1997

Reports and Announcements

various authors

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The DEFA Film Library Project was begun in 1990 in order to encourage and support the study of the cinema of the GDR (films produced by DEFA – Deutsche Film-Aktiengesellschaft) and films dealing with Eastern Germany since unification.

Current activities of the DEFA Film Library include:

• The first North American Conference on the Cinema of Eastern Germany, 2-5 October 1997.
• Distribution of important DEFA films by arrangement with Progress Film-Verleih GmbH.
• Publication of information on Eastern German cinema of importance to North American audiences, students and scholars.
• Development of an archive and study center at the University of Massachusetts, with extensive collections of films and publications. In May 1997 the Bundesanstalt für vereinigungsbedingte Sonderaufgaben approved an agreement on the DEFA Film Library’s future cooperation with the German organizations responsible for this part of the German cinematic heritage, Progress Film-Verleih GmbH and the DEFA Stiftung (expected to be established in winter 1997/98).
• Acting as a gathering point for information to be shared among scholars working on the subject.
• Ongoing support of coursework, graduate research and film series at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

Direct inquiries to:

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EAST GERMAN AND GDR-RELATED FILMS AVAILABLE IN NORTH AMERICA

Compiled by Barton Byg and Jacob Adelman
Edited by Jacob Adelman

The DEFA Film Library at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst keeps a file of films produced in the German Democratic Republic’s DEFA studio and presently available from North American film and video distributors. Along with this list of GDR-produced titles are co-productions with West Germany and other countries. Films with East German- and German unification-related themes have also been included. The films listed here are all subtitled in English. An updated version of this information is available on the Worldwide Web at www.umass.edu/defa/titles.html.

Affäre Blum (The Blum Affair), 1948
Directed by Erich Engel
black & white, 110 min.
Available on VHS from Heidelberg Haus and 16 mm from Kino International.
In the style of an Expressionist gangster film, the story of a Jewish businessman in the Weimar Republic who is framed by an Anti-Semitic prosecutor for a crime he did not commit.

Der Bruch (The Break), 1988
Directed by Frank Beyer
Screenplay by Wolfgang Kohlhaase
Starring Götz George, Otto Sander and Rolf Hoppe
color and black & white, 111 min.
Available on 16 mm from West Glen Films.
In the lean days following the war, three men plan a million-dollar safe cracking heist.

Domino, 1981/82
West German production
Written and directed by Thomas Brasch
Starring Bernhard Wicki and Katharina Thalbach
black & white, 118 min.
Available on 16 mm from West Glen Films.
When a successful actress breaks her theater engagement mid-run to play the leading role in Goethe’s Stella, she gains a new perspective on her life and the world around her.

DrehOrt Berlin (Location Berlin), 1987
East/West German co-production
Directed by Helga Reidemeister
color
Available on 16 mm from West Glen Films.
Through diverse interviews, a spectrum of German identities is explored and East and West Berlin are “joined” on film before the fall of the Wall.

Ehe im Schatten (Marriage in the Shadows), 1947
Written and directed by Kurt Maetzig
Based on Hans Schweikart’s Es wird schon nicht so schlimm black & white, 104 min.
Available on 16 mm from the National Center for Jewish Film.
The Nazis force a Jewish actress to give up her career and insist that she divorce her German husband. When he is ultimately unable to protect her, the two resort to suicide. Based on the lives of Joachim and Meta Baer Gottschalk.

Der Fall Gleiwitz (The Gleiwitz Case), 1961
Directed by Gerhard Klein
Written by Wolfgang Kohlhaase and Günther Rücker
black & white, 70 min.
Available on 16 mm from Kino International.
On September 1, 1939, Hitler’s army started World War II when it crossed over Poland’s western border. The justification given to the public was that the Polish rebels had allegedly raided the German “Gleiwitz” radio station. An authentic reconstruction of events in a laconic, “New Wave” style.

Former East/Former West:
Berlin After the Reunification, 1994
Directed by Shelly Silver
color, 63 min.
Available on VHS from Shelly Silver.
Made up of hundreds of street interviews, Former East/Former West presents a complex view of how Berliners are redefining their beliefs, identities and allegiances. As people talk about the recent changes in their city’s borders, they raise the question now facing most people and countries of the world: Who belongs and who does not?
Frühlingssinfonie (Spring Symphony), 1982/83  
West German production; filmed at DEFA Studios  
Directed by Peter Schamoni  
Available on VHS from Live Entertainment and 16 mm from West Glen Films.  
A costume/ music film on Clara and Robert Schumann.

