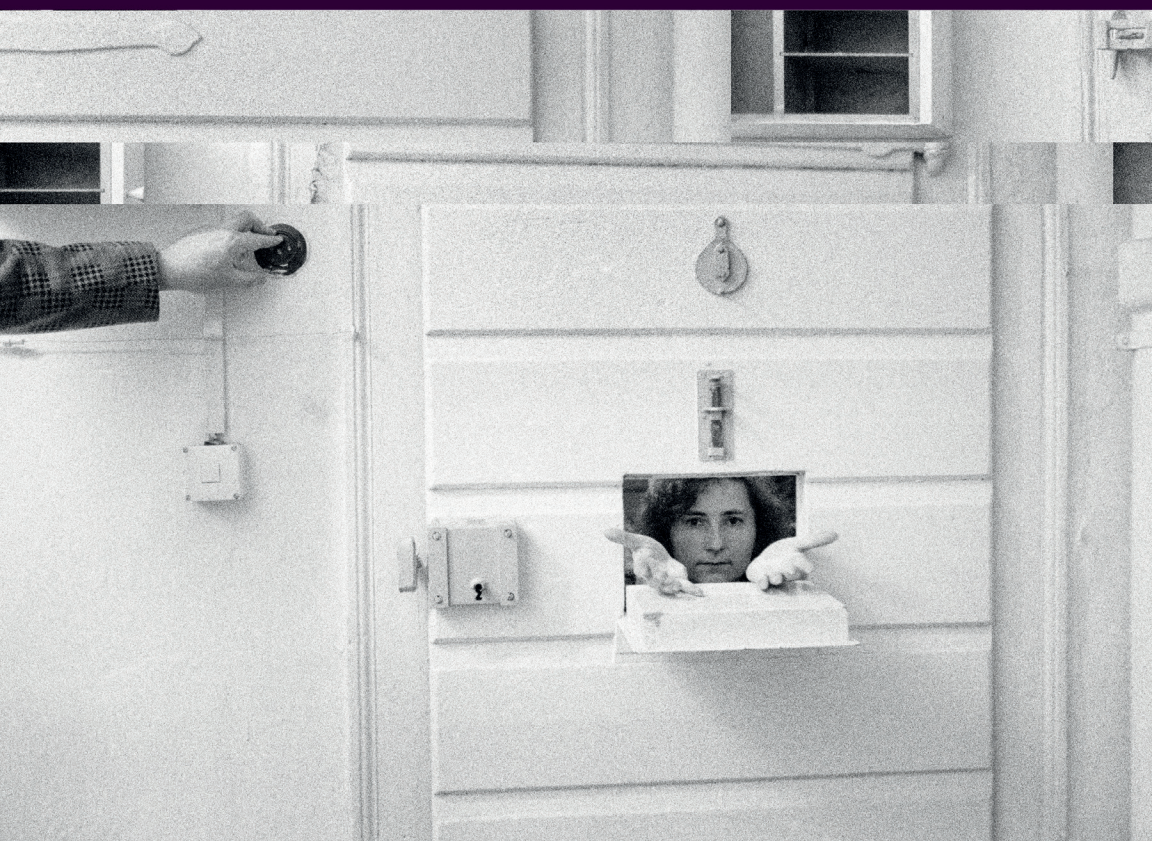


KNOWLEDGE OF THE STASI IN THE EAST GERMAN LITERARY SPHERE

SURVEILLANCE, SECRECY, AND REVELATION



Sara Jones, Tara Talwar Windsor, and Betiel Wasihun

Knowledge of the Stasi in the East German Literary Sphere

Culture and Power in German-Speaking Europe, 1918–1989

Series Editor

Julian Preece (*Swansea University*)

Editorial Advisors:

Stephen Brockmann (*Carnegie Mellon University*)

Mary Cosgrove (*Trinity College Dublin*)

Knowledge of the Stasi in the East German Literary Sphere

Surveillance, Secrecy, and
Revelation

Sara Jones, Tara Talwar Windsor,
and Betiel Wasihun



Copyright © 2026 Sara Jones, Tara Talwar Windsor, and Betiel Wasihun

Some Rights Reserved. Without limiting the rights under copyright reserved above, any part of this book may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise)

First published 2026
by Camden House

Camden House is an imprint of Boydell & Brewer Inc.
and of Boydell & Brewer Limited
www.boydellandbrewer.com

ISBN-13: 978-1-64014-193-3 (hardback)
ISBN-13: 978-1-64014-195-7 (paperback)
ISBN-13: 978-1-80543-994-3 (ePDF)

This title is available under the Open Access license CC BY-NC-ND due to funding by the Arts and Humanities Research Council/UKRI.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
CIP data is available from the Library of Congress.

The publisher has no responsibility for the continued existence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this book, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate

Full credit details are provided in the captions to the images in the text. The authors and publisher are grateful to all the institutions and individuals for permission to reproduce the materials in which they hold copyright. Every effort has been made to trace the copyright holders; apologies are offered for any omission, and the publisher will be pleased to add any necessary acknowledgement in subsequent editions

Cover image: © Bernd Hiepe. Gabriele Stötzer during her performance
“U-Haft” (1990)

This title is available under the Open Access license CC BY-NC-ND,
funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council/UKRI

Contents

Acknowledgements	vi
Introduction: Flipping the Script: Surveillance, Secrecy, and Revelation	1
1: We Know, But We Don't Know How We Know...	37
2: Knowing Who to Trust and Trusting What to Know	69
3: Looking Back at the Stasi	105
4: Literature as Knowledge—Between Revelation and Concealment	144
Conclusion: Knowledge as Resistance—Revealing the Public Secret	184
Bibliography	195
Index	215

Acknowledgements

This monograph is the outcome of the literary strand of the research project “Knowing the Secret Police: Secrecy and Knowledge in East German Society”, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council [AH/R005915/1], led by principal investigator Dr Anselma Gallinat, together with Dr Joanne Sayner and Professor Sara Jones as co-investigators, from 2018 to 2022. We are grateful to the AHRC for their generous support of our research and enabling the open access publication of our book. We extend our sincere thanks to the entire project team—Dr Anselma Gallinat, Dr Joanne Sayner, Dr Grit Wesser, and Dr Alexander Brown—for their intellectual contributions, collaborative spirit, and commitment throughout the life of the project. We would also like to thank the project advisory board, especially Professor Alison Lewis for her advice on the literary strand, and our project partners in Germany—the Federal Agency for Civic Education (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, BpB) in Bonn and the Magdeburg branch of the Federal Agency for the Stasi Records (Stasi-Unterlagen-Archiv, now Bundesarchiv)—for their collaboration and support. This project was carried out under the shadow of the COVID-19 pandemic, which presented considerable challenges to fieldwork, archival access, and collaboration. We are thankful to all those who showed flexibility, generosity, and patience during this time.

We are especially grateful to our interview partners Uwe Kolbe, Ekkehard Maaß, Christa Moog, Gabriele Stötzer, Bernd Wagner, and Bettina Wegner for sharing their experiences with us and granting us permission to access their Stasi files. We would like to thank Inge Heym for taking time to talk to us and allowing us to use the Stasi files kept on her and her husband Stefan Heym, as well as her literary agent Sebastian Ritscher for supporting our endeavours. We are grateful to the late Gerhard Wolf and to Reiner Kunze and his late wife Elisabeth Kunze for their permission to access their files. Our thanks also go to Lutz Rathenow for allowing us to consult his papers housed at the Federal Foundation for the Study of the Communist Dictatorship in Germany (Bundesstiftung zur Aufarbeitung der SED-Diktatur). We are indebted to all of the archivists and archival staff who facilitated access to crucial materials, and would like to extend particular thanks to Stephan Bachtejeff-Mentzel and Raphaela Schröder at the Stasi Records Agency, and Matthias Buchholz and Sylvia Griwan at the Bundesstiftung Aufarbeitung. We are grateful to

Bernd Hiepe and Gabriele Stötzer for allowing us to use the image on the cover of this book and to the Bundesstiftung Aufarbeitung for permission to reproduce the image of Ralf-Günter Krolkiewicz's original manuscript, 'Der Dissident'.

None of this work would have been possible without the support of the professional services staff in the College of Arts and Law and School of Languages, Cultures, Art History, and Music at the University of Birmingham. We also wish to thank the DAAD Cambridge Research Hub for German Studies, the Schröder Fund at the University of Cambridge, and the Institute for German and European Studies in Birmingham for supporting a workshop that enabled key discussions and planning for this volume. We are deeply grateful to Jim Walker and the Camden House production team, and to the anonymous reviewers for their feedback on our manuscript.

Introduction

Flipping the Script: Surveillance, Secrecy, and Revelation

THIS BOOK IS about surveillance, secrecy and revelation in the German Democratic Republic (GDR). It is a book about the East German State Security Service, or Ministry for State Security (MfS), popularly known as the Stasi. However, it is also a book about the writers, artists, performers, and publishers in the literary sphere and their efforts to create trust, build networks, and form friendships in a context of pervasive state intrusion. We want to flip the script of existing scholarship. We ask not what the Stasi knew about those involved in literary production in the GDR, but what these groups knew about the Stasi, how they acquired that knowledge, and how it circulated. In the process, we uncover the myriad ways in which those seeking to write, publish, or support critical literary production negotiated, circumvented, and actively confronted the threat posed by surveillance and control.

Our sources include original interviews with individuals who have direct experience of the GDR literary sphere, archival documents, and published and unpublished literary works. The focus is on seven figures who operated in different ways as authors, editors, and organisers of literary subcultures: the poet Uwe Kolbe (b. 1957), the singer-songwriter Ekkehard Maaß (b. 1951), the prose writer Christa Moog (b. 1952), the experimental artist and writer Gabriele Stötzer (b. 1953), the prose writer Bernd Wagner (b. 1948), and the singer-songwriter and poet Bettina Wegner (b. 1947) and her then-husband Klaus Schlesinger (1937–2001). These authors represent different personal and political approaches and different roles within the scene and contributions to it. As we explore the encounters of these individuals with the Stasi, we will meet a range of other critical intellectuals, informants, and Stasi officers who constituted the networks in and through which knowledge about the secret police was shared and circulated. *Knowledge of the Stasi* thereby makes a significant empirical contribution to our understanding of state intervention in literary production in the GDR.

Through our analysis, we seek to develop a better understanding of the relationship between surveillance, secrecy, and revelation in authoritarian societies more broadly. We engage and bring into dialogue theoretical frameworks drawn from anthropology, sociology, psychology, philosophy, and cultural studies to explore that relationship and develop a model that can be applied to other “low trust”¹ societies. We show how those engaged in the literary sphere built (unreliable) knowledge about the secret police which permitted the development and maintenance of the relationships of trust that were necessary to foster individual and collective agency. Knowledge and trust in the GDR were intimately connected, fragile, and imperfect—but also essential for the formation of networks and bonded communities. For our case studies this means the networks formed in and between the multiple literary spheres in the GDR; however, as literary authors in *Leseland DDR*,² these authors also connected beyond those networks with different readerships. In the final chapter of this book, we explore literary production itself as a form of knowledge and as a medium that could reveal the secrets of the state.

Writing in the GDR

Much has been written about the role and position of writers in the GDR and their complex relationship to power.³ In the early post-war period, several prominent left-wing writers—including Bertolt Brecht, Stefan Heym, and Anna Seghers—returned from exile, choosing the fledgling socialist state as the “better Germany” that promised to eradicate the very basis for fascism through an overhaul of the capitalist economic and social structures that were seen to have been its cause. Indeed, throughout its existence, the GDR was characterised by what Herfried Münkler has described as a “politischer Gründungsmythos” (political founding myth), that positioned the state as the antifascist alternative to the West and which was attractive to many who had suffered under or participated in the Nazi regime.⁴ The commitment to socialism as the antidote to fascism became, according to Wolfgang Emmerich, a “loyalty trap” for writers in the GDR, especially for those born in the mid- to late-1920s who had experienced and participated in Nazism as teenagers and young

1 Hawley, *Trust*, 18.

2 This was the title of a 2022 exhibition produced by the Federal Foundation for the Study of the Communist Dictatorship in Germany. See: <<https://www.bundesstiftung-aufarbeitung.de/de/vermitteln/ausstellungen/leseland-ddr>> (accessed May 28, 2025).

3 For a detailed overview of the history of writers and other intellectuals in the GDR see Mittenzwei, *Die Intellektuellen*.

4 Münkler, “Antifaschismus und antifaschistischer Widerstand.”

adults, some of whom we will encounter in the course of this book.⁵ Guilt over their participation, coupled with fear of being excluded from the community of antifascists, led—critics argue—those writers caught in the “loyalty trap” to temper their criticism of the SED regime.⁶ Even where they became more cynical about the SED’s ability to implement a socialist utopia in the GDR, for many the belief in that utopia remained.⁷

The politicisation of literary practice in the GDR also stemmed from a conception of the role of the writer as both “teacher” and “partner,” as Ian Wallace describes it.⁸ From the outset, writers were believed to have an important part to play to “disseminate noble ideological ideals, encourage socialist reconstruction of the country, and create heroes who would stand as model figures, inspiring the reader to comparable feats or life styles.”⁹ This firmly political role meant an increased status for writers in the GDR, including privileges not accorded to the rest of the population for those seen to be sufficiently conformist—a boundary that was constantly shifting and gradually expanding.¹⁰ Some writers even assumed positions of power within the party apparatus and saw themselves as playing a genuine role in political decision-making about the future of the state.¹¹

The acceptance of that political role on the part of the writer frequently outlasted their unwavering commitment to the SED and belief in the party’s ability to implement socialism. Wallace describes how a new paradigm emerged in the 1970s that positioned the writer as “partner, engaged on equal terms with [the] reader” to produce literature as “a vehicle for social communication and exchange through which collective values are organised and molded.”¹² Writers still felt they were needed as part of social debate (perhaps even as a “replacement” for a lack of social debate elsewhere), but that debate would include addressing social problems where they saw them.¹³ Bathrick describes the para-

5 Emmerich, “Between Hypertrophy and Melancholy.”

6 Emmerich, “Between Hypertrophy and Melancholy.” See also Emmerich, “Deutsche Intellektuelle: was nun?”

7 Emmerich, “Deutsche Schriftsteller als Intellektuelle”; Lehmann, “Die Rolle und Funktion der literarischen Intelligenz in der DDR”; Bialas, *Vom unfreien Schweben zum freien Fall*.

8 Wallace, “Teacher or Partner?”

9 Hutchinson, *Stefan Heym*, 77; Wallace, “Teacher or Partner,” 11; Mittenzwei, *Die Intellektuellen*, 73. See Jones, *Complicity, Censorship and Criticism* for an analysis of the expanding boundaries of legitimate debate.

10 Hutchinson, *Stefan Heym*, 7–78; Emmerich, “Between Hypertrophy and Melancholy.”

11 See e.g., Jones’s discussion of Hermann Kant and the writer as functionary. Jones, *Complicity, Censorship and Criticism*, 32–93.

12 Wallace, “Teacher or Partner,” 14.

13 Wallace, “Teacher or Partner,” 16.

dox that those celebrated in the West as dissidents were most often “reform-dedicated *Staatsdichter*” who offered a “variant of the official voice,” rather than true opposition to it.¹⁴ It is this ambiguous political positioning that fuelled the attacks on prominent GDR writers—particularly Christa Wolf—in the immediate post-Wende period. In the fierce exchange in the German feuilletons that became known as the *Literaturstreit* (literature debate), Wolf was dubbed by Ulrich Greiner as “die Staatsdichterin der DDR” (state scribe of the GDR). Her literary account of Stasi surveillance, *Was bleibt* (*What Remains*, 1990), was described by the critic as showing a lack of “Aufrichtigkeit” (decency) and “Feingefühl” (sensitivity), considering the extent of repression suffered by more outspoken critics of the state.¹⁵

More recent work suggests that this picture is too simplistic and that writers across the political spectrum negotiated ambiguous positions and relationships with those in power. Those ambiguous positions also played with publicness and secrecy in different ways. For example, as Sara Jones has shown, where Hermann Kant largely expressed conformity to the party line in public, he negotiated behind the scenes for the publication of critical works; Stefan Heym was extremely vocal in his public critique of the SED, but willing to talk to and negotiate with representatives of power when the political moment allowed.¹⁶ Greiner’s attack on Wolf also failed to acknowledge how the relationship between an individual and the state might evolve over time and be subject to ruptures and turning points. There is a tendency to overstate the latter to the detriment of gradual change. Nonetheless, moments such as the 1953 uprising in the GDR, the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, the show trials against the “Harich Group” in 1957, the 1968 Prague Spring, the 1976 expatriation of Wolf Biermann, and the 1979 expulsion of nine authors from the Writers Union resonated deeply in the cultural sphere.¹⁷ The Biermann expatriation in particular, and the differential punishment of those who signed the open letter against the SED’s actions, is seen as a moment of disillusion for many intellectuals. Wallace states: “it is clear in retrospect that, in terms of cultural policy at least, November 1976 marks the beginning of a process of disintegration.”¹⁸

Indeed, an emerging generation of writers in the last decade of the GDR viewed the ambiguous positioning of their older counterparts with

14 Bathrick, *The Powers of Speech*, 11.

15 Greiner, “Mangel an Feingefühl,” citations on 66 and 70.

16 Jones, *Complicity, Censorship and Criticism*.

17 For a chronological overview see Mittenzwei, *Die Intellektuellen*. Documentation of the Bierman Affair and the expulsions from the Writers’ Union are provided in: Keller and Kirchner, *Biermann und kein Ende*; Berbig et al., *In Sachen Biermann*; Walther et al., *Protokoll eines Tribunals*.

18 Wallace, “The Politics of Confrontation,” 74.

suspicion and aimed to avoid being similarly imbricated with those in power by rejecting state structures completely. In contrast to the older generation of writers, these “Hineingeborenen”¹⁹ (those born into the GDR)—associated most strongly with the artistic “scene” in Berlin Prenzlauer Berg²⁰—“never made the conscious decision to build a socialist state and therefore did not feel obliged to conform to its limitations.”²¹ Their relationship with politics and the politics of literature was diverse, but also distinct from that of the reform socialists described by Bathrick. As Karen Leeder notes, in the immediate post-Wende period, the writing of this group “was celebrated for its postmodern aloofness, for refusing to accept the antagonistic deadlock of collaboration and dissidence, and for founding an autonomous realm beyond official discourses.”²² Where critics before them had sought to engage the state, this group had abandoned all allegiance to it and to the utopian principles it claimed to represent.²³ For many, this meant a refusal of politics—including the politics of opposition—and a focus on language, intertextuality, intermediality, and artistic play. This focus became in itself a subversive act in the context of the GDR.²⁴ Others created work that was openly critical of the regime.²⁵ Although some of the key figures in the scene were able to publish officially on occasion, the majority of work was disseminated outside of official structures—in “underground” literary magazines and in unauthorised readings and performances in unofficial “literary salons.”²⁶

Most of the figures that form the focus of this book (Kolbe, Wagner, Maaß, Stötzer, Moog) were associated with the Prenzlauer Berg scene and/or moved in related underground scenes in other East German cities such as Erfurt, Dresden, and Magdeburg. Kolbe and Wagner, for instance, edited one of the most well-known unofficial magazines, *Mikado* (together with Lothar Trolle); Maaß was the organiser of one of the most significant “literary salons” in the Prenzlauer Berg.²⁷ Our focus on this generation of writers is partly a feature of the passing of time and the availability of individuals to sit for interviews in 2020 and 2021. The period of the late

19 A term borrowed from an eponymous poem by Kolbe, *Hineingeboren*.

20 For a critical engagement with this nomenclature, see Brady, “Prenzlauer Berg.”

21 Cooke and Ploughman, “Introduction.”

22 Leeder, *Breaking Boundaries*, 5.

23 Leeder, *Breaking Boundaries*, 6; see also Cosentino and Müller, “Die Kunst der Rebellion,” 5.

24 Cosentino and Müller, “Die Kunst der Rebellion,” 19. See also Berendse, *Grenz-Fallstudien*, 20.

25 Cosentino and Müller, “Die Kunst der Rebellion,” 13.

26 See, for example: Ní Chroidheáin, “*Dangerous Creations*.”

27 See Kolbe, Trolle and Wagner, *Mikado oder Der Kaiser ist nackt*, Böhlig, *Sprachzeiten*.

1970s to the 1980s is also of interest because of the changed operational approach of the Stasi from more open and brutal methods to an emphasis on “Zersetzung” and infiltrating oppositional groups (as discussed below), making the question of who knew what about whom even more salient. This means our findings are principally relevant to this period in the late GDR. The dynamics of knowledge, trust, and agency would likely have looked quite different in the 1950s and 1960s.

The common connection with the Prenzlauer Berg also means that we can view these figures as part of a network. One criticism of the term “scene” is that it risks eliding the plurality of artistic activity of those who are identified as being part of this grouping: as Jan Faktor (one of the key protagonists) stated, “Die Szene war nicht homogen” (the scene was not homogenous).²⁸ Nonetheless, Philip Brady identifies a “sense of shared activity” among the poets within the Prenzlauer Berg.²⁹ Gerrit-Jan Berendse describes these artists as replacing the official collective with a “selbstgewählten *ingroup*” (self-selected *ingroup*—italics in original), and “Splittergruppen” (splinter groups) that formed in particular around the production of the unofficial literary magazines.³⁰ He identifies familial-like structures and a network that is, however, “fein zerfasert und teilweise brüchig” (finely frayed and partly brittle).³¹ It is in part this fragmented network-like structure that allows us to trace how knowledge—specifically knowledge about the Stasi—was generated in this unique social context and how that knowledge was circulated and used to combat state surveillance.

