

# After the Stasi

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After the Stasi: Collaboration  
and the Struggle for Sovereign  
Subjectivity in the Writing  
of German Unification

Annie Ring

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*For Barbara and Patrick Ring*



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## Note on the Text

Translations from Stasi files and literary works in German are my own except where otherwise stated.



## Introduction: Collaboration and the Problem of Sovereign Subjectivity

Twenty-five years after the disbandment of the East German *Ministerium für Staatssicherheit* (Ministry for State Security; Stasi), the question remains as to why so many citizens of the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) agreed to collaborate with the Stasi as unofficial spies. The Stasi's demise and the opening of its vast archive brought to light the collaboration by ordinary East Germans as *Inoffizielle Mitarbeiter* (unofficial informants; IMs) for the Ministry. The revelations in front-page scandals and in speeches by prominent public figures tended to cast the former IMs as co-perpetrators in a totalitarian regime of power. Wolf Biermann, in his acceptance speech for the Georg Büchner Literature Prize of 1991, in which he outed the star underground poet Sascha Anderson as a Stasi informant, spoke damningly of IMs as the "Kreaturen" (creatures) which the East German state had set "an die Spitze der Opposition, um sie besser abbrechen zu können" (at the very top of the opposition, in order to lop it off it more effectively; Biermann, 1991, unpaginated). Biermann's language indicated a contempt for those who had permitted themselves to be subjugated by the Stasi as mere "creatures." The West German press meanwhile relished uncovering the IM pasts of such former supporters of socialism as Heiner Müller and Christa Wolf, at the same time as celebrating the advent of capitalist liberal democracy in the East. By contrast, though the literary sphere in the GDR had been saturated with informants, literary writing by East Germans after 1990 has dealt more ambivalently with the phenomenon of IMs, and with the questions of subjectivity in relation to power that it raised. Those literary works, by GDR-born writers publishing after the fall of the Berlin Wall, and *after the Stasi*, are the concern of this book.

Alongside the outcries in press and public discourse, a body of literary work has emerged since 1990 that offers a more nuanced and ultimately more

helpful account of life under the Stasi, moreover one that affords insight into broader problems of society and subjectivity which go beyond the history of the spy organization itself. These works include life writing, fiction, and a crossover genre of “autofiction,” by authors who had encountered the Stasi in their lifetimes, all of them as victims of its surveillance at some point, and many of them as spies themselves. Due to the intimate experience of their authors with the Ministry, these texts are uniquely placed to assess its operations and their effects. In particular, they offer a perspective on the interaction that the now-defunct secret police had with a subjectivity that in this body of writing is conceived as susceptible to the coercive structures that define collaboration and therefore not unproblematically guilty of it. In contrast to a public discourse that was dominated in the 1990s by clear-cut categories of victimhood and perpetration, power and subjection, totalitarianism and democracy, what many of these works have in common is the presence of core characters who cannot be categorized or defined. Nor do they make up self-defined, sovereign subjects in their own right. Instead, they are subject *to* the power of others, and even to other powers within themselves, in ways that both enable and complicate the collaborations that they carry out. These may be the collaborations that they enter into with the Stasi, or they may be certain new participations that take place in its aftermath, in the newly unified Germany. For, crucially, the challenge posed by these works is to see that such susceptibility to collaboration, the result of an ultimate lack of sovereignty in the subject of modernity more broadly, did not come to an end along with the Cold War.

### IMs: The Stasi’s unofficial collaborators

On 30 June 1990, not long before it voted in favor of German unification, the East German Parliament, the *Volkskammer*, elected to disband the Stasi. For the preceding four decades, the single-Party dictatorship of the *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands* (Socialist Unity Party; SED) had been in power, kept there with the help of a secret police that was tasked with spying on enemies both outside and within the GDR. The months following the mass demonstrations by East German citizens that had led to the fall of the Berlin Wall were dominated by wrangling with this secret service, with which an estimated total of two million people had been involved at some stage since its founding in 1950. Its offices were stormed and occupied by groups of protestors, who chanced upon evidence of an unprecedented surveillance regime. One of



the most shocking revelations in that time concerned the involvement of East German civilians in the Stasi's operations. It is estimated that in the year 1989 alone around 189,000 unofficial informants, or one in eighty-nine East German citizens (Müller-Enbergs, 2008a, p. 3), were at work supporting the 91,000 officers employed in the Stasi's formal ranks (Dennis, 2003, p. 3). The term "IM," first introduced to the Stasi's in-house vocabulary in 1968 to describe its civilian helpers, came after 1990 to dominate discussions of the demands that the first experiment in establishing state socialism in Germany had placed on its citizens, and of the decisions that those citizens had made when asked to collaborate with the spies who had until recently watched over them.

Though the term "IM" was practically unknown outside of the Stasi until after the Berlin Wall fell, the revelation of the existence of this network of unofficial spies made explicit something that many had long suspected, namely that the ears and eyes of the Ministry had indeed been ever-present in the GDR. However, few had suspected how close the collaborator network had allowed the Stasi to come to the objects of its surveillance, close enough so that even the most private activities had not escaped its pedantic attention. The IM operations were central to the Stasi's security project, as is attested by the resources that it expended to ensure that the right candidates were selected for IM work, and to training commanding officers in the proper techniques for guiding IMs through their surveillance tasks. There was a dedicated university for training Stasi officers, founded in Potsdam in 1951 as the *Schule des Ministeriums für Staatssicherheit* (School of the Ministry for State Security), and renamed in 1965 the *Juristische Hochschule* (Legal University). Courses at the *Hochschule* and a series of Guidelines that were circulated among officers, a first set appearing in 1952 and a final revision of 1979, set out how missions involving IMs were to be run. While unofficial collaborators did not themselves undergo training, they were subject to extensive checking by other spies, via an operation known as the *IM-Vorgang* (Informant-Procedure), the duration of which was not limited to the time before a collaboration was officially launched.

Such care was taken in the selection, recruitment, and surveillance of its IMs because these civilian informants carried out the work of the *Operativer Vorgang* (Operative Procedure; OV), a procedure targeted against suspected enemies of the SED-state. IMs were set to work on this crucial component in the Stasi's procedural apparatus, gathering information on victims to whom, as unofficial operatives, they could become particularly close, and thereby secure sufficient evidence of illegal activities for a court case in the Stasi's separate legal system. Such cases could lead to trial, imprisonment, or in rare cases, execution

(cf. Evans, 1996, p. 861); they could also produce fines, public denunciation, or expatriation, as seen in the case of Wolf Biermann. IMs were also central pawns in the Stasi's *Zersetzungsmaßnahmen* (measures for subversion; or more literally, taking apart or breaking down), the bullying that took place outside of the Stasi court and prison system, but through which lives were still destroyed, individuals isolated from their loved ones and often forced to remain in the GDR, resigned to the repeated refusal of their applications to travel, work, or attend university, and contemplating the illegal option of *Republikflucht* (defection to the West).

After the borders to the West were opened in 1989, scrutiny from protestors and international news media compelled the Stasi to reduce its operations rapidly. A strong citizens' movement of East Germans opposed to the Stasi's activities began a series of meetings in early January 1990, coordinating the closing down of the Stasi entirely, and on 15 January around 100,000 demonstrators stormed and occupied its central offices. With German unification, the perpetrators of the SED regime—the Ministers and Commanders who had ordered shootings at the Berlin Wall, the detention of dissidents, and large-scale surveillance of citizens—were brought to account. Erich Mielke had headed the Stasi from 1957 to 1990, and he was put on trial alongside long-time GDR leader Erich Honecker for the deaths of forty-nine people trying to escape to West Berlin over the Wall. After their trial was abandoned due to procedural difficulties, Mielke was tried and sentenced to six years in prison for the murder of two policemen during the pre-Nazi era, while Honecker died in disgraced exile. Among senior Stasi officials, a few decided to end their lives, including regional chiefs Gerhard Lange, Horst Böhm, and Peter Koch, all in the first half of 1990. The lowest-ranking Stasi officers, who were the first to be let go, initially entered sectors of the GDR workforce including border authorities, the *Nationale Volksarmee* (National People's Army; NVA), and the postal service, and, with unification, were once again some of the first to be made redundant. A disputed number of former Stasi employees was kept on by the Commission responsible for administering the Stasi archive which, as its chief and now Federal President Joachim Gauck admitted, required their bureaucratic skills and familiarity with the files in order to work through the "etliche laufende Meter Aktengut" (many meters of archival material) they had left behind (Gauck, 1991, p. 16).

The destinies of IMs were somewhat different to those of official Stasi employees. The mass demonstrations and storming of the Stasi offices led to insecurity on the part of many, who began en masse to terminate their collaborations with the Stasi in writing, via the usual procedure set out in the archive.

However, an unknown number continued to submit their spy reports up until the start of December 1989 (cf. Kowalczyk, 2013, p. 344), nearly a month after the Wall fell. As the files that had been uncovered began to be pored over, both of these groups faced their *Enttarnung* (unmasking) as having spied on fellow citizens. The question that lay behind these *Enttarnungen* was how the Stasi had been so successful in recruiting its unofficial informants. Why had so many citizens of East Germany agreed to spy on those with whom they lived and worked, and thus to serve a Ministry under which many had themselves suffered as victims of surveillance and *Zersetzung*? Despite the marked differences between the sensationalism of the post-unification press and the more ambiguous tone of literary writing after 1990, this question united tabloid headlines with the cultural output of East German writers, in a corpus of works that grappled with the Stasi and its legacy in unified Germany.

## Collaboration and critique in East German literature

According to the Stasi Guideline of January 1979, the motives that suitable IMs would exhibit included political and ideological “Überzeugung” (conviction; Müller-Enbergs, 2008a, p. 44), as well as an image of the class enemy compatible with that held by the Stasi, “materiell[e] Bedürfnisse” (material need) and / or some social or intellectual interest in the prospect of collaboration (ibid., p. 44). The Guideline also allowed for a degree of pressure to be placed on potential IMs whose work was considered necessary to the Stasi’s missions, pressure resulting from the use of “kompromittierendem Material” (compromising material; ibid., p. 44), defined in the document as information held on the potential informant that could be used to exploit their conscience or insecurities. Research published after unification, by the office of the *Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen DDR* (Federal Commissioner for the Stasi Files/BStU), also lists the reasons why IMs would have collaborated with the Stasi, including those identified by the Stasi in its Guidelines of conviction and material need, as well as motives that were named by IMs themselves, in interviews after the dissolution of the Stasi, including personal affection for their case officer, deception, and coercion.

An additional angle on the reasons underlying unofficial collaboration was furnished by the literary writing that emerged after unification by East German writers. Following the IM scandals, in a body of work that proved highly successful among the German reading public, many East German authors

felt compelled to give an account of their own collaboration with the Stasi or, where they had been only victims, an account of the manner in which the secret service had affected their lives. The access that these texts enjoy, as *literary* works, to narrative modes of testimony and storytelling, to imaginative systems of metaphor and symbolism, and to the complex languages of the inner life of the individual, enable them to give a perspective on the phenomenon of IMs as symptomatic of a fundamental lack of sovereignty in the human subject. This is a perspective which neither the Stasi nor the post-GDR public sphere could quite capture in their vocabularies, formed as they were by political expediency and a leaning towards the scandalous when dealing with the recent past.

Peter Graves has noted an expectation among the German reading public that contemporary literature in German should “work through” the historical and political past from which it emerges (Graves, 2002, p. 146). Indeed, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, German literary critics and readers awaited with bated breath the novel that would capture the mood of German unification, give an account of the GDR’s demise, and help the reading public to process the recent past. Contrary to the scandal-focused public discourses of the time, the most successful works of the post-unification moment were those that offered more nuanced accounts of the conditions of surveillance, and thus uncovered the imperative to collaborate that the SED regime imposed on citizens of the GDR with few exceptions. These literary retellings of the recent past contributed to a process that came to be known as *Aufarbeitung* (working through the past), which extended beyond the project of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (overcoming the past) that had been attempted in West German public discourses and cultural production after the Nazi era. Post-GDR *Aufarbeitung* included the work of Gauck’s Commission, the “BStU” or Stasi Records Agency that was set up to work through the Stasi’s archival legacy; it also took in the court cases against perpetrators, and the slower, as yet still unfinished process of reconciliation in unified German society.

Of particular interest for their accounts of collaboration and victimization under the Stasi are the works of Monika Maron (born Monika Iglarz, Berlin 1941) and Wolfgang Hilbig (born Meuselwitz 1941, died Berlin 2007), authors who shared the experience of having their writing censored in the GDR and published to great acclaim in West Germany. Although they are little known outside of Germany, and Hilbig’s works have yet to be published in English translation, the historical relationships of these two authors with the Stasi afford them rare insight into its operations with regard to IMs. In the following chapters, their novels and short stories, a selection of Hilbig’s many

poems, essays by Maron, and both authors' Frankfurt Poetics Lectures are set in dialogue with a rich array of works by other authors from the former East published after 1990. These include texts by the renowned authors Christa Wolf (1929–2011) and Erich Loest (1926–2013), and the award-winning writers of younger generations Eugen Ruge (b. 1954), Kerstin Hensel (b. 1961) and Durs Grünbein (b. 1962). Certain texts are also included that were published in the West by East German authors before the Stasi had been dissolved, including Maron's first novel *Flugasche* (*Flight of Ashes*, 1981), which was written in part during her collaboration with the Stasi, and some of Hilbig's earliest writings from immediately after his detention in Stasi interrogation prison.

These literary works give account of the motives that led to unofficial collaboration, including those arising from that ideological agreement that the Stasi named as desirable in its recruitment procedure, as well as from the coercion that the BStU interviews brought to light. Yet there are three further motivations that these texts "propose" as underlying collaboration. The first of these is a legacy from Nazi Germany, in which attachment to the authority of a leader expresses itself in participation by individuals in violent regimes. Consonant with the argument of Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich, that West Germany had failed to mourn, and thus overcome its Nazi past after 1945 (cf. Mitscherlich and Mitscherlich, 1967), this first motive for IM work as depicted in the literary works corresponds to an "alte Gewohnheit" (old habit) of self-subjection to leader-figures, a remnant from habits of the Nazi era that was flagged in some of the first interviews with IMs (Riecker et al., 1990, p. 163), but largely passed over in the perpetrator-hunts of the 1990s. Far from excluded, this bad habit instead appears in the literary writing of German unification as dying hard, or indeed as living on as a past still unmastered, that finds critical expression in the characters who appear in a number of works, literary figures of outright violence or subtler suppression, with whom collaboration is oddly impossible to refuse.

Psychoanalysts Ingrid Kerz-Rühling and Tomas Plänklers have proposed that a further motive for becoming an IM was a "Sehnsucht nach Anerkennung" (longing for recognition; Kerz-Rühling and Plänklers, 2004, p. 8), recognition that may have promised more adventure than everyday life in the GDR held, and perhaps the possibility of promotion in one's career through agreement to do what Mielke's organization demanded. This proposition is compatible with a second motive depicted in the literary works discussed here, whose characters long for status and subjecthood, for adventure and the opportunity to do the work that they love, as well as the reward of being acknowledged by others.

A third motive that these works reveal is a desire for “Geborgenheit” (safety) that was also identified by Kerz-Rühling and Plänklers (*ibid.*, p. 8). This third motive suggests a hope among collaborators that the Ministry that operated under the sign of *Sicherheit* (security) could offer protection for them, not least against victimization by that same Ministry. Representing a more collective kind of security, collaboration also necessarily meant access to those in power, in whose presence the committed collaborator might be able to criticize and thus protect the socialist state, in particular for those who wished to see the habits of the Nazi past overcome once and for all. This latter desire, to critique and thereby protect the East German state from within, was particularly strong among those left-wing intellectuals and authors who collaborated with the Stasi while they still believed in the potential for socialism in the GDR. This, and the less intellectual desires for protection and recognition are the three core motives for IM work as East German writers have portrayed them after 1990. The implications of these motives are handled, moreover, in literary plots that critically explore the consequences of following such desires or rationalizations for collaboration with a body of power such as the Stasi.

That literary writing should perform a critical role is by no means unfamiliar to readers of East German writing. Instead, much earlier East German literature that adopted a position of critique had itself entered into a degree of collaboration in the fallen SED regime. Lenin’s recommendation that literature should facilitate the development of traditions and role models for socialist living, and Stalin’s subsequent ideal of writers as “engineers of the human soul” (cited by Emmerich, 2005, p. 43), had led USSR state policy from the early 1930s to require that writers produce texts in a mode known as Socialist Realism. The SED’s cultural policy carried this model over into the GDR, requiring literary prose whose simplicity would make it accessible to the masses, with plots featuring the *neuer Mensch* (new person) as a strong, positive hero or heroine, and preferably taking place in realistic socialist settings, especially the factories where the seeds for the experiment in state socialism had been sown. The logic behind this policy was that such a mode of writing would replace the Nazi aesthetic via models of expression with which all readers could identify, as they set about building the new socialist Germany. Yet, despite its origins in the fledgling GDR’s project of radical economic transformation, Socialist Realist writing as produced by conformist writers in the early years suffered from a prose that was tediously “tendenziös” (tendentious; Herminghouse, 1979, p. 288), and plots whose idealism was too uniform to be inspiring. The figure of the *neuer Mensch* produced an image that, rather than being critical, instead

generated a new norm for the industrial productivity pushed for by the struggling state. To make matters worse, as the plots of most of these works failed to offer new models for a different kind of living in the socialist family, the mode also generated a norm for a private reproductivity that differed little from what had gone before it, or from the capitalist family in neighboring West Germany.

Writers in the GDR quickly grew dissatisfied producing texts in the strict mode required by the *Ministerium für Kultur* (Ministry for Culture), and as the gap between ideals and reality gaped ever wider, especially after the intervention by Soviet and GDR troops in the Prague Spring of 1968, they developed newly critical styles that enjoyed varying levels of publication success. Christa Wolf made an attempt to write critically within a mode that was still technically realist, as in her GDR novel *Der geteilte Himmel* (*Divided Heaven*, 1963), which was published, though the film version of the following year by director Konrad Wolf was banned from screening in the GDR. A writer of the same generation as Wolf, Irmtraud Morgner, had followed established patterns of content and form in her early work, for example *Haus am Rand der Stadt* (*House on the Edge of the City*, 1962), which celebrated women's opportunities in the GDR. However, she broke the mold with her montage-novel *Leben und Abenteuer der Trobadora Beatriz nach Zeugnissen ihrer Spielfrau Laura* (*The Life and Adventures of Troubadour Beatrice as Chronicled by Her Minstrel Laura*, 1974), which sidestepped Socialist Realism's single authorial viewpoint in order to weave together stylistic elements of the early modern novel that its extended title cites, as well as an array of narrative voices taken from previously censored work and documentary material. Morgner's fantastic-realist novel enjoyed a wide readership in the GDR thanks to its publication at the highpoint of an era of cultural liberalism, after the replacement of draconian leader Walter Ulbricht with the initially liberal Honecker in 1971, an era that ended with the expatriation of Biermann in 1976 and subsequent crackdown on dissident authors by the *Ministerium für Kultur* in collaboration with the Stasi.

From the mid-1970s, authors who wished to criticize the SED favored modernist modes of writing, with its uncategorizable patterns of character, plot, language, and symbolism. That this decision usually spelled censorship after 1976 lent even more kudos in the West to such writers, including Maron and Hilbig, both of whom were discovered by the Fischer publishing house in Frankfurt, which was eager to print GDR-critical works. Yet, while the modernist-inflected narratives of Maron, Hilbig, and their peers answered a critical imperative during the GDR years, to find modes of literary expression that went against the dictates of the SED, the status of such narratives underwent



rapid transformation in the moment of German unification. For now, in the era of the IM scandals, modes of writing that had critically resisted categorization in the GDR risked appearing as deliberate obfuscations of the recent past.

In the months before the *Volkskammer* voted for German unification, many of the most prominent voices arguing for an improved form of state socialism were also literary writers. The influence in this debate of such authors as Wolf and her counterpart in the GDR's theatre and poetry scenes, Heiner Müller, reflects the importance placed on the arts in the GDR, and these writers appealed for socialist reform alongside the late lead actor of *Das Leben der Anderen* (*The Lives of Others*), Ulrich Mühe, and Brecht's granddaughter, actress Johanna Schall, at the mass demonstration on Berlin's Alexanderplatz on 4 November 1989. Yet Graves has claimed the Alexanderplatz rally as the beginning of a crisis in the reputation of the arts, wherein "the notion of the artist as moral guide [...] died" (Graves, 2002, p. 146). Indeed, the calls for an improved socialism were not heeded; instead, within a matter of days, the revolutionary assertion of popular power by the uprising in the East, "*wir sind das Volk*" (*we are the people*), became the cry for a unified Germany, "*wir sind ein Volk*" (*we are one people*). The subtle switch from a definite to an indefinite article signaled the end of the first socialist state on German soil and also a discrediting of the voices of critical socialist intellectuals. Those who had practiced critique within the GDR, but were now arguing in favor of its continuation in some form, were poised at this point for a fall, which would come for Wolf, Müller, and others along with the revelation of their Stasi collaborations. The crisis in the status of politically engaged art from the East was deepened by the revelations that many of its makers had not only been involved in supporting the East German state in their work, but had also agreed to act as spies for its secret police.

However, although their moral authority may have fallen along with the GDR, the role of artists as commentators on the political events of their era did not perish with it. Instead, in response to the events of German unification, in particular the revelation of the involvement of a number of prominent writers with the Stasi, East German writing after 1990 developed a mode that made space for the public's interest in the biographies of its authors, and thus in the events of the recent past, while maintaining the qualities of creative expression that were particular to the critical literature of the GDR. Karen Leeder has viewed the boom since 1990 in autobiography and memoir, forms in which the onus is on the author to deliver an account of themselves and their actions, as a "fetishization of authenticity" in post-GDR memory culture (Leeder, 2011, p. 200). Yet many authors from the GDR offered resistance to such a fetishization



in the post-unification moment, as they began to publish texts that cannot be classified as autobiography in the classic sense. Instead, there developed at this time a form that resided somewhere between fact and fiction. It is best characterized as a kind of *autofiction*, a term coined by the French novelist Serge Doubrovsky to describe the combination of historical fact and literary fictionality that defined his writing in the 1970s. Historical referents in this East German corpus ranged from the use of authors' names or recognizable events from their lives in semi-fictional plots, to the inclusion of Stasi terminology and in some cases reproductions of Stasi files within texts marketed as novels, devices which breached the boundaries between memoir and literary fiction.

This new mode of post-unification autofiction allowed authors to explore the events of their pasts in texts that would also prove interesting and illuminating for their reading public. Yet the collaboration by literary authors such as Wolf and Müller in the early GDR years, and by Anderson and Maron in the later years of the GDR, made the ethics of this mode of autofictional writing especially problematic. Could these former IMs be trusted to render an authentic account of their espionage for the Stasi? The problem did not only affect the reception of works by former IMs. The GDR's literary sphere had been infused by Stasi espionage, and while some authors had participated in it, *all* authors writing during the GDR years had been victims of the Stasi. Therefore the questions about literary form and ethics that were raised by these works became even more fundamental. What becomes of life writing when a secret police has intervened heavily into the life of which one is trying to give account? What is the author to make of her own life-story that has been so shaped by the work of an agency that is, sociologically speaking, a black box (its workings are invisible)? Given the troubling of such fundamental bases of accounting and accountability on which life writing relies, the works of autofiction published after 1990 undermined the possibility of comprehending the recent past within clear categories, whether they be of victimhood and perpetration, participation and resistance, or the basic categories of fact and fiction on which the contract between author and reader rests across the whole of literature.

Given these factors, it is no wonder that the literary scandals of the 1990s dominated the front pages of German newspapers even more than the IM revelations in other areas of society. Moreover, there is a further factor that troubled the texts that were published at this time, which concerns the capacity of the individual to consent to or refuse participation in its society. More often than not, the central characters of these part-fictional, part-historical works fall into collaborations over which they do not have control. They suffer

out-of-body experiences, or carry out involuntary actions that undermine their integrity and capacity to act for themselves. The appearance of ghosts, fantasy-figures, and Doppelgänger in these texts, and the attendant aesthetic disruptions and distortions of their settings, combine to warn their reader against entrusting too much, not only to a singular, authentic version of the past, but also to the subject's agency to define its position in that past as resistant or conformist. These disruptions give rise to a further defining tendency of these works, namely that their narrative voices and perspectives shift almost incessantly, so that external focalization on a third-person protagonist suddenly switches into the interior monologue of a highly unreliable narrator and vice versa. Thus the narrative techniques, on which readers rely to find a route into the inner world of characters, operate in these works to reveal such an inner world to be very complex indeed. It is through such devices that the writing of German unification presents its characteristically nuanced handling of the question of collaboration. Most crucially of all, these are texts that in their aesthetic forms and ambiguous plots also pose a challenge to dominant categories of the society that came after the Stasi. For one of the strengths of this corpus of works is to present collaboration with the Stasi and SED not as shocking exceptions, but as behaviors compatible with broader traits of subjectivity in late modernity, traits that result from the demands that modernity places on its members to submit to authority, to participate in social and economic processes of domination, and thus to collaborate in the undoing of their own freedom. In this sense, the writing of East German authors after unification has maintained the critical imperative that existed in the GDR, and indeed taken it forward into the time after the Stasi, to consider the implications of Stasi collaboration for modern subjectivity at large.

### Collaboration as a challenge to the sovereignty of subjectivity

Few East German writers publishing after 1990 are content to locate their IM characters within neat ethical categories of participation or resistance to the Stasi. While certain narratives of the immediate post-unification moment set out the perspectives of individuals who were definably perpetrators or only ever victims of the former regime, most post-unification works set in the GDR depict characters who stood somewhere between those two positions. As such, these works also favor plot scenarios that implicate their characters in collaborations that occur outside official SED or Stasi employment, and in relation to

which they themselves are ambivalent or only partially aware. In this manner, East German prose has revealed collaboration as an interaction between subject and society in which the most complex aspects of human agency come to the surface. Many of the collaborator-figures in these works find that their actions have unpredictable consequences, or that they bring them face to face with lost memories or intersubjective dramas that they could not have foreseen when signing up. Collaboration in such cases appears as a psychic event in which the subject does not have agency over its decisions, and is instead delivered over to the content of its unconscious mind, including those identifications and attachments that bind the subject to others, especially to figures of power.

That the civilian arm of the Stasi would not have been entirely in control of its own actions did not occur to the Ministry itself, as it developed systems for selecting and testing an army of spies to whom its most delicate work could then be entrusted. Curiously, the idea is also largely absent from historical accounts of the IM, including the recent work of Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, who sets out to offer a much-needed, measured reassessment of the Stasi's regime of suppression. Kowalczyk bypasses the more complex implications of the IM phenomenon, to advocate instead only a very thorough examination of the facts contained in a given IM's spy file, assessing "das konkrete Tun des Einzelnen" (what individuals did, in a concrete sense; Kowalczyk, 2013, p. 214). The principle for Kowalczyk is that if enough information is gathered about the intent and the acts of a given IM, and if that information is viewed in the context of their broader behavioral patterns, it will be possible to gain a full picture of the collaboration. Matthias Wanitschke has come closer to addressing the complexity of collaboration in his examination of the *Menschenbild* (image of the individual) that the Stasi held. Wanitschke proposes that the Stasi's view of a society that could be ruled as a collectivity failed due to a basic autonomy in the make-up of human beings. Where the Stasi operated on the basis that any individual could be manipulated into participation if its techniques were sufficiently developed, Wanitschke maintains that the human subject is too fundamentally "frei, selbstbestimmt zu handeln" (free to define their own behavior; Wanitschke, 2001, p. 14) to be co-opted in that manner, a factor that in his analysis finally thwarted the Stasi's aims.

Such strength of individuality and self-definition, claims Wanitschke, held firm in many cases during even the darkest years of surveillance and suppression in the GDR. Yet there seems to remain some doubt in Wanitschke's analysis, concerning whether or not the subject acting in the context of the Stasi, and even after its dissolution, is necessarily able to grasp the freedom of self-definition

that is in principle available to it. He writes that everybody who lived as an adult in the GDR must face “die individuelle Gewissensfrage, ob man sich damals an die befohlene Norm anpasste oder sich seine Identität entgegen der staatlichen Gleichschaltung zu bewahren versuchte” (the question of individual conscience, whether one conformed to the norm demanded back then or whether one tried, in opposition to the cooptation that was being enforced by the state, to preserve one’s own identity; *ibid.*, p. 13). Moreover, he writes, this question continues into the present day, so that it remains the responsibility of each subject to consider “ob man sich auch heute in einer offenen Gesellschaft [...] selbstverantwortlich verhält oder sich—wovon auch immer—fremdbestimmen lässt” (whether [...] we behave with self-responsibility today, in an open society, or whether we let ourselves be defined by whatever it may be; *ibid.*, p. 13). Wanitschke’s analysis of the Stasi’s inaccurate, because too collective, *Menschenbild* approaches a crucial topic for understanding how collaboration comes to take place: does the subject define the course of her own life, or are others deciding it for her, in some fashion that is more collective than the individual will? Yet Wanitschke’s reading still neglects those aspects of the human subject over which it does not and cannot decide, namely the latent content of both personal and collective memory, as well as those desires and attachments that motivate its actions from a place of unconscious agency, none of which can be fully overseen. These are the aspects taken on by the literary writing by East German authors after unification, as they address themselves precisely to that lack of overview in the self, which causes the subject to act out of its own control, and to be susceptible to the manipulation of others, both within and after the Stasi’s reign.

The chapters that follow offer a new approach to collaboration in the GDR shaped by the insights of cultural theory and philosophy since the late nineteenth century. The psychoanalytic theories of Freud, and of his mentor Jean-Martin Charcot and colleague Josef Breuer, and their adaptation in the later twentieth century by Jacques Derrida prove fruitful for plotting out the unconscious identification that leads to collaborative attachment in literary writing after unification. Further illumination is provided by the recent intellectual histories of Ruth Leys, who sets out the legacy of psychoanalysis in contemporary cultural studies, and by Judith Butler, whose writings on gender, war, and moral philosophy apply psychoanalysis, among other theories, to contemporary phenomena of subjectivity in its collective contexts. These psychoanalytic and psychoanalytically informed theories enable the analysis that follows to elaborate behaviors of the subject that fall outside of empirical views of human behavior—empirical views that the Stasi itself would have

found acceptable, with its teaching of Marxist-Leninist “materialism” at the Juristische Hochschule.

In fact, a psychoanalytic view of the subject was not common anywhere in the GDR, where a preference for Pavlov’s teachings had been pronounced at a conference held in Leipzig on 15 and 16 January 1953, after which practitioners of psychotherapy were required to follow Pavlov’s teachings, including their condemnation of psychoanalysis. One of the few therapists who attempted nonetheless to apply psychoanalytic methods in the GDR, Hans-Joachim Maaz, described Pavlov’s behavioral theories perspicaciously as suffering from a “konfliktdämpfende Orientierung” (tendency to stifle conflict; Maaz, 1990, p. 195). Indeed psychoanalysis, with its approaches to repression, to matters of the taboo and the secret, posed too great a risk to the SED dictatorship, for which any questioning of the psychodynamic functions of power within the medical establishment, as anywhere else, would have been incendiary. While mindful of this resistant potential of psychoanalytic thought, the book also engages with Michel Foucault’s spatial analysis of power, and Walter Benjamin’s radical cultural critique, theories from outside of the psychoanalytic canon, which enable further navigation of the states of participation and refusal, collectivity and individuality, that structure the East German texts as they plot the complex and ultimately intersubjective dynamics of collaboration.

The intersubjectivity of collaboration is evident from the etymology of the term, as a *co-labor* or *working together* of interlinked subjects or groups, a gesture that does not have to be negative, and indeed is necessary to the formation of societies. Mark Sanders recognizes the necessity of a similar working-together in his book on *Complicities*, in which he focuses on the role played by intellectuals in upholding South African apartheid. Sanders analyzes complicity as the symptom of what he terms a basic “foldedness in human being” (Sanders, 2002, p. x). Foldedness is a structure of connectivity that for Sanders is the very “condition of possibility for any opposition to a system that constantly denies it” (*ibid.*, p. x), a denial that in turn renders complicity not only inevitable but also potentially resistant, as an expression of loyalty or solidarity, if only the forces to which the subject lent its complicity were not those of apartheid. As shall become clear in the present book, such inevitability of connectedness with others, the necessity of working with them and attaching to them in groups and societies, places the Stasi collaborator in something of a trap. Moreover, and perhaps even more urgently, one of the thematic markers of East German writing into the new millennium is that collaboration continues as an inevitability in its literary plots long after the time of the Stasi is over.

As it takes in the new environment of liberal democratic capitalism, post-GDR writing maintains plots and images of collaboration with regimes of power. The notion admittedly becomes more elastic in the years after German unification, so that where earlier texts refer to specific acts of collaboration in the Stasi past, more recent works turn to phenomena of participation in a variety of political, economic, and social processes that have arisen after the end of state socialism. These latter participations occur in contexts of personal and professional relating, but more commonly they figure as the more isolated decisions to engage in dominant markets of consumerism, or in the consumption of porn and striptease. They also encompass the knowing or unconscious participation in the new technologies of surveillance and archiving in which the contemporary subject is tracked in files that, as Heiner Müller predicted, may never be publicly opened. In what follows, I set out from Sanders's analysis in order to differentiate the terminology of collaboration from that of complicity, and thus distinguish these new forms of participation from the more active working-together of collaboration with the Stasi, as symptoms of a capitalist *complicity* that East German writing depicts as following soon after the Stasi's dissolution.

This new complicity is less actively connected than that which Sanders explores; indeed, its defining marker is the isolation that sets it apart from the interaction that IMs had with commanding officers who would woo them in a fashion tailored to their personality before asking them to sign paperwork explicitly stating their involvement. Complicity in the post-unification setting is even more invisible than was the work of the Stasi, but the urgency of addressing it is asserted convincingly by writers from the former socialist state. There is an increasing isolation of their characters in the corpus of East German writing as it enters the 2000s, and begins to track the acts of participation that transmute into a less connected, more abstract complicity that is not *folded* as in Sanders's account, but figures instead as a passive acting-in-participation with systems that are less embodied than was the Stasi, and so leave the subject to operate alone in a flat and empty environment. Whether East German writers prefer such acts of complicity to those that were carried out with the Stasi is unclear. These works of critical literature instead give us the insight that the newest complicities are intrinsically bound to the recent history of collaboration with the Stasi. Like the work of the IM, capitalist participation still—though perhaps imperceptibly—takes place in relation to others, still contributes to the maintenance of existing regimes that have collective consequences, even if those who suffer the worst of those consequences remain invisible.

An approach for articulating the relationship between individual participation and political collectivity is offered by a set of theories that cluster around the

notion of sovereignty. In twentieth-century political theory, sovereignty (*souveraineté; Souveränität*) signified the integrity and authority of a nation-state. As such, it was a loaded term during the division of the GDR from the Federal Republic, which refused to recognize socialist East Germany as a sovereign state and to conduct talks with it on that basis. Sovereignty also relates to the specific gestures of enactment, discussed by Carl Schmitt and Walter Benjamin, that can be made by the figurehead of sovereign nations. Schmitt, a legal and political theorist whose membership of Hitler's National Socialist Party makes him a problematic if not taboo member of the Western cultural-theoretical canon, was familiar with the seventeenth-century discussions of absolute monarchy by Hobbes and others, and from their terms theorized the defining gestures of sovereign power that were relevant to the regime that the NSDAP was building. Schmitt's sovereign is known by his or her ability to decide "worin das öffentliche oder staatliche Interesse, die öffentliche Sicherheit und Ordnung, *le salut public* usw. besteht" (what public or state interest, public security and order, and the public good consist of; Schmitt, 1993, p. 13). In times of crisis, the sovereign can declare an *Ausnahmezustand* (state of exception), which calls a halt to the political order in order to protect the security of the realm. This particular decision articulates the limits of a national territory and thus divides the subjects who may reside within those limits from those who must remain outside of their protection.

Critiquing liberal democracy from the opposite end of the political spectrum, the Marxist cultural theorist Walter Benjamin responded to Schmitt's thought by exposing the "fürstliche Exekutivgewalt" (executive power of the ruler) that was exerted by the Hitler regime (Benjamin, 2000, p. 47), and the "Gebrechlichkeit der Kreatur" (fragility of the creature; *ibid.*, p. 123), a metaphor for the vulnerable subjectivity of those who were governed by such violent force. Benjamin, who corresponded with Schmitt, pursued his interest in the underside of the gestures of totalitarian power that the latter propounded, and found in the process that the sovereign leader is a creature like any other. In this way, Benjamin identified a vulnerability at the heart of state power that offers a more liberatory prospect than Schmitt's totalitarian vision could. Giorgio Agamben's writing since the early 1990s has gone on to explore the applicability of these theories of sovereignty to the contemporary West, with its black zones, secret prisons, and other sites of political exclusion. The terminology of sovereignty theory is also found in the writing of Derrida, in particular his arguments concerning animal life as a constitutive counterpart to sovereign power in the last lectures before his death.

An approach to sovereignty that does not rely on the terms provided by Schmitt can be found in the work of Michel Foucault. It is common to distinguish



an early Foucault, the scholar of orderly regimes of discipline in such studies as *Madness and Civilization* (1964) and *Discipline and Punish* (1975), from a “Foucault 2.0” (cf. Paras, 2006), whose last lectures on governmentality and late histories of sexuality traced the development of regimes characterized by a wider array of options for agency on the part of their subjects. However, what binds the two eras of Foucault’s work is a concern with regimes of sovereignty. While in *Discipline and Punish* he considers its development into the orderly forms of modern regimes that he classifies under the term Discipline, his last lectures contrast the forms of *ancien-régime* sovereignty in pre-Revolutionary France with the more flowing, but still control-oriented systems of the then most current techniques of Biopower and Security. My aim in examining the Stasi in relation to these “schools” of sovereignty theory is to generate a political model through which to conceptualize the operations of the Stasi, including its place with the SED dictatorship. All of the key topoi of sovereignty as explored since Schmitt and Benjamin, including the decision, the limit, the state of exception, and the experience of creatureliness, as well as the architectures of governmentality that interested Foucault in his final lectures, appear in the writing of East German authors after unification. Their texts mobilize these terms in order to depict the effects of the Stasi’s operations on its subjects, both on the victims of *Zersetzung* and imprisonment, and on those subjects who acted as its unofficial informants. As such, a reading of the Stasi in the terms offered by sovereignty theory enables, first, an understanding of what made the Stasi so successful as a secret service—one whose subject-focused techniques are emulated today by surveillance agencies around the world. Second, it offers a terminology for describing the precise manner in which the Stasi could be so successful in recruiting the numbers of collaborators that it did from within the civilian population of the GDR.

The return of the topoi of sovereignty in the writing of German unification provides an essential vocabulary that has been missing until now from existing accounts of the Stasi, both in English- and German-language scholarship. As I show in the following chapters, these images and concepts function in East German prose works to delineate the relative resilience or, more often, fragility of the subject captured in scenes of collaboration both with and after the Stasi. This vocabulary is unfamiliar to the Anglophone world but enjoys currency in contemporary spoken German, where the adjective *souverän* has an everyday usage denoting a state of self-possession, in which the individual can feel that their life is independently self-defined, and therefore resistant to co-option by others. Such personal *Souveränität* is something for which the characters of



East German writing yearn during the dictatorship, as a result of the borders that it placed on individual lives. Thus, the first protagonist of Monika Maron's oeuvre, Josefa Nadler, longs to live not as one "der nur zweiköpfig denken kann, vierfüßig tanzen, zweistimmig entscheiden und einherzig fühlen" (who can only think with two heads, dance with four feet, decide with two votes and feel with one heart; Maron, 1981, p. 22). Instead, she strives to act as a whole individual, who can make decisions of her own. The poet Volker Braun, who unlike Maron was a decisive critic of the change to free-market capitalism in the former Eastern states, views such a desire for personal sovereignty much more sceptically in his ironic poem "Eigene Kontinuität" (Continuity of One's Own; Braun, 1979, p. 70), as a dogged desire for stasis that would ultimately be destructive.

Maron's protagonist's viewpoint was the more dominant after the fall of the Wall, such that East German writing plays host to a whole cast of characters who strive to grasp sovereignty of their own, hoping thereby to act with decisiveness and integrity in relation to their context. These qualities would represent a subjectivity quite different to that *Kreatur* of power which Biermann saw in IMs such as Sascha Anderson. Yet the possibility of such sovereignty and, as in Braun's poem, its ultimate desirability are also always in question in this body of texts. Within the dictatorship, but also after its demise, their characters instead continue to find themselves in scenarios of heteronomy, of that *Fremdbestimmung* or definition by others against which Wanitschke's subject naturally struggles, and yet which continually undermines the possibility of the modern subject's sovereignty over itself. Thus in the works presented here, sovereignty is an *impossible desirable*, a state that is sought but cannot be attained. If it were ever to be attained, moreover, this impossible desire, based in the same anxious longing for security that led to Stasi collaboration, would not offer any lasting benefit.

A theorist who has considered the notion that subjectivity desires its own sovereignty is Judith Butler, whose writing since 2000 addresses a subject who does not stay "intact" in relation to others (Butler, 2004, p. 23). Instead, Butler proposes an ethical model in which the understanding "that none of us is fully bounded [...] but, rather, we are in our skins, given over, in each other's hands" becomes "the basis of our accountability" (Butler, 2005, p. 111). Butler's subject is not separate from the power of others or the content of its own unconscious, and as such it must develop strategies for ethical action within these limits. The challenge to such an ethical programme arises, however, where the inherent unsovereignty of the subject presents itself as a susceptibility to be complicit

with power. Such complicity was already at hand in Butler's work of the 1990s on the production of the individual by the speech acts and material phenomena of a strictly gendered social order. In *Bodies that Matter*, Butler argues that the subject's very being is acquired through a *citation* of that order, "a citing that establishes an originary complicity with power in the formation of the 'I'" (Butler, 1993, p. 15). Such inherent complicity, in the very formation of the subject, renders the "reworking of abjection into political agency" (ibid., p. 21), by the resistant "queerness" at the heart of Butler's gender theory, difficult from the start. Given the forms of the sovereignty that the Stasi was there to uphold, with its vast network of secret prisons and express goal of *zersetzen*, taking apart the dissident subject, the citation of such an order seems perilous indeed.

Moreover, the provenance of the modern theory of sovereignty, from the most influential Nazi legal theorist, means that there are certain additional risks attached to its application. For instance, in an article on Uwe Tellkamp's celebrated novel *Der Turm* (*The Tower*, 2008), David Clarke applied Agamben's theory of "bare life" (Agamben, 1998, p. 111)—those human lives that are most subjugated and injured by the sovereign power of Schmitt's leader—to the indignities suffered by Tellkamp's protagonist Christian Hoffmann in the GDR. Christian joins the *Volksarmee* in order to secure a place at university, and is later imprisoned. Clarke writes that, through these events, Christian "is reduced to a piece of bare life, which can be disposed of as that system sees fit" (Clarke, 2010, p. 500). In an article in the same journal issue, I argued that the application of Agamben's theory of bare life to the GDR risked eliding different kinds of oppression, carried out in the name of opposing political ideologies (cf. Ring, 2010b, p. 518). On the other hand, Agamben's theory of the state of exception itself draws on examples outside of the concentration camps, including the black zones or secret prisons of capitalism. Contemporary Germanist Eric Santner's work also relies on a flexibility of categories to span across contexts where politics and techniques may differ, but certain spectres of past regimes remain. Thus to some degree, contemporary sovereignty theory allows for such comparisons and even relies on them for its own theoretical leverage. Given their basis in the analysis of the Holocaust, the challenge is to apply these theories differentially, in recognition of the very different political histories at stake and their varying human effects.

It became clear at the very latest in the autumn of 1989 that the Stasi had failed in its role of protecting the GDR's sovereignty. The sovereignty of the subject in this destructive setting was accordingly vulnerable to the kind of fragility that Benjamin was able to see, and against which, as Braun intuits in his

poem “Eigene Kontinuität,” the desire for a sovereignty of the subject is surely directed. The field of sovereignty theory has much to offer for understanding this ultimate failure of the Stasi, not least because it furnishes a vocabulary for describing the fragility of the subject that the Stasi held in its sights. To apply the terminology of these theories to sovereignty or unsovereignty of the subject is to offer an account of the Stasi’s failure to capture and secure the human target of its operations. Moreover, the fragility that such an account uncovers is key to understanding the complicities that East German literature finds operating in its new setting, as iterations of an unsovereignty of the subject that has been there all along.

## Approaches to collaboration (1): Texts and regimes

Chapters 1 and 2 present some of the first East German novels that were published after unification, including Maron’s *Stille Zeile Sechs* (*Silent Close No. 6*, 1991), and Wolfgang Hilbig’s “*Ich*” (“*I*”) of 1993. The protagonists of these novels are collaborators with SED Party functionaries or with the Stasi, who participate in those regimes in a manner with which they are not entirely comfortable, but which they also find impossible to resist. These chapters provide a first approach to interpreting the means by which the individual became implicated in collaboration with the SED and Stasi. This approach is consciously intertextual, so that it sets these early post-unification works into a context of European and North American literatures since 1750 to which these East German writers refer, and whose themes of labor and resistance shed light on collaboration as a subjectivity-in-crisis with implications beyond the immediate East German setting.

These co-readings situate the early novels of German unification in a literary tradition that includes the modernisms of Kafka and Melville, and the canon of German Romanticism. Thus, alongside the East German collaborators in its primary texts, this first section also plays host to a cast of figures including Goethe’s Faust, and one of the most cryptic characters of Kafka’s oeuvre, Josef K. of *Der Proceß* (*The Trial*, posthum 1925), who provide models of counter-intuitive participation in processes that cannot do them any good. Another figure of Kafka’s, the undefined creature / sovereign of his unfinished short story “*Der Bau*” (*The Burrow*, posthum 1931), and the ultimate limit figure of German Romanticism, Kaspar Hauser, prove apt forerunners for the East German characters who struggle in the grip of dictatorship. On the other hand,

Herman Melville's "Bartleby, the Scrivener" (1853) offers a rare model for the refusal to collaborate, one that admittedly pivots on the willingness of the dissident to die rather than collaborate. The East German writing of the early 1990s revisits these core figures of modernity for their portrayal of collaborators whose ghostly hallucinations disturb their bids for agency. It also cites the aesthetic techniques of modernism and Romanticism, their linguistic and symbolic fragmentations that can reflect the inner torment of the unwilling collaborator in the GDR. The first chapters evaluate the affordances of such a mobilization of literary tradition, and in so doing they set the focus in recent East German writing, on the ultimate unsovereignty of the human subject, in a line of inheritance beyond the immediate East German setting, into a whole canon of writing in which the individual struggles and fails to grasp control of its destiny, slipping instead into the most counter-intuitive acts of collaboration.

The section also considers the aptitude of a number of strands of cultural theory for understanding the interlinked processes of attachment and refusal that in these works are shown to underlie collaboration. Many of these theories are evoked by name or by association in the primary works, including the psychoanalysis of Freud and his colleagues, and the poststructuralist theories that traveled by various illegal and state-sanctioned routes into the GDR's literary underground. Given the perniciousness of the Stasi's techniques, that allegedly included the planting of these theories in the literary scene via IMs in order to prevent more direct forms of action against the regime, it is common to think of the Stasi as having created a world akin to the Castle and Court through which Kafka's last characters have to navigate. The vocabularies of Freud and Foucault have joined this vernacular for thinking about the Stasi after its demise, as an organization that operated "panoptically," or gave rise to behaviors that were "hysterical," "psychotic," or "perverse" on the part of its members. My approach takes these by now ingrained interpretations at their word, and in the process it enriches assessments of the Stasi as perverse or panoptic by reading closely the theories that the Stasi hoped would paralyze the SED's enemies, testing the applicability of these models, and thus the possibility of their recuperation for understanding the collaborative world that the Stasi created.

Crucial here are Freudian and post-Freudian accounts of hysteria, and Foucault's final lectures on Security, which were delivered from the late 1970s up until his death in 1984, and published in English translation between 2007 and 2011. In Chapter 2, citations from these lectures are set alongside detailed examinations of space and subjectivity in works by Hilbig and Kerstin Hensel, in order to offer new insight into which Foucauldian model of

governmentality—Discipline, Security, or indeed Sovereignty—is most fruitful for reconstructing the power wielded by the Stasi. In its application of these theoretical approaches, the first section finally intervenes in the debate that continues in historical and cultural studies of the GDR, concerning the degree to which the SED regime can be understood as having been “totalitarian.” This debate is related to the historical problem that haunts theories of sovereignty after Schmitt, and it poses one of the primary methodological difficulties in assessing the legacy of the Stasi, as part of a regime whose status remains in question.

Stuart Parkes has identified the associations of the term “collaborator,” whose use introduces an “implication that the GDR was comparable in its iniquity to the Nazi era” (Parkes, 2009, p. 154). In line with such a comparison, historian and former BStU researcher Hubertus Knabe’s introduction to a collection of writing by victims of the Stasi, *Gefangen in Hohenschönhausen (Captive in Hohenschönhausen, 2007)*, frames the narratives contained within it as testimonies to the totalitarian nature of the former GDR, describing its crimes against the “Opfer der kommunistischen Gewaltherrschaft in Deutschland” (victims of the Communist reign of terror in Germany; Knabe, 2007, p. 18). GDR scholar Carol Anne Costabile-Heming, meanwhile, uses the term “totalitarian state” in her study of the SED’s censorship regime (Costabile-Heming, 2000, p. 53). Certain continuities were indeed to be observed between National Socialism and the SED state, including the lack of democratically elected leadership in both regimes, and the persecution during the early 1950s of the GDR’s small remaining Jewish religious community (cf. Ostow, 1990).<sup>1</sup> Several hundreds of people were murdered by soldiers following the order to shoot at the border to the West, or suffered the death penalty, which was only abolished in 1987. However, to refer to the *two German dictatorships*, and thus categorize both as forms of one political mode of totalitarianism, risks a careless elision of two historically and ideologically distinct regimes.

As Michael Minden writes in his cultural history of modern German literature, there were considerable differences between the Hitler regime and the GDR. The latter state was “much less murderous” and “had deeper roots in historical causality than the death-obsessed Third Reich, as well as a theoretical concern for the welfare of the whole human race, and not just one part of it” (Minden, 2011, p. 160). Mary Fulbrook also rejects the trend of historical elision, arguing that the totalitarianism argument “served the Cold War purpose of conflating dictatorships of the Right and the Left under a common global label: the Soviet Union under Stalin and Germany under Hitler could be

equated and castigated with scholarly impunity” (Fulbrook, 1997, p. 26). In line with Minden and Fulbrook, one of the aims of this book is to overcome the use of totalitarianism as a device of elision. It does so in its first section by returning to the definition of totalitarianism by the political theorist Hannah Arendt. Moreover, it does so in the company of works of East German writers who, more often than not, have avoided relying in their depictions of the SED dictatorship on the *Nazi/Stasi* comparison, that “festering half-rhyme” that Timothy Garton Ash finds attaching to Germany’s recent history (Garton Ash, 2007, unpaginated). There are admittedly texts in which the risk of historical elision seems rather too close at hand. Maron’s late GDR novel, *Die Überläuferin* (*The Defector*, 1986), which depicts the GDR as a camp walled in with barbed wire, and Kerstin Hensel’s post-unification work *Tanz am Kanal* (*Dance on the Canal*, 1994), with its Stasi victim marked by a tattoo on her arm, present some of the riskiest examples. Yet in most post-GDR texts, the subject is decidedly located outside of the camp, residing instead in a context that is much more complex than that of genocide, and as such requires particularly careful handling if we are ever to understand the history of collaboration and resistance in the GDR.

## Approaches to collaboration (2): Reading the Stasi files

The book’s second section proposes that crucial context for understanding that history is provided by the Stasi’s archive of files. In late 1991, the *Stasi-Unterlagen-Gesetz* (law concerning the Stasi files) made large sections of this archive publicly accessible for consultation, and applications from involved parties and researchers wishing to view the files began in January 1992. During forty years of surveillance operations, the Stasi had collected 158 shelf-kilometers of archival materials (BStU, 2014, unpaginated). These include written spy reports, and the transcripts of surveillance operations, trials, and imprisonments. There is also a vast collection of procedural memoranda that were circulated among the Stasi’s official members, concerned with the correct running of its operations, including collaborator recruitment, and countless photocopies of correspondence between citizens within East Germany and correspondence that was sent over the border into the West. The archival estate includes, too, the equivalent of 47 shelf-kilometers of documents on microfilm (the Ministry tended to destroy the paperwork on closed cases, but preserve their contents on microfilm for future reference), 39 million file-cards, 1.8 million photographs, film negatives and slides, 30,300 video and

audio recordings, and 15,500 bags of papers that were torn up as the offices were stormed in 1989. The book's third and fourth chapters consult some of these documents and images, taken from spy reports and files pertaining to the authors in question, as well as from the in-house documents of the Stasi's surveillance and archiving techniques. These files are set alongside the works of life writing that East German authors produced after their own encounters with the Stasi, as collaborators, victims, or tantalizing combinations of the two. The aim of this second section is two-fold: first, it identifies the historical documents crucial to tracing the cases of collaboration and victimization about which its primary authors write in their autofictional works after 1990. Secondly, and more importantly, these chapters assess the capacity of these files to decode the ethical dilemmas of the East German past.

The Stasi files offer concrete historical material, that contrasts with the literary narratives that often slip away after 1990 from clear ethical or aesthetic categorization. Yet this perspective comes with certain methodological problems of its own. The largest number of requests to view the files came from citizens who are affected by them, with a total of 6.5 million access requests being filed between 1991 and mid-2012, 486,000 of which related to criminal investigations and reparation cases (BStU, 2012, p. 11). The archive's opening provided access to documents without which legal justice could not be done. On the other hand, many documents were removed from the archive during the months following 1989, including those held in the thousands of sacks of torn papers that are still being pieced together by employees in Zirndorf, Bavaria. A computerized system is in development to reassemble the latter fragments, but the papers that Stasi officers managed to pass through a glue machine after shredding them will remain unseen. So too will documents that were allegedly confiscated by Western security services and may still be in use. Access to the documents that *are* in the archive is further limited, meanwhile, by regulations made in haste after unification, which divided the existing spy files into *Täterakten* (perpetrator files) that can be viewed by any visitor whose access application is successful, and *Opferakten* (victim files), access to which is only available to those defined as victims of the Stasi or, in the case of death, their next of kin. In this sense, the Stasi archive offers only a fragmented resource for understanding the history of collaboration.

In a *Spiegel* article concerned with Monika Maron's Stasi involvement, Wolf Biermann also reflected on the limitation of the files as historical documents since, he writes, they could never give an account of the "lebendigen Erfahrungen" (living experiences) of their subjects (Biermann, 1995, p. 44),



but merely render “ein Flachbild” (a flat image) of them (ibid., p. 44). Literary scholar Michael Haase has questioned the kind of knowledge that can be gained by reading the documents of an “Überwachungs- und Repressionsbehörde” (office for surveillance and repression; Haase, 2001, p. 12). Indeed, the records that were kept by a spy organization such as the Stasi must be read with care. Yet the case for reading the literature of German unification in concert with the Stasi files has been convincingly made. In an essay on autobiographical writing by women after 1990, Karen Leeder finds that Günter de Bruyn’s notion of a “Mißtrauen gegen mich selbst” (mistrust towards myself) had wide applicability to life writing emerging after unification (Leeder, 2000, p. 256). Leeder shows how literary autobiography became “porous to outside influences” (ibid., p. 260), and as such underwent a “hybridization of genres” in the time following unification (ibid., p. 259). Even beyond the gender of its authors, it seems that the new political environment spawned a kind of genre-trouble, as writers had to take account of the information made available by the publication of the files, of which their readers would now be aware.

As a result of the presence of the files in the post-GDR environment, Leeder argues that they form a necessary context for reading autobiographical or other modes of life writing after unification:

It is not one that can replace the published literary texts, but rather one which must be read alongside—in that the files make explicit the schizophrenia at the heart of, but so often suppressed by, forty years of GDR literature. (ibid., p. 257)

Sara Jones has argued meanwhile that the files can be viewed as one “source” of life writing (Jones, 2010, p. 197), which can shed light on aspects of the past that remain hidden within other texts. Jones draws on Alison Lewis’s suggestion that a reading of files alongside literature should consider the file a form of “hostile, unauthorized biography” (Lewis, 2003, p. 383), in which the reports are deliberately intended to damage and manipulate their unwilling “protagonists” (ibid., p. 385). The second section of this book takes account of the approaches suggested by Leeder, Lewis, and Jones. It also goes beyond viewing individual spy files alongside the literary works of their subjects, in order to introduce a selection of the training memoranda, research documents, and Guidelines that were kept by the Stasi’s internal departments, and which show the Ministry perfecting its techniques of recruiting unofficial collaborators and maintaining its archive of spy files. While it is questionable as to how reliable the contents of the files could ever be for the legal illumination and resulting justice that victims desired, when set in dialogue with the literary works of East German authors



who encountered the Stasi as victims and as collaborators, the files nonetheless offer rich material for grappling with the consequences of the Stasi's regime and the ethical implications of collaboration with it.

Through their readings of previously unseen and untranslated procedural documents, Chapters 3 and 4 are able to track the practices through which the Stasi sought and yet failed to maintain an image of its victims and unofficial informants, and thereby of itself as an organization. What we find in the Stasi's procedural archive is a persistent striving for wholeness, for the completion of an image of the subject whose coverage should ideally be "lückenlos" (gapless; BStU, MfS, HA IX, Nr. 16034, p. 3). The works of life writing by former Stasi spies and victims consulted in these chapters evidence a certain level of success in the Stasi's aim for a *gapless* knowledge of its subject. On the other hand, the primary texts in these chapters also develop the image of a subject that ultimately resists containment in textual systems, in a manner that may well have brought about the failure of the SED system as a whole. It is not that this subject has no consistency whatsoever: neither the protagonists of Maron's or Christa Wolf's works quite fit with the systems that the Stasi put in place for managing them as unofficial collaborators, but nor were they completely unable to deliver the spy reports requested of them; meanwhile certain of Hilbig's autofictional characters muster enough resilience, as Hilbig himself did, to resist the imperative of collaboration with the Stasi to a certain degree. Yet the literary characters and indeed the historical figures who people this section do not hold together in the manner that the Stasi hoped, with its surveillance and archiving systems that were aimed at a totality of knowledge. The consequences of the subject's lack of hold in the face of these systems are ambivalent. It can lead in some cases to a rather too quick willingness to collaborate if it means the opportunity to travel and research, and publish literary works. In the case of the Stasi's victims, a lack of subjective "hold" may also mean falling apart under the pressure of *Zersetzung* or imprisonment. Such an ambivalence, of the subject that does not hold together with totality, is reflected meanwhile in the form of the works that are consulted in this section, works that have the most problematic status of all of the texts that came out of German unification.

That is because the texts consulted here are prose works whose characters and plots map onto the lives of their authors, yet whose literary qualities allow the events of the past to be re-imagined and explored in a complexity that sits on the edge of ethical defensibility. While Maron and Wolf reproduce documents relating to their own involvement with the Stasi in factual volumes, and both write in an autofictional prose that addresses these collaborations directly, Hilbig

allows his characters to cite and mimic the language of the files within clearly fictional prose works. In all cases, the authors' use of the files works to problematize the authority of textual evidence with regard to the East German past. This is productive in the sense that the problem of the legibility of the subject raised in these works, of identifying subjects of surveillance or collaboration and recording the details of their lives in a gapless textual archive, presented a strategic problem for the Stasi's surveillance project itself, as it attempted to measure and categorize physical characteristics and social behaviors that could never be pinned down in their entirety. Yet such problematization brings with it a concurrent problem in reading the past, in grasping the kind of harm that was done, and the degree to which such harm was deliberate on the part of either official or unofficial spies. The chapters in this section cannot solve this latter problem; however, they provide approaches to it, informed by the models of subjectivity and of textuality offered by the literary works by East Germans after unification and by the theoretical and literary canons on which they were seen to draw in the first two chapters. These models enable us to assess both the potential for resistance and the collaborative risk that attach to the figure of the IM—a potential and a risk that persist, moreover, in the new setting of unified Germany.

### Approaches to collaboration (3): Capitalist complicities

Chapters 5 and 6 are dedicated to the writing that East German authors continued to publish in the later 1990s and into the 2000s. When viewed together as a body of post-GDR literature, these works generate a haunting perspective on the new scenarios of political and personal compromise that their authors depict as underlying the new environment of liberal democratic capitalism. In the Federal Republic, the decisions that these literary characters can make are different, and they may hold the opportunity for more sovereignty, in the sense of deciding power over their lives. However, the characters of the latest East German texts also observe the limitations of that new sovereignty, in certain subject-internal conditions, not least the counter-intuitive operations of the unconscious, as well as external processes that these works depict. Central here are the dilemmas that they face regarding complicity with the new state and corporate bodies of the Federal Republic.

Charity Scribner's *Requiem for Communism* analyzed responses in German literature, visual arts, and cinema to "the socialist crisis" that followed unification

(Scribner, 2003, p. 9). By examining works that look back in “collective sorrow” at East German socialism (*ibid.*, p. 3), Scribner addressed herself to the *Ostalgie*, or nostalgia for the East, that became a critical watchword of the 1990s and early 2000s, leveled against former East Germans who were perceived as too slow in letting go of the GDR. The accusation was that certain groups were reluctant to relinquish the image of a GDR golden era that had never been, a hesitancy apparently expressed in the post-unification popularity of GDR consumer goods, as well as the successful cinema comedies set in the former socialist country, *Sonnenallee* (Leander Haußmann, 1999) and *Goodbye, Lenin!* (Wolfgang Becker, 2003), the latter directed by a West German but still considered a touchstone example of ostalgie culture. Historian Stefan Wolle’s thorough history of the GDR, published at the close of the 1990s, aimed at debunking a myth of *Die heile Welt der Diktatur (Ideal World of the Dictatorship)* (1999), to which East German culture was apparently attached. Yet, as Scribner argues, and as the texts consulted in this book’s final section attest, the cultural production of the post-GDR years did not exhibit any simplistic longing for the return of Soviet-style state socialism. Scribner’s *Requiem* focuses on a complex collective affect, in which the socialism that had collapsed could be at once mourned and yet still hated for its abuses. The literary texts of East German authors belong to such a memory-work, as cultural products of a socialist memory that is inconsistent, selective perhaps, or perhaps perfectly able to handle the ambivalence of the end of a repressive regime that also signified the loss of a dream.

In the year 2000, critical theorist and Russia specialist Susan Buck-Morss published a work that deconstructed “the Cold War discursive binary of totalitarianism versus democracy” (Buck-Morss, 2000, p. xii), by claiming that both communism and capitalism represented two forms of a single “utopian dream” (*ibid.*, p. xiv). Each aimed in the latter part of the twentieth century to generate “happiness for the masses” (*ibid.*, p. xiv), and crucially, each failed, resulting in the loss of both dreams, first with the collapse of the Soviet bloc and secondly with the incapacity of capitalist democracies to deliver the “utopian potential” that industrial modernity had once seemed to promise (*ibid.*, p. 3). In Buck-Morss’s analysis, the post-Cold War age does not only mourn the state socialism that it recognizes as having failed; it also mourns the miscarriage of its Western counterpart, that utopia that has ended in the crisis of global capitalism. In line with Buck-Morss’s analysis, East German authors are far from ostalgie in the terms bandied around in the anti-GDR hype of the 1990s. Instead, they favor plots and images whose complexity expresses the breaking

of the spell of capitalism's once-utopian appearance with a sophistication only increased by its lack of certainty about what a solution might be.

Chapter 5 takes a close look at one such image, which is initially puzzling in its dominance in recent texts. The chapter takes its cue from the animals that appear with spectacular regularity in works of East German writing from the mid-1990s onwards. These images shed light on a particularly enigmatic aspect of the sovereignty theory that Benjamin developed, namely that state of subjection to bodies of power that is understood as *creatureliness*: the being subjected to—or even created by—certain regimes of power, as well as that animal aspect of the human self that is simply subjected to the contingency of its own life. The literary characters of unified Germany should, at the very least by the turn of the new millennium, enjoy a new freedom to assert agency over their lives. The GDR's regimes of surveillance and censorship are now decisively gone, and thus the struggle in these settings for a subjectivity that is bordered off from others and can decide on its own definition is certainly less intense. Yet the entomologists and arachnologists in these latest works, the dog- and cat-lovers, and the subjects who experience their own being as a state of animal subjection signal a continuing problem of sovereignty that takes on new forms in the capitalist context.

In the light of these new images in East German writing, it becomes even more problematic to read the GDR as an exceptional environment, a “totalitarianism” that suppressed some natural freedom, which could be enjoyed by the individual subject if only it were freed of surveillance. On the contrary, in these works subjectivity always takes the form of subjection, whether that be to the demands of collectivity—the family, the workplace, the free market economy—or to the individual limitations of language, of desire, and other forms of human frailty. One such frailty is the continuing tendency of subjects to participate in the most destructive processes of their society. This tendency forms the focus of the final chapter, with its reading of Hilbig's final novel, *Das Provisorium* (*The Stop-Gap*, 2000), of the last stories published during his lifetime, and of the short prose works discovered in his literary estate. These texts are some of the most shattering works of the unification era, and they are written in Hilbig's characteristically dense prose that nonetheless delivers with searing clarity a vision of the complicities to which the subject of contemporary capitalism is vulnerable.

Certainly, the new complicities that these ex-East German characters enact are of a different nature and have different consequences to the collaborations that took place under the Stasi. Yet, in these final chapters, the book makes the

case for the persistence of the problem of sovereignty that is articulated in these texts into the capitalist present, and thus the case for the ongoing urgency of the specific insights of East German literary writing. Emerging as they do out of the lost utopia of state socialism, the works visited in this study offer insight into the limited degree of agency that subjects of modernity can truly have, the limits on their genuinely consenting to participation, or indeed their carrying out effective acts of resistance. As such, if we are willing to hear it, they have a message to impart concerning not only the harm that was done by the Stasi's agents, but also that which we risk as agents of more contemporary regimes.

## Note

- 1 Ostow's essay traces the vicissitudes of the SED leadership's attitude towards the Jewish community in the GDR. The SED state officially denied eastern Germany's guilt for the Holocaust, and relationships with the Jewish community remaining in East Germany were strained, albeit to differing degrees in different phases of the SED-regime. Thus in the early 1950s the SED carried out anti-Jewish purges in mimicry of those that Stalin was ordering across the USSR. Yet, after Stalin's death and a policy change in June 1953, there were moves to make remaining Jewish residents welcome in GDR society. After this point, grants were provided to repair synagogues, maintain kosher butchers and Jewish cemeteries, and special pensions were created for Jewish families due to their victimhood under National Socialism. In 1967, the USSR and the GDR took a pro-Arab, anti-Israel stance, which led to an increase in hostility towards the Jewish religious community; however in the years of Honecker's rule, relations improved once more. Honecker's GDR profiled its friendly relationship with its Jewish community as proof of a truly anti-fascist society—for instance, a large commemoration of *Kristallnacht* was organized in 1988, coinciding with the GDR's bid for the status of "Most Favored Nation" with the US.



## The Psychic Life of Collaboration: Monika Maron's *Stille Zeile Sechs*

Monika Maron drafted *Stille Zeile Sechs* in the final months of the SED regime and published it after German unification, in 1991. It was heralded by Iris Radisch in *Die Zeit* newspaper as a “gesamtdeutsche[r] Roman” (all-German novel; Radisch, 1991, unpaginated), which addressed issues pertaining to the whole of Germany in the months following unification. *Stille Zeile Sechs* indeed offered a perspective on Germany at the end of its division, and at the end of a century fraught with the issues of collaboration and abuse captured by its plot. Yet, in particular, the work provided a powerful new vision of the collaborations that had taken place in East Germany's recent past, between ordinary citizens and the organs of the GDR state apparatus. The novel's protagonist, Rosalind Polkowski, agrees in the text to work for a former SED functionary named Herbert Beerenbaum. As much as this sits uncomfortably with Polkowski's longstanding opposition to the regime, she finds herself drawn to collaborating with the man who reminds her uncannily of her deceased father, once a committed member of the SED. Through this plot, the text problematizes the view of the Stasi collaborator as a contemptible pawn in the regime's crimes, a view that dominated press and public discourse in the early 1990s but that neglected the deeper motivations underlying such collaboration, motivations to which even the GDR's most strident critics might not have proven entirely resistant.

