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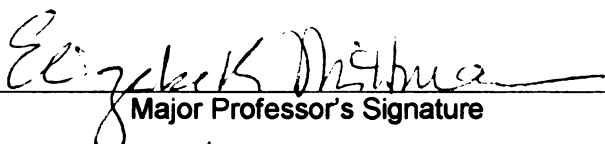
RE-MEMBERING THE FATHER: CONSTRUCTIONS OF THE
FATHER AND THE AUTHORITARIAN STATE IN POST-
UNIFICATION EAST GERMAN LITERATURE

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AUTHORITARIAN STATE IN POST-UNIFICATION EAST GERMAN
LITERATURE**

By

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ABSTRACT

RE-MEMBERING THE FATHER: CONSTRUCTIONS OF THE FATHER AND THE AUTHORITARIAN STATE IN POST-UNIFICATION EAST GERMAN LITERATURE

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Elizabeth Priester Steding

This dissertation examines the figure of the father in seven post-unification literary texts by younger East German authors, specifically the authority of the father in the life of the child as contrasted with his domination by the larger authority of the GDR state. The primary texts are: *Wie ich vom Ausschneiden loskam* (Volker Altwasser), *Helden wie wir* (Thomas Brussig), *Lügen und schweigen* (Katrin Dorn), *Moskauer Eis* (Annett Gröschner), *Tanz am Kanal* (Kerstin Hensel), *Andere Umstände* (Grit Poppe) and *Fitchers Blau* (Ingo Schramm). My analysis is largely grounded in the understanding of authority and authoritarianism offered by the *Studien über Autorität und Familie*. The texts as a group are also analyzed in their relationship to GDR *Aufbauliteratur* and West German *Väterliteratur*, highlighting their shared background of social upheaval and the related (albeit widely differing) construction of the father figure. In contrast to the overwhelmingly positive portrayal of father figures in *Aufbauliteratur* and the highly critical one in *Väterliteratur*, post-unification texts present a decidedly ambivalent father figure, simultaneously victim and victimizer. These texts also depict continuities in authoritarian attitudes and behaviors – exacerbated by the institutions of the GDR state, but persisting within post-unification Germany.

IN LOVING MEMORY

Elsie M. Priester

1902-2004

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Primary Text Title Abbreviations Used in Citations

A *Wie ich vom Ausschneiden loskam*

AU *Andere Umstände*

FB *Fitchers Blau*

H *Helden wie wir*

L *Lügen und schweigen*

ME *Moskauer Eis*

TK *Tanz am Kanal*

Chapter 1 Introduction

The literary exploration of the father-child relationship is nearly as old as literature itself, and some scholars assign this theme central importance: “Vater-Suche – dies ist kein beliebiges Motiv neben vielen gleichrangigen anderen, sondern zeichnet sich dadurch aus, daß es hier um die *Kernfragen menschlicher Identität*, um das Grundprinzip menschlicher Existenz geht” (Langenhorst 23, emphasis in original). The figure of the father serves as a link between past and present, self and other, individual and society.

This dissertation examines the figure of the father in several post-unification texts by younger East German authors, specifically focusing on how authors use the father to address issues of authority on both an individual and collective level. Their texts explore the (de)formative power of the father-child relationship as well as the perpetuation of authoritarian structures by state institutions both in and after the GDR. These texts emphasize the dual ‘*Täter/Opfer*’ role of the father – while he subjects his child to his authority, he is himself subject to the greater authority of the state.

I read these texts as powerful reactions to several phenomena within a larger literary and historical landscape: the social upheaval of German unification, post-unification Western criticism of GDR authors and literature, the continued attention paid to literature by older GDR authors, and a tendency to view GDR and post-unification experiences in black and white terms. The texts represent a demand for literary voice and autonomy, an insistence upon re-membling specific experiences, attitudes and relationships of younger East German authors rather than allowing them to be (re)presented by others. In order to better understand the context within which these texts

are written – and to which they respond – let us turn our attention first to the German literary landscape of the 1990s.

Post-Unification Literary Landscape

In the immediate aftermath of the fall of the Berlin Wall, many established East German authors produced texts that responded to their drastically altered world. “It was a period of great hope, euphoria, and awareness of social responsibility” (Scholz 93). Even in texts which portray the often difficult laying to rest of the socialist dream, “hope for a democratic, united Germany predominates” (Scholz 94). Often using the forms of essay and memoir, GDR authors, intellectuals and politicians exercised their power to confront the past and to speak out about their hopes for the future.¹

This early euphoria quickly dimmed, strained by the hurried “Beitritt” of the GDR to the FRG – an action which to many East Germans seemed more like an “Übernahme” – and the growing Western criticism of East Germans. As *Stasi* files began to be opened and the personal political choices of GDR intellectuals became public, West German censure increased, reaching its peak in the *Literaturstreit* initiated by the publication of Christa Wolf’s *Was bleibt* in June 1990. Written in 1979 and revised in 1989, the autobiographical text depicts the observation and psychological terrorizing of an author by the *Stasi*. Criticized by many West German intellectuals – most notably Frank Schirrmacher – for claiming victimization by the GDR system which she had previously supported (even working briefly as an IM) and which had supported her (allowing her to

¹ Politicians as widely varied as Gregor Gysi (Harnisch and Heider, eds. *Einspruch! Gespräche, Briefe, Reden*, 1992) and Erich Honecker et al (*Der Sturz*, 1991) produced autobiographical expressions during this time. Texts by well-known GDR authors include essay collections by Günter de Bruyn (*Jubelschreie, Trauergesänge*, 1991) and Helga Königsdorf (*1989 oder Ein Moment Schönheit*, 1990 and *Aus dem Dilemma eine Chance machen*, 1991) as well as works by Christa Wolf (*Reden im Herbst*, 1990) and Stefan Heym (*Stalin verläßt den Raum*, 1991).

travel, publishing her works, etc.), Christa Wolf became a scapegoat for some Western academics and a symbol of the perceived hypocrisy of many East Germans.²

The *Literaturstreit* only served to exacerbate a phenomenon observed by literary scholars, namely the near insistence of some Western literary critics and historians to collapse the actions and choices of GDR authors with their works, reading literature solely from a political perspective. Wolfgang Emmerich sees this as one of the greatest errors of the *Literaturstreit*: “die bewußte oder unbewußte *Vermischung*, ja *Verwechslung* der literarischen Werke mit ihren Autoren und deren weltanschaulichen Irrtümern, politischen Verfehlungen und moralischen Schwächen – oder umgekehrt: deren einschlägigen Leistungen” (“Rückblicke” 13, emphasis in original). Uncovering and accentuating the political fallibility or achievements of GDR authors shifted the emphasis from the text to the person, thus allowing Western critics to disregard the literary value of GDR works.³

While the political witch hunt has now largely subsided, it left a deep impact on research on GDR and East German literature. In focusing on the political lives of established authors and the political aspects of their writings, scholarship initially ignored many younger authors,⁴ authors with little political involvement, and literary aspects of texts by established authors. Post-unification literary criticism and research of GDR literature was (and to an extent still is) dominated by Western voices. The focus of literary scholarship has thankfully widened in the past 15 years, but it largely remains

² Schirmacher’s article “‘Dem Druck des härteren, strengeren Lebens standhalten’” appeared in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* on 2. June 1990. For more discussion of the *Literaturstreit*, see Anz, Emmerich (KLD 462-477), Krauss and Deiritz, or Wittek.

³ Emmerich argues that this attitude led to a second, similar mistake: dismissing forty years of GDR literature as mere political propaganda (“Gesinnungskitsch”) (“Rückblicke” 14).

⁴ A notable exception is the somewhat younger Sascha Anderson (born 1953), who received attention largely due to secretly working as an IM within the alternative Prenzlauer Berg literary scene.

focused on a limited group of authors, texts and issues. Established East German authors such as Christa Wolf, Heiner Müller and Monika Maron – and their post-unification texts – have provided the basis for much scholarly inquiry,⁵ while younger and/or less politically active authors are only beginning to receive attention (see Bremer, Jung, Kuhnau, Linklater and Dahlke). Research has also privileged issues of national identity (Brinker-Gabler, Engler, Maaz), East Germans' integration into 'unified' German society (Laukner, Mühlberg, Reifarth), and political reckonings with socialism and the socialist system (Cooke and Plowman, Rüther). Scholarly output about post-unification literature consists largely of essay collections (Wehdeking, Wilke, Costabile-Heming et al, Fischer and Roberts, Kane), although Brockmann and Garbe are notable exceptions.⁶

It is the much-researched generation of older, established GDR authors such as Christa Wolf, Günter de Bruyn, Volker Braun, Stefan Heym and even Kurt Drawert⁷ who are often considered the ideological “losers” of unification (Glaser 33). For this generation, “der kommunistisch definierte Antifaschismus wurde als Gründungsmythos des sozialistischen Staates akzeptiert und verinnerlicht” (Vogt, “Orientierungsverlust” 36). While many of these authors had harshly criticized the hypocrisy of *realexistierender Sozialismus*, they remained loyal to the utopian ideal. The deep sense of

⁵ Providing an exhaustive list of research on these authors is beyond the scope of this dissertation. A few examples of post-unification book-length scholarship are:

Christa Wolf: Love 1991, Ankum 1992, Firsching 1996, Resch, 1997, Nickel-Bacon 2001.

Heiner Müller: Arnold 1997, Wallace, Tate and Labrousse 2000, Barnett 1998, Lehmann and Primavesi 2003.

Monika Maron: Johnston 1997, Gilson 2002 (includes a 70 page bibliography of literature by and on Maron).

⁶ Much research on post-unification literature – particularly essay collections – focuses on both East and West German literature, although a majority of literature dealing directly with unification and its consequences is written by East German authors.

⁷ Birthdates of this older group range from 1913 (Stefan Heym) to 1939 (Volker Braun); individuals experienced the founding of the GDR as children, teens, or young adults. Drawert (born 1956) belongs to what is often referred to as a “middle generation”, younger than Wolf et al, but older than the authors of the primary texts analyzed here.

loss and melancholy evident in their post-unification texts stems from the end of the utopian dream signified by the overwhelming public rejection of a socialist Third Way, the pointed criticism of authors' political pasts, and the difficulty of adjusting to a new society. Long-established beliefs, habits and roles stood in stark contrast to the new reality. A number of (semi-autobiographical) texts came out of this individual and collective insecurity, with Volker Braun's poem "Das Eigentum" (1990), Wolfgang Hilbig's novel "*Ich*" (1993), and Marion Titze's novel *Unbekannter Verlust* (1994) being only a few examples.

A New Literary Generation?

It was within this literary and cultural landscape, dominated by Western critics, older GDR authors and melancholy for a lost past that a new 'generation' of authors became visible. The authors analyzed in this dissertation – Volker Altwasser, Thomas Brussig, Katrin Dorn, Annett Gröschner, Kerstin Hensel, Grit Poppe and Ingo Schramm – represent a fundamental departure from the ideology, politics and worldview of most established GDR authors. Born between 1961 (Kerstin Hensel) and 1969 (Volker Altwasser),⁸ these authors never personally experienced the ideological enthusiasm and utopian dreams of older generations involved in the founding and early history of the GDR. These younger authors were born into a world split by the Berlin Wall, into a "DDR-Normalität" – which they experienced "als mehr oder weniger repressiv, auf keinen Fall aber als utopisch besetzbar" (Vogt, "Orientierungsverlust" 36). They

⁸ 1962 – Ingo Schramm; 1963 – Katrin Dorn; 1964 – Annett Gröschner, Grit Poppe; 1965 – Thomas Brussig

experienced the slow failing of the GDR, characterized by widespread political apathy, national debt and the SED's ever-more-desperate grasping at power.⁹

But do these younger authors represent a new generation? The idea has received attention in both literary and historical research.¹⁰ Several scholars have posited that the events surrounding German unification helped create a new unified German literary generation which stands in stark contrast to older authors such as the West German *Gruppe 47*, the anti-authoritarian *68er*, or GDR socialist writers. Perhaps the best-known example is Iris Radisch's 1994 article "Die zweite Stunde Null", in which she argues that it is the portrayal of childhood and youth which separates young authors from previous post-war generations. Older authors continue to produce texts and dominate the literary landscape: "Und doch ist die Gegenwart, von der sie erzählen, nicht die Gegenwart." (98). The present now belongs to younger authors. Anz echoes Radisch's claim of a new generation, emphasizing those elements which differentiate them from their elders:

Die Erzähler dieser Texte wollen [...] nicht mehr irgendeine Vergangenheit bewältigen, sie wollen nichts verbessern, nichts entlarven, niemanden entblößen. Sie liefern so etwas wie eine Ethnographie eines vergangenen Alltags, ohne sie einem Programm zu unterwerfen, ohne sich oder ihre Protagonisten als Repräsentanten einer Epoche zu begreifen. ("Epochenumbruch" 35)

This social and political skepticism is also addressed by Vogt ("Orientierungsverlust" 44), and it is evident among the authors of the primary texts in this dissertation. Of the seven, only Grit Poppe was actively involved in the East German opposition movement,

⁹ By the mid-1980s, the GDR was deeply in debt, borrowing 1.95 billion DM from West Germany in 1983/4. Records made public after unification show that even SED officials feared the country would be unable to make debt payments by early 1990 (Wolle 333-335). None of this was made known to GDR citizens, instead the SED misrepresented and even made up financial information for public consumption.

¹⁰ For analysis in a historical-political context, see Leggewie. For a literary context, see collected articles (Dieckmann et al) from the "Literatur und Generation: vom Jungsein und Älterwerden der Dichter" symposium of the Deutsche Literaturkonferenz in *Neue Deutsche Literatur* 4/00.

participating in the group *Demokratie jetzt*.¹¹ As the focus shifted from *Runde Tische* to organized politics and the opposition group merged with *Bündnis 90* and later the Green Party, Poppe grew increasingly disillusioned, eventually leaving the group in 1991 (Eden 98). Annett Gröschner and Kerstin Hensel published texts in the alternative magazines which operated at the edge of GDR literature, but were not openly involved in politics themselves.¹² In an interview with *Focus On Literatur*, Thomas Brussig recalls his private shift from support of the GDR state to opposition, but admits that “die Ängstlichkeit trieb mich dazu, kein wirklicher Gegner des Staates zu sein. Als Gegner reicht Abstand nicht, man muß sich in Gefahr bringen und dafür bezahlen. Und das habe ich nicht getan” (Straubel 54). The protagonists created by these young authors reflect this non-involvement. Politics and political events are something which happen *to* them, not anything which they can influence. They do not concern themselves with changing the political system, often being more concerned with dealing with the problems the system has created for them. This skepticism of organized politics extends from the GDR to unification to post-1990 Germany, emphasizing a marked departure from the ideological conviction of earlier GDR authors and their protagonists.

While I share Anz’s rejection of Radisch’s claim that German unification served as a second *Stunde Null* (just as I do not believe the first *Stunde Null* really was a new beginning), I do agree with her claim that younger East German authors are writing differently than their predecessors. Unlike many earlier authors, who strongly identified with specific ideologies or groups, younger authors do not seem to be writing for any

¹¹ Poppe also signed the *Neues Forum* petition, an event which is satirized in her novel *Andere Umstände*. In the text, the protagonist signs the petition to impress a man she is interested in. Later at a demonstration she thinks the crowd is chanting “Neues Worum” (AU 151-152).

¹² Hensel also published in established literary journals such as *Sinn und Form* and *Neue deutsche Literatur*.

unified cause. Sabine Wilke effectively describes the differing generational experiences – and literary portrayals – of older and younger German authors:

[I]m Gegensatz zu den gestandenen Schriftstellern, die auch vor der Wende schon eine wichtige Position in der deutsch-deutschen Debatte eingenommen haben, wird diese Tatsache des Geschichtsverlusts nicht bemängelt. Diese Tatsache wird registriert, aber sie wird nicht beweint. Die Generation, die auf Christa Wolf, Stefan Heym, Günter Grass, Heiner Müller und Botho Strauß folgt, beschreibt zwar auch den einschneidenden Identitätsverlust, den Verlust der Sprache, der Heimat, der Symbole, und so weiter, aber der Verlust wird nicht als identitätszersetzend empfunden, weil diese Sprache, diese Heimat, diese Symbole nicht Teil der identitätsbildenden Persönlichkeitsstruktur dieser Generation waren. (85)¹³

The emotional and political investment in support or protest of existing institutions and ideologies which was so characteristic of established GDR authors is markedly lacking in post-unification texts by younger writers.

Regardless of whether German unification serves as a clear generational division, it *does* signify an enormous break in the lives of East Germans, and in the lives of younger citizens particularly.¹⁴ The *Wende* divided individual and collective biographies into ‘before’ and ‘after’, symbolizing for many the end of an established way of life. Many post-unification texts thematize to some degree aspects of life which are now irretrievably lost, gratefully discarded, or noticeably new. It is this sociohistorical background which keeps these texts from being ‘just’ another wave of father-child stories. For young authors, the events of 1989/90 and the ensuing social instability came when they were young adults: the social and political separation from the former GDR occurred at the same time as their generation’s emotional separation from the family.

¹³ I have some reservations about both Wilke’s and Radisch’s downplaying of differences between East and West German generations. I would argue that unification did not serve as a strong generational break for West Germans, a claim supported by the lack of *Wendeliteratur* produced by younger West German authors (Scholz 95).

¹⁴ For a discussion of the idea that events (such as the *Wende*) rather than similar age serve to coalesce a cohort into a political generation, see Leggewie.

This in part explains the literary focus on childhood experiences within the GDR state and family, the exploration of the father-child relationship, and the somewhat nostalgic look back combined with possible hope for the future. German unification symbolized an abrupt end to the GDR and these authors' and protagonists' childhood, but it also heralded the beginning of autonomy and independence.

Unification is by no means the first example of a large-scale social break in twentieth-century Germany, and it is also not the only one to be captured and reflected in literature. The aftermath of World War II in East and West and the turmoil of the late 1960s in West Germany also represent historical moments in which the established political and social order was challenged and/or defeated. Literature serves to capture – and sometimes create – the individual and collective stories which are impacted by social upheaval. In moments of cultural chaos and uncertainty, literature often turns to family narratives, using the figure of the father either as an anchor to emphasize generational connections or as a lightning rod for generational criticism. In the early GDR, *Aufbauliteratur* presented positive 'heroic' texts which reflected the SED's vision for socialist East Germany in its depiction of a communist legacy passed down from fathers to sons as well as appropriate postwar anti-fascist father figures. West German *Väterliteratur* of the 1970s/80s continued the confrontation with the German past begun by the student movement, harshly criticizing the father generation for their actions and attitudes during World War II. Post-unification East German literature constructs a much more ambivalent father figure, not burdened with guilt over a Nazi past, but criticized for his position within the authoritarian GDR state. Despite their widely varying ideological projects, narrative styles and subject matter, there are strong connections between

Aufbauliteratur, *Väterliteratur*, and post-unification East German literature in their shared origins of social upheaval. This theme will be explored in greater depth in Chapter 2.

The young East German authors analyzed here have produced father stories which do much more than tell the story of fictional GDR families. These texts serve as reactions to both older GDR authors and Western criticism. Younger East German authors, “eine[r] Generation, die zu jung war, um in der DDR in Erscheinung zu treten” (Magenau 46), are now making themselves known. By writing texts about childhood and youth which vary so strongly in tone and experience from those of older GDR generations, these young authors are creating and preserving *their* version of the GDR and 1990s Germany, remembering their fathers and their past.

In interviews with several of these authors, the role one’s own life plays in writing becomes apparent. When speaking about her writing, Grit Poppe claims: “Natürlich hat es ja immer mit einem selbst zu tun” (Eden 101). Kerstin Hensel mirrors this opinion: “Niemand kann leugnen, woher er kommt. Du schreibst immer aus deiner Herkunft heraus, auch wenn du dich noch so weltläufig gibst” (Dahlke, “Blick” 43). Jörg Magenau, in his article about Thomas Brussig, even posits that it is hard to imagine Brussig writing about anything except a “kleinbürgerliche[s] Spießerleben in seiner spezifisch östlichen Ausprägung. Denn das ist die Welt, die er am besten kennt. Hier wurde er groß, hier ist seine Heimat” (41).¹⁵ Although none of these authors describe their texts as anything but fictional, there is an acknowledgement of the role that one’s personal experience plays.

¹⁵ Wolf Biermann, in his *Spiegel* article about *Helden wie wir*, also comments on his impression of the blend of “Leben” and “Kunst” in Brussig’s text (187).

Therefore it is hardly surprising that these writers, all roughly the same age, have produced texts with such startlingly similar motifs and experiences.

For younger authors such as these, the events of childhood and youth hold particular importance and immediacy. Kerstin Hensel claims: “Kindheit und Jugend sind für das Leben prägender als die Herbstjahre. Ein Roman, in dem Kindheit gar keine Rolle spielt, funktioniert nicht” (Dahlke, “Blick” 44).¹⁶ Because the childhood and youth of the authors were so intrinsically entwined with the GDR, these texts also serve as explorations of *realexistierender Sozialismus*, of individual and collective East German experiences, as stories of the last GDR generation.¹⁷

Many authors seem to share Hensel’s focus on creating a compelling literary childhood, constructing a retrospective view of the GDR which is convincing in its authenticity. Birgit Dahlke even echoes Anz’s claim about this generation as a whole by comparing Annett Gröschner to an ethnologist (“Authentizität” 52) examining her past in an attempt to understand the present. “Nie behauptet sie, etwas wäre genau so geschehen wie sie es erzählt, aber: so hätte es sein können...” (“Authentizität” 53). Even authors who write fantastic tales – such as Grit Poppe, Thomas Brussig and often Gröschner herself – create compelling GDR backgrounds, ranging from realistic family situations and life choices to accurate product names and school terminology. Although never claiming to be factual, these texts are nevertheless believable. This has two results: it originally lulls the reader into viewing the text as merely a GDR memoir, but it also adds

¹⁶ Hensel echoes here the claims of psychoanalyst Erich Fromm: “Die Erlebnisse, die ein Mensch in seiner frühen Kindheit und Jugend hat, sind für die Bildung des Charakters von grösserer Bedeutung als die Erlebnisse späterer Jahre” (Fromm 85 – see my methodology section for more information).

¹⁷ Although these authors do not claim to be writing the story of ‘their generation’, the similarities between texts suggest generational tendencies. A notable exception is Jana Hensel’s book *Zonenkinder* (2000), which consistently employs the plural “wir”.

impact to the examination of authority and authoritarianism occurring at the same time. This 'authenticity', together with a portrayal of childhood and youth particular to those born into the 1960s GDR, lends a sense of credibility and legitimacy to these texts: they are literary reactions to the West, to older GDR authors, to authoritarian structures within the (GDR) state itself.

The GDR as an Authoritarian State

In his text *Modern Authoritarianism*, Amos Perlmutter offers the following description of authoritarian regimes: "The model for all modern authoritarian political structures is the state-controlled, centralized, and hierarchical bureaucracy. Under modern authoritarianism, no autonomous political, economic, social, cultural, or ideological organizations can exist outside of the state" (5). In the case of the GDR, the state was embodied by the SED (*Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands*).¹⁸ In its self-proclaimed role as a "Partei neuen Typs", the SED strove to subsume all areas of life – 'society', the private sphere, institutions – under its control. Fulbrook writes: "All areas of life were observed, manipulated, controlled, in the interests of the alleged greater good of the whole. The end justified the means; individual rights were subordinated to those of 'society', as conceived and defined by the leading force, the SED" (19, emphasis in original). This overwhelming focus on the greater good, the collective and conformity allowed the GDR to present itself as a *Versorgungsstaat* concerned with the welfare and *Geborgenheit* of its citizens. But the security offered by the SED-state came at the price

¹⁸ Some political scholars even refer to the GDR as a 'party dictatorship'. Since unification, the use of the term 'dictatorship' to describe the GDR has become widespread (see Fulbrook, Ross and Wolle). Some scholars disagree as to whether the SED regime was authoritarian or totalitarian, a debate which extends far past the scope of this dissertation. Ross offers a brief overview (20-25) and an insightful compromise, suggesting that totalitarianism be viewed "not as a system in itself, but as a radical phase in the development of certain modern authoritarian systems of rule that gives way to either collapse or systematization" (36).

of “individuelle Entmündigung” (Schroeder 586). Fulbrook describes the image as “perhaps one of a totally authoritarian parent, who is prepared to engage in the pretence of consulting the child but who will from the outset refuse to value the child’s opinions – for the omniscient and omnipotent parent always, in principle, knows better” (30). Glaser even goes so far as to claim: “In der DDR war die Infantilisierung der Bürger Hauptaufgabe des Staates und der Medien” (36). The security offered by the SED regime often came at the price of autonomy and self-determination.

Perhaps the most well-known (and most-researched) example of the SED’s efforts to control the state and its citizens is the *Ministerium für Staatssicherheit*, commonly known as the MfS or the *Stasi*. Unlike the *Nationale Volksarmee* or the *Volkspolizei*, which were easily visible representatives of state authority, the *Stasi* was feared in part because it was unknown, undercover, and unpredictable. Even the official mission of the *Stasi* makes its sweeping powers evident: “Das Ministerium für Staatssicherheit ist beauftragt, alle Versuche, den Sieg des Sozialismus aufzuhalten oder zu verhindern – *mit welchen Mitteln und Methoden es auch sei* –, vorbeugend und im Keime zu ersticken” (Fricke 13, emphasis added).¹⁹ *Stasi* employees, who numbered 91,000 by 1989 (Schroeder 442), had full freedom to open mail, enter apartments, shadow, interrogate, and even kidnap individuals it deemed threats to the state. The *Stasi* also made use of thousands of *Inoffizielle Mitarbeiter* (IM) who informed upon their neighbors, friends, and family members. Estimates place the number of IM in 1989 at approximately 174,000, which when combined with full-time *Stasi* employees, resulted in one MfS representative for every 62 citizens, “eine Relation, die weltweit ihresgleichen sucht” (Schroeder 442). While not every citizen of the GDR was spied or informed upon, the

¹⁹ Originally printed in the *Richtlinie Nr. 1/58* of 1958.

unspoken threat and resulting paranoia exerted immense pressure on many individuals to conform to SED expectations, to adhere to the socialist status quo.

Of course, not all of the structures of authoritarian power in the GDR were as ominous as the *Stasi*. The reach of the regime into every aspect of life was also underpinned by SED-affiliated bloc parties such as the LDPD (*Liberal-Demokratische Partei Deutschlands*) and the DBD (*Demokratische Bauernpartei Deutschlands*), labor unions like the FDGB (*Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund*),²⁰ and youth organizations such as the *Junge Pioniere* and the FDJ (*Freie Deutsche Jugend*).²¹ Adults could also participate in party-sponsored organizations such as the *Kulturbund* (200,000 members) or the *Gesellschaft für Deutsch-Sowjetische Freundschaft* (5.5 million members) (Fulbrook 61). No opportunity to influence and control its citizens was overlooked by the regime. Although statistics alone cannot provide information about the level to which citizens internalized SED ideology,²² one cannot deny the extent to which the SED organized and affected daily life in the GDR:

Die SED hatte ein dichtes institutionelles und nach ihren Vorgaben funktionierendes Netz in Staat und Gesellschaft geschaffen, das der individuellen Entfaltung enge Grenzen setzte. Die Lebensverläufe vor allem der jüngeren Generationen gestalteten sich nach weitgehend gleichem Muster. Dafür sorgten allein schon die Institutionen der kollektiven Sozialisation wie Kindergärten, Schulen, FDJ, Brigaden und Massenorganisationen. Auch in der privaten Sphäre, die die SED ebenfalls zu lenken beanspruchte, setzten die Rahmenbedingungen Schranken für Individualität bzw. Pluralität im Lebensstil. Über das Instrument der Sozialpolitik (Arbeitspolitik, Wohnungspolitik, Familienpolitik etc.) gelang es der Partei, zumindest die Berufstätigkeit oder den Zeitpunkt von Eheschließung, Geburt der Kinder etc. zu beeinflussen. (Schroeder 619)

²⁰ Membership in the FDGB in the late 1980s was 9.5 million, close to the entire adult population of the GDR (Wolle 181).

²¹ FDJ membership rates for students at *Polytechnische Oberschulen* were above 90%, and were close to 100% for students at the *Erweiterte Oberschulen* (college-preparatory schools) (Wolle 184).

²² Some Western history books about the GDR speak about the development of a *Nischengesellschaft* in the 1970s and 1980s, using the term to describe an inner distancing from official GDR society, an individual focus on personal life and family, and in some more radical cases, an outward rejection of the SED status quo. See Fulbrook 139-146 for more information (although she ultimately rejects the term).

Whether out of ideological conviction, fear, a wish to fit in, or the desire to be left alone, East Germans by and large participated in the authoritarian SED state. In their daily lives they were exposed to its structures and ideology, being simultaneously products and purveyors of GDR authoritarianism.

The Figure of the Father

My research examines the figure of the father and issues of authority in seven fictional texts which I find representative of post-unification East German literature: Volker Altwasser's *Wie ich vom Ausschneiden loskam* (2003), Thomas Brussig's *Helden wie wir* (1995), Katrin Dorn's *Lügen und schweigen* (2000), Annett Gröschner's *Moskauer Eis* (2001), Kerstin Hensel's *Tanz am Kanal* (1994), Grit Poppe's *Andere Umstände* (1998) and Ingo Schramm's *Fitchers Blau* (1996). The primary texts share several key elements besides the similar age of their authors (and protagonists, who are roughly the same age as the authors themselves). All of the texts are narrated from a clear post-unification standpoint with flashbacks to the GDR, which range from mere sentences to entire chapters,²³ and protagonists are young adults looking back on their childhood and youth in the GDR from their present position.²⁴ The families portrayed represent a large spectrum of GDR society, from the blue-collar absentee father of *Wie ich vom Ausschneiden loskam* to the pedantic Stasi father of *Helden wie wir*. The varied social and political backgrounds of the father figures lend emphasis to the claim that the

²³ This criterion eliminated Christoph Brumme's disturbing depiction of a GDR family in *Nichts als das* (1994) because of its lack of an openly post-unification narrator looking back on the GDR.

²⁴ The texts by Altwasser, Brussig, Gröschner, Hensel and Poppe have first-person narrators who are identical with the protagonist. Dorn uses a third-person narrator who appears identical with the protagonist Vera, while Schramm uses an omniscient third-person narrator who occasionally interrupts the narration with comments of his/her own.

defining experiences portrayed in these texts are not dependent upon social class or ideology, but are inherent elements of life within the authoritarian GDR.

It is the construction of the figure of the father which is perhaps the most intriguing and striking bond between these texts. Many post-unification works by younger East German authors portray common patterns of childhood.²⁵ The texts are not unoriginal – there is great variety in plot, style and structure – but the father-child relationship is remarkably similar. In virtually all of these texts, fathers are emotionally estranged from their children, unwilling or unable to love and accept them. Obedience is emphasized over autonomy, and paternal approval is nearly always dependent upon good behavior. Even absentee fathers loom large in the emotional lives of their children, thus emphasizing their role.

The figure of the father is explicitly portrayed within the context of the GDR – both as its representative and as its victim. His victimization and subjugation within larger structures of GDR authoritarianism are contrasted with his personal authority in his role as father. His children, the adult protagonists/narrators, are aware of this tension and the effect that it has on their own lives, both during childhood and their coming of age. Thus the conflicted double role of the father is mirrored in the double separation protagonists experience during German unification: the personal separation from the father, and the cultural separation from an East German homeland that had ceased to exist. The individual struggle of coming of age is foregrounded against the cultural chaos surrounding unification. Protagonists are re-evaluating and re-constructing the father

²⁵ Several texts were not included in my analysis because they only marginally address GDR childhood and/or the father. Examples are: Michael Fritz's *Rosa oder die Liebe zu den Fischen*, Kati Naumann's *Was denkst du?*, Alexander Osang's *Die Nachrichten*, Jochen Schmidt's *Müller haut uns raus*, Ingo Schramm's *Aprilmechanik* and Ingo Schulze's *Simple Storys*.

figures in their lives at a time in which social institutions, which themselves serve as father figures on a metaphorical level, are changing and disappearing.

While some scholars have included chapters about the literary father in their work (Brockmann 1999, Garbe 2002), no book-length research focuses exclusively on the construction of the father and the father-child relationship. My research therefore fills two gaps: it builds on existing scholarship of father-child literature (namely East German *Aufbauliteratur* and West German *Väterliteratur*) as well as directing attention to the father-child relationship in current literature by younger authors. It participates in the ongoing literary discussion of East German literature of unification (*Wendeliteratur*) and post-unification literature as well as expanding the field of research to include the often overlooked aspects of father-child narratives.

Research Methodology

The protagonists of these texts are profoundly affected by their childhood experiences of/with the father, and these effects largely shape their later interactions with GDR and post-unification state institutions. Therefore the father-child relationship as well as experiences of both father and child with(in) the authoritarian state will be analyzed. The main questions to be answered are: How is the father positioned as simultaneously exhibiting authority and being subject to it? How do behaviors learned within the father-child relationship later affect the protagonist's experiences with authoritarian institutions? What (dis)continuities in structures of authority are shown in pre- and post-*Wende* Germany? What role does gender play in protagonists' interactions with authoritarian figures and institutions? How do these texts respond to the need for

literary confrontation with social upheaval? What position do these texts occupy within the post-unification German literary landscape?

My analysis draws upon one of the first and best-known studies of authority from a sociohistorical and psychoanalytical viewpoint, the *Studien über Autorität und Familie* from the *Institut für Sozialforschung*. Published in 1936, these studies by the critical theorists of the Frankfurt School (most notably Horkheimer, Fromm and Marcuse) examine the history of authority and authoritarianism as well as their effects on the individual. Their argument is that social and state institutions influence and are mirrored by the relationship of fathers to their children. While paternal and state authority are viewed as neither good nor bad, their continued abuse can eventually result in an individual and collective internalization and idealization of authority, defined as authoritarianism. Much as in Horkheimer and Adorno's later essay *The Culture Industry*, the research here paints a rather bleak picture for the individual in a (state) system which seeks to control him.

The institute's research is also a response to German fascism put into political power and the ensuing effects on society. By the mid-1930s, Nazism was widespread in Europe, forcing the predominantly Jewish researchers of the Frankfurt School to relocate to New York. They view the Nazi-controlled German state as authoritarian, which Horkheimer defines as "autoritäts-bejahend (von Seiten des Autoritäts-Objektes aus)".²⁶ The authoritarian state fosters and rewards submission, conformity and compliance. The concepts of authoritarianism and the authoritarian state as constructed in the *Studien* do not only describe Nazi Germany, however; they can also easily be applied to the GDR, as

²⁶ Horkheimer contrasts the word "autoritär" with the word "autoritativ" – "ein autoritäts-forderndes Verhalten (vom Autoritäts-Subjekt aus)" (332 footnote 3).

discussed above. From its founding in 1949, the GDR defined itself as the ‘anti-fascist’ Germany, declaring a new era in German history. But in creating its anti-fascist myth, the GDR never truly dealt with its fascist past, hoping instead that a new collective image would stamp out the old reality. The authoritarian mindsets and structures addressed by the *Institut für Sozialforschung* also existed in the GDR, visible in the *Stasi*, mandatory military education for schoolchildren (*Wehrkunde*), and emphasis on obedience and devotion to the SED. While by no means a direct comparison of the Third Reich with the GDR, my research does build upon the aspects of 1930s authoritarianism analyzed in the *Studien*, attitudes and practices which were never openly acknowledged and dealt with in the GDR, but which powerfully influenced the ‘anti-fascist’ East German state.

The structures and effects of the authoritarian state as described in the *Studien* bear a remarkable resemblance to the portrayal of the GDR in the primary texts of this dissertation, making the *Studien* a useful explanatory model. The view of Frankfurt School theorists that individuals are impacted by authoritarianism both on the micro-level of the family and the macro-level of society echoes the experiences of domination, subjugation and authority constructed in post-unification literature. There is a shared emphasis on the relative powerlessness of the individual against institutions of authority and the enormous influence of the father in the life of the child. The very fact that these literary texts – which are not tasked with presenting ‘reality’ or ‘facts’ but can instead create their own world – all emphasize issues of domination and autonomy within the GDR state and family calls for an examination of these issues. The role of the father as simultaneous head of the family and subject of state control is also addressed in both literature and the *Studien*.

In the nearly 70 years since the *Studien über Autorität und Familie* were published, theorists have built upon, criticized and adapted the ideas presented in them. Feminist theory has challenged their traditional view of gender roles and the use of Freud's theories of ego development.²⁷ The Marxist theory which serves as a foundation for most Frankfurt School scholars has also been supplemented or replaced by poststructuralism and postmodernism. Ben Agger, in his thought-provoking text *The Discourse of Domination: From the Frankfurt School to Postmodernism*, convincingly argues for a careful blending of critical theory and postmodernism, building upon the rich heritage of critical theory by embracing the wider-than-Marx views of postmodernism. My research does not implement the Marxist views of the Frankfurt School concerning the genesis (or eventual downfall) of the authoritarian state, but instead makes use of the terminology and points of analysis presented in this particular study.

