

Chapter Title: Introduction

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Book Title: Art Outside the Lines

Book Subtitle: New Perspectives on GDR Art Culture

Book Editor(s): Elaine Kelly, Amy Wlodarski

Published by: Brill. (2011)

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1163/j.ctv2gjwvkc.5>

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# Elaine Kelly and Amy Wlodarski

## Introduction

In the twenty years since the fall of the Berlin Wall the German Democratic Republic has been cast invariably in the role of other. Rendered a historical entity by its sudden demise and rapid absorption into West Germany in 1990, it was denied the opportunity accorded to states such as Poland and Hungary to forge a post-communist identity on its own terms. Instead it remained frozen in the political landscape of the Cold War. Over the last two decades, perceptions of the GDR have evolved in response to this post-*Wende* positioning; most notably, very negative portrayals of the state as Germany's second dictatorship have been superseded in certain arenas by a wave of so-called *Ostalgie*, which has resulted in warmer depictions, a nostalgic alternative to modern German society. Yet despite such shifts in perception, there has been little change in the underlying principles governing the discourse surrounding the state. Whether positioned as an oppressive regime as in Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck's Oscar-winning film *Das Leben der Anderen* (2006) or as a nation of quaint consumer goods, rituals, and old-fashioned community spirit in Wolfgang Becker's more upbeat *Good Bye Lenin!* (2003), the GDR is imagined habitually in terms of otherness, construed as the historical antithesis to the contemporary German, and indeed western self.

This phenomenon possesses particular implications for the GDR's artistic legacy in that art produced in the state has been accepted into mainstream culture reluctantly if at all. This unwillingness to incorporate GDR art works into longer-term narratives of German cultural history forms the focus of this collection. The essays explore the enduring impact of Cold War paradigms on current modes of reception, and problematise accepted accounts of an East-West opposition where art is concerned. In particular, the collection questions the validity of current aesthetic frameworks that preference western aesthetics as a universal norm against which the GDR automatically appears as a deviation. What emerges is a variety of essays – both theoretical and applicative – which offer new directions for the study of GDR artistic culture. The volume examines the

potential of alternative modes of expression and newer, postmodern methodologies to provide substitute models beyond those of dogmatic totalitarianism or *Ostalgie*.

### The GDR as Other

German unification has been likened in certain quarters to a process of colonisation.<sup>1</sup> It involved not a merger of two equal states but an accession of East Germany into the larger Federal Republic. As the latter's interior minister, Wolfgang Schäuble, explained:

My dear citizens, what is taking place here is the accession of the GDR to the Federal Republic, and not the other way around. We have a good *Grundgesetz* (basic law), which has proved its worth. We will do everything for you. You are very welcome to join us. We do not wish callously to ignore your wishes and interests. However, we are not seeing here the unification of two equal states. We are not starting again from the beginning, from positions that have equal rights. The *Grundgesetz* exists, and the Federal Republic exists.<sup>2</sup>

From the perspective of the Federal Republic the collapse of the GDR represented a triumph for the ideals of democracy and capitalism. As a consequence, the welcome extended to GDR citizens was not granted to the state's intellectual culture, which was deemed at best opportunistic and at worst morally bankrupt. In the years immediately following unification, the intelligentsia came under widespread attack: writers were criticised for their compliance with an oppressive regime; professors were removed en masse from university posts, and East German art was removed from galleries.<sup>3</sup>

Central to this purge was the revival of the black-and-white paradigms of dictatorship that had dominated western perceptions of the GDR at the height of the Cold War. Analyses of the GDR in the 1990s consistently focused on its totalitarian status. The Enquete commission, which was established by the Bundestag as a form of truth and reconciliation commission in 1992, notably concluded that the GDR was a totalitarian dictatorship in which SED power penetrated 'all areas of state and society [...] effecting the complete submission of freedom of opinion and the free exchange of political views.'<sup>4</sup> The demise of the GDR was presented in this context as a catharsis from not one but two dictatorships; unification symbolised a second German zero hour, the final step in the arduous German process of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* or coming to terms with the past.<sup>5</sup>

The totalitarian model mapped directly on to discussions of the GDR's cultural history. The years following unification saw a spate of studies portraying an artistic culture that existed solely within the confines of the state's political structures, a culture which in the absence of these structures was now rendered defunct. Symptomatic is *Politisch fest in unseren Händen*, Lars Klingberg's 1997 account of music societies in the GDR.<sup>6</sup> Klingberg describes a culture firmly in the grip of the SED in which musicologists and musicians served as an extension of the party and exploited the Germanic cultural heritage for purely political purposes. This reading of the GDR's artistic culture as a microcosm of its monolithic political society underlined the reception in the 1990s of art works created in the GDR, and played a crucial role in their sidelining from contemporary discourse. The assumption that they were intrinsically linked to a corrupt political system precluded them from aesthetic appraisal, and resulted in the dubious tendency to view art created over a forty-year period as a single undifferentiated body. Evaluation was limited to blunt paradigms of dissidence and conformism, political and moral judgments that translated tenuously at best into artistic polarities of modernism and socialist realism.

