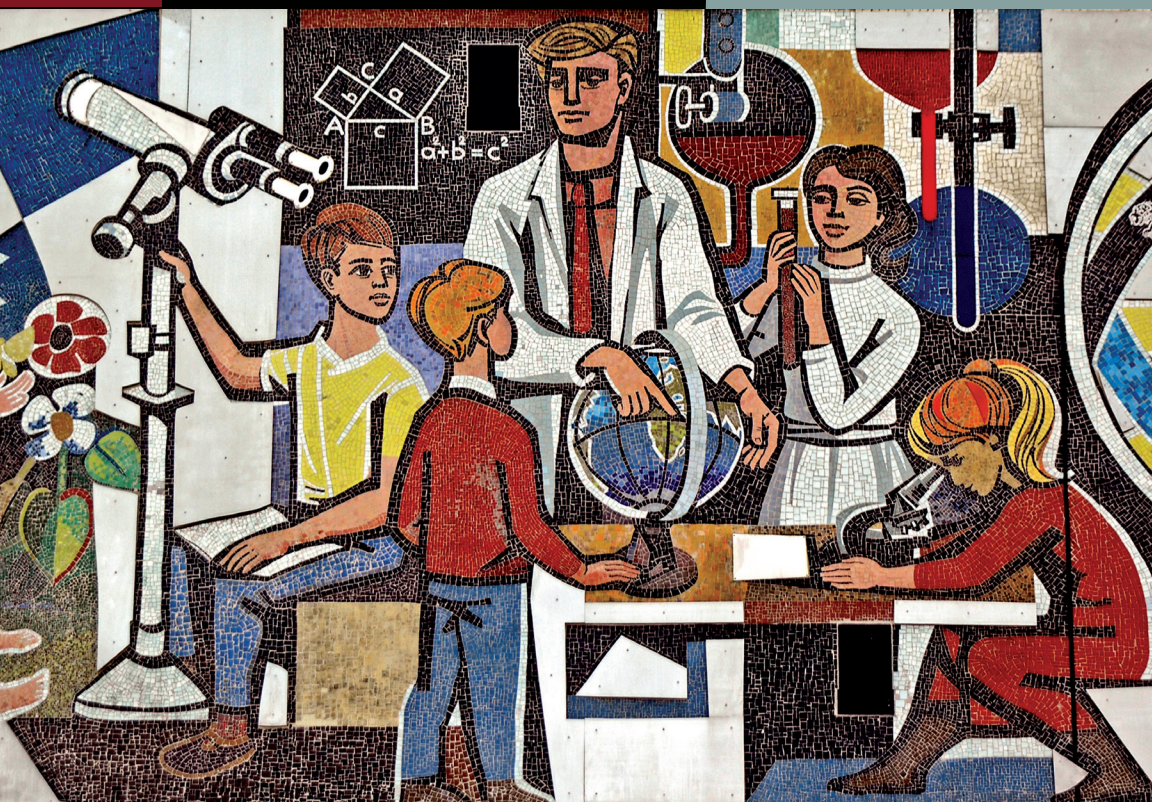


JEAN E. CONACHER

TRANSFORMATION
AND EDUCATION
IN THE
LITERATURE
OF THE GDR



Transformation and Education in the Literature of the GDR

Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture

Transformation and Education in the Literature of the GDR

Jean E. Conacher



CAMDEN HOUSE

Rochester, New York

Copyright © 2020 Jean E. Conacher

All Rights Reserved. Except as permitted under current legislation, no part of this work may be photocopied, stored in a retrieval system, published, performed in public, adapted, broadcast, transmitted, recorded, or reproduced in any form or by any means, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

First published 2020
by Camden House

Camden House is an imprint of Boydell & Brewer Inc.
668 Mt. Hope Avenue, Rochester, NY 14620, USA
www.camden-house.com
and of Boydell & Brewer Limited
PO Box 9, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP12 3DF, UK
www.boydellandbrewer.com

ISBN-13: 978-1-57113-955-9

ISBN-10: 1-57113-955-9

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Conacher, Jean E., author.

Title: Transformation and education in the literature of the GDR / Jean E. Conacher.

Description: Rochester, New York : Camden House, 2020. | Series: Studies in German literature, linguistics, and culture | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2019032970 | ISBN 9781571139559 (hardcover) | ISBN 9781787445390 (pdf)

Subjects: LCSH: German literature—Germany (East)—History and criticism. | Socialism in literature. | Socialism—Study and teaching—Germany (East) | Education and state—Germany (East)—History.

Classification: LCC PT3705 .C66 2020 | DDC 830.9/35570943109045—dc23 LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2019032970>

This publication is printed on acid-free paper.
Printed in the United States of America.

*To the memory of my parents, Kay and Ian, who together
gifted me an enduring love of education and literature.*

Contents

| | |
|---|------|
| List of Illustrations | ix |
| Acknowledgments | xi |
| List of Abbreviations | xiii |
| Introduction: The Postwar Desire for Renewal | 1 |
| 1: Shaping the Cultural and Educational Landscape in the Soviet Occupation Zone (SBZ) | 20 |
| 2: Interweaving GDR Education and Cultural Policy toward a National Literature | 48 |
| 3: Critiquing the Norm in Steinmann's <i>Die größere Liebe</i> , Wolf's <i>Der geteilte Himmel</i> , and Kant's <i>Die Aula</i> | 79 |
| 4: "Ich bin. Wer?": Subjectivity and Transformation in Wolf's <i>Nachdenken über Christa T.</i> and Reimann's <i>Franziska Linkerhand</i> | 111 |
| 5: "Wem geben wir Einsen . . . ?" Meritocracies and Reward in de Bruyn's <i>Die Preisverleihung</i> and Plenzdorf's <i>Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.</i> | 144 |
| 6: "Mir geht es gut": Challenging Stagnation in Hein's <i>Der fremde Freund</i> and Höntsch's <i>Wir sind keine Kinder mehr</i> | 174 |
| Conclusion | 207 |
| Appendix A: Text-Internal Functions of Narrative Triangle (Left Side) | 226 |
| Appendix B: Text-External Functions of Narrative Triangle (Right Side) | 228 |

| | |
|--------------|-----|
| Notes | 231 |
| Bibliography | 251 |
| Index | 277 |

