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Children in Frank Beyer's Holocaust Films

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CHILDREN IN FRANK BEYER’S HOLOCAUST FILMS

A Dissertation Presented

By

DELENE CASE WHITE

Submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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German and Scandinavian Studies
CHILDREN IN FRANK BEYER’S HOLOCAUST FILMS

A Dissertation Presented
by
DELENE CASE WHITE

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DEDICATION

For Jack, my own child with the most agency of all.
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ABSTRACT
CHILDREN IN FRANK BEYER’S HOLOCAUST FILMS
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This dissertation is about central functions children play in the Holocaust films of (East) German director Frank Beyer: Nackt unter Wölfen (Naked among Wolves, 1963), Jakob der Lügner (Jacob the Liar, 1974), and Wenn alle Deutschen schlafen (While all Germans Sleep, 1994). Beyer’s child characters contribute to resistance and challenge oversimplified ways the Holocaust and German division have often been remembered. Beyer’s films do not elide truthful representations of the Holocaust, and they avoid clichéd representations of children, Jews and Germans.

Released over a 31-year span, characters in these films demonstrate increasing agency, drawing out universal humanity in people around them—even German soldiers—in the form of storytelling, play, and the desires to protect others and live ordinary, worthwhile lives. Over time, these films also reveal changes in Beyer’s filmmaking artistry, as well as his collaboration with the author Jurek Becker. I explore the intertwined evolution of Beyer’s child characters and his filmic approach in four central chapters. The Introduction sets the stage by outlining German and international films about the Holocaust and reviewing Beyer’s biography. Chapter One provides an overview of adaptation theory, moral philosophy, and methods for analyzing representations of war and the gaze of the child, as well as the biographies of Bruno Apitz and Jurek Becker, the authors whose novels Beyer adapted to film. Chapter Two examines how
Naked among Wolves, which is ensconced in antifascist ideology and conventions of Socialist Realism, nevertheless challenges tenets of each, by decentering Communist heroes and focusing on a child. In discussing Jacob the Liar, which is set among Jews in a Polish ghetto and completely displaces Communists, Chapter Three explores how Beyer deploys the narrative devices of fantasy, flashbacks and flashforwards to depict how characters preserve their humanity in the midst of the Holocaust. Finally, Chapter Four shows how Beyer takes his abandonment of antifascist and social realist conventions a step further in While all Germans Sleep, which departs from fantasy and flashbacks in favor of a more objective narrative style, while challenging conventional views of the Holocaust through depictions of childhood autonomy and agency.
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INTRODUCTION

Frank Beyer is one of Germany’s most important twentieth-century film directors. Although his prolific career spanned East, West, and united Germany, and his personal history and his filmmaking are fascinating, Beyer’s work has received little scholarly attention.\(^1\) Certainly, Konrad Wolf, who has been the subject of much more scholarship in regards to his influence on East German cinema, made more films than Beyer and was more dedicated to antifascism and to the German Democratic Republic (GDR).\(^2\) However, this should not keep us from recognizing Beyer’s artistry in film. Wolf and Beyer were both part of the “second generation” of directors at the DEFA Film Studios (*Deutsche Film Aktiengesellschaft*), the state-


subsidized studios of East Germany (the GDR), which started making films in the late 1950s. Yet Beyer’s career took a shape that was unlike Wolf’s, beginning with their education in directing at very different film schools: Beyer at FAMU in Prague, and Wolf at VGIK in Moscow.

As members of the second generation of DEFA film directors, both Beyer and Wolf were committed to the task of exploring and rethinking the Nazi years. According to Frank Stern, this generation of directors helped “to establish new ways of dealing with the Nazi legacy and German-Jewish relations” in the years following Hitler’s defeat. As Sabine Hake has pointed out, the two directors utilized very different film styles, with Beyer tending to explore both modernist and realist forms using innovative cinematography and unusual camera angles, and Wolf working documentary-style footage into his Soviet-influenced version of modernism. She also remarks on similarities, however. For example, at times both directors relied on flashbacks, the superimposition of images, and chiaroscuro lighting reminiscent of Expressionist films of the 1920s, such as Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari (The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari, dir. Robert Wiene, 1920). Just as other artists shaped nuanced ways of representing East German antifascism, both Beyer and Wolf contributed to this discourse with films about Nazi persecution of leftists and Jews.

In contrast to Hake’s emphasis on similarities between Wolf and Beyer’s antifascist films, I contend that Beyer’s films complicated the interpretation of “antifascism” more than has been understood. Beyer made three films that touched on the Holocaust, all based on novels:

______________________________________________________________
3 Other second generation directors include Heiner Carow, Gerhard Klein, Joachim Kunert, Frank Vogel.

Nackt unter Wölfen (Naked among Wolves, 1963), Jakob der Lügner (Jacob the Liar, 1974), and Wenn alle Deutschen schlafen (While All Germans Sleep, 1994). Only the first of these, Naked among Wolves, can really be considered a true antifascist film in a socialist realist sense. Beyer was a forerunner of using children as central characters in fictional feature films about the Holocaust. The three films discussed in this dissertation were among the earliest to do so, both in Germany and internationally. Earlier films made in the Soviet Occupation Zone (SBZ) (into 1949) and GDR (thereafter) had focused on the Holocaust and Nazi persecution of Jews, including Die Mörder sind unter Uns (The Murderers are Among Us, dir. Wolfgang Staudte, 1946), Ehe im Schatten (Marriage in the Shadows, dir. Kurt Maetzig, 1947) and Sterne (Stars, dir. Konrad Wolf, 1959). But where Maetzig and Wolf might include children to showcase adult characters in their Holocaust films, Beyer increasingly used children and childhood as a narrative device to convey both the horrors of the Holocaust, and the ways that individuals in its midst exhibited ethical means of resistance with life-affirming results. This dissertation seeks to explore and illustrate this aspect of Beyer’s filmmaking.

**Children in Holocaust Films**

Before turning to Frank Beyer’s films, a selection of other Holocaust films can give us a sense of how children have appeared in these stories. Recent films indicate that child figures in Holocaust settings continue to capture modern audiences’ attention, perhaps even increasingly so, seventy years after the end of World War II.

As Yehuda Bauer notes regarding general interest in the Holocaust, it “is not going away; on the contrary, the Holocaust has become a cultural code, a symbol of evil in Western civilization.” In contrast to other genocides, Bauer points out,
It is the murder of Jews that brings forth a growing avalanche of films, plays, fiction, poetry, TV series, sculpture, paintings, and historical, sociological, psychological and other research. [. . .] Some of it, it is true, is kitsch. Some is not, however. And we must never forget that massive interest in the Holocaust in the United States and Canada arose from the NBC series Holocaust, a kitschy production if there ever was one.\textsuperscript{5}

As Bauer notes, many academic disciplines and art forms – including films – provide vehicles that are reshaping and reinforcing the memory of the Holocaust. And many films contributing to this international interest have used children as narrative devices.

Some of the earliest, serious feature films to confront the topic of the Holocaust were made in the SBZ and GDR. The Murderers are Among Us and Marriage in the Shadows also have the distinction of being the first two German postwar films, east or west, to comment on the Nazi genocide. Marriage in the Shadows, released in 1947 and directed by Kurt Maetzig, was the first German portrayal of Nazi persecution of Jews, depicting the true story of famous movie star Joachim Gottschalk and his Jewish wife, theater actress Meta Wolff.\textsuperscript{6} While the East German films focused on the impact of the Holocaust on Germans, Wanda Jakubowska’s Ostatni Etap (Poland, The Last Stage, 1948) was the first film to be set in a concentration camp.

Children play no or only minor roles in these early Holocaust films. Interestingly, Maetzig erased the story of the Gottschalk’s actual twelve-year-old son, whose life they also took in their suicide. In The Last Stage, children function primarily as symbolic visualizations

\textsuperscript{5} Yehuda Bauer, “A Past That Will Not Go Away,” in The Holocaust and History: The Known, the Unknown, the Disputed, and the Reexamined, ed. Michael Berenbaum et al. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998), 12-23. Here, 12.

\textsuperscript{6} Christine Mückenberger, “Zeit der Hoffnungen, 1946 bis 1949,” in Das zweite Leben der Filmstadt Babelsberg: DEFA-Spielfilme 1946-1992, ed. Ralk Schenk et al. (Berlin: Henschel, 1994), 8-49. Here, 16. Maetzig was also paying tribute to his mother who committed suicide rather than face deportation, it is certainly possible that the story of the child is omitted so that the focus could remain on the fate of the Jewish woman and her husband (“Marriage in the Shadows: Synopsis,” DEFA Film Library, accessed on February 10, 2016, https://ecommerce.umass.edu/defa/film/3633).
that underscore the extreme and systematic violence that characterized the extermination camps. The film highlights the murder of children in two scenes. In one, a Nazi approaches a newborn baby with a syringe he has just filled from a bottle labeled “poison.” In the other, Nazis with guns guide countless children on a march to a field that later burns; this is followed by a scene—quoted in Alain Resnais’ *Nuit et brouillard* (*Night and Fog*, 1955)—that shows piles of toys, shoes, and other personal items. The cinematography of these scenes allows the audience to infer that the children are murdered without actually showing them dying or deceased. Such early symbolic references to child victims helped develop a filmic language that expresses the terror we associate with the genocide.7

Along the same lines, GDR filmmaker Konrad Wolf contributed a later Holocaust narrative that also places children in conspicuous but not central roles. His Bulgarian-East German co-production released in 1959, *Stars*, includes a large group of schoolchildren, who help to demonstrate the kindness and character of Ruth, a Greek Jewish woman in a transit camp in Bulgaria. Ruth is shown teaching the alphabet to the children in the transit camp, as well as pleading for help for a pregnant woman going into labor. Because the idea of mass extermination of children is meant to contribute to the film’s pathos and not the story of an individual child, no one child is singled out and introduced to us.

The first example of placing a child character in a central role came with the 1959 release of the US film adaptation *The Diary of Anne Frank* (dir. George Stevens), based on Frank’s published diary, *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl* (1947). Fascination with this thirteen-

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year-old Jewish girl—who temporarily escaped the roundups of Jews in Amsterdam by hiding in the attic of a factory office, but eventually died in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp—has continued through plays and films, as well as TV-movies and mini-series. The 1959 film, in which the girl’s perspective and voice are placed at the center of the narrative, certainly had an impact on many Holocaust films that followed.

Many films of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s document the continuing fascination with the Holocaust; many were very well received, with some winning Academy Awards. Only a handful of the films produced during these decades show children in central roles, however. Following the wide attention gained by the historical figure of Anne Frank, Beyer’s choice to give the child a central role in a Holocaust film with *Naked among Wolves* was well-timed in 1963. Although neither *Naked among Wolves* nor Beyer’s *Jacob the Liar* (1974) are copies of Anne Frank’s story, the hidden child seems to be one of the main connections of these narratives.

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8 In the 1960s, several countries released feature films about the Holocaust, including the United States, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Belgium, Yugoslavia, and France. Starring German exile Marlene Dietrich, as well as Montgomery Clift, William Shatner, Spencer Tracy, and Judy Garland among other recognizable Hollywood actors, Stanley Kramer’s *Judgment at Nuremberg* (1961) focused on the military tribunal of 1947 and German guilt in the genocide and won two Academy Awards for Best Actor and Best Adopted Screenplay. *The Pawnbroker* (dir. Sidney Lumet, 1965) was the first Holocaust film from the United States that focused on the perspective of a survivor. It entered in the Berlinale in 1964. With the use black-and-white cinematography and flashbacks, the film has similarities to the European New Waves. With directors who studied at FAMU, *Obchod na korze* (Czechoslovakia, *The Shop on Main Street*, dirs. Elmar Klos and Ján Kadár, 1965) is about the “aryanization” of a small Slovak town occupied by Nazis and a local man’s working partnership with an elderly Jewish woman whom he accidently kills while trying to save her from deportation. This film was part of the Czech New Wave and won the 1965 Academy Award for the Best Foreign Language Film, a notable accomplishment for an Eastern Bloc entry.
The 1980s saw an increase in films about racial persecution featuring Jewish children. Once again, East Germany’s DEFA studios were a forerunner in this type of narrative. Several DEFA films of the 1980s depict varying levels of racial persecution with children in central roles, but they are not Holocaust films; they do not take place in a concentration camp or ghetto. Those that feature young children or adolescents in main or central supporting roles include: *Jan auf der Zille* (*Jan on the Barge*, dir. Helmut Dziuba, 1986); *Stielke, Heinz, fünfzehn* (*Stielke, Heinz, fifteen*, dir. Michael Kann, 1987); *Die Schüsse der Arche Noah* (*The Shots of Noah’s Ark*, dir. Egon Schlegel, 1983); *Kindheit* (*Childhood*, dir. Siegfried Kühn, 1987). A more direct portrayal of the Holocaust, yet one that nevertheless does not take place in a concentration camp, is French director Louis Malle’s *Au revoir les enfants* (*Good-bye Children!*), 1987). *Good-bye Children!* is autobiographical account of his childhood experience in a Catholic boarding school where one of his friends turned out to be a Jewish boy in hiding, and Nazis discover him, and take him away, presumably to a concentration camp.

Since 1990, children have been at the center of many films on the Holocaust. In post-unification Germany, the DEFA studios produced a film for young people, *Die Sprungdeckeluhr* (*The Pocket Watch*, dir. Günter Friedrich, 1991), which is about a Jewish brother and sister on the run from the Nazis in search of their parents. Although many children appear in Academy Award-winning *Schindler’s List* (dir. Steven Spielberg, 1993), a silent young girl in a red coat clearly symbolizes all Jewish children – and arguably all Jewish victims – murdered in the Holocaust. Winning the Grand Prix at the 1998 Cannes Film Festival and multiple Academy Awards in 1999, *La vita è bella* (*Life is Beautiful*, dir. Roberto Benigni, 1997) tells the story of a librarian who ends up in a concentration camp with his son. He protects his son in the concentration camp – very much like the men in *Naked among Wolves* and *Jacob the Liar* – by
playing games with him to keep him quiet and hidden from the Nazis. The US remake of *Jakob the Liar* (dir. Peter Kassovitz, 1999) – like Frank Beyer’s 1974 film, based on the novel by Jurek Becker – shows that Jakob’s real secret is a young girl who escaped a transport train and whom he, as a form of individual resistance, keeps in hiding to protect her from the Nazis. A slight twist on the topic, the film adaptation *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas* (UK/USA, dir. Mark Herman, 2008) depicts the Holocaust through the eyes of an eight-year-old son of a Nazi, who sneaks into a concentration camp to play with a Jewish boy. Finally, winning the Grand Prix at the 2015 Cannes Film Festival and an Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film, *Saul fia* (*Son of Saul*, dir. Lázló Nemes) focuses on a Jewish man in Auschwitz who is forced to clear out the bodies of those gassed and take them to the crematorium. While other members of the *Sonderkommando* plan a rebellion, he strives to save the body of a boy, whom he claims as his son, and give him a proper burial. The film emphasizes the man’s determination to take ethical action, but it also depicts the desperation he endures to an exhausting and frustrating end. Also in 2015, German television released a new adaptation of *Naked among Wolves* (dir. Philip Kadelbach); like Beyer’s 1963 version, it places a toddler in the center of the narrative. However, Kadelbach’s film focuses more on the men than Beyer’s film does; he shifts the narrative emphasis to Pippig, the child’s main caretaker, and downplays the rebellion that is in Beyer’s film and Apitz’s novel.

**Antifascism in the GDR**

In order to analyze Frank Beyer’s Holocaust films, it is also necessary to understand events in Germany, especially East Germany between 1945 and 1990 and the complicated political and cultural shifts that affected his art. Central to these was the concept of antifascism, which became the motivating force in a range of cultural phenomena: national legitimation, the
status of Jews, Socialist Realism and concepts of resistance. This section explores the history of the concept and its ramifications.

The Role of Antifascism in the East German State

After World War II, Germany was divided into four occupation zones controlled by the four Allies. Explaining political changes in Germany immediately following the war, historian Jon Olsen writes that in the SBZ the dominant discourse focused on “the Communist view that fascism was the climax of capitalism.” He writes:

Communists in the SBZ [Soviet Occupation Zone] developed a rhetorical dichotomy that equated fascism with capitalism and antifascism with communism. The corollary of this dichotomy implied that only communism represented the antifascist elements of society and thus provided the struggle for communism with a strong moral argument in the effort to rally support.⁹

As “The Cold War took hold and took its toll on keeping Germany unified,” he continues, the GDR set out from its beginning, in 1949, to demonstrate how diametrically opposed it was to European fascism. This moral argument was central to the antifascist myth that was central to the GDR’s self-legitimation. According to this myth, antifascist (i.e., anti-Nazi) resistance fighters were the true founders of the socialist state—in that they were both Germans, and had fought an ethical battle against National Socialism. This narrative was especially important in setting East Germany apart from West Germany after its founding in 1949.

Under Walter Ulbricht —secretary of the SED and thus leader of the GDR from 1949 until 1971—the SED was more repressive, including in cultural domains, with traits Ulbricht

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adopted during his WWII exile in the Soviet Union under Stalin. In this spirit, Soviet tanks put down an uprising in 1953, secret police and citizens kept tabs on potential dissidents, and the Berlin Wall was built in 1961. During this period East Germany contrasted itself to West Germany by representing itself as the “better Germany” and the “sole successor state.” West Germany responded in kind, adopting the Hallstein Doctrine, which denied the GDR statehood, in 1955. When Erich Honecker became SED Secretary in 1971, East Germany’s relations with West Germany improved and the socialist state soon gained international recognition.\textsuperscript{10} Just as under Ulbricht, this had an impact on how the SED’s Ministry of Culture operated. Even in periods of relative repression, in the last two decades of the GDR’s existence there was nevertheless more room for debate and resistance among the general population and artists. Finally, as Olsen has pointed out, the forces of dissonance and resistance “United during 1989 to topple the government, tear down the Berlin Wall, and bring an end to communist rule.”\textsuperscript{11} The following year saw radical economic and social change in East Germany and culminated in the unification of the former foes on October 3, 1990.

While both East and West Germany (the FRG) were confronted with guilt for the atrocities and injustices of the Nazi years, the leaders of neither state wanted to openly admit to participating in these. At first, the leaders of both German states avoided topics such as involvement with the Nazi party or Wehrmacht, or compliance with anti-Semitic policies. Unsurprisingly, they did this in very different ways. According to Jeffery Herf, West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, the dominant political figure of the first two postwar decades in the FRG, “fostered a public stance of silence and avoidance […] and pursued power via votes by

\textsuperscript{10} Olsen, Tailoring Truth, 2.

\textsuperscript{11} Olsen, Tailoring Truth, 2.
de-emphasizing the memory of the crimes of the Nazi era.”

Under Adenauer, according to Thomas Fox,

West Germany was characterized by repression and denial regarding the Holocaust, although it did, against popular opinion, agree to pay reparations to Israel (in exchange, West Germany gained a measure of international acceptance and was allowed to join NATO). [ . . .] West Germany also maintained [ . . .] a distressing continuity of National Socialist professionals in the government, teaching profession, and the judiciary; these professionals were obviously not interested in a public project of analysis, remembrance, and mourning.

West Germany did not publicly deal with this guilt until pushed to do so by the 1968 social movements, when the younger generation challenged their parents and grandparents about their role in the Nazi years and even more so when the United States mini-series *Holocaust* (dir. Marvin Chomsky, 1978) aired in West Germany in 1979.

In a very different trajectory, the antifascist discourse that formed the backbone of GDR identity distanced the country from Nazism by definition. As Frank Stern has pointed out, in the SBZ and, later, East Germany, “Antifascist attitudes ranged from the hope of the revival of the radical liberal climate German culture to the leftist dream of a socialist Germany that would avoid all the failures and mistakes of the 1920s and 1930s.”

In East Germany and as early as the SBZ, those who returned from exile – including Jews and communists – and those who stayed in Germany or who were sent to prison and concentration camps participated in shaping the discourse about antifascism. Many survivors longed for antifascist ideals of a just society to

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14 Fox, *Stated Memory*, 5-6.

come to fruition in the GDR, especially in light of the devastation as a result of persecution against socialists, communists, Jews, the disabled, and many other groups who suffered during the Nazi years.

Since the country needed to make a clean break with the Nazi period and West Germany, the GDR claimed roots in German history that reached back before the Nazi takeover. In working toward proving the claim of being the better Germany, according to Olsen,

The SED calculated that the elevation of the antifascist resistance movement as a significant and positive influence during the Nazi period could offer a liberating path out of the guilt that plagued many in postwar German society. Party officials believed that they could convince Germans who followed the antifascist corollary to its logical conclusion that they could absolve themselves of guilt by supporting the Communist (i.e. antifascist) cause.\(^\text{16}\)

This argument was the “anti-fascist myth,” which Berghahn, among others, claim, “played a crucial role in the construction of the GDR’s national identity and was instrumentalized to reinforce the GDR’s legitimacy as the only anti-fascist German state, and thus the ‘better Germany.’”\(^\text{17}\) In fact, the use of the term “antifascism,” for most of GDR history, covered the general population and party authorities in such a way as to not only absolve themselves of guilt, but also to avoid having to reconcile.

**Jews in the GDR**

In the immediate postwar years, early leaders of the Communist Party of Germany (KPD), such as Ottomar Geschke, supported the inclusion of Jews in the public memory of World War II and the concentration camps. With events such as the first “day of memory for

\(^{16}\) Olsen, Tailoring Truth, 21.

victims of fascism” on September 9, 1945, the KPD recognized those killed during the war. However, in 1945 this label “victims of fascism” was vague, but it came to be a synonym for Jews; it became central to debates in postwar memory politics, as well as throughout the forty years that the GDR existed as a separate German country. According to Herf, even though the victims included Jews and political fighters with no religious affiliation, the Communist Party’s interpretation of victimhood placed higher value on the political fighters against the Nazis, and thereby devalued Jewish victims. This system placed higher value on “fighters against fascism” (Wiederstandskämpfer) the synonym for Communists.¹⁸

Thus, even though the GDR started publicly dealing with the atrocities of the Nazis much earlier than the FRG, recognition of Jews in GDR culture was marginal. As historians Konrad Jarausch and Michael Geyer explain, one of the side effects of the fact that the GDR’s Socialist Unity Party (SED) “embedded [the Nazi regime] in a critique of capitalism” was to downplay the status of Jews as victims.¹⁹ This impacted how Jews were represented in the country’s memory discourse about the Holocaust. Shut out of public political discourse, some of the most effective ways that Jewish narratives entered East German culture—gently reinserting acknowledgement of the Holocaust—was in German-Jewish works of literature and film.

East German artists started almost immediately trying to confront German guilt and to convince other Germans in all of the postwar sectors to think and feel in new ways about the German persecution of Jews, for which not just Hitler was to blame. Leftwing artists in the Soviet sector and GDR tried to re-educate Germans to have empathy for Jewish victims of the

Holocaust, as can be seen in DEFA films as early as 1946. Filmmaker Kurt Maetzig – of Jewish descent and a prominent director and co-founder of the DEFA Studio – was a forerunner in this effort. Thomas Fox notes that, “Writers and filmmakers proved best able to interrogate and revise East German Holocaust discourse and with it the silences and taboos surrounding the so-called ‘Jewish Question.’”

And yet, the taboo was something that Jews of the Communist Party sometimes expressed, such as Salomea Genin and what she called the “great silence surrounding Jews” in the GDR. Fox finds that the leitmotifs of “silence,” “taboo,” and “repression” recur in critical discussion of Jews in the GDR. He notes that it was not only government discourse, but also that of the general public, which Jews also helped shape; in fact, “Party members of Jewish descent (Genin, for instance) treated their Judaism as any other religion, one that could be shed at will.” This was part of long tradition in the “German-Jewish symbiosis” that reached as far back as the German Enlightenment project of assimilation, also known as the Jewish Enlightenment (Haskalah), which has been largely attributed to the work of Moses Mendelssohn of the 18th century.

**Socialist Realism**

In terms of cultural policy, East Germany adopted the Soviet cultural tenets of Socialist Realism as encompassing art forms best suited to reflect and promote the ideals of a socialist society. The dominant art style in the Soviet Union since the 1920s, Socialist Realism was a theory of art, literature, and music officially sanctioned by the state. It was the prescribed canon of art throughout the Eastern Bloc during the Cold War, particularly for its glorification of the

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20 Fox, Stated Memory, 91.
communist values. Barton Byg points out that GDR antifascism was supported by the “Anti-fascist Democratic Basic Order,” proposed by the KPD at the end of the war and pursued until Stalinist cultural policy began to solidify in the GDR in the early 1950s. This order “implied a pluralistic and pan-German definition of culture”—reminiscent of the democratic ideas of the early postwar years. Even as the SED tightened its control of GDR cultural and political life in the early 1950s, East German artists participated in debates about art forms, helping shape the discourse around Socialist Realism.

While there were undoubtedly many artists who strictly followed the party line, the contributors to Elaine Kelly and Amy L. Wlodarski’s edited volume on the arts in East Germany suggest that the GDR also boasted many “strong pockets of innovation” that included not only underground artists, but also mainstream and public figures. For instance, according to Kelly and Wlodarski, musical and literary circles, included committed Marxist intellectuals such as Bertolt Brecht, Hans Eisler, Paul Dessau, and Christa Wolf, who “were all strong advocates of a socialist realist art that challenged rather than anaesthetized its audience.” From the start, artists thus provoked public reactions and participated in aesthetic debates that complicate how to interpret Socialist Realism of East Germany.

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This was also the case for some films emerging from the DEFA Studios since their beginnings in 1946. As the SED came into its own after the founding of the GDR in 1949, the themes of antifascism became a major factor for filmmakers, who were tasked with representing the antifascist struggle, socialist society and the birth of the GDR. This was, in part, because – unlike in West Germany where films were subsidized on an individual basis – films in East Germany were funded as a large industrial and national project. The predictability offered by government interest and funding, however – as Byg has written regarding East Germany as a “minor cinema” – also meant that the film industry in the GDR was much more modest than in the FRG. The film industry in East Germany found continuity in production groups, which Byg has claimed “developed a sense of collective identity, cohesiveness, and tradition that deemphasized the ‘great talents’ or auteurs [of other national cinemas].” According to Byg, the strength and consistency of antifascism as the GDR’s myth of origin “was one of the primary reasons DEFA could more readily function as a national cinema than its Western counterparts.” Consistency being key to developing a national cinema, antifascism was thus central to shaping

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24 Byg uses the term “minor cinema” to describe German cinema, adapted term from a number of uses in literary criticism, particularly Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. They praised “determinantization” and “minor literatures” - which they based on Kafka’s diary entry form Dec. 15, 1911, about the “literature of small peoples.” Byg argues that the concept of the “minor cinema” serves to illuminate the similarities between the cinemas of East and West Germany. He writes that both had dependence on government subsidy for their existence. “Demand was not enough to keep the industry alive in either part of Germany. The form of subsidy in each state was different, however.” “[East German cinema] parallels the minor cinema in the West, in that there was a struggle between the liberty of free individual expression on the one hand and the dependence on governmental subsidy on the other,” Byg, “German Unification,” 151-155.

25 Byg, “German Unification,” 152.

national identity through film production and viewership. This does not mean, however, that there was no room for shifting ways to represent antifascism in films.

While East Germany’s art scene was impacted by the SED’s politics and the debates about Socialist Realism, perhaps most surprising is how the Berlin Wall politics impacted changes in filmmaking. From 1961 until 1965, the GDR saw innovative and modernist expressions in film that could compare to the European “New Waves.” As Sabine Hake has pointed out, at this time “Writers in particular turned to innovative modernist styles to develop a critical perspective on the legacies of fascism and antifascism and to address the contradictions of everyday life under socialism.”

Filmmaking also shifted around this time into a modernist trend, and Frank Beyer was one of the forerunners of this wave. However, as many scholars have agreed, “Filmmakers’ hopes in modernist styles were soon shattered by the Eleventh Plenary which began in December 1965 that resulted in the shelving of an entire year’s production of DEFA films.” The first was Maetzig’s *The Rabbit is Me* (*Das Kaninchen bin ich*, 1965) and hence the nickname “Rabbit films” for the twelve films made in 1965-1966 that were shelved until 1990. With his film *Trace of Stones* (1965) included in the shelved films, Beyer was among these filmmakers. When the shock of this massive example of censorship wore off, it was the late 1960s and a lot of things were changing in the world.

**Résistance v. Widerstand**

A final cultural repercussion linked to the GDR’s commitment to the concept of antifascism has to do with the dominant understanding of resistance as Widerstand. Socialist

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27 Hake, “Political Affects,” 106.

28 Hake, “Political Affects,” 106.
realist doctrine was heavily invested in the representation of socialist heroes as single-mindedly devoted to the communist struggle against capitalism and the construction of socialism. While the socialist hero could be represented in different ways—for example, as hard-working farmers—post-WWII, the ideal was expressed at its most elemental in the figure of the resistance fighter: a committed communist who experienced no doubts or weakness. Even the idea of “resistance” and “defiance” has come to be seen in modern films as armed fighting in European countries that Germany invaded. The film *Defiance* (dir. Edward Zwick, 2008) provides one such example.\(^{29}\)

Writings on Nazism and the Holocaust have yielded other ways to understand the meaning of resistance, of course. Klemens von Klemperer, for example, draws an important distinction between the German term *Widerstand* and the French term *résistance*.\(^{30}\) *Widerstand*, according to von Klemperer, refers to the “German Resistance against Hitler and its role in the struggle against Nazi tyranny and its plan for world dominion.”\(^{31}\) The idea of *Widerstand* underpins the definitions and images of antifascism that appear in the arts of East Germany and is used to analyze the forms of armed, politically-charged resistance against the Nazis within Germany. In contrast, the French word *résistance* refers to the “European Resistance

\(^{29}\) Daniel Craig and Liev Schrieber play the lead roles as Jewish brothers in Eastern Europe who escape the Nazis and join Russian resistance fighters in the Belarussian forests. Schrieber also played Mischa in the 1999 Hollywood version of *Jakob the Liar* (dir. Peter Kassovitz).


\(^{31}\) Von Klemperer, *German Resistance against Hitler*, 1.
movements” that were, as von Klemperer explains, engaged in “a common fight to free their countries from occupation and to reinstate some form of national integrity and human rights.”

Von Klemperer critiques historians who have judged organized, political Widerstand as the more powerful form of resistance and dismissed other efforts – Résistance – as having little to no effect in defeating Hitler.

He writes that the historiography of resistance has given too much attention to the “representational theory of resistance, which insists upon correlating resistance with specific groups.” Instead, von Klemperer demonstrates the importance of individual acts of resistance in re-establishing the human dignity that the Nazis systematically tried to destroy. He writes: “In the German case, the groups in question tended not to go much beyond the point of ‘social refusal’ inasmuch as they primarily sought to fend off intrusion into their respective realms. But genuine resistance is above all a matter of personal decisions to stand fast and to fight evil, a matter of ‘self-discovery’ and ‘self-renewal.’”

Such acts ranged from Jews going into hiding, to gentiles hiding Jews, to spying and reporting on Nazis, to refusing to say “Heil Hitler,” among many more. As he claims, “Even if the Résistance was not effective strategically, if its impact was ‘puny,’ as has been exaggeratedly claimed, it gave back pride to the people, and hope to all men threatened by total dominion.”

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32 Von Klemperer, German Resistance against Hitler, 1.


34 Von Klemperer, German Resistance against Hitler, 1.

35 Von Klemperer, German Resistance against Hitler, 1.
resistance against Hitler is problematic, if we ignore or belittle the power in personal decisions to “stand fast and to fight evil.”

For the purpose of this dissertation, I borrow the term Résistance to refer to the ways that the characters, including Jewish characters in Beyer’s films—increasingly over time—participate in defiance against Hitler. By portraying a more nuanced form of resistance, Beyer’s films challenged East German attitudes about “fighters” vs. “victims,” by showing how individuals could practice defiance, even in concentration camps and ghettos. Child characters are central narrative vehicles in this project, allowing Beyer to bring these forms of resistance into stark relief.

Frank Beyer

Beyer was born in Nobitz, Germany in 1932. He went to school there starting in 1938 and later attended the Realgymnasium (high school) Ernestinum in Altenburg, Germany.36 His father and uncle – both Social Democrats – were killed during World War II. His father enlisted in the German army in 1942 (and Beyer described a family mystery about whether he willingly joined or was drafted),37 and died at the Eastern Front a year later; his uncle was a political prisoner who died in the Buchenwald concentration camp. Beyer helped his mother raise his brother, who was born shortly after his father died; he described these events in his memoir: “Alles Elend dieser Welt. Meine Mutter, eine junge Witwe von achtunddreißig mit einem Bengel von elf, der seinen Vater nicht recht gekannt hat, weil der so viel Zeit brauchte, seine

36 Beyer states in his memoir that his best friend Karlheinz met him on his way home from school in March 1943 to tell him he heard the news that his father had fallen in the war, which a letter from the army confirmed. Frank Beyer, Wenn der Wind sich dreht: Meine Filme, mein Leben (München: Econ, 2001). Here, 19.

37 Beyer, Wenn der Wind sich dreht, 21.
Familie durchzubringen, und mit einem Kind im Bauch, das ohne Vater aufwachsen wird, dem der große Bruder eine Art Vatersatz werden muss.”

In the obituary he wrote for his father, Beyer found a way to practice what he called “der Widerstand des kleinen Mannes oder der kleinen Frau,” by not representing a hero’s death for “Führer und Reich” (Hitler and Empire), as would have been expected in 1943. Instead, he wrote in the *Thüringer Gauzeitung*: “Auch mich verschonte das Schicksal nicht. Heute erhielt ich die schmerzliche Nachricht, dass mein herzensguter Gatte, mein bester Vati, Oberschützte Paul Beyer im Osten gefallen ist.”

Beyer wrote that the uncertainity about why his father enlisted in the army and his family’s political stance as Social Democrats made him wonder where his father stood in regards to questions of resistance and betrayal. He wrote: “Zwischen den beiden Polen Widerstand und Verrat gibt es die große Spanne der Anpassung. Wenn ich zurückblicke, stelle ich fest, dass mich dieses Thema in sehr unterschiedlichen Ausprägungen in vielen Filmen und immer wieder aufs Neue beschäftigt hat.” Although Beyer uses the term *Widerstand* in this statement, his meaning actually refers to what von Klemperer calls *Résistance*. Beyer’s filmmaking is clearly shaped by these influences on his life and career; his films demonstrate his abiding interest in World War II and the Holocaust, as well as daily life and contemporary issues. His films are powerful in their depiction of resistance against Nazism and their poetic expression of the effects of war.

Beyer’s education was interrupted at the end of the war in 1945 until the fall of 1946. As of 1946, Beyer’s hometown and his school were under the jurisdiction of the Soviet Zone of

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38 Beyer, Wenn der Wind sich dreht, 19.
39 Beyer, Wenn der Wind sich dreht, 20.
40 Beyer, Wenn der Wind sich dreht, 21.
Occupation. Beyer obtained his high school diploma in 1950 and stayed in Altenburg to work as the secretary of the Kulturbund cultural organization and studied film projection at the local college. Beyer then studied film directing at the prestigious Film School of the Academy of Performing Arts (FAMU) in Prague from 1952 until 1957, along with his East German peers Ralf Kirsten and Konrad Petzold, who later also became famous directors. Other classmates of Beyer’s at FAMU became the leading directors of the Czech New Wave, who made films full of dark humor that criticized the Communist regime, until the Prague Spring was ended by Soviet tanks in August 1968. Whether because of his time at FAMU or the relationships he established there, Beyer’s work clearly exhibits some of the same traits: humorous, playful and critical.

