

Chapter 3

East German cinema after unification¹

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THE END OF DEFA

The collapse of state socialism in the German Democratic Republic saw one of the most dramatic and rapid transformations of a country's political and economic system that history has ever witnessed. Against this backdrop, DEFA (Deutsche Film Aktiengesellschaft), just like all other state-owned enterprises, was privatized. For 46 years DEFA had enjoyed monopoly status, being East Germany's only film production and distribution company. At the time of its privatization, DEFA consisted of a feature film studio in Potsdam-Babelsberg, a documentary film studio in Berlin and Potsdam, an animation studio in Dresden, and a dubbing studio in Berlin-Johannisthal. There was also copy works, an import and export division, DEFA-Außenhandel, and Progress Film-Verleih, which was in charge of film programming and distribution.²

Between 1946, when DEFA was founded in the Soviet occupied zone, and 1992, when the Babelsberg site was sold to Compagnie Immobilière Phénix Deutschland GmbH for 130 million DM,³ the DEFA feature film studio produced no less than 750 feature films – an average of 15 films per year. Amongst them were critically acclaimed masterpieces, indeed milestones of German film history. When, on the 100th anniversary of cinema in 1995, German film critics and producers were invited to compile a list of the 100 most important German films of all time, no less than 14 DEFA films were nominated.⁴ Amongst them were Wolfgang Staudte's *The Murderers Are among Us* (*Die Mörder sind unter uns*, 1947), Kurt Maetzig's *Marriage in the Shadows* (*Ehe im Schatten*, 1947), Konrad

Wolf's *I Was Nineteen* (*Ich war neunzehn*, 1967) and *Divided Heaven* (*Der geteilte Himmel*, 1964), Frank Beyer's *Jacob the Liar* (*Jakob der Lügner*, 1974) and *Trace of Stones* (*Spur der Steine*, 1966/1989), Gerhard Klein's *Berlin – Schönhauser Corner* (*Berlin – Ecke Schönhauser*, 1957), and Heiner Carow's *The Legend of Paul and Paula* (*Die Legende von Paul und Paula*, 1974). What this brief and incomplete list of film titles reveals was that DEFA's reputation was founded on two traditions in particular: the anti-fascist tradition and the socialist realist tradition. This chapter will explore to what extent east German filmmakers stayed true to these two most prominent strands of East German film culture after 1990, notwithstanding the dramatically changed conditions of film production and reception in the wake of German reunification.

Soon after the privatization of the Babelsberg studio site, it became apparent that the new owners had no intention whatsoever of preserving the DEFA heritage. This heritage had been predicated on the assumption that film, alongside the other arts, had a central role to play in the grand project of constructing a socialist society. What the new owners had in mind was to turn the Babelsberg site into a lucrative business with a theme park, prime location real estate, a state-of-the-art media centre, and a film studio, which they named Studio Babelsberg Motion Pictures GmbH. The company logo paid tribute to Fritz Lang's film *Metropolis* (1927), which was also made in the film city Babelsberg when UFA was based there.⁵ No mention of DEFA was made in the studio's new name, most of DEFA's remaining staff were made redundant, and DEFA was officially struck off the register of companies in August 1994.

The west German film director Volker Schlöndorff, who was appointed as the artistic director of the new studio, had visions of creating a Hollywood in Europe. But his dream never came true, for instead of trying to develop a new creative centre of German or European film production, the studio management's strategy was to attract international big-budget productions. However, the number of such productions, including Jean-Jacques Annaud's \$80 million epic about Stalingrad, *Duel – Enemy at the Gates* (2000) and Roman Polanski's *The Pianist* (2001), remained small. The attempt to stimulate the development of indigenous film production by setting up Babelsberg Independents – a production and development unit within the studio

which aimed to support Berlin-based young directors – resulted in just a few films. One looked hopelessly for the familiar names of ex-DEFA filmmakers who had, it seemed, been ousted from what was once *their* film city in the wake of German reunification. In order to stay economically viable, Babelsberg's loss-making studios had to focus increasingly on television productions, in particular, lucrative soaps and chat shows. The future of film production at Babelsberg remains uncertain: Vivendi, the new owner of Media City Babelsberg, was 35 billion Euros in debt in 2002, and so far Studio Babelsberg has not succeeded in establishing itself in Germany's struggling film industry. The prospects for Babelsberg are bleak, or, as Bärbel Dalichow, the director of the Postdam Filmmuseum, aptly put it: 'A third life of the film city Babelsberg is unlikely but not impossible.'⁶

'IT'S BETTER TO LIVE IN THE JUNGLE THAN IN A ZOO': FACING ARTISTIC AUTONOMY

While Germany was swept up in a wave of unification euphoria, DEFA's filmmakers could not yet foresee the decline and eventual disappearance of DEFA. Instead, they were exhilarated by the prospect of being able to make films without having to worry about the state's interference and censorship, since in autumn 1989 the newly installed Minister of Culture granted all sectors of culture autonomy from state control. Nominally the Central Film Office (*Hauptverwaltung Film*) – a department in the Ministry of Culture which was in charge of regulating and controlling the GDR's entire film industry – continued to exist until March 1990. However, it effectively ceased to operate when the GDR's last Film Minister, Horst Pehnert, relinquished his post alongside many other cultural functionaries in November 1989. Films could now be produced and distributed without the approval of the Film Office. At last, the time had come to speak the unspeakable and make films that addressed subject matters which had hitherto been taboo. It was now possible to renounce the official aesthetic doctrine of socialist realism, which had, until then, remained mandatory in some form or another, and experiment with an avant-garde aesthetic that was still novel for east

German filmmakers but was long outdated across the rest of Europe. The time had also come to dig out those 'forbidden films' which had been banished to the state film archives in the wake of the infamous Eleventh Plenum of the Central Committee of the SED in December 1965, and prepare their public release.⁷ The newly-gained freedom was even accompanied by some modest financial support from the GDR's last government, which granted DEFA some 18 million DM for the production of eight final films, the so-called *Überläuferfilme* (run-over films, i.e. films that had been conceptualized before but were only realized after the fall of the SED regime). Thus the period of transition afforded filmmakers the unique opportunity of still receiving funding from the state without having to conform to its supervisory rigour.

