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## V. The Humanization of the Stasi in *Das Leben der Anderen*

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*Das Leben der Anderen*, the first popular feature film to deal seriously with activities of the State Security (*Stasi*) activities in East Germany, evoked intense critical discussion and ultimately, acclaim. One focal point of commentary was the humanization of the *Stasi*, perhaps with the concern that humanization could legitimate the actions of *Stasi* officers. The film employs a classical model of redemption-and humanization-through art. The story of the aesthetic education and humanization of Captain Wiesler activates in the viewer a powerful response to GDR trauma, such that the film makes a significant contribution to German collective memory.

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By all measures, *Das Leben der Anderen* (*The Lives of Others*), the 2006 film by rookie director Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck, has been an astounding international success. The first German film to capture the Oscar for Best Foreign Language Picture in a generation, it had already been showered with a series of German awards, including seven Lolas at the *Deutscher Filmpreis* 2006. In its first year, 1.7 million cinema viewers saw the film in Germany.<sup>1</sup> In the United States—it found one of the largest audiences for a foreign-language film in recent years.<sup>2</sup>

Internationally, the film's construction as a political thriller and the story of individual redemption and freedom probably account for its popularity. In Germany, its reception is more complex. Above all, viewers were attracted to the look of the film, that is, the recognizable aesthetic of the décor, clothing, and social groups within the German Democratic Republic, as well as the familiarity of the East Berlin cityscape. The story is compelling, the cinematography is of high quality, the acting exceptional, and the original score by Gabriel Yared carries the viewer along emotionally. In his review for the *Spiegel*, Reinhard Mohr hailed *Das Leben der Anderen* as “der erste deutsche Spielfilm, der sich durchgehend ernsthaft, ohne Trabi-Nostalgie, Spreewaldgurken-Romantik und anderen folkloristischen Klamaus mit dem Kern der 1989 untergegangenen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik auseinandersetzt.”<sup>3</sup> Mohr is comparing the film, of course, to the rather lighter fare of *Good Bye Lenin!*<sup>4</sup> the highly successful 2003 comedy that was replete with references to GDR material culture. *Das Leben der Anderen* breaks new ground in two ways: it is the first widely successful feature film to portray the Ministry for State Security (*Stasi*) at the center of the story, and it humanizes the individual *Stasi* worker on film.

Over 16 years after the fall of the Wall, the most sensitive personal traumas brought about by mechanisms of state power and ideology can only now begin to be accessed from varying perspectives that blur the boundaries of the terms victim and perpetrator. The reduction of larger social or cultural trauma to an individual fictional story has proven to resonate widely with the German and international public. The film demonstrates that a work of fiction can represent memory through the individual, humanizing story, more effectively than a documentary.

*Das Leben der Anderen* is set in East Berlin in the Orwellian year of 1984, at a time when the *Stasi* is at its peak of operations. By 1989, the Ministry for State Security had over 91,000 full-time employees, some 174,000 informants, and over 180 km of observation files.<sup>5</sup> The story centers on *Stasi* Captain Gerd Wiesler, assigned to observe successful playwright Georg Dreyman and his partner, star actress Christa-Maria Sieland. At the outset a politically loyal employee and ideologue, Wiesler is changed by the intimate observation of this couple. Over the course of the film, Dreyman gradually becomes involved with political resistance. Following his friend Jerska's suicide after years of being professionally blacklisted as a theater director, Dreyman makes contact with the Western newsmagazine, *Der Spiegel*, and smuggles to the West a text critical of the GDR as a state that has the second highest suicide rate in the world. Meanwhile, Sieland is subjected to increasing pressure to serve as an IM (*Inoffizieller Mitarbeiter*), on the threat of her career. Wiesler, observing the impact of the state's persecution on his subjects' lives, experiences a transformation.