It is predominantly the first two chapters of the *Studien über Autorität und Familie* which serve as the analytical basis for this dissertation, the contributions by Erich Fromm ("Sozialpsychologischer Teil") and Max Horkheimer ("Ideengeschichtlicher Teil"). Horkheimer's chapter lays the groundwork for the assertions about authority which underlie the case studies found in later sections of the volume. In it, he elaborates upon the idea that the modern state (society) is based upon the belief that "es immer ein Oben und Unten geben muß und Gehorsam notwendig ist" (330). Individuals are conditioned to recognize and submit to authority, and the family plays a defining role in this process. Horkheimer argues: "die patriarchalische Struktur der Familie in der neueren Zeit wirkt selbst als entscheidende Vorbereitung auf die Autorität in der Gesellschaft, die

²⁷ See Benjamin's article „Authority and the Family Revisited: or, A World without Fathers?“ for a feminist psychoanalytic response to critical theory's interpretation of the role of the father in society.

der Einzelne im späteren Leben anerkennen soll” (330). While authority – which Horkheimer defines as “bejahte Abhängigkeit” (360) – itself is neither ‘good’ nor ‘bad’, it is often abused, contributing to authoritarianism. Individuals submit to authority for many reasons: love, fear, financial gain, admiration, jealousy, etc. It is the inherent inequality of the authority relationship (student-teacher, employer-employee, father-child) which can so easily be exploited.

Fromm’s essay about the sociopsychological elements of authority and authoritarianism provides useful tools for a close analysis of the individual father-child relationship as well as the ways in which this relationship affects a child’s later experiences with institutional authority. He draws largely upon Sigmund Freud’s research on the role of authority in a child’s psychological development. While Fromm repeatedly criticizes what he sees as Freud’s “mangelnde Einschätzung des Zusammenhanges der Familienstruktur mit der Struktur der Gesamtgesellschaft” (88), and the “Vereinfachung, wie sie bei Freud fast immer vorhanden ist, wenn er gesellschaftliche Phänomene behandelt” (92), he also acknowledges Freud’s contribution to the field: “Seine Theorie liefert einen wichtigen Beitrag zur Beantwortung der Frage, wie es möglich ist, dass die in einer Gesellschaft herrschende Gewalt tatsächlich so wirkungsvoll ist, wie uns das die Geschichte zeigt” (83). Much of Fromm’s theory is based upon Freud’s views of the role of the father (and institutions of state authority such as school and the police) in the development of a child’s superego.

The superego and the id can be viewed as powerful processes both desiring immediate satisfaction of their diametrically opposed desires. The id “contains the passions” (Freud, “Ego and Id” 450), consisting of pleasure-driven urges, wishes and

obsessions. For the individual to function in society, these drives must often be denied or altered. The superego “comprises the norms, values, and ideals that upbringing and education have instilled in us” (de Berg 50). It is largely formed via childhood identification with role models, including “an individual’s first and most important identification, his identification with the father” (Freud, “Ego and Id” 455). The ego then strives to find a balance between these two extremes. In his text *Freud’s Theory and Its Use in Literary and Cultural Studies*, de Berg concisely and accurately describes this relationship:

The id represents an unconscious pressure on us to live in complete accordance with our own innermost wishes; the superego represents an unconscious pressure on us to live in complete accordance with the wishes that other people (first and foremost our parents and teachers) have instilled in us; and the ego tries to find a healthy *balance* between our own wishes and those of others. (50, emphasis in original)

Finding this balance is not easy, however, especially in authoritarian societies such as the GDR which emphasize obedience and integration (superego) over independence and autonomy (ego). This social privileging of superego attributes builds upon processes within the family, where a child’s early identification with the father as a symbol of authority leads the child to idealize and internalize larger structures of law and authority. Fromm claims that an overly developed superego hinders ego development (102), thus resulting in an individual who is more susceptible and submissive to the authority exercised by the father and the state. One can therefore argue that the authoritarian state and family actually *produce* submissive (easily dominated) individuals. Fromm claims: “Das Verhältnis zwischen Über-Ich und Autorität ist also kompliziert. Einmal ist das Über-Ich die verinnerlichte Autorität und die Autorität das personifizierte Über-Ich, zum anderen schafft das Zusammenwirken beider die freiwillige Fügsamkeit und

Unterwerfung, welche die gesellschaftliche Praxis in einem so erstaunlichen Masse kennzeichnen” (87). Patterns of domination and submission can thus become deeply ingrained within society, the family, and the individual.

Fromm and Freud disagree somewhat on the role of the father in the development of a child’s superego and relationship to institutional authority. Where Freud sees the father as the child’s first example of authority – an example which is later influenced by teachers, police and other social authorities – Fromm insists that the father himself is (de)formed by society. Although a symbol of authority, the father must also submit to those in authority over him:

Die Autorität nämlich, die der Vater in der Familie hat, ist keine zufällige, die später durch die gesellschaftlichen Autoritäten “ergänzt” wird, sondern die Autorität des Familienvaters selbst gründet zuletzt in der Autoritätsstruktur der Gesamtgesellschaft. Der Familienvater ist zwar dem Kind gegenüber (zeitlich gesehen) der erste Vermittler der gesellschaftlichen Autorität, ist aber (inhaltlich gesehen) nicht ihr Vorbild, sondern ihr Abbild. (88)

It is Fromm’s emphasis on the relationship between the authority of the father and his subjection to larger institutions of authority which makes his writings useful in analyzing my primary texts.

To a large extent, the theories of Fromm and Freud are in agreement. They both acknowledge the effects of authoritarianism on (super)ego development in children, they both explore the prevalence of (non-pathological) sadomasochistic personality traits in authoritarian and totalitarian societies (discussed in Chapter 4), and they both emphasize the enormous role a father plays in his child’s psychological development. It is not the psychological effects about which these two researchers disagree, but the larger social structures which affect individual psychology. Although Freud does explore mass psychology in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, he largely focuses on

individuals and their families. Fromm, on the other hand, argues that one must view individuals and families within a larger sociopolitical context. He understands the family to be a product and a replicator of authority relations within society. “Die Familie [repräsentiert] in erster Linie bestimmte gesellschaftliche Inhalte [...] und in deren Vermittlung, und zwar nicht im Sinne der Vermittlung von Meinungen und Ansichten, sondern in der Produktion der gesellschaftlich erwünschten Struktur [liegt] die wichtigste gesellschaftliche Funktion der Familie” (87). The family serves as a training ground for later behavior of the individual within the state.

The primary texts in this dissertation clearly show both the effect of authoritarian institutions and attitudes upon families and the role of the father in the psychological development of the child. Some fathers are openly victimized and dominated by state authority, such as the unsuccessful defector in *Lügen und schweigen* or the politically rebellious surgeon in *Tanz am Kanal*. Other fathers become part of the official institutions of authority, such as the *Stasi* father in *Helden wie wir* or the SED father in *Fitchers Blau*. Protagonists themselves are also controlled and impacted by institutions such as school (*Moskauer Eis*) and the military (*Wie ich vom Ausschneiden loskam, Fitchers Blau*). In stark contrast to the ‘*Arbeiter- und Bauernstaat*’ image of SED propaganda, which implied that authority came from the masses, authority in the GDR is portrayed in post-unification texts as a rigid top-down, hierarchical construct, a force to which one is subjected or which one embodies by becoming part of its institutions.

Regardless of the social and/or political authority of the father, he plays a dominant – and often domineering – role in the lives of his children. Themselves influenced by the attitude of authoritarian society which privileges those in authority

while resenting the weak, the fathers in these texts are controlling, distant, and sometimes violent toward their children. Sons and daughters struggle with issues of insecurity and self-esteem associated with a lack of unconditional love, recognition and autonomy. Their inherent self-doubt makes protagonists even more susceptible to institutional authority, and also causes difficulties as they seek to develop romantically and emotionally intimate relationships during adolescence and young adulthood.

Primary Texts and Structure of Dissertation

Due to the thematic structure of this dissertation and the number of primary texts involved, a brief plot summary of each text follows.

Four of the primary texts are written by women and have female protagonists. Katrin Dorn's 2001 novel *Lügen und schweigen* tells the story of the East German Vera and her West German boyfriend Vincent. It also explores Vera's relationship with her emotionally remote – and now dying – father Konrad. Secretly planning to escape to the West in 1960, Konrad falls in love and agrees to remain in the GDR when his girlfriend gets pregnant. Vera is only a young baby when the Berlin Wall goes up, trapping Konrad in a country he despises and a family he resents. Jankowski calls the novel “das plausible Psychogramm einer ostdeutschen Kleinfamilie und die Folgen des Scheiterns ihrer Ansprüche” (167); for Vera, the emotional aftermath of this failure does not end at the *Wende*.

The concept of unification as “absoluter Bruch” (Caspari 301) is also challenged in Annett Gröschner's 2001 novel *Moskauer Eis*. The text depicts three generations of the Kobe family, extending back to the 1930s and the grandfather Paul Kobe, a politically and personally pragmatic frozen-food engineer. His son Klaus, also a frozen-food

engineer, struggles to develop a sense of autonomy toward his domineering father and the restrictions of GDR institutions. Klaus's daughter Annja is both the protagonist and the narrator of the text, writing her own story as well as that of her father who loved the GDR and hated its government. The bizarre catalyst for Annja's writing is finding her father frozen in a disconnected (but still cold) deep freeze; at the end of the text both Annja and her father are missing persons.

Kerstin Hensel's long narration *Tanz am Kanal* (1994) has drawn the most scholarly attention of any of these texts, largely because of Hensel's established literary reputation. It is the troubling story of Gabriela von Haßlau's struggle for a personal identity not completely determined by her father Ernst von Haßlau or GDR institutional authority in the form of school, the police, or the *Stasi*. Homeless in early 1990s Leibnitz (a fictional town combining the names Leipzig and Chemnitz), Gabriela is writing her life story for publication in a West German women's magazine intent upon portraying her as a victim. Hensel's text explores the issue of male authority in the lives of women as well as the continuity of such individual and institutional domination *after* the collapse of the GDR.

As the title suggests, Grit Poppe's "wunderbar skurrile[r]" ("Weltgeschichte" 167) 1998 novel *Andere Umstände* portrays the pregnancy of the protagonist Mila, but there are other, troubling 'Umstände' in Mila's life – an absentee father who defects to the West in Mila's teens, her longing for male attention, and her killing of at least three boyfriends who reject her. Searching for a man who can both fill the void left by her father's abandonment and fulfill her wish for a child (as a symbol of unconditional love),

Mila also reconnects with her own father in 1989. Their relationship is tenuous, but portrayed in a guardedly optimistic manner.

The three texts with sons as protagonists offer more pessimistic visions for the father-son relationship. Volker Altwasser's 2003 novel *Wie ich vom Ausschneiden loskam* depicts an unnamed protagonist whose father Heiko is a violent, adulterous alcoholic who eventually divorces his wife and largely abandons his son. The protagonist deals with the tumult in his life by cutting pictures out of magazines; eventually he trades his scissors for a pen and begins writing poetry and stories. In the early 1990s, the protagonist encounters his father, who is sober and wanting reconciliation, a wish that is vehemently denied by his now adult son.

Fitchers Blau, Ingo Schramm's 1996 "poetischer Roman",²⁸ is the story of Karl Klemm and his half-sister Janni, who are the results of their father Josef's experiment to impregnate two women on the same night, bring two children into the world simultaneously, and raise them completely isolated from one another. Josef's traumatic childhood experiences during and shortly after World War II have left deep psychological scars; he considers himself obedient to a higher power (*der Wille*) and treats his children more as experimental guinea pigs than as human beings. Raised by a dominating authoritarian father – and in the GDR state – Karl struggles to develop a sense of identity and autonomy separate from his father.

At its 1995 release, Thomas Brussig's novel *Helden wie wir* symbolized a radical departure from previous texts by East German authors. As Simanowski states: "Brussigs Roman wirkt innerhalb jener Bücher, die sich dem Durchdenken der DDR-Geschichte widmen, ungefähr wie Monty Pythons "Das Leben des Brian" innerhalb der Jesus Filme"

²⁸ "Poetischer Roman" is the genre given on the book cover.

(“Dauerwitz” 162-3). Although several of the primary texts analyzed here also tell fantastic tales, it is the farcical tone of *Helden wie wir* which sets it apart. In the novel, Klaus Uhltzscht is telling his story to a reporter from the New York Times; it is the story of the conformist, daydreaming, sexually obsessed son of an overbearing mother and disapproving *Stasi* father. After many years of being insecure about his small penis, a bizarre medical procedure designed to cure an ailing Erich Honecker results in an enormous penis for Klaus, a penis large enough to stun the East German border guards at the Berlin Wall into inaction, allowing GDR citizens to pass through and thus opening the Wall. The novel became a bestseller in East and West, reaching #14 on the *Spiegel* bestseller list, and a film version was released on the 10th anniversary of the opening of the Berlin Wall.²⁹

While primarily focusing on issues of authority within the literary texts themselves, my research also acknowledges the larger cultural context within which these texts were written. As discussed earlier, I read the very existence of these texts as a response to power struggles within the post-unification German literary landscape. The texts confront Western stereotypes and oversimplifications, they challenge the portrayal of the GDR and *Wende* experiences produced by older authors, and they reveal the ongoing legacy of authoritarianism within German families and society. Just as these texts trace the relationship of individual and systemic authority, they themselves are shaped by society while at the same time speaking out in response.

This shared focus on the texts and their literary context is reflected in the structure of the dissertation. Chapter 2 (“Signs of the Times: Constructions of the Father in Post-

²⁹ The release of the movie also extended the popularity of the novel. It appeared in the paperback bestseller lists several times in 2000.

Unification Literature, *Aufbauliteratur* and *Väterliteratur*”) analyzes the concept of social upheaval as a catalyst for father stories. In the midst of political and cultural insecurity, there is often a need to examine, confront and re-member the past – a past in which the father played a central role. East German post-unification texts are only one example of this literary phenomenon, with East German *Aufbauliteratur* and West German *Väterliteratur* being two important predecessors. These three corpora, with their differing depictions of father figures, authority and the state, reveal much about the (dis)continuities of German society and literature.

In Chapters 3 and 4 (“(De)formation of the Father in the Authoritarian State and Family” and “The (Mis)use of Paternal Authority”), the focus shifts to a close analysis of the primary texts themselves. These two chapters can be read as literary ‘case studies’ for the *Studien über Autorität und Familie*. Chapter 3 highlights the domination of the father by greater authority, be it world political events (World War II), his own father, or the GDR state. Chapter 4 then investigates the father’s authoritarian behavior toward his own children, revealing stunning deformative similarities in father-child relationships across texts.

While Chapter 4 highlights the similarities in children’s experiences at the hands of their fathers, Chapter 5 (“Sex and the System: Gendered Experiences of Daughters and Sons”) examines the differences between sons and daughters in their relationship to the father, to romantic partners, and to institutional authority. The authority of GDR institutions is constructed as incorporating sons while dominating and excluding daughters. Chapter 6 (“Conclusion”) continues this examination, focusing on (gendered)

experiences of *post*-unification authority, revealing the (dis)continuities between the GDR and unified Germany.

Chapter 2

Signs of the Times: Constructions of the Father in Post-Unification Literature, *Aufbauliteratur* and *Väterliteratur*

Social Upheaval as Literary Catalyst

Social upheaval often serves as the catalyst for literature. Changes in longstanding traditions, institutions or social structures serve as the background for works as diverse as *The Iliad*, *Das Erdbeben in Chile* or *Gone With the Wind*. Periods of ‘cultural chaos’ call for literary attention on both a collective and an individual level. On the one hand, authors portray the larger historical and cultural context – be it war, revolution, or natural disaster. On the other hand, they tell the stories of individuals affected by events often beyond their control.

Social upheaval serves as a literary impetus because it allows – perhaps even necessitates – a (re)examination of existing beliefs, values and relationships. When social and political structures once seen as stable and natural are challenged and overthrown, this instability on a large cultural scale often leads to a questioning of individual identity: “es genügt, daß bestimmte psychosoziale Umstände zusammenkommen und den Boden für die Bildung oder Bewahrung persönlicher Identität ins Wanken bringen” (Straub 84-85). This results in a temporary fluidity in both collective and individual roles and habits. Formerly established systems of behavior are no longer in force, but new rules and institutions have not yet been fully formed. Authors who personally experience such social volatility often strive to record these moments of upheaval and change in their literary works. Therefore the primary texts of this dissertation can be read as glimpses into the psychological mindset of (fictional) individuals living amidst the rapid social change surrounding the fall of the GDR and German unification.

An examination of individual identity – a search for self – often involves a close look at and re-evaluation of the past and the family. Georg Langenhorst explains the historic and continued popularity of the literary search for the father as follows:

Gerade der Konflikt mit dem Vater oder die Frage nach dem Vater ist von Anfang an in diesen menschlichen Urerzählungen als Frage nach dem eigenen Ursprung vor allem die Frage nach der eigenen Identität und Existenz; habe ich – so die psychologische Binnenlogik dieser Erzählungen – den Vater gefunden, verstanden, durchschaut, dann klärt sich auch mein eigenes Leben, mein Selbstverständnis, mein Geschick. Oder, vorsichtiger formuliert: Um mich selbst finden zu können, muß ich zunächst wissen, wer mein Vater ist. (23)

The search for the father and the search for oneself – for identity, roles, and value – can therefore be seen as two sides of the same coin. A better understanding of the father hopefully results in a better understanding of oneself. However, periods of social upheaval necessitate not only a new examination of oneself (or one's father), but also of one's generation and the very society in which one lives. This is then the collective search for self, one which Langenhorst sees as leading to a collective search for the father: "Vatersuche kann ein individueller Prozeß sein, also die Geschichte allein eines spezifischen Individuums, kann aber auch als kollektiver Prozeß auftreten, in dem ganze Familien, Gruppen, Generationen oder Völker eine Vaterfigur suchen" (24). When viewed as a group, the individual father-child stories of post-unification texts can be read as a collective re-membering of the father by younger East Germans.

Many texts written during the social tumult of 1990s East Germany engage in this literary "Vatersuche". But social upheaval in twentieth-century Germany is not limited to the years surrounding German unification. The aftermath of World War II and the student movement are also examples of large-scale social and political unrest. Each represents a challenge to the existing social order and a subsequent change in political or public

attitudes and reality. Literature often reflects the collective and individual struggles associated with significant social change, from defeated German soldiers returning home in 1945 to young East Germans' first trip to West Berlin in 1989.

Father literature – or literature in which the father-child relationship serves as a central element of the plot – has a long history in German (and world) literature. In her reference work *Motive der Weltliteratur*, Elisabeth Frenzel traces the development of two aspects of father literature from ancient times to the present day: the father-son conflict and the search for the father.¹ She views these two aspects as recurring generational and individual issues – just as every generation of individuals must separate from their fathers, so too do individuals (or generations) yearn to understand the man behind the ‘father figure’. The tension between the person and the figure of the father, his individual choices and generational position in relation to his child plays out in every new (literary) generation (690-691).

German literary scholarship has traditionally focused on the father-son relationship. In her work *Töchter des Ödipus*, Britta Herrmann examines 20th century German father-daughter texts, acknowledging that they are often considered “außerhalb des Kanons” (22). The women’s movement drew more attention to texts by women, but these works were often grouped together under the heading of *Frauenliteratur* – a term which often implies a ‘for women by women’ attitude, largely limiting academic attention to questions of gender and often ignoring generational and social dynamics. In the 1970s and 1980s, literary explorations of the father-daughter relationship occurred

¹ Frenzel uses the terms “Vater-Sohn-Konflikt” and “Vatersuche”.

within the wave of West German *Väterliteratur*, eventually broadening scholarly research on the literary portrayal of the father-daughter relationship.²

It is during periods of social upheaval which challenge the authority of the father (generation) that noticeable ‘waves’ of father literature are produced. Herrmann points to the Expressionist movement around 1900, during which dozens of texts, largely dramas, were written about the father-son and father-daughter relationship. Building upon earlier literary works in the *fin de siècle*, a period known for its social reordering and insecurity, the Expressionist texts also reflect “ein Unbehagen an gesellschaftlichen, politischen und ökonomischen Zuständen, das einherging mit einem krisenhaften Ordnungsverlust” (Herrmann 32). This “Ordnungsverlust” was reflected in changing social orders and in the loss of social power on the part of the father. But Herrmann points to an interesting literary paradox: “Während kulturgeschichtlich gesehen die reale Vatermacht schwächer wird und die Väter immer mehr Rechte abgeben müssen, wird gleichsam im Gegenzug auf der symbolischen Ebene ein dominanter Vater produziert” (51). This pronounced and continued dominance serves as a critique of paternal power. Even as cultural power was beginning to shift and social structures were beginning to change – a change often welcomed by the younger protagonist generation – the literary father retains his aura of authority. The father and the father generation symbolize the social status quo, reluctant to change their ways even when confronted with their own social and historical failures.

Fifteen years after the political unification of East and West Germany, it is easy to minimize or even forget the enormous change it brought to the lives of East Germans. Democratic elections were held. Travel to Munich or Mallorca was possible. Previously unavailable items such as bananas and Levis routinely appeared in store windows. At the

² See texts by Bagley, Klages, Moffit, and Spooren.

same time, thousands were soon faced with job layoffs or reductions to part-time jobs. Familiar brands, routines and institutions were renamed or disappeared. Teachers and students were faced with new curricula and educational styles. Day cares and kindergartens closed. Streets were renamed and bus routes renumbered. Political parties disbanded and (re)formed. In other words, nearly every aspect of public and private life was redefined. Previously existing social and political structures – both positive and negative – were challenged, changed or disappeared. The formerly predictable if restrictive world of the GDR had become a larger, but very foreign place. Even after the initial phase of adaptation and assimilation, there still remains the sense that unification is not ‘finished’, that East Germans do not feel completely at home in post-socialist Germany, that the social and emotional ripples originating from unification have not yet subsided.³

It is against this backdrop of social, political and personal chaos and upheaval that younger East German authors produced their post-unification father texts. Amidst the historic uncertainty, writers turned to their own history, their own experiences. In much the same way as the authors of Expressionist dramas (and West German *Väterliteratur*, which will be discussed later), these East German authors focused on one of the largest but least understood figures in their lives – the father. In an attempt to make sense of the world around them, they took on the challenge of exploring and perhaps eventually understanding the father, reflecting Langenhorst’s idea of “Vatersuche als Ichsuche” (24). And although these younger authors do not view their texts as part of a larger literary

³ These themes have been widely addressed in the press and scholarly research. A representative article which incorporates varied East German responses to and experiences after unification is Jürgen Dahlkamp’s “Odyssee im Westraum” (*Der Spiegel* 27.9.04), with short essays about four individuals who fled the GDR via Prague in 1989.

project or as making a collective literary statement,⁴ the striking similarities between these texts – most noticeably the construction of the father figure – tell a different story. Read together, these texts depict the spectrum of this generation's GDR experiences, their family relationships and their lives in post-unification Germany. Made possible and perhaps even necessary by the social upheaval experienced during German unification, these texts display an inward turn, a focus on individual lives and families against the backdrop of social instability.

The relationship between father and child generations in the GDR was altered and complicated by the dramatic social upheaval of unification; teenage and young adult protagonists who were emotionally separating from the father and establishing their own individual identities were suddenly joined by an entire nation seeking to separate from its past and create a new cultural identity. The father no longer exercised social authority, instead he was a symbol of a *defeated* society. But just as Herrmann has observed in Expressionist texts, this actual loss of social and political power ironically results in literary depictions of dominant, sometimes nearly tyrannical fathers. While texts with slightly older protagonists (and/or authors)⁵ often highlight the father's loss of social authority – be it because of unemployment or a suddenly problematic political past – and the resulting loss of dominance in his relationship with his child, the major texts analyzed here portray fathers who continue to strongly influence the emotional lives of their children. I see this as a reflection of the protagonists' ages as well as their continued

⁴ See Dahlke's interview with Kerstin Hensel and Straubel's interview with Thomas Brussig.

⁵ For example, Alexander Osang's *Die Nachrichten*, Ingo Schulze's *Simple Stories*, Kathrin Schmidt's *Koenigs Kinder*. An interesting exception to this is Jana Hensel's *Zonenkinder*. Although she is the youngest of all the authors here (born in 1976), Hensel addresses the shift in power in the post-unification father-child relationship. I argue that this is in part a result of the essayistic nature of her text as opposed to novels.

longing for their fathers.⁶ Individual insecurity associated with emotional trauma and coming of age is magnified by the dramatic events surrounding German unification – the loss of childhood, state, and past.

While these new texts are powerful reflections of the personal and sociopolitical turmoil associated with German unification, they are not unique, but instead build upon and respond to two very different traditions of father literature: early East German *Aufbauliteratur* and West German *Väterliteratur* of the 1970s and 1980s. Post-unification texts rewrite and challenge the fantasies of *Aufbauliteratur* by unseating its heroic socialist father figures, constructing fathers and protagonists who are instead perpetrators and victims of authoritarianism. These new texts also incorporate elements of West German *Väterliteratur*, particularly in their examination of the deformative power of the authoritarian father in the life of the child. Defining characteristics of the father-child relationship – such as silence, estrangement and harsh discipline – are overwhelmingly similar in these two groups of texts. But in contrast to the idealized father figures of *Aufbauliteratur* and the demonized fathers of *Väterliteratur*, post-unification literature presents a deeply ambivalent figure, simultaneously *Täter* and *Opfer*, one which responds to but does not completely replicate these other versions and visions of the paternal figure.

What strongly connects post-unification texts to both *Aufbauliteratur* and *Väterliteratur* is their shared genesis of massive social breaks – World War II and the end of the GDR.⁷ Previous social structures and cultural patterns have been destroyed or are

⁶ These themes will be addressed in greater detail in Chapters 4 and 5.

⁷ The West German student movement (often termed ‘revolt’ by Germanists) in the late 1960s also represents a social break, albeit without the dramatic political changes brought about by the loss of World

being questioned, and stories must be written which reflect this tension between old and new, past and present, known and unknown. Each group of texts deals with this tension in a different way, but they share the compelling common background of social upheaval and an exploration of the past and of possible ‘new’ beginnings. When viewed in this light, the three disparate groups of texts suddenly present many common elements and rich opportunities for analysis.

Echoes of Post-War German Father Literatures in Post-Unification Texts

East German *Aufbauliteratur*

Historic and Ideological Background of *Aufbauliteratur*

With the end of World War II, the leaders of the SBZ (*Sowjetische Besatzungszone*) and the later GDR faced many challenges. Aside from the obvious financial and political difficulties of rebuilding a country after a long and devastating war, government leaders also needed to win the battle of East German public opinion, winning over citizens to the Communist/Socialist cause by contradicting years of anti-communist propaganda. Every nation produces a collective self-image – what it is to ‘be’ a German, an American, etc. Most of these collective images are formed over decades if not centuries, based upon long history and public attitudes. The government of the GDR thus faced the peculiar challenge and opportunity of consciously defining and defending a collective identity for the new country, deliberately constructing what Julia Hell has termed “ideological fantasies” to educate and guide its citizens, turning the military defeat into a social victory.

War II or the end of the GDR. Much of the social criticism by members of the student movement also relates to the political and personal decisions of the father generation during the Nazi regime.

One of the main elements of early GDR identity was the country's claim to anti-fascism. In her groundbreaking study of early GDR literature, *Post-fascist Fantasies*,⁸ Julia Hell claims that anti-fascism was the "most powerful ideological discourse" (17) of the GDR.⁹ In its desire to present a radical alternative to West Germany and recent German history, the GDR defined itself as exactly the opposite. Fascism included not only Nazi ideals, but also the capitalism which was seen as having led to them. In light of the trauma and loss suffered by many Germans in the 1930s and 40s, it is easy to understand how powerful the claim of East Germany as an anti-fascist state could have been. As Emmerich notes, socialism promised an "Anfang aus dem Nichts" (*KLD* 35) of immediate post-war Germany. Socialism defined as anti-fascism allowed the GDR to separate itself from the loss of World War II and align itself even more strongly with the Soviets, transforming itself from a defeated Nazi region to a victor over fascism.

One of the ways in which the GDR *Kulturation* depicted, disseminated and controlled its ideological project was through literature. This early *Aufbauliteratur*, which takes its name from the political and economic *Aufbau* of the GDR itself,¹⁰ served as the "foundational narrative of antifascism" (Hell, "Center" 23 and *Fantasies* 17). Although often maligned by Western literary critics and scholars (Hell, "Center" 23), *Aufbauliteratur* sheds considerable light on how the early East German government reacted to the social chaos left by World War II and which stories and figures they chose to represent the new anti-fascist state.

⁸ Hell's text is to date the most academically rigorous and insightful examination of early East German texts. Rather than merely tracing the cultural politics behind early GDR literature, she provides a psychoanalytical reading of the texts themselves.

⁹ Unless otherwise noted, all Julia Hell citations refer to *Post-fascist Fantasies*.

Wolfgang Emmerich also supports this claim in his *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR* (29).

¹⁰ The second party conference in July 1952 declared the "Aufbau des Sozialismus" to be the "grundlegende Aufgabe" for the GDR (Weber 188).

***Aufbauliteratur* and Post-Unification Literature**

Several of the most popular examples of *Aufbauliteratur* – such as Anna Seghers’ *Die Toten bleiben jung* and Willi Bredel’s *Die Väter* and *Die Söhne* – were actually written by German Communist authors in exile during World War II.¹¹ While written before the founding of the GDR, these texts played an important role in early GDR ideological discourse because they gave the anti-fascist movement a history. All “structured as family sagas, they each narrate the ‘pre-history’ of the German Democratic Republic by focusing on a single working-class family” (Hell 17). In tracing family histories, they “set up an unbroken male lineage of Communist fathers and sons” (Hell 17). By focusing on a rich Communist heritage, these texts construct a German anti-fascist movement which will finally find a home in the GDR.

Julia Hell attributes this focus on the past to the empty “locus of power” (28) experienced in immediate post-war Germany. Hitler’s regime had been defeated, and the GDR did not yet exist. Living under Allied occupation, “German Communists reacted to this situation by shifting their focus from Germany’s present to its past, from the political register to the register of the family, making the family model the privileged model of Communist politics” (Hell 28). While literary focus soon turned to the present, the family model – more specifically the paternal narrative – remained the vehicle for GDR ideology in literature.

¹¹ Willi Bredel finished his *Verwandte und Bekannte* trilogy in East Germany with the novel *Die Enkel*. Although much early *Aufbauliteratur* was written in exile, it differs from exile literature in that it focuses on a longer narrative time span instead of just exile experiences (Emmerich, *KLD* 90). Other examples of ‘historical’ *Aufbauliteratur* are Adam Scharrer’s novels *Der große Betrug* (1931), *Maulwürfe* (1933) and *Familie Schuhmann* (1939), Hans Marchwitza’s *Kumiak*-trilogy (*Die Kumiaks*, 1934; *Die Heimkehr der Kumiaks*, 1952; *Die Kumiaks und ihre Kinder*, 1959), which traces the story of a mining family from the 1920s to the early years of the GDR, and Otto Gotsche’s *Die Fahne von Kriwoj Rog* (1959).

GDR literature eventually expanded beyond this early model of paternal family narratives, but attention was sharply returned to the paternal narrative in 1989-1990. Julia Hell posits that, “at the very moment of East Germany’s dissolution, the paternal narrative reemerged once more as the most forceful story in a number of texts which attempted to retrospectively portray the protagonist’s life under ‘real existing socialism’” (106). This holds especially true for younger GDR authors. Rather than older, established GDR authors such as Christa Wolf or Heiner Müller, it was the middle generation of authors such as Monika Maron and Kurt Drawert, or the even younger generation of Kerstin Hensel and Thomas Brussig who flooded the market with paternal narratives.¹² This development is hardly surprising, especially for the youngest generation of writers, as they were themselves at an age where the father-child relationship (still) plays an important role.

In the early years of the GDR, largely due to influence from the Soviet Union upon cultural politics in the GDR, East German authors soon adopted the literary style of socialist realism, producing texts which fall into the broad category of *Bildungs-* or *Entwicklungsromane*.¹³ The story line generally portrays disillusioned World War II soldiers (Günter de Bruyn’s *Der Hohlweg*, 1963), hard-working factory workers (Maria Langner’s *Stahl*, 1952), or simple but noble farmers (Otto Gotsche’s *Tiefe Furchen*,

¹² Monika Maron *Stille Zeile Sechs* (1991), Kurt Drawert *Spiegelland: Ein deutscher Monolog* (1992), Kerstin Hensel *Im Schlauch* (1993), *Tanz am Kanal* (1994), Thomas Brussig *Wasserfarben* (1991 under the pseudonym Cordt Berneburger), *Helden wie wir* (1995).

¹³ In the GDR context, scholars often categorize *Entwicklungsromane* as novels depicting the personal transformation of former Nazi soldiers into Socialists while *Bildungsromane* depict (young) East Germans with no personal Nazi past. For a detailed discussion of the differences between these two genres as well as an analysis of early GDR *Bildungsromane*, see Taschner.

1949)¹⁴ who experience their own personal *Wende* over the course of the story – a turn from a fascist (or at least an apolitical) past to a strong and loyal commitment to socialist ideals.¹⁵ Originally developed as an aesthetic model in the Soviet Union in the 1930s, socialist realist texts were called to portray the “objektive Wirklichkeit” (Emmerich, *KLD* 120) of socialist society while helping to (re)form its citizens. *Aufbauliteratur* was tasked with providing ‘realistic’ examples of GDR citizens actively participating in and personifying the ideological project of East German socialism.

What occurred in these texts was a complicating of the father figure – a shift from actual Communist fathers to Party member ‘mentors’ who step in to fill the gap.¹⁶ Any effort to break with the fascist German past could potentially force protagonists to confront and/or deny their own father. In order to preserve the optimistic, teleological message of *Aufbauliteratur*, a viable substitute had to be provided. “These narratives involve a doubling of the paternal function in their depiction of a series of more or less prominent Party representatives who function as mentors to both fathers and sons, that is, as interpreters of the historical situation who assist the ‘positive’ hero in his task of acquiring ‘consciousness’” (Hell 34). Since the father himself was so often compromised by his Nazi past, mentors allowed the continuation of the family narratives used so often and so effectively in early East German literature. Julia Hell underscores the value of family narratives in the creation of official GDR identity:

¹⁴ *Tiefe Furchen*, actually written before the founding of the GDR, was long the best example of a text dealing with the collectivization of farms under socialism. Erwin Strittmatter’s *Ole Bienkopp*, perhaps the other best-known collectivization novel, was not published until 1963.

¹⁵ One of the best-known *Aufbauromane* is Eduard Claudius’s *Menschen an unserer Seite* (1951), although it stretches the limits of strict socialist realism. See Emmerich *KLD* 138-139 for a more detailed discussion.

¹⁶ To prevent any confusion caused by terms such as ‘actual father’, ‘substitute father’, ‘father figure’, I have chosen to refer to the Party member role models as ‘mentors’. The reader should keep in mind, however, that these are always men, and that they all fill aspects of the paternal role.

Structurally, the family narrative easily lends itself to the ideological project of constructing a coherent paternal order, advocating a form of unity centered on the figure of the father, and emphasizing the present's unbreakable connection to the past. The family plot is a narrative of linear succession, based on the underlying structure of law and transgression. (35)

When the literary focus in the GDR turned from the past to the present, the definition of family was broadened to include the Party. Party members stepped in as mentors when the actual father was absent, apolitical, or too strongly tied to the fascist past. With their hierarchical nature and obedience to the Party head, political structures often mirrored traditional authoritarian family structures. Obedience was rewarded, transgression was punished, and loyalty was expected. Literature provided an example of what *could* be, a highly idealized and emotionally reduced fantasy of reality. Substitute father figures – in the form of Party members – were available to mentor and ‘parent’ young East Germans on their way to full participation in socialist society.

Such idealized mentoring and parenting practices were among the fantasies constructed by *Aufbauliteratur*. While the GDR – in its politics and in its literature – proudly proclaimed itself to be everything the West was not, new political mottos and goals did not (and were not intended to) completely replace long-held German beliefs and traditions about gender relations and authority structures within the family and society. Although GDR mothers (and women in general) were given greater legal rights and employment opportunities, familial power remained largely in the hands of men. Much of this power of the father can be attributed to the continuation of long-standing authoritarian family structures within German culture.¹⁷ Joachim Garbe argues: “In

¹⁷ Hans-Joachim Maaz, an East German psychotherapist, describes such authoritarian childrearing methods in the GDR in his 1990 book *Der Gefühlsstau: Ein Psychogramm der DDR*. Although criticism has been raised about the book's sweeping conclusions, specifically Garbe argues convincingly that Maaz's portrayal of the average family is accurate and insightful.

diesem autoritären Staat galten ähnliche Erziehungsprinzipien, wie im Kaiserreich oder im deutschen Faschismus” (118). The father was still seen as the head of the family, and his authority within the home was not challenged to any significant degree. This social reality was mirrored in GDR literature (especially that of the 1970s and 80s), with authoritarian and distant fathers in such varied texts as Volker Braun’s *Die unvollendete Geschichte* (1975), Christa Wolf’s *Kindheitsmuster* (1976), Ulrich Plenzdorf’s *kein runter kein fern* (1978 FRG), and Christoph Hein’s *Der fremde Freund* (1982).¹⁸ Post-unification literary depictions of East German families also suggest that GDR society allowed fathers nearly unfettered freedom to raise and discipline their children as they saw fit. In this respect, the much-touted ‘new society’ was actually nothing new at all, merely a continuation of centuries-old childrearing practices that centered upon the authority of the father and the powerlessness of the child.

