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When We Was Red: *Good Bye Lenin!* and Nostalgia for the “Everyday GDR”

Timothy Barney

In former Eastern Bloc nations, nostalgia is often seen as a dangerous pining for days under totalitarian regimes in the face of rocky transitions to democratization. This paper questions these judgments and instead proposes that the complexities of waxing nostalgic in post-communism will help us understand these transitions better. East German culture, in particular, has been at the forefront of post-communist nostalgia through its ostalgie movement. Wolfgang Becker’s film Good Bye Lenin! has been touted as the most representative example of ostalgie, and is used here as a text to examine the complex questions about looking back on everyday life during communism’s fall. Through its use of nostalgic themes, the film simultaneously embraces and derides the Western values that became an indelible part of the post-1989 landscape, and thus serves as a reminder that a distinct East German identity may still exist.

Keywords: Good Bye Lenin!; Nostalgia; Eastern Europe; GDR; Memory; Post-Communism; Identity Politics

Nostalgia, as a political phenomenon, has been intensely contested. Often seen as conservative and regressive, a return to the “old days” and traditions that never were, nostalgia is historically built on medical metaphors, implying a sickness in the mind that calls desperately for a cure. As Zala Volcic has written, “Nostalgia offers an idealized version of an unattainable past that can stunt the cultural imagination by discounting and excluding real viable options for social change.”¹ Volcic builds off the assumptions of Frederic Jameson, who wrote, at the same time the Soviet Union was collapsing, that nostalgia is an “embarrassing . . . cultural fantasy” and a “costume-party self-deception.”² Nostalgia, for theorists in this vein, is an obstacle to

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knowledge, clouding “real” history with inauthentic emotion. Particularly in terms of nostalgia’s ability to aid in deliberative democracy, some scholars have been skeptical—as James Janack wrote of the 1996 Russian presidential election, “because candidates spent so much time and energy making value claims about the past, public attention was diverted from deliberation about future policy.”³ To such scholars, nostalgia is often deliberately employed to deny the present, creating, as Serguei Oushakine puts it, “a profound gap between the sanitized nostalgic reproductions and the actual traumatic history.”⁴

One has to wonder, though, whether authenticity and consensus are the standards by which nostalgia should be judged. Can not nostalgia be employed as a basis for active social change, rather than simply trying to live within a rose-hued era? In approaching the rhetoric of nostalgia, Stuart Tannock goes beyond simple classifications of good and bad, or dismissing it as simply reactionary or sentimental.⁵ Recently, a strain of researchers, particularly in rhetorical studies, has followed in Tannock’s wake. Recent work in rhetorical research highlights the possibility that nostalgia can be a way to release frustration and discontent in the collective to face political realities. Barbie Zelizer writes that “memory’s transformative nature underscores our inability to fasten memory work long enough to generate consensual notions about it. In a sense, then, memory appears to vibrate in excess of our ability to anchor it in discourse.”⁶ Scholars of nostalgia following Zelizer have noted this “processual” nature of nostalgia, “as something [that] needs to be ‘worked through’ rather than mastered,” as Marouf Hasian and Helen Shugart have written.⁷ Therefore, rather than being inauthentic or inaccurate, nostalgia in collective memory may serve as a complex discursive marker that contributes to a community’s identity.⁸

Vaclav Havel closed his New Year’s Day, 1990, address to the newly liberated Czechoslovak nation with words that spoke to the nostalgia of life before communism: “People, your government has returned to you!”⁹ And it seems that complex perspectives of nostalgia leave us with the nagging but crucial question: what happens in public memory when the government “returns to us?” This question is at the nexus of political nostalgia studies on the whole but is even more prevalent in the world of post-communist popular culture in East and Central Europe. Broader notions of memory and the ambivalence of nostalgia have become central to the nations of the former Eastern Bloc. Each of these nations faced daunting memory work—albeit each in unique ways. And more so than in just political speeches, nostalgia insinuated itself into the life of the “everyday” in these nations, particularly as the “rational” and future-oriented promise of democracy became more contested.

The former German Democratic Republic’s complex transition provides a particularly poignant example of nostalgia on a cultural level. The often painful reunification attempts in places like Germany and the rocky transitions to capitalist democracy have resulted in cultural movements that look back almost fondly on the bread-lined days of drabness. Post-communist democratization scholars, such as Joakim Ekman and Jonas Linde, have noted that the difficulty in analyzing nostalgia in post-communist Europe is in distilling whether or not it is an expression of

actually wanting to return to the communist way of life or whether it belies disillusionment with the rough road of Westernization and democratization.¹⁰

Recent artifacts of cultural nostalgia, though, point to a possibility that nostalgia can ambivalently express both of these sentiments. In 2003, one of Germany's biggest box-office hits, *Good Bye Lenin!* (*GBL*), received international acclaim and controversy when it highlighted the difficulty of post-communist nostalgia, comically and tragically telling the story of the breakdown of the East German Democratic Republic.¹¹

Wolfgang Becker's film told the story of a woman's intense devotion to the socialist state circa 1989 when she falls into a coma just as the political unrest in the GDR hits a boiling point. During her coma, the Wall falls, the borders are opened, and reunification begins. Upon awakening, her son sets out to elaborately reconstruct the world of the GDR around her in order to save her from a relapse. If the premise of "Hey! Let's pretend that the Wall never fell!" sounds like the makings of some twisted sitcom, many seemed to have appropriated it in this way. Despite the serious political upheaval in the film's backdrop and the story of its family rifts and tragedies, *GBL*, because of its loving jabs at the brown-tinted mundanity of East German life, has been assigned to the kitschy movement of *ostalgie* (or 'nostalgia for the east').¹² *Ostalgie* is a commodified market boom that traffics in the buy-sell ironic celebration of old East German foods, games, television, cars, music, and other cultural ephemera. There's no denying that *GBL*'s museum-like details of the bits and pieces of life in the GDR, many of which are played for laughs, are indicative of the *ostalgie* movement.¹³ The film would receive its share of criticism for its simplification of life before and after reunification, and from others about how there really was nothing funny about totalitarianism.¹⁴

But, as other writers have begun to point out, the film renders nostalgia and the prolonging of the past as something much more nuanced. Nick Hodgkin, for example, has written of *GBL* as a way of "burying the GDR" and laying it to rest, disputing the idea that it perpetuates the feeling of *ostalgie*, while Anke Finger probes the family-torn-by-politics aspect of the film, in its dichotomy of public and private memory, by contrasting the film's portrayal with her own life in an East German family.¹⁵ These rich readings point to the complexity of the film's messages about memory and nostalgia and call for further clarification of the rhetorical symbols and techniques used by the filmmakers to inspire these readings. Despite the film's affection for the dilapidated tokens of the GDR, the movie is stopped at an intersection between the clash of "isms" in post-1989 Europe. *GBL* does not choose a pathway for its audience, and it is at this congested intersection of memory and politics where I situate my analysis.

