanticism, Rousseau's philosophy, and the context of the times in which his story is appropriated:

If all these writers [the Romantics] had been content to retell the nineteenth-century mystery, one would not be surprised to find a Romantic slant to fit the tale. But in virtually all cases, writers use the historical elements with discrimination, in order to express other, superordinate ideas. So the question arises whether these Romantic or Rousseauistic ingredients are merely anachronistic embellishments, vestigial remains of

the original ambiance of the story which have hardened into conventions or even clichés, or whether they are in fact integral parts of the authors' statement, signaling a desire to revive tenets of Romanticism as an antidote to the sterility of our technical age. Several critics [Paul Kluckhohn, Theodore Ziolkowski, and Jakob Wasserman] have seen a conspicuous relationship between the mistrust of the putative forces of progress in the Age of Romanticism and the *Zivilisationspessimismus* of the twentieth century. (59)

This relationship is especially useful for recognizing the connection between rebels against the Enlightenment and postwar German reactions to National Socialism, especially from the second postwar generation. Herzog himself suggests that Kaspar stands outside traditional bourgeois society, but portrays normality next to that society's eccentricities (qtd. in Pflaum 62).<sup>17</sup> Hake calls Herzog's perspective in this film "anti-humanist... a radical critique of enlightenment rationality and classical modernity" (158). An example of Herzog's argument against Enlightened patterns of thought appears in the scene in which a logician challenges Kaspar. Herzog is not the only storyteller that portrays Kaspar as victim to this philosophy. Sampath suggests that twentieth-century tales of Kaspar Hauser develop his character as the "paradigm for modern man in general" through the loss of self in modern society (44). Despite being connected to the past through philosophies and tales, the film is also extraordinarily contemporary.

Another link to Romanticism appears in Kaspar's language acquisition, which brings together elements of human development and connections to German cultural heritage. Critics have explored the connection among language acquisition, socialization, and power in this film. Prager suggests the film is less about language acquisition than about "the violence that accompanies the process of socialization" (62).

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<sup>17</sup> Original source: Pflaum, Hans Günther, et al., eds. *Werner Herzog*. Reihe Film 22. Munich: Hanser, 1979: 68.

Sampath reminds us that the Romantics questioned language acquisition in the Romantic concept of *Sprachskepsis*:

Man's inner need and desire to communicate with his fellow men, and the role of language in society as a whole, were not seriously questioned until the end of the nineteenth century. At that time, *Sprachskepsis* became a conspicuous element of German literature, closely linked with the concept of alienation...More recent deconstructionist critics such as Jacques Lacan, for whom man's very entry into language signifies submission to the patriarchal order, gave the issue a further, political dimension and renewed importance." (106)

Focusing on Lacanian language acquisition as a force of patriarchy, Prager further explores the connection among language, society, Kaspar, and his "father:"

[H]is [Kaspar's] hand is put physically through the motion of writing. He is also at the same moment instructed in how to speak the word for 'writing'. This father-figure or guardian says to him 'wri-ting' ('Schrei-ben') as he moves Kaspar's hand across the page. Here the transition between the silent screaming,<sup>18</sup> the Schreien, and writing, or Schreiben, is emphasised. With the addition of a single letter Herzog moves us from the space of Kaspar's silence into written and spoken language, from Schreien to Schreiben. Once one has seen the whole film it may seem clear that this screaming is ultimately a call to return to an existence prior to the acquisition of language, or before the damage incurred by Kaspar's 'terrible fall'. (63)

These issues with entering language by writing one's name represent entry into the symbolic order by identifying oneself through language. Kaspar writes his name in two sequences of the film. The first is in the scene described above by Prager in which Kaspar's guardian guides his hand and sounds out the term *Schreiben* as he does so. The second time Kaspar sows his name in the garden with seeds. He speaks positively of this experience until he finds his name trampled. He cries at this and vows to sow it again. This scene is framed by a number of other images that stage dichotomous

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<sup>18</sup> The screaming refers to the quote at the beginning of the film, appropriated from Lenz, "*Hören Sie denn nicht das entsetzliche Schreien ringsum, das man gewöhnlich die Stille heißt?*" [My translation: Do you not hear that terrible scream around us that man calls silence?]

interpretations – as his rebellion against the patriarchal order (by writing his own name) and his sublimation to it (being victim of violent destruction). After asking the housekeeper about the usefulness of women, she suggests asking his caretaker, but he reports that he already did, leaving the spectator to assume that neither will give him an answer. Next, he sits at a small table in the garden writing a manuscript when he recounts his tale about sowing his name in the garden. The image cuts to a long take of a stork devouring a frog and then to another lengthy scene of Kaspar and Daumer boating. Afterwards Kaspar finds his name destroyed. By virtue of inscribing himself in the land and vowing to do it again after someone destroys it, he rejects the social and linguistic order being forced upon him. However, by succumbing to language, he also seems to have been unable to avoid the patriarchal order. A third event in the film can also attest to this dichotomy of rebellion and sublimation. Toward the end of his life, Kaspar writes constantly and he says that he will write his autobiography. At this point, however, his former captor and likely father takes Kaspar's life. While attempting to further define himself, he is destroyed by the father.

Kaspar's earlier forays into language, and therefore the social order, also reflect the power of the child. First, when eating with the jailer's family, Kaspar drinks water out of a cup, but when it is empty, the jailer's son lets him know that it is "*leer*" (empty) and he goes on to explain, tenderly, to Kaspar that nothing more will come out. He also tries to show Kaspar what he means by putting his hand in the upside down cup and tapping on the bottom. The father emulates his son's actions when Kaspar points at the jailer's cup and declares it "*leer*" although it is filled with beer; the boy teaches the word, explains its meaning kindly, and then shows him with his hands that one cup is full and

the other empty. Although the scene does not seem to highlight the significance of the young boy's attempt to teach Kaspar language, one must recognize that the boy initiated this care for Kaspar and the father took his cue from the boy, copying his method of teaching and learning language, thereby legitimizing and giving authority to the child.

This same authority appears in two parallel scenes of Kaspar being taught passages. First, the children are working with him and Agnes, a little girl, tries to teach him a nursery rhyme:

*Guten Morgen, weißes Kätzchen,  
Ist hier noch ein freies Plätzchen?  
Wenn du artig bist, dann ja,  
Trinke hier, ich trinke da,  
Schlapp, schlapp, schlapp, die Milch ist gut,  
Schlapp, schlapp, schlapp, wie wohl das tut.*<sup>19</sup>

Kaspar can only get to “*Ist hier*” in the second line. Julius, the jailer's son, reminds Agnes that it is too difficult for Kaspar because he only knows a few words. She, however, offers him the chance to expand his linguistic capabilities and does so with words that mean something to him. Kaspar has connected with the cat and the basic need to eat and drink. The rhyme becomes difficult for Kaspar when he reaches abstract notions such as an unoccupied space (an empty space), i.e., “*ein freies Plätzchen*.” So far, however, Kaspar has been unable and seemingly unwilling to communicate, but the scene shows him eagerly trying to learn from the girl. Later in the film, when he is living with Daumer the philanthropist, two preachers visit and inquire about Kaspar's thoughts while imprisoned to see if he had any pre-social spirituality.

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<sup>19</sup> Good Morning, little white cat/Is this seat free?/If you're good, then yes/You drink here, I'll drink there/Yum yum yum, this milk is good/Yum yum yum, this is really great.

When Kaspar suggests he needs to learn more language in order to understand them, they aggressively command him to simply have faith and believe in God. In their frustration they reprimand him for pressing his thumb and forefinger together when he speaks, then immediately and arbitrarily order him to repeat their prayer:

*Und der Friede Gottes welcher höher ist denn alle menschliche Vernunft,  
bewahre unsere Herzen in Christu Jesu, Amen.*<sup>20</sup>

The scene ends before Kaspar can even attempt to repeat the prayer. Unlike the rhyme taught by the children, this verse completely transcends Kaspar's understanding; nothing in the prayer fits into his world. He consistently tells the preachers he does not understand and even at the beginning of their conversation they agree that they are speaking about a subject that is too abstract for him. Unlike the children, they are also very aggressive toward him. When Kaspar works with the children on the nursery rhyme, the learning environment is much more inviting, leading to a positive reception of the lesson. When Kaspar speaks with the preachers, they are confrontational and condescending, offering a pessimistic account of Kaspar's development.

Romanticism enters the film as well through the film's connection to literature, which has been well documented. Prager remarks that "Herzog's screenplay, like his other screenplays, itself reads like a literary work" (61). References to the literary world also occur. The line from this film "*Hören Sie denn nicht das entzetzliche Schreien ringsum, das man gewöhnlich die Stille heißt?*"<sup>21</sup> constitutes a variation of a line from

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<sup>20</sup> From Philippians 4:7: And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (King James Version)

<sup>21</sup> Do you not hear that terrible scream around us that man calls silence?

Georg Büchner's "Lenz" (1835).<sup>22</sup> And, of course, the story of Kaspar Hauser has been used as the basis for many literary works, which Sampath catalogs and explores in her book. She writes that in adapting Kaspar Hauser's character into the many different modes of storytelling (stories, poems, plays, and films) the authors make him a "figure [of] emblematic significance, and...a catalyst for contemporary concerns" (2). For my project, however, I focus on the specific relationships with Romanticism, fairy tales, and the *Bildungsroman*.

Nineteenth century philosophical and literary movements inform the generational relationship within this film. The resistance of members of the New German Cinema generation to their parents and the first postwar generation's authoritarian upbringing parallels the resistance to the Enlightenment by the Romantics and its agenda for logic and reason. Herzog's film ridicules authority, logical reasoning, and their relationship with each other. This aligns Herzog with detractors of the philosophical movement of the Enlightenment, such as the Romantics, whom Herzog invokes at all levels of the film – from shot composition that references Romantic painters to dialogue and characters. Two other literary influences from the nineteenth century are the fairy tale, connected with fantasy, childhood, and social development, and the *Bildungsroman*, the novel which focuses on individual development and reason.

The next step in positing this film as anti-Enlightenment is to place it with the Enlightenment's contemporary detractors and see how Herzog's Kaspar connects to Romanticism and even the fairy tale. To connect it with the fairy tale, one must

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<sup>22</sup> *Hören Sie denn nichts? Hören Sie denn nicht die entsetzliche Stimme, die um den ganzen Horizont schreit und die man gewöhnlich die Stille heißt?* [Do you hear nothing? Do you not hear the terrible voice that screams across the entire horizon and that one generally calls silence?]

understand the connection not based on the magic and enchantment of the traditional tale, but on the status as legend and the familiar literary structure. Prager calls the tale of Kaspar Hauser a legend (60). Sampath calls it “the negative fairy tale” (23) and argues that the story of Kaspar Hauser includes elements of the fairy tale: “The prince held in a secret dungeon, the good-natured simpleton who turns out to have extraordinary abilities, the changeling or orphan in search of home and parents, or the social outcast who has to overcome his state of repudiation” (23). However, she explains that normal experiences in fairy tales that help the hero overcome adversity do not work for Kaspar Hauser: the magical agent, love, animals (25-27). She concludes:

By choosing a protagonist who so obviously combines many of the initial characteristics of the conventional fairy tale hero, and then drawing attention to the failure of the traditional and expected support system, authors can express their view that the established framework of beliefs has become questionable in their time, and that the victim can no longer count on outside help. (29)

Herzog’s representation of this view in his film is symptomatic of the context of the second generation’s conflict with their parents’ generation. While Kaspar’s tale is certainly not a postwar construction, it is significant as a representative of the generation whose anxieties appear in this film. The connection this generation has with stories and literary genres from before World War II creates an identity which anticipates cultural greatness but which struggles with infected traditions.

### ***Alice in den Städten***

Wim Wenders’ *Alice in den Städten* (*Alice in the Cities*, 1974) focuses on a child’s role in bringing an adult out of a state of melancholy. *Alice* tells the story of Philip Winter, a German photojournalist who travels through the U.S. trying to find images and a story to offer his editor. Frustrated that the images misrepresent what he sees and

lack a story, Philip journeys back to Europe. At the airport in New York he meets a German woman and her daughter. The woman abandons her daughter with him, saying she will catch up with them in Amsterdam. He takes Alice, the daughter, with him, but her mother's absence when they arrive in Europe causes Philip to become responsible for the young girl who insists that they find her grandmother. The pair sets out for a trip around Germany's *Ruhrgebiet*, an area in Western Germany known for its population density and heavy industry. They cannot find the grandmother at first, but after several inquiries and much travel, Philip discovers that the grandmother is in southern Germany. The film ends as the pair head to Bavaria, where her grandmother, and, by this point, Alice's mother are waiting.

Alice and Philip exemplify the relationship of the generational other and, specifically, that postwar symptom of the child's ability to affect the melancholy and identity of the adult. In an article on the lost ego and this film, Jean-François Boulín describes the psychological basis of this relationship: "...at the level of manifest content, the film is centered on the wandering, uprooting, and anguish of adulthood and its links to childhood" (55). Stuart Taberner calls the character of Alice "the catalyst for his [Winter's] successful quest for greater self-awareness" (126). Although Philip's role can be interpreted as a substitute father and he is placed in situations which obviously mark him as adult male, especially when paired with adult women, his undeveloped identity and inability to reach the symbolic with his work place him in the position of child. Alice is then placed in the position of adult as she leads him to Germany. She provokes him into story telling and associating it with pictures, his professional goal, and also gets him to admit his "fear of fear," a personal hurdle.

As his generational other, she defines him. Photography in this film connects Philip and Alice to questions of identity. Philip begins by being angry about the fact that his photos have not captured what he sees and the way he sees it. In three separate reactions to his pictures, Alice guides him away from this struggle. First, he takes a picture of the sky from the plane's window and, once it develops, she praises the emptiness of the shot. This legitimizes his photo and his visual language. Second, a policeman disregards an empty, undeveloped Polaroid picture that Philip shows him, an act of misrecognition when compared to Alice's reaction of the picture on the plane, both were "empty," but Alice, the child, recognized something in it. Finally, Alice takes a Polaroid picture of Philip and makes him look at it. Philip's self-recognition is visually interrupted for the audience by her reflection as she looks over his shoulder while he gazes at his own image. But he is also forced to see himself via her gaze in a re-imagined mirror stage, the first step in reconstructing his (personal and, as German, collective) ego. His original assessment that photos "never show you what you really see" is true until Alice becomes involved. "Instead of entering a vacuum, reflecting his own narcissism, he entered a more aware, more responsible state of being. Alice will therefore lead him to the other side of the mirror" (Boulin 61). His image is received and accepted when *she* looks at the photo.