This critique of GDR society in post-unification texts is emphasized further by the lack of positive mentor figures in the lives of protagonists. Unlike *Aufbauliteratur* protagonists, who always encounter an older, wiser male Party member willing to guide them into socialist maturity, protagonists in post-unification texts have no positive male role models to emulate, neither in the GDR nor after its end. The (omni)presence of socialist mentor figures in *Aufbauliteratur* served to reassure readers that they were not alone, that someone was looking out for them, that a paternal role model was available even if the actual father was rejected. Post-unification texts reveal this world view to be exactly what it was – a fantasy. These protagonists are burdened with emotionally distant fathers and deprived of any mentor. GDR socialism is portrayed as constraining and

¹⁸These texts were all published during what could be considered a wave of East German ‘Väterliteratur’, when GDR authors examined their fathers’ past and the legacy of fascism. For more information see Wolfgang Emmerich’s *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR*, pg 293-334 and 489.

isolating, while post-unification society is impersonal and intimidating. While fathers are authoritarian and dominant, they are never portrayed as the wise mentors of *Aufbauliteratur*. Indeed, in their very selfishness and political pragmatism, GDR father figures in post-unification texts are critical parodies of those found in *Aufbauliteratur*.

In writing stories about strong fathers and mentors, early GDR authors were addressing the role of the protagonist (in the role of son or daughter) in relation to the paternal role model.¹⁹ “As they wrote their narratives, focusing on the family and its center, the father, the Communist authors were also writing about the structures of individual subject formation and the fantasies involved in them – they were writing *ideological fantasies*” (Hell 35, emphasis in original). In East German *Aufbauliteratur*, these fantasies contained a powerful political father figure in the form of a mentor and a protagonist who willingly submitted to his power. Whereas the actual father was often mocked, despised and rejected, the mentor was admired, obeyed and emulated. Protagonists willingly surrendered power to him, taking upon themselves what Julia Hell terms a “feminine disposition” (49) – that is, they allowed their individual identity to be determined by the (hyper)masculine figure of the mentor. Although protagonists themselves contributed to the economic and social development of the newly-created GDR, they played a submissive role in their own political and ideological growth. The father figure (and therefore the state itself) was constructed as the greater authority. Protagonists could choose to embrace or oppose this authority, but they could not ignore or usurp it.

¹⁹ In some texts, particularly early ones, it is the father himself who fills the role of male/paternal role model.

The essential narrative tension of *Aufbauliteratur* is that of good vs. evil, with protagonists submitting to mentor figures who embody and symbolize 'good'. Post-unification literature replaces good vs. evil with young vs. old, depicting the inherent (and often abused) imbalance of generational authority in the father-child relationship. Unlike *Aufbauliteratur* protagonists, who willingly submit to an authority figure recognized to be both just and merciful, post-unification protagonists act out of fear and self-preservation. Both the father and the GDR itself are powerful but capricious authorities, requiring protagonists to predict and respond to their latest mood. The attitude of young protagonists toward their fathers could perhaps be more accurately described as an infantile disposition than a feminine one – implying that infants are more completely at the mercy of the father, whereas women (somewhat) voluntarily submit to a man. Protagonists feel helpless in the face of paternal and political authority, a helplessness which does not completely disappear with the end of the GDR.²⁰

In much the same way that *Aufbauliteratur* protagonists willingly yield to the wisdom and will of their mentors in order to become part of socialist society, the texts also reflect a utopian, teleological view of history. While life in the early GDR is admittedly difficult, there is always a confidence that the future will be better if everyone contributes. Society will come closer to the utopian goals of communism, individuals will be part of a supportive (if highly disciplined) collective, and the economy will continue to expand. Present difficulties and inconveniences are merely challenges to be overcome on the way to a brighter future. Even the term *Aufbauliteratur* reflects the “Vorwärtsgewandtheit, womit sie sich deutlich von der im westlichen Teil Deutschlands

²⁰ One could view the father-child relationship in West German *Väterliteratur* as a ‘forced feminization’ in that children are (unwillingly) relegated to submissive roles in relation to the father’s dominance.

vorherrschenden 'Trümmerliteratur' abhob" (Müller). Individuals are part of a collective, subject to its rules and rulers, but always facing forward.

In the earliest texts, this world view is even illustrated in the way in which physical suffering is portrayed. Communist fathers and mentors are depicted enduring physical suffering at the hands of their foes, often as political prisoners. "The myth of the Communist resisting under torture became one of the core elements of the GDR's official discourse of antifascism as it developed in the 1950s" (Hell 60). They are depicted as martyrs, nearly Christ-like in their stoicism and determination in the face of immense physical pain. Although the individual may be wounded or killed, there is the underlying sense that his pain and death are a noble contribution to the greater cause of Communism. Suffering is sacred, a sacrifice which one willingly makes. By tracing the history of Communist families, early GDR authors demonstrate to the reader that suffering and sacrifice make a positive impact on future generations. Although the Communist father (figure) is portrayed in his physical limitations, his ideological convictions overcome all and allow him to become part of the heroic, almost mythic line of Communist descent.

After the second party conference of 1952, literature was forced to abandon the heroic sufferings of past Communist generations, replaced with an almost exclusive focus on the present.²¹ In demanding this shift of attention, government leaders halted any constructive literary dealings with the immediate German past. But even in the early GDR texts which *did* depict the war years, the focus was always on Communist figures, not the foot soldiers, *Mitläufer* or low-level Nazi party members which made up the

²¹ This focus on the present continued in *Aufbauliteratur* and later in *Ankunftsliteratur*, named after Brigitte Reimann's 1961 novel *Ankunft im Alltag*. Commonly referred to as 'literature of arrival', most *Ankunftsliteratur* was written in the early 1960s, shortly after the building of the Berlin Wall and the 'arrival' of the GDR as a relatively stable nation. Structured as *Bildungsromane*, the texts continue the ideological project of *Aufbauliteratur*.

overwhelming majority of the East German population.²² Rather than facing the difficult task of writing texts about these problematic figures, GDR literature shifted its attention to the present and supported the official government claim of the GDR as an anti-fascist country. Optimistic texts about the new society drowned out any constructive confrontation with the shameful past. The new stories presented to the reading public were mere palimpsests laid over history – covering and obscuring it while it festered in silence. Protagonists (and readers) with dubious pasts were ignored if not condemned, and this early literature made no attempt to initiate any honest dealing with the past. Since the GDR was an anti-fascist country, any admission of fascist pasts on the part of its citizens threatened to show this claimed collective identity to be merely a fantasy.

Post-unification East German texts deal with the past in a much different way, for which I see two main reasons. First, young East German authors do not see themselves as contributing to a larger ideological project. Their texts are individual literary interpretations of growing up in the East and coming of age in the West, not guidebooks for a new nation. Rather than creating fantasies, these authors instead critique the antifascist myth of the GDR by distorting the familiar characters and experiences of *Aufbauliteratur*. The wise father figures and second chances found in early GDR texts are recast as emotionally dysfunctional fathers and the routine of *realexistierender Sozialismus*. The second difference is that the immediacy of the Nazi past has receded. The father generation of post-unification texts bears no burden of responsibility or guilt for the Nazi regime because they were infants or children during World War II. Instead,

²² Julia Hell points out that even in Communist family sagas, the war years are often downplayed or left out entirely (“Center” 25).

their political past is that of the GDR itself, a past they share with the protagonist generation.

The level of confrontation with the political actions of the father varies between texts. In general, the more the father interacts with political power structures in the GDR (such as the *Stasi* father in *Helden wie wir* or the politically and socially problematic father in *Tanz am Kanal*), the more overt and lengthy is the discussion of politics and the past. Texts portraying relatively apolitical fathers, such as *Wie ich vom Ausschneiden loskam*, devote almost no attention to his political past, instead focusing on the father-child relationship and perhaps recounting the protagonist's experiences at/after unification. When read collectively, these texts reveal the range of political pressure, hypocrisy, and abuse of power. Even those fathers who work for the GDR state are shown to be instrumentalized by it, and apolitical or anti-SED fathers are often victimized. Post-unification East German father literature continues the critical discourse on the father and the state found in 1970s and 1980s GDR literature, depicting the grim and disappointing GDR 'reality' rather than the ideological optimism found in earlier East German *Aufbauliteratur*.²³

West German *Väterliteratur*

Sociohistorical Background of *Väterliteratur*

In 1967, Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich published their landmark analysis of German (post-)war trauma, *Die Unfähigkeit zu trauern*. This text at last openly addressed the overwhelming emotional burden which many Germans bore for their

²³ For more information see Wolfgang Emmerich's *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR*, pg 293-334 and 489.

One of the reasons for this difference is the sense that unification does not symbolize a clean break with the past or a true 'new beginning'. East German authors focus on the continued impact of long-held attitudes, roles and habits.

actions and attitudes during the Nazi regime. The war generation had silently hidden their feelings of guilt and regret, and the post-war generation(s) had wordlessly accepted their parents' inability and unwillingness to talk about the past. Emotional trauma largely went unheeded and untreated; recent German history was a taboo subject, an era which was silently but forcefully relegated to the past. War trials and reports of war atrocities were viewed as something in which others had participated, certainly not one's own father or grandfather. But behind the claims of ignorance and innocence were often deep feelings of pain and loss – all the more powerful for their remaining unarticulated.

The shared taboo of the father generation's Nazi past was dealt with much differently in East and West Germany. While both nations paid lip service to early efforts at denazification, official attention was quickly and firmly shifted to other matters. In GDR cultural politics, this involved the creation of new literary role models, new mentors and father figures for the new society. In West Germany, there was no organized effort to construct collective ideological fantasies; the past was not a topic for discussion, but no single literary theme/motif was provided to take its place.²⁴

This tacit silence about the past finally began to be broken during the 1960s, marking what Bullivant and Rice view as a "politicization of the cultural life of the Federal Republic" (238). Political tensions between groups concerned with preserving 'traditional' German society and progressive groups desiring change intensified in the mid- to late-1960s with the formation of the Grand Coalition of the CDU/CSU and SPD

²⁴ Obviously there were early post-war novels which dealt critically with the German past, but they generally provided an "allegorical treatment of National Socialism" or a "narrow focus on the war experience of the ordinary soldier" (Bullivant and Rice 235). A direct confrontation with the Nazi past was absent in literature until the publication of three major novels in 1959: Heinrich Böll's *Billiard um halbzehn*, Günter Grass's *Die Blechtrommel*, and Uwe Johnson's *Mutmaßungen über Jakob*.

in December 1966 and the passing of the Emergency Laws in May 1968.²⁵ Socially, the attempted assassination of the student leader Rudi Dutschke in April 1968 and the growing number of students “demanding radical reform of the archaic West German system of higher education” (Bullivant and Rice 250) added to the unease. The students’ slogan “Unter den Talaren der Muff von tausend Jahren” was not only a critique of antiquated traditions, but also of the number of professors who were former members of the “thousand year Reich”. Members of the student movement “wished to wrench West German society out of its smug bourgeois torpor” (Burns and van der Will 274), a direct challenge to many members of the father generation, particularly ex-Nazis who gained or retained positions of power after the war.

The tension and confrontations between the bourgeois father generation and the anti-authoritarian younger generation was not limited to political activists. The political and social turmoil of the late 1960s permeated West German society. Many young adults began questioning their fathers’ actions, political views and closely-guarded pasts, often being met yet again with silence. Michael Schneider, in his discussion of the ensuing *Väterliteratur*, says that the events leading to its writing were “certainly indicative of a deep-seated disturbance in relations between two generations. This disturbance can obviously be traced back to historically specific causes, and it far exceeds the classical Oedipal complex which stamps every generational conflict to a greater or lesser degree at any given time” (5). He continues to claim that the explosive generational conflict surrounding the 1968 revolt implies that relations between the father and child generations “must have already been in a more or less damaged state *before* the younger

²⁵ The Grand Coalition effectively prevented any parliamentary opposition, while the Emergency Laws gave the government “sweeping powers free of parliamentary control in the event not only of war or a nuclear disaster, for example, but also in a situation of ‘threatened emergency’” (Bullivant and Rice 239).

generation experienced its ‘fall from grace’” (5, emphasis in original). The legacy of shame and silence caused by fathers’ roles in World War II had so weakened and damaged collective German generational relations that the revolt became inevitable. The “grim silence of the paternal generation has been bitterly avenged [...] Since the fathers had failed to indict themselves for their monstrous pasts, they were put on trial by proxy by the radicalized sons and daughters in 1968 and thereafter” (Schneider 11-12). The father generation was harshly and publicly judged by the younger generation for their actions and attitudes during and after the Nazi regime.

The importance of the social upheaval in 1960s West Germany cannot be ignored if one is to understand the context and catalysts of *Väterliteratur*. Whereas World War II functions as the dividing line between past and present, the break between father and child generations, 1968 marks the point at which the post-war generation collectively challenged this past. Schneider underscores the dramatic turning point the student movement played in their lives:

Experiencing this movement seems to have been a key element in the biographies of all of these authors; their perspective on the past has been markedly influenced by ideas and points of view which first came into play in 1968 and thereafter. The extent to which their lives, which had been so constricted and repressed, almost automatically found a voice in this revolt can easily be extrapolated from the novels. (44)

Just as many author-protagonists felt that their childhood innocence ended with the return of the father from World War II – marking the beginning of a father-child relationship characterized by rules, authority and silence – so too did the student movement’s challenge to German society end the post-war generation’s silence. Social upheaval enabled, even forced, the beginning of individual literary confrontations with the past, which must be read in light of the society which generated them. “Insgesamt ist nicht zu

verkennen, daß sich Schreibimpuls und Klärungsbedürfnis der Söhne und Töchter stark auf die private Beziehungsgeschichte richten; die aber ist doch so untrennbar mit dem zeithistorischen Stoff verwoben, daß es naheliegt, die Texte auch in diesem Sinn zu befragen" (Vogt 390). Individual and collective aspects of these father stories cannot be analyzed or truly understood in isolation from each other.

The social questioning and challenging of the father generation was eventually reflected in the wave of literary works which came to be known as *Väterliteratur*. Largely published in the late 1970s and early 1980s, these were (auto)biographical texts about the authors and their fathers, with varying degrees of fictionalization. Some of the best-known examples are Elisabeth Plessens's *Mitteilung an den Adel* (1977), Sigfrid Gauch's *Vaterspuren* (1979) Christoph Meckel's *Suchbild: Über meinen Vater* (1980), and Ruth Rehmann's *Der Mann auf der Kanzel* (1980).²⁶ All texts belonging to this corpus share several thematic and structural elements: a dead father, an exploration of his actions during the Nazi regime, and the retrospective portrayal of a father-child relationship defined by silence if not emotional abandonment.

***Väterliteratur* and Post-Unification Literature**

It is perhaps not surprising that the death of the father nearly always serves as a point of origin for these texts. Although the events of 1968 may have led to a collective judging and discrediting of the father generation, writing about one's own father is a much more personal and powerful act. Authors generally chose to wait until their fathers

²⁶ Other texts include Peter Henisch's *Die kleine Figur meines Vaters* (1975), Heinrich Wiesner's *Der Riese am Tisch* (1979), Julia Schutting's *Der Vater* (1980), Barbara Bronnen's *Die Tochter* (1980), Friederike Mayröcker's *Die Abschiede* (1980), Günter Seuren's *Abschied von einem Mörder* (1980), Katrine von Hutten, *Im Luftschloß meines Vaters* (1983), Brigitte Schwaiger's *Lange Abwesenheit* (1983), and Hanns-Josef Ortheil's *Abschied von den Kriegsteilnehmern* (1992), largely considered to be a late and perhaps final entry in the category *Väterliteratur*.

had died to publish *Väterliteratur*, and the protagonists in these texts have also experienced the death of the father. The texts separate into two main groups: those in which the recent death of the father is the immediate cause for writing, and those in which the father has long been dead. Such texts generally use the discovery of personal artifacts of the father – letters, diaries, pictures – as the impetus for the protagonist to explore and reflect on the father’s life, and the narrated time span is often quite long. The former category often begins with the death of the father and takes place in the brief time between death and the funeral, with the bulk of the narration being an “Erinnerungsstrom” from the protagonist’s childhood (Vogt 389). Both groups of texts end with new insight or understanding into the figure of the father and the father-child relationship, but the very catalyst for writing – the death of the father – also ensures that any confrontation with (or exploration of) the past will remain incomplete. On the one hand the father’s physical absence results in freedom and autonomy for the protagonist, but on the other hand it dooms the writing project from the start. As Stephen Brockmann points out: “within a [...] Freudian analytic framework, the death of the father is precisely the event which perpetuates the father’s rule: in death the father acquires more power than he ever had in life” (158). Death does not end the father’s influence.

Adult author-protagonists are free to judge, forgive, or condemn the father, but their ability to explore his (and their) past is still determined and limited by the father and his absence:

Der Tod des Vaters wird oft genug zum unmittelbaren Anlaß und Auslöser, sich mit ihm auseinanderzusetzen. Die im Leben gescheiterte, unmögliche, verdrängte, nicht versuchte oder erfolglos abgebrochene Kommunikation wird also erst in der Rückschau möglich. Am Totenbett oder am Grab des Vaters beginnt die Suche nach dem eigentlichen Selbst. (Langenhorst 24)

The physical absence of the father both limits and makes possible an exploration of an individual, familial and generational past and present.

In contrast, post-unification texts do not seem to ‘need’ the death of the father as a catalyst. While fathers often die over the course of the narration, their deaths are just as apt to be portrayed as *a* turning point in the lives of the protagonists as *the* turning point.²⁷ *Moskauer Eis* even questions the boundaries of life and death, portraying a father mysteriously preserved in a broken deep freezer – a freezer mysteriously found empty at the end of the text. I see two reasons for this difference: first, *Väterliteratur* is often openly autobiographical, and the death of the author’s own father is a natural catalyst for writing, and secondly, the past (and therefore the presence) of fictional GDR fathers in post-unification texts is not as problematic as West German fathers in *Väterliteratur*, therefore the symbol of their death is not needed. Unlike *Väterliteratur*, in which the protagonist can safely and severely judge the father for his past actions because the protagonist herself had no part in the Nazi past, the protagonist and father in post-unification East German texts share a common GDR past. World War II does not serve as a historical break as it did for earlier generations – even the fathers in these post-unification texts share in the “Gnade der späten Geburt”.²⁸ Although the protagonists in post-unification texts were mere children and teenagers in the GDR, there is not the historical remove from the father’s past that is present in *Väterliteratur* texts; because of this shared past, these post-unification texts are somewhat less severe, less condemning than *Väterliteratur*. Unlike many West German authors, young East German authors

²⁷ For example, in *Helden wie wir* the death of the protagonist’s father comes shortly before what the protagonist views as his greatest accomplishment – singlehandedly bringing down the Berlin Wall.

²⁸ Chancellor Helmut Kohl frequently used this phrase in the 1980s when discussing the post-war generations.

seem to acknowledge the human weaknesses of the father and to have some understanding of the pressures of the GDR system. This by no means results in a benevolent depiction of the GDR father – he is generally portrayed quite negatively, but it prevents these texts from disintegrating into childlike tirades against the father, an accusation made by some literary scholars about West German *Väterliteratur*.²⁹

Although the events directly surrounding the *Wende* are portrayed in vastly different ways in post-unification texts, ranging from a few offhand comments in Kerstin Hensel's *Tanz am Kanal* to multiple chapters in Thomas Brussig's *Helden wie wir*, the historic break symbolized by unification is the catalyst for this literary phenomenon as a whole. Much in the way that the death of the individual father served as a catalyst for authors of West German *Väterliteratur*, the end of the GDR was a symbolic 'death' of the GDR-as-father.³⁰ The sociopolitical overthrow of the father generation, however, does not mean that his influence in the life of the protagonist has come to an end. This is emphasized by the age of the protagonists in these texts; they are teenagers or young adults at the time of unification. Coming of age is a complex (and sometimes traumatic) process itself, and coming of age in the midst of national political and social upheaval is even more difficult. Not only is the authority of the father being questioned and challenged by the protagonist (especially male protagonists), but it is being radically changed by outside forces. Protagonists struggle to reconcile the larger than life father figure of childhood with the changed figure in post-GDR Germany.

²⁹ Schneider (43) in particular addresses this issue.

³⁰ Some texts do use the death of the (fictional) father as a point of departure for narration, namely *Lügen und schweigen*. *Moskauer Eis* plays with the idea of the dead father by placing him in an unplugged but still cold deep freezer, and *Helden wie wir* recounts the death of the father (although it is not the main impetus for the text).

In addressing the actions and guilt of individual fathers, the authors of *Väterliteratur* also confront the collective aspects of Germany's Nazi past, actively contributing to the country's literary construction of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. Fathers from all walks of life are presented: passionate Nazis, *Mitläufer*, academics and clergy – what Jochen Vogt calls a “Typenspektrum deutscher Männlichkeit” (390). This very representation of society's breadth serves to reinforce the idea that *all* German fathers were tied to the past, that no one could claim ignorance or innocence. Although it had taken nearly 20 years for the social revolt against the war generation and a decade more for the literary confrontation, the past was no longer allowed to remain unexamined. These texts engage in an unflinching and often unflattering exploration of Germany's past in the figure of the father, unlike the palimpsests of early East German *Aufbauliteratur*. They contribute to dominant West German constructions of the (post-)war experience, with their focus on trauma, silence and collective guilt. The antagonistic, critical, somewhat cynical representation of West German society is reminiscent of the black-and-white portrayal of the father himself.

The portrayal of the individual father and the father-child relationship in *Väterliteratur* is largely dependent upon the extent to which the father was active in the Nazi party. As a rule, the more politically active the father was, the harsher and less forgiving his portrayal. “Je tiefer die Verwobenheit der Väter in die Greuelaten der Nazis, desto unbarmherziger scheinbar die Schärfe der Abrechnung. Privates Fehlverhalten im Bereich der Familie scheint im Nachhinein relativierbar, zumindest vergebbar zu sein, das ‘politische’ Fehlverhalten angesichts der Greuel der Nazidiktatur aber nicht” (Langenhorst 31). But although Langenhorst reads a somewhat milder

reckoning with less politically compromised fathers, one should not assume that any of them are portrayed only positively.³¹ All fathers are criticized for their political pasts and their personal shortcomings. Jochen Vogt presents a disturbing characterization of the father figure in *Väterliteratur*:

Die Nachkriegs-Väter erscheinen unfähig, ihr Handeln und dessen politisch-ideologische Bedingungen zu bedenken, die existentielle Verunsicherung durch Krieg, Niederlage, Gefangenschaft zuzulassen und eine neue Orientierung zu finden. Die private und die politische Ebene verknüpfen sich in den hier untersuchten Erzählungen thematisch zentral im Scheitern an der *Vaterrolle*. Diese Väter sind unfähig zu sprechen (besonders über sich selbst), familiäre Beziehungen affektiv auszufüllen, kindlicher Eigensinn zu dulden, Vaterautorität nachvollziehbar zu begründen und ihren Kindern Abgrenzung und Autonomie zu ermöglichen. Sie versagen, pauschal gesprochen, genau dort, wo die affektiven Bedürfnisse der Kinder liegen. (391)

The underlying connection among all father figures is their traumatization during World War II and their inability to respond to the emotional needs of their children. Traditional authoritarian methods of childrearing are intensified by the father's need for military-like order and obedience. Returning to a home and family in a country nearly destroyed by war, father figures attempt to hold onto any sense of authority and order; the chaos and instability of post-war German society are not to be tolerated within the home. Even fathers who recognize the emotional needs of their children are unable to completely bridge the gap created by World War II. Father and child generations stand on opposite sides of the break caused by twelve years of the Nazi regime.

The characteristic elements of father-child relationships in *Väterliteratur* – silence, emotional estrangement, and the continuation of traditional authoritarian childrearing practices – are exacerbated in post-unification texts because of the

³¹ There are some examples of *Väterliteratur* which portray a reasonably happy childhood now being re-examined in light of new knowledge about the father, such as Ruth Reimann's *Der Mann auf der Kanzel*, in which the adult protagonist learns that her pastor father did nothing to protest Hitler's manipulation of the church.

authoritarian regime of the GDR. Themselves children of fathers involved in World War II (or even growing up fatherless because of the war), the East German fathers in post-unification texts seem to pass on dysfunctional relationships to their own children. These fathers can be seen as reflecting the inability of the SED regime to truly nurture and understand its citizens. Just as the state has a dysfunctional relationship with its citizens, suppressing, misunderstanding and misleading them – resulting in apathy, resignation and opposition on various levels – the fathers play out this relationship within the “Keimzelle des Sozialismus”, the family. Emotional distance plays a defining role in the father-child relationship, often coupled with overly high expectations for order and achievement or alternating neglect and physical or emotional abuse. The link between the father’s trauma – be it during World War II or within the GDR – and a poor father-child relationship is made in each text. The past continues to affect the present, and perhaps even the next generation.

However, the construction of the father figure in post-unification texts is much more ambivalent than *Väterliteratur* or *Aufbauliteratur*. The ‘black and white’ portrayal of earlier texts has been replaced with many shades of gray. The starkness of those images is lessened and challenged somewhat in post-unification texts, with their desire to critically describe situations, characters and relationships rather than to condemn them. Although these texts on the whole present a negative portrayal of the father, there is a tacit acknowledgement of his complicated social and symbolic position: victimizer and victim, powerful and powerless, (un)loving and (un)loved.³² Rather than being portrayed as a Communist hero or a Nazi villain, the GDR father in post-unification texts is portrayed as a traumatized, remote figure. Sometimes a tyrant (such as in *Fitchers Blau*),

³² This tension will be discussed at greater length in Chapters 3 and 4.

sometimes a loving but egocentric pleasure seeker (*Andere Umstände*), the GDR father exists in a tension between hero and villain, never completely one or the other.

The repeated challenges of the 1960s to the West German social status quo resulted in a destabilization of the father-child (especially father-son) relationship, the father figure, and the entire father generation, which is evident in *Väterliteratur*. “The sorry common denominator of all of these self-delegated biographies of the fathers is the fact that all of the sons and daughters have been left with an image of their fathers which has been either tarnished, damaged or destroyed” (Schneider 13). Authors and protagonists of *Väterliteratur* attempted to work through in literature the strained father-child relationship and the complex journey toward autonomy. Because the father has become a problematic figure, any identification with or separation from him has become muddled by collective attitudes as well as individual experiences.

This tarnishing of the father image calls into question not only the individual father figure and the father generation, but also the definition of masculinity in general. Most children – especially boys – look first to the father (or father figure) in an attempt to form a personal definition of masculinity. After World War II, sons and daughters were confronted with “a generation who had committed crimes unknown before” (Kosta 222), making it even more difficult to create a positive definition and image of masculinity. Unlike East German *Aufbauliteratur*, in which protagonists with flawed fathers were always provided with appropriate mentors, the protagonists in *Väterliteratur* texts struggle to find and define masculine role models. In the late 1960s, many young Germans, especially young men, rejected any traditional models and images of masculinity, turning away from a German image long defined by war (Kosta 224, Vogt

387). With the end of the revolutionary euphoria of the time, “sons in particular were left once again without a model of masculinity that functioned as an antidote to the deficient images that they had internalized and learned to abhor” (Kosta 224). In writing about the father, authors of *Väterliteratur* texts are finally confronting the powerful yet tainted figure of the father and his role in defining gender identity. Kosta continues: “These texts reveal a crisis of male subjectivity that defines both fathers and sons. The fathers are scarred by their own losses and are unable to reenter the dominant fiction that bestows an (untraumatized) ‘intact’ masculinity on the sons. Moreover, it is the deep sense of betrayal the sons experienced that is linked closely to their own masculinity” (227). Not only the masculine identity of the father is being examined, but also that of the author/protagonist himself.³³

Issues of gender are also addressed in post-unification texts, although not with the same intensity as in *Väterliteratur*. While a generational conflict exists, it is not as pronounced as that between the pre- and post-war West German generations. Post-unification East German texts instead explore the effect that emotionally distant, authoritarian fathers have on the gendered lives of protagonists. Sons tend to view the father either as the paradigm or antithesis of masculinity, ranging from Klaus’s hero worship of his *Stasi* father in *Helden wie wir* to the protagonist’s anger toward an absent, alcoholic father who left his son to struggle toward manhood “unter Frauen” (A 198) in *Wie ich vom Ausschneiden loskam*. For daughters in both *Väterliteratur* and post-unification literature, the father strongly influences their later choices in men. Whether subconsciously attempting to replicate the father or deliberately rejecting him, a

³³ For a discussion of the gender-specific elements of the father-son and father-daughter relationship in post-unification texts, see Chapter 5.

daughter's choice in men reveals much about her relationship to her father, as well as about her conception of gender and gender roles.

While the construction of an image of masculinity is most obviously dependent upon the figure of the father, Kosta's earlier statement reminds us that father literature is as much about the sons and daughters themselves as about the father. Langenhorst posits that these texts serve as "Ichsuche" not only for individuals, but for an entire generation: "Hier geht es nicht nur um den je individualbiographischen Einzelfall, sondern um das Phänomen einer ganzen Generation" (26). The startlingly similar (narrative and familial) structures, experiences and attitudes portrayed in *Väterliteratur* texts lead to this claim. In an essay about *Väterliteratur*, Heinrich Vormweg comments: "In dieser Zeit [1978-1980, ES] erschien eine ganze Reihe von Erzählungen und Romanen mit Vätern als den Hauptpersonen, die zu schreiben – wie sie immer wieder versichert haben – ihre Autoren ganz unabhängig voneinander sich gezwungen fühlten" (213). Individual author intent, however, is here much less intriguing than collective literary 'statements'. Regardless of why and how authors came to write about the complicated father-child relationship in post-war West Germany, it is striking how similar their experiences and attitudes are.

Michael Schneider writes:

[I]t seems, if we take a closer look, that the specific interest which released this literary return to the past was not at all primarily an interest in the fathers and in the dark areas of their pasts, but rather, and to a much greater extent, an interest in their own beginnings. The look back at the fathers is at the same time a retrospective look to the roots of their own emotional lives, to the influences at work on them, and to the psychological legacy of spiritual injuries and deficits which seem to surface time and time again in the lives of these authors, who are representative of an entire generation. (23)

Once again, the literary exploration of the father serves as a vehicle for exploration of the author's individual identity and place within society. Taken together, these texts can very

well be read as a collective biography of the first post-war generation. Young East German authors have produced fictional accounts of an individual and collective GDR past, representing the experiences of their generation. The figure of the father serves as both an anchor and a point of departure for the narration, but in the end the story is not his.

Although these three corpora – East German *Aufbauliteratur*, West German *Väterliteratur*, and East German post-unification texts – come out of widely varying political and social contexts, they share several important aspects. Perhaps the greatest of these is their common impetus of social upheaval, cultural chaos, historical breaks. All of these texts are literary responses to instability and uncertainty on a collective and an individual level. This insecurity is reflected in the turn to (paternal) family narratives, in the exploration of one's family origin, in the examination of the original 'collective' in which the individual is formed. In the case of East German *Aufbauliteratur*, the definition of family and father figure was broadened to include the political mentor as a father figure and socialist GDR society as a family. West German *Väterliteratur* and East German post-unification texts reject such utopian father figures and family structures, focusing instead on the failures and weaknesses of the father and society. In all three corpora, the father figure is the center around which individual identity forms and narration hinges. Whether a hero, a villain, or an ambivalent character, the father plays a defining role in the life of the protagonist.

Post-unification literature builds on and responds to the earlier traditions of *Aufbauliteratur* and *Väterliteratur*. It rejects and rewrites the ideological project of early GDR literature, portraying struggling individuals and stagnating institutions which stand

in stark contrast to the literary promises of the *Aufbau*- years. But it shares with *Aufbauliteratur* the background of social upheaval, collapse and new beginning. Early GDR authors were encouraged to present a unified, optimistic worldview, while young East Germans after 1989, freed from SED ideology and expectations, strive to portray what is often an unsettling, unsettled, but never boring world.

This portrayal both connects and differentiates post-unification literature and *Väterliteratur*. While *Väterliteratur* presents a much bleaker and more critical view of the German past and present, its portrayal of the father bears striking similarity to post-unification literature. Authoritarianism, trauma, and emotional distance characterize the father-child relationship in both corpora. Similar family experiences underscore the continuation of traditional German childrearing practices and attitudes toward authority in both East and West. But while this was challenged in 1960s West Germany, it was only exacerbated and silenced by the repressive system of the GDR. In his role as link between past and present, private and public, self and other, the father in post-unification texts serves as a rhetorical figure to address and challenge issues of authority in the GDR family and state.

Chapter 3

(De)formation of the Father in the Authoritarian State and Family

This chapter examines the portrayal of the father's experiences with authority in the family and the GDR state. It specifically explores the ways in which fathers are shown to be (de)formed by authoritarian structures in post-war East Germany. In depicting fathers as *victims* of authoritarianism rather than just symbols of it – as is the case in West German *Väterliteratur* – these texts both acknowledge the overwhelming influence of authoritarian structures in the lives of GDR citizens and also critique their continued existence in post-unification Germany.

Both Fromm and Horkheimer posit that authoritarian societies (such as the GDR) replicate authoritarian beliefs and behavior in their citizens, and that the family plays a central role in this process. “Die Familie besorgt, als eine der wichtigsten erzieherischen Agenturen, die Reproduktion der menschlichen Charaktere, wie sie das gesellschaftliche Leben erfordert, und gibt ihnen zum großen Teil die unerläßliche Fähigkeit zu dem spezifisch autoritären Verhalten, von dem der Bestand der bürgerlichen Ordnung weitgehend abhängt” (Horkheimer 388). But the process of assimilation and integration into authoritarianism is not limited to childhood experiences in the family:

Das Verhältnis der Individuen zur Autorität [...] bedingt ein dauerndes Zusammenwirken der gesellschaftlichen Institutionen zur Erzeugung und Festigung der ihm entsprechenden Charaktertypen. Diese Wirksamkeit erschöpft sich nicht in bewußten Maßnahmen von Kirche, Schule, sportlichen und politischen Verbänden, Theater, Presse und so fort, sondern mehr noch als durch die absichtlich auf Menschenbildung gerichteten Akte wird diese Funktion durch den stetigen Einfluß der herrschenden Zustände selbst, durch die gestaltende Kraft des öffentlichen und privaten Lebens, durch das Vorbild von Personen, die im Schicksal des Einzelnen eine Rolle spielen, kurz, auf Grund vom Bewußtsein nicht kontrollierter Prozesse ausgeübt. (Horkheimer 387-8)

Overt institutional influences therefore combine with more subtle forces to steer individuals toward ‘correct’ behavior and attitudes toward authority, preserving systemic stability and continuity. These influences, which exist in every society, are so powerful and insidious that the individual cannot help but be affected by them. Their power in authoritarian societies such as the GDR – a system which highly valued conformity and obedience – was enormous. Not everyone raised within authoritarian societies develops into an authoritarian personality as outlined by Fromm and later quantified by Adorno, but all of the fathers in the primary texts of this dissertation show marked authoritarian tendencies.¹

Several of these texts also implicitly explore the legacy of German fascism. They stand in contrast to the claim of East German *Aufbauliteratur* – that fascism can be and has been defeated – showing instead how the lack of constructive confrontation with Nazism in the GDR led to a repetition of its authoritarian structures. While the years of the Nazi regime are recognized as an extreme and horrendous example of the authoritarian state, they are also situated within a tradition of German authoritarianism. Governments may rise and fall, but underlying attitudes which privilege obedience and integration remain startlingly similar. Horkheimer makes the following pessimistic statement about moments of political change:

diese Augenblicke sind selten und kurz, die schlecht gewordene Ordnung wird rasch notdürftig ausgebessert und scheinbar erneuert, die Restaurationsperioden dauern lang, und in ihnen gewinnt der veraltete kulturelle Apparat sowohl als seelische Beschaffenheit der Menschen wie auch als Zusammenhang ineinandergreifender Institutionen neue Macht. (349)

¹ In 1950, Adorno et al published their study *The Authoritarian Personality*, which presented a quantitative scale for measuring authoritarian personality tendencies. Called the F-scale, it was conceived as a method for measuring susceptibility to fascism. It quantifies many of the personality traits described by Fromm and Horkheimer in the *Studien über Autorität und Familie*.

Fromm argues similarly, in a statement strikingly applicable to the early GDR: “Die neue Autorität bedient sich der Empörung gegen die alte und fördert die Illusion, als sei der Kampf gegen die Unterdrückung durch die alte Autorität ein Kampf gegen Unterdrückung überhaupt gewesen” (132). In defining itself as ‘anti-fascist’, the SED government of the GDR publicly situated itself against the Nazi regime while avoiding any authentic *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, any admission of individual guilt, any true challenge of underlying social mores. In its attempt to bring every aspect of life under the watchful eye of the regime, the SED created several institutions very similar to those of the Nazis, with the FDJ/Hitler Jugend and *Stasi*/Gestapo comparisons being the most obvious. More central to literature, however, is the continuity of *attitudes* between fascism and socialism. Elements of Nazism such as the focus on the collective, adulation of the leader, conformism and a patriarchal hierarchy were never deconstructed in the GDR, merely used for different ends. Many mindsets and behaviors fostered by the Nazi regime were redirected toward supporting the authoritarian SED state.