I seek in this essay to engage the complex relationship of *GBL* as a "text" that speaks to the collective memory of the GDR and to its wider observations about the post-communist transitions as a whole. The film alternately salutes, damns, and even expresses sheer boredom and apathy about the former communist state, and this complex nostalgia deserves to be unpacked as sometimes complimentary and sometimes contradictory rhetorical messages. Ultimately, *GBL* uses the popular

nostalgia movement as a means to infiltrate and question the memories of both the West and the East, and, most importantly, indicts both the socialist vision and the capitalist vision of “progress” and contrasts it with a very private story of a family and their own wrestling with progress. As Svetlana Boym has written, “Nostalgia is about the relationship between individual biography and the biography of groups or nations, between personal and collective memory.”¹⁶ I seek to posit *GBL* as a spur to a dialogue on this form of relationship, and rhetorically as a film that invites its audience into a moment of shared selective remembering that invokes certain beliefs or actions about the future.¹⁷ The film does not necessarily “bury the GDR” in the way Hodgkin claims, and I argue that the film articulates the validity of continuing a dialogue about the GDR as a way to remain critically skeptical about the current conditions of capitalist democratization.

Nostalgia, Post-Communism, and the GDR

If there were no good old days, why long for them? *Ostalgie*, however often lighthearted its reflections have been, has had its divisive political implications. Why, then, does a movie like *GBL* use nostalgia to make, or at least appear to make, in the case of the GDR, a lovable rascal out of hated oppression?

Nostalgia in Collective Memory

Originally envisioned as a serious psychological sickness, nostalgia was thought by Swiss doctors in the seventeenth century to be curable with leeches. The word itself bridges *nostos*, or “return home,” and *algia*, or “longing,” and the concept has become, according to Boym, “the incurable modern condition.”¹⁸ Often seen as a time-waster by those with their eyes on the present, nostalgia has transformed connotatively into a kind of fantasized retreat. Even worse than being a frivolous way to use one’s memory, nostalgia is hostilely attacked as dangerous because of its seemingly irrational sentimentality and its misrepresentations of verifiable reality.¹⁹ Proponents of liberalism and modernity have hounded nostalgia as a reactionary phenomenon whose reliance on the “old days” is there to keep the masses conservatively docile. Shawn J. Parry-Giles and Trevor Parry-Giles wrote critically of its use in political appeals, writing that, “nostalgic appeals are . . . structurally conservative. Inevitably, by referencing the past in a particular, emotional, and distorted manner, the rhetor invites the audience to validate that past in opposition to a vision for the progressive future.”²⁰ Others have attacked its inauthenticity on a cultural level through commercialization and its distortion of reality when used by the popular media—a particularly prevalent attack considering the increased media commodification and proliferation facing post-communist nations.²¹

However one approaches nostalgia, it nearly always is an acknowledgement of pain and longing for something that cannot be obtained in the present. As Fred Davis has written, this pain is traditionally linked to a matching pleasant, if bittersweet, feeling that was meant to cover up the intense melancholy of simply “being away.”²² The

concept's original connection to the German *heimweh*, or homesickness, still lingers. Yet, what characterizes the debate on nostalgia in current scholarship is how the term "home" is defined and how one can "return" there.²³

In our day, the power to play on our conceptions of both temporality and space is the linchpin of nostalgia. Temporally, nostalgia often works like punctuation marks, periodizing our memories and categorizing them linearly. As Tannock has said, "Nostalgia functions as the search for continuity," where we seek to fix our disorientation and mend our sense of self.²⁴ Out of this search for continuity, the nostalgic rhetoric distinguishes three stages: the "prelapsarian world," which is often referred to as the golden days; the "lapse," or the catastrophic occurrence that ruptures the rosy world and cuts through the continuity of time; and the "postlapsarian world," which is the present found to be insufficient in some way.²⁵ Spatially, nostalgia asks us to see our *place* in time within these periods. Greg Dickinson's work, in particular, richly details the importance of "place" in nostalgia as a postmodern response, both in terms of content and style, to contemporary problems.²⁶ A film like *GBL* is predicated on re-appropriating such places—sites from the familiarly frumpy East German block apartment to the historic Alexanderplatz square. The maintenance of stability, then, temporally and spatially, can be linked to social change—nostalgia can function as a way to keep individual balance in the midst of political events that can be incoherent, such as the fall of the Berlin Wall.²⁷

Yet, the punctuation function of nostalgia connotes a simplicity that is misleading. Scholars of nostalgia have begun a dialogue that acknowledges the complexity of a past commingling with the present.²⁸ In fact, sociologist Janelle L. Wilson averred that "contradiction and ambiguity . . . is largely the appeal" of nostalgia.²⁹ The breaks between time periods often fade. Rather than a mere retreat, nostalgia can facilitate a reawakening of identities and build a sense of lost community around shared visions of the past, forcing a confrontation with present realities.³⁰ Detractors of nostalgia have written as if there actually exists, as David Lowenthal has pointed out, a "non-nostalgic" reading of the past that has any authenticity. Such value judgment ignores nostalgia's malleability. Instead, nostalgia should exist along with other historical perspectives as a tool of using the past to engender an understanding of the collective's present-day anxieties.³¹ In trying to understand nostalgia in both political and cultural senses, the construct needs to be understood in terms of its "sharedness" in the face of the past, and thus should be located within the larger work on collective memory.³²

While many studies of collective memory point to institutional power and its use of nostalgia, perhaps even more integral to our discussion will be the way nostalgia can be co-opted by the culture and become an "emotional antidote to politics."³³ Boym uses two distinctions of nostalgia that will provide a cultural marker for this analysis of *GBL*: that of restorative and reflective nostalgia. The two nostalgias exist inside the same collective memories, but they do not match in narrative or in the structuring of identities.³⁴ A restorative nostalgia returns to that prelapsarian golden age and the recovery of lost time by renewing old symbols and spatializing time.³⁵ This is often an aim of the nationalist—reviving, rebuilding, and providing an

"awakening for the masses." The "home" in restorative nostalgia seems to be constantly under siege, and a return to it requires an intense defense of it.³⁶ By contrast, reflective nostalgia moves in the circles of individual and cultural memory and holds onto small cultural fragments, temporalizing space. With such distance, reflective nostalgia can often be characterized by self-conscious humor and irony. As Boym points out, "it reveals that longing and critical thinking are not opposed to one another, as affective memories do not absolve one from compassion, judgment, or critical reflection."³⁷

Boym's distinction on nostalgia, however useful, deserves to be problematized further, as I seek to do with this analysis of *GBL*. Her dichotomy between reflective and restorative nostalgia is itself a kind of binary that pits a conservative, nationalist version of memory that, in her words, "colonizes" the past, against a more progressive, critically distanced kind of perspective on the past. Boym implicitly makes a value judgment that one form of nostalgia is more complex and critical than the other: her binary construction allows us too easily to excise the restorative functions of nostalgia as belonging to those of demagogues intent on forwarding *one* national narrative.

