

# INTRODUCTION

---

People don't want to see a German film made by a German any more, not unless it's some trash.<sup>1</sup>

German film is gathering speed. The age of the rom-coms is over, the auteur film has finally given up. With courage, passion, irreverence and imagination, a new generation of actors, directors and scriptwriters has given German cinema a creative boost.<sup>2</sup>

By the final decade of the last century, German cinema, once regarded as a serious challenger to Hollywood and later associated with exciting, oppositional filmmaking, had, as the quotation from Werner Herzog indicates, been reduced to banality. Herzog's reputation as Germany's 'visionary' director seemed justified: the 1990s saw the release of a series of trite, formulaic comedies, whose debt to Hollywood was obvious. These popular mainstream films are, according to Eric Rentschler, part of the 'cinema of consensus', which shuns the perceived obscurantism of the New German Cinema and, instead, 'cultivates familiar genres and caters to public tastes'.<sup>3</sup> The satisfaction derived through recognition and anticipation, familiarity breeding contentment, as it were, was one that Adorno and Horkheimer had previously described:

Pleasure hardens into boredom because, if it is to remain pleasure, it must not demand any effort and therefore moves rigorously in the worn grooves of association. No independent thinking must be expected from the audience ... Any logical connection calling for mental effort is painstakingly avoided.<sup>4</sup>

This is not to say that German filmmakers have avoided making films requiring mental effort. In terms of box-office success, the 1990s may be associated with hackneyed genre filmmaking, but the decade produced some critical and inventive works, even if the public was seldom swayed by the films' success at international film festivals or by enthusiastic reviews.

Not everyone is as discouraged by contemporary German cinema culture as Herzog, as the second of the above quotations indicates. Some commentators have even spoken optimistically of a 'third golden age' (after the cinema of the Weimar period and the New German Cinema of the late 1960s and 1970s). This optimism, which led to talk of German cinema's ren-

aissance, was largely based on the unexpected success, nationally and internationally, of two films (both produced by the Berlin film collective, X-Filme Creative Pool), Tom Tykwer's *Lola Rennt* (*Run Lola Run*, 1998) and Wolfgang Becker's *Good Bye, Lenin!* (2003). German cinema's continuing fascination with its past(s) has further sustained its critical and commercial success as seen, in varying degrees, with films such as *Der Untergang* (*Downfall*, Oliver Hirschbiegel, 2004), *Sophie Scholl - die letzten Tage* (*Sophie Scholl - The Final Days*, Marc Rothemund, 2005), *Die Fälscher* (*The Counterfeiters*, Stefan Ruzowitzky, 2007), *Das Leben der Anderen* (*The Lives of Others*, Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck, 2006) and *Der Baader Meinhof Komplex* (*The Baader Meinhof Complex*, Uli Edel, 2008).<sup>5</sup>

While these films may go some way to legitimizing those optimistic projections about German cinema's future, it should be noted that this is not the first time such optimism has been heard. When the German Democratic Republic (GDR) collapsed in 1989, its state-owned enterprises were sold off, including its film industry, Deutsche Film-Aktiengesellschaft (DEFA), which was bought by the French company, Compagnie Immobilière Phénix. The acclaimed West German filmmaker and 1979 Academy Award winner, Volker Schlöndorff, who was made one of the studio's co-directors, was similarly prone to making such bold statements, especially those concerning the former GDR studios, which he imagined as a super-studio of the future: 'Wim Wenders or Werner Herzog will be directing in one studio, in the one next door there'll be Louis Malle or Claude Chabrol, and English directors like Peter Greenaway will be here or Americans like Martin Scorsese. And they will all meet up in the canteen.'<sup>6</sup> Neither Schlöndorff's vision of transforming the mighty Babelsberg studios into a viable, if internationally constructed, challenger to Hollywood, nor his declared intention of consolidating and applying the talent at DEFA has come to fruition. A dozen years after their purchase of Babelsberg, the French conglomerate (later renamed Vivendi) finally decided to part company with the studios, which had been running at a loss for a decade, and sold Babelsberg in July 2004 to the investment company Filmbetriebe Berlin Brandenburg GmbH (FBB) headed by the west Germans, Carl Woebcken and Christoph Fisser, for the symbolic price of €1 – and a debt of €18 million.