Illustrations

| | | |
|------|--|-----|
| I.1. | Narrative triangle paradigm | 16 |
| I.2. | Cultural-policy triangle paradigm | 17 |
| 1.1. | Emerging narrative triangle in SBZ literature | 44 |
| 1.2. | Cultural-policy triangle in SBZ | 45 |
| 2.1. | Narrative triangle of the socialist realism norm in the 1950s | 75 |
| 2.2. | Cultural-policy triangle in the 1950s | 76 |
| 3.1. | Narrative triangle— <i>Bitterfelder Weg</i> (political response) | 105 |
| 3.2. | Narrative triangle— <i>Bitterfelder Weg</i> (literary response) | 106 |
| 4.1. | Narrative triangle—searching for self | 137 |
| 4.2. | Dissolution of the cultural-policy triangle after 1965 | 139 |
| 5.1. | Narrative triangle—defining success | 170 |
| 6.1. | Narrative triangle—challenging stagnation | 204 |

Acknowledgments

MY INTEREST IN GDR literature was awakened many years ago during my undergraduate studies at the University of Aberdeen by Jürgen Thomanek. He then encouraged me to spend a year from October 1986 working at the Wilhelm-Pieck-Universität in Rostock, with the financial support of the Liga für Völkerfreundschaft. My warmest thanks go to Jürgen, without whose enthusiasm and mentoring I would have never begun nor completed the doctoral acorn from which this volume later grew. Thanks were due also in those early days to librarians at the University of Aberdeen, the then Institute of Germanic Studies in London, and the Wilhelm-Pieck-Universität in Rostock for all their help. My year in Rostock gave me time and space to read and provided me with invaluable insights into the academic realities behind seemingly endless sheaves of educational and cultural policy. I remain humbled by the willingness of many colleagues, students, and friends to share their experiences, well before any signs of political change. The Heinzius family, in particular, gave me a special home from home and opened many doors for me.

From today's perspective, it can be hard to envisage how challenging it was to conduct research on the GDR before the fall of the Berlin Wall. The British Council funded an invaluable research visit to Leipzig in autumn 1989, unwittingly enabling me to experience the *Wende* first hand. Precious help and support were provided by staff at the Deutsche Bücherei and by former colleagues and friends in Rostock and Dresden, who had far more exciting challenges to meet but continued happily to respond to my every question. More recently, I have been greatly helped by library and archival staff in Leipzig (the now Deutsche Nationalbibliothek, the Universitätsbibliothek, the Schulmuseum), Berlin (the Deutsches Bundesarchiv, the Akademie der Künste) and the Landeshauptarchiv Schwerin, the Senate House Library, University of London, MIC Library, and the Glucksman Library at the University of Limerick. This volume has been profoundly shaped by the archival material that has become available, not least through German translation of Soviet materials, since 1990, allowing me to resituate my work in a broader educational and cultural perspective.

Such a project is impossible without the gift of time. Professor Pat O'Connor, then dean, Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, supported the sabbatical that provided the impetus to consider this project. Her successors, Professor Tom Lodge and Professor Helen

Kelly-Holmes, and Dr. Cinta Ramblado-Minero, head, School of Modern Languages and Applied Linguistics, generously supported a Book Completion Award (spring 2015) and a sabbatical (2017–18), enabling me to complete the manuscript.

Throughout this project, I have enjoyed unfailing support from colleagues and friends. Particular thanks are due to everyone in German Studies at the University of Limerick and to David Atkinson, Gordon Burgess, Yvonne Cleary, Stephan Ehrig, Ray Friel, Barbara Geraghty, Caroline Graham, Michael J Griffin, Avril Hegarty, Manfred Kaluza, Michael G. Kelly, Lis Leitch, John McCarthy[†], Tom McAuley, Jim Mellis, Bill Niven, Pól Ó Dochartaigh, Lillis Ó Laoire, Aline Peter, Frank Peter, Pattie Punch, Renate Rechten, Eric Robertson, Jens-Uwe Roos, Wim van Schie, Dennis Tate, and Ian Wallace. To my family I owe gratitude and no doubt an apology for the many times this book encroached on shared moments. Special thoughts, too, for Dinesh Lutchman[†], who was always there.

Deirdre Byrnes, Marieke Krajenbrink, and Veronica O'Regan kindly read versions of the manuscript, and I am grateful for their comments and suggestions, and for those of the anonymous readers who took such care to help me make this book the best it could be. Any errors in fact, judgment, or style are, of course, all mine.

I am particularly grateful to Helga Grzebytta for her kind permission to quote from Rainer Kirsch's poem "Aufschub" on pp. 221–22. I would equally like to thank Klaus Bädicker for generously allowing me to use his photograph of the classroom scene from Walter Womacka's frieze on the Haus des Lehrers in Berlin for the cover image of this volume.

Finally, this book would never have seen the light of day had it not been for everyone at Camden House, not least Jim Walker, who maintained that fine balance of leaving me in peace to write, without ever letting me forget he was there! I thank him most warmly for his collegiality, good humor, and professionalism in often difficult and challenging times.

Jean E. Conacher
Limerick, October 2019

Abbreviations

Main Primary Texts

| | |
|-----------|--|
| <i>CT</i> | Christa Wolf, <i>Nachdenken über Christa T.</i> (1968) |
| <i>DA</i> | Hermann Kant, <i>Die Aula</i> (1965) |
| <i>FF</i> | Christoph Hein, <i>Der fremde Freund</i> (1982) |
| <i>FL</i> | Brigitte Reimann, <i>Franziska Linkerhand</i> (1974) |
| <i>GF</i> | Marianne Bruns, <i>Glück fällt nicht vom Himmel</i> (1954) |
| <i>GH</i> | Christa Wolf, <i>Der geteilte Himmel</i> (1963) |
| <i>GL</i> | Hans-Jürgen Steinmann, <i>Die größere Liebe</i> (1959) |
| <i>HN</i> | Karl Mundstock, <i>Helle Nächte</i> (1952) |
| <i>NL</i> | Ulrich Plenzdorf, <i>Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.</i> (1972) |
| <i>NT</i> | Holdine Stachel, <i>Dem neuen Tag entgegen</i> (1950) |
| <i>PV</i> | Günter de Bruyn, <i>Die Preisverleihung</i> (1972) |
| <i>RO</i> | Hans Marchwitza, <i>Roheisen</i> (1955) |
| <i>ST</i> | Maria Langner, <i>Stahl</i> (1952) |
| <i>TT</i> | Bernhard Kellermann, <i>Totentanz</i> (1948) |
| <i>WK</i> | Ursula Höntsch, <i>Wir sind keine Kinder mehr</i> (1990) |

