

© 2007

HUIPING WANG

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

HERMANN KANT'S CRITICAL REALISM

by

HUIPING WANG

A Dissertation submitted to the
Graduate School-New Brunswick
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in Germanic Languages and Literature

written under the direction of

Professor William Donahue

and approved by

New Brunswick, New Jersey

May 2007

ABSTRACT

HERMANN KANT'S CRITICAL REALISM

by HUIPING WANG

Dissertation Director:

Professor William Donahue

Following the fall of the Berlin Wall and socialism's collapse as a system in the German Democratic Republic (GDR), the united Germany, still struggling with its Nazi past, is confronted with a new task, that is, coming to terms with its socialist, or more accurately, Stalinist past. Some intellectuals of the united Germany, uneasy with both tasks, launched a massive, devastating attack on the socially relevant, political literature in both German states. Hermann Kant, a prominent author and a powerful politician of the GDR, became the natural target of the attack, along with Christa Wolf, Günter Grass and many other politically engaged German writers. Accusation of espionage for the State Security, his own adamant denial thereof, his declaration of being an activist for the GDR, and his continuing critique of the Western capitalism make him ever more unpopular in the post-reunification era. This study will examine and reclaim the political and aesthetic value of Kant's works through theoretical inquiry and the textual and inter-textual close reading of his short stories collected in *Ein bißchen Südsee* and his novels *Die Aula*, *Das Impressum*, and *Der Aufenthalt*. The project reveals Kant as an important author who is in constant meaningful dialogue with the realism/modernism debate of the twentieth century. It will demonstrate how Kant strives to balance modernism and realism to take advantage of the strengths of both literary traditions and avoid their pitfalls. This project

also critically examines the theme of coming to terms with the Nazi past in GDR novels and Kant's contribution to it. My work will reveal Kant as a less didactic, more thought-provoking author than many of his contemporaries, without shying away from the weaknesses present in his works. By examining *Die Aula*, a novel published in 1965, my study also shows how intricately critics' own ideology interacts with the reception of the novel. Furthermore, my study will demonstrate how literature in the realist tradition can provide insightful social critiques, and how myopic it is to pigeonhole East German literature in general, and Kant in particular, as state literature or as pure propaganda.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The dissertation could not have been written without Professor William Donahue. He not only served as my advisor but also encouraged and challenged me throughout my academic program. He was responsible for involving me in this project in the first place and has been there for me ever since, to listen and to give advice. He instilled in me the value of perseverance and discipline in order to achieve my goals. He encouraged me to produce a work that I could be proud of, never accepting less than my best efforts. He showed me different ways to approach a research problem. He taught me how to ask tough questions and express my ideas. I thank him for his patience, grace, and generosity in guiding me through the dissertation process.

Besides my advisor, I would like to thank my friends Elena Mancini and Chris Mesterham. In numerous conversations, I have had the privilege of receiving their insightful comments on my research problems. I cannot remember how many times Elena had to read my manuscript on very short notice and give me insightful feedback. I cannot remember how many times Chris amazed me with his persistence in getting hold of the articles that I needed from the Alexander Library. When the reference I gave him was less than precise, he would sit in the library and look through a dozen issues of a journal to locate the articles. In times of distress, Elena and Chris have been the ones who supported me unconditionally.

A special thanks goes to my family. My daughters, Jessica and Carolyn, have been the ultimate inspiration for me. In the pursuit of my academic program, my husband, Jack, has been an unwavering supporter. I thank him for sharing with me his

own dissertation experiences, for babysitting our daughters whenever possible, for listening to my complaints and frustrations, for believing in me. Without his encouragement and support, it would have been impossible for me to bring my dissertation to completion.

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

ABSTRACT ii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS iv

FOREWORD 1

CHAPTER ONE: HERMANN KANT IN THE MIDST OF LITERATURSTREIT 8

- 1. Kant's Life and Work 8*
- 2. GDR Literature and the Christa Wolf Debate 10*
- 3. Kant as a Cultural Functionary 19*
- 4. Kant as IM "Martin": The Stasi Debate 31*
- 5. Gesinnungsästhetik? The Realism/Modernism Debate Continued 36*
- 6. What Remains of GDR Literature and Hermann Kant? 46*

CHAPTER TWO: HERMAN KANT'S AESTHETIC POSITION: IN DIALOGUE WITH THE REALISM DEBATE 51

- 1. Kant's Views of Socialist Realism 51*
 - 1.1. Socialist Realism in the GDR 51*
 - 1.2. Deviations from Socialist Realism in Kant's Writings 55*
 - 1.3. Kant's Sympathy for Formalism 73*
- 2. Evolving Views of Modernism 80*
- 3. Hermann Kant: The Unlikely Heir of Franz Kafka? 86*

CHAPTER THREE: HERMANN KANT CONFRONTS THE NAZI PAST IN DER AUFENTHALT: MARK NIEBUHR'S APPRENTICESHIP 93

- 1. Hermann Kant in the Tradition of East German Anti-fascist Literature 93*
- 2. From "Kleine Schachgeschichte" to Der Aufenthalt 99*
- 3. Inclusive Picture of Perpetrators and Victims 110*
- 4. Niebuhr's Apprenticeship: Enlightening Moments 120*
- 5. Problematization of Niebuhr's Transformation: Between Denial and Acceptance of Guilt and Responsibility 129*

CHAPTER FOUR: REVISITING DIE AULA: FACING THE SOCIALIST PAST 144

- 1. Reception of Die Aula 145*
- 2. Social Critique at a Closer Look 150*

2.1. The Portrayal of the West	150
2.2 Socialist Achievements and Failures	154
2.3. Stalinist Dogmatism	157
2.4. Abuse of Power: Personal Story as Political Satire	161
3. <i>Postscript</i>	169

NOTES	177
--------------	-----

BIBLIOGRAPHY	187
---------------------	-----

FOREWORD

My research interest in the GDR literature has been closely related to my personal biography. I grew up under the authoritarian rule of the Chinese Communist Party. In high school, I frequently missed the collective reading session in the morning before breakfast. I simply did not like to read books aloud with seventy other classmates. My Chinese-teacher accused me of “capitalist liberalism” even though I maintained a perfect academic record in terms of my grade point average. In my college years, I demonstrated and marched all the way to the Heavenly Gate and survived the massacre on June 4, 1989, or the “June Fourth incident” as the Chinese Communist Party preferred to call it.

I did not consider myself indoctrinated. Yet the degree of freedom American people enjoyed shocked me when I first landed in this country in the mid-1990s. I was flabbergasted by the sharpness and unrelenting nature of the personal and political attacks launched against Bill Clinton in the 1996 presidential election. This stood in stark contrast to one of the rare incidents of criticism of a Chinese political leader with which I was familiar. My father’s colleague, a mechanic, indulged in a joking comment on the occasion of a power outage: “If Chairman Mao is the sun, why do we still need the light bulb?” The government accused him of disrespecting Chairman Mao and jailed him for three years without a trial. In view of this, the degree of freedom of speech in the USA put me in awe of American democratic and civic freedoms.

In many of my private debates on China and the USA with my American friends, I often caught myself defending China. I started to reflect on why this was so. Prior to my arrival here, my thinking had been conditioned by my upbringing in Communist China. Although I was not uncritical of anti-capitalist propaganda, as a child and young adult in

Communist China I once deeply believed that I would rather be a weed in socialist China than a crop in the capitalist West, as the textbook of Elementary Chinese taught all the little children in China. With time I came to realize that I was defined and limited by my own past, and I felt compelled to become more accurately informed.

Shortly after arriving in the United States, I was also shocked by the intense anti-Communist sentiments in the history of the United States, especially in the age of McCarthyism. During my stay at Rutgers, I was engaged in a vigorous cultural exchange with many Americans. In the process, I realized that many of them have blind spots in their thinking about their own national past, just as I did, and still do. While I am able to change many of my previous views, thanks to my stay in this country, many people who never left China are still trapped in the cold-war mindset. I feel very fortunate to have the experiences that I had and have grown even more passionate about the promoting cultural understanding among nations.

This awareness also influenced my research interest. Not many people have to justify their academic major the way I had to do. Most people still show disbelief when I tell them that I majored in German. I studied German because I was interested in Germany's great intellectual, philosophical and literary tradition. In the face of much discouragement and misunderstanding from my non-academic friends and acquaintances, I followed my passion and pursued graduate study in the German program at Rutgers University. I am glad I did. Studying a culture and a national literature that is not my own has been a sobering experience. More often than not, I have had to overcome the awe (read: excessive admiration) and the modesty (read: tendency to be uncritical) in order to tap into and utilize my own life experiences and to achieve a self-conscious relationship

with the objects of my study and to explore the meanings of literature on my own. This intellectual growth would also have been impossible without my literary “apprenticeship.”

In the fall of 1996, I attended Professor Christine Consentino’s seminar on East German literature. It was my first in-depth encounter with GDR authors. During numerous discussions in the classroom I found out that I had an easy time understanding that body of literature and felt a personal connection with GDR authors. It was then that I made up my mind to write my dissertation in this area. When Professor William Donahue encouraged me to apply for the DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) scholarship, I decided to focus on East German literature and Hermann Kant in particular in my grant proposal.

Hermann Kant interests me in more ways than one. He is a man of letters, and at the same time, a man of power. He is a complex figure and the center of much debate. It is also very interesting to see how people interacted with him before and after the collapse of the Communist regime. A common practice among critics is to automatically identify him in accordance with the political climate in which he wrote. What I want to achieve through this study of Hermann Kant is to provide an analytic and interpretative investigation of his life and work so that readers can acquire a more inclusive picture of him. My experience with GDR literature is that it demonstrates the strengths and weaknesses of East German culture that can be enlightening and provocative for the contemporary reader.

I will start chapter one with important biographical information on Hermann Kant and introduce his literary works and his political influence in the GDR. I will then explain

the precepts of GDR literature and position Kant in the framework of the debate about GDR literature as represented in the Christa Wolf debate. Then I will examine in more detail the debate about Kant's role as cultural functionary and ultimately his cooperation with the *Stasi* (East German State Secret Police: MfS—"Ministerium für Staatssicherheit").

I will argue that the underlying theme of the literary debate of the 1990s is the battle between realism and modernism. I will connect the Wolf debate and the *Stasi* debate with debate over Günter Grass and Group 47 in general in order to reveal the underlying agenda of the debates of the 1990s in the post-reunification Germany and demonstrate how mainstream critics try to dismiss politically engaged literature in the realist tradition and influence public opinion in order to ensure that apolitical, high-modernist and postmodernist literature dominates the cultural sphere. After I link the literary debate with the debate about realism and modernism, I will situate Kant's literary engagement within this debate. I will point out the danger of a wholesale liquidation of a culture and emphasize the need to reassess East German literature in general, and make the case for experimental critical realism of Hermann Kant in particular.

In chapter two, I will focus on the importance of Kant in literary history in general, and especially in that of the former GDR. I will put Kant's realism in the context of GDR cultural policy and give an overview on the discourse of socialist realism in the GDR. Then I will demonstrate how Kant's sarcastic depiction of socialist realism contrasts with the official promotion of socialist realist doctrines. I will illustrate how Hermann Kant confronts the cultural, aesthetic precepts of socialist realism in his literary practice, especially in his novel *Die Aula*. Moreover, I will examine Kant's sympathy for

formalism and his desire for formal experimentation. I argue that on the surface, his works employ humor, episodes, anecdotes and aesthetic encounters in everyday routine. By aestheticizing the mundane, he practices a form of political engagement.

Via close reading, chapter two also traces the development of the author's aesthetic position and literary style, which changes from *Ein bißchen Südsee* to *Die Aula*. The trajectory between the earlier phase of Kant's writing to the mature phase parallels the process of Hermann Kant's self-fashioning: from simple to more complex, from socialist realism to experimental critical realism. In this section I also explore his relationship with Franz Kafka in the context of the "modernism phobia" of the GDR. I will show how Kant's experimental critical realism sees the potential in both realism and modernism and how he consciously incorporates modernist elements in his realist prose. Finally, I will emphasize the important contribution of Kant's aesthetics to the realism/modernism debate of the twentieth century.

Chapter three looks into the original and distinctive treatment of the German Nazi past in his 1977 novel *Der Aufenthalt*.¹ I will give a brief overview of the GDR discourse on anti-fascist literature and highlight Kant's role in it. My close reading will trace the development of Kant's treatment of the Nazi past back to his more dogmatic early short story "Kleine Schachgeschichte," to the more complex and sophisticated novel *Der Aufenthalt*. I will demonstrate how Kant, resisting clichés, provides us with a genuine and intriguing portrayal of a wide spectrum of perpetrators and victims and gives readers an inclusive picture of the war.

In this chapter, I also argue that Hermann Kant established an unrecognized tradition of literary resistance against the official anti-fascist discourse of the GDR, and

that at the same time Kant's artistic subtlety and less didactic approach give his work a distinctive edge over the mainstream East German anti-fascist literature. On the one hand, Kant showed us how Niebuhr, the main character of *Der Aufenthalt*, slowly comes to terms with the past and how enlightened he is about his own guilt and responsibility; on the other, I will reveal another narrative behind the seemingly perfect story of conversion of a German soldier from Nazism to socialism. I argue that a hidden narrative of denial and regression emerges when readers examine the details closely. Niebuhr's conversion turns out to be fickle and his old prejudices prove to be more deeply-rooted than he imagined. Kant provides readers with a plethora of differentiated views on the war and the Holocaust from the perspective of Niebuhr, the Poles, and other German prisoners. Without judging them prematurely, Kant's narrator gives readers the advantage of critically confronting the Nazi past.

Chapter four will investigate how Kant innovatively deals with the Stalinist past of the GDR. I will show that in attempting to come to terms with the East German socialist past, reading Kant's novel *Die Aula* can be quite instructive. My close reading will focus on Kant's critique of the social ills in the GDR in order to aid us in our understanding of its past.

My investigation uncovers a wide range of positions regarding the social critique in *Die Aula*. I will show how critics in both the East and the West are defined and limited by their respective ideological position. I will direct my attention more to the subversive elements of the novel in contrast to the GDR official reception and at the same time argue that *Die Aula* is not radically anti-Communist literature as was previously thought. I will illustrate how Kant wrote a political satire of the GDR through a personal story. I will

show his critique of Stalinist dogmatism in the GDR and the grievous consequences of personal abuse of political power. I will also show how much control the Party had over individual citizens under the banner of socialism.

This study will not excuse Kant easily, nor will it conceal the weaknesses of the author and his works. Rather it will point out moments in which Kant seems to fall into the trap of socialist realist clichés, especially in his portrayal of the West. Critics have thus accused Kant of being conformist. My work is going to address their all too often facile and simplistic claims. I argue that as a private citizen of the GDR, he is conformist in his political self-understanding. But as an artist, he is very critical of the Communist regime. Both as a private citizen and as an artist, he is certainly no fan of capitalism. In my postscript, I will also conduct a brief survey of Kant's post-reunification works that reveal many sentiments that are still valid among many former GDR writers, be it nostalgia or anti-capitalism. Through a nuanced approach, my study will yield a more textured and culturally and historically more rewarding reading.

CHAPTER ONE: HERMANN KANT IN THE MIDST OF LITERATURSTREIT

1. *Kant's Life and Work*

Hermann Kant was born in Hamburg in 1926, the son of a gardener.² As a young man he was enlisted to serve on the Eastern front. After his return from a Polish prison in 1949, Hermann Kant, a former electrician, became a citizen of the German Democratic Republic (the GDR) and a member of the SED (German Socialist Unity Party). He majored in German at Humboldt University in East Berlin. His first novel *Die Aula* (1965) catapulted him to extraordinary popularity because of its artistic brilliance, humor, irony, and arguably, his critique of social problems in the early years of the GDR. His second novel *Das Impressum* was written in response to the demands of the Party to feature the Party's leaders in art and literature, but its publication was delayed for years until 1972, because the portrayal was too parodistic for the liking of the GDR establishment.³ In his third novel *Der Aufenthalt* (1977) Hermann Kant thematized his experiences as a German soldier in postwar Polish prisons.

In the post-reunification era, Hermann Kant is one of the few prolific writers from the former GDR. In 1991, he published his autobiography *Abspann: Erinnerung an meine Gegenwart* (1991). Subsequently, he published *Kormoran* (1994); *Escape: Ein WORD-Spiel* (1995); *Okarina* (2002) and *Kino* (2005). Interesting as these later works may be, my focus here are the literary works by Kant written in the GDR. Yet I will refer to the works written after reunification when they relate to my arguments.

In 1978, Kant became the president of the GDR Writers' Union. Later, he received a seat in the People's Chamber (*Volkskammer*). In 1986, he became a member of the Central Committee of the SED. The exodus of writers and artists was associated with Kant's president-ship at Writers' Union (*Schriftstellerverband*). Even though he was elected in 1989, Kant refused to be the President of the Writers' Union. Since 1992, Hermann Kant has had to live with the accusation that he not only worked with the *Stasi* (*Staatssicherheit*) openly as a GDR functionary and high official, but also cooperated privately with the Secret Police as IM (*Inoffizieller Mitarbeiter*) "Martin." In both the political and cultural life of the GDR, Hermann Kant was a towering figure.

Numerous debates marked the cultural life of the newly united Germany during the tumultuous decade of the 1990s. Although the controversy over Hermann Kant is the primary object of this study, it seems impossible to make a sensible analysis about it without referring to other cultural occurrences in the same era. Three debates are closely related to the Kant debate: the Wolf debate, the Grass debate, and the Stasi debate. The debate about Christa Wolf symbolizes the debate about GDR literature, and the Kant debate is embedded in the controversy on GDR literature. The Stasi debate, as an integral part of the debate on GDR literature, directly involves Kant and other important East German authors, including Christa Wolf, Heiner Müller, Günter de Bruyn, and even Monika Maron to some extent. The Grass debate of the 1990s signifies the debate over the postwar literary establishment represented by the Group 47. While the Wolf debate and the Stasi debate directly concern Hermann Kant, the Grass debate serves to broaden our perspectives in order to locate the Kant debate in a broader cultural context of the realism/modernism debate in twentieth-century intellectual life.

Considering Kant's prominent role in East German literature, one would expect him to be the primary target of the early 1990s attacks on East German literature. Even though he did not escape unscathed, he was not criticized as harshly as Christa Wolf was. At first view, it can be argued that Wolf enjoyed more international fame than Hermann Kant and therefore constituted a more obvious target for attack. Whether the attack on Wolf was "witch-hunting" is debatable, but I would argue that the delayed publication of Wolf's *Was bleibt* served merely as a timely trigger for this debate over the corpus of GDR literature. Ultimately, as we will see later, the debate did not remain on the level of GDR literature either; it quickly evolved into attacks on the postwar literary tradition in the FRG (Federal Republic of Germany), established by the *Group 47*.

2. GDR Literature and the Christa Wolf Debate

To discuss the literary debate on the GDR literature, I need to clarify what GDR literature is. Drawing on Wolfgang Emmerich's 1998 article, I will give a brief account of what GDR literature means.⁴ In the 1950s, Western conservative critics hoped for the unity of German literature and dismissed the concept of a separate German literature in the GDR. They only considered highly critical and talented writers from the GDR, such as Peter Huchel. Even luminaries such as Bertolt Brecht, Anna Seghers, and Arnold Zweig were not acknowledged. It was only in the 1960s that Western critics, slowly but surely, realized that another literature had emerged in East Germany that was screaming for attention. It could no longer be ignored for the following reasons: First, it facilitated information about the increasingly estranged country that the GDR was becoming, especially since the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961. For West Germans, GDR literature served as a sort of reservoir for social studies about their Eastern Communist

counterparts. It was at this time as well that critics started to pay attention to literature that was aesthetically interesting, such as Uwe Johnson's *Mutmaßungen über Jakob* of 1959. This interest extended later to works by Johannes Bobrowski. Later, this body of literature began to embrace prose by Christa Wolf, Erwin Strittmatter, Hermann Kant, Günter de Bruyn and Fritz Rudolf Fries, poems by Günter Kunnert, Karl Mickel or Wolf Biermann as well as plays by Peter Hacks, Heiner Müller, Hartmut Lange, and Volker Braun. Attentive Western readers would notice that by the end of the 1960s, GDR literature possessed a relatively clear contour and an impressive corpus of its own. In the course of the 1960s, especially following the student movement in 1968, a third interest became visible. For the New Left, socialist literature provided a certain amount of elbowroom to experiment. It was seen as an antidote to real-existing socialism. The New Left projected their own utopian blueprints of a non-capitalist society onto GDR literature produced by authors such as Biermann, Braun, Wolf and Müller. GDR literature seemed to serve as a harbor for socialist ideals, or, a "quixotic house down the street: we didn't quite want to inhabit it, but were glad it was there all the same," as William Donahue put it in 1994.⁵

In the 1970s, GDR literature gained more prestige because of its successful critique of civilization. For example, as an industrial state, the GDR fetishized productivity and destroyed natural resources. Its literature thematized and problematized the transnational issue and made this "exotic" neighboring state more accessible for the Western reader. A novel such as Christoph Hein's *Drachenblut* (1983) can hardly be identified as GDR literature, because its main theme, the alienation in modern society, is a feeling that is valid in both the East and the West. GDR feminist literature also exerts

wide appeal among Western women because it treats universal themes such as women's struggle over equality in the paternal hierarchy of the society and single motherhood.

1976, the year of the Biermann affair, marked a turning point in the literary history of the GDR. As Emmerich points out, the GDR entered a phase of cultural decay after 1976; however, its moral nimbus kept growing thereafter.⁶ Many authors and artists proved their political courage during and after the Biermann affair. Some were arrested; others were forced to emigrate. When the democratic movement in the GDR was still in its infancy, the literary, artistic intellectuals seemed to be the only source of regime critique and demonstrated civil courage. By the end of 1980s, GDR literature was very divided, politically and aesthetically. But its aesthetic and moral rank was not contested. The fact that Wolf was nominated as a candidate for the Noble Prize year after year attests to this. In addition, the young writers of the Prenzlauer Berg district in East Berlin only increased the nimbus of GDR literature with their apparent oppositional stance.

What did GDR literature represent to GDR readers? GDR readers read literature for the same reasons as Western readers. The impetuous civilization critique of the new literature, its feminist concerns, and its socialist potentials, to name a few, are appealing for all readers. However, for GDR readers, literature meant a lot more than for Western readers. First, reading was an alternative form of recreation since audio-visual forms of media were severely underdeveloped and deliberately weakened by the State, which in turn enabled a rather anachronistic monopoly of books. The SED furnished literature with pedagogical tasks that a majority of GDR authors greeted with enthusiasm. The state promoted literature and reading with inexpensive books. Contemporary literature was especially highly valued. Secondly, literature served as a compensation for the lack of

free press constitutive of a democratic society. This political-compensatory function meant more for the GDR readers than the Western readers.⁷ As limited and severely censored as it was, literature exposed social ills, as well as fundamental flaws of the system that were otherwise silenced in the press. Literature created a substitute public sphere that performed multiple necessary functions.

The debate about Kant is an integral part of the dispute about GDR literature, which was triggered by the Christa Wolf debate. Kant, like Wolf, is one of the widely acknowledged representatives of the reformist-socialist literature in the GDR. This body of literature resonates strongly among many GDR readers. According to Emmerich, the number of GDR citizens fascinated by socialist ideals seemed to be enormous, even as the regime proved hopeless and incapable of delivering reforms.⁸ Many of them still believed in the socialist alternative. In the reformist-socialist literature of writers such as Kant and Wolf, many readers saw their own views represented: not only their critique of the failed socialist model in the GDR, but also their own utopian longings for authentic socialism. The early phase of the debate over East German literature focused exactly on this corpus of critical socialist literature that used to be the crucial lifeline of GDR readers. Since reunification, consensus on the high value of GDR literature in general and its reformist-socialist segments in particular, has ceased to exist. To be sure, the political and literary critique from the old federal republic played a leading role in diminishing its popularity.

The untimely publication of a novel by Wolf triggered the literary debate of the 1990s.⁹ In the early summer of 1990, Christa Wolf published her novel *Was bleibt*, a story about an East German author persecuted by the State Security Service (*Stasi*).¹⁰ The

novel contains obvious autobiographical overtones. It was originally written in 1979 when the relationship between Wolf and the state was already somewhat tense, just three years after the singer-songwriter Wolf Biermann was deprived of GDR citizenship and expelled to the FRG in 1976. Many writers in the GDR, including Wolf, protested Biermann's expulsion and some were expelled from the Writers' Union of the GDR. The story tells how the protagonist, a leading writer in the country, was placed under close watch of the *Stasi*. The author depicts the schizophrenia and suffering of the protagonist at that time and her soul-searching about her position and her relationship with the state. Wolf allowed for this book to hibernate in her desk drawer and chose 1989 as the time to revise it, the year in which the fate of the GDR was at a turning point.

Wolf's decision to wait with the publication of the revised *Was bleibt* until 1989 sparked an intense and acrimonious debate about her. On June 1, 1990, Ulrich Greiner and Volker Hage opened this controversy by publishing two articles in the newspaper *Die Zeit*: "Mangel an Feingefühl" and "Kunstvolle Prosa" respectively. On June 2, 1990, an article on Christa Wolf and her relation to the state GDR by Frank Schirrmacher ("Dem Druck des härteren, strengeren Lebens standhalten") appeared in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. The late appearance of *Was bleibt* is regarded as indicative of Christa Wolf's alleged cowardice and supposed complicity as an IM in the legitimization of a repressive state like the GDR. Christa Wolf's moral integrity was unremittingly questioned.

Because public opinions have such enormous impact on the cultural sphere, it is of paramount importance that critics present the past as cautiously, comprehensively, and fairly as possible. That was not what happened in the German literary debate in the

1990s. My research reveals that common binary oppositions dominate the debate: West versus East, victors versus losers. The dichotomous mentality of the cold-war era was forcefully resurrected (if it had ever been dead) in this literary debate. This tendency among many contemporary critics is understandable. Because Derridean and Lacanian post-structuralism threatened to constantly erase every stable political or cultural identity, critics learned to anticipate it by overshooting their target. More often than not, they made grand exaggerations just to catapult a political and public platform with great effectiveness. This was what had happened to older generations of the most notable cultural critics such as Adorno and Lukács in their debate about realism and modernism. The same phenomenon happened in the new generation of critics in the literary debates in the 1990s' Germany.

I argue that the international readers appreciate the works by Christa Wolf because of their literary qualities, not because of some internal German political contingency. Greiner failed to account for Wolf's success while he was eager to attack Wolf's integrity. He claimed that in the political aesthetics exemplified by Christa Wolf, the work, author, and morality are inseparable and that the text is the moralistic self-portrait of the author and that the author is identical with her moral intention, which appeals to humanity and universality. For Greiner, these aesthetics represent "ein grandioses Mißverständnis."¹¹ He ignored Wolf's international popularity all too willingly and was misguided in his assessment of Wolf. As Lothar Baier pointed out, the German-German literary debate embarrassed Germany in front of Europe and was not only comical, but also scandalous.¹² When Wolf received the *Mondello* prize in Italy in September 1990 and the medal "Offizier des *Arts et des Lettres*" from the French cultural

minister Jacques Lang, Baier contended that these prizes must have felt like a slap in the face for the heroes of the German literary debate, implying Greiner and Schirmacher and their like.¹³ However, I want to emphasize here that the left-wing defenders of Christa Wolf and GDR literature are also deceiving themselves if they believe that Christa Wolf's continuing success is representative of the fate of the GDR literature and its authors. While Greiner needs to account for the success of Wolf, the defenders of Wolf also need to account for the success of the heroes of the literary debate in the public sphere of the united Germany.

A very strange change of trend in the German literary scene accompanied the German reunification process. This was reflected in Baier's words, "Je größer das Land äußerlich wird, desto provinzieller nimmt sich sein literarisches Leben aus."¹⁴ Similarly, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, April 13/14 1991, published an article called "Kalte Enteignung des nationalen Erbes?" This article reported about Austria's fears of being cultural-politically annexed by the unified Germany, which were widespread in Austria. The author indicated that in spite of their contrary social situations, the GDR and Austria have similar cultural interests. Both countries aimed to dissociate themselves from West German culture; both tried to formulate a totally independent national or state culture. The spreading German-speaking area would not serve as "*gemeinsame Heimat*."¹⁵ Instead, it seemed to be rather threatening. Most reactions from the Austrian press on the West German polemics against Christa Wolf supported these assessments.

I argue that it makes little or no sense for Greiner to wage a war against Wolf while she already subjects the real socialism in the GDR and her protagonist to the "language court" of literature. An attentive reader would surely recognize the critical and

self-critical elements of Wolf's novel *Was bleibt*. The articles by Greiner, Schirmmacher are literary-critical expressions of the West German victor-mentality (*Siegermentalität*). As Herbert Hrachovec stated once, after victors defeat the kings they always like to burn the priests as well.¹⁶ According to him, victors usually do not stop at defeating the secular power of a conquered nation; beliefs and convictions of its people must also be destroyed. Hrachovec predicted that "Wehe denen, die sich im unterlegenen Regime als moralische Autorität hervorgetan haben, sie trifft eine spezielle Wut."¹⁷ In retrospect, one can see the accuracy of this forecast. Hermann Kant was clearly one of the authors who functioned as a moral authority in the "defeated" regime. Therefore, he also was vilified with much indignation.

East German intellectuals seemed to suffer too much pain caused by the loss of their country and the attacks launched against them. They ceased to be objective in their judgment of the situation. Helga Königsdorf, an East German author, expressed her pain in an emphatic manner:

Nach diesem Jahr werden Gedichte unmöglich sein. Nach diesem Jahr wird es keine Liebe und keine Revolution mehr geben. Wenn ich könnte, würde ich den Frühling verbieten. In diesem Jahr gab es einen Moment, da waren wir alle sehr schön...Jetzt erst, da alles vorüber ist, möchte ich schreien. Das Spiel mit den Masken ist zu Ende. Ich taumele mit ungelenken Schritten in die Freiheit. Und es ist die Freiheit der anderen. Ich habe keine Verwendung mehr dafür.¹⁸

It is not uncommon for German intellectuals to add a romantic overtone to the pain from which they suffer, like Adorno, who five years after the end of World War II proclaimed the death of poetry after Auschwitz: "Nach Auschwitz ein Gedicht zu schreiben ist barbarisch, und das frißt auch die Erkenntnis an, die ausspricht, warum es unmöglich ward, heute Gedichte zu schreiben."¹⁹ Even though one can sympathize with the disappointment, despair and the fear of GDR writers, Königsdorf seems to greatly

romanticize this pain. Her evocation of Adorno's famous dictum is perhaps insensitive and exaggerated. The brief account of the attack on the literary establishment of the GDR and the left-wing reactions to this attack showcased the strong antagonism between the younger generation of writers and critics and the older generation. The rhetoric is usually over-heated on both sides of the battle.

Ten years later, Kant talked about this experience in the literary debate thus: "Ich habe sicher wahnsinnig viel falsch gemacht, und in den Augen der Leute, die heute über Richtig oder Falsch entscheiden, habe ich alles falsch gemacht."²⁰ Someone from England sent him a T-shirt with the inscription on it that read: "Ich bin all allem Schuld" (It is all my fault). Kant joked that he would have loved to put it on. He did not do it, he claimed, because everybody already considered him guilty anyway. In his view, the T-shirt was superfluous. Kant summed up the debate: "Bei der Bemühung, keine Zeichen von DDR zu haben, ist die Literatur eine so bekämpfte Angelegenheit wie kaum eine andere."²¹

In the process of discrediting the GDR and its cultural achievements, critics such as Schirmacher and Greiner also saw a chance to assault the reputation of politically engaged literature in the West that had arguably already been in decay through its marked apolitical silence of its intellectuals throughout the course of the 1980s. The engaged writer was most forcefully represented in West German literary life during the 1980s by GDR writers such as Christa Wolf, Stefan Heym, Christoph Hein, Volker Braun und Heiner Müller, despite the major differences observed between the literary contexts of the two states.

Paradoxically, the literary debate broke out at a time when it seemed that intellectuals in the GDR had acquired a standing and a role entirely comparable to that previously held by their colleagues in the West. Indeed, it can be argued that if Heinrich Böll had a true successor in the 1980s, it was Christa Wolf, a GDR writer. From its very inception, the GDR had appealed to left-wing intellectuals in so much as it seemed to represent a unique chance to put into practice the hope of socialist and Communist ideas from the 1920s; hopes that had been crushed by the Nazis taking over power in 1933. There seemed also to be an end to the division between intellectuals and politics (*Geist* and *Macht*) in the GDR. Had Heinrich Mann lived longer, he would have accepted the invitation to become the first President of the new state. As it was, the poet Johannes R. Becher became its first Minister of Culture. Not only did Becher represent the alliance between leading émigré intellectuals—who included Brecht, Anna Seghers, Peter Huchel, Stefan Heym, Stephan Hermlin, Ernst Bloch, Arnold Zweig and many less well-known left-wing writers—and the state, he also embodied the important role and the favored status that the state gave to them.²² Like Becher, Hermann Kant, even though belonging to a younger generation, epitomized this connection between intellectuals and power.

3. Kant as a Cultural Functionary

The Wolf debate seemed to challenge the notion of GDR literature as a whole. In this battle, the reformist-socialist writers were especially hard-hit. Christa Wolf, who had enjoyed worldwide fame and renown for her reformist, if not oppositional spirit, was harshly upbraided and accused of moral blindness, as shown above. If Wolf could be made out to be a coward and a hypocrite, then the rest of the reformist-socialist writers could safely go down with her. If this is indeed the case, then especially Hermann Kant,

who was always an apparatchik in the eyes of most critics, should have to be excommunicated from the realm of worthy literature automatically.

Kant has always been a controversial figure in both German states even before reunification. He was one of the most important writers in the GDR, with his novels *Die Aula*, *Das Impressum*, and *Der Aufenthalt* included in the canon of GDR literature. As the President of the Writers' Union, he clearly was an influential cultural functionary in the regime. Trying to mediate between the Union and society, especially between the Union and the Party, Kant harvested a plethora of hostilities. In the immediate post-reunification debate, star critics tried to make Kant into a political chameleon (*Wendehals*), but failed, for Hermann Kant remained a devoted socialist. Before reunification, he was the major oppositional voice to the capitalist West; after reunification, his critical view of capitalism did not change. Contrary to what his critics charge him with, these are hardly the makings of an opportunist, even though a sign of mitigation of his anti-capitalism showed up only recently, as I will demonstrate in the postscript.

Kant was not the ultimate political villain that the Western media made him up to be. Putting aside his depraved, power-craving image that seems to be substantiated by the *Stasi* documents which will be discussed later in the chapter, I believe that there is another side of Kant's story that deserves some detailed examination as well. When mass emigration occurred in the GDR, Hermann Kant was the only one from the Central Committee that discussed many crucial issues openly. In the fateful year of 1989, he wrote an open letter to *Die Junge Welt*, the official newspaper of the Communist youth organization (*FDJ—Freie Deutsche Jugend*).²³ In this letter, Kant, as the first member of

the Central Committee (*Zentralkomitee*), criticized the real problems the GDR was facing. He claimed that one could not blame the “class enemy” for the failure of the country. The mass emigration from East Germany in the previous weeks was not the pure work of “evil villains,” who lured and hypnotized the brave GDR citizens. He insisted on asking the question: why did these people leave friends, neighbors, work, apartment, plans, hometown, and small possessions in order to escape to the West? He did not believe that his Western opponents single-handedly motivated mothers to hand their children over the fences of the embassy and young men willing to leave for a strange land.²⁴ He suggested that the GDR should look into the reasons within the system itself, why those people chose this unknown and risky road with conviction and resolve. He advised that the GDR see the circumstances as they were: “Eine Niederlage ist eine Niederlage, und passt sie noch so schlecht in den Vorabend eines gloriosen Feiertags.”²⁵ Kant believed in the superiority of socialism over capitalism and reminded people to be grateful for socialism, and not to take it for granted, “Abwesenheit von Arbeitslosigkeit, Kriminalität, Sozialelend und Bildungsnot...Kriegsfurcht, Konzerndiktat, Ausbeuterei und Großbesitz.” On the other hand, he pointed out the shortcomings of the existing system: “bürokratische Gängelung, allwaltender Pädagogismus, verordnete Abstinenz gegenüber Gütern, die anderswo als Normbestandteile des 20. Jahrhunderts gelten, mangelnder Freizügigkeit von Ideen im eigenen Land und Trichterbegriff von Agitation.”²⁶ According to Kant, these weaknesses of the system severely undermined the rich substance of socialism. Finally, for Kant, what was best about the GDR is “daß es sie gibt,” and what was the worst about the GDR is “daß es sie so wie derzeit gibt.” Kant’s letter found resonance among GDR citizens because of the honesty with which he

depicted the squalid conditions of the GDR. Later, according to Egon Krenz, a few members of the *Politbüro* were not happy about the letter.²⁷ Since they suspected that Krenz was behind it, they did not make a big deal of it. Krenz himself was touched by it. He revealed that a few members in *Politbüro* did not like Kant because they thought him a nagger (“Nörgler”) and they thought his “produktiver Widerspruch” was annoying.²⁸ Krenz nominated Kant as candidate for the Central Committee, and he later regretted this move because the West German media and some writers made people believe that “Kant vergesse am Tisch der Mächtigen die Interessen seiner Berufszunft.”²⁹ For Krenz, Kant did more for the writers than many of his critics would have thought possible. Kant lobbied for writers who did not even belong to the Writers’ Union. He did a lot of this and talked little about it.³⁰

Although Hermann Kant was elected president of the Writers’ Union in 1989, he chose to retreat from the public eye. The steering committee of the union gratefully acknowledged him. It claimed that Kant belonged to the personalities who rendered outstanding services to the Writers’ Union. He publicly supported and promoted the reform of the country for a long time. According to the steering committee, the attacks against him, brought forward by a group of union members and candidates from Berlin and supported by a part of the media industry, lacked “jeder demokratischen Legitimation, weil sie sich gegen die Interessen der großen Mehrheit der Mitglieder richten.”³¹

Hermann Kant spoke about his role and the value of literature in the SED-regime in a *Spiegel* interview in 1990.³² Here, the interviewer suggested that Kant tried to justify

himself as victim of the system as Christa Wolf did with her late publication of *Was bleibt*. Kant responded:

Ich bin ein DDR-Bürger, ich stehe ein für die DDR, ich wollte sie, ich will sie, ich will sie auch verteidigen...Ich bin keineswegs einer Schimäre nachgelaufen, aber die, mit denen ich glaubte die gleichen Ziele zu verfolgen, hatten oftmals entschieden engere, eigensüchtigere Ziele als ich...Ich hatte den Vorsatz, an etwas mitzuwirken, einem Staat, einer Gemeinschaft, deren Mitglieder anderen keine Angst mehr einjagen würden. Das war für mich eine Hauptsache, der hänge ich nach wie vor an.³³

Kant remained loyal to his fundamental convictions. He supported the GDR and the socialist ideals, but complained that others had narrower and more selfish goals than he did. He did not pretend to be a victim of the system. He admitted that he was not someone whom the regime had deceived, mistreated, and that he was not remorseful as others who could not express their regrets enough.³⁴ Kant's statements here make it abundantly clear that he is not abdicating responsibility for his actions. Whatever he did, he did it knowingly and willingly: "Ich lege Wert auf die Feststellung, daß ich ein Aktivist der DDR war, daß ich für die Herstellung eines lebberen Sozialismus in diesem Land gewesen bin."³⁵ It would hardly be in the interest of an opportunist to claim to be an activist of a GDR whose socialism was severely bashed under the post-reunification circumstances. Surely it would not have been an effective way to promote his popularity in the post-reunification era. Yet, the (in)famous quote "Ich bin ein Aktivist der DDR" branded Kant from the moment that he pronounced it. However, it is unfair to judge his literary works as pure state propaganda just because he claimed to be an activist for the GDR, as I will demonstrate later in my study.

In the post-reunification debate, there are two major controversies that render Kant vulnerable to hostilities. The first accusation is that he was an accomplice within the

GDR regime in ostracizing Wolf Biermann and especially in banning nine oppositional writers from the Writers' Union; the second accusation has to do with his cooperation with the secret police, *Stasi*, from 1957 to 1976. The oppositional songwriter and singer Wolf Biermann had been banned from publication and stage performances after the eleventh Plenum of the Central Committee of the SED in 1965. In 1974, he was advised to leave the GDR, yet he steadfastly refused to do so. Nevertheless, the half-hearted liberalization policy of Erich Honecker could not tolerate him any longer. In November 1976, three days after Biermann accepted the invitation of the *IG-Metal* of West Germany, and sang in the sports hall in Cologne, the Politburo expelled him from his own country.

Famous artists from the GDR protested against this decision. Stephan Hermlin published a declaration of protest in *Neues Deutschland*, with signatures of twelve prominent artists, including Christa Wolf, Volker Braun and Stefan Heym. Within a few days, seventy more artists signed the protest declaration. This marked the first time in GDR history that the regime had to deal with the protest of its own prominent intellectuals. The SED then politely and strategically asked the protesters to withdraw their signatures. When artists refused to cooperate, they paid a heavy price. Some artists, such as Manfred Krug, were punished with a stage ban; others, such as Sigmar Faust, paid for their courage with a jail sentence. Following the protest was a wave of artists leaving for the West. Hermann Kant did not protest against the Politburo's decision. Instead, he, along with a few other prominent GDR artists such as Anna Seghers, Erik Neutsch, Paul Wiens, Konrad Wolf and Peter Hacks, stood by the government and approved of the expulsion of Wolf Biermann. In the Biermann affair, Kant clearly sided

with the regime. As an activist for the GDR, this was not out of character for him. His political convictions lead to his blindness and his intolerance toward oppositional artists.

In a subsequent incident centered on the exclusion of nine artists from the Writers' Union in June 1979, Kant's involvement was deeper and more complicated. The nine artists, Kurt Bartsch, Adolf Endler, Stefan Heym, Karl-Heinz Jakobs, Klaus Poche, Klaus Schlesinger, Rolf Schneider, Dieter Schubert and Joachim Seyppel, drafted a protest letter to Honecker and published it in the West. They accused the state apparatus of attempting to defame and criminalize critical and engaged writers. The Party, the *Stasi*, and the culture ministry staged a tribunal. In the famous meeting of the members of the Writers' Union in the *Rote Rathaus* in Berlin, Hermann Kant accused the writers of serving the anti-Communist agitation against the GDR and Socialism. The voting was only pro forma. Eighty percent of 400 voters voted for the ostracization. However, its legitimacy was questionable. Many voters were party delegates. Mail-in votes were not considered at all. In 1990, when the *Spiegel* interviewer suggested that the GDR was suffering from "persecution mania," (*Verfolgungswahn*), Kant did not agree. He did not think that the GDR, or he, an activist of the GDR, was paranoid: "die anderen wollen uns wiederhaben, und sie werden nicht Ruhe geben, bis sie uns wiederkriegen. Jetzt kriegen sie uns. Das ist doch keine Einbildung."³⁶ Kant seemed to have been genuinely frightened by the prospect that the West would one day defeat the GDR and viewed German unification as just the pinnacle of such a defeat. In Kant's famous speech at the meeting of the Writers' Union in 1979, he stated that members of the Writers' Union should respect its statute, and that those who do not accept the statute of the Union cannot expect to be accepted by the Union.³⁷ He believed that the nine writers forced their own

exclusion by disrespecting the Union's statute. Following this affair, many more artists and normal citizens took leave of the workers and peasants' state. As my above analysis shows, the 1979 affair was not only about the Writers' Union. It escalated to a full-blown state affair, a Party affair and turned out to be a lose-lose situation: The cultural repression did not solve the problems of the Party or those of the Writers' Union.

Even though Kant believes that he did what was necessary at that time, he does show some remorse.³⁸ Retrospectively, he evaluates his position and takes responsibility for not realizing that if the Union's statute divided its members, perhaps something was wrong with the statute. He regrets having focused the discussion merely on the exclusion or inclusion of the nine writers, rather than taking the opportunity to reevaluate the statute of the Writers' Union.³⁹ Here, in a moment of self-criticism, Kant appears to admit that his own dogmatism ultimately contributed to the cultural repression in the GDR.

Overwhelmingly, however, Kant believes that he did what was necessary to advance the socialist cause. As the newly appointed President of the Writers' Union in 1979, Kant might have had some illusions of his own. His novel *Das Impressum*, which the state censorship accused of philosemitism, anti-Semitism, and pornography, was finally published in 1972, only after Honecker's loosened cultural policy restrictions. The publication of his second novel and Honecker's "no-taboo" rhetoric might have prompted Kant to consider Honecker more open-minded than the much stricter Ulbricht. In his autobiography, *Abspann* (1991), Kant recalls that Günter Grass accused him of contributing to the degradation of the Writers' Union. Kant defends himself and claims that he advanced the writers' association to a professional union that "nicht nur seinen Mitgliedern äußerst wichtige Rechte verschaffte, sondern zunehmend Einfluß auf

gesamtgesellschaftliche Dinge gewann” (*Abspann* 180). Kant also mentions his letter exchange with Jurek Becker in the summer of 1979, in which he wrote: “...ich betrachte den Verband durchaus als eine Interessenvermittlung zwischen Literatur und Gesellschaft (und von Dir und von mir aus auch als eine zwischen Literatur und Partei), und ich finde, wer die Möglichkeiten des Verbandes nicht nutzt, beschneidet die Interessen der Literatur” (*Abspann* 444). Kant expects this letter to help justify the exclusion of the nine authors from the Union. He truly believes that “Nur ein...angeschlagender, so doch vorhandener Verband konnte die Interessen von Schreibern und Lesern, also auch die Interessen von Verlegern und Buchhändlern, also wichtige Interessen der gesamten Gesellschaft, wirksam vertreten. Er hat es getan, und ich sorgte, daß er vorhanden blieb” (*Abspann* 478). Here, Kant considers a crippled Writers’ Union better than no union at all. He argues that he fought for the existence of the Union because it represented important interests of the readers, publishers and bookstores. However, Joachim Walther, who is avowedly no fan of Kant, disagrees with this assessment. Walther suggests that Kant’s statement should read: “Ich sorgte dafür, daß ich, Hermann Kant, als Verbandspräsident vorhanden blieb.”⁴⁰ Walther speculates that if Kant did not agree to conduct the tribunal in 1979, he would have been thrown out as the President of the Writers’ Union. Even though Walther’s speculation sounds plausible, it is rather irrelevant, because already in his autobiography, Kant clearly claimed that he did not act under any coercion (*Abspann* 473). In his rage against the nine writers’ publication of the protest letter to Honecker in the West, Kant was alone. Nobody instructed him to make that speech; he did it all on his own, or so he claims in his autobiography (*Abspann* 473).

