



PROJECT MUSE®

---

Alternate Endings: The Cold War Meets Neoliberal Television  
in *Counterpart*

Heather Gumbert

Seminar: A Journal of Germanic Studies, Volume 61, Number 4,  
November 2025, pp. 341-363 (Article)

Published by University of Toronto Press



➔ For additional information about this article

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/984480>

# Alternate Endings: The Cold War Meets Neoliberal Television in *Counterpart*

---

Heather Gumbert, *Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University Blacksburg, Virginia, United States*

This article uses the example of the Starz television series *Counterpart* to suggest some preliminary hypotheses about the enduring appeal and important implications of telling “Cold War” stories through contemporary television. It draws on and contributes to historiographies of the postwar world, Cold War Germany, media history, historical memory, and recent work in critical media industries studies to explore a number of interrelated questions about the history, legacy, and representation of the Cold War, as well as the industrial conditions of contemporary television production and distribution. *Counterpart*, as I show, is a particularly keen example of television as both product and servant of neoliberal ideas, naturalizing the principles and also practices of neoliberalism for a transnational audience. It also exemplifies a new generation of television spy thrillers that is reimagining Cold War conflict and projecting a post-triumphalist version of the Cold War onto the problems of the post-9/11 world.

**Keywords:** neoliberalism, socialism, television, Berlin, historical memory, Cold War, media industries studies

In 2018, a secretive UN agency fought to contain a criminal conspiracy to release a devastating, pandemic-causing virus in Berlin. Such is the story of *Counterpart*, a twenty-first-century television spy thriller created by thirty-something screenwriter Justin Marks, financed and co-produced by Media Rights Capital and Studio Babelsberg (Berlin), and broadcast on premium cable by Starz and digitally via Amazon Prime (Marks). *Counterpart* finished its two-season run late that year, and Starz declined to pick it up for further seasons. Still, diehard fans of the show could take heart that even in cancellation they could find closure: in the second-season finale in late 2019, the conspirators manage to outwit clandestine operatives on both sides to smuggle the virus across the border. In an exceptional case of life imitating art, the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic ensued, not emanating from Berlin to be sure but spreading through the viewers’ own world and offering an unanticipated metatextual conclusion to the conspiracy of the series.

Late Cold War Berlin was the allegorical inspiration for *Counterpart*, in which the—or rather *a* cold war—is the organizing principle of the series. The creator of the series, screenwriter and showrunner Justin Marks, described it as a “Cold War story where the Berlin Wall [is] more of a metaphysical construct, a divide between two worlds that were once identical and have grown apart and grown into a competition.” The premise of the series hangs on the question, “[I]f you could create two equal worlds and then decide on an arbitrary division between them, what kind of drama would come out of that?” (Ford). Inspired by the German-German divide that grew in Central Europe for more than forty years, what sets Marks’s Cold War story apart is that the divide that underpins his series is not geopolitical but inter-dimensional. Scientists inadvertently open a rift in subterranean Berlin, a gateway between two identical worlds, Alpha Berlin and Prime Berlin. Decades later (2018), Prime Berlin is engaged in a shadowy conspiracy to unleash a bioweapon intended to exterminate the more open, liberal, and free world of the Alpha dimension.

This article uses the example of *Counterpart* to explore how twenty-first-century television operates as both a product of and a servant to neoliberal ideas, naturalizing the principles and also practices of neoliberalism for a transnational audience. The show exemplifies a new generation of television spy thrillers that is reimagining Cold War conflict and projecting a post-triumphalist version of the Cold War onto the problems of the post-9/11 world. I do not argue that this is an intentional project on the part of the creators of *Counterpart*; in fact, this series—from a first-time television writer and producer and the “disruptive” media content company Media Rights Capital (MRC)—should instead be understood as just one example of the implications (and enduring appeal) of telling “Cold War” stories on contemporary television, alongside series such as *Man in the High Castle* (2015–19, Amazon), the *Deutschland* series (2015, 2018, 2020, RTL), and *For All Mankind* (2019–, Apple TV). As the events of the Cold War become temporally further removed from our own time, its topographies, stories, and social world become increasingly abstracted cultural touchstones. Indeed, as the tangible, even sensory, differences between East and West are displaced by post-Cold War redevelopment, for example, what we are left with are the mental structures of the Cold War famously described by German novelist Peter Schneider as the “wall in the head.” Schneider was speaking directly to the lived experiences of Germans at home on either side of the Berlin Wall. But as we will see later in this article, the structures of feeling that organized belonging and difference in the Cold War persist even among those who lived elsewhere or were too young to live through it. The stories told during the Cold War continue to frame how we construct stories of conflict and difference in the twenty-first century. While narrative media have always been in conversation with each other—relying on established tropes and conventions as much as (or more than) they attempt to build on them—the underlying logics of those narratives have been decontextualized, set loose from the concerns and conceits of conventional broadcasters.

Twentieth-century broadcasters, often understood as “national” and as bearing some responsibility for serving the public interest, have been superseded by vertically integrated transnational media companies serving the interests of private capital (Gumbert, “Constructing”). Put plainly, operating within the political economy of neoliberalism, profit-seeking media companies are repurposing the template of Cold War storytelling in espionage stories such as *Counterpart* that reframe contemporary conflict and rationalize authoritarian responses to what neoliberals conceive as the major problem of the contemporary world: security. Contemporary Cold War narratives rationalize the tremendous expansion of state power (exemplified by policing, surveillance, and incarceration) since 1989, in service not to citizens but to capital.

This work draws on and contributes to historiographies of the postwar world, Cold War Germany, media history, and recent work in critical media industries studies to explore several interrelated questions about the shape of historical memory in the age of neoliberal television production and distribution. In what follows, I discuss the implications of the concentration and financialization of media industries, and themes in the discursive Cold War as expressed in recent historiography and American policymaking that underpin a particular set of tropes of Cold War storytelling and have helped shape popular understanding of the historical conflict. Chief among them is the reinvigoration of a trope that pathologizes the enemy. Then I discuss the storyworld of *Counterpart*, a series that uses the *Doppelgänger* device to explore two “alternate endings” of the Cold War. The story is located in the former East Germany, yet the series effaces the social and economic struggles of postsocialism. Socialism is relegated to the depiction of the past (the storyworld of 1987); Alpha Berlin, which experienced the fall of state socialism and subsequent liberalization as viewers might remember it, is naturalized as the model of successful postsocialism, while Prime Berlin, insufficiently liberalized, is home to the villains of the series. *Counterpart* looks away from the historically specific contexts of socialism and its collapse, as well as any potential successful postsocialist futures beyond neoliberalism. Instead, it privileges triumphalist interpretations of the end of the Cold War, naturalizing the neoliberal regime that replaced the German Democratic Republic (GDR). Similarly, it deflects systemic questions to refocus our attention on questions of individual success or failure—posing the question of how two genetically identical communities can be “so different”—in service of reaffirming the principles of liberal individualism.

In this way, the show also inadvertently reflects struggles over the post-Cold War identity of Berlin. The show uses an “authentic” location that legitimates for its audience the historical associations made by the series. But those historical associations are empty of any real context, consisting entirely of well-worn tropes that reduce socialism to the machinations of an authoritarian state. This is reinforced in the production design and particularly the decision to represent (former) East Germany in the locations and architectural vernacular of Nazism. Finally, I situate the series in its production context to suggest ways in which

contemporary television is adapting to and projecting the interests of global capital in the guise of historically compelling storytelling.

