

BERLIN IN TRANSIT(ION)

A study of the significance of the U- and S-Bahn systems in Berlin's cultural texts

by

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A thesis submitted to the Department of German  
in conformity with the requirements for  
the degree of Master of Arts

Queen's University

Kingston, Ontario, Canada

September 2010

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Abstract:

This study establishes how rail transportation systems and their filmic and literary representations form and inform culture and identity, particularly in the new German capital and by extension its new Berlin Republic. Where, how, and by whom mobility is practiced influences the city and vice versa. Historically, Berlin's U-Bahn and S-Bahn system, have mirrored physical and emotional changes in the urban landscape. They have also been an important platform for the exchange of cultural information through networks of shared knowledge among Berlin's diverse groups of citizens. This situation continues into today. Both studies about urban rail transport and more traditional cultural texts suggest the communicative possibilities of such public mobility infrastructure. Interactions that occur on the Bahn system can engender possibilities for a new nation based on a multicultural society and constitutional patriotism, rather than one based on blood-and-soil type ideologies. Theoretical and fictional work also suggests that public rail transport is a litmus test, registering, for instance, the significant tensions of unification including increasing economic disparity and a resurgence of racialized violence. Cultural texts in particular sketch a mass exodus of citizens from the Bahn system and depict an increase of privately owned vehicles and bicycles being used to access the city. How does the figurative and perhaps real world removal of these travelers from the culture-building dialogues that occur on Berlin's rail transportation signify for the future? Cultural representations of the Bahns provide unique perspectives into the past, the present, and the prospective future of Berlin. As ciphers, they participate in the rich cultural code of Berlin, a city between worlds and central to German national identity.

Acknowledgements:

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Jennifer Hosek of the department of German Language and Literature, for her patience and guidance in this project. I would not have been capable of completing this project without her wisdom and knowledge.

I would like to express my appreciation to everyone involved in the execution of this project. Thank you to Margaret Maliszewska for her guidance on logistics and words of encouragement, and many thanks to Dr. Jill Scott and Dr. David Pugh.

Finally, I would like to express my thanks to my family and friends for your continued support in all my endeavors.

## Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction .....	1
Chapter 2: The History of Mobility A brief history of the Bahns up to 1989 .....	9
Chapter 3: „Fahr mal wieder U-Bahn!“ Representations of mobility surrounding Unification .....	33
Chapter 4: Automobility in Berlin The privatization of transportation subsequent to Unification .....	57
Chapter 5: Conclusion: Fahr mal wieder Ringbahn .....	85
Bibliography.....	90



## Chapter 1

### Introduction

The Berliner U-Bahn was established at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in order to connect the separate municipalities of the city and to alleviate escalating traffic problems on the surface. Physical structures such as tunnels and tracks set subways apart from other forms of public transportation; where route and timetabling changes are relatively simple for buses, cars and bicycles, a great deal of capital and planning is required for subways services. The allocation of funds for such infrastructure comments on the nation's current priorities. As the London Underground statement "Mind the Gap" has become symbolic for London, the Metro for Paris and the Subway for New York, the U-Bahn and the S-Bahn system are microcosms for Berlin, where the new capital is a

metonymy for Germany. Thus, urban rail transportation in Berlin is an excellent platform for observing and defining culture. The Bahn systems are a place where the political problems, difficulties and divisions of the city and its citizens combine to tell the city's collective story. In this thesis I will argue that the U- Bahn and the S-Bahn systems have not only played a pivotal role in the physical and emotional unity of the city throughout the last century, but are an allegory for the nation. More specifically, the ways in which people travel in order to access the city and the representation of the Bahn system in film and literature comment on the current social and political climate of Berlin and Germany.

The mass implementation of public transportation at the turn of the twentieth century not only revolutionized mobility around the world, but had a profound effect on social interaction –the Berlin U-Bahn was no exception. Individuals from various backgrounds with a variety of unique experiences piled into the cars together and were transported to their destinations at a scale and frequency that had never before been seen. The riders sat in close proximity to one another in small, confined spaces, often facing each other, but their interpersonal interactions were limited and generally discouraged by some unspoken social agreement. The great German sociologist Georg Simmel (1858-1918) hypothesized that as a group grows in numbers and extends itself spatially (thus making rapid public transit such as the U-Bahn a necessity), the inner unity of the group loosens, and the common culture and sense of association is weakened. However, the rigidity of the original separation between individuals is also softened through mutual relations and connections such as those developed on public transit (Farganis 140). The Bahn system, therefore, concomitantly build (through creation of connections) and break

(through separation instigated by growth and expansion of the groups) the bonds necessary for the development of a cohesive community identity and culture in Berlin.

The interactions of public and private spheres on public transport have an immense impact on social and cultural development around the world. According to legend, in the United States, the American Civil Rights movement found its beginnings on public transportation when Rosa Parks refused an order from a municipal bus driver to give up her seat on the bus to a white man in Montgomery, Alabama on December 1, 1955. Such interactions influenced the development of the social fabric of a culture and the way individuals communicate. This was not only present in Montgomery, Alabama in 1955, or in Berlin in 1901 when the first U-Bahn made its maiden voyage from *Gleisdreieck*, but also in the Post-Wall period when two cities, which had been allowed to develop independently of and isolated from one another for over 25 years, were stitched together by the tracks of the U- and S-Bahn systems following official unification in 1990.

While the structural unification of the city was an engineering feat in its own right, with some U-Bahn lines taking up to five years to re-establish, the movement of East and West Berliners through the city as well as their interactions with one another on public transportation was another difficult but important factor in the on-going journey of social unification of the city and nation. Citizens of the New Berlin Republic were crossing boundaries where the physical barriers had once been, into spaces which had been inaccessible for decades. In hindsight, while Berlin's unified transportation helped to erase some of the old divisions, new schisms have arisen in their place through violence and racism. While unification brought with it the opportunity to address certain issues of national identity that had stagnated since the construction of the Berlin Wall in

1961, the rapid unification of the city resulted in danger in the public spaces of the city, such as the U- and S-Bahn systems, due to resurgence of racism and conservative ideologies. Writer Martin Walser stated that a sense of belonging together is necessary for the development of a national identity and the ability for Germans to see themselves as a normal people, and that this sense had been hindered by collective guilt and the exploitation of the Holocaust. Furthermore, in his acceptance speech for the *Friedenspreis des deutschen Buchhandels* in Frankfurt in 1998, Walser condemned the construction of the Holocaust memorial in Berlin and advocated for moving away from the historical burden that Germans face. Walser's critic, Ignatz Bubis, would criticize Walser for suggesting "eine Kultur des Wegschauens und des Wegdenkens, die im Nationalsozialismus mehr als üblich war und die wir uns heute nicht wieder angewöhnen dürfen" as well as a "Versuch, Geschichte zu verdrängen, beziehungsweise die Erinnerung auszulöschen [*sic*]" (qtd Von Ludger 412). Ignoring certain elements of the German past and basing views of national identity on conservative notions, as Walser seems to advocate, is dangerous as it may lead to a resurgence of National Socialism. Theorist Stuart Taberner suggests that since 1990 German "normalization" should no longer be based on such conservative views and that the united Germany must search for a different source on which to develop its sense of self (Taberner and Finlay 1).

In this thesis, I will argue that the way out of this dilemma surrounding the development of a national identity in Germany is through a normalization based on shared networks of knowledge and culture that can be strengthened through participation in public transportation. In his essay "The Metropolis and Mental Life," Simmel analyzed the effects that the metropolis had on the individual, suggesting a sort of interdependence

between the individual and society. The interactions and interdependence to which Simmel alludes in his essay are also important to the understanding of culture as defined by psychology professor Ying-yi Hong in her article “A Dynamic Constructivist Approach to Culture.” Hong outlines that it is precisely through social interactions in the city that culture is constructed. In her words; culture is “*networks of knowledge*, consisting of learned routines of thinking, feeling, and interacting with other people [...] shared among a collection of interconnected individuals, who are often demarcated by race, ethnicity, or nationality” (4). Thus, mobility and the ability to participate in a variety of social and physical interaction are necessary in order to create rich and diverse culture. However, as will be seen in this thesis, fluctuating mobility practices in Berlin caused by political and social phenomena are changing the way people access the city and each other, impacting the development of urban culture. But, it is the type of culture and normalization suggested by Hong’s notion of networks of knowledge that offers possibilities for a new nation to emerge, one based on a multi-cultural society and constitutional patriotism rather than conservation notions and the denial of history.

Much film and literature critiques the xenophobia and racism introduced into the culture of Berlin through a normalization of German identity as proposed by Walser,. The films suggest that Germans must not seek to base their national identity on conservative views. Rather, they must work together to create a collaborative, heterogeneous community and culture through interaction and the sharing of cultural information. Post-Wall unification film and literature often thematically incorporate the U-Bahn and S-Bahn, among other forms of transportation, to articulate the struggles of social unity and

to find a normalized German national identity in the politically unified but socially and culturally disjointed city and country.

The first chapter of this work will give an abridged history of the U- and S-Bahn network in order to conceptualize its historical significance on culture and society in Berlin, a city that can be understood as a metonymy for Germany. Through all of the many periods of growth and change in the nation, Berlin has been a rather consistent marker for Germany. This is especially true in the last century, where the new capital was a microcosm for the divided Germany, as well as being the location of unification in 1990. During these many historical eras, representations of the U-Bahn and S-Bahn system in cultural texts have played an important role in conceptualizing mobility in the city, such as the circumscription of movement following the construction of the Berlin Wall, which interrupted certain dialogues of reflection on national identity. The limitations placed on mobility by these Cold War borders impeded the ability of Berlin citizens from the East and West to interact, and thus in some ways their common culture and identity would remain fragmented until unification, and during this period two distinct cultures would develop through the circumscribed networks of mobility and shared knowledge.

The second chapter of this thesis will examine the rapid unification of Germany in 1990 and the associated plethora of changes. The stasis that can be seen as characterizing a common German national identity during the period of division was broken. However, the rapidity in which unification occurred revived resurgent nationalism and fears about it. Berlin film and literature address the issues raised by unification, as the increase of mobility throughout the entire city (brought on by the reconnection of the city's rail

transportation network) played an important role in the defining the state of German society. Yet, following unification, the violence and racism which emerged instigated a mass departure from Berlin's public transit while certain residents sought out other forms of transportation in order to access the city.

The films of the *Achtung Berlin* Film Festival feature privatized forms of transportation, such as bicycles and privately owned vehicles (POV), to convey the concept of a city in transition - attempting to grow together while simultaneously being severed along new lines. The representation of this tendency may suggest that there has been a departure from the communal sphere of public transportation and an increased usage of POVs and bicycles in Berlin in the last ten to fifteen years (Ladd 49). In any case, within cultural artifacts, different means of transportation have unique implications for the cultural development of the city, and as well personifying the city itself through its citizens and their mobility and accessibility to the urban space. Extended to current trends, one could predict that the representation of more privatized forms of transportation in today's cultural texts is being used to convey another shift in social and cultural development, most notably in Berlin. In the films of *Achtung Berlin*, the city is presented as being easily accessible by bicycle. Combined with the portrayed exclusion of outsiders from its public transportation through violence and racism, the resulting homogeneity and *Dorf*-like accessibility draws more parallels to Georg Simmel's *Kleinstadt* than to a thriving multi-cultural metropolis. The *Kleinstadt* brings together those with similar stories and everyday lives by pushing out the ostensible outsiders who do not belong, implying that Berlin may not be the inclusive metropolis it is reputed to be.

In this work, I will discuss the portrayals of transportation through the urban space of Berlin as found in German film and literature, and, most importantly, how these portrayals reflect and shape the contemporary social climate of the city, thereby influencing the development of a German national identity. I will also propose that shifts in these narratives can be used to hypothesize new sentiments about what it means to be German or live in Germany today. In cultural texts such as film and literature, the shared networks of knowledge and social practice that is Berlin's rail transportation have the potential to contribute to the development of a unified German national identity. However, they have also contributed to creating new schisms in the cultural fabric of Berlin, defining those who belong in the city and those who do not.

## Chapter 2

# The History of Mobility

A brief history of the Bahn system up to 1989

Over the past century, many societies worldwide have become visibly more international and heterogeneous due to increased mobility of individuals, goods and ideas. This increased mobility is a result of the transportation revolution at the beginning of the twentieth century where mass construction projects across Europe and the world connected people and places like never before. This chapter will provide a brief history of the effects of this revolution in Germany and will examine the development of urban rail transportation in Berlin as well as exploring the effects that the mass implementation of public transportation at the turn of the nineteenth century had on cultural development in the city. Many cultural texts set in Berlin highlight the importance of this transportation revolution on mobility, culture and society in the city. Through these texts it is possible to

see how mobility and public transit affected the collective consciousness of the city by connecting its citizens and creating communal public spaces. Although these representations of public spaces in the city highlight the ever increasing economic disparity, they more importantly act as a space where people from different backgrounds can act, interact and build culture. These fictional texts also allow for the study of the sentimental value that rail public transportation holds for Berlin citizens, as well as to envision how changes in this network affect the city and nation through the creation of empty spaces within both the physical and emotional landscape in which the texts initiate a dialogue with the audience on what it means to be German today. The prominent presence of the S- and U-Bahn systems in many cultural texts evidences the significant influence that urban rail transit in Berlin has on the development of culture and society in Berlin, where representations of the trains and underground tunnels and stations are an allegory for the nation and a sense of national identity for Germany.

The U-Bahn was first envisaged to improve transport, yet it quickly became an important factor in the development of the city, heralding both modernity and the future and a sentimental and nostalgic representation of the past. Brian Hardy writes in his overview of the history of the U-Bahn, *The Berlin U-Bahn*, that the Hochbahn Company in Berlin first established a tram line in order to extend its sphere of influence that stretched from Warschauer Brücke to Zentralviehhof. The trains on this line were built by Germany's own Siemens Engineering and the line opened to traffic on October 1 1901; nine years later the Hochbahn Company sold the line to the Strassenbahnen der Stadt Berlin and it was eventually incorporated into today's modern network (6). Shortly after the implementation of this new line, which neatly complemented the existing Stadtbahn,

more extensions were planned and some were already under construction as the system grew from its original 11.2 km to 35 km. At this time, Berlin was still a collection of separate municipalities and in order to continue with expansion and construction of the new urban railway, negotiations had to be undertaken with the various sectors of the city that were affected; Berlin, Schöneberg and Charlottenberg to name a few (ibid 8).

Politics greatly influenced the creation of the U-Bahn, while in turn, the U-Bahn system would also have a significant influence on the development of politics and society in Berlin. Not only did the U- Bahn system instigate the bonding of Berlin's various municipalities, but this symbol of modernity and culture in the national capital offered a better quality of city life to the residents by furthering equality through improved access to mobility. As mobility theorist Susan Hanson explains, because access to "activity sites" (i.e. public centers, shopping/grocery centers) available within a certain distance or travel time has come to depend increasingly on mobility, the ability to move between activity sites with ease and convenience is not just an indicator of privilege and luxury, but of equity and equality in the city, where public transit made mobility and activity sites more accessible (4). Kaiser Wilhelm II recognized the benefits of urban rail transportation; while his grandfather Kaiser Wilhelm I initially refused to grant Royal Assent to the project in 1879, Wilhelm II, who had more interest in technical matters, approved the construction of the U-Bahn in 1893. Wilhelm II would also be became the first Royal on the U-Bahn when he opened the line from Bismarkstrasse to Reichskanzlerplatz on March 29<sup>th</sup>, 1908, and rode this stretch in a train which was afterwards known as the "Kaiserwagen" (Hardy 9). The U-Bahn system was regarded as a symbol of the Wilhelmine Empire and the flurry of construction which occurred in U-

Bahn system development during the period leading up to 1913 was symbolic of the Empire's prosperity following the industrial revolution in Germany during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Kaiser's interest in public transit illustrates its political importance as it furthered the well-being of his people and presented him as a powerful leader of an industrious nation. The economy and population of the city grew dramatically during this period, and Berlin became the main rail hub and economic center of Germany. In order to accommodate the growing population, additional suburbs were soon developed and large projects worked to connect the various sectors of Berlin. The new importance of rail public transit in Berlin was an indicator of the rapid expansion of the city after becoming the capital city of the German Empire in 1871; the U-Bahn network effectively stitched together the separate municipalities. The U-Bahn system provided citizens access to the urban space of Berlin which helped to establish it not only as a district separate from Brandenburg, but as the economic and cultural capital.

