(RE)CASTING THE SELF IN MEMORY NARRATIVES:
MONIKA MARON’S STILLE ZEILE SECHS, ANIMAL TRISTE AND PAWELS BRIEFE

Kimberly Anni Strehlow

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate College of Bowling Green
State University in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

August 2009

Committee:

Christina Guenther, Advisor

Kristie Foell
ABSTRACT

Christina Guenther, Advisor

This thesis explores the memory discourse particular to Monika Maron’s *Stille Zeile sechs* (1991), *Animal triste* (1996) and *Pawels Briefe* (1999). The thesis reveals that for Maron, memory work is not an investigation of authenticity but a process that combines documents of memory and constructed memories in order to provide a comprehensive memory text that allows an individual to re-cast the self.

Maron’s three texts reveal a progression in the discussion about how memories might be translated into a narrative. This thesis examines the use of form and content of autobiographical writing in all three novels, all of which assist in forming a new self. In the first chapter on *Stille Zeile sechs* this is discussed with reference to the purpose and effect of memoir writing in the GDR in the 1980s. In the second chapter *Animal triste* is presented as a text that emerges out of the need to narrate a new biography in light of traumatic memories. In the third chapter I analyze how in *Pawels Briefe* the process of remembering is articulated through Maron’s untraditional format of autobiographical writing with emphasis on the use of photographs and letters.
Für Oma. Immer hast du mich daran erinnert, “I can”

For Mom and Papa

And

For Taylor: my love, my best friend
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would first like to thank my parents, Ute and Mark, for their constant support, encouragement, and love throughout this journey. It is because of you that I am always able to find the motivation and inspiration to forge ahead in spite of seemingly insurmountable obstacles. I would also like to express the most heartfelt thanks to Taylor. It is no understatement that your patience, sacrifice, and unwavering dedication made this accomplishment possible. I owe my successes to you. Thank you for never accepting less than my best.

I would like to thank the entire staff of German professors at Bowling Green State University for their contributions to my academic experience here and in Austria. I would especially like to thank Dr. Edgar Landgraf for some of the most intense challenges of my academic career. Never have I felt more tested, questioned, and no doubt; frustrated. Thank you for challenging me to think.

This thesis would not have been possible without the consistent advice and challenging questions from Dr. Christina Guenther, who provided me with a structure for success. I highly appreciate and value your contributions and (surely) endless hours of corrections and suggestions on this project. I would also like to thank Dr. Kristie Foell for her time spent reading and critiquing this thesis.

Finally, thank you to all my friends and family who have supported me in this venture. Thank you for believing in me.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>INTRODUCTION</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER I. DECONSTRUCTING BINARY OPPOSITIONS AND REFRAMING MEMORIES IN THE GDR IN MONIKA MARON’S <em>STILLE ZEILE SECHS</em></strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transforming Memories into Memoirs</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Binary Oppositions and GDR Politics</td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosalind’s Memory Quest</td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER II. TRANSLATING MEMORIES: USING NARRATION TO FORM A NEW SELF IN MONIKA MARON’S <em>ANIMAL TRISTE</em></strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translating Traumatic Memory</td>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aids to Memory Translation: Documents and Constructed Memories</td>
<td></td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memory Fantasies and the Female Body</td>
<td></td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Skeletal Framework of GDR Personal and Collective Memory</td>
<td></td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER III. DIALOG WITH THE DEAD: TRANSFERRING MEMORIES ACROSS THREE GENERATIONS IN MONIKA MARON’S <em>PAWELS BRIEFE</em></strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memory Work in the Two Germanys across Three Generations</td>
<td></td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transcribing Memories through Letters and Family Photographs</td>
<td></td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialog with the Dead</td>
<td></td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CONCLUSION</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WORKS CITED</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

Memories are a key source or basis in the process of articulating or establishing our personal identity. If the memories are not based on lived experience, we construct them from information in photographs, letters, or stories narrated by others close to us. How and why do we make these memories into something useful or meaningful? How do we, situated as we are in a different historical context than our forebears, re-cast our selves in a way that connects past worlds with the present one? Surely, memories and the process of articulating memories are also bound to specific cultural or national contexts. But how?

Monika Maron presents and explores these complex questions in her three texts *Stille Zeile sechs*, *Animal triste* and *Pawels Briefe*. With her discussions of both personal and collective memory discourse, Maron situates her novels within the historical framework of the GDR in *Stille Zeile sechs* (1991), in East Germany after German reunification in *Animal triste* (1996) and in Germany during WWII, in the GDR, and in both Germanys after reunification in *Pawels Briefe* (1999). Clearly connecting each historical context with both a need and inspiration for memory work, Maron builds on and extends East and West German memory discourse in the 80s and 90s.

Maron was born in 1941 and lived in West Berlin until she was ten, when she moved to East Berlin with her mother and aunt. In 1988 she traveled back to West Germany on a three-year visa for research pertaining to her literary work and now still lives in Hamburg. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, Maron was heavily criticized due to her involvement with the *Staatssicherheit* (East German Secret Police). Maron had provided information to the East German government in exchange for her visa to travel to West Germany. Maron’s difficult relationship with her father Karl Maron is evident in many of her autobiographical reflections in
her novels. Karl Maron was head of the *Volkspolizei* (State Police) in the GDR and the Minister of the Interior. In 1978 Maron was denied publishing rights in the GDR due to censorship and her first novel *Flugasche* was thus published exclusively in the West in 1981.

Maron’s literary works are heavily influenced by her own biography. Many characters in her novels have the same names as her family members. Perhaps due to her complex family history, Maron provides a new approach to the common victim-perpetrator discussion waged in postwar West Germany from the 1960s onward. Interestingly, she juxtaposes her many family identities with one another in her texts. Her experiences as a child during WWII in West Berlin, in East Berlin during communist rule, and in Hamburg before and after German unification certainly influence her many reflections on the common victim-perpetrator discussion in Germany regarding the Third Reich and, more recently, the dictatorship in the GDR.

Additionally, her family history aids in these reflections. Maron’s grandparents were victims of the Holocaust; her father, on the other hand, was a German soldier in WWII and her mother and stepfather were enthusiastic supporters of communism. Maron’s family history, then, reveals that her relatives lived in three historical periods and could each be identified as either a victim or a perpetrator in their respective historical contexts. Given this dynamic, Maron seems to consider with what role, victim or perpetrator, she must identify. First questioning whether to sympathize with one generation as victims and despise the next as perpetrators, Maron quickly realizes that this discourse is unsuccessful in creating a new, modern and effective construction of the self. Instead, Maron hypothesizes in her texts that the construction of self is not found in identifying in terms of a binary opposition, i.e. with victim or perpetrator roles, but that each individual is composed of both components through the very relation to generations past.
Maron creates three texts which increasingly consider the process of creating this connection to past generations that allows for a construction of the self. This process is particularly productive because of the construction of a narrative based on a renewal of memories. Through a translation of these memories into a narrative, Maron shows how the self can be re-cast to reveal a self that is separate from the restrictive victim-perpetrator roles.

The first chapter of this thesis will analyze Maron’s reflections in *Stille Zeile sechs* on the literary shape that memory work can take, namely in memoir writing. Maron seems to question what purpose memoir writing serves, specifically in the GDR society of the 1980s. In reflecting on this question I outline the motivation, content and form of memoir writing. Additionally, I examine the process of remembering. I pose the question: what causes the protagonist to begin her own memory work that, thus, allows her to begin casting her self? In the translation of the protagonist’s memories into the memoir that is *Stille Zeile sechs*, many reflections on the reliability of memory begin to surface. In these reflections the protagonist also begins to reevaluate the notion of the binary opposition perpetrator vs. victim.

The second chapter continues with a discussion of Maron’s novel *Animal triste*. In terms of her reflections of the process of remembering, Maron seems to pick up where *Stille Zeile sechs* left off. With questions of the reliability of memory in mind, Maron seems to ask whether the traditional form of autobiographical writing is productive in recreating the self. With the need for a new biography in light of the fall of the Berlin Wall, Maron creates a character that is essentially void of any biographical information worthy of memoir writing as she suffers from excessive forgetfulness. What forms do the narrator’s memories take and how does this aid her in a progression of memory work in order to eventually construct her biography? In this case, the construction of her biography is a direct result of a translation from traumatic to narrative
memory. I will outline how this translation specifically takes the form of constructed memories, which require imagination and fantasy, and documents of memory, which rely on some concrete artifact as a reference.

The third chapter articulates the specific form and content of memory work in Pawels Briefe. Declaring Pawels Briefe “Eine Familiengeschichte,” Maron distances herself from the fictional nature of Stille Zeile sechs and Animal triste and experiments with an autobiographical genre. She purposefully includes many autobiographical facts about her own life, yet refuses to identify Pawels Briefe as a purely autobiographical work. It is namely eine, not meine “Familiengeschichte.” As in Stille Zeile sechs and the discussion of memoir writing in that novel, she problematizes the use of indisputable personal facts in memoirs in Pawels Briefe as well. I will analyze Maron’s use of photographs and letters to articulate the need to move beyond the discussion of authenticity of memory to a more productive use of renewed memories. Additionally, the chapter will include a discussion of the interchangeability of family photographs that cause the viewer/reader to understand them as generic and, therefore, also develop a certain connectedness to an unfamiliar past. I will also articulate how Maron manages to continue the victim-perpetrator discussion, so central to Stille Zeile sechs, while facilitating a dialog with the dead.

In constituting a connection and progression from Stille Zeile sechs to Animal triste to Pawels Briefe, this thesis argues that the process of remembering is multifaceted. There is a need to translate, transcribe and transfer memories into the narrative form. The translations all, regardless of intention, involve some form of construction which can be viewed as invention. There is often a need to repair, in the case of traumatic or repressed memories, a need to reanimate in order to make real, and most importantly, a need to renew, or somehow improve on
the core foundation of memory work. Just as the dinosaur skeleton in *Animal triste* exists as an artifact and consists of artificial components, so too is memory a combination of fact, fiction, and imagination. Moreover, memory is never trapped in a vacuum, it seems. A framework of some sort is necessary in terms of specific historical contexts such as WWII, the GDR, or post-Wall Germany. Remembering in the form of a narrative exists in all cultures as a significant process of casting the self.
CHAPTER I. DECONSTRUCTING BINARY OPPOSITIONS AND REFRAMING MEMORIES IN THE GDR IN MONIKA MARON’S STILLE ZEILE SECHS

Monika Maron’s 1991 novel *Stille Zeile sechs* highlights a woman’s perspective on an individual struggle for identity outside of the state-sanctioned national identity in the GDR of the 1980s. *Stille Zeile sechs* is narrated by the protagonist Rosalind Polkowski who resigns from her position as a historian in East Berlin due to her epiphany: “Ich werde nicht mehr für Geld denken” (24). She leaves the professional public sphere and retreats into the privacy and the freedom of her own world where she enters into an unplanned and even unfocused search for self. This search starts with a chance meeting with Herbert Beerenbaum, an enthusiastic elder of the communist party. Despite her disgust for old men and party politics, she accepts a job offer from him to type his memoirs. Her determination not to think for money, however, crumbles as she cannot remain removed or objective with regard to Beerenbaum’s stories. In fact, she develops a hatred for Beerenbaum and wishes him dead. Eventually her unwelcome interrogations appear to cause his deadly heart attack indirectly. The novel alternates between a present scene at Beerenbaum’s funeral and the past incidents leading up to his death. Furthermore, Beerenbaum’s dictations are intertwined with Rosalind’s memories and anecdotes of her childhood. Her difficult relationship with Beerenbaum, whom she first identifies as a perpetrator due to her opposition to his political views and policies, in the end leads her to move beyond this very system of binary oppositions of perpetrator and victim.

Numerous critics of *Stille Zeile sechs*, including Lee Hyunseon, Birgit Konze, Georg Leisten, Lothar Blum and Alison Lewis have analyzed the novel from a range of perspectives: the dialectic of confessions, the representation of childhood in the GDR, depictions of the body,
intergenerational conflicts and the longing for a deed. These discussions are all most insightful, but my primary focus in this paper will be on Rosalind’s memory quest.

*Stille Zeile sechs* develops a unique memory discourse that involves a complex relationship between memory and identity. It is not just any memory, however, but particularly difficult, repressed, or traumatic memories, which can serve as objects of mediation between past and present. Rosalind’s memory quest, although unintentional, seems to result in an altered identity, one in which the line between perpetrator and victim becomes blurred. Dividing fellow citizens into perpetrators and victims, an almost fixed binary opposition, was an especially troubling tendency in post-GDR society when Maron was writing the novel. With the end of communism in East Germany, GDR citizens as well as historians were quick to analyze the many perpetrator roles that the constituents of this political system played. In this discussion, then, the average GDR citizen was seen as the victim of a repressive, communist society. As Mary Fulbrook points out in *The People’s State*, however, the GDR’s role in history must be viewed beyond the discussion of this binary opposition. When analyzing Rosalind’s behaviors in *Stille Zeile sechs*, I will show that her memory quest leads her to discover precisely what Fulbrook argues, namely that the social history of the GDR is much more complicated than the neat resolutions derived from binary opposition. Furthermore, I will argue that Beerenbaum’s purpose in this novel can be seen as a trigger for Rosalind’s own memory work, paradoxically resulting in a transcription of her own memoirs in the form of the book *Stille Zeile sechs*.

---

1 See Works Cited for corresponding article titles. The article by Alison Lewis discussed here refers to “‘Die Sehnsucht nach einer Tat’: Engagement und weibliche Identitätsstiftung in den Romanen Monika Marons.”

2 In the last line of her conclusion, Mary Fulbrook states, “It is this multifaceted and complex character of East German social history that helps to explain the paradox of conflicting histories and memories, of undoubtedly repressive structures and genuine nostalgia for lived experiences” (298).
Ultimately, Rosalind’s personal memory discourse allows her to move beyond resentment toward Beerenbaum or any other perpetrator that fits the order of binary opposition in the novel.

**Transforming Memories into Memoirs**

James R. Reece discusses the complex character of autobiographical writing with specific reference to the GDR and Günter de Bruyn’s own memory work in his essay “Remembering the GDR: Memory and Evasion in Autobiographical Writing from the Former GDR.” In Reece’s words:

> In the 1990s autobiography in various guises has figured prominently in the large body of writing devoted to remembering the GDR. Perhaps quite naturally, writers who had lived part or all of their creative lives in the shadow of a restrictive and coercive state turned to autobiographical writing, whether as a simple act of self-defense and self-definition, or as the means to interrogate their lives as former citizens of the GDR. (61-62)

Reece recognizes in the quotation above that autobiographical writing can be seen as a natural response of self-expression after years of political rule where honest confessions were discouraged and a positive communist discourse was privileged. Lee Hyunseon also argues this point but speaks instead in terms of a public “Geständniszwang im Stalinismus” (58). Hyunseon states the following in his essay “Die Dialektik des Geständnisses: Monika Marons *Stille Zeile sechs* und die autobiografischen Diskurse nach 1989”: “Im Gegensatz zu dem äußerlichen Geständniszwang im Stalinismus, handelt es sich in den Geständnissen nach 1989 um freiwillige Geständnisse und einen inneren Zwang, d.h. ein zwingendes, starkes Bedürfnis nach einem freiwilligen, zwangfreien und offenen Geständnis” (58). Thus, after the fall of the Wall, the GDR citizens were no longer living in the shadow of communism and, therefore, were given the
freedom, or even felt the necessity in Hyunseon’s terms, to reflect or confess publically. In the wake of the fall of the Berlin Wall, then, there was a proliferation of memoirs.