While studying at FAMU, Beyer also interned with Kurt Maetzig – one of the founders of the East German DEFA Studio and one of East Germany’s most influential early film directors. In 1954, Beyer worked in a practicum at DEFA under direction of Maetzig on the film Ernst Thälmann – Führer seiner Klasse (Ernst Thälmann – Leader of his Class 1955) and, in another

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42 Czech directors who studied at FAMU and were part of the Czech New Wave included Miloš Forman, František Vláčil, Věra Chytilová, Ivan Passer, Pavel Juráček, Jaroslav Papoušek, Jiří Menzel, Jan Němec, Jaromír Jireš, Vojtěch Jasny, Evald Schorm, Elmar Klos and Slovak directors Dušan Hanák, Juraj Herz, Juraj Jakubisko, Štefan Uher, Ján Kadár, Elo Havetta and others. Forman fled the country in 1968 and became a famous film director in the United States, with films such as One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest (1975), Hair (1979), and Amadeus (1984).

practicum in 1956, on the film Zar und Zimmermann (The Tzar and the Carpenter, dir. Hans Müller, 1956). According to Ines Walk, a film critic and writer for the DEFA-Stiftung, Beyer acquired special permission from FAMU to study abroad in his fourth year so that he could work with Kurt Maetzig again, this time on Schlösser und Katen (Castles and Cottages, 1957),

Beyer then directed his thesis film at FAMU, an anti-war film called Zwei Mütter (Two Mothers, 1957). It is a black-and-white film with an aesthetic similar to Maetzig’s Marriage in the Shadows, but without the Jewish perspective. Two Mothers is about how World War Two destroyed families, including two women who gave birth at the same time in the same hospital. In the chaos of the bombings during the war, the German baby dies, and the French baby gets accidentally assigned to the wrong mother. After this switch at the hospital, the French mother leaves, thinking that her child has died, but then returns to Germany years later and recognizes her daughter. The women eventually work out a plan that the child can have two mothers, as they can share the child. Two Mothers demonstrates how the collective could function to satiate a desire to raise a child and to help fill a void for a mother who mourns her deceased child. This theme of loss and collective raising of children appears again in Beyer’s later films, as discussed in this dissertation.

It is not only in film directing that FAMU shaped Beyer’s career, but also in the relationships he cultivated with the other students he met at FAMU. For instance, Vlastimil Brodský attended FAMU at the same time that Beyer did; later, the famous Czech actor played Jacob in Beyer’s Jacob the Liar. In fact, Beyer had hand-picked Brodský during his first attempt

44 Walk, “Beyer, Frank.”
to make *Jacob the Liar* in 1965. When Beyer and Becker finally made the film together in 1974, Beyer still had every intention of working with Brodský as Jacob.45

Back in the GDR after film school, Beyer’s connection to Kurt Maetzig, one of the founders of East German antifascist filmmaking in the GDR, also influenced his development, especially in his early antifascist films. The first films he directed on his own at DEFA were *Fünf Patronenhülsen (Five Cartridges)*, 1960, an antifascist historical film about the Spanish Civil War, and *Königskinder (Star-Crossed Lovers)*, 1962, a love story within an antifascist resistance narrative, with cinematography that references his contemporary, the modernist Soviet filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky.46 Sabine Hake notes that these two and *Naked among Wolves* (1963) make up Beyer’s “antifascist trilogy,” and that this trilogy was “part of a formally innovative socialist cinema.”47 While there are clearly many antifascist elements in all three films, I will contend in this dissertation that by 1963 Beyer’s work was already starting to show more nuance regarding the difference between *Widerstand* and *Résistance* than the earlier antifascist films he assisted on and directed; in this sense, *Naked among Wolves* can be seen as the beginning of stylistic experimentation he undertook in parallel to the European New Waves. The film he directed that was released in the same year, *Karbid und Sauerampfer (Carbide and Sorrel)*, 1963, a comedy about the immediate postwar with an antifascist message, showed even more playfulness with the conventions of antifascism and Socialist Realism.48

45 Beyer, Wenn der Wind sich dreht, 192.

46 According to the DEFA Film Library, the films also won the Medal of Recognition at the 1962 Karlový Varý film festival. See “Commentary” and “Awards,” https://ecommerce.umass.edu/defa/film/4053.

47 Hake, “Political Affects,” 108.

After the four antifascist films Beyer directed and that released from 1960 to 1963, he then directed his first *Gegenwartsfilm* (a film with a contemporary topic), *Spur der Steine* (*Trace of Stones*, 1966), which also turned into the first scandal that had a tremendous impact on his career. *Trace of Stones* premiered at the East Berlin theater “International” on June 30, 1966. Before that, it was shown at the *Arbeiterfestspielen Pfingsten* in Potsdam and was sold-out for a week,\(^49\) and it was selected by the DEFA leadership to compete as the GDR entry in the prestigious international film festival in Karlový Varý, Czechoslovakia. However, as a result of the SED’s Eleventh Plenary, *Trace of Stones* was among the banned and shelved films. It had already played in GDR theaters for eight days the SED – at the request of Walter Ulbricht, according to Beyer – staged riots.\(^50\) According to Beyer, with the Eleventh Plenary the SED seemed to intend to solidify party goals regarding art and cultural politics and to intensify blocking out western ideas. In Beyer’s view, it was about a purification of East German art. Beyer explains that the results of the Plenary – the banning of many films, books, theater pieces, and music were actually part of the “herrschenden hysterischen Atmosphäre” (“dominant hysterical atmosphere”) that consisted of misplaced frustrations about what the Party had expected the Berlin Wall to accomplish in constructing such a physical border around the GDR.\(^51\)

\(^{49}\) Beyer explains that sold-out houses for DEFA *Gegenwartsfilme* almost never happened any more in 1966. He also explains that the film was planned to have 56 copies in the GDR, which had never happened with such films in East Germany. See Beyer, *Wenn der Wind sich dreht*, 127.

\(^{50}\) Beyer, *Wenn der Wind sich dreht*, 144-151.

\(^{51}\) Beyer, *Wenn der Wind sich dreht*, 139.
Beyer then had to leave DEFA, but he was assigned a job at Dresden city theater, and he was allowed to work at the *Deutscher Fernsehfunk* (DFF, East German Television).\(^{52}\) While working at DFF, Beyer was allowed to work on co-productions between DFF and DEFA. With Jurek Becker, who still worked at DEFA, it was possible to set up *Jacob the Liar* as a co-production between DEFA and the DFF. According to Frank Beyer, Becker demanded to work with him and no other director on *Jacob the Liar*, since they had already started working together on this project starting in 1963.\(^{53}\)

After Kurt Bartel had given up directing *Jacob the Liar*, dramaturg Klaus Wischnewski asked Beyer if he would like to direct it. Since and it had been approved in 1963 and Becker started working with Beyer at that time, it worked out that the two could complete the project together. Beyer writes, “Parallel zur Endfertigung von *Spur der Steine*, im Herbst 1965, schrieben Jurek und ich das Drehbuch. Wir lieferten es am 15. Dezember 1965 ab; am nächsten Tag began das 11. Plenum der SED.”\(^{54}\) This claim is an important one, as it shows that Beyer and Becker were already collaborating as early as 1965. DEFA’s *Heinrich Greif Künstlerische Arbeitsgruppe* (artistic work group: KAG), approved the script and for the shooting to begin in the fall of 1966.\(^{55}\) DEFA also approved Beyer’s request that his good friend, the Czech actor Vlastimil Brodský play the lead role as Jacob. Brodský is another part of the collaboration that would pick up again in the 1970s.

\(^{52}\) Beyer, *Wenn der Wind sich dreht*, 152-153.

\(^{53}\) Beyer, *Wenn der Wind sich dreht*, 140.

\(^{54}\) Beyer, *Wenn der Wind sich dreht*, 183.

Writing the 1965 script set off the beginning of Becker and Beyer’s long friendship and professional relationship. According to Beyer, he and Becker traveled together to Poland for research on the Łódź ghetto and on that trip, they became close friends. Beyer writes in his memoirs,


Although Becker and Beyer started to cultivate a strong friendship in 1965, cultural politics destroyed their collaboration. The two worked together on the film Das Versteck (The Hiding Place, 1977) just before one of the main actors of the film, Manfred Krug, and Becker left the GDR to live in the West Germany.

Beyer hoped he would be allowed to keep his job, as he had reneged on the Biermann protest with which Becker and Krug went forward. He made the TV film Geschlossene Gesellschaft (Private Party, 1978), which is about a marriage in crisis, with actors Armin Mueller-Stahl and Jutta Hoffmann. The situation for artists in the GDR worsened while this film was being made and the film could be read as a critique of the GDR’s relationship with its most popular artists, who complained about not having state support. Authorities in GDR cultural politics harshly criticized Beyer’s Private Party and subsequently banned it, and his plan to keep his job did not last long. After this film, Beyer was not permitted any further contracts, and he was expelled from the SED in 1980.57

56 Beyer, Wenn der Wind sich dreht, 185.

57 Walk, “Beyer, Frank.”
Beyer then got a permit from the GDR to work in West Germany. He made *Der König und Sein Narr (The King and his Jester)* and *Die Zweite Haut (The Second Skin)*—with former GDR actors Angelika Domröse and Hilmar Thate, who had also left the GDR after the Biermann affair—for ARD Television in 1981. Beyer writes that he also attempted to work with Becker on projects he wanted to direct, but that did not come to fruition; in the 1980s, according to Beyer, he received offers from the West German company CCC-Filmkunst to direct the film that would become *Hitlerjunge Salomon (Europa Europa!)*; Germany, Poland, France, dir. Agnieszka Holland, 1990). Beyer was interested in developing the materials that a survivor wrote about his survival as a Jew by using a false identity. However, when Beyer invited Becker to work with him on developing the materials into something more artistic for a film, Becker rejected the offer. According to Beyer, “Jurek glaubte nicht an den Stoff.” Beyer also had an opportunity to direct a West German production of *Schindlers Liste (Schindler’s List)*, which did not come to fruition.

With a well-established directing career in both East and West Germany, Beyer had no problem continuing to work after the fall of the Berlin Wall in unified Germany, where many other GDR directors and filmmakers did have trouble finding work. Beyer and Becker worked together again in 1994 to create the TV-film adaptation *While All Germans Sleep* (1995), based on Becker’s short story, “Die Mauer.” This was the only film project on which Becker and Beyer collaborated after Becker unofficially but permanently left the GDR, and after Beyer landed jobs

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58 Walk, “Beyer, Frank.”

59 Beyer, Wenn der Wind sich dreht, 315.
in West Germany while still a citizen in the GDR. It was the last project they collaborated on together before Becker’s death in 1997.

**Overview of Dissertation**

As Beyer observed his career when he looked back on it in 2001, he noted that he had been preoccupied with the idea of resistance, persecution and betrayal ever since his father joined the army and died on the eastern front. He worked on the theme of resistance throughout his filmmaking career. Instead of portraying antifascism in a way that adhered to the SED’s desired Socialist Realism, in the three decades of his career Beyer infused his treatments of the Holocaust with images of idiosyncratic individuality, representing the fight for personal dignity. Child characters became a central narrative vehicle in this project. The three Holocaust-related films in which Beyer situates a child at the center of the plot trace an evolution in his work from a somewhat straightforward socialist realist approach to a more nuanced and even perhaps playful exploration of historical events in all their complexity. In doing so, Beyer also increasingly brought child characters into the center of his narratives.

This dissertation focuses on Beyer’s three Holocaust films, which all forefront children in the context of familial relationships within concentration camps or Jewish ghettos of World War II: *Naked among Wolves, Jacob the Liar*, and *While all Germans Sleep*. It does so in an attempt to explore the genius of this filmmaker, while extending scholarship on the use of children in central roles in films on the Holocaust. Throughout, Beyer creatively explores the idea of resistance, bit by bit evolving away from a narrow socialist realist representation of antifascist tenets.
At first glance, *Naked among Wolves* appears to be a straightforward antifascist film, focusing on the Communist veterans held in the Buchenwald concentration camp during World War II. I have found, however, that the child in the film has a significant impact on the protagonists and thus contributes to a more nuanced representation of antifascist heroism than could be accommodated by the GDR’s socialist realist conventions. It is my contention that the child and his protectors in fact participate in a different kind of resistance, one that is life-affirming and transformational for both the boy and the men. Even though the film depicts organized, communist anti-Nazi *Widerstand* in the current historical debate, Beyer’s film also instills the individuals participating in *Résistance*. Especially in comparison to novelist Bruno Apitz and his work, in this film we see Beyer beginning to explore the limits of *Widerstand* and the importance of *Résistance*.

*Jacob the Liar* was called an “antifascist” film in the GDR as its premiere and screening in movie theaters was part of the 30th anniversary celebrations of the liberation of the concentration camps and headlined the “month of antifascist film,” which was a film festival featuring East German and Eastern Bloc films about antifascist heroism.60 Critical discussion about *Jacob the Liar* has also typically focused on whether or not the adults in the novel and film demonstrate *Widerstand* against the Nazis. It is more productive, however, to analyze the film based on the *Résistance* that it depicts among the Jews in the ghetto and to consider Lina’s influence in the defiance that Jacob practices. Lina has tremendous impact on the title figure, Jacob, and we need to reconsider her role as a co-protagonist.

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While All Germans Sleep demonstrates a large leap in Beyer’s evolution of the antifascist narrative. Of course, with the film made after German unification, it makes sense that the GDR’s antifascist narrative would be even less prominent in this film. In a different way than Jacob the Liar, this film is sophisticated in its narrative style; Beyer utilized the little boy Marek and the adult Marek’s voice-over narration that distances the viewer from what might be expected as a straight-forward narration. This has a similar effect that the flashbacks and color changes have in Jacob the Liar. It is clear in this film that an adult who survived the Holocaust as a child is looking back on his childhood. This film also demonstrates an evolution in Beyer’s use of child characters, who in this film have the greatest amount of agency and space to move. It seems that with this film Beyer’s point of view is also strongest, as he – as well as Becker – seems to be reflecting on his own childhood and family experience of the war.

Chapter Overview

The films included in this dissertation belong to multiple registers of scholarly discourse. They are adaptations from literary models; they are situated among East Germany’s films produced by the state-sanctioned directors, and they are among international films about the Holocaust which focus on children. In Chapter One, I provide an overview of adaptation theories, moral philosophy, and methods for analyzing representations of war and the gaze of the child, and I include an overview of the artists’ biographies. I also draw on Emmanuel Levinas’s philosophy about ethics and helping an Other in need, and theories about representation of war and the gaze of the child, as I argue that child characters in the works included in my examination represent outsider perspectives. The children are the Other to adults who take care of them, while they are also the Other to the Nazis. But in these films, we see the perspectives of these Others. In my new readings of these films and their literary counterparts, I do not offer a
new method of adaptation studies. Rather, I work with several scholars on adaptation theory to observe the many nuances of Beyer’s adaptations. In doing so, I acknowledge the multiple registers of scholarly discussion to which the films in this dissertation belong. Moreover, I pay attention to the artists who created the children’s gazes, created the art that provides the space through which the child’s gaze criticizes German history, the Nazis, the Holocaust, as well as public memory about the Nazi years and the Holocaust, the GDR, and German division.

In Chapter Two, I analyze Beyer’s first Holocaust film, *Naked among Wolves*. In this film, Beyer focuses on the story of a Jewish toddler boy as he depicts fatherhood and family, while also employing a narrative similar to the more traditional GDR antifascist narrative: Communist heroes on a mission to fight the stereotypical German soldiers in order to liberate themselves from Buchenwald concentration camp. *Naked among Wolves* is an antifascist film in the sense that it de-centers the Holocaust in the tradition of Socialist Realism, as the characters only hint at the atrocities of the genocide. However, Beyer also de-centers the story of the antifascist hero to place a Jewish toddler boy in the center of the story; rather than focus on one hero, he depicts several men who take ethical action to save the child’s life, and they become share paternal and maternal roles in caring for the boy. Although the Holocaust is not directly discussed in the film, it cannot be ignored that the child being rescued is Jewish, thus placing the Holocaust in a more central poistion in the narrative than other traditional antifascist films do. That Beyer places this child at both the beginning sequence (although hidden in a suitcase) and in the final scene of the film, with his voice heard screaming among the men rushing the gates of Buchenwald to free themselves, is also of utmost importance to understand the child’s significance to Beyer.
In Chapter Three, I explore Beyer’s second Holocaust film, *Jacob the Liar*. In this film, Beyer continues with the child in the opening and closing sequences of the film, but the child in this film has much more agency than the toddler in *Naked among Wolves*. Furthermore, Beyer places the child in a significant central position that is different from other versions of *Jacob the Liar*. Jurek Becker wrote Lina as an central character for Jacob, but he did not place her in the very opening and closing of his novel, and Peter Kassovitz omitted the most important moments with Lina throughout the film, but he placed her at the fantasy ending of the film. Furthermore, in *Jacob the Liar*, the Holocaust is front and center as the film is set in a Polish ghetto for Jews. In telling this story, Beyer moves Lina into the center of the narrative by placing her in the first few moments of the film, by showing Jacob spend time with her every evening, and then by Lina speaking the very last lines of the film in order to remind the audience of the horrors of where the train she rides will deliver her.

Another change in Beyer’s artistry with *Jacob the Liar* is his utilization of dreaming and fantasy scenes which were not at all part of Socialist Realism. A major way that Beyer accomplishes such scenes is to employ flashbacks and flashforwards, which are not in *Naked among Wolves* at all. The dream and fantasy scenes in *Jacob the Liar*, while part of beautiful and colorful parts of the story, at the same time detract from the horror of the situation that the characters face. Jacob is shown in flashbacks and in a flashforward with Lina – a silent moment which is the only time the postwar Soviet Occupation Zone is suggested in the film. Lina appears in her own imaginative fantasy scenes and in her flashforward, but never in a flashback.

In Beyer’s continuation of the theme of fatherhood and family in this film, the fight to maintain dignity is central to the story and again part of the characteristics of humanity that the child forces us to see. A huge part of Beyer – and Becker’s – story of fatherhood and family in
Jacob the Liar is the storytelling that Jacob performs for Lina, but also for his own taste of fun, of participating in a banal activity that actually provides for life-giving joy that both himself and Lina experience. This would not be part of the story without Lina there to provide Jacob an audience.

In Chapter Four, I analyze Beyer’s third and final Holocaust film, While all Germans Sleep in connection to Jacob the Liar and Becker’s short story, “The Wall.” In While all Germans Sleep, Beyer uses none of the visual effects found in both Naked among Wolves and Jacob the Liar, making the narrative more straightforward while still continuing elements of fantasy and play. In this film made twenty years after Jacob the Liar, Beyer uses a different narrative perspective that refers to the fantastical imagination of the young boy named Marek, and yet we arrive at a much more understated description of the fantasy that illuminates the horrors of the boys’s reality. Rather than the fantasy of dreams to sweep characters – and viewers – away from reality, as in Jacob the Liar, While all Germans Sleep never turns the gaze away from the Holocaust.

With Marek’s voice-over narration as both child and adult, we can see how this child character has the most agency of all Beyer’s child figures, and we can hear how the child survivor – now an adult – reflects on his childhood. Marek plays with his friends, attends story time at Mr. Tenzer’s apartment, and eventually plays with his father. Not only does Marek have sheer freedom of movement to play around in the ghetto and transit camp like no other child in Beyer’s films has, but he is also the only child who gets someone killed, even if by accident, when he cannot keep a secret safe.

Marek’s agency also leads to confusion of innocence and guilt, which the voice-overs and the visual narration on screen portray and which complicate the ways people today remember the
Holocaust. A major example is Marek’s mixing up reality with a fairy tale he hears, his knowing that Mr. Tenzer disappeared and thinking that he is to blame. Even though the film’s narrative implies that Tenzer has been killed by the German soldiers, the only guilt around his death is shown in Marek’s adult voice-over that suggests only years later that he is haunted by his betrayal of his friend. The child’s tears on screen also suggest his feelings of frustration, fears, and sadness as he comes to realize that Tenzer is gone. This portrayal of the child’s agency and question of his guilt complicates ways to think about the Holocaust, especially in comparison to how it can be simplified in ways that leave viewers accepting that only all German soldiers – or even all Germans – were bad people who let the Holocaust happen or participated in murdering children, and that all Jews were passive victims.

Finally, in the Conclusion, I seek to reconnect the threads of Beyer’s evolution as an artist. I conclude my findings that his artistry changed starting with *Naked among Wolves* as he already began to challenge conventions and the tenets of Socialist Realism, and he progressively changed his filmmaking style over the 31-year span that included his work with Jurek Becker on *Jacob the Liar* as well as *While all Germans Sleep*. I also discuss further research that would connect Beyer’s work to current-day Holocaust films such as *Son of Saul* and Kadelbach’s remake of *Naked among Wolves*. 
CHAPTER 1
THEORY AND METHOD

All three of the films discussed in this dissertation were adapted from literary models. This is not to claim that the literary models are higher art than the films, but rather to point out that is among the ways to situate the films in their appropriate context. The films included in this dissertation also belong to other registers of scholarly discourse: they are situated among East Germany’s films produced by the state-sanctioned directors; they are among international films about the Holocaust which focus on children; and they provide case studies to explore new methods in adaptation theory that privileges the films’ contexts. This chapter provides an overview of the theories and methods most productive for analyzing children’s roles in Holocaust films. I will discuss multiple theories from adaptation studies, Emmanuel Levinas’s philosophy about ethics and helping an Other in need, and theories about representation of war and the gaze of the child, all of which are necessary for this study. To begin, I provide an overview of the artists’ biographies in the following section.

Adaptation and Biography

Adaptation Theory

The theories that inform how I analyze these three films come from the work of Kamilla Elliot, Eric Rentschler, Susan Figge and Jennifer Ward. They suggest to consider a film in its context and treat it as a separate piece of art (not like traditional adaptation theory that sees

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literature as the superior model). In scholarship on film adaptations from literature, debates about how to analyze adaptations have traditionally focused on the film’s fidelity to its literary model. Perhaps the earliest alternative to the fidelity/non-fidelity binary in discussing the value of film adaptation was André Bazin’s piece, “Adaptation, or the Cinema as Digest,” which he wrote in 1948. After teaching about the cinema through a ciné-club at the Maison des Lettres – a place for students to continue to learn after World War II had disturbed regular schooling – and after the end of the Nazi occupation of France, Bazin was appointed as film critic of Le Parisien Libéré. In 1951, Bazin also co-founded the film journal Les Cahiers du Cinema. Many of his essays were not translated into English until the 1990s, and his work on adaptation was among them. According to Bazin’s interpretation of adaptation, films that are summaries, or condensed versions of novels are “digests,” but he explains that his use of this term has a positive meaning. For instance, Bazin references Jean-Paul Sartre’s comment that a “digest” is “a literature that has been previously digested, a literary chyle.” Bazin applies this idea to the cinema, arguing that, when done correctly, multiple forms of art (e.g. a novel, a play, and a film) can reflect the same work.

Bazin describes this adaptation as an “artistic pyramid,” a single work reflected in three art forms, with “the work” being an ideal construct at the top of the pyramid. He explains, “The chronological precedence of one part over another would not be an aesthetic criterion any more

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than the chronological precedence of one twin over another is a genealogical one.”

In one of Bazin’s examples of a successful adaptation – Andre Malraux’s *Man’s Hope* (*Espoir: Sierra de Teruel*, 1945) – which, as Bazin states, the author wrote as a film before he wrote the eponymous novel (published in 1937). Bazin argues that Malraux “was carrying the story inside himself all along.” Like Bazin argues about adaptations such as Malraux’s *Man’s Hope*, because the author was involved in both the script and the novel, chronological precedence cannot be the aesthetic criterion for assessing film adaptations and their literary counterparts.

Whereas Bazin argued for seeing adaptations as multiple forms of art that are different “reflections” of the same work, American film scholar George Bluestone argued in the 1950s that films and their literary counterparts be distinguished as two different works of art. Bluestone takes a stand for film adaptations to be seen in their own right, which in the 1950s was a challenge to film critics, who frequently criticized film adaptations for not being “true” to the story or to a novel as a whole. Bluestone’s argument places him on a different plane, but on the same general side as Bazin, as both argue against other critics who completely dismissed film adaptation as if it were not a valuable art form. Bluestone writes, “Between the percept of the visual image and the concept of the mental image lies the root of difference between the two media.” In other words, the visual image of the film differs from the image that readers can imagine (“the mental image”) from literature. Bazin described film as having a visual language, which was key to it being cinematic, as opposed to painting, a radio transmission, or literature.

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65 Ibid.

66 Bluestone, *Novels into Film*, 1.
Although Bazin and Bluestone have two different messages, they are still in agreement that 1) film was a valid art form that needed scholarly attention and was worth studying and 2) film adaptations were no less valuable than their literary counterparts.

Since the 1980s, film criticism about adaptation has taken a sociological turn to analyze films based on their historical context. Film scholar Dudley Andrew led the way in this turn with his book *Concepts in Film Theory* (1984) by defining several possible modes of relationship between the text and the film, which, for convenience, he reduces to three: borrowing, intersection, and fidelity of transformation. More film scholars took up Andrew’s call for this turn to context, as can be seen in Brian McFarlane’s *Novel to Film: An Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation* (1996), in which he argues that the criterion of fidelity for judging film adaptations needs to be devalued, and that instead, scholars and critics should look at adaptation as a convergence among arts. James Naremore agrees with Andrew and McFarlane, but his work goes back to Bazin as the influence, rather than his contemporaries. Naremore discusses the tendency to see the novel as a “precursor text” and that criticism typically focuses on “literature versus cinema, high culture verses mass culture, original versus copy.” However, Naremore argues for writers to see what Bazin saw in 1948 – the value of film adaptation as “digest” of

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69 McFarlane, *Novel to Film*, 386.


71 Naremore, *Film Adaptation*, 2.
literature – and end the discussion of binaries in favor of moving adaptation from the margins to
the center of contemporary media studies.\textsuperscript{72}

Film scholars such as Rentschler, Elliot, Figge and Ward largely agree with the shift
away from debates around fidelity and toward a more thorough analysis of film adaptations that
would include the sociological turn as well as other methodologies. According to Elliot, debates
about fidelity offer “false and limiting paradigms” in which words and pictures are opposed.\textsuperscript{73} In
similar debates about film adaptation, the literary piece traditionally trumps the film, as it is often
seen as the better work of art. According to Elliot, this problem has partially stemmed from the
issue of using the term “literary cinema” to describe adaptations of canonical literature. This is
not to argue against the artistic value of works in canonical literature, but rather to make space
for valuing their film adaptations as independent works of art. Elliot proposes viewing both the
film and the novels as separate works of art, and to use the term “analogy” to help ameliorate the
“fidelity wars.”\textsuperscript{74} In this dissertation, Elliot’s use of the term “analogy” is productive in that it
continues to move away from the fidelity debate. However, I do not use the term to discuss the
literature and films in this dissertation because they are more complicated that the term
“analogy” suggests.

In a similar vein as Elliot, but with specific attention on German film adaptations, Eric
Rentschler argues that scholars must look beyond the novel to notice other features within the
film. For example, in his chapter, “Specularity and Spectacle in Schlöndorff’s \textit{Young Törless},”

\textsuperscript{72} Naremore, \textit{Film Adaptation}, 15.

\textsuperscript{73} Elliot, \textit{Rethinking}, 2.

\textsuperscript{74} Elliot, \textit{Rethinking}, 185.
Rentschler argues that the film is a “reflection on history, the novel and the medium, rather than a reflection of the novel.” Similar to Elliott and Rentschler, Susan Figge and Jennifer Ward are interested in “what new narrative truth is projected: by virtue of the filmmakers’ response to the novel as an account of the past, through their use of the film medium, and with their agenda for a new audience in an evolving political landscape.” “Getting it right,” they argue, is not just about narrative fidelity; it is about the political, emotional, and historical stakes of the larger project of memory work.

Influenced by Elliot, Rentschler, and Figge and Ward, this dissertation will explore three film adaptations by director Frank Beyer on multiple registers. In each case, I consider the scriptwriter and director’s response to the literature and the production history of both works of art. In all three cases, the author of the literary piece also wrote the film script. I also consider German, and specifically East German, cultural history. I use the term “adaptation” rather than “analogy” that Elliot recommends, but the meaning of the word as I use it is similar to what Elliot calls for – breaking away from reading the films as “literary cinema,” which already suggests the film is inferior to literature. Because the authors included in this dissertation also tell stories that are related to true stories, but are not exactly autobiographical, we can also look at both prose and films in terms of their “authenticity” with respect to the artists’ biographies, as well as their representation of the Holocaust, wartime, and political prisoner experience. Thus,

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76 Figge and Ward, *Reworking the German Past*, 80.

rather than testing the films’ fidelity to their literary counterparts, we consider the authors’ sources for their “true” stories. Thus, instead of “fidelity,” this dissertation discusses “authenticity” of representation, based on the biography of the artists in the Third Reich, East Germany, West Germany, as well as reunited Germany.

**Artists’ Biographies**

Because this dissertation relies on adaptation theories which include the biographies of artists as part of the context for the making of films, this section explores the biographical information of Apitz and Becker, both of whom worked with Frank Beyer on films about the Holocaust with children in central roles. Apitz and Becker were from different generations, with a significant age difference of thirty-two years, which allowed for them to have very different experiences and perspectives of German history. They came from dissimilar backgrounds connected to Nazi Germany: yet they both survived concentration camps – Apitz as an adult political prisoner and Becker as a very young Jewish child. After the war, they both lived in the SBZ and East Germany, and they were members of the SED, a requirement to participate in the Writers’ Union. They earned their professional reputations as artists in East Germany and through their work with the DEFA Film Studios. Their experiences within these contexts helped shape their motivations and how they wrote their literature and screenplays about children in Holocaust narratives. Apitz and Becker found ways to connect their personal experiences to the stories they later made, yet only Apitz claimed to have represented autobiographical facts in his novel. The following section discusses details of the artists’ biographies that shaped the making of their works.
**Bruno Apitz**

Born in Leipzig in 1900, Apitz was active in politics early in his life. He joined the KPD in 1927 and worked as the Agit-Prop functionary for its leadership of the Leipzig region. In 1928, he joined the Bund proletarisch-revolutionärer Schriftsteller Deutschlands (BPRS) and was the chairperson of the Leipzig group. According to Lars Förster, “Apitz unterstützte damit als Schriftsteller direkt den Kampf gegen den Nationalsozialismus.”\(^7^8\) For his political stand against the Nazis, Apitz was arrested many times in 1933. He eventually landed in prison over a duration of eleven years, eight of which were as an inmate in the Buchenwald concentration camp.\(^7^9\) Förster states that in Buchenwald the SS sought Apitz and forty-five other political inmates who, they feared, had information about SS abuses and murder to report to the US troops, but other inmates helped hide them for three days. Apitz credited another inmate, Alfred Ott, for bringing him food and water.\(^8^0\) By the time Aptiz was liberated from Buchenwald (May 1945), he had lost most of his teeth.\(^8^1\)

Involved in the arts from a young age, Apitz found ways to practice sculpting, drawing and writing while in Buchenwald. His work includes a carved wooden figures: “Clown” (1943), “Eulenspiegel” (ca. 1942/1945), and “Das Letzte Gesicht” (“The Last Face,” 1944). The latter is a symbolic death mask – representing the many murdered victims in Buchenwald – which Apitz carved out of the famous “Goethe Eiche” (Goethe Oak tree) of Weimar that was inside the

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\(^{81}\) Förster, *Bruno Apitz*, 110.
concentration camp until a fire related to a nearby US bombing overtook it in August 1944. He also drew a self-portrait in pencil, called “Klagelied eines Häftlings” (“An Inmate’s Elegy,” 1944) which depicts Apitz in the concentration camp uniform, thin, and with his head aslant. Apitz started to write the novella Esther while in the concentration camp and finished it after the war while living in Leipzig. This novella is an interesting contrast to Naked among Wolves in the portrayal of Jews and Germans, and would be a fitting comparison to Konrad Wolf’s 1959 film Stars. Esther is a love story that presumably takes place in the Natzweiler concentration camp (31 miles southwest of Strasbourg, France) between a Jewish woman named Esther and a German inmate named Oswald, who was a Kapo to the camp physician. Oswald knows that the Jewish women will be gassed; he tries to save Esther, but fails. According to Lars Förster, Apitz wrote this novella based on the story that another inmate, Josef Pröll, had experienced in Natzweiler. Apitz continued writing after World War II, starting with an account of his experience in Buchenwald, called “Das war Buchenwald!” (“That was Buchenwald!”), which the Leipzig newspaper published in 1946.

Although he was loyal to the SED Party of the GDR and supported Socialist Realism, Apitz also challenged the Party’s expectations of him as an artist. The form of his writing was realistic, but the narratives also romanticize individuals at times. After the war, Apitz returned to

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82 Förster, Bruno Apitz, 96.
83 Förster, Bruno Apitz, 91 – 105.
84 The Kapo was a major leadership position in the concentration camp, usually working under orders of the camp elder, who took orders from the SS.
85 Förster, Bruno Apitz, 100-101.
86 Förster, Bruno Apitz, 124.
Leipzig, which was in the SBZ and GDR. He worked for the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* from 1948 until 1949. He then worked for a brief time as a “freier Schriftsteller und Autor” (freelance writer and author) at DEFA starting in 1950, and then moved into a dramaturg position starting in 1952. As Förster explains, none of Apitz’s work – other than *Naked among Wolves* – was ever filmed.87

Apitz’s relationship with the Party was rocky, and this affected his success as an artist. Perhaps the biggest struggle in the 1950s was the power struggle between those in the German Communist Party who – after the Nazi take-over in Germany – went into exile in Moscow, such as Walter Ulbricht, and those who stayed in Germany and ended up interned in concentration camps. According to Förster, starting in 1950 a good number of the Buchenwald resistance had become leaders in the SED. As part of a Stalinist cleansing of the Party, those who had been in the Soviet Union and had a different claim to power than the former Buchenwald political prisoners and leaders of the illegal International Lagerkomitee (ILK) – began accusations against the latter. Ulbricht and others alleged that those in Buchenwald had participated in Nazi war crimes by assisting the SS in the concentration camp. Förster explains, “Die zurückgekehrten KPD-Exilanten um Walter Ulbricht nutzten diesen Machtkampf, um die Genossen aus den Konzentrationslagern moralisch zu diskreditieren, an den Rand zu drängen und somit die eigenen Macht zu festigen. […] Die Gruppe der Buchenwalder Kommunisten verlor zudem sukzessive ihren Einfluss auf die Konzeption der Gedenkstätte Buchenwald.”88 Although Apitz seems to not have come under direct attack because he was not a Kapo or leader of the ILK, it is nevertheless

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reasonable to presume that the actions taken against former Buchenwald prisoners despite their dedication to the KPD would apply to Apitz as well.

Despite these problems in the SED Party, Apitz remained loyal to antifascism and socialism. As part of this loyalty, Apitz started writing *Naked among Wolves* as a screenplay. However, he did not set out to glorify Ulbricht, but rather the party’s strength through its members who were in Buchenwald. The novel can then be seen as a support of the Party line, but at the same time a challenge to its leadership’s way of remembering what occurred in Buchenwald. For instance, Apitz’s novel glorifies the KPD in terms of its German leaders in Buchenwald, whom he depicts as covertly resisting the SS in the camp. Moreover, as Förster indicates, Apitz intended for the novel to respond to Ulbricht’s power play.  

DEFA rejected Apitz’s treatment for *Naked among Wolves* in 1955, which ended his work at DEFA. Apitz later worked as a spy for the Staatssicherheit (Stasi, the East German secret police) for two years (August 1957 - October 1959). According to Förster, the Stasi gave Apitz the cover name “Brendel.” His work with the Stasi ended, however, when he became well-known as a writer and had many public engagements for his successful novel *Naked among Wolves*. As Förster notes, the Stasi’s closing remarks of October 31, 1959 read,

> Die DA [Deckadresse] ›Brendel‹ ist der Autor des Buches ›Nackt unter Wölfen‹. Durch diese Buch ist die DA in der DDR sowie auch in Westdeutschland und Westberlin sehr bekannt und populär geworden, so daß eine weitere Verwendung als DA nicht mehr möglich ist.

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91 Förster, *Bruno Apitz*, 137.

The first edition sold 10,000 copies, and by 1989 East German publishers sold a total of 1,105,000 copies. Apitz later wrote the novel Der Regenbogen (The Rainbow, 1976) and its unfinished sequel Schwelbrand (Smoldering Fire, published posthumously in 1984), which – set in Leipzig – center on Apitz’s commitment to socialism throughout his life. Apitz died in April 1979, and the urn with his ashes was placed in the Zentralfriedhof Freidrichsfelde (Central Cemetery at Friedrichsfeld) near the Gedenkstätte der Sozialisten (Memorial for Socialists).93

**Jurek Becker**

Born to Jewish parents Channa and Max Bekker in Łódź, Poland in 1937, Jurek Becker was a toddler when the German army of Hitler’s regime invaded Poland in September 1939. The Nazis forced the Jews who had not fled to the East into ghettos; Becker’s family was among the Jews moved into the Jewish ghetto of Łódź. Their family was then separated, and Becker’s father was sent to Auschwitz, but Jurek stayed with his mother. The mother and son were moved to Ravensbrück concentration camp and, later, to Sachsenhausen.