Though an important financial success, the real value of a film such as *Good Bye, Lenin!* lay in its boost to industry morale. With domestic audiences exceeding six million, Becker's film counted as a major accomplishment for a film industry that had long accustomed itself to the dominance of Hollywood. *Good Bye, Lenin!* was not the biggest German film of recent times. That title still goes to Michael Herbig's *Der Schuh des Manitu* (*Manitou's Shoe*, 2001), a parody of the Karl May westerns (but undoubtedly the lowbrow mainstream fare to which Herzog objects), which attracted almost double the number of people. Despite Herbig's sensational returns, it was the films made by Becker and von Donnersmark and Hirschbiegel

which seemed to restore German cinema's reputation abroad. This was principally due to their perceived cultural significance, which, unlike the majority of other recent (successful) German films, reflected contemporary issues relating to German history and society in ways that were accessible to international audiences.<sup>7</sup> The ways in which *Good Bye, Lenin!* addresses the most important event in recent German history was considered of such importance that a gala screening was even held for the Bundestag, and the Federal Agency for Civic Education (BpB) was quick to publish an accompanying booklet designed for educational purposes.<sup>8</sup> It hardly needs to be said that such high-level endorsement is not a common occurrence, even in a country that values the arts as highly as does Germany. What distinguishes Becker's film from German cinema's other high-earners, however, is that it is prepared to reflect and engage with contemporary issues. It reflects present concerns about the recent German past(s) and is unafraid to explore issues central to (German) identity – memory, nostalgia and the communities on either side of the former wall. Rentschler included Becker's film in his summary of contemporary German films, noting that 'contemporary German films at long last once again manifest an ability to take risks, to dare to be spontaneous and tentative'.<sup>9</sup>

*Good Bye, Lenin!* is by no means the only film to address unification; and it is certainly not the most penetrating account of that time, though its success marks a significant point in the representation of the east, as the final chapter of this book makes clear. Filmmakers began addressing the dissolution of the GDR and the effects of unification on the (predominantly eastern) population almost as soon as the wall was breached. Some have surveyed the new republic from a critical position that recalls the kind of social critical filmmaking for which (West) Germany had once been renowned, though these are, by and large, low-budget films that made little impression on audiences. Others have seen the coming together of the two populations as material for light-hearted comedies and have revived old genres in order to represent the encounters between east and west. Despite the divergent approaches to unification and its related issues, one thing is clear: German unification has provided many of the country's filmmakers with a much needed focus, resulting in an intriguing audiovisual index of recent German history and contemporary society.

## Films and Identity: Reflecting the Nation

Conventional wisdom has it that identity is not a fixed, immutable concept. The contributions made to identity discourse by Benedict Anderson, Eric Hobsbawm and Anthony Smith have offered a theoretical starting point for many scholars seeking to trace the developments of national identity in film. These scholars have stressed the 'constructedness' and mutability of identity. If one accepts that identity is created, that it is the product of what

Hobsbawm refers to as 'invented tradition', one can begin to investigate the means by which culture (and that includes film) participates in its construction.<sup>10</sup> The cultural narratives that films offer play a vital role in the discussion, and even in the shaping of identities (whether regional/national, ethnic, or gender). Regardless of the universality of their themes – love, death, betrayal, duty, fate – the manner in which they engage with these ideas often reveals something of the society in which the films are produced. Though talking specifically about filmmaking in Afghanistan, the Iranian director Samira Makhmalbaf's comment that 'cinema acts like a mirror for society to look at its spirit and correct its faults' stresses the socially purposive role the medium can fulfil in providing an image of the nation that is invaluable to its self-understanding, but it also hints at the way in which cinema can provide a portal through which others come to view a particular society.<sup>11</sup> Since no society remains impervious to change but undergoes a 'continuous process of cultural reproduction', one should add that film enables us to view a particular society at a particular time.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, for film scholars (and the discipline extends to include, amongst others, art historians, philosophers, and social anthropologists), film is an important means of examining different nations' cultural individuality. Recent years have seen an increase in publications which address the twin subject of national cinema and national identity, resulting in some illuminating studies of countries as diverse as Spain, China and Iran.<sup>13</sup> Until recently, the interest in German cinema and national identity had tended to focus on Germany's pasts, whether on the Weimar period, the National Socialist (NS) past or West Germany during the 1960s and 1970s. The collapse of the East German state precipitated an identity crisis within Germany as the two populations, which had been separated for four decades, struggled to adjust to their newly defined profile. Since the collapse of Communism, many scholars have sought for evidence of an east German distinctiveness, a regional particularism that denies or at least problematizes any notion of a homogenous German identity. While literature and poetry have proved fertile grounds of enquiry, resulting in a wide number of anthologies and monographs on the period's poetry and fiction, most post-unification films have rarely been subjected to the same kind of critical examination; those international triumphs such as von Donnersmark's Oscar-winning film remain an exception to the rule. The discussion of post-unification cinema has largely been eclipsed by the discourse surrounding the role played by film in the GDR. The interest in East German film is understandable. The state film industry, DEFA, was largely unknown in the west and the sudden fascination with all things East German extended also to its cinematic output, resulting in a large number of historical accounts and individual studies.<sup>14</sup>