GDR in Memory

Nostalgia often appears after periods of revolution or political upheaval when individuals have to deal with the pain of instability. The overwhelming diversity of cultural experiences of the former Eastern Bloc nations makes generalization difficult. But the GDR can serve as a strong basis to make some wider observations about Eastern and Western identities and how uneasy democratization can create a situation where large groups of individuals decide to revel in looking back at what once was.

Of all the communist Bloc nations, the prevailing notion was that the GDR could be seen as the most prone to blind obedience to their socialist regime. As Tina Rosenberg has written, "Most East Germans' suffering was diffuse: they were smothered into lethargy and bored to tears. The regime made their lives small."³⁸ Mary Fulbrook concurred in her comments that for the ailing Honecker regime, "passive conformity was an acceptable compromise if outright ideological commitment was unattainable."³⁹ In communist countries as a whole, inhabitants of the second world came to lead a "double-life" under totalitarianism, where the conformity and deference to the state co-existed alongside the "authenticity" of their private lives.⁴⁰ Some writers and researchers have given credit to the citizens of East Germany for the quiet dissent in their private spheres. More often, though, Lenin's famous quote that "Germans don't make revolutions" seemed to be the order of the GDR.⁴¹

Before the dismantling of the Wall, perhaps one of the reasons for mass apathy came from a systematic denial of history by the GDR regime. For a historically nostalgic people, the Germans were not allowed, due to the vision of modernity and forward progress, to look back on what it meant to be German.⁴² Once the post-WWII airing of mass Nazi atrocities took place, to wax nostalgic for the immediate

past was not an option. The GDR was then founded in 1949 on the basis of anti-fascism, with the Soviets as the liberators of the collective trauma of Nazism.⁴³ The split of Germany, the ultimate symbol of Cold War dualism, only furthered this rupture of not being able to look and reflect upon a shared past.⁴⁴ Paul Betts has written, “so even if history was regularly invoked in both Germanys as a source of Cold War justification and negative identity, it did not serve as a vehicle of collective longing and desire. Nation and nostalgia were officially divorced.”⁴⁵

Despite some significant rumblings in the early 1950s, the GDR never saw much organized resistance, and especially after the building of the Wall in 1961, people sought cover in the futility of everyday life.⁴⁶ The Wall was barely seen anymore by the inhabitants of East Berlin—accepted as an inevitable part of the landscape.⁴⁷ Since the GDR failed to produce a socialist nationalist consciousness, the sense of a true East German identity came out of the experience of day-to-day life under socialism.⁴⁸ Propaganda promoted the GDR as the quiet success story of the Eastern bloc, and to a certain extent, as it offered full employment, cheap food, low-rent housing, and health care, this is arguable. Yet, in this “identity of the everyday,” maintained by the quietly suffering, it was impossible to ignore the cardboard thin high-rise apartments, the interminable sense of waiting for needed materials, and the anomie of the job-world.⁴⁹

Perhaps, then, it was the unrealized potential of what the GDR promised or *what could have been* that frustrated the Germans enough to finally break away, a “revolution” that was unforeseen, despite conventional wisdom. The mostly bloodless autumn can be attributed in large part to collapse of the regime.⁵⁰ The Honecker administration had given up on the pretensions to Soviet modernity and was engaged in a catch-up game with the West, trying to match its neighbor in levels of consumption. In a sense, the emulation of the West just made the symbol of the Wall seem that much more unnecessary. With borders meaningless, and the administration too tired to care, the cries of “We are one people!” could become louder and more insistent.

Within a year of the events of 1989, the *Wende* (“turn”), or reunification, was taking place, as the Germanys made a swift decision to rejoin forces and East Germans voted for voluntary annexation.⁵¹ Revolutionaries have expressed disappointment about the actions of the East Germans during the *Wende*. The immediate exposure to the consumption culture of the West showed many that East Germans were not interested in new political vision—they simply wanted the catch-up that had been promised to them for so long. Because the Wall was dismantled by so-called “ordinary people,” they could not live up to radical expectations. As Timothy Garton Ash said about the *Wende*, “the East Berliners just went to the shops and came home again.”⁵² A kind of “West-shock” took place, where both West German and East German sides became both fascinated and horrified by what they found on the other side. The *Ossis* began viewing the *Wessis* as God and the Devil at the same time, with a cursed attraction that was irresistible—whereas the *Wessis* felt they were picking up the check for the *Ossis*.⁵³ Such a complex feeling about reunification grew larger as

former GDR-ers realized that true assimilation into the Western culture was more symbolic than material.

Ostalgie Movement

In a sense, the Western Germany on the other side of the Wall may have originally been seen as the realization of the socialist utopian progress that had been promised to East Germany for forty years.⁵⁴ Once that “progress” seemed attainable, but then ultimately elusive, the effect of bruised identity began to produce the familiar longing of nostalgia. Before the *Wende*, since the communists were architects of the erosion of memory, any attempts to “remember” could be seen as acts of opposition.⁵⁵ Once the official collective memory of the socialist regimes fell apart, memories had to be rhetorically constructed and consumed in more individualized and unofficial ways.⁵⁶ Nostalgia became a way of mobilizing the trauma of the past, and can be applied to a multiplicity of postcommunist transitions.⁵⁷ In particular, GDR *ostalgie* points to the unique identity-crisis of a country that, unlike most of its neighbors, did not become autonomous in post-communism. The GDR was literally not on the map anymore and a popular culture of nostalgia began to try to make sense, and fun, out of the temporal and spatial void.

For this analysis, the *ostalgie* movement can be understood in terms of these “acts of opposition.”⁵⁸ In other words, the prized relics of the lost GDR are less about escaping pain through old, useless material goods and more about asserting an identity that is challenging the West’s conception of the East.⁵⁹ A large part of this identity is the stability of “everyday life,” thus making outdated everyday products a key part of the contemporary East German identity.

Significantly, *ostalgie* began with the “museumification” of East Germany and the collection of elements of everyday GDR life for national displays across Germany.⁶⁰ Museums became ironic paeans to the appliances, the quaint machinery, apartment design, clothing, and foods that had disappeared almost overnight during the *Wende*.⁶¹ These goods became rhetorical symbols of the transition itself, and Easterners would often be embarrassed at putting their not-too-distant life on display. Yet, as the West and East identities struggled to amalgamate, *Ostis* would begin to take control of these symbols as opposition to the lagging Westernization. A kind of counter-memory developed, where these items, pulled from their context of a backwards regime, gained new life as tokens of nostalgia for a future-past.