Not surprisingly, this sudden release from strict state control into complete artistic autonomy proved a double-edged sword for many filmmakers. The Film Office had not just acted as a censor, but in its capacity as the patron of the film industry had also assumed the role fulfilled by a producer in a capitalist system of film production, namely to weed out badly-crafted scripts or insist on alterations that would improve a film's quality and audience appeal. In the absence of such external quality control during the period of transition, some filmmakers celebrated their new creative autonomy in a self-indulgent manner and lost sight of their audience. Ulrich Weiß's *Miraculi* (1992) and Herwig Kipping's *The Country Beyond the Rainbow* (*Das Land hinter dem Regenbogen*, 1992), are illustrative examples of this trend: both are highly enigmatic parables of life in the former GDR which received recognition from some critics (Kipping's film even won the Federal Film Prize at the International Film Festival in Berlin), but failed to resonate with the public.⁸

Moreover, east German filmmakers were no longer sheltered from the harsh realities of the market. As a result, even well crafted films such as Roland Gräf's *The Tango Player* (*Der Tangospieler*, 1991), based on Christoph Hein's novel of the same name, performed poorly at the box-office. It was not the film that was to blame, but rather the changed conditions of film distribution and exhibition in the new federal states. The film's theatrical release in 1991 coincided with the privatization of cinemas. Nearly half of the 800 cinemas in the new federal states were gradually being closed, in particular those in provincial areas.

This massive closure severely diminished access to what once used to be a prime leisure activity for young people in the GDR. The majority of the remaining cinemas were taken over by west German cinema chains which modernized them and converted them into multiplexes. The change in cinema ownership had significant repercussions for the type of films that were shown. Whilst in the past DEFA productions had been promoted through centrally-devised programming policies which ensured a high visibility of the GDR's national film culture across the country, this artificial protection no longer existed after the privatization of cinemas. Suddenly east German films faced unmitigated competition from Hollywood blockbusters. As Leonie Naughton poignantly states, '[b]y the time *The Tango Player* reached theatres, cinema owners had realized that they could make more money selling popcorn than from screening DEFA films.'⁹

The general transformation of east Germany's cultural economy of shortage, which lacked a developed entertainment industry, into a cultural sphere with a variety of offerings contributed to the rapid decline of cinema audiences. Moreover, prices for cinema tickets, which had been heavily subsidized in the past, more than tripled, making a visit to the cinema an almost unaffordable luxury for many east Germans at a time when they were facing major economic insecurities. In 1988 East German citizens went to the cinema on average four times a year (as frequently as the Americans), by 1992 this figure had dwindled to just one visit per year.¹⁰

Of equal significance was the fact that the new cultural climate had changed audience expectations and behaviour. Fictionalized accounts of contemporary society in the style of DEFA (*Gegenwartsfilme*), a key 'DEFA genre', had lost favour with east German audiences. Given the choice between socialist enlightenment and sheer escapist entertainment, cinema goers opted for the latter. Entertainment films and Hollywood imports had been undeniably more popular with audiences even when the Film Office still prescribed what kind of films were deemed suitable viewing. However, domestic productions, and in particular films about contemporary society, had a unique role to play in the GDR's tightly controlled public sphere.¹¹ Film, albeit to a lesser extent than literature, had provided a platform for oblique criticism and filled an information deficit left in the Party-controlled public sphere.

Readers and audiences had learnt to decipher deviant messages by reading between the lines. Although cultural functionaries, who were not dumb either, understood them too, they often let them pass, depending on the prevailing political climate. Thus, what is usually referred to as the replacement function (*Stellvertreter Funktion*) of art in the GDR constituted a significant aspect of the audience appeal of films which were rumoured to have been only reluctantly approved by the officials. Not all of them became box-office hits on the scale of Heiner Carow's cult film *The Legend of Paul and Paula*, but the lure of the almost forbidden had at least drawn a large share of the educated public. In the post-Wall public sphere, in which freedom of expression was a given, films that spoke the truth had lost their magic spell.

The market for East German films in the old federal states was even smaller. Since the 1980s, Hollywood films have accounted for around 80% of all box-office receipts, leaving only a small share for other foreign imports and domestic productions. Moreover, West German audiences had traditionally shown little interest in the film culture of their brothers and sisters on the other side of the Wall. German unification did not spark a sudden interest in films made in 'the other part of Germany', and to date the only east German film that has appealed to audiences in the old and the new federal states alike has been Leander Haußmann's nostalgic comedy, *Sonnenallee* (1999).

Against this background of a dramatically changing media landscape, DEFA filmmakers were struggling for their artistic survival. DEFA's directors, scriptwriters, cameramen and other artistic staff had been permanently employed by the studio and never had to worry about making a living. For most of them the dismantling of the east German film industry meant a free fall from complete security to total independence, from the status of a once revered artist to a nobody. They lacked vital contacts with producers in the west and independent east German production companies were only gradually being set up. Inexperienced in raising funding for films – they had never had to worry about budgets, which had been centrally allocated by the Film Office and the studio management – DEFA's filmmakers lost their way in Germany's notorious film subsidy jungle.

Only a handful of DEFA's old guard of directors and scriptwriters succeeded in adjusting to these new conditions. Many took early

retirement, others went to work for television. Frank Beyer, best known in the west for his banned film *Trace of Stones*, has extensively worked for television since unification. His productions include a 1995 adaptation of Erich Loest's novel *Nicolai Church* (*Nikolaikirche*, 1995), about one of the centres of the GDR's 'velvet revolution' in Leipzig, which was subsequently released in cinemas, and *When All the Germans Are Asleep* (*Wenn alle Deutschen schlafen*, 1994). Like Beyer's Oscar-nominated film, *Jacob the Liar*, this television film is based on a text by Jurek Becker and depicts life in a Polish ghetto. Egon Günther, who had left the GDR in 1978 and worked in Munich for twelve years, returned to Babelsberg to direct two feature films: *Stein* (1991), a dream-like parable about the lost socialist utopia, and *The Mask of Desire* (*Die Braut*, 1998), a film about Goethe's relationship with Christiane Vulpius. Roland Gräf and Rainer Simon both made one more feature film, *The Mystery of the Amber Room* (*Die Spur des Bernsteinzimmers*, 1991) and *Distant Country, Pa-isch* (*Fernes Land Pa-isch*, 1993/2000). Heiner Carow, an exceptionally popular director in the GDR with a dozen feature films to his name, made just one more, *The Misdemeanour* (*Die Verfehlung*, 1991), and thereafter worked for television until his untimely death in 1997. Several of DEFA's scriptwriters, including Christl Gräf, Stefan Kolditz, and Wolfgang Kohlhaase have continued to write screenplays for east and west German feature and television productions. Similarly, many east German actors such as Michael Gwisdek, Sylvester Groth and Corinna Harfouch, to mention but a few, who made a name for themselves in DEFA productions but who were never permanently employed by the studio, have successfully adapted to the changed conditions of film production.