The shift of power in the generational relationship relies on the ability of the child and the adult to cross over into the other's world, therefore making border crossing an important trope in films about the generational other. Philip's and Alice's journeys cross many geographical borders, but they also cross generational boundaries. Boulin highlights these areas:

Throughout, the film develops an interesting dialectic between the states of adulthood and childhood in which Alice and Winter come and go. They are on their way to both.... Alice has the age and appearance of a child, more so than anything else except the capricious side and focus on the immediate (food especially). Philip has the qualities of adult reasoning and culture, and the reactions to it. But he is also an adolescent in many ways, notably his egocentrism, his closing off of himself, and the inability to fix or settle anything. Only at the end of the film does the advantage tend towards and come to terms with adulthood due to Alice. (71)

Boulin's equation of Philip with adolescence and a journey of discovery connects the film to the *Bildungsroman* tradition. This is seconded by Taberner who writes that through "a journey of self-discovery which takes the past as the starting point of identity, rather than a future in uncharted lands without history...the movie becomes a *Bildungsroman*...in which the protagonist finally achieves maturity and social integration" (125). This connection becomes clearer when one looks at the scholarship of Martin Swales and Michael Minden and their definitions of the genre. Swales, in his 1978 study, suggests that the *Bildungsroman* can be appropriated by a variety of artists because it is "a vital fictional medium by which the German mind, through all its changing historical contexts, could explore and define itself" (7). Swales also explores two forces within the genre which later scholars take up and explore further. Swales calls these two opposing forces the *Nebeneinander* (coexistence) and the *Nacheinander* (consecutive) as representations of "[individual] potentiality and [societal] actuality" (29). This tension is also what drives identity formation.

"Potentiality" considers the hero's journey of self-recognition. He develops his identity and therefore his art and he is able to return home. "Actuality" represents that world outside of the hero in which must he live, i.e., the society to which he belongs and all the constraints and requirements that go along with it. For one to argue that Philip's

story emulates a *Bildungsroman*, one need only consider this duality. Taberner's description of Alice's role in the film aptly suits this explanation:

Alice reintroduces Winter to the passion for images from which he had become disconnected in America. She also inspires him once more to associate pictures with story-telling and thus to invest them with personal meaning. Finally, she helps him to resolve the crisis of male identity that derives, in part at least, from the rootlessness engendered by his inability to locate himself either in his German past or in the American present he had adopted as a substitute culture. (126)

Along his journey Philip not only acquires an identity for himself (as other against Alice), but also reclaims his art – he is able to tell stories and his pictures become filled, and finally he returns back to “the mother” as represented by Germany and Alice's mother and grandmother. The other component of the *Bildungsroman* duality is represented in Philip's development of an “actual” identity as Alice's father-figure, and by becoming able to tell stories and invigorate his photos with them; he also accomplishes his “actual” career goal, thus finding his place in the outer world.

Certain elements of the *Bildungsroman* also characterize areas of the film. Swales states that the *Bildungsroman* includes “...an inalienable need in man to have a story... [and] [t]he story, then, becomes the guarantor that one is living” (32-33). Throughout the film Philip bemoans his inability to tell a story until Alice gets him to open up. He cannot meet his editor's expectations, so he tells him he will finish the story in Germany. Only when he begins to tell Alice about his time in America does he become able to tell a story. Eventually, at a hotel in Germany, Alice asks specifically for a bedtime story. He agrees and starts with “*Es war einmal ein Mann*” (Once upon a time there was a man), then stops himself and starts over, “*Es war einmal ein kleiner Junge*” (Once upon a time there as a little boy), then at the end of the film, he agrees that he can finally write his story. This specific journey reaches its pinnacle during the bedtime story when he

changes from telling the story of an adult to one of a child. Making these changes in the presence of a child propels Philip to reach his goal.

Minden's notion of the *Bildungsroman* relates to my notion of the generational other. Minden writes: "The hero, hesitant about his creativity, relies upon the confident offices of one in no such doubt: the narrator...a mature and accomplished voice" (4). Because this film only contains characteristics of the *Bildungsroman* and does not completely encompass the genre, it only fits this description in a circuitous way. While Philip is "hesitant about his creativity," the voice upon which he relies is a child, not "a mature and accomplished voice." But it is Alice's natural innocence about the world that allows him to return to and understand his own self. Her outer world, her reality, has not yet succumbed to the melancholy that an adult would experience when struggling to work through a tainted or broken identity. As Philip's other, Alice's real search for roots (mother and grandmother) corresponds with his journey of identity development that forces him to begin to come to terms with being German.

*Alice in den Städten's* relationship with German literary tradition also includes a connection to the fantasy tale *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll (1865). Like the other films in my study, this film further connects to childhood via the fantastic, referenced in this case by Carroll's tale. First, the similarities in the title and the girl protagonist's name create a comfortable place to enter the film. Both stories follow the girls' journeys home – Carroll's Alice through Wonderland, Wender's Alice through New York City and the cities of Europe (Amsterdam in the Netherlands and several in Germany). In each story the Alices continuously transcend borders. Wender's Alice crosses geographical and generational boundaries; Carroll's Alice crosses

between real and imaginary worlds and also generational boundaries which are represented in her changes in size. She even refers to herself as “grown-up” but not older, positing both adult and child within her identity (46). Carroll’s Alice inquires about her identity because of all the changes she experiences (19). Wender’s film and Carroll’s story both end with a return home and a reconnection between the adult in each Alice’s life and childhood. In Philip’s case this reconnection offers an optimistic ending to his identity crisis.

### ***Die Blechtrommel***

*Die Blechtrommel* provokes the question why postwar Germany so thoroughly accepted Oskar as a legitimate character through whose eyes, as childlike as they are, the audience could look at Nazism and war. Oskar holds the unique distinction of experiencing the physical body of a child at the same time his mind explores the world as an adult. Schlöndorff’s film tells only part of Oskar’s story from Grass’ 1959 novel by the same name. The film begins with Oskar’s ancestry and the story of how his mother is conceived. At Oskar’s birth and afterwards, we see the family and community from Oskar’s point of view, either through the camera lens or through Oskar’s narration. The film follows Oskar’s fall and end to growing, the rise of Nazism in German-speaking Poland and its effect on his life, his first love and subsequent fathering of a son, Oskar’s experience as part of an entertainment group for troops, his second love, and the end of the war and his intention to grow again.

Schlöndorff highlights Oskar’s duality as child and adult in a number of instances, focusing on generational conflicts. To remain a faithful adaptation, Schlöndorff needed Oskar to be both adult and child and in both first and third person. Moeller and Lellis recognize the different points of view stemming from Oskar and his personas:

“Schlöndorff alternates between objective third-person shots of Oskar, a spectator observing the action in a detached way, and highly subjective shots from Oskar’s point of view inside his environment. There is, in short, a multiplicity of Oskar ‘stances’ and ‘voices’ in the film” (173). The most significant decision of the filmmaker in regard to the adult/child duality, however, was his refusal to use an adult with dwarfism for the role of Oskar, but instead to cast twelve-year-old David Bennent, whose growth disorder made him look younger than he was.

In *Die Blechtrommel*, several clues leading to Oskar’s third birthday anticipate the power held by the child in the relationship of the generational other. The first word heard in the film is “*Ich*,” which Oskar speaks in a voice-over. This immediately aligns the perspective of the film with Oskar’s. All characters and points of view are subjected to his perspective as omnipotent narrator, and therefore the audience’s view is as well. Although Oskar should be the epitome of the castrated, lacking protagonist because he appears as a boy, he disrupts that function of the character because, first, his point of view dominates the shots on screen; second, he is seen *and heard* (with drum, screams, and the opening *Ich*); and finally, he eventually fathers a child, thus demonstrating his own phallic power.

Images of and references to the covered woman and the exposed man disrupt the power structure and set up the notion that this film will not accept traditional modes of looking, i.e., the dominant character in the relationship will possess the weaker one through the gaze, and the notion begins with the very first sequence. The grandmother is covered in *four* skirts, therefore denying any scopophilic sexualization. When she hides Josef, a man on the run from authorities, under her skirts, he takes advantage of

his position and rapes her. After the questioning police take their leave, Josef is let out of her skirts and the screen shows a close up of Oskar's grandfather buttoning up his pants. The second instance of focus on the male body occurs when Oskar's mother's cousin and lover, Jan, is being examined for the military; naked men are arranged in military order throughout the screen, on display for the spectators along with the military board. This scene is framed by parallel scenes of the women (old and young, mother and daughter) who are almost completely covered by long skirts and head scarves selling food in the market; first when Agnes is a little girl and then Agnes as a young woman. In a later scene, Jan meets Agnes for a sexual rendezvous and he is shown undressing before she even enters the room. Oskar's nakedness is even shown when changing with his caretaker at the beach. His body is displayed long before Maria begins to change her clothes and her breasts, buttocks, and crotch are never shown. In another sequence, even the *mise-en-scène* displays the male figure. After Oskar's third birthday, Nazis parade through the street and in front of the grocery store in Oskar's neighborhood as the grocer is moving his stock in and out of the basement. The camera discontinues following the parade and instead trails the grocer to his dark basement full of grocery goods and a contrasting white statue of Michelangelo's *David* displayed on a shelf.

Along with the focus on the male body in this film, the denial of the woman as sexual object of the gaze continues and the first sequence in which the viewer anticipates seeing a nude woman begins when Oskar goes with his mother on an outing into the town to get a new drum. There, after getting his new drum from the toy merchant who flirts with his mother, he witnesses his mother visiting Jan for a sexual

rendezvous. The camera follows Agnes from Oskar's point of view, but extends to trace the front of the building to an upper floor to see Jan looking out, and then the camera enters the pane to show what is happening in the hotel room. The spectator first sees Jan undressing before offering a view of Oskar's mother undressing. She enters and strips off her clothes quickly, but stays covered by her slip long after Jan has removed his clothing. Their nakedness is available to the audience's view, but as they come together, the audience is denied the traditional focus of the gendered gaze (Agnes' face, breasts, and genitals); the camera always keeps Jan in the frame with her and portrays their nakedness *together*. Even as they copulate, the camera pans up to a painting above the bed of women lounging in a field. Although the poses are reminiscent of classical paintings which include nudes, these women are completely covered. Later, at the beach, Jan helps Agnes take off her stockings and his hand plays under her skirt. As they walk, they watch a fisherman bring in his bounty – eels – which he has caught using a horse's head, causing Agnes to get sick. As she is vomiting, her husband chastises her for her response and Jan comforts her. As he comforts her, he rubs his hand over her rear. Afterwards, at home, she is upset about having to eat eels for dinner and she runs to her room crying. Jan goes in to calm her down and ends up fondling her to orgasm; her husband assumes that the noises are her sobs. These two fondle each other throughout these different scenes of the film and just as they hide their lust from Matzerath, Agnes' husband and potential father of Oskar, Schlöndorff denies the audience a traditional look at her body.

The same denial of nakedness happens with Oskar's sexual partners: Maria, Roswitha, and a neighbor. Maria is the teenage girl who comes to work for Oskar's

father in his shop and to keep house. She cares for Oskar as a child even though he is actually her age at this point in the film. The first time she takes Oskar to the beach, he plays with her as she sunbathes (she wears a two-piece swimsuit which leaves her belly uncovered). Later, she cleans the stairs in their building and Oskar watches her bending over scrubbing, but her dress keeps her body covered. At their second beach outing, the camera joins Oskar and Maria in the changing hut. After Oskar puts on his swimsuit, he watches her as she changes. When she turns to face him (and away from the audience), he lunges forward and buries his head in her crotch. Some writhing and gasps assumes that he is performing cunnilingus on her, but the audience does not see her body (she covers her own breasts and Oskar's head completely shields her), even when the camera moves behind Oskar's head. Next, they sleep in the same bed when Oskar's father goes off for a late night Nazi party meeting. In the bed Oskar seduces her with the same game he played on the beach, then crawls under the covers and has sex with her. The blanket not only covers her nakedness in this scene, but it covers Oskar completely as well. In the next scene Oskar walks in on his father and Maria having sex on the couch. Again, she is covered by her dress (he simply lifted her skirt). Finally, after Oskar leaves home and joins Bebra's entertainment corps of little people, he meets and falls in love with Roswitha. Their romance is shown sweetly, with a picnic, music, holding each other, and chaste kissing. In their last sequence together, they are roused out of bed by Bebra because they are being attacked. Again, Roswitha is first covered by the blankets and then a robe. In a much later scene, after Oskar has impregnated Maria, he is beckoned by a woman who lives upstairs; he gets into bed with her under the auspices of warming up, but they obviously mean to do more.

Between the blanket and her robe, no nudity is shown at all despite the obvious sexual intention of the scene.

This film's challenge to traditional modes of looking continues to manifest itself in the sequence of Oskar's birth. The scene begins with Oskar's narration of an astrological account and a shot of the street outside. Next, the image on screen takes the audience into a different setting – the womb. As the camera focuses on Oskar in utero, he locks the audience in his gaze for a length of time, and then the camera takes over his point of view as he is being born. The image rotates upside down, then rightside up as he is being turned by the midwife. Afterward, the camera switches from Oskar's point of view to that of those in the room. As he is being bathed (which is shown from the spectator's point of view), his parents discuss and predict his future. Then, the point of view returns to Oskar looking at his mother as she promises him a drum when he turns three and his voice-over pronounces that he will not protest his birth, even though he wants to return to the womb, in anticipation of that drum.

In Laura Mulvey's canonical essay on the gendered gaze, she recalls filmmaker Josef von Sternberg's comment that "he [Sternberg] would welcome his films being projected upside down so that story and character involvement would not interfere with the spectator's undiluted appreciation of screen image" (14). Although Mulvey's appropriation of Sternberg's statement is meant to exemplify the fetishistic scopophilia she claims his films engender, the statement has a different effect when thought about in regards to the scene in Schlöndorff's film of Oskar's birth. Instead of the rotation of the image causing the audience to separate from the narrative, Schlöndorff's upside-down shot from Oskar's point of view links the audience to Oskar's entrance into the

world, causing a non-traditional mode of identification for the spectator that removes the lacking character (the woman or, for my purposes, the child, i.e., Oskar) from objectivity and gives the power of identification to Oskar.

