Leander Haußmann und Sven Regener unterhalten sich über *Herrn Lehmann*, die Vorzüge des Flaschenbiers und die 80er-Jahre', *Der Tagespiegel*, 1 October 2003.

51. Cristina Moles Kaupp, *Good Bye, Lenin! Film-Heft*, Berlin: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2003.
52. Peter Bradshaw, '*Good Bye Lenin! Ostalgie* ain't what it used to be', *Guardian*, 25 July 2003.
53. Gunnar Decker, 'Vielfalt statt Einfalt: Zum Ost-West-Kinoerfolg von *Good Bye, Lenin!*', *Neues Deutschland*, 3 August 2003.

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Re-exoticizing the Normal: the *Ostalgie* Industry and German Television

In the summer of 2003, following on from the success of *Good Bye, Lenin!*, There was an extraordinary renaissance of interest in the GDR throughout Germany, central to which was discussion of *Ostalgie*. Now the term was beginning to be used by the media in a far less pejorative manner than it had been previously. Indeed, it had developed into nothing short of a craze. The most obvious example of this new *Ostalgie* craze was the plethora of television shows about the GDR. Programmes on the former East German state were not a new phenomenon. Throughout the 1990s, the television schedules regularly featured documentaries and news items about the machinations of the SED regime. However, the difference now was that for the first time the GDR became the focus of light-hearted entertainment shows. ZDF, Germany's second public-service channel, set the tone with its *Ostalgie Show*, broadcast on one evening in August. This was followed a few days later by *Ein Kessel DDR* (*A Pot of GDR*), produced by MDR, the public-service channel for the eastern regions of Thuringia, Saxony and Saxony-Anhalt. The very next evening, the privately funded channel SAT 1 broadcast *Meyer und Schulz: Die ultimative Ost-Show* (*Meyer und Schulz: The Ultimate East Show*). Finally, at the beginning of September, RTL, another national privately-funded channel, brought out its offering, the four-part *DDR Show*.[1] And the decision by these channels to produce their programmes clearly paid off in terms of viewing figures. ZDF's *Ostalgie Show*, for example, had an audience of 4.78 million viewers, 21.8 per cent of the viewing public as a whole, with 34 per cent of eastern viewers tuning in.[2] By the time RTL aired its programme the popularity of the genre had grown still further. The *DDR Show* achieved an audience on its first night of 6.32 million, 23.3 per cent of viewers in Germany (38 per cent of those in the east), and was only just pipped at the post for first place in the ratings by the German version of the 'reality' talent show *Pop Idol*, RTL's

Deutschland sucht den Superstar (*Germany looks for its Superstar*, 6.47 million viewers).[3]

Although there are some subtle and important differences between these programmes, they all have strong generic similarities. These are neatly caricatured by Antonia Kränzlin writing in *Der Tagesspiegel*:

> The principle of a GDR show is easily explained. You take a studio with a live audience, decorate it as colourfully as possible with lots of eastern items, put two presenters on the stage (preferably an *Ossi* and a *Wessi*) and then have as many eastern celebrities chat about the 'good old times in which perhaps not everything, but lots of things were better' … From time to time have the obligatory *Trabi* roll across the screen. Accompany the whole thing with hits from the East German charts. Let the *Wessis* guess the meaning of GDR abbreviations. Regularly fade in 'original pictures from the GDR'. Then add in a pinch of Spreewald Gherkins, FKK holidays and FDJ summer camps- that's the East German Show finished![4]

The tone of this piece, which ridicules the very concept of a nostalgic GDR show, was to be found throughout the newspaper debate these programmes engendered. Particularly vocal in their criticism were some former east German civil-rights activists, who in many cases had also been involved in the state-led processes of dealing with the past discussed in Chapter 2. The focus of the programmes on items such as the *Trabant* motor car, standard issue during the GDR period and now a cult collector's item, or the widespread practice of FKK (naturism) caused Rainer Eppelmann, for example, to condemn them as a 'dreadful trivialization of the GDR'.[5] The former east German dissident and now CDU politician, Günter Nooke went so far as to pose the question: 'What sort of a hullabaloo would there be if, instead of Kati Witt presenting a GDR show, we had Johannes Heesters presenting 'The Ultimate Third Reich Show'.[6] Here we see echoes of the sort of attacks I have already discussed in connection with Haußmann's *Sonnenallee*. The GDR is talked of in the same breath as Nazi Germany, the former Olympic ice-skater Katarina Witt, the presenter of RTL's *DDR Show*, and a figure who caused some controversy by her involvement in this project, being compared to a star of the National Socialist period.

That Eppelmann and Nooke were critical of the shows is not surprising, since the shows' approach to looking at the GDR is far removed from that of the Enquete Commissions' reports. More curious, however, was the fact that some of the shows' detractors were the very people who had previously defended certain manifestations of GDR nostalgia. The starkest example of this shift came with Leander Haußmann's comments in

Der Spiegel, in which he seems to take up the position of the very critics who attacked his film *Sonnenallee*:

> The reality of life in the GDR is obviously being completely forgotten – and now everyone's coming out of the holes they crawled into out of fear, frustration and shame: those old braggarts and 'fellow travellers' (*Mitläufer*). Instead of keeping their mouths shut happy that they got away with it, today they are mischievously indulging in *Ostalgie*.[7]

Haußmann's co-scriptwriter Thomas Brussig was also vociferous in his condemnation of the programmes. His bone of contention was that they were largely made in the west, or by western producers. The reason for this, he argues, is that the west is attempting to atone for its earlier treatment of eastern history, and of its poor management of eastern restructuring. Such programmes are, for Brussig, 'the expression of a bad western conscience and of a German unification that has been messed up'.[8] Whether one accepts this criticism or not, it is unarguably the case that these shows did largely take their impetus from the west (a criticism, as we have already seen, which was often, at times rather more unfairly, levied at some of the other processes of historical appraisal discussed in this book). This is even true for MDR, which is often viewed as one of the only real east German channels. The producer of Ein Kessel *DDR*, Hans-Hermann Tiedje, former editor of the tabloid newspaper Bild, was described by one interviewer as an 'Oberwessi' (Superwessi). Indeed, in the same interview Tiedje goes to some lengths to insist upon his right to make the programme, thereby implicitly revealing, perhaps, that he too found his western credentials somewhat problematic.[9]

To compound the irony of the shift in position by Brussig, Haußmann and others, their opinions were generally countered by the western programme makers themselves, along with a small number of primarily western journalists, with the types of arguments that Brussig and Haußmann themselves had used to defend *Sonnenallee*. The director of ZDF's *Ostalgie Show*, Martin Keiffenheim, for example, claimed that

> the media presents a very bad image of east Germany. With the GDR we only connect oppression, an illegal regime, Stasi files, an economy of shortages, pollution. It's high time that we approached it differently: through the culture of everyday life.[10]