Collaboration is too deeply ingrained in the life of Maron's literary subject and, as the following reading of the text with its literary and theoretical intertexts demonstrates, too universal to be judged as ethically unconscionable. As Rosalind Polkowski decides to leave her post as a historical researcher, she acts as an East German modulation of the eponymous protagonist of Herman Melville's “Bartleby, the Scrivener”. In the first part of this chapter, we see how

Melville's tale of a strike in Manhattan prefigures Maron's depiction of the refusal of labor in the GDR context. The history of strike ghosts the novel via the characters' discussion of the workers' uprising and its brutal suppression by the SED in June 1953, a period of unrest which, as Müller-Enbergs notes, saw a significant rise in the numbers of IMs being recruited by the Stasi (cf. Müller-Enbergs, 2008a, p. 3). Polkowski's gesture in withdrawing from her work holds a certain power, namely to express her views on labor and freedom within state socialism. Yet the gesture is cut short as the character begins her reluctant collaboration, thus undermining her intentions for a resistant independence. This too is compatible with Melville's pessimistic vision of resistance because even the most committed striker of literary modernity, *Bartleby*, finds that he has to choose death rather than collaborate with those against whom he prefers to protest.

In Melville's and Maron's accounts, collaboration is as inevitable as it is uncomfortable. Moreover, it seems that collaboration is also a fundamental behavior of the patriarchal family, as several works of East German writing from the unification years besides Maron's novel attest. The second part of this chapter sets *Stille Zeile Sechs* in dialogue with a selection of other works from the unification era, including Kurt Drawert's "German monologue" of 1992, *Spiegelland (Mirror-Land)*, Erich Loest's 1995 novel set during the fall of the GDR, *Nikolaikirche (St Nicholas' Church)*, Thomas Brussig's satirical novel *Helden wie wir (Heroes Like Us)*, also 1995), and Kerstin Hensel's novel in which two generations of collaborators fall under Stasi harassment, *Tanz am Kanal (Dance on the Canal)*, 1994). In the East German context, collaboration is carried out in relation to the distinctly paternal authority of "Vater Staat" (the state called "father"). The intrigue that structures these texts stems from the fact that this authority is both as loved as it is feared, and as vulnerable as it is violent. Kafka's "Brief an den Vater" (Letter to the father) of 1919 provides an *Urtext* for understanding such duality of authority in these East German works, as a result of which duality their collaborating subjects enter into states of confusion, self-contradiction, and despair.

These are states that risk turning the East German collaborator into an apparently powerless victim, akin to Biermann's creaturely collaborating subject. Because of the history preceding the Stasi, the depiction of these states, particularly in Maron's text, is problematic in that it sets up the collaborating subject as a new kind of "hysteric," a pathological subject who is caught in a scenario of struggle with powerful, patriarchal others. Given the cultural history of hysteria, such a depiction offers a prototype for the identifications and mimicries that



structure collaboration. Yet the hysteria of Maron's collaborating subject also raises the problem of considering Stasi collaboration in the context of broader German histories. The act of violence with which *Stille Zeile Sechs* concludes provides a more fruitful image than that of the hysteric for handling the complexities inherent in the behavior of collaboration. A last-ditch attempt on Rosalind Polkowski's part to free herself from what feels like a state of disempowered possession suggests that freedom from control might be attainable in isolated cases. Whether it is desirable to free the subject from a position of collaboration entirely is another matter. What is clear, however, is that this early and important work of literature to appear by a former Stasi agent after unification (albeit before the public was aware of her collaboration having taken place) challenged its readers to consider the complex psychic background to collaboration, and to temper their views of it accordingly.

### *Stille Zeile Sechs: An East German "Bartleby"*

The setting is East Berlin in 1985. A regime-critical historian, Polkowski (born 1943), meets the retired Party functionary Herbert Beerenbaum (born 1907) in a café, and agrees to transcribe his memoirs. She will do so in place of his right hand that has been paralyzed by a stroke. Beerenbaum is both a vocal supporter of the SED Party and a past agent in its abuses of power. He was present at the notorious Hotel Lux in Moscow during the war years, the former headquarters of the Communist International in which German exiles in hiding from the Nazis were allowed to live, but from which many were arrested by a paranoid Stalinist leadership that suspected them of double-agency and murdered them for it. Having survived these executions, Beerenbaum returned after the fall of Berlin and became an important functionary in the new East German government. In 1962, immediately after the building of the Berlin Wall and twenty-three years prior to his encounter with Polkowski, Beerenbaum was responsible as an honorary professor at the Humboldt University for the arrest of his colleague and Polkowski's friend, Karl-Heinz Baron, who is known by his friends as "Der Graf" (The Count). Der Graf was once a scholar of Chinese language and literature, but his career took a turn when he was accused of aiding one of his students to commit the crime of *Republikflucht* (defection to the West). Beerenbaum reported Baron to the Stasi, which led to the latter's imprisonment for three years. Beerenbaum's role in Baron's persecution signals his close association with the Stasi, one that is also honored by the ostentatious

wreath that the Ministry donates to his funeral. Beerenbaum is unrepentant for his role in the regime's civil and human rights violations and defends them until his death.

The novel's title refers to Beerenbaum's address where, two afternoons a week, Polkowski carries out her task of transcribing his memoirs. The work sits in conflict with Polkowski's views both of the GDR's political history and of how she might spend her time with the maximum possible freedom within the strictures of late East German society. When she meets Beerenbaum, Polkowski has recently left a monotonous post as historical researcher, and vowed to herself, "Ich werde nicht mehr für Geld denken" (I will no longer think for money; Maron, 1991, p. 24). Her new work for Beerenbaum allows Polkowski to carry out a merely physical, and she hopes therefore unthinking, labor. She refuses to contribute anything to the memoirs beyond a precise transcription of Beerenbaum's words. This refusal proves difficult to sustain, however, as Polkowski struggles with her intention not to protest against a heavily one-sided account of the recent past. Given the problem of their political enmity, and Polkowski's dilemma in transcribing the words of her opponent, the working relationship is strained and yet, on Polkowski's part, also oddly obsessive. She appears regularly at Beerenbaum's home, on "Dienstage und Freitage" (Tuesdays and Fridays; *ibid.*, p. 77) until he dies. The contrast between service and freedom in the names of her workdays—*Dienstag* resonates as "day of service" ("Diensttag"), and *Freitag* as "day of freedom"—reflects the paradoxical position that Polkowski assumes in relation to Beerenbaum. By agreeing to work for him, she enters into a contract that is much more passionate than her early resolution to quiet neutrality.

When Polkowski first meets Beerenbaum, she is several months into a period of self-employment. Tired of the intellectual conformity of GDR life, she has given up her post at a state-run research institute where her office approximated "seiner Größe nach eher eine Gefängniszelle" (in size, a prison cell; *ibid.*, p. 22), an architectural arrangement that reflected the constricting nature of the work with which she was tasked there. The post required her to document, among other things, the history of working-class movements in Saxony and Thuringia, and she did so under the strict surveillance of her employer Barabas, "einem gewöhnlichen, graumelierten Familienvater, den nur sein unentwickelter Widerspruchsgeist, verbunden mit despotischer Pedanterie, zur Beförderung empfohlen hatte" (a typical grey-haired family man, who had gained his position alone through the combination of his undeveloped spirit of contradiction and his despotical pedantry; *ibid.*, p. 23). Setting aside his New

Testament naming, redolent of sacrifice and crowd justice, Barabas's status as a family man is significant. He embodies a paternal quality that will be shared by all of the figures from whom Polkowski attempts to free herself in the course of the novel.

Polkowski comes to comprehend the meaninglessness of her working life when, after a day of research into an historical conference of Saxon communists, she feeds the cats that live in and around her apartment block:

Die Parteikonferenz hatte mich zu interessieren für Geld, das ich für Würstchen ausgab, die ich an Katzen verfütterte, damit diese am Abend auf dem Rasen sitzen konnten für nichts als für das Dasitzen, während ich allein hinter dem Küchenfenster saß.

(I was supposed to be interested in this Party conference so that I could earn money that I could spend on sausages that I fed to cats so that they could sit on the grass in the evening for no reason other than simply to sit there, while I sat alone behind my kitchen window; *ibid.*, p. 21)

The freedom and disinterestedness of the cats' lives appeal to Polkowski. In contrast, she feels trapped in a "Hundeleben" (dog's life; *ibid.*, p. 20), a repetitive cycle of working, earning, and finally feeding herself in the isolation of her kitchen. Alison Lewis has identified Polkowski's longing to do something "identitätsstiftend" (creating a sense of identity; Lewis 2002a, p. 75). This is a yearning that Polkowski shares with several other Maron protagonists, who want nothing more than to define the conditions of their own lives. Readers learn that one of the motivating desires of Polkowski's life is her "Sehnsucht nach einer Tat" (desire for action; Maron, 1991, p. 51). Unwilling to acquiesce passively to the conditions of her life, she leaves her post and resolves to devote her time to more worthwhile pursuits. She survives on an income from various writing tasks "die ich ausführen konnte, ohne von meinem Kopf eine spezielle Denkarbeit zu verlangen" (which I could carry out without placing particular intellectual demands on my mind; *ibid.*, p. 18). She plans to learn the piano and to translate the recitatives from Mozart and Da Ponte's 1787 opera *Don Giovanni* from Italian into German, a task considered to be impossible not least for those, like Polkowski, who neither read music nor speak Italian. These activities betray her desire for escape from the systems of the GDR state, towards a more entrepreneurial existence apart from the socialist workforce.

This desire positions Polkowski as an East German reconfiguration of Bartleby, hero of Herman Melville's 1853 "Story of Wall Street". For Agamben and Deleuze, Bartleby finds a way to leverage a "potenza di non" (power of no;

Agamben and Deleuze, 1993, p. 91), a power that can challenge the principle of sovereignty that operates in his employer's office in Wall Street. Bartleby is employed by a financial lawyer who runs a small but profitable Chancery office. This man, the novel's narrator, takes Bartleby on as a law-copyist or "scrivener," and at first Bartleby works diligently, even appearing to have been "long famishing for something to copy" (Melville, 2002, p. 10). However, Bartleby begins after a time to eschew certain of his tasks. At first he refuses to check the accuracy of his texts and those of his colleagues, and gradually he prefers not to do any work at all, not even the copying work that he at first performed so ravenously. Bartleby's gentle resistance, his "cadaverously gentlemanly *nonchalance*" in the office (ibid., p. 16; emphasis in the original), destabilizes the resolve of his employer, who feels "unmanned" (ibid., p. 16), and suspects that by his "perpetual occupancy" of the premises Bartleby might both "claim possession" of what his employer owns "and in the end perhaps outlive me" (ibid., p. 27). Employer and rebel are shown in a struggle over the realm of the office and the terms of their contract, a struggle that is depicted, moreover, in spectral language appropriate to the Marxian resonances of Bartleby's tale, written just five years after the publication of *The Communist Manifesto*.

Bartleby's famous mantra, "I would prefer not to" (ibid., p. 10), is a radical statement in an office otherwise held under the control of its chief. His subsequent refusal to work at all challenges the power that his employer takes for granted, to demand instant and effective productivity from the clerk whom he had viewed at the start as a "valuable acquisition" (ibid., p. 15).<sup>1</sup> Bartleby has been celebrated as a figurehead for the potentiality of rebellion haunting systems that rely upon the collaboration of their exploited subjects. As Slavoj Žižek has noted, Bartleby is a peaceful protestor, one who "couldn't even hurt a fly," and yet "that's what makes his presence so unbearable" (Žižek, 2006, p. 385). Bartleby's is a gentle but immovable resistance. He quietly occupies the office until he is removed by police and confined to The Tombs, a prison in Manhattan. He dies there on hunger strike, for he also prefers not to eat and thereby collaborate with those who would dictate his destiny to him. This, Bartleby's "cadaverous triumph" (Melville, 2002, p. 24), is the tragic and logical conclusion to his resistance. He finds that it is impossible to live without engaging in collaboration and so opts to die.

Questioning the desirability of the outcome of Bartleby's strike, the political philosopher Nina Power notes Bartleby's failure to engage in what some might consider a necessary collaboration. Power assesses the manner in which radical philosophy has handled the resistant protagonists of "Bartleby", Kafka's

“Josefine, die Sängerin oder Das Volk der Mäuse” (Josefine the Singer or The Mouse People), and the Bible’s *Job*, and she remarks that “there is a crucial difference between Marx’s universal class and these isolated, broken figures: the collective dimension is absent” (Power, 2010, unpaginated). Less optimistic than both Agamben and Žižek, Power bemoans the heroicization of individualist resistance, a sign for her that contemporary philosophy is losing faith in “organized struggle” (ibid., unpaginated). It is true that *Bartleby* lacks a community with whose solidarity he might more effectively—collaboratively—resist his oppression; for instance, he might have formed a union with other scribes of Wall Street, and thus catalyzed more widespread resistance. Instead he remains a lone figure of anarchy in the otherwise uniform financial district.

On the other hand, as Elizabeth Hardwick notes, *Bartleby*’s revolutionary refusal has a hidden, collaborative power, namely as a linguistic contagion:

The nipping clerks who have been muttering that they would like to “black his eyes” or “kick him out of the office” begin, without sarcasm or mimicry, involuntarily, as it were, to say to the lawyer, “If you would prefer, Sir,” and so on. (Hardwick, 2002, p. 261)

The involuntary introduction of the vocabulary of *preference* into the vernacular of the office echoes *Bartleby*’s mantra of radical refusal. In this way, *Bartleby*’s strike threatens the integrity of the entire firm, and not only because he does not do his own writing and editing. Even though they dislike him, *Bartleby*’s colleagues react to his quiet protest as if to a subtle call to action. Albeit unconsciously, they still imitate the idiom of *Bartleby*’s refusal, and this hidden mimesis contains the kernel of a more positive collaboration that might be initiated even without conscious leadership by that first, lone rebel.

In *Stille Zeile Sechs*, Polkowski’s decision no longer to think for money represents a similar “preference” not to be exploited. At the Barabas Institute, she is not only paid to think, but to think certain things about certain topics that have been chosen by others for her to investigate. When she leaves, she rejects this scenario in favor of a life in which she might at least attempt to find work that reflects her own interests. Like *Bartleby*, she acts alone, but she is not without potential to influence her community: she informs her friends of her decision, and asks Bruno what he might do, “wenn du nicht mehr dienen müßtest” (if you no longer had to serve; Maron, 1991, p. 176). Of course, the comparison with *Bartleby* has its limits. Wall Street in the 1850s and the GDR of the 1980s relied on quite different techniques of exploitation; the refusal to collaborate with the system

of employment also had different consequences for the rebel in the respective contexts. While Melville's eponymous anarchist perishes on hunger strike in *The Tombs*, Polkowski as *Bartleby* of the GDR's bourgeoisie has savings and a plan. These enable her to leave her work as an intellectual functionary. Her work for Beerenbaum subsequently provides a freelance income from which she can live, and this less official collaboration exempts her from the kind of oppression to which GDR dissidents, and those who were considered *asozial* (antisocial), such as the homeless or those with clinical mental ill health, were subjected.

Curiously, however, the freedom that Polkowski gains when she leaves her research employment proves dissatisfying and difficult to handle. Following her resignation, as the discipline of so many years in education and work deserts her, she suffers disturbed sleep and a guilty conscience:

Alles in meinem Leben hatte um acht Uhr am Morgen begonnen [...] die Gewohnheit [hatte] sich zum Gesetz erhoben, das, sobald es gebrochen wurde, die Strafe in Gestalt peiniger Träume unweigerlich nach sich zog.

(Everything in my life had begun at eight o'clock [...] The habit had elevated itself to the status of a law which, as soon as it was broken, inevitably gave rise to punishment in the form of tormenting dreams; *ibid.*, p. 50)

Feeling disenfranchised in her new, work-free existence—and perhaps following the example of Wall Street's cadaverous rebel—Polkowski seems to enter a Gothic nightmare in which tormenting (*peinigend*) dreams can follow her around “wie mein Schatten” (like my shadow; *ibid.*, p. 51). She also begins to suffer physical symptoms such that someone who has had a brain tumour removed might experience:

Schwindelgefühle, Koordinierungsschwierigkeiten, Orientierungslosigkeit [...] so daß dem Menschen, wenn es ihm besonders übel erging, Zweifel kamen, ob die Operation wirklich nötig gewesen war.

(vertigo, problems with coordination, loss of a sense of direction [...] so that the person would have doubts, when they felt especially awful, as to whether the operation had really been necessary; *ibid.*, p. 43)

Polkowski's work-withdrawal symptoms mean that it is a relief when she meets Beerenbaum and he asks her to transcribe his memoirs for a monthly fee of 500 East German Marks. It is not that this relief is entirely comfortable. For, having attempted to maintain the spirit of her strike by not employing her intellectual faculties during working hours, Polkowski finds herself silent in the face

of the man with whose political views and account of history she vehemently disagrees. This silence prevents political debate between the two characters, and it shifts the balance of power in Beerenbaum's favor. Polkowski's decision to leave the research institute, and thus resist exploitation, is thus scuppered by the complex psychodynamics of a strange collaborative relationship—dynamics that are influenced in turn by another relationship that is buried a little deeper in Polkowski's past.

### “Briefe an den Vater” (Letters to the father): Father-child relationships in the literature of German unification

In Beerenbaum, Polkowski meets more than an employer. She also encounters a man whose personality, appearance, and political stance are uncannily similar to those of her late father, Fritz Polkowski. These similarities elicit from Polkowski a troubling reaction towards her enemy and employer. Through this pivotal plot dynamic, Maron's novel shares with other works of literature from the time of German unification the central and problematic figure of the father. Father figures do not only parent, care for, and feed the children in these texts. In addition, many of them come to embody the state that replaced and rejected Hitler's fascism, in both its positive and negative qualities. The recurring configuration of state and father in such works is compatible with certain nurturing qualities that the GDR government had, as it worked to redistribute wealth and land after 1949, and made an array of social equalities possible as never before. Yet the SED regime also developed to exercise a controlling authority over its citizens. These were the two faces of *Vater Staat* in the GDR, and they find reflection in the troubling qualities with which father figures are endowed in the literature of unification. A second landmark of literary modernism, Kafka's short and shattering “Brief an den Vater” (Letter to the father) of 1919 provides an *Urtext* for the repeat metaphor in these works, of the GDR as a kind of political family, one structured at times by ideological agreement and at others by coercion, but always oriented towards a distinctly paternal authority. As we shall see, post-GDR writing is well placed to explore the affective impression that the parent-child bond makes on its subjects, as well as the resonances of this bond into a society that held such promise and yet led to such abuses.

Maron's protagonist in *Stille Zeile Sechs* was born, like Maron herself, in the early 1940s. Her employer, in his role as a former SED functionary, stands as

an incarnation of the state in which Polkowski grew up. Yet Beerenbaum also functions to bring back to life the figure of Polkowski's father, with whom she had an especially strained relationship. Fritz Polkowski was a prisoner of war until his daughter was seven years old, and her memories of childhood are defined by a yearning for his return, which took the metonymic form of longing for the fatherly gesture of prohibition:

Wer aber sagen konnte: Das hat mir mein Vater verboten, verfügte über eine Kostbarkeit.

(Those who could say, my father forbade me to do that, were in possession of a delicacy; *ibid.*, p. 157)

Yet, after Fritz's return from war, the paternal authority that his daughter had so craved arrived in confusing combination with a painful neglect. Fritz was made headmaster of his daughter's school, and struggled for the entirety of his career to hide his anxieties about his interrupted education. He also neglected to communicate with his daughter, except to control her movements in the house and ensure that she received a socialist education. As a result, the adult Polkowski admits in her narrative, "Vor dem Einschlafen wünschte ich mir manchmal, daß er stirbt" (before I went to sleep I sometimes wished that he would die; *ibid.*, p. 114). Father and daughter remained distant up to Fritz's death at the age of sixty-three.

For Iris Radisch, the plot of *Stille Zeile Sechs* can be read in terms of an "Abrechnung mit den Vätern" (reckoning with the fathers; Radisch, 1991, unpaginated), a reckoning with the men of a generation before that of Polkowski (and of her creator), who had built a repressive and ultimately failed socialist state. Admittedly there were women involved in the ruling of the GDR—Margot Honecker, SED Minister from 1963 to 1989, is a notable example. However, the SED leadership was predominantly male and, as Lewis remarks, the predominance of male operatives in the Stasi made it "one of the last remaining domains of male privilege in a country that prided itself on its affirmative action programs for women and its high levels of female participation in the workforce" (Lewis, 2002b, p. 113). In spite of the GDR's commitment to, and indeed progress in gender equality in the workforce, the reckoning that needed to be done after the regime fell was indeed largely with men, and as such, masculine power-figures return again and again in literary plots after the end of the regime. Thus, a number of other literary works written by East Germans after unification favor the employment of father figures in order to represent



the functionaries of the East German state and the Stasi. In *Nikolaikirche*, Erich Loest's protagonist Astrid Protter exists in the shadow of her Party-loyal father, and in the course of the novel experiences a psychological and physical collapse. Only after joining the citizens' movement can she cast off her father's influence, and she then begins to help overthrow the state that he supports. There is a comic iteration of such liberation in Thomas Brussig's satirical *Helden wie wir*. The unpronounceable Klaus Uhltscht's fragile masculinity sees him following in his father's footsteps to join the Stasi, but he later enjoys a phallic triumph that also brings down the entire state. In the novel, Klaus visits his father's corpse and relishes squeezing his testicles, in a gruesomely Oedipal victory gesture (Brussig, 1995, p. 268).

A more traumatic iteration of such paternal authority appears in *Spiegelland*, the award-winning *Deutscher Monolog* (*German Monologue*) of Stasi victim and poet Kurt Drawert, who grew up as the son of a detective in the GDR's police force. Drawert's autofictional narrator lives under the shadow of a Party-loyal father who controls every aspect of his life, even checking the diary into which he repeatedly scrawls the haunting cipher "S," which refers to "Sterbetermin[e]" (dates to die; Drawert, 1992, p. 59), dates and times for which he has in mind to end his own life. When the narrator refuses to decode this morbid cipher, his father strikes and interrogates him, whereupon the traumatized son responds only with cool observation "und registrierte, wie sein kriminalistischer Verstand zu arbeiten anfing" (and registered how his criminological mind started to work; *ibid.*, p. 56). Having failed to decode the cipher, the father in *Spiegelland* resorts to insulting his son as "Nichts und niemand" and "Ein verkommenes Subjekt" (nothing and nobody; a depraved subject; *ibid.*, p. 57). Physical violence combines with pronouncement on the very status of the son as a subject in this chilling work.

The power of the father is less tightly authoritative in Kerstin Hensel's *Tanz am Kanal* wherein, rather than being aligned with the state's powers of criminological detection, interrogation, and pronouncement, paternity is instead presented as being subjected to the greater power of the state. This does not mean, however, that the father is not still powerful in defining the fate of his child. Hensel's protagonist Gabriela is raped and mutilated and her surgeon father, who is not a regime-insider, is forced by the East German authorities to perform a skin graft that covers over the evidence of her mutilation. This father's dubious protection of his daughter ends early when he flees to the West, and Gabriela is left delivered over to even less benevolent authorities, in the form of the Stasi officer Queck, to whom she begins to submit surveillance reports.

The less powerful authority of Hensel's father figures is apparent too in her later novel, *Falscher Hase* (*Meatloaf*, 2005) which depicts three generations of men in the Paffrath family, who attempt to police or otherwise protect a Berlin that gradually crumbles over the course of the twentieth century. The color of the falling city appears pressed onto the face of Paffrath senior "als hätte sich der Staub der Ruinen auf seine Haut gelegt" (as if the dust of the ruins had laid itself on his skin; Hensel, 2005, p. 54), and his authority flounders through a number of conflicts with his son. Hensel's father figures are agents of Germany's twentieth century, but they are also subjected to the century's events and to the agency of others, in ways that they cannot control.

Comparing Maron's representation of East German father-daughter problems with West German and Austrian literary writing, Anna Kuhn has read *Stille Zeile Sechs* as an East German iteration of the genre of "Väterliteratur" (literature of the fathers; Kuhn, 1996, p. 170), the texts that in the era of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* of the 1960s and 70s challenged the presence of former National Socialists in leading governmental and industrial positions in the post-war West. Yet there is something about the father-figures in these East German works that captures attention, quite apart from their personal authoritarianism and links to Germany's recent dictatorships. These perpetrators are also victims of powerful regimes: the Stasi pursue Herr von Haßlau, forcing him to operate on his daughter before hounding him out of East Germany entirely. In Maron's novel, Fritz Polkowski is a loyal follower of the Party that he joined after fighting on the front line in the Second World War, which left him traumatized and ashamed of his interrupted education. These are figures of intimidating authority for whom empathy is, however, also possible, and even demanded by the texts in which they appear.

This demand for empathy registers as Polkowski enters her relationship with Beerenbaum carrying with her not only the resentments of a daughter silenced and suppressed by an authoritative father, but also the desire to relate to Fritz, and to give expression to the complicated sympathy she feels for him. The collaboration therefore offers an opportunity for reconciliation with a father from whom Polkowski was emotionally estranged—reconciliation, and perhaps the opportunity to carry on fighting. When she visits Beerenbaum at the end of their relationship, in the hospital where he lies on his deathbed, Polkowski wishes that she could be reconciled with him: "Jeden Satz hätte ich, jetzt, da er starb, zurückgenommen für einen versöhnlichen Abschied" (I would have taken back every sentence in order to be reconciled with him as we said goodbye; Maron, 1991, p. 34). Although the etymological root of *Versöhnung*

is *Sühne*, the post-Freudian psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan suggested that the German for reconciliation, *Versöhnung*, evokes by semantic echo the subject's status as the *Sohn* (son) of a paternal Law, even into adulthood (Lacan, 1977, p. 171). Lacan locates a drive for reconciliatory son-liness at the heart of his psychoanalytic model, in which the subject relates to figures of the law as if to a parent, and always with a desire for appeasement driving the encounter. That Polkowski returns again and again to work for Beerenbaum, despite her Bartlebian resolution, testifies to such a desire, one that remains after the death of her father to define her adult decisions.

Yet even in the passage at Beerenbaum's deathbed, the two characters remain enemies. Polkowski is in league here with the doomed protagonist of *The Trial*, Josef K., who seeks but fails to secure a handshake from the guards who arrest him, a reassuring social gesture that he hopes will enable him to bring his case to "einen versöhnlichen Abschluß" (a conciliatory close; Kafka, 1958, p. 16). Reconciliation also fails in the son-father relationship in Kafka's own life, so that in a letter written but never delivered to his father five years after he drafted the fragments of *The Trial*, the author continued to feel that his father's opinions dictated "meine paar kleinen Entscheidungen" (the few small decisions I made; Kafka, 2008a, p. 47; Kafka, 2008b, p. 63). Such decisions would have represented a small modicum of sovereignty for the author. Kafka writes that, through his literary work, he hoped to gain an "Abschied von Dir" (parting from you; Kafka, 2008a, p. 47; Kafka, 2008b, p. 63), but found in the end that he could not liberate himself from the paternal law. Kafka's "Letter to the father" reveals the son's fantasies and fears of his father in corporeal terms. Beside Hermann Kafka's towering body, the son was but a "kleines Gerippe" (a little skeleton; Kafka, 2008a, p. 16; Kafka, 2008b, p. 24), and the effect of this difference in body size and weight is described thus:

da ich keines Dinges sicher war, von jedem Augenblick eine neue Bestätigung meines Daseins brauchte, [...] wurde mir natürlich auch das Nächste, der eigene Körper unsicher.

(since I could not be certain of anything, since I needed new validation of my existence with every passing second [...] I naturally also became uncertain even of what was nearest to me, my own body; Kafka, 2008a, p. 16; Kafka, 2008b, p. 65, translation amended.)

Kafka relates how his own body, apparently *das Nächste*, the closest thing to him, became subject to a physiological insecurity to match the existential doubt about his own *Dasein*. In this state, the body is not one with the child Kafka but

something close to him, therefore separate from him, and always susceptible to heteronomy in the hands of the father as massive law-maker.

Yet Kafka's letter also expresses a sense of sympathy for his father, a filial affection that interrupts the letter's otherwise leading theme of conflict, and suggests nonetheless some reconciliatory potential. In the middle of the letter, there is a passage that seems almost to come to a halt with an "Einblick in unser beider Hilflosigkeit" (insight into the helplessness we shared; Kafka, 2008a, p. 22; Kafka, 2008b, p. 31), and leads to the relating of a series of affectionate memories:

Es gab glücklicher Weise davon allerdings auch Ausnahmen meistens wenn Du schweigend littest und Liebe und Güte mit ihrer Kraft alles Entgegenstehende überwand und unmittelbar ergriff.

(Fortunately there were some exceptions to this, mostly when you suffered in silence, and your love and goodness joined forces to succeed in moving me, in spite of all the obstacles; Kafka, 2008a, p. 26; Kafka, 2008b, p. 37.)

Although these episodes of love overcoming enmity were rare exceptions, they also comprise the letter's most poignant parts, suggesting as they do a bond that remained between father and child, despite the force of law wielded so oppressively by the one over the other.

A psychoanalytic reading, of biography as an influence on the work of art, would link this corporeal and psychological insecurity to the preoccupations with powerlessness, fear, and chastisement that dominate in Kafka's literary writing. Yet such an approach was rejected by Walter Benjamin, an attitude echoed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's skepticism towards a too-schematic Oedipal reading of Kafka's work. In their reading of the letter, Deleuze and Guattari reject the triangular model of Oedipal desire, in which the male child desires the death of his father in order to win the attention of his mother. Instead, they foreground a bond of empathy between Hermann and Franz Kafka, wherein "the hypothesis of the father's innocence" and "distress" reveal the father not only to represent an oppressive law, but to submit himself to it along with his son (Deleuze and Guattari, 1986, p. 14). That the father should also wield authority over the son renders this shared heteronomy profoundly confusing. Yet Deleuze and Guattari offer a model for holding this ambivalence, one that comprehends the father as both perpetrator and victim at once.

The father-figures of post-unification literary writing embody just such an ambivalence. If Father and State meet repeatedly as configurations of

GDR power in recent East German writing, they do so as the expression of a connection colored by hatred—or, conversely, of a hatred colored by connection, in that it is troubled by love for the figure who is still, despite all things, a parent, that figure of utter authority who is also, terribly, subject to the utter authority of collapse, if only in the form of death. This vulnerability of the authority figure finds expression in *Spiegelland*, when evidence emerges from the family archives to reveal that the Nazi grandfather's "Prinzipien" (principles; Drawert, 1992, p. 50) were only a form of opportunism, whereupon the SED-loyal father suffers a heart attack. This allows the son for the first time to look downwards at the father, "von *oben herab* [...] bis ich, wie vielleicht nie wieder in meinem Leben, ein tatsächliches Gefühl, eine Liebe für ihn bekam" (*from above* [...] until, perhaps like never again in my life, I actually had a feeling, a love for him; *ibid.*, p. 50; emphasis in the original). The son in this story has maintained his observation of his father as neutral as possible; he has kept his desire for suicide an untold secret. But here, when the surveillant authority of the father falls, he can see that father as an object of love. This is the same ambivalence of feeling with which Polkowski comes into contact in *Stille Zeile Sechs*, when faced with the vulnerability of her father in his reincarnated form as Beerenbaum. As her narrative reveals, Polkowski may recall her father's neglect, but she is also struck by the suffering he must have endured as a prisoner of war. Later, when she confronts Beerenbaum about his survival at the Hotel Lux, Polkowski asks whether he was also afraid that he might himself become one of the victims of the Stalinist disappearances, showing a readiness for empathy that one might not normally find activated between enemies. Her new "father" is thus at once a perpetrator and a potential victim, the latter a quality that is emphasized by Beerenbaum's poor state of health.

Beerenbaum's ill-health is what leads to him first approaching Polkowski and requesting her help in typing up his memoirs, a collaboration that is fraught with remembered and unresolved conflicts. The oddly benign epithet of the first pages, "Rosenzüchter Beerenbaum" (rose-grower Beerenbaum; Maron, 1991, p. 11), as if growing roses has been the former functionary's central occupation, adumbrates the ambivalent feelings that Polkowski will develop towards him over the course of their working relationship. As she reveals in a conversation with her neighbor and friend Thekla Fleischer, even while she fantasizes that "er könnte, während ich danebenstehe, einen plötzlichen Herztod sterben" (he could, while I was standing next to him, suffer a sudden heart attack; *ibid.*, p. 134), she approaches his house with her heart beating "als sollte ich auf einen treffen, den ich liebe" (as if I were going to meet somebody I loved; *ibid.*, p. 134).

There is an unwanted intimacy in Beerenbaum's shortening of Polkowski's name to "Rosa" (ibid., p. 146), a name shared with the maid in Kafka's "Ein Landarzt" (*A Country Doctor*, 1919), who has presumably been raped, and is found with a wound on her face. Pink is the color of the blush, of tender wound-flesh, and of the most vulnerable zones of the body where sensation is at its strongest.

Polkowski's ambivalent emotions, her strange love and her resistance to the intimacy of the bond to Beerenbaum, intensify over the course of their working relationship, and they find final expression in an explosive episode in which she breaches her intention to keep silent her objections to the memoirs. Leaving Beerenbaum's house after the outburst, she vows no longer to work for him, but when he telephones to postpone and thereby confirm their next meeting, she must admit to herself:

Hätte ich nur seine Macht über mich beenden wollen, wäre ich bei meinem Vorsatz geblieben, sein Haus nicht wieder zu betreten. Aber ich litt schon an jenem Stadium der Feindschaft, das Sehnsucht erzeugt.

(If I had only wanted to end his power over me, then I would have stayed with my intention never to enter his house again. But I was already suffering from that stage of enmity that generates longing; ibid., p. 146)

Polkowski wonders, as readers might, what binds her to Beerenbaum, and she compares herself to a man who strangled his fiancée who was in love with another man. As she asks, "was kettete ihn an seine Verlobte" (what bound him to his fiancée; ibid., p. 210), she must also ask of herself: "Warum ging ich nicht meine eigenen Wege?" (why didn't I go my own way; ibid., p. 210). Perhaps the answer is to be located in her profession of *Sehnsucht*. It is this state of yearning that sees her return again and again to bear witness to Beerenbaum's version of the past, though he represents a regime that she despises. This compulsive return in adult life is an echo of the yearning that Polkowski felt for her father, from whom she was always estranged but whom she longed "sehnlichst" (with utmost longing) to address as "Papa" (ibid., p. 158). Polkowski's collaboration is accompanied by the psychic remnants of the past, that longing (*sehnen*) to see (*sehen*) which carries on into her relationship with her employer. The almost material presence of these remnants haunts Polkowski even as she attempts, in her conscious intentions at least, to liberate herself from them.

Polkowski explains her family history to Thekla Fleischer as follows: "Das Schlimmste ist, wenn draußen die gleiche Macht herrscht und das gleiche Gesetz wie im eigenen Haus" (the worst thing is when the same power and the

same law rule both inside and outside your house; *ibid.*, p. 135). Fritz's power as both Papa and Party-loyal headmaster was so difficult because it was a dual agency over his daughter no matter where she was. Subject to this dual power, and shaken by the vulnerability by which it is invisibly, palpably inhabited, Polkowski suffers subjection to a heightened version of what Eric Santner, after Lacan, has called "extimacy" (Santner, 2006, p. 24), the internal-external quality of a summons to subjectivity, one that stems from an outside world, but which is intimately felt as the inauguration of subjectivity as such. Santner specifies that extimacy is not an appropriation of a prior subject for the operations of power, but instead it is one of the processes that bring the subject into existence at its origin:

What is impossible to assume is not an intimacy that is already constituted but one that is [...] ex-cited into existence by the very summons that ostensibly turns us towards it. (*ibid.*, p. 24)

Santner shows how intimacy and external authority coincide in a moment of subject-formation that is at once political and privately individual. According to this model, Polkowski will never find freedom from the duality of power that she has known since childhood. The apartment in which she lives as an adult is not safe from a haunting presence of power, as she is persecuted by sounds that have no apparent cause, and by something that "tippte mir auf die Schulter und ließ sich nicht sehen" (tapped me on the shoulder and did not reveal itself; Maron, 1991, p. 84). Meanwhile, the alternative social space of the bar that Polkowski frequents with the Graf and Bruno is also subject to the present-absence of power in the GDR, as when Polkowski reveals for whom she is working, the Graf cries out "[a]ls ginge ein Gespenst durch den Raum" (as if a ghost were walking across the room; *ibid.*, p. 179). As long as she longs to see it, Polkowski cannot shake the ghost of power; instead it continues in the extended power of the state for which her father stood. Moreover, with its plot of possession by this intimate-external power, the novel sets into motion a troubling psychoanalytic session, with Polkowski as patient on the couch.

### The Stasi collaborator as hysteric

Freud's psychoanalytic practice was heavily informed by his work at the turn of the century with hysterics, the mostly female patients who were admitted to the care of the neurologist Charcot, in his clinic at the Salpêtrière Hospital



in Paris. In 1886, after a year of study with Charcot, Freud returned to Vienna with a new interest in the psychosomatic symptoms that Charcot's patients had displayed. Charcot held public lectures on Tuesdays and Fridays, at which his patients demonstrated their symptoms under the control of their clinician. That these are the days of service and freedom on which Polkowski appears for work with Beerenbaum suggests that the history of the hysteric was a special resource for Maron's novel. Maron's heroine also displays certain of the symptoms that the women performed at the clinics with Charcot. Among the working-class women who were admitted to his clinic, Charcot observed dramatic fits and chronic paralysis of the body, especially the limbs. Freud's patients, young members of the Viennese bourgeoisie, experienced less severe symptoms such as coughs, speech disturbances, and temporary limb paralysis. In Maron's novel, Polkowski exhibits a number of involuntary bodily expressions, like those of Freud's patients, that can be classified as hysteric. These include a paralysis of the fingers as she practises playing scales on the piano. She finds she is prevented from playing, part of her project of withdrawing from work, by "steif[e] Gelenke" (stiff joints) that impede her movement and co-ordination (ibid., p. 197). However, the central symptomatic expressions of Polkowski's hysteria take place in Beerenbaum's study.

For instance, in an early session of work for Beerenbaum, Polkowski begins to emit an involuntary groaning that disturbs Beerenbaum's dictations. When Beerenbaum does succeed in dictating to her, Polkowski finds that she has to suppress disdainful laughter and, as a result, her diaphragm jerks "außer Kontrolle" (out of control; ibid., p. 61), leading to an attack of the hiccups. As the work sessions continue, Polkowski's involuntary symptoms persist so that in a later session, after a row about his experiences under National Socialism, Beerenbaum stares at Polkowski "wie jemand, der zum Schlag ausholt und sein Ziel fixiert" (like someone who is preparing to strike, and fixes the target with his gaze; ibid., p. 141), and under his gaze her fingers become "so steif daß ich nicht schreiben konnte" (so stiff that I could not write; ibid., p. 141). Her frozen fingers recall the paralysis of the legs of the protagonist of the same name in Maron's 1988 novel, *Die Überläuferin*, who wakes up paralyzed in bed one morning. They also call to mind the "Kontraktur und Anästhesie" (contracture and anaesthesia) of the limbs suffered by Bertha Pappenheim (Breuer and Freud, 1997, p. 44), whom Josef Breuer treated for hysteria under the code-name Anna O. Polkowski finds herself unable to control her actions once she begins to collaborate with Beerenbaum. Instead, her body takes over, as it expresses the memories of conflicts in the past as they are brought to the surface by her present interaction.



In *Der Mann Moses (Moses and Monotheism)* Freud describes the hysteric as a patient who has suffered a “sexuell[e] Verführung” (sexual seduction) which she recreates in later life by attempting “immer wieder solche Angriffe zu provozieren” (to provoke such attacks again and again; Freud, 1974, p. 524). In Freud’s argument, the reproduction of the original trauma is a compulsive symptom, not desired by the survivor but an unconscious after-effect of the trauma itself. Freud and his peers observed the women known as hysterics compulsively replaying past events in the gestures of their bodies, and they believed that these symptoms could be removed by hypnosis, in which patients were encouraged to take on and perform the suggestions of their doctor. Through his work with Breuer, Freud would come to replace hypnosis with the psychoanalytic talking cure. However, at its origins, both hysteria and its early, hypnotic cure were defined by performances of reproduction and mimicry.

Taking her cue from the centrality of the mimicry in theories of the traumatized psyche, Ruth Leys has recently employed the term “mimesis” to class together various theories of trauma and its treatment in psychoanalysis. In the theories that Leys classifies as “mimetic,” conscious or verbal reactions to traumatic events are viewed as subordinated to psychic or compulsive effects. For instance, in Cathy Caruth’s literary analysis, the victims of traumatic events are unable to process these events as they happen, or to verbalize their trauma in retrospect, and thus are fated to act it out in compulsive repetitions. Also falling within the mimetic model was the hypnosis that Freud learnt from Charcot, in which analyst and analyzand collaborate to recreate events of the past until the trauma has been recognized as part of the analyzand’s conscious world.

Polkowski’s collaboration with Beerenbaum brings to expression affects from the past, including her distress at her father’s neglect, her desire for rebellion, and the murderous wishes that she finally harboured against him. In this way, her collaboration mimes the patterns of childhood, of enmity and attempted rapprochement to the father. Meanwhile, the novel shows Polkowski exhibiting one of the central behaviors of the hysteric as mimic, as she finds herself unable to resist a compulsive mimicry of Beerenbaum during her time in his study. When she first meets Beerenbaum, she suspects him of wishing to employ her as the “Spiegel [...] für seine Spiegelfechtereien” (the mirror for his simulation games; Maron, 1991, p. 30). Returning home from her early working sessions for him, she has the impulse to look in a mirror, “und zu prüfen, ob ich mir noch ähnlich sah oder ob ich mich der Geisterwelt der Stillen Zeile [...] anverwandelt hatte” (and to check if I still looked like myself, or if I had [...] metamorphosed to conform to the ghost-world of Silent Close; *ibid.*, p. 64). Polkowski expresses

anxiety here with regard to a propensity that she has, to take on the qualities of others around her.

Indeed, mimetic compulsions characterize Polkowski's behavior even before she meets Beerenbaum. Early in the narrative she diagnoses herself with a "Verhaltensstörung" (behavioral disorder; *ibid.*, p. 26), in which "Symptome männlichen Alters" (symptoms of old age in men; *ibid.*, p. 15) provoke reactions of disgust in her. Struggling with this disgust, Polkowski finds that she must master an urge to mimic their voices: 'Selbst wenn sein Verursacher mir fremd war und der Ton nicht mir galt, mußte ich mich beherrschen, um ihn nicht in kindischer Manier nachzuäffen' (even when I didn't know its source and the tone wasn't directed at me, I had to master myself and not ape it in a childish way; *ibid.*, p. 16). On occasion her compulsion gets the better of Polkowski; for instance, she recalls herself unwillingly mimicking "papageienhaft" (like a parrot; *ibid.*, p. 17) the voice of an elderly man on the tram who is nagging his wife. This nauseated, involuntary mimicry of older men worsens as Polkowski begins to work for Beerenbaum. When her father's pro-Party discourse, once so frustrating and injurious to her, makes a return in Beerenbaum's dictations, Polkowski is overcome by a "Schwindel, der mich glauben machte, ich hätte das alles schon einmal erlebt" (vertigo that made me think I had experienced this all before; *ibid.*, p. 153), and, to the surprise of both characters, she is able to prompt Beerenbaum's words before he forms them. This uncanny parroting act, in which Polkowski can predict Beerenbaum's words before they leave his mouth, enacts a strange reverse mimesis; moreover the verbatim repetition of words from her painful past has a psychoanalytic resonance. It recalls Caruth's description of the breakthrough analytic moment, in which the traumatic event makes a "literal return [...] against the will of the one it inhabits" (Caruth, 1995, p. 5). In Maron's novel, the past returns word for word into the narrative present, and the effect on her protagonist is dramatic.

Rendered anxious by her involuntary eruptions, Polkowski begins to suspect Beerenbaum of deliberately provoking her reactions to him. This is because "jedemal, nachdem ich mich so unbeherrscht gebärdet hatte, diktierte er mir Sätze, die jene, um derentwillen ich gestöhnt hatte, an Scheußlichkeit noch übertrafen" (every time I revealed myself in such an unmastered fashion, he would go on to dictate sentences whose atrociousness vastly outdid the ones about which I had just been groaning; Maron, 1991, p. 59). If Polkowski is right, and if Beerenbaum is deliberately provoking her symptoms of groaning, paralysis, and mimicry, he is adopting a sinister version of the role of analyst, the figure of power and knowledge who is there to draw out the patient's

re-enactment of the past and thereby cure her of it. The success of such a cure remains in question, as Polkowski's symptoms of compulsive mimesis continue through to the final sitting of the collaboration, in which she finds herself mimicking Beerenbaum's facial expressions:

Während ich die selbstgefällige Reminiszenz in seinem Mienenspiel verfolgte, spürte ich plötzlich, wie ich ihn absichtslos nachahmte, wie ich meine Mundwinkel abwärts zog, die Brauen hob, die Stirn in mißtrauische Falten schob, und als eine scheinbar notwendige Folge solcher Maske vollzog etwas in mir diesen Ausdruck nach.

(As I followed the self-promoting reminiscence that played out in Beerenbaum's facial expressions, I suddenly sensed how I was unintentionally mimicking him, how I was turning down the edges of my mouth, raising my brows, frowning my forehead into mistrustful folds, and as an apparently necessary result of this mask, something in me reproduced his expression in my own; *ibid.*, pp. 202–3.)

Polkowski describes this scene of imitation as a *notwendige Folge*, an unwilling but inevitable result of the collaboration with Beerenbaum, as part of which his face that she is looking at reproduces itself in her own features. The past that returns to Polkowski as she works in Beerenbaum's *Arbeitszimmer* produces a hysterical counterpoint to the transcription of the memoirs. The words that she emits without meaning to, and the blocking movements that her body performs as she attempts to type the memoirs, seem to enact an ethical objection to their content. On the other hand, readers follow a plot in which Polkowski continues to sit at Beerenbaum's typewriter and transcribe the words that the representative of the dictatorship dictates to her. In her acts of mimicry, this East German copyist may have been able to carry over some of the mimetic power of *Bartleby*, to spread unease in the workplace in which he refuses to participate. But unlike *Bartleby*, Polkowski abandons first her workplace where she could have had such an influence, and thereafter abandons her own attempt at withdrawal. Instead, and apparently out of her own control, she finds herself copying down the words that Beerenbaum dictates, and mimicking his gestures and expressions, in the ultimate mimetic act of the novel, namely the compulsive transcription of her enemy's memoirs.

## Hysteria and Holocaust? The traumatized victims of communism

Polkowski's appearance as a traumatized sufferer of hysteria has delicate implications with regard to events of the twentieth century more broadly in Germany. In Alison Lewis's reading, Polkowski gives voice to the "victims of communism" (Lewis, 2002a, p. 85). Indeed, when Beerenbaum reaches the point in his memoirs where he makes his own claim to victimhood as an exile during the Nazi era, Polkowski rebels by inserting the phrase into his memoirs, "Sibirien liegt bei Ravensbrück" (Siberia is close to Ravensbrück; Maron, 1991, p. 142). This is both a rejection of Beerenbaum's self-declared victimhood, and a topographical distortion that compares the labor camps of Stalinism with Ravensbrück, the Nazi labor camp for women. As Karina Berger and Stuart Taberner argue, the suffering of German nationals during the Holocaust and after requires particularly careful representation (cf. Berger and Taberner, 2009). The question is also central to the ongoing historical debate about the status of the GDR as having been "totalitarian," a word that Maron herself has used to describe it (e.g. Maron, 2000b, p. 41).

Two philosophers who have written on the definition of totalitarianism, Hannah Arendt and Slavoj Žižek—though their theories stem from distinct ideological traditions—would both disagree with the description of the GDR as "totalitarian." Žižek has argued that the term "totalitarianism" works as an "antioxidant [...], whose function throughout its career was to tame free radicals" (Žižek, 2001, p. 1). In Žižek's argument, the term becomes an easy shorthand term with which liberal and right-wing political commentary is able to designate an evil communist "other," whose faults are not analyzed but instrumentalized to legitimate the self-view of "liberal-democratic hegemony" as the only just state organization possible (ibid., p. 3). Žižek has also lamented the elevation of Arendt, the theorist of totalitarianism whose comparison of Hitler and Stalin formed the cornerstone of her influential theory of the state, to an "untouchable authority" of recent cultural studies (ibid., p. 2). Arendt was excluded from discussions of the SED's dictatorship among the German Left during the years of the GDR due to her popularity with conservative theorists of the Cold War. This popularity was the result of her "equation of Stalinist Communism with National Socialism" (Hell, 2006, p. 76), an equation that was, for the Left in both East and West, uncomfortably accurate in certain eras, but not applicable to the dictatorship for the duration of the GDR. In Žižek's view,

Arendt's comeback after 1990 has signaled a continuation in cultural theory of the old Cold War opposition between a liberal West and a "totalitarian" East, to the detriment of genuinely radical criticism.

Yet a close reading shows that not even Arendt would have classed the GDR as a totalitarian state. Her concept of totalitarianism was based on the practices of Hitler's regime, and Stalin's purges and death camps in the Soviet Union. The murderous excesses of these regimes are aligned in Arendt's work under the umbrella term of totalitarianism. However, there are important distinctions between these totalitarian regimes and the GDR, especially in its liberal later decades, distinctions that are effectively illustrated by Arendt's definition of a totalitarian secret police. The secret police forces of Hitler's Nazism and Stalin's terror, to which Arendt turns her attention in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, share some characteristics with the Stasi: all three forces were responsible for finding enemies within their own population and for questioning them even though they were already condemned, in a practical sense, by the very fact of being questioned. As Arendt notes, all three forces also recruited civilians for "voluntary espionage" (Arendt, 1994, p. 129).

However, for Arendt, the totalitarian secret police are also agents of mass murder. They are responsible in her account for killing critical citizens and erasing all traces of them from memory (cf. *ibid.*, p. 129). This contrasts with the Stasi's mission, to carry out the control and surveillance of the *lives* of others, most of which were not ended by murder at the hands of state authorities. The other crucial difference between Arendt's totalitarian secret police and the Stasi is that the former have no decisive role in the government of the state. Theirs is the role of executioner, and as such they are always answerable to the will of the Leader, a sovereign decision-maker who from time to time founds new, duplicate secret police forces, in order to execute decisions arbitrarily and without opposition at any time (cf. *ibid.*, pp. 123–4). There is no record of a replicate Stasi organization being founded in the GDR; indeed the tenure of Erich Mielke, head of the Stasi, was longer than that of either Ulbricht or Honecker, the GDR's longest-lasting leaders. Above all, however repressive its prison and surveillance organs, and though it maintained the death penalty for certain crimes and the order to shoot those crossing its border illegally, the GDR and its secret police were not involved in murder on the mass scale perpetrated in Nazi Germany or the USSR under Stalin.

Despite these historical differences, the use of the term "totalitarianism" with regard to the GDR remains current in post-socialist historical research. Mary Fulbrook has challenged its currency, by demonstrating that many were able

to come to terms with the limitations of later GDR society and lead “perfectly ordinary lives,” a fact overlooked by studies that focus exclusively on the elements of “power, repression and fear” in the GDR (Fulbrook, 2005, p. 10). On the other hand, Hubertus Knabe has argued in multiple speeches and publications that the citizens of the GDR were permanently subjected to repression in most areas of their lives. The title of his 2007 monograph, *Die Täter sind unter uns* (*The Perpetrators Are Among Us*), adapts that of the first feature film made in Germany after the Second World War ended, *Die Mörder sind unter uns* (*The Murderers Are Among Us*; Wolfgang Staudte, 1946). Though *murderer* is replaced in Knabe’s book title by the more fluid assignation of *perpetrator*, the comparison between the two regimes resounds clearly. The comparison also extends into certain accounts of post-unification German cinema, with the historian Timothy Garton Ash analyzing *Das Leben der Anderen* in terms of a “banality of evil” (Garton Ash, 2007, unpaginated), thus comparing the actions of the spy in Donnermarck’s film with Arendt’s account of Adolf Eichmann, head of the Nazi *Judenreferat* that oversaw the deportation and murder of millions of Jewish people.

Such a comparison, between the GDR and the Nazi regime, can also be identified in the street scenes in *Die Überläuferin*, where an earlier incarnation of Polkowski chances upon a mass of “eng nebeneinander liegender Menschen” (people lying closely alongside one another) in a camp-like Eberswalder Straße that is fenced in by a wall and by barbed wire (Maron, 1988, p. 192). This Polkowski also experiences “unbeherrschte [...] und verwirrende [...] Zusammenbrüche” (uncontrolled and confusing breakdowns; *ibid.*, p. 140) that prevent her from visiting train stations, a paradigmatic setting of traumatic impact taken here to the limit of cliché. Since the genocide carried out under the Nazis has been categorized as a trauma unmatched by any other, its use in the Polkowski novels is an expedient manner by which Maron can emphasize the oppressive aspects of the GDR. The mere mention of certain Holocaust tropes such as barbed wire or the names of famous camps would prompt readers to link the different German dictatorships under a single sign of violence.

Yet to employ metaphors of the Holocaust for the portrayal of its successor state exposes authors such as Maron to the risk of historical inaccuracy, and even the co-option of the trauma of others to justify a particular stance towards the GDR. Andrew Plowman’s reading of Maron’s family biography *Pawels Briefe* (*Pavel’s Letters*) has shown how Maron “mobilizes the story of [her] grandfather, and in its train her own autobiographical act, in defence of her tarnished reputation” (Plowman, 2003, p. 233). Maron’s autobiographical voice certainly

identifies itself with the grandfather figure, whose suffering under Hitler meant that he would never have supported the “nächste [...] Diktatur” (next dictatorship; Maron, 1999, p. 181). Her identification with the grandfather enables the granddaughter to position herself as an all-out critic of the East German state, which is not entirely accurate. The delicate balancing of portraying victimhood in different German contexts is also attested by *Tanz am Kanal*, in which Gabriela von Haßlau is so grotesquely victimized that its author, Kerstin Hensel appears to be deliberately thematizing the blurred margins between different regimes in German cultural memory. In the first instance, Gabriela's rape practically forms a motif in the novel, as it is repeatedly threatened or enacted. The first rape, evidence of which her father is forced to cover up, is not an isolated event but part of a wider logic of sexual violence. Non-consensual sex is always already there, in her violin teacher's exciting but abusive caresses, in the threat of being “gefickt” (fucked) by Katka's brother (Hensel, 1994, p. 28) and by her father's pulling of her plait when he teaches her to speak. During the rape in the park Gabriela's hair is also plaited and pulled, and Gabriela is whipped with it just as her father once whipped Samuel, his wife's lover and a figure of positive identification for Gabriela.

The excessive repetition of sexual aggression in Hensel's novel does not have to function as a recollection of the Holocaust. It might instead hold within it the memory of the mass sexual violence that was perpetrated against German women during the Soviet occupation of war-torn Berlin. The historian Norman Naimark estimates that the invading Red Army subjected up to two million women and girls as young as ten to rape at least once between 1945 and 1949 (Naimark, 1997, p. 133). Though these events were only euphemistically referenced in official discourse, they were registered deeply in the memory of East German women, both as survivors and as their female descendants. On the other hand, the cutting, scarring, and grafting that are committed upon Gabriela during and after her rape, forming a kind of “tattoo” on her forearm, evoke by metonymy the mass murder of the Nazis' victims at Auschwitz, who were tattooed with a prisoner number upon entry to the camp in which many of them would die. Yet this reappearance of the tattoo on the Stasi victim's arm is not an uncritical one. Instead, the overdetermination of the form and the resonances of Gabriela's victimization seem to trouble historical boundaries deliberately. As Astrid Köhler has noted, Hensel's work can be defined by its commitment to revealing a “historischen Kontinuum ‘Irrsinn des Alltags’” (historical continuum of “everyday madness”; Köhler, 2007, p. 189), a senselessness in the plot events that befall her characters, and which seem to reach



beyond the borders of particular regimes to signify a wider field of experience whose exaggerated presentation signifies a critical distance from any naive comparisons.

In her work, Leys advises caution when evoking the Holocaust as a metaphor for other traumatic histories. In particular, she singles out Caruth's trauma theory for its "commitment to making victimhood unlocatable in any particular person or place, thereby permitting it to migrate or spread contagiously to others" (Leys, 2000, p. 296). In its own controversial move, Leys's critique of Caruth shows how the latter's theory of trauma as a contagion could even allow the Nazis to become victims of their own murderous acts, through the perpetrator's psychic "catching" of the suffering of his or her victim. In East German writing after the GDR, the trauma of the Holocaust also possesses the qualities of a contagion, as it goes into transit between different eras and subjects with disturbing effects. However, within *Stille Zeile Sechs* Maron arguably shows an awareness of this problematic, as she allows Beerenbaum to invoke the Holocaust as a justification for his own crimes. Beerenbaum's poem for Grete, his late wife, refers to the beauty of her "goldenes Haar" (golden hair; Maron, 1991, p. 150), which for many readers would carry a disturbing echo of Celan's Holocaust poem "Todesfuge" (Death Fugue), in which the golden hair of Margarete, to whom the German concentration camp guard writes home, is contrasted with the ashen hair of the Holocaust victim Sulamith (Celan, 1960, p. 39). The Celan reference is further suggested by the flowers with which Beerenbaum greets Grete at their moment of reunion after the war, "mit einem großen Strauß Margariten" (with a large bunch of marguerite daisies; Maron, 1991, p. 151). These references are more folded into Maron's plot than were Hensel's more explicit evocations, yet their presence in the self-serving discourse of the novel's antagonist signals that Maron is not invoking the Holocaust naively.

As Polkowski notes in her narrative, Beerenbaum exploits Grete's victimhood as a communist prisoner of the camps to sidestep responsibility for his crimes in the more recent past. One of Germany's new perpetrators, Beerenbaum is shown to evoke the trauma-tropes of the Shoah to evade responsibility for his own crimes. On the other hand, even as she expresses criticism of this co-optation, Polkowski also acts out her traumatized victimhood, a hysterical response to Beerenbaum that risks eliding her own responsibility. For even in her self-proclaimed victimhood, Polkowski finds herself committing acts that cast serious doubt on her ethical position. Above all, her regular visits to Beerenbaum's home to type up his memoirs undercut the "victimhood" reading. Her hands channel the voice of the Party functionary onto the page and into



the pages of history, and this perverse ventriloquism of the discourse of power enslaves her within the very structures against which she wishes to protest.

### The break for sovereign subjectivity

In her histories of trauma, Ruth Leys also traces a school of thought that rejects the notion of a subject rehearsing her suffering in “mimetic” repetitions that she can neither control nor activate for a process of healing. This “anti-mimetic” school envisages a human subject who is harmed by an event, yet capable of remaining a sovereign spectator both of the event and of its subsequent analysis, and thereby retain some freedom from the former’s traumatizing power. For instance, in his more recent work, Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen maintains that Charcot and Freud’s hysterical patients were not genuinely hypnotized, but instead involved in a “*folie-à-deux*” between patient and analyst (Borch-Jacobsen and Brick, 1996, p. 41), a performance of traumatic events that could take place on a conscious and even “dramaturgical” level (Leys, 2000, p. 166). Such model of conscious performance sits in an illuminating relation with an ambition that Polkowski expresses in *Stille Zeile Sechs*, to maintain control of herself within the collaborative relationship, that strange analytic session in which the affects of her past take such powerful expression.

Polkowski’s withdrawal from her research post is a strike for intellectual independence. The desire for such independence continues into her collaboration with Beerenbaum, wherein she is angered by the suspicion that her employer wishes “außer meinen Händen auch noch meinen Kopf in seine Dienste zu stellen” (to have in his service not just my hands but also my head; Maron, 1991, p. 62). As Katie Jones argues in her recent comparison of the novel with French author Marie Darrieussecq’s 1996 work *Pig Tales*, one of Polkowski’s initial ambitions in the novel is “to separate mind and body; she values what is uniquely human in herself—her capacity for abstract thought” (Jones, 2011, p. 159). Polkowski does indeed wish to split her mind from her body, in a Cartesian effort to gain sovereignty over herself even while her labor power is being co-opted for collaborative purposes. The compatibility of this Cartesian wish with the anti-mimetic school that Leys identifies is illustrated by an ambition that Polkowski holds, to practice the “Blick eines Naturforschers” (gaze of a scientist) in relation to Beerenbaum (Maron, 1991, p. 122). She wishes to preserve control by maintaining neutral spectatorship over the working relationship. Thus, when she begins work for Beerenbaum, Polkowski first sees

herself as a “Spion [...] wie jemand, der einen perfekten Mord plante und vorher sein Opfer akribisch studierte” (spy [...] like somebody who was planning the perfect murder and painstakingly studying his victim in advance; *ibid.*, p. 77). This espionage fantasy was inaugurated in the café scenes where Polkowski first encountered Beerenbaum. The café was a viewing point from which she had often observed unwitting passers-by: “In jedem Frühling suchte ich neugierig nach Veränderungen, die sich an meinen heimlichen Bekannten entdecken ließen” (each spring I curiously sought out the changes that I could observe in my secret acquaintances; *ibid.*, p. 12). In her café, Polkowski plays with a fantasy of amateur physiognomy, attempting “in den Gesichtszügen und Gesten der Menschen zu lesen” (to read people’s facial expressions and gestures; *ibid.*, p. 25). These observations allow her to glean information about pregnancies and love affairs, in a mode of research unlike that in her former role at the historical institute, which allows her to read the intimate details of living bodies.

Having rehearsed this mode of observation, when Polkowski attempts to resist the pull of her encounter with Beerenbaum, she aims to summon a view of herself as a scientific observer of their encounters: “Ich muss wie ein Naturforscher sein [...] mir von scharfen Steinen die Haut aufreißen lassen, tagelang ruhig in heißem Sand liegen, ohne mich als das Opfer des Löwen zu fühlen” (I have to be like a scientist [...] allow my skin to be torn open by sharp stones, lie calmly for days in hot sand without feeling like a victim of the lion; *ibid.*, p. 147). This is a fantasy of the neutrality such as a scientist might practice as she or he watches a lion devour its prey. Polkowski wishes to observe dispassionately as Beerenbaum dictates his memoirs, to maintain a thick psychic skin, and thus remain in control of herself and the collaborative relationship. However, she is unable to attain the level of neutrality to which she aspires. She ends the collaborative relationship with a verbal and, in one version of the event, a physical assault on her enemy.

At the end of their working relationship, Polkowski is overcome by rage and attacks Beerenbaum. The Polkowski of the first-person narrative splits off here from a third-person fantasy Polkowski who balls one fist, grasps Beerenbaum’s neck with her other hand, and presses his throat closed with her fingers. Soon after the attack Beerenbaum suffers a heart attack and is taken to hospital, where he later dies. Having been Beerenbaum’s “rechte Hand” (right hand; *ibid.*, p. 104), this attack, in German an *Angriff*, with its etymological associations of manual gripping or grasping, is Polkowski’s attempt to take power back into her own hands. Moreover, in line with her desire for independence, the moment of the attack is introduced by a sense of spectatorial sovereignty, whereby just

before it, she feels “ein Gefühl, das jeder Beobachter in mir jetzt auch vermutet hatte” (a feeling that every observer within me had also expected; *ibid.*, p. 203). Polkowski as narrator reports the attack with a clarity of recollection: “Ich weiß es so genau, als hätte ich diese Minuten zweifach erlebt, als Zuschauerin und als Akteurin” (I know it so precisely, as if I had experienced these minutes doubly, as an observer and as an actor; *ibid.*, p. 204). Thus, at the novel’s peripeteia, the character splits into two selves, one who acts and one who looks on and is able to observe her acting self.

In an article in 2010, I considered whether this narrative split between the first-person and the third-person Polkowski might map onto Butler’s post-Hegelian reading of the “unglückliche, in sich entzweite Bewußtsein” (unhappy, divided consciousness; Hegel, 1952, p. 158; cf. Ring, 2010a, pp. 257–8), an often overlooked stage in Hegel’s theory of recognition in which the liberated bondsman doubles back on his liberation in order to submit to the norms of shared society. In Butler’s reading of Hegel, this re-stitching into the social order necessitates a “dual structuring of the subject” (Butler, 1995, p. 184), whereby an essential, unchanging part of the self takes up a spectatorial position over another part that is changeable, self-contradicting, and susceptible to “bodily sensation” (*ibid.*, p. 184).

In the attack, Polkowski is attempting to liberate herself from an oppressive patriarchy, and her bodily susceptibility to submitting to it. Thus, the split in narrative voice that accompanies the event allows Polkowski as narrator to observe her third-person self as she commits an attack that does not allow itself to be prevented by empathy with her victim:

Während ich noch schwankte [...] sah ich, daß Rosalind sich schon entschieden hatte. Die kleinen gesträubten Haare auf den Unterarmen und der konzentrierte, gegen Mitleid weckende Signale verschlossene Blick kündigten den Angriff an.

(While I was still dithering [...], I saw that Rosalind had already reached her decision. The little hairs standing up on her forearms and the concentrated gaze that shut out all triggers of sympathy, these announced the coming attack; Maron, 1991, p. 205.)

The anger that brings on the attack is reflected in the corporeal effect of the hairs on Polkowski’s arms standing erect like those of an angry cat. One part of Polkowski is in sovereign control: transformed by her decisive self-confidence, the third-person Polkowski also strikes a regal pose, in which she “thronte [...] wie eine Rächegöttin hinter der Schreibmaschine: (she sat enthroned [...] like

a goddess of vengeance behind the typewriter; *ibid.*, p. 205). The other part of her remains subject, however, to a hatred for Beerenbaum that extends to irresistible corporeal reactions, demonstrating that the “bodily subjection” of Butler’s Hegelian proposition is difficult if not impossible to escape (Butler, 1995, p. 173). The first-person Polkowski reports just before the attack: “Seine anmaßende Zufriedenheit, betont durch die Schwäche, die ihm anzusehen war, reizte mich bis aufs Blut” (His supercilious satisfaction, which was highlighted by his visible weakness, aggravated me to my very blood; Maron, 1991, p. 203). Her sovereign, catlike resistance becomes susceptible here to the state of mind and body of her enemy-employer. In a contagion evocative of the suggestibility of Charcot’s hysterics, Beerenbaum’s self-satisfied presentation and concurrent weakness have combined to provoke an attack that represents more symptomatic, corporeal reaction than sovereign action.

Polkowski and Beerenbaum meet one final time, when Polkowski visits him in hospital after the attack and his resulting collapse, and shortly before his death. There, the apparently incapacitated Beerenbaum nonetheless manages to reach out his paralyzed hand to assault Polkowski: “wie eine weißhäutige Echse schoß sie hervor unter der Decke und sprang mir mit aufgerissenem Maul an die Brust” (like a white-skinned lizard, it shot out from under the covers and jumped at my breast with its maw wide open; *ibid.*, p. 164). This assault forms a traumatic image in Polkowski’s mind that returns several times throughout the novel’s framing narrative, which narrates her attendance at Beerenbaum’s funeral. In this way, the battle for sovereignty seems even to continue after one party’s death. Beerenbaum’s Stasi son Michael approaches Polkowski in the cemetery and hand-delivers a parcel to her, which presumably contains the memoirs that she has transcribed for Beerenbaum, though its exact contents are not revealed. The final words of the novel show her lack of resolve regarding what to do with the memoirs now that they are in her keeping: “Ich werde es nicht öffnen. Ich werde es in die nächste Mülltonne werfen. Ich werde es zwischen den Papierbergen im unteren Fach meines Bücherregals begraben” (I will not open it. I will throw it in the next rubbish bin. I will bury it at the bottom of my bookshelf; *ibid.*, p. 219). Polkowski’s project was to leave her work in historical research, and, through her relationship to Beerenbaum, to dispose of the psychic archive of her personal-political history. If she opts, however, to take the memoirs home with her, Polkowski will return, as Leisten argues, to her “erlernten Beruf der Archivarin” (vocation as an archivist; Leisten, 2002, p. 153). If she chooses archival preservation over disposal, Polkowski risks allowing the past to persist in some form, in her keeping. For

even if it sits at the very bottom of her bookshelf, this object will accompany her into the future.