The popular saying “we have emigrated without leaving home” reflected a feeling of spatial and temporal displacement that *ostalgie* sought to rectify.⁶² Rising unemployment, for example, was an extremely damaging and bewildering prospect for old GDR socialists who were told for so long that it was labor that made them special. So, GDR *ostalgie* began as a function of consumption but the phenomenon serves as a reminder that the people used to be producers, serving as a key facet of their collective identity.⁶³ Old GDR celebrities were brought back on game shows that tested knowledge of policies, clothes, and shows, while “memory games” asked for one’s recall of socialist iconography.⁶⁴ Such manifestations of nostalgia are hard to

justify as a protest against the West, since they are somewhat of an emulation of Western popular culture forms. Yet, simple accusations that nostalgic Easterners are engaging in over-romanticized longing seem almost a form of Western hegemonic control over Eastern identity. The dismissal of this movement denies the underlying indignation of reunification and the vision for a future Germany that is being pulled out of the past, a vision found in a film like *GBL*.

***Good Bye Lenin!* as Reflective “Ostalgic” Text**

One of the few films that puts itself right in the middle of the major events of breakdown and reunification, *GBL* spans the period from the GDR’s 40th anniversary on Oct. 10, 1989 to the official reunification of the two Germanys about a year later, with some interspersed flashbacks into the late 1970s.⁶⁵ Katrin Sass stars as the uber-socialist Christiane Kerner, who after her husband’s disappearance in 1978 and her institutionalization for a nervous breakdown, becomes the quintessential GDR supporter, both in her job as a teacher and in raising her two children, Alex and Ariane. Flashbacks to the late 1970s show Christiane teaching socialist chants to students and Alex’s idealization of the “progress” of his hero, Sigmund Jahn, the first East German in space. Fast forward to 1989 where Alex (Daniel Bruhl) is a politically apathetic and libidinous young man, and his sister Ariane (Maria Simon) is similarly apathetic but shows a fascination with all things Western. The family’s tiny flat in a high rise serves as a kind of GDR museum with its standard issue furniture and tacky wallpaper, while it also functions as a home base for Christiane’s communist activism. On her way to a Party function to receive a service award, she accidentally spots Alex at an anti-GDR rally, has a heart attack, and lapses into a coma for eight months.

While she slumbers, Alex and Ariane watch the Berlin Wall crumble and the GDR fall into ruin. West-shock sets in as the siblings find their sense of cultural identity uprooted. Alex falls in love with Lara, one of Christiane’s nurses, and gets a job selling satellite televisions, while Ariane falls for Rainer, a *Wessi* who loves artificial tanning and hates all that is East, and she takes a job at Burger King.

Christiane miraculously awakens, only for doctors to warn Alex and Ariane that any sudden, catastrophic news could cause another heart attack and possible death. Alex then concocts a plan to pretend that the Wall never fell, starting with a re-Easternization of their flat. The film follows the ruse’s evolution to outlandish heights where Alex has to search down obsolete foods and products, create newscasts, hide billboards, and convince old friends of Christiane’s to play along. Ariane, Rainer, and Lara become frustrated by Alex’s desperate attempts to keep the GDR alive, culminating in climactic confrontations and more elaborate cover-ups. Christiane is eventually exposed to the *Wende*, despite Alex’s efforts. In the process, secrets about the family surface that change their conceptions about Christiane and her long-lost husband.

While the breakneck plot of *GBL* is often commenting on the contestability of German national memory, its nostalgia is often a reflective one, which pits the stories of individual memory, in the happenings of the Kerner family, against the collective

memory of a GDR in ruins. With the ache and bemusement of reflective nostalgia, *GBL* takes solace in the ephemeral qualities of what came before, while still able to retain a critical distance. As Boym writes, awareness of collective memory occurs with distance from one’s community or when that community itself enters the moment of twilight.” The result can be both mourning and melancholia.⁶⁶ Yet, at the same time, the defiance of restorative nostalgia remains just beneath the surface, in the ways that *GBL* defends the “home” of an East German identity.

Perhaps the two most recognizable symbols of *GBL* best point to this deliberately inconclusive way that the *Wende* is portrayed. The image at the film’s climax where Christiane finally gets a glimpse of the reality that had been so carefully hidden by her son is of a gigantic statue of Lenin being hauled off to a trash dump by a helicopter. Lenin’s arms are outstretched toward Christiane, and it appears as if he is smiling, possibly offering something, maybe comfort and solace, even as he is just out of reach. A monument of intense rhetorical power—the ultimate symbol of worker’s progress—finds its way on to a pile of other discarded GDR rubble. The other indelible image of the film is the blood-red Coca-Cola logo, a frequent thematic trope that permeates the film’s perspective of reunification. The red color works as an inversion of the Soviet red, showing a replacement of ideology through a co-opting of highly symbolic color. The funniest use of Coke in the movie comes when the viewer watches a beautiful shot of a changing of the guard by socialist soldiers when enormous Coca-Cola trucks suddenly speed through the shot, covering the ritualistic action with the deafening roar of big wheels, and the bright red outshining the soldiers. There’s both sadness and acidic wit in these images: it may not be heartbreaking to see Lenin go, but the brash way that Western helicopters and soft drinks invade the scene jolts the viewer.

Both of these symbols point to three major facets of *GBL*’s nostalgia: the treatment of political institutions, cultural consumption, and individual memory. *GBL* certainly moves in the realm of public memory, as a filmic event representing memories of specific *places* with audiences sharing in them. But to create this public memory, the film is interlayered with individual, social, and collective memories of the GDR, distinctions in memory represented well by the work of Edward Casey.⁶⁷ The story of the Kerner family is constituted by fragments of its members’ own individual memories, the social memories shared by each other, their neighbors and extended community, and the collective memory of an East German identity in flux. And the notions of GDR institutions, pop-cultural ephemera, and individual/family nostalgia are the three ways we see public, collective, individual, and social memory at work in *GBL*.

Institutional Nostalgia in Good Bye Lenin!

GBL walks a tightrope between delineating the oppression and terror of the GDR and celebrating its musty odes to progress and the common man. The film alternates between these depictions, and the style of filming even changes with the shift of tone. Scenes that focus on critique of the government structures use a more realistic lens.

A softer approach is used for scenes that look more fondly at the old GDR. Other scenes during reunification, such as when Alex and Ariane are frantically searching for their mother's ultimately worthless old East German money, are unrealistically in fast-forward mode, giving the sense of changes moving too fast for the country to catch up. A few major examples of this dichotomy between stark realism and stylized techniques are worth exploring to highlight the film's playful conceptions of reality in terms of time and space that create this ambivalent nostalgia.