Harald Martenstein, writing in the *Tagesspiegel*, evokes no less a philosophical heavyweight than Adorno in his defence of the *Ostalgie Shows*, taking issue with Nooke's comparison of the GDR to Nazi Germany. He

turns Adorno's critique of National Socialism in *Minima Moralia* on its head, rhetorically asking if it is surely not possible to have a 'true life in a false one ... People try under all circumstances to be happy. In their false lives they look for the true'. The shows are, for Martensetein, potentially the long-awaited start of a genuine process of historical appraisal for the GDR. He even makes a rather bold comparison between the *Ostalgie Shows* and the effect that the student movement and the extra-parliamentary opposition (APO) in the 1960s had on the process of dealing with the Nazi period: 'The West needed 20 years, from 1949 to the APO. In the east it has taken 13 years, from the collapse to *Ostalgie*.'[11]

As we can see, the debate these programmes provoked was drawn along familiar lines. On the one hand, we have those who argue that the GDR was an oppressive dictatorship and that these programmes do not show this clearly enough. On the other, we have those who claim that we should not ignore the everyday, 'normal' experience of GDR citizens. However, crucially, some of the actors in it appeared to have switched sides. In this chapter, I argue that while Haußmann and Brussig might not be pleased about the appearance of these shows, on one level they can be seen as the end of point of a process set in train by the type of critical discourse we see in their film.

In television's *Ostalgie Shows* we find evidence that the GDR past has now become a part of the mainstream, in which the everyday experience of easterners has been incorporated into unified German television culture. However, their criticism also points to the limits of this process. The reason why some of the actors in this debate seem to have changed sides can to a degree be explained in terms of the question of ownership of the past, an issue that, as we have seen throughout this study, is central to claims of western colonization. In the critical response to these shows, there was a good deal of hostility to what was seen as another western appropriation of the GDR, even though this appropriation was ostensibly in response to an eastern call for a more differentiated view of the past. Indeed, although the shows were watched by many in the east, Brussig and Haußmann were not alone in their criticism of them. In an opinion poll carried out by Emnid, 59 per cent of those surveyed claimed they disapproved of the image of the GDR these shows presented.[12] The notion that high viewing figures might not suggest general approval is also indicate in an interview with one of the RTL show's eastern viewers, who claimed that 'lots of people enjoy these shows because it gives them something to get annoyed about'.[13] It would appear that many people only watched the broadcasts in order to get annoyed about the image of the GDR that was presented in them, It would seem that what was being

perceived as a western appropriation of *Ostalgie* allowing easterners to confirm their opinion that they are still being misunderstood by their 'colonial' masters.

For the discussion in this chapter, the comments by the RTL viewer are particularly revealing, as they point to an aspect of these programmes that was largely ignored by the media debate, but which is crucial to an understanding of their purpose. While people might have been annoyed by them, they obviously still found them entertaining. If they had not, why would they have tuned in?[14] And this is ultimately their point. Although the programme makers insist that their intention is first and foremost educational, their underlying aim is neither to present an authentic, nor a revisionist representation of life in the GDR but to attract viewers – that is, to make the GDR entertaining, and ultimately sellable. In this connection, Martenstein's reference to Adorno is particularly illuminating, since we have here a working example of what he and Max Horkheimer term the *Culture Industry,* in which an ostensible engagement with GDR history is in fact a means of commodifying it.[15] What is interesting about this process of commodification, is the way *Ostalgie* has been re-appropriated within it. Rather than seeing nostalgia for the GDR as a barrier to the long awaited 'inner unification' of the German people, as it had been previously, most obviously in western discourses, in these western-produced *Ostalgie* shows, it was now seen as a means of achieving this unity.

Although the reason why the programmes were made specifically at this time was largely due to the success of *Good Bye, Lenin!*, they have none of the critical distance of Becker's film towards present-day consumerism. Instead, the use of *Ostalgie* within the context of these television programmes implies the existence of a unified 'community of consumers', in which east German experience appears to have been brought into the cultural mainstream and normalized. As we have seen in other cultural discourses, particularly in my discussion of 'productive' hybridity, television is not alone is suggesting that east Germans are both a part of, and understand, western consumer culture. However, the reason some commentators in the east responded so negatively to the shows is, I suggest, due to the fact that a hierarchy is maintained in which eastern experience remains peripheral to the west, to the extent that GDR normality is in actuality firmly re-exoticized. Consequently, we see in the shows yet another 'orientist' use of the GDR, here as a space in which unification under the FRG can be further legitimized. However, instead of achieving such legitimacy by viewing the GDR as a totalitarian 'Stasi state', East Germany is now constructed as an alien consumer world, from which the population has, nonetheless, been similarly liberated.

Consumer Culture and *Ostalgie*

The idea that consumer culture might be important to debates on German national unity is not a post-*Wende* invention. From at least the 1970s the SED understood that the battle for the hearts and minds of the population was more likely to be won in the supermarkets and department stores of the GDR than by force-feeding its citizens Marxist-Leninist ideology. Unlike many Eastern-bloc countries, East Germans were very aware of social, economic and cultural developments on the other side of the Iron Curtain. With the exception of the Dresden area, commonly termed the 'valley of the clueless' (*Tal der Ahnungslosen*), Western television programmes and advertising were available throughout the GDR and had a huge impact on Eastern attitudes. As West Germans began to enjoy the profits of the post-war 'Economic Miracle', and with them an ever-increasing range of consumer goods, Easterners listened and looked on through their radios and television sets, fully cognisant that their government was failing to keep up. Initially, the Party attempted to stem the influence of the Western media, encouraging members of the FDJ to report households whose television aerials were set to receive West German stations. However, by the 1970s the practice was so common that the SED largely stopped trying to prevent the population from watching them. Instead, they attempted (albeit once more in vain), to counter Western influences by improving the quality of their own media output and by providing Eastern alternatives to highly prized Western products.[16]

In the immediate aftermath of the *Wende*, as we saw in Becker's film, the failure of the SED to produce goods that could compete with the West became blatantly apparent. The GDR population could not wait to 'Test the West', as they were encouraged to do by the advertisers of *West* cigarettes. Eastern brands were ignored as the GDR population was able to experience first hand what some of them had only seen on television. However, the euphoria for Western products was short lived. Andreas Staab notes that even as early as 1991 nearly three-quarters of households surveyed in the eastern regions stated they preferred eastern products to western ones.[17] Once again this tendency could be seen particularly clearly in tobacco advertising. The advertisers of *Juwel* cigarettes told us, for example: 'I smoke Juwel because I've tested the West: *Juwel* – one of our own'.[18] From the early 1990s there was a growth in demand for eastern products. Along with cigarettes, famous examples are the increased market share of *Rotkäppchen Sekt* and *Club Cola*. Paul Betts suggests that consumer culture in fact became the battle ground for east Germans attempting to mark their sense of difference. Although it would not become the widely discussed phenomenon we saw in the previous chapter until the end of the decade, from the early 1990s, he comments, one begins to find a 'revived romance between east Germans and their own material culture', a product, he suggests of 'political pessimism, coupled with economic recession, rising unemployment and growing social anxiety', all of which 'inspired a new nostalgia for the stability and solidarity for the old days'.[19] The growth in the popularity of such products is, for Betts, an example of east Germans looking back to a romanticized version of the past, making connections between GDR consumer goods and a perceived set of values at the heart of their way of life before they were faced with the problems of dealing with the western market economy.

