

2013

Representations of the Staatssicherheitsdienst and its Victims in Christa Wolf's *Was bleibt*, Cornelia Schleime's *Weit Fort*, Antje Rávic Strubel's *Sturz der Tage in die Nacht*, and Hermann Kant's *Kennung*

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**Representations of the *Staatssicherheitsdienst* and its Victims
in Christa Wolf's *Was bleibt*, Cornelia Schleime's *Weit Fort*,
Antje Rávic Strubel's *Sturz der Tage in die Nacht*, and
Hermann Kant's *Kennung***

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**Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Prerequisite for Honors
in German Studies**

April 2013

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank many people for their help and support with this thesis.

I wish to express my deep appreciation to Professor Thomas Nolden, my thesis advisor, for his guidance, patience, and dedication throughout this process. Our discussions on this challenging topic and his insightful comments and questions on my numerous drafts have helped shape this thesis.

I also want to dearly thank the German Department for their support. In particular, I would like to express my gratitude toward Professor Anjeana Hans who helped me conceive the idea of writing a thesis on the Stasi and Professor Thomas Hansen for reading my first semester draft and giving me useful feedback.

I also am grateful for my family and friends for their support, especially Yan An Tan whose friendship was invaluable throughout this process.

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Introduction

I. The Beginnings: the SED and the Stasi

After World War II, the Soviet Union exercised significant influence during the so-called reconstruction period and comprised the foundation of the *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands* (SED) that was established through a unification between the KPD and the SPD on April 22, 1946. This party emulated the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and became the dominant party in the German Democratic Republic (GDR or East Germany) after the state's foundation in 1949. Even though the GDR possessed a multi-party system, the elections were not free and clearly favored the SED. Because of the strong Soviet influence, East Germany quickly became a member of the Eastern Bloc countries during the Cold War era, and its citizens came to view the party as a satellite party of Communist Party in the Soviet Union,

The reconstruction period in the GDR proved quite different from that in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG or West Germany), where the United States fueled the *Wirtschaftswunder* with its Marshall Plan. East Germany's reconstruction strategy was founded on communist principles of the time: the entire economy, including the industry, goods, and infrastructure, was planned by the state. However, this approach was not as successful in terms of economic growth. Because many East Germans feared the intense measures of nationalization and wanted to enjoy the higher standard of living and opportunity that could be found in the FRG, many left the East: roughly 2.5 million East Germans emigrated before the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961.

The construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961 was implemented by Erich Honecker in order to provide the GDR with economic stability and to limit the waning population and the brain drain toward Western Europe. It also established a period of political stability within East Germany, as it secured the totalitarian power of the SED regime. With the SED steadily gaining more power in the GDR after 1961, citizens did not have the option to pursue their own career paths, since the key to a good profession—e.g. studying at a university—was by showing unwavering loyalty to the party. Citizens were not allowed to demonstrate interest in Western culture, as music, theater, literature, and cinema were also censored by the state to uphold the ideals of the communist culture.

To secure its power over the people, the SED established a police force to keep its power intact. Therefore, the *Staatssicherheitsdienst* (Stasi) or also known as the *Ministerium für Staatssicherheit* (MfS), was founded on February 8, 1950 by Erich Mielke, the Minister of the State Security Service between 1957 and 1989, as a secret police service that served as the “Schild und Schwert” of the state to sustain its totalitarian power. This oppressive force served to monitor every aspect of a citizen’s life to ensure minimal dissident behavior.

The Stasi observed and documented roughly one fourth of the population, in particular dissident writers, artists, and other critics of the state. This was made possible by the strong network of Stasi employees, spies, and unofficial collaborators. The East German Secret Police had about 125,000 official employees and 100,000 unofficial informants (*Inoffizielle Mitarbeiter* or IMs) (Andrews 1998, 24), and an estimated one in every 50 East Germans collaborated with the Stasi (Funder 2007). It was not uncommon that close friends, and in some extreme cases, even spouses spied on each other. In 1991, after the fall of the Wall when victims claimed

access to their files, the German government counted that the Stasi had compiled more than 100 miles worth of documentation on its citizens—roughly one billion sheets of paper—excluding the 5 percent the Stasi destroyed in the 1989 revolution (Curry 2008). Anna Funder stated in her article “Tyranny of Terror” that the MfS “accumulated...more written records than in all of German history since the Middle Ages“ (Funder 2007).

The Stasi infiltrated every aspect of daily life, including intimate relationships and family life. The state gave no room for individual thought or expression. In particular, writers and artists, especially those who criticized the regime, were carefully tracked. Many authors’ circles, especially in the underground Prenzlauer Berg group of writers, were infiltrated with MfS informants. The Stasi presence made it difficult to trust anyone, even in the closest of relationships. When East Germans were seen as a threat to the state, they were often punished, tortured and thrown in jail, and in many cases deprived of their East German citizenship.

The MfS practiced a strategy in the 1970s and 1980s called *Zersetzung* (corrosion), which was developed to silence dissidents through indirect psychological terror, such as breaking into and bugging homes. Anne Drescher, the state official of *die Stasi-Unterlagen Mecklenburg-Vorpommern*, explained that *Zersetzung* was designed, "die Menschen in eine Lebenskrise zu stürzen oder sie zu verunsichern, dass das Selbstbewusstsein zerstört wird, also ganz tiefgreifende psychische Veränderungen...Das wirkt bis heute nach" (Janzen 2009). A countless number of East Germans suffered traumatic psychological and physical damages because of the oppressive and stressful intrusion of the MfS in their lives. For many, personal memories of psychological trauma from this totalitarian force will never be forgotten and the exact number of people silenced and intimidated by the Stasi can never be established.

To analyze the East German police's aggressive presence in society, Anna Funder expounded on the shape and site of Stasi terror in her nonfictional work *Stasiland: True Stories From Behind The Wall* (2002). The author compiled interviews with former MfS informants and victims of the MfS to illustrate the overwhelming presence of the State Security in everyday East German life, even for those who themselves worked for the Stasi. Many victims recount that their education, career, and relationships were monitored, and one interviewee commented that "it's the total surveillance that damaged...the worst. I *know* how far people will transgress over your boundaries—until you have no private sphere left at all" (Funder 2002, 113). Funder concludes that the power and disturbance of the Stasi still affects its victims long after the dissolution of the GDR.

II. Representing the Stasi after the *Wende*

In *Stasiland*, Funder also noted that each person she met had a different view of the Stasi based on their personal—and very intimate—memories, which touches on the much debated discussed issue among historians, former West and East German citizens, and the German government of how to accurately portray the Stasi in history. Even though various Stasi museums, the most well-known one being the museum at the former MfS headquarters in Lichtenberg Berlin, were established in an attempt to come to terms with the past, there is still controversy on how to document the legacy of the MfS.

The most frequent representation in literature, media, and cinema have been from the victims' perspectives, and many ex-Stasi collaborators protest such one-sided stories. Anna Funder comments in her article in "Tyranny of Terror" on former MfS informants who harshly

protest the museum at the former Stasi prison at Hohenschönhausen in Berlin. These former IMs dismiss the victims' stories of torture during their imprisonment as exaggerations and oppose the term "Communist Dictatorship" for the GDR (Funder 2007). Even though the victim's perspective on historical events has been represented more often, the Stasi narrative has changed, in particular, with the film by Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck that represents a Stasi informant as an altruistic official who had the ability to willingly act against the immorality of the MfS.

III. Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck's *Das Leben der Anderen*

In earlier discourse on Stasi history, the Stasi informants often would be grouped into the same category as Nazis, which is exactly what former MfS employees wanted to avoid, since it seemed as if the East German State Security would be deemed as infamous as the National Socialists. However, one of the first films that dealt with coming to terms with the Stasi past was *Das Leben der Anderen* (2006) by the West German director Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck, which won an Academy Award in 2007 for Best Foreign Language Film. The film made a strong and long-lasting impact on how the Stasi was seen in Germany and put Stasi history on the international stage for discussion.

The film takes place in the GDR in 1984 and tells the story of a Stasi officer, Hauptmann Wiesler, who is called upon to monitor a playwright, Georg Dreyman, and his girlfriend, the actress Christa-Maria Sieland. Wiesler bugs Dreyman's apartment, and soon after Wiesler discovers the true motive behind this surveillance: the Minister of Culture, Bruno Hempf, desires Sieland and wants the Stasi to find incriminating evidence on Dreyman to lock him away. Even

though Wiesler is a loyal follower of the SED regime, Hempf's corrupt mindset horrifies him, and he therefore decides to help the couple by not documenting Dreyman's plans to publish a controversial article in a West German periodical, *Der Spiegel*. However, the Minister comes to realize that Wiesler is indirectly helping the couple and demotes him to work among other disgraced Stasi agents for the rest of his life.

When the Wall falls, Wiesler is set free. Dreyman later encounters the now former Minister of Culture at a play and asks him why he was never monitored, and Hempf replies that he was, in fact, spied upon. After uncovering the bugs in his apartment Dreyman finally goes to the Stasi Archives to read his file and realizes that Agent HGW XX/7, Wiesler's alias, covered the evidence of his authorship of his article in *Der Spiegel*. Two years later, Wiesler sees Dreyman's novel in a store window, entitled *Sonate vom Guten Menschen*, and when he opens the book, he reads it is dedicated to HGW XX/7. The movie ends when Wiesler decides to buy the book.

This film has received overwhelming positive praise for its portrayal of the Stasi figure, Hauptmann Wiesler, as an individual human being who undermines the power of the corrupt MfS and knowingly puts himself in danger to help this couple. Von Donnersmarck's film was commended by various media sources and historians, stating that the representation of East Germany is highly accurate, or as the GDR-born author Thomas Brussig states, "unbelievably authentic" (Wetzel 2007). Because this film depicts a Stasi officer who chose to resist the totalitarian system and attempt to save the writer, many ex-Stasi informants were sympathetic towards this film because it sheds positive light on a member of the East German secret police.

However, in her review in *The Guardian* entitled “Tyranny of Terror,” Anna Funder argues that a Stasi informant like Wiesler could have never survived within the Stasi force:

To understand why a Wiesler could not have existed is to understand the "total" nature of totalitarianism. Knabe talks of the fierce surveillance within the Stasi of its own men, of how in a case like Dreyman's there might have been a dozen agents: everything was checked and cross-checked. This separation of duties gives some former Stasi men the impression that they were just "obeying orders", or were "small cogs" in the machine, and that therefore they couldn't have done much harm. Perhaps this is partly why repentance like Wiesler's is rare. To my mind, hoping for salvation to come from the change of heart of a perpetrator is to misunderstand the nature of bureaucratized evil - the way great harms can be inflicted in minute, "legal" steps, or in decisions by committees carried out by people "just doing their jobs". (Funder 2007)

Funder's perspective on the film demonstrates that von Donnersmarck's representation is not an accurate one and further shows that Stasi representations are by no means uniform. *Das Leben der Anderen* is only one example among many of the various Stasi representations presented since the *Wende*. This film served to render a portrayal of a Stasi informant as a party ideologue who, however, can turn his back to the party and leave his commitments behind to risk his career in the pursuit of justice to the dissident. This is a rather revisionist take on Stasi history, if not, as Funder argues pure fiction.

IV. The Stasi in Literature

Cinematic and literary representations of the Stasi have courted controversy in the context of discussions of historical authenticity. However, the question that often arises is whether the authors' depictions are informed by their relationship to the MfS. If so, are there consistent patterns of similarity and difference among such representations? This thesis will explore these questions through a comparative analysis of literary representations of the Stasi and its victims in three different East German authors' works: Christa Wolf's *Was bleibt* (1990),

Cornelia Schleime's *Weit Fort* (2008), and Antje Rávic Strubel's *Sturz der Tage in die Nacht* (2011). These works specifically deal with the impact of the MfS and were chosen because they have not yet been closely examined in a comparative study. These three authors, who each experienced very different interactions with the Stasi during their lives in East Germany, structure their texts varyingly to portray their own image of the Stasi. This study seeks to uncover fundamental patterns within and variations between these authors' depictions on the Stasi and its victims and, in conclusion, to contrast their Stasi representations with Hermann Kant's discussion on the MfS in his most recent book, *Kennung* (2010).

Chapter 1

Stasi figures and their victims in Christa Wolf's *Was bleibt*

I. Introduction

Christa Wolf, born in 1929 in Landsberg an der Warthe, grew up during the Third Reich. After World War II, her family moved to Mecklenburg where she completed her *Abitur* and later attended university in Jena and Leipzig to study *Germanistik* before beginning her career as an author with the publication of her first piece of prose *Moskauer Novelle* in 1961. Wolf lived in the GDR and stayed active in the East German literary world until the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1990. After reunification, she continued to write about life in the GDR until her death in 2011.

Christa Wolf led a prominent literary career in East Berlin as the author of many world-renowned works, as a member of the board of the *Deutscher Schriftstellerverband* from 1953 to 1957, and as the editor of the journal *neue deutsche literatur*. Her works, published in the GDR, were read widely in both East and West Germany and translated in many languages. She won many literary prizes and awards, including the *Deutscher Bücherpreis* in 2002 for her life's achievements.

In most of her texts, Christa Wolf writes about her perception of and experience with socialism and the GDR society. One of her first and most widely read novels published in 1963, *Der geteilte Himmel*, which established her international fame, told the story of a young girl, Rita, who willingly chose a life in the GDR over living in the FRG and socialism over capitalism. Although this work portrays Wolf's obvious preference for the GDR, she does not embellish her depictions of life in East Germany, but rather presents a realistic image—for example the inadequate supply of food products—and to some extent, critiques of the SED state

(Case 2012). However, she never fundamentally challenged socialism as an ideology in any of her subsequent texts.

Wolf joined the SED in 1949 during the foundation of the East German state, and was originally driven towards socialism to repudiate her own past as a former member of the Hitler Youth. Along with other intellectuals of her generation, Wolf “often stressed the moral authority of an antifascist leadership that...engaged in the struggle against Nazism as providing a basis for their initial commitment to the GDR” (Bathrick 2001, 148). Therefore, Wolf developed her loyalty to the East German state during its early establishment.

From 1958 to 1962, she worked for the *Ministerium für Staatssicherheit* (MfS) as an unofficial informant under the alias “Margarete.” In her essay “Eine Auskunft,” published in *Der Spiegel* in 1993, Wolf wrote that she remembered little about her collaboration with the Stasi (Wolf 1993). There exists no clear explanation of Wolf’s forgotten memory as a Stasi informant. Her recorded observations as an informer consisted of neutral reports on subjects’ behavior and surroundings, thus proving rather innocuous. According to the critic Dorothea Dornhof, no evidence suggests that she informed on her friends or colleagues or provided information that was not accessible from published sources (Dornhof 2001).