A montage of old socialist images, GDR personalities, stamps, monuments, and public buildings thread through the film's opening credits. We soon see real television footage of the August 26, 1978 rocket launch where astronaut Sigmund Jahn became the first East German in space. Grainy Super8 family footage of the Kerner family at that time, particularly with clips of a young Alex with a toy rocket and a Sputnik T-shirt, show a reflectively nostalgic view of a time that seemed simpler, where progress seemed more attainable. This juxtaposition of real footage (i.e., soccer matches, newscasts, protest celebrations, shots of the famous world clock in Alexanderplatz square), a device used throughout the film, connotes the reality of politics and nation as an intrusion upon private life. The film's blending of these realities shows a temporal confusion in the GDR's use of memory and the government's jarring attempts to monopolize the spatial understanding of the everyday East German. After that government ceases to exist, Alex makes continual references to the speed of change during the *Wende*, at one point fittingly comparing it to "particles in an accelerator." Spatial references are most symbolically seen by Western migrants occupying the crowded space of the fallen GDR and in scenes that show border crossings, with the socialist border guards eventually shown as hopelessly outdated and ineffectual keepers of East German "space."

This temporal and spatial element is best highlighted by the film's space theme and references to the astronaut Sigmund Jahn. Alex's narration will often refer back to the launch and the dream of progress while the visual images speak to something else. The ultimate symbol of the film's tweaking of memory comes late in the film, during the *Wende*. Alex goes in search of his long-lost father and finds his cab driver to be none other than his hero, Sigmund Jahn. The idealized GDR has shattered, showing one of its legends as a taxi driver, a typically ambivalent comment from *GBL* on the fall of the East and the ensuing disappointment with what the West has in store.

In addition, the father's shady whereabouts become a key part of the political commentary of the film. Alex tells the viewers that his father had escaped to the West and was having an affair with "an enemy of the state." One of the flashbacks show Alex and sister Ariane watching space footage in the living room while their mother Christiane is being aggressively interrogated by the Stasi about the whereabouts of his father. Soon, Christiane is shown having a nervous breakdown, and while Alex tells us that this breakdown came because she was heartbroken about her husband, the film later leads us to believe that it was actually the invasive tactics of the Stasi that caused her fall. The film deftly plays with an ambivalent view of the regime in these spots—we are first led to feel that the heroine is let down by her husband's taste for the West, then we are given an alternate explanation that it was her own government oppressing

her. Any charges that *GBL* is indulging in useless nostalgia can be refuted by the complex political realities facing its characters.

Christiane’s rabid socialist activism anchors much of the view we get of the GDR regime before the *Wende*. We understand through Alex’s narration that the GDR and socialism became a stand-in for her husband and she threw herself into the cause. Christiane’s lovably obstinate views are best seen in scenes where she and friends are concocting petitions and letters to the government about forward progress and improving household products. Throughout the film, nostalgia is used to incite the viewer to feel longing for Christiane’s brand of idealism. Her smart enthusiasm and ambitious drive rhetorically make the audience long for the days when there was something at least to fight for and to be part of, even if we cannot fully accept her ideological position. Yet, Christiane’s enthusiasm for socialism can also be read as a nostalgic distortion of a devotion that did not exist in reality. The film acknowledges this later when Klapparth, her old principal at the school where she taught, admits he fired her because her idealism just was not practical anymore. *GBL*, then, is not nostalgic for the GDR per se, but does exhibit longing for a time where East Germans could feel pride in their solidarity, which may be, as the film suggests, a time that never was.

The complexity of *GBL*’s nostalgia is also suggested by the film’s use of television as a way for us to view the political institutions of the GDR. The television is almost always figuring in the background of the Kerners’ flat. We get hazy glimpses of the regime by the hilariously camp GDR newscasts where socialist “progress” and the East are disseminated as the center of the universe. Even better is during Alex’s painstaking recreation of the GDR in his mother’s room after her coma. Alex and his friend/co-worker Denis (both used to be television repairmen before they started selling satellite dishes to impoverished East Germans, another comment on the West) make mock newscasts that emulate old GDR news programs. In a sense, Alex uses TV to frame his fake narrative of perpetuating the GDR to his sick mother. The story of Alex’s nation is being told through the television, and this symbolism of the mediated political reality is an important comment of the film on how socialism crafted its message to the people—that the promise of “progress” was a pact made over the airwaves rather than one that coincided with the East German’s real-life world.

Cultural Nostalgia in Good Bye Lenin!

GBL reflects nostalgically on the everyday culture of the GDR and this nostalgia is comically made in contrast to the jarring influence of the West during reunification. The longing for the mundane stability that the GDR offered is perhaps delineated most sharply in this cultural sense. The kaleidoscope of old products that Alex gathers for Christiane is seen against the backdrop of a new political reality of emigrations to the West and the forced adaptation to capitalism. Still, as the film does in its treatment of political structures, the complexities and contradictions are made clear as a sense of excitement is built around the new way of life, especially through the consuming eyes of younger characters like Ariane, Alex, Lara, and Rainer.

The art direction is most sensitive to the nostalgia for the cultural aspects of the GDR in the face of the *Wende*. Alex's decision to keep his mother in the dark after her coma jumpstarts a virtual world that flashes back in time within the family's high-rise apartment. The gaudy, functional furniture, crass yellow wallpaper, and outdated televisions and appliances are exhumed by Alex for the "museum" that he builds around his mother, a filmic comment on the "museumification" of the GDR that became part of *ostalgie*. One of the first requests that she makes of Alex is for her favorite Spreewald pickles, a staple of any good East German's diet. The problem for Alex is that the old corner market is transformed into a bright, shining Western-style chain supermarket. Upon walking in to the garish market to look for pickles, where he also sees a person in a giant chicken costume as the mascot for the new store, Alex narrates wryly that, indeed, "I, the customer, was king!"

The fruitless searches for these quaint foods become a major part of Alex's re-creation, as these seemingly small tokens represent rhetorically powerful notions of the everyday identity that he and his mother were clinging to. Carefully placed products such as Spreewalds, Club Cola, and Mocca Fix coffee populate and cloud each frame of *GBL* with the popular culture of socialism as more evidence of the film's connections to the culturally commodified nostalgia of the *ostalgie* movement.⁶⁸ In addition, various images are seen of the ubiquitous Trabant car, affectionately called Trabi, a notoriously dilapidated hunk of metal that lined the East German roadways but which became a chic, cult item after the *Wende*. Families in the GDR would often have to wait years to receive their Trabi, and the Kerners were no different, as Christiane asks Alex hopefully after she awakes from her coma if the Trabi was ready yet.⁶⁹

The mustard, brown, and gray visions of these grimy industrial GDR products and the spare look of the Trabi collide in the film with the neon colors and elaborate gadgets of the infiltrating West. The climax of the movie comes in the scene where Christiane escapes from her room unbeknownst to a sleeping Alex and sees the new post-Wall world, first running into a swastika in her elevator, the ultimate symbol of what the GDR was founded against. When she reaches the bottom and sits down to catch her bearings, *Wessi's* who are moving in to the building, no doubt for the cheap rent, plop a comically oversized lamp with a neon pink furry shade in her bewildered view. The clothing contrasts, likewise, play up the quaint nostalgia for simpler times. Ariane and Alex revel in the bright, new Western fashions, but whenever taking care of Mom, they change back into their square old duds, with Ariane at one point remarking, "Look at the crap we used to wear!" Ariane is often seen, instead, in her gleaming new polyester Burger King uniform with its clean whites, reds, and yellows. In addition, her *Wessi* fiancé, Rainer, is painted as a ridiculous character, and is a recipient of much of Alex's enmity, with his trendy clothes and his tanning bed. We come to accept him as a symbol of the West's colonization. We are permitted to laugh throughout the movie both at the gracelessness of the clothing and products of the GDR and the almost belligerent call of the West with its fast food and blaring music. Yet, the quiet pull of the *Ossi* lifestyle is given more of a fond glance—the contrasts favor the nostalgic reading of the East in how it at least provides solace amidst the din

of capitalism. While *GBL* has often been cited for creating a kind of GDR museum in the Kerner flat, Charity Scribner reminds us that museumification is not simply a reverence for the past, but in some ways a purging of it.⁷⁰ By *GBL* putting the GDR’s wares on museum-like display, nostalgia, then, can have its melancholic longing mixed with a usage of memory to chart and map out future frontiers.

