

European Studies Research Institute

Josefine DOLLE

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**The Work of Christa Wolf Post-Unification in
the Light of the 'Deutsch-Deutscher
Literaturstreit' and Wolf's Stasi Revelations**

Josefine DOLLE

University of Salford,

European Studies Research Institute

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an examination of the extent to which the work of Christa Wolf post-unification can be interpreted as Wolf's response to the attacks on her in the 'deutsch-deutscher Literaturstreit' of 1990 and to the negative publicity generated by her Stasi revelations in January 1993. This thesis will also consider Wolf's post-unification work in the context of her characteristic aesthetic of 'subjektive Authentizität'.

Chapter One examines the nature of the accusations levelled against Wolf in both the 'Literaturstreit' and the media furore following her Stasi revelations, notably the allegations of complicity with the SED regime and prolonged allegiance to socialist ideals. The chapter also discusses criticism, expressed in these controversies, of Wolf's writing as *littérature engagée*.

Chapter Two analyses the collection *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou* (1994) which, with its emphasis on Wolf's own sense of changing status as a writer in post-unification Germany and her concern with 'Vergangenheitsbewältigung', can be read as Wolf's explicit response to issues raised in the controversies.

Chapter Three considers the collection *Hierzulande Andernorts* (1999), where Wolf's concern with 'Vergangenheitsbewältigung', in the sense of both personal and collective experience of the GDR, continues but where her responses to issues in the controversies are conveyed more subtly, whilst additionally providing insight into Wolf's reflections on *littérature engagée* and its relevance to her own distinct narrative concept of 'subjektive Authentizität'.

Chapter Four analyses the novel *Medea. Stimmen* (1996) which, with its focus on the 'rehabilitation' of a mythical figure and the theme of victimisation, continues Wolf's preoccupation with the broader theme of going back to the past in order to confront unresolved issues in the present.

Chapter Five examines the narrative *Leibhaftig* (2002) which, with the reworking of Wolf's memories of the GDR as well as the Third Reich and the treatment of the theme of guilt for the failure of the utopian socialist project in the GDR, constitutes not only Wolf's continued concern with 'Vergangenheitsbewältigung' at a personal level but also a reassertion of Wolf's concept of 'subjektive Authentizität'.

The conclusion will propose a detailed study of Wolf's final novel *Stadt der Engel oder The Overcoat of Dr. Freud* (2010) as the natural progression for future research, and in the context of a contribution to the nascent field of memory studies.

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This project has been a long personal journey, not least because, for the greater part, it was undertaken alongside a demanding full-time job, yet a journey which has been a personally enriching experience.

I dedicate this thesis to my father.

INTRODUCTION

Context

‘Was bleibt aber, stiften die Dichter’¹

When East German writer Christa Wolf (b. 1929) passed away on 1st December 2011, major German newspapers, rather than simply announcing her demise, tended to break the news with headlines singing her praises, such as ‘Eine Frau mit hochanständigem Charakter’, ‘Christa Wolf – die Leibhaftige von Weltrang’, ‘Schwäche wusste sie in Stärke zu verwandeln’, ‘Eine Sozialistin, die im Sozialismus aneckte’.² In stark contrast, the publication in June 1990 of Christa Wolf’s narrative *Was bleibt* (*What Remains*),³ which she had written in 1979, prompted criticism of the author in major West German newspapers, with captions proclaiming, for example, ‘Mangel an Feingefühl’, “Dem Druck des härteren, strengeren Lebens standhalten”: Auch eine Studie über den autoritären Charakter’, ‘Was bleibt, das ist die Scham’.⁴ Given that the subject matter of *Was bleibt* is a fictionalised portrayal of Wolf’s experiences of being under surveillance by the East German state security police (the *Staatssicherheit*, or ‘Stasi’ for short), *and* given that the narrative’s publication – just a few months before the GDR was to be subsumed into a unified Germany – coincided, as Georgina Paul emphasises, with the onset of ‘public discussion

¹ Friedrich Hölderlin, ‘Andenken’, *Werke*, Stuttgart: Cotta, 1953, 2: 196-198. ‘What remains, however, is what writers contribute’ (my translation), here 198.

² See *Die Zeit*, 1.12.2011; *Die Welt*, 1.12.2011; *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 1.12.2011; *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 5.12.2011.

³ Christa Wolf, *Was bleibt*, Munich: Luchterhand, 1993 (first printed Frankfurt a.M.: Luchterhand, 1990), henceforth referred to as WB; *What Remains and Other Stories*, translated by Heike Schwarzbauer and Rick Takvorian, London: Virago, 1993.

⁴ See *Die Zeit*, 1.6.1990; *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 2.6.1990; *Die Welt*, 23.6.1990.

on the corrosive effects' of the Stasi 'on GDR society',⁵ it was not surprising that the text and its author came under scrutiny in the West German press. The fact that, of the East German writers who had remained in the GDR until the end, Christa Wolf was not only the most prominent but also the first to release a text so explicitly treating the theme of Stasi operations added resonance to the media debate on *Was bleibt*.⁶ What was surprising to some observers, though, was the vehemence of a debate which progressed quickly from the review of a single literary text and its formerly highly-rated author into what became known as the 'deutsch-deutscher Literaturstreit',⁷ '[eine] Kontroverse, die [...] das nachkriegsdeutsche Literatursystem vielleicht am nachhaltigsten erschütterte',⁸ as Robert Weninger contends.

Contrary to what the expression might suggest, the 'deutsch-deutscher Literaturstreit' of 1990 was not a debate conducted along the fault lines of East

⁵ Georgina Paul, "'Ich, Seherin, gehörte zum Palast": Christa Wolf's Literary Treatment of the Stasi in the Context of her Poetics of Self-Analysis', in Paul Cooke and Andrew Plowman (eds.), *German Writers and the Politics of Culture. Dealing with the Stasi*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, 87-106, here 87.

⁶ It should be noted that 1990 also saw publications by two ex-GDR writers based on excerpts from their respective author's Stasi files: Erich Loest's autobiographical work *Der Zorn des Schafes* and Reiner Kunze's documentary text *Deckname Lyrik*. Both writers had emigrated to the Federal Republic of Germany, in 1981 and 1977 respectively, and in their 1990 publications both focused on those periods in their lives when they had been subjected to intensive surveillance by the Stasi. For scholarly analyses of the theme of the Stasi in German literature of the 1990s, see Brockmann, Stephen, *Literature and German Unification*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, 80-108, here 80f; and Paul Cooke, *Representing East Germany since Unification. From Colonization to Nostalgia*, Oxford and New York: Berg, 2005, 61-101.

⁷ See, for example, Wolfgang Emmerich, *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR*, Leipzig: Gustav Kiepenheuer, 1996, 462. The articles which comprised the debate are anthologised in Thomas Anz (ed.), *"Es geht nicht um Christa Wolf": Der Literaturstreit im vereinten Deutschland*, Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1995 (first printed Munich: Spangenberg, 1991), henceforth referred to as Anz; Karl Deiritz and Hannes Krauss (eds.), *Der deutsch-deutsche Literaturstreit oder 'Freunde, es spricht sich schlecht mit gebundener Zunge'*, Hamburg and Zurich: Luchterhand, 1991.

⁸ Robert Weninger, *Streitbare Literaten. Kontroversen und Eklats in der deutschen Literatur von Adorno bis Walser*, Munich: Beck, 2004, 133. In his analysis of twelve major post-1945 German literary controversies, Weninger focuses on the controversies surrounding Thomas Mann, Theodor W. Adorno, Rolf Hochhuth, Emil Staiger, Heinrich Böll, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Thomas Bernhard, Christa Wolf, Botho Strauß, Peter Handke, Martin Walser and Günter Grass, but excludes the debates surrounding Peter Weiss's *Die Ermittlung*, the 'Gruppe 47', Max Frisch's *Wilhelm Tell für die Schule*, Elfriede Jelinek's literary works, W.G. Sebald's *Luftkrieg und Literatur*, or any debates relating to GDR literature.

German as opposed to West German commentators about the respective merits of the literature produced in the East and the West during Germany's forty years of division. What began as an attack on Christa Wolf in the leading West German newspapers the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and *Die Zeit* at the time of the release of *Was bleibt* developed rapidly into a critical assault by Western commentators on GDR literature and 'critical' GDR writers such as Wolf who remained committed to socialist ideals. The debate then extended into a broader discussion of German literature in the post-1945 period and of the notion of an 'aesthetics of political conviction'⁹ (*Gesinnungsästhetik*), a notion which was seen by some Western critics as having tainted literary production in both the East and the West (particularly in the case of the latter implicating left-leaning writers, even a writer such as Heinrich Böll who had dominated mainstream literature in the Federal Republic of Germany). In the course of this discussion Wolf was subjected to further criticism as the epitome of *Gesinnungsästhetik*.¹⁰

A second wave of attacks on Christa Wolf in the German press emerged in January 1993 with the disclosure, triggered by the official release of the author's Stasi file by the *Gauck-Behörde*,¹¹ that she had been an 'unofficial

⁹ Stuart Taberner (ed.), *The Novel in German since 1990*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, 1.

¹⁰ With reference to West German literary critics' appraisal of German literature in the post-1945 period, Ulrich Greiner criticised what he saw as an endorsement of literature more preoccupied with its moral and political message than its aesthetic qualities: 'Es bestand die Übereinkunft, daß die deutschen Schriftsteller (die linken, die engagierten, die kritischen) das Gute gewollt, gesagt und geschrieben haben. Und die Literaturkritik ist dieser Übereinkunft gefolgt, indem sie *nicht ästhetisch geurteilt hat, sondern moralisch und politisch*' (my emphasis, JD). Ulrich Greiner, 'Die deutsche Gesinnungsästhetik. Noch einmal: Christa Wolf und der deutsche Literaturstreit. Eine Zwischenbilanz', *Die Zeit*, 2.11.1990.

¹¹ For details of the origins and operations of this government agency charged with regulating public access to the personal files on victims and collaborators of the Stasi regime, and specific references to the case of Christa Wolf, see, for example, Paul Cooke, op.cit., 65-67. The *Gauck-Behörde* (Gauck-Agency) derived its name from the GDR Protestant minister and political activist Joachim Gauck who was

collaborator' (*Inoffizielle Mitarbeiterin* or *IM*) with the Stasi from 1959 until 1962. What was ignored by the German press, though, was the considerably larger file which the Stasi had compiled on her as an object of surveillance from 1969 onwards. As Paul notes with reference to the *IM* revelations, whilst Wolf's decision to publish an unabridged version of her *IM* file¹² represented an attempt to 'defuse public disapprobation', her former position as the GDR's most internationally acclaimed writer seemed 'irrevocably damaged'.¹³ However, after the foundation of the Berlin Republic in 1998-1999, as Dennis Tate observes, Wolf regained her 'status as a major author of post-1945 German literature',¹⁴ and substantial new material has been published about her life and literary work which has contributed to this reassessment of her position as a writer in post-unification Germany.¹⁵ This thesis will offer a further contribution to the 'rehabilitation'¹⁶ of Christa Wolf after what has been

mandated to set up the agency in 1990 and ran it until 2000, and who was to become Federal President of Germany in 2012. The German freedom of information legislation concerning Stasi documents, which came into effect on 1st January 1992, granted citizens general access to their personal (victim) Stasi files, but not at that time to any *IM* files the Stasi might have held.

¹² Hermann Vinke (ed.), *Akteneinsicht Christa Wolf: Zerrspiegel und Dialog*, Hamburg: Luchterhand, 1993, henceforth referred to as A. Whereas the Stasi files covering the years when Wolf was under surveillance total forty-two volumes, there are just two folders detailing her activities as an *IM*. These two folders comprise 137 pages, twenty of which relate to Wolf's informal meetings with Stasi operatives. See A, 252.

¹³ Georgina Paul, 'Christa Wolf's *Medea. Stimmen (Medea. A Modern Retelling)*', in Stuart Taberner (ed.), *The Novel in German since 1990*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, 64-78, here 64.

¹⁴ Dennis Tate, *Shifting Perspectives. East German Autobiographical Narratives before and after the End of the GDR*, New York: Camden House, 2007, 195.

¹⁵ Tate, op.cit., draws attention to the publication of the twelve-volume edition of Wolf's *Werke* (1999-2001), edited and extensively annotated by Sonja Hilzinger, the appearance of two new biographies of the author (Jörg Magenau, *Christa Wolf. Eine Biographie*, Berlin: Kindler, 2002; and Peter Böhig, *Christa Wolf. Eine Biographie in Bildern und Texten*, Munich: Luchterhand, 2004), and the release of Wolf's volume of diary entries *Ein Tag im Jahr, 1960-2000*, Munich: Luchterhand, 2003, which includes some hitherto unseen material. We can now add to this list Sonja Hilzinger's biography of *Christa Wolf*, Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2007, and the posthumous publication of Wolf's diary text *Ein Tag im Jahr im neuen Jahrhundert, 2001-2011*, Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2013.

¹⁶ Tate, op.cit., 196.

described by some scholars as her ‘vilification’¹⁷ at the hands of the German press in the early 1990s.

Detailed discussion of the ‘deutsch-deutscher Literaturstreit’¹⁸ and of the accusations levelled at Christa Wolf in the 1993 media controversy¹⁹ will be limited to the first chapter. The overriding aim of this thesis is to explore the extent to which Wolf’s post-unification work was shaped by both the ‘Literaturstreit’ of 1990 and the controversy of 1993, and Chapter One will highlight significant issues arising from these controversies, issues to which I will return in subsequent chapters in the course of an examination of Wolf’s essays and prose in the post-1990 period. Through close analysis of four texts published between 1994 and 2002 – *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou* (1994), *Medea. Stimmen* (1996), *Hierzulande Andernorts* (1999) and *Leibhaftig* (2002) – and by way of pertinent references to the diary text *Ein Tag im Jahr* (2003) as well as references to the novel *Stadt der Engel oder The Overcoat of Dr. Freud* (2010), this thesis will contend that the attacks in the German press in the early 1990s left clearly discernible marks on the literary work of a writer whose stock in trade had been authenticity and whose characteristic aesthetic of ‘subjektive Authentizität’ continued beyond the lifetime of the GDR, indeed until her death.

¹⁷ See, for example, Paul, “‘Ich, Seherin, gehörte zum Palast’: Christa Wolf’s Literary Treatment of the Stasi in the Context of her Poetics of Self-Analysis”, op.cit., 87; Catherine Smale, *Phantom Images: The Figure of the Ghost in the Work of Christa Wolf and Irina Liebmann*, Oxford: MHRA, 2013, 34.

¹⁸ For book-length analyses of the debate, see Bernd Wittek, *Der Literaturstreit im sich vereinigenden Deutschland*, Marburg: Tectum, 1997; Kerstin Dietrich, “DDR-Literatur” im Spiegel der deutsch-deutschen Literaturdebatte: “DDR-Autorinnen” neu bewertet, Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 1998, particularly 65-107. See also Robert Weninger’s review of the ‘Literaturstreit’, op.cit., 133-148.

¹⁹ The major articles which constitute the 1993 journalistic debate are reproduced in Hermann Vinke, op.cit., as are the contents of Wolf’s *IM* file. The volume also documents responses from Wolf herself as well as those who expressed support.

‘Subjektive Authentizität’

Since the framework of ‘subjektive Authentizität’ underpins discussions in this thesis covering Wolf’s prose writing post-unification, some significant aspects will be explained here.²⁰ In her essay ‘Lesen und Schreiben’, written in 1968, Wolf identifies a fourth dimension, ‘die vierte, “wirkliche” [Dimension] des Erzählers’,²¹ as key to her concept of ‘Prosa’. She refers to it in her essay by way of analogy with the fourth dimension in relativity theory where it represents a temporal dimension. It is, by Wolf’s definition, the dimension ‘der Tiefe, der Zeitgenossenschaft, des unvermeidlichen Engagements’ (DA, 487) through which the author demonstrates her commitment to the time and the place in which she writes. Wolf’s facet of ‘Tiefe’ constitutes, as Paul highlights, an ‘explicitly psychological category’,²² and is linked to ‘a utopian impulse’²³ in human beings to reach beyond perceived limitations to self-fulfilment. As Wolf posits:

Tiefe [ist] das Resultat von unbefriedigten Bedürfnissen, daraus entstehenden Spannungen, Widersprüchen und unerhörten Anstrengungen des Menschen, über sich selbst hinauszuwachsen oder, vielleicht: sich zu erreichen. (DA, 467)²⁴

²⁰ For a particularly nuanced analysis of the theoretical framework for the definition of ‘subjektive Authentizität’ and Wolf’s ‘subjektive Authentizität’ in practice, see Tate, op.cit., 19-25 and 194-235 respectively. See also Georgina Paul’s essay “‘Aber erzählen läßt sich nichts ohne Zeit’: Time and Atemporality in Christa Wolf’s Subjective Authentic Narratives”, in David Clarke and Axel Goodbody (eds.), ‘The Self in Transition. East German Autobiographical Writing Before and After Unification. Essays in Honour of Dennis Tate’, *German Monitor*, No 75, Amsterdam and New York: Rodolpi, 2012, 109-121. A full discussion of the principle of ‘subjektive Authentizität’ can be found in Georgina Paul, “‘Subjective Authenticity”. Contemporaneity and Commitment in the works of Christa Wolf” (Oxford University, 1990).

²¹ Christa Wolf, ‘Lesen und Schreiben’, in *Die Dimension des Autors: Essays und Aufsätze, Reden und Gespräche 1959-1985*, Frankfurt a.M.: Luchterhand, 1990, 2: 487 (first printed by Luchterhand in 1987), henceforth referred to as DA.

²² Paul, “‘Aber erzählen läßt sich nichts ohne Zeit”: Time and Atemporality in Christa Wolf’s Subjective Authentic Narratives”, op.cit., 111.

²³ Ibid, 112.

²⁴ Quoted by Paul, ibid.

Engaging in the dynamics of the human psyche ('Tiefe'), as Paul comments, is seen by Wolf as a 'moral imperative'²⁵ for the prose writer. In a 1972 interview, Wolf herself explicitly states that examining 'die Bedingungen [...], in denen sich der Mensch als moralisches Wesen selbst verwirklichen kann' (DA, 765) is one of literature's functions.²⁶

For Wolf, Georg Büchner's novella *Lenz*, which she calls 'den Anfang und [...] den Höhepunkt der modernen deutschen Prosa' (DA, 486) and 'mein Ideal von Prosa',²⁷ exemplifies, as Tate states, the 'effective exploitation'²⁸ of the fourth dimension. Not only does Wolf admire Büchner's *Lenz* for the impact created by the 'phantastische Genauigkeit' (DA, 488), she also views Büchner as the model of an author for whom writing is the medium 'sich mit der Zeit zu verschmelzen in dem Augenblick, da beide ihre dichteste, konfliktreichste und schmerzhafteste Annäherung erfahren' (DA, 488). This fusion of the prose writer with the most challenging and most painfully felt aspects of the times can, Wolf suggests, most appropriately be expressed through subtle switches in narrative perspective from the third to the first person narrator, a narrative technique she borrowed from Büchner:

Komplizierte Erzählstrukturen, die [...] hervorgebracht werden, haben nichts mit Willkür zu tun – so, wie Georg Büchner auch nicht zufällig unvermittelt, von einem Satz zum anderen vom 'Er' zum 'Ich' übergehen kann. (DA, 487)

Wolf's use of this narrative technique will be illustrated in the discussions on her narrative *Leibhaftig* in Chapter Five of this thesis.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ See 'Unruhe und Betroffenheit. Gespräch mit Joachim Walther', in DA, 765.

²⁷ Ibid, 758.

²⁸ Tate, op.cit., 23.

The interrelatedness, in Wolf's fourth dimension, of the aspects of 'Tiefe', 'Zeitgenossenschaft' and 'Engagement' influences Wolf's choice of a recurrent theme in her prose: the link between past and present. 'Lesen und Schreiben' evidences Wolf's preoccupation with how to portray the interrelationship between past and present in her 'Prosa' and, equally importantly, with how to depict this interrelationship through the prism of the author's own life experience. Crucially, as Wolf explains in the fourth section of 'Lesen und Schreiben', entitled '*Medaillons*' (Wolf's italics), drawing on the author's own life experience does not simply equate to presenting personal recollections – the '*Medaillons*' (DA, 478) – as the story of the author's life. Instead, 'Prosa' is seen as the medium for a critical exploration of the relationship between personal history and collective history. By projecting the concerns of history at large onto the narrator, as Catherine Smale points out, emphasis is placed on depicting the 'personal [...] effects of collectively experienced events',²⁹ and, one might add, in ways that resonate with the lives of readers: 'Prosa [...] sollte anderen Mut machen zu ihren Erfahrungen' (DA, 481). This emphasis on the active part played by the author in transmitting collective experience is central to Wolf's narrative technique of 'subjektive Authentizität', and is bound up with the idea of responsibility. As Michelle Mattson asserts when she accentuates the notion of remembering as moral activity in the author's work, Wolf's 'efforts to historicise [...] seek to bring the past closer to the present, to examine the motives of those living at the time and to specify their level of responsibility'.³⁰ Wolf herself

²⁹ Smale, op.cit., 9.

³⁰ Michelle Mattson, *Mapping Morality in Postwar German Women's Fiction: Christa Wolf, Ingeborg Drewitz, and Grete Weil*, Rochester and New York: Camden House, 2010, 103.

highlights the significant effort required on the part of the author in the process of remembering since '[s]ich-erinnern ist gegen den Strom schwimmen, [...] gegen den scheinbar natürlichen Strom des Vergessens, anstrengende Bewegung' (DA, 480).

Whilst the narrative concept of 'subjektive Authentizität' with its facility to reflect on collectively experienced events through the voice of the narrator can be perceived as a medium of reappraisal, in 'Lesen und Schreiben', as Tate comments, Wolf also acknowledges the 'problematic nature of individual memory processes', the way in which human beings tend to construct an interpretation of the past 'to fit their own needs'.³¹ This idea is, I believe, expressed by Wolf when she states: 'man muß viel vergessen und viel umdenken und umdeuten, ehe man sich immer und überall ins rechte Licht gerückt hat' (DA, 479). This implicitly poses a challenge to Wolf's narrative project since she explicitly defines the prose writer's task in the creative process as promoting the truth: 'wahrheitsgetreu zu erfinden auf Grund eigener Erfahrung' (DA, 481).³² Indeed, as this thesis will contend, the fact that she became the target of a wave of hostile criticism following the publication of *Was bleibt* in the summer of 1990 could only happen because, to a greater extent than any of her contemporaries, the narrative concept on which her work is based professes the pursuit of truthfulness and the importance, as a writer, of maintaining moral integrity. As discussions in this thesis on the collections *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou* and *Hierzulande Andernorts* in Chapter Two and Chapter Three respectively will show, reflections on the importance of

³¹ Tate, op.cit., 2.

³² Quoted by Tate, *ibid.*

'Wahrheit' abound in Wolf's post-unification literary work. In the novel *Medea Stimmen*, to be discussed in Chapter Four, this is indeed an abiding preoccupation.

The recognition that each moment in the passage of time '[trägt] eine enorme Menge und Vielschichtigkeit an Erlebnismöglichkeiten in sich' (DA, 467) leads Wolf to reflect on the impetus which drives the choice of material for her narrative projects, her 'Wahl des Stoffes' (DA, 487). In 'Lesen und Schreiben', as already mentioned, she alludes to the imperative as a writer to fuse with the most challenging and most painfully felt aspects of the times. In the 1972 interview with the GDR writer Joachim Walther, entitled 'Unruhe und Betroffenheit',³³ she concedes that her impetus for embarking on a narrative project is paradoxically generated by her innate degree of resistance to confronting traumatic experiences in her own life. Yet as Wolf suggests in the interview, she increasingly came to view the process of creative writing in terms of working through particularly challenging and painful moments in her life, the 'sore points' as she calls them:

Es [geht] mir immer um den wunden Punkt [...], der für mich im Moment der wunde Punkt ist. Und es kann sein, daß es auch andere so empfinden – das ist der Glücksfall. Dann setzt natürlich der Streit darüber ein, ob man das soll; ob man die wunden Punkte ruhen lassen soll, damit sie besser heilen, oder ob sie im Gegenteil schmerzen sollen, um in der Gesellschaft Kräfte zu mobilisieren, die dem Heilungsprozeß zu Hilfe kommen. [...] Für mich und meine Arbeit habe ich diesen Streit entschieden. (DA, 770)³⁴

Paul comments that, for Wolf, confronting 'die wunden Punkte' in her personal experience through a 'process of painful self-analysis' was a

³³ See 'Unruhe und Betroffenheit. Gespräch mit Joachim Walther', in DA, 751-772.

³⁴ Quoted by Paul, "'Ich, Seherin, gehörte zum Palast": Christa Wolf's Literary Treatment of the Stasi in the Context of her Poetics of Self-Analysis', op.cit., 89.

'prerequisite for the process of healing'.³⁵ Because of the socially symbolic value of this process of painful self-analysis – in other words because of the potential identification of the reader with the fictional portrayal of Wolf's personal experience – the healing process was also seen, Paul adds, in terms of its 'social potential'.³⁶ When, in 'Unruhe und Betroffenheit', Wolf draws attention to the importance of reflecting on the shortcomings of her particular generation – the generation that had spent its formative years under National Socialism and that embraced communism as its opposite after the Second World War (the 'mittlere Generation der DDR') – she reiterates her commitment to a form of 'Prosa' which, whilst drawing on personal experience, could nevertheless claim broader significance on account of its paradigmatic character:

[D]ie Anläufe dieser Generation [interessieren mich], die Leistung, aber auch ihr Versagen und das, was ihr versagt wird; was man ihr schuldig bleibt, aber auch, was sie anderen schuldig bleibt [...] Also: wie es um das *Gewissen* dieser Generation bestellt ist. Das ist anstrengende Befragung und Selbstbefragung. (DA, 767) [my emphasis, JD]

Wolf takes it upon herself to complete the process of painful self-analysis, but she also asserts that the concept of conscience ('Gewissen'), or its alter ego responsibility, is predicated on the collective experience of her particular generation. She modifies her remarks by adding:

Ich denke nicht, daß meine Generation wichtiger ist als andere vor ihr oder nach ihr. Nur glaube ich, kein Älterer und kein Jüngerer wird erzählen können, was für unsere Generation die wichtigen Punkte gewesen sind. Und natürlich hofft man, daß das eigene Generationserlebnis interessant auch für andere Generationen ist. (DA, 767)

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid, 90.

When she expresses her desire to stand up and explain her generation to the next, she seems to be challenging readers to engage in their own critical, self-reflective practice.

Yet it was not until the interview with the GDR critic Hans Kaufmann in 1973, entitled ‘Subjektive Authentizität. Gespräch mit Hans Kaufmann’,³⁷ in the context of a discussion of her project *Kindheitsmuster* (1976) which focuses on Wolf’s experience of growing up in the Third Reich, that she uses the specific phrase ‘Bewältigung der Vergangenheit in der Gegenwart’ (DA, 791) to describe her rationale for the literary reworking of collectively experienced events. It was also in this interview, which together with ‘Lesen und Schreiben’ and ‘Unruhe und Betroffenheit’ forms the third in a triad of texts providing insight into Wolf’s narrative concept, that she coined the phrase ‘subjektive Authentizität’ as a label to express her ideas about literary content and form. Drawing on references from ‘Lesen und Schreiben’, Wolf refines her original remarks to make explicit the interrelationship between her essays – the precursors of her prose texts – and her ‘Prosa’, when she emphasises that:

sich bei mir die einander ablösenden (oder einander durchdringenden) prosaistischen und essayistischen Äußerungen nicht grundsätzlich voneinander [unterscheiden]. Ihre gemeinsame Wurzel ist Erfahrung, die zu bewältigen ist: Erfahrung mit dem ‘Leben’ – also der unvermittelten Realität einer bestimmten Zeit und *einer bestimmten Gesellschaft*. (DA, 774) [my emphasis, JD]

And she adds: ‘Prosa und Essay sind unterschiedliche Instrumente, um unterschiedlichem Material beizukommen, zu verschiedenen, doch nicht einander entgegengesetzten oder einander ausschließenden Zwecken’ (DA, 774-775).

³⁷ See ‘Subjektive Authentizität. Gespräch mit Hans Kaufmann’, in DA, 773-805.

Through writing and publishing *Nachdenken über Christa T.* (1968), a novel drawing on recollections of a 'real-life' friendship, Wolf encountered the difficulties of adhering to the officially sanctioned parameters of the Socialist Realist novel with its 'positiver Held'³⁸ and mechanistic, fictional plots in support of Party-defined political aims. She was seeking a narrative method which would convey the author's depth of personal experience *and* a commitment to the socialist society of the GDR – the 'bestimmt[e] Gesellschaft' (DA, 774) – albeit a commitment to an idealistic socialist community rather than the SED regime. Wolf describes the narrative method to which she aspired as an "eingreifende Schreibweise" (DA, 780) in which the writer does not construct a mechanistic, fictional plot but rather opens herself to the interaction of both her material ('Stoff') and her own authentic experience:

Plötzlich hängt alles mit allem zusammen und ist in Bewegung; für 'gegeben' angenommene Objekte werden auflösbar und offenbaren die in ihnen vergegenständlichten gesellschaftlichen Beziehungen (nicht mehr jenen hierarchisch geordneten gesellschaftlichen Kosmos, in dem Menschenpartikel auf soziologisch oder ideologisch vorgegebenen Bahnen sich bewegen oder von dieser erwarteten Bewegung abweichen); es wird viel schwerer 'ich' zu sagen, und doch zugleich unerlässlich. (DA, 780)³⁹

As Paul comments, with specific reference to the above extract, if one wants to do justice to Wolf's narrative project it is important that her form of writing from *Nachdenken über Christa T.* onwards be understood as a 'dynamic

³⁸ The difficulties Wolf experienced firstly in getting *Nachdenken über Christa T.* published, then defending herself against the post-publication attacks on it by the GDR cultural establishment are documented in Andrea Drescher (ed.), *Dokumentation zu Christa Wolf: "Nachdenken über Christa T."*, Hamburg: Luchterhand, 1991. Magenau provides a detailed biographical account of the same period. See Magenau, op.cit., 192-233.

³⁹ Quoted by Paul, "'Aber erzählen läßt sich nichts ohne Zeit": Time and Atemporality in Christa Wolf's Subjective Authentic Narratives', op.cit., 112-113.

process' rather than an 'end-product'.⁴⁰ Wolf refers to the embedding of personal experience in the fictional construct and its opening up to the active involvement of the reader through this dynamic process of writing as 'innere Authentizität':

[Ich] hatte erlebt, daß der Erzähler [...] gezwungen sein kann, das strenge Nacheinander von Leben, 'Überwinden' und Schreiben aufzugeben und um der inneren Authentizität willen, die er anstrebt, den Denk- und Lebensprozeß, in dem er steht, fast ungemildert [...] im Arbeitsprozeß mit zur Sprache zu bringen. (DA, 778)

She equates this 'innere Authentizität' with 'Echtheit, Glaubwürdigkeit' (DA, 779). In synthesising her thought processes, she concludes: 'Die Suche nach einer Methode, dieser Realität schreibend gerecht zu werden, möchte ich vorläufig "subjektive Authentizität" nennen' (DA, 780-81). This is a process '[der] die Existenz der objektiven Realität nicht nur nicht bestreitet, sondern gerade eine Bemühung darstellt, sich mit ihr produktiv auseinanderzusetzen' (DA, 781).

This focus on the contemporary relevance of her experiences and constructive social criticism led to Wolf being attacked in the 'deutsch-deutscher Literaturstreit' as the prime example of 'Gesinnungsästhetik'.⁴¹ Despite Wolf's suggestion, in 1973, that her terminology was intended to be provisional – 'vorläufig' (DA, 781) – the phrase 'subjektive Authentizität' proved to be of more than temporary durability. As this thesis will demonstrate, it remains an apt label for the aesthetic criteria which govern Wolf's post-unification prose writing. It is important to bear in mind, though, that not all of the aspects which contribute to Wolf's explanation of 'subjektive Authentizität' are visible to the same degree in

⁴⁰ Ibid, 113.

⁴¹ See Greiner, *Die Zeit*, 2.11.1990. See also footnote 10. The origin and the significance of the term 'Gesinnungsästhetik' are explained in Chapter One, 48-51.

each of her post-1990 literary works, as a close analysis of the selected texts to be discussed in this thesis will reveal.

In order fully to appreciate Wolf's narrative concept, it is also necessary briefly to consider Wolf's poetological statements following the 1973 interview with Hans Kaufmann. By the time she came to compose her novel *Kassandra* (1983) Wolf was explicitly aspiring to the ideal of a narrative 'Gewebe'⁴² or 'Netzwerk'.⁴³ the traditional linear storyline is replaced by a 'Netzwerk' in order to assist the human brain in remembering the story, thus creating 'Prosastrukturen [...], die der Arbeit des Gehirns am nächsten kommen'.⁴⁴ In the 2010 interview with *Der Spiegel*, and in the context of a discussion of what was to be her final novel *Stadt der Engel oder The Overcoat of Dr. Freud*, Wolf reiterates the notion of a 'Gewebe' as her narrative ideal:

Mein Wunschbild für einen Text ist ein Gewebe. Ich möchte ein Gewebe herstellen, wo die Fäden ineinanderwirken und übereinanderliegen, und dann entsteht ein Muster, das nicht auf einen Faden gefädelt ist. [...] Mit einer solchen Struktur kann man vieles Ungesagte und Nicht-Sagbare ausdrücken.⁴⁵

Tate observes that Wolf needed to 'reshape' her original autobiographical project of 'subjektive Authentizität' in response to the 'exceptionally political turbulence of [her] life-time'.⁴⁶ As this thesis will show, the 'Literaturstreit' of 1990 and the 1993 controversy constitute landmark events in her career as a writer which, in turn, have left an impact on her subsequent literary work.

⁴² Christa Wolf, *Voraussetzungen einer Erzählung: Kassandra*, Darmstadt and Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1983, 10, henceforth referred to as VK.

⁴³ Ibid, 136.

⁴⁴ 'Schreiben im Zeitbezug. Gespräch mit Aafke Steenhuis', in *Christa Wolf: Im Dialog. Aktuelle Texte*, Frankfurt a.M.: Luchterhand, 1990, 141, henceforth referred to as ID.

⁴⁵ Susanne Beyer, Volker Hage, 'Spiegel-Gespräch. "Wir haben dieses Land geliebt"', *Der Spiegel* [24], 14.6.2010, 135-138, here 136.

⁴⁶ Tate, op.cit., 7.

Outline

Chapter One will therefore focus on an analysis of key issues raised in the 'deutsch-deutscher Literaturstreit', in particular the accusation of complicity with the repressive SED regime – encapsulated in Wolf being labelled as 'Staatsdichterin' – which brought into question her moral integrity and therefore her 'authenticity'; criticism of Wolf's prolonged allegiance to ideals of socialism, which was interpreted as political allegiance to the SED regime and which was seen as evidence of her lack of critical stance as a GDR intellectual; and criticism of Wolf's writing as 'Gesinnungsästhetik', or an aesthetics that pushed moral and political considerations into the foreground of literary endeavours. The initial accusations made against Wolf in the 'Literaturstreit' were compounded by the revelation in 1993 about her brief involvement with the Stasi, also to be examined in Chapter One.

The 1993 media furore not only intensified Wolf's sense of changing status as a writer but also hastened her fall from grace as an East German writer, as is particularly evident in *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou* (1994), a collection of speeches, essays, letters, diary entries and experimental literary texts which constituted Christa Wolf's first literary work since the publication of *Was bleibt*. This collection, to be analysed in Chapter Two, has been described as 'the first sustained response from a formerly well-regarded writer who has undergone a public shaming, in the general press, among her peers, and [...] in her own mind'.⁴⁷ This chapter will show that many of the pieces in this collection can be read as Wolf's explicit response to issues raised in the journalistic

⁴⁷ Joshua Cole, 'The difficulty of saying "I"', *Journal of European Studies*, December 1999, volume 29, 405-416, here 405.

controversies of the early 1990s.

Hierzulande Andernorts (1999), another collection of short texts written largely between 1994 and 1998, to be analysed in Chapter Three, continues Wolf's preoccupation with writing as a response to the 'deutsch-deutscher Literaturstreit' and to the controversy surrounding her Stasi revelations. However, her responses are conveyed more subtly. It is above all the theme of 'Vergangenheitsbewältigung', in the sense of both personal *and* collective experience of the GDR, that permeates the pieces in this collection, thus illustrating her continued commitment to *littérature engagée* and in the context of a unified Germany. The prose piece 'Begegnungen Third Street' constitutes a prime example of Wolf's characteristic aesthetic of 'subjektive Authentizität' and many of the aspects which contribute to her explanation of the concept of 'Prosa' are discernible in this text, as will be shown.

In the novel *Medea. Stimmen* (1996), which forms the focus of Chapter Four, Wolf adopts an approach also evident in the pre-'Wende' work *Kassandra* which entails drawing on a figure from an earlier historical period as a foil for both self-scrutiny and reflection on political reality – in the case of *Medea*. *Stimmen* political reality in post-unification Germany. This novel cannot be read as a direct response to issues raised in the controversies of the early 1990s. However, the portrayal of the protagonist does thematise the issue of victimisation. Furthermore, the theme of going back to the past in order to confront unresolved issues in the present is integral to Wolf's narrative concept of 'subjektive Authentizität', as will be illustrated.

In the narrative *Leibhaftig* (2002), to be examined in Chapter Five, Wolf returns from the imaginary realm of *Medea. Stimmen* to reflect on a particular episode in her own life, a period of serious illness a year before the collapse of the GDR. Although the traumas of the early 1990s are not the determining experience here, the overriding theme is still that of not having left behind the past – a theme which is also at the heart of her 1976 novel *Kindheitsmuster* as expressed in the opening line: ‘Das Vergangene ist nicht tot; es ist nicht einmal vergangen.’⁴⁸ Whereas in *Kindheitsmuster* the emphasis was on Wolf’s experience of growing up in the Third Reich, *Leibhaftig* focuses for the greater part on her memories of personal experience in the GDR. However, the overriding concern is an exploration of the *collective* legacy of National Socialism and the former GDR government.

Whilst the purpose of this thesis is to consider Wolf’s post-unification work up until the publication of *Leibhaftig* in 2002, it is worth noting that her novel *Stadt der Engel oder The Overcoat of Dr. Freud* (2010) continues the theme of ‘Vergangenheitsbewältigung’. As my conclusion will propose, a detailed study of *Stadt der Engel oder The Overcoat of Dr. Freud* linked to the Freudian theory of psychoanalysis would provide further insight into the effects which the controversies of the early 1990s have had on Wolf’s ‘Prosa’ post-unification, also offering in the process a contribution to the nascent field of memory studies.

⁴⁸ Christa Wolf, *Kindheitsmuster*, Munich: Luchterhand, 1993, henceforth referred to as KM. It should be noted that Wolf’s opening lines in *Kindheitsmuster* are remarkably similar to those uttered by one of the protagonists in William Faulkner’s 1951 play *Requiem for a Nun*, Act I Scene iii: ‘The past is never dead; it’s not even past.’

CHAPTER ONE: The 'deutsch-deutscher Literaturstreit' and Christa Wolf's Stasi revelations

Ich wurde 1989 zur Staatsdichterin [der DDR] gemacht vom westlichen Feuilleton, vorher war ich es nicht, weder im Westen, noch im Osten, es hat mich auch keiner so gesehen.⁴⁹

Introduction

Almost ten years after the fall of the Berlin Wall on 9th November 1989, in an interview on *Radio Bremen Zwei* in March 1999 to mark the occasion of her 70th birthday, Christa Wolf responded to the interviewer's comment 'Sie waren die Staatsdichterin der DDR'⁵⁰ with a categorical denial, adding that she was not publicly perceived as 'Staatsdichterin [der DDR]' – a mouthpiece of the GDR regime – until 1989 when the West German media created this image. Wolf's assertion of not having been seen as 'Staatsdichterin' until 1989 cannot be allowed to go unchallenged, given that as early as 1987 she was labelled 'Staatsschriftstellerin'⁵¹ and 'DDR-Staatsdichterin'⁵² by the GDR exile Hans Noll and the West German literary critic Marcel Reich-Ranicki respectively. Both Noll and Reich-Ranicki cited Wolf's alleged withdrawal of her signature from the petition against the extradition of the lyricist Wolf Biermann in November 1976

⁴⁹ 'Ich habe das Leben, das zu mir paßt. Gudrun Boch spricht mit Christa Wolf zum 70. Geburtstag der Autorin', *Radio Bremen Zwei*, 21.3.1999 (manuscript of the conversation)

<http://www.radiobremen.de/online/wolf/gesprach.htm> [Accessed on 21st December 2005]

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ See Hans Noll, 'Die Dimension der Heuchelei', *Die Welt*, 4.7.1987. Hans (Chaim) Noll who, disillusioned with the GDR regime and in conflict with his father, the GDR writer and functionary Dieter Noll, had emigrated to West Berlin in 1984, employed the term 'Staatsschriftstellerin' in his review which followed the 1987 publication of Wolf's volume *Die Dimension des Autors: Essays und Aufsätze, Reden und Gespräche 1959-1985*.

⁵² See Marcel Reich-Ranicki, 'Macht Verfolgung kreativ? Polemische Anmerkungen aus aktuellem Anlaß: Christa Wolf und Thomas Brasch', in *Ohne Rabatt. Über Literatur aus der DDR*, Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1991, 215. Reich-Ranicki's labelling of Wolf as 'DDR-Staatsdichterin' was prompted by her eulogy on the former GDR writer Thomas Brasch, who had emigrated to the Federal Republic of Germany in 1976 and whom Wolf had selected as the winner of the prestigious West German literary Kleist Prize in October 1987.

as evidence of her support of Party-defined cultural policy. In a letter published on 28th November 1987 in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Wolf publicly denied the allegation that she had withdrawn her signature from the Biermann petition when she stated: 'Jeder, der mich kennt, weiß, daß ich meinen Einspruch gegen diese Maßnahme immer aufrechterhalten und auch nicht relativiert habe.'⁵³ This letter was also read out at the 10th Writers' Congress in East Berlin on 4th December 1987. The sequence of these events highlights criticism of Wolf in the West German media before the 'deutsch-deutscher Literaturstreit' was sparked in June 1990, even if it is accepted that, in 1987, the nature of the criticism expressed was unrepresentative of the West's prevailing positive assessment of Wolf.

This chapter will firstly examine the West German media's interest in the GDR's most prominent writer prior to the 'Literaturstreit' of 1990 and the charge that she was the 'Staatsdichterin [der DDR]', with particular reference to the time of the 'Wende' in 1989 as the seeds for the later assault were sown at that time. Secondly, and substantially, this chapter will analyse the nature of the attacks on Wolf that initiated the 'Literaturstreit' in the West German press and will trace the rapid development of the controversy into broader discussions on GDR writers, German literature in the post-1945 period and the notion of 'Gesinnungsästhetik'. Last but not least, this chapter will discuss the nature of the attacks on Wolf in the media furore surrounding her Stasi revelations in 1993.

⁵³ Quoted in Anz, 31.

The 'Wende' and Christa Wolf

As indicated in the introduction to this chapter, an examination of the West German media's interest in Wolf at the time of the 'Wende' is illuminating in terms of revealing issues which re-emerged in the 'deutsch-deutscher Literaturstreit'. The expression 'Wende' or 'Wende-Zeit', as defined in the *Fischer Weltalmanach Sonderband DDR*, denotes the period from the appointment of Egon Krenz as General Secretary of the SED on 18th October 1989 (following Erich Honecker's resignation from the same post of eighteen years standing) until his resignation on 3rd December 1989 and his withdrawal on 6th December 1989 from all of his other positions of public office. The end of Krenz's term of office initiated talks at the 'Runder Tisch' about a new GDR government, involving opposition movement representatives.⁵⁴

These historical references are emphasised here since, at the height of the 'Wende-Zeit' in the large scale demonstration in East Berlin's Alexanderplatz on 4th November 1989, it was Christa Wolf who captured the enthusiasm of the crowds with the pronouncement: 'Stell dir vor, es ist Sozialismus, und keiner geht weg!'⁵⁵ Three weeks later Wolf, together with Stephan Hermlin and Stefan Heym, initiated the appeal 'Für unser Land' which was signed by thirty-one GDR citizens, predominantly intellectuals.⁵⁶ The

⁵⁴ See the *Fischer Weltalmanach Sonderband DDR*, Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1990, 155-187. As Kerstin E. Reimann's analysis relating to the period denoted by the term 'Wende' reveals, scholarly literature varies in terms of the precise time-scale and the events comprised by the term 'Wende'; see Kerstin E. Reimann, *Schreiben nach der Wende – Wende im Schreiben? Literarische Reflexionen nach 1989/90*, Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2008, 22-64, particularly 26-27. The present thesis draws on the definition provided in the *Fischer Weltalmanach Sonderband DDR* as a reference point.

⁵⁵ 'Sprache der Wende', in ID, 120.

⁵⁶ See, for example, Dietrich, op.cit., 67.

signatories to this appeal were pleading for a separate existence of the GDR as 'eine sozialistische Alternative zur Bundesrepublik' based on 'die anti-faschistischen und humanistischen Ideale, von denen wir einst ausgegangen sind'.⁵⁷ This was at a time when thousands of GDR citizens were leaving for West Germany. In initiating this appeal Wolf was already swimming against the tide of opinion within the GDR population that supported unification with the Federal Republic of Germany and that had renounced the opposition movements' aspirations of a reform of the 'real existierender Sozialismus'. It is this display of unwavering belief 'an einen zukunftssträchtigen Kern des Sozialismus'⁵⁸ on the part of GDR writers even after the fall of the Berlin Wall that was criticised in the West German media, first and foremost by the West German literary critic Marcel Reich-Ranicki.

On 30th November 1989, two days after the publication of the appeal 'Für unser Land', Reich-Ranicki introduced his TV show *Das literarische Quartett* by asking 'Wie ist das, haben eigentlich in der DDR die Schriftsteller gesiegt oder versagt?'⁵⁹ The TV discussion centred on the issue of the degree of repression GDR writers were prepared to tolerate in order to maintain an ideological system they considered to be the better one – an issue that was to feature prominently in the 'deutsch-deutscher Literaturstreit'. Reich-Ranicki acknowledged the constraints imposed on writers by the GDR authorities ('[v]iele ihrer Arbeiten konnten nicht erscheinen'⁶⁰). Yet he also argued that, in stark contrast to what he considered to be genuine dissidents such as the

⁵⁷ The appeal 'Für unser Land' was signed on 26th November 1989 and was printed in *Neues Deutschland* on 28th November 1989.

⁵⁸ Anz, 49.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 46.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 47.

Czech writer Václav Havel, 'representative' writers of the GDR accepted privileges, as evidenced by the fact that the GDR authorities allowed them to publish their works in the West, granted them travel permits to the West and permitted them to retain royalties in West German marks. He stated that acceptance of these privileges brought into question their moral integrity: 'Diese Ambivalenz zwischen Schikane und Privilegierung [...] hat diese Schriftsteller gebremst. Sie wurden in gewissem Sinne dort alle, mehr oder weniger, korrumpiert.'⁶¹ What Reich-Ranicki omitted to mention is the fact that as much as eighty per cent of the royalties in West German marks would revert to the GDR Copyright Office, and that writers were also required to pay income tax on any royalties received.⁶²

It should come as no surprise that, even before the publication of *Was bleibt*, Reich-Ranicki had singled out Christa Wolf as a prime example of a GDR writer lacking in moral integrity. As early as 1987, two years before the 'Wende', he had dubbed Wolf the 'DDR-Staatsdichterin, die man schon zweimal mit dem Nationalpreis ausgezeichnet hat',⁶³ adding:

Zugleich läßt sie gern durchblicken, sie sei gar nicht so linientreu, wie sie sich gibt, sie müsse nur – wie in Deutschland oft üblich – manches, was ihr mißfällt, hinnehmen, um Schlimmeres verhüten zu können. Mut und Charakterfestigkeit gehören nicht zu den hervorstechenden Tugenden der geschätzten Autorin Christa Wolf.⁶⁴

Reich-Ranicki's comment on Wolf accepting 'wie in Deutschland oft üblich – manches, was ihr mißfällt [...], um Schlimmeres verhüten zu können' may be

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² See Phillip S. McKnight, *Understanding Christoph Hein*, Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994, 16-17.

⁶³ Marcel Reich-Ranicki, 'Macht Verfolgung kreativ? Polemische Anmerkungen aus aktuellem Anlaß: Christa Wolf und Thomas Brasch', in *Ohne Rabatt. Über Literatur aus der DDR*, Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1991, 215.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

read as a direct reference to Germans who joined the NSDAP with the defence thus 'Schlimmeres verhüten zu können'. In this respect, his comment implicitly raises the issue of complicity with a totalitarian regime, an issue which was also at the heart of the 'Historikerdebatte' conducted in the West German media in the late 1980s.⁶⁵

Three weeks after the fall of the Berlin Wall, in the TV discussion *Das literarische Quartett*, Reich-Ranicki initiated the debate on Wolf, citing as evidence of Wolf's complicity with the SED regime her failure to resign from the SED at the time of the expatriation of Wolf Biermann to the Federal Republic of Germany in 1976 and her continued membership right up to the collapse of the GDR in 1989:

Damals hätte Christa Wolf, ohne etwas zu riskieren, die Partei verlassen können. [...] Und jetzt, wo die SED an Einfluß und Macht sehr, sehr viel eingebüßt hat, jetzt geht sie aus der Partei raus. Ein bißchen zu spät! Jetzt ist es eine lächerliche Geste!⁶⁶

However, Reich-Ranicki did not mention that Wolf had been an inactive member of the SED since 1980 when she was transferred into the 'Parteilgruppe der Akademie', and that she refused to renew her membership with the SED when invited to do so in July 1989.⁶⁷

It is ironic that it should be Reich-Ranicki who threw down the gauntlet given that, between 1948 and 1949 in his official capacity as the Consul in London to the newly founded People's Republic of Poland, he had consented to operate as a Polish secret service agent 'zu ermitteln, was die politischen

⁶⁵ For further information on the 'Historikerdebatte', see page 33 of this thesis.

⁶⁶ Anz, 49.

⁶⁷ See Magenau, *op.cit.*, 367-368.

Emigranten gegen den neuen polnischen Staat unternehmen wollen'.⁶⁸ He justified his activities as having been motivated by his commitment, albeit short-lived, to communist ideals:

Meine ganze Tätigkeit hat niemandem geschadet, wahrscheinlich auch niemandem genutzt. Ich habe die Zeit bis 1950 so und nicht anders gehandelt, weil ich damals an den Kommunismus geglaubt habe.⁶⁹

In the aforementioned TV discussion the point was accepted that those writers who remained in the GDR did so because they were 'im Grunde Sozialisten' and therefore could not be expected 'die SED und ihr System von Grund auf [zu] verwerfen'.⁷⁰ This assessment was reiterated by the dissident and GDR-exile Chaim Noll who, just a few weeks before the opening gambits in the 'deutsch-deutscher Literaturstreit', remarked with reference to prominent GDR writers such as Christa Wolf: 'Sie haben dort geschwiegen, wo ein Schriftsteller sprechen mußte, sie haben Worte gefunden, wo degoutiertes Schweigen angebracht war.'⁷¹ The issue of Wolf's alleged moral failure also resonates strongly in articles published in *Die Welt* in April and May 1990⁷² by Jürgen Serke, who maintained '[daß] der Mut letztendlich nichts anderes war als ein Mut zur Privilegierung'.⁷³

The 'deutsch-deutscher Literaturstreit' and Christa Wolf

The reviews of *Was bleibt* by Ulrich Greiner in *Die Zeit* on 1st June 1990 and by Frank Schirrmacher in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* on 2nd June 1990 –

⁶⁸ Marcel Reich-Ranicki, *Mein Leben*, Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 2000, 322.

⁶⁹ Volker Hage, Mathias Schreiber, *Marcel Reich-Ranicki. Ein biografisches Porträt*, Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1997, 204-205.

⁷⁰ Anz, 49.

⁷¹ Chaim Noll, 'Das lächerliche Pathos alter Schwärmer', *Die Welt*, 12.5.1990.

⁷² See Jürgen Serke, 'Im Karussell der Rechtfertigungen', *Die Welt*, 26.4.1990, and 'Was man mit Worten alles machen kann', *Die Welt*, 3.5.1990.

⁷³ Serke, *Die Welt*, 3.5.1990.

just a few months before German unification on 3rd October 1990 – provided the fuel that ignited the debate on Christa Wolf. Greiner's title 'Mangel an Feingefühl' reinforces the attack on her moral integrity. He reiterates Reich-Ranicki's labelling of Wolf as 'Staatsdichterin der DDR',⁷⁴ and similarly criticises her alleged complicity with a repressive state regime in order to enjoy privileges, thus accusing her of hypocrisy and opportunism. Furthermore, he charges her with 'Mangel [...] an Aufrichtigkeit gegen sich selbst und die eigene Geschichte, einen Mangel an Feingefühl gegenüber jenen, deren Leben der SED-Staat zerstört hat',⁷⁵ by depicting herself, in *Was bleibt*, as a victim of the very forces which, by her advocacy of ideals of socialism and strategic silence on repressive aspects of the SED regime, she had been helping to preserve.

Greiner's indictment of Wolf hinges largely on the text's publication date. The narrative was originally composed in June/ July 1979, and revised for publication in November 1989, as stated in the last words of the text.⁷⁶ Greiner argues that had Wolf published this narrative in 1979, or at least before November 1989, the text would have been a sensation and would have signalled 'das Ende der Staatsdichterin Christa Wolf und vermutlich ihre Emigration'.⁷⁷ As Wolf chose to publish her 1979 composition after the watershed date, in other words after 9th November 1989 when her critique of the Stasi no longer attracted repressive measures, the book was seen as 'nur

⁷⁴ Ulrich Greiner, 'Mangel an Feingefühl', *Die Zeit*, 1.6.1990.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ See also the 'Nachwort' to *Christa Wolf: Werke 10* (2001) where Sonja Hilzinger states 'im November/ Dezember 1989 greift Wolf auf diese Fassung [aus dem Jahre 1979] zurück, die sie mit einigen wenigen stilistischen Korrekturen für den Druck vorbereitet', 322. Hilzinger concludes that Wolf could have spared herself some of the accusations thrown at her in 1990 if she had described the origins of her work more precisely in a postscript.

⁷⁷ Greiner, op.cit.

noch peinlich. Peinlich wie ihr Parteiaustritt zu einem Zeitpunkt, der keine Risiken mehr barg' (Greiner)⁷⁸ and 'bedeutungslos, anachronistisch und hat Züge des Lächerlichen' (Schirmmacher).⁷⁹

Greiner does mention that emigration or expulsion to the West would have been an option and ultimately accuses Wolf of remaining in the GDR until the very end, unwilling to sacrifice her belief in the GDR as the better German state: 'Sie ist dageblieben, hat am Projekt Sozialismus festgehalten'.⁸⁰ Greiner concedes that nobody should reproach Wolf with the 'Irrtum' of having remained faithful to socialism to the last. Nevertheless, he charges her with opportunism for having done so by taking the honours (literary prizes, membership of the Academy of the Arts) and for only leaving the SED in 1989, when there was no longer any risk involved in doing so.⁸¹

Whereas Greiner's article focuses on Wolf's alleged lack of moral integrity, Frank Schirmmacher's essay in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* on 2nd June 1990 centres on a biographical discussion. Schirmmacher assesses the significance of paradigmatic biographical experiences in Wolf's work, in other words paradigmatic experiences of the 'mittlere Generation der DDR', but only to portray Wolf as a prime example of a misguided East German intellectual. For instance, he links Wolf's decision to support the appeal 'Für unser Land' to the decision of her protagonist Rita Seidel, in her first major work *Der geteilte Himmel* (1963), not to follow her lover to West Berlin in 1961 but to stay and help develop the 'demokratischer Sozialismus' in the GDR:

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Frank Schirmmacher, "'Dem Druck des härteren, strengeren Lebens standhalten". Auch eine Studie über den autoritären Charakter', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 2.6.1990.

⁸⁰ Greiner, op.cit.

⁸¹ See ibid.

Anfang November verspricht der Appell Christa Wolfs denen, die in der DDR bleiben, 'kein leichtes, aber ein nützliches und interessantes Leben', 'keinen schnellen Wohlstand, aber Mitwirkung an großen Veränderungen', den 'Aufbau einer wahrhaft demokratischen Gesellschaft', – kurz: all das, was sich Rita im 'Geteilten Himmel' versprach.⁸²

In fact, the title of Schirmmacher's article 'Dem Druck des härteren, strengeren Lebens standhalten' is a direct quotation from *Der geteilte Himmel*, where it is meant as a self-critical comment by the protagonist's lover who flees to West Berlin instead of facing up to the 'Druck des härteren, strengeren Lebens [in der DDR]'.⁸³ Schirmmacher interprets this section of the book as proof of Wolf's political allegiance to the SED regime, though arguably it should be viewed as an indication of her commitment to ideals of socialism and, above all, her allegiance to the people she will not desert. Wolf herself would have considered an escape to the West in 1961 – or, one might add, in subsequent years of the GDR's existence – as an act of cowardice, as evidenced in her post-unification work.⁸⁴

Similarly, when Schirmmacher singles out Wolf as 'die einzige Intellektuelle, die die geistige Souveränität und Selbständigkeit der anderen deutschen Republik zu bezeugen schien',⁸⁵ he sees her not only as the GDR's most prominent author but as *the* intellectual representative of a discredited political system. In effect, he uses her as a foil for a general attack on those GDR writers who supported efforts to retain the GDR as a separate German

⁸² Schirmmacher, op.cit.

⁸³ Christa Wolf, *Der geteilte Himmel*, Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1973 (first printed Halle and Saale: Mitteldeutscher Verlag, 1963), 181, henceforth referred to as GH.

⁸⁴ See in particular 'Von schwachen und stärkeren Stunden – Briefwechsel mit Günter Grass', in *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou*, discussed in Chapter Two; the tribute to Franz Fühmann 'Nirgends sein o Nirgends du mein Land', in *Hierzulande Andernorts*, discussed in Chapter Three; and *Leibhaftig*, discussed in Chapter Five.

⁸⁵ Schirmmacher, op.cit.

state even after 9th November 1989, but he fails to highlight their reformist aspirations. He seems to suggest that, with the GDR itself having collapsed, there should also remain very little of its socialist ideals or its literary icon.

Later on in the controversy Günter de Bruyn would draw attention to Wolf's predicament as an easy target for Western critics, given her international standing as a GDR writer, when he stresses that the attack on Wolf was both illogical and unjust and '[war] nur als Folge ihres großen Erfolges zu begreifen, der zum Denkmalsturz reizt'.⁸⁶ However, in the opening gambits of the 'Literaturstreit' Schirmmacher's assessment of Wolf as an ideologue, a writer whose prime motivation for writing is to foster ideological (socialist) principles, sets the tenor of the attack on Wolf when he asserts 'daß ihr schriftstellerischer Rang weit überschätzt wird'.⁸⁷

Above all Schirmmacher turns his attention to Wolf and GDR writers of her generation. Reflection on generational patterns became a specific issue in the controversy⁸⁸ and, indeed, remained a preoccupation in Wolf's subsequent writing.⁸⁹ It is suggested that the relationship to the GDR of Wolf's generation – the generation that had first-hand experience of National Socialism as children

⁸⁶ Günter de Bruyn, 'Jubelschreie, Trauergesänge', *Die Zeit*, 7.9.1990.

⁸⁷ Schirmmacher, op.cit.

⁸⁸ In May 1990 Martin Ahrends, a representative of the younger generation of GDR writers who had emigrated to the West in 1984, pointed out that the question of 'Dableiben oder Gehen' was not least a generational issue – in his case prompted 'nicht weil ich sie [die ältere Generation] verachtete, sondern weil ich einer anderen Generation angehörte und also die Chance hatte, dem endgültigen Bankrott zu entgehen'. See 'Weshalb es ungerecht ist, den in der DDR geliebten Autoren Feigheit vorzuhalten: Stunde der Abrechnung', *Die Zeit*, 25.5.1990. In contrast, in his article 'Die Heimat der Dissidenten' published in *Freitag* on 27.9.1991, Uwe Kolbe – a representative of the younger generation of GDR writers who remained in the GDR – argues that there was never any genuine opposition in the GDR because representatives of the 'mittlere Generation' simply lacked the courage to challenge the SED regime and contends that intellectuals had only adhered to visions of a socialist utopia in order not to be compelled to form an active opposition movement.