That is not to say that writers outside of the Prenzlauer Berg (or other underground scenes across the GDR) did not also form professional and personal networks in which they generated and exchanged information. It also does not mean that the networks in the Prenzlauer Berg did not include individuals who are not generally identified with this grouping. Established authors—notably Volker Braun, Elke Erb, Franz Fühmann, and Christa and Gerhard Wolf—were connected to the “scene” and actively supported the authors in it.³² Bettina Wegner established her career in the 1970s and is not generally considered part of the Prenzlauer Berg. Nonetheless, she grew up and was active in official and unofficial cultural life in East Berlin until her departure from the GDR in 1983—the same can be said for Klaus Schlesinger, who left the GDR in 1980. Throughout this book we trace connections between different groups of

28 Cited in Brady, “Prenzlauer Berg,” 1.

29 Brady, “Prenzlauer Berg,” 5.

30 Berendse, *Grenz-Fallstudien*, 20.

31 Berendse, *Grenz-Fallstudien*, 25.

32 Consentino and Müller, “Die Kunst der Rebellion,” 16.

authors, showing also how knowledge gained through experience with the state and its security services was transmitted across literary “generations.”

Keeping Authors in Check: Censorship and the Stasi

The respect that the SED regime accorded intellectuals in their perceived role as educators of the masses also underpinned the suspicion with which they viewed writers and other artists. The state feared that literature’s educative function might be used against the state and its ideology. Officially, there was no “censorship” in the GDR; however, there were various mechanisms in place to prevent the publication of books deemed undesirable. Most works required approval before publication by the Hauptverwaltung Verlage und Buchhandel (Main Office for Publishing and Book Trade) and some authors were involved in direct negotiation about their texts with representatives of that office or other leading functionaries. However, there were multiple other levels to the process of getting a work into print, making it a “dynamisches Kräftespiel mit wechselnden Teilnehmern aus allen Bereichen der Gesellschaft” (a dynamic power play with varying participants from all parts of society).³³ This included negotiations with publishers (who usually knew where the boundaries of the sayable lay), reviewers whose opinion could be used to both support and sink an unpublished manuscript, and “post-censorship,” that is the directed reading of a work in official literary journals after publication. Some have described the most insidious form of censorship to be self-censorship, that is the decision not to write about certain topics deemed taboo or to hold back manuscripts, writing solely “for the drawer.”³⁴ Manfred Jäger goes as far as to state that all censorship in the GDR was self-censorship as ultimately the author had to agree to any changes made (albeit often under duress and the threat of non-publication).³⁵ The system was highly differentiated and authors with a higher profile (especially those renowned in the West) had more room for manoeuvre than those who were less well-known.

There was a further layer to this complex and highly bureaucratic system of censorship: a layer that brings us closer to the main subject of this book. The Archiv unterdrückter Literatur der DDR (Archive of Suppressed Literature in the GDR) contains manuscripts that were confiscated by the Stasi before they could even be considered for publication. In

33 Barck and Lokatis, *Zensurspiele*, 8.

34 There are numerous studies of censorship in the GDR. Alongside those already cited here, that includes: Barck, Langermann, and Lokatis, *Jedes Buch ein Abenteuer*; Wichner and Wiesner, *Literaturentwicklungsprozesse*; Bradley, *Cooperation and Conflict*; Jones, “Writing in Ambiguity.”

35 Jäger, “Das Wechselspiel,” 26.

the volume dedicated to these works, *Gesperrte Ablage*, Joachim Walther describes the anxiety caused by knowledge of Stasi infiltration into the literary sphere as functioning “subtil als Selbstzensur, als Denkblockade und als schwarzer Fleck” (subtly as self-censorship, as a mental block, and as a black fleck).³⁶ Indeed, the belief in the power of the writer made the literary and cultural spheres an area of significant concern for the MfS. The Stasi infiltrated these spheres with their complex network of Inoffizielle Mitarbeiter (informal collaborators, or IMs). As this book makes clear, knowledge of the existence of informants, or “Spitzel” (snitches) in the literary sphere was widespread, even if knowledge of the identities of the informants and the details of their activities was not. The opening of the files of the MfS in 1992 provided hard proof of their involvement.

Since then, a plethora of publications have examined the infiltration of literary circles by the Stasi. How exactly did the Stasi interfere? What impact did they have on the writers? How did the Stasi manage to recruit IMs from the cultural opposition? What were their methods? Research since the early nineties has mainly been invested in understanding the activities of the Stasi, the motivation of those writers who were successfully recruited as IMs, and the lived experience of those who were the subjects of observation. This has included works exploring attempts by the Stasi to combat dissent through observation, the process of infiltration and disruption known as “Zersetzung,” and the imprisonment and expulsion of oppositional writers.³⁷ One of the earliest studies of the relationship between the Stasi, literature and writers is Walther’s comprehensive *Sicherungsbereich Literatur* (1996).³⁸ Walther demonstrates how the MfS systematically influenced literary life in the GDR, thoroughly examining the apparatus of the MfS and their methods, including the “unsichtbare Netz” (invisible network) of IMs.³⁹

Alongside such studies of the mechanisms of Stasi control, the victims of the Stasi have been allowed to speak for themselves in a rush of autobiographical writing after the *Wende*.⁴⁰ These works were frequently an outpouring of rage at the experience of oppression along with detailed

36 Walther, “Angsträume und literarische Gegenwelten,” 32.

37 Notably Walther, *Sicherungsbereich Literatur*. See also the collection of essays and commentary in: Böthig and Michael, *MachtSpiele*; the special issue of *Text+Kritik* edited by Heinz Ludwig Arnold and published under the title “Feinderklärung: Literatur und Staatssicherheit” in 1993; and the series of special issues of *europäische ideen* edited by Andreas W. Mytze published between 1991 and 1996 under the title *StasiSachen* (1–6).

38 Walther, *Sicherungsbereich Literatur*, 16.

39 Walther, *Sicherungsbereich Literatur*, 730.

40 For example, the texts collected in Schädlich, *Aktenkundig*; Böthig and Michael, *Machtspiele*; and the short contributions by victims of the Stasi collected in the *StasiSachen* series edited by Mytze.

descriptions of what those mechanisms of control looked and felt like for the victims. A particular focus was the experience of betrayal by family, friends and colleagues who had acted as informants. Often these texts emerged in the context of the opening of the Stasi files in 1992 and several authors reproduced Stasi documents in their writings, showcasing the inhumanity of both the actions of the secret police and the language that they used to talk about their victims.⁴¹ Writers expressed shock and dismay at the extent of Stasi infiltration into their lives, with Stefan Heym noting that reading the files taught him why he should have been afraid.⁴² More recent publications, including by Stötzer, indicate that interest in this topic amongst eastern German artists may have waned, but has not disappeared completely in the intervening 30 years.⁴³

Writers who had acted as informants were less forthcoming in their personal accounts, especially in the immediate post-Wende period, although there is a smattering of autobiographical or essayistic writing from this group.⁴⁴ However, the writer-informants have been the subject of a substantial body of scholarship. These texts explore the actions, motivations, and role of these individuals within the security apparatus, and how they influenced literary production in the GDR.⁴⁵ The Stasi's infiltration of the literary spheres entailed what Alison Lewis has described as the "Kunst des Verrats" (artistry of betrayal); the existence of informants created an atmosphere of suspicion and fear in the cultural underground.⁴⁶ In the first year or so after unification, it gradually came to light how severely the Prenzlauer Berg specifically had been infiltrated by Stasi informants. Protagonists such as Sascha Anderson and Rainer Schedlinski were revealed to have acted as informants. The revelation in particular that the "Kronprinz der DDR-Dissidenten" (crown prince of GDR dissidents)⁴⁷ Anderson had betrayed his friends and colleagues over a long period was especially shocking to many and led to a re-evaluation of the oppositional credentials of the entire scene.⁴⁸

41 For example, Kunze, *Deckname "Lyrik"*; Loest, *Der Zorn des Schafes*.

42 Heym, *Der Winter unsers Mißvermögens*, 222.

43 Stötzer, *Der lange Arm der Stasi*, 166–67.

44 For example, the autobiographies: Anderson, *Sascha Anderson*; Kant, *Abspann*. The *StasiSachen* volumes edited by Mytze contain a number of short entries by individuals registered as informants.

45 Notably Walther, *Sicherungsbereich Literatur*; Deiritz and Krauss, *Verrat an der Kunst?*; Miller, *Narratives of Guilt and Compliance*; Lewis, *Die Kunst des Verrats*; Lewis, *A State of Secrecy*; Ring, *After the Stasi*.

46 Lewis, *Die Kunst des Verrats*.

47 Lewis, *Die Kunst des Verrats*, 9.

48 As discussed, for example, in: Berendse, *Grenz-Fallstudien*, 7; Leeder, *Breaking Boundaries*, 6; Lewis, *Kunst des Verrats*, 9–10.

We thus know a great deal about what the Stasi knew about East German writers, what they perceived as critical or oppositional activity, and how they aimed to combat it. There is also extensive research on the motivation and psychology of the writers recruited as informants and the ambivalent impact of reading one's own Stasi files. However, what the writers knew about the Stasi and how they navigated Stasi secrecy and surveillance has hardly been addressed. It is these questions that our book seeks to answer.

Knowledge, Secrecy, and Revelation

To do so, we first need to define what we mean by knowledge and secrecy and how the two might be connected in the context of the GDR literary sphere. We take a social constructivist view of knowledge:⁴⁹ that is, we view knowledge not as something that is simply “out there,” ready to be acquired by anyone with the right tools. Instead, knowledge is produced in the context of social relationships and the environment of the would-be knower. As Mark Harris puts it, “knowing is always bound up in one way or another with the world: a person does not leave their environment to know, even when she is dealing with the most abstract of propositions.”⁵⁰ Anthropologists, such as Harris, highlight the multiple “ways of knowing” that exceed the linguistic and might include emotions and embodied behaviours and skills.⁵¹ These “bodies of knowledge are produced in persons and populations in the context of the social relations that they sustain.”⁵² As Andreas Glaeser puts it, knowledge (or “understanding”) is “indissolubly social” and “must always be analyzed from within the interactions with other persons.”⁵³ In this book, we explore how knowledge is produced and shared in different interactional contexts and how that knowledge underpinned trust (or the lack of it) within them. Glaeser argues that “the production of knowledge is typically deeply intertwined with a particular economy of trust”⁵⁴: in the GDR—as we will see—knowledge and trust were also deeply intertwined with agency and the ability to conduct countersurveillance.

The socially constructed nature of knowledge also means that it is unevenly distributed in any given society and subject to relations of power. That is, knowledge goes hand-in-hand with secrecy: “the distribution of

49 Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*.

50 Harris, “Introduction,” 1. See also Boyer, “Visiting Knowledge in Anthropology,” 141.

51 Barth, “An Anthropology of Knowledge,” 1.

52 Barth, “An Anthropology of Knowledge,” 1.

53 Glaeser, *Political Epistemics*, 163.

54 Glaeser, *Political Epistemics*, 190.

knowledge creates categories of the knowledgeable and the ignorant.”⁵⁵ It is here that the literature on secrecy can help us unpack how knowledge about the Stasi could be constructed and shared—or revealed—in a society such as the GDR. Different categories of experience created different forms of (partial) knowledge: informants, those who the Stasi attempted (and failed) to recruit, and those who were the subjects of observation were initiated into the secrets of the Stasi to different extents and with different results. Notably, individuals could occupy more than one of those positions, as the Stasi frequently observed its informants and attempted to recruit its victims.

Of particular interest in the context of the GDR literary sphere is the relationship between secrecy and revelation. The writer, as the supposed purveyor of *Öffentlichkeit* (publicness) in the GDR,⁵⁶ was viewed with deep suspicion and fear on the part of the state who therefore sought to control them through censorship and through intense infiltration and observation by the Stasi. In both processes, there was a complex interweaving of revealing/concealing. Literature by its nature works with metaphor, allusion, allegory and poetic language which both reveals “truths” and conceals them. The censors sought to unveil coded “truths” in order to re-conceal them; that is, have them removed from the text before it was made available for public consumption.

Similarly, through their mechanisms of control, the Stasi attempted to uncover the “secrets” of the literary intellectuals who they assumed to be harbouring oppositional intent, and at the same time ensure that these secrets did not enter public knowledge. The Stasi’s tactics—for example, the recruitment of literary informants and “open” observation—also meant that in their efforts to reveal secrets, the Stasi were required to reveal some of their own. In this way, the literary sphere represents a potentially very fruitful case study for an exploration of Michael Taussig’s concept of the “public secret” as an “unstable and uncapturable blending ... of concealment and revelation.”⁵⁷ The existence of the Stasi, their infiltration of the private and public spheres, the use of informants, phone tapping, and similar measures was known, but not in full and not openly. This feature of the Stasi as a known-unknown has also been understood as a crucial element in the power that the agency held over the GDR population. Lutz Rathenow—an oppositional writer who later headed up the regional office of the Stasi Records Office in Saxony—described the Stasi as “zombie,” against which the only remedy was a radical opening of the

55 Crick, “Anthropology of Knowledge,” 304.

56 Herminghouse, “Literature as ‘Ersatzöffentlichkeit’?”

57 Taussig, *Defacement*, 50. Gallinat also describes the Stasi as a kind of “public secret.” See Gallinat, “Power and Vulnerability.”

files. Such a flood of knowledge would, Rathenow argued, destroy the power of an organisation sustained by its own legend.⁵⁸

Indeed, the texts written by literary authors in the immediate post-Wende period, shortly preceding or following the opening of the Stasi files, are shot through with discourses of knowing and not knowing. In the early 1990s, as the Stasi files revealed the extent of the involvement of the secret police in the GDR literary sphere (and indeed elsewhere), much of the discourse appeared to centre on what was *known* by those accused of functioning as informants and, at the same time, the extent to which they *concealed* the secret of their collaboration. Perhaps the most prominent example is the case of Christa Wolf. Wolf defended her decision not to reveal her brief spell as informant between 1959 and 1961 with the explanation that she did not know, because she had forgotten or had not understood the nature of her encounters with officials in that period. The language she uses with reference to the files is the language of revelation: the files “aus dem ich erfuhr” (from which I discovered), “das traf mich völlig unvorbereitet” (I was completely unprepared for that). At the same time, she asserts that her behaviour was not in fact secret—“keineswegs geheim” (not at all secret)—or that it was part of a public secret: she meets with a “Genosse R. ... der hauptamtlicher Mitarbeiter der Stasi und als “Betreuer” für den Mitteldeutschen Verlag eingesetzt war, was jeder wußte” (Comrade R ... a regular employee of the Stasi and positioned within the Mitteldeutscher Verlag as “supervisor,” which everyone knew).⁵⁹ Hermann Kant—erstwhile informant and head of the Writers’ Union—pleads a similar case, despite the fact that the Stasi files (made public by the *Spiegel*) showed that he had acted as an IM over more than two decades. He describes himself as “so geheim wie der Marx-Engels-Platz” (about as secret as Marx-Engels Square), stating “ich war, was ich war, und es war bekannt” (I was, what I was, and it was known).⁶⁰ Kant works with a complex interweaving of concealment and revelation: revealing what was already known (the “public secret” of his semi-official conversations with the Stasi as head of the Union) and yet concealing his “unofficial” contacts with the MfS.

Such approaches might be (and have been) dismissed as an effort by these authors to deflect the accusations of complicity being made against them. However, these responses can hint towards the position of the literary IMs between knowing and not knowing. The debate around IMs in the literary sphere in the early 1990s sometimes appeared to be a debate about terminology: the IMs did not necessarily (or even usually) know that they were named as such in the files, that the person they were talking

58 Rathenow, “Akteneinsicht als Therapie.”

59 Wolf, “Eine Auskunft.”

60 Kant, “‘Rede’ in Marburg.”

to was their handler, that they were part of an extensive network, or what would happen to the information that they shared.⁶¹ They were given the sense of being initiated into a secret, but also excluded from full knowledge of that secret. Graham Jones points out that “secrets produce value through both the exclusion of outsiders and the inclusion of insiders.”⁶² In their retrospective accounts, the literary IMs seem to have occupied a position between those two poles. For some it was the incorporation into the “secret society” of the Stasi that held appeal (the fantasy of being an undercover agent in the Cold War); however, the Stasi handlers generally concealed the wider context for their activity—or revealed it piecemeal and strategically. Here we see in practice Simmel’s observation that the sociological meaning of secrecy can be both external (relationship between those who have the secret and those who do not) and internal (the relationship between those who share the secret). In the latter case, “that relation of exclusion toward the uninitiated exists here also with its special gradations”:⁶³ the IMs were both inside and outside.

The moment of recruitment of an IM was a dangerous one for the Stasi in terms of the risk of revelation of knowledge about the MfS.⁶⁴ Lutz Rathenow claims “jeder Oppositionelle in der DDR wurde einmal angeworben” (every oppositional actor was courted by the Stasi at some point).⁶⁵ As we will see, this included several of the case studies in this book (Kolbe, Moog, Schlesinger, Wagner). After the *Wende*, writers often presented this experience as evidence that being recruited was not inevitable and could be resisted, or (more generously) recognition that it was easy to be sucked into the system of informing through fear. Nonetheless, reading these accounts through the lens of secrecy can provide hints that knowledge about the Stasi was both gained and deployed in these moments of contact.

In most cases, the officers are described as revealing themselves: that is, they presented themselves as who they were. However, they attempted to conceal the real intent behind their visit—writers, especially critical writers, were viewed as particularly “sensitive” and were not therefore to be confronted directly with a request to collaborate.⁶⁶ A common *Legende* (or cover story) used by the MfS was that of “protection.” For example, as we will see in chapter 1, the officer attempting to recruit Wagner

61 See Walther, *Sicherungsbereich Literatur*, 480; Jones, *Complicity, Censorship and Criticism*, 44–45.

62 Jones, “Secrecy,” 54.

63 Simmel, “The Sociology of Secrecy and of Secret Societies,” 470.

64 Something that the Stasi were aware of. See Walther, *Sicherungsbereich Literatur*, 477.

65 Rathenow, “Akteneinsicht als Therapie,” 93.

66 Walther, *Sicherungsbereich Literatur*, 474–75 for a discussion of the “Besonderheiten ‘literarischer’ IM” (peculiarities of literary informants).

claimed that they intended to protect the critical writer against attempts by Western forces to use him in a “Provokation” (provocation) during his planned visit to West Berlin.⁶⁷ What is interesting in our context is that these accounts suggest that even at the time, the deception was at least in part recognised. Wagner throws the Stasi officers out and “trotz des Schweigegebots” (despite being sworn to secrecy) speaks with friends, at which point it occurs to him that this was an attempted recruitment.⁶⁸ Wagner thereby hints that it was knowledge dispersed within his networks that helped him to defend himself against the Stasi’s efforts and that it is the relationship of trust with his friends that allows him to gain that knowledge—an aspect that will be explored in more detail in chapter 2. It is also interesting to note that Wagner—in his account—did not conceal his plan to speak about their visit from the Stasi officers. Openness and revelation are used here as a weapon against the power of the secret: a tactic that we will see throughout the course of this book and which we focus on in detail in chapter 3.

Rathenow recalls that the Stasi deliberately circulated false information about who was an informant within oppositional groups and indicates that the networks in which he was involved were aware of these tactics at the time. Here again we see a complex interplay between revelation (the Stasi “reveal” the “public secret” that there are informants) and concealment (they lie about the identity of those informants, that is, the “true secret”).⁶⁹ This environment of half information, (mis)information, gossip and rumour might have been protective as it resulted in caution based on fragmented knowledge; however, it also produced, in Rathenow’s words “Neurotiker” (neurotics).⁷⁰ As we will see in chapter 1, it also fostered the use of (unreliable) heuristic knowledge or “rules of thumb” to identify informants. Such knowledge fomented distrust and was often wrong; however, it also made possible the formation of trust in a “low-trust” society, trust that, as chapter 2 shows, was crucial for the dissemination of knowledge.

The infiltration of the literary sphere by IMs was thus a known unknown—the subject of rumour, gossip, and allusion. It is also clear from post-Wende accounts that this information was passed on. Ernst-Pieter Wieckenberg, an erstwhile West German publisher who dealt frequently with GDR authors, writes in an article entitled “Wir wußten sehr

67 Wagner, “Stasi-Gift,” 8. We see something similar in the attempted recruitment of, for example, Uwe Kolbe (see Kolbe, *Die Situation*, 9) and Günter de Bruyn (de Bruyn, *Vierzig Jahre*, 190–202.)

68 Wagner, “Stasi-Gift,” 8.

69 We are aware that Taussig disputes that true secrecy is possible; however, this is a useful term to understand different levels of secrecy at play.

70 Rathenow, “Akteneinsicht als Therapie,” 94.

viel...” (We Knew a Great Deal...): “wer als Geschäftspartner von DDR-Firmen nicht wußte, daß es in jeder von ihnen ein paar Stasi-Vertreter gab, der hatte entweder kein Gehör für die mehr oder weniger versteckten Warnungen einiger Kollegen in der DDR, oder er wollte, aus welchen Gründen auch immer, die Wirklichkeit nicht wahrnehmen” (any business partner of a GDR company who did not know that in every firm there were a few Stasi representatives either could not hear the more or less hidden warnings of some colleagues in the GDR, or he did not want—for whatever reason—to recognise reality).⁷¹

The targets of the Stasi’s observations also recount the experience of “open observation” in which the Stasi revealed its methods in order (presumably) to promote fear: an interweaving of revelation (“we are watching you”) with concealment (“you don’t know why”). Stefan Heym describes in his pre-Wende autobiography (published in the West in 1988) the methods of “open observation”: parking directly in front of the target’s house, following him at a conspicuously short distance. Heym’s reaction—in this account—was to bring those observing him coffee.⁷² This is a striking example of agency. Such a response would indeed be an effective antidote to the power of the secret: by acknowledging their presence, Heym effectively speaks out loud the public secret that dissidents are the targets of secret police intimidation.