With her success as an author, Wolf became not only a prized intellectual of the GDR, but also a concern for the state because of her criticisms of the regime, which led the Stasi to open a file on her in 1968. Despite constant Stasi observation, Wolf, as part of the East German intellectual elite, „[konnte]...relativ ungehindert reden und schreiben, obwohl sich ihre politischen Vorstellungen grundsätzlich von denen der Staatsführung unterschieden“ (von Anikum 1992, 186). The government never restricted her ability to publish or travel, and

compared to many of her peers—some of who were forced into collaborating with the Stasi—Wolf enjoyed a rather privileged lifestyle in East German society.

Until the fall of the Berlin wall, the MfS compiled a forty-two-volume file on her daily life and relationships, but Wolf did not need to examine these documents to become aware of the Stasi's presence. The informants' obvious and rather open observation engendered both psychological and physical stress on her life. Even though she commented on its deeply disturbing impact and, as a result, used *Selbstzensur* (self-censorship) as a coping mechanism, she at times remarked that such outward surveillance was almost comical, allowing her to wave to the informants from her window (Case 2012). In "Eine Auskunft," she affirmed that she knew her life was carefully tracked, "[d]aß natürlich [ihr] Telefon, die zeitweilig auch die Wohnung, abgehört, die Post ausnahmslos geöffnet und zum Teil abgelichtet wurde" (Wolf 1993, 143). This aggressive interference, affecting her daily routines, relationships, and physical well-being is addressed in her controversial work, *Was bleibt* (published 1990).

As previously stated, Wolf did not examine socialism as an ideology with a critical eye, but rather criticized its specific implementation in the GDR that perpetuated an oppressive atmosphere. She strove for changes by arguing „dass sich hier Kräfte durchsetzen könnt[en], die den Kern des Traumes vom Sozialismus bewahrt[e] und dafür Verbündete finden würd[e]“ (von Ankum 1992, 7). Wolf promoted a reform of socialism as it was practiced in the GDR, which would open a door to „die geschichtliche Entwicklung zur Zukunft“ (von Ankum 1992, 10), and later argued against a unification between East and West Germany which she called „ein Ausverkauf unserer moralischen Werte“ (von Ankum 1992, 10).

In the proclamation, „Für unser Land,“ which she and other authors of the GDR drafted in 1989, she encouraged „eine solidarische Gesellschaft...in der Frieden und soziale Gerechtigkeit, Freiheit des einzelnen, Freizügigkeit aller und die Bewahrung der Umwelt gewährleistet sind“ (Wolf 1990, 170). Along with other East German writers and intellectuals, such as Günter Kunert, Volker Braun, Heiner Müller and Irmtraud Morgner, Christa Wolf, who was given the opportunity to emigrate to West Germany many times, remained convinced that it was possible to form a *Sozialismus mit menschlichem Antlitz*¹ in the GDR through a collaborative process with the East German populace. Bathrick quotes Christa Wolf in his article “Language of Power,” when she addressed East Germans to “[h]elp us build a truly democratic society...one which will retain the vision of a democratic socialism” (Bathrick 2001, 145). To construct her ideal socialist state, Wolf fought for the elimination of the corrupt SED government and of the MfS and of their totalitarian control in the GDR.

Because Wolf viewed the Stasi as a hindrance to her socialist vision, she contested its totalitarian power in her novella *Was bleibt*. Written as early as 1979, this text addresses the oppressive control of the Stasi and introduces a vision of a „sozialistische Utopie“ (von Anikum 1992, 11). However, she did not publish this text until 1990 because of its overt opposition to the East German State Security Service’s totalitarian control over society. If it had been published before the fall of the Wall, she could have faced severe sanctions, including loss of citizenship. *Was bleibt* prevails as not only one of the most important works about Stasi

¹ “Socialism with a human face.” Alexander Dubček, leader of Czechoslovakia (1968-1969) used this term in an attempt to reform the Communist regime in the 1968 Prag Spring.

interference in GDR society, but also a controversial work that began the *Literaturstreit*² in a newly united Germany after its publication in 1990.

Was bleibt tells the story from the subjective first-person perspective of a woman writer's experience under the watchful eye of the Stasi during an ordinary day in her life. The woman, who remains unnamed, is depicted doing chores in her apartment, encountering people throughout the day, and finally giving a public reading to a small crowd in the evening. In each instance, she notices distinct adjustments in her daily routine and relationships because of the constant presence of the Stasi. The representations of the informants and the description of their intrusion reveal the effects of the most powerful tool utilized by the Stasi—fear.

Wolf directly introduces the reoccurring theme of fear on the first page, by opening her text with “nur keine Angst” (Wolf 2002, 5). This phrase not only establishes the dark tone in the novella, but also highlights the protagonist's hesitation in telling a story about her experience of Stasi oppression under their close watch. It, however, also prevails as a source of motivation for the narrator to proceed further with her story. The protagonist mentions her privilege in East German society during the late 1970s, where she can still publish her works and give readings,³ which draws a parallel to Christa Wolf's own privileged position as a part of the intellectual elite.

Before analyzing Wolf's text any further, it is worthwhile to return briefly to Anna Funder's findings on the Stasi in her book *Stasiland*. The victims who recounted their personal experiences with the Stasi all expressed fear and psychological damage, since “the Stasi could

² The *Literaturstreit* in unified Germany was sparked with Christa Wolf's publication of *Was bleibt* and became a heated debate that discussed Wolf's text and the future of German literature in a new Germany. At this time, West German critics harshly criticized Wolf's political views and themes in her book.

³ The narrator mentions her privileged life: „Hochmütig...inwiefern denn das. Insofern ich zu glauben scheine, man könne alles haben, was ich hatte, ohne dafür seine Seele zu verkaufen“ (Wolf 1990: 42).

see inside your life” (Funder 2002, 158). Because of fear, “[r]elations between people were conditioned by the fact that one or the other of you could be one of *them*. Everyone suspected everyone else, and the mistrust this bred was the foundation of social existence” (Funder 2002, 28). Funder illustrates this finding in each of her interviews with East German victims, as they recount their experience under Stasi surveillance. Furthermore, many aspects of MfS surveillance explained by Funder’s interviewees, such as reading personal mail and controlling intimate relationships, are also found in *Was bleibt*, in addition to the strong overtones of trauma that are also exemplified by Wolf’s main character.

II. Fear and Repression in *Was bleibt*

The Stasi’s constant observation of the main character alters her body and mindset. Even though the word “Stasi” does not appear in the story (instead, it is signified only with the pronoun “sie”), the reader, nevertheless, grasps the deep psychological disturbance that the MfS imposes upon each character presented in the text. Because of the Stasi’s unwavering control over East German citizens, challenging this policing force is not considered a viable option. Therefore, the informants can deliberately flaunt their power, as exemplified in their public monitor of the protagonist. As the reader proceeds through *Was bleibt*, it becomes apparent that the structure of the protagonist’s relationships with friends and family devolves from this oppressive supervision. Even simple daily tasks, such as reading the mail, trigger an internal monologue of rapid thoughts and questions about the extent of the Stasi’s all-pervasive impact on her private life.

Ever when the main character gazes out the front window of the apartment, she relates: “standen sie noch da” (Wolf 2002, 54). She expresses fear and terror over the exposure of her “innersten Gedanken” (Wolf 2002, 61). The trauma from such observation does not only affect her psychological health, but also her body. „Der Gewichtsverlust...[d]ie Tabletten...[d]ie Träume.“ (Wolf, 2002, 19) describe the physical changes resulting from the stress and fear from the intrusive Stasi presence.

Her correspondence through letters presents another aspect of fear in her life. She asks herself „wie lange...es [war], dass [sie] kein vertraulichen und vertrauten Briefe mehre geschrieben hatte“ (Wolf 2002, 58). The Stasi reads her letters before she receives them, which she knows as she holds „die Umschläge so gegen den Lichteinfall...jener sich spiegelnde Kleberband zutage trat, der offenbar durch das zweite Zukleben entstand“ (Wolf 2002, 50). Because of this brutal interference in her privacy, she decided to write “Als-ob-Briefe...als ob niemand mitläse; als ob [sie] unbefangen, als ob [sie] vertraulich schreib[t]” (Wolf 2002, 58). This is not only an attempt to deal with Stasi supervision, but also a method to restore normalcy in her life, even though many of her correspondents eliminate any truly private dimension from their letters.⁴

Fear also undermines her relationships and intimacy, which is especially noted during the interaction with her husband. That „ein Zug in seinem Gesicht...unbekannt war“ (Wolf, 2002, 78) describes the devolvement of their marriage into a distanced relationship, even though she still has „gewaltsam der Schreckensvorstellung eines Lebens ohne ihn erwehren müssen“ (Wolf, 2002, 78). The structure of their relationship is transformed into a series of unnatural

⁴ “Nur soviel wußte ich: Für spontane Briefe war ich verdorben, und die Verbindung zu entfernt wohnenden Briefpartnern trocknete aus” (Wolf 1990: 58).

interactions, but the protagonist still views her husband as the most important person in her life because he seems to be the only one with whom she shares an intimate relationship in such isolating conditions. Without him, she would feel alone and even more isolated. Both characters long for a time when they can both be lighthearted again, and each other still “auslachen” (Wolf, 2002, 79).

III. Jürgen M. and the Face of Stasi Informants

In many ways, Wolf constructs *Was bleibt* in a manner to portray not only the sense of mystery the Stasi evokes, but also how a lack of knowledge places the protagonist at the mercy of the Stasi. The informants who watch over her apartment, whose image is created through superficial observations about their “Trenchcoats und [...] Sporthütchen” (Wolf 2002, 34) and movements, are anonymous; they are given no names, nor does the reader know anything about their personal life. The informants’ individuality never emerges, since the narrator always describes these men as a part of a group, and therefore evokes the image of one collective anonymous and *überpersönliches* face of the Stasi.

This is different with Jürgen M., whom the narrator introduces as a real character, a Stasi IM, described as an almost tragic character who has been pressured by the state to join the Stasi. The narrator—also the main character—confronts him on one of her daily errands and recalls his pre-Stasi life as that of a philosopher, writer, and a former friend. However, she imagines him observing her life: “er...sitzt in dem Haus mit den vielen Telefonen und sammelt nach Herzenlust alle Nachrichten über [sie]” (Wolf 2002, 45). Even though he is deeply unhappy with this position, which is displayed by his heavy drinking when he says “Immer obenauf” (Wolf

2002, 43), Jürgen M. seems to have no choice but to continue his service under the institution's repressive power.

The protagonist's ability to trust anybody is damaged, due to her old friend Jürgen M.'s collaboration with the Stasi and documentation of her daily actions. She acknowledges that their former friendship has dissolved, as he has come to know her better as a person described in short sentences on paper. Because of his constant role of surveillance, he no longer desires to know her personally as a friend, since the relationship and power dynamics between them have radically changed, as if they had spent "die Jahre in verschiedenen Ländern" (Wolf 2002, 39). Trust between these two characters has vanished, since Jürgen M. "könnte sich an [ihren] innersten Gedanken delectieren" (Wolf 2002, 54). The omniscience of the Stasi that Jürgen M. embodies, coupled with the protagonist's confusion, deeply frighten her and confirm that she no longer has a private life, much less control over her own life.

Fear governs not only the simple citizens, but also Jürgen M. and other Stasi employees who are on the periphery of the main character's life. Even though Jürgen M. works as an informant, he, much like the protagonist, is also described as being repressed by the state. He was pressured to find satisfaction within the ranks of the MfS, and even though he is still dissatisfied, he cannot easily *aussteigen*⁵ because he fears punishment and ostracization from society. Therefore, he has no choice but to continue his work with the Stasi, despite his deep unhappiness.

Through the protagonist's interaction with Jürgen M., the reader interprets Christa Wolf's perspective on the psychology of certain Stasi members. Even though the main character

⁵ The protagonist asks Jürgen M.: „Warum steigst du nicht aus“ (Wolf 2002, 45).

recognizes that Jürgen M. has monitored her for years, she does not deem him as inherently immoral. The story of Jürgen M. is presented as a tragic one, since he is described as a well-educated “Philosoph” (Wolf 2002, 39) and old friend who was unfortunately caught in the grasp of Stasi control. During his encounter with the protagonist, Jürgen M. demonstrates his distress about his duties with the Stasi: as he had enjoyed no privileges like those of the main character, the Stasi „hatt[e] ihn in der Hand“ (Wolf 2002, 45); „[er] müsse...seine Seele verkaufen“ (Wolf 2002, 45), a defeat, of which he was fully aware. Not able to leave the MfS, he, instead, deals with his repressive duty through nightly inebriation.

Even though Wolf elaborates on Jürgen M.’s power over the main character, he does not undergo harsh judgment by her. Instead, the narrator evaluates his lack of choice in East German society compared to her own freedom. “[Er] dankt jeden Morgen seinem Schicksal, das ihm an diesen Platz gestellt hat, an dem er seinem leidenschaftlichen Gelüst Genüge tun und zugleich der Gesellschaft nützlich sein kann” (Wolf 2002, 45). Even though Jürgen M. does not agree with the Stasi effort, his *Gelüst*, however, suggests his abject desire to be useful to society, despite his immoral line of work.

To this end, the narrator does judge Jürgen M. as a fragile human rather as an ideologue, in order to suggest that the power of the Stasi is upheld by citizens drawn into the Stasi’s grasp because of their inability to stand by their own moral principles. This, however, further demonstrates that it is impossible to individually withstand the Stasi’s power, especially given Jürgen M.’s position in society. Even though the protagonist seems to pass judgment on Jürgen M., she admits to also sharing his desire of having a place in this society, when she says: “Wie

ich selbst, auf meinem Platz” (Wolf 2002, 45), signifying that the narrator, to an extent, also understands Jürgen M.’s decision to cash in on his morals to join the Stasi.

Despite the reader’s gaining insight into Jürgen M.’s life, he and the other Stasi figures keeping watch on the main character’s apartment are in many ways portrayed as distant characters, as the first-person narrator’s perspective recounts the story from a victim’s perspective on Stasi observation, leaving little room to explore Jürgen M.’s life in an unbiased manner. Since Jürgen M.’s double life is not described in extensive detail, we do not form a concrete image of this informant, nor are we supposed understand him personally.

