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**Jennifer Ruth Hosek**. *Sun, Sex, and Socialism: Cuba in the German Imaginary.* German European Studies Series. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012. xvi + 266 pp. $60.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-4426-4138-9.

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## German Views of Cuba from the Cold War through Reunification

In *Sun, Sex, and Socialism*, Jennifer Ruth Hosek explores portrayals of Cuba to demonstrate how inhabitants of the Cold War and post-Cold War Germanies "thought themselves" through an exotic "other" (p. 14). Her examination ranges from West Berlin's student movement, through the 1970s disillusionment in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), to the post-1989 reunified Germany. The portrayals in question include a brief exploration of Cuban-themed night clubs and marketing campaigns for Cuban rum and tourism, but center primarily on films, novels about Cuba, and biographies about revolutionary figures, such as Che Guevarra and Tamara Bunke.

Hosek argues that these portrayals of Cuba served as veiled social critiques of the contemporary Germanies that produced or consumed them. They often cast Cuba as an island utopia, but a utopia within the realm of attainability–a "real world screening surface" against which German political inspirations and social fantasies could be projected (p. 17). The small Caribbean island, snarled between superpowers, offered an especially appealing parallel for Berlin and the GDR, which were similarly caught between bloc politics. In fact, as Hosek notes, Cold War political discourses actually "cast West Berlin as an island in a sea of communist influence" and the GDR as suffering from a "desert island syndrome" created by strict limits on travel beyond its borders (pp. 14, 164).

As the FRG and the GDR "factionalized internally from the late 1960s," Hosek argues, "intellectuals explored these tensions through Cuban themes" (p. 107). For example, Cuba offered the GDR film studio, the Deutsche Film-Aktiengesellschaft (DEFA), models of possible approaches to foreign and domestic policy. It also provided an intellectual expansion of *Heimat*, or a German sense of homeland, not through ethnic nationalism but through the internationalist socialist movement. While GDR government cultural agencies embraced Cuba, the FRG discouraged interest in it, and positive portrayals of the island were associated primarily with leftist student or antiauthoritarian movements. Here again, Cuba allowed West German radicals to abandon a bourgeois domestic nationalism, fraught by association with racism and the Nazi past, in preference to a global, subaltern imagined community.

The book provides astute deconstructions of films from the 1960s to the 1990s, including the feature film *Und deine Liebe auch*, made by DEFA in 1962; *Preludio 11*, a 1963 coproduction between the Instituto Cubano de Arte e Industria Cinematográficos (ICAIC), Cuban national film studios, and the GDR, which provided funding, supplies, and personnel; the 1966 Cuban film *Carlos*, which was produced and directed in the GDR; the *Buena Vista Social Club* (1999) by Wwest German filmmaker Wim Wenders; the documentary films *Havanna, mi amor* (2000) and *Heirate mich!* (2003) by eEast German filmmakers Uli Gaulke and Jeannette Eggert; and the narrative travelogue *Cuba libre bittersuß* (2000) written by Wwest German radical Inge Viett. I do wish that the book had provided more evidence of the actual impact of these films on German imaginaries. For example, the book admits that the two DEFA films were "unpopular" and had limited attendance, especially in the GDR (p. 60). The analysis of *Buena Vista Social Club* notes Cuban reac-

tions to the film and explores its images of Cuba and the United States in detail, but it offers no German reviews or responses to the film. Similarly, the detailed exploration of themes in Irmtraud Morgner's banned novel *Rumba auf einen Herbst* (written between 1962 and 1925) is interesting, and Hosek states that in the last few decades the book has become "canonized according to a Western feminist lens" (p. 78). But as she points out, the novel was censored and not published until 1992, so it really cannot provide a glimpse into public reactions to Cuban images in the 1960s or 70s. By contrast, Hosek's examination of *Havanna, mi amor* and *Heirate mich!* does provide statements from the filmmakers and from critics documenting the intentions behind the films and German reactions to them. Such details strengthen her arguments.

Cuba also offered an alternative to German gender roles that were increasingly becoming problematized and scrutinized. Films depicting life in Cuba, like *Havanna, mi amor*, showed empowered women; armed female heroes like Bunke were proffered as emblems of revolution. These romantic, revolutionary images were embraced in the Cold War East; however, in the West, where discrimination against women was built into legislation, where feminism was a new social movement, and where revolution and socialism were subaltern, their reception was much more chauvinistic. Bunke, for example, was portrayed as freakish and promiscuous in the FRG. And, as Hosek notes, while post-1989 integration resulted in a return to a paradigm of German identity as a *Kulturnation* or shared cultural tradition, which helped to integrate "ethnic Germans" who had been living in the Eastern bloc, it weakened integration of women (p. 23).

This book will be of interest to scholars of national identity, Europe and specifically the Germanies, Cuba, and film studies. Its classroom use is best suited to graduate seminars as it deals with sophisticated themes and concepts, and its almost deliberately dense, postmodern discourse makes the book less accessible to undergraduate students. *Sun, Sex, and Socialism* provides an interesting exploration of the impact of the "global South" on the "North," which makes it a possible accompaniment to postcolonial studies. Hosek's premise that one can explore German creations of identity through an examination of contemporary use of Cuban foils is fascinating.

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