

East German Literature in the 21st Century: Minor Literature and Alternative Memory

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Doctoral Dissertation

Submitted in
Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for Doctor of Philosophy in Germanic Studies
in the Graduate College of the
University of Illinois at Chicago, 2016

Chicago, Illinois

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my dissertation committee—Elizabeth Loentz, Sara Hall, Dagmar Lorenz, Heidi Schlipphake, and Richard Levy for their support, guidance, and input throughout this process. They not only provided invaluable insight about my topic and the discipline, but were also allies in navigating the writing and researching process.

There were many individuals and institutions that aided me in my research and I would briefly like to thank them – at Humboldt University of Berlin, Prof. Dr. Roland Berbig, The Studienstiftung des Abgeordnetenhauses-Berlin for the financial and intellectual support, Regina Rahm and Manuela Ebel at the Internationale Studienzentrum-Berlin, Ingo Schulze for taking the time to talk with me about his writing, and the Max Kade Foundation for the financial support to allow me to finish the dissertation my final year.

DMS

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SUMMARY

East German Literature in the 21st century is situated in a “minor realm” within the greater canon of German Literature; a small, but essential part of the whole. After the “Wende” and the resulting collapse of the German Democratic Republic literary scholars, critics, and the public alike have either attempted to position literature by authors who lived in the former German Democratic Republic under the umbrella of “German Literature,” or to read through their works in a search for the definitive *Wenderoman*; for the end of the GDR had marked the end of a “GDR Literature” per se. As with the end of World War II, the ushering in of a new era once again prompted calls for literature to reflect upon the chapter in recent history that had just closed, 40 years of division ending with the “Peaceful Revolution” and unification. Despite 25 years of German unification, the writing of authors born in the GDR remains distinctly different from their West German counterparts. By examining the post-millennial works of three authors of what could also be called the “Third Generation” (Ingo Schulze, Antje Rávic Strubel, and Julia Schoch) through the lens of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s theory of “Minor Literature,” this project shows how their experiences and memories of life in the GDR, the Wende, the post-Wende 1990s, and the resulting political and social effects continue to influence their writing. I will argue that rather than simply “writing back” defiantly or nostalgically in a post-colonial sense as Paul Cooke put it in his analysis of East German writing produced in the 1990s, there has been an evolution in their literary subject matter and aesthetic characteristics. Rather, these authors explore the legacy of dictatorship, the Stasi, or “Ostalgie” (nostalgia for life in the East) and their relevance for, and effects upon contemporary society.

I. INTRODUCTION

East German Literature in the 21st century is situated in a “minor realm” within the greater canon of German Literature; a small, but unique and essential part of the whole. After the “Wende” and the resulting collapse of the German Democratic Republic literary scholars, critics, and the public alike have either attempted to position literature by authors who lived in the former German Democratic Republic under the umbrella of “German Literature”, or to read through their works in a search for the definitive *Wenderoman*, for the end of the GDR had marked the end of a “GDR Literature” per se. As with the end of World War II, the ushering in of a new era once again prompted calls for literature to reflect upon the chapter in recent history that had just closed 40 years of division ending with the “Peaceful Revolution” and unification. Despite 25 years of German unification, the writing of authors born in the GDR remains distinctly different from the West German counterparts. By examining the post-millennial works of authors of what could be called the “Third Generation” (in my work Ingo Schulze, Antje Rávic Strubel, and Julia Schoch) this project shows how their experiences and memories of life in the GDR, the Wende, the post-Wende 1990s, and the resulting political and social effects continue to influence their writing. I will argue that rather than simply “writing back” defiantly or nostalgically in a post-colonial sense as Paul Cooke put it in his analysis of East German culture and writing in the 1990s¹, there has been an evolution in their literary subject matter and aesthetic characteristics. These authors explore the legacy of dictatorship, the Stasi, or “Ostalgie” (nostalgia for life in the East) through their relevance in, and effects upon contemporary society. As Ingo Schulze has stated, “1989/90 is where our present-day world began” (“Personal

¹ See *Representing East Germany since Unification: From Colonization to Nostalgia* (2005.)

Interview”). By highlighting their often forgotten role in achieving their freedom from the SED, an East German perspective challenges the dominant literary and political memory of the GDR and the past 25 years in German history, and incorporating this perspective into their fiction creates an alternative and more accurate artistic picture of the past, present, and future than the popular images of the West’s victory over communism as a natural progression of history.

It is essential to situate the works of these East German authors within a specific context in German language literature, which are already recognized as deserving of a separate space within German-language literature, for example “transnational” and German-Jewish literature. Authors considered transnational such as Terézia Mora, Hertha Müller, Emine Sevgi Özdamar, Zafer Senocak, Yoko Tawada, Feridun Zaimoglu, and German-Jewish authors Barbara Honigmann, Maxim Biller, Esther Dischereit, and Wladimir Kaminer, to name a few, have all enriched and widened the canon of German language literature while at the same time maintaining a specific section outside of what was traditionally perceived as “German National Literature”. This can be observed, for example, in the awards these authors have received. Authors whose native language may not be German or who grew up outside of Germany have increasingly won both general awards such as the “Deutscher Buchpreis” and those dedicated to non-native German writers such as the “Adelbert-von-Chamisso-Preis”, both which Terézia Mora has won. Pascale Casanova refers to this phenomenon as an “annexation of peripheral literary innovations under a central linguistic and cultural aegis” (120). The debate surrounding whether these subsections of German literature should indeed be given a label is deep and precarious. I argue, however, that in doing so, one can recognize the cultural, social, and political backgrounds from which writers emerge in order to appreciate the diversity inherent in the

German literary landscape today more as German *language* literature, rather than a “national” literature.

Since unification there has been much debate as to whether a specific section should be cordoned off for East German authors. Academic work on this subject denotes a number of different terms pointing to existing differences from “German Literature” such as, GDR-Literature, Post-Wende/GDR-Literature, (Neuere) Ostdeutsche Literatur, etc. Scholars such as Paul Cooke, Stephen Brockmann, Wolfgang Emmerich, Holger Helbig, and even the German literary publication *Text+Kritik*² have all used these terms to describe the literature by writers born in the former GDR. Many have felt that the political unification of East and West Germany should naturally include a corresponding literary unification. Journalist and literature critic Ulrich Greiner, who, along with Frank Schirrmacher was one of the most outspoken critics of Christa Wolf after the late release of her novella, *Was bleibt* (1990). Greiner believed: “Mit dem Ende der Zweiteilung Deutschlands ist auch das Ende der literarischen Teilung gekommen.” However, in his thorough and canonical work *‘Wende’ und ‘Einheit’ im Spiegel der deutschsprachigen Literatur* (2003) Frank Thomas Grub illustrates the problematic notions of “Wende” and “Einheit” for German Literature post-1989/90, emphasizing the near impossibility of (re)unifying two parallel but distinct literary trajectories that had parted ways after 1945. This debate shows at the very least, a necessity to *continue* to observe and analyze what makes this literature an individual subsection of German language literature. According to Paul Cooke, the divisions are no longer the geographical differences between East and West, rather the socio-political (*Representing* 14). These socio-political differences are rooted in a minor cultural

² See for example Arnold, Heinz Ludwig, ed. “DDR-Literatur der neunziger Jahre”. In: *text+kritik Sonderband*. (IX/00)

memory of those who lived in the GDR that still exists and may potentially continue with the generations that were too young to remember or never knew life in a divided Germany³.

Stuart Taberner also recognizes a noted difference in the writing of the East and West German counterparts (“West German” 72-90). Important for the understanding of German literature is also the commonly held belief that the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) before 1989/90 also changed with unification. According to Taberner the more engaged or politically charged West German literature prior to the Wende is found in works by writers of the older generations, Günter Grass, Heinrich Böll, and Uwe Timm, as well as the group known as the ‘68ers. However, the younger generations of West German writers have tried to “mark their distance from what they saw as the suffocatingly moralizing tone of the 68ers” (74). Compared with East German literature that often evokes a collective or shared experience, “much fiction by younger [West German] authors remains narrowly focused on the self“, for example works by Julia Franck, Christian Kracht, and Judith Hermann (79).⁴ Therefore, what differentiates East German literature from its counterparts in German language (especially West German) literature is an engagement with the continued effects from the political and literary events surrounding unification. The theoretical frameworks of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, Homi K. Bhabha’s work on Post-colonialism, and Aleida Assmann’s writings on (collective) memory will inform my readings to show how the East German perspective has been obscured. By opening this literature to a reading that goes beyond the fetishization of a

³ See Hannah Hunniger’s (born in 1984) work as one example: *Das Paradies: Meine Jugend nach der Mauer*. Stuttgart: Tropen, 2011. Print.

⁴ One may also refer to Helga Druxes’ essay on West German author Katharina Hacker’s *Die Habenichtse*, whose protagonists are self-absorbed, materialistic globetrotters. See “The Indictment of Neoliberalism and Communism in the Novels of Katharina Hacker, Nikola Richter, Judith Schalansky, and Julia Schoch”. *German Women’s Writing in the 21st Century*. Eds. Hester Baer, Alexandra Merley Hill. Pgs. 154-74.

Wende-novel that is supposed to close the book on German division, one can see how East German writers continue to probe the lasting effects that 1989/90 has had on Germany.

Literary history texts such as Wolfgang Emmerich's *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR* provide a context for exploring the influences and evolution of East German writing pre- and post-unification, and into the 21st century. This evolution spans four different eras: the German Democratic Republic (1949-1990), the Wende (1989-90), the post-Wende 1990s and the 21st century. The writing is as complex as the times from which they emerged. Therefore, an analysis of contemporary East German literature requires a rich theoretical approach, which can connect these eras/generations as well as recognize significant differences between them. It is essential to observe this literature not only as an aesthetic art form, but also to appreciate it as politically, socially, and historically critical writing. Much of the scholarly literature is more focused on how to discuss "GDR-Literature" before and after the Wende. While important for a coming-to-terms with the division of Germany and German literary history, this backward looking analysis does less to discuss a unified German present and future.⁵ I will avoid the term GDR-Literature for literature after 1989, as it is a term that focuses on a continuation of literature under the conditions present in the GDR and under the SED-regime rather than the development of East German writers in a post-unification society.

Historical Background

It is important to briefly discuss the political, historical, and literary implications of the GDR, the "Wende" (Turning Point) that sparked what was called the "Friedliche (peaceful)

⁵ See, for example, texts that focus on the GDR and less on East Germans' perspectives on unified Germany, such as Hodgkin, Nick and Caroline Pearce (eds.) *The GDR Remembered: Representations of the German State Since 1989*. 2011 and Ludwig, Janine and Mirjam Meuser (eds.) *Literatur ohne Land?: Schreibstrategien einer DDR-Literatur im vereinten Deutschland*. 2009.

Revolution”, and the immediate “Post-Wende” years during the 1990s. While a comprehensive history of the GDR and its literature will not be covered here, it is essential to form an understanding of the cultural and political system in which the authors in this project spent their formative years, as well as the chaotic, world-changing point in history through which these writers lived, essentially separating GDR literature from post-unification East German literature. According to Cooke, this break is both an “aesthetic point of departure” and literary material for East German authors today (*Representing* 73). The historical and political events surrounding the Wende and German unification and their aftermath have direct effects on the literary environment since 1990.

The “Wende” will be defined here as the period between the Kommunalwahl in May 1989, which sparked protest over election fraud, and the formal accession of East to West Germany on October 3, 1990 under Article 23 of the Grundgesetz (Basic Law) of the FRG. While it is difficult to define the start and end of the Wende, the “official” end of the German Democratic Republic brought an end to the conditions under which its literature was produced. According to Wolfgang Emmerich, “Literatur war, anders als in den meisten westlichen Gesellschaften, immer noch ein Leitmedium, dem bedeutende politisch-erzieherische Aufgaben übertragen waren” (*Kleine Literaturgeschichte* 436). Unification ended the official “erzieherische” role of literature for a socialist “Volk”. To be sure, the literary conditions under which GDR authors wrote and published were by no means uniform as the political and cultural realms of the GDR were subject to frequent tightening and easing of restrictions often referred to as “Tauwetter-Periode and Eiszeiten respectively. Restrictions were eased in 1953 and 1956, as well as in the immediate aftermath of the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961, and

again in 1971 with Erich Honecker's claim that in a socialist society, "there can be no taboos." On the other hand, increased artistic freedoms were often quickly followed by increased restrictions. For example, periods leading up to the Bitterfelder Weg (1959/60); the 11th Plenary in 1965, which brought about strong criticism and bans on writers as well as filmmakers; and the expatriation of Wolf Biermann in 1976, which resulted in the "bleeding" or exodus of much of the GDR's cultural elite to West Germany. Writers in East Germany experienced constant uncertainty, often torn between loyalty to the state and/or to communist/socialist political beliefs on the one hand, and self-censorship, publishing in West Germany, or whether or not to remain in the GDR at all on the other hand. The Wende period naturally eased such restrictions and the end of the GDR erased them completely, replacing them entirely with new conditions dictated primarily by publishing markets, and with them a new set of rules and restrictions.

The important question at this point became the role of literature in a unified Germany. According to Emmerich, this debate that became known as the "Deutscher Literaturstreit" took place in "three stages" (*Kleine Literaturgeschichte* 462). The first stage was the controversy surrounding Christa Wolf's novella *Was bleibt* whose protagonist is a writer and victim of Stasi surveillance. *Was bleibt* was originally written in 1979, but Wolf chose not to release it. It was not until it was edited in 1989 and published in 1990 that the controversy began. Wolf, who some thought of as the "state writer" of the GDR, was heavily criticized by literary critics Ulrich Greiner and Frank Schirrmacher as well as post-Wende East German author, Thomas Brussig⁶, among others for releasing the work when it was no longer provocative or dangerous to do so. They claimed that had Wolf, who enjoyed many privileges under the GDR system, published

⁶ See for example Brussig's novel Brussig, Thomas. *Helden wie wir: Roman* (1995). Brussig is quite critical of Wolf, even satirizing her Erzählung, *Der geteilte Himmel*, through his East German protagonists so-called "geheilte Pimmel."

such a work while the regime held power, it could have been a sensation, a decisive blow, and potentially resulted in her expatriation from the GDR. The “second stage” revolved around the younger generation of the “Prenzlauer Berg scene” of East Berlin that was seen as a dissident group both by those inside and outside the GDR. In 1991, Wolf Biermann sought to expose author Sascha Anderson as a spy for the Stasi within the scene, nearly delegitimizing the underground literature of the GDR’s younger generation. The “third stage,” which according to Emmerich is linked to the first two, occurred when Christa Wolf and Heiner Müller (among other GDR authors) were linked to the Stasi as *Inoffizielle Mitarbeiter (IM)*. These claims however, eventually became discredited as their “Opferakten” (Victim dossiers) were much more substantial than any information that they ever provided to the Stasi.

These debates in the early 1990s set the stage for the future of East German literature, because they called into question the role of literature before and after unification in both the GDR and the FRG. The accusations during the *Literaturstreit* not only questioned the authors themselves, but whether an author (East or West German) should function as a social critic. Greiner called for a return to an aesthetical literature through a third option, a unified German literature, which departs from the engaged or political subject matter that many in the West found to be “obsolete” (*Kleine Literaturgeschichte* 466). Furthermore, Schirrmacher called to an end of the more political writing in the FRG by authors such as Heinrich Böll and Günter Grass in his article in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* on 10.2.1990 entitled “Abschied von der Literatur der Bundesrepublik.” This did not occur, however, especially for East Germans most affected by the act of political, cultural, and economic absorption into West Germany.

As the revolutions in Eastern Europe in the late 1980s were (relatively) peaceful, and since the GDR acceded into the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), it may be difficult to think of Post-Wende and 21st century East German Literature as “minor literature” or the literature of a colonized people. The chants in the streets of Leipzig, Dresden, and Berlin of “Wir sind das Volk” (We are the people) and subsequently “Wir sind Ein Volk” (We are one people) as well as the (at least initial) euphoria surrounding the “Währungsunion” (Currency Reform and introduction of the Deutschmark into East Germany), and finally, unification, hardly speak of a people that have been colonized against their will. However, as Paul Cooke has stated the *perception* of colonization can function in ways analogous to actual colonization: “...to whatever extent the claim of economic colonization might be refuted, postcolonial theory nonetheless provides a useful framework for tracing developments in cultural attitudes toward the east” (*Representing* 11) These are observable cultural attitudes that one can see in literature as well as popular culture and opinion. The overwhelming majority of former GDR citizens were indeed euphoric and hopeful once the Berlin Wall and the SED were gone, and many supported unification. However, only a few short years after 1990 this early euphoria quickly diminished. Virtually no distinct socio-political or cultural aspect of GDR society had found its way into the unified Federal Republic. These “Neue Bundesländer” became, on the surface (i.e. politically), part of the FRG. This involved the transformation from socialism to democratic capitalism, a new education system, adoption of FRG laws; an entirely new mentality that all that had been taught for the last 40 years was wrong. The general West German attitude toward unification can be summed up quite well in the famous address by Christian Democratic Union (CDU) politician Wolfgang Schäuble at the time of unification:

My dear citizens, what is taking place here is the accession of the GDR to the Federal Republic, and not the other way around. We have a good *Grundgesetz* (Basic Law), which has proved its worth. We will do everything for you. You are very welcome to join us. We do not wish callously to ignore your wishes and interests. However, we are not seeing here the unification of two equal states. We are not starting again from the beginning, from positions that have equal right. The *Grundgesetz* exists, and the Federal Republic exists (qtd. in *Representing* 4).

An entire country, its political and social institutions, and its way of life were officially erased and, as is illustrated by Schäuble's comments, it was expected that the "East" Germans adapt to and enjoy the benefits that West Germans have enjoyed since 1949. For any group of people, no matter what regime was previously in place, such upheaval should naturally require a transitional period. Furthermore, this narrative ignores the efforts by those who sought a "third way," such as Neues Forum (discussed in Schulze's work). After the first years of unification, this transitional period began to deal with (what Paul Cooke calls "writing-back") the legacy of dictatorship and the Stasi. He describes the often defiant "trotzig" attitude, which attempts to put to rest the beliefs that the East Germans lived under horrible conditions and constant Stasi surveillance. However, these efforts did not exonerate the East German population. Works by writers such as Wolf Biermann, Wolfgang Hilbig, and Thomas Brussig condemned the former East German citizens for perpetuating their corrupt system.

As the often mentioned "euphoria" of the early 1990s wore off, and it became apparent that the transition of "becoming Western" would not take place as quickly as desired, the next stage of literary engagement saw a longing for now lost aspects of East German society that former citizens enjoyed (or took for granted) prior to 1989. A nostalgia for the East, or as it is called "Ostalgie" became prevalent. This phenomenon can be observed in popular culture, products, as well as in the East German literature of the 1990s and early 2000s. Films such as *Sonnenallee*, and *Good Bye Lenin!*, as well as the popularity of commercial products such as

Rottkäppchen Sekt, Spreewald Gurken, and Vita Cola, all perpetuated this trend and idealized the more “simple life” that existed in the GDR. While it is not the goal of this project to analyze this “Ostalgie” in detail, its existence is extremely important to the theoretical background of Post-Wende and later, post-millennial East German literature.

The socio-political and cultural trajectory from euphoria to melancholy, Stasi, post-colonialism, and Ostalgie are also engaged by the authors’ works in this project. However, Schulze, Strubel, and Schoch do more with these phenomena than look back. Cooke’s detailed work on post-unification East Germany was published in 2005 and thus precedes many of the literary works covered herein. For example, Cooke states: “...unlike the more ‘ideological’ construction of east Germanness that we find, for example, amongst intellectuals such as Hilbig and Wolf, there is often no suggestion that the values of Western capitalist society are in question” (20). His observation that Western-style norms of democratic capitalism are not questioned by East German authors is no longer the case today. This is undoubtedly a sign of the times in which this book was written. With the continued increase in “capitalization/economization” of society, the economic crisis, and, as these authors argue, loss of the democratic elements in “democratic capitalism”, their experiences in a non-capitalist society become a means through which to critique the development of society since 1989/90; whether it be through Ingo Schulze’s engagement with the world of work and the economization of society, or through Antje Rávic Strubel’s provincial, yet nomadic settings and characters who call into question the dominant discourses in contemporary society, or Schoch’s discussion of the erasure of East German cultural memory and “culture of forgetting.” East German literature

therefore problematizes unification instead of simply coming to terms with the GDR and the Wende.

Moving beyond the “Wende-Novel”

Since German unification there has been a search for a single novel to encapsulate the Wende and the events leading up to and resulting from it. Holger Helbig expressed simply in the first line of his 2007 essay, “Noch warten alle auf den Wenderoman” (“Wandel” 75). However, “everyone” (literary and scholarly critics as well as the German public) continues to wait. It is understood that an *East German* was expected to write this work that comes to terms with a collective German history: the aftermath of World War II (occupation, division, and the ensuing second German dictatorship in the 20th Century), the Wende that brought about the demise of the GDR, and the resulting (at times precarious) unification of the two German states. The desire for this novel seems to be paramount for what Stephen Brockmann calls “normalization”. West Germans prior to 1989 were relatively disinterested in East Germany and even considered the idea of a unified Germany “abnormal”, but are now forced to deal with this reality (“Normalization”). Some of the works analyzed in this project do indeed use the “Wende” (or as Schoch refers to it “The Revolution”), the events that led to it, and unification as their central plot point and “aesthetic point of departure” (*Mit der Geschwindigkeit des Sommers* and *Neue Leben*). They go beyond a sort of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* of the Wende and GDR and employ this period to engage German memory and the effects of unification on *all* of German society, thereby engaging the developments in German and world affairs over the past 25 years.

To date, the search for one *Wenderoman* has been a failed endeavor⁷. The critical literature confirms the difficulty of such an undertaking. Frank Thomas Grub illustrates *five* different aspects of what could be considered “*Wendeliteratur*” (71-84). Katharina Gerstenberger also writes, “...the experience of German unification was too diverse, too ambiguous, and too influenced by global developments to be captured by one novel” (1). Therefore, a single work that encapsulates all these aspects surely cannot exist. More importantly, the Wende-novel does not exist in East German writing, because it is a West German phenomenon. The process and the desire for a speedy “normalization” in unified Germany is exactly what led to the social, economic, and political problems that these East German writers indict in their literature. In this way, the aesthetic and political differences inherent in East German writing emerges, which has further implications for the understanding of East and West German identity and memory in contemporary German society.

East German Literature in the 21st Century

Broadly defined, East German literature could include any literature by authors from the former GDR. Furthermore, “post-GDR”, “post-Wende”, “post-unification” could refer to anything written after 1990, including works by many of the most prominent GDR writers who continued to write after the dissolving of the GDR, such as Christa Wolf, Christoph Hein, Durs Grünbein, or Volker Braun. It would also include writers who left the GDR prior to 1990, wrote in the Federal Republic before, and continued to write after the Wende, such as Jurek Becker, Sarah Kirsch, Günter Kunert, and Wolf Biermann. Rounding out the generational evolution of East German literature would be those authors who belong to what Linda Shortt calls the

⁷ Helbig quotes Thomas Brussig: “Vielleicht blieb der Ruf nach *dem* Wenderoman so lange unerhört, weil das Leben diesen *einen* Roman nicht bot – sondern gleich Millionen davon.” Pg. 80.

“transitional generation” (“Re-imagining East” 115), Wolfgang Emmerich calls the “distanced generation” (“(East) German”) and others call the “third generation”. For my purposes, the latter form is most productive, but will be used loosely, as no definition of generation is uniform. This generation is comprised of Ingo Schulze, Antje Rávic Strubel, and Julia Schoch and others whose work I will not examine in depth, such as Thomas Brussig, Uwe Tellkamp, Jakob Hein, Jenny Erpenbeck, Jana Hensel, and Clemens Meyer.

The question of “East German” Literature *after* October 3, 1990, is one of generational differences as well as differences of literary style and perspective. As Katharina Gerstenberger has pointed out, “The designation of a generation is more than a biological occurrence. It is an ideological construct that marks ending and new beginnings” (12). I seek to show, however, that there are indeed similarities in subject matter, plot points, and style that transcend generational divides. Many writers who began their literary career after the Wende or even post-2000 continue to write with elements of realist and modernist traditions prevalent in the GDR. Cooke notes that not only does Schulze take much inspiration from “provincial” elements found in GDR authors Uwe Johnson and Johannes Bobrowski, but also from American short story writers Raymond Carver and Ernest Hemingway (“GDR Literature” 62). Uwe Johnson’s and American author Joan Didion’s influence is also apparent in Strubel in this way, as she often uses Sweden as well as small town and provincial life in her work. While Julia Schoch’s provincial themes also resemble Uwe Johnson, her portrayal of her female characters’ negotiation with the world are reminiscent of Christa Wolf. Therefore this generation of writers engages the realities of unified Germany and the post-millennial era: “at times we see authors drawing on GDR literary traditions, at times reacting against them, in an attempt to negotiate both present-day problems

and the legacy of the East German past” (59). This negotiation of traditions, both literarily and culturally, is represented extensively in the works I will be exploring and allows for a critical representation of a unified Germany that now is part of a globalized and economically dominated world, to reiterate Schulze’s comment, a world that began in 1989/90. This fascinating intermingling of the pre- and post-Wende influences from the GDR, FRG, as well as other outside influences makes East German literature unique and worthy of examination as a distinct phenomenon. Validating an East German identity with roots in, but separate from the GDR allows one to move beyond GDR-literature and post-Wende literature with its subject matter based solely in 1989/90 to situate the writing within the present literary discourse.

While individual works will not be discussed in depth, the influence of works of the post-Wende or post-unification 1990s plays an important role in understanding contemporary East German literature’s contributions to German literature today. The authors in this project became adults and/or published authors during the tumultuous 1990s and have, as Clemens Meyer put it, this “incredible subject matter” at their disposal (*Proc. of Kinder*). This subject matter is engaged in his successful novel *Als wir träumten* (2006) and the German Book Prize shortlist novel *Im Stein* (2013). This period in history is just as important for 21st century literature as the legacies of the GDR and 1989/90. Further examples include Ingo Schulze’s important pre-2000 works (*33 Augenblicke des Glücks* (1995), *Simple Storys* (1998)), writing by former GDR writers, as well as the pop- and “Ostalgie” literature. The East German literature of the 2000s and even the 2010s represents a new era in which writing transitioned past the thematic focus on the Stasi or “Ostalgie” as Dennis Tate explains (“Importance” 7), as well as the everpresent Wenderoman.

Choice of East German Authors (the “Third Generation”?)

As no definition of a “generation” is uniform, there are varying opinions of what could be considered “third generation” in the East German sense as well. While some limit this term to those born in the 1970s and 1980s, others include writers born in the 1960s. I have chosen to include those born in the 1960s and 70s. The above mentioned authors were born between 1962 and 1974. These authors all spent their formative years in the GDR and all of them continue to live, at least partly, either in Berlin or East Germany. They experienced the downfall and end of the GDR, the Wende, and the post-Wende era at different ages, but their writing careers all began after German unification. These authors belong to a generation that has “made it” as authors in post-unification Germany. They have struggled less under democratic capitalism than former GDR citizens of earlier generations. This success however has not been at the expense of their memories of East German challenges before, during, and after the Wende. By spending their formative years in the GDR and living now nearly half of their life in one system or the other, they are able to critically engage both. They are engaged in social and political criticism much in the way GDR writers did. In doing so, they bring often forgotten East German memories to light. Paradoxically, with the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Wall and unification, the German public was barraged with the euphoric images of Germans dancing on the Berlin Wall, and were less concerned with the legacy of how unification was achieved and its effects on contemporary society. These effects include but are not limited to political corruption, the economization of society and the challenge of unchecked capitalism⁸, prostitution, as well as

⁸ The authors in this project often evoke themes of the development of capitalism over the last 25 years. Rather than provide more opportunity, it has worsened with the economic crisis and the ever-growing gap between the rich and poor.

engagement in issues of gender and identity, memory, the domination of West German perspectives, and a culture that is forgetting not only the GDR, but also the Nazi past.

A majority of the critical and scholarly literature on the subject of post-unification East German literature discuss the works of Ingo Schulze. He is also the most heavily praised and criticized for his work.⁹ Schulze has won numerous awards for his work including being shortlisted for the Deutscher Buchpreis in 2008 for *Adam und Evelyn*, which another East German author, Uwe Tellkamp, won for *Der Turm*. Born in 1962 in Dresden, he is the oldest of the authors I will be researching. While he had some journalism experience pre-unification, his first publication *33 Augenblicke des Glücks* was published in 1995. *Simple Storys* was his breakthrough work (and possibly his most well-known). His novel *Neue Leben* is one of, if not the most frequently analyzed in the context of East German literature after 1989/90. Although *Neue Leben* is set during the first half of 1990, the novel does more than describe the Wende in a purely historical-literary sense. The implications of what happens after 1990 are paramount. Such topics include, what will become of art and the role of the artist in this new, capitalist and economically driven society, and what is the most important aspect of this newly won freedom, democracy or capitalism? Furthermore, I will explore two stories from Schulze's short story collection entitled *Handy* (2007), further emphasizing the personal experience and the need to move beyond the all-encompassing *novel* and the traditional modes of genre and style. Schulze, as well as the other authors frequently employ various literary techniques and styles as well as write across genres.

Antje Rávic Strubel, born in Potsdam in 1974, won the Hermann-Hesse-Preis for her novel *Kältere Schichten der Luft* (2007). Her work, like Tellkamp's is detail-rich and portrays

⁹ See, for example, Marcel Inhoff "Why You Shouldn't Read Ingo Schulze", Linda Shortt, and Fabian Thomas.

experienced life with the Wende always lingering in the background of the characters' lives. She is among other East and West German authors included in the collection of stories *Die Nacht, in der die Mauer fiel: Schriftsteller erzählen vom 9. November 1989* (2009), and her contribution will be explored in the final chapter. Like many of the other authors in Renatus Deckert's collection, she finds November 9 to be less important than the events that surrounded it. This sentiment is important for the concept of minor literature and alternative memory as it is a clear break with the overarching Western/official sentiment in unified Germany, where "the Wende" finds its most prominent representation the fall of the Berlin Wall and the numerous media images that have replaced the more authentic memories of 1989-90.¹⁰ She problematizes collective memory and the dominant discourses in contemporary society. According to Beret Norman and Katie Sutton her stories also portray the intersection of gender, sexuality, and national consciousness (99). This intersection is yet another minor perspective. It can be seen as Casanova's struggle in challenging the dominant literary field. Strubel's works add not only an(other) female voice, but also one, which Emily Jeremiah calls "nomadic and queer", and thus disrupting the traditional views of "Germanness" ("Disorienting" 220). Her works create an East German "other" who while part of a globalized society (often associated with multilingualism and travel) still bears the burden of the events surrounding the GDR past and the Wende.

Julia Schoch, who was born in Bad Saarow in Brandenburg and grew up in Mecklenburg, has been living in Potsdam since 1986. Her works employ the relationship between temporal and spatial elements in order to discuss memory of the GDR past and what she frequently refers to as "The Revolution". The two novels discussed in this project, *Mit der Geschwindigkeit des*

¹⁰ See Assmann and Shortt in "Memory and Political Change: Introduction". "...the past itself...acts upon a present society, but *representations of past events* are created, circulated and received within a specific cultural frame and political constellation. Collective memories are produced through mediated representations of the past..." Pg 3.

Sommers (2009) and *Selbstporträt mit Bonaparte* (2012) as well as the short story “Der Körper des Salamanders” out of her collection of the same name (2001), problematize time and its passing influence on memory. Furthermore, her portrayals of female protagonists and their relationships with men often point to a feminist desire to break out of notions of *Heimat* and masculine domination of travel and home life. Like Strubel, her works include this travel as a way to change the spatial dynamic and bring political discussions about German unification, the shift from communism to neoliberalism, and the erasure of the GDR from contemporary memory, all with an important lack of *Ostalgie* as is true of the other authors in this project. Much like Ingo Schulze she is critical of both East and West German society prior to and after the Wende, and attempts to make sense of the rapid, in some ways backward, changes occurring in contemporary society.

Theoretical Background

This project is informed by three main theoretical concepts/texts in order to situate 21st century East German literature within German literature. Post-colonialist and memory theory have already been applied by others to explore post-Wende East German culture and literature. Homi K. Bhabha’s post-colonial theory in *The Locations of Culture* (1994) will help to situate the immediate post-Wende environment as a postcolonial one by explaining how colonialism affects the colonized and thus, still affects East German writers today. These studies and others by Paul Cooke and Wolfgang Emmerich, both of whom are influenced by Bhabha’s work, will provide a way to probe the existence of particularly East German culture and literature 25 years after unification. It is necessary to explore the ways in which East Germans remember the GDR and the events since unification. Memory and, in particular collective cultural memory of East

Germany will be explored through Aleida Assmann's works, in particular her works on historical/political change and memory. Due to what has been perceived as the colonial nature of German unification (a controversial, yet widely held claim¹¹), East German literature brings an alternative memory to light not present in media images or in the dominant cultural memory, and literary discourse, thereby challenging Germans to rethink their past, present, and future. This project will use the previous two theoretical concepts as a starting point to then explore how Deleuze and Guattari's concept of minor literature and a "minority" culture in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (1975) can prove fruitful in my analyses of the political and collective "enunciation" that is visible in these authors' works. While this project will not claim that East German literature is *similar to* or a new incarnation of Franz Kafka's works, Deleuze and Guattari's *method* of entering Kafka's works as a minor literature seeking a voice within a major one, can offer a model for how we might situate East German literature within the broader (West) German one in the post-unification context.

As in other subsections of German language literature, the development of East German authors' writings over the last 25 years has been an important part of the "German condition" by providing alternative viewpoints and memories of a divided history, which with unification indeed becomes a "Gesamtdeutsch" history. By casting an East German perspective and writing texts influenced by their experiences, these authors have confirmed their Germanness and not allowed an important perspective on history to be forgotten. As Jürgen Habermas explains, integration and common attachment are important in creating "normalization". Reading East

¹¹ For a provocative perspective on this colonization, see Daniela Dahn *Westwärts und nicht vergessen: Vom Unbehagen in der Einheit* (1997), and West German, Dirk Laabs' *Die deutsche Goldrausch: Die wahre Geschichte der Treuhand* (2012).

German writers' mnemonic and critical works is one way to highlight their part in what Jürgen Habermas calls their "historically achieved freedoms" (175).

Homi K. Bhabha's works on post-colonialism are indeed helpful in order to get a foothold in post-unification East German writing. Bhabha's notions of hybridity and mimicry of the colonizers by the colonized are useful in discussing East Germans' literary and cultural life. Bhabha explains: "The social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation" ("Locations" 3). This articulation of difference has been important as it is at times embraced, other times combated by East German writers, it persists. A conference in Berlin in 2013 made this difference all too visible. While the East German audience reacted positively to East German writers' discussion of these differences and desires to explore them further, West Germans in the audience often became bitter and even expressed outrage that this topic has not been overcome in these last 25 years.¹² Such attitudes can be explored through post-colonial discourse. With political unification, the desire for normalization is manifested in the desire to move beyond controversial political topics in order to overcome differences. At the same time, East Germans continue to explore these historical and cultural differences, which, in the name of normalization, have been left out of most public and media discussions.

While it is not uncontroversial to call German unification "colonization", this theory has been employed by others in the field to discuss East German literature and culture after German unification. Paul Cooke evokes the works of Bhabha, Edward Said, and Stuart Hall in his

¹² Conference: Kinder der Friedlichen Revolution: Junge Autoren schreiben über das Ende der DDR-Diktatur, Deutsche Gesellschaft e.V., Berlin, Germany. November 14-15, 2013. East German authors present were Clemens Meyer, Julia Schoch, and Andrea Hünig.

analysis of East Germany in the post-Wende era and the 1990s in his 2005 work *Representing East Germany since Unification: from Colonization to Nostalgia*. He thoroughly traces the development of East German culture from the immediate Wende and unification period up until the immediate post-millennial era.

Wolfgang Emmerich, whose book *Kleine Literatur Geschichte der DDR* (2005) is one of the most comprehensive on the subject of GDR literature and includes the immediate post-Wende 1990s, has also explored Bhabha's notions of *Third Space* to describe GDR literature after the Wende; the "reintegration of what constituted GDR literature into the new field of [post-unification] German literature, which has been homogenized by economic factors and the media as well as in people's minds..." I argue that it is this attempt at "homogenization", that obscures East German writers' critical engagement with these economic and media "factors" in contemporary society. Therefore, by operating within this Third Space, East German authors have a particularly "minor" or outside perspective. As Emmerich notes, "Authors from the former GDR are now [...] a small, albeit important group among many. To be sure, they feel 'displaced' in a special way" ("(East) German"). This displacement allows for a "double-vision", a term which Bhabha takes from Salman Rushdie in the *Satanic Verses*, evoking the "migrant's double vision" ("Locations" 7-8). While he uses this term in the case of migrant cultures, I argue that East Germans became literary and cultural migrants with the accession to the FRG. This is the "special way" in which East Germans feel displaced. Virtually no cultural or political aspect of the GDR made its way into unified Germany. This fact, along with Wolfgang Schäuble's previously mentioned speech and the post-unification attitudes about East Germans as outsiders, can certainly create a feeling of displacement or migration despite not actually having "moved"

to a new place physically. Therefore, East German double-vision can allow for a clearer view and a greater contemplative distance from the events surrounding unification and justify colonial perceptions of unification.

Despite corresponding to post-colonial literature in many aspects, East German literature has taken another step in the 21st century. I submit that East Germans within this “Third Space” have now moved into a new stage beyond the postcolonial realm, which is still influenced by postcolonial notions of unification (i.e.) West German economic and cultural colonialism) but no longer limited to them. Their writing has developed to combine a specifically East German collective memory and alternative representation of history with the political, economic, and social realities of Germany in the 21st century, a representation especially prevalent in Julia Schoch’s works.

This alternative, East German view of the history of the GDR and the past 25 years have developed into a literature that is no longer solely “trotzig” (Cooke) in its reactionary defense of GDR culture; it strives rather for a complete and actual/accurate memory of these years. Aleida Assmann’s understanding of collective memory in “Transformations between History and Memory” helps to illuminate some of what East German literature today achieves. One essential feature of East Germans’ writings on their experiences in the GDR and the last 25 years is the notion that it “is sometimes notoriously difficult to distinguish what one has experienced oneself from what one has been told and afterward incorporated into one’s stock of autobiographical memories” (50). I would argue that East Germans are experiencing what she calls a

memory boom [that] reflects a general desire to reclaim the past as an important part of the present, and to rediscover, to revalue, and to reassess it as a part of individual biographies and the way individuals position themselves in a wider historical perspective. It also provides a repository for group affinities, loyalties, and identity in a postindividualist age (54).

Furthermore, the dual memory of the GDR both as a repressive, totalitarian regime, as well as a comfortable, simple life, where basic needs were met and “togetherness” reigned, is an important discussion for German history and memory of the period after the Second World War. There is more to this process of memory than just dealing with a dictatorship, or a second *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. Using these terms may be precarious, as it would seem to conflate the GDR and the Nazi-past. Theodor Adorno discusses the belief held by some who lived under Nazi rule that life wasn’t always bad under fascism; at least for those who were not members of “a few and relatively well defined groups” of people. This has grounding in a feeling that in Nazi Germany “social alienation had been done away with thanks to the warmth and togetherness no matter how manipulated and contrived” (219). Although some former GDR citizens have shared a similar attitude in defense of life under a totalitarian SED regime, the difference lies in both the murderous tendencies of the Nazi regime, and the circumstances under which the GDR came into existence (a result of the end of World War II and the Nazi regime), as well as that which brought about the GDR’s demise (popular revolution). While there is indeed a need to come to terms with the SED regime, its disregard for the civil rights of some of its citizens and its perversion of Socialism (what has been termed “Aufarbeitung” rather than “Vergangenheitsbewältigung” in order to both distinguish between the Holocaust and Nazi-era, as well as recognize that East Germany did not go through the same process of dealing with the Nazi past that West Germany did), the “good” in the former East Germany is often separated from the regime in contemporary East German literature’s negotiation of the past. Additionally, it does more than simply “cherry-pick” the good or view the GDR through “rose-tinted” glasses, a crime of which many East Germans had been accused in the immediate post-Wende era. These

authors are as critical of the former GDR as they are of today's capitalist, democratic society, once again in a way that is evocative of Bhabha's hybridity and migrants' double vision and thus, they continually engage and "deal with" the past and its impact on the present, rather than simply attempt to put it behind them.

Another fundamental difference in the negotiation of memory of the GDR and the Nazi-era is that the East German citizens (as well as those of other former Soviet satellite nations) were themselves responsible for the "Peaceful Revolution" and the demise of the SED, unlike in National Socialism. Engagement with this past is important not only for East Germans post-unification, but for all Germans, as the division was an experience shared with West Germany, and thus, erasing East German cultural memory is to erase East German life before unification, as well as their part in bringing an end to German division.