Immediately after his birth the film cuts to Oskar's third birthday on which he has received the tin drum that his mother promised at his birth. In this scene, he same language Mulvey uses to buttress her argument that the pleasure of looking at the woman is coded by beauty connects the traditional relationship of passive sexualized woman and active aggressive male and the relationship between (seemingly) weak child and (seemingly) powerful adult. The scene's dialogue equates beauty to youth, thus connecting young screen protagonists to a gaze like that of the gaze at adult female protagonists. In a toast, one man says "*auf die Jugend*" (to youth) followed immediately by a woman's addition, "*und auf alles Schöne*" (to everything beautiful). The statements are punctuated with Jan and Agnes's song as they all join in to croon "*Schön ist die Jugend*" (beauty is youth). This example illustrates how the framework of the gendered gaze can help us understand the power dynamic of the generational gaze.

Oskar's gaze during this scene also portrays his unexpected power over the diegetic and, by extension, the adult audience. Before Oskar decides to stop growing, he watches his mother and Jan singing at the piano; the camera takes on Oskar's point of view as well. Jan sneaks his hand in her blouse as they sing about love. During this observation Oskar's mother looks back at Oskar and, therefore, at the audience also. The reverse shot shows Oskar looking disapprovingly, not at the camera, but slightly back, in the direction of his mother and Jan. Their mutual looking is set up like a warped mirror image, a relationship that is paralleled by voice in this scene. Even though we

have yet to hear Oskar's scream, it is foreshadowed by his mother's high-pitched sustained note at the end of the song, again fortifying the connection between the subjects of the two gazes (first Oskar at his mother who responds to his look; second the audience at Oskar, who denies our look). In this scene the child protagonist refuses to succumb to the objectification of the audience's powerful gaze by denying its look.

Oskar's power continues to develop throughout the scene. After singing, the adults go to the table to play cards and Oskar tries to hide under his grandmother's skirts. After being rejected, he sits under the table, only to witness Jan's second fondling of Oskar's mother, this time with his foot. Oskar has the unique ability to see into this secret world of the adults under the table and witness the truth. Although this scene seems to connect the audience to Oskar's point of view, he deflects the connection to the adult audience by insinuating that he recognizes adults' deceptions, alluding to the German audience's flawed relationship with its recent past.

Originally, Grass' Oskar is a fantastic character – he is omniscient and can control his growth. On film, Oskar is outwardly a child, without the innocence of. As narrator, he is all-knowing, even from before his birth, and his experiences are not innocent. Carol Hall writes: "His penetrating blue eyes witness suicide, execution, disease, rape, chaotic violence, and the loss of loved ones" (237). Her comparison of the film to the novel finds Schlöndorff's Oskar grotesque and, she suggests his *grotesque* persona and ironic voice turn horrible events into comical ones (237-238). The distortion and exaggeration emanating from Oskar's character and narration reach other characters in the film portraying some of the events as dark comedy. First, the rape of his grandmother clearly shows that she is being taken advantage of, but the way it happens—the

grandfather hiding under her skirts—is absurd. Then, after he disappears some time later while the police attempt to apprehend him, Oskar narrates about the speculation that his grandfather got away to America and has become wealthy selling fire insurance and making matches. This particular scene is punctuated visually by the early film style of closing and opening the camera iris from one scene to the next. “Joe” is shown sitting at his desk smoking a fat cigar.<sup>23</sup> This scene contrasts with the poverty of Oskar’s grandmother and mother selling geese before World War I, then turnips after World War I in the cold marketplace.

The film also tells the story of the illness and eventual suicide of Oskar’s mother in this *grotesque* style. The spectator may sympathize with her horror of watching the eels being fished, then vomiting, and the painful way she rejects eating them for dinner, but when she succumbs to being forced to eat them, her behavior becomes obsessive and disgusting. She cannot stop eating fish – pickled, canned, etc.; any fish she can find in the store, she devours voraciously and gluttonously to her peril as it makes her sicker and sicker. Her craving is not simply due to her pregnancy, but it is an attempt at suicide and she eventually succeeds. Agnes’ traumatic demise is overshadowed by her obsession that causes other characters, and presumably the audience, to feel sick and want to turn away in disgust, but is so gross that they cannot help but look.

Carol Hall focuses on Oskar’s use of the drum to create this effect of the grotesque, but I suggest that it is actually the scream that causes it (238). First, when Oskar’s drum is broken, his father tries to take it away as his mother screams to leave

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<sup>23</sup> For films in Weimar cinema, this image of the big American man sitting behind a desk smoking a cigar commonly represented wealth, greed, and gluttony. (See *Die Austernprinzessin*, 1919, dir. Ernst Lubitsch, for an example.)

him alone and Jan, ever the interlocutor, attempts to placate everyone. Oskar screams and the glass on the clock shatters, ending the argument and shocking all. In this situation, Oskar has found a power he has over the adults. Next, Oskar begins school, but when the teacher tries to take his drum away, he screams again, this time shattering her eyeglass lenses, obviously a much worse outcome than the clock losing its glass face. He not only gets to keep his drum, but he has rendered the teacher powerless. Later, at the doctor's office, the doctor wants to examine his spine, but, again, Oskar refuses to let go of his drum. Here, Oskar's screams break the glass jars in which specimens of animals and even a fetus are kept. There are no further attempts to take his drum away. The subsequent occurrences of his shrieking are under his control. In finding his mother in a romantic assignation with Jan, Oskar climbs the clock tower in the town square and screams, shattering glass that rains down on the street below, causing a commotion. Later he does it for show – showing Bebra what talent he has, performing his screams in Bebra's show and as a way to impress Roswitha. At first his screams create chaos and absurdity, later they become amusement.

Another way to look at the absurdity or *grotesqueness* in the film is to consider its relationship to fantasy, most specifically to the fairy tale. As I have proposed, the use of familiar structures from childhood, such as the fairy or folk tale, comprises part of the power of the generational other. Despite Schlöndorff's realism, the film, beginning with the book from which it was adapted, lends itself to a number of fairy and folk tale structures and allusions. Oskar's cinematic tale includes folktale plot structures that Propp extrapolates in his study. The structures appear in different levels of the story: the family, the drum, and Nazism.

According to Propp, folktales begin with an absence followed by an interdiction and its violation. Within the film's story the first absence is the disappearance of Oskar's grandfather – first within the grandmother's skirts, then from Poland altogether. The absence of the (grand)father creates the circumstances that propel the tale. All three components of the tale include a warning and its dismissal. Within the family the social code against adultery and in favor of the sanctity of the nuclear family is denied immediately by Agnes' affection for both men. In the story of the drum, the father's reprimand against Oskar's playing his drum in the house leads to Oskar's glass-shattering scream which he continues to use throughout the film. The story of Nazism's rise in Poland includes interdictions for and against the party line, represented by Alfred and Jan, respectively.

At this point, Propp suggests, the villain appears. This is the case in each storyline. The threat to the family is Jan or Agnes or at least their relationship. The threat to Oskar's drum is Alfred. The villain for Poland is Nazism. The next steps in the folktale are the villain's attempts to gain information about the victim and then to deceive him or her, followed by the victim's submission, allowing the villain to harm the family. These steps are not clearly linear within the three storylines, but they do appear in each. Jan and Agnes deceive Alfred (and others) with their secret meetings and touches. Their villainous relationship threatens and eventually harms the family structure. In the story of the drum, Oskar's parents take him to the doctor to discover what is wrong with him, leading the astonished doctor to write about him in a medical journal. The story of Oskar and his drum, however, denies the traditional trajectory of Propp's folktale

structure. Several people try to trick or bribe Oskar into releasing his drum, but fail to do so, causing part of Propp's structure to remain incomplete.

At this point a "lack in the family" becomes known, causing the hero to mediate and counteract. His first action thereafter is to depart. Alfred recognizes the lack of an honest marriage as the basis for the family, causing Agnes to begin a downward spiral that leads to her death. Maria is brought in to replace her, initially as housekeeper and shop assistant, but later as lover, wife, and mother. The family still suffers from a love triangle, this time Alfred, Maria, and Oskar. Oskar remedies the situation by leaving to join Bebra's entertainment corps.

According to Propp, after this departure the hero meets a new character, the "donor," who will test the hero and aide him, often in the form of a "magical agent." In the film, however, this step occurs earlier, when Oskar first meets Bebra after the circus. Again, all three storylines merge here. Bebra himself is portrayed like a mysterious fairytale character. He claims he is a descendent of Prince Eugene and, like Oskar, he made himself stop growing, but when he was ten. Oskar shows him his talent of drumming, then screaming, shattering a lamp, thus fulfilling Propp's structural element that the donor tests him. The "magical agent," which Bebra imparts, is a riddled warning before Oskar is whisked away by his parents:

My dear Oskar, trust an experienced colleague. Our kind must never sit in the audience. Our kind must perform and run the show or it's the others who'll run us. And the others are coming. They will take over the fairgrounds. They will stage torchlight parades. They will build platforms and fill them and from those platforms preach our destruction.

This wisdom obviously foreshadows the military invasion, but also gives Oskar a place to belong, where his identity is not in question.

Next Propp expects the hero to enter a new location, but in the film it will be awhile before Oskar leaves home. He appears in the interim, however, in a number of new settings within his community: first at the Nazi rally in a field near town, then on the beach with his mother and father and Jan, then with his mother at church, in the graveyard and outside for his mother's funeral, followed by the post office, at the site of Jan's execution, then the beach with Maria, and outside his building but in the snow. Finally, he travels to Bebra and joins his troupe.

Propp's structure then continues with the hero and villain in combat, leaving the hero marked, the villain defeated, the misfortune or lack relieved, and the hero returned. In the story of the family, Oskar and his father's fight is saved for the end of the film. As the family hides in the basement, Russian soldiers enter. Oskar holds his father's Nazi pin in his hand and threatens to label him with it. Instead, the father takes it and swallows it to hide it, causing him to choke on it and die, leaving Maria, Oskar, and young Kurt as the family unit. At his father's burial, Oskar agrees to grow again, taking his place as man of the family. The story of the drum follows the story of the family and it is only when Oskar throws the drum into the father's grave and the Nazis are defeated that he agrees to grow. Propp's structure ends with the pursuit of the hero, his rescue, a task for him to complete, his recognition, the exposure of the villain, and then the reconstitution of the family. In this film the previous structures have already satisfied these elements.

One cannot explore folk/fairy tales and this film without covering the more overt references to the genre. First is Oskar's initial statement, "*Es beginnt weit vor mir*" (It began long before me). This statement's similarity to "*Es war einmal*" (Once upon a

time), the traditional beginning to German fairy tales, connects the film to the framework of the folk/fairy tale. Second is the scene of *Kristallnacht*, which begins with Oskar's narration, "Once upon a time there was a drummer. His name was Oskar. He lost his poor mama who had eaten too much fish. Once upon a time there were gullible people who believed in Santa Claus, but Santa Claus was really the gas man!" followed by scenes of *Kristallnacht* and Nazis burning and looting a synagogue. The scene continues with more of Oskar's narration, "Once upon a time there was a toy merchant. His name was Sigismund Markus and he sold tin drums lacquered in red and white and he took all the toys in the world away with him. Once upon a time there was a drummer. His name was Oskar." Susan Anderson suggests that the fairy tale reference in the *Kristallnacht* sequence "distance[s] the narrator from the awful events he recounts. By juxtaposing the reenactment of Nazi violence against Jews with the aesthetic form of the fairy tale, Schlöndorff suggests that Oskar is using art to escape a reality that he cannot bear to confront" (229). Stephen Brockmann writes: "Oskar short-circuits such idolization from the very beginning, suggesting that our sentimentalized images of childhood are a fantasy, not a reality, and that they are based more on our narcissism than on genuine concern for children's welfare. In conventional, sentimental images of childhood, we live a fantasy; Oskar, in contrast, peskily insists on showing us who and what we are" (202).

Peter Arnds includes Grass's novel in an article about the use of fairy tales in postwar novels and visual art. Although his focus is not on the film, he does suggest that Grass and Schlöndorff (along with other authors and filmmakers)<sup>24</sup> "have all re-

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<sup>24</sup> In this list, he includes Arno Schmidt, Günter Grass, Edgar Hilsenrath, Rolf Hochhuth, Ingo Schramm, Alexander Kluge, Volker Schlöndorff, and Helma Sanders-Brahms (423).

claimed the German fairy-tale tradition [from the pollution of Nazi ideology] for their works in order to exploit the artistic potential of the connection between this genre and the Third Reich...they see ways of speaking the unspeakable” (423). I argue that what makes these tales an appropriate venue through which to convey the unspeakable is their connection with a more innocent time (childhood) and their purpose during that time to prepare the child to belong to society. Like mine, Arnds’ argument connects previous and well-known literary structures such as the fairy tale, the *Bildungsroman*, and romanticism as well as the philosophies from the humanists of that same period.

### ***Deutschland bleiche Mutter***

Helma Sanders-Brahms’s film *Deutschland bleiche Mutter* follows Lene, a young woman, through courtship, marriage, and family life as it occurs from just before the Nazis invade Poland through the first years after the war. The film intercuts first-person narration by Lene and Hans’s daughter, Anna. In her commentary, the adult Anna (voiced by the filmmaker) recalls memories of her childhood thoughts about her experiences and about some events she could not have experienced; she ponders these experiences during and after World War II as the camera shows what is happening narratively (the story of the family) and through documentary footage (what is happening to the country – the environment and in a few instances the people).