Becker survived the Holocaust most likely in hiding under the protection of his mother, who died at the end of the war. According to Sander Gilman, healthcare providers in the former Soviet Occupation Zone nursed Becker back to health, though he was extremely weak from starvation and could not walk for some time.94 His father, who also survived, decided that he and his son would continue to live in this zone which became the German Democratic Republic (GDR, in 1949). According to Becker, his father had made the decision to stay in the Soviet Zone because he had nowhere else to go. Following World War II, as well as the end of the

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93 Förster, Bruno Apitz, 184.

Holocaust, as the only surviving members of their family, Becker’s father decided to settle in the Russian occupation zone of Germany. Becker’s best guess was that his father chose this part of Germany simply out of convenience, not out of any ideological alignment with the Russians. His father never explained to him specifically why they settled there, other than that they had nothing and no one else left to call family other than the two of them; Becker’s mother, relatives, friends, and all those they were close to perished in the Holocaust, and so they simply stayed where they were, where they landed, in a sense. Furthermore, as Becker observes in his essay “Mein Vater, die Deutschen und ich,” he could have become an American writer, if his father and he had moved to Brooklyn, for instance. Similarly, he could have moved to Tel Aviv, or to Buenos Aires. Becker writes,

Aber nein, er entschied sich für die in meinen Augen exotischste aller Möglichkeiten, er bleib hier, bezog eine Wohnung, wenige S-Bahn-Stationen vom Lagereingang entfernt, und richtete es so ein, daß ich Deutscher wurde. Nicht einmal die paar lumpigen Kilometer bis nach Polen wollte er zurückgehen, wo er, wenn schon keine Verwandten mehr, so doch immerhin ein paar Freunde oder Bekannte angetroffen hätte.

Becker’s sarcasm about his father’s choice to live in Berlin exhibits his frustration with his father, but also with the situation that they were both Holocaust survivors.

After being permitted to leave East Germany for travel abroad – including working in the United States as a Writer-in-Residence at Oberlin College in Ohio – Becker managed the unusual

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96 “But no, he decided on, in my eyes, the most exotic of all possibilities, he stayed here, got an apartment a few S-bahn stations away from the entrance of the concentration camp and arranged for me to become German. Not even the few measly kilometers to Poland did he want to return, where he might have, if not for any more relatives, maybe a few friends or acquaintances.” Jurek Becker, “Mein Vater, die Deutschen und ich,” in Mein Vater, die Deutschen und ich: Aufsätze, Vorträge, Interviews, ed. Christine Becker (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2007), 247-268. Here, 247.
arrangement of settling in West Berlin without giving up his GDR citizenship or formally emigrating from the GDR. His screenplays included *David* (West Germany, dir. Peter Lilienthal, 1979) and *Der Passagier – Welcome to Germany* (*The Passenger*, United Kingdom, Switzerland and West Germany, dir. Thomas Brasch 1988). *David* is about a Jewish teenager who escapes the Nazis in Germany; on the run, he disguises himself as a gentile and eventually ends up in Israel, which was his dream since he was in Berlin. *The Passenger* is about a German-American Jew and former concentration camp inmate, who through a series of flashbacks provoked by shooting a film in Germany, confronts his own past.\(^97\)

Lillienthal, the son of German-Jewish emigrants who moved to Uruguay, co-wrote the script for *David* with Becker. Although Becker is listed in the credits as co-author, Lilienthal claimed in 1979 interview that Becker did not actually write the script. The following quote is from this interview:

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\(^98\) “… um Erkenntniss zu zeigen ist es meistens zu spät: Ein Interview mit Peter Lillienthal zu seinem Film „David“, *Medium* 9 (March 1979): 35-37. Jurek Becker corrected and focused my story and hared his critique with me. One cannot say that it is a script from us both; it is more so his edit of my model which was already there. Because he grew up in the GDR, he had a differnt experience with German language and with the German
Becker’s skepticism to which Lilienthal refers is most likely the stand Becker had originally taken against Israel’s politics, but later retracted. This skepticism led to Becker not writing the screenplay for the film, as it was not aligned with his political view. Rather, he edited the screenplay to stay true to Lilienthal’s story.

Becker also wrote multiple novels about life in East Germany. Becker based three novels on his experiences in the GDR: Aller Welt Freund (A Friend to All the World, 1982), Amanda Herzlos (Heartless Amanda, 1992), and Bronsteins Kinder (Bronstein’s Children, 1986).

Bronstein’s Children not only had the GDR as a subject of the narrative; it also returned to the topic of the Holocaust and its repercussions. Some of his other novels include Der Boxer (The Boxer, 1976), which also has Holocaust memories as a topic; Irreführung der Behörden (Misleading the Authorities, 1973); many short stories, including Jewish perspectives in “Die Mauer” (“The Wall,” 1980) and “Die beliebteste Familiengeschichte” (The Most Beloved Family Story,” 1980). He then returned to write screenplays for the film adaptations Bronstein’s Children (dir. Jerzy Kawalerowicz, 1991) and Wenn alle Deutschen schlafen (While All Germans

people. The whole thing came from a very harmonious, but on the other hand very controversial stance. He feels – I think – a greater obligation to his country, he is more sceptical of Zionist thought, even historical Zionism, than I am. He sees the current situation in Israel much more strictly through his socialis upbringings, which I share with him, but do not observe as rigorously as he does. Jurek Becker troubled himself endlessly to respect my work, which he could not lay down as the author. If he had written the original story, something very different would have come out.


100 Rock, Jurek Becker, 18.
Sleep, dir. Frank Beyer, 1994), which he adapted from “The Wall.” He also created the television series with his long-time close friend Manfred Krug, called Liebling Kreuzberg which ran on television (on ARD) for five seasons form 1986 through 1998. Becker wrote all of the seasons except for season four, which Ulrich Plenzdorf – a famous former East German author – wrote. The show was a hit in West Germany, and it continued to be successful well after German unification. Here again, the collaboration with other artists who had lived and worked in the GDR appears an important factor for Becker’s career.

Becker’s Jewishness

Becker’s writing and his motivations for writing the topics that he chose are the most intriguing. Since he was not originally a German citizen and had to learn German in school after suffering for years at the hands of Germans during the Holocaust, his life stands out as the most fascinating. The following section discusses Becker’s own fascination with his childhood and other childhoods in the Holocaust. Since he could not remember his own childhood, he relied on others’ stories to piece together his own past, and yet it remained imaginary for him.

Becker’s fascination with children in the Holocaust is linked to his perception of his own Jewishness and childhood experiences. Becker described his Jewishness as linked to his parents foremost, but also to his childhood when Nazis persecuted him for it. This identity determined from outside of his own subjectivity fed into Becker’s sense of himself as an outsider—cast out

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101 Plenzdorf is best known for Die neuen Leiden des jungen W., an updating of Goethe’s Die Leiden des jungen Werthers in a GDR context. He wrote many screenplays in East and West Germany as well as in united Germany, including a “Rabbit film” Karla (dir. Hermann Zschoche, 1964), and the cult classic Die Legende von Paul und Paula (The Legend of Paul and Paula, dir. Heiner Carow, 1973), as well as three films that Frank Beyer directed: Der König und sein Narr, (The King and His Jester, 1980), Bockshorn (Taken for a Ride, 1983), and Der Verdacht (The Suspicion, 1991).
through exile, and then offered a place in Germany, the very country that had persecuted him. According to Becker, he did not claim his Jewish background, but rather answered questions about his ethnic origins and his family with the same rehearsed answer, “Meine Eltern waren Juden” (“My parents were Jews”). Reflecting on his childhood, he writes,


With this statement, Becker notes moments in his early life that were directly affected because of the Nazi invasion of Poland. More precisely, the Nazi invasion of his home city of Łódź directly impacted his childhood, his family, and the rest of his life. For him to say that being Jewish has “not a small consequence” for his “resume up to now” is thus a piece of the sarcastic wit that appears often in his writing. In this instance, it is the double negative of “nicht eben klein,” with which Becker means “quite a lot.” Essentially, Becker is listing the moments that led to him being an exile from Poland and a Holocaust survivor, starting at the age of two.


103 The situation – that I was born into a Jewish family – has had not a small consequence on my resume up to now. When I was two years old, my parents and I became inhabitants of the Ghetto of Lodz, my birth city, which shortly before had been renamed “Litzmannstadt.” Following that were stays in the concentration camps Ravensbrück and Sachsenhausen. When the war came to an end, my family, previously an almost uncountable sea of people, so I hear, was reduced to three survivors: my father, my aunt whom I cannot remember because she succeeded in fleeing, perhaps to America, after the German march into Poland, and me. See Becker, “Mein Judentum” in Mein Vater, die Deutschen und ich, 13.
Becker’s experience of catastrophic exile and survival of the brutality of the Holocaust lends him a unique “moral knowledge” that he writes into his child characters. He uses his experience of exile and violence as a site of “critical consciousness,” much like children in literature and films about war and genocide can demonstrate critical consciousness of the societies in which they live. This certainly appears in Becker’s writing, both in his fiction and non-fiction. His critical consciousness included asking questions about his childhood, first of his father, and then of the archives.

Other than the story of the man with the radio in the ghetto, the origin of the film *Jacob the Liar*, Becker’s father refused to explain to him in detail what happened during the Holocaust, their exile from their home, and the early postwar years that led his choosing the Russian occupation zone as their home. According to Becker, he asked his father many times about his reasons to stay in Berlin. His father’s response was usually silence, as Becker claims, “Er schwieg sich aus, er verdrehte die Augen und ließ mich stehen, als könne er nur so meine Fragen abwehren, die in seinem Ohren wahrscheinlich wie Tadel klangen.” However, one of his responses was the question: “Haben die polnischen Antisemiten den Krieg verloren oder die deutschen?” According to Becker, his father then acted “als wäre alles gesagt, [. . .] als hätte ihn die Auskunft bis zum Äußersten erschöpft.” In this statement, Becker’s father showed that he

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105 “He was silent. He rolled his eyes and let me stand, as if he could only fend off my questions in this way, which in his ears probably sounded like reproach.” Becker, “Mein Vater, die Deutschen und ich,” 248.

106 “Did the Polish anti-Semites lose the war, or the German ones? [. . .] As if everything were said [. . .] as if the information would have exhausted [the answer] to the extreme.” Becker, “Mein Vater, die Deutschen und ich,” 249.
did not trust the situation in Poland or in Germany, as anti-Semites made both places unsafe for them. However, the very curt answer left Becker frustrated.

Becker and his father were separated during the war, and the child ended up in a Red Cross hospital, emaciated from starvation in the concentration camps. Even though Becker’s father did not discuss details of the situation in Poland with him, it is very likely that Becker senior either heard about postwar treatment of Jews in Poland or may have attempted to return to Łódź himself, and returned quickly to Germany. His father, however, may have returned to Poland, and like many Jews who returned to Poland, found it had become a killing ground. According to Ruth Gay, “In the first two years after the war ended, between 1,500 and 2,000 Jews were killed in pogroms in Poland. Instead of a welcome and a homecoming, the exhausted survivors found themselves in a dangerously hostile atmosphere and urgently in need of elemental safety.” Places that seemed to make sense for Jewish refugees – Palestine, the United States, and most of the western world – were all closed off. Ruth Gay explains that as one of the “great ironies of the postwar world,” only one place in Western Europe was safe for Jews – “that was, improbably, Germany. The Jews of Poland fled for protection to the Allied forces who had divided Germany into four occupation zones and who seemed to the displaced Jews like sheltering angels.” Perhaps Becker’s father also had this protection in mind when he decided to settle in the Russian occupation zone in Berlin.

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108 Gay, Safe among the Germans, x.

109 Gay, Safe among the Germans, x-xi.
In the last interview before his death, Becker said that he once tried using his writing as a tool to stimulate a memory, but he was unsuccessful and eventually gave up.\textsuperscript{110} To supplement his inability to recall the past, Becker also conducted research in archives and read accounts by witnesses and victims of the Holocaust.\textsuperscript{111} This research enabled him to write in a manner that seems to reflect his own life experience, which he in fact deemed a fictionalized narrative.\textsuperscript{112} This kind of narrative, however, is not to be discounted simply because of its fictional quality. Becker’s use of writing to provide a way to try to remember coincides with Maurice Blanchot’s theory of memory. Blanchot states, “If forgetfulness precedes memory or perhaps founds it, or has no connection with it at all, then to forget is not simply a weakness, a failing, an absence or void.” To Blanchot, recollection is a starting point that would obscure remembrance in its very possibility, “restoring the memorable to its fragility and memory to the loss of memory.”\textsuperscript{113} In short the act of remembering cannot fully recall the full story of the past, as memory is faulty. Becker exemplifies Blanchot’s theory insofar as he forgot his own experience, and he tried to reverse that forgetting and remember his childhood. In this attempt, Becker created narratives that \textit{could} resemble his actual experience. He relied on historical research to recreate this narrative.\textsuperscript{114} Furthermore, as James Young explains, fictional accounts are nonetheless accounts. Readers can still take these as interpretations of events that reflect personal and subjective


\textsuperscript{111} Koelbl, “Gewitter,” 211.

\textsuperscript{112} Koelbl, “Gewitter,” 211.

\textsuperscript{113} Maurice Blanchot, \textit{The Writing of the Disaster} (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986). Here, 85.

\textsuperscript{114} See Gilman, \textit{A Life in Five Worlds}; Beyer, \textit{Wenn der Wind sich dreht}. 
memories. Becker’s blend of historical narrative and fictional narrative help to make Becker’s writing unique within Holocaust memory discourse, and he has been praised for this style of writing and his unique contributions to Holocaust literature.

Additionally, Becker’s Jewish origins enable him to offer a unique portrayal of sensitive Jewish and Holocaust issues, allowing him to pose “more delicate questions which others in Germany were unable to ask.” The qualities in Becker’s writing that mark it as Jewish and the fact that he privileges a Jewish perspective over political and national perspectives distinguishes his writing from that of his contemporaries in postwar Germany. Becker’s essay, “The Invisible City,” which, according to his widow Christine Becker, he wrote when “four hundred fifty photographs of the Łódź Ghetto were discovered and an organization planned for an exhibition” in the late 1980s. Becker received the photograph collection and was asked to write about the pictures. Christine Becker describes his reaction: “He examined them with feelings of horror, excitement, and hope, knowing they could depict his parents or even himself. And he wrote,


117 Rock, “Questions of Language,” 337.

‘The Invisible City,’ which begins with the bare facts about himself, presented in his typical sober and ironic manner.”\(^\text{119}\)

Becker starts “The Invisible City” with the facts his father told him and of which the photos reminded him: “When I was two years old I came to this ghetto. At age five, I left it again, headed for the camp. I don’t remember a thing. This is what people told me, this is what is in my papers, and this was, therefore, my childhood. Sometimes I think: What a shame that something else isn’t written there.”\(^\text{120}\) Christine Becker comments that these first few sentences “already provide insight into [Becker’s] lifelong burden to know that he lived during the Holocaust and to not be able to remember it, except through stories from his father… that became the topic of his text – and which characterized all his works.”\(^\text{121}\)

Becker discusses this “lifelong burden” in a 1997 interview with journalist Herlinde Koelbl. In the interview, Becker said that he did research on the Łódź ghetto to learn about his past after his father and other people he knew refused to talk about the Holocaust with him:

What kind of a thing the ghetto is I obviously knew much better afterwards than I did before. Before, the Ghetto was always this unsettling, menacing, black place where people lived, people of whom I surely was one. I just don’t know which one. I once wrote: If you don’t know where you are from, it is a little bit like walking around all your life with a backpack on your back, a heavy bag, and you don’t know what is inside. It is a very unpleasant state and dealing with it is almost a lifetime task.\(^\text{122}\)

\(^\text{119}\) Becker, “The Invisible City.”
\(^\text{120}\) Becker, “Invisible City,” np.
\(^\text{122}\) “It is Like a Thunderstorm: Herlinde Koelbl in conversation with Jurek Becker,” in My Father, the Germans, and I: Essays, Lectures, Interviews, ed. Christine Becker (Calcutta, India: Seagull Books, 2010), 174-190. Here, 178.
As he tried to unpack this “backpack” and try to understand what was “inside,” Becker indeed did write about childhood in the ghetto. For Becker, the tale is about the childhood that might have been his.

After *Jacob the Liar*, Becker worked with Beyer again when he wrote the screenplay for *The Hiding Place* and Beyer directed, with popular GDR actors Jutta Hoffmann and Manfred Krug in the main roles. Shortly before the end of production in 1976, GDR authorities expelled folksinger Wolf Biermann from the country. Beyer, Krug, Hoffmann, and Becker met with other artists at Krug’s house to plan their protest and they all signed a petition. Moreover, Becker was among the artists who criticized the GDR at the Parteiversammlung des Schriftstellerverbandes der DDR (The GDR Writer’s Union Meeting) on December 7, 1976. Questioned whether he later considered it a mistake to have published the letter in protest to Biermann’s expatriation in West Germany, Becker replied that it should not matter where he published it, but that the real question is whether to discuss the issue publicly or “intern behandeln” (handle it internally, within the GDR). He explains, this actually meant “unter den teppich kehren,” (to sweep under the rug), so he chose to discuss the issue openly. Becker also saw the Biermann issue as not only a German issue, but rather as a matter that had worldwide relevance. When writing about Biermann’s expatriation, Becker stated, “Öffentlichkeit ist letztten Endes immer die Weltöffentlichkeit.” Beyer, however, changed his mind and removed his name from the petition so that he would not lose his job at DEFA again. Krug left the GDR in 1977, and then Becker did as well, with a travel visa and carefully crafted letter citing his

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problems with work in the GDR and a job offer from Oberlin College. He wrote in this letter, 
“Seit geraumer Zeit lebe ich in Umstän
den, [. . .] unter denen ich nicht arbeiten kann und denen
ich nicht länger ausgesetzt sein möchte. Ich halte es daher für eine naheliegende Lösung, die
DDR zu verlassen.” In this letter, he also requested not to simply emigrate from the GDR, but
rather to also travel there often, most likely to see his family. With approval of this request,
Becker was able to establish residency in West Berlin.\textsuperscript{125}

\textbf{Child as Outsider}

\textbf{“Jew as Child”}

Despite the frequent representation of children in Holocaust films, academic scholarship
on them is rather scarce. The earliest academic book on the representation of children in fictional
Holocaust films is Annette Insdorf’s 1983 first edition of \textit{Indelible Shadows: Film and the
Holocaust}.\textsuperscript{126} Insdorf uses the label “Jew as child” for both the narrative strategy of portraying
Jewish children and adolescents, and portraying adult Jews as childlike characters. Films with
children or child-like characters, as Insdorf observes, highlight the “intimacy of family, insisting
upon the primacy of blood ties even as it demonstrates that individual survival was predicated on
separation.”\textsuperscript{127} This separation indeed occurs with the child characters discussed in this
dissertation; however, it does not always promise the child’s survival, such as with Lina in \textit{Jacob

\textsuperscript{125} “For quite some time now, I am living in conditions, [. . .] under which I cannot work and to
which I no longer would like to be exposed. I consider it an obvious solution to leave the
GDR.” Jurek Becker, \textit{Ihr Unvergleichlichen: Briefe} (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp,
2004). Here, 71.

\textsuperscript{126} Annette Insdorf, \textit{Indelible Shadows: Film and the Holocaust} (Cambridge University Press,
2003).

\textsuperscript{127} Insdorf, \textit{Indelible Shadows}, 77.
the Liar. Insdorf argues that the French films of her study depict the Jew as a “weak character, somewhat feminine,” and the protector as not only a stronger, more effective character, but also one that satisfies France’s coping with its guilt for not protecting more Jews during the occupation and the Holocaust.\textsuperscript{128} France has arguably produced considerably more films treating the “Jew as child” with protagonists who are actually children than as adults coded as child-like. Examples of films she places in this category include \textit{Black Thursday} (French: \textit{Les Guichets du Louvre}, Dir. Michel Matrini, 1974), \textit{Entre Nous} (French: \textit{Coup de foudre}, dir. Diane Kurys, 1983), \textit{The Two of Us} (French: \textit{Le Vieil Homme et l’enfant}, dir. Claude Berri, 1967) \textit{Goodbye, Children} (French: \textit{Au revoir les enfants}, dir. Louis Malle, 1987). She also recognizes German filmmaker Peter Lilienthal’s film \textit{David} (German, dir. Peter Lilienthal and collaboration with Jurek Becker, 1979), which has a similar narrative in which a teenager hides with the protection of Christians. Insdorf sees this tradition in French film history as part of the country’s coming to terms with its “abhorrent” wartime behavior and its deportation of thousands of Jewish children. The films emphasize the sense of Christian duty to protect the Jews, which according to Insdorf, indicated that French filmmakers were trying to make up for this wartime behavior in at least an aesthetic treatment of the subject.

The kind of \textit{Vergangenheitsbewältigung} that Insdorf describes is not the same in Beyer’s films. In the case of \textit{Naked among Wolves}, certainly a quasi-Christian imagery appears that highlights the child as the symbol of eternal life (for the Communist Party). However, unlike what Insdorf finds in many French films, the men in \textit{Naked among Wolves} are not depicted as religious Christians stepping in to help passive Jews. There is also not just one signifier of Jews or the Communist Party in the films discussed in this dissertation. Rather, the Jewish characters

\textsuperscript{128} Insdorf, Indelible Shadows, 77.
in each of the films have various kinds of agency that they practice in their resistance to the Nazis; they fight for and maintain their humanity and dignity. Even if this participation in Résistance does not also systematically defeat the Nazis, it was nevertheless a strategy to thwart Hitler’s plan to dehumanize and exterminate world Jewry.

In fact, in Beyer’s films made from Jurek Becker’s works, the Jews must protect each other, and there are no outside rescuers coming to help them. In the case of the German soldier who – atypically – helps Marek in Becker’s “The Wall” and While all Germans Sleep, he assists the two Jewish boys in complete isolation, where none of his superior officers could see. Here, the Jewish survivor who is narrating the story is, in a way, being kind to the rare German who helped Jews during the Nazi years, not writing out of guilt, as Insdorf suggests some French filmmakers did.

**The Defamiliarizing Perspective of Child Characters**

Germanist Debbie Pinfold explains in *The Child’s View of the Third Reich: The Eye Among the Blind*,¹²⁹ that child characters in literature frequently providing an outsider’s view of the world in which they live. In developing her argument about outsider perspectives of child characters, Pinfold refers to Russian formalist Victor Shklovsky’s 1917 essay, “Art as Technique,” in which he describes the purpose of art to “recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things [. . .]. The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known.” According to Pinfold, Shklovsky claims that writers achieve this “sensation” by using aesthetic devices that “defamiliarize our world.”¹³⁰ In doing

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so, the process can make the reader re-experience physical sensations (perceiving the stone as stony), or it can have a moral purpose (Pinfold explains that Shklovsky gives the example of “Tolstoy’s way of pricking the conscience.”)\textsuperscript{131} Pinfold then uses this idea from Shklovsky to explore how writers use children as a means of providing a new perspective that is out of the routine behaviors of humans.

The outsider perspective, according to Pinfold, has frequently been one of a character raised in the wilderness, or the perspective of a “mad” person.\textsuperscript{132} She states, “Paradoxically, [the mad] are often seen as having taken refuge from a mad world and so the ostensible madman’s viewpoint is in fact the sane perspective.”\textsuperscript{133} Pinfold traces transitions from German Romantic literature to works written about the Third Reich. The principal influence of child figures as romantic outsiders, according to Pinfold, is Schiller’s aesthetic treatise, \textit{Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung} (On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry, 1795/6), which associates the child with nature and innocence. Pinfold quotes Schiller: “They are what we were; they are what we ought to become once more [Sie sind, was wir waren; sie sind, was wir wieder werden sollen].”\textsuperscript{134} Pinfold finds that Schiller’s idea of the Romantic and idyllic child still prevails in literature and films. Pinfold finds that modern writers have turned to using the child’s

\textsuperscript{131} Pinfold, \textit{The Child's View}, 1.

\textsuperscript{132} Examples Pinfold offers are Wolfram von Eschenbach’s \textit{Parzival} (c. 1210), Grimmelhausen’s \textit{Der Abenteuerliche Simplicissimus Teutsch} (1668), Thomas Mann’s \textit{Bekenntnisse des Hochstapler Felix Krull} (1954), Max Frisch’s \textit{Stiller} (1954); Oskar Matzerath in Günter Grass’s \textit{Die Blechtrommel} (1959); and Siggi Jepsen in Siegfried Lenz’s \textit{Deutschstunde} (1968).

\textsuperscript{133} Pinfold, The Child's View, 3.

\textsuperscript{134} Pinfold, \textit{The Child's View}, 11.
perspective as the outsider with a critical viewpoint on the society and culture that is not yet its own.

Focusing on German literature rather than film, Pinfold offers a path-breaking study of the roles of young people in imaginative writing about the Third Reich and includes a history of the origins of children as outsider figures who offer defamiliarizing perspectives. Pinfold traces the role of the child in European thought and culture and places it in the larger context of the outsider’s perspective that writers have used since as early as the Middle Ages. Especially in postwar European writings, modern authors have often adopted the perspective of a child. According to Pinfold, the difficulty of the mad/sane and wild/civil figures led to a shift to child/adult with similar contrasts of perspective. According to Pinfold, this contrast points to the non-conformity of the character in its society. Pinfold writes:

> While it is still being socialized it may be considered as existing on the margins of adult society, and its perspective, however provisionally, is that of an outsider. Using a child’s viewpoint is a particularly effective defamiliarizing device, for a child has not had time to become jaded by the process of habitualization that Shklovsky describes.\(^\text{135}\)

Thus, according to Pinfold, the child’s perspective is an easier device than the “mad” person, because the child is born into a social and cultural context, but takes time to develop a sense of belonging. The child’s perspective is shown clearly when the narrator is a child, or the child’s interiority is explicitly shown in some way. This can be in dialogue or in narrative perspective. Films also do this with the camera’s gaze showing the perspective of the child character, spoken lines of the character, or voice-over narration. Psychology need not always be a factor to show the child’s perspective. In the following chapters, I will discuss the various outsider perspectives that the child characters have in the prose and film adaptations and the meanings implied in their outsider role. I am primarily influenced in my use of the term “outsider perspective” by Pinfold.

\(^{135}\) Pinfold, The Child's View, 4.
The outsider perspective in the works treated in this dissertation is often affiliated with a secret that must be kept hidden from Nazis to ensure a person’s survival. Each of the children in this dissertation has a secret that has to be protected, and they themselves must be kept hidden or quiet at moments when they are at risk. While the Holocaust was dangerous and life-threatening for Jewish children, these fictionalized Jewish child characters also need to hide or be quiet in order to be protected from the Nazis within their narrative setting.

All in all, the child characters’ experiences and perspectives lead to their development as outsiders who critique the world of adults in which they live. Each of the artists discussed in this dissertation creates a space through a child’s gaze to create a new view of the Nazis and the Holocaust, and critique their depiction from the point of view of the German Democratic Republic, and in the case of While All Germans Sleep, even reunited Germany. According to my argument, it is the child outsider in the artistic works who is central to the critique of the Nazis and the Holocaust. The children in the works examined in this dissertation who resist the Nazis through their child-like behaviors are able to critique the world around them because of their outsider perspectives. Much of their defiance that resists the Nazis’ plans for extermination of Jews is tied to the children seeing the world differently from the adults who protect them. Because of this difference, the children avoid much of the despair that others in real-life concentration camps and Jewish ghettos suffered. In many ways, the child characters with alternative perspectives from adults also bring hope to those around them.

The Gaze of the Child in Representations of War

Scholars have written about ethical issues as demonstrated with children who play central roles in historical films about war and its related trauma, and who depict critical perspectives about the effects of war. Scholarship on Spanish cinema about the Spanish Civil War and its
effects on children provides a particularly productive example. In Spanish cinema, as these scholars demonstrate, children provide a critical view of their nation’s history and of the damaged world in which they live, a parallel to Frank Beyer’s films about the Holocaust examined in this dissertation.

In their work on Spanish and Latin American films, Georgia Seminet and Carolina Rocha discuss the little girl Ana’s mixture of reality and fairy tale in the influential Spanish film *El Espíritu de la Colmena* (*The Spirit of the Beehive*, dir. Victor Erice, 1974). Like the writers that Pinfold describes, these scholars writing about the filmmaker Victor Erice observe the child’s gaze as a moral, questioning one. Ana befriends a wounded Republican soldier who hides in an old house where she plays with her sister Isabel. Ana makes it clear that the Franco regime is the real monster, while the Republican soldier—an opponent to Franco’s Nationalist army—is the Other who needs care despite the regime’s rhetoric against the Republicans. Recognizing the power in the child’s gaze in Erice’s significant film which influenced generations of Spanish filmmakers, Alberto Elena explains, “*The Spirit of the Beehive* constituted a pioneering vision of Spain during the Franco years through the eyes of a child, mirroring Erice’s contention that cinema is the ideal medium through which to portray ‘innocence or the purity of the gaze.’”

Children in films about war can critique the traumas of war by using their imaginations, creating an imaginary world despite the reality of the war, as Antonio Gómez L-Quiñones finds in the case of *El Laberinto del Fauno* (*Pan’s Labyrinth*, dir. Guillermo del Toro, 2006).

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137 Antonio Gómez L-Quiñones, “Fairies, Maquis, and Children without Schools: Romantic Childhood and Civil War in Pan’s Labyrinth,” in *Representing History Class and Gender*
Gómez L-Quiñones claims that the representation of childhood in this film symbolizes “lost childhood” and nostalgia for a previous and idealized nation, which refers to the nation before the Franco dictatorship. Although not categorized as a “child of Franco,” according to Gómez L-Quiñones’s findings, director del Toro – like Erice – relied on a child figure to critique the Franco regime and the Spanish Civil War in *Pan’s Labyrinth.*

The Spanish films *Pan’s Labyrinth* and *Spirit of the Beehive* can shed light on the critical perspective and use of imagination in child characters in Beyer’s Holocaust films. At the same time, however, the children in the German films discussed in this dissertation are not symbols for nostalgia for an innocent time before World War II and the Holocaust. Rather, they are various symbols for adult hope for youth and innocence that to endure after the war despite the genocide. For example, in *Jacob the Liar,* Jacob is stimulated by Lina to think with nostalgia about his own past before the war, but the child herself is not a symbol for this past. She is not shown in the past at all, but only in flashforwards of her and Jacob’s imagination. The children in the German films also represent adults’ expectations and hope of renewal after the war’s end. Moreover, parallel to the Spanish films, the German examples create a space through the child’s gaze to criticize German history, the Nazis, the Holocaust, and racially-motivated persecution. Similar to what Gómez L-Quiñones describes, the childhood portrayed in Beyer’s films is also “lost” because it could not exist in its natural and social state. For instance, the child in both *Naked among Wolves* and in *Jacob the Liar* is hidden away and nourished only through the act of kind strangers. Although the boy in *While all Germans are Sleeping* does not live in hiding, his

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138 Gómez L-Quiñones, “Fairies, Maquis and Children,” 57.
parents work hard to keep him quiet and unnoticed when near the Nazis. Each child in Beyer’s films, however, finds ways enact what they understand as normal childhood.

Referring to the child characters in central focus, even if not a protagonist, Karen Lury argues that these characters in films about war represent, “its experience as visceral, as of and on the body, demonstrating how the interweaving of history, memory, and witness can be powerfully affective.” 139 Part of how this functions, according to Lury, lies in the fact that the child figures represent an “age minority” in society. In these films, they are placed front and center, used to “scrutinize the actions of adults.” 140 Although Lury’s work does not focus on German literature and film, her work sheds light on new ways to read the child figures in the present study. The child characters in Beyer’s Holocaust films represent German artists’ use of children as central characters for scrutinizing adult actions during the Holocaust and critically viewing – with a moral perspective – problems in German history and memory of these events.

**The “Face” and Ethical Responsibility**

Representation of children in the Holocaust in literature and film raises questions about ethics in taking care of children as the Other in need of care. However, ethical questions in film are not confined to themes related to the Holocaust. In broad terms, film scholars and critics have connected film aesthetics to ethics. For Andre Bazin, in film “matters of aesthetics influence ethical and moral questions.” 141 Informed by Bazin, film scholar Sam Girgus finds


140 Rocha and Seminet, Representing History, Class, and Gender, 4.

connections between the aesthetic and ethical issues in film by examining films in regard to the philosophical theories of Gilles Deleuze, Paul Ricoeur, and Emmanuel Levinas. Although their theories differ widely, Girgus finds that the work of all three “on the relationship of time and ethics to a variety of issues – movement, space, otherness, identity, selfhood, and narrative – also pertains to and informs the interaction between aesthetic and ethical issues in film.”

His reading of Levinas suggests a relationship of “holiness” that connects people to each other and infinity that is also at once transcendent and ethical. Girgus sets up the opportunity to apply Levinas’s ethical philosophy to film by showing how Levinas’s cinematic language (e.g. terms such as “mise-en-scène”) and his ideas about the Other connect to Deleuze’s ideas on time, movement, and space, and to Ricouer’s concentration on time, narrative, and self. Girgus also examines US films at turning points in US history, as my dissertation examines Beyer’s films which were made around turning points in German history or around shifts in the critiques of the GDR’s founding narrative.

For the purpose of this dissertation, Levinas’s philosophy of the ethical treatment of the Other is the most compelling aid in analyzing the relationships children have with adults who are their caretakers but not necessarily their biological parents.

In what Beate Müller has called Levinas’s “key concept” – the face – the emphasis is not on a person’s face, but the (usually sudden) encounter that occurs between two individuals. In his book *Entre Nous: On thinking of the Other*, Levinas writes:

> For all eternity, one man is answerable for an Other. … Whether he looks at me or not, he “regards me;” I must answer for him. I call face that which thus in another concerns the

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144 Girgus, Levinas and the Cinema of Redemption, 90.
“I” - concerns me – reminding me, [. . .] of his abandonment, his defenselessness, and his mortality, and his appeal to my ancient responsibility, as if he were unique in the world – beloved. 145

Here, the “face,” which is both a metaphor and a description of the primordial encounter with the Other, appeals to people to respond ethically. As Müller points out, the emphasis is to respond “responsibly, with kindness, compassion, and goodness.”146 Levinas espouses an adherence to ethical transcendence in the form of absolute responsibility to the other which is connected to his belief in the transcendental work of God in which people have the opportunity to participate, if they respond to the “calling” to help an Other in need. Emmanuel Levinas’s notion of the “face” relates to how the encounter between child and adult characters in Holocaust films calls on the adult to step into a protective role. Levinas’s tone here – exemplified with “beloved” – is not a politically charged statement. However, it is necessary to keep in mind that his Jewishness and his experience of anti-Semitism in Europe – which took shape in the personal and the political – must have influenced his view of ethical responsibility to others. A student of Husserl and Heidegger, Levinas developed “phenomenological descriptions of intersubjective responsibility, which he based upon an analysis of living in the world.”147


147 “Emmanuel Levinas,” [http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/levinas/index.html#note-2](http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/levinas/index.html#note-2). Accessed on 2/18/2015. Girgus explains that Levinas also wrote about this responsibility to the other in terms of his theological perspective. Levinas is also distinct from Heidegger’s notion of the Other, and the distinctions one uses to define oneself against that Other. Although Levinas had studied with Heidegger, the latter’s racial politics and involvement in the Nazi Party drove Levinas to forge a new perspective, developing a theory of ontology that explicitly relates to ethical responsibility for the Other.
While Girgus uses Levinas’s work to examine US films in what he calls a “cinema of redemption” and Müller uses Levinas’s moral philosophy in her discussion of the ethics presented in Apitz’s novel, I have found that Levinas’s theory can also be applied to the child figures in the literature and films of this study because the encounter and the ethical response that he discusses also occur in the films examined. The adults and children first encounter each other, and then each performs an action that affects the other. In each of the films discussed in this study, the children demonstrate need for an Other’s protection in different ways. The adults who take ethical action and responsibility for children make a difference to the existing state of affairs, in which the Jewish child will most likely be murdered by the Nazis. In each of the films, adults respond with ethical responsibility and compassion to help a child. In return, the adults also receive from the children an emotional bond that fills a void for them. Levinas’s theory about the “face” is most relevant for my reading of Naked among Wolves.

