

The Other in Contemporary German Film

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Abstract

Last year Germany celebrated the 20th anniversary of reunification. The rather singular motif of two separated states and their differing identities still appears in filmic form. The event of reunification is selected and contextualised by cultural narrative in order to create a coherent common cultural memory. Contrary to the 70s and 80s when Berlin and the wall served as a setting for tragic love-stories and art house-films, the newer films can now treat the past as concluded. After forty years abroad the "real GDR" has appeared in the movies yet remains highly ambiguous and inconsistent. Ambiguities and fragmentary constituted forms of narration can be seen as signs of what Lyotard called the end of great narratives. (One of them being GDR-Socialism). Totality is dissolving and its fragments are assembled into something new. This Hybridisation (pastiche, parody) extends the representation of the former GDR. The copy becomes as valid as the original as continuity and discontinuity get mixed up. The historic past of the other is not imitated but simulated in present, yet still subject to fights for interpretive primacy. The paper shall analyse the different shapes of the „filmic GDR“: as a humourist petit-bourgeois-socialist setting or a so-called „nostalgic“ long gone republic. Special attention shall be paid to the reception within reunited German society (press, critics, politics). This is especially interesting as reunited Germany writes the filmic history in accordance with western common sense.

Introduction

Twenty years ago the Berlin wall fell, one year later Germany was reunited after forty years of division. The peaceful revolution of 1989 has since become a European myth marking the end of an era. The fusion of two different states into what is now known as Germany seemingly happened without major problems. And yet some time ago GDR¹ made the news again. Ten years after its dissolution the "other Germany" was at the base of a neologism: "Ostalgie". This term has supposedly been invented by cabaret-artist Uwe Steimle from Dresden and is now part of everyday language. Apart from GDR themed souvenir stands near the Brandenburg Gate, Ostalgie has been used to describe a specific treatment of the GDR past in movies and TV-shows. It implies a positive feeling towards (aspects of) life in the former GDR, including products that had disappeared from the shops after reunification or certain cultural traditions. The general focus in German media on this "nostalgia of the Eastern past" may appear overrated. Still the social report of 2010, conducting a survey on reunification after twenty years revealed that only 25% of the former GDR-citizen feel completely "arrived" in FRG². 9% want the GDR back and the majority of 59% feel alien to both citizenships.³ Visibly the "Second German Dictatorship" as GDR is commonly called by the press has not yet been "digested". Twenty years of FRG-socialisation have not completely managed to create a common German identity. An otherness of the GDR-citizens abides and one must ask who they are.

1. New Films for New People

We will want to have a look on GDR and its citizens (the so-called others) in contemporary German cinema after reunification. The films discussed below are collective works. They are made by artists and collaborators from East and West, within the discourse of a reunited Germany. Although none of them is based on a non-alienated "true event", historical accuracy has been an issue in reviews. The reserves critics expressed when it came to the representation of the others have to be considered. They are mirroring society dealing with the sensitive subject of a common (postcommunist) identity.

Contemporary movies differ very much from the (few) works of the 70s and the 80s when Berlin and the wall served as a setting for tragic love-stories and art house-films.⁴ The new films can treat the past as concluded. The narrative of GDR-socialism is over and both sides should no longer be in need of political justification. This may explain that the number of (German) films about GDR has increased in the last twenty years. Still the depicted others appear highly ambiguous and inconsistent. A reason for this may be the delicate balancing act movies have to fulfil due to the relative recency of the events shown on screen. As products of reunited Germany the films target two different groups: the Eastern audience, whose day-to-day life in their now defunct country is depicted and the Western audience discovering the East but who is at the same time subject to the (as well defunct) FRG-discourse on GDR.

Unlike the cinematic treatment of the Third Reich that needed sixty years for the leap from drama to comedy⁵, GDR-movies went from slapstick to tragicomedy, to thriller in less than twenty years. An emphasis will therefore be put on the notion of genre.⁶

The filmic (re-)construction of the others' identity has to be seen as an ongoing process. The struggle for interpretation within society goes on and movies play their role in it. What appears as identity shall not be seen as the intentional outcome of the individual effort of a person or group but more an effect of everyday action and interaction.⁷ On-screen a multitude of codes interpellate (in the Althusserian sense) the (Eastern and Western) audience allowing it to position itself within the discourse on the others' identity.⁸ Reviews of movies dealing with the identity of the others have to be seen as reflecting discourse at a specific time. This may explain the diverse trends in reception during the last twenty years. Especially authenticity has often been an issue.