This hiatus in U-Bahn construction in 1913 following the decade of intense building and expansion of the urban railway at the turn of the century indicated that all was not well in the Empire. The First World War was not the brief, nineteenth-century style war which was expected, with decisive battle and limited fatalities. This war was unlike any other seen before in Europe, and it was long and drawn-out with high numbers of casualties; it was a new modern type of war that exhausted the resources of the countries involved. Mary Fulbrook notes in her *A Concise History of Germany* that the German economy was not equipped to sustain such a lengthy conflict, and as food provisions and living conditions worsened there was a loss of morale on the home front (152). Food riots, strikes, growing anti-Semitism and leftist activism characterized Berlin.

The economic disparity of the nation manifested itself in political and ideological divides. The majority of Germans grew increasingly war-weary and in the summer of 1918 the war was effectively lost. The Wilhelmine Empire collapsed and was replaced by Germany's first parliamentary republic, the Weimar Republic, which was born out of turmoil and defeat in an unstable economy.

These historical events had significant effects on transit. The outbreak of the War in 1914 had delayed the passage of a law meant to unify the 8 towns, 59 villages and 27 rural districts into one entity (this law was finally passed in October 1920, creating the enormous city of Greater Berlin), passage that would have paved the way for further developments in public transportation. Furthermore, most motor vehicles and horses were requisitioned by the military and priority for fuel usage was given to the war effort, all of which also had a significant impact on public transportation. Construction on the U-Bahn system would not recommence until 1919. Indeed, U-Bahn services had ended abruptly on August 12<sup>th</sup>, 1914 and they were restarted as late as 1921 due to the economic hardships faced by the nation in light of the reparation payments that Germany was forced to make following the treaty of Versailles. In the years following the First World War, Germany struggled politically and economically, with its citizens resenting the reparation payments, but nevertheless, construction and expansions of the U-Bahn system recommenced, indicating Germany's determination to move forward from the devastation of the war. The last big construction project on the U-Bahn network of the post- First World War era was Vinetastrasse, a 1.2 km extension north from Nordring to Pankow, which opened in 1930.

While many historical events would leave their mark on the urban railway system, the main body of the U-Bahn system which existed in the 1930s has remained relatively unchanged since this final extension of Vinetastrasse, and the system of that time is the base of the modern network. The Senior Curator of Railways at the Berlin Museum of Transportation, Alfred Gottwaldt, elaborates on the U-Bahn's relation to development in Berlin and writes that: "Seitdem es Eisenbahn gab, wuchs damit die Stadt nach dem eisernen Skelett der Schienen" (4). As Gottwaldt notes, as the rail forms of public transit in Berlin expanded into the elaborate "Netzspinne" it is today, it became the base upon which the city grew based on predictions of expansion and development.

Berlin's urban railway, like that of many other large cities, is not only the backbone on which the city grew; its changes and alterations reflected those of the city and its citizens. During the Second World War, like the London Underground, many U-Bahn stations were converted to and used as air-raid bunkers and infirmaries rather than terminals for transportation. The personal mobility of many urban residents was limited as public transit became less reliable because of the destruction caused by Allied bombing raids and the allocation of resources such as motor vehicles and petrol to the war-effort. At the same time, troops and prisoners were extremely mobile on trains to and from the front and the camps, indicating that Germany's energies and resources were directed towards the Nazi war machine.

The initial seizure of power by National Socialists brought countless changes to Germany, many of which were reflected in the underground U-Bahn stations. U-Bahn usage soared during the years following the First World War while car use plummeted due to economic hardship and fuel shortages, which made public transportation an

important target for Nazi propaganda. During the period from 1933 until the end of Second World War, the Nazi flag was hung in every U-Bahn station and in April 1933 two U-Bahn stations were renamed: Reichskanzlerplatz became Adolf-Hitler Platz and Schönhauser Tor became Horst-Wessel-Platz. These changes to the U-Bahn system were symbolic of the ever increasing control that the Nazi party exerted over every aspect of life in the Third Reich. The use of the Bahn system as targets for Nazi propaganda indicates that the Nazis recognized the importance of urban rail transit and its influence on society and culture; their advertising techniques were initially used to gain popularity with Berlin residents, who were still suffering from the devastation brought on by the First World War.

Due to the destruction caused by Allied bombing raids during the Second World War, the U-Bahn and S-Bahn service was disrupted and came to an abrupt halt by mid-April of 1945, once again mirroring Germany's war-torn political and social state, which this time came along with the collapse of Third Reich. The termination of public mobility reflected both the dire state of German society and the aftermath of the oppressive policies of National Socialism. Activity sites were inaccessible to many residents and the stream of soldiers and prisoners took place on foot, illustrating the total collapse of the Third Reich and a loss of direction for citizens following years of physical devastation and political extremism. The legacy of these events would result in a fractured sense of self and social cohesion for Germans. Berlin and Germany were left in ruins after the war and its citizens had to rebuild their nation from the ground up both physically and ideologically.

In the years following 1945, Berlin's rail transportation continued to mirror and shape the changes taking place in the nation and it served as a fairly reliable marker of the social climate and cultural development not only in Berlin, but all of Germany. Both the S-Bahn and U-Bahn systems in the East and West, as well as the Strassenbahn in the East, made a remarkable recovery in the years following 1945. This reflected the post-War *Wirtschaftswunder*<sup>1</sup> -economic miracle- that both Germanies experienced in the 1950s and that continued in the next decades in West Germany as its economy came into line with that of other Western countries (Fulbrook 230). Berlin's rail urban public transit also underwent a parallel series of renovations and innovations following the War. While the first section of the U-Bahn reopened on May 14<sup>th</sup>, 1945, only 6 days after the capitulation, the restoration of service throughout the entire network took until 1947 to complete.

While the urban landscape of Berlin was transformed from rubble into a functioning city in a few short years, with massive reconstruction projects to rebuild the tattered city, little time was taken to reflect on the past decades and rethink the (pre-)Nazi past or to redefine what it means to be German. Indeed, while the aforementioned period of the early *Wirtschaftswunder* was one of great economic change, as could be seen by the re-development of infrastructure such as this in the West, the 1970s generation would criticize their parents' generation for being too engrossed with the War and subsequent reconstruction to re-examine their beliefs and underlying sentimental idealism. One concrete example of this phenomenon is the renaming of many U-Bahn and S-Bahn stations. It mirrored the changes occurring in the city. These stations were hurriedly

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<sup>1</sup> This term is generally used to refer to the economic miracle in the West, but as Mary Fulbrook notes (230) both Germanies experienced rapid economic recovery following the War.

renamed in an attempt by the Allies and FRG to put the Nazi past behind; Adolf-Hitler-Platz once again became Reichskanzlerplatz, and Braunauer Strasse, which had been named to commemorate Hitler's birthplace, is today known as Sonnenallee. However, these renamings were only superficial alterations to the city's ideological state, and the 1940s generation focused so intently on the physical reconstruction of the nation following the distressing loss of the War that the majority of West German citizens either neglected to or refused to re-evaluate their morals and ideals.

Despite efforts by German leaders over the years to react responsibly to the events of the Second World War and the Holocaust, even today, many in the European population believe that Germany is still indelibly stained by Nazism (Probst 61). Prior to 1989 both German states designed strategies to meet the expectations of their respective occupiers in order to convince these power blocs that they had learned the right lessons from the past. The GDR's communist leadership established antifascism as a core state ideology in order to distance itself from the Nazi past. The FRG on the other hand, demonstrated a politics of continuity in that post-war chancellor Konrad Adenauer integrated many of the old elites into the new administration and failed to take up a consistent position on the past (ibid 66). Hence, it was necessary for the Allies and the FRG to attempt to limit the critique against the Nazi system in order to avoid connections between fascism and capitalism. It was also in the interest of the FRG and its allies to maintain capitalism as a buffer between the Soviet Union and Western Europe, despite its connections to fascism and the inclination of the general population to the left. Following the years of SPD-FDP coalition government from 1969 to 1982, Adenauer's Christian Democratic Union returned to power under its new leader Helmut Kohl. West German

Chancellor Helmut Kohl proclaimed in 1983 that there was a “geistig-moralische Wende” in both West German social and political life due to the division of the German population concerning the integration of old Nazi elites into the capitalist system (qtd. Taberner and Cooke 4). Kohl’s agenda was to foster a degree of national pride in order to establish some cohesiveness among German citizens. Kohl’s plan included addressing the FRG’s ostensible tardiness in dealing with the Nazi past and addressing the 1970’s generation’s doubts about their nation, which according to some had weakened the basis for common values and feelings of belonging. While the critical relationship that Germans have with their past is often useful for decreasing nationalism and certain types of xenophobia, for Kohl, the current state of the nation was indeed in a dangerous state of affairs because society was growing ever more complex, heterogeneous and fragmented.

Even before the Wall physically separated sections of Berlin, Eastern and Western Germany had already begun to develop socially, culturally and economically along very different paths, yet its public transit was the city’s venous system that allowed citizens to circulate between both halves. Its abrupt severance instigated and finalized radical, seemingly permanent changes in the nation’s identity. In the years following the Second World War until the construction of the Berlin Wall, the Bahn system continued to function relatively undisturbed despite the official division of Germany into sectors in accordance with the Potsdam conference in 1945. During the period from 1950 to 1961 many *Grenzgänger* used the U-Bahn network to legally cross the border in order to work in the “other” Berlin (Rodden xiv). The city’s public transportation allowed the citizens who suddenly found themselves under communist rule to travel to the Western capitalist sector. In the Western sector of Berlin, these East German citizens benefited from the

uneven exchange rate where a West German Mark was worth much more than an East German Mark. This came to a sudden end on the morning of August 13<sup>th</sup>, 1961 when 17 million people found themselves suddenly trapped behind the Wall. Under Erich Honecker's direction, the infamous 170 kilometer long Berlin Wall had been erected.

The Berlin Wall not only cut off surface access between East and West, but also underground routes to West Berlin, such as the U-Bahn system. During the decade leading up to the construction of the Wall, the U-Bahn had been regarded by many East Germans as an escape hatch into the West. East Germans who had always thought that there would be time to hurriedly pack their bags, hop on the U-Bahn train and head West for a stop or two if they felt they had enough of communism could no longer do so. GDR planners could now count on a stable population of skilled workers. The city and nation were effectively severed with a concrete and razor wire barrier, guarded by soldiers and wrapped in miles of bureaucratic red tape. With this structural division citizens living under the shadow of the Wall began to question who and what defined these new Germanies. The ability to travel between East and West was hindered and the interactions which occur in this public place that had previously been so integral to developing a cohesive culture in the nation became limited and less diverse. While the two nations were already growing apart following 1945, it was the events of 1961 which would seal this division and create the environment necessary for a population to grow into two distinct societies albeit sharing a common past.

The changes to social and economic mobility in West Berlin, as well as issues of national identity and morals, are thematic in Reinhard Hauff's 1988 filmic interpretation of Grips Theater's musical *Linie 1*, which plays entirely on Berlin's U-Bahn system and

its stations. The musical is a both a condemnation of Nazi sympathizers and a lament of those who struggle daily in the torn city in which the U-Bahn network functions as a unique stage to allow a number of issues to be unravelled and addressed. The young protagonist, Sunnie, comes to Berlin from small town West Germany and drifts through the underground U-Bahn network in search of her rock-star boyfriend Johnnie, father to her unborn child, who has invited her to come live with him in Kreuzberg when she could no longer handle living at home. In the film, the above-ground surface of Berlin is depicted as dangerous, under construction and inaccessible. It is polluted and dangerous with frequent car crashes, a place where residents would be well advised to go underground and “Fahr mal wieder U-Bahn!”

In *Linie 1*, the people in U-Bahn system are depicted as a community of diverse citizens who interact and support each other, although economic disparity and the associated social discontent are constant reminders of the fissures in society. On the U-Bahn system, Sunnie encounters a number of characters from a variety of backgrounds who all have an opinion of life in Berlin and the Federal Republic, and many of whom are desperate to talk about the social discontent of the city and the unresolved past. However, this desperation to address both private and public issues in the FRG is not possible in the social climate of the city at that time and Hauff shows how the issues are ignored, avoided and swept under the rug. Businessmen, children, American tourists, middle class people and homeless substance abusers are only a few of the groups portrayed as taking the U-Bahn, creating a microcosm of Berlin in the U-Bahn system complete with all of the Republic’s stereotypes and social problems.

Through the versatile public/private space of the U-Bahn network, the musical addresses many of the social problems in pre-1989 West Berlin that inhibited the development of a cohesive Germany national identity, including reservations about directly confronting the FRG's connections to National Socialism. In one scene, Sunnie falls asleep on the U-Bahn train after narrowly escaping an attack and wakes up to what looks like a flock of old Nazi war widows hovering over her. In this scene, the *Wilmsdorfer Witwen* are dressed in black and 1940s finery, with pearls and fancy feathered hats; they lament over the loss of their Nazi husbands and brothers who fell during the War, all while singing "wie vor 50 Jahren" and applauding the Third Reich for its social programs. The upward direction of the camera and the women's circular stance around Sunnie are redolent of birds, artistically linking them to Germany's national symbol of the eagle, the Bundesadler, the new incarnation of the old Reichsadler. Yet, instead of being presented as noble and proud creatures, their qualities are more reminiscent of vultures, squawking over their prey as they chastise the young Sunnie for surely being a drugged and drunken young Westerner, in their view a symptom of the moral decline of the nation. This interpretation of the Bundesadler offers a critique of 1940s generation that had directly experienced National Socialism and the War, where these women have negatively impacted the development of a new cohesive identity in the Federal Republic by refusing to change and re-evaluate their political values. The *Wilmsdorfer Witwen* were directly involved in the Third Reich and Second World War and are critiqued for their National Socialist support and the failure to re-evaluate their underlying sentimental idealism.

Public transit is a place of physical and social interaction and so its portrayal in cultural texts is often a critique of societal codes and cultural norms. Psychology professor Ying-yi Hong defines culture as networks of shared knowledge. These networks consist of learned routines of thinking, feeling and interacting with other people, as well as a corpus of substantive assertions and ideas about aspects of the world (4) that are often learned through observation and various forms of interaction with others. Defining culture as networks of shared networks of knowledge helps to differentiate culture from a homogenous group of people and prevents conflating culture with racial, ethnic, or national groups, which is especially important when studying Germany. Thus, the *Wilmsdorfer Witwen* become part of the cultural fabric of Hauff's interpretation of West Berlin through shared networks of knowledge and they are one of the reasons that Germany cannot move forward from the events of the Second World War and the Holocaust. While forgetting German National Socialist history would likely encourage xenophobia and racism, staying rooted in the past and applauding the Third Reich, as the *Wilmsdorfer Witwen* do, is also detrimental to the post-war search for a sense of cohesiveness among citizens as well as a re-evaluation of ideology and cultural traditions in Germany.