The centrality of an idealized image of pre-unification GDR values becomes clear if we return to the world of marketing. Advertising agencies were amongst the first institutions in the 1990s to understand that everything that 'belonged together' might not be 'growing together' quite as quickly as envisaged, and that perceptions of difference between the populations of the GDR and the FRG, whether real or imagined, could not simply be ignored. Patricia Hogwood cites the example of *Persil* washing powder, which came unstuck with one of its publicity campaigns in the eastern regions:

> The advert showed a middle-aged woman executive returning to work. Her husband and children couldn't cope without her until she discovered new Persil capsules. Eastern women, who until unification were accustomed to working all their adult lives, were offended at the implication that it was somehow wrong to 'leave' your family to go back to work. Faced with structural and gender-biased unemployment problems, they were insulted at the suggestion that such a woman could find a good post as soon as she chose to work.[20]

The prioritization of western cultural norms was alienating the eastern market. In order to find a better means of accessing this market *Persil* turned to the Fritzsch und Mackat agency, who have made a name for themselves producing campaigns specifically for the east. Instead of playing to the prejudices of patriarchy, a typical strategy in western washing-powder advertising, they highlighted the functionality of *Persil*. This allowed east Germans to identify with an 'honest-to-goodness' lifestyle, which in turn could be contrasted with a perceived superficiality of life in the west.

The need to highlight 'down-to-earth' values is, as Hogwood notes, at the heart of much east German advertising. The marketing material for

Lichtenauer mineral water, for example, suggests that the product is 'beautifully normal'.[21] In a similar vein and returning once again to tobacco advertising, one finds Cabinet cigarettes billed as 'authentic and unperfumed', thereby constructing the product in opposition to western 'perfumed', 'inauthentic' blends of tobacco.[22] The reason why these values should be seen as 'east German' perhaps reveals a residual legacy of the population's socialization within the GDR, showing that the state's cynicism towards capitalist consumer culture had more impact than one might have though in the early 1990s. Or, perhaps more accurately, it points to the legacy of having to make do with limited resources, the GDR period now being looked back on as a more frugal, simpler time, when communities readily came together to share what they had, thus seeming to live by a more 'humane' set of values than is possible in the hustle and bustle of capitalism. This might not be a time that they want to relive, nonetheless, it remains one upon which they can look back with a degree of fondness in a similar fashion to the way the British who lived through the Second World War might remember warmly the 'spirit of the *Blitz*'.[23]

While most commentators view this longing for a more wholesome, less superficial way of life in the 1990s in terms of *Ostalgie*, Fritzsch und Mackat suggest the word is ill-fitting. *Ostalgie* for them is a negative term, suggesting a resentful wish to return to the past. By the mid 1990s they claim that such backward-looking *Ostalgie* is being replaced by what they call '*Ostimismus*' (from the words for 'east' and 'optimism'): 'people are looking for an optimistic identity through which they can be proud of what they have achieved'.[24] Here Fritzsch and Mackat highlight what Hogwood identifies as a growing sense of '*Ossi* Pride', in which negative stereotypes of easterners by westerners are reinterpreted positively, in order to give value to, and ultimately normalize, their experience. While some westerners might, for example, stereotypically construct easterners as 'lazy', or 'workshy' this is inverted in eastern advertising discourses to present them as 'easy going'.[25] The impulse to de-exoticize the experience of east Germans is, of course, a familiar one, seen most obviously in east German film. In advertising discourse we find this normalization strategy confirmed. East Germans are, or at least like to be told in advertisements that they are, just as good as west Germans, that their products are just as valid, if not more so because they are 'down to earth', everyday, and not subject to the superficial and trivial whims of western fashion.

The Fritzsch and Mackat agency places great store in the importance of accepting east German distinctiveness and in particular the continuing impact of past socialization on the present. This is not surprising given

the fact that their business is built upon this very notion of difference. However, others suggest that the eastern and western advertising markets have largely converged. 'Although there are still subtle differences between advertising campaigns in east and west Germany, they are getting smaller', claims Steffi Hugendubel in the weekly business magazine *Werben & Verkaufen*.[26] It would seem that, if a process of colonization has taken place, it is reaching completion, or that the east German population is showing ever more clearly its ownership of western culture, highlighting that it is fully competent in the ways of late-capitalist society.

Yet, while east and west advertising markets might be converging, this does not seem to be leading to a downturn in interest in eastern products. On the contrary, in the same article Hugendubel notes that in 2001 – two years before the release of *Good Bye, Lenin!* or the production of the *Ostalgie* shows – interest in east German goods was starting to increase. On the Internet, particularly, there was a huge growth in the number of sites specializing in such products.[27] Media interest in the GDR in 2003 caused this growth to rocket, which, ironically, led to the collapse of one of the biggest Internet suppliers of GDR items. *Ossi-Versand* (www.ossiversand.de), the company, famous for their tag line 'Kost the Ost' ('Taste the East', a deliberate echo of 'Test the West') saw its turnover increase by 60 per cent in 2003. As a result, it expanded too quickly and was finally unable to keep up with demand.[28]

Along with a general increase in the consumption of specifically eastern products, there have also been developments in both their clientele and the range of products available, developments that suggest that the role of east German consumer culture is going beyond that of simply marking east German difference. First, much of this recent growth in interest comes from the west. By the time of its collapse, 85 per cent of '*Ossi*-Versand's' customer base was in the old Federal states. Thus, it would seem that the popularity of east German culture in the west has caught up with the east, because the regional demographic of its customer base now broadly reflects that of the population as a whole. Further, a recent study by the Institute for Applied Marketing and Communication in Erfurt (*Institut für angewandte Marketing- und Kommunikationsforschung*) found that a growing number of east German products have become just as important to western as they are to eastern consumers, with brands such as *Radeberger* beer and *Rotkäppchen* being recognized by over 90 per cent of those surveyed.[29] Evidently, this may be due in no small part to the fact that many of these brands have been bought out by western companies who are keen to escape the description of their products as purely eastern.[30] Moreover, it suggests that eastern culture has

become part of the mainstream, at last achieving the 'normality' advertisers have long exploited, and many east Germans ostensibly wish for.