Later, in the 1992 *Spiegel* interview, Kant justified his position in terms of historical and political necessity. In the fateful meeting in the *Rote Rathaus*, the oppositional authors appeared in the company of an ARD-Team (*Arbeitsgemeinschaft der öffentlich-rechtlichen Rundfunkanstalten der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* – the Consortium of public-law broadcasting institutions of the Federal Republic of Germany). What Kant disliked most was involving the Western media in internal affairs. He claimed that “Es ist doch nicht so, daß auf der einen Seite eine SED das Sagen hatte und niemand ihr widersprechen konnte, und auf der anderen Seiten waren Leute, die man nicht hörte, weil sie durch einen Sack voll Kleie riefen.”⁴¹ As a Communist leader, he must have felt that what the authors did at that time represented a genuine betrayal of the cause of the workers and peasants’ state. Although the ostracized authors had to suffer, Kant claimed that he made their loss as small as possible for them. He claimed that these authors were essential to the country and needed to be published. What followed was that Stefan Heym published more than before, and others published as well as the result of the Union’s efforts. According to Kant, this was no act of grace (“Gnadenakt”) on the side of the publishers, but simply demonstrated the insight that the works by these authors belonged to the literature of the GDR.⁴²

In his autobiography Kant speaks of his personal fight against the repressive cultural policy in the GDR. As president of the Writers’ Union, he devoted himself to the publication of the second edition of Erich Loest’s *Es geht seinen Gang* (1978) and the first editions of Erwin Strittmatter’s *Wundertäter III* (1980) and Christoph Hein’s *Horns Ende* (1985) (*Anspann* 118, 428-429). Kant was very proud of his accomplishment. He claimed that in the last five or six years of the GDR, democracy ruled within the Writers’

Union: “Nichts ging ohne Argumentation. Sie konnten nichts in ihm bewirken durch Hinweise auf irgendeinen Ukas.” The decree of the Czar, implying the official policy of the GDR, started to lose its power within the Union. According to Kant, the Writers’ Union was on its way to freedom because of the democratic initiatives of its members.⁴³

After the *Stasi* accusation, Kant did not often speak in public. But in 1997, he gave an interview on the show of the famous diplomat and journalist of the FRG, Günter Gaus that stirred some controversy in the *FAZ*. Gaus had always recommended two books for people who know German and want to understand the GDR; one of them was *Die Aula*; the other was Erich Loest’s *Es geht seinen Gang*. Gaus interviewed Hermann Kant on his program *Zur Person* November 19, 1997: “Günter Gaus im Gespräch mit Hermann Kant.”⁴⁴ During the interview, Kant claimed that he was not “im Hauptvorstand der Tyrannei.” He believed that the Writers’ Union would benefit all people who were interested in literature, as either writers or readers. He was frustrated that it was later treated as if it had been the warship of the tyrannical regime. Gaus raised the issue that a lot of people were not fond of Kant because they found him insincere: “Er tut so als ob, aber in Wahrheit hat er sich gerne bei der Macht aufgehalten.”⁴⁵ Kant replied that “Das ist nicht so ganz richtig. Ich habe doch sehr bald gemerkt, daß die Macht es gar nicht so gern hatte, daß ich mich bei ihr aufhielt. Ich war ja doch immer ein störender Aber-Sager bei der Ausübung der Macht.”⁴⁶ What Kant claims is consistent with what Egon Krenz once said about him: that he was a nagger [“Nörgler”], and that people in the Politburo did not like him much. According to Krenz, he intervened many times on behalf of the members of the Writers’ Union with Kurt Hager, Egon Krenz, and Erich Honecker, but

never talked to the Western media about his intervention.⁴⁷ Kant said something enlightening about his relationship to the power:

Ich sah doch nicht in den Mächtigen mir entgegengesetzte Leute. Das konnte nicht einmal bei Ulbricht der Fall sein. Bei Honecker schon gar nicht. Das waren für mich keine mir entgegengesetzte Leute, sondern es waren Leute, an anderen Ende und Ecken dieser Gesellschaft, natürlich mit Macht ausgestattet, ganz anderer, als ich sie besaß. Aber das, was in diesen Kommentaren aufscheint, deutet nach meiner Ansicht an, ich hätte mich mit den falschen Gesellen freundlich gestellt, um wohl zu leben. Das ist alles Blödsinn. Ich habe, das ist sofort einzuräumen, es machmal genossen, etwas richten zu können....Ich habe gemacht, was nötig war, was mir nötig schien, habe da weder Widerstände noch Beifall bemerkt.⁴⁸

This quote reveals that even though Kant was not opposing the people in power, he did try to draw a line between him and people like Ulbricht and Honecker. He lamented that these people viewed their power in a different light than he. He claimed that he did not consort with the wrong fellows for his own interests, and that he did what he believed to be necessary for the good of the country and the people in it. Once again, Kant identifies himself as a social activist of the GDR: “daß man einem Regime als Vorzeigepoet diente, ja, das hat mich nicht gestört. Ich fand dieses Regime in Ordnung. Mit all seinen Lücken und Fehlern war es in Ordnung.”⁴⁹ At the end of the interview, Kant clearly prided himself on his steadfastness and his perseverance in remaining loyal to the GDR and its ideological values:

Vor den Leuten, bei denen es wichtig war, keine Angst zu haben, keine Angst gehabt zu haben und mich durchgehalten zu haben in ziemlich grundsätzlichen Dingen. Adenauer hat vor vierzig Jahren gesagt: Warten Sie nur, den werden wir auch noch bekehren. Er hat es nicht geschafft, sie haben es nicht geschafft; es wird keiner schaffen.⁵⁰

In these words one cannot find any sign of regret. He is not a political chameleon, but a stubborn and defiant “soldier,” standing by his cause fearlessly. And he definitely does not like to be judged by the “class enemy.” This statement begs the question: Does he

really believe his slogans that sound so desperately empty today, or is he only putting up a brave face, a fearless façade against the capitalist West? This question remains unanswered in spite of his public statements and all of his books.

4. Kant as IM “Martin”: The Stasi Debate

The *Stasi* debate took place later, but was no less controversial. The 1991 discovery of the *Stasi* affiliation of several young authors from the *Prenzlauer Berg* scene, in particular Sascha Anderson and Rainer Schedlinski, ignited the *Stasi* debate. In the Wolf debate, the authors of the *Prenzlauer Berg* circle were not the chief targets because of its self-proclaimed defiance towards the system. The involvement of its members in the *Stasi* espionage besmirched its reputation as an antidote for state oppression. All of a sudden, even the oppositional stance of the *Prenzlauer Berg* writers seemed to be tainted by the *Stasi*. The very existence of autonomous and sovereign art and literature of the GDR was severely questioned. From 1991 to 1993, more authors with *Stasi* involvements were exposed. This time, it was not just the few youths from Prenzlauer Berg who were accused of espionage for the secret state police. It was the reformist-socialist core of GDR literature: Kant, Wolf, Heiner Müller and even Günter de Bruyn.

The alleged cooperation with the *Stasi* subjected Kant to fierce attacks in the West in 1992. *Der Spiegel* published an article entitled “‘Vermisse das Wort Pinscher’: Ein Staatsschriftsteller im Stasi-Dienst: Die Spitzel-Karriere des Genossen Hermann Kant alias IM ‘Martin.’”⁵¹ The article claimed that Kant worked for the *Stasi* for almost two decades: first as a “Kontaktperson” (KP), then as “Geheimer Informant” (GI), then as “Inoffizieller Mitarbeiter” (IM).⁵² The article revealed much of Kant’s spy-career through

the *Stasi* files. The article also claimed that Kant seemed to cooperate enthusiastically with the *Stasi*, without lack of self-initiative. This revelation was shocking, considering that Kant had never admitted to such involvement.

In 1995, the controversy over Kant's espionage was intensified after Karl Corino published his Kant-biography *Die Akte Kant: IM Martin, die Stasi und die Literatur in Ost und West*.⁵³ Corino meticulously documented Kant's relationship with the *Stasi*. His confrontation with Kant's nebulous past catapulted Kant right into the eye of the storm. In his relentless quest for truth, Corino exposed in full detail Kant's involvement in the *Stasi*.

It is possible that *Stasi* files are not the most reliable source of information. Former Chancellor Helmut Kohl, whom the *Stasi* spied on in the eighties, managed to win the lawsuit brought by Marianne Birthed, who headed the agency overseeing the secret police archives of the former Communist regime in East Germany. Kohl claimed that the *Stasi* files were bound to be full of false information. Kohl's lawyer told the hearing that the files were "manipulated and some information was simply invented."⁵⁴ On these grounds, ex-Chancellor Kohl's files will continue to remain largely sealed. On the these same grounds, one is tempted to conclude that Corino's research that is heavily based on the *Stasi* files, is fundamentally flawed. On second thought, however, one can see a rather obvious difference between Kant and Kohl. In the eighties, the *Stasi* must have perceived Kohl as the head of the enemy state and spied on him as such. While Kohl was not affiliated with the *Stasi*, Kant was the loyal member of the SED and the apparent protégé of the secret agency. Even though the *Stasi* might have been inaccurate in Kohl's files, there is little reason for the *Stasi* agents to conspire against Hermann Kant. Besides,

the reunification surprised the most perspicacious scholars. How can one expect *Stasi* agents to have foreseen the historical change and conspired against Kant for decades? It is thus highly improbable that Kant's files were intently manipulated or falsified.⁵⁵

In his autobiography, *Abspann*, Kant denies any deep involvement with the *Stasi*.⁵⁶ He described the recruiting effort of the secret police in the 1950s. He asserts that he refused to be any part of it:

...und auch ihnen erklärte ich, warum es mit unserer Partnerschaft nichts werden könne. Weil sie von auswärts waren, schilderte ich die vertrackten Kämpfe zwischen Humboldt und Freier Universität und fragte, wem es dienen solle, wenn wir, die wir Gespräche suchten, in den Ruf gerieten, Agentur verschwiegener Kräfte zu sein.⁵⁷

According to Kant, that was the last time that the recruiters approached him. However, many things took place between the writing of his autobiography *Abspann* and the novel *Okarina*. For one, Kant's files at the *Stasi* archive became available. Counting everything from and about IM (*InoffiziellerMitarbeiter*) "Martin," there are 2,254 pages on him. *Der Spiegel* published the article revealing some of his activities as IM in 1992; Corino recorded all Kant's *Stasi* involvements in his political biography of Kant, as I mentioned earlier.

While the evidence spoke against Kant, he continued to deny any affiliation with the *Stasi*. Later, he seems to confront this past in his 2002 novel *Okarina*. The narrator recalls his past in the following way: "Etliche der versammelten Nachrichten verdankten sich meinem Mitteilungsdrang. Ich hatte wem was geprahlt, der hatte wem das erzählt, der hatte es in sein Bild gefasst, dann hatte es als Bericht gepasst. Weniger böser Wille als schlechtes Benehmen lag vor."⁵⁸ Here, the narrator in *Okarina* admits that he leaked some information out of his urge to tell ["Mitteilungsdrang"]. According to the narrator,

he was not the one who wrote the actual reports for the *Stasi*, but the information indeed could be traced back to him. He considers this more misconduct than evil will. Kant tried to distance himself from the narrator of his novel *Okarina*. Anticipating readers' possible reaction to the narrator's statements in *Okarina*, Kant claimed that he actually takes pleasure at the thought that people would probably look for and find the proof of his espionage activities in his novel *Okarina* that they were not able to find in real life, such as the text cited above.⁵⁹ Here is what he said in a conversation with Günter Grass in October 1992 in Marburg: "Ich bin kein Mitarbeiter dieser Institution geworden und es auch nicht gewesen, war es nicht und bin es nicht."⁶⁰ This complete denial is representative of his comments regarding his espionage accusation. Kant never admitted that he ever worked for the *Stasi* in spite of the existence of abundant archival evidence from the *Stasi* files.

Even though a literary critic is expected to differentiate between Kant and his narrator in *Okarina*, one cannot help but wonder whether Kant is expressing his own feeling of remorse on his bad behavior, and whether the novel can help us understand the author. If we consider the extent to which Kant draws on his personal non-fictional experiences in his stories and novels, one can see that Kant and his narrator share a lot of the same traits. Admittedly, the one who is talking in the cited text from *Okarina* is not Kant, but his fictional protagonist; however, one can almost sense a confession. I think this confession probably goes well beyond Kant's literary imagination and might reveal his own relationship with the *Stasi* as well.

"Mitteilungdrang" might also be cited as the reason for Kant to notify the *Stasi* officials about what he knew about his friends, colleagues, and enemies. It is easy to say

that he did not mean to be evil, and that his espionage was just a character flaw and bad behavior on his part. But, one has to realize that in reality, his espionage for the *Stasi* is more than just a character flaw. In fact his alleged careless gossip about other people was his ultimate mistake and had severe consequences. It became important information for the regime to take disciplinary actions toward those people, regardless of Kant's initial intentions. Kant does not register the human sacrifices he caused with his information. Already in 1951, thanks to Kant's information, his fellow student Johannes Krikowski was sentenced to twenty-five plus ten years in a labor camp in Eismeer-Gulag Workuta. Kant's information led to Krikowski's arrest as an enemy of the state. When Kant was the editor of the student newspaper *tua es*, his information led to the eight-year long jail sentence of his friend Dieter Borkowski because of "boycott agitation" ("Boykotthetze"), while his other friend Hans-Joachim Staritz stayed behind bars for two years because of "continued agitation against the state" ("fortgesetzter staatsfeindlicher Hetze").⁶¹ Kant's official denial of his cooperation with the *Stasi* prevented him from coming to terms with his past and the harm that he inflicted—whether intentionally or not—on other fellow human beings.

Obviously, Kant had a very complicated relationship with the state. His apparent lies about his affiliation with the *Stasi* compromised his personal integrity. However, Durzak, as an admirer of the GDR and Kant, once attempted to situate both in a harmonious relationship. For Durzak, Kant is a perfect example of the fact that proximity to power does not necessarily mean the loss of the integrity of the author:

Als Autor-Typus widerspricht Kant so völlig den Maßstäben einer langen deutschen Tradition, die den Schriftsteller und die gesellschaftliche Öffentlichkeit stets in einem Spannungsverhältnis zeigt und auch als Begründung dafür ins Feld führen kann, daß jene Phasen, wo die Literatur von der politischen Öffentlichkeit

umarmt wurde—das jüngste Beispiel ist das Dritte Reich—zum Erstickungstod der Literatur geführt haben. Daß es auch andere nationale Traditionen gibt, wo die Öffentlichkeit dem Schriftsteller eine Repräsentanzrolle eingeräumt hat, die nicht von vorherein mit dem Verlust seiner schriftstellerischen Integrität erkaufte war—Frankreich wäre ein Beispiel—übersieht man dabei zu leicht.⁶²

Durzak stated this in 1979, long before the exposure of Kant's espionage activities.

Today, one can hardly support Durzak's thesis with the example of Kant. The embrace of power did seem to lead to the corruption of Kant as a politician. However, it is not the right place to discuss whether the politicization of aesthetics would necessarily lead to aesthetic suicide, or whether the aestheticization of politics would necessarily lead to political suicide. Although I agree that Durzak thought unduly highly of Kant as the representative of political integrity and was too optimistic in his utopian assessment of the relationship between Kant and the state, I cannot equally claim that Kant also compromised his artistic integrity as a writer. To evaluate his literary works fairly, I often have to leave out his personal flaws and political shortcomings. It is necessary to perceive the literature that he wrote as independent of the kind of person he is. I argue that authors' relationship to their body of literature do not stand in any one-to-one relationship. Their political and moral mistakes should have less bearing in our assessment of their literature than is the case in the field of German literary criticism of East German writers in particular. Their literary achievements should not go down with the Communist regime of the GDR.

5. Gesinnungsästhetik? *The Realism/Modernism Debate Continued*

I argue that, positioned in a wider context, the literary debate of the 1990s was not an isolated incident in the cultural and political history of Germany. The discussion was

only the manifestation of the tension between politics and aesthetics in general. In fact, the literary debate attested to the engaging power of the realism/modernism debate dominant in the twentieth-century cultural life, especially among the exile intellectuals in the interwar period and among intellectuals in both postwar German states.

In the Wolf debate and the *Stasi* debate, Western critics seem to direct their polemics against the socialist authors of the GDR. However, the extension of the Wolf debate to the Grass debate signifies the broadening of polemics from the GDR literature to the postwar engaged literature of the FRG as well. After all, Grass symbolizes the Group 47, whose corpus constitutes the core of the postwar literary establishment of West Germany. Taking into account the Grass debate makes it possible to arrive at a broader conclusion: the campaign was not only anti-socialist, but also anti-realist to the core. Seen in this light, the debates in the 1990s constitute an integral part of the high-stake debate between realism and modernism in the twentieth-century cultural life highlighted by the disputes between Lukács and Adorno, who represented realism and modernism respectively.⁶³ I will argue that, though wildly different and not each other's best friends, both Kant and Grass are politically engaged writers who were unduly attacked in a cultural atmosphere that had routinely been hostile towards realism. I have already discussed Kant's peril in the context of Wolf debate and the Stasi debate. In chapter two, I will analyze in detail how Kant, one of the most-read writers of the GDR actually contributed to the debate about realism and modernism in the GDR throughout his writing career. But in this section, I will uncover the hidden agenda of the second phase of the literary debate of the 1990s: the debate about Günter Grass and Group 47. Now, I will examine why and how the Grass debate was raised and how the Wolf debate, the

Stasi debate, and the Grass debate are related in a concerted effort to discredit literary realism and postwar engaged literature in both German states.

The publication of Grass's novel *Unkenrufe* (*Call of the Toad*) in 1992 triggered a deluge of negative reviews by feuilletonists who revealed the ideology of their own aesthetics. Frank Schirrmacher claimed that the book has "no real thoughts,"⁶⁴ the only moment of enjoyment the reviewer had was the "relief after finishing ...this handbook."⁶⁵ Marcel Reich-Ranicki claimed that Grass had long since had no theme to write about and represented the confusion and despair of German intellectuals and especially the writers.⁶⁶ The criticism of his book, coming from the quarters it did, clearly fit into the bigger picture of the German literary debate of the 1990s. The determination of Schirrmacher and others to attack Grass's standing in general, rather than the book itself, made the point that this was an important skirmish in the battle between political and apolitical literature. The publication of a new work by Grass offered the opportunity of discrediting the literature of the old Federal Republic.

The attempt to discredit engaged literature of the FRG, especially the works of Group 47, went hand in hand with the initial literary debate about GDR literature. By the time Germany was unified, the debate took another turn and went well beyond Christa Wolf: prominent authors from the old Federal Republic were also pigeonholed, along with Christa Wolf and other GDR writers, as practitioners of so-called "Gesinnungsästhetik" (political aesthetics), a phrase coined by Ulrich Greiner.⁶⁷ Two key articles set the basic tone of the second phase of the discussion: Schirrmacher's "Abschied von der Literatur der Bundesrepublik," and Ulrich Greiner's "Die deutsche Gesinnungsästhetik."⁶⁸ In Schirrmacher's article, Christa Wolf was used to demonstrate

how delusional East German intellectuals were in regard to the nature of reality. The postwar legacy of the critical, reliable, anti-dictatorial German writer, not just in the East, but also in the West, was exposed as false. Schirmmacher achieved perfect timing in his declaration of farewell to the literature of the Federal Republic: it was published in the *FAZ* right on the eve of the German reunification.

Ulrich Greiner's next contribution to the debate was his article "Die deutsche Gesinnungsästhetik."⁶⁹ Greiner argued that the error of political aesthetics was that it held art to the standards of bourgeois morality, class standpoints, humanitarian goals, and more recently to environmental crises. For Greiner, the literatures of the GDR and FRG have one thing in common: both practiced political aesthetics. He called for an end to both literatures and declared the death of them a fortunate occurrence, because authors in both German states had been "commissioned" for too long with "unliterary" themes and subjects, which included the fight against "restoration, fascism, clericalism, Stalinism, et cetera."⁷⁰

Greiner argued that the authors in the East and West were occupied with the creation of a reading public instead of literature. He declared works like Christa Wolf's *Störfall* to be "*pure Gesinnungskitsch*."⁷¹ Greiner could not understand why *Störfall* succeeded in touching hundreds of thousands of people and sweeping the critics off their feet. His only guess is that Christa Wolf is skilled in expressing the mixture of German "*Leidenslust*," "*Unheilserwartung*" and "*Trostbedürfnis*" in a very appealing and effective form, which is impossible to resist.⁷² What is perplexing about this position is that it is loaded with resentments against the public. The anti-intellectual sentiments appeared to be strongly linked with anti-public ones, as I will explain below.

This attack on the literature of both parts of Germany is disconcerting. Its scope and magnitude are unprecedented, and its implications are significant and consequential. According to Greiner, “Böll, Grass, Lenz, Fried, Walser, H.M. Enzensberger, Weiss, Kipphardt, Andersch” are all guilty of practicing political aesthetics.⁷³ The highly regarded literary production of these individuals and the Group 47 is thus discredited and reduced to *Gesinnungsästhetik*. Greiner claimed that political aesthetics had dominated not only the literary scene in the GDR, but also that of the FRG. In his opinion, the literary public had also been complicit because of its apparent preference for ethics, in the moral strength and political correctness, rather than literary qualities. It is quite disturbing to read these comments, because one cannot help but notice that Greiner was himself guilty of the very thing he criticized GDR readers: he paid no attention to the literary qualities of Christa Wolf’s works when he assaulted them at the beginning of the debate. His method of critique is actually reminiscent of that of the GDR censorship that is based on the single criteria: is a work friendly or hostile toward the state (*staatstragend* or *staatszersetzend*)?

The attack on *Gesinnungsästhetik* was not unanticipated. Karl Heinz Bohrer and George Steiner are the intellectual forefathers of Greiner and Schirmacher. What catapulted Greiner and Schirmacher to stardom was the perfect timing that their predecessors did not have. Bohrer had been an ardent advocate of an alternative aesthetic discourse since the 1970s. Bohrer’s “Kulturschutzgebiet DDR?” (“GDR as an Area of Cultural Preservation?”) and “Die Ästhetik am Ausgang ihrer Unmündigkeit” (“The Aesthetics at the Exit of its Immaturity”) constitute the ideological foundation for Schirmacher and Greiner’s polemics.⁷⁴ “Die Ästhetik am Ausgang ihrer Unmündigkeit

explained the underlying reasons for the rejection of the current literature of the Federal Republic and of the sort of literature that was being demanded instead. In this article, Bohrer sets his sights on describing the aesthetics as “Geschichte einer Selbstbefreiung von theologisch-metaphysischer, schließlich ideologisch-geschichtsphilosophischer Bevormundung,” that is, history needs to emancipate itself from the theological-metaphysical, and finally free itself from the ideological and historic-philosophical paternalism.⁷⁵ For the critics along this line, it is crucial to fend off the grip of historical philosophy and any conception that recognizes and acknowledges a plan in history to which all humans have to comply, if they want to be the subjects of their action.

I argue that socialism represents the most radical example for this kind of thought: it seeks its legitimacy in this philosophy of history and employs aesthetics to serve history. Bohrer’s spiritual fathers are Baudelaire, Nietzsche, and Schlegel. Like Schlegel, Bohrer demands that literature serve beauty independently and keep the beautiful separate from the true and the ethical. Bohrer also echoes Schlegel in considering no error more dangerous than looking for art in politics and universality as Schiller did.⁷⁶ Greiner endorsed this standpoint without any reservation. Schlegel, Bohrer and Greiner opposed attaching any functional aim except aesthetics to literary works. For the critics of the so-called ideological aesthetics, the German reunification was a perfect time to end this marriage of reason between ethics and aesthetics, which had been practiced since Schiller, Schelling, of course Hegel, and finally all (wo) men of letters who set political and ethical goals in their aesthetic pursuits. In this debate the attempt to discredit and to declare the total failure of the literary intelligentsia with socialist convictions or inclinations becomes more than obvious.

Throughout the postwar period there have been many challenges to this perceived major tendency of West German literature. These challenges include but are not limited to the controversies triggered by Emil Staiger, Leslie Fiedler, Hans-Magnus Enzensberger, Peter Handke and Botho Strauß. In 1966, Emil Staiger rejected the *littérature engagée*, especially for its concentration on the immediate present, rather than eternal values.⁷⁷ In 1966 Peter Handke attacked the major writers of Group 47 at its annual meeting in Princeton for “their descriptive incompetence.”⁷⁸ In the following year, he wrote the essay “Ich bin ein Bewohner des Elfenbeinturms” (“I am a Resident of the Ivory Tower”), rejecting any social engagement of literature, and any form of moralizing realist writing.⁷⁹ In 1968 Enzensberger pronounced the death of “bourgeois literature” in the left wing magazine *Kursbuch* and advocated documentary literature instead.⁸⁰ In the same year, the American critic Leslie Fiedler initiated a new controversy with his lecture “The Case for Post-Modernism” at the University of Freiburg. Drawing on the agenda of the anti-gods and anti-heroes of pop culture, Fiedler called for literature to be radically subversive, dedicated to misology and irresponsibility.⁸¹ In retrospect, we can situate this literary debate within the bigger picture of twentieth-century German literary history. My investigation has led me to conclude that the 1990s literary debate had evidenced a continuity of the dispute-discourse in twentieth-century Germany. This discourse shared a recurrent underlying theme, that is, the debate between realism and modernism. In his article “Literatur und Kritik” of 1990, Schirmacher took a position that countered the political aspiration of the “canon.” He labeled the writer as ‘*Zivilisationstyp*’, which alluded right back to the confrontation between the then apolitical Thomas Mann and his brother Heinrich in the latter years of the World War I.⁸² Thomas Mann termed Heinrich

Mann “civilization’s literary man” (*Zivilisationsliterat*).⁸³ Civilization here suggests a “modern western, urban, technological society dominated by the principle of rationality.”⁸⁴ Thomas Mann at that time represented a conservative cultural agenda opposed to that of Heinrich Mann, an “engaged” writer along the lines of Zola, and an heir of the agenda of the Enlightenment. At that time, Thomas Mann believed that the involvement of the writer with politics and with power was fundamentally wrong. Schirmacher and Greiner developed precisely these same arguments against writers in the East and West in their initial responses to the publication of Wolf’s *Was bleibt* in the early summer of 1990.

Thomas Mann’s early work before and during the war, as exemplified in novels such as *Der Tod in Venedig* (1912, *Death in Venice*) and the *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* (1918, *Reflections of an Unpolitical Man*) suits the taste of Bohrer perfectly, but Bohrer considered Mann’s *Doktor Faustus* (1947, *Doctor Faustus*) a key work that contradicted Mann’s early apolitical stance because of the catastrophe caused by the National Socialism. In Friedrich Schlegel, Hölderlin, Kleist, Nietzsche and certain Expressionists such as Trakl and Benn, Bohrer saw another tradition. According to Bohrer, *Doktor Faustus* was to a large degree responsible for the primacy of the quest for the “good” in postwar literature. The postmodern alternative discourse of “evil” was represented by Thomas Bernhard and Elfriede Jelinek, primarily Austrian writers coming from a different literary tradition. More importantly, Ernst Jünger, whom he regarded as the greatest counter figure in the postwar era to Heinrich Böll, exemplified alternative aesthetic. It is not surprising for Bohrer to admire Jünger because the work of Jünger, particularly as represented by that written between the two world wars, has much in

common with that of earlier cultural critics like Nietzsche, the Thomas Mann of the *Reflections*.

Greiner's stress on the humanist thrust of modern German literature, on the "good" as its central characteristic and value, also referred back to a somewhat earlier article by Bohrer in which he categorized German literature since the late eighteenth century as "permanent theodicy," a constant crusade for the triumph of good over evil, the blame for which he ultimately laid at Hegel's door. The primacy of the "good" totally dominated West German literature, even the stylistically seemingly progressive, as represented for instance by the work of Helmut Heißenbüttel, and which received its quintessential expression in the work of Heinrich Böll.⁸⁵ For Greiner and his like, the Enlightenment seems to be a false straitjacket imposed on the human race. For both Bohrer and Greiner, it seems futile to take account of human nature, predict a course of history, and develop a reassuring teleological blueprint that advocates egalitarianism and excludes innate human differences. This constitutes the main hidden ethos behind Greiner's literary criticism during the literary debate of the 1990s.

The events of autumn 1989 and beyond brought the counter-discourse of Group 47 to the fore yet again. Bohrer and Steiner's apolitical artistic vision struck a sympathetic chord with Schirmacher and Greiner. Bohrer emphasized the acceptance of the "Opposition zwischen gedanklichem Konstrukt und poetischer Imagination";⁸⁶ the attempt to rescue 'das Ewige' from "dem Vergänglichen" und "dem Flüchtigen";⁸⁷ and the conviction that literature is not to be considered a "Sozialhelfer," or "philosophische [r] Sinnproduzent; but represents "eine unvergleichbare Epiphanie."⁸⁸ Moreover, the second source, quoted with enthusiastic approval by Greiner, is George Steiner's *Real*

Presences (1989). It stresses the disinterest of literature, the strength needed by “the great writer” “to read the world and not the text of the world as it has previously been encoded for us,”⁸⁹ the pivotal place of the autobiographical for the great artist, and the way in which the work of such “seers of transcendence,” is “touched by the fire and the ice of God.”⁹⁰ In these views, the focus on the artistic self almost sounds cultic. The autonomy of art proves to mean the complete lack of social or ideological engagement.

Peter Handke and Botho Strauß are among the writers whose sense of aesthetic mission and self-vision concurs with the agenda formulated by Bohrer and Steiner and later endorsed by Schirmacher and Greiner.⁹¹ The two writers’ view of themselves and their work is radically different from that of the older writers. Two literary statements by Strauß and Handke at the time of the “German Revolution” in 1989 reveal this tendency. In his Büchner Prize speech in late October 1989, Strauß used the occasion to argue for an understanding of the writer as anything other than social and cultural critic. In his view, the writer should not subscribe to a belief in history as progress, but as the sum of all human experience. For him, the concerns of the present were to be disdained. Similar to this position, Handke consciously turned his back on Europe at the historical moment of German reunification. Refusing to attempt to understand reality, he withdrew to a remote part of Spain to understand himself better.⁹² These statements made by Strauß and Handke, together with the German literary battle we have been examining, were motivated by a common post-reunification concern that the victory of “autonomous” high modernism and post-modernism over realism, should be preserved. Indeed, the thought of a revival of the discourse of the Enlightenment, according to Jochen Vogt, was so disturbing for Greiner and his like, that they made every effort to forcefully prevent it.⁹³

Greiner declares his agenda openly: “Es geht um die Deutung der literarischen Vergangenheit und um die Durchsetzung einer Lesart. Das ist keine akademische Frage. Wer bestimmt, was gewesen ist, der bestimmt auch, was sein wird. Der Streit um die Vergangenheit ist ein Streit um die Zukunft.”⁹⁴ The spear is directed against progressive writers from both German states.

The German literary debates of the 1990s mark the end of the clear dominance of the liberal left in the intellectual debate in Germany. A discourse whose intellectual origins went back to the Youth Movement of the 1920s grew in importance from the latter 1980s onwards. “It had in mind nothing less than a new version of a German Conservative Revolution,” as Konrad Franke, an East German critic, observed in the spring of 1992.⁹⁵ Franke reads this as the struggle to establish a sophisticated right-wing cultural criticism by invalidating leftist criticism. One can claim that Greiner and Schirmacher’s agenda lies in the effort of reassuring the victory of apolitical aesthetics as the united Germany marched toward the new millennium.⁹⁶ This development gives support to Konrad Franke’s fear that the conditions for the success of a new Conservative Revolution were favorable to its proponents in the enlarged new Germany. Without a necessary counter-weight, the new cultural development had by the early 1990s clearly gained ascendancy in a cultural-political struggle that was likely to dominate the immediate future of German literature.

6. *What Remains of GDR Literature and Hermann Kant?*

The literary debates of the 1990s did not retain their momentum lost this vitality by the mid 1990s. No matter how hard one tried to erase the GDR from the history of Germany, or exorcise socialism from people’s minds and thoughts, Kant, the *ex-President*

of the *ex*-Writers' Union of the *ex*-GDR continued to remind readers of the past era through his post-reunification literary production. But what remains of his earlier works? Kant's own declaration on these is not very helpful: "Natürlich wird von der Literatur, die in der DDR geschrieben wurde, nur bleiben, was Literatur ist."⁹⁷ My study will go back to the works Kant wrote when the GDR still existed.

In evaluating East German literature, Western critics may have judged morally, and politically, but they have not judged aesthetically. Even Greiner, in a self-critical, sober moment, suggests the existence of a head start applied to East German literature, as with a generous handicap in the game of golf.⁹⁸ Of course East German authors may find this suggestion insulting. The fact that two different standards were used in assessing West German and East German literature is ineluctably condescending. However, there may be some truth in this suggestion. William Donahue points out the necessity for Western critics to face up to their own double standard:

...we would have to admit that we are indeed capable of reading a realist text as politically progressive. While loyal to modernist and postmodernist depictions of fractured selves and fragmented realities, we are, perhaps, simultaneously attracted by more traditional literary representations that hold out greater promise for political action in the social (not to say the "real") world.⁹⁹

The question is what Western critics should do with this new awareness. Obviously, in the literary debate, Western critics decided to dismiss literature in the realist tradition, that is to say, "more traditional literary representations," altogether.

There will always be people who want to orchestrate Kant into oblivion. For instance, Sabine Brandt published an article, "Tagebuch," in the *FAZ* on November 26, 1997. She expressed disappointment in the fact that Günter Gaus invited Kant to his show. Gaus was a skilled journalist who usually asked questions that made people talk more than they

wanted to on the air. However, Brandt thinks Gaus was overly lenient with Kant, for the word *Stasi* was not mentioned until the last third of the interview. Moreover, Brandt does not understand Gaus's choice of Hermann Kant for the interview. She does not even agree with Gaus's statement that Kant "ist ein bedeutender deutscher Schriftsteller und war ein hoher Funktionär der DDR."¹⁰⁰ In fact, she does not agree with the first part of the statement: "Über seinen literarischen Rang lässt sich streiten—wenn man Lust hat, aber wer hat dazu Lust? Hermann Kant, das immerhin machte die Sendung deutlich, ist ein Geschöpf aus einer Welt, die es nicht mehr gibt. Es was fast bestürzend, wie intensiv er sich als Mann des absoluten Gestern dekuvierte."¹⁰¹ Brandt joins the chorus of authors of featured articles in Germany's influential news media in a concerted effort to promote a lightening-fast "forgetting" of the past. However, it is exactly in the field of literature that oblivion and repression occur less speedily, since the literary production of the authors is quite different from that of managers and ministry officials. Literary work aims at the public and therefore is not easily covered up afterwards.

When Heinz Tröger defended Hermann Kant in his letter to the editor "Man mußte Kant lesen zu verstehen" on December 3, 1998, he was certainly not alone.¹⁰² In his letter, Tröger disagrees with Brandt's dismissive attitude toward Kant: "Für die meisten seiner Leser ist Kant gerade durch seine wortreiche und ironische Sprache besonders beliebt. Wer zu lesen verstand—und dies konnte der routinierte Leser in der DDR—entdeckte auch die Kritik zwischen den Zeilen."¹⁰³ Tröger points out that for people over forty, Kant's *Die Aula* is one of the best novels on the exciting years between the end of the 1940s and the early 1950s. Readers who have a similar biography to Kant's will continue to love him and identify with him: "Wenn Hermann Kant nichts mit dem

Kapitalismus im Sinn hat, weiß er sich einig mit vielen, die eine andere, meist gerechtere Gesellschaftsordnung kennengelernt haben und den vielen negativen Erscheinungen und Seiten, denen sie täglich begegnen, sehr kritisch gegenüberstehen.“¹⁰⁴

Tröger gives an entirely different perspective on Kant. While he may have romanticized Kant, Tröger is at least an aesthetically and intellectually informed critic of Kant: he took the time to read his works. Not only is he proud of his own socialist convictions and devotions, readers such as Tröger share the same sentiments. For instance, Tröger declares that people who do not change their political convictions and ideology like changing shirts deserve more respect than those political chameleons (*Wendehälse*).¹⁰⁵

Coming to terms with the socialist past does not mean erasing it from history. Prescribed amnesia will only backfire. One should not look for quick closure. An alternative action would be keeping this memory alive. Even though socialism in Germany as a system does not exist any more, we need to revisit its history constantly and strive to understand what people experienced under the system. We need to acknowledge both the positive and negative experiences in the GDR. Therefore, I argue that GDR-literature possesses distinctive characteristics that are absent in the West, which can be carried into the future of the literature of a united Germany. The two literatures will eventually fall into an ensemble of individual voices. I believe that it is imprudent to nullify the literature of any region by insisting on its political and geographical origin.

In the case of Hermann Kant, misunderstandings of his literature abound. Kant's political involvement in the GDR's cultural policy compounded the difficulties in the reception of his literary work. On the one hand, the anti-capitalist sentiments in Kant's

work struck a chord with Western liberal intellectuals and rendered them oblivious to the shallow psychological depiction of the West in his work; on the other, the critique of the social ills of the GDR depicted in Kant's work is not taken seriously. While guarding against an anti-Communist reading of the social critique in Kant's literature, critics of the liberal left tended to underestimate the appeals for political action contained in Kant's literature. The critical thrust was rendered harmless. The general assumption of GDR literature as formally obsolete prevents an unbiased evaluation and close examination of the more complex relationship between form and content that exists in many East German literary representations. The present work will illustrate this relationship with the example of Hermann Kant. In the next chapter, I will examine Kant's contribution to the debate between modernism and realism and his contributions to the debate.

CHAPTER TWO: HERMAN KANT'S AESTHETIC POSITION: IN DIALOGUE WITH THE REALISM DEBATE

Hermann Kant's aesthetic position evolves considerably from the beginning of his writing career to the publication of his successful novel *Die Aula*. In this chapter, I will trace the development of his aesthetic position in relation to the general discussion of realism, formalism, and modernism central to the cultural life of East Germany. My reading will demonstrate Kant's active engagement in the realism debate and give critical attention to his distinctive brand of realism.

1. Kant's Views of Socialist Realism

Kant's engagement in the realism debate is first demonstrated in his confrontation with socialist realism, the doctrines of the official cultural policy. To better understand Kant's relationship with socialist realism, I will explain briefly the official discourse of socialist realism in East Germany. After I introduce the broader context of this dominant cultural policy, I will illustrate how this doctrine influences Kant's early writings, especially in the collection of his early short stories *Ein bißchen Südsee*. Subsequently, I will further explore his relationship with socialist realism by examining his first novel *Die Aula*. In this analysis, I will come to the conclusion that Kant's aesthetic position goes through a crucial metamorphosis from early 1950s to early 1960s. His early endorsement and practice of socialist realism evolves into a critical assessment thereof. Furthermore, he develops a style of his own that distinguishes him from other writers of his time.

1.1. Socialist Realism in the GDR

Many common understandings of socialist realism in the GDR were more myth than truth. My research has led me to the conclusion that political necessity led to an urgent demand of a new Marxist aesthetics that in turn led to a rushed endorsement of Russian socialist realism. In the transitional period from an alleged “democratic” and “free” to a socialist country, the cultural leaders of the GDR did not focus on developing a Marxist aesthetics that better suited its cause, but instead adopted the socialist realism of Russia in a state of emergency.¹⁰⁶

The Fifth Plenum of the Central Committee of the SED in March 1951 decreed the new role of literature. It was to reflect the new reality and educate East German citizens to participate in a society-transforming practice. With the declaration of the socialist program in 1952, socialist realism was also recommended as a method of literary production. Even then it was referred to as “Prinzipien und Gesetzmäßigkeiten, die...unter der Führung der KPDSU herausgearbeitet worden waren.”¹⁰⁷ The East German Communist Party attributed socialist realist principles and laws entirely to the Soviet Union. The fact that socialist realism had its roots in German proletarian-revolutionary and socialist literature remained unnoticed in official discourse. Only after 1956 did a return to the international traditions of socialist realism appear in its coming understanding.

The constructed relationship between political function and aesthetic program also defined the scope, dimension, and direction of the official theoretical research. For example, this simplified process of theoretical thinking was characteristic for the discussions of the Fifth Plenum. When Paul Wandel complained about the lack of a Marxist aesthetics, Hans Rodenberg rebutted him: “Es gibt eine sowjetische

Kunstästhetik, wenn sie auch noch nicht in einem ästhetischen Lehrbuch herausgekommen ist. Sie ist erarbeitet. Sie ist da. Wir brauchen sie nur zu studieren, sie auf unsere Situation zu konkretisieren und anzuwenden.”¹⁰⁸

Should the new country develop a new Marxist aesthetics or simply appropriate a ready-made one? The pressure of the sharpened political situation had great influence on the decision. When Arnold Zweig made the legitimate argument that it took years for a new artistic theory to prevail and one had to have patience,¹⁰⁹ Fred Oelssner replied:

Lieber Genosse Zweig! Die Gefahr des Kriegs wartet nicht zehn Jahre, und ich betone noch einmal, der Kampf um eine fortschrittliche Kunst ist ein Teil unseres großen Kampfes für den Frieden! Wir können den Dingen nicht einfach ihren Lauf lassen, weil hier der feindliche Einfluß zu spüren ist und wir ohne Überwindung dieses Einflusses auf diesem Gebiet nicht weiterkommen.¹¹⁰

In this statement, one can easily see what was really at stake: a politically practical instrument to simplify cultural political decisions was urgently needed. Similarly, Werner Krauss argued that the GDR should avoid reinventing the wheel: “Wäre es wirklich an dem, daß alles nunmehr hier neu gedacht und neu gemacht werden müßte, so würde man sich gewiß in einer ausweglosen Situation befinden.”¹¹¹ As we can see here, the newly-founded East Germany desperately needed a Marxist aesthetics to educate the masses on the ideological foundation for socialist practice, namely in the forms of the dialectical and historical materialism, and Marxism and Leninism.

Characteristics of reality extracted from the "typical" served as a pattern for all artistic production. So the inherent partiality of realism was interpreted in the sense that artists were required to reflect an idealized reality. This confined the effectiveness of the present themes. Since only the “worthy” traits of reality were permissible for literary portrayal, the new themes were very limited. In addition, plots became implausible copies

of “real” situations. The act of communication was degraded to that of indoctrination. In the reportage of the 1950s, literary representation of the present followed a similar principle. Novels emerged with themes of industrialization. In political poems, new literary topics were explored. An overriding feature of this literature was the one-sidedness of the character of the literary figures, the so-called positive heroes. Critics such as Hans Heinz Schmidt noticed this problem already in the mid-1950s. Schmidt complained that “Was übrigbleibt sind seltsame schemenhafte Menschen, verschiedene Personifizierungen der ‘Idee’ des Arbeiters von heute.”¹² In this literature, characters are deprived of flesh and blood and become the mere personification of an idea.

Besides the idealization of reality, the reduction of specific artistic knowledge was an unrecognized result of this theory. With the requirement that the artist create an illusion of reality by way of presenting his knowledge in picture-like intelligible forms, realism was almost degraded to an anti-art. The anti-formalist campaign, which I will explore in more detail later, in the end led to the repression of literary methods that could have enabled the producers and recipients of art to conduct a dialogue about reality with the help of artistic language. The pre-Marxist notion of the artist as the producer of the meaning of reality and the notion of the educational function of art and literature, which can be traced back to the German idealists, especially Schiller, were by no means abandoned; they were only supplemented by the notion of ideological clarity. The relentless demand of a preconceived Marxist worldview in all its artistic endeavors is of course suffocating for both the theory and the practice of art and literature.

1.2. Deviations from Socialist Realism in Kant's Writings

In his early writing career, Hermann Kant was greatly influenced by the socialist realist doctrines. *Ein bißchen Südsee*, a collection of short stories that Kant wrote in the early 1950s, fits squarely into the schema of socialist realism. For instance, the short story "Krankenbesuch" is more or less representative of the usual sentimental kitsch typical of socialist realism.¹¹³ For the early Kant, a contradiction is divided into thesis and antithesis. A synthesis is at best implied, or if a synthesis is reached, it usually provokes a new antithesis. This method also demonstrates the Marxist dialectics that attribute the process of change to the conflict of opposing forces, whereby a given contradiction is characterized by a primary and a secondary aspect, the secondary succumbing to the primary, which is then transformed into an aspect of a new contradiction. On the surface, the interaction between the different aspects of the contradiction is frequently oversimplified; and the transformation is presented too abruptly. This dialectical process is reflected in his literary figures and produces shallow characters that do not possess any psychological depth.

However, Kant's flair for dramatizing a conflict has oftentimes resulted in something more complex. Paradoxically, this radical dialectic leads to something that was not intended for socialist realism: humor and the possible subversive interpretation of the moral of the story. I will illustrate this point with a case at hand. In his short story "Ein bißchen Südsee," Kant juxtaposes romantic and realistic impulses as motivating forces behind human action. In this narrative, the protagonist furnishes his home with exotic fish and other animals to enhance life and make it more romantic. His action goes through three metamorphoses until reality finally sinks in. His rich neighbors come to

visit him only to take pleasure in his beautiful animals. He finally realizes that his motivation for his exotic purchase was not as romantic as he initially thought. He wanted to improve his social standing by possessing something “extra,” something romantic. When he notices that this goal is not achieved, and his rich neighbors still look down upon him, he sells all his luxuries and buys a vicious dog. Langenbruch finds this ending to be a rich source for humor that produces meaningful laughter.¹¹⁴ I agree that most readers will respond to this with laughter; but it is disputable what the laughter really means. Does it show total agreement with the moral of the story, namely the dominance of class struggle in all aspects of social life, or are the readers just amused by the distorted dialectics? The latter seems to be more likely.

Even if one could assume that the GDR citizens, as historical readers, were devout Communists, it would still be arrogant to speculate that they were unable to discern the oversimplified moral of the story and that they would take the political message at its face value. The short story seemed to abide by the formulas of the socialist realism. However, it harbors subversive potential that threatens to reverse the obvious and superficial socialist realist interpretation of the text. This exaggerated act might send a smile to the reader’s face: the over-correction of his flaw might shock and amuse the reader. Readers might feel that they themselves are endowed with too much of their own dialectical thinking to identify with the protagonist. If the readers cannot relate to the protagonist, the message of the short story will in all likelihood be lost. Readers would probably just have a light-hearted laugh and would not be provoked to think further about the orthodox Communist message the author tries to deliver: all social conflicts originate from the class struggle.¹¹⁵

Contrary to the common practice of treating readers as naïve recipients of Communist ideology as in socialist realist novels, Kant treats his readers as intelligent humans with critical competency. In socialist realist novels, the narration is, as a rule, chronological and the plot sequential. According to socialist realist doctrines, any interruption of narrative time sequences is considered a transgression; and it is taboo to break the narrative flow with meditation and reflection. Furthermore, socialist realism aims at serving the Communist regime by educating its citizens, or in other words, instilling Communist ideology in its readers. The demand on the reader's critical competency is minimal.

While in socialist realism a traditional narrator narrates from an Olympian vantage point and preaches to the reader, the early Kant makes every effort to complicate the narrator/reader relationship, as my reading of his short story "Kleine Schachgeschichte" will demonstrate. In this short story, the present narrator, playing chess with another invisible partner, retells the anti-fascist efforts in a prison for captured German soldiers and officers. The narrator tells the readers how the soldiers overcome their inferiority complex and how they win a victory over the officers' team, and are transformed from apolitical humans to anti-fascist activists. The narrator is not a sympathetic figure. One of the narrator's most obvious flaws is vanity. He tries to find excuses for losing the chess game and attempts to save face. The omniscient Olympian narrator in the traditional realist novels seemingly ceases to exist in Kant's literature. The short story ends with the question "Spielen wir uns noch eine, Herr Nachbar?", addressed to a conversation partner of the narrator. In "Kleine Schachgeschichte," the conversation partner of the narrator is neither bright nor sympathetic and definitely not someone with

whom the reader is willing to identify. The invention of such a conversation partner prevents the actual reader from relating to him and consequently from the feeling of being lectured to by the narrator.