For DEFA's next generation of directors (*Nachwuchsregisseure*), the radical transformation of the cultural sphere was a blessing in disguise. If DEFA had continued to exist, they would have had to embark on a drawn-out studio apprenticeship as assistant directors before being assigned to their own projects, if indeed this ever happened. Instead, the dissolution of the rigid hierarchy in the DEFA studio at the time of the revolution resulted in the establishment of an autonomous artistic working group, *DaDaeR*, in January 1990. This group is associated with a number of aesthetically innovative or ideologically provocative debut films, notably Jörg Foth's *Last* from the *DaDaeR* (*Letztes aus der DaDaeR*,

1990), Kipping's aforementioned *The Country Beyond the Rainbow*, and Peter Welz's *Banal Days* (*Banale Tage*, 1992). After the revolution, Thomas Wilkening, one of the unit's co-founders, was commercially astute enough to transform it into a limited company, making Thomas Wilkening Filmgesellschaft east Germany's first private production company. Helke Misselwitz's feature film debut *Herzsprung* (1992),¹² and her next film, *Little Angel* (*Engelchen*, 1996), as well as Kipping's enigmatic artist bio-pic *Novalis* (1994) were among the first films produced or co-produced by Wilkening.

The most prolific and, in terms of the critical resonance of their films, most successful contemporary east German directors are currently Andreas Dresen and Andreas Kleinert. Both were born shortly after the Berlin Wall was erected; both graduated from the Konrad Wolf Film Academy in Babelsberg when the GDR ceased to exist; and both welcomed the abolition of the GDR's centralized system of cultural production, to which Kleinert so poignantly referred in his *bon mot*: 'It's better to live in the jungle than in a zoo.'¹³ Although both filmmakers have made a name for themselves with films which reflect the social and moral dilemmas of reunification, including Dresen's *Silent Country* (*Stilles Land*, 1992) and *The Policewoman* (*Die Polizistin*, 1999), and Kleinert's *Lost Landscape* (*Verlorene Landschaft*, 1992), *Outside Time* (*Neben der Zeit*, 1995), and *Paths in the Night* (*Wege in die Nacht*, 1999), they wish to shake off the label 'East German filmmaker' arguing that they address issues of universal relevance, albeit in a specifically east German social context.¹⁴

THE LEGACY OF DEFA IN EAST GERMAN FILMS OF THE 1990s

Even a cursory glance at the films made by east German directors after unification highlights significant continuities and discontinuities with the DEFA tradition. The most startling discontinuity is the almost complete absence of films that would once have been classified as 'anti-fascist' films, the lifeline of DEFA's feature film production.¹⁵ In fact, from its very first film, *The Murderers Are among Us* until the end of DEFA in 1992, DEFA produced approximately 100 anti-fascist films.

This represents roughly 13% of the entire feature film production. The importance accorded to the theme of anti-fascism in DEFA's feature film production reflects its cultural function as nation-building myth. While the focus of the anti-fascist genre is primarily on the triumphs and tribulations of heroic anti-fascist resistance fighters, it also comprises numerous remarkable films about anti-Semitism and the Holocaust, notably Kurt Maetzig's *Marriage in the Shadows*, and Konrad Wolf's *Stars (Sterne, 1959)* and *Professor Mamlock (1961)*.

In the wake of German unification, this great DEFA tradition has been largely abandoned. This is all the more astounding given that the search for a new and shared German identity after reunification resulted in a renewed interest in the Third Reich and the Holocaust, not least because after four decades of division these traumatic events provided the only common memory of German nationhood. Given the different interpretations of National Socialism in the GDR and the FRG, the democratization of memory in the wake of reunification resulted in a contestation and a rapid succession of public debates about whose memory would be represented in the new German national identity. West German filmmakers were quick to respond by making numerous films about the Third Reich and the Holocaust. The theme of anti-Semitism, in particular, received unprecedented attention in films such as Max Färberböck's *Aimée and Jaguar (Aimée und Jaguar, 1998)*, Rolf Schübel's *Gloomy Sunday – A Song of Love and Death (Gloomy Sunday – Ein Lied von Liebe und Tod, 1999)*, Michael Verhoeven's *My Mother's Courage (Mutters Courage, 1995)*, Joseph Vilsmaier's *Comedian Harmonists (1998)* and Dani Levi's *The Giraffe (Meschugge, 1998)*.¹⁶

What the small number of films about the Nazi past that were made by east German filmmakers in the 1990s all have in common is that they break with the conventions of the anti-fascist tradition and instead continue the trend that first manifested itself in a number DEFA films of the 1980s. Namely, they question the myth of heroic anti-fascist resistance,¹⁷ and acknowledge that the east Germans, too, are not free from guilt.¹⁸ They also redefine the relationship between Germans and Russians,¹⁹ asserting for the first time that the Russians were not (as official memory in the GDR had it) perceived as the eagerly awaited liberators, but instead as the 'Bolshevik menace' or simply the enemy. Notwithstanding a few remarkable films about Germany's Nazi past,

east German filmmakers made relatively few contributions to the east-west German memory contest during the 1990s. This was presumably because they were too preoccupied with coming to terms with a more recent past and its ramifications for the present. They were anxious not to repeat the sins of their fathers, who made peace with the perpetrators, but wanted instead to critically examine the GDR's Stalinist dictatorship through their films.

This preoccupation with the GDR's immediate past and its repercussions for the present is reflected in the numerous films that address concerns close to the heart of east Germans at the time. Thus many of the social issue-based films made by east German filmmakers after the collapse of the SED regime can be considered as a continuation of DEFA's films about contemporary society (*Gegenwartsfilme*), the second most important life-line of the feature film studio. Films about contemporary society began to play a prominent role in DEFA productions from the 1950s onwards, when filmmakers were encouraged to support the state's socio-economic agenda, the 'construction of socialism' (*Aufbau des Sozialismus*) and the 'consolidation of socialism' (*Ankunft im Sozialismus*) by making films that depicted the lives of ordinary people in socialist society. These films are not exactly the kind of stuff that celluloid dreams are made of. They dwell on problems at the workplace, examine the relationship between the individual and the socialist collective, and in many respects look like an illustrated social history of the GDR. Some are didactic and aim to help people master the problems they face in contemporary society; others (notably the more popular ones) provide counter-narratives to the official master-narrative of socialism. What many of the east German films of the 1990s have in common with DEFA's films about contemporary society is that they are socially committed films that are firmly grounded in the experience of ordinary life in east Germany, shortly before or after the end of state socialism. They are indebted to the aesthetic principles of a strong realist tradition, but one that has at last been liberated from the restrictions imposed by the hitherto mandatory qualification 'socialist'. Consequently, heroes no longer have to be positive, problems do not necessarily have to come with solutions, and an optimistic and progressive outlook on life is no longer obligatory. Eighteen years after Erich Honecker's frequently invoked remark that there would be no

more taboos in the realm of art and literature, the promise has at last come true.