Second, and seeming to contradict this normalization process, there has been a development in what is being marketed as east German. It is in this connection that we see the word *Ostalgie* once again used widely by the mass media. However, now it is commonly evoked to describe a more positive form of nostalgia than it had been previously. Along with the examples already mentioned there has long been an interest in certain other eastern objects, most obviously perhaps the *Trabi*, but also, for example, the GDR's *Ampelmännchen*, or pedestrian-crossing figures. These differ markedly from those found in the west in the fact that they wear a hat and so look as if they belong to the 1950s rather than the present. Although initially replaced by their western counterparts, they soon started to reappear in the east by popular demand. Recently, interest in these and other items has increased, but also changed. Specifically, such items have become important tools of the tourist industry. The *Ampelmännchen* are now iconic figures to be found on a range of items from t-shirts to table lamps, taking up a good deal of space in the capital's souvenir shops.[31] Interest in Trabis used to be largely confined to their proud owners from GDR times who would meet up at rallies, like many other cult car enthusiasts. But now the Trabi is also being instrumentalized as a Berlin tourist attraction, with people being encouraged to go, for example, on 'Trabi Safaris', hiring the car to travel around the city centre for the day.[32]

The notion of a 'Trabi Safari' clearly suggests a shift in the marketing of eastern products. In this new proliferation of interest in GDR consumer goods we see the complete rejection of GDR objects as being 'normal' or 'down-to-earth'. Instead, such objects are turned into cult items, a process that then allows the tourist *Ostalgie* industry to foreground, indeed to fetishize, their 'abnormality', or exoticism. Other examples of this trend towards exoticization within the tourist industry as well as within the leisure industry more generally, include the popular novelty item, the *DDR-Box*, produced in time for Christmas 2003. This was a tin box that provided the consumer with what its producers call a complete GDR 'starter-pack'. The box included a range of *ostalgic* items, from a fold-up model of a Trabi and a certificate to prove one's loyalty to the GDR, to a bag of *Mokka Fix Gold* coffee, made famous, along with Spreewald gherkins, by Becker's film. Indeed, the influence of this film is made abundantly clear on the box's lid. While the advertisements for *Good Bye, Lenin!* claimed that the film reproduced the 'GDR in 79 m^2', the *DDR-Box* was far more practical, allowing you to have 'the east in 0.05 m^2'. However, the most telling example of the trend by the leisure industry to

exoticize the GDR is the planned GDR theme park to be built by the Massine Production Company in Berlin. The declared aim of this park is to recreate a day out in the GDR, starting with the 'compulsory' exchange of Western money at its entrance gate, recalling the first step of any Western tourist's day trip to East Berlin before 1989. Like the makers of the *Ostalgie* shows, Massine insists that their motives for building the park are educational. It is not intended, the company argues, to trivialize the GDR, but rather to present to its visitors everyday life behind the Wall.[33] Yet, from the available publicity surrounding the park, it would instead seem to be simply a rather extreme version of the *DDR-Box* or the *Trabi* safaris, that is, another leisure item aimed at entertainment and profit making, not education.[34] To suggest that the visitors Messine Productions hope to attract to the park are looking to learn about the reality of life in the GDR would seem to be as misguided as to suggest that visitors to Disneyland in California are seeking to learn about the everyday 'real' life of Mickey Mouse or Goofy. Rather than looking to recreate empathetically the mundane experience of east Germans, such products seek to distil and commodify the *strangeness* of a world that no longer exists, 'to elicit surrealized East German life', as Betts puts it.[35] For the tourist industry normality is the last attribute a product wants. The *Ostalgie* Industry has become big business. It has become mainstream within German culture, precisely because it is different. This difference can then be commodified, marketed, put on a t-shirt, or as we shall see, made into a light-entertainment television show.

Television and the Eastern Regions

Before turning to the shows specifically, however, I wish first to examine more generally television culture in the eastern regions, as well as the representation of the former GDR on television since 1989. As I noted in the previous section, Western television had always been an important source of information for the population of the GDR, who largely shunned its own television channels, the state controlled DFF1 and DFF2, in favour of Western stations. In the immediate aftermath of the *Wende*, these channels did enjoy a brief moment of popularity. For a short interval, once-derided news programmes such as *Aktuelle Kamera*, whose journalists were now freed from the yoke of political censorship, began to produce more objective reports and, as Peter J. Humphreys notes 'a novelty, to attract large audiences'.[36]

As it became clear that unification was on the cards, many members of the East German media lobbied to have the DFF network turned into

a third national public-service broadcasting channel.[37] However, this idea came to nothing and the eastern television frequencies were given to western stations. The failure to acknowledge pre-unification GDR television culture is seen by some commentators as one of the most unambiguous examples of unification as a western takeover. John Sandford, for example, suggests, 'many Germans in the East saw the whole operation as one of the most blatant examples of arrogant Western colonization'.[38] Indeed, it became commonplace to describe the former GDR as a 'media colony'.[39] Western stations, eager to get their hands on the prize of 'relatively scarce broadcasting frequencies and the future east German advertising market' rapidly moved in, bringing with them their own personnel, and thereby forcing the majority of the former workforce into unemployment.[40] That said, as ever one must balance such emotive claims of colonization with comparison to the pre-*Wende* situation. It would be hard to suggest that the range of television in the east is worse than it was during GDR times, when media was tightly controlled, and freedom of speech largely impossible. As Humphreys also notes in his summary of the present situation, 'the positive far outweighs the negative'.[41]

Instead of becoming a third national channel, public-service broadcasting in the east was restructured into a number of regional stations that, like their western counterparts, became part of the ARD network. The northern region of Mecklenburg-West Pomerania was absorbed into the west German regional company NDR. Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt and Thuringia were covered by the newly formed MDR. East Berlin was included within the remit of the West Berlin broadcaster SFB, and in Brandenburg ORB was set up. Consequently, the only stations with a completely eastern constituency were MDR and ORB. In 2003 this was then reduced to one when ORB merged with SFB to become RBB. Interestingly, many executives of the former SFB have seen this recent merger as an 'easternization' of Berlin's broadcasting culture, thus seeming to show a shift away from the clear westernization of the early 1990s and perhaps pointing to a development in German television culture in which the eastern regions are beginning to assert themselves. This might also be reflected in the inclusion of east German culture as part of the mainstream, even if, as we shall see, this is taking place according to a fixed, and at times somewhat problematic, agenda.[42]

Shortly after the introduction of western public-service broadcasting, the east also gained access to the main western private stations. Although there were some delays in stations such as RTL and SAT 1 gaining terrestrial frequencies in the east, they nonetheless quickly enjoyed massive popularity through cable and satellite broadcasting, easterners seeming far more willing than many in the west to take advantage of new media providers.[43] Holger Briel notes:

> After unification, the first visible changes in the East occurred on the rooftops. The old aerials – all of them trained in a westerly direction – vanished. Even before many houses received a new coat of paint or the *Trabis* and *Wartburgs* had been exchanged for a western-made car, a satellite dish would appear. East Germans, it seems, had fewer problems with accepting the new media than their western compatriots.[44]

While on an institutional level the unification of German television might be seen as an aggressive western takeover, here we are reminded that the notion of western 'colonization' is at times more complex than it might at first glance appear. If we examine television *use*, we find that easterners themselves were more than willing to accept a western takeover. Indeed, we perhaps see here further evidence that, rather than being the backward 'colonized' cousins of the west, in quickly embracing the new media the east could be leading the way in a broader process of social change, further echoing Engler's view of easterners as Gemany's 'avant garde', discussed in Chapter 1. With regard to television culture, one might also point to the fact that those in the east are at the forefront of a general tendency in Germany to spend more time viewing. In a survey from 1993 it was found that easterners watched on average 209 minutes of television per day, whereas westerners watched only 168 minutes.[45] By 2000 both groups were watching more television, but the west was slowly catching up, easterners and westerners watching on average 223 and 198 minutes respectively.[46] Furthermore, the east seems to be at the vanguard of a shift in taste away from news and information-based programming towards light entertainment. This propensity amongst easterners could, however, simply be an effect of the continuing higher unemployment in the east than in the west, leading to viewers watching more daytime television, the schedules of which are dominated by soap operas, drama series and other such entertainment programming.[47]