Organizations, Political Parties, etc.

| | |
|------|---|
| ABF | Arbeiter- und Bauern-Fakultät |
| APW | Akademie der Pädagogischen Wissenschaften |
| BRD | Bundesrepublik Deutschland |
| CDU | Christlich Demokratische Union |
| CSU | Christlich Soziale Union |
| DDR | Deutsche Demokratische Republik |
| DVV | Deutsche Zentralverwaltung für Volksbildung |
| FDGB | Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund |

| | |
|-------|---|
| FDJ | Freie Deutsche Jugend (Free German Youth movement) |
| FRG | Federal Republic of Germany |
| GDR | German Democratic Republic |
| HJ | Hitlerjugend |
| KPD | Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands |
| NÖS | Neues Ökonomisches System |
| NSDAP | Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei |
| POW | Prisoner of war |
| SBZ | Sowjetische Besatzungszone (Soviet Occupation Zone) |
| SED | Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands |
| SMAD | Sowjetische Militäradministration in Deutschland |
| SPD | Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands |
| Stasi | Staatssicherheitsdienst (State Security Service) |
| USA | United States of America |
| USSR | Union of Soviet Socialist Republics |

Introduction: The Postwar Desire for Renewal

AT NO OTHER TIME in the history of the German-speaking world have the public roles of teacher and writer, the official realms of education and literature, been more inextricably and more explicitly interlinked than during the forty-year history of the German Democratic Republic (GDR). In particular, the first two decades of the country's existence constituted, in the words of Hannes Krauss, an “*einzigartige[r] literaturpädagogische[r] Großversuch*.”¹ Leading cultural politicians—many, like Johannes R. Becher, Anna Seghers, and Willi Bredel, well-established writers returning from exile—publicly, positively, and, it seemed, wholeheartedly promoted the integration of literary form, content, and message in their common educational and cultural mission to help the German population in 1945 understand the wrongs of the Nazi past and commit to a democratic and peaceful future for Germany in Europe.

Any interpretation of this immediate postwar period as a “*Stunde Null*,” a problematic concept explored more fully by Stephen Brockmann,² was officially rejected from the outset by the Soviet Occupation Zone (Sowjetische Besatzungszone, or SBZ), from which the GDR emerged in 1949. Instead, in the early years, writers, artists, educationalists, and politicians actively pursued a common strategy of positive atonement, encouraging an active acknowledgment of past mistakes while fostering a sense of continuity between Germany's pre-Nazi past and the new state's future. The first aim was to establish a cultural legitimacy for the new state by proving it capable of recovering and upholding Germany's cultural heritage. The second was to integrate cultural and educational policy into broader political agendas, thus tying writers and artists into the overall democratic—and later socialist—cause. The third was to promote the development of a national utopia capable of sustaining citizens through the hardships of the postwar years. This positive shared approach contrasted sharply with developments in the Federal Republic, where, as Brockmann highlights, “writers like Langgässer, Benn, Böll, and Koeppen tended to take a sceptical, critical, and even hostile attitude towards West German rebuilding and explicitly saw themselves as outsiders and nonconformists.”³

Producing challenging literature was not, however, the preserve of the West. It was inevitable that East German writers would also engage

critically with their own pedagogical and artistic role in the implementation of cultural policies that largely prioritized the thematic treatment of emerging socialist citizens within “the better Germany” and sought to impose constraints on writers’ selection of form and style to achieve that ideological end. In fact, from the very beginning, transformation and education emerged as central tropes not only within individual literary texts but also within the cultural practices that shaped the forty-year history of GDR literature. This latter aspect in particular has received less attention from critics; the current volume, therefore, revisits some already well-researched debates—around policy development, censorship measures, and the continuous interaction between politicians, writers, and their readership—to foreground how these are often framed in strongly pedagogical terms, employing school and teacher–pupil paradigms.

At the heart of the postwar interplay between education and literature lies an ideological belief in “Wandlung,” the capacity for human transformation described by Odile Jansen as “ein Prozess geistiger Erneuerung des Subjekts in intensiver Auseinandersetzung mit der Vergangenheit.”⁴ A term often restricted in alternative paradigms to a dramatic Damascene conversion, such transformation is, in Marxist thinking, to be achieved through political enlightenment, example, and education. In postwar Germany, however, the concept was never purely the preserve of those in the SBZ, nor the political left, as evidenced by the Heidelberg journal *Die Wandlung*, launched in November 1945 with the aim of encouraging, in Monika Waldmüller’s words, “die innere Neubildung” among readers West and East.⁵ Despite being for Brockmann “one of the most influential journals of the immediate postwar period,”⁶ *Die Wandlung* folded in autumn 1949, falling victim perhaps to the increasing unease Wilfried van der Will detects among writers in the Western zones toward the ideological basis of the reeducation processes promoted by the Allies.⁷

Although Wolfgang Emmerich registers “eine[n] Damaskus-ähnlichen Akt der Umkehr” in writers of the SBZ and the GDR toward what he terms the founding myth of antifascism,⁸ the fundamental reshaping of subjective consciousness inherent in “Wandlung” proved more elusive for many in reality. As early as 1919, Vladimir Il’ich Lenin had cautioned that the act of changing societal structures was not in itself sufficient to guarantee human transformation.⁹ Undaunted, GDR cultural politicians and writers continued well into the 1960s to portray “den neuen Menschen,” the embodiment of publicly declared societal goals and values, as fulfilling his (and now her) full potential within the favored locale of the fundamentally restructured rural or urban workplace, as Katrin Löffler’s 2013 essay collection illustrates.¹⁰ In contrast, sites and representatives of formal education—the school, the experienced teacher or lecturer—were initially treated with suspicion as remnants of a rejected ideological past, before gradually—if sporadically—emerging as emblems of the new

educational system embodying new pedagogical ideals. Likewise, private domains—individual space, the family home or personal retreat—played no more than a supporting role in guiding characters through their process of transformation during this early period. Only from the late 1960s onward did these more private realms gain in importance, albeit primarily as alternative spaces where characters might engage more critically with the increasingly problematic contrast between ideological belief and societal practice. A congruent shift in narrative structure by many writers—from the ideologically preferred omniscient narrator to the “subjectively authentic” exploration of personal experience in all its complexities—rendered the utopian concept of “Wandlung” practically meaningless. As Jens Priwitzer argues, “das bislang gültige Narrativ der ‘Wandlung,’ das eine Verbindung zwischen Vergangenheit und Gegenwart bei gleichzeitiger Trennung hergestellt hätte, findet in der Pluralität der Erinnerungen keine empirische Basis mehr.”¹¹