Kant's careful consideration of the reader's psychology in "Kleine Schachgeschichte" almost amounts to narrative excess that expands the dimensions of Kant's story. This literary practice is something that is hardly typical of socialist realism, if not forbidden.¹¹⁶ Kant's narrative style is rich in that it enables multiple interpretations of his text. Depending on how the reader relates to the narrator, he or she can interpret the story differently. The narrator's flaws actually could work to his advantage if readers fall into the trap of the intricate narrative device and end up identifying with the narrator. In spite of his weakness, or exactly because of his imperfection, some readers would trust the narrator's story even more.¹¹⁷ His imperfection does not prevent the message from coming across and affecting these readers. However, when the narrator exposes his weakness, he takes a risk. More cynical readers would discern the fact that the narrator, though imperfect, is just as much in control of the reader as the traditional narrator. He is only more manipulative. These readers would feel superior to the invented recipient of the narrator's story and even superior to the narrator himself. In this case, they would most likely cast more doubts on the credibility of the narrator's story and its message.

Kant's excessive narrative concern with the reader is clearly expressed in his short story "Gold." Here, Kant takes great pains to establish a rapport with his reader. He writes:

Der Leser, mit dem ich rechnete, als ich diese Geschichte anfang, der intelligente Leser also, wird inzwischen längst wissen, wo mein Vater das Gold gefunden hat, und er wird beleidigt sein, wenn ich das Überflüssige ausspreche. Aber er möge bedenken, daß stets auch ein paar andere mitlesen, solche, denen man immer

sagen muß, was man sagen will. Denen sage ich (die anderen können bis zum nächsten Absatz pausieren): Mein Vater...aber nein, es geht wirklich nicht; ich setze den Fuß wieder nieder, den Fuß, der schon angehoben war zum Schritt hinüber ins Platteland, ins Land der Plattheiten; ich habe mich entschieden, es mit den Kennern zu halten und den Zorn jener nicht zu fürchten, die fortan mit einem weiteren Rätsel werden leben müssen. Doch den letzteren zum Troste sei gesagt, daß der größte Spaß auf dieser Welt von ihren Rätseln herkommt. Wo und was wären wir denn, wenn wir nichts zu raten hätten? Und so will [ich] denn den längst überfälligen Sinnspruch formulieren: Leben heißt Nüsseknacken. Oder präziser noch: Der Mensch—ein Nußknacker! (*Südsee* 172)

This is a perfect example of his effort to gain both the sympathy and empathy of the reader and render the reader superior. The narrator imagines two types of readers. One is competent, the other incompetent. He tells the first group to go to the next paragraph, and promises to reveal more to the second group, and then decides not to tell where his father finds the gold and leaves the reader in the dark. He comforts the reader by telling him/her that life is only interesting because of all the riddles and that without riddles, life would be boring. Actually, from the text before this paragraph, the reader can easily and safely draw the conclusion that the father of the narrator finds his gold in a landfill. Any anticipation of mysterious adventure is eventually frustrated. Naturally, the reader would identify with “the intelligent reader” and enjoy the rest of paragraph as the narrator mocks the remaining “not-so-smart” readers who would insist that the narrator say directly what he wants to say and ultimately frustrates this expectation by mocking them.

Kant is aware of the psychology of the assumed traditional reader in “Gold” as well. He demands “fortschreitende Handlung, nach erzählerischem Sauseschritt durch die Niederungen des Daseins und über seine Höhen hin” (*Südsee* 172). He objects to “Autoren, die sie [die Leser] am Arm packen und mit ihnen gleichsam immer denselben öden Gedankengang auf und nieder rennen” (*Südsee* 172). In the obsolete demand of “fortschreitende Handlung” most readers will recognize the narrator’s irony. And the

reader of the short story will share the objection to the author who runs back and forth over the same barren train of thoughts as well. The narrator is obviously also mocking his own style as unproductive, with which the reader will mostly likely disagree. Although the narrator does not follow through with his original story, the reader will actually not find his “stories” inside the story “barren.” He or she will be led to agree with the author’s agenda. Again, the narrator successfully gains the approval of the reader through his exaggerated modesty and conscious self-criticism. In this sense, Kant’s narrator deviates conspicuously from the socialist realist formula. Kant’s preoccupation with the psychology of the reader and his narrative self-reflection run against the grain of the socialist realist tradition of novel writing which prescribes clear didactic directives.

Kant also rebels against socialist realist precepts through his liberal use of anecdotes in his novels. His talent in telling stories had already emerged in his early short stories. His long novels are actually composed of short stories characteristic of his early writings. In this aspect one can claim that he is stylistically consistent. The employment of a plethora of anecdotes helps to thwart the systematic conceptions of the progress of world history and the rigid narrative style of socialist realism. He actually mocks the idea of a systematic and necessary organization of experiences. This, however, is not to state that he completely sacrificed the coherence of his narrative prose. The frequent shifting of time planes and the profusion of anecdotes seem to be disorienting, but less so than the typical modernist novels. On the surface, the narrative coherence might seem to be undermined, but via cumulative self-discovery, the reader is prepared to reconstruct the coherency of the narrative in the end, in his or her own way. For example, in *Die Aula*, the reader is able to figure out in the end what happened with Trullesand and Paal and

what role Iswall played in the “conspiracy.” This does not mean that there are not indeterminacies and gaps in his narratives. The reader, for instance, cannot be sure what happened to “Quasi” Riek. I will come back to this later. Kant did not aim for complete consistency, as required by socialist realist doctrine, nor did he believe that it made for intriguing literature.

This narrative technique can be interpreted differently, seen from different perspectives. E. W. Herd argues that Kant managed to avoid critiquing the system directly by way of veiling the negative in the public sphere with private anecdotes, often humorous ones.¹¹⁸ According to Herd, larger social problems are circumvented by means of personal anecdotes, or trivialized as personal aberrations.¹¹⁹ I would furthermore argue that this kind of unsystematic narration had a real advantage in the former GDR because of its indirect nature. By not telling the story chronologically, the narrative was able to avoid committing some official literary taboos, evade censorship, and finally also able to exercise trenchant political criticism, as I will show later.

The short story “Gold,” collected in the book *Ein bißchen Südsee*,¹²⁰ was representative of Kant’s love for anecdotes and episodes. The story begins with a basic narration in the past tense: “Als mein Vater das Gold gefunden hatte, freuten wir uns alle sehr” (*Südsee* 167). It is quite easy to recognize this traditional narrative device used to intrigue the reader. The reader’s interest is instantly aroused, as he or she expects the narrator to recount his father’s potentially extraordinary adventure. The first sentence could perfectly be the title of a typical novella; an unusual event (*unerhörte Begebenheit*) seems to be lurking in the text, waiting for the reader. This expectation of the reader, however, is never met since the narrator keeps digressing from this topic. The following

passage exemplifies the ways in which the narrator turns away from the apparent main subject of attention time and again:

Das Gold erwies sich als ein Fund von neuer Qualität. Mit allem anderen war mein Vater kurzhändig fertig geworden; aber diesmal gab es Schwierigkeiten. Dabei hatte er doch wahrhaftig schon Probleme gelöst, von denen ich nicht weiß, ob andere sie so ohne weiteres bemeistert hätten. Nehmen wir nur die Sache mit den beiden Schellenbäumen. (*Südsee* 173)

After telling the story about the “Schellenbäumen,” he continues to postpone telling the reader about the gold his father has found: “Aber es dünkt mich fast, ich sei hier zu einem vom güldenen Kern meines Berichtes, also von der Tatsache, daß mein Vater zu unser aller Erleichterung und Freude eines sonnigen Tages Gold gefunden hat. Bevor aber dies geschah, ward uns die Ziege gestohlen” (*Südsee* 181). He then goes on telling the story about the family goat that is stolen and recovered. Digressions of this nature are notably long and present throughout the text. The most significant aspect of this is that the narrator is keenly aware of his digression and is even apologetic about it. This awareness also enhances the irony in his narration. The reader who sets his mind on the gold might become impatient, all the while is encouraged by the narrator to be patient. The self-irony of the author also makes it easier for the reader to bear with his “offense” of not fulfilling what seemed to be promised by the beginning of the short narrative:

Ausübende der Kunst wie ihre kritischen Begleiter sind daher immer dann am besten dran, wenn sie, schlicht gesagt, bei der Sache bleiben. Die Sache meines Vaters war es, zu suchen. Und die meine ist, davon zu berichten. Ziegen- und Apfeldiebe, Apfel- und Schellenbäume können erwähnt werden, aber sie dürfen uns nicht den Blick verstellen. Sie müssen bleiben, was sie sind, Nebendinge. (*Südsee* 185)

Here, the narrator claims that artists should focus on their subjects (“bei der Sache bleiben”). The irony arises from the fact that he does not practice the single-minded focus that he prescribes for the artists. The narrator’s assurance that what he has told so far is

only “Nebensachen” only raises the reader’s hope for eventually learning about the father’s adventure. However, the narrator is in fact only teasing the reader: Immediately after making this claim, he defies the reader’s expectations of finally learning more about the gold that his father found and contradicts himself by telling another completely unrelated story about Frau Mylamm:

Mich deucht, ich hätte bereits erwähnt, daß wir uns damals alle sehr gefreut haben, aber mir ist, als hätte ich noch nicht gesagt, wer denn das war: wir alle. Zuerst handelte es sich um meine Mutter, meine Geschwister und mich. Aber auch unter den Nachbarn waren viele, die von Herzen Anteil nahmen an unserem Glück. So vor allem Frau Mylamm, in deren eigenem Leben nie etwas von Erhöhung gewesen war, so daß ihr keiner hätte verargen dürfen, wäre sie ob meines Vaters Fund fortan neidgrünen Gesichtes herumgelaufen. Oh, war die vom Schicksal gebeutelt worden! (*Südsee* 186)

The narrator submits to the temptation of this sentence and his own urge to tell the story of Frau Mylamm. The hope of finding out what happened to the gold compels the reader to continue reading. From the bits and pieces of what the narrator reveals, the reader might finally guess where the father found the gold: the landfill. But the whole point is that it is not all about the gold. One slowly realizes where the narrator intends to go. In the end, he is just using the gold story as a starter for his recounting of the life stories of an ordinary man. The reader is fascinated by the individual stories and is even willing to forgive the narrator for his “transgression” and infringement on the narrative tradition. The degree of narrative excess is hardly typical of socialist realism. By means of digression, Kant violates the socialist realist demand of chronological narration and defers the closure characteristic of socialist realism.

Kant anticipates certain critics’ aversion to his writing style. In his first novel *Die Aula* the protagonist Iswall has a publisher, Werner Kuhlmann, demand that he write “ökonomisch, nicht so viel Anekdotenkram” (*Aula* 241). The style of anecdotes as local

narrative is a conscious decision of the author and not some flaw unconsciously committed by the author. The narrator rationalizes his choice of this narrative technique with the following aesthetic view: “Kunst ist nichts anderes als disziplinierte Ausschweifung” (*Südsee* 185). As is commonly known, the narrator’s points of view are not necessarily identical with those of the author. However, in this case, this narrator’s view reflects the author’s overall aesthetic view as well, as evidenced in almost all three of the novels that I shall investigate: the author indulges the reader with a plethora of anecdotes. Furthermore, regarding writers, Kant once stated: “Von unsereins [Autoren—H.W.] wird Übertreibung erwartet—zu Recht, denn Literatur ist kalkulierte Übertreibung.”¹²¹ Clearly, Kant lets his narrator speak his own mind because “disziplinierte Ausschweifung” [“disciplined excess”] and “kalkulierte Übertreibung” [“calculated exaggeration”] are almost synonyms. In the later discussion of Kant’s aesthetics and politics, we will frequently encounter this congruence of the view of the narrator and author.

In support of the anecdotal structure, the narration of the past, present, and future is mixed unpredictably. The author blends reality with possibility. He juxtaposes different time planes in his narration, which are very volatile. Some critics would consider this feature a narrative flaw, because it makes it easy for the author to avoid the treatment of important political events in the GDR history, most notably the workers’ uprising on June 17, 1953. As Hermlin claims, the author’s “Lust am Geschichtenerzählen” always appears to get in the way of talking about anything serious.¹²² Hermlin has good reasons to complain about Kant’s style, since Kant does not directly confront the most significant political issues in his novels, but only does so in a subtle and roundabout way. For

example, he gives his protagonist in *Die Aula* the name “Iswall” (Is -Wall), but never openly discusses the building of the Berlin Wall. However, it is worth considering whether the alleged “babbling” of the narrator is truly much ado about nothing. It could be an innovative device intentionally and strategically deployed by the author, because the employment of anecdotes in different time planes makes historical reflection a possibility. The narrator, writing in retrospection, becomes a literary figure himself and this frees him to narrate and comment on the story of the protagonists, which in turn makes the relationship between the narrator and the protagonists more intriguing. The reader really has to pay attention to who is talking and to whom the words are addressed. The fact that Kant makes both of the protagonists journalists in *Die Aula* and *Das Impressum* also supports his anecdotal style because of the nature of that profession.¹²³ The same can be said of his autobiographical style as well. Kant uses seemingly promising and adventurous events as a platform to catapult his novels. The “great” events evaporate and the “little” things, mundane subjects, the seemingly not literature-worthy, gradually steal the center stage in the end. As we can clearly see, in his literary work, socialist realist demands of chronological, sequential story telling are completely disregarded.

With a great sense of humor and irony, Kant demonstrates irony and doubts about socialist realism and his wish to give literary representations more lifelike credibility. He challenges the socialist realist formula at every turn. In his novels, he frequently pokes fun at the famous Soviet socialist realist novels. East German socialist literature has its roots in German revolutionary literature. Nevertheless, Soviet influence cannot be underestimated. Kant’s novels show the grievous effects that socialist realism had on

GDR literature. In “Gold,” he gives the hilarious goat story (how his family goat is lost and recovered) grandiose and seemingly awe-inspiring titles like “How a Miracle Is Made” (“So werden Wunder gemacht”) or “How a Thief Is Converted” (“Wie ein Dieb bekehrt wird”), which grotesquely alludes to, for example, the Soviet classic *How the Steel Was Tempered* written by Nikolay Ostrovsky. In this novel, the invalid Pavel Korchagin, wounded in the October Revolution, overcomes his handicap and becomes a writer who inspires the workers. In Kant’s story the narrator tells how his father got the thief to confess that he stole the family’s goat. It is nothing like heightening and idealizing heroes and events to mold the consciousness of the mass as desired in socialist realism. His father is not even close to a positive hero in the socialist realist sense. He is a garbage man and a scavenger of the landfill. He is street smart, humorous, down-to-earth, and very much a mundane human being living in the real world. He is literally out of the league of socialist realist positive heroes that only include soldiers, inventors, engineers, scientists, factory workers, and farmers who fulfill an ideological function. While Kant seems to follow the socialist realist formula devoutly on the surface, his narrative style effectively exhibits a discrepancy between his stories’ proximity to reality and socialist realist aloofness.

Furthermore, the dull narrative technique of socialist realism did not escape unscathed in his literature. In “Gold,” he also taunts the outdated narrative style of socialist realist novels:

Hüten freilich muß sich der Schreiber davor, daß die von ihm so kunstvoll erzielte Skepsis seines Lesers in Unmut umschlage, eine Gefahr, die nicht zuletzt immer dann zwischen den Zeilen lauert, wenn einer vom Erzählen ins Meditieren und Reflektieren verfällt und etwa, um ein Beispiel zu nennen, anstatt unverzüglich zu berichten, wie sein Vater Gold gefunden hat und was dann geschehen ist, belehrend ins Stocken gerät. (*Südsee* 169)

The short story at hand, “Gold,” of course violates the rigid socialist realist rule of chronological narration and sequential plot. Clearly, the narrator realizes that his constant digression might turn off the reader. However, he continually follows one story with another that has no bearing on gold whatsoever. In the story, the narrator apparently struggles with two forces. On the one hand, he knows that he is supposed to follow the realist literary conventions; on the other, he seemingly cannot resist the temptation of digression, and transgression of the obsolete literary conventions of his time.

The portrayal of positive heroes belongs to the mandatory requirements for a socialist realist novel. As we see in Kant’s narrative, elements of socialist realism do exist, but he always gives them an ironic twist and thereby reverses the gist of socialist realism. This renders the socialist realist reading of his novels impossible, both thematically and stylistically. More often than not, Kant’s portrayal of top party officials is unflattering. Kant’s “positive hero” in *Das Impressum* is more a parody of a socialist realist protagonist. David Groth, the protagonist in *Das Impressum*, has many mentors, and almost none of them are the typical father figures that are omnipresent in socialist realist novels.¹²⁴ Kant’s protagonists, against all expectations of a positive mentor figure by socialist realist doctrines, even learn from some obviously negative figures of society. In *Das Impressum*, for instance, David Groth learns from those on the margins of society such as Fedor Gabelbach. Groth’s Catholic colleague Gabelbach is one of the mentors with a dark past. He participated in National Socialist book burning. In his files, Gabelbach confessed how he acted opportunistically in the Nazi-movement and took part in the university’s book-burning event on May 17, 1933: “...habe ich etwa gegen 22 Uhr drei Bände eines deutschen Autors in den Scheiterhaufen geworfen und dazu gerufen:

“Gegen dünnelhaftel Verhunzung der deutschen Sprache, für Pflege des kostbarsten Gutes unseren Volkes! Ich übergebe der Flamme die Schriften von Alfred Kerr” (*Impresusum* 314). Groth is initially shocked by this revelation, and as chief editor of the newspaper, he has the power and is ready to fire Gabelbach. However, he then corrects his view and accepts Gabelbach in the end. Revealing his own mentor in the early stage of his career to be a former Nazi is not an easy thing to do, and it is even harder to forgive him and accept him. Here, Kant values real-life credibility more than the hollow heightening of heroes and events typical of socialist realism. Further, Kant’s “positive hero” often arrives at conclusions that the Party would consider disturbing and that do not accord with the Party’s “positive values.” His conclusions are more pragmatic, closer to reality and reason, than empty Communist ideals. He is not indoctrinated; he learns his lesson from real life. In next chapter, I will return to this and discuss it at greater length.

It is also worth noting that in his confrontation with the past, Iswall uses humoristic language. One of the dangers of this humor is that conflicts can be buried under the humor, which happens occasionally in *Die Aula*. On the other hand, Iswall also succeeds in using his humor to ready himself for self-questioning. Through jokes, satire, parody, and irony, he creates a distance for himself that allows for more retrospective insights, deepens his reflection on the past, and makes him more willing and ready to ask tough questions. This strategy makes conflicts less heavy in order to deal with them more efficiently and to avoid further repression of the problems and conflicts.

If seen in this light, Kant’s novels have the merit of utilizing the socialist realist format and the socialist realist model itself, while reversing socialist realist morals and sentiments for the purpose of exercising a critique of the social ills of the GDR. For

instance, in *Die Aula*, Iswall tells Meibaum the story about Quasi that happened before Quasi was admitted to the Workers and Peasants Faculty (ABF—Arbeiter und Bauern Fakultät). In the sugar factory where Quasi works, sugar is constantly being stolen. Quasi is at that time working as a plumber in the factory, before he enters the ABF. He caught the thief who threw little bags of sugar from the roof of the factory to the outside. Because the thief was an old friend of his, he did not report it to the police, and only asked him to stop his stealing practice. Whereas Quasi is happy with this ending, Meibaum finds the ending inappropriate for the festive speech Iswall is supposed to give. He exclaims: “Aber um die Geschichte ist es wirklich schade. Mir ist eben eingefallen, welch herrlichen Schluß sie hätte haben können!” (*Aula* 263). With a simple “Erzähl mal!” Iswall encouraged Meibaum to go on with his imagined ending.

According to Meibaum, the story should go like this: Quasi saw how the thief threw the sugar in the air. According to Meibaum, this conflict should occur: on the one hand, Quasi should report this friend, but on the other he is struggling with this “perverse” concept of solidarity. Then Meibaum comes up with this “great” solution: Quasi should have convinced this thief to become a hammer thrower. Prompted by Iswall’s “Wie das?” Meibaum continues, “Nun, Genosse Iswall. Er entdeckt in dem Dieb ein sportliches Talent. Er tritt hinter dem Schornstein hervor und sagt: “Das hätte ich von dir, Christian, meinem alten Kumpel, nicht erwartet. Weißt du denn nicht, daß Millionen auf diesen Zucker angewiesen sind?” (*Aula* 264). Here, Meibaum creates his own version of the story. Quasi’s real experience becomes object of empty socialist realist jargon. According to Meibaum, the narrative should have unfolded as follows: Quasi persuades Christian, the sugar thief, to join the sport movement, specializing in hammer throwing.

Quasi encourages the thief to take this opportunity and win the hammer-throwing contest in order for him to drop the charges. Only then, concludes Meibaum, the sugar theft ceases. Everything should have happened according to this plan. After listening to Meibaum's version of the story, Iswall answered: "Ja, ich weiß nicht. Das wäre wohl eher eine Novelle von Frau Tuschmann. "Du sollst nicht begehren des anderen Zucker" könnte sie heißen, vielleicht auch "Zucker oder Hammer" oder auch "Des Zuckers Spur," aber leider hat Riek die Pointe versaut" (*Aula* 265).

When he told Meibaum that it could be a novella by Frau Tuschmann, Meibaum proved unable to appreciate the irony in his tone. The reader, however, would, because earlier in the novel, Iswall admits that thinking about the ABF is more fun than writing an article on Frau Tuschmann. "...Aber in deiner Maschine steckt ein halbgarer Artikel über Frau Tuschmanns Novelle 'Du sollst nicht stehlen!' Frau Tuschmann kann mir gestohlen bleiben mit ihrer Moraltute; ich werde einfach sagen, ich habe jetzt keine Zeit dazu, ich müßte eine Rede halten, ganz eilig..." (*Aula* 33). For Iswall, Frau Tuschmann is a tedious author who only blows the horn of morality ("Moraltute"). "Du sollst nicht begehren des anderen Zucker" corresponds to Frau Tuschmann's "Du sollst nicht stehlen" that is a bore for Iswall. He is so excited about the speech that he is asked to give and wants to get closer to life and away from Tuschmann and her kind of people. The reader is informed about these thoughts, but Meibaum does not have a clue.

This conversation between Iswall and Meibaum creates a certain intimate space between the reader and Iswall that is unknown to the other conversation partner, Meibaum. Knowing what kind of a journalist he is, the reader can notice his sarcasm in his urging Meibaum with "Erzähl mal" and "Wie das?" Meibaum's fabrication not only

amuses Iswall, but also the reader. Early on in the novel, the road sign “Kraftfahrer, haltet Abstand!” prompts Iswall to think “Journalisten, näher ans Leben!” (*Aula* 33). However, halfway through his research for the speech, his plan is frustrated by Meibaum’s unwillingness to confront the real. His wish of being “näher ans Leben” and freeing himself of Frau Tuschmann’s “Moraltute” seems to become less and less realistic. Another indication of his scorn for Meibaum is demonstrated in the repetition of platitudinous phrases such as “völlig richtig” and “selbstverständlich.” Since imitation can be seen as a form of flattery, Meibaum might think that Iswall agrees with his opinions. But the reader, with all the previous knowledge about Iswall, will, of course, detect that this has a distinctive mocking quality of which his conversation partner could not be aware. Finally, the episode takes an unexpected turn. When Meibaum finds out that “Quasi” is actually Karl-Heinz Riek who went to the West, he sentences the story to death: “Völlig richtig, republikflüchtig...warum hast du das nicht gleich gesagt...nein, dann geht das ja alles nicht. Über den sollte bei der Ausschlußfeier besser nicht gesprochen werden; ich meine, über solche Elemente sollte auf keinen Fall gesprochen werden” (*Aula* 265). It becomes clear to Iswall that stories of negative people are to be kept silent in the history of the GDR. *Republikflucht* is literally a politically charged “element” that needs to be hushed up. From 1949 to 1961, almost three million people fled the GDR to live in the Federal Republic. This massive flow of the GDR population to the West eventually led to the erection of the Berlin Wall on August 13, 1961.¹²⁵ Once again, Iswall’s wish to get closer to life and truth seems to be going nowhere when Meibaum requests that he should not touch on the topic of *Republikflucht* in his speech.

When Kant wrote this novel, he was at the height of this sensitive political issue. Thus it was quite daring for him to critically broach this topic in *Die Aula*.

In *Die Aula*, the narrator pokes fun at socialist realism whenever possible. During his research for the speech, Iswall runs into Quasi's article on socialist realism. In this article he reads: "So läßt sich eindeutig feststellen, daß Tschakowski in seinem Roman, 'Bei uns ist schon Morgen' die fünf Punkte des sozialistischen Realismus allseitig erfüllt hat..." The narrator comments that when Iswall reads this passage, he has problems swallowing ("Schluckbeschwerden"), and immediately following the quotation from the article this comment appears: "Ach, du liebs Herrgöttle" (*Aula* 245). The author of this statement is not identified. But the context indicates that this is the voice of the narrator. "Oh my dear God!" can mean different things. Here, it most certainly does not indicate any admiration for Quasi's article on socialist realism. Rather, he expresses his impatience with the socialist realist literary precepts. "Oh my dear God" signals incredulity in this context. This comment makes it clear that the narrator is very critical of, if not disgusted by, the socialist realist craze.

In the election of the student council, Quasi came up with a winning strategy. The narrator comments that this strategy is born out of Quasi's "Hochachtung vor den jüngsten Kreml-Lakonismen" (*Aula* 205). He then continues to satirize the hollowness of a socialist realist style:

Unsere Sache ist klar, also muß auch unsere Sprache klar sein. Klare Sache – klare Sprache. Klare Sprache ist vor allem kurze Sprache. Die anderen brauchen nichts zu sagen, also werden sie lang sprechen. Wir müssen viel sagen, aber wir müssen es in aller Kürze tun. In der Kürze liegt auch die politische Würze. Also vorwärts, Jugendfreunde, in aller Kürze mit aller Würze vorwärts!¹²⁶

From the text above, the reader can certainly detect the derision of the socialist realist style implied in it. The relentless demand for clarity and brevity verges on the comical. Clearly, this formula could never yield any successful campaign results.

Kant also draws another caricature of GDR literary life through the scenes from the Writers' Union's Conference. He satirizes the popular official socialist realist style, especially this quest for clarity and simplicity, by giving its writers names such as "Schlichtkow," and "Buchhacker" (*Aula* 336, 338). The names reveal the values these writers cherish. Schlichtkow, that is, Plain-kow, is a critic. He represents the principle of "plain and simple" in the style of the socialist realism. Gertrude Buchhacker, the book hacker, enthusiastically pursues the career of writing and is eager to be successful. Much of the discussion on the Writers' Congress is depicted as a farce. It is ironic that the author of the novel, would one day become the President of the same Writers' Union years later.

1.3. Kant's Sympathy for Formalism

Kant became increasingly disillusioned by socialist realism. This is evidenced in his writing through his constant attempts to revitalize his prose with new experiments and techniques, which do not always concur with the official cultural discourse. The cultural political program of the Fifth Plenum from 1951 focused on directing attention to the opposition between realism and formalism and making this topic central to the discussion of artistic theoretical and practical problems for the next years. As reasons for the failure of art to fulfill the demands of the epoch, it named "Die Herrschaft des Formalismus in der Kunst" and "Unklarheiten über Weg und Methoden des Kunstschaffens in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik."¹²⁷ This conclusion hardly came from the reality of

art production. Two reasons accounted for this conclusion instead: first, the new art had to distinguish itself from the bourgeois ideology of art; second, the application of modernist methods to the new art could lead to knowledge-unfriendly or even hostile tendencies. The relatively simple formula was as follows: "Weil die formalistische Kunst nicht die Erkenntnisse der Wirklichkeit vermittelt, die Kunst vom Volke trennt und in die Abstraktion führt, dient sie objektiv dem Imperialismus."¹²⁸ Among those blamed for formalism were not only bourgeois writers (i.e., Ernst Bloch), but also some socialist artists' works, for example the opera *Die Verurteilung des Lukullus* by Brecht and Dessau or the design of the Buchenwald Memorial by Fritz Cremer.

Brecht's operetta *Die Verurteilung des Lukullus* (*The Trial of Lucullus*) encountered great resistance in the GDR.¹²⁹ The play was termed "decadent" by the official discourse and banned from the stage. In this play, the Roman General Lukullus, after his death, has to defend himself in the court of the dead, which decides where he should go, that is, whether he should be blessed or condemned. At the beginning of the play, the general is extremely confident, even arrogant. He is convinced that the court will honor him. However, to his surprise, worldly standards do not apply to the world of the dead. What he considers heroic actions are deemed to be crimes in the kingdom of death.

In *Die Aula*, Kant makes a bold reference to the debate on formalism. When the allusion to this debate is made, Iswall and Quasi are in the ABF together; they are full of revolutionary verve and naiveté. This humorously manifests itself by their not leaving gratuities in restaurants in the belief that by so doing they are fighting against bourgeois corruption. When there are love scenes in the movie, they just chew carrots loudly. When

there are shootings in the movie, they shout for doctors. Hence, they are not even welcomed in the movie theater afterwards. Their misadventures also include getting into trouble for whistling during the operetta “Blume von Hawai.” The Party disciplines both men, because the operetta is about the miseries of the oppressed people and is not to be taken lightly. The Party actually advised Iswall and Quasi to devote themselves to the fight against decadence: “...mochten sie ihre Puste gefälligst im Kampf gegen die Dekadenz einsetzen, ‘Lukullus’ oder so etwas.” (*Aula* 394)

Indulging in the funny stories about the couple of bozos, many readers might even overlook the allusion to one of the most important debates in the GDR. They might not discern the implied criticism of the Party. However, it was still courageous for Kant to bring up one of Brecht’s plays that was fiercely scrutinized in the formalism debate. Even though nothing further regarding this play is mentioned in the remaining part of the novel, this allusion to Brecht’s operetta reminds the reader of the cultural repression expressed in the debate about formalism in the GDR and the emptiness of the charges held against it.¹³⁰

Kant’s sympathy for formalism does not stop at the defense of Brecht’s *Lullukus* play. He senses the rigidity of Lukácsian realism, just as Brecht did. Like Brecht, Kant also has a keen desire for formal innovations. To understand this point better, I will give an overview of the dispute about formalism in the cultural discourse of the GDR.¹³¹ In exile, Lukács developed his critique of Expressionism in German literature. Gradually, he laid out the main categories and principles of the doctrine of literary realism. He reiterated the antithesis between naturalism and realism; he insisted on the notion of the “typical character” as a nexus of the social and individual; he rejected both external

reportage and internal psychologism; and he made the distinction between passive description and active narrative. Lukács also extolled Balzac and Tolstoy as classical models for the contemporary novel.¹³² He labeled any artist who disobeyed these regulatory norms as “formalist.” One could well imagine how Brecht would be tormented by Lukács’s literary precepts.

Brecht emerged as a bright star in the Weimar period. He started his career as an Expressionist with his plays of the early 1920s. Brecht’s polemic against Lukács covered a wide range. He contended that the result of a Lukácsian attempt to recast the figures of Balzacian or Tolstoyan type in the new historical conditions would actually be a flight from realism.¹³³ Brecht pointed out that Lukács was, in fact, the real “formalist,” for he attempted to deduce norms for prose purely from literary traditions, without regard for the historical reality that encompassed and transformed all literature in its own processes of change. He considered Lukács’s exclusion of poetry or drama--genres in which he excelled--as extremely myopic. He defined realism as a practical social behavior in all fields and saw formalism where old forms were suggested and recommended for new contents.¹³⁴

Brecht stressed the indispensability of experimentation in the arts. According to him, artists should have the right to invent new forms of expression even though they might fail or only partially succeed. Sometimes the new aesthetic devices invented in transitional epochs of history failed to live up to the expectations of the artists and the demands of the new society. Interior monologue, montage, or mixtures of genres within a single work were all permissible and fruitful, as long as they were disciplined by a watchful truthfulness to social reality. Fertility of technique was not automatically a mark

of the mechanical impoverishment of art, but a sign of energy and liberty. The fear that technical novelties as such tended to render works of art alien or incomprehensible to the masses, moreover, was a fundamental error. Brecht was convinced that proletarian audiences and participants welcomed experimental audacity on the stage.¹³⁵ Brecht violently protested whenever he sensed Lukács's hostility toward formal experimentation. His conflict with Lukács was primarily one between a poet and a theoretician. As an Expressionist in his early career and the creator of epic theater and the alienation effect, Brecht was deeply offended by Lukács's literary precepts.

Politically, Brecht experienced a radical break with the bourgeoisie while Lukács advocated "revolutionary democracy." For Lukács, authors did not have to endorse, or approve of, socialism. What was important to him was that they did not reject it. "Non-rejection of socialism is a sufficient basis for realism," Lukács wrote in his essay "Frank Kafka or Thomas Mann?"¹³⁶ *Die Maßnahme (The Measures Taken)*, for example, illustrates the Brechtian idea of radical revolution: he, who is not for us, is against us.¹³⁷ Ironically, Lukács's political tolerance does not transform into literary insights; and neither does Brecht's political radicalism apply to his literary practice. Lukács remained an obstinate adversary of modernist formal experiments, while Brecht became an ardent advocate of technical innovations.

To be fair: the socialist avant-garde made efforts to create representational methods for the new function of art as represented by the revolutionary literature of the 1920s. The artistic avant-garde of the 1920s is not to be read as socialist realist. The radical values of the early revolutionary years should not be confused with those of the 1930s. For example, Brecht's avant-gardism lead him to create in his theater practice a

new process in which the artistic character of the works was consciously made visible and the audience was encouraged to draw conclusions on its own. For Brecht, reality was not the "Außenwelt" that existed independently of consciousness; instead, consciously molded activities in life served as a criterion for the truth content of art. The alienation technique serves to break the usual associations in order to discover new, not well-known and ready-to-serve truths.

Hermann Kant seems to emulate in prose what Brecht practices in theater. The narrator in his short story "Gold" once states:

Ich neige zu der immer mehr um sich greifenden Auffassung, daß zur Unterhaltung Aufgeschriebenes oder auf Bühnen vorgeführtes stutzen machen, glauben machen soll, man habe nicht recht gehört oder gesehen. Literatur — und ich bin mir der Unbescheidenheit meiner Wortwahl in diesem Zusammenhang durchaus bewußt — Literatur muß sich auf den ersten Blick wie ein Druckfehler ausnehmen. (*Südsee* 169)

This line of thinking comes very close to what Brecht calls alienation effect (*Verfremdungs-effekt*). In his epic theater, Brecht employed various methods to interrupt the Aristotelian trance. The narrator in "Gold" believes that literature has to look like a typographical error at the first sight. The narrator's view appears to reflect Kant's aesthetics. As I demonstrated earlier, Kant's narrator represents many similarities to the author, when it comes to aesthetic views.

The alienating element in Kant's prose is often achieved by his use of exaggeration, and sometimes achieved by the creation of new vocabulary. When talking about his father who always employs extravagant means to achieve his goals, the narrator of "Gold" claims that his father is like an artist, "und zwar einer von jener absonderlichen Art, der es um das Wie mehr zu tun ist als um das Was" (*Südsee* 178). The same can be said about Kant's literature as well. He takes great care to make things interesting and

enjoyable. When he talks about dialectical thinking and about putting things into perspective, he created the term “Veranderung,” originating from “anders” and meaning to “think differently.” The creation of this word literally corresponds to the view of the narrator in his novel *Das Impressum* that literature should look like a typographical error at the first sight: “Veranderung” does look like a typo of “Veränderung” (*Impressum* 277).

Another formal element that promotes the novel’s self critical potential is that the novel reflects upon the past from the perspective of the present, which creates a certain distance to the past. It enables the author to employ irony as a literary device. By transposing narrative time, the author not only frees himself from the past, but the reader is also allowed to adopt a greater vantage point along with the author. While the author lets his hero confront the sanitized picture of the past, the reader is enabled to observe the protagonist carefully. In this case, the reader is even positioned at a higher vantage point than that of the protagonist by being granted a perspective, which is unavailable to the protagonist himself. I will give one example of this in my reading of *Die Aula* in chapter four.

At the beginning of his writing career, Kant was often apt to offer a solution to the problem of his respective fictional characters. But later, in *Die Aula*, for example, he became more cautious about providing solutions to the problems he exposed. In *Die Aula*, for instance, readers did not know for sure what kind of conclusions Iswall would draw from his encounter with the past. This does more than make the novel open-ended: it gives readers the opportunity to engage with the narrative in an active, creative and critical way. The end of the novel is structured in such a manner as to suggest to readers

how they might resolve the contradictions outside the intentionally unfinished work as Brecht attempted to do.

2. *Evolving Views of Modernism*

To discuss Kant's evolving views of modernism, I need to delineate the GDR discourse of modernism phobia that is deeply rooted in the history of its literature. In Hitler's "Third Reich," aesthetic tendencies of flight from reality were widespread. Many writers and the majority of readers chose to retreat to the inner space of private subjectivity. The postwar demand of *Zeitnähe* was a response to this trend. To combat the devotion to religious mysticism or other forms of the repression of reality, as Münz-Koenen explains, it was necessary to connect basic concepts such as humanism and democracy with one's own influence on history on a daily basis.¹³⁸ In fact, under these circumstances, it was crucial that the focus on reality and political responsibility of literature went hand-in-hand with the introduction of the fundamental elements of the Marxist worldview.

In the late 1940s, anti-fascism was replaced by anti-imperialism. With the founding of the GDR and the declaration of the socialist program in the 1950s, literature received a new task of presenting socialist perspectives. This transition was conditioned in part by Western anti-Communist policies and Western ideological and real rearmament against socialism as the cold war was intensified at the time. Aesthetic theory became an instrument of GDR cultural policy in the hands of the "ruling" working class. Its usefulness depended on its ability to promote a cultural practice that could lead to Socialism on the one hand and counteract the ideological manipulation of the masses from the West on the other.

In West Germany, cultural and literary life in particular was oriented toward the model offered by Gottfried Benn. His artistic theory corresponded with an extremely radical political program that became exemplary for a whole generation of young writers.¹³⁹ This development was already visible when Benn published his “Berliner Brief” in 1948. In his open letter, Benn analyzed the situation after World War II and refused any political engagement as his conclusion. According to Benn, the Occident did not decay because of its ruling systems or material deterioration, “sondern an dem hündischen Kriechen seiner Intelligenz vor den politischen Begriffen. Das zoon politikon, dieser griechische Mißgriff, diese Balkanidee — das ist der Keim des Untergangs, der sich vollzieht.”¹⁴⁰ Joining together the notion of absolute art and an apolitical attitude, Gottfried Benn was an ideal legitimatizing figure for modernism. With the appeal of Benn, modernist poetry by Mallarmé, Rimbaud, Baudelaire, and the surrealists was considered representative of the free occidental tradition, while realism on the other hand tended to be discredited during the 1950s in the FRG. Under these circumstances, the GDR deemed it urgent to adopt an anti-modernist orientation in socialist art of the 1950s. It was mainly the conspicuous lack of theoretical mediation between politics and aesthetics that led to a marred assessment of aesthetic modernism in the GDR.

If in his early writings Kant tends to oversimplify conflicts, he tries to expose the complexities of reality in his later novels. He negates in order to criticize reality and demonstrates that something different could have been done. This is not to say that Kant was ever a devout disciple of Adornian Modernism, or that he was a strict follower of the aesthetics of negativity. In reality, he pokes as much fun at modernism as he does at socialist realism.

Again, in his early prose, Kant already demonstrated his skepticism towards certain aspects of modernism. In his “Gold,” he satirized the ambivalence in modernist literature and its abandonment of certain literary conventions. After relating the love story of Frau Mylamm in her own words, the narrator exclaims:

Ich habe das von Frau Mylamm Gehörte so rasch und fließend aufzuschreiben vermocht, und es ist mir so glatt von der Hand gegangen, daß nunmehr der Zweifel in mir rast, ob es denn heutzutage noch angängig sei, anderszuschreiben, als Frau Mylamm zu sprechen pflegt. Der Hauch der Moderne hat mich angerührt, und die Unschuld, in der ich meine Sätze zu prägen, meine Worte zu wählen und meine Zeichen zu setzen pflegte, ist verletzt, wenn nicht dahin. Kann denn ein Schreiber noch als ein heutiger zu gelten Anspruch erheben, wenn er nicht schreibt, wie man gestern, ganz weit gestern schrieb? Ist man von dieser Welt, wenn man sich ihrer Regeln bedient? Muß man nicht für hoffnungslos zurückgeblieben gelten, wenn man nicht im engen Vokabelzirkel der Urväter im linnenen Kittel bleibt und in ihrer Wortarmut die wahre Tugend erblickt? Und begräbt sich nicht, bevor er geboren ward, wer auf eine Sache schwört und sie lobpreiset, anstatt zu sagen: Dies ist nichts und das auch nichts, Entschlossenheit wie Unentschlossenheit etwa, oder was weiter da an altväterischen Begriffen sein mag? (*Südsee* 190)

Here the narrator laments the violation of literary conventions and the loss of a literary heritage in modernist literature. In his retelling of Frau Mylamm’s story, he uses no punctuation, no capitalized letters, and parodies the style of Rilke and Joyce, two paramount modernists. He also complains about the “bourgeois nihilism” allegedly inherent in high modernism and the worldview of “Dies ist nichts und das auch nichts” (*Südsee* 190). In the same sense, he criticizes this negativity as a separation of form from content and as a negation of the enlightenment tradition. At this stage, Kant’s narrator still dismisses high modernism’s love of fragmentation and dissonance. He also reveals his own nostalgia for harmony and formal unity in traditional literary conventions. From the vantage point of the narrator, Kant experiments with different literary positions.

In spite of his nostalgia for traditional novel writing, as I mentioned above, the narrator of “Gold” in fact struggles with both traditional and modernist forces. Frequently the modernist impulse seems to take the upper hand. But, his modernism is restricted to experimentation with narrative techniques.¹⁴¹ In a sense it is more of a “faux modernism.” His digression is not born of “free association”; his “stream of consciousness” does not lead to the inward turning of his narrator/protagonist, but remains on the conscious and rational level. He admits his admiration for Kafka, but does not strive to become Kafkaesque, as I will show later. In his individual stories that had no relation to the story of his father’s gold, there is always a conscious message. One senses the narrator’s constant intention to enlighten; he openly states that he aims to influence the reader (*Südsee* 190). In spite of all the departures in his narrative techniques from socialist realist literary conventions, the narrator remains concerned about enlightening the reader. Moreover, in the face of modernist trends, the narrator admits to being troubled and doubts his own literary practice. He asks himself if the novel as a genre is too archaic for the modern world. He seriously ponders giving up this kind of project entirely in order to invent a new kind of story, “eine ohne allzu viele Worte, ohne Moral, ohne Kommata und klein geschrieben” (*Südsee* 191). Just when one starts to sense the narrator’s pessimism, Kant’s narrative delivers comic relief at the end of his short story: “Zum Abschied will ich, wie eine silbrig-blauen Fetzen der Erinnerung, den einen Satz noch einmal schwingen lassen: Als mein Vater das Gold gefunden hatte, freuten wir uns alle sehr” (*Südsee* 190-191). Kant’s playful critique of modernism went hand in hand with East German modernism-phobia.

Kant's evolving view of modernism is representative of the overall views of the socialist avant-garde. As these progressive artists aimed to practice realism as a form of social behavior, they were forced to find a possible explanation for the question of why artists of modernism, so strikingly different from one another, such as Brecht and Kafka, Eisler and Schönberg, Picasso, and Kandinsky, had contributed to the progress of art in the twentieth century. Robert Weimann, a leading East German literary scholar, rightly claimed the following:

Eine marxistische Revaluation der großen Leistungen der bürgerlichen Moderne ist längst überfällig. ... Das bedeutet nicht etwa, daß die Kritik an den selbstgesetzten Grenzen der schriftstellerischen Isolation zurückgenommen wird, im Gegenteil, die Kritik am bürgerlichen Individualismus ist dadurch zu radikalisieren, daß das poetische Selbstverständnis der Modernisten aus der Kenntnis der wirklichen ideologischen und kommunikativen Prozesse hinterfragt wird.¹⁴²

According to Weimann, critics do not need to endorse aesthetic modernism. However, they might need to radicalize the critique of the bourgeois individualism by questioning the poetic self-understanding of the modernists. According to Weimann, modernism is not an autonomous, artistic world untouched by reality. Weimann challenges the GDR's cultural practice of equating artistic modernity with ideological decadence and reactionary politics that failed to recognize the conflicted relationship between politics, ideology, and art. Similarly, Brecht contested the GDR's attempts to remove modernism from the art process of the twentieth century.¹⁴³ According to Brecht, Lukács ignored the simultaneity of different revolutionary processes in the 1920s. On the occasion of the realism debate Brecht criticized Lukács for seeing two totally different trends in the downfall of bourgeoisie literature and the rise of proletarian literature. Brecht observed a convergence of the two trends. "In Wirklichkeit," Brecht stated:

zeigt sich der Abstieg des Bürgertums in der elenden Aushöhlung einer seiner formal immer noch realistischen Literatur und zeigen Werke wie die Dos Passos'schen, trotz ihrer Zertrümmerung der realistischen Formen und in ihr, den Durchbruch eines neuen Realismus, möglich durch den Aufstieg des Proletariats.¹⁴⁴

What Brecht was suggesting was that formally, realistic literature could be hollow and meaningless, while modernist unconventional, broken forms could harbor a real breakthrough to a new realism. This also illustrates how Peter Weiss's aesthetic position became increasingly obvious: realism should not be confined to a number of rigid rules for the purpose of artistic production; rather the category of realism should be applied to reception. Peter Weiss suggested an aesthetic of reception: a model of possible appropriation of Picasso's *Guernica* by the workers. The inaccessibility of the painting was understood by the workers as a challenge to develop their own ability of perception according to the artists' broadened ability of expression.¹⁴⁵ Kant seems to adopt Peter Weiss's pragmatic approach in his view of modernism. In the same spirit, Kant developed an increased tolerance in his reception of modernism in general. The critique of modernism and formalism diminishes in Kant's later works. As he finds his own style, which, ironically, is very much indebted to modernism, he starts to demonstrate greater understanding and sympathy for modernism in his literary practice. In his novels, he appropriates some of its elements selectively. *Die Aula*, for instance, embraces flashbacks, free association, reflection, interior monologue and the technique of stream of consciousness, as Silvia und Dieter Schlenstedt demonstrate in the article "Modern erzählt. Zu Strukturen in Hermann Kant's Roman *Die Aula*."¹⁴⁶ Although the Schlenstedts seem to be overly eager to link Kant with modernist world literature, they

furnished an impressively thorough analysis of the various modernist techniques Hermann Kant employed in the novel.

There are many critics who appreciate Kant's literary achievement. For example, Jost Hermand considers *Die Aula* overall a great literary production. He thinks highly of Kant's ability to steer clear of the nihilism fashionable in the West while simultaneously eschewing the mechanical optimism required in the East. Hermand points out that Kant avoids all barren intellectual schemata and confronts reality with "altmodischer Naivität und zugleich höchst geschickter Arrangierfähigkeit mit jener welterzeugenden Lebensfülle, die nun einmal zu allen großen Romanen gehört."¹⁴⁷

3. Hermann Kant: The Unlikely Heir of Franz Kafka?

Kant's dialog with the realism and modernism debate is intensified by the inspiration he drew from Franz Kafka. As a celebrated GDR author and cultural functionary, Kant was not supposed to have anything to do with Kafka, given the rigid cultural policy of the 1950s. He was expected to repel "decadent" figures like Kafka. However, he cultivated a unique literary relationship toward Kafka. His references to many Kafka stories and his sympathy toward Kafka seem to suggest that he is going against the grain of socialist realist writing and reminding the reader of another tradition of German literature that is suppressed in the official GDR cultural policy.