Party functionaries such as Maron’s character Herbert Beerenbaum also would have felt inspired to transcribe their experiences whether in self-defense or self-definition. *Stille Zeile sechs* presents an interesting perspective on this process since it is Maron’s first novel written after the fall of the Wall but is set in the mid 1980s. Beerenbaum’s reason for writing his memoirs is left unexplained in the novel. It is assumed that as an enthusiastic, life-long party functionary, his memoirs would praise communism and its supporters. However, the novel’s narrator, Rosalind Polkowski, allows such limited insight into the content of Beerenbaum’s memoirs that it is impossible to be sure what his true intentions were. It is important, therefore, to note that Hyunseon’s terminology for Beerenbaum’s memoir writing as a “Geständnis” (confession) may be somewhat problematic. Hyunseon explains the term as follows: “Das Geständnis ist ein Diskursritual, in dem eine Person einer ‘richtenden’ anderen aufrichtig das erzählt, was diese von dem Geständigen hören will, oder etwas Peinliches bzw. Geheimnisvolles, was normalerweise sehr schwer zu sagen ist” (57). This definition of “Geständnis” is problematic when used to define Beerenbaum’s autobiographical writing because Beerenbaum never states that he has any sort of confession to make. Rosalind is the person who accuses and interrogates Beerenbaum for something she believes will be a confession, but this is never provided. For this reason it is critical for my argument and the context of the novel to understand Beerenbaum’s various possible reasons for autobiographical writing.

As a contrast, consider Reece’s reflection on Günter de Bruyn’s autobiographical project:

He [Günter de Bruyn] goes on to differentiate between various aspects of the impulse to write factually about oneself. It is, first and foremost, a means of
confronting oneself, of “Selbstauseinandersetzung” of “Selbstforschung und Selbstklärung” but also a means of “Rechenschaftsablegung” (18); it is, ultimately, “der Versuch, mich über mich selbst aufzuklären,” the attempt to discover “wer ich eigentlich sei” (19). Autobiography also involves examining one’s relationship to history and to the time in which one has lived; it is the opportunity “das Ich in die historischen Geschehnisse einzuordnen, es aus ihnen erklären, durch sie vielleicht auch bewerten zu können” (19-20). (64)

In other words, for Reece Günter de Bruyn effectively outlines the different reasons for writing an autobiography in the post-GDR context. As he explains further, good autobiographical writing should involve some sort of self-interrogation so that the writer can be as honest as possible with him/herself.

In comparison, then, to Maron’s Stille Zeile sechs, a novel about memoir writing, the reader remains unaware of Beerenbaum’s impetus to self-interrogate. The interrogator is clearly Rosalind, despite her desire to remain distanced and uninvolved with Beerenbaum’s life story. Her inclination to become involved, however, may at first glance seem to be evidence of what Reece outlines as bad autobiographical writing with reference to the autobiography of Hermann Kant:

Kant’s less-than-straightforward Erinnerungen belie his naïve reliance on the “facts” of his life to speak for themselves; they illustrate well the problematic relationship between memory and truth, between truthfulness and evasion in autobiographical writing. (63)

On one hand, Rosalind’s involvement in Beerenbaum’s memoir writing suggests that, like Kant, Beerenbaum is unable to be truthful or straightforward in his writing. Instead,
however, I will suggest that Rosalind’s interrogation of Beerenbaum’s own memories is not due to his bad autobiographical writing but rather to her aversion to her own memories which confront and interrogate her throughout the novel. In the end, the novel is not about Beerenbaum’s memoirs, but an autobiography of Rosalind.

This, however, by no means excuses Beerenbaum of the implications behind writing his memoirs. Clearly, when choosing to transcribe one’s memories onto paper to be published, there is an intended purpose. This concept, which is not discussed in Reece’s essay, touches on the historical and cultural consequences of autobiographical writing. An author who chooses to publish facts and truth about his/her life often chooses to be legitimized by society. Once read by an audience, the author becomes culturally and historically immortalized. The text serves as a testimonial or memorial to the author.

Why, then, does Beerenbaum choose to write his memoirs? This seems to remain unclear, but a look at a different area of autobiographical work might help to articulate some hypotheses. An interesting and valuable parallel here can be drawn from Mieke Bal’s discussion “Memories in the Museum: Preposterous Histories for Today.” In this essay Bal does not address any literary works of Maron, but she does have an applicable argument relating to the subject of autobiographical writing. In her intriguing analysis of Ken Aptekar’s art exhibition, “My parents take us on trips” (1997), she discusses the use of autobiographical art. In this particular example Ken Aptekar has taken original works from Hobbema and made his own copies, adding some element of the present and overlaying written text as a palimpsest. The result is a relic of the past being touched and transformed by the present and additionally made autobiographical through the text that is placed over the top of it. In her analysis Bal states, “For me, it is an exemplary act of memory: an intervention in the museum that both contributes and solicits acts of memory, on
a number of different levels” (173). Not only is it an “exemplary act of memory” it is also a
connection to national collective memory, one which a group of people can access, and which
serves, therefore, also a dialog between past, present and personal stories. She hastens to add:

But that access to the “real” person can hamper your free, personal engagement
with the autobiographer’s texts. In such cases, the personal narrative of memory
becomes an institutional force, almost oppressively telling you how to read: an act
of shaping other people’s memories. The intimacy gives way to the pressure of
public culture. (174)

So, if we are to assume that these paintings can be used as a parallel to an
autobiographical text, which Bal also suggests, then it helps to illuminate the impact of
autobiographical art on not just the artist but the viewer/reader as well. These stories have
influence in “shaping other people’s memories” because they share elements of historical
collective memory that everyone holds to be true (WWII, GDR for instance). This is useful in the
discussion of Beerenbaum’s memoirs because it signifies the possible influence on society by
autobiographical writers with political power. Clearly Beerenbaum was aware of this power of
influence before determining to write his memoirs. It seems fair to assume that, writing in the
mid 1980s, his purpose is to pass on his experiences to the next generation in hopes that they
would learn from him and possibly follow his advice. This also explains Rosalind’s aversion to
his memoirs. She is aware of the impact his memoirs could have on GDR society, supporting the
very system that she detests and finds to be faulty.
As other critics have already argued, *Stille Zeile sechs* presents an intergenerational conflict between Beerenbaum and Rosalind.³ The relationship between these two characters represents the changing ideology in East Germany from one generation to the next. In his brief analysis of Maron’s works, Lothar Blum discusses the generational conflict against the backdrop of *Erinnerungsdiskurs* (memory discourse), which he sees as relevant in all of Maron’s works.

Was hier nebeneinander steht, sind nicht nur zwei Strömungen oder Tendenzen, sondern tatsächlich zwei divergierende Kulturen, deren Auseinanderentwicklung oft genug die Signatur des Generationenkonflikts zeigt. Der unterschiedliche Stellenwert, der dem Phänomen ‘Erinnerung’ in den beiden Kulturkonzepten zugewiesen wird, dürfte als relevante Scheidegrenze auch kaum zu überbrücken sein. (141)

Blum’s assessment of the different modes of memory for each generation is relevant and helpful in the analysis of *Stille Zeile sechs*. This discussion helps articulate the binary oppositions which are prevalent throughout the novel. Maron juxtaposes her protagonist and narrator with nearly every other character in the novel. Maron also uses other polarities to emphasize not only generational differences but also differences in political ideology and personality. These oppositions are critical to analyze because of the change in the protagonist’s position as a figure of opposition. I argue that the protagonist’s own memory work throughout

---

³This reference most specifically Lothar Blum’s “ ‘Irgendwann, denken wir, muß ich das genau wissen.’ Der Erinnerungsdiskurs bei Monika Maron,” which is a discussion not just of *Stille Zeile sechs* but other novels by Monika Maron. See this article for more on the intergenerational conflict between Rosalind and Beerenbaum. Also see Anne Fuchs’s article, “From ‘Vergangenheitsbewältigung’ to Generational Memory Contests in Günter Grass, Monika Maron and Uwe Timm” for more on intergenerational conflicts and memory in the GDR.
the novel allows her eventually to begin to break free of thinking in terms of clear cut oppositions including the familiar victim-perpetrator opposition.

To begin this discussion of binary oppositions, it is helpful to return to Mary Fulbrook’s *The People’s State*. In the conclusion of her study, Fulbrook explains that her analysis of GDR social history takes a different perspective from other, more common histories. In outlining her central argument, Fulbrook lays out the very binary oppositions that play a central role in *Stille Zeile sechs*. She articulates convincingly why this system of oppositions is unsuccessful:

This huge area of overlap between what are conventionally distinguished as ‘state’ and ‘society’, the lack of a clear dividing line in a massive margin of popular involvement, and the sheer extent of participation in the functioning of the structures of power on the ground, make it very difficult for a significant percentage of East Germans to adopt the black-and-white condemnation of the ‘evil regime’ beloved of theorists of totalitarianism. For this would mean casting themselves in the roles of ‘perpetrators’ and ‘accomplices’ and hence condemning themselves.

Nor could most East Germans be happy with allotted roles of passive ‘victim’ or ‘dupe’, mere ‘object’ rather than ‘subject’ of history. (295)

Fulbrook does not excuse the actions of totalitarianism in the GDR but does suggest that the conflicting feelings and memories of GDR citizens serve as proof that there is not a clear-cut, or as she states “black-and-white,” assessment of this regime. Furthermore, this assessment through use of binary oppositions is not helpful in the dialog on the part of former East German citizens with their history. Fulbrook makes an additional insightful point about the positive consequences of her arguments:
Secondly therefore, and perhaps equally significant, it is important to recognize the fact that ‘the people’ more generally – and not merely those who participated actively either in the formal structures of power or as dissidents and political opponents – played an active role in shaping their own lives, and taking initiatives to shape their own futures in the circumstances in which they found themselves.

To paraphrase Marx: people made their own history, but they made it not in conditions of their own choosing. (295)

Fulbrook concludes, therefore, that the GDR was in fact not a repressive perpetrator in the sense that it would not still allow citizens to lead their own lives and make their own history. This argument is helpful because it allows those who experienced this system to perhaps move beyond resentment of the system and beyond their conflicted memories of GDR society.

These binary oppositions that are critical in *Stille Zeile sechs* are certainly rooted in the history of the GDR that Fulbrook describes. It is still important to understand where the concept of these binary oppositions stemmed from. Gisela Shaw touches on this in her essay “Living Without Utopia: Four Women Writers’ Responses to the Demise of the GDR.” She discusses the works of Maron, Irmtraud Morgner, Helga Königsdorf and Brigitte Burmeister in relation to their respective biographies as authors and German citizens. Shaw identifies the root of one of the oppositions in the GDR as stemming from the construction of communism:

The fact that the Socialist Unity Party from the start consistently presented the doctrine of communism as the only alternative to fascism made it difficult for doubt or criticism to be raised by a generation deeply shocked by having been witnesses and victims of recent fascist crimes. (164)
When communism replaced fascism, the platform that East German politicians ran on was that it was the only viable replacement for fascism. The ruling party could be either a fascist one, which was a governmental system led by a dictator suppressing all opposition to the government, or a communist one, which attempted to create a classless society where oppression did not exist. Such an opposition here between the two forms of government does not allow for a debate of capitalism or any other form of government. Thus, as Shaw observes, this particular opposition served as the foundation for the communist ruling party in the GDR.

Beerenbaum’s resistance to and perhaps confused reaction to Rosalind’s perspective, i.e. that his ideology as a communist may not be the only correct perspective, is rooted in this opposition. As Beerenbaum defends himself against Rosalind’s interrogations, for example, he states, “Meine Frau Grete wurde im Herbst 39 verhaftet. [...] Sie kam in das Konzentrationslager Ravensbrück” (SZ 141). He immediately attempts to give Rosalind reasons for why he fulfills the position of victim and not perpetrator for which, he assumes, Rosalind is reproaching him. Rosalind’s thoughts in response to his comments reveal her frustrations with a system where you have to be the victim in order to have power and influence:

Von Dienstag bis Freitag hat er diese eine Minute vorbereitet, diese drei Sätze, hat er sich vorgestellt, wie ich mit steifen Fingern und sprachlos vor Scham dasitzen werde, unfähig, meine Frage nach dem Hotel Lux zu wiederholen, weil ich in meinem Leben nichts vorzuweisen hatte, was mich zu dieser Frage berechtigte.

(142)

Beerenbaum deems Rosalind unable to sympathize with him and his political ideology because she does not come from a generation that experienced fascism. This intergenerational conflict is truly difficult for Rosalind to accept. If she goes against the system and questions
Beerenbaum’s communist ideology, however, she puts herself into the same system of binary oppositions that Beerenbaum is comfortable with.

Rosalind’s interactions with Beerenbaum, therefore, actually unveil the problems of this seemingly insurmountable system of oppositions. In the end, despite her strong desire to oppose Beerenbaum in everything he stands for, she makes several key realizations that won’t allow that to happen. First, she makes an important confession in answer to Beerenbaum’s question: “Rosa, sagte er, nun doch wieder Rosa, haben Sie sich einmal die Frage gestellt, wer Sie in der Nazizeit gewesen wären. Vielleicht wäre ich Kommunist geworden, sagte ich” (162). Through this statement Rosa admits that she, just as Beerenbaum did, would have played the role of opponent which ultimately would have resulted in the role of the victim. Moreover, however, this seems to be a gesture of understanding to Beerenbaum that his ideology was acceptable and favored during Nazi rule. Rosa understands, then, that there is and was merit in Beerenbaum’s political ideology. It is unclear, however, until the end of the novel, that she is aware of her own level of understanding vis à vis Beerenbaum, the individual.

Then, for the first time in her life, she recognizes that part of her negative response to Beerenbaum is not political but personal. He reminds her of her father. Literary critics have argued that Rosalind’s issues with her father caused her to despise Beerenbaum and wish him dead. Through Beerenbaum, she begins to see her father as a human being, someone like herself. This is a significant change from her previous negative feelings toward her father which are informed by the patriarchal/paternal structure of GDR society. She states that “Jetzt, da Beerenbaum tot ist und ich als Zeugin seiner Grablegung hinter seinem Sarg hergehe, fühle ich zum ersten Mal Mitleid mit meinem Vater” (169). This conclusion is pivotal in the novel. If we
take this statement at face value, her admission of “Mitleid” can be seen as a certain form of resolution with her father and with his communist ideology.\(^4\)

Although tempted to do so, Rosalind in the end chooses not to discard the manuscript of Beerenbaum’s memoirs that was given to her by his son after the funeral. She says, “Ich werde es in die nächste Mülltonne werfen. Ich werde es zwischen den Papierbergen im unteren Fach meines Bücherregals begraben. Ich werde es auf keinen Fall öffnen” (219). Her decision to keep the memoirs, albeit not to read them, allows Beerenbaum’s life to become a monument of sorts. The stories might not be read, but his legacy and story will exist in the form of a book, one that might be discovered at a later point.\(^5\)

Rosalind attempts to remain somewhat neutral in her perspective with regard to Beerenbaum by the end of the novel. Thus, the binary oppositions, which seem fixed in the first sections of the novel, shift or are, at least, questioned. These oppositions, however, are not just represented by Beerenbaum and Rosalind. There are a few other relevant juxtapositions made by Maron. Lothar Blum also recognizes this and calls them “Konstellationen” (143). One of these constellations is related to gender roles, as Blum states, “In die Täter-Opfer-Konstellation ist ein Geschlechterdiskurs eingewoben, bei dem die Täter-Rolle des männlichen Parts, Beerenbaum, mittels sexistischer Gestik nochmals unterstrichen wird” (143). In terms of what Rosalind desires to be and to have as part of her identity, the male/female opposition is critical. In the search for a

\(^4\) Birgit Konze adresses Rosalind’s childhood issues in her essay, “Zur Thematisierung und Darstellung von Kindheit in der DDR im Werk von Monika Maron im Vergleich mit Werken von Uwe Johnson, Irmtraud Morger und Thomas Brussig.” She discusses many aspects of Rosalind’s difficult relationship with her father. She specifically suggests that Rosalind’s desire to learn to play the piano and translate an opera represents her unfulfilling childhood, as these goals are obviously unrealistic.