This mindset was epitomised in the highly controversial 'Aufstieg und Fall der Moderne' exhibition, which took place in Weimar in 1999 and is discussed in Jonathan Osmond's essay in this collection. The exhibition, curated by the West German Achim Preiss, contained three sections. The first, which was housed in the Weimar Schloss, centred on international modernism of the early twentieth century. The second and third sections presented art of the Nazi period and the GDR respectively. Notably these sections were housed together in the decidedly less elegant environs of the post-war Mehrzweckhalle. The juxtaposition of the two periods combined with the apparently indiscriminate approach to the hanging of the East German art works conveyed an explicit message: GDR art, if it was to be remembered at all, should be retained in the collective cultural memory only within narratives of dictatorship.<sup>7</sup>

The acrimony that accompanied the portrayal of GDR art in the Weimar exhibition indicated a shift in attitude toward the state.<sup>8</sup> In the late 1990s, debates about the limitations of the totalitarian model, most notably its failure to allow for the diverse fabric of GDR society, played out at length among historians. Attempts to define a model of

totalitarianism that accounted for the relative flexibility of the GDR dictatorship resulted in moves to approach the state from a socio-cultural rather than political angle, thus giving agency to ordinary citizens.<sup>9</sup> This changing orientation was reflected in the growing fascination in mainstream culture with life in the GDR. As unemployment rose and Germans became increasingly disillusioned with the policies of the Federal Republic, East Germany emerged as an icon of a lost past, a focus for a nostalgia shared not just by citizens of the former state but also by their western counterparts.<sup>10</sup> This *Ostalgie* has resulted in a barrage of films and television programmes devoted to life in the GDR, shops selling GDR paraphernalia, and themed museums, bars, and hotels.<sup>11</sup>

The phenomenon has been criticised in certain quarters as a form of historical revisionism, an attempt to glorify what was for many GDR citizens a repressive regime.<sup>12</sup> Certainly, it involves a more positive portrayal of the GDR than was common in the years immediately following unification. Yet, the focus of *Ostalgie* is extremely narrow; the emphasis is placed squarely on consumer rather than artistic or intellectual culture. As Paul Cooke crucially observes, this results in an attempt to normalize the GDR on what are effectively western terms. Discussing the rise of *Ostalgie* television programs he remarks: 'While these programs ostensibly try to include in the mainstream and thus normalize the experience of living in GDR, it soon becomes apparent that their real focus is to normalize the experience of GDR citizens as *consumers*, and by extension to embed their position within the consumer culture of present-day German society.'<sup>13</sup> Given the focus on kitsch and difference in such programmes, the GDR emerges once again as other; it is effectively portrayed as a novelty state. In terms of the reception of art, *Ostalgie* is in its own way as limiting as the rhetoric of dictatorship. The emphasis on 'things' and consumable items leads to artworks produced in the GDR being interpreted as commodities rather than aesthetic entities, a circumstance which cements their exclusion from western artistic discourse.

And yet perhaps the greatest obstacle that has faced East German artists in the years since the *Wende* is the fact that cultural life in the GDR *was* inextricably linked with the state. That is not to say that artists served as mere mouthpieces for a tyrannical regime, but to acknowledge the crucial role that the state's infrastructure – its

institutions, economy, and media – played in promoting the arts. The systematic dismantling of this infrastructure in the 1990s had lethal implications for the state's intellectual culture. Deprived of forums in which they could debate, exhibit paintings, and have compositions performed, GDR artists were effectively left without a voice, and their cultural heritage, in the absence of public advocates, was seized by western critics as a canvas onto which the wider tensions of the Cold War and unification could be projected.

Clearly the so-called 'wall in the head' has had a far longer legacy than its concrete counterpart. Twenty years after the collapse of the GDR, however, there are signs that the constructs of self and other that have been so central to German identity are abating. Significant here is a growing awareness that the allegations of western continuity associated with unification were as self-constructed as the nationalist myths created by the GDR in the 1950s. Unification inevitably impacted on the financial and cultural structures of the Federal Republic, and while on paper the FRG remains very much alive, its pre-unification intellectual culture is as much a thing of the past as the GDR's.<sup>14</sup>