While *Linie 1* addresses the discontents and divisions of the city such as division of the city and lingering sentiments of National Socialism, more importantly the film focuses on how the U-Bahn system brings people from a variety of backgrounds together to form a heterogeneous, yet supportive community. Despite certain scenes which allude to the violence in the U-Bahn, which are often used to critique the spectre of National Socialism that normalization might bring, much of the film depicts the U-Bahn network

as being a relatively safe place where people interact and build the culture of Berlin through the creation of networks of shared knowledge. Upon Sunnie's arrival in West Berlin at the beginning of the film, the city seems cold and impersonal to this girl from the West German countryside, a place where nobody will help her navigate the U-Bahn system, portraying Simmel's contrast between the small town and the metropolis. However, as she gets to know Berlin and its citizens, Sunnie realizes the community on the U-Bahn, although varied in social structure and economic well-being, is supportive and more empathetic than she first imagined. While Sunnie is initially hesitant to befriend seasoned U-Bahn traveller Maria and small-time dealer Bambi, it is through their friendship that she is able to travel through the maze of tunnels and track down Johnnie. When disaster strikes one of the characters in *Linie 1*, such as when Johnnie turns Sunnie down, or when Mondo's girlfriend, Mücke, kills herself by jumping in front of a train, the community in the Bahn systems supports those who are down on their luck. Because *Linie 1* is set in a time when the social welfare state of West Germany made the island of West Berlin relatively safe, the U-Bahn system is a place for people to come together and support one another as they contribute to shared networks that form the basis of a diverse, cohesive culture.

*Linie 1* illustrates the influence of mobility and transit on social interactions and the development of a cohesive identity. Public transit has not only revolutionized mobility and accessibility of the urban space, but also significantly impacted the ways in which humans interact and react. Charles Baudelaire remarked that “[b]efore the development of buses, railroads, and trams in the nineteenth century, people had never been in situations where they had to look at one another for long minutes or even hours

without speaking to one another” (qtd Benjamin 23). Accordingly, people had to adapt themselves to new situations, particularly in big cities. In these modern metropolises interpersonal relationships became less personal, above all because of contemporary means of public transportation and the social codes they created. Georg Simmel recognized that these new situations and close proximities were not exactly pleasant and he emphasized the dangers of the city where anybody could be an unknown enemy. In “The Metropolis and Mental Life”, Simmel outlines the potential dangers and benefits of existence in the city, where the “modern mind has become more and more calculating.” (13). Simmel emphasizes the social climate of the metropolis in relation to that of the small town, as does director Hauff in *Linie 1* through his protagonist Sunnie. In each, very different text, the close contact of the metropolitans towards one another results in seemingly distanced social relations in an instinct of self-preservation. The Grips Theater song “Du sitzt mir gegenüber” emphasizes the vulnerability and critiques the apathy of people engaging in public transit. However, these U-Bahn travellers are not surrounded by the insular bubbles provided by cars that separate them from their environment, and although unwritten social codes dictate that direct contact with others should be avoided while in transit, one is never truly isolated. *Linie 1* furthers Simmel’s theory that the complexities of the modern metropolis, such as developed public transit, create new social bonds and attitudes.

On one hand, the metropolis tends to indicate weakening of common culture and forms of association. Due to the brevity of contact in urban space, for instance, it is not possible to develop a lasting impression based on unspectacular interactions with others. In these circumstances, self-image and "the sense of filling a position" may be developed

by seeking "the awareness of others" (Farganis 143). Simmel explains it this way. On the other hand, however, Simmel notes that individuals assert their personality in the city by differentiating themselves from others, adopting manners or fashions in order "to appear concentrated and strikingly characteristic" (30). Such individuals are dependent on one another. Where personality exists it is not an isolated entity but also a social entity, one that depends on diverse social interaction. In this way Simmel ties together the individual and the social, showing how each requires the existence of the other. As *Linie 1* demonstrates, urban rail transportation in Berlin becomes an excellent platform for this interdependency, creating a sense of community on the Bahns.

Despite the community building elements depicted in *Linie 1*, the film also represents how many citizens subscribed to a nationalism that is deeply rooted in the emotional attachment to Germanness, a conservative essentialist blood-and-soil definition (*Blut und Boden*) which excludes those without German heritage. This real-world problem is reflected in *Linie 1*, where visibly minority groups such as Turkish people quickly become the target of violence and discrimination on the U-Bahn. As will be seen in chapter 3 of this thesis, this portrayal of violence on the U-Bahn directed towards visible minorities leads to their mass departure from the city's public transportation. These groups then take their refuge in privatized mobility, such as privately owned vehicles, and are thus removed from the discourse of culture in the city. Dramatization of this actual social problem recurs in many cultural texts such as *Linie 1*. During the *Wilmsdorfer Witwen* song the widows sing "Berlin erstinkt von Turken" and continue to sing about cleansing the city and as they menacingly chase a man of Turkish appearance along the U-Bahn car. They only allow the man to leave when he pulls back

his large moustache to reveal a trimmer, more German styled moustache, reminiscent of Hitler. This scene illustrates the conservative view of German national identity that festered even in liberal West Berlin. It suggests that those of the older generation who refused to re-evaluate their National Socialist ideals believe that there is no room for cultural diversity in the city or for collective identity.

These lingering sentiments of National Socialism remained during the period from 1961 to 1989, when the restrictions imposed on mobility by the Berlin Wall inhibited interactions of the German population, separating the city and nation physically and emotionally. While it was the border of the East which was sealed off, the Western sector was also influenced by these borders. West Berlin was somewhat isolated from cultural and social developments in the Federal Republic. These physical divisions impeded physical movement throughout Germany and the barriers blocked the opportunity for Germany's citizens to engage and interact with each other. Had leftist activists in both East and West Germany been able to communicate during this period, they may have been able to do more political work in addressing conservative views of national identity as well as the lingering sentiments of National Socialism.

These sentiments are addressed in Chlor Aridjis' *Book of Clouds*, in which the elements of the divided city caused by the difficulty of partition are reminders of the unaddressed elements of history and national identity allowed to fester during the time of separation. U-Bahn stations function as such memory sites; the physical division of the city's urban rail transportation, along with the severing of the city following 1961, was not an easy task as many of the lines meandered from the Eastern Sector to Western Sector, passing under the sealed and guarded border. The S-Bahn became an Eastern

operation whereas the U-Bahn was run by the West. At certain sections along the U6 and U8 as the U-Bahn went from one Western station to the next, it would pass underneath the Eastern territory and travel by the eerie abandoned stations, which had been left almost exactly as they had been on the night the Wall was built, even down to the litter and fading advertisements. These abandoned facilities became Berlin's infamous *Geisterbahnhöfe* -Ghost Stations- as the West Berliners called them, and went untouched for almost 25 years (Hardy 38).

While the *Geisterbahnhöfe* of Berlin mirrored the empty spaces of the physical city, such as the empty city centre of Potsdamer Platz and its corresponding defunct U-Bahn station, they are also symbolic of the schisms created in the German national identity. The empty physical spaces of the *Geisterbahnhöfe*, which resulted from denied access to East U-Bahn stations following the construction of the Wall, became a legend and part of the cultural fabric in West Berlin. These stations had become so mythical that they became part of the cultural heritage of the West Berlin and many short films, documentaries and articles had been written on the subject. The *Geisterbahnhöfe* are intermittently referenced in other cultural works of the city which deal with unification themes in order to emphasize the incompleteness of West Berlin and the German identity.

*Geisterbahnhöfe* play in Chloe Aridjis' 2003 novel *Book of Clouds*, where these stations and other physical reminders of Berlin's past symbolize the unresolved issues and schisms in Berlin's community created by nearly thirty years of separation. The novel describes many of the reminders of Berlin's past, and the protagonist Tatiana becomes particularly interested in physical manifestations of Berlin's collective memory. Tatiana arrived in Berlin on a scholarship in the year 2002, 16 years after vacationing in

West Berlin with her family. In the novel, the Jewish Mexican protagonist often reflects on the spaces of the city, such as the *Geisterbahnhöfe*, which still carry significant historical baggage for Berlin:

The stations became ghosts at places where the city was not neatly split and Western trains had to cross sections of the East in order to continue their journey to other destinations in the West. And so it was, Doktor Weiss explained, that this dimly lit Netherworld, frozen in time for nearly thirty years, was created. Each ghost station had its own somber mood and idiosyncrasies, walled-up exits and entrances, and sealed corridors (as if life could be immured), but there were a few common features: rampant dilapidation (mountains of bricks, dripping ceilings, peeling plaster), fluorescent bulbs that cast a meager light and the ubiquitous presence of armed men, green-clothed sentinels watching over a place no one wanted to enter but most wanted to leave. (76-77)

One could expand upon Tatiana's observation in that it was not only the physical stations which were frozen in time, but the state of the German national identity which was also preserved during this period of division. The *Geisterbahnhöfe* were therefore symbolic of Germany's unresolved issues, issues which could not be addressed until the city and country were able to examine their underlying beliefs and morals collectively. These physical reminders were symbolic of the fractures developing in Berlin's community through lingering sentiments of National Socialism.

In West Berlin, the *Geisterbahnhöfe* came to represent the sentiments of restriction and fragmentation attached to both the physical and emotional realms, and like the thoughts of the protagonists of *Linie 1*, these sentiments also urgently needed to be addressed. In cultural work, the U-Bahn system often acts as a physical reminder of the city's history that ghosts of the past haunt. Many pre-1989 works address the sense of physical and emotional restriction imposed by the spectre of National Socialism. These sentiments of restriction were shared by both West and East Berliners as not only was the

Allied sector walled in, the German Democratic Republic was also walled out of the capitalist world and the Third Reich separated.

This sense of overwhelming control and limitation is thematized in *Book of Clouds*. During a family trip to West Berlin in August of 1986 the young protagonist describes the restrictive presence of the Wall and remarks that “[n]o matter where you went –east, west, north, south –before long you hit against the intractable curtain of cement and were able to go no further” (Aridjis 2). Here, Tatiana references the physical limitations caused by the Wall and the associated restrictions on mobility, but her description of her childhood visit to Berlin also alludes to emotional restrictions. Not only was the mobility of Berliners denied by this physical manifestation of the Iron Curtain, but so was the free movement of those visiting West Berlin.

The U-Bahn network, along with other physical structures in Berlin, such as the Reichstag or the Wasserturm, are often represented in cultural texts such as *Book of Clouds* as reminders to collective German memory. The texts comment on the fear that spectres from the past thought to have been banished when Germany was divided will be set free by unification (Mertes et al. 303). These memories make ghostly appearances in the city’s dark places in works such as Yadé Karas 2003 novel *Selam, Berlin* and Aridjis’ *Book of Clouds*. In both works, apparitions of Hitler are seen travelling on the U-Bahn; in Kara’s novel he is present post-1989 and in *Book of Clouds* the manifestation of Hitler disguised as an old woman is present pre-1989. While Tatiana and her family return from a protest against the Berlin Wall, they squeeze into a U-Bahn car on the U2 at Gleisdreieck with hundreds of other people. The peaceful protest in which Tatiana and her family took part appears to have conjured up the image of the Führer in the

imagination of the young protagonist, as if the protest was a baby-step towards the reconciliation of the two city halves that was necessary to address the skeletons in its communal closet. Tatiana describes the circumstances where she encounters Hitler on the U-Bahn:

My entire family stayed rooted like metal poles on the U-Bahn while I stood one foot away from Hitler with not a witness in sight. To my great surprise, *not a single person* seemed to notice the old woman in the head scarf. All these birds were simply too caught up in their feather ruffling and gregarious squawking to pay much attention to their fellow passengers, especially those seated below eye level, on a different perch. But how could no one else notice the forehead and the eyes and the shaded patch between nose and mouth, when the combination of these features seemed so glaringly, so obscenely, real and factual and present? (7)

Reminiscent of the *Wilmerdorfer Witwen* in *Linie 1*, the novel makes a reference to birds and uses the national symbol of the Bundesadler to comment on the state of the German national identity in Berlin pre-1990, alluding to the fear that unification may bring with it nationalism and a resurgence of far-right ideals. This scene in the novel criticises citizens too concerned with their own business to notice the elephant in the room. It is significant that this vision of Hitler appears after Tatiana and her family protest the Berlin Wall, as in much film and literature it is only after unification that the problem of the collective German national identity is truly addressed. Skilfully, the novel comments on the lack of reflection on German national identity before unification and uses the eyes of the young Jewish protagonist to frame the current social problems through a lens of Berlin's past. Tatiana even remarks on the presence of Germany's past in its historical structures, such as the U-Bahn or Holocaust Memorial, and she remarks that "[t]wenty years later, the ghouls I had seen on the U-Bahn continue to linger, only in a new dimension. If they'd stuck around that long there was no reason to think they

would leave now. No, they were here to stay, bound to Berlin for an eternity” (118). The omnipresence of these historical figures in Berlin, as well as places of significance in cultural texts of the city, serve as segue into Berlin’s present and future social climate.

In *Book of Clouds*, Tatiana’s vision of Hitler exiting the U-Bahn at Sophie-Charlotte-Platz station in the heart of Charlottenburg allegorizes the fear of a far-right resurgence instigated by lingering conservative sentiments amplified by impending unification. Charlottenburg is home to certain conservative neighbourhoods, reminiscent of Wilmersdorf and the *Wilmersdorfer Witwen*, and since 1995 Charlottenburg has been the location of the Germany’s first and only Jewish high school in five decades (Rodden 16). Perhaps the Hitler apparition leaves the U-Bahn at Sophie-Charlotte-Platz due to its proximity to the Jewish High School in order to reference the Holocaust and its daily presence in the lives of Germans today or to allude to the fear that unification will set free the ghosts of the past that were thought to have been banished years before.

The cultural texts studied in this chapter address important themes in pre-unification Germany, highlighting the significance of Berlin’s public transportation system, notably the famous U-Bahn network, as a platform for cultural development in West Berlin. The U-Bahn system has long been an allegory for the social climate of the city and its division reflected the division of a nation and its people. Issues that arose in the divided Berlin underground were those were not addressed on the surface, and, despite the efforts of some residents, festered until official unification. The U-Bahn system also served as symbol of hope for the future of Berlin, and although division of the city was growing following the separation of Germany and Berlin, the senate of West Berlin produced the first version of what became known as the 200 km Plan in 1955. The

200 km Plan was based on the assumption that there would one day be a single, unified transport network (Hardy 36). Although the city's infrastructure grew independently during its nearly half-century of division, this plan for the severed U-Bahn system stood for the hope that the city and nation would one day be able to grow together in a cohesive, heterogeneous community. The U-Bahn network as reference in cultural works of the city provides a unique perspective into the past and prospective future of Berlin, where memory and expectation allow the viewer an opportunity to begin to decipher this urban and national space.

## Chapter 3

### “Fahr mal wieder U-Bahn!”

#### Representations of mobility surrounding Unification

While the political unification of the two Germanies was officially celebrated on October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1990, only one short year after the momentous fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the social and geographical unification of the nation will take much longer and cannot be neatly pinned to a simple anniversary. Film and literature set in Berlin during the 1990s explore the social and geographical disunity of the city and nation, raising questions of mobility and accessibility. As I have argued in Chapter 2 of this work, historically any changes to this system are significant in reading the current social, political and economic climate of the city because they require more extensive planning and capital to alter or to expand the network. Furthermore, increased access to transit and

increased mobility encourage a greater network of interactions and shared cultural knowledge, whereas more circumscribed mobility encourages identity and culture that is strongly linked with tradition and geographical location. Because the Bahn systems are a unique platform from which to explore the development of Berlin's and Germany's sense of national identity and culture, cultural texts set in Berlin often use urban rail transit as a setting to articulate and interpret actual social developments and use these depictions to develop a critical view of Berlin's culture and society.