\(^5\) In his analysis of Monika Maron's *Stille Zeile sechs*, “‘Leib wart ihr euch selbst genug...’ Schrift und Körper in Monika Marons Roman *Stille Zeile Sechs*,” Georg Leisten also discusses this concept that Beerenbaum’s memoirs become a sort of legacy when Rosalind decides not to discard them.
space of her own which she develops through her memories and her present experiences, she meets many different personalities. One of these is the male personality. She seems to see herself as not-male but also does not necessarily seem to identify with any feminine characteristics. The scenes in the bar and all scenes with Bruno, a former boyfriend, remind her of the male characteristics and behaviors that this society will not allow her to have.

Die Kneipe sei der letzte Hort männlicher Freiheit, sagte Bruno. Dazu gehöre, daß Frauen in einer richtigen Männerbierkneipe nichts zu sagen hätten. Frauen störten die Ordnung, die jede Kneipe im freien Spiel der Kräfte mit der Zeit hervorbrächte, denn natürlich käme keine Kneipe, wie überhaupt nichts in der Welt, ohne Herrschaft aus. (SZ 74-75)

Rosalind, however, never responds to Bruno’s suggestions that women are somehow not welcome to speak at the bar. It seems that Rosalind is bothered by the absurdity of this notion, but not to the point where it influences her decision to stay at the bar. Furthermore, Rosalind seems even to find the absurdity of the man’s notion of a woman to be amusing. This opposition, then again, is not one that Rosalind finds herself compassionately fighting for or against. She remains somewhere in the middle of the two polarities male and female. She clearly recognizes the difficulty, then, in choosing to define herself within the GDR system as one who follows the system of binary oppositions.

Furthermore, even the bar itself is seen by Rosalind as an oppositional space, one that is removed from the GDR public space: “Die Kneipe war, profan und geheimnisvoll zugleich, eine Gegenwelt, ein Orkus, wo andere Gesetze galten und ein urbanes Naturrecht herrschte” (172). This “Naturrecht” seems to be an opposition to the organized communist society of the outside world.
The bar is also one of the settings for the gebildet vs. ungebildet opposition, the opposition between the educated and uneducated classes. The bar’s hierarchy is determined by the level of the customers’ Bildung, or degree of schooling. Bruno and the Graf, Bruno’s older friend, are seen as the leaders or kings of the bar. Bruno clarifies the reasoning of this position easily by stating, “Die Lateiner hätten den interessanteren Teil zur Unterhaltung beigetragen, und so sei ihnen die Herrschaft ganz natürlich zugefallen” (75). His power in the bar, then, is purely determined by his level of education which is determined by his mastery of the Latin language. Again, Rosalind seems slightly irritated by this notion, but never acts on it. In fact, she avoids any sort of confrontation or argument with Bruno or the Graf altogether. She cannot define herself as a victim in this system despite analysis that the situation is incorrect and allowed by the GDR social system.

The binary opposition between the educated and uneducated classes is especially applicable in the case of Beerenbaum. When Rosalind confronts Beerenbaum about his past, one of the points she makes is about his resentment regarding the opportunities presented to her generation that were not presented to him. He was not able to study at a university, and Rosalind sees it as a reason for his (and the party’s) restrictions on liberal education. It is important to note here that Beerenbaum indicates that he was a communist during Nazi rule. When relaying the story of how he met his wife again after the war was over he explains the circumstances to Rosalind: “Und wir, eine Handvoll halbverhungerter und zerschlagener Kommunisten und Antifaschisten, hatten den Karren aus dem Dreck zu ziehen. Auferstanden aus Ruinen und der Zukunft zugewandt, ja, so war es” (152). The distinction that he belonged to the “Antifaschisten”

---

6 In his essay “Die Dialektik des Geständnisses: Monika Marons Stille Zeile Sechs und die autobiografischen Diskurse nach 1989.” Lee Hyunseon also recognizes an opposition regarding Bildung created specifically between the two generations.
during the Third Reich is significant for my discussion of the binary opposition with regard to Bildung because of the relevant historical context. Mary Fulbrook makes a helpful observation with regard to education in the GDR:

The Third Reich had been no less interested in stamping its mark on the rising generation than was the new communist regime, and the Nazi culling of the teaching profession from 1933 onwards, with the systematic exclusion of Jews, socialists and anyone else inclined to query the values and curriculum of Nazi Germany, had left its mark on the political profile of the teachers remaining in post by 1945. (197-198)

Fulbrook articulates the impossibility of education for socialists during the Third Reich, and this category of uneducated citizens is one that Beerenbaum fits into. Furthermore, Fulbrook articulates the problems that the GDR faced when constructing their state after the end of the Third Reich. She describes the Besitz- (property owning) and Bildungsbürgertum (educated bourgeoisie) that were the remnants of a broken German society after WWII. The first difficulty with the educated bourgeoisie was that it was necessary to have a professional group of citizens to help run the state, but as Fulbrook says, “precisely these sorts of groups had also been, in various degrees, pillars of the Nazi state” (195). The new political ideology, therefore, needed the educated bourgeoisie, but needed to distance itself distinctly from the Nazi state. Furthermore, she explains, the East German “‘intelligentsia’ even constituted a conceptual problem for GDR social theorists” because the educated individuals were “in many respects distinctively different from both the power elite and the industrial and agricultural working classes” (196). The educated class, therefore, presented a threat to GDR communist ideology to a certain extent, which is where the intense regulation of this system derived from. The educated
vs. uneducated classes then, represented a binary opposition in the GDR society itself. As Rosalind sees it, this binary thinking, in which the uneducated class is privileged over the more dangerous educated class, is also the reason that Beerenbaum needed to send the Graf, a member of the intelligentsia, to prison for three years.

Other binary oppositions that present themselves in juxtapositions of personalities can be seen between Thekla and Rosalind, and Irma and Rosalind. Both Thekla Fleischer and Rosalind’s friend Irma possess personality traits that Rosalind neither has, admires nor detests. Her pessimistic friend Irma, who is always depressed, clearly irritates Rosalind. Irma has personality traits that Rosalind does not have. Even though Irma is very negative and dramatic, her juxtaposition with Rosalind seems to intensify Rosalind’s lack of interest or apathy. This lack of interest in engagement with society or with her own personal life begins with her resignation from her job and intensifies in the freedom she has at home.

On the other hand, Thekla represents an interesting opposition to Rosalind as well in that she is utterly optimistic. Thekla is clearly a subject of the state who has never found reason to question or complain about the actions of the GDR. Rosalind seems fascinated with Thekla because of her seemingly ignorant yet blissful approach to life. In juxtaposition with Rosalind, Thekla unveils the pessimistic characteristics in Rosalind herself. These are the characteristics that allow Rosalind to find Thekla’s love story amusing and highly fictional yet desirable at the same time. Rosalind is too realistic to have hopes for a romance such as Thekla’s but finds satisfaction in helping to make her dream love-life come true.

Rosalind’s Memory Quest

In the introduction of this thesis I suggested that Stille Zeile sechs can be viewed as protagonist Rosalind Polkowski’s own memoirs. This reading is one which I have not seen
articulated before but think is significant in the discourse on memory work in the GDR. Rosalind’s unintentional writing of her memoirs occurs solely because of her experiences with Herbert Beerenbaum. I argue that he acts as a trigger for her own memory work. Each retelling of an encounter with Beerenbaum is followed by an anecdote of Rosalind’s childhood or present social life. Her reflections on her memories are specifically tied to Beerenbaum’s actions, words or body. This argument is of importance because of the transformation that this transcription of memories creates for Rosalind. As stated earlier, the oppositions in this novel outline a difficult divide in generations but also in personality figures juxtaposed with Rosalind. By retelling memories of her childhood, however, Rosalind is able to break free of her position in the GDR society as a force of opposition herself. Her change in desire to be neither a perpetrator nor a victim seems to be caused by her own memory work and by her comprehension of Beerenbaum’s actions. This, in turn, represents an altered view of GDR history as outlined earlier based on Fulbrook’s arguments. It is a type of acceptance of GDR memory and identity.

In order to articulate this argument I will briefly discuss important related topics that other critics have outlined. Birgit Konze, for example, provides a comprehensive analysis of Rosalind’s troubled childhood. She sees Rosalind’s relationship to Beerenbaum in direct parallel to her relationship with her father. She underlines Rosalind’s need to confront the difficult relationship with her father in order to create her own identity. Moreover, she makes several brief observations that I would like to expand on. First Konze begins a discussion about the father-daughter relationship by touching briefly on the concept of remembrance as a whole:

Auch das Schreiben, das Erzählen ist immer ein Erinnern; in dem Augenblick, in dem ein(e) AutorIn etwas erzählt, erinnert sie/er sich an Gewesenes, das durch das Prisma der Reflexion etwas Anderes, Neues wird, nämlich Literatur und somit
Zukunft, ganz gleich, ob das utopische Moment explizit eine Rolle spielt oder nicht. (181)

Speaking generally here, about authors such as Uwe Timm, Irmtraud Morgner and Maron, whose literary works often revolve around the theme of Erinnerungsdiskurs (memory discourse), she specifies a more particular form of Erinnerung (memory), namely literary remembrances. Just as this quotation has been applied to Maron the author, it can also be applied to her characters Herbert Beerenbaum and Rosalind Polkowski. Similar to Maron’s novel Animal triste, Stille Zeile sechs is then also a therapeutic exercise for the narrator who requires witnessing (a reader) in order to gain recognition and approval as well as to engage in self-interrogation. This, according to James Reece, is precisely the prerequisite for autobiographical writing. Furthermore, this notion of Rosalind’s self-interrogation is also supported by Lee Hyunseon. He states, “Rosa zwingt nicht nur Beerenbaum zum Geständnis, sondern sie selbst steht unter einem inneren Geständniszwang. Ihr Erzählen an sich ist ein Geständnis, eine Trauerarbeit und gleichzeitig eine Anklage im quasi-juristischen Kontext” (62).

When Rosalind first meets Beerenbaum she immediately claims to know his biography based on his similarity to her father. When she enters Beerenbaum's house she recognizes a similarity to her own parents’ house: “Beerenbaums Wohnzimmer ähnelte dem meiner Eltern” (SZ 45). Rosalind’s memories are spurred by Beerenbaum’s in other instances as well. At Beerenbaum’s funeral she becomes ill because of the double chin which reminds her of communism, which, in turn, reminds her of her father, which further reminds her of the story of her rotting grandmother. Suddenly the concept of the larvae eating away at her grandmother’s corpse is directly connected to Beerenbaum and his funeral in the present. Everything about Beerenbaum forces her to remember moments of her childhood and memories of her relatives.
In other moments where Rosalind is transcribing Beerenbaum’s memories at her typewriter, she cannot help but be overwhelmed by memories stimulated by Beerenbaum’s own stories. One such example is her irritation with specific words that Beerenbaum uses, such as “Klasseninstinkt”:

Er zelebrierte die Armut seiner Familie, als wollte er sich entschuldigen für seinen späteren Wohlstand, wie mir überhaupt schien, daß er jedes Detail aus seinem jungen Leben nur im Hinblick auf seine spätere Bestimmung erzählte: sein frühes Interesse an der Politik, seine Wißbegier, der Lehrer, der seine Begabung erkannte, sein Sinn für Gerechtigkeit und natürlich der Klasseninstinkt, der einem Arbeiterjungen aus dem Ruhrgebiet, wie Beerenbaum sagte, in die Wiege gelegt worden war. Das furchtbare Wort Klasseninstinkt, die todsichere Waffe meines Vaters, wenn er zu begründen versuchte, warum Kafkas Bücher, von denen er vermutlich keine Zeile gelesen hatte, dekadente und schädliche Literatur, wenn überhaupt Literatur seien. (58)

This quotation has one of those specific triggers that are directly connected to Beerenbaum. His use of the word “Klasseninstinkt” causes her, almost inadvertently as if ingrained in her mind, to remember her father. She therefore seems to associate her troubling memories of her father and his ideology with Beerenbaum. This is problematic because she is unable to distinguish between her feelings toward her father as a person and toward his political ideology.

Then, when Rosa admits to wishing that Beerenbaum would die, she draws an almost accusatory parallel to Beerenbaum, suggesting that he would understand the death-wish if he only understood the circumstances of her childhood. This absurd suggestion seems to mark the
height of Rosa’s journey between Beerenbaum in the present and her memories of the past. Here she states in her imagined conversation with Beerenbaum that he could never understand: “Sie [Beerenbaum] zwingen mich, das Abscheulichste zu tun, was ich mir denken kann: jemandes Tod zu wünschen. Wie könnte ich wollen, daß Sie weiterleben. Und dann würde ich ihn fragen: Verstehen Sie mich. […] Was hätte er alles verstehen müssen, um ja zu sagen” (156-157).

Despite her difficulty with Beerenbaum Rosalind recognizes that he is truly not responsible for her frustrating memories, nor can she choose to label him a perpetrator as she had been attempting to do throughout the novel and as she had labeled her father her entire life. This is not to suggest any innocence on behalf of Beerenbaum. This is simply an indication that she has begun to remove herself from one end of the seemingly fixed binary opposition of perpetrator and victim by resolving some difficult memories of her childhood. Furthermore, Beerenbaum aids her in his confrontations with her to process these troubling memories. He is, then, the key to Rosalind’s changed experience with the perpetrator-victim system of oppositions.

As stated in the beginning, Rosalind’s move beyond the binary oppositions is represented in her decision not to destroy Beerenbaum’s memoirs. Instead she uses his concept of autobiographical writing to pursue her own memory work. Beerenbaum advises her inadvertently throughout her journey with the triggers that he provides. In the end she seems to overcome her aversion for Beerenbaum once she feels empathy for her father. Because she is able to recognize that neither her relationship with her father nor with the communist state is in Fulbrook’s terms “black-and-white,” her attitude moves beyond the binary oppositions. Furthermore, her memories are reframed from their original, rigidly stagnant state, to something more fluid and less “black-and-white.” Rosalind’s memoirs are written proof of the GDR citizenry’s own very
real need to move beyond the binary oppositions that allow only for perpetrator and victim roles in its history.
CHAPTER II. TRANSLATING MEMORIES: USING NARRATION TO FORM A NEW SELF
IN MONIKA MARON’S ANIMAL TRISTE

Monika Maron’s novel *Animal triste* (1996) invites a reflection on translating traumatic memory into narrative memory within the context of the German Democratic Republic and the immediate post-reunification period. In painstakingly narrating her memories, the protagonist attempts to be released ultimately from the firm grip of a past traumatic loss. This traumatic loss can be read as the loss of both the love of her life, Franz, and the GDR. The narrative process parallels the experience of a post-GDR society living with the traumatic loss of structure, control and familiarity. Certainly, the euphoria surrounding the fall of the Berlin Wall was followed by new expectations for a unified nation. However, the difficulties in forming an identity based on a culture that no longer existed resulted in a biography-less nation. Maron’s *Animal triste* represents this phenomenon in a narrative where the process of reminiscing is used as a tool to reconstruct the self. Indeed, the novel seems to foreground the question: are citizens of the GDR, then, in need of a particular process of remembering in order to create a new biography reflective of changes since its unification with the Federal Republic of Germany?