Therefore, I will enter East German writing through the lens of Minor Literature or "kleine Litteraturen", a term originally used by Franz Kafka in his *Diaries* and "theoretical" works. This literature refers to Jewish writing in German and German language writing in Kafka's Prague, a minor culture writing in a major German language that occupied Prague. For Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari the most important aspects of that minor literature are its three characteristics: "[1.] A deterritorialization of language, [2.] the connection of the individual to political immediacy, and [3.] the collective assemblage of enunciation" (18). I will argue that these elements open up the works of post-Wende and in particular, contemporary East German literature to a new reading as a way to set it apart from its West German counterpart beyond solely post-colonial themes resulting from unification and expanding upon alternative collective memory. The characters in each work are irrevocably tied to political and historical events and

the social change that accompanies them. That individual character could represent the story of hundreds of thousands of former GDR citizens. For example, one sees this in *Neue Leben* in Enrico Türrer's letters, or in Schoch's description of the erasure of the East German past happening all around them. While "deterritorialization of language"¹³ may not seem to apply to this literature linguistically as it did with the Jewish population in Prague, i.e. writing in the deterritorialized *language* of a German, it does occur in the cultural *use* of German in East German writing emphasizing the political and collective themes while still "speaking the language" of a West German culture by creating works praised by Western audiences. Furthermore, terms specific to East Germany or "DDR-Wörter", or the use of the Russian language and its influence appear, illuminating the imprint of their former GDR culture.¹⁴ These characteristics allow for an analysis of the literature that is not solely concerned with the traditional modes of literary categories, styles, and genres. In spite of the *Literaturstreit* debates, these authors maintain the politically and socially critical characteristics while writing aesthetically pleasing works. The ethos does not come at the expense of the aesthetic.

Despite debates about whether or not Deleuze and Guattari were indeed on the right track in their analysis of Kafka's "Kleine Litteraturen" (see Edmunds and Pascale Casanova), it nevertheless provides another means to view his work, rather than "solely through the natural-oedipal and theological-metaphysical points of view"¹⁵, which is especially helpful in the works of Antje Rávic Strubel. Minor literature theory is a starting point and by no means the only way

¹³ Lowell Edmunds rightly points out that Deleuze and Guattari spend a majority of time writing about this "deterritorialization" of language in their work: "They are indeed far less interested in politics in minor literature than they are in the "deterritorialization" of a major language in this kind of literature, to which they devote by far the largest part of their third chapter" (352). I, however, am more interested in the politics and political in minor literature, thus tying it with the themes of East German literature.

¹⁴ See for example Hellmann, Manfred W. "Zur Sprache vor und nach der "Wende" - Ost- West-Kulturen in der Kommunikation."

to view East German literature. However, reading these works through this theoretical lens, one can gain new insights into a more nuanced portrayal of the life and experiences that East German authors describe through the process of literary creation (a concept present both in Kafka and East German literature).¹⁶

While East German topics are the backdrop and many times the harbinger of their writing, a sort of self-awareness and engagement with topics outside the purely colonized East German experience is beginning to emerge. The East German writers in the project do indeed articulate a difference between West and East, and while each author writes in varying styles, employing different literary devices, they are all engaged in a common endeavor: “[Sie] vermitteln[n] das Thema Ostens in einen Westen, in dessen Alltag die Wende kaum wahrnehmbar war” (Helbig, 84). Therefore, by conveying East German themes, they allow all Germans to rediscover, rethink, and reassess the past and portray the memory of that past and its role in a *German* present and future.

¹⁶ For a discussion of the “process” of literary writing of experience see, for example, Deleuze and Guattari Chapter 1, as well as Holger Hilbig and Andrea Geier for the post-Wende East German context.

II. CHAPTER 1 – INGO SCHULZE

If there is an author most often looked upon by literary critics as a representative of the new generation of East German writers, it is Ingo Schulze. Stuart Taberner, Wolfgang Emmerich, Paul Cooke, and Stephen Brockmann just to name a few all discuss Schulze's works within the scope of new East German writing post-1990.¹⁷ While his works have at times been viewed as examples of "Ostalgie", or "Wenderomane", these labels fail to capture the essence of Schulze's writing. Due to the overtly political and socially critical tone in Ingo Schulze's works, it is productive to look at his writing through postcolonial, collective memory discourses, and ultimately a minor literature approach. In this way, one can see the specifically East German collective enunciation in Ingo Schulze's texts and the evolution of which can be seen in the works of East German writing in general.

Born in 1962 in Dresden, Ingo Schulze is the oldest of the authors discussed in this project. Therefore, dependent on one's definition of "generation", he may straddle competing notions of the former GDR's "Third Generation", which may range from the 1960s through the early 1980s.¹⁸ For a constructive analysis of East German literature post-2000 I consider it paramount to consider the perspective of those born in the 1960s as these authors spent their formative years in the GDR and became successful in unified Germany. Schulze's years include

¹⁷ See for example Stuart Taberner and Paul Cooke's writing in *Contemporary German Fiction: Writing in the Berlin Republic*. (2007), as well as Stephen Brockmann's Essays "Normalization? Has Helmut Kohl's Vision Been Realized" and "Remembering GDR Culture in Postunification Germany".

¹⁸ Third Generation Ost: <http://thirdgenerationost.wordpress.com/>. For a more detailed analysis of the term "Generation" and how it refers to the GDR, see Katarzyna Norkowska. "Das Jahr 1989 als Wende in der Literatur: Erzählstrategien Thomas Brussigs, Thomas Rosenlöchers und Ingo Schulzes." *"Die Mauer wurde wie nebenbei eingerissen": Zur Literatur in Deutschland und Mitteleuropa nach 1989/90*. Ed. Stephan Krause and Friederike Partzsch. Vol. 27. Berlin: Frank & Timme, 2012. 203-13. Print. Literaturwissenschaft. She calls Thomas Rosenlöcher (born 1947) the "middle" and Ingo Schulze and Thomas Brussig (1964) the "younger" GDR-generation.

- See also Ines Geipel, *Generation Mauer: Ein Porträt*. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2014. Print. For her, this generation includes those born in the 1960s in the GDR.

significant, GDR-specific experiences that are portrayed in his works, such as his childhood, education, and the obligatory 18 months in the East German armed forces, the *NVA* (*Nationale Volksarmee*).

Schulze's literary success began in the 1990s with his first two works, *33 Augenblicke des Glücks* (1995), which was hailed as the "discovery of the year" (Thomas 56) and *Simple Storys* (1998) "one of the most successful east German novels of the 1990s" (Cooke, "GDR Literature" 61). This chapter will however move beyond these in order to analyze two of his post-2000 novels: *Neue Leben* (2005) and *Adam und Evelyn* (2008). The goal of this chapter is to examine how the distance from the events following 1989/90 may change Schulze's perspective of these events. The passage of time allows for greater reflection upon the experiences of a specific moment in history (here, the *Wende*) as well as what has happened since that moment (post-unification Germany): "...jede neue Erfahrung verändert den Blick auf die Vergangenheit und damit unser Bild von ihr" (Schulze, *Tausend Geschichten* 10). This "Blick auf die Vergangenheit" is especially important in an analysis of Schulze's work as he is the only author discussed in this project who published in the 1990s.

Observing Schulze's work through the lens of minor literature, post-colonial discourse, and collective memory theory will allow for a nuanced approach to his literature that extends beyond a style-based approach because his "Erzähltechnik" and influences are so diverse and fluid. According to Schulze: "...es [gibt] keine veralteten und obsolete Erzähltechniken, sondern nur angemessene und unangemessene" (*Tausend Geschichten*, 26). Thus, the focus shifts from the "how" to the "what" of this literature. The two novels in this chapter as well as a short story in a later chapter portray a collective and specifically East German perspective of the world,

society, and recent history. The two novels *Neue Leben* and *Adam und Evelyn* are written in different styles, a Briefroman (epistolary novel) and a much shorter travel narrative respectively. Furthermore, his influences range from Russian short story writers such as Pushkin and Chekhov, to Americans such as Hemingway and Carver, as well as the Briefromane by E.T.A. Hoffmann, Goethe, and Thomas Mann. This is important for a reading of East German writing within the tropes of minor literature. The variety of influences embodies the contemporary culture in unified Germany and rounds out a picture of both the (East) German past and today's globalized society, two aspects that are important in German literature in the second decade of the 21st century.

I will also examine his works as representative of an East German literature that stems from post-colonial perceptions of German unification. Paul Cooke's discussion of this perception of colonization creates a specifically East German context stemming from Homi K. Bhabha's work on the subject. The post-1989, globalized world, can be viewed in the way, in which Bhabha views the post-modern condition: "...the demography of the new internationalism is the history of postcolonial migration, the narratives of cultural and political Diaspora, the major social displacements..., the poetics of exile, the grim prose of political and economic refugees" ("Locations" 6-7). The perception of colonization makes for a literature that expresses East Germans' *feeling* that they are in exile or political Diaspora in the unified Germany in the 1990s. While more prevalent in his (and East German) works of the 1990s with their stark portrayals of the East German condition in a post-Wende world, such experiences are still discernable and influence his post-2000 works, but begin to show an evolution from a purely postcolonial tone. For example, the characters in *Simple Storys* from 1998 overwhelmingly feel disoriented in the

post-unification, globalized world. On the other hand, Schulze portrays Enrico Türmer of *Neue Leben* (2005) and Adam of *Adam und Evelyn* (2008) as keenly aware of the trajectory the post-Wende world is taking, but unable to come to terms with it, expressing criticism and disappointment. Therefore, the post-2000 works examine the Wende and post-Wende era through a distanced and more refined knowledge of this trajectory and hence, the critical rather than disoriented or defiant tone (see Paul Cooke).

Moving beyond the disorienting and defiant feel of the 1990s, Schulze's literature now portrays personal and collective experiences in order to be voice an (alternative) memory and socially criticism. His works create a space for reflection on our contemporary world. With the fall of the Berlin Wall and eventually the entire Eastern Bloc, German language literature, East as well as West, began to ask questions of the past and engage the history of the 20th Century: "Nicht nur die DDR-Geschichte wird im Spannungsfeld von Kritik und Verklärung bilanziert, auch der Nationalsozialismus und die bundesdeutsche Vergangenheit werden neu interpretiert" (Besslich 7). In Holger Bösmann's contribution to *Wende des Erinnerns?* entitled "Nach dem Ende der Geschichte", he refers to Frances Fukuyama's famous essay "The End of History" from 1989, which was expanded to *The End of History and the Last Man* in 1992. He quotes Fukuyama's claim that liberal democracy and capitalism have proven to be the system that is capable of providing satisfaction to ever growing human needs and desires, and that it may be the final form of human government (Bösmann 201-2). This claim was seen as a certainty in the post-Wende world. In all of his texts, however, Schulze problematizes the concept of what he refers to as "Die neuen Selbstverständlichkeiten" and questions the validity of our "new lives" in a one-world-system.

A. *Neue Leben (2005)*

Neue Leben: Die Jugend Enrico Türmers in Briefen und Prosa. Herausgegeben, kommentiert und mit einem Vorwort versehen von Ingo Schulze, is a multi-leveled “Briefroman” and account of the life of Enrico (Heinrich) Türmer, a former theater “Dramaturg” (dramatic advisor) turned newspaper mogul in the East German city of Altenburg. Altenburg, Thüringen, the “ostdeutsche Provinz” is also where *Simple Storys* takes place and where Ingo Schulze worked as a Dramaturg himself. The recipients of Türmers letters (which comprise the bulk of the nearly 800 page novel) are his sister, Vera Türmer, his childhood friend Johann Zielke, and Nicoletta Hansen, a photographer from West Germany, whom he met only once, but with whom he has fallen in love. Depending upon the addressee, the tone and content of each letter varies, describing different events occurring at different periods of time. For example, the duration of the narrative, the first level, describes the actual events as they take place during an important period of the Wende from January to July 1990, (just short of two months after the fall of the Berlin Wall and up through the Währungsunion prior to German Unification). During this time Türmer composes letters addressed to Vera and Johann (Jo), which discuss current, mostly personal events. On the second level, the letters addressed to Nicoletta Hansen (N.H.) discuss Enrico’s (T’s)¹⁹ childhood and life in the GDR up to January 1990, when the two met.²⁰

In addition to the different layers of time in the novel, the fictional compilation and commentary by Ingo Schulze, that is, a fictional version of himself creates another level. This, of

¹⁹ I will refer to these characters through the abbreviations and nicknames that are given to them in the novel. Nicoletta Hansen (N.H.), Enrico Türmer (T.), Johann Zielke (Jo), Vera Türmer (V.T.) and the “fictional” editor Ingo Schulze (I.S.).

²⁰ See Schulze. *Tausend Geschichten. Neue Leben* was published seven years after *Simple Storys*. During that period Schulze wanted to write about his childhood in the GDR, but struggled with the material in attempts to make it contemporary. Here he achieves this through the letters to N.H.

course, elicits similarities to, and influence from E.T.A. Hoffmann's *Die Lebensansichten des Katers Murr nebst fragmentarischer Biographie des Kapellmeisters Johannes Kreisler in zufälligen Makulaturblättern*. Herausgegeben von E.T.A. Hoffmann (1819/21), as well as other contemporaries such as Feridun Zaimoglu with *Liebesmale, scharlachrot: Die neuen Leiden des jungen Ali* (2000). In the forward the fictional Schulze explains that he came to this information about Enrico "Heinrich" Türmer in his search for material for a novel about business people. After compiling this "Stoff" he ultimately came to the realization that what was forming before him was a novel and not merely a collection letters (*Neue Leben* 7-9). This revelation adds yet another dimension to the novel. As "fictional" editor, I.S. is not simply compiling letters and providing additional or clarifying information in the footnotes, he often gives non-neutral opinions regarding what T. writes. He casts doubts and makes judgments. This tone upsets the narrator vs narrated (Erzähler vs Erzählte) dynamic making for an unreliable narrator as now there are two narrators contributing to the story. Who is portraying an accurate account of the events; Türmer who lived through them and wrote about them as they occurred, or "I.S." who is reflecting upon them 10 to 15 years later? The *real* Ingo Schulze states:

Der Herausgeber, der meinen Namen trägt, hat, wie jeder Herausgeber, seine eigenen Interessen und Absichten...Er sieht in Türmer literarische Konkurrenz. Zudem ist er eifersüchtig auf die enge Beziehung zwischen Enrico und dessen Schwester Vera. Das hat zur Folge, dass der Leser auch ihm misstraut (*Tausend Geschichten*, 47-8).

One can begin to understand this semi-autobiographical metanarrative of (and commentary on) Ingo Schulze's own experiences as well as the experiences of East Germans during this time, by looking at them through the third characteristic of minor literature which states that events "refer to an experience for which only a collective enunciation can take responsibility" (Bensmaïa xii). Particular details do have basis in the author Schulze's personal

life. He was indeed a Dramaturg in Altenburg, founded a newspaper, and was active in the Neues Forum during the Wende, a citizens' movement which was instrumental during this period.

These elements are projected onto the main character, T.'s life, and onto the people and events that surround it. However, through this fictional version of himself, Schulze also comments on events and collective East German experiences leading up to the unification of Germany, which at times do take on a sort of explanatory role for the outside observer (reader): "Als ich die Briefe...las, entfaltete sich vor mir das Panorama jener Zeit, in der das Leben Türmers auf der Kippe gestanden hatte, *und nicht nur seins*" (9, emphasis added). While it can be argued that the chaotic period of the Wende undoubtedly spurred an inconceivable number of different stories and experiences, the protagonist's tale in *Neue Leben* does indeed create an effective panorama of the time through his experiences, correspondences, and interactions. For Ingo Schulze as well as Enrico Türmer; "Mich drängte es, das Erlebte festzuhalten" (147) and as Bensmaïa mentions, not simply the individual, but the collective "Erlebte."

Schulze's narrative of the Wende-era is also an exercise in the validity of a collective *memory* that correlates with Aleida Assmann's writings. It becomes apparent through his characters that especially in times of political upheaval, "humans beings do not live in the first person singular only...they become parts of different groups whose 'we' they adopt together with the respective social frames" ("Transformations" 51). Schulze's use of the epistolary novel also illuminates the question of agency with regard to memory. The letters report experiences in the GDR from Türmer's childhood up through July 11, 1990. While these are Türmer's (and loosely Schulze's) experiences, they are common or known to former citizens of the GDR. It is important to note that these letters by themselves purport to have no audience aside from their

original addressee. However, the varying perspectives told from the time in which it was lived, the reflections by the editor, and the witness contributions to the novel (the addressees of the letters often discussed in “Schulze’s” notes), create a “story about a story” that provides a panorama of the times. As Aleida Assmann expresses,

In stressing the experiential solipsism of individual memory...we disregard two important dimensions of memory: interaction with other individuals and interaction with external signs and symbols. Autobiographical memories cannot be *embodied* by another person, but they can be *shared* with others (50).

Schulze’s work *shares* these memories in two ways for two different audiences. The collective assemblages of enunciation discussed in Deleuze and Guattari show that the minor culture of East Germans had similar experiences despite not necessarily being uniform and thus, many East Germans would be able to find reference to their lives in Schulze’s semi-autobiographical narrative. Thus, there is a collective enunciation of specific East German collective memory, or what Aleida Assmann refers to as a “culture as a monument”, which is to be remembered. The second way can be explored by recalling Assmann’s concept of presentation of a collective memory of the experienced world (*Kultur als Lebenswelt*). In this case, there is not an implied observer, rather those who review these memories and experiences retroactively or as Christian Sieg puts it historiographically. It seems that Sieg’s analysis of *Neue Leben* claims that *every* reader is experiencing this work in such a way; because we as observers are reading letters of which we are not the addressee, and receive explanations through an editor’s comments, we are inherently confronted with a collective memory that is not our own, as Assmann puts it “through the backdoor” (*Kultur*, qtd. in Sieg 170). However, I would posit that Schulze’s technique is both a “monument” for East German readers, *as well as* a retroactive account of “Lebenswelt” for

those who did not experience the Wende as East Germans did. What this process does is allow one to experience the collective memories of a minor culture.

The letters in *Neue Leben* recall some of the most important moments in recent German history, such as the “Montagsdemos” in the late summer and fall of 1989, the Volkskammerwahlen in March of 1990, the Kommunalwahlen in May of 1990, and the currency reform/introduction of the D-Mark to East Germany on July 1, 1990. In addition to these political events and the debates surrounding them, social aspects are engaged, in particular those surrounding the role of literature, art and the artist in (German) society, which was a central part of the “Literaturstreit” during the Wende and the early 1990s. This engaged, literary account is important for both East and West Germans for an understanding of literature about the Wende. An East German perspective on the events of 1989/90 and the society that came after is essential to a more comprehensive picture of the last 25 years of German history and literature. One must, therefore, understand just what it is that makes *Neue Leben* an East German novel in a unified Germany.

For Christian Sieg, what makes *Neue Leben* a work of East German literature, in particular, is the fact that: “Es ist jedoch nicht die kulturelle oder politische Bedeutung dieser Ereignisse [der Wende], die im Mittelpunkt steht, sondern die sich aus ihnen ergebenden Konsequenzen für den Alltag” (169). I would go further to say that in line with minor literature both the meaning and the consequences are all one process and are equally important. These events, their cultural and political meaning, as well as the consequences for the everyday lives of East Germans cannot be separated, for as a minor literature “*everything* is political” (Deleuze and Guattari, 17, emphasis added). The experiences and the memories of a culturally “minor”

East German population are, to evoke Assmann once again, both experiential in interaction with others *and* in the interaction with external signs and symbols. Throughout the novel, in what is becoming more and more a population integrated into, or colonized by the Federal Republic, the powerful political symbols of one currency, freedom, the changing of the names of streets, and eventually the calls for “Ein Volk” coexist with their emerging consequences for the Alltag (one of which is the evaporation of all things East German). Because German unification was both political and cultural in nature, Schulze’s literary expression of the events immediately connects the individual (Enrico Türmer/Ingo Schulze) to politics (revolution and unification) and thus, it “takes on a collective value” (Deleuze and Guattari 17) as part of the East German condition and their Alltag, before, during, and after 1989/90. To return to Sieg’s observation, both the cultural and political significance of events during the Wende *as well as* their consequences for the East German Alltag are the focal point of East German literature.

Ingo Schulze also portrays the evaporation of East German society through the social and political elements inherent in his frequent commentaries on the economization of society, which is one contributor to the loss in the value of art and critical political discourse in post-1990 society. As Türmer says at one point in the novel “Die Aufmerksamkeit würde aus der Welt verschwinden...” (527). These were important issues not only in the former GDR, but as seen by the “Literaturstreit”, were also paramount in the former FRG and unified Germany. As Stephen Brockmann points out:

The historical record shows that culture in the GDR – in particular literary culture, but also film, and to some extent also art and music – played an explicit political role that is largely foreign and incomprehensible in the West – other than perhaps in the western parts of today’s Federal Republic... (“Remembering” 46).

Therefore, we have the Western influenced world of politics through economics versus a culture where the arts played a political role. *Neue Leben* shows this type of transformation of the East into the West in one way by exploring the eventual takeover of Türmer's newspaper "Altenburger Wochenblatt" by West German investors. Originally he hails this newspaper as his own personal "Revolution", his own "Neues Forum" with which he wanted to contribute to the political discussions, culture, and changes of the time (93-4). As unification nears, however, he goes into business (without his "Wochenblatt" partners) with a West German business mogul named Clemens von Barrista (a name curiously similar to that of the German romanticist Clemens Brentano). Together Türmer and von Barrista, the man they call "Der Baron" start an advertising paper "Anzeigenblatt" to make money, eventually destroying the former newspaper which featured primarily politically and socially critical content.

Schulze is highlighting a paradox in pre- and post-Wende Germany that can also be examined by comparing post-colonial criticism and Bill Niven's theory of "self-exclusion" (87). According to Paul Cooke, East Germany's situation can be considered both post-colonial with Soviet occupation after World War II and neocolonial with unification and the introduction 'free markets' and trade agreements, "...which bring with them new, and perhaps equally debilitating, constraints" (*Representing* 10). According to Schulze, in this new world dominated by Western style capitalism, social and political discourses are sacrificed for economic gain and comfort. Rather than engaging in civic activities in order to gain rights and promote progress, change and comfort are achieved through economic means. This was always one of the East's largest critiques (at least officially) of the West prior to the Wende and caused some East Germans to

question how progress is achieved. This dualism is apparent in the novel when Türmer begins to question his rebellion against the GDR:

Im Bett mußte ich daran denken, was man uns in der Schule gelehrt hatte, nämlich dass bei uns in der DDR die Werktätigen nicht zu demonstrieren oder streiken brauchten, denn wer im Sozialismus auf die Straße ginge, demonstrierte schließlich gegen sich selbst. Diese Formulierung beschrieb präzise meine Lage. Als Schriftsteller tat ich genau das. Ich demonstrierte für die Abschaffung meines Stoffes, meines Themas...Was sollte ich, ein Schriftsteller, ohne Mauer? (447).

As with the process of German unification, the Western lifestyle begins to take hold. To be fair, this may not have been solely due to a hostile takeover by West Germany.

Niven's self-exclusion theory makes the claim that East Germans had a hand in creating their own struggles by excluding themselves from the political processes of change that may have avoided such a colonization (or the perception of one). He claims that "[y]ears of oppression, arguably an unbroken tradition since 1933, produced in the East Germans a people whose self-denying conformism made it hard for them to take initiative" (98). This is a damning claim of ambivalence on the part of East Germans; and in the novel, Schulze also does not spare his protagonist similar criticisms. By turning his back on art and political engagement, Enrico Türmer contributes not only to his own demise, but to the demise of other artists (his girlfriend/theater actress Michaela, as well as the theater group, for example). As Fabian Thomas mentions, "Der Baron" enters Türmer's life and becomes his equivalent to a "Mephistopheles" from Goethe's *Faust* by seducing the self-proclaimed artist into capitalism (70). Barrista lures him in with the promise of the fame and fortune that he will no longer achieve as a dissident writer now that the GDR is collapsing. Schulze explains in *Tausend Geschichten*,

Türmer...ist...jemand, der in der DDR leben, leiden und schreiben wollte, um eines Tages als erfolgreicher Schriftsteller und Dissident à la Biermann in den Westen zu gehen. Er ist gegen die DDR, aber um seinen Traum...leben zu können, braucht er die zweigeteilte Welt...der unwahrscheinliche, unvorstellbare Mauerfall [macht] seinen Traum gegenstandslos. Statt als

gefeierter Dissident in den Westen einzuziehen, latscht er gemeinsam mit Millionen anderen über die Grenze (48).

The events leading up to and during the Wende make him all the more susceptible to Barrista's seduction. This phenomenon bears some similarity to Schulze's life. While he did not flee to the West, he desired to become a famous writer, and like his protagonist felt that in the GDR the best way to do so was to follow in the footsteps of dissident writer and singer/songwriter Wolf Biermann, who was expatriated from the GDR in 1976. Schulze remembers: "In den Augen meiner Mutter war er ein ungehobelter Prolet, und seine politischen Ansichten fand sie zu kommunistisch. Ich begriff jedoch: Gedichte können einen Staat ins Wanken bringen. Solche Gedichte wollte ich auch schreiben" (*Tausend Geschichten* 12). While Schulze has been quite successful as a writer in unified Germany, for East Germans however, this begs the question; does it make the process of unification any less of a colonization when those being colonized have their own hand in it or like Faust have sold their soul for the things that have been denied them so long?

Türmer does allow himself to be seduced by the expensive dinners, nights out partying, and charming character of the West German businessman. What results is Schulze criticizing not only the West Germans', but also East Germans' hand in the colonization, overall economization of society, and the declining role of art. As a lesson, Türmer's business enterprises eventually fail and he is left with nothing but debt and he flees in the mid to late 1990s. Relating to this phenomenon are comments by Schulze on the election results in March of 1990, in which the East German CDU won the surprising majority, "Wir hatten unser Geschick selbst gewählt...Mitte der neunziger Jahre war es jedoch offensichtlich geworden, dass das Wirtschaftswunder im Osten nicht stattfinden würde" (*Tausend Geschichten* 32). Therefore, Ingo

Schulze and the authors discussed here truly do bridge a gap by not only suggesting that a colonization existed, but also by lamenting that many East Germans were responsible to a certain degree. The parallels to the fate of Enrico TÜRmer show that rather than looking back and pointing fingers to any one source, Schulze describes what has come out of the various possibilities and failures of 1990 and lets the reader draw conclusions.

The reader observes and even experiences in great detail the schizophrenia among East Germans through descriptions of their simultaneous admiration and criticism of “Freedom” and all things Western. Just as Barrista plays his role in luring TÜRmer, there are other aspects of the West that are the subject of East Germans’ desire, for example, T. ’s obsession with West German reporter Nicoletta Hansen. She can be seen as a metaphor for the golden, unattainable West, something he only understands on the surface, wants to obtain, but never does. TÜRmer and Hansen meet just once when they are in a car accident together, but his letters to her describe his longing for her. In a footnote, the editor I.S. comments on this:

T. und N.H. kannten sich nur wenige Stunden, und diese waren voller Missverständnisse und Unfälle. Dass N.H. aus der Bundesrepublik stammt, muss viel zu ihrer Attraktivität für T. beigetragen haben. T. erzählte und rechtfertigte sich somit in Richtung Westen, eine für die damalige Zeit durchaus typische Haltung in Ostdeutschland. (*Neue Leben* 140).

Not only does N.H. so quickly become an object of his desire, but on the same page he also tells N.H. that she is the only one he trusts to discuss his experiences in the GDR. It seems odd that simply being from the Bundesrepublik would make a person trustworthy, but as I.S. says, this was typical, and it could show a false sense of security that everything West was right. Furthermore, it could portray a desire for East Germans to be understood by West Germans, or at least as a way to fit into the new Western way of life.

The admiration for the West is also portrayed through T.'s trips to Western locations. This fascination and the awareness of stark differences between the East and West allow for a unique perspective to emerge that not only criticizes the Western idolization and Zeitgeist of the Wende, but contemporary 21st century society. His trips to Monte Carlo, Kurfürstendamm in West Berlin, and Paris arouse an exquisite sense of freedom within him. On the other hand it is a freedom that achieved through monetary means and possessions, a phenomenon that T. is aware of but the consequences of which he is unable to aptly comprehend or control. This paradox is apparent in separate observations in Paris:

...plötzlich war ich kurz davor, in Tränen auszubrechen. Das Bewußtsein, für zwei Stunden frei zu sein, so frei, wie ich es noch nie in meinem Leben gewesen bin, beraubte mich meines Willens (63).

In Paris werde ich meine Uhr verkaufen, um mir den Aufenthalt leisten zu können. Ich greife in die Tasche. Statt einer Uhr ziehe ich immer wieder Zehn-Franc-Scheine hervor. Ich überlege, wie oft ich das noch machen muß, damit ich einen Tag bleiben kann, eine Woche, ein Jahr (68).

His wishes to constantly pull enough money from his pockets highlights his impossibility of having enough money to afford a life in Paris and thus, equating free living with having enough money to do so.

Similar to this Paris experience, T. gets another taste of Western "freedom" in West Berlin on Kurfürstendamm: "Ich dachte: Du bist so frei, so frei wie nie zuvor in deinem Leben. Mitten in Westberlin konnte ich tun und lassen, was mir beliebte." What at first seems like a sense of pure freedom to move or act as one pleases after the fall of the Berlin Wall quickly becomes economic, tied with money and purchasing power: "Plötzlich hatte ich die fixe Idee, das Geld wäre verloren, wenn ich es nicht sofort ausgabe. Jedenfalls suchte ich händeringend nach dem idealen Objekt" (581). It begs the question as to where this hyper-consumerism stem from. Does this represent a burning desire to *possess* that which has for so long been unattainable, or is

there something inherent in the “freedom” to do so, in the ability to own something that one does not need?

To evoke Homi Bhabha, this rush to capitalistic ventures and consumerist behavior by East Germans during and after the Wende shows a *mimicking* of the culture of the colonizers (the West). In this way, one attempts to conform, but instead overcompensates and the colonized (the East) only *mock* the colonizers, which ends up being only a “partial representation”. According to Bhabha, colonial mimicry is the “desire for a reformed recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite.*” There is an inherent “double articulation” in mimicry which accounts for both appropriation of the colonized and a “sign of the inappropriate...difference or recalcitrance” (*The Location* 122-3). Therefore, through the German unification process, many East Germans become more than willing to accept this new lifestyle. However, they never fully become the “West” Germans whose freedom they have admired and were told to strive for. Even the younger generation described in Jana Hensel’s *Zonenkinder* bears a distinction from the westerners: “Wir waren die ersten Wessis aus dem Osten”. The phrase “aus dem Osten” is a distinction both from without and within. As we will see in Antje Rávic Strubel’s *Sturz der Tage in die Nacht*, both Easterners and the “Wessis” continue to negotiate East German culture; the westerners lack a frame of reference to GDR culture and are often uninterested. For East Germans, the GDR still plays a part in their lives. What occurs in Schulze’s novel, published 15 years after the collapse of the GDR, is a “double vision” from the perspective of the East German, that is “disrupting the authority” (Bhabha) of a Western, consumer-driven, capitalistic lifestyle. With the Wende came freedom to leave the constraints of GDR society, to do as one pleases, but the precarious image of T. desperately

seeking to purchase the perfect object disrupts a pure picture of freedom from the point of view of an author who finds such a lifestyle and behavior unnecessary, even dangerous.

The desire to be West German also led to backlash and with the eventual disappointment that stemmed from the process of unification, one sees the wave of East German self-identification observed during the 1990s and first few years of the 2000s. Paul Cooke refers to this as the “trotzig” (defiant) identity (*Representing* 8). Thomas Ahbe’s sociological study of East German identity confirms this trend by highlighting that before the Volkskammerwahlen on March 18, 1990, 32 percent of the East German population identified themselves as “East German”, while 61 percent felt they were “German”. Less than two years later “the picture flipped”: 60 percent of East Germans felt they were “East German” while only 35 percent considered themselves “German” (“Die ostdeutsche Erinnerung” 27). In moving beyond the East German literary enunciation of the 1990s, Schulze does not illustrate this phenomenon in a “defiant” way in order simply lay claim to a counterbalance to western dominance. Rather his work portrays what a loss of East German culture means for unified Germany.

An example of this in *Neue Leben* is the role of the fine arts and the artist in the East vs. West. In a discussion with Türmer and his colleague, Georg, Barrista asks: “Was fällt Ihnen bei der Jahreszahl 1797 ein?” to which Türmer and Georg respond with “Balladenjahr” and Hölderlin’s “Hyperion”. At this point there is even a footnote by I.S. to explain that this refers to Goethe and Schiller’s “Balladen”, which highlights further the importance of such knowledge in East German education (the letter is addressed to Jo) and of which a general audience may be unaware. Barrista answers: “Sehr gut...aber wir sind hier nicht im Literaturunterricht...[E]s geht um England, eine Leistung, für die die gesamte zivilisierte Welt dem Empire Dank

schuldet...[E]in Gesetz [erging], das die Bank of England ermächtigte, den Umtausch von Papiergeld in Münzen zu verweigern” (123). Barrista goes on to explain what this meant for the world economy. It is representative on one hand of the general differences of opinion between the East and the West on what is truly important in world history, and on the other hand the trajectory that society takes after 1989. Türrner’s conversion begins as he writes: “Seine Schlußkonfession, er beschäftige sich so gerne mit Geld, weil nichts poetischer sei als seine Hundert-Dollar-Note, erschien mir dann sogar als plausibel” (124).

The debate also rages at a gathering of a theater group in Berlin described in the letters to N.H. On many occasions various characters lament that theater and art is dead, that the future is in economic interests such as business, markets, advertising, and wealth. Türrner’s melancholy is short-lived, however, once Barrista is there to “educate” him. While speaking to the theater group Türrner uses an extremely vivid, metaphorical description of the artists’ life to come after the Wende: “Wenn die Mauer weg ist...werden alle hier wie die Fische auf dem Trockenen liegen und große Augen machen. Dann wird es gut sein, einen richtigen Beruf zu haben” (525-6).

Another portrayal of the post-Wende world is the game of roulette which takes place during a Barrista-sponsored trip to Monte Carlo (a roulette table is also pictured on the hardcover of *Neue Leben*). Türrner is given 5000 DM to either “lose or double” on roulette, which can be viewed as sort of an education or training for the new life to come. In this “new life” there are risks and the results are uncertain, but if one accepts this, plays the game, and is smart about the gamble (with own’s own as well as other people’s money/lives) you can be successful, and/or rich. However, Schulze always manages to show a dualism, an “outsider” perspective. Christian Sieg confirms:

Türmer lernt in Monte Carlo, diese fundamentale Unbestimmtheit der Zukunft emphatisch zu begrüßen. Die Zeiterfahrung, die hier im Zentrum steht, verweist aber auch auf die vielen nicht verwirklichten Zukunftspläne der Nach-Wende-Zeit – denn alle Hoffnungen haben sich mitnichten erfüllt (174).

The comparisons of gambling and life after the Wende are also present in Julia Schoch's *Selbstporträt mit Bonaparte*. The protagonist and her lover also frequently evoke roulette as a metaphor for life, as well as the lack of orientation and future goal in the post-Wende world.

Not only does this evoke the mentality of Germans both East and West during the Wende of euphoria-filled rush to judgement, but it also engages the post-Wende era and the often forgotten disappointments that came thereafter. Furthermore, it reveals how the mentality and events during this crucial point in history shaped our contemporary world. The unrestrained “freedom” of capitalism and market forces gained full momentum and is represented in *Neue Leben* to depict the trajectory of this new society, both retroactively seen during 1990 and from the time when Schulze wrote the novel. It begins to ask the questions that many East Germans have been asking since the sobering moments after 1990: Is this type of market-driven, capitalistic society what we want and is it really good for humanity? Fabian Thomas quotes an interview from 2008 in which Schulze said that those in the West no longer wanted to discuss or hear about the Wende period, that there are other problems to be dealt with today (77). However, in a personal interview and in reference to my question about the dominant portrayal of 1989/90, from the perspective of the victors of history, Ingo Schulze replied:

Das Problem ist, dass es tatsächlich so ist, aber was bewirkt das, das ist das Interessante. Ende Juli erscheint ein kleines Buch²¹ von mir, eine Rede, da habe ich das noch mal versucht zusammenzufassen, also eigentlich diese falsche Selbstverständlichkeit, die mit diesem Weltumbruch von 1989/90 gekommen ist. Da sind die neuen Selbstverständlichkeiten entstanden, da beginnt eigentlich unsere heutige Welt, weil plötzlich viele Fragen und viele Diskussionen, die

²¹ Referring to *Unsere schönen neuen Kleider: Gegen eine marktkonforme Demokratie – für demokratiekonforme Märkte*. Hanser, Berlin (2012).

es vorher gegeben hat, verschwinden. Das ist das Desaster, allmählich kommt es wieder (Personal Interview).

This is in large part the impetus for much of East German writing about the Wende and East German life in the over 25 years since unification. In order to understand the problems of today, one must be aware of where they began. Many of the problems in today's society that many from the former FRG believe are more important, began exactly at the point in history that they are refusing to discuss. The questioning of today's society is especially timely post-2000 since such events as the financial crisis and the ever-growing disparity between the rich and the poor. Many of these issues began (or at least really gained steam) after 1989/90 with what George H.W. Bush and Mikhail Gorbachev coined the "new world order" after the fall of communism, which with it, was the fall of a competing system to keep capitalism in check. As we see, the political and collective run through nearly every aspect of this literature.

Another essential aspect in Schulze's narrative is an alternative memory discourse of 1989/90. It is important to portray the alternative to what has been traditionally provided by the above-mentioned dominant (especially mass media) sources. Christian Sieg's thesis states: "Ingo Schulze...inszeniert in *Neue Leben* ein Medium des kommunikativen Gedächtnisses, den Brief, um den Alltag der Nach-Wende-Zeit zu beleuchten". He continues:

Damit macht er auf eine Dimension gesellschaftlicher Wirklichkeit aufmerksam, die in den historiografischen Darstellungen der Wende oft vernachlässigt wird und auch bei den Feierlichkeiten des Jahres 2009 oftmals in Vergessenheit geraten ist. [Der Roman bezieht] sich – in fiktionaler Manier nicht nur auf vergangene Ereignisse, sondern auch [evoziert] den Zukunftshorizont der Vergangenheit (164).

In order to achieve an accessible portrayal of the reality of the East German "Alltag", *Neue Leben* evokes a sort of dislocation of time, bringing the (post-)Wende out the traditional "Es war einmal..." ethos so often used to describe this radical historical change. In Wolfgang

Emmerich's analysis of GDR literature, he discusses Mikhail Bakhtin's theoretical concept of chronotopes; an internal "time-space of...represented life in the novel" and an external "from which the literary portrayal derives and in which it operates in the public sphere" ("(East) German"). *Neue Leben* achieves both these chronotopes, but also upsets the simple continuity of past and present. Homi Bhabha writes that "[t]he present can no longer be simply envisaged as a break or a bonding with the past and the future, no longer a synchronic presence: our proximate self-presence, our public image, comes to be revealed for its discontinuities, its inequalities, its minorities" ("Locations" 6). Therefore, *Neue Leben*, as well as Strubel's and Schoch's works especially, steps outside a typical chronological timetable of events. One has to upset the established norms of time, society, and culture and this is achieved through a minority perspective on radical change. Bhabha also writes, "'to dwell in the beyond' is...to be part of a revisionary time, a return to the present to redescribe...cultural contemporaneity; to reinscribe our human, historic commonality; *to touch the future on its hither side*" (10). Schulze's novel revises the perspective with respect to the Wende, unification, and the years thereafter.

An example of this can be seen in Türmer's letter to his sister Vera describing personal emotions with respect to the chaotic times during the Wende:

Manchmal fürchte ich mich vor mir, nein, nicht vor mir, vor dem Gang der Dinge! Alles geschieht so zwangsläufig und folgerichtig, und plötzlich erblicke ich mich mittendrin wie in einem Traum. Ich habe Angst, eines Morgens aufzuwachen und nicht zu wissen, was ich als nächstes, was ich überhaupt tun soll (32).

Türmer's fear of the "course of things" lies beyond their inevitable and consequential nature, his fear lies in not being able to find meaning in the course of events, to make sense of their "dream-like" quality. Therefore, his place as an East German, simultaneously beyond and "mittendrin" the events represents the alternative reality for East Germans to that of Westerners. In fact,

Türmer's comparison to a dream-like state comes up frequently in much East German writing.²² Both the GDR and the immediate Wende period before unification seem to be a dream from which East Germans eventually wake-up once the Wall falls.

These observations are telling of the Wende experience because of the speed at which “der Gang der Dinge” took place in 1989/90. So much so that it is often referred to as “Wahnsinn” or “Wilde Zeit”. Not only did East Germans (and to some extent West Germans) have to make sense of the events occurring around them, but they had to do so at a breakneck pace. For East Germans this occurred at the expense of everything they had known for over 40 years. Schulze comments, “wir [hatten] praktisch keine Übergangszeit erlebt. Vom vierzigsten Jahrestag der DDR bis zur deutschen Einheit war kaum ein Jahr vergangen” (*Tausend Geschichten* 23). While all Germans are to some extent aware of this sentiment, the Wende era is remembered, at least officially as a time of excitement and joy and not as one of fear and uncertainty.