The kind of collaboration in which the characters of Beerenbaum and his contemporary Fritz Polkowski engage is motivated by ideological agreement with the regime. In Polkowski's case, however, collaboration takes place with a body of power with which she cannot agree and against which she has been attempting to rebel since childhood. After she has freed herself from her daily work at the research institute, the collaboration is not the result of dire economic need. Nor is she coerced into the position of scribe to her political enemy. Instead, she is motivated by an emotional bond that she maintains towards a father long dead, but whom she has neither reconciled herself with nor has she let go. In its depiction of this collaboration, with its multiple intertextual references to some of the most complex collaborations in literary modernism, Maron's text sets out a number of variations on the Althusserian scene of "interpellation" (Althusser, 1984, p. 48). Althusser theorized a subjectivity that is called into being via the voice of a powerful authority, normally a representative of state power, who hails the subject in a manner that activates the psychic bonds of childhood and causes it to turn towards its own subjection, as if compelled by some primary guilt. This scene is rendered anew in Maron's novel, in whose plot a representative of the state becomes closely intertwined with the fantasy of familial authority, producing a psycho-social dynamic in which the lead character cannot help but render herself guilty in the regime against which she had wished to rebel.

Moreover, when the novel is set in dialogue with other works of East German literature after unification, such as those by Thomas Brussig, Kurt Drawert, Kerstin Hensel, and Erich Loest, the image becomes even clearer of the GDR as a kind of political family, one that maintained certain patterns of connection and of power that are core to the patriarchal family, in spite of the GDR's projects for gender equality and social transformation. In these works, collaboration takes place in relation to an authority that is both familial and pertaining to the state. Moreover, from these difficult bonds, there arise certain states of trauma that draw problematically upon literary and theoretical tropes of Holocaust victimhood. The hysterical collapse of Maron's lead character is the text's most problematic aspect, deflecting as it does a certain responsibility for collaboration away from a figure whose involuntary symptoms makes her appear as its victim. On the other hand, Polkowski is motivated all the time by her wish to take responsibility for the conditions of her own life. As such, the final event of Maron's collaboration, her attack on her employer, figures as a final

attempt to free herself from collaboration. Yet even this final strike does not lead to a recovery of sovereign selfhood. As such, the novel leaves its readers with a fundamental problem: as long as the subject remains embedded in her societal and psychic contexts, sovereignty may well remain out of reach, even for the most reluctant collaborator.

## Notes

- 1 Leo Marx also comments on the employer's view of Bartleby as an object acquired for his outfit, in "Melville's Parable of the Walls" (Marx, 2002, p. 244). However, this Marx finds that the tale encourages an overall positive view of the employer and treats the character of Bartleby, whom he views as a self-critical version of the author himself, with "severity" (ibid., p. 256).

## Mapping the Topography of Surveillance in Wolfgang Hilbig's "*Ich*" and Kerstin Hensel's *Tanz am Kanal*

Wolfgang Hilbig's "*Ich*" ("I", 1993) was one of the most celebrated literary works of German unification. Its virtuosic prose delivered an account of the Stasi's infiltration of the literary underground, from the narrative perspective of an aspiring writer who is blackmailed into spying for the Stasi. Like Rosalind Polkowski in *Stille Zeile Sechs*, Hilbig's narrator struggles to operate with independent self-definition under the power of the East German state. Yet even more so than Polkowski, this surveilled subject-turned-collaborator finds that body of power impossible to escape; instead he cannot help but collaborate with the very institutions that are tormenting and blackmailing him. Some of the novel's success may indeed have lain with the fact that, as Alison Lewis has argued, "more East Germans were able to recognize themselves and their experiences in the story of the perpetrator than in the narrative of the secret police victim" (Lewis, 2002b, p. 112). Yet beyond its narrative of the individual spy, Hilbig's novel is compelling for its depiction of a *whole structure* of surveillance, mapping out as it does the techniques of coercion and observation that the Stasi operated across the GDR in its entirety. In this way, Hilbig's successful novel made it possible to track not only the subjective effects but also the systemic techniques, those structural, collective, and spatial practices through which the Stasi's particular regime rendered collaboration an apparent inevitability, even by those who had also been its victims.

Unlike his lead character, Hilbig was only ever a victim of the Stasi. Thus, in writing "*Ich*", the author showed remarkable sympathy with the unofficial members of an organization that had tormented him for decades. His text also ran counter to the simplistic press and public discourses that arose around 1990 in response to the revelation of unofficial collaboration in the GDR. As indicated by the quotation marks that call its pronominal title into question,

identity in this novel is highly complex from the start. Though its narrator is initially introduced as “W.” or “M.W.,” he is soon reintroduced as a character in a third-person narrative, known by the Stasi code-name “Cambert,” and he also appears throughout the text under the Kafkaesque cipher, C. These shifting names betray the vexed agency, or indeed agencies, with which Hilbig’s collaborating protagonist struggles, in a system of espionage and disguise that effectively obscures any true identity or affiliation. Further obscuration is effected by a set of events and movements in the novel that appear to take place *before* W. The prefix “vor” (fore-) punctuates the novel to an obsessive degree, and in the first part of the chapter I allow myself to be led by Hilbig’s deliberately compulsive reuse of it, in his detailed observations of a spy who is always kept behind others, in the dark, and never fully in control. In order to reconstruct in literary form the Stasi’s unprecedented espionage network, Hilbig draws on a number of literary and philosophical intertexts that prefigure the systemic structures through which mass collaboration with the Stasi was achieved. The haunting imagery of late Romanticism, with its shadows, mirrors, and hostile Doppelgänger, provides a haunting visual backdrop for imagining the world of the IMs, that “Schattenarmee” (army of shadows; Müller-Enbergs, 2008a, p. 3) whose invisible operations made possible the work of the Stasi’s official ranks. As well as mobilizing this Romantic visual canon, Hilbig also succeeds in grappling in his novel with the conceptualizations of Stasi surveillance as “Kafkaesque” or “Panoptic,” the latter of which Paul Cooke has visited in his own reading of *Ich*, and upon which I build here with reference to Foucault’s last lectures on governmentality. Foucault wrote of the modes of modern governmentality that he studied that power in modernity must be understood as “a machine in which everyone is caught, those who exercise power just as much as those over whom it is exercised” (Foucault, 1980, p. 156). Hilbig concurred with this claim, and his most celebrated novel accordingly captures the Stasi spy in a saturated ecology of power, in which some of the most ghastly dreams of the twentieth century were fulfilled.

One of the most striking techniques that Hilbig adopts for capturing the Stasi’s success is his virtuosic depiction of 1980s East Berlin as a city space through which embattled characters must attempt to move without overview of their situation. Hilbig’s representation of the surveilled city makes vivid the invidious functioning of a system that is also depicted in Kerstin Hensel’s short novel published just a few months after *Ich*, *Tanz am Kanal (Dance on the Canal)*. In Chapter 1, we saw how Hensel’s narrator in this text slips into the traumatized victimhood of the Stasi collaborator as hysteric. There are striking



parallels between Gabriela von Haßlau's victimization and that of Hilbig's tortured spy, both of whom are survivors of rape, and of Stasi *Zersetzung*, the Stasi's measures for breaking apart (*zersetzen*) victims' confidence and social infrastructures that leave them isolated in their own worlds. A shift of attention to the habitat in which Hensel's homeless narrator must reside, moreover, reveals a second parallel between her work and Hilbig's, namely in their accounts of the Stasi's inescapable, psycho-topographic control. Space is not a neutral container for plot and characterization in these works from the very early post-unification years. Instead, urban and interior spaces figure in both texts as forming the subjects who are confined to operating within them. Both in their built architectures and in the uses that are made of them by governmental agencies, such spaces define the possibilities that are available to these subjects; they might provide refuge, or they might cast them into terrifying chases by the authorities, or into the extreme vulnerability of homelessness. As shall become clear here, the resulting dominance of space over character becomes most significant when these works wish to engage with the *agency* that could still be available to the subject of surveillance, and thus imagine the options that subject might yet have for responding to the forces that shape its life.

### The *Vorgang* (process) and the *Lehrgang* (apprenticeship): In the footsteps of Hilbig's reluctant collaborator

Hilbig's novel is set in the GDR's literary underground in the 1980s. By this time, the underground scene was heavily surveilled by a network of unofficial informants, many of them writers themselves. As a result of Stasi blackmail, Hilbig's narrator W. agrees to spy on his fellow authors in this scene, in particular an author code-named "Reader." W., whose initial is perhaps an aspirational abbreviation of writer, is also drawn into the collaboration by the promise of a career as a freelance author. Yet, through his work for the Stasi, W. seems to sabotage not only the authors around him but also his own desires to launch a career in writing and ultimately escape to publish freely in the West. The novel's first section, "Der Vorgang," relates W.'s spying activities and his relationship with his commanding officer, Major Feuerbach. The section's title, which can translate as either The Process, Operation, or Procedure, is derived from the *Operativer Vorgang*, the term used in the Stasi's in-house vocabulary to denote spying operations carried out against suspect individuals. Yet in W.'s

case, his “Vorgang” takes in more than the operative mission with which he is tasked. The novel also depicts an intimate psychological process by which W. is *operated upon* by the East German authorities, with devastating effects for his sense of self and his ability to act in the Stasi-dominated environment.

Hilbig’s fictional plot takes the historical Stasi’s activities to their most complex and disempowering extremes. The author known as “Reader” is revealed to be an IM as well as the object of W.’s surveillance. W.’s commanding officer Feuerbach also reveals that a woman whom W. has been stalking while off-duty is not a student as W. had believed, but a literary editor and Stasi contact in West Berlin. Towards the end of his time in Berlin, W. displeases his superiors and is imprisoned, whereupon Feuerbach rapes W. with a gun. Thus, in spite of his status as IM, W. figures more and more as a victim, and the *Vorgang* of his work for the Stasi descends into a gradual dissolution of his identity. In echo of the procedure by which it is initiated, this dissolution of W.’s sense of self is related through a demonstratively excessive use of the particle “vor” in the novel’s lexicon. The dual spatial and temporal connotations of this modifier produce an excess of events and movements that take place *before* W., either topographically and metaphorically ahead of him, and more often than not, also seemingly prior to his control. In the novel’s first section—a short preamble that prefigures the emplotment of the novel’s longer second and third parts—this prefix is introduced as paradigmatic for the chronically vexed agency of W. as reluctant collaborator. Later in the novel, the significance of the *Gang* (way or walk) that he undertakes in his missions around Stasi-infiltrated East Berlin is then fully articulated, as the *Vorgang* (procedure) of W.’s enforced recruitment gives way to a *Lehrgang* (apprenticeship, or literally “teaching-walk”) that W. undergoes under the tutelage of the sadistic Feuerbach. W. hopes to learn from officer Feuerbach’s appearance of *Souveränität*, a masterly quality that W. would benefit from mimicking if only he could. Yet W. is thwarted in performing the agency that Feuerbach embodies by the psychological torments that have been prepared for him by his Stasi superiors.

A common prefix to German nouns and verbs, “vor” evokes events and movements that are incomplete, yet to occur, or that carry some sense of forewarning or preparation. Its dominance in Hilbig’s text signals that W. lacks the confidence of the present tense. Instead, something is always just around the corner awaiting him, predestining him perhaps, with the effect of reducing his agency to a mere effect of prior decisions. Prefiguring appropriately the events of the novel to follow, the prefix appears repeatedly in its opening two pages, where W.’s first-person narrative gives voice to his “Vorliebe für die sogenannten

kleinen Schritte" (predilection for the so-called baby steps) in his spying operations (Hilbig, 1993, p. 7). No master of the grand gesture, W. instead takes careful steps that he can easily reverse, or those that have very little effect at all. Congruent with this careful disposition, in the first lines of the novel W. muses on the "Vorteile" (privileges) and "Vorzug" (preferment) that he could win if his work as a Stasi operative is successful (ibid., p. 7). In anticipation of such rewards, W.'s narrative explains the conditions that are "vorausgesetzt" (prerequisite) if his intricate spying techniques are to succeed and reminisces upon the excessive "Vorsorge" (care) with which, in his early days as a spy, he committed himself to his tasks (ibid., p. 8).

However, readers soon learn that W.'s meticulous efforts are destined to remain unrewarded. Though he inserts his head inside "die dafür vorgesehenen Öffnungen, Fenster und Türen" (the openings, windows and doors that were there for that purpose; ibid., p. 8), W.'s insights into the lives of his victims and into the operations of the spy organization for which he is working are limited indeed. Moreover, the pervading tense of the preliminary that "vor" evokes reveals how limited W.'s hopes are for a change in these circumstances as the "Reader" operation unfolds. Despite his efforts, W. always remains *vor dem Gesetz* (before the law), stuck in an impasse comparable with that of Kafka's man from the country, who is perpetually deterred from entering the operative center of the law, where its functioning might promise to be understood, even though the guard who blocks his way eventually informs the man that the entryway to that realm is preordained for him alone (Kafka, 1958, p. 156). In resonances with Kafka's terrifying proverb, W.'s preliminary hopefulness is swiftly replaced by the troubling modality of a life preordained by some ineffable power. This is the power that the Stasi holds over W., through operations that are designed for him specifically, and yet always out of his grasp.

W. still has a life that he leads, or tries to lead, apart from the Stasi, as a literary author. Between spying shifts, he finds time to pen literary portraits and sketches that give expression to a different kind of observation. Yet even in this area of his life, W. experiences a sensation of falling behind. He feels that "Reader" "war mir vorneweg, in der Literatur" (was ahead of me in literature; Hilbig, 1993, p. 315). The object of W.'s surveillance is also a rival on the literary scene, one who is always a step ahead of him. That W. never quite accesses the mysterious inner world of the state authorities, nor the inner circles of the literary underground, could make him appear as a victim who bears no responsibility for his actions, like the hysterics of Maron's oeuvre who perform a traumatic subjection to circumstances they do not master. Yet unlike in Maron's

problematic hysteria-images, this problem is itself thematized in Hilbig's text. W. is one among a number of spies in the Stasi's employ who, even years into their service, consider themselves "Neulinge—ein Glauben, mit dem sich eine dürftige, sehr trügerische Hoffnung verbindet" (rookies—a belief that was bound to a vain hope; *ibid.*, p. 9). This vain hope may be that of considering oneself, as a *Neuling*, only the tiniest of cogs in the Stasi's system. If they are just beginning to spy for the Stasi, these newer IMs cannot be accused of having known the true extent of acts that may well have been planned and set in place *before* their involvement. The irony of such a hope becomes clear when W. expresses a sense of suspicion, upon reading one of Officer Feuerbach's reports: "Irgendwann, dachte ich, wird ein solcher Text an die Öffentlichkeit gelangen ... und niemand wird, wieder einmal, etwas davon gewußt haben wollen" (one day, I thought, such a text will reach the eye of the public ... and once again nobody will want to admit any knowledge of it; *ibid.*, p. 23). In a novel published when the Stasi's crimes were being revealed for the first time, Hilbig's narrator foresees the risk that nobody will *want to know*: that they will neither accept responsibility for that which is documented in the Stasi's vast archive nor admit to having known about it, except in the most general terms.

As the irony of W.'s self-view is undercut by his own suspicions, Hilbig reveals a fundamental double-agency to W.'s position as a spy. As an employee of the Stasi, W. is guilty of perpetrating its crimes in invading the privacy of East German citizens, and contributing the information that would lead to their persecution and imprisonment. Moreover, W. appears at times not as a simple IM; he also seems to have the power to hire and fire. He takes the initiative and sets free another spy from his hometown, codenamed Erwin Kurze, deciding to instruct him to perform his own "Dekonstruktion" (decommissioning) and go home to the countryside (*ibid.*, p. 272). Kurze obeys W., seemingly confirming the latter's authority in the organization. Yet all the while that he is working in this apparently well-established role, W. is also being observed and tormented, at first by his Stasi bosses in his hometown of A., and subsequently by Major Feuerbach and even by his own object of surveillance, "Reader", in Berlin. Through W.'s characterization, Hilbig presents a spy who is not only guilty or only innocent, but both of these at once, a kind of a double-agent who is both subject of and subjected to the Stasi's operations. In fact, most of the characters of "*Ich*" appear as double-agents in some way: "Reader" is a dissident author who also spies; W.'s landlady Frau Falbe is a lover who also plays a mother to him; Feuerbach is a commander who befriends his colleagues only to rape them with his regulation weapon. By joining forces with these agents, W. enters into a

milieu of spies spying on spies, and doubles who multiply into further doubles of themselves.

It is over the course of his work for officer Feuerbach that W's "Vorgang"—as preliminary process—develops into a sustained "Lehrgang," an apprenticeship in the art of operative agency. Feuerbach directs W's missions in Berlin, and the latter must report to him regularly in a café, producing written spy files and giving an account of his activities during his shifts. Feuerbach also regularly enters W's apartment (whether or not W. is there) to read the spy reports and drafts of literary works, texts of quite different genres that sit, at least at first, in separate piles on W's desk. Despite these intrusions, W. maintains a counter-intuitive loyalty to Feuerbach, one that is revealed as dangerous when W. hears the story of Feuerbach raping his former friend Harry Falbe, and reacts with disbelief, wondering if this report could really be concerned with "den eleganten Zyniker Feuerbach, der alles mit spitzen Fingern anfaßte?" (the elegant cynic Feuerbach, who would only touch anything with his fingertips; *ibid.*, p. 217). When Feuerbach then goes on to rape W. in the same way, the element of loyalty to Feuerbach is still, extraordinarily, present. W. justifies the fact that he did not cry out for help during the rape by means of the maxim, "Gegen einen betrunkenen Freund durfte man niemand zu Hilfe rufen, selbst wenn es auf Leben und Tod ging" (you don't cry out against a drunken friend, even if it's a case of life and death; *ibid.*, p. 366). After the rape, Feuerbach falls asleep with his face in the crook of W's neck. W. moves away from him, but not before readers can take in this disturbing tableau of terrorized collaboration. Even now that the threat of Feuerbach's violence has been carried out, W. feels he is not permitted to turn his back on him.

The passage in which W. is raped forms the peripeteia of the novel's sympathetic portrayal of the Stasi collaborator. W's collaboration began with blackmail, and in his rape the threat that stood behind the blackmail takes a specific, violent form. It is this configuration of threat and violence that motivates W's collaboration, the latter thus operating under the power of others, and not out of his own choosing. The rape makes W's powerlessness in the face of such a configuration horribly evident. It also renders horrifyingly ironic Feuerbach's statement that the aim underlying W's difficult apprenticeship is to teach him how to behave with self-possession. Feuerbach appears to W. as a knowledgeable commanding officer who is able to act freely and decisively in his realm. Consequently, W. attempts to exercise his own power in imitation of Feuerbach, "des souveränen Ironikers" (the sovereign ironist; *ibid.*, p. 200). This is an apprenticeship in sovereign decisiveness and ironic self-distancing, as Feuerbach

articulates explicitly. For instance, he accuses W. of failing to decide to flirt with the student on whom he is carrying out surveillance: “Wie wolle er jemals ins Innere gewisser Intimverknüpfungen vorstoßen, *wenn er sich nicht einmal zu einem kleinen Flirt entschließen könne*” (how was he going to penetrate into the inside of any intimate relationship *if he couldn't even decide* to pursue a little flirtation; *ibid.*, p. 234; emphasis added). Later, W. tries to grasp the kind of agency at which Feuerbach hints, in that he sets out to *decide* whether or not to tell Feuerbach about his plan to publish his literary works in the GDR's unofficial magazines: “Wenn ich es nicht tat, wenn ich also ganz wie ein *Autor* handelte—autonom, rücksichtslos ... selbstsicher?” (If I weren't to do it, in other words if I were to act like a true *author*—autonomous, uncaring ... sure of myself?; *ibid.*, p. 287; emphasis in the original). W. comes to the conclusion that he should confide in Feuerbach only partially, so that he can maintain distance and thereby some degree of “freie Hand” (a free hand) over his own plan (*ibid.*, p. 290). In this way, W. endeavours to become the *Autor* of his own actions and writing projects, while in other contexts he works on mastering himself, retreating to his room at Frau Falbe's and, once in this refuge, attempting “meiner Verwirrung Herr zu werden” (to master my confusion; *ibid.*, p. 330).

Yet it is Feuerbach who retains the role of sovereign definition with regard to W. When he surprises W. at work in an uncomfortable posture he cries out: “Alle Wetter [...] was ist denn das für eine Haltung?” (by Jove, what kind of a posture is that?; *ibid.*, p. 10), whereupon W. responds in mimicry: “Alle Wetter! äffte ich ihn nach” (by Jove, I aped him; *ibid.*, p. 10). Feuerbach figures here as a voice of sovereignty, with W. as the subject who “apes” him, thus once again not “going before” but following after. Moreover, in concert with Maron's collaborative copy-writer in Chapter 1, W. finds himself in an ape-like position of mimicking the voice of his employer. In fact, the collaboration that Hilbig portrays appears to be much more willing than that of Polkowski, who vehemently disagreed with the viewpoint of her enemy-employer, because W. readily accepts Feuerbach's opinions and takes them on as a form of mentorship. Having read the texts that W. is producing, Feuerbach begins commenting on his writing and on the works of philosophy and literature that W. reads. He says for instance of Beckett: “Ich bin immer noch der Meinung, daß dieser Ire die Literatur der Insel verdorben hat” (I am still of the opinion that that Irishman ruined the literature of his island; *ibid.*, p. 39). Later he advises W. that “Ein kreativer Kopf theorisiert nicht, er bildet!” (a creative mind doesn't theorize, it educates!; *ibid.*, p. 262). Although this mentorship is unhelpful for W.'s literary or indeed life ambitions—he wishes to leave the GDR rather than become further embroiled in its didactic systems—W. finds himself heeding

Feuerbach's words carefully, with a mind to following them and thus participating in the form of sovereignty that the commanding officer dictates.

The choice of Feuerbach for the name of W's commanding officer is cunning. If he were in training with his commanding officer's philosopher and anthropologist namesake, W. would be embarking here on a course of instruction in the principles of free will. But instead, his apprenticeship finds him in an impasse in which the only kind of achievable self-mastery must be one that is imitated after another. One of W's tactics for dealing with this condition is to mimic the confident steps of the student whom he pursues around Berlin, which he describes as "mein ganz privater Vorgang!" (my very own, private operation!; *ibid.*, pp. 314). This unofficial operation offers W. the opportunity to gain some of the confidence that others enjoy: "ich hatte schon ihr Schrittmaß angenommen, das fest und sicher war, und dabei schienen Festigkeit und Sicherheit im gleichen Maß auch in mir zusammenzufließen" (I had already taken on her pace, that was firm and secure, and this firmness and security seemed to flow into me; *ibid.*, p. 337). W. mimics the student's steps, doubling up for her in such a way that her secure sense of self seems to inform W's own, helping him to walk in firmer fashion behind her.

This operation with the student seems to offer W. a playful alternative, albeit one structured by the same preliminary logic of surveillance that his collaboration with Feuerbach is. W. relates as the student "ging [...] vor mir her, ohne den Schritt zu beschleunigen" (went before me, without speeding up her steps; *ibid.*, p. 315), an exciting re-playing of his mission following "Reader" around the city. The anticipatory pleasure of this personal *Vorgang* echoes a conversation in which W. listens with interest to his landlady's tale of a husband who was more interested in foreplay than penetration. W. professes that he, too, is "ein Mann des Vorspiels" (a man for the preliminaries / a man of foreplay; *ibid.*, p. 266), and he compares himself in this sense to Thomas Mann: "er sei ebenfalls ein Mann des Vorspiels gewesen" (he was also a man for the preliminaries / a man of foreplay; *ibid.*, p. 266). This playful comparison evokes the plot of *Tod in Venedig* (*Death in Venice*, 1912), Thomas Mann's novella in which the author Gustav von Aschenbach never obtains his love object Tadzio, but only observes him from a tragic remove, or follows him in vain along the beach. Yet in spite of the tragic association introduced by the reference to Mann's thwarted author, there is pleasure here, the playfulness of foreplay, and perhaps even a resistant potentiality in W's attempt, by setting up his own project of pursuit, to play with the role for which he is seemingly predestined.



Andrew Webber has explored the “economy of simulation” that, in “Mann’s man’s world” (Webber, 2002, p. 65), offered a model for undermining the rigidly (hetero)normative sexuality of Mann’s time. In presenting W’s experience of subjection to the Stasi organization, Hilbig’s text also incorporates aspects of playful simulation. It achieves this through its insistence on structures of the preliminary and the provisional, which defy categories of the authentic, natural, or complete. Admittedly, though playful, this ongoing preliminaryity remains a punishing grammatical condition for his lead character to inhabit. W. never masters the sovereign mastery that Feuerbach invites him to simulate; meanwhile, his time spent tracking the student around the city exacerbates a loss of agency that he is suffering, as he becomes “ein Automat, der von ihr selbst gesteuert wurde” (a machine that was steered by her; Hilbig, 1993, p. 312). When it transpires that this woman is herself a Stasi IM in West Berlin, W’s play with agency is definitively over. Though he tries to mimic the mastery of others, W. remains stuck in a paranoid sphere where his actions are steered by an agency that is not his own, but that of a ghostly machine of which he is only one, un-sovereign part.

### Remnants of Romanticism in the Stasi city

In *Stille Zeile Sechs*, Polkowski found that she was unable to take control of her own acts. Despite her initial intentions, she could not hold herself back from commenting on her employer’s memoirs and thereby contributing to their content. Like Polkowski responding to an apparently irresistible pull into this collaboration with her enemy, W. makes what he describes as a “Bündnis” (a bond or bind; *ibid.*, p. 7) with the Stasi. The Faustian resonances of this pact are emphasized by the straining attempts on W’s part to gain information on the objects of his surveillance, a striving for knowledge that condemns him to sacrificing his identity to the organization represented by Major Feuerbach. That this latter figure could embody an East German Mephistopheles, Goethe’s devil figure to whom Faust accusingly posits: “Das *Spionieren*, scheint’s, ist deine Lust” (Goethe, 1968, p. 50), is further suggested by the stark lighting in which he resides in W’s narrative memory, lighting in which he casts a satanic figure:

auf mich machte er, in der Erinnerung, sogar einen etwas dämonischen Eindruck, das Licht meiner Schreibtischlampe beschien sein Gesicht von unten, seine gleichmütigen grauen Augen blieben unsichtbar, weil der Schatten, den die Hand mit der Zigarette bildete, Nase und Stirn bedeckte.



(in my memory he even made a rather demonic impression, his face uplit by the lamp on my desk, his indifferent grey eyes invisible because of the shadow of his smoking hand that covered his nose and forehead; Hilbig, 1993, p. 51.)

In Maron's novel, Beerenbaum was backlit, which reflects an arrangement that was used historically in Stasi interrogation prisons, so that prisoners could not discern their interrogator's facial expressions. Here, though, Feuerbach is lit from below, in a set-up of only partial obscuration, wherein his fingers cast shadows that cover his eyes but leave some parts of the face horribly visible. It is through such strongly optical descriptions, redolent of the visual distortions of late German Romanticism, that Hilbig sets out in his text to depict the Stasi at its most terrifying.

Catherine Smale has written of a "post-*Wende* gothic" (Smale, 2012, p. 242), a literary tendency in which post-unification literature has invoked a Romantic sensibility in order to mourn the recent pasts that haunt the Federal Republic after unification. Hilbig is one of the East German authors who drew on the tropes of Romanticism in order to process the GDR past. The strong Romantic signature in "*Ich*" is signaled by the quotation from Johann Ludwig Tieck's *Der Runenberg* (*The Runenberg*) as an epigraph to the novel (cf. Hilbig, 1993, p. 5). The epigraph prepares attentive readers to encounter the distorted figures of shadows, demons, and Doppelgänger in Hilbig's novel, remnants of German Romanticism that Hilbig renders in order to communicate the paranoid visual dynamics of Stasi surveillance. Thus, the sadistic Stasi officer Feuerbach moves around the city deftly "wie einen Geist, der durch Wände ging" (like a ghost, that walked through walls; *ibid.*, p. 57). W. sees this Stasi spook "plötzlich aus den sich überlagernden Spiegelbildern der Hochhausfronten hervorschreiten" (suddenly emerging from the layered mirrors of the skyscrapers' fronts; *ibid.*, p. 57), and finds that his commanding officer is capable of creeping up on him with the silence of a ghost, leaving W. entirely vulnerable to attack. As an effect, W. suffers a state of terror, so that as he cowers in a stairwell at night, ostensibly there to spy, he believes that he can see "Gespenster" (ghosts; *ibid.*, p. 19).

The function of these late-Romantic apparitions in Hilbig's post-1990 novel is to prefigure the metamorphosis of W. as IM into a presence whom others cannot see. As a result of his role as an IM, we learn, "er ging wie ein Gespenst durch die Stadt, man blickte durch ihn hindurch" (he went like a ghost through the city, people looked through him; *ibid.*, p. 123). Such ghostly opacity may carry some of the resistance of Polkowski's Bartlebian strike, that cadaverous gesture that haunted Maron's novel in the previous chapter. Indeed, a resistant

ghostliness is certainly operative in W's pursuit of the student in his free time, which he carries out without permission of his bosses, but it is also a painful invisibility, as the student is a figure of desire with whom W. never interacts, but instead only chases her around, carrying with him his gravest fear that she could turn her gaze back on him and identify him as a spy. W. need not be anxious that the student will recognize him, however, as he finds when he finally speaks to the woman at a literary reading, and she does not recall ever having met him. This blocked recognition recalls the problem experienced by Tieck's disoriented hunter in *Der Runenberg*, Christian, who seeks in vain the returned gaze of his love-object, Elisabeth. To be seen in the sphere operated by the Stasi is dangerous, but as this intertextual recall to Tieck indicates, it is also painful *not* to be seen, not to be recognized as any kind of subject at all. The painful aspect to the spy's invisibility becomes clear as W's identity becomes more and more diffuse, and he comes to view himself as "ein Schatten in den Schattengewölben der Nachtstadt" (a shadow in the shadow-vaults of the night-city; *ibid.*, p. 324), and as the student's "Schattenmann" (shadow-man; *ibid.*, p. 337). This lexicon of a shadowy identity, that prefigures the analysis by BStU researcher Müller-Enbergs, of IMs as a "Schattenarmee" (army of shadows; Müller-Enbergs, 2008a, p. 3), suggests at the same time that a further Romantic role model for W. can be found in the hero of Adelbert von Chamisso's *Peter Schlemihls wundersame Geschichte* (*The Wonderful Story of Peter Schlemihl*, 1813), a work published five years after Goethe's *Faust: Part One*, and whose protagonist sells not his soul but his shadow to the devil.

As it returns again and again to these late Romantic references, the novel continues to alternate between the perspectives of W. and W's alter ego (or shadow self), named C., thus introducing a further trope of the Romantic canon, the Doppelgänger. One particularly memorable change of narrative identity between the two IM-selves in the text occurs alongside an everyday identity-check. The narrator presents his identity card to a policeman on the street, who is not interested in seeing it and reads it "falsch herum" (the wrong way around; Hilbig, 1993, p. 237), whereupon the character's cipher switches from W. to C. for the subsequent portion of the novel. It is troubling that W's (or C.)'s identity should turn so suddenly on the basis of an arbitrary and oddly disinterested body of power, but this is the highly contingent nature of identity in Hilbig's account. The account is rounded off at the close of the novel by the unearthing of evidence that W. has a living double, who has been traveling in West Germany. When he returns to his hometown after being decommissioned from the Stasi, W. discovers that his mother has been receiving correspondence

from another iteration of himself, who has been posting cards and letters typed on an identical typewriter to the one that he has used in recent months, and sealed with a perfect copy of his signature, "unterschrieben von einem Sachverständigen, der meine Unterschrift perfekt beherrschte" (signed by an expert who mastered my signature perfectly; *ibid.*, p. 376). W. decides that it would be too complicated to disabuse his mother of her belief that he is his double and has just returned from the West, and so he acts as if he has indeed been in West Germany.<sup>1</sup> This enforced multiplication of W's identity does not make his sense of himself any more concrete; instead W's identity seems to break down into two or more selves, whose actions he can only follow in retrospect. Such doublings of identity are the terrifying effect of the Stasi's operations—operations that Hilbig renders with particular attention to their visual manifestations.

For Andrew Webber, the *Doppelgänger* represents "above all a figure of visual compulsion" (Webber, 1996, p. 3). He cites Jean Paul on *Doppelgänger* as "Leute, die sich selber sehen" (people who see themselves; *ibid.*, p. 3)—the double or twin not representing an alien other, but another version of the self that is revealed in specular doublings by which the subject becomes able to view its own self, to uncanny effect. True to his inheritance from the Romantic tradition, Hilbig supports the plot in which W's sense of himself dissolves into at least two identities, with descriptions of a surveilled space in which vision is heightened to the point of utter disorientation. Berlin's streets, riddled with glass screens and mirrors such as those from which Feuerbach effortlessly emerges, plot out W's confusing position as an agent of the Stasi. Meanwhile, interior spaces are equally vulnerable to observation as, alone in Feuerbach's office, W. begins to look at the files and papers kept on his desk, whereupon a colleague immediately berates him from another room for looking at them, and W. realizes "ich war im Auge der Kamera" (I was in the eye of the camera; Hilbig, 1993, p. 23). The Stasi's world has no private corners; W's sensual encounters in his apartment with his landlady Frau Falbe are interrupted (or heightened) by the knowledge that, here too, he is always under surveillance. Thus the optical operations of surveillance cross over into a haptic realm, adopting a tangible intimacy—or, perhaps, in Santner's terms *extimacy*, that originary intrusion of power at the very point of the subject's constitution.

Lacking any safe space of refuge in the Stasi city, W. seeks out positions of observation from which he can spy "aus dem Dunkel ins Licht" (from the darkness into the light; *ibid.*, p. 133). These positions seem to place him as untouchable, viewing others from a point of safety hidden in the darkness. The

café where W. meets Feuerbach, and which is frequented by a large number of spies, might appear an advantageous lookout of this kind. Yet its expedience is always contingent on the play of light: if the street outside is dark, a reversal occurs so that the spy inside is exposed to the gaze of others. Such a reversal of the surveillant gaze flips spy into victim, aligning W. with the Stasi's prisoners who were positioned facing a light source so that they were blind to their interrogator's face while fully exposed to scrutiny. This exposure of the spy in Hilbig's novel contrasts with the depiction of the spy Gerhard Wiesler in *Das Leben der Anderen*, who carries out the large portion of his surveillance in an empty attic, in an operation that takes the form of listening-in rather than optically observing his victims. Wiesler remains safe in his attic hideout, and supplements the auditory reach of his surveillance by chalking a map by the help of which he can imagine the movements of his victims in the apartment below. Yet it is through his very safety that Wiesler shares with W. the terrible isolation of those who remain invisible—an invisibility that is emphasized in von Donnersmarck's film when his spy meets Christa-Maria, one of the objects of his surveillance in a bar, and she does not recognize him as the man who hears and reports the intimate details of her life. The film's melodramatic plot structure requires that recognition be restored, a turnaround that occurs in the interrogation scene between the two characters when Christa-Maria finally realizes to whom she was speaking in the bar. In Hilbig's literary rendition of the Stasi, however, spying does not lead to a dialectic of recognition and interaction, prompt or delayed. Instead, the visual dynamics in his novel map out an unreal setting in which seeing does not reveal information, and any recognition between subjects is entirely shaped by the plot manipulations of the Stasi.

Hilbig's return to Romanticism provides an array of figures to convey the excessive power of the GDR's secret police. Moreover—and this is what made the novel so appealing to its reading public—the labyrinthine territories that Hilbig's collaborating subject must navigate combine the other-worldly imagery of the literary Gothic with reminders of later modernities. The collision in the novel, between Romantic and later modern tropes, is evident when W. finds that a large-scale phallus has been graffitied onto the wall of an underground cellar, in which he sits to rest between spying shifts. W. believes that it must be an enemy of his who has painted the wall with an exaggerated icon of the penis with cartoon testicles that look like “einer überdimensionalen bügellosen Brille” (an oversized, frameless pair of glasses; *ibid.*, p. 34). This optical sex organ, whose excessive scale obscenely recalls the *Sandmann's* dangerous lenses in E.T.A. Hoffmann's late Romantic tale (*The Sandmann*, 1816), also calls to

W's mind a term by Baudrillard: "Ich hatte keine Ahnung, was die Skizze hier unten zu suchen hatte; es war mir dazu höchstens ein Begriff von Baudrillard eingefallen: *leere Signifikanz*" (I had no idea what the sketch down here meant. I could only think of a term by Baudrillard: *empty signification*; *ibid.*, p. 34). The graffitied phallus is indeed an empty signifier; it stands for the Stasi's obscene self-reproductions, including the mimetic behaviors of its individual members. As he contemplates the graffiti, it dawns on W. that he has come to inhabit a "Simulation" (*ibid.*, p. 335). Here nothing is what it seems, and under the empty sign of the Stasi's power, even the most tangible objects are revealed as inauthentic doubles of themselves. To explore this, Hilbig has W. refer to Baudrillard's theory of abstract modernity, in which apparently authentic experiences are revealed as elements of a faked "hyperreality," produced by visual media and images which are only reproductions of what might be thought of as real (Baudrillard, 1998, p. 168).<sup>2</sup> As if Hoffmann and Baudrillard had conspired in its design, Hilbig's Stasi city plays host to confusing appearances that do not veil any underlying truth about its agents, but only plot out the mechanics by which those agents were kept under surveillant control.

### The Stasi spy in Kafka's "Burrow"

Kafka is by now a familiar point of comparison for the Stasi's surveillance systems, and his works can indeed provide a touchstone for imagining the power of the East German state to turn even its most decided critics into unwilling collaborators. Kafka's were also some of the most controversial literary works in the GDR. In a critical study of the reception of his works by four GDR authors, Angelika Winnen relates how the literary establishment of the 1950s labeled Kafka's oeuvre "dekadent" (decadent), "formalistisch" (formalist), and therefore "unnütz" (useless) for the GDR's politico-cultural agenda (Winnen, 2006, p. 18). A conference on Kafka in the Czech Republic in 1963, at which West and East German literary critics met to discuss the relevance of his writing for socialism, has even been described as a catalyst for the Prague Spring (cf. Stottmeister, 2008, unpaginated). A few days after Soviet troops invaded Prague, the GDR's then culture minister Klaus Gysi compared the counter-revolutionaries with Kafka and claimed that the correct literary heritage for the GDR was not Kafka's body-morphing creature of modernity Gregor Samsa but the Romantic hero Faust. As Minden notes, the vision at the end of *Faust II* of a "post-feudal future" made Goethe's hero a welcome role model in the young GDR (Minden,

2011, p. 166). Where Goethe was championed, Kafka continued to be excluded from the prescribed socialist literary canon up until the end of the regime. A meagre number of his works were published, but this is considered to have been a further manipulation on the part of the state, targeted to stifle protest rather than to promote his reception (cf. Winnen, 2006, p. 21). As difficult as it was to lay hands on Kafka's works during certain eras of the GDR, his influence on Hilbig is cited by almost all of his critics. Indeed, in "*Ich*", the influence of Kafka is identifiable, for instance, in the use that W. makes of the surveilled city space. One of Kafka's last unfinished prose works, "*Der Bau*" (The Burrow, posthum 1933) offers a forerunner for Hilbig's subject who invests his high-surveillance environment with fantasies of sovereignty that give way to strong experiences of subjection.

W. describes both the literary and spying milieus as made up of "Schauplätze" (Hilbig, 1993, p. 285), scenes or more literally "places of looking" of different kinds. Both spheres seem to operate according to a system of performances, carried out by artists as the objects of Stasi surveillance and by the Stasi's spies themselves. For both state and subject, power is a performance here, and this is reflected in the visible patrolling of the city by "die Grenztruppen, sie möblierten die Ausnahmesituation dieses Bahnhofs" (the border guards, they furnish the state of exception of this station; *ibid.*, p. 282). Looking up at the soldiers as he stands near the border where East Berlin meets its western double, W. takes this performance of exceptional power seriously, speculating "daß man oben, in den sogenannten höheren Etagen über uns, mehr von mir wisse als ich selbst" (that those who sit up there, in the so-called higher echelons above us, know more about me than I know myself; *ibid.*, p. 61). He imagines a god-like seat of power / knowledge, situated *oben* (up there) in the higher ranks of the Stasi or above the city, holding its citizens in a state of subjection. As one of the Stasi's spies, W. himself is a power figure, walking the streets of Berlin and observing its inhabitants as part of the Stasi's mission of total control. This state of affairs is reflected in the words of Feuerbach: "Aber Sie sind doch die Staatsmacht, junger Mann!" (but *you are* the state power, young man!; *ibid.*, p. 157), when W. suggests (in an attempt at collaborative pacification) that they should allow their superiors to plan their futures and not try to define them on their own.

As we have seen, W. is following Feuerbach in a *Lehrgang* that he hopes will lead to more power and knowledge over himself. But he rarely feels powerful, and this results in part from his failure to master—or to perform mastery of—the spaces around which he is required to move. Unfortunately for W., to be powerful in the Stasi-run city requires him to be "ein Experte der Orientierung

in der Stadt" (an expert of orientation in the city; *ibid.*, p. 138)—in other words, to adopt the spatial authority that he only perceives as belonging to others. This is a "Vorsatz" (requirement; *ibid.*, p. 138) that W. cannot fulfil; far from a confident orienteer, he is subject to a spatial bewilderment that reflects his powerlessness within the complex ranks of the Stasi and bodes ill for his ability to gain sovereignty over himself. W.'s problematic sense of himself, and his isolation from others, are reflected in a spatial move that sees him gradually retreat into the cellars of Berlin. It is here that the intertextual link with Kafka's "Burrow" becomes operational.

W. carries out his surveillance operations in the cellars under Berlin, an underground zone where he both hides himself and executes his spying work on others. These tasks are enabled by the labyrinthine structuration of the underground, comprised as it is of unmapped corridors and cellars. W. orients himself by counting the number of cellar doors that he has passed, and thereby identifying the address under which he is located. He then uses his vantage point beneath the apartments to listen in on the conversations taking place on the level above him. In its form and associations, this underground space recalls a topographical description in the earlier short story "Die Einfriedung" (The Enclosure, 1980) of the entire GDR as a "Labyrinth," one whose "Ruinenengelände" (landscape of ruins) includes a complex "unterirdischen Kanalsystem" (subterranean canal system; Hilbig, 2009, p. 94), along which both "Herrschaft" (power) and people pass (*ibid.*, p. 94). The title of "Die Einfriedung" refers to the clinic, "Der Einfried," in which the protagonist of Thomas Mann's burlesque novella *Tristan* (1903) takes refuge from his unsuccessful life as a writer. Yet the underground canal system in Hilbig's "Einfriedung," and the underground that W. makes his home in "*Ich*," owe a debt to Kafka's late unfinished story, in which an unidentified creature builds a burrow underground which it hopes will form a defense against its enemies.

Walter Schmitz's reading of the intertextual link between "*Ich*" and "Der Bau" takes Kafka's underground space as a "Projektionsdimension" (dimension of projection) for Hilbig's subject (Schmitz, 2000, p. 121), a space onto which W. projects psychological states of "Begrenztheit, Widersprüchlichkeit, Daseinswiederholung, [...] Identitätssuche und schließlich Angst" (limitation, contradiction, the rehearsal of being-there, [...] the search for identity and finally fear; *ibid.* p. 122). Indeed, the comportment of Kafka's creature, as it occupies its own underground zone with moods of concurrent panic and tranquility, foreshadows the ambivalent states of mind with which Hilbig's W. experiments in his own underground lair.



Relating the story of the construction and maintenance of its burrow, the creature in “Der Bau” states: “Ich lebe im Innersten meines Hauses in Frieden und inzwischen bohrt sich langsam und still der Gegner von irgendwoher an mich heran” (I live in peace in the innermost part of my house and at the same time the enemy is slowly and silently burrowing its way out of somewhere towards me; Kafka, 1931, p. 78). As in “*Ich*”, this narrator knows the space in which it hides and this gives it an advantage over its enemy: “ich habe den Vorteil, in meinem Haus zu sein, alle Wege und Richtungen genau zu kennen” (I have the advantage of being in my house, of knowing all ways and directions exactly; *ibid.*, p. 79). There is a “Burgplatz” (castle hold) in the burrow, where the creature stores its food and other belongings, and it declares itself “Herr, alleiniger Herr über eine Vielzahl von Gängen und Plätzen” (lord, sole lord over a manifold ways and places; *ibid.*, p. 90). Feeling a sense of security, the creature is able to be lord of the private “Burg” that it has created, and so to declare a sort of sovereignty. In an interview on the critical potential of literature, Derrida referenced Kafka’s burrow space in “Der Bau,” albeit not by name, in order to describe how he too would like to burrow away under the earth, and there in safety respond to his own “irrepressible need—but one forbidden, inhibited, repressed—to tell stories” (Derrida, 1992, p. 40). This need dare not find expression “so long as it has not cleared a space or organized a dwelling-place suited to the animal which is still curled up in its hole half asleep” (*ibid.*, p. 40). As Derrida suggests, the burrow can function as a zone of potentiality, where the creature may itself engage in creative pleasures, for instance by producing narratives, or perhaps simply in the pleasurable construction of the burrow itself. For it is not clear in “Der Bau” whether the burrow is a necessary protection or a pleasurable product of the creature’s invention. Speaking for the latter, the creature comments that “die Freude des scharfsinnigen Kopfes an sich selbst ist manchmal die alleinige Ursache” (the joy of the calculating mind is sometimes the only cause; Kafka, 1931, p. 79), thus revealing the motive behind his calculations and careful constructions. Part of the burrow, which it built early on, is a tightly networked “Labyrinthbau” (labyrinth structure; *ibid.*, p. 87) that it created out of idle pleasure and which has little use but is “theoretisch vielleicht köstlich” (perhaps theoretically pleasurable; *ibid.*, p. 87).

Yet the creature’s pleasure, in creatively building and occupying its own space, is always tempered by fear: “Glückliche, aber gefährliche Zeiten; wer sie auszunützen verstünde, könnte mich leicht, ohne sich zu gefährden, vernichten” (happy but dangerous times; anyone who knew how to abuse them could easily, without endangering themselves, destroy me; *ibid.*, p. 86). This late Kafkan



animal exists in fear that some enemy will come in and disturb its pleasurable safety, so that its burrow is revealed as both a space of *Frieden* (peace), a refuge like that of the clinic in Mann's novella, and at the same time, in Hilbig's idiom, an imprisoning *Einfriedung* (enclosure). Although Kafka's creature-narrator experiments with improving the storage security of his *Burgplatz*, and examining the tunnel entrance from outside, he never finds a satisfactory way of securing the tranquility of his burrow. Accordingly, the dark moss at the burrow's entranceway—at once an opaque disguise and a fragile web of plant fibre and soil—would be easy to penetrate. As enclosed as it is, therefore, the creature in his castle is also always exposed to the espionage and potential assault of others. In John Hamilton's reading, the precariousness of life in Kafka's burrow may yet have some productive potential, in preventing a too-certain complacency in its inhabitant: "The defect, therefore, is a source of vital energy" (Hamilton, 2013, p. 27). For Hamilton, the constant reminder of vulnerability might function paradoxically to keep the creature safe. Yet, in line with the ongoing "Vorgang" of W.'s experience, this is an extremely anxious condition to inhabit—one that leaves Kafka's creature wondering if he should not simply bury himself in the burrow and thus end his anxious suffering once and for all.

The intertextual link between "Der Bau" and the underground spaces of "Ich" offers a clue for understanding the complex of agency and vulnerability that W. experiences in the underground space of Hilbig's novel. As he hides there, W. is able temporarily to forget his existence that is defined by observing others. He relates: "Das plötzliche Dunkel ließ mich mein gesamtes Wesen vergessen" (the sudden dark let me forget my whole self; Hilbig, 1993, pp. 25–6), and reveals that he longs to stay here, where his thoughts are "rebellischer" (more rebellious; *ibid.*, p. 289). Thus the underground is not exclusively a fearsome space of darkness and disorientation, and W. is not consigned to always be a traumatized victim hiding out from a system that fully overpowers him. J. M. William notes that, on street level, W. "has no greater sense of orientation than he does when lurking in the sewer" (William, 2005, p. 170). In fact, the underground offers W. more of a sense of orientation than do the streets, for down here he can find his own way, locking and unlocking doors for himself, and counting his way along passageways that, he believes, only he knows. He can also harbor thoughts here that rebel against the order of the streets overhead.

At times, W.'s underground realm is a refuge where he can listen to "dem unfäßbaren Massiv der Riesenstadt Berlin, die mir zu Haupten schlief" (the unfathomable mass of the giant-city Berlin, which slept above my head; Hilbig, 1993, p. 20). The expected order, of the city surface as a navigable space and

the underground as its ineffable depth, is reversed here where W. knows the passageways better than any street route. The cellars are also refuges from the city's crowds, that cause him an uncanny anxiety: "Es war mir unheimlich an den Orten, wo ich dem *Volk* begegnete, wo unübersichtliche Scharen von Müßiggängern sich tummelten" (I felt uncanny in those places where I met the *people*, where unfathomable throngs of idlers bustled about; *ibid.*, p. 58; emphasis in the original). What is the precise cause of this uncanny feeling is unclear, but some clue is provided by the emphasis in the prose on the word *Volk*, which signifies crowds but also 'the people'—including the mass movement of citizens who when the GDR came to its end declared their desire for sovereign self-definition through the declamation "wir sind das Volk" (we are the people).

Though self-definition might be too much to hope for in the Stasi-controlled city, W. can gain some relief, at least, in the space that he knows, and thus escape the mass of people whose secrets he has failed to penetrate as a spy. In the warm dark of the cellars, W. also has a temporary home away from Feuerbach's disturbing watch. It is a space of security where W. is able to practice some of the mastery which he observed in Feuerbach and the student, and wished to gain for himself: "Eine Zeitlang war er der Patriarch der Unterwelt hier unten, der Alleinherrscher über ein unbekanntes halbdunkles Reich" (for a while he was the patriarch of this underworld, the sole ruler over an unknown half-dark imperium; *ibid.*, p. 71). The *half-dark imperium* of Berlin's underground provides W. a space over which he can practice at least some form of authority. This fantasy of patriarchal rule only lasts, however, until somebody enters W.'s underground hideout, rips and subsequently steals the red armchair that he sits on down there, and draws the gigantic Baudrillardian image of the phallus onto the Wall's concrete foundation, that had functioned as the interior wall of his underground home. As a result of this threatening but inscrutable inscription, W. realizes that Berlin's underground is not a safe space, but only a further colony of the surveilled city, and therefore not exempt from the paranoia that makes the subterranean world of Kafka's creature so hard to inhabit.

### The Stasi as Foucauldian power-structure

Like Kafka's works, the writings of poststructuralist philosopher Michel Foucault were officially scorned by the GDR's cultural ministry and its publishing apparatus. As a rule they were considered decadent, nihilistic, and therefore as

unlikely as Kafka to contribute to the future of Soviet-style state socialism. An exception to this was the use of Foucault's works as a confusing subterfuge by the more intellectually adept Stasi plants. In spite of the difficulty of accessing Foucault's works legally in the GDR, Paul Cooke has argued that the theorist's writing about regimes of Discipline, and more specifically panopticism, influence Hilbig's portrayal of the Stasi in "Ich". The link is indeed made explicit as Hilbig's characters refer to Foucault on multiple occasions in the novel, in which Officer Feuerbach comically misappropriates his name as "Le Feu" and "Le Fou." Yet Hilbig's depiction of the Stasi moves past what was by the mid-1980s a well-known analysis of power as a carefully designed phenomenon of "Discipline," and in so doing it expands on what Foucault was attempting to achieve in the last years of his life. Foucault pointed in his final lectures both to the spatial organization of *ancien-régime* "Sovereignty" and to the new designs of late capitalist "Security" as two alternative models to "Discipline," for understanding the coercion that governments can exercise upon their subjects. As I will show here in building upon Cooke's reading of the influence of early Foucault on Hilbig's writing, these later models from Foucault's teaching afford new insight into the power wielded by the Stasi over its victims and collaborators.

Foucault's legacy offers some of the most suitable theoretical models for dealing with the Stasi. This is true even though Foucault rarely mentioned East Germany or any of the Soviet states in his work. In a 1976 interview he described the Soviet Union as an "example of a State apparatus which has changed hands, yet leaves social hierarchies, family life, sexuality and the body more or less as they were in capitalist society" (Foucault, 1980, p. 73). The comment does not draw out the specificity of surveillance and control in the former East, rather Foucault chooses to criticize the similarities between the organizations of power and knowledge in the Soviet states and their rivals in the West. Hilbig's use of Foucault's name and his theories in "Ich" may signal, however, that his most successful novel offers a remedy to this rather gaping hole in the late philosopher's project. Hilbig's work has in common with Foucault's writings an implicit analysis of space. Spatial terms such as territory, site, displacement, and archipelago can be found in abundance in Foucault's work, and he was led to admit that it was through metaphors of space that he alighted upon "what I had basically been looking for: the relations that are possible between power and knowledge" (ibid., p. 69). In turn, Hilbig's engagement with the spaces of Stasi surveillance enables a refinement of how we understand power to have operated in the Stasi context, shedding light on the practical means through which it shaped the behavior of its collaborators on such a massive scale.

In the five years before his death, Foucault reviewed the system of three power-forms that he had analyzed over the course of his career, and in the opening lecture of his seminar of 1977–8, *Security, Territory, Population*, he set out the differing spatial configurations of these forms. The lecture describes how Sovereignty, first, “capitalized a territory” (Foucault, 2007b, p. 20), with the early modern nation being built in the form of concentric circles, their capital forming a literal center of power where the sovereign resided. Sovereignty pertained to the absolutist regimes of the early modern period, in which a ruler or king sat at the head of a strict hierarchy of power. However, Foucault’s analysis also shows how some of the symptoms of the early modern sovereignty regimes remain in late modern societies. After Sovereignty, Foucault’s second modality of power, Discipline, “structures a space” (ibid., p. 20), producing grids and sectors of activity within a closed space with fixed relations of vision and tight circulation of trade and transport. Such fixed spatial order characterized nineteenth-century institutions such as the prison, the clinic, and the school. Foucault’s analysis of Discipline includes a reading of the panopticon, Jeremy Bentham’s 1785 blueprint for an inspection house for the surveillance of prisoners, which would also be applied to the construction of asylums, workhouses, factories, and schools (Bentham, 1995, pp. 29–95). Bentham envisaged a circular construction of single cells around a central watchtower. These architectures of Discipline were built to produce controlled human subjects, and the practices of policing and power within them were thorough, acting on the bodies of their inhabitants to make them well-disciplined at all times. Because these subject-inmates can be viewed at any time from the panopticon’s central watchtower, they also begin to self-discipline, to watch over themselves. Moreover, the inspector is also subject to continual surveillance. Though Božovi has described this figure in its opacity, as “an utterly dark spot’ in the all-transparent, light-flooded universe of the panopticon” (Božovi, 1995, p. 1), the surveillance of the inspector by his or her own superiors in fact subjects him or her, too, to this triumph of transparency.

Although the intentions and architectures of Discipline can still be found in twentieth- and twenty-first-century organizations of power and space, Foucault proposed a third model of power / knowledge, Security, which he believed was replacing the centralized power-model of Sovereignty and the hard structures of nineteenth-century Discipline with the softer touch of late twentieth-century liberalism. His analysis of Security includes the operations of Biopower, “the set of mechanisms through which the basic biological features of the human species became the object of a political strategy” (Foucault, 2007b, p. 1). Subtler than the illuminated physiognomies of Discipline’s prisons, Security harbours the files of

health records, passport information—and latterly, though they do not appear in Foucault's register of techniques, one might think of the archives of information harvested from individuals' internet-use—all the while allowing its subjects in most cases to walk free. Topographically, Security operates by opening up the borders of a space and implementing looser structures than Sovereignty or Discipline, in order to insure its futurity: "to plan a milieu in terms of events or series of events or possible elements" (ibid., p. 1). Security is not based around prisons, although it does use them. On the larger scale, however, it plans its spaces in terms of probability, risk and population, pre-empting uncertainties but otherwise allowing the milieu to control itself. Thus, in the model of "Security," the panopticon is networked out, rendered more fluid and multiple in its effects.

Cooke has offered a compelling analysis of Hilbig's novel as a portrayal of "The Stasi as Panopticon." He writes:

Hilbig constructs the GDR as a postmodern nightmare, in which the state's power spreads amongst the population like a web and, as in Foucault, not only controls individuals, but actually constitutes them by implicating them in its system of domination. (Cooke, 2003, p. 148)

The nightmare "web" that Cooke identifies as spreading out in Hilbig's GDR is indeed panoptic. W. experiences a sense of being watched even when he is alone: he feels compelled "mich möglichst harmlos zu verhalten zwischen diesen vieläugigen Wänden" (to behave as harmlessly as possible between these many-eyed walls; Hilbig, 1993, p. 32). Foucault's account of the panopticon includes an analysis of the performances that such an organization of space demands, envisioning in it "so many small theatres, in which each actor is alone, perfectly individualized and constantly visible" (Foucault, 1991, p. 200). Hilbig's spaces of the underground, the café, and W.'s apartment, do indeed work as small theatres in which spy / victim can at any time be observed. Crucially, the omnipresence, or potential omnipresence, of power in these spaces has a performative effect. As Cooke indicates in the quotation above, these spatio-visual conditions constitute the individual that W. can be. He is required to maintain his disciplined performance at all times. In this way, performance becomes an enduring mode of behavior, indistinguishable from any authentic self prior to it.

Cooke's choice of the panopticon as the Foucauldian model through which to read Hilbig's portrayal of the Stasi is illuminating. However, the Stasi that Hilbig represents also contains elements of the other modes of power delineated by Foucault in his final lectures and writings. It is possible to trace in the text

certain techniques of Security, the later and softer regimes of liberalism. For instance, the more fluid organization of space under Foucault's Security model is reflected in the movements and transitions that W. makes around the city. He is not trapped into the single circular form of a Benthamesque space, rather he moves with some fluency around the different levels and zones of Berlin, and between Berlin and his hometown of A. In the guise of his double he may even have crossed the ultimate site of blocked transition, the Berlin Wall. More surprisingly, the other Foucauldian mode of power, Sovereignty, can also be drawn upon for a productive reading of Hilbig's subject of surveillance. This is counter-intuitive because Foucault's analysis of Sovereignty oriented itself towards the organization of the monarchies of the early modern era, and not the high-surveillance milieux of the late twentieth century. Nonetheless, Hilbig's portrayal in "*Ich*" of a subject who is subjected *to* the power of Feuerbach as terrible sovereign—and his depiction of the entire Stasi system as the extension of this sovereign agency—suggest that such a counter-intuitive reading may be precisely what this vision of the Stasi's obscene domain demands.

Eric Santner's readings of German modernism draw in part on the forms of sovereignty described by Foucault, and more centrally on those theorized by Giorgio Agamben after Benjamin and Schmitt. In the Agambenian model, the age of sovereignty does not wane with the dissolution of the absolutist monarchies, nor does it end along with the Nazi totalitarianism that Schmitt propagated. The term remains relevant to the systems that subject humans to power in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. In this sense, it is also pertinent for understanding the aesthetic representation of these interactions. Simultaneously both a spy and a victim, W. stands at once within and outside the authority of the Stasi. He is constantly implicated in the lives of others and yet isolated by his surveillant position. As a result of this exceptional and isolated state, W. states: "ich stand mitten in der Stadt wie ein Kaspar Hauser" (I stood like a Kaspar Hauser in the middle of the city; Hilbig, 1993, p. 58). W. compares himself to the outsider-archetype of Kaspar Hauser, the child who in 1828 presented himself in the town of Baden and claimed to have grown up in a dark prison cell, an origin that set him apart from his new community. Cooke finds figures of the outsider peopling all of Hilbig's texts, his "*Unbehauste Menschen*" (Homeless Person) in whom the Steppenwolf of Hermann Hesse and Rainer Maria Rilke's tortured protagonist Malte Laurids Brigge could find a reflection (Cooke, 2000, p. 119), as archetypes of the outsider on the border between Romanticism and modernism. Occupying his own inside-outside position, as victim and spy, Gothic shadow, and modernist creature, W. feels

that he is subject to "jener Macht, die mit ihren magisch-steinernen Runen alles natürliche Leben bedingt und steuert" (that power, that with its magic-stone runes defines and steers all natural life; Hilbig, 1993, p. 280). The image of the runes, reminiscent of the "magische steinerne Tafel" (magical stone tablet) of Tieck's *Runenberg* (Tieck, 1828, p. 224), captures the terrifying power which in Hilbig's text is wielded by the Stasi in order to construct a punishing architecture of control. This is an architecture, moreover, amid which Hilbig's subject experiences the subjection, the exceptionally subjected state of being, of what Eric Santner has termed "creaturely life."

The Agambenian model of sovereignty, which finds an echo in W's terrible predestination, nonetheless leaves some hope for the future of liberal societies. Santner's readings of Agamben in the light of German modernist literature define the category of "creaturely life" as a state of subjection, but one in which the subject still struggles for power, and therefore a state that resonates with the powerful, powerless experience of Kafka's creature visited above:

What I am calling creaturely life is a dimension of human existence called into being at [...] natural historical fissures or caesuras in the space of meaning. These are sites where the struggle for new meaning—in Nietzsche's terms, the exercise of will to power—is at its most intense. (Santner, 2006, p. xv)

This possibility for power—a "*pouvoir de pouvoir*," as Derrida might have it (Derrida, 2008, p. 27)—is a proposition that could comfort W. in his underground hideout, and perhaps comfort Polkowski too, as she works to regain power over her life. While the image of a human creature may seem to evoke animal helplessness, a delivery over to its own drives and those of more powerful others, creatureliness works here as a dialectic between sovereign subjecthood and subjection to the mastery of others.

The ideas that Foucault was developing to the west of the Berlin Wall, and the contemporary work of Santner on the paradoxes of sovereignty, can help to shed light on the organization of agency in Hilbig's novel. W. may figure at times as the creature held in thrall to the greater sovereignty of the Stasi. Yet this character is also exemplary of the category of IM, since he is not only subjugated as a victim, but also responsible for contributing to the Stasi's crimes. W. can engage in a struggle to regain agency beyond the reach of the Stasi, in the writerly activities that perhaps lie behind his cipher. W. never publishes his literary works under his own name, and he has to endure Feuerbach's unhelpfully critical readership of them. Polkowski, too, finds opportunities to exercise agency, through her private projects and her final challenge to the authority



of Beerenbaum's worldview. In this way, though they are repeatedly thwarted, these "creatures" continue to struggle, even as they collaborate. As in Hamilton's reading, such commotion may insert some productive precarity into the system that co-opts its subjects as collaborators, a shadowy potential for disruption among the GDR's secret "Schattenarmee."

### Kerstin Hensel's Stasi city: *Tanz am Kanal*

As a shadow agent himself, W. feels safest when he is held in the "Schattengewölbe" (shadow-vaults; Hilbig, 1993, p. 324), of the city at night. Curving, perhaps womblike, this night-time sanctuary offers some protection to one who feels otherwise surrounded by hostile agencies. The city in this guise gives W. the space to formulate some sense of independence, however fleeting, from the power structures that surround him. Meanwhile, though its fictional setting of Leibnitz plays host to hostile forces, there are protective architectures available to the protagonist of Kerstin Hensel's *Tanz am Kanal*, too.<sup>3</sup> In the novel's opening pages, the young homeless woman Gabriela von Haßlau sits beside a canal and begins to write her life story. A bridge overhead forms a "Bogen" (bow; Hensel, 1994, p. 7) around her, shielding her from the city's heat. Meanwhile a "großer glatter Bogen Packpapier" (big smooth sheet of parcel paper; *ibid.*, p. 7) creates a second arc of protection, this time a figurative one. Writing on this curve of paper prevents Gabriela awakening to the reality of her homelessness, and thereby falling "ins letzte Loch" (into the last hole; *ibid.*, p. 21). The practice of writing seems to offer her a more secure hold on her identity, thus forestalling her fall into a final space of incoherence.

Yet these material and imaginary architectures are revealed throughout Hensel's text as limited in their protective scope. Gabriela has little hope of securing her self against the various bodies of power that intervene in her life, or against the ravages of life on the streets where she is forced to reside. This lack of security is reflected in the city-landscape that Hensel creates in which to hold Gabriela's story. The "von" of her name, like the nickname of Polkowski's friend "Der Graf" in *Stille Zeile Sechs*, functions as a marker of a lost feudal power, a mastery over land and its government that for these characters has disappeared, to be replaced by vulnerability to imprisonment, to rape and homelessness, and to co-optation into the new disciplinary techniques preferred by the Stasi. As shown in the previous chapter, Gabriela is presented in the text as suffering multiple forms of victimhood, at first as victim of her rapists, then of her father's



forced surgical intervention, and finally as victim of the control of the Stasi on whose dubious support she must rely after her abandonment by all relatives and friends. Moreover, in order to deliver her account of excessive victimhood, Hensel relies on images of porosity and dissolution. These qualities come to define the fictional landscape in the novel, and they interact with its depiction of a subject whose homelessness and isolation leave her radically exposed to the conditions onto which her body borders.

Under the power of the East German authorities, the fictional city of "Leibnitz" serves a number of disciplinary technologies. It is watched by police forces possessing extraordinary powers: in the GDR Gabriela's childhood home is confiscated, and she is later assigned a Stasi apartment. Indeed, she is always subject to displacement at the hands of others, threatened with "Versetzung" (being forcibly moved to a different class at school; *ibid.*, p. 28), and suffering the Stasi's notorious practices of *Zersetzung*. Gabriela's self-view as the object of these practices is reflected in passive verb constructions where the speaking self flips into the object "mich" (me): "plazierte man mich" (they put me; *ibid.*, p. 93), "Mich nahm man" (they took me; *ibid.*, p. 110). Gabriela's "mich" figures as an accusative, and therefore even less agentic, counterpart to the precarious "Ich" of Hilbig's text. After reunification, the moves to which this "mich" is subjected become yet more severe, as twice she is admitted to a psychiatric ward, and finally ejected onto the street. Gabriela discovers here how warmer sleeping-places, including doorways, gates, and the sections of pavement under balconies, are forbidden to the homeless (cf. *ibid.*, p. 16). This control over space, "who lives where," turns in winter into the definition of who lives at all.

Leibnitz's inhospitable ecology is rendered life-threatening by its exploitation at the hands of the Stasi and other state authorities. Yet Hensel offers certain other planes along which this environment can be read, planes on which Gabriela might find freedom from those who victimize her. For instance, while sitting under her bridge Gabriela discovers a "Lust, die aus Besitzverhältnissen stammt" (pleasure that stems from ownership; *ibid.*, p. 8), the desire to view certain objects as "hers," and thereby assert herself with regard to others. Another kind of lust emerges in Gabriela's encounters with other women characters. She dances with her friend Katka on the low, marshy canal banks, and these dances are repeated at a formal event years later when, "[e]ng umschlungen" (closely entwined) with another woman, Gabriela feels a "kräftigen Rücken" (*sic*; powerful back) and recognizes Katka as her partner (*ibid.*, p. 103). At the end of the dance, Katka "hob mich in die Höhe" (lifted me up high; *ibid.*, p. 104), into a vertical plane that hovers over street level. This gesture recalls a more

problematically exciting instance when Gabriela's violin teacher Frau Popiol "hob mich hoch" (lifted me up) and kissed Gabriela as a child (ibid., p. 21). The repeat choreography of one woman lifting another leads to a less complicated euphoria when Gabriela and Katka find one another again, and after the dance they run "Frei [...] und voller Beifall" (free, and full of applause) through the streets before spending the night together (ibid., p. 104). These encounters, and the protective burrow offered by Frau Popiol's "Mooshäuschen" (moss-hut; ibid., p. 31), where she shelters the two girls from the police, seem to set them apart from the otherwise omnipresent regime of the Stasi in Hensel's city. They are located beneath street level, or otherwise they raise Gabriela to a level high above the ground. Yet the limits of such a queering or disruption of the city-surface are articulated when officer Paffrath surveils Popiol's house and denies that she ever lived there, and the Stasi enter the flat the morning after Gabriela and Katka's reunion. Katka has disappeared before Gabriela awakes, and she is herself forcibly collected from the apartment by her commanding officer Queck and his driver. In these last examples, the surface appearances of the city are subverted, but this time by the authorities who persecute Gabriela.