These texts therefore participate in a critique of authoritarianism before, during and after the GDR. The father figures constructed in them are ambivalent, completely functioning neither as the ideological heroes of East German *Aufbauliteratur* nor the authoritarian despots and remnants of the Nazi regime of West German *Väterliteratur*. Instead post-unification portrayals of the GDR father acknowledge his pain as well as his power and place him in a dual role of submitting to authority as well as symbolizing it. In many respects, the father-state relationship can be read in the same way as the father-child relationship, with the father taking on the less powerful (child) role in relation to the state. The father who is powerful within the family (in his role as father) is less than

powerful at the hands of the authoritarian state and its institutions (which together can be seen as a type of *über-father*). One must also keep in mind, however, that the experiences of the father (both within and outside the father-child relationship) are not portrayed by the father himself, but rather by a narrator. Often this narrator is identical with the child/protagonist, while other texts have an (omniscient) third-person narrator. Thus the reader is presented with an *image* of the father, a *figure* used to address both the father-child relationship and the larger issue of authoritarianism.

The concept of the father as a constructed image is central to this dissertation, which is not a sociopsychological study of actual authoritarianism in the GDR (such as Maaz's *Gefühlsstau*), but authoritarianism as it is depicted in the lives of these literary fathers. Therefore my arguments, based upon psychoanalytical and critical theory, are always in reference to the texts as *representations*, not reality. These texts are not (auto)biographies or history textbooks, but fictional representations, with characters whose actions, experiences and surroundings are crafted by the author to express certain ideas and evoke a powerful response. The similarity of the representation of the father figures in these texts stems from the shared GDR background of the authors; each text contributes to the collective construction of the father figure as a vehicle to examine and challenge issues of authority.

This chapter is split into two sections which focus on childhood/youth and adulthood. The first section analyzes two texts, Annett Gröschner's 2000 novel *Moskauer Eis*, and Ingo Schramm's 1996 novel *Fitchers Blau*. Both texts provide revealing information about the childhood and youth of the father. While other post-unification texts focus nearly exclusively on the time period of the father-child relationship, these

two novels include extended passages recounting the father's childhood and his (adult) experiences with *his* father (the grandfather generation) outside the protagonist-father relationship. They therefore position the father (generation) within a larger heritage of authoritarianism.

The second section of this chapter examines how the fathers in primary texts are victimized and (de)formed by the authoritarian GDR state itself. Two representative texts are used for analysis: Kerstin Hensel's *Tanz am Kanal* and Katrin Dorn's *Lügen und schweigen*. Both texts address aspects of the father's submission and challenge to authority, as well as how his acceptance and/or defiance affect not only himself but also his children. The pressure exerted – both openly and more subtly – on the individual in the GDR to conform and submit to authority is shown to lead to desperate decisions, feelings of entrapment, and a legacy of silence.

Childhood, Youth and Family Trauma

Fitchers Blau and *Moskauer Eis* are the only primary texts which extensively address events and experiences surrounding World War II and its immediate aftermath.² They both provide at least some information about the actions of the 'grandfather generation' during the war, positioning them within the authoritarianism of Nazism while not labeling them as Nazis.³ The fathers are therefore confronted with ambivalent representatives of the past and the present, and they struggle with issues of identification, separation and autonomy.

² Other texts either omit any mention of World War II (*Lügen und schweigen*, *Tanz am Kanal*, *Helden wie wir*) or make brief mentions of grandfathers (not) coming home from the war (*Andere Umstände*, *Wie ich vom Ausschneiden loskam*).

³ The grandfather in *Fitchers Blau* is described in his return from the war as a defeated foot soldier, without any statement made about his political ideology. The grandfather in *Moskauer Eis* was not a member of the Nazi party (one of the reasons his wife gives for marrying him), but did take advantage of the economic chaos of war.

World War II Trauma in *Fitchers Blau*

Roughly the first three-quarters of Ingo Schramm's novel *Fitchers Blau* tell the story of Karl and Janni, half-siblings who do not know they are related. Throughout this part of the text, there are references to their father Josef, generally in the context of the protagonists' traumatic childhood memories of emotional and physical abuse. For over 300 pages, the reader is given glimpses into the character of the father, and these glimpses are grim. It is not until late in the book – after his children's stories have essentially been told – that Josef's story is told in greater detail. The events of Josef's childhood and the way in which they are depicted vividly illustrate his victimization during and after World War II. Their position at the end of the book also forces the reader to reconsider her previously formed impressions of Josef, reminding her of the far-reaching effects which childhood trauma can cause.

Although the beginning of Josef's story is marked by a new chapter ("Im Raum der trunkenen Macht"), it is narrated by the same omniscient third-person narrator as the rest of the text. The continuity of narrator underscores the continuity of larger authoritarian structures, suggesting that the stories of father and children can be told from the same viewpoint – even though political systems have changed (from World War II fascism to GDR socialism to post-unification capitalism). This focus on repetition and continuity between generational experiences mirrors Schramm's portrayal of history itself. Unlike other post-unification texts, which focus largely on the political events surrounding the *Wende*, this text presents a sweeping overview of German history,

recounted in apocalyptic tones reminiscent of scenes in Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz*. One scene in particular illustrates this epic view: when Karl flirts too heavily with Janni one evening, she hits him: "Da trifft ihn ein Schlag. Es ist der Schlag der Geschichte" (293).⁴ In an abrupt departure from the previous narration, Schramm then retraces German history from the Germanen to the *Wende* in 12 pages. Evoking Heiner Müller's dramas, the focus is on war, battles, and destruction; all of history is seen as a mere replacement of one unjust ruler and regime with the next. The participants in World War II are portrayed as permanently marked with guilt:

Die Toten werden vergessen. Die draußen stehn, die werden nie vergessen. Es hängt ihnen an. Sie haben die Tür berührt. Ihre Hand ist blutig geworden. Ein Kainsmal. Das sich vererbt und vererbt. [...] Das Blut an der Hand. Das Mal. Werden Fitze Fitcher erwarten, der sie abholt am Ende der Zeit. Das sie herbeiwünschen wie eine Erlösung. Die es nicht gibt. Die es nicht gibt. Die es nicht gibt. (303)

It is shortly after this dark, hopeless passage that Josef's story begins, and here the narrative alternates between his individual story and larger political events. Another passage later in the text reinforces Schramm's desire to demonstrate and criticize the cyclical aspects of German history. "Was in Deutschland geschieht, ist immer ein Irrtum. Unbefleckbar. Es tut nachher sehr leid. Dann wird das Scheckheft gezückt. Dann wird vergeben. Dann wird vergessen. Dann fängt alles von vorn an" (400). Thus Josef himself is placed within the repetitions of German history, both a victim of the larger forces of history and a victimizer of the members of the next generation. The focus on the larger context of German history also highlights the generational aspect of Josef's story: not only his individual story is being told, but the story of a whole generation of post-war

⁴ This scene also takes place on 9. November, although not 'the' 9. November. Schramm then includes several paragraphs about the numerological meaning of 9 and 11, emphasizing the mystical (and repetitive) aspects of German history.

East German children (or *any* post-war child). Although Josef's personal decisions determine and shape his later life, it is larger cyclical events – namely events of war – that serve as a point of departure. The focus on a larger historical context underscores this text's use of the father as a rhetorical figure to address larger social problems. Josef is not merely portrayed in his role as father to Karl and Janni, but as a victim and product of World War II and (GDR) authoritarianism.

Little is shared with the reader about Josef's early childhood. His story begins at the age of ten during a bombing raid on Berlin. "Josef war noch ein Kind. Die Welt war an ihn herangetreten mit Explosivstoffen im Mantel. Er rannte, denn war ganz zu Angst geworden. Sein Körper noch ohne Bewußtsein. Der Wille wenig entfaltet" (307). The impression of this scene is one of fear, chaos and danger. Josef is a child who fears for his life. As the city burns around him, he is hit by flying debris, wounded but not killed. This near-death moment signals a profound turning point for Josef:

Er wurde aufgenommen in die Welt der Menschen im Alter von zehn. Sofort übermannte ihn das Vergessen, das Kind in ihm brannte nieder, der Mann lag in der Asche. Die Zeit hörte auf, mit Veränderungen zu locken. Von diesem Moment an war alles Gleichmaß und Erhaltung. Da war der Wille groß geworden und zum Zweck der Macht. (307-8)

In a single moment, the child Josef is extinguished and the man is born – much like the mythological story of the phoenix and the founding myth of the GDR ("Auferstanden aus Ruinen"). It is striking that Schramm uses the phrase "Welt der Menschen" instead of "Welt der Männer", as if to imply that children are not only not adults, they are not even people. And Josef does not just leave childhood behind him, he is "*übermann*" (rather than "*überwältigt*") with forgetfulness. The possible connotations of the word underscore

the sharp divide between childhood and manhood, the contrast between power and powerlessness.

For the second time in approximately one-half page of text, the concept of *der Wille* is present. As a child, Josef's will was only partially developed, but in his birth as a man, this will becomes great – a will which Josef both possesses and to which he willingly subjugates himself “zum Zweck der Macht”. Josef's symbolic death and birth separate him from his earlier life: “Jetzt ist Josef alles wie eine Fortsetzung jenseits des Lebens, das vom Vater auf den Sohn kommt” (308). Josef's life as a child – a life only made possible through the father – has ended, and his new life – a life as “eine Inkarnation des Willens” (308) – has just begun.

The portrayal of Josef's willing submission to a greater authority bears strong connections to Fromm's (and later Adorno's) concept of the authoritarian personality. Such individuals demonstrate masochistic attitudes: “Das Leben ist von Mächten bestimmt, die ausserhalb des Individuums, seines Wollens und seiner Interessen, leben. Ihnen muss man sich fügen, und diese Unterwerfung zu geniessen, ist das letzte erreichbare Glück” (Fromm 120).⁵ In identifying with this greater authority – “heisse sie Geschichte, Natur, Gott oder was immer” (Fromm 121) – the authoritarian personality not only submits to it, he *possesses* it. “Das Aufgehen im Grösseren, Stärkeren bedeutet ja nicht nur ein Aufgeben der eignen, sondern das Teilhaben an einer machtvollen überragenden Persönlichkeit (Fromm 124). Josef's recognition of the *Wille* satisfies his mutual desires to embody and to submit to something far greater than himself.

⁵ Fromm actually argues that authoritarian personalities present sado-masochistic tendencies, merging a desire to submit to a greater authority (masochism) with hatred/disregard for those in positions of less authority (sadism).

The concept of *Wille* is a powerful but slightly nebulous one in Josef's life. Although it is sometimes linked to specific positions and holders of power such as the occupying troops and Stalin, political power itself is not a driving force for Josef. His vision of *Wille* is larger than politics, bordering on fanaticism. Josef's subservience can also be read as a cynical commentary on the ideological will or beliefs of Communist fathers so prevalent in early East German *Aufbauliteratur*. Issues of devotion, submission and perseverance – all depicted as positive in *Aufbauliteratur* – lie at the heart of Josef's emotional trauma and deformation. The *Wille* which presents Josef with a utopian vision of a world without illness, an authority which he wholeheartedly accepts and follows, leads to his downfall. Josef's near-death Road to Damascus experience is actually the beginning of his road to destruction.

It is in this moment of near death and (re)birth that Josef realizes his true mission in life, to be a doctor. In keeping with the mystical tone, Josef characterizes doctors as "Priester der neuen Zeit" (308), a symbolism which can also be interpreted as a reminder of Josef's identification with authority; just as priests embody God's power, so too does Josef embody the power of the *Wille*. He sees himself not as a victim (*Opfer*), but as one who has been called to sacrifice (*opfern*) much. The moment is reminiscent of the conversion experiences of former Nazi soldiers in early East German *Entwicklungsromane*,⁶ but here the motif is used to satirize rather than validate the utopian idea of rebirth, reflecting Schramm's cynical view of 'new beginnings' throughout (German) history. Although Josef has physically survived the trauma and danger of war, his ultimate moment of bodily survival marks the birth of his neurosis, his trauma.

⁶ Such as Franz Fühmann's *Kameraden* (1955) or Herbert Otto's *Die Lüge* (1956).

From this moment on, Josef's life revolves around ideals of will and power. He abandons his home and his mother, preferring a life on the streets with only the *Wille* as his master. The first signs of Josef's trauma are already evident:

Nach Hause kehrte er nicht zurück, wo eine Mutter gewartet hatte. Er gehörte ihr nicht mehr, er gehörte sich selbst. Die sichtbare Welt würde ihm untertan sein, der Mensch in seiner Ganzheit. Er würde Schwert und Skalpell führen gegen die Erkrankungen des Leibes. Die gesunde Welt würde errichtet als eine ewige. Weder Eltern noch Fahnen wurden dazu benötigt. Der Wille würde die Direktiven setzen, die er mit willentlichem Tun beglaubigen wollte. (308)

In the chaotic aftermath of war, the young Josef is both a witness to and a victim of the abuse of authority by official figures: soldiers, police and teachers. He witnesses soldiers raping civilian women (309), and after being arrested for pick pocketing, is forced by police to expose his penis (to prove he is not a Jew) and to suck blood from another young thief's leg (after admitting he is a "Wanze" in an attempt to end the verbal abuse by the police, 310). Although Josef admires the power and will of the new rulers, he is also degraded, humiliated and traumatized by it. The only way to survive the new order is to bow outwardly to it, to adapt a "feminine disposition" (Hell 49) toward the new *über-*fathers of post-war East Germany. While it is unclear whether the police and soldiers are agents of the *Wille* or are working against it, they force Josef to submit to their authority.

After his encounter with police, Josef is sent to a children's home, where his journey of emotional detachment and feeling of being chosen by a higher will intensify. Tormented by other children and a witness to the dangers and shortages of a country which has lost a war, Josef learns to tune out his emotions and become an unfeeling observer: "Er lernte. Das Leid wurde seinem hungrigen Gleichmut Nahrung" (311). In the midst of this emotional retreat and fervent devotion to "das letzte und ewige Reich der Gesundheit" (312) comes the final death of his childhood, which Josef views as the

“veraltete Welt” (312) – his father returns from the war. Called to the headmaster’s office, Josef sees a:

Zerlumpte Gestalt auf einem vereinzelt Bein. Sagte, daß er ihn holen wollte. Josef schwieg, er war ohne Gefühl. Der Mann stürzte heulend auf ihn zu, umarmte den Jungen, fiennte, fiennte. Josef entwand sich den Armen. Der Mann [... r]ang wie berauscht nach Atem. Verwirrt von den Träumen langer Gefangenschaft. Den Gedanken an Frau und Sohn. Die ihm das Glück erneuern sollten, so wie es war vor dem Krieg. Wußte nicht, daß ein Krieg alles zerstörte, vernichtete, ein kleiner schon, ein Krieg von drei Tagen. Aber dieser war der größte gewesen, seit Menschen sich von Kriegen berichtet. (312)

Even as the broken father begs for a new start with his son, it is too late. Josef has distanced himself emotionally from his family, from anyone who is not as healthy and strong as he is. The disdain of the authoritarian personality for anyone or anything weaker than himself is clear: “Dann hatte Josef gelacht. Dann war er wütend geworden. Er kenne ihn nicht, rief er, der Mann sei ihm ein Fremder, der ihn entführen wolle, kein Vater, sondern ein Feind, ein Faschist und ein Kriegsverbrecher, mit dem hatte er gar nichts zu tun!” (312-313). What is perhaps even more chilling than Josef’s reaction is the support he receives from the headmaster, a representative of the new authority, himself traumatized by war, who asks Josef’s father to leave. “Dem Mann versiegten die Tränen. Er begriff, daß nun alles verloren war. Wandte sich um, hüpfte zur Tür. Seine Krücke berührte den Boden nicht. Ein Gockel, rief Josef und zog den Finger gegen den Rücken des Einbeinigen blank” (313). The child Josef and the adult headmaster have positioned themselves as superior to Josef’s wounded father. Josef’s separation from his father comes suddenly and at a very young age, and all for a chance to briefly identify with the authority and *Wille* embodied by the headmaster.

Along with Josef’s near-death experience, it is this scene which serves as a critical moment in the text. It is Josef’s moment to exert his autonomy, to deny his past and to

determine his future. His cool dismissal of his father – a complete break that many adult men do not make – signals Josef's contempt for all things tainted, broken or weak. Josef does not want any reminders of his life as a child, he wants only to focus on his goal of becoming a doctor. This literal and symbolic denial of the father underscores this desire and once again parodies the rejection of the 'fascist' past found in early East German literature.

This rather cynical borrowing of the thematic elements of *Aufbauliteratur* continues throughout Josef's story. Rather than an enthusiastic supporter of the new political system, Josef is portrayed as calculatedly using the system – a system which is merely one in a long list of authoritarian German regimes – for his own ends:

Ein Staat war gegründet, nicht der erste und nicht der letzte im Strom der politischen Zeit. Die Jugend stand sehr euphorisch. In der Mitte der Jugend stand Josef, der sich wie ein geheimes Zentrum dachte. Sein Hemd war von blauer Farbe. Ihn umkreiste der Wirbel der Abänderung, in ihm selbst aber fand sich das weite Prinzip der Konstanz. Er hielt alles in Grenzen, wie er die Fackel hielt in seiner Hand. (314)

While outwardly taking part in the euphoria of the newly created socialist state, Josef is emotionally removed. He participates in the institutions of the state – here the FDJ – but in his own way he is using the state. Political assimilation and integration allow Josef to pursue his personal goals while not drawing negative attention from authorities. In much the same way that abused children strive to not draw attention to themselves in hopes of avoiding further abuse, Josef learns to blend into GDR political structures, remaining safely hidden in the masses in an environment that doesn't encourage dissenting views.

Perhaps the most noticeable lack in this text is that of a mentor for Josef. Unlike the protagonists of *Aufbauliteratur*, he never encounters a wise role model who can help him mature as a socialist citizen. Typical socialist role model candidates are found

unworthy by Josef. After the scene in his office, the headmaster is not mentioned again. Teachers who could serve as role models are held in great contempt by Josef because he sees their subject areas as a waste of time, demonstrating once again that authority is not determined merely by rank or position, but by a willingness on the part of the individual to submit, be it out of fear, respect, love, etc. Other students are avoided so that Josef does not become tainted (beschmutzt, 322) by their immaturity and ignorance. Even Stalin, the symbolic father in so many early GDR texts, is an ambivalent figure for Josef:

Er konnte die wichtigen Lehrsätze bald auswendig hersagen, in einer Haltung von wilder Andacht. Stalin: "Eiserne Disziplin schließt Bewußtheit und Freiwilligkeit der Unterordnung nicht aus, sondern setzt sie vielmehr voraus, denn nur eine bewußte Disziplin kann eine wirklich eiserne sein." Doch Josef war das nicht genug. Eisen rostete durch [...] (311)⁷

Josef follows only the unyielding power of *der Wille*. Relentlessly driven by his goal of curing the world of illness, he remains emotionally isolated, an individual outwardly integrated into the socialist collective, but inwardly reflecting the emptiness and hollowness which later literary texts often used as a metaphor for GDR society itself.

It is Josef's definition of illness and health that is perhaps the most unsettling aspect of his character: "Das Identische hieß ihm gesund [...] Was sich unterschied, das fiel aus der Welt als Keim von Unruhe und Zerfall des Bestehenden" (327). Simanowski writes of Josef: "Ihm heiligt das Ziel die Mittel. Das stößt ab, man weiß, wohin das geführt hat" (179). In tones eerily similar to Nazi *Gleichschaltung* – and in keeping with Schramm's focus on the repetitive aspects of (German) history – Josef dreams of preventing "alle Unterscheidung" (327) in order to create a paradisiacal state which

⁷ In his review of *Fitchers Blau*, Simanowski describes "der Stalinist Josef, der ganz im Dienste einer Diktatur lebt" (179). I disagree with his conclusion, instead interpreting Josef's commitment to Stalinism in the same light as his commitment to the FDJ. The passage above suggests that Stalin's teachings are not strong or permanent enough for Josef, and the phrase "in einer Haltung von wilder Andacht" raises doubt about the sincerity of Josef's beliefs. Politics and political enthusiasm are merely means to an end for Josef.

would last for millennia. “Der gesunde Staatskörper war wichtig, alles andere stand hinter diesem zurück” (327). Fromm discusses the tendency of authoritarian personalities to divide the world into ‘us’ (everything associated with recognized authority) and ‘them’ (everything which differs from it), and concludes that this ambivalence is “umso stärker, je mehr Anlass zum Hass gegen eine bestimmte Autorität in Wirklichkeit vorliegt, und diese Teilung wird häufig von dieser Autorität gefördert und unterstützt” (116). For Josef, the relationship between the authority of the *Wille* and the GDR state is complicated and largely unexamined. But his attitude and behavior toward those who are weak or different clearly reveal the extent to which Josef yields to authority and embodies the sadomasochistic tendencies of the authoritarian personality.

Josef’s vision of ‘health’ as a consequence of loyally following *der Wille* is both a result of his early trauma and a critique of the (East) German state itself. Living in the chaos of immediate post-war Berlin, Josef is robbed – and also robs himself – of social and familial stability. Simultaneously, he is witness to the vast, often misused authority of the occupiers. With his decision to become a doctor, and therefore an agent of *der Wille*, Josef secures a position in a world order which he believes is far greater than politics. At the same time, however, Schramm’s use of words like “Staatskörper”, “Kampf”, “Einheit” to describe Josef’s mission are reminiscent of the language used in GDR propaganda. But where the newly formed state used such language to foster a sense of community and collectivism in the fight to establish a socialist society, Josef is a metaphor for the darker side of such goals. Rather than espousing the official “individual within the collective” slogans of the SED, Josef wants to stamp out anything or anyone

which deviates from the norm. He represents the normalizing pressures of authoritarian society taken to a terrifying extreme.

Family Trauma in *Moskauer Eis*

The trauma portrayed in Gröschner's *Moskauer Eis* is of a more subtle and individual nature than that in *Fitchers Blau*. Here the reader is not presented with a man traumatized by World War II and his rejection of the father, but rather the presence of an overbearing father who himself both represents and challenges the authority of the socialist state. Klaus Kobe is bullied by his father, manipulated by the state, and limited by his largely unquestioning and unreflected submission to authority – the typical elements of *Aufbauliteratur* (mentor, state, heroic protagonist) return here in a distorted, critical reinterpretation.

Klaus is the son of Paul Kobe, a “Verdienter Techniker des Volkes” (45), the “oberste Kälteingenieur des Landes” (40).⁸ As an engineer, Paul is characterized as being much more a “Praktiker” (40), a pragmatist, than the “Wissenschaftler” (40) his son Klaus later becomes. Paul has no trouble ignoring the rules when they do not suit his purpose. He deals in the black market – something many people did in post-war Germany, but on a much larger scale. He diverts large amounts of meat from the *Kälteinstitut* to buy supplies, a car, and even dresses for his secretary. It is often only through good luck and charm that Paul gets away with his antics, but he always does. He is tolerated and even supported by the Russian occupiers because of his professional

⁸ A note for clarification: Klaus Kobe is a member of the father generation (born shortly before World War II) and is the father of the text's narrator-protagonist, Annja Kobe. Paul Kobe is therefore a member of the grandfather generation (adults during World War II).

acumen and his longstanding membership in the Socialist Unity Party, and because he does not openly challenge their political authority.

Paul Kobe's flaunting of social rules continues into his personal life. He has affairs with multiple secretaries and makes only token efforts to hide this fact from his family. Near the end of the war, when the Russians stand ready to invade, Paul sends his wife and children to live with relatives while he and his secretary stay to guard the *Kälteinstitut* from looters and to continue their affair. His family often seems to be no more than an afterthought. When their fate is unknown at the end of the war, Paul's reaction is coldly pragmatic: "Sollte die Familie wiederkommen, würde sie ruhiggestellt werden, sollte sie in irgendeinem Straßengraben liegen, würde etwas Neues anfangen. So oder so" (105). It is perhaps not surprising that Paul's wife was once a secretary herself (103); although he chose to marry her, she can be – and has been to some extent – replaced by other young secretaries. Paul uses and abuses whatever authority he can, be it authority over his employees, his wife, or his children.

The young Klaus Kobe is not unaware of his father's behavior. As his daughter Annja later writes, "Mein Vater hatte ein untrügliches Gefühl für Sachen, die nicht stimmten oder aus dem Ruder liefen" (103). Growing up in the prudery of national socialism, the seven-year-old Klaus has internalized its "Benimmregeln" (103) – women are not to wear makeup or color their hair. "So hatte es schließlich der Propagandaminister empfohlen, und meine Großmutter hielt sich strikt daran" (103). Paul's affair with his very unnaturally blonde secretary contradicts societal rules, family conventions, and his son's personal understanding of right and wrong. Klaus's characterization of the secretary as "die olle Schminkdogge" (103) earns him a slap in the

face from his father. But the situation is never really addressed – Paul continues his affair, and Klaus struggles to make sense of differing sets of rules and behaviors in society, family, and himself.

Very few points in the text directly address Klaus' feelings about his father's behavior. One exception is Paul's transfer by the Russians from Berlin (where he had lived alone, leaving his family back at home) to his own *Kälteinstitut* in Magdeburg. What Paul may have seen as a reward for service to the Russians – or at least as a welcome escape from nearly being arrested for trading 'borrowed' goods on the black market (172) – was not seen as positively by his son Paul. Instead, this move is reported with the terse but bitter statement: "Vater hat ihm den Umzug nie verziehen" (172). Nothing more is ever reported about the matter, but even at his young age, the depth of Klaus's feelings and his difficult relationship with his authority-flaunting father is apparent.

The (Grand)father and the State in *Moskauer Eis*

The trauma in the relationship between Klaus and Paul is not the obvious emotional damage caused by verbal or physical abuse, but rather the more hidden trauma caused by an emotionally careless and self-centered man. Paul is portrayed as contradictory and irrational in his behavior and his beliefs. The inconsistency and inexplicability in the father-son relationship is reflected in and exacerbated by Klaus's relationship to the authoritarian GDR state.

Klaus's attitude toward the GDR is highly ambivalent. His daughter Annja claims: "Ich war von einem extrem widersprüchlichen Vater gezeugt worden: er liebte die DDR und haßte ihre führende Partei" (41). Although other fathers – such as Konrad

Gröbers in *Lügen und schweigen* – resent the authoritarian political regime of the SED and its control over their lives, none of the other texts describe their attitude with such emotionally loaded terms as “hassen”. Love and hate are more often associated with personal (familial) relationships than with politics. Gröschner’s use of these terms thus adds an emotional component to Klaus’s views of authority as embodied in the SED, underscoring the connection between his relationship with the state and with his father (who is actually a member of the Party). It also reminds the reader of the difference between patriotism and politics, although the authority wielded by the SED and its institutions nearly drowns out Klaus’s love for his East German homeland.

At several points in this text, Paul Kobe (inter)acts with the East German state itself, and the two powers in Klaus’s life are shown in their complementary and also contradictory aspects. This is evident in the circumstances surrounding the death of Günther, Klaus’s brother, who was unknowingly shot by a border guard while fleeing East Germany.⁹ After Günther’s body is discovered, his family unsuccessfully tries for weeks to get it released for burial. Paul eventually takes matters into his own hands and attempts to use his political clout to make things happen, “[a]ber wir schrieben nicht mehr das Jahr 1968, in dem Großvater jeder Wunsch von den Augen abgelesen worden war, weil man ihn als Kälteexperten brauchte” (133). No officials want to deal with this issue, and Paul’s political power has dwindled, especially since he has retired. In what seems to be a mix of grief over the death of his son and temper over not getting his way, Paul rages until he is finally allowed to see an undersecretary. In typical fashion, Paul bluntly makes his feelings known:

⁹ Günther had stowed away in the back of an ice truck traveling from East to West Berlin. The shots were fired for no apparent reason.

“Ihr mit eurer blöden Enteignungspolitik fügt dem Staat Schaden zu. Ihr dürft euch nicht wundern, wenn uns die Leute weglaufen. Das wird euch noch mal das Genick brechen.”

“Überleg dir, was du hier sagst, du weißt, daß wir in besonderen Situationen keine Rücksicht mehr auf deine Verdienste nehmen können.”

“Meine Verdienste habt ihr euch schon längst in den Arsch gesteckt”. (133)

For the first time, Paul is unable to use his personality or his political connections to get his way. His era is over, his son is dead, and his power is gone. In a sad inversion of the typical father-son story, it is the father who outlives the son and watches his influence lessen. In a final attempt to make his point clear and make himself heard, Paul removes his medals one by one and leaves his *Parteibuch* on the desk. But as a chilling reminder that it is the SED, not Paul, who is in charge, Paul is warned that Klaus should not attend the funeral once the body is released. Klaus “hat doch noch viel vor auf seinem Arbeitsgebiet” (135) and cannot afford to be publicly linked to Günther the defector. In the terse style so typical of this text, the only follow-up to this scene is the following: “Mein Vater ging nach längerer Diskussion mit Großvater nicht mit auf den Friedhof und verließ regelmäßig das Zimmer, wenn von Günther die Rede war” (135). Not only does Klaus take the state’s direct warning seriously, he also submits to the unspoken threat that *any* further involvement with his brother Günther will be punished.

This episode shows on one hand the delicate balance in which the authority of the father and the state stand, and on the other hand, the crushing combined weight of them upon Klaus. After living through childhood and youth having his father alternately bully or charm people to get his way, Klaus is now faced with the limitations of his father’s authority against that of the state. The situation surrounding Günther’s death is complicated, with both Paul and the state battling for authority over Klaus. At an age at which most sons are asserting their autonomy over the father, Klaus is instead witnessing

both his father's loss of authority to the state and his own lack of authority and autonomy in his relationship to either his father or the state. Unlike *Aufbauliteratur*, which consistently constructs father figures (mentors) who are identical to the state (in that they represent and are represented by it), Gröschner splits the father and the state, pitting one against the other, with the state as the greater (and potentially destructive) authority. What is striking is that Klaus continues to recognize and acquiesce to both of these stronger wills – he does not challenge his father or the state,¹⁰ choosing to obey the superego (as represented by both the father and the state) rather than assert his individual (ego) autonomy. The fact that he actually leaves the room whenever Günther is spoken of illustrates his willingness to submit to the decisions made by those he views as being in authority over him. Paul's power is broken, he is identified as belonging to the past, but Klaus seems unwilling or unable to step into a role of autonomy.

One of the reasons for Klaus's inability to step into the role of authority previously occupied by his father is that social and political situations have changed. Paul Kobe thrived in the chaos of post-war Germany and made full use of the opportunities presented by "unordentliche Zeiten" (148). But as the events surrounding Günther's death make clear, the party apparatus has taken control of the GDR and of Klaus; he exists within the ever more regimented and controlling SED system and does not attempt to break out of it. Paul's slightly scandalous behavior in the 1940s and 1950s required social chaos and a blatant disregard for the rules – a disregard that Klaus does not normally possess. Authoritarian politics and personality work together to consign Klaus to a life as a follower, not a leader.

¹⁰ This scenario is repeated in Annja's life as she watches her father struggle with the material shortages of the GDR and lose his job after unification. At the same time, she is repeatedly made aware of her own lack of power in the GDR and post-GDR state. This last aspect is discussed in greater depth in Chapter 5.

One other episode in this text shows in striking clarity how Klaus is controlled by both his father and the state. In 1969, Klaus and his team are nominated for the *Nationalpreis* for their development of “Blitzkost” (115), a method of freeze drying food. Klaus is ecstatic about the nomination, he “kam lachend von der Arbeit...nahm Mutter und drehte sie beschwingt, wie es gar nicht seine Art war, durch unser Wohnzimmer” (115). The whole family attends the ceremony with great anticipation, but the evening turns into a disaster. At the last minute, *Politbüro* officials had noticed that both Klaus and Paul’s names were on the nomination list, hinting at nepotism. Although involved with the project in name only, Paul receives the recognition and congratulation which should have gone to his son. “Als Großvater auf die Bühne kam und sich von Walter Ulbricht auf die Schulter klopfen ließ, mahlten seine [Klaus - ES] Kiefer” (119). The evening which should have been a long-awaited recognition of Klaus’s hard work by the state becomes yet another reminder of his father’s status. Although Paul had nothing to do with the decision of the *Politbüro*, this incident serves to underscore the sense that in this instance he – the father – and the state are on one side and Klaus is on the other. Earlier personal rejections and family conflicts are now repeated in those of the state. Klaus is denied recognition by both his father and the *über*-father the state.

Klaus’s experience here stands in stark contrast to that of Josef in *Fitchers Blau*. Whereas Josef outwardly deliberately identifies himself with the state by espousing its politics – in effect appearing to ‘double’ with the state while in fact remaining distanced from it – Klaus remains a complete outsider. It is Paul who is associated with the authority of the state, in a sense doubling with its role. Klaus is powerless against his

father and the state, always taken advantage of rather than taking advantage of any authority himself.

As well as being the most public humiliation for Klaus, the award ceremony debacle also serves as a harbinger for future career developments: “Es war der Beginn einer Kette von Herabwürdigungen, die in Vaters Fall wohl in einer Kühltruhe endete” (119). From the point of nearly being awarded the *Nationalpreis*, Klaus’s career takes a sharp downward turn. After the 1968/69 success of *Blitzkost*, the political and economic situation in the GDR deteriorates – neither money nor enthusiasm for continued development is available, research is stopped, and Klaus is in effect demoted to developing ice cream. With Paul old enough to retire, Klaus is made director of the *Kälteinstitut*. But this development is a negative one, since the possibility of building upon his father’s accomplishments has been taken away by the state. Rather than improving cutting-edge methods for freezing food, the institute is limited to producing ice cream. Even this becomes an exercise in futility as supplies become more and more limited. Instead of making ice cream with milk, sugar and fruit, Klaus is forced to use margarine and artificial flavoring.¹¹ The depiction of a scientist lacking such basic supplies – 20 years into the GDR’s existence – serves as a cynical commentary on the unwavering hopefulness of early East German politics and literature.

One of the few conversations in this text between Klaus and his father illustrates both the nature of their relationship and Klaus’s difficulties in the GDR. Paul is retired, and the world has changed around him in the years since 1949:

¹¹ The ridiculousness of the situation in the GDR during these years is underscored in the text by mentions of scientists creating ketchup out of carrot puree and food coloring, or attempts to produce lemon juice out of green tomatoes. All of these attempts are made necessary by the fact that fresh produce and milk are exported in an attempt to keep the country afloat financially.

Mehr als ein Vierteljahrhundert später verstand Großvater die Welt nicht mehr [...] Nur wenn Vater kam, war er wieder der alte.

“Wir waren Spitze im Weltmaßstab, und was macht ihr, ihr fahrt das Ding gegen den Baum. Sensorische Qualitätsprüfung für Eiskrem! Wir haben ‘Blitzkost’ im Weltraum erprobt, wir haben die besten Kühlhäuser gebaut, wir waren dem Westen Längen voraus, und was macht ihr daraus? Eiskrem. Daß ich nicht lache. Versager seid ihr!” (172)

Paul – who can be seen as an example of the material and social (if not the political) optimism of the *Aufbau*-generation – refuses to recognize the economic or political changes in the GDR, and he is quick to personalize the blame and place it squarely on his son’s generation. Rather than show understanding for Klaus’s difficulties in obtaining supplies or support, Paul simply labels him a failure, unable to live up to the accomplishments of Paul’s generation. Klaus is criticized and under-appreciated by his father just as he is constrained and undermined by the state. Gröschner’s critical portrayal of Paul as a member of the *Aufbau*-generation clearly speaks against GDR myths of politically and personally ‘pure’ role models. Even fathers with well-established ties to the Party are shown to be self-centered, ruthless and morally weak. Paul is a failure as a father on both an individual and symbolic level.

Despite the many years of frustration and degradation, however, Klaus continues to pursue his career with an astounding passion. He seems to carry on despite the GDR rather than because of it. Although financial and supply situations perpetually worsen, work continues. It is therefore all the more striking that Klaus’s final humiliation at the hands of the state comes *after* unification. In a pointed criticism of (West) German unification politics, Gröschner portrays Klaus and his *Kälteinstitut* as falling victim to the massive plant shutdowns and layoffs which occurred in East Germany in the early 1990s. In a very telling “Bericht vom Ende” (211-213), Klaus protocols the events leading to the

shutdown of the plant: notification that the institute would be evaluated, a pre-visit by West German experts providing tips for a better evaluation, the final notification of closing. The West German experts, who suggest such things as removing mirrors and green plants from the labs, remind Klaus of earlier visits:

Die ganze Sache erinnerte uns sehr stark an einen Besuch von Politbüromitgliedern in den siebziger Jahren in unserem Institut, wo auch vorher eine Kommission durch das Institut gegangen war und uns darauf hingewiesen hatte, was für Bilder in den Labors zu hängen hätten. Damals mußte der Staatsratsvorsitzende aufgehängt, mußten die Blumenbilder abgehängt werden. (212)

In only a few sentences, the activities of the Treuhand commission are deemed as ridiculous as those of former SED officials, coloring Klaus's view of the West. West Germany no longer represents a savior for Klaus and his institute, but merely yet another authoritarian system with inexplicable rules, expectations, and decrees – a cyclical view of German history similar to that found in *Fitchers Blau*. After 30 years at the *Kälteinstitut*, Klaus is let go. His report continues: “Ich hatte das ‘Glück’, ich schreibe das hier bewußt in Anführungsstrichen, für unser Institut zum Leiter der Abwicklung ernannt zu werden. Ich konnte noch zwei Monate länger dort arbeiten und Gehalt beziehen” (213). Rather than a new beginning, unification serves as an end to Klaus's career. While many texts relate episodes of East German job loss, long-term unemployment and early retirement,¹² this particular example is unusually critical. Gröschner depicts the West German state behaving in ways that are equally as authoritarian and ludicrous as the defeated East German state, situating Klaus yet again as a victim of politics and history. But this time, he chooses a different path – rather than accepting the decisions of the state, as he did during his career at the institute, Klaus

¹² *Simple Storys, Die Nachrichten, Was denkst du?*

selects a radical form of revolt by freezing himself in his own deep freeze (of course a GDR model). What appears to be an experiment in cryogenics is also Klaus's bold move from being submissive to authority to taking control of his life. In his suspended state, Klaus has stepped outside the bounds of the state and has the last laugh.