Representation matters because it frames and organizes how audiences think about the past and present, but media products are produced within an industrial ecosystem that also plays a profound role in shaping the production, distribution, and reception of television narratives (see, for example, Lotz). The industrial ecosystem of the twenty-first-century media has been profoundly reshaped by neoliberal principles and practices that propagated in the “spaces created by the Cold War divide” and spread unchallenged in the triumphalist moment of the 1990s (Mudge). Key features of the neoliberal era include the “elevation of the market over all other forms of organization” and the pursuit of a political project that seeks to abolish all limits on the free flow of capital, including situating economic decision-making beyond the reach of citizens and states, while also operating within political structures to define problems and their solutions in ways conducive to the interests of international capital (Mudge). Vertical integration and concentration in the media industries since the late 1990s, as well as the rising role of private equity in the 2010s, have restructured the media market, in which the cultural significance of (national) broadcasters has been eclipsed by privately owned content monopolies (Waard, “Wall Street’s Content Wars”).

*Counterpart* crafts a geography of freedom and authoritarianism that both is situated in and simultaneously elides the history of Berlin (and Germany), and it does so by capitalizing on a city and a production context that themselves were remade by struggles over the political economy of post-Cold War Germany. At the end of the Cold War—during which the city had been highly subsidized by German governments on both sides of the border—the city faced financial collapse. Rebranding the city as a creative centre—especially of media production—was a key strategy to revive the economy and drew on existing strengths in the city. Early twentieth-century German film production had been centred at the UFA film studios, and Cold War Berlin had been home to multiple production economies, so a body of skilled workers, a framework for media financing, and a culture of celebrating the media, exemplified by the Berlin Film Festival, already existed (Mikos). By 2016, the city had attracted numerous highly successful domestic and international productions—including the so-called *Ostalgie* films, such as *Sonnenallee* and *Good Bye Lenin!*; big-screen blockbusters, such as the *Bourne* series, *Inglourious Basterds*, *Hunger Games: Mockingjay*, and Steven Spielberg’s *Bridge of Spies*; and television series, such as *Homeland*. In 2016, 42 per cent of German films were produced in Berlin (Mikos 380). On the strength of the city’s experience with *Homeland*, filmed in Berlin in 2015, the regional film-financing board expanded its funding to include television drama, contributing a half million Euros in production credits to *Counterpart*, for example (Mikos 382).

Berlin officials have found film and television production attractive due to the perceived multiplier effect on the regional economy. Productions have received funding from both national and regional institutions, with conditions

that the money be spent accordingly—in Germany or the region from which the funds originate. Since 2016, the national German film-financing board has supported film productions in the amount of 2.5 million euros each and television dramas at the rate of 1.2 million euros an episode. The Berlin-Brandenburg media financing board oversees an annual budget of almost 40 million euros. Production credits pay for below-the-line talent, production and postproduction, technical equipment, training, conferences, festivals, hotels, and catering, for example (Mikos 381–82). In 2020, local officials reported the multiplier effect for the region to be as much as 544 per cent for film productions and 778 per cent for high-end drama (Mikos 380). In 2017, the Berlin-Brandenburg film and television industry employed 70,000 workers and earned 7.5 billion euros. As media scholar Lothar Mikos notes, “high-end drama productions have become increasingly important for regional and national funding schemes” (380).

The narrative of regional economic success elides other, perhaps less desirable, consequences for regional media production and content diversity in the transnational market, not to mention the social health of local communities. For one, bringing in international productions undermines local creative vision and control. Indeed, working on transnational productions is perceived to professionalize German media workers. But in this case, professionalization means requiring German film and television professionals to adhere to practices and standards associated with “American-style” television production, shifting creative responsibility and control from the director to a showrunner, for example, or requiring “tight time frames for shooting and picture lock” (Mikos 384; Shimpach). Second, content decisions are increasingly concentrated outside of the regional or national context. Despite contemporary rhetoric about the power of big data to help media platforms understand audiences and taste, they are instead using the data they collect to produce particular kinds of knowledge to “try and gain acquiescence and advantage over other players” (Havens 6, 8). Finally, the German funding model has created a situation that privileges short-term profits over long-term economic health. Production credits privatize the public good, using public monies to pay for upfront costs, while global media companies monopolize profits. International productions are also fickle; *Counterpart* no longer shoots in Berlin, due to cancellation, while the contemporaneous series *Berlin Station*—despite the lure of the Berlin location that is so central to its plot—has “run away” to Budapest, Hungary (Mikos 387; Slobodian and Sterling).

Berlin’s emergence as a centre of film and television production was built on local conditions but also on the wider context of the shifting conditions of the globalized media economy of the twenty-first century. Industrial and financial shifts in the 1990s transformed legacy American media companies into international conglomerates. Vertical integration in the American media market—the heavyweight in the international media market at the time—opened new avenues for profit. Media companies that were now invested in distribution *and* production not only sold audiences to advertisers but could profit from licence

fees levied on commonly owned production companies, as well as from the secondary market selling series in syndication (Lotz 928; Calabrese 6–7). In the twenty-first century, even that level of media concentration has been eclipsed. The rise of multiplatform and transnational distribution has upended the profit model based on advertising, viewer subscriptions, and licence fees. Viewers and advertising dollars no longer drive profits; instead, global media conglomerates seek to monopolize and monetize extensive content catalogues that attract subscribers to premium platforms (Waard, *Derivative Media*). Moreover, in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis and vanishing opportunities for investment returns, investors increasingly perceived media companies to be ripe for speculation, turning the media business “into a cultural hedge fund” (Waard, “Wall Street’s Content Wars” 19). Investors have bought up “distressed” cultural assets, hollowing them in the name of greater efficiency through labour reduction, flouting conflict-of-interest rules that are long-standing industrial conventions, and accumulating legacy content catalogues.

Starz cancelled *Counterpart* after its two-season run, leading to a minor online uproar. The premium network—at the time best known for the British series *Outlander*—had recently embarked on a rebranding campaign to boost its market share against competitors HBO and Showtime. This campaign framed the network as a destination for the “Premium Female” audience and for content created by and for women and under-represented minorities (Goldberg, “Starz Chief”). The public-facing explanation for *Counterpart*’s cancellation was that its audience was “too male” and the story too complicated for a company (Starz) that had rebranded itself as an outlet for women audiences and under-represented creators (White). Multiple media stories reported that *Counterpart*, which drew small audiences of 500,000 (over a three-day delayed reception metric), did not appeal to women. Online fans were incensed, especially women who claimed that they, and not necessarily their (male) friends and partners, had been devoted to the show (White).

This identity narrative, crafted in the context of American racial politics after a spate of police killings of numerous African Americans and a rally of white supremacists in 2017 in Charlottesville, Virginia, was timely and appealing, and it drew attention away from the larger issue at play, which was competitive concentration of the media industries (again, reframing systemic economic crisis as political). In 2015, two companies—Liberty Global (an “internationally focused” media and communications company that operated numerous cable providers in Europe) and Discovery Communications—had bought into Lionsgate Entertainment (“Liberty Global”). The following year, Lionsgate acquired Liberty Global’s Starz Networks, a media property that consisted of seventeen channels in the American cable market (Johnson, “Liberty Global”; Clarke). By 2018, Lionsgate, a direct competitor of *Counterpart*’s production and financing company Media Rights Capital (MRC), had begun shedding shows from independent production companies, privileging those they produced in-house (Goldberg, “Counterpart”; Goldberg, “Starz Chief”; O’Connell). In other words,

*Counterpart* had become too expensive in a market in which its competitor (Lionsgate) could capitalize on the efficiencies of vertical integration within its own corporate family. The show had served its purpose, contributing two seasons of transnationally accessible content to Lionsgate's expanding catalogue.