These responses stand in contrast to the intentions of the Stasi to intimidate and to the response of others who were subject to open observation. Notably, Christa Wolf’s *Was bleibt* (first published in 1990 but written in 1979) recounts the fear experienced by a critical writer of Wolf’s generation who must live with the Stasi stationed outside her house and following her every move. As described above, Wolf’s text caused controversy on its publication, in part because of its delayed appearance. In effect, Wolf was criticised for concealing the public secret of Stasi observation, suggesting that (for some at least) it was viewed as her role to reveal it. Indeed, the motif of the secret police is present in several works by established GDR authors, including texts by Heym and Wolf. However, as we will discuss in detail in chapter 4, here too we see a complex interplay between revealing and concealing. The secret police is revealed in the text, but often concealed through the use of literary devices such as myth (e.g., Wolf’s *Kassandra* (*Cassandra*), 1983) or resetting in a different time (Heym’s *Der König David Bericht* (*The King David Report*), 1972). Texts that were more explicit in their representation could not be published in the GDR (e.g., Heym’s *Collin*, 1979 and *Ahasver* (published in English translation under the title *The Wandering Jew*, 1981), but were published

71 Wieckenberg, “Wir wußten sehr viel...,” 98.

72 Heym, *Nachruf*, 806.

in West Germany, weaving in another level of revelation and concealment as the works were smuggled back and consumed in the East.

Writing shortly after the Wende, Rathenow (1990) acknowledges that this was the power of the writer and the reason that they were feared by the SED and Stasi: “sie [the Stasi officers] hatten immer Angst ... vor jeder versuchten Öffentlichmachung der Machtmechanismen” (they [the Stasi officers] were always afraid ... of any attempt to reveal the mechanisms of power).⁷³ Indeed, the particular function of literature as *Öffentlichkeit* means that the literary sphere is a unique site for the study of the public secret. Literary authors produced and circulated knowledge about the Stasi and methods of resistance within their networks; that is, using the tools of gossip, rumour and veiled language that we may find is common to the other groups in the GDR. However, their role as critical intellectuals also entailed “speaking truth to power,” that is, speaking out loud the public secret of the Stasi in their literature. The Stasi, along with those involved in the censorship mechanisms in the GDR, anticipated this and attempted to prevent it. That *Öffentlichkeit* was expected of literary authors in their relationship to power—at least on the part of observers in the West—is seen in the reception histories of critical texts and, perhaps most tellingly, in the fierce criticism of GDR authors after the collapse of the GDR. Taussig argues that being a “purveyor of public secrecy”—in this context, keeping to yourself your knowledge of the authoritarian regime and the activities of its secret police—implicates you in the political system in the same way that corruption does.⁷⁴ This is akin to the accusation levied against critical intellectuals in the immediate post-Wende period that they sustained the dictatorial regime by being not quite open enough.

Methodology

In this book, we combine three overlapping research methods and corresponding types of empirical source, which are interwoven throughout the four substantive chapters of the book. In addition to analysing original, qualitative interviews conducted with individuals who had direct experience of literary production in the GDR, we draw on extensive archival material gathered from the Stasi-Unterlagen-Archiv (Stasi Records Archive, now integrated into the Federal Archive), as well as the lesser-known Archiv unterdrückter Literatur in der DDR (Archive of Suppressed Literature in the GDR), which is housed in the collections of the Bundesstiftung zur Aufarbeitung der SED-Diktatur (Federal Foundation for the Study of the Communist Dictatorship in Germany).

⁷³ Rathenow, “Akteneinsicht als Therapie.”

⁷⁴ Taussig, *Defacement*, 71.

We also undertake close readings of published and unpublished literary works, which deal variously with real or fictionalised encounters with the Stasi. Our approach to all materials consulted in this study can be termed “post-positivist.”⁷⁵ While these different sets of sources each raise distinct methodological questions, there are also some commonalities in the critical approaches they demand. With the exception of literary fiction (our approach to which we detail in chapter 4), they all make a claim to referentiality outside of the text and invite the kinds of critical analysis applied to (auto-)biographical writing, which must always take into account “the question of perspective, subjectivity, selection and language.”⁷⁶ Our study brings together and compares this range of material not in order to pass judgement on which of these accounts is “more reliable or valuable,” as Sara Jones has noted, but to explore possible tensions or even convergences between these different texts in order to produce a nuanced understanding of knowledge production and circulation in the GDR literary sphere.

Interviews

Between October 2020 and August 2021, Tara Talwar Windsor conducted six loosely structured interviews, each lasting approximately two hours, with the writers Uwe Kolbe, Ekkehard Maaß, Christa Moog, Gabriele Stötzer, Bernd Wagner, and Bettina Wegner. Given our main interest in their roles as (semi-)public figures and the considerable availability—albeit to varying degrees—of existing accounts about their lives and works in the public domain, we decided against conducting full life-story interviews, which are often used as the basis of full oral histories or anthropological studies. Nonetheless, our approach to these interviews adopted and adapted methods from oral history, the history of everyday life, and narrative inquiry. In particular, we were interested in the interviewees’ recollections and narration of “critical events”⁷⁷ which provided or transformed their knowledge about the MfS and its tactics, and how they responded to such events. The aim of these conversations, then, was not to seek a singular notion of “truth” about the Stasi, or to test our interviewees’ knowledge for accuracy, but to gain an understanding of what (and how) the interviewees recalled knowing—no matter how unstable that knowledge might have been—and to understand the forms of agency that emerged from that knowledge.

To this end, our interviews began with broad questions that enabled the participants to narrate their experiences in the GDR literary sphere, in

75 Saupé and Roche, “Testimonies in Historiography and Oral History,” 75.

76 Jones, *Complicity, Censorship and Criticism*, 29.

77 Mertova and Webster, *Using Narrative Inquiry as a Research Method*.

general, and their encounters with the MfS, in particular. These general questions were followed by more specific questions tailored to the particular interviewee, framed in the light of readings of their literary texts and related archival materials, and building on aspects arising from their responses to earlier questions during the conversation. As the historian Penny Summerfield has written, “[o]ral history is dialogic”:

Even though oral historians typically take a schedule of questions to an interview, they ask follow-up questions and prompt their interviewees to elaborate and explain what they mean. ... The interest of the interviewer in a particular subject, about which they know something and want to find out more, is constantly modified by the preoccupations of the interviewee with aspects of the past that are unknown to the interviewer. The dialogue can facilitate discoveries on both sides.⁷⁸

In response to our invitations to participate in this research project, our interviewees often expressed initial uncertainty about whether there was anything new to contribute to a topic (“literature and the Stasi”) which they considered well-worn and long-buried—not least after the heated public debates of the immediate post-Wende years, and precisely because they had already given oral and written accounts of their experiences of the GDR and their encounters with their Stasi files. In the course of the conversations, however, it became clear that many of our questions were new to them, and that asking these questions generated new knowledge *about* knowledge (and systems of knowledge) in the GDR—as well as about secrecy, revelation, trust, and agency—with the potential to reframe their (hi)stories as GDR writers.

The schedule of questions underpinning our interviews revolved around the following: having been asked to reflect on what it was like to be a writer or artist in the GDR, interviewees were invited to recall what it was possible to know about the Stasi within the literary sphere, how that knowledge was acquired, and whether and how that knowledge was passed on. This entailed exploring the kinds of formal or informal literary networks they were part of, including (where relevant) the role their contacts in the West may have played in their acquisition and transmission of knowledge about the MfS. In doing this, our interviewees were encouraged to think and speak about the strategies they developed—whether individually or collectively—for dealing with the Stasi, as well as the kinds of rumours and gossip they heard and passed on about the Stasi and suspected informants, when, and in what contexts. Interviewees were also asked about their recollections of particular moments of contact with Stasi

78 Summerfield, “Oral History as an Autobiographical Practice,” 3.

representatives or with colleagues and acquaintances who were suspected of collaborating with the Stasi and how those moments transformed their knowledge. In this context, questions about the circumstances or characteristics that aroused suspicion or what made certain people seem more or less trustworthy were addressed. Interestingly, the interviewees often found it easier to explain what made someone seem suspicious (whether that suspicion turned out to be justified or not) than to specify why they trusted some people over others.

Our reading of the interviews proceeds with an awareness of the vagaries of memory and retrospective accounts. Much work has been conducted and published on the ways in which individual memories are shaped by wider social, cultural, and political frameworks. As Summerfield writes, “[s]cholars argue that memory interacts with subsequent experience, and with ideological and cultural representations of both the present and past, so that accounts of the past are never pure recall of life as it was.”⁷⁹ Building on the work of historians Graham Dawson, Alistair Thompson, and others, Summerfield refers to the mediated character of personal recollections as the “cultural circuit.” According to this, “individual life stories are picked up, developed and portrayed in a generalised form in public media constitutive of popular culture, such as films, television, fiction, and newspaper articles” so that the “meaning of experiences of, for example, the Second World War [the focus of Summerfield’s own research] becomes crystallised in popular and general accounts ... Individuals narrating their own accounts subsequently use elements of this generalised form in recalling their personal part in that war, and indeed find it difficult to speak outside it.”⁸⁰ In her work on the media, testimony, and memories of the Stasi, Jones shows that scholars working from “diverse disciplinary and/or theoretical perspectives ... agree that social conventions structure how (and indeed what) individuals remember and that a significant aspect of these conventions is the medium in which personal memories are presented. Moreover, the form that memory takes is influenced by previous mediations and, in particular, their narrative structures, which, in turn, draw from culturally accepted patterns of remembrance.”⁸¹

Previous writings and interventions by the very figures we focus on in this book have contributed—undoubtedly quite consciously and deliberately—to the public framing of the GDR. But the influence of cultural

79 Summerfield, “Oral History as an Autobiographical Practice,” 5.

80 Summerfield, “Oral History as an Autobiographical Practice,” 6. On the “cultural circuit,” see also Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, 59, 68–70; Saupe and Roche, “Testimonies in Historiography and Oral History,” 76.

81 Jones, *The Media of Testimony*, 33. See also Wesser, “Das Erinnern an die Staatssicherheit.”

and medial circuits also applies to our interviewees' own narration of their memories of life in the GDR literary sphere, and more specifically their recollections of what it was possible to know about the Stasi, during our conversations. They are both producers and recipients of cultural narratives of the past (and present). In some cases, they made direct reference to works published by their colleagues before and after the end of the GDR. Kolbe, for example, referred to Gabriele Stötzer's *Die bröckelnde Festung* (The Crumbling Fortress) and more generally to writings by Wolfgang Hilbig, as well as documentary publications such as Erich Loest's *Der Vierte Zensor* (The Fourth Censor) and Reiner Kunze's *Deckname "Lyrik"* (Codename "Poetry"). Perhaps most tellingly, Kolbe mentioned explicitly that he had been rereading Jürgen Fuchs's novel *Magdalena*, which was published in 1998 and combines narrative fiction with documentary evidence from the Stasi files.⁸² Kolbe was clear that he considers this to be "ein sehr aufklärerisches Buch" (a very enlightening book), yet he also reflected openly on its emotional impact and how this, in turn, left its mark on his contributions to our interview (especially on comments he made about the Stasi's treatment of prisoners and the ubiquity and insidiousness of the regime's bureaucratic language): "Da kommt auch eine Menge Zorn heraus, und überträgt sich" (a whole lot of anger seeps out of it, and gets transferred).⁸³ Even where this kind of reflexivity is not explicit in the interviews, our critical analysis of the transcripts takes into account the creation of these narratives as part of what Lynn Abrams terms a "three-way dialogue: the respondent with him or herself, between the interviewer and the respondent and the cultural discourses of the present and the past."⁸⁴ At the same time, we acknowledge the interviewees' own agency and potential for "critical subjectivity," which is never "wholly constrained by dominant discourses."⁸⁵

Crucial in this respect is also their own consultation of files from the Stasi Records Archive. Like cultural depictions, the files themselves—as well as public discussions about them—present certain kinds of narrative structure, which influence how individuals make sense of their own past.⁸⁶ As Barbara Miller suggests, "individuals may begin to re-remember the past on the basis of the information which has been recorded in the files. This is not only the case for the area of interpersonal personal relationships but also for past behaviour."⁸⁷ In the context of our study, knowledge acquired in the process of reading their

82 On *Magdalena* as "hybrid" genre, see Lewis, "Reading and Writing the Stasi File," 383. See also Costabile-Heming, "Jürgen Fuchs."

83 Interview with Uwe Kolbe, June 1, 2021.

84 Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, 59.

85 Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, 70.

86 See Wesser, "Das Erinnern an die Staatssicherheit."

87 Miller, "Wiederaneignung der eigenen Biographie," 372.

own files inevitably colours their recollections of what our interviewees knew before. Indeed, the interviewees often raised the topic of viewing their files or referred to things that they had read in them throughout our conversations without direct prompting. Bernd Wagner spoke openly, for example, of being summoned to speak with the head of the Aufbau publishing house after he (Wagner) had signed a protest letter against Biermann's expatriation, but noted that his own memories of the encounter were vague: "ich selber habe kaum Erinnerungen an das Gespräch, ich kann mich auch fast nur auf die Akten da beziehen, ne?" (I myself can scarcely remember the conversation, I am almost completely reliant on the files for that, right?).⁸⁸ In this particular case, Wagner was baffled to discover the publisher—Fritz-Georg Voigt, alias "IM Kant" whom he did not name explicitly in the interview—had informed the MfS that Wagner had been blackmailed into signing the protest, something which Wagner rejects as "völlig aberwitzig" (completely absurd).⁸⁹ To open further reflection on the impact of the files, a final point on our interview schedule was to invite interviewees to discuss their experiences and reactions having consulted their own files in the Stasi archive, how this affected their understandings of the Stasi and transformed the knowledge they possessed before, and how their ability to articulate what they know or knew about the Stasi may have changed over time, especially since the end of the GDR. We reflect on this further in the Conclusion.

The Files

The use of Stasi files for historical research has generated considerable academic debate and public controversy. Although they were willing to grant us permission to consult their files, several of our interviewees voiced scepticism about the files and warned us to exercise caution when dealing with their contents, echoing critical or at least ambivalent comments often levied with regard to the reliability of documents that emerged in the ideological context of the socialist state's surveillance of

⁸⁸ Interview with Bernd Wagner, October 20, 2020.

⁸⁹ Interview with Bernd Wagner, October 20, 2020. In his recent book of reflective notes, Wagner also suggests that reading the files led him to momentarily question his own recollections of this episode: "Ich versuchte mich vergeblich, an den Wortlaut unseres Gesprächs zu erinnern. War ich tatsächlich ein solcher Opportunist gewesen, dass ich mich als vom [Jurek] Becker erpresst dargestellt hatte? Das ergab doch überhaupt keinen Sinn ... Von alledem findet nichts in meinen Notizen einen Niederschlag" (I tried in vain to recall the exact words of our conversation. Had I really been such an opportunist that I had portrayed myself as being blackmailed by [Jurek] Becker? That made no sense at all ... There's nothing about any of this in my notes): Wagner, *Verlassene Werke*, 44.

its population.⁹⁰ However, many historians and literary scholars have argued in favour of the historical usefulness of these records, which must, like any form of historical document, be contextualised and analysed critically, with an awareness of the “referentiality of these texts” and the fact that “events are filtered through the lens of ideology, pressure to report success, and a particular vocabulary, that is, they are reported from a particular perspective, but the text still refers to past events external to it.”⁹¹ With particular reference to files relating to GDR writers, Lewis claimed that by the early 2000s, the files had “proven to be one of the most useful tools in rewriting the literary history of the GDR, especially with respect to reassessing the relationship of writers to the state.”⁹²

According to Lewis, the Stasi files are: “especially good at capturing the surface minutiae of everyday life, often in excruciating, hyper-realistic detail. Reading the files, however, we soon discover that in this context, no amount of detail is redundant or superfluous, since any snippet of information can reveal itself later to be an important piece of intelligence.”⁹³ Paying close attention to this fine-grained detail is an important facet of our approach to reading the files to understand not how “snippets of information” were used as incriminating intelligence, but to explore patterns of revelation, secrecy, and knowledge transmission about the Stasi itself within the literary scene. Of course, there is always the possibility that documents from the files—especially IM reports—contain “errors of detail,” but there is little evidence of entirely fictional reports;⁹⁴ there can be little doubt that the meetings from which they emerge or the occurrences that they refer to did in fact take place, even if accounts and interpretations of those moments differ. Moreover, discrepancies between accounts contained in the Stasi files and written or oral accounts from our writers and/or their acquaintances are, in fact, productive for our analysis of the kinds of unstable knowledge that circulated in the literary sphere, as demonstrated in our discussion of Stasi reports on short stories by Christa Moog and Bernd Wagner in chapters 2 and 4.

Our research in the Stasi archive focused primarily on the observation reports contained in the extensive IM files of the notorious poet and informant Sascha Anderson, and on the *Operative Personenkontrollen* (OPK, operative personal surveillance) and *Operative Vorgänge* (OV, operative procedures) that were opened to monitor oppositional writers such as Uwe Kolbe (OV “Poet”), Ekkehard Maaß (OV “Keller”),

90 Jones, *Complicity, Censorship and Criticism*, 22–25. See also Wilke and Kubina, “Von der Aussagekraft der Akten.”

91 Jones, *Complicity, Censorship and Criticism*, 23.

92 Lewis, “Reading and Writing the *Stasi* File,” 379.

93 Lewis, “The Secret Lives and Files of Stasi Collaborators,” 28.

94 Jones, *Complicity, Censorship and Criticism*, 25 (note 91).

Christa Moog (OV “Dichter”), Gabriele Kachold-Stötzer (OV “Kapitän” and OV “Toxin”), and Bettina Wegner and Klaus Schlesinger (OV “Schreiberling”). In the case of Bernd Wagner, the only one of our interviewees who was not the focus of an OPK or OV, we were given access to another category of personal file—an *Allgemeine Personenablage* (general personal dossier).⁹⁵ We also consulted files that contain documents relating to these writers and their literary works, including underground publications such as *Mikado* and, for wider context, (partial) files on Franz Fühmann, Stefan Heym, and Christa Wolf.

Although we draw on both “perpetrator” (or “collaborator”) and “victim” files from the Stasi Records Archive, our interest lies not so much in exploring such dichotomies of collaboration and persecution but in different types of knowledge transmission across and within these categories. Through close, detailed readings of these various files, we seek evidence and accounts relating to different types or moments of contact with the MfS that came about in the process of recruitment and activity as informants; through attempted, but unsuccessful, recruitment as informants; in the course of the Stasi’s observation, whether open or covert, of writers deemed oppositional; and in cases when writers were arrested and/or brought in for pre-emptive questioning and interrogation (*Zuführung*). For each of these overlapping categories or perspectives, we are interested in what was revealed or concealed to the writers in question about the MfS (and how) and what tactics those writers developed for dealing with the knowledge they acquired about the Stasi and related institutions in such instances. We also read the files for indications of interactions and discussions amongst writers and their circles of friends and acquaintances when knowledge about the MfS or the topic of “state security” more broadly was exchanged and passed on. In doing this, we look not only for dramatic moments of revelation, *Dekonstruktion* (public outing or exposure of informants, often voluntary), and confrontational accusations, but also read the files “against the grain”⁹⁶ for more subtle patterns of behaviour, traces of suspicion, and the circulation of rumours. Through these readings, we aimed to reconstruct communities and practices of knowledge transmission and, where possible, consider developments in knowledge over time.

In the preface to his collection of essays, *History and Criticism*, Dominick LaCapra argues that “all forms of historiography might benefit from modes of critical reading premised on the conviction that documents are texts that *supplement* or *rework* “reality” and not mere sources

95 On the various categories of MfS files, see Walther, *Sicherungsbereich Literatur*.

96 Lewis, “Reading and Writing the Stasi File,” 394.

that *divulge facts* about ‘reality.’”⁹⁷ Drawing on this in her discussion of reading the Stasi files, Lewis suggests that “all historical documents—even police reports—ought to be read not simply as sources for facts, but as texts that “supplement or rework ‘reality.’” As such police reports “can benefit, *like literature*, from ‘modes of critical reading.’”⁹⁸ Lewis, Jones, and other scholars such as Annie Ring have developed approaches to reading the Stasi files as a “genre” of life story, which has often been incorporated into—and can be productively read in conjunction with—other (hybrid) forms of life writing about the GDR, especially literary biography and autobiography.⁹⁹ Such approaches often take their cue from writers’ own responses to reading their files: Schlesinger, for example, compared the experience to reading a novel, in which he was the main protagonist. Specifically, for Schlesinger, the file read like a work of European modernism, “in which the characters emerge without subjective consciousness ... and the protagonists are constructed entirely by factors and persons external to themselves.”¹⁰⁰

In the case of the Stasi’s victims, Lewis suggests that “the files can be read as a form of hostile, unauthorised biography” written by Stasi officers and/or informants about “dissident subjects and real or imagined enemies of the state.”¹⁰¹ In its original context, the Stasi’s documentation of its surveillance in these files functioned as a written “technology of power” (in a Foucauldian sense) and, according to Lewis, “is witness to the state’s desire for total control as well as a participant in its means of achieving this.”¹⁰² Ring, meanwhile, suggests that the Stasi’s “increasingly detailed archive ... [was] akin in scale and ambition to the ‘totalizing assemblage’ that in Derrida’s description is put together in order to achieve complete knowledge of the objects in the archive” and notes that “[t]he Stasi files did not only hold a thorough record of existing behaviours; they also had a role in authoring the lives contained within them, and thus producing what Foucault termed a ‘reality equivalent to fiction.’”¹⁰³ According to Ring, “[the Stasi’s notorious *Zersetzungsmaßnahmen*”—which she translates in this context specifically as “measures for breaking down the subject”—“were crucial to this authoring project.”¹⁰⁴ Removed from

97 LaCapra, *History and Criticism*, 11. Our emphasis.

98 Lewis, “Reading and Writing the *Stasi* File,” 383. Our emphasis.

99 Lewis, “Reading and Writing the *Stasi* File”; Jones, “Conflicting Evidence”; Jones, “‘Ein reines Phantasieprodukt’”; Jones, “Wie man ‘das Gruseln’ lernt”; Ring, “Collaboration as Collapse”; Ring, *After the Stasi*.

100 Lewis, “Reading and Writing the *Stasi* File,” 385; Ring, *After the Stasi*, 141. Schlesinger, “Macht, Literatur, Sicherheit,” 30.