Moreover, the use of astronaut Sigmund Jahn also plays into this theme of looking back at the faded memory of the regime. Toward the end of the film, Alex even uses Jahn as the subject of his final newscast, the one that closes the book on his ruse. In the newscast, Jahn is chosen as Honecker’s successor to lead the GDR and his first act as president is to allow the borders to open and to invite Westerners in to marvel at the East. Alex’s comic creation of the West reveling in the “progress” of the East, all under the tutelage of their great astronaut hero (now a cab driver), is the film’s ironic comment on the complexity of memory. In Alex’s re-rendering, the East benevolently allows the *Wessis* to share in the forward vision of the GDR, with Sigmund Jahn as the symbolic leader—the man who orbited the earth would now bring the fortunes of his country into the stratosphere. These readings of the “old guard,” in characters like Jahn and Klappprath, all have a tinge of sadness—the nostalgia includes the knowledge that they cannot go back but the longing for stability still plagues them.

Good Bye Lenin! and Individual Memory

Such reflective nostalgia in these cultural comments of the film does not call for a return to the GDR. The juxtaposition with the political realities in *GBL* makes this clear, as does the inevitability of the West’s influence. Yet, the struggle for stable identity on the individual level may be the movie’s strongest claim to an ambivalently reflective nostalgia, as its family storyline represents the most complex rendering of GDR memory.

The film is slow in revealing the true contours of the family trials that faced the Kerners. Alex continually voices anger at his father’s desertion of his cherished mother and Ariane is paralyzed by fear and anger when she thinks she waits on her long-lost dad at the Burger King drive-thru. The father is used as the reason for Christiane’s headlong dive into the socialist cause. Yet, a major twist before the film’s conclusion, as Alex desperately tries to keep his constructed narrative intact, is the real story of the father’s whereabouts. In a nostalgic trip back to their old country cottage, Christiane finally reveals to her children that their father emigrated illegally to the West with her consent. She was meant to follow soon after, but a combination of fear and meddling by the Stasi led to her breakdown. She then resolved to follow the socialist cause wholeheartedly, and she hid all the letters that the father continually wrote to Alex and Ariane, letters that are painfully discovered by Ariane behind a cupboard in their flat.

The weaving of this storyline of obfuscated memories heightens the complexity of Christiane’s role. Rather than the “dim celebrant of Communist kitsch” that David Denby accused her of being, she represents the torn and conflicted memory of “progress” in the GDR.⁷¹ The story of Christiane’s husband’s political resistance, and

the Stasi's harassment of her, forms a powerful sense of countermemory, a "foundation of democratic resistance."⁷² In *GBL*'s typical ambivalence, the film introduces this narrative of resistance right around the time in the film when it feels like Christiane's dogged socialist devotion is almost farcical. Christiane's personal journey becomes much more complex and multilayered with the film's point that countermemories of the GDR did and still exist. Christiane's idealism and devotion to GDR "progress" ended up more as a highly personal attempt to champion motherhood above all, and the Communist narrative provided the context for unselfishly raising her children. When she loses all of this to the *Wende*, Alex's desperation to keep it in intact, while absurd, makes sense as an unselfish tribute to mom's devotion. During Alex's last newscast with Jahn as the new GDR president, Christiane has already learned of the truth and she knowingly smiles at Alex while pretending to play along with his game.

At one point, Alex narrates that, "The GDR I created became the one that I might have wished for." Alex, in all his apathy about the past and the excitement about the opportunities of reunification, becomes wrapped up in his own reconstruction of memories, arguably even more so than his mother. These family relationships, with their hidden truths and hazy memories, highlight the true "nostalgia of the everyday" at the heart of *GBL*. While the upheaval of political structures turns life on its head and the aggressive cultural changes beg for some sense of the quiet past, the individual's struggle against memory and the state is the underlying message. Upon Christiane's peaceful death, family and friends gather to light a toy rocket on the top of the high-rise; such a tribute could be seen as one last ode to socialist "progress," but it reads more as a testament to the power of individual memory. In the end, the reflective nostalgia acknowledges that life as a family will never be the same, and clinging to some simple fragments of memories allows for the present times to be more easily swallowed.

Conclusion

As a box-office bonanza in Germany and with its art house crossover into the West, *Good Bye Lenin!* has become one of the most successful German films of all time. Its critical reception has been generally positive, although certain commentary has worried about its potential indulgence of the *ostalgie* memory market and its capacity for distortion.⁷³ Generally, though, the film has been praised for its treatment of the contentious issues facing West and East so much that, as Hodgin points out, the film was considered as having enough educational value to warrant an accompanying booklet with lesson ideas and suggested discussion topics.⁷⁴

Reception aside, *GBL* affords the opportunity to ask some larger questions about the intersections between both post-communist cultural studies and rhetorical research. While the film provides a representative example of Boym's theory of "reflective nostalgia"—in the spirit of *GBL*'s ambivalence, it's not enough to simply stop there. In many ways, Germany represents the ultimate Cold War binary, the free world and the totalitarian world, and thus it is always tempting to speak in dualistic

language when analyzing the worlds of Western and Eastern Germany. Discussing nostalgia on the whole has similar temptations—to speak of authenticity and inauthenticity or accuracy and inaccuracy; productive and unproductive; rational or irrational.

What *GBL* arguably shows us is that such binaries are not that easily divided. A simple stamp of "reflective nostalgia" on the film ignores the real sense of anger at Western commodification that undercuts the humorous celebration of communist totems. I would not hold that *GBL* makes any attempt to actually return to the GDR, yet by downplaying its restorative aspects, we run the risk of missing the film's defiant argument that an East German identity still exists and must be maintained.

