

Rutgers, The State University of NJ
Department of Germanic, Russian, and East European Languages and Literatures

WENDE PUNKTE

- Turning points in German history and their aftermath -

German Graduate Student Conference
March 26th, 2010

"Gibt es Trennlinien zwischen Zeitaltern? Gibt es Zeiten, in denen das Jahrhundert stillsteht?"
(Alexander Kluge: Die Lücke, die der Teufel hinterlässt)

This year marks the twentieth anniversary of what Germans broadly call the "Wende". Literally translated as "turning point", the term refers to the events of fall 1989 (fall of the Berlin Wall) and 1990 (German unification). Since that time, a whole complex of "Wendeliteratur" has evolved and developed. Yet, even works not explicitly dealing with this singular historic event have surely been influenced by it. Literature, film, and other arts always mirror historical changes and tell us something about the time and place of their production, even if this is not subject of their content.

In how far, then, can we speak of "realistic" depictions in works of art, how do we delineate fact from fiction? How do singular historical events – *Wendepunkte* - affect the production of literature, film and other art forms? How do literature and history influence one another? What is the importance of literary history and historical literature? What can literature learn from history and vice versa? We seek to answer these questions by taking important historical events in German speaking countries and examine the literature, films and art that ensued.

We invite papers that cover not only the "Wende" of 1989/90, but "Wendepunkte" in German history in general.

Possible turning points could be:

- 1455 Invention of the mechanical printing press by Gutenberg
- 1784 Kant publishes his essay "What is Enlightenment?"
- 1806 Collapse of Holy Roman Empire
- Revolutions of 1848
- 1871 German empire proclaimed
- Industrialization
- 1900 Turn of the century
- 30 November 1918 Women's suffrage becomes law
- 30 January 1933 Hitler becomes German Chancellor
- 8 May 1945 Stunde Null – Zero Hour
- 17 June 1953 Uprising in East Germany
- 13 August 1961 Construction of the Berlin Wall
- 1968-69 German student movement
- 1976 Wolf Biermann is deprived of his East German citizenship
- 9 November 1989 Berlin Wall falls
- 2002 Introduction of the Euro

Please send your 250-300 word abstracts to Mareen Fuchs and Katrin Polak-Springer at

ruggsc2010@gmail.com by January 10th, 2010. Include your text as an attachment and in the body of the e-mail. Please address any other questions to the e-mail mentioned above.