In the film the fundamentally different political contexts of the *Stasi* agent before and after 1989 relativize our view of his actions. The GDR's most prominent dissident, singer-songwriter Wolf Biermann, watched a sneak preview of the film in 2006 and found himself "verblüfft, verwirrt, war angenehm enttäuscht und vorsichtig begeistert." He felt that his dissident friend Jürgen Fuchs would have said: "Jetzt werden die Schergen der Diktatur auch noch vermenschelt! Das alltägliche DDR-Leben war brutaler, war grauer und grauenhafter. Werden jetzt die *Stasi*-Verbrecher wie Mielke und Markus Wolf historisch weichgewaschen, etwa wie der arme Mensch Adolf in den letzten Tagen im Führerbunker unter der Reichskanzlei?"<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, Biermann's review in *Die Welt* ends positively with the comment that the film marks the beginning of a deeper confrontation with Germany's second dictatorship.

How is it that Biermann, forcibly expatriated from the GDR, one of the foremost voices of *Stasi*-condemnation and IM-whistle-blower, finds the humanization of the *Stasi* operative acceptable, ultimately even praiseworthy? The film has been followed by vigorous debate, and is frequently accused of being too soft on the perpetrators of the SED regime. Yet, most critics and audience discussions end on a positive note. I would argue that the narrative structure of the film is productive in a number of ways: it reduces the immense issue of the

*Stasi* in society to a manageable scale, it triggers the imagination of the viewer to engage with the traumatic past, and offers a fable with which to access it.

First of all, viewers are moved by the way that the film recreates the look of the GDR, for instance, by means of the distinctive color palette. That visual association with the GDR past is a key to unlocking a whole storage of historical problems and personal memories. In *Das Leben der Anderen*, the director was particularly careful with color. As he says on the director's commentary on the DVD, he worked with a strict color concept that excluded red or bright blue. These colors were not very present in images and films within the GDR, he says, and since memory exaggerates such impressions, the film must also do so.<sup>7</sup> As the critic from *Die Zeit* put it: "Donnersmarck will keinen Realismus, sondern einen metaphorischen Hyperrealismus."<sup>8</sup> He plays on certain clichés and types to create an effect. The German viewer, after the initial impression, is quick to engage critically with the content of the film. The film bears witness to some deep wounds, and the means by which it does so evokes debate. Memorials and, in this case, films that deal with the German past are fraught with symbolic meaning and become contested terrain.

Some, including the Polish sociologist Piotr Sztompka, have described the effects of rapid social change after 1989 in Eastern Europe as a cultural trauma.<sup>9</sup> For East Germans the historical trauma was triple: they had to cope with a new, Western perspective on Nazism and the Holocaust, the oppression of the government in the GDR, and then the dramatic societal shift after 1989. Hans-Joachim Maaz, author of a psychiatric profile of East Germany in 1990, identifies a *Gefühlsstau*, or pent-up rage, pain, and resentment expressed after unification, in a cathartic breakthrough of the unconscious.<sup>10</sup> While Maaz was rightly criticized, in my view, for analyzing the psyche of a nation in the same way as one would an individual, he was one of the first to acknowledge the widespread social effects of the shock experienced in 1989/1990. The Fall of the Wall and German unification, in itself a shock that was experienced by some as traumatic, also exposed the trauma experienced by many within GDR society.<sup>11</sup>

The term cultural trauma has come into currency relatively recently, and brings some controversy with it. Jeffrey Alexander, in the introductory chapter on his volume of essays on the subject, writes that

cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways.<sup>12</sup>

Hans Joas has challenged this subjectification of a collectivity, the tensions between the individual psychological and construction of cultural trauma, and significantly, to the "extremely wide notion of trauma" employed by

Sztompka's essay in Alexander's volume.<sup>13</sup> Sztompka holds an optimistic view of the potential effects of trauma in Eastern Europe, as he has stated in a previous publication:

Cultural trauma begins with disorganization of cultural rules and accompanying personal disorientation, culminating even in the loss of identity. ... The traumatic mood which spreads in a society is countered by various coping strategies. If they are successful trauma turns into a mobilizing force for human agency, and stimulates creative social becoming.<sup>14</sup>