Contemporary German cinema, however, has received much less attention, despite its obvious relevance to identity discourse. At least eighty films exploring issues relating to unification have been made since 1989. Many of

these remain unknown, having received limited distribution even within Germany, and are accessible only to those able to attend international film festivals (though the sheer number of festivals that are now in operation provides these films with a far bigger audience than was once the case).<sup>15</sup> Subsequent television broadcasts allow some films an afterlife of sorts; nevertheless, the films rarely enjoy prime time slots and tend to be shown in the small hours and often only on regional stations. This is not true of those films that did enjoy considerable success at the box-office such as *Go, Trabi Go* (Peter Timm, 1990), *Sonnenallee* (*Sun Alley*, Leander Haußmann, 1999) and *Good Bye, Lenin!* which are regularly screened on television and usually at peak time. Though some films have been individually commented on in film magazines and academic journals, the majority simply vanish from view. The publication of Leonie Naughton's *That Was the Wild East. Film Culture, Unification and the 'New' Germany* in 2002 went some way to rescuing many films from obscurity and the volume counts as the first comprehensive account of the developments in filmmakers' responses to unification.<sup>16</sup> Naughton's study, which is weighted towards western productions, concludes quite rightly that 'the western takeover of the studios had devastating cultural implications for the filmmaking community in the former GDR as well as for East German culture'.<sup>17</sup> Naughton's assertion correctly describes the situation for many of DEFA's established directors. Following the collapse of their indigenous industry, which came under the control of the *Treuhand*, the trust fund that was responsible for supervising the transferral of the GDR's state businesses into joint-stock operations – or, the 'world's busiest asset-stripper', according to one observer – many careers were lost to the new market conditions. However, Naughton does not acknowledge the new generation of filmmakers from the east who have made a significant contribution to contemporary German film culture.<sup>18</sup> Despite the problems experienced at Babelsberg and the decline of many DEFA directors, filmmaking in eastern Germany has not dried up. The film school in Potsdam, where many GDR filmmakers learnt their craft, is now open to students from all over Germany, and a number of the films discussed in the following chapters were made by its graduates. Where one might have expected some contribution from the once politically minded proponents of the New German Cinema, these remained strangely silent when it came to dealing with the complicated issue of unification. Wenders, Herzog, Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet, and Hans-Jürgen Syberberg have, in fact, shown little interest in the troubled dialogue of unification, preferring to make quirky documentaries, experimental films, or working in Hollywood. Of the directors associated with the German new wave, Helma Sanders-Brahms (whose 1992 film *Apfelbäume* (*Apple Trees*) is discussed in Chapter 2) and Margarethe von Trotta (whose GDR melodrama, *Das Versprechen* (*The Promise*), was released in 1994) and Ulrike Ottinger, whose documentary film *Countdown* (1991) chronicled the last ten days before unification, are among the few to have responded to unification. It has mostly fallen to young directors to chart Germany's progress since the two states

were sutured, and to see how the east has recovered from this operation and what kind of scars it may have left.