Submission and Rebellion in the Authoritarian State

The following section analyzes two texts which do not portray childhood events in the father's life, but do clearly reveal the extent of state control and domination:

Kerstin Hensel's *Tanz am Kanal*, and Katrin Dorn's *Lügen und schweigen*. Both texts depict fathers who struggle with the personal and political limitations that authoritarianism places on individuals. There are several aspects of the father-state relationship which closely mirror behaviors found in father-child relationships, most particularly in fathers' petulant and defiant interactions with the state. Fathers are predominantly portrayed as victims of the authoritarian GDR state, but they are also shown in their egocentrism, selfishness and spite toward authority and individuals.

Control and Collapse in *Tanz am Kanal*

Tanz am Kanal tells a story of loss and downfall on several levels: the loss of social standing, the loss of personal relationships, and the loss of trust in authority figures. Both the father-state relationship and the father-daughter relationship are built on fragile foundations, and both collapse over the course of the narration. The underlying assumption in both relationships is that expectations must be filled and that failure to do so will be met with withdrawal of recognition, love or social status.

Ernst von Haßlau, a surgeon in the fictional town of Leibnitz, has a rather tense relationship with the GDR state. Coming from nobility and old wealth, he does not

personify the ideals of the new “Arbeiter- und Bauernstaat”; he exercises and embodies authority rather than submitting to it. He is a man accustomed to being humored and obeyed, and his life includes an impressive job title, a private villa, and a well-dressed (and well-behaved) wife and daughter.¹³ The first hint of direct confrontation with the government comes when Ernst decides to hire a housekeeper to relieve his wife.¹⁴ It is only after Gabriela gets in trouble at school and the claim can be made that she needs more guidance from her mother that his request is granted:

Für unsere Villa wurde eine Wirtschaftshilfe angestellt. Vater setzte es gegen den Staat durch.

-*Staat*, sagte er am Abendbrottisch – ein Wort, das ich mir merken sollte.

-Sprich nach: *Staat*, der ist dagegen, daß es Wirtschaftshilfen gibt. (35, emphasis in original)

The battle over the maid is only the beginning of Ernst’s fight against the state; it is the first time that he challenges its authority, and it is the beginning of his downfall. The defining battle is Ernst’s desire to open his own clinic, which the state forbids him. After being promoted to *Obermedizinalrat* (17) and occupying the highest ranks of Leibnitz society, Ernst wants more. But the state, which has thus far tolerated Ernst and his bourgeois behavior, refuses his request to open his own clinic. Ernst reacts to the denial of his personal autonomy much like a rebellious child – by acting out: “Er wolle eine Privatpraxis gründen, aber der *Staat* erlaube es nicht, aber *er*, Ernst von Haßlau, würde es durchsetzen“ (36, emphasis in original). His solution is to outwardly thumb his nose at the state by throwing parties¹⁵ for others merely tolerated by the state: “Kollegen und

¹³ Issues of authority and control as reflected in Ernst’s relationship with his daughter are examined in Chapter 4.

¹⁴ This is quite unusual because his wife does not work at all outside the house and has only one child. This also means she does not fit in the typical GDR woman’s role.

¹⁵ Hensel’s use of the word “Party” (41) in contrast to earlier “Feste” (29) highlights Ernst’s rebellion. He specifically points out to Gabriela that the word is American, and she understands that “etwas Verbotenes hinter dem Wort steckt” (41).

Künstler... keine Parteibonzen, keine Assistenzärzte, keine Schwestern, keine Familie”

(41). Even the child Gabriela senses her father’s recklessness: “Vater *tat* es einfach, ohne Angst, erwischt zu werden, tat, was die *Russen* einem *vermiesen*! Schäumend vor Erniedrigung, brüllte er durch die Villa“ (41, emphasis in original). Ernst’s rebellious behavior is actually quite typical of individuals with authoritarian personality tendencies:

In Wahrheit hat er die gleiche Sehnsucht nach Liebe und Anerkennung der Mächtigen; seine Auflehnung ist gewöhnlich von einer zu strengen, ungerechten oder auch bloss lieblosen Behandlung bedingt. Er kämpft im Grund mit all seinem Trotz um die Liebe der Autorität, und mag er sich auch noch so trotzig und feindselig gebärden. Er ist immer bereit zu kapitulieren, wenn man ihm nur die Möglichkeit dazu gibt, indem ein Minimum seiner Ansprüche auf Gerechtigkeit und Liebe befriedigt wird. (Fromm 131)

Ernst’s rebellious attitude toward the state arises not from any concrete wish to overthrow its authority (what Fromm calls revolt), but rather from its denial of his wishes.

Ernst’s outward display of nonchalance and rebellion toward the state are in stark contrast to his private response. Unable to cope with his disappointment and frustration, he begins to drink heavily, which soon begins to affect his family and his work performance. It is as if Ernst does not wait for the state to reprimand him for his rebellious behavior, but instead defeats himself. Unwilling to remain in the role that the state has determined for him – a role that many would see as privileged – he also cannot find a constructive way to escape it. Within a short period of time, Ernst is constantly drunk, his wife has left him, and his daughter is in trouble with the authorities. He is eventually forced to sell his family’s villa, which is given to loyal party members, individuals who follow the rule of submission to authority. After completing an alcohol treatment program, Ernst returns to his daughter and his job, futilely attempting to regain his standing. For a time he lives undisturbed by the state, left in peace so long as he

continues to work. The larger than life – and politically volatile – *Obermedizinalrat* Ernst von Haßlau has been reduced to a submissive, emotionally broken vascular surgeon.

An example of the state's instrumentalization of the father is found in events surrounding Gabriela's rape.¹⁶ Violated and carved with a knife by strangers, Gabriela goes to the police, who do not believe her account. Instead, they claim that she is making false claims against the state. Rather than showing any sympathy, the institutions of the police and the *Stasi* treat Gabriela and her parents like criminals: "Sie kamen zu Vater und sagten: Die Narbe bleibt so, ihre Tochter zeigt sie überall herum, die Konsequenzen tragen Sie!" (71). Pressured by authorities, Gabriela's father performs plastic surgery to cover her scars, even as the question of whether *he* believes his daughter's story is never asked or answered in the text. The charges which Gabriela had pressed are dropped, and a case is opened against her. She is also denied entrance to the Erweiterte Oberschule, at which point Ernst von Haßlau steps in and attempts to exercise his authority as a father and a wealthy surgeon in the face of institutional authority:

Wieder sprach Vater in der Schule vor: Man habe seiner Tochter übel mitgespielt, sie sei überfallen worden.

-Beweise?

-Die Narbe am Arm.

-Da ist nichts zu sehen. Leider können wir da nichts machen, Herr Doktor.

[....] Vater hatte seine Macht verloren. (73)

No longer any risk to the authority of the state, Ernst von Haßlau has been relegated to the rank of average citizen. Once again, the state has set the rules, and this time, Ernst has complied – operating on his daughter when nobody else would. But now even his obedience is not recognized, and his request for special consideration for his daughter is denied. Not only has he lost his previous power, but also his recent relative invisibility.

¹⁶ The impact of this traumatic episode on *Gabriela* is examined in Chapter 5.

Unlike his social standing during his time as *Obermedizinalrat* or his quiet life as a recovering alcoholic, Ernst has now (via Gabriela) drawn the attention and scrutiny of state authorities upon himself. He is visited by the *Stasi* on more than one occasion and interrogated about his daughter. His only value in the eyes of the state is as a provider of information about her. In what can be read as both his final betrayal of Gabriela and his first effective challenge to the state, Ernst von Haßlau defects to the West. The postcard which he sends to his daughter gives the terse explanation: “Er habe nichts anders gekonnt” (95). Although on the one hand Ernst’s defection is a new beginning for him, it is also a reflection of the power of authoritarian state institutions to drive individuals to such lengths.

Frustrated Dreams in *Lügen und schweigen*

Katrin Dorn’s novel *Lügen und schweigen* also recounts the story of a father who is controlled and frustrated by the authority of the East German state, and who allows this control to nearly break his will. Although less direct than the victimization depicted in *Tanz am Kanal*, the traumatization in this book is no less fundamental in the life of the father, Konrad Gröbers.

This text is perhaps best described by what *doesn’t* happen: the father doesn’t escape East Germany as he had planned, he doesn’t forgive his wife and child for ‘keeping’ him there, and he therefore doesn’t provide an emotional connection to his daughter. He allows disappointment, anger and hate to determine and define his character and becomes an emotionally unavailable, bitter man. But while Konrad controls his (re)actions, the original circumstances which lead to them are clearly controlled by the state, a state that Konrad desperately wanted to escape. As his wife Irene later recounts to

Konrad's sister: "Damals wollten ja alle weg. Aber so eine Flucht hat eben Umstände gemacht, auch wenn man gar nichts mitnehmen durfte. [...] Aber weißt du eigentlich, daß Konrad schon alles vorbereitet hatte?" (37). On the evening before his planned escape, Konrad throws a combination birthday and (unannounced) farewell party, during which he meets Irene. Konrad proposes within hours of their meeting, she soon gets pregnant, and they dream of defecting with their young son. But the hoped-for son is actually a daughter,¹⁷ and the Berlin Wall is built shortly after her birth. More than 30 years after events occurred, Irena tells her daughter Vera and her sister-in-law Regine about the summer of 1961:

Stellt euch vor, am Sonntagmorgen haben sie im Radio gesagt, daß sie das Land abgeriegelt hatten. Da ist er vom Frühstückstisch aufgestanden und hat sich wieder ins Bett gelegt. So wütend war er. Und am Montag ist er nicht mehr zur Arbeit gegangen, nicht einmal zum Arzt, um sich krank schreiben zu lassen. Er hat überhaupt nichts mehr gemacht. [...] Am Anfang habe ich ihn völlig verstanden. Sein ganzes Leben, alles pfutsch. Aber auf die Dauer war es doch anstrengend mit ihm. (38-9)

With one report on the radio, Konrad's life – and the life of his family – is changed forever. Rather than a slightly risky endeavor, defection has now become hugely dangerous, a danger which Ernst may have been willing to confront, but which his wife could not bear: "er wollte allen Ernstes schwarz über die Grenze, nicht mal die Minen haben ihn abgeschreckt. Denk doch an das Kind, hab ich gesagt. Soll das vielleicht ohne Vater aufwachsen?" (44). The state which Konrad wanted to escape has effectively taken away this chance, and it becomes his bitter enemy. But rather than risking escape or attempting to improve whatever aspects of life he could, Konrad views his entrapment in the GDR as permanent and unchangeable, a life sentence passed down by a hated but

¹⁷ "Wir haben ja beide gehofft, daß du ein Junge wirst. Du solltest Elvis heißen, und dein Vater wollte mit dir Reiten lernen in Texas" (38).

relatively unchallenged authority. As Vera later recounts: “Das einzige, was ich von dir weiß, ist, daß du alles, was du nicht ändern konntest, gehaßt hast” (133). Konrad’s hate, which is originally directed at the state, spills over onto his wife, his child, his situation in general. At his wife’s urging, he finally takes a job as a forester, spending his days alone in the woods. This isolation and silence characterizes his relationships with others: “Der Vater war der Meinung, daß die meisten Leute nur Sachen sagen, die überflüssig sind, und nur reden, um sich wichtig zu machen. Er hatte diese Meinung nie ausgesprochen. Das wäre auch überflüssig gewesen. Es verstand sich von selbst” (15). Even though Konrad remains in the GDR, his emotional withdrawal results in Vera growing up “ohne Vater”; he remains disconnected and unattainable. In some ways, Konrad’s silence and choice of solitary job resemble perpetual pouting – the reaction of a small child who doesn’t get his way and removes himself from the company of others. Although there is obviously an element of sadness involved in Konrad’s situation, it is much more defined by his hate and resentment.

In the spring of 1992, Konrad Gröbers is dying. Hearing of her father’s frustrated dreams for the first time, Vera poses the obvious question of why Konrad did not go West after unification. Her mother has obviously discussed this with him: “ich dachte ja auch, daß er das macht. Aber er hat gesagt, jetzt wäre es nicht mehr dasselbe gewesen” (41). After living nearly 40 years in a state he despised, Konrad views the now open border as too little, too late. The longed for opportunity cannot make up for a lifetime of frustration. Unlike Ernst von Haßlau in *Tanz am Kanal*, who eventually chose to risk defecting (although also abandoning his daughter), Konrad was defeated by the shock of August 1961, when the state actively stepped in and thwarted his dreams. In contrast to

the presence of 'state representatives' in individual lives (such as the *Stasi*'s repeated contact with Ernst von Haßlau), the state here is seen as a non-individuated entity which exercises enormous authority and denies the individual freedom of choice.

The father figure of post-unification East German literature is portrayed as a victim of authoritarianism to a much greater extent than in *Aufbauliteratur* or *Väterliteratur*. Rather than constructing socialist role models or national socialist perpetrators, young East German authors acknowledge the father's individual frailty, his emotional trauma, and his (lack of) submission to authority. Historical events and the socialist state play critical roles in the lives of these figures. Although the (re)actions of individual fathers are depicted with varying degrees of sympathy and criticism, these texts share the underlying recognition that the father is also a victim.

The somewhat sympathetic portrayal of the father in these texts arises from two issues: the shared GDR past of father and protagonist/author, and the perceived legacy of German authoritarianism that persists even after the *Wende*. Unlike previous German father literature, where the father generation was actively involved in events of past eras – namely World War II – this father *and* child generation grew up in the post-war GDR. Although the events of the *Wende* may mark a dividing line between father and child generations, they are by no means as divisive as the (non-) involvement in World War II which separates father and child generations in *Aufbauliteratur* or West German *Väterliteratur*. These shared experiences of authoritarianism within the GDR are not presented as historic anomalies, but as historically specific examples of the effects that (East and West) German authoritarian institutions and states have upon individuals.

Chapter 4

The (Mis)use of Paternal Authority

In Chapter 3, the figure of the father in post-unification texts was analyzed in the context of his submission to and victimization by authoritarian structures. This chapter examines the ways in which the father is portrayed as himself possessing and exerting authority – over his children. The father-child relationship is placed within the greater legacy of German authoritarianism, highlighting the (de)formative power of the father in the lives of his children. These children, who struggle with issues of autonomy and self-esteem because of their relationship with their father, are then dominated and victimized by larger authoritarian institutions, setting up a cycle which continues for generations. These texts focus on the inherently unequal distribution of authority within the father-child relationship, how this is abused by the father, and the often difficult shift of power as protagonists come of age within and after the GDR. Although written after unification, when the authority of the GDR and GDR fathers had apparently been broken, these texts present father-child relationships defined by issues of domination, submission, love and fear. The father inhabits a central position in the literary psyche of this young generation, and their works highlight his role within the authoritarian family and larger hierarchy of the GDR.

The father-child relationship is an especially effective rhetorical figure for addressing larger social issues because it replicates large-scale relations of authority on an individual level. Horkheimer traces the underlying inequality in authority relations within society and the family, stressing the idea that both institutions are characterized by relatively few – the state, the employer, the father – having authority over many – the masses, workers, children (358). Authority is not something that the few can simply

demand without any compensation, however, instead it is a system of “bejahte Abhängigkeit” (360). Those with less authority willingly submit to those with more authority because they see some benefit in it. Fromm emphasizes that authority relationships have many motivating emotions, but that the father-child relationship is most often defined by fear and love: fear of the father himself (his physical power and temper), fear of what he represents (law and authority), fear of losing his love, and of course love itself (109). The primary texts analyzed here use these ambivalent feelings about the father as a vehicle for addressing and exploring larger sociohistorical themes such as the domination of the individual by the state, (East) German patriarchy and post-unification identity.

As we have seen, the father occupies a complicated position within the authority structures of the state and the family. As a citizen, he is subject to those in authority over him, such as his boss, the police, even leaders of social organizations. Men from lower social classes are also (indirectly) controlled by those from higher classes who want to preserve the status quo which keeps them in their privileged position (Horkheimer 345).¹ Wherever a man stands in the hierarchy of authority, he is kept in his place both by those above him and by his ‘agreement’ to continue to live in society.² His position is radically different within the family, however. The father who may have little authority within state institutions (such as not being affiliated with the SED in the GDR) is the ultimate authority figure in his own home merely because he is the father: “Der Vater hat moralischen Anspruch auf Unterordnung unter seine Stärke, nicht weil er sich als würdig

¹ Fromm argues that even totalitarian leaders often present themselves as subject to a greater power, be it an ideology, religion, etc. Part of this is perhaps a political move to gain sympathy and support, but it also emphasizes the scale of authority relations (117).

² In extreme cases – such as in *Andere Umstände* and *Tanz am Kanal* – fathers were no longer willing to submit to authority structures in GDR culture and defected to the West.

erweist, sondern er erweist sich als würdig, weil er der Stärkere ist” (H 393). The role of father elevates him to a position of authority essentially different from and greater than his wife and children.

Periods of social and political upheaval challenge the authority of the father because they (threaten to) disrupt established institutions and ideals. German unification is a recent example of this, leaving many East German fathers unemployed, without substantial political power, and struggling to adjust to competitive capitalist society. But although scholars posit a loss of authority in this GDR father generation,³ post-unification literature by younger authors to a large extent continues to emphasize the enormous impact of the father in the lives of his children, an impact that continues on into adulthood.

The wax and wane of paternal authority in Germany has been studied throughout the 20th century. “The concept of the absent father in modern society has been discussed by critical theorists such as Weber, Horkheimer and Marcuse, whose writings date back to the early 1920s and 1930s” (Klages 44). Alexander Mitscherlich, in his landmark 1963 work *Auf dem Weg zur vaterlosen Gesellschaft*, points to industrialization as the beginning of the end of the father’s rule.⁴ Because of changes in means of production, fathers were forced to work outside the home, thus removing them from extended daily contact with their children. Rather than being visible, present authority figures, they became distant, unknowable employees – more subject to authority than representing it (Klages 44). Other scholars see the decreasing average number of children per family as a sign that the authority of the father was shrinking (Lempp 178). Lempp also views the

³ See Dennis, Göschel or Youniss.

⁴ Although I disagree with some of the conclusions drawn by Mitscherlich, his book played an important role in postwar West German discourse on fathers and authority.

Nazi era as “ein letztes Aufbäumen des Patriachats” (178), and the loss of World War II as an end of the “Väterherrschaft” (178).

But once again, literature does not reflect such a weakening of the father figure. Even in the aftermath of World War II, literary fathers retain their authority, a theme examined by Claudia Mauelshagen in her insightful study of West German *Väterliteratur*. Returning home after losing a war – and perhaps their political beliefs – German fathers are portrayed as being emotionally traumatized but ready and willing to fill their roles of authority in the family (186-7). As Meckel writes in *Suchbild*, the returning father was an “Erzieher mit Nachholbedarf an Autorität. Er arbeitete an der Wiederherstellung seiner Familie, das heißt: an der eigenen, bestimmenden Rolle in ihr” (74). For many fathers in immediate post-war West Germany,⁵ the family was one of the few arenas in which they could still exercise authority. Mauelshagen continues with the following claim:

Die soziale Realität der Autoren-Generation ist eben weder charakterisiert durch mangelnde väterliche Autorität noch durch Vaterlosigkeit, und dies ändert sich auch nicht, wenn die herausgekehrte Autorität als Kompensation eines durch die militärische Niederlage ausgebliebenen Heldentums oder eines auch familialen Machtverlusts gedeutet wird. Eine gemäßigt-patriarchalische Familie, die die autoritär-patriarchalische abgelöst haben soll, ist zumindest aus dem überwiegenden Teil der Vaterbücher kaum herauszulesen. (187)

Despite the prolonged absence of the (East and West German) father during World War II and his daily absence while at work, the literary portrayal of his authority within the family does not significantly diminish. I agree with Mauelshagen’s claim that this physical absence actually *contributes* to the father’s authority because it makes him someone inherently unknowable:

⁵ Mauelshagen’s study focuses largely on the West German context.

Das Postulat von der familiären Vaterlosigkeit ist nicht einfach als ein Abdanken der Vatermacht zu verstehen, sondern nimmt Bezug auf eine sich herausbildende Unkenntlichkeit des Vaters. Dabei wird der Vater zur inhaltsleeren Autoritätsfigur, und seine Macht erhält sich nicht nur, sondern steigert sich noch. In überaus vielen Vater texts gelangt die grundsätzliche Fremdheit der Väter, kommt ihre Unkenntlichkeit *und* ihre Übermächtigkeit zum Ausdruck. (189, emphasis in original)

The father figures in both West German *Väterliteratur* and East German post-unification texts are enigmas to their children – emotionally and physically distant, unknown and unknowable – and at the same time fascinating and dominant. Although historically viewed as the losers of World War II and of unification, respectively, the two father generations as constructed in these groups of texts are powerful, daunting figures in the lives of their children. The persistence of this portrayal of the father as authority underscores the continuation of the larger authoritarian structures which the father-child relationship so often represents.

The physical and psychological authority of the father play a deciding role in the development of a child's superego. In Freudian psychoanalytic theory, it is a son's fear of physical punishment (castration) at the hand of the father which initiates the resolution of the Oedipal complex. Rather than risk confrontation over the mother, the son acquiesces to the greater power of the father, identifying with him and internalizing his rules. Although many theorists have rejected Freud's interpretation of the Oedipal complex (particularly for girls), they still acknowledge the enormous role the father plays in a child's development: "For psychoanalysts like Chasseguet-Smirgel who have moved away from the strict oedipal view, the father is not powerful simply because he *has* a phallus, but because he (with his phallus) represents freedom from dependency on the powerful mother of early infancy" (Benjamin, *Bonds* 95). Children look to the father and

internalize his values and attitudes about life outside the family sphere. Benjamin continues: “No matter what theory you read, the father is always the way into the world” (*Bonds* 103). Thus the rule(s) of the father become(s) a guiding principle for the child’s superego development, laying the groundwork for his or her later relationship to state authority. Fromm expands this idea to a social level, with authority figures – teachers, police, government officials – serving as substitute father figures (superegos) (88). The father therefore serves as a link between private and public spheres; he shapes not only the child’s view of paternal authority, but her submission to larger authority structures as well. Because young children not only idealize the father and the (larger) authority associated with him, but also determine their own sense of self via the father (superego), there is extreme internal pressure to believe in the inherent ‘goodness’ and ‘justice’ of both the father and the state. To doubt them means to doubt oneself. Children who grow up with fathers and in states that exploit their authority often find it extremely difficult to later confront the failures of the father and the authoritarianism of state institutions, and to develop the ego necessary to forge an individual identity separate from (and often at odds with) their father.

Horkheimer argues that the family is the ideal training ground for learning to function within authoritarian society. “Die Wege, die zur Macht führen, sind in der bürgerlichen Welt nicht durch Verwirklichung moralischer Werturteile, sondern durch geschickte Anpassung an die Verhältnisse vorgezeichnet” (397). The concepts of obedience and submission, which are so important in such societies, are also those taught and learned within the patriarchal authoritarian family. Because of a young child’s physical, emotional and financial dependence upon the father, the child learns at a young

age to obey him (out of the dual motivations of love and fear). As mentioned above, the child usually also idealizes and admires his father, thus believing that the father's actions and attitudes are accurate and good. While this often changes in adolescence, the mind-set internalized in childhood remains a powerful influence on a child's stance toward authority. Horkheimer argues that growing up in an authoritarian household serves "zur Gewöhnung an eine Autorität, welche die Ausübung einer qualifizierten gesellschaftlichen Funktion mit der Macht über Menschen in undurchsichtiger Weise vereinigt" (397-8). Put bluntly, children are to a large extent 'programmed' by their childhood experiences as to how to function within society.

Fromm also discusses the effects of authoritarian society upon the individual. He argues that the strict, 'opaque' hierarchy of society (with real authority residing only at the top) makes the lives of the masses seem even more ruled by chance and coincidence. "Die relative Undurchschaubarkeit des gesellschaftlichen und damit des individuellen Lebens schafft eine schier hoffnungslose Abhängigkeit, an die sich das Individuum anpasst, indem es eine sado-masochistische Charakterstruktur entwickelt" (118). Responding to the environment around them, many individuals find relief and even pleasure in submitting to higher authority (masochism) while also abusing their authority over others (sadism).

Literary Constructions of the Father as an Authoritarian Personality

Fathers in post-1989 East German texts exhibit many of the sadomasochistic traits of authoritarian personalities, and their behavior leaves lasting effects on their children. While the portrayal of the father as *submitting* to authority is closely linked to specific GDR institutions and situations (*Stasi*, police, travel restrictions), his *exercising* of

authority in his relationship to his children positions him within longstanding traditions. Pre-war German childrearing practices were characterized by patriarchal, authoritarian attitudes, as is illustrated by Horkheimer, Fromm and Lempp. Both Fromm and Horkheimer discuss how authoritarianism is internalized and passed down through generations within such societies. Mauselshagen also shares the viewpoint that West German fathers are both products and representatives of authoritarianism, examining several characteristics which mark the construction of the father-child relationship in West German *Väterliteratur*.⁶ The similarities between father portrayals in *Väterliteratur* and in East German post-unification texts are striking. Rather than include all of Mauselshagen's (briefly described) authoritarian characteristics, the focus here is on those which seem most evident in post-unification texts: the refusal to see children as autonomous individuals, silence toward children, and an underlying 'disconnect' between father and child manifested in emotional and/or physical abandonment. In the analysis of father behavior, the focus will be on the direct effects on the children (protagonists) and also what these father-child relationships reveal about larger issues of (GDR) authoritarianism.

As both sociology and literature show evidence of the persistence of traditional paternal authority in the GDR (and the FRG), it is therefore not surprising that the literary portrayal of the GDR father is in many respects similar to that of the West German father. This similarity is especially strong between West German *Väterliteratur* and post-unification East German texts, largely because both corpora can be viewed as post-traumatic texts responding to World War II and the collapse of the GDR, respectively. Therefore it comes as no surprise that the characteristic aspects of the father-child

⁶ I would like to acknowledge Mauselshagen's text as the inspiration for many ideas in this chapter.

relationship found in *Väterliteratur* once again appear in these post-unification texts, and that they are exacerbated by the authoritarianism of the GDR state itself.

The authoritarianism that defines the GDR father-child relationship is particularly problematic in texts which explore both pre- and post-*Wende* East German society. In contrast to West Germany, where the student revolt of the 1960s challenged but did not always change existing social and political authority structures, the end of the GDR drastically changed the lives of *all* East Germans. Relations of power and authority were changed on an individual and collective level, ranging from fathers being suddenly unemployed (and thus robbed of an important part of their (GDR) identity) to the collapse of the SED (largely made up of members of the father generation). This is coupled with the fact that authors and their protagonists were roughly 20-30 years old at unification, passing through the blatantly unequal power distribution of the early father-child relationship and beginning to establish themselves as autonomous adults. The individual coming of age of East Germans was thus intensified and mirrored by the larger social and political break of German unification.

What is striking, however, is the pivotal role the GDR father plays in these post-unification narratives of childhood and youth in East Germany. Although all of the primary texts are set in post-1989 Germany, the narration of the father-child relationship overwhelmingly focuses on the GDR. While this makes sense in a purely ‘chronological’ way – more than 20 years of life in the GDR versus only a handful in post-unification Germany – it also emphasizes the enormous role of the childhood relationship with the father. The larger social and political changes of unification play little to no role in the

father-child relationship for most protagonists.⁷ Patterns of behavior and uses of authority were determined during childhood in the GDR, and therefore the portrayal of the father-child relationship is largely limited to this time period. The downplaying of post-unification changes also serves to emphasize the continuity in outlooks and behaviors that these texts construct. Just as the forming of the GDR did not (radically) change structures of the father-child relationship, neither does unification. While the *Wende* may serve as a personal turning point for protagonists, it does not automatically signal a change between father and child.

Obedience, Autonomy and Narcissism in *Tanz am Kanal* and *Fitchers Blau*

A recurring theme in the GDR father-child relationship is that of obedience. *Gehorsam* was a concept learned at home as well as within GDR society. The authoritarian, top-down political and social system of East Germany both mirrored and fostered the German tradition of authoritarianism and patriarchy in the family. As Maaz writes: “Jeder DDR-Bürger kann bei genauem Hinsehen ein Lied davon singen, wie an ihm ‘Disziplin und Ordnung’ vollzogen wurden. [... D]ie Führungsrolle der Erwachsenen widerspruchslos und dankbar anerkennen und Gehorsam üben gehörten zu den vornehmsten Tugenden und Pflichten eines jeden Kindes“ (25). While discipline and obedience are characteristics of long-standing childrearing traditions in Germany, they play an even more definitive role in the authoritarian system of the GDR. The social understanding of obedience included shutting out anything that did not correspond to what the government (or the father) presented as ‘fact’, as ‘right’, as ‘good’ if one did not

⁷ The obvious exception to this is *Andere Umstände*, in which the father had defected to West Berlin during the 1980s. Unification thus gives both father and daughter a chance to resume their interrupted relationship.

want to be accused of “mangelnde Staatstreue” (Maaz 26). Questioning of or rebelling against the status quo was not encouraged in GDR society or the GDR family.⁸

Obedience, or good behavior, is expected by nearly all fathers in these texts.⁹ What sets apart the fathers in *Tanz am Kanal* and *Fitchers Blau* is that their expectations of obedience are associated with attitudes and actions which suggest they see their children less as individuals than as projections of themselves and reflections of their (the fathers’) success, intelligence, or social status. As Mauelshagen writes, “Kinder interessieren nur dort, wo sie den eigenen Bedürfnissen, etwa nach Geltung und Prestige [...] oder Selbstdarstellung dienen” (194). Obedience in these families is not measured in terms of absolute right or wrong or even adherence to laws or social norms, but is instead determined by the father’s wishes, needs and expectations. Mauelshagen discusses the underlying narcissistic tendencies of such fathers – not just simple ‘self love’, but an obsession with the *image* one has of oneself (203). The fathers in these texts display characteristics of narcissism, namely the father’s fixation on his role as ‘father’ (or ‘doctor’ or ‘scientist’, etc).¹⁰ This self-absorption makes the father indifferent to his children, and reduces them to the level of objects who merely serve to reflect, validate and embody him. As Bremer writes about Ernst von Haßlau in *Tanz am Kanal*: “Seine Tochter soll [...] eine Art Statussymbol für ihn sein” (73). This results in children who are deeply insecure and who have difficulty establishing their own autonomy and personal identity.

⁸ A real-life example: in an article in *Die Zeit* about a 1989 *Abitur*-class in Berlin-Pankow and their experiences since unification, one of the former students comments about growing up in GDR society: “Wir waren es nicht gewohnt, auch andere Meinungen zuzulassen” (Simon 17).

⁹ The one possible exception being the father in *Andere Umstände*, who is part of the household for such a short time that he is never portrayed as a traditional authority figure.

¹⁰ An excellent example of this is the father figure in Christoph D. Brumme’s *Nichts als das* (1994). A well-liked and highly-respected teacher, his teacher-role takes on pathological qualities with his sons (in the privacy of the home).

The two fathers in these texts, Ernst von Haßlau and Josef (whose last name is never mentioned) actually share the same role that defines their lives – they are doctors. Ernst von Haßlau works as “Erster Venenchirurg” (TK 11) and is later appointed *Obermedizinalrat* at the surgical clinic (TK 17). Josef is also a “Chirurg” (FB 246). While the reader is never informed of the reasons behind Ernst von Haßlau’s decision to become a doctor, Josef views himself as a “Soldat, [...] Kämpfer an der Gesundheitsfront, erbarmungslos gegen die schwache Menschheit” (FB 97). For Josef, medicine holds the keys to power – not in the material trappings it brings, but in its effect on health, life and death. He sees the opportunity, “die menschliche Krankheit fortzuvernichten. Nur Glück würde bleiben und Gleichmut. Eine erwachsene Welt ohne Tränen. Nach seinem Bilde, das ein Bild des übergeordneten Willens war” (FB 315). In Josef’s quest to change the world, medicine allows him to play a leading role. Himself willingly subject to “der Wille”,¹¹ Josef views his medical skills as allowing him to *obey* and also *become* this higher authority. For Ernst von Haßlau, however, the power associated with medicine and doctors falls far short of the authority of the state.

Issues of authority and autonomy manifest themselves differently in the two texts: Ernst’s socially acceptable wish for a ‘perfect’ but low-maintenance daughter, and Josef’s overtly pathological experiment: “Das war sein Vorsatz von Jugend an gewesen: den Menschen im Innersten umzugestalten, wenn es von außen her und mit Gewalt nicht möglich. Ihm das Gehirn umzubauen, daß er von selbst das Gute und Richtige sah und nicht danach fragte” (FB 359). Josef’s son Karl’s childhood is characterized by emotional terrorism, physical abuse, and extended absences of the father. In contrast, Gabriela von

¹¹ Discussed in Chapter 3

Haßlau's childhood is defined by patent leather shoes, isolation from unsuitable children, and a father distracted by the rise and fall of his career.

A vivid illustration of the roots and eventual effects of narcissism, *Gehorsam* and lack of autonomy in the father-child relationship is found in a comparison of early childhood memories of both protagonists. These memories depict father-child relationships which were never healthy, but instead damaged by trauma from earliest childhood. Both Karl and Gabriela desperately want to please and obey their fathers, but they continually fall short of the egotistical standards set by them.

While the following episode is not the earliest of Karl's memories shared with the reader, it is by far the most traumatic, and it marks a shift from 'mere' physical abuse to deliberate psychological terrorism. To fully convey the horror of the situation, extended passages depicting both Karl and Josef's point of view are quoted:

Karl war auf den Wohnzimmerteppich gefallen, rücklings, auf Karl saß der lachende Papa, hatte die Uniform an, denn er war immer im Dienst. [...] Der kam auf Karls Arme zu knien, ein Muskelreiter in galantem Galopp, senkte den filzgrauen Hintern auf die Schenkel des Sohns, dem nun keine Bewegung möglich war, der zu Stein erstarrt lag wie ein achtloser Held im Märchen. Mutter las mit lauter Stimme die Geschichte von Fitze Fitcher [...] Der Vater hockte auf Karl, ließ ihn nicht fort, er sollte hören, alles hören. Der Vater beobachtete, wie Karl sich in seine Bestimmung schickte, wie ihm die kleine Phantasie auswuchs zu einem großen Geschwür aus Bildern, eine unausrottbar gemachte Welt [...] Die Mutter las vor, Karl schrie und heulte, denn er wollte nicht hören. Der Vater untermalte die Lesung mit genauen Details, er war ein Chirurg. Ergänzte, beschrieb die Gerüche der Innereien, wie er sie kannte; [...] Karl kam bald ein Röcheln in die junge Kehle, ihm wurde es übel, er wollte kotzen. Konnte es nicht, denn der Vater saß auf ihm, zwang ihn in eine Stellung, da hätte das Kotzen ihm das Erstickten beschert, eine schöne Bescherung, da wäre er gestorben. Sterben wollte er nicht. (FB 246-248)

Perhaps even more disturbing is the father's point of view – in contrast to Karl's impression of this as a terrifying and unexpected event, Josef has planned this long in advance and sees it as a process of training and forming his son. He views this abuse as

an “Eingriff”, a quasi-medical/scientific experiment. Karl is not viewed as a child here, but rather as a laboratory rat, a convenient subject upon which Josef can test his frightening psychology and observe its results:

Josef ließ seine Version des Märchens bei Karl in Anwendung bringen. Er beobachtete genau, wie sich Wirkung einstellte. Zuerst war dem Sohn nichts klar. Er hörte und nahm es wie andere Märchen. Zwar schürte es ihm die Phantasie, doch sah er sich nicht selbst betroffen. Nach einigen Wiederholungen und den Erläuterungen Josefs, daß auch Karl ein Wesen sei ähnlich jenen Frauen in der Geschichte, die zerhackt in die Blutschüssel zu liegen kamen, wurde es dem Sohn anders. Er begann zu verweigern. Wollte nicht länger mit anhören. Lief aus dem Zimmer. Mußte zu Boden gezwungen werden und festgehalten. Josef sah, daß der Eingriff Wirkung zu zeigen begann. Das Kind schloß die Augen. Die Ohren konnte es nicht verschließen. [...] Karl erstarrte nach einiger Zeit. Sprach wenig. Wurde begriffsstutzig. Josef begann, den Sohn zu verachten. Der ihm nahe der Debität zu leben schien. Wollte ihn auf eine Sonderschule schicken. (FB 348-9)

Karl’s very understandable reaction to his father’s emotional terrorism is viewed by Josef as failure. Rather than comprehending the depth of emotional trauma he is causing his son, Josef seems disappointed in the results of his experiment – not because he sees that the experiment itself was faulty, but because the subject of the experiment (Karl) is somehow unfit.