Tumultuous change in the life of East Germans is portrayed in *Neue Leben* in a letter to Nicoletta Hansen. In the GDR citizens were told that their society was always striving to reach a socialist utopia, that there was always a goal on the horizon and progress was being made toward that goal. Türmer portrays life early in 1990 a bit differently, “Es ist ungewohnt, ohne Zukunft zu leben...ohne Aussicht auf Erlösung. Aber diesen Zustand ziehe ich dem der Vergangenheit bei weitem vor. Heute erscheint mir die schönste Erinnerung nachgerade obszön“ (107). This comment (which according to I.S. sets the tone for his future letters to N.H.) further shows the sort of confused condition T. is experiencing during the Wende: There is no future and he does

²² See Uwe Tellkamp's *Der Turm* also discussed by Stephen Brockmann, Antje Rávic Strubel's *Sturz der Tage in die Nacht*, and Julia Shoch's *Selbstporträt mit Bonaparte*.

not want to think about the past. More important is it to live in the present (a very West German, in particular West Berlin attitude),²³ rather than look to the past or even the future. Ironically, he does not stick to this mantra as the letters to N.H. do describe his childhood and his “Vergangenheit” in the GDR and his desires to be a famous writer. There is a danger in such two-sided behavior and by projecting this image on to Türmer, Schulze speaks of a societal impulse pre- and post-1990: “So sehr Türmer die Vergangenheit reflektiert, so unreflektiert bleibt die Gegenwart, als wäre die kapitalistische Welt ein naturgegebener Zustand, in den man nach dem Irrweg von vierzig Jahren real existierendem Sozialismus zurückgekehrt ist” (*Tausend Geschichten* 49). Rather than seize the opportunity to think about how the past has led to this particular present and what it means for the future, East Germans *and* West Germans allowed the victory of the West to lead them by the hand into our present day. This occurred for different reasons, of course: For East Germans, anything was better than the SED and furthermore, as Schulze mentions, “Kohl war wie der Weihnachtsmann angesehen“ (31). According to the West, what they had been doing had been working, so why fix what isn’t broken (see Schäuble’s speech)? Those who had discussed a third-way that included more elements of East German life lost out in the planning of the future.

Despite Türmer’s attempts to “mimic” West German lifestyle, he is not immune to occasional sympathy for GDR citizens. He writes N.H. about an experience during the previous year’s demonstrations in Leipzig. Türmer sees a group of women demonstrating for the GDR against the mass of demonstrators:

²³ See Sven Regener: *Herr Lehmann* (2001). Regener’s characters, especially the protagonist, embody the “live in the moment” attitude prominent in West Berlin until the very end of the novel when the Berlin Wall falls. It is noteworthy that Regener is from the former FRG.

[Ich] bemerkte die wütenden, aber auch ängstlichen Blicke dieser Frauen. Eine von ihnen...hatte ihre Stirn an die Schulter ihrer Nachbarin gelehnt und schluchzte. Ihnen, liebe Nicoletta, mag es merkwürdig erscheinen, wenn ich behaupte, in diesen Frauen zum ersten Mal Menschen begegnet zu sein, die aus freien Stücken für die DDR eintraten" (*Neue Leben* 570).

By conjuring images of wavering opinions and uncertainty in his characters, Ingo Schulze portrays a Germany going through change. However, the East German enunciation perspective upsets the dominant narrative that the resolute overthrow of the SED regime by freedom-seeking East Germans was a natural decision that the oppressed were destined to make. This novel challenges perceptions on all fronts; perceptions of the Wende experience, of the development of the post-1990 world, and on the implicitness of peace and freedom supposedly enjoyed today. *Neue Leben* truly can be seen as what Ursula März calls a "Wendejacke...[, die] man doppelt gebrauchen [konnte]. Sie hatte keine Innen- und Außenseite, sondern einfach zwei gleichberechtigte, nach außen tragbare Seiten, die man je nach Gelegenheit und Wetterlage wechselweise tragen konnte," thus creating an effective panorama of the time, one that is important for German-language literature and German history of the Wende. Encapsulating a key message in the novel, is an excerpt from a letter to N.H., describing Barrista's view on the world changing events caused by the Wende:

Zuerst sprach er über den Zustand der Welt und erklärte unser Heute kurzerhand zur besten Gegenwart, die es je auf dieser Erde gegeben habe (konkurrenzlos starke Demokratien und ein technologischer Fortschritt, der den Menschen mehr und mehr entlaste und ihm die Freiheit schenke, seiner eigentlichen Berufung nachzugehen)...Gerade nun, da sich in einer Woche mehr veränderte als früher in Jahren, stehe die Kunst, egal ob in Ost oder West, auf verlorenem Posten. Die Erfahrungen von heute werden nicht im Theater gemacht, sondern im Geschäft, auf dem Markt (512).

This quote is akin to a sort of motto for what Schulze's novel and his works after 2000 are propagating; Hope for the new world through democracy, technology, and freedom cannot solely be achieved through the "new" vehicles of business and economic output that exist today. As the subtitle of his most recent collection of speeches and essays states, one must be for a market that

conforms to democracy rather than the inverse. This can also be aided through enlightenment through art or political or civic engagement. Even in the end of *Neue Leben*, Türmer is unsure whether any of these endeavors will truly bring humans freedom. The final passage entitled “Die letzte Übung”, “Der Gefreite Türmer” (Lance-corporal Türmer) first discusses the enjoyment he gets from being a SPW-driver (Armored Personnel Carrier) and his loyalty to his men and the NVA. When he exits the vehicle to relieve himself, he begins to feel the freedom of nature, claims he wants nothing more to do with the army, and becomes animalistic. He sheds his NVA uniform, turns into a wolf, howls at the moon, and runs off into the night (783-90). This scene evokes many different references to literature and mythology such as Kafka’s *Die Verwandlung* or Herman Hesse’s *Der Steppenwolf*, but the werewolf mythology of inner-conflict seems to be the most productive. Enrico Türmer has been torn throughout the novel between East and West, socialism and capitalism, art and economic gain. His final metamorphosis, as is much of Schulze’s writing, is open to interpretation, but it does show the conflict residing within East Germans who have seen both world systems. Schulze will refuse to prescribe a solution for he claims he does not know it himself what the perfect world might look like. As will be seen in the next work, Schulze rejects utopianism. However, he is aware that it is essential to ask “Was wollen wir?” When viewed as an author of minor literature within an “established” literature, Schulze is not offering solutions but rather presenting experiences and alternatives for the “revolutionary forces to be constructed” (D&G, 18), meaning: another way to perceive the past, to reflect on the present and to possibly revolutionize the future. The following works engage this process in a similar way.

B. *Adam und Evelyn (2008)*

A premature sense of certainty and optimism of the post-Wende world are themes that permeate Ingo Schulze's fifth major work, *Adam und Evelyn* (2008). In referring to Schulze's writing style Claudia Stockinger uses the term "Ingo-Schulze-typische Texte", meaning texts that are multileveled, experience oriented, and ones that evoke mistrust of the narrator (29). I would add that on the content level, this novel demonstrates the "Ingo Schulzesque" engagement with the critique of capitalism and trajectory of society, by looking back on the events during the late summer and fall of 1989. Finally, he stays true to his mantra of giving the old stories about life and death (and love) some contemporary value in this work (*Tausend Geschichten*, 25).

Adam und Evelyn is also a travel novel in that it follows an East German tailor Adam, his partner and later wife Evelyn, Evelyn's friend Simone and her West German cousin from Hamburg, Michael, on a journey from the East German province²⁴ through Czechoslovakia, Hungary, across the border to Austria and eventually to Munich. Along the way Adam picks up a young woman, Katja, who is trying to cross the "grüne Grenze" between Hungary and Austria, and nearly drowned in her failed attempt to flee to the West by swimming across the Danube River. For Adam and Evelyn, what at one time had been planned as a couple's vacation becomes an escape from the East to the West. This vacation/escape takes place sooner than previously planned, however, when Evelyn catches Adam in the immediate moments after sleeping with one of his clients. When she leaves him due to his (frequent) infidelity, he follows them on this journey and eventually wins Evelyn back, but at the cost of his comfortable life in East Germany.

A finalist for the Deutscher Buchpreis, *Adam und Evelyn* paints a picture of primarily East German experiences, memories, and cultural and political themes regarding the changes during

²⁴ Altenburg is once again the setting for the first couple of chapters.

the late summer/early fall of 1989, particularly at a time in which the the radical changes during the Wende were beginning to take shape. Specifically it portrays the choice between leaving the GDR for a potentially better life in the West or staying and continuing one's life and possibly attempting to affect change in the GDR from within and participate in the revolution. The title, which refers to the biblical creation myth and the fall from the paradise of the Garden of Eden, evokes a sense of expulsion, loss, or searching. As Elizabeth Boa writes, the characters are "moving from garden to garden" (140) posing the question where (or when) is paradise and does such a thing exist? As in *Neue Leben*, Schulze once again retroactively looks back on this time period, using multiple styles and influences, in order to engage in a conversation about unified Germany and contemporary society. These questions and conversations regarding the Wende and life thereafter are exposed through the characters' self-exploration. My reading of this experience-based, politically charged tale is also informed by minor literature and collective memory theory. Furthermore, Schulze's commentary on the development of post-Wende society situates this novel beyond the post-colonial realm of defiance into a more pragmatic engagement with history and contemporary society, a tendency that begins to emerge with the publication of *Neue Leben*.

In *Adam und Evelyn*, the minor East German perspective is complimented by a major-cultural West German counterpart in the character Michael. Schulze has stated that: "Um etwas über den Osten zu sagen, musste ich auch über den Westen schreiben..."²⁵ This is a uniquely East German phenomenon. While writers from the former FRG may have gradually begun to write about the Wende, they need not say something about the former GDR in order to define

²⁵ Tausend Geschichten. Pg 43. In this quote Schulze is referring to his attempts to write about his childhood in the GDR, which eventually came out in *Neue Leben*. However, it is a fitting description of his engagement with East and West themes in his other works.

themselves in unified society. As the victors of history, their position is self-evident. In fact, according to Linda Shortt and Holger Bösmann, West German writing about the “Bonner Republik” is inward and backward looking in that it engages a safe, secure, and simple past in the former Federal Republic (Shortt “Reimagining”) (Bösmann “Nach”). In this novel, “saying something about the East” is often achieved through a recurring juxtapositioning of the two German societies. In doing so, Schulze highlights general life experiences of both East and West Germans in a way that makes them accessible to the reader in a unified Germany nearly 20 years later. The authenticity achieved in *Neue Leben* through letters, is accomplished in *Adam und Evelyn* through dialogue. Schulze draws the reader into conversations by frequently opening chapters with a dialogue, which for one half to a full page provides no direct indication of who is speaking. The reader must focus on what is being said in order to discern who is speaking and what is taking place.

When asked about this technique, Schulze said in an interview with Felicitas von Lovenberg that many of the dialogues he writes are directly influenced by and learned from Ernest Hemingway. In the interview he describes this process: “Man muss Dialog lernen. Tödlich ist es, wenn man mit dem Dialog irgend etwas sagen will, wenn man etwas hinein tun will, was jetzt unbedingt gesagt werden muss...Dialog ist dazu da, dass sich Positionen klären” (“Exklusiv” 0:03:48-0:4:10). This is an important remark if we are to view this work through the lens of minor literature. Deleuze and Guattari reiterate Kafka’s point that, “...talent isn’t abundant in minor literature...” (17). Therefore, Schulze as well as the other writers researched in the project, pull influence from many sources. It is not the “literature of masters”, such as Goethe or Hemingway, rather a literature in which a minority voice finds its expression through

major influences. Schulze poses the question in the interview, “Warum müssen die Schreiber immer nur die Autodidakten sein?” (0:03:40-0:03:43). Furthermore, because it is not the primary concern to engage a work through genre and style *and* given Schulze’s previously mentioned comment: “...es [gibt] keine veralteten und obsolete Erzähltechniken, sondern nur angemessene und unangemessene” (*Tausend Geschichten* 26), dialogue, in this novel, can be used to clarify the position of the minor perspective without the need for symbolism or to hide messages behind the dialogue. This is key for Deleuze and Guattari, as the political in minor literature, “takes place in the full light of day” (17) and there is no doubt that the dialogue in *Adam und Evelyn* illustrates that political commentary on the surface, right before the readers’ eyes.

What is somewhat hidden however is the author’s or narrator’s role. The fact that Schulze finds the attempt to implant meaning into a dialogue deadly and that he has been called the “Ich-Jongleur” or one who hides himself in the texts in a sort of “Versteckspiel” (Böttinger 19), allows us to go deeper into the analysis of Kafka’s writing and use this in Schulze’s work. For Deleuze and Guattari,

...the message doesn’t refer back to an enunciating subject who would be its cause, no more than to a subject of the statement (*sujet d’énoncé*) who would be its effect. Undoubtedly, for a while, Kafka thought according to these traditional categories of the two subjects, the author and the hero, the narrator and the character, the dreamer and the dreamed of. But he will quickly reject the role of the narrator, just as he will refuse an author’s or master’s literature... There isn’t a subject; *there are only collective assemblages of enunciation*... (18).

They point out further that the letter “K” in Kafka’s work “no longer designates a narrator or a character but an assemblage”, Schulze’s dialogues “clarify” the assemblage of East German experiences; life and love during the political upheaval of 1989/90. The analysis that something else lies behind the characters’ dialogue, as one might expect in a major literature, could in this case blur the message. Contrary to what one may assume, the influence of an American master of

the short story, among other role models, in order to enunciate this East German assemblage does not confirm a literature of masters, rather a minor one in which Western literary language (major language) lends itself to Eastern (minor) experiences. This is the way in which we can also see how deterritorialization à la Deleuze and Guattari can be applied to East German literature: “A minor literature doesn’t come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language” (16). This construction, then, makes the minority aspects of the East German condition in a unified, culturally western Germany accessible allowing for a more productive representation and analysis of East German life for an audience that has some distance to the events, politically and geographically as well as chronologically. Similarly to *Neue Leben*, the concept of culture as a realm of experience (Lebenswelt) is applicable here (Assmann *Kultur*, qtd. in Sieg 170). The reader is observing retroactively as he/she is not implied in the exchange of thoughts and experiences, i.e. not directly involved in the dialogue. Therefore, as Christian Sieg writes about *Neue Leben*, “Sie [die Leser] werden mit der Erinnerungspraxis eines Kollektivs konfrontiert...” (170).

It is tempting to disregard Schulze’s warning, and read into the dialogues, which are often comparisons between systems in order to find out what Schulze (or East Germans 20 years hence) find to be the true paradise. However, he does not allow the reader this satisfaction; there never is a decisive answer or claim as to where paradise lies, or if it exists at all. The conversations do however, allow for colorful comparisons between East and West Germany. According to Ingo Schulze, as a tailor in the GDR Adam has both an enviable profession and offers a coveted service. He is quite sovereign and free in his career and thus, his life; he determines his own hours, has a comfortable home with a garden, a couple of cars, and access to

various types of fruit that were stereotypically not available in the GDR (*Adam* 37).²⁶ His life and home portray the image of his personal “Garden of Eden”, his provincial paradise, rather than the typical portrayal of the run-down East German “Plattenbau” and grey cities.

Despite living in the “garden” with Adam, Evelyn does not share this idyllic portrait of life in the GDR. She wanted to study art history, instead studied pedagogy (a more “practical” subject) but had been turned down twice for acceptance at the university in this field for arbitrary reasons that were common in the GDR. Instead she was given a position as waitress, a job she despises. A series of events take place that appear to be fate: Evelyn quits her job after a gift of perfume from the West German Michael is allegedly stolen by a co-worker. Arriving home early from work, she catches Adam moments after he had sex with one of his clients. This spurs her to leave not only Adam and his paradise, but her entire life up to that point on the trip to Hungary and to seize the opportunity to leave for the West in a search for her own paradise. To be able to choose between East and West was a new and exciting prospect during the Wende and is the subject of many of the dialogues in the novel, providing compelling insight into the changing times. As many claimed that this “*wilde Zeit*” was a great and exhilarating time to be a part of, it also begs the question of what resulted from this period. Is this time of change, the in-between and the elation over a freedom to choose the true paradise? Is temptation to rush toward a decision an issue? Schulze says that this “*dazwischen ist...schwierig*” (Personal Interview). By allowing the observer (the reader) to confront each character’s negotiation with paradise, Schulze sets the stage for an authentic collective *enunciation* of East German experiences without the distraction of interpretation. Contrary to what has most frequently been portrayed in the

²⁶ The references to fruit (not always forbidden) appear throughout the novel.

dominant narrative of the Wende, there is another perspective to be told than simply East Germans choosing the “free world” over communism.

Michael, the cell biologist from Hamburg, provides much of the juxtapositioning between East and West. In some ways he is similar to Barrista in *Neue Leben*, as he tells Evelyn (with whom he briefly becomes romantically involved) of all the alluring wonders of the West such as the ability to take trips to Brazil, Mexico or New York and the opportunities for studying as long as one wishes in the West German university system until one finds one’s true calling. A short example of this is highlighted in a conversation between the two:

Michael: “Es ist [im Westen] alles viel schöner, als du es dir überhaupt vorstellen kannst.

Evelyn: “Weißt du doch gar nicht, was ich mir vorstelle.”

Michael: Aber du weißt nicht, wie schön es ist, wie schön! Bei uns lebst du einfach besser und länger.” (151).

Furthermore, Michael is an essential character for not only the East perceptions of the West, but also vice versa. He is a channel through which the Zeitgeist of the Wende period in *Adam und Evelyn* flows, through which both sides can engage in mutual preconceptions of the “other” and compare to themselves or the system under which they lived.

The 32nd chapter entitled “Arbeit für die Ewigkeit”, a little more than halfway through the novel, portrays one of the key elements in the exploration of the difference between East German and West German society in *Adam und Evelyn*; the world of work. In the interview with von Lovenberg, Schulze says that he was interested in the two different conceptions of work in each society. This comes to a head in the dialogues between Adam and Michael. During this chapter the group is camping on Margaret Island in Budapest and the two men are engaged in a conversation about the process of studying and starting a career in their respective Germanys. Furthermore, Margaret Island is in the Danube River, which divides the city between West

(Buda) and East (Pest), symbolizing negotiation in an in-between space. The sentences are peppered with the phrases “bei uns” and “bei euch”.

Adam: Glaubst du denn, dass ich bei euch ne Arbeit fände?

Michael: Wenn du wirklich willst, wieso denn nicht?

A: So einfach wird's ja auch nicht sein.

M: Jeder der will, findet was.

A: Aber nicht unbedingt das, was du willst.

M: No problem. Du brauchst eine Idee, eine Idee und Fleiß und etwas Glück.²⁷ Manchmal reicht es schon, freundlich zu sein. (170-1).

This dialogue continues and eventually ties in with what Brockmann and Emmerich have said about the attitudes of East and West German citizens in divided Germany²⁸; Adam seems to be much more interested in the prospects of studying and the world of work in the West than Michael is in that of the East. While for Adam his interest could be due to the Zeitgeist of the Wende or that he is simply curious about how it works in the West, Michael's lack of interest is due to more than just the changing times.

A: Warst du schon mal hier [in Budapest]?

M: Nein, der Osten hat mich nie interessiert. Der war schon vor zwanzig Jahren abgehängt.

A: Du meinst ökonomisch?

M: Wer seine Busse “Ikarus” nennt... was soll denn dabei herauskommen?²⁹ Der Fortschritt wohnt im Westen.

A: Ich leb nicht schlecht.

M: Eure Bonzen sollen mal die Krebsstatistik veröffentlichen, dann sagst du das nicht mehr. So eine Dreckschleuder wie in Rositz, die wäre bei uns verboten, völlig undenkbar... Das ist die Pest! Das ist alles Verbrechen! (171).

Immediately after this exchange we finally discover what Michael's career is. He is researching why humans age and die and he explains his research to Adam. It is his optimistic belief that in

²⁷ See once again *Neue Leben* for the role of luck in the new capitalist society.

²⁸ See Steven Brockmann, “Remembering GDR Culture in Postunification Germany and Beyond”, where he discusses the “foreignness” of East Germany to West Germans. See also the literary aspect of the divide in Wolfgang Emmerich's *Kleine Literatur Geschichte der DDR*, in which he mentions the growing similarities in FRG and GDR literature, and yet, West Germans were really only interested insofar as the works also identified with their West German problems. Pgs 520-22.

²⁹ Michael is referring to the Ikarus bus manufacturer based in Budapest and the irony that the Greek myth of Icarus warns against both complacency and hubris, something that could be seen in both German societies.

40 to 50 years that people could live 200 years or longer. This conversation and the way in which the two view their lives begin to reveal fundamental differences in the East and West German perspectives. Furthermore, it plays on the title of the chapter.

A: Lebst du, um zu arbeiten, oder arbeitest du, um zu leben?

M: So kannst du nicht fragen.

A: Doch, dein ganzes Leben geht für die Ewigkeit drauf.

M: Für mich ist Arbeit Leben. Für dich nicht?

A: Schon, aber wir meinen nicht dasselbe.

M: Wieso nicht, du hast doch eine schöne Arbeit.

A: Eben weil ich machen kann, was ich will.

As the conversation continues Adam asks if Michael loves Evelyn. He answers that he would not be there if he didn't and that by being there for three weeks, he is letting his work project slip away:

M: ...Damit kannst du alles aus der Hand geben, alles, nicht nur die eigene Existenz, auch die der anderen, das ganze Projekt!

A: Und die Unsterblichkeit.

M: Ja, auch die Unsterblichkeit.

Beide nickten, als stimmten sie nun endlich überein (174).

This conversation juxtaposes two meanings of the title of the chapter "Arbeit für die Ewigkeit".

It shows an alternative perspective on the traditionally held beliefs about work in the former East and West Germanys. It is Michael the West German who says that work is life. Adam agrees, but not on the definition. He is the one who has more freedom in his career. For him work is life because he can do what he wants with his career and his time, and according to Evelyn, his occupation never seemed like "work" to him (273), thus, the two different concepts of "Ewigkeit". Michael has a goal in his work that people live forever; Adam has work that can last him as long as he lives. Adam, who is no longer in the party (he was before his time in the NVA because he had to be), nor did he vote in Kommunalwahlen in May of 1989 (167), still lives a comfortable existence. Michael, who lives in "freedom" in the West, is risking a lot by being

away from his job for three weeks. He often worries about being gone, while Adam makes a couple dresses for the people they visit in Balaton, Hungary. Even if such a phenomenon only represents a small portion of the population in any societal system that this did exist in the GDR breaks some stereotypes about the overarching repressive world of work in Arbeiterstaat-DDR. This may indeed be an idyllic picture of the role of work in the GDR; however, it shows that an alternative perspective can exist despite that which is portrayed in unified Western culture. Furthermore, the comparisons in the text and the fact that neither system (nor even the in-between) is this paradise confirms what Elizabeth Boa says about reflection on the past and the present: “Much was wrong with the GDR, but people’s lives should not be defined simply by which side of a political border they were on, and free-market capitalism is not the Garden of Eden” (139).

The point in comparing the two systems can also be explained by Schulze’s feelings toward having experienced both, a feeling which I believe he shares with the other authors in this project and other East Germans of the Third Generation. He says that he feels privileged to have experiences in two different systems and that this affords him a completely different perspective on the contemporary. He explains that the problem today is not that the East is gone; rather it is how the West is today (Personal Interview). In many works of contemporary East German literature, the basic questions that permeate the works are ones regarding contemporary society. The backdrop of these inquiries is most frequently the Wende because, after the fall of the Eastern bloc, there was no other system (way of life) with which one could compare, or one that could keep the “other” system (and itself, for that matter) in check. Schulze has discussed this phenomenon in many interviews and speeches, and it resonates in his works.

Many East German writers often point to ambivalence toward politics and social critique in contemporary society, which is especially palpable when discussing the Wende as an “Ausgangspunkt” for the development of society since 1989/90. As mentioned, many people (especially West Germans) do not want to talk about this time anymore. Schulze in particular emphasizes that capitalism has gotten worse since 1989, but despite this, the system is criticized much less than before '89. Schulze even makes comparisons to the concept of “Vergangenheitsbewältigung”. As with engagement of the Holocaust and the Nazi era today, there are some in Western Europe who are of the opinion that this period in history no longer has anything to do with them. While the historical break of 1989 may have been less catastrophic than 1945, it is no less important because for Adam (as with so many others) it brought about an existential issue as to how one lives in the new, western, capitalistic, globalized world and this begins to take for as the characters in *Adam und Evelyn* make their journey westward.

Elizabeth Boa analyzes *Adam und Evelyn* in its “revisit[ing of] the historico-geographic revolution” and she accurately describes what this and many of Schulze’s works soberingly accomplish with regard to the memory of this era: “...the magic moment is always shadowed by the silent knowledge of socioeconomic problems to come once the euphoria has passed” (139-40). Furthermore, Aleida Assmann’s commentary on the growing research in memory studies says that, “We have witnessed how over the last 20 years or so, [...] commonsensical truth has been *called into question* (emphasis added) and even reversed...We are now experiencing that the past is constantly changing and the future proves to be heavily determined by the past” (“Transformations” 57). This novel recalls the zeitgeist of the late 1980s and early 1990s through collective memories of East Germans especially, but also of West Germans (Michael) and

remembers the overwhelming optimism by many that the world would be a better place, even a utopia, once communism had fallen. *Adam und Evelyn* is a “sobering” reflection on the past through characters that experienced the Wende in different ways.

The characters Katja and Evelyn discuss on a number of occasions how bright their future will be once they leave the repressive GDR that has afforded them little opportunity for happiness. However, Adam is always there to share his skeptical point of view, not necessarily because he is allknowing or because he is the East German voice of reason against the upcoming capitalist beast. Coming from a comfortable, independent existence in the GDR, Adam has every reason to fear the change that the Wende brings. Schulze’s characters become the agents of memory, who embody the varying attitudes of the time. He leaves open questions so that the readers are engaged in the act of cultural memory “through the backdoor” (Assmann *Kultur*, qtd. in Sieg 170) and take part in the conversation about our understanding of the past, present, and future.

Boa calls this exercise a “Two-way satire, [which] undoes utopianism, whether in Communist or capitalist mode” (140). The exchanges between Adam and Michael show that they are tangled in this two-way satire as they both attempt to present their respective lives as “paradise”. Another fitting example of this is a discussion at the very end of the novel between Adam and Evelyn after it is decided that the two will stay in Munich. Adam, having been cast out of his personal paradise in the East German province is now struggling in the West unable to find work that he feels suitable (he refuses to fit one woman for a dress based on her size and does not want to take his uncle’s advice to work in the bottle depository, thus starting from the bottom).

Evelyn: Stell dir doch mal vor, Anfang Juni, Sonne, blauer Himmel, alles grün, die Berge – unser Kind kommt in die schönste Welt, die es je gegeben hat.

Adam: Findest du?

E: Na, dann sag, wann es besser gewesen ist!? In welche Zeit willst du zurück?

A: Und Michael lässt uns erst zweihundert Jahre werden, bevor wir dann ganz unsterblich sind.

E: Wäre doch gut! Und Angst vor Krieg braucht auch niemand mehr zu haben. Jetzt können sie das ganze Geld für sinnvolle Sachen verwenden, nicht nur hier, überall auf der Welt. Bald muss man nur noch dreißig Stunden arbeiten, und statt anderthalb Jahre zur Armee zu gehen, machen alle ein Jahr was Nützliches.

A: Und die Wölfe werden bei den Lämmern liegen.

E: Warum sagst du das?...Glaubst du wirklich, dass alles weitergeht wie bisher? Das wäre doch absurd! (311-2).

While on the one hand Adam could be seen as Ingo Schulze's calm voice of reason retroactively reaching back from the future to warn Evelyn that the future is not so rosy, his motivation may also stem from his struggles to replicate his life in the East or to start anew in the West.

Conversely, Evelyn's optimism embodies the euphoria of the Wende and can be linked with the aforementioned thesis by Francis Fukuyama that the changes in the late 1980s and early 1990s spelled "The End of History". All of the joys that this change will bring for Adam and Evelyn and their child to be born in the "most beautiful world" are what Fukuyama claims will happen now that the Cold War had ended. In Schulze's collection of essays, speeches, and skits entitled *Was wollen wir?*, he speaks directly to the problem seen here in Evelyn's and Fukuyama's optimism.

Aufgewachsen mit gesellschaftlichen Zukunftsentwürfen und der Theorie, die ganze Geschichte sei eine Entwicklung hin zur klassenlosen Gesellschaft, sah ich mich [und andere, die "östlich des Eisernen Vorhangs gelebt hat"] nun mit dem "Ende der Geschichte" konfrontiert. Die Mehrheit der Ostdeutschen wollte nicht mehr auf die Zukunft getröstet werden, sie wollte die D-Mark und die soziale Marktwirtschaft am liebsten sofort. Wenn man überhaupt einmal von der Zukunft sprach, dann sah diese ungefähr so aus wie die Gegenwart, verbessert um technische Erfindungen (280).

By highlighting what today seems like naïve optimism in this quote as well as in the character Evelyn, Schulze does not complain about what happened to the East, rather he emphasizes that this naiveté and eagerness are partly responsible for the condition of our present society and how

the euphoria of “freedom” clouded the judgment of a population that instead of asking themselves what they really wanted, accepted whatever came thinking that anything was better or even the best. To return to Michael’s comment about the “Ikarus” Busses in Budapest, there seems to be another aspect than just saying that the East has fallen just as Icarus did when he flew too close to the sun. It may serve as a retroactive commentary on the complacency (the other extreme of the Icarus legend) of those in the East, who simply accepted what the West brought them, as well as the hubris of the West, thinking that only the West represented all “Fortschritt” and that they had perfected society and thus, the result is the societal problems we have today.

Elizabeth Boa also explains the phenomenon of retroactively engaging the past in order to analyze the future in this novel:

We know what will happen on the larger scale, but[...]Schulze creates smallscale mysteries: the characters inside the maze [of the story] lack our historical foresight, but we access their personal motivations only in retrospect if at all. The effect is to destabilize the present: as a liminal realm, does meaning come fatefully from the past or teleologically from the future; does it come from private love affairs or from public events? (141-2)

This is the question surrounding 1989/90 and the memory of the Wende. Schulze is trying to teleologically impart meaning from the future so that we begin (albeit delayed) to ask questions of ourselves, and our current society.

Retelling a story of the opening of the Hungarian-Austrian border in the late summer/early fall of 1989 opens an alternative discourse on memory as well. To answer Boa’s question, especially in times of political change and especially for a minor culture, the private and the public become entangled so that the meaning comes from both the past and the future through memory. Through the characters’ ubiquitous examinations of their personal lives, interpersonal relationships during that summer and fall of 1989, (the choice to flee or stay in the GDR and what that means for their past, present, and future) we may observe the political events

in a much more human way. Doing so sheds light on the struggles some East Germans had surrounding how to react to the political climate and reveals more than just what is portrayed by the dominant media and historical discourses, namely the “obvious” choice of “freedom” such as is portrayed the images of GDR citizens climbing over and knocking down fences in order to get to the west. While this obviously did occur, much like the images of East and West Germans dancing on top of the Berlin Wall, it is far from representative of all East German experiences and their memories thereof.

The events portrayed in this work are at times personal memories, while other times Schulze claims he had to actually do research by collecting the experiences of those who did cross the border in order to discover what such an undertaking entailed.³⁰ Therefore, one can see again, Aleida Assmann’s notion of collective memory in *Adam und Evelyn* in that these “[auto]biographical memories cannot be embodied by another person (here Schulze), but they can be shared with others” (“Transformations” 50). Schulze’s fictional literary expression then changes the landscape of *German* memory by presenting an alternative perspective based on various real life experiences.

It is of course unavoidable to conjure up popular and medial images from the Wende period, as they also are symbolic forms of our cultural memory. As Assmann writes; “Oral narratives, texts, and photographs are important props of autobiographical memory, which explains why the boundary between individual memory and shared material things (such as texts and images) is not always easy to draw” (50). However, this boundary between East and West, or alternative and dominant memory discourse in *Adam und Evelyn* is that there was indeed an uncertainty about fleeing to the “Golden West”. After Adam and Evelyn make it to Bavaria and

³⁰ See also Antje Rávic Strubel’s *Sturz der Tage in die Nacht* as she was also engaged in active research for her novel.

are staying with his uncle and aunt, an important detail is revealed about Adam's uncle Eberhard; he also fled the GDR after being a prisoner in the Soviet prison camp Bautzen in 1957. He claims that the people staying in the GDR and actively taking part in this revolution (in 1989) are the real heroes, and not the "economic refugees" who are now pouring over the border, and who he believes Adam and Evelyn to be (273, 290). This is where Schulze discusses the "Stunde X".³¹ This concept comes up in his novel and in interviews, and is the thought (rarely reported in today's discussion of the Wende), that some people *chose to stay* and be there when the Wall fell and/or the system collapsed in order to take part in change of that system.

There is a larger "we" involved in *Adam und Evelyn*. It is an East German "we"; not the one that is often referred to in "Ostalgie" literature, which recalls the close knit society of the GDR, a notion that Antje Rávic Strubel will dispute in *Tupolew 134*. It is rather a "we" that collects the individual memories and experiences of East *and* West Germans in a way that draws attention to East German perspective, once again, from the *minor* perspective. Even if those experiences and opinions are not uniform, they portray the alternative. To cite Assmann once again, this could be part of what she calls the "memory boom" and it "reflects a general desire to reclaim the past as an important part of the present, and to reconsider, to revalue, and to reassess it as part of individual biographies and the way individuals position themselves in a wider historical perspective" ("Transformations" 54). Furthermore, the use of memory in this work and in others by East German authors allows the reader to reconsider the past and the future, altering the narrative and potentially changing the course of events. Aleida Assmann and Linda Shortt write that "...memory is not only susceptible to changes, it is itself *a powerful agent of*

³¹ Also referred to frequently in the Personal Interview with Schulze.

change” (4). Collective cultural memory is therefore a powerful agent through which to observe this work.

As *Adam und Evelyn* was published in 2008, it begins to step away from a distinctive post-colonial discourse. While the novel certainly shares some concerns of post-colonial literature, such as a revising of history and an assertion of cultural identity, *Adam und Evelyn* begins to stand on its own as a novel that no longer purely engages issues of Western takeover of East German life and culture. In fact, where Paul Cooke, evoking Edward Said, refers to the East as the “Federal Republic’s orient” (*Representing* 27), *Adam und Evelyn* turns this phenomenon on its head through the portrayal of Westerners, especially Michael whose often exorbitant use English words such as “easy” or “no problem” or the French “bonjour” and “merde” seem out of place and begin to characterize him as the “other” and comical. While this and the above mentioned comparisons between East and West may be a way to assert East German culture and history, the goal is more to raise questions about unified Germany in a 21st Century globalized world through an East German perspective, rather than to solely assert East German difference for its own sake. This novel begins to move beyond the defiant attitude toward the “colonizers” that Paul Cooke evokes. Schulze as well as Strubel and Schoch use their role as artists to take on a sort of responsibility for the past AND the future by highlighting the *process* of history of the past effecting the present and future.

We can cite Homi Bhabha in his discussion of the author’s role: “as literary creatures and political animals[, who] ought to concern [themselves] with the understanding of human action...”. He also cites Hannah Arendt in saying that “the author of social action may be the initiator of its unique meaning, but as agent he or she cannot control its outcome” (“Locations”

17-8). The end of *Adam und Evelyn* (with a very Ingo-Schulze-typical ending) depicts in detailed manner Adam in the final “garden” (Boa 140) that is outside of their apartment in Munich. We see through Evelyn’s perspective (through the window of their apartment) how Adam burns the pictures of the women he used to fit back in his former paradise:

...[Er] zog eines der großen geklebten Fotos seiner Frauen heraus und ließ es in die Flammen fallen. Er tat dies ohne Hast. Er blätterte um, zog das nächste heraus, warf es ins Feuer...Am meisten ängstigten Evelyn das Gleichmaß und die Ruhe seiner Bewegungen. Er...lachte. Plötzlich sah Adam über die Schulter herauf, als hätte er die ganze Zeit gewusst, dass sie dort stand. Er zog den Hut, lächelte, nickte ihr zu und setzte den Hut wieder auf. Evelyn überlief es kalt. Die Elster hüpfte weiter über die kahlen Äste und Zweige der Kastanie und wippte dabei hin und her, als würde sie jeden Augenblick das Gleichgewicht verlieren... (313-4).

Throughout the entire novel, Schulze’s characters have been set on starting a new life, or continuing the one they had. This final scene of despair, while clearly showing that Adam has either gone crazy due to his struggles in West Germany or has simply given up on the past, leaves questions unanswered. The Elster bird possibly losing its balance portrays this constant struggle to balance or understand in which direction life is moving. It definitely shows a break from his past in East Germany as many East Germans surely experienced once they left or at least once Germany unified a year later. However, the open questions as to what the future holds for Adam and Evelyn, such as whether or not they will “make it” in unified Germany or if they will be part of an East German generation that never fully acclimates to Western society, show that the meaning may rest in this uncertainty or just as with the Elster, imbalance. As Arendt says, the author (Schulze) cannot control the outcome; and I submit that he is well aware of this. By leaving questions open, he moves beyond the post-colonial tone of East German literature of the 1990s and even early 2000s and forces the reader to think about what the *Wende* actually brought society, the rest is up to the reader.

Conclusion

What Ingo Schulze started in the 1990s has continued with his and other East German writers into the 21st century, namely a literature that is not only aesthetically pleasing, but engaging in the sense that it brings the reader closer to contemporary political and societal questions.

Literatur ist dafür da, dass man mit bestimmten Erfahrungen nicht allein bleibt, mit Erfahrungen, die nicht im Gespräch oder einer wissenschaftlichen Erörterung sagbar sind, die in ihrer Universalität und Gleichzeitigkeit nur in einer Geschichte, einem Gedicht, einem Roman Ausdruck erhalten. Literatur ist nicht dafür gemacht, etwas zu erklären, aber sie darf und sollte für eine gesellschaftliche Selbstverständigung genutzt werden. Denn das Bild, das wir uns von unserer Zeit, von unserem Ort machen, hat Einfluss auf das, was wir wollen, was wir tun. In diesem Sinn halte ich diejenige Literatur für die wirksamste, die unsere Welt am differenziertesten beschreibt (*Tausend Geschichten*, 57-8).

This is one characteristic that contemporary East German authors have inherited from authors of the former GDR. The importance of an engaged literature today is that it makes one think "...Sie befragt und auch in Frage stellt" (58). As Christine Cosentino writes with reference to *Handy*, "Die *Storys* skizzieren eine Zeit politischer, ökonomischer und existenzieller Veränderungen, eine Zeit der Starre und der Fremdheit, in der der Mensch die historische Übersicht verloren hat" ("Ingo" 170). Thus, Schulze and East German authors have the unique ability to reconstruct this lost view of history and create opportunities to construct a more complete perspective, one that goes beyond the joyous images of the fall of the Berlin Wall and unification to one that is more commensurate with the realities in unified Germany more than 25 years hence.

III. CHAPTER 2 – ANTJE RÁVIC STRUBEL

Antje Rávic Strubel plays with contrasts and contradictions, ones which lurk behind every word, even every letter of her stories. These are at times overtly portrayed in her descriptions of people, landscapes, time and events, or situations. Other times they are more subtle, often blurred through the intertwining and overlapping of events and characters' personal stories. Even her name represents a contradiction to established norms. On her website it states: "...sie ergänzte ihren bürgerlichen Namen um den Namen Rávic, der eine Erfindung ist. Er bezeichnet eine weitere Identität, die ihrer Person während des Schreibens zukommt" ("Antje Portrait"). Such contradictions and contrasts find their way into the text via her skillful use of language. She plays with the language, even imagining that letters and words possess colors (Norman and Sutton 101). Beret Norman quotes Stefan Döring, a writer in the GDR's underground alternative scene in the 1980s, as he emphasized the importance of language in writing in the former GDR: "One is raised by language, when one consumes the language, then also the system" ("Ambiguities" 66). As a writer living in a different system (and nation) from the one in which she was born, "Rávic" Strubel deterritorializes language in ways which force the reader to observe the text from a strange or outsider's perspective. She achieves this through changing the settings of her stories to somewhere outside Germany (most often Sweden) or through out of body experiences in which she analyzes individual words to give them a new context and meaning. In this way, language is a means through which a minor culture expresses a collective enunciation, as is evoked by Deleuze and Guattari (16-7). Like the works of other East German writers post-1989, Strubel's texts call the commonly held perceptions of the Wende and the post-Wende years into question.

As in the works of Ingo Schulze and Julia Schoch, most of the protagonists are from East Germany and many aspects of their individual stories have autobiographical elements related to the author's life. The personal experiences that author and character share involve societal issues during the time of the German Democratic Republic such as the personal choice of being (or not being) an active member of socialist society in a corrupt system, i.e. being a member of the SED party, the Stasi, or even something as simple as membership in a Sportverein. She problematizes the distinctly German notion of *Heimat* in an East German sense. Emily Jeremiah discusses this in regard to Strubel's first novel *Offene Blende* (2001) (*Nomadic* 108). As she puts it, Strubel's novels are indeed "nomadic", which allows for a deterritorialization of "Heimat" in order to cast a critical view upon the unified Germany and the East German condition. While Deleuze and Guattari define the concept of deterritorialization in primarily linguistic terms, for Strubel, the deterritorialization occurs physically and literarily. The post-Wende globalized world is associated with freedom of movement and travel and she transposes German issues onto locations other than Germany. Furthermore, her literary engagement with the disappearance of East Germany politically, as well as her challenge to Western and male-dominated literary norms, deterritorializes what it means to write a "German" novel. In this chapter, I will discuss these distinctly nomadic themes in two of her novels: *Sturz der Tage in die Nacht* (2011), which takes place in Sweden³², as well as in *Tupolew 134* (2004). Both novels emphasize the act of leaving home, which in *Sturz* occurs in the post-Wende choice to leave East Germany and in *Tupolew*, the decision by the two protagonists to hijack an airplane from Poland to the GDR in order to defect to the FRG, a fictional recreation of an actual hijacking in 1978.