IV. The Girl

When the protagonist acknowledges Jürgen M.’s helplessness against the oppressive Stasi force, she grows more fearsome. She tries to validate her fear through an interaction with a young unnamed girl who disputes the SED in her written works. Throughout the first part of the story, the protagonist elaborates on her personal fears and physical and mental symptoms and then attempts to justify these disturbances through the girl’s personal stories of Stasi oppression. „Der Name dieses Mädchens [war] wirklich mit einer bestimmten Affäre an einer bestimmten Universität, im Zusammenhang mit Denunziation, mit Verfahren und Erpressung aufgetaucht“ (Wolf 2002, 71), and a second rebellious event has put her in jail for a year.

Hearing of the girl’s punishment and ostracization substantiates the protagonist’s hesitation to present her work publically. The allusion to the girl’s jailtime (where “die Kälte...das schlimmste gewesen [sei]” Wolf 2002, 73) and to her exclusion from studying at a university, can be read as an argument to validate the protagonist’s self-censorship. As the

narrative progresses, it becomes apparent that the girl's attitude visibly contrasts with the protagonist's, whose fear of retaliation against outwardly nonconformist behavior silences her and has led her to become a "Selbstzensor" (Wolf 2002, 48).

The term, *Selbstzensor*, emerges often in *Was bleibt* as a reaction to MfS supervision, where the protagonist argues that she favors "[i]nnerer Dialog" (Wolf 2002, 49) over open expression of her ideas. She illustrates this preference by identifying her "lieber Selbstzensor" (Wolf 2002, 48) as almost a counselor or an old friend, whom she asks for advice when she wants to confront the Stasi agent, Jürgen M.

Schön guten Tag, lieber Selbstzensor, lange nichts von Ihnen gehört. Also wer soll es denn sein, wenn nicht Jürgen M., mach deiner Meinung? –Ein unvoreingenommener Beamter, der dich gar nicht kennt. –Das wäre mir sogar lieber. –Lieber ist gut (Wolf 2002, 48).

This quote suggests that self-censorship (*Selbstzensur*) is the protagonist's favored option to deal with Stasi surveillance; she chooses to remain ignorant about whether Jürgen M. is truly spying on her and hopes that another informant, "[e]iner der kein persönliches Interesse an [ihr] hat" (Wolf 2002, 48), would monitor her life. The critic David Bathrick argues that the main character's self-censorship "serv[es] as her *better* self" (Bathrick 2001, 153).

The purpose of the girl's visit with the protagonist is to receive advice on a text that she eventually wants to publish. The girl's controversial manuscript "sei gut" (Wolf 2002, 72), but „[s]ie solle es niemandem zeigen. Diese paar Seiten könnten sie wieder ins Gefängnis bringen“ (Wolf 2002, 72), since it openly questions the regime's interpretation of socialism. Therefore, the main character must now „falls es möglich war, diesem Mädchen Angst einjagen“ (Wolf 2002, 73) to save the girl from severe punishment, again. This scene illustrates the highly limited freedom of speech and expression of ideas in the GDR. However, the difference between

the girl and the protagonist is that the young girl will publish her work despite these circumstances, while the main character remains convinced that it is „nicht der rechte Moment“ (Wolf 2002, 93) to openly distribute a text that critiques the SED state.

V. Stasi Employees with a Human Face

Even though these Stasi figures in *Was bleibt* aggressively observe the protagonist's life, the main character does not portray them as a despised enemy: „was mir fehlte, war wahrscheinlich ein gesunder nivellierender Haß“ (Wolf 2002, 15) because she strives to understand the circumstances of their work and level of opportunity in the GDR. In fact, the main character empathizes with Jürgen M. through their shared fear and oppression under the SED state, which breaks down the juxtaposition between the perpetrator and his victim.

After the reunification between East and West Germany, victims of Stasi oppression and East German intellectuals published extensively on the East German secret police. The conservative Western views of the early 1990s rendered a polarized black and white image of the Stasi employees, who were often presented as emotionless and empty-minded servants to the SED regime, often even as fantastical villainous creatures, as David Bathrick argues in his article “Language and Power.”

For in the social imaginary of post-cold war and post-Wall German politics, the Stasi had become precisely that: a metaphorical monster whose tentacles enveloped and indeed poisoned every aspect of East German public and private life. (Bathrick 2001, 139)

Der Spiegel became one of the first magazines from the FRG to depict the Stasi in this manner, in which “the GDR had already become metamorphosed into the Stasi as a monster sea serpent” (Bathrick 2001, 39). The representation of the MfS as supernatural villainous creature

created tensions in unified Germany, since it perpetuated the polarized and polarizing image of the MfS. In many cases, the Stasi agents were also compared to Nazis. The well-known GDR dissident, Wolf Biermann, described the atmosphere in the GDR and the Stasi in this light:

„[D]as alltägliche DDR-Leben wäre brutaler, grauer und grauenhafter. Würden jetzt die Stasi-Verbrecher wie Mielke und Markus Wolf historisch weichgewaschen, etwa wie der arme Mensch Adolf in den letzten Tagen im Führerbunker unter der Reichskanzlei“ (Dueck 2008, 600).

Because of his outward criticism towards the regime, the SED state had deprived him of his citizenship in 1976. Even though Wolf opposed Biermann's denaturalization, she, nevertheless gave a different image of the Stasi in *Was bleibt*, which served to deconstruct the black and white image that became a popular interpretation in the early 1990s. Wolf argued that one should not view the phenomenon of the Stasi in such extremes, through which a definitive line was drawn between the victims of the MfS who embodied innocence and the faceless Stasi IMs who carried the complete responsibility for the past. However, Wolf attempted to blur this border and was one of the first authors during the early 1990s who broke down the barrier between victims and perpetrators. Even though Wolf had felt pressure from Stasi supervision, she presents Jürgen M. with a human face, unlike Wolf Biermann who called the Stasi animal names (Brockmann 1994, 81-2), a response Christa Wolf specifically discusses in her text.

Even though the main character, much like Christa Wolf, was incessantly observed by the MfS, she does not hate the Stasi informants: „[t]iernamen ... [werden] nur auf Tiere angewendet, nie würde ich, wie andere es taten, die Namen von Schweinen und Hunden, nicht einmal die von Frettchen oder Reptilien auf die jungen Herren da draußen münzen können“ (Wolf 2002, 15). As previously mentioned, she attempts to make her empathy for the informants understandable to

the reader. In contrast to the popular image of the Stasi, Wolf presents Jürgen M. with human attributes and feelings, such as fear, discontent with his work, and hopelessness.

Despite her fear of the Stasi and a loss of trust, the protagonist breaks down her *ich selbst* into three identities, of which she labeled the young men in front of her apartment “als den Dritten in [ihr]” (Wolf 2011, 53-4). The main character’s attempt to define her self, whether it was “[d]as, das sich kennen wollte [...] [d]as, das sich schonen wollte” (Wolf 2002, 53), she questions whether part of her *ich selbst* wants to “nach derselben Pfeife zu tanzen wie die jungen Herren da draußen vor [der] Tür” (Wolf 2002, 53), and even though she attempts to invalidate any sense of identification with the Stasi employees, they represent a part of her self that wants to follow and obey. The informants watching over her apartment, Jürgen M., and the protagonist have lost their definition of self in society, which makes all parties victims of the SED state.

VI. Christa Wolf’s Socialism

Christa Wolf’s text strives to create “eine lebbare Zukunft” (Wolf 2002, 90) without outward oppression from the state. The critic von Ankum claims that „[f]ür Christa Wolf verkörperten die gesellschaftlichen Verhältnisse in der DDR jedoch nie ganz die eigentliche sozialistische Idee, so wie es von Politikern und Funktionären häufig dargestellt wurde“ (von Ankum 1992, 8). Therefore, at the end of *Was bleibt*, Wolf contrasts the *real existierende* society controlled by the East German State Security Service, with her own ideal of a socialist state, a *Sozialismus mit menschlichem Antlitz*. Bathrick argues that the dissident elite in East Germany, to which Wolf belonged, “articulated the dream of reform socialism—a utopian third way between Stalinism and capitalism, beyond the existing two-bloc system” (Bathrick 2001,

145). Wolf emphasized this ideal in the scene of the protagonist's public reading, where her citizen-readers display *Brüderlichkeit* (fraternity) as a foundation of a socialist country based on open exchange.

It is remarkable that Christa Wolf has Jürgen M. compare the reign of the Stasi with the Middle Ages. „Es hat sich nichts geändert, abgesehen von Äußerlichkeiten. Und es wird sich nichts ändern“ (Wolf 2002, 44). Jürgen M. asserts that the GDR resembles the Middle Ages because the societies in both cases exercise totalitarian power to control every aspect of life, such as religion, private life and politics, and to harshly punish dissident behavior and controversial expression. This statement pinpoints the lack of progressive movement and development throughout history, culminating in the control over the present and future development of the GDR. Therefore, history seems to have come to a standstill under the Stasi, where individuality and autonomy are nonexistent. According to Jürgen M., capitulation is the only way to lead an unproblematic, but also unfulfilling, life:

[W]enn sich als Wissender über die Masse der Unwissenden erheben wolle, dann müsse man seine Seele verkaufen, wie eh und je. Und, wenn ich es genau wissen wolle, Blut fließe auch dabei, wenn auch nicht das eigene. Nicht immer das eigene. (Wolf 2002, 44-5)

As mentioned earlier, the totalitarian authority of the Stasi leaves Jürgen M. no other choice other than giving into a Faustian pact: „seine Seele [der Stasi] zu verkaufen“ (Wolf 2002, 44). He articulates his willingness to coerce out of fear: “Blut fließe auch dabei, wenn auch nicht das eigene.” (Wolf 2002, 45). This quote expresses the Stasi's power over people's lives and the sanctions when there is opposition. Even when the *Blut* is not one's own, it is used as a fear factor to scare the populace into obedience. Despite his attempt to conform with the MfS, he is isolated and powerless. By contrast, *eine lebbare Zukunft* for the citizens and children eliminates

this fear and creates room for the individual. Wolf develops an ideal socialist microcosm at the end of her work, as exemplified in a group of people who can freely express their thoughts at a reading and believe in fraternity. The discussion concerned the future and “[w]as bleibt” (Wolf 2002, 99) following the anticipated changes in the then current political situation in the GDR.

The narrator’s public reading of her work at the end of Wolf’s text is an important scene, which allows the reader to understand Wolf’s socialist utopia. The protagonist presents her work in a controlled environment for an audience of six people, even though other people crowded outside the venue also want to attend this literary event. While the state succeeds in confining the dispersion of controversial ideas by minimizing the number of audience members, it fails to control the discussion of the ideal socialist state, as the discussion that follows the reading shows:

Die Stimmung im Saal [wurde] immer lockerer. Buchtitel wurden durch den Raum gerufen, manche notierten sie sich, andere fingen an, mit ihren Nachbarn zu reden, um die junge Frau, zuerst gesprochen hatte, bildete sich ein Kreis. (Wolf 2002, 92)

The dialogue on *eine lebbare Zukunft* poses a threat to Stasi power, since it provides a realm for the individual, the *ich selbst*, without an omniscient controlling presence in society. Despite the narrator’s fear to speak out, a socialist utopia is envisioned where people believe in *Brüderlichkeit*. Because the power of the Stasi stems from a concept of a timeless realm, in which the MfS stifles changes through time, this discussion is a direct threat to the Stasi’s power, despite the “friedlich und unprovokativ” (Wolf 2002, 98) atmosphere. Frau K., the event manager, is relieved to end the reading and the discussion. This scene in *Was bleibt* gives insight into Wolf’s ideal GDR state, one where individuality and the concept of an evolving future thrives—in other words, a society without the omniscient and oppressive power of the Stasi.

VII. Conclusion

Wolf aims to set forth her views on the GDR and the Stasi and to influence the younger generation in the GDR with her text, although she acknowledges in the end that her story could not be published in 1979. Wolf wanted to spark a reform of the SED state, and she saw the possibility of change in the younger generation. By introducing younger characters into the story—for example, the girl and the young woman at the reading—Wolf underlines the importance of opposition in the younger generation against the repressive and totalitarian power of the state, in order to create a future for the citizens of the GDR. The girl continues to offer other critiques about the regime despite her previous imprisonment, while the young women in the audience envision the idea of a livable future in the GDR. These characters not only present Wolf's longing for socialist reforms, but also her persuasion that the younger generation must transform the current conditions in the GDR. In the following chapter, this adamant younger generation will be examined in Cornelia Schleime's *Weit Fort*, a writer born in the GDR.

Despite Wolf's longing for a reformed socialist state without totalitarian Stasi control, she does not entirely demonize the Stasi employees. She portrays Stasi characters both as fragile humans corrupted through their own use of fear as a tool for oppression. Wolf even breaks down the barrier between the victim and perpetrator when the protagonist admits she can empathize with the Stasi informants monitoring her apartment. Although some subsequent literary texts and films also painted the Stasi in a similar light—for example, the film *Das Leben der Anderen*—there are, nevertheless, varying representations of the Stasi that will be discussed in the following chapters.

Chapter 2

Beyond Christa Wolf's *Was bleibt*: the Stasi and its Victims in Cornelia Schleime's *Weit Fort* and the Question of Reconciliation after Reunification

I. Introduction

Cornelia Schleime, artist and author of *Weit Fort* (2011), shares with Christa Wolf the experience of living in East Germany under Stasi observation. However, Schleime, born in Berlin in 1953, grew up in the GDR; she was constantly monitored during her rebellious years as a young painter and lead singer of one of the first punk bands in the GDR, *Zwitschermaschine*. Schleime commented on her dissident behaviour that she did not attempt to clash with the East German government and its socialist ideology, but rather did “was [ihr] Spaß machte,” which in itself challenged the SED state (Schumacher 2010). In 1981, when the state prohibited her from exhibiting her art, she applied to leave the GDR to continue her career in the FRG.

Schleime not only chose to emigrate because of her career, but also because of the Stasi interference in her private life. In an interview with *Die Zeit* in 2011, she recounts that she “stellte fünf Ausreiseanträge, zusammen mit [ihrem] Freund. Ihn ließen sie gehen, [sie] ließen sie schmoren. Die Stasi wollte demonstrieren, dass sie auch eine Liebe kaputt machen kann“ (Koelbl 2011). Finally in 1984, her application to leave the GDR was accepted after she had threatened to start a hunger strike. Most of her portfolio paintings and short films compiled in the GDR disappeared when she moved and therefore she had to start anew in the FRG.