Leibnitz forms more than a backdrop to these exercises of power and bids for freedom. Its city architectures themselves furnish brief openings, such as Gabriela's mossy shelter by the canal, reminiscent of Kafka's ambivalent Burrow-space. These same architectures can also operate in complicity with the mastery of others, as the bridges over these shelters do, by providing the ideal viewing platforms for Gabriela's pursuers. In these depictions, Hensel allows her city space to interact with her characters, in a manner that shifts along with the agencies operating at given points in the plot. This shifting city topography can shield Gabriela in her vulnerability; it also provides the support for those who exploit that vulnerability in the service of the states that surround her. Hensel's use of such shifting topographies continues in *Falscher Hase*, wherein wartime Berlin is struck with "Wunden" (wounds; Hensel, 2005, p. 35), and the first postwar trains arrive "als versorgten sie die Stadt mit frischem Blut" (as if they were bringing fresh blood to the city; ibid., p. 55). Like *Falscher Hase*, Uwe Tellkamp's hugely successful satire set among the educated bourgeoisie of late-GDR Dresden, *Der Turm* (*The Tower*, 2008) focuses on the experiences of male family members of different generations who are drawn into the political events of their century: the protagonist Christian Hoffmann, who is imprisoned after attempting to resist the arbitrary violence carried out by his commanding officers in the *Volksarmee*, his father Richard, who is blackmailed by the Stasi, and his uncle, Meno Rohde, who distances himself from both the State and the

other inhabitants of the "Turmviertel," preferring to act as invisibly as possible, "mit gesenktem Kopf, fast unsichtbar, wie Staub" (with head lowered, almost invisible, like dust; Tellkamp, 2008, p. 504). As David Clarke has argued, this novel also engages with the interaction between city topography and individual character experience, whereby differing perceptions of the city, and of any possible "space of refuge" within it (Clarke, 2010, p. 501), are conditioned by the level of affiliation that characters experience toward the state apparatus.

The role played by city topography in the destinies of these characters is considerable, as is clearest in Hensel's depiction of Gabriela von Haßlau. Whereas in *Falscher Hase* the skin of Paffrath Senior was overlain with the dusty matter of the city, and although Tellkamp's Meno Rohde begins to *look like* dust, Gabriela's experience is more extreme. Not only are her clothes soaked through with "Brückenwasser" (bridge water) as she sits under her bridge (Hensel, 1994, p. 7), after her rape Gabriela crawls through "nachttaufeuchten Laub" (grass moist with night-dew) and over cobbles to the police station, and the ground's "Dreck" (muck) mixes in with her blood (ibid., p. 69). Later, she worries that on the streets her body could "bei lebendigem Leib verschimmeln" (go moldy while still alive; ibid., p. 72). As Gabriela's destiny unfolds, the city's substances also enter into her, soaking through clothes and skin, and in this manner revealing a condition of extreme subjection to an environment that operates under the control of others.

In *The Powers of Speech*, David Bathrick drew upon an image commonly evoked around unification, of the Stasi as a "Krake," an octopus "whose tentacles enveloped and indeed poisoned every aspect of East German public and private life" (Bathrick, 1995, p. 220). If the Stasi was a large and poisonous mollusc, slipping its limbs suffocatingly around the lives of East Germans, in these literary accounts it is emphatically a many-tentacled beast, a complex ministry with multiple arms and multiple agencies operating within it. This complex multiplicity of the Stasi organization gives rise in these works to an intractable problem of discerning the ethical motivation of those who worked within it. Thus, Hilbig's focalization on an individual who is coerced into participation in the Stasi's operations allows for a nuanced reading that can include sympathy for the Stasi informant floundering in a nightmare vision of the late GDR. Yet this character is not only a victim, for as in *Stille Zeile Sechs*, we observe W. making strikes for agency, so that at times he is seen directing operations, or engaging in surveillance missions of his own design. Hilbig's choices of image for the victimhood and the strikes for agency of his collaborator-subject are less problematic than those seen in Chapter 1, because the "systems" of coercion

that they evoke avoid the imagery of the GDR as concentration camp, instead teasing out power relations and psychological effects that appear as specific to East German state socialism itself. Thus W. does not suffer the traumatized symptoms of Maron's unwilling collaborator. On the other hand, there is a sense in which W. must remain powerless, like Polkowski, in the face of a larger system. This is a system that Hilbig brings to life with great skill, as a hall of mirrors peopled by figures who seem to have returned from the Romantic literary canon to haunt much later modernities with their disorienting optics.

Hilbig then sets this Romantic literary tradition into dizzying dialogue with two of the most transformative thinkers of power and agency in the twentieth century, Kafka and Foucault. By drawing on this multiple modern canon, the author was able to highlight the struggles and performances carried out by the Stasi's agents in the GDR's geographical spaces and in its communities. In concert with Foucault's interpretation of the systems of European modernity as closed worlds in which one might struggle for control or perform resistance, but never truly escape, in "*Ich*" the Stasi have achieved total infiltration of the literary underground, so that W.'s underground refuge is unveiled as a contingent and ultimately illusory "domain of the outlaw" (Foucault, 1991, p. 300)—one in which the famous discomfort of Kafka's characters is well housed. As such, Hilbig's fictionalization of the Stasi would appear as a perversely exaggerated modulation of the worlds that Kafka and Foucault envisaged, except that such a modulation did exist in the historical operations of the Stasi. In this sense, Hilbig's work merely communicates the perversions that were inherent in the Stasi's system, in a poetic form that is well placed to articulate their extreme potential for co-opting even the most reluctant of accomplices.

Also in concert with the Foucauldian and Kafkan images of the Stasi that Hilbig seeks out, the configuration of space in his novel is such that setting appears to dominate over character identity: the spaces through which W. moves work powerfully to destabilize his sense of himself and his role in the field of Stasi surveillance. The domination of space over character is shared, moreover, with Kerstin Hensel's novel of Stasi collaboration, so that together these texts shed light on Stasi surveillance *as a system*, one that was able to co-opt and manipulate its subjects through techniques of isolation and deprivation of information, through manipulation and through the threat (and in these key works of unification, the completion) of violence. These accounts of the Stasi as an all-encompassing system are powerful because they counter the tendency of post-unification press and public discourse to scapegoat individual perpetrators of Stasi surveillance. Moreover, since they are written by authors

who never agreed to collaborate with the Stasi, these renditions of the GDR as coercive system are especially convincing. The coercive power that operated in the GDR is also attested by the archives that were opened after the dissolution of the Stasi, archives that Hilbig was reading for the first time as he completed his novel. As the following two chapters will show, these archives of the Stasi's surveillance regime shed further light on the Ministry's techniques of coercing both its victims and those who consented to collaborate with it as IMs.

## Notes

- 1 Hilbig's readers will meet this double who has succeeded in leaving the GDR in Hilbig's final novel, *Das Provisorium (The Stop-Gap)*, 2000).
- 2 For a discussion of Hilbig's attitude towards Baudrillard's theories see Cooke, 2000, pp. 35–41.
- 3 Hensel has revealed that the name of her fictional city is derived from the combination of the eastern cities Leipzig and Chemnitz (cf. Steingröver, 2002, p. 105). Both heavily bombed during the Second World War and rebuilt as models of Soviet style, Leipzig and Chemnitz remain in stages of redevelopment and, in the case of the former at least, gentrification. These cities can be seen as historically scarred, the bombings, buildings, and rebuildings eradicating a discrete urban surface. (Of course the name Leibnitz also echoes that of the philosopher Gottfried Leibniz, whose indivisible monads could correspond here to the impossibly "sovereign" subjectivity which Feuerbach seems to model for W., and sit in contrast to the Hegelian divisibility of the collaborating subject of Judith Butler's account, as visited in Chapter 1.)



## Collaboration as Collapse in the Stasi Files and Life Writing of Monika Maron and Christa Wolf

Stasi chief Erich Mielke issued the command on 19 May 1967 that the East German secret police should understand its mission as follows:

Die Schaffung des entwickelten gesellschaftlichen Systems des Sozialismus in der souveränen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik verpflichtet die Organe des Ministeriums für Staatssicherheit, durch eine noch qualifiziertere politisch-operative Arbeit die sozialistische Menschengemeinschaft vor allen Angriffen des Gegners zu schützen und gleichzeitig zu ihrer weiteren Stärkung und Festigung sowie zur Entwicklung der sozialistischen Demokratie beizutragen.

(The achievement of the developed societal system of socialism in the sovereign German Democratic Republic obliges the organs of the Ministry for State Security, through even more qualified political-operative work, to protect the socialist people's collective from all attacks by the enemy and at the same time to contribute to the further strengthening and securing of the collective as well as to the development of socialist democracy; BStU, MfS, HA IX, Nr. 16034, p. 3.)

A human resource equivalent to the architectural security of the Berlin Wall, the Ministry for State Security was charged with protecting the stability of the GDR. This projected stability is figured in Mielke's command through a lexicon of strength (*Stärkung*) and securing, or fastening (*Festigung*), qualities of tight structuration that illustrate the aim for a sovereign resilience in the constitution of the country. The central role that unofficial Stasi collaborators played in this securitization project is attested by the increased rate of IM recruitment during times of unrest such as the uprising of 1953, the time preceding the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961 when Christa Wolf was an operative, and the era of German–German *Entspannungspolitik* (politics of détente) in the mid-1970s, during which Monika Maron was successfully recruited. At these key moments

of national insecurity, the Stasi's shadow-army of IMs was set to tasks meant to support the East German state's strategy for national resilience.

The documents that remain from the Stasi's internal training programs, now held in the Archive of the Federal Commissioner for the Stasi Files (BStU), contain a wealth of information regarding the methods that lay behind this security strategy, including the training of Stasi officers in recruiting and managing its army of unofficial collaborators. Special procedural attention was paid to selecting IMs, and to training their commanding officers as models of self-control and efficiency, who in turn could guide their unofficial spies in the execution of some of the Ministry's most delicate surveillance tasks. The control that the Ministry aimed to create through the painstaking preparation of its officers showed some success, as they were able to select and deploy large numbers of IMs in most areas of society until the autumn of 1989. On the other hand, the limits on such procedures of selection, control, and efficiency are testified by the works of literary life writing by former IMs that are discussed in this chapter alongside the documents of the training programs, none of which have been available until now to an English-speaking readership. As I show here, a co-reading of these literary works by IMs with the Stasi's procedural files provides a vocabulary necessary to understanding the phenomenon of Stasi collaboration. This is a vocabulary that goes far beyond the imagination of the Stasi as it set about preparing its spies for action; moreover it is one that escaped the scandal-hungry public discourses of the early unification years, discourses which have shaped the way that IM collaboration has been understood thus far.

Monika Maron was pursued for years by the Stasi. Nonetheless, she was among the authors and artists from the East who also consented to work as a spy, reporting under the codename "Mitsu" to the *Hauptverwaltung Aufklärung* (Foreign Intelligence Service; HVA) between October 1976 and May 1978. Despite the mostly innocuous nature of her work for the Stasi, the revelation of Maron's collaboration in 1995 was high-profile and transformed her reading public's view of her. Accounts of Maron's Stasi affair are available both in her own publications and in files held at the Stasi archive, some of which are undersigned by Maron, while others are unsigned or authored by other agents altogether. These Stasi files on Maron's case are the focus of the second section of this chapter. In contrast to the Stasi's programs for ensuring their ranks were as operationally resilient as possible, the documentation of Maron's Stasi collaboration reveals her encounter with the secret police as the result of a personal collapse. Moreover, the account that Maron gave of her case following the opening of the archive problematically calls into question the possibility



for responsibility in a subject who seems guided by unconscious response. Yet these archival and literary accounts, of a subject who collapses in the face of the Stasi's security techniques, hold a potential for transforming our view of collaboration with the Stasi. This potential is revealed here when Maron's works are set alongside the sections of her Stasi victim file that make visible the resources that the Stasi expended trying to *read* the true loyalties of this collaborator who would nonetheless remain mysterious to them, and indeed to her public after the collaboration was uncovered.

Maron informed for the Stasi in 1976–8, when the numbers of IMs were at their all-time peak of around 202–203,000 citizen spies (Müller-Enbergs, 2008b, p. 35). By contrast, when the famous author and intellectual Christa Wolf was recruited as a GMS in 1959, only around 77,800 unofficial informants were working for the Stasi (ibid., p. 35). Revealed in the first months after the archive's opening, Wolf's collaboration case captivated the post-unification press and public, as it was discovered that the best-known East German writer both at home and abroad was also, briefly and reluctantly, an IM before being victimized by the Stasi for three decades. Though their personal histories and literary oeuvres display important differences, there is an affinity between the writing that Maron produced after the revelation of her Stasi collaboration and that of Wolf, in particular in the final publication of Wolf's lifetime, *Stadt der Engel oder The Overcoat of Dr. Freud (City of Angels or The Overcoat of Dr. Freud*, 2010), whose narrator enters a state of collapse when her forgotten collaboration with the Stasi is uncovered by the press of the 1990s. The depiction of collapse in Wolf's final novel continues a concern present in her most controversial text, *Was bleibt (What Remains*, 1990), the publication of which left her open to vituperative attacks not only for its coming much too late as to be effective in criticizing the Stasi, but also for the apparent absence from its autobiographically informed narrative of any hint of the collaboration story that was later revealed. This return of the concerns of *Was bleibt* in Wolf's final publication in her lifetime underlines how decisive her brief work as an IM was in her life. Moreover, the haunting of Wolf's final work by the memory of her historical collaboration suggests that it remained not only unresolved, but was in fact impossible to resolve within the stark ethical framework that dominated the afterlife of the spy organization.

The images of collapse that are provided by the literary texts of former IMs sit in contrast to the textures and forms of resilience that are named in the Stasi's files as the goals of its securitizing program. In this sense, these works display a strange optimism with regard to the power wielded by the Stasi, one

that contrasts with the novels discussed in the previous chapters, with their depictions of collaboration as an imperative under the SED regime, in the face of which neither consent nor resistance were ultimately possible. For in their depictions of the collapse of the collaborating subject, these texts show up the project of control documented in the Stasi's files as always ending in failure. Though it may have succeeded in recruiting thousands of collaborators, the Stasi's actual aim, of gathering reliable information that could render the GDR entirely secure as a sovereign nation, failed to materialize. This failure is reflected in the literary form of these late works of East German writing, works that stand on the boundary between historical autobiography and experimental modernist fiction, and as such offer anything but reliable testimonies to concrete fact. Moreover, the collaborator-figures at the heart of their plots perform through personal and physiological collapse the decisive failure of the Stasi's project. Even as they collaborate in the systems whereby the Stasi hoped to secure knowledge about their subjects, the very agents who were meant to secure that information faint, they fall ill, are admitted to hospital, or begin to lose trust in their ability to make decisions and remember the events of their past. Yet as troubling though these accounts of personal collapse may be, and as painful as their effects are for the subjects in question, they also hint at the limits of the Stasi's operations. These works suggest that a certain agency is still available to the collaborating subject operating in the context of the Stasi—if not an agency that arises through conscious resistance, it is one that nonetheless makes it possible for them to undermine what otherwise seemed a failsafe surveillance regime.

### Selecting the Stasi's unofficial collaborators

The importance of the IMs to the Stasi's security project is attested by the care taken by the Ministry in devising the Guidelines for how IMs were to be recruited and managed. The first Guidelines for the recruitment of unofficial collaborators were set out in November 1952, in a document regarding the ideological reconnoitering of civilians who were to be approached to work as unofficial spies, as well as those who were to be asked to make their properties available as so-called "konspirative Wohnungen" (safe houses), the homes that were held in unofficial use by the Stasi. The document, Guideline 21, describes the techniques for garnering a "klares und umfassendes Bild" (clear and comprehensive image) of these civilian helpers (Müller-Enbergs, 2001, p. 168), including the gathering of

information on “Eigene Personalien [...] Verwandtschaft [...] Gewohnheiten, Leidenschaften” (personal details [...] relations [...] habits, passions; *ibid.*, p. 169), and the identification of *Faustpfänder*, those nuggets of information about the individual which could be used to persuade them to pledge their allegiance to the organization. Throughout the 1970s, after Mielke complained that the process of “Prüfung” (checking) the suitability of candidate IMs was too superficial (cited by Müller-Enbergs, 2008a, p. 42), the Guidelines were further refined. While the basic aim of the resulting Guideline of 8 December 1979 remained the same—to gather secure knowledge about the individuals with whom the Stasi was unofficially working—the focus on the personality of the IM is sharpened in it. The document, signed by Mielke himself, emphasizes “Eignung, Zuverlässigkeit und Gewinnungsmöglichkeit” (suitability, reliability and likelihood of being won over; Müller-Enbergs, 2001, p. 305) as the criteria for deciding if an unofficial operative is qualified for their tasks. The quality of suitability was to be assessed according to the commanding officer’s knowledge of the candidate IM’s personal and working life to date, as well as observations from their current life situation, and information that could be gained by interviewing their close family members. The second quality, reliability, should be clear from their behavior in society and their beliefs; meanwhile the likelihood of their being won over would be gleaned from their current material needs and any compromising factors that might lead them to agree to collaborate. These conditions having been checked, an official *Kontaktaufnahme* (establishment of contact) could be made, and meetings scheduled between the IM and the commanding officer. At this last stage before the collaboration officially began, the commanding officer was asked to pay attention to the individual’s political opinions, including any that were critical with regard to the Stasi.

The 1979 Guideline on the handling of IMs was the result of three decades of refining the techniques for the recruitment of collaborators, and it remained in force until the dissolution of the Stasi in 1989. Building upon its earlier iterations, the document sets out recommendations regarding the personality traits and the desirable ideological standpoint of an IM, and in so doing it also specified what was required of commanding officers working with them. Commanding officers (*Führungsoffiziere*) were the main point of contact between IMs and the rest of the Ministry. In 1988 there were around 15,000 *Führungsoffiziere* active, with varying responsibilities according to the perceived areas of danger and interest in their area. These senior members were required not only to be responsible and carry out their tasks with precision, but also to approach their work with an attitude that was “schöpferisch” (creative; BStU,

MfS, BdL/Dok 1523, p. 7), so that they could maintain the highest possible quality of operations. Moreover, as Korth, Jonak, and Scharbert wrote in a dissertation submitted at the Stasi's University, the *Juristische Hochschule*, commanding officers had to take particular care in the way in which they represented the Ministry to their IMs, because it was considered that one most effective "tschekistische Waffe" (espionage weapon) was the "Liebe zur IM-Arbeit" (love for the work of an IM; cited in Müller-Enbergs, 2008a, p. 8), a love that the *Führungsoffiziere* should actively work to generate. The creative measures that would be necessary to induce that kind of love for IM work might seem excessive, and indeed expensive, yet such measures were put into place under the specific encouragement of Mielke, who made clear in October 1982 that *Führungsoffiziere* should not use a lack of resources as an excuse to avoid "kompliziert[e] Werbungen" (complicated recruitment measures) to ensure the suitability of prospective IMs (cited by Müller-Enbergs, 2008a, p. 41).

A veritable model commanding officer, in his precision and commitment to thorough work in the recruitment of IMs, was Lutz Edel, Senior Lieutenant in the HA XX, the Stasi's notorious Twentieth Central Division that was responsible for spying on the cultural scene in the GDR, including its lively literary underground. Edel's signature regularly appears approving collaborator reports on East German authors, and alongside his work as a commanding officer, Edel also attended the *Juristische Hochschule* in Potsdam, where he submitted an undergraduate thesis analyzing the recruitment. Edel writes in the thesis that commanding officers such as himself are best served by "ideologisch reife und bewußte Menschen" (ideologically mature and conscious individuals) as collaborators (BStU, MF, VVS, 269/81, p. 8). Edel describes how, once selected, IMs should undergo a "politisch-ideologischen und tschekistischen Erziehung" (politico-ideological and espionage training) to improve these operative qualities (*ibid.*, p. 45). He also stipulates that those given the special task of infiltrating the literary sphere should be neither "sexuell hörig" (sexually dependent) upon nor intellectually "unterlegen" (subordinate) to the objects of their surveillance (*ibid.*, p. 59), so that they could maintain self-control within a scene considered susceptible to instability. The Ministry that Edel embodied was one in which high levels of self-control and detachment were prioritized as factors that should underlie the "love" of IM work that Korth et al. envisaged in their academic work on the subject.

Maron's recruitment as a Stasi collaborator in 1976 included the request to be open to serving the Stasi's missions "mit verschiedenen Mitteln, auch mit sexuellen" (using different methods, including sexual ones; BStU, ZA, AOP,

Nr. 6784/89, p. 276). The request testifies to a certain faith, on the part of her *Führungsoffiziere*, in Maron's ability to carry out her surveillance work with a degree of self-control, and indeed with a love for the work that would make her willing to sleep with the subjects of surveillance for it. Yet it is also likely that high-risk operations of this sort led to the unease in the Stasi's leadership that is evident in the transcripts of the Conference of the Lead Officers of the Regional Office of the Ministry for State Security, held in Potsdam in December 1986. The conference reviewed the year's work, and set the "politisch-operative und sicherstellende Ziele und Aufgaben" (political-operative and securitizing goals and tasks) for the coming months (BStU, BVfS Potsdam, AKG 494, p. 1). A portion of the minutes is devoted to "Arbeit mit IM" (work with unofficial collaborators), an area which continues to be "von besonderer Bedeutung und dringend notwendig" (of special importance and urgently necessary; *ibid.*, p. 14). Commanding officers in attendance are warned that the Stasi's mission is threatened "wenn sich Routine, mangelnde Wachsamkeit und Unordnung in die Zusammenarbeit einschleichen" (when routine, insufficient wakefulness and disorder creep into the collaboration; *ibid.*, p. 14). As a result, the speaker demands more "Logik und Rationalität" (logic and rationality) from his Stasi officers, and a more efficient use of resources (*ibid.*, p. 27). By the time the Wall fell, the core syllabus at the *Juristische Hochschule* included a year-long module comprising 259 hours, entitled "Die Arbeit mit IM sowie die Anwendung ausgewählter operativer und kriminalistischer Mittel und Methoden [...] zur Ermittlung und zweifelsfreien Identifizierung von Personen" (Working with IMs and Using Selected Operative and Criminological Means and Methods [...] for the Investigation and Identification of Individuals Beyond Doubt; Förster, 1994, p. 19). Such training of the officers who were to work with IMs occupied considerable resources. And yet, as the literary writing of East German collaborators attests, the Ministry that had prepared its procedures so carefully nonetheless found itself faced with a problem in controlling some of its most important operatives, the unofficial spies who, it seems, could hardly control themselves; nor, after German unification, could they give a controlled account of what their intentions and affiliations in the GDR had been.

### The "Mitsu" case: Monika Maron's critical collaboration

The Stasi's project of selecting a corps of loyal, reliable collaborators to help maintain the security of the GDR was doomed; this much was clear at the very

latest in the autumn of 1989. Yet, when viewed from a certain angle, the loyalty and reliability required to be an undercover operative were not so far from the desires of certain collaborators themselves. The best-known East German playwright, Heiner Müller, when his collaboration was revealed, was keen to stress a high level of control—in the sense of loyalty and reliability with regard to his own beliefs—that he had maintained during his encounters with the Stasi. He stated to the journalist Thomas Assheuer that “Ich war nicht erpreßbar” (they couldn’t blackmail me; Müller, 2003, p. 486), and “Die direkten Gespräche waren kontrollierte Gespräche” (any direct conversations were under [my] control; *ibid.*, p. 488). When pressed, Müller claimed that his self-control was resilient enough when he worked with the Stasi that he could not have contributed to their nefarious purposes. Yet it is not unthinkable that the Stasi could elicit less self-controlled behavior from its spies. When revelations continued into the mid-1990s, Monika Maron gave a contrasting account to that of Müller. Maron’s published works, in which she writes about her collaboration either in fictional or factual form, describe a *failure* in self-control, and so bear witness to a less resilient state than that which Müller claimed to have mastered, and that the Stasi would have desired for their informal collaborator.

Maron was raised in Berlin by her mother Hella Iglarz, a committed Communist. In 1955 Hella married Karl Maron, who was a member of the SED’s *Zentralkomitee* and the Party’s *Innenminister* from that year until 1963. After the marriage, Hella moved Monika from West to East Berlin to grow up with the man who went on to oversee the erection of the Berlin Wall in 1961. Hella’s Party loyalty led her to disown her daughter for a time, when the adult Maron began to publish her writing “in der falschen Stadt” (in the wrong city; Maron, 1993, p. 10), to the west of the Berlin Wall. The daughter’s relationship with Karl was even more strained, to the degree that she experienced a breakdown from relief at his death in 1975. The mourning process following the death of this despised stepfather is described towards the end of the autobiographical novel *Pawels Briefe* (*Pavel’s Letters*, 1999), whose narrator describes a physical breakdown, as a result of which she was admitted to hospital with cramps in her body, and lay unconscious for a short while. This narrator, who is as close to the author Maron herself in biographical detail as a literary character can be, attempts to account for the incident in the following terms:

Nicht der Schmerz, sondern daß ich keinen Schmerz empfinden konnte, daß ich diesen Tod wirklich als Befreiung erlebte, hat mein verwirrtes Hirn dem

ihm untergebenen Körper offenbar so viele falsche oder einander widersprechende Befehle erteilen lassen, bis er kollabierte.

(It wasn't the pain but the fact that I couldn't feel pain, that I really experienced this death as a liberation. This clearly made my confused mind give my body, that was subordinate to it, so many false or contradictory commands that it finally collapsed; Maron, 1999, p. 193.)

The narrator's body works here to document a process of impossible mourning. The shock of the death of a family member was overtaken by a secondary shock at realizing that she did not feel pain about it, and this conflict caused a physiological collapse. Like Polkowski's hysterical body that documents her unadmitted feelings toward Beerenbaum in *Stille Zeile Sechs*, the body of the autofictional narrator in *Pawels Briefe* offers evidence of a "Triumph der Überlebenden" (triumph of the survivors; *ibid.*, p. 194), one that paralyzes the character at first, but thereafter enables her to act freely. After recovering from her collapse, she goes on to be fully free of her stepfather, the inheritance that he left allowing her to buy a car, renounce her work as a journalist for the state-owned *Wochenpost*, and leave behind her cramped apartment, all of which events are recognizable from the author Maron's own life.

During the years after her stepfather's death, Monika Maron became something of an antihero to the GDR authorities. While Karl was still alive, her *Wochenpost* articles had profiled the good and the bad of working-class life in the GDR. After his death enabled her to cease work at the newspaper, she published several literary works with Fischer Press in the West. The first such publication, *Flugasche* (*Flight of Ashes*, 1981) with its plot of a persecuted journalist, conveyed a critical commentary regarding the SED's policies on the environment and on press freedom. The critical content and non-conformist literary aesthetic of *Flugasche* made Maron a figure of suspicion and ultimately the object of the Stasi's investigations, as documented at length in the Stasi file on her. However, between Karl's death and the *Operativer Vorgang* against her, Maron was involved in a collaboration with the state that her hated stepfather represented. This collaboration can be read as a second kind of collapse, this time of an ethical kind, following the death of Karl. This ethical collapse occurred when the conflicting demands of Maron's political loyalties and those placed on her externally, by the Stasi, came into clashing conflict.

The core character of *Flugasche*, Josefa Nadler, longs for nothing more than to be her own subject. Her attempts to control her life include the decision to live alone, one to which she tries to remain true despite the conflicting desire



she has for contact with others, as she sits in her very cold flat contemplating the implications of sovereign solitude. Above all, Nadler would like to be able to think for herself alone: “Ich wollte kein siamesischer Zwilling sein, der nur zweiköpfig denken kann” (I didn’t want to be a Siamese twin, who can only think with two minds; Maron, 1981, p. 22). Though this character is persecuted by the GDR authorities, and driven to the point of madness by her trial for critical journalism, she manages to resist giving up her ideals. In this sense, she maintains an integrity with regard to her own desires that suggests that the sense of “Halbheit” (halfness) that plagues her is more a universal problem than a result of the conditions of her individual life (ibid., p. 24).

Certainly, this inner conflict, of a self not fully at one with its own desires and actions, resonates with the self-contradictory event in the author’s own life when she agreed to work for the Stasi at the same time as she was drafting the critical novel *Flugasche*. Soon after her release from hospital, Maron was approached by the GDR’s secret service and agreed to work for the foreign intelligence arm as a *Kontaktperson*, a subcategory of IM. Her mission was to write reports on the West German citizens, diplomats, and journalists with whom she socialized on a number of trips to West Berlin. When Maron decided to end her contact with the Stasi, after around 18 months, the Ministry pursued an aggressive surveillance operation against her under the codename “Wildsau” (Wild Sow). This second codename, of which Maron was not aware until the archive’s opening, doubled her persona in the files, a shadowing of identity that emerged once again in the early 1990s, when the archive was divided into *Täterakten* (perpetrator files) and *Opferakten* (victim files), with differing access rules applying to each category.

The “Mitsu” story hit the headlines in the summer of 1995, and it made Maron an antihero again, now of the newly unified Germany. The late civil rights campaigner and former Stasi prisoner Bärbel Bohley was one of Maron’s most vociferous critics, and the press backlash included Bohley’s accusation in the *Spiegel* that Maron had operated at the very “Herz der Stasi” (heart of the Stasi; Bohley, 1995, p. 68). The *Spiegel* also interviewed Maron, asking why she decided to become involved with the secret police. She recalls having felt curiosity regarding the mystique surrounding the organization: “Alle redeten von der Stasi, da wollte ich wissen, wie die das machen, ich fand es spannend” (Everyone was talking about the Stasi, so I wanted to know how they do it, it excited my interest; “Stasi-Deckname Mitsu,” p. 149). Further justifications are provided in *Pawels Briefe*. Here readers learn that the trips that Maron made in order to report on the West Berlin cultural scene allowed her to visit



“Stätten ihrer Kindheit” (sites from her childhood) in the district of Neukölln (Maron, 1999, p. 147), and to carry out research for *Flugasche*. Her work as a *Kontaktperson* bestowed on her a liberty of movement denied to most East Germans, and she was compensated for her travels. In *Pawels Briefe*, Maron also defends her collaboration and the privileges that she enjoyed as a result, citing her belief at the time that the HVA was engaged in “gerechte Kämpfe” (a just war; *ibid.*, p. 197) against the enemies of socialism in the capitalist West. Finally, she denies having written anything untrue.

As Byrnes has noted, “the revelation about her Stasi involvement was all the more surprising in light of the unrelenting criticism of the GDR present throughout her writing” (Byrnes, 2011, p. 8). Indeed, Maron’s reading public had only known her as a fierce critic of the behavior of her fellow East Germans during the GDR years. In the early 1990s, she had used such essays as “Zonophobie” (Zonophobia; first published in the *Spiegel*) to express an “unüberwindlichen Ekel” (insuperable disgust) towards everything that recalled the former regime (Maron, 1993, p. 113), even down to the packages of meat sold in the new shops to cater for the tastes of the eastern states. The 1995 revelations threatened the reputation of an author who had set herself up as the sworn enemy of all things *Ost*. Yet the strong criticism that Maron received after the revelation of her Stasi affair does not find justification in the two reports that Maron—or rather, her Stasi persona Mitsu—wrote for the HVA.<sup>1</sup>

Mitsu’s reports exercise a cutting critique of the SED and its secret police. She criticizes the lack of “Meinungsfreiheit” (freedom of opinion) in the GDR, and expresses the wish for “eine bessere Wirtschaftsführung” (better economic leadership; BStU, ZA, AOP, Nr. 6784/89, p. 259). She also writes that the newspapers in the GDR are too dry and do not address economic problems, and she finds that Party functionaries do not speak freely, instead they read speeches from pieces of paper, and in addition that “Die Privilegien der Spitzenfunktionäre sind nicht maßvoll” (the privileges of the top bureaucrats are unreasonable; *ibid.*, p. 259). The criticisms are compounded by praise for the other Germany that Maron encountered on the west side of the Berlin Wall. In what is perhaps a precursor comment to the “Zonophobie” essay, she states that she prefers West Berlin consumer products and that in the GDR things are “häßlicher” (uglier) than in the “Sündenbabel des Imperialismus” (imperialist hotbed of vice; *ibid.*, p. 260). She preferred the atmosphere in the West, “in der nicht Klischees, organisierte Sprechchöre und unzählige Sicherheitsbeamte jedes Gefühl bremsen, ehe es auch nur entsteht” (where there aren’t clichés, organized choirs of speakers and countless security officials

putting the brakes on any kind of feeling before it even gets going; *ibid.*, p. 261). Mitsu's positive impressions gained during these visits to the West are unequivocally communicated to her *Führungsoffizier* on her return.

Mitsu writes, moreover, that in contrast, political groups in the East have their mouths, "Mäuler" like the maws of animals, stuffed "mit fertigen Sprüchen und stereotypen Formulierungen und vielsagenden Hinweisen auf den Klassenfeind" (with ready-made sayings, stereotyped formulations and telling hints about the class enemy; *ibid.*, p. 289). This S/M image of a stuffed maw is striking, yet in the second report Mitsu's critique is even stronger. In it she describes her "tiefstes Erlebnis in Westberlin" (most profound experience in West Berlin; *ibid.*, p. 287), which was a concert by the Greek songwriter Mikis Theodorakis. The lively and open atmosphere in the concert venue contrasted with the "Starre und Unbewohnbarkeit unserer Stadt" (paralysis and uninhabitability of our city; *ibid.*, p. 284), where East Berliners "fühlen sich beobachtet, abgehört und denunziert" (feel observed, bugged and denounced; *ibid.*, p. 287). Although the Stasi may have had some use for the rather general feedback that Maron gave, as Mitsu, on the West German cultural scene and the mood among her East German contemporaries, these are not the kinds of report that incriminated individuals or led to arrests. One might make a strong case that any kind of cooperation with the Stasi was harmful, since branches of the organization did cause real harm. This argument was made for instance by the author and Stasi-victim Hans-Joachim Schädlich (cf. Maron, 2000b, p. 36). The content of the Mitsu reports shows, however, that Maron's intentions for critique, even if they fell on deaf ears, were genuinely meant and passionately delivered.

While the reports signed by Maron as "Mitsu" are decidedly critical, much harder to decipher are those parts of the file written by her Stasi employers, which give an obscure account of the collaboration based on the impressions that they have been able to glean of their new operative. Maron's spying operations began in the same year that the poet and dissident Biermann was stripped of his East German citizenship and exiled to West Germany, an event that caused widespread protest among East German artists and intellectuals. It is curious, then, that in the Stasi reports of conversations with "Mitsu" about these events, the position of the latter becomes unclear. On the one hand, commanding officer Daum reports Mitsu's statement that she would be on the Biermann supporters' side "im Falle einer Zuspitzung der Situation" (if the situation were to come to a head; BStU, ZA, AOP, Nr. 6784/89, p. 259). Yet on the other, Mitsu is quoted as claiming not to have a problem with the cultural policies of East Germany, and "auch ein Fall BIERMANN könne daran nichts

ändern” (even cases like the “Biermann” one wouldn’t change that; *ibid.*, p. 259). The loyalty suggested by this latter reported statement is also attested by certain other, more practically collaborative tasks that “Mitsu” is alleged in the file to have performed, including “Kurierdienste in Form eines Transportes von verschiedenen Containern, deren Inhalt sie nicht kennt” (courier services, in the form of carrying various containers whose contents were unknown to her; BStU, MfS, Allg. P., Nr. 11009/78, p. 15), and drafting “[e]ine Konzeption für die Untersuchung sozial-politischer Probleme von Studenten in der DDR, der BRD und Westberlins” (a concept for how to investigate the socio-political problems experienced by students in East and West Germany and West Berlin; *ibid.*, p. 13). A certain personal loyalty is suggested, meanwhile, by contents in the file that depict Mitsu asking the advice of her commanding officer regarding “ihr Verhältnis zu Männern” (her relationship with men) and whether she should visit the United States (*ibid.*, p. 4), as well as an account that alleges that she was willing to share an early draft of *Flugasche* with her commanding officer “wenn es im Ministerium nicht zu sehr ‘rumgereicht wird’” (as long as it wasn’t “passed around” too much within the ministry; BStU, ZA, AOP, Nr. 6784/89, p. 257).

Such close collaboration of Maron and Daum is further suggested by a controversial report that she signed off after her last operative meeting “[m]it Tränen in den Augen” (with tears in her eyes; BStU, MfS, Allg. P., Nr. 11009/78, p. 4), a report that Maron has emphatically denied. More in line with the author’s claim that she had done “nichts Verwerfliches” (nothing reprehensible; Maron, 2000b, p. 34), the file also contains a statement by Maron that she refused to report on friends except “wenn einer ihrer Freunde Verbindung zu einem westlichen Geheimdienst aufnehme oder an einer konspirativen feindlichen Tätigkeit gegen die DDR teilnehme” (if one of her friends should take up contact with a Western secret service, or take part in conspiratorial enemy action against the GDR; BStU, ZA, AOP, Nr. 6784/89, p. 256). These pages state that Maron also withheld reports on people with whom she felt “in wesentlichen politischen Meinungen eng verbunden” (very close in substantial political opinions; *ibid.*, p. 256), or on any GDR citizens whom she meets in the West (cf. *ibid.*, p. 280). At the time of the revelations, the *Spiegel* suggested that what had arisen was “eine Art Doppelrolle” (a kind of double-role; “Stasi-Deckname Mitsu,” p. 149), with Maron wanting to profit from her connections through her stepfather while retaining her oppositional image before the public. The multiple authorship and, more importantly, unverified nature of much of her perpetrator file leaves the question open. Moreover, there is evidence that the Stasi itself doubted Maron’s affiliation, as the Second Central Division commissioned a report to ascertain

whether she was working out of “politisch-ideologischen Übereinstimmung mit dem MfS” (political-ideological agreement with the Stasi; BStU, ZA, AOP, Nr. 6784/89, p. 265). The file continues: “Ausgehend von dem vorliegenden Material ergeben sich [...] für die Verhaltensweise der MARON gegenüber der HVA im wesentlichen 2 Versionen” (on the basis of the material we have on Maron there are [...] two versions of her behavior in relation to the HVA; *ibid.*, p. 265). Unable to settle either way, Maron’s superiors conclude that their file on her is incomplete “und nicht exakt aussagt, wie mit ihr gearbeitet wurde” (and doesn’t give a clear sense of how the collaboration went; *ibid.*, p. 267). They therefore resolve to increase their ties with and influence on Maron, attempting “eine wirksame politisch-ideologische Einflußnahme, um sie an uns zu binden” (an effective ideological influence on her, in order to bind her to us; *ibid.*, p. 268). Meanwhile, they also begin a surveillance operation against her.

### Collaboration as failure of control in *Pawels Briefe*

Mitsu’s commanding officer struggled to determine his IM’s true motivation: was she a loyal helper of the Stasi or was she a dissident author only working with them to gain the temporary privilege to travel West? Curiously, this problem of legibility also emerges in the literary life writing that Maron published after the Stasi scandals. With its focus on the reluctant collaboration of Rosalind Polkowski, *Stille Zeile Sechs* could be read as an autofictional account of Maron’s collaboration, as I have argued at further length elsewhere (Ring, 2010a, p. 252).<sup>2</sup> In her later non-fiction collection, *Quer über die Gleise* (*Sideways Across the Tracks*, 2000), Maron went on to make direct comment on the case, delivered there with a tone of clear self-defense. However, along with the tale of unwilling collaboration in *Stille Zeile Sechs*, Maron’s family biography of 1999, *Pawels Briefe*, gives a more complex account of the decision to collaborate, and one that cannot be read as easily as Maron’s critics in the early 1990s might have wished.

While East Germans were enjoying the new liberty to write about their lives, free of both official and inner censorship under the SED regime, the coincidence of this new era of freedom with the heyday of postmodern thought and aesthetics complicated the status of autobiography. After the aesthetic innovations of the literary Romanticism that formed a touchstone for Hilbig’s depiction of the Stasi in “*Ich*”, postmodern literature and literary theory together heralded the end of aesthetic systematization and of the epistemological certainty that literary

authorship once promised. In this critical context, autobiography, which relies on rendering plausible, factual accounts of the author as an agent in history, was troubled. The combination of these collapses of ideological and aesthetic authority lent new popularity to the “autofiction” of Serge Doubrovsky, whose mode of writing Monica Kjellman-Chapin defines as “the retention of one’s real name and persona while maintaining insertion into imaginary life, or the creation of a fictional clone who narrates the author’s real existence” (Kjellman-Chapin, 2009, p. 148). The works of literary life writing that emerged after German unification are complicated not only by the fact that their authors had dealings with the Stasi in the past, but also by an aesthetic mode that resisted the kind of victim-perpetrator categorization at which the IM scandals were directed. Their characters and plots might map onto the lives of their authors, yet their literary qualities stretch beyond the autobiographical in a manner that allows the events of the past to be re-imagined and explored in their complexity, all the while potentially undermining their authors’ integrity in cases where they exercise poetic license regarding such a thorny topic as collaboration.

*Pawels Briefe* inhabits a more historically referential mode than autofiction in the Doubrovskian (anti)tradition. Subtitled as a *Familiengeschichte* (family history / story), the text employs the names of Maron’s family members and photographs taken from the author’s family archive. Maron has described the work as “eine ganz und gar kontrollierte Montage, die es mir ermöglicht hat, Vergangenes und Gegenwärtiges ständig in Bezug zu setzen” (an entirely controlled montage that enabled me to place the past and the present in constant relation to one another; Maron, 2000b, p. 108). Yet the text strays outside of the fact-oriented and author-controlled mode of autobiography. As such it can also be read as a *family romance*, with the Freudian resonances that the term carries, of the unconscious drives and complex identifications that shape the subject’s actions. In line with such a psychoanalytic reading, the plot circles around the “Erinnerungslücken” (lacunae in memory) that beset the narrator’s mother Hella (Maron, 1999, p. 17), which the narrator attempts to fill using an archive of letters dating from the deportation and murder of her grandfather, Pawel. It is fitting that this plot, with its central reflections on forgetting, closes with an account of a collaboration that is documented in the archive but had disappeared from the narrator’s memory. The “Mitsu” story appears, despite the author’s claims of control over the text’s “montage,” as an uncontrolled eruption in the novel’s plot just as it is ending. This late eruption gives credence to a suspicion that is indexed earlier in the text, namely that it might be unfair to focus on Hella’s memory-trouble. The narrator expresses a

discomfort at taking the position of filling in such gaps in her mother's memory, because she cannot be sure if her own memory is intact, or instead if it represents a "Neuinszenierung" (re-dramatization) dependent on her own desires and changing perspective (ibid., p. 167).

In the text's closing pages, the narrator lists the reasons that she can recall for collaborating with the Stasi, including a simple desire to travel—the collaboration won Maron a visa to the West that had previously been denied her—and the more complex "Traum von einer sinnvollen Tat" (dream of a meaningful act) following the death of her stepfather (ibid., p. 196). Not satisfied with relying on her own memory of this time, which was fraught with the strong psychodynamics of this family's story, the narrator instead turns to her friends' memories of how she presented herself when the Stasi approached her. Her friends remember her as "Ungeheuer energisch" (terribly energetic) at that time, "unbelehrbar" (unteachable), "und von dem Gedanken besessen, jede Sache ließe sich beeinflussen, regeln, verändern" (and obsessed by the idea that everything could be influenced, set right, changed; ibid., p. 195). Maron's close friends recall a decisive, agency-driven energy more set on influencing outside circumstances than susceptible to influence itself. It is all the more surprising, therefore, that the description of the collaboration in the text closes with a conversation in which the narrator probes with horror the states of mind that might have led her to commit acts that not only escape her memory, but may not have resulted from her own agency at all.

Maron's autobiographical narrator reacts to the accusation that she spied on a close friend, an event she cannot recall, and by which she is therefore particularly troubled, by considering situations "in denen ein Mensch etwas tun könnte, ohne später davon zu wissen, Hypnose, Schizophrenie oder andere krankhafte Zustände" (in which a person could do something and not know about it later, hypnosis, schizophrenia or other pathological states; ibid., p. 200). In such *pathological states*, the collaborator would lack the resilient agency that the Stasi's training programs aimed to ensure, and instead be led by unconscious drives and identifications. Maron's narrator concludes, and her mother reassures her, that she could not have been hypnotized into acting as the Stasi's puppet, since her intentions would have remained stronger than any attempts at coercion by her commanding officer. Yet the image remains of collaboration as a failure of control, and thus a complication of the collaborator's responsibility.

The closing pages of *Pawels Briefe* make clear the limits of trying to work with the GDR's most slippery power-body, if the collaborator's hope is all the while to maintain control of the consequences of her actions. Judith Butler's recent works

of moral philosophy have engaged with the problem of an agency that fails to control itself, and therefore cannot deliver an easily legible account of its actions in history. Following her work in the 1990s and early 2000s on the construction of gendered identities, Butler has moved on to explore the ways in which the influence of others and of our own unconscious agencies shape the accounts that we can give of ourselves, in a manner that illuminates the “blinder Fleck” (blind spot) with which Maron’s writing continues to be associated (Brändle, 2013, unpaginated). In *Giving an Account of Oneself*, Butler writes of a “shared, invariable, and partial blindness about ourselves” (Butler, 2005, p. 41), which must be taken into consideration as subjects encounter and recognize one another, and seek to render coherent descriptions of their lives. For Butler, the subject’s blindness to itself is a result, first of all, of default patterns of relating that are learnt along with language. Although we might adopt linguistic means of describing our experiences, these means are always marked as “ghosted, laden, persuasive, and tactical” (ibid., p. 63), qualities that may influence the practices of presenting the self after such accusations as Maron faced, in a manner that would prevent blame or loss of reputation. Moreover, any report that we might try to give of ourselves to others is heavy, in Butler’s account, with unconscious content that the speaker can never fully author. This further ghosting of the subject by its drives, lost memories, and unconscious desires means that the attempt to give account of, and take responsibility for, our actions forever risks failure. On the other hand, as the reception of Maron’s collaboration case shows, the account that subjects give of their actions will nonetheless be a principal means by which they are judged by their society. After the revelations, the history of Maron’s Stasi involvement influenced the reception of her literary works—yet it has not come to define them in any certain terms.

### The “Wildsau” file: The Stasi as reader

In the guise of “Mitsu,” Maron may have been a double-agent committing subterfuge as her *Führungsoffiziere* suspected, or she may have seen herself as a genuine co-worker who was willing to carry out her allotted tasks as long as they did not endanger her friends, and as long as the Stasi fulfilled its side of the contract and permitted her to travel to the West. In concert with Maron’s published accounts of her collaboration, the files of her case (or cases) show that her collaboration was almost certainly a critical one, carried out in conscious deliberation, and in the hope that her surveillance might even have some



positive effects. In line with this latter notion, in *Pawels Briefe* the narrator describes a hope that she nursed during her contact with the Stasi—namely for change: “ich erwartete irgend etwas, eine unverhoffte Wendung, eine unmögliche Möglichkeit” (I was expecting something, an un-hoped-for change, an impossible possibility; Maron, 1999, p. 197). Yet her hope to do some good by working with the Stasi was unlikely to succeed. When she revealed her true colors as a critic of the Stasi, the Ministry simply stopped working with her, and instead pursued the new case against her as their victim.

The sheer difference in size between the perpetrator file on “Mitsu” and the “Wildsau” file shows that Maron was far from the perpetrator that her critics in the *Spiegel* wished to make of her. For reasons of privacy, it is only possible to view limited portions of Maron’s victim file. In her response to the collaboration scandal, Maron referred to the part of the victim file, “der in der Sprache der Stasi zehn Jahre meines Lebens, einschließlich der Krankenakten, dokumentiert” (which documents, in the language of the Stasi, ten years of my life, including my health records; Maron, 2000b, p. 41). The intimate evidence contained in her file’s “victim” volumes explains why the author might wish to maintain them as a private archive, even if some publication from them might have exonerated her more effectively in the eyes of her public. The elements of the file that can still be viewed in the archive exclude these personal details, and instead allow readers to peruse reports and documentation pertaining to Maron’s literary oeuvre. Photocopied press cuttings sit alongside Stasi-typed protocols of Western Radio programs in which Maron is profiled or interviewed, with accompanying evaluations of their ideological content. These parts of the file cluster around the spring of 1987, when the GDR’s Ministry for Culture refused Maron a visa to give readings from her second novel, *Die Überläuferin* (*The [Female] Defector*, 1986), in West Germany. As the file records, this ban and the Ministry’s subsequent change of heart received considerable attention in the West German press. The file also contains IM reports on the readings that Maron delivered from her literary works in East and West Germany and in Switzerland. Finally, there is a set of evaluations of her publications that focus on their ideological and aesthetic aspects.

In these latter documents, we can observe the Stasi attempting to pin down the motivations behind Maron’s literary project. In November 1980 they commission a report, by the author, literary critic, and IM Ernst-Otto Luthardt, on some of Maron’s early short works. Dr Luthardt’s reading offers an interpretation of the problematically-named short prose work “Wer fürchtet sich vorm schwarzen Mann” (*Who’s Afraid of the Black Man*), in which a high-ranking functionary named Aurich suffers a heart attack and thereafter must view his



environment from below instead of above. Luthardt's exegesis of the collapse reads as follows:

Für den Leser entsteht der Eindruck, als wäre infolge der persönlich-schmerzlichen Zäsur schlichtweg *die Welt* durcheinandergeraten. Tatsächlich ist aber nur *seine, Aurichs jahrzehntelang für intakt gehaltene Welt* aus den Angeln gehoben und als das demaskiert worden, was sie trotz augenscheinlicher Funktionalität immer war: eine Illusion.

(The reader gains the impression that *the world* has fallen prey to a terrible mix-up thanks to this personally painful caesura. But in fact it is only *his, Aurich's world* that has come apart, *a world that he has held intact for decades* and is now uncovered as what it had always been, despite its apparent functionality, namely an illusion; MfS, HA XX, Nr. 3859, p. 18; emphasis in the original.)

Luthardt's reading of the collection is largely positive; he appreciates the "sicher und souverän" (sure and sovereign) manner in which this story makes vivid the change in Aurich's life (*ibid.*, p. 18), enjoys the "Vehemenz und Entschlossenheit" (vehemence and decisiveness) of the subsequent texts in the collection (*ibid.*, p. 18), and observes the "psychoanalytisch determinierten, Eros und Traum emanzipierenden Symbolismus" (psychoanalytically determined symbolism, that sets free both Eros and dream) in several of the pieces (*ibid.*, p. 19), especially the play *Ada und Evald* (*Ada and Evald*). Luthardt's essay was commissioned in order to provide the Stasi with a reading of Maron's work in terms of her views on the state and her possible threat, or usefulness, to the Stasi's missions.

Following his assessment, the file contains an unsigned "Gutachten zu Geschichten von Monika Maron" (report on the stories of Monika Maron), dated 29 December 1980, an evaluation that was written by a Stasi insider on the basis of Luthardt's report. Here the conclusions about Maron's writing are much less equivocal than in Luthardt's external review, with the internal writer confidently concluding: "Die Position von Monika Maron ist vom Haß gegen unsere Wirklichkeit [...] durchtränkt" (The position of Monika Maron is soaked through with hatred for our reality; *ibid.*, p. 29). The secondary assessment here, of "Wer fürchtet sich vorm schwarzen Mann," offers an equally unequivocal reading of the story's anti-GDR impetus as follows: "Die Geschichte ist voller Haß geschrieben, sie will kein Weltbild entwerfen, sie will auch keine besonders ausgeprägte Vorstellung vom Menschen entwickeln" (The story is written in a way that is full of hatred, it does not wish to project an image of the world, nor does it wish to develop any especially distinct conception of the individual; *ibid.*,

p. 30). Unlike the Party-approved literary works of Socialist Realism, peopled by the positive socialist protagonist of the *neuer Mensch*, Maron's works provide characters by whose emulation no readers will be inspired to work for the maintenance of GDR society, perhaps indeed because their image is not distinct enough to be "read" for its ideological standpoint at all.

Undeterred by this lack of distinctness, however, Maron's Stasi readership feels able to surmise that "Sie will nichts anderes, als die Macht bei uns zu denunzieren, sie will vor allem zeigen, daß es eine tiefe, absolut unüberbrückbare Kluft zwischen den 'Oberen' und den 'Unteren' gibt" (She wants nothing other than to denounce power here; she wants above all to show that there is a deep and absolutely unbridgeable cleft between those "above" and those "below"; *ibid.*, p. 30). On the other hand, the report also focuses on the story's depiction of power as "brüchig" (breakable; *ibid.*, p. 30), a failing sovereignty that the writer also finds in the short story "Audienz" (Audience), in which a young girl is granted an audience with a God whose failing sovereignty—"maskenhaft, angetan mit absurd wirkenden Dingen" (masquelike, adorned with absurd-seeming objects; *ibid.*, p. 31)—allegorically mocks the authorities in the GDR. The second report on Maron's stories takes the attempt by Luthardt to assess the ideological content of Maron's work much further and, as befits the Stasi's project to gain a "klares und umfassendes Bild" (clear and comprehensive image) of their IMs (Müller-Enbergs, 2001, p. 168), concludes with a clear condemnation of Maron's writing.

Yet this surface reading by the Stasi's internal reviewer, in its insistence on a clear image of the subject, neglects a crucial unreadability that Luthardt emphasizes in his report. Right at the opening, Luthardt states that Maron is producing a writing that cannot be pinned down, via "eine unerhört dichte, äußerst plastische, sehr kontrapunktische und vieldimensionierte Struktur des Erzählganzen" (a remarkably dense, extremely plastic, very contrapuntal and multidimensional structure of the narrative as a whole; MfS, HA XX, Nr. 3859, p. 17). In the face of such a narrative structure, Luthardt writes, "[m]an wird vergeblich Festes, Abgeschlossenes, Markiertes suchen" (it would be in vain to seek anything fixed, complete or marked; *ibid.*, p. 17). Moreover, Luthardt warns in his reading of *Ada und Evald* that any meaning or messages in the play's twelve episodes are obscured both by its dense narrative form and by the characters' obsession with themselves:

Die symbolisch-absurde Konsistenz dieses Textes ist so dicht, die Selbstbeschäftigung der Personen so massiv, daß *konkrete* gesellschaftliche Substanz in theatralischen Übungen untergeht.

(The symbolical-absurd consistency of this text is so dense, and the degree of the characters' concern with themselves so massive, that any *concrete* societal substance is entirely subsumed into theatrical exercises; *ibid.*, p. 19.)

He finally compares the fairytale qualities of the collection's concluding short story, "Annaeva," to Ingeborg Bachmann's late modernist writing: "wie im letzten Roman 'Malina' ist auch ihr Ich gefährdet, teilt sich" (like in the recent novel *Malina*, her "I" is also in danger, it splits from itself; *ibid.*, p. 20), and he quotes a passage where the character Annaeva describes herself in terms of "die zwei, die ich bin" (the two that I am; *ibid.*, p. 21). Luthardt would not have been surprised by the psychosomaticism of the collaborating subject in *Pawels Briefe*, who acts in a manner that is apparently split off from her conscious mind. The splitting self that he uncovers in his reading is not one that the Stasi, however, with their graphs, tables, and checklists for assessing the reliability of new IMs would be able to interpret.

In spite of Luthardt's pointers, including his perspicacious identification of the modernist author Bachmann as core influence for Maron's narrative style, the conclusion to the Stasi-internal report entirely overlooks the equivocal representation of the self in the early stories. Instead, the report is structured by a categorizing logic familiar from the Stasi training documents cited above, with their lists of motives for collaboration and techniques for identification and recruitment:

Man kann schon sagen, daß es sich a) völlig gegen unsere Welt richtet; b) daß es eine demonstrative Abkehr von ihr ist; c) daß es demzufolge auch Leute aktivieren kann, diesem Trieb zu folgen (sofern er bereits im Keim vorhanden ist).

(One can certainly say that it is a) entirely directly against our world; b) that it is a demonstrative retreat from said world; c) that it could therefore also mobilize people to follow this drive (in cases where it already exists in embryonic form); *ibid.*, p. 34.)

This list of conclusions contrasts starkly with the only inference that Luthardt is happy to make, namely that the texts have some message to impart concerning "der spröden Verletzbarkeit des Individuums" (the brittle vulnerability of the individual; *ibid.*, p. 21). In his Stasi-commissioned reading, Luthardt chanced upon the commitment to the literary mode, attested even in Maron's earliest works, of modernism. Borrowing from the psychology and aesthetics of modernist authors as diverse as Melville and Bachmann, Maron's writing

produces the image of a self captured in its incongruent and inconclusive parts, an image that meant her literary oeuvre would be unreadable in the GDR in several senses: first, it was unreadable for her Stasi observers, who attempted to reduce any complexity or ungraspability in these works to simplistic critiques of authority. It was unreadable, secondly, because this lack of understanding on the part of the GDR authorities led them to bar Maron's works from publication in the East, so that keen readers in the GDR needed to access bootlegged copies smuggled back in from the West. Finally, this unreadability of Maron's writing during the GDR years is reflected in the part of the "Wildsau" file that attempts to assess Maron's attitudes based on the statements she makes at readings of her works. In the sixth volume, an IM report on Maron's reading of *Die Überläuferin* at the Zionskirche on 28 May 1987 notes her surprisingly "loyal" behavior (BStU, ZA, AOP, Nr. 6784/89, Vol. VI, p. 94), based on the observation that her listeners cannot persuade Maron to answer questions about the particular political agenda of the text. A different report on the same event, signed by a Captain Neuberger, records a critical statement by Maron, namely that the writer Stephan Hermlin has recommended the publication of her books in the GDR, but that the Deputy Cultural Minister Höpcke has "dagegen ausgesprochen" (decided against it; MfS, HA XX, Nr. 3859, p. 220). Nonetheless, this critique is tempered by the additional statement that her recent experiences of travel in Switzerland exposed her to "eine ähnliche stickige Atmosphäre" (a similarly stifling atmosphere; *ibid.*, p. 220) as that which reigned in the GDR.

The Maron who appears here is not the outspoken critic who left the GDR to pursue a life in the capitalist West, and who on her return to the East experienced the nausea that is evoked so vividly in the "Zonophobie" essay. Yet her refusal to make a clear critical statement at the reading in the Zionskirche is not the sign of loyalty that the IM report approvingly identifies. By the late 1980s any GDR author giving a public reading of their work would be aware of the infiltration of the audience by several IMs, so that Maron's reticence here is more likely a sign of caution than of loyalty. By commissioning expert reviews of the work and sending unofficial collaborators to observe at close hand her comments after literary readings, the Stasi is trying to gain a sense of Maron. But, cautiously critical, Maron does not permit others to read her so easily. At the reading, she will not speak out openly as a critic of the GDR. Nor did she consent, in her collaboration, to helping the Stasi in its dubious attempts to protect the GDR beyond the very minimum required to help her travel to the West. This refusal to be clearly pinned down is in line with her late-modernist works which, as Luthardt notes, are as hard to categorize as her political loyalties.

## Collaboration as collapse in Christa Wolf's *Stadt der Engel* and *Was bleibt*

The difficulty that Judith Butler has identified, in giving an account of a self whose actions are profoundly shaped by external influences and unconscious agencies, is surely exacerbated in contexts where the words spoken or written about the self and its environment can lead to censorship, imprisonment, or exile. Stories by those who collaborated in the German dictatorships of the twentieth century are especially “ghosted,” as Christa Wolf recognized in her review of Günter Grass's novel *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel* (*Peeling the Onion*, 2006), a prominent West German work of post-unification autofiction, which includes an account of Grass's service as a teenager in the Waffen-SS. Wolf's review stresses that Grass never fired a shot, and himself came close to death three times. These were events, moreover, “[d]ie auch Grass, und mit ihm Tausende Kriegsheimkehrer, in sich zunächst ‘überschlagen,’ nämlich verdrängt und beschwiegen haben” (which Grass, and thousands of others who were returning from war, had at first “covered up,” in other words suppressed and kept silent within themselves; Wolf, 2012, p. 45). Within her sympathetic review of collaboration in the Nazi regime, Wolf also expressed her regret that Grass had not voiced stronger support when her collaboration with the Stasi had been revealed. Coming to light less than a year after the archive was opened, and more than a decade before the revelation of Grass's service in the Nazi military, Wolf's Stasi scandal was a veritable bombshell in the German media of 1993, as it provided the opportunity to uncover as an ex-IM the highest-profile literary writer from the former GDR. The lengthy discussions in news pages and editorials led to a crisis in Wolf's reputation, as this literary and moral authority was forced to admit she had forgotten her collaborative past, and covered it over in favor of the more personally painful history of victimization by the Stasi.

There is a sense in which Wolf's case is easier to read than that of Maron. The loyalty to the regime that Wolf expressed, and her regular, interior criticism of it, were both much more openly expressed throughout the GDR years, and she was also willing to engage more publicly than Maron was with the scandal around her collaboration after the fall of the Wall. Yet the problem of psychological illegibility, the unreadability of the self even to itself in Maron's Stasi story, also pertains to Wolf's case and to the writing that she released after the Stasi was dissolved. According to the Stasi files, from 1959 to 1962 Wolf worked for the Ministry first as a GI (*Gesellschaftlicher Informant* / societal informer)

and after that as a fully fledged IM (Vinke and Wolf, 1993, p. 143). In these roles she was known by her middle name, Margarete, a codename that she allegedly chose, but subsequently forgot until she was able to access her files in spring 1992. In her guise as Margarete, Wolf contributed to information on conflicts in the literary journal *Neue Deutsche Literatur's* editorial team, of which she was a member, and shared correspondence from its editorial office. She also reported on the atmosphere in the Writers' Union, and delivered accounts of "diejenigen Arbeiten, an denen Schriftsteller des Berliner Verbandes 1959 und 1960 [schrieben]" (those works that writers in the Berlin Union were writing in 1959 and 1960; *ibid.*, p. 147). The only document in the file that is signed by Wolf herself is an evaluation of the writer Walter Kaufman, wherein she describes him as "gefährdet [...] durch mangelhafte theoretische Kenntnisse" (endangered by his lack in theoretical knowledge; *ibid.*, p. 147). The language of dangerous lack—lack of vigilance and of rationality—that registered in the Potsdam conference's warning to commanding officers finds echoes in the words of Wolf in her informant guise. This echoing is also in tune with the writer's early affinity with the GDR, an affinity based on the fact that the new regime seemed to offer a complete change from the dictatorship that preceded it. This was a misreading of which not only Wolf was guilty.

Unlike Maron, who had been anti-SED since her childhood clashes with her stepfather, Wolf's experiences with the Stasi confronted her with deep disappointment in a state with which she had always attempted to engage. Yet even this loyal GDR insider was subject to checks and evaluation during her early GI work. Though her commanding officers are content that Wolf's attitude is "parteilich" (Party-loyal) and thus suggests that she will be "abwehrmäßig von großem Nutzen" (of great use to our defense efforts; *ibid.*, p. 147), they note that Wolf lacks the requisite "Liebe für unsere Aufgaben" (the necessary "Love" for our tasks; *ibid.*, p. 147), and they are concerned regarding certain qualities in her that they perceive as excessively hesitant. They impute this hesitancy to "einer gewissen intellektuellen Ängstlichkeit" (a certain intellectual anxiety; *ibid.*, p. 94), and seem confident that "intensieve [sic] Erziehungsarbeit" (intensive educational work) will help to overcome these "Schwächen des GI" (weaknesses in the informant; *ibid.*, p. 94). Such plans for the education of Margarete were indeed already put in place in the first documentation in the file, which prepared the initial evaluation of this potential collaborator, and already included a note to intervene and warn her against the "subjektivistischen Tendenzen" (subjective tendencies; *ibid.*, p. 89) of her writing, which strayed from the literary dogma of the era.

This early educational gesture failed, as Wolf went on in the later 1960s to develop the literary style that she termed “subjektive Authentizität” (subjective authenticity), and that is exemplified in the complex, psychological prose of her novel *Nachdenken über Christa T.* (*The Quest for Christa T.*, 1968). As Charity Scribner has observed, the mode of *subjektive Authentizität* already placed Wolf’s work at the border between “autobiography and denial” (cited by Schmitz-Burgard, 2011, p. 89), due to the insistent modernism of her writing that appeared more problematic when the story of her collaboration emerged. The revelations aroused suspicion of hypocrisy regarding the account in Wolf’s short prose work drafted in 1979 but not published until 1990, *Was bleibt*, in which the depiction of Stasi surveillance against a closely autobiographically informed narrator positioned Wolf as a victim of the GDR, where in fact she had continued to publish her works until its demise, and even been a candidate for the SED’s Central Committee. The author Erich Loest, who was held in the Stasi prison in Bautzen from 1957 until 1964, and whose writing rarely strayed from realist modes and plotlines, wrote in *Die Welt* newspaper that Wolf had set herself up as an “Opferlämmlein” (little sacrificial lamb) in *Was bleibt* (Loest, 1993, p. 151), and that the tale thus delivered a damningly partial account of Wolf’s dealings with the historical Stasi. That such an account could only ever be partial—and that it therefore necessitates a less totalizing mode of delivery—becomes clear in Wolf’s final novel published before her death.

The revelation of Wolf’s collaboration offers material for the major plot event in *Stadt der Engel*. The autofictional novel is set during a stay at the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles, which the historical Wolf visited in 1992–3. The narrator, an unnamed “Autorin belletristischer Bücher” (author of fictional books) who has gained international success with such titles as *Kindheitsmuster* and *Kassandra* (Wolf, 2010, p. 20), is in possession of a set of letters, sent to a now-deceased friend by a woman signing her name only as L., who fled Nazi Germany for Southern California and whom the narrator is determined to find. The letters offer an archive of loving words between friends, one to which the narrator turns for “Trost” (comfort; *ibid.*, p. 119). Other archives prove more ambivalent, however, as the news breaks back home of her incriminating Stasi files, leading to the collapse of her reputation including, as news spreads internationally, among her fellow researchers at the Getty Institute. Like Wolf, the narrator of *Stadt der Engel* wrote a number of IM reports in the distant socialist past. Moreover, it seems in the novel that, until she visited the archive after unification, the narrator had entirely forgotten the collaboration history contained in her slim *Täterakte*. This story of forgetting reflects that of the historical Wolf



herself, who wrote in January 1993 that she does not recall having functioned as an IM, though she does remember a number of visits from Stasi officers, with whom she conversed about cultural-political matters and the goings-on in the Writers' Union (cf. Vinke and Wolf, 1993, p. 143).

The revelations threaten the psychic stability of Wolf's narrator in *Stadt der Engel*, who succumbs to attacks of stress and panic, excessively high blood pressure, and a crisis of shame that she can only express in English, the German words provoking crises of rumination from which she struggles to emerge. These symptoms are linked back in the narrative to her hospitalization after the Eleventh Plenum of the SED's Central Committee in December 1965, when her criticism of Party policies was met with little support from those she considered peers, and she was committed to hospital, displaying symptoms of a breakdown. She was rehospitalized a matter of days before the fall of the Berlin Wall, as she argued for a democratic alternative to the SED in front of thousands of demonstrators at Berlin's Alexanderplatz, only to collapse as the result of a long-standing "Herzrhythmusstörung" (cardiac dysrhythmia; *ibid.*, p. 25). In the California of the early 1990s, visits to alternative medicine practitioners for joint pain, indulgence in the simple pleasures of ice cream, margaritas, *Star Trek*, and the purchase of a car to pursue what Kaleen Gallagher has termed a "drive to distraction" into inland Southern California (Gallagher, 2012, p. 388) do not protect the narrator from a further breakdown that sees her contemplating suicide one night.

In an attempt to document and, she hopes, overcome this crisis, the narrator continues to write in a journal that she began at the start of her trip. Its notations register as fragments, distinguished typographically as indented, capitalized eruptions throughout the novel, from which readers can trace a line of reflections on the scandal, on what might have motivated the collaboration that is its subject, and, crucially, on the difficulty of piecing facts together with the aid of a memory that resists recalling the past. Awakening from a dream of moving furniture across the porch of a house that appears regularly in her dreams, the narrator types: "DIESES SCHREIBWERK SCHIEBT SICH VORWÄRTS IN MIKROSKOPISCHEN DOSEN, GEGEN EINEN WIDERSTAND, DER SICH MIR ENTZIEHT, WENN ICH IHN BENENNEN WIL" (THIS WORK OF WRITING MOVES FORWARD IN MICROSCOPIC DOSES AGAINST A RESISTANCE THAT ESCAPES ME WHEN I GO TO NAME IT; Wolf, 2010, p. 107). Left in a cheerful mood after a character in the dream appears to advise her against wallowing in guilt, the narrator is able to assess, if not name, the effects of a resistance that is blocking the progress of her accounting for herself.