2. Being crazy in Germany

The cinematic treatment of GDR began right after the fall of the Berlin wall. The first films focused explicitly on the otherness of the new fellow citizens. Slapstick comedies like *Go Trabi Go* (1990) by Peter Timm reproduce common clichés about the nice but somewhat simple GDR citizen (Ossi), unable to cope with the new capitalist wonderland. The plot revolves around a GDR-family driving to Italy. The others are depicted as simple but warm people whose former lack of civil rights and consumer goods contrasts with their newfound freedom. The journey to Italy has been an integral part of German culture (and a place of longing) since Goethe's "Italienreise"-which is quoted by the father upon arriving: "Me too in Arcadia!"

In the Fifties during the "Economic Wonder" the first German Travel Agencies focused on Italy. It is therefore not surprising that the "New Germans" choose it as their first "free-will-destination" This approach is very much consistent with the Western view of GDR: they are not free, they do not have what we have, but now they do. On the other hand it shows the optimism in the eastern parts of Germany during the penultimate Kohl-Administration.

Go Trabi Go was quite successful and brought about a sequel and several variations on the

same subject. Critics were generally favourable and the movie was nominated for the German Film Prize (Lola). The differences between East and West in the Trabi-movies are mainly broken down to consumer goods: Trabi vs. BMW car chases are won by the Ossi because his streetwise attitude includes creative tuning ideas for his vehicle, whereas the "Wessi" ends up as victim of his arrogance. In the early 90s an immanent optimism prevails and reunification for example, is never questioned.

There are few exceptions to that rule. Heiko Schier's *Alles Lüge* (1991) can be considered the first attempt of an ostalgie comedy. It shows a famous Eastern German comedian who, after the fall of the wall is constantly ripped-off by greedy Western investors. His revenge is the construction of a "Socialist Disneyland" giving him and his friends a new perspective within a setting they are familiar with.

Christoph Schlingensief's *The German Chainsaw Massacre* (1990) has a tagline "They came as friends and became sausage". It shows a Western German family of butchers becoming frenzy after reunification and killing Eastern countrymen in order to produce sausage. The film uses elements of splatter movies and is deliberately confusing, brutal and badly acted: Schlingensief's film is considered as a film on "being crazy in Germany or Civilisation and its discontents"⁹ The GDR-citizens are shown fleeing from their desperately worn down homeland entering a capitalist inferno made of furnaces and solely based on productivity. The German economic wonder is based on the endless production of sausages which needs fresh meat in order to be kept running.

Schlingensief's film may be influenced by horror movies but it deliberately breaks the conventions of genre-cinema and conventional habits of seeing. The film-genre is less an optic goal than a method here¹⁰ and as such the viewer perceives it. Schlingensief's revolution is not peaceful and juxtaposes the "national-pathetic unity" of the eve of reunification¹¹ with the bloody moral of the story. Critical reception in the press was generally favourable and the movie was considered to be the first relevant film about GDR: a fart, a belch disturbing the festive mood.¹² Due to its graphic violence and controversial attitude towards reunification *The German Chainsaw Massacre* was nevertheless debated and a lawsuit for glorification of violence was filed against Schlingensief.¹³ Most significantly a memorable panel discussion about violence on TV opposed Schlingensief to the then Minister for Women and Youth Angela Merkel.¹⁴ Still the movie was not criticized for its depiction of the others. A reason for this is that it managed to appear alien to both audiences East and West. The otherness of both sides is exaggerated to the point that the viewer is unable to identify with his "own people". Difference is therefore less shown in the respective degree of craziness but in the desperate affirmation of similarities by the protagonists. Similarities that cannot hide the 40-year-crack where the chainsaw keeps passing through. *Alles Lüge* and *The German Chainsaw Massacre* were shot directly after the fall of the wall. Whereas the former was highly unsuccessful the latter was generally perceived as an art film. This may explain that none of them was accused of revisionism. In particular compared to the reception of the (more mainstream) ostalgie films a decade later.