This volume explores how, throughout the lifetime of the GDR, political, cultural, and educational authorities oscillated between concepts of transformation (“Wandlung”) and education (constituting both “Bildung,” the complex classical development of moral and aesthetic values, and “Erziehung,” understood primarily within the GDR as education toward citizenship) to describe the goals and policies of their efforts to establish a socialist German state. As Katrin Max suggests, the temporal distance now afforded researchers since the collapse of the GDR in 1989 makes possible a critical distance facilitating new approaches to the country’s literature.¹² This repositioning is further supported by the increased availability of archival material on GDR educational and cultural policy since 1990. This volume, therefore, consciously revisits both canonical and lesser-known GDR texts with a particular eye to formal educational experiences. Driven by necessities of space in a broad field, my main focus lies on prose writings, which Brockmann argues enjoyed a particularly privileged position at the time, not just within Eastern-bloc socialist culture striving to develop “the socialist epic.”¹³ That said, some attention is given to other genres, such as film, drama, and poetry, and indeed some of the works discussed were adapted for cinema (including *Der geteilte Himmel* and *Franziska Linkerhand*, filmed as *Unser kurzes Leben*) or stage (*Die Aula*), or were even produced in multiple forms (*Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.*). Despite this intriguing blurring of genre lines, my emphasis on prose writings has the bonus of facilitating a fruitful study of the influence of prevailing pedagogical models on text-internal and text-external narrative relationships. The changing focus of these relationships, and what this reveals about changing attitudes toward official cultural and educational policy as manifested in individual literary works across the decades, is discussed in each chapter using a well-established heuristic in innovative ways. This analytical framework theoretically conceived, and

diagrammatically represented, in terms of narrative and cultural-policy triangles helps uncover and illustrate more vividly the complexity of the pedagogical beliefs underpinning the relationships portrayed. Furthermore, it casts an analytical spotlight on a range of educational processes and relationships portrayed within the literature and evident in cultural and political activity. Such an approach is especially valuable in revealing the complexity and variety of both protégé(e) and mentor figures and countering the all-too-common blanket listing of apparently stable, generic types (for example, experienced worker, Soviet officer, or Party activist). Developing a more systematic picture of how such figures have been presented, exploited, adopted, or rejected by writers across the decades will provide the basis for a more nuanced and in-depth discussion of transformational and educational processes both here and in future research on narrative literature.

The priority accorded by previous critical studies to noninstitutional educational contexts (such as the workplace) and political and manual-worker mentor figures has frequently overshadowed any in-depth analysis of the literary depiction of institutional educational settings, representatives of the teaching profession, and the integration of differentiated teacher–pupil models into the more broadly recognized mentor–protégé(e) paradigm.¹⁴ Yet GDR literature is rich with novels where formal (institutional) and informal (noninstitutional) education processes complement or challenge one another, where teachers play central roles as positive or negative mentors, and where schoolday experiences are shown to have long-term positive or negative impacts on the development of individual characters in all spheres of their lives. The approach adopted in this volume not only informs our understanding of representations of general class teachers but also reveals the extent to which writers exploit an increasingly differentiated portrayal of teachers from specific disciplines to reflect and challenge the priorities of educational and cultural politicians.

The tropes of transformation and education can be traced across three interwoven domains: representation, narrative form, and literary and cultural practice. Analyzing more closely, for example, the depiction of sites and representatives of institutional education reveals how broader transformational and educational aspirations expressed in policy statements and often publicly promoted by writers themselves are supported or thwarted, upheld or critiqued by literary portrayals of educational practice. The processes of transformation and education inform the narrative structure of much GDR prose writing. Educational metaphors are also employed repeatedly to help frame arguments for reform within educational and cultural politics and to depict interactions between different actors within the process of literary production. The volume ultimately questions the extent to which the GDR's much vaunted educational

ideals proved capable of generating a robust new teacher-pupil metaphor that could reframe broader cultural-political discussions and inform the treatment within GDR literature of themes well beyond education.

Constructing a Legitimate Educational and Cultural Tradition

The political challenge of reinforcing the legitimacy of the new state by building on a recognizable *Kulturelles Erbe*, which might form the basis of a new literary and educational landscape, involved not just the identification and appropriate interpretation of positive cultural roots but also the rejection of those that ran counter to postwar aspirations. The carefully managed reception, for example, of eighteenth-century Weimar Classicism, not least through its increasingly central positioning in the school curriculum,¹⁵ facilitated a fusion of the ideals of classical education and literature and provided in the classical Bildungsroman a narrative and structural template of personal development sufficiently robust for writers through the decades to follow, modify, or reject. Such an approach also helped GDR cultural politicians bypass subsequent, not least twentieth-century, literary movements that were deemed inappropriate springboards, either aesthetically or ideologically, for the proposed new national literature. As we shall see, this inevitably led to tensions, as internationally established writers like Anna Seghers and Bertolt Brecht—whose work shaped, and was shaped by, literary traditions beyond national boundaries—demonstrated that commitment to political ideas and critical approaches could take forms other than those laid down by the SED. In so doing, they sustained, as critics like Marike Janzen, Stephen Parker, and Stephen Brockmann have individually argued, an alternative, equally committed socialist literary tradition, which offered later writers a window to the outside world and a critical, creative space beyond the limitations of socialist realism and the political borders of the GDR.¹⁶

Eighteenth-Century Educational and Literary Roots

In Wilhelm von Humboldt's elaboration of "Bildung" and "Erziehung" as two ideally complementary, but potentially conflicting, concepts of education, the eighteenth century also offered pedagogical models upon which the GDR authorities could draw. The Humboldtian understanding of "Bildung" as the basic tenet of universal education within any civilized and moral society provided a widely respected German educational heritage that the GDR could combine productively with Soviet pedagogical models. In parallel, however, Humboldt recognized that formal education in particular, being informed by the ideology of the prevailing governing power, played a major role as "Erziehung" in shaping the

individual in the spirit of establishment thinking.¹⁷ Humboldt's prescient warnings against privileging *Erziehung* over *Bildung*, and of the damage caused "wenn der Mensch dem Bürger geopfert wird,"¹⁸ were, however, repeatedly ignored by later state authorities, not least in the GDR. As we shall see, strong traces of this Humboldtian tradition can be seen within the works discussed in this volume, and the growing tensions between *Bildung* and *Erziehung* form the basis of much of their educational and societal critique.