In *Animal triste* the narrator (and protagonist) attempts to narrate her life story but finds herself constantly interrupted by her own forgetfulness. She claims to have forgotten crucial information about herself and the people important to her. She begins her narration explaining that she is unaware of her own age and the historical time frame in which she currently lives. The

---

7 The notion of translating traumatic memory into narrative memory comes from Irene Kacandes’s essay “Narrative Witnessing as Memory Work: Reading Gertrud Kolmar’s A Jewish Mother.” She does not discuss any literary works by Monika Maron, but I find this notion applicable to *Animal triste*.

8 See Brigitte Rossbacher, “The Status of State and Subject: Reading Monika Maron from Flugasche to Animal triste” for more on the concept of a biography-less nation.
memories that she manages to recover largely surround her love affair with Franz, a name which she calls her lover because she seems to have forgotten his real name. The narrator constantly reflects on the purpose and process of memory work and forgetfulness.

Other scholars such as Andrea Geier, Henk Harbers, Alison Lewis, Elke Gilson and Brigitte Rossbacher have taken different approaches in analyzing *Animal triste*. In his essay “Gefährliche Freiheit. Zu einem Motivkomplex im Werk von Monika Maron,” Henk Harbers, for instance, outlines the conventional reading of *Animal triste* as a love story in modern literature but quickly counters this reading by arguing that because of the narrator’s uncertainty and old age, the novel cannot be understood as a love story. Instead, Harbers suggests that *Animal triste* is just another example of Maron experimenting with fictional writings to express the sheer “Komplexität” of life (136).

Elke Gilson and Andrea Geier have written more specifically about the themes of memory and remembrance in works of Maron. Gilson suggests in her essay “‘Zwiesprache mit Geistern:’ Die Entschränkung der Rhetorik im Werk von Monika Maron nach 1989” that the “literature of remembrance” in Maron’s work does not begin with *Animal triste* as other scholars have suggested (93). Instead, *Animal triste* should be considered a continuation of Maron’s literary discussion of memory.

In her discussion of Maron’s *Animal triste*, “Re-Membering the Barbarian: Memory and Repression in Monika Maron's *Animal Triste*,” Alison Lewis suggests that the narrator’s remembering and forgetting are caused by trauma. She states that “personal as well as collective memory demands time and must first deal with the psychical and cultural resistance of repression”.

---

9 Harbers says, “Dabei geht es um die alte Verbindung von Liebe und Tod, um das Ideal einer absoluten Liebe, das in dieser Absolutheit nicht erreichbar ist und deswegen den Tod sucht” (132).
before the soul's protective shielding of trauma can be overcome and the past in all its shamefulness and duplicity confronted” (44).

Andrea Geier also thoroughly discusses the theme of memory in Animal triste in her article “Paradoxien des Erinnerns. Biographisches Erzählen in Animal triste.” She outlines the paradoxical framework of autobiographical writing in Animal triste and suggests that if we trust that the narrator has truly forgotten the cause of Franz’s death, Animal triste is the narrator’s attempt to construct an autobiography of her choosing. Geier also argues that the narrator could not have been responsible for Franz’s death and her narration can therefore also be viewed as her construction of a fictionalized memory.

While Geier, Lewis, and Gilson’s arguments will aid my discussion of Animal triste, I will be focusing on a different aspect of Maron’s novel. I concentrate in my discussion on the translation of traumatic memory into narrative memory, a translation process that is often used when a person has experienced a traumatic event. Although much has been written about the narrator’s trauma and what her memory work yields, less attention has been paid by scholars to the actual process of translation occurring in the novel.10 I will investigate what tools the narrator uses in order to transcribe her traumatic memory into a narrative form which becomes the novel itself. I argue that this translation is part of the process of autobiographical narration. The narrator’s use of particular aids to memory (photographs, stories, specific words or smells and props) are also all crucial to the process of translation and therefore of autobiographical narration. Finally, in my reading, Animal triste reveals that memory work can very well be a

---

10 See Alison Lewis, “Re-Membering the Barbarian: Memory and Repression in Monika Maron’s Animal Triste” for more discussion on the narrator’s trauma.
combination of documents of memory (photographs) and constructed memory (imagined and fantasized elements).

Translating Traumatic Memory

The protagonist begins her narration in the confines of her bedroom where she has forgotten her name and age. She narrates about a time “vor fünfzig oder vierzig oder sechzig Jahren” (At 10). Her narrations revolve around an affair with a man whose name she has forgotten but calls Franz, memories which she seems to have repressed for years. She tells us that after having experienced a peculiar accident while crossing the street when someone “den Strom im Gehirn abschaltete,” she experiences what she calls a love epiphany (At 21). This just happens to be around the same time the Berlin Wall falls. One year later she meets Franz at the museum she works at and falls in love with him. Franz is married and seems to refuse to leave his wife because of her apparent inability to deal with a separation or divorce. The entire novel exists as a narrative reconstruction of the female narrator’s memories, of which the traumatic catalyst seems to be the loss of Franz. Franz’s fate only becomes clear at the end of the novel, once the narrator chooses to remember everything. Until this point she wafts in and out of the same cycle of reminiscences as if constructing a memorial to her only love.

The notion of a process of translation is helpful in analyzing Animal triste because it addresses the need to rework memories, some of them traumatic, in order to create a fluid narrative. The fluidity of the narrative is dependent upon intensively working through traumatic or unwanted memories. As the narrator in Animal triste pieces together stories, photographs, smells, and imagined memories, she embarks on this journey of translation. In my opinion, this need to translate memories into a narrative derives from the narrator’s experience of trauma.11

11 Alison Lewis also views the narrator’s need to retell and repeat memories as deriving from a traumatic experience.
A general discussion of victims of trauma is useful to understand why the narrator feels she must recreate her biography in the narrative form. Psychologist Susan Brison discusses several helpful points about the effects of trauma on the self and the consequent need for narration. In her essay “Trauma Narratives and the Remaking of the Self” Brison argues that “trauma undoes the self by breaking the ongoing narrative, severing the connections among remembered past, lived present, and anticipated future” (41). The narrator in Animal triste experiences these same symptoms. As mentioned earlier, the time in which she narrates her story is indeterminate. Thus the connections between past, present, and future have been severed in the way that Brison describes as symptomatic of individuals who have experienced trauma.12

Brison also discusses the process of translation involved in healing from a traumatic event. She elaborates on the importance of narratives in the “remaking of the self”:

By constructing and telling a narrative of the trauma endured, and with the help of understanding listeners, the survivor begins not only to integrate the traumatic episode into a life with a before and after, but also to gain control over the occurrence of intrusive memories. (46)

The narrator’s attempt to begin a narrative about her life, then, can be seen as an attempt to “integrate the traumatic episode into a life with a before and after.” Furthermore, Brison mentions that this narrative involves the need to gain control of uncontrollable memories. Without control over certain “intrusive memories” the victim cannot begin or continue a narrative. Brison also writes about speech acts of memory which aid this process of controlling traumatic memories. She argues that traumatic memories cause a severing between the self and

---

12 Susan Brison does not review Monika Maron’s work. She discusses the psychological and physical effects of trauma on individuals and the need for narration to overcome the effects of trauma on the self.
one’s view of the world. The speech act that she writes of, then, is a fragment of a narration that aids the person who has experienced trauma to confront, and ultimately gain control over, uncontrollable memories.

As Brison also points out in her discussion of traumatic memory, “The shrinking of time to the immediate present is experienced not only during the traumatizing events, but also in their aftermath, at least until the traumatic episode is integrated into the survivor’s life narrative” (44). In *Animal triste*, this shrinking of time is depicted in several different ways. For example, the narrator tells us that her age is irrelevant by declaring that she has no idea how old she is: “Vielleicht bin ich aber doch erst neunzig oder sogar noch jünger” (At 9). Her age, however, should not be irrelevant if she is attempting to develop a narrative that would essentially reconstruct her broken identity. Without the specifics of her age and the time in which she lives, her story and her memories become isolated within the confines of the space she moves in.

This controlled isolation can perhaps be viewed as a kind of self-imposed memory exile. Lewis writes about the narrator’s self-imposed exile in her article, and I would like to expand on this, more specifically, in terms of this exile being a psychological and not physical space. As Alison Lewis argues, her “retreat is an act of survival in a hostile and coercive environment, even where this external world is screened out almost entirely from the narrative” (43). Indeed the narrator distances herself from her cultural surroundings and the reality outside of her controlled space. Lewis, however, speaks mainly of this physical retreat and not of a psychological memory exile. The narrator, I suggest, also becomes trapped in a process of reminiscence which becomes her memory exile. In this memory exile she also places significant emphasis on her
reminiscences of Franz as opposed to superficial details of other aspects of her identity. Frozen in time within her memory exile she seems to attempt a tribute to Franz.\textsuperscript{13}

In terms of the physical space in which the translation of memory occurs, the narrator controls nearly every controllable detail. As Lewis has also suggested, the narrator has clearly constructed her site of exile within a physical space that she is familiar with and feels safe in. This space is necessary for her to confront her memories of her life with Franz and then to begin her memory narrative. More specifically in terms of space, most of her memories in the novel are reconstructed in her bedroom “zwischen den fleischfressenden Pflanzen,” the patterned sheets on her bed (36). This is where she and Franz spent nearly all of their time together except for the very first day of their encounter in the museum and the day that they parted outside at the bus stop. These representations of space must, however, be seen as careful side steps out of her controlled physical exile. There are also memory excursions that include stories of her friends and their love lives, her brief recollections of her daughter and their pets, and finally her trip to New York at the end of the novel. Each of these memory outings that depart from the events that occurred in her bedroom, exclude Franz. The memories of Franz resurface only in her personal space.

The specific memories she seems to need to repeat over and over indicate the need to further control the process of reminiscing. Repetition is often considered a symptom of trauma. Irene Kacandes discusses this notion in her essay “Narrative Witnessing as Memory Work: Reading Gertrud Kolmar’s \textit{A Jewish Mother}.” Although Kacandes does not discuss Maron’s

\textsuperscript{13} Alison Lewis also views the narrator’s need to control the space and time as though she is “frozen in time and space” (31).
Animal triste or other works by Maron, her essay is helpful in the articulation of symptoms of trauma and narrative witnessing:

As Pierre Janet and numerous researchers and psychoanalysts after him have observed, the relief of traumatic symptoms like flashbacks, reenactments, amnesia, and numbing (among others now grouped under the medical diagnosis Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, or PTSD), seems to require the creation of some kind of coherent narrative about the event or events that inflicted the trauma; this process is sometimes referred to as the translation of traumatic memory into narrative memory. (55)

The narrator’s need to repeat specific memories in a specific space, then, is part of the narrative translation. The narrator has also chosen to freeze time within her personal space, indicating a state of numbness, which is another common symptom of trauma. In the beginning of the novel the narrator admits that she cannot see and has destroyed all the mirrors in her house. Consequently, she has no idea what she looks like. This also freezes time for her so that she has no accurate or current information about her age and appearance. Other critics such as Alison Lewis have suggested that the breaking of the mirrors indicates a rejection of the patriarchal society and its expectations of women. Lewis states, “Having smashed all the mirrors in her flat in a gesture symbolic of her rejection of patriarchal society, she lives the life of a recluse, waiting for Franz's return” (31). There seems, however, to be a more direct correlation between destroying the mirrors and the narrator’s need to distance herself from reality. This distancing from reality correlates to the narrator’s need to be in control of her uncontrollable memories, and with that, also time and space.
The narrator’s obsession with Franz and the memory of him becomes very obvious in her exclusion of other memory times and spaces in her life. As an example, the reader has no idea why the narrator left her husband or who he is or was as a person. The narrator states, “Mein Ehemann muß, nachdem ich Franz getroffen hatte, unauffällig aus meinem Leben verschwunden sein” (At 20). Moreover, by claiming uncertainty in most other respects of her past life, she emphasizes the need and desire to reminisce about Franz even more. She claims that no one except the bank knows that she is alive. She does not give any information about the life of her daughter at the current time but instead tells anecdotes about her daughter’s childhood. Her previous life (before Franz), therefore, takes on an insignificant role in the purpose of her reminiscences.

In distancing herself from these realities, just as from the reality of her reflection in the mirror, the narrator attains a safe, controlled environment. No outside influence can tell her which memories are significant or insignificant. She can attempt to revive her experiences with Franz in any way she desires. In this way, imagination does play a role in her ability to translate her memories into a narrative form. A mix between imaginative and controlled reminiscences can be seen in the narrator’s destruction of her own eye sight:

Mein letzter Geliebter, um dessentwillen ich mich aus der Welt zurückgezogen habe, hat, als er mich verließ, seine Brille bei mir vergessen. Jahrelang trug ich die Brille und verschmolz meine gesunden Augen mit seinem Sehfehler zu einer symbiotischen Unschärfe als einer letzten Möglichkeit, ihm nahe zu sein. (11)

By wearing Franz’s glasses she attempts to hold onto the memory of him. She almost attempts to become him, adapting, thereby, to his eyesight. With this she tries to resurrect Franz in her controlled space and time, perhaps paying him the ultimate tribute. She also uses specific
memory props that are unchanged or left untouched in order to pay tribute to Franz by remembering him. One of these memory props is her sheets which she has kept unwashed since the last time Franz slept with her:


Her actions are very consistent with a person grieving the loss of a loved one. A parent whose child has died or even simply moved away may leave his or her room untouched for months. That signals both a fear of erasing the memory and of disrespecting the life of their loved one. It is furthermore a way to remember not to forget, just as any memorial or historical monument. The narrator’s obsession is centralized around a refusal to confront an identity absent of Franz. Because her story is focused around her personal space and memory exile, she seems to be disconnected from the world and, therefore, from a self devoid of Franz. Much later in the story the narrator finally admits her dependence on Franz in a way that others sometimes do their fear of God: “Ich dachte den Namen Franz vor mich hin wie andere den Namen Gottes; für Glück, Unglück, Erlösung hatte ich nur noch dieses eine Wort: Franz. So ist es bis heute geblieben” (149).

The narrator’s dependence on Franz transcends a mere memory. It is her reason for existence. Because of the trauma she endured, whether she killed Franz or it was an accident, she is unable to create her self without Franz. The trauma binds everything she knows to him. Thus the memory sequences with Franz all shift to the foreground of the narrator’s memory. She does take minor detours in recollecting memories to give a brief context to her story. The narrative,
however, quickly returns to a consistent and recurring line: the scenes in her bedroom “zwischen den fleischfressenden Pflanzen” (36).

In her reminiscences, the narrator seems to attempt to manipulate the reader into seeing the narrator’s “truth.” Additionally, the narrator’s opinion of the concept of forgetting is used to justify her manipulation of her own memory: “In meinem Leben gab es nicht viel, was das Vergessen nicht verdient hätte, und so ist es in der von mir für bewahrenswert befundenen Fassung ein ziemlich kurzes Leben geworden” (17). Furthermore, the narrator explains that her careful consideration of narrated memories comes from an instinctive need to be protected from harm:

Ebenso wie das Vergessen könnte man den Menschen verbieten, bei übergroßem körperlichem Schmerz in Ohnmacht zu fallen, obwohl nur die Ohnmacht einen tödlichen Schock oder ein lebenslanges Trauma verhindern kann. Das Vergessen ist die Ohnmacht der Seele. (17)

Here the narrator attempts to support the notion that forgetting is essentially a life saving instinct. Yet it is difficult to believe the narrator as she has already begun to tell a story centered around remembering. The reader can only conclude, therefore, that the narrator is aware of the consequences of remembering, that is, facing her memories without a safety net. Slowly, her control over her memory work diminishes as she realizes that in retelling her story, her safe memory fantasy will end:

In den letzten Wochen oder Jahren fällt mir das eine oder andere wieder ein, was nur bedeuten kann, daß meine Liebe zu Franz, für die allein ich die vielen Jahre in meiner Wohnung verbracht habe, nun langsam nachläßt. Ich habe aber keinen
The narrator’s loss of control, therefore, gives way to her resolution with her traumatic memories and consequently, her death. Alison Lewis also confirms this:

Telling the story to its end forces therefore the undoing of repression and deferral, but it is also the affirmation of the death principle, and, as a result, she assumes that her life is now nearing its end. Instead, the narrative is nearing that unbearable moment of pain and trauma, that key moment repressed from her memory, as it tries to undo the ‘Ohnmacht der Seele’ (AT 17). (40)

“Die Ohnmacht der Seele,” then, cannot protect her once she begins to remember.