3. Ostalgia

In 1999 Leander Haußmann made *Sonnenallee*, based upon a screenplay by German author Thomas Brussig. *Sonnenallee* (the "sunny alley"-a street located on both sides of the wall) is a comedy, which insists that the sun shone on both sides of the wall and that life in the GDR was absurd and repressive but funny as well. Brussig considered *Sonnenallee* to be a "milestone in fictionalisation". A film that "should make Western Germans jealous." However the success of Haußmann's movie clashed with common perception and aroused a debate in German media and society. The issue was Ostalgie. Indeed in the wake of Reunification,

former GDR was perceived as Reagan's "Empire of Evil" finally defeated. The critics of *Sonnenallee* were quite harsh. Hans-Christoph Buch in the *Tagesspiegel* sees *Sonnenallee* as a musical with Honecker as "Fiddler on the Roof" where cheap Ostalgie covers the contradictions within society.¹⁵ HELP, an organisation for victims of political oppression, filed a lawsuit against Haußmann.¹⁶ HELP claimed that *Sonnenallee* was an insult to the victims of the former regime. The Berlin-based City Magazine TIP went so far as to compare the film with propagandistic comedies made under National Socialism.¹⁷

Sonnenallee follows two adolescent boys Micha and Mario at a crucial point in their lives: the time after High School and before conscription. The characters of Micha's family and friends appear familiar to western and eastern audiences. The Western viewers didn't identify with the grumpy uncle from West Berlin but with the Eastern German family living their life according to cultural codes that the Western audience could decipher. *Sonnenallee* mixes popular genre-narratives and pop cultural references. It is a teenage comedy, a love story, and a coming-of-age drama, containing elements of musical, cabaret and sitcom. Thomas Brussig the writer of the screenplay said that Woody Allen's *Radio Days* (1987) was the initial inspiration for the screenplay. Brussig, sees *Sonnenallee* as a comedy, a genre film and claims furthermore that GDR "[...] happens in genre film or not at all."¹⁸ Unlike the novel¹⁹, *Sonnenallee* is set in the seventies²⁰, a period remaining relatively unknown to Western audiences.

Another successful German movie about GDR commences in that era: *Goodbye Lenin* (2003) by Wolfgang Becker. The prologue mixes news footage of the late seventies, with personal memories of the main protagonist. The plot itself takes place between the fall of the wall and German reunification one year later but the "mythical" seventies²¹ play an intrinsic role within narration. Christiane the mother of the main protagonist Alex suffers a near-fatal heart attack and falls into a coma. Subsequent to that she misses the fall of the Berlin wall. Eight months later she awakes but remains extremely fragile. The doctors tell Alex, that any shock might cause a this time fatal heart attack. As Christiane was a devoted socialist, Alex redecorates the now westernised apartment with eastern furniture. He pays schoolboys to sing FDJ²²-songs for his mother and fakes the daily GDR news broadcasts from old footage. GDR in its 70s-version plays the role of a somewhat enchanted past, which is recreated for Christiane who remains in this era. As Alex articulates it at the end of the movie: he did not want to recreate GDR as it was but the way he would have liked it to be.

To achieve that Alex is sampling the "always similar" GDR news. The postmodern West manages to fool the mother who, until her death, is trapped in her world of modernity made up of the ongoing struggle for a better world to come. The VCR (as assemblage-machine) did not exist in Eastern Germany, as magnetic tapes were very expensive. By assembling bits and pieces Alex' imagined GDR comes to life. It is made up of childhood memories²³, family solidarity and a somehow literal realisation of the GDR-leadership's promises. Because the truth is inconceivable to Christiane a metanarrative is created that incorporates every fragment and reassembles it within the frame of Christiane's perception. When Christiane accidentally sees a large advertisement for Coca-Cola, Alex legitimizes it by a newsflash explaining that Coca-Cola was in fact a GDR-product falsified by the imperialist West. Objective truth does no longer exist in *Goodbye Lenin*. Unlike Christiane, Alex has understood this and uses the methods of the defunct state to deceive his mother: he blackmails his family and his girlfriend, re-brands Western products and reinterprets the fall of the wall, all for the higher goal of saving his family. In Christiane's room the Great Narrative²⁴ of GDR-Socialism (and thus modernity) lives on whereas on the outside the West is building the new city.