The last decade of the eighteenth century also saw the publication of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1795–96), a work central to the GDR's cultural historiography. By 1820, in his efforts to encapsulate the sense and pattern not only of Goethe's work but also of other explorations of the form, Karl Morgenstern had formulated a general definition of the Bildungsroman that portrayed "des Helden Bildung in ihrem Anfang und Fortgang bis zu einer gewissen Stufe der Vollendung."¹⁹ Fifty years later, philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey revived the label, delineating the genre more clearly and cementing Goethe's work as its archetype in his declaration of "die Schule des Wilhelm Meister."²⁰ The world of the Bildungsroman's protagonist, and indeed of its readership, was one firmly limited by circumstance, wealth, social standing, and gender. Regardless of their setting, the novels typically depicted young, male protagonists, free to set out into the world, where, in addition to facing conflict and strife, they encountered a range of suitable mentor figures to help them along their seemingly inevitable path toward personal development and fulfillment.²¹

For literary critics, including Tobias Boes and Liisa Saariluoma, the term "Bildungsroman" has become increasingly problematic, as the genre has been pulled in varying directions across different cultures and languages.²² Such terminological concern is, however, largely overshadowed here by three considerations of far greater import. Firstly, how GDR cultural politicians appropriated the heritage of the classical Bildungsroman in search of a national genre they could call their own. Secondly, how—in a process David Bathrick terms a "rewriting of some master code from within the code itself"²³—this sanctioned genre was later adapted by individual writers to engage in a conscious critique of educational, cultural, and societal developments within the GDR. Finally, how the form's inherent mentor-protégé(e) constellation provides a valuable heuristic both to explore changing patterns across individual works and to throw light on deep-rooted ideological stances within cultural policy formation and literary production.

Education and the School Novel in the Early Twentieth Century

Not all educational and literary predecessors were as enthusiastically adopted by the new state as the classical traditions of the eighteenth

century. In the same period Dilthey was establishing norms for the Bildungsroman, wide-ranging school reforms began. These were largely driven by the Reformpädagogik movement, which placed the child at the center of the learning process, emphasized the unfettered development of that child through exploration and play, and adopted the title of Ellen Key's work *Das Jahrhundert des Kindes* (1900), as its rallying-call for the twentieth century. The belief that new educational approaches could fundamentally change both the individual and society found resonance amid growing critique, on the intellectual left at least, of the expansionist policies of both the German and Austro-Hungarian empires. The German states had successfully raised literacy levels and a sense of loyal citizenship through widespread elementary education, but the broader education system after 1871, with its strong Prussian military focus on order and discipline, remained marked by an illusory diversity where advancement was based on wealth and status rather than merit.²⁴ Although, as Klaus Johann suggests, some pupils may have benefited from institutions offering both an education they could otherwise ill afford and the promise of future professional security,²⁵ for Andrew Donson this education system was "arguably the key feature in imperial Germany that reinforced a patriarchal society, blocked social mobility, and maintained the power of the aristocracy and the middle class."²⁶ Only the later societal upheaval of the First World War truly opened up opportunities for new pedagogical approaches that became more established within the Weimar Republic.²⁷ Karl-Heinz Günther's catalog of various streams of Reform thought both illustrates the diversity of interpretations to emerge and reveals the potential political weakness of the movement's very lack of cohesion.²⁸ Nonetheless, its proponents played an important role in shaping educational thinking in early twentieth-century Germany and, as Ulrich Herrmann demonstrates, the provenance of concepts like "der neue Mensch" (so central to GDR educational and cultural discourse) can also be traced back to the Reform Movement.²⁹

The pedagogical debate in the early decades of the twentieth century was driven in part by a wave of writing that focused critical attention on the role of the formal education system in supporting the development of an unquestioning, militaristic, and conformist youth.³⁰ Frequently drawing on the authors' own school experiences, many of the works are set in the microcosm of the *Internat*, a term raising more ominous connotations of confinement than the English "boarding schools." In the most extreme cases, pupils are psychologically, physically, emotionally, and sexually abused. Robert Musil's 1906 work, *Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törleß*, for example, explores how the systematic bullying of the young Basini, caught stealing by his fellow pupils, triggers psychological and behavioral models among the boys—whether as perpetrator, victim or observer of the abuse—that each seems inevitably to accept and

adopt. In other works, like Rainer Maria Rilke's tale "Die Turnstunde" (1902), where the protagonist finds unexpected strength to climb to the top of the gym ropes before plunging to the floor, or Hermann Hesse's novel *Unterm Rad* (1906), where the official cause of Hans Giebenrath's drowning is left unexplained, characters, oppressed by a school system that pars pro toto represents broader society, find their only escape route or act of defiance in death. Dieter Schlenstedt accurately recognizes these denouements as a paradoxical form of self-realization through self-destruction.³¹

Blame for such a tragic end does not lie solely, however, with the school, as Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach's *Der Vorzugsschüler* (1901) reveals. At the very moment the protagonist jumps into the river and drowns, his father is revealed pleading with the school's headmaster to recognize the boy's aptitude. While offering reassurance that every teacher appreciates the boy's scholastic effort, the Reform-influenced headmaster in turn attempts to manage parental expectations in a manner atypical for the genre at the time, warning (prophetically, as the reader knows) that overstretching such a pupil will destroy him.³²

Primarily, it is the pupil figures who prove the ultimate victims of strict societal expectations and moral codes, and Dieter Schlenstedt's interpretation of these works as "Elegien," characterized by the reader's sympathy for the suffering child, is typical of the stance adopted by GDR literary critics.³³ As early as 1919, however, Theodor Adorno, then aged only sixteen, criticized writers for establishing a good-evil paradigm in which teachers were considered inherently sadistic, arguing instead that the external factors of their environment made them, and their pupils, the people they became and established an inevitably antagonistic relationship between the two groups.³⁴ Heinrich Mann's *Professor Unrat* (1905) illustrates this position in its portrayal of the teacher destroyed for not adhering to the role demanded of him by society. Joseph von Sternberg's film adaptation *Der blaue Engel/The Blue Angel* (1930), in which Marlene Dietrich famously upstaged her leading man with her portrayal of nightclub singer Lola Lola, brought Mann's story to the attention of an international audience. The film generated a long-lasting fascination for the authoritarian teacher's personal and professional disintegration as a result of his relationship with Dietrich's character. It largely overlooks, however, the sharp societal critique of the original novel, which Mann had pointedly subtitled *oder Das Ende eines Tyrannen*. Mann's protagonist does not escape his miserable life through death, as in the film version, but must face the permanent ignominy of public humiliation. While the destruction of his personal moral integrity, already twisted by the prevailing societal code, makes him a figure of ridicule, his downfall throws into sharp relief the intransigence of those societal values and institutions that have formed him.