Many of the films made shortly after the demise of the East German regime look back in anger at the GDR and accuse the paternalistic state of having abused its authority and suppressed its children. In particular, the all-pervasive surveillance by the *Stasi* (short for *Staatssicherheitsdienst*, the State Security Service) is a prominent theme in several post-unification films of the early 1990s. The *Stasi*'s hydra-like surveillance network infiltrated every sphere and niche of GDR society. Everybody could be potentially spying, being spied on, or both. In the feature film studio alone, some 60 to 70 unofficial informers (*inoffizielle Mitarbeiter*) had been working during the 1970s and 1980s, and files on both victims of the *Stasi* (*Opferakten*) and *Stasi* employees and unofficial informers (*Täterakten*) who had worked for DEFA were lodged with the Ministry for State Security.²¹

In the initial years after the opening up of the *Stasi* archives, 'the public developed a lurid fascination with the stories of victims and perpetrators of the East German secret police'.²² It became an extremely popular theme on talk shows that were trying to boost audience ratings with sensational revelations of victims and perpetrators. The *Stasi* became the voraciously consumed subject of infotainment, but also the concern of more serious attempts to come to terms with the past. The numerous feature films made by ex-DEFA directors during the early 1990s, which centre on the victims and perpetrators of *Stasi* surveillance can be seen as an important contribution to working through the past.

Frank Beyer's film *The Suspicion* (*Der Verdacht*, 1991), based on the east German writer Volker Braun's *Unfinished Story* (*Unvollendete Geschichte*, 1975/1988),²³ provides an evocative account of the mistrust and fear sown amongst people by the omnipresence of the *Stasi*. It is shown to destroy the humanity and dignity of peoples' lives, to break up families and relationships. In *The Tango Player*, the protagonist and victim of *Stasi* allegations and manipulations suffers from an acute loss of identity as a result of his imprisonment. Michael Gwisdek's *Farewell to Agnes* (*Abschied von Agnes*, 1994) is a dark comedy which revisits the *Stasi* experience from the vantage point of the early 1990s. Heiner, an unemployed academic and writer, spends his days mourning the loss of his beloved wife, Agnes, recording his memories of her on a tape

recorder. The *tristesse* of his isolated and eccentric existence is suddenly interrupted when a young man named Stefan forces his way into Heiner's flat, seeking refuge from a pack of journalists in pursuit of him. As the two men end up living together, a somewhat sado-masochistic dependency with homoerotic undertones develops between them, which again and again prevents Heiner from getting rid of his unwelcome guest. When it transpires that Stefan, a former *Stasi* major (hence the media witch-hunt directed towards him) knows the most intimate details of Heiner's dreams and fears, details which only Heiner's wife Agnes can have conveyed, Heiner kills the former spy by throwing him out of the fourth-floor window. The sinister suggestion that Heiner's farewell to Agnes took a similar form adds to the ambiguity of the film, which is essentially a psychograph of the complex relationship between victim and perpetrator.²⁴

Another theme that preoccupied east German filmmakers after unification was Germany's erstwhile division. The theme itself was not new, but the ideological slant with which it was approached changed after the fall of the communist regime in the GDR. During the days of DEFA several productions had made reference to Germany's division, most notably the four so-called 'Wall films' (*Mauerfilme*) of the 1960s which present the erection of the Berlin Wall in the most positive and partisan terms.²⁵ Even films which provide a much more balanced and discursive comment on Germany's division, such as Konrad Wolf's *Divided Heaven* and Roland Gräf's *The Escape* (*Die Flucht*, 1977), ultimately confirm the superiority of socialism and the GDR, albeit without condoning the enforced imprisonment of East German citizens in their own country.

Although Wolf's and Gräf's films were daring for their times in that they addressed the taboo topic of illegal emigration from the Republic (*Republikflucht*), predictably, those films which were made or completed after the fall of the Wall are much more outspoken about the inhumanity of the enforced division between the German people and the sense of isolation and imprisonment that was part of the East German experience. In Heiner Carow's melodrama *The Misdemeanour*, the 'forbidden' love between Elisabeth, a middle-aged cleaning woman in a desolate East German border town, and Jacob, a dockworker from Hamburg, is tragically destroyed through the German–German border

and a system of surveillance and betrayal. More poignantly, even when the Wall comes down and the lovers could be reunited at last, they have just missed each other:²⁶ Elisabeth, the victim of a political system that has deprived her of personal fulfilment, has avenged herself by shooting her oppressor and has been sentenced to prison. She thus becomes ineluctably entangled in the power structures of the GDR's totalitarian system from which she cannot escape even after its demise.²⁷

Andreas Kleinert's film *Lost Landscape* gives a retrospective account of the childhood of its protagonist, Elias, in the GDR. His parents have done precisely what the GDR's paternalistic state also did: they have built a high fence around their home to protect their child from the harmful and deceitful influences of the outside world. The son eventually escapes and becomes a successful politician in the West. Kleinert's film is a parable, not just about the 'fenced-in' German Democratic Republic, but also about fences and barriers in a more symbolic sense. The barrier of estrangement that Elias finds almost impossible to overcome when he visits his parents in the former GDR after decades of separation corresponds to the estrangement east and west Germans experienced when the Wall came down. For Elias's parents, just as for Elisabeth in *The Misdemeanour*, freedom has come too late: they commit suicide.

Violent death and suicide are prominent motifs in several films that depict the social and personal problems of east Germans in the wake of reunification. Herein lies another violation of an erstwhile taboo: death was a theme which DEFA filmmakers were to avoid, with the exception, that is, of sacrificial or heroic death for a good cause, such as the fight against the fascists or the class enemy. The depiction of ordinary death, be it by accident or illness, was considered to be pessimistic and thus incompatible with the optimistic and progressive pathos of socialist art. Hence films which touched upon the theme of death, let alone suicide, such as Egon Günther's *The Keys* (*Die Schlüssel*, 1974), *The Legend of Paul and Paula*, and Konrad Wolf's *Solo Sunny* (1980) invariably gave rise to controversy and debate. But the prominence of the death motif in several east German films of the 1990s cannot simply be explained by filmmakers' fascination with what used to be taboo.

While the murders committed by the protagonists in *Farewell to Agnes* and *The Misdemeanour* are symbolic acts of liberation from the GDR's

totalitarian rule and its representatives, the violent deaths that occur in several other post-unification films are less readily explained in terms of their symbolic significance.²⁸ In particular in Andreas Kleinert's second feature film, *Outside Time*, the murder of a Russian deserter is embedded in an ambiguous web of references. The film is set in a small town somewhere in Brandenburg, a place which, as the title suggests, is rapidly falling 'outside time' since it cannot keep pace with the changes brought about by unification and the transformation of the former GDR. The Russian troops stationed there have withdrawn and their barracks have turned into rat-infested ruins; the intercity trains do not stop there any more and even the regional railway link to Berlin is going to be suspended. Most young people are leaving. Against this backdrop, the film tells the fateful love story of a young east German woman, Sophie, and Sergej, a Russian deserter. When Sophie introduces her lover to her mother and her brother, Sergej becomes embroiled in the incestuous tensions underlying the relationship between Sophie, her brother, Georg, and her mother. The mother is drawn towards Sergej because he reminds her of her own adulterous affair with a Ukrainian soldier shortly after the war. At the same time Sophie's mother and brother are jealous of Sergej and fear that he will take her away from the family. The arrival of the Russian implodes the claustrophobic sham existence that held this dysfunctional family together. As so often in Kleinert's films, the family functions as a microcosm in which such universal themes as self-deception, guilt and destiny are acted out in a clearly defined socio-historical context. This combination of the universal with the specific lends the film a parabolic dimension: both Sophie and her mother choose Russian men as lovers; both do so at historically significant moments which mark the beginning and the end of the GDR; in both cases the involvement with a Russian results in tragedy, namely the suicide of the mother's jealous husband and the murder of Sophie's Russian boyfriend at the hands of her brother. Within the microcosm of the family, Russian men become the pivot of complex family dynamics, evoking passionate and conflicting feelings and triggering a two-fold tragedy. Within the macrocosm of East Germany's geopolitical context, the character constellation parabolically mirrors the ambivalence which characterized the relationship between East Germans and Russians, the GDR and the Soviet Union. It embodies the changing power structures between the