While the earliest childhood memory of Gabriela von Haßlau is less shocking than the physical and emotional abuse of *Fitchers Blau*, it also illustrates her father’s perception of her as an extension of his ego. On her fourth birthday, Gabriela is given a violin by her father. At no time has Gabriela said that she wants to play the violin, or even that she likes music; this gift is a symbol of the father’s expectations. “Seine Tochter soll überdurchschnittlich wohlerzogen und musisch begabt erscheinen” (Bremer 73). As the daughter of a prominent family, Gabriela should have suitable hobbies and skills:

Das erste, woran ich mich erinnere, war ein Geigenkasten. Ich bekam ihn zu meinem vierten Geburtstag. Außen braunes Leder, innen grüner Samt. Ich öffnete ihn und sah das Instrument. Ich hielt es für ein Tier, einen verzauberten Dackel. Als ich aufheulte, riß mich Vater an den Zopfschnecken.

- Das ist eine Violine.

Onkel Schorsch aus Sachsen war bei uns zu Besuch, er lachte.

- Das ist aber 'ne Binka, eure Tochter!

Mutter schämte sich, Vater skandierte mir ins Gesicht:

- Vi-o-li-ne! Vi-o-li-ne! Sprich nach!

Ich weinte über dem verzauberten Dackel. (TK 8-9)

Although he hires a professional violinist as a teacher for his daughter, Gabriela continues to disappoint her father – musically and socially. Several months later, Ernst von Haßlau is appointed *Obermedizinalrat*. Gabriela remembers: “Am Tag seiner Berufung war Vater ein Mensch. Zum Frühstück nahm er mich auf den Schoß” (TK 17). As a special surprise, he informs Gabriela that she will play her violin for him and his fellow surgeons. What the father sees as an opportunity to impress his colleagues with his well-mannered, cultured daughter turns into a nightmare for Gabriela. She is so nervous that she faints before she even begins to play. When she regains consciousness, lying in the clinic, she innocently asks if she too has varicose veins like her fathers’ patients:

Es gab Gelächter in der Klinik, nur Vater lachte nicht.

- Wir werden eine andere Lehrerin für dich suchen, du hast mich in Grund und Boden blamiert.

Ich lag auf einer Pritsche im Op II, über mir jetzt die riesige runde Lampe. Ich hoffte, daß sie herabstürzt und mich begräbt. In Grund und Boden. (TK 19)

Rather than acknowledging the limitations of his young daughter, Ernst once again turns the spotlight on himself, on his desires and emotions. Gabriela’s corresponding feelings of shame and embarrassment show how deeply she has internalized her father’s attitudes.

Growing up with an unpredictable and often abusive father makes an indelible impression on Karl. He learns at a young age that his father is powerful and to be feared, and that he himself only exists to reflect his father:

Karl war ein rechtlicher Mensch. Vaters Hände und Füße hatten ihr Werk getan, den Sohn verhärtet, hölzern gemacht unter Schlag und Tritt. Denn die Väter tun, was ihnen beliebt mit den Kindern, die sie erschaffen zur Mehrung des Eigentums, sich zurechtschnitzen nach einem Ebenbild, mit scharfen Messern, die alt sind wie Obsidian. (FB 91)

Josef serves as the ultimate authority – even being referred to as the “HErr” (FB 14) in an obvious allusion to God. As a subject of such an authority figure, Karl does not need to think for himself, only to obey. Even as an adult, Karl “meinte, daß ein Verstehen nicht nötig war, wie es schon immer unnötig, [...] Gehorsam und Glaube, das waren Tangenten der Welt, wie sie ihm aufgespannt einst” (FB 244). Because he is never encouraged or even allowed to make his own decisions as a child and develop his own ego (instead of blindly following his father-controlled superego), Karl continues to struggle with issues of autonomy and personal identity as a teenager and adult. This is evident in his being an easy target for a job scheme run by an acquaintance.¹² Grateful to have someone else make the decision for him, Karl once again blindly follows along.

Josef’s over-controlling behavior not only makes it difficult for Karl to act decisively and with autonomy, it also leaves him in a state of emotional numbness, a numbness he is afraid to leave. Karl often (mis)uses alcohol to preserve that numbness: “Alkohol, der ihn schützt vor den bösen Gedanken” (FB 21). But while numbness allows Karl to avoid directly facing his situation, he is still aware of his powerlessness. At times Karl is portrayed as barely human, but rather a “Karikatur seiner Gattung” (FB 239). Several times he is compared to a puppet or marionette, with Josef pulling the strings. “Der Sohn sein Hampelmann. Hängt an der Wand, mit Schwanz unten dran. Zupp, schon springen die Glieder” (FB 109). Building on the theme of a powerless marionette, there

¹² Karl is convinced by a former schoolmate to sell insurance door-to-door, unwittingly taking on huge financial responsibilities. When he abandons his job, he is actually pursued and threatened.

are over 25 comparisons of Karl to a piece of wood, phrases such as “der hölzerne Leib” (FB 7), “Holzkopf” (FB 71,254) “Holzpuppe” (FB 300). This metaphor of Karl as a wooden marionette changes, albeit slowly, over the course of the text. The puppet Karl – the son who is so overtly controlled by his father – begins to come to life: “Etwas wie Hoffnung glimmt ihm innen. Ein erstes Feuer, ein Flämmchen nur, in den Höhlungen, die ihm die Würmer fraßen. Das Holz wird an einigen Stellen verzehrt. Umgewandelt in ein bebendes Fleisch. Die Würmer flüchten” (FB 287). And at the end of a passage highlighting the historical events of the German past through unification comes the following potentially optimistic statement: “Die Puppe hält sich fest bei schwankender Kurvenfahrt. Ihr Holz ist zerstört, ihre Fäden zerrissen. Sie fährt allein, treibt keine Wurzeln und auch kein Blatt” (FB 305). The helpless marionette is showing signs of becoming a man.

However ill-prepared for making his own decisions, Karl does eventually rebel against the control of his father. It is the nature of that rebellion which perhaps best illustrates the extent to which Karl’s ego has been stunted by the domination of his father. Against his father’s express wishes, Karl decides to join the Army as a non-officer. An officer himself, Josef is irate – angry that Karl is defying him, embarrassed at what others may think, frustrated that his ‘experiment’ is producing such disappointing results. Josef’s response betrays his obsession with himself, his narcissism, his refusal to see Karl as anything other than a reflection of himself:

Aber nicht die Söhne der Offiziere, rief der Vater, waren zum Soldaten geboren. Wozu er dann wohl die Mühe der Aufzucht geleistet hätte. Ob der Sohn keinen Begriff habe von der Schande, die ihm, dem Vater, aus dieser Verweigerung erwuchs. Daß alle Mühe umsonst, alle Zuwendung verschwendet gewesen, daß er, der Vater, einen großen Fehler begangen hatte bei der Zeugung Karls! Der Sohn schwieg und nickte. (FB 360)

Karl's decision actually arises much less from any desire to defy his father than it does from his hesitancy to have authority over others – hardly surprising considering that he has rarely been allowed to even have authority over his own life. What is most striking, however, is that Karl rebels against the authority of his father by willingly taking on a subservient position in one of the most visible authoritarian institutions in the GDR – the military. Schramm appears to be making a rather cynical point here, implying that Karl's willingness to enter into the "offene Hierarchie" (FB 90) of the East German military was the only way to challenge Josef's paternal authority.

Not surprisingly, Karl's time in the military does not better equip him to assert his own autonomy against Josef. He remains trapped in long-established patterns of transgression and punishment. Karl has so deeply internalized his father's judgment (and legacy of physical abuse) that he self-abuses as an adult. Notified by a former friend that he owes her money, Karl knows he cannot pay:

Endlich; er hat die Peitsche aus altem Kabel gefunden, postiert sich quer übers offene Klobecken, nur des Gestanks wegen, das erniedrigt noch mehr. 6000 Mark; Prügelstrafe, so hat er es damals erlernt. Vater und Mutter. Die süßen Träume der Vorzeit, als Buße noch Recht gab. Er beginnt sich zu schlagen; stumm. (FB 43)

The lessons learned in childhood retain their power in Karl's life. Physically free of the punishing father, Karl himself takes on the role of punisher.

In the midst of this hopelessness, there are perhaps a few (mixed) signs of hope. As mentioned before, the wood-metaphor is carried throughout the text, providing glimpses of a developing sense of autonomy in Karl. Growing up with the domineering Josef has left Karl with an incredibly overly-developed superego and a relatively undeveloped ego, a condition exacerbated by the authoritarian control of the GDR state

and its military. But within unified Germany – even the cynically portrayed Germany of Schramm’s text – Karl’s ego begins to tentatively take root: “Karl ist ein Mensch. Er tanzt nicht, er lebt” (FB 386). Meeting his sister Janni and joining her fight for squatters’ rights in East Berlin finally gives Karl a sense of purpose. The effects of his upbringing are still evident in Karl’s transferal of obedience and loyalty to Janni, however: “Sie sagt, was zu tun ist. [...] Seine Träume sind nichtig gegen die ihren” (FB 408). But even though Karl obviously needs someone to follow, his sister is a more merciful leader than either Josef or the military, and there is a tacit implication that her goals are much nobler than theirs. Amidst the chaos and eventual defeat of the squatters’ uprising, there is at least the possibility of hope held out for Karl: “Karl brachte einen Schritt fertig. Vorwärts?” (FB 438). Schramm leaves the question unanswered, but the very fact that it has been posed signals a change from Karl’s previous ‘wooden’ state.

The father-child relationship portrayed in *Tanz am Kanal* between Ernst von Haßlau and his daughter Gabriela is strongly connected to issues of social status and appearances. Raised in a wealthy, protected environment, Gabriela vainly attempts to live up to her father’s overly high expectations for her. The state’s refusal to let Ernst start his own clinic (or more precisely, his unwillingness to accept this decision) signals the end of the family and the beginning of Gabriela’s often painful struggle for autonomy and independence.

The depiction of Ernst von Haßlau centers around themes of control and authority. For years he controls how the world views him – successful, wealthy, cultured – until the greater authority of the state steps in and forces him into a “Zustand der Bedeutungslosigkeit” (TK 29). Thus begins the roller coaster ride of struggles for

authority between Ernst, the state and Gabriela – struggles where Gabriela is most often a victim. Ernst vacillates between lavish parties and abject alcoholism, neglecting Gabriela and micromanaging her life, emotional and physical abandonment. His behavior is narcissistic and childish: when something does not go his way, he makes a fuss, just like a child. If anger and threats do not succeed, Ernst prefers to ignore a situation or just leave (such as when he defects without even telling his daughter).

The inconsistency and unpredictability of the father deeply unsettle Gabriela. While never subjected to the psychological terrorism depicted in *Fitchers Blau*, she does to an extent share Karl's anxiety and uncertainty of how her father will react to her behavior. After years of expecting his wife to attend to Gabriela's accomplishments at school (and several more years of just ignoring everything as he struggles with alcoholism), Ernst is suddenly determined to be a hands-on father: "Plötzlich interessierten ihn meine schulischen Leistungen; er achtete auf den Umgang, den ich hatte. Katka Lorenz verbot er, sich auch nur in der Nähe der Villa blicken zu lassen" (TK 61). While on the one hand deeply disapproving of Gabriela's only friend – the irreverent, happily fatherless Katka – because she symbolizes a threat to (his) authority, Ernst is at times also surprisingly irreverent in his own behavior toward authority figures, for example, Gabriela's teachers (TK 34, 53, 73). Ernst von Haßlau wants to be the center of attention and authority, and he respects only those authority figures whom he deems worthy.

Ernst's problematic relationship with figures of authority also plays a role in Gabriela's struggle to develop a sense of autonomy and individual identity. A childhood spent with an overly controlling father and adolescence with a father consumed by

alcoholism and personal problems leave Gabriela uncertain of who she is and where she belongs. Proud of being her father's daughter as a child – "Ich [...] weiß, wer ich bin" (TK 22), the young adult Gabriela questions her identity – is she her father's daughter, her rapist's victim, herself? "Heiß' ich Binka? Heiß' ich Ehlchen? Heiß' ich vielleicht Gabriela? Gabriela von Haßlau" (TK 80). The question remains unanswered even at the conclusion of the text.

There are several key events during Gabriela's adolescence which arguably result from and exacerbate her weak sense of autonomy. One of these is the trauma of being raped and subsequently not believed by the police. Even her father's authority is of no help here. The other is the *Stasi* attempt to force Gabriela to spy for them. Within a short span of time, Gabriela is rebuffed by one authority figure (the police), taken advantage of by another (the *Stasi*) and physically abandoned by a third (her father). Hensel here portrays the GDR as a system of authoritarianism on both a private and public level – one in which the individual is conditioned to respect and obey authority (and not develop a strong sense of self) and is then betrayed by the same authority figures.

Fathers who view their children as extensions of and reflections of themselves – their success, standing, or intelligence – fail to provide children with an adequate sense of self. The will of the father becomes internalized as the superego and is so all-encompassing that the child cannot or does not develop a strong individual ego. This often becomes problematic in adolescence and adulthood, when children come into closer contact with institutional authority such as school and the police. In these texts, this acquiescence to authority and poorly developed sense of individual identity is taken advantage of both by authorities in the GDR – the police, the *Stasi* – and after unification

– dishonest employers, the police. Taking advantage of weak individuals is portrayed as occurring within the family, the GDR, and modern (capitalist) society. Although politics and country names have changed, the same abuses of authority occur, and individuals raised in over-controlling, authoritarian families and states are often the victims.

Ignoring and Silence in *Helden wie wir* and *Lügen und schweigen*

To a certain extent, all of the primary texts belong in this category. All fathers at times ignore their children, be it the workaholic father in *Moskauer Eis*, the defector father in *Andere Umstände*, or the appearance-conscious father in *Tanz am Kanal*. But two texts – *Helden wie wir*, and *Lügen und schweigen* – portray fathers who purposefully ignore their children as a means of control and punishment. Writing about *Väterliteratur*, Maelshagen argues:

Bei Schwaiger, Vesper und Härtling gehört das Entziehen jeglicher Beachtung zu den wirksamsten elterlichen Maßregelungspraktiken, denn im Bewußtsein des Kindes ist die elterliche Beachtung mit der Empfindung der eigenen Existenz und deren Berechtigung verknüpft. Das vollständige Ignorieren, manchmal tage- und sogar wochenlang, bedeutet die Aufkündigung der Elternschaft und die Erklärung der Nichtexistenz des Kindes. (193)

In the mind of a child, parental/paternal attention often serves as a validation of the child's own existence, and when that attention is deliberately denied, children are deeply unsettled. Continued ignoring or inattention often results in children who are hyper-attuned to the father, trying to anticipate his moods, wishes and actions. Because the father-child relationship is largely controlled and initiated by the father, children become very dependent upon his favor and will do nearly anything to foster it: "daraus erwächst wiederum die Bereitschaft zur Anpassung durch unbedingte Unterordnung, denn nur diese gewährleistet die Anerkennung als Person, mehr noch: gewährleistet die Berechtigung des bloßen physischen Daseins" (Maelshagen 193). Being ignored and

shut out by the father creates children who struggle with self-image and self-esteem, desperately trying to become what the father wants in a frantic bid for attention.

The parents in *Helden wie wir* can be seen as opposite extremes of authoritarian personalities: the mother who is (over)involved in all aspects of Klaus's life, and the distant, aloof father who rarely deigns to speak to his son. "Mein Vater, autoritär und rechtschaffen, interessierte sich nicht für Nebensächlichkeiten; er sprach fast nie mit mir, und wenn, nur das Nötigste. 'Steck dein Hemd rein!' oder 'Sei still!' oder 'Komm jetzt!'" (H 9). Klaus appears to view himself as one of the "Nebensächlichkeiten" in his father's life, blaming himself even as a young child for his father's behavior: "Wenn ich ihn in so peinliche Situation bringe, ist es doch kein Wunder, daß er nie mit mir redet. Er würde sicher ganz anders sein [...w]enn es ihn stolz macht, mein Vater zu sein" (H 41). Klaus – like nearly any child – associates attention with love and silence with disapproval. "Warum interessiert er sich nicht für mich? *Was habe ich falsch gemacht?*" (H 40, emphasis in original). Phrases such as "er redete nicht mit mir" (H 212) are repeated throughout the text, stressing that Eberhard's silence is ongoing.

Perhaps the most powerful symbolic aspect of this ignoring is Eberhard's non-use of Klaus's name. For children, their name is their identity, and having someone refuse to use that name is a blatant rejection of the child's very existence. Eberhard's continued silence is upsetting for Klaus, but it is the father's deliberate withholding of Klaus's name which most undermines his son's self-image. Klaus describes Eberhard as follows:

Ein Vater, der so wenig an mich glaubte, daß er sich nicht mal der Anstrengung unterzog, einen vernichtenden Satz wie "Ach, aus dem Jungen wird doch nichts!" zu Ende zu bringen; er winkte nach den Worten "Ach, aus dem Jungen..." immer nur resignierend ab. Er sagte nicht mal meinen Namen! Niemals habe ich aus seinem Munde meinen Namen gehört! (H 10)

Klaus internalizes his father's perceived attitude toward him, repeatedly calling himself a "Versager" (over half a dozen times in the text), "klein" (H 205), "Dummchen" (H 208), "Trottel" (H 80). Eberhard's continued rejection and silence produce a son who is deeply insecure, self-critical, and desperate to finally gain some attention from his father.¹³

This attention from Eberhard often comes only when Klaus has done something wrong. Klaus's transgressions are not portrayed as the deliberate misbehavior that Mauelshagen claims children sometimes engage in to gain parental attention (193), rather they are merely the careless or self-centered behavior of children and teenagers – forgetting to lock the apartment door (H 34), losing his wallet (H 205), even sleeping with an 'unsuitable' woman (H 135-6). They are interpreted as misbehavior by the father. Eberhard's stern responses to such situations are some of the few times he actively and willingly interacts with his son, albeit in a manner which does little to bridge the emotional gap between them. Klaus several times compares his father's behavior to an "amerikanisches Schwurgericht" (H 56), seeing himself as the accused and his father as the "Staatsanwalt" (H 56).¹⁴ Here the father very obviously takes on the symbolic role of law and authority. As Mauelshagen writes about such fathers: "sie lassen sich auf keinen Widerspruch ein, sind Kläger, Richter und Strafende in einer Person und dabei entschlossen, das Kind ins Unrecht zu setzen" (194). These fathers alternate between emotionally neglecting their children and punishing them for breaking rules they often neither know nor understand.

¹³ This description of Klaus may seem to contradict his self-confessed "Größenwahn" (6), but I interpret his continued fantasies of being important (and his attempts to fulfill them – such as being featured in the newspaper) as a result of his father's lack of attention toward Klaus.

¹⁴ In another passage, Klaus describes his parents as "gleichzeitig Ankläger, Richter, Zeugen und die zwölf Geschworenen" (34).

The theme of law and authority is closely intertwined with Eberhard because of his career in the *Stasi*. For years, Klaus looks up to his father and sees him as a formidable figure. At the same time, he distrusts and dislikes the *Stasi*; it comes as a shock to Klaus when he learns that his father works for this much-hated organization. The following scene is therefore only further proof of the importance of Eberhard in Klaus's life:

“Sag mal, du fängst doch auch bei uns an.”
Er redet mit mir! Und wenn er mich für fähig hält, dasselbe zu machen wie er, dann glaubt er vielleicht doch an mich? Dann darf ich mich mit ihm auf einer Stufe stehen? Ich? Meinte er wirklich mich? (H 92)

Klaus apparently completely forgets his former loathing for the *Stasi* simply because he so longs for recognition from his father and the chance to be associated with him. Initially Klaus has high expectations for his time in the *Stasi*, hoping that some of its importance and his father's authority will be transferred to him. But all too soon Klaus becomes painfully aware of the hypocrisy and farce behind the secrecy – both in his father's life and in the *Stasi* itself.

The pivotal point in Klaus's relationship with his father comes at Eberhard's death. Klaus approaches his now eternally silent father and expresses his feelings of anger, frustration and inferiority. In one sense, the father retains his power even in death, since Klaus's criticisms cannot be heard, but in another sense, this scene symbolizes Klaus's determination to overcome his father's stifling silence and condemnation. “Ich konnte für zwanzig Sekunden seine Eier quetschen. Er hat meine zwanzig Jahre gequetscht, so wie sie aussehen. Es gibt Dinge, die ich getan habe und heute am liebsten ungeschehen machen würde. Das nicht” (H 268). While this action could be seen as too

little too late, it is a turning point in the development of Klaus's self-esteem. The balance of power in the father-son relationship has permanently shifted.

The possible motivations behind Eberhard Uhltzsch's behavior are never explored in this text; instead he is presented as a fully-formed product of GDR society, *Stasi* paranoia and authoritarian structures. He is simultaneously a powerful member of the *Stasi* – perhaps the best-known symbol of GDR authoritarianism – and also submissive to its authority. Klaus's subsequent personal experiences with the *Stasi*, which show its absurdity and fallibility, also serve to bring the father figure down to size. Eberhard can be viewed as representing all fathers who actively participated in maintaining and expanding the public and private authority of the GDR state.

Much like Klaus, Vera's relationship with her father Konrad is shaped by her conflicting desires for attention and distance. As a child, Vera longs for attention from her father, as illustrated by a memory of her grandfather asking her what she wants to be when she grows up:

“Fernsehsprecher”, sagt sie.

“Und warum?” fragt der Großvater, und Vera sagt, obwohl sie ihm auch das schon erzählt hat:

“Ein Fernsehsprecher darf den ganzen Tag reden, und alle hören ihm zu, sogar mein Papa.”

Das Lachen platzt aus allen Mündern, und noch einmal schwillt die Freude an; [...] Im Gesicht des Vaters bewegt sich nichts, sein Blick ist auf Veras Mund gerichtet. (L 22)

Unfortunately Vera's desire for closeness remains unfulfilled, and at least outwardly, she responds by distancing herself from her father. As a young adult, she leaves home as soon as she can and only keeps in touch through occasional postcards: “Gäbe es den Tod nicht, hätten sie sich vielleicht nie wieder gesehen” (L 18). Vera even denies her parent's

existence, initially telling her boyfriend Vincent that they are dead. Such actions help her maintain the illusion that she is rejecting her father, not that she was first rejected by him.

This text also includes a pivotal deathbed scene which vividly illustrates the silence and emotional distance between father and daughter. Told that her father is dying, Vera travels to visit him and finally asks his forgiveness for what she sees as her greatest betrayal of their relationship – killing her father’s beloved dog and lying about it (L 61). But instead of a last-minute reconciliation, the father’s response exacerbates the atmosphere of silence and distance between them. Konrad’s final words to his daughter are “Halt die Klappe, Vera” (L 204) – essentially the story of his life and the lesson he taught her. Vera actually represses her father’s last words for several months until a conversation with her boyfriend Vincent brings back the memory. Seconds later, Vera begins to miscarry her baby – a baby she was not sure she wanted, who may have been doomed to share Vera’s fate of emotional distance. She sees the situation so: “Es ist keine Fehlgeburt, das weiß sie. Ihr Körper gibt nur frei, was er viel zu lange festgehalten hat” (L 204). The unwanted pregnancy can be read as a metaphor for Vera’s relationship with her father, and the miscarriage as the first step in breaking the legacy of silence and pain.

It is not until after the death of the father that Vera finally begins to address her feelings for him. At last she criticizes him for his silence, his hate of everything he could not control (L 133), his withdrawal from emotional connections (L 133). Vera’s silence is finally broken, although it is too late to improve her relationship with her father. This posthumous reckoning with the father is instead important for Vera’s relationship with herself; she finally accepts Vincent’s claim that her father’s behavior had nothing to do

with her (L 205), a thought which both challenges Vera's importance in her father's life and absolves her of years of self-criticism and guilt.

In a less (melo)dramatic way than *Helden wie wir, Lügen und schweigen* is also a reckoning with the GDR past (and thus a continuation of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*). Konrad Gröbers is portrayed as a victim of politics who then duplicated the authoritarianism of the GDR within his own home. Vera's individual experiences with silence and authority are mirrored in the collective past of many East Germans. The death of her father and her long-overdue confrontation with and separation from him serve as metaphors for the necessary confrontation with the GDR past. There are no guarantees, and there is no utopian vision for the future, but the silent reign of the father has finally ended – too late for the father-child relationship, but in time for the child to save herself.

Emotional and Physical Abandonment in *Andere Umstände, Moskauer Eis* and *Wie ich vom Ausschneiden loskam*

The theme of the distant father runs through all of these texts and West German *Väterliteratur* as well: “Der Vater wird als unnahbar, unerreichbar und fremd erfahren“ (Mauelshagen 195). A scene from *Lügen und schweigen* – which takes place between Vera and the father of her West German boyfriend Vincent – serves to underscore this point:

“Ich hatte gar keinen Vater”, sagt sie.
“Natürlich hattest du einen.”
“Aber ich habe ihn nicht gekannt.”
“Du meinst, er war immer zu Hause, und er hat dir trotzdem gefehlt, nicht wahr.
Die Väter sind immer weg”, sagt Herr Münzner. (L 186)

For a moment, these two very different individuals – a young East German woman and an older West German man – both acknowledge the emotional absence which defines

their relationship with their father. It is the element of abandonment which connects *Wie ich vom Ausschneiden loskam*, *Moskauer Eis* and *Andere Umstände*. This is presented as a separate category from silence/ignoring because the texts characterized by silence portray an emotional distance and isolation which exists from the very beginning of the father-child relationship. In *Helden wie wir* and *Lügen und schweigen* there is not a damaged relationship, but rather no relationship at all. The silence is both auditory and emotional.

The three texts analyzed here depict a father-child relationship whose development is radically interrupted by decisions and behaviors of the fathers. Protagonists know and love their fathers, but they also suffer from the understandable hurt and insecurity of any abandoned child. In all three texts, divorce plays a central role, although in *Moskauer Eis* it is the mother who leaves the family. Physical or emotional abandonment by the father results in children (even adult children) who are fundamentally insecure – unsure of their right to be loved unconditionally, afraid to let others get too close, and greatly conflicted in their feelings toward their father.

Both *Wie ich vom Ausschneiden loskam* and *Andere Umstände* relate the experiences of protagonists who are children of divorce at a young age. These texts are also the two which address the high divorce rate in the GDR.¹⁵ The unnamed protagonist of *Wie ich vom Ausschneiden loskam* recalls: “Wir waren [alle] Kinder geschiedener Eltern” (A 90), and Mila, the protagonist of *Andere Umstände*, remembers: “Über die

¹⁵ By the mid-1980s, the GDR had 30 divorces per 10,000 citizens (as compared to 20 per 10,000 in the FRG), one of the highest divorce rates in the world (Schneider 192). Gries presents the statistics differently: for every 100 marriages in the GDR in 1985, there were 39 divorces (94). In part the high divorce rate can be attributed to divorce laws based upon ‘irreconcilable differences’ rather than fault (adultery, abandonment, etc.). The economic and social consequences of divorce were also less burdensome in the GDR than in the FRG. Approximately 70% of divorces in the GDR between 1970 and 1989 directly affected minor children (Schneider 193), translating to 75,000 children annually affected by divorce in the 1980s (Gries 94). By 1982, 29.3% of children born in the GDR were born to single mothers (Rossade 195).

Hälfte meiner Mitschüler waren Scheidungskinder, es war nichts Besonderes. [...]

Irgendwie sah ich mich als Mitglied der zweiten vaterlosen Generation” (AU 20-1). This concept of fatherless generations connects these texts to German history and the fathers who never returned from World War II; it also resonates loudly within West German post-war discourse of fathers, patriarchy and authority sparked by Mitscherlich’s text *Auf dem Weg zur vaterlosen Gesellschaft*. But although being raised in a single-parent home (generally with the mother) is portrayed as being “normal” (AU 20), the very absence of the father gives him importance. Children grow up rarely seeing their fathers, but often wondering about him: why he left, where he is now, when he might return. Altwasser’s protagonist is “der vaterlos Heranwachsende – und vaterlos ist er ja nicht und kann den Vater nicht abhaken und muß immer mit dessen Eintreffen rechnen und hat nirgends eine Sicherheit” (A 199). Being abandoned by a father does not have the finality or even comfort of death, instead the uncertainty and anger remain alive.

All three protagonists can recall when their fathers abandoned them, and for the son in *Wie ich vom Ausschneiden loskam*, it was an extremely traumatic event. His alcoholic father Heiko ‘disappears’ from the family apartment after he is caught in an affair. Not understanding that his parents are getting a divorce, the young protagonist opens the door to his father’s room and makes the following traumatic discovery: “Mein Vater war weg. Gestern abend war er noch da gewesen. Er war weg. E/r” (A 20).¹⁶ As many children do, the son assumes he must have been at least partially responsible for his father’s leaving, even developing a psychosomatic condition he later describes as

¹⁶ It is at this point in the text that an interesting typographical shift takes place. The first person narrator no longer writes any words relating to his father – er, sein, ihn, den – in the normal way, but rather with a slash between the first letter and the rest of the word (e/r, s/ein, i/hn, d/en). Although helpless as a child, the adult author/protagonist displays his power by visibly and repeatedly “de-personifying” his father.

“Absence” – “ein schwarzes Loch, das sich manchmal über einen stülpt, Zeit und Raum ausklammert” (A 21). The episodes come as unexpectedly as the father’s abandonment, and the protagonist is just as helpless to prevent them.

In *Andere Umstände*, Mila initially appears more blasé about her absent father: “Er hatte sich von uns getrennt, als ich noch Zöpfe trug und glaubte, dass es Hasen gibt, die Schokoladeneier legen” (AU 20). But other comments about her father’s behavior reveal the anger and hurt inside.

Mein Vater lebte auf seine Weise in den Tag hinein: Er fand Freunde und verlor sie und fand neue Freunde. Er verliebte sich in Frauen und heiratete und ließ sich wieder scheiden, weil er wieder verliebt war. Und er zeugte Kinder, spielte mit ihnen Hoppe Reiter *und vergaß sie* und zeugte neue Kinder. (AU 20, emphasis added)

It is the father’s lifestyle as much as the divorce which strains his relationship with Mila, and her fear that she will also be forgotten is always near the surface. In describing her childhood and teenage relationship with her father, Mila makes several statements that are disturbing in their offhandedness: “Mein Vater besuchte mich regelmäßig: einmal im Jahr, am zweiten Weihnachtsfeiertag” (AU 21); “Er [...] opferte für mich vier Tage Urlaub” (AU 22); “Ich trug es ihm nicht nach” (AU 20); and “Auf seine Weise liebte mich mein Vater” (AU 22). Each contact with the father is a cherished experience but also one which underscores his absence. Mila’s father actually abandons her more completely when she is 16 and he defects to the West. Distracted by a crush on a teacher and her new (West German) jeans, Mila “dachte ... wohl nicht daran, dass ich meinen Vater ein zweites Mal verlieren würde” (AU 24). But the father’s repeated abandonment, even rejection of Mila – for other women, other families, another country – creates a lasting impression on Mila’s self-esteem and her sense of control over her world. Nearly

immediately, she turns to other male authority figures for validation, and they are always poor choices – a married teacher (Herr Kraus), a college instructor (Leopold), a boyfriend who rapes her (Fred). While such behavior is actually quite common among daughters who experience a lack of attention from their fathers, it is Mila's method of self-protection which sets her apart. Receiving a jackknife from her father shortly before he defects, Mila very much takes to heart his instructions for using it: "Wenn du wütend bist, dann nutze die Energie deiner Wut" (AU 24-5). Originally meant as protection against a child murderer running loose in the city, the knife becomes a talisman for Mila, who struggles to contain her rage. Desperate to be loved, but loathe to be rejected again, Mila begins killing the men who don't return her feelings. She murders three men and is at least indirectly responsible for the deaths of two more. Desperately trying to stay one step ahead of any man who "wollte mich loswerden" (AU 14), Mila ends each relationship herself, with the knife her father gave her. The abandoned daughter uses the farewell present of a knife given to her by one male authority figure (her father) to rid herself of other male (authority) figures.

Mila's most cherished dream is to have a child of her own, which she finally achieves. After suffering from a hysterical pregnancy, briefly kidnapping a baby from the hospital, and nearly poisoning a boyfriend she learns might be sterile, Mila delivers Alice, who "gehört zur dritten vaterlosen Generation, und es ist meine Schuld" (AU 27).¹⁷ Alice is Mila's guarantee that she will never be alone again (246), never have to fully focus on the pain of her own father's abandonment. After the trauma that Mila has

¹⁷ Alice's father is one of two men – Viktor or Fred. Both are assumed to have died in a car accident on the day she was born, although Fred's body was never found.

experienced and caused, Alice is her anchor. But even Mila herself realizes: “Ich mute meiner Tochter allerhand zu” (AU 224). An infant cannot replace an absent father.

The effects of being abandoned by the father are somewhat different for the protagonist of *Wie ich vom Ausschneiden loskam*. Deeply unsettled by his father’s abandonment, the protagonist must later endure years of living with an alcoholic, sometimes violent stepfather.¹⁸ His way of dealing with the chaos and fear of the household is to carefully cut out magazine pictures. In a world otherwise out of his control, these pictures are the only things over which the protagonist has power and which also give him some measure of peace.

Unlike Mila’s father who more or less permanently abandons her by defecting, the father in Altwasser’s text continues to live in the same town as his son. The son resents his father’s presence – their shared last name, the father’s heavy drinking, his stories. He characterizes their occasional chance meetings as “Überfälle”, implying his lack of control over yet another aspect of his life. But even though he insists he wants nothing to do with his father, on more than one occasion the son responds to him: “Das war endgültig das letzte Mal, daß d/er mich so überfällt, das allerletzte Mal. Und ich fahre noch wie ein Trottel hin” (A 86). Like Mila, the son here longs for attention from his father, but also wants to protect himself from being abandoned and rejected again.

It is this need for distance on the part of the son which leads him to join the *Nationale Volksarmee*. Needing to fulfill his military requirement anyway, the son decides that the NVA is the perfect escape from Heiko, something that he can claim all for himself: “endlich weg [...] von s/einem Schatten” (A 103). But in a quiet moment on

¹⁸ Alcoholism shows up several times in this book – the protagonist, his father, and his stepfather. It is also a problem for the father in *Tanz am Kanal*. All of these figures use alcohol to help them ignore their problems, to prevent “waking up”, to avoid difficult questions.

the way to basic training, the protagonist admits to himself the real reason he joined the military. “Ich wollte die Nähe des Versoffenen durch die NVA ersetzen: Die NVA sollte mir helfen, mich von der Sehnsucht nach i/hm zu befreien” (A 107). The son is replacing his biological father with the overtly authoritarian structure of the military.¹⁹ It is as if the son is running from the authority of the father – the authority to name, to abandon – and into the arms of an even greater symbol of authoritarianism. But even this symbol “war am Ende” (A 107); the son’s date of enlistment is November 9, 1989. The NVA is soon after integrated into the West German military, and Klaus along with it, ending up in the Navy.

The protagonist’s time in the military is the turning point in his emotional development, because the highly regimented and regulated world of the military allows him to shift his focus from survival and self-protection to other things. Shortly after shipping out, the protagonist realizes that cutting out pictures no longer calms him: “Ich warf die Schere über Bord und nahm einen Kugelschreiber in die Hand” (A 135). With this small act, the powerlessness and passivity which defined childhood are replaced by a sense of action and agency. Rather than reacting, the protagonist is acting and creating. Dealing with ideas rather than pictures is emotionally difficult, but ultimately more fulfilling.

The motif of the turning point recurs throughout this text. Military service is associated with becoming a man, the protagonist goes from cutting out pictures to creating word pictures, the GDR is disappearing and post-unification Germany is being

¹⁹ This is also one of the few instances in these texts where institutional authority is portrayed in a positive light. School, teachers, the police, and the *Stasi* are typically depicted as figures who instrumentalize and almost terrorize the individual. Part of the positive portrayal in *Wie ich vom Ausschneiden loskam* seems due to the protagonist’s personal situation, and part of it is easily attributed to the fact that the NVA is taken over by the *Bundeswehr*.

defined. Associated with this symbolism is both a sense of loss and a new beginning. Childhood and the reality of the GDR must be sacrificed in order to move on to adulthood and unified Germany. The protagonist here sees unification as an “äußere Schere” (A 161) – an external event over which he had no control – but he also hopes that the “new picture” of Germany which will be placed over the old GDR will contain a place for him: “Würde ich unter dem neuen Bild ersticken, oder würde Platz für mich auf dem neuen Bild sein?” (A 112). No answers are given, but the possibility is raised that the new beginnings in the protagonist’s personal life might be reflected in larger social and political contexts.

The theme of turning points and new beginnings is reflected somewhat differently in the father-son relationship. It is shortly after unification that the son and his father have their last encounter. Finally sober, the father is obviously interested in resuming his relationship with his son. He praises him for his literary prize (although he admits he knows nothing about books) and repeatedly says how proud he is of his son. He is determined: “Das mit uns beiden. Das kriegen wir wieder hin!” (A 204). But this “Überfall” is different: the son is an adult, he has discovered a productive way to deal with his fears, he is the one in control. He coldly tells his father that this is all “zwanzig Jahre zu spät” (A 197), in effect abandoning his father just the way his father had abandoned him so long ago. Unaccustomed to his son’s new attitude, Heiko makes one last desperate attempt to reclaim his role as father – he tries to reject the son who has just rejected him. In the last line of the text, Heiko screams out: “Hoffentlich sehe ich dich nie- NIEmals wieder!” (A 204). But his emotional hold over his son has been broken, and the father’s cry holds more a tone of desperation than dismissal.