In the following chapter, I start with Beyer’s adaptation Naked among Wolves. Here, I will consider the film’s context and aesthetics. I will discuss the nuanced ways Beyer addressed the Holocaust, the GDR’s antifascism and Socialist Realism, as well as his starting to demonstrate his evolution from straight-forward antifascism to more experimental narration and challenging aesthetics that show his ties to the European New Waves.
CHAPTER 2
THE SILENT CHILD INSPIRES HIS “BUCHENWALD FATHERS”: 
THE BOY IN NAKED AMONG WOLVES

Introduction

In an early career stage – just his third film – Frank Beyer already showed in Naked among Wolves his experimentation in aesthetics and narration and a freer interpretation of the antifascist myth of the GDR. While the novelist Bruno Apitz maintained devotion to the SED, as his writing of Naked among Wolves demonstrates, Beyer’s film adaptation of the novel depicts the antifascists as powerful and strong-willed for the cause of the ILK, but he also shows their gentler and more playful sides through his placement of the young child in the central role. While multiple films in the international context and in DEFA films placed children in minor roles, Naked among Wolves was the first East German narrative film about the Holocaust that had a child in a central role. It is one of the first Holocaust films in the international context that had a child in such a role as well. This film is set apart from earlier Holocaust films in international cinema, which emphasize the horrors of the murders of children, such as The Last Stage (1947) in which a newborn Jewish baby is murdered by a Nazi doctor. While the men save the boy, the child also has transformative effects on his rescuers. Although he never speaks, the child offers this perspective through his gaze – more than any of the other child characters in this dissertation. The boy is a powerful, life-giving symbol to the men who protect him; he represents the future and the possibility of humanity in a wretched place during the Holocaust. This chapter examines the child in Naked among Wolves by discussing his gaze as well as the familial relationships that develop in the narrative out of the adults’ ethical responses to their encounter with the helpless child.
Plot Synopsis

As in the novel, in the film *Naked among Wolves* the child enters the Buchenwald concentration camp in a suitcase. In the film, the child and is unseen for the first six minutes. In the film, as adult male inmates enter the camp from a transport just months before the end of World War II, the camera focuses on an incoming inmate – a Jewish man named Jankowski – and his suitcase. Inmates who are part of the camp’s Communist resistance eventually discover a young boy inside of the suitcase. The men – named André, the Kapo, and Pippig, a playful and childlike man – act quickly to keep him hidden. They later learn from Jankowski that the boy is Jewish and that both of his parents have been murdered in the gas chambers at Auschwitz. Some of the inmates already at the camp are planning an armed rebellion to liberate the camp in the name of the Communist Party, which they hope to re-establish after the war. The fate of the child becomes intertwined with the fate of the rebellion. The SS in the narrative aim to squelch the rebellion by killing the child, torturing his protectors, and killing any participants in the underground plan. They arrest the Kapo named André and Marian, his assistant in the personal effects building and torture them in the bunker, trying to get information about the boy’s whereabouts and the guns they believe are hidden in the camp. When this does not work, the SS, namely Mandrill and Zweiling, arrest others who work in the same building: one of the lead protectors of the child, Pippig, and one who has nothing to do with the boy, Rose. The inmates succeed in protecting the child, carrying out their rebellion, and rushing the gates of the camp. Marian holds up the boy, who screams for the first time, presumably in his life. The child’s scream in this moment mimics the birth cry of a newborn baby, and symbolizes the birth of the new future for the German Communist Party, of which he may or may not become a part.
**Literature on *Naked among Wolves***

Some scholars have criticized films that portray Jews solely as passive victims of the Nazis. For instance, Ruth Klüger, who herself survived the Holocaust as a young adolescent, criticizes the novel *Naked among Wolves* for making Jews “literally into a passive, dependent child.”

Klüger’s argument blends two political issues that she sees connected to *Naked among Wolves*: misrepresentation of all Jews as passive children, and ignoring the fate of thousands of Jewish children in the genocide by having only the one token Jewish child in the novel.

Similarly, Annette Insdorf sees the child in the film *Naked among Wolves* as weak, but she does not recognize how powerful this weakness is in the film. According to Insdorf, this child character fits into international cinema that tends to employ what she calls the “Jew as child” narrative strategy. This strategy involves either an actual child playing a Jewish character, or an adult Jew portrayed as a child-like character. Either way, according to Insdorf, the Jewish character is dependent on other people and, therefore, weak.

Thomas Fox reads the child in the novel as fitting into a larger framework of East German works representing women and children. According to Fox, filmmakers and writers in the GDR “not infrequently figured Jews as women (for example, *Ehe im Schatten*, *Sterne*, *Ravensbrücker Ballade*) or as children (for instance, “Das schweigende Dorf,” *Nackt unter Wölfen*, *Der Regenwettermann*, *Geschichte von Moischele*, *Dawids Tagebuch*).”

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150 Fox, *Stated Memory*, 139.
women or children, Fox finds that these Jewish characters are coded as weaker than men. Certainly, they are coded as weaker than strong antifascists. In my reading of Beyer’s film version of *Naked among Wolves*, however, the child is not simply a passive weakling for the men to protect; Beyer offers an alternative view with the child as a central motivator for the men to act ethically and not just politically against the Nazis.

Historian Bill Niven also recognizes how children and youth were frequently portrayed as weak. Niven analyzes several media portrayals of the “Buchenwald Child,” depicted as a boy whom political prisoners in the Buchenwald concentration camp rescued. These portrayals, however, overlooked the roughly 900 children who were also still alive in the camp at the end of the war. While the portrayal of this child is not consistent across media, the narrative surrounding the rescued child centers on the one presumed to be the youngest child the Communists protected, Stefan Jerzy Zweig. Niven argues that *Naked among Wolves* – both the novel and the film – “Reduces youth to helpless dependency, and it underpins the marginalization of women” for its focus on masculine self-sufficiency.  

More significance and agency are given to the child figure by former GDR dramaturg and film critic Klaus Wischnewski and literary scholars Korinna Hennig, Paul O’Doherty and Beate Müller. According to Wischnewski, the child endangers the men’s preparations for rebellion, but also, “für das Kind sterben Menschen; aber das Kind wird zum Motiv und Sinn der

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Befreiung.”\textsuperscript{153} Wischnewski’s position demonstrates that the child not only is powerful enough to endanger the preparations for the revolt, but that he also becomes an emblem for the men’s revolt. Hennig also explains that the child helps focus the revolt throughout the novel, giving the men a meaning for their action that is bigger than their own liberation. According to Hennig, “das Kind stärkt den Durchhatewillen der Gefolterten.”\textsuperscript{154} Although I agree with Hennig that the child gives some of the men more meaning for their struggle in the liberation of the camp, Beyer’s film depicts this much more strongly than Apitz’s novel.

Paul O’Doherty’s analysis of the child also excludes the film.\textsuperscript{155} He illustrates similarities of the child in hiding in Apitz’s \textit{Naked among Wolves} to other GDR fiction written by major GDR writers with Jewish subject matters. He uses Apitz’s novel as an example among many to prove that Jewish subject matter in GDR fiction was not as marginal as western literary criticism has previously suggested. O’Doherty includes in his study some of East Germany’s more prominent writers, most of whom came from Jewish heritage or identified as Jews themselves, such as Willi Bredel, Anna Seghers, Stephan Hermlin, Jurek Becker, Arnold Zweig, Christa Wolf, Helga Königsdorf, and Bruno Apitz, among others. O’Doherty criticizes scholars and reviewers for only occasionally mentioning the child’s and Jankowski’s Jewishness and for not including this point in “real discussion” about \textit{Naked among Wolves}.\textsuperscript{156} According to Beate

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\item \textsuperscript{154} Hennig, “Zur Funktion der Kinderfiguren,” 84.
\item \textsuperscript{155} Paul O’Doherty, \textit{The Portrayal of Jews in GDR Prose Fiction} (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, 1997).
\item \textsuperscript{156} O’Doherty, 106.
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Müller, Apitz’s novel provides a strong contrast to Edgar Hilsenrath’s first novel, Nach (Night, 1964); in Naked among Wolves, the child serves as a catalyst for the adults’ ethical actions, but in Night, the adults ignore children in need. Müller contrasts the characters’ ethical and rational decisions – which are rather at odds with each other in both Naked Among Wolves and Night. Set in a Romanian concentration camp, Jewish characters in Hilsenrath’s Night fight without mercy for survival; making rational, unethical choices, the adult characters do not sacrifice their own survival to help children. According to Müller, Hilsenrath – a Jewish writer himself – shocked German readers with Night because he challenged the postwar narrative of the passive Jewish victim. Apitz, on the other hand, portrays the ultimate antifascist heroes among adult men who do sacrifice their own safety and, in some cases, their lives, for the sake of the child. Müller argues that the child in Apitz’s novel is also a metaphor of the nation – the German Democratic Republic. According to Müller, the child is for the antifascists also a metaphor for the re-birth of the Communist Party.

Müller explains that the child’s action reinstates adults’ agency in situations where they ordinarily have none, such as in concentration camps, but this is demonstrated more clearly in Apitz’s than in Hilsenrath’s novel. Apitz’s novel was successful in the GDR and abroad, but Hilsenrath’s novel had a much more conflicted publication and reception history. Müller finds that the radically different responses to the novels are “rooted in their fundamentally different ethical cores.” She observes that Apitz’s characters make what seems like a normal ethical


choice to save the child, but they do this through making dangerous and irrational choices that make them more vulnerable to the Nazis. In contrast, according to Müller, Hilsenrath’s characters, given more room to make rational choices, choose immorality and selfish acts of survival, rather than rescuing children and sacrificing themselves. Müller states that the adult characters’ choices for survival rather than sacrifice led, in Hilsenrath’s case, to poor reviews.

According to Müller, the child in *Naked among Wolves* influences the men to take action and save his life. She sees him as an example of children in these novels who serve as catalysts for adult behavior, which brings out the adults’ agency within the concentration camps and ghettos during the Holocaust.¹⁵⁹ In these confined spaces for Jews, according to Müller, children would “normally be expected to have even less agency than the adults who find themselves in the same situation.”¹⁶⁰ Their interaction that leads to the adults’ taking ethical action on behalf of the child gives the adult agency where they have virtually none at all. Müller finds in the works by Hilsenrath and Apitz that adults develop a sense of freedom of choice; they face the options of right and wrong courses of action, and the choice of whether to protect a child and sacrifice something in doing so.

While little has been published on Beyer’s film and still fewer publications discuss the central role of the child, prior research on *Naked among Wolves* has focused on Bruno Apitz’s novel, including the child’s role. This chapter builds upon the prior work of Wischnewski, Hennig, and O’Doherty, but especially on what Müller has found regarding Apitz’s novel. This chapter will contribute to this research area by examining the more prominent child – albeit still a nearly silent one – in Frank Beyer’s film version of *Naked among Wolves*. In some ways, this


chapter tests Müller’s ideas about a Levinasian ethical reading of the child and his protectors in Beyer’s film adaptation while it also includes analysis of the film in the context of Apitz’s biography.

**Context**

**Apitz’s rewrites of *Naked among Wolves***

Like many writers in the GDR, Bruno Apitz wrote both literature and screenplays. Bruno Apitz first wrote the narrative for *Naked among Wolves* as a screenplay in 1955. As Niven explains (and as I discussed in Chapter 1), this was amidst controversies in the GDR as well as the politicization of Buchenwald in the mid-1950s, as well as the criticism of Buchenwald’s political prisoners, one of whom had been Apitz.

In his effort to combat the allegations that Communist prisoners assisted Nazis in their murder of Jewish inmates, Apitz’s story in *Naked among Wolves* depicted Communist prisoners facing an ethical dilemma: decide to save the child, or work in only the party’s best interest. This countered the allegations that Communist prisoners helped the Nazis, as is outlined in the Introduction, and instead depicts a story in which the Communists actually plan an attack on them while also saving a Jewish child’s life. Not only did the prisoners save the child’s life in Apitz’s story, however; they also show affection for him. By making this connection with the child, the Communists, according to Apitz’s story, in *no way* could have assisted in Nazi atrocities. Apitz’s narrative countered what Ulbricht and the SED Party had alleged about Buchenwald’s Communist prisoners.
Apitz rewrote the story as a novel, which was published in 1958. Apitz adapted the story from real-life events in the rescue of a boy named Stefan Jerzy Zweig, although he fictionalized the details. According to Niven, the rewrite reflects “shifts in attitudes to Buchenwald in the GDR as well as the influence of former Buchenwald prisoners and of interference from a number of other sources. This does not suggest that the SED censored or forced Apitz to re-write the story, but rather that he adjusted the story in ways to get it accepted by the SED. Apitz finally rewrote the narrative as the screenplay that Beyer directed and which DEFA released in 1963. Unlike the novel – in which the boy’s name is Stefan Cyliak – the child figure in the film *Naked among Wolves* has no given name at all. Apitz claimed as early as 1958, however, that his story was based on a boy whom the Communists rescued by hiding him from the SS in Buchenwald.

**The Buchenwald Child Controversy**

Apitz’s *Naked among Wolves* was part of GDR’s 1950s trend in cultural memory, but it was not the only narrative about the Communists and their rescue of a child (or children) in Buchenwald. At least marginally, the rescue of the child showed up in earlier depictions of Buchenwald prisoners. According to Niven, the theme of the Buchenwald child – who appears

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161 For more detail of this process for Apitz, see Müller, “Agency, Ethics and Responsibility,” 88-89.

162 Niven, The Buchenwald Child, 85.

again and again in East German narratives – played only a marginal role in the Communist resistance narrative before 1958, but its presence was not insignificant.

In self-defense of the allegations, which are outlined in the Introduction, some narratives included the story of the rescue of Stefan Jerzy Zweig, including photographs of him in the 1955 Buchenwald museum exhibition guidebook.\textsuperscript{164} Niven refutes claims that the child was a central to Buchenwald memory before 1958. He also refutes political scientist Peter Reichel’s claim – referring to Fritz Cremer’s sculpture that includes a figure of “Der Junge” (“The Boy”) – that the Buchenwald child Stefan Zweig became a symbol of liberation and a central element of public memory in the GDR before Apitz’s novel.\textsuperscript{165} Niven writes, “while ‘The Boy’ [in Cremer’s sculpture] could be Stefan, he could also be representative of all of Buchenwald’s [905] children.”\textsuperscript{166}

Although the boy and his protection were actually part of the historical record, they are just that – only part of the story. It was not until 1964, however, a year after the film was released, that Apitz confirmed the name of the actual boy. This delay may have happened because he forgot the name of the child, but only remembered the events. According to Frank

\textsuperscript{164} Niven, The Buchenwald Child, 73.

\textsuperscript{165} Peter Reichel, \textit{Erfundene Erinnerung: Weltkrieg und Judenmord in Filme und Theater}. (Munich and Vienna: Carl Hanser, 2004). Here, 199.

\textsuperscript{166} Niven, 74. Another iconic image of a child who was the subject of debate regarding his identity is the boy with his hands up at gunpoint in the Warsaw Ghetto. Publications on this subject include Richard Raskin, \textit{A Child at Gunpoint: A Case Study in the Life of a Photo} (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2004); David Bathrick, David, Brad Prager, and Michael D. Richardson, eds., \textit{Visualizing the Holocaust: Documents, Aesthetics, Memory} (Rochester N.Y: Camden House, 2008); Mariane Hirsch, “Nazi Photographs in Post Holocaust Art: Gender as an Idiom of Memorialization,” in \textit{Phototextualities: Intersections of Photography and Narrative}, eds. Alex Hughes and Andrea Noble (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2003), 19-40.
Beyer, however, it was journalists working for the *Berliner Zeitung am Abend* who found Dr. Zacharias Zweig (Stefan’s father) in Israel after he published his memoirs of his experience in Polish Jewish ghettos, and the concentration camps of Auschwitz and Buchenwald. The journalists eventually met Stefan Jerzy Zweig in Lyon, France, where he was studying engineering.\(^{167}\)

Zacharias Zweig’s account includes how he himself hid his son Stefan, but it demonstrates contradictory personal memory in that he also recounts that the Nazis had his son on record and that he was not hidden from them. According to Niven, the many differences between Zweig’s testimony and Apitz’s novel, are those “between a Holocaust narrative and a Communist-resistance narrative.” In Apitz’s novel, “Jewish suffering is not a theme, but only a surface-level observation.”\(^{168}\) The minimal portrayal of Jewish suffering is similar in the film. The men acknowledge that the SS could kill the child, but the real suffering in the film is what the camera reveals as the results of torture on André, Pippig, and Kropinski’s (i.e., Communist) bodies.

With the discovery of Stefan Jerzy Zweig, the film and novel gained further attention and respect in East German newspaper for their authenticity. Many of the newspapers focused on Zweig’s personal story, calling him the “Buchenwaldkind,” and conflating him with the boy who appears in Fritz Cremer’s sculpture at the Buchenwald memorial.\(^{169}\) Journalists followed him as he re-connected with his so-called “Buchenwald-Vätern” (Buchenwald fathers).\(^{170}\) Buying into

\(^{167}\) Beyer, *Wenn der Wind sich dreht*, 118.

\(^{168}\) Niven, *The Buchenwald Child*, 112.

\(^{169}\) Niven, *The Buchenwald Child*, 112.

the term “Buchenwald-Väter” alone suggests that GDR’s newspapers reinforced the fictional portrayal of the Communists as the boy’s ersatz fathers in the novel and film. This continued the misconception that the child’s father had died in Auschwitz and the Communists had then de facto adopted the orphan. As Zacharias Zweig’s testimony shows, clearly the real father was not killed at Auschwitz.

Since Apitz wrote the novel and the screenplay, he spoke publicly about his works as historical documents. By doing so, he took an active role in convincing the public that the novel and film were, thus, authentic. Apitz went so far as to claim that his story was a factual piece. In support of Apitz, East German newspapers and Progress Filmverleih (the distribution company for DEFA) propagated his claims, advertising both the novel and film as if they were identical and factual documents of the historically accurate occurrences at Buchenwald. The newspapers covering the release of the film in theaters reinforced Apitz’s claim by calling Apitz a “historischer Berater,” who provides the authenticity for both the film and the novel, because he was himself an inmate in this concentration camp. Although both were actually works of fiction, recognition of this fact does not appear in any of the advertising or newspaper articles about the works.

Apitz worked to prove the authenticity of his works. A leading example appears in the 1963 film trailer, in which Apitz conflates the “Stefan” of the novel and film with the real-life Stefan Jerzy Zweig. In this trailer, a woman in voice-over states, “The author describes the dramatic rescue of the child,” and already she does not mention whether she refers to Stefan Jerzy Zweig or the child in Apitz’s fictional works. Furthermore, the mise-en-scène in which

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171 Apitz, bonus material on Nackt unter Wölfen, DVD. DEFA Film Library.
Apitz appears on screen aims to authenticate the story, as books and photos lie on the table behind which he sits. As Apitz talks, he holds a photo up to the camera, showing a scene from the film of the young blonde boy. While holding this photo of the child actor playing a fictional character, Apitz says, “What makes up a child’s world? Motherly love? Care? A cozy bed? Feeling safe? A street full of sunshine, people, houses, playmates? Green grass and pretty flowers? Little Stefan knew nothing of all that. He went to Auschwitz as a baby. He was hidden from the SS for three years.” The irony in this moment is that while he discusses “Little Stefan’s” experience, he holds the photo of the actor.

Apitz then moves into the description of himself and other men whom – he claims – personally rescued Zweig as a child in Buchenwald. He describes how he and other men played with the boy and kept him in hiding to protect him from the SS. Moreover, he claims that the “meaning” of the boy and this rescue “proves the greatness and beauty of humans” and the “triumph of humanity over barbarity.” In his final statement before the trailer ends, Apitz makes a claim that further attempts to legitimize the boy’s symbolism for new life in the GDR: “On April 11, 1945, the armed division of illegal resistance organizations tore open the electric barbed wire fence. They flung the gates open and, walking among the thousands [. . .], we bore the bundle of life to that so hard won freedom.” Apitz’s statement exemplifies the ways in which the media also describe the film and appropriate the child as the “life” that would follow freedom from the camp and the Nazis. In this context, the boy represents the new life in the new society that the GDR offered.

172 Nackt unter Wölfen, DVD.

173 Nackt unter Wölfen, DVD.
In GDR newspapers, the child in *Naked among Wolves* represents a tangible victory against the Nazis. As such, he provides focus for the antifascist men who protect him. The newspapers discuss how the men focus their efforts on rescuing the boy and, by keeping him alive, survive the concentration camp. Their unified mission is to protect the child from the SS, and by doing so both the men and the boy win. Their efforts demonstrate the ideals of antifascism and the “beauty” of humanity that Apitz describes in the trailer to the film. Several GDR newspapers illustrate this portrayal of the men and of the child as the representation of their goal to survive and defeat the Nazis.

Frank Beyer contradicted some of Apitz’s claims, but confirmed others. In a 1994 interview with film historian Ralf Schenk, Beyer claimed that the story of the child was authentic and confirmed Apitz’s claim that the Buchenwald child was indeed Stefan Jerzy Zweig, whom the media found after the film was made. Beyer states that the film was true to the real story of the child, “wie es in Buchenwald ankam und versteckt wurde, und daß ihm die SS auf der Spur war. Man hat das Vorbild für den Jungen, das sogenannte Buchenwald-Kind dann gefunden, nachdem der Film herausgekommen war.” Beyer admits, however, that it was not historically accurate that this was the only child in the camp, as he knew there were hundreds more children who survived Buchenwald.

While pointing out what he saw as authentic and inauthentic about the film, Beyer also stated that he had not planned on recreating the precise history of the camp and its liberation. Instead, he said his focus was on “die Novelle im Roman: Das Kind wird von den Häftlingen 174

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174 “How it arrived in Buchenwald and was hidden, and that the SS was searching for him. Someone then found the model for the boy, the so-called Buchenwald-Child after the film had been released.” Schenk, *Regie*, 39.
versteckt, die SS kommt ihnen auf die Spur, sucht das Kind, findet es aber nicht, weil es an einen anderen Ort gebracht wurde und so weiter. Daraus entsteht eine elementare Konfrontation.”

While Beyer discussed other elements of the film, he focused on the story of the child in hiding as the “Novelle im Roman (novella within the novel).” This story of the child’s rescue then became the focus of the film, with only some revealing of the plan for armed resistance. Beyer’s film shifts the focus that Apitz had written in the novel which had focused on the men’s plan for armed resistance against the Nazis that is interrupted when the child shows up and the men rescue him. Thus, Beyer’s film shifts the focus away from the men’s plan to emphasize the role of the child instead.

**The Powerful Child**

The propaganda around Stefan Jerzy Zweig and all of the complications related to East German memory politics make the child in *Naked among Wolves* into something much greater than a real-life child. Yet it is worthwhile investigating how powerful the child figure in this narrative is. Insdorf and Kluger both argue that since the child in this film has no voice, he portrays Jews as silent victims, passively awaiting their fate. However, I defend the film’s use of silence for the boy. The child is powerful in his silence. An exemplary scene is when Marian, a prisoner from Poland, talks to the boy and tries to learn about his parents. In his lack of speech, the boy does not share his story with the adult prisoners aiming to rescue him. Marian attempts to get the boy to talk by speaking to him in Polish when German seems to not work. Marian asks, “Wo ist mama? Wo ist papa? Wie sie heißen.” (“Where is mama? Where is papa? What your name?”). Marian then tries again in Polish, his native language, but the boy does not answer. Of

175 Schenk, Regie, 39.
course, the boy could be unsure of whom he can trust, since Jankowski, his most recent caretaker and the man with whom he has previously bonded, is not present. On the other hand, the child may also not understand the languages Marian speaks to him, or he may not yet have learned how to speak due to constant hiding and the need to stay quiet. He may also be too traumatized to speak. In both of Marian’s attempts, the boy looks at him, but does not respond with words. I disagree with Ruth Kluger’s assessment of the child’s role in the novel and with Annette Insdorf’s analysis of the boy in the film. Where Kluger and Insdorf see the child as a poor representation of Jews, as he is a toddler and does not speak, I see his value more accurately reflected in the approaches of Müller and Hennig. That is, the child must be read as a character, not a prop, who symbolizes for the men in the narrative something more important to them than their own lives, and certainly more or at least as important than the Communist Party, for which some of them are ready to die. This is not a simple narrative of Communist-protecting-the-weak-Jew that would parallel Insdorf’s analysis of French films in which Christians protect Jewish children or child-like Jewish adults. Because Insdorf sees the Jewish characters in French films as weak and passive, her analysis does not work for the Jewish child character in *Naked among Wolves*. He is shown as weak, tired, hungry, and even speechless, but he is also more of a three-dimensional character than the term “weak” suggests; the boy in the film is clever, outwitting the Nazis as he hides from them, and thus taking part in his own rescue.

Already in the opening sequence of the film, the child’s significance is clear. This is an early sequence in which the adult taking care of the child clearly feels compelled to do so. When the film opens, Jankowski – a Jewish prisoner, and the only adult Jew appearing on screen in this film – has already been transformed by the child. Jankowski carries the boy into the camp, keeping him hidden so that the child arrives at Buchenwald silent and unseen. Of course, the
viewers do not yet suspect that the child has had this transformative effect because only Jankowski knows he is inside the suitcase. Furthermore, as the film’s narrative starts with Jankowski’s arrival in Buchenwald, his pre-history with the boy is not revealed until later in the film. As a medium shot on the arriving prisoners walking on a road moves into a close-up on Jankowski’s face, he looks exhausted and starved. However, shortly afterwards the camera zooms into a close up on the suitcase. Jankowski drops the suitcase, exhausted, and the camera moves into another close-up on the suitcase, without Jankowski in the frame. This shot shows the other men’s feet nearly trampling it. Later, it is clear from Jankowski’s reaction that he has an emotional attachment to something precious inside the suitcase. He obviously cares more about it than other prisoners seem to care about their personal belongings. This moment builds up tension for the audience, who does not yet know what is inside. When he turns around to pick up the suitcase, the camera points to it, reinforcing Jankowski’s emotional attachment. As a concentration camp prisoner, Jankowski has been mostly stripped of his agency, but this otherwise powerless man has still taken action.

Of course, the child in this scene has no real agency, as he passively rides in a suitcase that someone else carries. However, his power is in his influence, as well as in his silence, his willingness to stay hidden and his small size. He seems to know that to speak, move, or cry means certain death for him and Jankowski. He stays silent, even at two or three years old, because he is aware of what the SS will do if he makes any noise – even in silence, the child transforms the adults. This is played out for the viewer as well. Before the audience even sees the child, the camera reveals other men’s reactions to him. The camera shows Pippig, the next man to encounter the child, and his friend, the Kapo named André, looking inside the suitcase with shock on their faces. André and Pippig then turn around to see if anyone, especially any SS, is
watching. In the first ethical response to encountering the child, André orders Pippig to move the suitcase into the personal effects room: “Weg damit. Los! Beeil dich!” (“Get rid of it. Go on! Hurry!”). Pippig follows the order and carries the suitcase with the child inside while the camera is angled down onto him from a bird’s eye view, suggesting that a German guard might be watching.

This sequence is reminiscent of the encounter that Emmanuel Levinas describes: one person facing an Other, particularly an Other in need. In contrast to Jankowski, the audience witnesses the development of the bond between the men and the boy. But, in contrast to the other prisoners, the audience has also had the opportunity to witness the bond that has developed between Jankowski and the child in the opening sequence. Later in the film, Jankowski explains to Pippig, Marian, and André that the boy’s parents were gassed in Auschwitz, and that he had fulfilled the caretaking role since then. Jankowski has seen this orphaned child as an Other in need.

When he enters the film, Jankowski is fulfilling what Levinas describes in his concept of the “face.” This idea relates to how the encounter between children and adult characters in Holocaust films calls on the adult to step into a protective role. Levinas’s philosophy is transcendental and refers to a connection with God in ethical action, a sort of “calling” to do what is right. Although ethics can be political as well, for Levinas, politics has nothing to do with an action taken to help an Other in need. Instead, as I apply Levinas’s thought to the characters’ relationships in Naked among Wolves, it depends on the individual to make the right choice, rather than following a Party order to do something for the good of the collective. Jankowski has responded ethically, providing for the child who would otherwise certainly be murdered by the
Nazis. By making his choice to protect the boy on his own, Jankowski demonstrates how Levinas’ theory is not about politics, but about the individual ethical choice to help an Other.

The opening sequence with Jankowski and the boy represents a major step taken by a GDR film in the tradition of *Marriage in the Shadows* and *Stars* to acknowledge the death of Jews in concentration camps. On the one hand, the scene addresses the accusations brought up by Ulbricht and US authorities claiming that Kapos and other inmates in Buchenwald assisted the Nazis in killing Jews. In *Naked among Wolves*, the Jewish man protects the Jewish child, and then the Kapo and other inmates follow suit. In this way, they are ethical and also defy Nazi policies that could lead to their deaths.

When the audience first sees the child, he draws out the men’s humanity. Because of the child, they are no longer just prisoners but caretakers who smile and laugh as they bond with him. This transformation in their characters is shown through a point-of-view shot in which they are looking at the child in the open suitcase hidden inside and the audience sees the child for the first time, a young boy about two years old. The camera shows him in a close-up, curled up in the suitcase, and rubbing his eyes because of seemingly bright light. Pippig, still smiling at the child, says to Marian, “ein Mietzekätzchen ist uns zugelaufen,” and chuckles as the camera shows the boy rubbing his eyes and face. The men smile at each other before the camera fades out. Given the context of the concentration camp, the smiles show how the boy draws out an emotional relationship that was not possible before his arrival. Even without the boy speaking, the camera shows the men bonding with the boy and transforming from hardened political prisoners into caring, doting parental figures.

Through scenes like this one, the film invites its audience to participate in the redemptive practice of remembering victims and survivors of the Holocaust. Within the context in which the
GDR Ministry of Culture pushed an anti-fascist memory of the Nazi years – which completely marginalized the Holocaust as a genocide and only recognized exceptional Communist heroes, we can read Beyer’s depiction of this *Naked among Wolves* as experimental. With *Naked among Wolves*, Beyer subtly challenged the narrative of antifascist heroes by placing greater emphasis of the child who motivates adults to action; even though the boy is silent, the camera shows in scenes such as the one above how the men bond with him as if he is their own child.

In order to motivate the adults, it is clear to me that the boy demonstrates agency. One of the ways he does this is in deciding not to answer Marian, as if to signal that he knows speaking endangers his life. Beyer’s film shows that the boy, even though only a toddler, already knows that to remain silent is to stay alive longer. Making noise like a typical child his age would lead to certain death, as André reminds the boy. In the storage room of the personal effects building, where all the inmates’ personal belongings were taken, André voices his concern about the child’s situation: “Wenn es nun schreit? Kleine Kinder fürchten und dann schreien sie.” (“What if it cries now? Small children get scared and then cry.”) He then turns to the boy and says, “Du, du darfst nicht schreien. Hörst du? Du darfst nicht schreien, sonst kommt das SS.” (“Hey, you may not cry. You hear? You may not cry, or else the SS will come.”) The child responds to André by pulling away, climbing back into the suitcase and lying down silently, curling up to fit inside it. The result of this relatively long scene marks the awareness and compliance of the young boy, who plays a key role in his own rescue by keeping silent.

The boy’s behavior – being silent and using body language to communicate that he knows what to do – also starts to change as the men begin to regard the boy as a sentient person, even though he has not spoken. Pippig, already asserting his role as a father figure for the boy, realizes the child knows exactly what he must do, and he points it out to André, “Es weiß
Bescheid.” ("It already knows.") André and Marian follow Pippig in developing affection for the boy, as they see him show his cognizance of the SS and his need to keep silent. The men’s affection appears both in the way that they talk to the boy and how they hold him in brief moments throughout the film.

Far from being only a fragile, passive object on which the men dote, the child also helps the men by giving them an ethical, humanitarian purpose to rally around that is bigger than fighting the Nazis. Moreover, the desire to care for a dependent contributes significantly to the men’s motivations to save him and keep him hidden. If we ignore this aspect, we risk missing the meaning of very important parts of the film, including the risks that Pippig, André and Marian take. The men’s struggle becomes something greater than the sacrifice of self for the collective, and the child becomes a symbol for the future of the collective as well.

**The Child and Quasi-Christian Iconography**

In a sequence when Marian reveals the boy to other prisoners who have not yet seen him, Beyer’s film works Judeo-Christian iconography into the visual language that the novel does not portray. In this sequence, the darkness changes to light only in the child’s presence also recalls Christian descriptions of the Christ-child as the light of the world in darkness and the future savior for all humanity. The child, like Christ, inspires the men to embrace new ethics. When Marian leads a group of men working in the personal effects building to the back storage room, the lights go dark. In silence, the camera shows Marian draw down the blanket, revealing the sleeping boy, and a single circle of light moves to illuminate his head. During this scene, the camera has a birds-eye-view and is angled so that the viewers can see the back of the men’s heads as they look down at the boy. In a reverse shot, the camera then shows the men’s smiling faces as they gaze upon the child (9:50). All of the men appear soothed and calm, smiling down
at the child. August Rose, an older man who had just stated that he wanted nothing to do with the boy, here says aloud, “wie ein richtiger kleiner Mensch,” (“like a real-live small person.”) The other men look at the child in silence. Without any religious symbols – such as churches or crosses in the film, as can be found in *Stars* – this moment recalls the Christ baby sleeping in a manger, with people coming from afar to gaze upon him. With this connection in mind, the hope for the future that the child symbolizes is clear. For this to show up in a GDR film, however, where Christianity existed as a practice but was not a function of the state, it seems that Beyer may have had the specific goal of appealing to international audiences in mind.

This scene in *Naked among Wolves*, while quasi-religious, is also reminiscent of the drag scene in Renoir’s film on World War I, *La Grande Illusion* (*The Grande Illusion*, 1937). In this scene, the prisoners-of-war in a German camp prepare to perform a cabaret. Without any women around, the men sort tenderly through a trunk of women’s undergarments and clothing and dress in them to perform women’s roles on stage. As one of the smallest and youngest among the men steps out of the dressing room, wearing women’s undergarments and asking if he looks alright, the men pause and stare, reminded of women they have not seen in years. In this similarly emotional scene in *Naked among Wolves*, the camera remains focused on the men’s faces as they respond to the child who reminds them of children in the past and possibly of their biological children they have not seen or even met, and of the peaceful life and humanity that they hope for.

The novel *Naked among Wolves* underscores a similar response to the child on the part of the men protecting him. The narrator describes the group of men asking to see the child, despite Rose’s initial trepidation, as in the film. The narrator describes the scene in the following text:

die Gesichter der Häftlinge ging ein Glänzen, sie hatten lange kein Kind mehr gesehen. Staunten! “Wie ein richtiger, kleiner Mensch...”

The quasi-religious iconography in the film is thus not as apparent in the scene in the novel. Instead, passage emphasizes that the men are astonished as they realize that they have not seen a child in a very long time.

**Symbolism and Familial Connections**

The child in *Naked among Wolves* carries multiple symbolic contexts and meanings, but the familial bonds that the child has with his protectors is the most important. Jankowski, André, Pippig, and Marian bond with the child and aim to protect him as if they are his fathers. Jankowski, whose caretaking was set up before the start of the film, must leave the child behind when he is sent on a “transport.” After Krämer, the camp elder, selects Jankowski and the child for “transport” and most likely sending them to their deaths, André informs Jankowski that his “suitcase” (i.e, the code word for the child) will not go with him. As if they are father and son, their relationship leads to Jankowski’s heartbreak when he hears he must go and leave the boy behind; Jankowski weeps as he marches with the other inmates out of the camp, and the cruel upbeat music of a band plays during the transport.

The child inspires the men to infuse caring paternalism with antifascism. Both the novel and the film highlight the connection André feels to the boy that motivates his decision to hide him. In both works, he explains his personal dilemma to Bochow, one of the party leaders who chastises André for risking the Party’s future. In both works André’s response to Bochow unveils André’s motivation; in the heated debate with Bochow, he says, “Ich habe zu Hause selber einen Jungen, der ist jetzt zehn Jahre alt. Ich habe ihn noch nie gesehen.” (“I have a boy at home

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176 Apitz, Nackt unter Wölfen, 31.
myself who is now ten years old. I have not yet seen him.”) Identifying the young boy with his own son reveals the key conflict for Andre: who is more important to protect, his child or his political party? In both works, Bochow calls André sentimental and reminds him of his duty to the Party. Bochow’s stance on placing the Party over and above any individual resonates with Communist beliefs about loyalty to the Party; but André’s personal desire to save the boy, who reminds him of the son he has never met, brings out a more humane side of the Communist character.