As previously examined, the city's rail transit is often presented in cultural texts as a microcosm for Berlin in order to establish a unique perspective on the city and an important window into the social and cultural climate of not only a city, but a nation undergoing a crisis of identity. The transformations which the U-Bahn and S-Bahn system have experienced are indicative of greater shifts in the city and nation which are constantly changing and being redefined. In his history of rail urban transit in Berlin, *Das Berliner U- und S-Bahnnetz: Eine Geschichte in Streckenplänen*, Alfred Gottwaldt elaborates on the importance of the Bahns in Berlin as an indicator of the city and country's current political, economic and social state. The Senior Curator of Railways at the Berlin Museum of Transportation writes:

Die Entwicklung der Verkehrsmittel in der deutschen Hauptstadt ist ein getreues Spiegelbild der Geschichte unseres Landes. Wachstum und Zerstörung sind vor allem in den Plänen aus den Jahren 1945, 1961 und 1989 deutlich sichtbar. Aber auch die zahlreichen Umbenennungen der Bahnhöfe bezeugen den Gang der Zeit, sind politische Heimatkunde in der Landkarte. Diese einzelnen Namensänderungen sind es neben den Eröffnungsdaten von neuen Strecken, die mitunter bei nicht genau bezeichneten „Netzspinne“ eine Bestimmung des Entstehungsjahres ermöglichen [*sic*]. (4)

Gottwaldt here explains that political and social changes are reflected in renaming the various stops and stations, where the history of certain stations creates a socio-political timeline for the city and the country. Many examples attest to the unique history of Berlin as well the ideological influences on the city's collective consciousness. As mentioned in relation to earlier periods, changing street names exemplify this phenomenon. Reichskanzlerplatz on the U2 line was named Adolf-Hitler-Platz in 1933, and today's Bergstrasse on the U7 line was called Karl-Marx-Strasse in 1946.

Similarly, as Gottwaldt mentions, changes to the Bahns and their stations also reflect and shape changes to the city's political and cultural state in the period following unification. Post-1989, two cities were rather suddenly unified after over 40 years of existing as separate entities. Berlin's avenues of transportation became not only a way to access different sectors of the city, but also a platform for the exchange of concepts and the construction of culture through shared knowledge. The unification of the two cities as exemplified in the reconnection of public transit instigated a shift in values following the fall of the Wall and the political unification of Germany. This reconnection is depicted in part through the ensuing interactions of Eastern and Western Germans, interactions in which rail transport plays an important role in creating common ground and networks of knowledge.

In Germany's case, the creation of culture through shared networks of knowledge, as in Hong's definition, is important to consider in relation to mobility and accessibility of the urban space of Berlin. Hong's concept emphasizes that the causal potential of culture does not reside in ethnic groups, although these types of groups are carriers and agents of cultures. The causal potential resides in the activation of shared cultural

knowledge, which brings about various behavioral consequences. This definition is significant because it resists understanding culture as deep-rooted essences of groups and thereby reduces the risk of “essentializing” them (5). Hong’s definition is crucial when one considers Mark Landler and Michael Barbaro’s 2006 inquiry into the failure of the Wal-Mart shopping centers, which show mobility and identity to be significant factors in the widespread failure of the American conglomerate in Germany. In their analysis Landler and Barbaro reported that Germans tend to be unwilling to relocate for work (3). Shigehiro Oishi and Jason Kisling support Landler and Barbaro’s findings and report that because of this geographical stability, Germans tend to develop identities which are more deeply rooted in their culture and environment rather than individual traits (229). Therefore, the network of interactions and thus shared knowledge of the average pre-1989 Berliner may be less expansive due to fewer opportunities to interact with groups outside of their existing networks. And so, they are more likely to identify with a specific area (i.e. their neighborhood) rather than specific individual personality traits (i.e. good at maths, artistic etc.) due to less residential mobility than other studied groups. While this applies to West Berlin due to its “Kietz” quality, it also relates to residents who lived in East Berlin, where mobility was extremely limited and personal identities were deeply connected with physical location and relatively static networks of friends and acquaintances supported by the GDR and its programs.

Oishi and Kisling’s predictions of cultural development in light of Landler and Barbaro’s findings can be seen in film and literature set on both sides of the Wall before November 1989 as well as in the months following the fall of the Wall. Cultural works set in pre-1989 East Berlin tend to emphasize a lack of mobility, such as the 1999 film

*Sonnenallee* by director Leander Haußman, which takes place entirely in the Eastern city block of Berlin where *Sonnenallee* intersects with the Wall. In this film, we see that the protagonists, a group of young adults who grew up in the area, are represented as being strongly linked to their community, not only through the Communist programs of the GDR, but also through bonds created through restrictions on mobility. The entire film is set in this block of *Sonnenallee*, with only a few people entering or leaving; the only mobile characters are West tourists on charter buses and smugglers who sell West contraband at inflated prices to GDR citizens. In the film, these limited interactions with western capitalist culture intersect with GDR values to create a unique identity and local culture in this neighborhood. People long to leave and experience life on the other side of the Wall, but never do so because of the relationships and community they cannot leave behind since these external elements have become such an integral part of their identities. Even when presented with the possibility of escaping the GDR after finding a lost West German passport, Micha's mother identifies so strongly with her community and relationships that even the allure of Western goods cannot draw her away. In accordance with Oishi and Kisling's notions, due to the limited residential mobility in the East as depicted in the film, where there seems to be no public transit for the East Germans, the characters display a strong association and identification with their "Kietz." Micha describes this period of his life as the "schönste Zeit [s]eines Lebens."

*Sonnenallee*, along with other films such as *Goodbye, Lenin!* contribute to the growing collection of texts belonging to the "Ostalgie" genre. As the phenomenon of Ostalgie grows, so does the question of whether it is appropriate to be sentimental about life under a regime that persecuted those who disagreed with its ideology and shot those

who tried to escape. While representations of life in the GDR are becoming part of the cultural fabric of Germany today, this sense of nostalgia for the GDR seems to omit certain key parts of the state's history, such as the restrictions in ideology, cultural development and freedom of movement. Berlin's mayor, Klaus Wowereit, emphasized that Germans "really need to be careful that the GDR does not achieve cult status" (as qtd in Murphy). While an objective narrative of history does not exist and people certainly have happy memories from everyday life in the GDR and even under the Nazis, this form of nostalgia seems to ignore the oppression of life under these regimes and, somehow, history is being re-written through these fictional texts. Films such as *Sonnenallee* and *Goodbye, Lenin!* play an important role in the rewriting of history, and, central to this thesis, these works minimize the sense of restriction imposed by the GDR government and the Stasi.

While mobility in East Germany was restricted by governmental policies, on the other side of the divide West Berlin was an island within the socialist German Democratic Republic for more than 40 years, where movement was also limited (but to a lesser extent) for the West German. Beginning from the dawn of the multinational occupation of Germany in 1945, the borders around the western island grew tighter and tighter with the onset of the Cold War. Over the course of nearly two decades the remaining infrastructure was cut back, foreshadowing more permanent division. Consequently, any plans for new developments in West Berlin assumed the borders to be final, especially after the building of the Wall in 1961. The borders stood firm for over twenty years, where escape to the Western half became a daring and dangerous pursuit that is often thematized in post-1990 Wende films.

Although in the short period leading up to the fall of the Wall and official unification these borders became more porous, the effects that they imposed on Berlin's services and structures were significant. Manfred Nussbaumer commented on the drastic changes that occurred to the infrastructure of the city of Berlin following unification during his presentation at the American Society of Civil Engineers 1998 Geo-Congress. In his presentation, Nussbaumer elaborated on a variety of building programs in Berlin that drastically affected mobility and accessibility, and by association, according to Hong as well as Oishi and Kisling's theories, the development of a united German national identity and culture. According to Nussbaumer, following 1990, the total volume of excavated soil exceeded six million cubic meters from the open excavation sites during the construction of business centers, underground stations and tunnels for railways, underground and car traffic (333). These numbers grant a material conception of the massive construction projects in Berlin that would change the ways citizens moved about and interacted with the city and each other. While Nussbaumer's focus was on the structural challenges Berlin's engineers faced, he also alluded to the resulting social and physical changes. Simply put, at the end of over 40 years of separate development the two Berlins had to be combined in ways that included more problems than engineers alone could solve. Thus, the structural changes in the city symbolized the evolution of the sentiments surrounding German national identity.

The unification of the city called for the implementation of a huge construction program to connect the existing infrastructure, to establish a new infrastructure catering to present and future needs, and to develop the former center of Berlin, mainly Potsdamer Platz, which had in parts been left untouched since the end of the Second World War.

Any of these projects, such as the re-linking of many U-Bahn lines, posed a variety of problems because of different standards in the West and the East, and the Western norm was often favored over that of the East for economic reasons. Contrary to popular belief, there was no voltage difference on the U-Bahn in East and West Berlin, but there was a polarity difference on the small profile lines, which was changed from positive to negative on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1977 and was eventually reversed back to positive between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> of October 1993 (Hardy 5). The belief in the urban legend that there were different voltages on the Bahns highlights the sentiments of extreme separation felt by West and East Germans; the actual minor polarity change was a relatively minor problem. The interchangeability of trains was also problematic as neither the former East nor West classes of train ran on the lines of the other system without considerable alteration. As there were fewer of the eastern class G trains, it was decided to build in western standards (ibid 65), and this standardization of the western model over the eastern is also symbolic for the shift in values in the country, suggesting that unification took place primarily on Western terms physically, politically and culturally. The civil engineer Nussbaumer also mentions the political changes occurring in Germany post-1989, when the Bundestag decided to relocate parliament back to Berlin, once again making the city the capital of Germany (333). This more centralized location suggests a unified nation, yet the numerous changes, both political and physical alterations to the city's infrastructure, had a profound effect on mobility in the urban space of Berlin and the development of identity in the united city.

While the characters presented in the film *Sonnenallee* have developed a deep connection with their community and neighborhood, largely through circumscribed

residential mobility, we see a different behavior in many characters of cultural works dealing with the city post-1989, where movement becomes a major theme. Tom Tykwer's 1998 international sensation *Lola rennt* (*Run Lola Run*) is a classic example of cultural text set after unification which portrays mobility across the entire city of Berlin. The film focuses on Lola's three different runs in the attempt to find 100,000 DM in 20 minutes to save her boyfriend Manni's life. *Lola rennt* plays with the "what-if's" of everyday life, as each of Lola's three runs originates with the same distressed phone call from Manni, yet develops differently and has an altered outcome. Throughout each run, the many interactions Lola has with other Berlin citizens affect them in diverse ways and are illustrated through a series of still frames in a flash-forward sequence showing how their lives develop after they bump into Lola. These interactions all have causal potential qualities and illustrate how Hong's networks-of-knowledge approach to the development of culture is strongly linked with mobility – in order to create networks of knowledge, there must be physical and social interaction brought on by mobility and accessibility of different spaces. In addition to the interpersonal interactions which occur in these public/private centers of mobility, the physical U-Bahn system itself plays an important role in the development of the film's plot as well as acting as a unique timing device for each of Lola's runs. It is because Lola's scooter is stolen that she misses the pick-up time and Manni then decides to take the U-Bahn to his destination to drop off the cash from a job he did for his criminal boss. On the Bahn, Manni, a petty criminal trying to complete a big job in order to impress his mobster boss, helps a blind man who stumbles as the train lurches into motion, but in a novice blunder he leaves the bag of cash unattended on the U-Bahn seat. As the ticket controllers board the train, Manni attempts to make a

smooth escape, as he did not buy a ticket, but then forgets the bag of cash. Realizing his blunder too late, he turns back just as the doors close and the last thing he sees is a homeless man pick up the bag. These exchanges, as well the mix of class and culture on the train, created the interactions necessary for the plot to develop. After its initial use as a stage to jump-start the plot of this thriller film, the U-Bahn system then becomes a type of stopwatch for Lola's runs. Because of Lola's first interaction with a punk and his dog in the staircase of her family apartment building in every run, Lola's run is either ahead, behind or in sync with the U-Bahn schedule, which is marked when she runs by the train tracks as the yellow Bahn is making its way around a curve in the track. This timing affects how and who she interacts with, and these few seconds difference in her runs result in very different outcomes. Notably, it is Lola's third and final run that seems to synchronize best with the bright yellow U-Bahn, and the results of this run are the most desirable: with Manni locating the homeless man with the bag of cash and Lola simultaneously winning 100,000 DM in a casino, suggesting that being synchronized with the city's transit seems to bring about the most desirable results for everyone involved in the resultant mobility.

Cultural works show how different levels of mobility can influence the development of community and culture in Berlin. The interactions portrayed in *Lola rennt* lack the deep-rooted sense of community seen in *Sonnenallee*, where everyone in the film seemed to know everyone else. In *Lola rennt*, the majority of the interactions are shallow and with strangers. Even Lola's relationship with her mother and father are very superficial. Her family unit is divided by technology and self-centered individualism where the family spends most of their time apart. Lola's father, who works in a bank, is

involved with another woman and knows nothing about Lola's life, and her mother appears equally clueless. The mobility of life in the unified Berlin has allowed each individual family member to develop around his or her own personality traits and interests, rather than identify as member of a family or community. The type of community feel is very different from films set before unification such as *Linie 1* in the West or *Sonnenallee* in the East. The type of cultural and personal development presented in *Lola rennt* has caused significant rifts in their relationships and community. Lola's own identity and sense of culture is very westernized and modern, illustrated by her sense of style and the way she interacts with the urban space. It seems that Hong's networks-of-knowledge approach creates more links in the mobile Western society that is depicted in *Lola rennt* than that circumscribed, yet deep networks depicted in *Sonnenallee*. Mobility functions more as Oishi and Kisling predict; residential mobility is related to lower levels of pro-community action and decreased identity as a community resident (229). These two films show the effects of mobility on community and cultural development at opposite ends of the spectrum, where at one end, circumscribed mobility leads to strong ties with a stable community; at the other end of the scale frenetic mobility expresses severed family and community units.

Another example of a cultural text that highlights the effects of increased mobility post-unification is Yadé Kara's 2004 Western-based Wende Roman *Selam Berlin*, in which the protagonist Hasan "Hansi" Kazan's serial migration between his birthplace West Berlin and his parents' native Istanbul creates a dichotomy between deep-rooted blood-and-soil views of culture and Hong's networks-of-knowledge. Having grown up between two worlds, the 19-year old Hasan is independent and an

amalgamation of two distinct cultures. Unlike the youth who lives on the East side of the Wall visible from the window at his parents' flat in Berlin, such as those depicted in *Sonnenallee*, the Western and mobile Hasan focuses more on his individual traits and life experiences to develop his identity rather than geographical location. Hasan recognizes himself as a Berliner, speaks German just as well as any other and identifies closely with the city and its unique culture. However, this conservative blood-and-soil ideology (*Blut und Boden*) focuses on descent (blood) and homeland/Heimat (soil) and is deeply rooted in extreme nationalism and had been used by the Nazis, where those who do not meet these strict criteria are considered to be outsiders of culture and society. Kara uses the novel to bring to light that not everyone consciously accepts the same views of culture proposed by Hong, however valid it may be, and *Selam Berlin* provides many fictional scenarios where a limited blood-and-soil definition of culture creates dangerous divides in the fractured city's identity.