³² Strubel's *Kältere Schichten der Luft* (2007) also takes place in Sweden.

Strubel's characters struggle not only with the GDR past, but also with post-Wende experiences. She reflects on the past as a means to examine its influence on the present, something she holds in common with Schulze and Schoch. Not only must one deal with the legacy of the GDR as a dictatorship, but also the many societal issues today that are consequences of the end of that regime and the process of unification. Strubel portrays how today's society commodifies time and productivity, the importance we place on image and money (unchecked capitalism after the fall of communism), and the media's account of history, in particular "Western" portrayals of the GDR past and German unification. In an interview, she explains:

...vorher war die Mauer da. Das Eingesperrtsein war sichtbar. [...] Heute ist niemand sichtbar eingesperrt. [...] Die kleinen Kerker sind viel subtiler. Die Festlegungen auf ein Dasein, ein Wesen, laufen über Werbung, Markt, Geld usw. Und man sitzt in diesem bislang besten aller Systeme und stellt fest, es verschraubt sich immer mehr, wird immer roher (Strubel "Schreiben").

This sharp critique of the current system is similar to what one sees in Ingo Schulze's works. In contrast to Schulze's clear and concise writing-style, but similar to Julia Schoch, memory in Strubel's works evokes a "dream-like" experience. Reality is often called into question through the characters' senses or the readers' inability to situate them in a particular place or situation.

A. **Tupolew 134 (2004)**

Strubel's fourth work, the novel *Tupolew 134* is based on a true event that occurred in the summer of 1978. Two citizens of the GDR hijacked a Polish LOT airplane, model Tupolev, from Gdansk bound for Berlin (East) – Schönefeld and demanded rerouting to Berlin (West) – Tempelhof. This event is the starting point for the novel and is retold through two fictional characters, East Germans named Katja Siems and Lutz Schaper. This novel, based on an event

that occurred 26 years before its release, is a work of memory that problematizes the act of recollecting personal and collective past, as well the concept of objective truth within those memories. In all of her novels, she depicts people who wish to break out of what they feel to be confined lives. In *Tupolew* all notions of safety and security within the characters' memories become entangled and the text crumbles into uncertainty and unreliability ("Antje Portrait"). Therefore, Strubel explains the impulse to explore memory and all of its inconsistencies in order to recount the intersection of historical events and experienced life. Strubel then creates parallels to the Wende and unification as both a historical event and a personal experience to be remembered. One of the most prevalent issues concerning East German authors is how the GDR, the Wende, and unification are remembered, and what this memory not only *means* for contemporary society, but also what it *could mean*. *Tupolew* 134 challenges the act of remembering as a seamless process of looking back at the past and shows that on many levels, memory is incomplete or distorted by competing representations, and therefore, one must explore various facets in order to glean a more complete picture of both history and personal experiences, and the intersection thereof. Furthermore, Strubel "calls for reexamination of collective memory in which only the Western version remains valid" (Norman 69).

To create a complete picture, the story is told from three different "levels" which constantly subvert each other. She uses levels of a mineshaft or tunnel, "der Schacht" (oben, unten, and ganz unten), as a metaphor for memory. The narrator, who we discover very late in the novel, is the main protagonist Katja, addresses the audience from the first-person perspective (the "oben" level) at various points throughout the novel. This level serves as her personal

“Erinnerungsarbeit” 25 years after the hijacking (also after the Wende) (*Tupolew* 2). Katja asks the addressee to follow her:

Ich kann nur sagen: Vor Ihnen ist der Schacht. So hoch und so tief, dass Sie das Ende nicht sehen. Der Schacht mit Rost an den Wänden und dem Geruch nach Öl. Da denken Sie noch, es sei eine Redewendung, und schon geht's ab. Mehr kann ich Ihnen nicht bieten. Wenn überhaupt was für Sie dabei herausspringen soll, müssen Sie mir folgen. Sie müssen schon rein in den Schacht (13).

As we later discover, the addressee of the Katja's story is also a female journalist. In a masochistic sexual scene late in the novel, Strubel creates a gendered and later sexual relationship between author and audience, by forcing the journalist/addressee (and thus the reader) into an initial level of discomfort, with the hopes that one can move beyond uncomfortable perceptions in order to truly experience the narrator's experiences (304-6). These three “levels” all serve a purpose in telling the story. As one wanders deeper and deeper into the tunnel, one reaches “unten”, or what happened in the time immediately after the hijacked plane landed at Tempelhof airport in West Berlin. This level, told from the third-person perspective, describes the arrest, interrogation, trial, and the Cold War geopolitical environment of the 1970s. Finally, “ganz unten” is the prelude to the hijacking, the life of Katja Siems, Lutz Schaper, and the West German businessman, Hans Meerkopf, in the GDR before August 30, 1978.

In her discussion of the novel and of the presence of memory within *Tupolew 134*,

Strubel says:

Memory is always a story. In every memory there is a small core of what actually happened, it's the 5 percent facts I'm talking about. But how we present these facts changes all the time. In my writing I'm not talking about how things really were or how they really are, but how they are perceived through the lens of a specific character in a specific situation. It easily leads me to reflect on narration as such as I do in *Tupolew 134*. I'm using a historical event, but I use it in a way which makes clear that we construct every event by way of talking about it. How many possibilities do we have to construct something that seems clear, but actually is not? How many times can I retell a story in a different way? (Norman and Sutton 104).

That these different levels of the story, as well as the characters' accounts of the events often times contradict each other occurs in Schulze's *Neue Leben*, as well as in Jenny Erpenbeck's *Heimsuchung*, and is akin to what Aleida Assmann discusses with regards to the role of those who recount the past. Contemporary portrayal of the past by artists, historians, politicians, film and media producers, etc. is often "described in terms of a postmodern relativism that is induced by the reign of the media, which restage the past and exploit it according to current popular taste or the interests of specific groups" ("Transformations" 54). The retelling of the hijacking, the reasons for it, and the memory of the central event in *Tupolew 134* portrays this very phenomenon: The protagonists become aware that questioning by the American occupational forces and the West German courts are attempting to gain information, which will be used for their own geopolitical purposes, namely that the West is a safe place of asylum from the repressive East German regime. Furthermore, the interviews conducted by the media years after the hijacking (and after the Wende) will most likely be used to frame the event according to their and the public's tastes, much in the way the Wende is portrayed by media outlets in Germany today.³³

The narrator's above invitation to experience an event through entering a tunnel (Schacht) of personal experiences as they happened has telling implications for this novel when one considers it through a minor literature approach. It is not enough to simply *hear* the story, one must be pulled into the "collective assemblage" of the story: "There isn't a subject; *there are only collective assemblages of enunciation*, and literature expresses these acts insofar as they're not imposed from without..." (Deleuze and Guattari 18). Therefore, the East German perspective

³³ See Strubel's "Gezeiten" in *Die Nacht, in der die Mauer fiel*, as well as Jana Hensel's *Achtungzone* (2009) in which she discusses that media portrayals of the Wende have replaced her personal memories of the event.

is achieved by bringing the listener into the tunnel will show a distinct minor enunciation of which those who did not live in the GDR cannot be aware. The media (the interviewer) wants to confirm common “major” or West German narrative “from above/without” of what they believe life in the GDR to have been like. This belief includes, among other things, that East Germans suffered during the GDR and that this suffering was the protagonists’ motivation for the hijacking. As a work seen from a minority perspective, this premise is refuted throughout the text.

Refutation of a dominant narrative was also illustrated in Ingo Schulze’s works, and thus there is a strand of postcolonial discourse running through the novel. Not only do the West German journalists’ naïve questions about GDR society represent a colonial attitude that patronizes, to refer to Paul Cooke, even “Orientalizes” East Germany (*Representing* 28),³⁴ the colonial element finds its voice through the West German character Hans Meerkopf from Dortmund. Reminiscent of the character “Michael” in *Adam und Evelyn*, postcolonial reactions are seen through the rejection of Meerkopf’s opinions of East Germany and can be viewed as a critique of unification, but especially towards the sensationalized memory of East German life and the GDR, as well as memory of unification. In conjunction with the post-colonial aspect, and as is prevalent in Strubel’s as well as Julia Schoch’s works, there is a gendered element involved in *Tupolew*. Strubel uses this to challenge the male-dominant narrative of the West-East dynamic, which often is portrayed as the West coming as the fairytale-like hero to save the East, the damsel in distress.

³⁴ Cooke refers to the FRG’s handling of unification, in that “in a number of official discourses the GDR seemed to be functioning as a kind of Saidian ‘Orient’...a historical space through which the FRG could self-reflexively distance itself from the whole of Germany’s dictatorial legacy...” (28).

Released 15 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, this novel is part of a turning point in East German literature. Strubel's prior works *Offene Blende* (2001), *Unter Schnee* (2001), and *Fremd Gehen* (2002) already depart from the Ostalgie phenomenon common at the end of the 1990s and during the early 2000s.³⁵ Around the mid-2000s many other East German authors also begin to make the departure from the Ostalgie wave. One begins to see a critical engagement with not only the Wende itself and the legacy of the GDR, but also of individual, collective, and official memory of that time. *Tupolew 134* portrays the tumultuous process of engaging the recent past and shows that contradictions exist in nearly every facet of the mnemonic process.

The novel opens with an epitaph from a gravestone: "Nun suchet man nicht mehr an den Haushaltern, denn daß sie treu erfunden werden" (7), which is immediately followed by *Der Spiegel*'s report of the plane hijacking from May 21, 1979. On the next page (the first of the text) is the scene from the courtroom in West Berlin, where Katja Siems and Lutz Schaper are being tried for their hijacking of the plane. In these first two pages of the novel, Strubel already sets the reader up for a dizzying account of the story and the three different versions or "levels" of truth, faithfulness or allegiance in her recounting the past. The epitaph, which is taken from the Bible and articulates that "a man be found faithful" (treu) (Bib. 1 Cor. 4.2) provides one level expressing truth or faithfulness (especially when remembering the ideologically driven era of the Cold War), the German news magazine is another, and, of course, the purpose of the courts and the judicial process is to provide a third level of truth. These three opening levels foreshadow the three levels that appear throughout the novel and thus, that which one person, a group of people, or an entity deems as truth can be problematized or clouded through different memories and perspectives. Furthermore, it questions where one's allegiances or "faithfulness" should lie.

³⁵ See also Julia Schoch's *Der Körper des Salamanders* (2001) as part of this phenomenon.

These levels harken back to Strubel's problematization of the nature of truth. Judicial truth (and some also attempt to argue, journalistic truth) is meant to be objective and based on known facts. Whereas Biblical truth is one revealed through faith, that some argue may be subjective. One can therefore argue, that truth is entirely subjective and in the East German context, both that which is presented by the West as well as the East requires observation (in the tunnel) and negotiation.

If, as Strubel claims, memory is always a story, what happens when the story is fragmented and disjointed as in *Tupolew*? Can one trust memories from below or should one look to an institutionalized memory from above? As the text weaves in and out, up and down through different levels of memory (the tunnel), we find multiple perspectives on the central event in the novel and the reasons for which these two GDR citizens fled to the West. As with many other East German works of literature, *Tupolew 134* tells a story that introduces alternative narratives. Ultimately, one can choose what to believe, and Strubel doesn't necessarily provide concrete answers, but the complication of memory due to competing perspectives allows for a discussion to take place, rather than accepting one version of the past and thus, the present.

It will first be necessary to discuss how these different levels engage memory of a single event, or the "5 percent truth" that Strubel mentions. On the "oben" level, one gains insight into the events of the past through the narrator's memories. The invitation to enter the tunnel is an attempt to share the memories and experiences of the time. In the same way Aleida Assmann says that "[a]utobiographical memories cannot be *embodied* by another person, but they can be *shared*" ("Transformations 50), the narrator attempts to share these experiences with the interviewer and thus, the reader,³⁶ but she will not simply *tell* the audience about her memories, she wants the interviewer to take a look around "Noch können Sie überallhin" (26). She warns us

³⁶ In this text, "us", "the reader", and "the journalist" all refer to the same person, meaning the audience.

that while you can go back and forth between levels, some may not be safe, they might collapse, and one could stumble over them later, as happens with memory. The narrator also tells the journalist “Auch von hier aus, von oben, lässt sich nur wenig überblicken” (87). We see here the difficulty of memory par excellence, memories are broken, incomplete, and difficult to see from an outside perspective, in particular when one assumes that one can see everything from above, which the journalist is doing (possibly unknowingly), with her historical perspectives on the past.

The “unten” level is where the novel actually begins. As in her more recent novel *Sturz der Tage in die Nacht*, we begin after the story’s main event has taken place and then retroactively work through the events occurring before and after. This apparent middle level of the tunnel deals primarily with the plan to flee the GDR (originally on a ship across the Baltic Sea) and the immediate results of the plane hijacking, the landing in West Berlin, which then include the trial and imprisonment of Katja and Lutz. Memory is utilized on this level to dig deeper into the geopolitical environment of the time and also tell the story of how authorities in the West struggled with what to do with these refugees and how the West’s political interests came into play, a discourse that is often absent in Western accounts of the East/West dynamic in the past.

Finally, the “ganz unten” level discusses the past in the GDR. It portrays Katja, Lutz, their coworker Verona, and Katja’s parents’ life prior to Katja and Lutz fleeing the GDR. Furthermore, one sees how they meet the West German, Hans Meerkopf, who travels frequently to the East. This deepest part of the tunnel is the hardest for those who have not been there (those who did not live in the GDR) to see. And once you have been there, it is difficult to come out and to not see the world with at least the knowledge of a different perspective. The illumination

of this part of the tunnel is Strubel's challenge to the memory of the GDR. She does not look at the GDR from a (n)ostalgic point of view, nor does she chastise those who lived in the GDR as having a horrible life and not taking responsibility for making change. Katja and Lutz take extreme measures to leave the GDR and Katja even leaves partly because she is in love with the West German, Meerkopf. But she takes this a step further than this traditional view of leaving the East for the West and challenges the journalist to see different reasons for leaving East Germany than she previously may have imagined.

Much of the "ganz unten" section deals with exactly this phenomenon, and provides an authentic memory of (Katja's and Lutz's) life in the GDR, good and bad. Bernd Siems, Katja's father and first generation GDR citizen is indeed unhappy in the GDR. However, he essentially personifies much of the GDR in that his life is illustrated through many hopelessly GDR-specific disappointments. He was a soldier in the Wehrmacht at the end of the War and was captured by the Russians causing him to have deep-seated distrust of them and of the system and government they helped to create. One symbol of resistance to the Russians and the GDR, which in his case, also meets a tragic end is that Katja was conceived in June of 1953, the month of the workers rebellion in East Germany. Bernd's intentions were to have a child that was born in the astrological sign Pisces, which is supposed to bring about children with gentle personality traits. Instead, she was born an Aries, which is supposed to be the wildest. Consequently, according to astrology, Katja becomes a rebellious child, one who would not tolerate a life which she did not like. Bernd simply wanted her to be "glücklicher als wir" (20). This foreshadows what kind of a person she will be and the eventual act of "Republikflucht" that she will undertake. Unlike her

father who in times of despair would sit in his chair and stare at the wall, Katja decides “Ich lebe nicht mehr gern so” (40).

This comment, which she vocalizes to Lutz in the auto factory where she, Lutz, and Verona work, sets the stage for alternative memories of a past event. It is the sprouting of the seed of an idea to leave their life in the GDR. However, as the plan develops, she does not say anything about leaving the system, rebelling against the corrupt SED government, or fleeing to the “golden West”. What drives her is boredom and a desire for a different life. It is simply an alternative that she seeks. In Beret Norman’s article, “Strubel’s Ambiguities of Identity” she discusses Strubel’s “call for a reexamination of collective memory in which only the Western version remains valid” (69). Where the dominant Western version of history and East German motivations are to escape the oppressive East German regime, Strubel portrays it in another way, as Beret Norman also explains, that rather than being “politically minded revolutionaries” who want to leave the oppressive GDR for the freedom of the West, it is “tedium and boredom” and the desire for more space that are the impetus for Katja’s bold decision to leave (69-70). Not only is this idea portrayed through Katja, Lutz Schaper’s motivations for leaving the GDR are also not due to a terrible life in the GDR. Schaper is 39 years old and apparently, “Es ging ihm nicht schlechter als anderen, es ging ihm gut” (*Tupolew* 91). However, Schaper’s age seems to at first be a hindrance for him to take concrete steps to leave: “Es gab Momente, in denen er sich sagte, dass er irgendwann weggehen würde...Aber er wusste auch, dass er nicht weggehen würde...seine Sehnsüchte waren insgesamt zu kurz oder zu alt, um sich auf etwas jenseits der Mauer zu richten” (92-3). While this part of Schaper’s story still takes place in the 1970s before he and Katja hijack the plane, there is a clear parallel to the older generations of East German

citizens who did not leave the GDR and who had difficulties adjusting to (West) German life after the Wende as Schaper eventually will. Remaining in the GDR did not mean that they were “linientreu” rather that, as in the above example of Katja’s boredom in the GDR, Schaper indeed fantasizes about fleeing to the FRG to pursue a different existence, but it was difficult for many reasons. Here the East German cry for freedom is, however, not as loud as many in the West “remember” it to be or even think it should have been. Life went by seemingly normally when the East “normal” is suddenly no longer what Katja wants, and Shaper follows. Strubel simplifies the reasons for escape even more describing the “Kleinigkeiten” in Katja’s home: “Ob ihr die Wohnzimmercouch auf einmal jämmerlich klein vorkam. Ob der Gitterstab in der Glasvitrine seine Bedeutung verlor. Ob sie anders über ihren Vater in seinen unvermeidlichen Cordhosen dachte” (65). In the end, the act of terrorism in order to flee the GDR is a result of personal boredom and an act of opportunism, not a culmination of years of planning due to the objection to specific policies of the repressive GDR regime.

Strubel refutes a memory that comes from above based mostly on media representations, institutions and commemorations, which as Assmann contends “construct” memory and thus, identity (“Transformations” 55). Near the end of the novel, a young, beautiful journalist interviews Lutz Schaper. She inquires about how his suffering in the GDR lead him to flee. When he replies that he did not suffer, she continues to ask more questions about other stereotypes such as the “warmth” and the “Zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl” of the GDR that the “Neue Bundesbürger” miss today. Schaper becomes annoyed with her ignorant questions and simply replies, “Sie haben den Artikel schon fix und fertig im Kopf” (334-40). Schaper’s almost belittling refutation of the journalists’ assumptions show that Strubel’s interests lie elsewhere

than in simply a memory of the past and the GDR itself as historical facts. She discusses how the past and the perception of that past shape the future:

I'm in general less interested in a 'lost *Heimat*'. I'm interested in how and why the term 'lost *Heimat*' is established and in what way it is used. Of course, I happen to have grown up in a country that has disappeared, and it would be shortsighted to neglect its influence on my perception of the world. And if I create characters of a certain age, they tend to have their roots in that country, since I have easier access to an East German biography than to a West German one (the motif of the broken biography, the disillusionment, the emotional humiliation in the new society, etc.). But I'm not interested in saving something that is lost. I'm not interested in archives. I'm not interested in how 'it is' or 'was', but always in how 'it could be' or 'could have been' (Norman and Sutton 104).

The perception of East Germans remembering their *Heimat* in a simply (n)ostalgic sense is, therefore, problematic and ignores the evolution in East Germans' perspectives in the time that has passed since 1989/90, especially in the 21st century.

The "how-it-could-have-been" is illustrated in the description of how Katja and Verona meet Hans Meerkopf, the West German, originally from Dortmund, who works for the firm Reitz & Söhne. He visits the East German plant where Katja, Verona, and Lutz Schaper work, which was part of the attempted easing of tensions between East and West Germany during the 1970s. Katja and Verona see him outside the plant near the "Pechpfehl", a nature preserve in Ludwigsfelde. Here Strubel mentions all the small things or events that *could* have happened that would have prevented them from meeting. For example, she sees Meerkopf watching her jog and they begin a conversation. After she leaves him and continues her run, Katja interjects with memories (from the "oben" perspective),

An dieser Stelle wäre die Geschichte vielleicht noch aufzuhalten gewesen...Eine winzige Verschiebung der Figuren, eine Veränderung im Zeitplan hätten genügt. Ein Zwischenfall, der die Geschäftsreise um ein oder zwei Tage verschoben hätte, Schwierigkeiten mit den Einreiseformalitäten... (51).

This meeting illustrates the randomness of life and how little changes in the past would have completely altered the present and the future. I also discuss this when talking about *Sturz der Tage in die Nacht*, with regards to the past and its effect on the present. Strubel is not alone among East German authors who emphasize such a phenomenon, as one sees with Schulze, Uwe Tellkamp, and Julia Schoch, among others. They are bringing to light the events or decisions of the past (post-)Wende are responsible for our present. While not always offering answers, these texts illuminate past mistakes, societal inequalities, political and social missteps, and moments of opportunity. Remembering these incidences with some clarity can allow one to contemplate competing memories, moments of opportunity and realize how little it takes to change what *could be*. Homi K. Bhabha refers to "...Hannah Arendt's suggestion that the author of social action may be the initiator of its unique meaning, but as agent he or she cannot control its outcome" (*Location* 18). Thus, it may be possible that the illumination may initiate a social action with regards to memory of the Wende in the face of current top-down dominated discourse.

A continuous reexamination is paramount when one considers the circumstances and process of unification. Referring to, as Dagmar Herzog does, East German Konrad Weller's *Das Sexuelle in der deutsch-deutschen Vereinigung* (1991), we find the stark portrayal as the "powerful and self-confident male Federal Republic...and a not-quite-as-satisfied-as-she'd-hoped-to-be female German Democratic Republik" (131). Strubel portrays this East/West dynamic through the characters Katja Siems and Hans Meerkopf (who Verona refers to only as "HM", one cannot help but think of this as a reference to a Swedish-founded, popular clothing store in West Germany). The "ganz unten" background of Katja and Meerkopf discusses this in

detail (52-64). As they get to know each other more intimately, one sex scene describes how HM admires Katja's natural confidence. The East German woman is more natural and sexually confident; a phenomenon which is also found in post-Wende discourse, such as the recent film *This ain't California*. Meerkopf believes that oppression has allowed them to go back to instinct and he at first feels intimidated by her and that her very matter of fact behavior and confidence during sex was chilly or cold (fröstelnd). While this may be a simple stereotype of East German women on the surface, it runs deeper within German discourse on East Germany, especially in the early post-Wende years. Strubel's Katja also begins a deeper conversation about East/West colonial theory by reversing the typical roles of both a male dominated relationship and of a West German dominated one. The East German woman *is* satisfied, and takes on a more dominant role.

After the first time that Katja and Meerkopf sleep together, she leaves him a note on the bed, which says, "Danke, Mister. Sie haben mir großen Spaß gemacht. – Darf ich Sie wiedersehen?" (60). This phrase "Danke Mister" comes up again later in the novel, but Meerkopf does not want her to call him "Mister": "'Mister ist ein kolonialistischer Ausdruck', sagte er, '...und wenn es nichts Bestimmtes bedeuten soll, hätte ich es lieber, wenn du es nicht sagst'" (100). The use of the title "Mister" is also an allusion to the post-World War II U.S. occupation of Germany and thus positions Meerkopf as an extension of the victory of the United States over Germany. Furthermore, this likens the FRG-GDR relationship to the victor-loser dynamic. At times it seems that Meerkopf attempts to shed his (West) German identity when he is in the East, or at least he wants to be perceived as a sympathetic, very left-leaning liberal like many West Germans in the 1960s and 70s, who sympathized with socialism. His (West)Germanness is,

however, portrayed further in that he listens to the radio station RIAS (Rundfunk im amerikanischen Sektor), which was a very important station during the Cold War for bringing Western radio and television to the GDR. As a character he seems to be the embodiment of a naïve West German in the East German culture and in the world of women despite his admiration for both.

The West Germans' opinions of the East are juxtaposed with gender roles further when Meerkopf and a friend of his discuss what they think of their endeavors in East Germany. Meerkopf analyzes his relationship with Katja, wondering if she actually has feelings for him, if she is faking it, or if she is faking it so well that she makes herself believe that she loves him. He compares these thoughts with his experiences with other East German women,

Meerkopf kennt sie alle. In Leipzig und Dresden saß er nie lange allein an den Bars. Selten hat er dann mehr als zwei Glas Champagner ausgegeben. Chapagner waren sie hier nicht gewohnt, weil man den nur mit Westgeld bekam, und meistens fragten sie zügig beim zweiten Glas, ob er verheiratet sei (135).

The colonial aspect of West German men comes to a head on the next page:

'Entwicklungshilfe' hatte ein Freund nüchtern an einer der Dresdner Bars zu ihm gesagt. 'Weißt du eigentlich, was du hier leistest? Das ist 'n Entwicklungshilfejob. Die lassen sich doch vom letzten Krüppel ficken, Hauptsache, er kommt aus'm Westen, und sie kriegen dafür 'n Trauschein (136).

Once again, this portrays the East as the feminine damsel in distress in need of saving, and the West as the masculine hero, even in the crass way it is expressed here. Furthermore, this represents a post-Wende colonial aspect to unification by portraying East Germans (especially women) as the "other". Paul Cooke notes, "[t]he GDR...was being cast as the west's evil 'other', an historical version of Said's 'Orient', through which the FRG sought validation for its own

existence as a superior, enlightened German state” (*Representing* 41).³⁷ However, Strubel uses this familiar metaphor and turns it around in that the feminine opportunist also uses West German men, thus reversing the dominant roles in order to question the helpless East German stereotype. This is a dynamic that would not, however, work the other way around, as East German men do not seem to have this opinion of West German women.

Strubel is then not only juxtaposing West/East between individuals as metaphor for the Wende, in order to, as Wolfgang Emmerich puts it, to create a meaningful connection to the past and the present (“Cultural” 244-5), she is also showing the potential for the connection to be broken, or rewired so that the result *could have* been different. The articulation of a different perspective from what is known on the surface, is where her literature goes beyond the post-colonial mimicry per se, and breaks with conventional norms and thought. Strubel depicts a mimicry that also represents a break, a different way than one that was supposed to connect East and West in the aftermath of unification. To evoke Homi Bhabha,

The great connective narratives of capitalism and class drive the engines of social reproduction, but do not, in themselves, provide a foundational frame for those modes of cultural identification and political affect that form around issues of sexuality, race, feminism, [or] the lifeworld of refugees or migrants... (*Location* 8).

This lack of foundational frame creates the enunciation of difference and alternative perspectives found in looking at East German work. It upsets and deconstructs the major narrative.

As Strubel explains in her interview with Norman and Sutton, she has specific access to East German experiences because she is from, and spent her formative years in the GDR. More so than being her place of birth, it is indeed prominent in her writing, especially in the central

³⁷ This quote is in particular reference to the action of the Enquete Commission, which began reports in its “Aufarbeitung von Geschichte und Folgen der SED-Diktatur in Deutschland” examining the GDR post-1990

event of *Tupolew 134*, and thus make Deleuze and Guattari's Minor Literature theory a fitting vehicle through which to explore this work.

The first characteristic of Minor Literature, the deterritorialization of language, is more prominent in the works of Antje Rávic Strubel than the other authors in this project. Language is of the utmost importance to Strubel, who "forces" language through various deterritorialization processes. As we have seen with the fact that she gives letters colors and that she gives herself the fictitious second name, "Rávic", she focuses on words and how one makes sense of those words. She is also very interested in how a language sounds to the listener and what types of conclusions one can draw from the impressions of a language. Strubel plays with language in order to evoke "strange" minority constructs and one can see this come through in *Tupolew 134* in Katja's childhood:

Englisch war eine Sprache, der Katja seit ihrer Schulzeit mißtraute. Sie dachte, es könne nicht ernst gemeint sein, dass man erst gehen musste, um gehen zu können, auch wenn man längst laufen gelernt hatte, *I'm going to go*, wie es hieß. Sie wurde den Verdacht nicht los, die Lehrer hätten die Sprache mit Absicht verdreht...um sie erst gar nicht in die feindliche Sprache hineinkommen zu lassen (78).

Her linguistic musing about English is actually taking place in a deterritorialization par excellence. She is remembering her English lessons while being held at Tempelhof airport and speaking with the American authorities. Not only has she left the GDR, where one could argue that German and Russian are the "major" languages, she is now in West Berlin, where German and English are "major". In both cases, Strubel's "minor" perception is being enunciated through a major language in a major territory, as was the case with "Prague German" (Deleuze and Guattari 16-7).

Furthermore, one's perception of the language can be influenced by the geopolitical environment or cultural stereotypes. In fact, the SED regime's power over their people's

opinions is shown here in Katja's learning of English. The English language with its many rule exceptions and colloquialisms confuses Katja, so much so, that she instantly chalks it up to the teachers' intentional distorting of the "enemy's language". This suspicion is also fueled by her upbringing, by Bernd Siems' suspicion of everything the East German and Russian authorities did.

One can then see how language becomes immediately related to politics in *Tupolew134* and thus, the second characteristic of minor literature, "the connection of the individual to political immediacy" (17). As we have seen, Katja and Schaper's motivations for the hijacking were *not* political, rather personal. This "terrorist" act and Strubel's use of this event as the backdrop make a connection of the East German individual to the political event, even without intent. A telling example of this is the "Blick" that Schaper has from the airplane after they have taken the stewardess and the pilots prisoner. As they cross the border (The Berlin Wall) through the air, the pilot tells Schaper to look below for proof that they are indeed crossing the border to go to Tempelhof airport. In his excitement to be across he says the border is "Wie eine Narbe. Eine verdamnte riesige Narbe." To which the pilot responds, "Unten werden Sie das nicht sehen" (159). Schaper's likening of the border between East and West Berlin to a scar represents the wound that has only partly healed since World War II. The division of East and West Berlin (and East and West Germany) is an unnatural occurrence caused by injury. The scar it leaves behind heals over time, but many scars will always remain visible. Here Strubel points to the ability to see this scar when one steps back (here from above) to observe Germany. The pilot's response to Schaper's remark shows that when one is involved in everyday life "*unten* werden Sie das nicht sehen" one does not notice the wall, the border, the scar. The scar becomes normal,

a facet of everyday life and thus, without reflection upon it, one forgets about why the scar is there, which, in turn contributes to keeping the wound open.

As is portrayed throughout the novel and by observing this work through collective memory, post-colonial discourse, and minor literature, the third characteristic of a minor literature is where all of these theories come together; “the collective assemblage of enunciation.” While Strubel uses memory in a unique way to examine “what could have been” or “what could be”, the results of the past, and active memory of that past, have personal as well as collective affects upon the future. This one author’s enunciation, as Deleuze and Guattari point out, “already constitutes a common action.” Katja and Schaper’s act (the central political event) was in fact not politically motivated. It became political, however, when the West (German) reactions take on a colonial tone (via Hans Meerkopf and West German journalists). Therefore, the alternative East German memories may not be *embodied* by all, but the *sharing* of these memories and the historical and political backdrop show that *Tupolew 134* as well as her other works are “literature that produces active solidarity in spite of skepticism...” (17). This solidarity, then, is something that can become German in the sense that East German history and perspectives are a part of *German* history and a German collective memory.

B. *Sturz der Tage in die Nacht* (2011)

Antje Rávic Strubel’s novel *Sturz der Tage in die Nacht* (2011) tells the story of four characters from the former GDR, whose intertwining personal narratives of life there are brought back to life 20 years after the *Wendesommer* of 1989. Strubel’s eighth work casts an East German gaze upon contemporary (German) society that is sharply critical and heavily influenced

by memory and the past. This gaze is achieved through detailed descriptions of East German experiences in the GDR, as well as during the Wende and post-Wende years. As Gisela Brinker-Gabler writes with regard to the work of another East German author, Helga Königsdorf, “The personal is constituted by collectivity and vice versa” (287). With this in mind, this project explores the novel through the perspectives of its individual characters, demonstrating that Strubel seeks to express a uniquely Eastern collective past through the point of view of the individual pasts of her characters. This perspective affords for a more comprehensive picture of the German past rather than attempts at an objective history. Strubel explains in an interview: “In my writing I’m not talking about how things really were or how they really are, but how they are perceived through the lens of a specific character in a specific situation” (Norman and Sutton 104). Deleuze and Guattari’s concepts of deterritorialization and collective enunciation through the individual, as well as Aleida Assmann’s observations on individual versus collective memory show how an East German perspective must be considered in an engagement with Germany’s past and present. Paul Cooke’s application of post-colonial theory to the German unification context offers the impetus for reading the novel as a politically and socially critical engagement with the GDR past and unified Germany. Minor literature and alternative collective memory, however, are a more productive means through which to explore Germany’s unified past, present, and future through literature, especially as the time since the Wende increases, because they become a vehicle through which to view East German experiences of economic, political, and social colonization, *as well as* what those experiences mean for *all* Germans today.

Strubel’s novel provides two levels of narrative. Firstly, the “Rahmenerzählung” which takes place in the summer of 2009 on the small, Baltic island of Stora Karlsö, west of the

Swedish island Gotland. This frame-story deals primarily with the relationship between the novel's main protagonists Erik and Inez Rauter (who first meet on the island). The "Binnenerzählung" enters the novel when a former Stasi agent, Rainer Feldberg, comes to the island. His connection to the CDU politician, Felix Ton, completes the interconnected, sometimes complex web of relationships between all four of the characters. Furthermore, despite any differences in their ages and experiences, they are entangled in a common history and intersecting personal stories, which come together during this summer of 2009 as all four are suddenly confronted with each other once again, not coincidentally after 20 years of being apart. By incorporating these two levels, Strubel shows the juxtapositioning and connection between the past and the present.

The novel begins with the Rahmenerzählung told from **Erik**'s perspective, a young man born in the GDR in 1984. One may believe that the GDR may not play much of a role in the life of East Germany's younger generation. According to Wolfgang Emmerich, however, the German division, the GDR, and post-unification issues remain present for the generations who experienced the GDR only as children or were born in the years after its demise ("Cultural" 242). Erik leaves East Germany for Gotland and while there, makes a daytrip to the island of Stora Karlsö; a trip that will bring his "Osterbe" to light in a most unexpected fashion and pique this young man's interest in the GDR past. What Strubel demonstrates is not unlike W.G. Sebald's admonition that postwar German writers have a responsibility "sich an etwas zu erinnern, das man nicht erlebt hat, das einen aber auf unverstandene Weise prägt".³⁸ Erik becomes engaged in

³⁸ In both a published work of Sebald's essays and in a speech called "Luftkrieg und Literatur" and qtd. in Besslich, Grätz, and Hildebrand 7-17.

the act of remembering his GDR “heritage” which he barely experienced himself. Through Erik, Strubel illustrates examples of memories that have impacted his generation.

To prepare us for this engagement with memory, the first few pages of the novel are rife with foreshadowing. The novel begins at the chronological end of the story and therefore, the reader must also take part in the act of remembering in order to flesh out how the events of the past affect the present. The first lines of the novel also suggest that the past, even when one contemplates or “comes to terms” with it in the present, continues into the future: “Es hatte begonnen, wie es immer beginnt. Es beginnt auch jetzt noch immer. Es beginnt auf diesem Wasser, auf dem Weg zurück” (*Sturz* 9). Thus, Strubel sets the reader up to experience the novel’s portrayal of a past that continues into the present as described by Assmann:

In the last 20 years or so...people were convinced that the past was closed and fixed and the future was open to change, we are now experiencing that the past is constantly changing and the future proves to be heavily determined by the past. The past appears to be no longer written in granite but rather in water; new constructions of it are periodically arising and changing the course of politics and history. It is not safely locked up in history books and stowed away in libraries but continually reclaimed as an important resource for power and identity politics. History is not only what comes long *after* politics; it has also become the stuff and fuel of politics (“Transformations” 57).

The constant “beginnings” in Erik’s memory of his time on Stora Karlsö reflects how memory shapes his present and *will* shape his future. This is also true for the future of the other characters illustrating how East Germans’ memory of the past is not a closed chapter that ended with unification in 1990.

The interweaving of the protagonists’ stories is also foreshadowed when the character Inez (Rauter) is introduced in what appears to be a goodbye between the first-person narrator (Erik) and herself: Erik tells Inez that he will come back. This first page of text stands alone. On the following page the farewell occurs again, but at a different time told by a third person

narrator. Here, Inez is contemplating a comment made by a journalist who is standing with them on the dock during the goodbye:

“Sie haben doch was miteinander. Sie und der Junge.”
 “Wir haben alles”, hat sie geantwortet (10).

The story of Erik and Inez ends with these same words near the end of the novel (426). While this closing may seem to complete the story it actually points to the potential future between the two. Whatever it is that Erik and Inez “have”, their “everything” is not over, and Erik’s promise to come back to her confirms this. In this way the future is open and will continue to be influenced not only by the recent past that they had on the island, but also by the events in the GDR past that connect them. This connection will remain, whether or not they actually return to each other.

To show the connection between the four characters, the third person narrative employs flashbacks to the GDR past and/or personal stories describing in detail the experiences of the older generation: INEZ RAUTER, FELIX TON, and RAINER FELDBERG.³⁹ These three characters’ experiences each have specific purposes in the novel. Inez Rauter’s story takes place partly in the present on the island through Erik’s first-person account. The majority of her story however is a third-person account describing her past in the GDR and her relationship to the other characters. Those two other characters, Felix Ton and Rainer Feldberg, are former Stasi-agents whose stories are also told through the third-person. Felix Ton’s story portrays his life *after* the Wende in the present day. However, his present-day account recollects his life in the GDR and compares it to how much better it is today (this reminiscing occurs in a somewhat drunken state as Ton enjoys his glass(es) of cognac). In contemporary Germany he is living the

³⁹ Throughout the novel, the characters’ names are capitalized and are used as chapter subheadings. Only Erik’s full name is never capitalized in this way or used as a subheading, possibly because he is the first-person narrator.

dreams he had growing up in the repressive GDR. Finally, Rainer Feldberg's story also retrieves memories of the past in the GDR. In contrast with Ton, Feldberg attempts to recreate in present-day Germany what for him was a "better" GDR past.

The first section of the novel is an over 100 page account from Erik's perspective entitled "DIE FLINTKUGEL", a reference to the "Klapperstein" or eagle-stone/rattle-stone, which is continually brought up throughout the text and could be seen as the "Ding" or "Symbol" typical of a novella. The Klapperstein has a cavity which houses the fossilized remains of a sponge called *Plinthosella Squamosa*, which moves freely inside of the stone and sounds like a rattle. In German folklore such stones were said to be used to prevent miscarriage and facilitate birth (Stol 50). That Erik's narrative starts with this heading, hints to the mother-child relationship between him and Inez. Furthermore, if we view this as a metaphor for the Rahmen- and Binnenerzählungen, we see that the sections that are told in the third person and deal with the past begin with the *Plinthosella Squamosa* chapter/title heading, therefore suggesting that the story of Inez and Erik told through Erik's first-person account, *houses* the third person flashbacks of the past like the "*Plinthosella Squamosa*" or fossil that exists within the Klapperstein: The GDR past lives on *inside* of Erik. The fossil image may indeed contradict the idea that the past remains open to interpretation. However, the "loose" fossil and the rattling may suggest that the East German past can and should still be heard.

Erik's initial confrontation with the GDR past occurs as he arrives on the island. He and Inez first meet on Stora Karlsö where Inez is working as an ornithologist. Erik's excursion to the island was initially intended to be a daytrip: "...ich [hätte] nur sechs Stunden Zeit auf dieser Insel..." (19). However, in what seems to be fate, Inez (an older woman who catches his eye as

he arrives) fleetingly grabs Erik by the arm as he passes her on the dock. This touch and first connection between the two begins a love story that lasts the entire summer, as Erik stays to do an internship with the ornithologists on the reserve. While Inez is unaware of Erik's identity and past, her seemingly involuntary grabbing Erik foreshadows the truth about their relationship (20). As the novel progresses, the truth that Erik is her son, whom she gave up for adoption in the GDR in the mid-1980s becomes increasingly evident. Prior to this revelation, he discovers that Inez is from the former East and becomes interested in her background. As the two get to know one another, he even feels insulted that she did not tell him because, according to him, it is important that one *tell* another person that he/she is "aus dem Osten", something that Inez refutes:

Aber stimmt doch, oder? Du bist aus dem Osten.
 Ich bin ein Zugvogel... Und ich hätte nicht gedacht, dass das in eurem Alter noch eine Rolle spielt.
 Ich gehöre auch dazu. Deswegen interessiert's mich.
 Bist du nicht zu jung für einen Ossi?
 Ich bin ein Erbe. Beim Mauerfall war ich fast fünf (36).

Inez attempts to change the subject. Her memories of the GDR are tied with unpleasant experiences that are, as one later discovers, directly related to Erik, Rainer Feldberg, and Felix Ton, and their history and relationship in the GDR. She also expresses her discontent about having such discussions about the East:

Man erzählt sich, wo man aufgewachsen ist.
 Wenn man im Osten aufgewachsen ist, hört das aber an dieser Stelle nicht auf, Erik. Dann muss man *normalerweise* Auskunft geben.
 "Ja und", sagte ich heftig, "was ist daran so schlimm?"..."Ich finde es schlimm, belogen zu werden."
 Inez lachte. "Du bist ja ein Süßer", sagte sie. "Du bist wirklich süß" (105).

