The Cultural Politics of the German Democratic Republic:
The Voices of Wolf Biermann, Christa Wolf, and Heiner Müller

G. Ann Stamp Miller
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Upon the completion of my Ph.D., I continued to research the cultural politics of the East German regime and have spent several summers in Berlin working on this project. I would like to extend special thanks to Mrs. Marschall-Reiser and the many archivists and librarians at the Bundesarchiv in Berlin and to Mrs. Maren Horn and the librarians at the Akademie der Künste in Berlin. In addition, the information I received from the personnel at the Staatsbibliothek in Berlin was extremely valuable to this project. All of these institutions and their employees were very accommodating and helpful in assisting me to locate important documents and materials for this study. I am deeply grateful to them all for sharing their expertise with me.

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Preface

The Cultural Politics of the German Democratic Republic: The Voices of Wolf Biermann, Christa Wolf, and Heiner Müller, deals with the intricate connection between the political structure of the East German government and cultural politics. Specifically, it focuses on the relationship between the government agencies and three authors. The study covers the period of dissent which began in the 1960s and ended with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. The evidence I use are the works of the authors and the government documents that reveal how the government bureaucracy dealt with the authors.

This text was written for not only scholars but a wider reading public to explain the predicament of writers governed by a socialist regime during the Cold War. It explores the difficulties the writers encountered in the 1960s with the government of East Germany and how their works did or did not conform to the cultural policy established by the GDR regime in 1951. The government believed that it was imperative for authors and artists to adhere to the literary policy of social realism prescribed by the East German Ministry of Culture. An author’s works were expected to conform to the political ideology of Marxism. The Ministry of Culture expected writers to depict the society through the glorification of Marxism. The East German cultural functionaries evaluated a piece of literature more for the author’s devotion to the political doctrine than the aesthetic quality of the work. If works did not conform, the government agencies such as the Ministry of Culture could apply pressure to the authors in many forms: censorship, silencing, fines, prosecution, surveillance and, for extreme cases, expatriation.

This study assesses three prominent writers of the former East Germany: Wolf Biermann, a lyricist; Christa Wolf, a novelist; and Heiner Müller, a dramatist. The analysis is based on the political content of the authors’ works and how the West German and East German critics evaluated them. Government documents from German State Archives revealed the sensitive nature of the political and writer conferences of the GDR.
The study analyzes how the writers’ interpretation of socialism increasingly deviated from that of the East German regime. Over time, the writers chose to express themselves in a different manner and thus, encountered problems and conflicts with the Ministry of Culture. The various poems, novels, and dramas of these East German authors illustrated the degree of dissension which began in the 1960s and continued through 1989. The metaphors employed by the authors reflected the struggle that the East German intellectuals experienced with the regime and their commitment to reform the existing socialist system from within.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Akademie der Künste (AdK)</td>
<td>Academy of the Arts</td>
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<td>Amt für Information</td>
<td>Office of Information</td>
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<td>Amt für Literatur</td>
<td>Office of Literature</td>
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<tr>
<td>Allgemeiner Deutscher Nachrichtendienst (ADN)</td>
<td>East German Newservice</td>
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<td>Berliner Arbeiter- und Studententheater</td>
<td>Berlin Workers and Students’ Theater</td>
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<td>Bundesarchiv</td>
<td>German State Archives</td>
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<td>Büro für Urheberrechte</td>
<td>Office of Copyrights</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deutsche Demokratische Republik (DDR)</td>
<td>German Democratic Republic (GDR)</td>
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<td>Deutsche Verlagskommision (DVK)</td>
<td>German Publishing Commission</td>
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<td>Deutsche Verwaltung für Volksbildung (DVV)</td>
<td>East German Administration of Culture and Education</td>
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<td>Deutscher Schriftstellerverband (DSV)</td>
<td>German Writers’ Union</td>
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<td>Deutsche Wirtschaftskommission (DWK)</td>
<td>German Economic Commission</td>
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<td>German Term</td>
<td>English Term</td>
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<tr>
<td>Freie Deutsche Jugend</td>
<td>Free German Youth</td>
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<td>Hauptverwaltung für Verlage und Buchhandel</td>
<td>Central Administration for Publishers and Book Sellers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Informeller Mitarbeiter</td>
<td>Informal Collaborator</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands (KPD)</td>
<td>German Communist Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>Konzentrationslager (KZ)</td>
<td>Concentration Camp</td>
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<td>Kulturbund</td>
<td>Cultural League</td>
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<td>Kulturpolitik</td>
<td>Cultural Policy</td>
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<td>Kunstkritik</td>
<td>Guardians of Art (Office in the MfS)</td>
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<td>Landwirtschaftliche Produktionsgenossenschaft</td>
<td>Agricultural Union</td>
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<td>Ministerium für Kultur (MfK)</td>
<td>Ministry of Culture</td>
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<td>Ministerium für Staatssicherheit (MfS)</td>
<td>Ministry of State Security (Stasi)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei</td>
<td>National Socialist Workers' Party (Nazi)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parteiversammlung der Berliner Schriftsteller</td>
<td>Party Meeting of Berlin Writers</td>
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<tr>
<td>PEN-Zentrum</td>
<td>Poets, Essayist, Novelists Center</td>
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<td>Schriftstellerverband der DDR</td>
<td>Writers’ Union of East Germany</td>
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<td>Selbstkritik</td>
<td>Self-Criticism</td>
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<td>Term</td>
<td>Translation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sowjetische Militäradministration (SMAD)</td>
<td>Soviet Military Administration</td>
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<td>Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (SED)</td>
<td>Socialist Unity Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staatsgewalt</td>
<td>Supreme Executive Power</td>
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<td>Verlagswesen</td>
<td>Office of Publishing Affairs</td>
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<td>Volksgericht</td>
<td>Peoples’ Court</td>
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<td>Volkskammer</td>
<td>Parliament</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wiedervereinigung</td>
<td>Reunification of East and West Germany</td>
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<td>Zentralkomitee</td>
<td>Central Committee</td>
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CHAPTER 1