In contrast to *Wie ich vom Ausschneiden loskam*, the abandonment in *Moskauer Eis* is more emotional than physical. After the divorce, Klaus distances himself emotionally and (to an extent) physically from Annja. He begins spending even more time at the institute: “manchmal dachte ich, wenn es mich nicht gäbe, hätte er längst keine Wohnung mehr” (ME 24). Klaus’s career has always been his passion, but as a newly-single parent, his workaholic tendencies border on neglect. He begins to travel extensively for work, and Annja quickly realizes that he has “kaum Zeit für die Probleme eines pubertierenden Kindes” (ME 221-2). The problems are serious, however – Annja stops eating shortly after her mother leaves and struggles with anorexia for several years. “Vater bemerkte es nicht einmal, denn er war nur selten zu Haus” (ME 197). It is actually a (male) teacher who finally takes the time to confront Annja about her behavior (ME 220).

The attention that Annja does not receive from her father is unfortunately forced upon her later by another male teacher. He calls the fifteen-year-old, physically developed Annja to the front of the class and proceeds to completely belittle her, saying that he will bet anyone present that Annja will wind up as a prostitute. It is her father’s response that best illustrates the emotional distance, the “Abkapselung” (Mauelshagen 195) on Klaus’s part:

Abends erzählte ich Vater davon, aber er fragte nur: “Was soll ich jetzt machen, soll ich da hingehen und ihm eine runterhauen? Zieh dir lieber etwas anderes an.” Vater schrieb eine Beschwerde an den Direktor, aber der rief ihn an und sagte, es habe bisher noch nie Klagen über seinen besten Biologielehrer gegeben, und Vater hatte keine Zeit, sich weiter darum zu kümmern. (ME 222)

Again, Klaus seems unable or unwilling to truly connect with his daughter, to be an emotionally involved parent. He is seldom physically present, and is continually

distracted and distant, attributes strongly reminiscent of fathers in West German *Väterliteratur*. For some fathers – such as Konrad Gröbers of *Lügen und schweigen* – this “grundsätzliche Fremdheit” (Mauelshagen 195) is present from the very beginning of his daughter’s life. For others – such as Mila’s father (*Andere Umstände*), Heiko (*Wie ich vom Ausschneiden loskam*) and Klaus – this distance is made worse by their physical and/or emotional abandonment of their children at an age when children are old enough to be fully aware of it.

The distance evident in the father-daughter relationship in *Moskauer Eis* is only one example of a repeated theme of collapse and failure. Not only is Klaus’s relationship with Annja disintegrating, his position at work is becoming more difficult due to material shortages. This reflects the larger historical situation in the GDR of this time – a country drowning in debt, barely managing to prop things up and put on a brave face. Annja is abandoned by her father, and he is abandoned by his state. While post-unification reality is also a struggle, with both Annja and Klaus losing jobs, there is at least a small sense of hope. The police report at the end of the text describes Annja’s abandoned apartment and the empty deep-freeze, suggesting that Annja and Klaus may have unlocked the mystery of cryogenics and their relationship, that the authoritarianism associated with the GDR state and family has been challenged and perhaps defeated.

Andere Umstände also depicts a ‘thawing’ in the father-child relationship after unification. In November 1989, Mila visits her father in West Berlin – realizing that many of his other children have done the same thing. With the lessening of political tensions, her father is now able to play a more active role in Mila’s life. While he is portrayed as busy and distracted (AU 182), he also visits Mila after her nervous

breakdown (hysterical pregnancy) and the birth of her daughter Alice. Upon seeing him after her nervous breakdown, Mila thinks: “Mein Vater würde mich niemals besuchen. Es sei denn, ich wäre tot. Zur Beerdigung kommen auch die Väter. Dann sagen sie alle wichtigen Termine ab. Aber nur dann” (AU 238). Mila sits in judgment not just of her father, but all fathers who are too busy for their children. But his presence along with Mila’s mother when bringing Alice home from the hospital (and having to tell Mila that her boyfriend and the father of her child are dead) suggests that the father may play a larger role in Mila’s life in the future. However, this tentative new beginning in the father-daughter relationship is threatened by Mila’s fleeing to America;²⁰ this time it is the daughter who leaves her father.

It has been shown that the actions and attitudes of the father play a central role in the father-child relationship. In the texts analyzed above, this relationship is primarily defined by authoritarian behavior on the part of the father. Whether this manifests itself in a rejection of the child’s autonomy, silence toward the child, or abandonment, the primary effect is the same – insecurity. The children here struggle with self-esteem, identity development and self-acceptance. The influence of the father is so great that many protagonists have difficulty escaping its grasp, and many run straight into the arms of another authority figure who takes advantage of them.

This personal trauma is also set against the backdrop of authoritarian GDR society. Whether the fathers in these texts are *Stasi* officers or defectors, they are all ‘subjects’ and ‘objects’ of authority – both producers and products of the East German system, knowingly or unknowingly replicating its rules and attitudes in the home.

²⁰ Mila is on the run from her (boy)friend Fred Lobitz’s mother, who believes that Mila killed her son. Fred was in the car with Viktor when it crashed.

Children are thus subjected to authoritarianism on both a familial and institutional level in their interactions with teachers, military supervisors and employers. During childhood, it is generally the father himself who embodies authority, while the state and its institutions begin to play a larger role during adolescence.

Two catalysts for change are presented in these texts, the individual coming of age for each protagonist and the collective change of the *Wende*. Entering adulthood allows children to claim some of the previous authority of the father, but often his emotional hold over them remains strong (for example Eberhard and Klaus in *Helden wie wir*). Even physical distance does not always help (Vera and Konrad in *Lügen und schweigen*). The larger context of unification offers hope to some protagonists because it underscores their personal coming of age while at the same time weakening the authoritarian institutions and attitudes which had constrained them. While unification comes too late to save some father-child relationships (because of the death of the father or permanent abandonment), it does signify a possible freedom from the institutional authoritarianism of the GDR state.

Chapter 5

Sex and the System: Gendered Experiences of Daughters and Sons

The previous two chapters have closely analyzed the figure of the father in his simultaneous subjection to and (mis)use of authority. Aspects of the authoritarian GDR regime – such as pressure to conform, to submit, and to achieve – are both reflected and recreated in the father-child relationship. This chapter moves away from the exclusive focus on the father and the father-child relationship to examine in greater depth the experiences of protagonists with and in the GDR state and its institutions. Specifically, it analyzes the gender differences in these experiences for sons and daughters, revealing the ways in which daughters are consistently dominated, marginalized and violated by institutional authority, experiencing what Steingröver terms the “pervasive sexism of the GDR state” (99), whereas sons – as males – become (to some extent) *part of* it. Texts with female protagonists consistently portray male authority, a hierarchy to which women are subjected but of which they are never really a part. This begins in the home and extends to larger institutions within the GDR. Sons are subject to their father’s authority, but as they come of age, they become more a part of the (male) authority structures, still subject to authority but no longer taken advantage of as outsiders.

This reading of a construction of authority as male is in part based upon the view that both sons and daughters struggle with issues of authority and autonomy because of their early experiences with the father. As Freud and Fromm both posit, the father is the first (and perhaps most important) of many authority figures in the life of a child; his role in superego development is crucial in establishing acceptance and respect for larger structures of law and authority. Growing up with an authoritarian father makes children more apt to submit unquestioningly to representatives of institutional authority such as

teachers and the police (Fromm 87). This concept of child development is quite visible in these primary texts as children of authoritarian fathers begin to encounter the GDR state; submission is ingrained in the individual and collective psyche. Such mindsets are self-perpetuating, argues Horkheimer: “die Kraft der Selbstreproduktion dieser Institutionen stammt nur zum geringen Teil aus der absichtlichen Förderung von oben. Während sie aus der grundlegenden Struktur der Gesellschaft, zu deren Festigung sie selbst beitragen, neues Leben ziehen, stärken sie überdies auch unmittelbar die auf ihre Erhaltung gerichteten Kräfte” (411). Horkheimer uses religion as an example – life’s difficulties lead many people to turn to religion, which in turn leads them to interpret their experiences in a religious light. In the GDR, *Gehorsam*, collectivism and hierarchy often fill this self-perpetuating role.

Protagonists in these texts are portrayed as being especially vulnerable and sensitive to issues of domination and submission. Growing up with fathers who are themselves situated within the authoritarian hierarchy of the GDR, these children experience families and a state which foster and take advantage of poor ego development, an overly-strong superego, and submission to individual and collective authority. As discussed in Chapter 4, the protagonists in these texts are fundamentally insecure, doubting their right to be loved and accepted, unsure in their individual identity and sense of autonomy. This insecurity greatly affects protagonists’ interactions with authoritarian institutions of the GDR such as school, the police and the military; whose domination is made even more shocking and palpable in the lives of women by the threat of physical and sexual violence.

Experiences at the hand of the father do not only affect protagonists' interactions with GDR institutions, however. They also profoundly influence their relationships with others. Issues of dominance and submission, self-worth and self-doubt are problematic as protagonists seek to form romantically and emotionally intimate relationships as teenagers and adults. There are marked gender differences in these relationships; whereas daughters often seek a man to *replace* their father, sons choose women as a way to *reject* him. Both sons and daughters struggle with emotional intimacy, and many romantic relationships also contain elements of violence, itself a symptom of destructive attitudes about domination and submission. Indeed, male violence against women is a thread which runs through many of these texts. Much as with experiences of institutional authority, daughters are often portrayed as being disadvantaged in personal relationships, struggling to establish a sense of autonomy and an end to victimization, while sons are more likely to abuse their physical power and become victimizers themselves.

Much in the same way the father is used as a rhetorical figure in these texts, gender and sexuality are used as a vehicle to critique the GDR. One only need think of Klaus's obsession with "perversity" in *Helden wie wir* – an obsession which has much less to do with sex than with autonomy, authority and repression. But even such exaggerated characters as Klaus are based upon an author's understanding of human behavior and lived experiences; there must be some element of recognition on the part of the reader for a character to be convincing. In the case of *Helden wie wir*, Brussig was inspired by reading Maaz's *Der Gefühlsstau: Ein Psychogramm der DDR*, in which the psychotherapist discusses the psychological and emotional effects of the GDR state on individuals. Brussig calls the text "das Beste, was er über die DDR gelesen hat. [...] Das

wollte er in Literatur umwandeln” (Lahann 146, see also Nause 166). In preparation for writing his novel, Brussig also read Freud and interviewed friends about their own experiences during puberty, etc. While *Helden wie wir* does not claim to be a psychological novel, it obviously draws upon a layperson’s understanding of human psychology and common behavior, as all of these works arguably do. Their protagonists combine elements of ‘reality’ and ‘believability’ with those of exaggeration, omission and fantasy. Thus while fictional texts cannot be read as historical fact, the events and emotions portrayed can be read as relevant to and perhaps a heightened version of actual events. The shared backdrop of the texts – childhood in the GDR, unification as a teenager or young adult, adjustment to post-unification Germany – serves as a unifying element. These texts can therefore be viewed as a reduced collective psychological profile of this generation, their re-membling of the father, and their (re)presentation of gendered experiences of authority. It is these experiences – in protagonists’ interactions with (male) representatives of institutional authority and in romantic relationships – which form the basis for this chapter.

Experiences of Daughters

Male Figures of Institutional Authority

The daughters in all of these texts – Vera in *Lügen und schweigen*, Annja in *Moskauer Eis*, Gabriela in *Tanz am Kanal*, and Mila in *Andere Umstände* – are traumatized in some way by the authoritarianism and emotional isolation they experience in their relationship with their fathers. The behavior of many fathers, however, is merely a reflection of and response to the authoritarianism of the GDR state and its institutions. While the father is the primary authority figure in the lives of very young children, his

authority is later supported or challenged by institutional authority figures such as teachers and the police. The challenge to a father's authority is intensified as children mature and begin to make their own decisions, assert their sense of self, and seek approval from others. For the daughters in these texts, the GDR does not provide a safe place for them to assert their independence from the father. Instead girls and women are portrayed as being (mis)used and dominated by authoritarian figures, disadvantaged members of a "System der Ausbeutung und Verhinderung einer weiblichen Selbstverwirklichung" (Wehdeking, *Einheit* 97). Whereas men possess some measure of authority, women are endlessly subjected to it.

While (state) institutional authority is often metaphorically viewed as male because it reflects and underpins the male authority of the father (one need only consider the terms *Vaterland* or *Vater Staat*), these texts give concrete emphasis to the male element by making the overwhelming majority of institutional authority figures men. Not only do teachers, bosses and *Stasi* officers represent male authority, they are *physically* male authorities.¹ Daughters/women can choose to submit to this authority or rebel against it, but they do not *possess* it, just as they (can) never possess the authority of the father. This section is not an exhaustive catalogue of episodes in which daughters are subjected to institutional authority, but rather a brief analysis of the most striking examples of daughters' 'outsider' position, focusing on school, work, and *Stasi* encounters.

For several protagonists, school is their first experience with the authority of GDR institutions, both in the form of teachers as authority figures and school practices as

¹ There are female teachers in *Tanz am Kanal* and *Wie ich vom Ausschneiden loskam*, but they are portrayed as weak, not able to translate the authority of their position into individual authority.

normative forces. As one of the first state institutions with which all children come in contact, schools were assigned great importance by the SED, as is apparent in the high membership numbers of the SED-sponsored student groups *Junge Pioniere* and FDJ (see Wolle 184). Schools were very openly under the direct control of the authoritarian regime, and SED ideology was readily apparent, even in the grouping of children. Both Gabriela in *Tanz am Kanal* and Annja in *Moskauer Eis* recount the self-consciousness and uncertainty created by the insistence of categorizing children as “Arbeiterklasse” or “Intelligenz”. As a member of the “Intelligenz”, a “befreundete Schicht der Arbeiterklasse” (ME 157), Annja recalls: “Irgendwie war ich nicht normal. Weder war ich Arbeiterklasse, noch hatte ich Westverwandte, die einzigen beiden Dinge, die meine Mitschüler gelten ließen” (ME 157). Gabriela also sees her “Intelligenz” label as a burden – not only does her teacher expect more from her, she also wants Gabriela to side with her over her fellow students (TK 26). After being caught skipping school with her friend Katka, Gabriela worries about an awful punishment, “denn das rote I im Klassenbuch war mein Zeichen, während Katka ein harmloses dünnes Bleistift-A und keine Strafe zu befürchten hatte” (TK 32). Both Gabriela and Annja experience at a young age the rigid categorization of GDR society and the ensuing expectations.

It is at the hands of their (male) principals that Annja and Gabriela are most discriminated against, however. Both girls academically merit promotion, either to the EOS (Gabriela) or awarded a place at the university (Annja). Because of their conspicuous behavior, however, both girls are denied what should rightfully be theirs. Gabriela’s trauma after being raped and finding nobody to believe her story and Annja’s recurrent illnesses and her critical story about the competitive sports system make both

girls an unacceptable liability to the educational system and thus the state. Therefore they are simply shut out, denied further opportunities awarded to those who do not cause problems. From their first school day as members of the “Intelligenz” to their graduation with no future plans, both Annja and Gabriela are uneasy participants in the GDR educational system, a system which will not tolerate those who challenge the rules, social groupings, or thought processes.

Life after school does not necessarily improve for daughters. Rather than being subjected to school rules, they are now relatively powerless members of the work force. Gabriela eventually is given an apprenticeship as a “Zerspannungsfacharbeiterin” (TK 76), and her negative experiences there contradict anything described in early GDR industry novels (Bremer 76). Lehrmeister Kulisch is an impatient, harsh chauvinist – Wehdeking even terms him an “ausbeuterische[r], sadistisch-pedantische[r] Meister” (*Einheit* 96) – with an unsettling similarity to Gabriela’s father in his insistence that she learn and repeat ‘his’ words: “Das hier nennen wir Bohrfutter. Sprich nach, Gabriela, Bohr-fut-ter!” (TK 85). Unable to cope, Gabriela eventually runs away, pushing Kulisch into the canal, but winding up in the grasp of two *Stasi* officers. While Gabriela’s action can be seen in a positive light – she takes (perhaps futile) steps to change her situation rather than remaining submissive – the result is ominous. She has merely exchanged the authoritarian pedant Kulisch for two even more powerful male symbols of institutional authority.

The *Stasi* is perhaps the best-known and most-feared symbol of GDR authoritarianism, so it is not surprising that its (male) officers directly influence the lives of some daughters. The depiction of Queck and Manfred, the two *Stasi* agents assigned to

Gabriela in *Tanz am Kanal*, highlights their ruthlessness (their interview with Gabriela's father is one of the catalysts for his defection to the West, they appear to plan to kill Gabriela), their desire to know and control everything (sending Gabriela to spy on secretaries and artists), but also their fallibility (being outwitted by Gabriela on the boat).² The aspect of the *Stasi* portrayal which most highlights their authority and ruthlessness is the timing of their contact with Gabriela. It is at an incredibly vulnerable time in her life that Queck and Manfred arrive: shortly after being raped and not believed, after her estranged mother defects to the West, after being assigned an apprenticeship she cannot master. The initial contact – when Gabriela literally runs into the *Stasi*'s open arms while fleeing from her Lehrmeister – is rapidly followed by the defection of Gabriela's father, a defection the *Stasi* seems to have initiated. After four weeks of waiting, Gabriela finally receives word from her father in Bamberg. "Am nächsten Tag weckte mich Queck. Er hatte vom Bamberger Reiter gewußt" (TK 96). In her state of shock and loneliness, Gabriela is easily influenced and controlled by her *Stasi* contacts. Although she never becomes an effective spy, often resorting to making up stories in order to keep Queck and Manfred happy, Gabriela follows their orders. She sees no way out of her situation, and is powerless in her grief over her father's defection. It is not until Gabriela fears for her life at the hands of the *Stasi* that she (re)acts – by running away.

The encounters of other protagonists with the *Stasi* border on the absurd. In *Moskauer Eis*, while desperately looking for a job after graduating with poor citizenship grades, Annja receives a letter from the FDJ administration to contact "Jugendfreund Winter" (ME 246). No such person exists, and Annja's father claims the man's name is

² This moment of bumbling incompetence and harmlessness in Hensel's *Stasi* depiction is expanded and exaggerated in Brussig's *Helden wie wir*.

Sommermeyer (ME 246). Herr Sommermeyer does not appear to exist either – when Annja arrives she is taken to a man named Horst Schmidt (ME 246). This name game is a tongue-in-cheek criticism of the fanatic secrecy of the *Stasi*. Deeply offended that the *Stasi* wants her to be an informant for them, Annja quickly rejects their offer. Before she may leave, however, she is required to sign a statement that she will never talk about the conversation. Annja also realizes that the *Stasi* has been reading her mail for the past six months (ME 247), seeing enemies of the state even in teenagers. Even when portrayed as paranoid and ludicrous, the *Stasi* retains an underlying element of intimidation and control, reaching into the lives of GDR citizens. Its officials are nearly always male – whereas daughters may be recruited as informers, it is men who occupy positions of authority.

Although none of the female protagonists suffer physical or sexual abuse at the hands of their fathers,³ violence is disturbingly common in these texts and is directly related to male authority and power in GDR society. Sexual violence is always inflicted by men, and often by men who hold positions of authority over protagonists. Although rape is not truly about sex, it is about gender because it is nearly always women who are the victims, left to bear the emotional and physical scars. Rape *is* about domination, an issue which closely connects it to this dissertation. For the daughters in these texts, rape functions as the most traumatic expression of male authority and domination – characteristics constructed in these texts as being inherently associated with the GDR family and state, but also characteristics which did not disappear with the fall of the Wall.

³ In *Fitchers Blau*, Karl's half-sister Janni suffers physical and emotional abuse by the father Josef, but I have chosen to not include her character in my analysis. Although a main character in the text, she is not the protagonist, and I have also limited my analysis to figures of sons in texts by men and figures of daughters in texts by women.

It often serves as a metaphor for women's "violation by patriarchal, totalitarian, authoritarian and capitalist power structures" (Hosek 108).

Gabriela von Haßlau (*Tanz am Kanal*) is the victim of such violation. Sitting on a park bench one evening, she is raped by men who then carve a cross⁴ into her arm. The horrid senselessness of rape is made even worse by this mutilation, especially with such a potentially forbidden symbol in the anti-fascist GDR. But Gabriela's suffering has only begun; it is the reaction of police – an institution largely run by men and a symbol of male state authority – which truly makes her a victim. Her claims of rape are met with complete denial, with accusations that she carved the cross herself and that her allegations are slander against the state. In refusing to take Gabriela's report seriously, "[t]hese authority figures narrate the socially acceptable reality, silencing accounts of sexual violence that conflict with the state's identity narrative" (Hosek 113). Gabriela is completely helpless against the wall of institutional denial, forced to undergo plastic surgery from her father to cover up the cross, even having her own charges against her rapists dismissed and a case opened against her. As Steingröver claims, "Gabriela is thus triply violated: by the rapists, the state and her father, all male figures of power" (99). The institutions of the courts, the police, the *Stasi* (who begin to observe Gabriela) are united against her. Her experience with physical power and institutional authority is consistently portrayed as male dominance over women, reflecting and extending Gabriela's upbringing by her authoritarian father.

⁴ The text uses the word "Kreuz" (TK 69), although Bremer claims that it is "wohl im Form eines Hakenkreuzes" (78), citing a widely reported newspaper story about a girl who cut a swastika into her own arm and claimed she had been attacked by Neonazis. Bremer concludes that Hensel's inclusion of this symbol both raises doubt about Gabriela's believability as a narrator and subtly criticizes the tendency of some West Germans to believe the worst about East Germany. See also Hosek 111.

Love, Sex and Romantic Relationships

The four texts with female protagonists all portray daughters desperately and to a large extent futilely searching for recognition and attention from their fathers. As illustrated in Chapter 4, the lack of acknowledgement and validation from the father during childhood has left these daughters deeply unsure of their self-worth and self-identity. This insecurity is exploited by the state, and it also becomes problematic as daughters mature and begin to be romantically interested in other men. In her (re)interpretation of Freud's psychoanalytic theory, Jessica Benjamin posits that a daughter's identificatory (preoedipal) love for her father becomes the basis for later heterosexual love. If her identification with the father is refused – as is the case in these texts – her romantic relationships are often marked by envy and submission (111). A father's emotional abandonment, physical absence, or rejection of autonomy have a deformative effect on a daughter's identification with him as well as her ability to seek out healthy romantic relationships as an adult. Many daughters choose men very much like their fathers, perhaps in the (unconscious) hope that the relationship will be successful this time around. Often this means that they are drawn to men whose behavior reinforces daughters' negative attitudes about themselves – men who are violent, critical and dismissive. Such relationships can function as a (misguided) second-chance attempt to form a paternal identificatory relationship (Benjamin 116). Suffering from low self-esteem and determined to gain male recognition, daughters often submit to inappropriate behavior from the men they love while also envying other women who seem to be loved more than themselves.

Perhaps the most pronounced and obvious attempt to fill the void left by a distant father – a father with children by many different women who later defects to the West – is Mila's behavior in *Andere Umstände*. Like many schoolgirls, Mila has a crush on her teacher. After reading a romance novel about a 16 year-old who has a baby with her teacher and lives happily ever after, Mila begins daydreaming about having a baby with Herr Kraus. But it is not until her father defects to the West (when Mila is also 16), that her previously harmless crush on Herr Kraus – a teacher 21 years her senior (AU 29) – becomes an obsession. Mila begins stalking him in order to learn all she can about him, and admits that she has “das deutliche Gefühl, einen Anspruch auf ihn zu haben” (AU 34). Even after Herr Kraus confronts her, saying she is crazy and threatening to talk to her father or the police (AU 41),⁵ Mila replies that he is the one who is crazy, she is merely in love, and continues to stalk him. Verbal rejection seems to have little effect on Mila, but a few days later when Herr Kraus rushes past her on the sidewalk and – in Mila's opinion – nearly pushes her in a construction site hole in his effort to be rid of her, Mila reacts, stabbing her professed love interest with the knife her father gave her and then calmly meeting her friend Fred at the movies. Upon hearing that her dead teacher's wife is pregnant, Mila is upset – not out of guilt, but envy. “Eigentlich wollte *ich* doch das Baby von Herrn Kraus” (AU 57). Mila associates babies with love and attention, viewing them as the tangible result of romantic love and the recipient of a mother's love. Frustrated by the lack of affection and attention from her own father, Mila is envious of the relationship between her beloved teacher and his wife, as well as the product of that love – a child.

⁵ While it is not clear from the text whether or not Herr Kraus knows Mila's father has defected, his threat to tell her father or the (predominantly male) police underscores the construction of authority as male.

The tragic story of Herr Kraus is unfortunately not a unique event in Mila's life. Her next love interest, Leopold Christiansen, is a married university instructor also twice Mila's age. For Mila, this relationship is initially less about having a baby (as was the case with Herr Kraus) than about gaining sexual experience. But Leopold is portrayed as a self-centered, uptight pedant rather than the older, wiser lover Mila wants him to be. In contrast to her dogged pursuit of Herr Kraus, Mila initially plays the passive, submissive female with Leopold: "Ich siezte ihn auch noch, während ich seinen Penis in die Hand nahm" (AU 68). But the pair never actually has intercourse, and Mila eventually breaks things off, although "[i]ch leistete mir den Luxus, hin und wieder von ihm zu träumen. Ich stellte mir vor, wie er mich deflorierte. Wie er sich in mir entlud. Ich stellte mir meinen Bauch vor, der langsam, aber unaufhaltsam anschwell" (AU 88). As with Mila's father and Herr Kraus, Leopold does not offer her the sense of emotional closeness and recognition which she so craves, and his refusal to have intercourse robs her of the possibility of having a baby to ease her loneliness.

After her futile pursuit of obvious father figures and her dreams of having their babies, Mila's deflowering in *Andere Umstände* is a violent, traumatic event with a young man her own age (and whom she later finds out is most likely sterile). Mila's friend Fred Lobitz⁶ visits while on leave from the Army and rapes her, declaring his love for her at the same time. Dressed in the uniform of a male authoritarian institution, Fred asserts his physical dominance over Mila. Her reaction underscores a woman's disadvantaged position in sexual contexts as well as her personal hopes for her first sexual encounter:

⁶ Mila often refers to Fred as *Feuerstein* because he reminds her of Fred Flintstone.

Dieser Mistkerl. Ich hatte nie etwas anderes als Mitleid für ihn empfunden, und er kam hier hereinspaziert in seiner grässlich stinkenden Uniform und fickte drauflos. Fickte *mich*. [...]

Nicht Herr Kraus, nicht Leopold, *ausgerechnet Feuerstein*... (AU 90 emphasis in original)

Part of the violence of rape lies in the complete and unwilling domination of a woman by a man. Rape takes away choice and autonomy for women. This is especially difficult for Mila, who has been actively searching for romantic father figures, albeit unsuccessfully. After her experiences of personal and sexual rejection by these older men, Mila's first sexual experience is everything she didn't choose – a violent, unsensual experience with a teenage boy. She feels trapped by Fred, liking him despite this episode, but also not desiring the relationship he now wants to pursue. "Es kam mir vor, als hätte Feuerstein [...] ein Lasso nach mir geworfen. Die Schlinge legte sich um meinen Hals und zog sich abrupt zu" (AU 97). Having long been the unsuccessful aggressor in relationships with men, Mila is ambivalent about being the pursued, especially by someone capable of so completely forcing her to physically submit.

Although Mila is unable to defend herself against Fred's assault, she plays a vital role in protecting another woman from rape. In one of the many odd twists of this story, Leopold (Mila's instructor) begins dating Anna Kraus (the widow of the teacher Mila stabbed and whose son Mila babysits). When Anna ends the relationship, Leopold secretly follows her home. Mila sees his car and enters the apartment to find Leopold molesting the sleeping Anna: "Ach du liebes bisschen, dachte ich. Bekommt er nicht genug, wenn sie wach ist? Ging mich das etwas an? Wohl kaum. Aber Anna konnte nicht nein sagen. Und das störte mich" (AU 107). Although she had been powerless against Fred, Mila is not powerless now – she uses her jackknife to stab and kill Leopold.

Poppe's portrayal of Leopold as a vain, pedantic adulterer makes it easy to gloss over Mila's crime of murder and instead view her action as justified, even right. In this moment, Leopold stands for all men who feel entitled, who break the rules to suit themselves, who feel powerful just because they are men. The fact that Mila and Anna are never caught for his murder (although they briefly are suspects) signifies at least some small resistance and victory against male dominance.

In the late 1980s, Mila becomes involved with Viktor, who is active in the democracy movement. She shares none of his political enthusiasm, but participates in a few demonstrations and gatherings just to be with him. In contrast to her earlier catastrophic interactions with men, Mila believes that this time things are different: "Ich glaubte, dass es diesmal anders sei. Ganz anders. Ich glaubte, ich sei verliebt. *Wirklich* verliebt" (AU 161, emphasis in original). But Viktor is involved with another woman and distances himself from Mila, repeating the experience of male abandonment she knows so well. Several months after the *Wende* he returns, and Mila begins to dream of a future and a family with him. Having finally found a man willing to truly be a partner, lover and friend, Mila is crushed to learn that Viktor does not want children, that he sees them as a hindrance to his dreams of travel and career. Convinced that she can change his mind, Mila secretly gets pregnant, but Viktor's reaction to her news shows the depth of his emotions: "Er sah wirklich bekümmert aus. Als hätte man die Mauer plötzlich wieder hoch gezogen" (AU 268). For Viktor, who participated in the 1989 revolution, children are as much of a trap as the Berlin Wall. Although he stays with Mila, her pregnancy permanently alters their relationship; Viktor feels betrayed, and Mila feels rejected: "Warum liebte Viktor mich nicht mit unserer Tochter im Bauch?" (AU 295). However

unwittingly, Mila is setting up her unborn daughter to experience similar distance and estrangement from Viktor as Mila did from her own father. In the end, the distance is even greater, as Viktor dies in a mysterious car crash on his way to get the midwife when Mila goes into labor. It remains unclear whether the crash was accidental, intentional, or whether Mila had tampered with the car. Viktor remains an enigma – Mila's true love who may or may not have been planning to leave her, and who died (directly or indirectly) because of her. Mila is left with her daughter Alice, but still searching for a partner. The last scene of the text portrays Mila in America, in her backpack the blow-dryer she used to electrocute her latest victim, trying to hitch a ride with an unknown man who may be her next.⁷

The texts *Moskauer Eis* and *Lügen und schweigen* portray more typical female responses to absent fathers. In contrast to Mila's very obvious search for a father in older men and her relentless strivings to get pregnant, Annja and Vera seek to fill the emotional voids of a strained father-daughter relationship with same-age romantic relationships. But their choice of boyfriends – although more socially acceptable than Mila's – reveals the crippling impact of emotionally unavailable fathers on daughters, who often enter romantic relationships with other distant and needy men.

Unlike Mila's multiple conquests, Annja in *Moskauer Eis* has only one romantic relationship, that with her first boyfriend Jan. A former competitive swimmer, Jan is portrayed as a victim of the GDR sports machine and of his own insecurities. Initially attracted to Jan because he is slightly rebellious – with longer hair and a belligerent attitude (ME 230) – Annja quickly becomes deeply involved with him. Sex becomes a central part of the relationship, and Annja recalls that "Jan war ein guter Liebhaber" (ME

⁷ Mila's latest victim is a man she met while in San Francisco and with whom she had a brief relationship.

233). Sex is also one of the aspects of this relationship that serves as a sign of independence from Annja to her father; by asserting herself as a sexually active woman, Annja symbolically challenges her father's normative authority over her and rebels against her former role of submissive child. After finding a used condom in the toilet, Annja's father "wollte [...] seine Verantwortung als Vater nachkommen und verbot mir mit vielen blumigen Umschreibungen die Ausübung des Geschlechtsverkehrs in unseren vier Wänden" (ME 233). Annja protests that at age 16 she is one of the last girls in her class to have sex (which is a lie – she is only the second) (ME 233), and the matter is dropped. This episode is noteworthy not only because Annja challenges her father's authority, but because she does so because of another man – a man who is becoming more important to her than her father.

Within the span of a few months, Jan's demeanor changes radically. He seems less and less able to deal with the end of his swimming career and the loss of his status as an upcoming star. Deeply frustrated, Jan begins to drink heavily, and inadvertently gives Annja a new purpose in life: "Je öfter Jan betrunken nicht mehr Herr seiner Sinne war, desto klarer stand mir vor Augen, daß ich die einzige war, die ihn retten konnte" (ME 237). After experiencing the loss of her mother to divorce and of her father to a combination of grief and workaholicism, Annja chooses to view Jan's problems as proof that at least *he* needs her. But Jan's struggles with alcohol and self-control intensify to the point of physical violence. At first an isolated incident, the fighting becomes so frequent and obvious that even Annja's father notices. When Jan shows up drunk one afternoon and picks a fight with Annja, Herr Kobe orders him to leave. Annja claims her father has misread the situation, but he remains firm in his judgment. "Ich habe alles sehr gut

verstanden. [...] Merkst du denn nicht, daß du kaputtgehst an dieser Beziehung?" (ME 240). Unwilling to give up just yet on Jan, Annja lashes out at her father and other sport fanatics who drive the GDR competitive sports industry, situating her relationship with Jan in the context of general rebellion against GDR institutions. It is telling, however, that what Annja chooses to view as rebellion is simultaneously submission to emotional and physical violence. Her clumsy attempts to challenge the state come at the cost of domestic abuse – an even older version of male (mis)use of authority toward women.

What is perhaps most striking in the depiction of Annja and Jan's relationship, however, is the way in which it ends. Although a reader can imagine that issues of alcoholism and physical violence contribute to the breakup, they are not directly cited: "Daß ich Jan verließ, hatte am Ende keinen besonderen Anlaß. Meine Naivität war mir einfach verlorengegangen wie ein Schal, den man achtlos auf der Lehne eines Caféhausstuhles vergißt" (ME 243). Annja's child-like dreams of finding someone to love and to love her, to fill the emotional void left by her ever-more-distant relationship with her father have been dashed. Her ending of the relationship also shows, however, that her self-esteem and self-worth are at least strong enough to lead her to expect something more than what Jan was willing to give and be. Annja cannot and should not be viewed merely as a victim.

In *Lügen und schweigen*, little information is given about Vera's earliest romantic relationships. Within the first few pages of the text, however, the reader is told that she has lived with two other men before her current boyfriend Vincent, and that she moved in with the first one six months into the relationship and the second one after only four

weeks. Vera entered both relationships with high hopes, but their endings are painful echoes of childhood experiences:

Jedesmal war sie davon überzeugt, am Beginn einer lebenslänglichen Gemeinschaft zu stehen. Doch beide Beziehungen hatten das zweite Jahr nicht überstanden. Das Ende begann jedesmal gleich. Wenn das gemeinsame Wohnen allmählich zur Gewohnheit geworden war, wünschten die Männer ihr eines Tages keinen guten Morgen mehr und antworteten auch nicht auf die Frage, wie sie geschlafen hätten. Sie redeten einfach nicht mehr mit Vera, und das schien ihnen nicht einmal aufzufallen. (LS 7)

Unlike childhood, where Vera couldn't escape the silence, she is free to leave her lovers. This does not, however, negate the fact that she repeatedly chooses men like her father who surround themselves with silence. The bulk of the text explores the question of whether Vera's relationship with the psychology student Vincent can break through that silence, or whether trauma and self-protection are stronger.

The dynamics of Vera and Vincent's relationship are unique within this group of texts because Vincent is from West Germany. In her depiction of Vincent, Katrin Dorn both validates and challenges several common stereotypes of *Wessis*: Vincent is from a well-to-do family, he makes 'Western' assumptions (for example, that every family has a telephone), he occasionally views East Germans more as interesting specimens than as individuals. Other of Vincent's less lovable characteristics – his sometimes pedantic attitude and his desire to think for Vera – can also be attributed as much or more to his study of psychology than to his West German background. The East-West dynamic is therefore present within the relationship and the text, but it is not the dominant aspect, implying that individual emotional trauma plays a much larger role in relationship difficulties than do any East-West differences.

Issues of silence and communication, which were highly problematic in Vera's relationship with her father, are also present in her relationship with Vincent. "Vera hatte noch nie einen Mann von solcher Distanziertheit getroffen." (L 10). Vincent ignores Vera at times, claiming his attention needs a break after a long day of classes and therapy sessions. Vera justifies his behavior: "Es hat nichts mit ihr zu tun, wenn er nicht zuhört" (L 5). Vincent's mannerisms, even his sense of privacy and personal space, threaten to separate him from Vera rather than give her the room to grow with him. But Vera's (re)actions in emotional situations also make open communication more difficult. She often resents Vincent's attempts to understand her thoughts and feelings, instead demanding, "Vincent, kannst du bitte aufhören, für mich zu denken" (L 199). Although she desperately wants a man who will break the cycle of silence she learned in childhood, Vera struggles with the responsibilities this places on her, the need also to be open and honest, not to hide behind her own protective wall of silence. As much as Vincent wants to keep the relationship a "therapiefreie Zone" (L 98), merely living with someone who challenges her attitudes about silence and communication is a type of therapy for Vera.