Kara uses the backdrop of the celebration of political unification and the associated freedom of movement in order to conceptualize the changing climate and sense of personal and national identity of New Berlin citizens and Germany following the fall of the Wall and unification. The latter events resulted in an economic recession, and violence against foreigners was reported with alarming frequency from the East *Länder*, and attacks made headlines in the West as well, leading Germans to fear a return to German nationalism (Mertes et al. 303). In *Selam Berlin*, as well as other post-1990 texts such as Andreas Kleinart's film *Wege in die Nacht*, the U-Bahn and the S-Bahn systems become locations for the clash of class and cultures. These cultural artifacts illustrate the beginning of the difficult and lengthy process of social unification in a country and city

that, like Hasan's parents in *Selam Berlin*, are officially joined but having difficulties peacefully co-existing and forgiving the other half's indiscretions, let alone working together to forge a new amalgamated self. Following the collapse of the Iron Curtain, the characters of Turkish descent, such as Hasan and Leyla, who were born in Berlin and are bilingual, are oppressed in their city. The violence they encounter on the U-Bahn network seems to only become more frequent and severe throughout the year as the plot advances towards the country's official unification. The change in the city's demographics for both former populations seemingly resulted in an impulsive reaction of intolerance and paranoia to the uneasy sentiments surrounding unification, largely brought on by fear of the "other" and the Stranger conceptualized by Simmel (28-29).

Hasan remarks upon the changing social climate following the fall of the Wall during his first U-Bahn ride shortly after returning to Berlin from Istanbul after having seen the events on television. He remarks: "Ich kam mir plötzlich so fremd vor in der Berliner U-Bahn, mit der ich praktisch aufgewachsen war. Ich kannte jeden Bahnhof, jede Brücke und jedes Kurvengeräusch. Ich hatte mir sogar den [*sic*] Berliner U-Bahn ins Gehirn tätowiert. Und trotzdem kam ich mir zwischen diesen Ostleuten so fremd vor" (21). For the first time Hasan sees himself as outsider in his hometown although nothing about him personally has really changed thus far. Hasan's identity is not shaped by essence, but through interactive practices. Where the Berlin-milieu has transformed it has elicited a change in Hasan and every other citizen about what it means to be German in the unified country, a theme reiterated in the text as Hasan struggles with his identity. His first experience on the U-Bahn system following unification, among many other examples in Kara's text, shows how increased mobility and interactions among groups of

people who share different cultural knowledge influence both personal and national sense of identity and culture. Furthermore, as Oishi and Kisling's work predicts, the increase in mobility also elicited a change in sense of community and group membership where individuals began to identify more heavily with their individual characteristics and personality traits. Here, we can see a contradiction in the way mobility affects the development of culture and collective identity. Mobility can either provide the opportunity to blend cultures--where increased mobility can lead to greater shared networks of knowledge--or expose the fictional commuter to the dangers that a sense of German normalization might bring.

*Selam Berlin* depicts various perspectives shaped by environment and interactive practices in order to elaborate on the complex theme of national identity and culture in Berlin. Protagonist Berliner Hasan is often cast as an outsider in the city by virtue of his familial origins. The dichotomy between insider and outsider for Hasan may appear to be only skin-deep, but he struggles between his own feelings of being German and the projection of those who believe in ethnic culture. This becomes especially evident in his search for a room in the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter. When Hasan speaks with a landlady on the phone, she does not realize he is of Turkish descent due to his flawless native German and familiarity with German culture and traditions as well as a few conscious omissions regarding his full name. However, later when Hasan goes to see the room, it becomes apparent that the landlady believes in a traditional definition of culture that essentializes ethnic groups based on stereotypes and thereby creates dangerous fractures in the social fabric of the city. Upon laying eyes on Hasan, she insists on knowing his heritage and Hasan maintains that he is "Aus Berlin!", "Aus Kreuzberg" and that he is a true

“Berliner”(188-89). The dialogue only deteriorates as both the landlady and Hasan become increasingly impatient and hostile. Eventually, the landlady states that the room has already been rented out, even though they had spoken on the phone less than an hour before. The encounter has the effect of marginalizing Hasan and casting him as an outsider in the landlady’s normalized view of Berlin.

*Selam Berlin* and *Sonnenallee* both illustrate Hong’s notion of networks of shared knowledge, where the former emphasizes expansive mobility and the latter circumscribed mobility. *Selam Berlin* highlights the development of a national identity and culture through movement and mobility, whereas in *Sonnenallee*, the culture is defined by the homogeneous group of East/ern Germans and therefore is rather less diverse due the impositions of circumscribed mobility. Cultural works indicate that interpersonal interactions and networks of shared knowledge are less developed and varied in the East than in the West, where at least privileged groups have access to mobility and variety of groups different from their own. Oishi and Kisling write that non-movers, like the East/ern Germans in *Sonnenallee*, feel more positive when their upbringing and group memberships are accurately perceived, but not their personal selves, since this perspective brings out their sense of community (229). Furthermore, they indicate that residential mobility is related to lower levels of pro-community action, and that this link is mediated by the lack of interdependence among residents, decreased importance of reputation, and decreased identity as a community resident.

These texts present mobility and community as interdependent; the greater the mobility the more varied the community, but as Simmel notes with larger communities, such as the metropolis, the inner unity of the group tends to disintegrate. While this

relationship between mobility and community is evident in works such as *Selam Berlin*, this theme becomes increasingly important when studying cultural texts set in the 2000s, such as the *Achtung Berlin* Film Festival works, which will be considered in the fourth chapter of this work. In these texts, mobility is frequent and privatized, creating a disconnect between self and society as well as a separation, notably of minority groups that are targets for violence in public places, from the development of culture in the city.

To return briefly to *Selam Berlin*, although Hasan relates to being both Turkish and German, his identity is not largely based on his geographical location nor is he bound by any interpersonal relations, a state of affairs that is a result of his mobile youth. His family and friends are relatively dynamic, entering and exiting the story and leaving a variety of impressions on the young protagonist who, like Benjamin's *Flaneur*, moves across the urban space and observes its happenings. Hasan's identity and sense of community is largely based on his experiences and the knowledge gathered from his interactions. The fall of the Wall allowed for new interactions to occur through increased space in and means by which to move. Confrontations with violence as well as interactions with eastern Germans, among other new situations, present Hasan with different perspectives on national and personal identity. In the new Berlin, his identity and culture are constantly questioned due to his physical appearance as he moves about the city. Hasan experiences the city, but the collective city also experiences Hasan. His identity and sense of culture are shaped by his interactions in the city and he influences the collective identity of the new city.

With the fall of the Wall as a backdrop, film and literature show how many distinct cultures and ways of defining oneself came into direct contact with one another

and began the process of establishing a new unified but nonetheless heterogeneous German identity and culture. Theorist Stuart Taberner asserts that historically, “a ‘normal’ Germany [...] is to look to the better parts of its past to nourish a harmonious community on the basis of cultural and ethnic homogeneity” (1). However, in view of Germany’s changing ethnic demographic, Taberner continues on to argue that in contrast to 1990’s normalization, united Germany must search for a different source on which to develop its sense of self (1). This identity may best be conceptualized through interactive practices along the lines of Hong’s notion of networks of shared knowledge such as those offered on the U- and S-Bahn systems. This type of normalization is based on a multi-cultural society and constitutional patriotism and offers many possibilities for a new, cohesive nation.

The portrayal of public transportation in film and literature engenders interactions between the city’s inhabitants that point to such a source. Herein lies potential for creation of culture through Hong’s theory rather than the normalized definition of culture critiqued by Taberner. Whether the interactions are positive or negative, a transfer of knowledge occurs that shapes and defines the collective identity of the city and nation. In 1998 Martin Walser lamented that the institutionalization and exploitation of the Holocaust in the Federal Republic had made it impossible for Germans to see themselves, and to be seen from the outside, as “ein normales Volk, eine gewöhnliche Gesellschaft” (qtd Taberner and Finlay 1). Furthermore, Walser remarked that nearly ten years after unification, which repaired the most tangible consequence of Nazism, the nation still could not grow together because it lacked an adhesive patriotic feeling and no one was really sure what it meant to be German. However, unlike Walser, who suggests a nation

based on nationalism and a normalized identity, Taberner constructively suggests that the nation must look forward, and not to the past, to create the foundations for its new identity. The question became how and by whom this new identity should be forged, and the U- and S-Bahn systems are likely locations, as in film and literature they portray the social interactions needed for the construction of culture through networked knowledge and practices.

The fall of the Wall inspired some hopes of an optimistic future for Germans on which to build their sense of national identity, instead of basing this identity on sentiments rooted deeply in the past. Yet, while movement was ostensibly unlimited following unification and the nation was once again politically united, the Berlin milieu seemed to become an ever more hostile and dangerous environment, fracturing at the seams and awakening memories of Simmel's concept of the unknown enemy. Cultural works about the city suggest that unification allowed for the resurgence of National Socialist sentiments. Many cultural works deal with the immediate consequences of unification, such as xenophobia and violence, which become normalized and unremarkable in public places and spaces of interpersonal interactions such as the Bahn system in Berlin in the years following unification. In *Selam Berlin*, three of the young protagonists of Turkish descent are attacked on the U-Bahn following November 1989. Hasan's half-German cousin, Leyla, is attacked on Linie 1 by a "Fascho-Rocker" who lights her hair on fire while the U-Bahn is in a tunnel and then chases her down while she tries to escape (Kara 101). Hasan himself remarks on Leyla's limited cultural Turkishness, yet she still falls victim to essential blood-and-soil type definitions of culture and national identity because of her apparent ethnicity. In the same novel,

Hasan's friend Kazim, a taxi driver, is brutally attacked by a mob of soccer hooligans at the U-Bahnhof Adenauerplatz while on his way to visit Hasan. Ironically, the transnationally disposed Kazim has just sold selling his Mercedes taxi in preparation for his move to Great Britain. There, he planned to begin a new life with his Indian girlfriend Sukjeet, who lives in London and speaks English like the Queen (341). Other characters, such as the half-Hungarian half-Iraqi apple of Hasan's eye, Cora, who fled from East to West Berlin, and Erik, Hasan's half-brother, give hope for a future multicultural Berlin where people of different groups can exist together peacefully and thus, create a rich multicultural society.

Yet, in *Selam Berlin*, the U-Bahn network is portrayed as a place of danger and violence in the supposedly unified city, in which Hasan himself only narrowly misses being attacked by the same group of soccer fans as Kazim while riding the U-Bahn only hours earlier. The sense of danger and oppression is so strong that Hasan sees the aforementioned vision of Hitler in the U-Bahn shortly before Kazim is attacked. Hasan describes that "mir gegenüber stand Adolf Hitler oder jemand, der ihm ähnlich sein wollte. Ein kleiner Mann mit tailliertem Ledermäntelchen, braunen Augen, Bärtchen..." (333). As he sees this vision, soccer fans are piling into the U-Bahn train and he can almost imagine them chanting "Heil, Heil, Heil" as the Bahn approaches U-Bahnhof Zoo. While Hasan is fortunate enough to escape injury, Kazim is beaten into a coma. The premonition of Hitler that Hasan sees on the Bahn, much like the one that Tatiana sees in *Book of Clouds*, is a manifestation of the dark history which still clouds Berlin's underground and continues to haunt German collective consciousness. Cultural works

highlight the xenophobia and racism emerging in places of public interaction post-unification.

Rather than developing along the lines of Hong's theory, and despite the inter-racial and inter-cultural relationship that Kazim and Sukjeet appears to show is possible, *Selam Berlin* indicates that the city's culture is becoming increasingly divided. Its message resonates with Landler and Barbaro's predicted lower levels of community attachment that lead to fracturing of any cohesive ties in national identity along superficial ethnic lines. The type of information transferred is that ostensive outsiders are not welcome in the city, discouraging any active forms of cultural exchange. Everyone keeps progressively more to themselves in order to preserve their personal safety.

Other works such as Andreas Kleinart's 1999 film *Wege in die Nacht* depict similar developments towards violence in the New Berlin. The 50- or 60-something Walter, who had been the manager of a large company in the East, has been stripped of his former power and is forced to watch as the structured GDR society he knew falls apart with the influx of capitalism and its associated social problems. He takes it upon himself to reestablish order in the unified city and he goes on patrol at night with René and Gina, two young vigilantes. The group targets the abusers and oppressors on the U-Bahn and the S-Bahn systems, who are all struck down by Walter's "troop" until the film reaches its climax when Walter forces a young offender to jump off a moving S-Bahn. These interactions show that the public urban space of Berlin, including its public transit network, is perceived to have become a place of division, violence and oppression instead of a platform to share cultural knowledge and create a rich national identity through understanding and tolerance as depicted in the West Berlin of *Linie 1. Wege in die Nacht*,

among other cultural works, focuses on a minority of Berlin citizens (the abusers and oppressors that Walter targets) who have adopted a racist understanding of culture and national identity. These representations of the changing Berlin milieu stand in stark contrast to Hong's theory, where an intricate and diverse culture could be developed through interaction, not exclusion. In *Wege in die Nacht* and in *Selam Berlin*, transformations in the U-Bahn and S-Bahn systems indicate greater social shifts, in these cases highlighting the fear and concomitant violence that arises with radical change.

Hannes Stöhr's 2001 film *Berlin is in Germany* employs the leitmotiv of transport to depict the challenges of redefinition in the new Berlin. The naming and renaming of various locations in Berlin is central to the film. When former GDR citizen Martin is released in the year 2000 from an eleven year prison sentence that straddled unification, he is belatedly confronted with the changes brought on by German unification. Unlike the Germans who experienced unification and its aftermath directly, Martin had not seen the changes occur gradually and the fictional story allows viewers to be bluntly presented with the numerous physical changes that have occurred in the city and their associated political and social developments. Martin not only has to readapt to life outside of the prison system, but must also integrate himself into a society that he only knows from television. He must not only learn the previously off-limits Western Sector, but must also re-familiarize himself with the renamed street names in the former Eastern Sector in order to prepare for his examination as a taxi driver. Martin quickly realizes that he must accept the new landscape as well as the new mentality of a united Berlin and Germany to create a new life for himself. With the aim of studying the city, Martin takes public transportation to access the city space and educate himself on the new city layout with the

intention of integrating himself into his new Heimat. Berlin's buses, Bahn system and trams are the resources Martin needs in order to familiarize himself with his new surroundings in preparation for his examination, where the form of privatized mobility offered by a car and taxi is the key to his future and ability to provide for his 11 year old son. The film takes advantage of the contrast between the New Berlin and the Berlin of pre- 1989 in that it constructs the physical city as a metaphor for its citizens' mentality. Like the changed U-Bahn station names, the renamed streets reflect the new personality of the Westernized city where Eastern values and tradition were quickly cast aside. It suggests that Ostalgie is a product of the rapid dissolution of the GDR, where a former way of life was completely absorbed, including the ways in which people moved about the city.

The S-Bahn and Strassenbahn systems, which had been controlled exclusively by the East, were rapidly westernized. While this impacted large and small profile lines differently, one of the most noticeable changes for citizens of the New Berlin was the change in fare. Starting in January of 1990 the right to free travel on BVG transport for citizens of the GDR, many of whom were pensioners, was abolished (Hardy 97) and two tariffs came into operation due to the difficulty of assimilating the two systems. The first tariff was for visitors to Berlin and former western residents, and the second was for former Eastern resident, reflecting the lower purchasing power of those in the East. These two separate tariffs are symbolic of the different ways former East and West Germans were treated in the years following unification, where even today stereotypes rigidly cast different groups into different roles rather than allowing for physical and social movement through the urban and social space of Berlin. While the hurdles to

physical mobility in Berlin and Germany were brought to an end, the social rigidity and blunt difference in treating transit customers foreshadowed new obstacles to social unity.

Film and literature often reference mobility in Berlin both before and after the fall of the Wall in 1989 in ways that suggest that the role of public transportation is central in the development of social networks. Theorists such as Hong point out that increased mobility, especially on public transit, should allow for the interactions of groups that previously would not have come into contact. These interactions then would become instrumental in the development of a rich, reflective cultural identity. This multicultural society would develop through information shared among a collection of interconnected individuals and externalized by rich symbols, artifacts, and social institutions. These networks of shared knowledge would form common ground for communication and societal definitions would be dynamic and would undergo continuous modifications (Hong 4). While there are indications in cultural works that this type of development is possible in the unified Berlin, such as Kazim and Sukjeet's relationship in *Selam Berlin* or Martin's relationship with his son in *Berlin is in Germany*, the texts generally seem to indicate that the radical increase in mobility allowed by public transit after the fall of the Iron Curtain had the opposite effect on German development.