The fact that social change of any kind involves a mourning of that which has been lost does not necessarily mean that this social change can be described as traumatic. Even if one accepts the selective application of the term cultural trauma, one must note a considerable difference between the social change after 1989 and the aftermath of the Holocaust and Second World War. The *Wende* was clearly an event *desired* by the people. Nonetheless, individuals were traumatized by the actions of the Ministry for State Security in the GDR. It could very well prove useful to consider such trauma in the process of representing collective memory, as is carried out by *Das Leben der Anderen*. In the film those traumatic events in the lives of fictional characters lead to individual humanist awakenings. The hopeful ending and individual transformation point clearly to the "creative social becoming" to which Sztompka refers, and the transformation happens through art—in the film and by the film.

Penetrating the psychology of the *Stasi* officer in the story, Captain Gerd Wiesler, is a key to audience involvement. We are invited in the opening scene of the film to view the ambitious idealism of an MfS agent skilled in the art of interrogation of political suspects, with the objective of protecting the state. We then compare him to his superior, the more cynical careerist, Lieutenant Colonel Grubitz, who seeks to please the Socialist Unity Party Central Committee (ZK) Member and Minister, Hempf. Hempf's personal motives in a proposed Operativer Vorgang (OV), or covert investigation, of playwright Georg Dreyman are soon revealed: he wishes for easier access to Dreyman's partner, the actress Christa-Maria Sieland. Although Wiesler has already set up the operation with clinical precision, his reaction to this information is the first indication that he is at odds with the corruption of his superior, and that his personal ethics may trump the authority of the party.

The negative view of the humanization of the *Stasi* in this film, as expressed by a number of critics, is directly linked to the humanization of the Nazis, particularly Hitler, which has occurred in some recent popular books and films. Biermann refers specifically to Oliver Hirschbiegel's film, *Der Untergang* (2004), a psychological portrait of Hitler in the last days of the war.<sup>15</sup> Hirschbiegel, in his director's commentary on the DVD of this film, responds to criticism:

Das monströse an dem dritten Reich und allem was dann herging, ist dass

das Menschen sind. Das waren nämlich nicht irgendwelche Erfindungen aus der Hölle mit Klauen und Reisszähnen, sondern das waren ja Menschen. Und dieser Hitler ist auch ein Mensch gewesen. Und das macht für mich diesen beängstigenden Umstand aus, und deswegen ist es genau richtig, dass wir ihn als Menschen zeigen, mit allen Konsequenzen.<sup>16</sup>

Addressing the individual social and psychological processes of perpetrators, without neglecting the historical documentation of the harm they inflicted on countless citizens, seems to be a significant step in developing the German collective memory at this juncture. Reflections on the sensitive subject of the *Stasi* must now move beyond victim-perpetrator discourse in order to deal with the traumas inflicted. As Gajdukova writes in reference to post-communist victim-perpetrator discussion groups, the categories of victim and perpetrator are most often blurred in GDR history: “In den meisten Konflikten sind die Beteiligten beides—passives Opfer und aktiver Täter. Gleichzeitig gibt es Opfer, die sich bewusst als Täter im Konflikt verstehen.”<sup>17</sup> Given the large number of official *Stasi* employees, IMs, and the many more who exercised self-censorship, it has been very difficult to turn the “grayish web of collaboration into a clear-cut black-and-white picture of guilt and innocence.”<sup>18</sup>