The boy awakens paternal instincts in Pippig that are more pronounced than in the other men, which he expresses in the way he describes the small child. Pippig acts as a parent like Andre and Marian, but he is also more of a maternal figure for the boy. These characteristics are clearest in the sequence in which he delivers milk to the child, which requires risking his own safety as he crosses a checkpoint with SS guards. Pippig tells the cook at the mess hall that he needs milk for “mein Kind / my child,” thus revealing his de facto adoption of the child he recently discovered in the suitcase. While talking with the cook, Pippig makes small circles with his hands to describe how small the boy’s arms and legs are: “Solche Ärmchen hat es, solche Beinchen” (“Such little arms it has, such little legs.”). He then makes arrangements to meet a third person at the SS Schneiderei (the tailor shop for the SS) and the following film sequence shows Pippig implementing the plan, including pouring the milk into a canteen that he hides under his shirt like a de-facto breast.

After Pippig delivers the milk to the boy, he brings the child to laugh for the first time, deepening their bond. While the boy drinks, André asks Pippig where he found the milk. Pippig

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177 Apitz, Nackt unter Wölfen, 38. In the film, however, André says that his son is seven years old.
responds with a nursery rhyme, which he directs at the child – “Auf der Weide steht eine Kuh. Sie sagt, ‘muuh,’ sie sagt ‘muuh!’” (In the meadow stands a cow. It says ‘moo.’ It says ‘moo!’) – and tickles the boy’s stomach. This makes the child laugh loudly. Astounded, the men pause, and Pippig points out the milestone as if his own child had formed his first words. They are indeed the boy’s first sounds in the film overall. Pippig says excitedly, “Hast du gesehen? Er hat gelacht! Er hat gelacht!” He then pulls the boy in close to hug him.

In the novel, this scene is different. Pippig explains to Marian and the boy how he will procure the milk, which leads to his comment about the two men providing mother’s milk. The conversation starts with Marian discussing the child’s basic needs with Pippig,


While the narrator describes Marian Kropinski as astounded at the boy’s smile, Pippig sees the smile as a sign of further developments to come. Pippig says to the boy, “Du lernst noch lachen bei uns, Kleiner/ You’ll still learn to laugh with us, little one.” He then taps Marian on the shoulder and says to him with comedic effect, “Und du legst ihn dir morgen an die Brust, verstanden?/ And tomorrow, you put him to your breast, got it?”\(^{179}\) This discussion in the novel about milk and breastfeeding calls attention to the way in which Pippig takes the lead as a mother-figure, even though he also calls himself “Uncle Pippig.” Although he prides himself on

\(^{178}\) Apitz, Nackt unter Wölfen, 110-111.

\(^{179}\) Apitz, Nackt unter Wölfen, 111.
providing for the child, he clearly does not want to be the only one getting milk for the boy, and so he pressures Marian to share this role with him.

Over and above the lines that characters speak in the novel and film, the film is edited to highlight the transformative effect that the child has on the men in a way that the novel does not. A strong example of such editing is in the sequence that juxtaposes André’s and Marian’s screams when they are tortured in the bunker with the boy’s laughing. The scene when the SS officers Zweiling and Mandrill whip Marian grows intense, in part through the use of expressionist-like extreme close ups and tilted camera angles and the use of strong contrasting shadows. The film is then edited to show an extreme close-up of André’s face as the audience hears the cane hit Marian’s flesh. André squeezes his eyes shut and turns his face away, so as to not have to watch his friend’s torture. As Marian screams, the camera spins quickly around the room, highlighting the dizzying intensity of the moment. Cutting immediately to the boy laughing intensely, the use of parallel editing underscores the connection of the men to the child. The two men hiding the boy play with cloth puppets to entertain him. They sing, “Squeal, squeal, la la la, squeal, squeal, la la la,” almost seeming to mock what is happening to Marian in the bunker. The protectors’ meet the goal to keep the boy happy – rather than cry – as he laughs and smiles while watching them. The sequence continues as the film then cuts back to Marian, lying passed out on the floor, while Mandrill throws water on him from a bucket. The juxtaposition of images and sounds binds together the child and the men, visually contrasts life and death, young vs. damaged bodies, and it highlights the men’s sacrifices for the boy and for the Party.

This juxtaposition through the editing of the film does not come directly from the novel; As the story focuses more on the boy’s central role in the film, the images and sounds of the men are directly connected to the child’s images and sounds. This filmic juxtaposition underscores the
increased significance of the child’s role in Beyer’s film. In the parallel sections of the novel, the narrator describes the Nazis’ torture of André and Marian in gruesome detail.\textsuperscript{180} The narrator does not, however, describe the boy laughing in intermittent scenes, as the film portrays. Instead, in this part of the novel the connection is between the men in the bunker and the Communist leaders who are political prisoners in the camp – namely Bochow and Krämer. In both the novel and the film, Bochow – another Kapo who seems to have a higher position than André in the KPD – and Krämer – the camp elder – do not worry about André and Marian’s well-being, but rather about whether they will confess under torture where the guns are hidden.\textsuperscript{181}

Edited juxtapositions also highlight the lengths to which Pippig will go for the child’s sake. When the SS get no information out of André and Marian, they arrest Pippig and Rose, the man who at first wanted no part in rescuing the boy. After placing the two men in a cell together, the Nazis take Pippig for interrogation. The camera shows Pippig enter Mandrill’s office, where a lit cigar waits in an ashtray on his desk. Leaving the viewer to read between the lines and presume that Mandrill tortures Pippig with the cigar to get information on the boy’s whereabouts, the film does not show Pippig’s actual interrogation. In another cut, Mandrill carries Pippig back to the cell, and the camera reveals circular burns – just the size of the burning end of Mandrill’s cigar – all over Pippig’s torso. This scene’s suggestion through visual language is reminiscent of the moment the Nazi in The Last Stage prepares poison in a syringe for the newborn baby, yet the camera does not show him administer it. The torture that Pippig endures is

\textsuperscript{180} Apitz, \textit{Nackt unter Wölfen}, 180-183; 190-192.

\textsuperscript{181} Apitz, \textit{Nackt unter Wölfen}, 183-188.
part of the effect that the boy has on him; Pippig is willing to sacrifice his own life so that the boy can live.

When it is Rose’s turn for questioning with Mandrill, the camera zooms in on the half-used cigar again waiting on Mandrill’s desk. Rose screams right away at the sight of the cigar, which provokes such fear after he has just witnessed the burns and the fatal effect that they had on Pippig’s body. The camera’s repetitive focus on the cigar almost makes it a character as well. It is certainly an extension of Mandrill’s hand that tortures Pippig and Rose, again showing in visual terms how the Nazis single-handedly tortured Communists and that the Communists could not have become complicit with the Nazis.

After Rose returns from questioning, he sees Pippig lying in his bed. The film cuts to the boy sleeping peacefully sucking his thumb, and lying next to a new – unnamed – protector. The editing thus makes the connection between Pippig – and not Rose – and the boy. This peacefulness is visually juxtaposed to the quiet figure of Pippig, who lies dying. It is the last connection between the boy and Pippig shown on screen. Again, Apitz’s novel does not make this connection as clearly as Beyer’s film does. In Beyer’s film, the images make the distinct connection between Pippig and the boy; as the parental figure lies dying, the child lies sleeping. It is only later in the film that Pippig’s death is confirmed.

The sequence with Pippig’s torture and his injured body contrasted with the sleeping boy emphasizes the significance of Pippig’s sacrifice for the child whom he has accepted as his own. Of course, Pippig’s sacrifice for others marks the film’s context in the GDR aesthetic to sacrifice oneself for the collective. As Christoph Funke has also noted, Pippig is murdered for his protection of the child, and his individual fate provides a window through which to understand the sacrifice of many others in the concentration camp. Funke writes, “So gelang die fast
unlösbare Ausgabe, Leben und Kampf im Konzentrationslager nachvollziehbar zu machen durch das glaubhaft gestaltete Schicksal einzelner.”  

Thus, Pippig, as a parental figure, sacrifices his own safety and, finally his own life, in order to save the child, and this underscores the ways that others participate in the rescue of the child.

It is most poignant that Pippig is the one to die near the end of the film as he was the one to go the furthest in endangering his personal safety to find milk to nourish the child. It is curious, however, that this character should be the only one killed off in the narrative. Recalling a melodrama narrative technique of killing off the kindest characters, Pippig is depicted as the best all-around parental figure for the child, and he dies in the effort to protect him. Because of his strength of character, Pippig’s death seems no less honorable than the heroes who live – such as Marian and André. However, in his dying, the message to domestic audiences seems to also be that the strictly male-coded characters are the ones who survive in the end. An underlying message is that the child will also go on with the collective guiding him, even though his parents – as well as Jankowski and Pippig – cannot. This message is conveyed in the visual of the Communist men literally carrying the boy into his next phase of life – freedom outside of the camp – in the final scene of the film.

While Beyer’s *Naked among Wolves* offers an antifascist narrative portraying men who bond with a child through his silence, it also offers a new narrative about antifascist men who defied the Nazis in more subtle ways than the traditional GDR *Widerstand* narrative suggests. With characters such as Pippig and Jankowski offering alternatives to the traditional Communist hero, these men might typically be viewed as “weak” – Pippig for being playful and child-like.

\[182\] Quoted in Wischnewski, “Die bittere Aktualität,” 177.
and Jankowski for being a non-political Jewish character in a GDR film. Both men offer the most protective parental care to the child. Jankowski can be seen hugging the boy as if he were his own child, while Pippig plays with and sings to the boy and gets him food and milk.

The child in *Naked among Wolves* symbolizes, in part, the biological future of humanity. The child is not, however, *only* a symbol of the future. He is also not only a fragile, passive object on which the men dote. Even in his silence, the boy provides an emotional focus for the men who rescue him; they encounter him – face to face – and then develop familial bonds with him that lead them to want to protect him. If we ignore this aspect, we risk missing very important parts of the film, including the risks that Pippig, André and Marian take as they act as the boy’s *de facto* adoptive fathers and not only as political prisoners and fighters. The struggle becomes something greater than the sacrifice of oneself for the collective. This narrative portrays Communist men deciding to make a humanitarian effort to rescue the child. This makes the Communists seem interested in resistance for humanitarian reasons.

Furthermore, in the meaning behind the film’s portrayal of the child and his caretakers that become adoptive parents, the child figure underscores how Beyer’s *Naked among Wolves* offers an anti-war commentary in the intensity of the Cold War. Because the film was made in the GDR, it also has an East German slant on the anti-war message that was part of the traditional Communist rationale for antifascism in the state ideology. *Naked among Wolves* makes the torture of wartime and concentration camps palpable. The film suits an anti-fascist and GDR rhetoric promoting disarmament and world peace, which would satisfy domestic (GDR) as well as international audiences. For viewers who were aware of the threat of rearmament in West Germany and for international audiences who may have opposed this rearmament, the message from the film could have had a great impact – to claim how war takes a
terrible toll on many lives, including children who might go into concentration camps. More specifically, the film’s visual language could have also had the effect to remind viewers of the Nazis’ atrocities that they committed during – and under the cover of – World War II that could happen again during another war, and stopping rearmament could help sustain peace and safety of children.

This critique of war is not only visible when the men ethically respond to the child’s need for protection from the Nazis, but also in the camera’s portrayal of the men. The film’s editing connects the ones who suffer in isolation and then endure torture – namely Pippig and André – with the child. The film also recognizes the isolation of the child from his murdered parents in the frame of the Holocaust, and the need for the men to protect him by hiding him and reminding him not to speak or cry, but while providing entertainment with puppetry and other play, as well as providing milk and food. Although the men do not comment on how inhumane this treatment of the child is, the audience can extrapolate such a connection. In the absurdity of the concentration camp setting during the war (i.e., the normal world turned on its head), this treatment of the child in hiding is the most humane treatment the men can offer within the limits of the cruel situation.

The new narrative that is projected in Beyer’s response to the novel is similar to what Figge and Ward have observed in other adaptations. Even though the whole truth was not reflected in the narrative of the film (e.g., the number of children who actually lived in Buchenwald, who survived, and why), the new narrative truth in the film is what Beyer called the Novelle im Roman (novella within the novel); he emphasized the centrality of the child for the group of men who, before he arrived, only had their political party around which to rally. His arrival, however, made their new future a tangible reality.
CHAPTER 3


Spät genug kommen wir zu Lina, unverantwortlich spät,
denn sie ist für das alles von einiger Bedeutung, sie
macht es erst rund, wenn davon die Rede sein kann,
Jakob geht jeden Tag zu ihr, aber wir kommen jetzt erst.

--Jurek Becker, Jakob der Lügner, 75

Introduction

Lina’s origins were the initial film exposé for Jacob the Liar in 1963, a
“Szenarium” in 1965 and the film script he submitted later that year that was never filmed;
Becker then re-wrote her character in the novel Jacob the Liar in 1969, which won international acclaim. Becker’s novel was, in part, his reaction to GDR collective memory and historiography about the Holocaust that in the late 1950s and through the 1960s emphasized the “Buchenwald Child,” which I discussed in the previous chapter. Becker’s reaction was also based on his own experience as a child in the Jewish ghetto of Lodz and in multiple concentration camps, which, as far as he had heard, was nothing like what Naked among Wolves portrays. Becker re-wrote her character yet again for another draft of the “Szenarium” in 1972, as well as the 1972 script, and finally the for the film adaptation that Beyer directed. The film was released on East German Television (DFF) in 1974 and premiered in cinemas in April 1975 as part of the distribution company Progress Filmverleih’s program commemorating the 30th anniversary of the “liberation.”

183 “Die DEFA im Jahre 1975: Gespräch mit Günter Schröder, Künstlerische Direktor der DEFA über Pläne, Projekte, Absichten.” Filmspiegel 4 (1975): 4-7. Other films that premiered in GDR movie theaters during this program were from Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Vietnam. As a retrospective, two GDR so-called...
The focus in this chapter is on Lina’s perspective on the Holocaust. It examines Lina’s powerful and influential role in the film adaptation directed by Frank Beyer while providing context surrounding the making of the film and about other films that help illuminate the importance of the young girl’s perspective. It also examines how Lina’s outsider perspective is filled with imagination and life-affirming hope, even to the point that she distorts the reality of her situation in order to maintain a semblance of normal life as a child, and how it reminds the audience of the history that is referenced in the film’s narrative and of the various ways that individuals might have resisted the Nazi plan to dehumanize and exterminate Jews.

**Plot Summary**

The unnamed narrator in Becker’s *Jacob the Liar* underpins how the novel, in part, claims that the Holocaust was more than GDR memory politics observed, as it was a genocide of European Jews. It also, in part, is a critique of the ways people in the GDR, according to the narrator’s perspective, ignored the stories of Jewish survivors. The novel functions as a framing story, in which the first frame is about the narrator’s memories of life before, during, and after the Holocaust. The second frame story is about Jacob, a Jewish man in a Polish ghetto under the Nazis who first hears news of Russians approaching via a radio in the police headquarters. In the novel, the storyteller is both Jacob (who tells the narrator his stories) and the narrator, who tells the readers his frame story as well as Jacob’s. Frank Beyer’s film has different framing than the novel; it has no narrator to tell the multiple frame stories, but many of the frames are still in the film, such as the private lives of Misha and Rose, the Frankfurter family, the Schtamms and Kowalski, who is Jacob’s oldest friend. The narrator’s role becomes a few intertitles in the “antifascist” films that happened to be directed by Frank Beyer also featured in this program.
beginning of the film, and the camera’s gaze. Jacob is the storyteller, and others – including Lina – repeat his stories. The film editing also takes the place of the narrator, by allowing the camera to show the individual stories of the Jewish characters in the ghetto. Beyer’s film, however, does not show the narrator’s perspective of the GDR at all.

In another huge shift from the novel, Lina appears in the first sequence of the film. In the film’s opening credits, Jacob climbs into the attic in his building to check on Lina, whom he protects in hiding. While out on an evening walk, an SS guard plays a cruel joke on Jacob by telling him that he is out past curfew and sends him for punishment to the headquarters. Since Jews have no timepieces but are expected to observe curfew, Jacob has no way of knowing the guard is wrong about the actual time. In the police headquarters, Jacob accidentally overhears a radio broadcast with information about Russians approaching a nearby city, Bezanika while he waits on the German officer who would rather not be bothered. This officer sees on his clock that Jacob still has minutes to spare before curfew, then sends him home.

In the ghetto, it is strictly forbidden to have or listen to a radio, with the punishment of the death if found with one. To the other Jews, Jacob seems defiant, as they believe that he owns a secret radio despite this rule. All the while, Jacob’s radio is imaginary, as well as the news that he creates. Once Jacob realizes how excited the people in the ghetto are to hear his news, he starts making up new stories about the Russians getting closer to the camp. This leads to the adults’ hopefulness for their liberation from the camp. In both the novel and the film, the news from this “radio” essentially brings life back to the ghetto; the number of suicides drops and people feel hopeful for the future. Jacob’s stories reach all Jews in the ghetto quickly, but the one about the radio and the news it provides only eventually reaches Lina when she overhears one of Jacob’s guests asking questions.
Essential to Lina’s perspective is Jacob’s imaginary radio. After she convinces him to play the radio for her, and she has no idea what a radio looks or sounds like, Jacob has to elaborate on his fabrication of both the radio itself and the stories it produces. To this end, Jacob performs as a storyteller on the “radio” and tells Lina a fairy tale. After about a sick princess who is certain that a cloud will cure her illness. Highlights of the fairy tale, which appears in the novel and is much the same in the film, reads as follows:


In the novel’s fairy tale, the princess gets healthy quickly once she has the cloud made of cotton; the gardener boy then asks for permission to marry her, rather than receiving the reward that the king offers. In the film, the story is much the same, but instead of Lina imagining the story as Jacob tells it, as in the novel, she clearly visualizes herself as the princess and Mischa – a young man in the ghetto – as the gardener who saves her. In the film, the two playfully run off together.

Eventually, Jacob reveals to Kowalski that he is lying about the radio and making up news. Kowalski grows angry and loses hope, but Lina does not. Although she discovers that Jacob performs as the radio, she never tells him. Instead, Lina continues to play along with him, pretending there is a radio that provides news and fairy tales. However, Lina also seems to
believe that clouds are made of cotton until the point when she has very last line of the film, which takes place on a train to a concentration camp. She asks Jacob about the fairy tale, and he explains to her that the princess only had to believe that clouds are made of cotton and that they could heal her. She has the final word in the film, as she asks, “Aber sind Wolken nicht aus Watte?” (“But aren’t clouds made of cotton?”). With her question, Lina leaves the audience to consider the history that she represents, whether this moment that might be one of her last, and whether something miraculous might happen to save her. It also demonstrates the power of imagination and its possibility to give people strength in harrowing situations. For, both Lina and the adults for whom Jacob fabricates stories preserve their humanity despite the Holocaust and the Nazi efforts to dehumanizing Jews. Lina believes in the power of the cotton cloud just as much as the adult Jews believe in the Russian saviors. Their beliefs and their imaginations, although life-giving, are poignant because none of Jacob’s stories are true.

**Literature on Jacob the Liar**

The film *Jacob the Liar* has been recognized in scholarship and film criticism for being unprecedented in GDR film history, making the character of Lina that much more an unprecedented character. After the film’s final production in 1974, director Frank Beyer and GDR-based film reviewers agreed that Lina’s role draws out the central motif in the film. That is, the fairy tale scene in which Jacob performs as the “Märchenonkel” (fairy tale uncle) and invents the story of the “Sick Princess,” who believes that a cloud will heal her illness. According to Beyer, the central motif of the film is that the princess wants a cloud, but she is satisfied with
cotton because she thinks that cotton is a cloud.\textsuperscript{184} Even though Beyer did not say it in the interview, it seems that readers could read between the lines yet again, as was often the case with Becker’s writing critical of the GDR. With the princess believing that the cloud made of cotton will heal her illness, it seems there is also a metaphor to read into the fairy tale. For instance, if Beyer and Becker thought that the GDR government thought that the Berlin Wall was enough to “heal” the problems of East Germany – by keeping out West Germans, blocking out West German ideas, and keeping East Germans from traveling, then they, like the princess, were “satisfied” with the wall (symbolized in cotton). We can read the critique of the GDR government in Jacob pointing out to Lina that the princess only believed that the cotton cloud would heal her, just as the GDR leaders only had to believe that the Berlin Wall would solve all of the country’s problems. A similar critique could be read into many of the GDR’s policies that artists often resisted.

Film reviewer and dramaturg Klaus Wischnewski, publishing in the East German film journal \textit{Film und Fernsehen}, states that the most significant character next to Jacob in the film is Lina, as she is the reason why Jacob makes up the “Fairy Tale of the Sick Princess.” Klaus Wischnewski also interviewed director Frank Beyer about \textit{Jacob the Liar} in the East German film journal \textit{Film und Fernsehen}.\textsuperscript{185} The journal published their interview in February 1975, just two months before \textit{Jacob the Liar} premiered in movie theaters. While Beyer expresses pride in his other films,\textsuperscript{186} he agrees that \textit{Jacob the Liar} is quite different – even better than his other

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{184} Klaus Wischnewski, “Werkstattgespräch mit Frank Beyer” \textit{Film und Fernsehen} 2 (February 1975): 19-25. Here, 20. “Die Prinzessin will eine Wolke haben, aber sie ist zufrieden mit der Watte, weil sie die Watte für eine Wolke hält.”
\item \textsuperscript{185} Wischnewski, “Werkstattgespräch,” 20.
\item \textsuperscript{186} Beyer’s earlier “antifascist” films are included in the discussion, particularly \textit{Nackt unter Wölfen}, \textit{Fünf Patronenhülsen}, \textit{Karbid und Sauerampfer}, and \textit{Königskinder}.
\end{itemize}
films at achieving a unity among several elements. He describes these elements as “Einheit von Tragischem und Komischem, die Spannung zwischen Heroismus und Alltäglichkeit, Mut und Angst.”\(^{187}\) According to Beyer, *Jacob the Liar* goes further than his other films in its relevance to the human condition in any place or time – namely through the reliance on dreams and illusion to foster hope. This is done in the most concentrated way in the radio sequence, and it is the little girl Lina who provides the vehicle through which to portray this.\(^{188}\) The fairy tale is the start of the opportunity for the viewers to reflect on the history and memory of the Holocaust, and to understand the pathos of her last line in connection to this history. Wischnewski claims the girl Lina as the reason why Jacob has the ability to dream, as it is in the radio sequence that he begins doing so. Jacob actually starts having flashbacks earlier in the film than Wischnewski states, but he his flashback runs for a longer time on screen when he is in the basement with Lina as they both daydream. I agree with Wischnewski, when he points out that the fairy-tale scene gives the film its “deep meaning.”

The film’s reflection on childhood, war, and Jewish ghettos appears only occasionally in East German documents and press about *Jacob the Liar*. For instance, in a review of the film called “Randbemerkungen zu einer großen Biografie: *Jakob der Lügner,*” Maja Turowskaja immediately points to the relationship of the film to the Grimms’ fairy tales: “Bei dem Namen dieses Films denkt man aus irgendeinem Grunde an die Kindheit und an Grimms Märchen, gedruckt mit verschönkelter gotischer Schrift auf dickem Papier und mit Goldschnitt...”\(^{189}\)


This review first connects the film’s title to an adult’s recollection of childhood through memories of reading the Grimm’s fairy tales. The author goes on to discuss how the film spares the audience gruesome images of children in the ghettos during the war:

Die Geschichte spielt in einem jüdischen Ghetto. Diese Wort ist seitdem für uns fest verbunden mit Dokumentaraufnahmen, die Amateure gemacht und wenig sachkundig entwickelt haben [. . .]. Aber das gibt es in dem Film nicht – weder durch hunger häßlich gewordene Kinder [. . .], noch einen robusten Soldaten, der einem schwachlichen kleinen Jungen ein paar versteckte Kohlrüben herausschüttelt.190

This document suggests the adult writer’s anxieties about childhood and what one can handle seeing about the Holocaust and the treatment of children. Turowskaja does not want to see real images of children starving and nearly dead in the Jewish ghettos and concentration camps. Such authenticity would be entirely unwelcome. Beyer and Becker’s more aesthetic, beautiful portrayal of childhood in the ghetto – though false – is much more desirable to this adult audience.

While such reception of the film deserves recognition as the exceptions that discuss the child character in Jacob the Liar and allow her much more significance for the film’s meaning, I suggest taking the interpretation further than Wischnewski does. Taking a closer look at Jurek Becker’s multiple drafts of this one sequence, the changes in Lina’s character are telling. Lina’s importance for the entire film grows between 1963 and 1974 from a somewhat minor supporting role to the central synecdoche for the rest of the characters. More specifically, in Becker’s drafts of this sequence – from the initial film exposé in 1963, to the “Szenarium” in 1965 and the script he submitted later that year, to another draft of the “Szenarium” in 1972, as well as the 1972

190 The story takes place in a Jewish ghetto. This word is (since then?) for us connected to documentary images that amateurs made and little competently developed [. . .]. But that is not in the film – neither children who because of hunger have grown unsightly [, . . .], nor a robust soldier who shakes out a few hidden rutabagas to a small weak child. Turowskaja, “Randbemerkungen,” first page.
script, and finally the film produced in 1974 – Lina’s character changes from a two-dimensional prop to a multi-dimensional character who urges Jacob to tell stories and finally evokes in him a dream-like state where he finds pleasure in a moment from his past.

Scholars have recognized Jacob the Liar’s challenge to the GDR national narrative that celebrated antifascist heroes and marginalized Jewish victims and survivors. Becker’s Jacob the Liar was not the first to acknowledge the Holocaust for what it was – the genocide of Jews; but it certainly was the first to challenge the GDR’s narrative about the liberation of the concentration camps by antifascist heroes since Apitz’s novel had helped to create it. According to Germanist Kai Herklotz, the original 1963 scenario of Jacob the Liar was “one of the very few East German narratives at the time to explicitly acknowledge the specificity of Jewish experience under Nazism. […] Only Kurt Maetzig’s film Marriage in the Shadows [Ehe im Shatten] from 1948, [and] to a certain degree also Konrad Wolf’s Stars [Sterne] from 1958, and a limited number of literary publications explicitly portrayed Jewish suffering as a consequence of Nazi anti-Semitism and reminded their audiences of fascist racial politics.”

In scholarship on Jacob the Liar, topics tend to focus on Becker’s childhood, his (lack of) Jewish identity, and his stance on resistance in the GDR to pressures and restrictions from the SED. Although Herklotz includes a film analysis of Jacob the Liar, most of the scholarship on

191 Herklotz, “The Politics of East German Memory,” 230

Jurek Becker’s works have heavily focused on his writings, and there is still little scholarship on his role in the film adaptations. None, however, discuss the significant role of children in his works. Becker’s work urges viewers to see the contradictions in the GDR – an antifascist socialist state that people believed would represent justice and peace after the Nazi years – that was torn apart when the ruling elite obfuscated this mission. Becker was among artists who critiqued such contradictions. Rarely have scholars discussed Becker and his work with Beyer that contributed to international Holocaust memory and the invitation to audiences to participate in Holocaust memory. Becker achieved this in part through his child characters who offer critical perspectives of the Holocaust; with Lina in Jacob the Liar, her belief in fantasy is central to this objective.

Jacob the Liar (1969) challenged the GDR’s antifascist myth of resistance during World War II. O’Doherty, Heidelberger-Leonard, and Rock have also discussed the influential role of Jurek Becker’s biography in his narratives, particularly those that critique the GDR by way of his emphasis on Jewish perspectives of the Holocaust and censorship in the GDR. According to Thomas Schmidt, the most important texts written by survivors of the Holocaust in the GDR were Jurek Becker’s Jacob the Liar (1969), Peter Edel’s Die Bilder des Zeugen Schattmann (1969), and Fred Wander’s Der siebente Brunnen (1971), because of their focus on Jewish perspectives of the Holocaust and the use of their own biographies to inform their work, Schmidt finds that for Wander and Becker’s narrators, and for the authors themselves, “das Erzählen wird zum Lebensmittel” (the narrative becomes something that gives life). 193 He says that Jacob the

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*Liar* is a “Zeugnistext” (a text of witnessing, testimony) as well as fiction in a tradition of realism. As Schmidt observes, unlike Wander and Edel, Becker can only to a small degree grasp at his own biography.

Russell Brown emphasizes the roles of the father and child that appear in Becker’s Holocaust fiction - *Jacob the Liar, Der Boxer, Bronsteins Kinder,* and “die Mauer.” Brown traces the autobiographical elements of Becker’s life that he writes into these works of fiction. According to Brown, the “improvised family unit” of Jacob and Lina in *Jacob the Liar* is a “major element of the story” and it “may reflect the father-son relationship in Jurek’s actual ghetto experience.” Though Brown recognizes that Becker remembered virtually nothing from his early childhood and that his conscious past begins in Berlin after the war, he nevertheless asserts, “about half of Becker’s fictional works deal with his and his father’s Holocaust experience, while the others portray postwar reality in the new German socialist state.” Brown’s interpretation is also influential for my analysis of Lina’s relationship with Jacob, which is essential for understanding how Jacob finds motivation for his life-giving storytelling. Moreover, Brown’s interpretation is influential in my examination of Becker’s essays, which I discuss in this chapter.

Perhaps even more influential to my interpretation is Korinna Hennig, who finds that both child figures in Becker’s *Jacob the Liar* and Bruno Apitz’s *Naked among Wolves* are symbols of hope. While Hennig sees both children as embodying a part of the world after or outside of the Holocaust, she sees Lina as a more dynamic character. Hennig describes Lina as a

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driving force for the reader of the novel to understand the world of the child under the circumstances of the Third Reich. While Hennig is influential to my interpretation, I include discussion not only of Becker’s novel and film, but also multiple of drafts of the story in which he included Lina.

Analyzing the film as an adaptation, Susan Figge and Jenifer Ward discuss Lina’s role as one of the ways that Beyer’s Jacob the Liar portrays humanity in the ghetto. Furthermore, they draw out how significant Lina’s question is at the end of the film [“But aren’t clouds made of cotton?”], as it marks the film’s transition from story to the history to which it refers. According to Figge and Ward, both Lina and viewers have witnessed the events in the film as a story; but when Lina asks this question, it is a “grim reminder that no fairy tale will halt this train,” and “the history that was always just on the other side of the [ghetto] wall reveals itself.” Figge and Ward’s argument highlights how Lina as a child character reminds the audience of the fairy tale and also makes the audience remember the history surrounding her story. Since the audience knows about the Holocaust and the uncountable number of transports from ghettos to concentration camps that led to the murder of millions of people, when Lina

\[\text{References}\]

198 In an interview, Frank Beyer told Ward and Figge that a good story will always contain the history that serves as its context. Frank Beyer, interview with authors Figge and Ward, Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter, MN, 2 November 2002. Cited in Figge and Ward, Reworking the German Past, 94, note 28.
199 Figge and Ward, Reworking the German Past, 97.
rides in the box car leaving the ghetto, viewers comprehend that no one is coming to her rescue, like the gardener boy in the fairy tale rescued the sick princess.

**Context of Jacob the Liar**

My interpretation of Lina goes hand in hand with analyzing *Jacob the Liar* as an example for adaptation studies. For the study of *Jacob the Liar* in light of these arguments, it is productive to think about the historical context surrounding the story that tells a Jewish narrative of the Holocaust written at a particular time and in a specific place. It is not only the general history of the Holocaust that provides reference for *Jacob the Liar*; Becker’s family history is also part of the context in which he wrote the novel. Although the story is not autobiographical, there are certainly influences from Becker’s family history that coincides with German and European history, as his family history was directly affected by the German invasion of Poland and the Shoah. Furthermore, Becker’s context of writing after living in the GDR for more than twenty years must be factored into analysis of his writing.

Jurek Becker adapted the story of *Jacob the Liar*, in part, from stories he learned from his father Max Becker in the years following their survival of the Holocaust. Having worked closely with Becker and having become friends with him, Frank Beyer explains his understanding of what he calls “die wahre Geschichte von *Jakob dem Lügner*” (“the true story of *Jacob the Liar*”) as follows:

Sie beginnt damit, dass Vater Becker seinem Sohn Jurek, Philosophiestudent und angehender Schriftsteller, eine Geschichte aus dem Ghetto Łódź erzählt. Ein Mann dort besaß ein Radio. Das was streng verboten und mit der Todesstrafe bedroht. Dieser Mann...

Aber Sohn Jurek hatte das Gefühl, Geschichten dieser Art schon bei anderen Autoren gelesen zu haben, bei Anna Seghers, bei Willi Bredel, bei Bruno Apitz, und er hatte nicht den Wunsch, diesen Geschichten eine weitere, ähnliche hinzuzufügen.200

In his essay, “Wie es zu »Jakob dem Lügner« kam,”201 Becker describes a similar anecdote as Beyer’s. He explains how he originally came to the story of *Jacob the Liar* through his father’s story about a man he knew in the ghetto who fed the ghetto inhabitants news he heard on his hidden radio. According to Becker, this story came to him at a time after he had written several comedies for DEFA and was accepted as an author. In reference to his father’s hero, Becker says “Die Geschichte kam mir vor, wie eine Geschichte die ich schon hundertmal gehört oder gelesen hatte. Sie mag sich tatsächlich so zugetragen haben, aber das reicht nicht aus für eine gute Geschichte.”202 Although Becker did not want to write the story that his father told him, he did not forget it, and he changed the plot so that the hero Jacob would not actually have a radio from which to report the news of the Russians, but would make one up. This change complicates the whole moral and literary impact of the story.

In the essay, Becker describes his father with a “sehr entschlossenes Gesicht” (“a very determined look on his face”) telling him “es wird Zeit, daß du endlich etwas Ernstes und Wahrhaftiges schreibst, nicht immer nur deine leichtfertigen Geschichten ohne Gewicht, die

200 Beyer, Wenn der Wind sich dreht, 180.
202 “It occured to me that the story was like a story that I had already heard or read a thousand times. It may have actually happened that way, but that is not enough for a good story.” Becker, “Wie es zu »Jakob dem Lügner« kam,” 10.
Becker’s father thus pushed him to write more serious stories that would linger in the hearts and minds of his readers. This push seems to have had a great impact on Becker’s shift from comedies to writing with irony about the Holocaust – and even later about his critique of the East and West Germany.

Although Becker at first rejected the story of his father’s hero, years later he returned to it, employing his artistic license to write the story about a man whom no one would consider a hero. It occurred to him to write the story about a man who actually did not own a radio, “but rather someone whom the people believed had hidden a radio.” He worked this into the central theme of his story with both Jacob and Lina; just as Becker wanted to show what could happen if people simply believed that the man had a radio, Jacob explains to Lina at the end of the film that the princess only had to believe that clouds are made of cotton. Becker also saw the opportunity to tell a new story, “und auch ein bißchen zu philosophieren,” (“and also philosophize a little”) with the possibility to put forth a unique kind of heroism, one that stoked a fire for hope rather than despair in the ghetto, but not based on reality. It is important to recognize that Becker called this writing a chance “to philosophize,” and that, in doing so, he wrote Lina as a powerful character. The other stories, which he says he heard “a hundred times” were not good stories.

When he made the hero not actually have a radio, but only an imagined one, and then gave him a real girl to look after and keep her secret, he shifted the emphasis of heroism – from defiance as a weapon against the SS, to a type of heroism devoted to rescuing a little orphan girl and to telling fictional stories. Jacob’s heroism is layered with defiance, of course, as he is not taking in

just any girl, but rather, as a Jew stripped of power in a Nazi ghetto, he hides a young Jewish girl from the SS.