When Schleime gained access to her Stasi file, she discovered that many of her neighbors and friends had collaborated with the Stasi. She learned that even one of her closest friends, the well-known poet, Sasha Anderson, was a Stasi informant. He had given the MfS access to her

apartment in Dresden with his private key (Kulick 2002): in an interview with *Der Spiegel* in 2008, she recounts her reaction when she became aware that Sascha Anderson had led a double life in the GDR: “Als das Unfassbare Gewissheit wurde, überwältigte mich und die nächsten Freunde kollektive Trauer“ (Beyer and Knöfel 2008). In another interview with *Der Spiegel*, Schleime says that she “kann es bis heute nicht ertragen, dass es der Vertrauteste war, der sie verriet“ (Beyer 2009).

Sascha Anderson recorded many compromising observations on his friends, many of them writers and artists of the Prenzlauer Berg circle. He proved his loyalty to the MfS—despite his denial of his affiliation with the Stasi (Bathrick 2001, 139)—with the information he provided on subjects that was not readily available from other resources. Because of Sascha Anderson, the Stasi was able to infiltrate the dissident artist and literary sub-culture of East Germany. David Bathrick states in his article “Language of Power,”

Not surprisingly, to have the leading spokesperson and chief literary entrepreneur of the dissident Prenzlauer Berg artists, Sascha Anderson, unmasked as a Stasi agent was taken by some as further proof of an all-pervasive, ever-corrupting control of GDR intellectuals from above. (Bathrick 2001, 139)

In her novel, Schleime models one Stasi character after Sascha Anderson to portray not only the Stasi’s extent of control in the GDR, but also its legacy after the fall of the Wall. Despite her long career as a painter, Schleime decided to venture into the realm of literature to address the repercussions of Anderson’s betrayal and her experiences of oppression from the East German secret police. Her short novel, *Weit Fort*, published in 2008, recounts the story of Clara, a woman in many aspects similar to herself. Schleime’s compulsion to publish a novel that addresses one of the most widely researched and controversial subjects roughly 18 years after reunification stemmed from the “übertriebenen Opfertön vieler Ostdeutscher, die mental

nur noch in der Vergangenheit waren...,[a]nschließend kam die nostalgische Verniedlichungsphase...Der zeitliche Abstand war notwendig” (Beyer and Knöfel 2008).

Weit Fort is told by a subjective third-person narrator who is equipped with the single-perspective view of the protagonist’s own thoughts and actions. She thus employs the narrative technique used by Christa Wolf, which confines the perspective to focus primarily on the feelings and reflections of the Stasi victim. Over a decade after the fall of the Berlin wall, Clara, the protagonist (an artist from the former GDR), spends her time painting in her countryside abode. Through an online dating website, she meets meteorologist Ludwig who also grew up in East Germany, and as they spend time together, Clara’s romantic feelings for him grow stronger. Since the topic of their former East German lives emerges often, it becomes clear that Clara and Ludwig have had significantly different experiences in the GDR. Clara unveils her past of Stasi oppression to Ludwig, but Ludwig’s past remains nebulous, and even becomes more so when he suddenly severs contact with Clara. However, from the time she has spent with Ludwig, Clara strongly suspects—but remains unsure—that he was a former Stasi employee. Throughout the narrative, Clara recounts memories of the GDR integral to the novel’s plot development, such as the betrayal by her best friend who, based on the figure Sascha Anderson, has also been an informer. Even though Clara’s background in *Weit Fort* aligns with many events in Schleime’s own life, the author insists that this work is fictional.

It is important to note that Schleime’s *Weit Fort* and Wolf’s *Was bleibt* share similar autobiographical foundations, in which both authors use fiction to discuss their intimate past. Not only do these narratives serve to lead the reader into a private realm where a woman reveals aspects of her private life—what many consider highly personal—only to be contrasted with the

Stasi characters in the book. Wolf and Schleime also wrote these texts to distance themselves from their own lives and to give themselves freedom to achieve the kind of representation of the Stasi and its victims that they wish to portray. These authors turn aspects of life that were recorded by the Stasi into narratives that are authored by themselves as victims, which can be seen as an act that also serves to re-appropriate stories that should have never been written by others in the first place. However, Schleime adds another dimension to her novel of victimization by recounting the story of Ludwig's disappearance—a second betrayal on a victim after the fall of the Wall.

One theme that both Wolf and Schleime address in their works is the MfS's control exerted upon both of their protagonists and Stasi employees. Even though Wolf emphasizes this aspect more heavily through a description of Jürgen M.'s life, Schleime also briefly remarks that Stasi repression affected even its most loyal followers.

Im Osten hat die Macht niemanden wirklich groß gemacht. [Die Stasi Mitarbeiter] sind ihr hintergekrochen. Haben auf höhere Befehle gewartet in ihrem Wandlitz oder woanders, um in der Kolchose ihrer Massenaufzucht die Charaktere zu versauen (Schleime 2008, 66).

This quote demonstrates that the origin of power stems from a higher force, and even though the Stasi informants were loyal, they possessed no real power as individuals. In the end, everyone in East Germany, even the Stasi employees, followed orders. However, Schleime mostly focuses on the restricted artistic atmosphere for writers and artists. She writes that Clara and Ludwig lived „in einem Land, in dem die Zukunft auch für Künstler und Schriftsteller auf dem Reißbrett geplant ist“ (Schleime 2008, 25), which draws a parallel with the restrictions imposed on the protagonist's public reading in *Was bleibt*. The narrator in *Weit Fort* not only asserts the lack of liberty for artistic expression, but also suggests through Clara's immigration to

the FRG that the GDR would never become a country where artists and writers can freely display their work, which contrasts with Wolf's hope for *eine lebbare Zukunft* in the GDR through political reform.

II. Clara's Victimization and Oppression by the Stasi

Similar to the protagonist in *Was bleibt*, Clara also had to endure Stasi intrusion in her private life before leaving for to the FRG. She recounts the story of her and her husband's move to West Germany as a traumatic experience, in which the MfS wanted to exemplify their power by separating the married couple between the two sides of the Wall. With complete control over her private life, the Stasi "[konnten] sie in den Wahnsinn treiben" (Schleime, 2008, 79), and to escape intrusion, she believed she had no other choice than to leave the GDR.

Even though she knew the Stasi monitored all aspects her life, Clara only became aware of the extent of its presence and the use of the "Augen und Ohren ihres besten Freundes" (Schleime 2008, 80) through her Stasi file. Her circle of friends and people living in close proximity trivialized Clara's life, including her meaningful romantic relationships. She found love letters to an old boyfriend, comments from neighbors about the "Unrat in der Wohnung" (Schleime 2008, 34). Her neighbors also observed her personality: "Clara ist asozial, arrogant und aggressiv" (Schleime 2008, 36). These aggressive statements and judgments reduced her life into a file. As she viewed her file for the first time, „Clara weint. Weint über einen Verlust, den sie noch nicht definieren kann. Weint, dass es eine Akte ist, die ihr dieses Stück zurückgibt“ (Schleime 2008, 33). The file reminded Clara not only of the intrusive Stasi surveillance, but also of "das Gefühl dieser Ohnmacht" (Schleime 2008, 32).

These memories convey her trauma and devastation as a result of Stasi control. However, her response to her psychological damage differs from that of the protagonists in *Was bleibt*, who undergoes visible physical changes and resigns herself to become a *Selbstzensor* as a coping mechanism. Clara, instead, is more comparable to the girl in Wolf's text who continues to challenge the East German state despite her previous punishments and jail time. Clara also continued to remain active as an artist, in spite of the restriction on exhibiting her work. Her resistance is simply a different—even perhaps generational—response to Stasi oppression.

Clara understands that much of her trauma stems from her best friend's betrayal, surfacing when she finds out that he has monitored her life. In an effort to recount her East German life to Ludwig, she shows him a documentary film she has made to serve as a constant reminder that their „jahrelange Freundschaft ist eine Farce“ (Schleime, 2008, 29). She describes the work as “ein Film über das Zerschneiden einer einst gelebten Zeit. Über Täuschung, Verrat und Bespitzlung. Und sie war ein Opfer dieser Geschichte.” This quote illustrates Clara's inexplicable suffering caused by her “Dichterfreund” (Schleime 2008, 37), whom she confronts in the last scene of the film. As she watches the documentary with Ludwig, her sentiments of grief and shock surrounding this friendship return:

Es gelang ihr vor siebzehn Jahren nicht, eine persönliche Trauer zuzulassen, als sie erfuhr, dass ihr bester Freund die Wanze war, nach der sie panisch gesucht hatte, sie jeden und alles verdächtig fand, aber im Traum nie auf ihn gekommen wäre. Den Schock darüber teilte sie mit Freunden. Es war ein kollektiver Schock, eine kollektive Ernüchterung und Trauer. (Schleime 2008, 102)

The Stasi destroyed one of Clara's most meaningful relationships and imposed a psychological impact of fear and mistrust in her life. However, this wound opens up again when she meets Ludwig. Despite her attempts to form a trustworthy relationship with him, even after her friend's deception, she experiences a second betrayal; as she falls in love with a man who

very well may have been a former Stasi IM, he does not reciprocate her sentiments. Ludwig is set on preserving a life without addressing his own past. “All seine Kraft geht für die Abschirmung drauf” (Schleime 2008, 79). However, when Clara wants to know about his GDR past, he suddenly disappears from her life.

Er hat sie diese Ohnmacht noch einmal führen lassen, mehr als ihr bester Freund vor 17 Jahren, als er enttarnt wurde. Denn der Schattenmann und Clara trafen sich in der Liebe. Im Körper und in der Seele gleichermaßen. (Schleime 2008, 107)

This *Ohnmacht* that Clara experienced from the first perpetrator seems to magnify with Ludwig because she entrusts not only her friendship to Ludwig, but also another dimension of herself as a lover. Since he does not show these sentiments—perhaps he may not feel as she does or is emotionally unavailable—or even reveal his former East German life, she experiences a second betrayal of trust, the same powerlessness that she had experienced under Stasi control. When he leaves, the ambiguity of his disappearance claims power over Clara. Ludwig has the choice to continue this relationship by revealing his former East German life, but he chooses to remain distant and leave. “Sie ist vollkommen traumatisiert, und er ist unreachbar in seinem Panzer” (Schleime 2008, 48).

III. Stasi Figures in *Weit Fort*

Ludwig

The two Stasi informants in *Weit Fort*, Ludwig and Clara’s former best friend, differ considerably from Jürgen M. not only in their true conviction of the Stasi effort, but also in their demeanor that keeps the reader from attaching a human face to both characters. Ludwig, who has turned a weather reporter in post-unified Germany, does not openly express emotions as Clara does, nor does he reveal his past career, which Clara suspects was as a Stasi IM. “Er ist

nicht ahnunglos, nein, er ist Wissender. Er weiß mehr über die anderen als über sich selbst. Das ist seine Arroganz” (Schleime 2008, 104). Ludwig simply observes. He memorizes Clara’s eyes—“wie [ihre Augen] nach oben rollen, wenn sie über Kunst spricht” (Schleime 2008, 59). He claims that “man durch die Körpersprache viel mehr über einen Menschen erfahren kann“ (Schleime 2008, 57).

The reader understands that Ludwig has good reasons not to express himself, as he wants to shield himself from his repressed fear and guilt. Schleime suggests that Ludwig seems to possess deeper feelings for Clara than he chooses to convey. The last night they spend together after she watches the documentary film with him, Ludwig is portrayed as uncommonly quiet. Clara wants to ask why and Ludwig wants to explain that his reaction is grounded in his East German past, but both remain silent. “Er aber hoffte die ganze Zeit, es war ein stilles, unbewusstes Hoffen, dass sie ihm eine bestimmte Frage stellen würde” (Schleime 2008, 75). This quote illustrates his desire to address his reaction to the film and perhaps a deeper reason for his secrecy, which is never addressed.

His strategy of silence and removal is a defense mechanism that protects him from confronting the past and undergoing judgment from Clara. Many parts of his East German life seem to be labeled as a taboo, and because he must expose his past to Clara in order to pursue the relationship further, he “ist wieder unter der Luke verschwunden und in seinen Panzer zurückgebrochen” (Schleime 2008, 75). Even though he wants to keep dating Clara, his secrecy about his former East German life acts as a barrier to a successful relationship.

As previously mentioned, the narrator compares Ludwig’s distant demeanor and inability to adjust his feelings to a *Panzer* at two different points in the novel. This association evokes

Ludwig's distress of making himself vulnerable to Clara, in which the comparison to *Panzer* not only signifies his fear, but also his extreme distance from Clara and also from his past. The metaphor of the "tank" should be interpreted as Ludwig's thick shield of armor and also as a weapon used to protect himself and to preserve his power over Clara. This suggests a parallel to the *Zeitgeist* of the GDR when Stasi officials protected themselves from the people and used fear as an instrument to preserve their power, which overall creates a distant demeanor as seen in Ludwig and personified through the notion of a *Panzer*.

Nevertheless, the reader ironically enters Ludwig's home, an intimate sphere that should reveal a personal dimension about the character, but still does not come to understand Ludwig as a private being, except for the small revelation of fear in his life. When Clara first enters, „[d]ie Wohnung wirkt sehr warm, fast schwül. So als hätte er Angst vor der Einsamkeit“ (Schleime 2008, 71). Clara believes that Ludwig's apprehension and anxiety seem to stem primarily from his loss of relevance in society and his *Einsamkeit*, which could be perhaps translated as the lack of the collectivity in the now unified Germany that he found formerly in East Germany. Since the *Sich selbst* alluded to in *Was bleibt* did not exist in the GDR or within the ranks of the Stasi, Ludwig never experienced individuality. In addition, the Stasi is often portrayed with a single *Gesicht*, despite the important collaboration of a large number of individuals in the Stasi organization. The narrator hints that Ludwig seemed to live within this structure until the dissolution of East Germany. However, in a unified Germany, the specter of individuality comes to haunt him.

When Clara and Ludwig decide to take an excursion to visit their homes former East Germany, it becomes apparent that Ludwig was a true believer in the SED state, as the narrator

recounts that the state raised him “in der Kolchose ihrer Massenaufzucht” (Schleime 2008, 66). Unlike Jürgen M., who knowingly sold his soul, Ludwig was a convicted believer in the Stasi effort. When the GDR fell, „[s]eine Arbeit gab es nicht mehr. Alles war ohne Sinn. Alles Tabula rasa, von einem Tag auf den anderen.” (Schleime 2008, 88). The work that he contributed to society no longer has any significance. Unlike Jürgen M., his tragedy points to the insignificance of his dedication to the GDR after reunification. The narrator states that Ludwig is a “[h]eimatlos gewordene Verbundkameradschaft” (Schleime 2008, 88) who does not view Germany as his new homeland as Clara does.