It is impossible to view MRC as the underdog in this saga, which demonstrates instead the much greater risks to creators, especially the below-the-line workers in the United States and abroad, and audiences. Despite its reputation as an independent studio, MRC is a twenty-first-century media behemoth. Founding executives Asif Saatchu and Mordecai Wiczyk brought experience with internet fulfillment (in building supplies), foreign media sales (Summit Entertainment), and talent management together with a vision for disrupting the media sector. MRC sought to profit from skirting conflict-of-interest rules banning talent agencies from engaging in content production (Faughnder). MRC's bid to integrate talent and production agencies was purported to give "filmmakers and stars more earning power and ownership of their projects"; yet clear conflicts of interest led the Writers Guild of America in 2019 to "instruct their writers to fire their [among others, MRC] agents," replacing them with agents who had signed on to a Code of Conduct aligned against such integration (Cieply; Waard, "Wall Street's Content Wars" 15). Moreover, like Lionsgate, MRC can rely on favourable terms across the supply chain, due to the synergies of its corporate family. Its corporate parent, Silver Lake Partners, operates in talent, production, financing, fandom, and journalism sectors of the media industries (Waard, "Wall Street's Content Wars" 14, Ellefson). And in April 2021, MRC's owner, Endeavor Group, went public, raising half a billion dollars in capital after slashing jobs, putting 20 per cent of its employees out of work (Johnson, "LA500").

The neoliberal project rests not only on the creation of favourable economic conditions unconstrained by political regimes but also on cultural projections of crisis and resolution. Structural economic crises endemic to neoliberalism are reframed as political problems (reframing the systemic inequality of capitalism as the unwillingness of people to work, or the consequences of media concentration as the problem of reaching the right audience, for example). Proposed solutions mobilize a triumphalist reinterpretation of the past, domesticating and even eliding the experiences and histories of postwar Europe—liberal *and* socialist—in support of neoliberal versions of freedom, democracy, security, and prosperity.

## Cold War Tropes

In the immediate post-1989 triumphalist moment, liberal thinking consigned European socialism to the metaphorical trash heap of history. American policymakers, supported by impulsive scholarship such as Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992), saw in socialism's collapse the vindication of a grand narrative of progress and the ultimate triumph of liberal capitalism. Socialist perspectives and experiences were excised from the longer

history of Europe and modernity, except where they sustained efforts to erect a cordon sanitaire between liberal democracy and socialist authoritarianism, as was the case in Germany, where the study of the socialist past initially served to mete out “justice” and bolster the “constitutional state” (Gauck; Markovits). In the 1990s and into the twenty-first century, historiography and, more widely, political rhetoric characterized the GDR as the “second German dictatorship,” which was intended to compare (and contrast) German authoritarianisms but which, in less nuanced explanations, tended to equate the GDR with the Nazi dictatorship. Nazism, according to a once-influential interpretation, resulted from the inability of the late nineteenth-century German state to appropriately modernize, resulting in the persistence of older, even feudal norms and relationships and allowing, in turn, the rise of a charismatic demagogue. Nazism, in this interpretation, was an aberrant response to modernity. By implication, the “second German dictatorship”—the GDR—was as well.

More recent work on Nazism has turned this interpretation on its head, arguing instead that Nazism was “an exaggerated development of modernity’s dark side” that challenged the “Enlightenment[’s] master narrative of progress” (Crew 320). German historian Detlev Peukert identified the “‘scientization’ of the social, and the ‘medicalization’ of social problems” as the root of a “new and distinctly modern pathology” of social racism. Significantly, this was not “uniquely Nazi” but rather endemic to modern industrial society. Peukert’s interpretation asks us to consider the ways in which the problems and solutions of the contemporary world are not specifically Nazi, socialist, or liberal but fit into the longer history of modernity. Issues such as the police state loom large in the literature on the “second German dictatorship”; by contrast, Peukert asks us to consider not just the specificities of particular regimes but the ways in which policing, surveillance, and security fit into the larger expansion of state power—across the West—in the modern period.

I introduce this brief synopsis of scholarship because these ideas have their counterparts in the narratives and tropes of popular culture and shape the ways that media makers and audiences think about the present and the past. For example, popular culture has reflexively pathologized socialism—excised from its analytical context—using the metaphor of terminal illness and death to describe the fall of state socialism in Germany in 1989. Perhaps the most well-known example of this is Wolfgang Becker’s 2003 film *Good Bye, Lenin!*, which became justifiably central to cultural theorists’ analyses of contemporary (German) efforts to come to terms with the German socialist past. That film explores a young man’s journey to grapple with the turbulent disintegration of his country in 1989 and 1990. The major plot device of the film is the illness and ultimate demise of his mother. He confronts her illness by recreating the disappearing everyday life of East Germany. More recently, the *Deutschland* television series (2015–20) mobilized the trope of maternal illness as the device that compels a young East German soldier to pose as a West German, siphoning information to GDR intelligence. In “The *Deutschland* Series,” I explored how the series

depicts the GDR's decline and fall as inevitable, naturalizing the emergence of the Berlin Republic.

*Counterpart*, though co-produced with Studio Babelsberg Berlin, is a resolutely American series that draws on the American cultural imaginary of the Cold War, which imagined the United States as the embodiment and defender of Enlightenment values in a bipolar conflict with a monolithic, devious, and aggressive enemy. This conflict was ideological and territorial and demanded containment of domestic dissenters and enemy nations alike. Writing in 1990, diplomatic historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr. identified several "lessons" to be learned about the American policy community from the East-West Cold War: it tended to view the enemy as stronger, more devious, and more capable than they were; to engage in "arrogant prediction" (insistent on analytical certainties); to adhere to a fallacy of national self-righteousness (believing "the American side was so manifestly right that self-examination was unnecessary" (Schlesinger 51); and to view Cold War conflict as a zero-sum game. Similarly, in a study of the rhetorical Cold War—the Cold War as interpreted through presidential speeches—communication scholar Robert Ivie has argued that the imagery of geopolitical conflict and the enemy that emerged in the context of Cold War conflict remained stable over more than four decades and persisted even after the fall of communism. Per Ivie, the primary goal was national security, and the primary motif was a "democratic peace," to be achieved by spreading democracy abroad. Democracy is a contested concept, but in contemporary American rhetoric and foreign policy, it meant a specific form of limited liberal representative democracy that became increasingly synonymous with capitalism. Unfettered direct democracy, by contrast, was characterized as a political sickness, a "dangerous disease of illiberal rule" (Ivie 260). Perhaps paradoxically, this vision was built on a narrative of perpetual insecurity that would need to be met by pre-emptive opposition and even open conflict. Such elements of Cold War discourse persisted after the Cold War, and Ivie argued that "the unfortunate legacy of Cold War discourse is a republic of fear holding fast to a vision of the new world order that is more democratic in name than practice" (262). These fallacies have been baked into fictional Cold War narratives for decades, allowing Americans to cast their enemies as villains and themselves as heroes.

The US policy community's cultural imaginary of the Cold War informs popular cultural representations of the Cold War, geopolitical conflict, and the legitimacy of the liberal-democratic system, narrowly defined. For Western policymakers, the identity of the enemy remained stable over the course of the postwar period. But spy fictions expanded on the Cold War frame, dwelling not on conflict with a specific cultural enemy but rather on "foreign" interventions that undermine the legitimate liberal-democratic system—replacing the Soviet enemy with international criminal conspiracies, for example (Price 32). The projection of an ideal, politically correct, individualistic subject shifted also. In his study of espionage series on American television, television studies scholar Michael Kackman argued that in the 1950s, American television spy

stories centred on heroic protagonists, representing a “vulgar nationalism” and “forthright moral logic” to project what it meant to be an upstanding citizen and even how to identify a “closet communist” (Kackman xxix). By the 1960s, more playful series such as *Get Smart* challenged such “authoritative nationalist narratives,” while *Mission Impossible* (1966–73) demonstrated the final breakdown of the spy ideal (Kackman xxix). The show focused on the exploits of a diverse cast of mercenaries; Kackman argues that “the notion of individual agency is nearly completely evacuated” and that agents became pure expressions of state power (Kackman xxii). More important, the program was specifically built for transnational circulation. Seeking international success, the show displaced a specifically nationalist American identity, defined instead by liberal pluralism, “consumption, class privilege, and global mobility” (Kackman xxii).