Another layer to consider in this analysis is the film *Jakob the Liar* (1999) that Peter Kassovitz directed, based on Becker’s writing. Lina is in Kassovitz’s film (played by Hannah Taylor Gordon), but she is nearly eleven years old, rather than eight as in Beyer’s film and in Becker’s novel. Kassowitz made many changes to the characters Jakob and Lina as he took liberties with the story. This change in Lina’s age makes it seem less surprising that her character is more cognizant of her situation than the younger Lina in Becker’s novel and Beyer’s film. Moreover, Jakob does not tell Lina the fairy tale in Kassowitz’s film, and instead of performing as a radio in the basement, he actually plays a record on a phonograph in his former café. Instead of Jakob having a flashback to an evening with his former lover Roswitha – who does not exist in Kassowitz’s film because in his version, Jakob (rather than the novel’s narrator) was married to Chana – the flashback sequence seen in Beyer’s film is completely omitted; instead, Jakob and Lina dance to the music heard from the phonograph. Moreover, the fairy tale sequence in Beyer’s film is completely omitted; instead, Jakob and Lina dance to the music that actually plays from the phonograph on the film set. Jacob does not perform as the imaginary radio in this scene at all. Removing the dream-world of Lina affects the influential power of the girl, and so in Kassowitz’s film Lina is less powerful than in Beyer’s film.

Another significant difference in the roles of Jakob and Lina between Kassowitz’s film and Beyer’s film is that Kassowitz’s story centers more on Jakob and far less on Lina. One factor may be in that Williams is also listed among the credits as the executive producer, which likely impacted how much more this film emphasizes Jakob’s role than Lina’s. A continuity in the
films is the actor Armin Mueller-Stahl, who plays Dr. Kirschbaum in Kassowitz’s film and was one of the Schtamm brothers in Beyer’s version.206

Because Kassowitz removed the fairy tale scene with Lina, Beyer’s ending with her question about the cloud is also dropped at the end of Kassowitz’s film. Even though Kassowitz claimed to have felt a connection with Lina, his film does not focus centrally on her character in the same way that Becker and Beyer’s work does. Instead of returning to the question about clouds, at the end of Kassowitz’s film the camera focuses on Lina’s eyes as she sees – or imagines – the Allied troops stopping the train, and an American jazz band singing nearby. She does not speak, however. In contrast, Becker and Beyer pushed Lina to the foreground and made her a central character to the novel and the film, giving her the final word in the film.

Film scholar Alan Corkhill explains that Kassowitz’s own background as a Budapest Jew made him feel a connection to the little girl in Becker’s novel and in what he calls Jakob I (Beyer’s Jacob the Liar, 1974).207 According to Corkhill, Kassowitz was also kept in hiding after his parents’ deportation from a Jewish ghetto.208 Corkhill points to the issue of the adaptation credits, observing that Becker’s novel is credited as the source material for Kassowitz’s film, but Beyer’s film is not. Corkhill says that this signifies a protracted Cold War denial of 40 years of excellent East German filmmaking. Kassowitz may also not have seen the


208 Corkhill, “From Novel to Film to Remake,” 98. See also Peter Kassowitz, Interview about the Making of Jakob the Liar, DVD, 1999.
film, as Corkhill states that it was “mothballed” in 1974, and then not released on video (VHS) by Icestorm until 1999. However, I would argue with Corkhill on this point because Kassowitz sought permission from Becker for the rights to make the film, and it seems likely that he would have at least been aware of the film.209

Through these changes, we can consider not only the fact that Becker wrote multiple drafts, but also that the changes made over time also shed light on the final version of the story itself. Because Beyer was involved in changing the story as the director working closely with Becker, drawing on their very close friendship, the story that they created together in the DEFA film is a unique and compelling story. In their work together, the girl has tremendous impact, as will be discussed further in the following section.

**Lina**

**“Lina macht es rund”**

Lina was not only an important character for Jurek Becker, but she is also important to Jacob and the narrator in Becker’s novel. Familial ties and ethical responsibility for her care are at the heart of Lina’s significance in *Jacob the Liar*. The narrator discusses how important Lina is to the story, and he feels ashamed for not introducing her sooner. He writes:

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209 On the other hand, it seems that Kassowitz wanted to adapt the novel by Becker more specifically, because his film recalls the novel’s multiple endings. As Christine Becker has stated, her husband had also been in communication with Kassowitz. Christine Becker signed the final rights to allow the film to go into production shortly after Jurek Becker’s death in 1997. It seems Corkhill was not aware of this process of legal rights and so did not mention them in this article. Moreover, the implications of the way the film would be made in the time following Becker’s death are manifold. Christine Becker, interview with author, Amherst, MA, November 2009.
Spät genug kommen wir zu Lina, unverantwortlich spät, denn sie ist für das alles von
einiger Bedeutung, sie macht es erst rund, wenn davon die Rede sein kann, Jakob geht
den Tag zu ihr, aber wir kommen jetzt erst.\footnote{Becker, Jakob der Lügner, 75.}

Lina is clearly important to Jacob, and the narrator aims to illustrate how this makes her
important for his story. Noteworthy, however, is that Lina also appears in Becker’s drafts of the
film as early at the 1963 treatment. She is, of course, a fully developed character in the 1965
draft, as this was the first full screenplay. So, in this way, Lina has shown up much earlier than
the narrator indicates in the 1969 novel.

The narrator of the novel describes Lina and part of her relationship with Jacob. It is an
exclusive relationship between the two of them as adoptive father and daughter. He writes,

Sie kann einen ansehen, dass man Lust bekommt, den letzten Bissen mit ihr zu teilen, aber
nur Jakob tut es, manchmal gibt er ihr sogar alles, das kommt, weil er nie eigene Kinder
gehabt hat.\footnote{Becker, Jakob der Lügner, 75-76.}

Although describing how Jacob takes care of Lina, the narrator later describes Lina’s origins, and
how her relationship with Jacob began. The narrator explains that the Nazi police discovered that
Lina’s father, Mr. Nuriel, was absentmindedly not wearing his yellow stars on his jacket, when
he was walking to work. They arrested him and located his wife, who finally pointed out to her
husband, “Deine Sterne (Your stars).”\footnote{Becker, Jakob der Lügner, 76.} Immediately, he knew, “dass es sich um das Ende
handelt, um das Ende oder kurz davor, ein weit kleinerer Grund hätte für das Ende genügt, lies
die Ghettoverordnung.”\footnote{Becker, Jakob der Lügner, 76.} This simple phrase “your stars” unleashes the history that Figge and
Ward point out as well. The reminder that Mrs. Nuriel gives her husband also reminds the reader

\footnote{Becker, Jakob der Lügner, 76.}
that Jews could be killed or sent to concentration camps and death camps for not having stars on the front and back of their clothing.

In this description of what happened to Lina’s parents, the narrator’s sardonic tone critically discusses the ghetto ordinances. That something as seemingly insignificant as forgetting a star could lead to such a harsh punishment as the death of both of Lina’s parents is painful for the narrator. The sardonic tone, however, does not seem sad, but rather points out how absurd the Nazis’ ghetto ordinances were. Similar sardonic commentary on life under the Nazis appears in many of Becker’s other writings as well, including his novels Bronstein’s Children and The Boxer, as well as the short story “The Wall.” Such commentary is one of the ways in which Becker’s narrators makes Holocaust memory less familiar by creating a critical distance with which to analyze the story and the history that it urges the reader to recall. It is striking how his writing at first glance seems to not point out the atrocity, but leaves the reader to read between the lines. It takes an active reader to pay attention to the details in Becker’s writing for this kind of tone, so that they can pick up on the implications. The example with the Nuriels is one such case, in which a phrase such as “your stars” might otherwise seem ordinary – but all on its own criticizes the Holocaust. Then, if the reader connects the phrase to the context of the Holocaust, the meaning of Mrs. Nuriel’s phrase reaches a new register.

Becker’s sardonic tone continues his description of how the Nuriels prepare for their unexpected departure. As the SS force them to pack their belongings for their “deportation,” Mr. and Mrs. Nuriel try to hide from the police that they have a daughter. Although her parents had told her not to leave the apartment, she had disobeyed them. According to the narrator, they think about her behavior and how it might protect her in this instance: “Aber man weiß ja nicht, was die Kinder den ganzen Tag treiben, während die Eltern arbeiten, ein Stoßgebet, daß sie dieses
Mal unfolgsam sein möge.” In this instance, if she disobeys her parents, she might live, even if it is a life without them. It is clear to them that they cannot be the ones to protect her now.

As the Nuriels pack their belongings, they notice Lina playing in the courtyard of their building rather than waiting for them in the room. In the courtyard, Lina plays alone and without toys. Her father notices her as she “balancierte auf der kleinen Mauer zwischen den beiden Höfen, das hat er ihr wer weiß wie oft verboten, so sind Kinder eben.” As her parents see that she is playing against their parental commands, it is made clear that Lina’s playfulness is literally giving her life. Because she is playing outside instead of in their home, the SS do not suspect that she is their child. They probably assume that she would stay inside while they are away at work. Because Lina disobeys the rules – by claiming freedom for play and free movement – she lives at least two more years after their deportation, as Jacob then de facto adopts her.

When Lina returns home, she sees that her parents are gone and another family has moved in. The family thinks about what to do with her, but they are too afraid to take her in because “es brauchte nur eine unverhoffte Kontrolle aufzutauchen, wie kommst zu dem Kind?” With the help of multiple women who arrange for her to have some furniture, Lina moves to the top unoccupied floor of the building, and Jacob decides to take care of her because he never had any children. According to the narrator, “riskiert es Jakob, der nie eigene Kinder gehabt hat.” He goes to check on her every night, and on cold nights lets her stay with him in his room to share the blankets. According to the narrator, since her parents disappeared, Lina has

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214 Becker, Jakob der Lügner, 76-77.

215 Becker, Jakob der Lügner, 77.

216 Becker, Jakob der Lügner, 77.

217 Becker, Jakob der Lügner, 78.
had two years to “wrap Jacob around her finger.” When Lina is sick, Jacob goes to her every night and brings the doctor, Professor Kirschbaum to check on her as well.

In contrast to the novel, and perhaps since there is no narrator in the film Jacob the Liar (1974), the story of Lina’s parents is not thoroughly covered. Instead, the film begins with Jacob visiting Lina while she is lying in bed with a fever and sleeping. The film suggests that Jacob and Lina have a familial relationship; only later, in a discussion between the two of them, does she talk about finding her parents again after the Russians arrive. She asks, “And my parents, will they also be there?” In the novel, Lina never talks about finding her parents after the Russians arrive; she is more concerned about what her life with Jacob will be like in the years after the war: helping him cook potato latkes, going to school, eating whatever she likes, wearing clean and beautiful dresses.

Caring for Lina shapes Jacob into her adoptive father. As the narrator describes their relationship, it is clear that Jacob has made an ethical choice to protect the girl. In light of Levinas’s theory of the encounter and ethical choice to help an Other in need, Jacob’s choice connects him to other adult figures in this dissertation, such as André, Pippig, and Jankowski in Naked among Wolves, as well as the parents and Mr. Tenzer in “The Wall” and While all Germans Sleep. In this way, as Jacob acts as an individual answering the “calling” to do the ethical, responsible thing and take care of Lina, he acts in defiance of the Nazis. As he demonstrates no political ties to any party whatsoever – even in his pre-war flashbacks – his ethical choice is not politically charged.

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218 Becker, Jakob der Lügner, 78.

219 Becker, Jakob der Lügner, 78-80.
Lina’s Outsider Perspective

I analyze Lina as a child character with an outsider’s perspective that challenges an adult – Jacob – in the novel and film Jacob the Liar. As we have seen, according to Debbie Pinfold, the outsider perspective has frequently come from a character raised in the wilderness or a “mad” person, but has evolved to the use of children with similar critical gazes upon the world “turned upside down.”220 This observation applies to Lina in Jacob the Liar, if we understand the Jewish ghetto in the Holocaust as a metaphor for the wilderness or a site of “madness.” In the actual ghettos and concentration camps, people died of malnutrition as well as violent acts, and many had to fend for themselves to survive. Taking the metaphors of the wilderness and the site of madness, we can see Lina as an outsider in a world “turned on its head.” Other than her first two years of life, she has not known much of the world outside of the ghetto walls, and so she understands the world inside the ghetto very differently from the adults in the narrative. Lina is ignorant of the real cruelty that is taking place in the ghetto, even to her. She appears as an outsider among the other Jews because she seems to think that the world of the ghetto is normal. Even though she knows that her parents were taken, she does not grasp that she may never see them again. Because Lina sees the ghetto as normal, she leaves viewers to think about what is normal and what is cruel about the ghetto and about how we remember this history of the Holocaust.

Like the child outsider perspectives that Pinfold describes, Lina offers a critical viewpoint on the society that she knows in the ghetto. She lives in a world that is not yet fully her own; moreover, she is not yet part of German or Polish society outside of the ghetto. Although she cannot yet comprehend the world, she critiques restrictions and ideas that pop up

around her, such as the fictional radio from which Jacob invents stories. She also does not understand the future life that Jacob and others hope for, that resembles what they knew before the Nazi invasion. She has nothing tangible to which to compare her life. Instead, she relies solely on her imagination for what life after the ghetto might be like, and she invents what scenes will look like. This process is life-affirming for her, as she understands her imagination as real, or as becoming real one day in the near future.

From her outsider’s perspective, Lina is also the “sane” person who stays calm, while the adults get anxious and excited about the news of the approaching Russians. In both the novel and the film, Lina asks Jacob about the Russians. During their evening visit Lina asks, “Hast du gehört, wovon sie alle reden? [. . .] Dass die Russen bald hier sind?” (“Have you heard what everyone’s talking about? [. . .] that the Russians will be here soon?”) Jacob, pretending to be surprised, responds to her, “Was du nicht sagst!” (“You don’t say!”) Lina assures Jacob that everyone in their neighborhood knows, and she asks him again, but he denies having heard the news. The narrator has described Lina as a child who does not stop asking questions when she is determined to know more, and she does ask Jacob more questions – but her focus is on the imaginary future. She wants to know more about what life might be like after the Russians arrive; she asks Jacob out of curiosity, “Wie wird es den sein, wenn die Russkis hier sind? [. . .] Besser oder schlechter?” This future is more important to Lina than the here and now, which is everyone else’s focus. Also, in this moment, Lina’s character sets up Becker and Beyer’s critique of the GDR’s relationship with the Soviet Union. It is a safe way for them to critique this relationship because Lina knows nothing about the GDR since her setting is years before its


existence. Since she asks what it “will” be like after the Russians arrive, her questions allow the 1975 audience to think about how life turned out after the war.

Though Jacob tries to act as if he has not heard about the Russians, this is the very news he told Mischa and Kowalski and that spread throughout the ghetto, finally making its way to Lina. Shortly after Lina starts asking Jacob about the Russians, Kowalski shows up for more information from the radio. Not knowing who is at the door, Jacob tells Lina to hide under the bed as he seems uncertain who is at the door. Jacob also wants to keep the news away from Lina, and he does not want her to know that he is the one who has been spreading the news reports. When Kowalski asks about the news, Jacob says: “Bist du verrückt? Vor dem Kind!”223 Jacob hopes Lina did not hear Kowalski. The narrator of the novel describes the exchange:


At this moment Jacob is betrayed: Lina knows that he is the newscaster spreading the news in the ghetto Jacob, however, still hopes that Lina has not understood Kowalski. As the quote shows, since she is also “just a kid” she may not have been paying attention.

After Lina comes out from her hiding place, Jacob tells her to go upstairs to her attic. She obeys him, but first she displays her independence and agency: she goes to him and, when he thinks she will give him a kiss, she “holt sich den Kopf, weil an dem die Ohren dran sind, in eins

223 Becker, Jakob der Lügner, 122.

224 Becker, Jakob der Lügner, 123.
von ihnen flüstert sie: ‘Von dir wissen es alle. Du hast doch geschwindelt!’\textsuperscript{225} This scene plays similarly in the film as well. It is an important moment for establishing that Lina knows more than Jacob thinks she does – and that she has a mind of her own. Now that she knows he is the one who has been spreading the news, she also knows that he lied to her when she asked about the Russians approaching. She feels as if she has won a battle against Jacob. Now she knows where to get more information.

However, her reasons for wanting to hear more are very different from the adults who want details daily. After Lina has realized that Jacob is the source of the reports and that he is the one with the radio, she must hear it for herself. Lina is different from many adults, in the novel and film, in that she does not need to hear daily updates. Instead, she wants proof: she must see the radio, or get close enough to hear it for herself. It is in part about the material thing itself; it is pure curiosity, because she has never seen a radio before. As they knew life before, the adults, in contrast tp Lina, have expectations about the future, for life returning to how it was. However, this is almost as if the adults are longing for a fairy tale, as unlikely as it is that they will regain their lives from before the war after what they have experienced, the loss of family and friends, and perhaps their homes.

The narrator of the novel explains that Jacob sees two groups among the adults: those who are like Kowalski and need to know more news, and those who have “heard enough” and are worried that the existence of a radio in the ghetto puts them all into danger. The narrator states:

\begin{quote}
Die einen fiebern nach Neuigkeiten, was ist letzte Nacht geschehen, wie hoch sind die Verluste auf jeder Seite, keine Meldung ist so klein, daß man aus ihr nicht dieses und
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{225} Becker, \textit{Jakob der Lügner}, 123.
Kowalski belongs to the first group and, in fact, Jacob calls the first group “die hundert Kowalskis” (“the hundred Kowalskis”).

The adults who want to hear more news, are never satisfied and they keep coming to Jacob for more information.

Lina’s persistence in finding the radio pushes Jacob to play the secret, yet fictional radio for her. However, it is not easy for her to achieve this feat. She searches for the radio in Jacob’s apartment, where she has the privilege to come and go as no one else does; she takes the opportunity to go in his apartment while he is at work in the train yard, and she rummages through his apartment in search of the radio, leaving it in disarray.

In her search, Lina mistakes an oil lamp for the radio. When Jacob walks in and sees her with the lamp, his apartment in disarray from her search, he asks her what happened. She answers, “ich wollte doch bei dir aufräumen” (“I wanted to clean up your place”). She even tries to trick him further, by treating him as if he forgot the plan, “Weißt du nicht mehr?” (“Don’t you know any more?”). After he looks around at what the narrator describes as “Sodom and Gomorrha,” he asks her gently, “Aber du bist hoffentlich noch nicht fertig?” (“But you hopefully aren’t done yet”). Lina thinks to herself that of course, she is not done, as she has only just begun her search. As the readers, we can see that Lina has her own mind and is determined to figure

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226 Becker, Jakob der Lügner, 84.

227 Becker, Jakob der Lügner, 84.

228 Becker, Jakob der Lügner, 141. The novel’s narrator explains that Jacob gave her a key shortly after taking her in to his building and home.

229 Becker, Jakob der Lügner, 145.
out the proverbial riddle of the radio. Becker’s writing of her subjectivity here gives us the insight into her young mind.

Without saying anything to Jacob, she waits to see if he notices that she has found his secret radio; but what she has discovered is an oil lamp. When Jacob explains what it is, she weeps out of disappointment of not finding the radio. The narrator later says,

[Lina] nimmt die Lampe in beide Hände, betrachtet sie von allen Seiten [. . .]. Zu Hause, bei den Nuriels damals, hat es keine Petroleumlampe gegeben und kein Radio, Irrtümer entstehen aus Mangel an Erfahrung, sie stellt das Ding nach einem letzten Blick zurück in den Schrank.²³⁰

Lina then screws up the courage to tell Jacob that she thought this oil lamp was his radio. At first Jacob thinks this is cute, but then he realizes that he has made a mistake by telling her that the lamp is not the radio. He has missed the opportunity to tell the girl who has never seen either a radio or an oil lamp that his thing is precisely the radio for which she has been searching. The narrator says,

aber bald wird sein Lächeln schwächer und schwächer. Lina hat das Radio gesucht [. . .]. Er hätte sie zu heiligem Schweigen verpflichtet, jetzt hast du es endlich gefunden, jetzt weiß du, wie es aussieht, jetzt kein Wort mehr davon, vor allem nicht zu fremden Leuten. [. . .] Gleich wird sie fragen, schön, das war eine Lampe, wo ist nun das Radio?²³¹

Jacob’s thought process reveals that he knows Lina well. He is disappointed that he will not get peace at home until she is satisfied about the radio. However, he is thinking not only of Lina, but also of all the other people, the adults who come to him throughout each day to get more stories from him.

²³⁰ Becker, Jakob der Lügner, 147.
²³¹ Becker, Jakob der Lügner, 148.
Jacob is correct in his suspicion that Lina will push him to show her the radio. Since it
does not exist, he has to think of a way to satisfy her curiosity. In the novel, Lina asks Jacob
about the radio again in the following exchange:

»Zeigst du mir jetzt das Radio?«
»Ich habe dir gestern schon gesagt, nein. Hat sich inzwischen vielleicht etwas geändert?«
»Ich finde es ja doch«, sagt Lina.
»Dann such weiter.«
»Wollen wir wetten daß ich es finde?«

The narrator describes Jacob feeling as if Lina’s bet that she will find the radio is an “offener
Angriff” (“open attack”). He uses this opportunity to make up for the last one he missed, so
that the next object she finds and thinks is the radio he will confirm is the actual radio. Jacob
thinks, “Und das Radio, das sie nie findet, bleibt vorerst von Feuer verschont, daran sind viele
Gründe schuld, an erster Stelle aber Herschel, der Gelockte, der hat es schon am Vormittag, als
er im Regen zwischen den Bohlen lag, so gut wie repariert.” Earlier that day, the SS shoots
and kills Herschel Stamm at the railyard where they all work, for talking to prisoners through the
cracks of in a closed boxcar, presumably on their way to a concentration camp. The SS is too far
away to hear that Herschel tries to give the prisoners hope that the end of the war is near, by
sharing the news of Russians approaching. Although the narrator gives realistic details earlier,
here he is more poetic in referring to Herschel’s death. It is now the thing that broke the radio,
and Jacob plans to use the excuse of the broken radio to satisfy Lina.

However, Lina will not give up. The narrator of the novel describes an exchange in which
Jacob tells him how he finally caved in to Lina’s plea that he play the radio for her. The narrator

232 Becker, Jakob der Lügner, 149.

233 Ibid.

234 Ibid.
describes Jacob playing the radio for Lina as “der unbegreiflichste in der ganzen Geschichte”

(“the most incomprehensible in the whole story”). His conversation with Jacob in the novel reads as follows:


The narrator continues asking Jacob about his playing the radio for Lina. This time, he wants to know if Jacob feared that she would catch him in the lie about the radio:

[. . .] Du konntest dir doch nicht sicher sein, daß sie nicht alles durchschaut? Wie leicht hätte sie merken können, was in Wirklichkeit geschah, sie ist ein kluges Mädchen, wie du selbst sagst. War es nicht unverschämtes Glück, daß sie es nicht durchschaut hat?²³⁶

Then Jacob reveals to the narrator that he knows that “‘Sie hat es durchgeschaut’ [. . .] und seine Augen sind ganz stolz geworden.” (“‘She did see through it [. . .] and his eyes grew totally proud.”). It is essential to understanding Lina’s cognizance of the situation to see that she catches Jacob in the performance of the radio. She also confirms that it does not matter what she hears on it, only the experience of hearing it; hearing him happy as he performs as the radio for her is much more important to her. Jacob explains why this is a proud moment for him,

Weißt du, mir war es eigentlich ganz egal, ob sie was merkt oder nicht. Ich wollte ihr einfach eine Freude machen [. . .]. Oder nein, es war mir nicht egal. Ich glaube, ich habe damals gewollt, daß sie alles erfährt. Ich mußte irgend jemandem endlich mein Radio zeigen, und Lina war mir von allen die liebste dafür, mit ihr war alles wie ein Spiel. Alle anderen waren über die Wahrheit entsetzt gewesen, sie hat sich herunter gefreut.

²³⁵ Becker, Jakob der Lügner, 161.

²³⁶ Becker, Jakob der Lügner, 161.
Deswegen habe ich zu ihr an dem Abend gesagt, komm jetzt in den Keller, wir wollen zusammen Radio hören.”

Jacob shows the narrator that he understands Lina’s perspective, and how different she is from the others. He knows that she only wants to experience the radio, and he wants to share this with her. Moreover, he knows that she is the only one in the ghetto who wants this experience so strongly that she pushes him to play it for her; and yet she also will not spread any rumors, as he has already seen the adults do. As Jacob explains to the narrator, he is happy to entertain her and give her this important experience of pleasure by listening to the radio. It is also a relief for him to show the radio to someone, especially when that someone is Lina. However, it is with full irony that there is no radio to show.

In both the novel and in the film, when Jacob plays the radio for Lina in the cellar, he tries to give her the same news that the others have heard about the Russian and the British armies reaching Bezanika, nearer to defeating Hitler. This comes through in his performance, as Sir Winston Churchill and the reporter who interviews him. As early as the 1965 draft of the screenplay, and in the novel as well as the 1974 film, Lina is not satisfied with this news report. In all versions she says to Jacob roughly the same thing as she says in the novel: “Es ist doch nicht zu Ende? [ . . . ] Ich möchte noch mehr hören.” (Surely it’s not over? [ . . . ] I would like to hear more.”). She shows here again that she is not like the others in the ghetto, who just want more facts; she wants the experience of performance and make-believe.

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237 Becker, Jakob der Lügner, 161-162.

238 Becker, Jakob der Lügner, 165-167.

239 Becker, Jakob der Lügner, 167.

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In the film, this scene also features a flashback to Jacob on a date with his girlfriend, Roswitha. As a band plays outside of a restaurant, the two of them dance, and the camera circles around them. The moment is romantic in a different way from Jacob’s childhood memories of his father in the novel. In the film, this romantic moment reflects his love for Roswitha, the woman he missed the opportunity to marry and leave for America with. In the novel, however, as Jacob keeps performing as the band and remembering his father, Lina takes this moment to get up from the bed from which Jacob told her not to move. As he plays the radio on the other side of the wall in the cellar, she peaks around the wall. According to the narrator,

„sie muß das Ding sehen, das Jakob so ähnlich klingt und doch ganz anders, das mit verschiedenen Stimmen sprechen kann, niesen wie er und solche eigenartigen Geräusche machen [. . .]. Lina schiebt behutsam den Kopf um die Ecke. Unsichtbar für Jakob, der sitzt nicht nur seitlich, der halt auch die Augen fest geschlossen, [. . .]der lärm t weltvergessen.”

Lina’s actions – yet another time she disobeys – show up again in the film, as well as in the earlier drafts. Again, for Lina it is not important that she catches Jacob in this performance, because the performance itself is most important to her. Her satisfaction is connected to her seeing that Jacob is also happy in this moment and to having found him out: the radio is Jacob’s imagination, not a machine. But as Lina has pushed Jacob to this performance, she is also partly responsible for the pleasurable memories that Jacob experiences in flashbacks during this sequence both in the film and the passage in the novel.

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240 Becker, Jakob der Lügner, 169.
The Fairy Tale Sequence

Lina’s fairy-tale world plays an important role in her survival, at least protecting her from despair. Like many children, often girls, in fairy tales, Lina loses her parents at a very young age. Since she is eight in the narrative, she must have been five or six years old when her parents were deported. Also like many girls in fairy tales, Lina imagines in the fairy tale that Jacob tells her that a man will come to rescue her. Recalling tales of knights in shining armor, Mischa, playing a gardener, comes to her rescue with a piece of cotton she believes is a cloud.

Jacob’s fairy tale transformed over the years. In the 1963 treatment, the fairy tale reads as follows: “Zum Schluss spielt das Radio ein Märchen. Mit Prinzessin und Zwergen und Räubern. Lina kann gar nicht genug bekommen von dem herrlichen Spiel.”241 In the 1965 script, Becker changed the fairy tale significantly, so that it became “das Märchen von der kranken Prinzessin,” (“The Fairy Tale of the Sick Princess”) without the dwarves and robbers. In this version, the sick princess needs a cloud, which she believes will cure her illness. Lina imagines “eine wunderschöne blonde Prinzessin, in einem langen weißen Kleid und mit einer hohen spitzen Prinzessinmütze. Auf der Brust hat die Prinzessin einen Judenstern.”242 In this version of the fairy tale sequence, Lina imagines the princess is a blonde, the opposite of the brunette Lina. She identifies with the princess despite this difference because they both wear a yellow star on their clothing and they both experience illness and claustrophobic spaces. A significant difference between Lina and the princess it that the princess’s bright and colorful space is very different from Lina’s dark and grey space in the ghetto.


In the 1969 novel, however, this scene has become Jacob’s fairy tale, and there is no
description of Lina’s interiority. The novel does not include Lina’s identification with the
princess, which occurs in both the film script of 1965 and the film of 1974. The details of the
“Fairy Tale of the Sick Princess” are more fully developed in the novel, however. In the novel’s
fairy tale, the princess gets healthy quickly, and the gardener boy asks for permission to marry
her. The film includes all of Jacob’s “Fairy Tale of the Sick Princess” from the novel, but it also
refers to Lina’s interiority, with cuts to the scenes as she imagines them.

In the film, the cinematic effect comes to the fore in several forms for the fairy tale
sequence, including intercuts between Lina’s imagination and Jacob and Lina in the ghetto.
These forms make use of more vibrant color and brighter lighting which mimics Jacob’s
flashback scenes. However, the fairy tale sequence is set apart even more so than Jacob’s
flashback scenes with the use of the musical score – which changes dramatically for this scene –
as well as the ending of the sequence in slow-motion. To highlight the score in the fairy-tale
scene, the film music composer Joachim Werzlau provided a slower waltz on violin which lends
a tender, yet poignant atmosphere to the visual sequence that involves Jacob’s narration and
Lina’s interiority.  

In these moments, Lina floats away into a dream-like, fairy-tale world, as she imagines
herself as the sick princess. It is not entirely escapist fantasy, however, as the camera shows, with
a cut back to the cellar in the ghetto. The camera focuses here on Jacob’s face as he performs as
the storytelling “fairy tale uncle.” The film then cuts to Lina sitting on the bed listening to the

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243 Werzlau composed for several of Beyer’s films, including Nackt unter Wölfen, Königskinder,
Karbid und Sauerampfer, Zwei Mütter. He also composed for Konrad Wolf’s films
Sonnensucher and Lissy.
story, and then cuts again to her vision of the story with herself as the princess. These intercuts underscore how Lina perceives the fairy tale as something real; not only is the princess real to her, but she is the princess.

Jacob’s ending of the fairy tale and the film’s editing draw further attention to Lina in both the ghetto and the fairy-tale world. When the film cuts to Jacob in the ghetto finishing his narration with “Oh, you should have seen her face,” the slower waltz plays. The film then cuts back to the fairy-tale world. When the gardener boy returns with the pillow made of cotton, the fairy-tale world has changed to slow motion. Lina – the tale – then hops out of her bed and chases Mischa the gardener boy around the room; then, after he jumps over the ledge of her terrace, he returns to scoop her up and take her with him. This romantically playful scene is much more detailed than the description in the scripts, in which Lina simply “runs off” with the cotton pillow “cloud.” Though the shots in the fairy-tale scene are intercut with Lina and Jacob’s faces while they are in the ghetto, each shot in the fairy tale world keeps a consistent brightness of lighting, as well as colors of the set and the costumes. With the music, intercuts, and slow motion, as well as the lighting and color, the fairy tale achieves an aesthetic and stylistic quality that suggests Lina’s perspective on the fairy tale and the world in which she lives. For her, they could be one and the same.

Her romantic fairy-tale world offers Lina hope and life, and her perspective – supported by Jacob’s storytelling – contrasts with the fatalism of the adults other than Jacob in the ghetto. In Lina’s view, it does not matter if the radio is real, and it does not matter that the fairy tale is fiction. For her, they are both real. Lina holds tight to the fairy tale as reality through the end of the film and up until the third page from the end of the novel, when she, Jacob, and the others are on the train. She perceives the train ride as an adventurous trip, a vacation to America, Africa, or
China. In the novel and the film, Lina is so excited when she learns that they need to pack for this trip that she runs around shouting, “Wir verreisen, wir verreisen! (We’re going on a trip! We’re going on a trip!)” Her enthusiasm annoys Jacob, because he knows that the ghetto is being liquidated and the trip will not end well. The narrator in the novel, by contrast, provides two possible endings: he first had Jacob leave Lina with Mischa and his fiancée Rosa, as he tries to escape the ghetto and gets shot by an SS, while the second ending has Jacob and Lina on the train.

**Imagination as Resistance**

The audience knows that the cloud will not save the princess, yet Lina’s imagining of its healing power is crucial to her sustained belief in her own survival. It is also relevant in reminding the audience of the history that the girl’s story represents: children surviving or dying in the Holocaust. In making Lina’s imagination central to the narrative, Beyer’s film and Becker’s novel convey a story of hope. The train ride, according to Berghahn, is presented poetically by assuming Lina’s perspective of the adventure, the green trees, the clouds, and Lina’s imaginary world of the fairy tale. The deportation itself, as Berghahn observes, refers back to the fairy tale that Jacob performed for Lina; the girl might have a chance to escape with a rescuer. Furthermore, as Ward and Figge have observed as well, the audience knows – years after the Holocaust occurred – that the “cloud” will not save the princess and the fairy tale will not save Lina; instead, “we are reminded of the history that Lina symbolizes.”

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244 Becker, *Jakob der Lügner*, 278.


For Lina, the fairy tale and reality could be one and the same. Korinna Hennig observes the way that Lina seems to live in a more relaxed way than the adults in the ghetto comes from her “Bewahrung der Illusion, des Märchenhaft, des Spielerischen” (“Retention of the illusion, of the fairy tale-like, and of the playful”). And this is part of the central theme of the novel, according to Hennig. The film draws out even more of Lina’s perspective through her relationship with Jacob. Lina’s dream world is a way to intervene in the history that the girl’s story represents: children surviving or dying in the Holocaust. The audience knows that the cloud will not save the princess, yet Lina’s imagining of its healing power is crucial to her sustained belief in her own survival. In making Lina’s imagination central to the narrative, Beyer’s film and Becker’s novel convey a story of hope.

Lina’s perception of reality that is blended with fantasy recalls the little girl named Ana in the Spanish film *El Espíritu de la Colmena* (*The Spirit of the Beehive*, dir. Victor Erice, 1974), which was released the same year that *Jacob the Liar* aired on television (1974). Although they differ in context – Ana in the Spanish Civil War and Lina in World War II – the two girls perceive the world in a similar mix of reality and fairy tale. In *The Spirit of the Beehive*, which takes place in 1940, just after Franco’s victory in the Spanish Civil War (1939), Ana is fascinated with the American horror film *Frankenstein* (1931) which she watches in a local mobile movie theater in her town. *The Spirit of the Beehive* also pushed the limits of the Franco regime’s (1939-1975) censorship. As such, Ana befriends a wounded Republican soldier who hides in an old house where she plays with her sister Isabel. Ana’s fascination and longing to play with the

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247 Figge and Ward, Reworking the German Past, 98.

monster in Frankenstein reminds the audience of the monster in the 1931 film Frankenstein that accidentally kills the little girl who plays with him.

In The Spirit of the Beehive, Ana imagines playing with the monster of the film, and in her reality actually goes to the wounded Republican soldier – who the Franco regime would have labeled a monster. She feeds him instead of fleeing from him, and he does her no harm. Instead, the regime has the soldier killed in the house where Ana had visited him. Clearly, she could have been murdered by the regime if she had been there at the wrong time. Ana does not speak of it; rather, she stands silently gazing upon the spot where the soldier lay, observing his blood on the ground. Likely also frightened by this murder scene, Ana’s gaze offers the critique of the Franco regime for being the real monster. The mixture of fantastical story and film, and the history that is embodied in Ana and represented in her experience provides a comparison with Lina’s understanding of the world through the use of fairy tale. Like Ana, Lina blends fairy tale with the reality of the world in which she lives. Although Lina does not witness anyone’s death on screen as Ana does, her presence in the film, her gaze, and her questions remind the audience that children were murdered during the Holocaust.

The director Victor Erice could also shed light on Frank Beyer, who as a filmmaker subtly and consciously criticized his often repressive government. According to Seminet and Rocha, Erice’s Spirit of the Beehive “consciously undermined the official history of a homogenized and modern version of Spain that Franco’s regime strove to create through cinema.” With the focus on the young girl, they note that the film also “challenged the image of the patriarch.”249 Ana’s father is in the film, but he rarely speaks to anyone, much less to her.

249 Rocha and Seminet, Representing History, Class, and Gender, 7.
Ana, at a young age seems to have given up on having a relationship with him. She herself rarely speaks. According to Marsha Kinder, the focus on the girl also allows the film to encode “an obsessive love/hate relationship between an austere father and a stunted child.” that was a metaphor for citizens in Spain during the Franco regime.\(^{250}\) This innocence and purity of gaze – as Alberto Elena has pointed out in regard to Ana in *The Spirit of the Beehive* – also occurs with Lina’s character in *Jacob the Liar*, as in her dream world and imagination. Although Ana has a much more critical gaze than Lina which seems enhanced when Ana is silent, in both of the girls’ purity of gaze they subvert authoritative power ruling over them. Lina subverts the Nazis through her optimism for her future, while Ana subverts Franco’s version of homogenized, presumably happy Spanish society. This subversion allows the girls to maintain their humanity and dignity, showing how they have a mind of their own and can create their own way of seeing their situations.