This is the psychic resistance that allowed her to forget the objects that attest to her collaboration, “eine Reihe von Behältnissen” (a series of containers) which remained “jahrelang in einem Kasten versteckt [...] die ‘sie’ nicht finden sollten” (hidden for years in a box that “they” were not meant to find; *ibid.*, p. 95). The evidence of collaboration is held in a Russian-doll arrangement of containers, their form affording an image of *mise-en-abyme* perfect for screening the collaboration—screening it both from her detractors and from her own mind.

Yet the collaboration that is documented by the Stasi’s papers must resurface, and it does so in the 1990s, against the narrator’s will. Whereas the real-life Wolf outed herself in the article “Eine Auskunft” (A Disclosure), published in the *Berliner Zeitung* on 21 January 1993, in *Stadt der Engel* the revelations happen to her literary subject, in a violently public manner that leads to personal collapse and a profound self-questioning like that of Maron’s narrator in *Pawels Briefe*. Confiding after the revelations in her friend in Los Angeles, a philosopher named Peter Gutman whose parents died in the Theresienstadt ghetto, Wolf’s narrator wonders:

Wer soll dieses Ich sein, das da berichtet. Es ist ja nicht nur, daß ich nicht sicher bin, wer sich da erinnert. Eines von den vielen Ichs, die sich, in schneller oder langsamer Folge, in mir abgelöst haben, die mich zu ihrem Wohnsitz gewählt haben.

(Who is this “I” supposed to be that is giving an account. It is not just that I am unsure who is remembering here. One of the many “I”s who, whether in quick or slow succession, have been rotating within me, who have chosen me for their dwelling place; *ibid.*, p. 214.)

The conversation with Gutman functions as an anti-account; rather than certainty, we read of a self in collapse, of a “me” in which several “I”s have made their dwelling in order to rotate roles, thus suggesting a passivity on the part of the narrating subject in whom these roles express themselves at will. Meanwhile, while it picks up the image of the house in the narrator’s recurring dreams, the image of the *dwelling* also recalls a sense of haunting that was described in relation to the narrator of *Was bleibt*, who felt she was driven by something that “hatte von mir Besitz ergriffen, sich in mir eingenistet und ein anderes Wesen aus mir gemacht” (had taken possession of me, lodged itself in me and made of me another; Wolf, 2001, p. 240). In a volume of *Text + Kritik* devoted to Wolf’s work, Renate Rechten has noted the prevalence of instances of uncanniness in Wolf’s writing since 1993, i.e. since the year of her Stasi disclosure. The preoccupation with ghostly, unreal, and even deathly experiences leads Rechten

to align Wolf's concerns with those of Derrida, whose "hauntology" finds the subject of late capitalism caught in an uncomfortable threshold state between living and something more ghostly (Rechtien, 2012, p. 129). Though her works turn their attention rather towards the East German past than to late capitalism, Wolf's literary subjects certainly dwell in a place that is haunted, and in this manner they even take on ghostly characteristics themselves. In Wolf's works, it is as if the "Ich" were inhabited by multiple selves, selves that are familiar and yet terribly other, and therefore capable of committing troubling acts.

For instance, while the source of the haunting that inhabits and drives the narrator of *Was bleibt* is not specified precisely, its description follows a paragraph that explores the psychodynamics of collaboration with the SED regime. Here, contrary to the accusations by Loest and others that Wolf had hidden her collaboration in this earlier tale, the topic is in fact raised, as her narrator tries to understand the Stasi officers who are observing her so distressingly, and wonders if they are able to execute their tasks thanks to "einem untilgbaren Hang zur Ein- und Unterordnung" (an irredeemable addiction to conformity and subordination; Wolf, 2001, p. 236). Furthermore, this earlier narrator wonders if other members of GDR society find themselves collaborating for similar reasons: "Wir, angstvoll doch auch [...] es gierte nach Unterwerfung und nach Genuß" (We too were timid [...] greedy for submission and for enjoyment; *ibid.*, p. 239). In such dynamics of collaboration, individual sovereignty would be subordinated to some aspect of the self that is named, in this grammatically uncanny construction, *es*. This is the *Es* (Id) of drive in Freud's psychoanalysis, or indeed a whole aggregate of drives that have made their dwelling within the self: the drive to be loved, to subordinate oneself, and to experience the enjoyment of shared labor in which self and other troublingly, enjoyably, collapse.

The possessed selves in Wolf's writing on collaboration display compatibility with the description of collaborating subjectivity in *Stille Zeile Sechs*. As Polkowski carries out her counter-intuitive task, she fights a suffocating invasion of her body by something that is both inside and other:

[Es] breitete sich etwas in mir aus, ein gestaltloses Gewächs, das sich um meine Adern schlang wie Ackerwinde, das um mein Herz wucherte und den Magen einschnürte, so daß ich manchmal fürchtete, es fehle meinem Brustkorb der Raum zum Atmen.

(Something was spreading itself inside of me, a shapeless growth, which slung itself around my arteries like bindweed, grew rampant around my heart and

bound my stomach tight, so that I sometimes felt afraid that my chest didn't have the space to breathe; Maron, 1991, p. 122.)

In these texts, published in the two decades after 1989, Wolf and Maron provide narratives of collaboration as an uncanny presence, one that makes its home in the subject, in ways that are viscerally physical or linguistically torturous, and that seem to make her commit acts over which she lacks control. In the post-unification era these collaborations then return in collapses—of the body, of reputation and of belief in the self—not least when that self seems to have modified its memories in order to conceal certain incriminating events that the archives document.

The subjects of Wolf's and Maron's autofiction challenge the authority of the Stasi, as subjects that cannot be assessed and categorized, or relied upon to be recruited, employed and decommissioned in the fashion that the courses at the *Juristische Hochschule* and the IM Guidelines foresaw. Some readers may find the incommensurability of these literary subjects and their difficulties in accounting for their actions tiresome, or even suspect a postmodern abdication of agency and therefore responsibility. Yet it is not the case for either Wolf or Maron that their works are resigned to the impossibility of agency. On the contrary, it is impossible to overlook a central focus in both writers' oeuvres on autonomy, and on authorship of her own actions by the subject. Maron's most recent novels are narrated by Arendtian figures, self-determined "Aktionistinnen" (actionists; Gilson, 2006, p. 101), who want nothing more than to decide on the course of their own lives. In *Stadt der Engel*, meanwhile, there is a corresponding, if retroactive, struggle to grasp through writing what the motivations and actions of the past actually were. Nonetheless, the nuanced authority of both of these oeuvres stems precisely from their authors' willingness to address the collapses that both seem to have experienced, their struggles to grasp agency within their society, and to secure authorship of their life stories. Maron's consideration in *Pawels Briefe*, expressed through her autobiographical narrator, that she might have been susceptible to a loss of control, may have failed to be loyal to her friends or to her own intentions, and Wolf's painfully minute renditions of a collapse in both memory and self-knowledge, demonstrate admirable levels of self-critique. Moreover, as testimonies of collaboration with the East German dictatorship, these works shed particular light on the problems experienced by a subject attempting to act from within conditions of surveillance and coercion.

Beyond the GDR context, this willingness that the two authors share, to explore the unsovereignty of the self over its own actions, sets them in dialogue

with the recent cultural theoretical work of Butler, who has described how any report that the modern subject might try to give of itself is laden with unconscious content that it can never fully author or authorize. As such, while these writings by former Stasi spies trace a particular failure in producing secure accounts of the East German past, and as both literary works and spy files fail to organize knowledge about the agencies of the past, they also have a message to impart about collaborations and complicities in the present-day West. These cases present us with a challenge: if the subject in the context of the Stasi is not a sovereign, reliable agent, how many of us reading these cases today would be susceptible to co-optation by surveillant elements in the present? Is this more global problem that is indexed by the passages in *Stadt der Engel* that refer to the FBI's persecution of European Communists who had fled wartime Europe. Together with the collapses of Maron's collaborating subject, these works offer at the very least a correction to any attempts to view the history of state socialism with too much surety of judgment. Such attempts would risk falling prey to a flawed logic of totalization—a logic that, as the Stasi found, could not take in the urgent challenge to control that its most crucial operatives posed.

These collapses, symptoms of a subject who cannot be held together with security, raises a host of ambivalences when read alongside the Stasi documents which shadow the real-life collaborator stories. First, these works depict a subject who, according to archival evidence, has collaborated with the Stasi. Secondly, as the evidence in these multiple documents suggests, the owners of these unboundaried or ill-contoured bodies are not (or not only) the subjects of their actions: as collaborators, they are also vulnerable to the body's tactile response systems that cause them to enter their states of collapse. The intervention of the Stasi into the lives of these unsovereign subjects went on to have serious consequences for the reputations of the former IMs when the press took up the re-authoring of those lives to fit the scandalous profile of the "collaborator" in the 1990s. Such intervention by the Stasi had even graver consequences, however, for the victims on whom its operatives and collaborators were reporting, victims such as Wolfgang Hilbig, whose Stasi files and life writing form the focus of the following chapter.

## Notes

- 1 Although much of the archive of the HVA was destroyed soon after unification, Maron's *Täterakten* remain intact, and after the revelations Maron chose to

- reproduce the spy reports that she had written in the collection of short prose works *Quer über die Gleise* (*Sideways Across the Tracks*, 2000), in slightly edited form compared to the version available in the archive.
- 2 In an interview with Richter, held in the wake of the resounding success of *Stille Zeile Sechs*, Maron revealed that “es war letztlich meine Geschichte, die ich erzählen wollte” (in the end it was my own story that I wished to tell; Richter, 1992, p. 5), so that the publication of this novel several years before the Stasi scandals problematizes Bohley’s accusation that Maron had made no reference to her collaboration before it was forcibly revealed, and thus that she had remained faithful to the Stasi in the sense that she kept their “Schweigepflicht” (duty of silence; Bohley, 1995, p. 70).



## Prison / Writing: The Subject of the Stasi Archive

Two-thirds of the way through Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck's 2006 blockbuster *Das Leben der Anderen* (*The Lives of Others*), the spy Gerhard Wiesler is shown visiting his commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Anton Grubitz. The setting is 1984 in the German Democratic Republic and Wiesler is reporting to discuss the progress of his spying mission against the playwright Georg Dreyman and the actress Christa-Maria Sieland. Before Wiesler can begin his report, Grubitz excitedly confides in him about a PhD project that he has recently supervised. His student has been at work sorting some of the Stasi's core objects of surveillance—authors, intellectuals, and artists—into five “Charakterprofile” (character profiles), distinct psychological categories of artistic temperament that can be catalogued, observed, and treated with surveillance and interrogation methods tailored to each type. Dreyman, for instance, is a “Typ 4: hysterischer Anthropozentriker” (Type 4: hysterical anthropocentric), who thrives on having an audience, and should therefore be kept in isolation and under no circumstances brought to a trial, in which his performance-prone character would thrive. When his film was released, von Donnersmarck emphasized the research that he had carried out in order to make the most authentic representation possible of the Stasi, its internal workings and its surveillance operations in wider East German society. Indeed, the documents accessible in the Archive of the Federal Commissioner for the Stasi Files attest that the historical Ministry was interested in scrutinizing the personalities of its subjects, both the IMs who were instrumental in its operations and the victims whose lives would be so affected by them. By studying the subjects of its operations, and maintaining the results of these investigations in its vast archive of files, the Stasi hoped to gain a level of control over the population of the GDR such as no previous surveillance organization could have achieved.

The last chapter sought archival evidence of cases in which the Stasi collaborator was not sufficiently in control of herself that she could say a clear “yes” or “no” to working with the Stasi. This chapter takes in another perspective from the archive, that of an author who refused to collaborate, and instead became the Stasi’s victim. The following pages introduce a combination of textual sources, from cultural theory, Wolfgang Hilbig’s literary writing, and the Stasi files themselves, in order to explore this alternative perspective on the operations of the Stasi. In the process, they shed light on the status of the Stasi files themselves, as a body of information that was gathered on the citizens of East Germany with a view to controlling them and thus maintaining the security of the young socialist state. The archive that the Stasi left behind, containing behavioral profiles and physiological details, spy reports and interview protocols, had serious consequences for those victims whose lives were captured in its pages. Yet whether the Stasi could ever have been successful in gaining the control to which this massive archival undertaking was directed remains in question. The imperfection of the Stasi’s archival project is a deciding factor in understanding the effects on the subject of its surveillance, as well as the means by which that subject resisted in its very constitution the kind of control at which the Stasi aimed.

Two of the most influential cultural theorists of the twentieth century, Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault, agreed on the fundamental aim of archives to preserve the documents or objects in their keeping in as comprehensive and stable a form as possible. Yet, as the first part of this chapter demonstrates, their theories of the archive also shed light on the instability that results from this totalizing aim. Mindful of the instability of the fledgling socialist state, the Stasi set out to gather a stable totality of information on the citizens of East Germany, and it provided training for its officers in the correct techniques for maintaining its spy files accordingly. The documents of these training projects reveal the goal of the Ministry as a *flächendeckende Überwachung*, a complete surface-coverage of surveillance, whose results were to be recorded in an archive displaying the ideal unity to which Derrida’s archive aspires in his lecture of 1994, *Archive Fever*, and which characterized the “stone-smooth words” that Foucault and his colleague Arlette Farge found captured in the archives of the Bastille (Foucault, 2002, p. 158). In the second part of the chapter, my application of these influential theories to the archive of Stasi training files sheds new light on the differences between Foucault’s and Derrida’s visions of archival stability; moreover, this theoretical reading of the Stasi files demonstrates the difficulty that it was bound to have in securing stable control over the subject that it was tracking.



A close reading of the case of surveillance against Wolfgang Hilbig, who was spied upon under the rubric of an official *Operative Personenkontrolle* (full-scale surveillance operation / OPK) from January 1982 to August 1987, allows for an examination of the practical application of the Stasi's training programs. The operation against Hilbig offers an exemplary case of the Stasi's totalizing archival techniques: in it, his pursuers aim to keep track of their victim's life in a manner that captures that life in both fullness and detail. As such, the case seems to present a horribly successful example of the Stasi's goal for control over the lives of its subjects, a control that ironically resembled *authorship*, as the Ministry proceeded to imprison the writer, and in various ways shape the course of his publishing career, his ability to travel, and finally the country in which he lived. The stories that Hilbig wrote immediately after his imprisonment reflect this authorial quality of the Stasi's procedures. His first works to emerge after the experience of incarceration work through the Stasi's operations in painful psychological detail. Moreover, their particular focus on the linguistic and textual aspects of these experiences further emphasizes the centrality of the Stasi's spy files, those texts in which lives were documented and manipulated, for understanding the effects of Stasi surveillance and coercion on its subject.

Hilbig's case files and the short works he wrote after his imprisonment show East German state power as an aggregate not only of spies and collaborators, but also of interrogators and archivists, who were themselves linked into networks of censors and bureaucrats, expert literary reviewers who would evaluate the ideological qualities of a work before its publication could be considered, and a court system whose paperwork decided the fate of its victims. As such, in certain of Hilbig's depictions, the written word of the Stasi has the power to determine the freedom or incarceration of his characters and thereby define the course of their lives. And yet, even given the tragic effectiveness of the Stasi's intervention into Hilbig's own life, this author was also able to deliver a perspective on the limits of such determination. Curiously, it is in his most clearly autobiographical works, works that deal with some of the worst aspects of Stasi victimization, that the flaws in the Stasi's project begin to emerge. Like the author, the literary subjects of these post-prison works undergo some of the worst treatment that the Stasi was able to carry out, and yet their depiction by Hilbig calls the ambitions of the Stasi's archival project radically into question. In opposition to the Ministry's ambitions of total surveillance and archivization, his prose captures a subject in crisis with regard both to the self and the language of its expression. Difficult as such a crisis must surely be, this is nonetheless a subject that, in its most painful states of being, resists capture and thus undermines the Stasi's hopes for control.

## Cultural theories of the archive: Totalizing assemblage and miniscule commotion

Both Derrida and Foucault recognized the power of archives as sites of storage that do not only record, but also produce knowledge about the objects in their keeping. In their accounts, the fundamental gesture of the archive, to store information, is also a gesture of generating the knowledge that is available to the societies that maintain archives, and that rely on them for their collective memory and history. Thus Derrida's archive is the origin "from which *order* is given" (Derrida, 1998, p. 1; emphasis in the original), its operations "of unification, of identification, of classification" not merely organizing but also shaping the information that it processes (*ibid.*, p. 3). Meanwhile, the archive in Foucault's *Archaeology of Knowledge* lays down "the law of what can be said" (Foucault, 2007a, p. 4). Registration of a fact or a person in this archive is "not a condition of validity for statements, but a condition of reality" (*ibid.*, p. 143). On the other hand, the relative integrity of these archival institutions, and their consequent ability to ordain what can be classified as existing in a given society, differ between the visions of these two influential poststructuralist theorists.

In *Archive Fever*, his lecture held in collaboration with the Freud Museum, the Courtauld Institute, and the *Société internationale d'histoire de la psychiatrie et de la psychanalyse* in June 1994, Derrida presented his view of the archive as an authoritarian institution that strives to keep its contents in an impossibly orderly totality. The lecture opens by tracking the etymology of the term to the Greek noun *arkhē*, which signifies both commencement and commandment, and forms the noun *arkheion*, the home of the *archons*, magistrates who stored the documents of the law. Watching over these documents, Derrida writes, the archons "not only ensure the physical security of what is deposited [...] They are also accorded the hermeneutic right" (Derrida, 1998, p. 2). Out of that dual origin, of storage and interpretation, archives have continued to operate by "*gathering together signs* [...] to coordinate a single corpus" (*ibid.*, p. 3; emphasis in the original). Such hermeneutic operations allow the law that archives encode to be held and applied. Yet, in Derrida's account, the content of this juridical corpus does not remain orderly or fixed; instead, an "aggression and destruction drive" threatens its integrity (*ibid.*, p. 19). Derrida draws for his understanding of the archive on Freud's discovery of the death drive, that "*Wiederholungszwang* [...] *der sich über das Lustprinzip hinaussetzt*" (compulsion to repeat [...] which overrides the pleasure principle; Freud, 1920, p. 20; Freud, 1940, p. 22). Freud

identified the death drive in the patterns of repetitive thought or action to which his patients were compelled in spite of their failure to produce any healing effect.

The drive that tormented the subjects of Freud's late essay "Jenseits des Lustprinzips" (Beyond the Pleasure Principle, 1920), accounts for the "triebhaftes [...] Streben" (driven [...] striving) in which "der lebende Organismus sich auf das energischste gegen Einwirkungen [...] sträubt, die ihm dazu verhelfen könnten, sein Lebensziel auf kurzem Wege [...] zu erreichen" (the living organism struggles most energetically against events which might help it to attain its life's aim rapidly; Freud, 1920, p. 38; Freud, 1940, p. 39). Derrida's account adapts Freud's writing on the death drive, to assert that the archive is beset by a mortal *mal* or sickness that eats away at the tight limits of the whole. Making explicit its inheritance from Freud, the *mal* that afflicts Derrida's archival assemblage is described in his lecture as a "repetition compulsion," whereby the archive feverishly labors to secure its contents through techniques of "reproduction" and "reimpression" (Derrida, 1998, p. 14). These are the practices of totalization on which the archive is built, but which generate an unintended instability at the very heart of the institution, against which it must struggle to maintain the security of its contents.

Where Derrida saw death-drive and a tightening of the archive's totality against it, Foucault identified a more localized potential for disruption in a set of informant letters dating from 1660 to 1760, which are held in the archives of the Bastille that Foucault visited in collaboration with his colleague Arlette Farge. For Foucault, the instability of this latter archive stems not from its impossible desire to hold, but from an an-archic energy that pulses out from the lives that it ostensibly governed. His essay "Lives of Infamous Men" (1977) sets out a program for reading an anthology of petitions to the King of France, that were submitted by ordinary citizens seeking the punishment of their acquaintances and family members. While a clerk implores the King to act against his wife, "the cruelest of all women" (Foucault, 2002, p. 164), a wet-nurse requests that her absent husband be arrested as "a terrible example of the effects of disorder" (ibid., p. 165). In answer to these incriminating letters came *lettres de cachet*, documents in which the royal authorities approved the confinement of the subjects in question. Corresponding to the authoritarian power that Derrida's archive attempts to wield, the poison-pen letters and royal arrest warrants viewed by Foucault and Farge held a power that did not only record events in their subjects' lives, but operated a sovereignty of decision, either withholding or conferring the fate requested by the petitioners. On the other hand, as Foucault writes after his visit to the archive, this new recording mechanism

displayed certain unintended qualities, for instance a “strange intensity, and [...] a kind of beauty” (ibid., p. 167). Although the letters were the means by which lives were extinguished, they remain in an archive whose form preserves their subjects, in poignant and at times chillingly comic stories. As such, for Foucault, these are “poem-lives” that “flash” with a power of their own (ibid., p. 159), so that the subjects of this archive seem able to break out of its totalizing keeping, and threaten thereby to collapse its integrity entirely.

A second unintended quality of the archive that Foucault and Farge consulted was the recognition that its contents bestowed upon the “miniscule commotions” of “the lowliest men” (ibid., p. 169). By drawing royal attention to local conflicts, citizens risked the confinement of their peers and loved ones. Yet such drawing-down of sovereign power could also present “the opportunity to divert its effects to one’s own benefit, for anyone clever enough to do so” (ibid., p. 168). Given the consequences of the petitions, any attempt to play with them would be risky indeed. Foucault renders the precarity at stake here with clarity, in his image of wretched players, cloaked in “make-shift scraps of old finery” (ibid., p. 171), who through their appearance in the archive perform so very briefly on the stage of power. The image evokes, nonetheless, the potential for a kind of anarchival play, one that might exploit an epistemological instability that Foucault had identified in his early work. He wrote in 1969: “Nor is the archive that which collects the dust of statements that have become inert” (Foucault, 2007a, p. 146). Instead, the archive in this earlier account maintains a dynamic and even anarchic form, as a “web of which they [the authors; *AR*] are not the masters” (ibid., p. 143). Intended to bind the power of its authors securely, Foucault’s archival institution nonetheless exhibits gaps that might allow some flexibility for commotion, or gaps for contestation. Such flexibility indicates that the archive’s content can be re-interrogated, fall into other hands, and be subject to readings that challenge its law-giving principle. In the writing that the Stasi produced about the function of its own archives, the Ministry appears aware of the risks of instability that threaten its file-keeping. Prescient of the forms of instability that might exist within a fledgling socialist society, not least one in which coercion and surveillance had overtaken early hopes for democracy, the Stasi set as its goal the creation of a level of security that would keep commotion at bay in East German society. Central to this goal was the maintenance of the Stasi archive, a project to which it devoted considerable resources as the GDR entered its final two decades.

## A whole image of the subject in the Stasi's prison archive

When the Stasi archive was opened in 1992, it revealed the details of thousands of surveillance cases against East German citizens who were considered risky or suspect by the authorities. It also brought to light procedural documents that laid out the Stasi's aims for the production of a totality of information in its files, those kept on civilians under observation, but in particular on those who were subject to arrest and interrogation in the Stasi's dedicated prisons. Mielke's command of 19 May 1967, cited at the start of Chapter 3, goes on to describe the objective of the Stasi archive as “[d]ie gründliche, lückenlose und erfolgreiche Aufklärung” (the fundamental, gapless and successful illumination) of crimes against the state (BStU, MfS, HA IX, Nr. 16034, p. 3). Accordingly, such adjectives as *gründlich*, *umfassend*, and perhaps the most popular, *flächendeckend* (literally, surface-covering) figure with stunning repetition in the Stasi's descriptions of its surveillance activities. These are the qualities of blanket coverage that gave the Ministry its post-Cold War reputation for chilling exactitude, and their repetition in the files themselves testifies to the centrality of the Ministry's ambition for an archivization *without holes*. Thus, the minutes of the Conference of the Lead Officers of the Regional Office of the Ministry for State Security in December 1986 show the head of the Potsdam regional office exhorting his officers to exercise “umfassende Analyse” (comprehensive analysis), “gründliche Vorbereitung” (thorough preparation), and “die Konzentration auf das Wesentliche und konsequenter Verzicht auf irrelevanten Ballast sowohl im Treffgespräch wie auch in den Berichten und Informationen” (concentration on the task at hand, and consequent avoidance of irrelevant ballast both in conspiratorial discussions and in the reports and information; BStU, BVfS Potsdam, AKG 494, p. 27). The speaker stipulates meanwhile that the written files kept by these efficient officers should represent “eine lückenlose und aktuelle Bereitstellung und Weiterleitung aller [...] operativ bedeutsamen Informationen” (a gapless and up-to-date preparation and circulation of all operatively relevant information; *ibid.*, p. 40). Trained in a comportment that was consistent, relevant, and focussed, the Stasi's officers were also required to maintain consistent and complete record of the information that they gathered. The sheer scale of the archive left behind by the Stasi suggests that its ambition for comprehensive surveillance coverage, meant to bring to light disloyalty where it was taking place, was at least partly successful.

A special opportunity for gathering more complete information on the victims of spy operations was presented by their arrest. As such, in the 1970s

and early 1980s special instruction was given to officers with regard to the records they should keep on detainees in their interrogation prisons. The aim of such record-keeping, as a document from 1985 concerning the first interrogation of prisoners states, is to produce “das vollständige Bild von der Person des Beschuldigten” (the complete image of the personality of the accused; BStU, MfS, HA IX, Nr. 4740, p. 106). The author of this document, Berndt Michael, writes that such a full picture can be garnered from “Dokumenten über das Verhalten des Beschuldigten in anderen Lebensbereichen” (documents about the behavior of the accused in other areas of life; *ibid.*, p. 106). Such documents should already be gathered during the time before an arrest and first interrogation, Michael writes, because “Berichte und Informationen über das Verhalten des Beschuldigten vor der Inhaftierung objektiver sind als danach” (reports and information about the behavior of the accused dating from before the arrest are more objective than afterwards; *ibid.*, p. 106). The generative effect of handling by the Stasi, in other words the tendency of the arrest and interrogation to shape a detainee’s behavior, are taken into account. After the arrest, Michael goes on to write, interrogators should make use of the arrestee’s decreased “Orientationsfähigkeit” (capacity to orient themselves; *ibid.*, p. 107), which will result from the fact that new prisoners find themselves “in einer Lage der Ungewißheit über den weiteren Fortgang der Sache” (in a position of uncertainty concerning the way in which the matter will proceed; *ibid.*, p. 107). Sure of inhabiting a greater position of security than that enjoyed by the prisoner, the interrogating officer can set about gathering a full picture of his or her personality, even as the experience of the arrest proceeds to change that personality before the officer’s very eyes.

Keen to capture a full image of its victims, the Stasi’s leadership also instructed officers to gather information not only on the personalities of those they arrested, but also to record new detainees’ vital bodily statistics in a *Mießblatt* (measuring-sheet; MfS, HA IX, Nr. 16034, p. 95), as shown in Fig. 1. This image from the Stasi’s archive of procedural documents shows the Ministry at its bureaucratic peak. It devoted itself to painstaking techniques of biopolitical identification, concerning both the psychology and the physicality of the arrested person, and then passed on these techniques to a new generation of officers. Thus students attending a seminar at the *Juristische Hochschule* in 1984, on “Personenidentifizierung” (the identification of persons; BStU, MfS, HA IX, Nr. 9657, p. 45), listed the physiological details and other characteristics that they would be required to account for after the arrest of a suspect. One student’s notes list the order in which these details should be ascertained, as shown in Fig. 2.



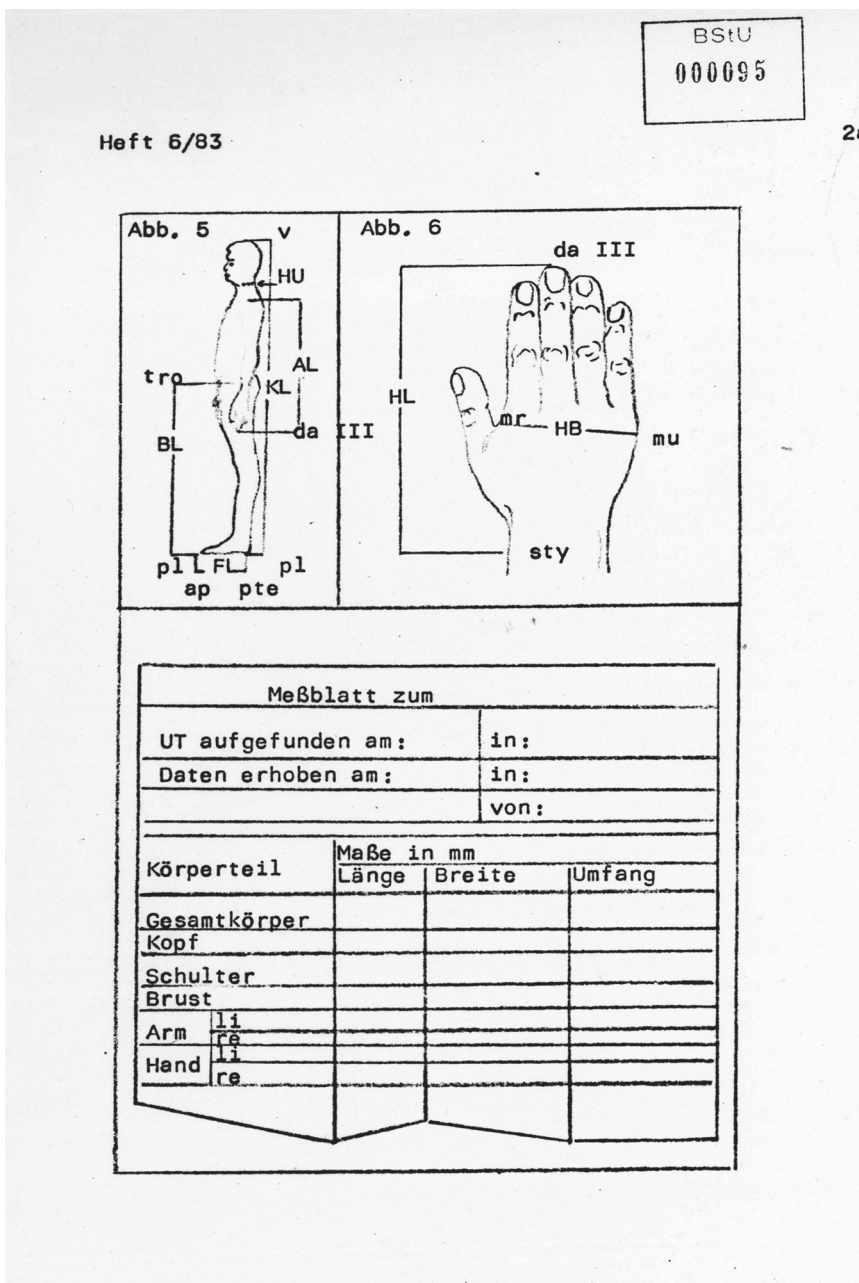


Fig. 1: "Meßblatt" (measuring-sheet) for new detainees of the Stasi. From MfS, HA IX, Nr. 16034, p. 95.

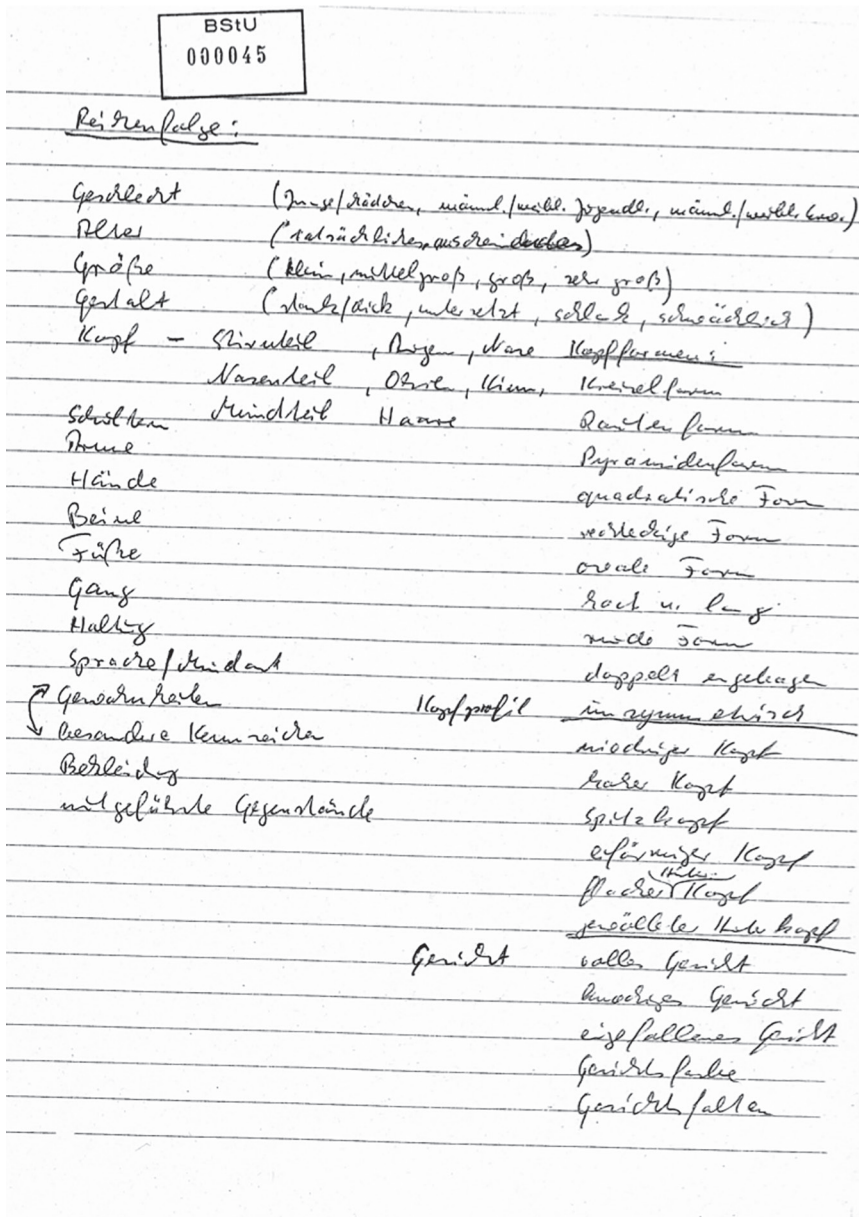


Fig. 2: Student notes from the seminar "Personenidentifizierung" (the identification of persons) at the *Juristische Hochschule* in 1984. From BStU, MfS, HA IX, Nr. 9657, p. 45



As well as the corporeal markers that would be recorded in the *Mefßblatt* in Fig. 1, the list contains such close details as “Gesichtsfalten” (ibid., p. 45), the wrinkles delineating a subject’s face. Thus, in ever finer detail, the Stasi pursued the twofold project of capturing the image of its subjects, first securing the physiological markers that would enable them to identify their victims, based on this archive, in the future. Second, officers were prepared to keep track of the inner lives of its subjects, lives which, according to its own training documents, were susceptible to being shaped by that very act of tracking.

The difficulty presented by this latter aspect of the Stasi’s investigations led to the introduction in the 1980s of a new discipline into the criminology degree at the *Juristische Hochschule*, entitled “Operative Psychologie” (Operative Psychology; BStU, MfS, HA XVIII, Nr. 18407, p. 64). This new area of study borrowed concepts from both Soviet and Western psychoanalytic traditions in order to prepare officers for managing victim risk-behaviors. Officers graduating from the *Hochschule* were thus prepared to collate an archive of character portraits, in files that contained not only IM reports and evaluations by official Stasi employees, but also protocols of interviews with family members of detainees. In practice, it was most often mothers who were called into the Stasi prisons and questioned about the childhood development, medical history, and interests of prisoners, for instance in an interview from the spring of 1989, where a woman in Rostock is asked about her relationship with her son, who has recently been arrested for the crime of “öffentliche Herabwürdigung” (public defamation; BStU, MfS, AU 457/93, Vol. 4, p. 128).

As Fig. 3 shows, the mother is asked to provide details of her son’s behavior as a child, whereupon she recounts the difficulties he had in his relationships with teachers, and those that arose in the different styles of upbringing favored by herself and by his father. Following such interviews, interrogators were required to compose detailed reports reflecting on their content in relation to the interrogations of detainees themselves. All of these documents, the protocols as well as the evaluations by Stasi officers writing afterwards, were then filed in the archive. Finally, instructions recorded in July 1981 stipulate that the full archiving of such “politisch-operativen Schriftgut” (political-operative written material) required the completion of an additional “Abschlußbericht” (closing report) that must contain “eine reale, konkrete und überschaubare Darstellung der Ergebnisse der politisch-operativen Arbeit und die wesentlichsten Informationen zu allen erfaßten Personen” (a real, concrete and comprehensible representation of the results of the political-operative work and any substantive information concerning all of the parties captured in it; BStU, MfS, Abt. XII, 1809, p. 7). These

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**ZUR KENNTNIS:** Sie werden im Ermittlungsverfahren gegen Ihren Sohn [REDACTED] als Zeugin vernommen. In diesem Zusammenhang werden Sie über Ihre Rechte und Pflichten belehrt. Haben Sie Fragen zur Belehrung?

**Antwort:** Durch die Kriminalpolizei habe ich erfahren, daß gegen meinen Sohn ein Ermittlungsverfahren gemäß " 220 StGB eingeleitet wurde. Den Paragraphen habe ich gelesen. Ich habe zur Kenntnis genommen, daß ich als Zeugin vernommen werde. Fragen zur Belehrung habe ich nicht. Von meinem Recht zur Aussageverweigerung mache ich keinen Gebrauch. Die mir gestellten Fragen werde ich beantworten.

**Frage:** Wie beurteilen Sie das Verhältnis zwischen Ihnen und Ihrem Sohn [REDACTED]?

**Antwort:** Das Verhältnis zwischen [REDACTED] und mir ist bislang grundsätzlich--ich gut gewesen. Seit einigen Wochen ist er mir gegenüber etwas frech und gereizt, wenn ich ihm irgendetwas sage. Den Grund für sein Auftreten kenne ich jedoch nicht. Wegen der von ihm begangenen Straftat ist derzeit das Verhältnis gespannt. Ich kann einfach nicht begreifen, wie [REDACTED] sowas tun konnte, was ich ihm natürlich vorhielt.

**Frage:** Sagen Sie bitte zur Entwicklung des [REDACTED] aus!

**Antwort:** [REDACTED] wurde als zweites Kind im Jahre 1972 geboren. Unmittelbar nach der Geburt mußte er zweimal einer Bluttransfusion unterzogen werden, weil er mit Gelbsucht zur Welt kam. Ich erinnere mich noch, daß [REDACTED] frühzeitig sitzen konnte usw. Wegen Ernährungsstörungen mußte er jedoch mehrere Wochen ins Krankenhaus, was ihn in seiner Entwicklung zurückwarf. Anschließend entwickelte er sich altersgerecht. Im September 1978 kam [REDACTED] sechsjährig in Rostock-Lütten Klein zur Schule. Charakterlich bedingt und weil er durch meinen geschiedenen Ehemann oftmals "angedonnert" wurde, verfügte [REDACTED] meiner Auffassung nach nicht über ein entsprechendes Konzentrationsvermögen. Die erste Lehrerin verstand es gut, mit [REDACTED] umzugehen. Diese Lehrerin wechselte jedoch die Schule. Die nächste Lehrerin hatte Probleme mit ihm. Bei [REDACTED] ist meiner Meinung nach die Auffassungsgabe nicht sehr gut entwickelt. Er hatte Mühe, den Unterrichtsstoff zu begreifen und zu verarbeiten. Zunächst gab er sich Mühe, doch weil entsprechende Erfolgserlebnisse ausblieben, ließ sein Interesse an der Schule nach. Wir, d. h. mein damaliger Ehemann und ich, mußten ihn zur Erledigung schulischer Aufgaben anhalten. Die Erziehungsmethoden zwischen meinem ehemaligen Mann und mir waren recht unterschiedlich. Möglicherweise war ich zu weich, zu nachsichtig. Sein Vater hingegen war jedoch zu streng bzw. kümmerte sich kaum darum. Er war beim Zoll beschäftigt und hatte Schichtrythmus, weshalb er oft seine Ruhe haben wollte. Dieses Verlangen war jedoch oft unberechtigt. 1986 wurden wir geschieden. Weil sich jedenfalls bei [REDACTED] wenig Erfolg beim Lernen einstellte, verlor er nach und nach die Lust daran. Er verließ nach insgesamt 9 Schuljahren die POS mit dem Abschluß der 8. Klasse. Mir ist momentan nicht bekannt, welche Schulklasse er wiederholen mußte.

Im September 1987 nahm er schließlich eine dreijährige Lehrausbildung in der Warnowwerft Warnemünde auf, um Schriftföhrer

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Fig. 3: Interview in 1989 with a mother of a detainee in Rostock. From BStU, MfS, AU 457/93, Vol. 4, p. 128.

instructions, delivered at the point of training at the *Hochschule* and reissued to functioning officers throughout their careers, were there to ensure a consistent and complete account of each spy operation was kept. These accounts would remain in the archive for future use, should subjects be arrested again, or should their cases reach the complex of secret courts that the Stasi operated.

As its methods developed, the Stasi kept an increasingly detailed archive on its prisoners, akin in scale and ambition to the “totalizing assemblage” that in Derrida’s description is put together in order to achieve complete knowledge of the objects held in the archive (Derrida, 1998, p. 50). Especially in the years leading up to the end of the GDR, the Stasi invested massively in the techniques of the archive, and in training its future officers to maintain it. While they were processing the information on their victims, in the most thorough manner possible, these officers were also doing the authorial work that Derrida and Foucault attribute to the archive. The training documents cited here show some awareness of this shaping power of archival work. Yet this did not deter the Ministry from its attempts to gain a complete image of the subject that they were tracking, a subject that its officers did not only observe, but also manipulated in its character and destiny, as becomes clear in the files kept on Wolfgang Hilbig during his last years in the GDR.

### Hilbig’s Stasi file: Victimization and manipulation

After consulting his own OPK-file, the writer Klaus Schlesinger reported his impression of reading a work of high Modernism, “in dem die Figuren aus Blicken entstehen, die andere Figuren auf sie werfen” (in which characters emerge from the gazes that others cast upon them; Schlesinger, 1993, p. 106). Indeed, in line with the archives that in both Foucault’s and Derrida’s accounts produce as well as record knowledge about their subjects, the Stasi files did not only hold a thorough record of existing behaviors; they also had a role in authoring the lives contained within them, and thus producing what Foucault termed a “reality equivalent to fiction” (Foucault, 2002, p. 162). The Stasi’s notorious *Zersetzungsmaßnahmen* (measures for breaking down the subject) were crucial to this authoring project, and they can be seen in action in the victim file on Wolfgang Hilbig, shaping what was possible for him in his writing career and his life after his imprisonment.

In May 1978 Hilbig was arrested for an infraction involving the GDR’s national flag, but while detained in the Stasi interrogation prison in Leipzig

he was almost exclusively interrogated about his plans for the publication of a collection of his poems in West Germany. According to Hilbig's account, he was threatened at this point with a sentence of five years in prison, but offered the opportunity to avoid such a sentence by collaborating with the Stasi. Although he was informed that spying would win him "die sofortige Zulassung als freischaffender Autor [...], und zwar mit gutem finanziellen Einkommen" (immediate permission to work as a freelance author [...], and with a good income to boot; Hilbig, 1995, p. 77), he refused, and was held prisoner until July 1978. A full-scale OPK was launched in 1982 after Hilbig published, in the words of his Stasi observers, "literarische Arbeiten mit politisch feindlicher Aussage" (literary works with a politically antagonistic message) with Fischer Press in Frankfurt (BStU, MfS, AOPF 302/88 'Literat', Vol. 1, p. 5). The operation ran until the summer of 1987, when Hilbig had left the GDR to live in the West.

It is now possible to consult around 2,040 pages of Hilbig's victim file, in which he is code-named "Literat" (Man of Letters). The remaining volumes are kept closed by laws that were put in place after unification to protect living victims of the Stasi. Although the OPK is officially opened in January 1982, the Stasi had been tracking Hilbig on a lower level for a much longer time, as is attested by an *Aufklärungsbericht* (assessment report) dated 25 September 1964 and filed in Altenburg, where Hilbig was then working as a tool-maker. A Lieutenant Kupfer offers a potted life story of Hilbig thus far: "Genannter stammt aus Arbeiterkreisen, sein Vater ist im 2. Weltkrieg 1942 gefallen. Er besuchte in Meuselwitz die Grundschule (3 Klassen)" (The named person stems from working-class roots, his father fell in 1942 in the Second World War. He went to primary school in Meuselwitz (three years); *ibid.*, p. 60). After this early report, the file lies dormant until 1978, when Hilbig's first major contact with the Stasi took place in the form of his arrest. Three and a half years after Hilbig's imprisonment and interrogation, the OPK against him begins, and the authors of this official surveillance file write that its primary aim is to gather information on Hilbig's links to West Germans who are planning activities that might harm "die gesellschaftlichen Interessen der DDR" (the GDR's societal interests; *ibid.*, p. 5). The Ministry discovers Hilbig has become an author of interest in the Federal Republic, and observes as he voices his critical opinions of the GDR in conversation with literary agents from Fischer. It also takes note as Hilbig begins the complicated and illegal process of publishing his poetry and short prose works in West Germany. In the process, the file gathers a large number of IM reports that document Hilbig's activities, as well as a body of correspondence between internal departments of the Stasi, in which officers review the progress of the operation and plan its next steps.



In putting together Hilbig's file, the Stasi undertook a considerable project of collection. The file includes photocopies of materials found at Hilbig's flat that he shared with his partner, the journalist Margret Franzlik, about Biermann's forcible exile. There are copies in duplicate of Hilbig's publishing contracts with Fischer in the West, and other correspondence between Hilbig and his publisher, including hand-corrected drafts of his early prose works. Triplicate copies appear of a manuscript draft of the short prose work "Johannis," in whose margin Hilbig has noted some of the lyrics to Bob Dylan's song "Maggie's Farm" (BStU, MfS, AOPF 302/88 "Literat," Vol. 5, p. 105).<sup>1</sup> The Stasi also tracks the delivery of a large collection of modernist literary writing, including German translations of Virginia Woolf and Doris Lessing, and original works by German modernists Arno Schmidt, Helmut Heißenbüttel, and Dieter Borkowski, that staff at Fischer send to Hilbig. Yet this is more than a mere copying activity on the part of the Stasi. As it is stated on the opening page of the OPK-file, a second aim of the Stasi's surveillance of Hilbig is intervention into the life that it tracks. The operation is intended to bring about the "Verhinderung von öffentlichkeitswirksamen Aktivitäten des Hilbig" (prevention of Hilbig's activities that could be effective in influencing the public; *ibid.*, p. 5). As such, the large-scale collection of texts and correspondence is the central weapon in the Stasi's project of obstructing Hilbig's

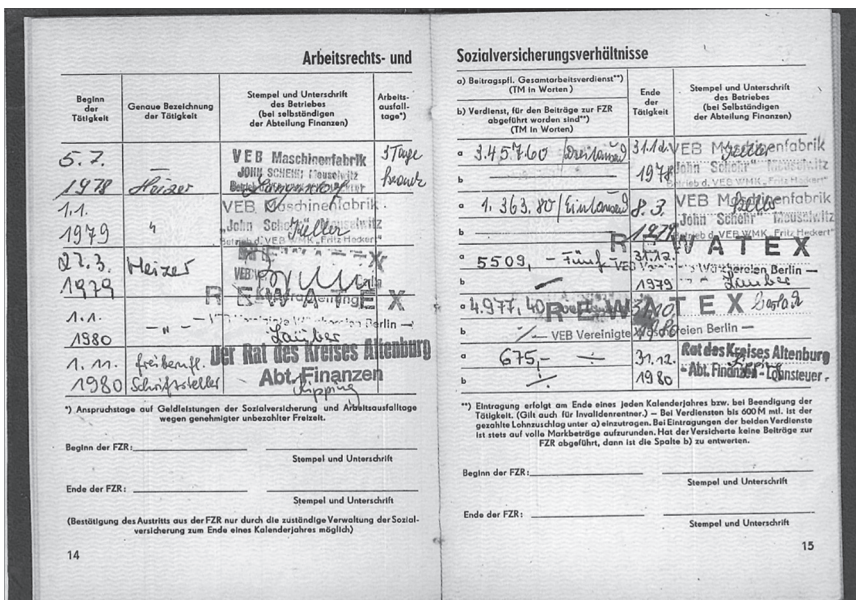


Fig. 4: Page from Wolfgang Hilbig's GDR *Ausweise für Arbeit und Sozialversicherung* (identity documents for work and social insurance). From Wolfgang-Hilbig-Archiv, Nr. 285.

attempts to publish his works. Having identified Hilbig as a critic of the GDR, the Stasi aims to reduce his critical agency, his effectiveness in spreading critique of the GDR among others, whether in written texts or public appearances.

The Stasi's operations in gathering a file of evidence to use against Hilbig seem to have been successful. Thus when he applied for his writings to be published in the East, he had only one success, in the form of a short book of poems that was subject to discouraging reviews by its GDR publishing house. He published his other works from the GDR era without permission in the West, as a result of which he received fines from the East German state. These fines had serious consequences for the work and life plans of this poet, whose income significantly dropped after he left factory work to become self-employed, as is evidenced in his GDR passbook (see Fig. 4). While the passbook records the economic consequences of Hilbig's decision to devote himself to writing, in spite of the Stasi's campaign against him, the Stasi's file documents the disciplinary procedures to which the author was subjected. As well as fines, these take the form of a lengthy correspondence with the Acting Minister for Culture, Klaus Höpcke, with whom Hilbig made a deal in 1983 in order to be permitted to travel to receive the Brothers Grimm literary prize that he had been awarded by the West German town of Hanau.

Permission to travel was granted to Hilbig only on certain conditions, which his file documents as follows:

In seinem Schreiben vom 7. und 27.9.1983 an den Stellv. Minister für Kultur, Genossen Höpcke, und auch in dem am 6.10.1983 bei Genossen Höpcke stattgefundenen persönlichen Gespräch gab Hilbig die Versicherung ab, sich während seines Aufenthaltes in Hanau bzw. der BRD jeglicher, gegen die DDR gerichteter propagandistischer Aktivitäten oder demonstrativer Handlungen zu enthalten und gegen einen Mißbrauch der Preisverleihung zu antisozialistischen Ausfällen aufzutreten. Im Gespräch am 6.10.1983 erklärte Hilbig seine Bereitschaft, die evtl. notwendige Dankesrede für die Preisverleihung in Hanau gemeinsam mit seinem DDR-Verlag (Reclam-Verlag Leipzig) zu erarbeiten und in einem weiteren Gespräch mit Genossen Höpcke Ende Oktober 1983 nochmals abzustimmen.

Gleichzeitig gab er sein Einverständnis, in dieser Rede eindeutig seine Position zur Raketenbedrohung durch die USA zu formulieren.

(In his letters of 7 and 27 September 1983 to the Acting Minister for Culture, Comrade Höpcke, and also in his personal conversation with Comrade Höpcke on 6 October 1983, Hilbig gave his assurance that he would hold back from any

propaganda activities against the GDR or any demonstrative actions during his stay in Hanau or in the Federal Republic in general, and that he would not abuse the occasion of receiving the prize to make anti-socialist diatribes. In the conversation on 6 October 1983, Hilbig declared his willingness to plan his acceptance speech, which will perhaps be necessary for the award ceremony in Hanau, together with his GDR publishers (the Reclam Press in Leipzig) and to fine tune its contents in a further conversation with Comrade Höpcke at the end of October 1983.

At that time he also agreed to use the occasion of his speech to make clear his position on the threat of rocket attacks from the USA; BStU, MfS, HA XX/AKG, Nr. 6540, p. 127.)

A year after this agreement was made, in December 1984, the Stasi found evidence of Hilbig's plan to publish a short prose collection in the West, whereupon the author was called in again to meet with Höpcke. A narrative account of the meeting records that Höpcke exhorted Hilbig to show "bei seinen Begegnungen eine noch größere Disziplin und Selbstkontrolle" (even more discipline and self-control in his encounters with others; BStU, MfS, AOPF 302/88 "Literat," Vol. 8, p. 47). The Minister was concerned about the passage of critical literary works over the border into the West, and about verbal comments that Hilbig might make concerning the GDR.

These documents shows the Stasi at work controlling the texts that made it out of the GDR, and it depicts the Ministry for Culture seeking to fine-tune the statements that Hilbig might make when appearing in person in the West. As such, these papers bear witness to the application of the aim stated in the Stasi procedural documents, to produce a "gapless" control of information, an aim that was also present in the priorities of the cultural authorities, represented by Höpcke. Furthermore, the aim of this latter Ministry to contain the possible, critical speech that Hilbig might utter once in the Federal Republic, suggests a desire for control over the very acts of the subject of surveillance, a subject who is asked here to act in a more disciplined manner in relation to Western others, in a kind of *behavioral* border control of the author from the GDR in relation to perceived enemies in the West.

Thus the archive of Hilbig's case offers evidence of the procedures through which the Stasi and the SED state at large sought to manipulate the individuals that they were tracking. Moreover, in the conversation where Höpcke encourages Hilbig to be a good subject, and indeed blackmails him into speaking in particular ways if he is to access monetary prizes and publication opportunities, these procedures take on a live form, attempting to shape the speech acts that

the subject is permitted to commit. That Hilbig agrees to the conditions set down by the Acting Minister for Culture suggests that the control procedures aimed at by Mielke and other SED authorities were successful. His acquiescence in the 1980s contrasts, indeed, with an attitude of resistance that the file tracked in its earliest documents. In the *Aufklärungsbericht* of 1964, Hilbig appeared as a subject who was decidedly difficult to influence:

Einschätzend wird H. so beurteilt, daß er einen schwierigen Charakter hat. Er ist in seiner Verhaltensweise sehr schwer zu beeinflussen. Lehren und Hinweise nimmt er sehr schwer und nicht immer befriedigend an. Auch durch das Kollektiv waren nur ganz geringe Erfolge in der Erziehungsarbeit mit ihm zu verzeichnen.

(The assessment of H. is such that he seems to have a difficult character. It is very hard to influence him in his behavior. He takes on instructions and tips with great difficulty and not always to satisfying effect. We are also only able to record very limited success in educating him by collective means; *ibid.*, p. 60.)

That Hilbig agrees to negotiate with the Cultural Ministry in 1984 suggests that the operations against him may have changed his attitude somewhat. On the other hand, they may merely document his strong desire to see his works published. This desire is apparent in many of the letters from Hilbig himself, which are copied in the Stasi files and addressed to Höpcke, and to his literary correspondents in the West.

In this sense, it seems that despite his decision to negotiate with the bodies that controlled and censored literature in the GDR, Hilbig remained critical. In support of this, unofficial collaborators codenamed “Hans,” “Rubinstein,” and “Frank” report on Hilbig’s appearance at the conference of the Deutsche Akademie für Sprache und Dichtung (German Academy for Language and Poetry) in Regensburg in May 1984, and note that Hilbig spoke out against conditions for writers in the GDR. These IMs report Hilbig as comparing the GDR to the reign of the Nazis, so that “[man würde] wie in einem ‘Nazi-KZ’ bewacht, ausgeforscht und zum Schreiben von Manuskripten gezwungen, die man unter anderen Voraussetzungen nie schreiben würde” (people are being surveilled like in a “Nazi concentration camp”, tracked and forced to write manuscripts which under other circumstances they would never have written; BStU, MfS, HA XX/9, Nr. 2027, p. 2). As these IM reports suggest, and as can be tracked in his literary output, Hilbig remained active in voicing critique of the GDR where possible.

Yet there are other ways in which the Stasi’s project appears to have succeeded in shaping Hilbig’s behavior. The file documents rejections in early 1979 of



a poetry collection initially entitled *Gegen den Strom* (*Against the Tide*), in evaluations from Dr Almut Giesecke at GDR publishing house Aufbau-Verlag, who finds the poems limited by their “trotzigen Kontra-Stellung” (dogged “anti”-attitude; MfS, AOPF 302/88 “Literat,” Vol. 2, pp. 5–6), and from Manfred [surname illegible] of the Mitteldeutscher Verlag für sozialistische deutsche Gegenwartsliteratur (Central German Press for Contemporary German Socialist Literature), who complains that the poems observe their world in a manner that is “zu einseitig individualistisch (z.T. introvertiert)” (too one-sidedly individualistic (and at times introverted); *ibid.*, p. 38) and as such are at odds with the GDR’s collective cultural imperative. The latter reviewer writes that in spite of the poet’s failure to address ideologically the “(produktiven) Widersprüchen unserer Zeit” ((productive) contradictions of our era; *ibid.*, p. 38), he is looking forward to hearing from Hilbig with some new poems soon. After these rejections, Hilbig began in the summer of 1979 to correspond with Fischer Press about the publication of the poetry collection *abwesenheit* (*absence*, 1979). His only publication in the GDR, *stimme, stimme* (*voice, voice*, 1983), printed in Leipzig in 1983, met with a similarly negative review that admits the author’s *sovereign* acumen, stating that “Hilbig beherrscht souverän die Kunst der Vieldeutigkeit, wie sie den Symbolismus eigen ist, dessen Traditionen er gekonnt verarbeitet” (Hilbig has sovereign mastery of the art of ambiguity, an art that is particular to Symbolism, whose traditions he handles skilfully; MfS, AOPF 302/88 “Literat,” Vol. 4, p. 322), but also maintains that he must be brought round to a socialist viewpoint “der unser Leben bejaht und es verstehen will, indem er es gestaltet” (that affirms our life here and seeks to understand it by the act of creating it; *ibid.*, p. 324). Yet Hilbig was too discouraged by this stage, and too busy building a different life outside the GDR. After he was granted a travel visa in 1985, Hilbig finally left for the Federal Republic, after which point he distanced himself from his partner Franzlik and their daughter Constance, born 30 June 1980, who remained living with her mother in East Germany. It is likely that the Stasi’s interventions into Hilbig’s life, and the admonitions and ongoing negotiations with the Ministry for Culture and the GDR publishing houses, were central in shaping these decisions.

Once Hilbig had settled in the West, the Stasi concluded that he was no longer sufficiently active to remain the subject of a full-scale operation. The file was therefore officially closed, and it ends with an *Abschlussbericht* (final report) dated 4 August 1987, where it is noted that he is undergoing a “langfristige psychotherapeutische Behandlung” (long-term psychotherapeutic treatment; BStU, MfS, AOPF 302/88 “Literat,” Vol. 1, p. 6), a fact of which Hilbig has

informed Höpcke in a letter; that he has estranged himself from his family in the GDR and does not seem to be active in any groups that are considered a danger to the SED state. These factors confirm to the Stasi that Hilbig is no longer able to be a member of an effective opposition, and thus that the victim operation against him has resulted in a “Realisierung der Zielstellung” (realization of the goals that were set; *ibid.*, p. 6). The aim at the opening of the OPK in 1982, of gathering enough information on Hilbig to prevent him posing a threat to the GDR, is considered to have been achieved.

Yet despite the triumphant tone of the *Abschlussbericht*, the final page of the file betrays certain doubts on the part of the involved Stasi officers as to the true success of the operation. When Hilbig left, the GDR lost one of its few literary authors who did not stem from an educated bourgeois background. In these last documents of the file on Hilbig, the Stasi seems to realize the implications of this mistake, and its officers begin discussing how Hilbig might be won back to the GDR, in memoranda that express the hope that this talented author might even be persuaded to use his talents to write in favor of the SED state. Hilbig did not return to the GDR; instead he remained in West Germany where he continued writing. His first novel, *Eine Übertragung* (*A Broadcast*, 1989), won the Ingeborg Bachmann Prize and in 2002 he received the Büchner Prize for his final novel, *Das Provisorium* (*The Stop-Gap*, 2000). He died on 2 June 2007 in Berlin from cancer, and his life archive was opened in Berlin at the Akademie der Künste (Academy of the Arts) in Autumn 2009, coinciding with Fischer’s publication of his collected works.

### Hilbig’s post-prison stories (i): A grammar of totality

After Hilbig left the GDR, he could continue writing in relative peace. Yet there remains a troubling sense in which the Stasi’s operations shaped the experience of this author forever. That is certainly the impression left by the literary works that Hilbig wrote after his imprisonment by the Stasi, autofictions that are narrated by, or have as protagonists, male writers who are surveilled by the Stasi and held in interrogation prison. These works depict the practices through which the Stasi attempted to manipulate its subjects, and the resulting struggles of those subjects to resist manipulation and pursue what was important to them. One of the most pernicious among these practices, in Hilbig’s literary accounts, is the control that the Stasi exercised over the language of their victims. Surveillance by the Stasi contributed to the Cultural Ministry’s censorship of literary texts by GDR authors; meanwhile, Stasi interrogation officers controlled routes of communication within

and out of its dedicated prison system. As a result, the state and the Stasi gained influence over the very words through which their victims could attempt to think through their situations and communicate with others. The control over text and language is a key problematic in Hilbig's short prose works published in the years immediately after his imprisonment. Here, the Stasi figures as wielding a despotic grammar of power, a "Herrschaft der Grammatik" (sovereignty of grammar; Hilbig, 2009, p. 87), that shaped the language of their subjects in the GDR, and the effects of which Hilbig strove to express in turn in his literary writing.

Operations of textual control figure early in Hilbig's oeuvre, even before the author's detention. His short story of 1973, "Er" (He), presents a nightmare scenario in which a character attempts to reach a village in a valley, but finds his way blocked by a group of children. The lead character is swiftly arrested and driven away by two unknown men in a large black limousine. At first, the protagonist of "Er" berates himself for not having asked the men for their identification papers. However, he immediately regrets thinking this way, because he feels that it is wrong that anybody should be required to carry "dieses brutale Dokument bei sich" (this brutal document about his person; Hilbig, 2009, p. 43). The character is caught in a bind because the paperwork that might save him, perhaps allowing him to defy the unidentified men, is nonetheless part of the brutal documentation system of the state that they presumably represent.<sup>2</sup> Once in the car, the protagonist must himself show his identity card to his two assailants, and this identity check seems to entail a brutal sensuality as one officer's "warme geschickte Hand" (warm, skilful hand) slides in to take it from the protagonist's pocket (ibid., p. 43), brushing his body as it extracts the card that will prove, and deliver over, his identity to those taking charge of him.

Prefiguring the passage in "*Ich*" where an identity check catalyzes a switch in the lead character's identity entirely, this moment of identification at the hands of the state is figured as a traumatic event. The traumatizing power of the *document*, as the medium of encounter between state and subject, becomes even clearer in the later short story "Johannis" (1978). The work was written immediately after Hilbig's detainment in Leipzig, and it depicts a victim of the Stasi in a state of delivery over to a documentary system in which totality is an imperative which interrogators and prisoners alike must obey. In the Stasi prison depicted in this tale, interrogations involve the dictation of a series of half-sentences that prisoners then attempt to complete. The prisoners have to provide satisfactory endings to the sentences begun by their captors, so that interrogation protocols can be filed and thereafter papers produced that will confirm or deny their release. This high-pressure technique for disciplining and,

it turns out, entrapping the prisoner seems to fill the space of the prison with a parallel imperative to complete sentences, even outside of interrogations:

an den sich ausdehnenden Abenden sind alle Kanäle eines *Untersuchungsgefängnisses* erfüllt von *unbeendeten Sätzen*, die man endlos auszubauen gezwungen ist.

(on the long stretched-out evenings, all the corridors of a *interrogation prison* are filled with *unfinished sentences*, which one is endlessly forced to complete; *ibid.*, p. 80; emphasis in the original.)

The inmates of the prison, who are coerced in their interrogations into a structure of linguistic completion, are haunted by this imperative as night falls outside the prison. If they are to have any chance of getting out, they must collaborate in the production of this haunting totality, wherein information is delivered in full sentences and in a manner that offers persuasive accounts of events and identities. As a result, the narrator of this tale asserts that “Inmitten des Organismus dieser Welt, dieser Zeit, kann die einzig menschenwürdige Sprache nur aus unbeendeten Sätzen bestehen” (in the midst of the organism of this world, this time, the only humane language must be one that consists of unfinished sentences; *ibid.*, p. 80; emphasis in the original). In contrast to a more humane, because incomplete language, the total account that the interrogators demand serves the Stasi’s historical goal of capturing a complete image of the subject of their interrogations. From the point of the view of the subject in prison, moreover, such an account also proves decisive over his or her future. Serious matters, of freedom and incarceration, perceived guilt and recognized innocence, are contingent upon the prisoner’s ingenuity in providing the words or phrases that are required of her or him. At the same time, the narrator also notes a dangerous power that the *written* word takes on in the prison.

As literary writers, Hilbig’s protagonists often turn to creative writing as a refuge, one set apart from the interventions of the East German authorities. Yet, as we saw in Chapter 2, writing was not a safe refuge for W., but was in fact bound into his disorientating involvement with the Stasi, as his sadistic commanding officer Feuerbach took to breaking into his apartment and reading them. The failure of writing to provide a safe refuge also poses a problem for the prisoner in “Johannis.” We read:

auf dem Tisch lag etwas Papier und ein Bleistift, aber wir schrieben nichts und sprachen nichts, denn wir wußten, daß ein einziger, beliebiger Satz uns in

rasende Bestien verwandeln mußte, daß wir uns aufeinander stürzen mußten, um uns mit Zähnen und Fingernägeln zu zerreißen.

(on the table there were paper and a pencil, but we wrote nothing and said nothing, because we knew that one single sentence could turn us into raging beasts, jumping upon one another in order to rip one another apart; *ibid.*, p. 82.)

Within the prison space, the word, whether it is spoken or written, has been transformed into something untrustworthy. Prisoners might find their words being twisted and used against them, or against other prisoners, thus turning the writer into an unwilling informant. There is no Derridean burrow of safety here in which to write, and as a result it seems to the narrator that “*der Beweis für alle Wörter war verloren*” (the proof for all words was lost; *ibid.*, p. 82). This hopeless declaration explains why, rather than potentially collaborate in an order of untrustworthy communication, Hilbig’s prisoner-character opts not to write at all while he is interred.

The second short story that Hilbig wrote after his imprisonment is entitled “*Die Einfriedung*” (The Enclosure), and it builds upon the concern in “*Johannis*” with linguistic and textual control within the Stasi’s prison system. The unnamed protagonist of this new tale awakes on the first day of his release from interrogation prison and is faced with a partial vision of a huge and unidentifiable “*Ungeheuer*” (monster), which may be dead or alive, and only appears to him in shards of light. Unable to view the creature (or is it a lifeless crag?) in its totality, the narrator comes to conceive of the mass as “*das schwer zu beschreibende, labile Dasein von Lichtreflexen*” (the difficult-to-describe, precarious existence of light-reflections; *ibid.*, p. 84). Yet as the tale progresses, and led by the fact that the creature is held behind a set of bars, it becomes apparent to readers that this disorienting vision embodies the aspect of the narrator’s experience that resides in a state between freedom and a possible return to the prison from which he has been released. Furthermore, like in “*Johannis*,” this state is a result of the control that the state authorities exercise over text and language, in this case via the documentation of the prisoner’s release. Even though the narrator’s release from prison has been confirmed, he cannot be sure of it, because the paperwork pertaining to it is written in the form of “*unkonkreten, alles offen lassenden Sätzen*” (inconcrete sentences, that leave everything open; *ibid.*, p. 86). The logic of the control exercised by the authorities here has shifted from the previous tale: whereas the prisoner in “*Johannis*” was required to deliver a coherent and complete account of himself, here the brutality of the state prison system lies in the non-completion of its own written statements.