Der geteilte Himmel (Divided Heaven), 1964  
Directed by Konrad Wolf  
Cinematography by Werner Bergmann  
Based on the Christa Wolf novel  
Available on 16 mm from the DEFA Film Library.  
A “new wave”-influenced screen adaptation of Christa Wolf’s novel. The film explores the dangerous quest for a female identity against the backdrop of momentous historical events, in this case the building of the Berlin Wall.

Die Grünsteinvariante (The Grünstein Strategy), 1984  
West German production  
Directed by Bernhard Wicki  
Based on Wolfgang Kohlhaase’s radio version of the Ludwig Turek story  
Available on 16 mm from West Glen Films.  
The poignant story of personal relationships in a Germany about to instigate the Second World War.

Ich war neunzehn (I Was Nineteen), 1968  
Directed by Konrad Wolf  
Screenplay by Wolfgang Kohlhaase and Konrad Wolf  
Cinematography by Werner Bergmann  
Available on 16 mm from West Glen Films.  
Eleven years after leaving Germany with his parents, nineteen-year-old Gregor Hecker returns in April 1945 with a Red Army scouting group. Ashamed of the German people, Gregor realizes his country can only be changed by the innocent survivors. Konrad Wolf’s most autobiographical film.

Jakob der Lügner (Jacob the Liar), 1975  
Directed by Frank Beyer  
Available on 16 mm from the National Center for Jewish Film and 35 and 16 mm from Kino International.  
Jacob Heim is forced to report to the police after he allegedly violates the ghetto’s curfew. At the police station, he overhears a radio report of the Red Army’s advance. He becomes a hero after claiming the news came from his own hidden radio.

Kinder, Kader, Kommandeure (Strictly Propaganda), 1992  
Directed by Wolfgang Kissel  
Available on 16 mm and VHS from First Run/Icarus Films.  
The history of the German Democratic Republic is told through East Germany’s official newsreels and state films. A fast moving compendium of East Germany’s forty years, the film presents beaming workers and perfect children who populate a world so bizarre and surreal that one can’t help but to reflect on other forms of propaganda – including our own.

Lissy, 1957  
Directed by Konrad Wolf  
Cinematography by Werner Bergman  
Based on the F.C. Weiskopf novel  
Available on 16 mm from West Glen Films.  
Eleven years after leaving Germany with his parents, nineteen-year-old Gregor Hecker returns in April 1945 with a Red Army scouting group. Ashamed of the German people, Gregor realizes his country can only be changed by the innocent survivors. Konrad Wolf’s most autobiographical film.

Die Mörder sind unter uns (The Murderers are Among Us), 1946  
Directed by Wolfgang Staudte  
Available on 16 mm from West Glen Films and 35 mm, 16 mm and video from Kino International.  
When Susanne Wallner returns from a woman’s concentration camp, she finds her apartment occupied by the cynical Dr. Mertens, a physician and officer in the war. Through Susanne’s care, the broken man gathers new strength and courage, until the shadow of the past catches up with him. The film evokes expressionism and film noir and was both DEFA’s first worldwide success and the first postwar German feature.
Nikolaikirche (Nikolai Church), 1995  
Directed by Frank Beyer  
Based on the Erich Loest novel  
black and white, 133 min.  
Available on VHS from the Consulate General of the FRG in Boston Massachusetts.  
In the final years of the GDR, highly decorated security police officer Albert Bacher dies, leaving behind a wife, son and daughter whose lives this film examines. The tone of these tense days is set by the dissident sermons of Minister Ohlbaum in Leipzig’s Nikolai Church, leading to the historic “Monday Demonstrations” that faced down the security forces of the SED government.

Spur der Steine (Traces of the Stones), 1966  
Directed by Frank Beyer  
Starring Manfred Krug  
Based on the Erik Neutsch novel  
black & white, 139 min.  
Available on 16 mm from West Glen Films.  
A popular and powerful brigade leader fears for his reputation when a young technologist and the new Party Secretary arrive at his building site. Banned until 1989.