The character of Wiesler, the *Stasi* agent, is in some ways the least conflicted in the film. His story arc neatly shows his conversion from a part of the repressive state to one of its opponents. The other characters in the film show more ongoing inner conflict, even if they are not as developed. We see Christa-Maria Sieland’s desperation as she is first pressured to submit to the advances of the Minister of Culture and later to serve as IM in order to save her career. She knows that a failure to collaborate will mean that she can never act again, and this is too much to bear. She sees no way to avoid the involvement with the MfS. Georg Dreyman is portrayed as someone who initially has faith in the socialist system, creates his art within the parameters set by culture functionaries, and even agrees with the refusal of a travel permit to his journalist friend, Paul Hauser. His biography, however, is eventually indelibly inscribed by the *Stasi* actions, both by the suicide of his close friend Albert Jerska and the blatant manipulation of Christa-Maria. He decides to engage in criticism of the system, at some risk to himself and those around him. We also observe Colonel Grubitz, who is motivated more by his career than by the political ideals of the party. Each of these characters represents a position to the viewer, and a sense of *knowing* them, both as individuals and as tropes is elicited. Martina Gedeck, the actress who plays Christa-Maria Sieland, criticized the female role as a functional device (*Funktionsträgerin*) within the plot, who must die in order to become a hero.<sup>19</sup> Her regret for her weakness redeems her. I would argue that the symbolic character of these roles—note the operatic staging of Christa’s death with the Pietà pose—actually works to engage the audience in the film,

and we can accept them as symbols within the hyperrealist environment that von Donnersmarck creates for us.

A common response to films about the Holocaust and other historically traumatic events—in this case *Stasi* surveillance and intervention—is that critics go to great lengths to reflect on the subject-position of the filmmakers. They consider the degree to which the writers, directors, and actors were firsthand witnesses, victims, or survivors, and to what extent the material is taken from memoirs, archival materials, historical accounts or autobiographic novels.<sup>20</sup> In the reception of *Das Leben der Anderen*, there are a number of stories behind the story. Nearly every critic comments on the historical inaccuracies, such as the types of uniforms worn on certain occasions, the kind of interaction between the Minister of Culture, Hempf, and Colonel Grubitz, for example. Most ardently disputed is the very possibility that a *Stasi* captain could have had a crisis of conscience as Wiesler did, and then cover for his surveillance subjects.

Anna Funder, author of *Stasiland*, wrote a piece for the *Guardian* about the film's "odd relation to historical truth, a truth that is being bitterly fought for now." She praises the film as a thing of beauty, but calls it a "fantasy narrative." She says that "On a case like Dreyman's there might have been a dozen agents: everything was checked and cross-checked. This separation of duties gives some former *Stasi* men the impression that they were just 'obeying orders' or were 'small cogs' in the machine and that therefore they couldn't have done much harm."<sup>21</sup>

Much has been made of a couple of cases of *Stasi* officers Trebeljahr and Teske, who left the service and then were given the death sentence in 1979 and 1981. However, there has been no evidence in the 185 km of *Stasi* files—they were assiduous record keepers—that there was ever an officer who concealed evidence to help a dissident as Wiesler does in this film. The film does make some claims to historical accuracy, which are not substantiated. However, even Joachim Gauck, the longtime director of the post-unification archives of the Ministry of State Security, supports the accurate depiction of details in the film, and defends it against critics. He argues in *Die Welt* that behind the claims of historical inaccuracy lies a view that this film is an anticommunist witch hunt, but the critics can't come right out and say that.<sup>22</sup> Timothy Garton Ash, in the *New York Review of Books*, says that "these objections are in an important sense beside the point. It uses the syntax and conventions of Hollywood to convey to the widest possible audience some part of the truth about life under the *Stasi*, and the larger truths that experience revealed about human nature."<sup>23</sup> Uncovering truths about human nature entails a humanization of the perpetrators—"the Others," whether real or fictionalized. In his book about his own *Stasi* file from the time he spent as a writer and researcher in the GDR, Garton Ash goes to some lengths to track down the officers who were involved in his case.