⁸⁹ See in particular the diary-like text 'Begegnungen Third Street' and the speech dedicated to Franz Fühmann 'Nirgends sein o Nirgends du mein Land', contained in *Hierzulande Andernorts* and discussed in Chapter Three; and the narrator's recollections of her contemporary Hannes Urban in *Leibhaftig*, discussed in Chapter Five.

and adolescents in youth movements such as the 'Hitler Jugend' or the 'Bund Deutscher Mädel' ('die mittlere Generation der DDR') – and particularly Wolf herself, constituted 'ein familiäres, fast intimes Verhältnis zu ihrem Staat und seinen Institutionen', ergo a matter of 'Familienverhältnisse von Anfang an'.⁹⁰ Schirmmacher does not mention, however, that first-hand experience of National Socialism as adolescents was not confined to 'die mittlere Generation der DDR' but was shared with the same generation in the Federal Republic of Germany. This might, for instance, explain the West German audience's interest in and possible identification amongst the 'mittlere Generation der BRD' with Wolf at the time she presented her *Frankfurter Vorlesungen* in West Germany in May 1982.⁹¹

Wolf Biermann, in his later contribution to the debate, also deploys the notion of 'Familienverhältnisse' when referring to Christa Wolf's generation in relation to the GDR. However, Biermann turns Schirmmacher's words around by dispelling the image of willing and trusting compliance amongst the 'mittlere Generation der DDR' when he states: 'ja wir waren Familie, bis aufs Blut zerstritten, aber Familie. Und aller Haß, das Gift, die Galle kamen auch aus dieser familiären Verklammerung mit unseren Unterdrückern'.⁹² Instead of depicting an image of compliance of the 'mittlere Generation' with the SED

⁹⁰ Schirmmacher, op.cit.

⁹¹ As Magenau explains: 'Die Vorlesungen wurden zu einem Massenereignis von überwältigenden Ausmaßen. [...] Das tausend Zuhörer fassende Auditorium war jeweils schon eine Stunde vor Beginn dicht besetzt. [...] In der feministischen Zeitschrift "Emma" wurde sie als "unsere Christa" apostrophiert. Das Hessische Fernsehen übertrug die Vorlesungen in voller Länge. Christa Wolf war Kult', Magenau, op.cit., 335. In the exchange of letters with Franz Fühmann, published by the Aufbau-Verlag in 1995, *Christa Wolf - Franz Fühmann: 'Monsieur – wir finden uns wieder'. Briefe 1968-1984*, Wolf describes her experience at the time of delivering her Frankfurt lectures as having been submerged in a 'Strudel von Menschenmassen', 128.

⁹² Wolf Biermann, 'Nur wer sich ändert, bleibt sich treu. Der Streit um Christa Wolf, das Ende der DDR, das Elend der Intellektuellen: Das alles ist auch komisch', *Die Zeit*, 24.8.1990.

regime and its authoritarian structures, Biermann highlights the dichotomy experienced by those GDR writers who shared the same 'historisch[e] Hoffnung' (in a revival of socialism) but who were forced to walk a thin line between 'Widerstand' and 'Anpasserei',⁹³ between opposition and conformity.

Collusion with the state, Schirmmacher argues, is a personal dilemma, yet a dilemma Wolf has in common with other GDR intellectuals of her generation. However, he singles her out once more when he accuses her of being incapable of understanding modern society 'als kompliziertes System konkurrierender Gruppen'; instead he maintains '[s]ie hat die Gesellschaft, in der sie lebte, allem Anschein nach immer nur als größere Variante der kleinbürgerlichen, autoritär aufgebauten Familie verstanden'. Consequently, 'das Schlüsselwort, mit dem Christa Wolf immer wieder politische Sachverhalte interpretiert, heißt denn auch "Generation"'⁹⁴ – which is a view he shares with other commentators.⁹⁵

Schirmmacher attributes Wolf's inability to assess reality objectively to her childhood experience in the Third Reich which, he argues, had sown the seeds for her blind obedience as her feelings of guilt turned into (uncritical) gratitude towards the liberators from fascism. In *Kindheitsmuster* and in her speech upon receiving the Geschwister Scholl Award in 1987 in Munich for her narrative *Störfall*, Wolf herself had already identified the 'Hang zur Übereinstimmung' (KM, 491) in her own generation as resulting from childhood experience, 'die Gewohnheit zu funktionieren, Autoritätsgläubigkeit, Übereinstimmungssucht,

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Schirmmacher, op.cit.

⁹⁵ See, for instance, Wolfgang Emmerich in his article 'Status melancholicus: Zur Transformation der Utopie in der DDR-Literatur', in Heinz Ludwig Arnold (ed.), *Literatur in der DDR: Rückblicke. Text und Kritik Sonderband*, Munich: Text & Kritik, 1991, 232-245, here 234-237.

vor allem aber die Angst vor Widerspruch und Widerstand, vor Konflikten mit der Mehrheit und vor dem Ausgeschlossenwerden aus der Gruppe'.⁹⁶

Schirmmacher points to these admissions by Wolf as significant illustrations of an attitude which prompted her to encourage patient tolerance and endurance of the SED regime and which, in his view, only served to consolidate and lend cultural credibility to a repressive regime. This attitude, he asserts, made her fail in her role as an intellectual.⁹⁷ He echoes Chaim Noll's condemnation that GDR writers, particularly Wolf, were privileged and, unlike their colleagues who left the GDR, did not feel able to break the ties that held in check their 'Angst vor dem Ausgeschlossensein aus der Gruppe'.⁹⁸

Schirmmacher faults her, for instance, for not opposing the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 even though, twenty-one years later, Wolf described her sense of disillusionment in these terms: 'Natürlich hatten wir größere Hoffnungen in den frühen Jahren. 1968 [...] wurde diese Möglichkeit vernichtet. Das haben wir als einen existentiellen Schock erlebt'.⁹⁹ Furthermore, Schirmmacher reasserts the rumour, notably stirred by Marcel Reich-Ranicki in 1987 as mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, that she privately retracted her public objection to Biermann's expatriation.

His criticism of Wolf's loyalty to the GDR – 'Angesichts ihrer Biographie stellt sich ein zweites Mal in der Geschichte des Jahrhunderts die Frage, wie blind Denken und Tat, Literatur und Welt füreinander sein können'¹⁰⁰ – is

⁹⁶ 'Dankrede für den Geschwister-Scholl-Preis', in *Christa Wolf. Essays/ Gespräche/ Reden/ Briefe 1987-2000: Werke 12*, Munich: Luchterhand, 2001, 104-105.

⁹⁷ See Schirmmacher, *op.cit.*

⁹⁸ Noll, *Die Welt*, 12.5.1990.

⁹⁹ 'Schreiben im Zeitbezug. Gespräch mit Aafke Steenhuis', in ID, 135.

¹⁰⁰ Schirmmacher, *op.cit.*

reminiscent of the stance the historian Ernst Nolte expressed in the exchange of arguments with the left-wing intellectual Jürgen Habermas in the 'Historikerdebatte' of the late 1980s in West Germany, in the course of which Nolte, in contrast to Habermas, tended to erase differences between GDR socialism and National Socialism.¹⁰¹ The conduct of GDR writers, Schirmacher maintains, should also dispel the West German myth that after the experience of National Socialism any writer is capable of 'eine stabile, antiautoritäre, kritische Gesinnung [...], die sich im Zweifelsfall bewährt'. He cites Christa Wolf as 'der exemplarische Fall' which demonstrates 'daß die Prägung nie überwunden wurde. Er lehrt auch, wie perfekt der Intellektuelle sich über die Wirklichkeit betrügen kann'.¹⁰² Greiner is more explicit when, in the next stage of the debate, he emphasises the moral and political issue of the 'Mitschuld der Intellektuellen der DDR, um die Mitverantwortung für die zweite deutsche Katastrophe – nach der nationalsozialistischen die stalinistische'.¹⁰³

The comments by Schirmacher and Greiner indicate that the 'deutsch-deutscher Literaturstreit' does not revolve solely around Wolf, but involves post-war German identity in general. However, at the early stage in the 'Literaturstreit' criticism is aimed at GDR intellectuals of Wolf's generation and does not explicitly include West German intellectuals of the same generation. As Magenau observes with reference to Schirmacher's assessment of Christa Wolf:

¹⁰¹ I will be discussing Habermas's counterarguments in the context of the 'Literaturstreit' in Chapter Two, pages 78ff.

¹⁰² Schirmacher, op.cit.

¹⁰³ Ulrich Greiner, 'Keiner ist frei von Schuld. Deutscher Literaturstreit: Der Fall Christa Wolf und die Intellektuellen', *Die Zeit*, 27.7.1990.

Schirmmacher stellte den Kernbestand der sozialistischen Utopie – das Erbe des Humanismus anzutreten, eine solidarische Gesellschaft zu ermöglichen – in Frage und bestritt damit den Erneuerern des Sozialismus die moralische Legitimation.¹⁰⁴

What is surprising in the early reviews by Greiner and Schirmmacher is the vehemence of the attacks. The Christa Wolf of the reviews by Greiner and Schirmmacher bears little resemblance to her earlier persona as constructed by the West German literary establishment which bestowed virtually every major literary award on her, including: the literature prize of the city of Bremen (1977); the Georg Büchner Prize of the German Academy for Language and Literature, Darmstadt (1980); the Friedrich Schiller Memorial Prize of Baden-Württemberg (1983); and the Geschwister Scholl Award (1987).¹⁰⁵ In 1989, Fritz J. Raddatz, an émigré from the GDR to the Federal Republic of Germany, even considered Wolf 'des Nobelpreises würdig'¹⁰⁶ for her novel *Sommerstück*. Both Greiner and Schirmmacher fail to mention any disparity between the image they present of Wolf in their reviews and her reputation in the Federal Republic as well as her international standing prior to the fall of the Berlin Wall. Overall, they appear to be intent on dismantling the literary icon West Germany had been so instrumental in helping to establish. This does not in itself, of course, mean that Greiner and Schirmmacher were wrong to criticise Wolf. However, they do seem to have been ignoring an important component in Wolf's international reputation: her popularity within West Germany.

¹⁰⁴ Magenau, op.cit., 407.

¹⁰⁵ It should also be noted that Wolf was invited to hold the prestigious Lectures on Poetics at the University of Frankfurt (1982) and that she was awarded honorary doctorates by the University of Hamburg (1985) and the University of Hildesheim (1990).

¹⁰⁶ Fritz J. Raddatz, 'Ein Rückzug auf sich selbst', *Die Zeit*, 24.3.1989.

The positions of Greiner and Schirrmacher were challenged straight away. Volker Hage, in an article in *Die Zeit*¹⁰⁷ which was published alongside Greiner's critique, suggests that Wolf's concern with the question 'wer spricht in mir, wenn ich spreche?' places her on a par with great writers in world literature, resulting in 'wunderbare, kunstvolle Prosa'.¹⁰⁸ Hage, however, argues that it is essential to acknowledge 'trotz aller Erfahrung (selbst der Bespitzelung)', Wolf's commitment to ideals of socialism as the driving force behind her writing, since it was 'zugleich der Boden, auf dem ihre Literatur entstanden ist'.¹⁰⁹

In his contribution to the debate in support of Wolf, Wolfram Schütte identifies the historical context, the collapse of the GDR, and the imminent unification of the two Germanies, as having triggered the harsh attacks on Wolf:

Selbstverständlich findet alles, was derzeit von DDR-Künstlern gesagt und getan wird [...] eine gereizte Aufmerksamkeit; und selbstverständlich wird nach den Tagen und Monaten des vergangenen Jahres, die die Welt des 'Realsozialismus' bis in die Grundfesten erschütterte (und das Beben dauert ja noch unübersehbar an) nicht nur die Literatur und die Kunst, sondern das ganze Leben, das nun in kürzester Zeit 'historisch' geworden ist, mit anderem Blick, mit veränderter Wahrnehmung und neuer Erfahrung 'durchforstet' (Brecht) werden.¹¹⁰

He urges consideration of the historical context 'um nicht blindwütig der unverhofft und unerwartet eingetretenen Versuchung eilfertiger Besserwisserei anheim zu fallen'.¹¹¹ When he quotes from Helga Königsdorf's article 'Schmerz über das eigene Versagen' in *Die Zeit* of 1st June 1990, which is meant as a contribution to the discussion on the question 'Was bleibt von der DDR-Literatur', he stresses the commitment to a reformist socialist utopia amongst

¹⁰⁷ Volker Hage, 'Kunstvolle Prosa', *Die Zeit*, 1.6.1990.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Wolfram Schütte, 'Reiß: Wolf - Zu einem Eilverfahren beim Umgang mit der DDR-Literatur', *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 8.6.1990.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

the 'mittlere Generation' of which Königsdorf, although nine years Wolf's junior, counts herself a member.

In her article, published in *Die Zeit*, Königsdorf emphasises the important role of GDR literature in fostering a sense of 'Verbundenheit' amongst GDR citizens, and also the vital task of the writer to share with his or her readers the sense of disillusionment with the SED regime:

Wir akzeptierten es nicht, das System, das uns umgab, aber wir liebten die Utopie, die es einst auf seine Fahnen geschrieben hatte. Und wir hatten die Hoffnung, wir könnten irgendwie dahin gelangen. [...] Wir wollten das System erschüttern, um es zu verändern, aber nicht das Land preisgeben, mit dem sich unsere Utopie verbunden hatte. Je schmerzhafter die Differenz zwischen Traum und Wirklichkeit, um so stärker die Verpflichtung, sich einzumischen. Gerade dieser Leidensdruck wurde die Quelle für unsere Arbeit, in der Trauer zunahm, kaum noch Übermut. Und diesen Kummer teilten wir mit unseren Lesern.¹¹²

Königsdorf goes on to say that those writers who believed in the fundamental principles of socialism had seen their role as changing the regime from within in order to bring about change. Their goal was not the end of an independent state but reform of the GDR and, ultimately, the establishment of an alternative societal model to the capitalist system in the West 'mit seiner sozialen Ungerechtigkeit, mit seinen perfekten Mechanismen, mit seiner rücksichtslosen Effektivität'.¹¹³

Wolfram Schütte's above-mentioned sympathetic article was followed by a number of responses defending Wolf against her critics or at least expressing outrage at her treatment. These responses came particularly, though not exclusively, from the East with the notable exceptions of the Western left-wing

¹¹² Helga Königsdorf, 'Schmerz über das eigene Versagen', *Die Zeit*, 1.6.1990.

¹¹³ Ibid.

intellectuals Walter Jens (President of the West German Academy of the Arts) and Günter Grass. It has to be noted, though, that critics and supporters do not fall into simple categories of younger generation against older generation, or those who remained in the GDR against those who left for West Germany, or West against East.

Those who supported Wolf include prominent victims of the Stalinist system such as the dissident Russian author and close friend of Wolf, Lew Kopelew,¹¹⁴ who sums up the aggression in the initial assaults on Christa Wolf as ‘ein konzentriertes Trommelfeuer von ideologischen Denunziationen’, ‘ideologische und moralische Waffen’.¹¹⁵ In similar vein, Walter Jens uses the graphic image of GDR writers being hunted by Western critics (‘die große Treibjagd, das Halali von Kritikern [...] Die Hatz vom West-Sessel aus’¹¹⁶) and Grass likens the language used by Western commentators, who criticise Wolf on the grounds of her commitment to socialism, to ‘eine Hinrichtung’ and ‘Kampagne’.¹¹⁷

In her diary entry for September 1990 included in *Ein Tag im Jahr*, commenting on a conversation she had in the context of the Bertelsmann colloquium on 14th June 1990, Wolf speaks of a ‘Frontalangriff’ and a ‘Kampagne’¹¹⁸ directed at her in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. The only occasion on which she publicly commented on any accusations against her in

¹¹⁴ Lew Kopelew was sentenced to 10 years’ imprisonment in the Soviet Union in 1945, rehabilitated in 1956, excluded from the Soviet writers’ association in 1968, and exiled to West Germany in 1981.

¹¹⁵ Lew Kopelew, ‘Für Christa Wolf’, *tageszeitung*, 14.6.1990.

¹¹⁶ Walter Jens, ‘Plädoyer gegen die Preisgabe der DDR-Kultur. Fünf Forderungen an die Intellektuellen im geeinten Deutschland (Rede in Potsdam am 11.6.1990)’, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 16./17.6.1990.

¹¹⁷ Günter Grass, ‘Bericht aus Altdöbern’, *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 30.6.1990.

¹¹⁸ Christa Wolf, ‘Donnerstag, 27. September 1990’, in *Ein Tag im Jahr, 1960-2000*, Munich: Luchterhand, 2003, 453-470, here 465, henceforth referred to as ET.

the early stage of the 'Literaturstreit' was when she was awarded the 'Officier des Arts et des Lettres' in France in September 1990, at a time when her international recognition remained untarnished. In her acceptance speech she only hinted at the hurt she felt at the attacks on her:

Wenn aber die Literatur streitbar sein kann und, wie ich finde, sein soll, so wird der Literaturbetrieb zuweilen mörderisch, seine Protagonisten halten sich nicht immer an das Gebot der Fairness und kämpfen mit präparierten Waffen: die Literatur als Kriegsschauplatz. Ob ein Offizierspatent da helfen kann, besser zu bestehen?¹¹⁹

Lew Kopelew and the younger generation GDR exile Martin Ahrends contribute two particularly noteworthy responses in defence of Wolf. Ahrends, who had emigrated to the Federal Republic of Germany in 1984, still argues from a GDR perspective. He points to an important reason for Wolf not to publish *Was bleibt* before 9th November 1989, a consideration both Greiner and Schirrmacher fail to mention in their early attacks on Wolf: she did not want to compromise her fundamental decision to go on living and publishing in the GDR:

Frau Wolf hat nicht das System geschützt, sondern seine Bedrückungen bis zur Grenze des Erträglichen geschildert. Für DDR-Insassen eine der ganz wenigen Quellen, die eigene Identität zu begreifen, dem Warteleben einen Sinn abzugewinnen, indem man es als historische Konsequenz annahm, anstatt es von sich zu weisen als ungerechte persönliche Bestrafung. [...] Kein Unglück für Christa Wolfs DDR-Leser; sie hat ihnen eine präzise Schilderung des allgemeinen Phänomens Stasi überliefert. – Und früher hätte sie dies eben nicht veröffentlichen können, das widersprach ihren wohlbegründeten *Prinzipien des Dableibens und Veröffentlichens*. Eben weil dies keine Sensationsstory ist, hat sie solche Allgemeingültigkeit.¹²⁰ [my emphasis, JD]

Ahrends draws attention to the important aspect of the representative nature of the narrator's experience of surveillance by the Stasi in *Was bleibt* when he

¹¹⁹ Christa Wolf: *Werke 12*, Munich: Luchterhand, 2001, 269.

¹²⁰ Martin Ahrends, 'Ach, ihr süßen Wessis', *Sonntag*, 1.7.1990.

notes: 'Es ist der Alltag des sich Überwacht-Fühlens, der da geschildert wird, das flächendeckende Lebensgefühl der DDRler'.¹²¹

In his open letter to *Die Zeit*, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and *Die Welt*, printed in the *tageszeitung*, Lew Kopelew condemns the 'kleinkarierte Gehässigkeit und Wirklichkeitsferne'¹²² on the part of Western critics. His letter represents one of the most impressive testimonials to Wolf's literary work and Wolf herself, not only because he combines criticism of West German commentators with his personal defence of Wolf but also because he makes a comparison between this post-1989 literary controversy and the earlier post-1945 literary controversy stirred up by Thomas Mann:

Thomas Mann hat über alle deutschen Autoren bitter geurteilt, die nicht emigriert waren und keinen Widerstand geleistet hatten. Der große Dichter war über die Greuel der Nazizeit so entsetzt, daß er im polemischen Eifer zu scharf oder auch ungerecht urteilte. Seine heutigen Nacheiferer möchten alle Autoren der DDR, die nicht eingesperrt, nicht geflohen und nicht ausgebürgert waren, als privilegierte Stützen des Systems denunzieren. Diese Beschuldigungen sind in den meisten Fällen falsch, doch im Falle 'Christa Wolf' sind alle politischen und moralischen Anklagen nichts als Auswüchse böswilliger Phantasie. Das kann ich mit bestem Wissen und Gewissen behaupten, weil ich mit Christa und Gerhard Wolf seit einem Vierteljahrhundert befreundet bin und aufmerksam lese, was von ihnen im Druck erscheint. Aus ihren Briefen – in unseren schwersten Jahren hielten sie zu meiner Frau und mir –, aus Berichten gemeinsamer Freunde weiß ich, was sie bei bitteren Auseinandersetzungen im Schriftstellerverband, mit der Zensur, mit Staats- und Parteiinstanzen erleiden mußten. [...] Jeder unvoreingenommene Leser kann aus ihren epischen Werken, aus ihren Essays und Vorträgen erkennen, wie hart sie mit sich selbst ins Gericht ging mit ihrer früheren und neueren Vergangenheit. [...] Christa Wolfs Romane, Erzählungen, Essays gehören zu den bedeutendsten und schönsten Werken der gegenwärtigen Weltliteratur. Über den ästhetischen Wert mögen Literaturkritiker, wie üblich, verschiedener Meinung sein, über ihre Äußerungen zu historischen, sozialen und politischen Problemen kann man diskutieren, aber die moralische

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Kopelew, *tageszeitung*, 14.6.1990.

Integrität von Christa und Gerhard Wolf ist unbestreitbar.¹²³

Walter Janka,¹²⁴ another victim of Stalinism, expresses his support for a 'reformierte DDR, frei von korrupten Bonzen, [...] als Alternative zur Bundesrepublik' at a time when unification is looming, contending that '[dies] wäre für unsere Menschen und für die Wahrung des Friedens in Europa besser gewesen als eine großdeutsche Republik'.¹²⁵ Even Hermann Kant, for whom 'Staatsdichter der DDR' might well be a fitting label, defends Wolf, stating 'daß sie in den Jahren, in denen es schwierig für Leute war, diesen Leuten ihre Schwierigkeiten gemildert hat, wo sie konnte'.¹²⁶ Kant's comment is of course unintentionally ironical, as he had always been a staunch supporter of SED cultural ideology and, as president of the Writers' Union since 1978, held an SED controlled office.

In his article 'Plädoyer gegen die Preisgabe der DDR-Kultur', Walter Jens advocates the maintenance of an interest in a literature that developed in the context of political difficulties: 'eine Kunst von Sozialisten, die das Regime, eben weil sie Sozialisten waren, fürchtete und verfolgte'.¹²⁷ Jens stresses the crucial role of GDR literature 'innerhalb der sozialistischen Gesellschaft Widersprüche [...] sichtbar zu machen',¹²⁸ echoing Wolf's frequently voiced demands for a 'Denkmodell' which is capable, 'die Widersprüche der Realität

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Walter Janka was sentenced to 5 years' imprisonment in the GDR in 1957 and was only rehabilitated after Honecker's fall.

¹²⁵ Quoted in Wittek, op.cit., 151. Walter Janka's open letter is dated 24th August 1990 and was published in *europäische ideen* in October 1990.

¹²⁶ Matthias Matussek, Ulrich Schwarz, "'Ich war ein Aktivist der DDR". Der deutsche Schriftsteller Hermann Kant über seine Rolle und den Stellenwert der Literatur im SED-Regime', *Der Spiegel* [32], 6.8.1990, 156-160, here 159.

¹²⁷ Walter Jens, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 16./17.6.1990.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

nicht zu verleugnen und zu verzerren, sondern adäquat widerzuspiegeln'.¹²⁹ He attacks Western critics for failing to consider the constraints of writers and artists in the GDR and for their outright labelling of intellectuals as collaborators in a socialist regime, 'wo Schriftsteller oft an den Rand ihrer Möglichkeit gingen, wenn es galt, einem Lesepublikum, das sie um keinen Preis verlieren wollte, die Möglichkeit des Beieinanderbleibens zu erhalten'.¹³⁰ Above all, Jens calls for an understanding of the motives that led GDR writers and artists to go on living and working in the GDR, seeking a reformed socialist society until the very end.

The notion of the GDR as a provincial backwater, obsessed with the maintenance of moral and ideological principles, was stressed during the controversy by commentators questioning the nature of GDR writers' commitment to, and relationship with, the socialist state in which they chose to remain. One of the main issues in the debate as it was unfolding was the distinction between the alternatives of 'engagierte Provinzliteratur oder ästhetische Weltliteratur'.¹³¹ Associated with the issues of 'Provinzliteratur oder Weltliteratur' were accusations prompted by the notion that GDR writers lived 'in

¹²⁹ 'Unerledigte Widersprüche. Gespräch mit Theresa Hörnigk', in ID, 1993, 29.

¹³⁰ Jens, op.cit.

¹³¹ Frank Schirrmacher, 'Abschied von der Literatur der Bundesrepublik. Neue Pässe, neue Identitäten, neue Lebensläufe: Über die Kündigung einiger Mythen des westdeutschen Bewußtseins', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 2.10.1990. In this context it should be noted that as early as 1987, in the previously mentioned article 'Macht Verfolgung kreativ?', Marcel Reich-Ranicki had given Wolf credit for merely one of her literary texts, *Nachdenken über Christa T.*, in which the heroine, who dies at an early age, is disenchanting with a society where lip-service to the state often takes precedence over true political idealism. All of Wolf's literary work which followed was dismissed by Reich-Ranicki as simply 'provinziell' (214), rating Wolf's 'künstlerische und intellektuelle Möglichkeiten [als] eher bescheiden' (215). As Magenu reminds us, because Western commentators identified *Nachdenken über Christa T.* as an anti-GDR book, the GDR authorities withdrew the novel after an initial print-run of 15,000, only 4,000 copies of which were distributed. The book was not reprinted until 1972, though backdated to 1968. The initial publication also led to the publisher Heinz Sachs being sacked. Magenu, op.cit., 218ff.

dem moralisch edleren, zukunftssträchtigeren deutschen Staat'¹³² and that this had influenced Western commentators on GDR literature to accord GDR writers an importance which the aesthetic quality of their works did not deserve. In June 1990, Greiner conceded that West German reviewers were, in fact, restrained in their judgements on GDR writers and assessed literary works on the extent to which writers criticised the SED regime without fear of reprisals:

Es empfahl sich, die Beschlüsse des jüngsten ZK-Plenums oder die Losungen des jüngsten Parteitages zu kennen, um zu wissen, wie mutig, wie riskant ein Text aus der DDR sei. Und die heikle Kategorie des Mutes wurde oft zum entscheidenden Kriterium, auch wenn der Text noch so mißlungen war.¹³³

He argues that, instead, Western reviewers used outdated political paradigms in contrasting Eastern and Western ideologies:

Wir haben die DDR nie so gesehen, wie sie wirklich war, sondern immer nur in den instrumentellen Zusammenhängen der alten Paradigmen. Faschismus contra Antifaschismus, Kommunismus contra Antikommunismus. Von diesem Schema war nicht nur die Literaturkritik geprägt, sondern die gesamte geistige und politische Auseinandersetzung mit der DDR.¹³⁴

In similar vein, in an interview with Günter Grass in June 1990 on the Christa Wolf controversy entitled 'Nötige Kritik oder Hinrichtung', the *Spiegel* interviewer conceded:

Wir alle, das heißt die westdeutsche Kritik, haben jahrelang auf DDR-Bücher einen Bonus angewandt, wir sagten uns, Literatur dort entsteht unter bestimmten schwierigen Voraussetzungen, die Autoren können das meiste nicht direkt sagen, sie müssen Umwege wählen.¹³⁵

¹³² Noll, *Die Welt*, 12.5.1990.

¹³³ Ulrich Greiner, 'Potsdamer Abgrund. Anmerkungen zu einem öffentlichen Streit über die "Kulturnation Deutschland"', *Die Zeit*, 22.6.1990.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ [Günter Grass], 'Nötige Kritik oder Hinrichtung? Spiegel-Gespräch mit Günter Grass um Christa Wolf und die DDR-Literatur (mit Hellmuth Karasek und Rolf Becker)', *Der Spiegel* [29], 16.7.1990, 138-143, here 138.

The idea of a 'Bonus' on 'DDR-Bücher' was most strongly expressed by Karl-Heinz Bohrer, who raised the question as to whether there was even a 'Kulturschutzgebiet DDR'?¹³⁶ In December 1990, Ivan Nagel recalls the irony inherent in the position of leading critical GDR writers:

Die Literaturkritiker der *FAZ* und der *Zeit* haben recht: Es hat bei uns einen 'DDR-Bonus' gegeben. Die Autoren der DDR wurden hochgelobt, solange sie die Regierung der DDR störten. Sie werden heruntergemacht, seitdem sie das Deutschlandglück stören. In grotesker Verkürzung: Hein, Heym, Müller, Wolf hießen am 4. November 1989 Helden der Demokratie; seit Mitte Dezember 1989 heißen sie Privilegierte des totalitären Regimes [...] und blauäugige Schwärmer einer Utopie.¹³⁷

The interplay of aesthetic quality and moral and political engagement in GDR texts was central to the expansion of the debate in the 'Literaturstreit'. On the one hand, critics of GDR writers were unimpressed by what they saw as 'Verschlüsselungen',¹³⁸ particularly in the texts of Wolf. Greiner had commented on the 'Unschärfe-Relation zwischen der wirklichen Welt [...] und der poetischen Welt ihrer [Christa Wolfs] Texte'¹³⁹ which, he argued, only served as a highly developed vehicle for disguising the truth about the SED regime. Greiner specifically criticises Wolf's veiled use of phrases in *Was bleibt* such as the 'Herr [...], der unangefochten meine Stadt beherrschte: der rücksichtslose Augenblicksvorteil' (WB, 33) instead of 'einprägsame Namen: Vopo, Stasi, SED'.¹⁴⁰ Similarly, Frank Schirmacher had claimed that Wolf's literary acclaim was in fact based on a failure to address the realities of the GDR system: 'Nur

¹³⁶ Karl-Heinz Bohrer, 'Kulturschutzgebiet DDR?', *Merkur. Deutsche Zeitschrift für europäisches Denken*, Heft 500, 1990, 1015-1018.

¹³⁷ Ivan Nagel, 'Die Volksfeinde: Literaturstreit und Intellektuellenjagd', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 22./23.12.1990.

¹³⁸ Noll, *Die Welt*, 12.5.1990.

¹³⁹ Greiner, *Die Zeit*, 1.6.1990.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

wegen dieser Unklarheiten, wegen der Allgemeinheit ihrer Trauer und ihrer Ängste konnte sie zum Träger aller möglichen Erwartungen werden'.¹⁴¹

On the other hand, the 'Verschlüsselungen' were seen by the defenders of GDR literature as examples of the high art of writing under a repressive regime. Grass emphasises the kind of 'kritische, wenn auch verschlüsselt kritische Funktion Literatur in der DDR hatte und welche Rolle Christa Wolf in diesem Zusammenhang spielte', and argues 'daß man ihr Dinge vorwirft, die zu ihrem Schreibstil gehören, also daß sie Staat und Partei nicht beim Namen nennt'.¹⁴² Not only does Grass respond to Greiner's attack on the aesthetic merit of Wolf's work by commenting positively on her uniquely subtle style as a means of expressing criticism of the SED regime, he also notes its appeal to Western readers: 'dieser Stil des behutsamen Dreinredens hat Wirkung gezeigt. Über Jahrzehnte hinweg las man sie aufmerksam in beiden deutschen Staaten'.¹⁴³

Moreover, Fritz-Jochen Kopka, a former GDR writer, maintains that Wolf had posed a threat to the regime because her works gave people the linguistic tools 'ihre Ansprüche an die Gesellschaft zu formulieren und zu vertreten'.¹⁴⁴ In similar vein the Eastern commentator Sabine Neubert, in spite of her criticism of Wolf for remaining an SED member until the summer of 1989, applauds Wolf because 'sie hat Wirklichkeiten thematisiert, die es in unserer Gesellschaft nicht geben durfte', adding that Wolf had been 'hilfreich' for those who also stayed. Neubert clearly interprets Wolf's decision to publicly speak out in favour of

¹⁴¹ Schirmacher, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 2.6.1990.

¹⁴² Günter Grass, *Der Spiegel* [29], 16.7.1990, 141.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ Fritz-Jochen Kopka, 'Who's afraid of Christa Wolf?', *Sonntag*, 22.7.1990.

democratic change at the height of the peaceful demonstrations as an act of courage and believes that, at that time, ordinary GDR citizens shared this view. Yet Neubert recognises that a few months after the 'Wende' those people were quick to label Wolf as 'state poet':

Ich entsinne mich an den Tag (wenig vor dem 4. November), als sie ihren Text zu Walter Jankas Lesung in der Erlöserkirche vorlas. Damals erlebte ich, daß mehrere Leute auf der Straße mir – aus purer Angst – den Weg zur Erlöserkirche nicht sagen konnten. Diese Leute sind jetzt besonders anfällig für solche Vorwürfe wie 'Staatsdichterin'.¹⁴⁵

The 'Literaturstreit' that had begun with Christa Wolf was to change focus and enter its second phase. In *Die Zeit* on 27th July 1990 Greiner stressed the need for a discussion of 'die Mitschuld der Intellektuellen der DDR, um die Mitverantwortung für die zweite deutsche Katastrophe – nach der nationalsozialistischen die stalinistische. [...] Der Streitwert ist hoch: Er heißt intellektuelle Moral'.¹⁴⁶ Yet the debate was no longer just about GDR writers who had remained committed to socialist ideals; it also encompassed a discussion about the responsibility – and alleged failure – of West German left-wing intellectuals and West German literary critics during the time of the Cold War. Anz points out that, at the colloquium arranged in Potsdam in June 1990 with the theme 'Kulturnation Deutschland', intellectuals were split as never before:

Der Streit um Christa Wolf wurde zu einem 'Intellektuellenstreit' im doppelten Sinn: ein Streit unter Intellektuellen, doch zugleich auch einer um den 'Linksintellektuellen', der meistens immer noch gemeint ist. [...] Diejenigen, die Christa Wolf besonders scharf angriffen, gebrauchten das Wort 'Intellektuelle' vorwiegend in einem abwertenden Sinn, wenn

¹⁴⁵ Sabine Neubert, *Neue Zeit*, 17.7.1990. The gathering at the 'Erlöserkirche' on 28.10.1989, addressed by Christa Wolf and others at the height of the peaceful demonstrations, was held under the slogan 'Wider den Schlaf der Vernunft'. The intellectuals were attempting to reawaken the old ideal of a humane socialist utopia. The text of Wolf's speech is reproduced in ID, 98-100.

¹⁴⁶ Ulrich Greiner, *Die Zeit*, 27.7.1990.

nicht sogar als Schimpfwort. Daß ihre Kritik an Christa Wolf von Anfang an zugleich auch eine Kritik an den deutschen Intellektuellen und ihrer Skepsis gegenüber dem Prozeß der deutschen Einigung war, trug entscheidend zur Eskalation des Literaturstreits bei.¹⁴⁷

The contentious issue was the concept of *littérature engagée*, which some Western critics felt had been maintained by the 'Club der Gleichgesinnten' both East and West of the Berlin Wall:

Müßte man ihn [den Club] näher definieren, so käme man auf die Attribute 'links', 'fortschrittlich', 'der Aufklärung verpflichtet'. Dieser Club funktionierte, solange die Mauer stand, über die Mauer hinweg: Im Westen wie im Osten die kritischen Schriftsteller, die Intellektuellen in der Opposition.¹⁴⁸

Critics argued that this 'Club' gave credit to *littérature engagée* by assessing the works of GDR writers and West German writers less according to literary qualities than according to moral and ideological principles and the extent to which writers criticised the political regime – either the 'real existierender Sozialismus' or 'Kapitalismus'. It was this concern with non-aesthetic aims which seems to have attracted the most criticism, with Greiner, for example, complaining that West German critics on the literary left had bestowed undue credit to *littérature engagée* because of the political realities of the East-West divide:

Es bestand die Übereinkunft, daß die deutschen Schriftsteller (die linken, die engagierten, die kritischen) das Gute gewollt, gesagt und geschrieben haben. Und die Literaturkritik ist dieser Übereinkunft gefolgt, indem sie nicht ästhetisch geurteilt hat, sondern moralisch und politisch.¹⁴⁹

The literary critic Friederike Eigler, in her analysis of the combination of factors which contributed to the intensity of criticism of GDR writers in general

¹⁴⁷ Quoted in Anz, 161.

¹⁴⁸ Quoted in Anz, 244. In March 1991, Thomas Anz had asked the contributors to the 'Literaturstreit' for a retrospective statement. The quotation constitutes part of Greiner's response.

¹⁴⁹ Greiner, *Die Zeit*, 27.7.1990.

and Wolf in particular, notes the association of these attacks and the wider assault on the concept of *littérature engagée* following the apparent loss of the socialist utopian ideal:

Daß die Debatte um *Was bleibt* mit solcher Emotionalität geführt wurde, läßt vermuten, daß es um die Abwertung und Ausgrenzung einer Literatur geht, die anstrebt, Erinnerungsarbeit zu leisten, eine Literatur also, die weder das 'Engagement' noch die 'Utopie' aufzugeben bereit ist. *Was bleibt* gab den Anlaß für zweierlei: Für die moralische Verurteilung der Autorin Christa Wolf und für die ästhetische Verurteilung einer Literatur, die außerästhetische Ziele verfolgt.¹⁵⁰

It is one of the overlooked ironies of the 'Literaturstreit' that Wolf was at the same time condemned for lack of moral integrity and for maintaining a commitment to moral principles in literature, by critics who maintained that 'ästhetische Weltliteratur' should be an autonomous art form essentially beyond moral considerations.

As the debate progressed, one of the principal questions came to be the relative merits of 'Ästhetik' and 'Moral' as categories for judging the nature and quality not just of GDR literature but post-war German literature in general. As Anz points out, the relationship between 'Ästhetik' and 'Moral' had been the object of a heated debate in the 1960s which came to be known as the 'Zürcher Literaturstreit', with an attack by Emil Staiger in 1966 on 'moderne Literatur' as essentially *littérature engagée* and Heinrich Böll's *Frankfurter Vorlesungen* of the same year promoting the concept of 'eine Ästhetik des Humanen' with 'Moral und Ästhetik [...] als kongruent, untrennbar'.¹⁵¹ In the 'deutsch-deutscher Literaturstreit' the old debate was revived. On the one hand, there was the

¹⁵⁰ Friederike Eigler, 'Die Mauer in den Köpfen: Mechanismen der Abgrenzung und Abwehr am Beispiel der Christa-Wolf-Kontroverse', *German Life and Letters*, 46, 1993 [1], 71-81, here 79.

¹⁵¹ Anz, 20. See Anz, 20ff for a more detailed discussion of the debates of the 1960s in the context of the 'Literaturstreit' in the 1990s.

demand for the political and moral engagement of literature, and on the other the claim for literature as an aesthetically autonomous art form which should be free from ideological, political or moral engagement: in short, the distinction between *littérature engagée* and *l'art pour l'art*.

In the 1990s debate it was the concern with non-aesthetic aims in literary texts, particularly those of GDR writers, that attracted the most criticism. The issue of *littérature engagée*, also referred to as 'Gesinnungsliteratur', was given prominence in the debate, with both Ulrich Greiner and Karl-Heinz Bohrer maintaining that Western commentators on the literary left were not evaluating texts according to aesthetic criteria but in terms of a writer's moral and political disposition. In November 1990, Greiner introduces the new word – though not a new concept – of 'Gesinnungsästhetik'¹⁵² (with variations such as 'Gesinnungskitsch', which he applies to Wolf's narrative *Störfall*) as a criticism of *littérature engagée* as against *l'art pour l'art*. Greiner sees 'Gesinnungsästhetik' as an idea linking intellectuals on the left in both the East and the West, creating what he perceives as a flawed 'Begriff der engagierten Literatur' which had, he argues, a long tradition in Germany:

Diese Gesinnungsästhetik hat eine zutiefst deutsche Tradition. Sie wurzelt in der Verbindung von Idealismus und Oberlehrertum [...]. Sie läßt der Kunst nicht ihr eigenes, sondern sie verpflichtet sie (wahlweise) auf die bürgerliche Moral, auf den Klassenstandpunkt, auf humanitäre Ziele oder neuerdings auf ökologische Apokalypse. Die Gesinnungsästhetik [...] ist das gemeinsame Dritte der glücklicherweise zu Ende gegangenen Literaturen von BRD und DDR. [...] In der Bundesrepublik verwendete man dafür den Begriff der engagierten Literatur. Ihr gehörten nahezu alle an, die heute noch Rang und Namen haben: Böll, Grass, Lenz, Fried, Walser, H.M. Enzensberger, Weiss,

¹⁵² Greiner, *Die Zeit*, 2.11.1990. In *Der Literaturstreit im sich vereinigenden Deutschland*, Bernd Wittek had pointed out that there is no such term as 'Gesinnungsästhetik' in any literary encyclopedia, but that the term was introduced in the German-German literature debate as a qualitative criterion, 105f.

Kipphardt, Andersch. Sie und die Gruppe 47 waren es, die das literarische Leben in der Bundesrepublik bestimmten. [...] Die Gesinnungsästhetik war das herrschende Merkmal des deutschen Literaturbetriebs, in der DDR sowieso, aber auch in der Bundesrepublik.¹⁵³

Greiner asserts, that in the East and the West, literature gave itself the air of fighting 'mit hoher moralischer Integrität für humane Prinzipien, sie leistete Widerstand gegen Repression und Restauration'.¹⁵⁴ However, Greiner argues that once the full truth of the SED regime and its reputedly critical writers had been revealed, one could say aloud that one had always had one's doubts about the quality of both East and West German literature.

In his article 'Kulturschutzgebiet DDR?' published in the October/November 1990 edition of the journal *Merkur*, Karl-Heinz Bohrer pleads for a 'Verteidigung von künstlerischen Kriterien vor dem Anspruch der Gesinnung'.¹⁵⁵ He describes left-wing intellectuals (those within the GDR and those in West Germany who would defend GDR literature), in other words 'die alte Garde der für "Sinn" Zuständigen', as 'Religionsanhänger' who wanted 'noch in der Kunst Metaphysik statt Ästhetik', and he insists 'eine aufgeklärte Gesellschaft kennt keine Priester-Schriftsteller'.¹⁵⁶ Speaking of Wolf's high literary acclaim and, at this stage in the debate, acknowledging her popularity in both the East and the West as evidenced by the popularity of her readings, he states:

Christa Wolf hat [...] auch von der angedeuteten quasireligiösen Mentalität west- und ostdeutscher Besucher von Dichterlesungen gelebt. Das ist hoffentlich vorbei. Auch sie wird sich daran gewöhnen müssen, was Literatur in einer säkulären Gesellschaft darstellt: keine Droge für

¹⁵³ Greiner, op.cit.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Karl-Heinz Bohrer, 'Kulturschutzgebiet DDR?', op.cit., 1015.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

Unterdrückte, kein quietistisches Labsal. Vielmehr verschärfter Anspruch an die imaginative Potenz.¹⁵⁷

In his essay 'Die Ästhetik am Ausgang ihrer Unmündigkeit' in the same edition of *Merkur*, Bohrer demands a new aesthetic concept which he describes 'als Geschichte einer Selbstbefreiung von theologisch-metaphysischer, schließlich idealistisch-geschichtsphilosophischer Bevormundung'.¹⁵⁸ He argues, as did Oscar Wilde in his preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, that the artistic and aesthetic quality of a work should be quite independent of a writer's moral and ideological disposition. In October 1990, Uwe Wittstock in his article 'Die Dichter und ihre Richter: warum die Schriftsteller aus der DDR als Sündenböcke herhalten müssen', also emphasises the need for a 'Trennlinie' between 'Ethik und Ästhetik'. However, and with specific reference to GDR writers, he stresses that an author should not simply be rejected because he or she happens to be a member of the SED or any other group, but that the aesthetic aspect should be the guiding principle in the assessment of an author's work:

Welche moralischen oder ideologischen Sünden ein Schriftsteller auch auf sich geladen hat, das Urteil über seine künstlerischen Qualitäten bleibt davon unberührt. Die Kulturfunktionäre der DDR wurden im Westen nicht zuletzt deshalb angegriffen, weil sie dazu neigten, den literarischen Rang eines Autors von seiner politischen Zuverlässigkeit abhängig zu machen. In ihre Fußstapfen tritt jeder, der heute Bücher verdammt, weil ihre Autoren SED-Mitglieder waren, bei Honecker antichambrierten oder peinliche Elogien auf den ersten 'Arbeiter-und-Bauern-Staat auf deutschem Boden' verbreiteten. Auch Céline oder Ernst Jünger, Ezra Pound oder D'Annunzio, Hamsun oder Yukio Mishima haben haarsträubende politische Thesen vertreten. Doch deshalb stellt inzwischen niemand den Wert ihrer Arbeit in Frage – ihre Bücher sind zu einem Kapitel der Literaturgeschichte geworden, das

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Karl-Heinz Bohrer, 'Die Ästhetik am Ausgang ihrer Unmündigkeit', *Merkur. Deutsche Zeitschrift für europäisches Denken*, Heft 500, 1990, 851-865, here 852.

einem nicht gefallen muß, dem man aber seine Anerkennung nicht verweigern kann.¹⁵⁹

Yet it is Greiner who provides the most vehement 'Abrechnung' with 'Gesinnungsliteratur' in favour of 'Ästhetik' and, albeit in a sarcastic tone, brings Christa Wolf firmly back into focus as the prime example of *Gesinnungsästhetik*:

In der Gesinnungsästhetik, und ihr hervorragendes Beispiel bleibt Christa Wolf, sind Werk und Person und Moral untrennbar. [...] Diese Moral beruft sich auf Humanität und Universalität. Wer also das Werk Christa Wolfs kritisiert, kritisiert ihre Moral und macht sich damit Inhumanität schuldig. So einfach ist das. Aber diese Ästhetik ist ein grandioses Mißverständnis.¹⁶⁰

It is ironic, though, that in his June 1990 article 'Mangel an Feingefühl', Greiner had employed precisely the approach he now criticises: he had judged *Was bleibt* and Christa Wolf on the basis of moral and ideological criteria. What he seems to be saying in November 1990 is that he and other Western commentators needed to review an approach to literary criticism which had been shaped by a left-wing agenda. Commenting on Bohrer's concept of 'Ästhetik als Geschichte einer Selbstbefreiung', Greiner depicts the argument as a debate about a peculiarly German concept of history and the historical process:

Seine [Bohrers] Gegner sind Schiller, Schelling, natürlich Hegel, schließlich all jene, die dem Kunstwerk eine Zielsetzung außerhalb seiner ästhetischen Erscheinung abverlangen. Am wichtigsten ist es ihm, den Zugriff der Geschichtsphilosophie abzuwehren, also jener Konzeptionen, die in der Geschichte einen Plan zu erkennen glauben, dem sich die Menschen (also auch die Künstler) zuordnen müssen, wenn sie Subjekte ihres Handelns sein wollen. Am radikalsten hat der Sozialismus dieser Vorstellung angehangen, und daraus die Legitimation abgeleitet, die Ästhetik in den Dienst der Geschichte zu zwingen.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ Uwe Wittstock, 'Die Dichter und ihre Richter. Literaturstreit im Namen der Moral: Warum die Schriftsteller der DDR als Sündenböcke herhalten müssen', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 13/14.10.1990.

¹⁶⁰ Greiner, *Die Zeit*, 2.11.1990.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

By the autumn of 1990, the debate had moved on from a re-evaluation of Christa Wolf's work to a more general and abstract discussion about the whole of post-war German literature. On 29th September 1990, Jens Jessen claimed: 'Eine Kaste wird entmachtet', listing Christa Wolf, Heiner Müller, Stefan Heym and Stephan Hermlin from the GDR alongside the Western left-wing intellectuals Günter Gaus, Günter Grass, Walter Jens, Franz Xaver Kroetz, Max Frisch, Jürgen Habermas, Günter Wallraff and Patrick Süskind, all of whom, in Jessen's opinion, needed to be 'disempowered'.¹⁶²

On 2nd October 1990 Schirmacher publishes his article in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* entitled 'Abschied von der Literatur der Bundesrepublik. Neue Pässe, neue Identitäten, neue Lebensläufe: Über die Kündigung einiger Mythen des westdeutschen Bewußtseins' in which he dismisses the dominant literature and post-1945 literary criticism in West Germany as mere 'Gesinnung'. He adopts the same strategy used by Hans Magnus Enzensberger and Walter Boehlich in 1968 when they announced the death of literature, in asserting: 'Die Literatur der Bundesrepublik wurde dreiundvierzig Jahre alt. Wie jener in der DDR steht auch ihr das Ende bevor'.¹⁶³ In other words, GDR literature represented by Christa Wolf as the most prominent of GDR writers, as well as the 'outdated' literature of the Federal Republic of Germany, needed to be reassessed. Schirmacher does not make explicit, though, that coming to terms with the Nationalist Socialist past and, importantly, the need for openness and honesty about that past was a

¹⁶² See Jens Jessen, 'Eine Kaste wird entmachtet. Die deutschen Intellektuellen als Hüter der Zweistaatlichkeit', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 29.9.1990.

¹⁶³ Frank Schirmacher, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 2.10.1990.

characteristic of the West German version of 'Gesinnungsliteratur'. One might argue that the fact that this issue was dealt with through literature in both the East and the West was linked to the unwillingness of both countries to look at this subject self-critically in other forms of public writing.

Schirmmacher does, however, make explicit reference to those writers in the Federal Republic he considers to be producing 'outdated' literature, writers who had played a dominant role in post-1945 West German literature. They are also writers in whose work the issue of coming to terms with the past features prominently. It might be coincidental that these writers were Schirmmacher's opponents in the Christa Wolf controversy, above all Günter Grass (who, although he was not awarded the Nobel Prize for literature until 1999, had already been mooted as a possible candidate),¹⁶⁴ Walter Jens, and various members of the *Gruppe 47*, which Schirmmacher describes as 'eine der Produktionszentralen des bundesrepublikanischen Bewußtseins'.¹⁶⁵ Even Heinrich Böll, who had been awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1972, is included in the list of 'outdated' West German writers. A new literature after the collapse of the GDR, Schirmmacher implies, should renounce any notion of a writer as 'öffentliche Instanz' or 'Sprecher und Repräsentant der Nation'.¹⁶⁶

As far as Christa Wolf is concerned, Schirmmacher does seem to be ignoring the broader context of the discursive structures within which Wolf's works originated. Wolf's status as a public figure in the GDR may in no way be described as 'öffentliche Instanz' or 'Sprecher und Repräsentant der Nation'.

¹⁶⁴ See Michael Jürgs, *Bürger Grass. Biografie eines deutschen Dichters*, Munich: Bertelsmann, 2002, 421ff.

¹⁶⁵ Schirmmacher, op.cit.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

What was at issue in the latter phase of the 'Literaturstreit' was indeed, as Paul suggests, the 'public dismantling of the discursive structures of the GDR'¹⁶⁷ by West German critics.

Wolf's Stasi revelations

From an initial attack on Christa Wolf, the debate moved on to a wide-ranging discussion of the role of writers, not just in the GDR but in a unified Germany. Yet focus was again drawn to Wolf, after revelations in January 1993 that between 1959 and 1962 she had been an 'unofficial collaborator' (*Inoffizielle Mitarbeiterin*), before becoming a long-standing target of the Stasi.¹⁶⁸ In the ensuing media furore, the most controversial revelations were those that, using the cover-name of 'Margarete' (her own middle name), Wolf regularly met with Stasi agents during these three years to report on people and events in the East German literary world, on one occasion submitting a hand-written report. Particularly problematical are her own admissions that she had forgotten crucial aspects of the affair, 'ein klassischer Vorgang von Verdrängung'¹⁶⁹ as she herself put it. By her own account, as documented in *Akteneinsicht Christa Wolf: Zerrspiegel und Dialog*, she can recall the meetings with the Stasi

¹⁶⁷ Paul, "'Ich, Seherin, gehörte zum Palast": Christa Wolf's Literary Treatment of the Stasi in the Context of her Poetics of Self-Analysis', op.cit., 88.

¹⁶⁸ See in particular the *Spiegel* article: 'Die ängstliche Margarete', *Der Spiegel* [4], 25.1.1993, 158-161. As Cole points out, the Stasi files come in two types, and both are in the hands of the Gauck-Agency (see footnote 11). The so-called 'Opfer-Akten' (victim files) contain records of police surveillance of ordinary citizens in the GDR, whilst the *IM* files (the files on *Inoffizielle Mitarbeiter*), which are also referred to as 'Täter-Akten' (perpetrator files), document the activities of unpaid informants among the GDR population. Anyone who believed he or she was a victim of the Stasi could ask to see the files. Whilst reading her 'Opferakten' in May 1992 Christa Wolf discovered references to an *IM* file with her name on. Because of the sensitivity of these files the Gauck-Agency was careful about allowing people to see them, and when the *IM* revelations broke in 1993 Christa Wolf had still not been granted access to those files documenting her activities as an unofficial collaborator. Several media organisations, including *Der Spiegel*, had obtained copies and made the information public. See Cole, op.cit., 407.

¹⁶⁹ "'Margarete in Santa Monica". Interview Christa Wolf mit Fritz-Jochen Kopka', *Wochenpost*, 28.1.93. Reprinted in A, 165.

informers, even her feelings during those meetings ('ein tiefes Unbehagen',¹⁷⁰ 'ein Gefühl von Bedrohung'),¹⁷¹ but not the most incriminating details as emphasised in the German press coverage of the affair, namely 'daß ich einen Decknamen hatte, daß ich selbst einen Bericht geschrieben habe'.¹⁷²

It emerged that the previous year, in May 1992, Wolf was reminded of her activities as a Stasi informant while she and her husband studied the Stasi files of their surveillance between 1969 and 1980, when the couple – under the code-name of 'Doppelzüngler' – became objects of systematic surveillance.¹⁷³ The German press criticised Wolf for having waited nine months before going public with her confession. Interestingly, Wolf's confession came in the wake of reports of Günter de Bryn's implication in Stasi activities and amidst rumours of Heiner Müller's involvement with the Stasi. It was in particular the accusations and revelations by others that Müller had been a Stasi informer that provided the final impetus for Wolf to publish her own admission, 'Eine Auskunft', in the *Berliner Zeitung* of 21st January 1993. Wolf came forward tentatively, justifying her delay in going public by arguing that she believed that the hunt for informants would hinder rather than further the work of an understanding 'der komplexen Realität DDR und auch die selbstkritische Aufarbeitung unserer Lebensläufe in diesem Land'.¹⁷⁴ Yet in the same article she admitted that her reluctance in going public at the time of discovering her *IM* file was a mistake.

¹⁷⁰ "'Auf mir bestehen". Christa Wolf im Gespräch mit Günter Gaus'. Quoted in A, 254.

¹⁷¹ "'Margarete in Santa Monica". Interview Christa Wolf mit Fritz-Jochen Kopka'. Quoted in A, 165.

¹⁷² "'Auf mir bestehen". Christa Wolf im Gespräch mit Günter Gaus', op.cit., 251.

¹⁷³ For details concerning the opening of the surveillance file on Gerhard and Christa Wolf on 12th February 1969, see A, 264-90.

¹⁷⁴ Christa Wolf, 'Eine Auskunft', *Berliner Zeitung*, 21.1.1993. Reprinted in A, 143-4.

Fritz Raddatz, formerly one of her most steadfast defenders, in an article in *Die Zeit* dealing with the revelations about the Stasi involvement of both Christa Wolf and Heiner Müller, expresses the dismay most vehemently when he writes: 'Mir scheint, beide haben nicht nur ihrer Biographie geschadet: sie haben ihr Werk beschädigt. Sie haben uns verraten', and in a direct plea to the writers he concludes, 'Halten Sie der Würde Ihres Werkes die Treue. Nehmen Sie mir und Ihren Lesern die Traurigkeit'.¹⁷⁵ Of course, it may be argued in Wolf's defence, as Joachim Walther does, that her collaboration happened a long time ago, that her links to the Stasi were short-lived, and that the information she passed on was low-grade and did not harm anybody.¹⁷⁶ In fact, two of the individuals on whom she reported, Walter and Wolfgang Schreyer, themselves came to Wolf's defence in letters to *Der Spiegel*.¹⁷⁷

Furthermore, the Stasi quickly dropped her as being of little use to them. When she moved from Halle to Berlin in 1962, the Stasi did not resume contact. It is equally appropriate in Wolf's defence to compare the 137 pages¹⁷⁸ of her Stasi 'Täter-Akte' with the forty-two volumes of the 'Opfer-Akte' relating to the period 1969-80 (the files covering the 1980s are lost),¹⁷⁹ when Wolf and her husband were under surveillance by the Stasi, with the telephone and flat being bugged, their mail being read and their flat being observed by *Informelle Mitarbeiter*, in short the situation Wolf describes in *Was bleibt*. In the interview with the journalist Günter Gaus in 1993, shortly after the news of her complicity

¹⁷⁵ Fritz Raddatz, 'Von der Beschädigung der Literatur durch ihre Urheber', *Die Zeit*, 29.1.1993.

¹⁷⁶ See Joachim Walther, *Sicherheitsbereich Literatur: Schriftsteller und Staatssicherheit in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik*, Berlin: Ullstein, 1999, 25-26.

¹⁷⁷ See *Der Spiegel* [10], 8.3.1993, 13-14.

¹⁷⁸ See "'Auf mir bestehen". Christa Wolf im Gespräch mit Günter Gaus', op.cit., 252.

¹⁷⁹ See *ibid.* One can only assume that the files on Gerhard and Christa Wolf were shredded after the fall of the Berlin Wall when the Stasi began to destroy the extensive files it had compiled on its citizens.

broke, Wolf drew attention to the fact that her Stasi file of 137 pages in length consisted of 'zwanzig Seiten mit [...] Treffberichten – alles andere sind Recherchen, Berichte, Lebensläufe über mich und von mir und bürokratischer Kram innerhalb der Behörde'.¹⁸⁰

Yet the fact remains that Wolf was a Stasi informer, and in the eyes of many critics this only confirmed their assessment of Wolf's lack of moral integrity and complicity with the SED regime. Commenting on the Stasi revelations, Peter Graves noted the need for a re-reading of Wolf's work:

What the affair does do, though, is to shift, yet again, our focus on Christa Wolf's works. [...] Christa Wolf may have forgotten her own brief moment of Stasi collaboration, but the dilemma inherent in that experience is reflected in a theme at the core of her work: the struggle for integrity when allegiances conflict, and the price this extracts in terms of identity loss and betrayed ideals.¹⁸¹

As the following chapters will illustrate, the struggle for integrity and the issues of identity loss and betrayed socialist ideals are also at the heart of Wolf's works in the post-1990 period.

It has been suggested that one of the reasons why Wolf was the target of so much criticism in the 'Literaturstreit' of 1990 and the controversy of 1993 was that she was a woman. Anna Kuhn, referring to the *Was bleibt* controversy, talked of 'the all male coterie that attacked Wolf',¹⁸² and 174 American Germanists, in the aftermath of Wolf's Stasi revelations, declared in *Die Zeit* in June 1993 that the criticism of her was an oblique attempt to discredit the social

¹⁸⁰ "'Auf mir bestehen". Christa Wolf im Gespräch mit Günter Gaus', op.cit., 252.

¹⁸¹ Peter Graves, 'The Treachery of St Joan: Christa Wolf and the Stasi', *German Monitor*, No 30, Amsterdam and New York: Rodolpi, 1994, 1-12, here 5-6.

¹⁸² Anna Kuhn, 'Rewriting GDR history: The Christa Wolf controversy', *GDR Bulletin* 17, 1991 [1], 7-11, here 10.

advances enjoyed by women in the GDR.¹⁸³ Such allegations are, in my view, misplaced. One could point, for instance, to the all-male coterie in the 'Literaturstreit' who defended her, such as Günter Grass, Günter de Bruyn, Wolf Biermann, Walter Jens, Martin Ahrends, Lew Kopelew, Hermann Kant, or to the fact that her critics were not all male. As Graves observes, one female voice to make 'some waspish comments'¹⁸⁴ in the 'Literaturstreit' was that of Sarah Kirsch, who had emigrated to the Federal Republic of Germany in 1977. Whilst I do not dismiss Kuhn's assertion that the issue of gender in the Christa Wolf controversy merits examination, I do think that the attack on Wolf in the early 1990s should not be reduced to a gender issue. For that reason, this thesis will not examine the aspect of what Kuhn calls an '*ad feminam* attack'¹⁸⁵ and the gender issue will not underpin discussions here. I tend to agree with Graves when he asserts that the main reason as to why, in the summer of 1990 and following her Stasi revelations, Wolf could become the target of attacks is linked to the emphasis, as reflected in her essays and 'Prosa', which she placed on the 'virtue of "Aufrichtigkeit"¹⁸⁶ and 'integrity'.¹⁸⁷

Conclusion

Now that, two decades on, the 'deutsch-deutscher Literaturstreit' can be viewed historically, it has become clear, as Tate observes, that the desire to 'dismantle

¹⁸³ See 'Das Kind mit dem Bade', *Die Zeit*, 18.6.1993.

¹⁸⁴ Graves, *op.cit.*, 2.

¹⁸⁵ Anna Kuhn, *op.cit.*, 10. See also Kuhn, "Eine Königin köpfen ist effektiver als einen König köpfen": The Gender Politics of the Christa Wolf Controversy', *German Monitor*, No 31, Amsterdam and New York: Rodolpi, 1994, 200-215, particularly 206-7.