**Aids to Memory Translation: Documents and Constructed Memories**

The narrator’s translation allows for a discussion of memory work in general and reminds us that memories can take many forms. They can be verbalized in stories, written, or transcribed into memorials, or can leave traces in photographs. With each form, an experience, a piece of information, is being translated for a listener, a viewer or reader. The purpose of these translations or this process of recalling memories also varies, but the narrator remains constant in his/her need for a listener, a second person.

In the context of reading Holocaust memoirs, Irene Kacandes coins the phrase “narrative witnessing” which “is a capacious concept, constituted by the reader’s activity of encountering and describing several phenomena, thereby creating a new narrative about the text of/as trauma” (56). The need for a listener, then, can be understood as a need for “narrative witnessing” in the process of translating traumatic memory into a narrative. In this novel, the reader is the listener and is encumbered with the chore of analyzing the narrator’s memories. The narrator uses both
photographs, which I refer to as *documents of memory*, and stories, which I refer to as
constructed memories to create this narrative.

Many of the narrator’s memories include physical descriptions of Franz, but the only
actual photographs that are described and inscribed into the narrator’s memory narrative are of
Franz. The narrator refers to them when recollecting Franz’s childhood sweetheart. The
photographs, one of Franz and his high school sweetheart and the other of Franz alone, present
an interesting comparison to other ways that the narrator transmits her memories to the reader.
The narrator recreates the photographs for the reader by giving a detailed description of their
content:

> Franz hat aus seinem Körper eine Höhle gebildet, darin, mit verschränkten Armen
  und Beinen, hockt das Mädchen. Franz’ rechte Hand fällt über ihre Brust, ohne sie
to berühren. Auf einem anderen Foto ist Franz allein, seine kleinen Augen bohren
sich in das Stück hechtgrauen Himmel über ihm, als wollten sie ihm die triste
Farbe aussaugen. (At 58)

In contrast to the narrator’s other imagined narrations of Franz standing or sitting or lying
in her room, the photos seem to provide a certain degree of tangible evidence for the narrator.
For this reason, the photographs are *documents of memory* for the narrator. They act as
milestones of memory in her journey through the autobiographical narration. Nonetheless, these
documents of memory require a certain amount of imagination and interpretation on the part of
the narrator. As a result, in creating her narrative she uses the documents of memory to revisit
past emotions such as her longing for Franz as seen in her obsession with his eyes and their
“triste Farbe.” The color of his eyes seems to evoke a sense of loneliness that the narrator longs
to cure.
These photographs should be considered documents of memory in so far as there is visual proof of past events and people for the narrator. Different from what I consider her constructed memories, the documents of memory affirm the very real presence of the man she calls Franz. Any memory that is narrated beyond these documents can be seen as a deviation from the milestones of memory that these photographs provide. The constructed memories in *Animal triste* on the other hand can be understood as memories that the narrator reconstructs without any direct ties to personal or cultural artifacts. Nearly all of the memories the narrator retells are constructed. These types of memories are imagined and yet made legitimate in the sense that they become part of the narrator’s biography. They do not become legitimized, however, until she translates these memories into her narration.

These constructed memories also force the reader to interpret both the said and the unsaid that is narrated by the protagonist. Many of these constructed memory sequences seem to occur for the narrator like a theatre production. There are scene changes, props, and actors. Instead of having any actual visual information or proof for the reader, like a play’s setting on a theater stage might provide, the narrator describes the scenes in detail. In this way, the narrator constructs her memories, piece by piece until the narration of her play is complete.

The narrator clearly uses her imagination and becomes extremely exegetical in her translation of these constructed memories. The narrator also goes beyond describing the minimum detail of person, place, and circumstance in her memories. Instead she incorporates details of lighting, mood, and feeling as though she were creating a work of art. Because of their detailed and concise rendering, it is as if they had just occurred, leaving a vivid description in the mind of the reader.
As an example, the following excerpt shows how the narrator herself even suggests that the recreations of her memories appear as photographs in her mind:

In dem bleichen Schein der Straßenlaterne, gefiltert durch die weißen Vorhänge, erscheint Franz wie auf einer unterbelichteten Schwarzweißfotografie, blaß und geisterhaft, eingeschmolzen in das graue Dunkel um ihn. Die matte Unschärfe löscht das Alter auf seinem Gesicht und gibt ihm für diese Stunde seine Jugend zurück. (19)

She describes the soft light of the street lantern, the translucent curtains and the lighting’s effect on Franz’s face. The black-and-white image that the narrator describes gives a very distant, cool, and lifeless feel to the memory. Yet at the same time, she describes the appearance of youth in his face, which somehow gives the image of Franz a certain degree of softness. Suddenly the reader is drawn in and begins to read into Franz’s character and his place in the life of the narrator. The narrator’s use of imagination then, seems in fact to assist in the process of the narration of her memories.

The reason the narrator needs to reenact her memories in what I have considered a theatre production refers to my analysis of the narrator’s need to translate traumatic memories into a narrative biography. For these constructed memories can be seen as reenactments, which, as previously mentioned, are considered a symptom of PTSD.14 Her need, then, to reenact specific memories relates back to an experience of trauma, most likely the loss of Franz.

Another example of the narrator’s reenactments can be seen in this description of her lover Franz. Here, he again appears suddenly frozen in time, very similar to the way in which a photograph or snap shot seems fixed forever:

---

14 Kacandes discusses the use of reenactments in literary narratives.
Den Abend vor vierzig oder fünfzig Jahren, an dem mein Geliebter mit geradem Rücken an die Wand gelehnt und von fleischfressenden Pflanzen umrankt in meinem Bett saß, erfinde ich, seit er vergangen ist, wie alle anderen Abende mit meinem Geliebten auch. So vergeht die Zeit und vergeht doch nicht. (18)

By repeatedly retelling these memories, sometimes reenacting them using actual memory props (such as the sheets she slept with Franz in), she seems to attempt to work through her narration of memories safely. By using her imagination in narrating these constructed memories, she is able to provide an environment in her memory exile that is controlled by her and therefore also safe from any unwanted memories. She also does admit that she must invent the memories surrounding this set (her bedroom) but still claims that this is also the place where many memories with Franz were made. Like a doll in her dollhouse she places him in different positions, with different props and different gestures.

Alison Lewis suggests that the narrator’s repetitions of memories change as the novel progresses. Lewis writes that “with the introduction of a new element in the bedroom fantasy and with the presence of difference in repetition – where Franz and the narrator are no longer sitting in bed but opposite one another – the narrative enters a new phase” (34). Lewis considers this an indication that what she terms the resistance to memory is diminishing. Yet, it seems that rather than a resistance to memory, the narrator has developed an alternative type of remembering. Although, as Lewis writes and I have also suggested, the narrator’s need to reminisce does stem from a traumatic experience, her reenactments and constructed memories seem to replace the resisted memories rather than work toward them.¹⁵ There may be a certain progression, for

¹⁵ Lewis writes, “As screen memories they can be read as symptomatic of other (often contiguous) memories that are hidden, or repressed from consciousness. They possibly indicate the presence and repression of trauma that the recurrent motifs act to shield” (33).
example, as Lewis suggests, when Franz goes on vacation with his wife, but the narrator’s need
to imagine and construct memories does not change. This means, then, that the narrator’s
translation of traumatic memories into a narrative becomes possible in her constructed memories,
even if they never allow the narrator to confront her resisted memories.

Memory Fantasies and the Female Body

The alternative type of reminiscence that I suggest can be seen in the analysis of the
narrator’s relationship to her body. The change that exists in her type of constructed memories is
that her imaginations become full of disgust and anger, and she begins to fantasize about morbid
desires. These changes are reflected in descriptions of the body. In this way, the body acts as a
translator for her memories. Descriptions of the female body are repulsive and degrading. The
narrator’s own body serves as evidence of the progression of her relationship with Franz and,
therefore, also her narrative. She uses the body as a vessel to transport fantasized actions and
desired feelings.

As Alison Lewis argues in “Re-Membering the Barbarian: Memory and Repression in
Monika Maron’s Animal triste,” the narrator’s behavior in relation to her body is a direct result
of a “disapproval of the historical and social compromises of the mother’s generation” (36). The
narrator shows her disgust of her mother’s subjection to the patriarchal society in her relationship
with her father. Alison Lewis argues that this results in the narrator’s objection to such
femininity that would allow her body to be a source of desire for men. The narrator certainly falls
into this paradigm. Her attitude toward her own femininity, however, seems just as dependent on
Franz as on the observations of her own mother. The change in the narrator’s body image from
when she first meets Franz to when she begins to lose him supports this argument.
In the narrator’s very first reminiscences of Franz, she admits her almost adolescent anxiety about having an intimate relationship. She seems to give Franz the credit for allowing her to rediscover her body and with it, to arrive at a different view of a man:


Her comments here are laden with insecurities and lack of self-confidence much like an inexperienced adolescent might feel. The narrator is clearly experiencing her first true love, one which she attempts to conform to her own childhood sweetheart replacing the one she never had. This memory of her new, positive body image serves to thank Franz and reveals the importance of his role in her life. It also shows further dependence on Franz in the formation of her new biography. This dependence is furthermore defined in her change in body image as she begins to reminisce and imagine the unraveling of their relationship. In this passage, the narrator begins to imagine herself in a negative light again, realizing that Franz is no longer in her life:

Ich zog den Bademantel aus, stellte mich vor den Spiegel im Korridor und betrachtete unter dem unbarmherzigen Oberlicht meinen nackten Körper, die rötlich marmorierte Haut am Bauch und an den Schenkeln, die weichen, in letzter Zeit zu fülligen Brüste, die mich an die schweren rosigen Brüste meiner Mutter erinnerten, der nachgebende Muskel oberhalb des Knies. Ich sah nichts, was mich in dem Glauben, daß Franz mich liebt, hätte bestärken können. (195)
The representation of her body in relation to her mother’s in this quotation is one key indicator of her new disgust (in contrast to earlier constructed memories). As observed by Alison Lewis as well, the narrator’s mother’s existence is a source of contempt. The description of her body is also followed directly by an association to Franz’s love for her. The representations of her body, then, are clearly a reflection of the progression of her relationship. They reveal the process or translation from traumatic memory to narrative memory, as discussed earlier. As the memories are constructed and the narrator imagines not only memories that honor Franz but also those that show anger, sadness, or guilt toward the status of their relationship, she nears a resolution with her traumatic memories and thus also a narrative memory.

The change from intimate, positive body representations between Franz and the narrator to grotesque images occurs at a specific turning point in the novel. This is when Franz leaves on vacation with his wife, despite the narrator’s secret wish for him to stay. This moment is what Lewis suggested to be representative of the narrator beginning to confront resisted memories. In my interpretation, however, this change more importantly represents a new way for the narrator to imagine and fantasize her past.

When Franz tells the narrator that he must go on a trip with his wife the narrator begins to express anger: “Ich muß verreisen, sagt er. [...] Ich spüre deutlich, wie sich in mir eine Eruption vorbereitet. Jeder Herzschlag treibt etwas Heißes den Schlund hoch, Zentimeter für Zentimeter. Wenn ich jetzt den Mund öffne, quillt Lava heraus [...]” (118). The narrator’s description of her

---

16 Lewis writes that “When her own body, described as ‘geschlechtslos mager’ (AT 74), threatens to assume the same feminine contours as her mother, this is seen as the fulfillment of ‘die genetische Botschaft’ (AT 74) she has inherited from her mother. [...] Furthermore, for fear that she may come to resemble her mother, whom she believes to be ‘alarmierend weiblich’ (AT 74), she forbids her body any gesture or movement that bears resemblance to her mother or women like her” (36).

17 See Alison Lewis (34).
feelings takes on a metaphoric quality in order to inform the reader of her feelings without directly confessing them. The image of a volcano about to erupt is quite declarative, allowing the reader to feel a shift in the type of reminiscence. The previous control that the narrator coveted to feel safe and less vulnerable is wrenched from her fingertips when it becomes apparent that she is not Franz’s childhood sweetheart.

Suddenly, the narrator’s constructed memories are full of morbid fantasy. This can, for example, be seen in her first encounter with Franz’s wife at the airport. Her descriptions of Franz’s wife’s body border on the grotesque. She first observes Franz’s wife with “ihren kleinen Füßen [...] Hals und Kopf gereckt [...]” at the airport (124). When the reality of Franz’s wife sets in, the narrator gives the word wife, previously void of meaning, a place in her memory: “[...] ich hatte Bilder im Kopf: Franz im schmalen Durchgang der Paßkontrolle, dahinter seine Frau [...] Dieses Lächeln klafft wie eine nicht heilende Wunde in meiner Erinnerung. Seitdem hatte Franz’ Frau für mich ein Geschlecht” (148). Confirming that Franz’s wife had a sex or gender is certainly a parallel to her disgust of her mother’s femininity. This is reflected in further descriptions of Franz’s wife and her body, especially in her fantasies about the interactions between Franz and his wife in their Hotel:

Ich sah ihnen zu, wenn sie sich entkleideten oder duschten, wenn sie sich nackt oder halbnackt in der Enge des Hotelzimmers streiften. Ich beobachtete Franz’ Frau, wie sie sich während Franz im Bad war, mit angespannter Bauchmuskulatur, die flache Hand zwischen Nabel und Scham, seitwärts im Spiegel betrachtete, weniger narzisstisch als ordent, so, als wolle sie überprüfen, ob ein Rock über der Hüfte spannt oder nicht. (153)
This reflects disgust for Franz’s wife’s femininity because of the narrator’s dissatisfaction with feminine forms evoked by a belly or wide hips. This change in constructed memories also conveys the narrator’s change from controlled imagination to morbid fantasy. Instead of simply describing the set of her play, she wants to act on stage. Her constructed memories begin to take on voyeuristic qualities. Even more, however, the narrator seems to want to physically harm Franz’s wife. This can be observed in the following fantasy where the narrator displays an obvious difficulty with Franz’s wife and her naked, female body. She fears all the exchanges of senses that Franz and his wife share, touching each other’s bodies, smelling, and watching each other. Her discomfort, anger and desire to cause harm increases as she continues to imagine what might be happening without her:

Sie hatte diese zu weit auseinanderstehenden Schenkel der Breitbeckigen und kleine Brüste wie in der Knospe verwelkte Blumen. Ihr Körper war weder besonders schön noch besonders häßlich, und ich habe nie ergründen können, warum er diesen instinktiven Ekel in mir auslöste. (153)

This disgust for Franz’s wife turns into an intensified fantasy as she wishes to be participating physically in her imagination: “Ich wollte das rosige weiche Fleisch ihrer Wange in meiner Handfläche spüren, ich wollte das ungläubige Erschrecken in ihren Augen sehen und das weinerliche Zittern um ihr Kinn” (205). Here the narrator expresses her desire to cause harm through the language of the body. She does not simply want to see Franz’s wife’s emotions, she wants to cause them. Her problematic association with Franz’s wife’s body as a female one

---

18 Alison Lewis states, “So great is her sense of violation at her usurpation by a woman as insipid as Frau Perleberg that she forces herself to witness in voyeuristic manner scenes of intimacy she imagines taking place between Franz and his wife in Scotland” (35). Her analysis sees Franz’s wife as the trigger to the narrator’s need to create this imaginative memory sequence that borders voyeurism.
clearly makes an unwanted connection to her own body as female. This connection in their similarity forces the narrator to imagine memories in her narration that are not as pleasant as other memories with Franz.