This realisation is important in that it allows the GDR to emerge from the shadow of otherness in which it has been languishing. Crucially, it also diminishes the benchmark status accorded to western culture in the years following unification, and demands that art from the two Germanys be evaluated on more equal terms, preferably those that transcend the dated frameworks of the Cold War. There have been significant moves in this direction in recent years. The hugely ambitious *Musik in Deutschland 1950-1990* series, for example, offers a history of contemporary German music in 122 compact discs organised, significantly, not according to East-West polarities but by genre.<sup>15</sup> The results are illuminating and do much to undermine the paradigms of dictatorship and conservatism traditionally used in conjunction with GDR art. A similar approach underpinned the Los Angeles County Museum of Art's (LACMA) recent 'Art of Two Germanys/Cold War Cultures' exhibition, which is discussed in Justinian Jampol's essay. As its title suggests, the exhibition, which opened in January 2009, also placed art of the FRG and GDR side by side, attracting considerable attention in the process. Despite the mixed responses by German galleries, it was hailed portentously by

Hanno Rauterberg in a review in *Die Zeit* tellingly titled ‘Nun kann die Mauer fallen.’<sup>16</sup>

Such exhibitions are often perceived as threatening, in part because they challenge the definitive status of the western artistic canon, which has excluded and marginalised the East German fine arts. Such prejudicial practices are not unique; indeed, many of the ideas within this volume build upon earlier advances in GDR popular culture and literary studies that were promoted to challenge similar canonical limitations in these fields. Particularly germane for the current volume are contributions to the re-definition and contextualisation of the GDR literary canon, a project that has taken multiple forms since the 1980s.

### Repositioning GDR Art

Scepticism about the dominant role of the political in GDR literature preoccupied literary scholars in the waning years of the Cold War. Troubled by the narrow one-dimensional boundaries of the accepted GDR canon, Anneli Hartmann pertinently asked ‘Was heißt heute überhaupt noch “DDR-Literatur”?’<sup>17</sup> After the fall of the Wall, new studies of GDR literature began to construe the canon as a site of history and memory that needed to be re-thought and re-historicised. The volume *Contentious Memories: Looking Back at the GDR* (2000) represents a defining moment within this movement. Therein, Marc Silberman criticised studies that promoted the tired binaries of ‘politics/aesthetics or content/form’ and instead called for greater attention to generational shifts within GDR culture and the situation of the GDR within longer pan-German or even international traditions of literature.<sup>18</sup> Later in the volume, Frank Hörnigk notably remarked: ‘There is no one definitive GDR canon of the 1960 and 1970s!’ – the exclamation point articulating both his excitement and conviction.<sup>19</sup>

This collection of essays builds on these literary currents, challenging accepted narratives of GDR culture and exploring alternative methods for interpreting and evaluating fine art produced in the state. Crucially, the essays put art itself to the fore; it is not, as is so often the case, considered simply as a political by-product but as an entity of value in its own right. A particular theme that emerges strongly from the collection is the rarely-acknowledged diversity of artistic life in the state. Moving away from the preconception that artistic directives were delivered from on high, the essays expose the significant level of dialogue that actually occurred between artists and the party.

Contrary to long-held perceptions, artists themselves were actively engaged in determining the direction and definition of socialist realism, and debates surrounding what was deemed acceptable as art in the GDR frequently took place within the public sphere.

A reconsideration of the simplistic opposition between western modernism and socialist realism, with the former representing canonical innovation and the latter out-moded propaganda, is long overdue. Central to a new approach is the realisation that socialist realism and artistic innovation were not mutually exclusive. While the GDR undoubtedly had more than its share of pedantic party hardliners and uninspired artists who were keen to prescribe conservative figurative painting and tonal music in the name of socialist realism, the state also boasted strong pockets of innovation. These pacesetters worked not just in the peripheries of society that form the focus of Sigrid Hofer's account of experimentalist art in Dresden, but also within the mainstream political culture.<sup>20</sup> Within musical and literary circles, committed Marxist intellectuals such as Bertolt Brecht, Hanns Eisler, Paul Dessau, and Christa Wolf were all strong advocates of a socialist realist art that challenged rather than anaesthetised its audience.

Also misleading is the assumed connection between avant-garde creations and political dissidence, an argument that equates artistic style with political orientation. As several high-profile scandals in the 1990s demonstrate, such simplistic associations were ineffective tools for determining the political loyalties and persuasions of East German artists. Most notably, the outing of Sascha Anderson, the apparently dissident leader of the Prenzlauer Berg literary community, as a Stasi informer effectively undermined the conclusion that a direct correlation existed between radical art and non-conformist political views. Yet critics in the West have been slow to move beyond the post-war alignment of democracy and the avant-garde.<sup>21</sup>

Without diminishing the significant and serious constraints that totalitarianism placed on artistic expression, intellectual ideation, and personal lives, this volume reassesses the basic assumption of the GDR's uncritical isolationism and reconsiders the state and its legacy in a broader political, sociological, and international context. Our intent is to offer alternative narratives that challenge the narrow characterisation of GDR art as prescribed or repressed and in doing so, to advance a more nuanced and diversified picture of East German creation, criticism, and post-*Wende* legacy. The explorations of cul-



tural life in the GDR offered here reveal a more complex relationship between aesthetics and politics, one in which negotiations between state and artist reveal successful challenges to political dictation through direct engagement, grassroots organisation, and the sheer act of artistic creation.