"Kafka-phobia" was representative of the modernism-phobia in the GDR. It was not only a matter of literary taste. This phobia was also rooted in the struggle of the East German state to legitimate its existence and to remain an heir to the "true" German literary tradition. Literature became one more arena of the Cold War. The discussion of Kafka and literary modernism would inevitably lead to the discussion of alienation under

socialism. If Kafka's depiction of alienation in Western modern society did corresponded to the character of the contemporary East German bureaucracy, then the GDR could not justify its existing socialist system as a better alternative to capitalism and a necessary stage in the transition to Communism. "Kafka-phobia" in official discourse represents perfectly the GDR's extreme resistance to cultural trends from the West in its attempts to justify its legitimacy and preserve its existence. Socialist realist orthodoxy was evidenced at the 1963 Kafka conference held in Liblice, Czechoslovakia. Speakers at the conference convened in order to reassess Kafka and to discuss the notion of literary modernism. The Soviets did not send a delegation to the conference, nor did it need to, because Klaus Hermsdorf and Helmut Richter, the GDR delegation, stood alone in their defense of the anti-modernist doctrines formulated at the 1934 Soviet Writers' Congress.¹⁴⁸

In 1962, Hans Mayer, still living in the GDR, published an essay "Kafka und kein Ende" in the West.¹⁴⁹ He criticized Klaus Hermsdorf, and with him the GDR cultural functionaries, for regarding Kafka only as "borderline literature." In this article, he asked a fairly sensitive question "Und wer bestimmt eigentlich, wo die 'Grenzen der Literatur' verlaufen?"¹⁵⁰ Right after Mayer's defection in 1964, Klaus Höpcke vilified Mayer and compared his career to Kafka's story, *Die Verwandlung*. Mayer was called a weak man without principles, a moral coward, a creature without backbone, who turns into a bug who disgusts even its own people.¹⁵¹

Hans Mayer was not alone in his defense of Kafka. Along with him, Kant expressed his appreciation of Kafka and his literary work. "Was war zuerst da, das Thema oder das Motto?" Hermann Kant was asked this question in an interview printed on the dust jacket of his third novel *Der Aufenthalt*. He replied: "Am Anfang war eine

Briefstelle von Franz Kafka: ...man muß sich mit Kunststücken durchzuwinden suchen, wenn es mit einem schönen geraden Leben nicht geht.” The interviewer was surprised at Kant’s referring to Kafka: “Kafka und Sie? Seit wann das denn?” Kant replied evasively, “Literatur und ich? Schon länger.”¹⁵² The interview suggested that Kant’s position toward Kafka was at odds with the official discourse from the beginning. It also implied that he always regarded Kafka as literature. From the example of Hans Mayer one could see how some East German critics could resort to *ad hominem* attacks instead of focusing on literary issues. It was very courageous of Kant to take this position of sympathy, if not admiration, towards Kafka, because it could have got him into personal trouble.

It is in this anti-modernist, especially anti-Kafka cultural climate that Hermann Kant wrote *Die Aula*. In *Die Aula* and in his later novels *Das Impressum* and *Der Aufenthalt*, Kant makes various references to Kafka. Quite a few stories within Kant’s novels remind the reader directly of Kafka’s own literary works. In *Die Aula*, Hermann Kant alludes to the Kafka debates of 1963. He describes a fictional meeting of the Writers’ Union, and parodies many star writers who dominate the meeting. The dramatist Tinkler-Bill makes the closing remarks: “von dir etwas, von mir etwas, du ein Stück Brecht, ich ein Stück Ionesco, du ein Stück Scholochow, ich ein Stück Kafka, du ein Stück Hikmet, ich ein Stück Ezra Pound...und das Ganze nennen wir dann Schwalbenwurst” (*Aula* 347). Tinkler-Bill’s sarcastic remarks are a diatribe against the Western ideological antagonists that is typical of the official cultural discourse of the GDR. Via the unflattering caricature of Tinkler-Bill, Kant reveals the Party’s aesthetic blindness. He suggests that compromises are possible between realist and modernist aesthetics, that one can combine the best of both worlds. Contrary to Tinkler-Bill’s

dogmatic view of literature, Kant considers that a convergence of literature is both desirable and possible, as his own novel attests.

In *Die Aula*, Kant makes direct references to Kafka in order to expose the issue of alienation under socialism. When the protagonist Iswall tells his old friend Jakob Filter, the seemingly only un-alienated character in the novel, about the fate of his own mother, he characterizes her bad experiences with the GDR bureaucracy as a “Kafkatour.” Iswall’s stepfather, a dogmatist, was arrested in 1953 for illegal financial transactions. Iswall’s father’s illegal financial dealings also implicated his mother. When she was allowed to return home, both the Party and the law abandoned her. After a few fruitless encounters with the bureaucracy, she was fed up with this “Kafkatour” and defected to the West (*Aula* 354-5). Even though Filter, a former ABF student and a top official in the forest ministry, reminded Iswall that the term “Kafkatour” sounds very hostile towards the socialist state, the dye had been cast: there was alienation in the GDR. The reader is provoked to think that alienation and bureaucratic distortions never really ceased to exist in the GDR. From the facts that Iswall was first summoned to write a speech for the closing of the ABF and then, after his extensive research, the speech was cancelled by the party leader Meibaum, one can perhaps draw the conclusion that the dogmatist was still very much at the center stage of history and still had the last say. Bureaucratic distortions still controlled many people’s life.

In *Das Impressum*, the Kafka-phobia of the GDR cultural functionaries is characterized more vividly. The time is the mid 1950s. A member of the editorial staff of the *Neue Berliner Rundschau* has a pocket edition of Kafka’s short stories on his desk when Herbert Bleck, the new editor, comes for inspection. Bleck picks up the book and

reads the title of the story at which it is open, “Die Verwandlung,” and comments: “Die Verwandlung eines Menschen in einen Käfer ist für uns keine annehmbare Lösung!” (*Impressum* 235). Bleck’s pronouncement becomes an office catchphrase (*Impressum* 248). He is a dogmatist and does not get along with others well and lasts only one year at his post. Kant might very well have had George Lukács in mind as a model for Bleck when he composed this parody of Kafka-phobia. He also might imply his own position on the issue of Kafka when he let the narrator comment that: “David Groth überschlug sich zwar keineswegs Franz Kafkas wegen, bestaunte ihn aber sehr und wäre nur nie auf die Idee gekommen, der unglückliche Prager habe mit der Geschichte von Gregor Samsa irgend jemandem eine Lösung bringen wollen” (*Impressum* 235). Groth might not be head over heels in love with Kafka, but he does marvel at his work quite a bit. Therefore, Bleck’s disparaging remarks on Kafka disturb him a great deal. He does not agree with Bleck’s interpretation of Kafka’s story: “Die Verwandlung eines Menschen in einen Käfer ist für uns keine annehmbare Lösung!” (*Impressum* 235). Kant let his protagonist take a more tolerant stance regarding Kafka. Groth would most likely see the story as the superb portrayal of the predicaments of the bourgeois individual. As he says above, Kafka does not aim at providing a solution for anyone with his Gregor Samsa story. The modernist phobia of the GDR cultural discourse would unlikely allow such an interpretation of Kafka’s work. In *Das Impressum*, the narrator is obviously distancing himself from those who consider Kafka potentially damaging and is thereby challenging the anti-modernist trend persistent in the GDR.

Far from being Kafka-phobic, Kant appears to draw inspiration from Kafka’s work constantly. For example, the situation in the following chapter is pointedly

reminiscent of Kafka's *Das Schloß*. In the first part of the chapter, Kant describes at length the bureaucratic difficulties Groth encountered at home before he is given permission to attend the exhibition of sporting weapons in London in the first place. In the second part, Kant criticizes the deformed character of the bureaucracy in the West. He and his partner get on the wrong aircraft and arrive by mistake in Lisbon. Since the GDR at the time lacked diplomatic recognition, they are asked to behave "als wären Sie nicht hier," and put on the first flight out of Lisbon and eventually reach London via Puerto Rico and New York. In writing this episode, Kant must have had Kafka's *Das Schloß* in mind. The allusion to Kafka is made abundantly clear by having the protagonist Groth comment sarcastically in the height of this mess: "Die Verwandlung eines Menschen in eine Käfer ist für uns keine annehmbare Lösung!" (*Impressum* 268). This office catchphrase coined by Bleck reminds the reader of the Kafkaesque nature of Groth's trip and serves to criticize administrative absurdities in the Western bureaucracy. Ironically, even though Kant tried to balance his critique of the GDR with his attack of the West in *Das Impressum*, he still had his difficulties with publishing the novel in the GDR.

Kafka's *Der Prozeß* is another work that appears to have inspired Kant to create a central leitmotif in *Der Aufenthalt*, namely the question Niebuhr frequently asked: "Was ist die Beschuldigung?" (What is my crime?). Kant uses Kafka to demonstrate alienation in the contemporary bureaucracy of both the East and the West, while refusing to accept Kafka's pessimism. In this way, he dialectically resolves the old antithesis of realism and modernism that is implied in Lukács's "Franz Kafka or Thomas Mann."¹⁵³ For Hermann Kant, it is not about choosing one over the other. What he wants is both Kafka *and* Thomas Mann.

With *Der Aufenthalt*, Hermann Kant seems to be indebted to Kafka, because the theme of false or unknown charges against oneself is also the enduring theme in Kafka's novel *Der Prozeß*. The parallel in *Der Aufenthalt* is that the Niebuhr is arrested for a crime that at least initially is not specified. The same question has different connotations for Niebuhr and Josef K. For Niebuhr in *Der Aufenthalt*, this is only one of the many questions he asks. It turns out that this question does have a definite answer. He is falsely accused of murdering of a Polish girl. The problem for Niebuhr is that he fails time and again to ask the right question and to enquire into the reality behind German propaganda. Although Niebuhr in *Der Aufenthalt* and Joseph K. in *Der Prozeß* are both bothered by the same question, the endings of their story differ greatly. The demise of all hope for the autonomy of the subject in the face of pervasive and internalized social and bureaucratic controls evident in Kafka's novels and stories concur with Adorno's belief in the dissolution of the subject in the totally administered society of the late bourgeois era. This may explain why Adorno celebrated Kafka in his famous essay "Commitment."¹⁵⁴ While Niebuhr manages to gain some insights, Joseph K. never has a chance. Kafka rendered reality to the point of apparent irresolution, confronting the reader or audience with impenetrable enigmas. However, even though Kant still believed in the possibility of progress and enlightenment, he questioned the permanency of Niebuhr's transformation in his novel as well, as I shall show in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE: HERMANN KANT CONFRONTS THE NAZI PAST IN *DER AUFENTHALT*: MARK NIEBUHR'S APPRENTICESHIP

In this chapter, I will trace the treatment of the Nazi past (*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*) in Kant's literary work. I will analyze the continuity and evolution of his treatment of this theme and his aesthetic style. The focus of my investigation is Hermann Kant's novel *Der Aufenthalt*. Although *Der Aufenthalt* is a book that principally focuses on the war and Germany's Nazi past, in my analysis I will also draw on his early short stories and his other novels, especially *Die Aula* and *Das Impressum*, since both contain the themes of Nazism and war that are objects of my examination in this chapter. In this close reading of the text, in conjunction with a historical analysis of the GDR's cultural policy and the West German landscape of the confrontation of the past, I will point out some of the distinctive contributions of Hermann Kant's literature to the WWII and Holocaust literature.

1. Hermann Kant in the Tradition of East German Anti-fascist Literature

During the Cold War between the Soviet Union and the United States, every issue broke down not only to two views, but also to two sets of vocabulary designated for the expression of the respective views. The same phenomenon appeared between the two divided German states. The term "Vergangenheitsbewältigung" does not appear in the official GDR literary history. In the official GDR discourse, one often encounters words like "Verarbeitung der Vergangenheit" (treating or processing history) and "Auseinandersetzung mit der Vergangenheit" (confronting the past).¹⁵⁵ Official GDR historiography had denied any ownership of that dark chapter of German history until

October 17, 1988, when Honecker met Edgar Bronfman, the President of the World Jewish Congress, in East Berlin and agreed at least in principle to pay compensation to Jewish victims of Nazism.¹⁵⁶ If responsibility was denied, why should one claim “Vergangenheit”? Such was the logic of the East German state. Meanwhile, the FRG became the “designated” heir of the Nazi heritage. The respective efforts of the two German states to establish their own identities constituted the major grounds for such historically and ideologically determined linguistic sensitivity and discrepancy.

The history of the East German anti-fascist literature is marked by a few important dates: 1945, 1949, 1957, 1959, and the mid 1970s. In the following analysis, these dates serve as important reference points.¹⁵⁷ During the immediate postwar years, beginning in 1945, the earliest books were mostly autobiographical accounts of wartime experiences. Literary production in this phase could, therefore, be seen as the continuation of exile writing. This period of time was recognized mostly as the “anti-fascist and democratic” period of the later GDR, for restrictive cultural policies were not yet in place and war literature and anti-fascist novels were mostly more or less spontaneous.

With the founding of the GDR in 1949 and the phasing out of the “democratic” nature of the state, anti-fascist literature took a different turn. As socialist realism gradually dictated the guidelines for literature and arts, ideological considerations started to influence literature more strongly. Literature was considered an extension of the state and a tool for achieving certain cultural and psychological goals. The pronouncements of a series of writers’ congresses prompted an erratic course of development of East German literature. Those pronouncements reflected the debates carried on in the cultural realm in

general. Beginning in 1952, literature became more and more programmatic. The recent socialist past was officially accorded a much more central role in cultural discourse. The personal stories of individual survivors were discouraged while the purely political and didactic element of the narrative was encouraged. In other words, the private sphere did not seem to interest the state or the Party; therefore, it was discouraged by the cultural policy and repressed in the respective anti-fascist literature. Party authorities such as Walter Ulbricht once stated: “Das [Exil] war einmal und ist jetzt vorbei. Wenn sie das Privatbedürfnis danach haben, kann man sie nicht hindern, aber sie können von uns nicht verlangen, daß wir ihnen Papier dazu geben.”¹⁵⁸

In the mid 1950s, national and international forces underwent significant shifts, which caused corresponding ideological and thematic shifts in the literary sphere. At the fourth German Writers’ Congress in 1956, the lack of literature that thematized the WWII was raised as a topic of debate.¹⁵⁹ This lack had already been registered before this meeting in January 1956 in an article titled “Brauchen wir Kriegsromane?” published in *Neues Deutschland*, whose author referred to a comment by Anna Seghers in 1954:

Bisher gibt es in der DDR noch kein bedeutendes Buch über den Krieg. Zwar haben sich in letzter Zeit bei uns mehr junge Schriftsteller gefunden, die über ihre Kriegserlebnisse schrieben. ... Aber es gibt bei uns kein einziges episches Werk, das ...eine Schilderung dessen gäbe, was die Gemüter Hunderttausender von Menschen unaufhörlich bewegt, eine Schilderung der unglaublich tiefen Veränderungen, die in den Menschen vor sich gehen. Wir haben keinen einzigen Roman, den man mit den Romanen vergleichen könnte, die in Deutschland nach dem ersten Weltkrieg verfaßt worden sind.¹⁶⁰

Seghers rightfully complained about the scarcity of literature about the Second World War. Considering the magnitude of the war, one would be justified in expecting a greater abundance in literary works treating this theme. But up until the mid 1950s, there was not

one single work, according to Seghers, that could be compared to the novels written after the First World War.

The reports of the 1957 conference of the Writers' Union on war literature documented a new tendency in anti-fascist literature.¹⁶¹ Writers such as Franz Fühmann, Dieter Noll, and Max Walter Schulz wrote about the experiences of the "lost" generation, and the conversion of the young Nazis into socialists. People who were too young to resist actively and *Wehrmacht* soldiers who never questioned the system they used to serve became literary protagonists. However, in the eyes of cultural functionaries and literary critics, such personal perspectives from individuals who used to be perpetrators involved complex problems. In their article "Die große Abrechnung: Darstellung des Krieges in der deutschen Gegenwartsliteratur," Hermann Kant and Frank Wagner advised authors to impose a narrative perspective (read: a partisan point of view) on the "typical" experiences of misled youth.¹⁶² Cultural functionaries distrusted the American style represented by Hemingway. They saw this as too close to naturalism and bourgeois objectivism, and therefore unfit for socialist literature.

Kant and Wagner's contribution to the discussion of this topic helped to bring about the shifting of focus: from around this time, resistance fighters in alliance with the workers' class stopped taking center stage. The emphasis was placed on young people who went to the front, experienced the collapse of their National Socialist ideals and gradually adapted to the new society. To Kant and Wagner's dismay, anti-fascist literature was filled with clichés. Protagonists were either predisposed to anti-fascism or were supplied with a ready-made older Communist mentor to help them with the transition. Kant and Wagner also criticized the naturalist reproduction of war. According

to them, this style would at best lead to a pacifist standpoint, but would not be able to uncover the nature of war. From these critiques, Alfred Kurella, the star critic of the GDR, was able to draw the following conclusion with unmistakable clarity:

Wenn Sie den Krieg als Hitlerskrieg, als abscheulichen Krieg, als Raubkrieg verstehen und negieren, dann kommen Sie nicht weiter als bis zu einer bürgerlichen Position... Erst wenn Sie ihn als antisozialistischen Krieg negieren und damit den Sozialismus zur Position machen, erst dann kommen Sie hinter das Geheimnis des Krieges [...].¹⁶³

It is logical to claim that World War II was not merely a horrible plundering war that Hitler had single-handedly instigated. However, Kurella aimed at coupling fascism with capitalism. He perceived socialism as primary target of the fascist war, and thereby represented the official theory of war in the GDR. According to Kurella's reasoning, socialism was the ultimate cure for all wars.

In the 1960s, the integration of the heroes into a socialist new homeland appeared to be the result of successfully coming to terms with the past. In literature at this time, the development of the hero always led in this sole direction; and no alternative seemed possible for a conscientious East German. In this historical phase, Hermann Kant's view was totally in alignment with the official discourse. He functioned as the mouthpiece of the cultural functionaries in his promotion of not only anti-fascist rhetoric, but also—more importantly—in his insistence on a socialist perspective. Hermann Kant could have drawn the same conclusion as Alfred Kurella did at that time.

The finalization of the division of Germany along geopolitical lines redefined the questions of war and military security according to the ideological precepts of two competitive social systems.¹⁶⁴ With the GDR's independence and sovereignty more firmly established, anti-fascist literature as a legitimating tool for the state became less

relevant. Beginning in 1959, a new cultural policy, called the “Bitterfelder Weg” took effect. It was more interested in depicting socialist achievements than in dealing with the trauma of a past war.¹⁶⁵ Although Bitterfeld literature steered away from antifascist topics and themes, it liberated GDR literature, particularly novels, from the shackles of socialist realist precepts.¹⁶⁶

In 1971, Erich Honecker urged more artistic emphasis on “real existierende Leute in ihrer sozialen Wirklichkeit.”¹⁶⁷ And furthermore, he also argued for the abolition of most taboos, as long as the writers proved not to be antagonistic to the solid position of socialism. This official position promised a more tolerant cultural policy and provided expanded opportunities for GDR writers to experiment in matters of theme, style, form, and content. It was during this period that Kant completed his work on *Der Aufenthalt* (1971-76).

As the result of loosened restrictions of GDR cultural policy, the mid 1970s saw the thriving of novels, a narrative prose form that had dominated the anti-fascist literature in the previous decades. After the apparent initial relaxation of Honecker’s cultural policy, the state regressed in the mid 1970s and attempted to regulate literary responses to the past by once again restricting literary topics, setting taboos and dictating literary precepts. How did literature respond to the policy? In the late 1970s and 1980s, in spite of the political restrictions, GDR literature became more independent of the state and set out to correct the rigid discourse of the official cultural policies. Compliance was not always the case. For example, in 1977, with the publication of Hermann Kant's novel *Der Aufenthalt*, Leonore Krenzlin, along with Silvia and Dieter Schlenstedt observed an emerging pattern in the history of this literature: a movement away from socialist

polemics directed against Nazism to a closer examination of the human dimensions relating to the Nazi era.¹⁶⁸ The novel *Der Aufenthalt* evidenced Hermann Kant's maturation on the issue of anti-fascism and his evolving view on Nazism and the Third Reich.

2. From “Kleine Schachgeschichte” to Der Aufenthalt

Hermann Kant exerted great influence on anti-fascist literature in the GDR. His unrelenting demand for a socialist perspective concurs with the party doctrine and his literary work, especially many of his short stories written in the 1950s reflect the socialist realist cultural policy. However, his novels, especially *Der Aufenthalt*, signal a great departure from that dogma and in reality are closer to the critical realism advocated by Lukács. Here, we can actually see how Kant's view evolves over time. This change of style demonstrates unmistakably the complex issue of the divided self of Hermann Kant as a public spokesperson and as the author of *Der Aufenthalt*. The author's self-understanding as a writer went through different phases that at times corresponded to, but often times clashed with the official discourse and his own self understanding as a political activist and cultural functionary in later years of the GDR.

In his treatment of the Nazi past, Kant went through a development of his own. In his first short stories published in a collection called *Ein bißchen Südsee*, two stories dealt with this theme: “Das Kennwort,” and “Kleine Schachgeschichte.” The message delivered in *Das Kennwort* is in total accordance with the Party's doctrine in its explanation of fascism. The GDR understanding of fascism was a continuation of the Comintern formulation in the early 1930s. It was explained in social-economic terms: the capitalist agents seduced the middle class and misled the proletariat.¹⁶⁹ This fascism-

topos is frequently encountered in GDR literature about the Third Reich. As I said earlier, this explanation of fascism exonerated the Communists of any wrongdoing and ascribed to them only the role of resistance, or innocent bystanders, while the Social Democrats and their labor union collaborators were seen as traitors and “social fascists.”¹⁷⁰ In “Kleine Schachgeschichte,” the focus is on the organizational and educational work of the anti-fascist committee among the prisoners. Class issues and struggles dominate the story. The fascist past lacks real substance. It essentially justifies the anti-fascist self-understanding of the Party and the country. Although the stories in the volume are told in a humorous and warm-hearted style, they have didactic overtones. In these early works, Kant functions a great deal as the puppet of the SED.

In his first novel *Die Aula*, Hermann Kant deals mainly with issues within the socialist GDR, and only briefly mentions the repressed Nazi past of the country. Here Kant also portrays the Nazi past that is not in accord with the official discourse. He wrote the novel in the early 1960s, when the Party decided to repress this past and instead concentrate on the socialist achievement in art and literature. Kant’s treatment of this topic in *Die Aula* is more provocative than subtle and indirect in this cultural political context.

Kant broke many taboos with *Die Aula*. From 1951 to 1952, the Party required artists to treat themes and materials from industrial and agrarian production and portray activists and brigades as model citizens. Under these circumstances, any further confrontation with themes such as war and fascism appeared to be inappropriate, committing the sin of being caught up in the problems of the past. In *Die Aula*, the narrator/protagonist Iswall confronts the GDR’s selective amnesia or memory of the

shared past with the FRG and reminded the reader of the history of the Third Reich, which at that time was witnessed by most students of the Workers and Peasants Faculty (ABF). The research for his speech leads Iswall back to the ABF. Looking through the admission forms for its students, Iswall is forced to come to terms with some unmastered past of the country:

Wer im Oktober neunundvierzig fünfundzwanzig war und männlichen Geschlechts, der hatte bestimmt einmal ein Soldbuch besessen, und er hatte kaum ein heiles Fell und selten, wenn er zu denken verstand, ein reines Gewissen. Der mußte "Ja" schreiben, wenn er auf großformatigem grauem Papier nach etwaiger Zugehörigkeit zur ehemaligen faschistischen Wehrmacht gefragt worden war, und die Frage nach einem Truppenteil und seinen Einsatzorten hatte ihm den Atem kurz gemacht, denn, verflucht noch mal, wie hieß das Dorf am Bug, das sie angezündet hatten, und würden sie ihn in die Schule nehmen, wenn es aufkam? (245)

In the paragraph cited, Kant exposes the falsity of the anti-fascist discourse of Socialist East Germany. He points out that the GDR is not simply a country of resistance fighters, anti-fascists and Communists. East Germans in their twenties and above, and especially males, have most likely fought in the *Wehrmacht*, the Nazi army. Some may have committed horrific acts against non-German civilians. The whitewashing of guilt does not clear the conscience of the East German populace, as Kant shows in the reflection above.

Just like the FRG, the GDR has the baggage of the Third Reich and has a Nazi past to deal with. With a school survey, Kant demonstrates the difficulty of confronting the past: "Und dann die Rubrik: "Waren Sie im Ausland und zu welchem Zweck?" War die nicht schon erledigt durch die andere, die mit der Wehrmacht? Möglich, aber hier wurde auch noch nach dem Zweck des Auslandsaufenthalts gefragt, und dadurch wurde die Sache erst verzwickt" (*Aula* 245). The survey includes a disturbing question: "Have you ever been in a foreign land? For what purpose?" Most of the forms contain no

answers. Iswall answers yes to the question of whether he has been overseas and admits to having been to the places as the Soviet Union and Poland. He leaves the space blank for the question “for what purpose?” When he comes across his résumé, he hopes to find more about his state of mind in the past; however, it does not tell much about the uncomfortable past either: “Auch in seinem Lebenslauf stand nicht viel mehr darüber. Das alles war ihm damals noch viel zu verzwickt gewesen, und viel übersichtlicher war es auch heute noch nicht” (*Aula* 248). The survey was conducted in the founding years of the GDR, and the young Iswall was understandably much too confused to grasp the historical events just like many of his classmates. What is disturbing is that ten years later, Iswall still finds the past enigmatic and impenetrable. The survey forces Iswall to think about the unconquered past, and the personal and official repression of the wrongs Germans, including East Germans, committed in WWII. Through Iswall’s reflection on the survey, Kant makes it clear that up until the moment that he wrote the novel, the GDR had not confronted the Nazi past adequately and effectively.

Kant’s portrayal of anti-fascist fighters diverges significantly from the official line. In the Party’s self-fashioning, anti-fascist fighters are often simultaneously Communists that live in the GDR and lead the socialist regime. They were supposed to be positive figures. But in *Die Aula*, Kant depicted his stepfather Nußbank, a former anti-fascist resistance fighter, as a stiff dogmatist. In the final years of the Weimar Republic, Nußbank was a functionary of the Communist Party. One year before the war, the Gestapo sent him to the concentration camp in Sachsenhausen (*Aula* 252). Nußbank wastes no opportunity to make the fact known that he has been imprisoned as an anti-fascist resistance fighter. Nußbank asks Iswall to pretend to be a very backward farmer

whom he must convert. Iswall is so good at his role of being a backward farmer that Nußbank cannot manage to convince him. Later he expresses his concern to Iswall's mother. He finds it troublesome that Iswall is so eloquent with the reactionary slogans: "das [Iswall's Nazism—H.W.] müßte tiefer sitzen," he says (*Aula* 124). When Iswall laughs at him, Nußbank thinks Iswall is laughing at the gray hair that he got from the concentration camp. Later Nußbank asks Iswall's mother to explain how Iswall, a "Nazibengel" comes to this household (*Aula* 124).

He also asks Iswall's mother to act as the farmer whom he wants to convert. He instructs Iswall's mother on how to ask questions: "Nein, nicht so fragen, diese Bauern fragen dümmer, du mußt dümmer fragen!" Iswall's mother has to ask really idiotic questions so that Nußbank can answer them fluently (*Aula* 124). Nußbank is vainglorious and very dogmatic. Later he is arrested because of financial crimes. According to Iswall, Nußbank is "ein Pedant und zugleich ein Verschwender, ein Scherzer und auch ein Geheimniskrämer, ein Tyrann und Feigling, ein Revoluzzer und Spießer, ein gerissener Komödiant und alles in allem ein erbärmlicher Nachfolger für Paul Iswall" (*Aula* 252). Iswall's contempt for Nußbank might in part be explained by the fact that Nußbank is not his biological father; however, it should be deemed rather audacious for Kant to depict a former anti-fascist functionary in such negative terms, labeling him as tyrant, would-be revolutionary, and petty bourgeois coward.

Kant's treatment of anti-Semitism was unconventional in the GDR. The GDR's discourse on anti-Semitism privileged economics. In general, anti-Semitism, like misogyny, was considered a peripheral phenomenon, one caused by the manipulation from above in order to "provide a scapegoat for anti-capitalist sentiment," thus achieving

the goal of “displacing the energies of class struggle.”¹⁷¹ In the explanation of anti-Semitism, economics had the absolute primacy. Officially, in the GDR, there was no Jewish question. It was widely believed in the GDR that the establishment of socialism in the country was supposed to uproot anti-Semitism. As part of Nazism, anti-Semitism was considered a result of advanced capitalism, that is, imperialism by GDR functionaries and mainstream citizens. Under the banner of socialism, anti-Semitic activities, especially in the early 1950s, were officially covered up, as Thomas Fox’s survey reveals.¹⁷² The fact that the GDR often equated Jews and capitalists suggests that its vision might have also been tainted by its own anti-Semitic prejudices. In fact, according to Fox, the GDR identified Jews as either capitalists or communists in ways that would best benefit the political agenda at hand.¹⁷³

Kant also criticizes the over-simplified Marxist theory that fascism represents the final stage of capitalism and that German finance capital single-handedly carried Hitler to power. In *Das Impressum*, Kant describes anti-Semitism in concrete historical terms. He realizes that the mechanical theoretical construct of class will not suffice to explain all aspects of anti-Semitism. Kant does not comply with the Party line and demonstrates how complex the issue is. Class struggle is not the focus of the narrative. In fact, the Groth family and the Blumenthal family have a very congenial relationship with one another. William Groth, the servant, names his son David, in honor of his Jewish employer, David Blumenthal. Blumenthal also promises financial support for the future education of little David Groth. There is no class tension between the two families whatsoever. After Blumenthal’s murder, William Groth is the only one in town trying to bring justice to his death, and subsequently suffers severe punishment. When David’s father, Wilhelm Groth,

goes to court to accuse Wolter of his crime, he is sentenced to hard labor at Dachau for daring to defend a Jew's reputation against a German (*Impressum* 50-51). David Groth is refused admission to grammar school because of his father's record.

In *Das Impressum*, Kant portrays two perpetrators: one is Wolter; the other is Kasten.

Blumenthal becomes one of the earliest victims of National Socialism because he publicly derides a nationalistic speech made by Councilor Wolter. Blumenthal comments sarcastically that Wolter's speech is like the town's shallow creek: "so tief und mitreißend wie der Küchenback gewesen—der Küchenbach, man wird Ähnliches ahnen, war bei Volltrunkenen sehr beliebt, man konnte sich in ihm ausbreiten und ungefährdet ernüchtern, lag man auf dem Rücken, so reichte einem die Flut nicht ganz an die Ohren" (*Impressum* 48). Everybody in town knows how shallow the creek is: it is drunkards' favorite place to sober up. If one lies on one's back, the water will not even reach his or her ears. To say that Wolter's speech is deep and sweeping like the town creek is to insult it as shallow and empty. Wolter realizes that it is a political joke at his expense. He is offended and threatens Blumenthal by noting that "diese Äußerung werde er dem Herrn Blumenthal schon noch eintränken" (*Impressum* 49). Wolter keeps his word and one night in February 1933, twenty-one months after that town meeting, he ruthlessly drowns Blumenthal in the creek as revenge. In a play on an idiomatic expression, we find out that the water is indeed deep: "...[er hat] den David Blumenthal so lange in das sandige Bachbett gedrückt, bis der gemerkt hat, daß dieses stilles Wasser tief war wie die Ewigkeit und reißend wie der Tod" (*Impressum* 49). Wolter senselessly and brutally kills Blumenthal simply because he mocked his nationalist speech at the town meeting.

The other perpetrator is David's fascist teacher, Kasten. David suffers persecution in school because Kasten repeatedly derides him for his "Jewish" name, his connection with Blumenthal, and his father's fate. Kasten's anti-Semitism is deeply rooted. The "Jewish" name itself provokes him:

...denn David, das klinge nun doch zu versetzt hebräisch, zwar kämen auch andere Bezeichnungen wie Jakob oder vornweg schon Adam aus derselben Mauschelecke, aber denen sei inzwischen längst deutscher Geist eingehaucht worden, spätestens durch den deutschen Denker Jakob Böhme beziehungsweise durch den deutschen Rechner Adam Ries, von einem bedeutenden Deutschen vornamens David jedoch sei seines Wissens niemals die Rede gewesen, und, übrigens, wie heiße denn Davids Vater, Abraham vielleicht oder gleich Moische? (*Impressum* 49)

This tirade on Groth's first name demonstrates Kasten's racist sentiments clearly. Jewish names such as David, Abraham, and the Yiddish name Moische (Moses) seem to evoke nothing but disgust in Kasten. He considers first names such as "Jakob" and "Adam" tolerable because "famous" Germans used these names and somehow breathed some "German-ness" into them. He also uses the derogatory "Mauscheln" to indicate the names' Jewish/Yiddish provenance.

In school, Kasten tells the students his twisted version of what happened to Blumenthal. According to him, Blumenthal threatened Wolter for his patriotic speech and then, "aus unzählbarer Wut über die gelungene Erhebung des deutschen Volkes," attempted to take the life of "Volksgenosse" Wolter and lost his own life instead, "denn der Volksgenosse Wolter habe gezeigt, wie ein deutscher Mann sich zu wehren wisse gegen unarische Meuchler" (*Impressum* 50). Kasten defends Wolter and defines Blumenthal as an enemy of the German people based on his race. By spinning the facts, he establishes Wolter as a member of the superior race, and he degrades Blumenthal as an immoral and un-Aryan murderer.

In addition to spreading rumors, Kasten's greater sin is that he is responsible for the death of the second Jewish character, Ascher Hirsch, who returns to his destroyed warehouse after *Kristallnacht*. Kasten's SA men force him to stand in a crucifixion pose while they fire chamber pots at him. Most of the pots missed Ascher, because the guards were laughing too hard to aim accurately. Even though some pots did hit Ascher, they did not harm him. The handle of a round pot broke one of Ascher's incisors. About this incident there were two open discussions: one that took place on the tenth of November 1938, and the other in 1945. In 1938, a total of eleven guards claimed to have scored the fatal hit; while in the fall of 1945, none of the five shooters who survived the war wanted to admit that he had participated in this incident. In the end, Kasten hit Ascher between the eyes. Untreated for his wounds, he dies: "da fiel der Warenhausbesitzer Ascher um und lag blutend zwischen seinen sauberen Nachtgeschirren, was aber nicht heißt, daß er nun auch hätte sterben müssen; sterben mußte er nur, weil ihm niemand rechtzeitig die Stirnhaut nähte, in Ratzeburg nicht und in Neuengamme schon gar nicht" (*Impressum* 62).¹⁷⁴ The day after Ascher's death, everyone in the school talks about his death before Kasten even shows up in his class. The distorted story goes that a Jew was bombarded with "Pißpöten" and it inspires the song that starts with "Abraham und Isaak schmissen sich mit Beefsteakhack!" (*Impressum* 62).

In the murder of Ascher, Kant portrays anti-Semitism as more complicated than class theory was able to explain. The identity of the person who fired the fatal shot is not as important as the fact that nobody stood up for Ascher when he was left to die, and that the citizens of the town clearly were informed of the horrific crime and yet decided to turn their heads away from the truth, just as in the murder of Blumenthal. When Wolter

drowned Blumenthal in the creek, no one in town dared to stand up for justice. The only exception to this was David's father. When Ascher's warehouse was destroyed, and he was killed, there was no outrage from the other town residents. This silence and indifference were both striking and disturbing. Except for what happens to Groth's father, David Blumenthal, and Ascher, Kant also makes it clear that Ratzeburg is a very quiet little town in which life goes on just like everywhere else: "ein ruhiger Ort, in dem es sich leben ließ" (*Impressum* 71). This fact, however, also shows that crimes committed against Blumenthal and Ascher could have taken place anywhere in Germany.

Even though Kant tells compelling stories about the Nazi past of Germany in *Das Impressum*, the overly obvious dichotomy of good and evil constructed in the novel runs the risk of preventing ordinary Germans from coming to terms with this past. The protagonist is on the good side of dichotomy, has an anti-fascist outlook, is affiliated with a Jewish person, and almost becomes his protégé. He and his whole family are victims of fascist ideology from early on. They occupy a position that is atypical for ordinary Germans. Potentially, for readers from both Germanys, identification with the anti-fascist resistor is more likely to take place in the reading and therefore self-exoneration is made easier via this identification with the positive side of the dichotomy. In the depiction of the perpetrators, the novel paints a black-and-white picture. In *Das Impressum*, perpetrators are described as blatantly evil. Wolter is depicted as an incarnation of the devil. He is vengeful and strikes people dead when they do not agree with him. Both Wolter and David's teacher Kasten are described as having sadomasochistic inclinations. The absolute lack of humanity of the perpetrators in Kant's 1972 novel contributes to the

“outsider status” of the perpetrators and hands ordinary Germans a ready excuse for exonerating one’s own involvement and denying any responsibility.

While the postwar generation of writers attempted to clarify their own positions toward the National Socialist past, anti-fascist literature of the GDR experienced a new boom in the 1970s.¹⁷⁵ The glorified anti-fascist resistance fighters lost their appeal in the eyes of the younger generation. In 1974, Kant pointed out the danger of furthering generational conflicts if one continues to preach anti-fascist platitudes to the youth. He also claimed that the Communist resistance was only part of the historical truth.¹⁷⁶ Furthermore, with the revision of the GDR cultural policy, the authors correspondingly had more freedom in trying to come to terms with the past. They met the question about personal relationships to the past and the psychological nature of the individual’s private life under Nazism with greater curiosity. In this context, a new voice emerged in the anti-fascist literature in the 1970s. It might seem anachronistic, but it was not until the 1970s, thirty years after the collapse of the Third Reich, that the generation whose childhood and youth were influenced by National Socialism began to process its past in increasingly personal terms.¹⁷⁷

While Kant is still inefficient in his confrontation with National Socialism in his earlier works, he is decidedly more nuanced in his confrontation with the Nazi past in his third major novel *Der Aufenthalt* (1977).¹⁷⁸ For instance, his early short story “Kleine Schachgeschichte,” is also based on Kant’s prison experience in Poland as well, but the perspective is entirely different. He focuses on the anti-fascist activities carried out by German prisoners of war. As in many postwar clichés about war, in this short story there seems to be a clear divide between officers and ordinary soldiers. The author is not

concerned with the deep psyche of either group. The early treatment of war experience in “Kleine Schachgeschichte” is significantly lacking in depth in comparison to what he later achieves in his novel *Der Aufenthalt*.

3. Inclusive Picture of Perpetrators and Victims

In the ten chapters with Niebuhr in a cell with fascist criminals, the anonymity of mass killing is individualized and rendered imaginable. Contrary to the image of perpetrators as incarnations of evil, Kant included a wide range of perpetrators in this big picture: ordinary foot soldiers and high-ranked officers and SS-men. More importantly, Kant analyzed the psychology of the victimized perpetrator and his moral crisis. Mistaken for someone else, Mark Niebuhr, a captured German soldier, is accused of murdering a Polish woman’s daughter and is locked up with German war criminals, which in turn gives him the opportunity to learn about anti-Semitism, the Holocaust, and most importantly, a vast variety of perpetrators.

At first sight, none of the prisoners seems to have bloody hands; on the contrary, his fellow prisoners even seem very gentle. The alleged “tulips planter” Jan Beveren from Auschwitz appears to be exceedingly benign. He has a very gentle whispering voice, and he actually helps secure Niebuhr a corner for him to lie down and rest. He has seemingly done nothing but plant tulips. Precisely this harmlessness in Kant’s characterization of Beveren demonstrates the nature of the perpetrator more poignantly than a stereotypical depiction of the KZ-commander himself. The disgust and the hatred aroused by this figure are connected with something normal: the friendly profession as gardener. It is precisely the portrayal of this apparent harmlessness that reveals the penetration of fascism into every field, even the field of nature. Jan Beveren, the alleged gardener, was

actually a cold-hearted killer in charge of the elimination of human lives. In this figure one can see a tendency in the GDR: After the liberation: “Man war nur Tulpenzüchter gewesen, nur mitgelaufen. Beveren ist eine neue sehr eindringliche Warnung vor ‘Tulpenzüchtern’ ähnlich der Warnung Brechts, daß zuzeiten Gespräche über Bäume etwas wie Verrat sind” (*Aufenthalt* 51). Kant satirizes the common practice of perpetrators after the war is over: Most of them claimed that they had never done any thing wrong. They were only “gardeners” as Beveren claimed to be. For example, they are only “fellow travelers” without evil intentions.

Since Niebuhr lives in the prison camp with German war criminals, *Der Aufenthalt* provides us with more perpetrators of interest besides Beveren: a barber, a porcelain maker, Edwin, Banker Rothschild, General Eisensteck, the monstrous Geissler, the fellow traveler, Nutschke, the movie expert Erich, Major Ludenbroich, and the local farmers’ leader Kühlich, who committed suicide. Niebuhr’s life experiences in captivity are part of his apprenticeship. *Der Aufenthalt* provides a wide spectrum of behaviors and views. Kant is relentlessly thorough in his inclusion of all patterns of widely popular postwar denial and repression of the past among the Germans.

The characters of perpetrators in *Der Aufenthalt* mentioned above are seen through the eyes of the then prisoner Niebuhr. The present narrator Niebuhr often comments retrospectively. I will focus on Niebuhr’s spiritual growth later, but will first analyze the other perpetrators in the novel.¹⁷⁹ The porcelain maker Edwin is a staunch anti-Semite. He refers to Jews as the “krummbeinigen Söhne Zions” (*Aufenthalt* 40). His hatred toward Jews definitely surpasses his animosity toward Russians and Communists. He calls the soup in prison “Judenpisse” (Jews’ urine), and calls bugs “Zionstöchter”

(Zion's daughters). For him, the toilet stinks like a synagogue. He even calls crossword puzzles, a then popular entertainment in the prison, a Hebrew invention and claims that its first squares were painted on the wall in a ghetto with the feces of a rabbi (*Aufenthalt* 118). Because he keeps interrupting his fellow prisoners who are solving the crossword puzzles, one of them ridicules his racial origin by saying "Wenn du nicht gleich deine wasserpölnische Fresse hältst, du aufgenordeter Hiwi [implying that he is not a member of the Aryan race, but only an integrated Polish volunteer] (*Aufenthalt* 120). Edwin becomes so provoked that he destroys the puzzles. He in turn is murdered in a senseless brawl. Edwin is the one who always is waiting for his ticket home, but dies of others' prejudices that are similar to his own towards the Jews. He never gets the return ticket home he always expected (*Aufenthalt* 41).

Edwin's murder does not come as a surprise. He had been getting on the nerves of many of the German prisoners with his constant anti-Semitic remarks. Of course this is not to say that the others were free from anti-Semitism, but no one wanted to be reminded that they once shared the same views: "So mußte Edwin einfach eine böse Störung sein; er konnte uns mit seinem Geschrei wer weiß wen auf den Hals locken, und es waren in diesem Geschrei Töne, wie sie uns bekannter nicht sein konnten, weil wir sie selber einmal von uns gegeben hatten. Und daran mochten wir nicht erinnert sein" (*Aufenthalt* 119). Niebuhr and his inmates try their best to convince themselves and others that they unfairly wound up behind bars as the result of a peaceful and decent life. They hardly talk about war and politics, but if they do, they act as if they are just a group of men who have nothing to do with the history of the world, whether it be Polish history or German history; and pity themselves as though they were suffering a great injustice.

Life in jail with German war criminals gives Niebuhr a chance to learn about the obvious and subtle expressions of deep-rooted anti-Semitism. Inmates talk about the happiest moments in their lives. For example, Major Ludenbroich's happiest moment was when he finds out that his fiancée Fräulein Annedore Koren, with blond hair and blue eyes, is not Jewish: "Fräulein Koren ist von einem Geblüt, das arischer nicht zu denken wäre. –Ich habe meiner Frau die Sache später einmal erzählt, und es hat viel Spaß in unserem Haus gegeben" (*Aufenthalt* 337). Episodes like this point out the deeper impact of National Socialist anti-Semitic ideology. Anti-Semitism is thus portrayed as a more complex problem than decreed by the Marxist explanation privileging economics and class struggle.

A Frankfurt banker, who is close to Niebuhr, is the epitome of ambiguity and generalization regarding guilt and responsibility. When Niebuhr asks him if he participated in destroying Warsaw, he replies: "Gelobt sei Jesus Christus, nein. Dann wäre mir noch weniger wohl in diesem Zug" (*Aufenthalt* 144). Then Niebuhr says some of them must be there. The banker seems to be a decent person. Niebuhr considers him a friend and seems to trust his words. But it is still unclear whether what the banker said is true or not. In an imagined sight-seeing in Warsaw, the banker tells Niebuhr everyone will be so modest and nobody will declare proudly what he has destroyed "Es wird Streit geben, fürchte ich, umgekehrt wie früher. Früher hat jeder geschrien, er war es, der den Bomber vom Himmel holte und den Scharfschützen vom Schornstein, und jetzt werden sie einander wohl den Vortritt lassen" (*Aufenthalt* 145). Note that he excludes himself and uses the third person plural "sie." But when asked about his own "trophy," the banker becomes vague, "Schön blöde, mein Freund, aber werde doch nicht persönlich. Laß uns

lieber so allgemein wie möglich bleiben” (*Aufenthalt* 144). Although he shows disbelief when Niebuhr denies any wrongdoing, he himself will not admit anything either. He would rather keep the personal story private and only speak about the war in general terms. Although he shows sympathy for the victims, he seems to be repressing his own deeds in the unjust war. “Halts Maul, Niebuhr! Reite die Mauer nieder, zeige dich willig, wo es um Arbeit geht, aber zeige dich nicht willig, zeige dich nicht, wenn sie Schuld verteilen” (*Aufenthalt* 259-60).

Niebuhr’s insistence on his innocence puts him one step further from the truth. Although the other prisoners use less blunt terms to describe their killings, they at least admit the acts. Niebuhr firmly displays a “holier-than-thou” attitude toward other prisoners. In his conversation with the Frankfurt banker, Niebuhr declares that he has never killed anyone; he presents himself as innocent: “Schrei doch nicht, sagte ich, die denken, es hat dich, wenn du so schreist. —Mich könnten sie ruhig rumfahren; ich brauchte keinen Ort zu fürchten, ich habe keinen kaputt gemacht” (*Aufenthalt* 144). Under further questioning by the banker, Niebuhr admits that he probably wounded someone. Of course this is not entirely true. He fired shots at people and set a tank on fire. He most likely killed a Russian kitchen soldier. He even has a ready excuse for his admitted wounding of a person in war: it was “reine Kampfhandlung und auch noch im Weglaufen” (*Aufenthalt* 144).

Niebuhr implies that he is telling the truth while others might be lying and considers the undifferentiated treatment of all war prisoners by the Poles unjust. As the banker sarcastically points out, Niebuhr’s self-fashioning as an innocent German is unsustainable: “Ja, dann bist du natürlich eine Ausnahme, mein Freund, mit

Kampfhandlung und Weglaufen. Wir anderen müssen uns Willkür vorwerfen und blutige Angriffslust. Du bist sehr spaßig; was glaubst denn du, wie jeder hier sein Stückchen Krieg erklärt?” (*Aufenthalt* 144-5).