Obviously Lene is the main protagonist of the film, but only her connection to Anna, her daughter, makes her a fully realized character. Like the other films in this chapter, the two main characters in *Deutschland bleiche Mutter* embody borderlessness in connection to their generation. The mother is not always an adult and the daughter is not always a child. The psychology of the mother-child relationship already involves a union; in utero, the child and mother are one. Kosta claims “the desire to merge with the

mother constitutes the main theme of *Germany, Pale Mother*" (141). Support for this claim is well documented in a number of other sources. In Angelika Bammer's article on the film, which predates Kosta's by nine years, she writes that the relationship between mother and daughter can be understood in terms of Luce Irigaray's thesis of a union in which "the one does not stir without the other"<sup>25</sup> (101). To Bammer, the two are "inseparable, almost symbiotic," a connection which manifests itself onscreen by the constant physical connection between Lene and Anna (101). Bammer also sets up the binary relationship of self and other in terms of "I" and "you" as another example of how the film supports this reading of their relationship (101-102). The narrative structure of I/you and narrator/protagonist parallels the relationship of self/other, in which the self cannot exist without the other and vice versa because they are projections of each other which create a primordial unconscious union. This conclusion is also one which Bammer comes to by way of the feminist writers Adrienne Rich and Irigaray and by way of Sanders-Brahms in this film, "For women this state of simultaneous separateness and oneness is not merely a utopian fantasy, but (at least potentially) actual primal experience" (104). Kosta concurs with Bammer's statement that Lene and Anna's physical connection on screen "emphasiz[es] an enclosure that obscures ego boundaries...[and] evoke[s] a dream of primordial unity between mother and daughter" (140). Thomas Elsaesser suggests that their survival is based on their "exist[ence] in and through each other in mutual interdependence and as each other's mirror images" and their separation from the (patriarchal) world by a "charmed circle of reinforcing identities" in which Hans, the father, representative of both patriarchy and the

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<sup>25</sup> Irigaray, Luce. "And the One Doesn't Stir Without the Other." Trans. Hélène Vivienne Wenzel. *Signs* 7.1 (1981): 60-67.

Fatherland, is denied entry (*New German Cinema* 270). Bammer suggests that this “private world of their own” promises utopia in two ways: first, through a feminine space unaffected by “dominant cultural parameters” and, second, through the primary union of mother and child (103).

Anna’s yearning for the connection to her mother within this world is additionally foregrounded in Anna’s narration. Anna’s first statement begins with “*ich*” (I) as the sequence on screen focuses on Lene as object – first from Hans’ and Ulrich’s point of view, then from the audience spectator, and finally from the aggressive group of Nazis who are following and taunting her. In a traditional autobiography, the spoken “I” should also be the person focused on, but in Sanders-Brahms’s way of telling the story, the daughter projects her voice (herself) onto her mother’s image, thereby joining them.

Anna’s narration also fills the gaps in which her mother is silent. During the introductory sequence, when Lene silently fends off her harassers and then cries to herself, Anna tells what is happening (in relation to herself, i.e. her parents coming together) and commenting on the situation from which she comes into the world (how even though she comes from this, she is not responsible for it). Later, after the wedding, the newlyweds quietly, with only very few words and those mostly spoken by Hans, evaluate the home and each other and prepare to consummate the marriage. Here Anna’s monologue comments on how she fits into this trio (she cannot imagine them together; she is in between them) and that this (later) ruptured family structure has caused her (as an adult) not to marry. Sometime later, Lene goes to retrieve a specific thread from a shop formerly owned by a Jewish merchant. The shop is closed, but a neighbor helps her loot the boarded-up place. Lene’s contribution to conversation here

is only superficial and her silence about the loss of the shopkeeper is again filled in by Anna's narration asking how she is better than her mother and answering that it is solely a coincidence that she was born later. In the middle and end sequences of the film, Anna's narration ceases except when the father is present and at the film's end. When Lene and Anna travel alone through the countryside, Lene sings and tells stories; little Anna is silent and just listens. In the postwar scenes, young Anna's diegetic dialogue replaces her narration as adult. She tells her father to leave her mother alone; she calls her father a name (when prompted by his friend Ulrich); she encourages her mother to eat, rest, drink tea, etc.; and, finally, in Lene's ultimate attempt to silence herself (suicide), Anna's constant crying out for her mother prevents Lene's suicide. Not only does this final scene express Lene's wish for a final silence, it is also her "attempt[s] to enact the final ritual of separation. Yet her desire to achieve separation cannot overcome the powerful force of her connectedness" (Bammer 104). This scene ultimately connects the utopian union with the mother to the daughter giving her voice to her mother. The idea of the utopian mother-child union may have been spurred on by gender theory, but its conclusion also becomes significant for generational theory. In their union, mother and daughter overcome the boundary that separates their generations; child becomes mother and mother becomes child.

Unlike most of the other films in this chapter, this particular film highlights the significance of fairy tales in the generational relationship. While the film includes several references to fairy tales and their structures, the central section of the film in which Lene recounts the story of *Der Räuber-Bräutigam* (The Robber Bridegroom) to Anna provides the most significant recognition of this characteristic. In Renate Möhrmann's book

interview with Sanders-Brahms in his book about female directors, Sanders-Brahms recounts her reasons for choosing this particular tale to include in her film. She connected the old woman's warning to the young bride<sup>26</sup> with her story about a mother guiding her daughter's earliest years through a historical period in which war (i.e., death, destruction, and abuse) reigned (155). The tale, she said, also expressed "the primal psychic fears that women have of men...But, at the same time, this fairy tale also describes German history" (155). Scholars have privileged a discussion of the fairy tale in the analysis of the film, viewing it in terms of women's connection to history; in terms of a further connection between Lene and Germany; and also in terms of the relationship between Lene and Anna, mother and daughter, as females surviving patriarchy. I see another dimension of the tale, namely it that focuses on the generations within the story.

The fairy tale begins when a father agrees to marry his daughter off to a certain man. The man suggests she visit his house in the woods; he says that he will leave a trail of ashes for her to follow to find it. She agrees, but also brings peas and lentils to drop on the path to find her way back. When she arrives, no one except an old woman is there. The old woman warns the girl that she is in a murderer's house and she should leave immediately. The girl does not leave in time, so the two of them hide behind some barrels as the groom and his cohorts return with a maiden in tow. They drug her with wine, abuse her, then cut her into bits and feast on her. She is wearing a ring and when the groom tries to take it, he struggles, then cuts off her finger to make it easier. He removes the ring, tosses the finger away, and it lands in the young bride's lap as she

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<sup>26</sup> "*Kehr um, kehr um, du junge Braut, du bist in einem Mörderhaus.*" ["Turn around, turn around, young bride. You are in a murderer's house."]

hides. She keeps it and after the old woman, the robbers' cook, puts a sleeping agent in their wine and they fall asleep, the two women leave. The girl tells her father what she witnessed and at a meal attended by the groom and his men, she recounts the story to all as if it was a dream. At the end she admits it was not a dream and provides the severed finger as proof. The story ends after the groom and his men try to run but are caught and punished.

Lene begins to tell this story after the war is over, following documentary footage of a grounded plane burning and two shots of a dead and bloody soldier. The telling of the story is visually punctuated by shots of the landscape, documentary footage, and a scene in which two American soldiers rape Lene. At the beginning, mother and daughter are walking through a green, lightly forested area. Its peaceful setting, however, is disrupted by the gruesomeness of the tale Lene tells and by a corpse they find. Lene tries to protect Anna from seeing it, but Anna protests that she wants to see it and Lene reluctantly lets her. As they continue, Lene finds shelter for them in a brick building which could have been a factory, but looks remarkably like a crematorium. Sanders-Brahms highlights the tall smoke tower by following Lene's gaze upon it, tracking it up in a relatively long shot. They settle themselves in front of an area that looks like ovens in the wall. The documentary footage includes a long shot of an aerial view of berubbed Berlin, a maimed soldier playing a legless piano, and a soldier in front of a destroyed building. After the part in the tale when the bride tells about her "dream," Lene and Anna enter another building and are confronted by two jolly American soldiers who rape Lene as Anna stands by and watches. Mother and daughter are next seen riding between railroad cars as Lene finishes the fairy tale.

These interjections link the story to the stories of the film – Lene’s personal story and Germany’s story as represented by Lene. As Roger Cook points out,

the decomposed remains of the soldier, the legless piano [sic], and the ruins of Berlin are all emblems of the maiming and dismemberment brought by the Nazis. The intersplicing of these shots into the narration of the folktale establishes a parallel between these consequences of Nazi aggression and the atrocities enacted against the young woman in ‘Der Räuber-Bräutigam.’ (115)

The plane on fire and the trail followed in the aerial shot represent the real German version of the groom’s ashen path. The buildings, especially the one alluding to crematoriums, represent the murderer’s house. The corpses and the destroyed buildings (both in the documentary footage and Sanders-Brahms’s shelters for Anna and Lene) also represent the proof the murder has been committed, which is represented in the fairy tale by the severed finger. Instead of the young bride showing the proof, the filmmaker herself does it. Finally, Lene’s rape is connected to the maiden’s rape in the story and to the abuse Germany suffered at the hands of the Nazis. The rapists being American soldiers also alludes to a criticism of Allied occupation. On the train Lene says, “It was only a dream,” in an attempt to abate the trauma of what had happened for herself and for Anna. This also returns to the fairytale, in which the bride reassures her anxious wedding guests.

Because the fairy tale interrupts the traditional cinematic narrative, it has been called “a deliberate alienation device,” “a bridge,” and “the key to Sanders-Brahms’ discursive strategies” (Seiter 579, Kaes 150, Cook 117). These three views about the role of the fairy tale allow a further understanding of the structural and theoretical connections between the tale and the film. Seiter bases her claim on Sanders-Brahms’s own statement that the film tells both the story of Lene and of Germany, therefore

suggesting its alienating quality to be part of its appropriation of narrative by feminine modes (579). Kaes connects the two parts of the story: the mother and father's union and his subsequent dispatch to the front and the mother and father's reunion after the war and the destruction of their relationship (579). The film's narration supports this when Anna proposes that the war outside is over and the war at home is beginning. Cook explicates his understanding of the folktale's structural purpose far more in depth than other scholars.

The fairy tale sequence's position in the middle segment of the film fixes it as one of the fantasies that mother and daughter share in their liberated bonding. In *Deutschland bleiche Mutter* those transgressive forms of expression which animated the mother-daughter bond during the war years inform the narrative relationship between the filmmaker and her audience. Many of the filmmaker's voice-over comments are addressed directly to her mother. The film then becomes a form of cinematic folktale, and the daughter assumes the reverse role of narrating to her mother her own tale about women's subjection to male aggression. The film as cinematic folktale becomes the mirror image of the *Märchen* that Lene tells Anna (Cook 117-118).

These observations lead to Sanders-Brahms's attempts at expressing her ideas outside of conventions of patriarchal storytelling. Seiter calls it alienating because it was new and different and not the traditional way in which to tell a story, cinematically or otherwise. Instead of continuing the story in the vein of the traditional family melodrama, Sanders-Brahms interrupts the flow of the film with this segment that Cook describes as the place where mother and daughter share their bond and are as close as they can come to the fantasy of returning to the mother (117). Sanders-Brahms tries to recreate

this fantastic space with her film, but this time she is telling the story. Yet, the outside world (i.e. the patriarchal world) intrudes upon their fantasy in the form of the corpse that they find, the crematorium-like buildings they enter, and most obviously Lene's rape. In Sanders-Brahms's retelling, she also misses the mark. Much of the narration is directed at Lene, but just as much is expressed with Lene in third person, directed at the audience. (I will approach the relationship of the audience to the film later.)

The connection that this film has to fairy tales extends beyond the actual fairy tale sequence. According to Rosemarie Morewedge, "The film relies on fairy tales as framing devices to construct and explore the identity of German women, the central theme of the film" (231). The very beginning, when Hans and Ulrich call her "a real German woman," creates this framing device which "permits a relational construction of identity: idealized, mythical constructions of the self and negative repressed perceptions of the Other, constructions that are subsequently corrected and modified through historical and biographical framing devices" (Morewedge 232). This framing device includes references to fairy tales and their structural elements. Morewedge sees "Little Red Riding Hood" in the beginning scene when Lene is harassed by the Nazis (233). She and Kaes note the reference to "Sleeping Beauty" when Lene pricks her finger on the needle attached to the curtains in her new home (233, 150, respectively). Kaes also suggests that pointing out that Lene is the only dark-haired one among her seven sisters "alludes to fairy tale motifs" (150). *The Robber Bridegroom* presupposes feminist readings in its different uses of familiar fairy tale structures. Morewedge suggests that the young bride's characteristics are more in line with male heroes of the tradition ("she demonstrates intuition and purposeful, rational thought") (232). The old woman who

helps her initially appears as a fairy tale witch, but the young bride “courteously and boldly” goes to her; falling in line with fairy tale structure, however, is that this girl’s willingness to seek out the old woman is the special test which allows her to gain a magical agent from a helper (Morewedge 233). The different levels of story within a story also belong to the fairy tale genre (as we see in *The Robber Bridegroom*). Barbara Hyams points out that Sanders-Brahms is “true to Grimm’s fairy tale” by telling the story twice, once as the original experience of the young bride then as her retelling it as if it were a dream (351). First is Lene’s/Germany’s story. Within that framework, through the cinematic images and the fairy tale as allegory, Sanders-Brahms tells the story again. Like the girls in the story, Lene/Germany finds herself in a murderer’s house. One girl is destroyed in the house; the other manages to escape and ultimately leads to the apprehension of the criminals by recounting her story, even if she has to do it subversively (as a dream). Like the young bride, Sanders-Brahms has to provide proof of the atrocities, which is done through her use of the documentary footage.<sup>27</sup>

Morewedge writes that these two tales are “a *narrated tale* leading to success, the reconstitution of the family, and social justice on the one hand and an *experienced horror tale* leading to a sense of failure, isolation, and the victimization of the heroine on the other” (231).

Witnessing is one of the themes this sequence reflects, which reappears throughout the film. When confronted with atrocities, the mother refuses to witness, to speak up, thereby becoming complicit in the event. At the beginning she does not respond to Hans and Ulrich’s catcalls and only reacts weakly (by merely swinging her

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<sup>27</sup> Hyams (351) and Kosta (152) discuss the connection between the proof in the fairy tale and in the film.

bag) to harassment by the group of young men following her. When their neighbor Rahel is taken away by the SS, Lene refuses to watch or to let her sister watch or even to discuss it, changing the subject back to the young men in whom the sisters are interested. During Hans's leave they argue and he smacks her; she becomes aloof, but eventually sleeps in his arms. When she is raped, she does not fight, but simply accepts her fate and even tells her daughter to leave it be. After the war, when Lene's facial paralysis sets in, she allows her husband to command the doctor to pull her teeth. Finally, facing everything, she does not want to live. She attempts the ultimate silence of death through suicide, but in the end cannot do it. On the other hand, Anna does not refuse to witness; she speaks up or cries out. She wants to see the corpse in the woods; she does not look away when her mother is raped. As a baby, when Anna is unhappy she cries loudly. The film emphasizes these shrill and disruptive cries when she is born "onto a battlefield," when Lene inspects their destroyed house, when they arrive in the apartment of relatives in Berlin, and when Hans visits them in the apartment on his leave. When she can talk, she also responds in situations in which her mother would do nothing. First, after the war and Hans' return, she calls her father a name after his friend Ulrich prompts her. Hans hits her repeatedly and she screams and cries and tries to stop him. When Hans accuses Lene of infidelity, Anna is the one to respond to him, telling him to leave her mother alone. Even when Lene is cruel to her – throwing hot soup at her, waking her and Hans up in the middle of the night by destroying their belongings, and in the end when Lene enters the bathroom to try to kill herself – Anna fights back with words, crying "*Mutti, Mutti,*" complaining she has a test at school the next day and then telling her mom to go to bed, and finally by her pleading

not to be left alone. And finally, Sanders-Brahms, as the real-life Anna, retells her mother's (and by extension her own) story with images, narrative, and commentary – an ultimate act of speaking and claiming witness.