The result of his persistent efforts is that he can portray four of the officers as interview subjects who respond individually to their roles in the GDR past. He finds them largely unrepentant and unwilling to accept blame (197),<sup>24</sup> but also learns what led them to their positions. Of one officer, he is able to say that he learned from his mistakes, and is a “good man” (199).<sup>25</sup> Garton Ash goes on to speculate that, if he had suffered more from the *Stasi* operations, he might feel differently. Nonetheless, the section of the book devoted to these officers does lead the reader toward a sober and nuanced reflection of the *Stasi* past and its long-term effects.

Then there are the discussions and legal issues surrounding the individual biographies of the director/screenwriter and the actors in the film. Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck has a name with a flavor of nineteenth-century aristocracy, and is a relatively fresh graduate from film school in Munich. His parents moved from the East to West-Berlin when he was eight years old. Many praise von Donnersmarck for doing his research and for managing to write such a film as a Wessi, but some criticize his characters as stereotypical, due to his Western outsider view.

Ulrich Mühe, who plays the role of Captain Wiesler, was a highly accomplished and sought after actor in the GDR. Most prominent GDR figures have *Stasi* stories to tell, either as victims or perpetrators, quite often as both. He says at the outset of the audio commentary on the DVD that he felt that he was telling part of his own biography in this film and felt very close to the material. At the beginning of the film, Wiesler is portrayed as the perfect technician. His self-control is demonstrated by the reduction of his physicality to the absolute minimum. The understatement of the role is vital for its success, since the German audience is highly sensitive to the material. Many *feuilleton* articles appeared that dealt with Mühe’s ex-wife, the well-known actor Jenny Gröllmann, whose extensive *Stasi* file as an IM, an unofficial collaborator, indicate that she reported on him. She claimed that the reports were fabricated by the *Stasi* officer in charge of her case, that she never worked for the *Stasi*, and won her defamation suit in court, despite the over 500 pages in her IM file.<sup>26</sup> Mühe was forced to pay restitution for libel, and statements by him and by Donnersmarck about this first-hand experience with the *Stasi* had to be deleted from the first version of the published screenplay and from the commentary on the DVD.<sup>27</sup> Von Donnersmarck makes a number of remarks about this on the early DVD commentary and concludes about the *Stasi* records that it seems that “du darfst zwar lesen, was geschehen ist, aber du darfst es nicht sagen.” He also says, “Ganz aufgearbeitet ist dieses Thema in Deutschland wirklich noch nicht. Aber zumindest beginnen wir mit der Aufarbeitung auf fiktionalem Gebiet.”<sup>28</sup> Despite the ban, one has reason to believe that the word was out, and Mühe’s experience as a victim and a witness became a significant element in his credibility in the role of Wiesler. Mühe was to die in the summer of 2007,



before the truth of his case could be fully revealed.

Only a few critics took greatest aim at the way in which Wiesler experiences his crisis of conscience, but this is very much linked to Biermann's initial complaint about the humanization of the *Stasi*. Wiesler is first troubled by a conversation with Grubitz about how finding something on the playwright will benefit their careers, but then the real turning point is brought about by art—a classical idea most clearly articulated by Friedrich Schiller's *Die Ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen*. Schiller wrote his letters on aesthetic education, which connect beauty and morality, in response to the trauma of the French Revolution. His utopian vision was one of education toward art and education by art, the latter offering advice and moral improvement. The director, von Donnersmarck, was inspired to make this film when he heard of Lenin's reaction to Beethoven's *Appassionata*. According to Gorky, Lenin said that he couldn't listen to it very often because it distracted him from the necessary violence of the revolution:

I want to say sweet, silly things and pat the heads of people who, living in a filthy hell, can create such beauty. One can't pat anyone on the head nowadays, they might bite your hand off. They ought to be beaten on the head, beaten mercilessly....<sup>29</sup>

That idea caused von Donnersmarck to imagine the cinematic possibility of a Lenin-like villain who is forced to listen to the *Appassionata* for the sake of the revolution.<sup>30</sup> This classical idea of art's redemptive—and humanizing—power becomes a central theme in *Das Leben der Anderen*.