101 Lewis, “Reading and Writing the *Stasi* File,” 383.

102 Lewis, “Reading and Writing the *Stasi* File,” 388.

103 Ring, *After the Stasi*, 141.

104 Ring, *After the Stasi*, 141.

the context in which they were originally written, however, these files can be reread not as they were “intended to be read”¹⁰⁵ but in ways which interrogate and potentially challenge the “authorial quality of the Stasi’s procedures.”¹⁰⁶ By flipping the script in our own study—by reading the files, in conjunction with other sources, for traces of (intuitive) knowledge, trust, and resistance—our approach illustrates that these hostile, unauthorised biographies can ultimately be seen to afford the protagonists of these (hi)stories agency in a manner that was never intended by the authors of the files (without trivialising the impact of those hostile attempts at total control and complete knowledge on individuals’ lives).

Published Sources

The (arguably) literary qualities of the files and their relationship with other forms of literary life writing brings us to the final set of sources examined in this study; namely, published and unpublished works of fiction and non-fiction, written before and after the opening of the files, that depict and/or discuss encounters with the MfS. Perhaps unsurprisingly, and as noted above, the Stasi was particularly “prominent in the wave of autobiographical accounts focusing on the literary sphere that appeared after unification.”¹⁰⁷ Indeed, “[a]utobiographical writing ... was one of the most common ways in which victims and informants alike sought to mediate their memories for a wider audience,” seeking variously to “set the record straight or simply to explain what intellectual life was like in the GDR,” and contributing in the process to “heated political debates about the nature of intellectual involvement with power.”¹⁰⁸

In the first three chapters, we draw on essays and autobiographical accounts, applying the same critical awareness of context, perspective, and narrative technique discussed thus far in relation to the interviews and archival documents. Our analysis of these writings asks similar questions about authors’ recollections of knowledge acquired and circulated following different moments of contact with the Stasi and interactions with colleagues, friends, and family, mindful of their entanglement in the “cultural circuit” of memories of the GDR, as well as the fact that such autobiographical texts are “presentation[s] of the self that the creator imagines him or herself to be or would like to be perceived as being, or indeed both.”¹⁰⁹ In doing this, we also take into account the often hybrid nature of autobiographical writings, including their intertextual

105 Lewis, “Reading and Writing the *Stasi* File,” 394.

106 Ring, *After the Stasi*, 131.

107 Jones, *The Media of Testimony*, 47.

108 Jones, *The Media of Testimony*, 47.

109 Jones, *Complicity, Censorship and Criticism*, 28.

relationship with other forms of life-writing and ego-documents, as well as the direct or indirect integration of materials from the Stasi files themselves. The transformative experience of consulting their own files and the resulting tensions between archived documentation and personal memories (consolidated in written form) offer fruitful points of analysis when it comes to understanding different types of knowledge about the Stasi and changes in that knowledge over time.¹¹⁰ Our approach demonstrates, moreover, that “[t]he narration of personal experience and the selection this involves promise to be particularly useful” not only in the “study of ambiguity and ambivalence in this experience,”¹¹¹ but also in the study of perceived and real agency when it came to these authors’ navigation of the “public secret” of the Stasi. As Ring points out with particular reference to the writer Wolfgang Hilbig, “it is in his most autobiographical works, works that deal with some of the worst aspects of Stasi victimization, that the flaws of the Stasi’s project begin to emerge.”¹¹²

While our focus in chapters 1 to 3 is primarily on non-fiction writings, we also refer, where relevant, to works of fiction with strong autobiographical traits. Our purpose here is not to read such works positivistically, but rather—building on uses of literature in the historiography of everyday life—to consider them to be “an expression of the author’s relationship to society, and a source that offers promise of ambiguity and multiplicity of meanings,” which can contribute further insights into the complexity of interactions with and knowledge relating to the Stasi.¹¹³ In this sense, we also build on Lewis’s suggestion (which draws, in turn, on Felski) that both the files and much literature “present a type of ‘social phenomenology’ of life under communism.”¹¹⁴ In chapter 4, we turn specifically to literary fiction as a “medium of knowledge”¹¹⁵ based on “standards of representation”¹¹⁶ in a range of literary depictions that can be placed at different points on a spectrum of revelation and concealment, both in terms of the literary techniques and devices they employ and the context of their publication and/or circulation. In doing this, we consider various paths that such texts took to reach different audiences, including canonical works and those written for the drawer, as well as underground or samizdat periodicals and others that were entirely suppressed and remain

110 See, for example, Jones, “Wie man ‘das Gruseln’ lernt” on Stefan Heym’s pre- and post-Wende accounts.

111 Jones, *Complicity, Censorship and Criticism*, 28.

112 Ring, *After the Stasi*, 131.

113 Jones, *Complicity, Censorship and Criticism*, 29–30.

114 Lewis, “The Secret Lives and Files of Stasi Collaborators,” 30.

115 Barth, “An Anthropology of Knowledge,” 3.

116 Gibson, *Fiction and the Weave of Life*, 70–73.

relatively unknown, some of which are now deposited in the Archiv unterdrückter Literatur in der DDR.¹¹⁷

Introducing the Case Studies

The individuals at the centre of our study have been selected for our research to represent a range of experiences, levels of recognition, and roles in literary production. To differing degrees and in different but overlapping contexts, these individuals engaged in critical or oppositional cultural production, in some cases quite openly, in other cases through more covert underground or samizdat activities. They have all written or spoken publicly about their experiences in the GDR literary and cultural scene, including their encounters with the Stasi, with whom they had direct contact through attempted recruitment, open observation, interrogation, or even imprisonment. While they each had distinct experiences, they were also part of intersecting networks, which often crossed the inner-German border, allowing us to build a picture of how knowledge about the Stasi was produced and circulated within them.

The singer-songwriter and poet Bettina Wegner (b. 1947) was a prominent critic of the party and state in the GDR cultural scene, both independently in her own artistic work and alongside the writer Klaus Schlesinger (1937–2001), to whom she was married from 1970 to 1982. Before her marriage to Schlesinger, Wegner had a brief relationship with the regime-critical poet, Thomas Brasch. Wegner's clashes with the state and experiences with the MfS began in earnest when she was arrested at the age of 20 and subjected to Stasi interrogation for distributing pamphlets that criticised Soviet intervention and the GDR's involvement in suppressing the Prague Spring in 1968 (Brasch had also been arrested the previous day for the same activity). As a result, she lost her place at acting school and was convicted of "staatsfeindliche Hetze" (agitation hostile to the state) receiving a suspended prison sentence of one year and seven months.¹¹⁸ In the mid-1970s, Wegner and Schlesinger organised two series of musical and literary performances, "Eintopp" (or "Eintopf," Stewpot) in the Berliner Haus der Jungen Talente (House of Young Talent) and "Kramladen" (Junk Shop) in Berlin Weissensee, both of which were monitored by the Stasi and eventually banned. The Stasi pursued both Wegner and Schlesinger as "feindlich-negative Personen" (hostile-negative individuals), often treating them differently, and actively

117 On the Archiv unterdrückter Literatur in der DDR see Buchholz, "The Archive of Oppressed Literature"; Geipel and Walther, *Gesperrte Ablage*.

118 Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung and Robert-Havemann-Gesellschaft, "Bettina Wegner."

intervening in their marriage with tactics of “Zersetzung.”¹¹⁹ Wegner’s public concerts were increasingly curtailed in the aftermath of the Biermann affair and her own involvement in those subsequent protests, forcing her to rely on covert advertising strategies and word of mouth to circumvent the state’s restrictions. After her breakthrough in West Germany in 1978, she was able to travel across the inner-German border to perform. While Schlesinger left the GDR for West Berlin in 1980, Wegner remained in East Berlin until 1983, reluctantly opting to leave when the state began proceedings against her for alleged customs and currency offences related to her earnings in the West. Wegner has given numerous public interviews about her life and experiences as an artist in the GDR, and was the focus of a recent documentary film that premiered at the Berlinale film festival in 2022.¹²⁰

Klaus Schlesinger, referred to by his biographer as “der sanfte Rebell,”¹²¹ began his writing career at the *Neue Berliner Illustrierte* and published his first novel *Michael* with the East German publishing house Hinstorff in 1971 and his first collection of short stories *Alte Filme* (Old Films) in 1975.¹²² He took a distance course at the Johannes R. Becher literary institute in 1972, before joining the official Writers’ Union in 1973. He was a prolific writer of prose fiction, essays, radio plays and screenplays.¹²³ Following the publication of his collection of stories *Berliner Traum* (Berlin Dream) in 1978—“his then most controversial work,” according to Edith Toegel—Schlesinger described himself as a socially critical writer who wanted to be integrated into the system he critiqued.¹²⁴ The anthology of *Berliner Geschichten* (Berlin Stories), which Schlesinger, Ulrich Plenzdorf, and Martin Stade planned to publish independently without interference from official publishing houses, was the subject of an MfS “Operativer Schwerpunkt Selbstverlag” (Operational Focus Self-Publishing) from 1975 to 1976. Its publication was ultimately abandoned until 1995, after the opening of the files revealed the Stasi’s surveillance of the project.¹²⁵ In 1976, Schlesinger co-organised and signed the declara-

119 See “Bettina Wegner,” in Bundesstiftungsaufarbeitung, *Wer war wer in der DDR?* and Wegner’s biography on her personal website <<http://www.bettinawegner.de/vita.html>> (accessed August 12, 2024). See also Köhler, *Klaus Schlesinger*.

120 Bettina, dir. Pehnert.

121 Köhler, *Klaus Schlesinger*, book blurb.

122 Schlesinger, *Michael* and *Alte Filme*. *Michael* also appeared as a licensed edition in 1972 with the Swiss publisher Benziger under the title *Capellos Trommel* and *Alte Filme* as a licensed edition with the West German S. Fischer Verlag in 1976.

123 For a full list of Schlesinger’s works see “Gesamtbibliografie zu Klaus Schlesinger (1937–2001),” <http://www.klaus-schlesinger.de/files/gesamtbibliografie_schlesinger.pdf> (accessed May 31, 2025).

124 Toegel, “Terrible Alternatives,” 17–18.

125 Plenzdorf, Schlesinger, and Stade, *Berliner Geschichten*.

tion of protest against the expatriation of Wolf Biermann and was one of nine prominent writers excluded from the official Writers' Union of the GDR in 1979 (Wegner also resigned her membership), after they wrote a letter to Erich Honecker in protest against legal measures taken against Stefan Heym under the so-called "Devisengesetz" (Foreign Exchange Law) following the publication of his (Heym's) novel *Collin* in West Germany.¹²⁶ After he left the GDR in 1980, Schlesinger was involved in the West Berlin squatter scene, and continued to publish in both West and East. In the early post-Wende years, rumours circulated that Schlesinger had been an informant for the Stasi, which were ultimately disproved with the opening of the files.¹²⁷ His post-Wende writings—notably his 1998 essay collection *Von den Schwierigkeiten, ein Westler zu werden* (On the Difficulties of Becoming a Westerner)—reflect extensively on the impact of Stasi surveillance and the difficulties of dealing with East German identities and biographies after the collapse of the GDR.¹²⁸

Having trained first as a bricklayer and then as a teacher, the prose writer Bernd Wagner (b. 1948) published his first collection of short stories with the Aufbau publishing house in 1976, the same year that he also signed a protest against Biermann's expulsion from the GDR. With the support and mentorship of the poet Sarah Kirsch, Wagner became a member of the official East German Writers' Union. Despite this official recognition, he was also an outspoken critic of the regime. After the Stasi attempted to recruit him as an informant in 1983, Wagner wrote a letter of complaint to Hermann Kant, president of the Writers' Union, and in 1985 he addressed another letter directly to Erich Mielke when he was denied permission to travel to the West (see also chapter 3). He was observed and then picked up and interrogated by the Stasi in 1984 for his involvement in planned protests against the detonation of the Prenzlauer Berg gasometer.¹²⁹ From 1983 until he left the GDR in 1985, Wagner co-edited the underground publication *Mikado* together with Uwe Kolbe and Lothar Trolle.¹³⁰ Wagner has written numerous works of fiction and

126 Goldstein, *Writing in Red*, 117–22. See also "Klaus Schlesinger," in Bundesstiftung Aufarbeitung, *Wer war wer in der DDR?*.

127 Argelès, "Das waren wir nicht!"

128 Schlesinger, *Von der Schwierigkeit, Westler zu werden*. His essay "Macht, Literatur, Staatsicherheit" also previously appeared in *Feinderklärung: Literatur und Staatsicherheit*, edited by Heinz-Ludwig Arnold (29–35). See also his autobiographical work, *Fliegender Wechsel* (Flying Change), as well as his works of fiction *Die Sache mit Randow* (The Thing with Randow), *Trug* (Deception), and his posthumous fragment *Die Seele der Männer* (The Soul of Men), which was republished alongside his other short stories in 2011.

129 See Wagner and Wüllenkemper, "Etwas auf die Beine stellen." See also Wagner's biography on his personal website: <<http://www.berndmaxwagner.de/biografie.html>> (accessed August 13, 2024).

130 Kolbe, Trolle, and Wagner, *Mikado oder Der Kaiser ist nackt*.

non-fiction, many of which deal directly or indirectly with the Stasi. These include his pre-Wende collections *Reise im Kopf* (Journey in the Head, published in the GDR),¹³¹ *Ich will nicht nach Österreich* (I Don't Want to go to Austria), and *Der Griff ins Leere* (Grasping at Thin Air, published in West Germany),¹³² as well as his post-Wende collection *Die Wut im Koffer* (Anger in the Suitcase—first published in 1991 and then reissued and extended in 1993 after Wagner had read his Stasi file—and his novels *Paradies* (Paradise) and *Die Sintflut in Sachsen* (The Deluge in Saxony).¹³³ Most recently, he published a creative memoir and chronology of his life from 1974 to 1989, *Verlassene Werke* (Abandoned Works), which includes notes and previously unpublished fragments.¹³⁴

Mikado was preceded by an earlier initiative of the poet Uwe Kolbe (b. 1957), who began collating and circulating the first samizdat (unofficial, self-published) publication *Der Kaiser ist nackt* (The Emperor's New Clothes) in 1981. Kolbe came to fame as a young writer, under the tutelage of Franz Fühmann, publishing his first poems in *Sinn und Form* in 1976.¹³⁵ Kolbe is perhaps best known for his debut volume *Hineingeboren* (Born into This), published by Aufbau in 1980; his second poetry collection, *Abschiede und andere Liebesgedichte* (Goodbyes and other Love Poems), appeared the following year.¹³⁶ From 1982, his collections were also published by Suhrkamp in West Germany. Despite early recognition and success, Kolbe voiced criticism of the GDR and its cultural policies in open letters and speeches. His poem "Kern meines Romans" (Heart of My Novel)—published in an anthology of debutant writers in 1981—contained a hidden poem composed of all capitalised letters in the main text, which, once decoded, was clearly derisive of the state and party (see chapter 4).¹³⁷ At Fühmann's instigation, Kolbe collaborated with Anderson on the ill-fated "Anthologie junger Autoren," (Anthology of Young Authors) initially planned for publication by the Akademie der Künste (Academy of Arts) and blocked by SED officials in late 1981 (later published by Anderson and Elke Erb in the West).¹³⁸ Having faced a de facto publication ban from 1982 to 1985, Kolbe was

131 Wagner, *Reise im Kopf*.

132 Wagner, *Ich will nicht nach Österreich*; Wagner, *Der Griff ins Leere*.

133 Wagner, *Paradies*; *Die Sintflut in Sachsen*.

134 Wagner, *Verlassene Werke*.

135 "Uwe Kolbe," in Bundesstiftung Aufarbeitung, *Wer war wer in der DDR?*; Deloglu, "Dann verlieren sich die Vorschriften des Widerstandes."

136 Kolbe, *Hineingeboren*; Kolbe, *Abschiede*.

137 Kolbe, "Kern meines Romans."

138 Anderson and Erb, *Berührung ist nur eine Randerscheinung*. On the Stasi's intervention with the volume, see Michael, "Eine verschollene Anthologie"; Costabile-Heming, "Surveillance and the GDR's Cultural Sphere."

eventually able to publish a third volume of poetry with Aufbau¹³⁹ and granted a continuous visa to travel to West Germany in 1986, before moving to Hamburg in 1988. Although he primarily publishes poetry, Kolbe has written several essays on his encounters with the Stasi—including his attempted recruitment aged 17 and his father's role as an MfS officer¹⁴⁰—and published a semi-autobiographical novel, *Die Lüge* (The Lie), in 2014.¹⁴¹

Before he left the GDR, Kolbe was a regular attendee at the unofficial literary salons, which the singer-songwriter and translator Ekkehard Maaß (b. 1951) hosted in his apartment in the famed Prenzlauer Berg district from 1978. With the support of established but critical writers such as Volker Braun, Elke Erb, Franz Fühmann, Heiner Müller, and Christa and Gerhard Wolf, these salons became a focal point in the development of the non-conformist literary and artistic “scene” in East Berlin. Artists from the Soviet republics and Eastern Bloc, as well as some intellectuals from the West, also attended these gatherings.¹⁴² Maaß was a close friend of Wolf Biermann and lost his place at the Humboldt university for collecting signatures in protest against Biermann's expulsion, an undertaking which also led to the opening of Stasi operative measures against him and a ban on his own public performances (he was known above all for performing the songs of the Georgian-Armenian musician Bulat Okudzhava). Maaß has written and given numerous public interviews about his experiences in the GDR and the Stasi's observation and infiltration of his salons, not least in the context of his fraught relationship with Sascha Anderson.¹⁴³ Peter Böthig's recent documentation, to which Maaß contributed personal and archive material, offers a detailed chronology of the readings and overview of attendees, and includes extensive reproductions of documents from the Stasi files.¹⁴⁴

Amongst the many writers who participated in Maaß's literary salons was the prose writer Christa Moog (b. 1952). Like Kolbe, Moog had both refused Stasi recruitment as a teenager and later became a protégé of Franz Fühmann. Moog was one of the young authors whose work was intended for inclusion in the aforementioned anthology at the Akademie der Künste; she was also signatory to a letter addressed to Minister for Culture, Hans Joachim Hoffmann, protesting against the prohibition of

139 Kolbe, *Bornholm II*.

140 Kolbe, *Die Situation* (The Situation); Kolbe, *Renegatentermine* (Renegade Dates); Kolbe, *Vinetas Archive*; Kolbe, “Die Sache mit V.”

141 Kolbe, *Die Lüge*.

142 See Böthig, “Vorbemerkung,” in *Sprachzeiten*.

143 For example, Maaß, “Vom Pfarrhaus in Schönburg zur Schönhauser Allee”; Maaß, “Und das ist geschehn”; Anderson, dir. Hendel.

144 Böthig, *Sprachzeiten*, esp. 25–241.

its publication in the GDR.¹⁴⁵ Moog wrote numerous short stories and was well known in the literary scene while she was still in East Germany, but was only able to publish in earnest after she left for the West in 1984 (having waited several years for permission to leave the GDR in order to marry a British citizen). In 1985, her volume *Die Fans von Union* (The Union Fans) was published by Claassen, and included a story entitled “Die Fete” (The Party) about a group of friends who suspect a newcomer of spying for the Stasi, which had attracted the attention of the MfS before Moog left the GDR (see chapter 2).¹⁴⁶ The following year, her short story “Es ist 15 Uhr” (It is 3 p.m.), a literary treatment of the Stasi’s attempt to recruit a young teenager, appeared in an anthology of East-West love stories.¹⁴⁷ Her semi-autobiographical novel, *Aus tausend grünen Spiegeln* (From a Thousand Green Mirrors), was published first by Claassen in 1988 and then reissued by Rowohlt in 1990/91.¹⁴⁸

The experimental artist and writer Gabriele Stötzer (b. 1953) was a leading figure in the underground scenes in Erfurt and Berlin in the 1980s.¹⁴⁹ She began writing and creating visual art after her imprisonment for in 1977—first in Stasi remand prison and then in the women’s prison at Hoheneck—after she was convicted of “Staatsverleumdung” (defamation of the state) for collecting signatures in protest against the expulsion of Wolf Biermann.¹⁵⁰ As a student, Stötzer had contact with Jürgen Fuchs and the literary scene in Jena. She had already clashed with the East German authorities, losing her place at the Pädagogische Hochschule in Erfurt a few months before the Biermann affair, having written a letter to Margot Honecker that was signed by 83 other students, opposing the exmatriculation of a fellow student.¹⁵¹ After her release from prison, Stötzer wrote about her experiences in a piece entitled “Dabei sein und nicht schweigen” (Being Present and Not Silent), which she circulated amongst acquaintances, including Christa Wolf, who later depicted this encounter in her post-Wende novella *Was bleibt* and autobiographical text *Ein Tag im Jahr* (One Day a Year, 2003).¹⁵² The

145 Opening report of Operativer Vorgang ‘Dichter,’ February 9, 1982.

146 Moog, *Die Fans von Union*.

147 Moog, “Es ist 15 Uhr.” See also Kabić, *Ein Königreich für ein Kind*, 235–39.

148 Moog, *Aus tausend grünen Spiegeln*; Mundt, “Katherine Mansfield Revisited”; Lewis, “Foiling the Censor.”

149 Different variations of her name appear in contemporary documents and texts. She was known by her married name Kachold until her divorce in 1979, then used the double-barrelled name Stötzer-Kachold, but returned to using her maiden name Stötzer after the Wende.