In the cultural texts under study here, a variety of interactions occur on Berlin's public transportation system and through contact between a variety of individuals from different cultural backgrounds. Information is shared, but the result is not a cooperative multicultural society. Instead, the increased mobility in the city, notably in the Eastern sector after November 1989, results in interactions which further fracture the city's culture and identity. Even the actions of residents such as the character Walter in *Wege*

*in die Nacht*, who seems to contrast Landler and Barbaro's theories, is extremely concerned with Berlin's social development, result in violence and oppression. These sentiments of hostility are then transported and grow more severe on public transit.

In cultural texts, the interactions between characters traveling on the Bahn systems comment on the changing social climate of the city and nation. Cultural texts such as *Selam Berlin* and *Wege in die Nacht* show that following the fall of the Wall, Berlin's intra-city rail transit became the stage for various groups to interact. While the Bahn system was essential in physically reunifying the city in these years, stitching the various neighborhoods back together, the social interactions portrayed in these cultural texts are largely destructive. Post-1990, mobility over the entire city did not encourage the development of a larger networked identity of practices that encompassed residents of the larger Berlin. Instead, such mobility led to increased individualism and decreased sense of community. Cultural works representing movement in public urban spaces, particularly in urban rail transportation, demonstrate this phenomenon. Interactions in these spaces are characterized by fear and the desire to dominate while the sites themselves signify danger, failure, and alienation. The cultural information relayed in the U-Bahn network was that anyone deemed to be an outsider through an ethnic definition of culture was not welcome in the city. In order to protect themselves from the harassment and dangers of the city's transit, citizens, notably those belonging to groups of visible minorities, began to avoid its use and film and literature of the 2000s shows a growing trend towards privatized mobility. And, as will be explored in the next chapter of this work, the privatization of mobility in the decades following unification also had an influence on the development of culture in Berlin.

## Chapter 4

### Automobility in Berlin

The privatization of transportation subsequent to Unification

As the mass implementation of public transportation at the turn of the twentieth century revolutionized movement, human interaction, and cultural development, so the contemporary trend towards privatized transportation suggests another shift. This new paradigm is transforming the way citizens interact and experience the city and the way culture is created in the new capital. This trend is noticeable for both affluent citizens, who have the means to alternative forms of transportation by choice, and certain minority groups, who are faced with discrimination in the public sphere and are forced out of the realm of public transportation. This chapter focuses on cultural representations of mobility in Berlin in order to examine the post-1990 trend away from more collective

urban rail and towards more privatized forms of transportation, notably privately owned vehicles (POVs) and bicycles.

While film and literature set in more immediate post-Wall years often reference the U-Bahn network and other forms of urban rail transportation as an avenue to examine social development in post-unification Berlin, recent cultural works tend to focus on the use of private transport. The privatization of mobility depicted in film and literature of the city mirrors the actual increase in usage of POVs and bicycles in Berlin over the last 10 to 15 years (Ladd 49) where both bicycles and automobiles have distinctive implications for cultural development as well as for the symbolism of the city. Put somewhat differently, Berlin is personified through its citizens, their mobility, and their access to the urban space; who moves and how indicates social and cultural developments. Cultural representations of mobility such as the works of the *Achtung Berlin* Film Festival suggest that these patterns are symptomatic of greater changes in the nation. Analysis of these works demonstrates that the nation, which has been officially unified for two decades, is fracturing further along the rough seams left by official unification and that the idea of a cohesive identity and culture is becoming increasingly difficult to achieve.

As shown in chapter 2 of this thesis, the mass implementation of public transportation at the turn of the nineteenth century revolutionized the way individuals moved through the urban space, an event that brought with it new forms of human interaction and cultural development. Similarly, the contemporary trend towards using more privatized forms of transportation suggests another shift in social interactions in the new Berlin. Certain groups of people are moving out of the underground U-Bahn

stations, off the city's streetcars and S-Bahn trains into alternate forms of transportation. This is transforming the way citizens interact and experience the city and the way culture is created in the new capital.

Berlin has experienced a plethora of political and social changes in the past two decades that have elicited alterations to its public infrastructure, as I have shown in more detail in Chapter 3. After nearly half a century of existing as separate countries, the German Democratic Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany were officially united in October 1990, one year after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. The ensuing celebration was witnessed around the world and aroused hopes for a united nation and people. However, this celebration could only mark the political unification with a concrete anniversary as the social and geographical unification of the country did not occur simultaneously with the official. Berlin was a microcosm of the sentiments felt throughout the country which experienced a sort of identity crisis in the subsequent. While the U-Bahn, S-Bahn and other transit networks effectively re-linked the urban space, the different societal groups did not come together as a unified population. Martin Walser lamented that Germany lacked a normalized sense of national identity developed through a sense of unity, and argued that this stemmed largely from the exploitation of the Holocaust in the Federal Republic for political purposes, and that Germans could no longer see themselves or be seen by others as “ein normales Volk, ein gewöhnliche Gesellschaft” due to a lacking adhesive patriotic feeling (qtd. in Taberner and Finlay 1). However, this conservative notion of normality brings with it the fear of resurgent National Socialism and a further fracturing of culture and society through the development of blood-and-soil ideologies. The films of *Achtung Berlin* can be used to

explore other avenues of normalization, where mobility takes the front seat in the discussions on the various representations of Berlin.

The *Achtung Berlin* Film Festival, which will be analyzed in this chapter, was birthed from the controversy surrounding normalization of German national identity and its works frequently examine and explore the concept of a national identity in Berlin and Germany today. Perhaps it is therefore unsurprising that themes of disconnectedness, of the city in flux, are represented through mobility and that such themes and representations speak to German national identity. The Festival is one that is uniquely 'Berlin' and began in 2005 as a response to the lack of German film in the capital's film festivals, such as the *Berlinale*. This dearth in Germany and internationally symptomatized the problem of representing Germany to itself and the world. Without some sort of patriotism the nation could not grow together. However, any sense of a normalized identity limits the potential for diversity, thus dividing citizens into societal and cultural insiders and outsiders in manners reminiscent of National Socialist logics. Furthermore, some of Germany's citizens have little common history and ethnicity to use as common ground in order to grow together. Hence the importance of emphasizing public spaces for public, interpersonal interaction as means of exchanging ideas. Such practices can engender forms of mutualism and understanding. In accordance with Jürgen Habermas's notion of constitutional patriotism, Germans are largely united by a common law and constitution, and public space is critical for this project. Political scientist Dolf Sternberger comments on similar situations in other countries, such as Switzerland, which has four distinct linguistic communities and, he argues, is not a nation based on affect, but rather is united through its constitution (30). Contemporary cultural events,

such as *Achtung Berlin* are practices that seek to produce such public spheres. *Achtung Berlin's* films thematize the negotiation of common ground on which German citizens and residents can build a sense of nation and identity.

All of the films shown at *Achtung Berlin* are shot entirely or partially in Berlin or the surrounding state of Brandenburg, and thereby explore the idea of a German national identity and what it means to be German since unification. They promote a sense of belonging together, which is essential to the unity of the nation as well as discouraging xenophobia and racism. These films do not appear to support the normalization of the traditional, pre-Third-Reich German. Rather, they tend to suggest a general departure from tradition and focus on the movement of the modern urban space of the city, rather than the static nature of the traditional countryside space of the *Heimat* film. They also highlight the various social problems of the new capital, the importance of diversity and community, and ways in which egotistical individuality and isolation prove to be destructive forces.

In many of the *Achtung Berlin* films, the city itself is presented as the protagonist and is developed through its citizens and their daily actions and interactions. The Berlin milieu, especially the newly gentrified district of Prenzlauer Berg in the former GDR, takes on an almost mythical quality where every character appears to belong in the city. Nevertheless, the films also reveal the new rifts which have developed in the social fabric of Berlin through its “outsiders” and “insiders.” These issues evidence the problem of German national identity. The lack of cohesiveness among citizens that Walser laments is due in part to the privatization of the modern world, including transportation. Individual citizens come into less contact with one another in today's Germany capital, a situation

that hampers the development of a unified identity. Some suggest that unity does not require a conservative idealist approach à la Walser, but a fettering of the neo-liberal capitalism that has followed unification. In the cultural texts analyzed here, representations of Berlin's transportation create a portrait of the effects of capitalism in the form of social equity, which reflect and shape the ways in which Germans view themselves and define power imbalances that are dividing the city and nation.

A picture of a city's social equity can be developed through examining a cross-section of who uses public transit (Garrett and Taylor 7); therefore changes to the depiction of BVG public transit ridership are important to consider when analysing the creation of culture in the city according to Hong's notion of networks of shared knowledge. Two principal markets exist for public transportation: transit dependants, people who are too young, too old or physically or financially unable to drive; and downtown commuters, people who live in close proximity to the public transportation network and want to avoid driving and parking hassles. Jovan Arsenic's 2008 film *Die Helden aus der Nachbarschaft* from the 2009 *Achtung Berlin* film festival depicts movement through the urban space of Berlin and is an example of measuring of social equity through observations of BVG ridership. Carola Jeschke argues in her article "Angsträume in Städten" that inner city public transportation has been negatively stigmatized, especially in comparison to the automobile, and that transit, with its vandalized train cars and ripped-up seating, reeks of "billigsein" which correspondingly affects the riders' own sense of worth and how they respond to their environment (168). In *Helden*, the only characters depicted taking public transportation are Niko, the son of privileged Westerners who now reside in the newly gentrified district of Prenzlauer Berg

in the East, who is too young to drive and takes the Ring-Bahn into the West to visit his friends, and Eastern German Attila, who presumably cannot afford a car as he, like many other impoverished Eastern Germans, has already been forced into the cheap, cramped back apartments of Prenzlauer Berg.

This film highlights the privileges of space through its depictions of access to (home and work) activity space and mobility space. In the narrative, wealthy Western couples who have flocked to the “hip” Prenzlauer Berg inhabit the ritzy front houses and thereby condemn the former Eastern inhabitants to the less desirable back sections of the houses, or force them out of Prenzlauer Berg altogether. These more prosperous citizens keep the curtains of their homes and lives drawn, thereby avoiding involvement in any situation where they would come into contact with people outside of their class or comfort zone. They are never shown to take public transportation. The impoverished former Easterners do not have this luxury; they live with their daily lives on display through windows without curtains to shield their lives and they ride on public transportation in order to access the city. The space occupied by the affluent is private and isolated from the public space of the less-wealthy and so the groups remain spatially and socially divided by privilege and economic disparity.

Privileged private space extends from the home to the car and indicates a power imbalance and this space suggests that those who can afford such luxuries are able to unilaterally intrude on the lives of those who cannot. Like privatized mobility, curtained windows are synonymous with privilege in the film and suggest that their proprietors have power over those who cannot afford the luxury of privacy in these forms. This power differential is cast in West-East terms. When Erika, Niko’s mother, peers out from

the family's curtained luxury flat she sees directly into Attila's small apartment, with its un-curtained windows, and she observes him eating glass. This Western woman has privileged access to the Easterners, and uses this access to her benefit when she takes advantage of Attila and his strange talent. She convinces the distraught fireman, whose relationship with his girlfriend Sabine has recently ended, to appear on her television talk show "Die Helden aus der Nachbarschaft." In what might be read as a critique of the status quo depicted in the film, privileged spaces do not lead to happiness or enlightenment, and Erika, with her failing marriage and career, ends up even more lonely and distraught than Attila.

Indeed, this supposedly fortunate lifestyle of wealth and spatial privilege is often portrayed as a barrier to the development and furthering of both personal and national identity. The wealthy citizens, such as Niko's parents Ulf and Erika, are generally depicted within a contained, controlled private space that only allows for certain types of experiences and expressions of loose social bonds (Wray 64). While such spaces are safe from certain types of violence (Jeschke 167) they also limit the extent in which characters experience the city and interact with their fellow citizens. Moreover, the highly privatized and individual nature of the privileged space restricts the impact that these characters have on the cultural development of the city and vice versa. The isolation of privileged space restricts the affected character's personal development and he or she avoids developing new interpersonal relationships that would contribute to a greater communal public identity and sense of understanding.

In contrast to Jeschke's notion that public transit deconstructively impacts the rider, the characters in *Helden* that grow and develop are those like Niko and Attila who

learn from one another while interacting in the public sphere, and not the wealthy proprietors of private space. Niko and Attila appear as social equals in the realm of mobility. Through their meetings while taking Berlin's transit they develop a mutual understanding that represents an ideal development of the modern Eastern/Western relationships from which Germany would benefit.

This same development of understanding is lacking in the other characters that have been limited by their self-imposed privileged space. Niko rides the Ring-Bahn to get to West Berlin from Prenzlauer Berg to go to Café Keese and it is precisely at this legendary Western Berlin cafe that he spots the shy Eastern German baker, Rosine, who lives near him in faraway Prenzlauer Berg. Rosine, literally raisin and to be figuratively understood as in the phrase *[große] Rosinen im Kopf haben* –to have big ideas – has stepped outside of her spatial comfort zone to discover the unfamiliar west of the city. Rosine's name and actions suggest the big idea of acting and interacting with others in public spaces, expanding her “networks of shared knowledge” and contributing to Berlin's diverse society. When Niko's privileged, Western German friends decide to play a prank on Rosine, Niko attempts to interfere and save her the impending embarrassment of his friends' hijinx, something in which he would have previously taken part and which he would have enjoyed. Unlike his Western friends, or even his parents, Niko has developed a further understanding and tolerance for others through his relationship and exchanges with Attila while riding the trams and the S-Bahn. *Helden* characterizes the U- and S-Bahn systems as places crucial for the development of shared networks of knowledge as per Hong's notions, and furthermore, illustrates how movement across the urban space and experiencing the city can promote tolerance and understanding.

Public transportation has also become an easy way for the modern-day *flaneur* to move through and experience the city. Consider Thomas Arslan's 2001 *Der schöne Tag*. Although Arslan's film was not featured in *Achtung Berlin*, it was funded by the Filmboard Berlin-Brandenburg (FBB) and was shot in Berlin. The film follows the young Turkish-German protagonist, Deniz, in her daily life, where she travels across the urban landscape and experiences the city. In her travels on the U-Bahn network and walking between stations, she encounters diverse groups of people with whom she interacts – a prime example of how public transit is a perfect location for the creation of culture through networks of shared knowledge. Charles Baudelaire developed the notion of the *Flaneur* as a person who walks the city in order to experience it and an individual who has a key role in understanding, participating and portraying the city (Benjamin 68). The character of Deniz is simultaneously part of and apart from the city and culture, emphasizing the relationship between the individual and the populace. She is an insider of Berlin; she knows the streets and the subways system and speaks German effortlessly, yet she is also an “outsider” due to her appearance and Turkish heritage. Through her travels, she is cast in both roles in different situations. Here, mobility is the catalyst of action and reaction and brings about both positive and negative results.