The turning point in the film for both the playwright Dreyman and Wiesler occurs when the former receives a phone call to inform him that his friend Jerska, who had been banned from his profession as a stage director, has hanged himself. Dreyman plays the powerful *Sonate vom Guten Menschen* which Jerska had given him. As Wiesler listens from his surveillance post in the attic and is deeply moved by the complex chords of the music.<sup>31</sup> The music has added to Wiesler's aesthetic education, since, in the previous scene, we have just watched him read a Brecht poem and imagine Dreyman's voice reading it to him. Brecht's position as a committed socialist who resisted many of the constraints and weaknesses of the early GDR, motivates the choice of the poem. Poetry and music together are able to reach the psyche and change the perspective of both protagonists in the film. Dreyman, after he finishes playing, asks rhetorically, "Kann jemand, der diese Musik gehört hat, wirklich gehört hat, noch ein schlechter Mensch sein?"<sup>32</sup> Dreyman, previously reluctant to become involved in dissident activities, decides to write a critical article on the hidden high rate of suicide in the GDR, while Wiesler, now sympathetic to his surveillance objects and their plight, conceals the evidence of their blatant actions against the state.

There are obvious parallels here to the recent Polanski film *The Pianist*, in which the Polish Jew is spared because the Nazi is so moved by the his performance of Chopin.<sup>33</sup> It is no coincidence that, in this representation of history by von Donnersmarck, there is a sense that many questions of memory are common to both the Nazi past and the repression in the GDR. While the two systems are on a vastly different scale and the crimes within them cannot be compared, some of what we have learned from the post-Holocaust period about remembering and narrating trauma can also be applied to the trauma inflicted by the *Stasi*. Germany has gone further than perhaps any other country to take steps to expose the past, with the acknowledgement that history must be understood rather than simply rejected. Artistic productions like *Das Leben der Anderen* make an important contribution to the development of collective memory. We are ultimately left in the film with the question whether art can humanize. Von Donnersmarck has said openly that he believes it can, and he presents this vision to us in his film. One sarcastic critic wrote for the *Frankfurter Rundschau*:

The efforts at earnestness give rise to kitsch. The isolated, unfeeling surveillance officer forgets his whole Marxist-Leninist schooling over a Brecht poem. Tears would spring to Schiller's eyes over so much human improvement.<sup>34</sup>

The film concludes two years after unification, when Dreyman has read the *Stasi* files and discovered Wiesler's cover-up. He devotes his next novel, *Die Sonate vom Guten Menschen* to HGWXX, Wiesler's operative code name. Wiesler finds a copy and buys it. When asked whether he wants it gift-wrapped, he replies, "Nein. Es ist für mich." The narrative is rather too neat and closed, but this is perhaps what is called for. In trauma treatments, narrating traumatic events brings together the fragmented images of the trauma, helps to reduce patient dissociation, and results in fewer intrusive symptoms.<sup>35</sup> The treatment helps to unfreeze the fixed image of the trauma into something manageable. While the notion of the redeemed *Stasi* captain's ideological shift from unfeeling enforcer of the state agenda to a dissident sympathizer is perhaps too much of a fable for some real witnesses of the GDR experience to accept, the film has certainly re-opened both dining-table discussions and public debate around the recent German past.

Films are "powerful means of enacting memory and mourning, enabling filmmakers and viewers alike to engage in processes of working through trauma. Both are forms of witnessing and testimony, and both are capable of addressing voyeurism, violence, comedy, and propaganda, as well as historical research."<sup>36</sup> *Das Leben der Anderen* is a form of witnessing that reaches a wide public *because* it uses familiar symbols and offers an aesthetically pleasurable experience.