150 Geipel, *Zensiert, verschwiegen, vergessen*, 208–18.

151 Stötzer, *Der lange Arm der Stasi*, 166–67.

152 Horakova, “Learning from the Underground”; Wolf, *Ein Tag im Jahr*, 246.

alternative circles she moved in were subjected to particularly intense surveillance and investigation by the Stasi and other state authorities; in 1981, the *Galerie im Flur*, a private gallery and artistic meeting place, which Stötzer had been running for a year, was “liquidated,” and in subsequent years numerous events prohibited.¹⁵³ She was a founding member of the Künstlerinnengruppe Erfurt, which was active from 1984, and in 1989, she co-founded the political group “Frauen für Veränderung” (women for change), who were the first to occupy the Erfurt Stasi headquarters in December that year.¹⁵⁴

Stötzer’s literary work only appeared in samizdat “publications” such as *Mikado*, *Ariadnefabrik*, and *Und*, and it was not until 1989 that a volume of her writings, *zügel los* (rein less), was published in the Aufbau-Verlag series “Außer der Reihe,” edited by Gerhard Wolf.¹⁵⁵ Her post-Wende publications include a collection of stories, *Erfurter Roulette* (Erfurt Roulette), about the lives of young artists in the GDR and a literary memoir, *Die bröckelnde Festung*, based on her experiences in Hoheneck, which was published in 2002.¹⁵⁶ A collection of her prose and poetry dating from 1978 to 1989, appeared in 2005 as part of the series “Die Verschwiegene Bibliothek” (The Silenced [or Secret] Library) edited by Ines Geipel and Joachim Walther.¹⁵⁷ Stötzer’s literary papers are housed in the Archiv unterdrückter Literatur. Like the other authors featured in this study, she has given numerous public accounts of her life in the GDR, often in the context of official memory work. Her most recent documentary publication, *Der lange Arm der Stasi* (The Long Arm of the Stasi), includes essays and an account of her meeting with one of her Stasi interrogators, as well as reproductions from the Stasi files and images of her work and acquaintances.¹⁵⁸

Overview of this Book

Our book is structured in four substantive chapters, each addressing a key theme and building on each other. Chapter 1 explores how knowledge about state surveillance was acquired and circulated in the GDR literary

153 The surveillance of Stötzer has been the subject of a dossier compiled by the Stasi Record Archive: Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen der Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, “*Eingeschränkte Freiheit*.”

154 Stötzer, *Der lange Arm der Stasi*, 220–33. On Stötzer’s involvement in the art scene, see also Richter, *Das Gesetz der Szene*.

155 Walther, “Gabriele Stötzer”; Kachold [Stötzer], *zügel los*. On her underground publications, see also Dahlke, *Papierboot*, 141–52, 201–15.

156 Stötzer, *Erfurter Roulette*.

157 Stötzer, *Ich bin die Frau von Gestern*.

158 Stötzer, *Der lange Arm der Stasi*.

sphere on the basis of “intuition” and “gut feelings” and interrogates how these forms of knowledge were used to develop strategies for dealing with the known-unknown of the Stasi. Drawing in particular on the work of cognitive psychologist, Gerd Gigerenzer, the chapter traces what can be termed “rules of thumb” or “heuristics”¹⁵⁹ which shaped the kinds of unstable knowledge that were formed and passed on, seemingly instinctively, in everyday life and through regular interactions with others and the social environment. With particular emphasis on the kinds of knowledge our chosen authors recalled having in their interviews with Windsor, the chapter addresses knowledge revealed and employed to navigate moments of attempted recruitment and commonly shared assumptions about signs and indicators that fuelled suspicions of collaboration with the MfS and/or infiltration by undercover informants. The chapter also explores knowledge acquired through direct experiences with the state security apparatus (beyond those moments of attempted recruitment) and how this experiential knowledge became the basis of second-hand knowledge passed on to others—a kind of knowledge which relied, in turn, on relationships of trust, and which remained partial and insecure.

The “rules of thumb” and experiential knowledge discussed in chapter 1 were used to make decisions about who to trust and what knowledge could be entrusted to others. Building on this, chapter 2 demonstrates that trust played essential role in the construction of knowledge on many levels in the literary sphere, illustrating that the interplay between trust and distrust was complex and often symbiotic. This chapter draws on work from the history, sociology, and philosophy of trust to explore how “regimes of trust and distrust” were met with “communities of trust and distrust,”¹⁶⁰ within and through which knowledge was generated and circulated. While the Stasi notoriously sought to sow seeds of distrust in literary (and other) networks with methods of *Zersetzung*, the urge to gain knowledge about GDR citizens as a mechanism of control and power depended, perhaps paradoxically, on the performance and mobilisation of trust both between the officers and (potential) informants and between informants and targets. Conversely, the chapter demonstrates that, precisely because of the risks entailed, our writers’ decisions to trust or distrust others enabled them to acquire, share and/or strategically withhold knowledge in different situations and thus became a means of navigating uncertainty and exercising agency which challenged the regime’s attempt to monopolise knowledge and trust. The chapter explores how trustworthiness was cultivated and (mis-)deciphered on the basis of emotions and (unstable forms of) evidence and examines the role of (semi-)professional networks and reputation in establishing

¹⁵⁹ Gigerenzer, *Gut Feelings*.

¹⁶⁰ Tikhomirov, “The Grammar of Trust and Distrust,” 319–22.

and expanding relationships of trust. The often fragile bonds of trust on which these various relationships rested were crucial for the sharing of knowledge which, in turn, informed strategies of resistance.

Chapter 3 turns to those strategies that were developed and employed by our chosen writers and their acquaintances to deal with the state surveillance they were subjected to. We draw on theories of surveillance and countersurveillance to illustrate how literary intellectuals were able to exercise political agency and “look back” at the Stasi, building on the different kinds of intuitive, experiential, and second-hand knowledge discussed in chapter 1 and the communities of trust explored in chapter 2. Chapter 3 shows that while living in the “panopticon” of the MfS and enduring their methods of “Zersetzung” certainly engendered paranoia, anxiety, and mistrust, these were not only mechanisms of control but also galvanised those being observed to push back against the state’s disciplinary power in both subtle and confrontational ways. Throughout the chapter, we explore numerous examples of (semi-)open confrontation to open observation—including the development of counter-legends, the mobilisation of prominent contacts, legal measures, protest letters, and public declarations—as well as covert actions in the underground scene that sought to avoid and subvert the Stasi’s gaze. The chapter also illustrates how humour was used as a means of sharing knowledge and undermining the Stasi’s authority and how writing was employed as a strategy of resistance, including the circulation of personal testimony, which revealed aspects of the repressive state apparatus otherwise concealed from public knowledge and counteracted the epistemic injustice imposed on those who experienced that repression first-hand.

The final chapter turns to the specific role played by literary fiction as a “medium of knowledge.”¹⁶¹ While works of fiction do not make a claim to extra-textual referentiality, we argue that they draw on and add to a repertoire of shared “standards of representation,”¹⁶² thereby performing “acts of creative imitation”¹⁶³ and using a complex interweaving of revelation and concealment, which must be interpreted by what we term (more or less) adequate readers. The chapter is structured around five themes and case studies of writing, which employ diverse literary genres and techniques to deal with the “public secret” of the Stasi, and which took different paths to publication. We situate these along a spectrum of total concealment to total revelation and illustrate how these positions shaped the extent and kinds of knowledge transported through these literary works. The chapter begins with an exploration of literature written “for the drawer,” taking Günter Kunert’s novel *Die Zweite Frau* (The Second

161 Barth, “An Anthropology of Knowledge,” 3.

162 Gibson, *Fiction and the Weave of Life*, 70–73.

163 Felski, *Uses of Literature*, 85.

Woman) as its key example, before moving to a discussion of satirical writing by an almost entirely unknown writer, Ralf-Günter Krolkiewicz, whose works only reached very limited audiences before they were seized by the Stasi. The chapter also examines critical fiction that circulated amongst underground counter-publics and was smuggled across the border between East and West Germany, focusing on Bernd Wagner's literary prose, and demonstrates how the use of history and myth in Christa Wolf's *Kassandra* enabled a form of revelation within the constraints of the East German publishing landscape. In a final step, we consider the somewhat paradoxical position of Stefan Heym's novel *Collin* which was highly revelatory in its depiction of GDR state surveillance but could only directly reach audiences in the West.

1: We Know, But We Don't Know How We Know...

THE KEY QUESTION asked in this book is what those operating in the literary sphere knew about the State Security Service that observed them, attempted to recruit them as informants, infiltrated their lives, and contributed to restrictions on their publications and performances. We explore how this knowledge was acquired and how it was circulated in the literary sphere. Based primarily on a close reading of transcripts of interviews with Uwe Kolbe, Ekkehard Maaß, Christa Moog, Gabriele Stötzer, Bernd Wagner, and Bettina Wegner, this chapter examines in particular how knowledge of the Stasi is reported in retrospect and—crucially—in light of new knowledge that has been acquired by our interviewees since unification and especially since the opening of the Stasi files. The chapter shows how knowledge about the Stasi was embedded in everyday life and used to develop strategies to combat surveillance. These strategies were based on heuristics or rules of thumb that emerged from knowledge acquired in moments of contact with the Stasi and which circulated in the social environment. Such heuristics—which were often experienced as a kind of intuition—are recognised in retrospect as precarious, uncertain, and even as a threat to the cohesion of social groups. Knowledge gained by rules of thumb contributed to a climate of fear and paranoia in which individuals policed each other's behaviour for signs of betrayal. However, this uncertain knowledge also allowed these writers to navigate a society steeped in distrust and, in many ways, made trust possible. We will explore the role of intuitive knowledge in moments of attempted recruitment, in identifying potential informants, and in understanding the experiences of those who had direct encounters with the Stasi. This chapter thereby provides the foundations for the exploration in chapters 2 and 3 of how critical intellectuals used knowledge about the Stasi to make decisions about whom to trust, to build networks and relationships in the context of surveillance, and to assert agency and resistance to the intrusions of the secret police.

Heuristic Knowledge and Rules of Thumb

Before we explore in detail how intellectuals in the literary sphere recount their knowledge of the Stasi, we need to outline what is meant by “heuristic” or “intuitive” knowledge. As explained in the introduction to this book, knowledge is both social and relational: it is not “out there” to be acquired by anyone with the right skills but constructed in a particular socio-cultural context and in relation to others. Relational knowledge is not sustained only (or even principally) through the use of language (textual or verbal). Knowledge is “what a person employs to interpret and act on the world,” but it includes “feelings (attitudes) as well as information, embodied skills as well as verbal taxonomies and concepts.”¹ In short, knowledge about the Stasi may not always have been explicit: certain behaviours and beliefs may have been practiced or developed seemingly “instinctively” or “intuitively.”² In fact, they were based on a not fully verbalised knowledge about how the MfS worked, how you should act to avoid an open confrontation, what could be said when and where and to whom, cues that indicated who might be an informant and so on.

Work in psychology, particularly by Gerd Gigerenzer, can help us understand this kind of intuitive knowledge.³ Gigerenzer notes that although we tend to think of human intelligence as deliberate, rational, and logical, the greater part of our mental life “is unconscious, based on processes alien to logic: gut feelings, or intuitions.”⁴ Gigerenzer shows how this kind of intelligence—or “heuristic” form of reasoning and knowledge—is adaptive, that is, it is an evolutionary capacity that helps us navigate a complex and unknowable world.⁵ He defines “gut feelings,” “intuition,” or “hunch” as a judgment that is made quickly, for reasons we are not fully aware of, but of which we are certain enough to act upon.⁶ Gut feelings are—Gigerenzer argues—based on “rules of thumb” or “heuristics,” which attempt to identify the most important information

1 Barth, “An Anthropology of Knowledge,” 1.

2 Myers, *Intuition*.

3 We are grateful to Grit Wesser for pointing us towards Gigerenzer’s work in the context of our collaborations within the project *Knowing the Secret Police: Secrecy and Knowledge in East German Society*. Dr Wesser observes similar forms of intuitive knowledge in her analysis of social/workplace networks in the GDR, for example, in her paper “Learning (how) to trust your gut: Suspicion, Stasi, and Socialisation in the former East Germany” at European Association of Social Anthropologists Conference, Belfast UK, July 26–29, 2022.

4 Gigerenzer, *Gut Feelings*, 3.

5 Gigerenzer, *Gut Feelings*; Gigerenzer, *Rationality for Mortals*; Gigerenzer and Gassmeier, “Heuristic Decision Making.”

6 Gigerenzer, *Gut Feelings*, 16.

and ignore the rest.⁷ This kind of heuristic knowledge weaves “together data from the senses using prior knowledge about the world.”⁸ That is, like other forms of knowledge, it is situated within the environment and cultural context in which the individual operates. A heuristic is—for Gigerenzer—“ecologically rational” because it is adapted to the environment.⁹ In our context, the environment of the GDR literary scene, in which questions about whom to trust and how to act in different situations were necessarily based on incomplete information. In this chapter, we focus on moments in the interviews with cultural intellectuals when the interviewee describes this kind of intuition or “rule of thumb.” This allows us to unpack where these “rules” came from, and the role they played in allowing these individuals to trust in a society marked by distrust and to assert agency in the context of an authoritarian state that would seek to restrict it. Where appropriate, we supplement discussion of the interviews with material from the Stasi files and published sources produced by the authors that are the focus of this study.

“Subliminal” Knowledge and Resisting Recruitment

A key moment of contact for many literary intellectuals was an attempt by the Stasi to recruit them as informants. This appears to have been a common experience for many operating in the literary sphere, particularly at the start of their literary careers: as we saw in the introduction to this book, Lutz Rathenow goes so far as to claim that “jeder Oppositionelle in der DDR wurde einmal angeworben” (every oppositional actor was courted by the Stasi at some point).¹⁰ We explore in detail the Stasi archive records relating to the attempted recruitment of our central authors in chapter 2. Here we focus on the author’s recollection of these events in post-Wende interviews and publications. Our emphasis is on how they report knowledge of the Stasi, the role that it played, and where it came from.

Christa Moog was no exception to Rathenow’s statement about the prevalence of efforts to recruit critical writers to the army of Stasi informants. The Stasi attempted to recruit her as an informant when she was just a teenager, but—as we will see—she resisted their advances. The way in which she describes this refusal indicates how fragmented knowledge about the Stasi circulated in social and familial environments, and how

7 Gigerenzer, *Gut Feelings*, 18. Gigerenzer and Gassmeier, “Heuristic Decision Making,” 454.

8 Gigerenzer, *Gut Feelings*, 44.

9 Gigerenzer and Gassmeier, “Heuristic Decision Making,” 457.

10 Rathenow, “Akteneinsicht als Therapie.”

direct experiences with the Stasi could be used to enhance that knowledge, which nonetheless remained incomplete.

In the interview with Windsor, Moog describes in some detail the experience of being approached by the Stasi to act as an informant when she was just fourteen. In January 1966, she received a postcard from the local police office (Volkspolizeikreisamt) with the request to attend “zur Klärung eines Sachverhaltes” (to clarify a matter)—a phrase that was frequently used to summon individuals to meetings with the secret police and which is now notorious in memory of the Stasi.¹¹ Moog describes a lack of knowledge within her family about the meaning of this request and what and who might lie behind it. This lack of knowledge makes the request even more worrying, as they attempt to interpret what might be behind it, focusing on insignificant past misdemeanours. In her recollection, the idea that it might be the Stasi or an attempted recruitment does not even occur to them:

... eine Vorladung zur Polizei war schon was Besonderes. Das war schon so, dass man sich dann total Gedanken machte und ich hab’ dann damals auch—Und meine Eltern hatten, vor allem meine Mutter war auch ganz besorgt, und wir haben alles Mögliche gemutmaßt, dass ich vielleicht so mit dem Fahrrad—Wir sind dann manchmal zu zweit auf’m Fahrrad gefahren ... Und, oder wir sind auch nachts in das Schwimmbad eingebrochen, da in der Katzenaue in Eisenach und sind dann da in der Nacht geschwommen, was natürlich auch ein Verstoß gegen die, also, absoluten Regeln war. Oder irgendwas.¹²

[a summons to the police was something special. It was something that made you really worry and I was also—And my parents, especially my mother, was really worried and we suspected all sorts of things, that maybe I was on my bike—Sometimes we would ride bikes two at a time. ... And, or we would break into the swimming pool at night in Katzenaue in Eisenach and then swim there at night, which of course was also a violation of the, well, absolute rules. Or something.]

Nonetheless, this lack of specific knowledge about Stasi tactics does not mean that Moog and her family were not aware of why they should be afraid of the secret police and the risks of becoming embroiled in its net. When Moog is pressured to sign a declaration that she will spy on her friends, a so-called *Verpflichtungserklärung*, she refuses. Interestingly, she describes the decision not to sign as being informed by an “innere Stimme,” (inner

11 Interview with Christa Moog, August 25, 2021.

12 Interview with Christa Moog, August 25, 2021.

voice) that is a kind of intuitive knowledge whose origins she cannot place: “Und irgendwie hat eine innere Stimme in mir gesagt ‘Du darfst das auf gar keinen Fall unterschreiben’” (and somehow an inner voice inside me said “You must not sign this under any circumstances.”)¹³

Moog says she only feels able to refuse because of the support given to her by her family, which meant she did not feel she had to fear the potential consequences or that her future would be ruined by her refusal. She notes that it was not a lack of knowledge about the Stasi’s power that gave her the strength not to sign; rather it was the resilience provided by her parents. Others—as Moog comments—responded differently to the same knowledge:

Also, das wusste man schon, dass das eigentlich, war das ja der eigentliche Machtapparat im Staat. Und für so einen jungen Menschen konnte das schon total beängstigend sein. Also, ich weiß zum Beispiel, es war ja so, dass einige das ja auch unterschrieben haben, und dann ja auch berichtet haben.¹⁴

[Well, we already knew that that was actually the real power apparatus in the state. And for such a young person that could be really frightening. Well, I know, for example, that some people signed it and then did inform.]

Moog goes on to indicate that her knowledge of the power of and threat posed by the Stasi came also from direct experience with the secret police within her network. Her best friend’s uncle had been imprisoned in the notorious Bautzen prison for several years in the early 1950s before being released into the West: “Und ich wusste, dass der dann wirklich als kranker Mann da raus kam und die Mutter meiner Freundin eben in wahnsinnigen Ängsten um ihn war” (and I knew that he came out of there a really sick man and my friend’s mother was extremely worried for him).¹⁵ Moog adds that although she knew that “mich niemand einsperren würde” (nobody would lock me up), this knowledge of what had happened to others created a kind of visceral response, something “unterschwellig” (subliminal) as she describes it.¹⁶ We might say a kind of intuition conditioned by the knowledge of what the Stasi *could* do, suppressed by knowledge of what they likely *would* do (or rather *would not* do) in this specific situation.

What we see here is a kind of partial knowledge—a lack of detailed information, but a sense of who the Stasi were and the threat they

13 Interview with Christa Moog, August 25, 2021.

14 Interview with Christa Moog, August 25, 2021.

15 Interview with Christa Moog, August 25, 2021.

16 Interview with Christa Moog, August 25, 2021.

posed. In his interview with Windsor, Ekkehard Maaß asserts that everyone knew “dass es die Stasi gab, schon in der Kindheit” (that the Stasi existed, already as a child).¹⁷ His description of what exactly was known is rather general. However, this superficial knowledge informs the development of rules of thumb relating to behaviour: “Also, man wusste sich immer beobachtet. Man wusste immer, dass man aufpassen muss, dass man nicht in irgendeiner Form den Vorwand liefert, dass man verhaftet werden kann” (well, you always knew you were being watched. You always knew that you had to be careful not to provide any kind of excuse for them to arrest you).¹⁸ Moog describes how she was able to use this partial knowledge to make quick decisions and avoid being drawn into the role of a secret informant.

Another decision that Moog makes is to tell her family and her friend about the attempted recruitment (despite having signed a declaration of secrecy). This makes her unusable for the Stasi as an informant and she subsequently becomes the target of their observation. In the moment of contact with a potential informant, the Stasi also make themselves vulnerable to revelation: these moments of contact allowed individuals to gain and disseminate knowledge about the Stasi, how they operate and even what they look like. Moog describes her reaction when a Stasi officer waits for her daily at the school gate: “Ich hatte total Herzklopfen, hab’ dann zu meiner Freundin gesagt ‘Um Gottes Willen, das ist der, da’” (my heart was pounding, then I said to my friend, “oh my god, that’s him over there.”).¹⁹ As we will see, Moog describes how later in her life this partial knowledge about the Stasi—how they behaved and what they looked like—was also used to try to identify Stasi informants within the literary sphere. That is, the knowledge gained through the moment in which the Stasi revealed themselves was used to support rules of thumb or heuristics that aimed to uncover more of their secrets.

Uwe Kolbe also had early direct experiences with the Stasi that provided him with fragmented knowledge about their operations. In the interview with Windsor, Kolbe describes knowledge about the Stasi in a way that resonates with Moog’s description of her “subliminal” or visceral response, that is, as something almost unconscious and stemming from experiences within one’s familial networks:

wenn man überhaupt so “Stasi” sagte, wenn man das Wort überhaupt benutzte, überhaupt dieses Kürzel benutzte, das war ganz schwierig. Also, in den 60er, 70er Jahren, so meiner Kindheits- und Jugenderfahrung, das war ganz schwierig. Da gab es reale Angst,

17 Interview with Ekkehard Maaß, July 30, 2021.

18 Interview with Ekkehard Maaß, July 30, 2021.

19 Interview with Christa Moog, August 25, 2021.

also da gab es sozusagen—wie soll ich sagen?—habituell also etwas. Darüber redete man lieber gar nicht.²⁰

[If you said “Stasi” at all, if you used the word at all, if you used this abbreviation at all, that was very difficult. So in the 60s and 70s, in my childhood and youth, it was very difficult. There was real fear, so there was—how should I put it?—something habitual. People preferred not to talk about it at all.]

Interestingly, Kolbe describes this “habitual” fear as being marked—within his parents’ generation at least—by childhood experiences of National Socialism. What Kolbe is describing here seems to fit very clearly with the idea of the “public secret”; something that is both known and unknown, acknowledged, but also secret.²¹

This knowing and yet not knowing extended to the language used to talk about the secret police in Kolbe’s account. He recalls that the most visible Stasi agents were those that stood around on the street whenever there was an official event attended by “die Bonzen,” that is, high-ranking SED members.