Cold War storytelling then imagines a righteous protagonist seeking to contain heretical values, defend against a determined and aggressive villain, and thwart conspiracies to undermine “the free world” (see Menand). The national identity of the villain serves primarily as a device to demarcate and reinforce the values of liberal capitalism. The enemy curtails individual rights, surveilling and controlling individuals and repressing the circulation of information and dissent. Suppressing the market, the enemy also deprives its citizens of material goods and engages in duplicitous and disingenuous negotiation with its rivals, backed up by nuclear arsenals.

In the post-9/11 world, state actors have been replaced by deterritorialized adversaries, conventional weapons and warfare with bioweapons and guerrilla tactics (e.g. suicide bombings), and national protagonists with cosmopolitan technocrats. In this world, security, intelligence, and surveillance even of one’s own citizens—once the province of the illiberal other—have become central to the “preservation” of liberal democracy. In sum, recent Cold War stories have appropriated a long-standing yet flawed framework for understanding geopolitical conflict and the enemy, while also displacing the contexts from which these analyses emerged. We are left with fictions that draw our attention back to the bipolar logic of the Cold War, obscuring—and even deterring any engagement with—the complex and often harmful conditions of the neoliberal world.

## The Storyworld of *Counterpart*

*Counterpart* is a family drama in the guise of a Cold War thriller set in a science fiction universe. The premise of the show is that a secretive UN agency is operating in Berlin to cover up, monitor, and exploit an unexplained portal to an identical world in another dimension. Each person in Alpha Berlin has a counterpart in Berlin Prime (if they have not yet died in the other world). Both worlds monitor and secure the border, which can be crossed in just one place beneath the streets of Berlin. Knowledge of the existence of the other world, not to mention travel across its border, is highly restricted to diplomats and clandestine agents.

The narrative world begins in 1987, although this is not revealed until the middle of the second season. Yanek (James Cromwell), an East German scientist planning to defect to the West, is distracted by his clandestine activities, and, unsupervised, an experiment goes awry, opening a tunnel to the parallel dimension. This dimension is identical to Yanek's world; Yanek Alpha and Prime think the same thoughts and make the same decisions. Tempted by the discovery of this new world, the Yaneks decide against defection, instead recruiting (East German) scientists from other fields to observe and share knowledge of the two worlds. Soon tired of simple observation, they experiment by changing one small detail in their worlds to observe and record what happens: Alpha Yanek gives an Alphaville cassette tape to his music-obsessed daughter, Mira (Emilie Neumeister); Prime destroys his copy ("Twin Cities," season 2, episode 6).

Unsurprisingly to anyone familiar with science fiction tropes, this seemingly inconsequential change has monumental consequences for their lives and even the geopolitics of their worlds. In Alpha, Yanek's son is killed by East German police for dissident activities; by contrast, Prime Yanek's son is merely arrested and released. The show thus invokes the trope of the revolutionary power of popular music in the West and suggests that Alpha's choice precipitates a freer, more liberal world. Time passes; in 1989, the Berlin Wall falls in both worlds but not in the same way. Parallel television screens set up to monitor divergences between the worlds broadcast contrasting coverage of this tumultuous moment: Prime coverage suggests a simple breach in the Wall in the Prime world, with hundreds streaming through a vast, deserted no man's land. By contrast, Alpha television reports boisterous scenes at the Wall as audiences conventionally would remember them: Germans dance in celebration atop the Wall before individual panels collapse to the ground. The worlds are diverging, and that difference is increasingly embedded in the production design. It becomes clear that Yanek's experiment has catalyzed an emerging cold war between the worlds.

As their worlds drift apart, so do the doubled East German scientists, who become more skeptical and suspicious of one another. Alpha Yanek begins to wonder how Alpha will protect itself if Prime turns against it, conceiving and developing a virus that could be weaponized in Alpha's defence. "If we're considering it, then they are too," he justifies ("Twin Cities" Season 2 Episode 6). Ultimately, Alpha Yanek is driven mad by the knowledge of another world in which his family is intact and, in a fit of rage, kills his counterpart. Horrified, Yanek's colleagues collectively consign him to prison in the Prime world (site of the murder) and go separately into hiding.

They retreat to undisclosed locations; their only means of communication with each other and their worlds is a clunky system of one-way videoconferencing, in which their commands are mediated by a surrogate to underlings in the so-called Office of Interchange. The secrecy and backwardness of this technology heighten the stakes of pervasive surveillance. One critic noted that "the garbled voices from on high being delivered through a spokesperson has such an eerie '1984' feel, made all the more unsettling by the fact that we can't see who

is actually giving instructions” (Greene; see also Hale). Their worlds continue to diverge when a pandemic flu kills 7 per cent of the population (half a billion people) in Prime in 1996 and when a terrorist attack levels the Twin Towers in Alpha New York in 2001.

This backstory, revealed well into the second season, frames the alternate endings of the (historical) Cold War. The principal story is set thirty years in the future, in 2017, and follows a transnational cohort of UN staffers charged with policing the boundary between worlds. In this world, a postsocialist Alpha has embraced liberal capitalism, while Prime remains mired in authoritarianism. In this world, Alpha confronts bioterror, illegal immigration, and the most fundamental kind of identity theft: a shadowy conspiracy of Prime-based terrorists has been smuggling Prime people into the Alpha world, who then hunt their counterparts and insert themselves into their lives, intent on decimating the Alpha population by releasing the virus that once devastated the Prime world. Thus, the series offers a counterfactual narrative of the fall of state socialism, naturalizing the liberal triumph of 1989 and the neoliberal social conditions described later in this article.

But *Counterpart* is not just a straightforward tale of good and evil in a cold war, replicating the narrative of liberal triumphalism, mapped directly onto the corresponding geopolitical territory of Cold War Berlin. Remember that Alpha and Prime *both* originated in the socialist GDR. Both sides of the dimensional portal are in the socialist East at the moment that two worlds emerge. Both are inheritors of an older, postwar, mid-century vision of modernity, on which both have capitalized in different ways, and both experience the fall of the Wall. The choice of East Berlin might just be a red herring, serving to ground the narrative historically and adding another layer of complexity to the plot. But the narrative suggests that socialists were the subjects of a post-Cold War experiment in liberalism; Alpha took the “normal” (American or Western) path familiar to audiences, who also lived through the fall of the Wall and the attack on the World Trade Center in September 2001, for example. By contrast, Prime represents a world on an aberrant path after socialism. Post-Cold War Prime does things recognizable to the audience as repressive, violent, and inhumane in the context of the liberal capitalist social conventions and memories of the historical Cold War. It is a Prime character who suggests building a wall to keep the two worlds separate. The Prime world employs contract assassins to kill and replace counterparts in the Alpha world. Children in the Prime world are separated from their families and raised in communal circumstances (a children’s home) and inculcated with (mis)information about the “other side.” Their bodies are broken, and they are forced to sacrifice their own selves in service of the larger conspiracy. Or as a final example, Prime characters are depicted preying on their Alpha counterparts.

But the far more consequential and heinous act is performed by the liberal Alpha world. The second-season twist reveals that Alpha Yanek conceived and developed the virus that decimated hundreds of millions of people on the other

side in the 1996 pandemic. Indeed, the series' conspiracy originated in Prime's discovery of Alpha's guilt, setting off the Prime faction's efforts to exact vengeance. Thus, *Counterpart* could hold an uncomfortable mirror up to our world, asking what we are willing to do in the name of security. Yet the storytelling—centring the Alpha world, the attention to the Prime conspiracy (not Alpha's role)—and production design undercut that critical perspective, persistently representing Prime as the illiberal other.