- <sup>1</sup> "Filmhitliste (deutsch) 2006." Filmförderungsanstalt, <<http://ffa.de>> (August 14, 2008).
- <sup>2</sup> <<http://www.imdb.com>> (August 14, 2008) lists the box office returns as €11,030,556 in Germany as of January 28, 2007, and \$11,284,657 U.S. as of September 9, 2007. The latter number is a record high for a German film.
- <sup>3</sup> Reinhard Mohr, "Das Leben der Anderen: Stasi ohne Spreewaldgurke." 15 March 2006. *Spiegel Online*. <<http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/kino/0,1518,406092,00.html>> (August 14, 2008).
- <sup>4</sup> *Good Bye Lenin!*. Dir. Wolfgang Becker. DVD (X-Filme Creative Pool, 2003).
- <sup>5</sup> <[bstu.bund.de](http://bstu.bund.de)> (August 14, 2008).
- <sup>6</sup> Wolf Biermann, "Die Gespenster treten aus dem Schatten. Das Leben der Anderen: Warum der Stasi-Film eines jungen Westdeutschen mich staunen lässt." *Die Welt*. 22 March 2006. <<http://www.welt.de/data/2006/03/22/863268.html>> (August 14, 2008).
- <sup>7</sup> *The Lives of Others*. Dir. Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck. DVD (Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, 2007).
- <sup>8</sup> Evelyn Finger, "Die Bekehrung. 'Das Leben der Anderen.' Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck setzt mit seinem Film über die DDR Maßstäbe. *Die Zeit* 13: 51. 23 March 06. <[www.zeit.de/2006/13/Leben\\_der\\_anderen](http://www.zeit.de/2006/13/Leben_der_anderen)> (August 14, 2008).
- <sup>9</sup> Piotr Sztompka, "The Ambivalence of Social Change: Triumph or Trauma?" <<http://skylla.wz-berlin.de/pdf/2000/p00-001.pdf>> (August 14, 2008).
- <sup>10</sup> Hans-Joachim Maaz, *Der Gefühlsstau. Ein Psychogramm der DDR*. (Berlin: Argon, 1990).
- <sup>11</sup> One concrete example of the broad-based social reaction to unification can be found in the fertility rate of the former GDR in the 1989–1991 period, which dropped by an astounding 50%. This drop exceeded that of all other Eastern European countries during the same period: Felicity Barringer, "Birth Rates Plummeting in Some Ex-Communist Regions of Eastern Europe." *New York Times*, 31 December 1991. <<http://query.nytimes.com>> (August 14, 2008).
- <sup>12</sup> Jeffrey C. Alexander, Ron Eyerman, Bernhard Giesen, Niel J. Smelser, Piotr Sztompka. *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 1.
- <sup>13</sup> Hans Joas, "Cultural Trauma? On the Most Recent Turn in Jeffrey Alexander's Cultural Sociology." *European Journal of Social Theory* 8(3): 365–274.
- <sup>14</sup> Sztompka, 1.
- <sup>15</sup> *Der Untergang*. Dir. Oliver Hirschbiegel. DVD (Constantin Film, 2004).
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>17</sup> Katharina Gajdukova, "Opfer-Täter-Gesprächskreise nach dem Ende der DDR." *15 Jahre Mauerfall* (Berlin: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2004), 24. <[http://www.www.bpb.de/publikationen/7OFWBB,0,0,15\\_Jahre\\_Mauerfall.html](http://www.www.bpb.de/publikationen/7OFWBB,0,0,15_Jahre_Mauerfall.html)> (August 14, 2008).
- <sup>18</sup> Bernhard Giesen, "The Trauma of Perpetrators: The Holocaust as the Traumatic Reference of German National Identity." *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*. Ed. Jeffrey C. Alexander et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 124.
- <sup>19</sup> Christina Tilmann, "Wer ist Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck?" *Der Tagesspiegel* 26 February 2007. <<http://www.tagesspiegel.de/zeitung/Fragen-des-Tages;art693,2207202>> (August 14, 2008).
- <sup>20</sup> Catherine Portuges, "Traumatic Memory, Jewish Identity: Remapping the Past in Hungarian Cinema." In: *East European Cinemas*, ed. Anikó Imre (New York: Routledge, 2005), 121–35.