Dann standen so diese markanten Herren mit ihren Täschen. Die hatten so ne Zeit lang solche komischen Täschen in der Hand, ich weiß nicht, was die da drin hatten, das waren so ne Armtäschen, mit so ner Schlaufe, die man so am Arm trug. Oder sie hatten Knirpse so in der Hand ... Als solches nahm man die Stasi schon wahr, aber das war so wie: “Na ja, das sind doch Idioten. Guck mal, die da.” Also, vor denen hatte man irgendwie, das war nicht beängstigend.²²

[Then there were these striking men with their little bags. For a while they had these funny little bags in their hands, I don’t know what they had in them, they were like little arm bags with a loop that you wore on your arm. Or they had collapsible umbrellas in their hands ... In that sense, you could certainly spot the Stasi, but it was like: “Well, they’re idiots. Look at them over there.” So somehow you weren’t ... it wasn’t scary.]

Here we see the development of a “rule of thumb” or “heuristic” in Gigerenzer’s terms, based on experience in the social environment—“if someone is standing around in a doorway with a little bag during demonstrations or other large public events, he is a Stasi officer.” But Kolbe does not recall saying that to those he was with, instead the public secret remains unnamed, they are simply “Idioten” (idiots). We see something

20 Interview with Uwe Kolbe, June 1, 2021.

21 Taussig, *Defacement*, 50.

22 Interview with Uwe Kolbe, June 1, 2021.

similar in Moog's recollection: when she points out the Stasi officer at her school gate, she says simply, "das ist der, da" (that's him over there).

What is particular to Kolbe is that this habitual, intuitive knowledge about the danger of the Stasi emerged in a context in which the Stasi were in his family, that is, his father was a Stasi officer. This is not something that Kolbe knew for certain until the opening of the Stasi files, but it is something that he suspected from a young age.²³ In the interview with Windsor, we see him struggling to articulate where that knowledge came from:

Ich hab's immer vermutet irgendwie, als ich dann so 13, 14 Jahre alt war hab ich das mal vermutet, wenn ich ihm mal begegnete, weil er hatte ... es gab so merkwürdige Dinge um ihn herum, ja, sodass das schon zu merken war: "Na ja, der ist doch wahrscheinlich ..." ²⁴

[I always suspected it somehow, when I was about 13, 14 years old I suspected it when I met him, because he had ... there were such strange things about him, yes, so that it was already noticeable: "Well, he's probably ..."]

Even the Stasi files cannot reveal everything about his father. In particular, they do not tell him the extent to which he influenced events in his son's life: questions about the Stasi's manipulations in Kolbe's life remain unanswered even after the opening of the files. In his post-Wende accounts, Kolbe notes that the files reveal that his father was not only a Stasi officer, but also formally an IM deployed to report on his son.²⁵ However, Kolbe's short text, "Die Sache mit V." (The Thing with V.), in particular, is shot through with language that indicates uncertainty and gaps in knowledge. The narrator repeats (a variation on): "Ich kann die Sache mit V. nicht vollständig erzählen, weil ich nicht immer dabei war" (I cannot give a complete account of the thing with V., because I was not always there).²⁶ Like Moog, Kolbe was subject to an attempted recruitment at a young age—when he was seventeen. We once again see him struggling to articulate his memories when reflecting on whether his father was behind that attempt: "Ich musste damals schon vermuten, dass das was—und habe es auch vermutet—, dass das irgendwie mit ihm zu tun hat" (I must have already suspected back then that that—and I also suspected it—that that somehow had something to do with him).²⁷

23 For a post-Wende account of Kolbe's suspicions about his father and the confirmation of those suspicions after the Wende, see: Kolbe, "Die Sache mit V."

24 Interview with Uwe Kolbe, June 1, 2021.

25 Kolbe, *Die Situation*, 43; Kolbe, "Die Sache mit V.," 154.

26 Kolbe, "Die Sache mit V.," 151 and 154.

27 Interview with Uwe Kolbe, June 1, 2021.

Kolbe's early confrontation with the Stasi began when he was invited to a seminar for young poets at the *Freie Deutsche Jugend* (FDJ, Free German Youth), the SED youth organisation. He was puzzled at the time as to why he had been invited, as he was already beginning to voice politically uncomfortable ideas. He suspects his father had a hand in it, but adds: "ich weiß es eigentlich bis heute nicht" (I actually don't know to this day).²⁸ When Kolbe returns from the seminar, his mother reports that someone from the Department of Culture in the Berlin Magistrate had visited and said they wanted to do something with his poems. He recalls that she was pleased about this apparent external recognition, even though she had shown little interest in his literary work previously. Despite his father's profession, his mother seems to have little awareness of what an approach from the Stasi might look like (noting that Kolbe's mother and father were separated).²⁹ It should be added in this context that the Stasi record suggests that Kolbe's mother and stepfather were, in fact, a little more circumspect about the visit and Kolbe only felt comfortable inviting the officers in on their return visit because his parents were not at home.³⁰ That return visit happened a little while later, when the man appeared at their door and wanted to speak directly to Kolbe. He introduced himself as being from the Magistrate. But, Kolbe recalls, he knew instantly that this was not true: "es fiel mir nämlich damals schon auf—natürlich wusste ich relativ rasch, wer die sind, dass das Stasi war. Das zum Beispiel wusste ich ganz schnell" (I already realised back then—of course I knew relatively quickly who they were, that it was the Stasi. I knew that very quickly, for example).³¹ Kolbe articulates that it was the man's behaviour that gave him away, that is, that he asked questions completely unrelated to his poetry and wanted copies of manuscripts. In this sense, we see once again that the Stasi risked revealing themselves at this moment of contact.

Nonetheless, the certainty that Kolbe expresses "natürlich wusste ich ... dass das Stasi war" (of course I knew ... that it was the Stasi) dissipates as Kolbe continues in his recollection. He remembers that he gave them the manuscripts and that he found the explanation that they wanted to promote young authors at least "halbwegs glaubhaft" (half believable). It is only on the second visit that it was "ziemlich sonnenklar" (pretty clear as day) that they were not who they said they were. Despite this, Kolbe agrees to attend a third meeting, this time in the Department of Culture at

28 Interview with Uwe Kolbe, June 1, 2021.

29 See chapter 2 for a discussion of the contradictory accounts of this meeting in the Stasi files.

30 Report on a conversation with Uwe Kolbe, dated September 16, 1975.

31 Interview with Uwe Kolbe, June 1, 2021.

the Magistrate. It is at this meeting that the Stasi officers (literally) lay their cards on the table:

da machte der dann auf, als ich zur bestellten Zeit da war, und dann holten die tatsächlich die berühmten Klappkarten, von denen man ja immer gehört hatte. Also, jeder wusste, dass die sich mit irgendwelchen Klappkarten an ner Kette, dass die sowas haben, ja? Und siehe da! Sie holten wirklich, der Ältere holte wirklich sowas aus der Tasche, sagte irgendwie: “Hauptmann so-und-so”—ich glaube, es war irgendwie vom Dienstgrad her Hauptmann So-und-so—“wie Sie sich bestimmt schon gedacht haben, sind wir eben vom Ministerium, vom Ministerium für Staatssicherheit ...”³²

[They opened the door when I arrived at the specified time, and then they actually brought out the famous folding ID cards you’d always heard about. So everyone knew that they had something like that with folding cards on a chain, right? And lo and behold! They really did, the older man really did take something like that out of his pocket and somehow said: “Captain so-and-so”—I think it was somehow Captain so-and-so in terms of rank—“as you’ve probably already guessed, we’re from the Ministry, the Ministry of State Security ...”]

Kolbe describes this as both a moment of revelation and a moment of confirmation: the Stasi reveal themselves, but at the same time confirm existing stereotypes and stories about how they dress and behave. We see a diminishing level of certainty in Kolbe’s recollection, perhaps reflecting the complex workings of memory. From his perspective in 2021, it seems to Kolbe that it was obvious that these individuals were Stasi officers; however, as he recounts his actual behaviour at the time, there is an acknowledgement that this knowledge was intuited, but uncertain.

Bernd Wagner was older than Moog and Kolbe when the Stasi approached him to work as an informant and already active in the unofficial literary sphere. In the spring of 1983, when Wagner was 34 years old, Wagner submitted an application to the Writers Union to travel to Norway and West Berlin. A few days later, he was visited by an MfS officer who stated that he was charged with Wagner’s security and proceeded to ask for information about friends and acquaintances. Wagner writes about the attempted recruitment in the 1993 article “Stasi-Gift” (Stasi Poison)³³ and also recalls the series of events in the interview with Windsor in 2020. In both accounts, we see a complex interweaving of knowledge and naivety. Wagner recalls that he let the officers into his

32 Interview with Uwe Kolbe, June 1, 2021.

33 Wagner, “Stasi-Gift.”

home because he was not aware of his rights, “die man selbst als DDR-Bürger hatte” (that we had, even as citizens of the GDR).³⁴ He refuses to answer any questions relating to his personal contacts and throws the man out of his home, refusing also to sign a declaration of secrecy and asserting that he will most definitely speak about the visit to his friends. This act of defiance was not, however, based on knowledge of the aim of the visit. Wagner states in both the article and interview that he did not realise that it was an attempted recruitment until after speaking to friends: “Aber letztendlich war mir da immer noch nicht klar, dass das ne Anwerbung, der Versuch einer Anwerbung als Spitzel war. So, das ist mir erst klar geworden, als ich dann mit meinen Freunden drüber geredet habe” (But in the end I still didn’t realise that it was a recruitment, an attempt to recruit me as an informer. I only realised that when I talked to my friends about it).³⁵ Armed with this knowledge, he refuses any further conversations with the Stasi when the officer returns two days later and writes letters of complaint to both Erich Mielke and then President of the Writers Union (and former informant), Hermann Kant (see chapter 3).³⁶

In contrast to Moog and Kolbe, intuitive knowledge, or rules of thumb do not appear to play much of a role in Wagner’s ability to resist the attempt of the Stasi to recruit him as an informant. Notably, unlike Moog (on receipt of the invitation to the police office) or Kolbe’s summons to the Magistrate, Wagner did not need to intuit the identity of the man who appeared at his door: the Stasi officer presented himself as such, including with his name and ID. Wagner presents himself as resolutely and uncompromisingly defiant against the very nature and activity of the secret police—something that is confirmed by the files³⁷—the purpose of their visit is therefore immaterial to that initial interaction. However, those in his circle with whom he speaks about the visit clearly do use heuristic knowledge to identify the reason for the visit: they have no more information about it than Wagner but use the clues he provides them to apply a rule of thumb that such visits are likely attempts at recruitment. We can see this as a further example of how heuristic knowledge was built on experiences within the social environment and circulated within it.

Particularly in his account in “Stasi-Gift,” Wagner makes clear the extent to which the files have helped fill in the gaps in his memory of the attempted recruitment and given it structure: “die Akten geben meiner Vergangenheit Chronologie und logische Strukturen zurück” (the files

34 Wagner, “Stasi-Gift,” 8.

35 Interview with Bernd Wagner, October 20, 2020.

36 Wagner, “Stasi-Gift,” 8–9. See Gallinat, “Power and Vulnerability,” for further examples of resisting recruitment.

37 See Wagner, “Stasi-Gift,” 9.

return to my past a chronology and logical structure).³⁸ However, as for Kolbe, gaps remain. In particular, Wagner wondered then and continues to wonder after reading the files why the Stasi thought he might be open to the attempted recruitment. In “Stasi-Gift,” he reports his feelings on first reading the Stasi files:

Beruhigend an der Lektüre dieses Berichts war für mich lediglich, daß mein Gedächtnis, auch wenn es gern verwechselt oder vergißt, scheinbar nicht dazu neigt zu verklären. Viel stärker war das gleiche Gefühl der Beunruhigung, das mich schon kurz nach dem Besuch erregt hatte: Was hast du getan, daß die Stasi auf eine solche Idee kommt, es mit einer Anwerbung zu versuchen?³⁹

[The only thing I found reassuring about reading this report was that my memory, even if it likes to confuse or forget, does not seem to have a tendency to distort. Much stronger was the same feeling of uneasiness that had troubled me shortly after the visit. What did you do to give the Stasi the idea of trying to recruit you?]

He adds that “die Akten beantworten diese Fragen nicht” (the files do not answer these questions), but speculates whether it was the false report provided by one informant—IM “Kant” (the publisher Fritz-Georg Voigt)—that he had been coerced into signing the petition against the Biermann expatriation, that is, that his opposition was not genuine.⁴⁰ However, this remains speculation: the unknown—the apparent mismatch between the Stasi’s perception of him and his perception of himself—remains frustratingly unknown.

Finding the Stasi: Rules of Thumb and Knowing whom to Suspect

The accounts of the role of intuitive knowledge or rules of thumb in resisting recruitment show how the experience of direct contact with the Stasi—either personal experience or within familial or professional networks—helped individuals identify Stasi officers. However, for many individuals, the greater threat to the cohesion of the network and their professional and personal well-being was the potential presence of informants. Informants were described by the Stasi itself as the greatest weapon in combatting subversive activity: they were, in Lewis’s terms, a “central piece in the Stasi armory.”⁴¹ While Stasi officers posed a threat to

38 Wagner, “Stasi-Gift,” 8.

39 Wagner, “Stasi-Gift,” 9.

40 Wagner, “Stasi-Gift,” 9–10.

41 Lewis, *A State of Secrecy*, xiv.

the literary scene from a position outside it, *Inoffizielle Mitarbeiter* were often recruited from within the scene or as individuals able to infiltrate it. This created an environment of uncertainty in terms of whom one could trust and with what knowledge: in this sense it was part of the “public secret” of the Stasi. Individuals knew that there were informants and that those informants represented a threat, but they could not (usually) know who those informants were. The function of trust in the creation and dissemination of knowledge will be discussed more fully in chapter 2. Here, we want to explore how our interviews recall using intuitive—heuristic—knowledge to navigate this “known unknown.”

What we see in the interview is, once again, the development of rules of thumb—based on personal experience or experiences of others in the network—that were used to inform decisions on who could and could not be trusted. For example, Moog remembers that the apparent receipt of privileges was viewed as particularly suspicious: for example, if a friend or acquaintance suddenly started driving a Wartburg or Skoda—cars that the average person had to wait decades to purchase—they were instantly suspected of working for the Stasi: “Dann konnte das leicht sein, dass derjenige dann, dass der Verdacht aufkam, der ist bestimmt bei der Stasi” (then it could easily be that the person was suspected of being in the Stasi).⁴² Or if a painter was suddenly able to show their works, despite the highly controlled public sphere, Moog admits to thinking: “Ach, der kann ausstellen, da seine Sachen. Bestimmt ist der mit der Stasi” (“oh so, he can exhibit his material. He must be with the Stasi”).⁴³ These rules of thumb were built from the knowledge gained from direct contact with the Stasi (as in the attempted recruitment described by Moog) and through knowledge dissemination within literary networks. In both cases, the knowledge was partial, unreliable, and frequently wrong: as Moog notes, “das traf dann sicher auch manchmal Leute, so ganz zu Unrecht traf die das” (certainly sometimes people were targeted, so completely unjustifiably targeted).⁴⁴

Bettina Wegner similarly indicates the importance of gut feelings and rules of thumb for acquiring and circulating (partial) knowledge of the Stasi. In retrospect, in the interview with Windsor, Wegner claims to have known a great deal about the Stasi's operations, but recognises at the same time the flawed nature of that knowledge:

Wir wussten eigentlich ganz gut Bescheid über alles. Wir haben in manchen Dingen manches überschätzt und manches unterschätzt. Dass, zum Beispiel, die [Stasi] für den Tag X 'n Lager im Kopf

42 Interview with Christa Moog, August 25, 2021.

43 Interview with Christa Moog, August 25, 2021.

44 Interview with Christa Moog, August 25, 2021.

hatten, und schon [im Kopf hatten], also, welche Leute dann, am Tag X in ein Lager kommen, dit hätten wir ihnen nich' zugetraut. Aber ansonsten haben wir gedacht, dass es viel mehr IMs gibt, also Zuarbeiter, als es tatsächlich waren.⁴⁵

[We actually knew about everything. We overestimated some things and underestimated others. That, for example, they [the Stasi] had a camp in mind for Day X [i.e., in the event of an uprising], and already [had in mind], that is, which people would go into a camp on Day X, we would not have thought them capable of that. But apart from that, we thought that there were far more IMs, that is operatives, than there actually were.]

Wegner thus asserts that while those operating in the unofficial literary sphere may have underestimated the full extent of the Stasi's operations and the danger that the organisation posed to individuals, they suspected more people of being informants than was actually the case. In this context, Paul Betts cites Jurek Becker as noting that "one of the Stasi's greatest strengths lay in the fact that one often presumed its representatives to be present when in reality this wasn't the case."⁴⁶

Indeed, Maaß points towards both the regularity with which these rules of thumb were applied and the potential threat they posed. He states that they tried not to be suspicious of one another, but that:

... es kam mehr als einmal vor, dass jemand zu mir kam und sagte, "Du, Ekke, der ist bei der Stasi, den laden wir nicht mehr ein." Und dann sagte ich, "Hey, woher weißt Du das? Hat er's Dir gesagt?"—"Nee."—"Na, dann kannst Du's doch nicht wissen. Warum verbreitest Du hier solche Gerüchte? Das ist doch gerade die Methode der Stasi, dass sie uns auseinanderbringen wollen."⁴⁷

[... it happened more than once that someone came to me and said, "Hey, Ekke, he's with the Stasi, we're not inviting him anymore." And then I said, "Hey, how do you know that? Did he tell you?"—"Nope."—"Well, then you can't know. Why are you spreading such rumours here? That's exactly the intention of the Stasi, that they want to tear us apart."]

What we see here is not a denial of the existence of informants in the literary sphere, or even that a particular individual might have been an informant; rather, Maaß recognises the partial and unreliable nature of

45 Interview with Bettina Wegner, August 23, 2021.

46 Betts, *Within Walls*, 38.

47 Interview with Ekkehard Maaß, July 30, 2021.

what was asserted by the interlocutor as “knowledge.” Maaß identifies that fragmented, heuristic, intuitive knowledge as a threat, where others are attempting to use it as an asset to determine who might be trusted. In an open letter to Anderson, published in the *Berliner Zeitung* in 2002 and republished in the 2017 collection *Sprachzeiten* (Speaking Times), Maaß states: “Wir verboten uns Stasiverdächtigungen, weil es eine Methode der Stasi war, Gerüchte auszustreuen” (we forbade ourselves from making Stasi allegations because it was a Stasi method of spreading rumours).⁴⁸ We might ask to what extent post-Wende knowledge of the Stasi’s methods are mixed with personal memory here; however, this statement suggests that the decision to “forbid” intuitive knowledge was also founded on knowledge about those methods. A Stasi report by IM “David Menzer” (Sascha Anderson), also republished in *Sprachzeiten*, adds a further dimension. In it, “David Menzer” indicates that Maaß saw the purpose of the literary events organised in his home as being, “jungen Schreibenden die Möglichkeit zu geben, vor einem größeren Publikum zu lesen und außerdem ihnen die Möglichkeit einzuräumen, sich untereinander kennenzulernen” (to give young writers the opportunity to read in front of a larger audience and also to give them the chance to get to know each other).⁴⁹ Both motives are about the acquisition of knowledge: disseminating knowledge of new literary texts and creating interpersonal knowledge between those present. Maaß’s post-Wende accounts suggest that he recognised that the mistrust and suspicion that heuristic or intuitive knowledge might foment risked being disruptive to the creation of community and networks that were in themselves necessary for protective knowledge to circulate.

But what were the “rules of thumb,” or heuristics used by individuals in the literary scene to determine who might be working with the Stasi? The following passage in the interview with Wegner can provide some initial insights in this regard. Wegner was asked by a young man after a concert in a church whether she thought that the Stasi had been present:

Und da hab’ ick gesagt “Naja klar, geh ich mal von aus, ick bin davon überzeugt. Man sagt doch, jeder Vierte ist dabei.” [Und ich] nehm’ den Finger und zeige “Ein, zwei, drei, vier,” und bleibe auf einem jungen Mädchen mit dem Finger, und sag’ zu ihr “Na, dann bist Du’s.” Und tatsächlich [*laughs*], ick finde ’nen Bericht: “Sie hat mich dekonspiriert. Ich kann nicht mehr weiter machen.” [*laughs*]⁵⁰

48 Maaß, “Ein Betroffener über die Stasi-Mitarbeit von Sasha Anderson,” 141.

49 “Bericht des IM ‘David Menzer,’” in Böthig, *Sprachzeiten*, 96.

50 Interview with Bettina Wegner, August 23, 2021.

[And then I said “Well, of course, I’m convinced of it. They say one in four is in the firm.” [And I] take my finger and point “One, two, three, four” and I land on a young girl with my finger and say to her, “Well, then it’s you.” And sure enough [*laughs*], I find a report: “She’s outed me. I can’t carry on.” [*laughs*]]

Although Wegner clearly views this episode as a humorous coincidence, her recounting of it reveals the intersection of community-based knowledge and rules of thumb. The knowledge circulating in her network is that one in four people are in the Stasi—an overestimation as Wegner admits later in the interview. She applies this rule of thumb in her assumption that there were therefore informants at the concert and the files later confirm the accuracy of this assumption. The unexpected part is that the heuristic on this occasion also allowed her to identify exactly who one of those informants was—something that Wegner herself did not expect and did not know before the opening of the files.