In an attempt to provide a broader picture of artistic life in the GDR, the essays collectively discuss how aesthetic discourse was influenced by artistic dialogue in myriad contexts, including private, public, and international spheres. The long-held precept that West Germany represented a hot-bed of internationalism while the GDR remained a realm of conservative provincialism does not stand up to scrutiny. New archival evidence suggests instead a creative interchange between artists on either side of the border, a phenomenon that repositis GDR artists in both international and German dialogues about the nature of twentieth-century art. East German composers, for instance, regularly travelled to the Darmstadt summer courses prior to 1961 and even after the erection of the Wall were in regular contact with left-leaning and unashamedly avant-garde composers such as Luigi Nono and Mauricio Kagel.<sup>22</sup> As Joy Haslam Calico has noted, collaborative projects between East and West Germany also established the possibility for a ‘third space of artistic collaboration’, in which ideas about the aesthetics of modern art were debated and advanced through the exchanges between composers on both sides of the Wall.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, the archives of the Akademie der Künste, which held branches in both East and West Berlin, hold multiple documents that speak to cross-cultural consciousness of the trends and performances occurring throughout the GDR and the FRG, an awareness confirmed in the diaries of composers such as Paul Dessau and official publications of the Verband Deutscher Komponisten und Musikwissenschaftler (VDK).<sup>24</sup>

Such realisations have been slow to impact on the wider reception of the GDR’s artistic culture; recent attempts to expose the diversity of the state have fostered intense debates about colonisation and historical revisionism. Notable in this regard was the exhibition ‘Parteidiktatur und Alltag in der DDR’ organised by the Deutsches Historisches Museum in 2007, in which personal objects were displayed alongside items associated with political propaganda in the public spaces of the Zeughaus. *Alltagsgeschichte* has long been a site for academic innovation within the realm of GDR cultural studies, in

part because common cultural materials have traditionally been situated on the margins of academic scholarship. As a result, analyses appear not only liberated from more hegemonic models but also aware of the multiplicity of GDR culture and consumption. While early studies in the 1980s did maintain the rhetoric of ‘othering’, their language was often more sympathetic and accepting than critical, as seen in the introduction to *Alltag im anderen Deutschland* (1985): ‘Wie ist der Alltag im anderen Deutschland? Durchaus nicht phantasielos, durchaus nicht unzufrieden, nicht leidenschaftlos, nicht lieblos.’<sup>25</sup> Post-*Wende* studies quickly raised the important question of social pluralism; Stefan Sommer notes that the question of ‘What was every-day life in the GDR?’ needs to be followed by another: ‘Wessen Alltag? [...] Da stehen viele Alltagserfahrungen nebeneinander, die DDR wurde von den verschiedenen Generationen verschieden erlebt.’<sup>26</sup> And yet, the exhibition at the Zeughaus elicited ire from both defenders and critics of East German art; the former declared the exhibition to be an attempt of the West to colonise the history of the East, while the latter dismissed the exhibition as too uncritical and generic.<sup>27</sup>

LACMA’s ‘Art of Two Germanys’ exhibition drew a similarly mixed response. The diversity of East Germany’s fine arts – a more contentious topic than everyday life – struck critics in both the American and German press. Writing for *The New York Times*, Michael Kimmelman observed that far from confirming traditional preconceptions that artists in the GDR adhered to rigid criteria of socialist realism, ‘the show makes clear that the truth was more complicated, as it usually is, East German art having been more varied, not always politically compliant, and closer at times to what was happening in West Germany than the West German art establishment either acknowledged or bothered to notice.’<sup>28</sup> And yet, negative reactions in certain corners of the German press prompted art critic Hanno Rauterberg to caution readers that ‘selbst 20 Jahre nach dem Mauerfall ist der Kalte Krieg nicht zu Ende, nicht in den Köpfen vieler Museumsdirektoren.’<sup>29</sup>

The emphasis on individual experience inherent in these two exhibitions highlights the importance of locating those voices that have been sidelined from historiographies of the arts in Germany. Adding to the challenge is the preferential status accorded to official archives and documents in recent scholarship. The sudden accessibil-

ity of vast realms of government documents in the 1990s provided scholars with an invaluable window on to the political machinations of the state. Yet, this resource has also had its pitfalls; the tendency to assume that SED documents constituted the authentic narrative of life in the GDR resulted in a spate of histories that bore little resemblance to the lived experiences of GDR citizens. Corey Ross, in this context, describes the phenomenon of writing GDR history from the ‘inside outwards’, a process that results in histories that overlook ‘the experiences of contemporaries, and in the process [paint] a picture of the past that the East Germans themselves do not recognise.’<sup>30</sup> Crucially, the privileging of government documents denies legitimacy to currents and events that were *not* recorded by the SED.<sup>31</sup> Absent from these archives are the alternative voices that existed within the GDR, in particular those of women artists, artists working within private spheres, and artists working in alternative mediums and genres.