The Skeletal Framework of GDR Personal and Collective Memory

The connection between the personal or private memory narration and collective GDR memory narration is apparent in one interpretation of the title of the novel which could refer to the dinosaur. In her essay “The Status of State and Subject: Reading Monika Maron from Flugasche to Animal triste,” Brigitte Rossbacher suggests that the dinosaur in Animal triste represents a preoccupation with an extinct past. She sees the paleontological work with the dinosaur in Animal triste as representative of the need to revisit the GDR past. In Rossbacher’s words:

The professions Maron assigns her protagonists from Flugasche to Animal triste reveal in similar fashion a compelling progression or, more accurately, a regression: a movement back in time from journalist to historian to paleontologist, from the active legitimization of the state in the present to the occupation with an extinct past revealed through the study of fossil remains. (211)

As Rossbacher states, the dinosaur fossils certainly represent a preoccupation with the past. Rossbacher also notes that the narrator recognizes that the dinosaur skeleton itself is not entirely composed of artifacts from the past. Rossbacher quotes from Animal triste in this passage:

Playing out the role of Penthesilea, the narrator’s love unto death likewise ends with her own demise and the death of all she loved- Franz and the brachiosaurus, who in her eyes reverts from a schönes Tier into what it was, “ein Skelett, an dem
Rossbacher sees the narrator’s observations of the dinosaur skeleton as changed in the end of the novel. Yet the narrator’s understanding that the dinosaur is not composed entirely of artifacts seems clear throughout the novel. In fact this observation that artificial bones must be placed among the fossils of the dinosaur skeleton in order to complete the structure can be read as a metaphor for the narrator’s own memory work. The protagonist’s narration also has many artificial components which can be viewed as her constructed memories. She uses imagination and fantasy in the construction of her memory narration. The paradoxical question of the novel is then, what makes the dinosaur more of a precious or valid artifact than the narrator’s memory work which takes the form of the novel *Animal triste*?

Moreover, the dinosaur triggers an investigation of the use of structures of memorialization. The entire novel itself becomes, in essence, a memorial to Franz. There is, however, the parallel story of the dinosaur serving as a memorial to the GDR. The narrator expresses the very problems of memorials in her question about the purpose of the dinosaur skeleton: “Ich habe es damals seltsam gefunden, daß niemand sich für das Leben der Saurier interessierte, nur für ihr Sterben” (25). The paradox in this statement is that she criticizes the memorializing of the dinosaur, and yet, creates a memorial for her lover Franz in her narrative, *Animal triste*. The question remains: why memorialize the death of the GDR instead of establishing a connection with its life?

In his article “Monumental Seduction” Andreas Huyssen reflects on the effects of unified Germany’s obsession with monuments and memorial sites. Among other observations, Huyssen notes that “In today’s Germany, redemption through memory is the goal” (192). The
Brachiosaurus can be interpreted as a monument that serves to memorialize the past without redeeming it. In other words, the result is that we are no longer concerned with the implications behind the monument and only are reminded of the monument itself. As Huyssen states, “The more monuments there are, the more the past becomes invisible, the easier it is to forget: redemption, thus, through forgetting” (193). As a metaphor of the GDR in the novel then, the memorializing of the skeleton causes the actual significance of the past to become invisible and an excusable act of forgetting. In the same way, as a metaphor of the narrator’s memorial to Franz, the past is forgotten and replaced with the memorial of the book *Animal triste*.

The dinosaur as a metaphor for the narrator’s own memory work can be seen in the following quotation:


Here the narrator describes her discovery of the life of the dinosaur and the structure of its lifeless framework. She desires to trace its footsteps and experience where it has lived as a sort of reconstruction of its life. The journey of resurrecting this extinct beast resembles her own journey of reminiscence. When she touches the dinosaur for the first time she even describes it as a sort of experience of transmission of memories. This can be understood as a connection between the present and past. The memorial to Franz that is *Animal triste* acts as a similar connector between past and present. Thus, the metaphor reinforces the earlier notion that
memory work can be composed of a combination of artifact and fossil (documents of memory and constructed memories) and still provide this connection.

The narrator’s reminiscences of Franz in her controlled times and spaces, her visually stimulating memories translated through documents of memories or constructed memories and through her depictions of the body, should all additionally be understood within the context of the GDR. The previously discussed metaphor of the dinosaur skeleton is critical in drawing a parallel to the concept of memory work in unified Germany.

There was certainly a feeling of euphoria when the Berlin Wall came down on November 9, 1989, unifying former East and West Germany. The newly unified Germany allowed East German citizens new social freedoms and a general introduction to western influences. In dealing with Maron’s texts, it is more specifically from the woman’s perspective that the effects of unification must be observed. In her analysis of Maron’s texts from Flugasche to Animal triste, Brigitte Rossbacher articulates this gendered perception of reunification that Maron problematizes in her novels. In her conclusion of the relationship between the state and the subject in the novel, Rossbacher declares:

Casting her subjects within a patriarchal social reality that invariably inscribes its subjects as gendered, Maron sheds light on the interchange of sexual difference and the system of power and domination whose imprint remains even after the most palpable embodiment of that power ceases to exist. (212)

Rossbacher clarifies further that Animal triste reveals the continued domination by the system after the fall of the Berlin Wall through the narrator’s containment in her room throughout the novel. She argues that this contributes to the same loss of self as a result of GDR
politics that characterize Maron’s protagonists in other novels. Rossbacher states in her concluding argument:

In *Animal triste* the demise of the socialist state, the museal brachiosaurus, not even whose skeleton was authentic, lays bare perhaps more subtle but similarly insidious power relationships, no longer represented in terms of a struggle against an embodied and paternal GDR Father State but rather expressed through the containment of female subjectivity that remains despite the apparent gain in freedom in post-Wall Germany. (212)

The notion that female subjectivity continues to be contained despite the fall of paternalistic East Germany and the Berlin Wall or socialist structure is indeed apparent in *Animal triste*. For Rossbacher, the narrator’s decision to contain herself in her room, as discussed earlier, “enables the transgression of social boundaries” but it also becomes the source of destruction of her self (206). It foregrounds the notion that the narrator, engaged in a sort of repetitive cycle, gripped by a repetition compulsion, lacks a biography after the fall of the Wall.

The narrator’s new biography (after the fall of the Wall) begins when she meets Franz.19 She even clarifies her experience: “Ich habe in einer seltsamen Zeit gelebt; als ich Franz traf, war sie gerade vorbei” (At 30). The reference to East Germany as the “seltsame Zeit” in addition to the meeting of Franz only after the Wall falls, shows a certain sense of difficulty with the social and political structure of the former regime. In addition, after experiencing that someone “den Strom im Hirn abschaltete” the narrator seems to feel a re-birth, after a period of unsatisfying socialist rule (21).

---

19 In contrast to my analysis, Rossbacher sees the narrator’s lack of biography as an opinion that Franz has of her exclusively because she is from East Germany (207).
Furthermore, just as the fall of the Wall seems to permit the narrator’s relationship with Franz, so too are other relationships permitted. As the narrator more generally states, it was not only she, whose life was changed: it was “als lebten wir alle erst seit einem Jahr” (my emphasis) (51). The narrator defines her new biography as a general cultural phenomenon and as a result of the fall of the Wall. In order to argue this statement and define her experience as not personal, but cultural, she tells three anecdotal love stories. First, there is the story of Emile and Sibylle, then of Karin and Klaus and lastly the story of Ate and Ali. Each relationship is affected differently by the fall or construction of the Wall. One person in each relationship is also left similarly without a notion of self despite the new changes, just as Rossbacher argues happens to the narrator.

The narrator first tells the story of Emile and Sibylle to Franz. This story is significant in its portrayal of the power of the Berlin Wall. Emile, who is unable to satisfy his ambitions as a politician, finally resigns hope when he retires. In this period of his life he manages to meet Sibylle and fall madly in love. Their relationship is somewhat difficult as Sibylle lives in West Berlin. When the Wall falls, however, and they are able to be together without difficulty, but Emile flees the relationship in an attempt to regain political power. He cannot resist the opportunity to feel this power and control again as a politician, almost as if the absence of the Wall has made him feel insecure. Sibylle, however, also is unable to comprehend Emile’s behavior after “die seltsame Zeit”:

Sibylle, die Emile sogar ihre Ballettboutique geopfert hätte, fiel es schwer, dessen Leidenschaft für sein neues Amt zu begreifen, schrieb sie aber der seltsamen Zeit zu, in der Emile gelebt hatte und die sie vielleicht nie ganz verstehen würde;
Sibylle’s inability to understand the effects of “die seltsame Zeit” hinder their relationship. A similar phenomenon occurs between Franz and the narrator. Just before Franz leaves the narrator’s life forever, he confesses his willingness to leave his wife and move in with the narrator. The narrator remains unconvinced, however, just as she implies that Sibylle’s sacrifice was an empty promise. It simply defines a deep contrast and disconnect between the two people types, East and West Germans, all Germans now.

In retelling her story, the narrator also reflects on the impact of the Wall in her own life. She states “Manchmal glaube ich sogar, daß auch die Mauer in Berlin nur eingerissen wurde, damit Franz mich endlich finden konnte” (51). She uses the relationship of Emile and Sybille as just one example of the destructive effect of the Wall. Here she outlines another example:

Ali war ein arbeitsloser Schauspieler aus dem Westteil Berlins, und in der Nacht, als die Mauer durch die Stadt gebaut wurde, schließ er in Ates Bett. Da im Stadtbezirksgericht Charlottenburg gerade wieder ein Verfahren wegen nicht gezahlter Alimente gegen ihn anhängig war, beschloß er, lieber bei Ate hinter der Mauer zu bleiben, als wieder einmal hinter den Gefängnismauern von Moabit.

(134)

Ate and Ali’s reason for meeting, similar to Emile and Sibylle’s is precisely the separation created by the Wall. Without this Wall, they may never have had reason to be together. The Wall controls and has power over Ali’s decision to stay with Ate, stripping him of the opportunity to decide whether he really loves Ate. Once the Wall falls, however, he realizes that his relationship to Ate was mainly convenient and necessary for his survival. The
relationship ends again, due to the unification of Germany. Ate is devastated over the relationship and as a result we see another subject, lost without her partner. Ate has become a victim of the biography-less former East Germany.

Finally the story of Karin and Klaus tells yet another perspective of love within East Germany. The narrator presents this couple not as people in love but as the high school sweethearts who have perfected married life. She despises them for their success as lasting childhood sweetheart love. Her contempt for the couple subsides when she realizes that they are not actually in love, just good at being the married couple. She also feels no sympathy for Karin when Klaus betrays her for a younger woman. When Karin and Klaus eventually return to each other the narrator suggests that it is not because of love: “Statt dessen werden sie sich erzählt haben, daß das Ende der Freiheitsbande schon deshalb ein Segen war, weil es sie, Karin und Klaus, wieder dahin geführt hat, wo sie hingehörten, in ihr Haus [...]” (98). The narrator’s attitude toward Karin, however, reflects her own contempt for Franz’s wife. Thus, she inevitably sides with Klaus, assuming that the love he had with another woman must have been more substantial than the role playing between Karin and Klaus.

Karin indeed represents a subservient female character similar to the narrator’s mother. Unlike the other two “love” stories, her unwillingness to adjust to a new social order results in the demise of her relationship. Her success, however, lies in the fact that her husband is also an East German, sharing the same history. There is no need to memorialize on the part of Karin and Klaus because they implicitly understand one another’s biographies.

Thus, the history of the GDR is clearly significant for the characters in these love stories in that it is integral to the construction of their new selves. The novel *Animal triste*, therefore, reveals that the falling of the Wall did not allow for immediate social and historical unity.
Despite the fact that both East and West Germans are Germans and share a cultural history, their personal memories are diverse. Consequently, it is interesting to contemplate the necessity of memorializing. Although memorializing events, people, and history can lead to the invisibility of their true significance, as mentioned earlier, Maron seems to suggest that it is a more successful alternative to the biography-less GDR, a reality perhaps of the 1990s when she wrote the novel.

In conclusion, the reading of *Animal triste* is a journey from traumatic to narrative memory for both the narrator and the reader. There is both an intense necessity to translate this memory into a narrative, and a self-ish or ego-driven desire to neglect it in place of an apparent self-preservation. Through a repetition of cyclically constructed memories the narrator makes her last testimony in light of her (apparent) old age. With a narrative comprised of documents of memory and constructed memory the final product helps her to put the past behind her, instead of existing in a timeless state as at the outset of the novel. This type of memorializing can be seen as a necessary narrative for citizens of the former GDR. In their new identities as Germans, they almost have no choice but to memorialize, whether through *constructed memories* or *documents of memories*, in order to proceed with a new biography, and more, a productive outlook on their past lives and on the future.
CHAPTER III. DIALOG WITH THE DEAD: TRANSFERRING MEMORIES ACROSS THREE GENERATIONS IN MONIKA MARON’S *PAWELS BRIEFE*

In *Pawels Briefe* (1999) Monika Maron reflects on three generations of German political history, each history impacting the form memory and remembering has taken. Labeling her work “Eine Familiengeschichte,” Maron distances herself from a direct association with any autobiographical information in *Pawels Briefe*. Although it is clear that much of the information revealed is from Maron’s own life, the narrator in *Pawels Briefe* must be distinguished as separate from Maron herself. The narrator Monika attempts to string together fragments and traces of memories from her life across these three generations. She is encouraged to investigate the life of her grandfather Pawel Iglarz when a Dutch TV reporter approaches her and her mother Hella with the question, “Wann werden die Deutschen endlich normal” (PB 10). Prompted by this question, Hella discovers a box of letters from her father, which she had forgotten existed. This critical moment sets Monika and her mother on a journey of investigative memory searching. Using these letters that document the correspondence between the narrator’s mother, her grandfather and her grandmother, Maron outlines the historical framework of Germany and Poland during WWII and in East Germany after the war. In addition to these letters, Maron inserts family photographs, which often speak for themselves in between the protagonist’s narration. Questioning the notion of authenticity in the very act of remembering and forgetting, the narrator carefully tries to compose the story of her forgotten grandparents, Josefa and Pawel. This story of the narrator’s grandparents, however, forms also into a significant reflection on the German political-historical contexts, and thus also the narrator’s relationship with her mother.

*Pawels Briefe* was heavily debated and criticized when it was first published, and continues, to some degree, to be criticized today. Because Maron withheld secrets of her
involvement with the *Staatssicherheit* many critics felt that Maron’s sudden reflections on the past were an attempt to excuse and explain her guilt away.  