Even in an intimate relationship, Ludwig does not outwardly articulate or display his true feelings. However, when Clara falls in love with him, she claims that „[h]eute, denkt sie, ist sie wie er. Ein Virus hat sich übertragen. Der Virus der Beobachtung, des Zerlegens, des Analysierens.“ (Schleime 2008, 57). The author accentuates Clara’s transformation in a negative light because she is almost becoming Ludwig, constantly over-analyzing and inclined “[n]ichts zu nehmen, wie es ist” (Schleime 2008, 57). The narrator describes this love as a *Virus*, which illustrates the narrator’s negative views on typical Stasi traits. When she asks if he can act like her, Clara believes „nein, natürlich nicht. Ihre Krankheit ist nur vorübergehend“ (Schleime 2008, 57), which portrays Clara’s inability to fend off the harmful impact exerted by Ludwig.

Clara’s Former Best Friend

The other Stasi figure in *Weit Fort* is, as mentioned before, Clara’s former best friend, who does not take center stage in the novel, but is nevertheless important to consider when evaluating Schleime’s depiction of the Stasi and is in many ways similar to Ludwig. In the

GDR, he was affiliated with the Stasi who willingly monitored and documented Clara's life. Clara only recounts memories of his betrayal, and the reader never views him with a human face, but rather as an amoral character led willingly down the wrong path toward a double-life as Clara's best friend and a Stasi informant. The narrator never characterizes him with human attributes, not even when Clara confronts him at the end of the documentary film and tries to force him to admit that he, indeed, spied on her life. Instead, he is portrayed as an actor who is constantly playing a role. In the last scene when he must confess, „[e]r verliert die Kontrolle.“ (Schleime 2008, 38), as he realizes that he has no choice but to affirm his betrayal. However, he admits his past to Clara “fast altmeisterlich inszeniert” (Schleime 2008, 39), in a most theatrical manner, as if he staged the act, which keeps him from showing any feelings.

The Face of the Stasi

When Clara sees Ludwig giving the weather forecast on TV, “ähnelte er immer mehr ihrem Freund vor 17 Jahren.” (Schleime 2008, 107) and asks, “[h]aben alle Agenten nur ein Gesicht” (Schleime 2008, 107). This question could perhaps help Schleime establish a Stasi prototype through the figures of the former best friend and Ludwig, since they both share the same characteristics of emotional distance and avoidance and both eventually betray the victim. However, Schleime does not pursue this question further, leaving these two Stasi figures to represent two individual faces of the Stasi force. In addition, Schleime's novel tells a highly intimate story about personal betrayal, which makes the claim of a Stasi prototype more difficult to argue. However, Clara's former best friend is modeled after Schleime's former longtime friend, Anderson, whose betrayal became a strong political statement, as mentioned by Bathrick.

Therefore, it seems that the reader could assume the same in *Weit Fort*, which is actually not the case, since Schleime only describes the personal aspects of Clara's life. To give another example, the author could have also made a political statement about former Stasi employees through the description of Ludwig's East German habits and ideals in a reunified Germany.

Von hier nach dort verändert sich ein Leben, aber die Fähigkeiten, die jemand mitbringt, machen vielleicht aus dem Dort wieder ein Hier. Wissen und Information gelangen einfach in einen anderen Speicher. Es ist ja nur Material, und wenn die Festplatte der alten Ideologie abstürzt, findet sich eine neue. Wen kümmert's. (Schleime 2008, 58)

Ludwig is apprehensive of change and therefore tries to make room for his East German *Wissen* and *Ideologie* in a reunified Germany. This quote describes his efforts—or lack thereof—to assimilate into a unified Germany after the dissolution of the East German socialist ideology, but when Schleime writes “Wen kümmert's” (Schleime 2008, 58), she hesitates in making any strong political statement about Ludwig's life that was built on East German socialist ideology. Instead, this problem of assimilation is only addressed in the context of Ludwig's character. Schleime, in the end, does not establish a general representation of the Stasi in the context of history, but rather confines her narrative to depict individual Stasi informers in the context of private settings.

IV. “Coming to terms” with the Past

Weit Fort addresses the larger theme of coming to terms with the Stasi past in a unified Germany that emerged long after Wolf published *Was bleibt*. This issue plays a significant role in the present-day lives of both victims of the MfS and former Stasi informants themselves. However, “coming to terms” holds no distinct definition, as each character in *Weit Fort* defines it differently. Even the East German state tried to suppress certain events of the past, such as Nazi

German history, in order to construct a reality that provided the SED regime with strong central power.

“Coming to terms” with the Stasi past in a reunified Germany has been difficult for Stasi officials. As the former Federal Commissioner for Documents of the State Security Service of the former GDR, Joachim Gauck (now President of Germany) wrote in his “Dealing with the Stasi Past” in 1994: “digging up the past...[is] more conspicuous in certain media in the “old West”...there was...overgeneralized and sensationalist treatment [of IM]” (Gauck 1994, 281). In addition, he argues that Stasi collaborators, especially more well-known ones, “fear of being compelled to acknowledge past mistakes, or sometimes to admit past guilt” (Gauck 1994, 283). Schleime does not address this difficulty that the former Stasi informants face in German society, but rather only investigates one who was able to face the past—in this case, only the victim. Ludwig, a principal Stasi figure, lives “immer im Zwischenreich zwischen Wollen und Nicht-Können” (Schleime, 2008,79), perhaps because of his guilt of having been affiliated with the MfS.

Schleime argues that this strategy of covering the past did not arise only after the fall of the Wall. When Clara and Ludwig drive to Hessenwinkel on their excursion, a popular vacation spot for “Funktionäre,” (Schleime 2008, 43), she remembers a class of children who had died in a boat accident. However, the East German news decided to not report the tragedy, in order to keep the destination’s current value to the vacationing *Funktionäre*. This reality was “[e]ine Gegenwart, die sich mit der Vergangenheit überschlägt[e]. Die Gegenwart weit fort“ (Schleime 2008, 44), and the trend of avoiding the past prevails among the Stasi members in *Weit Fort*, which emerges as a strategic attempt to erase this part of history. This concealment of the boat

accident is only a small example of this avoidance of the past. The Stasi magnifies this reconstruction of reality that excluded the past to reinforce the SED state.

Clara asserts that the past plays an important role in the present. She is not searching for an apology or even an explanation about Ludwig's past, but rather an acknowledgment. After he disappears, she writes him a letter asking him to come clean with his past.

Egal, was in deiner Vergangenheit war oder jetzt ist, ich möchte dich nicht drängen, etwas offenzulegen oder dich zu rechtfertigen. Ein paar Worte von Dir würden reichen, damit die schönen gemeinsamen Momente mit Dir in schöner Erinnerung bleiben können. (Schleime 2008, 78)

Because of Ludwig's secrecy about his former GDR life, their relationship could not develop. "Er schafft nicht die Reise zu sich selbst, und damit gelingt auch keine Reise zu ihr" (Schleime 2008, 79), which signifies that he cannot form a relationship with Clara without first acknowledging the past to himself. This distance gives him the ability "seine Haut zu retten" (Schleime 2008, 79) and to avoid guilt of his participation in a corrupt police force. Ludwig believes that suppression of his former life in the GDR will not only leave his past to go unnoticed, but will also erase it, which is embodied in this quote: "[z]urück kann er nicht denken. Nie und nimmer" (Schleime 2008, 79).

This theme of suppressing Stasi history is also addressed through Clara's documentary film on her best friend's betrayal, as he is forced to admit his double life as a Stasi informant in the last scene. Even though his "Geständnis," (Schleime 2008, 39) finally emerges, this confession is not authentic. Clara's best friend treats this confrontation with her as a scene directed on a stage and "[j]etzt führt er Regie" (Schleime 2008, 39). His role as a Stasi informant in Clara's life becomes only a "Figur zu seiner Geschichte" (Schleime 2008, 39), as he

is unquestionably distancing himself from his former life as Ludwig does. Right before his confession, he is depicted as sitting at a café in Italy drinking a glass of dark red wine:

[er]...schickt sein Leben in diesen Kelch hinein. Wird aus ihm trinken, so als könnte er die Tatsachen einfach hinunterschlucken, sie verschwinden lassen oder sie in eine andere Zeitebene verschieben. (Schleime 2008, 39)

The former friend attempts to dismiss the past that he is unwillingly forced to admit. However, his confession has no real significance, since it becomes, as previously mentioned, “fast altmeisterlich inszeniert,” (Schleime 2008, 39). Schleime claims that without a present that acknowledges the Stasi past, the process of reconciliation between the perpetrator and victim cannot begin. In this manner, both the victim and the perpetrator must undergo parallel tasks of addressing their past. Both the best friend and Ludwig are examples that perpetuate the East German strategy of “[d]ie Gegenwart weit fort” (Schleime 2008, 44).

However, Schleime creates a divide between the Stasi and Clara, the victim, when she acknowledges her victimized past through artistic expression. To overcome the betrayal of her best friend and the trauma of the Stasi file, Clara displays personal information from her file in a public art exhibit. „Sie setzte noch eins drauf und machte aus seinen Beobachtungsberichten für die Stasi eine ironisch künstlerische Dokumentation” (Schleime 2008, 103). She openly reveals descriptions of her private life, including love letters, and takes artistic pictures of herself to juxtapose with the short and trivialized Stasi descriptions. This act of claiming her file empowered Clara to reclaim as her own the past that was once controlled by the Stasi. Nevertheless, because the victim, unlike the Stasi informants, comes to terms with the past, Clara represents a morally higher character in this novel.

The author also does not make any political statements about the Stasi past, nor does she comment on the complexity of coming to terms with the past in a society that often lays shame and guilt upon former Stasi members in *Weit Fort*. As Gauck emphasized in his speech, addressing the past has proved difficult for many Stasi informants, especially those who were in the spotlight of the media. In addition, the difficulty of addressing the past became more amplified as the informants realized that their stories were often highly unpopular in a German society that, for good reasons, favored the victim's perspective on Stasi history.

V. Conclusion

Cornelia Schleime tells a personal story about one woman's experience of Stasi oppression. Many reviews like the one in *Die Zeit* have praised *Weit Fort*, labeling it as a must-read novel on the MfS, despite its poor writing style. However, even though this novel represents an interesting perspective, Schleime stays within the personal realm of Clara's experience of Stasi oppression (bordering on making political statements). Each time the narrator comes close to articulating a political image of the Stasi, she shies away in the end from making any strong political commentary or from creating a Stasi prototype. This, however, leaves the reader unsatisfied.

Hardly any reviews on *Weit Fort* have addressed this aspect of the book, perhaps since this story is closely intertwined with the author's personal life. However, it is questionable whether this story can be taken as a source of information about the Stasi, since the novel's historical accuracy is uncertain: not only was it written 19 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, but it also alludes only to Clara's personal issues. Whereas Wolf wrote *Was bleibt* under the

height of the Stasi's supervision on her life, the reader can derive more current and political issues from the work relevant to the East German intellectual elite in the late 1970s. Belonging to a younger generation as a child born in the GDR, Schleime tells her story from her unique, generationally-defined perspective and decides to write about these experiences long after their occurrences. This brings up the question of historical relativism within *Weit Fort* of what can be taken as historically correct, which will be addressed in the conclusion section of the thesis.

Rather than attempting to extract any greater political and archetypal significance, this text is better advised to be read as a personal confrontation with the Stasi. Unlike Wolf who asserts her political ideal for the GDR in *Was bleibt*, and Antje Rávic Strubel, whose novel, *Sturz der Tage in die Nacht*, will be discussed in chapter three, Schleime does not create a Stasi prototype. Nevertheless, *Weit Fort* touches on many issues surrounding the MfS and Stasi reconciliation in unified Germany, through which the author constructs a highly personal document that many critics commend.

Chapter 3

The Creation of a Stasi Prototype in Antje Rávic Strubel's *Sturz der Tage in die Nacht*

I. Introduction

Antje Rávic Strubel's novel *Sturz der Tage in die Nacht* (2011) differs from *Was bleibt* and *Weit Fort* not only in its representation of the Stasi, but also in structure, as it is a lengthy novel with a drawn-out plot, whereas the previous two literary texts were rather short and provided a small window into a character's personal life. Unlike Wolf and Schleime, Strubel does not incorporate personal experiences into her Stasi story to create a hybrid narrative. Born in 1974 in Potsdam, she was only fifteen years old when the Wall fell and had never personally experienced intrusive Stasi oppression, even though she was aware of the strong central state. She studied American studies, psychology, and literature in New York and Potsdam. Strubel began her literary career early and has published many short stories, essays, and articles, in addition to her seven critically acclaimed novels (*Offene Blende* (2001), *Unter Schnee* (2001), *Fremd Gehen* (2002), *Tupolew* (2004), *Kältere Schichten der Luft* (2007), *Vom Dorf* (2007), and *Gebrauchsanweisung für Schweden* (2008)). She has won many prestigious German literary prizes for her works, such as the *Ernst-Willner-Preis* (2001), the *Roswitha-Preis* (2003), and the *Deutsche Kritikpreis* (2003).

Strubel comments that her post-Wall and GDR experiences differ considerably from those of older generations who, like Christa Wolf and Cornelia Schleime, had to deal personally and directly with the longterm effects of Stasi oppression:

We younger authors from the East find the GDR a bizarre world we experienced only as children. Of course, we know how deadly it was, but we don't take it seriously anymore; maybe because we didn't experience it as a personal threat. It didn't destroy our lives because we were fifteen when the wall fell and we were just starting out. This means that we can write about the GDR, that we can use it as material, but we don't belong to the generation that needs to come to terms with the past. You could say we are the first generation that isn't dealing directly with that process. (Alexander 2007)

Strubel has not suffered from personal trauma from the totalitarian state power or the Stasi. As a member of the youngest generation of East German authors, Strubel often writes stories about pre- and post-Wall German issues, but the topic of “coming to terms” with the past that was addressed by Schleime in *Weit Fort*, does not figure as an issue in Strubel's personal life, nor does it much appear in her novel, *Sturz der Tage*. Instead, this literary text is fiction-based; it addresses the complex transition of a divided Germany into a unified country from a more distant perspective and in particular focuses on Stasi control and its traumatic effects reaching into the lives of Germans even twenty years after reunification.