UTOPIA or TYRANNY?

The State should not have anything to do with the affairs of art. It should not meddle or oppress others in this area. ¹

Bertolt Brecht

The purpose of this study is to illustrate the intricate connection between the political structure of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and cultural politics. The issue of cultural politics was a hotly debated topic in the early years of the GDR because government officials wanted to control the role of all art in this new society. Therefore, from the inception of the GDR there was warfare between the writers and the political officials overseeing the departments pertaining to culture. Unlike West Germany, the East German government required the writers to support the policies of the state through their literature. The government’s view was that the function of literature was to glorify Marxism and bring its citizens to a greater understanding of this ideology. Since the standards for writing literature were political, the emphasis was placed on content rather than form. The dilemma of East German literary intellectuals is an area which deserves more attention than it has received in the past. The years following World War II were characterized by social and political reforms in both East and West Germany. This study examines the policies of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in regard to its authors and how the East German writers did or did not adhere to the preset guidelines of the government. Certain significant historical events are highlighted that illustrate the shift in the writers' unquestioning support of the GDR regime

and consequently, caused conflicts with the *Ministerium für Kultur* (Ministry of Culture).²

**The Writers:**

The study assesses the work of three prominent writers of the GDR: Wolf Biermann, Christa Wolf, and Heiner Müller. The analysis is based on the political content of their work and, when possible, how the West German and East German critics evaluated it. This text explores how the writers’ interpretations of socialism over time did not agree with that of the GDR regime. Each writer chose to express himself/herself individually and, thus, encountered problems and conflicts with the *Ministerium für Kultur* (Ministry of Culture). Their various poems, novels, and dramas illustrate the degree of political dissension in the arts beginning in the 1960s and continuing through 1989. For example, the metaphor of the Berlin Wall and division used by the authors in the sixties and seventies represented the East Germans’ need to identify and create a new society and a culture apart from the excesses of western capitalism. However, in later years, the metaphor of cancer in the works of Wolf and Müller often reflected the struggle that East German intellectuals experienced with the regime of the GDR and the desire to reform the socialist system from within.

East German intellectuals were bound by their history but also the new order and culture they wished to help establish. Initially their literature reflected not only their commitment to the new anti-fascist order but the evolution that each writer underwent while living and working within the socialist society. The emphasis on this anti-fascist ideology allowed the GDR to distance itself from a Nazi past.³ Most certainly the East German literature of the post-war period stands as an historical testament to an era of communism which no longer exists.

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² The *Ministerium für Kultur* was created in 1954 and oversaw the publication of literature in the GDR. It had numerous departments responsible for censoring any and all works which did not adhere to the prescribed guidelines for writing literature.