Both *Sonnenallee* and *Goodbye Lenin* look upon GDR from a safe, a postmodern distance. Stereotypes, clichés are used but the main tenor remains the choice of a small narrative, a "return to privacy". The private lives of the citizens in opposition to the state doctrine of both East and West. The movies show how GDR and then FRG invade the lives of common people. Both films were very successful in Germany and abroad but as well extensively debated in the media and accused of trivialisation. The issue with Ostalgia is that it cannot be positioned within a politically neutral frame. On one side Ostalgie is the result of the singular German situation. In contrast to Poland or former Czechoslovakia, where the population acknowledges having benefitted immensely from the change to capitalism, parts of the reunification-process were perceived as a cultural, political and economical takeover. The economical reboot of eastern Germany did not lead to an increased nationalism (as in other eastern European countries) but it required the rejection of the entire GDR-discourse within a short period of time. This proved especially difficult, as two thirds of the reunited country were able to hold on to their system of beliefs and had a significant advance in the knowledge of capitalist and democratic governance and economy. Ostalgie can therefore be seen as a cultural answer to a sentiment of colonisation. On the other side Ostalgie appears as a figure disregarding differences within the foreign (and domestic) culture. The exaggeration of otherness and the preserve of a nostalgic difference culturally recreate the defunct two blocs.

Svetlana Boym perceives *Goodbye Lenin* as a mix up of eastern and western dreams. By merging the Western dream of a third way (distinct from capitalism and communism) and the Eastern dream of the cosmos²⁵ in a fairy-tale, *Goodbye Lenin* deals with the private lives of the others and masks political implications. This "dictate of the private" was very much criticized, especially in Western Germany. A reason for this may be the fact that Ostalgie does not interpellate the specific western codes regarding GDR and its history, or history in general.²⁶ In the context of the ongoing GDR-Vergangenheitsbewältigung²⁷ on Germany's political agenda, German filmmakers felt a general unease in dealing with real-socialism. On television this was different. Whereas TV-shows (after *Sonnenallee* and *Goodbye Lenin*) focused on the ostalgie wave²⁸, several made for TV-movies chose to fictionalise the lives of dissidents or heroic escape attempts.²⁹ By the choice of the subjects and the inclusion of documentary footage their goal was to be as authentic as possible. Embedding them into theme-based evenings on TV where their broadcasting was followed by a documentary or round tables with witnesses to history enforced this feeling of authenticity. Those movies were less debated. The featured others mostly belonged to two groups: dissidents (or soon-to-become dissidents) and representatives of the state. This "good people vs. bad government"-ideology did not meet much criticism as the "realist take" on the subject was affirmed by experts and witnesses to history.

4. Westalgia

One of the few early attempts to fictionalise the Regime of the others was *the Promise* (1995) by Margarete von Trotta. The plot revolves around two separated lovers whose lives intertwine during three decades until German Reunification. *The Promise* depicts GDR as a dark grey country where the inhabitants labour and are constantly surveilled by their neighbours and the state. After the fall of the Wall a woman from Eastern Germany outlines the general situation with: "I have been locked in a cage for 30 years and I am now unable to fly" Such sentences were partly due to a western feeling of compassion with the new fellow countrymen who seemed unable to live in the new country. But they can as well be seen as projection of Western German fears and as a result of an all-too positive self-perception.³⁰

It took more than ten years before Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck made the first critically acclaimed movie that openly embraced the Western perception in an eastern setting: *The Lives of Others* tells the story of the playwright Georg Dreyman and his girlfriend the actress Christa-Maria Sieland. The Minister of Culture, wanting Christa-Marie for himself, places Dreyman under surveillance in order to uncover him as enemy of the state. This task is carried out by Stasi-officer³¹ Gerd Wiesler who invades the couple's intimacy by bugging their apartment. By his discovery of the couple's day-to-day life Wiesler gets aware of his own rather dull existence and eventually betrays the state in order to save Dreyman.

Whereas *The Promise* was rather unsuccessful, *The Lives of Others* was the third most successful German film in Germany in 2006 and won the Academy Award for Best Foreign Film. The movie's reception was generally favourable. Critics often mentioned that Donnersmarck's film was not ostalgie.³² This was primarily due to the fact that it came out after the multitude of ostalgie TV-shows in the wake of the successes of *Sonnenallee* and *Goodbye Lenin*. At that time Western German critics and journalist had already denounced the ostalgie take on GDR as trivialisation. Mariam Lau even described it as "Schamabwehr" (shame-defense) generated for the Eastern Germans not having the conscience for a "look back in anger" (because of their personal involvement).³³ *The Lives of Others* indirectly profited from the "Ostalgie-wave" as it was perceived as different.