This novel recounts a love story between a young man of 25 years, Erik, and Inez, a 41-year-old woman, on a Swedish island, a bird sanctuary, called Stora Karlö at the height of summer roughly twenty years after the fall of the Wall. Erik stumbles onto the island during his solitary travels and decides to stay when his relationship with Inez seems to develop into more than just an ephemeral summer affair. However, when Rainer Feldberg, a former Stasi officer who monitored Inez's life in East Germany, steps onto the island as well, he disrupts their relationship and the peaceful atmosphere and serves as a reminder of Inez's traumatic memories of Stasi control. At first, Inez does not understand why Feldberg has appeared on this remote Swedish island, but she knows his sudden reappearance is not a coincidence. However, her traumatic past resurfaces when she reads a news article about Felix Ton, her former lover and Feldberg's close friend, and his candidacy for the Bundestag.

Inez Rauter, a dissident youth during her early days in the GDR, and Felix Ton share a complicated history. Because he wanted to follow Feldberg in the Stasi effort—perhaps out of peer pressure to join or out of desire to conform—Ton could no longer affiliate himself with Inez. Under Feldberg's advice, Ton left Inez and even persuaded her to put their child up for adoption. Therefore, as Ton's longtime friend and campaign manager, Feldberg travels to the island to ensure that neither this relationship nor Ton's affiliation with the East German Secret Police tarnishes his political reputation. Thus, Feldberg has appeared on the island to keep a watchful eye on Inez.

In the novel, the connection between Inez and Erik's love story and the political campaign does not become apparent before the second half of the story, but as Inez, Ton and Feldberg's East German history unfolds, they also become aware that Erik—also deeply intertwined with their past—is Inez and Ton's son who was five years of age when the Wall fell. Not only must Inez face her Stasi past again, but she also must deal with the incestuous relationship that has developed with Erik without their being aware of it. Both storylines intersect throughout the plot and are essential for comprehending Strubel's representation of the Stasi in her novel.

Antje Strubel, who belongs to the youngest generation of the authors analyzed in this thesis, views and shapes the Stasi from a different perspective than Wolf and Schleime, perhaps because she possesses no intimate connection to her life in the GDR. *Sturz der Tage in die Nacht* presents a depiction of the Stasi figure, Rainer Feldberg, as a villainous character who seems to always display a distant demeanor, Inez, as a victim who finds it almost impossible to

escape the Stasi, and other characters, such as Ton and Erik, whose depiction contributes to Strubel's representation of the MfS in her novel.

To develop these strongly contrasting characters, Strubel constructs her story through various narrators. The novel begins with Erik's first-person account of arriving on the island; he also recounts many events on the island throughout the text. As the plot develops, a third-person narrator is introduced not only to describe the series of events in a more objective manner than the narrators in *Was bleibt* and *Weit Fort*, but also to examine each character in the novel. This creates a social distance to the story and helps the reader to gain a comparatively objective view on the Stasi and even perhaps to outline a Stasi prototype.

II. Inez: The Stasi Victim

In *Was bleibt* and *Weit Fort* and now in *Sturz der Tage in die Nacht*, certain trends in the depiction of victims of Stasi oppression seem to arise: these characters are women overseen by strong, yet distant male Stasi figures who manipulate their victims psychologically and to some extent, physically. This dynamic reflects a certain kind of anti-feminist atmosphere in the GDR, despite the SED state's claim of social equality and justice among all citizens. However, Dorothea Dornhof states in her article "The Inconsequence Of Doubt: Intellectuals and the Discourse on Socialist Unity" that "the party, with its centralized structure and its general secretary serving as the „father of the people,“ assumed the right to speak for and to represent the people" (Dornhof 2001, 67). From Dornhof's historical perspective, the state served as a patriarchal figure where women held little power or voice, as is reflected through the victimized characters in all three literary texts.

The misogynist atmosphere of the GDR that is accented in Wolf and Schleime's novels, however, is directly addressed in Strubel's novel through Inez Rauter, as a victim of Stasi oppression. As Feldberg remains on the island, she loses autonomy in her daily life, since he attempts to ruin her career by blaming her for growing dangerous *Rauschpflanzen* on the island. Feldberg's complaints to her employer distance her from the research that she is conducting on the Razorbill (*Tordalke*), "weltweit der einzig verbleibende Vertreter der Gattung Alca" (Strubel 2011, 138). When Inez attempts to continue research on the *Tordalke*, her superior who monitors her work under Feldberg's advice, tells her to concentrate on the "Beseitigung der Rauschpflanzen" (Strubel, 2011, 140). This issue is simply a ploy that Feldberg uses to prolong his stay on the island and to control Inez's work. This storyline also portrays the powerful male figures in her life, however minor or major, who rob her of her autonomy. Inez comments to Erik on men's constant need for power over women:

Ich habe noch keinen Mann gesehen, dem es nicht graut vor zu viel Leben, vor unkntrrollierbarem Leben...Auf die eine oder andere Weise muss er es töten. Und als Beweis seiner sinnlosen Herrschaft stellt er es sich ausgestopft oder verschleiert in die Wohnung. Und es sind immer Männer, Erike, immer (Strubel 2011, 140).

Inez's remark results from the constant male dominance in her life. As a young girl, she rebelled against the East German traditions, such as *Marschmusik* and *Chansons*: in front of Feldberg, Ton, and her parents, she declared that "Marschmusik geht mir wirklich auf die Nerven...Vor allem sozialistische" (Strubel 2011, 167). However, her mother attempted to disqualify Inez's assertion in the presence of Feldberg, who already viewed her as threat to the socialist ideals the MfS upheld and therefore wanted to control her dissident inclinations by means of surveillance. Inez, who was brought up "als einen offenen und ehrlichen Menschen" (Strubel 2011, 170) and—quoting Goethe—thinks "jeder ist edel, hilfreich und gut" (Strubel

2011, 169), is depicted as a naïve adolescent; Strubel constructs this character to set up a story of a victim, who is led astray by the higher male power in the MfS. This is an example not only of the Stasi's oppression of a victim, but also of the male supremacy over women in the GDR that resurfaces in her life after reunification, as Feldberg reappears to exert his Stasiesque power over her once again.

Inez Rauter exemplifies the true victim in *Sturz der Tage* who undergoes both psychological and physical changes, and disturbances in her relationships from Feldberg and Ton's power over her work and private life. When she starts to unveil her past life to Erik, she says to him, „[d]u willst hören, wie jemand den Ruf verliert und die Freunde verliert und wie die Familie, die Zukunft, die Gesundheit, die körperliche und geistige Gesundheit—Betonung auf geistige—zerstört werden“ (Strubel 2011, 110). This quote portrays the Stasi's totalitarian power that infiltrates every aspect of her life. Therefore, after the fall of the Wall, she wants to be “frei und unkontrollierbar” (Strubel 2011, 106). She decides to remove herself from societal and structural influences and to live on a remote island. This act can also be viewed as a reaction to the trauma from Stasi surveillance.

To further establish Inez's role as the true victim in this novel, Feldberg and Ton even attempt to blame her for their own crimes within the GDR. In an interview, Ton comments how Inez had put their child up for adoption against his will, while Feldberg, at the very end of the novel, commits suicide off the cliffs of the Stora Karlö, in a last desperate attempt to control and damage Inez's life. This sacrifice portrays the extent of the Stasi's endeavor to preserve its power, and such events as Feldberg's suicide can be seen as the *Verlängerter Arm der Stasi* that

reaches into generations after the dissolution of East Germany, which will be discussed later in the chapter.

Because Inez did not have autonomous self-control growing up in the GDR, fear became a large presence in her life. Feldberg represents not only a deep disruption, but also the reemergence of the Stasi as a villainous force in her life. The encroachment of Feldberg on Inez's peaceful life on the island reinforces Inez's position, in particular when she recounts her trauma to Erik. Therefore, when she sees the former Stasi employee again, she realizes it was „[d]ie Prüfung am Einzelfall, wie stark sein Einfluss noch wirkte“ (Strubel 2011, 335). His reappearance has a strong effect on her: „[e]r wollte mir Angst machen...Er wollte mich daran erinnern, dass einer seiner Kumpel Angst hat“ (Strubel 2011, 110).

Despite her surprise and panic that Feldberg has returned, she realizes that the two Stasi figures are most fearful of losing power. However, when Feldberg reenters her life, she knows how to transform her fear into productive behavior: „Zu Angst kann man ein panisches oder auch ein produktives Verhältnis haben“ (Strubel 2011, 316). Feldberg believes that exposing the incestuous relationship in the press would destroy her peace on the island and her private life, but she dismisses Feldberg's scheme and simply says that Erik and she “hatten alles” (Strubel 2011, 434), a comment that she gives to the reporters that Feldberg calls on the island as they intrusively inquire about her relationship with Erik.

III. Rainer Feldberg: *Ihr väterlicher Freund*

Strubel establishes a markedly different depiction of the Stasi than Wolf and Schleime. Even though the previous two authors acknowledge the amoral aspects of the Stasi, they,

nevertheless, convey a subjective image of Stasi figures, by introducing them with more of an emotional presence, as Wolf does with Jürgen M. Schleime also depicts Ludwig's guilt and his reluctance to come to terms with his former life. This is not the case when Strubel introduces Rainer Feldberg, the principal Stasi figure in her novel who represents the prototype of a villain in society with his desperate intrigues and manipulative schemes to preserve his power. This unemotional character tries to reassert his power over Inez's life. Through the depiction by a third-person omniscient narrator, the reader perceives Feldberg as a coldblooded—at times, terrifying—ex-Stasi employee with no emotional depth. Furthermore, no attempt is made by any of the narrators to explain how a person could become such a villain

Feldberg's work as a Stasi employee falls with the Berlin wall, and “[e]s kränkt ihn, dass das sein Leben gewesen sein soll“ (Strubel 2011, 111). Nevertheless, he still attempts to make his work relevant by establishing his own business, an agency, which he calls MEGA OPERATION & RISK PROTECTION, with “[d]as Prinzip Geheimnisse in die Menschen hineinzubringen. Sie sich selbst zum Rätsel werden zu lassen” (Strubel 2011, 333). His job description is noted as “*Ihr väterlicher Freund*” (Strubel 2011, 394), which is also proof that he still uses East German rhetoric. Because he is used to having influence over people, losing control and power scares him, and opening his agency is one way he can perpetuate his former GDR work. As displayed through his agency, Feldberg attempts to prolong his former career as a Stasi officer into the new realities of the FRG.

Another characteristic he retains from his former career is his affinity for usurping and possessing control. Since he believes that Inez and Felix Ton's past together would harm Ton's campaign, „[d]ie Angst vor einem Imageschaden hatte Feldberg diesen lohnenswerten Auftrag

eingbracht, einen Auftrag, der es nötig gemacht hatte, ein paar genauere Informationen einzuholen.“ (Strubel 2011, 335). When he controls Inez’s life, he is minimizing the risk of an “Imageschaden,” which sums up what his agency does: protection against uncertainty by manipulating situations to achieve a satisfying result.

Through the third-person narrator’s description of Feldberg’s personal life, the reader captures a terrifying picture of him. Having dedicated his work and private life to the MfS, he has no family, but rather a dog that he adopted during his travels through Eastern Europe. However, he even views „[d]ie Liebe zu einem Hund” (Strubel, 2011, 339) as “eine Erfahrung, die ihm beruflich zugute kam“ (Strubel 2011, 339) not only to create an empathetic demeanor, but also to soften the subjects in question in order to help Feldberg determine their „Schwachstellen“ (Strubel 2011, 339). He retells the story of the adoption of this stray dog “bis sie ölig war” (Strubel 2011, 339), since he possess no other relatable or emotional story. This scene portrays not only his cold and unemotional demeanor, but also his strategy to lure victims into his control. (This anecdote hints that he was in the upper ranks of the Stasi because he possessed rights to travel to Eastern Europe.)

Because Feldberg derived his power from subjects’ weaknesses, the narrator also implies that he actively covered his own *Schwachstellen* to display a distanced, yet powerful appearance. When he explains this strategy to Erik in detail, he claims that “[m]an muss sich diese Stellen schmerzhaft bewusstmachen...und dann immer feste gegensteuern! Familienbande seien Schwachstellen. Die Liebe zu einem Hund. Zu einem Kind.“ (Strubel 2011, 143). Because exhibiting emotions and vulnerability robs him of his power, Feldberg sees his familial and friendship connections as hindrances. Therefore, his active effort to eliminate his weaknesses

and gain knowledge of other people's *Schwachstellen* creates a terrifying and authoritative image. Possessing information fuels his power, which has made him a successful Stasi officer in the GDR. Information is power, which he explains in detail when Erik catches him sifting through Inez's papers in her office late one evening:

'Information ist alles' sagte Feldberg. Er schaltete die Taschenlampe an...'Ohne umfassend informiert zu sein, können wir nie gewährleisten, dass unsere Schlüsse, die wir über Menschen ziehen, richtig sind. Das ist das A und O, Erik, das A und O meiner Tätigkeit. Und des Lebens. Finden Sie nicht, dass Entdeckungen aufregend sind? (Strubel 2011, 89-90)

This quote touches on the aspect of *Allwissenheit der Stasi* that Christa Wolf also addresses. The omniscience of the Stasi found in *Was bleibt* through the constant presence of the Stasi figures in the protagonist's everyday life aligns with Feldberg's credo about information equaling power. The documentation and compilation of information empowers the Stasi omniscience in East German society. In this case, the power of information can be used to control not only people's lives and careers, but also the literary and artistic world, which Feldberg characterizes as *aufregend*. He still carries a briefcase and files filled with notes on every encounter and interaction with people, an example of his conviction of the Stasi's strategy of securing power.

In the ending scenes, Feldberg proves to be a character desperate for control over Inez and whose dedication to the East German State Security Service never has diminished. Even though he attempts to ruin Inez's life, he sees that she is unaffected and commits suicide in a last attempt to frame her as a murderer. The reader is relieved to learn that his desired effects do not follow as he planned. Overall, Feldberg is still very much a character of the East German past who refuses to change his ways, and who is—to an extent—traumatized by the sudden dissolution of the East German state, but Strubel does not suggest such a disturbance in her story.

She describes a stubborn ex-Stasi who constantly tries to make himself relevant in a society that does not demand a totalitarian police force. Instead, he attempts to hold on to his power through control of Inez and by working as a spy for Ton in his political campaign.