Sanders-Brahms voice-over narration at the end brings the story to contemporary times and defines the relationship of Anna and Lene as ambivalent. “It was a long time before Lene opened the door. Sometimes I think she is still behind it and I’m still standing outside and she’ll never come out to me. And I must be grown up and alone. But Lene is still there. She is still there.” By telling this story to her mother, the way her mother told her the fairy tale, the daughter has claimed power and extended it to her generation.

Thomas Elsaesser discusses extensively the psychological issue of Germany's loss of the father and the Mitscherlich report on that subject from 1969 in his history of the New German Cinema, suggesting that “this may explain why it took thirty years after the death of Hitler...before one saw in West Germany the first sustained and coherent effort to come to terms with what Fascism meant at the personal level” (*New German Cinema* 243). Thus, the New German Cinema has come to be identified as a cinema of self-representation and self-reflection (Elsaesser, *New German Cinema* 243). Not only did this generation try to redeem German cinema, but the whole cultural realm as well. This focus on “self” supports the idea of auteurism, which characterized New German Cinema with its many auteurs. Elsaesser calls the diversity of the New German Cinema “the consequence of a vast transcription process” (*New German Cinema* 322). By this he means the process of gathering “images, sounds, and stories” to make up the

generational and national memory to create meaning (*New German Cinema* 322). In contrast, Rentschler reports that New German Cinema's variety was "a response to the continuing awareness of the dangers posed by an impersonal cinema that serves larger causes, be it a cinema that actively supported a fascist regime as was the case during the Third Reich, or be it a cinema that legitimized a conservative status quo, helping to reaffirm the condition of comatose passivity found during the Adenauer era" ("Specularity" 200). Despite these differences, this generation was united in its recognition of the problems that their heritage's past caused their present and they focused on working through those problems for themselves and for Germany collectively.

## CHAPTER 4 CHILDREN IN POST-UNIFICATION CINEMA

The third generation, or the *Enkelgeneration* (grandchild-generation), is comprised of those born in the seventies who experienced adolescence in the late eighties through early nineties. They are the third generation since World War II, but unlike earlier generations they do not identify themselves as the progeny of perpetrators and victims; they also grew up in divided Cold War Germany and experienced the end of the GDR and the reunification of Germany as children and adolescents, a critical time for their identity-formation and the identity-formation of the new Germany. Within the last two decades, characters from this generation have appeared as protagonists in cultural productions about their childhood and youth, showing a generation more active in developing their identity than its predecessors.

In this chapter I examine three films from the post-89 period: *Lola rennt* (*Run Lola Run*, dir. Tom Tykwer, 1998), *Nirgendwo in Afrika* (*Nowhere in Africa*, dir. Caroline Link, 2001), and *Good bye, Lenin!* (dir. Wolfgang Becker, 2003). These films represent important moments in a new generation of German cinema. The uniqueness of *Lola rennt* elevated Germany's reputation by proving that new and innovative film could and would be produced in Germany. The film addresses criminality, youth, contemporary concerns with otherness, and navigating a place saturated with the past in order to move toward the future. *Nirgendwo in Afrika* returns to the time of Nazi Germany, but not the place, to tell a story about an exiled German Jewish family. The final film takes place during the most significant historical moment of this generation. *Good Bye, Lenin!* not only offers comic relief, but an alternative history of the events of 1989-90. In *Good Bye, Lenin!*, Alex's innocent attempts to save his mother allowed not only for a positive

remembrance of the GDR, but also for it to live on in his home even after it was gone outside. Each of these films present post-unification views of Germany's past as their protagonists work towards a suitable identity. *Lola's run* makes the viewer hyperaware of the traversability of new Berlin. Regina's story combines post-unification sensibilities with a complicated characterization of first generation adults and second generation children by placing them in the ethnic hierarchy found in colonial Kenya. Alex's story follows him directly through the traumatic process of loss during the opening of the East German borders through unification.

The films of this generation are mostly discussed individually rather than collectively because they are so recent, but some film scholars have tried to define the period from the end of the New German Cinema through the late nineties until *Lola rennt*. Eric Rentschler, for example, summarizes German film after New German Cinema and before *Lola rennt* as "dominated by a formula-bound profusion of romantic comedies, crude farces, road movies, action films, and literary adaptations. This cinema is above all star-driven" ("From New German Cinema" 262). It is worthwhile to note his additional observation that the protagonists' conflict during this in-between time revolves around their confrontation with adulthood, a problem that also manifests itself in the films in this chapter even though they come after the period Rentschler covers ("From New German Cinema" 262-263). These descriptions of German cinema of the eighties and nineties are seconded by Hake, and she adds that the central struggle for the youthful protagonist lies in the "competing needs for complete independence and a sense of belonging" (186). This description of the protagonist's struggle extends to the films after *Lola* as well because it reflects the condition of this generation that finds itself

aching for independence from other generations of German history while dealing with its inevitable belonging to the collective past and creating a unifying identity that allows it to move forward. Films like *Nirgendwo in Afrika* that focus on a historically significant time in a nation's long ago past and tell stories that evoke nostalgia for the setting have been called heritage films. German heritage films became prominent in the nineties and "centered around the role of Jews" (Koeppnick, "Reframing the Past" 56). *Good Bye, Lenin!* belongs to the group of films influenced by *Ostalgie*, nostalgia for GDR life, which focused on the common experiences of the youths. While these films have particular characteristics shared with other films, their genre statuses are still being debated, however, because they are still too new and this generation is still actively producing films.

The *Enkelgeneration* is unique in twentieth-century German history. Far removed from the traumatic experience of the war and the instabilities it caused, these young adults have grown up in a prosperous Europe working towards political and economic unity. The (re)unification of Germany during their childhood and adolescence, during which postwar political and cultural boundaries were removed, affected the character of this generation as builders of a new future, rather than a generation trying to come to terms with the past. This generation also stands apart in its cohesion, uniting West Germans, East Germans, and the second-generation children of immigrants. Thus, cultural production of and about these young Germans revolves around those areas that significantly affect their identity-building – reunification, a culturally rich and mixed society, and a Europe working together. The *Enkelgeneration* protagonists of

contemporary films reflect this generation's concern with the future and its understanding of history.

While older generations have conveyed their preoccupation with the Nazi past on film through melancholic woe and the sorrow of unanswered questions that have transferred into all areas of their life, the *Enkelgeneration* is too busy dealing with its own traumas of identity. Some have experienced the collapse of the nation of their childhood and its erasure from everyday life due to the end of east European communism; others have endured the difficulty of combining two culturally and historically different national identities into one, and all of them are faced with the question of what it means to be German in today's Europe and today's global world. These are the concerns that make their way into filmic representations of this generation.

### ***Lola rennt***

Lola epitomizes the drive of her generation to take control to solve a problem. One of the most significant problems for this generation is defining what it means to be German at the turn of the millennium, disconnected by generations from World War II, in search of a national identity in post-Cold War Germany, and discovering its place in a globally connected economy. As Tom Tykwer himself has acknowledged, the philosophical questions posed during the opening sequence of the film reflect these concerns ("*Wer sind wir? Woher kommen wir? Wohin gehen wir? Woher wissen wir, was wir zu wissen glauben? Wieso glauben wir überhaupt etwas?*") (Who are we? Where do we come from? Where are we going? How did we come to know what we believe we know? How is it that we know anything at all?). The need to answer these

questions prompts this generation to become active directors of its stories instead of remaining a passive “victim” of its history.

Despite the distance from the wartime past, this generation still appears to be haunted by a transgenerational phantom. Nicholas Abraham suggests that “surroundings quite accidentally reveal the nature of the missing pieces [that represent the phantom]” (175). This is particularly poignant when one considers space and time (the “surroundings”) in *Lola rennt*. The tactics through which Lola explores space and time follow conventions in video games and computerized technology. The beginning of the film foreshadows this idea as the camera navigates the crowd of people. The motion of the camera emulates an image of electricity travelling through wires or as a visualization of our nervous system. The zoom from above the earth down into Lola’s apartment precedes the software program “Google Earth,” but works in much the same way during the initial zoom in to a specified geographical location. The flashbacks in the film also correlate to the sections of a video game’s story, often in the form of a movie, that are inserted between levels and are not player-controlled. As she runs, Lola faces a number of obstacles, and as she replays each level, her choices change based on what she has learned by experiencing it before.

As part of the *Enkelgeneration*, Lola already subscribes to visual representation as the preferred medium, so it is not surprising to see that her story harnesses such representation. Throughout the film, narrative devices constantly remind us that this generation relies on images. For Lola, images are a part of how she thinks. When deciding whom to ask for the money, she goes through the list visually. When she and Manni tell stories, their flashbacks always appear on screen. Sight becomes their power

of witnessing, but they also know how to exploit it. Ingeborg Majer O'Sickey argues that the media used throughout the film "create[s] sufficient narrative upheaval that destabilizes, or perhaps even subverts, stereotypical gender identities and traditional power relations for the creation of a powerful [young] heroine" (124). Advances in media technology have empowered this generation, giving them personal control over events and the events' visual representation.

Annegret Mahler-Bungers further explains Lola's connection to space and time as representative of her subconscious. She suggests that the film is like a dream with a "surreal" structure of space and time (83-84). What this means, then, is that the places and time are also internal to Lola as representative of her generation—Berlin is in her and she defines her own sense of time. Mahler-Bungers argues that the surrealistic nature of space and time in the film comes out of "the young generation's desire for a bonding system of orientation, in order to deal with the chaotic possibilities [that] deeply frustrat[e] the adolescent need for identification" (88). This frustration, she suggests, is born out of the New Age movement of the seventies and eighties that blurred the border between reality and fantasy that, when coupled with "the *laissez-faire* selfishness of the parental New Age generation," creates a dilemma for the identity building of Lola and her peers (89, 91). Unlike her parents, Lola must deal with parents who truly are disengaged, illustrating the change from second-generation passivity to third-generation activity.

The time of "now" is the only time that Lola recognizes. Lola's generation sees the materialistic, selfish problems created by her parents and grandparents and, in traditional teenage rebellion, chooses a path of selflessness. This is displayed in the

three narrative sequences and the two outer-narrative discussions with Manni, optimistic that this generation can control the chaos caused by earlier generations.

Each sequence represents the experience of a previous generation. Lola's story begins with references to her generation's feelings about World War II. When Manni scolds her for being late, she shouts, "*Das war nicht meine Schuld!*" (That was not my fault!) and when he tells how he got the money then lost it, he ends with "*Du warst nicht da*" (You were not there). These two simple statements echo a stereotypical reaction of this generation when confronted with Germany's past: "It's not my fault" and "I wasn't there." In Lola's attempts to get the money and save Manni, she experiences a sort of time travel as each sequence positions Lola as a manifestation of each generation.

In the first sequence, she suggests that Manni should run away, but he reminds her that "Nobody escapes Ronnie." This suggestion mimics the first generation's attempt to run away, that is, refuse publicly (and privately) to discuss what happened during National Socialist rule, but, as Manni reminds her, it is inescapable. Her second option is to go to her powerful father and ask for the money. Not only will he not help her, but he says he is leaving the family and he is not even her real father. Thus, she has lost her father. Stunned, she runs to Manni, but arrives too late and is forced into a criminal act in concert with him. As they try to run away after robbing a grocery store, they cannot escape the guilt of their criminal activity. Lola is shot by a police officer and dies as a result of her complicity (death happened often to children in the rubble films). Like many from the war's generation, Lola loses her father (literally and figuratively) and loses her own self as a victim of the series of tragedies influenced by war. In the following transitional sequence, she and Manni discuss the idea of uncertainty and

replacement. As she probes how Manni knows that she is the best woman for him, she points out that he cannot possibly know that and if they had not met, he could be saying that to another woman. She does not want to hear what he says; she wants to know what he feels. She refuses his attempt to articulate his feelings, confirming the transfer of the unspoken gap from one generation, or, in this case, one sequence, to the next.

In the second sequence she returns to her father for help. When she arrives, he is having an argument with his lover and becomes agitated and confrontational when Lola appears. She has caught him in his infidelity. He refuses to answer Lola's questions and after further heated exchange, they react to each other violently. He slaps her for calling his girlfriend a slut and she throws objects around his office. As she leaves, she realizes how to further respond to her father – by taking him at gunpoint to get the money from the teller. To prove that she can and will use the weapon, she fires it. (In the first sequence, Manni taught her how to shoot the gun. On the American DVD commentary, Tykwer points out that Lola learns new things as she travels throughout the sequences, an experience similar to playing leveled video games.) In this second sequence Lola of the second generation uses what she has learned from (and about) the first generation. Lola is starting to respond to her father's culpabilities and responsibilities. Despite her own crime, she is mistaken for innocent by the police outside of the building. This suggests that despite her parental generation's accusations and sometimes violent manifestations of them (such as the RAF/Baader-Meinhof group), they are innocent of that which the first postwar generation is not, namely active and/or passive complicity in the crimes of Nazi Germany. Even though she has rejected her father in his guilt, she still does not want to let him go. Manni's death comes on account of his being an

extension of her father. Majer O'Sickey connects Manni and Lola's father in reference to the final sequence of the film:

When he [Manni] meets up with her, he says 'What's the matter with you? Did you run? Don't worry, everything's O.K.,' nearly echoing the words of Lola's father: 'What is the matter with you? You look terrible!'). If it were not for Manni's affectionate tone and gestures, one might claim that Manni is from that moment on folded into the patriarchal line that Lola's father represents. (130)

During the transitional sequence that follows, she insists that she will not let Manni, the only significant male in her life, die.