At the same time it was stylistically far above the TV-productions. And it followed Brussig's premise in embedding Wiesler's story in the Thriller Genre. The formal quality and Donnersmarck's treatment of the subject made the movie a favourite of critics.³⁴ ³⁵ The support of former dissidents and German politicians combined with a clever marketing strategy, which kept the subject in the German media until the Oscar night, made *The Lives of Others* a commercial success as well. The main achievement of *The Lives of Others* remains that it managed to be perceived by as the long-awaited film on GDR. It was praised in the media and shown to schoolkids as part of the curriculum. After the "definitive" German film on Hitler: *Downfall* (2004) and before *The Baader-Meinhoff Komplex* (2008), dealing with the Red Army Faction, Donnersmarck by his "event-movie" managed to influence discourse. *The Lives of Others* shows the oppression of the Stasi-Regime and the lives of the "New Germans" by translating specific regional events into a universally understandable visual form. At the same time it uses specific Eastern cultural codes like Brecht's "Ballad of the Good Person" to express a humanist "Weltanschauung" which can be gained by everyone, even Wiesler.

5. The authentic others

Svetlana Boym describes the indulgment in nostalgia for the communist past as a natural consequence of a pervasive feeling of irrelevance of East German life, values and worldview in reunited discourse. Hence it is less an idealisation of the past GDR than a mechanism linking the present to that past. At the same time this nostalgia acknowledges that the past is irretrievably lost.³⁶ It is therefore not surprising that "Ostalgie" appears in the genre of poetic comedies. The balance between comedy and drama allows to domesticate Western stereotypes of the East. By narrating the story of the Eastern family within a frame the Western audience is familiar with, an identification with the formerly unknown other takes place.³⁷ Otherness is therefore attenuated to a point where it is no longer perceived. But the genre of comedy works as a safeguard mechanism as well. The confrontation of the viewer with a sensitive subject remains under discursive control: -Hey it is just a comedy!

A thriller like *The Lives of Others* works in a similar way, yet the identification is double here. The viewer takes part in Wiesler's voyeurism discovering "the others" Dreymann and Sieland. The delicate subject of the state invading the life of its citizens is approached but again in accordance with the rules of the thriller genre. Subsequently the viewer discovers the better (because more similar) life of the couple and leaves Wiesler's POV for that of Dreymann and Sieland. At the same time Wiesler's otherness is gradually disintegrating as he becomes more and more human and therefore similar.

This dealing with taboo or controversial subjects by embedding them in genre cinema is not new in German cinema. The years after World War II saw an increasing production of "Heimatfilme" coping with the destroyed country and the situation of the displaced from the East. The Edgar-Wallace-adaptations of the 60s were set in a highly artificial Great Britain and dealt with lust and violence and were tailored to the war-generation. Genocide and the Eastern Front were thematised in the Western of the 60s, the likes of *Winnetou I* (1963) The rather rigid rules and conventions of genre-cinema permit to treat such subjects within a frame of reference the audience is familiar with.

Ostalgic films like *Goodbye Lenin* introduced Eastern-German everyday-life into reunited German Discourse and Western audiences to specific cultural codes from the East. Through comedy the political process of Reunification is reevaluated and the results show that it was achieved in an unbalanced way. Yet the common life of the other Germans was perceived by mainstream media as distorted as the crimes of the communist leadership were voluntarily left out. The same media praised Donnersmarck's film for its realist stance on the subject. Yet the life of the others in Donnersmarck's film is not "more realistic" than most ostalgic films. Berlin in the Eighties, where the film is set, resembles Soviet Union under Stalin (or at least the way we imagine it). A successful author like Dreymann, with contacts to the West, would have had protection through these contacts not the opposite.³⁸ Yet several events surrounding the film had a legitimizing effect on the movie. Ironically when the film came out former Stasi Officers made the headlines when they objected against the denomination "communist dictatorship" at the former prison in Berlin-Hohenschönhausen, which is nowadays a remembrance site.³⁹ Furthermore one of the main actors filed a lawsuit against his former wife who supposedly worked for the Stasi.^{40 41} The delivery of the first DVD-edition was stopped by court order as it contained allegations about the Stasi-collaboration of a German politician. Such events helped the movie gain authenticity in a still highly political discourse on GDR.