¹⁸⁶ See Graves, *op.cit.*, 3.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 1.

the "discursive structures of the GDR",¹⁸⁸ as exemplified by Wolf's prose writing, was at the root of the media attacks on *Was bleibt*. In his final edition of the *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR* (1996) Wolfgang Emmerich, in his assessment of the 'Literaturstreit', commented: '[Es war] kaum je ein Streit um ästhetische Fragen, sondern einer *um die kulturelle Definitionsmacht im Lande*'.¹⁸⁹ As Tate argues, the 'political imperative'¹⁹⁰ had the effect of distracting from the aesthetic issue of whether a first-person literary text should be judged primarily on its 'perceived truthfulness'.¹⁹¹ The introduction to this thesis highlighted that the elements of truthfulness and personal experience are the hallmarks of Wolf's concept of 'subjektive Authentizität', yet this compositional principle was disregarded in the reviews of *Was bleibt* that sparked the 'Literaturstreit'. Hannes Krauss, in a review of the 'Literaturstreit' which benefits from historical perspective, concludes: 'Vom Literaturstreit [ist] sicher nichts [geblieben]',¹⁹² and reminds us that 'Journalismus ist wirklich ein schnellebiges Geschäft'.¹⁹³ He does raise the important question which will be addressed in this thesis: '[W]as ist der Autorin geblieben von ihrem ambitionierten Schreibprojekt?'¹⁹⁴

Since the 'deutsch-deutscher Literaturstreit' began with a 'reassessment' of Christa Wolf in the West German media, it is appropriate that Wolf's post-

¹⁸⁸ Tate, op.cit., 49. Tate quotes Paul, "'Ich, Seherin, gehörte zum Palast": Christa Wolf's Literary Treatment of the Stasi in the Context of her Poetics of Self-Analysis', op.cit., 87-91.

¹⁸⁹ Emmerich, op.cit., 462.

¹⁹⁰ Tate, op.cit., *ibid.*

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹² Hannes Krauss, 'Was ist geblieben? Rückblicke auf einen (Literatur)Streit', in Helen Fehervary and Bernd Fischer (eds.) 'Kulturpolitik und Politik der Kultur: Festschrift für Alexander Stephan', *German Life and Civilisation*, No 47, Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007, 175-190, here 175.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 176.

unification literary work should remain the focus of an assessment after the shock-waves of the 'Literaturstreit' and the media furore in 1993 surrounding Wolf's Stasi revelations had abated. Following the demise of the GDR, Wolf had to come to terms with the accusation of complicity in a discredited political system as well as with the loss of the socialist utopian vision. She had embraced Marxist utopian ideals in the early days of the GDR, and although the nature of her commitment to the socialist vision had changed and had been refined during the course of a life which Wolf herself called 'ein dauernder Prozeß der Disillusionierung' (DA 1: 116) and an 'Erosionsprozeß',¹⁹⁵ she never specifically rejected the commitment to socialist ideals as a GDR citizen. As her critics pointed out in the debate, Wolf chose to remain in the GDR and, as one of the signatories to 'Für unser Land' in November 1989, supported the development of the GDR as 'eine sozialistische Alternative zur BRD' even after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Her own reassessment of the utopian vision is illuminating and merits closer examination in the following chapters.

Furthermore, in the context of the controversy around the notion of 'Gesinnungsästhetik' and the comparisons and contrasts made between 'Moral' and 'Ästhetik' – between *littérature engagée* and *l'art pour l'art* – a study of Wolf is particularly revealing. Discussions on 'Gesinnungsästhetik' which surfaced in the course of the 'Literaturstreit' do not appear to have had any impact on the work of German writers post-unification, either in the East or the West. Indeed, the term itself has not resurfaced in any post-unification literary debates. Yet it is this specific term Wolf uses to defend *littérature engagée* in her essay on

¹⁹⁵ Christa Wolf, *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou: Texte 1990-1994*, Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1996 (first printed Cologne: Luchterhand, 1994), 266, henceforth referred to as T.

Heinrich Böll, entitled "Frei, geordnet, untröstlich" – Heinrich Böll, aus Anlaß seines 75. Geburtstags', which is included in the collection *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou* and which is to be discussed in Chapter Two, and also in the speech dedicated to Böll with the title "Mitleidend bleibt das ewige Herz doch fest", which forms part of the collection *Hierzulande Andernorts* and which is to be discussed in Chapter Three.

In her diary entry 'Donnerstag, 27. September 1990', included in *Ein Tag im Jahr*, Wolf notes the personal effects of the attacks in 1990: '[ich] verfiel leider in eine Depression' (ET, 466). Writing evidently assisted her in overcoming this sense of personal crisis, as discussions on *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou* will highlight. This collection constitutes Wolf's first sustained literary response since her drubbing by critics in the 'Literaturstreit' and the 1993 controversy. Dietrich emphasises the need to read *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou* in the context of the 'Literaturstreit', asserting that it represents Wolf's 'Antwort, Stellungnahme und Zeugnis zugleich'.¹⁹⁶ The next chapter should be read with these comments in mind.

¹⁹⁶ Dietrich, op.cit., 73.

CHAPTER TWO: *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou* – a collection of ‘Bruchstücke, die miteinander korrespondieren, einander fragen, auch in Frage stellen?’ (T, 10)

Introduction and reviews

*Auf dem Weg nach Tabou. Texte 1990-1994*¹⁹⁷ was Christa Wolf's first literary venture after the ‘Literaturstreit’ and the media furore that ensued when, in January 1993, she made public the news of her involvement with the Stasi as an *Inoffizielle Mitarbeiterin* between 1959 and 1962. As Hannes Krauss notes, only seven – mainly diary entries, letters and self-reflective texts – of the twenty-nine texts had not previously been published.¹⁹⁸ The reception in the German media was generally muted,¹⁹⁹ with commentators taking care not to repeat the vehement attacks elicited by *Was bleibt* and Wolf's Stasi revelations. A notably positive reaction was that of Konrad Franke in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, whose tribute to *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou* as ‘ein literarisches Denkmal deutscher Aufrichtigkeit’²⁰⁰ contrasts starkly with Greiner's criticism of Wolf's ‘Mangel [...]

¹⁹⁷ Christa Wolf, *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou: Texte 1990-1994*, Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1996 (first printed Cologne: Luchterhand, 1994). The twenty-nine pieces are divided into five sections, one for each of the years from 1990 until 1994. The volume appeared in English under the title *Christa Wolf. Parting from Phantoms. Selected Writings, 1990-1994*, translated and annotated by Jan Van Heurck, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1997. However, the English translation *Parting from Phantoms* only includes twenty-eight essays. The sections ‘Ein Posten ist vakant - Zum Tod von Max Frisch’ and ‘Schreibexistenz Friederike Mayröcker’ are not included, though the English version adds the television interview with Günter Gaus – the West German journalist, publicist, host of the television series ‘Zur Person’ and first director of the Permanent Representation of the Federal Republic of Germany in the GDR (1973-81) – entitled ‘Insisting on Myself: Christa Wolf in Conversation with Günter Gaus’. The interview is taken from *Akteneinsicht Christa Wolf: Zerrspiegel und Dialog*, Hermann Vinke's compilation of materials surrounding the question of Wolf's involvement with the Stasi.

¹⁹⁸ See Hannes Krauss, op.cit., 181.

¹⁹⁹ Examples of reviews that were muted, yet well-disposed towards Christa Wolf, include: Gunnar Decker, ‘Nachdenken von Christa W. Sorge um die Blaue Blume’, *Wochenpost*, 17.3.1994; Wolfram Schütte, ‘Das Brot der späten Jahre. Christa Wolfs Selbstvergewisserungen und Selbstbezweifelungen "Auf dem Weg nach Tabou" oder: ihre Heimkehr ins Unheimliche’, *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 16.3.1994.

²⁰⁰ Konrad Franke, ‘... aber graben müssen wir. Die Selbsterklärungen Christa Wolfs’, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 17.3.1994.

an Aufrichtigkeit gegen sich selbst und die eigene Geschichte'²⁰¹ in the opening shots of the 'Literaturstreit'.

At the other extreme was Marcel Reich-Ranicki's review in *Der Spiegel*.²⁰² Reich-Ranicki not only reiterates his misgivings about the literary quality of Wolf's work²⁰³ but also his criticism of her as 'eine Staatsdienerin, die man mit Nationalpreisen auszeichnete' – a variation on the theme of 'Staatsdichterin'²⁰⁴ – although he concedes: 'eine Mitläuferin war sie keineswegs, wohl aber eine Repräsentantin. Und nicht der Opportunismus wurde ihr zum Verhängnis, sondern ihr [politischer] Glaube.'²⁰⁵ Reich-Ranicki no longer accuses Wolf of complicity with a repressive regime in order to enjoy privileges, which suggests that he no longer doubts her moral integrity. However, he still singles her out as a figurehead of the GDR for her unwavering commitment to socialist ideals – an attachment, he argues, which was demonstrated in her call for East German citizens to stay and work for 'eine revolutionäre Erneuerung [des Sozialismus]'²⁰⁶ on the occasion of her famous speech on 4th November 1989 which is included in *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou*. This prolonged faith (in a revival of socialism) is seen by Reich-Ranicki as

²⁰¹ Greiner, *Die Zeit*, 1.6.1990.

²⁰² Marcel Reich-Ranicki, 'Tante Christa, Mutter Wolfen. Christa Wolfs Buch "Auf dem Weg nach Tabou"', *Der Spiegel* [14], 4.4.1994, 194-197.

²⁰³ In the *Spiegel* article, Reich-Ranicki describes Wolf as a 'Volksschullehrerin aus der Provinz, [...] die sich unentwegt bemüht, uns die Augen zu öffnen, uns zu warnen und zu ermahnen' and dismisses her writing as sentimental: 'Gedämpftes und würdevolles Pathos verbindet sich häufig mit Larmoyanz und auch mit offenkundiger Sentimentalität – und zurückhaltendes Selbstlob mit unverheimlichtem Selbstmitleid', 194. He condemns the book's concluding section with its 'Hymne auf das Brot' as 'Kitsch', 197. In the article 'Macht Verfolgung kreativ?', Reich-Ranicki had already dismissed Wolf's work as 'provinziell' and had mocked the 'elegisches Pathos und priesterlicher Ernst, erhabene Klischees und erbauliche Banalitäten' (quoted in Marcel Reich-Ranicki (ed.), *Ohne Rabatt. Über Literatur aus der DDR*, Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1991, 216).

²⁰⁴ Reich-Ranicki, *Ohne Rabatt. Über Literatur aus der DDR*, 215.

²⁰⁵ Reich-Ranicki, *Der Spiegel*, op.cit., 197.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid*, 194.

evidence of a 'fatale Verblendung'²⁰⁷ that, in his view, seriously undermines Wolf's judgement as to the realities of the SED regime and, ultimately, her call for a renewal of socialism. In expressing this viewpoint, Reich-Ranicki echoes Schirmacher's criticism, in the 'Literaturstreit', of Wolf as a misguided East German intellectual.

On its publication in 1994, *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou* was described as Wolf's 'persönliche Bilanz ihrer literarischen Existenz in den vergangenen vier Jahren'.²⁰⁸ Reflecting on this period in an interview in 1996, Wolf remarked: "stürzen" kann man Monarchen oder Ministerpräsidenten, nicht aber eine Schriftstellerin. Die kann man verleumden und beschimpfen, das ja', adding 'Wie jemand das "verkräftet" – danach wird dann erst sehr spät gefragt'.²⁰⁹ The texts in *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou* bear witness to the fact that she found it difficult to come to terms with her changing status as a writer who, until the fall of the Berlin Wall, had been almost universally acclaimed as the *grande dame* of GDR letters.²¹⁰

The speeches, essays, letters, diary entries and experimental literary texts which Wolf selected for publication testify to her belief in the importance of

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Schütte, op.cit.

²⁰⁹ 'Warum Medea? Christa Wolf im Gespräch mit Petra Kammann am 25.1.1996', *Christa Wolf: Werke II*, Munich: Luchterhand, 2001, 262.

²¹⁰ There had been attacks on Christa Wolf in the GDR, particularly in the wake of the publication of *Nachdenken über Christa T.* In the Federal Republic of Germany, prior to the 'Literaturstreit', there had been the attack by Marcel Reich-Ranicki, 'Macht Verfolgung kreativ? Polemische Anmerkungen aus aktuellem Anlaß: Christa Wolf und Thomas Brasch', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 12.11.1987, reproduced in Reich-Ranicki (ed.), *Ohne Rabatt. Über Literatur aus der DDR*, op.cit., 214-220. There had also been a few essays which had taken a more critical stance, most notably the essays by the German feminist Sigrid Weigel, 'Vom Sehen zur Seherin. Christa Wolfs Umdeutung des Mythos und die Spur der Bachmannrezeption in ihrer Literatur', in Andrea Drescher (ed.) *Christa Wolf: Ein Arbeitsbuch. Studien, Dokumente, Bibliographie*, Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau-Verlag, 1989, 169-203; and Arianne Bauer, 'Christa Wolf - eine Kultfigur? Oder Nachdenken über feste und unerschütterte Standpunkte', *Niemandland. Zeitschrift zwischen Kulturen* [7], 1988, 213-28.

emphasising moments of crisis or transition in her own life and experience as well as in the wider historical context. Wolf previously drew attention to the specific interrelationship in her writings between the ‘Kreuz- und Wendepunkte’ in history ‘an denen die Menschheit [...] andere Entscheidungen hätt[e] treffen können’²¹¹ and ‘die wunden Punkte’²¹² in her personal history. In this respect, these texts reiterate the important aspect in Wolf’s writing, as conveyed in the 1972 interview with Joachim Walther, of working through particularly painful moments in her life as a prerequisite for the process of healing.

The events surrounding the demise of the GDR constitute *the* historic ‘Kreuz- und Wendepunkte’ in *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou*. On the one hand, the diary entries, the exchanges of letters and the experimental literary texts represent a kind of record of Wolf’s own process of ‘Selbstbefragung und Selbstzweifel’ (T, 9), prompted by the attacks on her during the ‘Literaturstreit’ and again following her Stasi revelations in 1993. In contrast, the speeches and essays in this collection chronicle her reactions to contradictions in German society post-‘Wende’ as well as her reflections on contradictions in GDR society pre-‘Wende’ and during the ‘Wende-Zeit’ itself. These contradictions, Wolf implies, can only be communicated in a fragmented way, in other words in the form of a collection, and not as a single story:

Stücke, also Bruchstücke, die miteinander korrespondieren, einander fragen, auch in Frage stellen, zwischen denen manchmal Risse klaffen, die ich nicht oder noch nicht ausgleichen kann. [...] Texte, die sich manchmal zu widersprechen scheinen: hochgemut, tief gestimmt innerhalb kürzester Zeit. Aber so ist es eben. Den Widerspruch nicht darstellen, widersprüchlich leben – diese Erfahrung ist nur fragmentarisch mitzuteilen. (T, 10)

²¹¹ ‘Frankfurter Poetik-Vorlesungen’ [1983], *Christa Wolf: Werke 7*, Munich: Luchterhand, 2001, 137.

²¹² ‘Unruhe und Betroffenheit. Gespräch mit Joachim Walther’, in DA, 770.

In this chapter I will firstly analyse the essays 'Selbstanzeige' and 'Rummelplatz 11. Plenum 1965 – Erinnerungsbericht' as well as the speeches 'Sprache der Wende – Rede auf dem Alexanderplatz' and 'Zwischenrede', and also the exchange of letters with Jürgen Habermas since these contributions constitute Wolf's literary response to a specific issue raised by West German critics in the 'Literaturstreit': the issue of unwavering commitment to the ideals of socialism on the part of GDR writers who had chosen to go on living and working in the GDR until the very end. Secondly, I will analyse the experimental literary pieces contained in *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou*, as they capture Wolf's personal response to the attacks on her as a writer who has been shamed in the 'Literaturstreit' and hence her sense of changing status as a writer in a unified Germany. Thirdly, I will discuss the exchanges of letters with friends and selected diary entries as these constitute Wolf's explicit response to the media furore surrounding her Stasi revelations. Finally, I will discuss Wolf's dedications to individuals, particularly the essay "'Frei, geordnet, untröstlich" – Heinrich Böll, aus Anlaß seines 75. Geburtstags' because of the insights which it offers into Wolf's views on the notion of 'Gesinnungsästhetik' which, as discussed in Chapter One, had been the dominant issue in the second phase of the 'Literaturstreit'.

Speeches, essays and the theme of commitment to ideals of socialism

It is no coincidence that Wolf introduces *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou* with the essay entitled 'Selbstanzeige' – an expression associated with denouncing oneself to the authorities – given the preoccupation in the German media with Stasi collaboration in the former GDR at the time when she was compiling the

collection.²¹³ The opening piece begins with a hypothetical reference to Wolf's 'ideal' concept of writing as 'eine Art Mit-Schrift [...], das Subjektivste und das Objektivste verschränkten sich unauflösbar, "wie im Leben"' (T, 9). It is a kind of 'record'²¹⁴ that maintains a personal yet unsentimental perspective and is characteristic of her concept of 'subjektive Authentizität':

die Person würde sich unverstellt zeigen, ohne sich zu entblößen, der Blick betroffen, jedoch nicht vom Bodensatz ungeklärter Ressentiments getrübt, nicht kalt, teilnehmend, so unsentimental wie möglich, verdiente sich so vorurteilsfreie Aufmerksamkeit. (T, 9)

'Die Person' is in one sense Wolf herself, who wants to reveal her personal experience without being accused of self-interest in so doing – a clear reference to Wolf's own situation when, following the publication of *Was bleibt*, Western critics had accused her of self-exoneration in her fictionalised portrayal of being under surveillance by the Stasi. The reference to 'so unsentimental wie möglich' seems to be in deliberate contrast to the critical vocabulary used in the negative reviews which initiated the 'Literaturstreit' and which denigrated Wolf and her work, such as 'anmutige Melancholie', 'Malerin

²¹³ Christiane Zehl Romero suggests that 'Selbstanzeige' is meant as an 'ironic analogy to Anna Seghers' "Selbstanzeige" from 1931. Then the young Seghers, who had only recently joined the Communist Party, advertised and defended her first collection of stories to new comrades [...]. Now the sixty-five-year-old Wolf presents herself to a world from which Communism is being erased, aware that her texts are exercises in writing under a new system which will find fault with them'. Zehl Romero, Christiane, 'In the Shadow of the Rainbow: On Christopher Hein's *Exekution eines Kalbes* and Christa Wolf's *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou*', in Margy Gerber and Roger Woods (eds.), 'Changing Identities in East Germany: Selected Papers from the Nineteenth and Twentieth New Hampshire Symposia', *Studies in GDR Culture and Society*, volumes 14-15, Lanham: University Press of America, 1996, 78-86, here 81.

²¹⁴ The English translation of *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou* with the title *Parting from Phantoms* begins: 'My ideal of writing would be a sort of collaboration'. In my view a more appropriate translation for 'Mit-Schrift' is 'record'. Based on *Parting from Phantoms* Joshua Cole, op.cit., concludes: 'The translator captured the intentional whiff of complicity in the German original - 'Eine Art Mit-Schrift wäre mein Schreibideal'. Given the historical context, and the fact that Wolf's most problematic act may have been her handwritten communication to the Stasi in 1959, the phrase 'Eine Art Mit-Schrift' carries echoes of 'Mitarbeit' (the German word for 'collaboration') and the Stasi's word for informer, *Inoffizieller Mitarbeiter*.' I suggest that the translator conveyed 'Mit-Schrift' as 'collaboration' because of the preoccupation in the German media with Stasi collaboration at the time the original text was published.

des Idylls',²¹⁵ 'sentimentale Kategorien' and 'Larmoyanz'.²¹⁶ Wolf qualifies her opening statement by situating her specific circumstances as a former GDR writer in the context of a unified Germany, arguing that the reality of a sensationalist press (which for Wolf means the Western press) with its 'Lust auf Skandale in der Öffentlichkeit' (T, 9) stifles 'critical engagement' ('kritische Teilnahme' [T, 9]). Yet she feels morally obliged ('gedrängt und verpflichtet' [T, 10]) to continue writing. The expression 'kritische Teilnahme' suggests Wolf's continued commitment to the concept of *littérature engagée* which, as discussed in Chapter One, had been a contentious issue in the second phase of the 'Literaturstreit', culminating in a call by some West German literary critics for the re-evaluation of post-war German literature in its entirety. Above all, her focus on an engagement with moral and political issues is a reaffirmation of her characteristic aesthetic of 'subjektive Authentizität'.

Immediately following on from 'Selbstanzeige' is 'Sprache der Wende',²¹⁷ the speech given by Wolf in the Alexanderplatz on 4th November 1989 to an audience of around one million GDR citizens – just five days before the fall of the Berlin Wall, yet before the vast majority of citizens had embraced the idea of unification with the Federal Republic of Germany. Even though this speech predates the 'Literaturstreit' and therefore does not strictly represent Christa Wolf's literary response to the controversy, it does encapsulate her enduring vision 'von einem "dritten Weg" zwischen Kapitalismus und bürokratischem

²¹⁵ Greiner, *Die Zeit*, 1.6.1990.

²¹⁶ Schirmacher, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 2.6.1990.

²¹⁷ This speech was first published in ID, 119ff.

Sozialismus',²¹⁸ and therefore merits analysis here.

As argued in Chapter One, it was Wolf's belief in, and commitment to, this vision that attracted severe criticism on the part of Western commentators in the 'Literaturstreit', in the course of which Christa Wolf and like-minded intellectuals who had supported efforts at reforming rather than discarding the GDR were criticised for being out of touch with the majority of the GDR population. At the time of the 'Wende', however, clearly heartened by the bold demands for democratic reforms at the repeated mass demonstrations in Leipzig in September and October of 1989,²¹⁹ Wolf believed that her vision of a reformed socialist society was shared with the majority of the GDR people. 'Sprache der Wende' encapsulates her belief that, after the collapse of the SED regime, it might be possible to create a socialist alternative to the capitalist Federal Republic as had been envisaged when the GDR was founded – a society based on democratic and humanitarian principles, yet a society mindful of its past, including its past failures:

Demokratie – jetzt oder nie! Und wir meinen Volksherrschaft, und wir erinnern uns der steckengebliebenen oder blutig niedergeschlagenen Ansätze in unserer Geschichte und wollen die Chance, die in dieser Krise steckt [...] nicht wieder verschlafen. (T, 11)

Wolf's recurring use of the collective pronouns 'wir', 'uns', and 'unser' suggests a clear assumption on her part that she is expressing the future hopes

²¹⁸ Volker Hage, Mathias Schreiber, 'Jeder Tag ist eine Erzählung', *SpiegelOnline* [37], 8.9.2003. <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/0,1518,264727,00.html> [Accessed on 15th October 2006]

²¹⁹ In *Hierzulande Andernorts*, to be discussed in Chapter Three, Wolf recalls her impressions of the Leipzig demonstrations whilst spending time in Moscow: 'Ich erinnere mich der düsteren Moskauer Woche im Oktober 89, des einzigen Lichtblicks, als ich am ersten Abend vom Hotel aus Berlin anrief und du mir sagtest IN LEIPZIG WAREN HUNDERTTAUSEND AUF DER STRASSE, UND NICHTS IST PASSIERT und als ich auf einmal wieder wußte, was Glück ist, es war ja Montag, der Montag der Leipziger Lichterdemonstrationen'. In Christa Wolf, *Hierzulande Andernorts*, Munich: Luchterhand, 1999, 15, henceforth referred to as HA.

of GDR citizens, and thus their collective aspirations, for 'eine revolutionäre Erneuerung unseres Landes' (T, 18) and a commitment to a reformist socialist utopia – yet her socialist alternative model remains abstract and indirect even though she claims that her language is liberated:

Die Sprache [...] erinnert sich ihrer Gefühlswörter. Eines davon ist "Traum". Also träumen wir mit hellwacher Vernunft. Stell dir vor, es ist Sozialismus, und keiner geht weg! [...] Und dies ist für mich der wichtigste Satz dieser letzten Wochen – der tausendfache Ruf: Wir – sind – das – Volk! (T, 12-13)

Wolf is evidently under the impression that there was an alliance between critical intellectuals, opposition movements, and the people. This is the only plausible explanation for her public address on 4th November 1989 and for her decision both to read out the appeal 'Bleiben Sie doch in Ihrer Heimat, bleiben Sie bei uns' on GDR television on 11 November 1989²²⁰ and to support the appeal 'Für unser Land', published in *Neues Deutschland* on 28th November 1989.²²¹ She was supporting these appeals at a time when, since the fall of the Berlin Wall on 9th November 1989, around 9,000 GDR citizens were leaving for West Germany every day.²²²

Between 4th November 1989 and 31st January 1990, the date of the speech she gives on the occasion of being awarded an honorary doctorate by

²²⁰ See Magenau, op.cit., 384f. As Magenau comments, Wolf was persuaded to read out the appeal by a representative of the citizens' group 'Demokratie Jetzt'.

²²¹ In the article 'Nachtrag zu einem Herbst', written in February 1990 and reproduced in ID, 7-17, Wolf points out that she felt obliged to make both appeals: 'aufgetragen von den Bürgerbewegungen, die immer noch aus dem eigenen Land heraus Veränderungen bewirken wollten' (ID, 15). With hindsight, Wolf characterises these appeals as 'naiv' and confesses to misjudging political reality: 'Dies war noch die Zeit für Gutgläubigkeit, Unerfahrenheit, für Illusionen' (ID, 15). She admits: 'da hatte ich vorschnell von den Menschen, die ich kannte [...] auf alle anderen geschlossen, und ich hatte auch die Breite der bewußten Widerstandsbewegung überschätzt' (ID, 10). Once the slogan 'Wir sind das Volk' changes to 'Wir sind ein Volk' (in late November 1989), she is compelled to acknowledge that the vast majority of her fellow citizens did not share the commitment to a reformist socialist utopia. They chose unification and the West German way of life over any new experiments in socialism.

²²² See Mary Fulbrook, *A History of Germany 1918-2008. The Divided Nation*, Wiley-Blackwell (3rd edition), 2009, 278.

Hildesheim University and which is included in *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou*, Wolf's position changes. On 4th November 1989 she proclaimed 'Stell dir vor, es ist Sozialismus und keiner geht weg!' Hardly three months later, following the collapse of the SED regime, she concedes that the experiment of 'real existierender Sozialismus' in the GDR has failed. Commenting on the reasons for this failure, from what she perceives to be the collective perspective of critical East German writers, Wolf explains:

[U]nsere Erwartungen schienen gerechtfertigt, daß der durch die Volksmassen erzwungene Sturz des alten Regimes zur revolutionären Erneuerung unseres Landes führen würde. Darin scheinen wir uns getäuscht zu haben. Dieser Aufbruch kam wohl um Jahre zu spät, die Schäden in vielen Menschen und im Land gehen zu tief, der zügellose Machtmißbrauch hat die Werte, in deren Namen er geschah, diskreditiert und zersetzt, innerhalb weniger Wochen verschwanden vor unseren Augen die Chancen auf einen neuen Ansatz zu einer alternativen Gesellschaft, damit auch für den Bestand unseres Landes. Eine Niederlage wird nicht dadurch weniger schmerzlich, daß man sie sich erklären kann. (T, 18-19)

In the Hildesheim speech, entitled 'Zwischenrede', Wolf's first public address to a West German audience since the fall of the Wall, she gives the impression of still being a 'moralische Instanz' when she voices her reservations about inevitable unification. She warns of '[einen] schnellen Anschluß der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik an die Bundesrepublik Deutschland', on the grounds that this could lead to possible estrangement between East and West Germans, with West Germans emerging as victors and the East German people being forced to repress memories of their past. She fears that 'die Geschichte [der DDR] öffentlich beschwiegen und in die Menschen zurückgedrängt würde, die sie gemacht, erlebt und erlitten haben' (T, 17) and expresses her concern about the effects of this dissociation from

the past on 'die innere Verfassung der Menschen' (T, 17) in terms of people becoming 'desorientiert' (T, 19). Wolf's thinking here echoes that of Walter Jens who, in his article 'Plädoyer gegen die Preisgabe der DDR-Kultur' of June 1990 in defence of Wolf, as discussed in Chapter One, advocated the maintenance of an interest in a literature that had developed in the context of political difficulties.

In 'Zwischenrede' Wolf also touches on an important issue that was to arise in the first phase of the 'Literaturstreit', namely the role of critical GDR intellectuals and her own experience as a writer, when she portrays the mass demonstration on 4th November 1989 as the 'Kulminations- und Höhepunkt einer Vorgeschichte, in der Literaten, Theaterleute, Friedens- und andere Gruppen unter dem Dach der Kirche miteinander in Kontakte und Gespräche gekommen waren' (T, 18). She argues that the revolutionary events in the autumn of 1989 could not have been brought about without the contributions of critical writers and artists:

Durch Benennen von Widersprüchen, die lange Zeit nirgendwo sonst artikuliert wurden, bei ihren Lesern kritisches Bewußtsein zu erzeugen oder zu stärken, sie zum Widerstand gegen Lüge, Heuchelei und Selbstaufgabe zu ermutigen, unsere Sprache und andere Traditionen aus der deutschen Literatur und Geschichte, die abgeschnitten werden sollten, lebendig zu halten. (T, 18)

The 'Benennen von Widersprüchen' and 'kritisches Bewußtsein [...] erzeugen' is precisely what Wolf herself attempted to achieve as a GDR writer through her narrative method of 'subjektive Authentizität' in order to direct the focus of socialist literature away from a reproduction of officially sanctioned mechanistic representations of collective society and towards a dynamic vision of reality with its focus on individual self-realisation and productive social criticism.

When Wolf reiterates the notion of the crucial role of critical GDR writers in fostering 'kritisches Bewußtsein' in her speech in honour of Hans Mayer 'Ein Deutscher auf Widerruf', composed in October/ November 1990, her comments could be read as a response to those Western critics who in June 1990 had reproached GDR writers for their failure explicitly to condemn the SED regime when it was still in power:

Es gab Jahre hier, in denen Bücher wie Taten wirkten, Lebens- und Arbeitsmittel jener Gruppen, die in den achtziger Jahren entstanden und die im Herbst des vorigen Jahres in einer Reihe ganz neuer Organisationsformen das Gesicht, die Gestalt einer freien, humanen, sozialen Gesellschaft ahnen ließen, die sich unter dem Panzer des alten Staatswesens als Puppe herausgebildet hatte. (T, 27)

Wolf appears here to support the notion that there was a 'hidden GDR' which existed in people's minds, nourished by the idea of a humanist tradition, promoted in the writings of critical writers, and catapulted to the fore in the autumn of 1989.

It is noteworthy that as early as the Hildesheim speech, delivered four months before the 'Literaturstreit' began, Wolf anticipates the important issue of the survival of GDR literature. In doing so, she echoes Bertolt Brecht's sentiment as expressed in his poem *An die Nachgeborenen* – though, one might add, without a plea for 'Nachsicht':

Spätere, die vielleicht in weniger bedrängten Umständen leben werden, werden herausfinden, was an diesen Bemühungen zu oberflächlich, zu inkonsequent, zu wenig kühn war und was, als Literatur, Bestand hat. (T, 18)

These lines are an indication of Wolf's own doubts as to whether or not her opposition stance in the days of the GDR and the literature that she had produced was forceful enough to defend 'moralische Werte [...], die der zynischen Demagogie der herrschenden (SED) Ideologie geopfert werden

sollten' (T, 18). It is precisely this kind of re-evaluation of all literature produced in the GDR pre-'Wende' which was called for by Western critics in the 'Literaturstreit', not least by the initiators of the debate, Greiner and Schirrmacher. It could be argued that in 'Zwischenrede' Wolf took the wind out of the critics' sails by coming forward with her own self-critical comments and is not leaving it to 'Spätere' to assess her own contribution to GDR literature as a critical writer. Yet it was this element of 'Selbstbefragung und Selbstzweifel' (T, 9) which, in the 'Literaturstreit', would be dismissed as insincere by Western critics, with Greiner suggesting that these comments are simply evidence of Wolf's 'Entwaffnungstechnik, indem sie alle Einwände schon gegen sich selber vorbringt'.²²³

In 'Zwischenrede' Wolf focuses not only on the contributions of critical GDR intellectuals pre-'Wende', whose work was to be denigrated in the 'Literaturstreit' by Western critics as having condoned the SED regime, but also on their role in a unified Germany. She stresses that literature in the East post-'Wende' need no longer serve as a substitute for the public discourse on everyday life and social issues which the media in the GDR did not provide ('Die Arbeit der Presse muß die Literatur nicht mehr machen' [T, 20]). Yet Wolf does reflect on the crucial question for GDR writers 'wofür wir in Zukunft gebraucht werden' (T, 20).

For Wolf the question of the role of literature is inextricably linked to the issue of a writer's moral responsibility:²²⁴ to expose 'die blinden Flecken in

²²³ Greiner, *Die Zeit*, 1.6.1990.

²²⁴ See also my comments on the idea of responsibility in the author's work, as outlined in the Introduction to this thesis, 7-8.

unserer Vergangenheit' (T, 21)²²⁵ – the destructive pockets of unexplored experience affecting individuals and communities – and to render them 'sichtbar'.²²⁶ Hence, her express mission is for her further writing to reflect at least in part the experiences of former GDR citizens post-'Wende' ('die Menschen in die neuen Verhältnisse begleiten' [T, 21]), and thus contribute to the process of social healing. Prompted by letters from readers, Wolf surmises that literature needs to reflect their particular circumstances and, as a result, she wants to maintain her commitment to *littérature engagée*: 'die Trauer, die Scham, die Reue vieler Menschen [...] noch öffentlich ausdrücken' (T, 21).²²⁷ As discussed in some detail in Chapter One, the concept of *littérature engagée* became a contentious issue in the second phase of the 'Literaturstreit'.

Wolf's essay 'Wo ist euer Lächeln geblieben? Brachland Berlin 1990' is an illustration of her continued commitment to the social engagement of literature, for example when she argues that the main beneficiaries of unification and more specifically of currency union are those western bank managers, insurance agents, tax advisors and businessmen who relocated to East Germany whilst East Germans were the losers. Wolf sees her role as that of an author who voices the concerns of East Germans, and this for her involves drawing attention to the plight of the 'Verlierer' – 'people whose human

²²⁵ See also 'Unerledigte Widersprüche: Gespräch mit Therese Hörnigk' (June 1987/October 1988), in ID, 66.

²²⁶ See Wolf's description of Georg Büchner's work in 'Von Büchner sprechen', in *Christa Wolf, Fortgesetzter Versuch: Aufsätze, Gespräche, Essays*, Leipzig: Reclam, 1989, 154.

²²⁷ Wolf's position is in stark contrast to that of Heiner Müller who, in 1990, announced a retreat to an ivory tower existence: 'In der Revolution gibt es keinen Platz für Kunst und Literatur. 1871 schrieb Flaubert an Turgenjew: "Ich habe immer versucht, in einem Elfenbeinturm zu leben, aber ein Meer von Scheiße schwappt an seine Mauern". Vielleicht ist jetzt wirklich eine gute Gelegenheit, sich in den Elfenbeinturm zurückzuziehen, denn diesen Prozeß mit Literatur begleiten zu wollen wäre lächerlich'. See Heiner Müller, *Zur Lage der Nation*, Berlin: Rotbuch, 1990, 23.

potential a given society is casting aside'.²²⁸ By expressing what Wolf considers to be the collective concerns of East Germans, she wants to ensure that forty years of GDR history are not retrospectively devalued, and she emphasises the need for authenticity in representing the GDR past: 'Wir müssen auf Konkretheit bestehen und aufpassen, daß uns nicht das Leben genommen wird, das wir wirklich geführt haben' (T, 28). This reaction may be read as Wolf's counter-attack to Schirmacher's reductionist stance when he claimed, for example, that the relationship of Wolf's generation to the GDR was merely a matter of 'Familienverhältnisse von Anfang an'.²²⁹

Wolf stresses the pivotal future role of former GDR writers in ensuring that the 'Konkretheit' is not lost. And, in *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou*, she does so especially in her letter to the East Berlin Academy of Arts in September 1991 just before it was dissolved. She merges her examination of this particular moment of sadness in her own life with the 'Wendepunkt' in the history of the academy which for her, after the expatriation of Wolf Biermann in November 1976,²³⁰ represented 'jahrelang [...] der einzige Raum, in dem ich mich noch mit Kollegen treffen, diskutieren, Vorschläge einbringen, halböffentlich Kritik

²²⁸ Zehl Romero, op.cit., 79.

²²⁹ Schirmacher, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 2.6.1990.

²³⁰ The expulsion of Biermann in November 1976 took place in the full glare of the international media. Having been permitted to undertake a concert tour in West Germany, Biermann's citizenship was withdrawn and his re-entry into the GDR forbidden following a concert in Cologne where he was deemed to have uttered unacceptable criticism of the GDR. An initial letter of protest against the expulsion was signed by twelve writers in which they made clear their protest was not so much in personal support of Biermann as against such aggressive action by the SED regime in the face of (constructive) criticism: 'Wolf Biermann war ein unbequemer Dichter [...]. Unser sozialistischer Staat, eingedenk des Wortes aus Marxens "18. Brumaire", dem zufolge die proletarische Revolution sich unablässig selber kritisiert, müßte im Gegensatz zu anachronistischen Gesellschaftsformen eine solche Unbequemlichkeit gelassen nachdenklich ertragen können'. There followed a series of measures – enforced public withdrawal from the protest, expulsion from the SED – against those seen as leading figures. The events of late 1976 and early 1977 marked a complete breakdown of trust between the government and the critical artistic community. See Emmerich, op.cit., 252ff.

üben und sogar öffentlich lesen konnte' (T, 71). This letter reads like a plea not only to save 'den Schatz deutscher Kultur' but also to keep the memory of the GDR alive, including recollections of its 'Widersprüche', 'Konflikte' and the 'Gründe für Anpassung und Kompromisse, die nicht alle aus Feigheit oder Bequemlichkeit geschlossen wurden' (T, 76). Wolf considers authentic representation of contradictions during the forty years of the existence of the GDR as a crucial part of the educational process of 'Vergangenheitsbewältigung', if contemporary and future generations are to learn lessons from the past. Wolf's remarks echo comments made by Walter Jens in defence of Wolf in the 'Literaturstreit' when he stressed the crucial role which GDR literature had 'innerhalb der sozialistischen Gesellschaft Widersprüche [...] sichtbar zu machen'.²³¹ Rather than fixating on aspects of the past for their own sake, Wolf draws attention to the need for drawing the past into the present in order to reveal its relation to the future. In her letter to the Academy of Arts Wolf notes:

Wenn mit dieser Akademie auch ein gut Teil unserer in ihr materialisierten Konflikte und Widersprüche verschwindet – die Widersprüche einer Etappe innerhalb der deutschen Geschichte, die ja nicht einfach ein 'Unfall', ein 'Versehen' [...] ist, verschwindet auch eine weitere Möglichkeit für uns, die Mitlebenden und die Späteren, daraus zu lernen. (T, 74)

Yet Wolf could be reproached for being naïve, as portrayed by Schirmmacher in his article on 2nd June 1990, when she suggests that the divide between East and West Germans can be overcome by creating more opportunities for dialogue between 'Gleichgestellte'. For here Wolf is citing as a

²³¹ Jens, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 16./17.6.1990.

paradigm her own experience of the discussion groups²³² at the East Berlin Academy of Arts, 'wo Intellektuelle aus Ost und West sich artikulieren können. Ich weiß in diesem historischen Augenblick kaum eine andere Methode für eine nennenswerte Zahl von Menschen' (T, 82).

The importance of 'Dialog' as a means of advancing the process of self-understanding and adjusting one's behaviour accordingly is a recurrent theme in Wolf's work. Wolf further develops the theme of creating opportunities for dialogue between left-wing intellectuals in the East and the West in her letter to Jürgen Habermas dated 7th December 1991. It is important to stress that Habermas's letter to Wolf, which prompted her response, needs to be read as part of the 'Literaturstreit' discourse. As discussed in Chapter One, the issue of post-war German identity in the debate was brought to the fore by Schirrmacher with his implicit reference to the 'Historikerdebatte' of the 1980s between Habermas and Nolte, when Habermas had argued in favour of differentiating between GDR socialism and National Socialism. Contradicting his position in the 'Historikerdebatte' of the 1980s, Habermas now appears to have adopted his opponent Nolte's stance, arguing 'Von den "beiden Diktaturen" darf fortan *undifferenziert* die Rede sein' (T, 142). It should be pointed out, though, that Habermas's choice of the verb 'darf' is ambiguous, since it may be read as either 'es ist jetzt erlaubt' or 'muss'. He is, however, unambiguous in expressing what he perceives to have been the differences in cultural orientation between East and West German intellectuals post-1945. He emphasises the discordant

²³² Following the discussion rounds on *Störfall* a discussion circle had been formed, made up of friends and interested people in the East and the West, which met monthly in the East Berlin Academy of Arts. Wolf organised these half public groups, suggested topics and invited scientists, artists, politicians and sociologists as discussion partners. See Magenau, *op.cit.*, 437.

aspects of the GDR – in other words the embracing of utopian socialist ideals and the realities of the SED regime – when he states ‘daß die Entwertung unserer besten und schwächsten intellektuellen Traditionen für mich einer der bösesten Aspekte an dem Erbe sei, welches die DDR in die erweiterte Bundesrepublik einbringt’ (T, 144). But he also stresses ‘daß wir im Westen unter Verhältnissen gelebt haben, die auch im intellektuellen Bereich eine [...] als Emanzipation erfahrene Orientierung nach Westen ermöglicht haben [...], die Einübung in den aufrechten Gang’ (T, 146).

In her response to Habermas, Wolf counters that she does not share the feeling ‘das alte Gepäck abgeworfen zu haben und an einem neuen Anfang zu stehen’ (T, 150). She is attacking assumptions expressed by Western commentators in the ‘Literaturstreit’ about East German intellectuals:

Für uns, die linken Intellektuellen diesseits und jenseits der einst kompakt materiellen, jetzt nicht nur, wie es immer heißt, 'in den Köpfen', sondern durch die kraß unterschiedlichen Lebensbedingungen der meisten markierten Grenze heißt das, glaube ich, über unsere Geschichten sprechen: über Biographien. (T, 150)

She takes particular issue with what she perceives as the arrogance displayed by many West German intellectuals, even those on the left.²³³ Wolf reflects on the concern expressed by Habermas and like-minded left-wing West German intellectuals ‘durch uns, die Ostintellektuellen, und durch das Erbe des Stalinismus zurückgeworfen zu werden, auf Stufen der geistigen

²³³ In his review of *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou*, Gunnar Decker from the former GDR also attacked Jürgen Habermas and West German left-wing intellectuals: ‘Das Unverständnis westdeutscher Linker angesichts der DDR-Geschichte ist groß. Da meinten wir, wenigstens ein Stück eigener Demokratie-Erfahrung mit ins neue fremde Deutschland zu bringen, und merken, sie ist nicht gefragt, man ist mit sich beschäftigt. [...] Gedankenlos spricht Habermas in seinem Brief an Christa Wolf von der "Umbruchsituation, in der Sie stehen", so als wäre Wandlung nur einer Seite überhaupt möglich’, in Gunnar Decker, ‘Nachdenken von Christa W. Sorge um die Blaue Blume’, *Woche*post, 17.3.1994.

Auseinandersetzung, die Sie, die Westintellektuellen, hinter sich gebracht haben' (T, 151). She is promoting counter-arguments to those presented in the 'Literaturstreit' when, in what could be seen as a reinforcement of Schütte's caution 'nicht blindwütig der [...] Versuchung eifertiger Besserwisserei anheim zu fallen',²³⁴ she attacks West German intellectuals for their 'Unkenntnis der hiesigen Zustände, ihrer Entwicklung, auch der hiesigen Lebensumstände von Intellektuellen' (T, 151).

Wolf rejects Western critique of East German intellectuals on the grounds that the latter attempted 'sich im Widerspruch zu der herrschenden Ideologie, die sie als falsches Bewußtsein durchschaut hatten, zu behaupten und zu artikulieren' (T, 151-152), and condemns the reluctance on the part of Western intellectuals, including Habermas, to acknowledge 'diese Arbeit, die [in der DDR] geleistet wurde' (T, 152). Her further argument seems like a reversal of Schirmacher's attack on her in the opening salvo of the 'Literaturstreit' when he accused her of being incapable of assessing reality objectively on account of her first-hand experience of National Socialism as a child and adolescent. Here Wolf criticises Western intellectuals for their failure to accept that 'das "geistige Erbe des Nationalsozialismus"' (T, 152) was shared with the same generation in the Federal Republic of Germany. In a further dig at the lack of interest in the GDR on the part of Western intellectuals and their lack of critical engagement with the 'Literatur des Ostens' (T, 153) when the GDR was still in existence, and with reference to Habermas's letter, she reaches the verdict:

daß auch Sie Ihre Entwicklung gegen ein restauratives System sehen oder gegen restaurative Tendenzen. Dabei berufen Sie sich auf die

²³⁴ Schütte, *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 8.6.1990.

geistigen Anstöße, die Sie aus dem Westen, aus dem Geist der Aufklärung erfahren. Der Osten hat auch geistig für Sie keine Rolle gespielt: Könnte nicht darin doch eine Verengung liegen? (T, 152)
[Wolf's italics]

She adds that '[w]ir hier mehr über den Westen und die Lebensverhältnisse dort [wußten], als unsere Kollegen über uns und unsere Lebensverhältnisse wußten und wissen: einfach, weil es uns mehr interessierte' (T, 154). On a conciliatory note Wolf emphasises that it is important to share the very different experiences: 'Wir haben unterschiedliche Geschichten, darauf sollten wir bestehen, und wir sollten anfangen, uns diese Geschichten zu erzählen' (T, 154).

Reflection on collectively experienced events is a key theme in *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou*, not only to ensure that 'die reale Geschichte der Menschen, die in der DDR gelebt haben' does not disappear 'in einem dunklen Loch des Vergessens'²³⁵ (T, 74), but also to emphasise 'wunde Punkte' in Wolf's personal experience. The essay 'Rummelplatz 11. Plenum 1965 – Erinnerungsbericht' represents one such notable example of looking back at a landmark event in her own life and thus setting the record straight. The essay also complements Wolf's other publications in which her past is documented, such as *Akteneinsicht Christa Wolf: Zerrspiegel und Dialog* and her correspondence with Brigitte Reimann entitled *Sei gegrüßt und lebe*.²³⁶ 'Rummelplatz' is also the title of the novel by Werner Bräunig that was discredited in the discussions at the 11th Plenary Session in December 1965 and withheld from publication by

²³⁵ These words recall the narrator's words in *Was bleibt* which was begun shortly after Wolf Biermann's expulsion in November 1976. Events surrounding Biermann's expulsion had made a deep incision into Wolf's life. As *Was bleibt* records: 'Trostlosigkeit' had taken over since then: 'ich fürchte, alle diese wüsten Tage würden [...] unaufhaltsam im Strom des Vergessens abtreiben' (WB, 9), and the narrator decides to record one such day.

²³⁶ The exchange of letters with Brigitte Reimann focuses on life in the GDR, whereas *Akteneinsicht Christa Wolf: Zerrspiegel und Dialog* focuses on documenting Christa Wolf's Stasi past.

the GDR authorities.

'Rummelplatz 11. Plenum 1965 – Erinnerungsbericht' was originally presented at a colloquium at the East Berlin Academy of Arts in June 1990, at a time when the 'Literaturstreit' had just begun, and might be read as an explicit reaction to Schirmmacher's criticism of her as an intellectual. As discussed in Chapter One, Schirmmacher had reproached Wolf for her attitude of patient tolerance and endurance of the SED regime, an attitude which, he argued, only served to lend the regime cultural credibility and caused her to fail as an intellectual.

The 11th Plenary Session was notable for the resistance of Christa Wolf and others to the censorship campaign, and also because it banned Wolf Biermann from publishing or giving public performances of his work in the GDR, and led to his eventual expatriation in 1976. This event constituted one of the most significant attacks by the SED regime on writers and dissenters in the GDR and became known as 'kultureller Kahlschlag',²³⁷ not only because a number of controversial films and books were immediately withdrawn²³⁸ but also on the grounds that demands for democratic reforms on the part of writers were allegedly hindering the GDR's economic interests. For example Erich Honecker, then Secretary of the SED's Central Committee, declared:

Den Anhängern dieser Ideologie, die halbanarchistische Lebensgewohnheiten vertreten und sich darin gefallen, viel von 'absoluter Freiheit' zu reden, möchten wir ganz offen erklären: Sie irren sich, wenn Sie die Arbeitsteilung in unserer Republik so verstehen, daß die Werktätigen die sozialistische Gesellschaftsordnung aufopferungsvoll

²³⁷ See Magenau, op.cit., 172.

²³⁸ The following books were withheld from publication: Wolf Biermann's volume of poems 'Drahtarfe', which was only published in West Germany, Stefan Heym's narrative 'Der Tag X', which had not been printed at the time, and Werner Bräunig's novel 'Rummelplatz', of which only the first chapter had been printed in *Neue Deutsche Literatur*.

aufbauen und andere daran nicht teilzunehmen brauchen, daß der Staat zahlt und andere das Recht haben, den lebensverneinenden, spießbürgerlichen Skeptizismus als allein selig machende Religion zu verkünden. Es gibt eine einfache Rechnung: Wollen wir die Arbeitsproduktivität und damit den Lebensstandard erhöhen, woran doch alle Bürger der DDR interessiert sind, dann kann man nicht nihilistische, ausweglose und moralzersetzende Philosophien in Literatur, Film, Theater, Fernsehen und in Zeitschriften verbreiten.²³⁹

Wolf sums up the perception of artists and writers at the time: 'wir hatten ganz deutlich das Gefühl, daß die Kunst"diskussion" als Ersatz für die Auseinandersetzung mit den ökonomischen Problemen [...] dienen mußte, daß wir als Sündenböcke herhalten sollten' (T, 61). She presents herself in this essay as a critical GDR intellectual who was not prepared blindly to follow the Party-line. She reiterates her support for Werner Bräunig, for instance, who was not granted permission to publish his latest work:²⁴⁰

Ich habe mich [...] ausdrücklich gewehrt gegen Angriffe auf Bräunig, [...] weil ich sah, daß diese Angriffe paradigmatisch waren und daß Bräunigs Text als Beispiel herhalten sollte für einen viel umfassenderen Angriff auf die Kultur. (T, 59)

At the same time, and as if responding to Schirmmacher's criticism of intellectuals of Wolf's generation, Wolf rejects comparisons of critical intellectuals in the GDR with the 'Petöfi-Club'.²⁴¹ She dismisses any suspicions that the informal meetings of artists and writers prior to the Plenary Session could have been interpreted as a kind of 'Gruppenbildung' aimed at undermining the SED regime: 'aber natürlich ging es nicht darum, eine Oppositionsgruppe zu formieren mit einem politischen Programm' (T, 62). The

²³⁹ Günter Agde (ed.), *Kahlschlag. Das 11. Plenum des ZK der SED 1965. Studien und Dokumente*, Berlin: Aufbau Taschenbuch Verlag (2nd edition), 2000, 243f.

²⁴⁰ Wolf's outspokenness at the 11th Plenary Session would result in the removal of her name from the list of Central Committee candidates at the 7th Party Conference in 1967.

²⁴¹ The 'Petöfi-Club' was founded in Hungary in 1956 before the popular uprising was crushed by the Soviet military, and consisted of intellectuals demanding democratic reforms, which, in the eyes of the GDR, was tantamount to counterrevolution.

sociologist Wolfgang Engler notes that Wolf's stance reflected that of GDR intellectuals in 1965 who would not have imagined forming a 'Plattform' and who, as a result, quickly succumbed to repression.²⁴² Wolf sees herself as belonging to that group of GDR artists and writers, 'die mittlere Generation', who had lost faith in the SED state and its practice of socialism but who held on to the vision of the GDR as a socialist alternative to the capitalist Federal Republic:

Wir, meist Angehörige einer Generation, die in diesem Land engagiert lebte, die Konflikte sahen, hatten ein sehr starkes Gefühl von der Gefahr, in die dieses Gemeinwesen geraten würde, wenn die Widersprüche nicht in produktiver Weise ausgetragen würden. [...] Wir hatten das Gefühl, dies sei einer der letzten Momente, um die Entwicklung in der DDR in eine Richtung zu lenken, die diesen Staat zu einer Alternative machen konnte gegenüber der kapitalistischen Bundesrepublik. Wir wollten die sozialistischen Ansätze so weit stärken, daß die DDR auch geistig 'konkurrenzfähig' werden konnte. (T, 62)

Wolf notes the dilemma inherent in the position of those (more or less) critical GDR writers – they have been called 'kritisch-loyal'²⁴³ – who wanted to change the GDR from within, 'und zwar mit *kritischer Kunst*' (T, 64) [Wolf's italics]. Only after the 11th Plenary Session did it become clear to her that she did not want anything to do 'mit dem Apparat'.²⁴⁴ As Wolf emphasises, after that landmark event belief in a socialist utopia became a 'Glaubensfrage, die gegen die Partei verteidigt werden mußte'.²⁴⁵ Elsewhere Wolf admits: 'Unsere Hoffnungen konnten sich nicht erfüllen. Das Verlierergefühl – ich kenne es seit

²⁴² See Wolfgang Engler, *Die Ostdeutschen. Kunde von einem verlorenen Land*, Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1999, 106.

²⁴³ See Horst Domdey, 'Die DDR als Droge. Wie kritisch war DDR-Literatur?' *Deutschland Archiv*, volume 26, No 2, 1993, 169.

²⁴⁴ "'Auf mir bestehen". Christa Wolf im Gespräch mit Günter Gaus', in A, 251.

²⁴⁵ Magenau, op.cit., 169.

1965' (T, 27).²⁴⁶ The expulsion of Wolf Biermann in 1976 dashed the hopes of many critical intellectuals that the repressive GDR system could be reformed. It was not until the 'Wende', when Wolf believed that she discerned an alliance between intellectuals and the people, that her hopes for a reformed socialist state were rekindled, at least in the short term.

In her diary entry 'Woserin, Freitag, den 27. September 1991', written whilst spending time in her Mecklenburg country retreat, Wolf reflects on those events:

Haben wir nicht alle im Herbst '89 die zum Ersticken dichte Konsistenz unseres gemeinsamen Erwartungshorizonts gespürt. [...] Körperlich fühlten wir uns hingerissen in eine unglaubliche Konzentration von Energie, die noch wenige Wochen, ja Tage vorher nicht vorhanden gewesen war. (T, 108)

All that remained in September 1991 is a 'Dauergefühl des "Zu spät", unter dem ich lebe, von mir abgerückt', a depressive feeling of living 'im Joch falscher, vernichtender Bedürfnisse' (T, 109).

Experimental literary pieces and 'subjektive Authentizität'

Whereas the essay 'Rummelplatz' is a record of Wolf's 'wunder Punkt' as a critical GDR writer in 1965, the experimental literary pieces in the collection highlight Wolf's sense of crisis as a writer in the early years of post-unification Germany. These particular pieces shed light on Wolf's 'Denk- und Lebensprozeß' (DA, 778)²⁴⁷ and a form of writer's block which she experienced

²⁴⁶ Christa Wolf reacted to the experience at the 11th Plenary Session with illness and depression. See also 'Begegnungen Third Street' in HA, 18; and "'Auf mir bestehen". Christa Wolf im Gespräch mit Günter Gaus', op.cit., 249, where she confesses to a feeling of having had 'die Hände weggeschlagen'. After the 11th Plenum Wolf began working on *Nachdenken über Christa T.* and fought her way out of her depression through writing, as she admits in a letter to Brigitte Reimann, contained in *Sei begrüßt und lebe*, Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau-Verlag, 1993, 47f.

²⁴⁷ See my Introduction, page 14.

following the attacks on her in the early 1990s. The texts allow the reader to gain insight into Wolf's process of overcoming the crisis in her own writing as well as her motivation for continuing in her writing career. Whilst her literary beginnings in a socialist state were shaped by her dialogue in essays with Anna Seghers and by the sense of 'Auftrag',²⁴⁸ which had motivated her communist role model to write, she now hints at her affinity with the 'Schreibexistenz Friederike Mayröcker' and the latter's 'lebenslange Besessenheit, sich ganz auszusprechen, dieser Zwang, zu schreiben bis zur Erschöpfung, mit der gleichen Geste sich ganz zu entblößen und sich zu bedecken' (T, 205). When she describes the Austrian avantgardist's writing practice as 'rückhaltslos, schonungslos, verletzlich bis zum äußersten, aber den Schmerz nicht scheuend', she sums up her own literary endeavour, which consists ultimately in 'der Wahrheit auf der Spur zu bleiben [...] sie durch die sehr fein gesponnenen Lügennetze, auch die der Selbsttäuschung und des Selbstbetrugs, hindurchzuretten' (T, 207).

Fundamentally, Wolf is plagued by her own doubts of finding a poetic voice in which to speak of the pain of facing her own failures as a GDR writer – doubts which recur as a leitmotif in the experimental literary texts in *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou*. However, facing her own failures should not be read here as admitting moral failure in the sense in which Greiner had argued, nor as the failure of an ideologically misguided intellectual, as Schirrmacher made her out to be. Wolf is questioning whether or not as an East German intellectual she has gone far enough 'die Grenzen des Sagbaren zu überschreiten' (WB, 20).

²⁴⁸ 'Fragen an Anna Seghers' and 'Ein Gespräch mit Anna Seghers', in DA 1: 255-262 and 279-292 respectively.

She is referring here to the dilemma she faced as a GDR writer who wanted to remain in the GDR but needed to tread a narrow line, as expressed in Biermann's contribution to the 'Literaturstreit', between 'Widerstand und Anpasserei'.²⁴⁹

Wolf's doubts about finding a poetic voice as a writer in post-unification Germany are expressed particularly forcefully in the 1991 text 'Nagelprobe'. 'Nagelprobe' is quite different from the speeches and essays, not least because of the discontinuous, associative style of writing which gives it its nightmarish quality. It is a key text in *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou*, not least because it casts vivid light on Wolf's sense of personal crisis as a writer at the time. Graves notes that the text was first written for inclusion in the catalogue of an art gallery in St. Gallen.²⁵⁰ Prompted by the artist Günther Uecker (born 1930), in whose work nails feature prominently, the story is essentially a 'literary meditation'²⁵¹ on the word 'Nagel', its 'metaphorical variations'²⁵² in German, specifically in traditional children's stories, and the actual 'uses'²⁵³ to which nails have been put throughout history to punish individuals for their 'Verfehlungen' (T, 160, 164). As Graves highlights, throughout the text the emphasis is on 'images of intimidation and violence'.²⁵⁴ The reason for this becomes apparent in the opening scene where the female narrator, recounting what appears to be a nightmare, finds herself in an unfamiliar auditorium of around one hundred

²⁴⁹ Biermann, *Die Zeit*, 24.8.1990.

²⁵⁰ See Peter Graves, 'Christa Wolf in the 1990s', in Martin Kane (ed.), *Legacies and Identity: East and West German Literary Responses to Unification. Britische und Irische Studien zur deutschen Sprache und Literatur*, No 31, Oxford: Peter Lang, 2002, 167-180, here 170-171.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 171.

²⁵² *Ibid.*

²⁵³ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

people to whom she is expected to recite literature or poetry (precisely which is not made clear) and who – in a Kafkaesque scenario – appear to pass judgement on her. She becomes aware of ‘Nagelfelder’ (T, 156) breaking through the four walls of the room and slowly coming towards her from all sides. We are not given details of the outcome, but the narrative voice implies that ‘resistance is futile, the process is inexorable’.²⁵⁵

The opening sentence, ‘[i]ch habe in einem Raum gesessen, denke ich, oder erzähle ich jemandem, den ich noch nicht kenne’ (T, 156), gives rise to two possible interpretations. It is not merely the ‘Raum’ that is unfamiliar to the narrator but also the ‘jemand’ to whom she is describing the scenario: ‘da sind von beiden Seiten, genaugenommen auch von vorn und hinten, also von allen vier Seiten, Nägel auf mich zu gewachsen’ (T, 156). As in Kafka’s *Der Prozeß*, the question arises as to whether or not the people in the room are her judges or whether she is meant to pass judgement on herself. In a figurative sense the choice of the term ‘Nagelprobe’ in the title suggests that the narrator is undergoing a kind of trial of her own worth ‘damit die Wahrheit, nichts als die Wahrheit, endlich aus ihr herausgetrieben wird’ (T, 157). Given that, in the opening salvo of the ‘Literaturstreit’, Greiner had charged Wolf with ‘Mangel [...] an Aufrichtigkeit gegen sich selbst’,²⁵⁶ Wolf’s soul-searching here may well have been prompted by those attacks.

As Graves observes, Barbara Sørensen compares the scene where fields of nails are breaking through the wall with some of Edgar Allan Poe’s

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Greiner, *Die Zeit*, 1.6.1990.

stories, specifically 'The Pit and the Pendulum',²⁵⁷ but she does not mention parallels that can be found in Wolf's own earlier writings. An example is Ellen's dream in *Sommerstück* where, seeking to escape from an oppressive public meeting, Ellen finds herself '[i]n einer engen Zementkammer [...] an die Wand gedrückt', from which her only escape is to become paper-thin 'um sich durch einen winzigen Spalt nach oben durchzuzwängen'.²⁵⁸ Another example can be found in *Was bleibt*, when the narrator is trapped within her mind by a 'Horizont aus Stein' (WB, 69).²⁵⁹ These images of claustrophobia in *Sommerstück* and *Was bleibt* are used to stress the oppressive atmosphere of the GDR, but Graves highlights that what is significant in 'Nagelprobe' is that, although the story was written after the demise of the GDR, the 'experience of individual persecution'²⁶⁰ has not gone. On the contrary it has become more intense. Not only is the threat presented as more vicious, but the nightmare develops into a 'paradigm'²⁶¹ of acts of violence throughout the ages.