<sup>21</sup> Anna Funder, "Tyranny of terror. *The Lives of Others* is about a Stasi man who shows a little mercy. Impossible, says Anna Funder. The GDR spies couldn't have done it—and wouldn't have wanted to." *The Guardian*. 5 May 2007. <<http://film.guardian.co.uk/features/featurepages/0,,2072629,00.html>> (August 14, 2008).

<sup>22</sup> Mariam Lau, "Nostalgie sit Erinnerung ohne Schmerz. Interview mit Joachim Gauck." *Die Welt*, 22 March 2006. <<http://www.welt.de/data/2006/03/22/863462.html>> (August 14, 2008).

<sup>23</sup> Timothy Garton Ash, "The Stasi on Our Minds." *The New York Review of Books* 54/9, 31 May 2007. <<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/20210>> (August 14, 2008).

<sup>24</sup> Timothy Garton Ash, *The File: A Personal History* (New York: Random House, 1997), 197.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 199.

<sup>26</sup> Frank Pergande, "Jenny Gröllmann und Ulrich Mühe. Sie waren einmal ein Traumpaar." *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* 29 April 2006, 44. <<http://www.faz.net>> (August 14, 2008).

Path: F.A.Z.-Archiv; Feuilleton; Jürgen Schreiber, "Der Verführungsoffizier. Stasi-Major Helmut Menge war für Filmstar Jenny Gröllmann zuständig. Er sagt, sie war als IM registriert. Aber sie hat es nicht gewusst." *Der Tagesspiegel* 29 April 2006. p.3. <<http://www.tagesspiegel.de/zeitung/Die-Dritte-Seite;art705,2246568>> (August 14, 2008).

<sup>27</sup> Regine Sylvester, "Die Zielperson. Geschiedene Leute: Die Schauspielerin Jenny Gröllmann wehrt sich gegen Stasi-Vorwürfe, die ihr früherer Mann Ulrich Mühe gegen sie erhebt." *Berliner Zeitung*, 3 May 2006. <<http://www.berlinonline.de/berliner-zeitung/archiv/.bin/dump.fcgi/2006/0503/blickpunkt/0001/index.html>> (August 14, 2008); "Keine DVD von Stasi-Drama." *Der Tagesspiegel* 17 January 2007. <<http://www.tagesspiegel.de/kultur/art117,1876502>> (August 14, 2008).

<sup>28</sup> *The Lives of Others*. DVD.

<sup>29</sup> This English translation of Gorky's account of Lenin's words can be found at "V.I. Lenin" <<http://www.marxists.org/archive/gorky-maxim/1924/01/x01.htm>> (August 14, 2008).

Although the phrasing is rather surprising and even comical, I have been assured that it is an accurate translation of the Russian found in M. Gorky, "V.I. Lenin" *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol 18; (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1963): , 253–85.

<sup>30</sup> *Das Leben der anderen*. Filmbuch von Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2006), 169f.

<sup>31</sup> The music is an original score by Gabriel Yared. Von Donnersmarck's instructions to him, according to the director's commentary on the North American DVD, were to compose a piece of music that would be the best that he could do to have changed the way that Hitler thought. *Das Leben der Anderen*. Dir. Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck. DVD (Buena Vista Home Entertainment, 2006).

<sup>32</sup> *Filmbuch*, 77.

<sup>33</sup> *The Pianist*. Dir. Roman Polanski. Universal Studios, 2002.

<sup>34</sup> Matthias Dell, "Damaligenallee. Filme wie 'Der rote Kakadu' und 'Das Leben der Anderen' stellen die Frage nach der DDR-Darstellung im Kino." *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 31 March 2006, 15.

<sup>35</sup> Sandra Bloom, *Creating Sanctuary. Toward the Evolution of Sane Societies* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 159ff.

<sup>36</sup> Portuges, 132.