But why is authenticity considered so important, its abundance or lack of, the main source of praise and criticism? The reception of the GDR-films analysed here does not treat movies as systems of signs without reference in reality⁴². The use of documentary effect is perceived as authentic and neutral dealing with political subjects. At the same time authenticity is equated with open criticism of GDR (-politics). Following the maxim: "There is no right life amidst wrongs" a realist approach has therefore to include the wrongdoings of the regime. The focus on privacy of ostalgic films is not perceived as authentic, especially as their fictionality is discernible due to their embedding in the genre of comedy. This derives from the firm belief that fictionality is subject to trivialisation and/or ideological manipulation. *The Lives of Others* managed that the public perceived its fictionality (they know that the actor playing the Stasi-Officer is not a real Stasi-Officer), but at the same gave him credit for being a witness (because he was himself subject to espionage).^{43 44} This shall not mean that *The Lives of Others* is a top-bottom manipulation through culture by strategic use of iconography and language. Yet it shall serve as an acknowledgment of the ongoing performative reading of GDR in reunited Germany's discourse(s). There is of course an ideological component to that

reading but not so much from a historical point of view (now defunct communist state entity). It is more a process establishing "objective-" and "subjective reality" by the dissemination of various forms of (competing) discursive elements. This allows the construction of reality orders but is as well subject to conflicts. The praise for the anti-communist stance of *The Lives of Others* can therefore be seen as a backlash of the old FRG-discourse, having won the ideological war with the competing political system and wanting to consolidate this victory within Reunited Germany. Ostalgie on the other hand, has to be opposed from a Western point of view as it masks the political crimes of the GDR-government by establishing Eastern Germany in collective memory as an alternative political experiment. This is especially important for films as they visually reproduce the aesthetics of the East.⁴⁵

Even though the reception of (mainstream) GDR-films differed very much, the movies themselves tend to work the same way when it comes to the treatment of otherness. By the genre approach otherness is attenuated to the point of identification. Yet at a certain point those parts of the audience (in East and West) that are autobiographically affected fail to identify. This is especially true for the ostalgie movies in the comedy genre.

The German Chainsaw Massacre constitutes an exception. The main reason is that it deliberately refuses genre-classification. It is a mere pastiche of the "backwood slasher genre"(which by definition deals with otherness) but lacks the victims. It unhinges the genre rules to a point where otherness is not attenuated but overplayed. Therefore the audience is neither able to identify with the others nor with his own people. Authenticity is therefore not relevant. Original footage is used but never appears "true". Schlingensiefel himself acknowledged that he does not believe in authentic representation, that only excessive exaggeration may approach truth.⁴⁶ The aim is to reach an outside-look from within: to analyse a specific discourse by its reproduction. Instead of the event (reunification) and its protagonists (the respective others) Schlingensiefel chooses to show consequences and maniacs. Instead of unity: dismemberment. "In a time when everything is possible it doesn't matter if it is good or bad." is a recurring quote from the film: the event and the impossibility of its representation.