Consequently, the authors of this volume have expanded the scope of their inquiry beyond that of the traditional archives, utilising both private and state-sponsored art collections, discarded objects, and the resources of oral history. A recurring theme is that of art’s critical role within the GDR dictatorship and its connection to pan-Germanic ideas and legacies. Many of the essays are concerned with new theoretical frameworks that better account for the range of artistic expression that occurred within the borders of the former East German state. Methodologies that encourage consideration of multiple histories and alternative modernities are drawn from current cultural historiography as well as postcolonial studies.<sup>32</sup> In short, the volume aims to give a voice to those who have been all too frequently excluded from contemporary consideration. In all cases, the authors’ research has benefited from the post-*Wende* position from which they are writing; by moving away from the binary position of West-other, these studies attempt to debunk the notion that there was a normal path of modernity that was inherently western in composition and nature. As Stuart Taberner and Paul Cooke argue in *German Culture, Politics, and Literature into the Twenty-First Century*, post-GDR criticism has reached a point where its materials defy simple classification into categories of normal and abnormal, a dichotomy too easily grafted onto the cultural geography of the divided German state.<sup>33</sup> It is a tendency that has plagued not only academic studies but also the painful cultural negotiations of unification, including debates over the

preservation and dismantling of East German icons and artistic legacies.

### ***Art outside the Lines: Organisation***

This volume aims to interject the fine arts into the broader context of GDR culture and is generally concerned with repositioning art produced in the former East Germany in terms of current trends in GDR studies. Our approach has required a metaphorical ‘knocking down of the wall’ that has separated the various artistic disciplines from one another. We advance an inclusive perspective that situates fine art mediums in dialogue with genres such as film and literature that have benefited from decades of study and reconsideration. The essays build on recent advances in social and cultural history, but they also offer new perspectives that have cross-disciplinary relevance. This cross-disciplinary aspect is significant. The juxtaposition of the various arts provides a broader overview of aesthetical discourse in the GDR, demonstrating the shared concerns and interchange between the various artistic spheres.

The volume follows a trajectory that moves from more thematic considerations of GDR art to subject-specific studies of music and the visual arts. The first group of essays explores the multiple discourses that shaped the production and reception of art in the public sphere of the GDR. Working with the audience-oriented mediums of murals, film, and public monuments, the authors pose challenges to the prevailing political-historical constructs of the time, and reveal the extent to which art facilitated open exchanges about aesthetic policy and preferences, the staging of socialist history, and political power. They examine debates, propaganda, and most importantly the space that existed for counter-narratives and alternative interpretations. Moreover, all three essays address the various and conflicting interpretations of socialist realism that determined artistic production in the state, arguing that the definition was more flexible and inclusive than previously admitted.

April Eisman’s essay focuses on a series of murals created by the artist Bernhard Heisig that sparked controversy in the mid-1960s over what constituted socialist realism. The debate that ensued demonstrates the power of East German artists to contribute openly to aesthetic debates and complicates a simplistic understanding of socialist realism as politically conservative art. Skyler Arndt-Briggs explores

the public memory of 17 June 1953 as encapsulated in DEFA films, contextualising her discussion in terms of the political impact of the uprising on the DEFA studios. She contrasts Kurt Maetzig's officially sanctioned representation of 1953, *Schlösser und Katen* (1957) with other films from the era in which references to the uprising are conspicuously absent, positing the date as a shadow memory that pervaded public consciousness up to and beyond 1989. Finally, Kristine Nielsen turns her attention to public monuments and the means by which their social value was assessed and evaluated by the broader East German public. Her study, which focuses specifically on the Ernst Thälmann monument in Prenzlauer Berg, explores how artistic objects provoked public reactions that were often antithetical to the staged, theatrical dedication ceremonies that accompanied their unveiling, ultimately demonstrating the collective power of the public to reject 'gifts of the state' in the late 1980s.

The second section places East German art in dialogue with the West and explores the various channels of influence that transcended the geographical and ideological divisions of Cold War. Whereas most studies involving internationalisation and the GDR have tended to focus either on the state's relationship with its Warsaw Pact neighbours or on attempts to foster links with sympathetic Third World nations, the essays by Sigrid Hofer, Sara Lennox, and Joy Calico explore the GDR's international profile along the East-West divide. As they show, artists in the GDR developed means by which to encounter and reinterpret western artistic currents, including the founding of underground artists' collectives and academic analysis of western artwork. More importantly, their scholarship suggests that the transfer of ideas travelled in both directions, thus negating an impression of GDR culture as isolationist and irrelevant.