Though such non-completion in the Stasi's court documents may contain some element of the more human, because incomplete, language for which the protagonist of "Johannis" longed, it is of little comfort to the narrator of "Die Einfriedung." Even while reading the good news of his release, this figure remains aware that "gleichzeitig mußte ich aber den zweiten Text dieser Sätze beachten, der die Entlassung verneinte" (at the same time I had to take account of the writing between the lines, which negated the fact of my release; *ibid.*, p. 87). To be released means, for this character, to be aware of a continued entrapment within the systems that define his fate, not least the system of documentation whose terms remain worryingly ambiguous. The tale ends with a confirmation of the ambiguity of the documents stating his release, as the narrator finds in his letterbox "eine Vorladung der Polizei" (a police summons; *ibid.*, p. 103), a piece of paper demanding that he return to court for further trial. The documentation of the narrator's release was indeed not to be trusted, and what feels like an end to the ordeal is merely a forewarning, following the proleptic logic of *vor-*, of future persecution, that Hilbig's later protagonist W. would suffer in "*Ich*".

It seems that no release is final from the Stasi's prison system. One of the reasons behind this ongoing entrapment is the fact that the documents of state power—those written texts and announcements that pertain to the law, to imprisonment and to release—slip even out of the control of the authorities. These are authorities who, the narrator suspects, "hatten sich entweder verplant, oder sie verfügten nicht über die Kompetenz für diese fast uneingeschränkte Macht beweisenden Sätze" (had either gotten their planning wrong, or weren't competent to deal with these sentences that proved an almost limitless power; *ibid.*, p. 87). This latter idea, that the Stasi authorities are not fully in control of the power that their textual systems wield, leads the protagonist to imagine, perhaps hopefully, a greater, indeed *limitless* power that might exist beyond the East German state. Yet the form that this imagined power-body would take is not a benevolent one. Instead—and the narrative voice slips from narrator to protagonist as the thought occurs to him—he senses "die Existenz einer totalen, zur Willkür aufgestiegenen—denn jetzt erschien nur noch die Willkür—Herrschaft der Grammatik über sein Gehirn" (the existence of a total rule of grammar over his mind—one that has risen to the point of despotism, because it seemed despotism was all that remained; *ibid.*, p. 87). While the languages of the law may be slippery and lacking finality, this despotic power or *Willkür* that has come to dominate the world in which the character resides will not turn to his advantage. Instead, he suspects that it is much more likely to maintain his entrapment in an illegible yet inescapable system.

As a result of his subjection to the despotic grammar of the state's documentation, the narrator / protagonist of "Die Einfriedung" feels, even during periods of release, that he is no longer a coherent, individually discernible subject. Instead he begins "meine Gestalt, aber wie allen Geistes entledigt, auf vielen in die Irre führenden Wegen zugleich zu erblicken" (to see my character, as if robbed of any kind of mind, going simultaneously down several routes, all of which led to madness; *ibid.*, p. 88). The narrator consciously links this splitting off of his *Gestalt*, his character or form as a subject, into parts that head off in multiple directions, with the textual productions of the state, productions which both control and conflict with the view he has of himself. Thus, he feels that "Die erbarmungslose Erwartung dieser Papiere" (the intransigent expectation of these papers) is pitched against "die erlogene Gesamtheit meines Ichs" (the illusory totality of my self; *ibid.*, p. 90). At the same time as his sense of self splits into multiple forms, the character feels the pressure of the state's totalizing expectations. This is a pressure to have a *Gesamtheit* or *wholeness* of self, a totality that would be bureaucratically convenient, because it could be captured in the state's paperwork. But it is a painful expectation to bear for the individual who is subjected to the everyday practices through which the prison system keeps a track of its victims:

Er wunderte sich, wie er durch Fingerabdrücke und Geruchsproben, Fotos, Zählappelle und Lichtkontrollen überhaupt als anwesend feststellbar werden konnte—dieser Körper hatte in den zerbrechlichen Geräuschen seiner letzten Wahrnehmung etwas verloren.

(He was amazed that the fingerprints and smell samples, photographs, roll calls and inspections made him appear present—this body had lost something with the brittle sounds of the last thing he was aware of; *ibid.*, p. 101.)

The Stasi's techniques of recording inmates' fingerprints, appearance, and bodily smells in its archive are meant to make the narrator tangibly present and identifiable in their prison system. Moreover, they appear to do so, to the character's amazement, in a manner sufficient for the paperwork that the Stasi maintains. Yet at the same time, these techniques of examination and categorization that are there to make the prisoner tangible in the archive concurrently make his body and his perceptions feel *less* palpable to him. This simultaneous loss of a sense of substantial selfhood conflicts with the message that the prisoner in this story feels he has received from the processes of the prison, that "ein jedes Individuum dieser Welt mußte ein einziges, offenes Ich besitzen" (each individual in this world must possess a single, open self; *ibid.*,



p. 102). “Die Einfriedung” demonstrates with clarity how the Stasi’s processes of interrogation, categorization, and documentation functioned to demand an ontological completion on the part of the subject, a subject who was expected for the purposes of the archive to possess an *Ich* that is both *offen*, capable of being read, and *einzig*, capable of being counted as a single totality. Yet, as the tale reveals, these demands are undercut by the same organization’s procedures of control, whose arbitrary application works to split the prisoner into many figures, dispersing him into multiple selves that are by definition incomplete, that transform into apparently undead *Ungeheuer* heaving pitifully behind bars, or that disappear into intangibility even as new rounds of interrogation are announced.

### Hilbig’s post-prison stories (ii): Dissolution and perforation

Hilbig’s renditions in his immediate post-prison writing of a subject who fragments and even disappears under the bureaucratic control of its Stasi tormentors, communicate a terrifying prospect. These literary victims of the Stasi’s prison and court systems suffer a lack of control over their lives, that is expressed through the language and images in these texts of a subject who does not hold together with security. Such a lack of hold is presented in these first prison stories as the result of an encounter with the linguistic and textual techniques which are wielded by the Stasi—techniques that are so powerful that they even threaten to slip out of the Stasi’s control, but as long as the organization exists, do not quite do so. Yet in the early 1980s, there is a shift in Hilbig’s portrayal of such systems, whose stability begins to falter as the historical author recovered from his imprisonment, left his factory work, and began to realize his ambition to work as a full-time author.

A faltering of the state’s textual systems is first apparent in one of Hilbig’s first tales from the 1980s, “Er, nicht ich” (He, not I), which he wrote in 1981 and published in 1992, in the Reclam volume *Zwischen den Paradiesen* (*Between Paradises*). In the story, a protagonist named C. (short for Cebolla) is traveling to a post office in order to post a letter to which he repeatedly grasps for comfort in his pocket. The letter contains information regarding a crime, which C. may or may not have committed. The story closes with the text of the letter, in which it is revealed that C. intends to turn himself in to the authorities so that he can be sold to the West and freed. Counter-intuitive as this may seem, C.’s trip to post the letter is a dual mission. For not only is he attempting to deliver information



to the authorities, readers discover that he is also on a hunt for himself. This search is expressed in the story via an image of a number of circles through which C. must travel: “Kreise [...] rund um irgendein essentielles Zentrum” (circles [...] around some essential center; *ibid.*, p. 418), a center which he feels he must reach: “um dort mit dem Finger auf sich zu zeigen, wenn er sich erkannte” (to point at himself there with his finger, if he recognized himself; *ibid.*, p. 419). However, if such a center does exist, and if such self-recognition were to be possible, the narrator never reaches it. The problem that is evoked in this image, of a self that cannot be clearly located and recognized, is reflected on the formal level of the story. Its wandering phrases stand out even against the multi-clausal sentences familiar from the (un)whole of Hilbig’s oeuvre. Meanwhile, certain of the optical effects described in the tale prefigure the late Romantic apparitions that were identified in Chapter 2 as shaping the depiction of identity crisis in his novel, “*Ich*”, which was published one year later.

In the latter work, the character W. chances upon his own reflection in the polished wall of a building. The surface that he sees is “ein irreguläres, querstehendes Scheingehäuse voller Blendung und Staub und Rauchgewirbel, darin zusammengesackt eine Schattenkontur ausgespart blieb: der dunkle Umriß meines ‘Ich’” (an irregular, jack-knifed apparition of a building full of glare and dust and whirling smoke, and there crumpled up into a shadowy contour was omitted from the image: the dark outline of my “self”; Hilbig, 1993, p. 342). Like W. looking at the crumpled and shadowy reflection of himself in the building, the narrator of “*Er, nicht ich*” encounters a fragmented reflection of himself in the fog of the city at night: “flüchtig sah ich mich, von den Kegeln der Blendlaternen erfaßt, auf dem Nebel wie in einem dunklen Spiegel” (for a brief moment I saw myself captured in the tapers of the dark lantern, projected onto the fog like in a dark mirror; Hilbig, 2009, p. 443). C. is a troubling reinvention of Edgar Allan Poe’s man of the crowd, who is drawn out into the foggy city at night by his obsessive surveillance of another man. Here, the man of the crowd is searching for himself and yet like W., who in “*Ich*” all but disappears amid the disorienting optics of the shadowy Stasi city, C. does not see his reflection as a clear form; rather he perceives his image as “eine Grimasse, aus der Gelächter brechen wollte, die aber gerann wie ein durchsichtiger; man beachtete mich nicht mehr, ich sah, wie man ihn hinwegzerrte, ein zitterndes Bündel greifbarster Wahrhaftigkeit” (a grimace, which wanted to break into laughter, but which clotted instead like something transparent; nobody was paying me any attention any more, I saw how he was being dragged away, a trembling bundle of the most palpable truth; *ibid.*, p. 443). The hideous grimace just as soon

disappears into the dark fog even as C. perceives its trembling, transparent form. Oddly, however, this un-graspable form that C. perceives seems to him to represent something of *the most palpable truth*. Yet, sadly, this truer double of C.'s self disappears before any such truth can be discovered.

“Er, nicht ich” also prefigures “*Ich*” in its use of a switch in narrative voice, so that there is not just Er in this tale, there is also Ich, as the narrator is transformed into the protagonist and back again. Moreover, there is apparently more than one C. Late in the tale, the narrator experiments with drag, trying to create his feminine Doppelgänger, a woman who appears to exist, or even to be brought into existence by this drag act, because C. subsequently meets her in a bar. He finally suspects that another, masculine C. exists, who has written the letter in order to sabotage this C.'s progress. That suspicion is not confirmed, but one certainty in Hilbig's disorienting world is that the subject cannot be pinned down to one simple position: the selves that do come to articulation slip around, in an unreality whose playfulness here recalls the “poem-lives” of those costumed characters whom Foucault encountered in the archives of the Bastille. The psychological effects of such unreality are perhaps not so playful, however, but rather lead to conditions of suffering for the subject in question.

As if in response to the discovery of his own unreality as a subject, C. expresses the following desire in the letter: “ich fordere die zuständigen Organe auf zur endlichen und durchgreifenden Abschaffung der Realität” (I hereby demand that the responsible authorities finally and totally do away with reality; *ibid.*, p. 445; emphasis in the original). Gerhard Bauer and Uwe Schoor note in an early interpretation of the story that the narrator himself has already been working towards this goal, through the tale's “Durchlöcherung, Infragestellung, Diskreditierung der Wirklichkeit, womöglich schon ihrer Abschaffung” (puncturing, questioning, discrediting of reality, perhaps even its elimination; Bauer and Schoor, 1994, p. 190). Hilbig's crafting of the story itself as a slippery document reflects this goal, too, on the narrative level, as its ellipses, repetitions and multiple folding clauses call any secure meaning into question even as it is generated. One goal of this narrative slipperiness is to leave the question open as to the consequences of such insecurity of meaning. These consequences would certainly be negative for the state authorities who are trying to secure knowledge about their subjects; yet they may also be negative for the subject of these authorities, who finds himself (herself?) cast around, dragged away, and yet ever trapped in a reality that provides little to hold onto.

Certainly, little hold is provided by the letter that the C. of in “Er, nicht ich” wishes to send to the authorities. The purpose of this textual record of guilt or

innocence is to record the “truth” about a murder that C. claims not to have committed. His continual grasping after the letter to check that it is still in his pocket seems to set it up as a counter-archive of truth, one that can challenge the bureaucratic rule of the authorities, and thereby provide some measure of epistemological security for him. But ultimately, the letter is also an unreliable document. C. finds that he is repeatedly blocked from posting it and, once it is finally, safely in the post, there remains the suspicion that it will further incriminate him. This is because C. suspects that “ein Schreiber dieses Briefs alles gegen ihn, gegen C., zu richten versuchte, und sich dazu seiner Schrift bedient hatte” (a writer of this letter was trying to do everything possible against C., and had been using his writing to do so; Hilbig, 2009, p. 432). If C.’s suspicion is correct, then the “truth” that is preserved in the letter may not offer him so much security after all. Instead, the letter joins the ranks of the other unreliable documents scattered throughout Hilbig’s works, slipping as it does here out of the protagonist’s authorship to be attributed to another writer altogether. In this sense there is a risk that the letter that C. holds “wie einen Schutzschild vor der Brust” (like a protective shield in front of his chest; *ibid.*, p. 403), and which he hoped would exonerate him before the authorities, may in fact incriminate him further.

The slippery potentiality of C.’s letter contrasts with the quality of the documents depicted in another work of the same year, *Der Brief* (*The Letter*, 1981). This was Hilbig’s first long prose work, and was published by Fischer in 1985. The story portrays the machinations of the GDR’s state system, like in “Johannis,” as functions of a despotic sovereignty. The power that reigns in the GDR decides, here, with terrifying arbitrariness over the guilt and innocence, and seemingly thereby the very existence, of its people:

Die herrschende Wirklichkeit [...] bewahrheitet alle Sätze nur, indem sie diese umkehrt: sie erwirkt in der Tat nur, daß schuldige Personen unschuldig werden, und ihnen also die Existenzen genommen werden.

(The prevailing reality only proves the veracity of sentences in that it turns it around: it only has the effect that guilty people become innocent, and that their existences are therefore taken away from them; *ibid.*, p. 442.)

In this tale, the Stasi’s court systems have the power to turn the innocent into guilty by means of an arbitrary *Umkehr* (turning). It could be true, by the same token, that the state’s textual systems can just as well be turned to the purpose of removing their subjects’ guilt, as the release documents could potentially have done in “Die Einfriedung.” Such an *Umkehr* would appear a gentler use of destiny were it not for the fact that, as the narrator of *Der Brief* claims in the

above quotation, the existence of the subject perceived as innocent would also be expunged along with their guilt. The written word of the authorities has the effect here of deciding on the legal state of their subjects, states of guilt and of innocence, that can be generated at a bureaucratic whim, but that have serious consequences for those who come to be defined within those categories. As a result of this bureaucratic power, the story's protagonist, C., muses:

es ist immerhin denkbar, daß in gilbenden Aktenordnern, die in den Schränken der Behörden ruhen, selbst Tatsachen aufbewahrt werden, die älter sind als die Regierungen, die den Wechsel von Staatsapparaten und ganze Generationen von Bürokraten überdauert haben.

(it is quite conceivable that there are facts being stored in the yellowing files held in the authorities' cupboards, that are older than the governments, that have survived whole state-apparatuses and whole generations of bureaucrats; *ibid.*, p. 248.)

To try to resist the terrible permanence of such archives appears fruitless to C. Yet it is not long before he begins to imagine a "Lücke, die C. sich zunutze zu machen gedachte" (gap, that C. was thinking of making use of; *ibid.*, p. 248), a perforation in the state's systems through which he could pass by moving unnoticed into the house of a persecuted Jewish family. Thus, the ahistorical totality that C. perceives in the state files is pitched here against their failure, as porous documents that might yet allow him to escape bureaucratic detection.

The hole in the archive identified by the C. of *Der Brief* would offer a vertical escape, one that might even undermine the surface-covering control of the Stasi. It resonates too with certain images of porosity and perforation that return in Hilbig's post-unification writing, for instance the prose poem "Gewebe" (Web), which was published in the same year as "*Ich*" as part of an online poetry project by the *literaturWERKstatt berlin*. The poem imagines an architecture of machinic webbing: "Aggregate von Webmaschinen, riesige Hallen voller Webmaschinen, Straßen von Webmaschinen, Zeile um Zeile aufgereiht in den großen Webereien" (aggregates of webmachines, huge halls of webmachines, streets of webmachines, line upon line strung up in whole webb-eries; Hilbig, 2008, p. 264). Although this "imaginäre Gewebe [...] entwickelt sich labyrinthisch und breitet sich labyrinthisch aus" (imaginary weave develops and spreads itself out like a labyrinth; *ibid.*, p. 264), evoking in the poem a threatening, because ubiquitous complexity, its structuration as a multi-directional weave also suggests a lacunary character that may yet permit escape. The poem recalls the Stasi-infiltrated cityscape, which nonetheless figures as a surprisingly

porous space in “*Ich*”, as W. positions himself in holes in the ground in order to secure purchase on the objects of his surveillance. A recurrent hole (*Loch*) in that novel was of course the (male) anus, which figured as a site of abusive entry by powerful others. Gendered otherwise, and perhaps offering more elasticity, is the orifice that appears in his final novel, *Das Provisorium* (*The Stop-Gap*, 2000), in which the character H’s mother wields “zwischen ihren Beinen ein unberechenbares Loch” (between her legs an unreckonable hole; Hilbig, 2000, p. 98). This character is entangled in collaboration with the powers who spy on her, yet she maintains an incalculable power of her own through sexual encounters.

At times it seems in these works that a hole has been punched into reality, cleanly preventing its agents from conceiving of themselves as subjects, from recalling their own actions, and certainly from interacting with the Stasi’s bureaucracy in such a manner as to save themselves from imprisonment. Yet at others times there is a more hopeful prospect, as if the archive’s totalizing fever has burned a hole through which the subject might slip. The latter kind of hole would align itself with those that in Deleuze and Guattari’s *Thousand Plateaus* offer passages into “a more positive line of deterritorialization” (Deleuze and Guattari, 2013, p. 388). The former, on the other hand, seems to evoke the more destructive perforations through which, Deleuze and Guattari write, “[e]very consciousness pursues its own death, every love-passion its own end” (*ibid.*, p. 155). If there is an escape route from the Stasi’s textual systems, it is not an easy one for Hilbig’s characters to take, and there may be no recovering from the traumatic state of falling away from definition, even from the definition of their own perception.

## Archival and an-archival practices

The aim of the Stasi archive was to hold information that would enable the Ministry to uncover and ultimately prevent crimes of dissidence and disloyalty. However, if we heed Hilbig’s literary account of these files and their effects, the goals of the historical organization are revealed as ultimately self-defeating. The Stasi cannot capture the full or gapless image of its subject because, as Hilbig’s work demonstrates, that subject itself did not hold together with security, but rather struggled to maintain a sense of identity such as could be recorded in the tabular forms of the spy archive. This identity struggle has a basic affinity with that experienced by the unwilling collaborators of the previous chapter, who in Wolf’s and Maron’s life writing could not fully control their own actions,

but instead gave in to the coercion of state authorities, thus finding themselves inhabited by ghostly forces that were both inside and other. However, a significant difference resides in the fact that Hilbig's characters are usually only victims (the fictional spy in "*Ich*" is a notable exception), and therefore they find themselves delivered over in even more direct fashion to the secret police's oppressive practices. As the works that Hilbig wrote after his release from prison suggest, these were practices whose effects of dissolving the victim's sense of self made it impossible for the subject's identity to make sense within the terms of corporeal tangibility, ideological clarity, and quasi-legal guilt or innocence that the Stasi archive required.

Given the drastic effects that a clash with, and imprisonment by, the Stasi could have on its subject, it is striking that Hilbig's post-prison writing shows the very documents that are meant to record and manipulate their subjects themselves coming apart. Admittedly, in "Er" and "Johannis," written in the mid-1970s, the identity documents kept by the state are portrayed as brutally fixed, and operating via a totalizing grammar that is pitched entirely against the contingency experienced by those that they profiled. However, the first tales of the 1980s, "Die Einfriedung" and "Er, nicht ich," began to show these papers as slipping along with the identities that they were attempting to track. With this slippage comes an increased freedom, in turn, for the subject of these documents, who can begin to commit oppositional acts such as drag, that reveal the state's files as fallible documents that allow crimes to occur and images, memories, even subjects to slip through their pages. In this manner, Hilbig's writing offers an account of how the Stasi's files, which sought to capture the total image of their subject, served finally to destroy the security for which they were intended. The archive is full of holes in these texts, holes through which its subject of surveillance readily slips, losing its own sense of security and undermining the security of the system around it in the process. Such slippages may have the potential to resist the totalization to which Derrida's archive is destructively driven in *Archive Fever*. In Hilbig's vision they certainly offer a form for the kind of resistance that Foucault envisioned in his readings of the Bastille documents. In that sense, they can also be seen to map onto the resistance that defines Deleuze and Guattari's images of a deterritorializing assemblage. There is a vertical route out here, leading to a fall beyond reckoning perhaps, but an escape still from the confines of the files.

Appropriately for Hilbig's own vocation as a literary author, many of his characters make particular use of the slipperiness of the state's archive by producing their own forms of writing. This is the case for the protagonist of "*Ich*", who when he spies for the Stasi in Hilbig's post-unification novel

begins to scatter through his spy reports the “Restbestände seiner lyrischen Versuche, vollkommen zugedeckt von der dürren Wortspreu mühsam erstellter Protokolle” (remains of his literary attempts, covered over with the dry word-chaff of carefully compiled protocols; Hilbig, 1993, p. 208). Perhaps making up for the fact that his work is not being published for its literary merit, this character’s creative ideas feed into the spy reports that he must constantly churn out, generating in this way a subversive re-use of the textual forms that are available to him. What is more, when the busy spy finds himself short on time, he also lands upon the idea of sampling his spy reports in his creative essays: “Warum sollten nicht Teile aus diesen Berichten in die Texte einfließen, welche den Zeitschriften zugedacht waren? [...] sie konnten als ‘Fragmente,’ als nicht abschließbare Bewußtseinsprotokolle ohne weiteres hingehen” (why can parts of these reports not go into his texts? they could go in as “fragments,” or unfinished protocols of consciousness; *ibid.*, p. 290). As the linguistic formulations of W’s literary texts begin to mimic the Stasi files that he writes, readers might be reminded of the subversive power of mimicry employed by Rosalind Polkowski in Chapter 1, and by her hysterical forebears in Charcot’s and Freud’s treatment. These feverish performances, by collaborator-subjects who on one level long for release from the Stasi’s control, have potential in that they offer something of the repetition that in Derrida’s account threatens the oppressive institution of the archive.

Yet there are risks, too, for the subject who seeks to subvert the archive by mimicry, as is also clear in *Ich*, where W’s literary and surveillance writings become indistinguishable from one another, as a result of which playful textual mimicry he can no longer confidently affirm his own authorship of either kinds of writing. Some of W’s sketches do appear to have been published in literary journals, but he remains ignorant of how this has happened, because W. does not himself submit them for publication. As a result, W. begins to doubt whether the texts that are published in his name are really his own. This doubt is exacerbated by the problem that W./C. has more than one name, so that if he does want to abandon his role as a spy and assume a life as a writer in the West (should this iteration of W’s identity ever make it to the other side of the Wall), he will need to prove that he is indeed their author. Finally, even the refuge of writing seems to constitute W. as “eine literarische Figur” (a literary character; *ibid.*, p. 142), and as the autonomy of his authorship is called into question, he begins to feel that his entire identity amounts to “eine papierne Phantasie” (a fantasy in paper; *ibid.*, p. 142). There are limited possibilities available to the subject operating under the Stasi’s regime, and the risk that identity may flip



over here into a mere fantasy of the creative writer looms large for these internally resistant characters.

Perhaps frustrated by the limits of writing, one of Hilbig's characters devises a different kind of response to the disorienting effects of the Stasi's techniques. The narrator of "Die Einfriedung" attempts to imagine for himself a more secure identity, one that is perhaps stored in a personal memory-bank of hope. Thus, he wonders as he lies in his cell why he has not drawn on the comforting memory of the escape scenarios that he once dreamt up in his youth. Memory appears to him here as a "Bildfläche" (screen; Hilbig, 2009, p. 95), one on which familiar names and faces are stored but from which many have been wiped. While suffering the tyranny of the authorities' filing system, this character also goes back to an archive of sorts, or wishes that he could, in order to escape the prison of the present. This recourse to the archival is a surprising response for a character whose experiences with the files and documents of the state have only been negative. The idea of a personal archive that could possibly store what this character terms a "Wahrheitsperson" (true self; *ibid.*, p. 97) is also challenging for the philosophy of the subject that is operating within Hilbig's texts. While he is normally read—including in this book—in terms of a fundamental breakdown in subjectivity, and in the language of its articulation, at certain moments Hilbig hints towards a somewhat less postmodern *Ich*. Though the narrator of this story finds, and must bitterly admit "daß diese Person der entwirklichten Welt zwar ihre Materie zu nehmen schien, sie porös, fadenscheinig, durchscheinend zeigte, die Wahrheit aber, die dahinter auftauchen mußte, geheimhielt" (this person did seem to take its material from the world that had been stripped of reality, making it porous, threadbare, translucent; but the truth that must reside behind it was kept a secret; *ibid.*, p. 97), he has nonetheless been in search of a "unterdrückte Person in ihm" (suppressed person in him; *ibid.*, p. 97), in a kind of self-anamnesis that suggests that not all archival systems are to be rejected.

Grappling with the abrupt shift from the authoritarian archives of the past to the archival openings of the capitalist present, the literary works consulted in this and the previous chapter assert the failure of the Stasi files to deliver a singular, authoritative account of the past. However, this is not an anarchist (or an-archival) plea for the destruction of the archive as totalitarian institution. Instead, certain of the texts operate in close relation to the archive, relying upon other kinds of texts to compensate for the illegibility of the past to its own agents. In Christa Wolf's *Stadt der Engel*, the archive of Stasi files, however harmful, serves as a back-up disk for the narrator's faulty memory, and *Pawels Briefe* relied on the written documents of the Holocaust to track back the



murder of Maron's beloved grandfather. The latter text's closing pages that refer to Stasi collaboration seem even to presuppose the reader's familiarity with the spy files in question, so that this text cannot work without reference to its enemy-archival sources. It seems that beyond the compulsions that found and sustain modernity's archives, there is the more benevolent capacity of archival forms to trace and store a culture's knowledge. This is the role of the Freud family library on which Derrida grounds his analysis. A certain kind of cultural keeping may be a gift, too, of the (in 1994) new email technology to which Derrida's lecture briefly addresses itself.

There is something highly ambivalent about the holding power of the archive. The perverse preservation carried out by the Stasi files means that a visit to them can provide access to the early lyrics that the late Hilbig exchanged with his publishers in the West, with their precious, handwritten annotations. Foucault's project articulates such ambivalence of the archival hold, as he notes that it is only in "the few sentences that struck them down" that his memorial project can re-encounter the dead (Foucault, 2002, p. 164), so that "they are no longer anything but that which was meant to crush them" (*ibid.*, p. 164). This ambivalence makes the Bastille archive a "precarious domicile" for those whose lives are governed in it (*ibid.*, p. 162). The Stasi files house precarity too, one that is apparent in the vulnerability of the archive itself, as it relies on future readers to fill in its gaps and engage with the lives that its pages contain. Mary Fulbrook has warned against the instrumentalization of the Stasi files for a "moral demolition job" against the GDR (Fulbrook, 1999, p. 224). As Heiner Müller once commented, the state archives of West Germany have not (yet) been opened.<sup>3</sup> It would certainly be possible to read from the East German spy archive a particular view of state socialism, and to conclude with an anti-archival, libertarian viewpoint uninformed by readings from the other side. The references to McCarthyism and the CIA in Christa Wolf's last novel, as her narrator traces the persecution of European communists in post-war America, index the political problem of holes in the surveillance archives to which we have access today. Moreover, such un-wholeness of the archive also exacerbates the ethical challenge that literary works about the Stasi files present. The subjects of the texts consulted here are not sovereign, reliable agents; instead they repeatedly fall into collaborations and compromised co-optations by the Stasi, even in the case of Hilbig as he enters into discussions with the censors of his work. Ultimately, the failures of archival and individual integrity to which these archival and literary texts attest cannot solve a riddle of guilt or resistance in relation to the surveillance archive. They do, however, enable an exploration

of the inconsistencies and insecurities held in the archive, and the limitations that these problems place on historiography. This is an exploration that will be less sure, but perhaps therefore more accurate, in its own attempts to take and give account.

## Notes

- 1 The Stasi are catching a glimpse here of Hilbig's deep passion for Bob Dylan. The younger GDR author Claudia Rusch recounts how Hilbig, a friend of hers, left behind an archive of 1,500 Dylan CDs, whose lyrics he knew by heart (Rusch, 2008, p. 102).
- 2 Cooke reads these unknown officers explicitly as members of the Stasi (Cooke, 2000, p. 183).
- 3 In fact, a very small number of West German secret service files from the 1950s are available for consultation in the German Federal Archive, albeit so redacted as to give little information on the former Nazis who went into the post-1945 West German public sphere.

## Animals and the Limits of Sovereignty in the Writing of Unified Germany

*Ich ist kein anderer  
Als dieser Grenzhund, der sich selbst bewacht.  
Wer garantiert dir, daß er dich nicht anspringt*

*(I is no other  
Than this young border-hound, that surveils itself.  
Who guarantees that he won't jump on you)*

(From Durs Grünbein, "Porträt des Künstlers als junger Grenzhund"/  
Portrait of the Artist as a Young Border-Hound; Grünbein, 1991, p. 102)

East German literary works that were published soon after German unification understandably maintained a strong focus on the recent past. Yet as the first decade of unification progressed and its second decade began, writers from the GDR began to take in the society into which they had been liberated when the SED fell, and to let their characters loose in this new setting. The decisions that these last East German characters can make about their lives are radically different in liberal democracy and its capitalist economy. From a certain perspective, unification brings with it opportunities for them to grasp more "sovereignty," more power to define the course of their own lives. The liberalism of unified Germany undoubtedly affects plot, character development, and mood in recent works, as characters are able to travel, connect with family and friends abroad, take up different kinds of employment and, in the cases of characters who are also literary writers, see their works published without censorship. Yet these texts, by authors experiencing a new society in all of its aspects, observe certain limitations on those new freedoms, limitations that exist within the characters themselves, as well as in the nation in which they are beginning to settle.

Monika Maron was one of the few authors from the GDR who asserted herself consistently as a proponent of unification. At the very beginning of the process, she wrote with approval of the shift that the eastern states were making “aus einer autoritären kleinbürgerlich-feudalen Machtstruktur, in eine offene bürgerliche Demokratie” (out of an authoritarian, petty-bourgeois, feudal power structure into an open bourgeois democracy; Maron, 1993, p. 88). In such a context, the struggle for agency that her literary characters faced in her GDR texts should surely be replaced by opportunity and the personal satisfaction that it brings. However, despite Maron’s early approval for unification, her post-unification fictions from 1996 onward have betrayed the ambivalences of the political and economic environment after 1989, by their depiction of the problems for subjectivity that persist within it. In particular, the literary subject that throughout Maron’s oeuvre so longed to hold sovereignty over itself and to use that sovereignty to commit “meaningful action” continues, in the texts handled here, to battle an ongoing subjugation to both inner and outer conditions. Curiously, such subjugation figures in several of her works as a phenomenon related to the entrapment of the human in its destiny as an animal. Thus, Maron’s first novel set after unification, *animal triste* (1996), received acclaim for its arresting depiction of the love affair between its East German protagonist and a West German entomologist, an experience that leads not to more freedom or self-sovereignty, but to a clash with the limits of agency. Maron’s first post-*Wende* protagonist metamorphoses into the sad animal of the title by means of a counter-intuitive collaboration in her own, loving destruction. This character’s becoming-creaturely can best be understood via a co-reading with Heinrich von Kleist’s play of 1808, *Penthesilea*, in which Kleist rewrote and re-gendered the myth of the Amazonian Penthesilea in love with her enemy on the battlefield, Achilles. The influence of Kleist’s play is signaled by the repetition by Maron’s narrator of a quotation from it about love unto death. This demonstrative intertextual reference might seem to point to a shared focus in both works, on love’s devotion. Yet a close reading, of the instances of sovereign power and animal self-loss in Kleist’s play, reveals the crucial masochism behind the love story in *animal triste*, as Maron’s narrator consents to a perverse self-subjection that undercuts her desire for potency.

The theme of sovereignty (and its opposites) in Maron’s writing has persisted and progressed throughout her oeuvre, as we shall see here in readings from the two novels that followed *animal triste*: *Endmoränen* (*Last Sediments*, 2002) and *Ach Glück* (*Oh Happiness*, 2007), as well as her collection of short prose pieces, *Geburtsort Berlin* (*Birthplace: Berlin*, 2003), her Frankfurt Poetics Lectures of 2005,

the reportage *Bitterfelder Bogen* (*Arc of Bitterfeld*, 2008), her Hölderlin-Prize speech and her most recent prose work, *Zwischenspiel* (*Interlude*, 2013). These texts exist, moreover, in a dialogue with a range of works from the years after German unification in which dogs and other animals abound as metaphors for human subjects tied into the forces of political history. From the immediate post-Wall works of celebrated poet Durs Grünbein to the celebrated GDR epic by fellow Dresdener Uwe Tellkamp, *Der Turm* (*The Tower*, 2008), animals populate the literature of the new federal East densely. We find them in the Stasi novels of Erich Loest and Hans-Joachim Schädlich as well as in the recent, much-lauded texts of Eugen Ruge, whose characters share with Maron's a desire for travel, for a *Rückzug* or retreat away from the former East. These journeys seem to promise more personal sovereignty, and yet they entail encounters with the ultimate creatureliness of subjectivity, through contact with (other) animals met along the way.

These literary manifestations of non-human life are illuminated here with the help of some of the last lectures by Derrida, which he devoted to the relationship between human lives and their animal counterparts. Derrida joins several other theorists of politics and subjectivity in this chapter, helping to decode the plots of sovereignty and subjection in the East German writing of the new era. Thus while the works of Schmitt, Benjamin, Agamben, and Žižek elucidate the gestures through which power seeks to assert itself, Butler, Derrida, and the contemporary Germanist Eric Santner investigate the limits on such sovereign self-assertion. Against this theoretical background, the following pages observe as the characters of the last East German fiction struggle with a subjectivity experienced as "creatureliness." The image of the "creature" offers a means of imagining the multiple subjections of the human animal, including the subjection to our ontological state as living beings who are always subject to death, and the kinds of social subjection whereby we always rely on the goodwill of others, whether they are in power or simply living alongside us. As will become clear here, such ontological and social subjections are compounded by the dilemmas posed by an environment in which the freedom to make personal and political choices is pitched against the coercions and and limitations of current modes of capitalism.

## Sovereigns and creatures in the writing of German unification

While the sovereignty theorist Schmitt lent both ideological and legal support to Hitler's totalitarianism, his correspondent Walter Benjamin looked on in horror as a state of exceptional violence became the rule in fascist Europe. More recently,

Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben's work on sovereignty has extended the conversation between Schmitt and Benjamin, by foregrounding the existence of certain structural elements of political sovereignty even after the demise of fascist regimes. Agamben extracts from Schmitt's and Benjamin's models of sovereign power in order to expose their applicability to an "originary exclusion through which the political dimension was first constituted" (Agamben, 1998, p. 83). As a constitutive origin of politics as such, the state of exception on Agamben's model continues to define the operations of liberal capitalism.

The argument that an ongoing state of exception continues to provide the ruling condition of modernity has found currency in contemporary German Studies, for instance in Eric Santner's *The Royal Remains* (2011), which follows Agamben by drawing on Ernst Kantorowicz's work of political theology, *The King's Two Bodies* (1957), in this case to claim that traditional monarchic sovereignty has been replaced in Western modernity by an investment of political agency in the body of the people. Santner argues that the totalitarian excesses and violent exclusions of earlier sovereignty regimes persist in new forms of "biotechnical mutation" in the present-day West (Santner, 2011, p. 21). My objections, in Chapter 1, to the application of post-Holocaust trauma theory to literary cases of Stasi collaboration expressed concern at the historical elisions risked by such a comparison, between Schmitt's model of totalitarian sovereignty and modern modes of governmentality. One of the central problems of such an approach as Agamben's, which finds acts of sovereignty taking place even in eras without a sovereign, mean that responsibility for those acts cannot be attributed to any subject in particular. On the other hand, Agamben's theory of the "state of exception" draws convincingly on examples outside the concentration camps, including the black zones and privately run secret prisons of contemporary capitalist warfare, to suggest the usefulness of a certain degree of comparison, one which can indeed discern responsibility for these new crimes. The popularity of Agamben's work in humanities scholarship since the 1990s shows how, though their techniques of government may differ from those of our Western democracies, past regimes nonetheless remain as spectres in current political structures in attempts by philosophy and art to conceptualize them.

One such spectre is that of the "creature," a term that Santner adopts from the cast of modernist characters analyzed in Benjamin's cultural criticism. In *On Creaturely Life* (2006), Eric Santner examines the figurations (and disfigurations) of a human modernity haunted by vestiges of its animal origins. He does so by drawing on Benjamin's term "Kreatur," which took in those bent, buckled, and otherwise disfigured animal-subjects who populate both

the Baroque German tragedy (cf. Benjamin, 2000, p. 72) and the writings of Kafka (cf. Santner, 2006, p. 21), as troubling figurations of subjection to a power experienced as violently sovereign. Derrida, too, refers to the figurations of animal subjectivity in works by Kafka, and also Hoffmann and Rilke, in terms of a “zoopoetics” (Derrida, 2008, p. 6), that enables their readers to encounter a border-zone between the naked life of the animal—naked for “no animal has ever thought to dress itself” (ibid., p. 5)—and the life of the human subject who inhabits the usually *dressed* realms of social and political life. That the figure of the sovereign also counts as another creature is present in Benjamin’s writing on German tragedy, so that “so hoch er über Untertan und Staat auch thront, sein Rang ist in der Schöpfungswelt beschlossen, er ist der Herr der Kreaturen, aber er bleibt Kreatur” (however highly he may throne above subjects and state, his rank is decided in the world of creation, he is the lord of the creatures, but he remains a creature; Benjamin, 2000, p. 66). The sovereign, after all, is human, and therefore subject to same ontological problems of any other human-creature, albeit with different consequences for one so privileged.

There is something liberating, at least potentially, in the notion that even a figure of sovereign power, a dictator, a concentration camp commander, is still a mere “Kreatur.” In some of the last lectures he gave, published posthumously as *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (2008), Derrida sought to undermine the binarism between human and non-human life, insisting instead on a multiplicity expressed by the neologism “animot” (Derrida, 2008, p. 41). The term re-figures the French plural noun *animaux* to insist on an ontological experience bordering between humanity and animality, with the pleasingly robotic resonances of the term suggesting a liberating flexibility of being, where human can function as machine, can extend its possibilities into the realm of the technological, and thus make the notion of animal-being less subjection-oriented and potentially subversive. The liminal experience of human-animality is a troubling one, however, entailing as it does a universality of subjection that means that even the most powerful human is not exempt from the phenomena of vulnerability and deliverance that define animal life. The prevalence of the literary figures of Kafka in all of these theoretical writings about creatureliness, characters who are executed as bugs or dogs, or delivered over to states of degradation that have no obvious end, is therefore not too great a surprise.

It should also not be too puzzling that the unfreedom of the human-creature is an important theme in works that are set in the GDR. Josefa Nadler, the

narrator of Maron's first novel, *Flugasche*, felt that she and her fellow journalists "benehmen uns wie dressierte Hofhunde, die letztlich nur ihre eigene Kette bewachen" (behave like trained yard-dogs, who in the end are only keeping watch over their own chains; Maron, 1981, p. 74). One does not have to cast around too much in the imagination to picture how strong was the *dressage* to which the human underwent in a dictatorship, where censorship prevailed over press freedom, all votes were rigged, and dissent could lead to imprisonment, exile, or sometimes worse. That such training could also lead to unwitting collaboration on the part of the subject is clear, meanwhile, in *Pawels Briefe*. There, Maron's autobiographical narrator describes a concern that she had in the GDR, that even her hatred for the SED leadership could contribute to its repressive state policies. This is because, to engage with and win arguments against her political enemy, Maron's narrator finds that she must also mimic him: "weil ich, um ihn zuvorkommen, zu oft versuche, zu denken wie er" (because, in order to outwit him, I try too often to think like he does; Maron, 1999, p. 163). In the scenario that Maron is depicting here, any dialogue with one's political opponent risks an involuntary mimesis, perhaps like that aping to which the spy W. found himself prone in Wolfgang Hilbig's novel *Ich*. Moreover, the aping performed by Maron's narrator in *Flugasche* produces the anxiety that "ich könnte meinem Feind ähnlich werden wie ein Hund seinem Herrn" (I could become like my enemy, just as a dog becomes like its master; *ibid.*, p. 163). Such anxiety, about the involuntary nature of collaboration, echoes the fictional depiction in *Stille Zeile Sechs* of a collaboration which also presents as an animal phenomenon, with Rosalind Polkowski quitting one *dog's life* only to enter another, under a new master, with new tasks of mimicry to carry out.

One of the most haunting stories of the hysterics that Charcot treated at the Salpêtrière hospital attaches to a woman called Augustine, a patient who was reported to crawl along the stage when hypnotized and bark like a dog. Anna O., meanwhile, confessed to Freud's colleague Josef Breuer that she felt unable to drink because she had felt such disgust when watching a dog drink from a glass. These primal scenes from the prehistory of psychoanalysis return in Polkowski's story in *Stille Zeile Sechs*. Her sense that she had led a "Hundeleben" (dog's life) at Barabas's research institute foreshadows her meeting with Beerenbaum (Maron, 1991, p. 20), who in her first observations of him tells jokes to workers in the café as if he were throwing "dem Hofhund ein Knochen" (a bone to the watchdog of the yard / court; *ibid.*, p. 15). The *Hofhunde* of Polkowski's observation are allied with the yard-dogs who surveil their own chains in *Flugasche* by the affiliation to the *Hof*, a term that signifies both a yard and a court in



the monarchic sense, a dual site which Webber finds operating in Benjamin's writing under "a law of exception" (Webber, 2008, p. 76), an inside-outside logic wherein feudal authority both assembles its subjects and disperses them from the threshold of its residence. As Polkowski later finds out, Beerenbaum is master to a housekeeper who resembles a "Zerberus in der hellblauen Kittelschürze" (Cerberus in the bright blue overall-pinny; Maron, 1991, p. 199). Her high-coverage apron is a reassuring item of clothing familiar from most GDR households, thus making Frau Karl's appearance as the fifty-headed watchdog who guards the gates of Hades particularly uncanny. Frau Karl keeps watch, perhaps like Josefa Nadler and her colleagues in *Flugasche*, over the mechanisms that keep her, too, prisoner. The compulsion to collaborate with the SED dictatorship is figured in these examples from *Stille Zeile Sechs* as a behavior of trained animals, who parrot and ape, serve and protect a master regime in relation to which they nonetheless only remain on the threshold.

This trope, of the creature as a figuration of collaborative servitude, is shared with other works of the post-unification era that are still set in the GDR. Thus in Erich Loest's *Nikolaikirche*, protagonist Astrid's brother Sascha Bacher is not only a Stasi captain, but also a specialist dog-trainer. He is responsible for training the ministry's sniffer dogs to follow the scent of dissidents, a "Spurensuche" (search for traces; Loest, 1997, p. 263), in which the invisible traces of criminal activity can reveal themselves to the dogs' multisensory tracking. Bacher is also responsible for deploying the dogs during the anti-SED demonstrations, and using them to terrorize arrestees held in the temporary prisons set up specifically for the protests. Loest's narrative reveals the fantasies that Bacher entertains, of the IMs who he employs as dogs, and of the prisoners he plans to arrest at the *Montagsdemonstrationen* as a pack of hounds who may kill each other when they are locked after the demonstrations in cages normally reserved for his tracker dogs. Aroused by the cynegetic exploits of these latter, canine servants, Bacher also imagines having to set the sniffer dogs on his mother if she were ever suspected of dissidence. This sadistic fantasy combines with others that Bacher has, of women dressed in fake leather dresses, to give readers an image of the Stasi officer as a cruel self-styled master—one whose sartorial taste aligns him with the perpetrators in the concentration camps of earlier decades.

Loest deliberately builds up an image of the Stasi officer as a concentration camp guard, so that Bacher's Stasi boss explicitly compares his enthusiastic junior colleague with the members of the SS who were required to shoot their Alsatian "mit dem sie den Lehrgang über zusammengelebt hatten, als Beweis

des Gehorsams” (with which they had lived throughout their training, as proof of loyalty; *ibid.*, p. 49). The *Lehrgang* of becoming a member of the Nazis’ elite military corps included this test of mettle that would show the officer’s suitability for executing humans when their service began. The comparison between Stasi officer Bacher and the military group that operated the Nazi death camps and ghettos reflects the trend of comparing the Stasi with the Nazis in order to gain recognition of the seriousness of the East German spy organization’s crimes. Perhaps understandably for a victim of the Stasi himself, Loest counts among those who aligned the Stasi with the Nazis, through the metaphors he chose to employ in his literary writing. Despite the historical problems attaching to it, the comparison is effective in this novel, because it allows Loest to convey the chilling effect of a mastery that executes those who have carried out loyal service, within a text where GDR citizens are imagined, even more terrifyingly, as dogs themselves.

Durs Grünbein, like Loest, effectively envisages a transformation of the human into a dog within the SED state. His “Portrait des Künstlers als junger Grenzhund” (Portrait of the Artist as a Young Border-Hound), which is dedicated to Pavlov and to the dogs used by the Russian Army’s Medical Academy as guinea-pigs, depicts the lyric subject as a dog, “Glücklich in einem Niemandland aus Sand / War ich ein Hund, in Grenzen wunschlos, stumm” (Happy in a no-man’s land of sand / I was a dog, within borders free of desire, mute; Grünbein, 1991, p. 101). In a poem published in the immediate aftermath of unification, Grünbein’s dog-subject stands on the deathstrip between East and West, the layer of sand at the Berlin Wall designed to keep track (both figuratively and literally) of attempted escapees. Strikingly, in this liminal zone, the subject is stripped of desires and of the ability to make verbal sounds. Ruth Owen finds in these lines a multiple limitation on the subject that renders it animal: “in Grenzen’ [(with)in borders; AR] is the link between emotional, existential and topographical realities, between a limited contentment and the limited existence of a dumb animal” (Owen, 2004, p. 30). Far from the communicative cynegetics of a tracker dog, Grünbein’s East German canine is struck dumb by the border-conditions in which it exists. Alexander Müller’s reading, meanwhile, identifies the poem’s adaptation for its GDR setting of the title of Dylan Thomas’s *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog* (Müller, 2004, p. 40), itself a play on the title of James Joyce’s semi-autobiographical *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. In Joyce’s high-modernist vision, the standard opposition between masterly humanity and subjugated canine existence is problematized by what critic Robert Spoo calls the “God/dog flip-flop” (Spoo, 1989, p. 445). The

precarious opposition between sovereignty and enslavement that was evoked in Benjamin's description of the sovereign as "hoherhabene Kreatur" (most sublime creature; Benjamin, 2000, p. 67) is also made plain in Joyce's reverse-mimetic orthography of g-o-d/d-o-g.

In most post-GDR representations, dogs are the opposite of gods. Although dogs are physically able to overpower and kill their masters, they rarely do so, thanks to the rigorous training and socialization that they receive and to the affective bond that exists between the two. Maron's evocation of this animal, whose slavery is sealed by a complex emotional bond, is therefore compelling as a metaphor for the Polkowski-Beerenbaum collaboration in *Stille Zeile Sechs*. It also makes sense that in a text that was so imprinted with the desire for rebellion, the dog was not the only point of comparison between human and animal. In contrast to her image of herself as an enslaved dog at work for various masters (Barabas, Beerenbaum, and the more abstract force of destiny), when Polkowski thinks about her desire to commit more meaningful acts she fantasizes herself as a horse:

Mein erster Gedanke an eine Tat war immer verbunden mit dem Bild eines sich aufbäumenden weißen Pferdes, das von seinem Reiter ermutigt wird, über den Abgrund zu springen, vor dem es scheute.

(My first thought of an act was always bound up with the image of a rearing white horse, which is being encouraged by its rider to jump over the abyss of which it was afraid; Maron, 1991, p. 51.)

Leonhard interprets the image of the horse in terms of its "Kraft und Rebellion" (strength and rebellion; Leonhard, 2004, p. 290), and as such as representing Polkowski's anarchic acting-out against Beerenbaum's authority. Yet, like the dog metaphors, the image contains an undeniable element of servitude. No matter how powerfully it might rear, the horse is in a position of obeying or resisting its master's encouragement to jump. A more inspiring counterpart is available, however, in the form of the cat, a creature associated closely with Polkowski's striving for action in the novel. So long as Polkowski is working at the research institute, she feels that she is merely subsisting in a "kreatürliches, von einem Katzendasein wenig unterschiedenes Überleben" (creaturally survival that differed little from the being of a cat; Maron, 1991, p. 22). Yet, on closer observation, the cats that she observes sitting in a carefully structured circle in her apartment's *Hof* impart the message that being an animal does not have to mean subjection to a human master. The cats demonstrate a way of living that involves not subordinating one's life to the will of others, but instead "tun, wozu

man Lust hat" (doing what one wishes; *ibid.*, p. 21). It is appropriate that on the morning when Polkowski wakes up and decides no longer to go to work, the blood behind her eyelids appears to her "so rot wie Katzenblut" (as red as cat's blood; *ibid.*, p. 23). This withdrawal is differentiated from that of her namesake in Maron's earlier novel *Die Überläuferin*, who awakes paralyzed in bed and therefore unable to return to work. The Polkowski of *Stille Zeile Sechs* makes instead an active choice, at least initially, to liberate herself from servitude.

When she goes on, after opting for independence, to work for Beerenbaum, Polkowski tries to maintain that state of self-definition that she observed in the cats. Like Melville's *Bartleby*, she "prefers not to" pass comment on the content of the memoirs, and she tries to remain faithful to this decision and thereby retain a sense of sovereignty over herself. "Die selbstständige Bedeutung der Deziision" (the independent significance of the decision) is one of the central markers of Schmittian sovereignty theory (Schmitt, 1993, p. 13). Moreover, the central decision, on which in Schmitt's model of the sovereign's power pivots, concerns the "Ausnahmезustand" (state of exception; *ibid.*, p. 13), which the leader of a political unity can declare in order to ensure the security of its realm.<sup>1</sup> By declaring the state of exception, the sovereign defines the lines that demarcate a political territory, and also draws the line between the subjects who can reside within these borders and those who must stay outside of them. In her role working for Beerenbaum, Polkowski does not gain the powers of decision and demarcation that she desires, and that would thus make of her a civilian embodiment of Schmitt's sovereign leader. Instead, she remains caught in subjection to her hated employer. Beerenbaum's reign may end with his death, "ausgeliefert einer anderen Macht, vor der Beerenbaums Macht im Leben sich ausnahm wie eine Glühlampe gegen die Sonne" (delivered over to another power, before which Beerenbaum's power extinguished [or excepted] itself like a lamp against the sun; Maron, 1991, p. 124). Or it could be that he will live on through what Georg Leisten has identified as the second "Körper des Königs" (body of the king), namely through his memoirs (Leisten, 2002, p. 140), in that way continuing to rule as a vulnerable but compelling sovereign over the creature that Polkowski remains.

### Creaturely life in *animal triste*

It was not until the publication of *animal triste* that Maron released a work of fiction set in unified Germany. Here and in her two subsequent novels, the

monumental historical flip (*Wende*) by which the two Germanys were unified presents her characters both with new possibilities for action and new dilemmas. Thus in *animal triste*, the reign of a “Gangsterbande” (gangster mob; Maron, 1996, p. 30) in a bordered-off state had hitherto robbed the palaeontologist heroine of “das Paläozoikum, das Mesozoikum [...] alles, dem ich mein Leben hatte verschreiben können” (the Palaeozoic and the Mesozoic eras [...] everything that I might have devoted my life to; *ibid.*, p. 34). Before the restrictions on travel were lifted, the unnamed narrator had dreamed of visiting the Pliny Moody garden in Massachusetts, where a set of dinosaur footprints remain as a trace of prehistoric life. Although the narrator never travels to see the footprints in the course of the novel, the demise of the *Gangsterbande* and the opening of the borders it had erected at least mean that the possibility is available.

In her essay collection *Geburtsort Berlin*, Maron provides a non-fictional view on the liberation from limits that the arrival of liberal-democratic capitalism promised. She does so here on a more local level, dealing with smaller-scale issues such as the relationship of the inhabitants of Berlin to their pets. In her essay of 2000, “Die Berliner und die Hunde” (Berliners and their Dogs), the new era is described as follows: “nun, nachdem die grundsätzlichen Fragen geklärt sind, [rücken] die Sekundärfragen ins Bewußtsein” (now, after the basic questions have been dealt with, the secondary questions start to dawn upon us; Maron, 2003, pp. 100–1). This is a striking claim, seeming to cast most large-scale economic and political problems as solved, and the citizens of the new Berlin as dealing now only with the micro-issues of their individual lives. In this sense, the statement echoes a comment by Allan Bloom, cited by Derrida in his *Specters of Marx*, that at the end of the Cold War “everything that stood in the way of the reciprocal recognition of human dignity, always and everywhere, has been refuted and buried by history” (cited in Derrida, 1994, p. 78). This comment by Bloom, a role-model for the outspoken proponent of liberal democracy Francis Fukuyama, expresses an extreme optimism about the potential of the end of the Cold War as also the end of global injustice.

Yet the essays in the *Geburtsort Berlin* collection must concede that traces of the repression associated with the former GDR remain in unified Germany, as in the bureaucratic climate of the post office where the narrator is reminded of “vierzig Jahre seelischer Mißhandlungen” (forty years of psychological abuse; Maron, 2003, p. 89). However, overall the collection handles the changes that unification has wrought from a positive standpoint. In this sense, the collection prefigures Maron’s novel-length reportage of 2009, *Bitterfelder Bogen*, in which she revisits the industrial landscape whose degradation had formed the setting

of *Flugasche*. The replacement of the socialist-run factories at the Industriepark Bitterfeld-Wolfen by the plush and environmentally efficient *Solar Valley* is celebrated as one of the “Erfolgsgeschichten” (success stories) of German unification (Maron, 2009, back cover). Admittedly, in her acceptance speech on the occasion of receiving the Hölderlin-Preis, Maron expressed more negative feelings about unified Germany and the handing over of the freedom that had been won to “dem Diktat der globalen Wirtschaft und ihren expansiven Ambitionen” (the dictate of the global economy and its expansive ambitions; Maron, 2010, p. 190). Still, the solution that she proposes, to such a handing over of freedom to new dictates, is to struggle for a more genuine liberalism: “als Erstes unser wichtigstes Recht, das Recht auf freie Wahlen, zurückerobern” (to win back first of all our most important right, the right to free elections; *ibid.*, p. 195). This is a value entirely in line with the newly unified society.

Curiously, the sanguinity of these non-fictional statements contrasts with the fictional plots of Maron’s post-*Wende* novels, in which the struggle for liberated agency continues even in a context wherein, if the “Berliners and their Dogs” essay was to be believed, all large-scale problems have supposedly been solved. After the “Gangster” regime has ended, the narrator of *animal triste* encounters a number of obstacles to her freedom of self-definition. One such obstacle is the experience of love for another human being, which is a different kind of collaboration to that portrayed in Maron’s GDR novels, but one in which the sovereignty of the self is called into question in ways that are arguably no less fundamental or, indeed, injurious. In the present time of the novel, its narrator has retreated into solitude in order to grieve her relationship with a West German named Franz, which began when the borders between East and West were opened. The narrative covers the period before, during, and after the relationship and readers are left unsure as to how much time has passed since it ended.

Temporal punctuation is provided, instead, by a number of episodes of self-loss that the narrator suffers, before the relationship begins, during its course, and at the moment of its ending—episodes in which a powerlessness seems to encroach upon her and take away her physical or emotional integrity. The first such episode is a fall in the street in 1989 when, for no apparent medical reason, the narrator is plunged into a state of “Ohnmacht” (unconsciousness; Maron, 1996, p. 21), and awakes from it to feel “eine unbekannte Taubheit auf der Zunge, die sich schnell auf die übrigen Sinne ausweitete” (an unfamiliar numbness on her tongue, which soon spread to all the other senses; *ibid.*, p. 21). In the aftermath of the collapse, the narrator forgets names and suffers

dyspraxia, a form of brain damage that prevents certain types of movement, and includes the confusion of left and right hand. She comes to believe that the fit, from which these contemporary-hysterical symptoms stem, was the work of some foreign power that colonized her body:

Die Vorstellung, etwas Fremdes hätte mich an diesem Abend auf der Friedrichstraße für eine Viertelstunde einfach abgeschaltet und [...] den Funktionsplan meines Gehirns geringfügig verändert, wurde mir zur fixen Idee.

(The idea that something foreign had come along on this evening on Friedrichstraße and simply turned me off for half an hour and slightly changed the way my brain functioned—this became an obsession to me; *ibid.*, pp. 22–3.)

It is not obvious why the narrator's conviction, that a foreign entity entered into her and temporarily halted her operations, should be stronger than the more scientifically grounded notion of "ein paar verrückt gewordene Neuronen im Hippocampus oder in der Amygdala" (a few neurons in the hippocampus or the amygdala that had gone mad; *ibid.*, p. 23). The interpretation of this collapse as a colonization by some powerful other force makes sense, however, in the light of the love affair that follows, a further instance in which foreign powers usurp the narrator's self-governance.

The narrator meets Franz, who is married, in 1990 as both of them stand before the brachiosaurus skeleton in Berlin's *Naturkundemuseum*. They begin an affair, in the course of which the narrator realizes that Franz has remained unchanged, "während mein Leben weggespült wurde wie ein unverputztes Lehmhaus vom Wolkenbruch" (while my life was being washed away like an unplastered mud-walled house in a downpour; *ibid.*, p. 79). The image of a mud-house, whose unrendered walls are being washed away, makes vivid the dissolution that love visits upon the narrator, leaving her vulnerable to forces beyond her conscious control. These forces drive her to Berlin's Tegel airport to watch Franz board a plane with his wife. Embarking for the airport at the wheel of her car, the narrator feels that she is following "einem Sog, gegen den mir jeder Widerstand fehlte" (a suction against which I could raise no resistance; *ibid.*, p. 122). The incapacity to resist also makes itself felt in Franz's presence so that, like Charcot's hysterics and Polkowski in her collaborative guise, this new narrator is held hostage by a body against which her conscious will is weak. In love, she claims, the body is stronger than the mind, and hers and Franz's bodies behave as "eigenmächtige Akteure" (unauthorized agents; *ibid.*, p. 109), unauthorized but nonetheless able to claim "bedenkenloser Herrschaft" (unscrupulous sovereignty) over the conscious acts of their inhabitants (*ibid.*,



p. 109). Love, it seems, is able to take such unscrupulous control over the narrator because, like the foreign power in her pre-Franz fall, she feels that it has entered in to colonize her agency. Thus in one of her fantasies of love, the narrator describes how it is able to breach the surface of the subject at its weakest moments:

sie bricht in uns ein wie ein anderes Wesen, das uns monatelang, sogar jahrelang umlauert, bis wir irgendwann, von Erinnerungen oder Träumen heimgesucht, sehnsüchtig unsere Poren öffnen, durch die es in Sekunden eindringt und sich mit allem mischt, was unsere Haut umschließt.

(it breaks into us like another being that has been skulking around us for months or even years, until such time as, haunted by memories or dreams, our pores desirously open themselves, and it penetrates them within seconds and mixes with everything that our skin contains; *ibid.*, p. 28.)

The pathological terminology here conveys a haunting power, held within memories or dreams, that renders the subject more vulnerable to the *other being* that is love, which threatens to break in and nestle beneath the skin. Such vulnerability, being as it is towards an emotion that draws humans together in the collaboration of love, would surely be more desirable than that to which Maron and Wolf's subjects fell prey in the collaborator stories discussed in Chapter 3. Yet there is a felt similarity between the two states, a sensation of being broken into, of dissolving at the point where self meets other, that hints at a troubling link between the different kinds of participation portrayed in these works.

The dissolving effect of love in Maron's depiction, in which the physiological border of the skin is opened and crossed, conforms to Judith Butler's account of love in *Precarious Life*. Here, a human subject's desire or grief for another is able to challenge "the very notion of ourselves as autonomous and in control" (Butler, 2004, p. 23). In neither state, writes Butler, does one "stay intact" (*ibid.*, p. 23). The idea of a subject rendered porous by emotion for another also finds an echo in Maron's subsequent novel, *Endmoränen*, in which love is figured as "die verzweifelte Lust, die eigene Haut zu sprengen" (the despairing desire to jump out of one's own skin; Maron, 2002, p. 246). Here the border-breach is something lusted after, a loss of limits both despairing and desired. Yet not all the effects of love's border-breach are salutary. Like the collaborator figures of Maron's GDR novels, the narrator of *animal triste* suffers a loss of self-control that she experiences as turning her from a human into an animal. It leads her to describe herself and her old friend Ate, in whom she confides the affair, as



“Insekten im Bernstein” (insects in amber; Maron, 1996, p. 149), delivered over to their destiny of “Tierhaftigkeit” (animality; *ibid.*, p. 165).

This episode recalls a conversation in *Stille Zeile Sechs* between Polkowski and her neighbor Thekla Fleischer, in which Maron’s earlier protagonist describes destiny as something violent, a trap, “in der man sich unweigerlich fangen werde” (in which one will inevitably get caught; Maron, 1991, p. 128). In his essay “Schicksal und Charakter” (Destiny and Personality), Benjamin writes of a “schicksalhaft gekrönte Gewalt” (a violence crowned by destiny; Benjamin, 1965, p. 42), a malevolent force that its subjects have no agency to oppose. Destiny is aligned in Benjamin’s essay with the performative accusations of a court of law that, like in Hilbig’s prison stories, constitute the guilt of that subject in a manner that is inescapable and permanent. He writes that the law is able to produce life “das erst verurteilt und darauf schuldig wurde” (that is first judged and only then becomes guilty; *ibid.*, p. 72), simply by the fact of its powerful pronouncements. In a reading that resonates with Benjamin’s comments on destiny, Mark Anderson’s analysis of Kafka’s *Trial* makes the argument for the constitution of the protagonist Josef K.’s character by the legal accusation levelled against him. Anderson writes: “If K. behaves ‘like a dog’ it is because he has been treated like a dog by the court” (Anderson, 1992, p. 162). Anderson’s claim is convincing, and it echoes Benjamin’s analysis of the *performative* power of destiny. The pronouncement of Kafka’s court produces behavior to which K. appears predestined, and which turns him moreover into a dog, a creaturely subject with little agency.

Maron’s most recent novel to date, *Zwischenspiel*, takes up the notion of a subject who is destined by some external force. Here, her protagonist Ruth feels that she is trapped into a state of guilt for the events of the past. The novel takes place on the day of the funeral of Olga, Ruth’s friend and previously her de facto mother-in-law, who visits Ruth in apparitions throughout the day, along with the ghost of Bruno, a deceased friend from the former East. These visitations provoke memories of her life in the GDR, and her sense of guilt for certain of the decisions that she made there. Yet comfort is available to this latest character due to her belief, gained during earlier conversations with Olga, that guilt will always be a side effect of any decision. Olga’s aphorism, “Schuld bleibt immer, so oder so” (guilt will always be there, one way or the other; Maron, 2013, p. 34), offers Ruth an ambivalent kind of comfort:

Bilde dir nichts ein, hieß er, auch auf dich warten Scheidewege und Fallen, auch du wirst nicht davonkommen. Der Trost war nur: man konnte nicht davonkommen, wie immer man sich auch mühte.

(Don't delude yourself, is what it meant, there are crossroads and traps awaiting you too, and you too will not escape. The only comfort was: there was no escape, however hard you tried; *ibid.*, p. 66.)

Further comfort comes in this latest work from a dog whom Ruth befriends by way of buying him sausages, and who offers a kind of guidance in the ghostly space of the park, where she would otherwise be abandoned as her deceased friends disappear with nightfall.

Lacking such comforting company, the narrator of *animal triste* responds to her destiny by retreating into a decades-long state of immobility and unproductive solitude. Yet before her retreat begins, this earlier character first commits an act that she hopes will overcome her painful destiny. Even more ambivalently than the attack in *Stille Zeile Sechs*, this character appears to kill Franz, the object of her desire, by pushing him under a bus. In post-Freudian psychoanalytic terms, this would figure as a *passage-à-lacte*, a psychotic gesture of rupture. Žižek defines the *passage-à-lacte* as allowing the subject to exit the limiting sphere of language, law and order known as the symbolic, and to enter the more chaotic and ultimately deadly realm that Lacan termed The Real (cf. Žižek, 1999, pp. 11–36). The murder might exhibit a kind of agency, but it is a violent and self-destructive one that indeed shifts Maron's character into a realm of deadliness. Moreover, the description of this act directly precedes the final image of the novel, which shows the narrator as an ape, "eine braunhaarige Äffin mit einer stumpfen Nase und langen Armen, die ich um meinen Tierleib schlinge" (a brown-haired ape with a flat nose and long arms, which I loop around my animal-body; Maron, 1996, p. 239). The attack that kills Franz was motivated by a love that had rendered the narrator "creaturely"—where creatureliness is a less sovereign selfhood that the subject may wish for itself. Yet could it be that some element of agency remains in this act, as is witnessed by the final metamorphosis of the narrator, after she has killed her lover, into the most human of the animals? She is transformed in the novel's final tableau from an insect of the kind that Franz might study in his research into an ape. Not entirely possessed of the (desired) sovereignty of the human, the ape is nonetheless a liminal case in which delivery over to involuntary drives is balanced with a certain degree of agency, or at least aptitude.

### Creaturely love: The *Penthesilea* intertext

The narrator of *animal triste* repeats the mantra throughout the novel: “Dich zu gewinnen, oder umzukommen” (to win you, or to die; e.g. *ibid.*, p. 132; Kleist, 1967, p. 77). Readers learn that she admires the vow of Kleist’s heroine, Penthesilea, to either win the man she loves or to die trying. In 1992, Maron won the prestigious Kleist literary prize for *Stille Zeile Sechs*. Since winning the prize, Maron has drawn on Kleist’s 1808 retelling of the story of the Amazon warrior *Penthesilea* as a blueprint for her woman characters struggling for agency. The Amazonian’s valiant battle for the victory of her tribe and the intransigent strength of her love for the Greek soldier Achilles might frame her as a model of decisiveness and thus sovereignty for Maron’s feminine heroines. In her struggle to maintain some agency over herself in the midst of her love, the narrator of *animal triste* certainly finds in Penthesilea a model of agency, one who attempts to resist the disempowerment with which love threatens her. At the same time, Penthesilea’s vow speaks of the risk of destruction, of both self and other, that resides in the experience of love.

Iris Radisch, writing in *Die Zeit*, hailed *animal triste* as “einer der bewundernswürdigsten Liebesromane der Gegenwart” (one of the most admirable love stories of our time; Radisch, 2002, unpaginated). What is admirable about this love story is its authenticity, in particular its authentically painful depiction of a character in the midst of a dilemma at once utterly human and historically specific. This is the dilemma of vulnerability that arises from two kinds of opening, both the opening of the historical East–West border and the opening of herself to another, through love. In Santner’s view, the experience of human “creatureliness” necessitates an ethics of “opening” to the other (Santner, 2006, p. xxi), in acknowledgment of the suffering of other creature-subjects, and in this way relating to them as neighbors. In *animal triste*, no longer hampered by the Berlin Wall, Maron’s narrator experiences a new opportunity for opening to a Western neighbor, and she also experiences the painful vulnerability to which such openness gives rise—a vulnerability that, as we have seen, is figured in the novel through images of the animal.

Appropriately, the cover image chosen for Brigitte Goldstein’s English translation of *animal triste* is the painting *Sexuality gallops away with me still clinging on* by Sandra Brandeis Crawford. The painting depicts a woman, her upper body surrounded by a yellow smudge of cloud, riding a horse that has extended legs and large hooves. Unlike the disciplined horse of *Stille Zeile*

*Sechs*, this creature is scaled up to a size that dominates its human rider, who sits, like Derrida's animal, in an undressed state upon it. This image, in which the woman clings with her thighs and holds tightly to the mane of an oversized horse, encapsulates the experience, in the novel's plot, of being carried away by love. As the description on the back cover of Goldstein's translation states, love in this plot is "a compulsive suffering from which she can neither free herself nor withhold anything" (cf. Maron, 2000a, back cover). A powerful Amazonian princess may seem an inapt forebear for Maron's paralyzed, powerless lead character in *animal triste*. Yet Penthesilea's vow of unbending love for Achilles, on which she insists to the death, resonates in the affair between Franz and the narrator, a story that also ends in death. The death of the beloved male in Maron's novel is especially fitting in the context of Kleist's re-rendering of the myth, in which he exchanged the image of Achilles mourning over the body of his lost love to the Amazonian princess murdering and thereafter mourning her Grecian man.