The narrator recalls her fear as a child of 'fairytale of wicked women being rolled to their deaths in spiked barrels',²⁶² she comments on the use of nails in the Middle Ages to 'extract confessions of witchcraft',²⁶³ and she reflects on the implements of suffering in the 'crucifixion of Christ'.²⁶⁴ Through these associations of demands for a scapegoat, Wolf depicts a continuity of acts of

²⁵⁷ See Barbara Sørensen, 'Sprachkrise und Utopie in Christa Wolfs Texten nach der Wende. Die Krise der Intellektuellen im wiedervereinigten Deutschland', *Text & Kontext*, volume 38, Copenhagen and Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1996, 84-94. Quoted in Graves, op.cit., 171.

²⁵⁸ Christa Wolf, *Sommerstück*, Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuchverlag, 1995 (first printed Berlin and Weimar: Luchterhand, 1989), 24. Quoted in Graves, op.cit., 171-172.

²⁵⁹ Quoted in Graves, op.cit., 172.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

human cruelty down the ages which now appear to be replicated by the Western public media. As Graves emphasises, all these acts, whether they derive from the notion of retributive justice or from simple prejudice, have one theme in common: 'innocence affords the sufferer no protection'.²⁶⁵

Wolf seems to see a similar pattern being played out to the treatment she herself received during the 'Literaturstreit'.²⁶⁶ Her choice of vocabulary is reminiscent of the images used by those who defended her against her Western critics in the 'Literaturstreit', in particular the image of 'Treibjagd' (Walter Jens), the image of 'Hinrichtung' and the notion of 'Kampagne' (Günter Grass), and the idea of 'ideologische und moralische Waffen' (Lew Kopelew). Tweaking the Book of John, the narrator comes to the realisation that 'Am Anfang war der Nagel'. 'Nagelprobe' concludes with an apocalyptic vision which reveals the perpetrator of cruelty and the victim as one and the same person:

all unser Wohltun und Unschuldig-bleiben-Wollen ist ja vergeblich, die dunkle wilde *Jagd* ist ja, womöglich in unserer Gestalt, über dem Land, und die steile feste Burg im Hintergrund wird sie nicht abwehren, ganz im Gegenteil, da kommt sie schon über uns, mit Spießen und mit Stangen, und wir hören den Hetzruf, und der heiße Atem schlägt uns in den Nacken, und [wir] erschrecken [...] vor unserem Ebenbild, das wir nicht kennen wollen, wie jene ungetreue Kammerjungfrau aus dem Märchen ja auch nicht sehen konnte, daß sie über sich selbst das Urteil sprach. (T, 166-168) [my emphasis, JD]²⁶⁷

This vision of guilt and punishment appears to refer to Cranach the Elder's painting 'Melancholie' and comes at the end of 'Nagelprobe', just before the final prose poem entitled 'Prinzip Hoffnung' which refers to Ernst Bloch's

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ As discussed in Chapter One, on the public occasion of being awarded the 'Officier des Arts et des Lettres' in France in 1990, Wolf had referred to her treatment during the 'Literaturstreit' as 'Kriegsschauplatz', 38.

²⁶⁷ In the novel *Stadt der Engel oder The Overcoat of Dr. Freud*, the word 'Jagd' turns into 'Hexenjagd' when Wolf refers to the attacks on her in the course of the 'Literaturstreit'. See Christa Wolf, *Stadt der Engel oder The Overcoat of Dr. Freud*, Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2010, 203.

maxim. With the collapse of the GDR the 'Prinzip Hoffnung', the hope of bringing about a reformed socialist society, has become futile martyrdom: 'Genagelt ans Kreuz Vergangenheit' (T, 169). After the collapse of the GDR, it is the sense of dislocation from the utopian vision and, as portrayed in the Western media, a discredited life that heightens Wolf's sense of personal crisis. In contrast to the carefully argued responses in the speeches and letters, the language deployed here by the narrator is peppered with metaphorical references, which suggests that Wolf is manipulating the reader into empathising with the sense of a crisis experienced by the narrator.²⁶⁸

In her 1992 essay 'Befund' Wolf also reflects on the experience of a crisis in her writing career. In this respect, it is similar to 'Nagelprobe'. 'Befund' sums up Wolf's private fears of 'Sprachlosigkeit' and is in stark contrast to the public speech 'Sprache der Wende' (November 1989). In 'Befund' Wolf reflects on the difficulties of speaking her mind freely; her voice is literally and figuratively constrained: '[Das Gesträuch in meiner Kehle] lasse die Stimme nicht durch oder zumindest nicht in ganzer Stärke durch, in voller Stimmkraft' (T, 189).²⁶⁹ The first person narrator notes that the first word she loses is 'sicher' together with its variations 'sicherlich', 'versichern' and 'unsicher'. This development has been preceded by a long process of self-discipline which involves the pretence of expressing herself freely. In the course of this process she has learnt 'nur zu sprechen, wenn ich es nach reiflicher Überlegung für unumgänglich hielt' (T, 190). Eventually she loses the ability to utter abstract

²⁶⁸ In *Leibhaftig*, to be discussed in Chapter Five, Wolf deploys the same technique of using metaphorical references in order to manipulate the reader into empathising with the narrator's predicament.

²⁶⁹ The 'Gesträuch' is reminiscent of the inner censor in *Was bleibt*.

words which are associated with ethical values such as 'Wahrheit, Treue, Liebe und Verrat' (T, 191). As discussed in Chapter One, in the opening shots of the 'Literaturstreit' Greiner had struck a vehement personal blow when he accused Wolf of 'Mangel an Aufrichtigkeit'. Wolf evidently sees the long-held demands in her own literary work for honesty and sincerity being undermined by such attacks:

Was zum Beispiel sollte mich dazu bringen können, unbefangen ein Wort wie 'ehrlich' sagen zu wollen und mich freiwillig der Qual auszusetzen, die ein jedes falsches Zeugnis unweigerlich nach sich zieht. (T, 192)

Far from finding that 'andere Sprache' (WB, 14) to which the narrator of *Was bleibt* had looked forward when circumstances would be favourable, Wolf feels new constraints as a writer in unified Germany. Reflection on 'die verlorenen Worte' is still possible, 'aber jeden Versuch, sie auch auszusprechen, habe ich aufgegeben' (T, 192). Previously the narrator had used language 'bedenkenlos', but even then she imagined 'das Wort "Lüge"' (T, 192) lurking behind every word. Now, the temporary loss of abstract words might serve a therapeutic purpose: 'Ruhig, beinahe lächelnd lasse ich alle diese Wörter aus meinem früheren Leben in Stille und Vergessenheit zurücksinken, sage ich, wo sie womöglich gereinigt und erneuert werden' (T, 192). Most importantly, not using the discredited abstract words could be interpreted as an opportunity to overcome both the crisis in her writing and what she appears to perceive as writer's block:

Jetzt wird jeder verstehen, denke ich, daß ich nur noch wenig und zögernd und leise spreche, es ist ja selbstverständlich, daß ich mit den mir verbliebenen Wörtern behutsam, fast liebevoll umgehe und daß ich ein jedes von ihnen zu schätzen weiß. (T, 192)

It is significant that the contributions following 'Befund' centre predominantly on Wolf's own situation as a writer in unified Germany. In the short piece 'Anwandlung', which like 'Nagelprobe' and 'Befund' focuses on her experience of crisis, Wolf reflects on the issue of for whom a writer should write: '[für] ein Publikum' or 'einfach [...] versuchen, mir über mich selbst Klarheit zu verschaffen und nur für mich zu schreiben' (T, 202). Now that she appears to be free from her former 'Sprecher- und Stellvertreterrolle in einer streng reglementierten Ersatzöffentlichkeit',²⁷⁰ the emphasis is on writing as a means of overcoming the loss of faith in her own words and in herself. She sees herself in the tradition of authors who were discouraged by their critics but who are able to rise above these attacks:

ich *darf* also entmutigt sein, das macht mir ein winziges bißchen Mut, so daß etwas wie der Hauch eines Gedankens daran aufkommen kann, daß ich irgendwann diesem beharrlichen Selbstverdacht der Unaufrichtigkeit vielleicht doch wieder Worte abringen kann. (T, 203)

Her reservations about the loss of truth and authenticity in the process of writing – 'Die Verzerrungen und Verfälschungen [...] bei der Umwandlung von Erfahrung in geschriebene Sätze' – appear only temporarily to have led to a writer's block. The narrator tries to put into perspective the fact that 'mein Name entwertet ist' by acknowledging that literary criticism is not about the 'victim' as such but about the maintenance of

[der] Schlachtekessel [...], der sich Literaturbetrieb nennt und der ein Gift entwickelt, das schon manche zerstört hat, durch Zersetzung der Substanz, aus der heraus sie schrieben, nämlich jenes Restes von Selbstgefühl, das sie zum Schreiben gebraucht hätten. (T, 204)

This is an implicit acknowledgement of the time it has taken Wolf to publish *Auf*

²⁷⁰ Magenau, op.cit., 433.

dem Weg nach Tabou, her first post-unification work. In a stubborn bout of irony, she wants to re-enter 'das mörderische Geschäft' by adopting a new identity, a new name, unrecognisable to critics. Both in 'Befund' and 'Anwandlung' the writer is in crisis. However, in contrast to 'Nagelprobe', a slim possibility of overcoming resignation exists: the process of re-establishing oneself as a writer can only be achieved through writing as therapy.

At the nadir of her own fall from grace as a writer, and after her activity as an *IM* had been made public, when 'dreißig Jahre Arbeit [...] in einer Sekunde weggeschmolzen sind' (T, 269), Wolf reflects on her dilemma as an intellectual in the GDR in 'Rückäußerung', an experimental prose collage. 'Rückäußerung' is her response to a supportive letter from Volker and Anne Braun, 'den wirklichen Freunden' (T, 279). As in 'Nagelprobe', the narrator undergoes a kind of trial. Through insistent questions and answers she carries on a fragmented dialogue with herself and with Volker Braun, and she intersperses quotations from her own work, Heiner Müller, Volker Braun's poem 'Eigentum', the Bible, and poems by Brecht. As in 'Nagelprobe', writing means 'DER SPUR DER SCHMERZEN NACHGEHEN' (T, 270),²⁷¹ but this time Wolf speaks in her own voice, although she also inserts the voices and names of those who share the same political past.

She admits that she never killed 'den Fremden in mir', a kind of inner censor who was tied to what had remained of her need for and fear of authority in GDR times. Braun had written: 'Wir wußten doch immer, daß es das eigene widersprüchliche Leben ist, aus dem das ANDERE wird' and Wolf replies: 'Ja

²⁷¹ In *Hierzulande Andernorts*, Wolf uses the same expression in the opening piece 'Begegnungen Third Street', and then again towards the end of *Leibhaftig*.

Volker aber welches ANDERE und was heißt wissen' (T, 266) [Wolf's emphasis]. What follows is an inner monologue of disembodied voices and recounted dreams. When she says 'we' she means people like Braun and herself, intellectuals who had held on to the utopian ideal of reformed socialism – the 'Prinzip Hoffnung' – and she recollects the process of erosion of the 'Prinzip Hoffnung':

Aber
 wie oft und wann
 war Hoffnung Selbstbetrug
 DIE HOFFNUNG LAG IM WEG WIE EINE FALLE
Und warum konnten wir uns
 so schwer aus ihr befreien (T, 266)

However, this 'we' who shared her illusions must be left behind for the 'I' who has to face its own actions, in other words her Stasi involvement:

Ich Volker hätte damals eine Wahl gehabt
 Warum hab ich mich nicht geweigert
Ich weiß es nicht mehr
 Das Gedächtnis
 ist ein tückischer Filter
Kaum wollte ich mir selber glauben daß ich das vergessen konnte
 [...]
 Ich nahm den eignen Namen und verdarb ihn mir
 Ich schrieb den Bericht
 Ich ging in die fremde Wohnung
Ich war dreißig Wie
 langsam wir erwachsen wurden (T, 273-274)

In her letter to Wolfgang Thierse (dated 21.9.1991), Wolf rejects any idea of a public 'Tribunal' to judge acts against humanity committed under the SED regime (T, 80). In her letter to Jürgen Habermas she rejects criticism of her as an intellectual by arguing that East German intellectuals attempted 'sich im Widerspruch zu der herrschenden Ideologie, die sie als falsches Bewußtsein durchschaut hatten, zu behaupten und zu artikulieren' (T, 151-152). In the diary entry from Santa Monica dated 27 September 1992, she rejects the idea of

others passing judgement:

es soll das Verhalten, das aus einer Summe von Konflikten, auch Irrtümern, Illusionen, aus Wunschdenken und Fehleinschätzungen, schließlich aus immer realistischer werdenden Einsichten zustande kam, nun nur noch wie bei einem Computerspiel unter 'richtig' oder 'falsch' abgelegt werden. (T, 246)

Instead, it is in exchanges with friends and through self-reflection that she wants to 'conduct' her own trial. 'Rückäußerung' suggests what Wolf herself wants to do here and elsewhere in *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou*:

Den Prozeß
den ich gegen mich eröffnet habe
muß ich ohne Beistand führen
Ausgang ungewiß
Mir schwant
daß unrecht haben
mir gut tun kann
Daß ich kein fremdes Urteil
akzeptieren muß (T, 278)

Letters and Wolf's Stasi revelations

It is predominantly in the exchanges of letters with friends ('Wegbegleitern, den Gesprächspartnern, die mir blieben, die ich neu gewann, lebenswichtige Gefährten' [T, 7]), that Wolf engages in the process of personal reckoning and where she attempts to reaffirm her position as a critical intellectual. Although in each instance the correspondence is private, the subject matter suggests that these exchanges were intended for publication. As so often in *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou* the statements of another serve as a starting point for Wolf's own reflections. It is particularly in her letters to Efim Etkind (May 1992) and Günter Grass (March 1993) that she describes not only the effects of her 'eigenen, öffentlichen Vivisektion' (T, 259) but even more so the confrontation with her

Stasi files at the *Gauck-Behörde*, the ‘Behörde hinter dem Bundesadler’ (T, 269).

This kind of connective writing, trying to understand oneself through the interpretation of another, is Wolf's own way of combating public criticism and personal self-doubt. In her reply (dated 23.5.92) to Efim Etkind, a Russian Germanist and long-standing friend,²⁷² Wolf specifically refers to her labelling by western critics as a ‘Staatsdichterin’²⁷³ and the accusation of self-exoneration in publishing *Was bleibt*: ‘ich, die ich eigentlich “Staatsdichterin” gewesen sei, würde mich in diesem Text widerrechtlich als Verfolgte aufspielen’ (T, 196). By her own admission the effect of these allegations was that she fell silent in terms of not publishing anything for a while: ‘Es hat und hatte keinen Sinn, differenzierte Erfahrungen in diesen Hexenkessel zu werfen, der sich auch auf kulturellem Gebiet “deutsche Vereinigung” nennt’ whilst ‘das Bedürfnis nach historischer Wahrheit und Gerechtigkeit dagegen (noch) minimal ist’ (T, 196). To refute the allegations she makes reference to information she obtained while studying the Stasi files on her – the so-called ‘Opferakten’.²⁷⁴ Wolf uses the evidence that she and her husband had been under surveillance for subversive activity since 1969 to counter the charges of ‘Staatsdichterin’ and collusion with the GDR regime:

²⁷² In contrast to the correspondence with Jürgen Habermas, discussed previously, which, as the heading ‘Vom Gepäck deutscher Geschichte’ alludes to, focuses on collective experiences of left-wing intellectuals in the East and the West, the correspondence with Efim Etkind addresses issues closer to her personal experience following the *Was bleibt* controversy and the revelations of her brief activity as a Stasi informer.

²⁷³ As discussed in Chapter One, the charge of ‘Staatsdichterin’ and collusion with the GDR was originally made by Reich-Ranicki and reiterated in the opening shots of the ‘Literaturstreit’ by Greiner and Schirrmacher. In particular Wolf appears to be answering Greiner’s sarcastic charge: ‘Das ist ja ein Ding: Die Staatsdichterin der DDR soll vom Staatssicherheitsdienst der DDR überwacht worden sein? Christa Wolf, die Nationalpreisträgerin, die prominenteste Autorin ihres Landes, SED-Mitglied bis zum letzten Augenblick, ein Opfer der Stasi?’, Greiner, *Die Zeit*, 1.6.1990.

²⁷⁴ See footnote 11 for background information on the *Gauck-Behörde*.

Als ich die ersten Akten las, die uns so früh schon als potentielle Schädlinge einstuften, empfand ich doch etwas wie Genugtuung: Dieser Staat hat mich jedenfalls nicht als 'seine Dichterin' gesehen. (T, 199)

Furthermore, she notes that the Stasi files exonerate her of any rumour spread deliberately by the Stasi about having withdrawn her signature from the Biermann petition in 1976 – a rumour seemingly spread with great success:²⁷⁵

Registriert wurde, [sic] das gezielt ausgestreute Gerücht, ich hätte mich nach der Ausbürgerung Biermanns insgeheim doch noch 'auf Parteilinie' begeben, habe bei einigen unserer Freunde Wirkung gezeigt. (T, 199)

Whilst reading her 'Opferakten' in May 1992, Wolf discovered references to the *IM* files with her name on them, although at the time of writing to Etkind she had not been granted access to those files. Yet in the letter Wolf expresses 'Selbstzweifel' (T, 9). Based on the recognition of the fact that she identified with the GDR system in its early years, she articulates her awareness of the effects of her brief Stasi involvement on her moral integrity in terms of a split into a 'multiple Person', a deep crisis of identity:

Ich muß schon noch etwas näher an meine widersprüchlichen Gefühle bei dieser Lektüre heran. Ein Teil meiner 'multiplen Person'²⁷⁶ empfindet diesen ganzen Schwachsinn nämlich auch als eigene Schande, wengleich er gegen mich gerichtet ist und ich mich schon sehr lange nicht mehr mit den Urhebern identifizierte. Aber ich tat es doch einst, und ein Nachhall davon erreicht mich auch noch in diesen Aktenstücken. Ich muß mich fragen, wie viele Moralen ich eigentlich in meinem Leben schon in mich aufgenommen, zum Teil 'verinnerlicht' habe, warum es jeweils so lange dauerte und so konfliktreich war, mich von ihnen zu trennen. (T, 200-201)

Arguably, it is this self-critical, confessional element that lends Wolf's

²⁷⁵ The summary, by a Stasi informer, of this process of spreading the rumour of Wolf having withdrawn her signature from the Biermann petition can be found in A, 288.

²⁷⁶ This appears to be a reference to *Was bleibt* where Wolf had written 'Ich selbst. Wer war das. Welches der multiplen Wesen, aus denen 'ich selbst' mich zusammensetzte? Das, das sich kennen wollte? Das, das sich schonen wollte? Oder jenes dritte, das immer noch versucht war, nach derselben Pfeife zu tanzen wie die jungen Herren da draußen vor meiner Tür?', WB 56.

writing its depth, in particular the struggle for integrity when allegiances conflict, such as her commitment to ideals of socialism on the one hand and her willingness to criticise the practices of the SED regime on the other, without transgressing 'die Grenzen des Sagbaren' (WB, 20). She may have forgotten her own brief moment of Stasi collaboration ('was ich zuverlässig verdrängt habe' [T, 201]), but the reader is left in no doubt about the personal dilemma inherent in that experience.

The correspondence with Günter Grass in the wake of the Stasi revelations, aptly entitled 'Von schwachen und stärkeren Stunden', sheds further light on Wolf's personal response to the Stasi episode. In his letter to Wolf (dated 9.2.1993), Grass comes to her defence. He condemns attempts by the West German press to devalue Wolf's achievements as a writer and criticises the Gauck-Agency for passing on Stasi files to the press but not granting the 'accused' access to those files:

Verurteilen kann ich mit Entschiedenheit die nicht nur an Dir angewandte Methode der Gauck-Behörde, Stasi-Unterlagen der Presse freizugeben und dabei den jeweils Beschuldigten uninformiert zu lassen. Erkennbar ist der Versuch, mit dieser über dreißig Jahre zurückliegenden Episode Deine über Jahrzehnte hinweg bewiesene kritische Haltung und mit ihr Dein literarisches Werk zu entwerten. (T, 256)

In her reply to Grass (dated 21.3.1993), Wolf informs him that she finds some consolation in the fact that the Western media had not singled her out amongst East German writers when she refers to the revelations about Günter de Bruyn's *IM* files. She also quotes extracts from a file entry in her *IM* file – the 'vermaledeite Akte'²⁷⁷ – which emphasise her lack of devotion to the Stasi

²⁷⁷ See A, op.cit.

cause and thus seem to clear her from any involvement with the Stasi beyond the three-year period:

Der Kern der Akte, nämlich ein Treffbericht von Stasi-Leuten mit mir, sind zwanzig Seiten. Dreimal habe ich mich 1959 mit zwei Herren in Berlin getroffen, wo ich hätte wissen und mich erinnern müssen, daß es sich um Mitarbeit handelte; dann gab es 1960 drei Treffen mit einem Stasi-Menschen in Halle, der uns über den Charakter dieser Kontakte im unklaren ließ, und dann noch eines 1962, wonach die Akte geschlossen wurde – auch darüber gibt es wieder seitenlange Protokolle. Ich hätte nicht die ‘richtige Liebe zur Sache’ gezeigt, heißt es da unter anderem. (T, 259)

Wolf also makes reference to her cover name ‘Margarete’ and the handwritten report, emphasising that she cannot recollect these accusations – ‘die entscheidenden Erinnerungen’:

Die entscheidenden Erinnerungen, nämlich, daß ich einen Decknamen hatte, daß ich mich in Berlin einmal in einer konspirativen Wohnung mit ihnen getroffen habe und daß ich einen handschriftlichen Bericht verfaßt habe – Dinge, die ich mir schwer verzeihen kann – sind nicht wiederaufgetaucht. Was nun in den Berichten der Stasi-Leute als angeblich meine Aussagen steht, das kann ich weder bestätigen noch widerlegen, [...] ich habe den Leuten nichts erzählt, was sie nicht in jeder Versammlung hätten hören können. (T, 259)

In spite of the fact that the *IM* files appear to partially exonerate her from having compromised her moral integrity, she feels unsettled by her media treatment, and seems to imply that there is a conspiracy against her:

ich habe den Hetz-Ton dieser Artikel im Ohr, da geht es nicht darum, unvoreingenommen zu berichten oder gar jemanden zum Nachdenken zu bringen und vielleicht mit ihm nachzudenken; da geht es um moralische Vernichtung, und mit einem Vernichtungsgefühl habe ich darauf reagiert. (T, 260)

Furthermore, Wolf feels compelled to counter Grass’s comments that her critique of the SED should have been more explicit (‘Nach meiner Einschätzung hättest Du die Kritik an jener Partei, in der Du Mitglied warst, deutlicher und fordernder aussprechen müssen’ [T, 255]). In what might be

read as a direct response to the critical comments in the 'Literaturstreit' by, above all, Reich-Ranicki, Greiner and Schirmmacher about her leaving the SED when it was no longer risky to do so, Wolf reminds Grass of her protest against Wolf Biermann's expulsion from the GDR in 1976 and her express wish, stressed in writing, to be excluded from the SED party and its activities:

noch einige Sätze zu Deiner Bemerkung, ich hätte die Kritik an der Partei deutlicher aussprechen sollen. Ich habe sie sehr deutlich ausgesprochen, Günter, und nach 1976 erklärt, daß ich ausgeschlossen werden will und zu keiner Parteiveranstaltung mehr gehen würde – was ich auch nicht tat, und ich habe von Honecker abwärts jeglichem Funktionär auf jeglicher Ebene gesagt, warum. Manchem habe ich es schriftlich gegeben. Ich habe das nicht in die westlichen Medien gegeben, das stimmt – nicht, weil ich den Beifall von der falschen Seite vermeiden wollte, sondern weil wir uns entschlossen hatten, in der DDR zu bleiben und dort zu wirken, was nicht möglich gewesen wäre, wenn ich mich zu sehr in den westlichen Medien getummelt hätte. (T, 260-261)²⁷⁸

In their attacks on Wolf which ignited the 'Literaturstreit', Greiner and Schirmmacher had criticised Wolf for remaining in the GDR when expulsion to the West would have been an option. In the exchange with Grass, Wolf justifies her decision to remain in the GDR even after Biermann's expulsion in 1976 by referring to the public role which she believed she had to fulfil as a critical intellectual who refused to toe the Party-line and whose writings offered a kind of 'Lebenshilfe' to those readers in the East who shared the vision of a reformed socialist state:

Nach der Biermann-Affäre gab es einen Augenblick [...] da wurde mir klar: Wenn es mir gelingt, mich von jeglicher Abhängigkeit von 'denen' zu befreien und kompromißlos zu schreiben, kann ich in der DDR bleiben. Wenn das nicht gelingt, muß ich gehen wie die anderen. Es war

²⁷⁸ See also Magenau, *op.cit.*, 367ff. Wolf did not officially leave the SED until July 1989; she had been an inactive member since 1980 when she transferred to the 'Akademie der Künste'. When the SED distributed forms to canvass its members for support in the summer of 1989 Wolf refused her signature, something she was reluctant to do in 1976.

ein schwieriger, konfliktreicher Prozeß; kompromißlos geschrieben habe ich; wir konnten einer ganzen Menge von Leuten auf vielfältige Weise helfen. (T, 261-262)²⁷⁹

The choice of 'kompromißlos' can be interpreted as evidence of Wolf's resolve to maintain her moral integrity in her writing. However, she does recognise the fact that her decision to continue living and publishing in the GDR meant that she did lead a compromised existence. Nevertheless, she rejects any suggestion that this existence was tantamount to complicity with the SED regime:

Ganz pragmatisch dachte ich, ich wollte den Posten, den ich besetzt hielt, wenn möglich nicht räumen. Es war unser Konzept, nicht in jedes Messer zu rennen,²⁸⁰ und zu versuchen, meine Texte auch in der DDR gedruckt zu kriegen. Weil ich prominent genug war, klappte das meistens; was sich hinter den Kulissen meiner Manuskripte abspielte, habe ich in meinen 42 Bänden 'Opfer'-Akten lesen können. [...] Wenn ich jetzt in meinen Büchern blättere, die in der Zeit entstanden und gedruckt worden sind, so finde ich, es hat sich gelohnt. Ich habe dieses Land geliebt. Daß es am Ende war, wußte ich, weil es die besten Leute nicht mehr integrieren konnte, weil es Menschenopfer forderte. Ich habe das in 'Kassandra' beschrieben, die Zensur stocherte in den 'Vorlesungen' herum; ich wartete gespannt, ob sie es wagen würden, die Botschaft der Erzählung zu verstehen, nämlich, daß Troja untergehen muß. Sie haben es nicht gewagt und die Erzählung ungekürzt gedruckt. Die Leser in der DDR verstanden sie. (T, 262-263)

On the question of why she remained in the GDR, Wolf had previously provided a twofold answer. On the one hand she emphasised her role as a figurehead, influenced by the many letters urging her to stay which she

²⁷⁹ In ID, Wolf had previously provided a similar rationale for remaining in the GDR: 'Eine große Rolle spielte auch, daß viele Menschen mir schrieben oder sagten, daß ich hier gebraucht würde. Es war mir klar, daß ich mich in schwierige, moralisch anfechtbare Situationen begeben mußte. Das ist mir sehr schmerzlich', ID, 148.

²⁸⁰ See *Was bleibt* when the narrator advises the young female writer who seeks advice on her manuscript to be cautious 'daß noch in zehn Jahren Menschen Sätze würden lesen wollen, wie sie sie schrieb. Und daß sie, bitte, nicht in jedes offene Messer laufen sollte' (WB, 77). The girl, whose name 'mit einer bestimmten Affäre an einer bestimmten Universität, im Zusammenhang mit Denunziationen, mit Verfahren und Erpressung aufgetaucht war' (WB, 74), who had been expelled from her studies 'da sie nicht zu den Erpreßbaren gehörte' and who was imprisoned for a year following 'eine zweite Affäre' (WB, 75), appears to be based on the young writer Gabriele Kachold.

received from fellow countrymen. On the other hand, she stressed the personal, more existential dimension:

Der Hauptantrieb, glaube ich, war, daß ich dachte, daß ich nirgendwo anders schreiben konnte. Ich brauchte dieses Spannungsfeld, daß ich zeitweise dachte, daß es auch den Schreibantrieb mit vernichten könnte, hat es aber offenbar nicht getan.²⁸¹

Western critics condemned her mainly for not making her critique of the SED regime more explicit in her literary work. It emerges from the 1991 interview that Wolf's motives for writing encompass the desire to expose contradictions in GDR society without facing expulsion, as well as the intrinsic need to write: 'Es hat mich einfach nichts anderes so interessiert wie die Konfliktlage in diesem Land', and, recognising that this might be a questionable statement, she adds: 'Das kann man mir vorwerfen, natürlich, aber es ist einfach so gewesen' (Ibid). After the collapse of the GDR, Wolf needed to find a new 'Spannungsfeld', and the revelations about the Stasi affair undoubtedly provided just that.

Wolf continues the theme of her response to the *IM* file in the diary extract 'Berlin, Montag, der 27. September 1993',²⁸² when, in recalling the publication of *Akteneinsicht Christa Wolf: Zerrspiegel und Dialog* and the subsequent public discussion, she highlights the fact that she was only able to deal with this phase in her life through writing about it:

Jemand forderte mich auf, meine Entwicklung seit der Einsicht in die

²⁸¹ *Besuch bei Christa Wolf. Christa Wolf im Gespräch mit Daniela Dahn*. DEFA-Studie für Dokumentarfilme. Deutscher Fernsehfunke. 1991.

²⁸² As Wolf explains, the origins of her annual diary entries for 27th September go back to 1960 when the Russian magazine 'Iswestija' repeated Maxim Gorki's 1935 appeal to writers worldwide to describe 'einen Tag der Welt [...] – für mich selbst aber war das fortan eine Pflichtübung. Es entstand eine Mischung zwischen Sucht und Auftrag'. Quoted in Volker Hage, Mathias Schreiber, 'Jeder Tag ist eine Erzählung', *SpiegelOnline* [37], 8.9.2003. <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/0,1518,264727,00.html> [Accessed on 15th October 2006]. The diary entry 'Berlin, Montag, der 27. September 1993' is also included in Wolf's volume *Ein Tag im Jahr*, Munich: Luchterhand, 2003, 509-524.

Akte, besonders in meine IM-Akte, zu beschreiben. Ich versuche, so offen wie möglich über die verschiedenen Stadien zu sprechen, über den ersten Schock, den Schrecken über mich selbst, die Verzweiflung über die Unmöglichkeit, in der allgemeinen Stasi-Hysterie auf eine Differenzierung in der Öffentlichkeit rechnen zu können, auf die Gefahr, mich mit der Darstellung, die ich dann in der Öffentlichkeit erfuhr, zu identifizieren, auf die Therapie durch Schreiben und das allmähliche Wieder-Herausfinden aus der Depression bis zu dem jetzigen Zustand, da ich glaube, ich könne diese Episode, die immer ein wunder, dunkler Punkt bleiben werde, in meine Entwicklung einordnen. (T, 291)

As she does here, Wolf has frequently alluded to her view of literature and language as therapy, as a means of overcoming moments of crisis and depression, and of imaginatively ‘playing through’ the difficulties and problems perceived by the writer.²⁸³ Wolf uses the media coverage of her as a foil to reflect in general on the coverage of Stasi involvement in the German media and on ‘die Praktiken der Gauck-Behörde [...] als Beleg dafür, daß die Stasi-Akten instrumentalisiert werden’ (T, 293). Thus she highlights representative aspects of her own treatment in the German media:

Jemand stellt die schöne Frage, ob denn nun die Stasi-Akten das schlechte Gewissen der Nation seien, ich sagte: Nein, nur in Deutschland könne man auf die Idee kommen, daß Akten das Gewissen ersetzen können, nachdem ich meine Akten gelesen habe, wisse ich: Diese Akten enthalten nicht ‘die Wahrheit’, weder über den, zu dessen Observation sie angelegt wurden, noch über diejenigen, die sie mit ihren Berichten füllten. Sie enthalten, was die Stasi-Leute gesehen haben oder sehen sollten, mußten, durften [...] schon die Sprache, die sie benutzten, sei nicht geeignet gewesen, ‘Wahrheit’ aufzunehmen, schon ihre Fragestellung erzwingt eine Reduzierung der Objekte, derer sie sich bedienen. Ein paar Informationen könnte man aus ihnen herausziehen, häufig veraltete Informationen selbst über die Zuträger, denen die Akten keine Entwicklung zugestehen und die man nun auf einem für sie vielleicht überwundenen Punkt festnagelt. [...] Nein, ‘die Wahrheit’ über diese Zeit und über unser Leben müsse wohl doch die Literatur bringen. (T, 294-295) [my emphasis, JD]

²⁸³ See Wolf’s interview ‘Unruhe und Betroffenheit’, where she says, ‘Schreiben kann auch Therapie sein’ and refers to writing as part of a ‘Heilungsprozeß’, in DA, 762 and 770 respectively.

She reiterates the significant future role of literature in revealing the truth about the GDR past and, by association, the reasons for its collapse, yet cautions against 'jede Erscheinungsform von DDR-Nostalgie, die es einem erlaubt, zu schönen, was man selbst in den letzten Jahrzehnten gesagt und getan hat' (T, 293). Above all she is reluctant, as a writer, to continue in her 'Sprecherrolle' – a role which, at the time of the 'Wende', had prompted her to give the speech 'Sprache der Wende' and to read out the appeals 'Bleiben Sie doch in Ihrer Heimat, bleiben Sie bei uns' and 'Für unser Land':

ich wehre mich gegen die Anwalts-Rolle, die sie mir wieder zuteilen wollen, [...] plädiere für die Besinnungspause, die man auch Schriftstellern zugestehen muß, ich höre sie ja, ja sagen und spüre, daß sie im stillen bei ihren Forderungen bleiben, merke körperlich, wie stark dieser Anspruch schon wieder ist oder vielleicht immer geblieben ist. (T, 295-296)

In a television interview in March 1991 with Daniela Dahn, Wolf had already clearly expressed her relief at no longer having to fulfil the role of a figurehead:

[...], daß ich es als befreiend empfinde nicht als eine Sockelfigur fungieren zu müssen. Denn in der DDR hat unter dieser Käseglocke dieses Bedürfnis sich irgendwelche Leitfiguren zu schaffen natürlich sehr zugenommen und das war manchmal auf einem Punkt, daß ich es selber auch gar nicht mehr ertragen konnte, erstens weil ich die Postmenge, die damit verbunden war nicht mehr bewältigen konnte. Zweitens, [weil] solche Anhimmlung ganz schnell in Haß umschlägt, weil man überhaupt nicht mehr in der Lage ist, dem gerecht zu werden. Diese Leute sind so schnell dann enttäuscht. [...] Alle diese Erwartungen zu erfüllen, das war einfach nicht zu schaffen.²⁸⁴

Dedications to individuals and the notion of 'Gesinnungsästhetik'

A distinctive feature of *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou* is the dedications to other artists and writers, particularly in the section for 1992 which contains speeches

²⁸⁴ *Besuch bei Christa Wolf. Christa Wolf im Gespräch mit Daniela Dahn*, DEFA-Studie für Dokumentarfilme. Deutscher Fernsehfunke, 1991.

and dedications for public occasions to five individuals: Paul Parin, Friederike Mayröcker, Otl Aicher, Anna Seghers and Heinrich Böll. *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou* has been called 'ein ständiges Befindlichkeitsprotokoll, ein Protokoll über das Suchen'²⁸⁵ and as such draws on other writers and artists as a guide. In each case these writers serve as a foil for Wolf's self-scrutiny. For instance, in her homage to the writer and psychoanalyst Paul Parin she singles him out as someone who has the ability to initiate within the reader 'einen Prozeß der Selbstbefragung und Selbstprüfung' (T, 180). In another essay, Wolf pays tribute to Anna Seghers, who was a role-model – 'eine Orientierungshilfe' (ID, 47) – in Wolf's early literary career. Wolf cautions against devaluing the contributions made by individuals such as Seghers to the GDR in their life time. However, with the exception of her tribute to Heinrich Böll on the occasion of what would have been his 75th birthday, entitled "'Frei, geordnet, untröstlich'", Wolf's dedications to selected individuals do not constitute her literary response to any specific issues raised in the 'Literaturstreit'.

Heinrich Böll, who had always rejected the title 'Gewissen der Nation' as a writer in the Federal Republic of Germany, was closest to Wolf herself as she had to fight against the burden of being a 'moralische Instanz' in the GDR. In Wolf's view Böll embodies a model of someone 'der sein Leben daran gewendet hat, Humanität im Alltag der Deutschen zu befestigen' (T, 252). With reference to Böll she defends the discredited 'Gesinnungsästhetik'. Specifically, while reflecting on the significance of Böll's prose, Wolf reminds the reader of

²⁸⁵ Thomas Wohlfahrt, 'Der ungestaltete Abgrund. Sprachvertrauen und Sprachmißtrauen im Werk von Christa Wolf', in Heinz Ludwig Arnold (ed.), *Christa Wolf*, Munich: Text & Kritik [46], 1994, 100-113, here 110.

the attacks on her by Western critics who had dismissed *Was bleibt* as

'Gesinnungskitsch':

Und ist nicht Utopie der Kern der Poesie, wie Sie sie sehen? 'Poesie ist Dynamit für alle Ordnungen dieser Welt'. Ist sie vielleicht deshalb eben mal wieder unter Verdacht geraten? Ist vielleicht deshalb in den feineren ästhetischen Kreisen 'Gesinnung' als Schimpfwort postmodern geworden? Wie gerne hätte ich Ihre bissigen Bemerkungen zu dem journalistischen Parforceritt gegen die '*Gesinnungsästhetiker*' – auch gegen Sie natürlich – gehört. Hatten Sie vielleicht schon damals, vor zwei Jahren, vorausgesagt, wohin das nun geführt hat: zur säuberlichen Teilung auch der Intellektuellen in Sieger und Besiegte, die ihre Abwehrkräfte gegeneinander richten, anstatt gemeinsam dem zynischen Nihilismus zu Leibe zu rücken, der, weil er sozialen und geistigen Nährboden findet, um sich greift wie eine Krankheit. (T, 250-251) [my emphasis, JD]

There was an additional important reason for Wolf to single out Böll. In his life-time he was seen as an 'Außenseiter' – albeit a very popular one – in West German society, just as Wolf thinks of herself in an 'Außenseiterrolle' within a unified Germany in the early 1990s. In *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou*, the diary entry 'Santa Monica, Sonntag, den 27. September 1992' details Wolf's experiences during her stay in Santa Monica, California, as a visiting scholar at the Getty Centre in 1992-93. The entry opens with Wolf recounting a dream ('ein Emigrationstraum') in which she casts herself in an 'Außenseiterrolle' (T, 233), but as an outsider in unified Germany. It seems that from this vantage point as an outsider she then reflects on the events and the mood following the collapse of the GDR and the unification of Germany, recalling hopes at the prospect of creating a socialist alternative and the stark reality of the economic collapse of the GDR:

die Paradieshoffnung brach viel früher zusammen als die Ökonomie, ich versuche mich der Etappen in meinem eigenen Denken zu erinnern, frage mich nicht zum ersten Mal, worauf wir hinlebten, als nach dem Zusammenbruch der Hoffnung nur noch platte Machterhaltung geblieben

war und sich auch die moralischen Fragen neu stellten – wie jetzt wieder, da für viele Menschen in der ehemaligen DDR eine neue, mir schwer begreifliche Paradieshoffnung zusammenbricht – ‘blühende Landschaften’, ein paradiesisches Bild – und so viel davon abhängt, wohin das Gewicht dieser Enttäuschung die Mehrheit dieser Menschen zieht. (T, 235)

As so often in *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou*, reflections on events serve as a foil for her own self-scrutiny, and, in this context, self-doubt at her long-held belief in a reformed socialist state.

Conclusion

Auf dem Weg nach Tabou reflects Wolf's own dissonant experiences in the early 1990s which she was only able to communicate in literary form in a fragmented way, in the form of ‘Bruchstücke, die miteinander korrespondieren, einander fragen, auch in Frage stellen’ (T, 10). However, in its entirety the collection can be read as Wolf's sustained response to the attacks on her in the ‘Literaturstreit’, the media furore surrounding her Stasi revelations in 1993, and the attacks on *littérature engagée*. Wolf wants to write without self-pity, ‘anteilnehmend, so unsentimental wie möglich’ (T, 9), but clearly from the perspective of one who has been shaken by the events leading to the demise of the GDR. Wolf accepts German unification as given, and her main concern is not to embellish the GDR past but to foster an informed understanding of it and not “Vergangenheitsbewältigung” als Skandalchronik’ (T, 330). GDR nostalgia, in the sense of longing for and embellishing the GDR past, is absent, though a certain wistfulness remains. Wolf brings contradictory aspects of the GDR past, its dashed hopes and its repressive practices, into present focus (and on as many occasions as possible) so that they are not forgotten. There are no

imaginative projections about the future in a united Germany. Nevertheless, writers still have a role in helping to answer the key questions: 'Was war? Was bleibt? Was wird?'

As Hannes Krauss observes: 'In den neuen Bundesländern stand dieses Buch monatelang auf der Bestsellerliste, im Westen war das Interesse schnell wieder abgeflaut, nachdem klar wurde, daß spektakuläre Enthüllungen nicht zu erwarten waren.'²⁸⁶ This comment suggests that Wolf's own life experience, as communicated in *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou*, resonates, at least to some degree, with the lives of readers in the former GDR. In an article in *Freitag*, Wolf emphasises that she expects literature to continue to articulate 'was Politik und Parteien nicht artikulieren können. Das kann nur dadurch geschehen, daß jeder Autor, jede Autorin, von ihrer eigenen Erfahrung so schonungslos wie möglich berichtet'.²⁸⁷ In *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou*, she performs her own 'Vivisektion' so that, for her personally, 'das Gelingen von Leben und Werk' may happen once again in the sense which she once defined in an essay on Max Frisch:

Angenommen, ein Autor macht, von früh an, das Gelingen von Leben und Werk voneinander abhängig. [...] Was er am tiefsten ersehne, sei nicht das Meisterwerk (das auch gewiß), sondern das Lebendigbleiben.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁶ Krauss, op.cit., 181.

²⁸⁷ 'Ich bin eine Figur, auf die man viel projizieren kann', *Freitag*, 18.3.1994.

²⁸⁸ Christa Wolf, 'Max Frisch beim Wiederlesen oder: Vom Schreiben in Ich-Form', in DA, 168.

CHAPTER THREE: *Hierzulande Andernorts*

Der geographische Ort, an dem ein Autor lebt und der zugleich ein geschichtlicher Ort ist, bindet ihn. (DA, 498)

Introduction and reviews

Hierzulande Andernorts,²⁸⁹ a collection of short texts written between 1994 and 1998,²⁹⁰ is similar to *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou* in that it also constitutes a compilation of individual pieces, and indicates Wolf's continuing preoccupation in the 1990s with writing as a response rather than publishing a narrative 'project'. The novel *Medea. Stimmen*, which will be discussed in Chapter Four, represents the exception. In contrast to *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou*, however, *Hierzulande Andernorts* elicited no reaction in leading German newspapers at the time of its publication, which prompted *Der Spiegel*, in an article on the cultural scene in Eastern Germany at the close of the 1990s, to comment: 'Über Christa Wolf redet man zehn Jahre nach der Wende nur noch, weil sie 70 wurde',²⁹¹ and Peter Graves to conclude that 'as a writer, she has become deeply unfashionable'.²⁹² In this chapter I will attempt, to some degree at least, to redress the imbalance caused by the dearth of scholarly articles dealing with

²⁸⁹ Christa Wolf, *Hierzulande Andernorts*, Munich: Luchterhand, 1999.

²⁹⁰ The volume contains twenty texts: two diary-like texts 'Begegnungen Third Street' and 'Wüstenfahrt', the prose piece 'Im Stein' as well as four essays and thirteen speeches. The essays were written in 1994/1995. Most of the speeches were written in 1997/1998 and, with three exceptions, they are dedications to individuals. The three speeches not dedicated to individuals are: 'Der geschändete Stein', a speech on the restoration of a Jewish memorial stone in Berlin, 'Von Cassandra zu Medea' and 'Dünn ist die Decke der Zivilisation – Musikalische Meditation. Joseph Haydn, "Missa in Tempore Belli"'. In contrast to *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou*, there are no exchanges of letters.

²⁹¹ Andreas Lehmann, Richard Mohr, 'Im Osten was Neues', *Der Spiegel* [45], 8.11.1999, 50-54, here 54.

²⁹² Peter Graves, 'Christa Wolf in the 1990s', op.cit, 180. It should be noted here that there are few scholarly articles which deal with *Hierzulande Andernorts* as a whole. The exceptions are: Barbara Kosta, 'Annäherung an die Vergangenheit oder Selbstbetrug: Christa Wolf "Hierzulande Andernorts"', in *Internationaler Germanisten-Kongress*, No 59, 2002, Berne: Peter Lang, 159-164; Bernd Leistner, 'Wider den herrschenden Wahn', *Neue Deutsche Literatur*, No 47, 1999, 163-165; Benjamin Robinson, 'Santa Monica of the Turn: Catastrophe and Commitment in an Autobiography of Collaboration', *New German Critique*, No 84, Autumn 2001, 89-128.

an assessment of *Hierzulande Andernorts*. As I will demonstrate, the pieces in *Hierzulande Andernorts* can to some extent be interpreted as Wolf's sustained response to specific issues raised in the 'Literaturstreit' and the attacks on her following her Stasi revelations in 1993. In *Hierzulande Andernorts* Wolf never mentions the publication of *Was bleibt* but, as Barbara Kosta observes, 'die Kreise, die ihre Novelle gezogen hat und ihre [Wolfs] Diffamierung liegen schwer unter den Schichten von Erinnerungen und Erzählungen'.²⁹³

Firstly, discussion will focus on the speech dedicated by Wolf to Heinrich Böll because of the insight provided into her reflections on the concept of 'Gesinnungsästhetik', which was the dominant issue in the second phase of the 'Literaturstreit', and the relevance of 'Gesinnungsästhetik' to her own concept of 'subjektive Authentizität'. In this context the prose piece 'Begegnungen Third Street' will be singled out as a prime example of 'subjektive Authentizität' and of Wolf's treatment of the notion of 'guilt'. A discussion of 'Begegnungen Third Street' is also of significance since the text can be read as a precursor to her final novel *Stadt der Engel oder The Overcoat of Dr. Freud* (2010), and its engagement with the theme of guilt. Secondly, I will examine the speech and the essay dedicated to Franz Fühmann, for the insight which they offer into both the mindset and *modus operandi* of some intellectuals who went on living and working in the GDR to the very end and, above all, into Wolf's understanding of herself as a critical GDR writer. Thirdly, I will analyse the prose text 'Im Stein' because it captures Wolf's sense of disorientation as a writer in post-unification Germany.

²⁹³ Barbara Kosta, 'Annäherung an die Vergangenheit oder Selbstbetrug: Christa Wolf "Hierzulande Andernorts"', op.cit., 161.

‘Gesinnungsästhetik’ and Wolf’s concept of ‘subjektive Authentizität’

In *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou* Wolf dedicated a speech to Heinrich Böll in which she defended the discredited ‘Gesinnungsästhetik’. In the speech “‘Mitleidend bleibt das ewige Herz doch fest’” in *Hierzulande Andernorts*, on the occasion of what would have been Böll’s 80th birthday in 1997, she repeats her earlier sentiments:

Schriftsteller haben sich immer und überall zu wehren gegen die Zumutungen der Zeitgeistästhetik; heute, wenn ich nicht irre, am ehesten gegen die Propagierung jenes fröhlichen Nihilismus, der in der Postpostmoderne an die Stelle von ‘Gesinnung’ lanciert wird. Dieses ‘perfekt-adrette Nichts’ – wie unermüdlich hat Böll es immer wieder benannt und verspottet, später: das ‘etablierte Nichts’, das die Gesellschaft von innen her aushöhlt. (HA, 182)

Engaging with moral concerns remains an important aspect in Wolf’s literary work post-unification. In the 1972 interview with Joachim Walther, as highlighted in the introduction to this thesis, Wolf had defined one of literature’s functions as examining how the individual ‘sich [...] als moralisches Wesen selbst verwirklichen kann’ (DA, 765). Twenty-five years later, and in the aftermath of the attacks on her in the West German press, in her tribute to Böll she stresses his significance to her as a ‘Orientierungshilfe’ on account of ‘seine Art über Anfechtungen und Anfeindungen hin sich selbst treu zu bleiben’ and his role as a ‘provozierend[e] Instanz in Gewissensfragen’ (HA, 180). Drawing on Böll’s own comments on ‘Gesinnungsästhetik’ in the *Frankfurter Vorlesungen* of 1966 where he promoted the notion of ‘eine Ästhetik des Humanen’ with ‘Moral und Ästhetik [...] als kongruent, untrennbar’,²⁹⁴ Wolf

²⁹⁴ Heinrich Böll, *Frankfurter Vorlesungen*, Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1966, 75. See Anz, 20ff for a more detailed discussion of Böll’s concept in the context of the ‘Literaturstreit’ in the 1990s.

articulates her endorsement of an aesthetic concept where form and moral concern are inextricably interwoven:

Bölls Aufsatz – natürlich ein Plädoyer gegen ‘bloße Gesinnungsliteratur’, die ja niemals zur Debatte stand – bringt die Demagogie der meisten Verächter der ‘Gesinnungsästhetik’ auf den Punkt: ‘... und überall gibt es die Zeigefingerschwenker, Leute, die empört, beunruhigt, verzweifelt die Hände ringen, wenn etwas, das ihrer Gesinnung nicht paßt, sich als formal glänzend und somit gefährlich erweist; die Form spannt den Geist des Menschen, der Inhalt das Herz und die Nerven’. (HA, 182)

As discussed in Chapter One, the ‘deutsch-deutscher Literaturstreit’ extended into a revival of the 1960s’ debate on *littérature engagée* as against *l’art pour l’art* and saw Böll relegated to the list of ‘outdated’ West German writers because of his commitment to the social engagement of literature. As Böll had done, Wolf might reject the title of ‘Gewissen der Nation’ for herself – ‘[e]s ist dies ja nur die Kehrseite des Bedürfnisses, ihn [den Schriftsteller] von Fall zu Fall zum Sündenbock der Nation zu machen’ (HA, 191) – but, in her efforts ‘die Gesellschaft zu humanisieren’ (HA, 184), she wants to continue in the tradition of socially engaged literature.

The prominent moral issue resonating throughout *Hierzulande Andernorts* is the ‘schmerzhaft[e] Frage [...], die Heinrich Böll sich und den Seinen sehr früh gestellt hat: Was ist aus uns geworden? Was haben wir aus uns machen lassen?’ (HA, 185),²⁹⁵ which was also the question at the heart of Wolf’s 1976 novel *Kindheitsmuster*.²⁹⁶ When she draws attention to the importance in Böll’s work of confronting Germany’s past under National Socialism, ‘jenes schwarze Loch des Verschweigens, Verdrängens,

²⁹⁵ Böll’s question lies too at the heart of Wolf’s speech ‘Von Cassandra zu Medea’, also contained in *Hierzulande Andernorts*, and, above all, her novel *Medea. Stimmen* to be discussed in Chapter Four.

²⁹⁶ In *Kindheitsmuster*, Wolf posed the ‘schmerzhaft[e] Frage’ of the extent to which her generation had been shaped by their experience of National Socialism in the following terms: ‘Wie sind wir so geworden, wie wir heute sind?’ (KM, 466).

Vergessens' (HA, 183), she does so to emphasise the continuing need for literature in a unified Germany to address the issue of Germany's fascist past, a past which is shared with the equivalent generation in the Federal Republic, in order to advance the process of 'Vergangenheitsbewältigung' (HA, 158):

Es ist, glaube ich, an der Zeit, auch und gerade in der Literatur zu fragen, welche Formen und welche Folgen die je unterschiedliche Auseinandersetzung mit dem Nationalsozialismus in den beiden deutschen Staaten hatte und wie diese Folgen in das vereinigte Deutschland hineinwirken. (HA, 183)²⁹⁷

Wolf's treatment of the theme of Germany's past in her post-unification work and her broader commitment to socially engaged literature need to be considered in the context of her continued pursuit of 'subjektive Authentizität'.²⁹⁸ Wolf's focus on the contemporary relevance of her personal experiences and constructive social criticism led critics in the 'Literaturstreit' to attack her as the prime example of *littérature engagée*. The prose piece 'Begegnungen Third Street', which opens *Hierzulande Andernorts*, is a striking example of Wolf's narrative concept of 'subjektive Authentizität'. In my analysis of this text I will address in particular the extent to which it can be read as an example of her characteristic aesthetic.

'Begegnungen Third Street' demonstrates the degree to which Wolf's own experience continued to inform her literary work. The 'genau notierter Selbsterfahrungsbericht'²⁹⁹ reflects in diary-like fashion Wolf's everyday experiences in California, where she spent a year between September 1992 and July 1993 as a visiting scholar of the Getty Foundation. The title itself

²⁹⁷ The theme of Germany's fascist past resonates in most pieces in *Hierzulande Andernorts* and two texts - 'Gegen die Kälte der Herzen' and 'Der geschändete Stein' - are exclusively devoted to this issue, together with the associated topics of anti-semitism and right-wing extremism.

²⁹⁸ See my Introduction for an explanation of Wolf's narrative concept of 'subjektive Authentizität', 6-15.

²⁹⁹ Bernd Leistner, op.cit., 163.

raises the expectation that the text deals with a reappraisal of Wolf's 'chance encounters' during her stay in Santa Monica, based close to Third Street Promenade.³⁰⁰ Yet Wolf is more concerned with reflections on Germany's past, particularly that of the GDR, and her own past experiences. Indeed, by placing emphasis on the 'andernorts' of Germany, the 'hierzulande' of America as a temporary location is of lesser significance to her. In this context I disagree with Graves's interpretation that 'hierzulande' represents Germany and 'andernorts' America, and would suggest that a reversal of the locations is more plausible.³⁰¹ In contrast to Wolf's 1979 prose text *Kein Ort. Nirgends*, where the name of the location is omitted and time and place are transcended, 'um den Dialog zwischen Kleist und Günderrode zu dehistorisieren',³⁰² 'hierzulande' and 'andernorts' suggest a simultaneity of locations. At the same time historicity manifests itself in the narrator's preoccupation with the history of a place – the GDR – that had not long ceased to exist. Metaphorically speaking, the 'hierzulande' represents the outer self and provides the external stimuli which in turn trigger associations within the inner self, the 'andernorts'. The reader is left with the overriding impression that the narrator, who appears to be identical with the author, is somewhere in between.

Wolf's ambivalent feelings about her own situation of 'Heimatlosigkeit'³⁰³ are captured in the opening lines. The text starts with the cheery greeting in English 'How are you today?' followed by the rejoinder, 'Fine!' (HA, 7). Yet a

³⁰⁰ In 'Begegnungen Third Street', Wolf provides an indication as to her residence whilst staying in Santa Monica when she describes a bus trip along Wilshire Boulevard and 'her' stop-off point, Fourth Street. See HA, 13.

³⁰¹ See Peter Graves, op.cit., 2002, 179.

³⁰² Kosta, op.cit., 160.

³⁰³ Ibid, 163.

more honest response than 'Fine!', we are told, would actually have been 'pretty bad' (HA, 7).³⁰⁴ The narrator's prevailing sense of existential pain transcends any feeling of temporary displacement from her home country and is instead bound up with musings on Germany's past. Indeed, Wolf's search for the '*Spur der Schmerzen*' (HA, 8) is at the core of the text,³⁰⁵ underlined by the use of italicised phrases to identify and emphasise the abstract issues of pain and guilt,³⁰⁶ and this search takes her back to Germany's National Socialist past.

In the speech on Böll, Wolf had identified as the 'schmerzhaft[e] Frage' underpinning his work as a writer who, having been born in 1917, had experienced National Socialism as an adolescent and an adult: 'Was ist aus uns geworden? Was haben wir aus uns machen lassen?' (HA, 185). In 'Begegnungen Third Street' Wolf, who was born in 1929 and had experienced National Socialism as a child and adolescent, pursues this 'schmerzhaft[e] Frage' by looking back at the historic watershed of the fall of the Third Reich and the beginnings of the German Democratic Republic. She then develops further her associations of 'collective guilt' as a consequence of Germany's fascist past in the context of socialist biographies of her generation – 'die mittlere Generation der DDR' – and hence of the history of the GDR.

³⁰⁴ Wolf was away for a longer period than had ever been the case in GDR times, whilst her husband remained in Germany. This extended absence between September 1992 and July 1993 might have increased her feeling of displacement.

³⁰⁵ Wolf reiterates a key phrase she had used in 'Rückäußerung – Auf einen Brief Volker Brauns' which is included in *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou* as discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two, 81-82, and which she repeats in *Leibhaftig* (L, 184).

³⁰⁶ Further notable examples of statements in italics in the text are '*Du mußt dich selbst aus dir herauschneiden*' (HA, 10), '*Falsch leiden sollte es das auch geben oder ist leiden immer echt immer gültig worum auch immer man leidet oder gelitten hat*' (HA, 23), '*Und wenn es doch Menschen gäbe die bereit wären diese meine Wunde als ihre eigene zu empfinden und nicht hineinzuschlagen wundergläubig noch immer*' (HA, 26). The absence of punctuation in these statements is also evident in the prose piece 'Im Stein'.

In the interview in 1973 with Hans Kaufmann,³⁰⁷ which took place when Wolf was writing *Kindheitsmuster*, in which she embarked on her probing psychological analysis of the continuing consequences of her socialisation in the Third Reich, she claimed:

Ich glaube nicht, daß mein Bezugspunkt zu diesem Thema [Faschismus] meine privaten Gefühle oder gar Ressentiments sind; vielmehr scheint es mir ein elementares gesellschaftliches Interesse zu sein, den fast verlorengegangenen Bezug zwischen diesem Abschnitt unserer persönlichen Geschichte und der Gegenwart wiederherzustellen. (DA, 793)

In 'Begegnungen Third Street' Wolf approaches the issue of confronting the consequences of Germany's fascist past by reminding the reader of the *raison d'être* for the establishment of the GDR, namely the collapse of National Socialism and the consequent attempt to create a humanistic alternative to the immediate Nazi past. It could of course be argued that the issue of creating an alternative to the fascist past also applies to West Germany, and is indeed enshrined in its constitution. When Wolf comments on the circumstances of the founding of the alternative socialist German state, she does so in order to emphasise that in the GDR the differences between the Third Reich and the 'antifascist GDR' were made more explicit for ideological reasons: the identification of the GDR as a state with the 'Tradition der Antifaschisten und Widerstandskämpfer' and the concomitant tendency to delegate the inheritance of the fascist past 'an "die anderen"' (DA, 785), in other words to West Germans.

Reflections on the word '*Schuld*' (HA, 9), and specifically 'collective guilt', are typically triggered by her observation of external instances which provide

³⁰⁷ See my Introduction, page 12.

the 'äußere Authentizität'. For instance, whilst watching passers-by on Ocean Park Promenade near her temporary residence – the Japanese couple, the Mexican family, Russian emigrants, joggers – Wolf is suddenly struck by the notion of their 'collective innocence', a state of grace she cannot claim for herself:

Es ist kaum zu glauben und schwer auszuhalten, daß alle diese Leute [...] unschuldig sind, Menschen ohne Schuld, das gibt es [...], schuldlos sie alle, die Gruppen russischsprechender Emigranten [...], schuldlos auch sie, gerade sie. (HA, 9)

It is in these thought processes, the way in which Wolf draws the reader into her dynamic process of writing, that 'innere Authentizität' manifests itself. Importantly, Wolf's musings on the nature of the word 'Schuld' are not linked to any notion of acceptance of individual guilt. Instead, they centre on the idea of Germany's collective guilt as a consequence of its fascist past, and for Wolf this results in assuming responsibility for deeds for which she cannot personally be held to account. She is accepting collective responsibility for Germany's fascist past and also moral responsibility in terms of atonement, but this is of course not the same as accepting personal guilt. When she singles out Russian emigrants as 'schuldlos [...] gerade sie' (HA, 9), the implication is that, in the Second World War, Russians were the ones to have suffered most as a result of Nazi atrocities. Wolf then focuses on specific East German post-war experience when she stresses that it was East Germans rather than West Germans who actually went to eastern bloc countries and who, as a consequence, saw themselves as having to atone for the sins of their fascist forefathers: 'wir aber, wir Ostdeutschen, waren es, die zu den östlichen Völkern gehen mußten, zu denen, die am meisten unter uns gelitten hatten' (HA, 24).

Implicit in this statement is a presumption that for East Germans, unlike West Germans, confrontation with and restitution for the Nazi atrocities in the East was an inevitable historical legacy and a consequence of the Cold War milieu.