³ Fascism is a totalitarian governmental system led by a dictator which emphasizes an aggressive nationalism and racism. The Nazi dictatorship of Adolph Hitler controlled most independent organizations, mobilized the economy, and persecuted the Jewish population from the late 1930s to 1945. See *Hitler and Nazi Germany* by Jackson J. Spielvogel.
This project focuses on Wolf Biermann, Christa Wolf, and Heiner Müller for specific reasons. Each socialist writer ended up playing a distinct and contrasting role. Wolf Biermann, a poet and lyricist, was in my opinion the catalyst to dissident behavior in East Germany. Without him, many critical events would not have occurred. By the mid 1960s, he was stalwart in his beliefs that socialism in the GDR was not operating the way that it had been intended. Biermann severely criticized the GDR government with his lyrics and in a rather short period of time, he became a cult hero for young people not only in East Berlin but in West Berlin as well. As much as the East German bureaucrats persisted, they could not silence this artist and with both Germanys watching, he eluded imprisonment. When Biermann encountered difficulties, it created a certain sense of solidarity among many of the artists. Often the intelligentsia believed they had more political clout than they actually did. But the intelligentsia soon discovered that intervening on behalf of a fellow artist could have a severe aftermath, as will be illustrated in the case of the writers’ petition, supporting Biermann after the regime had expatriated him in 1976.

Christa Wolf is significant to this study because unlike Biermann, she was initially the darling of the East German bureaucrats. Wolf has been criticized severely by both the East Germans and the West Germans for her role in society during the years of the GDR and after the fall of the Wall in 1989. Nevertheless, she had pressed continuously for change in numerous, if subtle ways. Moreover, Wolf’s inclusion in this study is necessary because as a member of the East German Writer’s Union, she knew and understood probably better than anyone the social and political pressures under which intellectuals labored to conform to government policy. A study of Wolf offers valuable insight about other authors such as Wolf Biermann and Heiner Müller with whom she worked in the Writers’ Union and at various writers’ conferences.

Finally, the dramatist and poet, Heiner Müller, is included because he has not only been hailed as one of the most important playwrights of this century but because he was a victim of GDR censorship for long periods of time. Müller was essentially discovered by the West. Because of this, he had more of his plays produced there than in East Germany. How

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4 East Berlin was essentially a gathering place for the writers and artists, so most resided there or at least had a second residence there. Consequently, they knew each other well and recognized their dilemma with the government bureaucrats early on. See *East German Dissidents and the Revolution of 1989* by Christian Joppke.
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Müller developed his own unique persona, survived censorship, and published his works, despite their political content, is an important part of a story about how specific artists learned to cope with an oppressive regime.

The Writer and the German Democratic Republic:

Each writer in this study is considered to be outstanding in his or her genre, but each experienced problems finding publishing outlets and suffered from governmental treatment under the GDR. Difficulties arose for the authors when trying to decipher the guidelines set by the Ministerium für Kultur because this involved considerable subtlety in determining precisely how much artistic license they truly did or did not have. Even when authors felt they had complied, they were often accused of not staying within the established criteria. For example, Müller’s works were often criticized and even censored for the negative and often humorous portrayal of Party bureaucrats. Wolf’s novels were often questioned because of the characters which exuded a strong sense of individuality as opposed to an emphasis placed on the collective consciousness of the socialist society. The stringent guidelines established by the Ministerium für Kultur of the GDR frequently meant that government editors required writers to submit numerous rewrites before a poem, novel, or drama actually could be published.

The study investigates the government editors who critiqued the artists’ works and what qualifications they brought to this position. They could easily support or tarnish an author’s career by their critiques in newspapers, literary journals, or government reports. The ultimate decision to publish a work was in the hands of the cultural functionaries, and at times, the East German critics evaluated a piece of literature more for the author’s devotion to the political doctrine than the aesthetic quality of the work. A socialist culture emerged from the writings and other media that came to print; writings which ostensibly supported the socialist ideology of the German Democratic Republic in the years 1950 through 1989 and often undermined it as well.

The intent of this project is not to critique any of the works of Wolf Biermann, Christa Wolf, or Heiner Müller on their literary merit. No method of literary criticism will be applied to discuss either the literary form or content of various works. Rather, this text examines the difficulties that the authors encountered with the GDR regime and discusses the specifics of these altercations between the writers and the socialist government. Essentially, the authors had no intent to cast doubt upon the so-
cialist ideology of Marx and Lenin. Instead their purpose was to criticize an autocratic regime which left the intellectuals and workers with no opportunity for open discourse.

