

Somewhere In Berlin: Film Portrayals of Youth From Weimar to the Wall

Almost 30 years ago after the fall of the Berlin Wall, a generation has come to adulthood, and images of childhood in East Germany have faded into the background. This talk turns back to urban childhood in the 'other Germany' through the lens of East German film for youth. It focuses on Berlin as a space of historical change, and argues that film allows for a revealing investigation of childhood under political restrictions—from the Weimar Republic, Nazi Germany, the post-war period, and finally Germany behind the Iron Curtain. The first film for children produced by the East German film company DEFA came out 1946 under the title *Irgendwo in Berlin (Somewhere in Berlin)*, and portrays the psychological wounds that mark youth after the war. Lamprecht, director of the famous adaptation of *Emil and the Detectives* (1931), resumes the cinematic style from the end of Weimar, but now portrays childhood in ruins. In the later films, the city became a touchstone for the political downsides in a divided country, mirroring the propaganda of a socialist society as well as a youth lost after the socialist state has turned oppressive. *Sheriff Teddy* (1957) portrays a troubled, rebellious youth. The motif of the fraternal feud drives the question which German state offers the best alternative to fascism. Later, the Berlin Wall marked an end to ideals of humanism, and film turned to adaptations of proletarian literature of Weimar Berlin to question new political pathways. Filmmaker Dziuba captured best the lost generation of youth at the beginning of the last decade of the GDR. His childhood classic *Sabine Kleist—7 Years* (1982) and Zschoche's *Island of Swans* (1983) foresee the end of the 'other' Germany with characters that wander alone the modern but cold streets of East Berlin without hope for an integrative future.