Erik's interest in Inez' past is being suppressed by her unwillingness to discuss it. Both her past and suppression thereof are essential for her character development throughout the novel, as this "Zugvogel" is eventually forced to deal with a past that she was previously able to avoid.

Sixteen years separate the two. This is not only an important factor for Inez and Erik's relationship, but also in how that relationship describes the societal aspects of post-GDR life. Erik represents the generation born during the 80s who have little to no actual memory of the GDR, but seem to still have interest in their "Osterbe". East German memory of its history and culture are still important to the younger generation of East Germans. In much the same way that transnational and German-Jewish authors continue to engage past events that effect their present, so do younger generations of East Germans. Therefore, this literature is something both unique, and an essential part of writing in German, because it helps to paint a complete and multi-faceted picture of the recent German past. The fictional Erik, as well as Strubel's other characters, allow insight into East German perspectives, which Strubel says "certainly came from specific observations that I have made" (my trans. *Antje spricht* 0:03:20-:24). Indeed, younger writers such as Clemens Meyer (born in 1979) and Andrea Hanna Hünig (like Erik born in 1984) still have an interest in their short GDR past, the GDR that the elder generations knew, and the post-Wende experiences of all East Germans; and they write about them extensively in novels and journalistic endeavors.⁴⁰ The critical acclaim that their works achieved attests to how the topic of East Germany resonates with both East and West German audiences 25 years after unification.

Interest in East Germany, however, is not simply historical. Erik seems unsure of what to do with his future, but unlike many East Germans of previous generations, he has always known

⁴⁰ See for example Meyer's novels *Als wir träumten* (2006) and *Im Stein* (2012) as well as Hünig's *Das Paradies. Meine Jugend nach der Mauer* (2011).

the freedom to choose his own path and to travel to do it. His cultural heritage, however, requires a negotiation that goes beyond finding oneself as an individual. While a nomadic, multicultural existence and experience and the problem of “Heimat” is common in German literature in the 21st century⁴¹, East German versions of such stories bring another element of this “problem” into play, in that their “Heimat” no longer exists as it was when they were born. This phenomenon makes for an abnormal or “queer” memory as Emily Jeremiah states with reference to Strubel’s works referring to both the sexual orientation of some of her characters, and the juxtaposing of “queer” and East German memory.⁴² This “abnormal” or even, according to Emmerich, “displaced” (“(East) German Literature”) memory in that it is slowly disappearing after the dissolving of the GDR. These memories, as Jana Hensel has stated, can be difficult to share with those who did not experience them (*Zonenkinder* 34-41). Even when Erik reflects upon his time on the island (a reflection, which is “displaced” chronologically, as it occurs within the foreshadowing near the beginning of the novel and continually interspersed throughout) he refers to the memories as “Splitter”...:

..., die man einsammelt, Splitter auf dem Weg, den man gekommen ist und den man jetzt versucht, zurückzuverfolgen, den ich versuche, zurückzuverfolgen, um einen Anfang zu rekonstruieren, den Anfang einer Geschichte, die, wie mir scheint, die Geschichte eines anderen ist, nicht meine (43).

Thus, memory is problematized throughout the novel, and not only in Erik’s case. As in many of Strubel’s works, the story is a disjointed one, rife with the previously mentioned flashbacks and foreshadowing that only slowly begin to come together as the story progresses. Erik further expresses his difficulty recounting the past: “Wie schwierig ist es, beim Zurückschauen

⁴¹ See for example works by Olga Grjasnowa, Ilija Trojanow, and Yoko Tawada.

⁴² See Jeremiah, Emily. *Nomadic Ethics in Contemporary Women's Writing in German: Strange Subjects*. Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2012. Print.

chronologisch vorzugehen...” (53). This is also evident in the story of Inez and the connection that forms between them, both as a romantic relationship and as mother and son. The duality of this relationship is problematic as it engages contemporary societal issues as well as the difficulties in engaging the GDR past and their effect on the present and future from different generational perspectives, as one sees when the story of Inez is introduced.

Inez Rauter is 41 years old and also from the former GDR (Greifswald, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern an der Ostsee) and works as an ornithologist on Stora Karlsö. Born in 1968, she fits securely into what for my purposes I have defined as the GDR’s third generation. She was approximately 21 years old when the Wall fell, thus placing her formative years, experiences, and her education in the GDR. Inez often acts out against her parents’ wishes and associates with older men (Feldberg and Ton). She fits well within the climate of the GDR during the 1980s in which she spent her formative years, rebellious, inquisitive, and boldly desiring a degree of freedom which puts her at odds with the elder GDR generation.

As with many of the third generation (Strubel included) the way Inez expresses her feelings and ideas are many times seen as radical or “rocking the boat”. She wants to be “frei und unkontrollierbar” (102-3). When Rainer Feldberg comes to Stora Karlsö to make supposed “investigations” into the nature preserve’s activities, she is immediately skeptical, questions his motives and takes nothing he says to her or to Erik at face value. It becomes apparent that Inez and Feldberg have a personal relationship from the past, which for some reason she wants to keep silent. As she had done this successfully up until Feldberg’s arrival, the uninformed camp director asks her not to overreact to Feldberg’s inquiries into the activities on the island (97-8). In essence, Inez’ present is being invaded by her past and her opinions and concerns are

dismissed or stifled by others (including Erik, initially). There is a dualism present in Inez that coincides with the lives of many younger East Germans. Due to their age during the GDR and its end, they were spared much of the SED-regime's control and repression. Furthermore, they were less deeply ingrained into what Wolfgang Emmerich calls the "homogeneity" of most aspects of GDR society ("(East) German"). Thus, they were able to adjust to unified Germany more easily than previous generations. At the same time, many East Germans feel that the GDR is a part of their past and while they defend that not all was bad, they recognize that not all was good. One must struggle as well as embrace being both a former GDR citizen and a "new" German citizen, and they accomplish this through the critical tongue that many of their predecessors in the GDR possessed, one that seeks to question actions that they consider unjust. These critical opinions (of both the former East and unified Germany) have earned them the pejorative nickname "jammer Osis" (whiney Easties) and they are often seen from a Western perspective as backward or unable to fully acclimate to, accept, and appreciate unified Germany. However, when this politically and socially critical tongue is viewed through a minor literature approach, it can be seen in this novel as an "enunciation" of the East German condition, rather than backward thinking complaints. The relative success of Strubel and other East German authors, shows that their tendencies toward collective enunciation and political themes do indeed have an important place in post-unification society, namely in the negotiation of the relationship between East and West, a topic that "West" Germans often do not want to engage.

Strubel states in an interview that she addressed the topic of "Osis" in this novel (I would say in all of her novels) because of her observations of a "Gegenwind" (also mentioned on page 36 of *Sturz der Tage*) that East Germans must constantly overcome. For East Germans

before and after the unification: “Sie [hatten] immer mit Widerständen zu kämpfen” (*Antje spricht* 0:02:45-:48). That this one author makes observations about “Ossis”, a minor culture in unified Germany, to which she also belongs suggests that “what [this] author says individually [...] constitutes a common action” (17) with which many can identify. Specifically in *Sturz der Tage*, the characters run into “Gegenwinde” in many different instances. They range from specific events common to former GDR citizens, such as Inez’ parents’ struggle with the decision whether or not to flee to the West and the difficulty Inez had deciding whether or not to join them while she was expecting a child,⁴³ to events in the post-Wende world portrayed through Inez’ international travels and jobs.

Travel and freedom to move (nomadic themes) are omnipresent in Strubel’s works. Inez travels through work rather than the exciting or luxury travel one might assume when one finally has the freedom to do so. Her motivations are portrayed in a way that is familiar from Strubel’s other works:

Inez erinnerte sich an einen Roman, den sie bei subtropischer Hitze gelesen hatte über ein Mädchen aus dem Osten, das Ende der 70er Jahre ein Flugzeug entführt. In dem Drang weg zu sein, war dieses Mädchen Inez wie eine frühere Version ihrer selbst erschienen. In ihrem Drang oder ihrem Protest gegen das Leben überhaupt, in dem etwas Grundsätzliches nicht stimmte (234).

This refers to Strubel’s own novel, *Tupolew 134*. Strubel places the East German Inez onto a tropical island (depicting “Ferne” or distance) where she reads Strubel’s novel about an East German woman’s (Katja’s) departure from the GDR, in order to illustrate a specifically East German condition. Her reasons and means for travel, and her choice of literature while abroad, break with the commonly held belief that it was simply desire for the West that drove East

⁴³ It was common in the GDR that a person who applied for emigration from the GDR could have their child taken away, or at the very least their application denied.

Germans to leave (as in *Tupolew*) or simply to travel for travel's sake after 1989-90. Strubel specifically mentions that Inez (and Katja) leaves as a protest against *life*, not explicitly against the GDR (or post-unification Germany). Eventually we arrive at Inez' present-day location and job on the island, and to what Strubel calls the "anarchistic, incestuous" forbidden love between Inez and Erik (my trans. *Antje spricht*). Finally, "Jetzt war Inez einundvierzig und wollte nirgendwo mehr hin" (234).

In the post-Wende world, in fact, Inez has lived quite well. The opportunities afforded to her after 1989 are indeed due to events of the Wende. However, the words "Sie [Inez] lebte gut" (234) are preceded by a critical comparison to rich kids that come to Visby, Gotland for their summer vacations. Much in the way that Ingo Schulze portrays contemporary capitalist society, Inez talks about "die reichen Jugendlichen":

Mitte Juli überschwemmten die reichen Jugendlichen aus Stockholm die kleine mitteraltliche Stadt, um in den Cafés am Platz und im Hafen Champagner zu trinken, sich tief und sinnlos zu verlieben und sich in der nicht dunkel werdenen Nacht der Illusion hinzugeben, sie könnten die flüchtende Zeit festhalten, die ihnen noch blieb, bevor sie das Geschäft der Eltern übernehmen, in die IT-Branche einsteigen, als Manager von Banken, Designerlabels oder Elektronikkonzernen um die Welt jetten würden und diese erste ausgelassene Beschwipstheit nur noch als Bildschirmhintergrund oder Pop-up auf dem i-Phone existieren würde (232).

Inez's observations as well as the description of the rich kids from Stockholm depict a noted contrast in the ways in which the people from the former East "live well", and those who live well under the auspices of a capitalist society. Inez' travels to do research came from saving her money and then going to night-schools, while those typically deemed successful in Western society are those who hold the above mentioned careers, and many times those careers are obtained through the already privileged lifestyle that Inez describes. We see here a Western "Erbe", albeit an extreme one.

This juxtaposing represents an incomplete cultural hybridity between East and West Germany. While East Germans did and do in many instances attempt to “mimic” the West (Bhabha 121) in their desire for freedom and travel, their goals and methods are different as seen through Inez, but also through the narrator in Julia Schoch’s *Mit der Geschwindigkeit des Sommers*. This evokes Homi Bhabha’s discussion on colonial discourse, which Paul Cooke emphasizes, that the “copy of the ‘master’ that the colonized produces is imperfect” (*Representing* 17). In addition, Cooke describes with reference to Stuart Hall’s “productive” pole of hybrid identity formation, “the individual’s past experience becomes a dynamic element in an ever-developing understanding of his or her present-day identity” (19). Inez’ travel and settling in Sweden “imperfectly” mimic Western travel norms, but beyond this tendency to mimic the West German norms is the ongoing engagement with her East German past, which is thrust upon her once Feldberg arrives.

Inez’ GDR past is depicted primarily through flashbacks, the first of which takes place in a fever-induced dream. In her review, Dorothée Leidig calls this literary technique forced and “ungeschickt”:

...der lange Fiebertraum, der Inez in ihre Geschichte mit Felix Ton zurückführt, sind [...] arg holprig geraten, hinein in die Rückblende und wieder hinaus und wieder hinein. Gewiss, so mag ein Fiebertraum verlaufen, aber wenn Ein- und Ausstiege sich so hölzern lesen oder Leserinformationen so ungeschickt platziert sind wie hier, kommt ein unstimmiges Gemisch aus szenisch erzählten Passagen, erlebter Rede und Informationstransport heraus.

I would counter that dreams are forms of memory and memory itself is often choppy, incomplete, and awkward. The dream sequence is not the only way in which Strubel portrays Inez’ memories, but this particular sequence further problematizes memory and portrays the ongoing negotiation with memories of the past. Inez’ experiences could have happened to anyone in the GDR and that they are portrayed through dreams show both an individual and

collective experience, as well as the East German process of recollecting a now hazy past 20 years hence. If what is important to minor literature is the collective value of that which an (individual) author says, then how does this fever-induced, very personal dream convey collective value? Aleida Assmann states that: “Autobiographical memories cannot be *embodied* by another person, but they can be *shared* with others... By encoding them in a *common medium of language* (emphasis added), they can be exchanged, shared, corroborated, confirmed, corrected, disputed, and even appropriated” (“Transformations” 50). Through the common medium of (deterritorialized East German language) this dream shares a memory that is common to East German experience: Inez’ issues with emigration, the Stasi taking away her chance at the Abitur and university, and her post-Wende experiences of travel and work abroad.

As Strubel’s character Anja does in her 2007 novel, *Kältere Schichten der Luft*, Inez leaves Germany for Sweden. Many East Germans left East Germany immediately after the fall of the Wall and unification. It is important for the story that the events take place somewhere outside of (East) Germany. It transposes the Deutsch-Deutsche/generational story to neutral ground. There is a sort of “Verfremdungseffekt” in order to look at the recent German history away from the location where debates about the East German past and unification typically occur. In a further act of Verfremdung, there is a side story about Inez planting “Rauschpflanzen” or Tollkirschen (belladonnas or death cherries) that are not native to the habitat on the island. These plants can have psychedelic or intoxicating effects causing one to experience a loss of sense of reality and eating too many can cause death. The reasons for this may be symbolic in that she may have planted them in order to escape reality, or to view reality

through a different lens. That these are not native to the island could represent the planting of something (also herself) on a new place, but whose habitat (Heimat) was elsewhere.

Inez' job on the island is a metaphor for her relationship with Erik. As an ornithologist she studies the "Trottellumme" or the urea or murre birds. She takes Erik to the cliffs on the island and describes to him how these birds breed and take care of their young. Before the chicks can fly they jump or are thrown out of their nests into the sea from cliffs about 40 meters high. The birds survive the jump and learn to swim before they can fly, as this is how they primarily feed. Without a doubt, this instinctual practice parallels the story between Inez and Erik and relates to their shared past. Erik did indeed survive the dive. However, just as Deleuze and Guattari wrote with regard to Kafka's works, it is important not to simply accept this metaphor and focus solely on the oedipal relationship between Inez and Erik. If we take this further, we see how Strubel discusses how this relationship represents one of two poles of what she calls "the destructive potential in society", here the incest taboo. She states that she wanted to bring this moral taboo to light in order to show how ignoring such issues (especially those connected to love) can have an even more threatening impact on an established order (Norman and Sutton 104). She is also questioning the established literary order. In *Kältere Schichten der Luft* she challenges conceptions of homosexual/lesbian relationships and gender identity. In this novel she takes it further with an incestuous relationship. Here reasons for this are: "...maybe because the political and the private are so closely interlinked in the field of sexual identity and gender identity, the borders we put up here and the stories we make up are especially rigid" (106). In this way, she forces the reader to deal directly with it, confront it and bring them out of their "rigid" comfort zone. Thus, the novel not only presents a socially critical element, but forces the

readers to participate in this criticism of morality and love in contemporary society. In addition what this critique does is bring in a wider audience. As Strubel says: “I wanted to illuminate something that is specifically human, not something that is restricted to the GDR” (104).

The other pole that Strubel engages is the dark side of every human on an individual level, which she states is controlled by structural *laws* versus the abovementioned *moral* issue. This individual darkness is represented by the Stasi (Feldberg and Ton) in the novel. She discusses that the difference in reaction to these poles depends upon where in Germany she is reading her work to an audience:

Of course, people react to the incest, especially since I’m going a step further to see what happens when you break the taboo. But people react more strongly to the topic of the secret service. In the former West I had responses of disbelief. People can’t imagine that some of the old structures still exist. They think I’m exaggerating. In the East I hear the opposite. People come up to me and tell me they had to put the book aside again and again, because they couldn’t bear it (105).

By the “old structures” Strubel refers to the Stasi, the Party, and the old GDR, which still exist in the minds of some of those who served in (and/or were targets of) the *Ministerium für Staatssicherheit* (MfS/Stasi) and the SED. She mentions in an interview that she spoke with former Stasi members to do research and their attitudes are portrayed in the characters Rainer Feldberg and Felix Ton (*Antje spricht* 0:05:00-:56).

Rainer Feldberg is a former Stasi agent who worked in the “Hauptabteilung II”, which was responsible for: “Aufdeckung und Abwehr geheimdienstlicher Angriffe gegen die DDR auf politischem, ökonomischem und militärischem Gebiet” (Fritsche 82). His position in the GDR helped him to be hired as an investigator at a West German private security firm called “Mega Operation & Risk Protection” after the Wende. He is eventually hired by Felix Ton (a current/former friend) to find Inez and Erik so that Ton can use their common story for political gain. Feldberg uses his Stasimethoden in a new and up-to-date function in the post-GDR world.

Both he and Ton represent former GDR functionaries who have escaped any punishment for their activities with the Stasi. Furthermore, both attribute their post-Wende success to being put into new posts by West Germans. They exploit the political, economic, and social situations in unified Germany for personal gain/pleasure; much in the way they did in the GDR. This critique of German society shows that political, economic, and social corruption did not end with the end of the so-called “Unrechtsstaat-DDR”. Rather than simply “writing back” and dealing with the Stasi as Paul Cooke puts it with regard to East German writers in the immediate post-Wende years (*Representing* 61), Strubel uses these characters as embodiments of the “evils” in people that can and do exist under any system or in any society. This illumination of corruption by different means than existed in GDR can also shed light on the fact that there were those in the GDR who were not corrupt or evil. By taking these characters and portraying their evil as something that is possible in contemporary society, one must also consider the opposite; those who are not evil, neither today nor prior to 1989 and thus, demonstrate that not every citizen of the former GDR was a Stasi-member or “IM” (inoffizielle Mitarbeiter).

Rainer Feldberg is first introduced as the “Rotblonde” during Erik’s first person narrative. As Feldberg makes contact with Erik on Stora Karlsö, he is quite obviously setting up his investigation, as well as making Erik feel as if he is testing his trustworthiness. Feldberg gives Erik (and everyone else on the island) the impression that he is there to conduct an investigation into the work of the conservation authority for which Inez works. He attempts to gain the trust of Erik by telling him, bit by bit, the relationship that he, Inez, and Felix Ton had in the past. One particular exchange sounds much like the early stages of a Stasi investigation:

[Sie] (Inez) hatte sich später in eine blöde Sache verstrickt, und ich wurde so etwas wie ihr Schutzengel.
 „Wann war das”, sagte ich.

In einem Teil der Welt, der nicht mehr existiert und mal die Zukunft war.
 Im Osten? Also doch.
 ...Da glaubten sie damals noch an die Zukunft. Und das machte sie zu anderen Menschen.
 Klingt, also ob Sie von einem anderen Planeten reden.
 Das haben Sie gut herausgehört. Von einem verschwundenen und besseren Planeten.
 Und was war das für eine Sache, in die Inez sich verstrickt hatte?
 Richtig! Wenn Sie den Rat eines Freundes hören wollen: Begeben Sie sich immer in die Rolle des
 Wahrheit Suchenden...Aber ich kann Ihnen an dieser Stelle nicht viel mehr erzählen. Ich war
 damals in einer Position, in der es mir möglich war, ihr zu helfen...Aber eines kann ich Ihnen
 sagen, sie war nicht gerade die keuscheste Person unter der Sonne (*Sturz* 89).

Feldberg piques Erik's already established interest in both Inez' past and in the former East Germany and leaves him wanting more. He is not sure if he can trust Feldberg, but Feldberg is masterfully using his old Stasi techniques to play Erik against Inez. Erik picks up on his use of language that was frequently used in the GDR and especially by the SED and the Stasi to mask meaning or to make intent ambiguous: "*Die Rolle des Wahrheit Suchenden*, hatte er gesagt, nicht *der Wahrheit Suchende* oder *die Wahrheit suchen...*" (90). In this way, Feldberg represents the "dark side of humanity" that Strubel mentions, in that these old structures of evil still exist in the present day. Here Feldberg and his "security company" still have the old structures of the past (the Stasi) inhabiting them, which has repercussions for the present.

Feldberg brings this past with him partly due to the mission from Ton, but also partly because the three of them have a history that he alludes to in the discussion with Erik. They were the two older men with whom Inez spent time in the 80s when she was 15 and 16 years old. This past is introduced with Inez' "Fiebertraum" flashback and explains the story of how Inez, Feldberg, and Ton met. At that time, Feldberg's tendencies for blackmail and oppression were already evident. When he sees fifteen year old Inez on a seesaw he sits on one side and says he will not allow Inez to get down until she agrees to sleep with him. Eventually it was Felix Ton who "saved" her, by telling Feldberg to let her down (160-1). The dream continues and describes

how the three of them went out together, eventually leading to Inez falling in love with Ton. In what can be considered further abuse from Ton in the GDR, she later gets pregnant from him at only 16 years old and he leaves her. It is at Inez' most desperate and vulnerable moment that Feldberg becomes Inez' "Schutzengel" as he so modestly puts it. When Inez had the son (Erik) and gave him up for adoption, it was Feldberg (the Stasimensch) who through connections helped to organize a secret adoption for Erik's foster mother, Annegret. The adoption was also (apparently) organized as a "favor" because of Inez' parents' wish to emigrate to West Germany and it was feared that the child would have been taken away. As in the case of incest, this is also transgressive (or even criminal) and shows the intermingling of universal and GDR-specific abuse.

As this look into Rainer Feldberg's character shows, his GDR past is almost exclusively brought up through his relationships to other characters. Under the sole "RAINER FELDBERG" chapter subheading is only the description of his job with MEGA OPERATION & RISK PROTECTION, and discusses his many "Operativen, Operationen" (333), which sound much like the phrase "Operativer Vorgang" used in Stasi files. In interviews Strubel explains that in writing this character, she attempts to set herself in the position of such a person. In preparation for the novel, she did research and spoke with former members of the Stasi in order to see if she could understand how a person can bring themselves to the point in which they would be willing and/or capable to do the things required of them by the Stasi. She says that initially, one can indeed put oneself in the position of these people given the circumstances of the time, but when one takes a step further, one realizes that the mentality and the ideological blockheadedness (*ideologische Verbohrtheit von damals*) is incomprehensible (*Antje spricht* 0:05:00-:56).

Unfortunately, according to Strubel, this *ideologische Verbohrtheit* personified by Feldberg still exists as it did in the GDR despite the ideological structures from that time no longer being in place. People such as Feldberg are unable to deal with the past or engage the present effectively. For this reason, it remains important to be critical and ask questions despite the demise of the GDR and the SED. Because one has the luxury of being born in a society where such ideological preconditions do not necessarily exist, does not mean that one should refuse to explore the past or ask questions as to whether or not we ourselves would also perpetrate such acts. The ending of a regime that perpetrates terrible crimes against their own population does not necessarily mean an end to the potential in people to commit them. By positioning Feldberg's acts not only within the memory of the GDR, but also as something that is possible 20 years after the end of the Stasi and the SED regime, Strubel creates a critical gaze onto today's society, that the past can and does still shape the present. In the end, Feldberg seems to have a personal desire to follow Inez despite his mission from Ton being over (Inez agrees to allow Ton to "use" Erik). However, Feldberg still desires to follow through on the mission for his personal satisfaction. Eerily Strubel shows that the mentality from "damals" has had a lasting effect. Thus, German division, the GDR and the SED, and German unification are more than historical events or "Ausnahmefälle".⁴⁴ They continue to be important aspects of the German present and must remain part of cultural and political discourse.

Felix Ton was also in the higher ranks in the GDR/Stasi and has now become a well-to-do person in unified Germany (ein typischer Wendehals). His "Wendehals" attributes are found throughout the novel. He is running for a seat in the Brandenburger Landtag with the CDU party.

⁴⁴ The "Ausnahmefall" or "exception" refers to the belief that division of Germany was a historical exception, caused by the war and that unification would be a return to normalcy.

The “mover and shaker” as he is called in the text (193), prides himself on having been able to “see what was coming” unlike the other generations/citizens in the GDR. Ton even reflects upon this: “...[diese] Jahrgänge, die nie einen Blick fürs Kommende besessen hatten“ (201). On the other hand and much in the way many in the GDR felt during the Wende, Ton and other Wendehälses like him, were not always seen as heroes or more intelligent people who possessed some kind of inherent ability to take advantage of the political climate.⁴⁵ In contemporary society, a mover and shaker is often seen as something positive, a go-getter or a hard worker. In this novel, his being a mover and shaker is not portrayed in a positive light as the distinct East German perspective highlights his use of others to achieve his personal gains. He is well versed in the art of exchanging favors. Such awareness of who owes whom is, in today’s society, a somewhat common phenomenon. However, when put on the page in conjunction with a character like Felix Ton, one is forced to take a step back and ask why a person only does things for others; is it a genuinely altruistic action, or the expectation that it will be returned in the future. There is no doubt that these “symptoms” and the character Felix Ton are intentionally paired together. Strubel illustrates yet another aspect of the “evil” in today’s society, as well as in politics and political gain which at their core are not much different today than they were under socialism. Like Feldberg she describes Ton as a person who has the ability to get what he wants:

Er wusste, wie man Verbindungen knüpfte und aufrechterhielt und sie nutzte. Hier ein Gefallen, da ein passender Anruf, auf Empfangen immer die aalglatte aufgeblasene Zerstreutheit, die signalisierte, was für ein Kotzbrocken man war, und dort, wo früher Mangelwaren getauscht und vermittelt wurden, Klempner, Ersatzteile, gute Ärzte, eine Datsche am See, war heute Geld im Spiel...(192).

⁴⁵ A “Wendehals” is a person who was seen in the GDR as an opportunist during the Wende and changed their political views very quickly in order to conform with the changing times, namely “Westernizing” his/her convictions. Ingo Schulze and Julia Schoch are often critical of Wendehälses and portray characters whose lives were not substantially improved through taking advantage of the political climate. See Schulze’s *Neue Leben* and Schoch’s *Mit der Geschwindigkeit des Sommers*.

This ability is an example of corruption via other means and in another system. Personal greed is only different in that different means are used to satisfy it, but the evil itself, the impulse for it, is the same. Like other East German authors, Strubel critically engages both GDR and contemporary society, moving beyond any sense of purely post-colonial and (n)ostalgic undertones.

Today, enjoying his Hennessy cognac in a cozy office building in Potsdam, Ton expresses his disgust with being born in the GDR and expresses that he never thought of the FRG as “die gegnerische Seite”, but understood why he ended up where he did: “Zufällig hatten sich in diesem Land, in das er mit Hilfe eines gedankenlosen Ficks während der Kartoffelernte hineingeboren wurde, die meisten Möglichkeiten dort geboten, wo er gelandet war” (196). However, the “Mover and Shaker” knows how to get out of his unfortunate lot in the GDR and even uses his “Kumpel”, Feldberg to do it.

A large portion of Felix Ton’s story is described through his semi-drunken flashbacks, and his plans to get his son, Erik, back from the island for his political purposes, namely, to help his election campaign: “Der Vater-Sohn-Geschichte würde gut ankommen. Sie würde der Kampagne noch einmal Aufwind geben, nachdem der Juli eher flau gelaufen war. Und wenn man zusätzlich die Mauer ins Spiel brachte, könnte es noch mal einen Aufmacher geben“ (295). Using the “Mauer” here refers to the story of how Inez gives Erik up for adoption. Such a story would be most useful to Felix Ton’s campaign as the media eats them up when portraying the division of Germany. The unfortunate stories of families divided make for heart-wrenching but compelling stories to sell to a public that is all too eager to consume them after the fall of the Berlin Wall, especially in the anniversary year of 2009. Thus, Strubel critiques not only the

media's portrayal and exploitation of "Mauergeschichten", but also politicians' eagerness to use them in order to help their campaigns. Nothing is taboo when discussing the East German past, not even family histories. Much in the way that is seen in Ingo Schulze's *Neue Leben*, another East German author criticizes both West and East Germans' attitudes toward the events surrounding the Wende and unification. These events are irrevocably tied to the political in their writing as seen in Ton's story and memories.⁴⁶ Furthermore, memory, and the problem with authentic and inauthentic memory comes into play here as Ton's character manipulates the past for his political gain. He uses the Wende memory narrative from above (to evoke Andrew Beattie), in which the tragedy that *all* East Germans must have experienced puts him on common ground with them. It is, indeed, the problem that faces memory of the GDR and unification *per se*. As Aleida Assmann writes: "To be part of a collective group such as the nation one has to share and adopt the group's history, which exceeds the boundaries of one's individual life span. The individual participates in the group's vision of its past by means of...identification and commemoration..." ("Transformations" 52).

Therefore, *Sturz der Tage in die Nacht* paints yet another portrait of contemporary (German) society. It is one of many different perspectives on this society, but one that must be considered in order to understand how a divided German past, and the repercussions of unification affect the present and will continue to do so in the future. One must not blindly "participate in the group's vision of its past", but collect individual experiences to paint this picture. Gazing upon this picture through a minor literature approach allows for these individual levels to create a collective story. Erik, who was only five years old when the Berlin Wall fell, still feels that his East German heritage is important to him. This interest in East Germany does

⁴⁶ See Deleuze and Guattari's second characteristic of minor literature (17).

not seem to be going away. In fact, and especially after another anniversary year of the Wende (2015), discussions about how the population, politicians, and members of the cultural realm remember and engage this time continue to come to the forefront. Does Germany “remain in an abnormal state in which many features of abnormality have become firmly entrenched” as Jeremy Leaman states (31)? To be sure, exploring Germany’s status in Europe and in the world must include the East German multi-generational perspectives. To recognize the East German view as marginalized by popular or “top-down” remembrance and commemorations of the Wende and unification may make them, over time, less abnormal. For now, however, Antje Rávic Strubel must take the reader out of the comfort zone, away of the images and East Germans “finally” breaking free of their chains, and portray East German life and memory as something associated with repression and evil as it exists in ALL societies, not just in the one that ceased to exist over 25 years ago.

IV. CHAPTER 3 – JULIA SCHOCH

Julia Schoch's works are the culmination of the multiple trends in East German literature that lead to its writing in the 21st century. Her literature focuses simultaneously on memory and on the condition of our present day, negotiating the challenges passing time and changing space impose on our ability to remember and assess the past, as well as the past's influence upon our present and future. Similar to Antje Rávic Strubel, her works are at times dream-like accounts that allow her characters and the reader to observe and take part in the recognition and reflection on the passing of time. Breaks in the normal passage of time or changes to an environment are most often the impetus for such reflection. Within her works these rifts and changes correspond directly or metaphorically to the Wende. In addition, her works bear similarities to Ingo Schulze's in their discussion of the role of literature and the arts in today's society, often questioning what writing can and cannot accomplish in a society dominated by economic affairs. Furthermore, the above quote also draws on a similarity to Schulze, in that she also finds the difference in East/West, past/present as the change from the importance of ideas to the importance of things or possessions.

Both of the works discussed in this chapter, *Mit der Geschwindigkeit des Sommers* (2009) and *Selbstporträt mit Bonaparte* (2012) evoke the importance of time, the temporal in the portrayal of East German alternative and collective memory. As with the other authors, this chapter will view these memories through Aleida Assmann's work on memory and discuss the problematization of "Heimat" in the ever-changing East German landscape of the past 25 years. Julia Schoch remembers the Wende in her works by referring to it as "The Revolution"; a connotation that emphasizes East Germans' role in initiating the changes that occurred during the

Wende. One can view the use of such a term through a postcolonial lens, thereby seeing East Germans' attempt to reclaim their agency in the achievements of the Wende. Through the dualism of pre- and post-Wende life that is present in so much of these and other East German authors' works, it is possible to experience both the East German perspective on the Wende as well as postunification society. Homi K. Bhabha's work is helpful in such a discussion, especially with regard to the "Migrant's Double-Vision" as it seems that Schoch's characters become migrants in a landscape that changes around them. However, as with Ingo Schulze and Strubel, it will be important to see how Schoch moves beyond a purely postcolonial tone described by Bhabha and Paul Cooke through her engagement of the German and even human process of memory. Schoch's works also present the collective and socio-political enunciation in their subject matter, which is characteristic of many East German authors. Furthermore, she engages the topic of East German identity, which continues to be negotiated 25 years after German unification.

As with the other writers in this project, Julia Schoch spent her formative years in the GDR and continues to live in what used to be the GDR. She was born in Bad Saarow, grew up in Mecklenburg, and moved to Potsdam, where she has lived since 1986. She studied in both Bucharest and Paris and like Strubel, is a translator from French into German (mostly the crime novels of Fred Vargas) ("Zur Person"). Her time in both the former Eastern Bloc and in the West after the Wende surely contributed to her interest in what time and change do to both societies. Furthermore, she is extremely sensitive and observant to how people (especially East Germans) have handled change. Both novels portray those who seem to embrace the change, or at least accept it, while others avoid it and struggle. In both cases, however, it is not as simple as

becoming Western or remaining Eastern (or “different” as Jana Hensel has put it in *Achtungzone: Warum wir Ostdeutschen anders bleiben sollten*).

Jochen Hieber of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* notes that Julia Schoch never indulged in the phenomenon of “Ostalgie” that was present at the end of the 1990s and in the early 2000s. This chapter will emphasize Schoch’s rejection of (N)Ostalgie,⁴⁷ which she finds unproductive. This does not mean however, that she has taken on a Western dominant view of East German enunciation or memory. Her views coincide with the authors whose works are examined in the previous chapters, who negotiate change through critiques of the former East and East Germans *as well as* the trajectory of society brought on by Western hyper-capitalism. Her other works *Der Körper des Salamanders* (2001) and *Verabredungen mit Mattok* (2004) for example, at times use dream-like descriptions and other times simple, but clear-cut language in order to describe the former East and the current West. In her more recent works discussed in this chapter Julia Schoch moves away from an overt critique of capitalism per se and engages in a discussion of how individuals perpetually reinvent themselves in today’s society. While a critical view of brash capitalism and economization of society are indeed present, she focuses more on the internal struggle of her characters in dealing with the external forces of the contemporary order.

A. **Mit der Geschwindigkeit des Sommers (2009)**

Julia Schoch’s fourth work *Mit der Geschwindigkeit des Sommers* (2009) portrays the dilemma of temporal and spatial perceptions with regards to memory of the life of two East German women before and after the “Revolution.” The title of this novel metaphorically evokes

⁴⁷ This also seems to be a reaction to the dangers of Ostalgie. See also Cooke *Representing* 141.

the speed, at which the Revolution took place, as well as the perception of time that has passed since 1989. Published in 2009, the novel also marks an important date in time, the 20th anniversary of the Wende and the fall of the Berlin Wall. Anniversaries are ways in which we commemorate the passing of time and Schoch's novel problematizes this practice in that memories are often incomplete or become blurred. When something has ended, or when we memorialize or reflect upon the passing of time, we may be only partially remembering the past; possibly intentionally. The time between the event and the act of remembering can make perceptions unclear and problematic and this is especially prevalent in both East and West Germans' memories of the German Democratic Republic and East Germans' post-Wende lives.

The novel's concepts of time and space and their relation to memory allow for a further discussion about lost "Heimat" and present-day identity via the transition from East to West after the Wende. The specific Heimat referred to in this text is a former Nationale Volksarmee (NVA) garrison town on the border with Poland. This location on the margins of the GDR becomes the center for the two women protagonists' childhood memories. The way in which the town slowly deteriorates and is only slowly rebuilt after the Revolution, affects their memories of their childhoods and how they negotiate the meaning of their past and present lives. When one looks to Aleida Assmann's works on alternative memory as well as on spatial and temporal memory, we will see how this quickly built GDR town had a purpose only in a specific place and time, which coincides with the way the entire nation and the lives of its former citizens seem to be remembered and portrayed.

It is important to note, however, that despite the personal and collective enunciation regarding East German life pre- and post-1989, this narrative is absent of any semblance of

(N)ostalgie, as both Mary Cosgrove and Anne Fuchs have also pointed out. In fact, Schoch emphasizes the dangers of such a form of memory on one level by leaving the protagonists (ich, die Schwester, der Soldat) and the city (die Stadt, die Siedlung, etc.) nameless and on another through her descriptions of the bland, yet ominous “Ödnis” that this settlement is both before and after unification. Cosgrove aptly refers to it as “nonplace” and “Terrain Vague.”⁴⁸ Thus, Julia Schoch negotiates memories that have been made difficult due to the temporal distance and spatial change observable in where they lived in the GDR. However, just as in Strubel’s works, she does not desire to retrieve what is lost, rather to draw attention to that which has been suppressed.

Therefore, the process of recollecting the protagonists’ past and the influence on their present evokes an inherently collective and politically critical account of the minority (East German) construct within a major narrative of life after the Wende, namely a precarious existence. There are frequent examples of East German “common action” (Deleuze and Guattari, 17) personified through her characters’ actions and thus, one gains access to East German experiences that are essential to a complete picture of divided German life before and unified German life since 1989. Deleuze and Guattari write of the impulse to collective enunciation in minor literature, “above all else, because collective or national consciousness is ‘often inactive in external life and always in the process of break-down,’ literature finds itself positively charged with the role and function of collective, even revolutionary, enunciation” (17). This novel does this by activating East German post-unification perceptions and the problematic memory of a

⁴⁸ According to Cosgrove, the term “Terrain Vague” was “reinvigorated in 1995 by the by the Spanish architect and critic Ignasi de Solà-Morales [and] describes the unused spaces of postindustrial urban settings” (63).

place that, especially in unified Germany, where the dominant West German narrative reigns, seems stuck out of time and purposeless.

The novel is told through the first-person narrator, a young woman who leaves the settlement town after the Wende and becomes successful in a jet-setting career requiring frequent travel around the world. The narrator's sister, however, struggles to accept the life and changes that the Revolution have brought with it and does not leave, perpetually putting thoughts of a new life on hold. Schoch's portrayal of the stark differences in East German lives within one family is akin to what Homi Bhabha calls a "double-vision" (*Location* 7-8). In this novel double-vision is represented in the dualism existent in post-Wende life in East Germany. While it was indeed the perception of a colonial process that brought about many of the struggles for East Germans as Paul Cooke writes (*Transformations* 10), in the novel, Schoch partially attributes the inability to act as a remnant from GDR times: "Ich halte es für möglich, dass der wortlose Gleichmut jener Zeit in uns geblieben ist...und dass gar nichts ihn ersetzen kann...nicht einmal die Lust der Freiheit" (120). Finally, when one observes this East German narrative through the lens of a minor literature, one can observe a deterritorialization of the German idea of Heimat. Where in many of Antje Rávic Strubel's works, the setting is changed to Sweden or a location outside of (East) Germany, Schoch transforms her protagonists' childhood residence from a town in the East German province into a "nonplace", bearing no meaningful purpose or any sense of a "Heimatgefühl" either in the GDR or in unified Germany.

The primary story in *Geschwindigkeit* deals with the life of the narrator's older sister.⁴⁹ The narrator, who happens to be a writer, uses the occasion of her sister's suicide to write and reflect on the events in her life. She interjects details about her own life in the moments where

⁴⁹ Henceforth the two sisters will be referred to individually as "The Narrator" and "The (older) Sister"

their stories run parallel, mostly regarding growing up in the town. The final unnamed protagonist is introduced through the older sister's extra-marital affair with a former NVA soldier, referred to simply as "der Soldat." They met in the garrison town during the 1970s and the two had a fleeting relationship. However, after the Wende, they reunite and the affair becomes an intense way for her to escape her mundane life and reflect upon, even potentially hold on to the past, much in the way one looks at and touches the photos of a photo album (my trans. 130). The narrator describes the perilous love story and how the two were salvation for each other; she for him while he was a soldier in the NVA in order to escape his mundane military existence, and years later, he for her from her life with a husband and two children in the small town where nothing happens (57). She continued to secretly see the soldier up until the day before she decides to finally leave the East German province behind and go to New York, where the suicide, which becomes the impetus for the narrator's reflection through writing, eventually takes place.

Because this tragedy occurs at the very beginning of the novel, the reader is taken through the break in time, in which one must engage in the narrator's act of memory, and thus experience the events leading up to her suicide retroactively. Helga Druxes points out that this text requires an active engagement by the reader (170).⁵⁰ I argue that this is inherent in many East German works: "[minor] literature is the people's concern". The writer, narrator, subject, and the reader are not individuals representing individual interests, but rather are part of the same "collective assemblage" and thus, work together to carry any message (Deleuze and Guattari 18). In many instances Schoch's frank and cold writing style may seem like a distanced account of

⁵⁰ This active engagement by the reader is in reference to all of Schoch's works and I would argue all of the authors in this project.

the events that have affected the protagonists' post-Wende lives. However, they are indeed characteristics of many East German experiences that, today, are almost dream-like in their haziness. Despite the unclear nature of her memories, the passing of 20 years allows for her reflection upon the past and thus a critical engagement with memories and the present day without running the risk of (n)ostalgia or harboring bitter overtones of the past due to the perception of colonization that Paul Cooke maintains is present in much East German writing in the 1990s (*Representing* 2-3).