Crucially, Wolf's reflections on the word 'Schuld' need to be seen as part of her concern with the moral issue of 'die je unterschiedliche Auseinandersetzung mit dem Nationalsozialismus in den beiden deutschen Staaten' (HA, 183), as expressed in her speech dedicated to Böll, and are evidence of a commitment to *littérature engagée* in post-unification Germany. Yet in combination with the associative, reflective style and the emphasis on depicting personal experience whilst at the same time projecting the concerns of history at large onto the narrator, the text bears the distinctive hallmarks of 'subjektive Authentizität'.

This aspect of the active part played by the author in transmitting collective experience is brought to the fore when Wolf reflects on the importance to her generation ('die mittlere Generation der DDR'), in the early days of the GDR, of those writers she regarded as 'Leitbilder'.³⁰⁸ When she recalls those 'Leitbilder' who, by accentuating the threats posed by any potential resurgence of the forces which led to fascism – namely, monopoly capitalism – had reinforced the need for the existence of the GDR as a separate socialist German state, she implicitly examines the motives that led her generation to welcome communism with open arms.

Remembering the 'Leitbilder [der] frühen Jahre' (HA, 21) – left-wing authors who fought fascism during the Third Reich and had to go into exile or

³⁰⁸ A detailed discussion of these 'Leitbilder' can be found in Emmerich, *op.cit.*, 78ff.

endure concentration camps³⁰⁹ but who had returned to the GDR – she emphasises her appreciation of how the older generation of GDR writers, reacting to their experience of exile or imprisonment under Hitler’s regime, had embraced the GDR as a new societal form that offered great promise as a humanistic alternative to the immediate Nazi past. But she asks herself at the same time whether her own generation maintained hope for too long when she realised that

alle diese Leitbilder meiner frühen Jahre, die Bredel, Seghers, Fürnberg, Becher, Weiskopf, Kuba und all ihre weniger bekannten Gefährten, einer tragischen Generation angehörten, die erbarmungslos zwischen den Fronten zerrieben wurde und die auf Nachsicht der Nachgeborenen allerdings nicht rechnen kann – jene Nachsicht, die Brecht für die erbat, die den Boden bereiten wollten für Freundlichkeit und selber nicht freundlich sein konnten. (HA, 21)

Acknowledging the prolonged commitment of her own generation to the socialist experiment, albeit an experiment that was started by an earlier generation, she focuses on the personal effects of ‘collective experience’;³¹⁰ and does so in a narrative manner of association and reflection which provides a vivid example of ‘innere Authentizität’:

Und wann ist mir klargeworden, daß auch wir noch, meine Generation, die wir anfangs in stolzer Unerfahrenheit so sicher waren, jene freundliche Menschengemeinschaft noch zu erleben, für die wir uns ja einsetzen wollten; daß auch wir bestimmt waren, in den Untergang jenes Experiments mit hineingerissen zu werden, an dessen Verwirklichung wir schon lange nicht mehr glaubten.

³⁰⁹ In the interview ‘"Auf mir bestehen". Christa Wolf im Gespräch mit Günter Gaus’, she explains the attraction those ‘Leitbilder’ held for her: ‘Wir erlebten nämlich damals, Anfang der fünfziger Jahre, als ich nach meinem Studium im Schriftstellerverband arbeitete, Genossen, die aus dem KZ kamen, aus den Zuchthäusern, aus der Emigration, beeindruckende Menschen – ich glaube auch heute noch, daß sie zu den interessantesten Leuten gehörten, die einem damals in Deutschland hätten begegnen können –, und das war eine Bindung, die zum großen Teil auch auf schlechtem Gewissen beruhte’. Quoted in A, 242-263, here 244.

³¹⁰ Wolf’s reference to collective experience should not be confused with the notion of ‘Kollektivschuld’ for the Nazi past.

Jetzt sind wir dran was jetzt geschieht geschieht uns (HA, 21)³¹¹

As Benjamin Robinson points out, even if Wolf is too circumspect to describe herself either as victim or as a tragic figure, she does consider her generation, like that of the anti-fascist exiles and resistance fighters she admires, to be tragic.³¹²

One specific issue which had been highlighted in the 'Literaturstreit' by Schirmacher was that of the relationship of Wolf's generation to the GDR as a matter of 'Familienverhältnisse von Anfang an'³¹³ and, linked to that, the premise of 'starke Schuldgefühle' on the part of Christa Wolf 'die sich in unverbrüchlichen Loyalitäten gegenüber jenen alten Kommunisten äußern, die sich [während des Nationalsozialismus] in den Gefängnissen, den Konzentrationslagern oder in der Emigration befanden'.³¹⁴ Wolf does confess to a sense of guilt, which is bound up with the notion of 'Kollektivschuld', in the face of those Communist elders who had suffered imprisonment and exile in the Third Reich. At the same time she counters Schirmacher's criticism of her as having demonstrated 'uncritical' gratitude towards her Communist elders when she reflects on an autobiographical instance which exemplifies her ambivalent, yet critical, stance towards 'jen[e] alten Kommunisten'.

She recounts the scene when, on a visit to a Soviet collective farm, an older member of the GDR delegation, 'ein alter Kommunist, der zwölf Jahre im

³¹¹ In the speech dedicated to Franz Fühmann, analysed later in this chapter, Wolf hints at the importance of Biermann's expulsion in 1976 as a significant incident that marked the beginning of the erosion of hope (HA, 57). In the speech dedicated to Wolfgang Heise, she identifies both the 'Einmarsch der Warschauer-Pakt-Truppen in Prag' in 1968 and 'die Ausbürgerung Wolf Biermanns' as particular examples of 'was unsere Generation aufwühlte' (HA, 79).

³¹² See Robinson, *op.cit.*, 101.

³¹³ Schirmacher, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 2.6.1990.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Zuchthaus gegessen hatte, jetzt hoher Funktionär und Schriftsteller' (HA, 24),
wept at the thought that their hosts' family members had been killed by the
Nazis:

und es war diese Szene, die mir später im Wege stand, als es darum ging, ihm grundsätzlich und scharf zu widersprechen, und diese und ähnliche Szenen waren es, die es mir am Anfang schwermachten, seine kompromißlose Feindschaft zu ertragen, die ich mir durch den Widerspruch zuzog, sehr hätte ich es mir gewünscht, unsere gegensätzlichen Standpunkte darüber, was 'uns' nützte, hätten uns nicht auf die verschiedenen Seiten eines Grabens gebracht, der immer tiefer wurde, [...] und ich dachte an seine Zuchthausjahre und an meine Zeit in der Hitlerjugend, und ich brauchte eine starke bewußte Anstrengung, um ihm sagen zu können, daß seine Vergangenheit ihn nicht davor bewahrte, heute unrecht zu haben, und meine mich nicht davon ausschloß, heute recht haben zu können. (HA, 24-25)

The reference to the 'alter Kommunist, [...] jetzt hoher Funktionär und Schriftsteller' (HA, 24) seems to relate to the writer Otto Gotsche who was Secretary of the State Council under Ulbricht from 1960 until 1971. It is typical of Wolf not to name individuals, and to let readers draw their own conclusions. By concealing Gotsche's identity here, she focuses on the important point about the contradictory nature – the 'Widersprüchlichkeit' – of life in general, through the prism of her own life experience.

In summing up her ambivalent feelings towards the older generation of GDR writers, Wolf once again demonstrates her resolve 'wahrhaftig von den eigenen Erfahrungen auszugehen' (DA, 499). On the one hand, she respected these elders for their acts of resistance against the Nazis when she, in her youth, had joined the 'Bund Deutscher Mädel', and she shared their belief in the ideology which offered an alternative to the fascism under which she had grown up. On the other hand, she distanced herself from the entrenched attitudes of the older generation of Communists who were in positions to set the cultural

and political agenda but who were unwilling to consider reforming the SED and the way in which it practised socialism.

It is clearly important for Wolf to dispel the accusations of complicity with a repressive regime which were levelled at her in the initial stages of the 'Literaturstreit' by Greiner and Schirmmacher, and to reassert her reputation as one of the leading intellectual critics of the SED state when the GDR was still in existence. This is evident when she reflects on the SED Central Committee's repressive Plenary Session of December 1965 and when she links this landmark event, which constituted one of the most significant attacks on those writers and artists in the GDR who were perceived as stepping outside the guidelines laid down by cultural policy, to her personal history. In the essay 'Rummelplatz 11. Plenum 1965 – Erinnerungsbericht' contained in *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou*, Wolf had already singled out her stance at the 11th Plenary Session as evidence of her role as a critical GDR writer (Chapter Two, 79-82).

In 'Begegnungen Third Street' she recalls the proceedings at the event where she was the only delegate to express resistance to the censorship campaign against a number of critical GDR intellectuals and thus her solidarity with them:

erst neulich sind mir durch Zufall einige Zeitungen aus jener Zeit – ELFTES PLENUM, ein Signal für Eingeweihte – unter die Hände gekommen, [...] und, wie sich herausstellte, meine Rede auf jener Versammlung und die, auf die sie sich bezog, um die entscheidenden Sätze gekürzt, und zwar nicht nur in den Zeitungen, auch in den internen Protokollen. [...] Sieh dir das an, sie korrigieren die Realität. (HA, 19-20)

She then complains about the activities of 'that' individual without naming the person:

So werde ich niemals beweisen können, daß jener Mensch 'Petöfi-Club'

gesagt hat, also Konterrevolution, auf die Schriftsteller gemünzt, und daß meine ersten Sätze sich dagegen richteten. Nun kann ich es doch beweisen, die ursprüngliche Mitschrift hat sich in irgendwelchen Aktenbergen gefunden. Sie interessiert mich nicht mehr. (HA, 20)

In official records of the meeting all references to the 'Petöfi-Club', and thus the motive for Wolf's speech, had been deleted to make her remarks appear unreasonable. This archival information, which had only recently come to light, exonerates Wolf from accusations of complicity. Yet it is the inference Wolf herself draws from this incident that represents a notable example of 'innere Authentizität', where the process of reflection (writing) on a conflict situation serves the therapeutic purpose of coming to terms with it through understanding the stalemate of conflicting thoughts and emotions. By writing about this particularly 'wunde[r] Punkt'³¹⁵ (DA, 770) in her own life, she can finally leave behind accusations in the 'Literaturstreit' of not having been a critical intellectual.³¹⁶

Given Wolf's situation of temporary 'Heimatlosigkeit' whilst residing in Santa Monica, it is not surprising that in 'Begegnungen Third Street' there are repeated references to encounters with people who experienced exile or loneliness. Wolf's 'exilic optic'³¹⁷ is to those on the fringes of society, those who are homeless or exiles; she has dinner with Jewish emigrants who speak German for her sake and she is, in the narrator's own words, 'in der Stadt der Emigranten' (HA, 17). This acknowledgement triggers reflections on exiled

³¹⁵ See also comments in the Introduction to this thesis on confronting the 'wunde Punkte' in her life through the process of writing, 10-11.

³¹⁶ Wolf reacted with 'Zeitungsphobie' to the events surrounding the 11th Plenary Session and spent time in a psychiatric hospital. Wolf subsequently commented on the notion of writing as therapy, for instance in an interview with Joachim Walther in 1972 where she stated: 'Man kann auch schreiben, wenn man krank ist. Um gesund zu werden. Schreiben kann auch eine Therapie sein' (DA, 762).

³¹⁷ Hamid Naficy, *Home, Exile, Homeland: Film, Media, and the Politics of Place*, New York, 1999, 5.

German writers during the Third Reich, especially Bertolt Brecht and Thomas Mann. My contention is that Wolf's reflections were prompted by accusations in the German media, following an interview with her on the TV programme 'Kulturreport' broadcast on 24th January 1993 at the time her Stasi revelations broke, that she was comparing her situation in Santa Monica with that of German emigrés during the Third Reich. In the interview, the transcript of which is included in *Akteneinsicht Christa Wolf: Zerrspiegel und Dialog*, Wolf referred to the heritage of Jewish and communist emigrants which she discovered whilst staying in California:

Hier in Los Angeles bin ich sehr stark konfrontiert mit der Hinterlassenschaft der deutschen Emigranten, meistens jüdischer, aber eben auch, wie Brecht, kommunistischer Emigranten aus der Nazizeit, die eine große kulturelle Hinterlassenschaft haben [...]. Die Deutschen haben damals geglaubt, sie können darauf verzichten. Jetzt glaubt man in Deutschland, man könnte auf die Kultur verzichten, die es in der DDR gegeben hat. Damals hat sich Deutschland der linken, der jüdischen Kultur entledigt, dieser ungeheuren, großen, menschlichen Kultur, die da war. Wir wissen, wohin das geführt hat. (A, 170)

The outrage of liberal German intellectuals at Wolf's comments in the television interview was expressed in strong terms by Academy of Arts President Walter Jens when he asserted: '[d]iejenigen [Emigranten], die dort elend krepieren sind, die Selbstmord begangen haben, von Hunger zermürbt und entwürdigt, die hatten doch wohl ein etwas anderes Los als Christa Wolf' (A, 234). Jens's response only illustrates the sensitivity which still surrounded Christa Wolf in the German media in the mid 1990s. In no way can she be accused in the interview of comparing her stay in Santa Monica with that of Brecht or other exiled German writers during the Third Reich. What she does emphasise is that GDR literature should not be forgotten in the same way that

Jewish and leftist literature were ignored in 1930s and 1940s Nazi Germany.

Wolf is clearly drawing attention to the plight of GDR literature in general, rather than to her own situation in particular.

In the interview with Günter Gaus in February 1993, which is contained in *Akteneinsicht Christa Wolf: Zerrspiegel und Dialog*, Wolf attempted to clear up any misunderstanding:

[...] von solcher Anmaßung, mich mit denen vergleichen oder gar mich mit ihnen gleichsetzen zu wollen, die aus Nazideutschland ausgegrenzt, rausgeschmissen wurden, bin ich – gerade jetzt – nie ferner gewesen. Ich bin froh, daß ich das hier sagen kann. Es ist wirklich ein Mißverständnis. (A, 262)

My own reading is that Wolf's references to exiled German writers in both the television interview and 'Begegnungen Third Street' are evidence of her expressing her personal experiences as a writer through interpreting those of others. For this reason, I take issue with the following interpretation by Kosta of 'Begegnungen Third Street': 'ihre [Wolfs] Identifikation mit den ins Exil Verbannten stellt eine unerhörte Mißinterpretation des Exils von Wolf dar. Für Wolf gibt es ein Zuhause, in das sie zurückkehren wird.'³¹⁸ I suggest instead that Wolf's thoughts on those who were exiled from Nazi Germany should be read as part of her efforts to advocate the maintenance of an interest in GDR literature – a literature that had developed in the context of political difficulties – rather than the attempt at self-aggrandisement which Kosta's comments imply. Indeed, relating societal issues to her own experience is at the core of Wolf's concept of 'subjektive Authentizität', although she did, as critics' comments illustrate, create misunderstandings as a result.

³¹⁸ Kosta, op.cit., 163.

Wolf's observations of immigrants in Santa Monica prompt reflections not only on the National Socialist past but also on a definitive period in the history of the GDR – the months immediately prior to the fall of the Berlin Wall. It is at times like these, when her personal history is closely interlinked with that of the GDR, that 'subjektive Authentizität' expresses itself most poignantly. In 'Begegnungen Third Street', watching Russian men shop in a Polish-American store triggers memories of her last visit to Moscow in October 1989:

Heimweh [...] nach einem Moskau, das es nicht mehr gibt, in dem beinahe alle Telefonnummern, eine nach der anderen, für mich erloschen sind und an das ich mich nur noch mit Freunden erinnern kann, die ich einst dort kennenlernte und die ich jetzt in westlichen Städten treffe. (HA, 14-15)

Yet her thoughts immediately turn to the time of the 'Wende' in the GDR. She had acknowledged that after the expatriation of Wolf Biermann in 1976 hopes of attaining a socialist utopia faded and disillusionment set in: 'Es begannen die Jahre ohne Hoffnung, ohne Alternative' (HA, 57). The 'Wende' reignited those hopes within her. As discussed in Chapter Two (Chapter Two, 66-68), heartened by the bold demands for democratic reform at the peaceful mass demonstrations in Leipzig in September and October of 1989, Wolf believed she shared the vision of a reformed socialist state with the majority of the people in the GDR. And it was Wolf's public support of this vision that, at the beginning of the 'Literaturstreit', attracted severe criticism on the part of Western commentators, who accused her of being out of touch with the GDR population. When in 'Begegnungen Third Street' Wolf recalls the events of the autumn of 1989 in the GDR, she highlights their significance not as a personal preoccupation, as critics in the 'Literaturstreit' had claimed, but as part of a

mass movement:

Ich erinnere mich der düsteren Moskauer Woche im Oktober 89, des einzigen Lichtblicks, als ich am ersten Abend vom Hotel aus Berlin anrief und du mir sagtest IN LEIPZIG WAREN HUNDERTTAUSEND AUF DER STRASSE, UND NICHTS IST PASSIERT und als ich auf einmal wieder wußte, was Glück ist, es war ja Montag, der Montag der Leipziger Lichterdemonstrationen. (HA, 15)³¹⁹

Her concern that, after the collapse of socialism, the reasons as to why some intellectuals, and indeed she herself, had remained in the GDR might be forgotten is echoed in the issue raised by her Soviet writer friend Lidia: '*Unser ganzes Leben kann doch nicht falsch gewesen sein*' (HA, 17). Wolf evidently does not want to see the humanistic ideals of 'jene freundliche Menschengemeinschaft' (HA, 21), which in the early days of the GDR she believed could be achieved, devalued following re-unification, even though she concedes that the SED's practice of socialism was flawed and that the 'Versteinerungen [des Systems] schienen unauflösbar' (HA, 179). In 'Begegnungen Third Street', Wolf therefore voices a sense of moral responsibility on behalf of her generation for its prolonged commitment to the GDR as a socialist state in addition to the notion of collective guilt on account of Germany's fascist past, as discussed earlier.

'Begegnungen Third Street' was written in the aftermath of Wolf's Stasi revelations.³²⁰ In contrast to the exchanges of letters with friends in *Auf dem*

³¹⁹ In the essay on Fühmann 'Nirgends sein o Nirgends du mein Land', also discussed in this chapter, Wolf similarly reiterates: 'Es zeigte sich, *der Funken, den wir manchmal für erloschen hielten, war doch nicht ganz ausgetreten worden*, auf einmal kam, wenn auch wie immer in der Geschichte nur für kurze Zeit, die kreative Seite der Widersprüche doch noch hervor, richtiger: sie wurde hervorgeschleudert als unaufschiebbares Verlangen nach der Befriedigung der wirklichen, lebenserhaltenden Bedürfnisse' (HA, 67) [my emphasis, JD].

³²⁰ A precise reference as to when 'Begegnungen Third Street' was composed is not provided in *Hierzulande Andernorts*. The fact that all texts in this collection are arranged in chronological order, with 'Begegnungen Third Street' constituting the opening piece, suggests that the text was completed no later than early 1994. Given the subject matter – Wolf's experiences in California between September 1992

Weg nach Tabou, in particular her correspondence with Günter Grass and Volker Braun, which contain explicit references to the Stasi affair and its coverage in the German media, in *Hierzulande Andernorts* explicit pointers are absent.³²¹ However, in her reflections on the mythical figure of ‘Medea’, Wolf does expound on the theme of culpability, and she does pre-empt some of the material in her 1996 novel *Medea. Stimmen*.³²² I believe that Wolf’s personal motivation for embarking on the Medea ‘project’ is her own need to penetrate the surface appearance of events. Her probing reflections on the Medea myth compel her to confront her own past involvement with the Stasi and the extent to which, however brief and distant, this might be considered as evidence of complicity with the SED regime. When, in ‘Begegnungen Third Street’, she ponders on Medea, who was presented by Euripides as the murderer of her own children but who was innocent of that charge in earlier interpretations of the myth, Wolf uses her as a figure who was wrongly accused and on to which she projects her own dissonant experiences in the early 1990s:

Medea, die ihre Kinder nicht ermordet hat, die Unschuldige, dachte ich freudig und triumphierend, da kannte ich sie noch nicht oder hoffte vielmehr insgeheim, sie benutzen zu können, als Zeugin, als Entlastungszeugin. (HA, 11)

The choice of the word ‘Entlastungszeugin’ evokes associations of personal culpability, but should not be read here as an admission of culpability but rather

and July 1993 – it is likely that the narrative was originally composed in the time period following her Stasi revelations in January 1993 and before her return to Germany in July 1993, with minor revisions made subsequently.

³²¹ In *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou*, Wolf’s correspondence with Günter Grass and Volker Braun in the wake of the Stasi revelations provides evidence of her explicit responses to the affair.

³²² As Chapter Four is dedicated to a detailed analysis of the mythical figure of Medea, I shall not expand on the significance of this figure here. Wolf used her time in California as a visiting scholar to research and collect material on Medea as the basis for her 1996 novel. Hence reflections on Medea are prevalent in this early piece in *Hierzulande Andernorts* and are the reason why, in this collection, Wolf devoted an entire chapter ‘Von Cassandra zu Medea’ to this mythical figure.

as part of Wolf's process of reflection and introspection on dissonant experiences, and thus as an integral part of 'innere Authentizität'.

It is no coincidence that 'Begegnungen Third Street' concludes with an entry in Thomas Mann's diary containing an extract from a harsh review article on Mann's 1944 'Atlantic-Aufsatz'. Wolf notes that when the critic and scholar Ludwig Marcuse had defended Mann against attacks on political convictions held in the past, Mann signalled his unwillingness to publicly comment on his own former stance.³²³ Marcuse writes:

Thomas Mann hat nicht nötig, zu verteidigen, daß er nicht mehr für Tirpitz³²⁴ ist. Aber vielleicht sollte man wünschen, daß er einmal, bei Gelegenheit, schonungslos über seine Vergangenheit schreibe – so schonungslos, wie es alle Bekehrten taten. (HA, 40)

In his diaries, which Wolf then cites, Mann remarks with annoyed dismissal, '[s]törender und taktloser Artikel von Marcuse [...] Dummheit' (HA, 40).

Essentially, he reproaches Marcuse for expecting public soul-searching since Marcuse demands that intellectuals should reflect on their own contribution to Germany's National Socialist history, 'um in jedem von uns die Abrechnung mit der eigenen Vergangenheit anzuregen' (HA, 40).

Given both the criticism Wolf received in the German media following her Stasi revelations in January 1993 and comparisons in the 'Literaturstreit' with her GDR life as that of 'innere Emigration',³²⁵ reading Mann's diary extract clearly prompted reflection on her own role as a writer when the GDR was still in existence. Wolf wants to engage in a process of self-scrutiny about her own

³²³ See Robinson, op.cit., 96.

³²⁴ Alfred von Tirpitz was a German Admiral and, from 1897 until 1916, German Secretary of State of the Imperial Naval Office.

³²⁵ Schirmacher, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 2.6.1990.

past as a GDR intellectual in order to combat both public criticism and self-doubt, and thus to engage in the process of 'Vergangenheitsbewältigung' on a personal level. In many respects her essays and speeches in *Hierzulande Andernorts* that follow 'Begegnungen Third Street' are the continuation of a soul-searching confrontation, where a personal and national history are closely interwoven. When the narrator reflects on words such as "Gewissen" and "Reue" (HA, 41), she emphasises that they are so much more immediate in her mother-tongue than their English equivalents ("conscience", "regret"), not least 'weil es sich um deutsche Taten oder Unterlassungen handelt' (HA, 41), implying that for her these expressions evoke associations with the history of National Socialism.

Speeches and essays: reflections on 'why stay in the GDR?'

Most of the speeches and one of the essays in *Hierzulande Andernorts* are dedications to (predominantly East German) intellectuals who shared Wolf's commitment to socialist ideals.³²⁶ It could be argued that they constitute Wolf's additional response to the accusation, by Schirmmacher and Greiner in the opening gambits of the 'Literaturstreit', of prolonged adherence to the ideals of socialism. At another level, they represent evidence of Wolf's continuing reflections on the theme of guilt and culpability.

In her eulogies on GDR intellectuals, Wolf focuses on important issues in their lives as well as the personal convictions that brought them into conflict with the state, which are also issues and experiences which captivate her

³²⁶ These GDR intellectuals include Franz Fühmann, Wolfgang Heise, Heiner Müller, Stephan Hermlin and Irmtraud Morgner. In addition, there are dedications to the West German intellectuals with left-wing sentiments, to Günter Gaus, Günter Grass and, as already discussed, Heinrich Böll as well as eulogies to the Russian friend and writer Lew Kopelew and the Jewish psychoanalyst and writer Charlotte Wolff.

emotionally. In her portrayals she emphasises the friendship that connected her to those individuals, '[ein] Netzwerk von Freundschaften, das in keinem Geschichtsbuch erwähnt werden wird, das sich aber über das ganze Land erstreckte und uns leben half' (HA, 80).

Her reference to the 'Netzwerk von Freundschaften' may be read as an implicit response to Schirmmacher's accusation in the 'Literaturstreit' that the relationship of Wolf's generation and particularly that of Wolf herself to the GDR constituted 'ein familiäres, fast intimes Verhältnis zu ihrem Staat und seinen Institutionen' – ergo a matter of 'Familienverhältnisse von Anfang an'.³²⁷ However, Wolf turns Schirmmacher's words around by dispelling the image of willing and trusting compliance with the Party-line, when she uses the term 'Netzwerk' to define the broad critical movement amongst the intellectual community in the GDR from the 1960s onwards of which she considered herself a representative. For instance, in her dedication to Wolfgang Heise, she highlights the extent to which

viele Angehörige der Generation, der auch Wolfgang Heise angehörte, [sich] als 'politische Menschen' sahen und wie weitgehend alle anderen Lebensgebiete und Lebensäußerungen von diesem Selbstverständnis berührt worden waren. (HA, 80)

The phrase 'politische Menschen' should be read as an allusion to those within the critical intellectual community who remained committed to the ideals of socialism but had distanced themselves from the GDR establishment – a commitment poignantly captured in Irmtraud Morgner's maxim '[i]ch selber kann nicht leben, ohne mich meiner Utopie zu erinnern' (HA, 203), which in *Hierzulande Andernorts* is repeated in the speech Wolf dedicated to Morgner.

³²⁷ Schirmmacher, op.cit.

Similarly, with Stephan Hermlin she shared in GDR times 'die wachsende Sorge um das Land, das sich immer weiter von den sozialistischen Grundsätzen entfernte, denen er sich seit seiner Jugend verpflichtet fühlte' (HA, 105); and, post-unification, there was the distress of being maligned in the West German media: 'das letzte, was er von großen Teilen der deutschen Öffentlichkeit erfuhr, der Versuch einer Demontage war' (HA, 106). And when she writes that for Heiner Müller '[d]er Widerspruch der Zeit nicht nur, wie er es manchmal darstellte, sein Arbeitsmaterial [war]; er war Grundlage und Stachel seines Lebens' (HA, 97), she is also summing up the driving force behind her own writings.

It should be noted, though, that it is not Wolf's intention to draw attention to herself. What she does wish to do is provide an insight into the mindset and *modus operandi* of some intellectuals who remained in the GDR and who saw themselves as critical writers. In so doing, she is implicitly responding to accusations in the 'Literaturstreit' of having remained in the GDR until the end. It is above all in her dedications to GDR writer and friend Franz Fühmann, who – born in 1922 – experienced National Socialism as an adolescent and adult and was a fervent supporter,³²⁸ that Wolf sheds light on the question as to why writers remained in a GDR in which the political reality no longer reflected the ideals that led to its establishment. The tributes to Fühmann, the speech 'Was tut die strenge Feder' and the essay 'Nirgends sein o Nirgends du mein Land', all therefore merit further analysis.

In the 'Briefwechsel mit Jürgen Habermas' contained in *Auf dem Weg*

³²⁸ In 1941, Franz Fühmann even became a member of the SA.

nach Tabou Wolf had already criticised West German intellectuals for their 'Unkenntnis der hiesigen Zustände, ihrer Entwicklung, auch der hiesigen Lebensumstände von Intellektuellen' (T, 151). In 'Nirgends sein o Nirgends du mein Land', Wolf seeks to promote mutual understanding between intellectuals in the East and the West by reflecting on the role of, as she sees them, critical GDR writers from the vantage point of experiences she shared with them. In *Hierzulande Andernorts*, commenting on the reasons for publishing the exchange of letters with Franz Fühmann³²⁹ – the 'Zeugnisse aus einer Periode, die inzwischen als abgeschlossene Geschichte betrachtet und häufig so behandelt wird' (HA, 61) – she re-emphasises her intention to enlighten and inform.³³⁰

Wolf's comments here are not exclusively directed at Western intellectuals, even though they appear to be motivated by (largely West German) commentators' critical assaults in the 'Literaturstreit' on GDR literature and GDR writers:

Die Unkenntnis über die konkreten Umstände, unter denen in der DDR Literatur entstand und Schriftsteller miteinander umgingen, ist Grund für mich, diese authentischen Zeugnisse zur Verfügung zu stellen, auch wenn ich nicht annehmen kann, daß schon die Zeit dafür ist, sie ruhig wahrzunehmen. Zu tief haben sich Vorurteile – genau wie Nach-Urteile – über die Rolle derjenigen Schriftsteller eingefressen, die in der DDR geblieben sind, zu sehr werden diese Vorurteile noch gebraucht und beeinträchtigen das Vermögen zu differenzieren. (HA, 61-62)

³²⁹ Wolf is referring to her publication *Christa Wolf - Franz Fühmann: 'Monsieur – wir finden uns wieder'. Briefe 1968-1984'* by the Aufbau-Verlag in 1995.

³³⁰ Wolf expands on the reasons for the publication of the exchange of letters with Fühmann when she writes: 'Viel schneller als unter "normalen Umständen" wird ein Zeitabschnitt "historisch", mit betäubender Geschwindigkeit werden die, die diesen Abschnitt überlebt haben, anderen und sich selbst zu historischen Figuren. Dies kann man als Desaster sehen oder als Chance, vielleicht ist es beides, jedenfalls befördert es die Distanz zu den eigenen Hervorbringungen, übrigens auch zu den Aufregtheiten der Gegenwart. Auch sie wird einmal dem kühlen Blick der Nachgeborenen ausgesetzt sein', HA, 62.

In this passage she deploys the word 'Nach-Urteil' to accentuate the changed perspective following the dissolution of the GDR and the subsequent loss of trust on the part of Western intellectuals vis-à-vis those East German intellectuals who, as critics in the 'Literaturstreit' alleged, maintained the façade of functioning socialism whilst the GDR was still in existence. As Wolf rightly assumes, it will take a while before their situation can be considered with detachment.

In *Hierzulande Andernorts* she does not, however, want to leave an assessment of the role of critical GDR writers to Western critics, but is determined to make her own contribution to a public debate by continuing to reflect on the 'schmerzhafteste Frage' (HA, 185) which preoccupied both Fühmann and herself when the GDR still existed. Wolf wonders 'wohin das Land trieb, in dem wir lebten, wohin es getrieben wurde, und ob wir etwas tun könnten, die zunehmend unheilvolle Richtung zu beeinflussen' (HA, 64). She admits to the futility of having maintained hope of a reform of the SED regime when she writes: 'Das haben wir schließlich aufgeben müssen; er [Fühmann] schlug sich noch mit den Institutionen herum, weil er nicht glauben wollte, daß sie unverbesserlich waren' (HA, 64).

Eulogising Fühmann, a martyr 'der Erfahrung der Vergeblichkeit' (HA, 64), Wolf reflects on a society so ideologically highly strung that the socialist experiment, which once offered promise as a humanistic alternative to capitalism, had become fatally crippled. In 'Nirgends sein o Nirgends du mein Land' it is in instances where she moves away from specific recollections concerning Fühmann's life to contemplation of GDR writers' shared

experiences and frustrations with the regime that 'innere Authentizität' is most vividly expressed and her own crisis of political commitment is brought to the fore:

Auf verlorenem Posten 'Würde' wahren, um Selbstbehauptung kämpfen, es lernen, ohne Perspektive und ohne sichtbare Alternative zu leben, darum ging es, wir wussten es; wussten, dass wir nicht unangefochten aus dem Dilemma herauskommen würden, in dem wir steckten, aber vielleicht ging es nicht darum, unanfechtbar zu bleiben, vielleicht mussten wir nicht fremden, sondern eigenen Maßstäben zu genügen trachten, die wir manchmal täglich neu finden mussten, denn es ist ja kennzeichnend für sich zersetzende Verhältnisse, dass diejenigen, die immer noch ihren eigenen Maßstäben gerecht werden wollen, nie das Gefühl loswerden, sie könnten nichts mehr 'richtig' tun. Aber vielleicht ging es nicht mehr um 'richtig' oder 'falsch'; vielleicht ging es darum, einen Platz nicht zu verlassen, und wenn es auch ein Platz war *mit dem Rücken an der Wand*, und wenn wir ihn auch noch so unvollkommen, so fehlerhaft, unter noch so vielen zermürenden Selbstzweifeln und Selbsttäuschungen verteidigten [...] 'Kann man vor seiner eigenen Geschichte in den Westen gehen'? [...] Hier, am Ort des tiefsten Schmerzes, an dem Ort, der uns am gründlichsten in Frage stellte, war unser Lebensstoff. (HA, 66-67) [my emphasis – JD]

In spite of feeling that they were standing 'mit dem Rücken an der Wand', an image which is also repeated in the prose text 'Im Stein', those writers who had taken the decision to remain in the GDR assumed that the SED regime was there to stay:

Selbst diejenigen [Autoren], die sich am deutlichsten den Vertretern und Institutionen des Staates konfrontierten, gingen davon aus, daß dieser Staat dauern werde [...]. Dieser selbstverständliche Handlungshintergrund war es ja, der die Konflikte schärfte, an denen wir uns über Jahre hin abarbeiteten, Veränderung einklagend, uns selbst verändernd. (HA, 61)³³¹

As a writer in post-unification Germany she believes her role is to

³³¹ In *Im Dialog*, first published in 1990, Wolf had already expressed her feelings of hope that 'die Realität bewege sich auf die Dauer in die gleiche Richtung wie wir, und wir könnten, zusammen mit den Leuten aus der Wirtschaft, aus der Wissenschaft dieser progressiven Richtung zum Durchbruch verhelfen. [...] Es gab für uns keine Alternative. Sollten wir das Westdeutschland Adenauers und Globkes oder Erhards als möglichen Lebensort in Betracht ziehen? Dieses Land hier war – großmütig gesprochen – unser Kampffeld, hier wollten wir es wissen, hier sollte es passieren, und zwar noch zu unseren Lebzeiten', ID, 54-55.

continue 'weiter zu versuchen, das Wichtige vom schnell Vergänglichen zu trennen und was Sache der Literatur ist: das Unkenntliche kenntlicher zu machen' (HA, 68). The speech 'Was tut die strenge Feder', which formed part of a school's dedication ceremony when it was renamed in honour of Franz Fühmann, exemplifies Wolf's didactic endeavour. The rhetoric in this speech is different to that in the other pieces in *Hierzulande Andernorts* as it is addressed to pupils, teachers and parents alike and is driven by her desire to make young people comprehend. At the same time this speech does correspond to other pieces in the collection in that it continues to address the issue of coming to terms with Germany's past and the 'Prozeß der Entwicklung in diesem Land DDR' (HA, 53), thus concentrating on 'diejenigen Fragen, die uns beiden [Wolf and Fühmann] dringlich gewesen wären' (HA, 50).

In contrast to Wolf's 'Leitbilder [der] frühen Jahre' (HA, 21) – the anti-fascist resistance fighters and exiles – we are told that Fühmann, '[war] als Kind und junger Mensch führergläubig, fanatisch begeistert [vom Nationalsozialismus]' (HA, 53), but that he subsequently spent many years of his life 'diesen Wahn [des Rassismus und Antisemitismus] in sich auszurotten' (HA, 54). Wolf's depiction of Fühmann as a paradigm of an individual's attempt at 'Vergangenheitsbewältigung' demonstrates her continued commitment to *littérature engagée*, and is given contemporary urgency in the light of a resurgence of right-wing extremist activities and nationalistic fervour since reunification, particularly in the eastern part of Germany. In addition, through her portrayal of Fühmann, Wolf illustrates the problems faced by independent thinkers in GDR times: the easy success of those who followed the officially

sanctioned line and the difficulties encountered by those who advocated a less passive approach to social and political life. Yet in simultaneously identifying this as an issue that persists in present-day Germany, her comments need to be read as part of her socially engaged writing.

The prevailing mood in the speech is that of disillusionment amongst critical GDR intellectuals in the immediate years following Biermann's expatriation in November 1976, even though, as Fühmann's example demonstrates, this sense of disillusionment did not mean that critical GDR intellectuals disengaged from the 'Konflikt zwischen Geist und Macht; zwischen der dogmatischen Ideologie und einem eingreifenden Denken' (HA, 58). Biermann's expulsion in November 1976 was followed by the SED exercising pressure on those who had signed the Biermann petition to withdraw their support. An initial protest letter against his expulsion was signed by twelve writers,³³² including Fühmann and Wolf, in which they made clear that their protest was not so much in personal support of Biermann as against the aggressive action by the state in the face of what they considered to be constructive criticism. More than seventy artists and intellectuals subsequently added their names to the protest.

Wolf only alludes to the problems that ensued for those who supported the protest when, in 'Was tut die strenge Feder', she remarks:

Was für ein Apparat zum Beispiel in Bewegung gesetzt wurde, wenn eine Gruppe von Schriftstellern bekanntgab, daß sie die Ausbürgerung eines ihrer Kollegen aus politischen Gründen mißbilligte. (HA, 56)

³³² The initial 12 signatories of the Biermann petition were: Christa Wolf, Volker Braun, Franz Fühmann, Stephan Hermlin, Stefan Heym, Günter Kunert, Sarah Kirsch, Heiner Müller, Rolf Schneider, Gerhard Wolf, Jurek Becker, Erich Arendt. See Emmerich, *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR*, 254.

The expression 'aus politischen Gründen' here signifies criticism of the SED regime on the part of critical intellectuals. Not mentioned in the speech itself are the political repercussions for those seen as the leading figures: enforced public withdrawal from the protest and expulsion from the SED, even though the latter was eventually only imposed on four of the original signatories of the Biermann petition, namely Sarah Kirsch, Günter Kunert, Gerhard Wolf and Jurek Becker.³³³ That most of those involved, including Biermann himself, had in the words of the letter of protest 'nie Zweifel daran gelassen, für welchen der beiden deutschen Staaten [sie] bei aller Kritik ein[treten],³³⁴ seemed no longer to be of any importance to the state. The events of late 1976 and early 1977, and the government's more far-reaching measures of arrests and non-publication, marked a complete breakdown of trust between the government and the critical artistic community. The atmosphere of distrust and uncertainty dominated the last years of the decade. Many artists left the GDR for good, finding themselves no longer able to express their allegiance to a state which acted in contravention to what they saw as the fundamental tenets of socialism. Others moved to the West on long term visas, among them Jurek Becker, Thomas Brasch, Sarah Kirsch, Günter Kunert, Reiner Kunze and Rolf Schneider.³³⁵ This meant the loss of a great deal of critical talent.

Those directly affected by the events of 1976 who nevertheless chose to remain were faced with shattered illusions, the apparent end of the dream that their own 'Sehnsucht nach Selbstverwirklichung' (DA, 780) was in unison with

³³³ Ibid, 256.

³³⁴ Ibid, 254.

³³⁵ For a complete list of names, see Emmerich, op.cit., 257.

the goals of the GDR establishment. Significantly, in her speech on Fühmann, Wolf highlights their perceived public role as ‘Lebenshelfer’ as the main reason why Fühmann, and indeed she herself, decided to stay in the GDR:

1978 muß auch das Jahr gewesen sein, in dem er [Fühmann] unsere Grübeleien über die Frage: Sollen, können wir hierbleiben, in der DDR, die sich immer mehr verkrustete, unsere Wirkungsmöglichkeit nach außen immer mehr einschränkte [...] oder müssen wir weggehen, wie andere Kollegen es taten? – das Jahr also, in dem Fühmann unseren Dauerdiallog über diese Frage mit der Formel beantwortete: Ärzte, Pfarrer und Schriftsteller sollen hierbleiben, solange sie können – womit er zeigte, in welche Kategorie von Lebenshelfern er sich, uns *auch* einordnete. (HA, 57)

Wolf clearly saw her particular role as a critical GDR writer as that of looking after the ‘seelisch geistige Wohl’ of her compatriots.³³⁶ She felt a particular responsibility and moral duty to stay in the country and to attempt to publish what she could under the existing conditions of censorship and surveillance. In this respect, Wolf’s comments echo the important aspect raised by Königsdorf in the latter’s defence of Wolf in the ‘Literaturstreit’: that of sharing with GDR readers the ‘Leidensdruck [...] die Differenz zwischen Traum und Wirklichkeit [der Utopie]’ (Chapter One, 35-36) which resulted from the shattered illusions.

Furthermore, when Wolf identifies the responsibilities Fühmann took upon himself as ‘Pflichten der Verteidigung von zu Unrecht Angegriffenen; die Fürsprache für Hilfesuchende; der Ermutigung anderer Autoren, die ihn mit Manuskripten überhäufte’ (HA, 57), she pinpoints aspects that are also true of herself. For example, *Was bleibt* contains the real life instance of Gabriele Kachold, who had been expelled from university and spent a year in prison because she had signed the petition against Biermann’s expatriation, visiting

³³⁶ ‘Schreiben als Lebensäußerung. Gespräch mit Herlinde Koelbl’, *Christa Wolf: Werke 12*, 596.

Wolf at home to seek her advice on a manuscript.³³⁷

Wolf's recollections of Fühmann as a critical GDR writer appear to mirror the 'wunden Punkte' in her own life and experience. When she singles him out as 'ein Mensch der andauernden und gründlichen Selbst-Prüfung, eine Anstrengung, die ihn gleichzeitig verzehrte und zum Schreiben trieb' (HA, 51), she sums up the demands she sets herself as a writer. When she highlights his conviction 'daß ein Schreibender zuerst mit sich selbst ehrlich sein müsse, daß er anders kein Recht hätte, an Leser heranzutreten' (HA, 51), these sentiments echo her own demands for 'innere Authentizität', for 'Echtheit, Glaubwürdigkeit', (DA, 779). The prose text 'Im Stein', to be analysed next, represents a striking example of 'subjektive Authentizität'.

'Im Stein' and 'subjektive Authentizität'

This more experimental text bears the hallmarks of Wolf's narrative method of 'subjektive Authentizität'. At another level, however, the text can be read as a metaphor for coming to terms with the past on a personal level. The title itself captures the narrator's sense of being trapped within her own mind and evokes an image used in *Was bleibt*, where the narrator is described as being imprisoned within her mind by a 'Horizont aus Stein' (WB, 69). In 'Im Stein' this sense of entrapment is reinforced by physical confinement to a hospital.

The storyline is based on reflections by a first person narrator who is undergoing a hip operation under local anaesthetic – a clear instance of Wolf's translation of a personal experience into prose as she had to undergo a similar

³³⁷ See Magenau, op.cit., 318. Other instances include Wolf passing on the proceeds of the GDR's national prize in 1987 to colleagues who needed the money and, in 1989, her financial support of Gert Neumann who was not allowed to publish. See Magenau 354 and 367.

operation in November 1994 (also under local anaesthetic).³³⁸ These reflections are triggered by observation of circumstances surrounding the narrator's operation and prompt sudden, seemingly unconnected thoughts. The disorientating effect this has on the reader is heightened by the absence not only of external points of reference but also of temporal orientation. Not surprisingly given the setting, reflections on the word '*Schmerzen*' prevail; yet it is the existential dimension that is highlighted rather than any physical manifestation of pain.

Similar to the prose text 'Nagelprobe' contained in *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou*, and discussed in Chapter Two, there are images of intimidation and violence as well as allusions to sacrifice and martyrdom by way of extracts from literature and the Bible, with the extracts highlighted in italics. These images are linked by association with the word 'Stein' which serves as a leitmotif. Yet, in contrast to 'Nagelprobe', the two-dimensional aspect of these images is emphasised. For instance, the narrator recalls traditional children's stories that involve stones, in both their constructive and destructive uses. Similarly, in her references to the mythical figures of Prometheus, Andromeda, Sisyphus and, above all, Medusa and Medea, the narrator stresses both the ambivalent nature of these mythical figures and the need to penetrate the surface appearance of events. Medusa, once a beautiful maiden, was turned into a monster because she dared to vie with Athena in beauty. Medusa's head was cut off by Perseus so that her glance would not turn him into stone and thus entrap him. Medea too is portrayed by Wolf as both victim and culprit:

³³⁸ See Peter Böhig, *Christa Wolf. Eine Biographie in Bildern und Texten*, Munich: Luchterhand, 2004, 176.

Medea die um der Liebe willen/ um der Liebe willen?/ dem Jason den Stein in die Hand gibt den er unter die Krieger werfen muß die aus der Drachensaat aufgestanden sind damit sie sich untereinander töten und er Jason den Drachen/ die Drachin besiegen kann (HA, 91-92)

As well as reflections on the word 'Schmerzen', meditations on the word 'Schuld' are prominent, vividly captured in the biblical reference: *Wer unter euch ohne Schuld ist der werfe den ersten Stein* (HA, 92).³³⁹ As in the biblical story of the adulteress in the gospel according to St. John, from which the reference is taken, the word 'Schuld' is used on the level of culpability for personal deeds. The implication is that coming to terms with one's guilt should be considered a personal matter rather than one for public judgement.

As far as a thematic link to her earlier works is concerned, the opening of 'Im Stein' is reminiscent of Wolf's 1963 novel *Der geteilte Himmel*, where the narrator is also in hospital after having lost consciousness in a near-death encounter and is dwelling on her situation. However, in terms of form, the beginning of 'Im Stein' echoes that of her 1965 prose text 'Juninachmittag', where Wolf expressed her doubts about a narrative being something 'Festes, Greifbares, wie ein Topf mit zwei Henkeln, zum Anfassen und zum Daraustrinken'.³⁴⁰ In 'Im Stein' Wolf further develops her distinctive associative style of writing in an experimental mode by omitting punctuation marks, thus emphasising the fluidity of her thoughts. Fragments of thought follow one

³³⁹ The reference is derived from the standard German translation of the Bible and taken from the gospel according to St. John, 8,7 which reads: *Wer unter euch ohne Sünde ist, der werfe den ersten Stein*. The original Greek version of the bible uses the adjective 'amemptos', meaning faultless, without guilt or without sin. The differences in the translation of 'amemptos' can be explained by the theology which underpins it. Essentially, Wolf remains faithful to the gospel's message which is: whoever is without guilt, sin or fault, is the only one who has the moral right to judge others and, as one might deduce, because that person does not exist, nobody has the right to do so.

³⁴⁰ Christa Wolf, *Gesammelte Erzählungen*, Munich: Luchterhand, 1980, 42, henceforth referred to as GE.

another by way of association, reinforcing the narrator's and, one might add, the reader's sense of disorientation, although it could be argued that the use of capital letters at the start of new sentences does provide some 'Orientierung'. Wolf is evidently looking for new directions for her language and deploys a manner of self-questioning that draws in the reader whilst simultaneously directing attention to her own process of writing, to which she made explicit reference in the 1973 interview with Hans Kaufmann when she remarked that 'der Erzähler den Denk- und Lebensprozeß, in dem er steht, fast ungemildert [...] im Arbeitsprozeß mit zur Sprache [bringt]' (DA, 778).

'Im Stein' begins with the request addressed to herself by the narrator, who is also a writer, not to begin at the beginning as if the ending was unknown. This suggests that Wolf is reflecting on her own situation, that of a new beginning as a writer in unified Germany. She is drawing attention to the writing process. The narrator is reproaching herself here for not anticipating the demise of the GDR, something which she could not realistically have predicted. At the same time, in a figurative sense, she is awakening to the realisation of having adhered too long to misguided ideals³⁴¹ when she asks herself:

Ein Erwachen Aber vielleicht sollte ich damit nicht anfangen, frage ich dich, nicht jedesmal wieder mit dem Anfang anfangen, das heißt so tun als wüßte ich das Ende nicht oder als könnte ich mir immer noch einmal etwas aus der Lebensmasse/ Stoffmasse herausschneiden, das mit Anfang beginnt und mit Ende endet, das heißt genau genommen die Täuschung weitertreiben, aber vermiede ich denn die Täuschung, frage ich mich, wenn ich mit dem Ende anfinde, was hieße so tun als gebe es ein Ende solange ich lebe, als hätte ich mir nicht seit längerem klargemacht, daß alle die Buchstabenenden in allen den Büchern künstliche Abbrüche sind [...]. (HA, 81)

The narrator of 'Im Stein' wants to remember events in the past, but her

³⁴¹ Wolf is repeating sentiments she expressed in the prose text 'Begegnungen Third Street'.

memory is failing under the influence of heavy medication. The remembering of personal history constitutes an existential aspect in Wolf's writing, as does the functioning of human memory, which is a recurrent theme in *Kindheitsmuster* where she sought to overcome the process of repressing memory. As discussed in Chapter One, what was particularly controversial about Wolf's Stasi revelations was her own admission that she had forgotten the most incriminating details, 'die entscheidenden Erinnerungen' (T, 259), namely that she had a cover-name and that she had submitted a hand-written report, yet was able to recollect her feelings during the meetings with the Stasi ('ein tiefes Unbehagen',³⁴² 'ein Gefühl von Bedrohung'³⁴³). The narrator of 'Im Stein' cannot recall the name of the insect that had tormented her in the night but can describe its appearance down to the last detail. Furthermore, the narrator reluctantly signs a document agreeing to the local anaesthetic, followed by reflections on how one's memory can be deceived under its influence as well as how the phenomenon of forgetfulness might be explained:

Sie haben mein Gehirn überlistet Sie haben ihm eine Erinnerung an einen Augenblick aufgezwängt der längst vorüber ist [...]. So mag das meiste was ich gelesen und meinem Gehirn eingespeichert habe/ auf die Umlaufbahnen in meinem Gehirn gebracht habe/ schlicht und einfach falsch sein abgenützt wie die Gelenke verbraucht. (HA, 86)

The mention of the signing of the document serves, I suggest, to locate the relevance of the narrator's remarks in time, and to address the theme of her early involvement with the Stasi by association rather than by direct reference.

In *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou*, Wolf had captured the effects on her of

³⁴² "'Auf mir bestehen". Christa Wolf im Gespräch mit Günter Gaus', in A, 254.

³⁴³ "'Margarete in Santa Monica". Interview Christa Wolf mit Fritz-Jochen Kopka', *Woche*, 28.1.93. Reprinted in A, 165.

forgetting specific aspects of the Stasi episode as 'Vivisektion' (T, 259). The graphic image she now utilises is '[e]in Stück Fleisch auf der Schlachtbank' (HA, 85), yet she hints at the possibility of having resolved this conflict situation in her own mind when she asks herself: 'Und wie mag es kommen daß mir das zunehmend gleichgültig wird/ das Alter?/ daß mir die Berichtigungs- und Beschwichtigungsversuche zunehmend lästig werden' (HA, 86). There are parallels with her prose text 'Juninachmittag', at the end of which the narrator states: 'Ich wollte nichts sehen und nichts hören' (GE, 64), implying that she did not want to write any more. Yet she continued to do so. With reference to a discussion of 'Juninachmittag', Andrew Hollis argues that the process of crisis resolution was the focus at the end of 'Juninachmittag'.³⁴⁴ This also applies to 'Im Stein', reinforcing the general impression that, for Wolf, writing about a conflict situation serves the therapeutic purpose of coming to terms with it. Yet what remains is the overwhelming feeling: 'Leben bedeutet Schmerz Aber das weiß ich doch schon lange, dachte ich, erinnere ich mich' (HA, 96).

There is an increasingly informed awareness that Wolf's life as a writer is inextricably bound up with suffering, and this recognition provides the perspective for tracing the source of the 'Schmerz' from which 'Im Stein' is written. When in the last line of 'Im Stein' she asks herself the question 'Soll ich damit aufhören Mit erwachen anfangen und mit schlafen aufhören und so den Kreis schließen' (HA, 96), she no longer feels trapped. The reiteration of words from the opening lines suggests that Wolf has overcome her sense of

³⁴⁴ See Andrew Hollis, 'Timelessness and the Game: Christa Wolf's *Juninachmittag* and Joachim Walther's *Wochenende im Grünen*', *New German Studies*, volume 7, 1979, 145-167, here 152.

disorientation as a writer in unified Germany as well as her creative block. The very fact that she published *Hierzulande Andernorts* demonstrates that she has regained her voice as a writer in post-unification Germany, including writing about painful experiences. Indeed, the titles of two pieces in the collection – ‘Verwundet’, Wolf’s interpretation of a painting by the artist Frieda Kahlo depicting the ‘Hetzjagd’ (HA, 42) of a deer, and ‘Der Worte Wunden bluten heute nur nach innen’, the tribute to Stephan Hermlin – are replete with words associated with pain. Yet this preoccupation with ‘Schmerz’ is not confined to *Hierzulande Andernorts* but continues in her 2002 prose text *Leibhaftig*,³⁴⁵ where Wolf expresses the sentiment that creative talent is linked to suffering in the following terms: ‘Das Talent selbst – war es nicht Schmerz?’ (L, 46).

Conclusion

The theme of ‘Vergangenheitsbewältigung’, overcoming the past of National Socialism and, above all, that of the GDR, permeates the pieces in *Hierzulande Andernorts*, and is particularly evident in the prose piece ‘Begegnungen Third Street’ and the speeches dedicated to Franz Fühmann. Hence, these texts can be interpreted as part of Wolf’s contribution to the ‘Aufklärung’ discourse in the 1990s. In the collection, reflections on the past are also inextricably linked to an exploration of the notion of guilt, both in the context of socialist biographies of Wolf’s generation – ‘die mittlere Generation der DDR’ – and their experience of the GDR. This chapter has shown that Wolf’s treatment of the theme of ‘Vergangenheitsbewältigung’ is evidence of her continued commitment to *littérature engagée*, and is given renewed urgency in the light of a unified

³⁴⁵ Christa Wolf, *Leibhaftig*, Munich: Luchterhand, 2002, henceforth referred to as L.

Germany. In a discussion on *Kindheitsmuster* in 1975, Wolf asserted that 'Gegenwart ist ja nicht nur, was heute passiert. Das wäre ein sehr enger Begriff der Gegenwart. Gegenwart ist alles, was uns treibt, zum Beispiel heute so zu handeln oder nicht zu handeln, wie wir es tun oder lassen'.³⁴⁶ Her discussion of the theme of Germany's past in *Hierzulande Andernorts* needs to be considered as part of an attempt to advance the process of 'Vergangenheitsbewältigung' in a unified Germany. In spite of the 'Anfechtungen und Anfeindungen' (HA, 180) she experienced in the 'Literaturstreit', particularly from Ulrich Greiner³⁴⁷ whose review of *Was bleibt* scorned the network of agonised reflection and self-questioning, she engages with the theme of 'Vergangenheitsbewältigung'.

As was the case in *Was bleibt*, *Hierzulande Andernorts* concludes with an open question:

Aber die Geschichte ist nicht zu Ende. Und sind nicht von jeher Menschen, die mit dem Sinnverlust, den sie verspüren, nicht mehr leben wollen oder können, Urheber großer Veränderungen geworden? Ich ende nicht mit Gewißheit, ich ende mit einer Frage. (HA, 219)

In *Leibhaftig*, to be discussed in Chapter Five, Wolf continues the quest for 'Sinn' as well as for the 'Spur der Schmerzen' (L, 184) by once again looking back at the history of the GDR and her own experience as an East German writer. Equally importantly, *Leibhaftig* continues her reflections on the theme of personal guilt in the context of the demise of the GDR. *Medea*. *Stimmen*, to be discussed in the next chapter, also explores the theme of guilt but this time through the depiction of a mythical figure in an ancient setting.

³⁴⁶ 'Erfahrungsmuster. Diskussion zu *Kindheitsmuster*', *Christa Wolf: Werke* 8, 33.

³⁴⁷ Greiner, *Die Zeit*, 1.6.1990.

CHAPTER FOUR: *Medea. Stimmen* – ‘Gegenwartsbewältigung’ through ‘Vergangenheitsbewältigung’?

Introduction and reviews

The publication of *Medea. Stimmen*³⁴⁸ in 1996 marked, as Paul mentions, Wolf's 're-emergence as a novelist'.³⁴⁹ In the narrative of the ancient story of 'Medea', with Wolf keeping close to the storyline itself, there may appear to be no links with the 'deutsch-deutscher Literaturstreit' of 1990 or the 1993 controversy. However, an important theme in Wolf's novel is Medea's discovery of an unpalatable truth: 'Die Stadt [Korinth] ist auf eine Untat gegründet' (MS, 23). Yet in Wolf's reworking of the ancient myth this 'Untat' is an issue Medea herself is not willing to talk about, much as Wolf herself did not discuss problems in the GDR openly in her literary work. As her critics in the 'Literaturstreit' observed, Wolf opted for a subtle, between-the-lines style to express any criticism of the SED regime.

As discussed in Chapter One, in the opening shots of the 'Literaturstreit' Wolf was accused by Greiner and Schirmacher of not having been 'truthful' enough about the SED regime. In the 1993 media furore, accusations about not having been truthful about her early involvement with the Stasi reinforced the issue of her culpability. However, in Wolf's re-interpretation of the ancient myth the protagonist Medea is silenced once she discovers the unpalatable truth. This does not fit with Wolf's own experience, only with that of the re-worked Medea. Hence there are superficial allegorical elements in the stories of Wolf and Medea, but the main theme linking both stories is that of victimisation.

³⁴⁸ Christa Wolf, *Medea. Stimmen*, Munich: Luchterhand, 1996, henceforth referred to as MS.

³⁴⁹ Paul, 'Christa Wolf's *Medea. Stimmen (Medea. A Modern Retelling)*', op.cit., 64.

Indeed the scapegoat theme is at the heart of *Medea. Stimmen*.

In her re-interpretation of the ancient myth, Wolf also returns to a recurrent theme in her prose: that of going back to the past in order to confront unresolved issues in the present, a theme which is of course integral to Wolf's narrative concept of 'subjektive Authentizität'. The allegorical treatment of the societies in the East and the West suggests that Wolf is continuing the theme of 'Vergangenheitsbewältigung' in a post-unification context. The occasional allusions to life in the two Germanies, pre- and post-unification, is the second respect in which Wolf's novel is about the 'Literaturstreit', the first being the presentation of Medea as a victim.

When the novel appeared, critics tended to view it merely as an East-West allegory³⁵⁰ from the perspective of a writer whose reservations, at the time of the 'Wende', about the option of unification with West Germany were well-known through her appeal 'Für unser Land' of 28th November 1989.³⁵¹ Volker Hage, for example, suggested that Wolf had set 'die Orte Kolchis und Korinth in Analogie zum ehemals sozialistischen Osten einerseits und dem kapitalistischen Westen andererseits'.³⁵² Sigrid Löffler described the novel as an 'Ost-West-Roman und Wende-Text',³⁵³ whilst Jens Balzer summed up the text in polemic terms as '[e]in Ost-West-Drama [...] wie aus dem Lehrbuch'.³⁵⁴ Even

³⁵⁰ For an overview of and comments on reviews written in German, see the contributions by Eva Kaufmann, 'Stimmen um *Medea*', *Die Frau in unserer Zeit*, 3, 1996, 35-40; and Jürgen Krätzer, 'Das Cassandra-Syndrom. *Medea*: Stimmen und Gegenstimmen', *Die Horen*, 2, 1997, 48-59.

³⁵¹ See Chapter One for comments on the public appeal 'Für unser Land', 21-22.

³⁵² Volker Hage, 'Kein Mord, nirgends. Ein Angriff auf die Macht und die Männer: Christa Wolfs Schlüsselroman *Medea*', *Der Spiegel* [9], 26.2.1996, 202-206, here 202.

³⁵³ Sigrid Löffler, 'Medea des Ostens. In ihrem neuen Roman "Medea Stimmen" [*sic*] adaptierte Christa Wolf erneut einen antiken Mythos – mit durchsichtigen Mitteln und in eigener Sache', *Falter*, 9, 1996, 59-71, here 59.

³⁵⁴ Jens Balzer, 'Tobt nicht, rast nicht, flucht nicht. Die Königin ist nicht Täterin, sondern reines Opfer: Christa Wolf gibt *Medea. Stimmen*', *Die Zeit*, 23.2.1996.

Manfred Fuhrmann, who takes issue with an allegorical reading of the novel and focuses on Wolf's interpretation of the Medea myth, entitled his review 'Honecker heißt jetzt Aietes'.³⁵⁵ Wolf's portrayal of King Aietes of Colchis certainly invites comparisons with leaders of Eastern regimes during the Cold War era: their craving to hang on to power and their disregard for the next generation. Yet craving for power and disregard for the younger generation are also characteristic of the reign of King Creon of Corinth at the western end of the axis. Furthermore, both regimes conceal a murder committed to maintain the continuing rule of the respective incumbent.