### **Doppelgänger**

The *Doppelgänger*—the doubling of bodies—is the central device of *Counterpart* and an evolving trope of literary and science fiction narratives. The modern world has had a long-standing fascination with the doubled self, which has recurred in literature and the media in periods of social upheaval that have destabilized conventional identity formation. Doubled characters “challenge (the) conventions of identity, by making the self see itself,” or even “going double, as a duplicate body which may go its own way,” making different choices with different outcomes (Cuthber). Major literary works from Jean Paul, E. T. A. Hoffmann, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, and Friedrich Dürrenmatt featured doubling in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars and the First and Second World Wars (Tucker 15). More recently, scholars have tied the *Doppelgänger* device more specifically to technological and social changes in communication and media that have displaced or multiplied identities. During the romantic period, the *Doppelgänger* explored the uniqueness of the individual in an expanding culture of celebrity, for example (Esterhammer). Media scholar Heather Humann similarly points to the breakdown of stable social conventions and the disruption caused by emerging technologies in accounting for the contemporary resurgence of doubles (41). In the twenty-first century, online role-playing games, social media sites, professional networking sites, and blogs have made it possible for us to try on different identities, and she argues that the resurgence of *Doppelgänger* figures suggests that our survival depends on the ability to change and adapt to changed circumstances (43). Media scholar Alia Soliman posits that recent examples of doubles demonstrate a shift from the “repressed” to the “redemptive.” In “classical depictions [...] the doppelgänger figure appears as repressive, antagonistic, and ultimately fatal,” while more recent doubles “often contribute to the validation, real or illusory, of the protagonist of the story” (2).

Contemporary *Doppelgänger*, then, engage and even help shore up identities that have been destabilized by social, political, and cultural upheaval. In *Counterpart*, doubling explores the possibilities of the post-Cold War and, more specifically, the postsocialist world, depicting multiple and competing outcomes of the fall of state socialism and the “victory” of liberalism. *Counterpart* intervenes at a moment when the idealistic visions of the twin ideologies of the Enlightenment—socialism and liberalism in their various iterations and imagined futures—have died. Socialist and liberal thinkers and societies sought to achieve

greater liberty and equality (although perhaps less fraternity), although in different ways. They operated on one another, even forcing democratic concessions from one another. The neoliberal world seeks a different outcome: containment of the unstable and unpredictable will of the people and greater freedom for capital. In the twenty-first century, perhaps even more than during the Cold War, we depend on our *Doppelgänger*—the enemy—to be avatars of illiberalism such that neoliberal worlds appear more just, equitable, and free. The enemy is thus an integral part of our self-conception.

In science fiction literature, *Doppelgänger* appear in several forms, including clones, time travellers, or visitors from parallel universes, for example (Humann 48). Use of the device in television goes back decades, at least to *Star Trek*'s 1967 episode "Mirror, Mirror," in which Spock encounters an evil alter ego, whom viewers could identify and differentiate from Alpha Spock due to his beard (which led to the "beard of evil" television trope) ("Beard of Evil"). In literary as well as televisual narratives, the parallel universe may have its good qualities, but it is represented such that it reinforces our allegiance to the Alpha world. In *Counterpart*, Alpha serves as the normative world, which is conveyed and reinforced through character development and plot, as well as the location and production design, which I discuss in the next section. Alpha is represented more completely: it is featured first, and Prime characters (somewhat passively) appear in Alpha, while Alpha characters exert agency to enter and explore Prime.

*Counterpart* envisions a world in which there are nothing but *Doppelgänger* in parallel communities of familiar people, places, and situations. Our protagonist and naive narrator Howard (Alpha, played by J.K. Simmons) is confronted with his double even before he is apprised of the existence of a parallel world. He is forced to grapple with the mission statement of the series: "What if there were another you?" With shared experiences, memories, and genomes, what would make us different from our "other"? Howard's Prime counterpart is not a lookalike or genetic twin but rather himself arrived from a parallel world. "He looks exactly like me, but he's nothing like me," Howard sputters, preoccupied with the philosophical implications of this revelation: "Is Life just the sum of our choices?" he asks. "We are who we are," a friend replies, unaware of the turmoil fracturing Howard's world ("The Crossing" Season 1, Episode 1).

In its premise, then, the show challenges the certainties of the liberal self—the uniqueness of the individual—but it does so in service of (re)asserting and delineating the boundaries between liberal individualism and its "other," that is, socialism. The doubles, though genetically identical, with shared memories and experiences, exercise individual agency and choice. Most characters inhabit the grey areas that challenge moral certitude, in line with espionage narratives since at least the 1960s (Kackman; Worland). But the figure of Howard represents the liberal conception of self, and he serves as viewers' moral compass. Howard's persistent attempts to identify and rationalize the differences between his self and that of Howard Prime allow the show to mine the boundary between good and

evil. Howard Prime is impatient, disdainful, cynical, unempathetic—qualities often associated with an “authoritarian personality” (Martin)—and thoroughly entwined in the ominous system that governs the boundary between the worlds. Prime hates Howard for his impotence: what he perceives as Alpha Howard’s meek affect, lack of ambition at the agency, and thrall to Emily (Olivia Williams) despite her disloyalty and deception. However, Alpha’s Howard in fact is written to exhibit moral strength based on reason (and love) and is not given to retribution (and hate). Nor will he submit to the inhumane rules and conventions of this Cold War. Moreover, we find out that he is indeed master of his universe: he is fully aware of Emily’s betrayals, but he has chosen to rise above them.

Faced with Howard’s existential confusion, Baldwin Prime (Sara Seraiocco), a contract assassin and the series’ truth-teller, foretells that Alpha Howard will come to a point at which he *will* recognize his other in himself. (Significantly, there are no contract assassins in the Alpha world, and Alpha Baldwin lives a very different life as a concert violinist). Caught up in an operation to save Emily and flush out the conspirators, Howard is forced to cede his world to Howard Prime, by all accounts the version of him better positioned to protect his wife and ferret out the enemy in Alpha Berlin. Alpha crosses the border into Prime Berlin in Howard Prime’s ill-fitting persona, obeying the command to “just keep your mouth shut.” He drinks in the smallest details of Prime’s life. He performs Prime’s identity: he never achieves a true replica of Prime’s alpha masculinity, yet catastrophic results ensue. Alpha Howard kills a man, an act impossible for the audience to have imagined even at the beginning of the episode. Horrified by this turn of events and his perception that he is becoming Prime, Howard resolves to go home. But circumstances have changed: a terrorist attack has irretrievably closed the border (“No Man’s Land Part Two” Season 1 Episode 10). In the figure of Howard (Alpha and Prime) then, *Counterpart* explores and projects the boundaries between liberal individualism and socialism in this post-Cold War universe.

## **Producing *Counterpart* and Re-Producing the Cold War**

In its production design, the show projects liberal as opposed to socialist space, especially in its use of the architectural language of Nazism, at the same time capturing the contemporary struggle over historical memory and public space in postsocialist Berlin. Paradoxically, the architecture of the Nazi period is the setting for *Counterpart*’s “socialism,” eliding the myriad differences between those two systems and visually reinforcing the concept of two German dictatorships. It is first and best exemplified by the central setting, the mysterious (UN) Office of Interchange (OI) that anchors the worlds of both Alpha and Prime, which is located at the site of the historic Tempelhof Airport in Berlin. OI is the site of *Counterpart*’s Big Bang, the “point of departure” for the story of the parallel universe and the site of the only crossing point between the worlds of Alpha and Prime (see “Point of Departure” Season 1 Episode 4).

Berlin is a setting loaded with complicated and competing legacies of the twentieth century, especially the memory of twentieth-century authoritarianism and democracy, now complicated by the structures of twenty-first-century neoliberal capitalism. The built environment encompasses a multiplicity of architectural periods and styles. Berlin served as the seat of Prussian absolutism; the capital of the Second Empire; the site of the German revolution and republican victory after the First World War; the principal playground of Hitler's vision for a thousand-year Reich; the central object of defeat, occupation, and division after the Second World War; and, with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the symbolic site of the people's victory over state socialism in Europe. These histories are laid bare in the structures and surfaces of the city, many of which are featured in the show. The coexistence of these historical traces has made Berlin an exceptional case study of urban planning, historical change, and efforts to come to terms with the past.