Wegner appears to recall this incident as something playful and as an example of the artist asserting agency by refusing to be intimidated by knowledge of the presence of the Stasi and potential threat that they posed. However, it is also clear from the anecdote that the presence of informants was a topic of discussion within the network and that the act of informing was viewed as morally reprehensible. Gigerenzer and Gassmeier note that “an example of a moral heuristic is an intuitive search rule that looks for information that could reveal whether one has been cheated in a social contract.”⁵¹ Rules of thumb relating to who might be an informant could be understood as just such a form of “moral heuristic.” In the interview, in a similar way to Maaß, Wegner states that she tried not to suspect people of being informants without evidence, but that “dann kam irgend’n Verdacht auf, weil einer so sich verhalten hat” (then you started to become suspicious, because someone behaved in a particular way).⁵² For Moog, we have seen that such indicators included having a new car, or being allowed to exhibit your artwork. When asked by Windsor what kinds of behaviours would arouse suspicion for her, Wegner elaborates: not taking part in conversations on particular topics, not being present when arrests or interrogations took place, or simply being quieter than others. Like Moog, Wegner notes that these forms of knowledge were uncertain and unreliable, but also that the network relied on these kinds of gut feelings to operate in an environment where other forms of knowledge were not available: “Also, wenn einer ’n Verdacht hatte—manchmal stimmte es ja leider auch—dann hat er auch den anderen dit gesagt” (so, if one of us had a suspicion—sometimes it was true, unfortunately—then

51 Gigerenzer and Gassmeier, “Heuristic Decision Making,” 473.

52 Interview with Bettina Wegner, August 23, 2021.

he told the others as well).⁵³ Indeed, reluctance to share experiences of the Stasi with others in the network—for example, following a search of one's home or arrest—was another heuristic that others might use to determine if one was an informant: “Also, man hat sich untereinander immer allet erzählt. Und wer nicht so viel erzählte, der hätte schon unter Verdacht fallen können” (well, we always told each other everything. And anyone who didn't share so much could be viewed as suspicious).⁵⁴

In contrast to Gigerenzer's adaptive heuristics, the rules of thumb applied to determine who might be an informant were highly unreliable: like Moog, Wegner notes that innocent people were suspects, and some of the guilty were not suspected at all. Nonetheless, these heuristics appear to have been drawn from knowledge (or at least belief) within the network about how the Stasi operated (they are in churches, they infiltrate friendship groups) and to have played a role in allowing that network to persist in a context of high uncertainty. Wegner's recollections suggest that such rules of thumb worked to provide the sense that the secrecy of the Stasi was penetrable, that the unknown—who was an informant—could be partially known. It is not clear if the reliability of the knowledge created through these heuristics was greater than would be provided by the game of chance in Wegner's story of the informant in the church concert. However, according to Wegner's account, it provided people with a way of navigating the unknowability of this aspect of their environment. Wegner states that she tried not to allow these gut feelings to affect her behaviour, but others adapted their actions, paying attention to what they said and to whom. In her interview with Windsor, Gabriele Stötzer states that one of the “Gesetze” (laws or rules) followed in the underground arts scene was that you could only meet in private apartments or in the church.⁵⁵ The concept of “Gesetze” speaks directly to the idea of a heuristic built not on detailed knowledge of who might be an informant, or the extent to which the Stasi might already know about an event, or even be interested in it, but on a generalised understanding of how the Stasi operated constructed on the basis of the experiences of those in the network or scene.

The rules of thumb about who was an informant may therefore have helped individuals navigate uncertainty, even if unreliably so. However, Wegner's account also shows us that the Stasi were able to take advantage of this unstable knowledge to foment distrust. In the interview, Wegner recalls that for a period of time her then-husband, Klaus Schlesinger, was permitted to travel while she (and many other critical intellectuals) was

53 Interview with Bettina Wegner, August 23, 2021.

54 Interview with Bettina Wegner, August 23, 2021.

55 Interview with Gabriele Stötzer, June 14, 2021.

not. She notes that this aroused suspicions that Schlesinger was working for the Stasi:

Und Klaus durfte dann nach Amerika fahren. Also, die haben abgefahren, die Schiene, er darf alles, kriegt reisen, er darf reisen. Woraus dann auch ein Gerücht kam, er könnte vielleicht dabei sein, also IM sein, was ihn sehr verletzt hat.⁵⁶

[And Klaus was then allowed to travel to America. So, they went off track, he was allowed to do everything, he got to travel, he was allowed to travel. And then there was a rumour that he might be involved, that he might be an IM, which really hurt him.]

Later in the interview, Wegner states that this was a deliberate attempt by the Stasi to generate distrust of Schlesinger within the network. We know from other accounts that starting rumours that one or more members of a group were Stasi informants was a common method of “Zersetzung,” that is, the process of trying to undermine the group from within.⁵⁷ It was also one of the specific operative measures set out by the Stasi for OV “Schreiberling.”⁵⁸ Wegner’s account shows how the Stasi could get a similar result by reflecting the heuristics that the network used to identify informants without actually starting the rumour themselves. In an environment of uncertainty, if the rule of thumb states “someone allowed to travel despite critical activity may be an informant,” then granting someone permission to travel even when they are not an informant is likely to foster mistrust for that person.

This manipulation points towards a further kind of gut feeling related to the operations of the Stasi and the infiltration of the secret police in their professional and personal lives. Wegner discusses the *Eintopf* (Stewpot) evenings in the Haus der jungen Talente (House of Young Talent), at which participants were invited to read their poetry. Wegner notes that it became increasingly difficult to organise these evenings and that they were put under pressure to vet the poetry before it was read (something she refused to do). The pressure came from the management of the Haus, but, Wegner notes: “Wer dann dahinter stand, wusste man. Dit mein ick, jeder wusste, es is’ die Stasi” (we knew who was behind it. I mean, everyone knew it was the Stasi).⁵⁹ Wegner does not elaborate on how they knew it was the Stasi, suggesting that this was a hunch or kind of intuitive knowledge based on collective prior experience within the network. In contrast, other manipulations were and remain

56 Interview with Bettina Wegner, August 23, 2021.

57 Betts, *Within Walls*, 40–41. See also Gallinat, “Power and Vulnerability.”

58 “Plan for the long-term political-operative ‘Zersetzung’ of OV ‘Schreiberling.’”

59 Interview with Bettina Wegner, August 23, 2021.

unknowable, even after the opening of the Stasi files. Wegner recounts reading her files with Schlesinger, after the Wende and long after their divorce. They learned that one of the aims of the Stasi's 'Zersetzung' was to destroy their marriage: "[da] hat der Klaus gesagt, 'Mensch, Tina, vielleicht haben die daran mitgewirkt,' und da hab' ick gesagt [*laughs*] 'Ne, Klaus, das haben wir ganz alleine geschafft'" (then Klaus said, "Gosh, Tina, maybe they were involved," and I said [*laughs*] "No, Klaus, we did it all by ourselves").⁶⁰

This lack of certainty even after the opening of the files is similar to Kolbe's continued uncertainty regarding the role of his father and Wagner's puzzlement at why the Stasi thought he might consider becoming an informant. Kolbe's description of his knowledge about who was an informant is similarly ambivalent. On the one hand, he states of the "Spitzel" (snitch) in his (undefined) group in the army: "da haben sie einen Spitzel—und das war deutlich—, sie haben einen Spitzel in diese Gruppe gesetzt, sozusagen für mich [*laughs*] ein Leibspitzel ... Der Witz war, dass das eigentlich irgendwie jeder wusste" (they put a snitch—and that was clear—they put a snitch in this group, a personal snitch for me, so to speak [*laughs*] ... The joke was that somehow everyone actually knew it).⁶¹ Here we see him expressing certainty—not only he, but in fact "everyone" knew that this individual was an informant. We might ask if this certainty in retrospect is in part a result of the fact that the informant revealed himself on their final mission: "Hat er mir beim letzten Ausgang erzählt, dass er da jeweils immer über mich berichten musste und so weiter ... Dann haben wir ein Bier getrunken und okay. War die Sache erledigt, ja" (he told me on the last outing that he always had to report on me and so on ... Then we had a beer and it was okay. That was the end of it, yes).⁶² This is a common theme in our interviews: if informants were open and honest about their behaviour, they could be forgiven, it was the secrecy that destroyed relationships.

When asked by Windsor how he could be so certain at the time that this individual was an informant, Kolbe says it related to his behaviour: "Der war, der hat so Dinge gemacht, der war nicht wie die andern [*laughs*]" (he was, he did things, he was not like the others [*laughs*]).⁶³ This included going to bed early, rather than staying up to play cards and drink illegal schnaps—a kind of rule of thumb that those displaying conformist behaviour were to be distrusted. It is when he describes this rule of thumb in the interview that Kolbe describes as uncertain knowledge something that he had previously described as certain. Where previously,

60 Interview with Bettina Wegner, August 23, 2021.

61 Interview with Uwe Kolbe, June 1, 2021.

62 Interview with Uwe Kolbe, June 1, 2021.

63 Interview with Uwe Kolbe, June 1, 2021.

as we have seen, he stated that “jeder wusste” (everyone knew) that this individual was an informant, he now states: “Es war, im Grunde war es nur ein Verdacht. Es war ... Er tat Dinge, die man so nicht tut. Er hat mit den andern sich nicht gemein gemacht und gleichzeitig hat er immer, hat er auch blöde Nachfragen gestellt. Also, er war auffällig, ja?” (it was, basically it was just a suspicion. It was ... He did things that you don’t do. He didn’t make fun of the others and at the same time he always asked stupid questions. So, he was conspicuous, right?).⁶⁴ As in the discussion of the attempted recruitment, we see Kolbe revising his statement of certainty as he is asked to explain that certainty. This speaks to this knowledge as a kind of intuition or heuristic, developed in the context of the environment in which Kolbe and his colleagues were working and used to navigate a society steeped in mistrust. Rules of thumb that made sense at the time no longer make quite as much sense to Kolbe when he narrates them from the position of the present. Indeed, Kolbe comes to realise that the process of the interview itself has made him realise how little he really knew:

Ich finde, dass man eigentlich, wenn Sie [Windsor] immer so nachfragen ... begreift man eigentlich, dass man verdammt wenig wusste. Also ich wusste verdammt wenig. ... Der große schwarze Mann, ja, das irgendwas ... Sozusagen der Ledermantel, der Schlapphut. Irgendwie. Also irgendwas ... etwas, von dem man—ich jedenfalls—viel zu wenig wusste.⁶⁵

[I find that as you [Windsor] keep asking these questions ... you actually realise that you knew damn little. Well, I knew damn little ... The big dark figure, yes, that something ... The leather coat, so to speak, the floppy hat. Somehow. So something ... something you knew far too little about—at least I did.]

Indeed, these rules of thumb were at best precarious knowledge. As in the case of Moog and Wegner, Kolbe admits that he suspected many innocent people of having worked as informants and failed to recognise some of the most prolific informants in the Prenzlauer Berg scene. Kolbe states: “Meine Nase war schlecht ... auf dem Gebiet. Das hat nicht funktioniert. Ich hab die falschen Leute verdächtigt und die richtigen nicht verdächtigt” (my nose was poor in this area. It didn’t work. I suspected the wrong people and did not suspect the right ones).⁶⁶ We see from his story about the informant in his army troop that this is an exaggeration; however, it speaks to an ambivalence in Kolbe’s account. Kolbe says:

64 Interview with Uwe Kolbe, June 1, 2021.

65 Interview with Uwe Kolbe, June 1, 2021.

66 Interview with Uwe Kolbe, June 1, 2021.

Ich hab Leute verdächtigt, nur weil sie'n bestimmten Habitus hatten. Also, irgendwie ... weiß ich, einer ... irgendwie einer zu glatte Haare, zu weiß der Teufel, zu ordentlich angezogen und plötzlich ... Also, ganz blöd, ja. Wirklich auch Kollegen, also, andere junge Schriftsteller und Leute, wo ich dann ... also, wo man so ne Reserve hatte einfach, und die Reserve war eben nicht da, wo sie hätte sein müssen.⁶⁷

[I suspected people just because they had a certain habitus. Somehow ... I know, someone ... somehow someone with too straight hair, too God knows what, too neatly dressed and suddenly ... Well, quite stupidly, yes. Colleagues too, really, other young writers and people where I then ... well, where you simply had a reserve, and the reserve wasn't where it should have been.]

Knowledge that felt certain at the time now appears to be based on shaky ground and unreliable heuristics that were ultimately harmful or “unangenehm” (unpleasant). In his 1994 text, *Die Situation* (The Situation), Kolbe states that he owes a personal apology to those people he suspected, who turned out not only not to have been informants, but to have been victims of Stasi observation themselves: “Das Mißtrauen, es fraß mehr oder minder in uns allen. Wir hätten *schöner* miteinander leben können” (the mistrust ate away at all of us to a greater or lesser extent. We could have lived together better).⁶⁸

While Wagner does not use language that suggests intuition or rules of thumb when it came to resisting the recruitment attempt, in his discussion of Stasi informants within this scene, this kind of knowledge does appear to have played a role. Regarding the prolific and high-profile informant, Sascha Anderson, Wagner recalls that he did not suspect Anderson: “ich wusste nichts, ob er bei der Stasi war, oder so—wer sollte das auch wissen, es gab auch keine, keine direkten Gerüchte oder sowas” (I didn't know whether he was in the Stasi or anything—how could anyone know that, there were no direct rumours or anything like that).⁶⁹ However, he nonetheless wanted nothing to do with Anderson, something that he also struggles to explain in retrospect: “ich hab gesagt mit Sascha Anderson mach ich nichts. So. Ich wusste nicht warum, aber mit dem wollte ich nichts machen” (I said I wouldn't do anything with Sascha Anderson. I don't know why, but I didn't want to do anything with him).⁷⁰ There is a risk here of projecting knowledge gained since the opening of the Stasi

67 Interview with Uwe Kolbe, June 1, 2021.

68 Kolbe, *Die Situation*, 23 n.16.

69 Interview with Bernd Wagner, October 20, 2020.

70 Interview with Bernd Wagner, October 20, 2020.

files back onto what were simply personal animosities; however, Wagner is not alone in finding Anderson in some way untrustworthy, despite his deep entanglement in the unofficial scene and his own public confrontations with the state (including his arrest and imprisonment).⁷¹ Stötzer describes the animosity between herself and Anderson and her knowledge at the time that Anderson was attempting to isolate her, forbidding anyone to speak to her because she was a “Versagerin” (loser) and “furchtbare Emanze” (dreadful women’s libber). She states that she sought out others who avoided working with Anderson, including Kolbe, Wagner and Jan Faktor.⁷²

Where Wagner’s dislike of Anderson is described as intuitive—that is, as based on an instinctive response rather than articulable knowledge—Wagner is able to explain in more detail why he suspected a woman who had been “ununterbrochen an meiner Seite” (stuck to my side) for a week during a particularly intense period of activity relating to the magazine *Mikado*—including preparations for a demonstration against the demolition of gasometers in Prenzlauer Berg—and had subsequently disappeared. He notes that she was one of only three people who had access to an edition of the magazine that had found its way onto the desk of Kolbe’s (Stasi officer) father. He tells Windsor that he wrote about the woman in a text focusing on his experiences with the Stasi more broadly. In the work, Wagner plays on the woman’s name—Anastasia—to make the pun “Anna-Stasia.” He recounts that the woman approached him at a reading, furious at the accusations in the text and asserting her innocence:

... sie hat gesagt, sie hätte da überhaupt nichts damit zu tun, und ich konnte dann nichts anderes ihr erwidern als, “aber du hast dich so benommen,” wie sich eigentlich nur ein Stasi-Spitzel, oder ja, wie sich ein Stasi-Spitzel benimmt. Also, du warst an meiner Seite, in diesem Moment, als es darum ging, mich zu überwachen, während dieser ganzen Demonstrationszeit und so weiter, du bist danach verschwunden, dieses Heft ist durch dich in die Hände der Stasi gekommen, also was soll ich anderes vermuten.⁷³

[She said she had nothing to do with it at all, and then I couldn’t think of anything to say to her other than, “but you behaved like that,” like only a Stasi spook, or yes, like a Stasi spook behaves. So you were by my side, at that moment when I was under surveillance, during the whole demonstration period and so on, you disappeared afterwards, this magazine edition came into the hands of the Stasi through you, so what else can I assume?]

71 For a (deeply problematic) account of Anderson’s complicity with the Stasi see his autobiographical text. Anderson, *Sascha Anderson*.

72 Interview with Gabriele Stötzer, June 14, 2021.

73 Interview with Bernd Wagner, October 20, 2020.

What we see here is once again knowledge built on the basis of an individual's behaviour. "Anastasia"'s assertion of innocence challenges the certainty of this knowledge: a certainty that seems confirmed by Wagner's inclusion of the episode in his text. The assumed knowledge in this particular case turns out to be wrong; however, Wagner refuses to remove the detail from his text: "Weil ich es geschrieben habe aus der Bewusstseinslage damals, also wie ich es vermuten musste, und es ja auch wichtig war, unsere ständigen Zweifel, und das Misstrauen untereinander, und die Verdächtigungen, also zu artikulieren, in denen wir gelebt haben" (Because I wrote it from what I understood at the time, as I had to make assumptions, and it was also important to articulate our constant doubts, and the mistrust among ourselves, and the suspicions with which we lived).⁷⁴ This statement is a clear articulation of the challenges and benefits of intuitive or heuristic knowledge about the Stasi in the GDR. Uncertain knowledge, based on "assumptions" or rules of thumb had to be used to make sense of a world so deeply infiltrated by the "known unknown" of the secret police. That uncertain knowledge allowed the development of relationships of trust and yet also fostered mistrust and unfounded suspicions because—as Wagner puts it—"man konnte sich ja selten sicher sein. Wenn man noch so eine gute Nase hatte" (you could rarely be certain. However good your nose for these things).⁷⁵

In his post-Wende fictional text, "Stube und der Herr" (Stube and the Gentleman), published in 1991 in the collection *Die Wut im Koffer*, Wagner stages a conversation between "Stube" and a critical intellectual recounting his experiences in the GDR and after its collapse and the opening of the Stasi files. The "Herr" describes a special relationship between him and those he describes as the "Kanzlisten" (administrative clerks—here those serving power): "das ist vor allem eine Sache der Nasen. Man nimmt Witterung auf, wenn man sich begegnet, und dabei sticht jedem etwas Fremdes, ja Feindliches in die Geruchsknospen, und das Verhältnis ist ein für allemal festgelegt" (it's primarily a matter of the nose. You pick up scents when you meet, and something foreign, even hostile, stings everyone's olfactory buds, and the relationship is fixed once and for all).⁷⁶ The "Herr" describes to Stube how he was not only observed by the Stasi, but also observed them, gathering his own "Archiv" (archive) consisting of "Erinnerungen, Vermutungen und Halluzinationen" (memories, suspicions and hallucinations). He adds that it is of little interest to him whether or not the one being observed was really in the Stasi, it was sufficient "wenn er sich so benommen hat, als ob er dabeigewesen sein könnte" (if he behaved as if he could have been with them).⁷⁷ In this

74 Interview with Bernd Wagner, October 20, 2020.

75 Interview with Bernd Wagner, October 20, 2020.

76 Wagner, "Stube und der Herr," 314.

77 Wagner, "Stube und der Herr," 313.

account, behaving as if one could be a Stasi informant or officer means behaving as if one might be complicit with state power. Here, Wagner not only indicates a kind of countersurveillance (a theme described in more detail in chapter 3); he also suggests that other forms of complicity with the SED regime were equally reprehensible.

Direct Experience and Knowing at Second Hand

The discussion above of Moog, Kolbe, and Wagner's resistance to being recruited by the Stasi as informants shows the role that intuitive or heuristic knowledge could play in informing decisions (including impulsive decisions) on how to act in threatening situations. Wagner's report of his arrest at the Czech-Austrian border is another example of heuristic knowledge being deployed to identify a threat, although Wagner suggests that he was rather slow to do so. After his arrest and release, he was ordered to leave the border area: he was subsequently followed by a "junger Wanderer" (young Rambler), a "shadow" for 60km by bus and hitchhiking all the way to Brno.⁷⁸ In the interview with Windsor, Wagner recalls the strange and suspicious behaviour of the young man: "Aber das war dann auffällig, wenn ich zum Bus rannte, rannte er hinterher, sprang mit in den Bus rein, wenn ich in ein Museum ging, als ich wieder rauskam, saß er davor, und so weiter" (but that was striking, when I ran for the bus, he ran behind me and jumped onto the bus, when I went into a museum, when I came out again, he was sitting in front of it, and so on). However, it is not until the man asks Wagner if he plans to write about the journey that Wagner realises the man's agenda, at which point he confronts him, receiving the response "daß er nur seine Pflicht tue" (that he is just doing his duty).⁷⁹

Wagner's story suggests that he had a generalised understanding of how a spy would likely behave and he is (eventually) able to identify the young man's purpose on that basis. However, not all knowledge held within the networks was based purely or even mainly on such rules of thumb (i.e., if a person appears to be following you and is curious about your work, he is likely a spy). Sometimes, knowledge circulating in the networks was based on the direct experience of others with the secret police. We can understand this as a form of knowledge "at second hand," as it is understood in analytic philosophy, that is knowledge that is "justified by the authority of a speaker," here authority born of direct experience and a relationship of trust (something we explore in more detail in chapter 2).⁸⁰

78 Wagner, "Stasi-Gift," 10.

79 Wagner, "Stasi-Gift," 10.

80 McMyler, *Testimony, Trust, and Authority*, 1.

In some cases, this knowledge functioned similarly to the familial knowledge that Moog describes in the context of the attempted recruitment, that is, it helped the individual to decide on a course of action in a potentially threatening situation. To give a further example, in 1981, Moog was involved in the production of an anthology of young writers in the GDR, a project driven by the established writers Franz Fühmann and Stephan Hermlin.⁸¹ The Stasi got hold of a copy of the unpublished anthology and began to place extreme pressure on the young authors involved, including an intensification of observation. Moog recalls that she received advice from Fühmann:

dass das Beste ist, dass wir uns jetzt alle ruhig verhalten, nicht mehr provozieren, weil die Stasi eben wirklich zu Mitteln greift und sozusagen die Instrumente gezeigt hat ... Also, es gab dann auch Verhaftungen, und auch so, dass Leute noch mehr beobachtet wurden als vorher ... Und er [Fühmann] hat also uns Autoren zu verstehen gegeben, dass wir uns möglichst eben also zurückhaltend verhalten sollen, also, keine Lesungen [zu machen], bei denen die Stasi anwesend sein würde. Und, [dass wir] eben auch vorsichtig in den Kontakten untereinander [sein sollten], weil eben alle unter ganz besonderer Beobachtung standen.⁸²

[that the best thing is for us all to keep quiet now, to avoid further provocations, because the Stasi really did resort to measures and showed their instruments, so to speak ... Well, there were also arrests, and people were watched even more than before ... And he [Fühmann] advised us authors that we should behave as cautiously as possible, i.e., not [give] any readings where the Stasi would be present. And [that we] should also be careful in our contacts with each other, because everyone was under particular observation.]