Der schwarze Kasten (Black Box), 1992  
Directed by Tamara Trampe and Johann Feindt  
color, 90 min.  
Available on 16 mm from the Museum of Modern Art.  
Profile of Dr. Jochen Girke, who trained would-be Stasi interrogators, jail psychologists and supervisory officers of informers in operative psychology. With unspiring forthrightness, the film tries to reach the world of this man who says of himself, “I was a criminal by word.”

My Second Life, 1996  
Directed by Simone Shoemaker  
color, 53 min.  
Available on VHS from Bronco Video.  
Shoemaker interviews a broad cross section of Eastern German women about their lives before and after unification. The examination presents a history of women’s roles in both Germanies, lending a new perspective on reunification.

Stilles Land (Quiet Land), 1992  
Directed by Andreas Dresen  
color, 98 min.  
Available on 16 mm from West Glen Films.  
A provincial theater company rehearses “Waiting for Godot” while the Berlin Wall is opening far away in the Capital.

Test the West!  
Directed by Simone Shoemaker  
color, 30 min. (Part I) and 48 min. (Part II)  
Available on VHS from Bronco Video.  
This two part documentary focuses on the metamorphosis East Germany and its people are going through while shifting from one system to another. The video looks at German reunification from an insider’s perspective, offering an alternative to the picture painted by the American mainstream media.

Sonnensucher (Sun Seekers), 1958/1972  
Directed by Konrad Wolf  
Cinematography by Werner Bergmann  
Written by Karl George Egel and Paul Wiens  
black & white, 115 min.  
Available 16 mm from the DEFA Film Library.  
A look at Soviet/German relations among the uranium miners in the GDR’s Wismut region. Konrad Wolf’s film presents a highly dramatic and differentiated view of the Nazi past, Stalinist political practices and the energetic chaos of the early postwar period. Banned until 1972.

Sterne/Zwezdy (Stars), 1959  
East German/ Bulgarian co-production  
Directed by Konrad Wolf  
Cinematography by Werner Bergmann  
black & white, 92 min.  
Available on 16 mm from West Glen Films.  
In a camp where Greek Jews await transportation to Auschwitz, a German sergeant is profoundly moved by his encounter with a young Jewish teacher who requests help for a woman in labor. Awarded the Special Jury Prize at Cannes in 1959.

Der Untertan (The Subject, or: The Kaiser’s Lackey), 1951  
Directed by Wolfgang Staudte  
Based on the Heinrich Mann novel  
black & white, 109 min.  
Available on 16 mm from West Glen Films and VHS from Heidelberg Haus.  
Staudte turns Dietrich Hessling’s progression from mama’s boy to factory owner into a historical satire of biting sharpness and majestic comedy.
Verriegelte Zeit (Locked Up Time), 1991
Directed by Sybille Schönemann
black & white, 90 min.
Available with English subtitles 35 and 16 mm and VHS from Zeitgeist Films.
East German filmmaker Sybille Schönemann takes the audience with her on her quest to find out who was responsible for her 1984 imprisonment and expulsion to West Germany. At turns comic, tragic, infuriating, but always moving, the film captures the aftermath of East Germany’s communist legacy.

Das Versprechen (The Promise), 1995
Directed by Margarethe von Trotta
Screenplay by von Trotta and Peter Schneider
Starring many former GDR actors, including Corinne Harfouch, Dieter Mann and Ulrike Krumbiegel
Available on VHS from Facets Multimedia.
The story of lovers divided by the Wall (one goes west, the other stays in the GDR), tracing turning points in their lives from 1961 to the Prague Spring, the early 1980s and the opening of the Wall.

Winter adé (Adieu Winter), 1988
Directed by Heike Misselwitz
16 mm, black & white, 115 min.
Available with English subtitles on 16 mm and VHS from Zeitgeist Films.
Just before the fall of the Berlin Wall, Heike Misselwitz journeys through East Germany, interviewing women of all ages and backgrounds. The women reveal their frustrations, hopes and aspirations, and their stories document the failure of the socialist state to achieve true equality of the sexes.