The subject of German unification has spawned a vast number of books and articles across a broad range of disciplines, from economics to gender studies. From the beginning of the GDR's end, the debate surrounding German identity was one of the critical issues. The subject aroused passions as a wide range of people entered the fray, from politicians to filmmakers, footballers to intellectuals. Despite the images of jubilation and of cheerful defiance that for many came to define the autumn revolution, many articles tended towards gloomy prediction and remained unconvinced by Chancellor Helmut Kohl's confidence that the grey east would transform into 'blossoming landscapes' (a vision that he later recanted, explaining that he too had been caught up by the general optimism of the times). This tendency continued to be a feature throughout the 1990s, but the *a posteriori* consideration resulted in a more thoughtful, less emotional consideration of the situation. The tenth anniversary of unification inevitably aroused media attention but, with spirits tempered by the experiences since 1989, the celebrations were muted, and the failures and disappointments of unification received as much attention as its achievements. Two decades on, the questions surrounding Germany's post-Cold War identity continue to provoke debate and lively media coverage.

The ongoing economic problems that are most evident in the new federal states (the area comprising the former GDR) and the financial burden placed on the states that previously comprised the Federal Republic are well documented.<sup>19</sup> In 2004, the east Germans showed themselves capable of mass demonstrations once again, as thousands took to the streets in order to protest against the so-called 'Hartz IV', the controversial package of economic reforms that appeared to encumber still further a region already suffering from high unemployment. The disillusionment with unification has manifested itself in other ways too, a fact arguably revealed in the electoral support for the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS, later renamed The Left Party) in the east. What is more, increasing numbers of commentators have offered evidence suggesting that, rather than overcoming the differences between east and west, which was the ardent hope of unification's architects, the opposite may in fact be the case.

## Heimat, Memory and Nostalgia

*Screening the East* sets out to investigate how these differences have come to be represented in the films since 1989 and, in so doing, assesses their contribution to, and reflection of, the debate surrounding east German identity. For all the rhetoric of integration and the (contested) notion of cultural commonality inherent in the idea of the *Kulturnation* (an idea of

German exceptionalism that was promulgated by various sides in both German states), the populations of the east and west did not naturally coalesce once the barrier that had divided the nation was removed and geographical and political union established. The following account reveals how the east Germans' post-unification frustrations have, in some films, led to a regrouping of their local/regional community and the emergence of a post-GDR eastern identity. This reconstructed identity has not resulted in a single, unambiguous sense of belonging observable throughout the films. It is possible to single out two clearly definable east German identities at play in post-unification discourse and both are ultimately regressive. One involves the return of a *Heimat* (home, homeland) identity, an identity that largely ignores the features of modern life and celebrates instead the traditions of an imagined, ostensibly apolitical, all-German past. The other also celebrates aspects of the past, specifically of the GDR. Other films offer narratives that focus not on any revitalized identity but on the decline of the east German community and its repercussions. Unable to escape their stultifying eastern environment, or hindered by the memories of the GDR or by other markers of their easternness, the protagonists of these films can neither separate themselves from the east nor are they able to find an alternative home within the so-called Berlin Republic.

Certain questions arise from this investigation into the representation of east German identity: how, and to what end, is the east encoded (visually represented)? What are the perceived effects of unification on the territory and its population? Do clear, discernible differences emerge in the characterization of the east and west Germans in the films and, if so, do these differences preclude the notion of a homogenized national identity or do they broaden it? A number of themes that have emerged in the films made since 1989 are germane to the construction of identity. Three concepts in particular have come to preoccupy filmmakers interested in screening the east: *Heimat*, memory and nostalgia.

*Heimat* has always involved a dialectic of difference and identity. It may serve to distinguish *them* from *us*, though the manner in which this opposition is expressed changes according to context. *Heimat* is, after all, a polysemic notion: it can refer to the sentimental celebration of the folkloric tradition and be tied up with ideas of rurality and local culture; but it has proved a malleable concept to politicians of different hues, whether they are addressing the wider theme of nation and a sense of national belonging or focusing on narrower issues as part of a regional particularism. Indeed the left's recent appropriation of a concept traditionally promoted by the right has been met with some incredulity.<sup>20</sup> In a period in which the Germans' notion of home has (once again) been destabilized by political and historical events, *Heimat* surfaces as one of the key themes in post-unification film, frequently providing a context for the conflict between east and west, a clash of cultures in which the *Heimat* that is defended represents 'something more elementary, more contingent, and thus more real

than life seen in a larger scale perspective'.<sup>21</sup> Heimat is not just a confrontation between the global and the local, however. It can also be a site of contested space and attitude within established neighbourhoods. No longer held together by the ideological glue that appeared to bind communities in East German film, the post-GDR Heimat is for some filmmakers a location beset by prejudice and characterized by friction.