In the final sequence Lola has learned from the experiences of previous generations and is ready to take on the problem(s) as her own person. She cannot rely on Papa to help her this time because he is absent simply by coincidence. Without the strings of the past holding onto her, she is able to use her voice, specifically her scream, productively. By winning money legitimately, she has stayed innocent, not lost her father, not lost Manni, and has survived. The movie ends with Manni and Lola walking off into the future together with their successes, completely separated from parents (or grandparents), fully realizing the satisfactory development of the third generation.

Although one can argue that postmodernist feel of *Lola rennt* makes Lola appealing to the younger generation(s), the film's fairy tale associations must also be recognized as such. The film is framed by subtle references to fairy tales – first by the voice-over of Hans Paetsch, whom many Germans will recognize as the storyteller's voice on a number of audio cassettes of fairy tales produced in the seventies and eighties, and second by the "happy ending" of the film. Christine Haase describes Paetsch's presence as a calming reminder of childhood utopia, coming after the rapid rhythm of techno music combined with fast-motion images of people scurrying around

bombards the audience: “Then we hear a deep, quiet, soothing voice that conjures up nights in front of fireplaces, listening to an old storyteller, and memories of childhood fantasies” (390). The character of Lola is connected to fairy tales by her comparison to Pippi Longstocking, a red-headed adventurous girl who enjoys thwarting (adult) authority.<sup>28</sup> Mahler-Bungers calls Lola an allegory, “[a] symbol of the fiery hair” who is resolute and orphaned and “only they [Lola, Pippi, and two other childhood characters with red hair and who are resolute orphans that she references] themselves are able to create themselves” (91). Lola’s identity, and therefore also the audience’s, is connected to the fairy tale tradition.

Owen Evans has more to say about *Lola rennt* and fairy tales than do most other scholars. He characterizes the film as a fairy tale because of its “everyday and accessible” form, which it accomplishes by incorporating strong elements of youth culture with which the audience can identify (113). The fairy tale’s ability to imbue the fantastic into realistic situations also occurs in the film, which is manifested in the blind woman “as a fairy-godmother figure” and in Lola’s ability to magically affect others (her touch saves the bank’s security guard and her scream leads to her obtaining the money in two separate sequences) (113). Lola as the protagonist, he claims, “is central to this reading of the film as fairy tale” (113). Female protagonists in fairy tales are often princesses and the guard refers to her as such. Also, she, like other fairy tale heroes, must complete her tasks alone (113). O. Evans also mentions the importance of the hero doing three tasks or having three attempts as another connection between the film and fairy tales (113). O. Evans concludes his reading of the film as fairy tale by

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<sup>28</sup> Referenced in Majer O’Sickey, Mahler-Bungers; Owen Evans also connects her to Little Red Riding Hood (*Rotkäppchen*) (114).

commenting on the difference in intent. Although fairy tales had political and social goals, this film instead employs fairy tale structures to “simulat[e] a sense of community between us and his characters” (113). I agree with his assessment that these structures in this film connect the audience and the characters, but I would also add that the connection gives Lola power and affects social goals, specifically the goals of this generation’s identity development.

Just as Paetsch’s voice soothes the audience after the overstimulating images and music, the film’s use of contemporary modes of expression and allusions to fairy tales creates a comfortable place in which the adult audience can connect with Lola so that she can take them on her journey. She subverts the power of a traditional binary relationship through the fairy tales. As the child, she would be expected to be powerless, but as the situation of the generational other exposes, she, as representative of her generation, has more power to overcome the trauma that affects identity development than the collective adult audience.

### ***Nirgendwo in Afrika***

*Nirgendwo in Afrika* explores a crisis of identity through the story of a German-Jewish family during World War II. The film begins with the mother and daughter enjoying their last time to socialize with friends and family fleeing Germany. The father, a former lawyer in Germany, is already in Kenya and has secured a position as farm manager. When Jettel (mother) and Regina (daughter) arrive, Regina is eager to explore her new world while her mother fights against assimilation and acceptance of their new living situation. Regina’s youthful openness and curiosity allows her to experience the native culture and bond with the native people, specifically Ouwor, the old man who assists the family, and Jogona, a native boy of her age. At the local

school, Regina also becomes acquainted with British customs and culture and the English language. Because she is denied her traditional German-Jewish identity, she takes on, at least partly, these foreign identities. Adam Muller points out that Regina's "childishness frees [her] from the necessity of conforming to the norms and customs of the adult cultures and sub-cultures around [her], cultures to which [she has] not yet learned how to belong" (750).<sup>29</sup> These multi-national, multi-lingual, and multi-cultural experiences provide a unique position for the child protagonist to have more power over the single-minded adults around her and to represent the *Enkelgeneration*.

This film continues exploring the problems with German identity formation for the grandchildren of Nazi Germany. Despite the fact that Regina's story takes place during the war, she also reflects some of the questions of post-reunification German society. Lutz Koepnick, in one of his earliest studies of German heritage films, suggests that postcolonialism and post-unification (both as parts of postmodernism) have influenced the efforts of these films to reflect an identity that is both "unfixed" and "normal" (respectively) (*The Dark Mirror* 261, 267). In a different publication the same year, Koepnick further clarifies by suggesting that it is not simply because of the postmodern condition, but that it is specifically German: "These productions navigate a historical minefield, structured by Germany's peculiar history of violence, displacement, and division. By re-viewing the national past, they solicit a new kind of German consensus for the emerging Berlin Republic" ("Reframing the Past" 51). In order for the third

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<sup>29</sup> In a study of the films *Chocolat* (dir. Claire Denis, 1988) and *Nirgendwo in Afrika*, Adam Muller explores a theory of nostalgia through the two main characters, two little European girls, who spend part of their childhood in Africa. For both, he marks their time in school as transformative. Here the girls are forced to experience "principles of linear time" and to experience Africa only "on weekends or during school vacations" (750).

generation to construct a useful post-unification identity, its members had to construct a narrative of their past that would allow successful development.

The film acts as a reminder of what happened then and the purpose of the first person narrative is to account for the need to have witnessed the events, explaining one of the reasons the film is biographical. The only proof of the horrendous deeds lies in the first person accounts because the whole story of life under the Nazis can only be constructed with a number of personal accounts alongside historical and statistical data.<sup>30</sup> Because so much was denied and repressed in the postwar eras, the first person narrative of *Nirgendwo in Afrika* comes from postwar generations begging for proof of the truth and seeking to understand themselves as a nation. In this film, the child's voice is used to prove witnessing of the time and place. By narrating and beginning the film with "I," the audience is immediately placed in the role of observer, unable to claim identification with the character, but to act as its other. Despite any visual knowledge by the audience of the protagonist before he or she speaks, his or her presence is not separated from the audience until the first utterance in first person. Regina's voiceover at the beginning says "*Eigentlich konnte ich mich an Deutschland schon gar nicht mehr richtig erinnern. Ich wußte noch, daß es da Schnee gibt, und Jahreszeiten*" (I really cannot remember Germany. I knew it had snow and seasons). Not only does this statement set up an awareness between "I" and "you," but it also references time (*nicht mehr, Jahreszeiten*). Even though the characters are devoted to their place settings, the audience becomes aware of the time and their position in relation to it, as past. The audience can only experience these "times" through the

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<sup>30</sup> An ideal example of this is Claude Lanzmann's documentary *Shoah*, which is hours and hours of personal stories.

protagonist's story. While one cannot deny the role 'place' plays in this film, the relationship to a bygone time, a lost era, not a place, distinguishes the film. *Nirgendwo in Afrika* takes place during a time that no longer exists but cannot be left out of cultural memory. As Koepnick writes, "These films [heritage films] are part of a new kind of public memory work which has led to an unprecedented institutionalization, ritualization, and spectacularization of Holocaust memory...[and] German cinema now turns into a primary site of transmitting memory between generations who have never lived through the actual events" ("Reframing the Past" 57). This film represents this mingling of the generations because it integrates all three: Regina's parents, Regina herself, the audience and context of Germany in 2001.

An element of the heritage films that is most often discussed is nostalgia. Nostalgia itself has its own area of scholarship, but is also a significant part of stories about German identity because of its connection to the past and Germany's past certainly provokes a number of reactions. When one then takes on the position of the child protagonist and their role in collective identity formation, one must also consider the importance of nostalgia in that role. Nostalgia is often understood as a longing for a loss that manifests itself as a utopian fantasy of that loss. Psychoanalytic descriptions of overcoming loss such as Freud's *fort/da* game parallel the work of nostalgia, one can see its connection to identity development. The little boy observed by Freud overcomes his loss by rewriting the situation (the mother does not leave) and mastering a representative of his mother; the nostalgic works to overcome the loss of an imagined utopia by rewriting its history or by collecting representative objects from it. The main difference between the two situations is the reality of the mother versus the reality of

nostalgia's utopian fantasy. Because of the undefinability of the loss experienced in nostalgia, its characteristics become vague and open. This film, as an expression of Regina's nostalgia for a lost time (childhood) and place (the Kenya she experienced as a child), also relates to its contemporary situation and audience, expressing a collective nostalgia for a utopian fantasy of German-Jewish cooperation and a site within German national culture in which the Jew survives the war. In order to fulfill this notion, Regina must take on specific qualities that make her believable to her diegetic counterparts and to her contemporary audience other. Muller explains her character as a "best [European] self" (my addition) who is "perfectly aware and respectful of the risk-filled contingencies of otherness" (742). He describes her as a "moral cosmopolitan," that is one who conveys "a utopian desire for moral social equality" (745). He also explains that part of her ideal is what he calls "temporal ambivalence" (747). She "simultaneously belong[s] to three different temporalities" (750); she is in the past as written for the setting of the story, she is in the present as she is created in contemporary times for consumption by a contemporary audience, and she is in the future as her experiences in the past viewed through the present will affect how history will be remembered. Since part of her character is connected to Africa, it is no wonder, then, that Kristin Kopp recognizes the timelessness of Africa as well: "The African cultures so 'authentically' represented seem to exist in a developmental stasis, outside of the time of historical progress" (123). The differences between their two kinds of timelessness (flexible and static, respectively) highlight the focus of this film on the question of German history, the main concern for the German audience in their journey to a postwar, post-unification collective identity.

Regina's character is not only influenced by the concerns of the post-unification, but also her strength as generational other who displays power through subversion of the audience's gaze by acting as anthropological subject and responding openly to difference, much like the protagonist from *Toxi*. In *Toxi*, an Afro-German child is placed in a bourgeois Christian German home; in *Nirgendwo in Afrika*, a German-Jewish child is placed in the colonial Kenyan bush. In both films, the girls' bodies are displayed to highlight the contrast between the child physicality and her surroundings and both girls respond to difference openly and naively. Regina, like Toxi, gains her power through these reactions, denying a gendered or ethnic objectifying gaze. She refuses to be looked at and to be viewed as different. Regina's power over the spectator's gaze happens early during a bathing scene. While the camera investigates her body, the conversation between mother and daughter is foregrounded. As they talk, the mother makes a distinction between Regina's body and the bodies of the African, suggesting "A white child is not a black child" and proceeding to forbid her to accept their food or enter their homes. Regina dismisses these proscribed differences by pointing out that she cannot be labeled in only one way by reminding her mother of her grandmother's suggestion that she had "the luck of a Gentile." By innocently rejecting otherness, she denies the audience from seeing her as different and chastising those who do.

In a later scene, when Regina has reached adolescence, upon returning home during a school break, she meets up with Jogona, a native boy about her age and one of her childhood friends. In this scene, Regina pre-empts the audience's potential gaze. Jogona first tries to get her to climb the tree with him, but she refuses because she thinks she is too old and cannot get her uniform dirty. He suggests she take off her

blouse to keep it clean, but, framed so that she is looking at Jogona and with her back to the audience she refuses to do that as well. He insists again and she reiterates her argument that she is not a child and can no longer expose her torso because she has developed breasts. So, while taunting the audience in her sexually coded taboo school-girl uniform and with Jogona's words that anticipate her undressing, she refuses to submit to the audience's scopophilic desires. She supports her argument with the statement that "the breasts of the Mzungus [white folk] are different. You can't see them." Like the bath scene, the light-skinned bodies are held to a different standard than the dark-skinned bodies by the Europeans. Jogona, then, provokes her by asking if she can still climb trees and, in reaffirming her connection to life in Kenya, agrees to take off her shirt and climb the tree. The sexual taunting in this scene continues as she finally strips and begins climbing, all the while keeping her back to the audience, denying their look and, like Medusa in the mirror, punishing them for thinking she could be objectified, thus, exemplifying the generational gaze as one that reflects back to the audience and puts them under the child's power.

As with the other films in this study, the distinctions between adult and child and their power structure are blurred. Regina obviously has power over her mother's transition from a bigot to a more accepting woman. A conversation she has with Jogona also expresses this dual identity. She recites a poem she learned in school and he dismisses the line that one cannot talk to the night. She agrees, then praises his father for his ability to talk to the thunder and lightning. This portion of the conversation ends with Jogona's clarification that his father actually talks to the ancestors. The first half of this scene provides insight to the conversation between the filmed child and the adult

audience. “You can’t talk to the night” refers to an audience’s traditional role in the darkened theater, thus denying a relationship between the audience and the characters “in the night,” i.e., projected in the theater, with whom they want to identify. Secondly, Jogona’s reminder that his father speaks to the ancestors parallels the power of the child protagonist to speak to his or her ancestors, the adult generations in the audience.

Adam Muller describes Regina as a “fully realized person” (746). This distinct designation ultimately defines adult in my study, further expanding her characteristics of child and adult. It is here, he suggests, as the “fully realized person” where she acts as the intermediary of cultural translation (746). He also disconnects her (partly) from childhood by suggesting that though Regina is a child, the film does not “seek to generate the longing for a return to some specific childhood” and that she is not a younger version of the artists that created her, but rather a “proleptic abstraction, utopian ‘regulative’ (and therefore action-guiding) ideal, representation of the cosmopolitan self that ‘we’ long to be...projection of the kind of beings we desire to become” (750). As a cultural translator, he continues to argue, she “demonstrate[s] a subtly powerful ability both to learn from the adults in making better sense of one another and then to use what they have learned to assist adults in making better sense of one another” (751). Kopp extends this to the broader connection between audience, character, and identity in this context: “Germanness and Jewishness are reconciled within broader processes of personal maturation [growing up], which in turn appeals to spectators as sites of ‘emotional identification’” (107). Regina transgresses borders of age and ethnicity to double this effect in her otherness.