Ironically, Niebuhr’s pattern of denial is not unique, but very typical of German prisoners. The results of a yearlong interrogation of German prisoners demonstrate that almost none of them admitted doing anything wrong. They all intended to do good deeds. Even when they complied with bad commands, they did so only in order to do good things. They unanimously sound like decent human beings: Some hid Poles from fascists; some gave them warm jackets, warm soup, and cigarettes. They all seemed to be anti-fascists and good Samaritans. They all helped to their best ability. They all treated the Poles like friends, willingly or unwillingly (*Aufenthalt* 400).

The prisoners typically avoid talking in clear terms about war and killing. They routinely use euphemisms to mitigate the severity of their crimes. Niebuhr learns about the expressions popular among the prisoners also from the banker. When a person is killed, he or she becomes “Kleine Wolken über Jerusalem” (*Aufenthalt* 269). “Ich verpaßte ihm eine, und ab ging er. Sitzt nun auf einer kleinen Wolke überm Wolchow rechts” (*Aufenthalt* 269). In the hospital, instead of murder, the prisoners talk about “wem sie schon allen zu Verbänden verholffen hatten, zu Verbänden und zu Gräbern, wann, wo, wievielen und welche Art” (*Aufenthalt* 268). Of course nobody dares to mention murder, stabbing and shooting. A favorite euphemism for killing is that “Ich habe ihm eine verpaßt” (*Aufenthalt* 268). No doubt, the vague and mild terms must have helped the perpetrators feel less guilty about their brutal acts.

Geissler is the one who shakes up Niebuhr on a deeper level. In the common literary portrayal of the Nazi past there is a persistent tendency to demonize the perpetrator, as we have noted even in Kant's own 1972 novel *Das Impressum*. Geissler is an evil perpetrator. He describes the growing mountains of human ashes, and is indiscrete and plain when he talks about his own deeds. He is so convincing because nothing he says is hearsay. He talks about his expertise in procedures and technical processes. He looks the victims in the eye and stands by the fire and smells the powder that remained in spite of the burning flame (*Aufenthalt* 410). He admits his crimes and prays piously and loudly and impatiently for his salvation.

However, Niebuhr resists the temptation to classify Geissler as an *Unmensch*. In his new consciousness, he realizes that "Unmensch" is only a handy excuse. The label is a convenient device invented by the rest of the perpetrators to separate themselves from Geissler and other Geisslers. Niebuhr reflects as follows: "Ist Geissler erst ein Unmensch, kein Mensch mehr, kann er gleich auch mein Mitmensch nicht mehr sein, mein Landsmann, mein Kamerad, mein Gefährte—und ich kann alles dies ihm nicht sein, brauche es nicht zu sein" (*Aufenthalt* 479-80). If Geissler is deemed to be a monster, a non-human, then no one has to identify with him. Niebuhr realizes the hidden danger of demonizing war criminals and perpetrators. As painful as it is, he forces himself to accept the reality that he is inevitably related to Geissler: he is his "Landsmann," his "Kamerad" (*Aufenthalt* 479). Kant portrays Geissler as some one who did not come straight from hell to inflict pain on the Jews and other victims of the war. Geissler is one of them, one among many. This characterization of the perpetrator exemplarily illustrates the fact that

perpetrators, with or without blood on their hands, are average human beings, not some one-dimensionally demonic, pathological monsters.

Although Niebuhr realizes Geissler's complicity in the war crimes, he is not yet ready to admit his own. Believing in his own innocence, he acts arrogantly and calls everybody else a Nazi. Ironically, General Eisensteck who considers taking and shooting Polish hostages in war permissible and "agreed upon" ("ausgemacht") (*Aufenthalt* 412-3), is the one who enlightens Niebuhr on his role in the war as comparable to a cog in the machine without which the war could not have taken place. When Niebuhr throws the word "Nazi" around to upset others, the general speaks softly to him:

Nein, laß nur Grenadier, zweie, das ist schon erheblich. Ich sage dir, ohne dich wäre es nicht gegangen... Ohne die beiden Abschußringe an deinem Gewehrlauf wäre gar nichts gegangen; die Post nicht, die Bahn nicht, die Gasanstalt nicht, die Tulpenzucht nicht, Herr Rudloff nicht, ich nicht, das Ghetto nicht und Treblinka nicht – schön wären wir dagestanden ohne dich; da willst du uns jetzt verlassen? (*Aufenthalt* 456)

Gently, the General reminds Niebuhr that without ordinary men like himself nothing could have been accomplished. Without his weapon, the post office would not have functioned, neither would have the train system. The existence of soldiers, who did not commit extraordinary mass killings but nonetheless participated in killing, ensured the success of the gas chamber and the ghetto.

The general's remarks are reminiscent of Hannah Arendt's thesis on the "banality of evil" in her study on the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem. Arendt investigated the "banality of evil" to rebut the notion that Eichmann was the executor of some preordained destiny of anti-Semitism. For Arendt, as well as for Kant, this notion removes the crimes from their political and historical context and contributes to the characterization of Jewish history as a narrative of persecution, of Gentiles' trans-historical hatred of the Jews. This

explanation that both Arendt and Kant criticize is ideologically motivated and identifies Zionism and Israeli nationalism as the only options for Jewish survival in modernity.

Arendt objects to this strategic demonization of Eichmann for political purposes. She argues that the modern state provided structures for functionaries to commit evil without considering themselves morally corrupt. Ordinary citizens remaining silent or simply doing their job without particular hostility on their part caused the deaths of millions.¹⁸⁰

Arendt's analysis takes away a convenient excuse for those who are eager to exonerate themselves of any responsibilities, like Niebuhr.

Niebuhr did not yet realize that he, too, is a cog in the gigantic Nazi war machine, without which nothing would have gone so smoothly. The general is speaking as an insider and his argument is convincing. Since everyone is involved in the system, everyone is guilty. We must remember that the general is speaking inside a prison cell, among war criminals. But what would he say if we subjected him to a real trial? I think we can almost count on him to defend himself using precisely the same arguments: since no one is consciously committing a specific crime, no one should be charged with crimes or moral bankruptcy. While "collective denial" is made possible by the excuse that everyone is only a cog in the machine, "collective guilt" is a highly tricky and abstract concept that tends to serve as yet another tool to obscure historical facts and excuse oneself of one's concrete moral failings. Niebuhr protests the general's accusation in his imagined conversation with his mother by insisting that he cannot be a helper or an accomplice for that matter, because he did not even know what crimes he has committed. This is the typical reaction of "a cog in the machine" that claims innocence because of his or her lack of insights into the bigger picture.

In *Der Aufenthalt*, Kant treats a rather wide range of victims: not only Jews, but also Poles. He painted a rather inclusive picture of the devastation of the Nazi war. Niebuhr finally confronts the historical reality of the Holocaust, a notion that he had heretofore steadfastly denied. While Niebuhr demolishes one of the houses in Warsaw that the Germans bombed, he recovers a small box lid from the ruins that is engraved with the name Jadwiga Sierp. When the interpreter Eugeniusz sees Niebuhr holding that box lid, he cautions Niebuhr against the Polish authorities' detecting the lid in his possession: "...Jadwiga Sierp ist im Polnischen etwas ganz anderes, etwas sehr anderes, wenn Sie verstehen, wovon ich rede" (*Aufenthalt* 284). The interpreter confides to Niebuhr that Jadwiga Sierp must by now be one of the small clouds over Jerusalem (*Aufenthalt* 284).

Der Aufenthalt does not only describe Jewish suffering. Hermann Kant places much weight on Polish suffering as well. Considering that over seventy percent of WWII was fought on the Eastern front, it seems appropriate to include Polish suffering in this novel. Already in *Das Impressum*, Jewish suffering, German suffering and Polish suffering are placed side by side. Persecuted because of his standing up for a Jew, Groth's father, a German, shot himself under the tree on which a Pole was hanged because of a love-affair with a German girl.¹⁸¹

In his dialogue with the Polish lieutenant, on a motor trip through war-ravaged Warsaw, Niebuhr realizes the dimensions and ramifications of German involvement in Poland.¹⁸² The Polish lieutenant showed controlled irony, the intent being to confront Niebuhr indirectly with the brutal legacy of the German occupation and elicit from him responses in a manner that would not violate the formal judicial inquiry. When

commenting on the massive physical devastation of Warsaw, the Polish lieutenant observes ironically: "...das habt ihr gründlich gemacht.... Die Deutschen sind gründlich" (*Aufenthalt* 410); later when pointing out that only eleven Polish hostages were shot near the city wall, the Polish lieutenant again comments ironically: "Nur elf, hier seid ihr eilig gewesen" (*Aufenthalt* 428). In spite of the lieutenant's high degree of self-control, the unspeakable brutality of the war coupled with Niebuhr's continuous profession of innocence, leads him to exasperation and barely controllable rage. The use of irony as a tool for uncovering the truth is manifest most overtly when the Polish lieutenant comments upon German cultural chauvinism and acts of human degradation against the Polish people: "Polen müssen von Gehweg. Polen müssen Kennzeichen an Jacke haben. Polen müssen zur Arbeit in fremdes Land. Polen müssen erschossen werden" (*Aufenthalt* 423). Later when pointing out that Germans used Polish children as human shields for their tanks, the Polish lieutenant begins to choke after Niebuhr denies having witnessed the event. His only response is, "Halte deine blutige Fresse" (*Aufenthalt* 428).

Considering the enormity of the Nazi crimes, the challenge of trying to face them is not easily fathomed. Nevertheless, as we will see later, Kant provides us with a soul-searching tour in the guise of a complex psychological and emotional journey of a young soldier. As I have shown, Kant gives a forceful portrayal of perpetrators and a courageous and honest confrontation with victims in *Der Aufenthalt*, which is his foremost contribution to anti-fascist literature.

4. Niebuhr's Apprenticeship: Enlightening Moments

Plenty of textual evidence supports the argument that Niebuhr's de-nazification is a thorough and successful one, despite my comments so far. However, the narrator's

comments assure us of a successful conversion many times. In addition, my analysis below will also demonstrate the effective treatment of Nazism in many ways. Niebuhr's transformation is anything but quick and easy. There are a number of sincere and enlightening moments in the novel that are convincing of his conversion.

The major stumbling block in Niebuhr's confrontation with the past is his inwardness, his avoidance of reality, and non-engagement with external affairs. He is so preoccupied with his own thoughts and feelings that he is not able to perceive anyone else's pain and suffering. In trying to escape capture by the Russians, he runs fast. While he is running, all he can think of is his perfect hometown, a safe place with its "Samen- und Getreidehandlungen, Sauerkohlfabriken und Krabbenküchen, einer Brauerei und einem Pferdemarkt" (*Aufenthalt* 14). In his imagination, he is running toward his Marne; back to his safe haven: "Ich wollte zurück in den Schutz von meiner Mutter Küche" (*Aufenthalt* 14).

When he is desperate in his captivity, he romanticizes the past and his own hometown Marne. He talks to the inmates about the movie theater and the ice cream parlor. He brags about the culinary specialties of his hometown:

Bei uns [wurde—H.W.] sonntags das beste Gulasch gekocht, was es je auf der Welt gegeben hat. Mit Makkaroni, achhörauf, durch die man die Soße schlürfen konnte, achhörauf, und die Tomatenhaut hatte sich zu kleinen Tütchen gerollt, achhörauf, und der Speck war etwas mehr als glasig, achhörauf, und die Gurkenwürfel, achhöraufhöraufhörauf. (*Aufenthalt* 35)

In the desperation of captivity, all he can talk about is how delicious his hometown's goulash and macaroni taste and how good the tomato sauce and diced cucumber look. In his cold cell, "das kalte Winterloch," he longs for better food in a better country: The Germany of his childhood (*Aufenthalt* 34). When hauling the cabbages in the bitter cold

exhausts him, he remembers a similar story from his past that also takes place in the icy cold winter at home, but it has a romantic nature, since he gets to see the neckline of a beautiful girl. At the end of that story, warmth and an ego-boost are awaiting as his reward (*Aufenthalt* 56). It is obvious that Niebuhr romanticizes the remembered past, and wishes the present could in the end reward the tested hero. At this early stage, Niebuhr fails to perceive the reality of war and suffering. He is unable to locate his personal fate within broader historical context. His engagement with the past is totally apolitical.

An expansion of Niebuhr's horizon is the prerequisite for a new consciousness. He has to relinquish self-pity and self-centeredness in order to be able to sympathize and identify with victims and take a critical look at his own parents, his own hometown and eventually his own country. The change from inwardness to an interest in others is the key to Niebuhr's transformation. Niebuhr learns to get beyond his solipsism and complaints, and begins to look around and face the hard reality openly. He stops separating himself from his environment and begins to learn to look at things from others' perspectives, which is the essential part of this learning process. He is able to undergo this transformation also because he has a primitive instinct of justice in him:

Ich bestehe auch auf dem: Es ist schon öfter ein Flackern in mir gewesen, ein Flackern zu einem Zweifel hin, ob es denn richtig sei, mich gänzlich mit dem Jammer über mich selbst auszufüllen. Ich wußte von einigen stockenden Ansätzen, aber ich wußte auch, wie schnell ich mich von meinen Gedanken wendete, wenn sie mir die Gewißheit nehmen wollten, größeres Unrecht als mir sei noch nie einem Menschen geschehen. (*Aufenthalt* 270)

It is this primitive sense of justice that awakens his empathy. He starts to have doubts about his own way of relating to the world and his selfishness. However, he does not follow through. He still cannot imagine that other people could have suffered a greater

injustice than he. As soon as he relinquishes his self-pity, he is able to identify with the victims for the first time:

So, Mark Niebuhr, und nun mal ohne Gedankenfeigheit: Hier hat einmal ein Haus gestanden, in dem hat eine Jadwiga Sierp gewohnt. Hat eine Großmutter gehabt, die hieß auch Sierp und mit Vornamen...Ach, das ist doch nicht...Doch, das ist...Großmütter haben Vornamen, meistens sind es rührende oder auch komische, so sehr schon verklungene, aber auch sie machen den Menschen aus. Mark Niebuhrs Großmütter hießen Auguste und Friedrike, und das ordnet sie ein in eine Zeit, und damit Jadwigas Großmutter, die mit dem Griffelkasten, nicht zeitlos wird und gesichtslos, muß sie einen Namen haben. (*Aufenthalt* 270)

In Niebuhr's mind's eye, he is able to see a little girl named Jadwiga Sierp who once lived in the raided house. She has grandmothers who have names just like his own grandmothers do. He populates the house with the real people, not nameless, faceless creatures. For Niebuhr, this is an enlightening moment, for he is finally humanizing the victims.

In the final chapters of the novel, Niebuhr does not need his childhood and youth memories to the same extent as before. He ceases to be merely an object, a reservoir for memories of the past. Instead, he rebels against the old mode of operation. He begins to operate independently with the pieces and bits of memory and the proverbs of his parents at home. He also learns to look at his own mother and father critically. At one time, he imagines his own mother in the place of the Polish supervisor: "Und als ich versuchte, mir meine Mutter auf den Aufsichtsstuhl zu denken. Als ich mich also an unerhörten Gleichungen versuchte. Als ich also begann, mit den Augen meiner Mutter vom Aufsichtsstuhl zu sehen. Als ich also begann, mit polnischen Augen auf mich zu sehen" (*Aufenthalt* 439). At this moment he liberates himself from all the homesick summoning of the past, and he starts to see himself and his parents through the eyes of others, namely the Polish victims.

The commenting narrator makes it strikingly clear that this is a huge step in Niebuhr's development. This moment plays an important role in the story and is reflected in the narrative structure: Niebuhr starts to abandon his passive instrumentalization of the past in order to make place for active processing of the past experiences. To the same extent, Niebuhr starts to remember differently. His experience in captivity is now re-evaluated in repeated associations; an independent space of memory is forged. His memory finally finds an anchor and a reference point in humanization of the victims and critical examination of his own countrymen. This change in his ways of remembering leads to his change of perspectives regarding the past, as I will show below.

Once Niebuhr starts to look at his past critically, his memories provide a glimpse of daily life in the Third Reich, especially in the final chapters. Niebuhr remembers episodes in the past that make sense to him more than they did ever before. His parents had anti-fascist tendencies, but they were also subjected to fascist anti-Communist propaganda:

Ich würde von meinen Eltern sehr gern denken, sie seien in allem klug und freundlich und anständig gewesen, aber sie sind es kaum immer gewesen. Sie waren für die Nazis nicht zu haben, aber für die wenigen, die gegen die Nazis waren, waren sie auch nicht zu haben. Sie nahmen Onkel Jonnie mehr oder weniger hin, und wenn sie dazugekommen wären, wie er in der Waschküche eine Bombe baute, wären sie in den Garten gegangen und hätten nichts gewußt, und von ihnen hätte niemand etwas erfahren. Aber vorher hätten sie versucht, Onkel Jonnie den Wecker und das Dynamit wegzunehmen und ihn aus der Waschküche zu jagen. (*Aufenthalt* 443)

He realizes that his mother was not always nice and friendly to everyone. The more clearly Niebuhr remembers the past, the more his mother stopped being merely a source of comfort. He realizes that she had no sympathy for the Poles working in town. For her, the Poles were just cheap labor and represented nothing more than other tools such as

shovels and carts. (*Aufenthalt* 440). She also looked down on the Poles and the Jews: “Sie sprach auch von polnischer Wirtschaft und Judenschule...” (*Aufenthalt* 442). These pejorative terms revealed his mother’s prejudice: “polnische Wirtschaft” was a usual German expression for economic disarray, while “Judenschule” was the common German phrase for synagogue in medieval times, signifying a disorderly crowd. When no one is allowed to shop at a Jewish store, and the Jewish shop in Altona is forced to close, Niebuhr’s mother only feels sorry for no longer being able to shop at that store, whose prices were a lot less expensive than others in town. Niebuhr remembers never having heard her commiserate with the Jewish owners of the store or care about their fates.

Other repressed memories emerge to the surface. Niebuhr remembers a long forgotten Jewish schoolmate named Bernie, when he starts to come to terms with the anti-Semitism of his own hometown. His hometown is Marne in Ditmarschen. Niebuhr remembers that people blamed the “Viehjuden” (“brute Jews”) for any mishaps in Germany. Niebuhr’s classmate Bernie whom his mother called the “Judenbengel” (rascal Jew) “disappeared” along with his family long before 1938. In autumn 1938, a local leader sent his boss in Kiel a telegram in a joking manner: “Ausschreitungen des Volkszorns gegen Juden fanden allerdings in Marne nicht statt, denn es waren keine Juden vorhanden” (*Aufenthalt* 443). According to this telegram, the riot against Jews did not take place because there were no Jews in Marne. Before, there had been Jews in town. However, the town people, including Niebuhr’s own parents, were totally indifferent to the fate of Jews such as Bernie and his family. They acted as if the Jews had never existed in their part of the country. Previously, Niebuhr always thought his family would have never participated in the anti-Semitic movement; but since Bernie

came to his memory, he is no longer certain of this. He also grows uncertain about how his own mother would treat a Polish prisoner in his position if she had been his supervisor (*Aufenthalt* 443).

In remembering the training camp for Hitler youth, Niebuhr comes to understand what is lying underneath his compliance with the authorities. The loyalty is not explained as blind submission to the existing rules:

Treue, das war nicht: blöde den Kopf hinhalten, weil es einmal so verabredet war; Treue ging nach Volkers Weise: Man wußte den Untergang und litt an diesem Wissen und machte eine Musik darauf. ...der Tod des einen oder des anderen war unausweichlich, und so sang man vorher noch ein Lied, das war so süß und war so bitter. (*Aufenthalt* 72)

Volker the minstrel, a central figure in the German national epic, the *Nibelungenlied*, is the model for the young Niebuhr. Volker is a martial poet who combines martial prowess with musicality. This characterization makes him particularly attractive to the Romantics and their successors. In the face of the looming death and destruction, one does little to stop them. One suffers from the doom, yet also indulges in it in a sadomasochistic way. The promotion of this tale encourages people to neglect and endure their inner conflict. The assumption is that it makes life under hateful and terrible circumstances seem livable:

Daß ich so litt und doch mein Amt versah, daß mir das Herz bebte und daß ich doch mit den Hacken schlug, daß ich mich mit Tränen in den Augenwinkeln fort vom Lager sehnte und doch sein Tor bewachte – das gab dem Leid auf seltsame Weise etwas bei, das ich nur darum nicht Lust zu nennen wagte, weil es mir ungeheuerlich vorgekommen wäre, bei so quälendem Unglück von Lust zu reden. (*Aufenthalt* 71-72)

Stories borrowed from the past are used as sentimental self-help: “[Ich] lieb mir des Spielmanns Haltung, schauderte vor meinem Los, hatte die Furcht im Hals und war doch der getreue Wächter über den Schlaf der getreuen und etwas stumpferen Gefährten in

Etzels Burg an der jauchigen Ostsee” (*Aufenthalt* 72). Again, acquiescence by ordinary citizens seemed to be widespread. Just like the young Niebuhr, too many people accepted Nazi ideology passively, without questioning its validity and content.

In Niebuhr’s apprenticeship, help comes from all walks of life: the Russian doctor, Jadwiga Sierp, the Berlin barber, the Frankfurt banker, the Polish lieutenant, the hangman Geissler, and General Eisensteck all contributed to Niebuhr’s coming to terms with his German past and his own past. In spite of his fallbacks and resistances that are so typical of people with his background, he seems to gain the ability to start fresh with a new perspective. He displays his final realization of guilt and responsibility in the following laconic poem:

Nicht gefragt
Mitgejagt
Mitgerast
Mitgegast
Mitgeascht
Nun gehascht
Über...? (*Aufenthalt* 480)

The poem sums up Niebuhr’s reflection of his role in the fascist war. Niebuhr finally seems to realize that he, among many other soldiers and citizens, does not question the legitimacy of the war. Without protest he becomes a fellow traveler. He is theoretically responsible for all hideous war crimes. It takes a long time and a lot of work for Niebuhr to conceptualize this. Niebuhr seems to have made the transition from the indignant, “da ich doch Mark Niebuhr war,” to the understanding and apologetic, “daß ich ja Mark Niebuhr war” (*Aufenthalt* 480), as his consciousness evolves from denial to acceptance of his guilt and responsibility.

With such forceful, overwhelming textual evidence, one is understandably tempted to assume a successful conversion of Niebuhr. The narrator has inserted comments that guide the reader to read the story this way. Both the author and the narrator claim the changeability of a person. The motto that Kant placed before the start of the novel should represent his view of changeability of a person:

So bildet sich der Mensch
Indem er ja sagt, indem er nein sagt
Indem er schlägt, indem er geschlagen wird
Indem er sich hier gesellt, indem er sich dort gesellt
So bildet sich der Mensch, indem er sich ändert
Und so entsteht sein Bild in uns
Indem er uns gleicht und indem er uns nicht gleicht¹⁸³

The Brecht quote directly associates the novel *Der Aufenthalt* with the traditional *Bildungsroman*, which is based on the understanding of the world and human behavior. This motto seems to situate Kant's novels in traditional realist categories that concentrate on a Cartesian tradition of dualism: the individual and the world, subject and object, et cetera. The narrator's belief in human capability for change has an affinity with Bertolt Brecht's view: humans are not final products in any way. They change according to new situations.

Obviously, the narrator of the novel shares the same view on malleability of humans as the author, as shown in the following quote: "Wenn man älter geworden ist, weiß man, wieviel Möglichkeiten man hatte, wie viele man ausließ und aus wie wenigen man etwas machte. Man ahnt, dass einiges Glück zu vermuten ist, wenn man kein Mörder geworden war. Aber so dumm und jung wie ich, da hält man die Menschenrollen noch für gültig verteilt" (*Aufenthalt* 256). Niebuhr, as the narrator, believes that these old

patterns and codes can and need to be changed in order to suit the new concrete historical situations.

The narrator makes us believe that “Es ist so viel möglich, ein Bestimmter ändert sich in einer bestimmten Weise und bleibt der Bestimmte lange Zeit, und eines Tages ist er ein anderer Bestimmter, das kann vorkommen. Ihr sollt nur nicht einem Gesicht nachjagen, einem das alles von Anfang an in sich hat und nur seine Karten ausspielt, je nach Gelegenheit” (*Aufenthalt* 527). The narrator Niebuhr liberally disperses reassuring comments from his present perspective throughout the novel, giving the illusion that in the end the Niebuhr of the present is a changed man. Slowly but surely, progress, however small, seems to take place: “Es sind mir aus den fallenden Äpfeln und den tanzenden Kesseldecken keine weltbewegenden Gesetze geworden, nur ein wenig wägendes Verhalten” (*Aufenthalt* 440). On the surface, Kant seems to provide the reader with a model of a soldier’s transformation that is not as superficial and artificial as often seen in other socialist realist texts, yet perfectly acceptable for the official cultural discourse of the GDR. Niebuhr’s consciousness seems to evolve from complete denial of any guilt and responsibility to willing acceptance. However, when we examine Kant’s treatment of Niebuhr’s apprenticeship more attentively, a deep, so far unacknowledged complexity emerges. Even though Niebuhr does gain a few glimpses of humanity in his apprenticeship, his transformation is incomplete and problematic.

5. Problematization of Niebuhr’s Transformation: Between Denial and Acceptance of Guilt and Responsibility

After reading the whole novel, the reader is able to crystallize the major “patterns,” or “modes” according to which the young Niebuhr operates. From the analysis

in the previous sections, one can distill these formulas that make up the young Niebuhr: obedience, cowardice, escapism, stubbornness, self-absorption, self-flattery, and self-centeredness. Other “patterns” Niebuhr shares with his countrymen are anti-Semitism, indifference toward Jewish sufferings, denial and repression of guilt and responsibility regarding the disgraceful past. The ultimate questions to ask are then: is the later Niebuhr, in the figure of the narrator, really a changed man? Did the hero pass the challenge and overcome his old “patterns”? Did the narrator design the narrative to entertain the reader and satisfy his or her psychological needs in the same way as the Niebuhr designed his crossword puzzles for his fellow prisoners to entertain and forget what they had done? Did Niebuhr just hurl back any insights that he gained in his apprenticeship and fall back on his old self again, just as he does so frequently in the course of the novel?

Towards the end of the novel, however, one slowly comes to realize that the narrator seems to have been making a deliberate attempt to deceive the reader—even though the novel only hints at the unreliability of the narrator. The delayed discovery of an unreliable narrator forces the reader to significantly reconsider the narrator’s point of view from which he or she had been experiencing the story. The narrator’s ambiguity enables the reader to interpret the story in different ways.

The fact that the narrator liberally disperses reassuring comments from his present perspective throughout the novel is worth examining. Comments of generous admission of prejudices, guilt and responsibilities occur all over the first four hundred pages (16, 89, 98, 143, 273, just to name a few typical examples).¹⁸⁴ At first sight, they seem to be the analytical insights that define the essence of the novel, but as the reader advances, the narratorial tone switches way too swiftly to that of the young Niebuhr. The very element

that the narrator wants to criticize in the first place becomes the dominant factor and the analytical insights fade into the background just as swiftly as they appear.

Except for about the last one hundred pages of this novel of over five hundred pages, it is a narrative of striking prejudices, denial, repression of guilt and responsibility. What is noteworthy is that after every self-criticism, self-deprecation, even self-flagellation, follows even more obvious self-denial, self-deception, even self-congratulation. Only in the last hundred pages or so, Niebuhr's conscience and historical consciousness appear to awaken. This narrative technique is highly untypical of the transformation from Nazism to socialism in the socialist realist literary tradition. By resisting a simple, linear transformation of Niebuhr, Kant noticeably deviates from the socialist realist precepts.

In *Der Aufenthalt*, Kant demonstrates the long and arduous process of transformation of the protagonist. Niebuhr's insights come at an excruciatingly slow pace. There is no quick fix, no magical transformation. He falls back to his old ways of thinking and behaving many times. The old patterns from his past are very hard to break. First he denies the past obstinately, and then gains some insights into it, and then he loses them again. He goes one step forward and two steps backward. This frustrates the reader and causes us to want to give up on Niebuhr: this man is going to deny his guilt and responsibility and even the historical facts and insist on his innocence to the last. A telling example is offered in the novel. In his childhood and youth at home, he has never eaten potatoes with peels. But now he eats the peels with great joy. From this instance he concludes that habits are formed and abandoned quickly according to the circumstances: "Ich habe darüber nachgedacht und gefunden, daß Gewohnheiten nicht so haltbar sind,

wie man sagt. Sie zerfallen fast so rasch wie die Bedingungen, unter denen sie entstanden sind” (*Aufenthalt* 27). Niebuhr’s statement raises the suspicion that he might have fallen back to his old self as time went by and as circumstances changed since his captivity. This suspicion is supported by my later discovery that Niebuhr’s habits gained from childhood and youth and of prejudices ingrained from education and immediate environment are not as easy to get rid of as Niebuhr imagined. I will come back to this claim later.

Niebuhr feels strange when a Jewish woman doctor calls him a fascist. He has spent much time and made enormous efforts to make it clear that he has nothing to do with fascism: “nicht wahr, die Parteimenschen in Italien, dem Mussolini seine, die waren Faschisten, aber ich war kein Italiener und ein Parteimensch war ich auch nicht” (*Aufenthalt* 89). Even though his instinct tells him the Russian doctor is right, and he feels enlightened by her different ways of saying “Deutscher,” he does not want to admit that she might be right and decides to hide behind his own blindness and prejudices: “...So ließ ich mich überhaupt nicht auf ihre Urteile ein, wenn sie mich auf eine Weise betrafen, die politisch war. Schließlich handelte es sich hier um eine, ja, in der Tat, um eine russisch-jüdische Bolschewistin, und wie kann ich denn dazu, mich ausgerechnet von so einer mit Namen versehen zu lassen?” (*Aufenthalt* 91). Niebuhr dismisses the Russian doctor’s political judgments, because he has only contempt for a Russian-Jewish Bolshevik. His stubbornness prevents him from being open-minded.

He criticizes the Poles for being too intolerant because they refuse to release German war prisoners. He complains indignantly:

...Was wollen denn die von uns? Wie führen sich die nur auf, und doch nicht etwa wegen uns? Waren wir nicht die fröhlichen Sänger von Pulawy, waren wir

nicht Pulawys lustige Obstpflücker und Sandschipper, waren wir nicht die fleißigen Heintzelmännchen vom Weichselstrand, hatten wir uns nicht auf glitschige Stege gewagt und auf brandige Mauern und auch an wartende Minen, hatten wir es fehlen lassen an Fleiß und Einfallskraft und gutem Willen, hatten wir nicht ganz so getan, als gehörte dieses Land uns und als wollten wir es für uns wieder in Ordnung bringen? (*Aufenthalt* 142)

For Niebuhr, the Poles seem to be over-reacting. He agonizes over the question: What do they want from us? He thinks the German prisoners have worked hard enough and showed sufficient good will. According to Niebuhr, the Germans tried to re-build Poland as if it were their own country. He accuses the Poles of being vindictive:

Ja, wir wußten schon, wir waren mit dem Krieg hierhergekommen, und wer Schärfe wollte, konnte auch sagen: der Krieg mit uns, aber das war doch längst vorbei, das war schon fünf Monate vorbei, beinahe ein halbes Jahr lag das zurück, ein halbes Arbeitsjahr, und das Gras dieses Sommers war schon wieder verdorrt, da mußte man uns doch nicht den alten Krieg noch einmal neu erklären. Wir hatten nun genug vom Pulver gerochen, da mochten wir die Maschinengewehre nicht mehr; uns war schon heimgezahlt worden, und also waren unsere Taschen leer; bereitwilliger als uns gab es keinen. (*Aufenthalt* 142)

So far, Niebuhr shows no sign of recognizing the magnitude of the trauma that the Germans have inflicted on the Poles. He thinks by working half of a year in postwar Poland, the German prisoners have compensated their wrongs more than enough. For him, the war is already old news after only six months.

Wrongfully accused of killing the daughter of a Polish woman, Niebuhr is outraged as if the greatest injustice happened to him. He keeps repeating the Kafkaesque motive (as shown in *Der Prozeß*): “Erst die Beschuldigung, Herr Rektor, erst man mal die Beschuldigung!” (*Aufenthalt* 198). A while later, he continues: “Ich habe diese Stadt nicht angezündet, Herr Rektor, ich bin nie in Lublin gewesen, Herr Prokurator. Erst mal, Herr Prokurektor, erst man mal die Beschuldigung” (*Aufenthalt* 260). And Niebuhr complains on and on:

Kriegsgefangener. Kriegsverbrecher. Morderca. Ein Mörder aus Lublin. Aber wenn einer nicht in Lublin gewesen ist, kann er kein Mörder in Lublin gewesen sein. Und wenn er ein Kriegsverbrecher sein soll, weil er ein Mörder in Lublin gewesen sein soll, und er ist kein Mörder in Lublin gewesen, weil er gar nicht in Lublin gewesen ist, dann ist er auch kein Kriegsverbrecher. (*Aufenthalt* 313)

Niebuhr cannot get away from his belief in his innocence and invests much energy in feeling indignation and self-pity. He portrays himself as an empathetic and sympathetic human being incapable of murdering any one, despite the fact that he did fire shots at the Russians during his short stay in the army. According to Niebuhr, he cannot possibly commit murder; he is not even capable of suicide. So much so that he could not see a pig die and was afraid of the cemetery. He closed his eyes when a hangman lifted his axe on the movie screen. He dreaded blood and always obeyed laws (*Aufenthalt* 240). On one occasion he even exhibits a smug and self-congratulatory attitude toward the past because his youth prevented his participation in destroying Warsaw. He expresses pride in the fact that he only had to tear down the ruins of the wall and did not have to destroy the houses in the first place (*Aufenthalt* 259). Niebuhr later claims that he is Pland only because he obeys the German laws and follows the army's orders (*Aufenthalt* 259).

Niebuhr discovers that Sierp possessed a box that was similar to his, as I mentioned earlier. In his mind's eye, he sees that she might have a grandmother who is similar to his. The little girl's life might have a beginning that is similar to his. These discoveries help him overcome his own selfishness and reevaluate his own past, and show more understanding for the fate of that Jewish girl Sierp. However, Niebuhr's positive reaction does not last long before he relapses back into his original state of mind:

...Ich wußte nur: Ob es im ersten Herbst geschehen war oder im letzten, das Feuer hatten wir gelegt. Und was verbrannt war, hatten wir verbrannt. Und wer gestorben war, der war von unserer Hand gestorben. Nur, wenn jemand von

jemandes Hand stirbt, spricht man nicht von Sterben. Wer jemanden von seiner Hand sterben läßt, heißt Mörder. Außer es ist Krieg, dann heißt er nicht Mörder.

Es ist aber Krieg gewesen, und ich bin Soldat gewesen. Für einen Augenblick des Krieges nur.

Ich war nicht in Lublin. *Ich kenne keine Jadwiga*. Dies ist die erste Mauer, die ich niedermache. (*Aufenthalt* 276, my emphasis)

Here, Kant shows how fickle Niebuhr's transformation is. Right after he starts to feel the pain of the victims, he sets out to distance himself from the victims and begins to rationalize the loss of human lives in war. Consequently, he relegates Jadwiga Sierp back to anonymity.

When he learns that he is locked up in a prison for war criminals, he cannot understand why: "Ich war keins von denen, und Kriegsverbrecher war ich auch nicht. Ich war kein Verbrecher, ich war Gefangener. Kriegsgefangener. Was sollte jetzt Kriegsverbrecher?" (*Aufenthalt* 306). Before he has close encounters with war criminals, Niebuhr looks at the war with a traditional view: he romanticizes war and does not admit that there are war criminals; only prisoners of war.¹⁸⁵ He uses this line of argument to justify the death of Jadwiga Sierp as well earlier in the novel (*Aufenthalt* 27). Niebuhr distances himself from the officers and generals in the prison camp. On the one hand, the distance is genuinely based on his working class upbringing, his childhood experiences of being called "Proletenarsch," and the influences of his Communist uncle, Jonnie. On the other, Niebuhr is instrumentalizing the class issue to exonerate himself from his war involvement (*Aufenthalt* 310-11). He claims that he pays attention so that he will not be influenced by the worldviews of the war criminals, especially those of officers and generals. But he does share many of their arguments without being aware of this fact. In his novel, Kant provides us with a chilling version of Holocaust denial, over twenty years before the 1998 debate over the "Holocaust revisionism," as its supporters prefer to

call it. The debate was sparked when a British historian, David Irving, launched an unsuccessful lawsuit against Deborah Lipstadt and her publisher Penguin Books.¹⁸⁶ Irving sued Lipstadt and her publisher for libel in a British court after she characterized some of his writings and public statements as Holocaust denial in her book *Denying the Holocaust*. This egregious denial of the Holocaust was represented even more recently by the hard-line Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.¹⁸⁷ Readers have a literary encounter with this line of thinking by reading *Der Aufenthalt*.

Niebuhr contends that it does not help to bring him into connection with Auschwitz because he does not even know whether it is the name of a place or a person. He denies that Germans are guilty of such inhumanity: “Grausamkeit, gewiß, es gibt Grausamkeit, aber es gibt auch die Grenzen der menschlichen Grausamkeit. Kannibalismus, das ist Afrika, aber doch nicht in Hannover” (*Aufenthalt* 323-4). Of course Niebuhr is not aware how racist these statements are. He considers the civilized Germans incapable of brutality and only Africans capable of cannibalism. He accuses the Poles of being vengeful and fabricating the death camp stories in order to justify the “abuse” of German prisoners. He claims that not the Germans, but the English invented camps. He justifies the camps by saying that:

Wenn man seine Gefangenen nicht unterbringen kann, kann man sie nur noch umbringen. Wir haben sie untergebracht. Oder hätten wir sie herumstreunen lassen sollen? Jeder sieht zu, wo er ein Dach über den Kopf kriegt, ja? Jeder kümmert sich selbst, daß er was in den Bauch kriegt, ja? Ist doch einfach Unsinn. Wer soll denn einen Krieg führen, wenn das Hinterland voll ist von unversorgten Gefangenen? (*Aufenthalt* 324)

Niebuhr argues that one can either kill or lock up the prisoners. Germans simply locked them up. On this note, he implies that the Germans were rather merciful. Then, he appeals to healthy “Menschenverstand” to ridicule the “alleged” elimination camps:

Hätten wir die Leute erst einsperren müssen, wenn wir sie vernichten wollten? Hätten wir uns die Mühe gemacht, Zäune gezogen, Latrinen ausgehoben, Baracken aufgestellt, wenn wir die Brüder doch nur unter die Erde bringen wollten? Also, Herschaften, die Sieger sind immer im Recht, aber deshalb muß man doch nicht gleich die Vernunft abschaffen. Und Vernichtungslager erfinden, Auschwitz und wer weiß was noch.¹⁸⁸

Niebuhr denies the existence of Auschwitz and considers it a Polish fabrication. Calling upon common sense, he claims that the Germans would not have bothered to build concentration camps if they wanted to kill the Jews in the end. He thinks someone just made Auschwitz and all of the other horrible things up.

Two-thirds into the novel, Niebuhr does not change much in spite of a couple of enlightening moments along the way. When the prisoners are retelling the happiest moments in their life, Niebuhr still considers himself an innocent lamb among wolves and hyenas by declaring that his best moment still lies ahead of him when he leaves this prison (*Aufenthalt* 343). Why is it so hard for him to change? The answer to this question lies in Niebuhr's relationship with his past in particular and Germany's past in general.

Even though Niebuhr gains insights along the way, as I have shown, his vague awareness of his connection with the war and the Holocaust is not enough to keep him strong. He keeps reverting to the old self. He has to see with his own eyes what the Germans did and the horror they caused. Then the flood of his thoughts throws him back to the images of the past and the language play that makes his transformation impossible and which is designed to make him forget the psychological shock. For example, the Zarah-Leander-films are only summoned up to decrease the sharpness of his perception. For Niebuhr, past events always have more meaning attached to them.

For the same reason, the reader has difficulty reading them as a snapshot of the "normal" life in the Third Reich, especially set against the extreme background of the

hero's captivity. Mostly they are just "Erzählschnörkel" (narrative curlicues) (*Aufenthalt* 114). Even when a current event activates and mobilizes the already existing social experiences that are suppressed in the past, he tends to use them for self-exoneration: The officers remind him of his uncle's proletarian proverbs. An emergency alliance proposed by officers is rejected because of his memory of a humiliating childhood experience with "Herrensöhnchen," the upper class kids. These social experiences are real; however, Niebuhr remembers them only to establish his own identity as an innocent soldier coming from a working class family.

As I have shown earlier, a major stumbling block for Niebuhr is his self-absorbed mentality. Like a leitmotif, this motto of his father appears repeatedly for a long time: "Bleib der Deine, ich bleib Meiner" (*Aufenthalt* 219). When Niebuhr reads the letter informing family of the death of his brother and that his brother set a good example for his comrades, his mother tells him angrily that: "Daß du dich unterstehst" (*Aufenthalt* 218). Along the same lines are quotations from the Baroque poet Paul Fleming and adaptations of the young Niebuhr: "Geh, sieh dich selbst durch! Du selbst bist dir die Welt/ Verstehst du dich aus dir, so hast du's wohl bestellt!" (*Aufenthalt* 219). But unfortunately, one cannot understand the world from within; one has to dive into the world to understand the self and the world.

This is exactly Niebuhr's problem: the attempt to remain himself, avoid all things unfamiliar, hostile, retreat to an inner self as a "Besonderer," as an individual, and the belief that he can retain his integrity as an individual this way. At first, this emphasis on the "self" allowed him some self-assertion, even if only under the wildest circumstances: "Ich bestehe darauf: Ich hatte Gründe, auf mich zu sehen, aber ich glaube, hätte ich nicht

es noch lange so gehalten, wäre ich nicht ohne großen Schaden davongekommen” (*Aufenthalt* 220). However, the novel demonstrates that individualist retreating and distancing marked by inwardness does not suffice for real liberation.

Niebuhr seems to be trapped in his old self-centered pattern. First, the voluminous novel is his *own* résumé; second, the narrator believes that this disposition of inward-turning still remains in him and, even worse, that he is not even sure whether he should condemn or approve of this trait. Did tradition continue to have such an impact on him that he resorted to his old patterns after all the lessons he learned in his captivity? His wishful thinking coupled with his nature of self-deceit resurfaces at the end of the novel while remembering his mother’s remarks about the Russian prisoners: “Wie die aussehen” (*Aufenthalt* 441), implying that the Russians were rough and disgusting in appearance. There are two ways to interpret the comment, one is pejorative, and the other is sympathetic. Does his mother find the Russian prisoners’ looks by nature repulsive, that is to say, in a racist way? Or is she sympathizing with the Russian prisoners and disapproving of the ways in which the Germans mistreat the prisoners? Preferring to see his mother as morally innocent, the narrator Niebuhr claims that he is not certain, but he *believes* that his mother’s attitude is the second one and she means “Wie wir sie so aussehen lassen.” He clearly feels the sudden urge to exculpate his mother. Because he has always been an obedient child and never dared to cast a critical eye on his own mother, the ultimate authority figure in his life, the narrator suffers pangs of guilt. The narrator Niebuhr seems to have forgotten what he learned in the past: to think critically, to abandon wishful thinking and to confront the past courageously. By doing this, he inevitably undermines his own agenda of enlightening the reader.

There are other moments in the novel that make the reader suspect that Niebuhr reverts in the development of his consciousness. As I mentioned earlier, the time plane of the captivity is a direct narrative that goes from point “A” to point “B” without any jumping backwards and forwards. Then it is disturbing to encounter the following passage at the end of the novel: “Der Pole ist ja in seinem Wesen regelrecht für den Untergrund angelegt, das ist bis in die polnische Neigung zum Bergmännischen zu verfolgen...” (*Aufenthalt* 505). Because of its present tense, one has reason to believe that the narrator is speaking here. His view of the Poles is clearly not positive. But earlier in the novel, the narrator makes us believe that Niebuhr overcame his prejudices about the Poles. Let us compare the above passage with another one that appears earlier in the book:

...als er [Hauptsturmführer] von List und Tücke als polnische Eigenheiten sprach. Denn es war doch nicht so lange vorbei, da hatte man mich mit einem Schulungsheft versehen, in dem es eben um Tücke und List gegangen war; und es hieß dort, daß ein Germane nicht auf sie verzichten dürfe, wolle er den Endkampf bestehen. Bilder und Verse nach Art des Wilhelm Busch waren beigegeben. (*Aufenthalt* 474)

An attentive reader would notice the discrepancy of perception in both passages. The narrator reverts whatever insights he has gained earlier in the novel. Besides, the pejorative comments about the “bergmännisch” character of the Poles are made in the present tense, and this makes us believe that this is perhaps the voice of the narrating Niebuhr, living in the present. If it were not the voice of the narrator, it has to be the voice of the allegedly changed Niebuhr. Either way it lends itself to the suspicion that Niebuhr’s transformation to a certain extent is only a pseudo-transformation.

As I have shown, Niebuhr seems to entertain many different views of the past and he himself becomes unsure of his own transformation in the end. He seems to be eager to

enlighten the reader, but ultimately makes himself untrustworthy. Thus the novel is susceptible to the question: Did Niebuhr really change his childhood patterns? The ambiguity of Niebuhr's position demonstrates the continuity between past and present. However, since Niebuhr as the present narrator seems to be very sure of his views and appears as a changed and assertive man, it is difficult for the reader to recognize the parallel between the old and the new Niebuhr.

In the treatment of a soldier's conversion from Nazism to socialism, the narrative device of an unreliable narrator and the suggestion of a pseudo-transformation suffice to render Kant's *Der Aufenthalt* distinctive from other GDR novels. As commonly known, in the socialist realist tradition, the narrator needs to be in an "Olympian" position and cannot possess any ambiguity. The protagonist's conversion needs to be thorough according to the socialist realist precepts. It shall leave the reader no doubt about the superiority of socialism over Nazism. Again, Kant breaks a taboo in this respect. In *Der Aufenthalt*, Kant provides the reader with a spurious narrator. Throughout the novel, the narrator disperses innumerable comments reassuring us of Niebuhr's successful transformation. Now, with the narrator's credibility challenged, the reader is provoked to reassess Niebuhr's apprenticeship as a doubtable transformation from Nazism to socialism, even though his wavering attitude toward Germany's and his own past does not invalidate many of the insights that the novel offers us.

Der Aufenthalt distinguishes itself from the majority of war novels in the FRG, as Hans Wagner's survey on the war literature of the FRG has demonstrated.¹⁸⁹ Wagner notices a few phases of war literature in the FRG. From 1945 to 1948, authors remained silent. From 1949 to 1955 there was a peak of war literature. From 1955 onward there

was a dramatic drop in the publication of war literature in accordance with the changing political climate in the mid-1950s. The survey shows that most novels on WWII are in the tradition of adventure novels. A serious confrontation with the Third Reich occurs only when the officers and soldiers had a bad conscience about knowingly fighting for a wrong cause. The battle of Stalingrad occasioned questions about the historical reasons for this misfortune and the officers' ethos of submission. In a series of novels, the Third Reich is even excluded from discussion. Some heroize certain technical weapons; some depict war as gruesome in abstract terms as a warning for the future; some use war as an existentially suitable background for the construction of extreme human conditions. All in all, there is a noticeable lack of examination of the Nazi past that takes the political elements into consideration. Nevertheless, these novels continued to fascinate the public up until 1976, the year of the publication of *Der Aufenthalt*. The fascination is not so much an expression of the urge for self-reflection or confrontation with the German past. More accurately, these war novels, as entertainment, just met the demand of the public for entertainment. In other words, they became consumable commodities.