Within these early works, writers portray how formal schooling—both as a means of education and as a microcosmic reflection of prevailing morality and social norms—plays a key role in the formation of the characters portrayed, much as Humboldt had contended more than a century before. Each work provides a stinging critique of the school system and the society that produced it, demonstrating the danger of favoring *Erziehung* over *Bildung*, as Humboldt had recognized. Any initial potential of the main characters to become rounded, positive human beings is subverted, indeed destroyed, by their experience within the formal school system. The texts represent a rejection of the military values suffusing a boarding-school system designed—in an age when universal education was not the norm—to educate, and replicate, its national elite.³⁵

Yet these works also demonstrate a wider engagement with the world of the child and adolescent, driven equally by the Reformpädagogik movement and growing interest in psychology and the work of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung. Despite Anna Stiepel's recognition that school novels exist in various national literatures,³⁶ no other traditions during this period appear to be more critical of the damage inflicted on the young by the school system than those within the German-speaking world.³⁷ Indeed, a century later many of these novels continue to shock with the bitterness of their critique and overt exploration of topics such as cruelty, pedophilia, and sadomasochism.

The end of the First World War, and with it the end of the Wilhelmian and Austro-Hungarian empires, moved the focus of literary interest away from such privileged educational establishments. Within the GDR, only a tacit, if differentiated, acknowledgment of the school novel of the early decades of the twentieth century remained. In official discourse, the term "Schulroman" retained largely negative connotations and was often used dismissively by both cultural politicians and writers themselves. That said, an intriguing, recognizable subset of school novels, perhaps overenthusiastically categorized by Helga and Manfred Neumann as a "Genre *Schulkritik*" did emerge briefly in the GDR in the late 1970s.³⁸ Although limited in both number and quality, and written within a very different societal context, these novels can be regarded as a muted response to those of the early twentieth century in their renewed critique of the educational values promoted by the school system. Much more significantly, however, the ghost of these early-twentieth-century novels is resurrected in the final decade of the GDR, as the presence of unwarranted sexual advances, this time within the context of a universal school system founded on principles of democratic and egalitarian education, once more becomes an important, if infrequent, subject of literary treatment in the 1980s.

New Educational and Cultural Discourses

Without doubt, the school novels of the early twentieth century provide an important cultural yardstick for later representations of educational institutions and values within German-language literature, even in the GDR, where the ideological backdrop differed fundamentally. The imperial structures of the early twentieth century sought above all to maintain the status quo and consolidate power in the hands of the educated few, while the GDR declared its intentions, particularly in the early decades of its existence, to bring about the transformation of individual citizens and society as a whole. For forty years, as part of this broader strategy, both GDR cultural and educational policy played a pivotal role in shaping how people at home and abroad understood national efforts to establish a socialist state on German soil. As a result, the processes of transformation and education permeated a broad spectrum of literature within the GDR well beyond the school novel. Indeed, these themes were taken up by writers even before Goethe's *Bildungsroman* was officially adopted as the natural precursor to an explicitly socialist form, and they continued to be critically explored, even as the GDR's literary output became more diverse.

Focusing on this early postwar period in his discussion of the balance of power between Germans and Western Allies, Jaimey Fisher argues that "at a time when the Allies subverted German sovereignty on nearly everything . . . reeducation became a site at which Germans could make a determined last stand in defense of traditional German culture."³⁹ This stood in stark contrast to the situation in the SBZ, where Soviet models of education rapidly prevailed. GDR teachers and writers became officially responsible for demonstrating the superiority of this Soviet-driven socialist alternative, infusing pupils and readers alike with a commitment to the emerging state, and providing persuasive role models of *der neue Mensch* each literary character and actual reader was challenged to become. The literary portrayals of formal and informal educational domains, characters, and processes do not, however, simply serve as a mirror of the broader societal expectations placed upon teachers and writers within the GDR. David Bathrick rightly argues that any literary analysis of GDR texts should "focus on the discursive framework of literary and cultural life within East Germany and its relation to the struggles of a number of literary and cultural intellectuals to open up alternative spaces within that framework."⁴⁰ The current volume takes this process a step further. Appreciating the interplay between cultural *and* educational policy throughout the lifetime of the country facilitates a more nuanced exploration of how individual GDR writers came to engage with, and respond to, the role of teacher and mentor accorded them by politicians and the reading public alike. Any analysis of the changing portrayal of transformation

and education within GDR literature must also consider more closely the changing relationship of educational and cultural politicians, writers, and their readership across the country's forty-year history. As teachers and writers were essentially accorded the same societal task, literary portrayals of teachers quickly became coded explorations of the role of the writer in society.

The German political and cultural scene in the period between 1945 and 1949 when Germany was divided into four occupation zones, each overseen by one of the Allied powers, was characterized by extreme fluidity. As a result, works from this period by writers who later moved from the Soviet Zone to the Western zones or to their subsequent reconfiguration as the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) could still have a significant impact on the development of a distinctive creative identity in the GDR and deserve attention. Any broader study of GDR literature beyond 1949, however, is inevitably challenged by discourses of inclusion and exclusion.⁴¹ Consequently, I have adopted a necessarily narrow interpretation of GDR literature as covering works written after the foundation of, and within, the state; works published in the SBZ thus form a type of proto-GDR literature. In 1984, the Leipzig writer Erich Loest—by then living in the West—fruitfully identified “vier Arten der DDR-Literatur”: conformist literature largely ignored by the West; committed, relatively critical literature published equally in East and West; literature written in the East but published only in the West; and literature written and published in the West by writers who had fled or were banned from the GDR.⁴²