Sigrid Hofer depicts a subculture inspired by international cross currents in her essay on Art Informel. Examining underground artists' collectives in Dresden in the 1950s and 1960s, she documents a vibrant transfer of ideas between artists on both sides of the border. Hofer characterises the abstract and non-conformist art created in Dresden not as an openly hostile political attack on the state, but rather as a reflective, personal defence of artistic self-assertion. She suggests that the Dresden painters were less concerned with political rebuke and protest, as has been commonly argued, and more interested in nurturing aesthetic concerns and the international transfer of cul-

tural thought. Sara Lennox, in contrast, explores the official face of internationalism. Her essay examines the impact of American black authors in the GDR, merging the methods of Africana studies with those of German literary criticism. She asserts a theory of transnationalism, which probes beyond Cold War dichotomies to document East German interpretations of Black American literature, most notably the writings of Richard Wright, James Baldwin, and Langston Hughes. Finally, Joy Calico's analysis of *Regieoper* exposes a more maverick brand of international exchange between East and West Germany, tracing the export of opera directors from West to East and, more importantly, vice versa. The daring stage productions of figures such as Ruth Berghaus, Götz Friedrich and Harry Kupfer in Frankfurt, Bayreuth, and further afield reveal East German culture not only to have been internationally relevant in its own time but also to have produced a lasting legacy of artistic interpretation that survives into the twenty-first century.

The essays in the final two sections of the volume focus on art music and the visual arts respectively, the fields that have been most resistant to revisionist accounts and alternative narratives. While figures such as Christa Wolf and Stefan Heym have gradually been accepted into the canon of German twentieth-century literature, their contemporaries in the visual arts and music have been very obviously sidelined, not least because the discourse surrounding both is heavily driven by advocates for traditional canonical repertory. Music, in particular, represents a microcosm of the problems surrounding the legacy of GDR art. It has been a victim not only of the moralistic paradigms that have been used to evaluate art produced in dictatorships, but also of the hegemony of western aesthetics in musicology. The romantic ideology of the work concept sits uncomfortably with conventional interpretations of art created according to socialist principles, and the reluctance to incorporate East German composers into the narrative of German music history can be ascribed, at least in part, to the tenacity of artistic autonomy to western thought processes.<sup>34</sup> The essays in this section of the volume exemplify a new wave of scholarship that seeks to evaluate GDR music on its own terms. The authors explore methodologies that not only expose the full spectrum of musical life in the GDR but also impact on established perceptions of musical creativity in the West.

These concerns are paramount in Matthias Tischer's essay, which appropriates Michel Foucault's discourse theory as a useful theoretical framework by which to locate and reconcile marginalised voices within musical historiography. Drawing on Foucault's concept of power as a productive rather than repressive force, he explores the ambiguities of composing simultaneously *for* and *against* the regime, reasserting the importance of the artwork as a site of memory and criticism. Building on Tischer's exposition of power and discourse, Nina Noeske discusses the implications of the inherently patriarchal structures of the GDR for performance, composition and aesthetics. She locates the marginalised voices of the female and the feminine in music, and explores their exclusion from a society that prided itself on gender equality but was itself firmly constructed in terms of masculine norms. In the final essay, Laura Silverberg posits the strength of alternative voices in the upper echelons of the state's musical elite, documenting the very public stand-off that took place between leading composers and the more conservative party members who dominated the VDK in 1956. Charting a series of articles in *Sonntag* and *Musik und Gesellschaft* surrounding the need to reform and revitalise East German composition and musical life, Silverberg debunks the perception that the aesthetics of socialist realism were dictated by a unified party voice.

The final section examines the practicalities of dealing with the legacy of the GDR's visual arts since the fall of the Wall, with three essays focusing on the difficulties of exhibiting GDR art in museums and art galleries in Germany and beyond. These exhibitions represent the public face of GDR reception and have served as a focal point for the anxieties and tensions surrounding unification. On the one hand, they function as a barometer of public opinion. Yet, such exhibitions can also play an instrumental role in changing perceptions, in prompting re-evaluations of the East German artistic heritage and its place in the twenty-first century.

Jonathan Osmond's essay provides a historical account of the major exhibitions of GDR art that have taken place since 1989, examining the role that these have played in mediating attitudes and valuation (or devaluation). He uncovers the various agendas and subtle suggestions of these showings, and raises questions about how curatorial decisions evaluate and impact the aesthetic worth of East German art. The final two essays of the volume provide a counterpart