Distributors
Aside from the Consulate, who lends free of charge, and West Glen Films, which the German government subsidizes, most prices range from $150 to $200 per rental for educational use.

Bronco Video
P.O. Box 343
San Marcos, CA 92079
phone: 619-781-5714
E-mail: simone@cts.com

Consulate General of the FRG in Boston
Barbara Hankin
Phone: 617-536-4414; ext. 117 (9AM-1PM EST)

The DEFA Film Library
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fax: 413-545-6995
E-mail: DEFA@german.umass.edu

Facets Multimedia
1517 West Fullerton Avenue
Chicago, IL 60614
phone: 800-888-0775

First Run/Icarus Films
153 Waverly Place
6th Floor
New York, NY 10014
phone: 212-727-1711; 800-876-1710
fax: 212-989-7649
E-mail: FRIF@echonyc.com

Heidelberg Haus
The German Language Video Center
7625 Pendleton Pike
Indianapolis, IN 46226-5298
phone: 317-547-1257; 800-252-1957 (for credit card orders 9AM-6PM EST)
fax: 317-547-1263
Kino International
333 West 39 Street
Suite 503
New York, NY 10018
phone: 212-629-6880
fax: 212-714-0871

Live Entertainment
15400 Sherman Way
P.O. Box 10124
Van Nuys, CA 91410-0124
phone: 818-988-5060

Museum of Modern Art
Circulating Film and Video Library
11 West 53rd Street
New York, NY 10019
phone: 212-708-9530

The National Center for Jewish Film
Brandeis University
Lown 102
Waltham, MA 02254-9110
phone: 617-899-7044
fax: 617-736-2070

Shelly Silver
22 Catherine Street, #6
New York, NY 10038
phone/fax: 212-732-2986

West Glen Films
1430 Broadway
New York, NY 10018
phone: 212-921-0966

Zeitgeist Films
247 Centre Street
2nd floor
New York, NY 10013
phone 212-274-1989
fax: 212-274-1644
E-mail: zeitgeist@tunanet.com
THE CINEMA OF EASTERN GERMANY: THE VIEW FROM NORTH AMERICA

The first North American conference on DEFA, the cinema of the former GDR and films on Eastern Germany since unification.

Sponsored by DEFA Film Library, University of Massachusetts, Amherst
Held at Smith College, Northampton, MA
2-5 October 1997

How did the Cold War look from the other side of the Berlin Wall? Why do more and more people in the late 1990s think of themselves as “Eastern Germans” before “German”? What was the German “new wave” before Fassbinder and the rest? How does the image of Weimar, Nazi and postwar German cinema shift if we add the missing piece to the puzzle – DEFA (Deutsche Film-Aktiengesellschaft), the state-owned film studios of the German Democratic Republic? An international and multidisciplinary group of scholars will address such issues and view rare films at a conference inaugurating the DEFA Film Library, an archive and study center at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

Topics of papers and workshops include:

- “The Sense of an Ending”
- DEFA, UFA, and Weimar
- DEFA and the German 50s
- DEFA and the New German Cinema
- DEFA and the German 50s
- Artist Figures in DEFA Films
- Women and Film in the GDR
- DEFA’s Audience Today
- Indianerfilme
- Socialist Realism
- The Image of the Jew in German Cinema
- Teaching the DEFA Film
- Censorship
- Hanns Eisler’s Music for DEFA
- Heiner Carow’s Coming Out

Participants include:

- Seán Allan, Univ. of Reading, UK
- Nora Alter, Univ. of Florida
- David Bathrick, Cornell Univ.
- Bärbel Dalichow, Filmmuseum Potsdam
- Irene Dölling, Potsdam Univ.
- Thomas Elsaesser, Univ. of Amsterdam
- Joshua Feinstein, Emory Univ.
- Gerd Gemünden, Dartmouth College
- Jennifer Good, Univ. of Massachusetts, Amherst
- Sabine Hake, Univ. of Pittsburgh
- Julia Hell, Duke University
- Patricia Herminghouse, Univ. of Rochester
- Thomas Jung, Univ. of Oslo
- Anton Kaes, Univ. of California, Berkeley
- Gertrud Koch, Ruhr Univ./Bochum
- Ute Lischke-McNab, Univ. of Toronto
- Eric Rentschler, Univ. of California, Irvine
- Willy Rieper, Univ. of Delaware
- Andrea Rinke, Kingston Univ., UK
- Karen Ritzenhoff, Central Conn. State Univ.
- John Sandford, Univ. of Reading, UK
- Marc Silberman, Univ. of Wisconsin, Madison
- Stefan Soldovieri, Univ. of Wisconsin, Madison
- Vera Stegmann, Lehigh University
- Denis Sweet, Bates College
- Katie Trumpener, Univ. of Chicago