IV. Felix Ton's Stasi Past

Felix Ton, Feldberg's friend, was a Stasi informant, but his demeanor does not terrify the reader in the same ways that Feldberg's does. Feldberg possessed strong influence over Felix in the GDR, and even had enough control over his private life to end Felix's relationship with Inez. Ton was "ein Spielball" (Strubel 2011, 348) for Feldberg, and through their friendship, he could manipulate Ton's actions accordingly. However, even though Feldberg uses Ton as his "Kapitel" (Strubel 2011, 335) to gain influence on the German populace—which portrays Ton as a victim—the political figure, nevertheless, takes on the role of the perpetrator and demonstrates his desire for illicit power through his attempt to climb the ranks of the Stasi in the GDR and his deceitfulness in the political campaign.

However, Feldberg's control over both Ton's private life and career during his youth in the GDR place Ton within the category of victim. Feldberg describes the Stasi IMs as "[g]ehorsam wie Schafe...Man konnte ihnen irgendetwas in der Rübe pflanzen, und sie machen es" (Strubel 2011, 326), which is precisely how Ton has acted: Feldberg has not only controlled him, but Ton has followed Feldberg's direction out of friendship pressure and in an attempt to conform. However, much like Feldberg, he feels no regret about giving his son away because he does not want to even see Erik now. Strubel describes Ton as a weak character who still falls

mercy to the Stasi, and unlike Jürgen M., who does not question Feldberg's motives or form his own ideas on the morality of following the Stasi effort. Instead, he blindly follows.

However, Ton hires Feldberg to run his political campaign and to tell Ton how to structure his speeches and interviews. Ton states that he wants "Menschen aus der DDR Gerechtigkeit wiederfahren zu lassen" (Strubel 2011, 97), which is sarcastic since he lies about his past and motivation for the *Bundestag*. Ton shocks the reader with his display of typical SED behavior by hiring a former Stasi employee to gain power in a democratic system. We can see that Ton desires power and control, which he never achieved in his attempt to join the MfS. This political campaign is a way for Ton to grasp power by now using Feldberg as a pawn in his plan.

In East Germany, Ton had an unsteady relationship with Inez. He was brought under questioning by the MfS about his loyalty to the state, since "Inez Rauter ist [ihm] ans Herz gewachsen" (Strubel 2011, 308). As a consequence, Ton was strongly advised to end his relationship with her since she was a dissident. Despite his professed loyalty to the Stasi, his interests in Inez deviated from the Stasi beliefs. The reader sympathizes to a certain degree with Ton because he has conflicting interests, and the powerful force in his life overshadows everything else. Therefore, in an effort to conform, he has ended his relationship with Inez. As Gauck mentions in the essay "Dealing with a Stasi Past," people joined the Stasi for different reasons, and pressure from friends was often one of them. However, Feldberg continued to control his private life within the GDR. This type of Stasi victim represents a new hybrid, different from Jürgen M. because it was Ton's best friend who asserted pressure upon him to join the Stasi ranks.

However, Feldberg asserts that Ton was never a “reines Herz” for the Stasi. He states, “[d]as ist der Unterschied zwischen uns. Statt dich auf das zu konzentrieren, was ansteht, lässt du dich zu sekundären Assoziationen verleiten“ (Strubel 2011, 327). Because of the presence of the Stasi in his life, he tried to disassociate from Inez because of the pressure from his Stasi friend. However, these conflicting interests grow gradually stronger throughout the novel until Ton decides to sever contact with Feldberg after the political campaign is complete. Because of Feldberg’s attempt to publicly scrutinize Inez and Erik’s relationship, Ton breaks his *Auftrag* with Feldberg, which is a sign that Feldberg is losing control and a symbol that the Stasi has no longer any power in unified Germany.

Ton tried to comply with the Stasi effort and to follow the way of the *Wahrheit Suchenden*. Even though he has tried to rise through the Stasi ranks, Feldberg tells Ton: „[d]u bringst alles durcheinander, Felix. Du wärst für uns völlig unbrauchbar gewesen.“ (Strubel 2011, 327). For Ton, this piece of information sets his work in a different light, since he thought that he was a meaningful contributor to the Stasi effort. Because Ton was totally clueless about his position and that he was being used, he is also a victim in this way.

However, as a perpetrator, he is just as guilty as Feldberg, as he turns himself into a reckless politician who lies about his past. In the end, Strubel argues that the Stasi has no place in society, as she illustrates when Ton rebels against Feldberg’s attempt to bring Inez publicly to shame. However, she also illustrates the terror of the SED ideology and rhetoric in Ton’s political platform.

V. *Vernunft*

To create this convincing picture of the MfS as a villainous state apparatus, Strubel cleverly juxtaposes the Stasi figures with Inez, Erik, and their relationship. In her novel, Strubel equates a specific conception of *Vernunft* with the Stasi, casting, however, a most critical light on a rationality not checked by morality. “[Feldberg] hatte sich an seine Maximen erinnert. Eine dieser Maximen war es, sich von der Vernunft leiten zu lassen” (Strubel 2011, 336). It was *Vernunft* that led him on this operation on the Swedish island single-mindedly to help Felix Ton’s campaign built on the traditional GDR “Familienidyll” (Strubel 2011, 330). The *Familienidyll*, which is also an aspect of Feldberg’s *Vernunft*, refers directly to the former East German state’s ideals, as Dorothea Dornhof asserts in her article “The Inconsequence Of Doubt: Intellectuals and the Discourse on Socialist Unity”

The dominance of a bureaucratic political regime intended to ensure unity meant that the diverse elements of society had to be accommodated within the state. Typically, this effort led to the revival of a pre-modern language of community-building. Like the *paterfamilias* of the pre-bourgeois family, the party, with its centralized structure and its general secretary serving as the „father of the people,“ assumed the right to speak for and to represent the people. Ideas of social equality and justice found highly stylized expression within the context of these paternalistic principles. (Dornhof 2001, 67)

Dornhof’s description addresses to the patriarchal language employed by the East German state and on which Feldberg shapes Ton’s rhetoric during his campaign. Ton hopes to become the “wiedervereinigter Vater” (Strubel 2011, 97) and in his interviews with the media, Ton utilizes patriarchal terms relevant to the traditional formation of family and state. When Erik reads one of his interviews, he remarks: “*Hoffentlich merkt jemand, was das für eine Sprache ist. Hoffentlich merkt man, das er redet wie im Kalten Krieg*” (Strubel 2011, 98). Strubel uses Erik, a character who has only learned about the GDR in a historical context, not only to emphasize

Ton's rhetoric and his convictions in GDR ideology, but also to illustrate the terror of such beliefs and the shocking amount of power that can be achieved through such rhetoric.

The diction associated with both Stasi figures is highly politicized and somewhat militaristic, as they use official language of the GDR over 15 years after the fall of the Wall. Feldberg often coins terms to describe occurrences, people, and complication. For example, he employs the terms "*Angriffsfrent Intimleben*" (Strubel 2011, 69) to express the unknown that must be exposed. This term shows how private life and political life become conflated. All of this official language, Strubel italicizes to emphasize Feldberg and Ton's political language derived from the GDR.

This aspect corresponds strongly to the Stasi figure, Ludwig, in *Weit Fort*, since Ludwig, Feldberg, and Ton attempt to create "aus dem Dort wieder ein Hier" (Schleime 2008, 58), or in other words, to evolve a space in unified Germany where their Stasi past still has relevance. However, the incestuous mother-son relationship that takes shape between Erik and Inez challenges this rhetoric and Feldberg's *Vernunft*. Strubel contrasts Feldberg and Ton's Stasi utilitarian rationality and morality, on which Ton builds his political campaign, with this incestuous relationship to question the foundation of morality in a society. However, he does not seem repulsed when he comments that "es mochte nicht in den Plan dieser Gesellschaft, aber es gab vieles, was nicht in den Plan dieser Gesellschaft passte" (Strubel 2011, 330). Strubel directly challenges the "[d]ie bürgerliche Kernfamilie" that „ist sowieso bloß noch ein Überbleibsel des absterbenden Imperialismus" (Strubel 2011, 323). This suggests the traditions of the GDR should be challenged, which Strubel confronts through an extreme juxtaposition of an incestuous relationship in an attempt to dismantle GDR ideology.

VI. Individuality and the *Sich selbst*

Strubel's argument is similar to Wolf and Schleime's previously discussed assertion of the absence of the individual or the *Sich selbst* in East German society. In a conversation between Feldberg and Erik about individuality in society, Feldberg argues that in „jede[r] beliebige[n] Kultur, jede[r] Gesellschaft...Es geht immer um eines: die Bestätigung des Ich....Das ist so, weil dieses Ich gar nicht existiert. Weil es ein Hirngespinnst ist. Eine Behauptung“ (Strubel 2011, 49). This claim seems to originate directly from his former work as a Stasi employee, through which when Feldberg wanted to smother individuality, as he did with Inez by determining her future in the GDR after she had given birth to Erik. Because Feldberg's opinions on the subject of the *Sich selbst* appear early in the story, the reader becomes aware that his perception of society differs from those of Erik, who decides to pursue solitary travel away from his friends.

The topic of the private sphere emerges once again when discussing the MfS. Both Wolf and Schleime comment on the nonexistent *Sich selbst* in East German society because of the Stasi's totalitarian power over the populace. Strubel concurs with this assertion that the individual was crowded out with the emergence of power, as characterized by Feldberg. Therefore, all three Stasi depictions convey the same message on the topic of the *Sich selbst*. However, Strubel extends the topic of individuality to address the reemergence of the Stasi after reunification, much as Schleime attempts through Clara and Ludwig's relationship.

VII. *Der verlängerte Arm der Stasi*

Therefore, Feldberg cannot only be seen as a former MfS employee with old views, but also as an extension of the Stasi power in unified Germany, or the *verlängerter Arm der Stasi*, since he still tries to grasp control and power where he sees vulnerability. *Der verlängerte Arm der Stasi* is a concept that defines the MfS power that still exists post-Wende and recaptures not only the generation who experienced such oppression, but also in subsequent generations who are unfamiliar with its power, like Erik. Even though Inez believed that the experiences of Stasi oppression stayed in her memories, Feldberg returned to her life to reinstate the *Legendenbildung* of the Stasi through complete control over her life once more. Erik asserts that he attempts this by framing his suicide as if Inez were the perpetrator:

Er wollte es noch einmal versuchen, auch wenn er die Wirkung nicht mehr erleben würde. Er wollte ein Rätsel in Inez hineintragen, ein tiefes, dauerhafter, endgültiges Rätsel, und erst sein Tod gab diesem Rätsel Konsequenz. Über seinen Tod hinaus sollte Inez sich selbst misstrauen. Sie sollte sich fragen, ob ihre Erinnerung sie im Stich gelassen habe und ihre Leben nicht so, sondern anders verlaufen sei. Und dieser Zweifel betrifft, da ich sie liebe, auch mich. (Strubel 2011, 432-3)

Through Feldberg's act, Inez must question whether she was the perpetrator, as she starts to distrust even herself. This is an effect that the former Stasi employee wanted to evoke, but his suicide also affects the younger generation, Erik, as he sees Inez's world shaken with uncertainty. The legacy of the Stasi also reaches deep into the post-Wende generation to Erik who is still "ungefestigt in [seiner] Haltung zur Welt" (Strubel 2011, 49). On Stora Karlsö, he not only witnesses Inez's Stasi past unfold and Feldberg's power over Inez and Ton, but also experiences Stasi oppression himself, as he notices that Feldberg also followed him. He reads through Feldberg's reports for Ton's candidacy to the Bundestag labeled *Operation Dohle*. Erik

is the only character who reads the Stasi file and realizes that even twenty years after reunification, Feldberg still possess power over these subjects, just as he experiences his oppressive control over his life. Feldberg attempts to make Inez and Erik's incestuous relationship public:

Al ser jedoch feststellte, dass Inez R. mit ihrem Sohn wissentlich ein inzestuöses Verhältnis hatte, wollte er damit an die Öffentlichkeit gehen, um vor den perversen Auswüchsen zu warnen, die ein totalitärer Staat auch nach seinem Untergang noch auf das Bewusstsein der Menschen hat. (Strubel 2011, 430)

Feldberg also uses Erik as his *Spielball* as a last attempt to create a power image of the Stasi. "Die Presserklärung ist nur eine Verleumdung *Legendierung*, wie Feldberg sagen würde. Legendierung und ein letztes großes Rätsel" (Strubel 2011, 432). Therefore, Feldberg's "long arm" reaches through all generations of the post-Wende period to perpetuate the power of the former East German State Security Force. With the metaphor of the *Verlängerter Arm*, Strubel adds to the quasi-mythological dimension of the term whose Oedipal constellation here is captured by the power of a god-like authority, the Stasi, to impact a family's life over the course of several generations.

VIII. Conclusion

Antje Rávic Strubel's *Sturz der Tage in die Nacht* offers a markedly different depiction of the MfS than is seen in *Was bleibt* and *Weit Fort*. Through her descriptions and use of politicized rhetoric from the GDR, the author develops a Stasi prototype, which reveals Feldberg and Ton as unambiguous villainous characters who attempt to regain their lost power. These characters do not attempt to assimilate into a reunified Germany, as they keep their former East

German socialist rhetoric. The various narrators that create these one-dimensional Stasi figures do not elicit any empathy or understanding from the reader.

Although this depiction of the Stasi represents only one image among various literary depictions, many West German media, such as *ARD*, praise Strubel's text and do not bring the topic of historical revisionism into question. The author states in her interview with *Deutschlandradio*: "für mich steht die Stasi in diesem Zusammenhang für alles Zerstörerische, für sämtliche niederen Eigenschaften des Menschen, für Manipulation, für Motive, die aus reiner Gier, aus Selbstverliebtheit heraus kommen. Also die Stasi steht für dieses zerstörerische Moment" (Opitz 2012). Even though *Sturz der Tage in die Nacht* is a fictional novel, Strubel's extreme depiction of the MfS in it begs controversy, especially since this topic is part of recent German history that many still have difficulties addressing.

Conclusion

Understanding the different Stasi depictions

I. Addressing the Generation Gap between the Authors

Christa Wolf, Cornelia Schleime, and Antje Rávic Strubel share many similarities, all being writers from East Germany who offer their unique perspectives on the MfS in their literary works. There are many factors that may account for these differences, but one noticeable distinction that may explain these three different representations of the victim is the generational gaps between these authors.