to Osmond's essay by offering insights into the actual issues facing curators of GDR art in the here and now. Silke Wagler, director of the Kunstfonds in Dresden, speaks candidly about the political and institutional challenges associated with maintaining one of the largest repositories of GDR art in Germany. She describes the creative approaches necessary for dealing with limitations such as shortage of space, and the role of the Kunstfonds in encouraging active engagement between the public, contemporary artists, and GDR art. Finally, Justin Jampol, director of the Wende Museum in Los Angeles, explores the city's position as an alternative space for the re-evaluation of East German art. He traces Los Angeles's historical relationship with Germany, and examines the extent to which the city's own attempts to interpret the legacy of German Cold War history can challenge the deep-seated historical and cultural divide that remains nearly twenty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> This is a central argument of Paul Cooke's *Representing East Germany since Unification: From Colonization to Nostalgia*, Oxford: Berg, 2005. Also interesting in this regard are the comparisons Christa Wolf makes between the Spanish colonisation of Native Americans in California and the fate of the GDR in her short diary entry titled 'Santa Monica, Sonntag den 27. September 1992', published in *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou. Texte 1990-1994*, Cologne: Verlag Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1994, pp. 232-47.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Cooke, *Representing East Germany*, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Historians suffered particularly in this process of *Abwicklung* or liquidation; the West German political scientist Hermann Weber, for instance, dismissed pre-1989 work by East German historians simply as 'rubbish'. See 'Zum Stand der Forschung über die DDR-Geschichte', *Deutschland Archiv*, 31:2 (1998), 249-57 (here: pp. 249-50). For a general discussion of this phenomenon see Catherine Epstein, 'East Germany and Its History since 1989', *The Journal of Modern History*, 75:3 (2003), 634-61, and Mitchell G. Ash, 'Becoming Normal, Modern, and German (Again?)', in: Michael Geyer, ed., *The Power of Intellectuals in Contemporary Germany*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2001, pp. 295-313.

<sup>4</sup> Cited in James McAdams, *Judging the Past in Unified Germany*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 113. In the years of *Ostpolitik* western commentators were reluctant to use the totalitarian model in discussions of the GDR. Such qualms disappeared once the state was consigned to history.



<sup>5</sup> The term *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* derives from Adorno's 1959 phrase, 'Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit', which originally referred to the dilemma of placing the Holocaust within German history and consciousness. See Theodor W. Adorno, 'What Does Coming to Terms with the Past Mean?' in: Geoffrey H. Hartman, ed., *Bitburg in Moral and Political Perspective*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986, pp. 115-29.

<sup>6</sup> *Politisch fest in unseren Händen. Musikalische und musikwissenschaftliche Gesellschaften in der DDR: Dokumente und Analysen*, Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1997. The book and Klingberg's related publications caused serious consternation among musicologists who had been active during the GDR. See for example the correspondence between Klingberg and Georg Knepler, and Knepler and Gerd Rienäcker in the Stiftung Archiv Akademie der Künste (SA-AdK): Knepler 34 and Knepler 56.

<sup>7</sup> The manner in which the GDR art was hung, often askew or without frames, drew comparisons between the display of East German art and the controversial exhibiting of modernist or Jewish art at the Degenerate Art exhibition, which the Nazis curated in 1937, suggesting that the East German art was degenerate and furthering its status as anti-aesthetic. A comparable mindset is explored in Daphne Berdahl's discussion of the portrayal of the GDR by the *Zeitgeschichtliches Forum Leipzig*, which is similarly orientated in terms of dictatorship. See Daphne Berdahl, 'Museums and Memory in the Former GDR', in: Katherine Pence and Paul Betts, eds, *Socialist Modern: East German Everyday Culture and Politics*, Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2008, pp. 345-66.

<sup>8</sup> *Kunstsammlungen zu Weimar*, ed., *Der Weimarer Bilderstreit: Szenen einer Ausstellung: Eine Dokumentation*, Weimar: VDG, 2000.

<sup>9</sup> For alternative models of totalitarianism, see Jürgen Kocka's 'The GDR: A Special Kind of Modern Dictatorship', and Konrad H. Jarausch, 'Care and Coercion: The GDR as Welfare Dictatorship', both in: Konrad H. Jarausch, ed., Eve Duffy, trans., *Dictatorship as Experience: Towards a Socio-Cultural History of the GDR*, New York: Berghahn Books, 1999, pp. 17-26 and 47-72.

<sup>10</sup> Wolfgang Engler, *Die Ostdeutschen. Kunde von einem verlorenen Land*, Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1999. See also Daphne Berdahl, '(N)ostalgia for the Present: Memory, Longing, and East German Things', *Ethnos*, 64:2 (1999), 192-211.

<sup>11</sup> A notable recent example is the *Ostel* 'DDR-Design-Hostel' in Berlin.

<sup>12</sup> See for example the discussion in Claudia Sadowski-Smith, 'Ostalgia: Revaluing the Past, Regressing into the Future', *GDR Bulletin*, 25 (Spring 1998), 1-6.

<sup>13</sup> Cooke, *Representing East Germany*, p. 159.

<sup>14</sup> In this context Michael Geyer notes the prescience of the title of Otthein Ramstedt and Gert Schmidt's 1992 survey of the FRG: *BRD ade! Vierzig Jahre in Rück-Ansichten*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1992. See Geyer, 'The Long Good-Bye', in: *The Power of Intellectuals in Contemporary Germany*, pp. 355-80 (here: p. 356).