Memory, too, plays an important role as a point of orientation for the east German community. How communities see, or imagine, themselves is defined as much by the present as by the past. A fundamental component of identity, memory is likewise a protean concept, subject to change and manipulation. Memory of the GDR past has been crucial to preserving some cultural specificity. But while memory is crucial to identity, enabling communities to coalesce through shared experiences and reminiscences, which are assembled in order to construct some collective framework for identity, it can also be divisive, serving to exclude those without a legitimate claim to the collective memory bank. The East German past has been subjected to conflicting accounts, which either reify or vilify the GDR. Memories are often fiercely disputed, especially during times of upheaval when a community's unsteadiness prompts it to cling to the (imagined) security of the past. The past is then reinvented through certain symbols and rituals, which may continue to offer a point of orientation for the community and perpetuate identity. This is not to suggest that memories of the past go unchallenged within a community, that it is only those outside its boundaries who doubt its authority; as some of the films show, there are competing memories of the past even for those whose life stories intertwine.

Nostalgia, the third recurring theme, is closely related to memory and offers a further inroad into identity. Nostalgia's focal point, however, is less precise than that of memory which often narrows in on particular points in the past. Indeed, the tendency towards nostalgia is interpreted by others who do not participate in its sentimental yearning as a provocation, for 'disparagement of the present' is, as Christopher Lasch has noted, 'the hallmark of nostalgia'.<sup>22</sup> The evocation of a vague past is central to its appeal and this retrospective desire is exploited by everyone, from politicians to tourist boards to television producers who contribute to what Frederic Jameson calls the 'aesthetic colonization' of favoured periods.<sup>23</sup> In recreating a vision of the past, films often prompt nostalgia, even – and this is where nostalgia and memory differ – among those who have no recollection of the past that is being performed before them. Nostalgia, then, may describe a regretful yearning for something one never had, for something that did not exist in the first place. Like memory, nostalgia is often at the centre of disagreement; 'a utopian diversion from the real tasks ahead', the retrospective realization of what has been lost can, and has, further exacerbated dissatisfaction with the present.<sup>24</sup>



This book examines these interrelated factors as represented in film in relational terms and considers them with reference to, among others things, socio-economic issues and political developments which have all influenced the post-unification experience. Chapter 1 looks at the factors that are involved in the development of the east Germans' contentious post-GDR identity and establishes the social and political context against which the films that are considered in subsequent chapters may be analysed. According to many observers, the various measures employed by the East German state in order to establish a separate national consciousness ultimately failed.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, the mandate given to Kohl's Christian Democratic Union (CDU) in 1990 and the support for subsequent monetary union appeared to offer conclusive proof that its population had no problem in identifying with the west and had happily abandoned any GDR distinctiveness. The east Germans' enthusiasm for the west was more likely prompted by their desire to enjoy the material benefits associated with the neighbours across the former border than proof of any profound bond. The euphoria of the early days was short-lived, and the assertion of pan-German solidarity soon disappeared. The regeneration of the east has proved far more of a challenge than was initially expected and the anxieties and disappointments associated with life in a free market society have been central to the emergence of a separate identity, which (in the early days at least) was unafraid to hoist the tattered banner of the left.

Discussion of the films is, as the book's subtitle suggests, organized thematically, though there is naturally some overlap; memory of the GDR for example runs through many of the narratives. Within the chapters, the films are discussed chronologically. I have opted to present an exegetic account of numerous films that are pertinent to the themes outlined above. A few of these have received some critical attention, many have gone unnoticed. Not all the films made since unification are easily categorized. Though many of the films that situate their narratives in the east do conform to certain generic conventions, a fact that may, in part, be explained by their reliance on funding from television stations and regional film funding boards, there are also several idiosyncratic productions, which are experimental in both narrative and form, and which resist classification. *Screening the East* considers films regardless of their generic character or the merits of their representation. The categories 'popular film' and its standard antonym the 'art film' are, as others have pointed out, problematic concepts when it comes to considering a nation's self-representation, with the critical weight often falling on those films which do not accurately reflect the national taste.<sup>26</sup> The popular, mainstream films may be critically derided, dismissed as flummies because they fail either to engage with social issues or reveal anything about the society that produced them, but this is a prejudice born of the high art preferences that have long dominated film studies and working within such narrow confines risks a limited and limiting understanding of national film production.<sup>27</sup>