Alice Bolterauer has made the argument that Maron's feminine characters are capable of a "lustvollen Ausagieren von Gewalt" (sensuous acting out of violence; Bolterauer, 2006, p. 114), as they make their violent and seemingly enjoyable attempts to free themselves from the structures that surround them. Bolterauer claims Penthesilea as a model for this aggressive self-assertion, one who represents the "Gestaltung eines Frauenlebens, das gewalttätig und kriegerisch, selbstbewußt und stolz, selbstbestimmt und autonom agiert" (conception of a woman's life that is violent and warlike in its actions, self-assured and proud, self-defined and autonomous; *ibid.*, p. 126). Indeed, in Kleist's play, Penthesilea is a warrior who acts with self-definition and assurance. She is loyal to her Amazonian tribe, and speaks a moving declaration of sisterhood to her faithful co-warrior Prothoë in the words "wir kämpfen, siegen mit einander, / Wir beide oder keine" (we fight and overcome together, *we two* or *nobody*; Kleist, 1967, p. 31; emphasis in the original). However, the peripeteia of Kleist's play depicts the terrifying loss of self-control, in the battle during which Penthesilea kills Achilles.

Throughout the play, love has had an unsettling effect on Penthesilea, shaking her in her sense of herself as a warrior. She describes in disbelief how Achilles was able to destabilize her confidence when they first met:

Den Übermüthigen, der mir an diesem  
Glorwürdig'en Schlachtentag, wie keiner noch,  
Das kriegerische Hochgefühl verwirrt.

(The wanton one, who on that  
Glorious day of battle, like no other before him,  
Confused me in my warlike elation; *ibid.*, p. 25)

Merely looking at the Greek hero makes Penthesilea feel “in dem Innersten getroffen” (touched at my deepest core; *ibid.*, p. 25), so that she has to admit that even she could find herself in the position of “die Überwundene, Besiegte” (the conquered, the vanquished; *ibid.*, p. 25), in a state dominated by emotions other than self-assurance and pride. As a result of her more tender feelings, early in the play, Penthesilea curses the weakness of her heart: “Verflucht das Herz, das sich nicht mäß’gen kann” (curse the heart that cannot temper itself; *ibid.*, p. 27). She is dismayed at the inability of her heart to temper, or measure itself in the face of a love-object. The narrator in *animal triste* can well identify with Penthesilea’s love for Achilles, which is framed as a fall, in the words of Prothoë: “Der Sturz / Hat völlig ums Bewußtsein sie gebracht” (The fall / Robbed her fully of consciousness; *ibid.*, p. 42). The fall also leads, like in Maron’s narrator’s case, to violence. Even though Penthesilea means only tenderness towards Achilles—“ihr ew’gen Götter, nur / An diese Brust will ich ihn niederziehn!” (you eternal Gods, I only / Want to draw him down to my breast; *ibid.*, p. 42)—she commits a deadly act, tearing him to shreds with her teeth in the company of her pack of hounds as she faces him in battle.

The unconscious drive that love has unleashed within Penthesilea means that after Achilles’ death she cannot believe it was she who committed his murder. In further disbelief she asks “Küßt’ ich ihn todt?” (did I kiss him to death?; *ibid.*, p. 107), and once she is persuaded of the truth, she becomes conscious of the act that love caused her to commit:

Küsse, Bisse,  
Das reimt sich, und wer recht von Herzen liebt,  
Kann schon das Eine für das Andre greifen.

(Kisses, bites,  
That rhymes, and the one who loves right from the heart,  
Can indeed take one to be the other; *ibid.*, p. 107.)

For Penthesilea, love and violence are interwoven as two unconscious states that play out beyond her control. Her loss of self-sovereignty, that causes her to act “[g]leich einer Hündin” (equal to a she-dog; *ibid.*, p. 94), makes her an appropriate intertext for *animal triste*. Yet Penthesilea is not the model of loving feminist potency that Bolterauer finds and is emphasized by the mantra

repeated throughout the novel. Her influence rather lies in the animalistic acts to which love drives both women. *animal triste* depicts love as a traumatic experience, a breach of the borders of the self that leads to an *Ohnmacht* in which self-possession gives way to possession by the other. The effect of this creaturely love is traumatic. Lewis has likened the narrator's behavior, characterized by obsession and forgetfulness in turns, to "an instinctive protective response to unbearable pain or trauma" (Lewis, 1998, p. 34). Indeed, the narrative circles obsessively around scenes and snapshots from the love affair. A framing narrative shows glimpses of the narrator subsisting for years, a simian Miss Havisham, alone in her apartment and condemned to reliving "fünfundzwanzig oder fünfundvierzig Jahren meines sich endlos wiederholenden Lebens mit Franz" (twenty-five or forty-five years of my constantly repeating life with Franz; Maron, 1996, p. 39). The repetition of the love story in the narrator's mind is painful, paralyzing, and it recalls at once the repetitive training of Pavlov's dog and the self-destruction of the death drive that Freud posited, that unconscious content to which his patients were delivered with no hope of healing through its interminable repetition.

*animal triste* was celebrated by Marcel Reich-Ranicki in the *Spiegel* as a highpoint in Maron's career. For him, she had finally found her destined content matter here, namely "der Liebe Fluch und Segen" (the scourge and the blessing of love; Reich-Ranicki, 1996, p. 189). Reich-Ranicki admires the portrayal in the novel of a state that is "alles übertrumpfend" (all-surpassing), and "keine Grenzen kennen will" (admits no limits; *ibid.*, p. 185). He effectively analyzes the "Außersichsein der Liebenden" (being-outside-of-oneself of the lover; *ibid.*, p. 185), as being at the heart of the novel's exploration of love. Indeed, love in the novel figures as an ecstasy that is as traumatic as it is desired by the subject. In this sense it resonates with Judith Butler's account of ecstasy, where she frames it as a being "outside oneself" that can be both positive, as an ecstatic pleasure in which one is "transported beyond oneself by a passion," and negative, for instance being "beside oneself with rage or grief" (Butler, 2004, p. 24). The importance of such an ambivalent state of ecstasy for understanding the creaturely love depicted in *animal triste* is suggested by a further intertextual link. The Greek etymology of the contemporary term ecstasy, *ek-stasis*, standing outside of the self, is memorable from Euripides' final play, *The Bacchae*, in which female revellers ecstatically tear a cross-dressing interloper to pieces (cf. Euripides, 1973, p. 219). This proto-Penthesilean gesture is only too familiar to Maron's post-GDR heroine, for whom love works as a traumatic state of ecstasy that robs her of individual sovereignty, whether she desires that or not.

This state of being in love, though it brings some pleasure with it, also leads her masochistically to follow her lover while he spends time with his wife, and to imagine them having sex, the other woman lying in her place in a way that induces feelings of jealousy and disgust. Moreover, this plot of masochistic love has a resonance beyond the realms of the personal relationships around which the novel is centered.

For Reich-Ranicki, *animal triste* represented a turning point for an author who had been consumed for so long with GDR politics and history, but who, with German unification, could finally embrace the theme about which she was destined to write, namely the potency of love. Yet as Lewis shows, politics continue to be a leading element in the plot. Lewis's 1998 reading of the novel responds to Reich-Ranicki's analysis by pointing out the remnants of the political at the very heart of the East–West love affair between Franz and the narrator in which, Lewis writes, “the past looms larger than life” (Lewis, 1998, p. 30). The tale of an *Ossi* and a *Wessi* coming together reveals a painful underside to the words of Willi Brandt: “Jetzt sind wir in einer Situation, in der wieder zusammenwächst, was zusammengehört” (Now we are in a situation where what belongs together is growing together; Brandt, 1989, unpaginated). It is telling that the titular *sad animal* is a post-coital figure—the full Latin idiom on which the title is based is *post coitum omne animal triste est sive gallus et mulier* (after sexual intercourse every animal is sad, except the cock and the woman). In this sense, the novel has a message to impart concerning both the initial euphoric union and certain remaining elements of disunity within the unified Germany, a topic that can also be traced in Maron's novels of the 2000s. Here, her women protagonists continue to struggle with a sense of sovereignty both in their personal experiences and in the new socio-economic order of unified Germany.

### La vita contemplativa: *Endmoränen* and *Cabo de Gata*

With the publication of *Endmoränen* (2002), Maron introduced an important new character into her oeuvre. Johanna Märtin is a Berliner in her mid-fifties, who spends most of the time of the novel alone in her second home in a rural Brandenburg hamlet with only thirty-six inhabitants. She spends an autumn there occupied in writing the biography of Wilhelmine Enke, the Countess of Lichtenau (1753–1820), who was the mistress of the Prussian Prince Friedrich Wilhelm II. During her time in the country, much of which she spends waiting



for her emotionally distant husband Achim to ask her to return to the city, Märtin finds a “Gleichnis” (likeness) in the figure of Enke (Maron, 2002, p. 36). She compares this period with the “Verbannung” (banishment) of Enke after Friedrich Wilhelm’s death (ibid., p. 122), when Enke was accused of treason by the Prince’s son, dispossessed, and exiled to Poland. In her own “exile,” Märtin’s minimal activity makes for uneventful plot. When Maron reproduces the plot of this novel in her Frankfurt Poetics Lectures, she recounts: “[e]ine Frau fährt aufs Land, weiß nicht, was sie da soll, und fährt wieder nach Hause” (a woman goes to the country, doesn’t know what she should do there, and returns home again; Maron, 2005, p. 90). Indeed, the novel reproduces the tendency in *animal triste*, of circling around the insular lives of a few isolated characters, whose struggles seem far removed, moreover, from their historical context. Yet in her Frankfurt lectures, Maron also hints that her minimalist plot nonetheless contains a message about the German unification process. In Johanna Märtin, Maron created a character, she writes, who experiences the *Wende* “wie jemand, der ein Leben lang mit einer Kugel am Bein herumlaufen mußte und dann, von dieser Kugel befreit, die Mitte seines Körpers erst wiederfinden muß” (like somebody who had to walk all of their life with a ball and chain on their leg and then, free of it, at first had to relocate the center of their body; ibid., p. 90). Like many East Germans, Märtin is faced after unification not only with freedom, but also with the dilemma of how to profit from it, how to make something of the life that builds up over periods of age and time. Sadly for this character, the *Endmoränen* of the title—a neologism that pairs the glacial rock sediments that build up over years of repetition (*Moränen*) with the finality of an uncertain *Endzeit* (end-time)—do not amount to very much.

Märtin’s withdrawal from the city in pursuit of a writing project is shared with the narrator of Eugen Ruge’s 2013 novel, *Cabo de Gata* (*Cape of Cats*). This novel follows Ruge’s highly successful GDR epic *In Zeiten des abnehmenden Lichts* (*In Times of Fading Light*, 2011), whose protagonist Sascha visits a fishing village in Mexico where his grandmother celebrated New Year’s day in 1952 before tracing the family’s history through the years of the GDR. The later novel sees a Berliner named Peter sell or store all of his belongings and travel away from the former Eastern Germany—the Berlin district in which he lives could easily be a contemporary Prenzlauer Berg. Peter is provoked by overhearing some “Prenzlberg”-based freelancers talking about “den Verkauf von Computerdingen, über Marktanteile und Expansion; Worte wie Absatz, Vertrieb, Prozent, Gewinnspanne und das mir damals unbekannte (und auch heute nur halbwegs verständliche) Wort Franchising” (the sale of computer



things, about *market shares* and *expansion*, words like *turnover*, *distribution*, *percent*, *profit margin* and the word that was unknown to me then (and that still today I only half-understand), *franchising*; Ruge, 2013, p. 16; emphasis in the original). Feeling assaulted by this conversation, and irritated by the speaker's manner of moving his feet around in their fine but impractical footwear "wie junge Dackel" (like young sausage dogs; *ibid.*, p. 16), Peter immediately makes plans to leave Berlin, not minding where he ends up. He finds himself staying in an unwelcoming Andalucían port, named after the cats who live wild there, where he sets about writing a novel.

Ruge's readers share in Peter's simple routine at the Cape of Cats, where he sleeps, eats, writes in the mornings, and reads Henry Miller's novel *Colossus of Maroussi* at night. Peter does not identify comfortably with his reading material, a memoir that relates the desolation of Miller's arrival in Greece, part of which is caused by a driver who "was like an animal who had been miraculously taught to operate a crazy machine" (Miller, 1941, p. 8). Instead, Peter justifies his consumption of this text by the lack of other activities: "eine andere Beschäftigung gab es nicht" (there wasn't anything else to do; Ruge, 2013, p. 90). Like the static routines of Maron's narrator in *animal triste*, the daily timetable that Peter adopts is mesmerizingly repeated across the novel, with variations only in the local life that he sees during the afternoons, including a flock of gulls that he dubs "die hysterischen Tanten" (the hysteric aunts; *ibid.*, p. 84), some guard dogs who watch over areas of beach that are fenced off with wire, local pugs who sniff their territory mistrustfully, as well as the dead body of a cat lying on the Steppe. The lead character in the novel's non-human world is the female cat whom Peter painstakingly befriends after encountering her on the way to the postbox one evening, and manages to make a comforting bedfellow until he touches her pregnant belly, whereupon she jumps out of his window and disappears. Peter's final encounter in the novel is with a ray-fish that he sees dying upside down in a puddle of water and neglects to save just before leaving the port. These animals, the paranoid watch-dogs, and the cat and the fish with whom contact is aborted, work to emphasize Peter's isolation in his Southern-Spain hideaway.

Johanna Märting is a less depressive character than Ruge's lustless novelist. Indeed, like Polkowski in *Stille Zeile Sechs*, Märting has rather been viewed as an "actionistic" character, who longs for self-definition from within the systems around her. Volker Wehdeking notes the link between her name and that of Joan of Arc (cf. Wehdeking, 2003, p. 132), while Elke Gilson points out another namesake is the "im Werk vertretene 'Aktionistin', der 1906 als

Jo-hanna geborenen, politischen Denkerin Hannah Arendt” (the “actionist” who appears in the text, who was born in 1906 as Jo-hanna, the political theorist Hannah Arendt; Gilson, 2006, p. 101). The *vita activa* is the antithesis in Arendt’s *Human Condition* to a *vita contemplativa* such as the Graf and Bruno favored in *Stille Zeile Sechs* (Arendt, 1958, pp. 7–9; Maron, 1991, p. 176), and which Polkowski temporarily adopted before entering her contract with Beerenbaum. Later, Arendt’s philosophy of this more vivid life finds its echo in a struggle that Märtin undergoes in *Endmoränen*, to take meaningful action in the post-GDR era.

In continuity from Maron’s earlier works, Märtin experiences her life as a creaturely state, a “haustierähnlichen und gänzlich unnützen Zustand” (a pet-like and completely useless state; Maron, 2002, p. 83). Domestic animals are associated of course with a particular dependency, wherein dogs and even cats must rely on their human companions for food and shelter. These creatures must make themselves complicit with humans in order to secure their domestic survival. This would explain the meaninglessness, the lack of action or purpose, with which Märtin associates such domestic pets. As a result, this character is struck by the fear, “es könnte schonwieder [sic] vorbei sein mit dem eigentlichen Leben” (once again, real life could be over already; *ibid.*, p. 83). She feels as if she is living in an “öde lange Restzeit [...] in der wir nur noch als Zielgruppe von Verkäufern aller Branchen und als katastrophaler Kostenfaktor für die Krankenkassen wichtig sind” (a long barren unoccupied time in which we were nothing but a target audience for salespeople of all kinds and a catastrophic expense factor for the health insurance companies; *ibid.*, pp. 55–6). Like the domestic house-animals who must collaborate with their masters, the subject of capitalism is required to participate in certain processes, of consumerism, of securitization, which make a contemporary life livable but not always meaningful.

Märtin’s banishment, to the house that her daughter Laura will later refer to as her mother’s own “Endmoräne” (last sediment; Maron, 2007, p. 174), finds her in a state of heavy waiting, rather than galvanization by the changes that come with unification—and that so disgusted Ruge’s retreating novelist. Like Polkowski, Märtin has a desire to take meaningful action, but at this stage it is characterized as an “unzeitgemäße Bedürfnis, etwas Wichtiges zu tun” (an untimely need to do something important; Maron, 2002, p. 57). The desire to be her own mistress feels untimely to Märtin, and looks in any case as if it will remain unfulfilled, as if she were too old (or too young?) to adopt a role of sovereign decisiveness over her own fate. As Märtin bemoans, “[j]etzt ist es zu

spät oder zu früh [...] wir können nichts mehr entscheiden” (it is too late or too early now, we cannot decide anything any more; *ibid.*, p. 220), and this is because the “wichtige Kontrakte unseres Lebens” (important contracts of our lives) have long been set in stone and there are no further decisions to make until old age takes over (*ibid.*, p. 220).

Yet all is not lost. For one thing, Märtin’s comment about salespeople and insurance companies, who view their customers as target audiences to be measured in terms of *expense factors*, adds a critical edge to the feeling of lateness expressed in the text. Moreover, although the end-time evoked by the title, attached as it is to glacial remnants, may have the slow pace of natural phenomena outside of the human *polis*, the novel is nonetheless framed by the call to return to the capital city of Berlin, where a changing pace of life is on offer. In an essay on lateness in Volker Braun’s poetry collection *Auf die schönen Possen* (*Here’s to the Good Times*, 2005), Karen Leeder has identified Braun’s use of the topos of endings, both personal and historical, at once to give recognition to the inevitability of catastrophe in individual lives and in collective history, but also to offer some “resistance” to the problem (Leeder, 2009, p. 39). For Leeder, Braun’s lyric voice is not resigned; instead it explores the manner in which post-GDR poetry can “quarrel with its time” (*ibid.*, p. 42), namely by taking issue with the dominant political and aesthetic modes of late capitalism. Maron’s more recent novels can also be read as critically engaging the theme of lateness. Through the plot of *Endmoränen*, she draws attention to the trappings of adult life, the marriages, property-ownerships and other contracts “in deren Schlingen wir gefangen bleiben bis zum Ende” (in whose nooses we remain trapped until the end; Maron, 2002, p. 220). Yet there is some hope, as in the sequel to *Endmoränen*, the same protagonist experiments with various acts that seem to offer her more freedom than do the contractual obligations of her current situation. Here, as in *animal triste*, Kleist’s writings offer illuminating intertexts for the sovereignty project of Maron’s lead character, with regard to both its successes and its limits in the new era in which she lives.

### Modeling sovereign subjectivity in *Ach Glück*

At the close of *Endmoränen*, on her return journey to Berlin, Märtin rescues a stray dog from the side of the road, where he has been tied to a dustbin and shivers helplessly in the rain. The dog accompanies her into the sequel novel, *Ach Glück* of 2007. By bringing the dog to Berlin, Märtin also brings him home

to her husband, Achim, and this is a first act of self-assertion in what has felt like a trial of waiting for her husband's affection. *Ach Glück's* narrative form differs from *Endmoränen* in presenting the viewpoints of Märtin and her husband Achim in alternating third-person sections: Märtin turns here from narrator to protagonist, making space for a second voice, that of the husband who was left behind in Berlin, and who happens to be a scholar of Kleist's works. The relationship between Johanna Märtin and her husband Achim calls to mind comments made in Maron's early post-unification lecture "Nach Maßgabe meiner Begreifungskraft" (Within my Limited Powers of Understanding), which she delivered on reception of the Kleist-Preis in 1993. In the lecture Maron considers the fate of women in Kleist's works with reference to Kleist's own, as Maron claims, "sehr beängstigende und unglückliche Beziehung zu Frauen" (very alarming and unhappy relationship to women; Maron, 1993, p. 104). The title of Maron's lecture and the essay collection in which it was reproduced is provocative, since it refers to a line in a letter from Kleist written in 1800 to another Wilhelmine, his fiancée Wilhelmine von Zenge, to whom he wishes to explain the meaning of the word "Panorama," but in the terms that her limited "Begreifungskraft" (powers of understanding) can encompass (cited in *ibid.*, p. 104).

One of the chapters focalized on Achim reveals an equally condescending opinion of Johanna Märtin's capacities. He muses that his wife is "eher ein Käthchen von Heilbronn als eine Penthesilea" (more a Catherine of Heilbronn than a Penthesilea; Maron, 2007, p. 47), and he finds this idea comforting because it suggests to him that she is unlikely to leave him for a passionate encounter with somebody else. Kleist's oeuvre offers opposing models of femininity, pitching the serial victimhood of *Käthchen von Heilbronn* against the fearlessness of the Amazonian warrior. That the major plot event in Maron's novel sees Märtin fly to Mexico to run an art gallery owned by her friend and lover, Igor, proves Achim to be misled in his philological estimation of his wife's capacity for passionate action. Of course, it is not necessarily the case that such action would be beneficial for Märtin—indeed, if Penthesilea is her true Kleistian forerunner, then action may in fact turn her into another "sich selbst verzehrenden Menschen" (self-consuming person; Maron, 1993, p. 111), potentially destroying herself and anybody about whom she might feel passionately. Nonetheless, Achim's estimation of his wife as a passive Käthchen is off the mark.

Märtin's other project in Mexico is to locate the nonagenarian surrealist artist and writer Leonora Carrington. Looking at a photograph of Carrington,

Märting perceives her as a model of feminine sovereignty, one that exudes a “gespannte Entschlossenheit” (intent decisiveness) that suggests she is “mit seltsamen Mächten im Bunde” (in communion with strange powers; Maron, 2007, p. 110). The Carrington in the photograph appears to be possessed of an otherworldly power of decision that Märting, in turn, wishes to attain for herself. In her Frankfurt lectures, Maron commented on this protofeminist role-model who left the Surrealist group in Paris to create her own art in remote Mexico: “Carrington ist in ihrem Naturell und Selbstverständnis kein Opfer. Sie kämpft um die Täterschaft” (in her naturalness and her self-understanding, Carrington is no victim. She fights for the agency of perpetration; Maron, 2005, p. 45). Seen in the light of Maron’s broader oeuvre, the search for Carrington in *Ach Glück* is motivated by the author’s perennial project of examining the meaningful action that is possible for her characters. In this case, it is self-understanding that would provide the key to a meaningful, because self-defined *Täterschaft*—or simply agency.

At the same time, in her project on Wilhelmine Enke, Märting explores a more ambivalent model of personal sovereignty, one of a woman less self-possessed than Carrington, who lived in an era when women were even more likely to be the objects of the men surrounding them. While Achim is concerned with aligning his wife with various feminine characters of Kleist’s oeuvre, Johanna Märting tries to categorize the object of her own study as perhaps “eine Olympia oder Eliza Dolittle?” (an Olympia or an Eliza Dolittle?; Maron, 2002, p. 106). Märting’s indecision sits between two mistresses of (self-)possession set a century apart, as she considers whether it would be appropriate to cast Enke as an automaton of the men who surround and fall in love with her. In Enke, Märting rightly finds herself reminded of Hoffmann’s horror tale-*cum*-case history *Der Sandmann*, in which a trio of masculine characters is involved in a process of creating, projecting fantasies upon, and finally destroying a doll woman. Like Prince Friedrich, the protagonist of *Der Sandmann* finds himself forgetting about his legal fiancée Clara in a passion of fascination for the mistress-figure. Märting’s research for the Enke biography also draws upon an account by Rahel Varnhagen, who describes Enke as the “Spiegelbild” (mirror-image) of all the men who love her, reflecting their “Ideal” back to them as they worship her (cited in *ibid.*, p. 149). In this model, Enke works as a mere projection screen for the desires of the men of the Court.

Yet Märting hesitates at the Hoffmann reference and wonders if Enke might be better characterized as a historical iteration of the transformed figure of Pygmalion in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. In her attempt to categorize Enke, Märting

alights upon three of the pivotal moments in Freud's essay on "Das Unheimliche" (The Uncanny), in which *Der Sandmann* provides an exemplary case of uncanny haunting, but the revival of the statue in Ovid's "Pygmalion," alongside Freud's encounter with himself in a train mirror, are explored as examples of things that *could* be uncanny but in the event are not. In a famous footnote towards the end of the essay, Freud's image in the train mirror is defined as not-uncanny because he had "einfach nicht agnosziert" (simply not registered) his own reflection and was therefore not alarmed (Freud, 1970, p. 270). Freud's conclusion, that the uncanny's fearsome effects are dependent on processes of identification, is relevant for Maron's plot in *Ach Glück*. For Märtin attempts to work out the degree to which she herself can identify with Enke (as an Olympia figure, a Pygmalion, but certainly a "Spiegelbild" for herself), and if not, which other models of self-possession (or perhaps self-canniness) she might find in her quest for personal sovereignty.

In her search for "canniness," as a sovereign familiarity with herself, Märtin finds a further role model in her friend Hannes Strahl, who was long a professor in New York but now lives in the countryside of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. Märtin spends time with Strahl at his smallholding and observes his confident self-view, which moves her to entrust him with the care of her dog while she goes to Mexico. Strahl explains his confidence to Märtin as the result of something he calls "Bliss," a "sichere, dem üblichen Kalkül nicht unterworfenen Instanz" (secure state, not subjected to the usual calculations; Maron, 2007, p. 154), which works like an "inneres Wissen über sich selbst" (inner knowledge about himself; *ibid.*, p. 154), and leads him in his decisions. Recalling the amateur physiognomy of personal lives that Polkowski carried out in her café in *Stille Zeile Sechs*, here Märtin observes the physiological signifiers of Strahl's blissful self-canniness. His gestures as he shows Märtin his land, "Mit ausgestreckten Armen, als wolle er alles Land bis zum Horizont als sein eigenes markieren" (with arms outstretched, as if he wanted to mark as his own all land up to the horizon; *ibid.*, p. 23), recall the demarcations of territory that defined Schmitt's sovereignty theory. Meanwhile, his walk reflects his state of inner mastery, as he "lief fest und breitbeinig einen Schritt vor ihr" (walked steadily and with a broad stride before her; *ibid.*, p. 23). That his footsteps leave "tiefe Spuren" (deep traces) in the sand beneath his feet suggests a material basis to the man's sovereign composure (*ibid.*, p. 23), with which Märtin cannot, corporeally at least, compare.

One of the core arguments of Santner's recent *Royal Remains* is that the switch of sovereignty from the body of the king to the body of the people also entails a transfer of the corporeal duality that Kantorowicz's study found in the

*Two Bodies* of pre-modern royalty. That problematic doubling of the king's body is transferred now to the body of the people in current democracies, and as a result, Santner writes:

The new bearers of the principle of sovereignty are in some sense stuck with an excess of flesh that their own bodies cannot fully close in upon and must be "managed" in new ways. (Santner, 2011, p. xxi)

In Märtin's eyes, Strahl carries an almost excessive fullness of corporeality. He contrasts in this way with Achim's machinelike physicality, which leads Märtin to view him as a centaur made up of half-man, half-computer. Unlike the repressed and fussy Achim, Strahl manages his supplementary sovereign weight well, as attested by his heavy footprints that mark out the territory of his countryside estate. Perhaps it was after such depth of sovereign traces that the earlier protagonist of *animal triste* longed but, never traveling to the USA to trace the prehistoric footprints, did not manage to take up for herself. In the later work, Johanna Märtin feels that she is lacking the sense of materiality that Hannes Strahl confidently enjoys. In contrast to him, she feels like a "dienende Füllmasse" (ancillary filling material), an excess of matter that serves those individuals who have a more defined sense of self and of their "Schicksal" (destiny) such as Strahl and their acquaintance Karoline Winter (Maron, 2007, p. 155). Luckily, however, there is one last mode of sovereignty to which Märtin can look for inspiration, one which does not require such a weighty body for its practice.

A final role model in *Ach Glück* is Natalia Timofejewna, a *Fürstin* (princess) by birth, with whom Märtin corresponds about her search for Leonora Carrington in Mexico. The Russian aristocrat is a remnant of an imperial past, an inheritance reflected in the "herrische Schriftbild" (masterful handwriting) that her letters boast (ibid., p. 63). Where Märtin's physiognomic observation found Strahl's sovereignty residing in his capital and corporeal (self-)possessions, Timofejewna is associated with the more diffuse self-possession of writing, and accordingly Märtin's graphology of her "kräftig" (powerful) script reveals a different kind of self-assurance (ibid., p. 63). In a comparison between Maron's novels up to and including *Stille Zeile Sechs* and the Austrian author Ingeborg Bachmann's late modernist novel of 1971, *Malina*, Elizabeth Boa interpreted the use of writing as a strategy of "Selbsterschaffung und Selbstbehauptung" (self-creation and self-assertion; Boa, 1994, p. 133), and an attempt "die Repräsentanten der Macht zum Objekt eines Gegenangriffs zu machen" (to make the representatives of power into the objects of a counter-attack; ibid., p. 133). Boa echoes here an earlier statement in her study of Bachmann in comparison with Christa Wolf's oeuvre,



that “To write ‘I’ as a woman is a political act contesting social oppression and psychic repression” (Boa, 1991, p. 144). Perhaps, by this logic, the writing projects in which Märtin engages in the lead-up to her passage to Mexico can provide access to the kind of self-possession that she craves. An entirely human endeavour, writing promises to separate Märtin from the creaturely existence that has plagued her since the earlier text.

In *Endmoränen*, Märtin’s narrative described the writing that she had produced as a biographer working in the GDR, during which time she had attempted “Botschaften [...] zu verstecken” (to hide messages) in her texts (Maron, 2002, p. 40), which were meant “Tabus, die [...] meine Themen und meinen Wortschatz bestimmt hatten, wenigstens nachträglich zu verletzen” (to injure at least retrospectively the taboos that had defined my themes and my vocabulary; *ibid.*, p. 44). The interest that the same character later shows in the powerful handwriting of Princess Timofejewna seems to echo these past attempts to carry out a critical writing that could *injure*—the word-choice indicating a traumatic corporeality that haunts the immaterial power of writing—or undermine the taboos that were upheld in the GDR. However, in *Ach Glück*, Märtin finds that her attempts at critical writing, once appropriate for the GDR setting, are now interrupted by the processes of democratization initiated by unification. She learns that now, “da ich über alle Archive, historische Berühmtheiten und Wörter verfügen durfte” (when I could access any archive, historical figure or words; *ibid.*, p. 45), critical writing is no longer of interest, “und niemand mehr auf die Idee kam, in ihnen [her texts; AR] nach geheimen Botschaften zu suchen” (and it did not occur to anybody any more to look for hidden messages in her texts; *ibid.*, p. 45). What would once have represented an unwanted antibody of critique in the GDR now becomes a useless excess in a literature that is largely ignored in capitalist unified Germany. As Byrnes has noted, *Endmoränen* “offers a melancholic meditation on the sobering reality of life after socialism” (Byrnes, 2011, p. 8). Indeed, both *Endmoränen* and *Ach Glück*, Maron’s first two novels of the new millennium, show the angry tone of her GDR-related writing being replaced by a melancholic tenor regarding the conditions for critique in unified Germany. In addition to the political impotence of her post-unification writing, Märtin also finds her texts are ineffective in helping her to achieve a more substantial sense of *personal* sovereignty. As a result, and appropriately for a character of Maron’s, she finally attempts something more *actionistic* still than writing, and makes her way in Timofejewna’s footsteps to Mexico, leaving work, husband, friends and even her dog behind in Germany, in favor of the freedom of a new climate entirely.



## From security to freedom

Johanna Martin's journey takes her to Mexico, in what is perhaps a gesture at Trotsky's flight from Stalin in 1937. Martin makes this journey for quite different reasons, however, fleeing as she does from the binding contracts of her life in liberal democracy, those agreements that bind her to her husband and her insurance company. In Maron's Frankfurt Poetics Lectures, the author describes Mexico City as "Sehnsuchtsort" (place of longing) for her, its "augen- und ohrenbetäubende Unordnung" (disorder numbing to the eyes and ears) contrasting with the drab order of the global North (Maron, 2005, p. 61). Like in a dream of Benjamin's, in which he voyages to Mexico as member of "einer forschenden Expedition" (a research expedition; Benjamin, 2008, p. 16), Maron's post-2000 heroine travels on an investigatory mission into this new territory. This move marks a significant change for Maron's characters, who are no longer trapped behind a wall and can make such strikes for freedom as Martin undertakes by boarding the plane.

In her Frankfurt lectures, Maron also describes the impression that she gained on her first visit to New York, of this modern metropolis as another home of Western freedom. She relates: "In New York verstand ich, daß es eine verteidigungswürdige Freiheit sein kann, als Obdachloser auf der Bowery zu enden; daß es ein Recht auf Scheitern gibt" (In New York I understood that it can be a freedom worth defending to die on the Bowery as a homeless person; that there is a right to failure; Maron, 2005, p. 59). The statement evokes an extreme freedom, in which the homeless exercise their "right" to die in downtown Manhattan. That brutal liberty recalls the scenario in Hensel's *Tanz am Kanal*, wherein the homeless of post-unification Leibnitz froze on the streets, denied even the meagre shelter of doorways. Yet Maron clarifies her statement by way of the explanation "daß der Preis der Freiheit die Sicherheit ist und der Preis für die Sicherheit die Freiheit" (that we pay for freedom with security, and we pay for security with freedom; *ibid.*, p. 59). The compromise that Maron found operating in New York was one in which liberty won over security, and this appealed to the author who had lived for so long in the GDR.

Drawing on the inspiration of New York and Mexico as sites of a wilder freedom than would ever have been possible under the SED, Maron goes on in the lecture to define her ideal vision of the liberty offered by the West, namely as "eine schöne Unordnung, in der man Glück haben kann oder Pech, die Räume läßt für das eigene Spiel, für glückliche und unglückliche Zufälle" (a lovely

disorder in which one can be lucky or unlucky, which leaves room for one to play and to have happy or unhappy coincidences; *ibid.*, p. 67). Such a setting, in which the citizens of the newly unified Germany seemingly found themselves in the early 1990s, would operate according to the logic of *Zufall*, the potentiality of chance that functioned as the opposite of the heavy-handed destiny that Josefa Nadler and Rosalind Polkowski suffered in the GDR-era novels. There is more space for chance in Maron's writings since 1995. Yet unified Germany has not proven immune to Maron's brand of fictional-political critique. The visceral hatred that the author has expressed for the former East precludes her producing any works that would hanker after the lost GDR; nonetheless there are hints in her most recent works that unification has proven to have certain limitations. For one, viewing freedom as an increased self-sovereignty, as Johanna Märtin does in these recent novels, risks downplaying the importance of community to human happiness, and thus neglecting the benefits of sacrificing personal freedom for communal projects and ideas. Meanwhile the limits to the kinds of private freedom that Maron describes capitalism as making possible in her Frankfurt lectures are articulated by her other lead character in *Ach Glück*, Achim Märtin.

Achim's view of the *Wende* had at first approximated a feeling he remembered from childhood, "wenn im Märchen das Gute über das Böse gesiegt hatte und die Gerechtigkeit wieder hergestellt war" (like in fairytales when good had triumphed over evil and justice was restored; Maron, 2007, p. 87). However, Achim's experience at work belies this, as the university where he works loses state support and he finds himself dependent on grant funding to continue working. Although university scholars are now freed of ideological pressure from the SED, there is a new pressure to compete for the sponsorship of public research by external bodies. Achim's professional existence depends on his ability to justify the importance of his work above that of the many others thrown into the new economy of competition and, shockingly, he claims "dass es seine Würde weniger verletzt hatte, als er sich noch einem ganzen Staat mit seiner Armee, Polizei und seinem Geheimdienst unterwerfen musste" (that it had injured his dignity less to subjugate himself to a whole state with its army, police force and secret service; *ibid.*, p. 168). The GDR's infrastructures of oppression left Achim feeling less undignified than does the competition he must now maintain to gain grant money in a capitalist intellectual marketplace.

The failure of unification to bring about an end to the insecurity of the subject, a subject only just recovering from the oppressions and co-optations of the GDR, finds expression in the ongoing limitation on Maron's literary

characters. There is always a sense that their decisions are ultimately consigned to other powers, whether corporate or political powers, or simply the operation of fate. Certainly, given the changed historical conditions, a new relaxation is reflected in the looser form of these newer literary works, their more diffuse characterizations and their gentler narrative voices, which are relieved of the embittered hatred for the SED and Stasi in past texts, and in *Ach Glück* even allow the perspective of the lead character to fall back entirely in chapters focalized on an antagonist. Yet even after such markers of GDR sovereignty as the Berlin Wall and the Stasi's ubiquitous surveillance machine have been dismantled, the personal sovereignty of these literary subjects, their ability to decide the course of their lives and escape subjection to such other powers, are by no means guaranteed.

Such a thematic continuation, concerned as it is with the limits of human freedom into the new political era, crystallizes in Maron's latest work around the presence of animals. Where they are not adopting dogs, these characters discuss the desirability of employment in a zoo, or the implications of current biological research on contemporary ethics. Her texts share this presence of animals with other texts that emerged after unification had become an established state of affairs, texts in which the animal functions as a symbol of the limits to human sovereignty. Of course, citizens who had been kept within a barbed-wired border such as that which delineated the GDR from the West, from which they could be shot at and bleed to death if they tried to cross it, could justifiably compare themselves to animals being kept in cages. The imagery of animals in immediate post-GDR works might also have to do with the actual animals that the Stasi and *Volkspolizei* used, so that if dogs appear in poetry and prose, they may well be referring to the historical dogs with which prisoners and demonstrators were threatened in the GDR. Their particular prevalence in the most recent works of East German writing, however, is more perplexing. What might these animals be doing, in works that are set in capitalist democracy? It is my suspicion that the figure of the animal, in particular the domestic animal, gives concrete form to the limits on human freedom that continue, despite the end of the GDR into our present age. These are the limits placed on creativity and independent thought within a consumer marketplace or a privatized university system; they are the limits, too, on seeing one's life take the form that one had hoped, even without the Stasi there intervening in it. Thus, through their writing about animals, more often than not humans-as-animals, Maron and her contemporaries capture the continuation after 1989, of a creaturely aspect of the human. This is the aspect that makes

self-sovereignty difficult and, as we shall see in the final chapter, collaboration a continued risk.

## Note

- 1 In *Die Überläuferin*, the Man in the Red Uniform, an archetypal character whose speech interrupts the prose narrative with excerpts from a theatrical script, cries out “Ich verhängen den Ausnahmezustand!” (I declare the state of exception!; Maron, 1988, p. 40). Here Maron’s GDR is made to appear an absurd but dangerous iteration of the sovereignty structures of a totalitarian regime.

## Capitalist Complicity in Wolfgang Hilbig's Last Prose Works

When the Berlin Wall falls, the subjects of East German literary writing do not experience a sudden increase of sovereignty in their lives, even in this new context of freedom. While Johanna Märtin, the protagonist of Maron's novels *Endmoränen* and *Ach Glück*, shows an almost obsessive interest in the characteristics that appear to constitute personal sovereignty in others, she does not find that confidence, decisiveness, or ownership reflected in herself. Thus, she expresses envy for her friend Karoline Winter's "welterfahrene Selbstgewißheit" (worldly-wise self-assurance; Maron, 2002, p. 71), in contrast to which she feels "armselig und provisorisch" (squalid and provisional; *ibid.*, p. 71), a mere prototype of a person beside Winter's perceived elegance and success. In the texts examined in the previous chapter and in the last writings of Wolfgang Hilbig, we are confronted with provisory states of subjectivity, states that, as we shall see here, are even exacerbated by the new capitalist context. Having suffered some of the worst abuses of Stasi and state in the GDR, Hilbig was no proponent of a return to the fallen regime. On the other hand, his depiction of eastern German characters adrift in unified German capitalism emphasizes the ethical and political dilemmas that arise *out of* the freedom of unification, and as such bear witness to an ongoing problem, of the unsovereignty of the subject in the face of continuing demands to collaborate with the systems that surround it. Crucially, however, collaboration in this context is different to that demanded in the former Worker's and Farmer's State. Indeed the notion of *co-labor*, of working together with other subjects, is almost entirely absent from the last works of this late East German writer, so that the imperative to collaborate that operated in the GDR transmutes in his final texts into the even more isolated phenomenon of *complicity*, with bodies and systems even still more obscure than the Stasi was itself.

Hilbig's final novel, *Das Provisorium* (*The Stop-Gap*; 2000), is set in the late 1980s and early 90s, that "Übergangszeit" (transition-period) between two political regimes (Hilbig, 2000, p. 96). Its protagonist, C., is a former factory worker and now literary author who has been permitted to leave the GDR for a series of public readings in the West. Passing through Nuremberg, Hanau, Munich, and Vienna, C.'s perspective is that of an Easterner observing for the first time the consumer wonderland of the West. Where in East Germany C. was caught in a system of stagnation and suppression, in the West everything seems trapped in perpetual motion, so that his life there embodies the *provisory* quality evoked in the novel's title. As this chapter will show, Hilbig's novel cleverly maps the phase of transit between Cold War and unified capitalism onto the crises of subjectivity—the breakdown of relationships, struggle with alcoholism, and finally writer's block—that C. suffers. Intertextual links between this disorientation of life after the Stasi and Walter Benjamin's exile writings from within Nazi Europe become clear as C. walks through the new sites of West German and Austrian capitalism: the shopping malls, hotels, and train stations in which this constant traveler spends much of his time. Homing in on the railway stations that C. believes have become the only fixed points of his identity, the second part of the chapter considers the station as a space where historical regimes meet, collide with one another, and are subject to the discourses of contrast and comparison that have dominated post-Cold War Europe as it attempts to grapple with what preceded it. This part of the chapter expands the discussion in Chapter 1 of the post-unification tendency to compare the GDR and Nazi totalitarianism, by examining the station sequences in *Das Provisorium* and in two of Hilbig's mid-length prose works, *Die Weiber* (*The Women*, 1987), and *Alte Abdeckerei* (*Old Knackers Yard*), which was based on manuscripts from 1975 and 1985, redrafted in October 1990 and published in 1991. These sequences trouble the border between historical regimes and as such offer a new perspective on the application of the term "totalitarianism," suggesting that, while certain comparisons might fruitfully be drawn between Hilbig's works that are set in Eastern landscapes and their forebear-regime, it is in the urban locations of West Germany that Hilbig's most chilling reflections on the legacy of National Socialism find their setting.

In *Das Provisorium*, the shopping malls of the West are hallucinated as new labor camps. The inmates of these "camps" are locked into complicity with the brands that they buy, and by which they are branded, in some of the most ghastly tableaux of Hilbig's entire oeuvre. The protagonist of the novel, C., seems to represent an especially critical spectator of these scenes

of consumerism-as-concentration-camp, and his critical attitude apparently carries over into a habit that he takes up in the West, of watching pornography and striptease. These are compulsive viewing activities during which C. nonetheless attempts to maintain a sovereign, because critically detached spectatorship. However, as the chapter's final section shows, C.'s attempts at critique are cut short, instead sliding into the unwilling collaboration of one whose actions fuel the economy as much as those of the shoppers whom he criticizes. Although in C. Hilbig offers a model of critique, one who attempts to take distance from the behaviors and products of his new setting, even this last protagonist of Hilbig's oeuvre finds that he is no more immune than any other, and so finally must succumb to compromises and conformities that persist, as challenges to the sovereignty of subjectivity, long after the dissolution of the Stasi.

Hilbig was a much more critical commentator than Maron with regard to the unification of Germany and the potential for those living in it to regain personal sovereignty after the abuses of the past. Published in 2000, his final novel-length work offers a perspective on the first decade of unification, and it asks that readers immerse themselves in a post-Stasi Germany that is haunted by vestiges of its oppressive pasts—not only that of state socialism, but also the murderous Hitler regime that came before it. On the other hand, and perhaps most challengingly, this work and the short prose pieces that Hilbig completed soon after it demand that critical readers examine the kinds of collaboration that are necessary in the social landscape and cultural marketplace in which they are themselves located. This final chapter takes up the challenge laid down in Hilbig's final works before his death: to follow his final characters into a political and economic regime, and a regime of human relationships, that implicate them in new and surprising scenarios of complicity.

### How to live in the West: Disorientation, simulation, and transit

Hilbig described *Das Provisorium* in an interview in 2001 as “das Autobiografischste meiner Bücher” (the most autobiographical of all my books; “Wolfgang Hilbig im Interview,” 2001, unpaginated). Certainly, the novel's protagonist C. shares with Hilbig the change of career from factory worker to writer, his censorship, victimization and arrest by the Stasi, and ultimate exile

from the GDR in its final years. Like Hilbig, C. too suffers from writer's block and alcoholism. The novel also delivers an account of the painful and multiple love affairs that punctuate the plot of *Nachtgeschwister* (*Night-Siblings*, 2009), the memoir-novel by Hilbig's widow Natascha Wodin. Yet Hilbig also stated of his final novel: "trotzdem kann ich mich dahinter verstecken" (I can still hide myself behind it; *ibid.*, unpaginated). This accomplished work of autofiction took five years to complete, partly due to his decision in the middle of the drafting process to switch from a first-person to a third-person narrative, and to integrate that change in the text. As this latter gesture attests, *Das Provisorium* is the culmination of an oeuvre that radically undermines the possibility of a truthful, archival function of life writing.

The consequences of such radical undermining of the function of life writing, for the literary subject whose life revolves around writing as a means of understanding his experience, are painful. As in "Ich", the protagonist of *Das Provisorium* suffers from acute identity trouble, which takes the form of a suspicion that he does not really exist, but is instead a character playing "eine Art Hauptrolle" (a kind of protagonist role) in a novel (Hilbig, 2000, p. 39). Like W., C. feels as if he were living a "Schattendasein" (shadow-existence; *ibid.*, p. 283), one that permits him neither to experience nor to express an authentic sense of self. It is not surprising, therefore, that the characters who surround the C. of *Das Provisorium* also doubt his authenticity as a subject. He recalls a period when he needed to take time off work at the factory due to illness, but this was hampered by the fact that "die Ärzte schrieben ihn immer seltener krank, er geriet in den Ruf eines Simulanten" (the doctors were less and less willing to give him a sick note, he began to have a reputation for malingering; *ibid.*, p. 281). Most troublingly, C. himself is not sure of the extent to which he has simulated his illnesses and other problems. C.'s lack of trust in himself as a subject leads to a lack of confidence as an author, an insecurity that seems incongruent with his success in this career. In the present time of the novel, he is suffering from severe writer's block while at the same time harvesting the fruits of a successful writing career. Echoing the accusations of his "simulated" illnesses while a worker, C. now feels that he is too healthy to be a writer. Since his worker's body does not suffer from "den Krankheiten der Dichter" (the illnesses suffered by writers; *ibid.*, p. 277), and his face appears too swarthy for his vocation, he feels he does not fit the imagined physiognomic profile of a creative intellectual.

C.'s self-doubt is compounded by the disorientation that he suffers as he makes his tours around the West as a star author. The plot is structured around these journeys through different Western zones, where C. gives readings, and at



times back into the GDR. C. is involved in two, overlapping relationships, with Mona in Leipzig and Hedda in Nuremberg, and he conducts these relationships mostly over the telephone, spending the remaining part of the action sleeping, drinking, or reading on trains, or undertaking a short stay in a rehabilitation clinic. However, there are certain spatially fixed sites of transit that work appropriately as temporary homes for the equally transitory C. He finds, for instance, that the hotels he visits offer the “prototypische Behausung für ein Dasein in der Vorläufigkeit” (prototypical home for a temporary existence; *ibid.*, p. 133). C.'s interim self can be accommodated well by the West's faceless hotels, which are not merely typical, but *prototypical* for the precarious life that he finds himself living. This precarity recalls the time-space logic of W.'s progress in “*Ich*”, as he moved around East Berlin spying, always “following,” or going after his Stasi superiors. Such a movement of “coming after” is also germinal to Derrida's writing about the animal, as part of which he considers the fundamental gesture of “following” that the French verb “to be” locates as central in the ontology of man as human animal, via “the question of what I do when ‘I am’ or ‘I follow,’ when I say ‘*Je suis*’” (Derrida, 2008, p. 3). The consequences of the temporal and spatial disorientation suffered by Hilbig's characters, its contribution to the creatureliness of these characters' lives, is suggested in “*Ich*” but only becomes clear in *Das Provisorium*.

The protagonist of the latter text, C., is able to enact W.'s fantasy in “*Ich*” of going West: “dort irgendwo keuchte und pumpte das wirkliche Herz dieses Landes” (somewhere there, the true heart of this land was panting and pumping; Hilbig, 1993, p. 172). Permitted to leave the GDR in 1985 on a one-year visa, C. goes before many of his fellow citizens in the East. However, where in “*Ich*” the West appears as a fantasy space into which W. could safely disappear, “spurlos” (without a trace; *ibid.*, p. 172), in *Das Provisorium* this fantasy becomes a nightmare. In his proleptic journey into what will have been the future for the people of the GDR, C. is a pioneer disoriented and depressed by what he finds, and increasingly invisible to the people around him. Indeed, C. finds himself fantasizing about returning to the East from which he has only recently escaped, “dort wo die Bestie, deren Unruhe er nicht mehr beherrschte, anscheinend zu Haus [sic] war” (there where the beast whose anxiety he was no longer able to master was apparently at home; Hilbig, 2000, p. 133). There is some creaturely self within C., a self that longs to return to the the East where he may be victimized and censored, but where he may also find the closest thing to home. He indulges this self on repeat visits to railways stations, never far from the city hotels in which he stays, during his nights that are plagued by insomnia.

So long as C. is in the West, these hotels and their neighboring train stations themselves must function as figurative “homes” for his transitional existence. Indeed, resigned to the endless *Vorläufigkeit* (provisionality) of his travels, C. reports that stations “waren ganz zu den Anhaltspunkten seines Bewußtseins geworden” (had become the main reference points for his consciousness; *ibid.*, p. 117). The stations through which he must pass prove to house many other types like C., “die ihre Selbstgefühle wechselten wie eine schattenhafte Kleidung” (who changed their sense of self like a shadowy costume; *ibid.*, p. 117). These other changeable subjects include homeless people lying on the concourses, business-people rushing by, and countless stragglers sitting in solitary units in the station bars. C. finds himself “magisch angezogen” (magically drawn) to this cast of characters (*ibid.*, p. 117), and compelled to make his home among them, because “im Bahnhof fiel er mit seiner Form der Unruhe nicht auf” (in the station he didn’t stand out with his kind of unease; *ibid.*, p. 121). C. spends a considerable amount of time caught in such a loop, of changing from home to home, and since he does not return to the East before unification, the country that he had left behind disappears. From this point on there is no longer a home to which he could return, and the novel closes with him blending into the homeless crowd who live in Leipzig station after the *Wende*.<sup>1</sup>

In his study of the cultural topography of *Berlin in the Twentieth Century*, Andrew Webber pays special attention to the significance of the station in Walter Benjamin’s writing. Webber focuses on Benjamin’s favored allegorical image of the *Weichbild*, the limit of a city’s boundaries, in order to delineate how the “exemplary threshold space” of the station itself articulates the boundaries between different territories and between the economic classes inhabiting them (Webber, 2008, p. 84). For instance, in Benjamin’s *Berliner Chronik* (*Berlin Chronicle*), his collection of articles about Berlin around 1932, the businessmen passing through the official concourses of the station are distinct from, but also interact with, the sex workers who take up their place in the back-alley (cf. *ibid.*, p. 85). Hilbig, who is also a close reader of Benjamin, extends this threshold potentiality to make his stations sites of modernist indeterminacy that no border—not even that of the Berlin Wall—can contain. The narrative relates, about the stations that C. visits: “Nichts auf ihnen war geeignet, einem deutliche Konturen zu vermitteln” (nothing in them was suitable for transmitting clear contours to you; Hilbig, 2000, p. 117). The station represents a site where the borders of states and of social groups break down, and in this setting, part-fascinated, part-horrified by their dialectics of interaction and dissolution, C. finds a perfect location in which to explore the indistinct contours of his own identity.

*Das Provisorium* depicts the personal breakdown of C. occurring at the same time as a breakdown of historical boundaries, as the topographical sites that house Hilbig's ill-contoured subject also become the scene of a collision between different regimes of the twentieth century. In Alan Corkhill's reading, Leipzig station functions as "a symbolic 'Endstation,' a cul-de-sac of finality, of personal terminality" (Corkhill, 2004, p. 238). Corkhill concentrates on the personal journey mapped out in Hilbig's final novel, arguing that it is a "very private, even existential variety of *Wenderoman*, in the sense that the work does not purport to be a socio-political chronicle" but instead focuses on "the very worth and *raison d'être* of creative writing at a critical turning point in postmodern discourse" (ibid., p. 237). The novel is certainly led by a plotline concerned with C.'s struggles to write creatively, continuing from "*Ich*" some of the problems posed for writing and for identity after the insights of postmodernism. However, even more so than in "*Ich*", *Das Provisorium* relates these kinds of personal breakdown to the socio-political endings of its era. In particular, the end of the long twentieth century poses the author and his lead character the problem of a conjunction of regime-endings and regime-changes that cluster around Leipzig station. It seems here that, in Hilbig's Benjaminian vision, any definitive or endings are foreclosed by a logic of repetition, wherein regimes can change, but certain of their remnants live on into a future time.

### Regime change? The station as historical exchange-zone

Visiting Leipzig station after the fall of the Berlin Wall, C. notices a smell that suffuses its air: "Es war der Geruch alter schäbiger dunkelgrüner Züge [...] ihr Geruch nach altem Schmierfett und bitterem Staub" (it was the smell of old, shabby, dark green trains [...] the smell they had of old grease and bitter dust; Hilbig, 2000, pp. 318–19). The vehicles to which this smell attaches are the green trains familiar from C.'s years in the former GDR; yet the scent of their wagons is disquieting. The description of this smell might remain enigmatic, were it not for the multiple evocations, earlier in the text and throughout Hilbig's oeuvre, of an even more gruesome past than that of the Stasi. It is telling that *Das Provisorium* opens in the shopping district of Nuremberg, the city where both Nazi rallies and the post-war trials of high-profile Nazis were held earlier in the century. In "*Ich*", readers witnessed W.'s perambulations around the city, which are described as "Nacht- und Nebelgänge" (moonlight-flits; Hilbig, 1993, p. 134). This reference could have stood alone as a light-hearted image of the

spy moving quickly around in secret, were it not for the fact that “Nacht und Nebel” (night and fog) has a significance beyond the foggy night-wanderings of Hilbig’s Stasi spy. The phrase stems from the law passed by Hitler on 7 December 1941, which ordered the elimination of political activists from Nazi Germany’s territories. The phrase also occurs in Hilbig’s prose work of 1987, *Die Weiber (The Women)*, which tells the story of a group of women who have been abducted from the city in a “Nacht- und Nebelaktion” (moonlight-flit / night-and fog-maneuver; Hilbig, 2010, p. 20). Despite the women’s disappearance, the narrator entertains fantasies about them, interspersed with images of a “Haufen von Frauenhaar” (heap of women’s hair; *ibid.*, p. 35), which has been thrown into a rubbish bin and set alight.<sup>2</sup>

The narrator of *Die Weiber* wonders if his vision of the women’s hair has any link to the “mörderischen Traditionen meiner Heimat” (murderous traditions of my homeland; *ibid.*, p. 26). The piles of hair certainly echo the titular plea of Hilbig’s poem, “bitte mein haar nach auschwitz zu schicken” (request to send my hair to auschwitz; Hilbig, 2008, p. 468), which was written in 1978 and published posthumously. The poem voices a fantasy of self-sacrifice by which the lyric subject hopes to undo the crimes of the Holocaust. For Cooke, *Die Weiber* is a key pre-unification work about the Holocaust, which Hilbig hoped would “force the people living in the GDR to face their sordid National Socialist past” (Cooke, 2000, p. 120). The tale indeed addresses itself to a past rather than a present reality in the GDR: in this sense, Hilbig is not one of the authors and intellectuals comfortable comparing the GDR with the Nazi regime. If the images of the Nazi past recur in his oeuvre it is not as a repetition of the same crimes under socialism, but as a history that has been repressed and should be remembered as part of a past that persists in both Germanys.

Accordingly, the spectres of Auschwitz do not only return in Hilbig’s texts published during the GDR years. The unsuccessful suppression of the Nazi past is also thematized in the post-unification publication *Alte Abdeckerei*, whose nameless narrator is haunted in a dark landscape by a “markerschütternden Schrei” (blood-curdling scream; Hilbig, 2010, p. 117), and feels that the rustling of leaves around him conceals the “Geräusche eines fernen Eisenbahnzugs, der fuhr und fuhr, als dürfe er die ganze Nacht hindurch sein Rollen und Klappern nicht enden lassen” (sounds of a distant railway train, which drove and drove, as if not allowed to stop its rolling and clacking the whole night through; *ibid.*, p. 118). The setting of *Alte Abdeckerei* and the temporality of these murderous echoes are both indeterminate, although it becomes clear during the tale that the train is heading towards a slaughter-house of some kind. There is no such

indeterminacy in *Das Provisorium*, whose protagonist is clearly located in West German capitalism. It appears, moreover, that the spectre of the Nazi past is also in transit here. The cuttings and pilings of hair from Hilbig's "auschwitz" poem and *Die Weiber* are recalled by the private rehabilitation clinic that C. visits, named simply *Haar* (hair). Among the inmates at Haar, C. meets an elderly man who can only repeat the words "Nazis ... Nazis ... Himmler ... Hitler!" (Hilbig, 2000, p. 47). Later, during his travels outside of the clinic, C. collects a vast number of books about the Nazi genocide and the mass murders under Stalin in the Soviet Union, storing them in boxes bearing the inscription "*Holocaust & Gulag*" (ibid., p. 193). C. claims that these boxes contain "das einzige wirklich notwendige Wissen des 20. Jahrhunderts" (the only really necessary knowledge of the twentieth century; ibid., p. 153; emphasis in the original). Thus, even as he makes his travels in the West of Germany, C. carries with him remnants of the totalitarian past.

C.'s book collection is one of several identifications made in the novel between C. and the famous collector, Walter Benjamin. Benjamin is evoked in the novel as a representative of the millions who died as a result of Nazi persecution, and he is resurrected in certain cultural-critical observations that C. makes. For instance, C.'s book habit seems to reference Benjamin's talk, "Ich packe meine Bibliothek aus" (Unpacking my library), which he held in 1931, not long before he had to flee the Nazis and leave this very library behind. In the talk, Benjamin notes the criminal acts that collectors will commit in order to acquire books, because for some, not having access to books is a cause of illness.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, Benjamin also comments in his talk on the not-reading of books, revealing that collectors do not read every book in their library; indeed they are less interested in the books' "Funktionswert" (use value; Benjamin, 1972, p. 388), than in housing them in safety. C. takes Benjamin's comments about collectors not reading books to an extreme. He has purchased a set of "Walter-Benjamin-Bänden" (Walter Benjamin volumes; Hilbig, 2000, p. 179), but only uses them to conceal the pornographic magazines that he reads on trains. C. wonders himself why he would buy these volumes and not read them, "Bücher, für die er sich drüben im Osten fast ein Bein ausgerissen hätte" (books that he would have almost ripped out one of his legs for over there in the East; ibid., p. 179). He concludes that, in contrast to the East where certain works are a precious scarcity, "die Bücher hier im Westen nichts mehr wert waren" (books are not worth anything any more here in the West; ibid., p. 180). This suspected elimination of literature's value is encapsulated by the "Plastikattrappen" (plastic dummies; ibid., p. 181) that, as C. learns, decorate some West German living rooms. These plastic panels are disguised as classic literature collections, and as

such they represent a grotesque endpoint for Benjamin's vision of the library as a protective home.

As the protector of C.'s traveling porno-philosophical collection, Walter Benjamin is a melancholy presence in this novel about the end of state socialism. Another Frankfurt School philosopher whose presence is invoked, albeit less explicitly, is Theodor Adorno. The voice of Adorno seems to echo in C.'s claim that literary narratives after the Holocaust run the risk of banality:

Das Leben einer Romanfigur, ihre Verwirrungen und Leiden, ihr Umgetriebensein, ihr Unglück oder Glück, war nichtswürdig, dumm und banal im Vergleich zu denen, die in den Lagern gewesen waren.

(The life of a character in a novel, its confusions and suffering, its worries, its misfortunes and luck were worthless, stupid and banal in comparison to those who had been in the camps; *ibid.*, p. 256.)

C.'s comment echoes Adorno's statement of 1949 regarding lyric writing: "Nach Auschwitz ein Gedicht zu schreiben, ist barbarisch" (to write a poem after Auschwitz is barbaric; Adorno, 1977, p. 30). It also recalls Brecht's exile poem of the mid-1930s, "An die Nachgeborenen," which voices the claim that "Ein Gespräch über Bäume fast ein Verbrechen ist / Weil es ein Schweigen über so viele Untaten einschließt!" (A conversation about trees is almost a crime / because it involves remaining silent about so many barbarities; Brecht, 1988, p. 85). In *Das Provisorium*, C. as literary author adopts Adorno and Brecht's poetry ban for his prose narratives. He suspects that any stories he might write would always be banal compared to the life histories of the camps' victims or survivors. As a result, he is tormented by writer's block, under which lies the suspicion that "Mit der Unschuld des Erzählens war es vollkommen vorbei" (the status of writing as something innocent was completely over; Hilbig, 2000, p. 257). At worst, C. fears that, due to their perceived banality, any works that he produces could find themselves complicit with the Nazis—or, by their participation in certain kinds of marketplace, perhaps with more contemporary regimes.

### The shopping mall as concentration camp: Problems of capitalist complicity

Soon after publishing *Das Provisorium*, Hilbig revealed the intention that lay behind the novel, namely: "Ich wollte beschreiben, was mit einem DDR-Bürger

passiert, der aus einer finsternen Industrielandschaft des Ostens in die strahlende Fußgängerzone von Nürnberg versetzt wird" (I wanted to describe what happens to a citizen of the GDR who is displaced from a dark industrial landscape in the East into the shining shopping precincts in Nuremberg; "Wolfgang Hilbig im Interview," 2001, unpaginated). From the novel's opening in a stairwell in Nuremberg's shopping district, the West that Hilbig portrays certainly sparkles with the shining vitrines and plastic goods of consumer capitalism. It also traces the psychological journey made by a man cast out of the GDR's *dark* landscape and into this glittering environment for the first time. Traveling in the West, C. views the spectacle of a "Konsumrevolution" (consumer revolution) going on around him (Hilbig, 2000, p. 8). The people whom he encounters here are convinced "der gerechtesten Sache der Welt zu dienen: dem Shopping" (that they are serving the most just cause in the world: shopping; *ibid.*, p. 8). West German consumerism functions, he learns, as an almost religious discipline, wherein its children are raised to be "pflichtbewußten Konsumenten" (dutiful consumers; *ibid.*, p. 206). The ideology and attendant rituals of this system rival the conformity culture of its opponent Germany, the GDR. Moreover, and as the Frankfurt School philosophers Benjamin and Adorno's ghosting of *Das Provisorium* indicates, these consumer rituals also contain certain remnants of the Nazi state.

Thus the citizens that C. sees traveling on a tram in Nuremberg are shown in a "Kompression ihrer nicht mehr identifizierbaren Leiber" (compression of their now unidentifiable bodies; *ibid.*, p. 33), a crush of bodies that echoes uncomfortably with the packed train wagons of the Eichmann-engineered transports to Nazi death camps. Once they arrive at the malls, these citizen-shoppers are then, like the inmates of those camps, branded. Not with hot irons, however; they are instead marked with a "Firmenlogo auf der Brust" (company logo on their chest; *ibid.*, p. 263), and a code number to mark out their individuality within each brand group. C. looks on as these shoppers "laufen nur noch als wandelnde Werbung herum" (run around as nothing more than walking adverts; *ibid.*, p. 263), their clothes re-promoting the brands that they buy. He listens in the mall as shoppers around him discuss the bargains that they have found and in his mind he names one "Nike Nr. 174517" (Nike number 174517; *ibid.*, p. 264), and remarks that "das ist zufällig dieselbe Nummer, die auf dem linken Unterarm von Primo Levi eintätowiert war" (that, by the way, is the same number that was tattooed into Primo Levi's left forearm; *ibid.*, p. 264). Hideously, here, the experience of one of Auschwitz's most famous inmates returns by numerical replication on the body of the shopping consumer. In this way, Hilbig opts to



articulate a space–time compression that draws National Socialism and Federal German capitalism together into a troubling proximity that borders on ethical causality. The effect of this is to render the apparently “indirect” violence of late capitalism—that “systemic” violence that in Žižek’s writing characterizes “the often catastrophic consequences of the smooth functioning of our economic and political systems” (Žižek, 2008, p. 2)—as a direct bodily violence not far removed from the camps of the earlier twentieth century.

Hilbig’s branded subjects might have found an East German counterpart in the form of a clone that Rosalind Polkowski encounters in Maron’s *Die Überläuferin*, a branded subject who does not have a name, but merely a “Patientennummer” (patient number; Maron, 1988, p. 200). The clone explains to Polkowski that it is not a person but “sein fleischgewordener Schatten. Das Original mit dem Namen und dem Personalausweis ist der Mensch und lebt das Leben, ich bin sein Kontrollgerät” (its shadow made flesh. The original, with the name and the identity papers is the person and lives a life; I am merely a testing device; *ibid.*, p. 202). Lacking even the personal identity documentation that in Hilbig’s early short prose appeared so brutal, Maron’s clone is a mere machine for testing the actions of the person to whom it is attached. As we have seen, in Maron’s early novels it is the GDR that is compared to its forerunner-regime of National Socialism, with its experiments, codes, and categorizing systems. However, in Hilbig’s late work the comparison operates between the National Socialist dictatorship and the “Diktatur des Schachers und der Dummheit” (dictatorship of traders and idiots; Hilbig, 2000, p. 316), that C. perceives in his first experiences of capitalism. Replacing the death lists of the Nazis and the code names of the Stasi files, here we have the faceless brands and barcodes of the contemporary shopping mall.

The comparison is a sticky one, occurring throughout the novel persistently. Hence, after unification, C. revisits Leipzig and must come to terms with the changes that have occurred in his former city of residence. A huge shopping precinct has been built around the station, allowing transport and shopping to meet in a central hub of activity. Here, in the *Endstation* that Corkhill identified, the end of history meets its obscene underside as the slogan *Arbeit macht frei* (work will set you free), which stood over the entrance gates of the main camp at Auschwitz, is resurrected in signs that read “*Shopping macht frei*, so steht es in attraktiven Lettern über all diesen Eingängen zu lesen” (*Shopping will set you free*, that’s what hung in attractive letters over all of these entranceways; *ibid.*, p. 263; emphasis in the original). The other “siegreiche Zeichen” (triumphant sign) that shines out over the station’s glistening shopping concourse is an



advertising banner for AEG (ibid., p. 320), a multinational firm that is known to have donated large sums of money to the NSDAP.<sup>4</sup> Hilbig is too historically aware to make a direct comparison between any two regimes. However, in the terminus station at Leipzig, National Socialism and late capitalism meet in a collision of different times of injustice, and Hilbig allows C. to observe as these pasts pile in onto the platforms and walkways of the colossal station-mall.

Persistent as the image of the shopping mall as camp is, C.'s observations in the novel also leave past regimes behind, in order to reflect on the specific kind of subject that is demanded by contemporary capital. Capitalism, it seems, relies on the constitution of subjects who will appear mobile and independent, shopping in order to fulfil their own needs, even as they are "nach und nach ihrer selbst enteignet" (dispossessed of themselves bit by bit; Hilbig, 2000, p. 123). These subjects would lend themselves to an environment in which an illusion of individuality actually contributes to the same actions being carried out repeatedly by millions of subjects all convinced of their own uniqueness. C. finds examples of such subjects traveling in a mass on the escalators of the station-mall and in the public transport leading into and out of it. Meanwhile, the cars on the Autobahn render their drivers no more sovereign than the shoppers who are carried around on public transit. A passage made poignant by its despairing alliteration relates:

Diszipliniert und zu dicht geschlossenen Pulks vereint, vereint für eine Minute, einheitliche enthirnte Stirnen hinter den Frontscheiben, Leiber, [...] wie vom Peitschenschlag eines großen Herdenführers in Bewegung gesetzt. Und dieser große Hirte war das Kapital.