Nostalgia is slippery and elusive in categorization—as we move forward to chase it in our scholarship, a film like *GBL* reminds us of Zelizer's notions of memory as a working process. There is a fluidity and tension in nostalgia that can encapsulate both the melancholic and knowing longing of reflective nostalgia with the active search for origins and meanings inherent in restorative nostalgia. Capitalistic democracy has not engendered a consensus about its acceptance amongst the people of the two Germanys, and so one has to be careful about assumptions that nostalgia simply impedes the rational road to "freedom."

Rhetorical research continues to richly interrogate the complications of individual, social, collective, and public memory, and Boym's contribution is an important step forward—a way to "proceed with ambivalence." But as she calls for the critical distance of a reflective nostalgia, so should future studies be critically reflective of typologies of nostalgia that could possibly preclude the undertones of social change and unrest that exist beneath it.

As we make inroads in probing the binaries at work in memory scholarship, we would also do well to continue to follow the twisting knots of popular culture's representation of post-communist life. For example, the 2006 Best Foreign Language Oscar went to Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck's *The Lives of Others*, a considerably darker vision of the GDR in public memory. Absent in *The Lives of Others* are the faded but warm and lively colors of *GBL*—instead we see harsh darkness and sharp grays, blues, and blacks, connoting the GDR as a menacing bureaucratic jungle. Donnersmarck's meditation on the crumbling socialist regime focuses around the final days of the Stasi, and tells the story of one man's gradual repudiation of his involvement in totalitarian surveillance and his heroic (but ultimately tragic) defense of those seeking freedom. The narrative revolves around individualistic redemption against evil, rather than the ambivalently painful but humorous transition of a family to a new reality, as advanced by *GBL*. Such distinctions mark the continuing fascination with the "authentic" past, and the placement of nostalgia within debates around reality and history.

The possibility of continued success for films like *The Lives of Others* also displays the contestability of post-communist memory as we move forward. Tellingly, both of these films about the fate of East Germany are made by West German filmmakers (*GBL*'s screenwriter Bernd Lichtenberg is a *Wessi* as well).⁷⁵ As more studies of post-communist memory in popular culture are undertaken, we must keep in mind the

question of transnational identity, and how Western and Eastern perspectives collide and intermingle. Once again, memory is on contested and shifting ground, and such perspectives will continue to evolve in meaningful ways. Nostalgic longing for a time in history when memory was institutionally suppressed will continue to yield important critical insights. But once we can reconcile this with the idea that democratization has also engaged in its own suppression of cultural memory, we might truly be in a “both-and” territory that could bring us even deeper into the layers of nostalgia.

Even nineteen years later, no consensus of German memory under communism exists (nor arguably that of any post-communist nation), and this lack of consensus makes the future of nostalgic studies exciting and important. A stable German identity has not yet been reformed in this short period, and the culture’s penchant for nostalgia has been a response to this void. Perhaps, then, *GBL* is a better representation of everyday German life and identity for the early 2000s than it is for the late 1980s and early 1990s. In other words, in the canon of nostalgic works about post-communism, *Good Bye Lenin!* may stand as a reminder of how democratization and unification with the West continue to inspire ambivalent emotions and heated debates about a Red past. The film does not have to be part of an *ostalgic* time capsule, as it engages a relevant, timely, and ongoing dialogue about East/West relations and the multiplicity of perspectives that continue to challenge identity on both sides.

Notes

- [1] Zala Volcic, “Yugo-Nostalgia: Cultural Memory and Media in the Former Yugoslavia,” *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 24, no. 1 (March 2007): 25.
- [2] See: Volcic, “Yugo-Nostalgia,” 25; Frederic Jameson, “Nostalgia for the Present,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 88, no. 2 (1989): 536; Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), 170.
- [3] James A. Janack, “The Future’s Foundation in a Contested Past: Nostalgia and Dystalgia in the 1996 Russian Presidential Campaign,” *Southern Communication Journal* 65, no. 1 (Fall 1999): 45.
- [4] Serguei Alex. Oushakine, “‘We’re Nostalgic But We’re Not Crazy’: Retrofitting the Past in Russia,” *The Russian Review* 66 (July 2007): 452.
- [5] Stuart Tannock, “Nostalgia Critique,” *Cultural Studies* 9, no. 3 (1995): 461.
- [6] Barbie Zelizer, “Reading the Past Against the Grain: The Shape of Memory Studies,” *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 12 (June 1995): 220.
- [7] Zelizer, “The Shape of Memory Studies,” 218–21; Marouf Hasian, Jr. and Helene A. Shugart, “Melancholic Nostalgia, Collective Memories, and the Cinematic Representations of Nationalistic Identities in *Indochine*,” *Communication Quarterly* 49, no. 4 (Fall 2001): 332.
- [8] Kimberly K. Smith, “Mere Nostalgia: Notes on a Progressive Parathey,” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 3, no. 4 (2000): 522.
- [9] Vaclav Havel, “New Year’s Address to the Nation: Prague, January 1, 1990,” in *The Art of the Impossible*, trans., ed. Paul Wilson (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), 9.
- [10] Joakim Ekman and Jonas Linde, “Communist Nostalgia and the Consolidation of Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe,” *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition*