Russians and the east Germans after the collapse of communism: once the victors and imposers of communism, the Russians have become the losers who have to withdraw now that the ideological battle has been won by capitalism.³⁰

Kleinert's next film, *Paths in the Night*, culminates in the suicide of its protagonist Walter, a man in his late 50s who used to be the powerful and well-respected director of an electricity combine. However, in the wake of unification and the ensuing privatization of industry, he has lost his job. At first it may seem that Walter's social decline is the cause of his tragic end. However, Walter is not depicted solely as a victim who deserves our pity. Admittedly, he is a victim of the west German take-over of the east as well as a victim of 'decades of tutelage and crippling authoritarian structures [that have made him master] in the art of self-deception, disavowal and denial'.³¹ But he is also a perpetrator who has been complicit with the totalitarian system, and who has internalized the authoritarian principle to such an extent that it ultimately leads to his self-destruction.³² To give his life meaning and in order to regain self-respect, Walter becomes the self-appointed boss of a vigilante team, consisting of himself, Gina and René, who patrol Berlin's commuter and underground trains at night. At Walter's command, the two adolescents beat up hooligans who are molesting passengers, seemingly to enforce law and order in a world that has gone out of kilter, but in reality to find an outlet for their pent-up aggression. Walter sees himself and his violent helpmates as precursors of a better time to come in which he is to occupy a central place as a new leader. Driven by his frustrated desire for power, Walter becomes more and more entangled in a series of acts of violence, randomly directed at hooligans but also at his accomplice, Gina, when she renounces her obedience and respect. A moral abyss opens up as Walter's self-deception begins to crumble and he realizes that at the bottom of his declared mission to reinstate justice and order is a fascistic desire for power that he is unable to satisfy in the new social order of post-Wall Germany, in which he has been degraded to a powerless underdog. Unable to adjust to the new social order, Walter commits suicide.

Kleinert's film provides a complex psychograph of a man who is portrayed as a fossil of the *ancien regime* and whose mental disposition reflects the totalitarian power structures of the former GDR. Implicit in

his fate is a symbolic dimension and the message that has concerned Kleinert in all three of his post-unification films, each of which advocates the need to change. Invariably those characters, namely Elias, Sophie and Walter's wife Sylvia, who embrace change survive, or better still, are granted a new lease of life, whereas those who resist change perish.

The same holds true for Hanna in Oskar Roehler's *No Place to Go* (*Die Unberührbare*, 1999), which some critics consider to be the west German counterpart of Kleinert's *Paths in the Night*.³³ The protagonist Hanna, who is based on Gisela Elsner, a west German author and the mother of the film director, also refuses to accept the need for change, as her outdated 1960s make-up and hairstyle suggest. As she witnesses the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of communism, she stubbornly clings to an ideal of communism that has little in common with the realities of real existing socialism in the GDR. Hence the end of the GDR instils her with fear, since it deprives her of her spiritual home. Like Walter she is deluded about her own identity: she considers herself to be a radical left-winger, a communist at heart whose spiritual home is the GDR, while indulging in the most decadent consumerism capitalist society has to offer. Like Walter she pays with her life for her self-deception and inertia.

With a few notable exceptions such as the road movie comedies *Burning Life* (Peter Welz, 1994), and Peter Kahane's *To the Horizon and Beyond* (*Bis zum Horizont und weiter*, 1999), the majority of post-Wall films made by east German filmmakers paint a gloomy picture. They consequently stand in stark contrast to the countless comedies made by west German filmmakers during the 1990s. These are predominantly relationship comedies, which totally ignore the historic event of German unification, arguably because for the majority of west Germans unification was of little consequence other than leading to a small increase in their tax burden, the so-called solidarity surcharge (*Solidaritätszuschlag*).³⁴ However, a number of road movie comedies, notably such box-office hits as Peter Timm's *Go, Trabi, Go!* (1990) and Detlev Buck's *No More Mr Nice Guy* (*Wir können auch anders*, 1993), depict the comical side of east Germany's take-over by the west. These films help to take the sting out of the problems and hostilities Ossis and Wessis (easterners and westerners) experienced as they were trying to overcome decades of division which had led to a serious state of estrangement

between them. In the eyes of east German filmmakers, however, the process of a rapid acculturation to social, political and economic structures imposed upon by westerners was no laughing matter.

Another reason for the scarce number of comedies made by east German filmmakers in the wake of unification is the under-representation of this genre in the DEFA tradition. Not just comedies, but genre cinema as a whole, was held in low regard by the GDR's cultural officials, mainly because the role assigned to film art was not diversion and entertainment but rather education and enlightenment. As a result, DEFA's foremost filmmakers never dirtied their hands with genre cinema. DEFA did employ a number of directors and scriptwriters who specialized in genre cinema, but generally audience demand for most popular genres had to be satisfied by Western imports.³⁵

However, ten years after the fall of the Wall, things were beginning to change. Old traditions fell into abeyance and a new generation of filmmakers acutely aware of audience demand came to the fore. More importantly, the east Germans' attitude towards their past underwent a dramatic change. After their initial embrace of all things western, they had become wary of 'their experience of living in the GDR [...] being elided from the German historical record' and of losing their Eastern identity.³⁶ Moreover, they were keen to move on from a tainted memory of their past and the stigma of the 'Stasi state' that has dominated the public debate about the former GDR. As memories of the old GDR were becoming somewhat blurred, 'magnifying its achievements while forgetting its repression',³⁷ a wave of *Ostalgie* (nostalgia for East Germany – literally, 'eastalgia') swept across the new federal states. East German brands enjoyed revived popularity; websites devoted to GDR memorabilia, Honecker, Trabis and the GDR's national anthem mushroomed on the internet; east Berlin night-clubs capitalized on 'a "GDR revival" with "old-time" sing-alongs, employing staff dressed up as party officials and border guards, and even Erich Honecker look-alikes.'³⁸ Unmistakably, the time had come to look back at everyday life in the GDR through a rose-tinted camera lens.