Lina’s perspective on life with the threat of genocide surrounding her offers new ways to understand child characters in Holocaust films in general. Her perspective as an outsider who has never known – or only barely knew – another world from the ghetto, contrasts with the adults in the ghetto who long for something better, based on their memories of the past before the Nazis. This child-as-outsider perspective is part of a long tradition in which outsiders critique the world in which they live. As an outsider – a child in adult world, and a Jew in the anti-Semitic and violent world of the Holocaust – Lina fully belongs to neither the world inside the ghetto, nor to the world outside of it. As a Jew, she experiences Poland in the Jewish ghetto, and the narrative suggests finality – that she will not likely survive the Holocaust. As a child within the ghetto, she

does not fully understand the other characters’ motivations to hear more news about the Russians possibly liberating the ghetto.

If Lina had survived, her life might be something like what Becker’s life became after the war: a Polish Jew living in Germany, learning a new language at eight years old, attending school in a foreign place for the first time, and all of this without her parents. As Becker imagines what childhood – his childhood – might have been like in the ghetto, the audience and readers can imagine what Lina’s life might have been like. The following chapter examines further how Becker’s imagination of his childhood drives the narrative of Beyer’s film While all Germans Sleep.
CHAPTER FOUR
THE CHILD’S CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE IN “DIE MAUER” AND
WENN ALLE DEUTSCHEN SCHLAFEN

Introduction

Frank Beyer’s artistry in Holocaust films further evolves in While all Germans Sleep by moving away from the fantasy and flashbacks that he utilizes in Jacob the Liar and turning to a seemingly more objective narrative style. In this film made twenty years after Jacob the Liar, Beyer uses a different narrative perspective that refers to the fantastical imagination of the young boy named Marek, and yet we arrive at a much more understated description of the fantasy that illuminates the horrors of the boys’s reality. Rather than the fantasy of dreams to sweep characters – and viewers – away from reality, as in Jacob the Liar, While all Germans Sleep never turns the gaze away from the Holocaust. Even with such change, Beyer continues in While all Germans Sleep to emphasize some of the same characteristics of humanity as in his earlier works which underscore various means of preserving ordinary life and human dignity, and which form the basis of individual resistance in Beyer’s films.

While all Germans Sleep opens with a photograph of young, seemingly healthy Jewish children. As the Jurek Becker Archive of the Academy of the Arts in Berlin reveals, this photograph was part of an exhibit, “Unser einziger Weg ist Arbeit”. Das Getto Lodz 1940-1944,” which was produced under the auspices of the Jewish Museum Frankfurt in collaboration with Yad Vashem. Although this film is Frank Beyer’s adaptation of Jurek Becker’s short story “The Wall,” it also gives depth to this photograph by seemingly bringing the children to life. For

its continuities that remain despite Beyer and Becker’s changes in their work over time, *While all Germans Sleep* can be seen as a sister film to *Jacob the Liar*. While the former, especially in novel form, related to the GDR, the adaptation of “Die Mauer” brings similar issues to post-unification audiences in Germany. Beyer states in his memoirs that they intentionally changed the name because the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 would make people think of that wall instead of the one around the Jewish ghetto. Despite this, however, it seems that the pair nevertheless wanted viewers to think of the ghetto wall in association with the Berlin Wall.

Of all of Becker’s novels and short stories, Becker and Beyer chose to return to the topic of a child living through and surviving the Holocaust when they decided to collaborate on *While all Germans Sleep*. This aspect stands out because since 1975, Beyer had also directed many other films that do not have the Holocaust as a topic. Becker and Beyer had also worked together on a romantic comedy, for which Becker wrote the script, *Das Versteck* (*The Hiding Place*, 1977). During the making of this film, the GDR expatriated the folksinger Wolf Biermann who was critical of the GDR’s censorship practices. Becker, Beyer, and many other artists began participating in protests that were part of the Biermann Affair. As a result, Becker was removed from the GDR Writer’s Union and he left the GDR, first to travel to the United States as a writer-in-residence at Oberlin College, and then to move to West Berlin. Becker turned to writing more novels, essays, and even comedy films and a popular television series, *Liebling Kreuzberg*, which ran on German television for a remarkable five seasons (1986-1998), spanning across German division and unification, and even for a year after Becker’s untimely death.

Produced by Novafilm in collaboration with Arte, *While all Germans Sleep* was filmed in Warsaw, Górna Kalwaria, and Grójec, Poland on 16 mm film. The film was screened for the first
time in the *Filmmuseum Potsdam* on February 2, 1995.²⁵² And it played on TV for the first time on Arte on 31 July 1995.²⁵³ This release was just five years after the two German states reunited to make up the new Federal Republic of Germany (3 October 1990), a time that was damaging to many filmmakers who had started their careers in East Germany but seemed not severely to impact Beyer and Becker. This film was part of Beyer’s continued success in West Germany and reunited Germany despite his early career in East Germany.

The perspective of the young boy named Marek in *While all Germans Sleep* stands apart from the other films discussed in this dissertation in that he narrates the film in voice over – both as an adult and as a child – and, as a child, he is the main character on screen. This is similar in “The Wall,” but in the short story, the narration is only that of a child. Marek is connected to Becker’s and Beyer’s previous work, *Jacob the Liar*, in which the little girl named Lina plays a crucial role as a child with an outsider’s perspective. Like Lina, Marek’s perspective also poetically calls into question adults’ behaviors during the Holocaust, as well as the ways that viewers remember the event. His commentary in voice-over, which is both as a five-year old boy and as a grown man looking back on his childhood in the Holocaust, critiques the world in which he lives in both the 1940s and the 1990s. For the child in the 1940s, this world is the world “turned on its head,” one in which the Holocaust was allowed to occur, but it seems not all that improved fifty years later for the adult who was the child survivor, as he is haunted by many horrors from his childhood. This motivates the narrator to talk about his experiences the best he

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can remember them. With the film released in 1994, we can presume the adult narrator is speaking from his point-of-view in the 1990s, post-unification period.

With the lens of Beyer and Becker’s careers and of the anniversary of the end of the Holocaust, continuities between *Jacob the Liar* and *While all Germans Sleep* become clear. As *Jacob the Liar* was released on television in 1974 and was a highlight of the GDR’s thirtieth anniversary celebrations of the “Befreiung” from fascism in 1975, the year following *While all Germans Sleep*’s release (1994) marked the fiftieth anniversary of the end of World War II, the Holocaust, and Nazi rule in Germany. Although *While all Germans Sleep* is by no means simply a copy of *Jacob the Liar*, the two films resemble each other in the playful storytellers and former shopkeepers Jacob and Mr. Tenzer. Tenzer is played by Gerry Wolf, a successful and prolific actor whose career started with DEFA films, including *Naked among Wolves*.

Furthermore, the child outsider perspective of Lina in *Jacob the Liar* shows a continuity in Marek in *While all Germans Sleep*. Marek, however, has definitively more agency than Lina. On the one hand Marek can be understood as a version of Lina – as a child who has a close relationship with the storyteller and perceives reality through fairy tale fantasies – and who, because of social affirmations of the boy’s gender, is privileged with almost total freedom of movement throughout the ghetto. On the other hand, Marek is also a fuller depiction of the boys who taunt Lina in *Jacob the Liar*. *While all Germans Sleep* is also a return for Beyer as a filmmaker to a story about resistance and maintaining dignity within a Jewish ghetto despite the odds against the Jewish family on which his film focuses. This chapter explores the multiple ways that Becker’s story and Beyer’s film build upon their work on *Jacob the Liar*, returning to the topic of the Holocaust and a Jewish story of defiance through daily life and playfulness, and
thus contributing to the still ongoing German and international depictions of children in central roles in Holocaust films, as well as those that focus on war trauma through a child’s perspective.

**Plot Summary**

Even though the child protagonist and narrator is unnamed in “The Wall,” for the purposes of this chapter, he is called “Marek,” as in the film adaptation *While all Germans Sleep*. Marek is a five-year-old boy who lives with his parents in an unnamed Jewish ghetto in Poland during World War II. In the ghetto, Marek regularly leaves his parents to go outside and play with other children or to go to the former shopkeeper Mr. Tenzer’s apartment to listen to his stories and fairy tales, one of which is about a burglar who attempts to rob a witch, but she catches him in her house and casts a spell on him. On one of his visits when no other children are there, Marek discovers a secret cactus in Tenzer's apartment. The cactus is forbidden as all plants are, according to the Nazi ghetto ordinances, and having one is punishable by death.

The film narration in *While all Germans Sleep* is similar in the short story about Marek’s hardest lesson – the punishment Tenzer faces for his cactus – about bizarre rules of the Nazis and the cruel reality of the Holocaust. Like in the short story, Tenzer tells Marek in the film to keep this secret. But in the film, adult Marek says in voice over, “Of course I told millions of people about it, whether they wanted to know or not. I just didn’t tell my parents.” After Tenzer disappears, Marek continues to think of the fairy tale that Tenzer told the children, and he makes up a dark fairy tale version in order to understand Mr. Tenzer’s disappearance.

The family then is moved to a transit camp adjacent to the ghetto which the Jews call “Lido.” Here, according to the child-narrator’s perspective, the Jews wait until the Germans find another useful place for them. In this camp, Marek and his family live in a warehouse with many other Jews. His boredom is countered with occasional fights among bunkmates and when he
goes outside – like in the ghetto – to play with his friends. During their playing, the boys devise a plan to climb over the wall dividing the transit camp from the ghetto so that they can retrieve toys they left behind, and only two of them see the plan through. Margit Voss, a former East German film critic and journalist, explains that the new title used for the film comes from a line of Marek’s friend Julian in the short story, as he says they will climb over the wall at night because “nachts alle Deutschen schlafen (at night all Germans sleep).” Julian convinces Marek that the rules simply do not hold true at night, especially if the Germans are not awake to catch them.

Literature on “The Wall” and While all Germans Sleep

Little scholarly attention has focused on “The Wall,” but nearly all literature on the short story discusses the child as a character and narrator. Even less scholarship has been published on Beyer’s While all Germans Sleep. The following section provides a summary of publications focusing on both of these works.

In her thorough analysis of Jurek Becker’s literature, Susan Johnson seems to overlook some of the most important aspects of the child’s perspective in “The Wall;” she criticizes it for inappropriately representing the Holocaust experience. For instance, since Marek and his friend climbing over the wall disobeys their parents’ rules as well as the curfew, Johnson argues that the boy

Never thinks of the danger he risks to himself and his family, only of his rivalry with the second boy. For this reason, the narrative of the story is inappropriate to its content. We read a series of life-threatening events narrated in the voice of a child concerned with


finding a toy. An obsessive sense of competition motivates him solely to demonstrate prowess as a scavenger.\textsuperscript{256}

I disagree with Johnson’s analysis regarding how the story is “inappropriate to its content.” Instead, I will argue in the upcoming section that the child’s outsider perspective offers a way to challenge the ways we remember the Holocaust.

Eoin Bourke also disagrees with Johnson’s analysis for missing the point of the child’s perspective. While countering Johnson, Bourke writes, “Children and grown-ups view things around them differently and have divergent priorities. […] And his rivalry with Julian that Johnson finds somehow reprehensible is conveyed in a psychologically perceptive and amusing way, with all its boyish bravado, mimicking of macho posturing, ranking maneuvers and blunt exchanges.”\textsuperscript{257} Play is central to the boys’ behaviors and their perspectives as children. Even though they live in what Bourke describes as a “man-made hell,” a “pervasive element of play is embedded in the context of the Holocaust.” This, according to Bourke, is probably what offends Johnson.\textsuperscript{258} Furthermore, Bourke states in a footnote of his article that the child’s view in this story corresponds to the story German authorities told Jewish victims in order to persuade them to go along with their deportations.\textsuperscript{259}


\textsuperscript{258} Bourke, “Affinities in a Ludic Perception,” 105. Playfulness in this context appears again three years later in Life is Beautiful, which has not yet been compared to \textit{While all Germans Sleep}.

In Bourke’s disagreement with Johnson, he states that the toys and play in “The Wall” and in real-life ghettos were essential for children’s understanding and coping with the threats and death that encompassed them. Bourke further emphasizes the aspect of play in the story, relating it to Henryk Ross’s photographs of children playing in the Łódź Ghetto—made in the same time roughly that Becker lived there—and to Johan Huizinga’s *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture* about the importance of play for a person’s sense of humanity. Bourke draws from Huizinga’s explanation that play is especially important in the face of the imminent threat of a criminal, fascist government such as Nazism. According to Bourke, play “suspends determinist systems, [. . .] creating a magic space [. . . that] is a metaphysical protest against the inexorability of the Holocaust.” While Bourke emphasizes “The Wall,” he also states that Beyer’s *While all German’s Sleep* more provocatively demonstrates how play is essential in the boy’s life and how it affects adults.

David Rock responds to Johnson in regards to *Jacob the Liar*, but not to “The Wall,” as he focuses on the autobiographical influences in Becker’s work. He claims that Becker told him directly that the “situation in the story was indeed based on the very few hazy memories of his own childhood in Łódź” and most reviewers took it as “pure autobiography.” Rock calls


262 Rock, *Jurek Becker*.

263 Rock, *Jurek Becker*, 78. Rock cites a personal interview with Becker in 1991 in which Becker stated he had only “akustische Erinnerungen [. . .] das jüngere kind in der Geschichte war ich” (acoustic recollections [. . .] the younger child in the story was me”).
attention to the value in the “mind of the child” and argues that Becker articulates his “own possible childhood” with “The Wall.” Rock also defends the story’s child narrator. He states, “For in the mind of a child, the real dangers of everyday life in the ghetto take on the terrifying yet also exciting dimensions of the world of fairy tale and the supernatural.” Rather than critique the story as Johnson does, Rock defends “The Wall” as an “imaginative construction.” He argues, “the few particulars of the situation and the surroundings which Becker does give us reveal nothing of the horrors of the real ghettos, only the prevailing sense of threat, the bleakness and the squalor.” However, Rock dismisses here the understated style of Becker’s writing that actually does point out the horrors of real ghettos, such as suicides which the children discuss, friends who are disappeared overnight for owning forbidden plants, and the nightmare of reliving the Holocaust through haunting memories of childhood that include feelings of guilt and shame. These are aspects featured in “The Wall.” Something to consider is whether this dismissal is due to the fact that the narrator says he is a child and therefore readers might conclude that he is an unreliable narrator.

Another instance of seeing the child narrator as unreliable is Margit Voss’s questioning whether the film’s audience should trust the five-year-old boy’s story. However, she also observes that because there is also the adult voice of Marek in voice-over, the two perspectives of the same person function to contrast one another. Voss observes that the adult voice also

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264 Rock, Jurek Becker, 80.
265 Rock, Jurek Becker, 80.
266 Rock, Jurek Becker, 80.
267 Rock, Jurek Becker, 79.
signifies to the audience that we can rest assured that the child survived the Holocaust.\textsuperscript{268} The two perspectives of the child and adult – who are one and the same person – work together, as Voss points out, to demonstrate the variety of things the Holocaust survivor has experienced: “Liebe und Tod, Verrat und Hass, Vertrauen und Leid.”\textsuperscript{269} This statement recalls Beyer’s repeated return to the themes of resistance and betrayal throughout all three of his Holocaust films, and the use of future and past points-of-view that is also in \textit{Jacob the Liar}.

Voss also contrasts Marek’s perspective (as both child and adult) with the adults in the film. She explains that the absurdity of the film is the relatively safe environment in which the boy is shown. She says this creates tension for viewers who know about the treatment of children during the Holocaust and their extreme vulnerability.\textsuperscript{270} Voss explains, “Die absurde Harmlosigkeit, die sich durch den Blickwinkel eines Kindes auf eine entsetzliche Situation ergibt, stellt zugleich die innere Spannung des Films.”\textsuperscript{271} Voss gives credit to multiple people in the filmmaking team, but she states that it is Becker and Beyer who create a different world through the perspective of the child that the adults are not capable of doing. This is “Die Welt

\textsuperscript{268} Voss, “Die unsichtbare Grenze,” 270. Jürgen Hentsch, who plays the adult Marek’s voice, began his career as an actor in DEFA films as early as 1964 with \textit{So lange leben in mir ist} (\textit{As Long as There Is Life in Me}, dir. Günter Reisch, 1965), including the banned film \textit{Karla} (dir. Herrmann Zschoche, 1965), \textit{Ich war neunzehn} (\textit{I was nineteen}, dir. Konrad Wolf), and \textit{Rottenknechte} (dir. Frank Beyer, 1969), among many others.

\textsuperscript{269} “Love and death, betrayal and hate, trust and suffering,” Voss, “Die unsichtbare Grenze,” 270.

\textsuperscript{270} See http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005142
And
http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/about/institute/children_and_the_holocaust.asp#!pretty Photo

\textsuperscript{271} “The absurd harmlessness, which emerges through the perspective of a child in a cruel situation, is altogether the inner tension of the film,” Voss, 272.
der Phantasie, der Hoffnung, des Lebens.” As I have found, Voss’s observation also applies to the other films discussed in this dissertation. In *Jacob the Liar* he emphasizes fantasy even more than in *While all Germans Sleep*, but all three of his Holocaust films center on the themes of hope, and life, in order to show how people preserved their humanity.

In her review of the film, Voss also discusses what she expects attracts viewers to the child actors: Benjamin Kaatz who plays Marek; Ilja Smolianski, who plays Julian; and Robin Timpter, who plays Itzek. She comments on the “nice curls” on Julian, and she describes the “gespielte Sicherheit,” of Itzek. Kaatz is easily “half a head smaller” than the other two boys, “aber wenn er die Augen aufschlägt, geht einem das Herz auf.” According to Voss’s description, Marek/ Kaatz is the most attractive of the boys through his cuteness, and makes the audience want to see him survive. The child’s appearance is certainly a visual aspect that the film offers, which cannot work in the short story. The cuteness of the boys is part of the emotional draw for the audience into the film’s story. Voss’s statements recall the ways that audiences have engaged with Anne Frank’s photo on the cover of her published (and edited) diary, in which she, as a healthy young girl, smiles at the camera.

I have found that even more so than his looks, Marek’s voice-over and central point-of-view throughout the film are effective techniques to draw the attention of the viewer to awareness that this is a child who survived the Holocaust. With people typically being averse to child suffering because of their presumed innocence, we know via the voice-over narration and in the camera’s gaze that Marek endures many horrors by living through the Holocaust. With


other Holocaust films in mind that imply the murder of children or even show it on screen, what is potentially surprising and attractive for modern viewers is that the adult Marek reveals he also lived to talk about his experiences. Moreover, the child’s experiences are not simply innocent. Rather, Marek exemplifies challenges to how modern viewers remember the Holocaust; he shows how children even during the Holocaust, and with death as a consequence, disobeyed their parents and German laws. Furthermore, they sometimes betrayed their friends – whether by accident or on purpose – in order to tell others what they had seen.

**Origins**

**Marek and Lina; Tenzer and Jacob**

Marek’s character in some ways provides a continuity with Lina’s character, which is key to seeing thematic and character connections between *Jacob the Liar* and *While all Germans Sleep*. Similarities can be seen in how Marek breaks rules given by adults, and in his relationship with Mr. Tenzer. Further continuities can be seen in the ways the children draw out the humanity of adults: Marek for Mr. Tenzer as the storyteller, and Lina for Jacob the storyteller. In both cases, the children provide the adults an audience. The main areas in which we can draw connections between Marek and Lina, and thus the two films, is in analysis of their secrets and the ways they engage with fairy tales.

The trust of children continues from *Jacob the Liar* to *While all Germans Sleep*. Lina in *Jacob the Liar* has the potential to tell Jacob’s secret, and the narrator in the novel expects that she will, but she does not. Jacob trusts Lina, and she shows that she is trustworthy by keeping his secret even after she discovers that the “radio” is actually Jacob himself, as he makes up the stories to continue giving people hope. Lina does not seem to understand that this is the point of Jacob’s storytelling, but she certainly enjoys the effects of the story that Jacob creates for her.
In “The Wall” and in While all Germans Sleep, Tenzer thinks that he can trust Marek, but he is, unfortunately, proven wrong. When Marek finds the cactus in Mr. Tenzer’s apartment, he discovers a bond with Tenzer as he sees that he is not the only one who breaks the rules. Mr. Tenzer asks Marek if he knows what “they” do to those who own plants in the ghetto, and he demonstrates the punishment of violating the ghetto ordinance by violently wringing out the shirt he is washing. Tenzer is clearly breaking the rules by owning his cactus and keeping it hidden behind a curtain in his apartment, yet the danger is not enough to stop him from owning the plant that clearly means something to him. Although there is furniture in the apartment, Tenzer’s most prized possession is this secret cactus. In a way, the plant also seems to be his only companion in the apartment, except when the children visit him for his storytelling. Tenzer trusts the child with the secret that he owns a forbidden plant, just as Jacob trusts Lina with his secret that his forbidden radio is actually only imaginary.

Even though Marek is aware of the punishment for owning plants, he also cannot stop himself from betraying Tenzer’s trust. Marek explains in his narration of the short story how it hurts in his mouth if he keeps “strange things” quiet: “Ich bin fünf Jahre alt und kann nicht still sein. Die Worte springen mir aus dem Mund heraus, ich kann ihn nicht geschlossen halten, ich habe es versucht. Sie stoßen von innen gegen die Backen [. . .] und tun mir weh im Mund, bis ich den Käfig offne.”275 He tells his friends about the plant without thinking about the consequences until too late; he betrays Mr. Tenzer.

Tenzer’s cactus constitutes the most important “absurd” story that Marek tells his friends. Like in the short story, Marek explains to viewers of the film that Tenzer died because of this cactus and because he told “millions.” Marek states in both the short story and the film, “In the

end, if I killed shopkeeper Tenzer, I will never know.”

Even though he knows that owning plants is a punishable by death, he still does not comprehend that the murder would actually happen. But, to Marek’s shock, shortly after he tells people about Tenzer’s secret cactus, he and his friend Itzek see that Tenzer no longer lives in his apartment. When they go to visit Tenzer, an old woman whom they mistake for a witch has moved into his former apartment.

Marek shapes his perception of reality through the lens of fairy tale and fantasy. Because he heard fairy tales at Tenzer’s house, Marek understands the man’s disappearance in terms of a fairy tale. Tenzer had told Marek and a group of children the fairy tale about “der Räuber Jaromir,” (the robber Jaromir) and how a witch casts a spell on him to deter his thievery. When Marek returns home after seeing the woman who now lives in Tenzer’s house, he explains to his mother that he thinks a witch has taken over Mr. Tenzer’s home. In the film, the exchange is as follows:

Marek: There’s a witch at his house now. She wanted to put a hex on me.
Mother: But she didn’t do it.
Marek: I ran away.
Mother: Well, thank goodness.

Showing kindness to her son, Marek’s mother indulges his fantasy world. Seeking to protect him, she then plays along with the fairy tale interpretation of Tenzer’s disappearance. Marek, understands Tenzer’s disappearance in terms of the fairy tale he heard from the man himself. He conflates the witch with the woman in Tenzer’s apartment and with the Nazis, who are the

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“they” his father told him about. In his misunderstanding of who the “bad guys” are, five-year-old Marek assumes it could only be a witch who has taken Tenzer away.

In “The Wall,” Marek interprets “they” as monsters or giants, and does not understand the very real threat of the Nazis. Beyer has the film refer to Marek’s fantasy world, but does not show it on screen, as he does with Lina’s fantasy world in *Jacob the Liar*. For Lina, the fairy tale world is hopeful and romantic – a place for escape – which appears in Beyer’s technique of cutting to the fairy tale world of Lina’s imagination. However, for Marek the fairy tale world is scary and dangerous – something from which to run away. Beyer shows this frightening part of Marek’s imagination in the child’s lines that reference the fairy tale, but the camera never turns to a fantasy world in *While all Germans Sleep* as it does in *Jacob the Liar*. Like Lina who hears a fairy tale from Jacob and continues to believe it until the end of the film, so does Marek continue to believe in Tenzer’s fairy tales when he applies them to his life outside of Tenzer’s room.

For Marek tests the scary tale that his father describes about the invisible border and that “they” will take you away if you cross it. In regards to the invisible border, Marek says in voice-over, “Sometimes I believe my parents about the invisible border. Sometimes I don’t. My best friend Itzek says that there’s no such silly border in the whole world.” Marek starts to believe Itzek, but he is confused because someone has indeed already taken Tenzer away. As far as he knows, it could have been the “they” that his father described, or, as he chooses to believe based on the fairy tale he heard from Tenzer, the witch cast a spell on him and took him away. Marek does not say so himself, but it would make sense for the child to be confused about the border and what Itzek says when he thinks about when Tenzer suddenly is nowhere to be found. In Marek’s confusion about his father and Itzek’s stories, he remains scared – in both “The Wall” and in *While all Germans Sleep* – of what could happen to him at the wall. The worst fear is the
structure: the height of the wall and the shards of glass that line the top of it to deter inhabitants – like himself – from trying to climb over it. Marek spends more time in “The Wall,” than *While all Germans Sleep* complaining about the glass that cuts his hands and knees. In this way, nothing that his father or his friends have said really matters to him anymore; for Marek, the fantasy of what could happen to him if Germans catch him is displaced by the reality that the wall itself is proven dangerous.

**Rafael and Siegfried’s similarities with Marek**

I have found no record of Beyer or Becker claiming that Marek’s origins are the continuities with the boys named Rafael and Siegfried in *Jacob the Liar*. But based on the content of the stories and films, I believe that the two boys in the film *Jacob the Liar* are indeed one example of a continuity of characters, playfulness, and resistance that is central to *Jacob the Liar*, “The Wall,” and *While all Germans Sleep*. In *Jacob the Liar*, Siegfried play-acts armed resistance as he pretends that he will attack the ghetto police station. As the boys discuss the approaching Russians, which they heard through the rumors spread from Jacob’s fictitious radio, they plan their pretend attack. An exchange between Rafael and Siegfried in the novel *Jacob the Liar* reads,

»Und wenn sie uns kriegen?« fragt Rafael.  
»Mach dir bloß nicht die Hosen voll. Die Russen kommen ja bald, hast doch gehört. Außerdem können sie uns gar nicht kriegen, wenn wir sie sprengen, weil sie dann nämlich alle tot sind. Bloß vorher dürfen wir uns nicht kaschen lassen.«

Here, the Buchenwald rebellion in *Naked among Wolves* is revisited from the perspective of the boys in *Jacob the Liar*. They play with the idea of *Widerstand*, but they do not take it as

seriously as the adults in *Naked among Wolves*. The boys are, then, a way for Becker to be playful with the idea of *Widerstand*, not taking it as seriously as the GDR’s antifascist narrative had been. Moreover, this play-acting of an attack to resist the Germans exemplifies how Beyer took an ordinary thing like child’s play and made it a statement against German soldiers. This is a way of decentering the Communist heroes of antifascist films by allowing the children’s imagination to give them a chance to participate in the resistance. Even if they could not actually bomb the police headquarters, they could agree that it should be done. And, at least in their imaginations, they could carry out the act of defiance.

Like the boys in *Jacob the Liar*, the boys in “The Wall” and *While all Germans Sleep* also have much freedom of movement in which they roam away from parents as they play outdoors. In *Jacob the Liar*, the boys are shown playing in a courtyard of their building, which is presumably also where Lina and Jacob live. Space for playing is much more expansive, however, as shown on screen in *While all Germans Sleep*. While Rafael and Siegfried likely roam outside of their building’s courtyard, they are not on screen long enough to show any roaming they might do. In contrast, the camera follows Marek roaming down streets throughout the ghetto and even approaching the main gate where a German soldier stands watch.

Such play times allow the boys – and the adults, Germans included – to escape boredom in their ghettos and the transit camp in Marek’s case. However, as Bourke explains in his reading of Huizinga’s theory about play being central to preserving humanity, the boys’ play time helps them to psychologically escape the horrors of the ghettos as well, one of which was limited food rations and the threat of starvation. The boys in *Jacob the Liar* never mention the limited food rations, but Lina and Jacob demonstrate the extremely small portions, which give viewers an idea
about what other characters endure. Marek demonstrates the problem with extremely limited rations, however in multiple scenes of *While all Germans Sleep*.

Unlike the boys in *Jacob the Liar*, the children in *While all Germans Sleep* do not plan an attack on the Gestapo. Instead, the big adventure that is potentially very dangerous for Marek and his friends is their plan to seek their old toys and other abandoned riches in the ghetto. They defy German laws and parental rules they find ridiculous when they climb over the wall between the transit camp and the ghetto. The goal of their adventure is to find toys left behind in the ghetto. Although it is a less violent plan than Rafael and Siegfried’s attack on the police, Marek and his friends’ plan is nevertheless rooted in defiance of the Nazi laws restricting everything in Jews’ lives. Defiance, a key part of resistance of any kind, which appears in the films among the children’s roles, then, endured throughout Becker and Beyer’s work.

The boys in *While all Germans Sleep* continue negative attitudes and behaviors towards girls that the boys in *Jacob the Liar* exhibit. In the latter, the boys reject playing with Lina because she is a girl and repeatedly tell her that she would not understand things because she is a girl. Like Rafael and Siegfried exclude Lina from their play-acting to destroy the Germans, starting with the police headquarters, Marek and Itzek in *While all Germans Sleep* exclude a girl from their plans for their adventure over the wall. After the girl approaches Marek and Itzek, asking to join them, they grow angry with her for talking about the secret plan, which could lead to dangerous consequences for them if the German soldiers hear. They tell the girl not to follow them, but they do not tell her, as Rafael and Siegfried say to Lina, that their reasoning is that she is a girl and would not understand. Instead, Marek and Itzek seem annoyed more with their friend Julian for telling her anything about their plans.
As far as they understand, Julian and the girl could betray them by telling their parents. If either the girl or Julian are like Marek, by this point they could have told “millions.” For Marek, the betrayal is limited in that he fears Julian has told people – as he had told people about Tenzer’s plant – then his parents might find out and stop them. It is almost tragic that Marek does not see at this point that it could also mean that the German soldiers might find out and that the potential harm could be much worse than a punishment executed by his parents, and maybe even death. However, as Beyer shows it, the boys see things as children, naïve to the potential threats of the Germans, and they preserve their version of normality and, thus, their humanity, by seeing things simply as children.

**Adaptation from “The Wall”**

As an adaptation from Becker’s short story set during the Holocaust, it was fitting for Becker to return to the project with his friend and director, Frank Beyer. Beyer also states that he recognized the potential for the short story to become a film from its first publication in 1980.\(^{278}\) He writes: “Die Mauer ist eine der schönsten Erzählungen von Jurek Becker aus dem Band Nach der ersten Zukunft von 1980. Und es war mir immer klar, es ist auch ein Filmstoff. Aber ich hatte Jurek nie vorgeschlagen, einen Film daraus zu machen.”\(^{279}\) As Beyer also states in his memoir, his main reservation keeping him from motivating Becker to write a script for a film adaptation was that he feared working with children as young as the protagonists. Beyer writes,

Ich hatte Angst vor diesem Film. Die Helden sind fünf- bis sechsjährige Kinder. Und mit Kindern in diesem Alter zu arbeiten, ist ein schweres Geschäft. […] Das Schrecklichste für mich sind Kinder, die Texte aufsagen, die sie nicht verstehen. Fünf- bis sechsjährige

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\(^{278}\) Beyer, Wenn der Wind sich dreht, 359.

\(^{279}\) “‘The Wall’ is one of the most beautiful stories by Jurek Becker out of the volume After the First Future of 1980. And it was always clear to me that this is also material for a film. But I had never suggested to Jurek to make a film out of it.” Beyer, Wenn der Wind sich dreht, 359.
Kinder kann man im Film nur schwer lenken. Man muss also kleinwüchsige Achtjährige besetzen, und auch die Achtjährige haben Aussetzer, werden von Gefühlen überschwemmt, und man kann mit ihnen nicht vernünftig reden, wenn sie – wie bei unseren Dreharbeiten in Warschau – das Heimweh überfällt.

This adjustment with the actor’s age and finding a smaller eight-year-old to perform the part seems to have been a motivation to shaping the film narration with voice-over much more than spoken lines on screen. Allowing for the young actor to read his lines off-camera as a voice-over, the actor would have more time to practice and read his lines from paper instead of having to memorize them. Even with the lapses that Beyer describes, the film does not lack quality, and the children seem authentic in their roles.

“The Invisible City” and While all Germans Sleep

Historical documentation that brought Becker back to his childhood in a Holocaust Jewish ghetto arrived at his door in the form of photographs for an exhibition on the Łódź ghetto. Becker writes in “Die unsichtbare Stadt” (“The Invisible City”) that he missed the opportunity to ask his father for more details about their past. His father only “reluctantly and seldom” talked to him about their past. Poignantly, Becker writes, “During his lifetime I wasn’t curious enough to outsmart him with subtle questions, and then it was too late.”

As he could not claim the memory with authority, he labeled his work about the Holocaust as fiction, thus allowing for his artistic authority on the subject. “Nevertheless,” Becker writes, “I wrote stories about the ghettos as if I were an expert. Perhaps I thought that if I could only write long enough, the memories would come. Perhaps at some point I even began to take some of my inventions for memories.”

Rock also observes that Becker’s writing was a way for him to “climb back

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down’ into the past and ‘unlock the box’ of his own memories.” This work with personal recollection is – as Rock also observes – one of the central, yet understated themes of “The Wall.” I also see this as a central theme of While all Germans Sleep, which Beyer underscores with the use of both the adult male and the child’s voice-over narration.

Some of the “inventions [he took] for memories” are the stories he wrote that feature children, such as Marek and his friends in “The Wall” and While All Germans Sleep. Becker writes about the children in the photos sent to him that led to writing “The Invisible City:"

But all of a sudden, something unsettling happens. Individual pictures absorb my gaze. I fall into them, far from any intention to write a text. I see two pictures of children. In the first, they wait for rations to be handed out, pots and little buckets and spoons in hand. In the second, they’re wearing red caps and staring at the photographer. Interrupted at play and nonetheless motionless.

Because he received the photos in the late eighties, it was also close to the time of the Berlin Wall opening. Between receiving the photographs in the late 1980s and the Berlin Wall opening in 1989, and writing the essay “The Invisible City” in 1990, it seems that these two events could be the inspiration for Becker to re-write the story “The Wall” into the screenplay for While all Germans Sleep. This timing would work for him to have re-written the story into a script, submit it for approval at a television station, and re-connect with Beyer about directing it. Proof of this sequence of events is not to be found in the archives; however, Christine Becker writes that in the time that Becker was collaborating with Beyer for the adaptation

It finally happened: Jurek was describing the furnishings of the small room in the ghetto where the little boy and his parents live. And suddenly everything had its place: table, cupboard, a stool with a tub on it. . . . Excitedly, he got up from his desk and stood before me. ‘Since I have no memories – how could I know? How would I know exactly what the room looked like?’ he asked. It appears that, for once, he succeeded in unlocking at least part of his childhood.

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The photos did not reveal Becker’s past directly, as he did not find an image of himself in the photos. Becker writes:

No, a child as small as I must have been then is not to be seen. But there are probably children in the pictures who knew me, who took things away from me, or beat me up or ordered me around. Perhaps there is someone standing there who would be my best friend today, had things taken a slightly more favourable course.\(^{284}\)

The potential best friend shows up in “The Wall” and *While all Germans Sleep* in the form of Marek’s friends Julian and Itzek. However, the narrator never explains what happens to the other boys; we only know through the adult voice of Marek that he and his father survived, much like Becker and his father. In “The Invisible City,” Becker places his own childhood as the main topic, and a discussion of his father and about women follows. He imagines himself among the people in the photos: “If I had memories, they would have to be at home there, on those streets, behind those walls, among these people.”\(^{285}\) It seems that *While all Germans Sleep* was then a way of practicing making up these “memories” into a visual representation of living, breathing, real people moving about in the ghetto.