The collapse of state socialism ushered in a turbulent era in which the promise of citizen agency unleashed by the Velvet Revolution was quickly overtaken by the ideology and economics of perceived liberal triumph after the Cold War. The larger struggle to integrate two Germanies into one was especially acute in post-Cold War Berlin, the front line of the Cold War and, after 1989, an experimental ground for the neoliberal principles that guided reunification. Film scholar Hester Baer argues that "the 'new German states' formed a kind of *tabula rasa* for the development of [neoliberalism]": a new order that required former East Germans to embrace "geographic and social mobility, 'flexible' or insecure modes of employment, individualization and social fragmentation, heightened use of technology and the centrality of consumption for social legitimation" (28). The former GDR became a proving ground for neoliberal principles and policies later adopted more broadly in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), "placing East Germans in the vanguard of a new German identity 'on their common path to a new a neoliberal global society'" (29). The reconstruction of the city, the erasure of the urban landscape, and new "memories" manufactured by global capital have restaged urban elements in unexpected ways, such as repurposing fascist sites to represent socialism or reviving imperial neoclassicism as symbolic of liberalism (Slobodian and Sterling 25).

Fraught struggles over how to deal with the socialist (and liberal democratic) past have remade the Berlin landscape. The destruction of the Berlin Wall, a twenty-seven-mile (43.5-kilometre) border strip complete with no man's land, set off a decades-long struggle over the expansive void revealed by its absence. Writing about the reconstruction of Berlin in the 1990s and 2000s, cultural theorist Andreas Huyssen described a hard-fought debate between urban technocrats that was defined by "a politics of willful forgetting" (60). Plans for redevelopment worked towards the omission of undesirable pasts, including National Socialist architecture but also the much more extensive architectural record of East German socialism. "Traditionalists" envisioned a city of neoclassical forms tempered by tentative modernism, especially the *Altbau* apartments

of the Wilhelmine period and the traditional neighborhood, or *Kiez*, while others advocated for a “contemporary high-tech global architecture”; each sought the “erasure of memory rather than its imaginative preservation” (Huysen 66–67).

The Berlin described by Huysen—a modern neoclassical mash-up juxtaposed with the architecture of global capital—is the *Ur*-style of *Counterpart* and key to the show’s creation of two discernible worlds in an ever-diverging timeline. The Alpha world is defined by two settings: Howard’s cozy *Altbau* apartment on a pleasant tree-lined street in the *Kiez*, a leafy bourgeois neighborhood that is home to the art house Cinema “Cosima,” and a nondescript postindustrial courtyard with an expansive view over the gleaming newly rebuilt government quarter of (our) Berlin Republic. Exterior locations are generally shot in daylight, and the production is pervaded by a pleasing palette of earth tones (muted greens, yellows, and grays). By contrast, the Prime world is darker, colder, harder, and, above all, absolutely deserted. Establishing shots are wider, encompassing the former East Berlin’s premier boulevard and showcase of socialism, the Karl Marx Allee, augmented with imagined modern skyscrapers, emphasizing this world’s desolation. The high-modernist jewel Cafe Moskau, a GDR-era conference centre visually defined by its neon-lit corner bar, is the central monument of the Prime world. This is a wealthy world: its people are well dressed, they drive Audis (the counterpart to Alpha’s BMWs), and this Berlin skyline is punctuated with the modern steel-and-glass buildings inhabited by global capital. Shots of Leipziger Strasse and Potsdamer Platz—an actual centre of the architectural performance of global capital in the Berlin Republic—are reserved for the Prime world. This world is generally shot at night and is pervaded by not-unpleasant cool blue tones.

The production site at Tempelhof Airport is one of the many locations in Berlin with deeply layered histories. A former Prussian military parade ground, the first airport terminal in the world opened there in the 1920s. The site was redeveloped and expanded by the Nazis using forced labour in the mid-1930s, intended to comprise just one component of Albert Speer’s grand design for the Nazi capital and one of the few elements the Nazis actually completed. In line with the Nazi penchant for monumentality, the terminal was built to resemble the outstretched wings of the (Nazi) eagle and reportedly could support a crowd of 80,000 on its roof (Haskell). With the defeat of Nazi Germany, the airport fell into the American zone of occupation, where it served as the hub of the American-led Berlin Airlift of the late 1940s. Its short-lived Airlift fame did little to revise the building’s association with Nazism, perhaps because the most famous images of the airlift gave up the opportunity to reinscribe the airport as a site of liberation, focusing on low-angle shots that elided the airport terminal building in favour of sky, planes, rubble, and scruffy children. Establishing shots of the exterior of the Tempelhof terminal anchor the show in this location, with additional shots from a Depression-era hospital in Lincoln Heights, Los Angeles, standing in for the office building’s interior (“Los Angeles County+USC Medical Center”).

Other elements of the production design layer this aesthetic with meaning suggested by long-standing tropes of Cold War, espionage, and science fiction narratives. In the Alpha world, clothing is casually contemporary and stylishly rumpled. Prime is more authoritarian, militaristic, cold, and calculating: people are buttoned up, clothing resembles uniforms, and dark skyscrapers loom menacingly over empty streets. Society is structured by state authorities' rules for combatting the virus: people are distanced and cold and avoid touching. These stylistic choices are reinforced by more explicit calls back to long-standing tropes about the socialist East. For example, the Prime world seems wealthy, as already suggested, but it lags technologically. Their futuristic-looking cell phones are both transparent and luminescent, but they still can only make calls and lack the functionality of Alpha's smartphones. In one pivotal scene, only Emily Prime, Howard Prime, and a clandestine hit squad occupy an otherwise dark, deserted, and desolate Karl Marx Allee, calling on the trope of atomized, fearful East German citizens in a world where public space is deeply politicized, surveilled, and pervaded by powerful state security forces. While the story of Alpha and Prime suggests that heightened surveillance and security is endemic to both dimensions, the production design underpins the viewers' perception that Alpha is much freer.

Finally, the line between liberalism and the enemy is made clear when the conspirators set their plot in motion in the first season's two-part finale. This episode draws on the liberal visions of force as the purview of the state, not individual actors, and openness and information sharing as a virtue of liberal, not socialist regimes; the trope of socialist regimes' purported tendency to sacrifice their citizens for a cause; and the representation of an actual historical incident often invoked as evidence of the authoritarianism and inhumanity of the GDR. The conspirators' goal is to close the border between the worlds for good. Prime Germans, recruited as children, are groomed to replace their "others" in the Alpha world. Their commitment is so extreme that they even model their bodies after their others: when Alpha Clare (Lara Decaro) breaks her legs in a ski accident, Prime Clare's legs are broken too, so that even her body will pass inspection in Alpha. They become suicide bombers terrorizing the Alpha Office of Interchange. The action culminates in the deliberate and premeditated sacrificial death of a character known as "Angel Eyes" (Nolan Gerard Funk), who crawls to and bleeds out on the border between the two worlds, thus fulfilling his mission to cause an inter-dimensional incident critical enough to sever all ties between the worlds. Both regimes are paralyzed by the diplomatic ramifications of this act and leave him to die. He is a twenty-first-century Peter Fechter, serving as a symbol of the inhumanity of the border regime and—being Prime's citizen—the brutality of the Prime world.<sup>1</sup> A Prime character laments that Alpha "ruins people. [...] It's the knowledge that there is something else out there. We should build a Wall and never come back" ("The Lost Art of Diplomacy" Season 1 Episode 3). Alpha is subject to the ruthlessness and cruelty of the Prime world, delineating the boundary between authoritarianism and the free world.