After unification, public transportation became one of the main platforms for the transfer of knowledge and development of culture through Hong's networks-of-knowledge, but the rapidity with which these changes occurred seemed to have instigated a trend of violence and racism, arguably stemming from lingering National Socialist sentiments. Accordingly, the Berliner U-Bahn and S-Bahn systems have been depicted in cultural works as becoming places of ever-increasing violence towards women and

minority groups, especially Turkish-Germans, who are essentially being forced out of the city's public spaces. Carola Jeschke further explains the dangers of the U-Bahn and S-Bahn systems. She writes:

U- und S-Bahnen gelten als öffentliche Räume, die häufig aus Furcht vor Belästigungen und Bedrohungen gemieden werden. Viele würden der Aussage zustimmen, daß der öffentliche Verkehr eine "Brutstätte der Kriminalität" ist. Und niemand würde sich über den Ratschlag wundern, zur Sicherheit in den Zeiten der Dunkelheit am besten gar nicht aus dem Haus zu gehen, zumindest keinesfalls die öffentlichen Verkehrsmittel zu benutzen. (165)

Jeschke continues to elaborate on the real-world perceptions of public transit, citing a 1994 BVG telephone survey where 36% of men and 70% of women admitted to being afraid of violence while riding Berlin's public transportation, where 47% of women and 20% of men stated that they do not use public transportation in Berlin for this reason (167). The survey indicates that women feel targeted by violence on the U- and S- Bahn network, resulting in their absence from this form of mobility. The perceptions of violence in public transportation to which Jeschke refers are reflected and shaped by cultural texts, such as the more immediate post-unification works discussed in Chapter 3: Yadé Kara's novel *Selam Berlin*, Grips-Theater cult-classic musical *Linie 1*, and Andreas Kleinert's post-Wende film *Wege in die Nacht*. Cultural works set in the twenty-first century, such as the films of the *Achtung Berlin* film festival, also comment on the state of transit and mobility in Berlin, often using depictions of violence and safety to remark on restrictions and accessibility of the urban space as well as their impact on different ethnic groups.

In many *Achtung Berlin* films such as *Evet*, *Ich Will* and *Folge der Feder*, the main form of transportation for Turkish-German protagonists is the car. This depiction

influences and is engendered by an "automobile-centric" identity among Turkish-Germans. In *Evet, ich will!* the local car-repair shop is even owned by Turkish people, illustrating their unique relationship to the vehicle. As can be seen through the previous analysis of cultural texts such as *Selam Berlin* or *Linie 1*, the stereotypical characteristic of Turkish/ Turkish-German New Berlin citizens appears to stem from necessity due to the oppression they have been experiencing on public transport since unification. In order for them to access the city without trepidation, it seems, they must engage in their own forms of private mobility that do not put them in immediate danger of attack. Indeed, recall that in Kara's novel Kazim is attacked on the U-Bahn immediately after he sells his Mercedes taxi and must take the U-Bahn system in order to get home. This event articulates the dangers of the U-Bahn network contrasting it with the privacy and separation of automobile use.

The privately owned vehicle (POV) thus not only indicates affluence but delineates private space where the occupants do not interact or engage in any cultural exchange. Generally speaking in the *Achtung Berlin* films there are those who take public transportation and those who do not. The mobility practices and resultant interactions between characters express notions of spatial privilege and identity. Those who possess a POV can control more of their environment and have safer, easier access to certain urban spaces, as well as possessing an easily recognizable status symbol that indicates social stature and marks isolated individualism (Wray 64). Furthermore, for the persona of the formulaic car-driving-Turk developed in the films, the car not only acts as a "Blechpanzer Sicherheit" (Jeschke 166) for its passengers, but also as a status symbol that contrasts with their small living quarters in suburban *Hochhäuser* - high rise housing

complexes. The car stands for the wealth and (upward) mobility the families have, or want others to believe they have “back in Turkey.” in order to further their social and thereby economic status through marriage and networking. Yet, as in *Helden*, privileged space is destructive for personal and national identity because it limits networks of knowledge and interactions with other people and ideas. In what seems a vicious cycle, minority groups such as Turkish people isolate themselves through the shield of private mobility in order to escape oppression and injury, which at the same time reduces their ability to interact with other groups and develop mutual understanding. While the car is a visible status marker and keeps passengers safe from unwanted interaction, it is also a hurdle to cultural development and tolerance.

The representation of mobility in Berlin is important to understanding its current social and cultural climate, as Berlin is a city that is structurally well-suited to a variety of forms of transit, whether it be driving, cycling or public (Ladd 46). With its densely built inner city there are more “activity sites” (Hanson 4) in close proximity to one another than in many other metropolises, making it easily accessible by bicycle and transit friendly. Such accessibility in turn makes auto ownership less necessary, enabling some households with the financial means to be car-free (Pucher 215). On the other hand, with its wide streets, Berlin has historically been one of the most car-friendly cities in Europe (Ladd 47). In recent years, however, public policies such as parking bans, high taxes and fuel costs restrict the use of the automobile in Berlin, thus further encouraging walking, cycling and riding public transit while making car ownership an even more elite class marker (Pucher 218). The exclusivity is present in many *Achtung Berlin* films such as *Folge der Feder*, *Sprit*, *Evet, ich will!* and *Der Letzte macht das Licht aus!* In one dream-

like sequence of *Folge der Feder*, Helin's James Dean-like dream man is framed by a classy car in order to connote his attractiveness as wealthy enabler of her access to the city and Germany. In a later sequence that highlights this car-privilege connection by undercutting it, the film suggests that this young German offers the undocumented migrant Helin privileged access whether or not he possesses the fancy car that the viewer never sees again.

The luxury of mobility through the POV is fetishized in Marco Raab's highly ironic 2009 *Achtung Berlin* film *Sprit* in order to contrast the stereotypical German obsession with privatized mobility through car ownership with the growing *Grüne Bewegung*, as well as critiquing the effects of this form of highly privatized mobility. In this film it is not an expensive car or attractive driver that is the fetishized object, but private mobility, the opportunity to go cruising. The film also briefly touches on the massive amounts of crime generated by automobile usage through theft, speeding and dangerous driving (Sheller and Urry 738). Here, the crime surrounding automobile usage emphasizes the negative economic and social influences of the car as a hindrance to the development of a cohesive, tolerant culture and community. The life of the protagonist, Kai, is fuelled by his infatuation with privatized mobility in a time when oil reserves are being depleted and "Sprit"-gasoline- is at seven Euros a litre. Everything important to Kai runs on premium unleaded –his car, his job as a mechanic and even his relationship with his musician girlfriend Maja, whom he often takes out for a spin, an act that accentuates his highly sexualized relationship with automotive mobility. Contrary to most transportation theory, Kai's pursuits are not simply to move from one activity site to the next in minimal amounts of time (Hanson 3). For him, private daily mobility is a source

of extreme pleasure, an addiction and obsession encapsulated in his desperation of “Ich muss tanken!” The roads are almost devoid of other cars and the bright yellow S-Bahn trains, buses and bicycles, make frequent and obvious appearances in the background of many scenes, indicating that Kai could easily access the same areas of the city through alternate, cheaper forms of transportation. Yet, he refuses to give up driving because the loss of his car would mean loss of the phallus. That is, losing the control and power he has over his own mobility and space would mean forfeiting his masculinity. In his case, the demand for privatized travel is not derived from the demand to accomplish other activities, but something undertaken solely for the pleasure of mobility and the status derived from this action.

In a critique of the capitalist, consumer society which has taken over in Berlin, the relationships between protagonist Kai and other characters are expressed as and mediated by commodities and money. Kai’s relationship to everyone else is mediated through his mobility --the commodity-- and the lengths he is willing to go to maintain this luxurious lifestyle. He deceives his caring, elderly employer in order to steal money to buy gas and his relationship with both his co-worker and girlfriend are expressed solely through commodity fetishism of the mobility provided by his car. Kai interprets his masculinity and power to be intrinsic to his automotive mobility rather than being a personal trait. The fetishism presented in the film suggests that the obsession with mobility is detrimental not only to the personal relationships that it has been allowed to mediate, but to concepts of personal and community identity. Privatized mobility in the film begins to take on human characteristics and begins to dominate the lives of those around it.

The sexualization of mobility, as well as its relation to the phallus, is not left up to the viewer's imagination but is underscored in order to call attention to Germany's obsession with privatized mobility and the country's related traffic epidemic (Giese 11). The film alludes to the POV's destructive impact on individuals and national solidarity through Kai's personal decline. The first time that Kai steals gas from parked vehicles in order to fuel his lust for mobility, he uses a jerry can to transfer the fuel. The jerry can, which is a National Socialist invention of the Second World War, stands in place of the phallus and the act of filling the can with stolen fuel appears to give him sensual pleasure. This very act of thievery illustrates the moral decline of the principal character, though commodity fetishism and ties Kai's extremism to that of the Nazis through the use of the jerry can. Furthermore, due to his escalating obsession with access to the private, privileged space provided by the POV, Kai isolates himself from other characters.

In *Sprit*, characters like Kai who exist under this self-imposed limited space of privatized mobility are portrayed as increasingly egotistical, which eventually eliminates their ability to empathize with others or develop tolerance and understanding. In another scene, while stealing fuel from parked cars, Kai stumbles upon a couple having a romantic encounter. This type of alleged healthy sexuality between people in cars is placed in stark contrast to Kai's compulsive relations with cars. His obsession with mobility means a related inability to have human relations that are not mediated by mobility. His mania culminates in a Freudian slip when he vividly imagines his girlfriend, Maja, getting into another man's car at a gas station. Kai has finally hit rock-bottom and can no longer afford to fill his own tank, effectively de-masculinizing him. He poses the question "Was ist in Berlin günstig?" – certainly not status or individuality

derived from private mobility. Life has become unaffordable for Kai; with the little fuel he has left, he chases down another car and beats the driver to unconsciousness or death with his pseudo-phallus, the jerry can. He then completes the act by stealing gas from the other car, illustrating his addiction. The entire murder scene takes place with a bicycle lane sign and Berlin's new Hauptbahnhof visible in the background, contrasting the destructive lifestyle of private mobility against its more positive alternatives of cycling or transit. With his tank running on empty, Kai purposefully crashes his beloved vehicle into a tree along the country boulevard in the East. This scene is in part a *Grüne Bewegung* critique in satirical form, suggesting where Germany's escalating obsession with private mobility and its related privilege may lead (depletion of natural resources, crime, unhappiness, death, etc). The scene also criticizes the narcissistic and isolating nature of the automobile, the source of increasing violence and fractured culture and identity. In the end, Kai has become an unsympathetic character; through an alienation effect, the viewer may reflect on his or her own choices of mobility and their impact on the development of personal identity and national cohesiveness.

As Mimi Sheller and John Urry note, the car not only provides status to its owner/user through the sign-values with which it is associated (sexual desire, speed, success, freedom, masculinity) (738) but is an indicator of the financial well-being of the entire nation, a type of "American Dream" which is applicable outside of the United States as well. For former master craftsman and business owner, Norbert, in *Der Letzte macht das Licht aus!* his car is a symbol of the good life he was able to provide for his family initially following the fall of the Wall. With his nest egg transferred into Deutsch Marks, as was done by many others (Giese 12), Norbert built a nice house in the suburbs

of Berlin and purchased a car (for which he would have had to wait for years in the East, as seen in *Goodbye, Lenin!*) in order to access this privileged and private space outside of the city centre. These investments and the immediacy with which he acquired them marked his new found wealth and status in the new world of opportunity, yet to a certain degree they also removed him and his family from the community of Berlin. In his work *Pedal Power* J. Harry Wray remarks about the relation of private, privileged space in relation to the American Dream:

Driven by individualism and materialism, it is intensely private and thoroughly egocentric, a dream of individual struggle toward a life of personal ease, control, security and comfort. Accumulation is central to the goals towards which we privately struggle. One pinnacle of achievement, acquiring a “dream home,” has led one observer to note “For the first time in history, a civilization created a utopian ideal based on the house rather than on the city or the nation.” One might add that usually the house has a fence around it, for the American Dream is indifferent to the plight of one’s neighbours, one’s community, and one’s nation. It is in fact an aggregation of millions of private dreams that seemingly bear no relationship to each other. [...] The automobile plays a more immediate and extensive role in our symbolic lives. Cars, also, are the stuff of dreams. (63)

Here, Wray emphasizes the individuality of the car and the private home, where there is a discontinuity between national cohesiveness and the individuality and materialism. In cultural texts, this relatively new social phenomenon of rampant individualism has been represented as destructive to the development of emotions of solidarity and national identity.

Many Eastern Germans were able to realize certain “American Dream” type aspirations post-Wall that would have been impossible in the GDR, such as buying a nice house and car or making the world’s largest Pfannkuchen (*Die Helden aus der Nachbarschaft*). However, many Eastern Germans were not accustomed to the new capitalist system and they eventually lost their jobs and possessions, including their cars

In some cases, such as in Robert Thalheim's 2005 *Achtung Berlin* film *Netto* or *Berlin is in Germany*, Eastern Germans also lost their significant others, in part because of financial instability. The welcome money offered to Easterners in post-Wall Berlin coupled with the excitement surrounding unification was a gesture towards creating an inclusive German community. Unfortunately the promises of a unified and inclusive community did not come to fruition and many Eastern Germans were cast off as outsiders of society, creating significant fractures in the politically unified Berlin. The new Germany was rather more of a continuation of the old Federal Republic than an amalgamation of two nations. As professor of modern history at the Freie Universität Berlin Jürgen Kocka points out, the official name, national hymn and flag of West Germany became that of the united Germany (196). Furthermore, Kocka mentions that the Grundgesetz was mostly taken over as well, and the West German political parties quickly spread to the East, merging with parties that the peaceful revolution had newly created in the GDR (197).

Since the new unified Germany departed significantly from the old GDR, Eastern Germans were unaccustomed to the economic system and often suffered under it. Impoverished, they had to rely on more economical forms of transportation for their daily mobility, creating another cultural divide. Cultural texts do not only portray the expulsion of visible minority groups from the new capital's avenues of public mobility, but inhabitants of Berlin's Eastern sector are often seen to be choosing alternate forms of transportation in the city. The Eastern German main characters Micha and Marcel in *Der Letzte Macht das Licht aus!* and *Netto*, respectively, are examples. They are frequently seen using bicycles to travel great distances and experience the city. Like the formulaic

car-driving Turk in the *Achtung Berlin* films, another stereotype of mobility is the bike-riding Eastern German. John Pucher, professor of Urban Planning and Policy Development at Rutgers School of Planning and Policy Study, notes that “the poor also rely much more heavily than affluent households on walking and bicycling for their urban travel” (212). Accordingly, the bicycle functions as a class marker, yet unlike the car, it generally indicates poverty rather than wealth. This is perhaps why Kai, the auto-obsessed protagonist in *Sprit* is so opposed to and appalled by cycling. When his girlfriend Maja even suggests cycling, he immediately vehemently opposes by yelling “Das scheiss Fahrrad bleibt im Keller!” Kai’s masculinity and social status would be abridged were he to cycle and that his girlfriend even suggested it as a viable alternative for mobility indicates added de-masculinization and embarrassment, which only further fuels Kai’s obsession.

In a later dream sequence, Kai has a nightmare in which he is riding a bike. In what could have been stylized as a pleasant bike ride through the city, with the rider enjoying the fresh air with rosy cheeks and the direct, unmediated contact with Berlin and its citizens, Kai is presented as pale and worn looking. Bright lighting and a close shot of Kai’s face reveal an almost corpse-like quality, suggesting that he would rather die than give up driving. While automobiles and bicycles are both private forms of transportation that allow for a certain freedom of movement independent of public transportation, they each carry unique implications. Automobiles indicate an almost selfish disconnect of community and cohesiveness, signifying a decline of society through gross materialism and excessive individualism. Bicycles are also a private form of transportation, but are

less destructive to national solidarity because cyclists are not as isolates from their surround as car drivers.

