



# **After the Stasi: Collaboration and the Struggle for Sovereign Subjectivity in the Writing of German Unification**

*Annie Ring*

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Why did so many citizens of the GDR agree to collaborate with the Stasi?

Reading works of literature since German unification in the light of previously unseen files from the archives of the Stasi, *After the Stasi* uncovers how writers to the present day have explored collaboration as a challenge to the sovereignty of subjectivity. Annie Ring here interweaves close analysis of literary fiction and life-writing by former Stasi spies and victims with documents from the archive, new readings from literary modernism and cultural theories of the self. In its pursuit of the strange power of the Stasi, the book introduces an archetypal character in the writing of German unification: one who is not sovereign over her or his actions, but instead is compelled by an imperative to collaborate – an imperative that persists in new forms in the post-Cold War age.

Ring's study identifies a monumental historical shift after 1989, from a collaboration that took place in concert with others, in a manner that could be recorded in the archive, to the more isolated and ultimately less accountable complicities of the capitalist present. While considering this shift in the most recent texts by East German writers, Ring provocatively suggests that their accounts of collaboration under the Stasi, and of the less-than-sovereign subjectivity to which it attests, remain urgent for understanding the complicities to which we continue to consent in the present day.

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