Yet this scene also lays bare the rhetorical logic of neoliberalism, which relies on a discourse of fear to underpin illiberal policies and actions taken to ensure the security of the West: look at what they are capable of; we must answer with any means necessary.

## Conclusion

*Counterpart* is the product of a historically specific moment that illuminates two important and interrelated shifts in twenty-first-century storytelling. First, as the actual Cold War recedes, engagement with twentieth-century socialism, democracy, and the principles of liberal individualism is based more on what we think we know about the past, which is shaped in large part by fictional (and even non-fiction) narratives. That is, what we know about twentieth-century socialism is now grounded less in historical experience than in a collective memory that has been shaped by the stories we tell ourselves about who we are (Landsberg). In the era of the war on terrorism, a new social imaginary of the Cold War underpins our conception of good and evil in the battle against our enemies. The ends have come to justify the means.

Second, the industrial conditions of television production have shifted in ways that can be read as progressive and emancipatory—content production is expanding, giving audiences ever-greater choice; transnational markets are making content from transnational cultural contexts accessible; and, finally, audience segmentation is working in favour of the under-represented—but in fact these shifts have led to a new kind of gatekeeping and greater social and economic inequalities. Disruptive media companies have been hollowing out domestic media industries, capitalizing on (and terminating) distressed yet often important cultural assets and decimating the creative class (Waard, *Derivative Media*). At the same time, they are chasing subsidies, through which they privatize public funds to produce programming for subscription-based premium outlets. National and even municipal bodies are subsidizing transnational production that serves private interests; profits remain with global companies; and series become run-away productions, abandoning familiar production spaces in pursuit of yet more financially favourable terms.

Thus, *Counterpart* illustrates the ways in which both representational culture and industrial practices are reframing the problems we face, diverting our attention from the consequences of the collapse of twentieth-century mass utopias, naturalizing and even rendering invisible the system of the present (Gumbert, *Envisioning Socialism* 17). *Counterpart*'s world—both Alpha and Prime—is a world subject to extreme surveillance, in which clandestine intelligence operations are endemic but also mostly impotent, where both the fear and experience of terrorism have pervaded everyday life, resulting in the willingness to consider pre-emptive attacks on the enemy, without concern for the moral morass of plausible deniability. Even so, the conventions of espionage narratives—and the assumptions of Cold War interpretations—remind us that these things belong to

“that world,” not ours. We are no longer surprised by the illiberal things our side does: they are so foreign to our self-image and, at the same time, have been so normalized by mediated scenarios that they have become invisible to us. We just don’t look like the enemy we’ve been trained to recognize.

## Note

- <sup>1</sup> Peter Fechter is perhaps the most famous victim of the Berlin Wall. He died on 17 August 1962, just one year after the border closure, when he tried to breach it head-on. East German border guards shot him mid-climb; he fell back into GDR territory, where he was left to bleed to death over the course of an hour.

## Works Cited

- Arndt, Stefan, and Wolfgang Becker. *Good Bye Lenin!* Sony Pictures Classics, 2003.
- Baer, Hester. *German Cinema in the Age of Neoliberalism*. Amsterdam UP, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.5117/9789463727334>.
- “Beard of Evil.” *TVTropes.com* <https://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/BeardOfEvil>. Accessed November 6, 2025.
- “Mirror, Mirror.” *Star Trek*, season 2, episode 4, directed by Marc Daniels, written by Jerome Bixby, featuring William Shatner, Leonard Nimoy, et al. NBC, 6 Oct. 1967.
- Calabrese, Andrew. “Toward a Political Economy of Culture.” *Toward a Political Economy of Culture: Capitalism and Communication in the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Andrew Calabrese and Colin Sparks, Rowman and Littlefield, 2004, pp. 339–42.
- Cieply, Michael. “Tilting Hollywood’s Balance of Power to Talent Agency Clients.” *New York Times*, 19 Mar. 2007, <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/19/business/media/19fund.html>. Accessed 6 Nov. 2025.
- Clarke, Stewart. “Lionsgate Sees Starz Aligning with Series.” *Variety*, vol. 336, no. 18, 2017, p. 20.
- Collins, Suzanne, et al., creators. *The Hunger Games. Mockingjay Part I and II*. Lionsgate, 2015 and 2016.
- “Counterpart Filming Locations.” *Fandom.com*, [https://counterpartstarz.fandom.com/wiki/Counterpart\\_Filming\\_Locations](https://counterpartstarz.fandom.com/wiki/Counterpart_Filming_Locations). Accessed 6 Nov. 2025.
- Crew, David F. “The Pathologies of Modernity: Detlev Peukert on Germany’s Twentieth Century.” *Social History*, vol. 17, no. 2, 1992, pp. 319–28. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4286021>.
- Cuthber, Alan, et al. “Doppelganger.” *The Oxford Companion to the Body*, edited by Colin Blakemore and Sheila Jennett, 1st ed., Oxford UP, 2001, p. 226.
- Ellefson, Lindsay. “Variety Parent Penske Media to Take Over Hollywood Reporter, Billboard in Joint Venture with MRC.” *The Wrap*, 23 Sept. 2020, <https://www.thewrap.com/variety-parent-penske-media-to-take-over-hollywood-reporter-billboard-in-joint-venture-with-mrc/>. Accessed 6 Nov. 2025.
- Esterhammer, Angela. “Identity Crises: Celebrity, Anonymity, Doubles, and Frauds in European Romanticism.” *The Oxford Handbook of European Romanticism*, edited by Paul Hamilton, Oxford Academic, 2016, pp. 771–87. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.vt.edu/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199696383.013.39>.
- Faughnder, Ryan. “‘House of Cards’ Producer MRC Merges with Dick Clark Productions and Hollywood Reporter Publisher.” *LA Times*, 1 Feb. 2018, <https://www>.

- latimes.com/business/hollywood/la-fi-ct-hollywood-dick-clark-mrc-merger-20180131-story.html. Accessed 6 Nov. 2025.
- Ford, Rebecca. "'Counterpart's' J.K. Simmons, Justin Marks on Challenges of One Actor in Dual Roles." *Hollywood Reporter*, 11 June 2018, <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/general-news/jk-simmons-justin-marks-challenges-counterpart-1117066/>. Accessed 6 Nov. 2025.
- Fukuyama, Francis. *The End of History and the Last Man*. Free P, 2006.
- Gansa, Alex, and Howard Gordon, creators. *Homeland*. Showtime Networks, et al., 2011–2020.
- Gauk, Joachim. "Rechtsstaat und Gerechtigkeit." *Zeitschrift für Rechtspolitik*, vol. 31, no. 10, 1998, pp. 379–81.
- Goldberg, Lesley. "'Counterpart' Canceled at Starz." *The Hollywood Reporter*, 11 Feb. 2019, <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/tv/tv-news/counterpart-canceled-at-starz-1185316/>. Accessed 6 Nov. 2025.
- . "Starz Chief Explains the Cabler's 'Premium Female' Push." *The Hollywood Reporter*, 26 July 2019, <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/tv/tv-news/starz-chief-explains-cablers-premium-female-push-1227421/>. Accessed 6 Nov. 2025.
- Greene, Steve. "'Counterpart': The Season 1 Finale Lets Starz's Best New Show Embrace Its Strengths and Start Again Fresh." *Indiewire*, 1 Apr. 2018, <https://www.indiewire.com/2018/04/counterpart-starz-finale-review-episode-10-ending-spoilers-1201943204/>. Accessed 6 Nov. 2025.
- Gumbert, Heather. "Constructing Imperial Liberalism on Television: The BBC and the Berlin Blockade." *Berlin and the BBC*, edited by Miles Taylor and Patrick Majors, De Gruyter, forthcoming.
- . "The Deutschland Series: Cold War Nostalgia for Transnational Audiences." *Central European History*, vol. 54, no. 2, 2021, pp. 352–60. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008938921000480>.
- . *Envisioning Socialism: Television and the Cold War in the German Democratic Republic*. U of Michigan P, 2014. ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/vt/detail.action?docID=3570525>.
- Hale, Mike. "On 'Counterpart' and 'Berlin Station,' Spies to Keep You Company in the Cold." *New York Times*, 12 Dec. 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/12/arts/television/on-counterpart-berlin-station.html>. Accessed 6 Nov. 2025.
- Haskell, Douglas. "Recent Architecture Abroad." *The American Scholar*, vol. 9, no. 3, 1940, pp. 372–77.
- Hausmann, Leander. *Sonnenallee*. Delphi Filmverleih, 1999.
- Havens, Timothy. "Media Programming in an Era of Big Data." *Media Industries Journal*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2014, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/mij/15031809.0001.202?view=text;rgn=main>. Accessed 6 Nov. 2025.
- Humann, Heather. "Multiple Selves: Representations of Twins, Doubles, and Doppelgängers in Contemporary Television Programming." *Studies in American Culture*, vol. 38, no. 1, 2015, pp. 39–60.
- Huyssen, Andreas. "The Voids of Berlin." *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 24, no. 1, 1997, pp. 57–81. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1344159>. Accessed 25 July 2025.
- Ivie, Robert. "A New Democratic World Order?" *Critical Reflections on the Cold War*, edited by H. W. Brands and Martin J. Medhurst, Texas A&M UP, 2000, pp. 247–65.
- Geller, Bruce, creator. *Mission Impossible*. Desilu Productions, 1966–1973.
- Johnson, Drew, editor. "LA500: MEDIA & ENTERTAINMENT." *Los Angeles Business Journal*, vol. 43, no. 22, 31 May 2021.