The concept of time is prevalent throughout the text, in particular how time relates to and influences the characters' memories and actions. Some form of the word "Zeit" or words with temporal connotations are strewn throughout the text such as "zeitlich", "Zeiten", "damals", "früher", "heute", etc. As in Antje Rávic Strubel's works, time often becomes elusive. One is aware of its presence but in any particular moment, it seems uncountable or intangible until the time has passed and one is able to reflect upon it. For example, "Diese Zeitrechnung, die irgendwann begonnen hatte: vorher und nachher. Früher und jetzt. Damals und heute. Die erst funktioniert, wenn etwas ganz und gar abgeschlossen ist. Und die die wirklichen Regungen des Lebens einschnürt, in gewisser Weise abtötet" (118). Schoch's characters become aware of time, that is, they recognize its passing, but their reflections upon it are not simply reminiscent. Rather, they become aware of the temporal connection of past actions, memories, and present day and future consequences. From an East German perspective, the political event of German unification has a direct impact on the trajectory of former GDR citizens' lives. At one point in the text, the older sister and the soldier question the potential for a relationship had the Wende never occurred:

Hätte er sich damals auch bei ihr gemeldet, wenn nicht alles so gekommen wäre? Der Staat, der Ort, wenn sich nichts davon verändert hätte? Vielleicht war er nur zurückgekommen, weil alles harmlos, verwandelt und die Erinnerungen es plötzlich wert waren, hervorgekramt zu werden.

...Nein, lacht er, warum hätte er zurückkommen sollen, wenn alles beim alten geblieben wäre...? Wäre sie denn genauso heir gewesen? fragt er.

Kurz überlegt sie, dann schnell: Nein, natürlich nicht.

Aber vermutlich gibt es da keinerlei Zusammenhang. Zwischen uns und dem Hergang der Welt (103).

They claim that they are happy with the course of events, that they were able to meet and escape into a hotel room in what is left of the garrison town where “Verschwinden und Entstehen keine Rolle mehr spielen” (104). When one has experienced such a tremendous change as the Wende, one reaction could certainly be to hold onto or even escape time (a concept that is prevalent in Schoch’s next novel described later). Furthermore, and as Cosgrove claims, today’s world lacks a societal “future orientation” post-1989 (82), unlike the utopian dream during GDR-socialism, one has to ask whether uncertainty is now a way of life and do people truly have any effect on the course of events, or does time simply tick on regardless of us? The above excerpt from the text is written in the subjunctive and there are other sections of the novel, in which the subjunctive is used to imagine and consider “what ifs.” This affair allows them to see each other again and retrieve a time that has passed as an attempt to reclaim a space and the time in which it existed. In this way, one can avoid the “Hergang der Welt”, and even briefly, make “what ifs” a reality. However, it soon becomes apparent that this affair is only a brief escape and the space never represented what it was meant to or what they hoped it would, neither in the GDR, nor in unified Germany.

Space in this text then, becomes a dystopia. As the main setting for both sisters’ memories, the recollection of their lives in this NVA garrison town assigns both temporal and

spatial attributes to its existence and decay: “Die Zeit, das Geschehen, der Ort des Geschehens...an dem sich für meine Schwester bis zuletzt alles abgespielt hat: eine Garnisonsstadt...ein künstliches Gebilde in einer abgeschiedenen Gegend. Ein aus dem Nichts gestampfter Ort, nahe der polnischen Grenze” (16). As Jochen Hieber writes, this describes the town of Eggesin, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, which was built solely for the military, one can say, solely for the GDR. Throughout the text, it undergoes a spatial transition from space or “Raum” to place or “Ort”. Aleida Assmann defines “space” as a location, which is built and transfigured into an area with a future view. This describes the GDR’s original state with its focus on the utopia that was always on the horizon and destined for its citizens. Throughout the novel, and especially after the Wende, it transitions to a “place” that *has been* built, lived in, and suffered (“Der Kampf” 72-3). History has taken place there and the city effectively died with the GDR. The town suffered the same fate as many towns in the GDR. After the Wende it became “eine Geisterstadt, dass man sich schon anstrengen muss, um sich zu erinnern, wie es war...” (*Geschwindigkeit* 16-7). The evolution of this space through time and political change represents the evolution of the GDR from its founding until its death and beyond.⁵¹ Therefore, and as Assmann points out, it is necessary to consider both time *and* space with regard to history and memory, rather than following the “Spatial-Turn,” where space has replaced time in our modern conception of history (72-3). Memory is not found in *either* the temporal *or* in the spatial realm alone. While many places were in transition after 1989 (some taking longer than others to make that change to Western standards) some become the kind of “nonplace” or “terrain vague” that Mary Cosgrove refers to. She elaborates on her terms: the “...terrain vague is not solely a spatial

⁵¹ For a detailed account of the evolution of small East German cities after 1989 see Daphne Berdahl’s ethnography of the border town, Kella in: Berdahl, Daphne. *Where the World Ended: Re-Unification and Identity in the German Borderland*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999. Print.

category; it is also temporal. More precisely, we might call the terrain vague a ‘place-in-time’: a location that signifies transience... [a terrain vague] temporalizes space” (65-6). This former military outpost occupies a space that signifies the vagueness of what GDR memory has become in the post-Wende world. From conception to death, this town is described by the narrator as a “rasch errichtete Phantasiewelt” and it is not until after the Wende when the sister is only one of a few people left, that the narrator recognizes its “Künstlichkeit” (18-9). While the dwindling of the East German population is well known, this realization by the narrator (and most likely eventually by the older sister) of the GDR as a fantasy or artificial land is akin to the way in which Stephen Brockmann has referred to other East German authors’ portrayals of the GDR as a dreamland from which one must wake up (“Remembering” 39).

From the beginning of the novel, we see that this town never represented utopia for the two sisters. In fact, they seemed to be ashamed of the place: “Wir haben später nie gesagt, wir würden von dort stammen...Genau wie andere Menschen hatte auch meine Schwester Vertrauen gehabt, dass ihre Zukunft, das für sie Vorgesehene, etwas *gänzlich anderes* wäre. Das hier war nur ein etwas unpassender Beginn” (21-2). This critical gaze upon the garrison town is by association a critique of the GDR and the ways in which many did not buy into what the nation was trying to sell to its people. The sisters were not born in the garrison town. In an autobiographical reference to Schoch, their father was in the NVA and therefore they moved there at a young age. Just as the GDR resulted from World War II, this place resulted from it as well. This is a particularly severe East German critique of the GDR. However, while the nation did not represent or become the socialist utopia that the SED had propagated, neither did it represent the communist nightmare portrayed by the West. In a similar way, Strubel’s critique

through Ton and Feldberg's action and Inez's indifference to discussing the East in *Sturz der Tage in die Nacht* represent fleeing an East German place that does not coincide with their hopes and desires due to the mundane existence and not necessarily because of direct oppression or desire for a western way of life. We see an alternative discourse in this writing that tries to transcend the overarching Western account of German division and geopolitical affairs. One of the most prominent narratives in East German literature and their recollections of desires for freedom have to do with the freedom of movement. In *Geschwindigkeit* the town and the nature that existed around it represent an artificial existence and barriers to movement:

Die Natur hatte nichts mit ihr [der Schwester] zu tun. Abgesehen von ein paar amüsanten Erinnerungen...war sie eine Zumutung. Ein Hindernis, das zwischen ihr und *dem Wesentlichen* lag. Als versperrte sie ihr den Zugang...das alles konnte man nicht anders als eine Kulisse betrachten (37).

Even the nature around it seemed ominous and shielded the citizens from the outside world, just as in *Tupolew 134*, Katja's surroundings, which were supposed to be the epitome of East German socialism, work, and production, become a hindrance to happiness.

Unlike the narrator who left the province after the Wende, the older sister starts a family and moves to the other side of the settlement rather than away from the province completely. Years later, she and the soldier return to the place where they used to live and where they met. Going back to the physical place where these significant memories took place, they find that this ominous nature has taken over. However, it is not only the "natural" as in plants and weather reclaiming old buildings; rather the village/settlement is also being torn down by machines. At one point the soldier likens this to both natural and artificial processes such as oceans drying up, fishing villages turning to resorts, the disappearance of industries, and the dwindling of natural

resources (85). The sister knew that demolition was going on, but expected it to be finished when she arrived. Instead they find that the work is unfinished and the town is only half demolished:

...die Auslöschung noch in der Schweben. Kein Arbeiter zu sehen, ein paar Maschinen stehen zwischen den nutzlos gewordenen Häusern herum, als wäre heute ein Feiertag oder eine kurze Unterbrechung der Arbeit...Es könnte auch sein, dass plötzlich das Geld ausgegangen war, die Kassen leer, um die Zerstörung wirklich zu vollenden (83).

Is it a natural process just like changing societies? One cannot go back to the place where events took place and relive what happened, but memories still exist and like memories, a place often gets covered up with layers of other events, natural or otherwise. As cities are rebuilt or transfigured, they have newness or even gain usefulness. To refer to Assmann's essay on the city as "Identitätsverankerung" once again, she likens the city to a palimpsest (75-6). Unfortunately for the garrison town and thereby, for many towns in the former GDR, especially in the immediate post-Wende years, the settlement is not rebuilt; the palimpsest, or the memory of their lives, is only partially rewritten. The narrator says that for her sister, the partially completed demolition gives it a strangely familiar feel: "Das Ende hat die gleiche Gestalt wie der Anfang" (83). Thus, the sister's memories are only partially recognizable and if the end looks the same as the beginning, it is as if everything that happened between the beginning and the end never existed or occurred. The place seems to be in a permanent state of impermanence. There are reminders of the former socialist nation everywhere, but they are either remnants or an incomplete removal from history and thus, they exist in a sort of historical and mnemonic no-man's-land. For the sister and for many East Germans, the transition period of the Wende was so swift, that one did not have time to reflect upon the change, but as the sister returns to a space where the transition is incomplete, it is as if time has slowed to a halt. She is unable to move on or grasp that time has passed since the Revolution.

Through this portrayal of the end of the settlement, we see another paradoxical tragedy of the GDR “[d]ass all das hier nicht einmal heldenhaft zu Bruch ging!...es lag ja nicht in Kriegstrümmern, stand vielmehr nur ausgeholt herum, um schließlich harmlos zu verschwinden” (85). Obviously the “Peaceful Revolution” was a welcome change and that this change occurred so quickly without major violence or war was indeed astonishing. However, that many towns in the former GDR that were less important than Dresden, Leipzig, or Chemnitz (Karl-Marx-Stadt in the GDR times) for example, were left to crumble, or like this one, were restored only slowly when there was enough money and investors to deem it important enough, can represent a trivializing of their history and memories. The city was not preserved out of respect for the former society, rather it is as if their memories are not even important enough to destroy or cover up. The fate of this place is much like the fate of the GDR. The “socialist experiment” that was the German Democratic Republic failed, overthrown by its own people and colonized by market forces. Thus, the memories most often tied with it are repressive in its existence and its demise is either trivial at best or tragic at worst. The failed goal of the GDR does not allow for a nostalgic memory of belonging, of Heimat. Furthermore, the unremarkable existence of this place in the East German province is like two sides of a coin; both in the GDR (it was a place of potential socialist utopia or an “unpassender Beginn”) and now in the post-Wende and globalized world, the small town has no relation to the rest of the world and prevents or at least shows the uselessness of old narratives of Heimat today (Fuchs 133-5).

While Mary Cosgrove rightly explains that this work’s lack of “Heimatgefühl” or “Ostalgie” may represent a “problem of imagining the nation due to a problem of imagining the local Heimat”, she also claims that *Geschwindigkeit* does not “present this conundrum as

particular to unification and therefore as a uniquely (East) German problem” (66). I would argue that this misses the importance of an East German minority perspective on life in the GDR and the role of “The Revolution” in the narrative, and therefore in the wider canon of German literature. As she writes: “the problem of place and identity is shown to extend back to GDR times and earlier” (67). Being told from that minor East German perspective shows that while German division has affected both East and West and that place and identity are not only German problems, the specific context of the Revolution, the disappearance of the GDR, and assimilation into Western culture are all harbingers for the absence, or as she calls it, the “abject” sense of Heimat in the (East) German sense; a radical change and disillusionment that brings about a collective disassociation with feelings of home.

This disassociation is an enunciation from the nameless subjects in the text. While this could indeed be true of any terrain vague or even a minority culture, in *Geschwindigkeit* the idea of Heimat and the word “Ostalgie” carry specific weight with regard to an (East) German perspective. Furthermore, that Schoch’s text is intentionally absent of “Ostalgie” while being critical of how the both the GDR, as well as the resulting disillusionment after the “Revolution” are remembered in unified Germany, I would argue that Schoch’s view illuminates an East German position based on actually living the GDR and the Wende, and thus provides a unique ability to observe and to spawn a critical discussion of what Heimat means in the complete German context. Thus, and as Cosgrove points out that unified Germany is more of an “anti-Heimat...contaminated – as opposed to liberated” (66). The Wende may have changed systems, but it does not change the places or as Cosgrove puts it, the “nonplaces as somewhere that exudes the dullness, ennui, and blandness of existence, both before and after unification” (83).

Such engagement with place can also prove useful in West German or “Westalgic” accounts of life in the FRG before unification, namely the former capital city of Bonn as the epicenter of West German political life, and the changes that occurred after the capital was moved back to Berlin.⁵² The critique is one of *both* systems; neither capitalism with its lack of future focus and potential for instant reward, nor the failure of the GDR and the “geschrumpften Träumen” of the guarantee of a small apartment and job, which will no longer be fulfilled in the post-Wende world (*Geschwindigkeit* 109) are able to provide happiness or utopia. Such a perspective is possible from a minor literature within the constructs of a major society and may be able to question whether or not this western society or any for that matter can provide utopia.

Concepts of collective memory are productive for understanding how the time spent in a place such as the garrison town and thereby the GDR can influence and shape one’s stock of memories. Focusing on memory could, however, lead one to think of East German enunciation as inherently backward looking, even when nostalgia is avoided or even rebuked. However, when one examines collective memory in *Mit der Geschwindigkeit des Sommers* in conjunction with a minor literature perspective, we can see that it is not only the memory of a place and time that is key to identity, but that writing about such memories and experiences allow for a negotiation of the past as well as the present. The narrator seems to do just this in reflecting upon her past:

Seltsam – sie merkt es –, dass sie inzwischen so davon spricht, als wären es die Geschichten aller. Als hätte es sie selbst gar nicht darin gegeben. Versatzstücke eines Lebens, das allen gehörte, gleichmacherisch bis ins Blut der Erinnerung hinein. Sie kann nicht einmal mehr sagen, ob sie selbst eine dieser Varianten erlebt hat. War es nicht möglich, dass man ein Teil davon geworden war, weil, als es schon längst vorbei war damit, wieder und wieder davon erzählt worden war? (88).

⁵² As Mary Cosgove also mentions, see Jochen Schimmang’s novel *Das Beste, was wir hatten*. Hamburg: Nautilus, 2009. Print.

As Aleida Assmann has pointed out, “Once [memories] are shared, or “verbalized” in the form of a narrative...the individual’s memories become part of an intersubjective symbolic system...” (“Transformations” 50). But symbols do not always reflect experiences.

Memories can be dangerous, however, and it is important for the narrator to reflect upon and critically engage these memories through writing, in an analysis of the present state and future. She describes looking back on occurrences in the past not necessarily with fondness, but with humor after one survives bad events. “Die Vergangenheit war plötzlich ein amüsantes Geschichtenresevoir...Erst als er [der Soldat] sich schon verabschiedet hatte, kam beiden der Ernst wieder. Ihnen fiel ihre *wirkliche* Vergangenheit ein” (32-33). As she writes the story of her sister, she is forced to reflect upon her sisters, hers, and a collective East German past. From an outside perspective, that of the active reader, one must remember that memories come from those who lived them. East German writing, in particular Schoch’s and the other authors in this project are not striving for a return of the past, but are highlighting (enunciating) what really happened while simultaneously engaging in a social and political critique that even post-Wende success does not erase the GDR, nor does it end a contemporary negotiation with their shared past.

This negotiation is always difficult and is never clear. In fact, it can at times seem impossible and one’s motives can be questioned. The narrator discusses what the act of writing can and cannot accomplish:

Es heißt, man könne Ereignisse noch einmal stattfinden, Personen auferstehen lassen, indem man sie beschreibt. In Wahrheit aber ist das Ereignis dieses Aufschreibens fast immer eine Ratlosigkeit, mit der man zusieht, wie da jedesmal ein ganz anderer aufersteht und das Ereignis, das stattfindet, ein gänzlich anderes ist. So wird zum Beispiel das, wovon ich hier nicht spreche, vollends ausgelöscht, indem ich es beseite lasse. Bald schon werde ich mich an meine Schwester nur noch in den Szenen und Gedanken erinnern, wie ich sie hier notiere: Erinnern ist eine Art zu vergessen (67).

The narrator is compelled to write. The impulse to do so in order to remember is, however, paradoxical. While writing allows for memory, not all she writes may be the way things were and what she leaves out will later seem never to have occurred. The same is true for memories of the GDR and the Wende. Those particular images and stories that are neglected are forgotten. Furthermore, the narrator makes herself unreliable through her mixed memories of her sister: “Was sie mir erzählte, vermischt sich schon mit allem, was ich von ihr weiß. Meine Beschreibungen zementieren, und zugleich schließt der Wortzement das wirklich Geschehene unter sich ein. Die Angst, dass das Falsche sichtbar bleibt, kann die Phantasie zersetzen” (70). Therefore, the act of remembering through writing is problematic or can lead to systematic forgetting.

As observed by Deleuze and Guattari, the story in minor literatures may be less frequently told, but it is impossible for these writers *not* to write them. While Deleuze and Guattari emphasize the linguistic or language impossibilities of Prague Jews writing in German, we can take a step further to say that the East German author attempting to write about East German experiences that do not coincide with major narratives (i.e. repression and the Stasi) are met by that major culture (unified “West German”) with a degree of skepticism. Therefore, “[t]he impossibility of not writing because national consciousness, uncertain or oppressed, necessarily exists by means of literature (‘the literary struggle has its real justification at the highest possible levels’) (16). Despite the difficulty or “the impossibility” of expressing these thoughts, both internally and externally, the “impossibility of not writing” them is real. The challenge lies in making sure that critics and the public do not see these works as just another potential “Wenderoman.”

Julia Schoch is one of many East German authors who also consciously avoid the major narrative of repeatedly referring to terms such as “9th of November”, “Berlin Wall”, or “unification” specifically. This corresponds with the claim that the 9th of November is less important than what occurred around that date and the event’s impacts on everyday life.⁵³ In fact, the narrator’s description of the Wende is quite dull. She describes how everyone left the settlement. For her sister, this was the unspectacular move to the other side of town. Originally the Wende meant hope in that she and her husband (once he finished his studies) would move to Berlin or another large city, but this did not happen. She and “der Soldat” discuss it later, “Die Revolution war über ihr Leben gekommen wie ein plötzliches Unwetter, dem man aus sicherer Behausung zuschaut” (48-9). Schoch also portrays the “Wende” as a much different one than everyone saw (and continues to see) on television or in clips during anniversaries and commemorations. She describes joyous women leaving their defeated husbands and “der Staat, der sich da auflöst, reißt alles mit sich. Aber es geschieht lautlos, als hätte jemand den Ton abgeschaltet bei der Sprengung eines Hauses” (51).⁵⁴

The narrator also never refers to unification or the changing of the GDR as brought upon by “The West”. She describes the West and unified Germany as “Das neue System”, to which one must (attempt) to adjust, evoking critical political undertones. This very general tone when it comes to characters, places, and political or social events achieves an alternative East German tone; one in which the individual’s experiences are at the forefront and both connect to political immediacy and stem from a collective enunciation. On the surface, the novel seems to describe

⁵³ See for example Renatus Deckert’s introduction in *Die Nacht, in der die Mauer fiel: Schriftsteller erzählen vom 9. November 1989*. (2009)

⁵⁴ One cannot help but be reminded here of the frequent scenes in the cult DEFA film *Die Legende von Paul und Paula*, where the music stops when an “Altbau” building is blown up to make room for the “Neubauten”.

purely individual or at best, familial experiences. But the emotions, feelings, political events, and the results thereof are ones with which many East Germans can identify as the political solution which resulted in the German Democratic Republic after World War II, the fall of that system (here the garrison town), and the swift ushering in of the “new system”, are all irrevocably connected to East German lives. Whether or not this exact critique was Julia Schoch’s intention is irrelevant, as “...what each author says individually already constitutes a common action, and what he or she says or does is necessarily political, even if others aren’t in agreement. The political domain has contaminated every statement” (Deleuze and Guattari 17).

The individual characters’ reaction to the political changes that have occurred after the Revolution can represent the disparity, dualism or even Bhabha’s migrant’s double-vision. Throughout the novel it seems as if there is an “East sister” and a “West sister”. In this way, Schoch is able to critique the changes in society. As explained in the partial spatial transfiguration of the garrison town, so have the people changed, but these are changes that sister refuses while the narrator seems to embrace them until she is forced to reflect upon them. The narrator describes her sisters’ days in New York:

...[sie] zählte seltsam steif auf, was sie [in New York] den Tag über getan hatte. Ein Besuch im Planetarium, ein Schuhkauf. *Welche Dankbarkeit man früher empfunden hätte, hier zu sein. Peinlich. Als sei es schon der Gipfel von dem, was einem geschehen kann. Die Leute hier haben recht, wenn sie sich für solche Albernheiten nicht interessieren* (74).

This seems to highlight the idiocy of Wendehals attitudes and euphoria during the Wende. Her sister seems to have a keen ability to see banality of the things that many East Germans wanted so desperately from the Wende, rather than the voice of freedom and democracy for which they chanted in the streets. This critique of both the people who do it every day and those who wish they could only be achieved from an East German point of view that has seen both systems and

has the ability not only to reflect upon what the GDR was and was not, but also upon what unified Germany and western culture is and is not.

In another example, the sister and her soldier are at the Haff (Lagoon) and are watching people get off of the ferry, who were purchasing alcohol, cigarettes, chocolate in tax-free waters (between Germany and Poland) and she sees ferry as nothing more than a “schwimmendes Kaufhaus”, which she cannot stand:

Den Anblick der Einkaufsstüten, der prall gefüllten, buntbedruckten Plastikbeutel. Dass sie nicht hinsehen kann. Sie schämt sich, als hätte sie es zu verantworten...Sie will noch immer, dass sie beide das Gegenteil sind. Die Möglichkeit eines Gegenteils. Sie müssen etwas anderes sein als diese Herde, die wortlos an ihnen vorbeizieht, sonst wäre alles Erhabene nichts, und ihre Liebe all die Jahre über hätte nicht den geringsten Sinn (78).

Here it seems that she is trying to be “trotzig” in her attempt to be a counterweight to capitalism by not partaking. However, her sister commits suicide. She cannot cope with the fall of the former system nor can she adjust to the new system. Even though the sister does not “hold her mouth open” in awe while in the West and she blushed with shame when she received her “Begrüßungsgeld” (52-3), this is not trotzig in the sense that Paul Cooke refers to since she does not reject capitalism out of a sense of pure defiance against the colonizers. That she was not truly at home in either system is apparent when she mentions the GDR as a dream killer (109).

What this leads to is a difficult negotiation with the “nowhere” in which one finds oneself, which portrays the difficulties in a system without future focus. The narrator describes this in a poignant passage about how people changed and essentially stayed the same after “The Revolution”:

Die neuen Verhältnisse...Die Leute fingen an, sich gegenseitig zu einem Arbeitsplatz zu beglückwünschen. Man hielt fest, was man bekam. Die Mienen wurden wieder verhuschter, die Gesten misstrauisch. Niemand redete mehr von Blöcken oder heißen und kalten Kriegen, davon, eine Sache zu verteidigen oder sich ihr zu verweigern. In einem solchen Moment wird alles klar erkennbar. Die Menschen treiben sich als Teile einer unförmigen Masse auf die immergleiche

Weise durch die Geschehnisse der Geschichte, werden mitgerissen, gehen manchmal ein Stück allein, um wieder in eine andere Richtung gespült zu werden. Ihre Existenz: ein stetiges Schlingern durch einen dunklen Raum, in dem sie doch alle lernen, sich so weit zu orientieren, dass sie nicht auf der Stelle zugrunde gehen (53).

This passage sounds very much like Ingo Schulze; as in his texts it destroys not only the idyllic image of nostalgia for the GDR, but also the naïve presumption of a better life in the post-Wende world.

Julia Schoch's *Mit der Geschwindigkeit des Sommers*, published in the anniversary year 2009, is showing, through this break in time or moment of reflection, another step in the evolution of East German writing. While maintaining critical standpoints on unification and contemporary society, it begins to show a future focus that stems from the memories of the past. The East German enunciation evokes a past-present-future narrative that is important for all German literature. As Mary Cosgrove points out:

...it is problematic to suggest that [the novel] is fundamentally about a place where time has stopped. If the focus remained on the sister who commits suicide, this would be a legitimate reading. However, we cannot overlook the self-reckoning implicit in the narrator's developing self-understanding. In the end it is she who looks blankly at the present, and while it may be daunting, she already occupies this present. Time *continues* (my emphasis) through her perspective thus, in the very production of this reflective account (85).

The sister's suicide, 20 years since the Revolution, and the Revolution itself are both breaks, interventions in time that allow one to observe and negotiate the past, present, and future. One will be reminded, again, of Homi K. Bhabha's quote "...to dwell in the beyond...to touch the future on its hither side. In that sense, then, the intervening space 'beyond' becomes a space of intervention in the here and now" (*Location* 10). These breaks described in *Geschwindigkeit* are thus not simply passing moments. They are spaces in which the author's present reflection on the past immediately influences the future.

Once again, it is time that is paramount in this novel. In one of their last telephone conversations, the sister claims that time goes on without the necessity of humans and to resist it is futile. The “new” times that come and go are not made for them, it is just a process (148). So what does one do with this point of view in which one must completely distance oneself from events in order to comprehend them? It seems that one must move on but not forget. To understand the process is to understand that it is one at all and does not end once one has decided to reflect upon it.

While for Schoch, Ostalgie is dangerous, so is forgetting through the covering or removal of all East German memories, culture, and life. The politically charged critique of a GDR that never existed and of a democratic capitalist that is going awry today are the results of humans not recognizing the mistakes of the past and going for the short-term goal in the present; forgetting as well as not moving on. The narrator reflects upon the borders that exist, the war that was fortunately behind them, and the brighter future that was meant for them, while she lived in the garrison town (132). While the Wende brought an end to this and an East German collective enunciation could be seen as one for all Germans today, the discussion of differences and commonly held (and achieved) freedoms does not end with celebration and reflection. If one forgets, as we will see in Schoch’s next novel one also forgets the results of war, borders, and oppression.

Fuchs maintains there is no place or locality to actually counter deterritorialization or global connectedness both in the GDR, and now in the post-Wende and globalized world (132). This realization is one impulse for the transition in East German literature of the 21st Century. Ingo Schulze seemed to recognize this after his 1998 novel *Simple Storys* and Schoch recognizes

it now. This is also why so many of Strubel's works take place outside of Germany. Thus, there is a continued importance of the Eastern province in East German literature. To quote Mary Cosgrove: "...the eastern province becomes more than just a statement about the GDR's demise; its de facto spatial indeterminacy and historical impermanence connects the province, whether of the GDR or of other periods, to the greater geological, natural, and political contexts that produce, pulverize, and reproduce it" (86).

B. Selbstporträt mit Bonaparte (2012)

Julia Schoch's fifth work and third novel *Selbstporträt mit Bonaparte* (2012) bears similarities to *Mit der Geschwindigkeit des Sommers* in that concepts of time, "die zeitliche Elemente," loom over nearly every facet of life. Much in the way Uwe Tellkamp's *Der Turm* (2008) uses the ominous ticking and chiming of clocks as a way to almost count down the end of the GDR, Schoch uses a timeless space (the casino) in order to escape the rapid changes in contemporary society. In *Selbstporträt* these changes include the covering up or the re-writing of history upon the face of the city (to evoke Aleida Assmann's "City as Palimpsest" theory). The focus on the spatial element in this text shows that while the disappearing past is not problematic in and of itself as societies naturally change over time, it is disappearing in favor of the even more distant past and the novel portrays this backward looking tendency with a sense of confusion regarding the present and the future. Schoch's critical "Blick" on today's society presents the danger inherent in cherry-picking one's memories and representations of the past through the tendency, in the former GDR territory, in particular, to rebuild and recast the recent past of the 20th century and the GDR as the old Wilhelmine Germany via architecture. In this

way, the connections between the past and the present disappear, as if the 20th century with its atrocities, wars, and division never took place. Rather than collective memory as a “reclaiming the past as an important part of the present” (“Transformations” 54), one sees collective forgetting.

So then how does one overcome the difficulties inherent to the binary of forgetting and remembering? What Schoch began in *Geschwindigkeit* with her portrayal of the decay of the garrison town in the East German province is further portrayed in *Selbstporträt mit Bonaparte* with the transfiguration of the urban spaces. Thus, space is once again temporalized. The only way to escape the backward change is to, in essence, take a “self-portrait with Bonaparte” and confront one’s connection to history, a past-present connection that exists when one takes a photograph.⁵⁵ The disappearance of cultural identity in the altering of East German spaces also alters memories. In this novel in particular, Schoch is not, however, reclaiming memories in a nostalgic way. Both East German “Ostalgie” and the tendency after unification to restore towns and cities, especially in the former East, to their Wilhelmine splendor does little to differentiate memories into the “malign and benign” as Assmann writes is necessary in critical memory discourse (54). Therefore, East German literature, when viewed as a minor literature of a minority culture once again is “charged with the role and function of the collective” (Deleuze and Guattari 17); in this novel through the critical enunciation of the removal of East German memories through architectural restorations, which have political, economic, and cultural repercussions for *all* Germans, but such repercussions have been felt most heavily by former GDR citizens.

⁵⁵ Even the cover of the book has multiple layers. A woman wearing a modern style dress takes a photo with a Polaroid camera of a man in green, which could be the garb of GDR soldiers or the Volkspolizei. The focus is on the woman so the man and GDR style “Neubauten” buildings in the background are blurred.

This architectural reversal that is occurring not just in Potsdam (the subject of the novel), but in Berlin, Dresden, and other East German cities, erodes East German cultural memory. This paradoxical phenomenon of simultaneously forgetting, as happens in times of political change, and selective remembering through restoration of late 19th century architecture show that the trajectory since the Wende has taken a sharp turn backward. Rather than simply make everything (West) German, it all becomes old German. Note that this not only obscures the GDR past but also steps over Weimar and National Socialism. Because the narrator and Bonaparte see this collective forgetting as a danger, they are intent on doing anything, i.e. escaping into the timeless place of the casino, to take refuge from the backward progression. The East German perspective on Germany's willingness to begin forgetting the past, which includes forgetting the GDR, serves as a reminder to all Germans of the dangers of forgetting.

The frequent claim that one studies history in order not to repeat it is problematized in the text. If post-Wende renewal is a way of forgetting the GDR as well as Nazi Germany and World War II, or in fact all of the 20th century, it seems that Julia Schoch is articulating that recalling the pre-20th century era is not a way forward. Furthermore, as an example of East German alternative memory and discourse, *Selbstporträt mit Bonaparte* portrays the struggle of holding on to a disappearing past, not in a nostalgic sense, but as a way to utilize one's past in order to pave a path to the future. Schoch seems to be well aware that "...the past is constantly changing and the future proves to be heavily determined by the past" ("Transformations 57). The novel does not seek to reclaim East German identity in order to articulate difference, rather it seems that the way to articulate a collective (East) German future is not to forget that which defined Germany's past. Jay Winter writes that, "Collectives of all kinds are defined by the narratives

they fashion about the past. Change the collective, and stories and identities change” (ix).

Selbstporträt seeks to highlight the way in which the (East) German collective’s story is being changed through refashioning the past as if part of it never occurred.

In *Selbstporträt mit Bonaparte*, the narrator (once again nameless) has a love affair with a historian whom she calls “Bonaparte” (not his actual name) revolving primarily around their brief encounters in a casino to play roulette. Their relationship takes place primarily in the city of “P.”, meaning Potsdam where Julia Schoch has lived since 1986. Potsdam, with its connection to Prussian kings and their wars against Napoleon Bonaparte and his decedents, evokes Prussian cultural memory, especially once the town’s reconstruction begins. Schoch intertwines the love story with fin de siècle, 20th century, and GDR memory, along with 21st century reality as a way to illustrate the passing and overlapping of time, history, and loss of cultural memories, all of which she attempts to draw out as long as possible by gambling, loving, and writing.

Her relationship with time and feelings of loss and confusion are reflected in this relationship with Bonaparte, who is often traveling. As Tobias Becker explains, “Der Romanautorin Schoch geht es um weit mehr als um die Frage, was mit einem Menschen geschieht, der eine Liebe verliert. Es geht ihr um die Frage, was mit einem Menschen geschieht, der seine Geschichte verliert, seinen Halt, seinen Glauben an *Kontinuität*.” The word continuity is a key concept that ran through her previous novel, but is of the utmost importance for *Selbstporträt mit Bonaparte*. A sense of continuity is repeatedly broken with his absence and especially once the “Ausgangspunkt des Zeitenstrahls” and “Glücklicher Anfang” (*Selbstporträt* 33-4), words which she associates with the game of roulette and thereby her relationship with Bonaparte, is severed. Schoch begins the novel with the narrator’s reflection upon the loss of

love, goals of a revolution, and one's own history and potentially the future, when she breaks the text with a single line: "Bonaparte ist weg" (13).

As with the other authors in this project, we have once again become part of the disjointed recounting of the past that can only accompany a tumultuous history and change over time; portrayed in this novel through the casino and the love affair. For her, the *amount* of time that has passed between any two events seems to be irrelevant. Instead it is the constant changing that accompanies the passing of time that is most important. She frequently describes this through arbitrary numbers or values; For example, time will pass between visits from "Bonaparte" and she perceives the time as the passing of "Tagen, Wochen, Jahrhunderten" (14), or "zwei oder zweihundert Jahre." One can get lost inside the passing of time, and this phenomenon is the "Ausgangspunkt" of the novel. Her memories of what life was like in East Germany shape how she sees the world, and this perspective captures the many changes over time. Her observations of the constant changes in society and her surroundings prevent, or at the very least hinder being able to live in the moment. The act of writing about this experience (and reading about it) allows for reflection.

The very first lines of the text portray the timeless refuge the protagonists experience in the casino: "In jener langen Sekunde, wenn die Kugel noch unterwegs ist, wenn sie sich noch nicht entschieden hat für eine Zahl, ist alle Zeit ausgelöscht. Keine Zukunft, keine Vergangenheit. Für diesen einen Moment kann man beruhigt sein, die Welt, sie wartet noch" (9). In an interview Schoch further describes the timeless location that is the casino; it is a place without clocks, often without windows and thus, people are numb to the outside world (my trans. "Interview" 0:01:48-0:01:58). In the novel she compares this timelessness with love, writing, and

the past (or history). It seems that one gambles, loves, writes, and even contemplates history in a timeless “zeitlos” state, where one can actually watch oneself, reflecting upon the actions one takes. While she avoids reflection in the casino, her writings articulate the way time is irrelevant in those states. This phenomenon can also be observed with Antje Rávic Strubel’s claim that she steps outside of herself when she writes. The act of reflection becomes a deterritorializing, or in Schoch’s case, a “de-temporalizing” one, by living, writing, and remembering disappearing time and history. From this deterritorialized minor perspective, those who knew life in what is now a history that is disappearing can actually see themselves in a place that no longer exists.

Therefore, one can begin to understand the critical commentary on this process of erasure, the collective assemblage that exists in timeless states, here the casino, and how writing about it is a necessary process of examining that life. We can also see that once the colonial process of the West engulfing the East took place, the changing of formerly East German cities into pre-World War states evokes an erasure of all that was GDR, as if “the last 100 years did not take place” (my trans. “Interview” 0:02:49-0:02:53).

That much of East Germans’ memories and experiences are being forgotten, or at least clouded, by history is unsurprising, as there is evidence of it everywhere in contemporary discourse on the Wende and unification. To refer to Wolfgang Emmerich once again, East Germans (authors) “feel displaced in a special way” (“(East) German”), and in much of Schoch’s work this is through expressed through temporal and spatial displacement. Their former towns and neighborhoods as well as the “modern” architecture of the GDR are being forgotten, as they are no longer a stage for revolution or nostalgia. Thus, the displacement is taking place around them rather than through their departure. The narrator describes this not only through literature,

but also through art. As a historian and writer she at times does contract work, writing about an artist who paints pictures of old buildings...

...aus denen die Menschen verschwunden waren, Gehäuse, Geisterstädte, die überall dort auf der Welt zurückblieben, wo eine bestimmte Epoche beendet war. Es ist tatsächlich seltsam: Im Licht einer bestimmten Zeit entsteht ein Ort, wächst und bewegt sich, doch sobald der Scheinwerfer der Geschichte ausgeknipst wird, holt sich die Natur alles zurück, was der Mensch mit großem Brimborium in sie hineingestellt hat (21).

Apart from places such as the former East Berlin, Dresden, and Leipzig, this picture of nature taking over is representative of many East German small to midsized towns, as in

Geschwindigkeit. Thus, one can see that the “spotlight of history” has been turned off in such places, the Revolution is over and they have become less important as a stage for German

unification. In those larger cities where investment occurs, the rebuilding of East German cities becomes a “Vergessen-Wollen”, the desire to forget in the name of progress:

Was die Bomben der Alliierten in den letzten Tagen des Krieges zerstört und die Kommunisten wenig später weggerissen und mit modernen Häusern überbaut hatten, wurde wieder ausgegraben oder neu errichtet. Aber nicht, um die Erinnerungen oder die Spuren der Toten zu suchen, im Gegenteil, diese neuerliche Zerstörungswut war ein Rausch des Vergessen-Wollens. Wie ein Greis sich plötzlich seiner Jugendliebe erinnert, beschwor man die einstige Schönheit, die königliche Pracht der Stadt. Alles Moderne wurde entfernt, um wieder ungestört in einem Album der Nostalgie wandeln zu können. Als hätte Bonaparte und mein Leben heir niemals stattgefunden oder höchstens als seine Art Irrtum oder lächerliches Intermezzo, verschwand die Stadt, wie wir sie gekannt hatten (39-40).

Schoch's Potsdam is thus similar to Uwe Tellkamp's Dresden in *Der Turm*. The older residents of the educated bourgeoisie long for the “Pracht” of the old Dresden. Once communism has been defeated, the task at hand seems to call for forgetting that it ever existed. According to Stephen Brockmann, the normalization process that was championed by Helmut Kohl after unification called for Germany to become a “normal nation” like any other (*Literature* 13-4). However, and as the frequently used word “Re-unification” insinuates, the end of divided Germany seemed to require forgetting or covering everything that had happened in the last 100 years in order for

Germany to become Germany. Cities like Dresden and Postdam were and are still being restored to their pre-war splendor and the protagonists in the novel (as well as Julia Schoch herself) observe these changes occurring with blinding speed. Such “nostalgic” restoration as Schoch puts it can also be seen in the project to rebuild the Berliner Stadtschloss in place of the old Palast der Republik in Berlin, which has been in process since 2013. The ruins of the Berliner Schloss were removed by the GDR in 1950 as part of the modernization of the city center as the stage for political demonstrations (Assmann “Der Kampf” 85-6). In order to forget the past, it is an “out with the old, in with the older” process. In this way one forgets the Nazi past and erases the socialist “experiment”. This irresponsibly suggests that the GDR was *equally* abhorrent as Nazi Germany, and thus must be similarly forgotten. Even if forgetting is a natural process that occurs once “Vergangenheitsbewältigung” has run its course, this assumes that all of the questions regarding German division and unification have been answered, something the above quote from *Selbstporträt* calls into question.

Since after World War II there has been a debate as to whether forgetting or remembering is more productive in bringing positive change. Aleida Assmann and Linda Short talk about the “radical counter arguments” that forgetting or “wiping the slate clean...should be hailed as a formidable agent of change that ushers in social peace and integration” (5). Assmann further discusses this dualism of forgetting and remembering by analyzing those who have called for one or the other as a way to move forward. For some, the act of forgetting after the war was “not conceived of as a repression of memory; rather, it was connected to a spirit of renewal and openness toward the future...Hope in the regenerative power of the future...” (“To Remember” 59). While this project does not intend to examine in depth the process of

Vergangenheitsbewältigung after World War II and the Holocaust, I would argue that *returning* to the past before atrocities *is not* wiping the slate clean, rather it is choosing to ignore atrocities and human rights catastrophes, as well as the GDR's programmatic denial of any responsibility for the Holocaust. Schoch's text seems to argue that the current trend is a backward looking "new nostalgia" for pre-National Socialist Germany. Can the "regenerative power" of the post-Wende world lie in *re*-unification under the auspices of Wilhelmine Germany, especially when that Germany immediately preceded the two world wars and division that one is now trying to forget? Are we trying to do it over?

As in *Geschwindigkeit*, the city must be viewed in this novel as a palimpsest. Assmann explains:

Die Architektur der Stadt lässt sich als geronnene und geschichtete Geschichte beschreiben und somit als dreidimensionaler Palimpsest aufgrund wiederholter Umformungen, Überschreibungen, Sedimentierungen...Geschichte ist geschichtet und heterogen, durchkreuzt von unterschiedlichen Besiedlungsphasen und Bevölkerungsgruppen. In diesem Sinne bedeutet lokale Geschichte nicht nur Heimat und lokale Verankerung in einer konkreten Landschaft, sondern auch Alterität und Vielfalt auf engstem Raum. Obwohl in Stadtraum alles gleichzeitig anwesend ist, heißt das jedoch keineswegs, dass jeweils alle Schichten auch wahrgenommen werden und im Bewusstsein präsent sind ("Der Kampf" 75).