This chapter will demonstrate that a reading of *Medea. Stimmen* as an East-West allegory is superficial. In an interview in 1997, Wolf dismissed the notion of reading her novel as an East-West allegory when she argued:

Diese Deutung [eine Umsetzung des Verhältnisses BRD-DDR] ist sehr oberflächlich. [...] Dazu muß ich mich nicht lange mit einer Figur wie Medea beschäftigen oder mit vorgeschichtlichen Mythen oder urgeschichtlichen Tatsachen, soweit wir sie kennen.³⁵⁶

According to Wolf, therefore, the experience of 'Medea' is intended to carry much broader significance, even though allusions to East and West Germany cannot be overlooked. These run through the novel by way of metaphors, as exemplified by the disparity between the 'Prachtentfaltung' (MS, 91) in 'König Kreons schimmernder Stadt Korinth' (MS, 16) and the 'düstere[n] Kolchis' (MS, 46) with King Aietes in his 'Palast [...] aus Holz' (MS, 47). At the same time, Corinth's class-based society – 'besessen von der Gier nach Gold' (MS, 35) in

³⁵⁵ See Manfred Fuhrmann, 'Honecker heißt jetzt Aietes. Aber Medea wird verteufelt human. Christa Wolf schreibt den Mythos neu', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 2.3.1996.

³⁵⁶ 'Gespräch nach der *Medea*-Lesung im Frauen Museum in Bonn am 23. Februar 1997', in Marianne Hochgeschurz (ed.), *Christa Wolfs Medea: Voraussetzungen zu einem Text*, Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 2000 (first printed Berlin: Janus, 1998), 90.

which each citizen is valued 'nach der Menge des Goldes, die er besitzt' (MS, 35) – conveys a picture of ruthless capitalism, in contrast to the vision of a more egalitarian, almost utopian society which sustained Colchis, 'bewohnt von Menschen, die in Eintracht miteinander lebten und unter denen der Besitz so gleichmäßig verteilt war, daß keiner den anderen beneidete' (MS, 91). The contrast between the Colchian and Corinthian societies invites comparisons with the societies of East and West Germany. However, I will argue in this chapter that, whilst allusions to East-West disparities cannot be ignored, critical attention should be directed towards Wolf's understanding of and approach to the Medea myth as well as to her interpretation of German history.

This analysis of *Medea. Stimmen* will firstly elaborate on Wolf's understanding of the ancient myth of 'Medea', its importance to her personally, and her motives for re-working it. Secondly, the significance of Wolf's choice of a polyphonic narrative structure ('*Stimmen*') will be discussed as well as her treatment of the aspect of victimisation. Thirdly, I shall turn my attention to Wolf's treatment of the theme of the German past.

'Medea': old and new

Wolf had ventured into mythological territory once before in her *Kassandra* project (1983),³⁵⁷ which is a reinterpretation of the myth of the fall of Troy as narrated in Homer's *Illiad* from the new perspective of the Trojan seer Cassandra. In *Medea. Stimmen* as in *Kassandra*, the present in which Wolf is writing forms the starting point for an exploration of mythical material. Whereas

³⁵⁷ For a discussion of continuities and differences between *Kassandra* and *Medea. Stimmen*, see Georgina Paul, 'Schwierigkeiten mit der Dialektik: Zu Christa Wolfs *Medea. Stimmen*', *German Life and Letters*, 50, 1997 [2], 227-240; and Helen Bridge, 'Christa Wolf's *Kassandra* and *Medea*: Continuity and change', *German Life and Letters*, 57, 2004 [1], 33-43.

a particularly tense period in the Cold War nuclear arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union, marked by the stationing of a new generation of medium-range nuclear missiles on West German soil, provided the stimulus for *Kassandra*, in the case of *Medea. Stimmen* it was the political upheaval caused by German unification. Wolf stresses the origins of her *Kassandra* project in the volume *Voraussetzungen einer Erzählung: Kassandra*,³⁵⁸ which comprises her Frankfurt lectures on poetics, the so-called *Frankfurter Poetikvorlesungen*. The genesis of the 'Medea' project is similarly highlighted in the collection *Christa Wolfs Medea. Voraussetzungen zu einem Text*,³⁵⁹ consisting of Wolf's diary entries, exchanges of letters with scholars, notes for a manuscript, interviews, her essay 'Von Kassandra zu Medea', as well as essays by literary scholars on the Medea theme and on *Medea. Stimmen*. The collection draws attention to the influence of the traditional picture of Medea, as fashioned by Euripides in his drama of 431 BC, on representations of this mythical figure in Western literature.³⁶⁰ As the collection also illustrates, Wolf's interpretation of the Medea story, which is distinctively different from the classical version bequeathed by Euripides, is based on her extensive study of the 'mythologischen Quellen [...] über den Verlauf von Medeas Schicksal' (VM, 97).

In Wolf's novel as in Euripides's drama, Medea is the daughter of the King of Colchis and also a priestess and healer. Through her knowledge of

³⁵⁸ Christa Wolf, *Voraussetzungen einer Erzählung: Kassandra*. Darmstadt and Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1983, henceforth referred to as VK.

³⁵⁹ Marianne Hochgeschurz (ed.), *Christa Wolfs Medea. Voraussetzungen zu einem Text*, Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 2000 (first printed Berlin: Janus, 1998), henceforth referred to as VM.

³⁶⁰ See in particular Christa Wolf, 'Von Kassandra zu Medea', in Hochgeschurz, op.cit., 22; 'Warum Medea? Christa Wolf im Gespräch mit Petra Kammann am 25.1.1996', in Hochgeschurz, op.cit., 78; and Anna Chiarloni, 'Medea und ihre Interpreten', in Hochgeschurz, op.cit., 174-176.

magic, she assists Jason, leader of the Argonauts, in retrieving the Golden Fleece, accompanies him to Corinth and, having been abandoned by Jason in his pursuit of an advantageous marriage to the daughter of the King of Corinth, is expelled from Corinth by King Creon. However, the storyline of Wolf's *Medea Stimmen* differs from the Euripidean version in a number of significant respects. Firstly, Medea's decision to turn against her own father, King Aietes, in assisting Jason to retrieve the Golden Fleece is not motivated by her passion for Jason; rather, Jason provides an opportune escape route from Colchis, after her collusion with a group of citizens to end her father's reign ends in vain and with her brother's murder. Secondly, Medea, rather than being fixated on Jason to the end, frees herself of any attachment to him. Thirdly, she does not murder her own brother Absyrtos, who is killed at the command of her father as a result of Aietes' craving for power. Fourthly, Medea is innocent of the death of Creon's daughter and Jason's new wife-to-be, Glauke; rather than dying as a consequence of wearing the poisoned wedding dress given to her as a present by a jealous Medea, Glauke drowns herself in a well in her own father's palace. Finally, and most importantly, Medea does not kill her own children in an act of revenge against her husband Jason for his unfaithfulness with Glauke. Instead, once she is sentenced to leave Corinth, she entrusts her two sons to priestesses in the sanctuary of Hera from where they are taken by the Corinthian mob and stoned to death. Thus Medea is presented in *Medea Stimmen* as someone who kills no-one, a 'Zauberin' (MS, 99) who only uses her herbal expertise for healing and as a 'Königstochter' (MS, 17) who helps Jason to retrieve the Golden Fleece for the very best of motives, namely to reinstate

him in his rightful position on the throne of Jolkos which had been usurped by his uncle, even though, in the event, Jason and Medea are forced to seek asylum in Corinth.³⁶¹ In her own succinct summary of the differences between her story and the Euripidean version, Wolf comments:

Woran ich mich gehalten habe, ist der Ablauf von Medeas Lebensstationen. Was ich aber von Grund auf neu überlegt habe, sind die Motive ihrer Handlungen.³⁶²

However, it is not so much Medea's motives for her actions that will be considered here, but Wolf's own motives for what amounts to a radical re-interpretation of the Medea myth, above all 'acquitting' Medea of infanticide, as infanticide constitutes the centrepiece of the traditional myth.³⁶³ A closer look at the gestation of Wolf's *Medea. Stimmen* will shed light on these motives.

The genesis of the 'Medea' project can be traced back to the early 1990s. Diary entries from 1991 and 1992,³⁶⁴ exchanges of letters with scholars³⁶⁵ and later interviews,³⁶⁶ all record Wolf's preoccupation with the Medea myth long before notes for a manuscript emerged.³⁶⁷ In her diary entry for September 1992, Wolf notes that Euripides apparently needed 'für das

³⁶¹ For a discussion of the relationship between Wolf's *Medea. Stimmen* and Euripides' *Medea*, see Liliana Mitrache, 'Von Euripides zu Christa Wolf. Die Wiederbelebung des Mythos in "Medea. Stimmen"', *Studia Neophilologica*, 74:2, 2002, 207-214; Michael Scheffel, 'Vom Mythos gezeichnet? Medea zwischen "Sexus" und "Gender" bei Euripides, Franz Grillparzer und Christa Wolf', *Wirkendes Wort*, 53:2, 2003, 295-307; Ernst-Richard Schwinge, 'Medea bei Euripides und Christa Wolf', *Poetica*, 35:3/4, 2003, 275-305; and Birgit Roser, *Mythenbehandlung und Kompositionstechnik in Christa Wolfs Medea. Stimmen, Münchener Studien zur literarischen Kultur in Deutschland*, 32, Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 2000).

³⁶² 'Sind Sie noch eine Leitfigur, Frau Wolf?', *Tagesspiegel*, 30.4.1996.

³⁶³ Critics' dismissal of Wolf's *Medea. Stimmen* was to some extent linked to Wolf's 'Medea' not conforming to the classic picture of the murderer of her own children. See, for instance, Balzer and Hage, op cit; Elmar Krekeler, 'Der Mythenstammtisch im Frauencafé', *Die Welt*, 2.3.1996.

³⁶⁴ See Hochgeschurz, op.cit., 25-26 and 57-60; 'Santa Monica, Sonntag, den 27. September 1992', in *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou*, 232-247.

³⁶⁵ See Hochgeschurz, op.cit., 27-49.

³⁶⁶ Ibid, 'Warum Medea? Christa Wolf im Gespräch mit Petra Kammann am 25.1.1996', 75-89; *Tagesspiegel*, op. cit.

³⁶⁷ For details of notes for a manuscript beginning 1st February 1993, see Hochgeschurz, op cit., 61-74.

Unmaß an Haß, das ihr [Medea] durch die Jahrhunderte folgt, ein starkes Motiv' (T, 244) and that he therefore accused Medea of murdering her own children. A discussion of Wolf's motives therefore needs to take into account Euripides' possible motives too.

In the course of her research Wolf discovered pre-Euripidean versions of the story, which ascribe the death of the children to the citizens of Corinth and also contain the rumour – improbable as it seemed to her – that Euripides had accepted a Corinthian bribe to transfer the deed in his play to Medea.³⁶⁸ Reflections on Euripides's motives for 'eine Umdeutung der alten, gewiß bruchstückhaft überlieferten Sachverhalte' led Wolf to speculate that his 'Umdeutung' might be related to the inability '[der] patriarchalen frühen Griechen [...] eine andere als ihre Gedanken- und Gefühlswelt [zu] begreifen und als "wild" ab[zu]qualifizieren'.³⁶⁹ It is possible that Wolf's experience of life in early post-unification Germany, and the disparities between the two different societies, prompted this speculation. Wolf's assessment of pre-Euripidean versions of the story influenced her decision, in her reworking of the myth, to expose the ideological function of the traditional picture of Medea derived from Euripides. Wolf concludes that she herself would need to deconstruct the myth in order to explain this extraordinary sense of hatred for a woman like Medea: 'die Göttin, die Heilende, auch durch Imagination Heilende, [...] verleumdet, verfolgt, verfemt' (T, 244). The choice of the phrase 'durch Imagination Heilende' may, I suggest, be read as an explicit reference to Wolf's position as a writer.

³⁶⁸ See Hochgeschurz, *op cit.*, 32.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 34.

In Medea's story of an outsider figure in Corinth who becomes the victim of a propaganda campaign, Wolf doubtless saw parallels with her own experience of being under attack in the West German media in the period from 1990 to 1993. Through this mythical figure, Wolf imparts her own experience of a 'Frontalangriff' and 'Kampagne'.³⁷⁰ Wolf may be viewed here as a writer who, to use the words of Alicia Ostriker, 'deconstructs a prior "myth" or "story" and constructs a new one which includes rather than excludes herself'.³⁷¹

Evidence which supports this proposition can be found in Wolf's 1996 interview with *Tagesspiegel*. When asked whether the process of writing *Medea. Stimmen* had helped her to work through the personal crisis brought about by the literary controversy, she replied '[d]as stimmt. Wobei ein Teil der "Überwindung" natürlich der Prozeß der Entstehung des Buches ist'.³⁷² This admission suggests that Wolf's intense study of a mythical figure falsely accused of the crimes of betraying her own father and multiple murder helped her to come to terms with her own experience of having been falsely accused in the 'Literaturstreit'. Similarly Wolf's approach to revisionary mythmaking needs to be seen in the context of her notion of writing as therapy, in the sense of drawing on her own experience which informs her version of the Medea 'story', rather than 'Medea' being a carbon copy of Wolf, so that she can leave behind a painful episode in her own past. This aspect of confronting particularly painful moments in her own life as a prerequisite for the process of healing is, of course, an integral part of Wolf's narrative concept of 'subjektive Authentizität'.

³⁷⁰ See footnote 118.

³⁷¹ Alicia Ostriker, 'The Thieves of Language: Women Poets and revisionist Mythmaking', *Signs*, volume 8, No 1, 1982, 68-90, here 72.

³⁷² *Tagesspiegel*, 30.4.1996.

In Wolf's case, accusations were levelled at her in the course of the 'Literaturstreit' for 'crimes' almost opposite to those of which Medea was accused: complicity with a repressive regime rather than its betrayal, and remaining in her home country of the GDR rather than emigrating to the West. In her reworking of the ancient myth, however, Wolf had to stick to Medea's 'Lebensstationen'.

Wolf's selection of a female mythical figure is not coincidental. The *Voraussetzungen einer Erzählung: Cassandra* testifies to her spirit of feminism when she says: 'Wenige, sehr wenige Stimmen von Frauen dringen zu uns, seit um 600 vor unserer Zeitrechnung Sappho sang' (VK, 146). Like *Cassandra* her re-vision of Medea can be interpreted as a reincarnation, for as in *Cassandra* Wolf depetrifies the 'living' memory of a mythical woman:

Das lebendige Gedächtnis wird der Frau entwunden, ein Bild, das andere von ihr sich machen, wird ihr untergeschoben: der entsetzliche Vorgang der Versteinerung, Verdinglichung am lebendigen Leib. (VK, 149)

The aim, therefore, of Wolf's rewriting of the myths of Cassandra and Medea is to counteract this objectification ('Verdinglichung'). At the same time it may be said that the notion of 'ein Bild, das andere von ihr [Christa Wolf] sich machen' preys on Wolf's mind when, in January 1993, revelations break about her involvement with the Stasi as an informer between 1959 and 1962.

It is unlikely to be a coincidence that the first manuscripts for the Medea novel date back precisely to the time of Wolf's Stasi revelations. The manuscript notes are written from the perspective of a first person narrator. Yet in her diary entry for September 1993, Wolf expresses her unwillingness to expose herself again through the publication of a first person fictional narrative, as if, as Tate

observes, 'there were no element of self-protection created by textual mediation'.³⁷³

Wann werde ich, oder werde ich überhaupt je noch einmal ein Buch über eine ferne erfundene Figur schreiben können; ich selbst bin die Protagonistin, es geht nicht anders, ich bin ausgesetzt, habe mich ausgesetzt. (T, 298)³⁷⁴

Wolf's personal experience in the 'Literaturstreit', followed by the media attacks on her after her Stasi revelations, seems to have led her to question the 'validity of the aesthetic demarcation line'³⁷⁵ which she had always preserved between her personal life and her presentation of it as first-person narrative. Tate suggests that Wolf's frame of mind helps to explain her decision, in attempting to overcome this creative block, to adopt a similar mythic perspective to the one she had used in *Kassandra*.³⁷⁶ It is evident that Wolf became increasingly fascinated with the Medea myth during a time of personal crisis. It is therefore arguable that this reinterpretation of the ancient myth might be read as actually being about Wolf, as the following comment from her aforementioned 1996 interview with *Tagesspiegel* suggests:

mich hat dann immer stärker interessiert, was auch bei *Kassandra* ein Movens gewesen ist: die Frage nach den destruktiven Wurzeln unserer Zivilisation, zum Beispiel die nach den Mechanismen der Herstellung eines Sündenbocks.³⁷⁷

Looking back on the gestation of the work, Wolf reiterates the significance of the scapegoat theme in her speech 'Von Kassandra zu Medea' of May 1997, contained in *Hierzulande Andernorts*, where she relates the treatment of this theme to the contemporary context of unified Germany:

³⁷³ Tate, op.cit., 221.

³⁷⁴ Quoted in Tate, ibid.

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

³⁷⁶ See ibid.

³⁷⁷ *Tagesspiegel*, op. cit.

Warum brauchen wir Menschenopfer. Warum brauchen wir immer noch und immer wieder Sündenböcke. In den letzten Jahren, nach der sogenannten 'Wende' in Deutschland, die dazu führte, daß die DDR von der Bühne der Geschichte verschwand, sah ich Grund, über diese Fragen nachzudenken. [...] Ich kannte, wie alle, die ich fragte, die *Medea* des Euripides [...]. Sie [Medea] aber bringt, so erzählt Euripides, rasend vor Eifersucht und gekränktem Stolz, die Königstochter um, dann ihre eigenen Kinder. Das konnte ich nicht glauben. (HA, 165)³⁷⁸

Her research, and also her consultations with scholars,³⁷⁹ led Wolf to confirm her intuitive conviction about Medea: 'die hat ihre Kinder nicht umgebracht' (HA, 12). Wolf's perception of Medea as innocent of the murder of her children is also highlighted in her 1996 interview with Petra Kammann, where it is linked to the author's conviction that a Medea influenced by matriarchal values would be incapable of committing infanticide:

Mir war klar, daß sie [Medea] bei mir keine Kindsmörderin sein könnte – nie hätte eine noch von matriarchalen Werten beeinflusste Frau ihre Kinder umgebracht. Dann fand ich – unterstützt durch Wissenschaftlerinnen – den Zugang zu den frühen Quellen, die meine Ahnung bestätigten. Das war ein freudiger Augenblick. (VM, 79)

In this respect, Wolf's *Medea. Stimmen* offers a critical re-examination of assumptions inherent in the Euripidean version, assumptions reinforced over the centuries in the works of prominent writers and dramatists such as Seneca, Ovid, Corneille, Franz Grillparzer, Jean Anouilh and even Heiner Müller,³⁸⁰ who all provided their own interpretations of the Medea story but never doubted her guilt.

It could be argued, however, that Wolf's method of deconstructing the story and of advocating Medea's 'innocence' is problematic, a point made

³⁷⁸ See also the prose piece 'Begegnungen Third Street' discussed in Chapter Three.

³⁷⁹ See Hochgeschurz, op cit. See, in particular, the exchange of letters with the *Altertums-wissenschaftlerin* (classical archaeologist) Margot Schmidt and the *Matriarchatsforscherin* (specialist researcher into matriarchial structures) Heide Göttner-Abendroth, 27-49.

³⁸⁰ See Hage, *Der Spiegel* [9], 26.2.1996, 202-203.

clearly by Helen Bridge when she refers to the correspondence between Wolf and the classical archaeologist Margot Schmidt, which is reproduced in *Christa Wolfs Medea. Voraussetzungen zu einem Text*.³⁸¹ Bridge notes that, in this correspondence, Schmidt questions both 'Wolf's "archaeological" approach',³⁸² – in other words Wolf's intense study of a prehistoric period – and, closely linked to this approach, her belief in the 'possibility of uncovering an original, authoritative version of the Medea story',³⁸³ which predates the work of all those other dramatists and writers. Wolf's emphasis on deconstructing the myth implies that she claims a unique validity for her interpretation of the story, whereas it could be argued that she is simply adding to the canon of more than three hundred versions of the 'Medea' story in literature, art and music.³⁸⁴ Bridge comments that Wolf's revision leaves her open to the criticism that, just as Euripides had done, she is re-writing Medea's story 'in accordance with her own interests'.³⁸⁵

It could also be argued that Wolf's portrayal of Medea – the 'andere Medea' (VM, 7), to use the term from the preface to *Christa Wolfs Medea. Voraussetzungen zu einem Text* – is not unique. As Ludger Lütkehaus shows in *Mythos Medea. Texte von Euripides bis Christa Wolf*,³⁸⁶ prior to Wolf's re-vision of *Medea*, other German women writers had already depicted a Medea innocent of infanticide: Marie Luise Kaschnitz in the narrative *Die Nacht der*

³⁸¹ See Hochgeschurz, op.cit, 31-43.

³⁸² Bridge, op.cit., 36-37.

³⁸³ Ibid, 37.

³⁸⁴ See Ludger Lütkehaus (ed.), 'Der Medea-Komplex', in *Mythos Medea. Texte von Euripides bis Christa Wolf*, Leipzig: Reclam, 2001, 12.

³⁸⁵ Bridge, op.cit., 37.

³⁸⁶ Lütkehaus, op. cit.

Argo (1943), Anna Seghers in the narrative *Das Argonautenschiff* (1948),³⁸⁷ Elisabeth Langgässer in the novel *Märkische Argonautenfahrt* (1950), Helga Novak – inspired by the feminist movement – in the poem *Brief an Medea* (1977), Ursula Haas in her novel *Freispruch für Medea* (1987),³⁸⁸ and Dagmar Nick in her play *Medea, ein Monolog* (1988).³⁸⁹ Irrespective of the work of her predecessors, it could be asserted that Wolf's 'Freispruch für Medea' constitutes not only the most controversial Medea version of all but, in the words of Lütkehaus, that *Medea. Stimmen* can also be read as 'Christa Wolf's Anti-Euripides'.³⁹⁰ Ernst-Richard Schwinge arrives at a similar conclusion when he states:

denn sie [Medea] verdankt ihre Andersartigkeit zu wesentlichen Teilen gerade der Umstülpung der euripideischen *Medea* ins Gegenteil. Der entscheidende Prätext der Wolfschen *Medea* scheint die des Euripides zu sein.³⁹¹

Some reviewers, as Paul observes, read the Medea figure within the East-West allegory as a 'representation of the author herself as the victim of a concerted media hate-campaign in the post-unification period'.³⁹² Indeed, Wolf's final novel *Stadt der Engel oder The Overcoat of Dr. Freud* (2010), which provides an account of her experiences in California from 1992 to 1993 as a

³⁸⁷ As Wolf wrote the foreword to a biography on Anna Seghers, she was aware of Anna Seghers' narrative; see Frank Wagner, Ursula Emmerich, Ruth Radvanyi (eds.), *Anna Seghers. Eine Biographie in Bildern*, Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau-Verlag, 1994, 6-9.

³⁸⁸ In spite of the title of Ursula Haas' novel *Freispruch für Medea*, the scene where Medea aborts Jason's unborn child links the work to the accusation of murder.

³⁸⁹ See Lütkehaus, op.cit., 340-348; and also Rita Calabrese, 'Von der Stimmlosigkeit zum Wort', in Hochgeschurz, op.cit., 135-144.

³⁹⁰ Ibid, 348.

³⁹¹ Ernst-Schwinge, op.cit., 294.

³⁹² Paul, op.cit., 66. Paul makes reference to the following articles which emphasise this reading of Medea as a self-identificatory figure: Thomas Anz, 'Medea-Opfer eines Rufmords. Christa Wolf's Weiterarbeit am Mythos', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 2./3.3.1996; Frauke Meyer-Gosau, 'Kassiber von drüben. Die DDR aus der Schlüssellochperspektive: der Roman *Medea* von Christa Wolf lädt zum Dechiffrieren und Spekulieren ein', *Die Woche*, 8.3.1996; Volker Hage, op.cit.; Ursula Püschel, "'Ich selbst bin die Protagonistin". Christa Wolf: *Medea. Stimmen*', *Neue deutsche Literatur*, 44, 1996: H2, 134-41. Quoted in Paul, op.cit., 76.

scholar of the Getty Foundation at a time when she was working on *Medea. Stimmen*, sheds light on Wolf's state of depression as a result of the vehemence of the media furore which followed upon the disclosure of her Stasi revelations. The novel also gives some insight into Wolf's reflections on the suggestion expressed by her Californian companions in the text, that 'die gegenwärtigen Ausprägungen des Sündenbock-Rituals' (SE, 328) had been aimed at her because she was a woman. I tend to concur with Paul's assessment that a reading of 'the central portrait of Medea as a self-justificatory portrait'³⁹³ would be rather reductive.³⁹⁴ However, as I will argue in the analysis of the aesthetic narrative form which Wolf adopts in *Medea. Stimmen*, the literary treatment of the aspect of victimisation is central to Wolf's novel.

Medea. Stimmen: a polyphonic narrative

One of the major structural changes, besides changes in the storyline, which Wolf undertakes with respect to Euripides is that of literary form: from dialogue-based drama to polyphonic narrative. At first sight the concept of a plurality of voices might seem to contradict Wolf's method of 'subjektive Authentizität', with its focus on a literary reworking of personal experience. It could be argued, though, that Wolf's exposure to a plurality of 'voices' in the West German press following the publication of *Was bleibt*, reducing her to the object of the discourses of others, constitutes precisely the personal experience which informs Wolf's choice of aesthetic form for her first post-unification novel. *Medea. Stimmen* is different in narrative form from any of Wolf's other works.

³⁹³ Paul, op.cit., 68.

³⁹⁴ See *ibid.*

Speculative though this assumption may be, in the absence of any indication from the author herself, exposure to a diversity of perspectives may well have influenced Wolf's choice of polyphonic narrative.

Wolf introduces six 'voices', three male and three female, in a series of eleven monologues. Each of the 'voices' tells the story from its own perspective, in addition to the narrator of the prologue; hence the novel's title *Medea. Stimmen*. The voices follow in chronological order, covering a time period of three weeks – with the exception of Medea's final monologue which is set seven years later – and make references to past events. They complement each other and propel the story forward to its seemingly inevitable ending, but they do not enter into a dialogue with each other. Three of these voices are familiar from the myth: Medea herself, Jason, and Creon's daughter (unnamed by Euripides, but here given one of her traditional names, Glauke) whose epilepsy Medea is attempting to cure but who commits suicide when Medea is expelled from the city. Three characters are of Wolf's own invention: Agameda (formerly an apprentice healer to Medea at Colchis but who, in Corinth, denounces Medea to the authorities), Akamas (the first astronomer at Corinth and King Creon's advisor who is the main adversary in the conspiracy against Medea), and Leukon (the second astronomer at Corinth and a friend of Medea's).

As Inge Stephan observes, even the epigraphs which precede each of the eleven monologues and which are taken from classical authors (Seneca, Plato, Euripides, Cato) as well as modern writers (Lenk, Bachmann, Girard, Kamper, Cavarero) seem to serve the purpose of broadening the number of

voices and perspectives in the novel. They also highlight central themes and ideas in the monologue they precede.³⁹⁵ Wolf describes the inclusion of epigraphs as 'ein[en] Versuch souverän mit Aussagen umzugehen' and as:

eine Referenz an die alten wie die neuen Autoren, auch ein Hinweis auf die lange Reihe der Vorläufer und Vorläuferinnen und darauf, daß man selbst ein Glied in einer Kette ist.³⁹⁶

For Wolf, as will be illustrated, 'souverän mit Aussagen umzugehen' involves stressing differences between her version of the Medea myth and the interpretations of predecessors, by newly contextualizing the examples she has selected.

Bridge observes that the 'polyphonic narrative form' suggests 'that truth is no longer located within an individual's memories',³⁹⁷ as was the case in *Kassandra*, but 'somewhere between or beyond a number of complementary perspectives',³⁹⁸ each with its own limitations. At the same time, however, Bridge also mentions that in spite of the 'plurality of perspective' created by the different voices, the novel 'actually promotes a single version of events'.³⁹⁹ In their entirety these voices provide a clear understanding of why Medea, 'die Fremde', is in the end again forced into exile. The information and viewpoints

³⁹⁵ See Inge Stephan, *Musen und Medusen. Mythos und Geschlecht in der Literatur im 20. Jahrhundert*, Cologne: Böhlau, 1997, 242-251. Silke Beinssen-Hesse goes one step further in dividing the epigraphs into three categories: authors such as Euripides, Plato, Seneca and Cato who, in her assessment, pushed ahead the denigration of women; those like Ingeborg Bachmann, Adriana Cavarero and Elisabeth Lenk, who represent the feminist project, as well as the social theorists René Girard and Dietmar Kamper, who adopt a critical stance towards the enlightenment project and, as Beinssen-Hesse points out, all utopian projects, including the socialist project associated with Wolf. See Silke Beinssen-Hesse, 'Christa Wolfs *Medea*. Stimmen und die Krise des Opferkults', in Gerhard Fischer and David Roberts (eds.), *Schreiben nach der Wende. Ein Jahrzehnt deutscher Literatur 1989-1999*, Tübingen: Stauffenberg, 2001, 193-206, here 196.

³⁹⁶ 'Warum Medea? Christa Wolf im Gespräch mit Petra Kammann am 25.1.1996', in Hochgeschurz, op. cit., 81.

³⁹⁷ Bridge, op.cit., 35.

³⁹⁸ Ibid.

³⁹⁹ Ibid.

offered by some of the characters 'may be unreliable',⁴⁰⁰ and their motivation for providing the information (good or evil) questionable, but 'their version of events is never in question',⁴⁰¹ nor is the central assumption of Medea's innocence. Through the overriding voice of the author, Medea is exonerated. As will be shown, Medea is not guilty as charged in the Euripidean version, but Wolf uses Medea's process of self-analysis to explore different facets of the issue of guilt, and thus provides further insight into the workings of her narrative concept of 'subjektive Authentizität'.

Not surprisingly given the title of the novel, Medea is not only the most prominent of speakers, delivering four out of the eleven monologues including the opening and closing ones,⁴⁰² but she also remains the focus of everyone else's account. As Bridge emphasises, although most monologues provide a different 'spin' on events, 'we are invited to sympathize primarily with Medea's view'.⁴⁰³ The following analysis will firstly examine Medea's version of the story, and then the information and perspectives provided by the individual voices,⁴⁰⁴ with a view to highlighting the extent to which these voices are deliberately distorting facts about Medea's 'innocence' and, above all, their motivation for doing so. A discussion of the significance of these different voices will also provide insight into Wolf's understanding of completely different individuals.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid, 36.

⁴⁰² For a discussion of the structural arrangements in *Medea. Stimmen*, see Marie-Luise Ehrhardt, *Christa Wolfs Medea. Eine Gestalt auf der Zeitengrenze*, Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2000; and Birgit Roser, *Mythenbehandlung und Kompositionstechnik in Christa Wolfs Medea. Stimmen*, op cit., 59-60.

⁴⁰³ Bridge, op.cit., 36.

⁴⁰⁴ Medea's monologues frame two and three other monologues respectively: Her first monologue is followed by those of the 'immigrants' Jason and Agameda, her second by those of the Corinthians Akamas, Glauke and Leukon and her third by those of Jason and Leukon. All the voices, apart from Medea's, are those of people in positions of power at Corinth (Akamas, Leukon, Glauke) or with access to people in positions of power (Jason and Agameda).

The first three Medea monologues deal with the events in Corinth, starting with Medea's discovery of the bones of Iphinoe – the eldest daughter of King Creon and Queen Merope and the rightful heir to the throne of Corinth, who became the victim of her father's political intrigue to ensure the continuation of patriarchal power structures in Corinth – and ending with the murder of her children by the Corinthian mob. Her final monologue seven years later may be read as a kind of epilogue. In every monologue crucial events in Medea's life emerge, a life which is framed by two murders: the murder of her brother Absyrtos in Colchis and the murder of Iphinoe in Corinth. Significantly, the murder of Iphinoe is not mentioned in the Euripidean version and represents Wolf's addition to the storyline, with events surrounding Iphinoe's murder mirroring those around Absyrtos's murder. Whilst Iphinoe falls victim to King Creon's suppression of attempts by Corinthian dissenters, gathering behind his wife Queen Merope, to re-establish a matriarchal tradition in Corinth, the murder of Absyrtos extinguishes endeavours on the part of the 'Unzufriedenen' (MS, 90) in Colchis to reform patriarchal power structures. As Medea realises:

Sie hatten Korinth retten wollen. Wir hatten Kolchis retten wollen. Und ihr, dieses Mädchen Iphinoe und du, Absyrtos, ihr seid die Opfer. Sie ist mehr deine Schwester, als ich es je sein kann. (MS, 103-104)

We first meet Medea – the 'Königstochter' (MS, 17) and 'Heilerin' (MS, 17), who possesses 'Zauberkräfte' (MS, 19) as well as 'den Zweiten Blick' (MS, 19) – when she has just been expelled from the Palace at Corinth and is in a feverish, disoriented state. As she emerges from this state, she recalls a Colchis 'voller dunkler Geheimnisse' (MS, 16), her departure from Colchis

together with Jason and loyal fellow Colchians, and their arrival as 'Flüchtling[e] in König Kreons schimmernder Stadt Korinth' (MS, 16). Corinth seems without secrets until she discovers the bones of Iphinoe in the subterranean passages underneath the Palace, leading her to realise: 'Die Stadt ist auf eine Untat gegründet' (MS, 23). If there is any allegorical reading intended here it might be Wolf's reference to both German states being based on an 'Untat', that of the Holocaust.

The circumstances surrounding this discovery bring on Medea's fever.⁴⁰⁵ Her dilemma starts when she comprehends that, in terms of the lengths to which each of the respective rulers is prepared to go to safeguard patriarchal power structures, civilised Corinth is no different from the 'barbarisches' Colchis (MS, 42). However, when Medea first uses the word 'Schuld' (MS, 14), she does so with reference to herself rather than by way of allusion to the Colchian and Corinthian regimes. She expresses a sense of personal guilt for having betrayed her father by assisting Jason in retrieving the Golden Fleece:

[...] unsere Kolcher, die mit mir gegangen sind, haben in Jason und mir von Anfang an ein Paar gesehen, es will ihnen nicht in den Schädel, daß ich in meines Vaters Haus nicht mit einem Mann schlafen konnte, der ihn betrog. Mit meiner Hilfe betrog [...] das war doch die Grausamkeit meiner Lage, die mich zerriß, daß ich keinen Schritt machen konnte, der nicht falsch war, keine Handlung, die nicht etwas, was mir teuer war, verriet. Ich weiß, wie die Kolcher mich nach meiner Flucht genannt haben müssen, dafür hat schon mein Vater gesorgt: Verräterin. Das Wort brennt mich immer noch. (MS, 25)

In Wolf's version Medea's decision to leave Colchis results from the recognition that she has no future in her home country: 'Ich bin mit Jason gegangen, weil ich in diesem verlorenen, verdorbenen Kolchis nicht bleiben konnte. Es war

⁴⁰⁵ Illness, as in *Leibhaftig*, can be read psychologically as a figurative escape route in order to withdraw from overwhelming experiences.

eine Flucht' (MS, 95/96). This comment might be read as an implicit reply to those critics who attacked Wolf for not moving to West Germany. Medea leaves Colchis only to be considered a traitor by her own people for so doing.

When Medea notes that her escape with Jason will be widely interpreted as a consequence of female love, Wolf emphasises the importance of hindsight in telling Medea's story:

Dabei hätte mir klar sein müssen, daß auch er sich nur einen einzigen Grund dafür denken konnte, daß ich ihm gegen den eigenen Vater half: Ich mußte ihm, Jason, unrettbar verfallen sein. So sehen es alle, die Korinther sowieso; für die erklärt und entschuldigt die Liebe der Frauen zu einem Mann alles. Aber auch unsere Kolcher, die mit mir gegangen sind, haben in Jason und mir von Anfang an ein Paar gesehen. (MS, 25) [my emphasis, JD]

Hence it is Medea who reflects on the mythological potential in her destiny and becomes a prophet of her own myth; to be precise, a prophet of the traditional myth as laid down largely by Euripides.

As recounted by Wolf's Medea, the motivation for her escape from Colchis is in contrast to the Euripidian interpretation which, in turn, was reinforced by Seneca, whose epigraph precedes Medea's first monologue and includes the statement: 'Alles, was ich begangen habe bis jetzt, nenne ich Liebeswerk' (MS, 12). In both Euripides's and Seneca's versions, Medea's prime motivation for leaving Colchis is love for Jason as an act of 'Liebeswerk'. In her interpretation, Wolf wants to absolve Medea from this claim. Behind the differences in interpretation, Wolf raises the question as to the conditions which may give rise to a myth. This is done by directly addressing the transition from actual event to myth, above all by Medea herself.

In Wolf's novel it is also Medea who introduces the concept of the 'wilde

Frau' – a facet shaped by Euripides – when she refers to herself as 'eine wilde Frau, [die] auf ihrem Kopf besteht' (MS, 18), a trait which could be viewed in a positive light as an attribute of a self-assured individual and a turn of phrase used by Medea to differentiate herself from the Corinthian women who seem to her 'wie sorgfältig gezähmte Haustiere' (MS, 18).

When we first hear Jason's voice, his assessment of Medea seems to reinforce the notion of 'eine wilde Frau', since he associates her with 'Verhängnis' (MS, 39) at a time when he fears for his own position in Corinth. From the outset, though, his reliability as a narrator is called into question when he acknowledges:

irgend etwas muß mir entgangen sein, wie mir so vieles entgeht in der Wirrnis dieses Königshauses [Korinth], in dessen Gewohnheiten ich mich schwer einfügen kann. (MS, 39)

As much as he attempts to see through the 'Nebel, in dem sie [ihn] heruntappen lassen' (MS, 58), he constantly finds himself referring to the judgements and statements of others, above all those of Akamas and King Creon, using comments such as 'Akamas hat recht' (MS, 49) and 'hat also Kreon recht' (MS, 54). The archetypal hero of the traditional myth, as epitomised in the words of Plato which precede Jason's first monologue, is no longer a man of action, but instead Jason is dependent on the decisions and actions of other people, not least King Creon, who sees in him a future son-in-law. Under the manipulative influences of Akamas and Creon, Jason becomes increasingly distrustful of his own 'inner[e] Stimmen, man hat mir dargelegt, daß sie von Medea beeinflußt waren' (MS, 52). His intellectual inferiority, which contrasts with the superior powers of perception of Medea for whom 'alles so

durchsichtig ist, so leicht durchschaubar' (MS, 101), is also reinforced linguistically through Wolf's use of colloquial expressions such as 'wie der letzte Dummbart' (MS, 40), 'wie ein begossener Pudel' (MS, 199), '[w]ir zappelten uns ab' (MS, 47), and 'sie ist ein Mordsweib' (MS, 199) – although the irony is likely to be entirely lost on him as he utters the word 'Mordsweib'.

It is Jason who introduces the aspect in the storyline which relates to speculation about Medea's part in Absyrtos's murder. When challenged by Akamas in the Corinthian Council, Jason does not deny the rumour about Medea having killed her brother. His motives for failing to defend Medea are opportunistic; he does not publicly demonstrate any loyalty towards Medea because he does not want to jeopardise his own chances of self-advancement in Corinth, which offers itself in the prospect of marriage to Glauke. Through his inaction and non-committal stance, he ensures the endurance of the picture of Medea as '[eine] Verräterin' (MS, 26), one who deceived her own father.

Yet his memories of initial encounters with Medea in Colchis present her in a more positive light. Recollections of his arrival 'in ein[em] barbarischen Land [Kolchis]' (MS, 42) with 'barbarische[n] Sitten' (MS, 42), such as the custom of hanging human remains in pouches from trees, contrast with the positive impact Medea has on him: her attractive appearance – 'schlank, aber von ausgeprägter Figur' (MS, 42) – her uninhibited demeanour, and her attribute of providing 'Trost' (MS, 48). He also emphasises her abilities as 'Heilerin' (MS, 61), abilities which gave Medea 'Ehrfurcht und Ansehen' (MS, 60) in Colchis, and enlightens the reader as to the meaning of her name: 'die guten Rat Wissende' (MS, 55). It is also Jason who criticises the official

explanation of Medea's expulsion from the Palace at Corinth:

angeblich, wie der Leibarzt des Königshauses bezeugte, weil ihre Mittelchen und Tränke der uralten Mutter des Königs geschadet hätten, aber das glaubte sowieso keiner. Jetzt bringen sie schon andere Ausreden vor. (MS, 47-48)

By Jason's own account, when he informs Medea that he will remain in the Palace she reacts 'nachsichtig' (MS, 48) when she replies: 'Mach dir nichts draus, Jason. Es hat so kommen müssen' (MS, 48). In Jason's depiction of Medea it is hard not to perceive similarities with Wolf's understanding of her own role as a 'Lebenshelfer' when the GDR was still in existence.⁴⁰⁶

Furthermore, Wolf had been a highly-rated GDR author who enjoyed 'Ehrfurcht und Ansehen' both nationally and internationally, as evidenced by the numerous literary prizes she was awarded.

Whilst Jason sums up his initial impressions of Medea in the complimentary words 'sie hat mich verzaubert' (MS, 42), once in Corinth 'verzaubert' turns into 'verhext' (MS, 45). He recounts the incident of Medea having averted famine in Corinth after two years of drought by teaching citizens to eat wild plants and horse meat – an act which undermines their sacred beliefs: 'die Leute wollen sich lieber für verhext halten, als daß sie Unkraut fraßen und Eingeweide unberührter Tiere verschlangen aus gewöhnlichem Hunger' (MS, 45). Similarly, his memory of Medea as 'Opferpriesterin' (MS, 58) emphasises an element of witchcraft. As Peter Arnds observes, he is 'attracted to Medea drinking blood, at the same time he notices her vampiric appearance: "schrecklich und schön, ich begehrte sie, wie ich noch nie eine Frau begehrt

⁴⁰⁶ See, for example, the speech Wolf dedicated to Fühmann, discussed in Chapter Three, 140.

hatte” (MS, 58).⁴⁰⁷ Arnds explains further that Medea’s healing powers initially fascinated Jason during his stay at Colchis. In retrospect however, from the perspective of his cultural surroundings at Corinth, Jason ‘interprets these scenes as entirely demonic and consequently uses them against Medea’,⁴⁰⁸ even though Medea undertook the rituals in order to protect him from any harm which might befall him in the process of retrieving the Golden Fleece.

There does appear to be a parallel in Jason’s radical change of perspective and the treatment Wolf received in the ‘Literaturstreit’ at the hands of Western journalists who, as highlighted in Chapter Two (Chapter Two, 34), after the fall of the Berlin Wall appeared intent on dismantling the same reputation they had been so instrumental in helping to establish when the GDR was still in existence. As Arnds notes, in addition to the ‘hypocrisy of Jason’s condemnation of Medea for her alleged bloodthirstiness’ and Jason’s labelling of Medea as ‘eine wilde Frau’,⁴⁰⁹ it is the murder of Iphinoe in particular which provides evidence of the ‘art of repressing unwanted memories and distorting reality according to dictates of circumstances’.⁴¹⁰

If Jason is depicted by Wolf as the stereotype of a weak, insecure man – a depiction that might have been informed by Wolf’s own treatment at the hands of Western journalists in the early 1990s – Agameda is portrayed as a spiteful social climber, driven by ambition ‘in die höhere Existenzform aufzusteigen, nicht niemand sein’ (MS, 79). Agameda thus represents the example of an individual who might be found in both the East and the West.

⁴⁰⁷ Peter Arnds, ‘Translating a Greek myth: Christa Wolf’s Medea in a contemporary context’, *Neophilologus*, volume 85, No 3, 2001, 415-428, here 420.

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 421.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid.*

Whereas Medea, in her monologues, often addresses other people (her mother, Jason, Lyssa, Absyrtos) and attempts to enter into a dialogue with them, Agameda is focused on herself. Agameda, Medea's apprentice healer – 'ihre begabteste Schülerin' (MS, 68) – and the only fellow Colchian 'voice' in the structural arrangement of the novel, also introduces Medea as the 'große Heilerin' (MS, 67). For Agameda, Medea represents not only 'die Königstochter' and 'Priesterin der Hekate' (MS, 81) but also her childhood ideal, whose 'Art zu leben [ihr] als die einzig erstrebenswerte [erschien]' (MS, 81). Furthermore, Agameda makes reference to Medea's humanistic convictions, but from the perspective of the cultural surroundings at Corinth she presents these as human weakness when she comments: 'Medea in ihrer Verblendung setzt ja auf die Stärken der Menschen, ich setze auf ihre Schwächen' (MS, 76). In Corinth Agameda wants to see Medea tumble from the pedestal upon which she herself placed her. This may be read as another parallel to the attacks on Wolf by Greiner and Schirmmacher in the early stages of the 'Literaturstreit'. It is to be noted here that Sarah Kirsch, once a kindred spirit, who emigrated to West Germany in 1977 and who became rather critical of Wolf once she had moved to the West, might have been the model for Agameda.⁴¹¹

A prime motive for Agameda turning on her former teacher is that Medea had failed to show her preferential treatment in the past, which Medea had justified with the admission that she was stricter to Agameda than to other apprentice healers 'damit man ihr [Medea] nicht nachsagen könne, sie ziehe die Tochter ihrer Freundin den anderen vor. Da fing ich an sie [Medea] zu

⁴¹¹ See, for example, Peter Graves' comments on Sarah Kirsch having made 'some waspish comments' on Wolf in the 'Literaturstreit', Chapter Two, 58.

hassen' (MS, 82). Linked to Agameda's hatred of Medea is the twin motive of envy of the 'unfehlbare Medea' (MS, 70), '[der] alles zu glücken schien. Daß sie dasaß, wie in einer Festung aus Glück' (MS, 70), imagining 'daß sie [Medea] unantastbar sei. Sie lief wie in einer Schutzhaut herum' (MS, 81). Hatred and envy are Agameda's prime motives for slandering Medea's 'Ansehen' (MS, 68), and she therefore plots 'den Untergang der Medea' (MS, 76) in a calculating manner, suggesting to Akamas: 'wenn ein Mensch sich so vollkommen und untadelig gebe, wie Medea, dann müsse es doch irgendwo eine faule Stelle geben' (MS, 78).

Initially she shares with Akamas her observation that she saw Medea following Queen Merope into the underground vaults – an observation Akamas relays as: 'Sie [Medea] hat herumgeschnüffelt' (MS, 80). Not until Akamas who, fearing that Medea might share her discovery of Iphinoe's murder with the Corinthian people, bans Agameda from circulating rumours concerning any 'Geheimnis, dem sie [Medea] auf der Spur ist' (MS, 80), does she supply him with the 'genial[en] Plan' (MS, 83) of spreading the rumour about Medea having murdered her own brother. Indeed, Medea is silenced quickly once she discovers the dark secret on which Corinthian society is based. In fact, the fear among some Corinthian officials that Medea might lend her voice to one which has been brutally silenced – that of Iphinoe, who had been murdered because she represented a challenge to the then still young patriarchal regime – proves a strong enough motive for them to discredit Medea and begin the process which will make her an outcast. Wolf seems to suggest that it is through the mechanism of slander and rumour that the traditional picture of a 'wilde Medea'

was created. There seems to be a parallel here with Wolf's own experiences both as a GDR writer and at the time of the attacks on her in the 'Literaturstreit' in the West German press. As discussed in Chapter One, in June 1990 Schirrmacher had reiterated the rumour that Wolf had withdrawn her signature from the Biermann petition – a rumour which had initially been deliberately spread by the Stasi in order to discredit her (Chapter One, 32).

When Medea confronts Agameda because the latter spread the rumour of Medea having committed fratricide, Agameda responds by reinforcing the issue of Medea's guilt: Agameda's reproach that it is possible '[den] Bruder auf verschiedene Weise auf dem Gewissen [zu] haben' (MS, 85) echoes the central question Medea poses herself, namely the extent to which she might be indirectly culpable. In Medea's second monologue, which follows Agameda's 'voice', Medea returns to the issue of guilt when she reflects on the notion of personal guilt concerning her brother's death and the extent to which she might have contributed to this by supporting efforts in Colchis to depose King Aietes. As in her first monologue she addresses Absyrtos, who followed her as a 'Gerücht' (MS, 89), as if she had entered into a dialogue with him. She attempts to justify her behaviour in Colchis by pleading dissatisfaction with King Aietes' regime as well as ignorance – 'ich verstand nicht, was vorging, das ist meine einzige Entschuldigung' (MS, 93) – but also admits that mere recourse to the matriarchal tradition whereby her sister Chalkiope would be made queen in order to stop 'die schleichende Krankheit, den Niedergang von Kolchis' (MS, 90) only opened the doors to the 'fanatisch[e] Gruppe alter Weiber, deren Lebenssinn es war durchzusetzen, daß wir in Kolchis in jeder winzigen

Einzelheit so leben sollten wie unsere Vorfahren' (MS, 93-94). In Medea's account, King Aietes – 'unser alter, verknöchertes König' (MS, 91) – outwits his entire family and has his son, Absyrtos, killed so that he is able to remain King of Colchis. In Wolf's depiction of the 'Niedergang von Kolchis' (MS, 90) one cannot help but see parallels with the demise of the GDR, and with it the betrayal of the socialist utopian vision. It was, of course, Wolf's prolonged belief in a revival of socialism and her call for its renewal, as evidenced in both her speech at the time of the 'Wende' on 4th November 1989 in Alexanderplatz in East Berlin and by her public proclamation 'Für unser Land' of 28th November 1989, for which she came under attack in the 'Literaturstreit'.

The account of the ritual murder of Absyrtos may be read as an important passage in Wolf's reworking of the Medea myth, not least because of the allusions to the peaceful demonstrations against the SED regime in the GDR in 1989 but also to the suppression tactics used by the 'Volkspolizei' and the Stasi in the embryonic phase of these demonstrations in September and October of 1989. In Wolf's novel, frustrated with the 'alter verknöchertes König' (MS, 91) who represented 'das größte Hindernis' (MS, 91) to the realisation of the increasingly distant collective 'Wunschbild' (MS, 91) of a harmonious society, the dissenters met in the temple of Hekate, to whom Medea is a priestess and which soon became 'ohne [Medeas] Zutun [ein] Treffpunkt der Unzufriedenen, vor allem der jüngeren Leute' (MS, 90). These gatherings turn out to be political in nature and become a channel for the growing dissatisfaction with Aietes's regime. In this respect the gatherings are reminiscent of the 'Montagsdemonstrationen' in September and October of

1989 in Leipzig, and the demonstrations which followed in other cities where they did not necessarily take place on a Monday. In the image of Absyrtos as king for one day, Wolf seems to be encapsulating her recollection of the popular uprising in the GDR in the autumn of 1989. Aietes' drastic action in having his son murdered should be seen as his response to informal gatherings of women and men in the temple of Hekate.

While Medea and many other members of the community express their fascination with an old tradition according to which a queen rules Colchis, and nominate Medea's sister Chalciopie for this position, Aietes hypocritically offers to revert to another Colchian tradition according to which no king could rule longer than fourteen years and according to which either he or his successor should be sacrificed. He then arranges to have some elderly women – fanatical followers of this tradition – murder his son. Medea concludes that, objectively speaking, she is innocent of her brother's death: 'Wir waren blind. [...] Wir nahmen sie [die alten Weiber] nicht ernst, das war ein Fehler' (MS, 99-100). However, subjectively she feels guilty, concluding:

Dadurch, daß ich das [Zurückgreifen auf die 'Bruchstücke der Vergangenheit'] nicht verhinderte, daß ich es noch beförderte, habe ich zu deinem Tod beigetragen. (MS, 94)

She expresses a sense of personal guilt which has nothing in common with the actual details of the murder of her brother, as her innocence is never in doubt. In this respect, I don't share Georgina Paul's conclusion that Wolf's Medea 'ist von jeglicher Schuld gereinigt worden' and 'ein ganz und gar unschuldiges Opfer'.⁴¹²

⁴¹² Paul, op. cit., 236.

Firstly, Medea herself realises that through her misjudgement of the political circumstances in Colchis and in her actions to depose her father, she has subjectively become guilty of complicity in the death of her brother. In this sequence of events in *Medea. Stimmen*, it is possible to see a parallel with accusations levelled at Wolf in the 'Literaturstreit' (particularly by Greiner as discussed in Chapter One) relating to the degree of repression Wolf was prepared to tolerate in order to maintain what she considered to be a superior ideological system. Her strategic silence on repressive aspects of the SED regime, so the charge went, had helped to preserve it.

Secondly, Medea represses her own feelings of guilt and, for reasons of vanity (MS, 19), joins in the deceitful rituals at the court of King Creon, although she knows: 'In dem großen Getriebe spielt auch der seine Rolle, der es verhöhnt' (MS, 22). Finally, when Medea does attempt to influence developments in Corinth by taking part in the Corinthian Artemis festival with a view to making an offer of reconciliation, she becomes guilty again when, during the violent outbreaks at the Corinthian Artemis festival, the Corinthians hold her responsible for the murder of a human being:

Das Blut, Menschenblut, lief in die Opferrinne. Den habe ich auf dem Gewissen. Etwas nie wieder Gutzumachendes war geschehen, und ich hatte meine Hände im Spiel. Die anderen hatte ich gerettet, das galt mir nichts. Jetzt hatte ich nur noch zwischen zwei Verbrechen wählen können. (MS, 186)

Thus she is caught in the same dilemma as Cassandra. Paul points out that: '[Die] eigentliche, vielleicht nicht ganz offen zugegebene Erkenntnis beider Texte ist, daß es nicht möglich ist, historisch zu handeln, ohne schuldig zu

werden'.⁴¹³ A Medea who lacks aggression and wishes '[sie] möge im rechten Moment böse werden, wirklich böse' (MS, 101) in the end becomes part of the history of violence when she utters the curse:

Fluch über euch alle. Fluch besonders über euch: Akamas. Kreon. Agameda. Presbon. Ein gräßliches Leben komme über euch und ein elender Tod. Euer Geheil soll zum Himmel aufsteigen und soll ihn nicht rühren. Ich, Medea, verfluche euch. (MS, 218)

I would not suggest, as one critic did: 'In Rede standen Akamas, Kreon, Agameda and Preson [*sic*]; angesprochen fühlen durften sich Schirmmacher, Greiner, Radisch und Reich-Ranicki',⁴¹⁴ although it could be argued that there are resonances with Wolf's attackers in the 'Literaturstreit'. In *Medea. Stimmen*, the double-edged portrayal of guilt and the picture of '[die] halb gefürchtete, halb verachtete Barbarin in Korinth' (MS, 104) may be read as evidence of Wolf's endeavour to depict 'Medea in ihrer Widersprüchlichkeit'⁴¹⁵ and thus avoid a portrayal of Medea as 'ungebrochene Heroine' (VM, 80), which could be read as an allegorical reference to the situation in which Wolf found herself as a critical intellectual who had to straddle the fine line between 'Anpassung' and 'Widerstand'.

'[D]urchschaue[n]' (MS, 121) and 'durchsichtig' (MS, 101) are words, almost leitmotifs, which combine the monologues of Medea with those of Akamas, suggesting that he is Medea's intellectual equal and a rational, logical being. In spite of contributing to the intrigues against Medea, and hence to her downfall, Akamas demonstrates sympathy, even respect, for 'die schöne Wilde'

⁴¹³ Ibid.

⁴¹⁴ See Markus Joch, 'Prophet und Priesterin: Die Logik des Angriffs auf Christa Wolf', in Ute Wölfel (ed.), *Literarisches Feld DDR, Bedingungen und Formen literarischer Produktion in der DDR*, Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2005, 223-232, here 225.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid.

(MS, 107). He acknowledges Medea's qualities, above all her powers as 'Heilerin' (MS, 110), and finds it 'immer anregend, mit ihr zu reden' (MS, 112). Yet as first astronomer and advisor to King Creon, and thus a high level representative of the Corinthian patriarchal regime, he considers it his duty to contribute to Medea's 'unaufhaltsamen Niedergang' (MS, 121) in order to prevent her from potentially disseminating her knowledge of Iphinoe's murder:

Nicht immer gefällt einem, was notwendig ist, aber daß ich in der Pflicht meines Amtes nicht nach persönlichem Gefallen, sondern nach höheren Gesichtspunkten zu entscheiden habe, das hat sich mir unauslöschlich eingeprägt. (MS, 121)

Akamas is presented as a system-oriented individual and the most unscrupulous power-broker among Creon's advisors, a man who adheres to the principle that the end justifies the means as summed up in his admission: 'Denn es kommt ja darauf an, was man wirklich will und was man für nützlich, also für gut und richtig hält' (MS, 112). Even though the depiction of Akamas as a system-oriented person is associated with the Corinthian regime at the western end of the axis, Wolf's own experience of this kind of individual is most likely to have been derived from the GDR. In that respect, and given the novel's socio-political context of post-unification Germany, Akamas may be read as an allegorical personalisation of a power-seeking individual in the political systems of both East and West Germany.

Whereas Medea embodies 'die Entfaltung alles Lebendigen' (MS, 112), dismissed by King Creon's first astronomer, Akamas, as an attitude displayed by 'Schwärmern' (MS, 112), the latter represents the opposite, as captured in Jason's comment: 'Überhaupt frage ich mich, ob die Lust, andere Leben zu zerstören, nicht daher kommt, daß man am eigenen Leben so wenig Lust und

Freude hat' (MS, 212). Akamas identifies the interdependence of emotion and reason – in other words the need not to neglect the one at the expense of the other – as a characteristic of Medea, but personally dismisses this outlook as outdated:

sie [Medea] glaubt, die Gedanken hätten sich aus den Gefühlen heraus entwickelt und sollten den Zusammenhang mit ihnen nicht verlieren. Veraltet natürlich, überholt. Kreatürliche Dumpfheit, sagte ich dazu. Schöpferische Quelle sie. (MS, 113)

In spite of his intention to repress his emotions, he feels pangs of guilt that Medea's 'Lachen' (MS, 109), as an instinctive, emotional reaction, has been suffocated in Corinth. Yet he quickly squashes these pangs of guilt in the interests of expediency: 'leider muß man manches tun, was einem selbst nicht gefällt' (MS, 109). It suits Akamas to believe that his active role in causing Medea's expulsion was determined by the greater necessity of his official duty and therefore beyond his responsibility.

Akamas might not have taken part in the act of brutality against Iphinoe, as he states: '[i]ch war jung, als das alles geschah' (MS, 115), but he leaves no doubt about his endorsement of it, as this act, in his view, prevented 'schlimmere Menschenopfer' (MS, 120) and could not be considered an act of murder: 'von Mord zu sprechen ist also ungeheuerlich' (MS, 118). Akamas recounts the version of events as relayed to him by a Corinthian official: King Creon, obsessed by the thought that his first-born daughter Iphinoe⁴¹⁶ could succeed him on the throne and thereby re-establish a matriarchal tradition in Corinth, had her killed deep inside the palace walls and then created the myth

⁴¹⁶ The name 'Iphinoe', reminds the reader of what Stephan calls 'Iphigenie, das antike Opferlamm schlechthin'. See Stephan, *Musen und Medusen*, op. cit., 246.

that she was kidnapped by a young prince who desperately wanted to marry her.

Akamas freely admits that in the past kings derived their right to rule from their queens, but then goes on to quote King Creon's rationalisation of the suppression of women as a political force in the name of expediency and historical processes:

Nicht Eigennutz, nur die Sorge um Korinths Zukunft habe ihn bestimmt. Denn wer die Zeichen der Zeit zu lesen wisse, der sehe doch, daß sich unter Kämpfen und Greuel rundum Staaten bildeten, denen ein auf alte Weise frauengelenktes Korinth einfach nicht gewachsen gewesen wäre. Und sich gegen den Lauf der Zeit aufzulehnen habe keinen Sinn. Man könne nur versuchen, ihn rechtzeitig zu erkennen und zu verhindern, daß man von ihm überrannt werde. Der Preis, den man dafür zahlen müsse, könne allerdings sehr schmerzlich sein. Unser Preis war Iphinoe. Ganz Korinth wäre untergegangen, wenn wir sie nicht geopfert hätten. (MS, 116)

Queen Merope's psychological instability and Glauke's recurrent epileptic fits are the physical and mental remnants of repressed memories resulting from the act of Iphinoe's murder. Added to this is the public denial of this act of inhumanity on the part of Corinthian officials, as expounded in Glauke's monologue which follows that of Akamas.

The Ingeborg Bachmann extract from the *Franza* fragment, which precedes Glauke's monologue, prepares the reader for a Glauke who has been silenced as a result of her father's power games and who is obsessed by undefined feelings of 'Schuld' (MS, 127). The extremely long and encapsulated sentences of her monologue express a sense of her being trapped in her own thoughts; for example from the second paragraph (MS, 127), which is introduced by two short sentences, until the end (MS, 131), there are only three sentences. Under Medea's guidance – the guidance of a person in whose

presence 'Leute, wenn sie einen Raum betritt, [sich] sofort anders benehmen als vorher' (MS, 130) – Glauke's epilepsy seems to improve. Medea tells her:

[daß] das Vergessene mitgewachsen wäre, ein dunkler Fleck, der größer wird [...], bis er sich des Kindes, des Mädchens bemächtigt habe, [...] sie warf mir das Seil zu, an ihren Fragen sollte ich mich hinablassen, sie wollte mich vorbeiführen an den gefährlichen Stellen, die ich alleine nicht passieren konnte. (MS, 135)

The psychological contortions involved in self-delusion are most dramatically illustrated. In Glauke's case extreme tension between memories pointing to the truth about her elder sister's murder and the psychological need to maintain faith in her society results in a self-destructive repression of past experience:

Daß unser schönes Korinth, das diese Fremden niemals verstehen können, eine Art Schlachthaus ist? Nein. Das will ich nicht glauben. Natürlich habe ich mir das alles eingebildet. (MS, 146)

Ultimately Glauke prefers to believe that Medea is a 'Verräterin' who practises 'schwarze Magie' (MS, 128) than to acknowledge that her sister was murdered at the command of her father.