Notes

- ¹ GDR/DDR -German Democratic Republic.
- ² FRG/BRD -Federal Republic of Germany.
- ³ Sozialreport 2010, Die deutsche Vereinigung 1999-2010. Positionen der Bürgerinnen und Bürger, In: http://www.volkssolidaritaet.de/cms/vs_media/Downloads/Bundesverband/PDF_Dateien/2010/100831SR2010kurzDF.pdf [03/08/2011].
- ⁴ Wim Wenders' *The Wings of Desire* (1987) can be seen as an example for (german) cinematic treatment of GDR in the seventies-eighties as is Wieland Speck's *Westler* (1985)
- ⁵ Wolfgang Staudte's *The Murderers are among us* (1945/46) to Dany Levy's *Mein Führer* (2007).
- ⁶ Hereafter "genre" will not be understood as mere classification but as a system of recurrent patterns, helping the audience to actively construct meaning. SOLOMON, Stanley J. (1995): Beyond Formula. American Film Genres, In: BOYD-BARRET, O./NEWBOLD, C. (Eds.): Approaches to Media. A Reader, London, p. 453-9. [1967] John Fiske explains genre by the vision of a car chase only making sense in relation to all the other car chases the viewer has seen on-screen. FISKE, John (1987): Television Culture, London, p. 115.
- ⁷ KELLER, Reiner (2005): Analysing Discourse. An Approach from the Sociology of Knowledge, In: Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung, Vol 6/3.
- ⁸ ALTHUSSER, Louis (1965): Positions, Paris, p.120.
- ⁹ THOMAS, Andreas (1990): Das Deutsche Kettensägenmassaker. Blut und Boden und Schleim, In: <http://www.filmzentrale.com/rezis/deutschekettensaegenmassakerat.htm> [27.02.2011].
- ¹⁰ GROH, Thomas (2006): Vorwort. Splatterwerkstatt Deutschland, In: KÖHNE, J./ KUSCHKE, R. /METELING, A. (eds.): Splattermovies. Essays zum modernen Horrorfilm, Berlin.
- ¹¹ GÖTTLER, Fritz (1990): Wo alles Wurscht ist, In: *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, December 28th.
- ¹² SEIDL, Claudius (1990): Von Menschen und Metzgern, In: *Der Spiegel* 49/03.12.1990, p. 264.
- ¹³ LÖSER, Claus (2007): DDR Revisited. Mediale Umcodierungen, In: *Recherche Film und Fernsehen* 1/2007, p.43.
- ¹⁴ Explosiv-der heiße Stuhl: Gewalt im Fernsehen /RTL 15.09.1992.
- ¹⁵ BUCH, Hans-Christoph (1999): Schönen Gruß von Charlie Chaplin, In: *Der Tagesspiegel*, Nov. 9th, p.28.
- ¹⁶ WOLLE, Stefan (2000): Schatten in der Sonnenallee, In: *Die Welt*, Feb. 2nd, p. 14.
- ¹⁷ COOKE, Paul (2003): Performing Ostalgie. Leander Haußmann's Sonnenallee, In: *German Life and Letters* 56/2,p.156-67.
- ¹⁸ SCHENK, Ralf (2009): Von Brussig bis Brecht. Die DDR-Vergangenheit und ihre Widerspiegelung in neuen deutschen Filmen. Ein Überblick, In: Dossier <http://www.bpb.de/themen/9RBZBB.html> [27.02.2011].
- ¹⁹ The novel Sonnenallee was written after the movie and is set in the Eighties shortly before reunification.
- ²⁰ Honecker brought several liberalisations in comparison to the era Ulbricht, one of them being Rock Music, which is featured on the movie soundtrack.
- ²¹ When GDR was, according to the movie, still an important player and sent the first German into space.
- ²² FDJ-Freie Deutsche Jugend: the socialist youth movement of the GDR.
- ²³ Sigmund Jähn, the first GDR-Kosmonaut and Alex' childhood hero eventually becomes president and reunites Germany.
- ²⁴ LYOTARD, Jean-François (1979): La condition postmoderne, Paris, p. 63.
- ²⁵ BOYM, Svetlana (2009): Nostalgia and its Discontents, In: http://www.agora8.org/reader/Boym_Nostalgia_Discontents.html#1 [11/07/2011].
- ²⁶ FRG had already dealt with the Third Reich whereas GDR had officially located the guilt for the Shoa and WWII on the other side of the Iron Curtain.
- ²⁷ Roughly to be translated as 'struggle to come to term with the past'.
- ²⁸ f.ex *die Ostshow, die Ostalgie-Show, Die Große DDR-Show*. Shows hosted by and featuring GDR-celebrities and GDR-music.
- ²⁹ f. ex. *Der Tunnel* (2001) by Roland Suso Richter and *Nikolaikirche* (1995) by Frank Beyer.
- ³⁰ SCHENK, Ralf (2009): Das verschwundene Halbland. Die DDR im deutschen Kino nach 1989, In: *Film-Dienst* 22, p. 9.
- ³¹ MfS: Ministerium für Staatssicherheit- the official State Security Service of GDR.
- ³² WACH, Alexandra (2006): Das Leben der Anderen In: [film-dienst](http://www.film-dienst.de) Nr. 6/2006, S. 42–43.
- ³³ LAU, Mariam (2006): Schluß mit lustig, In: *Die Welt*, Mar. 22, p.3.
- ³⁴ GANSERA, Rainer (2006): In der Lauge der Angst, In: *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, Mar. 23, p. 12.
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