Taking as a given Gerald Mast's conclusion that 'even the most light-hearted, escapist piece of fun inevitably implies serious values', Chapter 2 addresses a number of comedies that focus on the encounters between east and west.<sup>28</sup> Ostensibly humorous accounts, which often make use of cabaret performers, the films – including Wolfgang Büld's and Reinhard Klooss's *Go Trabi Go II. Das war der wilde Osten* (*Go, Trabi, Go. That was the Wild East*, 1992) and Vadim Glowna's *Der Brocken* (*Rising to the Bait*, 1992) – reflect substantial divisions between the two peoples and should not be discounted as 'the social bad conscience of serious art'.<sup>29</sup> It has been argued that these films revive the post-war (West German) genre, the Heimatfilm. Though the most successful genre of the 1950s and 1960s and arguably the country's only indigenous genre, the traditional Heimatfilm for a long time received little academic attention, with film scholars subscribing to the long-held view that it was a reactionary genre, which replaced real-life concerns with 'idyllic images of rural simplicity'.<sup>30</sup> This chapter provides an overview of the Heimatfilm and includes recent reappraisals of the genre, which argue that the films did acknowledge post-war tensions, albeit in a subtle fashion. Progress and the development of a forward-looking socialist culture were some of the guiding principles in the GDR, and the film industry was expected to support these notions. The celebration of the local and the traditional that was central to the idea of Heimat did not correspond with the ideologues' vision, though they recognized its importance for the population, and the chapter examines the efforts made to redefine it according to a socialist perspective; inevitably, DEFA was expected to play a part in portraying this new version of Heimat. Having established the Heimatfilm's genealogy, I then consider its revival in some of the comedies of the period. Claims that the Wende comedies simply recycle themes associated with traditional Heimatfilme can be misleading. I therefore assess the appeal of the genre and question its purpose, looking particularly at its use in the articulation of a collective identity mustered in defence of an east German Heimat that is firmly set in the provinces.<sup>31</sup>

Chapter 3 continues the enquiry into the Heimat theme though not the Heimatfilm. The provinces are still the focus of films such as Helke Misselwitz's *Herzprung* (*Heart Leap*, 1992), *Stilles Land* (*Silent Country*, Andreas Dresen, 1992), and *Verlorene Landschaft* (*Lost Landscape*, Andreas Kleinert, 1992), but these narratives share none of the cheer found in the comedies. The chapter focuses on those communities no longer characterized by solidarity or a group identity but portrayed as either irreversibly divided or on the verge of extinction. Memories of the GDR past figure strongly in these narratives, which repeatedly use the landscape as a way of reflecting the east Germans' sense of loss since unification, a loss that reflects the GDR's unrealized potential rather than nostalgia for the halcyon days of life behind the wall.

The discussion of Heimat is drawn to a close in Chapter 4, after looking at a number of films that have received very little attention in the litera-

ture on the subject. These meld the gloomy vision of the east that informs the narratives of the previous chapter with a comedic take on unification and on the stereotypes that have come to dominate in post-wall discourse. These black comedies (for example, *Tolle Lage (The Perfect Site)*, Sören Voigt, 1999), *Not a Love Song* (Jan Ralske, 1997)), which are partly reminiscent of non-German filmmaking – the lo-fi cinema of Jim Jarmusch, the grotesques of Mike Leigh – highlight the continuing social and economic problems in the east but do not champion the local population in their struggle against the west.

In Chapter 5, the attention shifts from the community to the individual and from the provinces to the city; in post-unification cinema this is shorthand for one city alone: Berlin. Though the city has long been portrayed as an alienating place, an *unheimlich* location, the anxieties that are articulated in these films reflect a general unease and restlessness associated with the loss of guidance once provided by the state. The architectural makeup of the city plays an important role in these narratives, serving to alienate and estrange the inhabitants, who, in the films of the 1990s, are often seen struggling to find their way in the new capital. Like the protagonists of the films examined in Chapter 3, these urban protagonists, in films such as *Der Kontrolleur (The Border Guard)*, Stefan Trampe, 1994) and *Wege in die Nacht (Paths in the Night)*, Andreas Kleinert, 1999), are caught between the past and the future, between memories of life in the GDR and their present lives in the Berlin Republic. Negotiating these two temporal coordinates is, as we shall see, seldom straightforward and even perilous.