The theme of Medea being made a scapegoat for Corinth's own ills is further elaborated in Leukon's monologues, which also address the broader question posed by Wolf in the aforementioned interview with *Tagesspiegel*: 'die Frage nach den destruktiven Wurzeln unserer Zivilisation, zum Beispiel die nach den Mechanismen der Herstellung eines Sündenbocks.'⁴¹⁷ In the two epigraphs in the novel taken from René Girard, Wolf refers to her dependence on the 'Opfer- und Sündenbocktheorie' expounded in Girard's treatise *Das Heilige und die Gewalt*.⁴¹⁸ The quotation by Girard which precedes Leukon's

⁴¹⁷ *Tagesspiegel*, 30.4.1996.

⁴¹⁸ René Girard, *Das Heilige und die Gewalt*, translated by Elisabeth Mainberger-Ruh, Zürich: Benzinger, 1987. Original title *La Violence et le sacré*, published in 1972.

first monologue sums up the pattern of victim and persecution in *Medea*.

Stimmen:

Die Menschen wollen sich überzeugen, daß ihr Unglück von einem einzigen Verantwortlichen kommt, dessen man sich leicht entledigen kann. (MS, 147)⁴¹⁹

Medea's story is paradigmatic of this scapegoat mentality which is in turn based on the assumption that in situations of crisis a society cannot deal with its own ills, difficulties and fears, which it therefore projects onto a particular person who is punished even though, or rather because, (s)he is innocent and wants to engage in good deeds. Leukon sums up this phenomenon as '[das] Bedürfnis der Menschen, die eigene Last auf einen anderen zu legen' (MS, 165). At the same time he paints a devil-like picture of Medea when he comments: 'immer gefährlicher wird es für jeden, sich in den Abglanz jenes Lichtes zu begeben, das Medea ausstrahlt' (MS, 154). Hence, Medea can become '[ein] Sündenbock' and 'das unschuldige Opfer' (MS, 206).

In *Medea. Stimmen* the triggering of latent violence is brought about by external forces: famine, an earthquake – used by King Creon to suggest to citizens 'das Erdbeben könnte durch Medeas böse Kunst heraufbeschworen worden sein' (MS, 162) – plague and finally the lunar eclipse. Corinthian society has become so insecure that even the sacrifice of twenty bulls on the altar of Artemis does not contain citizens' hysteria. On the contrary, the sacrifice

⁴¹⁹ For a detailed discussion of the significance of the quote by René Girard, see Birgit Roser, 82-90; Silke Beissen-Hesse, 196-199; Friederike Mayer, 'Potenzierte Fremdheit: Medea – die wilde Frau. Betrachtungen zu Christa Wolfs Roman *Medea. Stimmen*', *Literatur für Leser*, 1997/2, 85-94, here 89f; Gudrun Loster-Schneider, 'Intertextualität und Intermedialität als Mittel ästhetischer Innovation in Christa Wolfs Roman *Medea. Stimmen*', in Waltraud Wende (ed.), *Nora verläßt ihr Puppenheim. Autorinnen des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts und ihr Beitrag zur ästhetischen Innovation*, Stuttgart and Weimar: Metzler, 2000, 222-249, here 243-245. Roser, in particular, highlights the link to 'Gründungsopfer' in Girard's work.

initiates a blood frenzy which initially causes citizens to turn against the prisoners in the sanctuary and, after Medea intervenes and in an act of reconciliation releases only one of them to be slaughtered, culminates in the mob stoning her children to death.

These events are recounted by Leukon, the second astronomer at Corinth and friend of Medea, a man who, like Akamas, is part of the elite at the Palace of Corinth. Unlike Akamas, Leukon – by Medea's account 'ein kluger Mann' (MS, 16) – was demoted because he belonged to the group of critics in Corinth 'die nicht abließen nach Iphinoe zu fragen' (MS, 123); this group of dissenting voices was then 'zerschlagen' (MS, 123). Living in fear of 'blutig[e] Hände' (MS, 149) by getting involved too closely in the power machinations in Corinth, he exercises restraint and develops as his life strategy a close observation of 'eine feine Witterung für die kleinste Veränderung der Atmosphäre um die Mächtigen' (MS, 154) as well as 'die Fähigkeit, zu schweigen und [sich] wegzuducken' (MS, 153). Thus he becomes a cog in the wheel which maintains Corinth's ideological system. The consequence of his inaction is that he is helping to preserve a repressive system – an accusation levelled at Wolf herself in the 'Literaturstreit'. Leukon and Medea have in common that they do not attempt to share the knowledge about the crime in Corinth and do not intervene.

Leukon appears to fulfil the function of a narrator who witnesses Medea's downfall with compassion, but is powerless to stop it. Bridge observes that whilst it was convenient for Akamas to think that his part in scheming Medea's

downfall was determined by 'greater necessity'⁴²⁰ – he speaks of a 'Geröllawine [...] die jedermann unter sich begraben würde, der sie noch aufhalten wollte' (MS, 121)⁴²¹ – Leukon explains his non-intervention by arguing that 'human beings are powerless to change anything'.⁴²² He sees the developments in his society as 'ein Räderwerk [...], das niemand mehr aufhalten kann' (MS, 166). His sometimes overly detailed, vivid descriptions of events are frequently interrupted by sudden insights into Medea's fate, for example 'Medea ist verloren' (MS, 149) and '[s]ie will es nicht wahrhaben' (MS, 154). He has become a resigned spectator, justifying his inertia with the knowledge:

daß ich die Menschen [...] bis auf den Grund durchschaue und eben deshalb, so merkwürdig es klingen mag, ungefährlich bin. Da ich nicht glaube, daß ich oder irgend jemand sie ändern kann, werde ich in das mörderische Getriebe, das sie in Gang halten, nicht eingreifen. (MS, 212)

At the same time, Leukon expresses envy of Medea, the object of slander, because she is at ease within herself:

Ich spüre so etwas wie Neid auf diese Frau [...]. Neid, weil sie, das unschuldige Opfer, frei war von innerem Zwiespalt. Weil der Riß nicht durch sie ging, sondern zwischen ihr und jenen klaffte, die sie verleumdete, verurteilt hatten, die sie durch die Stadt trieben, beschimpften und bespuckten. (MS, 206)

The issue here is the attempt on the part of Corinth to exile the witness Medea in order to avoid a 'surfacing' of the repressed deed, the 'Untat' (MS, 23) on which the Corinthian society is founded, and to maintain the illusion: 'Es gibt einen Ort auf der Welt, da kann der Mensch glücklich sein' (MS, 16). Medea is expelled because she poses the threat of potentially revealing the violence on

⁴²⁰ Bridge, op.cit., 40.

⁴²¹ Quoted in Bridge, op.cit.

⁴²² Bridge, op.cit., 40-41.

which the patriarchal order is based.

Yet Leukon also answers the question of 'Schuld und Unschuld' in a different way, which in Wolf's view some readers might have shared:

und manchmal frage ich mich, was gibt einem Menschen, was gab dieser Frau das Recht, uns vor Entscheidungen zu stellen, denen wir nicht gewachsen sind, die uns aber zerreißen und uns als Unterlegene, als Versagende, als Schuldige zurücklassen (MS, 207).

The comment does not justify the violence in the novel, but shows the futility of attempting to draw a clear line between perpetrators and victims and thus questions attempts to categorise in simple terms.

In Medea's penultimate monologue the futility of the 'Opfer, zur stillen Duldung gebrachte Opfer, die zur Schlachtbank trotteten' (MS, 178) is emphasised. Medea is ultimately put on trial and expelled from Corinth for a crime she did not commit: the crime of emasculating Turon, Akamas's assistant, which had been committed by Colchian women because Turon had violated a sacred Colchian rite. Her final monologue, after her expulsion from Corinth, is one of total resignation:

keine Spur von Hoffnung, keine Spur von Furcht an mir. Nichts, nichts. Die Liebe ist zerschlagen, auch der Schmerz hört auf. Ich bin frei. (MS, 217)

Living in isolation in the mountains with her Colchian friend Lyssa, far away from established Corinthian society, she is shocked by the news that her sons, whom she believed to be protected in Hera's sanctuary, are long dead, the victims of mob violence, and that the Corinthians have fabricated the lie that she herself killed them: 'Sie sorgen also dafür, dass auch die Späteren mich Kindsmörderin nennen sollen. [...] Was bleibt mir. Sie verfluchen' (MS, 218).

Ironically Medea, the supposed incarnation of feminine irrationality –

‘eine wilde Frau’ (MS, 18) – is the only character in the novel who wholeheartedly expands the project of enlightenment by engaging with both the Colchian and the Corinthian people and by trying to understand their minds on more than a rational level. Yet Medea’s conception of an enlightened reality clashes with that of her opponents, above all Akamas, who sees no enlightenment beyond rationality. At the end of the story, Medea expresses a sense of displacement when she asks:

Wohin mit mir. Ist eine Welt zu denken, eine Zeit, in die ich passen würde. Niemand da, den ich fragen könnte. Das ist die Antwort. (MS, 218)

Significance of the past in *Medea. Stimmen*

The dichotomy between perpetrator and victim, as expounded by Leukon, also exists in our relationship with the past and is examined by Wolf through both the Colchian and Corinthian stories. However, in *Medea. Stimmen*, as Bridge notes, ‘there is no sense that the origins of a historical development are being explored’.⁴²³ The prologue does focus on a meeting of times but, as Bridge comments, the ‘notion of chronological progress in history is questioned’.⁴²⁴

Wir haben sie [Medea] auf den Weg geschickt, aus der Tiefe der Zeit kommt sie uns entgegen, wir lassen uns zurückfallen, vorbei an den Zeitaltern, die, so scheint es, nicht so deutlich zu uns sprechen wie das ihre. Irgendwann müssen wir uns begegnen. (MS, 9)

When Medea reflects on the events that led to her brother’s murder, she says that ‘seitdem ist mir ein Schauer geblieben vor diesen alten Zeiten und vor diesen Kräften, die sie in uns freisetzen und derer wir dann nicht mehr Herr werden können’ and concludes:

⁴²³ Bridge, op.cit., 41.

⁴²⁴ Ibid.

wenn dein furchtbarer Tod mich etwas gelehrt hat, Bruder, dann dies, dass wir nicht nach Belieben mit den Bruchstücken der Vergangenheit verfahren können, sie zusammensetzen oder auseinanderreißen, wie es gerade paßt. (MS, 94)

The lesson Medea learns from her brother's murder – and, one might add, that of Iphinoe – is that the 'selective endorsement of values from the past risks unleashing a barbarism which can likewise be legitimised by reference to ancient customs'.⁴²⁵ This is exemplified by the events in Colchis where demands for a recourse to a matriarchal tradition on the part of the 'Unzufriedenen' (MS, 90) only lead to counter-demands by the 'fanatisch[e] Gruppe alter Weiber' (MS, 93) to re-establish traditional patriarchal customs. Wolf clearly endorses neither matriarchal nor patriarchal power structures.⁴²⁶ Bridge concludes that while the 'Colchians use the past to justify Absyrtos's murder',⁴²⁷ Iphinoe's murder in Corinth demonstrates that repression of the past can be 'equally dangerous'.⁴²⁸ King Creon explains the 'sacrifice' of his daughter by arguing, 'sich gegen den Lauf der Zeit aufzulehnen habe keinen Sinn' (MS, 116).⁴²⁹ One can only concur with Bridge in concluding that hope no longer seems to have any place 'either in the past or in the future'.⁴³⁰ Medea herself, who will only be known as the murderer of her children, sums up this pessimistic stance: 'Aber was ist denen das gegen die Greuel, auf welche sie

⁴²⁵ Ibid.

⁴²⁶ In the interview with Petra Kamman, Wolf answers the question as to whether a return to matriarchal structures is sensible, as follows: 'Um Gottes willen – nein. Wahrscheinlich hat es ein vollkommen ausgebildetes Matriarchat als "Frauenherrschaft" nie gegeben, und ein Zurück in so frühe und undifferenzierte Verhältnisse gibt es sowieso nicht'. Hochgeschurz, op.cit., 81.

⁴²⁷ Bridge, op.cit, 42.

⁴²⁸ Bridge, op.cit., 42.

⁴²⁹ Quoted in Bridge, op.cit.

⁴³⁰ Ibid, 42.

zurückblicken werden. Denn wir sind unbelehrbar' (MS, 218).⁴³¹

The differences between the Euripidean version and Wolf's version of the myth of Medea raise the question of how a myth arises. Medea's escape from Colchis constitutes the trigger for memories, rumours and legends, all of which are the basis of myth. A case in point in the novel are the 'Übersiedler' Colchians who followed Medea to Corinth in search of a better society, then blame her for their disappointment, and couch this in nostalgic stories of the place which they were so eager to leave. As Medea comments:

Ihre Legenden werden ausufern, wenn unsere Lage sich weiter verschlechtert, und es wird nichts nützen, ihnen die Tatsachen entgegenzuhalten. Falls es noch etwas wie Tatsachen gibt, nach all den Jahren. Falls sie nicht, ausgehöhlt durch Heimweh und Demütigung und Enttäuschung und Armut, zu einer dünnen brüchigen Schale geworden sind. (MS, 31)

Jason too shows an awareness of the manner in which his own narratives of securing the Golden Fleece shift in the story-telling and in line with the expectations of the audience:

Viele Male habe ich erzählen müssen, wie ich auf den Baum geklettert bin, wie ich das Vließ zu packen kriegte und mit ihm glücklich wieder herunterkam, und jedes Mal hat die Geschichte sich ein wenig verändert, so wie die Zuhörer es von mir erwarteten, damit sie sich ordentlich fürchten und am Ende ordentlich erleichtert sein konnten. Es ist dahin gekommen, daß ich selbst nicht mehr genau weiß, was ich da in dem Hain, an der Eiche mit jener Schlange erlebt habe, aber das will ja sowieso keiner mehr hören. [...] Am Ende sagte sie [Medea]: Sie haben aus jedem von uns den gemacht, den sie brauchen. Aus dir den Heroen, und aus mir die böse Frau. (MS, 31)

Following the discovery of the murder of Iphinoe, Medea concedes a sense of 'Vergeblichkeit unserer Flucht' (MS, 30). This overriding feeling of 'Vergeblichkeit' leads her to re-assess her own history. The East German

⁴³¹ Bridge, op.cit., 42.

question of staying in the GDR or leaving for West Germany resonates in Wolf's answer. She makes a conscious effort not to join in spreading the myths her fellow Colchians have created when, 'ausgehöhlt durch Heimweh und Demütigung und Enttäuschung und Armut' (MS, 31), they perceive Colchis 'nachträglich in ungetrübtem Glanz' (MS, 30). These feelings, it could be argued, are not unlike the East German sentiments of 'Ostalgie' which followed in the wake of the realisation that the 'blühende[n] Landschaften im Osten' promised by 'unification Chancellor' Helmut Kohl had not materialised. As Agamedea observes, who would not want to experience the ideal which is 'den Kolchern so greifbar vor Augen' (MS, 91), 'ein wunderbares Kolchis, das es auf dieser Erde niemals und nirgends gegeben hat' (MS, 70), and associations evoked thereby of the socialist utopian ideal. However, this is an ideal from which the Colchians moved away, resulting in the 'Niedergang von Kolchis [wie eine] schleichende Krankheit' (MS, 98).

The cultural criticism implicit in Wolf's novel is more fundamental than the trivial contrasting of East and West Germany suggested by some critics. Stuart Taberner, for instance, notes that in *Medea. Stimmen* we are presented with 'a fantasy projection of the realisation of the socialist project untainted by the compromises that, in the event, accompanied the transformation of ideals into deeds'. As such, the book 'has less to do with the coming-to-terms with the "real" GDR past than with the desire to confront a clearly imperfect post-unification present with a vision of what socialism in the east could have been'.⁴³² However, as Wolf's ambiguous depiction of both Colchian and

⁴³² Stuart Taberner, *German Literature of the 1990s and Beyond: Normalization and the Berlin Republic*,

Corinthian societies demonstrates, this is too sweeping an assessment. Wolf's novel focuses on the broader issue of united Germany's past history.

Medea's plea for caution in our dealings with the past might have a parallel in Wolf's own experience when, in the course of the 'Literaturstreit', she was accused of having published *Was bleibt* at the wrong time and thereby having evoked a past that was interpreted very differently by Western critics from the way she herself had anticipated. But in *Medea. Stimmen* Wolf also indirectly poses the question of how both East and West Germany are coping with their common historical past as well as with their forty years of separation. These are issues which Wolf had raised in previous post-unification publications, most notably in her exchange of letters with Jürgen Habermas, contained in *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou* and discussed in Chapter Two and also in 'Begegnungen Third Street', contained in *Hierzulande Andernorts* and discussed in Chapter Three.

According to Wolf the past is clearly alive and penetrates the present, summed up by Medea in the opening monologue as follows: 'Auch tote Götter regieren' (MS, 13), words which evoke resonances of the already quoted opening line of *Kindheitsmuster*: 'Das Vergangene ist nicht tot; es ist nicht einmal vergangen' (KM, 9). Wolf particularly draws attention to the issues of repressed elements in an individual's recollections of history. *Kindheitsmuster* asks the question 'Wie sind wir so geworden, wie wir sind?' which refers first and foremost to the experience of being shaped by National Socialism. In *Medea. Stimmen*, Wolf's call to maintain an awareness of the multiple

influences of the past over the present is summed up in the quotation by the writer Elisabeth Lenk with which the novel begins:

Achronie ist nicht das gleichgültige Nebeneinander, sondern eher ein Ineinander der Epochen nach dem Modell eines Stativs, eine Flucht sich verjüngender Strukturen. [...] Die Leute aus den anderen Jahrhunderten hören unser Grammophon plärren, und wir sehen durch die Zeitwände hindurch, wie sie die Hände heben zum lecker bereiteten Mahle.

The choice of the term 'Stativ' suggests seeing things through the different lenses in (e.g.) a telescope or a camera. Here Wolf seems to question the very concept of linear history and reminds us of the interrelationship between times and epochs. Yet there is no suggestion of progress between the ages. This point is significant not only with respect to German National Socialism – the presence of which in contemporary Germany, Wolf seems to imply, many would like to forget or 'consign' to East German history – but also with regard to more contemporary re-evaluations of the forty years of the GDR's existence.

As the figure of Medea highlights, her fellow Colchians are already starting to change their stories about their Colchian heritage by leaving out details or adding aspects which did not happen or which, at least, are not in keeping with Medea's recollections. Wolf seems to suggest that our memories are often short-term in nature, a fact which supports dictatorial power structures such as those to be found in Colchis and Corinth. As discussed in the introduction to this thesis and in the context of Wolf's characteristic aesthetic of 'subjektive Authentizität', in her 1968 essay 'Lesen und Schreiben' Wolf had highlighted the significance of the process of remembering as a writer when she asserted: '[s]ich-erinnern ist gegen den Strom schwimmen, [...] gegen den

scheinbar natürlichen Strom des Vergessens, anstrengende Bewegung' (DA, 480). In the novel she seems to suggest that this is also an active process in which readers need to engage in order to learn lessons from the past. To counteract this tendency of forgetting, Wolf urges communication with the past, although not based on the example of Medea and her followers. Wolf's remarks in the prologue are a clear call for a realisation that past and present are interlinked and that a unified Germany needs to acknowledge this link in order to avoid a return to the more negative aspects of the past. Wolf starts off on a round of reflection:

Lassen wir uns zu den Alten hinab, holen sie uns ein? Gleichviel. Es genügt ein Händereichen. Leichthin wechseln sie zu uns über, fremde Gäste, uns gleich. Wir besitzen den Schlüssel, der alle Epochen aufschließt, manchmal benutzen wir ihn schamlos, werfen einen eiligen Blick durch den Türspalt, erpicht auf schnellfertige Urteile, doch sollte es auch möglich sein, uns schrittweise zu nähern, mit Scheu vor dem Tabu, gewillt, den Toten ihr Geheimnis nicht ohne Not zu entreißen. Das Eingeständnis unserer Not, damit müssten wir anfangen. (MS, 9)

Although Wolf does not expand on what our 'Not' is, the context perhaps allows us to understand 'Not' as inner conflicts and societal structures similar to those in the myth of Medea – matters with which we still seem to struggle in the present. There may be a link here, albeit tenuous, to the accusation of 'Staatsdichterin' levelled at Wolf in the 'Literaturstreit' when Wolf was accused of doing nothing to counteract repressive aspects of the SED regime.

Although Medea is ultimately the victim and scapegoat of the machinations of Creon and his officials, she did actually have a choice. She could have ignored the signs that led her to discover Iphinoe's murder. Yet she refused to speak out against the violent repression upon which the patriarchies in both Colchis and Corinth were based. Consequently, she became the

scapegoat for even the most trivial of Corinth's problems. Since Medea has seen through the lies that are at the core of Corinthian society, she has to be sidelined. Perhaps this is the position in which Wolf saw herself when she refused to join in the praise for West Germany before and after 1990, and when she was unwilling to endorse the unification process.

Conclusion

This analysis of *Medea. Stimmen* has drawn attention to the fact that a reading of the novel as an East-West allegory, which was common in reviews of the novel, should be treated with caution. Allusions to East and West Germany cannot be disregarded, indicating as they do Wolf's continued commitment to an engagement with moral and political issues in Germany post-unification and thus a commitment to *littérature engagée*. However, Wolf's treatment of Medea as a 'Sündenbock' does suggest an allegorical reading of the novel in terms of Wolf projecting her own dissonant experiences in the early 1990s. Wolf's approach might well have been prompted by headlines in the 'Literaturstreit' which drew attention to GDR writers being treated as scapegoats, as captured, for instance, in the following headline: 'Warum die Schriftsteller der DDR als Sündenböcke herhalten müssen.'⁴³³

In spite of the plurality of 'voices' in the novel, the assumption of Medea's innocence is not in doubt, suggesting that through the depiction of the mythical figure of Medea Wolf is still fighting off personal guilt and not accepting the charges levelled at her in the 'Literaturstreit' and subsequently. It is not until the

⁴³³ Wittstock, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 13/14.10.1990.

narrative *Leibhaftig* that Wolf seems to adopt a more self-critical stance, allowing her reflections on the theme of personal guilt to take on a different, more personal dimension, as will be discussed in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FIVE: *Leibhaftig* – a model of ‘Vergangenheitsbewältigung’ through ‘subjektive Authentizität’?

‘Nichts mehr wird kommen.’⁴³⁴

Introduction and reviews

The narrative *Leibhaftig*,⁴³⁵ published in 2002, can be considered as evidence of Christa Wolf having left behind the traumas generated by the ‘Literaturstreit’ and the Stasi revelations. Even so, *Leibhaftig* recounts traumatic experiences: a female writer’s life-threatening attack of peritonitis due to a burst appendix, leading to a complete collapse of the immune system and three major operations; feverish dreams kindled by the illness; and memories of the GDR and of the Third Reich besieging the narrator in her sickbed in a hospital in the GDR towards the end of the 1980s. Indeed, the title of the narrative, which has been rendered as ‘In the Flesh’⁴³⁶ in the American translation of the text, suggests that *Leibhaftig* focuses on profoundly personal experiences, although other (metaphorical) interpretations of the title cannot, and should not, be disregarded.

These are considerations to which we shall return in the main parts of this chapter following, in the introductory section, a closer examination of reviews of *Leibhaftig* and an outline of the principal presuppositions – *Leibhaftig* as an example of ‘Vergangenheitsbewältigung’ and ‘subjektive Authentizität’ – around which this chapter has been constructed. The introductory section will also bring to the fore the extent to which my own reading of *Leibhaftig* differs

⁴³⁴ Ingeborg Bachmann, ‘Enigma’, in Christine Koschel, Inge von Weidenbaum, Clemens Münster (eds.), *Werke*, Munich: Piper, 1978 (4 vols.), I, 171.

⁴³⁵ Christa Wolf, *Leibhaftig*, Munich: Luchterhand, 2002, henceforth referred to as L.

⁴³⁶ See *In the Flesh. A Novel by Christa Wolf*, translated by John S. Barrett, Boston: David R. Godine, 2005.

from those of other critics. In the context of these expositions, I will direct attention towards Wolf's literary treatment of the theme of guilt since, as discussed in some detail in Chapter One, the accusation of alleged complicity with the SED regime represented a prominent issue in critics' assessment of the 'Staatsdichterin' Christa Wolf in both the 'Literaturstreit' of 1990 and the 1993 controversy surrounding Wolf's Stasi revelations. Whilst *Leibhaftig* should not be read as an explicit response to the accusation of complicity, the related issue of guilt or 'Gewissen' (DA, 767) is indeed explored through the narrator.

Given the narrative's title and the subject matter – illness – it is not surprising that some critics have drawn attention to an autobiographical dimension, namely Wolf's own near-death experience when, suffering from the same illness and repercussions as the fictional narrator, she endured a series of major operations and a prolonged stay in hospital in Schwerin in 1988.⁴³⁷ The majority of reviews, apart from in some instances emphasising the autobiographical aspect, echoed those of *Medea. Stimmen* six years earlier in reading the text as an allegory. In *Medea. Stimmen* the contrasting depiction of Colchis and Corinth was viewed as an East-West allegory, whereas in *Leibhaftig* the collapse of the patient's immune system was seen as a metaphor for a GDR in decline⁴³⁸ – in the words of one critic an '[Ü]berblenden [der]

⁴³⁷ See, for example, Martina Caspari, 'Im Kern die Krisis. Schuld, Trauer und Neuanfang in Christa Wolfs Erzählung *Leibhaftig*', *Weimarer Beiträge*, 49, 2003 [1], 135-138; Volker Hage, 'Auf Leben und Tod', *Der Spiegel* [8], 18.2.2002, 198-200, here 199; Lothar Müller, 'Das Kichern. Ein Fall von Genesung: Christa Wolf lässt Cassandra hinter sich', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 28.2.2002; Volker Müller, 'Die Geschichte einer Entgiftung', *Berliner Zeitung*, 25.2.2002; Tilman Spreckelsen, 'Operation Tunnelblick', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 23.2.2002. A full discussion of the autobiographical dimension in *Leibhaftig* can be found in Dennis Tate, *Shifting Perspectives, East German Autobiographical Narratives before and after the End of the GDR*, Camden House: Rochester, 2007, 220-227.

⁴³⁸ See, for example, Volker Hage, *Der Spiegel* [8], 18.2.2002; Susanne Kunckel, 'Zurück zum Lächeln. Geliebt, gefeiert und verfemt: Als ehemalige DDR-Autorin abgehakt, gelingt Christa Wolf mit ihrer

eigene[n] Geschichte [der Erzählerin] mit der ihres sterbenden Landes im letzten Jahr vor der Wende'.⁴³⁹

Reviews invariably also noted illness as a recurrent theme in Wolf's pre-unification texts, mentioning *Moskauer Novelle* (1961), *Der geteilte Himmel* (1963), *Nachdenken über Christa T.* (1968), *Kein Ort. Nirgends* (1979) and *Störfall* (1987).⁴⁴⁰ Some critics included the post-unification prose piece 'Im Stein' contained in *Hierzulande Andernorts* (1999).⁴⁴¹ However, critics were divided in their assessment of the narrative's literary merits. *Leibhaftig* was either rated positively on account of what was perceived as a plausible interlinking of individual suffering and societal malady,⁴⁴² or it was criticised for 'Überdeutlichkeit' and being 'plakativ'⁴⁴³ in portraying illness as a psychological reaction to shortcomings in GDR society. The latter reading was adopted, for instance, by Volker Hage who, twelve years earlier in his review of *Was bleibt*, had commended Wolf's 'wunderbare, kunstvolle Prosa'.⁴⁴⁴ Some critics also

neuen Erzählung das literarische Comeback', *Welt am Sonntag*, 24.2.2002; Beatrix Langner, 'Gespenster am Krankenbett. *Leibhaftig*: Christa Wolf lässt die Vergangenheit aufleben', *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 23./24.2.2002; Stephan Maus, 'Kassandra im Kernspintomographen', *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 20.3.2002; Rolf Michaelis, 'Krankengeschichten. Heilgeschichten: Wenn der (Staats-) Körper leidet: Christa Wolfs Erzählung *Leibhaftig*', *Die Zeit*, 28.2.2002; Lothar Müller, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 28.2.2002; Volker Müller, *Berliner Zeitung*, 25.2.2002; Tilman Spreckelsen, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 23.2.2002.

⁴³⁹ Rolf Michaelis, *Die Zeit*, 28.2.2002.

⁴⁴⁰ See Volker Hage, *Der Spiegel* [8], 18.2.2002; Rolf Michaelis, *Die Zeit*, 28.2.2002; Lothar Müller, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 28.2.2002; Volker Müller, *Berliner Zeitung*, 25.2.2002; Tilman Spreckelsen, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 23.2.2002; Inge Stephan, 'Kampfplatz der Erinnerung', *Freitag*, 22.3.2002.

⁴⁴¹ See Volker Hage, *Der Spiegel* [8], 18.02.2002; Rolf Michaelis, *Die Zeit*, 28.2.2002; Volker Müller, *Berliner Zeitung*, 25.2.2002. For detailed comments on illness as a recurrent theme in Wolf's work, see Astrid Köhler, *Brückenschläge. DDR-Autoren vor und nach der Wiedervereinigung*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007, 38-42.

⁴⁴² See Susanne Kunckel, *Welt am Sonntag*, 24.2.2002; Beatrix Langner, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 23./24.2.2002; Rolf Michaelis, *Die Zeit*, 28.2.2002, 45; Volker Müller, *Berliner Zeitung*, 25.2.2002; Inge Stephan, *Freitag*, 22.3.2002.

⁴⁴³ Volker Hage, *Der Spiegel* [8], 18.2.2002, 199. See also Tilman Spreckelsen, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 23.2.2002.

⁴⁴⁴ Volker Hage, 'Kunstvolle Prosa', *Die Zeit*, 1.6.1990. For full details of Hage's assessment of *Was bleibt* in the opening gambits of the 'Literaturstreit', see Chapter One, 35.

dismissed the work for its vague metaphors and allusions,⁴⁴⁵ with one commentator asserting, in what must count as the most scathing verdict, that *Leibhaftig* was a 'zusammengestümperte Chronik phantasieloser Wehleidigkeit'.⁴⁴⁶ At one level, the criticism that the work is vague is at least understandable since, by interweaving four different narrative threads – endurance of illness, feverish dreams, reflections and memories of the GDR and thoughts on the Third Reich – Wolf does create an entire network of references and allusions, as will be illustrated in this chapter. Whether these references are vague or not will be discussed in some detail in the second part of this chapter and in the context of Wolf's characteristic aesthetic of 'subjektive Authentizität'.

In this analysis of *Leibhaftig*, I will first and foremost suggest that the interpretation of the narrative as an allegory of a fatally diseased GDR, which constitutes the common denominator in the majority of reviews, should be adopted with caution. This reading seems rather implausible, not least because the patient (narrator) survives whereas the GDR does not. At the same time, the link between the demise of the GDR and the patient's physical breakdown cannot be ignored. In fact, the narrator herself suggests that the underlying causes for the collapse of her immune system might, to some extent, be psychosomatic and that the illness has helped her to realise that '[d]ie Infektion früh erfolgt sein [mochte], die jahrzehntelange Inkubationszeit ist vorbei, jetzt bricht die Heilung aus als schwere Krankheit' (L, 93). If, as the narrator implies, the life-threatening illness signals the beginning of a healing process, the

⁴⁴⁵ See, for example, Heide Soltau, *NDR 4 'Info'*, 26.3.2002.

⁴⁴⁶ Stephan Maus, *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 20.3.2002.

question arises as to the origins and nature of the 'Infektion' which eventually necessitated 'emergency treatment' in order to initiate the life-saving process of healing. The intertwining of 'Heilung' and 'schwere Krankheit' obliges us to read *Leibhaftig* not as an allegory of a GDR in decline but as a manifestation of the narrator's *personal* journey, albeit a journey revealing underlying political and historical themes and preoccupations.

With this consideration in mind, I would agree with those critics who direct attention towards Wolf's treatment of the twin themes of guilt and responsibility for the failure of the utopian socialist project in the GDR: 'ein Netz von Schuld und Verantwortlichkeit, in das auch das Ich [des Erzählers] verstrickt ist.'⁴⁴⁷ It could be argued that the issue of 'die Mitschuld der Intellektuellen der DDR, um die Mitverantwortung für die zweite deutsche Katastrophe – nach der nationalsozialistischen die stalinistische',⁴⁴⁸ which was raised in the second phase of the 'Literaturstreit', resonates in *Leibhaftig*. Importantly, in Wolf's narrative this issue is explored in the wider context of the double legacy of National Socialism and the former GDR government – in other words in the context of the *collective* legacy of the German past.

This chapter will therefore focus firstly on Wolf's reworking of the twin themes of guilt and responsibility in the context of the failure of the utopian socialist project through the metaphor of illness. Paradoxical though it may seem, this particular aspect might be considered as Wolf's implicit response to the criticism expressed in the 'Literaturstreit' of her enduring allegiance to the

⁴⁴⁷ Inge Stephan, *Freitag*, 22.3.2002. For a further discussion of the theme of guilt in *Leibhaftig*, see Martina Caspari, *Weimarer Beiträge*, 49, 2003, op.cit.

⁴⁴⁸ Ulrich Greiner, *Die Zeit*, 27.7.1990.

ideals of socialism.⁴⁴⁹ In the first part of this chapter I will argue that in *Leibhaftig* the twin themes of guilt and responsibility are closely, though not exclusively, linked to the narrator's recollections of her contemporary and friend Hannes Urban, and need to be read as evidence of Wolf's continuing concern with the 'Erkundung der blinden Flecken der Vergangenheit' (T, 21)⁴⁵⁰ in a GDR-specific context. The narrative thus brings a further dimension to Wolf's literary treatment of the theme of 'Vergangenheitsbewältigung' which, as discussed in previous chapters, constitutes a central preoccupation in her post-unification essays and prose.

In her diary entry for 27 September 1997 in *Ein Tag im Jahr*, Wolf reiterates that the role of literature in promoting precise memory of the past had become even more important in an era narrowly focused on the Stasi files, the implication being that these have limited authenticity.⁴⁵¹ With this qualification in mind, *Leibhaftig* might be read as a sequel to her 1976 novel *Kindheitsmuster*: whereas *Kindheitsmuster* focuses on Wolf's experience of growing up in the Third Reich, *Leibhaftig* concentrates for the greater part on her memories of personal experience in the GDR. However, Wolf's recollections of aspects of the Third Reich also merit further analysis, as will be shown in the second part of this chapter.

Secondly, I take issue with those critics who dismiss the narrative on the basis of what they see as vague metaphors and allusions, or who criticise *Leibhaftig* for 'Überdeutlichkeit' in linking the narrator's illness to shortcomings

⁴⁴⁹ See Chapter One, 21-23 and 25-27 respectively.

⁴⁵⁰ See also 'Unerledigte Widersprüche: Gespräch mit Therese Hörnigk', ID, 66.

⁴⁵¹ See ET, 580-581.

in GDR society. I suggest that the text should be read as a further example of Wolf's distinctive narrative concept of 'subjektive Authentizität' – a concept which is specific to Christa Wolf but not to the literature of the GDR per se. Therefore, the second part of this chapter will concentrate on an analysis of the interwoven narrative threads of endurance of illness and feverish dreams in the context of Wolf's distinctive narrative method. It will also highlight inextricable links to concealed memories about the Nationalist Socialist regime and the GDR, particularly aspects of the past which Wolf has not previously addressed. I contend that in this 'Alterswerk' Wolf has moved on from defending herself against the accusation of having been a 'Staatsdichterin'. In contrast to selected texts contained in *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou*,⁴⁵² which were discussed in Chapter Two, *Leibhaftig* should not be interpreted as the author's response to this allegation, but should be read as an assertion of her role as 'Dichterin' and a reassertion of her distinctive aesthetic which, in the 'Literaturstreit' and as discussed in Chapter One, had attracted disparaging comments.

Hannes Urban and the themes of guilt and responsibility

The detailed analysis of *Leibhaftig* will begin with Wolf's treatment of the twin themes of guilt and responsibility in the context of the failure of the utopian socialist project. These twin themes are linked to the narrator's recollections of her contemporary Hannes Urban, an old 'Freund und Genosse' (L, 36) whose disappearance at the time the narrator's illness breaks out preys on her mind. The narrator's memories of her friend Urban represent the GDR-contextual thread of this narrative and span a period of roughly forty years, from the early

⁴⁵² See in particular the diary entries, exchanges of letters and experimental literary texts contained in *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou*.

fifties to the late eighties. Through the divergent paths taken by the protagonist and Hannes Urban, Wolf explores the shortcomings of the ‘mittlere Generation der DDR’ – the generation that was formative of the structures of the GDR – and therefore, as she had first stated in her 1968 essay ‘Lesen und Schreiben’: ‘[D]ie Anläufe dieser Generation, [...] die Leistung, aber auch ihr Versagen, [...] wie es um das Gewissen dieser Generation bestellt ist’ (DA, 767).

In her feverish state the narrator revisits individual phases which connect her life with that of Urban ‘whom she got to know when she began her student life at Jena University’,⁴⁵³ and who, much later, had a career as a leading cultural functionary – a ‘Kultursekretär’ (L, 123) – in the state apparatus.⁴⁵⁴ As Tate notes, whilst she opts for a writing career and ‘becomes increasingly alienated from the state’s political leadership’,⁴⁵⁵ Urban climbs up the Party-political ranks. He pursues a ‘career as an ideologue’,⁴⁵⁶ similar to that of Akamas in *Medea. Stimmen*, which turns him into an ‘agent of the establishment’⁴⁵⁷ for which ‘he is rewarded with promotion to ever higher office’.⁴⁵⁸ And, like Akamas, Urban embodies the principle that the end justifies the means. Even when his personal stance is at odds with official policy, by his own admission he toes the Party-line: ‘wenn die Autorität der obersten Spitze auf dem Spiel stand, dann müsse man alles tun, damit eben wirklich in ihrem Sinne entschieden werde’ (L, 182). As Tate observes, in spite of his loyalty to

⁴⁵³ Tate, op.cit., 225.

⁴⁵⁴ It should be noted that the SED is never explicitly mentioned in the text.

⁴⁵⁵ Tate, op.cit., ibid.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid.

the regime, he ultimately 'proves expendable'.⁴⁵⁹ As the narrator endures and recovers from her life-threatening illness, Urban vanishes and is found dead weeks later, feelings of betrayal by the establishment having caused him to commit suicide.

The biographical similarities between Hannes Urban and Hans Koch (born 1927), who became a powerful literary ideologue in the GDR and who committed suicide in 1986, have, as Tate comments, been noted in reviews of *Leibhaftig*.⁴⁶⁰ It appears that Wolf exercised an author's prerogative to modify the facts in making Urban's suicide coincide with the outbreak of the narrator's illness, thus 'bringing together two events separated by more than a year in the lives of their real-life counterparts'.⁴⁶¹ Yet Wolf's narrative traces the broad pattern of their encounters in the GDR cultural scene.⁴⁶² *Leibhaftig* is one of a number of Wolf's narratives or novels which do not carry the disclaimer that the characters are fictional and that any resemblance to other persons is entirely coincidental,⁴⁶³ which suggests that Wolf might not have wanted to go out of her way to conceal the identity of the real-life person on whom the fictional

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁰ See, Tate, op.cit., 234. Examples of reviews not mentioned by Tate are: Rüdiger Bernhardt, 'Ein fast biografischer Wiederholungsfall', *Unsere Zeitung – Zeitung der DKP*, 28.6.2002; and Volker Müller, *Berliner Zeitung*, 25.2.2002.

⁴⁶¹ Tate, ibid.

⁴⁶² For an outline of Koch's career, see Helmut Müller-Enbergs, Jan Wielgohs, Dieter Hoffmann (eds.), *Wer war wer in der DDR? Ein biographisches Lexikon*, Berlin: Links, 2000, 445-46. Quoted in Tate, op.cit. Tate points out that Koch made his way from a 'Freie Deutsche Jugend' functionary, first in Gera then in Jena (1946-1950), via a professorship in the SED's 'Institut für Gesellschaftswissenschaften', where he was a research student between 1951 and 1956, to posts of authority in the Writers' Union (since 1961), the Ministry of Culture (from 1966 onwards), the Institute of Literature at the Central Committee of the SED, whose director he was from 1977, and finally, in May 1986, to membership of the cultural commission in the Politbüro until his suicide in June 1986. I would like to add that the latter incident is regarded as noteworthy in *Wer war wer in der DDR?* because, according to this source, for the first time in the history of the GDR the suicide of a high ranking functionary was reported in the GDR media.

⁴⁶³ The other novels or narratives by Christa Wolf not carrying a disclaimer are *Kassandra*, *Störfall*, *Sommerstück*, *Medea*. *Stimmen* and *Was bleibt*.

character of Urban is based. The choice of the name 'Urban' for her character gives further credence to this notion since Hans Koch was known as the GDR 'Literaturpapst' and many real-life popes shared the name Urban.⁴⁶⁴ Alternatively, the choice of name might be derived from the Latin 'urbanus' where, in addition to the standard meaning of urban as opposed to the natural, the term also means 'cultured'. Even though I do not wish to labour the biographical dimension with regard to Hans Koch, as this approach would not contribute much towards a deeper understanding of *Leibhaftig*, awareness of the identity of Urban's real-life counterpart is helpful in providing authenticity to Wolf's literary treatment of an individual in authority within the GDR state apparatus through whom underlying patterns of thought and behaviour are revealed and whose decisions with regard to cultural policy in his various posts of authority affected her own life as a writer in the GDR.

Through her depiction of the figures of Urban and the narrator, Wolf explores the theme of generational experiences of GDR contemporaries – of 'die mittlere Generation der DDR' – and thus, at least implicitly, responds to a prominent issue raised in the 'Literaturstreit' (Chapter Two, 27-28). However, in contrast to Wolf's post-unification texts *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou* and *Hierzulande Andernorts*, in which the issue of generational experience is presented by way of highlighting shared experiences of GDR intellectuals who were critical of the SED regime, in *Leibhaftig* the focus is on GDR contemporaries who have taken different paths in life. Indeed, the narrator and

⁴⁶⁴ For details of popes with the name of Urban and their significance in the context of *Leibhaftig*, see Nikolaos-Ioannis Koskinas "Fremd bin ich eingezogen, fremd ziehe ich wieder aus". *Von Cassandra, über Medea, zu Ariadne: Manifestationen der Psyche im späten Werk Christa Wolfs*, Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2008, 210.

Urban are portrayed as contrasting figures: she is the talented writer who deplores the inexorable erosion of the early socialist ideals on which GDR society was founded, whereas he – ‘der vernichtenden Wahrheit innegeworden, daß er kein Talent hatte’ (L, 47) – is a career-oriented cynic who is rarely seized by the zest of the early socialist ideals.

In the narrative, the contemporary who turns into an agent of the establishment becomes ‘der neue Mephisto’ (L, 183). Yet, significantly, from the moment he goes missing he becomes the narrator’s alter ego: ‘Seit Urban verschwunden ist, hat er Asyl gefunden in mir’ (L, 37). Through her memories of Urban, the narrator pursues the answer to her overriding question: ‘Oder hat es einen Sinn, mich endlich, nach all den Jahren, Jahrzehnten der Selbsttäuschung, von der durchdringenden Sinnlosigkeit allen Geschehens zu überzeugen?’ (L, 32). In other words, she is asking herself whether, after the experience of National Socialism and the ‘real existierender Sozialismus’ – the ‘Jahrzehnt[e] der Selbsttäuschung’ – any belief in a society’s utopian potential to create ‘ein[e] ander[e] Hoffnungs- und Menschheitsstadt’ (L, 136) might plausibly be maintained.

In *Leibhaftig*, the quest for ‘Sinn’ in the GDR-specific context is unravelled through the narrator’s reflections, which take her back to the early days of East Germany and intellectuals’ initial hopes of realising the vision of a socialist, humanitarian utopia: the ‘Zipfelchen, [an dem] Urban und ich zusammenhängen’ (L, 180). This ‘Zipfelchen’ is tantamount to ‘[d]ie Infektion, die früh erfolgt sein [mochte]’ which culminates in the narrator’s ‘schwere Krankheit’ (L, 93) and emergency treatment at the cusp of the ‘Wendezeit’. It

could also be argued that this 'Zipfelchen' corresponds to the alleged prolonged allegiance to the ideals of socialism for which Schirrmacher had criticised Wolf in the opening shots of the 'Literaturstreit'.

Through the narrator's memories of individual phases in her life which connect her with the fictional character of Urban, the gradual erosion of the utopian socialist vision on which the GDR was based is revealed. To some extent I agree with Tate's comment that the forces that 'subverted'⁴⁶⁵ – my choice of expression here would be 'eroded' – the vision on which the GDR was founded are personified by the narrator's counterpart Urban, reminding us, as Tate emphasises, of the symbolic reference to the title of Wolf's narrative, since 'der Leibhaftige' is commonly associated with the devil.⁴⁶⁶ However, as Christine Cosentino points out, 'der Leibhaftige', or 'Mephisto' (L, 183), not only refers to the principle of 'das Böse' (L, 119), but in old medieval religious texts 'Mephisto' can also refer to the divine.⁴⁶⁷

Significantly, in *Leibhaftig* the narrator does not merely portray Urban as a one-dimensional subversive character but as someone who, in the early days of the GDR, which coincide with the narrator's and Urban's student days, shared the narrator's utopian ideals: 'Was ist Menschenglück heute. Die Frage stellte ich Urban vor der Mensa [...]. Nun was schon, Genossin. Der Kampf gegen die Unterdrücker' (L, 49). The expression 'Unterdrücker' here denotes the Western capitalist system, and is used to contrast the vision of a socialist,

⁴⁶⁵ Tate, op.cit., 225.

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁷ See Christine Cosentino, "'Aus Teufels Küche": Gedanken zur Teufelsfigur in der Literatur nach 2000: Christoph Heins *Willenbrock*, Christa Wolfs *Leibhaftig* und Monika Marons *Endmoränen*', *Germanic Notes and Review*, volume 35, No 2, Fall 2004, 121-127, here 123.

humanistic alternative state at the time of the founding of the GDR.⁴⁶⁸ In fact, the narrator suggests that Urban ultimately committed suicide for the very reason that 'er versäumt [hat], rechtzeitig jede Hoffnung abzutöten. Das hat ihn umgebracht. [...] Das Quentchen Hoffnung, das noch in ihm war, das war seine schwache Stelle, sein Lindenblatt' (L, 181). Nevertheless, once Urban embarks on his career path in posts of authority within the state apparatus he opts to follow Party discipline and succumbs to the pressure to conform. This is the point in the course of developments within the GDR when the narrator's and Urban's paths diverge.

Yet the narrator fondly recalls a 'moment' in the early stages of Urban's career when he already holds a post of authority in the Ministry of Culture – 'ich war erst Mitte Dreißig' [*sic*] (L, 15) – and when, at the time the rough cut of a film which she had been involved in writing was shown for official approval, she is admitted to hospital having collapsed with heart palpitations. The reference to the film seems to relate to the genuine controversy surrounding *Fräulein Schmetterling*, for which Wolf had written the script and which occurred a short while after the 11th Plenary Session of the SED Central Committee,⁴⁶⁹ resulting in the film not being sanctioned for completion.⁴⁷⁰ In this more formal context within the GDR cultural scene, the narrator refers to Urban as a figure in authority who dispenses

[m]ilde Urteile, wenn irgend möglich, oder, falls Kritik unvermeidlich war,

⁴⁶⁸ See my detailed analysis of Wolf's prose text 'Begegnungen Third Street' in Chapter Three for a discussion of the significance of establishing a socialist East German state as a humanistic alternative to Germany's fascist past, 117-120.

⁴⁶⁹ See Chapter Two, 81-84, for a detailed discussion surrounding the events of the 11th Plenary Session of the SED Central Committee in December 1965.

⁴⁷⁰ For further details relating to the controversies surrounding the film *Fräulein Schmetterling* see Magenau, 189-190.

eine in Ironie gekleidete Kritik, die immer durchblicken ließ, daß wir doch alle aus demselben Brutkasten kommen, wie Urban sich ausdrückte. (L, 13)

On this occasion Urban still displayed a personal interest in the narrator's predicament, not least on account of their experience of having grown up in the Third Reich and their shared experience as university students at the time of the newly founded GDR, as implied by Urban's choice of expression 'aus demselben Brutkasten kommen' (L, 13). His concern about the narrator's health and her response to his concern seem sincere. Yet this sincerity soon diminishes on both sides:

Urban war der erste, der mich am nächsten Morgen anrief, und ich bedankte mich aufrichtig bei ihm für seine Anteilnahme. Die Aufrichtigkeit ließ dann bald nach, von beiden Seiten, das muß ich zugeben. Man denkt ja, wenn der andere nicht aufrichtig ist, hat man das Recht, sich auch ein wenig zu verstellen. (L, 18)⁴⁷¹

In this context 'sich verstellen' takes on particular significance, implying as it does that the narrator maintains the pretence of making Urban believe that she is convinced of his continuing commitment to the utopian socialist vision, even though she has come to view him as an agent of the regime who contributes to the erosion of the socialist vision on which the GDR was founded.

One of the possible consequences of lack of sincerity is guilt. Whilst the narrator associates a commitment to the utopian socialist vision with the notion of being 'unschuldig' (L, 18), she links the loss of the utopian vision to a sense of guilt when she asks herself:

Und hatten sie Urban nicht schon früher verloren? Wie oft im Leben werden wir andere und verlieren diejenigen, mit denen wir jung und, nun ja: unschuldig waren? (L, 18)

⁴⁷¹ As discussed in detail in Chapter One, in the opening gambit of the 'Literaturstreit' the issue of lack of sincerity and integrity constituted a significant accusation levelled at Christa Wolf.

The implicit question which Wolf raises here, whilst reflecting on the loss of friends who have taken different paths in life, is that of her guilt as an intellectual in the course of developments in the GDR. Tate's view is that, in *Leibhaftig*, the conflict between GDR intellectuals and 'authority' is presented in an allegorical way and that this portrayal not only effectively absolves the narrator of responsibility for what went wrong but also that it leaves a mystery surrounding the identity of the forces actually determining the course of events.⁴⁷² This assessment cannot be allowed to go unchallenged. Admittedly, Urban's Party-political activities 'hinter den Kulissen' (L, 29) remain rather impenetrable, and in that respect Urban is reminiscent of the unnamed 'Herrn [der] Stadt' (WB, 33) in *Was bleibt*. However, it could be argued that the narrator *does* explore the issue of personal guilt and responsibility through her reflections on particular 'moments' which connect her life with that of Urban.

The narrator's exploration of the issue of personal guilt is poignantly captured in the recollections of her involvement in official committee work within the GDR cultural scene – work which, with reference to Wolf's involvement in real life, would have included the Writers' Union, the East German PEN and the Academy of the Arts, which are also committees where her path would have crossed with that of Hans Koch. Specifically, the narrator deliberates on whether her ultimate withdrawal from Party committee work was the right decision. Once again, these reflections are inextricably linked to Urban as she recalls that it was he who had a say in the various committees in which she was engaged:

⁴⁷² See Tate, op.cit., 234.

Urban, der hatte in mindestens drei Kommissionen, denen auch ich angehörte, das entscheidende Wort. In der ersten hat er es ungeschickt und unsicher gebraucht, da war er durch Argumente beeinflussbar, und ich war zufrieden mit ihm, in der zweiten schlich sich Routine in seine Diskussionsleitung ein, und in der dritten machte es ihm nichts mehr aus, die Entscheidungsmacht zu gebrauchen, er fing an Widerspruch abzuwürgen, und ich fing an die Sitzungen zu meiden. Kein Grund, sich zu rühmen. (L, 37)

The narrator was pleased with Urban when he could still be persuaded by arguments. Yet she gradually withdraws from Party meetings once critical voices are routinely smothered. Wolf expresses her own guilt here for not continuing explicitly to voice her opposition to Party policy in the context of these official gatherings, an admission which might be considered as an implicit response to the accusation in the 'Literaturstreit' by Schirmmacher of her failure in her role as an intellectual. As discussed in Chapter One, Schirmmacher had criticised Wolf for encouraging patient tolerance and endurance of a repressive political regime instead of demonstrating an overtly critical approach.⁴⁷³ Wolf seems to imply now that as a GDR writer and intellectual, she could have contributed more effectively to humanising the state by remaining an active and constructively critical Party member. Earlier post-unification texts can still be read as examples of Wolf fighting off guilt, particularly *Medea. Stimmen* with the emphasis on the figure of Medea as a scapegoat. In *Leibhaftig*, however, Wolf adopts a self-critical stance in the narrator's implicit admission that, in later years, she lacked the energy to make use of any remaining chances of influencing political events in the GDR.

In *Sommerstück* (1989) Wolf had already conveyed the feeling of despair at not being able to change political developments in the GDR, which prompted

⁴⁷³ See Schirmmacher, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 2.6.1990.

her to spend extended periods of time in her second home in the country. Wolf reiterated this sense of despair in her diary entry 'Woserin, Freitag, den 27. September 1991' contained in *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou*. When, on one occasion in the early days of the GDR, Urban posed the question 'Oder könne man Privates und Politisches voneinander trennen?', the narrator's reply was unambiguous: 'Das fand ich nicht' (L, 87).

In later years the increasing alienation of the individual from the state is identified as an important element in the erosion of the GDR 'brotherhood' who once shared the belief in a better humanitarian, socialist society – the 'ander[e] Hoffnungs- und Menschheitsstadt' (L, 136). The narrator's particular reflections on the notion of the 'brotherhood' to which she felt both Urban and herself once belonged are triggered by recollections of her own observation by the Stasi. If one accepts that this experience is the basis of Wolf's own memories, this hints at a point in time after the expatriation of Wolf Biermann in 1976 when her telephone and flat were being bugged. In *Leibhaftig* the Stasi represent the opposite in the real world of the SED regime to the utopian 'ander[e] Menschheitsstadt':

BIG BROTHER. Damit muß man leben, sagte Urban einmal zu mir. Überall auf der Welt müssen wir damit leben. Irgendwann hatte er angefangen, auf diese neue, beinahe verschwörerische Weise 'wir' zu sagen. Wir, sagte er geheimnisvoll, von den eigenen Leuten beargwöhnt im eigenen Land, einer größeren Bruderschaft zugehörig, die ihn tröstete und rechtfertigte und von der eine starke Verführung ausging. Auch auf mich? Ja. Auch auf mich. Eine Zeitlang wohnte sie [die Erzählerin] in ihrer realen Stadt mit diesem Metallkästchen im Keller, in dem ihre Telefonleitung konspirativ verschwand, und zugleich in einer anderen Hoffnungs- und Menschheitsstadt, die ihre eigentliche Heimat war oder sein würde, die wir der Zukunft noch entreißen, die wir uns schaffen würden, 'wir', die auch Urban meinte. (L, 136)

As the narrator suggests, the erosion of the 'brotherhood' was a gradual

process and cannot be traced back to any particular point in GDR history:

Seit wann fühlte sie sich nicht mehr angesprochen, wenn er 'wir' sagte, es gab [...] keinen besonderen Anlaß, nur eine Häufung alltäglicher und weniger alltäglicher Anlässe, die jenen Dauerschmerz erzeugte, der zu Einsichten führen mußte, die Urban scheute. (L, 136-137)

The narrator's 'chance encounters' with Urban over an unspecified period of time provide further insight into the underlying causes for the failure of the socialist project in the GDR at the level of individual accountability. There is the instance of the narrator's accidental meeting with Urban at the Friedrichstraße crossing point in Berlin – the "Transitstelle, wo der Strom sich teilte, in Reisende, die in den Staat einreisen wollten, dessen Bürger wir sind und dessen Territorium hier begann, und in diejenigen, die [...] in diesen Staat zurückkamen' (L, 26) – when the narrator mentions that she was kept waiting at the checkpoint, in contrast to Urban whose papers were processed swiftly as he held an important position in the GDR cultural scene:

[aus der] Dauer des Verbleibs der Dokumente in dem Häuschen [kann man] allenfalls auf die eigene Unverfänglichkeit oder, wenn man lange warten muß, auf die eigene Verdächtigkeit bei der zuständigen Dienststelle schließen. (L, 26)

On this occasion, Urban waited for the narrator in order to make polite conversation, and they both pretended to be delighted to see each other. The compulsion to justify oneself, to present oneself as a good citizen of the GDR state, breeds a degree of insincerity which I think is presented not just as an issue for the individual but as an issue which is at the root of the failure of the GDR socialist project, since socialist belief arguably attaches greater importance to the notion of sincerity than does belief in capitalism. Avoiding communication, in its extreme form opting for 'silence', is identified as a further

contributory factor, and is illustrated by another accidental encounter within the GDR official cultural scene a few years later, at a time when Urban had progressed further through the Party-political ranks whilst the narrator had fallen out of favour:

er war [...] Eile vortäuschend die Treppe hinunter entschwinden, ohne sich von ihr zu verabschieden, den Anlaß hatte sie vergessen, nur, daß er sich anscheinend wegen irgendeines Vorfalles vor ihr genierte, ihr jedenfalls aus dem Weg gehen wollte. (L, 29)

Even though Urban is presented as an agent of the regime for whom the end justifies the means, the narrator does not doubt his fundamental commitment to socialism – the ‘Fortschritt in der Geschichte’ (L, 139) – when she ironically comments on his ethos:

Die Wahrheit sei eine Funktion des Fortschritts in der Geschichte. Alles andere Gefühlskitsch. Ob er denn meine, der Zweck heilige die Mittel? Er zögerte. Bis zu einem gewissen Grad, sagte er dann. [...] Jedenfalls nach Interessenlage und nicht nach den Kriterien ihres moralischen Rigorismus. Der würde uns entwaffnen, ob sie das nicht sähe. (L, 139-140)

Yet she gradually distances herself from Urban because she feels that, given his view that the end justifies the means, even with the vague qualification of ‘bis zu einem gewissen Grad’ (L, 139), he is betraying the original shared utopian vision. He, on the other hand, believes that she has remained a hopeless romantic, as captured in the narrator’s memories of her last encounter with Urban: ‘beim letzten Mal, als sie sich überhaupt gesehen hatten’ (L, 181). Even though this connection is not explicitly stated by the narrator, these recollections of their last encounter appear to be linked to genuine events surrounding the 1979 Writers’ Congress, events which resulted in the expulsion of a number of writers and intellectuals including Kurt Bartsch, Adolf Endler,

Klaus Poche, Klaus Schlesinger, Dieter Schubert, Stefan Heym, Karl-Heinz Jakobs, Rolf Schneider and Joachim Seyppel,⁴⁷⁴ and which also provide insight into the vexed relationship between the worlds of art and politics in the GDR. As the narrator recounts,

Hoffnung als Schwachstelle. Hatte er [Urban] es nicht genauso ausgedrückt? Und war das nicht beim letzten Mal, als sie sich überhaupt gesehen hatten? In jenem Wandelgang vor dem Konferenzraum. In der Pause, in der ein üppiges Büfett sie einstimmen sollte auf den zweiten, den entscheidenden Teil der Versammlung, deren Ablauf, das war klargeworden, Urban dirigierte, eine Art Bewährungsprobe, der er sich unterziehen mußte. Es war nach der wüsten Rede, die er gehalten hatte. Als selbst der Gang zur Toilette von unauffälligen jungen Männern beobachtet wurde.⁴⁷⁵ Sie hätte wütend sein sollen, leider war sie traurig. Unvermutet stand sie Urban gegenüber. Sie machte eine Bemerkung über die Bewacher, da konnte er nur die Achseln zucken: Nicht mein Revier. – Ihr wollt uns mit Lachsbrötchen kaufen, hatte sie gesagt, er verzog die Mundwinkel: Einige von euch haben einen höheren Preis. Sie hatte gefragt, ob er seine Rede selbst geschrieben habe, und er antwortete schlicht: Nein. Jedenfalls nicht alle Passagen. – Sie fragte: Muß das sein? – Er sagte: Ja. Das muß sein. – Sie sagte: Ihr verlegt euch darauf, uns einzuschüchtern. Und er: Wenn wir dadurch zehn Gegenstimmen weniger bekommen, lohnt es sich. – Du findest es in Ordnung, die Kollegen, die, wie du weißt, nur ihr Recht verlangen, zu verurteilen und auszuschließen. – Das habe ich nicht gesagt, sagte Urban. (L, 181-182)

In the exchange Urban adopts a pragmatic approach in attempting to pacify the narrator into toeing the Party-political line since, one might assume, a positive outcome would assist his career. At the same time he points out that he was not involved in making decisions about censorship:

Es stellte sich heraus, daß er eigentlich nichts 'in Ordnung' fand, oder ob sie ihn für so dumm halte. Nur, wenn die Autorität der obersten Spitze auf dem Spiel stand, dann müsse man alles tun, damit eben wirklich in ihrem Sinne entschieden werde. Da lasse er sich in seine Reden reinschreiben, was immer sie für richtig hielten. (L, 182)

⁴⁷⁴ For a more detailed account of events, see Magenau, op.cit., 311-314.