Although easterners are watching more television than westerners, the majority are nonetheless still dissatisfied with what is available to them, particularly in regard to its coverage of eastern issues. In a recent study, Manuela Glaab notes that '57 per cent of east Germans generally [felt] ignored in the media'.[48] To a degree this criticism would seem to be unfair. If one looks at Werner Früh and Hans-Jörg Stiehler's 2001 study, they suggest that for every story specifically about the eastern regions one

finds 2.9 stories about the west. Since easterners constitute approximately one fifth of the German population, this coverage would, in fact, appear rather generous. Nevertheless, what Früh and Stiehler also find constantly problematic across a number of surveys is the nature and tone of much of this coverage. In a study from 1999 they summarize the representation of the east on national television since the mid 1980s, drawing on work by Thomas Bruns and Frank Marinkowski. Here, they comment that if one looks at coverage of the east in the early 1990s, one finds a similar trend in the representation of the east to that found in the state-led processes of historical appraisal examined in detail in Chapter 2. In the immediate post-*Wende* period, they found that the GDR was being

> presented as a phase which had to be dealt with (mainly legally) … characterized by the terms Stasi, violence at the Wall and doping. The news and magazine programmes examined … offer[ed] the viewer no starting point for a more positive relationship to his or her past.[49]

Television coverage tends to underline the hegemonic value system we saw at work in the Enquete Commissions' reports. This is, of course, unsurprising. As John Fiske and John Hartley point out in their seminal study of the medium, in general television tends to reflect and reinforce, rather than question, society's dominant organizing principles. This it achieves by consciously constructing its messages as reflecting society's centre:

> Television is one of the most highly centralized institutions in modern society. This is not only a result of commercial monopoly or government control, it is also a response to the culture's felt need for a common centre, to which the television message always refers.[50]

With the introduction of digital satellite media and a far wider range of channels, television and television audiences have become far more fragmented than they were in the early 1970s, when Fiske and Hartley were writing. Nevertheless, the need to represent what it perceives as society's centre remains an imperative of much mainstream television. As such, television continues to be one of the most important media 'through which society finds self-confirmation and understanding'.[51]

If we accept this is a major function of television, it is interesting to look at the representation of east Germany more recently. As discussed in the previous chapter with regard to film, or in aspects of the marketing of material culture examined above, there has been something of a shift away from focusing on the legacies of the GDR's dictatorial regime to an

exploration of the everyday experience of easterners. To this we might add certain literary texts that are beginning to appear, suggesting that the same can be said of this cultural sphere.[52] However, Früh, Stiehler *et al.* comment that, by the end of the 1990s at least, such a shift was not generally evident on television, thereby suggesting that, although there appeared by this time to be a wish amongst the population to look at East Germany in terms of its everyday culture (as reflected in marketing campaigns), with regard to the region's cultural representation in the mass media, this shift largely remained within what might be seen as more self-reflective discourses, such as literature and (some) cinema. In the 1999 survey, we see that on television east Germany continued to be presented as a problem, with what Früh, Stiehler *et al.* call everyday eastern 'society' (*Gesellschaft*) topics, that is coverage of social occasions (such as marriages and public events) being almost entirely absent in comparison to the coverage of such events in the western regions – they suggest a ratio of 1 to 71 in favour of the west. The fact that this aspect of life was being largely ignored by the national media for these commentators betrays a dominant western perspective in news coverage. More recently this would seem to have dissipated. In 2001, Früh und Steihler found that there were more 'non-problem-based' stories being presented. Indeed, on ARD, for example, they suggested that the number of eastern cultural items actually outnumbered those about the west.[53] Nevertheless, they also argue that while the east may be receiving more coverage, a western perspective continues to dominate, claiming that in many cases eastern stories are presented as if they were 'foreign news'.[54] As a result, eastern views still appear in much television coverage as if they were peripheral to the west. The one exception they mention to this general trend is MDR (ORB did not form part of their survey, although the same could be said of this station at the time). This channel's focus is solely the eastern regions. Unsurprisingly, therefore, it spends more of its time covering east German-specific issues.[55] Interestingly, this station has probably received more national opprobrium than any other, often seen as being nothing more than a 'Long-term advertisement' for *Ostalgie*, as the journalist Jens Schneider put it in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, the term *Ostalgie* here being used completely negatively.[56] Others criticize what they see as its homely, sentimental view of the world, which seems to betray a thoroughly conservative value system and does nothing to face the problems of inner unity.[57]

The *Ostalgie* Shows

With the arrival of the *Ostalgie Shows* in the summer of 2003, it would appear that this western perspective had finally been overcome. At last, the everyday experience of east Germans had entered mainstream culture, thereby suggesting, as certain members of SFB management claimed, that an 'easternization' of German television was taking place. In my discussion of these shows I suggest that there is indeed evidence of an attempt to bring the GDR past into the mainstream. However, I also suggest that this is ultimately achieved by the re-establishment of a western-dominated value system. Central to this is a focus on consumer culture, and more specifically the construction of the eastern population as consumers. In so doing, the shows embed the former citizens of the GDR firmly within western society. At the same time, they suggest the continuing existence of a hierarchy within this 'united' society in which western experience remains central, a curious state of affairs given their subject matter. I argue that the east is, in fact, ultimately re-exoticized from within the mainstream, and pushed once again to the margins. The tension between an impulse to bring the GDR into the mainstream, while concurrently maintaining its exotic cache, is one which, as I shall also examine, at times put an extraordinary strain on the programmes' light-entertainment structure.

Of the four shows, the two that were the most similar were ZDF's *Ostalgie Show* and SAT 1's *Meyer und Schulz: Die ultimative Ost-Show*. This connection is curious given the different remits of these channels. ZDF is usually the home of more highbrow television culture. SAT 1, on the other hand, is a commercial, populist channel. Nevertheless, the material both shows covered was almost identical. ZDF's content can best be summarized by reference to the programme's trailer. Here we see its two east German presenters, Andrea Kiewel and Marco Schreyl, standing in front of the camera while they compete to 'out-remember' each other on their knowledge of the GDR, rapidly calling out a string of items in turn, one after the other:

AK: *Club-Cola*	MS: *Steppke-Jeans*
AK: *Dederon-Beutel*	MS: *Goldbroiler*
AK: *Trabi*	MS: *FKK*
AK: *Action-Haarspray*	MS: *Inka*

The GDR is evoked by reference to everyday life, and more specifically to its consumer and leisure culture. A similar stance is taken in the *Ultimative Ost Show*. In its first part, we are shown a range of GDR scenarios, in each of which, as with ZDF, the focus is on the role played by consumer items. We see, for example, a GDR living room, where we are introduced to furniture concepts such as the 'Mufuti', already familiar to spectators of *Sonnenallee*, as well as to a strange GDR cocktail. Or we are presented with an east German bathroom, where we are told of the dangerous lengths young people went to dye their hair, or the problems of using GDR toilet paper.