Place of publication is particularly important for the current study, as the impact on ordinary citizens within the GDR of individual examples from Loest's third and fourth categories of literature was necessarily limited. These works, only accessible through Western connections, were inevitably subject to different influences, publishing conditions, and critical receptions. While the authors might still seek to speak to their original community of readers, this readership could, in such circumstances, no longer be guaranteed.⁴³ In fact, a determination to remain within the country is characteristic of all the writers considered in this volume. This resolve is not unsurprising. T. J. Reed emphasizes that “critical literature in the GDR was never in principle *dissident* literature . . . virtually to the end of the GDR, writers had a critical commitment to the society . . . what made them appear as dissidents was the Party's refusal to listen.”⁴⁴ Since 1990, some writers such as Günter de Bruyn have openly engaged with the dilemma this position presented: “Kritische Bücher wollte ich schreiben, aber die sollten in der DDR gedruckt und gelesen werden können.”⁴⁵ Others, like Hermann Kant, never contemplated leaving, or, as Christa Wolf had already acknowledged in her own case, could not face the traumatic loss of a second *Heimat*, despite the double bind such a

decision inevitably created: “Ich denke, nie mehr würde ich woanders heimisch fühlen können, wenn ich hier wegginge. Und ich frage mich, wie hoch der Preis unter Umständen wäre, den ich für dieses Heimatgefühl zu zahlen bereit wäre.”⁴⁶

Inevitably, Loest’s first two categories—conformist and more critical works published in the GDR by authors who chose to remain—exercised far greater influence on the possible transformation and education of the ordinary reader in the GDR. Committed to the pedagogical and ideological ideals of the state, if not their subsequent implementation, these writers continued to find sufficient favor with the GDR authorities to be published there and so form a core element of the literature to which a GDR readership had direct, if not always immediate, access. Following Reed, works in these categories that draw more directly on educational settings as a backdrop to discuss broader societal issues do not represent a mistrust or rejection of the fundamental values the education system purports to promote (unlike the pre-1918 school novels that critiqued the very values on which the education system was founded⁴⁷). Instead, they question whether the established or emerging infrastructures support and facilitate the expression of fundamental and officially promoted societal values in which the writers believe. Despite increasing diversity of form from the 1960s onward, each in some way proves also a response to the main officially sanctioned novel form of the 1950s—the socialist Bildungsroman—and the heritage of Goethe and Humboldt.

In recognition of the expansion and extension of formal education in the postwar period, such novels address not only education within the school sphere but also tertiary education.⁴⁸ They equally explore educational processes that take place beyond formal institutions. The value placed on the workplace as a place of learning alongside, or even instead of, the classroom is core to the State’s determination to replace what it perceived as outdated bourgeois views with those of the working class. Nonetheless, as we will see, traditional patterns of education were frequently used by writers to question whether new modes of learning had emerged from such new learning environments, and the depiction of distinct subject teachers was equally exploited to challenge the integrity of the broader education system.

Structuring the Educational, Cultural, and Literary Discussion

Ute Wölfel’s study of literary production in the GDR adopts the frame of a Bourdieu-inspired literary field, in which writers and their works can only be understood within a broader network of interrelated and interacting participants, institutions, and political, cultural, and aesthetic

positions.⁴⁹ Likewise, the current volume is based on the hypothesis that a closer exploration of the portrayal of transformation and educational processes within GDR literature will uncover how educational and cultural policy and policy making were inextricably interwoven throughout the forty years of the country's existence. From a very early stage in the development of a national literature based on publicly stated cultural traditions, writers began to exploit the educational paradigm not only to engage critically with educational and school-specific issues but also to explore interpersonal relationships, societal values, and the types of meritocracy in operation both inside and beyond the formal educational environment. As a result, each of the chapters within this volume opens with an exploration of the broader educational and cultural policy concerns providing the backdrop against which the individual literary works are discussed. In particular, the volume seeks to understand how, well beyond the period of its official primacy as a literary model, the conscious or unconscious exploitation of the form and narrative norms of the socialist *Bildungsroman* enabled writers to explore the changing nature of their relationship to their readership and the very role literature itself played in contemporary society.

While drawing on a breadth of novels and other prose forms in building a picture of the portrayal of educational processes within the forty-year history of the GDR, the range of works discussed in more detail within each chapter intentionally varies. Early chapters reflect the diverse narrative forms adopted by writers in the early postwar years and reveal how in the 1950s, even within the favored rubric of the industrial novel (*Betriebsroman*), varying stylistic and thematic approaches toward issues of transformation and education could be accommodated. Later chapters focus, in contrast, on a small number of key works; this is an acknowledgment that the more nuanced critique of GDR society undertaken by later writers demands closer textual analysis of the role education in its many forms plays. The aim is not to treat literature simply as a sociocultural lens on the society that produces it. Instead, developing an understanding of those representations of educational transformation that are most explicitly linked to formal and informal educational settings will prove central to an aesthetic appreciation of GDR literature more broadly. Within the chapters that follow, differences in the literary field East and West are highlighted where this may explain particular aspects of GDR cultural politics. For example, John Farrell, in his volume on authorial intention, discusses how Roland Barthes's 1968 essay, "The Death of the Author," generated a new critical focus in the West on the literary text and its readership, whereby "authorship as a respectable concept was set out of bounds and has never fully recovered."⁵⁰ In contrast, efforts by the GDR authorities to minimize the impact of individual authors as autonomous cultural figures were repeatedly challenged by writers drawing on the

traditions of Brecht and Seghers; indeed, 1968 also marked the very year that Christa Wolf would emphasize the centrality of authorial intention and individual subjectivity in literary production, thus providing a counter both to Barthes and to contemporary trends in GDR cultural politics.

Within the imaginary worlds they create, the writers under discussion draw literally and metaphorically on portrayals of changing education processes, teacher-pupil relationships, and cultures of success and reward in their critique of practices within the public and private spheres. Given the strong educational mandate afforded writers by the state from the outset, no study of transformation and education in the country's literature would be complete without examining more closely the impact of parallel processes in the narrative approaches adopted and the societal function afforded writers and forged by them. Such an approach sheds light upon ever-deepening tensions, as those involved sought to negotiate the competing demands of reader reception and authorial intention, underpinned to a greater or lesser extent by cultural-political agendas.