This is not just with regards to history. This is also a discussion of memory and the longer that time passes and these "Umformungen" continue, the more East German memories become "geschichtet", which, can lead to forgetting or at best, one must "dig" in order to remember these buried memories.

The narrator associates the the removal of East German things as a process that began in the immediate post-Wende attempts at unification:

Der sogenannte Rückbau geschah wie nebenbei. Ähnlich lautlos jedenfalls wie die Umbenennung von Straßen vor sich geht. Längst läuft man zum Kasino nicht mehr durch die Ludschuweit und Külz, sondern durch Luisen und Breite, wohne ich in der Scharnhorst (früher Nuschke) und mein Vater in der Großen Kurfürsten anstatt in der Straße der Nationen (*Selbstporträt*, 40-1).

The changes in names of streets, as this example shows, can create a particular kind of alienation. The names mentioned first (Ludschuweit, Külz, Scharnhorst, and Straße der Nationen) all have particular significance for the GDR (or Soviet occupation) and now, being changed to names that have either West German or Prussian roots, one may feel either conquered by the West, or forgotten in favor of Wilhelmine splendor. Furthermore, when a location is renamed, but appears visually and spatially similar, it is as if this act of conquering has been done covertly. This bears similarities to the process in the East German province in *Geschwindigkeit* where the destruction of the garrison town occurs “lautlos” like someone turning off the sound.

This process is also described in great detail by Aleida Assmann. Assmann uses three different categories to discuss the changes in a city over time that are brought on by “Rekonstruktion und Wiederaufbau.” East Germany and East Germans seem to have undergone a combination of “‘Vernichtung und Wiederherstellung’ – Ein Gebäude wird zerstört, weil es zur Zielscheibe feindlicher Aggression wird”, “‘Abkehr und Rückkehr’ – ein Gebäude steht dem eigenen Selbstbild ideologisch entgegen”, and “‘Abwertung and Wiederaufwertung’ – Ein zerstörtes Gebäude wird nicht wiederaufgebaut, vernachlässigt und schließlich abgerissen. Weil es im Rahmen eines neuen Zeitgeistes massiv an Wert verloren hat, kann es sich gegenüber neuen Bedürfnissen und Zielen nicht mehr behaupten. Die Rekonstruktion bedeutet in diesem Fall Wiederaufwertung des vorübergehend Entwerteten und ist Symptom einer ästhetischen und historischen.” All of these have an effect on East German cultural memory and the pace of all have increased since unification. The Dresdner Frauenkirche, which was intentionally left in ruins by the GDR as a symbol of imperialism, fascism, and war, being restored to its former

glory by the West after its destruction by the Allies during the war, illustrates the process of “Vernichtung and Wiederherstellung.” By restoring the symbolic church from the ruins, it marked an end of the post-WWII era and Cold War, which along with this novel, also marks an end of the GDR. The previously used example of the Berliner Stadtschloss shows a case of “Abkehr and Rückkehr” due to the “epochale Zäsur einer politischen Umorientierung”, first in the GDR when Walter Ulbricht built the Palast der Republik on this site, and once again after the defeat of communism and the destruction of the Palast. Finally, the “Abwertung and Wiederaufwertung” of some buildings that fell into disrepair because of loss of purpose in the post-Wende world are being reshaped to serve new purposes. For example the Altstädte are returning after they were gutted in both East and West in order to serve more practical purposes; in the East for political demonstrations and marches and in the West as commercial and shopping areas (“Der Kampf” 85-9). In *Selbstporträt*, the narrator highlights this in her observations of her city:

“Ich sage *unsere* Stadt. Aber ich erkenne sie nicht mehr. Inzwischen ist sie wieder die alte geworden...Die Kulturhalle hat man weggerissen...Aus den darunterliegenden Steinresten hat man nach historischen Vorlagen das alte Schloss, den sogenannten Lustgarten und zwei Kirchen errichtet. Es ist eine Art wütende Sucht. Als sei das definitive Ende der Geschichte nun wirklich da, die Zeiten der Verirrung ein für alle Mal vorbei, und als müsse die Stadt, diese albern-monströse Ansammlung von Kulissen, in einem letztgültigen Zustand übergeben werden” (73).

While narrator even claims that this change does not bother her and that she finds something ludicrous about it, she still questions: “Konnten wir uns überhaupt ernsthaft erinnern?” (74). Furthermore, as Assmann also explains, “...we are experiencing that the past is constantly changing and the future proves to be heavily determined by the past” (“Transformations” 57). If a particular past is removed or covered, what does that do for the future? Rather than renewal through political change, in this case German unification with the goal of not being “associated

with anxiety and crisis, but with hope and positive transformation...[a] new kind of transition [that] involves actions that reach out for new forms of order and legitimacy by instigating profound change of political and social identity” (Assmann and Short 2). Schoch highlights the paradox in *Selbstporträt* that this change also includes forgetting and is no longer a new forward looking transition. The connotations of “the end of history”, a notion that has often been referred to in discussions of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of communism, also ends particular memories. This phenomenon is articulated in this novel as well as in the works of Ingo Schulze and Antje Rávic Strubel.

While the narrator and Bonaparte escape the changes and the confusion of disjointed time by going to the casino, her father, who can be seen as a representative of the older generation, simply lets everything “go through him” and does not pay any noticeable attention. He retreats to simple timeless hobbies such as researching plants and bird-watching. His patience and seeming disconnectedness with life disturbs the narrator: “Vermutlich ist es genau diese Geduld, die mich beunruhigt. Diese vollkommene Langmut, bedenkt man die Unruhe, ja quälende Getriebenheit, die sein früheres Leben ausgemacht hat. – Ein früheres Leben“ (41). He was an accompanist for state-run traveling bands and orchestras. He enjoyed the travel, even within the “abgezäunte Geographie” and “Wenn er nach Hause kam, schwärmte er ihr [der Mutter] vor von der Welt, der kleinen, die er gesehen hatte und der großen, von der er träumte und die er nur vom Hörensagen kannte.” As with most cultural institutions of the GDR, the orchestra was dissolved after the Wende. In another parallel to Ingo Schulze’s *Neue Leben* she explains: “...die Kulturhäuser blieben leer, kein Mensch ging mehr auf diese Art Konzert” (42). Art does not hold the same prestige or importance in society after the Wende. Economic prosperity and gain becomes more

important. What is disturbing to her is that (like Türmer in *Neue Leben*) her father develops a sort of “Wendehals”-like attitude. Apparently her mother was able to stop him from leaving before the “Revolution”, but afterward, she did not stand a chance: “Kopfschüttelnd, wie fassungslos über sich selbst, ging er. Als wäre angesichts der Freiheit draußen, dieses *Wahnsinns*, wie es damals so oft hieß, jedes weitere Zugeständnis nun wirklich lächerlich und sein Gehorsam all die Jahre nur noch eine Peinlichkeit, an die er sich besser nicht erinnerte.” The narrator adds that the mother, as if in protest, moves to the south of Germany with another man (43-4).

The narrator remembers that like her father, she also had the optimism about the future (Zukunftsfreude) that many other East Germans had. She looks at the tall buildings and skyscrapers that are erected in her city and remembers that she wanted to live there, but how quickly these dreams and excitement for the future changed; a similar mentality in the early years after the “Revolution”:

Plötzlich kommt es mir unfassbar vor, dass eine Sehnsucht über Nacht abhandenkommen, dass ein Traum *altmodisch* werden kann. Nur eine Kleinigkeit, ein winziger Umschwung der Zeitläufe, und schon lassen die Menschen ab von ihren Ideen, denke ich, lasse ich ab davon, von meinen Vorstellungen, meinem alten Leben – unfassbar, ja beschämend, dieses vollkommen fehlende Talent zu Beständigkeit (109).

She repeats these last sentences to her father and he simply and coolly nods his head and talks about his memories of the past as if he has stored them into metaphorical drawers. His inflection, according to the narrator, was “journalistisch” (110). These passages not only mark sadness at the loss of a former life, they are indicative of a disappointment at the trajectory of the present and harken back to the question of a future view of the world or the lack thereof:

“Jede Epoche träumt ja nicht nur die nächste, habe ich vor Jahren einmal gelesen, sondern drängt träumend auf das Erwachen hin” (124). Once again the dream connotation with reference to East

Germany suggests that people wanted a new future, but not at the expense of their memories or a future that is meaningful to them. As Linda Shortt explains, the younger generation of East Germans was better able to assimilate than the previous generation or “losers” of the Wende, but they do not blindly accept everything they see (“Re-Imagining” 118-9). In fact, this generation of East Germans may be as able to critically engage their society as the previous “losers” were to bring about change during the end of GDR.

The pre- and post-Wende frustrations of East Germans have, however, evolved past the post-colonial, “trotzig”, and nostalgic tones of the 1990s and early 2000s. The narrator illuminates the political, cultural, and historical dangers of such a process, describing the process of forgetting the memories and stories of the people who lived them (from below) in favor of remembering a state-mandated or medially popular history (from above)⁵⁶:

Von diesem Auseinandersetzungen der Menschen, dem Zerstreuen und Zurückbleiben schreiben die Historiker nichts, habe ich einmal zu Bonaparte gesagt. Die wesentlichen Dinge entgehen uns, hatte er achselzuckend bestätigt, als mache dies ganz selbstverständlich das Wesen seines Faches aus (45).

As a historian, Bonaparte’s view of the past is a critical look upon those who write history. Often history is written from the side of the victors and discusses how that group of people or nation succeeded. Bonaparte is confirming the narrator’s suspicions that those who live history, in particular the “regular” people, are often forgotten or cast aside, but are actually the most important factor in world-changing events. The narrator and Bonaparte’s views can be associated with how memory in contemporary society has progressed over the past 25 years.

⁵⁶ The “above” vs. “below” dynamic are discussed in more detail by Andrew H. Beattie as well as in a “simultaneous interview” between Günter Grass and Pierre Bourdieu published in “A Literature from Below”. *The Nation*. 271.1 (2000)

Furthermore, Bonaparte associates roulette players with societies after a disaster or a war, saying that numbers attempt to balance themselves out in roulette: “Nur diejenige, der wiederkäme, könne erleben, wie die Zahl versuchen würde, ihr Fehlen auszugleichen.” This phenomenon plays itself out in society:

Lernt ein größerer Haufen Menschen – aus einem Krieg, einer Kraftwerkexplosion, der Verödung einer Landschaft? Natürlich. Aber nur für eine Weile. Eine, zwei, höchstens drei Generationen werden sich Mühe geben, werden sich und die Zukunft zu beeinflussen versuchen. Lernerfolge, Errungenschaften! Roulettespieler wissen, es ist nur eine Frage der Zeit, eine Frage der Anzahl von Spielen, bis die Welle zurückschlägt. Um die Schmähung, die Ignoranz oder schlicht das Vergessen zu sehen, dem jedes Gelernte nach einer Weile ausgesetzt ist, müsse man nur lange genug dableiben (66-7).

The game of roulette in Schulze’s *Neue Leben* also dealt with people gambling and the impact it has on the future. Schoch’s novel takes this a step further, in that there is an element of chance both in the results (the future), as well as the players. The roulette player has no influence on the outcome, and has little or no influence on the conditions under which one plays. As generations pass, the population is given a set of conditions (where and when they are born, the political and social situation of the time) and must choose how to deal with this situation. It seems that Bonaparte’s comparison shows that a population will gamble with their future and society up until they lose dramatically. After a loss (a catastrophe, war, disaster) people learn to be cautious and try more constructively to influence the future. However, as time passes (the number of rolls in roulette increases), humans forget the loss and one chooses to gamble, eventually leading to the next loss/catastrophe.

A generation of (East) Germans who never knew life in divided Germany is coming of age. While 1989/90 was not a natural disaster and was not a war, rather a “Peaceful Revolution”, the political, social, and cultural change that occurred was immense. The question of memory (and “das Vergessen”) is how long it will be before the memories of war, Holocaust, and German

division, as well as the memories of those who experienced East Germany, the Wende, and postunification era are completely forgotten. While history often “forgets” in order to create a homogenous community, will *reuniting* by *recreating* a former Germany create a homogenous nation that is not doomed to repeat the “blasphemy and ignorance” of the past?

Just as Bonaparte, Assmann and Linda Shortt discuss what time does to memories: “The historical witness...is a liminal figure whose embodied memory connects two or three generations. Once the word of historical witnesses has vanished, the memory of community relies exclusively on mediated representations of the past” (Assmann and Shortt 6). What Schoch, and other East German authors accomplish through their writing is to keep an alternative memory existent that is being covered up by time and as we have seen, by “renovation.” East German literature as an expression of collective enunciation and memory is particularly important for *German* memory of the past, as their perspectives illuminate the memories of people who experienced the catastrophies of the 20th century. To obscure these memories in the name of “reunification” through the documentary history from above, and to return to pre-WWII normalcy is to play a few too many games of roulette. For now, as there still seem to be East Germans who are generally interested in their East German “Erbe” as in Strubel’s observations and personification in the example of Erik in *Sturz der Tage in die Nacht*, an alternative to the status quo can exist.

Furthermore, East German literature has the ability, once again through the “migrant’s double vision” quoted in Bhabha, to cast an alternative view upon today’s society and the representation of the past. In the passage below the narrator presents an alternative view that

many East Germans might think about their past as represented through hers and Bonaparte's lives:

Ich habe einmal gehört, dass die Ordnung in einem geschlossenen System, sagen wir einer Diktatur, nur auf den ersten Blick größer ist als in einem offenen. Es handele sich dabei nämlich nur um eine äußerliche Ordnung. Das sogenannte Experiment solcher Systeme bestünde gerade darin, Menschen an Plätze zu schieben, die ihnen nicht entsprechen und sie an diesen Plätzen festzunageln. Revolutionen, die solche geschlossenen Systeme sprengen, bringen nur scheinbar alles in Unordnung. Im Gegenteil, sie sorgen dafür, dass schon kurze Zeit später alle an ihrem richtigen, gleichsam natürlichen Platz landen, und das ganz von allein. Mit fast blinder Sicherheit sucht sich plötzlich ein jeder den Ort, der ihm entspricht. Ja, *sucht*. Auch wenn den meisten Menschen diese Suche wie höhere Gewalt vorkommt.

All das besagt, dass, wenn Bonaparte auf Reisen ist anstatt bei mir und ich hier bin anstatt dort, wo er ist, wir also nicht Versprengte oder Vertriebene sind. Im Gegenteil. Es heißt, wir sitzen an exakt dem Platz, den wir gewählt haben. Und darüber hinaus heißt es, dass selbst beständiges Fortsein ein Ort ist, an dem man sich aufhalten kann. (91-2)

Therefore, this work represents a 21st century East German perspective that does not completely reject the new order and can be critical of the East German past much in the same way as Ingo Schulze's *Neue Leben*.

As was seen in both Strubel's and Schulze's works the autobiographical element so starkly present shows a personal engagement with the events surrounding the authors' lives. In *Selbstporträt*, the narrator discusses how she grew up with roulette and had a plastic roulette toy set. Even more precious to her, were the films she would see where people would be playing roulette. Her fond memories about roulette are here tied with memories of life in East Germany and cast an East German "Blick" upon these films that may be different from a western one. To the narrator, it was not winning or getting rich that interests her; rather it is the places where these casinos are located.

Roulette – das war der Inbegriff einer ganz anderen Welt, und alles, was gänzlich anders war als mein Leben in einer verschlafenen Kleinstadt am äußersten Rand eines verriegelten Landes, war verheißungsvoll...Dabei interessierte mich der Reichtum nur am Rande...Das Wesentliche jedoch lag weiter weg, im Hintergrund. Das Wesentliche war das Meer, an dem im Film beinahe alle Kasinos lagen, und zwar an Meeren, die größer waren als mein heimatliches, die Ostsee... (17).

Her longing for freedom manifests itself in desire to travel, rather than to achieve riches (as it did her father). She eventually does get to travel to some of the casinos and locations with Bonaparte, but it does not change time and memories. In fact, she even mentions toward the end of the text: “Keiner fällt heute mehr aus der Welt. Habe ich das gesagt oder Bonaparte? Er befindet sich *höchstens* auf der anderen Seite der Erdkugel” (134). This is a very modern perspective from someone who lived in a nation and time where one could disappear if one left.

Yet she hangs on the feelings of co-existence in the timeless space of the casino. She describes that people in the casinos greet each other quietly with nods and subtle hellos and something occurs to her:

Jetzt fällt mir auf, dass ich diese Zeichen und Gesten von meiner Kindheit her kenne. Von einer Art des Zusammenlebens, an das ich gewohnt war und an dem ich vielleicht noch immer hänge. Jenes seltsam verloren gegangene Gefühl einer Gemeinschaft, deren Regeln festgelegt sind, gegen die sich zu wehren sinnlos wäre. Aber all das, ohne dass die Menschen wirklich eng beieinander wären, ohne etwas voneinander zu wissen. Keine Verschworenheit” (50).

These observations are only ones that could be made by an East German and show an alternative memory and enunciation, a sort of disappearance into the past.

While love, the casino, writing, may all seem like escapism in this novel, it is more of an alternative illumination of the dangers that occur with rapid backward change post-Wende. In the moments when she reflects upon life after she no longer sees Bonaparte, she begins to realize that the casino is no better escape. After Bonaparte is gone the narrator drains her bank account to gamble it all away in one last disengagement with the passing of time. She discovers that how you play and what you wager represents who you are and just as in society, those in charge will leave you alone as long as you do not pose a threat (are losing). Like the narrator in *Mit der Geschwindigkeit des Sommers*, this narrator finds herself reflecting upon her life and relationship

with Bonaparte. In this way, she never escapes time but she illuminates the past in order to keep it alive and therefore, is switching on the dimming flashlight of history.

The process and collective assemblage of time is unavoidable as both narrators in these two works by Julia Schoch come to realize. Therefore, her literature attempts to show that when one writes, one extends time in a way that may slow it down, but not in order to *live* the past, rather in order to take the time to understand it. The sheer speed “Geschwindigkeit” of change today must not come at the expense of forgetting where one (a society, community, or history) has been. The danger of pushing a reset button can result in forgetting the GDR and the tumultuous post-Wende years, as well as the difficult 20th century history. Furthermore, attempting to reconstruct the past creates only an idealized fantasy of a former life, as one does not attempt to construct the trials and tribulations of the time. This is especially important in the former East because “Ostalgie” only represents the GDR without the SED; a utopia that did not exist. And finally, because as Bonaparte warned, the wave is breaking and rolling back and today we see demonstrations against foreign refugees and the return of populist agendas. Even more problematic is that this has only been one generation since the neo-Nazi riots against foreigners. Thus, if one forgets rather than remembers, we see history repeating.

V. CHAPTER 4 – SHORT STORIES

After the exploration of these East German authors' post-millennial novels, it is necessary to explore the other forms and genres of their writing in order to show, just as Deleuze and Guattari's minor literature approach to Kafka suggests, that form is less of a concern than content: "Deleuze and Guattari give the modern reader a means by which to enter into Kafka's work without being weighed down by the old categories of genres, types, modes, and style..." (Bensmaïa xiv). As I have emphasized in the previous chapters, this project does not claim that these East German authors' works are new incarnations of Kafka. Instead, I have sought to show that when entering East German literature through Deleuze and Guattari's approach to Kafka, we gain another lens through which to observe this literature's minor subject matter, which crosses genres in its political and collective enunciation with regard to memory of the GDR, the Wende that brought the demise of their former nation, and a critical view upon the trajectory of society since 1989/90.

Furthermore, it would be a disservice to these authors as well as their readers to discuss only the longer forms of their writing. Each of the writers in the project are well known for writing in short forms, such as short stories and essays as well. Even their novels often take the shape of an "Episodenroman." The influences upon Schulze, Strubel, and Schoch's short form narratives are as broad as in their novels. Therefore, this section on their short stories seeks to show further how East German literature pulls from the traditions of both its GDR predecessors, as well as Western and Eastern influences, as a means of articulating East German experiences prior to and following 1989/90.

This chapter is set apart from the novels in order to examine how East Germans use this form as a way to – more succinctly and overtly than in a novel – portray memories and experiences of one person, and situate such experiences within the broader realm of geopolitical and cultural events. If we understand a short story (eine Erzählung) in its more literal sense, as a narrative that portrays past experiences, i.e. something that has occurred, then it is essential to include these works by Schoch, Strubel, and Schulze in order to obtain a picture of East German experienced life that has been overshadowed by dominant West German narratives of the GDR and post-GDR Germany.

For this final chapter I have chosen short stories (Erzählungen) from Julia Schoch, Antje Rávic Strubel, and Ingo Schulze that are further examples of the work of alternative cultural memories of East Germany expressed as a minority literature, through the exploration of different aspects of the authors' collective histories and experiences, which are essential to their contribution to the wider canon of German literature, yet worthy of distinction within it. Analysis of these short stories will chronologically follow in order of the primary subject matter discussed, as this will allow for an observation of the evolution of East German literature in the 21st century.

Julia Schoch's debut work, a short story collection entitled, *Der Körper des Salamanders* (2001), will be the first work discussed. More specifically, I will discuss her short story from the collection, which bears the same name. This story examines the memory of East German life up to the end of the GDR and describes how one young girl struggles with, and ultimately decides to end her involvement with the GDR system. Like her novels, Schoch's highly praised collection⁵⁷

⁵⁷ See for example Kämmerling “‘Der Schmerz des eisernen Dickhäuters’: Julia Schochs grandiose Debüt”. in the *Frankfurt Allgemeine Zeitung* from 6.10.2001

leaves an open ending, signifying the continued negotiation with the GDR past in the 21st century, rather than simply “arriving” in the post-Wende “West” Germany, and leaving the GDR and her past behind. Thus, she departs from the Ostalgie trend of the late 1990s and early 2000s and provides authentic and critical memories of the GDR. Therefore, this story will be examined both due to the time period in which the story takes place, as well as its definitive break from the trends of the previous decade.

Antje Rávic Strubel has also published short story and episodic collections, “Episodenromane.”⁵⁸ However, I will examine “Gezeiten”, her short, albeit dense memoir and contribution to a collection of texts entitled *Die Nacht, in der die Mauer fiel: Schriftsteller erzählen vom 9. November 1989* (2009). A reading of her personal story, which is told in the same vivid, dream-like manner as her novels, shows that a “minor” approach permeates different genres in order to tell of East German unification experiences, including through literary or poetic nonfiction. Many East German authors have described their memory of the GDR as dream-like and Strubel portrays this quite literally as she wakes up the morning after the fall of the Berlin Wall trying to “anchor” herself in the new day and the new world after the beginning of the end of the GDR. In a highly personal, autobiographical account, she emphasizes the notion that for her (as for many other East Germans) November 9th is remembered less as first hand experience than as a combination of medial images.

Finally, Ingo Schulze’s short stories “Verwirrung einer Silvesternacht” and “Eine Nacht bei Boris” from his short story collection *Handy: Dreizehn Geschichten in alter Manier* (2007) offer insight into a post-Wende world, which was achieved through East Germans’ efforts to end

⁵⁸ Including her newest release *In den Wäldern des menschlichen Herzens. Episodenroman*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Verlag, 2016. Print.

the repressive regime (also apparent in Schoch), yet the after-effects of the system change (seen in Strubel as well) are becoming ever more clear. Ingo Schulze famously said, “1989/90 is where our present-day world began”, and he is highly critical of the trajectory society has taken since the Wende. These two stories portray this trajectory and how East Germans come to terms with and adapt to the status quo of the post-Cold War world. The use of “night” in both these stories also resembles the transitioning that East Germans underwent and the negotiation with contemporary society.

These texts discuss the unique East German experience that has informed their outlook upon the world today. As with their novels, it is a necessary exercise to explore their writing as a way to form a complete picture of the past, present, and future. Furthermore, these stories offer unique insights into the past that move beyond the narrative told during each anniversary year of jubilation and parties when the Wall fell. They portray how East Germans both had their hand in the demise of the SED regime and the GDR, as well as critically engaging their own as well as the West’s responsibility for the social, economic, and political situations existent today.

A. **Julia Schoch – “Der Körper des Salamanders” (2001)**

This short story, which is part of her collection of short stories under the same title, breaks with the “Ostalgie” trend in East German literature that was prevalent at the time of the collection’s release. In the late 1990s and the early 2000s there was a wave of nostalgic representations of the former East Germany in writing such as Jana Hensel’s *Zonenkinder* (2002) and Jakob Hein’s *Mein erstes T-Shirt* (2001). This wave also existed in other media such as television shows, films like *Sonnenallee* (1999) and *Goodbye Lenin!* (2003), as well as in

consumer culture with the popularity of East German products, clothing, and artifacts.⁵⁹ The authors in the project have shown that their writing does not seek to harken back to a time that is lost, rather it recasts the popular image of the East through authentic memories of life in the GDR, as well as social and political critique of life before and after the Wende. “Der Körper des Salamanders” does both, in that it portrays the first-person narrator as someone who does not fit into the mold of a GDR woman/athlete. Because “[minor] literature finds itself positively charged with the role and function of collective, and even revolutionary, enunciation” (Deleuze and Guattari 17) this story portrays life in East Germany through one important element of the former nation’s society, competitive team sport coupled with revolution. Therein the reader is exposed to the outsiders and (sometimes reluctant) insiders within GDR society. Ultimately, the story presents the end of the GDR regime in a way that is much different than the common narrative of the Wende; it describes the self-determining actions, which brought an end to the GDR, and the life thereafter, of which many from the GDR may be familiar, namely a sense that East Germans occupy space in both pre- and post-unification society.

The story’s first-person narrator is the coxswain of a girls rowing team in the GDR. Competitive sport was paramount to the GDR’s self-image both at home and abroad and the training that the girls undergo in the story is rigorous. The emphasis on sport is confirmed in many instances throughout the text; the murals on the wall of the cafeteria in the sport hall of strong Olympic athletes with “...Gesichter vom Sieg oder Schmerz verzerrt” (16), as well as the huge men in the Olympic training facility hooked up to machines “[w]ie zu groß gebaute traurige Golems...mit gebeugtem Kreuz und ballongroßen Oberarmen. Ihre Lider hielten sie halb geschlossen” (13-4). Schoch does not shy away from critique of the forced team exercises

⁵⁹ See again Schoch’s emphasis of the importance of ideas over things in “Orte von denen ich schreibe.”

involved in sport in the GDR and does not use these moments to nostalgically describe team-building or closeness through hard work among citizens in the GDR.

The girls must train in the cold February weather in nearly frozen water and often complain when the trainer is not around.⁶⁰ In fact, the narrator compares the Havel to the Styx, a river in Greek mythology, which formed at the boundary between Earth and the Underworld (23). Furthermore, comradeship is absent as the narrator is an outsider. Unlike her teammates who have already hit puberty, “An mir gab es wenig anzufassen. Ich war fast durchsichtig und sah aus wie die kleine Schwester eines der Mädchen” (18). She attempts to find any excuse possible to avoid the girls as well as the training, even sabotaging some of the equipment in order to be sent into the warm shop to do repairs (11). Her main escape, however, comes through her daydreaming and attempts to write. Elise Müller-Adams explains that this is her resistance to the system: “Widerstand leistet [sie] vor allem, in dem sie sich in das Reich der Phantasie zurückzieht” (79). Her fantasies have her rowing through the fog and wilderness, seeing savages, and entering different mythological realms. Her difficulties with the GDR system are represented by her troubles putting words on the page, as the activities involving the rowing team constantly distract and interrupt her. The narrator must make a drastic break from the mundane life of the GDR in order to find her purpose, much like Strubel’s Katja in *Tupolew 134*.

As Anne Flieg explains, many of the short stories in the collection, *Der Körper des Salamanders*, have references to borders and/or transitioning. Many of the texts are “direkt am Wasser, dem symbolischen Bereich ständigen Wechsels...” (175). This story’s East German

⁶⁰ The cold winter weather is a reference to the Cold War environment in East Germany. For another Cold War/Winter reference see Wolf Biermann’s fairytale “Das Märchen vom kleinen Herrn Moritz, der eine Glaze kriegte” (1972): “Als nun der lange Winter kam, der längste Winter auf der Welt in Berlin, da wurden die Menschen allmählich böse.”

enunciation discusses neither a (n)ostalgic memory of East Germany, nor does it represent the long awaited western desires for East German adjustment to a new life in unified Germany. It is also more than a personal awakening leaving the repressive GDR past behind. The act of transition is problematized, as it remains incomplete in the end. The narrator's personal memories of the GDR evoke a collective set of East German experiences that remind East Germans, and explain to *all* Germans, that freedom did indeed mean breaking free of restraints, bringing about the death of a nation and former life. However, as the reader will come to see, this death does not signify an absolute end, as Schoch leaves the ending open. In what I argue is the beginning of the evolution beyond nostalgic and post-colonial overtones in East German literature, her writing describes East German experiences, rather than prescribing answers, providing an impetus for contemporary society to critically engage with the past, present, and future.

In a similar way to the two novels by Schoch, the short story "Der Körper des Salamanders" begins at the end, once again evoking an immediate sense of memory. The reader must become involved in the narrator's story. Just as Deleuze and Guattari's concept of collective assemblages of enunciation upsets the subject/reader dynamic by bringing both into one collective entity (18), so does the act forcing the reader to take part in the memory in order to ascertain what happened prior to the present moment. Here, the first lines of the story), which begin with "Jetzt ist es vorbei..." and goes on to describe the narrator drowning, triggering the act of memory. The detailed portrayal of her drowning is not a struggle, rather it is peaceful "...Nach der Entscheidung schlägt keine Brandung mehr von innen an meine Haut, keine Welle bricht sich Bahn, kein Tropfen dringt in keinen Spalt, nichts fließt, nichts bewegt sich..." Finally, the

end of the opening paragraph shows that the end is the beginning: “...*endlich* kann ich *beginnen*” (emphasis added 7). This end-as-beginning and beginning-as-end show how her act of memory and the negotiation with the past continues into the future. As with the other authors in this project, we see how the one act (the end of the GDR) does not put an end to their past.

As the end of the story returns to the beginning (her drowning), the narrator makes the drastic move to end her involvement with life in the GDR. For a second time in the story, she will sabotage the boat and the training by steering it into another object while lost in her fantasies. The first time she steered the team onto the shore of an island. The second time, as she imagined the border guards as savages in the wilderness, she steered the team so close to the infamous Glienicker Brücke⁶¹ that she could see the “kleine Schweißperlen auf ihren [den Grenzposten] Stirnen” (26) and the guards had to warn her to turn around. Her desire to write and to escape from the life in the GDR is bringing her ever-closer to her sense of freedom. She is eventually successful, “[a]n diesem Februarmorgen...waren meine Augen offen,” and she steers the team, this time intentionally, into another boat. She jumps off the boat and slowly and calmly allows herself to sink into the water, while her teammates, whose feet are strapped into the boat, are trapped upside down in the water. It is this act of sabotage that frees her and allows her to write. It takes bringing the system down, here the boat and the sport team, in order for her to do what has been denied her the entire story. This act of self-determination has parallels to the Revolution. Finally, as a writer, she is able to express the important ideas about East Germans’ acts of self-determination and their role in “historically achieved freedoms” (Habermas 175).

⁶¹ The Glienicker Bridge over the Havel River was the stage for many East-West exchanges, not to mention exchanges of spies and political prisoners between East and West during the Cold War. It was for a time one of the few places connecting the East to the West.

The ending of the story is in fact, a new beginning. However, as with hers and the other works in this project, the open ending forces the reader to contemplate what is to come.⁶² Throughout the story, the only line she is able to write into her blue notebook with a Melusine on the cover is “Lass den Salamander...” During the training the narrator sees a few salamanders, whose mythological significance surely plays a role. They were associated with fire in antiquity due to their apparent resistance and ability to escape their housing in burning logs. However, Salamanders are amphibious creatures and thus associated with water as well (Müller-Adams 78). This dualism dovetails with Flieg’s claim that the narrator is in constant transition (175); between fire and water, reality and fantasy, the Earth and the Underworld, and ultimately, between East and West. What her transition becomes then is a growing up with the end of the GDR and in adulthood becoming a writer (176-7).⁶³

As the story ends, the drastic change she makes finally enables her to express herself as a writer in the form of a poem. She initiates what becomes perpetual transition throughout adulthood, as a writer, in unified Germany. This poem evokes notions of rejuvenation and continual negotiation with her new life. Anne Flieg writes of the constant “Verschwimmen der Grenzen und fragwürdigen Gewissheiten” that exist throughout the collection of short stories (177). “Fragwürdigen Gewissheiten” sounds strikingly similar to Ingo Schulze’s comments on the post-Wende “neue Selbstverständlichkeiten.” The poem starts with the line she was able to write in the GDR and then she composes the rest after she leaps from the boat to her freedom:

Laß den Salamander, in Stein
gehaunes Untier,

⁶² See for example Ingo Schulze’s two novels *Neue Leben* and *Adam und Evelyn*, as well as Antje Rávic Strubel’s *Sturz der Tage in die Nacht*.

⁶³ See also Jana Hensel *Zonenkinder* for more discussion on this generation’s childhood ending simultaneously with the end of the GDR.

er sinkt zum Grund und anderes fällt mit.
 Das braune Haar der Frau hängt noch
 im Schilf, der Sumpf nimmt es nicht auf.
 Um jeden Halm ist es
 gewunden und blüht im nächsten Jahr (28).

Müller-Adams writes: “So wird am Schluss der Erzählung eigentlich nichts gelöst, das Gedicht, mit dem der Text endet, verstärkt im Gegenteil noch einmal die Atmosphäre des Rätselhaften, die diese Erzählung wie auch die anderen in der Sammlung bestimmt” (80). On the other hand, Flieg claims that the end signifies a new beginning, in that while the Salamander (the creature associated with her GDR and rowing life) sinks, her hair still hangs/floats among with the reeds and will bloom again next year (my trans. 187-8). Furthermore, Schoch does not explicitly explain whether or not her teammates survive. This leaves the question open as to whether or not her teammates are left to drown with the GDR system or also experience the sort of rebirth that the narrator does. I would argue that the “Rätselhaften” or mysterious in this story depicts the uncertainties of East German experiences and the transitory atmosphere of the Wende-era. The narrator most definitely frees herself from the GDR (boat and team) in which the other girls are unfortunately still trapped. This transition that takes place in the water represents both the taking and life-giving power of water, thus signifying her drowning and blooming again as a transition. What this poem (and the entire story) do not do, is provide a simple answer to the question of what her life is to be after the fall of the GDR. As many East Germans were freed from restraints after the drastic action that was the Revolution, they often felt as if they were drowning in the post-GDR world. Schoch’s collection of short stories was published in 2001 and there were, while there were still no definitive answers as to what the Revolution would mean for unified Germany; negotiation was, and is, ongoing. This is also the case for her other novels discussed in this project, which were published in 2009 and 2012. Therefore, if one approaches the story

through minor literature, we see a woman's experience in the GDR, completely absent of Ostalgie, and the portrayal of the political act of Revolution and the collective enunciation of both those pre-Wende experiences and the post-Wende engagement with the past. When taken with her other novels and the other works in this project, one can see that the GDR, its end, and the life that came after still have an effect on their perception of the world today. Memory is an ever-evolving process that blooms anew with each passing year and it is essential to keep such memories alive in order to negotiate with the present day.

B. **Antje Rávic Strubel – “Gezeiten” (2009)**

In this short text Strubel discusses her memories of the night when the Berlin Wall fell. Where Schoch portrays the break in time and the possibility for future endeavors, Strubel goes into more detail about both the positives and negatives that resulted from that momentous event and the importance of its memory. Paradoxically, her recollection of the 9th of November is unclear, blurred and overtaken with media and television images. The blurring of authentic memory and media images is reminiscent of how Jana Hensel describes her memories of the Wende in *Achtung Zone* published the same year, as well as how Aleida Assmann and Linda Shortt explain collective memory and the at times exclusion of some memories in favor of mediated ones. Strubel writes:

An die Nacht des 9. November habe ich keine Erinnerung. Wenn ich versuche, mich zu erinnern, sehe ich nur die Fernsehbilder, die jedes Jahr im Herbst gesendet werden: ein einstürzender Mauerblock, die eine Seite in Grau, die andere in grellem Graffiti, der Westberliner mit Schnauzbart und Lederjacke, leutselig ein Trabantdach tätschelnd. Ich sehe rittlings auf der Mauer sitzende Menschen, aus der bereits große Brocken herausschlagen (war das dieselbe Nacht?)...(225).

Assmann and Short evoke Sigmund Freud's term "belatedness," meaning that "for the subject there is no other reality but the one that is belated, and which has already undergone a process of interpretation. What we encounter as reality is in fact the product of an act of interpretation" (4). Strubel describes this phenomenon of hazy, mediated memory in metaphorical detail: "...wenn ich versuche mich an Details zu erinnern, dass mein Beteiligtsein an diesem Ereignis oder auch nur mein Dasein in dieser Nacht bezeugen könnte, ist es, als würde ich in die Sonne sehen: nur die Ränder sind sichtbar, das Zentrum bleibt dunkel." (225). These observations are a telling description of how many East Germans (especially of the third-generation) feel about and remember the fall of the Berlin Wall. An authentic memory has been replaced with an incomplete, media-induced memory, and many cannot remember where they were or what they were doing on that momentous day. Strubel frequently second-guesses her memories in the story ultimately saying "(...ich erinnere mich nicht)." However, what she does remember are events that happened immediately before or after November 9th, even simple things such as the parking garage of a department store in the West, her Handball match the next day, being able to read the books she wanted to read, etc.

While this particular event on this particular day in history was important and symbolic, her blotted out memories coincide with what many East Germans report about their experiences. Furthermore, this shows that they believe that the most important details of the Wende, which to them, represent the true meaning of the changes that occurred in the Eastern Bloc and East Germany, were memories of what immediately preceded and followed November 9, 1989 to bring about change and shape the future, in many cases for the better, in others for the worse. As the editor of this collection of stories, Renatus Deckert, mentions: "Selbst der 9. Oktober, der als

historischer Wendepunkt gilt, steht heute in seinem [9. November] Schatten” (8). The 9th of October with the massive demonstrations in Leipzig is seen by all three authors in this project as the major turning point in the Revolution. With over 70,000 protestors the demonstrations were best known for putting the “peaceful” in the “Peaceful Revolution” as the military did not intervene with armed force as was seen in bloody suppression of the student protests in China’s Tiananmen Square only a few months earlier.

Strubel describes “die entscheidenden Ereignisse” on this night as a break that one can only comprehend retroactively: “Habe ich diese Nacht verdrängt? War ich zu jung, um zu begreifen, was passierte, hatte ich mich tatsächlich schlafen gelegt? Oder sollte es wahr sein, daß die entscheidenden Ereignisse erst im nachhinein geschehen, daß ihre Wirkung sie erst hervorbringt” (226). Similar to how another East German author, Uwe Tellkamp, ends his epic novel *Der Turm*, Strubel describes the 10th of November as if awakening from a dream: “Am Morgen des 10. November...[d]irekt aus dem Traum gekommen und noch nicht fest verankert im Tag, schienen die auf Mauer reitenden Menschen...als kämen sie aus einer anderen Welt, einer anderen Zeit“ (229). The post-Wende world has arrived and there is no going back to sleep.

The text paints this picture through her first encounters with and immediate critique of capitalism, which is about to engulf her country. She describes her experience in a huge department store called “Wollwert”, which is actually her East German mispronunciation of a popular store in the West called “Woolworth”:

Ich irrte durch grell ausgeleuchtete Gänge, und irgendwann fand ich den Ausgang nicht mehr. Das ist die deutlichste Erinnerung, die ich an jene Tage habe: Ich verliere mich zwischen Dingen, die ich nicht brauche, die künstliche Luft, das künstliche Licht machen mich schwindlig, und während ich verzweifelt versuche, nach draußen zu kommen, wird mir klar: Einen Ausweg gibt es jetzt nicht mehr (232-2).

This critique resembles some of Ingo Schulze's descriptions in *Neue Leben*. The disorienting experience may seem strange or even an overreaction to anyone who grew up with these brightly lit supermarkets and department stores with twenty different varieties of toothpaste or laundry detergent. Often it is exactly these seemingly banal adjustments into a different way of life that East German authors describe. The detailed descriptions in their writing force one to take a step back, observe, and focus on the aspects of our society that we find normal through a different lens. Rather than freedom of choice, variety, or luxury, Strubel sees unnecessary consumerism. Furthermore, due to what is often propagated by the West as the "victory" over Communism, there are no longer other options concerning political or social systems. She juxtaposes confusion in the store with confusion and the illusion of choice in the nearly unlimited consumerism of Western democratic capitalism, of which there is now no alternative system (kein Ausweg); Hence Strubel's belief that one is "bolted down" (my trans.)⁶⁴ by unlimited choice due to the inability to choose a different direction than the system in which we now live.