Kant's treatment of the confrontation with the Nazi past is less didactic and therefore has a distinctive advantage over other anti-fascist literature of the GDR.¹⁹⁰ Typically, anti-fascist literature comforts the East German populace, distances them quickly from Nazism. In this sense, it becomes consumable commodities as well. To some degree, it participates in the FRG trends.¹⁹¹ Instead of a sweeping transformation from fascism to socialism, Kant provides us with a character that seems to snap back into his old pattern of denial and repression continually. While this treatment of Germany's Nazi past might be frustrating, it does seem to be extraordinarily honest. The inconsistency of

the narrator, his problematization of Niebuhr's transformation and the hinting of the continuity between the past and the present all suggest that the process of coming to terms with the past is a difficult one. It is hard to fully come to terms with the past, even with the help of the "almighty" Communist ideology. In this process, the novel provides the reader with a wide spectrum of positions. The reader is invited to watch Niebuhr hover between these views. Much to Kant's merit, he demonstrates that there is a more nuanced position in coming to terms with the Nazi past except for the established dichotomy between denial and its critical reception.

CHAPTER FOUR: REVISITING *DIE AULA*: FACING THE SOCIALIST PAST

This chapter will place Hermann Kant's confrontation with the GDR's Stalinist past and its socialist realist discourse in historical, political and cultural context and will provide the reader with new perspectives on East German literature. After the initial amazement over the unexpected disappearance of a country, it is necessary to further explore its fascinating past where the grandiose socialist experiment took place and failed. How this country was established is just as interesting as how it rather suddenly ceased to exist. Although the beginning and the end of the GDR routinely attract more public attention and scholarly interest, it is perhaps more important to find out what happened during the years in between. East German literature in general, and Kant's novels in particular, are enlightening in this aspect.¹⁹²

After the Fourth Writers' Conference in 1956, cultural policy of the GDR was tightened. A "socialist perspective" and literature with socialist content were demanded of artists. However, instead of the proliferation of more socialist realist literary works, literary production took a rebellious stance.¹⁹³ Subjective experiences gained primacy in the early years of the 1960s. By subjective experiences, I mean that the existing social reality became the interest and focus rather than the depiction of the projected utopia, as required in socialist realism. Kant's novel *Die Aula* transcends the restrictive boundaries between realism and modernism, between subjectivity and universality, between form and content. In this novel, he not only parted with nineteenth-century literary conventions, but through his choice of themes, he also broke the political taboos of his era.

1. Reception of Die Aula

Kant started this novel in 1962, ten years after his graduation from the Arbeiter- und Bauern Fakultät (ABF), the Workers and Peasants Faculty. It took him three years to finish. The novel *Die Aula* was first published as a series in the newspaper *Forum* and was beloved by its readers. In 1965, it was published by both *Rütten und Loening* in East Berlin and *Rütten und Loening* in Munich. This was especially uncommon if we take into consideration that at that time the FRG and the GDR were engaged in a cold war against each other. However, critics in both worlds did not respond to *Die Aula* with unanimous approval, as Jost Hermand suggests.¹⁹⁴ For Hermand, *Die Aula* is an extraordinary phenomenon because critics from both sides of the border acclaimed the novel as an important contribution relatively unanimously.¹⁹⁵ Critics from both sides actually did not find a common ground on the basis of the universal values demonstrated in the novel as Hermand claims. He considers love, jealousy, and the “Urseele” of every human being to be universal values that make the novel popular. To support his claim, he cites the narrator’s comment: “Es war vielleicht die millionste Wiederholung eines Urstücks im Menschentheater” (*Aula* 274).¹⁹⁶ The unanimity of judgment is a myth founded on misunderstanding. The novel does not escape ideological interpretation; the reception of the novel thus diverged greatly. In fact, critics from both countries, according to their own criteria, found this novel ideologically valuable and interpreted the work accordingly. Nevertheless, the historically concrete, critical thrust of the novel is ultimately sacrificed and mysteriously escapes careful scrutiny by most critics.

The East German reception of the book recognized Kant's confrontation with the conflicts in the political, cultural, and historical development of the GDR, but ultimately

highlighted the socialism-affirming, conformist tone of the novel in the end. Its critical potential was not explored adequately in the GDR. Wolfgang Spiewok argues that *Die Aula* manifests the perfection of socialist realism in the literary arts. It is, he says, a part of the complex cultural transformation that takes place in the GDR (417).¹⁹⁷ Along with Spiewok, Werner Neubert, convinced of the superiority of the socialist system, attempts to reclaim the genre of satire to benefit socialist realism.¹⁹⁸ In this assessment of *Die Aula*, the political contents were largely overlooked or willfully misconstrued. Kant rebelled against socialist realist tradition in order to make problems visible, and therefore manageable. If socialist realism can incorporate the style and content of Kant's *Die Aula*, it would be hard to call it socialist realism, or it would render this term meaningless. In his article "Die Aula—Eine Laudatio auf die DDR," Hermann Kähler represented a fairly orthodox reading of the novel.¹⁹⁹ Blind to the critical potential of the novel and its modernist form, Kähler offered his praise: For him, *Die Aula* was written with socialist pathos and was the expression of a youth with high socialist consciousness, educated by the Party (269). The importance of *Die Aula* to East German literature was compared to that of Grass's *Blechtrommel* (1959) to West German literature.²⁰⁰ The Schledstedts give *Die Aula* credit for being aesthetically innovative. They especially emphasize the narrative techniques that are multi-layered and therefore modern, which appeared to be another effort to imply the linkage of the GDR literature to world literature.²⁰¹

While the reception of *Die Aula* in the GDR is positive across the board, its reception in the West is more complicated. I will demonstrate how both negative and positive reception of the novel highlight the challenges critics face in their interpretation of the novel. Negative reception of *Die Aula* has taken place in different frameworks.

Critics such as Ranicki accuse *Die Aula* of insincerely representing the reality in the GDR and manipulating the facts.²⁰² For instance, in “Ein Land des Lächelns,” Reich-Ranicki ignores the critical potential of the novel and dismisses Kant’s writing style:

Die starke Seite seiner Begabung ist die heitere epische Miniatur, die sich allerdings meist als unbedarft erweist. [...] Aus Problemen macht Kant treuherzige Anekdoten. Heisse Eisen verarbeitet er zu kleinen schmucken Souvenirs. Was geschehen ist, wird entweder verheimlicht und ausgespart oder verharmlost und verniedlicht. Lausbubenstreiche geben den Ton an, die wehmütige Erinnerung und die fröhlichen Schuljahre dominiert, die DDR erweist sich als ein Land des Lächelns.²⁰³

As I discussed in chapter two, it is true that Kant’s anecdotal and humorous style runs the risk of not being taken seriously. However, Reich-Ranicki’s assessment of the novel does not seem to accurately catch the gist of the novel either. As I will show later, *Die Aula* is a lot more than just nostalgic memory of the protagonist’s happy school years. Kant portrays the GDR far more critically than just showing it off as “ein Land des Lächelns.”²⁰⁴

Others such as Günther Zehm react negatively to the novel, but on totally different terms: for Zehm, *Die Aula* is reflection of GDR reality and should be judged as such. He links Kant with Iswall explicitly and reads *Die Aula* as an autobiography. He exaggerates Iswall’s personal flaws and attacks his character in an *ad hominem* manner:

...Robert Iswall, dieses deutsche, demokratische Stiftlergeschmäckchen, [hat] es so weit gebracht und [wird es] auch noch weiter bringen... Iswalls deutlich neureiche Allüren, sein kokettes Spiel mit den Autoschlüsseln, seine schneidende Verachtung der Kleinbürger (die einem preußischen Leutnant wohl angestanden hätte), sein ambivalentes, aus Überheblichkeit und Minderwertigkeitskomplex gemischtes Verhältnis zum westdeutschen Wirtschaftswunder lassen ihn als eine ziemlich fragwürdige Gestalt erscheinen, zu der man keineswegs ja sagen möchte.²⁰⁵

Later on, Zehm continues to make negative comments about Iswall: “Allerdings fallen dem sich erinnernden Iswall auch verschiedene Scheußlichkeiten ein [...] und er

verschweigt sie.”²⁰⁶ For Zehm, *Die Aula* reflects the reality of the “vertrackte Psychologie jener Menschenschicht, die man sehr treffend ‘die neue Klasse’ genannt hat.”²⁰⁷ As I will address in the next section, Iswall certainly does have his flaws. However, Zehm seems to be too preoccupied with them to understand their larger meaning in the novel.

Fritz Raddatz gives *Die Aula* a negative reception on the grounds that Kant only exercises superficial critique of the social ills in the GDR. He accuses Kant, and indeed all contemporary German literature, including Grass, of being conservative and contributing to “Aufrechthaltung des Bestehenden.”²⁰⁸ This claim is impossible to prove and seems to be a false insinuation in any case. His verdict says “Es ist neu, aber nicht jung – ein altes Buch.”²⁰⁹ The decisive question he asks is: “ob eine Phänomenkritik angedeutet wird oder Strukturen grundsätzlich kritisch erörtert werden.”²¹⁰ It is a question that is very hard, if not impossible, to answer. The immediate reception of this novel in the FRG is detailed in Heinrich Mohr’s “Gerechtes Erinnern.”²¹¹ Mohr seems to take *Die Aula* under his protection. He makes us realize that its reception in the FRG generally admits the critical potential of this book, but claims that it suffers from an ideological barrier that prevents fair judgment about and an appropriate understanding of the socialist country.²¹²

Franz Schonauer and Hans-Georg Hölsken represent some positive reception of *Die Aula*.²¹³ Both Schonauer and Hölsken focus on the critical tone of the novel and emphasize its non-conformism. Both of them see a contradiction between Kant’s novel and the Socialist country in which it takes place. According to Schonauer,

Die Aula ist der erste Versuch eines DDR-Schriftstellers über die Verhältnisse ‘drüben’ so zu schreiben, daß den Leser nicht vor lauter Aktivisten,

Arbeiterhelden und Klassenkämpfern das Gähnen ankommt. Im Gegenteil! Gußeiserne Linientreue, Parteijargon und leeres Parolengeplapper kommen bei Kant schlecht weg.²¹⁴

While Schonauer's assessment of *Die Aula* is still well grounded, Hölsken's remarks seem to be based on decidedly anti-Communist sentiments:

Kant parodiert in seinem Roman den Versuch, den Menschen zu "konfektionieren," und er wendet sich gegen alle Denkschematismen der Partei, die der menschlichen Individualität keinen Raum lassen. Mit anderen Worten: der eigentliche Gegenstand der Gesellschaftskritik ist die Auseinandersetzung des Individuums mit den Erstarrungserscheinungen der sozialistischen Gesellschaft, mit dem also, was der österreichische Reformkommunist Ernst Fischer die "Deformation des Kommunismus" nennt.²¹⁵

This assessment comes close to categorizing *Die Aula* as anti-communist literature by claiming that Kant defies "alle Denkchematismen der Partei." Clearly, *Die Aula* represents the genre of self-reflexive Communist literature. Nevertheless, this attempt to label it as "Deformation des Kommunismus" is doomed to be fruitless, because the novel is not about exposing the GDR as the totalitarian police state and certainly will not serve the purpose of anti-Communist propaganda very well, especially in light of the fact that the novel is also a satire of capitalism in the West.

Critics of the West have routinely ignored the fact that *Die Aula* is also a critique of the capitalist West. While Schonauer and Hölsken notice the critical potential of *Die Aula* against the socialist GDR, they both, knowingly or unknowingly, seem to overlook Kant's critique of capitalist West Germany. Hermand mentions the depiction of the West: "Einmal ganz grob gesprochen, gibt es bei Kant zwei Arten von Satire: die an dem anderen Deutschland, der BRD, und die an dem eigenen Deutschland, der DDR."²¹⁶ However, he did not follow through with this promising statement. The FRG falls out of sight in his discussion and Hermand concludes that "Wie in manchen anderen DDR-

Romanen der frühen sechziger Jahre wird damit der SED ein Spiegel vorgehalten, der die alten Stalinisten recht erbittert haben muß.”²¹⁷ For Hermand, the target of the satire is limited to the East. Emmerich claims that *Die Aula* is “*der DDR-Roman schlechthin*,” because it stands for “die politische Grundsatzentscheidung und Entwicklung des Landes DDR.”²¹⁸ While in some ways perceptive, this view equally ignores the fact that the Hermann Kant’s satire is directed not only against the East, but also against the West. My study will attempt a more differentiated look at the novel’s critical components.

2. Social Critique at a Closer Look

The reception history of *Die Aula* demonstrates that it is difficult to assess the novel from a neutral standpoint. Many critics are tempted to take what they need from the novel to paint their own picture of what they believe the novel is about. Over 40 years of distance will certainly make it possible for my study to escape many an ideological barrier that influenced critics in the 1960s and 1970s. In this section, my study will go back to the novel itself and present the findings of my close reading. I will discuss the merits and flaws of *Die Aula* from a present-day perspective. I also wish to stress that the last thing I want to claim is being neutral. The reader is free to judge my ideological framework.

2.1. The Portrayal of the West

Views on the portrayal of the West did not change much from the immediate reception of the mid-1960s up to the 1970s. Wolfgang Spiewok represents a typical East German view. In 1972, Spiewok writes:

Ging es dort [auf der bundesrepublikanischen Ebene] um absolute Verneinung, um ein grundsätzliches Infragestellen der gesellschaftlichen Ordnung als Trägerin

jener abgelehnten Erscheinungen, so geht es hier, auf der Ebene der sozialistischen Wirklichkeit, keinesfalls um ein Verneinen der gesellschaftlichen Ordnung in ihrer Totalität, sondern um die Anwendung eines speziellen ästhetischen Wertungssystems, mit dessen Hilfe Tadelnswertes kritisch und zugleich selbstkritisch dargestellt wird.²¹⁹

Clearly, in Spiewok's view, the inconsistency between the depiction of West Germany and that of East Germany is well justified. Regarding the critique of the GDR, Spiewok is in agreement with Raddatz that the critique of the GDR is only directed at the symptoms of social ills, not the root cause, that is, the system itself.²²⁰ But Spiewok, convinced of the superiority of the socialist system, considers it fair that West Germany is negated in its totality ("totale Verneinung"). The "double standard" that Kant employs in his depiction of the respective German state does not bother Spiewok at all.

Along the same lines, in 1979, Manfred Durzak avoids this inconsistency with a good-will speculation regarding the depiction of the FRG in *Die Aula*. Durzak notices the denunciative distortions of the reality in the West. However, Durzak thinks this black-and-white depiction of the West should not be the focus of our attention. Durzak obviously notices the blind spots of the novel, but he is quick to justify them with the speculation that it is just the author's writing strategy. In other words, Kant intentionally creates these blind spots in order to accentuate his superior depiction of the GDR reality that abandons every standardized pattern dictated by the state and refuses to uncritically reflect the officially sanctioned reality of the GDR.²²¹

In their assessment of *Die Aula*, I think both Spiewok and Durzak fail to give an inclusive picture of the novel. They are perhaps too eager to defend Kant and his successful novel. They fail to admit that the depiction of West Germany is the obvious weakness of *Die Aula*. Iswall seems to lose all his analytical ability and completely

condemns the West, Hamburg in particular. This forms the most unconvincing aspect of the novel. Kant's weakness is reflected in the character of Iswall. When he travels to West Germany, he converses with a West German businessman named Windshull. Windshull reads Böll and Grass, Bachmann and Heine, but only for entertainment. He does not take those writers seriously. He believes in the superiority of the capitalist system and claims that people in the West are doing well: "Im Ernst, sie werden doch nicht sagen, daß es den Leuten hier schlecht geht? Noch nie, das nehme ich auf meinen Firmennamen, ist es den Leuten so gut gegangen wie heute" (*Aula* 140). Iswall responds sarcastically:

Daran ist was Wahres, Herr Windshull, die Menschen machen durchweg einen schlachtreifen Eindruck; Hänsel ist fett, und die Hexe kann den Grill schon immer einschalten. Oder, wenn Sie erlauben, noch einmal Heine: 'Gar manche, die ich als Kälber verließ, / fand ich als Ochsen wieder! / Gar manches kleine Gänschen ward / zur Gans mit stolztem Gefieder.' (*Aula* 140)

Instead of facing the fact that West Germany is an economical success, Iswall resorts to sarcasm. Jealousy seems to be playing a role in Iswall's reaction, which in turn reflects its author's dilemma: on the one hand, Iswall believes in the superiority of socialism; on the other, he cannot come to terms with the West's success. He simplifies the social relations in the West by letting Iswall lecture to the Western businessman with an analogy: " 'Ich bin ein Tierfreund', sagte der Angler, als er den Fisch in die Pfanne legte, 'nun ist das arme Ding doch heraus aus dem kalten Wasser!'" (*Aula* 141). Clearly, West Germany is portrayed as a land of hypocrites. Iswall's portrayal of the West also includes his brother-in-law, Hermann Grieper, a bar owner in the Reeperbahn, Hamburg, who is proud of his saga: "Dreißig Jahre nur Kriminelles und keinen Tag Zeit!" (*Aula* 94). For Iswall,

Griepert represents West Germany, a land full of “criminals.” His myopia leads him to unfairly condemn the West as a whole.

Iswall specifically targets the city of Hamburg, a quintessential German town in his eyes. While in Hamburg, Iswall overhears a conversation between a prostitute and a freezing man: “‘Ich bin noch besser als Kleopatra.’/ ‘Und wohl auch ’n büschen alter’, sagte der Mann” (*Aula* 115). Iswall finds the reply of the man very appropriate for the city of Hamburg. He then compares Hamburg to the prostitute: “...sie [die Antwort] war gemacht für diese Stadt, die sich an allen ihren Ecken ausschrie als besser, reicher, gerissener, bunter, lauter, bewegter und erfolgreicher denn alle anderen um sie herum” (*Aula* 116). Iswall compares Hamburg to East German cities and concludes that even though Hamburg is richer and more fun (“erfahren in Besitz und Vergnügen”), it is still a capitalist city, old and decadent, just like the prostitute he overheard that night (*Aula* 116). Iswall is implying, not so subtly, that the East is a new country full of hope and new energy and, in any case, a better alternative to the West.

In these episodes, Kant seems to work exclusively within the socialist realist framework set by the GDR cultural policies by projecting the “truth” dictated by the official discourse into art. Even if socialism were truly superior to capitalism, as Kant believed, the application of this principle is fundamentally a bad starting point for an artist. It is fair to claim that Kant sees in the West only what he wants to see.

Representation is not based on reality, but on pre-conceived knowledge. One can rightfully claim that *Die Aula* serves to confirm the official picture of the West dictated by the Communist regime. Yet was it really necessary for Hermann Kant to do so? It would not have any real effect on readers in either society: readers in the East most likely

were already very familiar, if not fed up with these official platitudes; and readers in the West mostly likely would not relate to his critique or simply shrug it off as more East German propaganda. This weak spot, in fact, undermines the critical thrust of his work. In this regard, Kant does to some extent compromise his own critical aesthetics.

Even though Kant's critique of the West is valid to a certain extent, he seems to rush the discussion on the West and falls back on a superficial cliché. His critique of capitalism lacks sharpness and honesty. The reasons for this rather blatant inconsistency with the otherwise subtle, yet potentially explosive critique of the GDR in *Die Aula* could be multifold. It could be his personal political convictions that caused this superficiality. Kant is clearly devoted to the socialism of the GDR. This devotion leads him to an absolute refusal of the capitalist West. He equates the West, above all the FRG, with imperialism, militarism, and fascism. His political tunnel vision may thus fog his artistic creativity. It could also be a strategy Kant employs to appease the censorship of a repressive regime. A third possibility is that the moral weakness of the author allows his political ambition to interfere with his intellectual integrity, artistic instinct and literary sophistication. Regarding the depiction of the GDR, *Die Aula* is neither "eine Laudatio auf die DDR" à la Kähler, nor an anti-Communist pamphlet à la Schonauer und Hölsken.²²² The truth seems to be somewhere in-between. In the next section, my analysis will demonstrate the critical treatment of the GDR reality in its nuances as well as its flaws.

2.2 Socialist Achievements and Failures

Part of the reason that Hermann Kant wrote a novel about this was to remind people of the selective amnesia of official history. Kant repeatedly takes on the problem

of memory in *Die Aula*. From 1945 to 1952, Hermann Kant was a student of the ABF Greiswald. The goal of this institute was to prepare young GDR-citizens without a grammar school diploma (*Abitur*) for a university education. Although it was a big part of the East German educational revolution (*Bildungsrevolution*), it was hardly mentioned in the history of the university. The failure of remembering the ABF suggests for Kant the very problem inherent in the GDR: it stopped making efforts to provide equal educational opportunities for its people. The achievements of the educational revolution attested to the initial success of the socialist movement in the country. Ignoring this success was not only disturbing for the author of *Die Aula*, but for its narrator and the protagonist Iswall as well.

Admission to the ABF was life-changing for underprivileged workers and peasants who were deprived of the right for higher education in the past. The establishment of the ABF in the university challenged the bourgeois educational privilege that the auditorium (*Die Aula*) once represented with its baroque architecture. The protagonist Robert Iswall himself is also very impressed by the professional achievements of many an ABF graduate. The former electrician, Iswall, becomes a leading journalist; the former dressmaker, Vera Bilfert, becomes a respected eye specialist; the former carpenter, Gerd Trullesand, becomes a Sinologist; the former farmer, Rose Paal, becomes a Sinologist too. The list goes on. Above all, the rise of the forest warden, or Jakob Filter, to the top official in the forest ministry is the most impressive. Even though Iswall is sarcastic about the language of singing praise for the ABF graduates, his tone makes it also clear that he is in the end very proud of the achievements of his class. Admittedly, a revolutionary élan did indeed accompany the

founding and the development of the GDR for quite some time. But in many a place, Kant's narrator, unnecessarily, sings superficial praises for the GDR: "wer jetzt noch nicht weiß, was das ist, DDR, der kann einem nur leid tun, dem ist nicht zu helfen..." (*Aula* 364). The preachy tone that Kant employs here is very uncharacteristic of his usually non-didactic approach in his novels.

Even though Iswall sounds like the mouthpiece of the Party in the analysis above, if Iswall were to make his speech, its content would not solely be restricted to rosy praise. The novel shows that the rise of the peasants and the working class was in no way without conflict. It points out that the methods employed to achieve this rise are in some cases rather questionable. The party leader Meibaum cancels Iswall's speech at the celebration and calls attention to the fact that there is an essential conflict between ideal and reality: it is not the peasants and workers who have the last word, but the party leader who has the right to make final decisions. Even if one considers the GDR from the present day perspective, one can still refer to the novel as a literary witness of the "Schönfärberei offizieller Darstellungen der jungen DDR."²²³ There were also many graduates who forgot their proletarian roots and took everything for granted and as a result their class-consciousness became corrupted. In this case, the official discourse of history does not provide any insight. No wonder in his letter to Kant, Kuczynski candidly claims:

...für künftige Historiker [wird] die Lektüre unserer Gegenwartsromane viel wichtiger sein als die der meisten gesellschaftswissenschaftlichen Schriften. [...] Denn unsere Romane schildern den sich bei uns entwickelnden Sozialismus real, mit allen seinen Widersprüchen und Ärgernissen, während unsere Gesellschaftswissenschaftler zwar vom realen Sozialismus sprechen, aber in ihren konkreten Beschreibungen der Realität so oft der Neigung zur Schönfärberei verfallen.²²⁴

Even in the history of the ABF itself, Kant sheds light on the strengths and weaknesses of collectivism and its relationship to the individual. For the first time after many years of SED rule, one could finally gain insight on what seemed to be going on in that country. In *Die Aula*, complicated issues that were troubling the socialist enterprise in the GDR are raised: How does teleology relate to ethics? Do the ends justify the means? Does collectivism justify the elimination of individualism? When is collectivism going too far? We may not have answers for all the questions, but Kant's novel provokes readers to think critically.

Kant treats approaches the past with a critical eye, not so much with a clear message, but only with hope for a better socialism. The historical contexts in his novel are concrete and not reduced to the minimum designed only to serve the purpose of sending the Communist message. His novels demonstrate the human sacrifice under the pretext of the "noble" Socialist cause and examine closely the misuse of political power for personal gains.

2.3. Stalinist Dogmatism

The Stalinist view of the philosophy of history tends to avoid reflection on the past. The march to Communism in the GDR failed because it did not seem to learn from the mistakes that had been made in its early years, which might be one of the reasons for its eventual collapse. Hermann Kant voices his oppositional views on official dogmas such as the repression of the German past. He breaks away from the glorification of the anti-fascist resistance fighter in the figure of his stepfather; he also demonstrates how the rigid application of Stalinist dogmas leads to disastrous consequences for the state. One of these was the mass escape of GDR citizens to the West (*Republikflucht*). There are

many cases of *Republikflucht* in *Die Aula*. Riek's case is both more complicated and more closely connected to Iswall's personal story (I will analyze it a bit later). If Riek's case poses a great deal of political ambiguity, then the other cases of *Republikflucht* are ascribed clearly to the Stalinist nature of the early GDR. For example, Iswall's mother settles down in the West permanently because of her "Kafkatour" through the East German bureaucracy. As I have shown in chapter two, it was quite daring to refer to a "Kafkatour" in East Germany, considering how East Germany considered itself a socialist country and free of alienation. Yet Iswall's sister escapes to the West in order to forget her painful love affair with a Russian soldier. As a result of this affair, she is subjected to the incessant ridicule of the towns people. The fact that a Russian is portrayed as a target of ridicule also defied official discourses because as part of the GDR cultural policy, Russian soldiers could only be cast in the best possible light: as the liberators of East Germany. Here too, Kant breaks a taboo.

The attack on Fiebach demonstrates the severity of the Stalinist personality cult and the harm that dogmatism inflicts upon individuals. The flight of Fiebach is caused by the dogmatic disciplinary methods of Angelhoff (*Aula* 194). The story starts with a discussion about democracy. Students and faculty spend three days studying an article sentence by sentence in the central media organ in East Germany called "Selbstkritische Stellungnahme zu einem redaktionellen Fehler." The dogmatist, Angelhoff would have them memorize the whole article if he could have his way. In the transcript from the news, the word "democratic" was missing from Stalin's telegram: "Es lebe und gedeihe das einheitliche unabhängige, friedliebende Deutschland!" In other commentaries in the same paper, the word is present in all places. But the newspaper acts as if it is a major

violation of principles and makes much of this mistake and everyone in the ABF has to study materials on democracy for the entire three days.

Fiebach is not the only one who wonders if a simple announcement in the newspaper is enough to clarify the situation. But he is the only one who speaks up. Therefore, Angelhoff launches a major attack against Fiebach. Angelhoff hints that Fiebach is too ignorant to comprehend the intentions of the editors and that he is a counter-revolutionary and intends to undermine or change the words of the leader Stalin arbitrarily. He suggests that Fiebach, the former mechanic, is ungrateful toward Stalin, the son of the shoemaker from Gori, and thus ungrateful toward the role of the Soviet Union. Angelhoff not only insults Fiebach, he also intimidates him by labeling him a potential counter-revolutionary who wants to sabotage the establishment of a unified, independent, democratic, and peace-loving Germany.²²⁵ Fiebach tries to explain what he means with his question but he does not manage to get through to him. So he persists in his silence and studies the nature of democracy with others.

The animosity between Fiebach and Angelhoff escalates a half year later and results in Fiebach's escape to the West. In a demonstration aiming to change the name of "Pommerplatz" to "Platz der Befreiung" (Liberation Square), Fiebach mentions this discussion on the careless editorial error again and tells another person that he had been thinking about it for half a year, but still does not understand why a simple mistake in the newspaper created such an uproar. He still thinks the whole issue was blown out of proportion. Angelhoff hears his comments and launches another attack against Fiebach. He calls Fiebach a hypocrite: pretending to agree yet holding a grudge. Angelhoff provocatively asks: "Fiebach, Du wolltest dich wohl in deinen Plänen nicht stören lassen,

wie? Was sind also deine wirklichen Pläne, Fiebach? Und warum wirfst du diese erledigte Frage gerade jetzt wieder auf, jetzt, in dieser revolutionären Situation? Heraus damit, Fiebach!” (*Aula* 282). Branded a class enemy and scared of further disciplinarian punishment, Fiebach flees to the West.

In the midst of euphoria over the name change of the square, Fiebach’s fellow students are not willing to reflect on the loss of Fiebach to the West. No one has the courage to face potential problems associated with escape to the FRG. The name of the square is indeed changed to “Platz der Befreiung” and the victory makes the disappearance of the mechanic Fiebach seem invisible. Iswall offers more insights into how he deals with Fiebach’s flight. He notes that when they return to the university, everyone is extremely satisfied, talkative and inspired to make speeches after dinner. Nobody notices Fiebach’s desperation. When Fiebach goes to a dark corner, nobody cares. It is his business. If Fiebach ever comes out of that dark corner, it is his business as well. The victors of the moment can be extremely arrogant, especially the small victors, as Iswall comments years later (*Aula* 303).

Another victim of the Stalinist personality cult is Haiduck. Haiduck has an unorthodox view of socialism. He expressed his view in the early years of the GDR that Germany should have its own socialist road and should not copy whatever is preached and practiced in the Soviet Union. When the Party discovers his view of German socialism, he is reprimanded and demoted for his independence of mind. Haiduck is portrayed as a positive and in no way dogmatic party leader. Haiduck’s independence from Stalinist dogmatism is also clearly exemplified by the following episode: When he finds out what happened to Fiebach, Haiduck reprimands Robert for organizing the demonstration and

does not appreciate the name change of the square; instead he is furious about the fact that the country loses a fine mechanic like Fiebach. He criticizes Angelhoff's dogmatism and the students' lack of solidarity toward Fiebach. "Jetzt haben wir einen Platz der Befreiung und einen künftigen Ingenieur weniger, eine feine Rechnung ist das, santa madonna!" (*Aula* 284). One cannot help but think that if the Party realized the problem of the mass escape earlier, and listened to people like Haiduck, it would have found a better solution than the Berlin Wall.

2.4. Abuse of Power: Personal Story as Political Satire

The main plot of the novel is a classic love triangle: Iswall loves Vera Bilfert. He suspects and is then convinced in the absence of concrete evidence that his best friend Trullesand is romantically interested in her as well. Soon, when an opportunity presents itself, he does not waste a single minute to rid himself of his imagined rival. He manages to banish him for seven long years to a far away place. The Chinese government invites two people to study Chinese in China and the ABF has to recommend someone quickly. Because of the requirement that the two people have to be a couple, the leadership in the ABF has difficulty choosing appropriate candidates. Iswall seizes this perfect opportunity and proceeds to recommend his best friend Trullesand, whom he knows for certain wants to be a philosopher, not a Sinologist. To make matters worse, he also suggests a marriage partner, a young woman named Rose Paal, who is a former farmer and a secret admirer of Trullesand. Iswall is here the sheer embodiment of opportunism. He uses his privilege as a leader of the youth organization to his best interests: he marries off his best friend to a woman he is not in love with and sends them off to China so that he can have his love object all to himself.

The novel is much more than just a plot of the universal human drama of a love triangle. Iswall's allusion to Heine helps to jumpstart the story. For chapter I, II, and XX in his *Buch der Lieder*, Heinrich Heine uses the following verses as motto: "Sie war liebenswürdig, und Er liebte sie; Er aber war nicht liebenswürdig, und Sie liebte ihn nicht. (Altes Stück)" (5, 7, 65). In *Die Aula*, Hermann Kant writes: "die millionste Wiederholung eines Ur-Stückes im Menschentheater....daß ein A eine B haben wollte und auch C nach B verlangte, aber D bekam" (*Aula* 313). This citation demonstrates that Kant is alluding to Heine's verse, but giving it a new twist to suit his story line in *Die Aula*.²²⁶

Although this passage refers to an old "theater," Kant is nevertheless aware of the peculiarity of this seemingly same age-old drama, that is, the "new" in the old. The universal drama of love is a thread running through the narrative and provides the platform for remembering the past. The progression of the plot itself is slow and interrupted by many anecdotes. By the time the reader finally gets some idea about the plot, it is already page 313. Then the narrator drops the plot again only to pick it up again on page 409. Some negative reviews of *Die Aula* blame the narrator for the discrepancy between the goal stated in the motto and the narrative itself. For instance, according to E. W. Herd, in *Die Aula*, the narrator depicts GDR history in such a way as to avoid events of significant political importance.²²⁷

If one expects to find sequential development of the historical events in the novel, one is destined to be disappointed. Major events of the GDR in the first fifteen years of its existence are not reflected in great detail in *Die Aula* and if mentioned, then only briefly and in a very indirect way. The motto for *Die Aula* states:

Der heutige Tag ist
 ein Resultat des gestrigen.
 Was dieser gewollt hat,
 müssen wir erforschen,
 wenn wir zu wissen wünschen,
 was jener will.²²⁸

The motif revolves around the dialectics of the past, the present, and the future, as the motto suggests. On the surface, Kant admits the universal validity of his personal love story, and on a deeper level, he discusses a very important social issue regarding the abuse of power. The protagonists are ordinary individuals, not some heroes of grandiose stature. Just as the importance of history is emphasized in the motto, the novel concerns itself primarily with the history of the GDR and the pros and cons of this country in its own distinctive way.

The author consciously devises this plot as the universal drama of love and betrayal. He alludes many times to this prominent theme in Heine's works in chapter two—but this narrative of love and betrayal is only one aspect of the novel. Just like the speech Iswall was supposed to give, the love story is a background theme throughout the novel to keep the reader oriented. There is more depth to the novel than is obviously stated. The love triangle among Gerd, Robert and Rosa might have contributed to the accessibility of the novel, but the value of the novel lies further in its GDR-specific contents that help us visualize and understand the history of the GDR. The treachery of a friend should not single-handedly catapult Trullesand and Paal into an arranged marriage and to a foreign country. The Party practices what constitutes the most symptomatic of failures of socialist humanism: gentle pressure. It took the party leaders three hours of “persuading” and more hours of “plotting” to finalize the marriage arrangement. The

Party invades the most intimate sphere of its members' life. This and more render socialist humanism little more than an empty concept.

Iswall's abuse of power, presented as the story of one person in the novel, is the story of a whole society. In this novel, Kant constructs a political satire with the aid of a plethora of personal stories. The fate of Trullesand demonstrates the failure of socialist humanism. He is not only deprived of free choice in his career, but also in his freedom of choosing a spouse. "Happiness for all" becomes the pretext for selfish behavior. Ironically, at the end of the novel, Iswall finds out from Trullesand that he is not a real rival and that his marriage to Paal is not a total failure. Instead they appear to be quite happily married and quite successful in their careers.

The apparent happy ending of the Trullesand and Paal story can be misleading in the interpretation of the novel. Thanks to Iswall's not so gracious role in their marriage arrangement, they were "gently" forced into marriage and sent to China to study Chinese. But at the end of the novel, according to Trullesand, this marriage works out fine. He also claims that Iswall's action was totally unnecessary and that he and Bilfert, the girl Iswall fell in love with, are not romantically involved. Some critics are led to conclude that an acceptably happy ending diminishes the critical and self-critical thrust of the novel. For example, Andress draws the same conclusion regarding the GDR: "Trotz Iswalls egoistischen Verhaltens damals wirkt sich die ganze Geschichte positiv für die DDR aus."²²⁹ According to Andress, if Trullesand leads a happy life with Paal in spite of Iswall's treachery, it exonerates Iswall of his guilt and responsibility. By extension, it does not damage the image of the GDR much.

However, the reader also has reasons to believe that the Trullesand and Paal story cannot be called a happily-ever-after fairy tale. Trullesand claims to have a happy marriage with Paal. However, Trullesand's credibility is compromised because he does not speak his mind when he is sent to China with Paal. We cannot rely on what Trullesand said over ten years later about what he was thinking when he was married to Paal and sent to China. On this, he is not a source one can trust. Therefore, the reader has the right to have doubts when he claims that he and Paal are happy together. Furthermore, will a happy man fish in a reservoir for hours; while he knows all along for a fact that there is not one single fish in it? This is where Iswall finds Trullesand when he searches him out in Leipzig. Iswall knows the severe consequences of his behavior but he seems to be repressing the truth all along. He is an inquisitive journalist. Will he honestly believe Trullesand's version of his happy marriage? Or is Trullesand self-sacrificial to a disturbing degree?

The ambiguity of this ending is important because it reveals the complexity of Iswall's character. On the one hand, Iswall tries to make light of his misdeeds in the past and suggest that his self-torture in the process is unnecessary. He might wish to have this relief that no harm is done to his friends. On the other, we have reasons to believe that Iswall is aware of his mistake and the severe consequences it causes. The narrative of the past reveals that Trullesand was indeed interested in Bilfert in a romantic way. He was in fact a rival and Iswall was not just paranoid to think so. What is new from what Trullesand told Iswall in the end is that Iswall did not know that Bilfert loved him, not Trullesand. But all these details do not amount to much and cannot change the nature of Iswall's behavior; that is, that he does not hesitate to abuse his power to dispose of his

rival even though he is his best friend. After all, the final outcome of his act does not erase the act itself.

On the surface, this story appears to be personal, but it implies a far larger problem in the system. What Iswall did to his friend and fellow student Trullesand is not at all amusing: As I mentioned before, it in no way constitutes the “fröhliche[n] Schuljahre,” as Reich-Ranicki would have us believe.²³⁰ This incident exemplifies the disease of the system that is corrupt and corrupting as well. The socialist cause is able to serve as an excuse for any despicable deed that is completely at odds with the “noble cause.”

In his fight for Vera Bilfert, Iswall won. As a victor, he forgets about the price he had to pay. Not only does he lose the friendship of Trullesand, but he also has caused Riek to defect to the West. Riek is a former plumber in a sugar factory. He is great at math and has excellent organizational and motivational skills. He stands out among the ABF students: “Er war der Mathematiker Nummer eins des Jahrgangs neunundvierzig und als Organisator fast ein Genie” (*Aula* 188). He seems to be better suited to the socialist construction than conducting espionage in the FRG. Even the narrator believes that he is custom-made for the GDR and the GDR needs people exactly like him: “Kein schöner’ Land in dieser Zeit...Ein Rechnerland, ein Organisatorenland, ein Soll-und-Haben-Land, ein Land für Plänemacher, Logarithmenland, Perspektivenland, Tabelliererland, Programmiererland. Ein Land für Quasi Riek” (*Aula* 188). Did he become a GDR spy in Hamburg or simply flee the country realizing the chilling nature of what was going to happen there in the future? Iswall, the narrator, knows best, but in the narrative he is not telling much. In the case of Riek, there is no rational explanation for

his disappearance in the West, which is not typical for the earlier socialist realist novels: there is no room for irrational occurrences in this genre; everything has to be explainable. Others may have obvious reasons to leave the country, but not Quasi Riek.

A close reading of the text indicates that Riek may be working for the Stasi in Hamburg. Kant seemed to imply this same thesis in his *Abspann* (262). However, one should not exclude the possibility that Riek might just as well have fled to the West for the following reason: he is disappointed by Iswall's betrayal of his best friend. In their conversation in Hamburg, Iswall tells Rieck that Vera Bilfert is still his wife and Trullesand and Paal are back from China. Riek responds with "who would have thought!" Then he explains to Robert:

Schließlich, und das mußt du mir zugute halten, schließlich weiß ich ja, wer Trullesand und Rose nach China verladen hat und wer sie verheiratet hat und warum er es getan hat. Das sind so liebe kleine Erinnerungen, die halte ich mir warm für den Fall, daß ich mal Heimweh kriege, die helfen einem dann schnell darüber hinweg. (*Aula* 198)

This quote demonstrates that Iswall's action greatly influences his move to the West. Iswall's actions lead to a series of negative personal consequences for many of his friends, making the country look as poorly as the protagonist himself. Here, Kant shows that in the GDR life was not only shaped by the political loyalty to the Party, but that personal and private experiences could function as motives for change as well. In this, he is also deviating from socialist realist doctrines.²³¹

However, Iswall cannot accept this responsibility and replies defensively, "Ich hätte auch Heimweh an deiner Stelle" (*Aula* 198). He may have forgotten about the incidents, but others keep them alive. Rieck's words do stick with Iswall. Nevertheless, he refuses to come to terms with his past with self-defense and self-deception:

Und zehn Jahre später sagte ein gewisser Gastwirt Riek in Hamburg, den das alles nichts mehr anging, ihm helfe die Geschichte von Trullesand und dessen gottgegebener Frau über das Heimweh hinweg. Wenn der uns weiter nichts vorzuwerfen hat, dachte Robert, dann stehen wir gut da; ich vielleicht nicht, ich sicher nicht, aber das Land doch und unsere Zeit damals; wenn der nicht mehr Gründe hat als den, dann hat er keine...Dann ist er nur ein Narr. (*Aula* 202)

He continues with this line of argument for a long time. Later he also minimizes his own guilt and responsibility by remarking that “Quasi ist aus einem heiteren Himmel verschwunden, da trifft uns keine Schuld” (*Aula* 303). Only after more soul-searching does he realize that his action not only betrays his best friend but also costs him his friendship and has consequences that reach farther than he would have liked to admit.

Iswall's attitude toward his past is clearly not always commendable. It goes through different stages: from oblivion to denial and to admission. It takes him a long time to realize the grave consequences of his treachery. But until the very end, he still resorts to self-deception. Although willing to confront the past, he is not ready to take any responsibility to undo the wrong. His final concealment of the truth to his wife Vera is self-deceptive and is a time bomb waiting to explode sometime in the future. His silence over the truth is in the end a fatal danger that may still come back to haunt him and catapult him into another crisis if and when his wife finds out what he did in the past. Though he does not actively lie, silence serves as a provisional security wall to protect things from falling apart, just like the wall the country built to prevent it from collapsing. Here the parallel emerges between Iswall and the GDR: Deep-rooted insecurity leads to paranoid decisions and measures; walls of any kind predicated on insecurity and self-defense may of course eventually crumble, as history has revealed time and again.

As I have shown above, Kant does not always depict East Germany as being superior to the West. However, critics tend to accuse him of being the mouthpiece of the

GDR. Raddatz accuses Kant, along with Grass, of promoting literary consumerism, being fundamentally conformist to the respective ruling regime.²³² According to Raddatz, Kant produces a book with a “konservierenden, also konservativen Charakter,” and contributes therefore to the “Illustration, also Aufrechterhaltung des Bestehenden.”²³³ For me, Raddatz’s suggestion that politically engaged authors such as Kant and Grass only illustrated and prolonged the status quo is purely false insinuation. I also disagree with Zehm’s evaluation of Kant’s *Die Aula*. Identifying the protagonist with the author, Zehm attacks Iswall/Kant’s opportunism that has the function of Mephistopheles, “der stets das Böse will und stets das Gute schafft.”²³⁴ The diverse opinions about *Die Aula* are a testament of its greatness: Kant produced a literary work of art that is open to manifold interpretations and debates. Kant provided readers with a novel that is playful, provocative, non-dogmatic, and historically relevant.

3. Postscript

Constant tension exists between Kant’s self-understanding as a political writer and his literature. He refuses to admit the incompetence of literature, but at the same time is aware of the limits of what literature can achieve, and warns of the danger of expecting too much from literature.²³⁵ Refusing to separate form from content and to divorce politics from literature, he managed to create a pragmatic realism that included elements of modernist literary devices.

The genre of the realist novel, especially in the GDR, suffered greatly under the constraints and restrictions imposed upon it by the socialist realist doctrines, as I have already shown. The Lukácsian view of modernism especially deprived GDR writers of many of the modernist advances of narrative techniques. Until the beginning of the

1970s, the GDR novelists were given very little room to employ new techniques in order to express themselves. But already by mid 1960s, Hermann Kant had made distinctive contributions to novelistic innovations along with his contemporaries such as Christa Wolf. Slowly but surely, early romantic impulses began to “invade” GDR novels and began to counterbalance the official socialist realist style. However, these authors never fully left the ground of realism. They retained close touch with reality and made reference to reality their number one concern.

Positioned within the larger picture of critical theory and Western Marxism, Kant, as an author, contributed greatly to the realism/modernism debate by constantly balancing realism and modernism, reconciling the high and the low, and taking advantage of the progressive legacies of both tendencies. His position on Lukács and Brecht demonstrated that there was no unbridgeable gap between both sides of the formalism debate. While certain antagonisms between realism and modernism may be irreconcilable, in other respects, as we have seen, both schools are not mutually exclusive. Kant makes the best of realism and modernism by combining elements of both and manages to integrate both theories and overcome their respective weaknesses.

In the evaluation of GDR literature, socialist realism was set up as a straw man by many conservative critics in order to discredit socialist literature as a whole just as socialist cultural policy of the GDR set up formalism as a straw man to discredit modernist impulses within certain literature. When even Eastern critics set up formalism as an artificial target, the result was disastrous for the theory and practice of realism in the GDR. In both cases, literature itself was sacrificed to serve a certain ideologically driven agenda. However, East German literature cannot be reduced to empty socialist

realist propaganda. It is time to critically examine this body of literature and rescue valuable insights from the realism debate in the GDR. There are many works of literature that have more qualities to them than for which they have been credited. The contribution of “late bourgeois” modernism was an aesthetic experimentation that was by no means only an empty play of pure forms. The advanced artistic methods enabled literature to represent the new reality that would have remained inaccessible to conventional methods. As I have demonstrated, Hermann Kant never hesitated to utilize these innovations. With the help of different artistic techniques, he illuminated the status quo of the socialist reality. He documented a history that tended to be forgotten, without abandoning the aesthetic nature of literature. He united the aesthetic and the political in his novel and attempted a solution to the realism/modernism debate, Kafka or Thomas Mann? For Hermann Kant, it is about both Kafka *and* Thomas Mann, as I discussed in chapter two.

Hermann Kant is one of those writers who survived the literary debate of the 1990s and proved that he did not need the SED regime to be a prolific writer. The unification has not in any way kept Kant from writing. In the post-reunification years, he published *Der Abspann: Erinnerungen an meine Gegenwart* in 1991, *Kormoran* in 1994 *Okarina* in 2002 and *Kino* in 2005. On April 20 of 2006, he read his new story about a soccer game, which was not quite about the game itself, but a critique of capitalism. Frank Pubantz characterizes Kant’s appearance at the reading in Bützow as “nachdenklich, pointiert, angriffslustig, philosophisch.”²³⁶ He was dethroned as a man of power, but the post-reunification hostility did not prevent him from being a powerful man of letters. While Kant continues to write columns and articles in *Neues Deutschland* and *Konkret*, he is hardly heard or asked to voice his opinion in the discussions of the nation’s

big feuilletons. For example, he wrote a piece on the debate of the Holocaust monument, “Das Mal.” The article was on the first page of *Neues Deutschland*; however, later in a compilation of fourteen hundred articles on the topic, Kant’s article was not chosen. Excluded is also his piece on the concept of prescribed anti-fascism (“Verordneten Antifaschismus”).²³⁷ All this evidences that as the literary debates fade in to oblivion, the mainstream media in the West increasingly marginalizes prominent East German authors in the public sphere.