This became a source of serious contention between the intelligentsia and a static GDR regime, which became paranoid and fearful of any form of either direct or indirect criticism. To protect themselves, the authorities of the GDR developed a seemingly infallible system to seek out disloyal citizens through elaborate security measures. They installed mass organizations or departments, each equipped with the appropriate propaganda techniques to insure total and complete control.

As stated specifically in the East German Constitution, criticism and self-criticism were an integral part of the communist doctrine. Lenin had encouraged this concept of self-criticism within the system. This constitutional right adhered to by writers and other dissidents eventually became the source of much conflict and oppression, especially when the regime misused the original intended purpose of this concept of criticism and self-criticism. For example, when a writer found his or her work censored, the Ministerium für Kultur suggested that the author draft a letter of self-criticism to exonerate himself or herself.

After the fall of the Wall in 1989, East German authors were condemned when information surfaced in the West German media about the informal cooperation many of them had with the Stasi (Staatssicherheit or State Intelligence). Both Christa Wolf and Heiner Müller were accused of being Informelle Mitarbeiter (informal collaborators) with the Stasi. It was believed that they had divulged information about their acquaintances and colleagues in these conversations with the secret police. These charges conjured up images of a repressive dictatorship strangling the espoused socialism of the new nation that emerged at the end of World War II. It also raised a series of questions about the authors’ reactions to such charges, about the cultural politics of the accusations, and about their truth or falsity. It is not likely that their meetings with government officials could

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5 Criticism and self-criticism were concepts, encouraged by Lenin, that were used as a controlling devise by the bureaucrats in the GDR as well as other Soviet republics. The GDR was, by no means, an isolated case. But the concepts would ultimately be used against the authors in the GDR to encourage them to conform to the policies established by the SED.

have assisted the regime’s intelligence departments to any large degree, but these issues will be explored more thoroughly in the text.

In short, this study explores the problems the intelligentsia faced with the East German regime. The Constitution proclaimed that the rights of authors and inventors are protected by the socialist state. Article 27 stated that:

1. Every citizen of the German Democratic Republic has the right, in accordance with the spirit and aims of this Constitution, to express his opinion freely and publicly. This right is not limited by any service or employment relationship. Nobody may be placed at a disadvantage for using this right.

2. Freedom of the press, radio and television are guaranteed.7

However, what happened to the basic rights of freedom of speech, press, and the right to strike expressed in the constitution? The issue of citizens’ rights can be explained by considering the role of the Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (SED or Socialist Unity Party) and the mass organizations which it carefully supervised. By 1949 the SED had become a highly-centralized Leninist Party and it remained the controlling political party of the land until 1989.8 The SED exerted its influence over the numerous mass organizations created to help govern East Germany.

How was it that mass organizations like the Ministerium für Kultur became so all powerful and controlling? From the GDR’s inception, culture in the sense of literature, music, and art became inextricably tied to East German politics and it was essentially a handful of political functionaries who dictated precisely what the nature of culture was to be. Was “creativity” impossible in this context? As Joachim Walter, an East

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8 The Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (Socialist Unity Party) was established in 1946 in the Soviet zone of Germany. The party declared its dedication to peace and anti-fascism. But by 1948-1949 and the onset of the Cold War, the SED became a mass party modeled after the Soviet Communist Party. The SED solidified its power by abolishing property ownership, trade unions, and the civil service. Walter Ulbricht became the SED’s General Secretary in 1950. Ulbricht was an authoritarian ruler and he controlled the political scene in the GDR until 1971. See Ulrich Mählert’s Kleine Geschichte der DDR.
German literary critic, suggested in his book *Sicherungsbereich Literatur: Schriftsteller und Staatssicherheit in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik*, the writers of the GDR worried about their artistic freedom and in turn the state worried that the writers’ artistic freedom would jeopardize its political power.9

Contemplating the dilemma of East German authors writing under the pressures of a totalitarian regime, I reflected upon Czeslaw Milosz’ book, *The Captive Mind*. It aptly describes the situation of the writer in an oppressed society when faced with the need or desire to describe society under such circumstances. Does the writer choose to reflect upon what he or she actually sees or does the author conform to the externally dictated policy, thereby negating the artist’s creativity? Does an author have a moral and ethical responsibility to society? Does an artist compromise his or her creativity in order to support the ideology of the state? These were the same questions that many of the East German authors would be forced to contemplate and each would have to decide for himself/herself as to how they would respond to difficult circumstances.