The Narrative and Cultural Policy Triangles

Triangular models have long been used within the study of literary form. As early as 350 BCE, Aristotle's *Rhetoric* explores the interplay of *ethos*, *logos*, and *pathos* in the successful development of persuasive argument, while—in *Technik des Dramas* (1863)—Gustav Freytag exploits the pyramid to represent the structural framework of dramatic tragedy. Georgina Paul also highlights the frequency of plot triangulation within GDR literature of the 1960s, citing “the plot device of situating a young woman between two significant alternatives in her choice of love relationship,”⁵¹ although, like Hans-Jürgen Steinmann's *Die größere Liebe*, discussed later in this volume, Günter de Bruyn's *Buridans Esel* (1968) famously proves this gendered model is occasionally reversed. Beyond the text, and as part of the movement toward a greater focus on the reader in literary research, Hans Robert Jauß spoke at his inaugural lecture at the University of Constance in 1967 of the “Dreieck von Autor, Werk und Publikum.” For Jauß, the reader was not simply a passive final link in a chain reaction but a dynamic “geschichtsbildende Energie.”⁵² By 1972, Jauß's colleague, Wolfgang Iser, had developed the concept of the implicit reader, which, coupled with Wayne Booth's attention a decade earlier to the implied author and the postulated reader, opened up the exploration of “text-internal” aspects of reception.⁵³ Admittedly, Carol Anne Costabile-Heming argues that Jauß's and Iser's subsequent work on reception theory gained little foothold in the GDR, not least as contemporary GDR publishing practices stood “in sharp contrast to the theoretical application of reception theories.”⁵⁴ Nonetheless, Thomas C. Fox rightly points out that Iser's “idea that a text encodes a perfect reader (and hence a ‘correct’

way of reading) is an intriguing concept for a censored literature.”⁵⁵ Indeed, Fox hypothesizes that reception theory might after all offer a useful heuristic to approaching the study of GDR literature from today’s standpoint, not least in better understanding differing cultural responses to individual works.⁵⁶ In his volume *Buch und Lesen*, the first comprehensive study of broader reading practices in the GDR, Dieter Löffler argues that, for a GDR readership, literature had “eine enorme Bedeutung für die Konstitution eines Lebensgefühls jenseits der die Öffentlichkeit beherrschenden Propaganda.”⁵⁷ Including comparisons where possible with the Federal Republic, he draws on a range of sources such as library statistics and reader surveys in his attempt to gauge more accurately the popularity of individual titles. Although there are significant challenges in evidencing reading practices in the GDR beyond limited official statistics, the potentially changing dynamic of work, author, and reader (whether real or implied) in a literature that from its inception claims a pedagogical role certainly merits closer attention.

This volume, therefore, explores in more detail how such “text-external” relations between the author, the creative work, and the extant (i.e., “real”) reader and “text-internal” relations between the narrator, protagonists—particularly, diverse mentor and protégé(e) figures—and the implied reader are equally subject to recognizably shifting alignments across the individual works examined. In order to illustrate the changing dynamics of such narrative constellations more clearly, this study incorporates the use of a narrative-triangle paradigm (see figure I.1) that simultaneously portrays text-internal and text-external relations and highlights changing patterns of authorial intention.

The narrative triangle reflects, at its base, the starting point or stance from which the process of transformation and/or education portrayed within the literary work can begin. Its central axis identifies both the nature of the journey the protagonist will undertake—either as protégé(e) or, in some cases, as mentor—and the alignment of this journey with the societal/individual goal stated at the apex of the triangle. The left side focuses upon text-internal relations between the narrator, protagonists, and implied reader; the right side focuses upon text-external relations between the author, the creative work, and the extant reader. As will become clear in the course of this volume, the relative distances between each of these elements on either side, and indeed their proximity to the core of the triangle itself, vary as a result of changing cultural-political factors. On the left side in particular, a multitude of different narrator, mentor, protégé(e), and even implied-reader types will become identifiable as writers explore with greater critical complexity the realms of transformation and education, the sites and representatives of formal and informal educational processes, and the impact of educational and cultural policy on both the individuals and society portrayed. For ease,

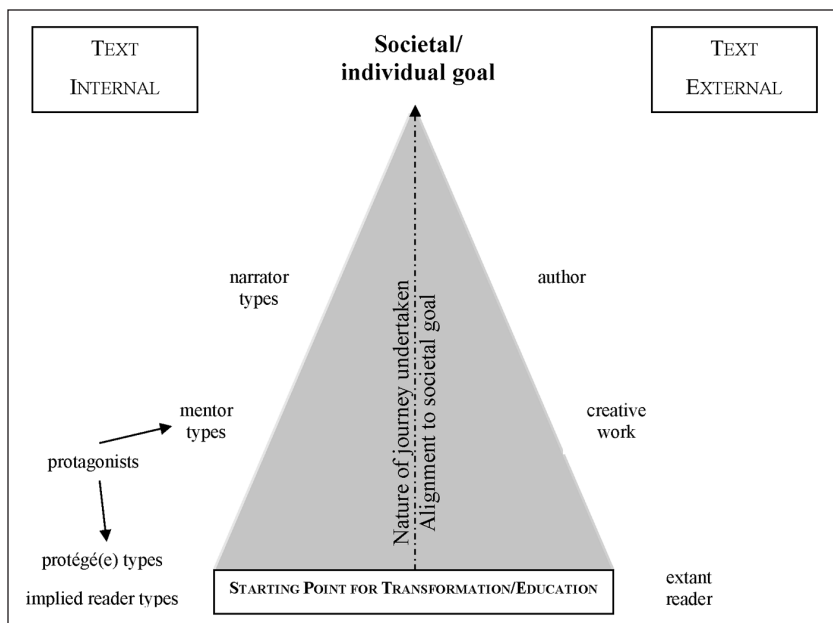


Figure I.1. Narrative triangle paradigm

appendix A provides a summary of text-internal functions, appendix B of text-external functions, with a range of examples.

Particularly up to the mid-1970s, the educational patterns depicted within literary works were also mirrored in GDR cultural and political discourse. In chapters 1 to 3, and in reduced form in chapter 4, therefore, a subsidiary “cultural-policy” triangle (see figure I.2) illustrates the changing relations between domestic and foreign political powers, cultural politicians, writers, and, even at times, the reading public.

The cultural-policy triangle brings to the fore those tensions between creative and party-political interpretations of societal and individual goals within the GDR that ultimately pushed many authors to leave the country and left others living a form of inner exile. Such writers withdrew as much as possible from cultural-political life to concentrate on their creative work, without ever abandoning their ideological commitment to shared societal goals.

An analysis of the changing nature of the narrative triangle presented in each chapter reveals that even the narrative models adopted in GDR literature of the 1950s and early 1960s are more complex than previously supposed. Examining how these narrative models are then adapted at different stages in the development of GDR literature uncovers how writers used their work to explore new spaces for individual personal development and to portray individual characters seeking opportunities