In his post-reunification writings, Kant has been attempting to deal with the past in his own way. When we observe Kant’s post-reunification work closely, there appears to be a gradual development. Kant goes through phases from legacy-making in his autobiography, to unrelenting bitterness in his *Kormoran*, to nostalgia in his *Okarina*, and finally to a critique of capitalism in his *Kino*. All his novels have autobiographical elements, which is not a departure from his previous writing. He continues to write from his own life experiences. His confrontation with his own past, with the history of socialism of the GDR is not always successful, and the reception of his autobiography and his novels are not uncontroversial. However, it is not hard to see that the negative reception overweighs the positive.

Even though a thorough examination of Kant’s post-reunification works is beyond the scope of my study, I would like to point out that the reception of this body of Kant’s literature has been rather one-dimensional. For example, Reinhard Andress considers Kant’s autobiography a perfect example of legacy making. Andress criticizes that a large part of the book is about name-dropping. According to Andress, Kant sheds no light on important political events of the country, such as the workers’ uprising in 1953 or the

building of the Berlin Wall in 1961. Even though Kant did not do enough to come to terms with the political mistakes that the country has made, Andress fails to emphasize that in his autobiography, Kant did provide some insights into the reason for the collapse of the GDR, especially the economic collapse of the country.

Similarly, Kant's 1994 novel *Kormoran* has received undue criticism. The novel is about the sixty-sixth birthday party of the publisher and critic of the GDR, Paul-Martin Kormoran, in June 1992. Kant depicts the conversations of the guests, which show their more or less successful adaptation to of the new society. Ironically, Kormoran dies on this day of celebration. Without his country, life seems to be not worth living. And for Kormoran, there is simply no future and no way out. Not surprisingly, critics like Hans-Jürgen Schmitt und Anke Westphal ravaged the novel.²³⁸ Schmitt called the celebration a party of "Wendeständler," playing with the word "Widerständler," possibly suggesting that Kant's figures represent alleged resistance fighters against the German unification. Furthermore, Westphal simply called it "Mumienparty" (party of mummies). However, the reader does not have to read the novel this way. Kant expresses his feelings toward the intellectual debate after the reunification that critics like Schmitt und Westphal do not acknowledge: "statt eines Todesurteil vielfach verurteiltes Leben," "statt der Garotte die Mietenschraube," "statt Volkszorn Siegehäme," "statt würgenden Stricks Verstrickungsgewürge, statt gemordeter Leichen gehetzte Seelen."²³⁹ For Westphal, these expressions only illustrate the false pathos of Kant and his like; however it can also be argued that exactly with these words Kant expressed the authentic feelings of his generation. What is more surprising is probably that Kant's hero, Kormoran, died at the end of the novel. Of course, Kormoran is not Kant. However, one cannot help

entertaining the question: is Kant ready to disappear with the old system like his protagonist Kormoran?

No, Kant is not done with his cause. Even though his country is gone, he keeps writing and practicing his “Gesinnungsästhetik” à la Greiner. In *Escape: Ein WORD-Spiel* (1995), Kant plays with the Microsoft software WORD. He has great fun proofreading his text using the built-in dictionary of WORD. Out of this very common practice, he makes a play of words and criticizes Bill Gates. In the novel, he emphasizes his unfaltering faith in the socialist cause and shows himself as an unchanged adherent to Communist principles.

In *Okarina* (2002), Kant reflects poetically on issues that were obviously near and dear to him. The eloquent narrator depicts his development from a young German soldier to a convinced anti-fascist and socialist party soldier. The novel is not a chronicle of an infatuation with socialism. The narrator has a clear and critical consciousness. Kant draws an interesting and amusing panorama of the postwar history, all from today’s very rare perspective of a convinced communist cadre. He does not produce propaganda but sketches the errors and confusions of an East German Marxist with great humor and refreshing polemic verve. With some exaggeration, Stephan Maus correctly labels Kant as “ein unterhaltsamer Kapitalistenfresser, dem auch nach den Jahren der Appetit nicht vergangen ist.”²⁴⁰

In 2005, Kant published his latest novel *Kino*. This time, the stage is set in his hometown of Hamburg. Curious about how it is to be the social outcast, the protagonist takes his nephew’s high-tech sleeping bag and settles down in the center of Hamburg. Because it is illegal to beg in public, he puts a tag on the side of his sleeping bag that

reads: “Sinnstudie!” and “Nicht stören und nichts spenden!” In Kant’s “movie,” we witness scenes from the capitalist West. The novel demonstrates how the state kowtows before high finance. In order to attract the investment of a rich woman from Nepal, the state tries everything to please her, including efforts of getting the narrator off of the street. Even secret police and border control personnel are involved. However, the appetite of the anti-capitalist “hardliner” Kant seems to be very moderate, as expressed in his latest novel: the narrator in *Kino* and his “persecutor,” the secret police officer, have a nice chat together and clarify things accordingly. One of them even helps the protagonist pack up his stuff and leave his “study.” These facts seem to suggest that Kant has changed his attitude toward capitalism and embraced a more conciliatory view of it.

It is no secret that Hermann Kant did not like capitalism. It is also true that he still sees no other alternative worth fighting for other than an ideal socialism, one that has nothing to do with the Ulbricht’s, or Honecker’s or Stalin’s regime. However, it is completely misguided to talk about an unholy alliance with the Neo-Nazis. This is exactly what the German historian Hans-Ulrich Wehler suggests. Besides Hermann Kant, Wehler also names Heiner Müller, Stefan Heym, Christa Wolf, Stefan Hermlin, Christoph Hein, and Volker Braun. He accuses them of striving to transform their internalized anti-capitalism into a deeply rooted anti-West resentment.²⁴¹ Wehler is unequivocally off-base, for these intellectuals have tried to continue an anti-fascist tradition in Germany throughout the span of their writing careers. I do not think it is sensible for today’s critics of Wehler’s caliber to accuse these writers of being in some unholy alliance with the neo-Nazis. In their effort to delegitimize the GDR, an important part of the anti-fascist tradition is also contested. This denial of the anti-fascist

tradition might help some forget that their ancestors once were block guards in concentration camps. This flawed logic that the non-existence of anti-fascism implies the non-existence of fascism does not help in building a new German national identity. If one could indeed talk about an unholy alliance, it would not be between leftist intellectuals and neo-Nazis. Instead, one could talk about an unholy alliance between the deniers of an East German anti-fascist tradition and the neo-Nazis. This alliance is about as unholy as the one between the deniers of the Holocaust and the neo-Nazis.

While historians and biographers need further research into what the politician Kant did or did not do in the GDR, my study's purpose is to demonstrate Kant's literary merits, to shatter the one-dimensional characterization of Kant and GDR literature, and to make readers and critics realize that Kant provided and still provides readers who want to understand fascism, socialism and capitalism with literature that is aesthetically pleasing and historically relevant.

NOTES

- ¹ Hermann Kant, *Der Aufenthalt* (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1977).
- ² Bibliographic information in this section is indebted to Leonore Krenzlin, *Hermann Kant: Leben und Werk* (Berlin: Volk und Wissen, 1988).
- ³ Hermann Kant, *Das Impressum* (Berlin: Rütten & Loening, 1972).
- ⁴ Wolfgang Emmerich, "Versungen und vertan? Rückblicke auf 40 Jahre DDR-Literatur und Geschichtsschreibung der DDR-Literatur," *Oxford German Studies*, 27 (1998) 146-68.
- ⁵ William Collins Donahue, "Vicarious Pleasures – Critical Interventions: German Political Literature Revisited," *German Politics and Society*, 32 (Summer 1994): 124-135, here 129.
- ⁶ Emmerich, "Versungen und vertan?" 4.
- ⁷ Ibid.
- ⁸ Ibid., 5.
- ⁹ The West German anger toward Christa Wolf and other GDR authors started actually on November 26, 1989, when many a GDR author pleaded in "Für unser Land" to the citizens of the GDR for an independent socialist alternative in the GDR.
- ¹⁰ Christa Wolf, *Was bleibt: Erzählung* (Frankfurt am Main: Luchterhand Literaturverlag, 1990).
- ¹¹ Ulrich Greiner, "Die deutsche Gesinnungsästhetik," *Die Zeit*, 2. November 1990.
- ¹² Quoted in Thomas Anz (ed.), *Es geht nicht um Christa Wolf: Literaturstreit im vereinten Deutschland* (München: Spangenberg, 1991) 218.
- ¹³ Quoted in Thomas Anz (ed.), *Es geht nicht um Christa Wolf: Literaturstreit im vereinten Deutschland* (München: Spangenberg, 1991) 218.
- ¹⁴ Ibid., 218.
- ¹⁵ Ibid., 212.
- ¹⁶ The article was published in a weekly newsmagazine *Falter* of July 13-19.1990, here quoted in Anz 219.
- ¹⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁸ Helga Königsdorf, *1989 oder ein Moment Schönheit*, (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1990) 5.
- ¹⁹ Theodor Adorno, *Gesammte Schriften*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann. Band 10.1: *Prismen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977) 30.
- ²⁰ Detlef Friedrich, "Der Vergang meiner Vereinzelung: Hermann Kant will nicht mit unerfüllbaren Vorstellungen durch die Gegend humpeln. Er ist kein radikaler Mann," *Magazin*, Ausgabe 223, *Berliner Zeitung*, 23. September 2000.
- ²¹ Friedrich, "Der Vorgang meiner Vereinzelung."
- ²² It was, of course, expected that they would show loyalty to the Party (SED: Socialist Unity Party) and, moreover, their activities were essentially defined by the cultural policy of the Party, which was in turn shaped by overall Party thinking at a given time. Censorship in many guises was an integral part of all this.
- ²³ Hermann Kant, "Ein offener Brief an *Die Junge Welt*," *JW*, 9. October 1989, 26 Apr. 2006 <<http://www.ddr89.de/ddr89/chronik/1089/091089.html>>.
- ²⁴ Ibid.
- ²⁵ Ibid.
- ²⁶ Ibid.
- ²⁷ 26 Apr. 2006 <http://www.2plus4.de/chronik.php3?date_value=09.10.89&sort=001-000>.
- ²⁸ Ibid.
- ²⁹ Ibid.
- ³⁰ Ibid.
- ³¹ *BZ*, 22.12.1989, 30 Apr. 2006 <<http://www.ddr89.de/ddr89/chronik/1289/1289.html>>.
- ³² "'Ich war ein Aktivist der DDR': Der ostdeutsche Schriftsteller Hermann Kant über seine Rolle und den Stellenwert der Literatur im SED-Regime," *Der Spiegel* 32 (1990): 156-160.
- ³³ Kant, "Ich war ein Aktivist der DDR," 156.
- ³⁴ Ibid., 158.
- ³⁵ Ibid., 160.
- ³⁶ Ibid.

- ³⁷ Ibid.
- ³⁸ Ibid.
- ³⁹ Ibid.
- ⁴⁰ Reinhard Address, “‘Schwarzmalerei und Mohrenwäsche: Differenzierung ist notwendig’: Ein Gespräch mit Joachim Walther,” *GDR Bulletin*, 18:2 (1992): 6-12, here 7.
- ⁴¹ Kant, “Aktivist,” 156.
- ⁴² Ibid., 157.
- ⁴³ Ibid., 160.
- ⁴⁴ Günter Gaus, *Zur Person*, “Gespräch mit Hermann Kant,” *Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg*, broadcasted on 19.11.1997, 26 Apr. 2006 <http://www.rbb-online.de/_zurperson/interview_jsp/key=zp_interview_638398.html>. The interview appeared later in Günter Gaus, *Zur Person 1: Jureck Becker, Daniela Dahn, Hermann Kant, Helga Königsdorf, Christa Wolf*, (Berlin: Edition Ost, 1998).
- ⁴⁵ Ibid.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid.
- ⁴⁷ 26 Apr. 2006 <http://www.2plus4.de/chronik.php3?date_value=09.10.89&sort=001-000>.
- ⁴⁸ Gaus, *Zur Person*, 2.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid., 6.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid., 8.
- ⁵¹ “‘Vermisse das Wort Pinscher’: Ein Staatsschriftsteller im Stasi-Dienst: Die Spitzel-Karriere des Genossen Hermann Kant alias IM ‘Martin,’” *Der Spiegel* 41 (1992) 323-336.
- ⁵² Ibid.
- ⁵³ Karl Corino (ed.), *Die Akte Kant: IM “Martin”: die Stasi und die Literatur in Ost und West* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1995).
- ⁵⁴ BBC News, 23. 06. 2004, 11 Sept. 2006 <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/world/europe/3833397.stm>>.
- ⁵⁵ Professor Donahue prompted me to make this important argument in one of our many productive conversations. I thank him cordially.
- ⁵⁶ Hermann Kant, *Abspann: Erinnerungen an meine Gegenwart* (Berlin; Weimar: Aufbau Taschenbuch Verlag, 1991) 246-7
- ⁵⁷ Ibid.
- ⁵⁸ André Meier, “Stalins Erektion und Ideengefäß,” *Die Tageszeitung (TAZ)*, 12 March 2002.
- ⁵⁹ Ibid.
- ⁶⁰ Udo Scheer, “‘Nicht schuldig! Darauf bestehe ich,’” *Die Tageszeitung (TAZ)*, November 28, 1995:12.
- ⁶¹ Ibid.
- ⁶² Durzak, 427.
- ⁶³ Lukács’ views on realism can be found in his three essays “The Ideology of Modernism,” “Franz Kafka or Thomas Mann?” and “Critical Realism and Socialist Realism,” compiled in the collection titled *Realism in Our Time: Literature and the Class Struggle*, trans. John and Necke Mander, (New York: Harper & Row, 1964). Adorno expressed his preference for modernism explicitly in his signature essay “Commitment,” collected in *Literature in the Modern World: Critical Essays and Documents*, ed. Dennis Walder, (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press in association with The Open University Oxford University, 1990) 89-99.
- ⁶⁴ Schirrmacher, “Das Danziger Versöhnungswerk,” *FAZ*, 6 May 1992.
- ⁶⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶⁶ Reich-Ranicki, “Wie konnte das passieren?” *Der Spiegel*, 19 (1992) 254-263.
- ⁶⁷ Ulrich Greiner, “Die deutsche Gesinnungsästhetik,” *Die Zeit*, 2. November 1990.
- ⁶⁸ Frank Schirrmacher, “Abschied von der Literatur der Bundesrepublik,” *FAZ* 2.October 1990; Ulrich Greiner, “Die deutsche Gesinnungsästhetik,” *Die Zeit*, 2. November 1990.
- ⁶⁹ Greiner, “Die deutsche Gesinnungsästhetik,” *Die Zeit*, 2. November 1990.
- ⁷⁰ Greiner, “Die deutsche Gesinnungsästhetik,” Anz 213-214. It is interesting to see the irony of the debate. First, Christa Wolf is accused of being a coward, not being courageous enough in her literary works, in other words, not being political enough. And now, the accuser argues against his own position;

now, he says, the literatures in both halves of Germany are way too political. His position is confusing to say the least.

⁷¹ Greiner, "Gesinnungsästhetik," Anz 215.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid., 214.

⁷⁴ Karl Heinz Bohrer, "Kulturschutzgebiet DDR?" *Merkur*, 43, 1990, 1015-8; "Die Ästhetik am Ausgang ihrer Unmündigkeit," *Merkur*, 44, 1990, 851-65.

⁷⁵ Bohrer, "Die Ästhetik am Ausgang ihrer Unmündigkeit," 851.

⁷⁶ Bohrer's insistence on defining the aesthetic phenomenon without any metaphysical reference is especially reminiscent of the art theoretician Adorno's obsession on rescuing the "non-identity."

⁷⁷ Staiger, "Literatur und Öffentlichkeit," *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 20 December 1966.

⁷⁸ He recounted the incident in his essay *Ich bin ein Bewohner des Elfenbeinturms*, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Verlag, 1972).

⁷⁹ Peter Handke, *Ich bin ein Bewohner des Elfenbeinturms*, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Verlag, 1972).

⁸⁰ Hans Magnus Enzensberger, "Gemeinplätze, die neueste Literatur betreffend," *Kursbuch* 15 (1968): 187-197.

⁸¹ Fiedler's lecture was published under the title "Cross the border, close the gap" in *Playboy*, December 1969. In the article, Fiedler extols the virtues of postmodernism and sees it as cultural rejuvenation.

⁸² Schirmacher, "Literatur und Kritik," *FAZ*, 8 October 1990.

⁸³ See Thomas Mann's *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*, 1918.

⁸⁴ Keith Bullivant, *The Future of German Literature* (Oxford, UK Providence, RI: Berg, 1994) 5.

⁸⁵ Bullivant, *Beyond 1989: Re-Reading German Literary History Since 1945*. (Providence, RI: Berghahn Books, 1997) 6-7.

⁸⁶ Bohrer, "Die Ästhetik am Ausgang ihrer Unmündigkeit," 855.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 858.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 863.

⁸⁹ George Steiner, *Real Presences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989) 195.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 223.

⁹¹ Botho Strauß, *Paare, Passanten* (München, Wien: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1981).

⁹² Handke, *Versuch über die Jukebox*, (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1990).

⁹³ Jochen Vogt, "Langer Abschied von der Nachkriegsliteratur," *Erinnerung ist unsere Aufgabe: Über Literatur, Moral und Politik 1945-1990* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag 1991) 182.

⁹⁴ Ulrich Greiner, "Die deutsche Gesinnungsästhetik: Noch einmal: Christa Wolf und der deutsche Literaturstreit. Eine Zwischenbilanz," >>> *Es geht nicht um Christa Wolf* <<<: *Der Literaturstreit im vereinten Deutschland*, ed. Thomas Anz (Munich: Spangenberg, 1991) 208.

⁹⁵ Konrad Franke, "Um wen geht es?" *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 7 May 1992 (Beilage).

⁹⁶ When I consider the common roots of both German states, I tend to claim that it is more accurate to speak of colonialization of oppositional groups, as the West per se has always been doing in its own countries, rather than annexation of another culture.

⁹⁷ Friedrich, "Der Vorgang meiner Vereinzelung."

⁹⁸ I thank Professor Donahue for helping me formulate this argument.

⁹⁹ Donahue, "Vicarious Pleasures," 128.

¹⁰⁰ Sabine Brandt, "Tagebuch," *FAZ*, 26.11.1997, 26 Apr. 2006 <<http://web.lexis-nexis.com.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/univer/printdoc>>.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Heinz Tröger, "Man mußte Hermann Kant zu lesen verstehen," *FAZ*, December 4, 1997, 26 Apr. 2006 <<http://web.lexis-nexis.com.proxy.libraries.Rutgers.edu/universe/printdoc>>.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ The Soviet dissident writer Andrei Sinyavsky, under the name Abram Tertz, published his insightful analytical essay, "On Socialist Realism," in France. He traced socialist realism to its deep roots in

Russian culture. See Abram Tertz, *On Socialist Realism*, trans. George Dennis, with an introduction by Czeslaw Milosz, (1960, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

¹⁰⁷ *Beiträge zum sozialistischen Realismus. Grundsätzliches über Kunst und Literatur* (Berlin, 1953), 11 (Vorwort).

¹⁰⁸ "Der Kampf gegen den Formalismus in Kunst und Literatur, für eine fortschrittliche deutsche Literatur," *Entschließung des ZK auf der Tagung vom 15-17. März 1951* (Berlin, 1951) Ibid., 132.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 52.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 52.

¹¹¹ Werner Krauss, "Das Ende der bürgerlichen Philosophie," *Literaturtheorie, Philosophie und Politik*, ed. Werner Krauss and Manfred Neumann (Berlin und Weimar: Aufbau Verlag, 1984) 513 f.

¹¹² Hans Heinz Schmidt, "Sprödes Roheisen," *Neue Deutsche Literatur*, I (1956): 139.

¹¹³ Hermann Kant, "Krankenbesuch," *Ein bißchen Südsee* (Berlin: Aufbau, 1962) 129-152.

¹¹⁴ Theodor Langenbruch, *Dialectical Humor in Hermann Kant's Novel "Die Aula": a Study in Contemporary East German Literature* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1975) 104.

¹¹⁵ This forms a contrast to Thomas Bernhard's *Heldenplatz* where nobody seems to be able to think from another perspective, as Fatima Naqvi pointed out in her article Fatima Naqvi, "Dialectic at a Standstill: The Discourse of Victimhood in Thomas Bernhard's *Heldenplatz*," *German Quarterly* 75.4 (September 1 2002): 408-21.

¹¹⁶ I thank Professor Donahue for this eye-opening comment.

¹¹⁷ The content of the short story is itself affirmative of the Party line. Anti-fascism is established as one of the founding pillars of Communist East Germany. See chapter three.

¹¹⁸ E. W. Herd, "Narrative Technique in Two Novels by Hermann Kant," *"Erfahrung und Erlieferung": Festschrift for C. P. Magill*, ed. Hinrich Siefken and Alan Robinson (Cardiff: University of Wales Press [for] Saint David's University College, Lampeter, 1974) 195.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Hermann Kant, *Ein bißchen Südsee: Erzählungen* (Berlin: Rütten & Loening, 1962).

¹²¹ Hermann Kant, *Unterlagen: Zu Literatur und Politik* (Berlin; Weimar: Aufbau, 1981): 34.

¹²² Stephan Hermlin, "Über 'Die Aula'," *Äußerungen 1944-1982* (Berlin/Weimar: Aufbau, 1983) 338.

¹²³ All quotes are from Hermann. Kant, *Das Impressum Roman*. (Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1972).

¹²⁴ Julia Hell's psychoanalysis of GDR novels obviously does not apply here. She treats the paternal figure exclusively in her analysis of the post-fascist fantasy in East German literature. Actually, male figures do dominate all socialist realist novels. However, Hermann Kant creates some strong female figures in his works. This rebellion could be conscious or unconscious, but it is noteworthy nevertheless. See Julia Hell, *Post-Fascist Fantasies: Psychoanalysis, History, and the Literature of East Germany* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1997).

¹²⁵ "Republikflucht," 15 May 2006

<http://de.encarta.msn.com/sidebar_721549817/Republikflucht.html>.

¹²⁶ Kant, *Die Aula*, 205. Quasi is also the one who fled to the west later. Previous researches argue that he must be sent to the West as a GDR spy. There are a lot of textual indications about this possibility. Kant also indicates this in his autobiography, *Abspann: eine Erinnerung an meine Gegenwart*. However, I would argue that it makes more sense to consider Quasi an example of Kant's dialectical humor, so pronounced is it in his novel *Die Aula*.

¹²⁷ "Der Kampf," 151.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 154.

¹²⁹ The play was composed in 1949 and staged in 1951.

¹³⁰ The sheer mentioning of important political and cultural events of the GDR gives the reader, especially the contemporary reader, the space for imagination and reflection and also gives the novel a better chance of passing the state censorship.

¹³¹ Information on the debate between Lukács and Brecht is indebted to the collected essays in Ronald Taylor (trans. edit.), *Aesthetics and Politics* by Bloch, Ernst [et.al], with afterword by Fredric Jameson (London: NLB, 1977).

¹³² *Aesthetics and Politics*, 61.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ However, it is difficult to estimate if and how effective Brechtian experiments were. The problem with Brechtian alienation-effect is the somewhat arrogant assumption that the readers are so weak-minded that they need the special effects to remind them of distancing themselves from the fiction in order to be analytical and critical.

¹³⁶ Georg Lukács, *Realism in Our Time: Literature and the Class Struggle*, trans. John and Necke Mander, (New York: Harper & Row, 1964) 70.

¹³⁷ Even though Brechtian aesthetics was most celebrated, Lukács was the most practiced and for a longer time than in any other socialist countries in the Eastern block. Why was Lukács popular for so long in the GDR? From 1945 to 1949, the anti-fascist-democratic phase of the revolutionary transformation of the GDR, the concept of realism was usually used in the traditional stylistic sense, that is, well-known means of life-like portrayal of reality. In the first postwar years, artists who came back from exile, critics and cultural politicians who had knowledge of the previous realism debates and had partly participated in them, were consciously reserved in their remarks regarding the further clarification of the problems brought up before. Their attitude seemed to be a temporary consensus: In these years, there were above all no polemics among Marxists and their allies. This applied to Brecht-Lukas's aesthetic divergences as well. Other cultural representatives had to give up the discussion of unsolved problems consciously because the current situation pressured them to concentrate on spreading the simplest "truths." After the declaration of the Socialist program, the GDR still used democracy and freedom to describe its social transformation in its ideological superstructure. The transition from anti-fascist democratic to socialist contents of Cultural Revolution was rather smooth. The hope for a united socialist Germany was one of the reasons. In the GDR, for this reason, a few aesthetic concepts remained effective that already lost their validity at the end of the 1940s. That is also why Lukács's aesthetics enjoyed longer validity in the GDR; though they were supplemented with and confronted by other concepts, they did not lose effectiveness until 1956. For detailed analysis, see Ingeborg Münz-Koenen, "Realismus in der Diskussion: Literarische Theoriebildung in der DDR – Rückblick auf die Übergangsperiode," *Literatur im Wandel: Entwicklungen in europäischen sozialistischen Ländern 1944/45-1980*, edit. Ludwig Richter, Heinrich Olschowsky, Juri Bogdanow, and Swetlana A. Scherlaimowa, (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1986) 27-54.

¹³⁸ Münz-Koenen, 32.

¹³⁹ Klaus Schuhmann, *Weltbild und Poetik. Zur Wirklichkeitsdarstellung in der Lyrik der BRD bis zur Mitte der siebziger Jahre* (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau-Verlag, 1979) 17f.

¹⁴⁰ Gottfried Benn, "Berliner Brief, Juli 1948," *Autobiographische und vermischte Schriften* (Wiesbaden: Limes, 1961) 280.

¹⁴¹ There is a deeper reality than the surfaces disclosed in temporally unfolding historical events, the frame of reference which is so prominent in the literature of nineteenth-century realism. Instead of a traditional art of transitions from one event, one sensation, and one thing at a time, presented sequentially, modern art is often without apparent causal progression and completion. It is intended to exist within an open-ended and "continuous present" in which various experiences, past and present, inner and outer, of different persons are juxtaposed, their distances eclipsed as though on a flat surface (See Eugene Lunn, *Marxism and Modernism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982) 35.

¹⁴² Robert Weimann, "Literaturwissenschaft und historisch-materialistische Theorie," *Zeitschrift für Anglistik und Amerikanistik*, I (1980): 28.

¹⁴³ Bertolt Brecht: "Bermerkungen zum Formalismus," *Schriften zur Literatur und Kunst*, Band 2 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1967).

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 49

¹⁴⁵ Peter Weiss, *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1975).

¹⁴⁶ Silvia Schlenstedt/Dieter Schlenstedt, "Modern erzählt. Zu Strukturen in Hermann Kants Roman >Die Aula<," *Neue Deutsche Literatur* 13, 12 (1965), 5-34.

¹⁴⁷ Hermand, 177.

¹⁴⁸ Paul Reiman (ed.), *Franz Kafka aus Prager Sicht* (Prague: Verlag der Tschechoslowakischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1966) 95-106; 181-98.

¹⁴⁹ "Kafka und kein Ende. Zur heutigen Lage der Kafka-Forschung," *Ansichten. Zur Literatur der Zeit*, (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1962): 54-70.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 61.

¹⁵¹ Klaus Höpcke, "Herr Lehmann und Herr Mayer", *Neues Deutschland*, 7.3.1964, 6.

¹⁵² Kant, *Der Aufenthalt* (Berlin: Rütten & Loening,) 1977.

¹⁵³ Lukács, "Franz Kafka or Thomas Mann?" *Realism in our Time*, 47-92

¹⁵⁴ "Commitment," *Literature in the Modern World: Critical Essays and Documents*, ed. Dennis Walder (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1990) 89-99.

¹⁵⁵ Marc Silberman, "Writing What — for Whom? 'Vergangenheitsbewältigung' in GDR Literature," *German Studies Review* 10.3 (October 1987): 527.

¹⁵⁶ William John Niven, *Facing the Nazi Past: United Germany and the Legacy of the Third Reich* (London; New York: Routledge, 2002) xvii.

¹⁵⁷ The information about the literary history of the East German anti-fascist literature is deeply indebted to literary historian Therese Hörnigk's article "Das Thema Krieg und Faschismus in der Geschichte der DDR-Literatur," *Weimarer Beiträge*, 24:5 (1978): 73-105.

¹⁵⁸ Qtd. in Patricia Herminghouse, "Vergangenheit Als Problem der Gegenwart: Zur Darstellung Des Faschismus in der Neueren DDR-Literatur," *Literatur der DDR in Den Siebziger Jahren* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1983) 264.

¹⁵⁹ With the exception of a few, Franz Fühmann's *Die Fahrt nach Stalingrad* (1953) and Wolfgang Schreyer's novel about the Warsaw uprising *Unternehmen Thuderstorm*.

¹⁶⁰ Otto Braun, "Brauchen Wir Kriegsromane?" *Neues Deutschland* Nr. 7. Beilage Kunst und Literatur (8/1 1956): 1.

¹⁶¹ Cf. *Neue Deutsche Literatur* 12, 19570.

¹⁶² Hermann Kant, Frank Wagner, "Die große Abrechnung. Probleme der Darstellung des Krieges in der deutschen Gegenwartsliteratur." *NDL*, 3 (1957): 127.

¹⁶³ Quoted in Christa Wolf, "Vom Standpunkt Des Schriftstellers und von der Form der Kunst," *Neue Deutsche Literatur* 5.12 (1957): 123.

¹⁶⁴ The parallel integration of the GDR into the Warsaw Pact and the FRG into NATO signaled this final division of Germany. Before this, the GDR was always hoping for one united Germany.

¹⁶⁵ The didactic purpose was largely served by documentary evidence and identificatory conversion stories. Literature, as a privileged tool, was thus liberated from anti-fascist education and timely reserved for more important issues, such as the achievements in the real existing socialism.

¹⁶⁶ In its novels, writers started to experiment with formal aspects and new narrative techniques. One obvious example that quickly comes to my mind is Christa Wolf's *Der geteilte Himmel* (1963). The formal experimentation of the *Bitterfelder* literature laid the ground for reformulating the task and the nature of anti-fascist literature in the 1970s.

¹⁶⁷ Erich Honecker, *Die Roller der Arbeiterklasse und Ihrer Partei in der Sozialistischen Gesellschaft* (Berlin: Dietz, 1974) 198.

¹⁶⁸ "Sehen, Wissen, Erinnern," 107; *Leben und Werk*, 146.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. Reinhard Kühl, *Faschismustheorien* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1973), 2 vols.

¹⁷⁰ It is no wonder that GDR writers found it very difficult to reconcile the notion of the defeat of the working class in the Third Reich and the notion of its victory in the real existing socialism.

¹⁷¹ Fox, 59.

¹⁷² Changing images of the Jew can be found reflected in the work of Stefan Heym, see Thomas C. Fox, "A 'Jewish Question' in GDR Literature?" *German Life and Letters* 44.1 (October 1990): 63-65.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Neuengamme is a town close to Hamburg in Northern Germany. The SS established the Neuengamme camp in December 1938 as a subcamp of Sachsenhausen. In 1940 Neuengamme became an independent concentration camp.

¹⁷⁵ Karl-Heinz Hartmann, "Das Dritte Reich in der DDR-Literatur. Stationen Erzählter Vergangenheit," Hans Wagener (ed.), *Gegenwartsliteratur und Drittes Reich: Deutsche Autoren in der Auseinandersetzung mit der Vergangenheit* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1977) 319.

¹⁷⁶ VII. *Schriftstellerkongreß der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik. Protokoll (Arbeitsgruppen)*, (Berlin; Weimar: Aufbau-Verlag, 1974) 102.

¹⁷⁷ A lot of the writers in this group started to publish literary works as early as the 1950s, such as Christa Wolf, Günther Kunert, Franz Fühmann, Erich Loest and Hermann Kant, just to name a few. Why did not they address the war experience critically much earlier? This is actually an unfair question to ask. Yet it is worth addressing. When these authors started to write, the cultural policy in the 50s and 60s was antagonistic and repressive. It discouraged particularly the telling of the war stories in a private and critical

manner, as I have shown above. On the other hand, as these authors grow older, one can expect them to be more mature. And they have the skills and the audacity needed to tackle a complex issue that had been repressed both by the state and by the famous internalized censorship (*innere Zensur*). Besides, the change of government in 1971 prepared the way for the loosening of the restrictive cultural policy and granted the artists much coveted space for free expression. The writers were apt at grasping this opportunity and claiming this freedom: Already in the 1973 Writers' Congress, one of the most charged controversies was about historical consciousness (*Geschichtsbewußtsein*).

¹⁷⁸ Mark Niebuhr was born in 1927 in northern Germany that was occupied by English troops later. He is the son of a worker, and he is prepared to be a worker (printer). He is drafted to the Wehrmacht, and in January 1945 he is sent to the Eastern front, i.e., Poland. At this point, he is the last man in the family, for his father and older brother died in the war. After fighting for a few days and setting a tank in fire, he is captured as prisoner first of the Russians, then of the Poles. His status is war prisoner that he simply is, until one incident changes his life. While being transferred from one prison camp to another, he is accused by a Polish woman who believes to have recognized him as the German soldier that killed his daughter in Lublin. However, Niebuhr has never been in Lublin and Lublin was taken over by the Soviet and Polish troops for half a year when Niebuhr came to the front. While he can not prove himself innocent, the Polish woman's accusation is evidence enough to change his status from war prisoner to war criminals: six million people were murdered by Germans; like Niebuhr, the daughter of the Polish woman was among the dead. As war criminal whose crime is to be proved, Niebuhr spends years in prison and goes through a lengthy process of interrogations, investigations, and solitary confinement. Then he gets to share a prison cell with Polish criminals, and in the end he is locked up with all the German war criminals. Finally, after many efforts of many people, the story ends with his being proven innocent, because he was not in Lublin when the woman's daughter was murdered, and someone else must have done it. From then on, Niebuhr is not a war criminal anymore, and he is again a war prisoner who will return to Germany sooner or later.

¹⁷⁹ Through his interaction with his cellmates, his observation, and his conversation, Niebuhr experiences the past of his own country once again, and this experience contributes greatly to his realization of anti-Semitic sentiments in his family and his immediate environment, his hometown Marne.

¹⁸⁰ Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Viking Press, 1964).

¹⁸¹ This answers the provocative question of the Polish lieutenant later in *Der Aufenthalt*: Could one imagine what would have happened if a German woman screamed that a Pole had killed her daughter, as in Niebuhr's situation in Poland? If a Pole can be lynched because he has an affair with a German girl, he surely will be killed if he is accused of murdering a German girl.

¹⁸² Niebuhr's confrontation with the issue of individual and collective guilt for the war is most fully brought about through his interaction with this person who conducts investigation of Niebuhr's alleged murder of a Polish civilian.

¹⁸³ Kant, *Der Aufenthalt*, 5.

¹⁸⁴ "Anstatt die Feinde zu werfen, hatte ich mich davon gemacht, nur weil die Feinde auf mich schossen. Anstatt das Großganze zu sehen, hatte ich alles persönlich genommen. Ich hatte an mein Fell gedacht, ich hatte meinem Magen gelauscht, hatte meine Füße angesehen, nur weil sie erfroren waren. Und als ich den Küchensoldaten erschoss, hatte ich es getan, weil sonst er mich erschossen hätte. Ich, mein, meine, mich. Ich hatte mich zu sehr meiner angenommen und darüber vergessen, daß die Feinde hinter den Ural gehörten und ich dahintergekommen nicht unter ein polnisches Bauernbett" (16); "Bis ich bin, langsam, langsam, daß meine Weise, über die Welt zu denken, nur die Weise war, in der man mich unterrichtet hatte, und daß es, langsam, langsam, langsam, noch andere mögliche Weisen gab und daß es womöglich war, jetzt aber ganz langsam, ganz behutsam, ganz vorsichtig, daß meine Weise zu den Sachen und Verhältnissen nicht immer stimmte. Und, schwindelnmachender Gipfel von Kühnheit, daß der anderen Weise vielleicht doch stimmen könnte" (89); "Aber für mich ist sie nicht nur eine Abwechslung in einer Zeit so scheinbar ohne allen Wechsel gewesen; mir hat sie Änderunge gebracht. Ja, ich bin sicher, Änderung. Es liegt seither in mir etwas bereit, das, knurrend manchmal, aber doch verläßlich, aufsteht und mich zwingt, ein Urteil, welches ich schon niederlegte, noch einmal aufzunehmen, zu mustern und zu prüfen, und siehe, gar sehr oft erfahre ich, daß dort, wo ich mit meinem Denken abgeschlossen hatte, noch weiterer Gesichtspunkt möglich ist und Korrektur des Urteils also auch" (98); "Weil ich fortgegangen bin fast ohne ein Auge für die Ecke Land, in der ich ins Leben einige Einsicht bekam, etwas mehr jedenfalls als vorher in achtzen Jahren" (143); "Es mag anstrengend sein, das zu glauben, aber mit der Entdeckung, daß

Jadwiga Sierp einen Griffelkasten besessen hatte, der meinem sehr ähnlich war, und eine Großmutter, die meiner sehr ähnlich war, und daß sie eine Geschichte hatte, deren Anfang sich erzählen ließ wie meiner Geschichte Anfang – mit diesen Entdeckungen bin ich zum ersten Mal wirklich über mich hinausgekommen; habe mein Los um kein Jota mehr gemocht, habe es aber um zwei Jota mehr verstanden” (273).

¹⁸⁵ “Dann wäre ein Kriegsverbrecher einer, der es bei Krieg macht? Aber was? Ein Verdunkelungsverbrecher klaut bei Verdunkelung oder plündert, aber was macht ein Kriegsverbrecher bei Krieg? Wenn einer bei Krieg klaut, ist er dann ein Kriegsverbrecher? Oder Sittlichkeit, da ist es wieder anders. Ein Sittlichkeitsverbrecher ist einer, der sich unsittlich benimmt. Ist ein Kriegsverbrecher einer, der sich unkrieglich, unkriegisch, unkriegerisch benimmt?” (*Aufenthalt* 313); “Deshalb sperren die einen doch nicht ein. Früher, ja. Früher wurde man eingesperrt, wenn man unkriegerisch war, feige und nicht gehorsam. Aber jetzt waren wir eingesperrt, weil wir kriegerisch gewesen waren. Kriegsgefangen” (*Aufenthalt* 313).

¹⁸⁶ Cf. Deborah Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory* (New York: Free Press, 1993); Evans, Richard J., *Lying about Hitler: History, Holocaust and the David Irving Trial* (New York: Basic Books, 2001).

¹⁸⁷ His recent denial of the Holocaust is recorded in his Spiegel interview on May 30th of 2006. He makes frequent television speech, declaring the Holocaust a “myth.”

¹⁸⁸ Kant, *Der Aufenthalt*, 324. Ironically, people who often appeal to *Menschenverstand* (“Möglich, daß er ein guter Porzellanmacher war, aber darüber hinaus wußte er nicht viel, und er fand das in Ordnung, denn Bildung schien ihm etwas Verächtliches zu sein. Er war der Typ, der einem Astronomen die Sterne erklärt, und zwar laut und immer unter Berufung auf seinen gesunden Menschenverstand” (*Aufenthalt* 40).

¹⁸⁹ Hans Wagener, “Soldaten zwischen Gehorsam und Gewissen. Kriegsromane und –tagebücher,” *Gegenwartsliteratur und Drittes Reich*, ed. Hans Wagner (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1977) 241-64.

¹⁹⁰ I cordially thank my advisor, Professor Donahue, for making this fact visible for me. I was originally quite troubled by this aspect of *Der Aufenthalt*.

¹⁹¹ My sincere thanks go to Professor Fatima Naqvi for reminding me of this parallel.

¹⁹² In the previous chapter, I investigated the confrontation with the Nazi past in Hermann Kant’s novel *Der Aufenthalt*. In this and the next chapter, I will focus on his coming to terms with the Stalinist past of the early GDR in his novel *Die Aula*. Although this arrangement of chapters might suggest an affinity or even equality of the two pasts as it is so popular in the theory of authoritarianism, it is never the purpose of this project to equate the National Socialist past with the socialist past. Although some similarities do exist, (even the author suggests some parallels in his own novels) the differences are fundamental: socialism was a great idea aiming at human liberation but spoiled by its supporters while Nazism was an ideology of racism from the very beginning.

¹⁹³ Münz-Koenen, “Realismus in der Diskussion.”

¹⁹⁴ Jost Hermand, “Herrmann Kant: Die Aula (1965),” *Unbequeme Literatur* (Heidelberg: Lothar Stiehm Verlag, 1971) 176-192.

¹⁹⁵ Hermand, 176.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 189.

¹⁹⁷ Wolfgang Spiewok, “Hermann Kant,” *Literatur der DDR in Einzeldarstellungen*, ed. Hans Jürgen Geerds, (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1972) 416-434.

¹⁹⁸ Reception in the GDR: Werner Neubert, “Komisches und Satirisches in Hermann Kants >Aula<,” *Weimarer Beiträge* 12: 1 (1966): 15-26; Silvia Schlenstedt/Dieter Schlenstedt, “Modern erzählt. Zu Strukturen in Hermann Kants Roman >Die Aula<,” *Neue Deutsche Literatur* 13, 12 (1965), 5-34.

¹⁹⁹ Hermann Kähler, “Die Aula – Eine Laudatio auf die DDR,” *Sinn und Form* 18 (1966), 267-273.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Silvia Schlenstedt/Dieter Schlenstedt, “Modern erzählt,” *Neue Deutsche Literatur* 13.12 (1965), 5-34.

²⁰² Reich-Ranicki, Marcel. “Ein Land des Lächelns. Hermann Kant, Die Aula.” *Zur Literatur der DDR*, (München: Piper, 1974) 83-89.

²⁰³ Reich-Ranicki, 85, 87.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 87

- ²⁰⁵ Günther Zehm, "Die Aula der neuen Klasse. Zu Hermann Kants Roman vom arrivierten Proletarier." *Die Welt der Literatur* 3.4 (1966) 7.
- ²⁰⁶ Zehm, 87.
- ²⁰⁷ Ibid.
- ²⁰⁸ Fritz J. Raddatz, *Traditionen und Tendenzen; Materialien zur Literatur der DDR*, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972) 333.
- ²⁰⁹ Ibid.
- ²¹⁰ Ibid.
- ²¹¹ Heinrich Mohr, "Gerechtes Erinnern. Untersuchungen zu Thema und Struktur von Hermann Kants Roman *Die Aula* und einige Anmerkungen zu bundesrepublikanischen Rezensionen," *Basis. Jahrbuch für deutsche Gegenwartsliteratur* 2 (1971). Reception in the West: Rolf Becker, Mutmaßungen über Quasi. In: *Der Spiegel* 20 (1966): 126. Günther Zehm, "Die Aula der neuen Klasse. Zu Hermann Kants Roman vom arrivierten Proletarier," *Die Welt der Literatur* 3: 4 (1966) 7.
- ²¹² Mohr, 245.
- ²¹³ Franz Schonauer, "Hermann Kant/*Die Aula*." *Neue Rundschau* 77 (1966), 308-312; Hans-Georg Hölsken, "Zwei Romane: Christa Wolf *Der geteilte Himmel* und Hermann Kant *Die Aula*," *Der Deutschunterricht* 21 (1969): 61-69.
- ²¹⁴ Schonauer, 311.
- ²¹⁵ Hölsken, 71.
- ²¹⁶ Hermand, 178.
- ²¹⁷ Ibid., 182.
- ²¹⁸ Wolfgang Emmerich, *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR*, (Frankfurt am Main: Luchterhand, 1989), 191.
- ²¹⁹ Spiewok, 430f.
- ²²⁰ Raddatz 332f.
- ²²¹ Manfred Durzak, *Der deutsche Roman der Gegenwart: Entwicklungsvoraussetzungen und Tendenzen: Heinrich Böll, Günter Grass, Uwe Johnson, Christa Wolf, Hermann Kant* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1979) 438.
- ²²² I showed their positions in the analysis of the reception history of *Die Aula*.
- ²²³ Reinhard Andress, "Bleibt Hermann Kants *Die Aula*?—Eine Post-Wende-Wertung," *Seminar* 31.1 (February 1995): 28.
- ²²⁴ Jürgen Kuczynski, "Briefe. Jürgen Kuczynski an Hermann Kant," *Neue Deutsche Literatur*, 28.10 (1980): 156.
- ²²⁵ "Ob sich der Herr Student etwas klüger dünke als die Genossen im Zentralorgan, hatte er gefragt, ob er vielleicht meine, die Redakteure hätte nicht gewußt, was sie taten, als sie die selbstkritische Stellungnahme verfaßten, ob er wirklich glaube, man könne mit den Worten des Völkerführers nach Belieben verfahren, ob er sich überhaupt bewußt sei, wieviel auch er, der ehemaliger Mechaniker Fiebach, dem Sohn des Schuhmachers aus Gori verdanke, ob er denn jemals über die Rolle der Sowjetunion nachgedacht habe und ob er sich am Ende herauszuhalten gedenke, wenn es um die Herstellung eines einheitlichen, unabhängigen, demonkratischen, jawohl, demokratischen, friedliebenden Deutschland gehe" (*Aula* 281-2).
- ²²⁶ Thanks go to Prof. Donahue who reminded me that Kant refers here also to another Heine poem: Ein Jüngling liebt ein Mädchen, / Die hat einen andern erwählt; / Der andre liebt eine andre, / und hat sich mit dieser vermählt. / Das Mädchen heiratet aus Ärger / Den ersten besten Mann, / Der ihr in den Weg gelaufen; / Der Jüngling ist übel dran. / Es ist eine alte Geschichte, / Doch bleibt sie immer neu; / Und wem sie just passiert, / Dem bricht das Herz entzwei. 3 March 2006
<http://gutenberg.spiegel.de/Heine/buchlied/Druckversion_lyr-39.htm, accessed on 3/22/2006 12:17pm>.
- ²²⁷ Herd, "Narrative Technique in Two Novels by Hermann Kant," 192.
- ²²⁸ Heinrich Heine, quoted in *Die Aula*, 5.
- ²²⁹ Andress, "Bleibt Hermann Kants *Die Aula*?—Eine Post-Wende-Wertung" 26.
- ²³⁰ Reich-Ranicki, 87.
- ²³¹ Thanks go to Elena Mancini who helped me realize this fact.
- ²³² Raddatz, 333.
- ²³³ Ibid.
- ²³⁴ Zehm, 87.

²³⁵ Kant, *Unterlagen: Zur Literatur und Politik*, 33.

²³⁶ Frank Pubantz, "Das Böse' an sich in Bützow: Hermann Kant, Literatur-Ikone der einstigen DDR, teilte aus," *Bützower Zeitung*, 22. April, 2006. 26 Apr. 2006
<<http://www.svz.de/newsmv/lr/bue/22.04.06/3668680/3668680.html>>.

²³⁷ Friedrich, "Der Vorgang meiner Vereinzelung."

²³⁸ Hans-Jürgen Schmitt, "Party der Wendeständler," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 19.10.1994.

Anke Westphal, "Die Mumienparty," *Die Tageszeitung (TAZ)*, Oktober 5, 1994.

²³⁹ Westphal, "Die Mumienparty."

²⁴⁰ Stephan Maus, "Wort," *FAZ*, 6. June 2002, Berliner Seiten: Section B, 4.