Film screenings:

The conference will feature rare screenings of classic films, including 35mm subtitled prints never before seen in the U.S., presented in the beautifully restored Sweeny Concert Hall at Smith College. A wide selection of works on video will also be available for individual viewing.

Publication:

To ensure that a broader audience can benefit from the conference, selected papers will be published in a special of New German Critique, to be edited by David Bathrick, Barton Byg and Eric Rentschler.

Published by New Prairie Press, 1997
About DEFA:

Caught between state-socialist propaganda and artistic liberation, DEFA filmmakers produced over 850 feature films, 14 of which were voted among the 100 best German films, and countless documentaries between 1946 and 1990. DEFA makes up a significant segment of German film history, created at the former UFA studios of Babelsberg. Spanning the periods from expressionism and *film noir* to postmodernism, with battles over new modernism, neo-realism and socialist realism, the history of DEFA is also a unique and refreshing window to everyday life in “really existing socialism” in Germany.

The DEFA Film Library Project:

The DEFA Film Library was founded in 1990 by the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. The University’s Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures has a long history of study of GDR literature, culture and film. The goals of the project are:

- to make films from and about the former GDR and post-unification Germany available to audiences, students and researchers in the U.S. and Canada.
- to provide up-to-date information on availability of films and documents.
- to establish an archive and study center where films and publications will be available for research use.
- to promote appreciation of an often ignored portion of German film art and cultural history – the experience of 17 million Germans for over 40 years.

The Location:

Located in the beautiful Connecticut River Valley of western Massachusetts, the conference has much to offer participants in their leisure time as well as during presentations. The area is home not only to the University of Massachusetts and Smith College, but also Amherst, Hampshire, and Mount Holyoke colleges, which are all accessible through a free bus system. Mountains, rivers, hiking trails, and historic villages are available for exploration. The Connecticut Valley is also full of fine restaurants, excellent bookstores, and interesting shops, museums, galleries, and concert halls.

Co-Sponsors:

The DEFA Film Library gratefully acknowledges support from numerous sources in the Five Colleges and beyond. These include the UMass College of Humanities and Fine Arts, Lee R. Edwards, Dean; Vice-Chancellor for Research Frederick W. Byron, Jr.; Interdepartmental Program in Film Studies; the Five College Film Council; the Goethe-Institut Boston; the Eastern German Studies Group; Lufthansa German Airlines; and numerous programs in film studies and other areas in the humanities and social sciences at Amherst College, Hampshire College, and Mount Holyoke College. Special thanks to Smith College for its generosity in hosting the conference on the campus in Northampton.

Registration information:

For registration information contact the address below. Remember, lodging is scarce during the New England autumn, so make reservations as soon as possible.

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THE UNIVERSITY OF READING
CENTRE FOR EAST GERMAN STUDIES

History

The Centre for East German Studies was founded in 1994 with the intention of capitalising on the Department of German Studies’ existing strengths in an area where five members of staff are engaged in research and teaching. ‘East German’ in the Centre’s title means that part of Germany which came under Soviet occupation in 1945, which formed the territory of the GDR from 1949 to 1990, and which since unification has become the ‘new Bundesländer’. The Centre’s activities are aimed at providing an academic focal-point within the United Kingdom for research into the literature, culture, society, and history of this area from 1945 to the present. In addition to building up a collection of relevant resource material, current projects include:

• A comprehensive annual survey of teaching, research and resources within the UK, published in regularly updated form
• Specialist conferences devoted to individual topics and figures
• A series of occasional papers accompanying these conferences
• An MA course in East German Studies
• The encouragement of postgraduate research in East German Studies.