“Murti-Bing,” a metaphor that Czeslaw Milosz uses, was a fictitious character from the book *Insatiability* written by the painter-philosopher Stanislav Witkiewicz.10 In the story, Murti-Bing, a Mongolian philosopher, designed a pill that contained the philosophy of life. In his attempt to conquer other parts of the world he offered this pill to others. Upon taking the pill, a person became extremely passive, serene, and contented, and no longer had any worries. During the reign of Murti-Bing, a person did not have to make conscious and thoughtful decisions if he swallowed this pill. However, a person could never fully rid himself of his former personality and so schizophrenic characteristics surfaced.11 The Murti Bing metaphor precisely describes the situation for many of the intellectuals in East Germany. The problem then, was living in a society where creativity was stifled and the literature that a writer produced had to conform

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10 Czeslaw Milosz, a Polish writer, referred to the Murti-Bing pill as something which all writers and artists in the Soviet Block were forced to accept. They were told by their governments to support the concept of social realism in all of their works. In accepting the Murti-Bing pill, many writers did what they were told and did not resist their regime.

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to the dictates of an uncompromising regime. This text addresses how the authors eventually grappled with these schizophrenic conditions.

East German writers chose a specific and singular style of writing to express his or her views during a repressive era. In no other country of the Soviet-occupied Eastern Europe had so many intellectuals accepted the Murti-Bing pill, especially after the failed revolutions in Hungary and Czechoslovakia. In the early years, the intelligentsia followed the new regime of the GDR obediently and adhered to the cultural policy. Joachim Walter claimed that the attitude of “Narkotikum” by the East German intelligentsia, illustrated their utopic belief in socialism. Thus, this idea of utopia made it easier for the GDR functionaries to misuse their political power. There is a good deal of truth to Walter’s assertion, especially when one reads some of the early literature of the GDR and how the intelligentsia glorified this newly founded workers’ paradise.

In the early years, the East German government tried to legitimize its prestige by extending invitations to renowned writers. The German author, Heinrich Mann, was one of those invited to live and work in East Germany. However, Mann believed that once a writer became political and joined a party, he would be lost as a poet. Therefore, the poet or author forfeited his “freier Geist” (free spirit) when he became engaged in politics. Mann’s personal philosophy might have led him to challenge the GDR regime but he died before he could relocate there. Questions about “freier Geist,” creativity, and morality surfaced in the early years of the GDR regime but did not become serious immediately because many of the intellectuals learned to cope with the system by taking the “Murti-Bing Pill.”

Does the guilt of the collective rest with those who unwittingly supported the GDR and allowed the regime to force its citizens and intelligentsia into total and complete submission? The authors of West Germany were free to explore the burning issues of past wars and a new German consciousness. The East German authors were restricted to combating the ills of capitalism, fascism, and exhorting the advantages of the new socialist state. East Germany underwent an intense denazification

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12 In Chapter Two, I discuss the Hungarian Uprising in 1956 which was backed by the Hungarian writers of the Petöfi Circle and the Prague Spring in Czechoslovakia in 1968 that was supported by its intellectuals.
13 Walter 11.
14 Heinrich Mann, Macht und Mensch (Frankfurt am Main: 1989) 14-18.
Utopia or Tyranny?
campaign just like the West. Neither state wanted to confront Germany’s troubled past. They too were concerned about defining and creating a new national consciousness but this effort did not come easily and what surfaced in their writings was the schizophrenia of the two German states which had a shared history and the same cultural heritage. The division was unsettling for those in both states but it was the East German intelligentsia who had to cope with the inconsistencies and contradictions of the socialist ideology and who criticized the regime’s interpretation of how this system was to be implemented in all phases of life.

The term intelligentsia will be used throughout the text to refer to writers and artists of the German Democratic Republic. An historian, Mary Fulbrook, suggested in her book, *Anatomy of a Dictatorship*, it could also include engineers, doctors, lawyers, school teachers and those in the fields of technology and the media. Yet, for my purposes this study will limit the use of intelligentsia to the writers because this group believed it would be instrumental in helping shape and form the cultural and political sphere of the GDR.