²⁴¹ Gerd Langguth, "Die Identität der Deutschen," Vortrag an der Sorbonne, Paris, 28. February 1996; 26 Apr. 2006 <<http://www.gerd-langguth.de/artikel/sorbonne.htm>>.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adler, Jeremy. "Die Macht des Guten im Rachen des Bösen." *Merkur* 54 (2000): 475-86.
- Adorno, Theodor. "Commitment." *Literature in the Modern World: Critical Essays and Documents*. Ed. Dennis Walder. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press in association with the Open University, 1990. 89-99.
- . *Gesammte Schriften*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977.
- . *The Authoritarian Personality*. New York: Harper, 1950.
- . *Aesthetic Theory*. Ed. Gretel Adorno, and Rolf Tiedemann. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997.
- . *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*. London: Routledge, 1991.
- . *Notes to Literature*. European Perspectives. New York: Columbia University Press, 1991.
- Andress, Reinhard. "Bleibt Hermann Kants *Die Aula?* — Eine Post-Wende-Wertung." *Seminar* 31.1 (February 1995): 19-31.
- . "Hermann Kants Erinnerungsbuch Abspann: Ein Beispiel von Legendenbau." *Seminar* 34.2 (May 1998): 137-48.
- . "Neue Autobiographien von DDR Schriftstellern. Beiträge Zur Aufarbeitung der DDR?" *GDR Bulletin* 20.1 (Spring 1994): 1-12.
- . "'Schwarzmalerei und Mohrenwäsche: Differenzierung ist Notwendig': Ein Gespräch mit Jochim Walther." *GDR Bulletin* 18.2 (1992): 6-12.
- Angröss, Ruth. "A 'Jewish Problem' in German Postwar Fiction." *Modern Judaism* 5.3 (1985): 215-233.
- Anz, Thomas. *"Es geht nicht um Christa Wolf": Der Literaturstreit im vereinten Deutschland*. Munich: Edition Spangenberg, 1991.
- Arendt, Hannah. *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. New York: Viking Press, 1964.
- Arnold, Heinz Ludwig, and Frauke Meyer-Gosau (ed.). *Literatur in der DDR: Rückblicke*. Munich: Edition Text + Kritik, 1991.
- Aschheim, Steven. *In Times of Crisis: Essays on European Culture, Germans, and Jews*. Madison, Wis.; London: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001.
- Bartholl, Silvia (ed.). *Texte dagegen: Autorinnen und Autoren schreiben gegen Fremdenhaß und Rassismus*. Basel: Beltz Verlag, 1993.
- Bathrick, David. "Politics of Reception Theory in the GDR." *The Minnesota Review* 5 (Fall 1975): 125-33.
- . "Productive Mis-Reading: GDR Literature in the USA." *GDR Bulletin* 16.2 (Fall 1990): 1-6.
- . *The Powers of Speech the Politics of Culture in the GDR*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995.
- . "Kultur und Öffentlichkeit in der DDR." *Literatur der DDR in den siebziger Jahren*. Ed. Peter Uwe Hohendahl and Patricia Herminghouse. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1983. 53-81.
- Becher, Johannes, R. "Die politische-moralische Vernichtung des Faschismus." *Kürbiskern* 2 (1975): 47.
- Becker, Jurek. *Jokob der Lügner*. Frankfurt am. Main: Suhrkamp, c1969.
- Benjamin, Andrew. *The Problems of Modernity: Adorno and Benjamin*. London; New York: Routledge, 1989.
- Benn, Gottfried. *Autobiographische und Vermischte Schriften*. Gesammelte Werke in Vier Bänden 4. Ed. Dieter Wellershoff. Wiesbaden: Limes, 1961.
- Birus, Hendrik. "Adorno's 'Negative Aesthetics?'" *Language of the Unsayable: The Play of Negativity in Literature and Literary Theory*. Ed. Sanford Budick and Wolfgang Iser. New York; Oxford: Columbia University Press, 1989. 140-64.
- Bjorklund, Beth, and Mark E. Cory. *Politics in German Literature*. Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1998.
- Taylor, Ronald (translation editor). *Aesthetics and Politics* by Bloch, Ernst [et.al]. Afterword by Fredric Jameson. London: NLB, 1977.
- Boeschstein, Hermann. "Zur Erzähl-Thematik in der Literatur der DDR." *Siefken* 166-84.
- Bohrer, Karl Heinz. "Die Ästhetik am Ausgang ihrer Unmündigkeit." *Merkur* 44 (1990): 851-865.
- . "Deutsche Revolution und protestantische Mentalität." *Merkur* 41 (1992): 958-64.
- . "Das Ethische am Ästhetischen." *Merkur* 54 (2000): 1149-62.
- . "Kulturschutzgebiet DDR?" *Merkur* 43 (1990): 1015-8.

- Brandes, Ute. "Between Utopia and Party Doctrine: Anna Seghers in the 1950s." *Michigan Germanic Studies* 21.1-2 (1995): 139-49.
- Brandt, Sabine. "Tagebuch." *FAZ* 26/11 1997.
- Braun, Otto. "Brauchen Wir Kriegsromane?" *Neues Deutschland* 7. Beilage Kunst und Literatur (8/1 1956): 1-2.
- Brecht, Bertolt. *Schriften zur Literatur und Kunst*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1967.
- Brodsky, Patricia Pollock. "Dressed Like a Soldier: World War II in Centural Europe in Two GDR Novels." *Symposium: A Quarterly Journal in Modern Literatures* 49.4 (Winter 1996): 250-61.
- Bronner, Stephen Eric. *Ideas in Action: Political Tradition in the Twentieth Century*. Lanham, Md. Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999.
- . *Of Critical Theory and Its Theorists*. New York: Routledge, 2002.
- . *Passion and Rebellion: The Expressionist Heritage*. South Hadley, Mass.: J.F. Bergin, 1983.
- , and Douglas Kellner. *Critical Theory and Society: A Reader*. New York: Routledge, 1989.
- Budick, Sanford, and Wolfgang Iser (ed.). *Language of the Unsayable: The Play of Negativity in Literature and Literary Theory*. New York; Oxford: Columbia University Press, 1989.
- Bullivant, Keith. *Beyond 1989: Re-Reading German Literary History Since 1945*. Providence, RI: Berghahn Books, 1997.
- . *The Future of German Literature*. Oxford, UK Providence, RI: Berg, 1994.
- Calvino, Italo. "Right and Wrong Political Use of Literature." *Literature in the Modern World: Critical Essays and Documents*. Ed. Dennis Walder. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press in association with The Open University, 1990. 99-102.
- Christmann, Stefanie. *Auf der Suche nach dem verhinderten Subjekt: DDR-Prosa Über Faschismus im Licht der Frankfurter Schule*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1990.
- Clason, Synnöve. "Wie progressive ist 'progressive' Literatur? Männliche Schwierigkeiten mit der Gleichberechtigung. Am Beispiel der DDR und Hermann Kants Roman 'Das Impressum.'" *Jahrbuch Für Internationale Germanistik* 14.1 (1982): 37-52.
- Cohen-Pfister. "Defining the 'End' of GDR Literature: Making the Case for Young Literature." *Germanic Review* 67.4 (Fall 1992): 151-8.
- Corino, Karl. *Außen Marmor, innen Gips: Die Legenden des Stephan Hermlin*. Düsseldorf: ECON, 1996.
- . *Gefälscht! Betrug in Politik, Literatur, Wissenschaft, Kunst und Musik*. Frankfurt am Main: Eichhorn, 1990.
- . *Intellektuelle im Bann des Nationalsozialismus*. Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1980.
- . *Die Akte Kant: IM "Martin," die Stasi und die Literatur in Ost und West*. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1995.
- Daly, Peter. *Germany Reunified: A Five- and Fifty-Year Retrospective*. New York: P. Lang, 1997.
- Davis, Lennard J. *Resisting Novels: Ideology and Fiction*. New York: Methuen, 1987.
- de Bruyn, Günter. "Der Hohlweg." *Eröffnungen: Schriftsteller über ihr Erstlingswerk*. Ed. Gerhard Schneider. Berlin: Aufbau, 1974. 138-43.
- Deiritz, Karl, and Hannes Krauss. *Der deutsch-deutsche Literaturstreit, oder, "Freunde, es spricht sich schlecht mit gebundener Zunge": Analysen und Materialien*. Hamburg: Luchterhand, 1991.
- . *Marx, Engels, and the Poets: Origins of Marxist Literary Criticism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967.
- . *Postwar German Literatur: A Critical Introduction*. New York: Pegasus, 1970.
- Dobrenko, Evgeny. "The Disaster of Middlebrow Taste, or, Who 'Invented' Socialist Realism?" *Socialist Realism Without Shores*. Ed. Thomas Lahusen and Evgeny Dobrenko, 1997. 135-64.
- Donahue, William Collins. *The End of Modernism: Elias Canetti's Auto-Da-Fé*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001.
- . "Vicarious Pleasures – Critical Interventions: German Political Literature Revisited." *German Politics and Society* 32 (Summer 1994): 125-35.
- Downing, Eric. *Double Exposures: Repetition and Realism in Nineteenth-Century German Fiction*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000.
- Dubiel, Helmut. "Linke Trauerarbeit." *Merkur* 49 (1990): 482-91.
- Durrani, Osman, Colin Good and Kevin Hilliard (ed.). *The New Germany: Literature and Society After Unification*. Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995.

- Durzak, Manfred. *Der deutsche Roman der Gegenwart: Entwicklungsvoraussetzungen und Tendenzen: Heinrich Böll, Günter Grass, Uwe Johnson, Christa Wolf, Hermann Kant*. Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1979.
- Ehlers, Hella. "Erinnerungsarbeit gegen Vergessen und 'Entsorgung': On the Treatment of the Experience of German Fascism in Prose Works of the Last Decade in the Federal Republic." *German Literature at a Time of Change 1989-1990*. Ed. Arthur Williams, Stuart Parkes and Roland Smith. Bern; Berlin; Frankfurt a.m.; New York; Paris; Wien: Peter Lang, 1991. 225-42.
- Eigler, Friederike Ursula, and Peter Pfeiffer. *Cultural Transformations in the New Germany: American and German Perspectives*. Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1993.
- Einhorn, Barbara. *Der Roman in der DDR 1949-1969: Die Gestaltung des. Verhältnisses von Individuum und Gesellschaft: Eine Analyse der Erzählstruktur*. 1. Aufl. Monographien Literaturwissenschaft. Kronberg/Ts.: Scriptor-Verlag, 1978.
- Emmerich, Wolfgang. "Affirmation — Utopie — Melancholie: Versuch einer Bilanz von vierzig Jahren DDR-Literatur." *German Studies Review* 14.2 (1991): 325-44.
- . *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR. Erweiterte Ausgabe*. Frankfurt/M: Luchterhand, 1989.
- Evans, Richard J. *In Hitler's Shadow: West German Historians and the Attempt to Escape from the Nazi Past*. London: I.B. Tauris, 1989.
- Fehn, Ann Clark., Ingeborg Hoesterey, and Maria Tatar. *Neverending Stories Toward a Critical Narratology*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992.
- Flanagan, Clare and Stuart Taberner (ed.). *1949/1989: Cultural Perspectives on Division and Unity in East and West*. German Monitor 50. Amsterdam; Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 2000.
- Fox, Thomas C. *Border Crossings: An Introduction to East German Prose*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993.
- . *Stated Memory: East Germany and the Holocaust*. Rochester, NY Woodbridge, UK: Camden House, 1999.
- . "A 'Jewish Question' in GDR Literature?" *German Life and Letters* 44.1 (October 1990): 58-70.
- Franke, Konrad. "Um wen geht es." *Süddeutsche Zeitung* 7/May 1992.
- Friedrich, Detlef. "Der Vorgang Meiner Vereinzelung. Hermann Kant Will Nicht mit Unerfüllbaren Verstellungen Durch die Gegend Humpeln. Er ist Kein Radikaler Mann." *Berliner Zeitung* 23/September 2000: Magazin.
- Friedrich, Gerhard. "Die Helden in Hermann Kants Roman *Die Aula*." *Der Deutschunterricht: Beiträge zu seiner Praxis und wissenschaftlichen Grundlegung* 26.4 (1974): 81-98.
- Fuhrmann, Helmut. *Vorausgeworfene Schatten : Literatur in der DDR, DDR in der Literatur*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2003.
- Gaus, Günter. *Zur Person 1: Jureck Becker, Daniela Dahn, Hermann Kant, Helga Königsdorf, Christa Wolf*. Berlin: Edition Ost, 1998.
- Geerdts, Hans Jürgen. "Zur Thematik des Antifaschismus in der Geschichte der DDR-Prosa." *Zeitschrift Für Germanistik* 1.1 (1980): 71-78.
- Gerber, Margy. "Confrontations with Reality in Hermann Kant's *DIE AULA*." *Monatshefte* 67.2 (1975): 173-84.
- , and Roger Woods. *Understanding the Past, Managing the Future the Integration of the Five New Länder Into the Federal Republic of Germany : Selected Papers from the Eighteenth New Hampshire Symposium*. Studies in GDR Culture and Society. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1994.
- . *Changing Identities in East Germany Selected Papers from the Nineteenth and Twentieth New Hampshire Symposia*. Studies in GDR Culture and Society. Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1996.
- Gerber, Thomas. "Hermann Kants Roman 'Der Aufenthalt' in der Literaturkritik der DDR und der VRP." *Rieck* 90-101.
- Gohlman, Susan Ashley. *Starting Over : The Task of the Protagonist in the Contemporary Bildungsroman*. New York: Garland Pub., 1990.
- Goodbody, Axel and Dennis Tate (ed.). *Geist und Macht: Writers and the State in the GDR*. German Monitor 29. Amsterdam; Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1992.
- Görlich, Johann Wolfgang. *Geist und Macht in der DD: Die Integration der kommunistischen Ideologie*. Olton Freiburg i. Br.: Walter, 1968.

- Greiner, Bernhard. "'Sentimentaler Stoff und fantastische Form': Zur Erneuerung frühromantischer Tradition im Roman der DDR." *DDR-Roman und Literaturgesellschaft*. Ed. Jos Hoogeveen and Gerd Labrousse. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1981. 249-328.
- Greiner, Ulrich. "Die deutsche Gesinnungsästhetik." *Die Zeit* 2/November 1990.
- . "Die Mauer im Kopf: Toward an Understanding of the 1990 German Literary Dispute." *German Politics and Society*, 27 (Fall 1992): 61-68.
- Große, Anneliese. "Interview mit Hermann Kant." *Weimarer Beiträge* 18.8 (1972): 32-64.
- . "Vom Wert der Geschichte." *Weimarer Beiträge* 18.8 (1972): 65-91.
- Groys, Boris. "A Style and a Half: Socialist Realism Between Modernism and Postmodernism." *Socialist Realism Without Shores*. Ed. Thomas Lahusen and Evgeny Dobrenko, 1997. 76-90.
- Gutkin, Irina. *The Cultural Origins of the Socialist Realist Aesthetic, 1890-1934*. Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 1999.
- Günther, Hans. "Die Lebensphasen eines Kanons — Am Beispiel des sozialistischen Realismus." *Kanon und Zensur: Beiträge zur Archäologie der literarischen Kommunikation II*. Ed. Aleida Assmann and Jan Assmann. Munich: Fink, 1987. 138-48.
- Habermas, Jürgen. "Die neue Unübersichtlichkeit." *Merkur* 39 (1985): 1-12.
- . "The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article (1964)." *New German Critique* 3 (1974): 49-55.
- . *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987.
- Hales, Barbara. "Fritz Lang's Metropolis and Reactionary Modernism." *New German Review: A Journal of Germanic Studies* 8 (1992): 18-30.
- . "Wir sind wieder normal geworden: German Unification and the Dynamic of Vergangenheitsbewältigung." *Proceedings and Commentary: German Graduate Students Association Conference at New York University February 12-14, 1993*. Ed. Patricia Doykos Duquette, et al. New York, N.Y.: The Conference, 1994. 169-75.
- Handke, Peter. *Ich bin ein Bewohner des Elfenbeinturms*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Verlag, 1972.
- Harder, Jürgen. "Literaturstreit in Deutschland: Menetekel einer Kulturwende." *Berliner Lesezeichen* 04 (1997). http://www.luise-berlin.de/Lesezei/B1z97_04/text01.htm (26 Apr. 2006).
- Hartmann, Karl-Heinz. "Die Darstellung der anti-faschistischen Opposition in der frühen DDR-Prosa." *DDR-Roman und Literaturgesellschaft*. Ed. Jos Hoogeveen and Gerd Labrousse. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1981. 33-59.
- . "Das Dritte Reich in der DDR-Literatur. Stationen erzählter Vergangenheit." *Gegenwartsliteratur und Drittes Reich: Deutsche Autoren in der Auseinandersetzung mit der Vergangenheit*. Ed. Hans Wager. Stuttgart: Reclam, 1977. 307-28.
- . "Erinnerungsarbeit." *Der deutsche Roman Nach 1945*. Ed. Manfred Brauneck. Bamberg: C.C. Buchner, 1993. 188-202.
- Hell, Julia. *Post-Fascist Fantasies: Psychoanalysis, History, and the Literature of East Germany*. Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 1997.
- Heller, Leonid. "A World of Prettiness: Socialist Realism and Its Aesthetic Categories." *Socialist Realism Without Shores*. Ed. Thomas Lahusen and Evgeny Dobrenko. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1997. 51-75.
- Herd, E. W. "Narrative Technique in Two Novels by Hermann Kant." *Siefken* 185-96.
- Hermant, Jost. *Unbequeme Literatur: Eine Beispielreihe*. Literatur und Geschichte: Eine Schriftenreihe 3. Heidelberg: Lothar Stiehm Verlag, 1971.
- . *Postmodern Pluralism and Concepts of Totality the Twenty-Fourth Wisconsin Workshop*. New York: P. Lang, 1995.
- Herminghouse, Patricia. "Vergangenheit als Problem der Gegenwart: Zur Darstellung des Faschismus in der neueren DDR-Literatur." *Literatur der DDR in den siebziger Jahren*. Ed. Peter Uwe Hohendahl and Patricia Herminghouse. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1983. 259-94.
- . "Whose German Literature? GDR-Literature, German Literature and the Question of National Identity." *GDR Bulletin* 16.2 (Fall 1990): 6-11.
- Hermelin, Stephan. "Über 'Die Aula.'" *Äußerungen 1944-1982*. Berlin/Weimar: Aufbau, 1983. 336-40.
- Herzinger, Richard, and Heinz-Peter Preußner. "Vom Äußersten zum Ersten: DDR-Literatur in der Tradition deutscher Zivilisationskritik." Ed. Heinz Ludwig Arnold and Frauke Meyer-Gosau. Munich: Edition Text + Kritik, 1991. 195-209.

- Heulenkamp, Ursula. "‘Der Gegenwart verpflichtet und für die Zukunft bauend’: Jüngere Literatur in der Sowjetischen Besatzungszone." Ed. Heinz Ludwig Arnold and Frauke Meyer-Gosau. München: Edition Text + Kritik, 1991. 23-33.
- Hirdina, Karin. "Debatten um Politik und Kunst." *Literatur in der DDR: Rückblicke*. Ed. Heinz Ludwig Arnold and Frauke Meyer-Gosau. München: Edition Text + Kritik, 1991. 85-92.
- Hohendahl, Peter Uwe. "Theorie und Praxis des Erbens: Untersuchungen zum Problem der literarischen Tradition in der DDR." *Literatur der DDR in den siebziger Jahren*. Ed. Peter Uwe Hohendahl and Patrica Herminghouse. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1983. 13-52.
- . "The Use Value of Contemporary and Future Literary Criticism." *New German Critique* 7 (Winter 1976): 3-22.
- Hohendahl, Peter Uwe, and Patrica Herminghouse (ed.). *Literatur der DDR in den siebziger Jahren*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1983.
- Holtz-Baumert, Gerhard. "‘Der Aufenthalt’ von Hermann Kant." *Neue Deutsche Literatur* 26.1 (1978): 48-53.
- Holub, Robert. "New Historicism and the New World Order: The Politics of Textuality and Power in German Studies." *Monatshefte* 84.2 (1992): 171-92.
- . "Coming to Terms with the Past in Postwar Literature and Philosophy." *Philosophy and German Literature 1700-1990*. Ed. Nicholas Saul. Cambridge, England: Cambridge UP, 2002. 245-90.
- . *Jürgen Habermas: Critic in the Public Sphere*. London New York: Routledge, 1991.
- Honecker, Erich. *Die Roller der Arbeiterklasse und ihrer Partei in der sozialistischen Gesellschaft*. Berlin: Dietz, 1974.
- Hoogeveen, Jos, and Gerd Labrousse (ed.). *DDR-Roman und Literaturgesellschaft*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1981.
- Hölsken, Hans-Georg. "Zwei Romane: Christa Wolf *Der geteilte Himmel* und Hermann Kant *Die Aula*." *Der Deutschunterricht* 21.5 (1969): 61-69.
- Höpcke, Klaus. "Hermm Lehmann und Herr Mayer." *Neues Deutschland* 07/March 1964.
- Huebener, Theodore. *The Literature of East Germany*. New York: F. Ungar, 1970.
- Huyssen, Andreas. *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986.
- Hüppauf, Bernd. "Moral oder Sprache: DDR-Literatur vor der Moderne." Ed. Heinz Ludwig Arnold and Frauke Meyer-Gosau. München: Edition Text + Kritik, 1991. 220-31.
- Iser, Wolfgang. "The Play of the Text." *Language of the Unsayable: The Play of Negativity in Literature and Literary Theory*. Ed. Sanford Budick and Wolfgang Iser. New York; Oxford: Columbia University Press, 1989. 325-39.
- Jackman, Graham, and Ian F. Roe. *Finding a Voice: Problems of Language in East German Society and Culture*. German Monitor. Amsterdam Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 2000.
- Jarmatz, Klausund, and Christel Berger(ed.). *Weggenossen: Funfzehn Schriftsteller der DDR*. Frankfurt a. m.: Roderberg Verlag, 1975.
- Jay, Martin. *Adorno*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984.
- . "Anti-Semitism and the Frankfurt School." *Germans and Jews Since the Holocaust*. Ed. Anton Rabinbach and Jack Zipes. New York, 1980.
- . *Marxism and Totality: The Adventures of a Concept from Lukács to Habermas*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.
- . "Once More an Inability to Mourn? Reflections on the Left Melancholy of Our Time." *German Politics and Society* 27 (1992): 69-76.
- Jäger, Andrea. "Schriftsteller-Identität und Zensur: Über die Bedingungen des Schreibens im ‘realen Sozialismus.’" *Literatur in der DDR: Rückblicke*. Ed. Heinz Ludwig Arnold and Frauke Meyer-Gosau. München: Edition Text + Kritik, 1991. 137-48.
- Jelavich, Peter. "Metamorphoses of Censorship in Modern Germany." *German Politics and Society* 27 (Fall 1992).
- Jessen, Ralph. "Diktatorische Herrschaft als kommunikative Praxis." *Akten. Eingaben. Schaufenster. Die DDR und ihre Texte: Erkundungen zu Herrschaft und Alltag*. Ed. Peter Becker and Alf Lüdtke. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1997.
- Joffe, Josef. "The Battle of the Historians: A Report from Germany." *Encounter* 69 (June 1987): 72-77.

- Joho, Wolfgang. "Das hohe Ziel der gebildeten Nation und die Steine auf dem Weg der Literatur." *Neue Deutsche Literatur* 1 (1963): 8-18.
- Joravsky, David. "Communism in Historical Perspective." *The American Historical Review* 99.3 (June 1994): 837-57.
- Juraga, Dubravka., and M. Keith Booker. *Socialist Cultures East and West: A Post-Cold War Reassessment*. Westport, Conn. London: Praeger, 2002.
- Kant, Hermann. *Ein bißchen Südsee: Erzählungen*. Berlin: Rütten & Loening, 1962.
- . "Ein offener Brief an *Die Junge Welt*." *Die Junge Welt* 9/October 1989.
- . "'Ich war ein Aktivist der DDR': Der ostdeutscher Schriftsteller Hermann Kant über seine Rolle und den Stellenwert der Literatur im SED-Regime." *Der Spiegel* 1990: 156-60.
- . *Abspann: Erinnerung an meine Gegenwart*. 1. Aufl. Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1991.
- . *Der Aufenthalt*. [1. Aufl.] Berlin: Rütten & Loening, 1977.
- . *Die Aula*. [15. Aufl.]. Berlin: Rütten & Loening, 1965.
- . *Bronzezeit: Geschichten aus dem Leben des Buchhalters Farssmann*. Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1986.
- . *Der Dritte Nagel: Geschichten*. 2. Aufl. Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1982.
- . *Das Impressum*. Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1972.
- . *Kormoran*. [1. Aufl.] Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1994.
- . *Die Summe: Eine Begebenheit*. Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1988.
- . *Unterlagen zu Literatur und Politik*. Originalausg. Sammlung Luchterhand. Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1982.
- . *Eine Übertretung: Erzählungen*. Darmstadt; Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1976.
- Kant, Hermann, and Leonore Krenzlin. *Zu den Unterlagen: Publizistik 1957-1980*. 1. Aufl. Berlin Weimar: Aufbau-Verlag, 1981.
- Kant, Hermann, and Lothar Reher. *In Stockholm*. 4. Aufl. Berlin: Verlag Volk und Welt, 1976.
- Kant, Hermann, Gerhard Zwerenz, and Joachim Jahns. *Unendliche Wende: Ein Streitgespräch*. [1. Aufl.] Querfurt: Dingsda-Verlag, 1998.
- Kant, Hermann, and Frank Wagner. "Die große Abrechnung. Probleme der Darstellung des Krieges in der deutschen Gegenwartsliteratur." *Neue Deutsche Literatur* 3 (1957): 124-38.
- Kellner, Douglas. *Critical Theory, Marxism, and Modernity*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989.
- . *Postmodernism: Jameson Critique*. Washington, D.C.: Maisonneuve Press, 1989.
- Kelly, Michael, Michel Foucault, and Jürgen Habermas. *Critique and Power: Recasting the Foucault/Habermas Debate*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1994.
- Knowlton, James and Truett Cates (trans.). *Historikerstreit: Forever in the Shadow of Hitler? Original Documents of the Historikerstreit, the Controversy Concerning the Singularity of the Holocaust*. Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1993.
- Königsdorf, Helga. *1989 oder ein Moment Schönheit*. Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1990.
- Krenzlin, Leonore. *Hermann Kant: Leben und Werk (3.Auflage. Ausgabe 1988)*. Berlin: Volk und Wissen, 1988.
- Kuczynski, Jürgen. "Briefe. Juergen Kuczynski an Hermann Kant." 10 (1980): 156-65.
- Küntzel, Heinrich. "Von Abschied bis Atemnot: Über die Poetik des Romans, insbesondere des Bildungs- und Entwicklungsromans, in der DDR." *DDR-Roman und Literaturgesellschaft*. Ed. Jos Hoogeveen and Gerd Labrousse. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1981. 1-32.
- Lahusen, Thomas. "Socialist Realism in Search of Its Shores: Some Historical Remarks on the 'Historically Open Aesthetic System of the Truthful Representation of Life.'" *Socialist Realism Without Shores*. Ed. Thomas Lahusen and Evgeny Dobrenko, 1997. 5-26.
- Lahusen, Thomas., and E. A. Dobrenko. *Socialist Realism Without Shores*. Post-Contemporary Interventions. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1997.
- Lange, Marianne (ed.). *Zur sozialistischen Kulturrevolution. Dokumente*. Berlin, 1960.
- Langenbruch, Theodor. *Dialectical Humor in Hermann Kant's Novel 'Die Aula': A Study in Contemporary East German Literature*. Abhandlungen Zur Kunst-, Musik- und Literaturwissenschaft. Bonn: Bouvier, 1975.
- Langenbruch, Theodor, and Benjamin Robinson. "Not Right, but Painfully Good: Ethical Identities in Real Socialist Fiction." *Proceedings and Commentary: German Graduate Students Association*

- Conference at New York University February 12-14, 1993*. Ed. Patricia Doykos, et al. New York, N.Y.: The Conference, 1994. 176-85.
- Langguth, Gerd. "Die Deutschen und ihre nationale Identität — Schwieriger Umgang mit einem vernachlässigten Begriff." *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* 12./13. /October 1996.
- Lauckner, Nancy A. "The Treatment of Holocaust Themes in GDR Fiction from the Late 1960s to the Mid-1970s: A Survey." *Studies in GDR Culture and Society*. Ed. Margy Gerber, et al. Washington D.C., 1981. 141-53.
- Lehmann, Joachim. "Vom 'gesunden Volksempfinden' Zur Utopie: Literaturkritik der DDR im Spannungsfeld von Zensur und Literatur." *Literatur in der DDR: Rückblicke*. Ed. Heinz Ludwig Arnold and Frauke Meyer-Gosau. München: Edition Text + Kritik, 1991. 117-26.
- Lewis, Rand C. *The Neo-Nazis and German Unification*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 1996.
- Liersch, Werner. "Hermann Kant: Das Impressum." *Weimarer Beiträge* 18.10 (1972): 149-53.
- Loewy, Hanno. "Mumpitz und Tabu." *Frankfurter Rundschau* 05/03 2003. http://www.fr-aktuell.de/ressorts/kultur_und_medien/feuilleton/?cnt=163793 (10.03.2003).
- Löffler, Anneliese. *Auskünfte Werkstattgespräche mit DDR-Autoren*. 2. Aufl. Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1976.
- . "Vom Wert der Geschichte." *Auskünfte Werkstattgespräche mit DDR-Autoren*. Ed. Anneliese. Löffler. Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1974. 273-318.
- Lukács, Georg. *The Theory of the Novel*. Trans. Anna Bostock. 1920. Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1971.
- . *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*. Trans. Rodney Livingstone. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT PRESS, 1971.
- . *Realism in Our Time: Literature and the Class Struggle*. Trans. John and Necke Mander, (1964) 70. New York: Harper & Row, 1964.
- . *Wider den mißverstandenen Realismus*. Hamburg, 1958.
- Lunn, Eugene. *Marxism and Modernism*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982.
- Meier, André. "Stalins Erektion und Ideengefäß." *Die Tageszeitung (TAZ)* 12/March 2002: Kultur, 15.
- Meier, Gerhard. "Zur literarischen Darstellung des Verhältnisses der Deutschen zu ihren ostlichen Nachbarn in Werken der DDR-Literatur der 80er Jahre." *Rieck* 43-57.
- Meyer, Hans. *Ansichten: Zur Literatur der Zeit*. Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1962.
- Mittenzwei, Werner. "Die Brecht-Lukács-Debatte." *Sinn und Form* 19 (1967): 235-69.
- Mohr, Heinrich. "Gerechtes Erinnern: Untersuchungen zu Thema und Struktur von Hermann Kants Roman Die Aula und einige Anmerkungen zu bundesrepublikanischen Rezensionen." *Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift* 21 (1971): 225-45.
- Münz-Koenen, Ingeborg. "Realismus in der Diskussion: Literarische Theoriebildung in der DDR-Rückblick auf die Übergangsperiode." *Richter* 27-54.
- Naqvi, Fatima. "Dialectic at a Standstill: The Discourse of Victimhood in Thomas Bernhard's Heldenplatz." *German Quarterly* 75.4 (September 1 2002): 408-21.
- Neubert, Werner. "Komisches und Satirisches in Hermann Kants 'Aula.'" *Weimarer Beiträge* (1966): 15-26.
- Niven, William John. *Facing the Nazi Past: United Germany and the Legacy of the Third Reich*. London; New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Nothnagle, Alan L. *Building the East German Myth: Historical Mythology and Youth Propaganda in the German Democratic Republic, 1945-1989*. Social History, Popular Culture, and Politics in Germany. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999.
- Orzelek, Irena Regina. "Um Problem nationaler Images in Werken der polnischen und der DDR-Literatur mit realhistorischem Stoff und Sujet." *Rieck* 19-33.
- , and Therese Hörnigk. "Kriegserlebnis und Wandlungsgestaltung in der frühen DDR-Literatur." *Richter* 223-46.
- Pareigis, Gottfried. *Kritische Analyse der Realitätsdarstellung in ausgewählten Werken des "Bitterfelder Weges"*. Kronberg Ts.: Scriptor Verlag, 1974.
- Peters, Jochen Ulrich. "Realisme sans rivages? Zur Diskussion über den sozialistischen Realismus in der Sowjetunion Seit 1956." *Zeitschrift für slavische Philologie* 37 (1974): 291-324.
- Pieck, Wilhelm, Georgi Dimitroff, and Palmiro Togliatti. "Die Offensive Des Faschismus und die Aufgaben der Kommunisten Im Kampf Für die Volksfront Gegen Krieg und Faschismus." *Referate auf dem VII. Kongreß der Kommunistischen Internationale (1935)*, 1960. 87.

- Pinkert, Anke. "Pleasures of Fear: Anti-Fascist Myth, Holocaust, and Soft Dissidence in Christa Wolf's Kindheitsmuster." *German Quarterly* 76.1 (Winter 2003): 25-37.
- Pubantz, Frank. "'Das Böse' an sich in Bützow: Hermann Kant, Literatur-Ikone der einstigen DDR, teilte aus." *Bützower Zeitung* 22/April 2006.
- Raddatz, Fritz J. *Traditionen und Tendenzen: Materialien zur Literatur der DDR*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972.
- Rectanus, Mark W. "GDR Literature in the International Book Market: From Confrontation to Assimilation." *GDR Bulletin* 16.2 (Fall 1990): 11-18.
- Reich-Ranicki, Marcel. *Ohne Rabatt über Literatur aus der DDR*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1991.
- Reid, J. H. "Monkey-Business in the GDR: Hermann Kant and Kafka." *German Life and Letters* 38 (July 1985): 417-26.
- Reiman, Paul, Eduard Goldstücker, and Frantisek Kautman (ed.). *Franz Kafka sus Prager Sicht 1963*. Prague: Verlag der Tschechoslowakischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1966.
- Richter, Ludwig (ed.), et al. *Literatur im Wandel: Entwicklungen in europäischen sozialistischen Ländern 1944/45-1980*. Berlin: Aufbau, 1986.
- Rieck, Werner (ed.). *Deutsche Literatur im Wirkungs- und Rezeptionsfeld mittel- und osteuropäischer Literaturen*. Potsdam: Wissenschaftlich-Technisches Zentrum der Pädagogischen Hochschule "Karl Liebknecht" Potsdam, 1989.
- Robin, Régine. "The Past as a Dustbin, or, The Phantoms of Socialist Realism." *Socialist Realism Without Shores*. Ed. Thomas Lahusen and Evgeny Dobrenko, 1997. 337-56.
- Rosellini, Jay. *Literary Skinheads? Writing from the Right in Reunified Germany*. West Lafayette, Ind.: Purdue University Press, 2000.
- Roshnowski, Stanislaw W. "Der Roman als Form des historischen Bewußtseins: 'Kindheitsmuster' von Christa Wolf und 'Der Aufenthalt' von Hermann Kant." *Richter* 430-47.
- Ross, Jan. "Hegel der Bundesrepublik." *Die Zeit* 15/10 2001.
http://www.zeit.de/2001/42/Kultur/print_200142_habermas.html (15.10.2001).
- Rossmann, Peter. "Zum 'Intellektuellenstreit': 'Intellectuals' in the Former GDR." *Michigan Germanic Studies* 21.1-2 (1995): 32-36.
- Rönisch, Siegfried. "Antifaschismus heute." *Weimarer Beiträge* H. 5 (1975): 5-9.
- Rüther, Günther (ed.). *Literatur in der Diktatur: Schreiben im Nationalismus und DDR-Sozialismus*. Paderborn; München; Wien; Zürich: Schöningh, 1997.
- Scheer, Udo. "'Nicht schuldig! Darauf bestehe Ich.'" *Die Tageszeitung (TAZ)* 28/November 1995.
- Schirmacher, Frank. "Abschied von der Literatur der Bundesrepublik." *FAZ* 02/October 1990.
- . "Das Danziger Versöhnungswerk." *FAZ* 06/May 1992.
- . "Literatur und Kritik." *FAZ* 08/October 1990.
- Schlenstedt, Dieter. "Integration — Loyalität — Anpassung. Über die Schwierigkeiten bei der Ankündigung eines komplizierten Verhältnisses. Ein Gespräch mit Frauke Meyer-Gosau." *Arnold* 169-83.
- Schlenstedt, Silvia. *Hermlin: Sein Leben und Werk*. Berlin, 1985.
- Schlenstedt, Silvia, and Dieter Schlenstedt. "Sehen, Wissen, Erinnern: Hermann Kant. *Der Aufenthalt*." *Neue Deutsche Literatur* 25.6 (1977): 105-20.
- Schmitt, Hans-Jürgen. "Party der Wendeständler." *FAZ* 19/10 1994.
- Schnabel, Manfred (ed.). *Hermann Kant zum 60. Geburtstag*. Berlin, Dresden: Zentralinstitut für Bibliothekswesen, Berlin; Stadt- und Bezirksbibliothek Dresden, 1986.
- Schneider, Peter. *Deutsche Ängste: Sieben Essays*. Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1988.
- . "The Germans are Breaking an Old Taboo." *New York Times* [New York City] 18/01 2003.
- Schonauer, Franz. "Hermann Kant/Die Aula." *Neue Rundschau* 77 (1966): 308-12.
- Schregel, Friedrich-H. *Die Romanliteratur der DDR Erzähltechniken, Leserlenkung, Kulturpolitik*. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1991.
- Schwitzke, Werner. "'Ich komme beim Leben um Verständnis ein': Betrachtungen zu Hermann Kants 'Aufenthalt'." *Deutsch Als Fremdsprache* 23 (1986): 53-68.
- Siefken, Hinrich, and Alan Robinson (ed.). *"Erfahrung und Erlieferung": Festschrift for C. P. Magill*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press [for] Saint David's University College, Lampeter, 1974.
- Silberman, Marc. "Scattered Questions After the End of the GDR." *Michigan Germanic Studies* 21.1-2 (1995): 178-83.

- . "Writing What — for Whom? 'Vergangenheitsbewältigung' in GDR Literature." *German Studies Review* 10.3 (October 1987): 527-38.
- (ed.). *Interpretationen zum Roman in der DDR*. Stuttgart: Klett, 1980.
- Simonow, K. "Der Aufenthalt von Hermann Kant: Einige einleitende Worte." *Kunst und Literatur: Zeitschrift für Fragen der Aesthetik und Kunsttheorie* 28 (1980): 489-92.
- Simons, Elisabeth. "Geschichtsbewusstsein und Selbstverständnis im Schaffen von Hermann Kant." *Weggenossen: Fünfzehn Schriftsteller der DDR*. Ed. hrsg. vom Inst. für Gesellschaftswiss. beim ZK der SED]. Leitung der Arbeiten: Klaus Jarmatz und Christel Berger. Frankfurt a. m.: Roderberg Verlag, 1975. 186-213.
- Slezkine, Yuri. "Primitive Communism and the Other Way Around." *Socialist Realism Without Shores*. Ed. Thomas Lahusen and Evgeny Dobrenko, 1997. 310-36.
- Spies, Bernhard. "Georg Lukács und der sozialistische Realismus in der DDR." Ed. Heinz Ludwig Arnold and Frauke Meyer-Gosau. München: Edition Text + Kritik, 1991. 34-52.
- Spiewok, Wolfgang. "Hermann Kant." *Literatur der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik: Einzeldarstellungen*. Ed. Von einem Autorenkollektiv unter Leitung von Hans Jürgen Geerdts. Berlin: Volkseigener Verlag Volk und Wissen, 1974. 361-86.
- Steiner, George. *Real Presences*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989.
- Stephan, Alexander. "Von Aufhalten, Hosenknöpfen und Kindheitsmustern: Das Dritte Reich in der jüngsten Prosa der DDR." *Studies in GDR Culture and Society*. Ed. Margy (Chief Editor) Gerber, et al. Washington D.C.: University Press of America, 1981. 127-39.
- Stevenson, Patrick, and John Theobald. *Relocating Germanness: Discursive Disunity in Unified Germany*. Houndmills [England] New York: Macmillan Press; St. Martin's Press, 2000.
- Stillmark, Hans-Christian, and Christoph Lehker. *Rueckblicke auf die Literatur der DDR*. Amsterdam; New York: Rodopi, 2002.
- Stolz, Dieter. "Deutschland — Ein literarischer Begriff: Günter Grass and the German Question." *Williams* 206-24.
- Stötzer, Ursula. "Zu Form und Funktion der Komposita in H. Kants Roman 'Der Aufenthalt.'" *Zeitschrift fuer Phonetik, Sprachwissenschaft und Kommunikationsforschung* 32 (1979): 723-37.
- Strauß, Botho. *Paare, Passanten*. München, Wien: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1981.
- Suleiman, Susan Rubin. *Authoritarian Fictions: The Ideological Novel as a Literary Genre*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1983.
- Taberner, Stuart, and Frank Finlay. *Recasting German Identity: Culture, Politics, and Literature in the Berlin Republic*. Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2002.
- Taschner, Winfried. *Tradition und Experiment Erzählstrukturen und -Funktionen Des Bildungsromans in der DDR-Aufbauliteratur*. Stuttgarter Arbeiten Zur Germanistik. Stuttgart: H. Heinz, 1981.
- Tate, Dennis. *The East German Nove: Identity, Community, Continuity*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984.
- Tertz, Abram. *On Socialist Realism*. Trans. George Dennis. 1960. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982.
- Thiele, Eckhard. "Ungeliebte Erbschaften." Ed. Heinz Ludwig Arnold and Frauke Meyer-Gosau. München: Edition Text + Kritik, 1991. 258-66.
- Thompkins, Jane P. "The Reader in History: The Changing Shape of Literary Response." *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism*. Ed. Jane P. Thompkins. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980. 201-32.
- Thompkins, Jane P. (ed.). *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980.
- Tröger, Heinz. "Man mußte Hermann Kant zu Lesen Verstehen." *FAZ* 04/11 1997.
- "Vermisse das Wort Pinscher. Ein Staatsschriftsteller im Stasi-Dienst: Die Spitzer-Karriere des Genossen Hermann Kant alias IM 'Martin.'" *Der Spiegel* (05/10 1992): 323-36.
- VII. Schriftstellerkongreß der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik. Protokoll (Arbeitsgruppen)*. Berlin; Weimar, 1974.
- Vogt, Jochen. *Erinnerung ist unsere Aufgabe: Über Literatur, Moral und Politik 1945-1990*. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1991.
- Von Hallberg, Robert, and Kenneth J. Northcott. *Literary Intellectuals and the Dissolution of the State Professionalism and Conformity in the GDR*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

- Wagener, Hans. "Soldaten zwischen Gehorsam und Gewissen: Kriegsromane und -Tagebücher." *Gegenwartsliteratur und Drittes Reich: Deutsche Autoren in der Auseinandersetzung mit der Vergangenheit*. Ed. Hans Wagener. Stuttgart: Reclam, 1977. 241-64.
- Walder, Dennis (ed.). *Literature in the Modern World: Critical Essays and Documents*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press in association with The Open University, 1990.
- Walker, William. "The Dialectics of Captivity and Emancipation in Selected Works of Hermann Kant." *Jaisa: The Journal of the Association for the Interdisciplinary Study of the Arts* 4.2 (Spring 1999): 115-30.
- . "Slavic World in Hermann Kant's *Der Aufenthalt*." *Philological Papers* 40 (1994-1995): 69-76.
- . "Socialist Ideological Convergence with the West: The Oppositional Voice of Hermann Kant." *The Image of Europe in Literature, Media, and Society*. Ed. Will Wright and Steven Kaplan. Pueblo, CO: University of Southern Colorado, 2001. 190-95.
- Wallace, Ian. "Teacher or Partner? The Role of the Writer in the GDR." *The Writer and Society in the GDR*. Ed. Ian Wallace. Tayport, Fife, Scotland: Hutton P, 1984.
- Walter, Jochim. "'Kosmonauten der Stillen Erkundung': Schriftsteller und Staatssicherheit." *Literatur in der Diktatur: Schreiben im Nationalismus und DDR-Sozialismus*. Ed. Günther Rüter. Paderborn; München; Wien; Zürich: Schöningh, 1997. 283-302.
- Weimann, Robert. "Kunst und Öffentlichkeit in der sozialistischen Gesellschaft." *Sinn und Form* 31.2 (1979): 213-43.
- Weiss, Peter. *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands: Roman*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1975.
- Werner, Hans-Georg. "Hermann Kant: *Der Aufenthalt*." *Weimarer Beiträge* 23.10 (1977): 139-51.
- Westphal, Anke. "Die Mumienparty." *Die Tageszeitung (TAZ)* 05/10 1994.
- White, Alfred D. *The One-Eyed Man: Social Reality in the German Novel 1848-1968*. German Linguistic and Cultural Studies. Oxford New York: P. Lang, 2000.
- Williams, Arthur, Stuart Parkes, and Roland Smith (ed.). *German Literature at a Time of Change 1989-1990*. Bern; Berlin; Frankfurt a.m.; New York; Paris; Wien: Peter Lang, 1991.
- Williams, Howard, et al. *Political Thought and German Reunification the New German Ideology?* Houndmills [England] New York: Macmillan Press; St. Martin's Press, 2000.
- Williams, Rhys W., Stephen Parker, and Colin Riordan. *German Writers and the Cold War 1945-61*. Manchester, New York: Manchester University Press, distributed exclusively in the USA and Canada by St. Martin's Press, 1992.
- Wolf, Christa. "Über Sinn und Unsinn von Naivität." *Schriftsteller Über ihr Erstlingswerk*. Ed. Gerhard Schneider. Berlin; Weimar, 1974. 164-74.
- . "Vom Standpunkt Des Schriftstellers und von der Form der Kunst." *Neue Deutsche Literatur* 5.H. 12 (1957): 121.
- . *Was bleibt: Erzählung*. Frankfurt am Main: Luchterhand Literaturverlag, 1990.
- . "'Kultur ist, was gelebt wird': Interview by Christa Wolf." *Alternative* 146 (Apr.-Jun. 1982): 118-27.
- . *Im Dialog: Aktuelle Texte*. [Originalausg.] Berlin: Luchterhand, 1990.
- Zehm, Günther. "Die Aula der neuen Klasse: Zu Hermann Kants Roman vom Arrivierten Proletarier." *Die Welt der Literatur* 3.4 (1966): 5-10.
- Zipser, Richard A., and Karl-Heinz Schoeps. *DDR-Literatur im Tauwetter*. New York: P. Lang, 1985.

Curriculum Vita

Huiping Wang

Education:

Ph.D. in Germanic Languages and Literature, May 2007, Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey

M.A., January 1999, Rutgers University

B.A., June 1992, Beijing Foreign Studies University

Awards:

1998-2001: Teaching Assistantship, Rutgers University

1998-1999: German House Director Fellowship, Rutgers University

July 1998-August 1998: DAAD Summer Academy Scholarship, Markt-Neubeuern, Germany

1997-1998: DAAD Annual Scholarship, Heidelberg University, Germany

1995-1997: Graduate Fellowship, Rutgers University

Conference Presentations:

“Anti-Semitism and Annette von Droste-Hülshoff’s *Die Judenbuche*.” Fifth Annual Graduate Conference at the University of Cincinnati, Oct. 13-14, 2000.

“China und Elias Canetti’s *Die Blendung*.” Seventh Annual Graduate Colloquium, Graduate Council on Languages and Literature, Rutgers. April 18, 1997.

Professional Memberships:

American Association for Teachers of German (AATG)

Modern Language Association (MLA)

Women in German (WIG)