Members

• Dr. Seán Allan. Research interests: DEFA; Heiner Müller
• Professor John Sandford (Director). Research interests: film and mass media; dissent in the GDR
• Dr. Peter Barker. Research interests: Sorbian history and culture; politics and society
• Graham Jackman. Research interests: contemporary and post-‘Wende’ literature (Christoph Hein)
• Dr. John Wieczorek. Research interests: East German literature (Jurek Becker, Johannes Bobrowski, Stefan Heym)

Events, Conferences and Publications

The Centre for East German Studies has organised four conferences:

• on the ‘Bürgerbewegungen since the Wende’ (proceedings available priced £5 from the Department);
• on the East German poet and novelist Johannes Bobrowski (1917-1965) (proceedings also available priced £5);
• on the East German cinema (proceedings from this conference will be published in 1997);
• on ‘DDR-Autoren seit der Wende’ in conjunction with Gesamteuropäisches Studienwerk in Vlotho. Proceedings have been published in German Life and Letters (April 1997).

The Centre has also, in conjunction with the Deutsche Schule London, arranged a visit by the eminent German writer Stefan Heym, who spoke in Reading on his experiences as ‘Altersvorsitzender’ of the Bundestag and who read in London from his recent novel Radek.

Future events planned

• A conference (September 1997) on “The PDS: Modern Post-Communism or Nostalgic Populism” in cooperation with the Institute for German Studies, Birmingham. For conference details contact Peter Barker: p.j.barker@reading.ac.uk

• A conference (July 1997) in conjunction with Gesamteuropäisches Studienwerk in Vlotho on “Sprache und Sprachlosigkeit in der DDR.” For further information contact Graham Jackman: g.m.jackman@reading.ac.uk
The following Ph.D. topics are currently being supervised in the Centre:

- Catherine Bishop: The Literature of the ‘Wende’
- Stephen Brown: The Role of the GDR Protestant Churches and the ‘Wende’
- Joachim Lembach: The Standing in Great Britain of the German Cinema after 1945
- Andrea Rinke: Gender Relations in DEFA Films

CEGS Publications

- Centre for East German Studies. Occasional Papers 1: The East German Citizens’ Movements since the ‘Wende’ edited John Sandford (Reading 1995)
- East German Studies in Great Britain edited John Wieczorek (Reading 1995) Copies of this survey are still available.
  Contact John Wieczorek lgwiecz@reading.ac.uk. The 1996 edition will be published on-line.
The Centre for East German Studies was founded in 1994 in order to promote research on the GDR and Germany's Eastern Länder since Unification. The Centre's **MA in East German Studies** can be taken full-time over one year (starting in October) or part-time over two years. It will appeal both to in-service teachers of German and to recent graduates wishing to deepen their knowledge of German Studies. Students completing the programme will be well placed for progression to a research degree to Ph.D. level.

The first five weeks of the MA are devoted to a **Foundation Course** and a **Course in Research Methods**. Students then take two **Core Courses**:

- The History and Politics of East Germany
- From Division to Unity: East German Literature since 1945

and four **Options**, from a list which includes:

- Prose: Christa Wolf
- Drama: Heiner Müller
- Writers and the Wende
- East German Film
- Protest Movements and the Wende
- The Uses of History in the GDR
- From the SED to the PDS
- Post-Unification Society

Assessment is by a mixture of written course-work, including a 15,000-word dissertation, and a viva-voce examination. Students may also be considered for the award of a Diploma on satisfactory completion of the nine-month taught part of the course.

A good reading knowledge of German is a precondition for registration for the MA, and applicants should normally have, or expect to obtain, a good Honours Degree in German.

**For further details please contact:**

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Fax: 0118 931 8333
email: j.e.sandford@reading.ac.uk
Web: [http://www.rdg.ac.uk/AcaDepts/ig/Deu/east_german.html](http://www.rdg.ac.uk/AcaDepts/ig/Deu/east_german.html)
Please contact the GDR Bulletin if you are interested in reviewing any of the following books. If you would like to review a book related to GDR studies that is not on the list (and has not yet been reviewed), we can attempt to order it for you. Books appearing after Summer 1997 have not yet been ordered.


Monteath, Peter, and Reinhard Alter, eds. *Kulturstreit-Streitkultur: German Literature Since the Wall.* German Monitor 38. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996.