(Disciplined and united in densely packed throngs, united for a minute, homogeneously decerebrated foreheads behind the windscreens, bodies [...] as if set into motion by the cracking of a huge herdsman's whip. And this huge shepherd was capital; ibid., pp. 123–4.)

The drivers may be isolated, each operating behind a different steering wheel. However, they are also being driven by a cruel herdsman, a big Other to whom they each unconsciously submit. A similar kind of submission is necessary on the five-lane dual carriageway on which Christa Wolf's narrator is forced to travel in *Stadt der Engel*, a "tausendäugigen Fabelwesen [...] das uns alle beherrschte und das jede Eigenbewegung, jeden Fehler grausam bestrafte" (magical thousand-eyed creature that had control over all of us and that doled out cruel punishments for any mistakes, any independent moves we might make; Wolf, 2010, p. 32). Wolf's narrator, characteristically for her oeuvre, becomes

hypnotized by this highway-monster into “einen leichten Trance-Zustand” (a mild state of trance; *ibid.*, p. 32), so that she cannot be viewed as responsible for her own behavior on the road, but instead is *beherrscht*, controlled by it. In the regimes represented by these fearsome traffic-ways, the ideal subject would fall somewhere between the qualities of the automaton and the addict: operating largely under the command of some other force, and sufficiently hooked as to motivate themselves, with a kind of driven self-reliance, into maintaining a flow of conformity.

Allowing themselves to be driven around on the escalators and highways of contemporary capitalism, these characters appear as new iterations of Georg Bendemann, the protagonist of a veritable *Urtext* for understanding the problem of collaboration in destructive acts. Judith Butler cites the closing lines of Kafka’s short work of 1912, “Das Urteil” (The Judgement): “[a]us dem Tor sprang er, über die Fahrbahn zum Wasser trieb es ihn” (he jumped out of the gate, over the highway to the water it drove him; Kafka, 2001, p. 20). She does so to demonstrate how Kafka’s protagonist is at once master and creature of his own death, operating in a “simultaneity of both conditions” as he both jumps and is *driven* by some mysterious *es* or *it* to carry out the father’s murderous command (Butler, 2005, p. 48). The imperative that Hilbig’s character C. imagines as propelling the drivers forward in *Das Provisorium*, “Schickt euch! Schickt euch selber” (Send yourselves! Send yourselves your self!; Hilbig, 2000, p. 124), echoes the sending of Georg to his death by his father, a command in the execution of which Georg collaborates by throwing himself into the “endloser Verkehr” (unending traffic) on a carriageway below (Kafka, 2001, p. 20). One century later, it is as if Hilbig’s drivers, conforming “in der Linientreue der Autobahn” (toeing the line of the motorway; Hilbig, 2000, p. 124), and Wolf’s figures of participation, were re-enacting *en masse* the complicity with which Kafka’s nightmare tale concludes. As he observes the new landscape of post-unification Germany, it becomes the task of Hilbig’s embattled C. to seek an alternative to such complicity.

Corkhill has argued of *Das Provisorium* that its protagonist is able to take up the traditional position of the literary author as “outsider” (Corkhill, 2004, p. 236). Such a role would appear to allow greater critical perspective than that available to other social actors. From such a privileged vantage point, C. would be able to immerse himself in the crowd of consumers in the malls and on the highways of West Germany and Austria while keeping himself at a distance from the influence of the culture that drives them. Thus removed, he would be able to observe the mechanisms behind that drive. However, as a fellow inmate

of the *Haar* rehabilitation clinic explains, C. is not so far from being an ideal consumer himself. Capitalism, explains the inmate, cultivates subjects who are addicted to something, preferably something that they buy:

die Herren in der Wirtschaft können froh sein, daß es uns gibt. Deshalb werden wir hier drin auch immer wieder fit gemacht...mit dem Rauchen ist es übrigens dasselbe.

(the men in the business world can be happy that we exist. That's why they keep making us better in here...it's the same with smoking; Hilbig, 2000, p. 52.)

C.'s alcohol addiction is a cause of grave suffering for him, not least because it interferes with his ability to write. In the paranoid hermeneutic of the fellow inmate, however, it is also an illness that renders him unwittingly complicit, because for him alcohol and cigarettes are products in an industry of addiction. Their faithful consumers are complicit in producing profit for businessmen, the *Herren*, or lords and masters of the economy. Thus, as much as he may have distanced himself from the shopping automata in the malls, through his addiction, and even as he is struggling to overcome it, C. is still playing a role required by the system about which he has serious reservations.

C. does not display any nostalgia for the East, viewing it at best as an unwanted home for his creaturely self, that *Bestie* that felt most at home where it was most persecuted. He means to end his relationship with Mona, his partner in Leipzig, though he fails to do so in repeated telephone calls that she finally refuses to answer. Nor does he settle in West Germany, where he meets another woman, Hedda, becoming close to her and her male partner, who treats their sexual relationship with friendly tolerance. Despite the potential for intimacy and community offered by these relationships, C. remains isolated, leaves his partners awaiting his communication and spends much of the narrative alone in the hotels, malls, and stations visited above. Yet one further refuge for C. is provided by a habit he acquires in the West, of watching pornography and striptease. In these activities, this character seems to exercise an unexpectedly critical agency, albeit an agency still based in certain modes of participation.

### Towards a critical participation? Case study (i): Pornography

C. first uses a "Pay-TV" service to watch hard-core pornography early in his travels, when he is resting in a hotel after giving a reading. The narrative

relates C.'s impressions of the porn as he makes two important observations about what he sees. The first concerns the importance of uninterrupted vision in video pornography. Over the course of a year traveling in the West, C. has noticed a rapid change in the visuals that are screened on these channels, from soft-core films in which only the upper portion of the pubic hair was visible, to a hard-core mode that provides unlimited visibility of sexual organs and acts. C. sees behind this new extreme form the "Dogma eines *Lehrfilms*" (the dogma of a *training film*; Hilbig, 2000, p. 172), one of whose generic features is the long shot of "das Eigentliche" (the actual thing; *ibid.*, p. 172), namely a "gut ausgeleuchtete Vulva" (well-lit vulva) at the center of the screen being penetrated "mit maschineller Gleichmäßigkeit" (with machinic uniformity) by the male actor's penis (*ibid.*, p. 171). What C. is viewing here are meat shots, explicit visuals that prove to their viewers, as film theorist Linda Williams noted in her groundbreaking 1989 study of porn, that "hard-core sexual activity is taking place" (Williams, 1999, p. 72). Meat shots are at the center of the hard-core mode that aims at locating what Williams called the "thing itself" (*ibid.*, p. 49)—the visual site where female orgasm might be evidenced. It is not, as it might be expected, the male orgasm to which hard-core porn directs its camera, this latter having long offered itself for viewing via the money shot ubiquitous in porn from as early as the 1970s, when the Mitchell brothers' 1972 production *Behind the Green Door* featured its famous seven-minute money shot, a highly visible event emphasized by slow-motion, close-up camera work. In search of images that can capture the contrastingly elusive "involuntary spasm" of vaginal orgasm (*ibid.*, p. 49), hard-core pornography produces an extreme visual content that appears to penetrate the surface of the body and, ideally, trace the elusive locus of feminine *jouissance*. This mode of porn is in development when C. views it in the 1980s, and it aims at making such an event visible in order to captivate its market. The film cannot show the female orgasm successfully, but it is still a compelling medium that can both provoke and respond to the viewer's desire to see. This desire participates with the filmic object in a triangulation of capitalist production that extends the spectacle seen in the malls above into the quiet solitude of C.'s hotel room.

Yet, explicit though their images are, and new for the eyes of a GDR exile on tour in the West,<sup>5</sup> these short films are not able to seduce C. unproblematically. The *Lehrfilm* that C. perceives in these images may be the kind of teaching-film shown in biology classes, where body parts are screened for teaching purposes. The notion that film should teach its viewers a more ideological kind of lesson is resonant, meanwhile, with the Stalinist project of promoting Socialist Realist

art. Yet the primary resonance is with Brecht's propositions concerning the *Lehrstück*, those works of theater that imparted lessons in how to watch critically, and through the experience of such a learning-play, to apply such critical watching outside of the theater. Like a model spectator of Brecht's progressive theater, Hilbig's character is shown analyzing the porn in a cool, critical manner, and in this way turning a resistant gaze upon the production process of the films on screen. As Williams stressed in her edited volume *Porn Studies*, one of the roles of academic work on pornographic cinema has been to draw attention to "the choreography of performing and labouring bodies" that the onscreen event of porn hides from view (Williams, 2004, p. 5). Thus it is in a scholarly fashion that C., as critical porn consumer, discerns the labor behind the hard choreography of the Pay-TV images. For instance, he considers the preparation that has gone into the porn actors' bodies, which are shaven and heavily made up, and even taped up. Such preparation is necessary, as C. notes, because the actors' hair and body parts can function as enemies to the "Auge der Filmkamera" (eye of the film-camera; Hilbig, 2000, p. 171), if they continually fall in front of the shot.

C.'s second critical observation concerns the actors' physical labor: as he watches, C. comes to wonder if the strained grunting sounds that he hears on the soundtrack are not a result of the actors' (real or feigned) pleasure, but instead, of their "fast akrobatischen Anstrengung" (almost acrobatic efforts; *ibid.*, p. 171), including a "schwierig[e] Hockstellung" (difficult squatting position) that the male actors must adopt to execute their role (*ibid.*, p. 173). C. also muses that some of the groans on the soundtrack might not stem from the actors but from the camera-person, who must surely take up strenuous positions in order to capture the images from the most revealing angle. The objective of such choreography is to perform pleasure, and at the same time to generate pleasure in the viewer who, as C. wryly notes, watches these shows with the aim "für rund zwanzig Mark in Richtung Bildschirm zu ejakulieren" (of ejaculating, for around 20 Marks, in the direction of the screen; *ibid.*, p. 170). Thus even as C. consumes the material in that fashion, he is also positioned as an analytic observer, one who sees through these performances to the experience of the actors and film crew, and with ironic distance hears their bodies at work. As an East German, C. is well placed to discern this labor's necessarily invisibility, invisibility that is indeed a prerequisite for the unconditioned enjoyment of any consumer product.

Yet C.'s response to the film is not limited to cool critique. Along with alcohol, pornography is a refuge, to which he can return for comfort and entertainment, and the more he does it, the more it begins to consume him. Before long,

when his tour of readings takes him to Berlin and Vienna, C.'s consumption of Pay-TV graduates to a habit of visiting the peepshows of Charlottenburg and the Gürtelstrasse. Here, clients are able to sit and watch as naked women sex-workers pass by on a conveyor belt behind a pane of glass. The glass is covered until insertion of a coin by a blind, which is lowered again when the woman removes her hand or, in West Berlin, a (nostalgic? socialist?) red paper star. The blind's descent interrupts the line of vision and compels clients to insert more money into the machine in order to see more. On his side of the glass, C. watches with phobic curiosity as the women's sexual organs are gradually revealed. Driven by this curiosity, "sein Blick bohrte sich in einen der Schaukästen" (his gaze drilled into one of the display cabinets; *ibid.*, p. 233), cabinets which house something frightening and arousing all at once. In these scenes, C. becomes a grown-up Little Hans, Freud's Viennese child patient whose curiosity about birth (being *geboren*) was confused with *bohren* (drilling; cf. Freud, 1969), a curiosity made only more intense by his parents' withholding of explanation. Cut off from his origins in the GDR, C. gives way in these scenes to an obsession with the answers apparently held within women's bodies, answers that he imagines might help to heal his existential angst.

Julia Hell's reading of the novel highlights the fetishistic portrayal of women's bodies in C.'s peepshow visits, referring in this way to the "structure of acknowledgement and disavowal" that Freud found at the origin of sexual anxiety in turn-of-the-century Vienna (Hell, 2002, p. 287). Indeed, as they are repeatedly covered then revealed, the performing bodies produce a frustration that surely appeals to that persecuted creature in C. Certainly, when the women's vaginas are revealed at the peepshow, and he can finally gaze at them, he is struck at that very moment by blindness, and feels that "der Tod hielt ihn bei der Gurgel gepackt" (death has grabbed him by the throat; Hilbig, 2000, p. 299). Perhaps it is, as Hell argues, an unconscious censorship of scopic desire. Yet this blindness might also be linked to the paranoia generated by C.'s realization that he does not know whether or not the woman can look back through the glass and see him in her turn. Such fear, of the undead capacity of the woman-as-commodity to gaze back at her viewer, leaves C. clenching his teeth "um sich zu beherrschen" (to master himself; *ibid.*, p. 300), as it shifts agency to the part of the actress. The peepshow here is not a place of uncomplicated viewing for C., and his experience leaves him questioning his control over himself. Though he has paid to be there and to view this spectacle, he is also deeply uncomfortable, at once dissatisfied and undermined by what he sees. The failure of C.'s self-mastery is reiterated when he leaves the peepshow for the final time in Vienna.

Back on the street, he sees an advertisement for the author's reading that he has just held. Faced with his own image, C. cannot recognize himself, but can only see "das Bild eines Toten" (the picture of a dead man; *ibid.*, p. 301). From the cool analysis of his Pay-TV consumption to the more frantic anxieties of his peepshow visits, a shift has taken place that makes C.'s experience less controlled. The nature of the shift has to do with the change of medium from porn to striptease, because in its less mediated form, C.'s newer viewing habit leaves him at higher risk of uncritical participation.

Corkhill's reading shows how the novel's focus on C.'s experience as an author-outsider can create an unfortunate impression of self-pity. Indeed, the protagonist's "trouble with perspective" seems to bleed out into flawed elisions between different kinds of labor in the West (Corkhill, 2004, p. 245). Certainly, while watching Pay-TV, C. entertains exasperated thoughts about "die *Feministinnen*, diese in ideologischer Hinsicht meinungsführende Bewegung in der BRD" (the *feminists*, this movement that holds such ideological sway in West Germany; Hilbig, 2000, p. 174; emphasis in the original), a view which hardly holds true today, let alone in the immediate post-unification years. Yet C. enters into an imagined dispute with this fictional feminist majority, and counters that the pornographic films' favored doggy-style position, in which penetration can be easily captured on film, as long as the camera-person is sufficiently agile, is most degrading to the male actor: "In Wirklichkeit beugte sie sich doch vor niemandem, sie kehrte ihm, dem Mann, den Rücken zu" (in reality she wasn't bending down before anybody; she was turning her back to him, the man; *ibid.*, p. 174). In contrast to this sad prospect, the most erotic moments in the novel are not the viewings of porn or striptease, but the description of sex scenes where a partially or fully dressed protagonist concentrates on giving pleasure to women lovers.

In bed with a fan after one of his readings, C. presses his fingers around those of the woman and into her vagina, where the two hands become indistinguishable from one another in a "schmelzenden Nässe" (wet melting) of sensuality (*ibid.*, p. 116). Later, C. injures himself in his efforts to give oral sex to a woman lover, in his enthusiasm tearing free "das feine Häutchen" (the tiny skin-let) that attaches his tongue to his lower jaw (*ibid.*, p. 253). Here, Hilbig creates his own anti-porn, one that might appeal to the female viewers who in Gertrud Koch's analysis of porn are oriented towards the less starkly visible pleasures of women's bodies, and in this manner can participate in a less patriarchal, because less visually obsessive economy, one in which porn would produce a "flickering [...] shadow world of bodies" (Koch, 1990, p. 28). The idea



of a less visual and more *imaginary* or interior sexual life for “women,” while useful at an earlier stage in feminist analysis, is problematic by the time C.’s story was published in the year 2000. Nonetheless the shadow-world, in which Koch and other feminist scholars imagined a more feminist porn situating itself, would surely suit C., in his *Schattendasein* inherited from so many of Hilbig’s other masculine literary subjects. If he could only reach that world, it might even permit him a more positive form of contact with other subjects within it. As it stands, however, he is caught in a more isolated state of complicity with sex as a product, one that he consumes for the large part away from others, in a participation whose potential for critique is therefore severely limited.

### Towards a critical participation? Case study (ii): The literary marketplace

The first time that porn appears in *Das Provisorium* is, exceptionally, in the shared public space of a bar in Regensburg, where a television can be heard giving out “schleimartige Musik” (slimy music; Hilbig, 2000, p. 77), as C. sits together with a woman who approached him after a literary reading there. C. feels negatively about his performance, which he perceived as a “froschähnlich quakenden, von Versprechern verseuchten Lesung” (a reading beset with frog-like croaking and contaminated with errors; *ibid.*, p. 78). There is an echo between the frog-like self-perception of C. as performer, and the *slimy* sound of the porn audiotrack that is playing in the background, an echo that is brought out by the narrative sequencing of these two events. In fact, C.’s encounters with porn always follow a reading of his works. When he watches the hotel’s Pay-TV, it is after a stressful public reading at which he felt his hands shaking and worried that he was losing control on the podium. C. feels an affinity with the porn actors and actresses because, like the on-screen sex that he views, his appearances onstage are meant to seem effortless, while concealing the effort that has gone into the composition of his texts and their spoken delivery. Where porn necessitates the act of sex to actually take place, the readings demand of C. that he render an authentic artistic performance, as speaker of the texts that he has authored.

Yet C.’s effort at authentic concealment fails, and instead, his literary readings become *verseucht* (contaminated) by inauthenticity and, since they are delivered in C.’s froglike speaking voice, akin to acts in a “Zirkus” (circus; *ibid.*, p. 117), that site of deliberate artifice where performing creatures entertain the human



crowd. As a result, C. feels that his repeated failed performances on the literary stage are turning him into a “völlig unbrauchbares, auf irgendein Gnadenbrot angewiesenes Subjekt” (completely useless subject, reliant on any kind of charity from others; *ibid.*, p. 118). *Subjekt*, like *souverän*, has an additional currency in German, in this case marking not only the neutral subjecthood of the human individual but also, as here, the abject vulnerability such a subject can have to the rule of others. C.'s desolate *Subjektion* recalls in some measure the “verkommenes” (squalid) subjectivity to which the protagonist of *Spiegelland* was condemned by his father (Drawert, 1992, p. 57), only this time the desolation of the subject is located in his role as an author performing in late capitalist literary culture, rather than in the oppression of the Party-loyal East German bourgeoisie. In this way, Hilbig's plot structure, that sets author's readings just before porn viewings in the novel, draws an analogy that has some critical potential. This is because it attracts attention to a final problematic of complicity in Hilbig's last novel, namely that of the author in a capitalist literary marketplace.

Having found that his works were unpublishable in his home country, Hilbig was forced to smuggle them westwards, and finally himself to leave for West Germany, in order to find a readership for them. Unlike so many others, Hilbig refused to collaborate with the Stasi, yet soon thereafter he found himself in a market in which other ideological interests were operative. Katja Lange-Müller recalls attending readings of Hilbig's after unification, where it was striking “wie offenkundig unbehaglich ihm dabei zumute war” (how clearly uncomfortable he was doing them; Hilbig, 2009, p. 734), and during which the words he read aloud seemed to form some “imaginären Widerstand” (imaginary resistance; *ibid.*, p. 734), against which Hilbig had to fight in order to speak. Such resistance may have stemmed from Hilbig's unwillingness to perform his role, perhaps shyness before his public, who would have noticed his strong Saxon accent, still foreign in the early post-unification years at Western venues. It may also have related to a discomfort to which Hilbig's character C. gives voice in *Das Provisorium*. Through C., Hilbig is able to comment upon the transformation of creative and politically engaged writing into a consumer good. Freshly arrived from the East, C. must quickly conform to the demands of a new economy and operate in its marketplaces: he must perform well on stage, and keep his work palatable to a mass audience and to the publishing houses that will produce it.

Maron has also professed ambivalence about the public readings on which most authors rely for sales and readership. In her short essay written soon after her emigration to the West, “Der Schriftsteller als Wanderzirkus” (The Writer

as Wandering Circus), she describes a sensation of objectification before her public's curious spectatorship:

Das heroische Klischee von der einsamen Arbeit des Schriftstellers erfährt eine perverse Umkehr und wird zum Gegenstand der öffentlichen Neugier, am lebenden Objekt.

(The heroic cliché of the lonely work of the writer is being turned around and made into the object of public curiosity, and this on the living person of the author; Maron, 1993, p. 55.)

Maron's choice of critical language here echoes Hilbig's juxtaposition of literary readings with scenarios of consuming pornography. She casts the show as *perverse* and the author as becoming its *object*, a process that takes place via the shift from a solitary act of writing to the high-optics, quasi-pornographic spectacle of the live reading. In the piece Maron also entertains fantasies of a different kind of literary marketplace in which authors "sich nicht verdingen müssten, um ihre eigentliche Arbeit zu finanzieren" (didn't have to objectify themselves in order to finance their own work; *ibid.*, p. 56). She imagines a reading held not for crowds of fans but instead for "Analphabeten und Blinden" (the illiterate and the blind), i.e. only those who would otherwise not access the work, and for whom she would happily "auf das Honorar verzichten" (give up the fee; *ibid.*, p. 56). In the meantime, however, she is resigned to participating in the shows that convert literature into product, with crowds of reader-consumers looking on.

An author writing for the *Tagesspiegel* described Hilbig as a "naiver' Dichter im Sinne Schillers, der mit der medialen Öffentlichkeit nicht so recht kompatibel ist" ("naive" poet in Schiller's definition, not quite compatible with the demands of media publicity; "Wolfgang Hilbig im Interview," 2001, unpaginated). Though the obligation to appear and read one's own work aloud in public is surely a test for authors of all temperaments, it was a particular torture for Hilbig. Böttiger also sees in Hilbig "keine medial verwertbare Figur" (not a figure who could be made use of by the media; Böttiger, 1994, p. 53), and claims that rather than talk about his works, Hilbig tended only to speak in them. This same observation is made in Katja Lange-Müller's 2009 afterword to the posthumous edition of Hilbig's collected short prose works (Hilbig, 2009, p. 734). While Hilbig does not shy away from making metafictional commentary about his works, such commentary does indeed always take place *within* them. For instance, the narrator of his last known prose work before he died, "Die Nacht am Ende der

Straße" (The Night at the End of the Street, 2005), provides an example of such intratextual commentary, as this character expresses the worry that literature has become too compatible with contemporary news media.

The story brings C.'s concerns in *Das Provisorium*, about complicity with the textual marketplaces of the West, up to date as it refers to the attacks on the World Trade Center and other sites of US government on September 11, 2001. The final narrator of Hilbig's oeuvre, a writer named H., attempts to describe what he has seen of the attacks on the television: "Von Terroristen entführte Passagierflugzeuge" (passenger jets hijacked by terrorists; *ibid.*, p. 742). But this character is frustrated that, in his attempts to write poetically about them, he has only been able to produce "ein ebenso dürftiger Satz, der direkt aus den Massenmedien kam" (a sentence that was just as inadequate and came straight out of the mass media; *ibid.*, p. 742). There is a limit on how this last character of Hilbig's oeuvre can write about the attacks in New York, a new kind of inner censorship perhaps, or a fear of finding his words marketed in favor of new political interests, that categorize the world in terms of terrorism and victimhood in a public discourse whose hysteria recalls the black-and-white terminology of the immediate post-Cold War moment. Although H. is trying to account here for the founding trauma of the West in the new millennium, he is not coming up against the sort of problem of ineffability that trauma theorists like Cathy Caruth might suggest. Instead, these last known lines of Hilbig's oeuvre express a problem of literary singularity, of resisting complicity with the styles of the contemporary discourse, which are sensationalist, universalizing, and weighted towards those wealthy enough to control the news media.

H.'s concern, expressed at the start of the twenty-first century, is strikingly compatible with a phenomenon described by Michael Minden in a comment on the literature of the Weimar Republic. In that early German manifestation of democratic capitalism, literature found itself "on the border between literature in the pre-war sense, politics, journalism and advertising" (Minden, 2011, p. 185). Hilbig's narrator finds that, in contemporary capitalism too, there is a problem of border-control between literary texts and those generated by the new media. Moreover, such lack of definition in the boundary between literary and news writing appears in Hilbig's rendition once more as a problem of complicity with industries geared towards economic production and ideological palatability.

## Forms of Collaboration and Complicity

Not long arrived in the Federal Republic, C. expresses dismay in *Das Provisorium* that most literary writing is barely valued at all there: “[d]ie Literatur, die sich weigerte, der Zerstreung zu dienen, wurde auf dem Markt mit Nichtbeachtung gestraft” (literature that refused to serve the purposes of entertainment was punished in the marketplace by being ignored; Hilbig, 2000, p. 70). Furthermore, that entertainment factor only becomes more sought-after after unification, so that when C. visits the Leipzig book fair in the early 1990s, he observes: “das Schriftzeug der Journalisten, der Dissidenten und Berufsoffer machte Furore und wurde gefeiert; die Bücher der wirklichen Schriftsteller wurden nicht mehr geklaut” (the stuff written by journalists, by dissidents and professional victims provoked an uproar and was celebrated; books by real writers weren’t being stolen any more; *ibid.*, p. 316). The books that Walter Benjamin in the early twentieth century and C. in his GDR years would have traveled miles and run risks to collect have no worth in the West, not even as loot. The future for literary writing in this light is unclear. In Hilbig’s sceptical vision, Foucault’s maxim that “there is no outside” seems to apply even to literature (Foucault, 1991, p. 301), an area that it might be hoped is the last bastion of autonomy in otherwise obedient society.

Hope persists in Hilbig’s vision, namely the hope that writing could still, in some form, offer a source of individual resistance, and therefore operate against the imperative to collaboration. This is the driving hope behind the otherwise counter-intuitive self-isolation of the protagonist of *Das Provisorium*, as C. neglects his relationships with others in order to clear time to write. Yet even then he does not achieve the success in the content of his writing that he desires. There is a moment in the novel when C. returns to his apartment in Nuremberg and discovers a journal that he had begun to write five years previously, when he was still living in the GDR. He doubts its veracity: “es konnte auch der Anfang eines fiktiven Tagebuchs sein” (it could easily have been the opening page of a fictional diary; Hilbig, 2000, p. 193). The character notes how difficult it is to read the words in the text, because “Die Zeilen waren in schlecht lesbarer, sehr flüchtiger Schrift geschrieben; tatsächlich, in einer Schrift, die auf der Flucht war” (the lines were written in a barely legible, very fleeting hand; actually, in a hand that was in a state of fleeing; *ibid.*, p. 193). Like the narrator in transit, on his book tours, his numerous short stops in hotels, stations, and different German and Austrian cities, his words on the page take a form that is itself

moving and fleeing, never finding a secure basis, of content or form, on which to rest.

Such a logic of transit is germinal to the plot of *Das Provisorium*. C.'s travels through the West leave him feeling as if he exists only in a temporary mode, a "provisorium" or precarity that, after a time, leaves him doubting—as Hilbig's Stasi victims did in his very earliest works—the reality of the world around him. Is he in a shopping mall or looking through the gates of Auschwitz? The risks of such unreality in this new context are different ones, of course, to what they would have been in previous German contexts. Now, instead of the obstacle of being blackmailed into collaboration with the Stasi, new modes of complicity lie in wait, more transitory ones perhaps, since the subject is free to leave scenarios in which he is uncomfortable or with which he does not wish to work. That possibility of movement, the long-awaited freedom of unification, is reflected in the literary works that accompany the era. Thus, if the last protagonist of Hilbig's novelistic oeuvre feels that his writing is *on the run* after he has left the GDR, it is not that the Stasi is hot on its heels, ready to arrest its author. Writing no longer needs to be censored or to censor itself in this context. Yet, in both Maron's and Hilbig's visions, intellectual and creative work seems to become just one more good in post-unification Germany's economy. Collaboration is still at hand here, in that more isolated phenomenon of complicity, as the new system into which the last East German texts appear also requires certain patterns of meaning or marketability, patterns that look different to those demanded in the GDR, but patterns all the same.

Hilbig's last characters know the problems of such patterns well. Vienna's red light district on the Gürtelstrasse presents his protagonist C. with a looping pathway to follow, a *Gürtel* or belt in whose precinct the actresses pass by on a conveyor belt for their client's viewing, a client who finds himself just as susceptible to being the object of a spectacle, as the gaze of his objects revolves to alight upon in. The shape of the triangle—like that pattern of the pornographic media that both arouse and respond to desire in a perfect geometry of capitalist (re)production—is reflected, meanwhile, in the topographic arrangement of West Berlin's red light district. Here, at the heart of Charlottenburg, C. finds himself walking repetitively around the "magisches Dreieck" (magic triangle) of Kantstraße, Joachimstaler Straße, and Hardenbergstraße (ibid., p. 232), home to the peepshows that he visits before continuing his distressed perambulations that loop on and on up to ten times, thus turning the triangle back, in his mind, into the smoother loop of a "magischen Zirkel" (magic circle; ibid., p. 233). While walking in these loops, C. keeps his gaze "wie ein Hund, auf den Boden

gerichtet" (like a dog, directed toward the ground; *ibid.*, p. 232). Recalling the brothel visits that Max Brod censored from Kafka's diaries, and Freud's recursive walks in his "Uncanny" essay, C.'s experience in the red light district echoes the fragility of the modernist subject, its susceptibility to drives that are not within its control, all the while expressing a new shame at how complicit he has allowed himself to become, in this environment that he cannot, however, resist frequenting. If C. were to look up—when he finally does, he sees his face as the image of a dead man.

The loops that C. walks in this new Western environment are different to those "Bögen" (bows) of paper and of the bridge that sat as forms of an imperfect protection around Hensel's Stasi victim / collaborator Gabriela von Haßlau (Hensel, 1994, p. 7). They contrast too with the tours around the labyrinthine cellars that the spy makes in *"Ich"*. In all of their suffocating ambivalence, those loops that were traced in Chapter 2 were able to close around the characters, to offer some refuge, even if briefly, from the power of the East German authorities. But the loops that later East German characters enter, in the writing of the new era, signify no sanctuary. Devoid of any kind of human project, the motorways around LA which Christa Wolf's final protagonist must drive in *Stadt der Engel* instead recall the death drive, that "triebhaftes [...] Streben" (driven [...] striving; Freud, 1920, p. 38), which Freud discovered in his trauma patients, the tendency of their war-damaged minds to loop endlessly around the cause of their suffering without opening onto any kind of healing. Freud knew in 1920 that the attachment to such self-destructive looping was at the heart of subjectivity. Even the erotic drive, expressive of that desperate human "Willens zum Leben" (will to live; Freud, 1920, p. 48), is merely a frame in Freud's essay through which we perceive that silent yet persistent other drive at its deadliest. Jacques Lacan took up this late insight of Freud's career in order to assert that "every drive is virtually a death drive" (Lacan, 1966, p. 848). Perhaps it is the case that whenever a subject finds itself operating by some predetermined pattern—whether by a bureaucratic pattern of categorization, by the gridded designs of a modern city, or indeed by the virtual topographies of contemporary technology—the effects of any such operation are likely to lead to destruction.

There is a looping pattern, too, to the walks carried out by another late protagonist of Hilbig's oeuvre, in "Der dunkle Mann" (The Dark Man, 2002), whose lead character repeats his daily walk again and again to the postbox. A gap seems to open up in the loop here, when, years after unification and the dissolution of the Stasi, it transpires that a former spy is opening the protagonist's letters and hoarding them in an unofficial, undelivered archive, thus

carrying on in a freelance fashion the work of the Ministry that trained him. This man, a “Spuk” (spook) of the present (Hilbig, 2009, p. 599), reports that the letters that the protagonist had believed he was sending to a lover were in fact being intercepted for years and carefully scrutinized by the Stasi, and that he is now continuing this practice into the new millennium. This ghostly operative is an unusually dedicated anomaly, continuing his surveillance tasks largely out of the pleasure of reading the writer-character's words. But does he really operate so differently to the automatic loop of a camera that C. observes on one of his visits to the mall in *Das Provisorium*? In a rare moment of standstill in that transitory text, C. stands and watches in horror an endless process of filming that takes in the mass of shoppers traveling on the escalators of Nuremberg's mall complex:

sie strömen ein und aus, und weiter in stetem Handel und Wandel durch die Fußgängerzone und fühlen sich alle gefilmt, gefilmt von den Fernsehkameras am Ein- und Ausgang der Breiten Gasse.

(they stream in and out, and on further in constant doings and dealings through the pedestrian zone and they all feel filmed, filmed by the TV cameras at the entrance and exits onto Breite Gasse; Hilbig, 2000, p. 263.)

The last images of Hilbig's oeuvre are unsettling. They take us one step away from the Stasi that dominated his early oeuvre only to loop back to it, by zooming in on the unemployed spy who haunts around the postbox opening the letters of his former victim, whose writing he has grown to love. There are moments in *Das Provisorium* when C. suddenly leaves the present and harks back to traumatic memories of his arrest and interrogation, but before long the novel returns to the shopping malls in which humanity meets, for now, not to work together, but to make the exchange of products and (self-)images. Hilbig did not survive to see the future development of the new society into which his last characters have been released. His last texts suggest, however, that he would have remained a critical spectator of its regimes of participation and control, in all of the technological forms that they continue to take.

## Notes

- 1 Images of the homeless are common in post-unification writing, for instance in Maron's comments concerning the people she had seen on the Bowery, and in Hensel's *Tanz am Kanal*, where protagonist Gabriela is able to identify different

groupings within the ranks of the homeless, including certain “Herrschaften” (authorities) who reign from within their ranks (Hensel, 1994, p. 15). Christa Wolf’s final narrator goes so far as to envy the “homeless-Frau” (homeless woman) whom she sees pushing a trolley that contains “ihre ganze Habe” (all of her worldly goods; Wolf, 2010, p. 49). This envy is linked to a fantasy of not collaborating at all: “sie beteiligte sich nicht an der Ausbeutung der Schätze dieser Erde, sie ist unschuldig, dachte ich, während wir alle schuldig sind” (she was not involved in the exploitation of the treasures of this earth, she is innocent, I thought, whereas we are all guilty; *ibid.*, p. 50). Problematically, the homeless seem to enjoy some imagined freedom, from the perspective of East German writers after unification. The appearance of extras playing homeless characters serves, meanwhile, in West German director Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck’s film *Das Leben der Anderen*, to mark the transition from a GDR to a unified German setting in which those excluded from society are not always locked up, but left to fend for themselves on the street—a brutal freedom indeed.

- 2 “Nacht und Nebel” is also the German title of Alan Resnais’ 1955 film *Nuit et brouillard*, which presented the first images of the concentration camps to most of its contemporaneous viewers. The film was shown in the GDR, at first with the script’s closing sentence modified to read “In einem Teil der Welt haben die Toten zu schreien aufgehört, weil das Unkraut bis zur Wurzel ausgerissen worden ist” (In one part of the world, the dead have stopped crying, because the weeds have been pulled out at the root); however after protests by the producers the text was changed back to a near translation of the French, “Und wir denken nicht daran, uns umzublicken, wir überhören die Schreie, die nicht enden wollen” (And it doesn’t occur to us to look around, we block out the cries that do not want to end; Rodek, 2011, unpaginated).
- 3 This is a sentiment with which Hilbig as author could surely identify, since, though he was not disposed to talking at length in public about his writing process, he nevertheless revealed in an interview, “Schreibe ich nicht, bin ich krank” (if I don’t write, I’m ill; Hilbig, 1994, p. 15).
- 4 The firm’s advertising tag, “Aus Erfahrung gut” (good from experience) has a bitter resonance with Benjamin’s definition of *Erfahrung* as the kind of *experience* that is shared by a collective and can be mobilized for the collective good (cf. Minden 2011, p. 184).
- 5 Although it would have been available as contraband, pornography was illegal in the GDR, and when he travels back to East Germany C. hides a pornographic magazine that he has been given behind a volume of Walter Benjamin’s works.



## Conclusion: After the Stasi. Complicity and Cooperation

The end of the Cold War heralded a time of reckoning in several corners of the globe. While the *New York Review of Books* played host to a controversy concerning the complicity of European intellectuals including Heidegger, Paul de Man, and Jean Paul Sartre with National Socialism, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission unearthed the complicity of white elites in South African apartheid. As if history really had ended, the Western world turned in the early 1990s to look back over its recent past, and evaluate the kinds of harm that had been committed through collaboration by its citizens in various systems of injustice. This was the time when the Stasi files were being pored over in East Berlin, leading to a seemingly unending stream of scandals in the German press and abroad. These scandals decisively sealed the status of the Stasi as defining symbol of the former GDR, as they drew attention to the techniques that made it an example for the potential of state surveillance to maintain the entirety of a population within its gaze, and thus secure a degree of unprecedented control. The false moustaches and poorly concealed spy cameras that dominate the displays of Stasi Museums in Berlin and other East German locations pale in comparison to the surveillance technologies available to state organizations in the present time. Yet the Stasi nonetheless continues to be a touchstone for other secret services (cf. Lebert and Staud, 2014, unpaginated), who now seek inspiration in the techniques that the Ministry developed for working with its human subjects, as victims and collaborators alike. The Stasi profiled and monitored these individuals, gauged their loyalties and any weaknesses that might be exploited for its purposes, and in this manner developed a method by which to manipulate those over whom it watched with extraordinary efficiency, and in the process succeeded in recruiting a considerable quantity of unofficial spies into its ranks.

Historian and Stasi Records Agency researcher Helmut Müller-Enbergs has drawn attention to the excessive press and public focus after unification on these former IMs. For Müller-Enbergs, the veritable victimization that has occurred is the result of:

Ein gigantisches Missverständnis! Die Stasi hatte ein Millionenheer von Informanten, sogenannten Auskunftspersonen, die die DDR zu einer indiscreeten Gesellschaft machten. Angehörige etwa von Armee, Zoll oder Polizei zählten dazu, Mitarbeiter von Behörden, SED-Funktionäre. Die IM waren nur ein kleiner Teil davon.

(A gigantic misunderstanding! The Stasi had a million-strong army of informants, so called information-subjects, who made the GDR into an indiscreet society. Members of the army, or of the toll authorities and police counted among them, as well as employees of government offices, SED-functionaries. The IMs were only a tiny part of it; *ibid.*, unpaginated).

Another senior Stasi Records Agency researcher, Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk has encouraged a historical view of the Stasi that does not fixate too much on the IM “Label” (Kowalczyk, 2013, p. 214), but also takes in the acts of other informants and Stasi collaborators in upholding its surveillance regime. The worries about scapegoating that Müller-Enbergs and Kowalczyk express carry forward a concern voiced in Christine Wilkening’s very early sociology of the Stasi scandals, where she warned that the opening of the files might turn IMs into the “Prügelknaben” (whipping-boys) of the newly unified nation (Wilkening, 1990, p. 5). As Wilkening predicted, the focus on IMs did indeed turn them into scapegoats, to whom blame for recent crimes was disproportionately assigned, while other sections of the SED apparatus were spared anything like the kind of scrutiny to which IMs were subjected.

## Collaborating subjects

Literary writing by East Germans did not fall into the same trap of scapegoating after 1990. Instead, the GDR-born authors who continued to publish after unification offered a view on the phenomenon of collaboration that went beyond the figure of the IM to take in, first of all, the GDR as a whole state. Thus the primary text of Chapter 1, *Stille Zeile Sechs*, showed its protagonist Rosalind Polkowski caught in a dilemma of unwilling and yet irresistible collaboration with a former functionary of the SED, a man whose link to the Stasi was not in

question, but who carried out persecutions outside the surveillance Ministry's central realm of control. Maron's novel also offered a first model for exploring the dynamics of collaboration, revealing its definition by an initial distance, in Polkowski's case a critical distance that articulated what is in fact always a starting point in collaboration, because in order to collaborate with some other power, the collaborator must originally be separate from it. This distance was then eliminated in Maron's novel by the initiation of a close contact that troubled the critical stance of the collaborator, and made even her most earnest attempts to be free of collaboration ethically questionable. This successful novel introduced a character who would go on to find many likenesses in East German writing after the Stasi was disbanded and the SED's censorship regime decisively put to an end. Arising from the earliest days of this new publishing context, Polkowski was one of the first representatives of a veritable archetype of collaborative subjectivity in recent literary writing, one whose entrapment in that dialectic of distance and contact means that she is neither entirely delivered over to other powers and yet, crucially, never fully free of them either.

Such unfreedom forms the starting point of Hilbig's much-lauded post-unification novel, *"Ich"*, the narrator / protagonist of which is an IM who becomes implicated in a system that is as harmful to him as it is to others. This harm begins with the specific regime of Stasi surveillance, coercion, and *Zersetzungsmaßnahmen*, yet in Hilbig's novel these techniques are portrayed as undercutting their own purposes through their production of a surveillant topography in which identity is severely troubled, subjects fail to recognize one another, and no agent quite plays the role that he or she seems to. Both Hilbig's novel and Maron's draw on images from literary Romanticism and high modernism, as well as the insights of critical theories of the twentieth century, and through these citational practices succeed in producing visions of the GDR whose incompatibility with the dogmatic realism of the regime enabled them to depict the problems of dictatorship in innovative literary forms. The regime set out to police its subjects with help of a Ministry dedicated to gathering reliable information in the name of state security. Yet as it appears in these first post-unification works, by Maron, Hilbig, and a number of their peers publishing in the first years of the 1990s, that regime only worked to undercut the security of that same subject, troubling her or his identity in a manner that prevented the gathering of any reliable information at all.

Led by their primary texts, the first chapters considered the theoretical and intertextual approaches appropriate to handling this paranoid scene of subjectivity under SED rule. Certain images of Holocaust victimhood that emerge

in the primary texts and their criticism proved unsuitable for considering the relative agency or passivity of these collaborators in the GDR context. Though they feel frustrated, and in the case of Hilbig's and Kerstin Hensel's protagonists, positively tortured by the experience of collaboration, these are not traumatized victims without any power of decision: they still have access to a certain degree of agency, that at times allows them to commit acts of their own, even if those acts are necessarily, due to their contexts, collaborative ones. On the other hand, though they are located outside of the concentration camps of Nazi Germany, these characters are still caught in positions of precarity, positions that were expressed in Hilbig's work through the prevalence of the particle "vor-", a signifier of non-completion that indexes the state of insecurity, or unsovereignty, in which the subjects of East German literature are entrapped. In his Frankfurt Poetics Lectures, Hilbig described modernity as a whole as "eine Art Ausnahmezustand [...] nur kommissarisch festgelegte Vereinbarung" (a kind of state of exception [...] an agreement that has been set up only in the most provisory manner; Hilbig, 1995, p. 24). This image of modernity as something only *kommissarisch*, or provisionally put together, is reflected in these first post-unification texts that look back at the insecurity that reigned in the recent East German past, and at the inner contradictions in a subject that collaborates in spite of itself and so appears in a state of unsovereign incoherence. This is a modernist incoherence, one that challenges the possibility of giving authentic account of the past in the face of those other texts that emerged as crucial in the period after the disbandment of the Stasi, namely the reports kept by the Stasi itself.

### Uses of the Stasi files

The literary writing by former collaborators and victims that was discussed in the second part of the book challenged the notion of purely good or purely bad characters in the story of Stasi collaboration, categories through which former IMs had come to be defined, and on which much post-unification press and public discourse relied. The Stasi files that accompany this second set of East German texts, files that came to light with the opening of the Stasi archive, do not provide further clarity concerning the actions of the recent past. Instead, in Chapters 3 and 4, the Stasi files appeared as fragmented and ultimately unreliable documents, written by a spy organization for which manipulation was a central mode of operation, and thus carrying in their forms and content

the coercion on which the Stasi had staked its hopes for control. The autofictional novels and other works of life writing examined in these chapters display a close relationship to the Stasi archive, at times drawing on it as a resource, and at others producing narratives that circle around its existence as a powerful factor in shaping the lives that it contains. Given this latter power, they also exhibit a fundamental ambivalence with regard to the files, viewing them as testaments to the past that are substantially shaped by the motivations of their Stasi authors, and perhaps liable to manipulation in the era after unification, too.

Indeed, one of the most reliable characteristics of the Stasi's files is their aptitude for misinterpretation and misuse, problems that Alison Lewis has classed as the "uses and potential abuses" of the files after their opening (Lewis, 2003, p. 380). While the Stasi archive was being made public, there were debates as to the benefits that would derive from this process. Suggestions that the files should be buried or burned were met with an outcry against the continuation of injustice if the facts that the archive contained were not brought to light and to court. The latter viewpoint reflects Derrida's suggestion that "[e]ffective democratization can always be measured by this essential criterion: the participation in and the access to the archive" (Derrida, 1998, p. 4). Archival access, as a stepping-stone to a more just and participatory Federal German democracy, was firmly supported in a collection of essays and literary works published in August 1992 under the title *Aktenkundig*, edited by victim and literary writer Hans Joachim Schädlich. Yet other authors including Hilbig and Maron criticized the industry that grew out of the archives' publication. In her 1991 essay "Fettaugen auf der Brühe" (Drops of Fat on the Broth), Maron complained that the promised *Aufarbeitung* had become a performance even before the archives were opened, at that time consisting largely of television interviews and other media scandals. She writes, using what we know from Chapter 1 is a characteristic comparison between the Nazis and the Stasi:

Es drängt sich der Verdacht auf, daß selbst Himmler und Göring heute nicht mehr zu befürchten hätten als eine anstrengende Stunde auf dem Heißen Stuhl von RTL plus [...] Statt sie aber zu schweigsamer Nachdenklichkeit zu ermutigen, ernennen die Medien, getrieben von der Amüsiergier ihres Publikums, sie zu den neuen Gruselhelden ihres Publikums.

(One begins to suspect that even Himmler and Göring would not have much more to fear in this day and age than a difficult hour on the hot seat of RTL plus [a commercial TV station; AR] [...] Instead of encouraging them to undertake silent reflection, the media, driven by their audience's desire to be entertained, make them into that audience's grisly new heroes; Maron, 1993, pp. 100–1.)

Hilbig's concern at the scandals that emerged after the archive's opening is reflected in his story of 2002, "Der dunkle Mann" (The Dark Man), whose narrator watches a talk-show about the revelations. Disheartened, he muses that the only people who profit from them are the authors who make them "zum Hauptthema ihres literarischen Lebens" (the main topic of their literary lives) and "die enttarnten Zuträger der Stasi" (those who had been outed as stooges of the Stasi; Hilbig, 2009, p. 576), both of which groups he assumes receive an honorarium for their television appearance. The narrator expresses disgust at this industry in which nothing is heard from "der Legion der Unbekannten, die, ohne den Schutz der Öffentlichkeit, von der Stasi wirklich gepeinigt worden waren" (the legion of unknown people who, without the protection of a public profile, had really been tortured by the Stasi; *ibid.*, p. 575).

Meanwhile, Christa Wolf, a victim of the Stasi who was also hounded during the IM scandals for her brief Stasi collaboration, wrote to Günter Grass from California that she had contacted Joachim Gauck, then head of the authority responsible for the Stasi Records Agency, "und davor gewarnt, in künftigen Fällen mit den Akten so umzugehen wie in meinem Fall, es könnte auch mal schiefgehen" (and warned him against handling the files in the way that he did in my case, it could go wrong at some point; Vinke and Wolf, 1993, p. 306). The narrator of Wolf's autofictional novel *Stadt der Engel* resists the drive to suicide that the IM scandals cause her; in this letter, however, the historical Wolf expressed her fear for others who were scapegoated by press interpretations of the Stasi's archive. In contrast to the simplistic discourse of those scandals, the texts by Wolf, Hilbig, Maron and others challenge the authority and the use of the Stasi files in the post-unification moment. The images in these texts of this archive's terrible authority, and the consequences for the subject when that authority slips into misuse, discourage any straightforward reading of its files as historical resources. Moreover, the emergence of these images, in narrative modes that deliberately breach the limits of fiction and autobiography, posed an ethical challenge. If no certain interpretation of events in the texts can ever be pinned down, instead giving way to a subjectivity that collapses in phenomena of response, susceptibility, traumatized victimization, where then are readers to locate responsibility for the acts of the past?

### The struggle for sovereignty

Another result of the opening of the archive was that it challenged the sense of national unity that had grown during the demonstrations that brought about

the fall of the SED. This sense of concord was encapsulated by the chants of “wir sind *ein Volk*” (we are *one* people), behind which Andrew Webber has identified a fantasy of “popular sovereignty” (Webber, 2011, p. 78), wherein East Germans would finally recover the power that their so-called people’s government had stolen from them by joining together with the West. As the lengthy division of Germany into two geographies and two ideologies came to its end, the image of renewed wholeness became even more compelling. However, the most recent literary works of East German writing conflict with this image of new German wholeness. The consolidation of the two Germanys into one sovereign whole is not reflected in their plots in which the personal security and indeed the political agency of the individuals living in the new order remain troubled. Instead, sovereignty appears in this corpus of texts as a fantasy of a self-definition that cannot be grasped, and even if it could, risks descending into violence. This violence is what Chapter 1 observed in the form of Rosalind Polkowski as “Rähegöttin” (goddess of vengeance; Maron, 1991, p. 205), as she seeks revenge on behalf of history’s most recent victims by committing violence against an ageing perpetrator. The problem of agency, for which Maron’s protagonist and her recent literary peers are after all striving in such gestures, is handled with complexity in the most recent works by East German authors who have continued to publish into the new millennium. In the first texts after unification, sovereignty of the self was a quality that the subject desired, but one that could lead to acts of individual violence that mirror the totalitarianism of the Sovereign as envisioned by Carl Schmitt. Perhaps, therefore, the impossibility of gaining this quality in the most recent works by East German authors is not as adverse as it may seem. That is not to say that there are no harmful consequences to such a lack of personal sovereignty in these new narratives, those that are set in the GDR and those that take in the present regime that has replaced it.

Chapters 5 and 6 demonstrated how the most recent East German writing envisages a unified Germany in which the subject has not become newly “intact,” despite the end of the SED and the Stasi’s oppressive rule. The characters of the latest novels and other works by authors born in the GDR, who live in the ostensibly free world of democratic capitalism, certainly enjoy improved conditions of democracy, freedom to travel and, if they are writers, publish their works. Yet there persists a sense in which the actions, decisions, and sense of selfhood available to these literary subjects, even under improved political conditions, are not entirely their own, but instead partially governed by external forces. These forces are different to those of the Stasi and SED, but

nonetheless decisive in the possibilities that are open to the subject in this new era. Hilbig's tormented protagonist in *Das Provisorium* is as trapped in the architectures of recent West German shopping districts as is Maron's narrator Johanna Märtin in her countryside getaway, waiting for the critical barbs that she hides in her writing to effect something. Nor is genuine agency over one's own life available to Märtin when she buys her one-way ticket to Mexico, or to Christa Wolf's unhappy narrator in *Stadt der Engel*, who is stuck driving in loops on the highways that make up LA, and consumed during her year of research with the press scandals raging at home in Germany. There are certain contracts from which these characters cannot easily escape, certain participations that they must carry out in order to function in this world, so that instead of sovereignty, there dominates across these texts a sense of entrapment, by the bonds of a shared life even outside of the context of dictatorship. Such entrapment has different qualities under conditions of democracy, where it is likely that the central contracts of a life will be with an employer, a health insurance company, a spouse, or a community that one can always leave for another. Yet it remains a dominant factor in these latest texts, whose subjects suffer not only such outward susceptibility to involvement with others, but also the vulnerability to those desires that drive the subject from within, those weaknesses that drove the Stasi informants of earlier chapters, and continue to be decisive in the acts made by the subject of contemporary capitalism, including the drive to be destructively isolated from other people.

There are certain weaknesses of the mind and of the body to which the collaborator characters in the GDR-set novels fell prey, modes of political *kollaborieren* (collaborating) that bring with them an experience of subjective *kollabieren* (collapsing). That such a state of unsovereign collapse might be desirable is counter-intuitive, and yet it is suggested in Monika Maron's most recent prose work, the short novel *Zwischenspiel* (*Interlude*, 2013), the narrator of which recalls her friend Gottfried Süß, a side character who ran a small press in Thuringia and decided to end his collaboration with the Stasi after a near-drowning experience at the Baltic Sea. Süß frees himself from his collaborative duties by explaining to his commanding officer that the accident has left him with a "stark erschütterten psychischen Stabilität, derentwegen er sich einer so speziellen Aufgabe derzeit nicht gewachsen fühle" (extremely shattered psychic stability, which meant that he did not currently feel up to such a specialized duty; Maron, 2013, p. 69). Losing consciousness in the water exposes Süß to the ultimate loss of control that death represents. That such an experience can have a positive effect is demonstrated as



the character allows it to change his mind and thereafter free him from a collaboration to which he had previously felt compelled.

Süß persuades his commanding officer to let him go as an IM on the basis of psychic instability, a strategy that would have been successful in relation to the historical Stasi, with its Guidelines emphasizing *Zuverlässigkeit* (reliability) as one of the core qualities of a viable IM. An unreliable or unstable subjectivity could, indeed, have had resistant potential where more decisive techniques proved too compatible with a regime that relied upon its collaborators operating in a resilient fashion. In this way, Süß's near-death experience, which was not of his own choosing, leads to his discovery of a strategy that could undermine the otherwise inescapable techniques of coercion operating in the GDR. Having discovered this strategy, Süß is free to devote himself to much more positive collaborations, with the authors whose works he publishes. This character, whom the narrator perceives thenceforth as "freimütig und furchtlos" (free-spirited and fearless; *ibid.*, p. 69), is admirable for his abandonment of the bond to the Stasi even during its reign. He is also admirable for the community he helps to build, a collectivity that is more desirable than the singular model of sovereignty that Maron's first-ever literary character, Josefa Nadler, craved, with her desire to think and behave as an entirely separate individual. Süß is a figurehead of a resistance that is crucially *mehrköpfig* (many-headed), and therefore linked to a mode of community that can exist apart from Stasi control. Moreover, since Süß is a literary character who appears as late as 2013, his development can be read in the light of other forms of control and of resistance that have come after the Stasi.

For Maron, at least in her public commentary, the fall of the Wall and arrival of democratic capitalism in the East were cause for celebration. Within her recent works, unification has seemed to allow her characters to cast off subjection to the will of others: to cease being the creature of the other and begin to create their own lives. Such a cessation was not available to her earlier characters, who instead harbored a sentiment that they had been thwarted by the GDR leadership. In *Flugasche*, Josefa Nadler expressed the sense that "alles, was ich bin, darf ich nicht sein" (everything I am, I am not permitted to be; Maron, 1981, p. 78), and a decade on in *Stille Zeile* Sechs Polkowski accuses Beerenbaum of withdrawing from her "alles, was ich zum Leben brauche" (everything that I need to live; Maron, 1991, p. 156). Yet Maron's first novel set in the FRG, *animal triste*, and her three most recent novels to date, *Endmoränen*, *Ach Glück*, and *Zwischenspiel* suggest that certain factors persist outside of the setting of dictatorship in making sovereign selfhood problematic. Readers

leave Johanna Märtin as she touches down in Mexico City. Unsure what her journey will bring, Märtin nonetheless feels that all of the recent events in her life “auf eine geheimnisvolle Art zusammengehörten” (belonged together in some mysterious way; Maron, 2007, p. 159). This is a kinder destiny than that to which Polkowski felt she was subjected in the earlier novels. However, Märtin and Maron’s other post-unification characters still struggle with how best to live among some of the less salutary changes that unification wrought, for instance Märtin’s bitter reflection in *Endmoränen* that regime change has heralded a switch from the oppression of censorship to the ubiquity of “Werbeblocks” (advert spots) on unified German television (Maron, 2002, p. 49). The ongoing lack of self-definition in this new context is made visible in the destiny of the spy in Donnersmarck’s Stasi film *Das Leben der Anderen*. Inspired to take ethical action independently of the Stasi organization, the spy Wiesler is able to transform himself from a conformist collaborator to a self-defining subject, rebelling against the Ministry in the hope of protecting the objects of his surveillance. Yet the final scenes of this otherwise pro-unification film show the former spy delivering advertising flyers, presumably a minimum-wage position carried out in new isolation and new precarity.

In Maron’s novel *Endmoränen*, Johanna Märtin felt at times that her life was reduced to a series of contracts, including the contracts through which she contributed to the profit- and cost-calculations of her insurance companies. Her husband struggled, meanwhile, to make his research on Kleist marketable to external sponsors. For his part, Eugen Ruge’s Berliner protagonist Peter was forced out of his home city by the discussions of Prenzlberg yuppies. In this climate, as the critics cited above complained, even the opening of the Stasi files generated a certain kind of profit or marketability, not least for the daytime-TV shows and tabloids looking for stories to sell in the immediate unification years. What is troubling in these cases is their suggestion that, in late capitalism, the human being itself risks becoming a commodity like any other, its history and future bound up in narrative processes that are defined by an economic market. Of course, the Stasi’s skill in exploiting human hopes, fears, and attachments in service of a bureaucratic system was traumatic for its victims and destructive to the entire society it was meant to protect. That after the fall of the Wall such affective experiences, of hope, fear, and attachment, would then become commodities ready to be bought and sold like consumer objects is just as disturbing.

If there is an escape from this predicament, the writing of East German authors suggests, it is unlikely to be achieved in isolation. Hilbig was one of many authors who were much more hesitant than Maron (and von Donnersmarck) to

accept the potential of capitalist democracy to improve lives and communities. Certainly, the settings, and the activities available to Hilbig's characters, such as checking in to a private rehabilitation clinic, or visiting a Viennese peepshow, change. However, unification does not suddenly enable them to define their own lives, even if the secret police is (apparently) no longer watching aggressively over them. Loescher has read the arrival of capitalism in Hilbig's work as a moment of terrible continuity, as his characters enter a new world, but one which "die bekannten Oppressions- und Steuerungsinstrumente lediglich verfeinert anwendete" (only applied the familiar instruments of oppression and steering in an even more refined fashion; Loescher, 2003, p. 12). The characters of the latest works of East German writing are not isolated like some of the Stasi's prisoners were in single-occupancy cells for hours, days, months at a time, nor do they suffer its *Zersetzungsmaßnahmen* that succeeded in isolating suspected dissidents from friends and family in their lives outside of prison. Yet there remains a terrible solitude in the lives of these characters who wander disoriented in shopping malls, watch video-porn in hotels or, as in Eugen Ruge's *Cabo de Gata*, struggle with long periods of writer's block interrupted only by vain attempts to befriend cats and passing Americans in coastal Spain.

Chapters 5 and 6 observed these latest works of East German writing, texts that abound with animal life struggling to define its own destiny, as well as those works that are furnished with abandoned architectures of transit still rattling with the deathly sounds of the past. They also took in Hilbig's short stories of the mid-2000s, the last works that he wrote before he died, which identify the persistence of a problem of surveillance after the Stasi, so that in "Der dunkle Mann" (The Dark Man, 2002) a Stasi spy returns to torment the protagonist, a former victim now living in West Germany. An almost identical plot plays out in "Verabredung mit dem Briefträger" (Date with the Postman, also 2002), where a "ghost" threateningly watches every move of Hilbig's perennial protagonist C., who visits a postbox several times a day in increasingly desperate attempts at communication. In this tale, the spy claims to have been doing this job for over 200 years, a claim that recalls the eternal spy Hoftaller in Günter Grass's comic novel about unification, *Ein weites Feld* (A Broad Field, 1995), and so suggests a continuation of surveillance and control from before the reign of the Stasi and indeed after its dissolution. These works resonate with the episodes in *animal triste*, whose narrator tracks her lover as he travels to Berlin-Tegel airport with his wife, and in *Ach Glück*, where Johanna and Achim Martin trail one another around the city in a cycle of private counterveillance after they discover that each has begun a new relationship.

## Surveillance after the Stasi

On 11 January 1990, 20,000 East German citizens gathered in front of the *Volkskammer* and, supported by the honking of hundreds of East Berlin taxi drivers, demanded that the Stasi be shut down and no new Ministry of its kind be established (cf. Kowalczyk, 2013, p. 346). Given this background, it is understandable that the German public, in particular in the former eastern states, has shown high levels of dismay at the current surveillance practices in use by Western governments, often in secret collaboration with one another. Just as understandably, the Stasi has become a watchword in critical commentary concerning these practices. For instance, Social Democrat Brigitte Zypries accused the Federal German government of using “Stasi-Methoden” (Stasi methods) after the arrest of twenty potential protestors before a 2007 meeting of the G8 in the former GDR seaside resort of Heiligendamm (“‘Stasi-Methoden’ vor dem G-8-Gipfel?,” 2007, unpaginated). The Federal security forces took pre-emptive action that indeed included the collection of body-smell samples, recalling the cloth samples kept in glass jars in the Stasi archive for identifying victims’ body scents and memorably demonstrated in *Das Leben der Anderen*. The twenty-fifth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, meanwhile, saw German activist group *Zentrum für Politische Schönheit* (Center for Political Beauty) travel to the south-eastern border of Europe and stage an attempt to remove the reinforced-steel and barbed-wire border, in order to raise awareness of the 23,000 refugees who have been killed or gone missing since 2000 at this new European Wall (“‘Migrant Files,’” 2014, unpaginated).

As well as GDR-born authors, writers socialized in the West have shown an interest in the complicity of the contemporary subject in such regimes of injustice and surveillance as those actions were protesting. Nordrhein-Westphalen-born Ulrich Peltzer opens his novel *Teil der Lösung* (*Part of the Solution*, 2007) with a scene in which activists draw attention to Potsdamer Platz’s CCTV network. The group dresses collectively as clowns and ballerinas to perform a piece that uncovers the inhumanity of a surveillance regime which, as the novel shows, is presided over by isolated watchmen who feel just as powerless in front of their flickering surveillance screens as do the subjects captured on them. More recently still, Jennifer Egan’s serialized Twitter-novel of 2012, *Black Box*, comprises a breathtaking manual of instructions for women collaborating as “citizen agents” on missions to protect America from terrorists (Egan, 2012, p. 91). Beyond such surveillance plots, the problem of complicity

with contemporary economic regimes has become a focus for novelists such as John Lanchester, with his city-novel *Capital* (2012), one of whose central figures is both an agent and a victim of the financial crisis of 2008. The protagonist of Swiss author Jonas Lüscher's *Frühling der Barbaren* (*Spring of the Barbarians*, 2013) is also vulnerable to the consequences of the banking system in which he has worked. This novella follows business executive Preising in flight to Tunisia, where he finds that he cannot escape his complicity in the financial crisis, but instead must witness the effects of his business on both the extremely poor locals and the young bankers whose lives are destroyed by a dystopian market crash while they celebrate in the sun. Like the subjects of East German writing cast adrift in Western capitalist landscapes, Preising spends much of the novella in a hotel or traveling, or more specifically being driven by others, at first in the car of his housekeeper, and later in a chauffeured vehicle in Tunisia, out of whose windows he witnesses a crash from which he allows himself to be "fortchauffiert" (driven away; Lüscher, 2013, p. 28), even though he has the financial means to rescue those whose livelihoods are ruined by it. The terrible irony of such isolation is that the harm it causes operates in both directions; failing to help others, Preising remains entrapped in the isolation that made of him such a capable and unhappy accomplice in the disembodied practices of contemporary finance.

Following the Soviet model—and at the same time carrying forward the eighteenth-century model of Germany as the *Land der Dichter und Denker*, whose arts were so important to forming the future German nation that they needed to be carefully controlled—the SED viewed the arts as holding the power to impart codes of conduct for behaving as a subject within one's society. The priority given to the arts and their censorship in the former East rested on the assumption that the reader cannot individually decide what kind of subject she or he is going to be. Instead of the *self-definition* that Wanitschke claims is fundamental to the rights of citizens in a democracy, such a model of the arts assumes a susceptibility to influence on the part of their recipient, to formation by discourses and images that will shape the kinds of subject he or she can become, or at the most *assent* to become. With the end of the Soviet bloc's extensive censorship regime, and the arrival of liberal democracy in the former eastern states of Germany, a new freedom arose to critique the modes of influence preferred in the arts approved by the dictatorship, and to produce works that generate new images in the freedom of a new marketplace. It is curious, then, that given these new freedoms, the literature that East Germans have published after the end of the GDR has maintained an interest in the

phenomena by which subjects are drawn into processes that do not make them free, which cannot do them any good, and yet which they also cannot resist.

This interest makes sense in the light of the revelations of large-scale surveillance in the West's current liberal democracies, and other practices of oppression in the post-Cold War present, including the hounding of critics of the West such as Julian Assange, Chelsea Manning, and the *Anonymous* group of spies whose shutdown of US government websites has made them some of the most avidly sought-after criminals by its secret service. These events explain the ongoing interest in recent literature, in the continuation of contexts of *unfreedom*, of the unsovereignty of the self in relation to regimes that reserve the right to gestures of power that can only be described as sovereign in the Schmittian sense. The events also give these late literary voices from the former East no small amount of authority. Slavoj Žižek has written of the "paranoiac belief in the power of the Word," which was lost along with the former Eastern European socialist regimes (Žižek, 1999, p. 71), a belief which meant that written critique was taken more seriously than in late capitalist societies, where one is free to write critical texts with few repercussions, and also scant effect. Yet the hounding of these new counter-spies of the contemporary moment suggests that their critique may not be as ineffective as it would, on that model, appear.

The literary works considered in this book suggest how such a critique might begin to take shape. Benjamin Robinson has argued that one of the tasks of post-GDR literary studies is to maintain "the memory of GDR socialism now that so little socialism of any kind remains" (Robinson, 2011, p. 217). Such a mode of criticism would look back at the events of the past, those memories of both positive and painful kinds, with a view to imagining the alternative forms that Left politics and cultures might still take in the future. More importantly still, the most recent texts to emerge from the East German context also look to the politics and cultures of their present time, in order to assess the languages and the images that are available for criticizing its own imperatives to be complicit, to tolerate surveillance, and in desperation to seek personal sovereignty apart from more positive forms of solidarity with others.

The languages and images that recent East German writing offers for such a critique are not uniform. Hilbig's writing, for instance, resists the kind of marketability against which his late protagonist C. raged against in *Das Provisorium*. This author's decades-long repetition of characters and plot events make his works distinctive, perhaps even addictive, but never entirely new products that can be packaged and sold as such. His expressionist- and modernist-influenced

prose style meanwhile resists flow and coherence; instead, this style and the non-completion of many of his works leads to abrupt interruptions that, as Walter Benjamin would have argued, provoke their readers to reflect on the text that they are reading, and to consider the “good” of the literature that they are consuming. In these ways, Hilbig’s writing compares with the self-exploratory, and equally self-repetitive modernism of Wolf’s prose works, although her oeuvre has proven more marketable and already exists in translation for an English-language market.

Works such as those of Maron, Ruge, Erich Loest, and to some degree Kerstin Hensel offer more sutured prose forms, and more realist visions of the worlds that their characters inhabit, making these texts more reader- and market-friendly than those of a Hilbig or even a Wolf. Yet what unites all of these post-GDR works as a corpus of texts, besides the shared origin of their authors, is their interest in the balance of liberation and collaboration that dominates their settings, both during and after the time of the Stasi. Whether in the GDR or later in the capitalist context, their characters are always in the process of negotiating between the options of collaboration or withdrawal that are available to them. Perhaps it is their origin in the lost socialist Germany that allows these authors to take the critical view that they do, on the complicities that might appear inevitable in the contemporary cultural moment, and the cooperations that could emerge as more positive alternatives to them. There is certainly something of that inner foreignness in the gesture of attempted withdrawal to an alternative community in GDR-born author Lutz Seiler’s 2014 novel *Kruso*, winner of the German Book Prize, whose cast of East German characters lives in utter retreat on the remote island of Hiddensee, pursuing a dream of freedom that, as Hammelehle notices, has no reflection in either GDR or FRG (Hammelehle, 2014, unpaginated).

The texts that have emerged from the time after East Germany are united by their focus on characters who stand between the risk of collaboration and the limited freedoms of our current context. Another uniting factor is the repeat occurrence across these works of central characters who are themselves literary writers, a metafictional gesture that indexes the mechanism of reflection, even of desperate self-scrutiny that is germinal to these last works of GDR writing. I have argued that truly sovereign spectatorship would not be possible even for the most distanced of these characters—and given the totalitarian inheritances of the notion of sovereignty, it is unlikely that it would be desirable. However, the writing of German unification offers a model for continuing in spite of the impossibility of sovereign distance, namely a model wherein its characters go

on reflecting, go on writing or acting critically. Even if theirs is a critique that cannot cease to encounter its own limits, such an encounter has a potential of its own, to make those limits visible and thereby, it must be hoped, susceptible to change.



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