⁴⁷⁵ It should be noted here that the reference to the Stasi – the ‘unauffälligen Männer’ – refers to Wolf, not Urban, being observed.

Yet Urban subsequently admits that the socialist project on which the GDR was founded has failed, though he draws different conclusions from this admission. Even after the events of 1979, Urban defends the state's repressive measures when he argues in favour of maintenance of the status quo for an unspecified period. At a time when the country is close to collapse, as he explains, his goal is to organise a well-ordered retreat:

Was ist denn noch zu retten, fragte sie.
Urban sagte: Die Fassade. Wenigstens noch für eine gewisse Zeit.
Sie sagte: So steht es, deiner Meinung nach?, und er erwiderte: Ja. –
Sie: Und wozu brauchst du dann noch die Fassade? – Er sagte: Um den
geordneten Rückzug zu decken. Oder, fragte er, würde sie den
ungeordneten Zusammenbruch vorziehen [sic]. (L, 182-183)

Significantly, the narrator's response to Urban's admission hints at the reason why history is not moving forward and why the socialist project is ultimately destined to fail: the absence of self-critique, which was also a theme at the heart of Braun's *Unvollendete Geschichte* (1977) as Andy Hollis emphasises in his introduction to the Manchester New German Texts edition.⁴⁷⁶ In *Leibhaftig*, the narrator touches on the effects of this absence of self-critique in GDR society as follows:

Der neue Mephisto, sagte sie [die Erzählerin]. Verführung nicht mit Unsterblichkeit, sondern mit Stillstand. Du gibst also alles verloren. Ja. Jedenfalls für diese Epoche. Sie war *ungeeignet für unser Experiment*. Wir waren auch ungeeignet, wir ganz besonders. (L, 183) [my emphasis, JD]

In *Hierzulande Andernorts* Wolf had already made mention of her generation – 'die mittlere Generation der DDR' – as having been drawn into the socialist experiment. Urban's reference to 'diese Epoche', the time of the Cold War,

⁴⁷⁶ Volker Braun, *Unvollendete Geschichte*, edited by Andy Hollis, Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1988.

would suggest that his assessment of developments in the GDR is indeed plausible and that his patterns of thought and behaviour are likely to have been shared by others in positions of authority within the state apparatus.

In order fully to appreciate the broader significance of the adverse notion of 'Stillstand', as noted by the narrator, it is helpful to remind ourselves of key tenets stated in the East German textbook *Grundlagen des Marxismus-Leninismus* (1971) where the question of how society is to develop from socialism to communism is explored at length:

Die reale historische Entwicklung des Sozialismus hat gezeigt, wie gefährlich die Illusion ist, daß die Gesellschaft unter den neuen [sozialistischen] Bedingungen von jeglichen Widersprüchen befreit sei. [...] Die historische Praxis zerstörte nicht nur die besagte Illusion, sondern schmiedete auch eine scharfe Waffe im Kampf gegen jeglichen Stillstand und Konservatismus, gegen Oberflächlichkeit und Selbstzufriedenheit. Diese Waffe ist die sozialistische Kritik und Selbstkritik.⁴⁷⁷

Hollis emphasises that if a socialist revolution is to be successful and not become trapped in a rut of complacency, and if socialism is to develop towards communism as the ultimate goal, then according to this textbook those in power must remain open to criticism and willing to practise self-criticism.⁴⁷⁸ It is arguable that, by eroding that 'double engine of socialist development, "die sozialistische Kritik und Selbstkritik"',⁴⁷⁹ the GDR *did* become trapped in a rut of complacency, and that this resulted in 'Stillstand'.

The perceived gulf between the stagnation of the 'real existierender Sozialismus' and the utopian vision of 'das Köstliche' (L, 99), or "'unsere gemeinsame Sache'" (L, 158), leads the narrator in *Leibhaftig* to ask the

⁴⁷⁷ *Grundlagen der marxistisch-leninistischen Philosophie*, Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1973, 140.

⁴⁷⁸ See the introduction by Andy Hollis to Volker Braun's *Unvollendete Geschichte*, op.cit., 8.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid.

question: 'Was machen wir, wenn das Köstliche vorbei ist, ein für allemal vorbei?' (L, 99). The reference to 'das Köstliche' is reminiscent of Volker Braun's poem 'Das Eigentliche' (1991) in which he deplores the loss of the socialist utopian vision as 'das Eigentliche' as follows: 'Was ich niemals besaß, wird mir entrissen./ Was ich nicht lebte, werde ich ewig missen.' In *Leibhaftig*, and in a variation on the theme of 'Das Eigentliche', the narrator's reflections on the 'Leibhaftige' prompt her to pose the question, in a reversal of the famous quote from Goethe's *Faust*,

ob es auch einen Teufel gibt, der stets das Gute will und stets das Böse schafft? [...] Der Teufel, den ich im Sinn habe, ist der allervernünftigsten Vernunft entstiegen oder ihr in einem unbeobachteten geschichtlichen Augenblick entwichen, der *Traum* der Vernunft gebiert Ungeheuer. (L, 119) [my emphasis, JD]

It is significant that the narrator deliberately uses the term 'Traum der Vernunft' instead of 'Schlaf der Vernunft', since, as Cosentino points out,⁴⁸⁰ for former GDR intellectuals 'Schlaf der Vernunft' was synonymous with visionary socialist happiness. The use of 'Traum' conjures up links with Wolf's historic speech at the time of change on 4th November 1989 in East Berlin

Alexanderplatz which is included in *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou*:

Die Sprache [...] erinnert sich ihrer Gefühlswörter. Eines davon ist 'Traum'; also träumen wir, mit hellwacher Vernunft! Stell dir vor, es ist Sozialismus, und keiner geht weg! (T, 12-13)

Whereas in November 1989 the concept of 'Traum' implied the possibility of a revival of the utopian socialist vision, which formerly preoccupied many critical GDR writers, in *Leibhaftig* the 'Traum der Vernunft' reveals itself as an illusion of an ideological opportunity – a malaise rather than a vision for the future.

⁴⁸⁰ See Cosentino, *Germanic Notes and Review*, volume 35, No 2, Fall 2004, 124.

The conflict between 'Stillstand' and the utopian vision of a better world finds its parallel in the ambiguous figure of the 'Leibhaftige', 'der [...] das Gute will und [...] das Böse schafft' (L, 119). However, the narrator also emphasises that 'das Bösertige' (L, 132) is not confined to the figure of Urban but forms part of every human being, corresponding to the 'dunkle[n] Fleck' (MS, 135) in *Medea. Stimmen*. In her 1996 novel, Wolf had used the dead child to symbolise the fact that the city of Corinth had been built on a lie. Whereas in *Medea. Stimmen* the image of the dead child was deployed to make a socio-political statement, in *Leibhaftig* the 'lie' goes much deeper and is more personal. The 'Homunkulus' (L, 107; L, 162), or foetus, which the narrator follows through Berlin's subterranean maze in one of her feverish dreams might be read as an example of the evil which is dormant in every human being and may therefore be interpreted as a more general statement about the human condition. Alternatively, it might be read as the 'Kollektivschuld' Germans (in the East and in the West) bear as a consequence of the Holocaust. In 'Rückäußerung auf den Brief eines Freundes' contained in *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou*, Wolf had used the following words to express the phenomenon of the evil which is dormant in human beings by linking the abstract ('die Einsetzung des Fremden') with the concrete (the 'dich'):

Entfremdung
ist die Einsetzung des Fremden in dir selbst
Er soll dich ansehen
wenn du in dich hineinblickst
das ist
was die Christen teuflisch nennen (T, 274)

Notably, there appears to be at first sight a 'Leibhaftiger' in the storyline in the form of the pathologist – a Frenchman (a 'Fremder') – whose description

in the narrative as being thin and with deep cheeks is reminiscent of the depiction of the devil in traditional stage productions: 'tiefschwarzes Haarfell, dessen Spitze weit in die Stirn hineinreicht' (L, 166). Yet this 'Leibhaftige' reveals himself as the patient's saviour when he identifies the killer-cells, thus ensuring that the life-saving drugs from the West – the 'Mittel, das es bei uns nicht gab' (L, 12) – can be obtained and administered in time. In the traditional mode of Goethe's 'Mephisto', the pathologist mocks the patient for having deceived herself in believing in the concept of 'das Köstliche' – a concept which, according to the pathologist, is abruptly devalued by death as 'eine böse Überraschung' (L, 170). Ultimately, he saves the patient and thus saves the vision of what is 'des Aufhebens wert' (L, 170) in art, by allowing the narrator, at the most existential of levels, to resume her role as a writer. He is therefore a benign 'devil' who provides hope in spite of his frightening appearance: 'es nimmt ihn mit, [wenn] der letale Ausgang nicht zu vermeiden war' (L, 171) und '[e]r liebt also das Leben' (L, 171).

The narrator's reflections on whether there might have been another way for her – 'Hätte ich einen anderen Weg wählen sollen, den, den Urban gewählt hat?' (L, 132) – lead her to dismiss the option of suicide. Urban's suicide not only signals the end to all socialist utopian illusions, but also the narrator's release from having to decide 'zwischen falschen Alternativen' (L, 183): hope in a revival of the socialist project and commitment to the status quo, or 'Stillstand' (L, 183). Yet the narrator does not interpret Urban's decision to take his life as an act of despair but rather as a lack of courage – 'Feigheit' (L, 180) – for no longer wanting to bear responsibility for the failure of the socialist project. Whilst

he ceases to continue the fight 'zwischen falschen Alternativen' (L, 183), the patient delegates the responsibility for curing her physical illness to an external agent: the medical profession. In response to the consultant doctor's question 'Warum ist Ihr Immunsystem zusammengebrochen' (L, 128), she replies:

Vielleicht, Herr Professor, weil es ersatzweise den Zusammenbruch übernommen hat, den die Person sich nicht gestattete. Weil es, schlau, wie diese geheimen Kräfte in uns sind, die Person niedergeworfen, krank gemacht hat, um sie auf diese etwas umständliche und langwierige Weise dem Sog zum Tode hin zu entziehen und die Verantwortung einem anderen zuzuschieben, nämlich Ihnen, Herr Professor. (L, 128)

There might be an alternative interpretation for Urban's decision to take his own life. He commits suicide because, unlike the narrator, he cannot resort to the therapy of writing to work through particularly painful and challenging moments in his life. The process of getting closer to the 'weißen Flecken' (L, 147) through writing takes the narrator to the brink of guilt and pain. In *Leibhaftig*, illness can be read as a strategy available to an individual 'ohne andere Organe zu verletzen zur Wurzel des Übels vorzudringen, zum Eiterherd, dorthin, wo der glühende Kern der Wahrheit mit dem Kern der Lüge zusammenfällt' (L, 138). The 'Eiterherd' in her body can be interpreted as the physical manifestation of the ultimate loss of hope in realising the socialist utopian vision. It seems that the narrator envisages the failed socialist project – in other words the origin of the 'Infektion' (L, 93) – as part of a longer process, entailing a 'jahrzehntelange Inkubationszeit' (L, 93). When the narrator realises 'daß man nur entweder sich selbst aufgeben konnte oder das, was sie "die Sache" nannten, "unsere gemeinsame Sache", alle Beiworte fielen ab, eins nach dem anderen' (L, 158), she not only refers to the socialist project but also

encompasses the wider issue of utopian thinking, of what should be done if the utopia one had envisaged turns on its head. This erosion of the utopian vision rather than the hopes associated with the vision at the time of the founding of the GDR is the 'Zipfelchen' (L, 180) linking Urban and the narrator.

In view of the 'Ausweglosigkeit der selbst gemachten Geschichte',⁴⁸¹ Urban commits suicide whilst the narrator endures her life-threatening illness. However, Urban's taking of his own life shows that he had not entirely given himself up to becoming an instrument of a flawed idea, whereas the narrator is prepared to accept 'ein Wort wie Vergeblichkeit' as 'Lebenssumme' (L, 145) – in what seems a reiteration of 'Vergeblichkeit' previously expressed in *Hierzulande Andernorts* in the eulogy on Franz Fühmann (HA, 64) as well as in *Medea. Stimmen* (MS, 30). This implies that Wolf has distanced herself from utopian thinking. In this respect I disagree with Cosentino's assessment that the question of the narrator's process of disillusionment with the socialist project in the GDR is left open.⁴⁸² The narrator does not wish to succumb to her illness and, in stark contrast to Urban, opts for life which would suggest that she is discarding any socialist utopian illusions:

Urban war der geworden, der alles mitmachte und auch in Zukunft alles mitmachen würde. Bis es, überraschend für uns alle, eben doch eine Zumutung gegeben hatte, die er nicht mitmachen konnte. Dies ist doch eigentlich etwas wie Hoffnung, oder nicht. Nur daß Hoffnung manchmal auf das Ende zuläuft, zulaufen muß, auch das soll eingestanden sein. (L, 157)

In contrast to Christa Wolf who, having fully recovered from her life-threatening illness of the previous year, in November/ early December 1989

⁴⁸¹ Lothar Müller in Geißler, Ute, 'Christa Wolf, Leibhaftig', *Broadcast by the SWR*, 2002.

⁴⁸² See Cosentino, op.cit., 124.

fought for the retention of the GDR, the narrator in *Leibhaftig* no longer harbours any hopes of a revival of the ideals on which the GDR was founded. As discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two, Wolf's public support of the vision of a reformed socialist state during this brief period in 1989 can be explained by the revolutionary events in the autumn of 1989, and was soon followed by the concession, in her formal Hildesheim speech of January 1990, as discussed in Chapter Two, that the experiment of the 'real existierender Sozialismus' in the GDR had failed. *Leibhaftig* evokes the tenor of *Sommerstück* with the narrator's sense of despair at not being able to change political developments in the GDR. For the narrator in *Leibhaftig*, illness fulfils a cathartic function, a process of cleansing of utopian illusions: 'eine Reinigung, ein Purgatorium' (L, 93).

The key figure in touching the life-affirming 'weißen Flecken' (L, 147) is the anaesthetist Kora Bachmann, who plays an important part in the patient's process of recovery, as will be explained in the second part of this chapter which will focus on an analysis of the interwoven narrative threads of endurance of illness and feverish dreams as evidence of Wolf's continued commitment to her aesthetic of 'subjektive Authentizität'.

'Subjektive Authentizität' and *Leibhaftig*

Leibhaftig represents a further example of the extent to which Wolf's narrative concept of 'subjektive Authentizität' continues in her post-unification work. The narrative demonstrates the extent to which Wolf has adhered to her original concept of 'modern[e] Prosa' (DA, 487) as a distinctive literary form that, in Tate's words, 'in no way legitimizes compromise on the essentials of

autobiographical truthfulness, while demonstrating its validity through the coherence of her narrator *persona*'.⁴⁸³ As Tate observes, *Leibhaftig* also represents evidence of Wolf having resisted post-unification pressures to create, in her 'Prosa', a 'clear demarcation line between ("autobiographical") fact and ("invented") fiction'.⁴⁸⁴ This point merits reiteration here considering that, in the controversies surrounding Wolf in the early 1990s, Wolf's distinctive narrative style had been berated as 'Ästhetik des versteckten Zeigens'⁴⁸⁵ and was referred to in a less dismissive review of *Leibhaftig*, as '[eine] paradoxe Einheit von Zeigen und Verbergen'.⁴⁸⁶ It is this absence of a clear demarcation line in *Leibhaftig* between autobiographical fact and fiction, though, that appears to have deceived some critics into reading *Leibhaftig* as mere autobiography, and prompted them to equate 'Authentizität' quite simply with reality as opposed to fiction.

In his review of *Leibhaftig*, and in support of an autobiographical interpretation of the text, Hage refers to an extract from Wolf's speech 'Krebs und Gesellschaft' (1991), which is contained in *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou*, where she had spoken about those 'tragisch[e] Leben, [...] die sich unter Anpassungsdruck von ihren wahren Bedürfnissen abtrennen' (T, 123) and where, as Hage observes, she had posed the question: 'Wie können wir wissen, ob nicht unser Körper der Austragungsort für Widersprüche ist, in die jeder von uns angesichts der unzumutbaren Ansprüche der Gesellschaft im weitesten Sinn gerät?' (T, 123). For Hage, *Leibhaftig* represents an

⁴⁸³ Tate, op.cit., 226-227.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁵ Noll, *Die Welt*, 12.5.1990.

⁴⁸⁶ Hage, *Der Spiegel* [8], 18.2.2002.

‘autobiographical’ answer to the question Wolf poses in her 1991 speech.

Indeed, from the details presented about the female fictional narrator in *Leibhaftig* the reader can reasonably deduce that she is a writer, though this important detail is not explicitly stated in the text. As Tate observes, the ‘Erinnerungsbrocken’ (L, 71) as they emerge from the narrator’s consciousness provide sufficient ‘intertextual points of reference to Wolf’s earlier life as mediated in [*Nachdenken über*] *Christa T. and Kindheitsmuster*’.⁴⁸⁷ The narrator, Tate notes, has a mother who died around the time the tanks of the Warsaw Pact rolled into Prague, ‘defiantly insisting “es gibt Schlimmeres” (L, 7)’.⁴⁸⁸ She also has a ‘favourite aunt called Lisbeth (Liesbeth in *Kindheitsmuster*) whose unhappy marriage is now known to have led her into a taboo-breaking relationship with a Jewish doctor in the late 1930s (L, 74-76)’.⁴⁸⁹ Furthermore, she ‘was attending the [...] Hermann-Göring-Schule in her home town’⁴⁹⁰ at the time the Third Reich collapsed (L, 101), ‘has nightmares about being attacked by “Tiefflieger” (L, 32) during the trek westwards’⁴⁹¹ towards the end of the war, and ‘still uses “das kleine blaue Buch mit den Goethe-Gedichten” (L, 32) she was given by Maria Kranhold in 1946’.⁴⁹²

In addition, as Tate comments, *Leibhaftig* yields biographical references which supplement gaps left in Wolf’s earlier works, for instance ‘the semesters at Jena University [as a Germanistik student] that preceded the reunion with

⁴⁸⁷ Tate, op.cit., 224.

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁹¹ Ibid.

⁴⁹² Ibid.

Christa T. in Leipzig (L, 33, 44-47)'.⁴⁹³ The interweaving of autobiographical truthfulness *and* fiction, but without making explicit the demarcation line between autobiographical fact and invented fiction, constitutes an important aspect in Wolf's prose. This point deserves reiterating here. As mentioned in the first part of this chapter, the narrator recounts the incident of having collapsed with heart palpitations and being rushed to hospital at the time of the conflict with GDR cultural bureaucrats over the banning of a film she had taken part in producing (L, 8-18). Importantly, as Tate notes, Wolf might have fused her experience of the controversy of 1963-64 regarding the film adaption of *Der geteilte Himmel* with that of the 1966 conflict which led to the banning of the film *Fräulein Schmetterling*, for which she had written the script.⁴⁹⁴

In addition to the biographical details noted above, Tate remarks that Wolf's situation in the GDR of the 1970s, already portrayed in *Was bleibt* when she was 'living in Friedrichstraße in Berlin [...] and playing the role of a mother figure to persecuted young writers (L, 78-79,107-108)',⁴⁹⁵ as well as instances of phone tapping and 'Stasi surveillance (L, 107-108, 136, 181)',⁴⁹⁶ are alluded to in *Leibhaftig*. The first part of this chapter has already discussed the events surrounding the Writers' Congress of June 1979, at which several critical intellectuals of the Berlin branch of the GDR Writers' Union were expelled (L, 181-183). This is, as Tate reminds us, the first time Wolf reworked this particular authentic incident in her 'Prosa'.⁴⁹⁷ If critics were looking for autobiographical pointers in the narrative, similarities between 'events' in Wolf's

⁴⁹³ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁴ See Tate, op.cit., 234.

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid, 224.

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid.

own life and that of the fictional narrator are easily identified. However, what critics omitted to mention in their reviews of *Leibhaftig* is the important detail that the fictional narrator remains unnamed. The absence of a named narrator might imply that Wolf intended to lend her 'protagonist' a representative quality, conjectural as this interpretation may be.

In an interview in *Der Spiegel* in 2003, Wolf does confirm the autobiographical aspect of her stay in hospital in 1988. Importantly, though, she directs attention to the fact that *Leibhaftig* constitutes autobiographically informed fiction:

Mein Roman 'Leibhaftig' verwertet Notizen, die ich bei einem Krankenhausaufenthalt in den achtziger Jahren gemacht habe. In diese Erinnerungen habe ich dann aber vieles Erfundene hineingewoben – Personen, Ereignisse, die Deutung der schweren Krankheit als Hadesfahrt.⁴⁹⁸

It is the significance of 'Hadesfahrt' as a metaphor which Wolf deploys to structure the narrative that merits further analysis and allows for a closer reading of *Leibhaftig* as fiction. It is worth noting that the expression 'Hadesfahrt' is not actually used in the narrative itself; however, 'Hades' is deployed on a number of occasions (L, 36, 144, 178, 184). Tate draws attention to the fact that a closer look at Wolf's diary entry for 27 September 2000, contained in *Ein Tag im Jahr*, provides an answer to the question as to why she chose the metaphor of the labyrinthine underworld to convey the narrator's experiences of feverish episodes.⁴⁹⁹ As Tate emphasises, in the diary entry

⁴⁹⁸ Volker Hage, Mathias Schreiber, 'Jeder Tag ist eine Erzählung', *Der Spiegel* [37], 2003, 192-198, here 193.

⁴⁹⁹ See Tate, op.cit., 221. For an analysis of the significance of the labyrinth in *Leibhaftig* and the inspiration Wolf derived from her reading of Walter Benjamin, see also Renate Rechten's article 'From *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* to Living with Ghosts: Christa Wolf's *Kindheitsmuster* and *Leibhaftig*', in David Clarke and Axel Goodbody (eds.), 'The Self in Transition. East German Autobiographical Writing

Wolf recounts how her reading of Jay Parini's biographical novel about Walter Benjamin helped her to decide on the structuring of her new text which is provisionally entitled 'Hadesfahrt', and comments in particular on Parini's reference, in Benjamin's unfinished 'Passagen-Werk', to the metaphor of the Parisian arcades as the entrance to a nightmarish labyrinth into which alienated citizens are drawn (ET, 616-618).⁵⁰⁰ On reading Benjamin's text, Wolf discovered the term 'das Zeitalter der Hölle' which he had used to denote the capitalist world in which the Parisian arcades came into existence. She adopted this term, as Tate states, 'as an equally valid metaphor for the era she had lived through, with the Third Reich, the Holocaust [and the Cold War years] as further phases in a seemingly never-ending process of human self-alienation'.⁵⁰¹

As Tate notes, the fact that the structuring principle of *Leibhaftig* is 'derived from a metaphor rather than the juxtaposition of two or more time levels creates initial problems'.⁵⁰² The series of 'events' that are narrated take place during the crisis period of the narrator's near-death-experience in hospital, yet there are no temporal pointers in the text itself as to the precise duration of the narrator's critical illness. The view expressed by the narrator's consultant that the 'hospital is "ein Spiegelbild der Gesellschaft" and that the society itself is a "Mangelgesellschaft" (L, 173)',⁵⁰³ which manifests itself in the hospital, for example, in the shortage of linen and surgeon's gloves as well as the need to procure life-saving medicines 'aus dem Westen' (L, 175), provides

Before and After Unification. Essays in Honour of Dennis Tate', *German Monitor*, No 75, Amsterdam and New York: Rodolpi, 2012, 123-143.

⁵⁰⁰ See Tate, *ibid*, 221-222.

⁵⁰¹ *Ibid*, 222.

⁵⁰² *Ibid*.

⁵⁰³ Quoted in *ibid*, 223.

a geographical pointer to the GDR at the time of its demise. Wolf might have used 'Mangelgesellschaft' to describe the society of the GDR as a counter-expression to the West German expression 'Leistungsgesellschaft'. Wolf's added reference to hospital staff treating her as being 'Weltmeister im Improvisieren' (L, 175) does put a positive spin on the notion of 'Mangelgesellschaft'.

As Tate also comments, the extent of the contextual guidance provided is limited, thereby 'frustrating any expectations the reader may have that the more dramatic events of 1989 will be anticipated in some revealing manner'.⁵⁰⁴ The fact that *Leibhaftig* does not anticipate the events of 1989 which led to the collapse of the GDR and that the mood is indeed that of 'retrospective stocktaking'⁵⁰⁵ substantiates the tenet stated in the introduction to this chapter that a reading of the narrative as an allegory of a GDR in decline should be adopted with caution. In *Leibhaftig* the focus is on the narrator's personal 'journey' and most importantly on remembering what has been repressed and what therefore remains 'unbewältigt'. Hence the narrator's repressed memories, further to those associated with Hannes Urban and as discussed in detail in the first part of this chapter, merit closer analysis since the patient's survival depends on engaging in the painful process of remembering personal *and* collective history.

In *Medea. Stimmen* repressed memories were linked to the theme of our relationship with the past. Medea conjured up these memories 'aus der Tiefe der Zeit' (MS, 90), evoking associations of earlier times. Similarly, in *Leibhaftig*,

⁵⁰⁴ Tate, 223.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid, 224.

experiences of other epochs and generations are repeated in the patient's sufferings. As she floats in and out of consciousness, the protagonist is subjected to a series of nightmarish visions, finding herself transported through layer upon layer of German history into a labyrinthine network of tunnels and cellars beneath Berlin. Furthermore, the opening lines of *Leibhaftig* are reminiscent of those in *Der geteilte Himmel*, since we meet the main female protagonist in hospital. And in both works the patient's survival depends on engaging in the painful process of remembering personal history, which, as discussed in Chapter Four, constitutes an existential aspect in Wolf's writing and thus contributes to 'Vergangenheitsbewältigung' on a personal level. However, with the exception of the prose text 'Im Stein', Wolf has not previously narrated from the perspective of a patient suffering from fever.

The word 'Verletzt' which abruptly begins *Leibhaftig* seems to refer back to *Der geteilte Himmel* (1963) where '[i]n den letzten Augusttagen des Jahres 1961' (GH, 9), the protagonist Rita Seidel awakens in a hospital after she had collapsed. Furthermore, at the very beginning of *Leibhaftig*, at the moment the body collapses, the narrator seems to encounter 'die Grenzen des Sagbaren' reminiscent of the end of *Was bleibt* where the narrator had expressed this sense of inability to find the right words as follows: 'Eines Tages, dachte ich, werde ich sprechen können, ganz leicht und frei' (WB, 108). In the opening lines of *Leibhaftig*, words appear to fail the narrator in describing her near-death experience:

Verletzt.

Etwas klagt, wortlos. Ein Ansturm von Worten gegen die Stummheit, die sich beharrlich ausbreitet, zugleich mit der Bewußtlosigkeit. Dieses Auf- und Abtauchen des Bewußtseins in einer sagenhaften Urflut.

Inselhaft das Gedächtnis. Wohin es sie jetzt treibt, dahin reichen die Worte nicht, das soll einer ihrer letzten klaren Gedanken sein. (L, 5)

The introductory 'sentences' signal that the story is not so much about narrating an individual's illness but about recalling memories. It is this tension between what the narrator is experiencing in her feverish state and what is on her mind, though, that provides momentum:

Während das Gehirn [...] seinen Betrieb einstellt, sich abgeschaltet hat, ganz den Körpersignalen zugewandt, bis auf eine Ausnahme: das Erinnern. Oder zumindest in seinen rudimentären Formen. Nicht, daß ich beliebig ein Gedächtnis anzapfen könnte. Doch an der festen Scholle in dem Meer von Unbewußtem, auf der ich mich halte, treiben Erinnerungsbrocken vorbei, ungerufen und unregulierbar. (L, 70-1)

Even though the narrator appears to have no influence over what is remembered and thoughts are not guided as would be the case in a healthy person, the narrative itself is highly controlled, as was also the case in 'Juninachmittag' and 'Im Stein'.

One of the narrator's initial memories, once she is admitted to hospital and her palpitations begin, is that of her mother:

Ich sinke. Das Herz rast. Ich höre Wörter. Pulsfrequenz. Paroxysmal. Sie streifen den äußersten Rand ihres Bewußtseins. Ich sinke vorbei an dem todesnahen Gesicht meiner Mutter. Ich stehe am Fenster ihres Krankenzimmers und sehe mich mit ihren Augen, als schwarzen Umriß gegen das Sonnenlicht. Ich höre mich sagen: Sie sind in Prag einmarschiert. Und ich höre meine Mutter flüstern: Es gibt Schlimmeres. Sie wendet den Kopf zur Wand. Es gibt Schlimmeres. Sie stirbt. Ich denke an Prag. (L, 7)

The change from third person, as expressed by 'ihres Bewußtseins', to first person here – from the patient who is conveying her loss of consciousness to the narrator who is remembering a particular 'event' in her own life – is just one instance which illustrates how tightly controlled the narrative is. It is unlikely to be a coincidence that the particular 'event' of the Prague invasion 1968 is

recalled here and so early on in the narrative, which suggests that this is an element in Wolf's past which remained 'unbewältigt'. By making reference to this historic event here and by placing it within the context of the 'tragedy' in her own life which preoccupied Wolf – the death of her mother – Wolf might be implicitly responding to Schirrmacher's criticism of her, in the 'Literaturstreit', for not openly opposing the Prague invasion at the time it happened.

It should be noted that at this point in the narrative the narrator neither questions her own vision nor attempts to interpret it. Nor, indeed, does she attempt to interpret the possible significance of the discrepancy between her mother's comment and her own perception of the invasion of Prague. The palpitations experienced by the patient lead the narrator straight into recollections of the first incident of heart palpitations requiring hospital treatment. As discussed earlier in this chapter, this incident took place at the time when a screenplay she had been involved in writing was shown for official approval. These thoughts on an earlier experience of illness are followed by the narrator's reflections on Urban. I suggest that Wolf is using images and metaphors as a ploy and in order to manipulate the reader into empathising with the narrator.

The narrator's physical suffering is presented as 'ohrenbetäubendes Getöse' (L, 19), with delirious visions of brutal fights and acts of cruelty in history and more recent acts of violence during the Second World War, followed by the picture of human 'Zügen, die sich durch eine trostlose Landschaft schleppen' (L, 24) and eventually 'Tiefflieger' and 'Menschenopfe[r]' (L, 32). At this point the narrator does ask herself what the purpose of these visions of

victims might be and describes the effect the illness is having on her: she is being forced to see certain things. At these moments – when the ‘Regisseur auf meiner inneren Bühne ausgeschaltet ist’ (L, 32), a kind of inner censor reminiscent of the inner censor in *Was bleibt* and also in the prose text ‘Rückäußerung’ contained in *Auf dem Weg nach Tabu* – she raises probing questions. The image of the ‘innerer Regisseur’ suggests that the issues which present themselves are of a fundamental nature. After an initial phase of not questioning her visions and memories, she does begin to ask questions and wants to understand her predicament. She does so by using images to express her illness which is perceived by her as an opportunity to access deeper layers: ‘Wie sollen wir wissen, wie ausgedehnt unsere Innenwelt ist, wenn nicht ein besonderer Schlüssel, hohes Fieber zum Beispiel sie uns erschließt’ (L, 24).

In the reflections on her suffering and her feverish dreams, the patient articulates the experience of an area one cannot talk about: ‘Wenn irgendetwas ein für allemal klar ist, so daß von den wichtigen Dingen überhaupt keine Rede sein kann’ (L, 83). In so doing, Wolf draws attention to the process of writing. This can be read as a further example of Wolf’s method ‘den Denk- und Lebensprozeß, in dem [der Erzähler] steht, fast ungemildert [...] im Arbeitsprozeß mit zur Sprache zu bringen’ (DA, 778). In *Leibhaftig*, the narrator experiences this realm of suffering and fever as the place of reality and she believes she will encounter the bare truth here. Yet all distinctions vanish between right and wrong, between spirit and body. All labels appear to be wrong:

So daß ich, sage ich mir in das Schallen der Eisen, das Jammern der Opfer hinein, falls es mir doch noch einmal einfallen sollte, Wörter zu

gebrauchen, in meiner wortsüchtigen Manier, wenigstens wissen und zugeben wollen, sie sind falsch. (L, 83)

The patient appears to construct a negative 'Sinnzentrum' which represents 'das Eigentliche' and which, at the same time, undermines any attempt to make sense of her experience of suffering. All the interpretations the patient offers are aimed at explaining the body's illness in order to provide her with the deeper meaning of this illness. In spite of an abundance of words there is the sense that there is something essential ('das Eigentliche') which cannot be articulated.

The narration does not only cover reflections and dreams but also the fact that the narrator is ceaselessly reflecting: 'Jetzt muss ich den Höllenlärm aushalten und die Züge der Gefolterten ansehen, die sich durch die Geschichte schleppen und mich aus meinem Inneren heraus anblicken' (L, 128). The surreal situation is made explicit through the narrator's observation, and signalled through the frequent change from first person to third person, from 'ich' to 'sie'. Often the change happens in the middle of a sentence: '[...] ein einmaliger Vorgang, der mich bis hierher verfolgt, in diesen Schacht, in dem es aber plötzlich so eisig geworden ist, daß sie plötzlich von einer Sekunde zur anderen zu zittern anfängt' (L, 80).

The narrator's personal crisis and sense of disorientation is also conveyed through the metaphor of the descent into the 'Gegenwelt' (L, 40). The narrator comes to exist in a 'Zeitlücke' (L, 69), an intermediate realm in which the distinction between past, present and future is non-existent. The regimented division of normal life into 'Zeitabschnitte' and 'Zeiträume' (L, 68) is suspended, and the narrator experiences the absence of temporal boundaries during her illness as 'Zeitlosigkeit' (L, 69), as a liberation – 'eine Befreiung vom

Zeitgeschehen' (L, 69). The suspension of temporality enables the narrator to see more clearly the connections between past, present and future. At the same time the experience of 'Unzeit' (L, 69) is revealed to be highly disorientating. No longer caught in a 'Zeitnetz' (L, 70) of everyday existence, her escape from this is described as an unbridled descent into the 'Gegenwelt' (L, 40). The descent into the 'Gegenwelt' is triggered by the actual experience of having to pass 'durch den gleichen betonierten schlecht beleuchteten Gang' (L, 21) located in the cellar of the hospital on the way to the radiology department and the operating theatre, which she comes to associate with the 'unterirdischen Labyrinth' (L, 21). The metaphor of the 'Gegenwelt' (L, 40) appears to serve two main functions. On the one hand it directs the patient's consciousness '[das] in eine Zeitlücke hineingeraten [ist]' (L, 69) into the hidden zones of her diseased body, making her body seem like a coalmine:

"Lösest endlich auch einmal / Meine Seele ganz." Lösen ablösen auflösen, das Wort, in dem magische Kräfte sind, trägt mich hinüber und hinunter. In die Tiefe. In den Schacht. Und so fährt er mit dem Licht bei der Nacht/ ins *Bergwerk* ein. Mein Körper als Bergwerk. Das Kopflicht des Bergmannes, das voranleuchtet. Das einen matten Schein gibt, mikroskopisch klein, das jede Körperzelle zur Höhle vergrößert, jede Ader zum Flußbett und das Blut zu einem Strom, der pulsierend einem weitverzweigten Stromnetz folgt, an dem entlang das Licht immer tiefer hineinfährt, Organe abtastet, bizarre Gebirgsformationen, sumpfähnliche Felder, Röhrensysteme, die für nichts stehen als für sich selbst. (L, 96-97) (my emphasis, JD)

On the other hand, the metaphor of the underworld represents the journey into the repressed zone of human experience of the GDR and the Third Reich. This repressed zone is once again perceived spatially, as subterranean border crossing points between the East and the West – 'der irdische Transitgang' (L, 25) of Friedrichstraße railway station, the much-used gateway

to the other world of West Berlin which Wolf had first referred to in *Der geteilte Himmel* – or as cellar labyrinths below the houses of a divided Berlin, partially destroyed by bombs in the Second World War (L, 106-115). The ‘tiefe Gräben’ (L, 142) which run along the street recall the bomb damage done to the city; at the same time, however, the vision of diggers seems to anticipate the building work which took place in this area after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

The metaphor of the journey into the ‘Gegenwelt’ (L, 40) links the unnerving images which form part of the maze of the body with the equally unnerving actual contemporary ‘unterirdischen Gängen’ (L, 139). The interrelationship of the physical zones in her diseased body and the process of coming to terms with the repressed past is expressed in the brief exchange with the narrator’s husband, the ‘du’ in the ‘real’ world:

Übrigens, sage ich, ich glaube, das Labyrinth in meinem Gehirn entspricht dem Labyrinth unseres Kellersystems. Du blickst erschrocken. Nein, sage ich. Ich phantasie nicht. Ich bin nur immer in diesen unterirdischen Gängen unterwegs, weißt du. Du sagst: Muß das sein? Ich sage, ja ich glaube, das muß sein. (L, 139)

The journey through the labyrinthine world uncovers the layers of what had previously been repressed by the ‘innere Regisseur’, and also reveals what had subsequently been deposited in the body. These ‘deposits’ have ruined the immune system, leading to the ‘Sog zum Tode’ (L, 129) and forcing the surgical invasions of the patient’s body.

The journey into the repressed layers in time also takes the narrator back to the war years, particularly to the days of the street battles in the ‘Schlacht um Berlin’ (L, 114), even though Wolf is recounting historical events here which she has not witnessed first-hand. The journey into the past goes even further back

to the time when Hitler 'seized' power, a time when Wolf was a child. Once again she is narrating an event which does not form part of her personal experience, though it does form part of the stories relating to her extended family: the affair surrounding her aunt Lisbeth with a Jewish doctor in the 1930s which Wolf had first described in *Kindheitsmuster*. Importantly, hitherto unmentioned details are provided in *Leibhaftig*, culminating in the revelation that the narrator's aunt had an illegitimate child by the Jewish doctor who was forced to emigrate to the USA after the 'Kristallnacht'. The figures of the aunt and her lover are therefore linked to details about the Third Reich which have not previously been spoken about. Their appearance in front of the 'Tränenbunker' (L, 59) recalls the building's association with tearful acts of departure in the Third Reich. Yet their appearance causes the narrator to fall into 'tiefe Verwirrung' on account of the fact that 'die Zeitebenen einander heillos durchdringen' (L, 59). To the narrator the figures seem out of place in the Germany of the 1980s. As Smale comments, the narrator's encounter with these figures can be viewed as 'part of her quest for historical truth',⁵⁰⁶ a willingness to engage with the 'revelation of repressed memories',⁵⁰⁷ and a desire to gain access to remnants of 'historical experiences which have been omitted from conventional narratives'.⁵⁰⁸ These figures therefore play an important role in the narrator's attempts to trace the cause of the suffering which she herself is experiencing (L, 184) and in her efforts to get to the bottom ('auf den Grund [...] gehen', L, 138) of her corporeal existence.

⁵⁰⁶ Smale, op.cit., 66.

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid.

The descent into the labyrinthine underworld inextricably links the maze of the body with the contemporary context of the hospital setting, and thus the patient's painful recollections, with what happens to the diseased body in the course of the operations:

Die Schnitte. In einem vorgeschriebenen Muster angebracht, alles andere wäre ein Kunstfehler. Wer nicht hören will, muß fühlen, Worte der Großmutter. Wer nicht fühlen kann, muß stärker verletzt werden. Und wer sich nicht tief genug ins eigene Fleisch schneidet, zu schneiden wagt, schafft den Vorwand, daß es ein anderer für ihn tun muß, Herr Professor. (L, 137)

Accordingly, the 'Bloßlegung der Eingeweide [der Patientin]' by the doctor represents the doctor's attempt 'der Wahrheit des Körpers auf den Grund zu gehen, die er [der Körper] so lange verborgen hat' (L, 137), 'bis zur Wurzel des Übels vorzudringen, zum Eiterherd, dorthin, wo der glühende Kern der Wahrheit mit dem Kern der Lüge zusammenfällt' (L, 138). This uncovering of layers is mirrored in the metaphorical 'Bloßlegen der Eingeweide' of the 'Friedrichstraße': 'An den steil abfallenden Grabenrändern können wir die Schichten ablesen, in denen die Jahrzehnte ihren Schutt abgelagert haben. Archäologie der Zerstörungen' (L, 143). The labyrinth represents a multi-layered 'Netzwerk' which allows the patient to unearth repressed experiences – the 'faulen Stellen' (L, 147) not only in her own past but also in collective German history, thus aiding her convalescence.

As mentioned previously, the key figure in touching the 'weißen Flecken' (L, 147) in the narrator's past is the anaesthetist Kora Bachmann who plays an important part in the patient's recovery. It is also Kora Bachmann, the 'dunkle Frau', who leads the narrator into 'Hades' and, in the end, out of it into the 'Reich der Lebenden' (L, 184). Apart from Hannes Urban, she is the only

person in the narrative to have been given a first name and a surname. Whilst the recollections associated with Urban span the period of the existence of the GDR, the world the narrator enters in her feverish state when accompanied by Kora Bachmann is predominantly associated with the Third Reich. Kora is the other name for the mythical Persephone or Kore, wife of the god of death 'Hades', who is condemned to spending part of her time in the underworld amongst the dead, where she reigns over women, and part of her time amongst the living. In the narrative she fulfils the function of 'ein weiblicher Cicerone' (L, 56) who leads the patient into 'Hades' and back. But she also allows the patient to tap into her memories, as expressed in the comment: 'Das Bewußtsein zieht sich zurück, es geht zum Grund' (L, 31).

Whereas Dante, in the *Inferno* and *Purgatory*, chose the mediaeval poet Virgil as his guide, Wolf chooses the anaesthetist who induces the patient's sleep and then accompanies her on her journeys in her dreams. The narrator's dream of flying above the city of Berlin with Kora Bachmann can be interpreted as the culmination of their encounters, and might suggest that Wolf has achieved a degree of distance from historical developments. Bachmann represents the surname of the author Ingeborg Bachmann whom Wolf admires. Renate Rechten stresses Bachmann's importance to Wolf when she states that Wolf was influenced by Bachmann's 'dismissal of literary forms which located the subject in history rather than tracing history within subjectivity'.⁵⁰⁹ In *Medea. Stimmen* (MS, 126, 137), as discussed in Chapter Four, Bachmann was previously quoted by Wolf.

⁵⁰⁹ Rechten, 'From *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* to Living with Ghosts: Christa Wolf's Kindheitsmuster and *Leibhaftig*', op.cit., 126.

As Tate observes, towards the end of *Leibhaftig*, when the narrator is nearing recovery after her treatment in hospital, she suggests in a conversation with Kora Bachmann that 'it would be worthwhile "der Spur der Schmerzen nachzugehen" (L, 184)', explaining that the intensity of pain suffered "das Maß sei für die Hoffnung, die man vorher gehabt habe" (L, 183-184)'.⁵¹⁰ By placing her personal suffering in the broader context of the legacy of the GDR and the Third Reich, Wolf has been tracing the 'Spur der Schmerzen'. Tate emphasises that the difference between *Leibhaftig* and other post-unification texts by Wolf is the 'mythical framing of this core of personal experience in terms of Benjamin's metaphor of the labyrinth'.⁵¹¹ Thus *Leibhaftig* is a demonstration of how classical mythology can become the medium for reflection on events and issues in contemporary society.

Conclusion

Leibhaftig, with the impact created by its 'phantastische Genauigkeit' (DA, 488) and the inextricable linking of personal *and* collective experience, bears the hallmarks of Wolf's aesthetic concept of 'subjektive Authentizität' as explained in her 1968 essay 'Lesen und Schreiben' and in her 1973 interview with Hans Kaufmann. However, whilst in the 1973 interview she still sees the GDR as the site for her striving of the realisation of a developed socialist society, *Leibhaftig* traces the underlying causes for Wolf's progressive self-distancing from the socialist regime. Whereas Wolf's deliberations in the 1973 interview reveal that the impetus for her prose writing was fuelled by a sense of historical mission – to contribute to the achievement of self-realisation, 'Selbstverwirklichung' (DA,

⁵¹⁰ Tate, op.cit., 224.

⁵¹¹ Ibid.

498), in a socialist society – *Leibhaftig* illustrates the loss of hopes and illusions she experienced with the GDR and its demise. As this chapter has shown, in following the ‘Spur der Schmerzen’ Wolf retraced the underlying causes for the failure of the socialist utopian project in the GDR. The narrator’s acceptance of ‘Vergeblichkeit’ as her ‘Lebenssumme’ (L, 145) suggests that Wolf has discarded any socialist utopian illusions. Yet any sense of despair is absent.

As Tate comments, the self-affirming certainties that remain for the narrator at the conclusion of *Leibhaftig* are: ‘the strength of her personal and family bonds’⁵¹² (as conveyed throughout the narrative by the ‘du’ of her husband), ‘the beauty of nature’⁵¹³ (as she appreciates the view of the lake outside the hospital), and ‘the comforting access to familiar literature (exemplified by the unnamed poem she recalls in the last sentence)’.⁵¹⁴ What remains is a sense of balance between ‘Schmerzen’ and ‘Glück’ at a growing distance from a commitment to utopian, political ideals and the hope, once associated with these ideals, in bringing about ‘Menschenglück’ (L, 49). This sense of balance is, as Tate observes, what has ‘earned *Leibhaftig* respect as an “Alterswerk”’.⁵¹⁵

The closing sentences of *Leibhaftig* allude to Ingeborg Bachmann’s poem ‘Enigma’, the opening lines of which read: ‘Nichts wird mehr kommen. Frühling wird nicht mehr werden. Tausendjährige Kalender sagen es voraus.’⁵¹⁶ With this ending in mind, *Leibhaftig* could be read as the work which represents

⁵¹² Ibid, 225.

⁵¹³ Ibid.

⁵¹⁴ Tate.

⁵¹⁵ Ibid.

⁵¹⁶ Ingeborg Bachmann, ‘Enigma’, in Christine Koschel, Inge von Weidenbaum, Clemens Münster (eds.), *Werke*, Munich: Piper, 1978 (4 vols.), I, 171.

closure in terms of Wolf's oeuvre. Yet Wolf clearly needed to return to the events surrounding her involvement with the Stasi as an *IM* which had been sensationalised in the German press in the early 1990s, and she did so in her final novel *Stadt der Engel oder The Overcoat of Dr. Freud*.

CONCLUSION

'Was bleibt aber, stiften die Dichter'⁵¹⁷ represents an optimistic statement by the eighteenth century writer Friedrich Hölderlin. This appraisal can equally be applied to Christa Wolf's narrative *Was bleibt*, the publication of which triggered the 'deutsch-deutscher Literaturstreit' in 1990 and whose author was exposed to further scrutiny in the media furore which followed upon her Stasi revelations in 1993. While Hölderlin's 'statement' can be read as a straightforward assertion, the situation with Wolf is more complex. The title of her 1990 narrative might well be a statement, along the lines of 'Something remains'. However, it could also be a question, something Wolf hints at early in *Was bleibt* when she writes down a question and 'omits' to include a question mark. Then she writes the following: 'Fragezeichen. Die Zeichensetzung in Zukunft gefälligst ernster nehmen [...] Das ging doch früher. [...] Als hinter den Sätzen mehr Ausrufezeichen als Fragezeichen standen?' (WB, 10). *Was bleibt* could, therefore, be interpreted as meaning either 'What remains?' or 'What will remain'.

The outstanding questions which need to be answered in this thesis are: 'What will remain of the controversies of the early 1990s?' and 'What will remain of the writer Christa Wolf?'. The controversies of the early 1990s are a distant memory, and have been superseded by other journalistic debates. What will remain of Christa Wolf, however, is her literary legacy. Since significant issues raised in the controversies of the early 1990s resonate in the literary works which Wolf published over the past two decades, her engagement with those

⁵¹⁷ See footnote 1.

issues now forms part of that literary legacy.

This thesis has shown how the attacks on Christa Wolf in the 'deutsch-deutscher Literaturstreit' of 1990, rapidly followed by the negative publicity in 1993 generated by Wolf's revelations about her early involvement with the Stasi, had major repercussions for a writer who continued to believe after unification that she could write 'authentically' but who felt at the mercy of critics who were only too happy to denounce the subtleties of her distinctive narrative style of 'subjektive Authentizität' as 'self-serving obfuscation of the truth'.⁵¹⁸ Given Wolf's prominence as a GDR writer and given the historical context at the time of the publication of *Was bleibt*, it was inevitable that she should come under scrutiny in the West German press. As Wolfram Schütte highlights in his contribution to the 'Literaturstreit', the collapse of the GDR and the imminent unification of the two Germanies explain, to some degree at least, the initial harsh attacks on the 'Staatsdichterin der DDR'.⁵¹⁹

One main criticism of Wolf in the 'deutsch-deutscher Literaturstreit', which was reinforced in the 1993 media furor, was the accusation of complicity with a repressive regime in order to enjoy privileges, an accusation which brought into question her moral integrity. Wolf's decision to remain in the GDR until its collapse, her continued membership of the SED until the summer of 1989, the specific charges of her retracting public objection to the expatriation of Wolf Biermann in 1976 and of not opposing the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 were all regarded as evidence of her complicity with the SED regime.

⁵¹⁸ Tate, *op.cit.*, 220.

⁵¹⁹ See Wolfram Schütte, *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 8.6.1990.

A further significant criticism was that of prolonged allegiance to ideals of socialism and, as one of the signatories to the appeal 'Für unser Land' in November 1989, to the notion of developing the GDR as 'eine sozialistische Alternative zur Bundesrepublik' even after the fall of the Berlin Wall on 9th November 1989. What critics failed to highlight in relation to this appeal, though, were the reformist aspirations of the signatories. Moreover, the accusation of prolonged allegiance to the socialist project was linked to Wolf's alleged lack of a critical intellectual stance: she was accused by Schirmacher, for instance, of having been a prime example of a misguided intellectual, who had demonstrated political allegiance to the SED regime. In this context Schirmacher emphasised that Wolf belonged to a generation who had first-hand experience of National Socialism as children and adolescents – 'die mittlere Generation der DDR' – and whose relationship to the GDR constituted 'ein fast familiäres Verhältnis zu ihrem Staat'.⁵²⁰ However, he failed to mention that the experience of National Socialism was not confined to the 'mittlere Generation' of the GDR but was shared with the same generation in the Federal Republic of Germany, nor did he address the issue of Wolf's popularity as a GDR writer within West Germany. Hence he, in turn, may be accused of lacking critical perspective.

Furthermore, in the 'Literaturstreit' Wolf's distinctive narrative style was dismissed as 'Gesinnungsästhetik' on account of the moral and political engagement apparent in her literature. *Was bleibt* was also considered a prime example of the 'Unschärfe-Relation zwischen der wirklichen Welt [...] und der

⁵²⁰ Schirmacher, *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 2.6.1990.

poetischen Welt',⁵²¹ which, it was argued, served only as a vehicle for disguising the truth.

Wolf's work post-unification does demonstrate her engagement with the accusations levelled at her by critics in the controversies of the early 1990s in a significant way, as this thesis has shown. Indeed, Wolf's first literary work after the 'Literaturstreit' and the 1993 controversy, *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou* (1994), may be read as an explicit response to those accusations. The fact that Wolf's first post-unification publication should be a collection of speeches, essays, exchanges of letters, diary entries and experimental pieces rather than a sophisticated prose text is in itself significant, as this demonstrates that, after the attacks on her in the early 1990s, Wolf needed to allow herself time to return to a prose 'project'.

The experimental pieces 'Befund', 'Nagelprobe' and 'Anwandlung', contained in *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou*, convey Wolf's sense of personal crisis as a writer and express her own doubts of finding a poetic voice in which to speak of the pain of facing her own perceived failures as a GDR writer from a post-unification perspective. In contrast, in the exchanges of letters with friends she reflects on her brief Stasi involvement as evidence of her alleged collusion with the GDR regime and also on the labelling of her by Western critics as 'Staatsdichterin [der DDR]'. Furthermore, these letters constitute her response to the specific charges of having withdrawn her objection to the Biermann petition in 1976 and for remaining a member of the SED until the summer of 1989. Wolf draws particular attention to the 'Opfer-Akten' which chronicle her

⁵²¹ Greiner, *Die Zeit*, 2.6.1990

surveillance by the Stasi from 1969 onwards, and which also exonerate her from any rumours spread deliberately by the Stasi about having retracted her signature from the Biermann petition. It is particularly in the exchange of letters with Günter Grass that she draws attention to her express wish at the time of Biermann's expulsion from the GDR to be excluded from the SED party and its activities, and emphasises the fact of subsequently remaining an inactive member of the SED. She does not, however, provide an explanation as to why she did not simply resign.

In contrast, the essays 'Selbstanzeige' and 'Rummelplatz 11. Plenum 1965 – Erinnerungsbericht' as well as the speeches 'Sprache der Wende – Rede auf dem Alexanderplatz' and 'Zwischenrede' can be interpreted as Wolf's response to the allegation of prolonged allegiance to ideals of socialism by focusing on the role played by critical GDR intellectuals and GDR writers. 'Zwischenrede' highlights the role of critical GDR intellectuals when the GDR was still in existence '[d]urch Benennen von Widersprüchen [...] bei ihren Lesern kritisches Bewußtsein zu erzeugen' (T, 18). After the fall of the Berlin Wall, Wolf still considers it the enduring responsibility of writers to expose 'die blinden Flecken in unserer Vergangenheit' (T, 21) and her express mission is that her further writing should, at least in part, reflect the experiences of former GDR citizens even post-'Wende'. Equally importantly, she emphasises the need for authenticity in representing the GDR past. The essay 'Erinnerungsbericht – Rummelplatz 11. Plenum' can be interpreted as her explicit reaction to Schirrmacher's criticism of her having failed as a critical intellectual, as she is providing evidence of her critical stance at the 11th

Plenary Session of the SED Central Committee in December 1965 and her open resistance to the state censorship campaign. The exchange of letters with Jürgen Habermas, in which Wolf critically engages in discussion on differences in cultural orientation between the East and the West, can also be read as a response to Schirmacher's accusation that Wolf was incapable of assessing reality objectively on account of her first-hand experience of National Socialism. Wolf's explanation seems like a reversal of Schirmacher's attack on her when she criticises Western intellectuals for not accepting that 'das "geistige Erbe des Nationalsozialismus"' (T, 152) was shared with the same generation in the Federal Republic of Germany, and can therefore be seen as evidence of Wolf's continued commitment to *littérature engagée*, as can the speech dedicated to Böll "'Frei, geordnet, untröstlich" – Heinrich Böll, aus Anlaß seines 75. Geburtstags' (1992) where she explicitly defends the discredited notion of 'Gesinnungsästhetik'.

One common feature of *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou* and *Hierzulande Andernorts* (1999) is immediately apparent: both represent a collection consisting of diary-like texts, experimental pieces, essays and speeches. In *Hierzulande Andernorts* Wolf provides further insight into her commitment to *littérature engagée* in the speech "'Mitleidend bleibt das ewige Herz doch fest"' dedicated to Heinrich Böll when she praises Böll for his commitment to 'Gesinnungsästhetik' and for his treatment of the theme of coming to terms with the past in his own work. In contrast to *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou*, where the focus is on the GDR past, in *Hierzulande Andernorts* Wolf includes references to Germany's fascist past.

Furthermore, in *Hierzulande Andernorts* responses to the accusation of complicity with the SED regime are more subtly conveyed than in *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou* by focusing on reflections on the theme of 'guilt' which are linked to having been a member of the 'mittlere Generation der DDR'. This more subtle approach is particularly apparent in the diary-like text 'Begegnungen Third Street' which deals with the theme of collective guilt for Germany's fascist past as well as with the moral issue of the different ways the two Germanies have dealt with this particular aspect of their common past. The text also makes reference to Wolf's specific stance at the 11th Plenary Session as an illustration of her role as a critical GDR intellectual. The experimental text 'Im Stein' further conveys a sense of crisis as a writer in post-unification Germany whilst continuing the theme of culpability for personal deeds. It is also a prime example of Wolf's notion of writing as therapy in order to overcome moments of crisis in her life. In contrast, the speeches and essays in *Hierzulande Andernorts* are dedications to those predominantly East German intellectuals who shared Wolf's commitment to socialist ideals, and may be read as her response to the issue of prolonged adherence to ideals of socialism when she emphasises the friendship that connected her to those individuals. The speech 'Was tut die strenge Feder' and the essay 'Nirgends sein o Nirgends du mein Land' dedicated to Franz Fühmann are revealing for the insights that can be gained into the mindset of some intellectuals who remained in the GDR and who saw their public role as a writer as that of a 'Lebenshelfer' (HA, 57). These tributes also represent an explicit response to the accusation of having remained in the GDR until the end when Wolf reflects on the question 'Kann

man vor seiner eigenen Geschichte in den Westen gehen?’ (HA, 67).

The novel *Medea. Stimmen* (1996) constitutes the first example since unification of Wolf publishing a longer piece of prose. Yet she is unwilling to expose herself through the release of a first person fictional narrative. *Medea. Stimmen*, with its focus on the ‘rehabilitation’ of a mythical figure, continues Wolf’s treatment of the broader theme of coming to terms with the past. In rewriting the traditional myth of Medea by ‘acquitting’ Medea of murder, Wolf continues her reflections on the theme of guilt. With its emphasis on the theme of victimisation, *Medea. Stimmen* represents an allegory, indicating parallels with the treatment Wolf received in the West German press in the course of the ‘Literaturstreit’ and in the 1993 media furore. However, in spite of the plurality of ‘voices’ the novel promotes a single version of events and the assumption of Medea’s innocence is not in question. This suggests that Wolf is still fighting off the issue of personal guilt.

It is only in the narrative *Leibhaftig* (2002), perhaps the most personal of Wolf’s post-unification publications, that she does address the issue of personal guilt in a self-critical manner, thus demonstrating a developmental process in her post-unification writing. The time that has elapsed since unification seems to have allowed Wolf to return to writing sophisticated literature. It might be argued that the subject matter of *Leibhaftig* suggests that the narrative can still be considered as an implicit response to the accusation in the ‘Literaturstreit’ of her failure as a GDR intellectual. In thematising the double legacy of the GDR and the Third Reich Wolf demonstrates her continued commitment to ‘Vergangenheitsbewältigung’. Above all, the narrative represents an affirmation

of Wolf's characteristic aesthetic of 'subjektive Authentizität', and evidences that, despite criticism in the West German press in 1990 on the part of some commentators about her writing style, Wolf remains a writer of 'Weltrang'.⁵²² Furthermore, it could be contended that, given the exuberance of metaphorical references in *Leibhaftig*, Wolf's writing has become even more 'verschlüsselt' and demonstrates '[einen] verschärfte[n] Anspruch an die imaginative Potenz'⁵²³ – an aspect for which she had been found wanting in *Was bleibt*.

For Tate the fact that, a decade after unification, Wolf chose to set this work in GDR times suggested 'a continuing reluctance to acknowledge any kind of accommodation with post-unification realities'.⁵²⁴ I would propose an alternative interpretation: in writing about the failure of socialism in the GDR Wolf was, among other things, criticising the wave of 'Ostalgie' which swept the East when 'the unification chancellor's' (Helmut Kohl's) promise of 'blühende Landschaften' failed to materialise. Looking at *Leibhaftig* from this perspective, Wolf might have employed her inimitable style of 'subjektive Authentizität' as a mechanism for making her readership realise the extent to which political developments in the former GDR had deteriorated.

The natural progression for future research on the subject matter of 'Vergangenheitsbewältigung' would be an examination of Wolf's final novel *Stadt der Engel oder The Overcoat of Dr. Freud*, particularly an analysis which is linked to premises found in Freud's psychoanalytical theories. This analysis would also take into account pertinent references in Wolf's diary text *Ein Tag im*

⁵²² Krause, Tilman, 'Christa Wolf – die Leibhaftige von Weltrang', *Die Welt*, 1.12.2011.

⁵²³ Bohrer, 'Kulturschutzgebiet DDR?', op.cit.

⁵²⁴ Tate, op.cit., 223.

Jahr im neuen Jahrhundert which was published posthumously in 2013. In the 2010 article in *Der Spiegel*, Wolf stated with reference to her final novel: 'Das Thema [IM] war einer der Anlässe dafür, dass ich das Buch geschrieben habe.'⁵²⁵ Indeed, a study of the novel provides further insight into the effects which the media furore which followed upon the disclosure of her Stasi revelations in 1993 has had on her 'Prosa', thus also offering a contribution to the nascent field of memory studies. However, *Stadt der Engel oder The Overcoat of Dr. Freud* does revisit issues she had covered in the publications which have been the focus of this thesis, in particular the significance of memory. It is the work with which Wolf signs off her oeuvre, but not, some might argue, the work for which she will be most remembered.

⁵²⁵ Susanne Beyer, Volker Hage, *Der Spiegel* [24], 14.6.2010, 136.

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