Elements of the fairy tale are also found in this film. Not only do fairy tales influence the film diegetically, but beyond the film yet connected to it, one speaks of fairy tales. In the preface to her 2004 English-language translation of the autobiographical novel *Nirgendwo in Afrika*, Zweig calls the barrage of questions she gets about her connection with Owuor nowadays<sup>31</sup> as “the childish longing for fairy tales” (ix). Djoufack suggests that “In scenes showing Regina playing with native children or attending a traditional ceremony, Link shows Regina’s knowledge of German fairy tales. Kopp remarks at length about the character of Owuor in the film. He is given a magical quality (for a number of reasons, she suggests) that connects him clearly with the magical helper found in fairy tales. Kopp quotes Knipp in the connection between the “the magical negro” and “European fantasies of harmonious feudal order, in which child-like serfs valued the guardianship and protection of their paternalistic landowners” (115). In the postwar and specifically post-unification context in which this film was made, it becomes a fairy tale of the exiled Jew, possibly as a way in which to fantasize a survival story. This story adds to the third generation’s collective memory of the past and its fairy tale qualities help the audience accept it as such.

### ***Good bye, Lenin!***

*Good Bye, Lenin!* is the story of Alex Kerner and his family during the months in which East Germany opened its borders until after the reunification of East and West Germany (approximately one year from autumn 1989 through October 1990). Alex is nineteen and lives with his mother, Christiane, a teacher and Socialist party supporter, and his sister, Ariane, an economics student. After his father fled the East in 1978, his

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<sup>31</sup> Her explanation is that he would be over 100 years old and his inability to read and write prevented her from getting in touch with him (ix).

mother devoted herself to her children and her country, summarized by Alex in a voice-over as her marriage to the “socialist Fatherland.” In 1989 she has a heart attack and falls into a coma for a prolonged time period during which the GDR collapses. When she wakes, Alex decides to keep the truth from her to prevent the shock and stress from damaging her health further. He attempts to keep his mother, and poignantly the world of his childhood, alive by recreating the fallen GDR in their home and through fake news programs and reproduced consumer products, keeping intact the world in which he has grown up. *Good Bye, Lenin!* portrays the collapse of East Germany as Alex’s trauma and offers a look at how he represents this generation during the most significant event of the late twentieth century for Germany, working through its own losses and overcoming the phantoms from previous generations through mastery.

Alex experiences several losses throughout the film. As a young boy, his father flees East Germany, abandoning the family and leading to his mother’s nervous breakdown which causes her temporary absence. As a young adult, Alex loses his mother again to a heart attack that puts her into a coma, during which all he knew as his nation and world view disappears. His losses cause a crisis of identity and his journey of accepting these losses gives him the power in his relationship with the adult audience. Despite the portrayal of apparent powerlessness, his power manifests itself in the control he takes over history (and therefore memory), thus allowing him to work through trauma differently than had the previous generations.

The predominant historical image of the GDR that has been portrayed on film until the late nineties has been about its governmental control, secrecy, and terror. In contrast, this film captures and preserves the everyday life in East Berlin during and at

the end of the GDR through the adolescent's own story. The first-person narrative engraves the normal, everyday aspects such as consumer products and coming-of-age experiences into the history of the GDR. This nostalgic view is unique for Germany's twentieth-century history, because of the taboo against recalling any positive experiences from the Nazi era, the historical precedent for the loss of nation and self. Becker's film portrays through everyday experiences the particular generation which experienced the *Wende* (change) as adolescents and its relationship to the GDR, childhood, and history. The writers and filmmakers treating these experiences come from a tradition of East German storytelling and filmmaking called *Alltag* (everyday life). Joshua Feinstein's text about the depictions of daily life in the GDR describes the trend whose characteristics can also be found in *Good Bye, Lenin!*. The *Alltag* films favored female protagonists, especially unmarried women, just as this film celebrates Christiane's and Ariane's detachment from men (134). The male characters in the films often experience an "existential crisis," as does Alex (135). The *Alltag* is also highlighted in *Ostalgie*, which I suggest gave birth to this film.

This film appeals to the audience through its connection to *Ostalgie*, which first appeared in 1993 in German news publications. The term blends the words *Nostalgie* and *Ost*, meaning 'nostalgia' and 'east' respectively, to express a 'nostalgia for the East' (East Germany, that is). The movement has led to the creation of a number of former GDR-inspired consumer goods: books, movies and television programs, and even reproduced food products. Beginning in the late nineties, a number of books and films were produced by the generation which experienced 1989 as adolescents, revealing the deep cavity left by the loss of home and childhood. Writers such as Jana Hensel, André

Kubiczek, Jakob Hein, and Julia Schoch are some from their generation responsible for the first texts describing everyday life in the GDR from a more naïve and flattering perspective than had yet been expressed. In a 2002 interview in *Die Welt*, Jana Hensel addressed criticisms of the movement and her own work, *Zonenkinder* (2002), suggesting that “[T]he GDR is so often examined and staged critical of the system, that one has the feeling either everyone was in the Stasi or passed out flyers. There was an entirely real everyday life that needs to be told.” In 1999, films such as *Sonnenallee* (dir. Leander Haußmann), a comedy, and *Helden wie wir* (dir. Sebastian Peterson), a drama, about adolescents in the GDR during the seventies brought another facet of the GDR to the big screen which had been largely forgotten in all discussions of the GDR — that children grew up there, experiencing both the wonders and the difficulties of childhood.

The conflict surrounding *Ostalgie*, however, is not simply a national conflict of (former) East and West Germans, but rather a generational conflict of remembrance and history. Melinda Milligan, who studied nostalgia’s role in sustaining and/or regaining identity lost by displacement, suggests that nostalgia is defined by “generations who experience shared space and place attachment” (382). Lothar Fritze defines *Ostalgie* specifically as a current of shared experiences by this generation that is attempting to reclaim the loss of a reality and replace it with a perception, a central theme of the film (Fritze 113, Moles Kaupp 9). As an example, Cristina Moles Kaupp notes several scenes which seem like possible recreations of documentary footage, but which have no actual duplicate in the media archives; they are found in recollections of people’s memories. Fritze uses the very filmic term ‘observer’ when discussing who holds the power to decide what reality is (113). This term works doubly in my discussion of the

film. First, because Alex and his generation are the “observers”; they decide what is or what will be considered the reality and, second, because the audience as traditional cinematic “observer” also becomes part of this relationship of power. Their relationship with the child protagonist causes their observations to be guided by the young protagonist. Fewer and fewer remember World War II and its aftermath, the ‘68ers are aging as well, and those who came of age during the *Wende* are now left with the task of passing on history. *Ostalgie* and the texts that started and have supported it could become part of the history. Unlike the children of World War II, the children of the *Wende* are able to share their childhood memories without breaking taboos. They have already begun to revise the history of the GDR and the events of 1989, not because of where they experienced it, but because of the age at which they experienced it.

The use of visual media is significant in *Good Bye, Lenin!* not only because it is something this generation is accustomed to use to communicate, but because it explores the question of perception and truth in the filmic medium itself, in the mass media system of the GDR, and in the trend of *Ostalgie*. Alex, as part of the *Enkelgeneration*, already subscribes to visual representation as the preferred medium, and thus he harnesses it for his own use. For Alex, history continuously happens on a screen. As a boy he watches Sigmund Jähn, the East German cosmonaut, fly into space and later he watches as the GDR celebrates its anniversary with a parade just outside his own window. To recreate history, he constructs it on video. His images of history, no matter how distorted or produced, potentially have the power to become what *is* remembered as historical truth. These representations of made-up news reflect the effects that the *Ostalgie* movement had on the real world. Critics frown on this

movement's celebration of everyday life in the GDR because they see the potential of *Ostalgic* productions to become confused with complete historical truth.

Just as the GDR controlled communication to its citizens through the mass media, so does Alex control the communication through media to his mother. After creating the façade in their home and in his mother's mind, Alex manipulates the information she receives. For example, he shows her that the radio is broken, but he broke it intentionally before her arrival. He scours flea markets to buy old GDR newspapers. She asks for the television and he puts it off until he can think of a way for her to watch it without exposing his deception. He then begins appropriating the events of 1989 and 1990 to create a new history. Alex's West German co-worker Denis provides him with taped copies of old news programs which Alex shows her through the television which is secretly connected to a VCR on the other side of her wall. Then his mother has some experiences that require him to create a whole new history of the GDR. First, she sees a Coca-Cola banner unfurl outside her window and he and Denis make a version of the GDR news program *Aktuelle Kamera* claiming that Coke was first developed in Leipzig in the fifties. Later, after watching her young granddaughter (Ariane's child) learning to walk, the mother is inspired to walk out of their apartment and goes out into the street. Alex and his sister find her and bring her back home, but not before she meets westerners moving into their apartment building and sees western vehicles and advertisements. In response, Alex and Denis create a second news program using actual, but misrepresenting, footage to explain that Western "refugees" trying to escape capitalism were being accepted into the GDR. Finally, he must cover up the reunification fireworks celebrations by creating other historical reasons for the festivities.

He uses footage from Honecker resigning from his position several months earlier and new footage of a taxi driver he met who resembles Sigmund Jähn accepting the position as new party leader. "Jähn" declares the borders open in a speech accompanied by reassigned images of Easterners fleeing to the West to make it appear as if Westerners were fleeing to the East.

Alex's final manipulation of history follows his mother's confession of her own manipulation of history. She admits that his father did not leave them for a Western girlfriend, but that they had planned to flee and she was supposed to follow with the children, but fear held her back. In the following scene she has suffered another heart attack. This prompts Alex to find his father and return him to his mother. Interrupted by the arrival of Alex's father at the hospital, Lara tells Alex's mother that Germany is now one country. The returning father paves the way for introjections, successful loss, and Alex's ability to cast off the phantom caused by past phantoms. After the return of the husband, Christiane can reclaim him as part of her unconscious and Alex is left to admit the end of the GDR itself. He does so by creating a final story reuniting the two Germanies under the history he had already started building. It is not until he recreates reunification on his own terms that he is able to introject both the nation and the parent which becomes represented on screen by his accidentally swallowing his mother's ashes after they are sent into the sky by model rocket. So, for Alex, his mother not only married the Socialist State, she became it, thus creating a fractured understanding by Alex that his mother and his homeland were one in the same.

The Mitscherlich's account that Germans failed to properly mourn the loss of the father (as ego-ideal) relates to the losses experienced in this film. The loss of Alex's

father and then nation affects him and his mother and prepares Alex for the loss of his mother. To understand the significance of these losses, one must understand Abraham and Torok's explanation of what can happen when one loses a love-object. If the subject *introjects* the love-object, that is, if the subject both speaks about it and connects associations to it, then normal, healthy mourning can occur (113). If the subject fails to introject the object, the object is *incorporated* into the subject's ego. An imago then takes its place in the subject's unconscious. The subject then sees the imago as literal and not figurative. In the case of Alex's mother, she incorporates the loss of her husband and takes the GDR as her partner. What she cannot admit to, however, is her own complicity in this loss – she was supposed to follow him to West Berlin with the children. This is the phantom that haunts Alex.

The obsession of East German characters such as Alex plays directly to the audience's own psychological wounds of loss, which is perhaps where the characters' appeal lies. Lacan discusses obsession and loss in his Third Seminar. The obsession is caused, according to him, by the need to justify one's existence and to escape the lack of the other (D. Evans 126). Alex is left, after the fall of the wall, with a loss. Everything he (and his generation) has come to know and understand about the world has come crashing down around them, figuratively and literally. For Alex, the border opening and the fall of the nation was like his father leaving again. He came to embrace the commonly shared events and artifacts from East Germany as desperate, grasping attempts to hold on to his identity, which is quickly disappearing. Alex's frantic obsession with the GDR appears as a simple response to his mother's grave illness, but it is meant to keep the GDR, as representative of his father, alive.

Continuing this habit of replacement, he also treats the perversions of real events as reality. Like his mother, he treats this loss orally. Abraham and Torok write that when words cannot be used to name our lost-object, the emptiness of the oral cavity manifests itself in a number of ways. Our introduction to Alex as a young man combines both of these symptoms. As a voice over, Alex says he is “*auf dem Höhepunkt der männlichen Ausstrahlungskraft*” (at the height of masculine attraction),<sup>32</sup> then he belches. Later, he chokes on an apple, vomits after getting punched in the stomach, and screams almost primally when their old money has been found too late, making it worthless. He also continues to describe events and people figuratively, avoiding proper labeling to prevent proper mourning – Lara, the nurse and love interest, is an “*Austauschengel aus der Sowjetunion*” (exchange-angel from the Soviet Union); the removal of the Berlin Wall is a great campaign of “*Altstoffsammlung*” (GDR project to collect and reuse or recycle materials); and the introduction of the Western goods into East Germany is a “*Siegeszug*” (procession of victors) (as several coke trucks travel foregrounded through the frame). Instead of describing the gathering on the steps of the Rathaus Schöneberg and the singing of the German national anthem by Helmut Kohl and gatherers as political, he says that his mother missed “*ein klassisches Konzert vor dem Rathaus*” (a classic concert in front of city hall). His voice-over descriptions of the events of November 1989 fail to reflect the historical relevance of the situation. This figurative language to disguise reality and Alex’s seemingly real belief in it is also in line

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<sup>32</sup> Note on translation: *Ausstrahlung* is often translated as *charisma*, but it also is the technical term for broadcast or transmission, which is important to note since communication technology plays such an important role in this film. *Kraft* most often means power, but it can also refer to virility.

with Abraham and Torok's explanation of incorporation and therefore proof of his initial response to loss as unhealthy.

In *Good Bye, Lenin!*, Alex loses his nation permanently and his mother temporarily. His nation, his *Heimat*, is his lost object. His mother becomes the imago, the idealized image of the nation formed during his childhood, since he cannot introject the loss of the object. He keeps the GDR and his mother in the shell of her bedroom and the few people he allows to visit her. When she is told some of the truth by the nurse after her second heart attack, Alex's support is lost. He finally cries, a symbol of release. He makes the final arrangements to mourn the nation he loved by recreating its end. He also makes the final arrangements for his mother after her death. His confession at the end that he had lost "*ein Land, das in meiner Erinnerung immer mit meiner Mutter verbunden sein wird*" (a land that will always be connected in my memory to my mother) proves this connection and the dual loss. Torok emphasizes that for introjection to occur the subject must connect the lost object to things associated with it rather than just incorporate it through fantasy into the unconscious; at this point, Alex accomplishes this.