- Politics* 21, no. 3 (September 2005): 354–74; See also: Paul Cooke, *Representing East Germany Since Unification: From Colonization to Nostalgia* (Oxford: Berg, 2004), 104.
- [11] *Good Bye Lenin!*, DVD, directed by Wolfgang Becker (2002; Berlin, Germany: Sony Pictures, 2004).
- [12] Daphne Berdahl, “‘(N)Ostalgie’ for the Present: Memory, Longing, and East German Things,” *Ethnos* 64, no. 2 (1999): 193.
- [13] Joe Moran, “November in Berlin: The End of Everyday,” *History Workshop Journal* 57 (2004): 228.
- [14] Chris Salter, “The Kulturstaat in the Time of Empire: Notes on Germany Thirteen Years After,” *Performing Arts Journal* 77 (2004): 12.
- [15] Anke Finger, “Hello Willy, Good Bye Lenin!: Transitions of an East German Family,” *South Central Review* 22, no. 2 (Summer 2005): 39–58; Nick Hodgin, “*Berlin is in Germany* and *Good Bye Lenin!*: Taking Leave of the GDR?” *Debatte* 12, no. 1 (2004): 25–45.
- [16] Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), xvi.
- [17] Stephen P. Depoe, “Requiem for Liberalism: The Therapeutic and Deliberative Functions of Nostalgic Appeals in Edward Kennedy’s Address to the 1980 Democratic National Convention,” *Southern Communication Journal* 55 (Winter 1990): 175.
- [18] Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, xiv.
- [19] Tannock, “Nostalgia Critique,” 454.
- [20] Shawn Parry-Giles and Trevor Parry-Giles, “Collective Memory, Political Nostalgia, and the Rhetorical Presidency: Bill Clinton’s Commemoration of the March on Washington, August 28, 1998,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 86, no. 4 (November 2000): 420–21, 428.
- [21] David Lowenthal, “Nostalgia Tells It Like It Wasn’t,” in *Imagined Past: History and Nostalgia*, ed. Christopher Shaw and Malcolm Chase (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1989), 21–22.
- [22] Fred Davis, “Nostalgia, Identity, and the Current Nostalgia Wave,” *Journal of Popular Culture* 11, no. 2 (Fall 1977): 418.
- [23] *Ibid.*, 415.
- [24] Tannock, “Nostalgia Critique,” 456.
- [25] *Ibid.*, 456–57.
- [26] See Greg Dickinson, “Memories for Sale: Nostalgia and the Construction of Identity in Old Pasadena,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 83, no. 1 (February 1997): 1–27; Greg Dickinson, “The Pleasantville Effect: Nostalgia and the Visual Framing of (White) Suburbia,” *Western Journal of Communication* 70, no. 3 (July 2006): 212–33.
- [27] Guglielmo Bellelli and Mirella A.C. Amatulli, “Nostalgia, Immigration, and Collective Memory,” in *Collective Memory of Political Events: Social Psychological Perspectives*, ed. James W. Pennebaker, Dario Paez, and Bernard Rime (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1997), 209–20.
- [28] Eugene B. Daniels, “Nostalgia and Hidden Meaning,” *American Imago* 42, no. 4 (Winter 1985): 379.
- [29] Janelle L. Wilson, “‘Remember When . . .’: A Consideration of the Concept of Nostalgia,” *ETC* (Fall 1999): 303.
- [30] Daniels, “Nostalgia and Hidden Meaning,” 381–82.
- [31] Lowenthal, “Nostalgia Tells It Like It Wasn’t,” 30.
- [32] Wendy Wheeler, “Nostalgia Isn’t Nasty – The Postmodernising of Parliamentary Democracy,” in *Altered States: Postmodernism, Politics, Culture*, ed. Mark Perryman (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1994), 98.
- [33] Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 58.
- [34] *Ibid.*, 49.
- [35] *Ibid.*, 41; 49–50.
- [36] *Ibid.*, 43.
- [37] *Ibid.*, 49–50.

- [38] Tina Rosenberg, *The Haunted Land: Facing Europe's Ghosts After Communism* (New York: Random House, 1995), 264.
- [39] Mary Fulbrook, *Anatomy of a Dictatorship: Inside the GDR 1949–1989* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 5.
- [40] *Ibid.*, 129–30.
- [41] Ernest D. Plock, *East German-West German Relations and the Fall of the GDR* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993), 2.
- [42] Paul Betts, “Remembrance of Things Past: Nostalgia in West and East Germany, 1980–2000,” in *Pain and Prosperity: Reconsidering Twentieth-Century German History*, ed. Paul Betts and Greg Eghigian (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 180.
- [43] Jane Kramer, *The Politics of Memory: Looking for Germany in the New Germany* (New York: Random House, 1996), 108.
- [44] Betts, “Remembrance of Things Past,” 181.
- [45] *Ibid.*
- [46] Moran, “November in Berlin,” 217–18.
- [47] *Ibid.*, 218.
- [48] Cooke, *Representing East Germany*, 7.
- [49] Moran, “November in Berlin,” 223.
- [50] Corey Ross, *The East German Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives in the Interpretation of the GDR* (London: Arnold Publishers, 2002), 130.
- [51] Charity Scribner, “Tender Rejection: The German Democratic Republic Goes to the Museum,” *European Journal of English Studies* 4, no. 2 (2000): 176.
- [52] Moran, “November in Berlin,” 226.
- [53] Milena Veenis, “Consumption in East Germany: The Seduction and Betrayal of Things,” *Journal of Material Culture* 4, no. 1 (1999): 81.
- [54] Veenis, “Consumption in East Germany,” 86.
- [55] William Outhwaite and Larry Ray, *Social Theory and Postcommunism* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 178.
- [56] *Ibid.*, 178; 195–96.
- [57] See: Outhwaite and Ray, *Social Theory and Postcommunism*, 191–95; Janack, “The Future’s Foundation in a Contested Past,” 34–48; Andrew Roberts, “The Politics and Anti-Politics of Nostalgia,” *East European Politics and Societies* 16, no. 3 (2003): 764–809; Joakim Ekman and Jonas Linde, “Communist Nostalgia,” 354–74.
- [58] Salter, “Kulturstaat,” 12–13.
- [59] Paul Betts, “The Twilight of the Idols: East German Memory and Material Culture,” *The Journal of Modern History* 72 (September 2000): 734.
- [60] See: Scribner, “Tender Rejection,” 173; Rosenberg, *The Haunted Land*, 289.
- [61] Scribner, “Tender Rejection,” 174.
- [62] Berdahl, “‘(N)Ostalgie’ for the Present,” 202.
- [63] *Ibid.*, 199.
- [64] Betts, “Twilight of the Idols,” 746.
- [65] For explorations of other treatments of nostalgia in Eastern German films, see: Leonie Naughton, *That Was the Wild East: Film Culture, Unification, and the ‘New’ Germany*, Social History, Popular Culture, and Politics in Germany Series (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 93–124; Paul Cooke, “Performing ‘Ostalgie’: Leander Haussmann’s Sonnenallee,” *German Life and Letters* 56, no. 2 (April 2003): 156–67.
- [66] Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 54–55.
- [67] Edward Casey’s typology of four different forms of memory proves instructive here. Casey defines one of his four as “public memory,” which serves as an “encircling horizon,” where “discussion with others is possible,” and “where one is exposed and vulnerable, where one’s limitations and fallibilities are all too apparent.” Casey’s version of public memory is composed largely around his other three types of memory—individual, social, and

collective. Individual memory and social memory are interlocked—individual reflections and memories are created and perpetuated by virtue of being reminded, recognized, or by reminiscing with others. Social memory, then, works in memories shared discursively by those we already have relationships with. Collective memory, by contrast, represents the circumstance by which different people, often unknown to each other, recall the same events, but each in their own way. See: Edward Casey, “Public Memory in Place and Time,” in *Framing Public Memory*, ed. Kendall R. Phillips (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2004), 21–22, 25.

- [68] For more examples of the repackaging of old GDR brands in the 1990s and their approach to advertising showing solidarity with the Eastern identity, see: Rainer Gries, “‘Hurrah! I’m Still Alive!’ East German Products Demonstrating East German Identities,” in *Over the Wall/ After the Fall: Post-Communist Cultures Through an East-West Gaze*, ed. Sibelan Forrester, Magdalena J. Zaborowska, and Elena Gapova (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 186–91.
- [69] Gries, “Hurrah! I’m Still Alive,” 200.
- [70] Scribner, “Tender Rejection,” 186.
- [71] David Denby, “Women and the System; *Good Bye Lenin!* and *Osama*” *New Yorker*, March 8, 2004, 92.
- [72] Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 60.
- [73] Denby, “Women and the System,” 92.
- [74] Hodgkin, “Taking Leave of the GDR?,” 35.
- [75] *Ibid.*, 26.