The frequent appearance of characters bicycling and walking in many of the *Achtung Berlin* films, as well as the ease in which these characters appear to move through the city, suggest that Berlin has a *Dorf*-like quality reminiscent of *Heimat* films all of Berlin is easily accessible without machine-powered forms of transportation. Characters in the films seem able to simply hop on their bikes or tie their shoes and go anywhere in the city. In *Netto*, we see main character Marcel cycle from his home in the East past a montage of various landmarks across the city all the way to the West, where his son and ex-wife now reside, all without breaking a sweat. A viewer lacking knowledge of Berlin's geography would assume that these locations are in fairly close proximity to one another, when in fact they are spread far across the urban landscape. Similar sequences appear in *Der Letzte macht das Licht aus!* where cycling Eastern Germans Micha and Silvio move across the entire city on an old bicycle with ease. This selective representation of the city implies a certain familiarity and frames Berlin not as a thriving metropolis, but rather draws more parallels to Georg Simmel's *Kleinstadt* with its stereotypical characters who share similar stories.

This presentation of Berlin as a small town avoids problems of visible oppression and violence that have commonly been associated with the U- and S- Bahn systems and cities in general, and pushes these themes to the outskirts of the city's collective consciousness. However, as the BVG website states, Berlin is "not exactly a village" but a sprawling metropolis, covering more than 892 square kilometers, which makes the entirety of the city less accessible to cyclists or pedestrians than some of the films imply.

In "The Metropolis and Mental Life" Simmel presents what appears to be a fairly negative analysis of city life, but also commends the mental stimulus provided by the city which promotes individuality:

The deepest problems of modern life flow from the attempt of the individual to maintain the independence and individuality of his existence against the sovereign powers of society, against the weight of the historical heritage and the external culture and technique of life. [...] [T]he nineteenth century may have sought to promote, in addition to man's freedom, his individuality (which is connected with the division of labor) and his achievements which make him unique and indispensable but which at the same time make him so much the more dependent on the complementary activity of others; Nietzsche may have seen the relentless struggle of the individual as the prerequisite for his full development, while socialism found the same thing in the suppression of all competition - but in each of these the same fundamental motive was at work, namely the resistance of the individual to being leveled, swallowed up in the social-technological mechanism. (24)

For Simmel, the individuality prompted through the stimuli of the big city is reliant on others in order for full development to be achieved. Isolated individuality, such as that brought on by the automobile, does not promote this idea of development because it is independent of others, rendering this form of individuality useless to the development of a cohesive community. In contrast to the city, Simmel associates the small town with a sense of restriction and deindividualization. Therefore, if we apply Simmel's notion of the *Kleinstadt* to "small town" Berlin, this interpretation seems to imply that there is no room in Berlin for those who are deemed outsiders, such as people of foreign descent, Eastern Germans and mobile women who act and interact in the public sphere, inhibiting the desired type of normalization according to Hong's networks notion.

While the films occasionally portray women as car drivers, albeit often ending disastrously, such as Mia's crash in *Austern ohne Schale*, cyclists are primarily male. The bicycle has been associated with the liberation of women, as prominent American civil

rights leader Susan Bronwell Stanton stated: “Bicycling has done more to emancipate women than anything else in the world. I stand and rejoice every time I see a woman ride on a wheel. It gives women a feeling of freedom and self-reliance” (as qtd in Sokolove 51). Perhaps due to this liberatory effect, men variously discouraged the practice for females in order to affirm male dominance over mobility, limit the realm of accessibility for women, and make them dependent on men for transportation through not only social echelons but physical space as well. Mariah Burton Nelson, author of *Nike Is a Goddess*, writes in her research about feminism and mobility that:

Cyclists’ saddles...were said in the early days to induce menstruation and cause contracted vaginas and collapsed uteruses. Further, while appearing to enjoy an innocent, healthful ride, female cyclists might use the upward tilt of the saddle to engage in the ‘solitary service’ of masturbation. (as qtd in Sokolove 51)

Furthermore, in a 1837 book entitled *Exercise for Ladies*, author Donald Walker suggested that females should avoid cycling as it “deform[s] the lower part of the body” (qtd in ibid 51). These antiquated beliefs illustrate the limitations placed on women’s mobility through social norms of gender performance, affirming that a woman must be accompanied by a man in order to be mobile and that a lone female engaging in mobility is deviant and dangerous. This problem of patriarchy in mobility is an undertone of many cultural works to this day. In *Achtung Berlin* it is predominantly men who ride bicycles through the city; *Austern ohne Schale*, *Der Letzte macht das Licht aus*, *Sprit*, and *Netto* all portray exclusively men riding bicycles. An exception to this tendency is Christian Schidlowski’s 2004 film *7 Tage im Leben meiner Freunde* where the viewer does encounter a female cyclist, artist Nicole who is on her way to an exhibition. However, she is accompanied by her husband René on their outing, reinforcing the male-dominant

trend of cycling through a male escort for the female cyclist. Jeschke points out in “Angsträume in Städten” that women and the elderly must take special care when experiencing the city irrespective of the method of transportation (165). Visible ethnic minorities can also be added to the list of those who are particularly at risk of being the target of violence while in transit or participating in other public forms of mobility practices (i.e. cycling). As a result these groups are often depicted in culture works to be accompanied by a white, able-bodied, non-Muslim German male.

This patriarchy of the public, semi-public and private spheres of transportation reinscribes male dominance over mobility, as well as female dependence on males to access the urban space of the city. In the *Achtung Berlin* films *Evet, ich will!*, *Austern ohne Schale* and Marcus Lenz’s *Close*, female characters and characters belonging to visible minority groups are often escorted by a German male in their travels through the city to maintain their personal safety. Contrast these situations with *Austern*; when Mia leaves her overbearing and abusive boyfriend, she drives a car to escape his domain, yet, while fleeing she is involved in a car accident. Throughout the rest of the film Mia never drives again, yet is offered a ride by her “dream guy”, which she accepts without any question, once again illustrating the male dominance over private mobility through the car. *Close* exemplifies an extreme example of this type of restriction, where Anna’s agoraphobia has become so severe that she actually does not leave her apartment. It is only at the end of the film when Jost, the strange young man who roams the streets of Berlin at night, forcefully brings her out of her home that she leaves her controlled private space. It is significant that Jost himself is one of the hazards of the city which Jeschke mentions that women, the elderly and ethnic minorities should avoid. Films such

as *Close* emphasize the patriarchy of mobility, where female mobility and access to the city are controlled to such an extent that women cannot engage directly with the city or its citizens. Here, women and citizens belonging to minority groups are symbolically cast out of the public spaces of the city such as public transit. Therefore, they cannot as readily engage in the development of Hong's networks of shared knowledge in order to contribute more meaningfully to the urban cultural fabric. Due to this limitation imposed by violence and oppression in mobility, the stories told and information shared in the U-Bahn system become increasingly homogenous. This is the result of the exclusion of those deemed outsiders through conservative definitions of what it means to a member of the community. This homogeneity of shared information results in an incomplete and fractured notion of culture and identity. Jost's aggression and destructive behaviour in *Close* are symbolic of the economic and social effects of neoliberalism in Berlin that is dividing the nation. This message is solidified at the end of the film when Jost easily carjacks an automobile and crashes it into a construction barrier, linking the actions of the characters to not only the physical, but also the emotional changes occurring to the city. This event abstractly links Jost's self-destructive behaviour to private mobility and its negative influence on interpersonal relations and development of mutual understanding or cohesiveness.

It is possible to classify various forms of transportation depicted in cultural texts as either furthering or thwarting solidarity and identity among Berlin residents and by extension the Berlin Republic. The automobile symbolizes privileged, private space, whereas public transportation indicates poor, public space. Bicycles and walking occupy a unique middle ground between public and private mobility. Due to the range in which

one can reasonably travel by bicycle or walking, these forms of transportation minimize conceptions of physical space in film. Furthermore, cycling and walking reference the *Kleinstadt* rather than a massive thriving metropolis. Through this connection between Berlin and the *Kleinstadt*, the state of intellectual life in the city is critiqued while the privilege of the lives of intellectuals is elided. The sentiments of the *Kleinstadt* elicited through travel by bicycle and walking indicate that not just anybody belongs in Berlin. It is only those who fill specific stereotypical roles in the *Kleinstadt* who belong to this representation of Berlin. The outsiders, out of the collective consciousness of the city, are placed outside of the identity of being a German or Berlin citizen. Moreover, the most privatized form of transportation, the car, isolates different groups of people from the cultural creation through privilege or necessity. One group of citizens deem themselves to be too wealthy to interact with others, through which a deeper sense of identity and culture could be developed. Other groups use the car to avoid injury or violence. All who employ this private mode of transportation are effectively marked as inaccessible through the steel barrier separating them from the rest of the city. They do not engage in public mobility nor do they interact on the platform of cultural exchange in the public sphere. Accordingly, the contributions that these characters could make to the development of a collective Berlin or German identity are limited. This division of citizens through mobility practices leaves those who use more public forms of mobility (public transit, cycling, walking) to interact with one another and to create particular forms of culture and identity.

Although Berlin is nearly bankrupt, it is the cultural capital of Germany and the city is seen as so attractive due to the low operating, living and mobility costs for artists

and citizens, the culture-makers of Berlin, who engage in these perceived poor forms of transit. Governing Mayor of Berlin, Klaus Wowereit stated in a 2004 television interview that “Berlin ist Arm aber Sexy,” which has become the slogan for the city. Alexa Färber elaborates on this idea in “Flourishing Cultural Production in Economic Wasteland” and suggests that Berlin is sexy *because* it is poor. Färber writes Berlin is deemed attractive “because of the spatial reminders (industrial wasteland) of a poor economy” (417) which I would argue include its vast public transportation system. Although a common indicator of national financial well-being, private transport is destructive to the development of a sense of unity among its citizens. Contemporary films would agree, since in them public transportation is portrayed as a space of cultural creation, whether it be a cohesive and tolerant nation, or one afflicted by racism and violence.

The culture of Berlin is forged through the sharing of knowledge and ideas in the public spaces of mobility, where the kind of culture that is formed is determined by who engages in these dialogues and what information they choose to share. Recent film and literature depict a move towards more privatized mobility in the city, where the U- and S-Bahn system have been stigmatized as poor and dangerous, rather than culturally diverse locations that are essential to the development of a cohesive identity. Furthermore, the privatized nature of cars and bicycles limits the ability of the traveler to engage in social interaction, thereby reducing the contribution of the commuter to cultural development in a city of scars left by unification. The danger of resurging nationalism and conservatism post-1990 was coupled with privatization and individualism. Under such circumstances, apathy and danger cause citizens to withdraw from the public sphere and thereby grow increasingly less concerned about their community to which they are no longer

connected. While it would seem that culture in Berlin is at risk of fracturing further, new innovations in public transit are developing ways to connect the city and its citizens in new ways. These new developments offer the possibility for new discourses on identity and to overcome blood-and-soil type ideologies, and, instead, replace conservative notions of normalization with an identity based on a multi-cultural society and constitutional patriotism.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusion

#### Fahr mal wieder Ringbahn

It was not until twelve years after the fall of the Wall that the Berliner Ringbahn – or *Hundekopf* as it is known for its distinctive shape – was completed and the gap between Wedding and Gesundbrunnen Stations was closed. The completion of this construction project was announced as the Wedding-Day, alluding to the English matrimonial term and implying a sort of official union of Berlin. It is natural that this sort of union would occur in the Bahn system, as urban rail transportation in Berlin is not only an excellent platform for observing and defining culture, but is also presented in film and literature as a space for the creation of culture through networked practices and knowledge. Since the people who use public transit to access the city is not a

homogeneous group, the U- and S-Bahn systems have become places where the political problems, difficulties, and divisions of the city and its citizens come together to tell the city's collective story. Furthermore, the Bahn systems have been central to the physical and emotional unity of the city since their implementation. Not only this, but these forms of transit are symbolic for the nation: the ways in which fictional characters commute, whether by Bahn, bicycle or automobile, comment on the current social and political climate of Berlin and Germany.

The cultural texts discussed in this thesis address important themes from Weimar to post-unification Germany, highlighting the significance of Berlin's public transportation as a platform for cultural development and framing the Bahn system as allegorical for the social climate of the city. The various phases of construction of the Bahn network reflect political objectives of the governing powers and symbolize the economic welfare of the nation. The division of the U-Bahn system caused by the construction of the Berlin Wall reflected the division of a nation and its people, and its subsequent re-linking following unification stood as a new chapter for Germany. The unique public spaces of mobility, such as the U- and S-Bahn systems, forge the culture and identity of Berlin through sharing and obstructing knowledge and ideas. Yet these new cultural forms are determined by those who engage in these dialogues and what they choose to share.

Mobility practices represented in film and literature from the 1990s depict a mass migration of minority groups in Berlin moving from public to more privatized modes of transport as certain citizens forced out of, or excluded from public transportation. Cultural texts indicate that people are not engaging in public transit because of violence

and affluence. However, while theorist Carola Jeschke maintains that public transit in the city has been stigmatized, many cultural texts frame these public gathering places as a common ground for culture creation and community building in Berlin. As seen in *Linie 1*, which is set in a time when the social welfare state of West Germany made West Berlin relatively safe, the U-Bahn is a place for people to come together and contribute to shared networks which form the basis of a diverse, cohesive culture. However, the depiction of pre-unification Berlin in *Linie 1* anticipates the increasing privatization and stratification of mobility. The privatization depicted in the works of *Achtung Berlin* negatively impacts the creation of city culture and identity. It seems that unification would set free ghosts of the past that were thought to have long been banished from the Berlin community, including an increase in violence against foreigners. This phenomenon is reflected in cultural texts: the result is a fragmented, less diverse, collective identity for Berlin. Increasing economic disparity also resulted in the more affluent citizens removing themselves from public transit. These two groups become the main players in the movement towards more privatized mobility in Berlin, where the automobile and the bicycle also influence the development of culture and collective identity.

Various forms of transportation depicted in cultural texts tend to indicate either a furthering or thwarting of solidarity and identity among Berlin residents and, by extension, the Berlin Republic. This movement of citizens towards more privatized modes of transport in film and literature reflects actual current trends, and has its own implications. The automobile symbolizes privileged, private space, whereas public transportation indicates poor, public space. Bicycles occupy a unique middle ground

between public and private mobility. The users of the most elite form of private transportation, the car, are effectively deemed inaccessible through a barrier separating them from the rest of the city. They do not engage in public mobility nor do they interact on the platform of cultural exchange in the public sphere. The cyclist is not deemed as inaccessible as the motorist, however the bike is also an individualistic form of transportation and, thus, does not promote the same social interactions that occur on the Bahns. Accordingly, the contributions to the development of a collective Berlin or German identity made by privatized mobility are limited by their restricted interpersonal networks. Those who use more public forms of transit are more directly connected to the creation of culture and national identity.

Over the last century, Berlin's U- and S-Bahn systems have witnessed significant changes and have stood for Germany and Germans. Furthermore, depictions of the Bahns and references to mobility in cultural texts have been used to express concern over the future of German national identity and the Berlin community. While the Bahn system initially played a significant role in both the emotional and physical unification of the city through increased mobility and accessibility, it also fostered divisions through racism and violence brought on by economic recession and the uncertainty of unification. The depiction of the privatization of mobility in film and literature of the 1990s and 2000s implies that the community of the U- and S-Bahn has disintegrated into individual dreams. The spaces of social and interpersonal interaction that are so vital to the development of culture and identity are being abandoned for more individual pursuits. However, as of May 2006, the Ringbahn in Berlin began to operate in a continuous circle, and the accomplishment of this construction project plants a seed of optimism that a

diverse yet cohesive community might yet develop in Berlin, perhaps a true domestic partnership. While other forms of transportation are present in cultural texts, it is the Bahn systems that provide a distinctive perspective into the past, present and possible future of Berlin. These mobility networks are the stage upon which actions and interactions between citizens are played out. They are the key to the rich cultural codes of Berlin, a city between worlds but central to the development of a German national identity and culture.

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