This book illustrates how artists among the intelligentsia managed to cope within the system which they challenged consistently. It explores how the authors reacted to the Stasi conversations, investigations, observations, and political and personal persecution at Writers’ Conferences. The study analyzes how these challenges were perceived by the GDR authorities and the records of the GDR illustrate the vehement reaction of the party bosses and political functionaries to any form of dissent or nonconformist behavior in a society that was essentially ruled by a few.

Research:

The documents that cover the forty years of the East German government have recently been opened to scholars. They offer valuable insight into the lives of its citizens, and specifically, the intelligentsia. The GDR government records of the mass organizations testify to the dogmatic nature of the East German functionaries to attain the ideological subordination of the population. The GDR regime sought to control all aspects of public and private life, as the documents illustrate. It was a society where individual rights were to be subordinated to the common good for all, as determined by the SED (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands) or

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Socialist Unity Party. In an attempt to rid the society of all elements of the Nazi period, the SED sought, through the creation of its mass organizations, to observe, investigate, record, and control the lives of its citizens.

This project is based on a variety of sources: the East German Constitution, speeches from East German Writers’ and Political Conferences, East German government documents from its mass organizations, German news magazine interviews, and literary reviews from the West and East German newspapers. The comments of East German critics are valid in their own right as they reflect the stringent Kulturpolitik (cultural politics) of the GDR. The assessment of both West and East German critics are essential to this study since they reflect the constant friction between the two German states during the years of the Cold War. A favorable review by a West German critic could damage the political reputation of an East German author in his own country just as easily as a poor review by an East German critic. How a literary critic interpreted an author’s work in regard to content and meaning was critical.

I conducted my research at several institutions in Berlin, Germany in the summers of 1998 and 1999. The two state libraries; Staatsbibliothek (Haus 1) and Staatsbibliothek (Haus 2) in Berlin had a variety of sources that were pertinent. They contained many newspapers, journals, and some useful government documents. The two libraries, as well as many other libraries and archives, are still in the process of combining, updating, and modernizing their catalogues of sources which the reunification of East and West Germany has occasioned. But despite the cataloguing difficulties, the librarians were extremely helpful and assisted me when problems arose as to the exact location of an item.

The Bundesarchiv, which is a state archive located in Berlin contained a wealth of information, and its collections are also in the process of combining and modernizing sources from the Potsdam Archive which was closed after reunification. In the interim, many of the documents are still being processed as quickly as possible and some are being assigned temporary reference numbers until all the details can be worked out. Nevertheless, the extremely knowledgeable archivists again helped me exploit the materials available. There is a considerable amount of information from the East German mass organizations located at the Bundesarchiv. The mass organizations were administrative departments such as the Freie Deutsche Jugend (Free German Youth), Ministerium für Kultur (Ministry of Culture), and the Kulturbund (Cultural League) that were designed with
the full purpose and intent of controlling the entire population through various methods of propaganda.

It was not easy to discern which of these mass organizations such as the *Freie Deutsche Jugend*, *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands*, *Kulturbund*, or the *Ministerium für Kultur* held the greatest amount of significant information pertaining to this study. There were also numerous departments and sub-departments within each mass organization which demanded my attention. Some of the files were listed as *Gesperrt* which meant that I could read them but not copy from them. Occasionally valuable documents concerning Biermann, Wolf, or Müller had been removed from a file. In their place lay an intriguing piece of paper stating that the documents had been expunged because it was damaging to the authors in some way. There were also hand-written notes and comments jotted across various documents and sentences were underlined. It was difficult to decipher who exactly had made the notations but the political agenda was clear by how carefully government officials tracked writers and other citizens who did not conform.

At the time of this study, I was not able to access materials at the Gauck Behörde in Berlin.\(^{16}\) I had been on a waiting list to view the documents in this archive for the past few years. There was a considerable amount of personal information about the three authors in this archive but special permission was needed to view the documents of persons still living.\(^{17}\)

It was difficult to access personal information about the authors unless they had specifically written about it. For instance, little was to be found about Biermann’s family and their reactions to his expatriation. Wolf discusses her reactions and her husband’s to a small degree in

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\(^{16}\) On October 3, 1990 Joachim Gauck established the archive holding the records for all those who had been under Stasi surveillance in the German Democratic Republic. In a December 1989 talkshow, Gauck stated that the East German population had more to fear from the *Ministerium für Staatssicherheit* (MfS- Stasi) and the *Amt für Nationale Sicherheit* (AfNS- Department for National Security) than the radical right extremists. See *Der SED Staat* by Klaus Schroeder, 370, and *Geschichte der Opposition in der DDR 1949–1989* by Ehrhart Neubert. 884-885.