Now over a decade after the publication of *Pawels Briefe*, my reading of this text should reveal that Maron’s use of form and content in her untraditional convention of autobiographical writing is far more notable than reflections on her Stasi involvement. It is also not my intention to examine the authenticity or accuracy of Maron’s, the author’s, memories. I am more interested in the way in which Maron crafts a type of autobiographical writing that allows her to reflect on the components involved in retrieving memories across three generations. In the vastly different political landscapes of each new generation in the narrator’s family, transference of memories changes or, more often, ceases to exist all together. Additionally, the question of who has committed acts as perpetrator and victim changes dramatically when written from the perspective of unified Germany in the late 1990s. Maron shows, by allowing her narrator to have a dialog between her deceased grandfather and herself, that if we remember all that history has left behind, a renewed or different discussion of perpetrator and victim must be launched. Furthermore, the mere discussion of Maron’s own involvement in the Stasi should not cast a shadow over the significance of her discussion on memory and remembrance across generations.

In this discussion I plan to shift my attention away from arguments of authenticity to an analysis of the use of form and content in autobiographical writing in post-Wall Germany. Not only the changes that take place within the common discussion of perpetrator and victim roles, but also how Maron uses concrete artifacts within her text, such as family photographs and letters allows all readers (not just European or relatives of Holocaust victims or survivors) to

---

20 See Owen Evans, “‘Mutmaßungen über Pawel’: Monika Maron, *Pawels Briefe: Eine Familiengeschichte* (1999)” for a detailed defense of the need to avoid considering Maron’s Stasi involvement as Maron’s reason to write *Pawels Briefe*. 
access the narrator’s imagined history. Because of the narrator’s lack of assuredness in the accuracy of her and her mother’s memories and photographs, all readers are invited to imagine her story. The mere fact that the family photographs allow an international audience to imagine the Iglarz family as their own, shows that the imagination of family history is not just a European or postmemory phenomenon, but occurs world-wide in many historical contexts.

The current history of photography that has become the object of study in the 20th century documents the development of a particular discourse of family photographs. The composition, texture and color of family photographs in Europe and the U.S. in the early 20th century are so similar and familiar that we can easily identify with them. The generic format of family portraits from this time causes the images to seem interchangeable. Thus, we recognize them and can integrate them into our own family histories. The viewer senses a certain connectedness with the portraits and therefore begins to identify with them as something familiar. This interchangeability furthermore reveals that family photographs cannot present indisputable facts. Particularly interesting is how the desire of the viewer to feel concretely connected to the past colors the interpretation of family photographs in *Pawels Briefe*.

In this discussion, I will show how family photographs allow the reader to consider *Pawels Briefe* as a fictional, as well as familiar, family history. Maron attempts to control the reader’s observations of her photographs by inserting enlargements of particular segments and by presenting imagined details and interpretations of her own to the reader. Paradoxically, however, she indicates that the photographs are open to interpretation. Attempting to perhaps combat the unreliability of the family photographs to present factual information, Maron then incorporates letters that serve as artifacts or documents of family history. I argue that the form these
photographs take and their relationship to the letters presented in the text cause the reader to understand family history and memory as malleable and interchangeable.

Memory Work in the Two Germanys and Across Three Generations

Many critics have written about *Pawels Briefe* and most have determined the necessity to analyze Maron’s work based on her historical-generational standing with reference to memories of the Holocaust.\(^1\) Most recently, Caroline Schaumann has written extensively about Maron’s *Pawels Briefe* and has also outlined a helpful argument for defining Maron’s generational standing. With reference to Marianne Hirsch, whose book-length study *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory* (1997) has been influential in the discussion of Holocaust memories, Schaumann points out that the term third generation is somewhat problematic with regard to someone like Maron. Hirsch, Schaumann reminds us, coins the term postmemory to highlight transgenerational memory patterns of Holocaust survivors and their children, the second generation: “Postmemory is a powerful and very particular form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through an imaginative investment and creation” (Hirsch, qtd. by Schaumann 225). Schaumann continues:

For the generation of grandchildren, however, this statement takes on even more significance. Whereas postmemory does not distinguish between children and grandchildren, there are crucial differences in that children encounter their parents’ (traumatic) memories but grandchildren acquire and alter their parents’ postmemories. (225)

---

\(^1\) The critics I am referring to here include Frederike Eigler, Silke Horstkotte, Joanna K. Stimmel, Katharina Gerstenberger, Lothar Blum, Michal Ben-Horin, Stuart Tabener and Sylvia Klötzer. See Works Cited for corresponding article titles.
Schaumann concludes from this reflection that the grandchildren of survivors of trauma must then resort more heavily to imagination to have a discussion about the past, since they have no direct connection to these memories. I find the distinction that Maron belongs to the generation of grandchildren and not the second generation critical. Although Maron was born in 1941, her discussion of memories in *Pawels Briefe* does little to document her own experience during WWII, as she remembers very little. She was also only one when her grandparents died and could not have preserved any actual memory of them from this period either. So by distinguishing Maron as part of the “Enkelgeneration” in Germany, Schaumann is able to make her arguments for Maron’s need to imagine her family history (242).

In continuing this discussion of Schaumann’s thoughts on the “Enkelgeneration,” it is also necessary to mention that Schaumann has documented the changes in the discussion of the victim-perpetrator roles in (West) German socio-political discourse. Schaumann states, “Stretching across three or more generations, grandchildren’s texts also move beyond the dual victim-perpetrator typology, embracing the fact that their fates […] have become intertwined and multifaceted” (242-243). I would like to expand on Schaumann’s arguments in noting that the victim-perpetrator typology has indeed changed for the generation of grandchildren according to Maron. More specifically, however, I will analyze Maron’s attempt to go beyond imagination as Schaumann sees it, and facilitate communication with the dead.

It is necessary here before I launch into my discussion of Maron’s reflections on memory in *Pawels Briefe* to note that the questions of memory discourse raised after Germany’s unification were due in large part to the different ways each Germany’s government facilitated memory work. Schaumann explains that after unification Germany felt the need to combine and unite their separate collective public memories in order to commemorate the victims of National
Socialism. The tendencies and strategies for confronting the National Socialist past in West and East Germany were quite different before unification. In the West it wasn’t until Willy Brandt became chancellor that a change began to take place in the attitudes toward public or collective commemoration. In East Germany on the other hand, the socialist state was built on the principal that it was an anti-fascist state. The commemoration of communist victims of National Socialism did take place, but little was done to begin a discourse about the Jewish victims.

Having left East Germany to go to the West in 1988 and also having lived in the West on a three-year visa, Maron was exposed to both forms of memory discourse. She was sensitive to the East German politics of memory work, especially since it is clearly a subject presented in many of her earlier novels, most notably *Stille Zeile sechs* and *Animal triste* as I have discussed in the previous chapters. In *Pawels Briefe* Maron seems to expand on her critical questioning of the GDR and contemporary attempts to process GDR collective memory. Moreover, she questions united Germany’s memory work as well as the extent of memory work associated with National Socialism in other European contexts.²²

By beginning this memory quest that becomes *Pawels Briefe*, Maron is able to present a new perspective on what is the correct way to go about processing and discussing memory. As Schaumann and others have suggested, this process takes a very imaginative and even exegetical form. While the narrator imagines aspects of her grandparents’ lives she also comes to terms with the difficult victim-perpetrator paradigm. She outlines her frustrations with GDR politics, which her mother Hella in part and her stepfather Karl most directly reflect. This becomes clear when she states that she felt able to live only after Karl’s death. She also outlines the victim role

²² This can be seen in her questioning of what the Polish villagers remember of the Jews that used to live there. Maron seems to suggest that they have perhaps chosen to forget this piece of history.
of her grandfather and grandmother but notes that labeling them as such is difficult and not helpful. She cannot think about or consider her grandparents’ cause of death in talking about her family history because it would cause her to understand their lives only in terms of their victimhood:

Um mir das alltägliche Leben meiner Großeltern vorstellen zu können, muß ich vergessen, wie sie gestorben sind. Ich muß mir einreden, sie seien gestorben, wie Menschen eben sterben, an Krankheit, Alter oder durch einen Unfall, zwar zu früh, als daß ich sie hätte kennenlernen können, aber an einem Tod, der im Leben vorgesehen ist. Im Schatten ihres wirklichen Todes hat kein Detail Bestand, es wird banal oder mystisch. (PB 23)

It is clear that she purposefully tries to avoid talking about her grandparents as victims of history and instead focuses on the humanity of their existence in the everyday events of their lives. However, she also attempts to avoid defining her mother Hella as a perpetrator despite her own difficulties with the former GDR and Hella’s devotion to the communist state. Although Hella was raised in West Berlin and only moved to East Berlin in 1951, the narrator seems to suggest that she is most influenced by GDR Vergangenheitsbewältigung (process of coming to terms with the past). This can be seen in the narrator Monika’s attempts to understand why Hella forgets and remembers certain things. Monika says, for example, that her mother remembers her early years in terms of “eine schöne Kindheit” and is jealous of that memory (23). But as she continues in her memory work she realizes that her mother probably only imagines her childhood as a positive memory due to GDR tendencies to forget the bad. This process of forgetting is poignantly stated in Hella’s comment “wir haben immer so nach vorn gelebt” (114). Monika’s pressure, then, on her mother to remember, causes Hella first to realize that she has forgotten,
and then to wonder why. When Hella begins to question her own memories, Monika seems to stop her attempts to define Hella as a perpetrator or as a victim. Hella, after all, is a child of victims of the Third Reich and could easily fit into the category of victim. It is clear that bringing Hella’s unknown past into the present, then, also resolves a troubled relationship with her mother and the former GDR. This resolution is clearly linked to the less defined roles of perpetrator and victim.

Although critics like Schaumann argue that the victim-perpetrator roles become less relevant for the grandchildren generation, some critics do not agree. Stuart Tabener, for example, in his article, “‘ob es sich bei diesem Experiment um eine gescheiterte Utopie oder um ein Verbrechen gehandelt hat’: Enlightenment, Utopia, the GDR and National Socialism in Monika Maron’s Work from Flugasche to Pawels Briefe,” concludes that Maron “invents a new myth of victimhood” by the end of the story despite her desire to move beyond this (56). As I outlined above, however, the narrator states specific reasons why she cannot integrate Hella and her grandparents into the victim-perpetrator paradigm. This argument by Tabener, then, does not seem to support Monika’s own thoughts on victimhood in Pawels Briefe. Tabener also begins his discussion of Pawels Briefe stating, “Maron’s book echoes both the western focus on the Shoah-the fact of Pawel’s murder-and eastern critiques of the GDR’s corruption of its founding goals. Yet the emphasis is very much on the mass murder of Jews” (49). As stated above, however, the narrator Monika even goes out of her way to avoid the discussion of her grandparents’ deaths in order to commit to personal memory work. This opinion does not seem to aid the discussion of memory work that is so useful in this book. It is important to discuss this opinion here, however, because it has been echoed elsewhere too.
The narrator’s documentation of her family’s and her own changes in modes of identification can be viewed as Maron’s continued attempt to move away from the victim-perpetrator binary opposition. Monika’s grandfather was born and raised Jewish but converted to Baptist. Her Catholic German grandmother also became Baptist but then was a Half-Jew by law. Moreover, her grandfather Pawel was also a communist and of Polish origin but lived in Germany and identified as a German. Monika’s mother Hella was also half Jewish (by birth) and a communist. Monika’s father Walter was an Aryan Nazi in the war who received a medal of commendation for his efforts in the war. Monika herself was a communist in the former GDR until her political ideology changed and she eventually left for West Germany. Furthermore, all of these roles fell apart when the Berlin Wall came down. These rather dramatic shifts in political and religious identity roles that potentially fit into a rigid system of oppositions are interrogated in Maron’s text. The narrator underscores this interrogation throughout *Pawels Briefe* by exploring her family history and her own personal difficulty in dealing with these oppositions. One particular example of such difficulty is in reference to the discovery of Pawel’s identity as a communist. The narrator contemplates all of the reasons why Pawel might have become a communist. She imagines that he would not have been a communist out of his own free will. As she speculates about his motivations, however, she writes self-reflexively about how she is (re)constructing history:

Was immer ihn bewogen hat, er wurde Kommunist, und ich kann ihn mir in einer kommunistischen Parteiversammlung einfach nicht vorstellen. Oder will ich nicht? Will ich mir nicht vorstellen, wie er in einer kommunistischen Parteiversammlung redete, sich mit den anderen gemeinsam erregte, abstimmte,
weil es ihm das Geheimnis, mit dem ich ihn seit meiner Kindheit umgeben habe, rauben könnte? (60-61)

Pawel is described as a very respected and loved figure in this book. It is clear through the images used and imagined descriptions and dialogs with Pawel that Monika reveres her grandfather, or rather her imagination of her grandfather. Knowing, then, that he was a communist, which she had resented in other figures in her life (her stepfather Karl and her mother) was surely not an easy discovery. It, however, did bring her to understand that the defined binary oppositions that she was accustomed to operating under are not always adequate. In realizing this she herself mentions, “Vorübergehend muß ich wohl vergessen haben, daß er außer Jude, Pole, Baptist auch noch Kommunist geworden war” (62). This clarifies the notion that not all people can fit under only perpetrator and only victim. If the narrator were to use the perpetrator-victim system to classify Pawel, she would have had to choose which identity to know him as: as a communist, as a Jew, as Baptist, as Polish? This clearly outlines the problematic with this form of organizing and understanding German history and further negates Tabener’s arguments regarding the binary oppositions in *Pawels Briefe*.

Transcribing Memories through Letters and Family Photographs

The questions that the narrator poses for herself and her readers not only launch a discussion of the traditional perpetrator-victim roles but even more so of the act of remembering. The type of memory work that she explores in *Pawels Briefe* not only leads to new discoveries in the German context, it also raises questions about memory work in other historical and cultural contexts. The narrator Monika clearly outlines the factual historical events that have affected the past generations in her family: the Holocaust, World War II, the founding of the GDR, the fall of the Berlin Wall, etc. In other words, she not only focuses on how her family memories evolved
in the face of national or cultural tragedies and triumphs. She also focuses on the way in which memory is prodded through concrete artifacts and the way in which these are embedded in a historical context. In this discussion the photographs and letters, the authentic artifacts, belonging to Monika, are most critical. I would like to analyze Maron’s use of photographs and suggest that her decision to include them not only aids in her memory imagination but also causes her to facilitate a dialog with her dead grandfather. Her inclusion of the photographs additionally controls the reader’s perception of the narrator’s family members in that the reader can only see the pictures she chooses to include and enlarge. This control over the reader’s image of the narrator’s family, however, does not pertain to the authenticity of information being transferred. Because the narrator is unsure of any factual data in the photographs and readily admits and problematizes this, the reader is actually encouraged to continue the imagination of “eine Familiengeschichte” beyond the narrator’s own story. So, paradoxically, in attempting to control the perceptions of her reader and guarantee pieces of authenticity, the reader can integrate the general family photographs into his/her own personal history. The reader, thus, might experience the postmemorial connection to the narrator’s family history, a kind of mediated yet immediate connection.

Scholar Julia Hirsch presents a useful analysis for my argument in her text titled *Family Photographs*. In the introduction of her book, Hirsch explains that photographs can be viewed by many people regardless of relation to or knowledge of the person depicted. Because we can all identify with the humanity of individuals in many photographs, they can often easily become ours while just viewing the image. In Julia Hirsch’s words:

> If we do not know the individuals—if we happen to see them on the walls of a friend’s house, on the desk of a colleague whose office we share, in a library
book, or in a motel night table—we are easily attracted by a human constellation whose names and voices we ignore. The picture, with its display of eyes and hands, perhaps even bosoms, groins, and legs, seems to bring intimacy without any formal introductions. But this is a superficial closeness. We have no more than a set of poses, of textures, to go on, and we recognize, finally, that the picture, like the faces we see on the television screen when the sound has been turned off, tells us only the barest of narratives. And yet for all its limitations, it can be a narrative of great intensity. (6-9)

In confirming that everyone has the ability to begin a narrative with photographs from unrelated, unknown subjects, Hirsch seems to impute a genuinely common connection to imagery that is nearly cross-cultural. In her brief discussion of the history of family photography she also describes that because technology was limited in the 19th century, for example, family photography was done on similar backgrounds throughout Europe. Additionally, the techniques for postures, dress, and arrangement of family photographs were so similar that we recognize them today as nearly uniformly similar family frames. From the perspective of an outsider (one who does not have familial relation to the people depicted in the photograph) of Maron’s generation or younger (grandchildren’s generation), photographs of 19th century families may appear very similar to one another. They all evoke one common theme: a recognition of humanity in the past. There is a general feeling of being able to relate to the images that are so far removed, that they could indeed be anyone’s relatives.

