

Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages Tripos 2008
Examiners' Report on Paper Ge 13
Aspects of German-speaking Europe since 1945

The paper again attracted a large number of candidates, as well as optional dissertations, and although the general standard was high, the examiners were *slightly* less satisfied with performance this year than they were in 2007 – there were nevertheless a good number of powerful performances and no fewer than sixteen of the seventeen questions were tackled – including two of the general ones. There was particularly good use of secondary material, and general knowledge of the paper as a whole was often brought to bear in specific answers. After consideration of borderline candidates by the External Examiner, six Ists were awarded, sixteen II.1s, and four II.2s; there were no candidates in the IIIrd Class. One Optional Dissertation received a Ist, the other a II.1

Relatively few opted for autobiographical writing (this option will be replaced next year), but those who did so had a good understanding of the genre and of recent approaches to it, especially feminist ones. Answers on the literature of the *Wende* were sound, and it was encouraging to see that yet again a large number of candidates exploited poetry particularly well to argue their case. The question on ‘freedom’ for creative writers created surprising problems, however, with no one really addressing the issue of an occasionally outrageous imagination displayed in certain texts; it was good to see the alternative question on ‘irony’ and ‘flippancy’ was not degraded to the standard answer on comedy. Sport was approached solidly and well, although this year there were no particularly outstanding answers. Those who scored best engaged fully with the secondary literature. Answers on film were of a high standard, often well focussed, a good range of films was drawn on and a wide range of shots were exploited to make the argument, suggesting candidates had been encouraged to think independently. Women’s writing attracted fewer answers, but there was a strong sense of commitment – although some responses were at times too general. There was a need here to identify a particular line to be argued rather than produce a general interpretation of key texts. Answers on ‘contemporary German politics’ and ‘Germany and Europe’ were both handled well: candidates were strong on factual material, very much abreast of current thinking, a good range of historians and political commentators was used, and the very best were ‘up to the minute’ in their knowledge. Weaker candidates needed to submit terms such as ‘revolution’ and ‘abandonment’ to some critical scrutiny, while accounts of the development of the EU needed explanation of the significance of the various treaties that marked its progress.