Jelena Spreicer asks why Strubel finds it so important at this point, 20 years later, to express her personal memories of this famous date. She writes that the answer can be found in the following quote from the story:

Und heute, wo dieses Gemeinschaftsgefühl im Abklingen ist, nimmt auch der Wahrheitsgehalt am Erinnernten ab, und die Vorstellung, die ich mir mit Hilfe der Fernsehbilder, des Internets, der Zeitungsberichte zum Jahrestag und vom Hörensagen von der Nacht des 9. November mache, dürfte sich von der der anderen (vom Ereignis selbst?) nicht mehr allzu stark unterscheiden (G, 226)

As Spreicer writes, "Das Gemeinschaftsgefühl lässt laut der Autorin nach, und jetzt können artifizielle Erinnerungen nachträglich produziert werden..." ("Wie und was"). It is then essential

⁶⁴ See Strubel "Schreiben verwandelt mich"

for Strubel to keep authentic memories alive. Furthermore, the changes in society since that day have allowed for authentic memories to be obscured and thus, in an act of collective enunciation, Strubel highlights the experiences that are not always included in the dominant “major” narrative of the Wende and November 9, 1989.

Throughout Strubel’s story she refers to a Chinese calendar that she received on her 15th birthday and that 1989 was the year of the snake, which signifies unpredictable years that can bring quick changes (227). She also mentions that the year of the snake occurs every 12 years (which is interesting when one considers that the next year in that cycle is 2001). At the end of the story however, she explains that regardless of how many years there are in any cycle of time;

der Versuch, aus diesem Kreislauf auszubrechen, scheint so vergeblich wie der, mit bloßem Auge in die Sonne zu sehen. Meistens sind wir ahnungslos, wenn es wirklich passiert, gefangen in der Welt unserer Vorstellungen, in die die Ereignisse erst im nachhinein einsinken, gehalten vom Konjunktiv, getragen vom An- und Abschwollen der Gezeiten (234-5).

Although she claims that we are unsuspecting of the changes that occur around us, I would argue that her act of writing achieves what the other East German writers in this project achieve: a platform through which to contemplate that which has occurred in our past and to attempt to understand the ways in which a cycle will eventually come back around, impacting our future.

C. **Ingo Schulze – “Verwirrungen der Silversternacht”, “Eine Nacht bei Boris” (2007)**

Due to the success of his first two works published in the mid- to late-1990s, also short story collections, *33 Augenblicke des Glücks* and *Simple Storys*, Schulze is known for the short form. However, since the focus of this project is post-2000 works, I will closely examine two of the stories in *Handy – Dreizehn Geschichten in alter Manier* (2007), “Die Verwirrungen der Silvesternacht” and “Eine Nacht bei Boris.” These stories not only closely follow the themes

emphasized in his other works, but the tone of these stories also portrays the societal changes and general attitudes of East Germans differently than the writing of the 1990s. Christine Cosentino writes, “Schulze gestaltet die Erfahrungen des Systemwechsels...ohne Sarkasmus, mit freundlicher Ironie...ein Überwinden ostalgischer Trotzidentität zugunsten pragmatischen Akzeptierens des westlichen Neuen” (“Ingo” 159). While East German writing has indeed overcome the “Trotzidentität” and “Ostalgie” of the 1990s, moving past these tendencies does not necessarily mean an acceptance of everything West and loss of East German elements of writing. Even when describing the writing process for this collection, Schulze mentioned that in using this “trusted form” of writing, he did not want to write another *Simple Storys* for fear of being unable to come in contact with something new: “Denn beim Schreiben richtet man sich für eine Arbeit zu, man stellt sich ein auf Stoff und Stil, wird für bestimmte Wellen und Schwingungen besonders empfänglich, für andere taub. Man nimmt anders wahr, sieht und denkt anders” (*Tausend Geschichten* 53). By using this trusted form with a “friendly irony”, Schulze is able to reach a wider audience (including West Germans) by portraying experiences through story and not preaching through defiance or “Ostalgie” with which West Germans may have difficulty identifying.

Despite this search for the new, he admits that the first six stories were sketched out before 2000. Christine Cosentino writes that with his return to the short story form, one could give *Handy* the subtitle “*Simple Storys* in neuer Manier” (“Ingo” 162). In her essay she emphasizes the advances in technology since the end of the GDR and how these advances represent a change or break in a society in *Handy* (one only need refer to the title). Technology certainly plays an important role in many of the stories; in others somewhat less. The story

telling emphasizes a minor perspective of former East German citizens affected by societal and political change. Even the stories that were originally sketches seven or more years before they were first published in this collection can show the impact of the changes on contemporary society and how Schulze's "Blick" portrays the alternative memory of the recent past that is so important in his works. He explains this at the Leipziger Poetikvorlesung in 2007:

Als ich mir im Frühjahr 2006 die sechs bis sieben Jahre zurückliegenden Ideenskizzen vornahm, fürchtete ich, dass sie sich überlebt haben könnten und ich den Antrieb, diese Geschichten zu erzählen, verloren hatte. Waren sie überhaupt noch notwendig?...Doch die Keimzellen von 1999 und 2000, aus denen dann 'Die Verwirrungen der Silvesternacht' und 'Eine Nacht bei Boris' werden sollten, standen plötzlich in einem ganz anderen Umfeld. So banal es klingt: **Die Welt hatte sich verändert; die Gesellschaft des Jahres 2006 war sozial und ökonomisch ungleich mehr polarisiert als diejenige von 1999** (emphasis added). Obwohl die Ideen nicht neu waren, musste ich keine alte Geschichte erzählen" (*Tausend Geschichten* 54).

Therefore, it is still important, perhaps now more than ever, to hear the East German voice, for this voice of a minor perspective and experiences that are "double-edged...and from a realm in which economic and social problems hide" ("Ingo" 161), grapple with the speed with which the changes occurred, out of which such problems grew.

Beginning with "Die Verwirrungen der Silvesternacht" we can see this trend. This story also shows how Schulze "tries to give the old stories of love and death contemporary meaning" (*Tausend Geschichten* 25). The first person narrator, Frank Reichert, recounts a story about "the love of his life", Julia. Reminiscing from his desk chair in his office sometime in the mid-2000s, he describes this love against the backdrop of the 10 years between the events of 1989, such as the demonstrations in Leipzig and Neues Forum, up through New Year's Eve 1999 and all the excitement (and slight hysteria) that came with the new millennium; all of which the characters experience firsthand. The story begins with a call from Reichert and Julia's mutual friend Claudia, who wants him to attend her New Year's Eve party and also wants to reunite the two

former lovers on the eve of the new millennium. It is no accident that this call to the narrator comes on October 9, 1999, ten years after what Schulze has called a more important date than the 9th of November (Fall of the Berlin Wall), as this was the day of mass demonstrations in Leipzig and the turning point of the peaceful revolution (*Was wollen wir* 270). The memories of this love parallel the Wende era, from which it began, the disappointment of the early 90s when the love failed, and the hope for a new life but ultimate acceptance of his current situation at the beginning of the new century. It is often his own decisions that lead to his downfall, which on the surface may not seem self-destructive, but should be viewed critically. As Cosentino confirms, “äußere Bereicherung bedeutet innere Verarmung...Reichert ist dem Druck der kapitalistischen Leistungsgesellschaft ausgesetzt...” (“Ingo” 166). Thus, from a critical perspective the story portrays a negative rather than a positive development in Reichert and society.

He and Julia live in the former GDR in the town of “B”. Similar to *Adam und Evelyn* they embark on a trip to Hungary, but in this case they actually return to the GDR and take part (to some extent) in the revolution. Just as Schulze emphasizes in his writing and in interviews that not all East Germans fled to the West, Reichert and Julia never discussed going to the West. He juxtaposes this with the pair never having discussed having children or moving into an apartment together (177). Through this juxtapositioning of two seemingly unrelated topics, Schulze illustrates an alternative memory discourse than the accepted West German model. The pair chose not to do two things that should be seen as a “given” or that “people simply do”; 1. The natural progression of finding a partner, moving in together and having a child, and 2. Going to the West. What’s more, the fact that they came back to the GDR is greeted by others with a smirk (177). Ultimately, the love with Julia fails when Reichert reveals that he slept with a co-

worker named Ute at the copy business they are running. Julia attempts to save the relationship by claiming that she understands and that it was just a mistake as long as there are no feelings of “love” involved between the two. However, in a moment of arrogance, Frank makes a choice:

...ich [begreife] es bis heute nicht. Ich dachte an diesen einen Augenblick, in dem ich überlegt, ob ich auch mit Ute leben könnte. Und anstatt Julia zu beteuern, dass mir der Gedanke, sie wegen einer anderen zu verlassen, absurd erscheine, sagte ich, dass auch ein bisschen Liebe im Spiel gewesen sei. Warum log ich? Denn das war eine Lüge, ich schwöre es, eine Lüge! (183).

In telling this lie, he makes a choice to settle for Ute, who he claims he merely tolerates by saying later that they are “Geschäftspartner, die halt auch zusammenleben” (187).

After the loss of his one true love, Reichert continues to tell of his business, at the print and copy store and how his life with Ute goes on in a rather mundane manner. The events of the early 1990s are interwoven with the events of his personal life. At his copy store they now charge 10% of their invoices in D-Mark, most of the people with whom they began the Neues Forum have switched to support other political parties, and they purchase new copy machines on credit (184-5). It is not the story of a wildly successful businessman who has made it in the West and who is passionate about his work or of a defiant East German dissident musing over the loss of the GDR and lack of political engagement; but his ambivalence is precisely the problem. On one of the occasions when Reichert speaks directly to the reader, he describes his pedestrian involvement in his career and life: “Verstehen Sie? Nichts von dem, was ich tat, tat ich aus Überzeugung. Zwischen mir und meiner Arbeit bestand kein Zusammenhang, es passte nur zueinander, das eine ergab das andere, wie ein Gesellschaftsspiel, in das ich aus Kummer, aus Verwirrung und rein zufällig geraten war” (187). There is a disappointment in the tone of Reichert’s story. The loss of Julia or rather, his mistake in judgment causing him to lose Julia parallels the errors and disappointments many East Germans felt in the early post-Wende years.

For example, Reichert casually mentions his realization around 1993 that there would be no “Wirtschaftswunder” resulting from unification, a fact mentioned frequently by Schulze. As the story comes back to 1999 and his phone call with Claudia, he decides that he is going to give up everything. It is not clear what he plans to do, but he begins to rid himself of the things that have defined his life up until that point in order to start anew with Julia. He clears out his desk and decides, among other things, to get rid of all the “Krimskrams aus dem Herbst 89”.

On the crazy New Year’s Eve night that involves the attempted (re-)unification of Julia and Reichert, Claudia showing explicitly (physically) that she has feelings for Frank, and a drunken brawl, the “true love” between Frank and Julia does not reignite despite the feelings they had and may still have for each other. They go their separate ways. The very next morning, instead of Reichert following through on his radical plan to give up everything anyway, the unsuccessful unification seems to bring on an epiphany and he embraces his life with Ute, telling her he loves her. Eventually, they marry and have a second child. He also hopes that their first child, Fritz, with whom Reichert previously did not get along, will take over the business. Despite his supposed newly awoken love for Ute, he continues an extramarital affair with Claudia. They also have parties to forget about business stress and live a very bourgeois existence that in the end, he seems like a fool for questioning.

The portrayal of “acceptance” of the trajectory of his life evokes a sort of refusal to question the lifestyle of the “comfortable” post-millennial existence. The unsuccessful reunion with Julia shows an acceptance that things never return to the way they were, while at the same time forcing the reader to think about the passive acceptance of the stereotypical western businessman lifestyle. The story holds true to Schulze’s quote above, highlighting yet more

changes and experiences after the millennium (common currency of the Euro, for example). We can observe that even the certainties that may have still been held true in the late 90s and early 2000s have gone by the wayside, such as financial and business security. Thus he shows the progression from the Wende to the present (here 2006/7). Reichert in 1989 as an East German involved in Neues Forum sees that like in his relationship with Julia, failed ambition and decisions shape a different future than he may have wanted. In 1999 on the eve of radically giving up his previous life and starting something new, the decision in 1989 still effects his life, which leads to the Reichert of the post-2000 era settling in and accepting what he has (and taking a little of what he wants, in another woman). This progression is a highly critical and skillfully written allegory of not only one person's life, but also of society. It is more than simply a look at the natural progression of aging and life. It challenges the implicitness of the bourgeois, businessman way of life as a norm from the perspective of an author who has seen the two competing systems. It seems like a happy end (in a way), but the fact that he continues an affair with Claudia makes one question the validity of this happy comfortable existence of the businessman. Cosentino rightly explains that in this story "Liebe ist Sex und Voyeurismus [und] materieller Erfolg ist von Angst vor Ruin begleitet" ("Ingo" 166).

Schulze also does not shy away from taking a plug at the post-Wende and contemporary (empty) notion of freedom. At the party Julia begins to talk about the education that they had in the East compared to school today and that her father had also run into financial problems since unification, which Frank speculates may have brought him to his death. Marco (Claudia's husband) replies to this with a typical answer to anyone who bemoans the current system, "sie [aus dem Osten] solle froh sein, endlich in Freiheit zu leben..." To which Julia replies, "Welche

Freiheit denn?'. Marco however, avoids the confrontation and gets up out of his seat (210-11).

This conversation also portrays an argument that went on throughout the 1990s and to some extent still surfaces today, the stereotype of the unappreciative "Ossi" and the know-it-all "Wessi".

This short story is also a compelling and multi-layered act of memory and transition. As with most of Schulze's writing, there is more than just one story (memory) flowing through it. Objects also play an important role in memory and here there are a number of important objects or settings to be taken into account. One is the unexploded bomb from World War II that a man in Berlin "stumbled upon". This bomb sets off a few stories between Reichert and Ute and Claudia and Marco, whose luxurious apartment they are visiting for New Year's. Marco explains the system in which the Allies bombed Berlin and that it must have "unfortunately" only been a coincidence that the first district to be bombed was the first one to be declared "judenfrei". This was unknown to Reichert, but he is not interested in war stories and even hopes that Ute doesn't start talking about her grandparents and the Dresden bombings "schon wieder" (201-2). There are two types of dealing with the past here; those who talk about it (Marco and Ute) and those who had enough of hearing about the war and roll their eyes and say "nicht schon wieder". Until the bomb is externally detonated or dealt with, it is still an "active" reminder of the War. Once the conversation ends after they believe the bomb to be gone, they can safely move on into the next century, leaving the bomb and possibly having to deal with the War in the last century. The millennium and the break from everything in the previous century are also illustrated when Ute tells Reichert that she had a sexual encounter with Claudia before they met. When asked why she

decided to tell him now (before the New Year) she replies that she wants to leave it in this century, another chance to leave a sensitive topic from the previous century behind.

While these objects and experiences show a “Spalt” between the previous century and the new one much like the breaks in Strubel and Schoch’s stories, many things simply seem to carry over and have not changed that drastically. Outside of the apartment where they are staying is an excavator that Reichert constantly watches. The famous phrase from the 1990s, which is still true today, “Berlin ist eine Baustelle” shows that the continuation of rebuilding after the GDR is also a way of dealing with the destruction of the past century. Another example of continuation is particularly well portrayed through Reichert’s reaction to waking up on January 1, 2000: “Die Häuser vor dem Fenster standen alle noch und sahen so aus wie im letzten Jahrtausend, ein Umstand, der mich umso befriedigte, als ich glaubte, an diesem Wunder einen gewissen Anteil zu haben” (215). After just describing his frequent extramarital encounters with Claudia, which is something that he feels he should not have to give up, he also claims that that day was the actual beginning of his love for Ute (216). With such an ending one can wonder where he stands but as Cosentino mentions, as a storyteller, “Er [Schulze] kommentiert nicht, er zeigt” (“Ingo” 163).

The story “Eine Nacht bei Boris” is once again an Ingo-Schulze-typische story. As Christine Cosentino calls it, it is a story with a “matryoshka-structure” with multiple stories told within a larger one (“Ironische” 168). The first story, told by the narrator, recounts a house-warming party at a friend/acquaintance Boris’ new apartment much in the way of the oral tradition. Schulze says himself:

Nicht zufällig ist die Geschichte ‘Eine Nacht bei Boris’ eine Anspielung auf das Schahrasad-Muster wie auf Boccaccios *Decamerone*. Ich war selbst überrascht, dass ich über die jüngste

Vergangenheit und Gegenwart in dieser, wie ich fand, alten Manier des mündlichen Erzählens schrieb (*Tausend Geschichten* 56).

In fact, the people at the party, all from the former GDR, each share stories that last into the night and the next morning much like in the story *One Thousand and One Nights*. In addition, the guest who begins the story telling, Elvira, is surprisingly revealed to be Boris' lost daughter (a paternity test pending). This is not told to anyone at the party until the next day and everyone assumes that the girl is Boris' lover. Boris even asks the narrator his opinion of the young woman before and after the party. Out of Elvira's story follow multiple individual stories within the larger story of experienced life of East Germans.

As far as the "jüngste Vergangenheit und Gegenwart" are concerned, each story told at the party has some sort of political or societal element with regards to recent world events and/or history. The narrator and his partner, Susanne, move to the West part of Berlin in order to "flee the construction and baseball caps" and regularly attend Boris' parties (who the narrator only fleetingly knows from "früher" in his school and NVA years in the GDR) (219). In fact, the word "früher" comes up quite frequently as the guests tell their stories. The narrator, however, is the only one who does not share his stories or feelings during the party. His are shared only with the reader and Susanne as it is revealed at the end that he writes the story about Boris' party and gives it to Susanne to read. This is yet another matryoshka doll in the story. The matryoshka doll is similar to the collective assemblage to which Deleuze and Guattari refer, in that the individual stories are part of a whole in which the narrator's story cannot stand alone or would be empty.

At one point, Susanne even accuses the narrator of being "harmoniesüchtig" and that he wants to avoid confrontation. This is interesting in light of East German literature as it is in such a forum, that the narrator/author is able to express his opinions and discuss openly. He attributes

this recent preference not to get into arguments with the way people converse today versus “früher”,

Natürlich fanden wir verschiedene Dinge gut oder wichtig, aber es hatte nie etwas Grundsätzliches oder gar Persönliches, selbst wenn der eine an Gott glaubte oder in der Partei war und der andere nicht. Doch damit ist es vorbei, spätestens seit dem Kosovokrieg und seit Afghanistan. Ich dachte, es würde sich bessern, seit jeder sehen kann, wohin das im Irak geführt hat...aber sie sind nicht mehr dieselben. Man überlegt sich jetzt, was man sagt und was nicht (225).

This comparison is interesting as it tracks a development in interpersonal relationships after the Wende in a way opposite of what one may think. The impulse would be to believe that in today's unified Germany there is no need to “think about what one says”, that with the collapse of a bipolar system, the old arguments would no longer exist and East Germans would have less fear of spying among them. As Cosentino mentions, the author's quote above chalks it up to communication issues, but the issues stem from the “new comers” to the system trying to come to terms with the new world (“Ironische” 171). It seems that despite East Germans' at times differing experiences in the GDR and during the Wende, there is more that binds them than that which binds East and West Germans in unified Germany. No matter their individual experiences, East Germans seem to have (an)other history that they cannot share with West Germans and thus, are all “new comers.” Unfortunately, this would confirm that, at least for Schulze, East and West are not yet “growing together.”

Through the party guests' stories, Schulze highlights societal critiques that are omnipresent in his other works as well. Elvira's story about the renovations in Boris' new apartment highlight the question once again of living to work or working to live. One of the workers (who said he made the mistake of leaving the East immediately in 1990) comes into the apartment to use the restroom, looks around at the place “like it is a museum” and then remarks,

“Das muss ja auch alles bezahlt werden, aber wenn man nur arbeitet und schläft, hat man nichts davon” (232).

There is a definite minor East German perspective flowing through all of the guests’ stories as well. Charlotte tells the story about a movie production company coming in to her apartment and using her and her partner’s house for a film. They pay her well and assure her that everything will be back in its place. After filming is over the company keeps good on their promise (even paints the walls for them) and puts everything back. However, when their daughter returns to her bedroom, she tears down the posters (which were also put back right where they were) and the family now feels strangely about their home (237). While such a feeling to most people may seem unreasonable, life in the GDR has definitely touched these people. The feeling that someone was in their house, moved things around, and then put everything back exactly where it was evokes memories of the Stasi and their tactics for spying on citizens.

Schulze’s storytelling allows for memories and critiques to flow seamlessly from one story to another. Cosentino refers to another analysis of *33 Augenblicke* in which it is explained that “the narrators introduce another narrator from whom they heard the story they have to tell” (Annan qtd in “Ironische” 160). In “Eine Nacht bei Boris” each party guest is prompted to tell a story based on the previous one they just heard saying “...sowas habe ich auch mal erlebt”, “Mir ist mal so was passiert”, or “ich kenne das”. Paul Cooke even writes: “the stories never end, but rather continually engender new ones” (“Beyond” 290). While there is a transition from one story to the next, the conversation is anything but smooth and reflects some of the uncomfortable subject matter discussed.

Another guest, Fred, talks about a story that immediately evokes more images of the GDR power system and its ability to control citizens. He explains that as a teenager, he went to a lake with a girl with whom he was in love. They took off their clothes and went swimming, only to find that when they wanted to get out of the water, four men around their late 20s were standing on their clothes and would not give them back to him. Fred emphasizes that they did not look like troublemakers, “Halbstarken”. The condition upon which they were to get their clothes is that his girlfriend comes out of the water and gets them herself. Once she does they slowly, piece by piece give her clothes back, keeping her naked and humiliated for an uncomfortable period of time. This event took place in the 1960s and even up to the time of the story, Fred deeply regrets not doing something to the young men, not fighting back (245-6). This evokes images of the former GDR and could be a critique of the East German citizens who did not stand up to those with the power for so long. They allowed themselves to be frightened and intimidated.

The final story of the night is told by the narrator, not at the party, rather directly to the reader through the narrator’s writings about a radio interview with an opera singer from the former GDR. The opera singer tells the interviewer about her trip to Chicago for a concert where she met another German named Rüdiger who came to the U.S. in the late 1940s. The conversation turns to a comparison of the two systems when Rüdiger invites her to visit the Chicago Stock Exchange where he works. The interviewer wants to paint this conversation as the forming of a new friendship between Germans. However, what occurs is a critique that Schulze also frequently makes; the loss of a counterweight to western Capitalist hegemony after the fall of the Wall and Communism. The opera singer explains:

Ausgerechnet dieser Mann erzählte mir am Nachmittag, dass der Sozialismus das einzig Richtige sei, man müsse den Armen helfen und den Reichen etwas wegnehmen, man müsse die lebensnotwendigen Betriebe verstaatlichen, denn Staatliche Betriebe seien immer noch besser als private Monopole...Ausgerechnet er hat nichts anderes gesagt als das, was wir hier vor dreißig oder vierzig Jahren alle gedacht und gesagt haben, nichts anderes. Er hat nur nicht damit aufgehört (249-50).

This man, who works in a place that is the epicenter of capitalistic venture, tells her that Socialism is the only way to help the poor. Furthermore, Schulze not only provides this antipodal anecdote regarding the former Cold War antagonists, the more important message is in what follows and shows how such an opinion is silenced in contemporary major media discourse. The singer turns the tables and asks the interviewer, whether or not she believes that there will always be wars as long as someone is profiting from them. She repeats the question a few times, which causes the interviewer to cut to music to interrupt the interview. The narrator then recalls that once the interview continued after the forced break, the subject was changed and the discussion went without issue (249-50).

After hearing such a story, one may accuse this particular East German writer, Schulze, of wanting Socialism, the SED, and the Berlin Wall to return. However, as mentioned, the most important aspect of the previous story by the narrator is to highlight how opposition or minor voices can be silenced. The narrator does not even necessarily blame the interviewer. He asks himself,

...was ich als Moderator gemacht hätte...Wahrscheinlich hätte ich den Fehler begangen und die Sängerin nach ihrem amerikanischen Freund gefragt. Denn welche Konsequenzen sollte dieser Rüdiger aus seinen Ansichten ziehen? Seinen Job aufgeben? Die Börse in die Luft sprengen? Politiker werden? (250-1)

There seems to be a bit of unwillingness or even helplessness in both the former GDR society (Fred's story) and the current society (the story about Rüdiger) to critically engage or take some sort of action when one feels unjustly treated by those in power, or even how to do it. These

stories inside of the story of a party force the reader to think differently about the recent past simply by retelling it. The act of reading a story that on the surface seems banal almost begs for further, deeper thought and when one is allowed to look at it from a minor perspective it sheds new light on commonplace situations. This is especially true, when the author (Schulze or the one hidden in the story as the narrator) does not explicitly state his opinion. The immediate feelings that something is left unsettled lead the active reader to further contemplation.

What these as well as the other stories in *Handy* have in common is the ability to be direct through sharing the experiences and experimentation by East Germans with the development of the western world. This directness and experimentation is important to how Deleuze and Guattari read Kafka as a minor literature and can be employed to look at contemporary East German literature, as the collective enunciation is part of experienced life or “experimentation of life” (Bensmaïa xvi) in a minor culture. Not to forget that entering Schulze’s works through minor literature allows one to look past genre or style, as Schulze confirms, he wants

...Unmittelbarkeit zu erreichen. Deshalb imitieren die Geschichten die gesprochene Sprache. Schon die klassische Short Story wäre dafür zu stilisiert. Es ist der Versuch, ‘das Kunstformige des Erzählens zum Verschwinden’ zu bringen (Ijoma Mangold), eine Bestrebung, die sich auch schon in der Briefform von *Neue Leben* entdecken ließe... Der Impuls, der mich nach einer möglichst direkten Art der Mitteilung suchen lässt, hat damit zu tun, dass ich gehört werden und möglichst viele Leser erreichen will...Ich will meine **Erfahrungen** mitteilen (emphasis added *Tausend Geschichten* 57).

This goal is also seen as mentioned above in Assmann’s concept of the reader entering the story “through the backdoor” and this pairs well with the concept of minor literature, as the reader is directly confronted with the experiences of a minor culture, which “begins with expressing itself and doesn’t conceptualize until afterward” (Bensmaïa xvii).

VI. CONCLUSION

As another anniversary of German unification has come and gone, the usual celebrations took place, the German population reminisced about where they were and what they were doing when East and West Germany came together, and political realms reflected, once again, as to whether or not Germany “has grown together.” During the 20th anniversary of unification, Jana Hensel claimed that East Germans “should remain different.” While the differences may not be as stark as in 1990, the differences between East and West need not be seen as a failure of unification. Rather, they must be an impetus to reflect upon German unification and its effects upon contemporary (German) society. It allows Germans to ask the questions; *wo sind wir und was wollen wir?*

In literary research, the 25th anniversary has spurred another debate as to the terminology of literature written about the “Wende” as Sonja Kersten asks whether the popular term “Wendeliteratur” is fitting. As I highlighted in the introduction to this project, while there are many terms that do not seem fit, the most blatant of which is “GDR-Literature” we need not get lost in the “Begriffdschungel”, as Kersten calls it. The GDR no longer exists and to borrow from Wolfgang Schäuble’s speech: “The Federal Republic exists” (qtd in Cooke *Representing* 4). There is no disputing this assertion despite the quick process of (perceived) economic colonization that occurred. Thus, the conditions under which GDR literature was written, re-written, banned, and hopefully published, no longer exists as well. However, what I have attempted to explain through the exploration of these three authors’ literature is that East Germany (at least through its literature) still exists in the minority realm of German language literature. Examples of this minority delineation include: the lack of distinct awards given to

authors from the former GDR despite their distinct subject matter from the West German counterparts and other German language subsections; the attempts by many (critics and public alike) to observe writing by former citizens of the GDR solely as a coming-to-terms with the GDR and the Wende. While this is surely due to the attempt to unify German both politically, as well as culturally, East German literature in the 21st century must be seen beyond the Wende-novel as a distinct section among the diverse voices that comprise contemporary German language literature. Just as transnational or migrant literature and German-Jewish literature can provide insights into German society that non-minority German literature cannot, so can East Germany provide insights through a different perspective upon the Selbstverständlichkeit of the system and culture that resulted from unification, namely that of the victors of history, the West. East Germans, in particular those who spent the formative years of their lives in the GDR, have a unique ability to step back and observe these political and cultural “certainties” that (West) Germans take for granted, and offer a critical view upon democratic-capitalism (or as it has become today according to Ingo Schulze, capitalist-democracy). Through experiences in a different nation under a different socio-political environment, this literature can pose important questions and inspire reflection about German as well as Western society. The authors in the project endeavor to use literature as a platform for further discussion, which may indeed be an extension of GDR practice, that art is not just “art for art” but serves a purpose.

It is important to note, that none of these authors wish to have the SED, the GDR, or the Berlin Wall back in place. They do not look upon their past in the GDR with “Ostalgic” through naïve perceptions about a superiority of socialism or their way of life in the GDR. They are often times as critical of the GDR and its former citizens as they are of the West. However, the

dismantling of virtually every aspect of their society and even the dismantling of some of the elements of the FRG that were more socially responsible, East Germans and in particular these authors as cultural and social critics, are acutely aware and sensitive to what they believe to be the eroding of democracy, social justice, and equality in the name of profit over the last 25 years.

While only Ingo Schulze published works prior to 2000, one must observe the impact that the post-unification 1990s had on his, as well as Antje Rávic Strubel and Julia Schoch's writing. What is interesting about these authors' comments on today's society, is that it does not come from a place of an aging generation that is unable to cope with both the changes that took place after 1990, as well as the (especially post-millennial) technological advances. These authors have been shown to belong to a group that has "made it" in post-unification society. However, they do not simply accept all they see. Their unique perspectives create a space in which questions are asked and debates can occur, all without prescribing solutions.

Each work in this project discusses the GDR, the Wende, and post-unification in different ways (sometimes replacing term "Wende" with "Revolution"). Schoch seems particularly adamant about using the term "Revolution." This harkens back to Habermas' point that East Germans desire to be recognized for their role in what Habermas, again, refers to "historically achieved freedoms" (175). The active in "Revolution" emphasizes this role and also leaves out the commonly referred to "Peaceful" in "Peaceful Revolution", which is surely because while no shots were fired, violence did take place and blood was shed. "Wende", however, is a passive term and in the dominant discourse on the end of communism, it is the preferred way to describe the political changes brought about by those above, such as Mikhail Gorbachev, Helmut Kohl, and Ronald Reagan, than to discuss, for example, the popular mass protests, the meetings in East

German churches, and Solidarność and revolution in Poland. This distinction, just as in minor literature, creates a literary engagement and spurs on discussions. As Ingo Schulze claims, literature exists in order to ask questions, not to prescribe answers:

Literatur ist dafür da, dass man mit bestimmten Erfahrungen nicht allein bleibt, mit Erfahrungen, die nicht im Gespräch oder einer wissenschaftlichen Erörterung sagbar sind, die in ihrer Universalität und Gleichzeitigkeit nur in einer Geschichte, einem Gedicht, einem Roman Ausdruck erhalten. Literatur ist nicht dafür gemacht, etwas zu erklären, aber sie darf und sollte für eine gesellschaftliche Selbstverständigung genutzt werden (*Tausend Geschichten* 57).

Strubel's works also adhere to such a mantra. Not only do her works discuss societal issues of gender and sexuality, she also (reluctantly at first) (Spreicer 9)⁶⁵ shared her personal experiences during the Wende in the short story "Gezeiten", therefore expressing a collective enunciation: [...] what each author says individually already constitutes a common action, and what he or she says or does is necessarily political, even if others aren't in agreement" (Deleuze and Guattari 17). Therefore, the difference in East German literature compared with some contemporary minority writers (Olga Grjasnowa is one example) is that many do believe that what they say through literature is representative of others or can be used as a societal self-understanding (even if others aren't in agreement). This may indeed have to do with the legacy of East German (GDR) writing and its role in the state, but it seems even more important today, as the minority culture within unified Germany is invested in showing the faults and negative effects on contemporary society that stemmed from unification and runaway capitalism.

Through literature one can also change who one is as a writer, a reader, a citizen and engage with our reality as well as what we may not be able to perceive on the surface:

...womit ich mich beschäftige, ist die Verengung der Realität durch verängte Wahrnehmung. Kategorisierungen, Labels, Bezeichnungen, immer stärkere Ausdifferenzierung, bis alle Räume,

⁶⁵ Strubel said nothing of her personal experiences for 20 years, but felt that the sense of common memory that came out of the TV images of the Wende were clouding the memory of what actually happened.

in denen zuvor noch Unmögliches sich zeigen oder besser gesagt: aufscheinen konnte, so erhellt sind, dass alles immer sichtbar ist (Strubel "Schreiben").

Furthermore, when it may be difficult to see beyond what one perceives to be reality is when literature can play an important role in society. East German collective enunciation can allow for memories to be reclaimed not only with the purpose of being defiant, but also to avoid past mistakes, learn from the past and take responsibility for history rather than erase that which is uncomfortable in the past as well as the present. Julia Schoch writes:

Ich will keine Bücher mehr lesen, in denen sich nicht in irgendeiner Weise der Wirklichkeit der Gegenwart widersetzt wird. Ob absichtsvoll oder ganz hektisch, durch Liebesplan, einfaches Nichts-Tun oder Entzug, unerwartete Güte, vorsätzliches Vergehen oder vielleicht sogar Angriffsspiel. Keine Bücher mehr, in denen nicht einmal in Erwägung gezogen wird, etwas zu wollen, was die Realität nicht vorschreibt, in denen Anmaßung nicht vorkommt oder der Kleinstversuch einer Sabotage. Als Figur, als Idee, als Sprache, als Perspektive vielleicht. Genug mit den Abbildungen eines gepolsterten Alltags, den Abschilderungen, die nur wiedergeben, ohne das Gesehene zu kneten und zu treten, genug mit den Zumutungen des Realen. Zumutung auch und vor allem, wenn dieses Reale nur als Individuelles daherkommt. Das Individuum mit seinen persönlichen Geschichten langweilt in der Literatur, wenn es nicht als ein Modell, ein Vertreter oder Gesetz gelten kann. Wofür? Zum Beispiel einer Haltung, die es gegenüber der Umgebung einnimmt. Ich will wieder Äußerungen, nicht Erforschungen des Inneren ("watteierte").

The works explored in this project also show the trajectory of East German literature itself since unification and in particular since the turn of the new century. They have all broken from the trends of the 1990s, which were much more backward looking in their reflection. Instead these authors have initiated a critical engagement with the GDR, the process of German unification, the tumultuous 1990s, and the state of society and culture in a globalized world in order to explore where it has lead. Furthermore, the extent to which there is an articulation of difference between East and West in their work is manifested in their personal life experiences. Wessis and Osis may still exist, but the "aesthetic points of departure" of GDR, Wende, post-unification, all bear consequences and have relevance in the discussion of contemporary Germany. In this way, East Germans have kept with their predecessor GDR writers in a political

and socially critical realm of literature and yet pull from various influences around the world showing that East German literature's continuing evolution and negotiation with the past, present, and future, "[d]enn das Bild, das wir uns von unserer Zeit, von unserem Ort machen, hat Einfluss auf das, was wir wollen, was wir tun" (*Tausend Geschichten* 57-8).

I have argued that Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's minor literature approach to Kafka is one way through which to look at this literature in that doing so will allow for an appreciation of its specificity as a distinct section of German literature in the 21st century. Due to the amount of time that is passed since the 1990s, it is no longer appropriate to call the works by these authors (n)ostalgic or view them solely as post-colonial literature. While Homi K. Bhabha's writings on post-colonialism have indeed been helpful in describing essential East German perceptions of their former nation's accession into the Federal Republic, it is no longer the case that this literature defines itself solely through representations of, and reactions against (West) German economic colonialism. Rather, their perspectives are a unique critique having lived under a socialist government and grown up without capitalism. Wolfgang Emmerich's use of Bhabha's "third-space" is indeed effective in explaining that East German literature is neither West German nor GDR literature, as he explains a "displaced" feeling that exists among these authors in unified Germany ("(East) German").

Therefore, the extent to which the post-colonial realm occupies these authors' writings plays less of a role than the ultimate critique of capitalism and its effects on society. While Ingo Schulze does much to critique the West's handling of unification and often portrays many of his characters from the West with ultra-capitalist sensibilities, his many times ironic references to East Germans' reaction to the changing times move more into a critique of the trajectory of

society, which began when there was no competing system or mentality to keep capitalism in check. Furthermore, as Paul Cooke's canonical work examines the trajectory of post-colonialism to nostalgia, it was written as Ostalgie was at its peak. These authors' literary contributions are surely also a reaction to this naïve wave of nostalgia for the East as none of them have attempted to portray the innocent and kitsch side of the GDR prior to 1989. Thus, it would appear that these authors' works are a reaction also to Ostalgie, which stemmed from post-colonial perceptions as a way to reclaim the good of the GDR. While some of their works coincided with the wave of nostalgia in the early 2000s, I would argue that their works throughout the decade and beyond mark the end of a literature that finds its primary focus in the economic colonization of the West.

Each author emphasizes different aspects of the East German experience and they mount their critiques in different ways. However, they all are part of the same assemblage. As Deleuze and Guattari write, "...what each author says individually already constitutes a common action, and what he or she says and does is necessarily political, even if others aren't in agreement. The political domain has contaminated every statement (énoncé)" (17). This is most apparent in Ingo Schulze's works, which have also been most frequently defined as Wenderomane or Wendeliteratur due to this political backdrop being his most frequent point of departure. After the Wende many East Germans gave up their political, civic, and artistic endeavors in order to achieve profit as is seen in *Neue Leben*. Furthermore, the many dialogues that Adam has with Evelyn and Michael about the false sense of optimism regarding the West and the post-GDR world in *Adam und Evelyn* highlight the failures of democracy and capitalism, as well as the irrational expectations for peace and happiness.

On the surface, Antje Rávic Strubel's works may seem to get away from the Wende itself as the main point of departure for her works. As I have added her personal reflections on the fall of the Berlin Wall to her two novels, I believe that one can then see how her experiences in East Germany as well as during the Wende lurk in the background of her multi-leveled texts. Both *Tupolew 134* and *Sturz der Tage in die Nacht* explore how East Germans see the world, which she says surely have an influence on her writing. Furthermore, they are deeper explorations into East German attitudes toward their lives in the former GDR as well as what it means to be German in the post-unification society. There is a collective memory that spans generations of East Germans and both novels seek to cast authentic memories of what life was like through characters' reactions to contemporary society. Both Lutz Schaper and Katja Siems in *Tupolew* decide that they have had enough of life in the GDR. Strubel shows the motivations for leaving their nation in a way that is only possible through an East German lens; they make opportunistic choices to leave due to boredom and personal enrichment, rather than a desire for a specifically Western life. They also shatter stereotypes of life in the GDR through Lutz' refutation of the young western journalists' assumptions (which in their own right were (n)ostalgic).

Julia Schoch's works are the epitome of the transformations which are constant in the negotiation of today's society, especially for East Germans who continually reflect upon a society that is further and increasingly different than the one under which they grew up. As Reda Bensmaïa writes with regard to minor literature, "...such a change of perspective – [...]one experiences, travels, concretely forms oneself – cannot be conceived without a radical change in the very nature of the order of signs that is at work in the text" (xii). In Schoch's three works, the radical change takes place from within as well as from without. The spatial and temporal realms

in *Mit der Geschwindigkeit des Sommers* and *Selbstporträt mit Bonaparte*, which serve as location and orientation for her characters, are in constant flux and are even adopting the façade of the 19th century, essentially erasing both the GDR and early 20th century past. Her own radical change in “Der Körper des Salamanders” was a personal choice in ending her involvement with a system that restricted her ability to express herself through writing. It is not enough for East German memory discourse to simply reclaim that which has been obscured by (West) German popular representations of the GDR and unification; it is also charged with presenting how their particular engagement is essential for a “gesamtdeutsche” negotiation with their history, for as Bonaparte warns in *Selbstporträt*, forgetting the past occurs every few generations and can lead to disastrous results for all Germans.

The above mentioned theories are indeed useful means to explore East German literature in the 21st century. Memory discourse will always be able to explain much of what East German authors discuss in their works, especially as the distance from the end of the GDR grows greater and these and other East Germans attempt to avoid a complete disappearance of the society and culture which impacted the first 15 to 25 years of their lives. As they continue to write, however, we may see the slow disappearance of the Wende and its immediate aftermath as pragmatic themes in their works. In fact, it seems that Antje Rávic Strubel’s works are already engaged in such an endeavor, as those themes step further into the background. Therefore, it will continue to be important to view these works through a minor literature perspective, as all three authors remain politically and socially critical. Their experiences have not disappeared, rather they have impacted the way in which they see the world and, at least for the near future, having a critical

view upon the trajectory of society will be a valuable asset in dealing with the tumultuous times developing throughout the world.

It will remain to be seen how this particular period in (East) German writing will impact the future. Will they be seen as the writers who were able to highlight change through memory? Surely when this literature is looked at from the future, it may be (re)categorized, put into a specific genre, or seen as the last generation of East German authors before those who were born after 1990 (the 4th Generation?) begin to write about their lives and possibly collective experiences in the 2000s and the 2010s and 2020s. *East* German literature, culture, and perspectives have not disappeared as quickly as may have been expected when unification took place now more than 25 years ago, but the dreams of Helmut Kohl, Willy Brandt, and Frank Schirrmacher need not be deemed failures. The cultural and literary diversity that is born out the experiences of various groups of people including those from the former GDR and their children allows for representations of the ever-changing German population where the past, present, and future are continually negotiated and engaged by those who reflect upon their experiences in Germany. Ultimately, it is important in any endeavor to collect varying perspectives on the world. If one is able to see the world through the perspective of authors who have experiences in a different cultural, political, and social system, it may be possible to contemplate and ask other important questions about our collective society.

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