For this reason, by inserting family photographs in her book, Maron allows the reader to indulge in this wandering imagination. In essence, the narrator Monika is herself participating in imagining her past and as such does not seem to be able to distinguish herself from the reader as
far as her claim to authentic familial facts goes. Indeed, it does seem like this is also perhaps not her goal.

In Marianne Hirsch’s discussion of photographs and remembrance of the Holocaust she also addresses the use of photography to make a connection to the past. In the very last chapter of *Family Frames* she analyzes the work of photographer Shimon Attie who takes World War II images of Jewish children and families and projects them onto the walls of what would have been Berlin’s *Scheunenviertel*, an area of town that formerly had a substantial Jewish population and immigrants from Eastern Europe. The visual images of peoples’ pasts, or ghosts projected in the present is haunting to say the least. This is perhaps in the most literal practice what Maron attempts to do in connecting the images of the narrator’s dead grandparents with the letters and eventually with a discussion that the narrator might have had with Pawel. Maron provides the viewer with visual images and projects literary imaginings, and in this way she offers a variant of Attie’s work. Moreover, she seems to invite the reader to experience a kind of personal investment through the photographs and her explanations. Once again, I cite Marianne Hirsch here in her discussion of photographs of Holocaust victims:

> We mourn the people in the photographs because we recognize them, but this identification remains at a distance marked by incomprehension, anger, and rage. They may be like us, but they are not us: they are visibly ghosts and shadows. They are and remain other, emanations from another time and space. They are clearly in another world from ours, and yet they are uncannily familiar. Our entry into the circle of postmemory through the act of familial looking enlarges the notion of family without dislodging it from a historical and geographical specificity that signals its difficult accessibility. (267)
The idea that the “notion of family” is “enlarged” through the postmemorial observance of these images is extremely helpful in providing a key to *Pawels Briefe*. As stated above, Maron’s readers become involved in the photographs because of the same familial sense that Hirsch describes here. As she explains, this feeling does not prevent the furthering of an event in memory but actually aids it along and allows the discussion to remain in the “historical and geographical” spaces. It is my sense that this actually promotes the dialog about memory and the connection to various historical pasts, which as seen in *Pawels Briefe* also helps to deconstruct unhelpful notions such as, for example, the binary opposition of perpetrator-victim in German history. As a result, the discussion of personal memories appears to be more fluid, not halted by politically driven binary oppositions. Finally, allowing readers from outside of the Western European realm to feel a connection or familiarity, even intimacy, with these images opens up the discussion of memory to a global community. Family is, after all, a notion that all cultures can recognize and identify with.

**Dialog with the Dead**

In order for the connection between three generations of history to be made possible, Maron chooses to integrate a combination of letters and photographs. This combination results in a bridge of communication between past and present that seems to develop into therapeutic imagination for the narrator and her possible life with her grandfather Pawel.

In her analysis titled “Photo-Text Topographies: Photography and the Representation of Space in W.G. Sebald and Monika Maron,” Silke Horstkotte argues that Maron’s use of photography does not aid in an authentication of her memories. While I agree with Horstkotte in this sense, I do not agree that this is Maron’s intention. Horstkotte sees Maron’s use of photography as a failure due to this fact. She states: “The photographs themselves do not enable
an easy, authentic, or immediate access to the past, which is what the narrator is ultimately trying to achieve; on the contrary, they depend on slow, intense, and repeated acts of looking” (66).

Horstkotte continues her analysis by looking at the placement of photographs in *Pawels Briefe* and how they affect the mediation between past and present:

> By positioning photographs in the very corners of the printed book page, Maron suggests that photography is a marginal medium of memory and one that is overdetermined by discursive, especially verbal frames. Moreover, the repetition of photographs in a synecdochic pattern implicitly argues against a view of photography as an immediate, shocklike or traumatic access to the past (contrast, e.g., Baer 2002). (73)

Although I do not agree that the placement of the photographs in *Pawels Briefe* has such an impact on the meaning of the use of these images, I do find the way in which they are used and the type of photograph relevant. There are seventeen different photographs used in this autobiographical text. Most photographs are then followed on the subsequent page by a cropped close-up of a particular section of the photograph.

The first two images are portraits of Pawel and Josefa Iglarz. Placed one on either side of the open-faced book, Pawel and Josefa look strangely similar, as though they could be siblings. When introducing these first images even Monika attests to a lack of connection with the distant black-and-white images of her grandparents of whom she has no memory.

> Das Bild, das ich mir von meinen Großeltern mache, ist schwarzweiß wie die Fotografien, von denen ich sie kenne. Selbst wenn ich mich anstrenge und versuche, mir meine Großmutter und meinen Großvater als durchblutete farbige
Yet, immediately after admitting that her grandparents can never be real colored images of memory in her mind, the next page is followed by the first letter from her grandmother. This presents a stark contrast of the two-dimensional faces that seem distant and generic. The chapter begins as follows:

Einen Tag vor ihrem Tod, am 10. Juni 1942, schrieb meine Großmutter ihrem Mann diesen Brief:

Mein lieber Mann! (19)

By inserting this letter which the reader assumes to be authentic (an actual letter from 1942), Monika transforms the readers’ thoughts, and her own, by attempting to give her black-and-white, generic, grandparents a voice. Suddenly the reader, too, has a historical context for the images presented.

The next and only image of her great grandfather Juda Lejb Sendrowitsch Iglarz represents the sometimes troubling difficulty with attributing authenticity to photographs. As the narrator introduces this photograph, which is of an older man at a desk and chair with his hand holding a place in his book, she notes that her great grandfather was supposed to have been illiterate. The expectation of truth conveyed by the artifact is thwarted by what is known about the great grandfather and, thus, the photograph immediately loses any sense of veracity that it may have once had. Because there is also no form of correspondence from the great grandfather, the image cannot be given a voice and thus it loses significance within the framework of the narrator’s history. The photograph does, however, remain interesting in terms of its role as a generic depiction of anyone’s great grandfather.
Struggling against this undermining of authenticity the narrator seems to attempt to attribute some sense of meaning to the image. By cropping the image of the hand in the book and enlarging it, she immediately controls the interpretation of the photograph to be centered around the question of Juda’s illiteracy. Nonetheless, she seems to question the legitimacy of photography and its use in memory, but this does not hamper her from examining the photograph more closely and speculating about her great grandfather.

The first family photograph depicted on page 32 of *Pawels Briefe* seems to be critical for Monika’s imaginative memory to begin. Observing relatives whom she had never met and wondering how they might have interacted on a daily basis she begins to retell stories that her mother Hella told her. This is where the dialog between image, text, and memory begins. She begins to ask herself questions: “Haben sie Deutsch oder Polnisch miteinander gesprochen? Wenn sie allein waren, bestimmt Polnisch” (33). Monika continues to describe her imagined scenario of her grandparents in the kitchen, their discussion and what they might say to each other. She imagines a dialog, “Juscha, sagt mein Großvater, gibst du mir bitte mal die Schere?” (33). Not only does the insertion of this language take Monika beyond imagination into the realm of nearly attempting to converse with the dead by playing a role in their daily life scenario, but it also exposes the personalities she wishes them to have had. This is revealed in the type of everyday common language they use. It is neutral and yet familiar. The emphasis on Pawel is then, again, seen clearly by another cropped close up of only Pawel’s head. Pawel appears to be happy, and have a kind and gentle demeanor. But how can the photograph tell this? He could have been squinting because it was sunny outside. Maron also reflects on this possibility to interpret multiple readings of emotion and circumstance in one photograph throughout this autobiographical text.
Each of the photographs Maron chooses to place in *Pawels Briefe* depicts a specific epoch of the Iglarz family life and each is equally interesting. One of the most telling photographs, however, is the family portrait for a visa application to the U.S.

At first, the photograph on page 46 of the Iglarz family certainly depicts the common European arrangement and postures of photography of the late 19th and early 20th century. The photograph does not reveal their true social standing since they all appear to be dressed finely and be very clean and proper. The background obviously indicates that the photograph was taken in a studio. Josefa and Pawel are sitting on elegant chairs as they frame and advertise their four children who sit and stand protectively between them. Also separated by sex, the women on one side and the men on the other, even their expressions seem varied by sex. The women are serious but gentle and the men strong and stern. In response to this idyllic family frame, the narrator questions her own desire to be there, in this distant space and time that the photograph represents. Yet even with this desire she questions herself:

The narrator seems to recognize that all that she misses are the bygone moments of the past that she has heard retold so idyllically by her mother Hella. She desires those experiences but at the same time realizes that they are not real because of Hella’s own omission of important, but sad and difficult, moments of the past. When, on the next page Maron again inserts a cropped and enlarged photograph of only Hella, the reader’s focus is narrowed and controlled. Now we are told that the most important information in this photograph is Hella’s facial expression. When the narrator explains Hella’s expression, we are again reminded of the false truths that photographs can transmit. In the photograph, Hella looks pretty and complacent, yet when Maron enlarges just her, we can see that she appears angry. Only Hella’s own memory can offer a hint about what Hella’s true expression might explain. As Monika says, “Hella erinnert sich, daß sie für den Fotografen so lange auf ihrem Bein hatte sitzen müssen, bis es ihr abgestorben war” (46).

As a relatively objective reader and viewer of these photographs, however, we do not need to question the expressions of the individuals depicted. Maron encourages this process with the narrator’s thoughts, but the narrator’s continuous uncertainty about facts regarding her family also encourages us to develop our own story. Thus, one might say that we are nearly schooled in Maron’s process of developing a line of communication between past and present.

In conclusion, in this communication of memories across three generations of family history, Maron attempts to aid the reader in his/her creation of the story that is made into a dialog with the deceased family members. Not only does Maron present a changed victim-perpetrator paradigm through these family portraits, she also encourages an imagined form of memory work, one that is accessible and malleable. This concept of using malleable memories in the construction of the self is certainly outlined beginning with Stille Zeile sechs. Animal triste furthers this discussion with a hypothesis on what this malleable memory work might look like,
and how it might by criticized as inauthentic and untrustworthy. Further advancing along this line of thought, *Pawels Briefe* seems to combine the thoughts on memoir writing with the translation of traumatic memories into a narrative form to create the untraditional autobiography that is “Eine Familiengeschichte.” The paradox of a fictional autobiography is surely an indication of Maron’s desire to translate memories into somewhere between fact and fiction.
CONCLUSION

In this thesis I presented a close reading of Monika Maron’s *Stille Zeile sechs*, *Animal triste* and *Pawels Briefe* that outlined a progression from one text to the next regarding the discussion of autobiographical writing, the construction of identity and their connection to binary oppositions in the former GDR. I directed the examination of memory work away from authenticity debates and focused instead on Maron’s use of form and content in autobiographical writing. I questioned how she designed her texts and what impact this format had on the reader’s interpretation of the narrative. I also discussed a shift, in each of Maron’s three texts, away from the use of the victim-perpetrator binary opposition as a mode of identification. In conclusion, this progression in Maron’s texts reveals an altered suggestion for autobiographical memory work, namely a blending of historiography and fiction.

The concluding question of this thesis then seems to be: what separates historiography from fiction? In terms of memory narratives, Maron seems to suggest that it is not in segregating these two concepts but in combining them that a re-casting of the self is possible. This means that it is not solely through a detailed account of facts about personal and collective history, that is, through historiography, that a memory narrative is formed. Instead I showed how Maron presents historical facts within a memory narrative of fiction. I argued that Maron develops this notion beginning with *Stille Zeile sechs*, which focuses on autobiographical writing in the form of a memoir. As memoirs are used as intermediary sources for historical facts, they supposedly represent truth whereas fiction represents personal subjectivity. I showed in my thesis how Maron questions this way of reading memoirs, namely as a form of personal historiography in the case of Beerenbaum. I argued that memoirs, furthermore, present the inevitability of fiction in autobiographical writing.
Continuing this discussion in *Animal triste*, I showed how Maron then essentially flips the paradigm of memory work. Instead of personal historiography, Maron writes a completely fictionalized narrative. Nevertheless, as I argued, the narrator translates her traumatic memories into a literary narrative which allows her to resolve certain repressed memories. In the end she is able to reconstruct her self despite the reader’s constant questioning of the reliability of her memory. The need for a connection to both personal and collective historical facts within the narrative, then, becomes less significant.

Finally, I showed that in *Pawels Briefe*, Maron creates a narrative that seems at first to be an autobiographical text. Elements such as photographs and letters are used to convince the reader of this. Yet as I argued, Maron rejects labeling the text as an autobiography by declaring it “Eine Familiengeschichte.” As a result, her text becomes fictionalized despite the reader’s assumption of the personal narrative as historical fact. Thus, Maron plays with combining historical truths with fiction to produce memory narratives that may re-cast the self.

Often taking the role of a historiographer herself, Maron also reevaluates history in her texts. I have shown this in her renewed discussion of the victim-perpetrator opposition in Germany. I argued that Maron avoids using binary oppositions as a method of identification. In this, she essentially writes herself out of the restrictive box that these roles create. In a sense, then, she creates a new historiography, or a new way of interpreting history, by questioning and indeed undermining, the rigid divide that binary oppositions create. In *Stille Zeile sechs* I showed this as Rosalind moves beyond declaring Beerenbaum as strictly a perpetrator or herself as strictly a victim. In *Animal triste* the narrator begins declaring herself as a victim and Franz as a perpetrator but causes the reader to remain unconvinced about this labeling. Because her memory doesn’t allow her to make a determination between victim and perpetrator (she can’t remember if
she killed Franz or if it was an accident), she becomes lodged in a gray area somewhere between victim and perpetrator. This is where *Pawels Briefe* then continues. Maron refuses to continue the narrative with binary oppositions as a means of identification. She does this by outlining the many different roles of opposition each of her narrator’s family members could potentially be classified under.

Thus, we are left wondering what significance historiography has in its fact-finding mission. What can historiography tell us about ourselves that purely fictionalized autobiographies may not? Maron seems to suggest that historiography cannot be without elements of fiction, and so too can memory narratives not exist without certain historical facts and elements of fiction. With a certain freedom, then, to embellish memories, Maron allows perhaps for a more fluid narrative of the self. We are after all, constantly re-casting the self just as historiographers are continuously reevaluating history.
Works Cited


Harbers, Henk. “Gefährliche Freiheit. Zu einem Motivkomplex im Werk von Monika Maron.”


Klötzer, Sylvia. “‘Wir haben immer so nach vorne gelebt’: Erinnerungen und Identität. Flugasche und Pawels Briefe von Monika Maron.” Monika Maron in Perspective: ‘Dialogische’ Einblicke in zeitgeschichtliche, intertextuelle und rezeptionsbezogene


Maron, Monika. *Animal triste.* Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1996.

- - -. *Pawels Briefe.* Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1999.

- - -. *Stille Zeile sechs.* Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1991.