On 7 October 1999, the day that would have marked the 50th anniversary of the GDR, Leander Haußmann's *Ostalgie*-comedy *Sonnenallee* was released. A month later, on 9 November 1999, the 10th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, Sebastian Peterson's comedy

Heroes Like Us (Helden wie wir) premiered, based on Thomas Brussig's best-selling 1995 reunification novel of the same name. What both films have in common, apart from being based on screenplays written or co-written by Brussig, is that they are feel-good movies about the GDR. Audience demand for such reconciliatory retro-comedies continues, as the box-office success and critical acclaim of *Goodbye, Lenin!* (2003), made by the west German director Wolfgang Becker, proves. All three films are grotesque satires about everyday life in the GDR conveyed from the vantage point of adolescents.

This narrative perspective is of particular significance in explaining the reconciliatory stance of *Sonnenallee*. As Micha, the film's protagonist and narrator, explains in a voice-over comment at the end of the film: 'Once upon a time there was a country and I lived there. If you ask me how it was? It was the best time of my life, for I was young and in love.'³⁹ The conflation of memories of the GDR with memories of the experience of first love and youth legitimizes a nostalgic idealization of the GDR, which ultimately paves the way for a normalization of the GDR's totalitarian legacy. In other respects too, *Sonnenallee* promotes the project of normalization.⁴⁰

The film tells the story of a group of adolescents who live at the shorter end of the Sonnenallee, a five-kilometre-long street that stretches from the West Berlin suburb of Kreuzberg to Treptow in the East and that was, until 1989, divided by the Wall. In spite of living right next to the border fortifications, the film argues, they are normal teenagers and do what teenagers do the world over: they fall in love, experiment with drugs, and try to impress their peers by wearing the hippest clothes and listening to the coolest pop music. What sets the lives of these East Berlin teenagers apart from their peers in the West is the economy of shortage and the all-pervasive authority of the state. Both aspects are at the centre of the film's satire: much-coveted Western consumer goods such as a Rolling Stones album are only available on the black market; recreational drugs are entirely unavailable, and home-made substitutes concocted from herbal asthma remedies and the GDR variety of Coca-Cola have to suffice.

Sonnenallee is a far cry from DEFA's critical films about contemporary life. Haußmann's film does not purport to give an authentic picture of life in the GDR during the 1970s. Instead it projects a nostalgic fantasy

that is in equal measure a tribute to the romanticized notion of youth as the best time of our lives, and a reconciliatory offer to east Germans to make peace with the problematic past and thus regain a positive identification with their part of German history. It is thus only right that this self-conscious fictionalization of the GDR's erstwhile everyday culture abounds in inter-textual references to its fictional status. For example, the film pays homage to DEFA's cinematic tradition by recreating the artificial Orwo-Color-look. This was a distinctive feature of DEFA colour films, many of which were made with Orwo-Color film stock, the GDR brand that was a bestseller across the Eastern Bloc.⁴¹ Colour, as the film's final sequence in which colour fades to black and white suggests, stands for an embellished fictional reality that has little in common with the greyness typically associated with real life under socialism. The notion that only the prettification through the colourful medium of film can transfigure the drabness of real life is further underscored by Nina Hagen's song 'You Forgot the Colour Film', which accompanies the fade from colour to hues of grey at the end.⁴²

More importantly, *Sonnenallee* alludes to DEFA's cult film *per se*, *The Legend of Paul and Paula*. When Mischa runs across the street to put his life (in the shape of his forged diaries) at Miriam's feet, we hear the most memorable song from this 1970s *Gegenwartsfilm*, 'Go to Her and Let Your Kite Fly High'⁴³ by the popular East German band Die Puhdies. Rushing up the stairs, he encounters Paul, played by the same actor (Winfried Glatzleder) as in Carow's film, who asks him whether he needs an axe. This is a reference to a famous scene from *The Legend of Paul and Paula* in which Paul smashes Paula's front door after she has refused ever to see him again.

The oblique social critique that made Carow's film, as well as many other DEFA films about contemporary society, so controversial is here reduced to a series of more or less empty signifiers that produce nothing more than nostalgic recognition and laughter. Thus *Sonnenallee* neutralizes DEFA's tradition of social realism to a postmodern pastiche that is witty, entertaining and reconciliatory, rather than critical or subversive. Although to date *Sonnenallee* is the most popular east German film in the west, it is in many respects untypical of the eastern cinematic discourse on unification, which has remained more or less faithful to DEFA's tradition of socially committed films about contemporary issues.

That social critique does not necessarily have to exclude humour has been proven by Andreas Dresen's recent feature films. *Silent Country*, *Night Shapes* (*Nachtgestalten*, 1999) and *Grill Point* (*Halbe Treppe*, 2002) transfigure what is essentially the depiction of a drab or even miserable existence through humour. *Silent Country* is a subtle comedy that captures the historic moment when the Wall came down from the periphery of a small provincial theatre, where a young director and his cast are rehearsing Samuel Beckett's absurd play *Waiting for Godot* (1952). The film is a light-hearted parable of the sense of stagnation and inertia that pervaded every aspect of life in the GDR. *Grill Point* is an immensely funny film about adultery and marital conflict that is set in a bleak prefabricated housing estate (*Plattenbausiedlung*) in Frankfurt an der Oder, near the Polish border. The protagonists' desire to break out of their stale marriages poignantly mirrors the desire of many east Germans to leave their past behind and start a new life in the new Germany. Yet, as the film suggests, the habit of a lifetime may prove more enduring than the thrill of the new. *Night Shapes* traces the meandering paths through Berlin at night of a number of people living on the margins of society: a homeless couple expecting a baby, a heroin-addicted child prostitute, a young boy from Africa who is seeking asylum in Germany, and a middle-aged underdog, who has lost touch with his emotions. Although these characters' lives are ostensibly miserable, the film argues that they are not beyond hope and redemption. Each and every one of them is touched by divine mercy, which momentarily lights up the all-encompassing darkness around them. As Dresen commented, through seemingly profane yet ultimately spiritual experiences, these marginalized and desperate individuals discover a core of human dignity and moral integrity in themselves that is ultimately indestructible.⁴⁴

Dresen's feature films are unmistakably indebted to DEFA's cinematic tradition, in terms of their thematic concerns, the humanist approach taken to the characters, and their aesthetics. Notably DEFA's documentary realist tradition has been a strong formative influence on Dresen's filmmaking.⁴⁵ His training at the Babelsberg Film Academy and with DEFA's masters of documentary realism has taught the director to use images rather than words, to carefully research and observe his characters and their social environment rather than invent them, and to

apply this documentary approach to feature films. However, Dresen has taken these stylistic principles merely as a starting point and developed a distinctive style of his own: the shaky hand-held camera, the grainy film stock, jump cuts and tracking shots, the near absence of floodlights, often combined with improvised acting, are the hallmarks of Dresen's true-to-life aesthetics. What distinguishes Dresen's films from other probing explorations of post-Wall German misery in the east is the light-heartedness of his approach. This trademark of his style may also explain why some of his East Side stories proved much more popular with audiences in the west than the majority of other films originating in the new federal states.