The focus of Chapter 6 is on nostalgia, specifically Ostalgie, the east Germans' nostalgia for their pre-wall past. The nostalgic turn has been a central factor in post-unification identity discourse; reconstituting an idealized, inauthentically authentic past has naturally impacted on attempts to structure a dominant cultural hegemony and this final chapter explores some of the controversies surrounding the east German community's attachment to their past and considers its implications. Having traced the evolution of Ostalgie and examined it in its social and economic context, I then turn to those films which generated the most debate in post-unification cinema, the so-called Ostalgie films, and question the appropriateness of the label and assess whether these retro narratives, among them *Sonnenalle (Sun Alley)*, Leander Haußmann, 1999) and *Good Bye, Lenin!* (Wolfgang Becker, 2003), really do indulge east Germans' nostalgic longing.

The number of films offering insight into issues of contemporary east German identity is far larger than the few articles on post-unification film might suggest, and no single study could offer a detailed account of each film. I have therefore chosen to concentrate on feature films, rather than television or documentary films (though the funding practices in Germany which see some films part-financed by television companies and given a short release at cinemas mean that some films are both television and

feature films). To include the many television films and series that have in some way or other engaged with unification issues would have burdened the study unnecessarily. This is more a logistical question than a matter of taste; there is simply not enough room within this account to offer a satisfactory survey of the large number of relevant television productions, though I occasionally refer to some television dramas and series where this enhances my discussion of a particular film or films. Equally, the many documentary films made since unification have been omitted from the research. While these films often provide invaluable accounts and insights into individual reactions to the historic changes that have taken place in east Germany, my focus is specifically on feature films. These may not be guided by the putative objectivity that generally governs the documentaries, but the films' contribution to the identity debate is not diminished by their subjectivity. As with other modes of representation, they 'creatively interpret and refract ... complex worlds of significance and actively contribute to the construction of new forms of self-understanding'.<sup>32</sup>

## Notes

1. Herzog, cited in G.S. Freyermuth, *Der Übernehmer. Volker Schlöndorff in Babelsberg*, Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 1993, p. 27. All translations, unless otherwise indicated, are the author's.
2. M. Töteberg, 'Vorwort', in M. Töteberg (ed.), *Szenenwechsel. Momentaufnahmen des jungen deutschen Films*, Reinbek: Rowohlt Verlag, 1999, p. 7.
3. E. Rentschler, 'From New German Cinema to the Post-Wall Cinema of Consensus', in M. Hjort and S. Mackenzie (eds), *Cinema & Nation*, London and New York: Routledge, 2002, p. 264.
4. T.W. Adorno and M. Horkheimer. 'The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception', in T.W. Adorno and M. Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, London, New York: Verso, 1979, p. 137.
5. See N. James, 'German Cinema. All Together Now', *Sight and Sound*, December 2006: 26–31.
6. R. Schenk, 'Zerissene Seelen und gefundene Fressen', *Berliner Zeitung*, 20 May 1996. Retrieved 4 March 2002 from <http://www.berlinonline.de/wissen/berlinerzeitung/archiv/1996/0520/kultur/0004/index.html>. Note: I follow the convention whereby any reference to the pre-unification population/state/region is referred to by using upper-case spelling (East/West) and employ lower case (east/west) when referring to the period since unification.
7. Of course, Herbig's film is of cultural significance, even if it has received little, if any, scholarly attention. One possible analysis might consider the film's nostalgic value, since it engages with the popular Karl May films of the 1960s. Similar might be said of Herbig's other huge hit, *(T)Raumschiff Surprise – Periode 1* (2004), which parodies cherished sci-fi films.
8. See C.M. Kaupp, *Good Bye, Lenin! Film-Heft*, Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2003, and N. Hodgkin, 'Aiming to Please: *Good Bye, Lenin!* and the Cinema of Consensus', in P. Cooke and C. Homewood (eds), *New Directions in German Cinema*, London: I.B. Tauris (forthcoming).
9. E. Rentschler, 'Post-Wall Prospects: An Introduction', *New German Critique* 87 (Special Issue on Post-Wall Cinema), 2002: 5.
10. See E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