As a child during Hitler's Third Reich, Christa Wolf's trauma from her National Socialist past directed her path toward socialism. However, Wolf opposed the totalitarian atmosphere the Stasi upheld, and as a member of the oldest generation who witnessed the birth of the GDR state, she saw hope in a socialist state and called for reform, through which a *Sozialismus mit menschlichem Antlitz* would be achieved. In her novella, she expresses this desire by creating a personal story about Stasi oppression from the first-person perspective, in which the victim and the perpetrators both experience trauma from the MfS, and during her public reading, she envisions her ideal socialist state. Wolf's text is unique, as she does not criticize socialism as an ideology and presents Jürgen M. with a human face.

In *Weit Fort*, Schleime integrates her own experiences of Stasi oppression into her work, but also uses the mono-perspectivism of the third-person narrator to describe Clara's victimization, which ultimately serves to create distance from the Stasi characters. This structure also reinforces the barrier between victim and perpetrator, which is defined through the issue of "coming to terms" with the past in unified Germany. Since Ludwig does not reveal his past to

the victim, the barrier remains between Clara and Ludwig, so that neither is able to move forward with their relationship. Her representation is perhaps as a result of her being born in the GDR and outwardly challenging the SED as she belonged to the rebellious youth of East Germany. Also, Schleime wrote her novel in 2008, roughly 20 years after the fall of the Wall, which allowed for a certain attitude to develop toward her own past as well as the actual events of the Stasi, whereas Christa Wolf wrote her novella during the height of her Stasi surveillance in the late 1970s; this could also explain the many differences between these two Stasi depictions.

Strubel's presentation of the Stasi contrasts considerably with the other two. Since this young author came of age as the Wall fell, she remembers little about the GDR or the Stasi. The reader, therefore, encounters more of an objective description of the MfS, in which Inez does not and cannot empathize with Feldberg. In fact, Feldberg is depicted as a destructive force in society, a much more extreme depiction of a Stasi figure than those in the previous texts. Where Wolf's Jürgen M. has made a pact with the devil, we almost encounter the devil himself in the Stasi figure Feldberg. In addition, Strubel does not address Stasi reconciliation, but rather portrays the informants almost as sub-human agents who refuse to acknowledge that the times have changed. These differences and the extent of Stasi contact each author experienced is something to take into consideration when analyzing the representations of the victim and perpetrator, which is perhaps one reason why Strubel is able to easily construct a Stasi prototype.

The authors' generational differences and personal experiences—or lack thereof—could explain the divergent representations found in these texts. These authors, especially Wolf and Schleime, draw on their personal experiences as victims to angle their works to portray a certain kind of Stasi figure. Strubel, who does not have any connection to the Stasi, portrays Feldberg

and Ton in a more extreme manner. In order to delve even deeper into the various literary representation of the MfS, it would also prove useful to examine a novel written from the perspective of an official who was closely affiliated with the Stasi and whose description of the MfS strongly diverges from those of the three previously discussed works.

II. A Comparison with Hermann Kant's *Kennung*

It is worth looking at yet another representation of the Stasi by an author from the GDR to understand better the patterns observed in the works discussed thus far. Hermann Kant's *Kennung* (published 2010) is a good example of a literary text that illustrates a different representation of the Stasi. Although *Kennung*, like Strubel's *Sturz der Tage in die Nacht*, is purely fictional, Kant's experiences in East Germany as well as his generational perspective, nevertheless, give shape to the text's themes and to the representation of the MfS in this novel.

Born in 1926 in Hamburg, Kant, like Wolf, lived through the rise and fall of the GDR and was a confirmed socialist who truly believed in SED ideology. He first became a member of the SED in 1949 and in the 1980s became a member of the *Zentralkomitees der SED* and the *Volkskammer*. Kant served the SED state as the President of the *DDR-Schriftstellerverband* from 1978 until 1989, and substantial evidence suggests that he worked as a Stasi informant from 1963 to 1976, even though he denies his collaboration with the MfS today and fought successfully against these allegations in a trial. Because he worked at the political and official helm of the GDR, his life and political views differed considerably from Christa Wolf's experience in the GDR.

Hermann Kant's *Kennung* allows for an interesting comparison with Wolf, Schleime, and Strubel's texts because his novel hardly addresses the destructive power of the Stasi. As a prominent official of the GDR who gained a lot of attention post-Wende, he may have experienced pressure from the societal expectation to write about the Stasi. His dilemma does not originate from the decision to write about the MfS, but rather from the challenge of how to create a representation of the secret police that does not trivialize his long-term career and dedication to the SED. Therefore, a critical portrayal of the Stasi like Wolf's would hardly be an option for him, and not surprisingly, one finds only minor critiques about the destructive power of the Stasi in *Kennung*. The story is told from a mono-perspective narrator who follows the main character, Linus Cord, in a divided Berlin, before the construction of the Wall and before the peak of Stasi terror in the East Germany.

The critic Klaus Schroeder summarizes *Kennung* as follows:

die Hauptfigur, der ehrgeizige Literaturkritiker Linus Cord, [wird] von Stasi-Offizieren aufgefordert, seine Wehrmachts-Erkennungsmarke bei der West-Berliner Auskunftsstelle zu erfragen. Cord sträubt sich, zeigt sich aber gleichwohl verunsichert ob seiner offenbar die Stasi interessierenden Vergangenheit...[Cord] begibt sich...schließlich zur Recherche eigenmächtig nach West-Berlin. Dabei wird er von seinen Gesprächspartnern zwar verfolgt und beobachtet, aber so, dass er sie bemerken kann. Im Westteil der Stadt, der Anfang 1961 noch problemlos von Ost-Berlinern besucht werden konnte, fühlt er sich sichtlich unwohl. Der von den Erlebnissen in West-Berlin und dem Verhalten der Stasi-Leute gleichermaßen verschreckte Linus Cord erhält schließlich Besuch von dem ihm schon bekannten Tschekisten und einem General, der die ihm von der Stasi zugewiesene Rolle erläutert. (Schroeder 2010)

Even though Kant creates a complex story with an intriguing storyline, he succeeds in clarifying his perspective on the MfS through a writing style that describes the Stasi informants as dumb and clueless. Despite avoiding a strong critical view on the MfS, he still does not completely dismiss the repressive aspects of the Stasi.

Sie sei eine Kröte, die man einerseits schlucken müsse, andererseits aber nicht schlucken könne. Schon ihres Panzers wegen, der nicht selten das erdrücke, was er schützen solle. Ein Instrument der Macht, das sich für die Macht selber halte (Kant 2010, 122).

Like Cornelia Schleime, Kant uses the word *Panzer* to describe the weapon the MfS uses not only to secure its own control against the defenseless East German populace, but also to create distance as a protective barrier from the rest of society. However, the majority of the text is written in a rather ironic tone, which trivializes the destructive power of the Stasi. Ignoring the psychological and physical impact that the Stasi imposed on its victims speaks directly to Kant's revisionist practices. The author analyzes the confusion surrounding Stasi observation through a most perplexing series of events, which is only understood at the end of the book when all of the details suddenly converge at the end to conclude in the novel's main theme.

In the last scenes of the novel, Cord has a revelation about the goal of literature in the GDR, as Cord and the Stasi officers discuss the position of literature in the state's ideological and political ideals with Cord. The Stasi officials suggest to Cord that GDR literature should not embellish or serve as a support mechanism for the SED, but rather enlighten readers on the reality of the times. However, the SED historically controlled the literary culture in the GDR, and the official state perspective was enforced through the Stasi surveillance in society. Kant's perception of the Stasi is exactly the opposite in *Kennung*: the MfS serves as a prophetic force that warns against the dangers of omniscience in society, instead of actually taking form as the totalitarian force that has been depicted in all of the works analyzed thus far.

Nevertheless, Kant did not stand alone in his opposition to an omniscient narrator, and like Christa Wolf, underlined that *Allwissenheit*, achieved by the Stasi through surveillance and careful documentation, should play no role in society. In the last scene, Linus Cord and the Stasi

officials speak out against the omniscience of the literary narrator, in order to make a statement about the importance of undermining the *Allwissenheit* in the GDR:

Und wenn's die blanke Wahrheit kosten sollte: Schont die Mitarbeiter nicht, schont eure Maschinen nicht, scheut keine Grenzen, setzt ein Beispiel, aber verschont uns mit der Scheiß-Allwisserei. (Kant 2010, 247)

Although the informants in *Kennung* are „allwissend“ (Kant 2010, 246), they insist that „eine allgemeine Allwisserei kann nicht geduldet werden...auf keinen Fall“ (Kant 2010, 246), thus reserving this perspective as a principle for their own “stories.” Not only does Kant support this declaration, but he also further states that the omniscient narrator should not be a technique of storytelling when the Stasi officers make the following declaration:

Unter den Literaten bahnt sich eine Mode an oder geht etwas um, das sie den allwissenden Erzähler nennen...Den Drang haben sie alle, aber der soll ihn besonders haben, hat der Oberste Chef zu meinem Chef gesagt. Mit solchen oder ähnlichen Flausen hat es immer angefangen. Wenn hier einer alles wissen müsste, wären wir das. Als Vorhut und als Vorhut der Vorhut. Man muss die Unklarheit durch Klarheit ersetzen. Klarheit, und nochmals Klarheit, sagt der Klassiker. Diesen allwissenden Erzähler muss man den Geschichtenschreibern austreiben. Natürlich ohne sie zu vertreiben. (Kant, 2010: 246)

Even though Kant trivializes the real impact that the Stasi had on its victims and society, he emphasizes that a narrator should not serve to reflect the GDR state and its all-powerful control over its populace, by portraying the narrator, Linus Cord, as not all-knowing. The omniscient narrator does not recount a subjective story, but rather „[dient] der erzählten Welt als Führer“ (Beicken und Goebel, 1982: 62), but *Kennung* presents itself as a work against the omniscient narrator. This is exemplified through Cord's confusion and unreliability, especially when nothing seems as is really is at the end of the story. This supports Kant's argument against institutional literature and the omniscient narrator.

Such thoughts were not new when Kant's *Kennung* was published in 2010. Since the 1970s, authors of the GDR contested the official speech of the state. Similarly to Kant, Wolf argued that „die Teilhabe des erzählenden Autors am Kunstwerk durch seine ‚subjektive Authentizität‘“ (Biecken and Goebel 1982, 62) is integral. The subjectivity of a narrator, especially in *Was bleibt*, does not build a subjective world, but rather develops a world to achieve the goal of „den Leser von...Konventionen der Realitätserfassung ‚zu befreien‘...[und um] neue Sehweisen [zu provozieren]“ (Biecken and Goebel 1982, 64). Therefore, Wolf reveals the importance of literature and writing in the GDR to illustrate authenticity. In her work, she describes the consuming pressure of the Stasi and argues for a „dritten Weg für die DDR“ (von Ankum 1992:7) without Stasi power. Unlike Wolf's text, *Weit Fort* and *Sturz der Tage*, however, do not directly address with the issue of an *allwissende Erzähler*, even though Strubel also achieves this indirectly by juxtaposing subjectively configured perspectives against each other.

Kant's *Kennung* evolves a markedly different depiction of the Stasi than Wolf, Schleime, and Strubel. It is easy for Kant depict his Stasi characters differently, since the story takes place before the construction of the Berlin Wall and before the height of the Stasi's totalitarian reign of terror over the East German population. If he had written his story during the 1970s or 1980s, it would prove impossible to dismiss the Stasi as a harmless police force. Therefore, given his chosen time setting, the author is able to depict the Stasi figures as clueless characters who pose as literary advisors to Cord and inform him on the dangers of an omniscient voice in literature.

III. Historical Revisionism and the Stasi Prototype in Literature

Kant's work engenders revisionist practices by directly trivializing the Stasi's impact on everyone as an institution simply intended for defining literary strategies. Many East Germans who were monitored, tortured, or thrown in prison by the Stasi would react strongly against this representation of the MfS, since Kant boldly eludes addressing their experiences of Stasi oppression and trauma that is a prominent theme in Wolf, Schleime, and Strubel's novels. In a review, Klaus Schroeder evaluates the novel as a work that "nimmt Kant indirekt zu den Vorwürfen Stellung, indem er die Arbeit des MfS und ihrer potenziellen Zuträger banalisiert und vernebelt." (Schroeder 2010), and further argues that "er [tief] gesunken ist" (Schroeder 2010) with the publication of *Kennung*. Kant's almost complete dismissal of Stasi terror has proven quite unpopular, as he has radically rewritten history to portray the MfS as a rather helpful advisor for the future.

However, even though Kant's representation of the MfS is an unpopular and extreme example of revisionism, it is, nevertheless, useful to observe such noticeable differences between the various Stasi representations discussed in this thesis. For example, Wolf describes the Stasi with a human face, and similarly, Schleime recounts a highly personal story of a weak ex-Stasi informant's inability to come to terms with his past, whereas Strubel creates a villainous prototype of the Stasi through Feldberg. Since there are such conflicting images of the Stasi, it would be useful to question whether the construction of a Stasi prototype is possible, since many of these depictions are founded in the authors' own experiences.

We can infer that from these different depictions, historical revisionism on the topic of Stasi history has been quite popular. For many East Germans, this part of recent history is a

highly sensitive subject, since they still have personal memories of the Stasi. In addition, West German authors who have little or no connection with the East German secret police force are gradually writing more literature on the Stasi. Therefore, it makes sense that there are manifold representations of the MfS found in literary texts, but it is also equally important to understand how the author's experiences inform their works.

Even though these authors do not establish their work as reliable historical sources, but rather as fictional works, many readers still turn to these works to gain more insight on the Stasi experience in the GDR. The media applaud such works and seem to forget that these authors offer highly intimate stories of Stasi oppression that do not apply to the whole of society. In fact, Wolf and Schleime do not discuss the effect of the MfS on East German society and instead focus only on the main characters' own lives. However, *Sturz der Tage in die Nacht* contrasts with the other two literary texts in its representation of the Stasi through Feldberg and Ton because Strubel actually does create a Stasi prototype of an evil figure who even after the fall of the Wall still attempts to grasp political power and control over people's lives. This novel was also critically acclaimed, and its historical accuracy on the Stasi was never commented upon.

The various Stasi depictions analyzed in this thesis prove that there is no one prototype for the MfS found among these literary works because each author had their own relationship with the MfS that formed their perception of it. This reinforces the idea that history is also shaped by experience and memory, and many victims and former MfS officials today carry highly personal memories from East Germany, which is one reason why lively debate still persists in Germany on how to depict the Stasi past in both a historical and literary context as we progress into the

future. Comparing these literary texts to Stasi representations found in other works written by generations who never lived in a divided Germany would further deepen the analysis.

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