As I claim, the child in the generational relationship has significant power which has thus far been expressed by Alex's power to write history, but this is further expressed through the camera's refusal to make Alex the object of the audience's gaze. Several devices in the film disrupt the notion of Alex being looked at. The film starts with home movie-type images. The home movie is projected onto the center of the screen, framed by black space and captioned "*Unsere Datsche – Sommer '78*" (our vacation home – summer '78). Quickly, the projection expands to fill the screen. This creates a

double barrier between the film and audience – two cameras, two screens. The film’s prelude continues, describing the story about the flight of Alex’s father from the GDR and his mother’s nervous breakdown, followed by her seeking refuge in devotion to the “fatherland.” As the prelude ends, young Alex launches a model rocket and after it has disappeared into the sky, the camera pans back down to reveal an older Alex sitting on a bench. At this point sound causes a rupture between the film and the audience. A sound check occurring off screen creates feedback, a noise meant to create discomfort. Then, Alex’s voice-over explains that it is the GDR’s anniversary, he has the day off of work, and he is at the height of his “masculine charm,” followed by his diegetic belch, thus making the audience more uncomfortable and less willing to connect to Alex.

Later, police assemble to stop the protest in which Alex takes part and they are successful. They scare, beat into submission, and arrest several of the protesters. Christiane witnesses Alex’s arrest during the fracas as she return from a celebration of the nation’s anniversary. She collapses from a heart attack and he calls out to her. This particular scene is quite poignant because it destroys the focus of the audience’s gaze. Are we supposed to be watching his mother, a spectacle in her red evening gown, or are we supposed to be watching Alex looking at his mother/the camera/the audience? These three sets of shot-reverse-shot cloud the audience’s understanding, thus taking away the audience’s power to gaze at any particular character.

Alex’s own looking creates a situation in which the audience learns that it does not have the usual power of an observer. The first example occurs during his first crossing into West Berlin. His “first cultural discovery in a new land” occurs in a shop where several (presumably East German) citizens have gathered to watch a pornographic film

demonstrating Western excess in the size of the woman's exposed breasts and the gluttonous amount of whipped cream that covers her. This experience affirms Alex's possession of the gaze and, thus, power. The second example occurs when his sister's new boyfriend, Rainer, moves in and Alex sees them through a crack in the door dancing seductively together. We witness his third command of the gaze at the hospital. As he sits by his mother's side, he watches the legs of the nurses as they walk away. Although we, as the audience, are shown these foci of Alex's gaze, we are not meant to objectify them the way that he can. He blocks our attempts to gaze subjectively by his sugar-coated descriptions of these events.

Despite Alex's power as seen in many different levels of the film, his identity as child is reaffirmed throughout the film. Alex is the child in the generational relationship, not a man in a gendered one or a colonizer in an ethnic one. His attempts to be a grown man fail. This appears first in his naïve political rhetoric he uses to argue with his mother about GDR policies. When he participates in a protest against these same policies, his immaturity is again revealed, this time by his disconnection from the seriousness of the activity and his irreverently eating an apple, only to choke on it, and then he flirts with the girl who helps him. When he visits his father in West Berlin, he waits with two children (his half-brother and half-sister) as they watch *Unser Sandmännchen* (*Our Sandman*, a bedtime children's television program) instead of joining the adult soiree. Later, he and his girlfriend find an abandoned apartment filled with the products and decorations of the GDR. During this time of sexual maturity, his childishness is still present in their "playing house" behavior as they explore this

unchaperoned space. All of these attempts to grow up are hindered by Alex's position as child.

Although this film seems far removed from the style of fairy tales, its elements appear generally and in reference to a specific tale. Like Propp's theory, this film includes the removal of a parent, followed by an interdiction and violation. There is trickery, a lack, and revelation that cause the hero to react. Alex's "*Austauschengeßel*" is like his magical donor. Alex travels between two lands to repair the lack and the revelation, enduring challenges along the way. And finally all is revealed and the family is put right. Ariane and her boyfriend marry and raise a family and Alex is released from the bond with his mother and fatherland. More specifically, the provocative sequence of the protest, followed by Christiane's coma, references the story of Snow White. In the fairy tale, the girl runs away from a cruel stepmother only to succumb to a poisonous apple given by the stepmother in disguise. Snow White is thought to be dead, but a prince finds her in her glass casket, sees she is beautiful, and takes her corpse away to his castle. When a piece of the apple stuck in her throat becomes dislodged on the journey, she wakes and marries the prince. The stepmother is punished by being put in shoes made of hot iron and she is forced to dance at the wedding until she collapses and dies. In *Good Bye, Lenin!*, Alex is stifled by his step-parent (the GDR as married to his mother), and when he tries to fight it, he chokes on an apple, but it is his mother who falls into a coma.

"*Wir lösen Probleme im Vorwärtsschreiten*" (We solve problems by moving forward) says Alex, recalling a motto from the GDR. Lola literally took steps to solve a problem and Regina experienced this through her exile and return to Germany. These

young adults represent the third generation and how they are solving problems of identity. Lola and Alex take control to solve the problems in order to overcome the burdens of the past and release the phantoms that stunt their development. Regina accepts the others around her in order to identify herself. These characters' (generational) otherness promises an optimism missing since World War II.

## CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

I began my dissertation wondering why a child protagonist would appeal to an adult audience. In my research I have found that the child protagonist offers a unique vessel through which the adult audience can experience a film. For postwar Germany, the child protagonist can act as both reflection and guide, and, as generational other, can contribute to understanding the psychological and social development of the German collective. In the first decade after World War II, German films used young protagonists to work through topics of immediate importance such as reconstituting the family as the basic social unit upon which to build a destroyed society. Films from the second generation reveal the weakness of the hastily reconstructed postwar family and the crisis of identity it caused for the second-generation children. In response to the suffocating tether of the previous generations' connection to World War II, the third generation portrays young protagonists aware of the shortcomings of their parents and grandparents, but who look forward and independently to identification with a Germany that has survived not only the war, but also postwar division, the end of the Cold War, reunification, and a significant place in the global economy.

Through its flexibility to adapt to other eras and even other categorizations of film, the concept of the generational other has implications that reach farther than my dissertation. For example, films from the Weimar era could also be revealing when read through the lens of the generational other. Some examples that come to mind are *Der Golem, wie er in die Welt kam* (*How the Golem Came Into the World*, dir. Carl Boese and Paul Wegener, 1920), in which a young child defeats the golem, and *Mädchen in Uniform* (*Girls in Uniform*, dir. Leontine Sagan, 1931), which takes place in a girls'

boarding school and focuses on one girl's affection for her teacher. These films already have a number of elements from which to pull several readings, but the generation of the characters has not been studied. Recent and current films can also be revealing when read through the generational other. For example, the acclaimed filmmaker Fatih Akin, often uses young adult protagonists to explore questions of ethnic identity in Germany. In *kurz und schmerzlos* (*Short, Sharp, Shock*, 1998),<sup>33</sup> for example, the protagonists, all young men by age, are characterized as the child in the generational other. In this film, the protagonists are trying to find their identity, a process closely linked in psychoanalytic theory to parental figures, as immigrants or offspring of immigrants.

In 2009 German-born Austrian filmmaker Michael Haneke directed *Das weiße Band: eine Kindergeschichte* (*The White Ribbon: A Children's Story*). The film tells the story of a small German village in the year leading up to the catalyst to World War I—the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand of Austria. During this time, several horrible events occur: the doctor is injured when his horse trips on a wire strung low between two trees, a farmer's wife dies after falling through a rotted floor, the cabbage field is destroyed, the barn is set on fire, the Baron's son goes missing and is found beaten, the midwife's son also goes missing and is found blinded, the pastor's pet bird is left dead on his desk, and the doctor and the midwife and their respective children go missing at the same time. Most of these events remain a mystery, but the village teacher, who is also the film's narrator, believes the children, specifically the pastor's children, are at fault. Some events are eventually explained. The farmer's wife died because of the

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<sup>33</sup> The translation of this title is actually "short and painless," but its English language title is the one given in parentheses.

Baron's lack of attention to work conditions. His cabbage field was destroyed by the farmer's oldest son as revenge for his mother's death. The pastor's bird was likely killed by his oldest daughter because she enters his office stealthily, retrieves the scissors in his desk, and walks towards the bird's cage before the camera cuts away. Later, the bird appears on the desk with the scissors still stuck in it and in the shape of the cross. The other mysteries are never solved and the disappearance of the midwife and the doctor lead the town to believe they were the ones behind all the tragedies, but the film suggests that the town's children are responsible.

Critics have recognized that this film's temporal setting offers a proleptic reading of the Nazi generation, and Haneke has stated in several interviews that this is a correct assumption, but he reminds the audience that not only can Nazi Fascism develop from ignorance and cruel authoritarianism, but any fanaticism can lead to terrorism. This link to terrorism connects the events of a hundred years ago to those today. This film also seems to connect the eras of film which I have explored in this dissertation. Haneke was born in 1942, placing him in the second postwar generation. His film reflects that generation both in its concentration on parent-child relations and distrust of authority as well as its cinematic similarities to New German Cinema. This is no surprise since, in an interview for *The Observer*, he states that in the sixties and seventies he saw movies almost daily (Day). This film correlates in a number of ways to the films of New German Cinema that I discussed in chapter 3. Its most similar cousin is Schlöndorff's *Der Junge Törless*. Both films were shot in black and white, set in a small town shortly before World War I, and explore cruelty and violence, specifically through children. Both films have elements of class and generational discontent. They also address the educational

system, religion, and sexual development. Unlike Törless, however, neither the village teacher, nor the audience, witnesses the violence in action, perhaps because of his adult status which is highlighted when he visits the father of the girl he intends to marry. The father reminds him that she is only 17 and he is old enough to be her father (he is 31). She also uses the formal *Sie* (you) when speaking to him, a practice one uses for elders and strangers as a gesture of respect, even though he insists she use the informal *du* (you), which is used for familiarity or as a diminutive. One could argue that the teacher should be the main character of the film because he is the narrator, but again he is dismissed from that status because he is not an omnipotent narrator like Oskar or Anna from *Die Blechtrommel* and *Alice in den Städten*, respectively. He does not find out who the culprits are before he is drafted into the military and because his narrating voice is that of an old man, we can assume that he never finds out.

Two stories intertwine to create the film's narrative: the romantic personal story of the narrator as he falls in love and the suspenseful tale of cruel events that appear to come from within the community. In the first story, the teacher is the main character. This storyline is tame, wholesome, and idyllic. The boy meets the girl and they fall in love. He does not dishonor her when they meet for a carriage ride alone and he respectfully accepts her father's request that he wait another year to marry her. In the second storyline, the children are the main characters. Unlike the child protagonists of New German Cinema, the psychology of these characters is not explored blatantly. They are mysterious through the end because we are never told or shown proof that they are the culprits, yet they are often found near the mysterious atrocities. We do learn that they are treated cruelly by their parents. The pastor's children are caned for

being late to dinner, marked by a white band for insolence, and tied to the bed to prevent masturbation. The doctor's daughter is molested by her father who also shows cruelty through verbal abuse in a scene with the town midwife, his longtime lover. The Baron's steward also canes his sons even without proof of their culpability.

While the film is credited with showcasing "horrible children," some of the children perform decent acts in lengthy scenes that are meant to draw attention. The pastor's young son wishes to keep and care for an injured young bird and humbly asks his father for permission. When the pastor's bird is killed, the young boy unselfishly offers his recuperating bird to this father as a replacement. The doctor's daughter shows compassion and motherliness toward her young brother when their father is injured and when he is afraid at night. These characters complicate the reading of the film as one about evil children whose strict parents and society unknowingly prepare them to become a generation of Nazis. If the film anticipates these children as future Fascists, it expands the understanding of their generation as simply cruel monsters. Not only are there both good and, presumably, bad children, but how much has their authoritarian, patriarchal, and strictly religious upbringing influenced their development?

Another aspect of the film that prevents this common, yet simplified reading is the dynamic of the children's social group. As reflected in both the families and the greater social structure, this culture of authority cemented through violence and degradation is based in its patriarchy. This is also an accepted explanation of the popularity of Hitler as the ultimate father of the German *Volk*. The group of children, however, is led by Klara, the pastor's oldest daughter. From the very beginning, she is afforded a special designation as leader. In the first scene with children, she immediately reprimands a

boy for greeting the midwife incorrectly and apologizes for him as if she were his mother. The narrator then explains that the children often followed her to the village exit after school. Later, long after she and her brother have submitted to the punishments of caning and wearing a white ribbon, the children are alone in the school, waiting for the teacher and pastor to arrive for confirmation lessons. Klara watches for them and when she sees them, she commands the other children to stop running around and yelling. She also speaks for the children when they are caught near the midwife's home after she has gone missing. Klara is also the only child the filmmaker ties directly to a crime—killing the pastor's bird and leaving its body for him to find. Her counterpart in the social group is also her brother. He, however, is portrayed weakly through his suicide attempt, his tearful admission of masturbating, and his puppeted responses to the teacher as prompted by his sister. In this film, the child protagonists, as generational other, complicate the simplified reading of the film as a modern-day interpretation of the seeds of Nazism that were rooted in the cycle of strict authority from the earliest stages of psychological development through its manifestations in the social constructions of family, religion, and class. As this film exemplifies, continued studies of the relationships of the child protagonist to the adult audience offer another way to reveal the complexity of culture through cinematic texts.

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Jennifer Coenen was born in Phoenix, Arizona and has lived in southwest Missouri as well as north central Florida. In 1998, she married Danny Coenen and they welcomed their daughter in 1999. In 2000, she earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in German from Southwest Missouri State University (now named Missouri State University) in Springfield, Missouri. She continued immediately in graduate studies at the University of Florida, earning a Master of Arts degree in German and continued to work towards a Ph.D. During her time as a graduate student, she has taught beginning and advanced courses in German, the sequence of introductory college writing courses, and a writing course that incorporated an introduction to the college experience. She has presented at local conferences and symposiums as well as the German Studies Association annual conference. Following graduation, Jennifer Coenen will continue to teach and research German film, but would also like to study contemporary American romantic fiction.