In both shows, features about cars, leisure activities and bathroom products are then interspersed with celebrity interviews. In line with Antonia Kränzlin's comments, quoted above, personalities from the east talk about their experience of life in the GDR, while west German guests parade their ignorance. The ZDF programme focuses particularly on the use of studio guests, featuring some twenty-nine in its 90-minute programme. These include actors (for example, Saskia Valencia and Udo Schenk) singers (such as Wolfgang Ziegler and Ute Freudenberg) and sports personalities (for example, Kornelia Ender and Wolfgang Behrendt). SAT 1 has fewer studio guests but makes up for this by including a number of inset montage sequences, during which high-profile *Ossis* such as the dancer Detlef 'D!' Soost, television presenter Kai Pflaume or singer Nina Hagen appear in front of original footage from the GDR as 'talking heads', in a style familiar to viewers of British nostalgia shows such as the BBC's *I love the 1970s,* or Channel 4's *Top 10 series*. These figures then reminisce, at the obvious prompting of an off-screen interviewer, on topics such ranging from their favourite GDR music, to the problem of trying to find fashionable items of clothing.

As we have already seen, the reasons given for adopting this approach to the remembrance of the GDR by the director of the ZDF show are highly reminiscent of those stated by Haußmann in defence of his film. The shows, like *Sonnenallee*, are ostensibly aimed at 'normalizing' the experience of living in the GDR, a justification which is reiterated at the beginning of the first SAT 1 show. Ulrich Meyer, one of the show's co-presenters, a journalist from the west, summarizes life in the GDR, informing the viewer that the main point to remember is that 'between all the mass meetings and waiting in queues for food' people in the GDR had a life that was not 'half as grey' as many think. Although 'some people had at lot of problems, some people were happy'. He even suggests that the experience of living in the East was ultimately 'the same as in the West', while also being 'just a little bit different'. The aim of the programme is educational. Over the next two hours, both Meyer and the viewing audience will 'learn a great deal about the GDR'. Through this educational process of normalization, he claims, the programme will play its part in helping Germany to at last find inner unity, a point made

explicit in the final sentence of his welcome statement, which is framed as a rhetorical question to his co-host Axel Schulz: 'we are one people, are we not?', the revolutionary call for unification chanted by the people of the GDR in November 1989, 'wir sind ein Volk', here re-invoked as a declaration of SAT 1's commitment to a unified German television culture.

In SAT 1's case, this commitment was also highlighted in the show's scheduling. It was broadcast on a Saturday night, the 'high altar of entertainment television', as Thomas Gottschalk, Germany's highest profile television presenter, puts it.[58] By placing the show at this time, the channel's schedulers show their commitment to bringing the GDR into the mainstream of public memory. This commitment towards presenting GDR experience as normal is, however, perhaps most clearly communicated through the format adopted by all the programme-makers. All of the programmes follow the rules of German light entertainment talk shows to the letter, providing the viewer with a mixture of musical items and celebrity interviews, in front of a live studio audience. In such programmes, the relationship between the presenter and the audience is key. The studio audience stands as a proxy for the viewers at home.[59] Generally, the studio audience is shown at regular intervals, singing and clapping along to the musical items, and laughing at the presenters' jokes. The audience's performance of obvious enjoyment provides a ready-made point of identification for the viewer, guiding him or her to accept the show's message, promulgated by the presenters, and thereby creating, as Andreas Garaventa in his study of the genre puts it, the 'illusion of a large, harmonized television family'.[60] In both these programmes, as well as in the MDR and RTL shows discussed below, the audience is used in a classic German light-entertainment manner. However, as we shall see with regard to ZDF's offering, this at times also becomes somewhat problematic, and indeed one of its key flaws.

In both the ZDF and SAT 1 shows, we seem to see what Fiske and Hartley term the 'claw back' function of television. Mainstream television, they argue, tries to occupy the central ground of a society. In order to achieve this, it constantly 'strives to claw back into a central focus the subject of its messages'. Anything that might be seen as an aberrant, or eccentric cultural position, once it has been adopted by entertainment television, is turned into something that society's mainstream can understand and with which it can identify.[61] On the face of it, this is precisely what both the ZDF and SAT 1 shows are intent upon, in turn marking an important sea change in mainstream attitudes, away from the perceived exclusion of east German experience we find bemoaned in earlier chapters in this book, as well as in television in the 1990s.

While these programmes ostensibly try to include in the mainstream and thus normalize the experience living in GDR, it soon becomes apparent that their real focus is to normalize the experience of GDR citizens as *consumers*, and by extension to embed their position within the consumer culture of present-day German society. The whole of the GDR is viewed through this optic. Whatever the shows discuss, be it going on holiday or the role of political institutions, the t-shirt to be bought or the CD to be plugged is never far away. Consequently, rather than giving a more differentiated picture of life in the GDR than the one afforded by the totalitarian 'Stasi state' model, the GDR is once again constructed as 'other' to the Federal Republic, but this time as a world full of humorous or bizarre consumer products. The shows' guests then look back upon this world with nostalgic condescension, able to indulge their consumer cravings, while distancing themselves from it and in turn further legitimizing the present German state. This is shown most obviously by the fact that many of the items the shows foregrounded are already completely mundane and therefore would hardly appear to need 'clawing back' into the centre of culture. By clawing back the already mundane and mainstream, in a similar fashion to the marketing of *Ostalgie* in the tourist industry, the programme-makers fetishize certain GDR objects, pushing them, instead, back to the fringes from which they ostensibly have just been rescued.

One of the many examples of this in the SAT 1 programme is the presenters' examination of bathroom items. Schulz brings out his old wash-bag from the GDR and the east German guests revel in its contents, including a stick of deodorant, and apparently most curious of all, a bar of soap in a plastic holder. But, there is very little that is strange about such items. The soap holder appears perfectly normal, only made worthy of examination by the 'oohs' and 'aahs' of the studio guests who laugh at this apparently strange artifact. As Christoph Schutheis puts it in his review of the ZDF show, 'Who says that a chocolate bar called "Schlagersüßtafel" is funnier than one called "Ritter Sport"'.[62] Thus, while the rational for these show is to normalize the GDR past, the underlying reason would seem to run in the opposite direction, namely to endow this past with an exotic chic.

