ABSTRACTS

DANIELA BERGHAHN (Royal Holloway, University of London)

Remembering the Stasi: From DEFA Gegenwartsfilm to the Stasi fairy tale *Das Leben der Anderen*

In the DEFA Gegenwartsfilm (film about contemporary society) the Stasi was a taboo topic, but in many of the films made shortly after the demise of the East German regime the all-pervasive surveillance by the ‘Stasi’ emerged as a prominent theme. In the initial years after the opening up of the ‘Stasi’ archives, the ‘Stasi’ became the voraciously consumed subject of infotainment in the media alongside more serious attempts to come to terms with this traumatic aspect of East Germany’s recent past. Ex-DEFA directors made numerous feature films during the early 1990s, including *Der Verdacht* (Frank Beyer, 1991), *Der Tangospieler* (Roland Gräf, 1991), *Verfehlung* (Heiner Carow, 1992), *Abschied von Agnes* (Michael Gwisdek, 1994) and the autobiographical documentary *Verriegelte Zeit* (Sybille Schönemann, 1991) which centre on the victims and perpetrators of ‘Stasi’ surveillance.

In this paper I will compare Frank Beyer’s film *Der Verdacht* (1991), which in many respects represents a continuation of DEFA’s important Gegenwartsfilm genre, and Florian Henckel von Donnersmark’s internationally acclaimed *Das Leben der Anderen* (2005). Both films illustrate how the omnipresence of the secret police created a climate of fear, suspicion and mistrust that ultimately threatened to destroy or actually destroyed intimate personal relationships and families. Von Donnersmark’s début film won numerous awards, including the Oscar, the BAFTA and the César, but was also severely criticized for its positive portrayal of the ‘Stasi’ Hauptmann Gerd Wiesler and his improbable transformation from ‘geradlinigen Täter zum feinfühligem Gut-Menschen, dann zum Helden und schließlich zum bedauernswerten Opfer’ (Jeschonnek 2006). This is the stuff only fairy tales are made of, some critics argued.

Drawing on recent memory discourse, in particular Marianne Hirsch’s concept of post-memory (1997), Alison Landsberg’s prosthetic memory (2003) and on Aleida Assmann’s distinction between the memory of the experiential and the confessional generation (2006), I shall argue that the empathetic approach taken by von Donnersmark illustrates what Assmann has referred to as the ‘Modus des emotionalen Miterlebens’ which can only be adopted by the temporally (and in Donnersmark’s case also culturally) detached confessional generation.

WOLFGANG EMMERICH (Bremen)

Cultural Memory East / West: Is what belongs together growing together?

In the more than forty years between 1945 and the fall of the Berlin Wall two quite different cultural traditions, or to borrow a much-discussed term of the time, different versions of ‘cultural memory’ developed in post-war Germany. It began with diametrically opposed foundation myths: in the East antifascism and socialism; in the West American ‘reeducation’, the German Mark and the economic miracle. By 1965 at the latest there existed a situation of ‘Diskultralität’ [cultural dissonance] (Jürgen Link), which took hold and became established until the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. The Federal Republic became an integral part of the western capitalist civilization; in the East
a ‘workers’ society’ (Wolfgang Engler) developed with, for the most part, quite different attitudes and values. The two bodies of German literature too are part and parcel of this distance – or perhaps they can be seen as reflecting it. Various questions present themselves: to what extent has there been a rapprochement between the two cultures and literatures in the twenty years since 1989/90? In what ways and why have they remained distinct? This seminar attempts to answer these questions by focusing on the largely antagonistic and anyway distinct ‘cultural memories’ of East versus West. It comes to the conclusion that the cultural alienation between East and West is significant and will remain so for a long time: something that will be with us for at least three generations.

TIMOTHY GARTON-ASH (OXFORD)
'A Footnote in World History': The GDR as Memory, Myth and History.

KATRIN KOHL (Oxford)
Conceptualising the GDR - 20 Years After
This paper will examine metaphors used to give conceptual shape to the GDR two decades after its demise. The focus will be on the role played by metaphor in remembering the GDR as an entity (e.g. container/boundary, kinship) and engaging with its relationship with the Federal Republic.