Shortly after Vera's father dies, it also appears that her relationship with Vincent may end. Vera's web of stories and lies about her father,⁸ along with her reaction to Vincent's attempts to help, have put distance between them. It is during this time that Vera has a one night stand with an actor, Michael Conrad.⁹ Perhaps because of the similarity of the name Conrad to her father's (Konrad Gröbers), Vera seems preoccupied with her father, whom she calls her "Bekannter". Michael Conrad sees through her

⁸ Upon first meeting Vincent, Vera had claimed her parents were dead. She later made up elaborate lies about her father, claiming he had been imprisoned for political resistance.

⁹ In contrast to other characters in the text, who are generally referred to by their first name, Michael Conrad is either referred to as "der Schauspieler" or "Michael Conrad", highlighting both the fact that he is playing a role and that for Vera his role is associated with her father Konrad.

stories, however: “‘Du bist ganz schön naiv’, sagt er. ‘Meinst du vielleicht, ich merke nicht, welche Rolle du mir gern geben würdest. Ich bin nicht dein Vater. Und Sie sind längst kein Kind mehr, Madame’” (L 162). In the morning Vera leaves without even waking him, using silence as a means of controlling the situation. And although she becomes pregnant and does not know whether Vincent or Michael Conrad is the father, Vera never mentions the actor again.

Despite the ways in which Vera’s relationship with Vincent echoes her relationship with her father – silence, lying, and distance – it does not merely perpetuate the cycle. Vera’s miscarriage actually serves as a turning point, setting her free from her father’s legacy and allowing her to interact with Vincent as an individual rather than merely another ‘version’ of her father. Vincent matures over the course of the text as well – serving as a contrast to the boyfriends and lovers in other texts. The small signs of hope for this relationship are captured in the first and last scenes of the text, which are basically the same: Vera and Vincent are in the kitchen, he is reading the newspaper, and the bouquet of tulips on the table is wilting. At the beginning of the text, Vera holds a whole conversation which Vincent ignores, only belatedly looking up from the paper and trying to formulate a response to questions he did not hear. The scene unfolds differently at the end of the text:

Als er die Zeitung umblättert, fällt aus dem Tulpenstrauß ein erstes orangerotes Blatt auf den Tisch.

“Die Blumen welken schon”, sagt Vera.

Vincent läßt die Zeitung sinken und schaut sich den Strauß an. “Wenn sie zu welken beginnen, sind sie am schönsten, glaube ich”. (L 207)

Vincent is truly the exception in these texts – a man who has seen some of the worst of Vera and who doesn’t abandon her, a man who doesn’t physically or emotionally abuse

her, a man who continues to mature. While Vincent and his relationship with Vera are definitely works in progress, there is some hope for the post-unification East-West couple which can be read on both a personal and collective level. This boundary-crossing relationship, which would have been difficult if not impossible before unification, can be interpreted as a call for a new type of romantic relationship, a new interaction between men and women, a re-thinking of domination and submission.¹⁰ This interpretation is supported by the fact that Vera and Vincent's relationship is the only romantic relationship for daughters portrayed as extending past the end of the narrative. Dorn offers hope for a future, but only in a relationship much different than those of the (GDR) past.

Experiences of Sons

Male Institutional Authority

The experiences of sons with the institutions and organizations of the GDR present a stark contrast to those of daughters. Quickly evident is the difference in the *quantity* of confrontational encounters. Whereas daughters are repeatedly harassed and victimized by teachers and school administrators, the texts about sons include relatively few mentions of school at all, highlighting the differences of the role of state institutions in the lives of sons versus daughters. The episode most similar to those of daughters occurs in *Fitchers Blau*, when Karl gets in trouble at school for sending letters to a West German radio station requesting a song (FB 52). The principal "verdammte und ächtete Karl" (FB 52) – much the same treatment that daughters receive from school officials – until his father Josef asks the Party to step in and take care of the matter. Reminiscent of

¹⁰ In *The Bonds of Love*, Jessica Benjamin provides an intriguing analysis and (re)interpretation of male and female domination and submission.

events in *Tanz am Kanal*, this episode illustrates the relative lack of power of the child (Karl and Gabriela) and the power of the father. But unlike Ernst von Haßlau in *Tanz am Kanal*, Josef does not have to rely merely on his intimidating personality, he also has the power of the SED behind him. Thus his son Karl is more reliably protected against the authority and anger of school authorities than Gabriela could hope to be.

The protagonist in *Wie ich vom Ausschneiden loskam* also has an encounter with the schools, but actually comes out victorious all on his own. During a final exam in geography (an exam whose grade affects the protagonist's choice of apprenticeships and for which he had chosen to study instead of relying on cheat sheets), he is suddenly reprimanded for using a pen. In the principal's office, the teacher finally states her concern: students are forbidden from using West German pens in class. But the protagonist's angry claim "Hier geht's um meine Zukunft!" (A 151) seems to convince the principal to respond with compassion rather than with a strict adherence to Party policy, resulting in the teacher being ordered to apologize publicly and the exam being repeated. When the teacher refuses to apologize, she is transferred to another school. For once a representative of GDR authority (the principal) sides with a student, even without threats from the father or his Party. It is also worth noting that the teacher is a woman, her authority challenged by two men. Even a woman affiliated with the SED via her role as a teacher and technically following Party guidelines is portrayed as having little authority.

By far the most striking contrast between sons and daughters, however, is their experience with authority in the form of the military, police and *Stasi*. Instead of being the victims of these institutions, sons actually become *part of* them. *Fitchers Blau* and

Wie ich vom Ausschneiden loskam depict protagonists' experiences in the military,¹¹ and *Helden wie wir* portrays Klaus's career with the *Stasi*. Both the military and the *Stasi* are depicted as repressive, hypocritical (and sometimes foolish) systems, but they do not specifically victimize the sons. Indeed, sons merge with these institutions, existing within their authority and assuming it themselves. A similar sense of belonging is denied daughters – even when working as an IM in *Tanz am Kanal*, Gabriela remains a victim rather than becoming an insider.

While military service was compulsory in the GDR, Karl of *Fitchers Blau* and the protagonist in *Wie ich vom Ausschneiden loskam* almost seem to welcome it. For both sons, the clearly delineated hierarchy, rules and punishments are a sharp contrast to the instability and unpredictability of their treatment at the hands of their fathers. The Army responds to transgressions with standardized punishment, whereas the behavior of the fathers closely fits Fromm's definition of terrorism: "der Terror [zeichnet sich] dadurch aus, dass er infolge seiner mangelnden Rationalität, der Plötzlichkeit und Blitzartigkeit seines Vorgehens die Angst wesentlich erhöht" (128). Remarkably enough, for these sons, the state (in the form of the Army) is actually a better father than their biological fathers merely because its mode of operation – however authoritarian – is known and predictable. As the protagonist of *Wie ich vom Ausschneiden loskam* claims:

"Wehrpflichtiger zu sein, ist, Urlaub vom Leben zu haben" (A 101). While in many ways just as powerless as soldiers as they were as children, these two sons trust in the limits that the hierarchy of the military places upon those above them. Karl even dares defy his father by refusing to enlist as an officer (FB 90, 359), not wanting to be in charge of other

¹¹ The protagonist in *Wie ich vom Ausschneiden loskam* actually serves in both the NVA and the West German Navy.

men. Again, Schramm's portrayal of the military as an institution is very critical, but the military's impact on Karl's life is nowhere near as traumatic as the impact of his father. In the NVA, neither Karl nor the protagonist of *Wie ich vom Ausschneiden loskam* are singled out as victims. They are allowed to bide their time, to remain relatively unnoticed, neither victims nor heroes.

Much has been written about Brussig's depiction of the *Stasi* in *Helden wie wir*.¹² My focus is the ways in which Klaus's *Stasi* experience mirrors the military experiences in *Wie ich vom Ausschneiden loskam* and *Fitchers Blau*. Although the power of the *Stasi* to victimize, harass and oppress its victims is made abundantly clear, it is never directed at Klaus himself because he is a part of the *Stasi* and its authority. While one could argue that merely being a part of such an organization affects an individual, Klaus's experiences stand in stark contrast to those of daughters such as Gabriela von Haßlau in *Tanz am Kanal*. Even when working for the *Stasi*, Gabriela never shared in authority because of it. The *Stasi* and the East German military are the worlds of men.

As a group, the depictions of sons' experiences with (and within) GDR institutional authority vastly differ from those of daughters. Whereas both daughters and sons experience similar situations in the authoritarian father-child relationship, their experiences in the larger state and social context are often gender-specific. Daughters continue to experience authority as a male construction outside of which they stand and to which they are subjected. Sons – even within the constrictions of the GDR state – are less discriminated against by institutional authority as they mature and take their place within it. As the protagonist Klaus recalls in *Helden wie wir*: “Ich war nicht nur das Kind meiner Eltern, ich war auch Schüler meiner Lehrer und Leser meiner Bibliotheken. *Ich*

¹² See particularly Biermann, Bremer, Fröhlich, Nause, Prager and Simanowski.

war einer von uns” (H 107, emphasis added). Daughters do not make similar claims; being part of the GDR state is a male experience, one which daughters do not share. The state as a male institution opens itself only to its own kind and men manage much better than women to live and thrive within its structures. Indeed they are represented as being its heirs.

Love, Sex and Romantic Relationships

Sons as well as daughters struggle with intimate relationships with the opposite sex, largely because of their experiences with the father. Whereas daughters openly seek a replacement in other men for the affection and attention they are lacking from their fathers, sons struggle even to acknowledge their need for emotional closeness. The male protagonists in these texts grapple with issues of lust vs. love, emotional vulnerability, and violence toward women. As boys and young men, they have neither experienced unconditional love from their fathers nor witnessed healthy relationships between their parents. Father-mother relationships are defined by divorce, abandonment and violent outbursts. Positive role models are largely lacking, leaving sons insecure and confused as to how to initiate and sustain a physically and emotionally intimate relationship with a woman.

Much like the father-son relationship, sons’ relationships with women center around domination and submission. Growing up with domineering and/or absent fathers, sons have learned to submit to their authority and to long for their love. But they have also observed that fathers exercise similar authority over their wives and girlfriends. This results in tension for many sons: raised to submit to paternal authority, they are unsure of

their role in later male-female relationships. Their reactions are a mix of learned passivity/submission and physical and sexual aggression.

Especially for Klaus in *Helden wie wir*, the connection between sex, love and domination is a puzzling one.¹³ Incredibly naïve, he is overwhelmed by his first sexual encounter with Marina:

Ich lebte immer im Glauben, daß man vor, während und nach dem Vögeln *Ich liebe dich* sagen muß. *Vor* und *während* war vorbei. Was tun?

“Ich liebe dich”, sagte ich probeweise.

“Nun beruhige dich mal wieder”, sagte sie.

Was? Keine Liebe? War es der pure 6? ¹⁴

“War doch sonst nix da”, sagte sie [...]. (H 129, italics in original)

Klaus feels that Marina’s attitude “degradierte mich zur 6maschine” (H 129). Klaus is a virgin who feels inferior to his sexually experienced (and uninhibited) fellow soldiers, while Marina is sexually confident and looking for a companion for the evening. She takes the lead during their sexual encounter, placing Klaus in the submissive role he is so used to playing. Although Klaus views this experience as an assertion of his own (sexual) autonomy – not only sleeping with someone he barely knows, but someone of whom his father would not approve – his behavior with Marina reveals more naïve curiosity than assertiveness. By deflecting his declaration of love, Marina further undermines Klaus’s domination, driving home the point that she is using him just as he is using her. Klaus’s ensuing case of gonorrhea underscores his lack of control over the situation.

Klaus’s later experience with Yvonne – “die einzige Liebesgeschichte meines Lebens, eine Liebesgeschichte, die so scheißtraurig ist, daß ich sie nicht erzählen würde,

¹³ It must be noted that much of Klaus’s insecurity, misinformation and paranoia about sex are the result of his mother’s influence. She is an overbearing hygiene inspector who associates sex and sexuality with filth. The discussion here, however, focuses on sexuality in relation to issues of domination, which can also be seen as relating to the father.

¹⁴ Klaus’s mother pronounces the word “Sex” like the German word “sechs”, thus the orthography.

wenn ich nicht müßte” (H 214) – illustrates his struggle to understand the role that sex plays *within* a relationship. Deeply infatuated with Yvonne, even describing her as an angel (H 235), Klaus is dismayed to find himself sexually aroused. “Kann ich es mit meinem Gewissen vereinbaren, einen *Engel* zu ficken? Noch dazu einen Engel, den ich liebe?” (H 235-6). The very choice of the verb “ficken” to describe sex shows the disconnect in Klaus’s understanding of sex and emotions. None of Klaus’s previous sexual encounters have been associated with feelings of tenderness or admiration. Now in the presence of a girl he likes, Klaus is confused and ashamed of his natural (but to him inexplicable) sexual desire for her. After vividly imagining any possible negative ramifications of sleeping with Yvonne, Klaus decides to live dangerously. But even as he bravely determines to have sex with a woman he has feelings for, Yvonne utters the words “Tu mir weh!” (H 237). Brussig has taken traditional notions of male-female dominance and submission and turned them on their head, as Klaus’s reaction reveals: “Soll ich sie blutig kratzen? Schlagen? Beißen? Oder will sie, daß ich ihre Gliedmaßen verrenke? Ich fühlte mich zu nichts davon in der Lage” (H 237). Rather than provoking the rough sex she desires, Yvonne’s words result in anxiety for Klaus; instead of being dominant and assertive, he panics and leaves. Years of condescension and domination at the hands of his father have left Klaus unable to take on the overtly masculine role Yvonne desires.

The issue of physical violence is raised repeatedly in these texts, and sons are positioned as being both its victims and its perpetrators. As children, some sons are physically abused by their father, most notably in *Fitchers Blau* (discussed in detail in Chapter 4). The protagonist of *Wie ich vom Ausschneiden loskam* is witness to his

father's drunken rage which manifests itself in yelling, throwing objects, even killing his son's pet bird. Violent behavior on the part of the father correlates with Fromm's discussion of the sadomasochistic tendencies of authoritarian personalities – implying a basic disregard and disrespect for those seen as weak(er than oneself) (115). As sons grow older, they become less likely to be victims of violence, both because they are physically stronger and because they have learned to pacify their father and prevent his violent episodes. As sons mature, however, they become more likely to be violent themselves. No longer the victims forced to witness and experience violence, they are now the (male) figures who perpetrate it. While there are few episodes of sons being violent, the fact that they occur within male-female (sexual) contexts underscores the theme of male authority over women.

The connection between sexuality and violence is most evident in *Fitchers Blau* and *Helden wie wir*. Klaus's encounter in *Helden wie wir* with a woman referred to only as "die Wurstfrau" (H 188) shows to what extent he is willing to go in order to find a sexual partner. Not physically attracted to the woman, Klaus chooses her merely because she is drunk and desperate. He sees the encounter as a test of will: "wenn ich mit der kann, kann ich mit jeder" (H 188). But Klaus's patronizing pity is replaced with shame and anger when the woman laughs at his small penis. Although she no longer wants to have sex, Klaus is determined to 'get what he came for', to prove his manliness, and to put the woman in her place. He becomes physically aggressive, undressing the woman even as she protests. It is only thoughts of being arrested and most of all his parents' certain disappointment in him that finally end the ordeal. Deeply ashamed by his actions,

Klaus sees his ensuing accident as a just punishment.¹⁵ It is noteworthy, however, that over 100 pages later, Klaus mentions wanting to visit the Wurstfrau to show her his now massive penis. Her insult to his masculinity has not been forgotten, revealing once again Klaus's deep sense of insecurity and low self-worth.

While not making light of attempted rape, Klaus's experience is related in the same farcical tone as the rest of the text, a tone which distinguishes *Helden wie wir* from the other texts. There is never any real danger that he will hurt anyone but himself. The protagonist Karl's violence toward his girlfriend Susanne in *Fitchers Blau* is much more ominous, however. Upon hearing that Karl is entering the military, Susanne becomes greatly upset, insisting he object or defect.¹⁶ On the day he receives his orders, she kicks him painfully in the tailbone as he stands at the toilet: "Und die Erziehung siegte" (FB 92). Enraged, Karl grabs an ax and goes after Susanne: "Susanne, die mit allem gerechnet hatte, doch nicht, daß dieser Karl zurückschlagen könnte" (FB 93). She escapes unharmed and later changes the locks on Karl, "der sich gewiß nicht entschuldigt hätte" (FB 93). While in some small way Karl's action could be seen as positive – he finally responds to abuse rather than merely tolerating it – it is also a sobering example of the legacy of physical violence. After years of suffering the psychological and physical abuse of his father, Klaus only knows two responses to violence: the passive submission of a child or more violence. His threat of violence toward Susanne signals an end to Karl's childhood role, but it also positions him within a pattern of male power and violence.

¹⁵ Still sexually aroused after his encounter with the "Wurstfrau", Klaus masturbates in her stairwell, then slips on his ejaculate and falls, breaking his left thumb and right wrist (H 198).

¹⁶ An uncle of Susanne's died in the military because of a doctor's failure to diagnose appendicitis (FB 91), and she is understandably critical of the military as a whole. The doctor was actually Karl's father Josef, although neither Susanne nor Karl knows this (FB 339).

The romantic relationship depicted in *Wie ich vom Ausschneiden loskam* is markedly different from Klaus's sexual successes and failures in *Helden wie wir* or Karl's sudden violence in *Fitchers Blau*. Rather than centering around overt issues of sex and power, the relationship of the unnamed protagonist of *Wie ich vom Ausschneiden loskam* with Manuela represents his search for emotional intimacy, his desire not to be like his father, and his (perhaps subconscious) attempts to revise his own childhood experiences. This is first signaled by the age discrepancy – he is 25 while she is not quite 16. Although the two are very obviously sexually involved (A 188), many aspects of their relationship more strongly resemble those of a father-daughter relationship than a romantic one. There is even discussion of the protagonist becoming Manuela's legal guardian (A 187) because she doesn't want to live with her mother and new stepfather in the West and is too young to live on her own. The protagonist jokingly warns Manuela that she will have to go to school and answer to him about homework (A 187), sounding very much like a concerned parent. He is anxious to do things right – urging Manuela to contact her mother to tell her where she is – and takes on typical household tasks of parents, such as doing Manuela's laundry (A 189).

It is obvious that the protagonist longs for someone to care for. Growing up with an alcoholic absent father and a distracted mother, he has seldom been on the receiving end of affection, togetherness and family tradition. The protagonist recounts: "Je häufiger Manuela mich besuchte, umso dringlicher wollte ich die Butter mit Petersilie bestreuen, den Wurstteller mit mit Paprika gewürzten Eierscheiben garnieren und eine weiße Tischdecke kaufen, hielt mich aber noch zurück" (A 183). These are not simply the desires of a young man wanting to impress his girlfriend, but those of a parent-like figure

wanting to nurture a child. The protagonist also seems to take on traditionally 'feminine' qualities – worrying about issues such as food, clothing, and caring. The following scene makes the importance and newness of everyday acts of togetherness in the life of the protagonist poignantly clear:

“Noch Tee?” fragte ich. Und als Manuela nickte, kroch mir eine Gänsehaut über den Rücken. Ich goß ihr Tee ein, gab zwei Stück Zucker dazu und rührte um. “So. Fertig”, sagte ich. Sie nahm die Tasse, führe sie an die Lippen und trank vorsichtig. “Genau richtig”, sagte sie und lächelte mich an. Ich räusperte mich und trank einen Schluck Tee. (A 184)

The protagonist is portrayed neither as the violent, domineering figure of his father Heiko nor the hyper-sexual but submissive son Klaus in *Helden wie wir*. The personality traits which are traditionally less 'masculine' – nurturing, serving, connecting – are the very traits which give his relationship with Manuela a chance to survive. The protagonist of *Wie ich vom Ausschneiden loskam* has stepped outside the traditional male role of dominant sexual aggressor, suggesting that a new version of masculinity is necessary – one which rejects the legacy of authoritarian patriarchy so often associated with the GDR. Much like Vera and Vincent's relationship in *Lügen und schweigen*, this relationship also redefines masculinity/femininity, domination and submission, implying that not only a political, but also an interpersonal *Wende* was (or is) necessary in Germany.

The absence of a father figure, paternal prudishness, or physical abuse at the hand of the father has a lasting effect in the lives of sons and their relationships with women. Sons struggle to establish emotional intimacy with their partners largely because they did not experience it themselves as children. Whereas daughters openly, even desperately search for a deep emotional connection in their romantic relationships, sons seem largely unable or unwilling to acknowledge their own emotional needs, instead focusing largely

on sexual desire and satisfaction. Unaddressed anger and aggression also enter into sexual relationships, often making sex more about conquest and power than about an emotional connection. All of these sons also struggle to maintain intimate romantic relationships. It is striking that the only relationship which has not failed by the end of the text is the one in *Wie ich vom Ausschneiden loskam* – a relationship in which the protagonist takes on many ‘feminine’ traits and emotions, and a relationship which also begins after unification. It bears intriguing similarities to Vera and Vincent’s relationship in *Lügen und schweigen*. Both are post-unification relationships, begun after the GDR state collapsed, and both challenge established roles and rules – either by crossing the East-West ‘boundary’ (*Lügen und schweigen*) or masculine-feminine roles (*Wie ich vom Ausschneiden loskam*).

The key difference in the experiences of sons and daughters is subjugation to authority (for daughters) versus possession of authority (for sons). Even within the more repressive authoritarian society of the GDR, sons are portrayed much less as victims; GDR family and state institutions seem particularly discriminatory toward women. Young daughters are ignored and abandoned by their fathers, and older daughters attempting to form their own sense of identity are stifled and discriminated against by the authoritarian, patriarchal structures of the GDR state. Young sons also suffer trauma because of emotionally and physically remote fathers, yet they are depicted as integrating more successfully into the GDR state by fact of becoming part of the institutions of authority. Compulsory or voluntary, well-reasoned or naïve, the power of choice and agency is (at least in a limited way) granted to the sons of the GDR. Sons still struggle

with issues of authority, but the frustration and helplessness so evident in the lives of daughters plays a much smaller role for adolescent and young adult sons.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

The post-unification texts analyzed here address issues of authority and authoritarianism on two different levels. Most directly, they serve as fictional representations of the GDR father in his possession of and submission to authority. Authors make use of familiar tropes found in early GDR *Aufbauliteratur* – the positive hero, the paternal mentor figure, the strict but nurturing state – and reveal them as fantasies. The GDR state is instead portrayed in its (de)formative authoritarian power, dominating and manipulating its citizens. This blatant authority of the state over the individual is often reproduced in the home by fathers who tyrannize, ignore or even abuse their children. The role of the father as a symbol of absolute authority within the home closely connects these texts to West German *Väterliteratur*, the other literary tradition from which they borrow. But in contrast to the exclusively positive portrayal of father/mentor figures in East German *Aufbauliteratur* and the highly critical depiction in West German *Väterliteratur*, post-unification texts construct *ambivalent* father figures, exposing their abuse of authority while also acknowledging their subjugation to the greater authority of the state.

These texts also challenge authority within the literary and historical context of their writing. They contradict the melancholic post-unification texts of older GDR authors who remain committed to socialism and who mourn its passing, addressing instead the hypocrisy and abuse of authority within the socialist state. The use of father-child stories – stories to which nearly everyone can relate – also speaks to Western readers and perhaps begins to challenge their previously-held stereotypes about East Germans and East Germany. Thus these texts truly stand between East and West.

The critical portrayal of authority does not end with the collapse of the GDR. While unification frees young adult protagonists from the overt authoritarianism of the SED state, it does not stop their continued marginalization and domination by individuals and state institutions. Indeed, the negative (gendered) experiences within the GDR examined in Chapter 5 remain evident within unified Germany, continuing the tradition of authoritarianism shared by both German states.

Authority and Marginalization in Post-Unification Germany

While the end of the GDR serves as a turning point in these texts, it does not serve as their ending. The sociohistorical backdrop of unification and the immediate post-*Wende* years play key roles in these texts – even if not explicitly narrated – because they represent a significant change in state systems and mechanisms of control. At an age when young adults commonly begin to integrate themselves into institutions of social authority outside of family and school and (re)evaluate their position and experiences within the state and society, these young East Germans protagonists are confronted with an entirely new state and institutions, many aspects of which are complete opposites of the old GDR regime, while others are also shockingly similar.

These texts represent the GDR as a traditionalist, patriarchal state with conservative values and a male power monopoly on all levels of society – a refutation of the SED's outward attempts at creating a woman-friendly state by means of plentiful kindergartens, liberal divorce laws and high female employment rates.¹ Also apparent, however, is that the legacy of institutions such as the *Stasi*, police and the SED continues after 1989, especially in the lives of women, and that patriarchal and authoritarian

¹ For a discussion of the “status of women in the GDR and their ambiguous relationship to the state, as both beneficiaries of the state's generous support for motherhood and as targets of sex discrimination” (90), see Ferree.

characteristics are not just GDR-specific. While the overtly regimented, hierarchical authoritarianism of the GDR has been exchanged for the social and economic risks and freedoms of German capitalism, post-unification experiences in these texts continue to show gender differences in experiences with authority. Sons as well as daughters are confronted with typical East German difficulties of the early 1990s such as unemployment, poverty and questions of identity. But much as the discussion of sons' experiences in the GDR military emphasized the idea of becoming part of the greater authority, sons in unified Germany are more easily and fully integrated into the new state. Daughters, however, continue to experience domination by male authority in their personal and professional lives. Writing about *Tanz am Kanal*, Steingröver views Hensel's text as "pointing to the larger continuities in abuses of power and inequality" (92), a claim which can extend to any of the texts about daughters. The means of dominating and marginalizing women are less blatant in post-unification German society, but they exist nonetheless.

The workplace is one of the areas in which East German women struggle after unification.² After growing up in a state where jobs were guaranteed, protagonists have difficulty finding good positions in the competitive post-unification job market and asserting themselves against Western (often male) supervisors and critics. In *Andere Umstände*, Mila's post-unification employment prospects originally look bright. Her company has been "adoptiert" (AU 191) by a West German company, and she is on the

² Men also struggled with unemployment, underemployment and job security after unification, as is depicted in texts such as *Fitchers Blau*, *Was denkst du?* and *Simple Storys*. The older generation (men in their 50s and 60s) was the hardest hit, which is touched on in texts such as *Die Nachrichten* and *Zonenkinder*.

track to promotion: But when her West German boss learns that Mila is pregnant,³ the situation changes. Perhaps concerned about Mila's productivity or attendance after the birth of the baby, he offers her a "Schonplatz", "ein ruhiges, freundliches Plätzchen" (AU 197). The diminutive of "Platz" already hints at the ways Mila will be belittled and marginalized by the company. Knowing that what she is being offered is a dead-end job, Mila quits. The attitude of her male West German boss is evidence of the continuing legacy of male authority and female marginalization and submission, and is actually a negative change compared to GDR employment policies. Mila eventually finds a job she enjoys at a vegetable stand (AU 257), but it is a job far from the career ladder. In an attempt to find personal happiness and a measure of professional autonomy, Mila has to step outside the male-, Western-defined workplace.

Annja must also battle against this system. Doomed to low-level jobs in the GDR because of negative comments on her final report card, Annja sells ice cream on the street and even works in an ice cream production plant. Shortly after unification she begins delivering ice cream for a large company, but loses her job after crashing the delivery truck. It is only after Annja begins producing her father's ice cream recipe that she has financial success and a sense of personal power. She must then defend herself against a lawsuit by a large West German ice cream company which claims the recipe as its own (ME 284) – Annja wins and builds up a small but successful company. But the extent of her accomplishment within (and against) the West German market is greatly downplayed by the way it is included in the text as part of a West German police report, not in

³ Mila is actually not pregnant, merely pretending to be. She has unexplainable cravings for bread and has gained quite a bit of weight. After the cashier at the bakery asks when the baby is due, Mila decides to pretend to be pregnant, a decision which reveals the depth of her longing for love and her psychological trauma.

Annja's own words. Gröschner's terse, almost offhand narration reflects the lack of support and recognition Annja has received from institutions in post-unification society.

In addition to struggling to assert themselves in a post-unification society largely controlled by West German values and practices, the women in these texts also encounter remnants of authoritarian GDR institutions, most specifically the police. *Moskauer Eis* depicts Annja being confronted while visiting the cemetery with her grandmother.

Admittedly, the sight of an elderly woman being pushed in a shopping cart might raise a few eyebrows, but the reactions of the male policemen – one East German and one West – illustrate the legacy of (male) institutional authority in both systems. The officers demand to see Annja's ID, although she is no longer required to carry it at all times.

When she points this out, she is told that police still have the right to demand identification. It is, however, in fact the *West* German policeman who comes across as narrow-minded, uptight and order-obsessed. The players may have changed, but the experience for Annja is similar – the police are her opponents, intimidating in their capriciousness, unjust in East and West.

Perhaps the most complicated figure is that of the East German policeman Paffrath in *Tanz am Kanal*, who represents “das System selbst in seinen unteren Vollzugsorganen” (Wehdeking, *Einheit* 91). Gabriela first encounters him on the night of her rape, when he is ordered to take down her statement. Several years later, as a result of her life story appearing in a magazine, she meets him again. Trained as a policeman in the GDR, Paffrath now works for a police force based on West German traditions. He embodies authority in both systems, highlighting the connection between East and West German authority and authoritarianism. Paffrath also represents male authority and power

on an individual level. After Gabriela loses her temporary home in the back room of a bar because the bar burns down, Paffrath takes her home with him, buys her clothes, feeds her. Whether out of desire or survival instincts, Gabriela initiates sex, an episode which quickly becomes deeply disturbing for the reader as Gabriela begins having flashbacks to her rape. Paffrath's repetition of the phrase her rapists used ("MeineGutemeineLiebemeineSchöne" TK 118) places him in the same role of violator and dominator - a role intimately connected to Hensel's critical portrayal of male authority in (and after) the GDR.

Much as the subjugation of daughters to individual and institutional male authority continues after unification, so too does the relative *lack* of this in the lives of sons. *Helden wie wir* depicts very little of Klaus's post-unification experiences, but the reader does know that he becomes a successful porn star, and the text itself is a transcript of his interview with a New York Times reporter. The protagonist of *Wie ich vom Ausschneiden loskam* experiences periods of unemployment, but even those are not awful: "Durch den Montagejob, der mich nach Westdeutschland geführt hatte, bekam ich jetzt so viel Arbeitslosengeld, daß ich gut mit den Bekannten mithalten konnte, die hier für Mindestlöhne arbeiteten" (A 183). He also eventually earns a good living as an author. Neither son is confronted by the existential insecurities and threats experienced by daughters in post-unification Germany.

Karl's negative post-unification experience in *Fitchers Blau* is a direct result of *his own* decisions rather than the decisions and authority of others. Unemployed and owing 6000 DM to a former girlfriend, Karl finds out about a prospective job from the

employment agency.⁴ On his way to visit the company, he encounters Mario, an old schoolmate. Mario runs an insurance ring and launches into a high-pressure pitch to Karl, who as usual submits to a more assertive personality and signs up. While the passivity that Karl learned in childhood admittedly makes him more susceptible to follow anyone who sounds confident, he is a grown man who makes an unwise decision, not someone with little choice. The harsh reality of post-unification employment and finances, combined with Mario's quick adoption of West German capitalism and salesmanship, make things challenging for Karl, but the state – here in the form of the employment agency – actually does its best to support him, a stark contrast to the experiences of daughters.

Unification also serves as an ambivalent turning point in the personal lives of these protagonists. Much as long-established (GDR) institutions and attitudes carry over into post-unification Germany, the father-child relationship has lasting effects sons' and daughters' self-worth and relation to authority. While unification brings about change on a political and social level, it is portrayed as having far less direct effect on individual relationships. The events of 1989 *do* serve as a personal *Wende*, however, because the protagonists are coming of age, making the often difficult transition from childhood to adulthood. Thus the political and personal turning points are merged.

For sons then, emotional separation and independence from the father serves as a symbolic ending to their dependence on him and a step towards personal agency and autonomy. All three texts include episodes of sons' confrontation or rejection of their fathers, from the awful argument at the end of *Wie ich vom Ausschneiden loskam* to

⁴ Schramm's description of the *Arbeitsamt* (FB 47-54) is sharply critical, comparing it to GDR bureaucracy, pointing out the hypocrisy and arbitrariness of the system, disparaging the employees. But although Karl must slog through the process, he is eventually rewarded with contact information for a job.

Karl's 'forbidden' relationship with his sister Janni in *Fitchers Blau*⁵ to Klaus's crushing of his dead father's genitals in *Helden wie wir*. These experiences are turning points in the lives of sons, signaling an end to the father's larger-than-life role and the beginning of a son's independent participation in society. Situated chronologically at or near the end of the narration, these scenes also mark the end of the depiction of the father-son relationship and the beginning of an exclusive focus on the *son*'s actions – be it Karl's participation in squatters' protests or Klaus's star role in the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Because daughters are not portrayed as 'competing' with their fathers (hoping to confront or defeat him), their relationships generally do not come to the sort of climax as those between fathers and sons. Instead, daughters continue to seek a connection, affection or forgiveness from these emotionally unavailable men. In several texts, this hope seems defeated – such as Ernst von Haßlau's wordless defection to the West in *Tanz am Kanal* or Konrad Gröbers's last words "Halt die Klappe" in *Lügen und schweigen*. But in *Lügen und schweigen*, Vera manages in her own way to make peace with her father after his death. For Mila in *Andere Umstände*, unification brings new opportunities for contact and closeness with her father in West Berlin, as is illustrated by his clumsy but caring interaction with her after Viktor's death. Although the final scene of the text finds Mila on the run in San Francisco, she has not irrevocably severed ties to her father. And in *Moskauer Eis* it can even be inferred that Annja helps bring her father (and their relationship) 'back from the dead', as is evidenced by the empty deep freeze and Annja's disappearance.

⁵ Josef had expected that *he* would be the person to introduce his two children to each other. He actually responds to seeing Karl and Janni together with the statement „Ihr dürft euch nicht kennen“ (FB 306).

This guarded optimism is also reflected in the two post-unification romantic relationships, that of the protagonist and Manuela in *Wie ich vom Ausschneiden loskam* and Vera and Vincent in *Lügen und schweigen*. In contrast to pre-unification relationships, which openly reflect and reproduce damaging attitudes toward authority and domination, these two relationships share a sense of newness and freedom: freedom from oppressive definitions of masculine/feminine (*Wie ich vom Ausschneiden loskam*) and from confining ideas of East/West (*Lügen und schweigen*). Neither relationship is without its flaws, but as the only romantic relationships in these texts which do not end, they simultaneously serve as a plea for and offer hope of a new understanding of authority, gender and relationships.

Directions for Further Research

Perhaps the most obvious topic for further research would be an examination of the mothers in these texts. While the figure of the father is clearly associated with issues of state and personal authority, mothers are predominantly portrayed within the context of the family. This use of the traditional association father/public sphere-mother/private sphere underscores the continuity of long-established conventions and attitudes about family, childrearing, and gender roles in the GDR. In contrast to GDR literary texts such as Irmtraud Morgner's *Leben und Abenteuer der Trobadora Beatriz* (1974), the short story collection *Geschlechtertausch* (1980),⁶ or Helga Königsdorf's *Respektloser Umgang* (1986), which portray women actively seeking new definitions of family and male-female relationships, these post-unification texts construct very limited mother figures (many of whom belong to the protagonist generation of the texts mentioned above). This can be partly attributed to the fact that these women are presented

⁶ The collection contains stories by Sarah Kirsch, Irmtraud Morgner and Christa Wolf.

predominantly in their role *as mothers* to the protagonists, but it also casts new light on the role of women in the GDR. The mothers in *Tanz am Kanal* and *Helden wie wir* are not employed and therefore ‘limited’ to their role within the home, and the mothers in the remaining five texts – while fitting the GDR image of working women – are never directly depicted within the workplace. Mothers in these texts also rarely interact with institutional authority such as teachers, police, or government officials. Their role is primarily their interaction with their children and husbands/boyfriends. They contribute to the formation of a child’s relation to authority via their childrearing methods (particularly the mother in *Helden wie wir*) and their relationship with their distant, domineering or even abusive male partners.

A smaller future project would be to analyze the depiction of the events of November 1989, particularly the opening of the Berlin Wall. In *Helden wie wir*, Klaus plays a central role in bringing down the Wall, and Brussig devotes an entire chapter to the surrounding events. At the other extreme are *Lügen und schweigen*, in which November 9 is never directly mentioned, or *Tanz am Kanal*, which obliquely relates a conversation between two villagers: “In Teterow sünd die Straten vull mit Lüd; die trecken dörch de Stadt, dat geiht los!” (TK 115). It would be interesting to examine any possible correlation between the importance (space) assigned the events surrounding the fall of the Wall and the level of confrontation with or criticism of post-unification Germany. Is November 1989 portrayed as a symbol of continuity, frustration, or promise? Do the individual experiences of protagonists during those days correspond to their later impressions of and attitudes toward the unified country?

Finally, it will be fascinating to return to these authors in five or ten years and read any ensuing texts in comparison with these father-child stories. Will these writers continue to (implicitly) challenge the dominance of established GDR authors and West German viewpoints? Will their childhood and youth in the GDR continue to figure largely in their writing? Will issues of authority repeatedly emerge? And as the (GDR) father generation ages and dies, will these authors produce autobiographical texts which more directly confront the individual father rather than using him as a rhetorical figure? The answers obviously remain to be seen as the legacy of the GDR is experienced, interpreted, and re-membered.

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