In both shows we find the commodification of GDR culture, a culture that is paradoxically being both brought into the mainstream while also being confined to the margins in order to maintain its exotic appeal. As such, one finds a reconfiguration of the orientalist attitudes one sees in discussion of the GDR in the early 1990s. Although not stated explicitly, this resurgence of orientalism is hinted at by a small number of commentators in the media debate the shows sparked, particularly by those on the left from the former GDR. Peter Hoff, for example, writing in *Neues*

Deutschland, claims the the very idea that SAT 1 has produced an 'Ost Show' is misplaced. For him, it would better described as 'a west-Show about the exotic east'.[63] A similar point was made by Loskar Bisky, the leader of the PDS, on a discussion programme about the *Ostalgie* craze, where he suggests that far from being about a nostalgia for the GDR, the television programmes are in fact '*Westalgie* in the colours of the east'.[64] As we have seen in previous chapters, in other cultural discourses there is a tendency amongst some west Germans to use the GDR as a space through which they can critically engage with developments in present-day German society. In many such *Westalgie* texts, we see artists attempting to recuperate a critical left-liberal agenda, which they feel is now being lost. For Bisky, however, the problem is that these programmes are not attempting to use nostalgia to engage critically with either the past or the present. Instead, they simply reinforce a social order in which western consumer culture is constructed as central and east German experience peripheral.

Evidence for this tendency is indeed readily available, particularly in the SAT 1 show. The programme's stated aim is to teach viewers about the GDR. From the language used it is clear that the viewers in question are primarily those from the west. Representing this group is the show's west German presenter, Meyer, who rejects any notion of western dominance before it is uttered. He insists that the show is wholly about the GDR and its people. 'We' will learn, he tells the viewers, about 'their [the easterners'] home', 'their stories'. The programme's co-host, Schulz, is to be the east German representative, the voice from the GDR who will ensure that authenticity is maintained. In terms of the show's implied learning process, then, Schulz is to be the teacher, Meyer the pupil.

Yet, everything about the actual roles these presenters play in the show points to the inverse of this relationship. If we return, for example, to the opening sequence of the first show, it is Meyer, dressed smartly in a suit and tie, who outlines the rationale of the programme to the audience, even explaining what life was like in the east. Meanwhile Schulz ignores Meyer's introduction, wandering around behind him, dressed more casually in an opened-necked shirt and baseball cap, kissing members of the show's chorus line, whose dance routine has just announced the entrance of the two men. He makes just two brief contributions to this opening welcome sequence. First, he interrupts Meyer's speech in order to tell a joke, only to be gently asked to be quiet while Meyer finishes talking. Then, at the end of the sequence he responds with a confused 'yes', to Meyer's rhetorical question about whether all Germans are 'one people'.

Meyer and Schulz adopt classic comedy double act roles, with the former playing the straight man to the latter. Consequently, the show

turns the logical teaching relationship on its head, if we are to believe Meyer's aim of wishing to learn about the GDR. From their demeanour, the figure of authority and knowledge is clearly Meyer, a position reinforced by the fact that Schulz consistently addresses him as 'Herr Meyer', while Meyer addresses the east German by his first name, 'Axel'. Curiously, much of the information we learn about the GDR comes from Meyer. It is Schulz's role to tell funny anecdotes about his life in the GDR, while relating, through the medium of humour, to the other east German guests. When it comes to imparting more general judgements about the GDR such as we see in the opening welcome sequence, or when more detailed, technical information about GDR products is required, this is left largely to Meyer. It is he, for example, who explains to the viewer the consistency of the fabric in the *Präsent 20* suits the presenters wear, or the engine capacity of the GDR sports car they feature. Thus, the notion that the show might be concerned with realigning the place of eastern experience within mainstream society is undermined through the construction of a power dynamic in which the westerner, Meyer, is the holder of authority and of factual knowledge about the GDR. The easterner, Schulz, is then confined to the role of the comic buffoon, suggesting the humorous, primitive nature of life in the east.

In the ZDF show, a potentially patronizing relationship between the east and west is avoided by having two eastern presenters. However, here too the marginality of eastern experience is finally writ large, this time through the programme's obvious failure to communicate with its studio audience. As Kränzlin notes, the programme was filmed in Mainz in front of an audience with very little experience of the GDR, a fact that is revealed in its obvious 'stiffness'.[65] Such stiffness breaks the German light-entertainment programme's pact, as outlined by Garaventa above. As a result, the audience highlights not the normality of the material to which it exposed, but rather its confusion by it. Without a *Wessi* presenter to *translate* eastern experience for it, as Meyer does for SAT 1, this west German audience cannot understand it. Consequently, the programme finally casts into doubt the mainstream status of the topic it discusses.

MDR's *Ein Kessel DDR*, like the ZDF *Ostalgie Show*, was presented by two east Germans. However, in this case the use of solely eastern presenters is constructed as one of the show's main strengths. All the editions were filmed in Leipzig, transmitted terrestrially only within the eastern regions, and thus could avoid any didactic need vis-à-vis a western audience. MDR, as an overtly eastern channel seems to buck the trend of national television in its prioritization of eastern issues. And as one might expect, the channel saw itself as perfectly placed to produce this genre of show. Unlike the others, this was to be a programme for east

Germans by east Germans (although, as already mentioned, its producer was in fact a high-profile west German). The show's stated aim remained educational. Nevertheless, this was not going to be the type of *ostalgic* 'education' we saw on ZDF and SAT 1. In its first opening sequence Franziska Schenk, who like Witt is a former GDR Olympic ice-skater, asks what was by now becoming the usual opening question for these programmes: 'naturally we asked ourselves if we ought to be allowed to make a funny programme about the GDR', to which her co-presenter Gunther Emmerlich, a television personality from GDR days, responds in the affirmative, quoting some key figures from the state's socialist tradition: 'During GDR times we laughed, and now we can laugh more freely. Karl Marx even said, it is through laughter that people can say farewell to their past. I'm often asked "what remains"? Memories will remain.' Here Emmerlich cites Karl Marx, with perhaps a sideways glance at Christa Wolf in his invocation of the *Was bleibt* debate, figures who would be very familiar to an audience socialized in the GDR. Unlike other GDR shows, MDR will examine the GDR past on its own terms. This is in fact suggested in the very title of the programme. *Ein Kessel DDR* draws deliberately on the title of *Ein Kessel Buntes* (*A Pot of Colour*), the most popular light-entertainment programme on GDR television, which ran from the early 1970s until 1992, being taken over briefly after the state's collapse by ARD.[66] Indeed, *Ein Kessel Buntes* is remembered in a variety of ways in *Ein Kessel DDR*. The opening credit sequence, for instance, includes a number of clips from this older programme, and Emmerlich himself was a regular guest on the show during the GDR period.

Unlike the repeated use of the 'their' pronoun we find in the SAT 1 show, here we find the constant use of 'we' and 'our'. MDR will present 'our stories', 'our history'. There is no amusing examination of the *Trabi*. Instead, in the first instalment we are given a detailed presentation of the life of Eva Maria Hagen, a film star in the GDR in the 1950s and the mother of the singer Nina Hagen. In an inset film we hear from her former partner, Wolf Biermann. We learn how the whole of society viewed her as a sex symbol in the 1950s, no different from Marilyn Monroe or Brigitte Bardot in the Western world. The 'normality' of her position within Eastern popular culture is, however, balanced by a discussion of how her status was manipulated by the government. We are told, for example, that she was used for propaganda purposes by the SED, who sent her to the newly built Berlin Wall in August 1961 in order to show GDR's stars supporting the state's policy to close the border. Finally, we hear of the difficulties she faced through her connection to Biermann in the wake of his expulsion in 1976. Thus, we are given a far more complicated image of life than that presented in the other shows discussed so far.