\(^{17}\) Wolf Biermann claimed that there are over forty files of documents recording his activities while he lived in the GDR. Detailed documents pertaining to Biermann were kept until 1976. They dealt with the political turmoil which ensued after his expatriation. After 1976 Biermann lived in the West and was not permitted to even visit East Germany until thirteen years later.
reference to certain dilemmas only because he was a writer and literary critic and moved in the same circles of the intelligentsia as she did. Personal finance was also a difficult area to investigate. I searched endlessly in the *Druckgenemigung* (Permission to Print). Many times the fee that an author received could be found there but rarely in the cases of Müller or Wolf. Nor did one find the severe criticism of works that was so often the case with other authors. I am inclined to believe that much of this information lay in the personal files of Müller and Wolf. Müller made vague references to these things in his autobiography *Krieg ohne Schlacht* (War without Battle) and at this writing, Wolf has yet to reveal this information. She has not offered her readers an autobiography with such personal details and is not even inclined in the past few years to give interviews. When she does allow some sort of dialogue with the press, the conversation is quite superficial and understandably, exhibits a defense nature. Wolf and Müller, as authors of international fame received certain perks and benefits from the SED but as yet there is no trail as to how they were paid. As an archivist explained to me, in a capitalist society such things are often made public but in the GDR how much an author made and what sort of benefits they received was not public knowledge. It was a private matter.

The material on Müller was not as accessible as that of Biermann or Wolf. After Müller’s death in 1995 there were problems with acquiring any information in regard to him because of legal questions as to whom this material actually belonged. The details in dispute have apparently been worked out with his widow and her lawyers but at the time of my research, I had to rely largely on the *Akademie der Künste* for information concerning this author. However, today the Heiner Müller Archive is housed in the *Akademie der Künste*. Yet many of the items are still being catalogued such as the works, letters, and documents that will testify to a life lived under two dictatorships; the Nazi years as a teenager, and forty years under the GDR.

The *Akademie der Künste* had a fine collection of all East German literary journals, documents of the writers’ conferences, East and West German newspapers, and photographs which enhanced my study significantly. The librarians at the *Akademie* were quite accommodating.

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18 In the chapters on Christa Wolf and Heiner Müller, I discuss that one of the effects of the Biermann Affair was generous travel benefits for authors who had an understanding, or at least feigned to have an understanding with the GDR regime, while normal citizens did not have such luxury.
and ready to assist my research in any way possible. I was extremely fortunate to work with such knowledgeable and helpful people.

**Brief Outline of the Text:**

Chapter One focuses on the scope and purpose of this study. Chapter Two outlines the early history of the GDR and introduces the political ideology of socialism and how the SED established its authority and solidified its power in the republic by 1948-1949. This chapter details an early opposition to the GDR government in 1953 and also considers the agitation behind the Hungarian uprising in 1956 and the Prague Spring in 1968. Chapter Three examines the guidelines set by the regime and traces the change in cultural policy that the government pursued with the writers over the years. Chapter Four details some of the key mass organizations in the GDR and explains briefly how several of the most important ones operated and what kind of control they had over the authors who wished to publish. It also identifies various publishing houses and comments on their close association with the state. Chapter Five discusses the playwright Bertolt Brecht and his brief interlude in the United States during the Red Scare before relocating to the Soviet-occupied sector of Germany at the end of World War II. The chapter introduces the writers Biermann, Wolf, and Müller. Chapters Six, Seven, and Eight, after highlighting certain biographical information about the lives of the authors, clarify their reasons for choosing to live in the GDR or relocate there after World War II. There is a discussion of the political ideologies of the authors and their initial dedication to the newly established government. The chapters also explore more thoroughly the altercations the authors had with the cultural functionaries over time. It is imperative to consider the difficulties the authors encountered with the regime about the publication of their works, because they believed that their voices would be recognized and heard by this regime. These authors were totally unprepared then to deal with the censoring and in some cases, even the suppression of their works.

The final chapter discusses the implications of the study of the three authors and their overall effectiveness as writers in the GDR society, despite the requirement to conform (or not to conform) to the political and cultural dictates of the SED. The study also explores the contradictions which existed in East German society and how the authors sought to shed light on these issues in their works. Other texts have dealt with the fact that authors did indeed encounter problems with the GDR authorities but this work seeks to explain what those political differences were and precisely