What then is the legacy of DEFA in the works of contemporary east German filmmakers? Though none of the post-Wall films surveyed here could have been made in the days of DEFA, because they fly in the face of the doctrine of socialist realism and broach taboos that would have provoked the censors, they are indebted to DEFA's tradition of social realism. Like DEFA's films about contemporary society, east German films of the 1990s are socially committed films that are driven by a strong humanist and utopian impulse. Unlike the 'cinema of consensus' that has been identified as the dominant strand of west German film culture during the 1990s,⁴⁶ the films discussed here are based on the premise that film has to play a social function; precisely the premise that was at the core of socialist film art in the German Democratic Republic. The idea of film performing a social function was also at the root of the socially committed author's film (*Autorenfilm*) in the Federal Republic during the 1960s and 1970s. New German Cinema was in many respects a counter-cinema that critically examined the social ills of contemporary west German society. When a new generation of west German filmmakers abandoned this tradition in favour of socially conformist comedies during the 1990s, east German filmmakers entered into an all-German film culture which they enriched through a specifically eastern variety of a cinema of social concern.

Notes

- 1 For an in-depth discussion of many of the issues and films referred to in this chapter, see my book *Hollywood behind the Wall: The Cinema of East Germany* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005).
- 2 In view of the limited scope of this chapter, I shall only be able to examine the impact of unification on DEFA's feature film studio and the legacy of DEFA's feature films in post-Wall Germany.
- 3 CIP was a subsidiary of the French utilities and communications conglomerate, Compagnie Générale des Eaux (subsequently Vivendi and since 2000 Vivendi Universal). After the take-over, the DEFA feature film studio was renamed DEFA Studio Babelsberg GmbH. On 9 August 1994, the name DEFA was eliminated from the register of companies.
- 4 Barton Byg, 'Introduction: Reassessing DEFA Today' in Barton Byg and Betheny Moore (eds.), *Moving Images of East Germany: Past and Future of DEFA Film* (Washington, D.C.: American Institute for Contemporary German Studies, 2002), pp. 1–23 (p. 6).
- 5 The German film company UFA (Universum Film AG), which was founded in 1917, produced such internationally acclaimed masterpieces as Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922), Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927), and Joseph von Sternberg's *The Blue Angel* (*Der blaue Engel*, 1930). In 1937 the Nazi Party took over UFA's shares, and in 1942 UFA, alongside other film companies, was subsumed under the UFA holding company into which the entire Nazi film industry was organized. After World War II UFA ceased to exist as a legal entity when the Reich's film industry was dismantled, but was soon revived in a different business configuration. Cf. Klaus Kreimeier, *Die UFA-Story: Geschichte eines Filmkonzerns* (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer Taschenbuchverlag, 2002).
- 6 'Ein drittes Leben der Filmstadt Babelsberg ist unwahrscheinlich, aber nicht ausgeschlossen.' Bärbel Dalichow, 'Das letzte Kapitel 1989 bis 1993' in Ralf Schenk (ed.), *Das zweite Leben der Filmstadt Babelsberg: DEFA Spielfilme 1946–1992* (Berlin: Henschel Verlag, 1994), pp. 328–53 (p. 353).
- 7 Frank Beyer's *Trace of Stones* and Kurt Maetzig's *The Rabbit Is Me* (*Das Kaninchen bin ich*, 1965/1989) are the most famous forbidden films. For a detailed discussion of the twelve films that were banned in 1965/66 see Christiane Mückenberger, *Prädikat: Besonders schädlich* (Berlin: Henschel Verlag, 1990); Stefan Soldovieri, 'Negotiating Censorship: GDR Film at the Juncture of 1965/66' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1998); Daniela Berghahn, 'The Forbidden Films: Film Censorship in the Wake of the Eleventh Plenum' in Diana Holmes and Alison Smith (eds.), *100 Years of European Cinema: Entertainment or Ideology?* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 40–51.
- 8 *The Country Beyond the Rainbow* was seen by just 1000 viewers. It took two years for Miraculi to find a distributor and then it was taken off cinema programmes after just five days. See Leonie Naughton, *That Was the Wild East: Film Culture, Unification and the 'New' Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), p. 66.
- 9 Naughton, *That Was the Wild East*, p. 67.
- 10 Johannes Klingsporn, 'Zur Lage der deutschen Kinowirtschaft', *Media Perspektiven*, 12 (1991), 793–805 (p. 794); Naughton, *That Was the Wild East*, p. 74.
- 11 For a discussion of the 'public sphere' in the GDR's social context see David Bathrick, *The Powers of Speech: The Politics of Culture in the GDR* (Lincoln, Nebraska and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1995); Marc Silberman, 'Problematising the "Socialist Public Sphere": Concepts and Consequences' in Marc Silberman (ed.), *What Remains?: East German Culture and the Postwar Public* (Washington, D.C.: American Institute of Contemporary German Studies, 1997), pp. 1–37.