11. In D. Calhoun, 'Afghan Aftermath', *Sight and Sound*, February 2004: 222.
12. G. Schöpflin, *Nations, Identity, Power. The New Politics of Europe*, London: Hurst, 2000, p. 15.
13. See R. Tapper (ed.), *The New Iranian Cinema. Politics, Representation and Identity*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2002; Y. Zhang, *Chinese National Cinema*, New York and London: Routledge, 2004; and N. Triana-Toribio, *Spanish National Cinema*, London and New York: Routledge, 2003.
14. There are a growing number of titles that address DEFA. For an indispensable guide see R. Schenk (ed.), *Das Zweite Leben der Filmstadt Babelsberg DEFA-Spielfilme 1946–1992*, Berlin: Henschelverlag, 1994. Other useful histories include S. Allan and J. Sandford (eds), *DEFA. East German Cinema, 1946–1992*, New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 1999, and D. Berghahn, *Hollywood Behind the Wall. The Cinema of East Germany*, Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2005.
15. Elsaesser suggests that the multitude of festivals has given rise to a new genre, the 'festival film'. See T. Elsaesser, *European Cinema: Face to Face with Hollywood*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2003, p. 88.
16. L. Naughton. *That Was The Wild East. Film Culture, Unification, and the 'New' Germany*, Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2002.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 235.
18. The situation at DEFA had allowed many directors to wither on the vine. The state's collapse came at a time when several promising directors were too old to be considered fresh talent and not nearly experienced enough to command any kind of attention; not that the older DEFA directors were necessarily in demand. Only the biggest names in the East German film industry successfully completed the transition from nationalized industry to the highly competitive privatized industry in the west, and even their presence is difficult to detect. In 1994, the respected (and former GDR) film journal, *Film und Fernsehen*, sent questionnaires to various former DEFA directors, in order to assess their experiences since unification. Few of the responses suggested that the directors had mastered the new market. The journal folded after twenty-seven years in 1999. See 'Lebenszeichen aus dem Osten. Antworten auf eine Umfrage', *Film und Fernsehen* 3, 1994: 22–27 (no author).
19. See, for example, M. Münter and R. Sturm, 'Economic Consequences of German Unification', *German Politics* 11(3), 2002: 179–94.
20. See C. von Dittfurth, cited in P. Thompson, *The Crisis of the German Left. The PDS, Stalinism and the Global Economy*, New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2005, p. 98.
21. A. Appadurai, cited in D. Morley, *Home Territories. Media, Mobility and Identity*, London: Routledge, 2000, p. 11.
22. C. Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven. Progress and Its Critics*, New York and London: E.E. Norton, 1991, p. 82.
23. F. Jameson, 'Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism', *New Left Review*, July/August 1984: 67.
24. A.D. Smith, 'The "Golden Age" and National Renewal', in G. Hosking and G. Schöpflin (eds), *Myth and Nationhood*, London: Hurst & Co., 1997, p. 38.
25. According to K.H. Jarausch *et al*, assessing the success of the state's attempt to create a GDR identity is difficult, given the paucity of empirical data and relevant surveys before 1989. In K.H. Jarausch, H.C. Seeba and D.P. Conradt, 'The Presence of the Past. Culture, Opinion, and Identity in Germany', in K.H. Jarausch (ed.), *After Unity. Reconfiguring German Identities*, Oxford: Berghahn, 1997, pp. 41–2.
26. R. Dyer and G. Vincendeau, 'Introduction', in R. Dyer and G. Vincendeau (eds), *Popular European Cinema*, London and New York: Routledge, 1992, p. 1.
27. See G. Vincendeau, 'Issues in European Cinema', in J. Hill and P. Church Gibson (eds), *World Cinema. Critical Approaches*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 58.
28. G. Mast, *The Comic Mind. Comedy and the Movies*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1979, p. 17.
29. Adorno and Horkheimer, (1979), p. 135.
30. See T. Elsaesser, *New German Cinema. A History*, London: BFI Publishing, 1989, p. 141. R.P. Kolker and P. Beicken, *The Films of Wim Wenders. Cinema as Vision and Desire*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 64.

31. The term *Wende* (literally 'turning point') originally referred to the transition from the GDR's planned economy to the west's market economy but has since come to mean the period of unification and the period that immediately followed.
32. M. Fulbrook and M. Swales, 'Introduction: Representation in Literature and History', in M. Fulbrook and M. Swales (eds), *Representing the German Nation. History and Identity in Twentieth Century Germany*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000, p. 10.