- . "Liberty Global." *International Directory of Company Histories*, edited by Karen Hill, vol. 139, Farmington Hills, St. James P, 2012. [https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/I2501316500/GBIB?u=viva\\_vpi&sid=bookmark-GBIB&xid=e9889b42](https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/I2501316500/GBIB?u=viva_vpi&sid=bookmark-GBIB&xid=e9889b42). Accessed 6 Nov. 2025.
- Kackman, Michael. *Citizen Spy: Television, Espionage, and Cold War Culture*. U of Minnesota P, 2005.
- Landsberg, Alison. *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture*. Columbia UP, 2004.
- "Los Angeles County+USC Medical Center." *Los Angeles Conservancy*, <https://www.laconservancy.org/locations/los-angeles-countyusc-medical-center>. Accessed 6 Nov. 2025.
- Lotz, Amanda. "Teasing Apart Television Industry Disruption: Consequences of Meso-Level Financing Practices before and after the US Multiplatform Era." *Media, Culture & Society*, vol. 41, no. 7, 2019, pp. 923–28. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443719863354>.
- Ludlum, Robert, et al. *The Bourne Identity*. Universal Pictures, 2004.
- Marks, Justin, creator. *Counterpart*. Lions Gate Entertainment, 2018.
- Markovits, Inge. "Selective Memory: How the Law Affects What We Remember and Forget about the Past: The Case of East Germany." *Law & Society Review*, vol. 35, no. 3, 2001, pp. 513–63. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3185395>.
- Martin, John Levi. "'The Authoritarian Personality,' 50 Years Later: What Lessons Are There for Political Psychology?" *Political Psychology*, vol. 22, no. 1, 2001, pp. 1–26.
- Menand, Louis. *The Free World*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2021.
- Mikos, Lothar. "Berlin as Location and Production Site for Transnational TV Drama." *Critical Studies in Television: The International Journal of Television Studies*, vol. 15, no. 4, 2020, pp. 373–92. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1749602020948210>.
- Moore, Ronald, et al., creators. *For All Mankind*. Sony Pictures and Tall Ship Production. 2019—.
- . *Outlander*. Tall Ship Productions and Sony Pictures Television, et al., 2014—.
- Mudge, Stephanie Lee. *Neoliberalism's Three Faces*. European Union Institute, 2008. EUI Working Papers, no. 2008/34.
- O'Connell, Michael. "Two CEOs Was Too Many at Lionsgate." *Hollywood Reporter*, vol. 425, no. 6, Feb. 2019, p. 20. EBSCOhost, [research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=f665025a-a011-38aa-94ac-a37ff1a765dc](https://research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=f665025a-a011-38aa-94ac-a37ff1a765dc). Accessed 6 Nov. 2025.
- Peukert, Detlev. *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity*. Hill and Wang, 1992.
- Price, Thomas J. "The Changing Image of the Soviets in the Bond Saga." *Journal of Popular Culture*, vol. 26, no. 1, 1992, pp. 17–38.
- "Rolling Stone Parent Company P-MRC Purchases Stake in South by Southwest." *Rolling Stone*, 19 Apr. 2021, <https://www.rollingstone.com/pro/news/p-mrc-south-by-southwest-purchase-investment-1157629/>. Accessed 6 Nov. 2025.
- Schlesinger, Arthur Jr. "Some Lessons from the Cold War." *Diplomatic History*, vol. 16, no. 1, 1992, pp. 47–53.
- Schneider, Peter. "Tearing Down Berlin's Mental Wall." *New York Times*, 12 Aug. 2011.
- Segal, Peter, et al. *Get Smart*. Warner Home Video, 2008.
- Shimpach, Shawn. "The Immortal Cosmopolitan: The International Co-Production and Global Circulation of *Highlander: The Series*." *Cultural Studies*, vol. 19, no. 3, 2005, pp. 338–71.

- Slobodian, Quinn, and Michelle Sterling. "Sacking Berlin: How Hipsters, Expats, Yummies, and Smartphones Ruined a City." *The Baffler*, no. 23, 2013, <https://thebaffler.com/salvos/sacking-berlin>. Accessed 6 Nov. 2025.
- Soliman, Alia. *The "Doppelgänger" in Our Time: Visions of Alterity in Literature, Visual Culture, and New Media*. Peter Lang, 2024. ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/vt/detail.action?docID=31318726>.
- Spotnitz, Frank, creator. *Man in the High Castle*. Amazon Studios and Scot Free Productions, et al., 2015–2019.
- Steinhauer, Olen, creator. *Berlin Station*. Anonymous Content and Studio Babelsberg, et al. 2016–2019.
- Stowell, Austin, et al. *Bridge of Spies*. Buena Vista Home Entertainment, Touchstone Home Entertainment, 2016.
- Tucker, Harry. *Double: A Psychoanalytic Study*. UNC P, 1971.
- Waard, Andrew de. *Derivative Media: How Wall Street Devours Culture*. 1st ed., U of California P, 2024.
- . "Wall Street's Content Wars: Financing Media Consolidation." Working Paper, UC San Diego, 2021. [https://escholarship.org/content/qt7m6819ch/qt7m6819ch\\_noSplash\\_614478eadc4fa007ee3737f087b0a6f4.pdf?t=r9yypfq](https://escholarship.org/content/qt7m6819ch/qt7m6819ch_noSplash_614478eadc4fa007ee3737f087b0a6f4.pdf?t=r9yypfq). Accessed 6 Nov. 2025.
- White, Pete. "'Counterpart': J.K. Simmons' Starz Sci-Fi Thriller 'Too Male' to Score Third Season amid 'Premium Female' Push." *Deadline*, 29 July 2019, <https://deadline.com/2019/07/counterpart-starz-cancellation-1202655113>. Accessed 6 Nov. 2025.
- Winger, Anna and Jörg Winger, creators. *Deutschland Series*. Sundance TV, RTL, and UFA Fiction, 2015–2020.
- Worland, Rick. "The Cold War Mannerists: The Man from U.N.C.L.E and TV Espionage in the 1960s." *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, vol. 21, no. 4, 1994, pp. 150–61. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01956051.1994.9943983>.
- Wuttke, Martin, et al. *Inglourious Basterds*. Universal Studios Home Entertainment, 2009.