In “The Invisible City,” Becker also writes about women in the photos that recalls how he wrote Marek’s mother into “The Wall” and in *While all Germans Sleep*. In “The Invisible City,” Becker writes, “The women in the pictures interest me most: I don’t know what my mother looked like. No photos of her exist. She died in the camp. I could just choose one of the women, I suppose. My father said that she was strikingly pretty, of course.”\(^{286}\) This description of Becker’s interest in women in the photos from the Łódź ghetto, one of which could have been his


\(^{286}\) Becker, “Invisible City,” 2.
mother, resembles the way that the child narrator in “The Wall” describes his mother. For instance, in remembering a moment with his mother, the narrator recalls that his mother made him a cloth ball, and it is the central item he looks for in his quest for toys beyond the wall. Marek also recalls how tenderly she cried about Tenzer’s disappearance when she says to Marek, “He had a flowering plant. Just imagine, they found a flowering plant in his room.” It is rather quiet. [. . .]. Tears drip from my mother’s eyes onto her clothes. Never before has she had a good word to say for Tenzer.” And later in the passage, “My mother has stopped crying but says: ‘Perhaps he loved that flower very much. Perhaps it reminded him of someone, how do we know?’”287 The narrator also says in “The Wall” that his mother once said to him, “What a child! Just listen to that child, that crazy child,” but he also says that she “no longer has a face, only a voice.” 288

Even though this way of talking about his mother is a poetic way of stating that she is no longer alive, the narrator of “The Wall,” does not actually state that his mother was killed in the Holocaust. However, he does state more clearly in the film While all Germans Sleep that the transit camp was a stop-over on the way to the concentration camps. The adult Marek says in voice-over as the family enters the transit camp with other people from their side of the street:


As a visual and audio finality to this hope, the camera shows two German soldiers slam the huge metal doors at the entrance and lock them tight. Their guard station can be seen several steps away.

This change in the film’s voice over, as compared to the story, indicates that the photographs Becker received and his reflections on the ghetto that led to his writing “The Invisible City”, which Becker wrote years after “The Wall,” influenced his adaptation of the short story for the film. This kind of context is what Eric Rentschler also argues must be included in an analysis of film adaptations. It is relevant to consider multiple influences that shape the context of the re-writing. In Becker’s case, the context to consider for his works is not only his situation in reunited Germany, or West Germany vs. East Germany. The context should also include his interest in Germany during the Holocaust, and his fascination with others who endured it. It is also curious that the people who asked him to write “The Invisible City,” sending him the photographs of the ghetto, hoped it might stir memories in him.

Transformation of the German Soldiers

Another change from “The Wall” and While all Germans Sleep is the way Becker and Beyer depict the German soldiers. In “The Wall,” published in 1980, Becker writes the Germans as much more antagonistic than they appear in While all Germans Sleep. While Marek describes some of the German soldiers sounding dangerous, only one German soldier in “The Wall” shows any signs of being a humane character, and that is only after he is unkind to the boys. In “The Wall” after the child narrator and his friend Julian have climbed over the camp wall and fallen asleep on the ghetto side, a German guard, whom the boy describes as a giant, wakes them. The narrator explains, “Ich habe keinen Zweifel, daß wir bald erschossen werden, das war uns klar
At first, the German does not seem kind, as he steps on the boy’s stomach and grabs him by the scruff of the neck. The German soldier seems rough at first, and he steals Itzek’s pocketwatch, and Marek’s flashlight which was one his father had left behind. He orders the two boys to follow him to the guard house. Then, he pauses and says, “Wißt ihr, was mir passiert, wenn ich euch nicht zur Wache bringe?” The boy thinks to himself, “Gar nicht schlimm genug kann es sein, was dir passiert. [. . .] Jede Schlechtigkeit, die ich je über die Deutschen gehört habe, ist plötzlich wahr. Ich hasse ihn wie die Pest.” Eventually, Marek asks the German, “Erschießen Sie uns jetzt?” Instead of the violent act that Marek and Julian expect, the soldier tells the boys that he will help them climb over the wall. Even then, the boys have a hard time believing the German.

Beyer’s portrayal of German soldiers in While all Germans Sleep offers an intervention to the ways viewers remember the Holocaust. Marek’s perspective of Germans that evolves into a new point-of-view in While all Germans Sleep – released fourteen years after “The Wall” – shows the German soldiers as much more humanized than the Germans in “The Wall.” In Marek’s point-of-view, even though he is a Jew in a ghetto run by German soldiers, the Germans are not altogether horrible, as shown in Marek’s interactions with German soldiers at the gate and after the climb over the wall.

For instance, in one scene in While all Germans Sleep, a German soldier is shown from Marek’s perspective, as Marek approaches the gate of the ghetto. He stands around the corner of

290 Becker, “Die Mauer,” 82.
a building and watches the soldier open the gate for an army vehicle to enter. He hides around
the corner until the car passes and he is out of imminent danger. Marek then peeks around the
corner again, this time stepping toward the soldier standing guard. It seems not to pose a threat to
Marek at all that the soldier has a rifle hanging on his shoulder and could probably fire it at him.
Not only does the soldier not point the gun at him for being so near the gate, but he even goes so
far as to stomp playfully at Marek, challenging viewers to accept that German soldiers actually
played with Jewish children rather than killing them on the spot.

In the film, the soldier who discovers Marek and Itzek on the wrong side of the wall is
not as harsh as he is in the short story, and yet he seems to have a sudden dynamic moment in
which he becomes a more ethical character; he helps the boys and demonstrates a quality rarely
seen in depictions of Nazi characters. In this scene, he turns the boys around, gently touching
them on the shoulders, and looks at their faces. The camera shows the boys’ faces in a medium
close up from the sentry’s point-of-view, emphasizing their eyes looking up at him. In the cut
back to the sentry to reveal his eyeline match, viewers can see on the sentry’s contorted facial
expression that he has second thoughts about where to take the boys. When he then hears a
motorcycle approaching, likely carrying his superior officers, the sentry orders the boys to lay
down on the ground, and – surprisingly for a Nazi in a Holocaust film – he jumps down with
them. The boys say nothing, but only look at him while they are on the ground. In this moment,
Levinas’s notion of “the face” applies to what is going on in the sentry’s mind. As in the short
story, he makes his ethical response to the “face” of the boys when he asks them if they know
what will happen to him if he does not follow orders and take them to the guard. But at this
moment in the film, Marek does not wish for bad things to happen to the German. Instead, he
simply asks him here if he plans to shoot them.
As the guard becomes a more ethical character, solely inspired by the boys in front of him, he goes further to save the boys. The German says in response to Marek, like in the short story, that he will help them climb back over the wall. Even though the sentry is trying to help Marek, the boy watches him suspiciously. Tension builds in this moment because the guard picks up his gun. Marek only sees the barrel point at him for a moment and then drops down out of fear, but as the sentry shows, he only intends to help Marek by lifting him further with the gun. The sentry tries again, this time asking Itzek to pick up the rifle and hand it to him. The camera angle here shows Itzek from the German’s point-of-view, pointing the barrel of the gun at him. The German does not notice that the gun is pointing at him, but he takes it back from Itzek, who looks disappointed in himself because he misses his opportunity to shoot a German sentry. The German then uses the butt of the gun to push Marek higher up the wall and tells him to jump down to the other side. Marek’s jump is the freeze-frame that ends the movie.

Frank Beyer describes this as an “absurd Ende” (absurd ending) because it is unusual that the German is so helpful to the boys. As Beyer states, it is ironic and not all that helpful that he helps them go back into the transit camp, where they will be transported by train to Auschwitz. However, as I interpret the scene, it is probably scarier for the children at this age to be without their parents. However, according to Beyer, the fact that the guard uses his gun to help the Jewish children, rather than to kill them on the spot, is “der Hoffnungsschimmer in einer Trostlosen Situation” (“the shimmer of hope in a bleak situation”). Levinas’ notion of the “face” and the ethical response to help an Other applies in this moment in regards to how the soldier responds and then behaves with the children. He still has limits to his kindness, as he is serving in the German army during World War II (e.g., he does not help the boys escape the

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293 Beyer, Wenn der Wind sich dreht, 360.
Holocaust entirely), but he pushes the boundaries of his orders so that he can help the boys return to their parents. In this way, even though they are in a very dangerous situation by living in a transit camp and likely moving soon to a concentration camp, the boys at least feel safe with the assistance of the German sentry in this moment. It is a moment that recalls Lina’s excitement in Jacob the Liar when she hears that they will leave the ghetto and go on a train trip. The irony of the situation is painful to watch, as the girl prepares for the trip, running through the building shouting “Wir verreisen!” (We’re going on a trip!), viewers are reminded of the history that her story represents. Here again, the boys are excited to be able to go back into the transit camp, which at the time they do not know leads eventually to a concentration camp. After all, it is only in the adult Marek’s voice-over in the film that he explains how the transit camp was a place where the Nazis placed the Jews only temporarily, as it was part of the journey to the concentration camps.

**The Element of Play**

As Marek disobeys his father’s rule so that he can have fun and play with his friends, the camera shows the boys in some of their antics which resemble stories about real-life children in ghettos. As Bourke points out, the boys’ activities resemble the documentary photographs of Henryk Ross, whose subjects include Jewish children playing a version of cops and robbers, or Jews and Germans. According to Bourke, the children in these photographs use such games to make sense of the things they experience in the ghetto. The children in While all Germans Sleep do not play these games, as far as the camera shows, but they find other pastimes. They go to Tenzer’s house for storytelling, but they also roam aimlessly around the ghetto. The spaces they

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can use for play in the transit camp involve neglected equipment and machinery. In one of the
nooks around a brick structure, the boys have a peeing contest to see who can reach the highest
on the bricks. The boys are not the only characters who find creative ways to pass the time,
however. Tenzer seems to enjoy telling the children stories just as much as the children enjoy
listening to them. He not only has a certain time set aside for the children so that they can all
arrive at once to hear his stories, but he speaks to the children very calmly and full of joy. He
clearly welcomes the children – either in groups or one at a time – into his home. Eventually,
Zefir, Marek’s father, gives in and participates in similar storytelling and playtime with Marek.

After Tenzer’s disappearance, Zefir grows to understand that his son misses Tenzer’s
entertaining companionship; he changes his attitude when he, as Bourke points out, replaces
Tenzer, the “magical storyteller,” and finally offers a “magic space” to Marek in the transit
camp. On a day when it is raining, after Marek complains in voice over about the boredom he
faces in the camp, he sits gloomily on the bed. When Zefir notices Marek, for the first time in the
film he offers to tell him a story or play with him: “Soll ich dir eine Geschichte erzählen? Oder
was hältst du davon, wenn wir etwas spielen?” Marek seems reluctant at first to accept this side
of his father as a replacement storyteller.

When Marek does not reply, Zefir picks him up and places him on his shoulders. Zefir
says, “Du bist Ritter Lancelot und ich bin dein altes Ross.” They gallop around the room, while
the father neighs and talks to their new roommates in the warehouse where they live. Some
adults play along and enjoy watching the father and son play. However, some do not show
interest in playing. In a conversation with one such adult named Mosche, Zefir demonstrates a
major turning point in his character:

This scene is central in demonstrating how Zefir changes in the film because of his son. It is the only time that Zefir plays with his son. It is interesting to note that he only plays in the film, and not in the short story, so it is a moment of playfulness that Beyer brings into the film. However, it is probable that Becker also had a role in shaping this change in the story, as he was central to adapting “The Wall” into the film script, even if Beyer was at the lead as director. Moreover, as Eoin Bourke also points out, this scene is an example of how the film brings out the ludic element amidst the man-made hell “more explicitly and even provocatively” than the short story does. Unlike in “The Wall,” Zefir in While all Germans Sleep takes this play time with Marek further than telling him a story and actually acts out the story with his son. In the short story, Becker did not write any form of playfulness into Zefir’s character and he does not tell Marek a story at all. Marek shows delight at having fun with his father, and at having witnessed his father’s acceptance of play as worthwhile, rather than as redundant.

This playtime for Zefir and Marek is not simply child’s play, however. Bourke’s use of Johan Huizinga’s work sheds light on the importance of play for a person’s sense of humanity in

Zefir: Hältst du das besser sich hinzulegen und auf den Tod zu warten, Ritter Mosche?296

Holocaust films such as *While all Germans Sleep*. Bourke references Huizinga’s explanation that play is especially important in the face of the imminent threat of a criminal, fascist government such as Nazism. Drawing from Huizinga, Bourke states that play “suspends determinist systems, [. . .] creating magic space [. . . that] is a metaphysical protest against the inexorability of the Holocaust.”

Bourke argues that the toys and play in “The Wall” and in real-life ghettos were essential for children’s understanding and coping with the threats and death that encompassed them. Bourke further emphasizes the aspect of play in the story, relating it to Henryk Ross’s photographs of children playing in the Łódź Ghetto—made in the same time roughly that Becker lived there.

Bourke also discusses the implications of this scene in regards to play, or the “ludic element,” that Johann Huizinga describes. While I agree that Zefir changes as he plays with his son, Bourke focuses instead on the act of playing, rather than on the child’s providing the impetus to play. According to Bourke, the main point is that Zefir comes to recognize that play is not only therapeutic, but that it is “the retrieval of dignity,” while Mosche sees play as undignified.

This dignity that they maintain through play is part of the practice of resistance and defiance. The child has demonstrated his need for play in order to feel human in the dreary space of the camp, and his father Zefir has finally learned from him that he needs it, too. The dignity of play that Zefir learns and then does, then, starts with the influence of his child Marek.

Marek seems to begin to understand his father as a better human being, too, only after this play time, which is only in the film. His longing for his father’s care grows despite his seemingly callous parenting style up until their playtime in the warehouse. It is particularly

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strong after the boys find no toys in the ghetto and fall asleep on the ground at the wall. Upon waking in the morning, the child Marek says in voiceover that he wishes his father was there to help them. He states, “Mein Vater muss uns holen. Erst ich dann Itzek, oder uns beide zusammen, unter jeden Arm einen. Er musste mich ins Bett legen und warm zudecken. Menschenskind, wäre das gut!” Here, Marek longs for his father – not his mother or both of his parents – to rescue him and put him to bed comfortably.

**Connections to Pan’s Labyrinth**

In this confusion and yet perceptive interpretation of his surroundings, Marek is similar to the little girl Ofelia in *Pan’s Labyrinth*. Ofelia is an independent child similar to Marek; both children are autonomous in their free movement away from their parents, but they also live within strict confines of fascist regimes. Marek lives in a Jewish ghetto run by Nazis, and Ofelia in a decrepit palace that belongs to her new step-father Vidal, a captain who serves Franco’s regime in the years following the Spanish Civil War. Marek’s costume, on the other hand, never changes from his worn-out clothing with the sewn-on Jewish stars at his shoulders. Instead, Marek’s imagination features in his description in voice-over and in conversations with his mother.

Guillermo del Toro’s claim about *Pan’s Labyrinth* being a “fairy tale for adults” also sheds light on ways to analyze *While all Germans Sleep*. In a 2007 interview, del Toro said his understanding of war and its aftermath is that “there is a very dark side to the world and one of the best ways to cope with it is fantasy.” He stated in the interview that Pan’s Labyrinth is a

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300 “My father must pick us up. First me then Itzek, or us both together, one under each arm. He would lay me down in bed and cover me warmly. Man, would that be good!”

sister movie to his previous film El Espinozo del Diablo (The Devil’s Backbone, 2001), which is about a boy in an orphanage during the last year of the Spanish Civil War. Del Toro stated in the interview that his two films have the same themes: the contrast of brutality and innocence, and what happens to children during war and after. Regarding his ideas for making Pan’s Labyrinth, del Toro explained that he thought he could create a movie in which “the fantasy world would be as real and sometimes as scary or as dangerous as the real war. [...] I think it’s great to have a movie that addresses childhood, but for adults.” This storytelling for adults that reflects on war and its trauma on children is similar to the effect of Beyer’s film While all Germans Sleep in that the childhood of the real world of the Holocaust and Marek’s fantasy world are equally dangerous in his eyes.

Although it may not be del Toro’s or Beyer’s intention for their films, adults who observe them may look at war differently, through the eyes of the child on the screen. With both Marek and Ofelia, the child’s gaze and actions guide viewers to see fascism through their eyes. In Ofelia’s case, fascism looks like a violent step-father who seems not to love his wife or Ofelia, but only exhibits interest in protecting himself and his newborn son. In fact, at the end of the film he murders Ofelia when he shoots her at the portal Pan had been preparing her to open with “blood of an innocent” child. This blood turns out to be her own, as she sacrifices herself when trying to save her baby brother. In Marek’s case, fascism is more confusing to the child, as he conflates his father’s rules with the German laws. For him, it is unclear who the fascists are, when the Germans he encounters do not seem so bad to him.

Like Marek, Ofelia understands reality through fairy tales in such a way that is playful at times, but also dangerous at others. Ofelia’s pleasure in fairy tales and stories comes in the form of her reading books and in what she learns from an encounter with Pan: that she is actually a
princess of an underworld land, and her parents are waiting for her to return. Ofelia confuses her reality in her step-father’s home with fairy tales and myths she has read about in the books. The visual elements of *Pan’s Labyrinth* depict Ofelia’s interpretation of reality with fairy tales and stories not only in her imagination but also in her clothing. Her costumes range from her 1940s attire to a dress resembling Alice’s clothing in *Alice in Wonderland*, to Dorothy’s ruby slippers in *The Wizard of Oz*, which Ofelia even clicks together in the end. However, Ofelias’ interpretation of fairy tales in the context of the war is also frightening. For instance, she encounters a cyclops creature reminiscent of Greek mythology, who wakes up and attacks her when she takes food from an elaborately filled dining table. She also learns from Pan that in order to return to her world, the blood of an innocent child must be spilled onto the portal that, once opened, will take her to her family.

Ofelia’s life seems far more dangerous than Marek’s situation, but that is because the more straightforward narration makes Marek seem safer. What the viewer has to remember, though, is that Marek is trying to preserve ordinary life, but he is trapped within the nightmare of the Holocaust. In his perception of the Holocaust, as a child, Marek does not grasp all of the atrocities as he aims to simply play with his friends and enjoy his favorite pastimes. Even though Marek guides the viewers to hear what he thinks about his life, the camera actually never turns the gaze away from the reality of the Holocaust. However, because it focuses on the world of the children, it challenges viewers to think about what ordinary life was like for those living in ghettos during the Holocaust. In contrast, since the fairy tale and fantasy elements that blend into Ofelia’s real world show her situations as magical, colorful, but also dangerous, *Pan’s Labyrinth* turns the gaze from the reality of life in the fascist’s household.
The similarities between Marek and Ofelia are part of a longer thematic connection between the Spanish Civil War in films and Frank Beyer’s Holocaust films with children. For instance, one of Beyer’s earliest films (*Five Cartridges*, 1960) takes place during the Spanish Civil War and depicts Germans fighting in the war against the Spanish Nationalists. His characters then side with the “good guys” who are fighting against fascism in Spain. Moreover, Beyer’s child characters in Holocaust films are thematically related to children in Spanish films about the effects of the war. Like Beyer’s Holocaust films, Spanish films such as *Pan’s Labyrinth* and *The Spirit of the Beehive* place children in central roles. Like Beyer’s films – and especially his work with Becker – these Spanish films give the child agency through movement and a critical gaze as a means to show the inhumanity of war and fascism and resistance to them both.

Another connection is in the level of agency that the directors give the characters in relation to the time when the films were made. Of the examples discussed above, the children in the earlier films provide an origin of characters for the children in later films. For example, as the little girl Ofelia in *Pan’s Labyrinth* is in some ways modeled after Ana in the *Spirit of the Beehive*, Marek is modeled after both Lina and the boys in Beyer’s film *Jacob the Liar*. It is interesting that the lead children in Beyer’s films and the Spanish films – the making and release of which corresponds to the timing of when Beyer made these two films – resemble the behaviors and symbolism of each other. Just as Ana is similar to Lina in some ways, Ofelia is similar to Marek. Marek demonstrates more developed agency than Lina, just as Ofelia also has much more agency than Ana.

In “The Wall” and *While all Germans Sleep*, Marek has decisively more agency than the children in Beyer’s previous Holocaust films. Even though he seems more confined in “The
Wall,” Beyer depicts him in *While all Germans Sleep* freely moving all over the ghetto and the transit camp. This freedom of movement gives him space to play to which Lina in *Jacob the Liar* and the toddler in *Naked among Wolves* do not have access. Even though the camera never turns its gaze from Marek and his setting in the Holocaust, Beyer and Becker’s artistry allows viewers to pay attention to the normalcy that Marek represents. In doing so, the camera shows him acting like a relatively normal five-year-old child: playing with his friends, attending story time, disobeying his parents when he is out of their eyesight, and longing to have a toy to play with.

It is not only the space and movement, however, that allows for Marek to demonstrate his agency. Beyer’s direction and Becker’s script allow Marek the chance to have the most spoken lines of the children in all of the films discussed in this dissertation. Marek is the five-year-old and the adult narrator in voice over, and he speaks on screen as well. The camera also focuses on Marek as the central child – and central character overall – throughout the film as a means to emphasize his agency, which implies his humanity and even his resistance to the Nazis. What might seem less ordinary about Marek is that he wants his toy ball that his mother made for him so much that he risks the trouble of climbing over the wall that he sees as dangerous. In his determination, Marek exhibits not just agency, but also sheer defiance of the German laws meant to contain Jews in the camp. However, even though he knows that he is breaking his father’s rules and the German laws, he does not quite fully understand how much he is acting in defiance.

Mareks’s excitement for breaking rules leads him to one of his worst feelings as a child in the ghetto and a guilt that haunts him into his adulthood: betraying a friend whom the Nazis then presumably murder. Although Marek by no means aims to comply with the Germans by reporting Tenzer’s hidden and forbidden cactus, he ends up talking about it so much to his friends that the German soldiers eventually hear about it and then remove Tenzer from the
ghetto. Marek’s role in Tenzer’s death is an act that evidences his agency far more than Lina or the toddler in Beyer’s previous films. Still, Marek’s shame in Tenzer’s fate also reflects his humanity, left intact even though he betrays a friend through his excitement.

**CONCLUSION**

Frank Beyer’s Holocaust films, which he directed over thirty-one years, exemplify the evolution of his artistry at the same time as they depict an increasing use of central child characters, as well as increasing levels of agency on their part. As I have shown, Beyer’s artistry initially connects to some Socialist Realist traditions, yet also challenges these traditions in his formal choices as well as his focus on a Jewish child instead of the antifascist heroes in *Naked among Wolves*. Beyer then turns away from Socialist Realism with *Jacob the Liar*, which displaces the antifascist hero completely and features dream-like flashbacks and flashforwards, as well as a fairy tale scene. Finally, in his third Holocaust film, *While all Germans Sleep*, Beyer utilizes a seemingly more objective and straight-forward narration, by means of a voice-over on the part of the child protagonist himself, which further removes the film from the antifascist tradition.

The beauty that prevails in Beyer’s films is captured in the human, quasi-familial relationships that exist among the victims of Nazi persecution, be they Communist prisoners in the Buchenwald concentration camp, or Jewish inhabitants of a Polish ghetto. These relationships help people persevere in their efforts to maintain their humanity, which constitute their way of putting up resistance to the dehumanizing forces that seek to destroy them. Beyer draws out the nuances of how these relationships do preserve the dignity of individuals,
highlighting them by inserting the provocative element of central Jewish child characters. Through key child characters, perseverance and preservation give shape to the characters’ resistance to the Holocaust. While many recent Holocaust films depict children either deceased or dying in concentration camps (e.g., *Son of Saul*, *Schindler’s List*, *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas*), Beyer’s films do not portray the deaths of children and any allusions to their death are vague. His work focuses instead on how some children *lived* during the Holocaust. Just as Beyer’s characters participate in resistance, his films thus provide their own type of resistance against oversimplified ways of remembering the Holocaust as well as German division.

Central to analyzing the beauty, artistry and humanity in Beyer’s films is my reading of Levinas’s theory of the “face” and the ethical response necessary to help an Other in need. For instance, the humanity that Beyer depicts in *Naked among Wolves* is centered around the “face;” the prisoners who encounter the child face-to-face see that he is in need of help. After the initial encounter, the men eventually agree that the ethical thing to do – and this is what makes them human, in the face of the effort to dehumanize them – is to hide the boy. Those who protect him develop a bond with him that resembles familial bonds, with some of the men developing into parental figures for the boy. The child and this moment of the “face” is thus the beginning of the child’s drawing out the humanity of men whom the Nazis are attempting to dehumanize in the concentration camp.

Analyzing the Levinasian “face” in encounters between children and adults, as I have applied it in my analysis of the *Naked among Wolves*, could also deepen our understanding of recent films, such as *Son of Saul* and in Kadelbach’s remake of *Naked among Wolves*. Both of these films emphasize an encounter between an adult prisoner and a child’s face in a concentration camp. Kadelbach’s film in particular—being a post-unification adaptation of
Apitz’s novel and therefore directly parallel to Beyer’s 1963 film—provides an interesting comparison to Beyer’s film. For instance, Kadelbach focuses more on the character of Pippig and far less on the boy than Beyer does. While Beyer’s film opens and closes with references to the child, Kadelbach’s version opens and closes with the camera focused on Pippig, the child’s main caretaker and parental figure. Kadelbach also omits the opening scene with Jankowski and the suitcase (included in Beyer’s film), as well as—for political reasons aligning with the post-unification narrative of the Buchenwald Memorial—the ending where the prisoners storm the gates and take turns carrying the boy. Such differences allow me to conclude that Beyer placed much more significance than Kadelbach on the role of the child in drawing out the humanity of adult male prisoners. Beyer’s focus on the central child is effective in rounding out the adult characters’ longing for ways to preserve their ordinary lives so that they can feel human in a place that could mold them into monstrous participants in genocide, if not corpses.

Beyer’s treatment of children in the Holocaust evolved further with his return to the topic in his 1974 film, *Jacob the Liar*. In this film, as I have argued in Chapter 3, the role of the child is quite different from that of the boy in *Naked among Wolves*: Lina is a girl; she has more agency than the boy in *Naked*; she has many spoken lines, including the last line of the film; and she actively spurs her parental figure, Jacob, into inventing a fairy tale for her. Similar, however, is Beyer’s placement of the child in the opening and closing scenes in both films; Lina is in the first and last scenes of *Jacob the Liar*, just as the toddler is in the first (albeit in a suitcase) and last scenes of *Naked among Wolves*. As in *Naked among Wolves*, the humanity of the adult character in *Jacob the Liar* evolves because of and is shown more distinctly in the presence of the child character.
Beyer continued this process of artistic and narrative evolution with his 1994 film, *While all Germans Sleep*. In this film, as I have discussed in Chapter 4, Beyer turned to using voice-over as a device to depict a child survivor’s memory as an adult and commentary on himself as a child. Viewers can thus hear the child’s and the adult’s thoughts about what Marek sees and does in the ghetto and in the transit camp, while the camera itself never turns its gaze from Holocaust. In this way, *While all Germans Sleep* is unlike *Naked among Wolves* because it directly addresses the Holocaust. It is also unlike *Jacob the Liar*, however, which clearly focuses on the Holocaust, but allows the camera to turns its gaze away when it shows Lina’s and Jacob’s imagination of distant places.

All three of Beyer’s Holocaust films thus have in common that, in depicting nuanced forms of resistance to the Nazis, they challenge conventional representations of the Holocaust – whether that of either German nation during the Cold War or of the post-unification Federal Republic of Germany. In *Naked among Wolves*, this resistance is actually directed at both the GDR and the FRG’s (as well as its western allies) memory of the Holocaust. On the one hand, Beyer’s film supported the GDR’s founding myth – by representing German Communists as heroes who planned an armed rebellion and helped run the SS out of Buchenwald as the Soviet Army was approaching, managing to rescue a Jewish child in the midst of the action – and thus countered West German accusations that Communists supported the SS and even carried out war crimes. However, Beyer also challenged the GDR’s interpretation of antifascism by displacing and softening the Communist heroes by means of the Jewish child.

In *Jacob the Liar*, Beyer turns away from the GDR’s tradition of antifascism by displacing Communists even further, focusing instead on s-telling and the Jewish experience of the Holocaust, with the camera on Jews throughout the film. Although Soviets are suggested in
this film as approaching troops, the tongue-in-cheek statement made by the film is that no Soviets arrive to liberate the ghetto. The only Soviets ever pictured on screen are ones that Lina makes up in her imagination.

Following German unification, in the 1990s the topic of the Holocaust emerged in renewed debates about which German memory about it – East or West – represented the correct side of the story. Much like the Cold War politics that shaped how East and West Germany portrayed the Holocaust, debates recurred with the “winner” of reunification – the Federal Republic of Germany – arguing that East German version was “too Communist” and did not reflect all of the groups affected by the Holocaust. The events surrounding German unification re-ignited Becker’s enthusiasm to write about his childhood that he wished he could remember, as in his short essay “The Invisible City,” and asked Beyer to make While all Germans Sleep with him. Beyer’s collaboration with Becker suggests that he not only wanted to work with Becker again after so many years, but that he also wanted to preserve a certain part of the memory of the Holocaust: that although Jewish children may have been killed during the Holocaust, for a while they also lived… and some, such as the character Marek or Jurek Becker himself, survived and continued to have a voice, including in Germany.

In some ways, however, Beyer seems to have agreed with the Federal Republic’s revisions to Holocaust memory, as While all Germans Sleep has no reference to Communists in it at all. This omission of Communists cannot only be attributed to Beyer or to the post-unifications shifts in representations of the Holocaust, however. In fact, Becker’s short story “Die Mauer,” from which Beyer adapted While all Germans Sleep, also does not include any

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mention of Communists or Allied forces. This suggests to me that the post-1990 changes in German memory of the Holocaust were not the primary influence, but an argument Becker had been making all along: it is similar to what his narrator in *Jacob the Liar* states: “Es hat dort, wo ich war, keinen Widerstand gegeben.” Placing Becker and Beyer’s stance into context within the post-unification changes in German memory politics, is a matter of interpreting which form of resistance Becker is referring to: *Résistance*—the fight to preserve what makes life worthwhile despite the dehumanizing effects of the Holocaust; or forming an armed coalition to physically battle the Nazis—*Widerstand*. In my interpretation of Becker’s works, which are key to two of Beyer’s Holocaust films, the former was the most important type of resistance to them both, and the most accurate, according to what they knew about the Holocaust.

Although Beyer’s career started in the Eastern bloc during the Cold War and continued into the 1990s after German reunification, the relevance of his films does not remain confined to this time period. In fact, as other directors – both in Germany and in international contexts, including Hollywood – make new adaptations of Apitz and Becker’s novels, Beyer’s films implicitly continue to be part of an ongoing dialogue about German memory of the Holocaust. A case in point is Peter Kassowitz’s adaptation of Becker’s *Jacob the Liar* in the 1999 Hollywood film *Jakob the Liar*, starring Robin Williams. In my opinion, the changes Kassowitz makes to the story by displacing Lina make this film inferior to Beyer’s version; the relationship between Jacob and Lina must be shown, as it is central to understanding the title character. Lina’s function—to draw out Jacob’s humanity—cannot function the same way in Kassowitz’s film because he does not allow for the relationship to develop. Instead, Kassowitz’s film emphasizes

an underground *Widerstand* plot among men attempting to hide guns and prepare for battle against the SS; in the end Jakob is shot for hiding a radio and participating in this underground plan. Such changes bring back the notion of *Widerstand*, which Beyer had depicted in *Naked among Wolves* and newer Holocaust films often portray. If modern films and their viewers only focus on the *Widerstand* that took place – or that one might wish had taken place, as in *Inglourious Basterds* (USA, dir. Quentin Tarantino, 2009) – we will miss visualizing the many nuanced ways that people preserved their humanity and helped rescue others from despair through friendships and familial relationships.

Ongoing debates rekindled around the topic of the Holocaust as of 2012. Apitz’s novel *Naked among Wolves* was re-released that year with documentation from Apitz that had not been included in the 1958 East German publication of his novel and with an afterword by historian Susanne Hantke. After the publication of this edition of the book, which some reviewers called a “revision of the GDR’s Bible,” debates about the fate of Roma and other victims of Buchenwald that had been prevalent in Germany since unification reemerged. Phillip Kadelbach’s film appeared, with a script by Stefan Kolditz, depicting Communists in Buchenwald planning a revolt but too weak to see it through. The end of Kadelbach’s film also shows US soldiers approaching the camp – albeit far too casually for the urgent moment the film portrays – and takes liberties with Apitz’s characters, whom Beyer depicted more true to the novel. Kadelbach and Kolditz previously collaborated on the mini-series *Unsere Mütter, Unsere Väter* (*Generation War*; literally: “Our Mothers, Our Fathers”), which aired on television in...

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Germany and Austria in March 2013 and again in May 2015, in honor of the seventieth anniversary of the end of World War II. Refering to the new film as *Unsere Opfer, Unsere Täter* (literally, “Our Victims, Our Perpetrators”), film critic Jan Wiele made light of Kadelbach’s return to the Holocaust topic with *Naked among Wolves*, which aired on German television (ARD) in April 2014. This new adaptation of *Naked among Wolves* was released too late to be considered in full in this dissertation, but would provide a productive comparison to Beyer’s film and a point of departure for investigating ongoing debates about Holocaust memory in the context of a unified Germany.

Kadelbach’s adaptation of *Naked among Wolves* and its reception nevertheless provide evidence of this dissertation’s contemporary relevance in multiple registers. For one, it attests to the enduring interest in adaptation and the themes of Apitz’ novel, which Beyer also adapted. However, the timing of Kadelbach’s film reflects more than the anniversary of the end of World War II and the Holocaust; rather, the topic has been continuously intriguing, because viewers still want to know more about what individuals experienced in the concentration camps – either as Jews or Communists. This curiosity seeks to know something that is between the truth and the fictional visual representation of the past in movies. As German public memory – which can be supported or contradicted in places such as the Buchenwald Memorial – the mystery of details other than gas chambers and shootings—of the life that took place in concentration camps and other sites of the Holocaust—has not yet been fully resolved.

In Germany, Kadelbach’s film also rekindled debates that surfaced after German reunification about the presence of other children in Buchenwald (904 at the time of liberation) and about the “swapping” of a 16-year-old Roma boy named Willy Blum for 3-year-old Stefan
Jerzy Zweig. Volkhard Knigge, director of the Buchenwald Memorial as of 1994, and the commission of historians for reconstructing the exhibits in the Buchenwald Memorial claimed that the Communists made a deal with the Nazis to save Zweig, but sent Blum to his death. The Memorial then removed a plaque with Zweig’s rescue story on it because it was determined that the story was too focused on the GDR’s antifascist foundation myth. Since then, Zweig has written a book, maintained a website, and has gone to court to confront Knigge, stating that the change of the memorial and the revised story has stripped him of his dignity. This ongoing struggle about correct ways to remember the events in Buchenwald, which was renewed since German reunification, merit further investigation.

While issues of perpetrators and victims would be central to analyzing these two film versions of Naked among Wolves by Beyer and Kadelbach, further research should also be done to investigate the relationships of films made after 1990 to Beyer’s Jacob the Liar. This should include, for example, a more detailed discussion of Kassowitz’s Jakob the Liar than I have offered in this dissertation. It should also address Benigni’s film, Life is Beautiful, which has been compared to Beyer’s Jacob and which critics have compared Kassowitz’s film. Such an analysis of Beyer’s Naked among Wolves and Jacob the Liar would ground the analysis of what has occurred in film history and Holocaust memory since 1990. In all of these films, a child is a prominent figure, although not always key to understanding the humanity of the adults with whom they have relationships.


306 Connolly, np; See also Stefan Jerzy Zweig, “Tears Alone Are Not Enough,” http://www.stefanjzweig.de/foreword.htm.
It would also be useful to pursue further research on the glimpses of humor and playfulness of Beyer’s Holocaust films. Thus far, critics have only focused on these elements in Benigni’s *Life is Beautiful* and Robin Williams’ performance in *Jakob the Liar*. Although *Life is Beautiful* was featured in film festivals and won an Oscar, it was also criticized for making light of the Holocaust because it depicted the father and son playing a game in order to survive. Similar references to playfulness and games appear in Beyer’s films, as well as in Kadelbach’s *Naked among Wolves*, without having the films lose a tone appropriate to the topic of the Holocaust. Finally, these films would further tie into this exploration of Frank Beyer’s Holocaust films in that they depict ways that people fought to preserve the mundane aspects of their lives so that they could feel human in the hellish world of the Holocaust.
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