- 12 Herzsprung is the name of a village, but literally means 'crack in the heart'.
- 13 'Besser im Dschungel, als im Zoo.' Cited by Andreas Dresen in an interview with the author in Potsdam, 19 July 2002.
- 14 This claim appears to be more justified in the case of Dresen's films. In particular *Night Shapes* (*Nachtgestalten*, 1999), which renders life in Germany's new capital from the perspective of those on the margins of society, could be set in any metropolis. For a detailed account of Dresen's and Kleinert's oeuvre to date and the numerous prizes their films have been awarded, see Kerstin Decker, 'Neben der Zeit: Die Filme von Andreas Dresen and Andreas Kleinert' in Ralf Schenk and Erika Richter (eds.), *Apropos: Film 2001. Das Jahrbuch der DEFA Stiftung* (Berlin: Verlag Das Neue Berlin, 2001), pp. 328–43.
- 15 On DEFA's anti-fascist films cf. Christiane Mückenberger, '*Sie sehen selbst, Sie hören selbst ...*': *Die DEFA von ihren Anfängen bis 1949* (Marburg: Hitzeroth, 1994); Barton Byg, 'The Anti-Fascist Tradition and GDR Film' in 'Proceedings, Purdue University Fifth Annual Conference on Film', West Lafayette, 1980, pp. 81–87; Daniela Berghahn, 'Liars and Traitors: Unheroic Resistance and Anti-Fascist DEFA Films' in Daniela Berghahn and Alan Bance (eds.), *Millennial Essays on Film and Other German Studies* (Oxford and Bern: Lang, 2002), pp. 23–39.
- 16 For a discussion of representations of the Third Reich in film since unification, including an analysis of *Aimée and Jaguar*, see John Davidson's chapter in this volume.
- 17 For example, Ulrich Weiß's *Your Unknown Brother* (*Dein unbekannter Bruder*, 1982).
- 18 For example, Frank Beyer's *The Turning Point* (*Der Aufenthalt*, 1983), Heiner Carow's *The Russians are Coming* (*Die Russen kommen*, 1968/1987), and Rainer Simon's *The Case of Ö* (*Der Fall Ö*, 1991).
- 19 For example, *The Russians are Coming* and Maxim Dessau's film *First Loss* (*Erster Verlust*, 1990).
- 20 Joshua Feinstein distinguishes between 'films of contemporary life' (*Gegenwartsfilme*) and 'films of everyday life' (*Alltagsfilme*). The latter, he argues deny the progressive vision of history inscribed in socialism. Feinstein, *The Triumph of the Ordinary: Depictions of Daily Life in the East German Cinema 1949–1989* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), pp. 6–7.
- 21 Axel Geiss, *Repression und Freiheit: DEFA-Regisseure zwischen Fremd- und Selbstbestimmung* (Potsdam: Brandenburgische Zentrale für politische Bildung, 1997).
- 22 Alison Lewis, 'En-Gendering Remembrance: Memory, Gender and Informers for the Stasi', *New German Critique*, 86 (2002), 103–34 (p. 105).
- 23 Braun's story appeared in the journal *Sinn und Form* in 1975, but when the text's provocative nature was discovered half of the journal's print run was quickly destroyed. The text was not published in the GDR until 1988 and was subsequently adapted by Ulrich Plenzdorf, who wrote the screenplay for Beyer's film.
- 24 Other films in which surveillance through the *Stasi* is a prominent theme are Lienhard Wawrzyn's *The Informer* (*Der Blaue*, 1994), Nicolai Church, and Sybille Schönemann's autobiographical documentary *Locked-Up Time* (*Verriegelte Zeit*, 1991).
- 25 The 'Wall films' are Frank Vogel's ... *And Your Love Too* (... *Und deine Liebe auch*, 1962), Heinz Thiel's *The Knock-out Punch* (*Der Kimnhaken*, 1962), Gerhard Klein's *Sunday Driver* (*Sonntagsfahrer*, 1963) and the episodic film *Stories of That Night* (*Geschichten jener Nacht*, 1967), directed by Karlheinz Carpentier, Ulrich Thein, Frank Vogel and Gerhard Klein.
- 26 The film's original German title, *Die Verfehlung*, can also mean 'just missed'.
- 27 Margarethe von Trotta's German–German love story, *The Promise* (*Das Versprechen*, 1991), can be considered as the West German counterpart of Carow's film.

- 28 The protagonist Johanna of Helke Misselwitz's *Herzsprung* falls victim to a racially-motivated arson attack committed by neo-Nazi skinheads. However, she does not die in the flames but apparently of a heart failure shortly after the attack. The numerous incidents of suicide in films, including *Herzsprung*, Peter Welz's *Burning Life* (1994) and Peter Kahane's *To the Horizon and Beyond (Bis zum Horizont und weiter, 1999)* are motivated by the disenfranchisement of east Germans in the wake of unification.
- 29 See Hans-Jörg Rother, 'Georg, wo ist dein Bruder Sergej?', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 1 October 1996.
- 30 Andreas Kleinert and Erika Richter, 'Anarchie der Menschlichkeit', *Film und Fernsehen*, 5/6 (1996), 52–55 (p. 53).
- 31 Lewis, 'En-Gendering Remembrance', p. 106, referring to Hans-Jürgen Maaz's influential study *Gefühlsstau: Ein Psychogramm der DDR* (1992), in which the psychologist argues that all east Germans have been psychologically crippled and deformed by the experience of totalitarian control and manipulation.
- 32 In the original script, Walter was conceived as a high-ranking *Stasi* official. However, the actor Hilmar Thate who plays Walter insisted that the protagonist's former profession be changed in order to make Walter a more likeable character. Hans-Jörg Rother, 'Das Spiel ist aus: *Wege in die Nacht* von Andreas Kleinert', *Film und Fernsehen*, 3/4 (1999), 8–9 (p. 8).
- 33 See for example Merten Worthmann, 'Wege in die Nacht: Oskar Roehlers Film "Die Unberührbare"', *Die Zeit*, 19 April 2000. For a further discussion of Roehler's film, see Paul Cooke, 'Whatever Happened to Veronika Voss?: Rehabilitating the "68ers" and the Problem of Westalgie in Oskar Roehler's *Die Unberührbare* (2000)', *German Studies Review*, 27 (2004), 33–44.
- 34 For a discussion of these comedies, see Dickon Copey's chapter in this volume.
- 35 The only genre which DEFA successfully adapted to the requirements of socialist society was the Western. Between 1966 and 1979 the Babelsberg studio made twelve so-called 'Indian films' (*Indianerfilme*). See Gerd Gemünden, 'Between Karl May and Karl Marx: the DEFA "Indianerfilme" (1965–85)', *Film History*, 10 (1998), 399–407.
- 36 Paul Cooke, 'Performing "Ostalgie": Leander Haußmann's *Sonnenallee*', *German Life and Letters*, 56.2 (2003), 156–67 (p. 160).
- 37 Konrad H. Jarausch, 'Reshaping German Identities: Reflections on the Post-Unification Debate' in Jarausch, *After Unity: Reconfiguring German Identities* (Providence and Oxford: Bergahn Books, 1997), pp. 1–23 (p. 19).
- 38 Naughton, *That Was the Wild East*, p.20.
- 39 'Es war einmal ein Land und ich habe dort gelebt. Wenn man mich fragt, wie es war? Es war die schönste Zeit meines Lebens, denn ich war jung und verliebt'.
- 40 For a different perspective on Haußmann's film, see Seán Allan's chapter in this volume.
- 41 Orwo, short for Original Wolfen, is an East German brand of film stock that was created in the 1960s. Originally, the German company Agfa had manufactured film at Wolfen, but in the early 1960s reserved the brand name for films produced in West Germany. From 1964 onwards most DEFA films were made with Orwo, while a few were made with Eastmancolor. *Sonnenallee* is made on Kodak.
- 42 'Du hast den Farbfilm vergessen'.
- 43 'Geh zu ihr und laß deinen Drachen steigen'.
- 44 Personal interview with the author, Potsdam 19 July 2002. Dresen himself has attributed the spiritual or even religious concern of *Night Shapes* to the strong influence which East European cinema had on him. However this existentialist concern can also be found in the films of Lothar Warnecke, who studied theology before joining DEFA and who was nicknamed the 'moralist'.

- 45 Documentary realism is usually associated with the third generation of DEFA directors, notably Lothar Warnecke, Rainer Simon and Roland Gräf.
- 46 Eric Rentschler, 'From New German Cinema to the Post-Wall Cinema of Consensus' in Mette Hjort and Scott MacKenzie (eds.), *Cinema and Nation*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 260-77.