KAREN LEEDER (Oxford)
The last GDR literature. New Writing from the Berlin Republic
This paper will explore the notion of GDR literature after the end of the GDR by focusing on work written by authors who experienced the GDR only as children but whose work, published in the early years of the new century, asserts a clear GDR identity. A first wave of broadly reportage literature had a distinctive presence in the book market a few years ago: from Jana Hensel, Zonenkinder (2002), Claudia Rusch, Meine freie deutsche Jugend (2003) Michael Tetzlaff, Ostlöckchen: Eine Kindheit in der Zone (2004) or Daniel Wiechmann, Immer Bereit! (2004). Key themes are aspects of socialisation: school, FDJ, and relationship with the father. However there are also more interesting fictional re-workings of this experience (e.g. Oskamp, Franck). In some senses this literature evokes the issues of nostalgia, coming of age and the idea of a retrospectively imagined community which might be common in discussion of the period more generally (e.g. in films like Sonnenallee or Goodbye, Lenin!). However there are also fascinating insights into the processes of socialisation at work in the GDR and the need for young writers to write a way out them. Moreover, aesthetically some of this literature provides a pendant to pop-literature of the ‘Generation Golf’ (constituting a ‘Generation-Trabi’ of sorts), with similar name-checking of consumer goods, forms and styles of writing. Finally, this literature raises important questions about how we define bodies of literature in and after socialism.
JAN-WERNER MÜLLER (Princeton)
‘Just another Vergangenheitsbewältigung? Coming to terms with the GDR Past’

LYN MARVEN (Liverpool)
‘Berlin ist bekannt [...] für die Mauer, die es aber nicht mehr gibt’ (Monika Maron): the persistence of East Berlin in the contemporary city

From the Fernsehturm to the Ampelmann, not to mention the multiple sites of the former Berlin Wall, Berlin’s image in the twenty-first century draws on icons of the Haupstadt der DDR. While the Wende and the reunification of the city saw the West expand into the East, authors writing about Berlin during the 1990s and 2000s suggest instead that East Berlin extended into the West. This paper will examine writing on former East Berlin by Irina Liebmann, Monika Maron, Katja Lange-Müller and Annett Gröschner amongst others, considering how post-Wende representations of the city continue to renegotiate the relationship between East and West Berlin.

GEORGINA PAUL (Oxford)
The Privatisation of Community: The legacy of collectivity in eastern German literature of the post-unification period

The socialist system in the GDR sought to integrate all citizens into a social collective and to promote collective identity, a political aim which amongst other things determined the conditions of literary production up until 1989. Even the politically critical literature of the 1970s and 1980s displays the sense of collectivity in its responses to the failure of socialist ideals. With the collapse of the socialist system and the absorption of the former GDR into the FRG, citizens were confronted with the challenge to adapt to the entirely different conditions of a free market economy which requires greater independence and mobility of the individual. This paper undertakes an investigation of the ways in which the literature of the post-unification period registers the disorientation created by the loss of collective identity and seeks to re-imagine community after the collapse of socialism. Works to be considered include Schulze’s Simple Storys, Burmeister’s Unter dem Namen Norma, and works by Annett Gröschner.

CHLOE PAVER (Exeter)
Memory and Place in the New Bundesländer

An early literary response to the Wende, Friedrich Christian Delius’s Die Birnen von Ribbeck, expresses an anxiety that the Federal Republic will high-handedly redraw the memorial landscape of the East, falsifying history and marking it in the wrong places. Drawing on examples from memorial projects and site-specific exhibitions, the paper looks at what has really happened to places of memory in the new Bundesländer in the past two decades. While the desire to mark authentic sites of memory appears equally
strong in West and East, there is evidence that the new Bundesländer are having to catch up with the West in terms of the memorialization of local crimes.

**JIM REED (Oxford)**

‘In that dawn...’ Reflections on hope and experience.

I shall look at hopeful new starts from 1774 to 2009, as a political and psychological phenomenon, recall what the Wende felt like in Germany and to outside observers, and then discuss three accounts of DDR realities: Werner Bräunig’s *Rummelplatz* (2007), Gottfried Meinhold’s *Prag. Mitte. Transit* (2008), and Uwe Tellkamp’s *Der Turm. Geschichte aus einem versunkenen Land* (2008).

**PETER THOMPSON (Sheffield/Oxford)**

‘Die unheimliche Heimat’: The GDR as the Presence and Absence of Hope.

The 20 years since the fall of the Berlin Wall have been marked by an apparent inability of the PDS/Linke (former ruling communist party) and, by extension, the wider society of the ex-GDR to ‘arrive in the west’ (André Brie). This paper will discuss the psychological as well as the philosophical reasons behind this reluctance in terms of both Ernst Bloch’s concept of a ‘concrete utopia’ grounded in the principle of Hope, as well as a Žižekian take on the ‘lack of a lack’ and the unbearable cynicism of ideological consciousness in eastern Europe during the years of the ‘Brezhnev social contract’. It will conclude that the absence of hope in the GDR under Honecker is the very thing which has kept the image of hope alive in the post-mural period.