<sup>15</sup> Published by Deutsche Musikrat in conjunction with Red Seal SONY/BMG Music Entertainment. Financial support for the project was provided by the Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien.

<sup>16</sup> Hanno Rauterberg, 'Kunst in BRD und DDR: Nun kann die Mauer fallen', *Die Zeit*, 29 January 2009.

<sup>17</sup> Anneli Hartmann, 'Was heißt heute überhaupt noch "DDR-Literatur"?' in: Margy Gerber, ed., *Studies in GDR Culture and Society: Selected Papers from the Ninth New Hampshire Symposium on the German Democratic Republic* Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985, pp. 265-80.

<sup>18</sup> Marc Silberman, 'Whose Story Is This?: Rewriting the Literary History of the GDR', in: Jost Hermand and Marc Silberman, eds, *Contentious Memories: Looking Back at the GDR*, New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2000, pp. 25-57 (here: pp. 47-9).

<sup>19</sup> Frank Hörnigk, 'Reconstructing the GDR Canon of the 1960s and 1970s', in: *Contentious Memories: Looking Back at the GDR*, p. 195.

<sup>20</sup> Sigrid Hofer, ed., *Gegenwelten. Informelle Malerei in der DDR*, Frankfurt am Main and Basel: Stroemfeld, 2006.

<sup>21</sup> An interesting parallel can be found in the contentious discussions that took place about post-war American modernism in the 1970s. See Francis Francina, ed., *Pollock and After: The Critical Debate*, London: Routledge, 2<sup>nd</sup> rev. edn, 2000.

<sup>22</sup> A rich picture of the interchange between composers in post-war Germany emerges in Paul Dessau, ed. Daniela Reinhold, *'Let's Hope for the Best': Briefe und Notizbücher aus den Jahren 1948 bis 1978*, Hofheim: Wolke, 2000.

<sup>23</sup> Joy H. Calico, 'Jüdische Chronik: The Third Space of Commemoration between East and West Germany', *The Musical Quarterly*, 88:1 (2005), 95-122 (here: p. 96). Calico appropriates her theory from Homi Bhaba's post-colonial writings as well as Jeffrey Herf's binary model of Nazi reception. See Bhaba, *The Location of Culture*, London: Routledge, 1994, and Herf, *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997.

<sup>24</sup> See Paul Dessau, *'Let's Hope for the Best'* and 'Informationsblatt', Verbandes Deutscher Komponisten und Musikwissenschaftler (VDK), SA-AdK.

<sup>25</sup> Werner Filmer and Heribert Schwan, eds, *Alltag im anderen Deutschland*, Düsseldorf: Econ-Verlag, 1985, p. 9.

<sup>26</sup> Stefan Sommer, *Das große Lexikon des DDR-Alltags der DDR*, Berlin: Schwarzkopf & Schwarzkopf, 2002, pp. 3-4. The lexicon contains entries ranging from A (*Aber Vati!*, a television sitcom from the 1970s) to Z (*Zum Wohle des Volkes*), one of the official phrases of the SED.

<sup>27</sup> See Gustav Seibt, 'Austellung im Deutschen Historischen Museum. Weichgespülte Ostalgie', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 3 April 2007.

<sup>28</sup> Michael Kimmelman, 'Abroad – Before the Wall Fell, Art in Two Germanys Often Spoke the Same Tongue', *The New York Times*, 12 February 2009. This is a theme that also emerges prominently in Hanno Rauterberg's previously-mentioned review in *Die Zeit*.

<sup>29</sup> Hanno Rauterberg, 'Kunst in BRD und DDR: Nun kann die Mauer fallen'.

<sup>30</sup> Corey Ross, *The East German Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives in the Interpretation of the GDR*, London: Arnold, 2002, p. 201.

<sup>31</sup> As Elizabeth A. Clark observes regarding the perils of archival work: 'documents do not record everything and as such are not necessarily representative. The historian has no control over the chance selection of documents that remain.' *History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004, p. 94.

<sup>32</sup> For further discussion on the importance of postcolonial studies to GDR studies, see Katherine Pence and Paul Betts, 'Introduction', in: *Socialist Modern: East German Everyday Culture and Politics*, p. 12.

<sup>33</sup> Stuart Taberner and Paul Cooke, *German Culture, Politics, and Literature into the Twenty-First Century: Beyond Normalization*, Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2006. See also Ash, 'Becoming Normal, Modern, and German (Again?)'.

<sup>34</sup> Anne Shreffler has alluded to this problem on more than one occasion. See her 'Berlin Walls: Dahlhaus, Knepler, and Ideologies of Music History', *Journal of Musicology*, 20:4 (2003), 498-525; and 'Review of *Socialist Realism and Music; Zwischen Macht und Freiheit; Musik zwischen Emigration und Stalinismus; Nationale Musik im 20. Jahrhundert*', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 60:2 (2007), 453-63.