The 'normality' of Hagen's position as a teen idol in the GDR is carefully contrasted with the problems she faced negotiating the SED's policies.

To a degree, the MDR show would seem to fulfil its educational remit. It does indeed appear to be concerned to give as honest an appraisal as possible of the GDR period, normalizing the experience of east Germans, while also avoiding a rose-tinted view of life. Yet, although the show does not focus solely on consumer items to the extent others do, one of the main methods used to achieve this balance is still to filter the past through the prism of present-day consumer values. One of the regular ways the show undermines a revisionist image of history is in its comic 'hidden camera' feature. In this item, contemporary members of society are faced with situations that would have been normal to easterners during the GDR period, but that are now completely alien, due primarily to changes in German service and consumer culture. Remaining for the moment with the first show, we watch the reaction of customers wishing to eat at the restaurant in the Leipzig Town Hall when they are faced with the kind of rude waiter who was commonplace during the GDR period. We see the man casually leave customers waiting for long periods of time while he reads his newspaper. Even when he does decide to take his customers' orders, more often than not he tells them that the dish they have selected is not available. As a number of the guests mention in the film, this is the sort of treatment they hoped had disappeared with the end of the GDR, highlighting the fact that, with regard to their status as consumers, a core value of the new society, the situation is vastly better than it was before the *Wende*.

Although the programme suggests that, unlike the other *Ostalgie* shows, it will present an image of the GDR on its own terms (whatever these terms might be), nonetheless, at times it too tends towards exoticization. The educational aim of the programme is regularly undermined by an overwhelming need to provide populist entertainment. This tendency leads to much of the material covered being sensationalized, a tendency that at times jars with the programme's apparently loftier aims. Such jarring is particularly apparent in some of the show's studio interviews, during which the presenters often put the guests into confusing positions, where they find it difficult to conform to the presenters' obvious wishes, in turn undermining the smooth linking of items.

If we return to the interview with Hagen, at the end of this segment the former sex symbol is asked by the presenters if she ever enjoyed FKK, or naturism, which, as already mentioned, is a staple of these programmes generally, and the next item to be discussed. To their surprise, Hagen responds with 'no, FKK wasn't really my thing', clearly unhappy about being associated with this phenomenon. As a result, she disturbs the tran-

sition to the next feature. Nevertheless, Emmerlich and Schenk carry on regardless, introducing a short film of original GDR footage and interviews with celebrity 'talking heads' who recount their experiences. We see, for example, the singer Gerhard Schöne make the case for FKK as an expression of the natural beauty of the human body. He claims that it is a liberating experience and rejects any notion that it was sleazy or voyeuristic. FKK within the GDR context, it is suggested, was as a moment of liberalism that escaped erotic connotations, once again highlighting the show's aim of normalizing apparently exotic GDR experiences. The non-voyeuristic aspect of FKK is then further emphasized by an interview with the photographer Günther Rössler who took 'art-house' pictures of nudes in the GDR, and who maintains the emphasis on the natural beauty of the human form.

However, this reading of FKK is simultaneously undermined throughout the item. First, from Hagen's disparaging response during its introduction, it is clear that she does not think that it was devoid of voyeuristic sleaze. Yet far more curiously, the entire feature is punctuated by shots of a topless model, who sits at the side of the stage in a deckchair sipping a cocktail. Eventually, we are told that the woman's name is Nicky, a favorite to win Germany's 'Most Beautiful Summer Girl' contest. The presentation of Nicky is completely out of step with the item's overt message. She herself could have very little memory of FKK in the GDR, being obviously in her early twenties. Her presence, therefore, can have nothing to do with the programme's avowed aim of remembering 'our' past honestly. Furthermore, when Rössler is asked to comment as a photographer on Nicky's picture in one of the tabloids, he completely distances himself from it, explaining that he has no interest at all in such photography, offering to give the presenters an explanation as to why, but warning them that this would take some time, to which Emmerlich responds by suggesting he had better not. The guests fail to stick to the script that would endow the show's presentation of FKK as a moment of titillating exoticism with a veneer of respectability, thereby revealing the show's non-educational agenda. Indeed, it is not only the guests who are confused by this item. The bizarre nature of Nicky's appearance also dumbfounds the studio audience, which has no idea how to respond to the woman, forcing Emmerlich, with a degree of embarrassment, to ask for applause after he has made his introduction. As with the ZDF programme, at times throughout the show the pact of compliance between the studio audience and the presenters is stretched to breaking point, undermining the mainstream 'centrality', in Fiske and Hartley's terms, of the show's message.

In all the episodes of *Ein Kessel DDR*, the MDR presenters attempt to hightlight the authenticity of their offering, in the face of what they

present as other, inauthentic western-dominated GDR shows. The need to show that this is not just another GDR show reaches its zenith in the fourth instalment, which is dedicated largely to the discussion of state oppression, and in particular the role of the Stasi. This is an issue that is almost completely ignored on the other channels. As usual, in the show's opening the presenters try to maintain a balance between addressing the oppressive nature of life in the East, and avoiding reductive readings of the past which focus wholly on this area. We hear of the massive size of the organization, of the 6 million files it produced and of the fact that it had influence in every corner of society. However, Emmerlich also makes the point that if the MfS had up to 150,000 employees at the end of the GDR, and if the population of the state was roughly 16 million, this still means that well over 15 million members of society were not members. Thus, Emmerlich attempts to recuperate the biographies of a population often seen in mainstream discourse as having been tainted on mass by the influence of this organization.

Yet, as with the FKK item, the show's examination of this aspect of history is undermined by its entertainment imperative. The presenters seem at times to wallow overindulgently in some of the organization's more salacious activities. The first item of this edition focuses, for example, on the Stasi's use of prostitutes to blackmail foreign visitors. This is introduced by the sort of film montage to which we have by now become accustomed, much of the footage being taken from a Stasi training film. The original material is inter-cut with a high-contrast black-and-white image of a woman wearing only stockings and dancing erotically in slow motion with her back to the camera. The impact of this overtly voyeuristic image is reinforced by a deep male voice-over commentary, which tells us that such women were both 'sex objects and objects of state desire'. The film is followed by an interview with a 'Martina X', a former Stasi prostitute whose name and voice have been changed to protect her present identity. The woman clearly finds it difficult to talk about her experiences. Nevertheless, she is gently pressed into giving evermore explicit details about her activities. After first describing how she would be taken to conferences in Leipzig, she breaks off. With further prompting she is then coaxed into explaining that she would be introduced to men and go up to their rooms. Again she stops. Finally she is asked by Schenk, 'And what happened then?', to which the woman responds with the rather obvious answer 'I had to get undressed and fulfil [the man's] sexual desires'. While prostitution in the GDR is obviously a topic worthy of investigation, in the MDR show what is framed as an honest engagement with the past here comes dangerously close to salacious exploitation. The interviewers voyeuristically focus on the act of illicit sex rather