From 1954 to 1959, Fühmann was registered with the MfS as an IM under the code name “Salomon.” However, as he neither provided reports nor was willing to attend covert meetings, the Stasi eventually released him from his obligation.⁸³ Gradually, Fühmann began distancing himself from the SED government, feeling betrayed and increasingly disillusioned. As will be discussed in chapter 3, Fühmann later became the subject of intense observation by the Stasi.⁸⁴ Here we see the older writer—who had his own experiences with the secret police—giving

81 For a discussion of the emergence and suppression of the anthology, see: Costabile-Heming, “Surveillance and the GDR’s Cultural Sphere”; Michael, “Eine verschollene Anthologie.”

82 Interview with Christa Moog, August 25, 2021.

83 Rüther, “Franz Fühmann.”

84 See also Costabile-Heming, “Surveillance and the GDR’s Cultural Sphere.”

concrete advice to his younger colleagues on how to respond to a given situation, and, in particular, when to pull back from a confrontation with the state and avoid a potentially catastrophic escalation.

Indeed, there were other, more certain, forms of knowledge that circulated in the literary sphere: knowledge based on the Stasi revealing themselves not only through recruitment attempts but also through intimidation, arrest, and imprisonment of those viewed as being in opposition to the SED. In her interview with Windsor, Wegner recalled telling her parents about her traumatic experiences in Stasi custody (*Untersuchungshaft*) following her arrest in 1968 for distributing pamphlets protesting against the GDR's involvement in suppressing the Prague Spring. Similarly to Moog's experience of attempted recruitment, intimate familial trust played a fundamental role in her ability to speak openly with her parents about her treatment by the Stasi. From a political standpoint, this trust and support were not guaranteed in light of her parents' commitment to the Communist cause, but the strength of their familial bonds meant they stood by her when their hardline Communist acquaintances suggested they distance themselves from their daughter: "Und dann haben beide Eltern gesagt, 'Ja, sie hat 'n Fehler gemacht, aber sie ist doch unser Kind, wir lieben die. Das geht nich.' ... Dit war sehr wichtig. So'ne Eltern zu haben, so'ne Schwester zu haben, war toll. Dit war'n großer Schutz" (and then both of my parents said "yes, she made a mistake, but she's still our child and we love her. We can't do that [abandon her]." ... That was really important. To have parents like that, and a sister like that, was brilliant. It was great protection.)⁸⁵ For Wegner, the family was a sanctuary where she could share her testimony in and with confidence.

In the interview with Windsor, Stötzer asserts that she and her artist colleagues did not speak about the Stasi to avoid giving it power in their interactions. On the other hand, she states that she wrote her account of her imprisonment (discussed in more detail in chapter 3) precisely to convey the experience to her friends and persuade them that their route to the West should not be "durch 'n Knast" (via prison).⁸⁶ She notes that she did not end up in prison again exactly because her first experience of incarceration functioned as a kind of "Schutzimpfung" (immunisation) and she knew where the boundaries of dissent lay.⁸⁷ Stötzer asserts explicitly that her knowledge of the Stasi was not abstract, but acquired through direct experience:

85 Interview with Bettina Wegner, August 23, 2021.

86 Interview with Gabriele Stötzer, June 14, 2021.

87 Interview with Gabriele Stötzer, June 14, 2021.

Also, ich war nicht eine, die was gemacht hat, und hat von der Staatssicherheit gewusst, sondern ich hab sie gesehen. Die Staatssicherheit waren die Menschen in zivil. Das waren die nicht in Uniform, ne? Und ich hatte die ja von Anfang an, dass die mich verhaftet haben, vernommen haben, dass ich im Gefängnis war, ich hatte die alle so. Ich wusste, wo die in Erfurt sind, wo in Erfurt die Vernehmer sitzen, wo U-Häftlinge sitzen. Ich wusste das alles, ja?⁸⁸

[Well, I wasn't someone who did something and knew about the State Security Service, rather I saw them. The State Security were people in civilian clothes. They weren't in uniform, right? And I had them [in my life] from the beginning, they arrested me, questioned me, I was in prison, I had them all like that. I knew where they were in Erfurt, where the interrogators were in Erfurt, where the remand prisoners were. I knew all that, yes?]

She describes the year she spent in prison as a sharp learning experience: “also ich bin da wirklich ins kalte Wasser gefallen und hab da ganz viel gelernt über Frauen und na ja, kam dann wieder raus und wusste eigentlich alles” (I mean I really fell in at the deep end and learnt lots about women and well, was released again and knew everything, in fact).⁸⁹

Initially, Stötzer explains, she was too traumatised to speak about those things she had learnt—that is, too traumatised to share her knowledge:

Ich hab ein Jahr nach'm Gefängnis nicht geredet, mit niemand. Was hätt ich den Leuten erzählen sollen? Sollte ich ihnen das erklären, was sie gar nicht wissen wollten? Oder durften? Das gab's ja nicht in der DDR, ja. Und da hab ich nur gemalt in der Zeit. Ganz innige Bilder von innen, ja. Und nach'm Jahr hab ich dann langsam angefangen wieder, meine Mutter hat gesagt: “Du bist viel gewandert. Du hast nicht geredet.”⁹⁰

[I didn't talk, not to anyone, for a year after [I left] prison. What was I supposed to tell people? Was I supposed to tell them what they absolutely didn't want to know? Or weren't allowed [to know]? That didn't happen in the GDR, right. And all I did in that time was paint. Very intimate pictures from within. And then after a year I gradually started again, my mother said: “You went walking a lot. You didn't talk.”]

88 Interview with Gabriele Stötzer, June 14, 2021.

89 Interview with Gabriele Stötzer, June 14, 2021.

90 Interview with Gabriele Stötzer, June 14, 2021.

This reference to her mother indicates that—unlike Moog and Wegner—Stötzer had not even been able to talk about her experiences with her family, at least to begin with. Although she would come to exploit her freedom and channel her energies into experimental art and activities, Stötzer's experience of Stasi interrogation and prison meant that she lost her previous "Leichtigkeit" (effortlessness) and "hohe theoretische Intellektualität" (high theoretical intellectuality): "nach'm Gefängnis flog ich eigentlich nicht mehr mit meinem Geist, ja? Also ... da war ich so unten gelandet, dass ich dann wirklich mehr oder minder gekrochen bin und ... sowieso kein Vertrauen mehr hatte, auch keinen Glauben mehr hatte, sowieso nur das geglaubt habe, was ich selber erlebt habe. Ja? Und auch nur noch davon geredet habe" (after prison my spirit no longer soared, you know? I'd hit rock bottom and then really more or less crawled along and ... in any case had no confidence, also no faith, and only believed what I'd experienced myself anyway. Right? And only ever talked about that.)⁹¹

What Stötzer describes here is not just a personal crisis but a crisis of trust in society and in knowledge itself. At the same time, she suggests that in place of intellectual discussions about Marx, Lenin, Trotsky, and Bakunin (thinkers she mentioned in her interview), her only topic of conversation once she emerged from her year of silence was that traumatic taboo subject of the GDR's prison system. In the interview, Stötzer refers to herself as a "Knastologin," (prisonologist) a term which, despite its usually humorous or ironic connotations, points to a certain type of expertise held by someone who knows about prisons through direct experience.⁹² This was not only integral to Stötzer's self-understanding after her release but also her social networks: the so-called "Knastologen" (prisonologists) were one of three key groups she associated with, alongside the groups she refers to as "die Experimentellen" (the experimental ones) and "die Politischen" (the political ones). Interestingly, she speaks of her bonds with others who had been imprisoned in terms of familial relationships (she refers to Ulrich Schacht, for example, as a "Knastbruder" (prison brother) which gives expression to the private and political nature of their affinity). Moreover, she notes that having been a prisoner in the GDR automatically made you a kind of "öffentliche Figur" (public figure): "Sobald du über'n Knast geredet hast, warst du sowieso gefährlich für die Stasi, weil es dann Knast gab, oder gefährdet, eben weil du gesprochen hast" (as soon as you talked about the clink you were in any case dangerous for the Stasi, because it meant that jail existed, or threatened, precisely because you'd talked).⁹³ As we shall see in more detail in chapter 3, Stötzer not only spoke but also wrote about her experiences to resist

91 Interview with Gabriele Stötzer, June 14, 2021.

92 Interview with Gabriele Stötzer, June 14, 2021.

93 Interview with Gabriele Stötzer, June 14, 2021.

the state's attempts to silence former prisoners and prevent their knowledge from becoming public.

Both our interviews and the Stasi files point to other occasions when knowledge about arrests and interrogations by the Stasi was shared with friends and close colleagues. For instance, Wegner recalled sharing details after she, Schlesinger, and several acquaintances were taken to Hohenschönhausen for interrogation having sent a letter to Honecker complaining about the way the newspaper *Neues Deutschland* had reported on the self-immolation of Pastor Oskar Brüsewitz in 1976: "alle, die unterschrieben hatten und die in der Brüsewitz-Geschichte vernommen wurden, haben sich anschließend getroffen und haarklein erzählt was die [Stasi] wissen wollten" (everyone who signed and had been interrogated about the Brüsewitz story met up afterwards and told each other down to the last detail what they [the Stasi] wanted to know). Maaß states that reading the Stasi files revealed to him how close he was to arrest and imprisonment. He knew what prison was like from the accounts of others, but not the risks that he was running: "Man wusste, wie es dort im Knast ist. Das haben uns schon Leute erzählt. Und ich hatte nicht geahnt, dass ich so nah da dran war" (we knew what it was like in prison. People told us that. And I didn't realise, that I was so close to it).⁹⁴

Anderson's IM files also contain reports on conversations he had been privy to after the arrest and release of other writers. In one example from late 1983, Anderson reported that a prominent political writer, who had been arrested ahead of a demonstration between the Soviet and US embassies, had told friends gathered in his apartment "daß er bei seiner Vernehmung einen sehr gut informierten Mann von der Staatssicherheit gegenüber saß" (that he had sat opposite a very well-informed man from the state security during his interrogation).⁹⁵ The writer himself had refused to sign the MfS "Protokoll und Erklärungen bzw. Belehrung" (transcript and declarations or caution) but had otherwise held an "offenes Gespräch" (open discussion). In a later conversation with a different group of friends, the same writer once again spoke about his arrest and "vor allem darüber, was man tun könne, wenn künftig wieder solche Verhaftungen seien. Man müsse untereinander besser koordinieren, da man ja wüßte, wenn solche Sachen geplant sind" (above all about what can be done when there are future arrests. There needs to be better coordination with each other, since it's known if such things are planned).⁹⁶ We can see that the experience of

⁹⁴ Interview with Ekkehard Maaß, July 30, 2021.

⁹⁵ Report by IMB "Fritz Müller" on [name redacted] arrest and reaction to November 4, 1983, dated November 11, 1983, 1.

⁹⁶ Report by IMB "Fritz Müller" on [name redacted] arrest and reaction to November 4, 1983, dated November 11, 1983, 2.

arrest and these moments of knowledge-sharing were also moments that shaped shared strategies for dealing with the Stasi's repressive measures.

These first-hand experiences of imprisonment initiate these critical intellectuals into significant aspects of the public secret of the Stasi that remain hidden from others. In chapters 2 and 3, we will explore in more detail how these different forms of knowledge supported trust, agency, and countersurveillance. However, we should note the fragility of knowledge at second hand, which could only ever be partial. Moog describes her encounter with Jürgen Fuchs in West Berlin after her exit from the GDR. As she recounts it, we see that it is Fuchs's body, rather than his words, that reveals to her the conditions in the Stasi prisons in which the critical writer had been held after the Biermann protests: "Der [Fuchs] war wirklich gezeichnet von dem Aufenthalt in diesem Stasi-Gefängnis, erstmal in Bautzen und dann auch in Hohenschönhausen" (he [Fuchs] was really scarred by his stay in this Stasi prison, first in Bautzen and then in Hohenschönhausen).⁹⁷ Kolbe recalls that friends who had been in prison, such as Frank-Wolf Matthies or Lutz Rathenow—spoke openly of their experiences, but that there was sometimes a reluctance to ask:

Und immer, wenn jemand sagte: "Oh, der und der und die und die waren in Hohenschönhausen"—zum Beispiel—im Gefängnis, das war immer, das war wie unberührbar, also da wusste ich nichts davon, wusste nur das war wie'n, das war sozusagen der schlimmste Name, ja. Da möchte man nicht.⁹⁸

[And whenever someone said: "Oh, he and he and he and they were in Hohenschönhausen"—for example—in prison, that was always, that was as if untouchable, so I didn't know anything about it, I just knew that was like, that was the worst name, so to speak, yes. You don't want to go there.]

Despite the openness of some of those in his network about their experiences in Stasi prisons, Kolbe acknowledges that he struggled to fully understand: "Ich kannte Rathenow und Frank-Wolf Matthies und so weiter, die dann schon von ihren Stasivernehmern dann auch redeten und machten, ja? Nur, das war ja nicht zu fassen. Das war nicht, also das eigentlich Wesentliche war nicht zu fassen" (I knew Rathenow and Frank-Wolf Matthies and so on, who were already talking and doing things about their Stasi interrogators, yes? But that was unbelievable. That wasn't, well, you couldn't grasp the essence of it).⁹⁹

97 Interview with Christa Moog, August 25, 2021.

98 Interview with Uwe Kolbe, June 1, 2021.

99 Interview with Uwe Kolbe, June 1, 2021.

In his post-Wende publication, *Die Situation*, Kolbe describes the course of his friendship with Matthies. This begins when, in 1975, both writers are invited to perform some of their poetry at the “Haus der Jungen Talente” on the same evening. Kolbe’s description of the evening echoes Wegner’s account of the infiltration of these events by the Stasi: “Man hatte *es* wirklich gesehen: den geflissentlichen Mitschreiber in der Lesung” (you really saw it: the conscientious scribe in the reading).¹⁰⁰ By the time of this meeting, Matthies had already experienced the remand prisons of the Stasi after his arrest in 1974. The young Kolbe is impressed by the “unverhüllten politischen Implikationen” (undisguised political implications) of Matthies’s poetry.¹⁰¹ After completing their civil (Matthies) or military (Kolbe) service, the two authors meet again in Prenzlauer Berg. Kolbe recounts the decline of their relationship by early 1980, as Matthies was unable to understand Kolbe’s willingness to continue a relationship with the GDR regime that he saw as compromised, and Kolbe was not yet willing to take the confrontational stance that would likely lead him to suffer the same fate as his former friend: “Dabei trafen sich FWM und ich im selben Moralismus, vielleicht spiegelte sich gar seiner (wegen des damals noch bedeutsamen Altersunterschiedes) in meinem. Nur hatte er andere, seine Konsequenzen gezogen” (FWM and I shared the same moralism, perhaps even his was reflected in mine (owing to the significant age difference at the time). But he had drawn his own conclusions).¹⁰² We might wonder if the different “conclusions” drawn by the two men are also a result of the different forms of knowledge available to them about the Stasi’s most brutal methods. Kolbe had this knowledge at second hand and by his own admission struggled to grasp it; Matthies had it ingrained in his own body.

Conclusion

In his interview with Windsor, Uwe Kolbe describes the infiltration of the secret police into GDR society, as follows: “Stasi war immer so, mehr sowas im Alltag Anwesendes. Von dem man wusste, dass es da ist, nur dass man es nicht fassen kann” (Stasi was always like that, more like something present in everyday life. You knew it was there, you just couldn’t grasp it).¹⁰³ This is a succinct representation of the Stasi as “public secret,” as a “known unknown,” whose presence GDR citizens were well aware of, but which could never be fully grasped. This chapter has set out to explore how critical intellectuals sought to uncover some of those “ungraspable”

100 Kolbe, *Die Situation*, 7.

101 Kolbe, *Die Situation*, 7.

102 Kolbe, *Die Situation*, 35.

103 Interview with Uwe Kolbe, June 1, 2021.

aspects of the secret police, that is, how they constructed and circulated knowledge about how the Stasi operated.

What we see is a range of intuitive, or heuristic, forms of knowledge—"rules of thumb" that helped these critical intellectuals make quick decisions about whom to trust or how to act in a given moment. Like Gigerenzer's adaptive heuristics, these rules of thumb were developed in the social environment, often on the basis of personal or familial moments of contact with the Stasi and advice from others with direct experience of the secret police. Throughout the interviews, the artists we spoke to recall moments when knowledge about the Stasi was shared and how that knowledge was used to build strategies to combat the surveillance to which they were subjected, and resist attempts to recruit them as informants.

Unlike Gigerenzer's adaptive heuristics, these rules of thumb were uncertain, partial, unreliable, and often simply wrong. As we have seen, several of those we spoke to noted that they had wrongly suspected friends and colleagues of working for the Stasi or overestimated the extent to which the scene was infiltrated. In this way, this kind of knowledge contributed to the paranoia and fear that marked the network of which these individuals were a part. However, we also see that this intuitive knowledge was essential for the scene to be able to operate at all. It helped these critical intellectuals gain some sense of certainty in an environment marked by uncertainty, some sense that they could know how the Stasi might respond in given situations, that they could identify Stasi officers even in plain clothing, and—especially—that they could work out who might be working as an informant. As we will explore in chapters 2 and 3, this partial knowledge was crucial for the creation of trust in a society marked by distrust, and to permit critical agency despite panoptic surveillance.

2: Knowing Who to Trust and Trusting What to Know

THE “RULES OF thumb” discussed in the previous chapter were applied by GDR citizens to decide what knowledge could be entrusted to whom, or to make judgements (whether conscious or unconscious) as to what kinds of knowledge might be trusted and thus absorbed into one’s own epistemological tool kit as the basis of individual behaviour and collective action. Whereas Chapter 1 explored different types and degrees of knowledge acquired and shared about the Stasi, this chapter focuses in more detail on gestures, relationships, and networks of trust underpinning the construction and circulation of knowledge. This is particularly important in the context of the GDR where the role of trust is often overlooked or underestimated.

Trust, according to the historian of trust Geoffrey Hosking, is “one of the most pervasive—and perhaps for that reason least noticed—aspects of social life. We need to display trust in order to live at all.”¹ Hosking underscores the historical contingency of trust, which “is not an invariant entity, present in different societies at the same level and in the same forms.”² Rather, “both its incidence and its social forms vary greatly.”³ Whereas “[s]ome societies seem peaceful and stable, and their members relate to each other without acute or chronic distrust for generations,” others “are riven by apparently unceasing distrust, so that conflict between individuals or groups is always either present or latent, ready to break out at the slightest provocation.” Nonetheless, a society without trust is simply unsustainable: “no society can survive ... on a diet of total distrust.”⁴ In light of post-Wende revelations about the extent of Stasi surveillance and infiltration tactics, the GDR seems to fit clearly into Hosking’s second category of a society characterised by “unceasing distrust,” and we might be tempted to understand its ultimate demise at least partially as the result of the kind of “diet of total distrust” that Hosking refers to.

Indeed, since the collapse of the East German state and the opening of the Stasi files, it has become a commonly accepted trope that the GDR

1 Hosking, “Trust and Distrust,” 95.

2 Hosking, “Trust and Distrust,” 106.

3 Hosking, “Trust and Distrust,” 106.

4 Hosking, “Trust and Distrust,” 106.

was a society permeated by mistrust, suspicion, and betrayal. As Betts notes, “[t]he effects of Stasi complicity and the world of mutual surveillance were widely commented on after 1989. Most tended to see its destructive legacy in the breakdown of solidarity. Even the most resistant alternative subcultures—the Church, artists, dissidents, and punks—were riddled with Stasi informers.”⁵ Writing in the mid-1990s, David Childs and Richard Popplewell commented that “the most appalling aspect of the system of IM was the breakdown of trust between officers and men, lawyers and clients, doctors and patients, teachers and students, pastors and their communities, friends and neighbours, family members and even lovers.”⁶ More recently, Lewis has written that “confidence and trust was sorely lacking in East German society,” noting that further research on the Stasi has “led to a heightened awareness of breaches of trust in the GDR.”⁷ According to Lewis, the Stasi files, in particular, “paint a grim picture of GDR society as founded on chronic mistrust and born from a misplaced desire for total control.”⁸ Revelations about the extent of the Stasi’s network of informants, as well as the existence and sheer volume of documentation held in the files do suggest that the GDR was a “low trust society,”⁹ something which is also borne out in many of the examples discussed in this chapter. Yet the fact that there was “widespread shock”¹⁰ at those post-1989 revelations also points to a tension in retrospective accounts which emphasise rampant mistrust and betrayal: the shocked reactions implies that (some) trust had existed and that people were especially aggrieved when they discovered the identities of those they had mistakenly trusted. As we demonstrate in this chapter, “low trust” by no means equated to “no trust.”

Drawing on Georg Simmel, Lewis highlights the close connection between knowledge, secrecy, and trust in the modern era when “we have become more comfortable with not knowing everything about the people we deal with on a daily basis” which means that we tend to “trust others despite their secrets.”¹¹ “In dictatorships such as the GDR,” Lewis writes, “this trust in others was severely undermined ... The regime did not value trust, and it filled this gap with modes of control. Because total control was in practice impossible to achieve, the regime was obliged to content itself with knowing everything about those citizens it could not

5 Betts, *Within Walls*, 48.

6 Childs and Popplewell, cited in Betts, *Within Walls*, 48.

7 Lewis, *A State of Secrecy*, xxvi.

8 Lewis, *A State of Secrecy*, xxxii.

9 Hawley, *Trust*, 18.

10 Betts, *Within Walls*, 48.

11 Lewis, *State of Secrecy*, xxxii. On trust and secrecy, see also Gallinat, “Power and Vulnerability.”

trust.”¹² Like other socialist states during the Cold War, the GDR leadership sought to cultivate and mobilise what Alexey Tikhomirov terms “regimes of trust and distrust” that would regulate citizens’ interactions with leaders, institutions, and each other.¹³ If the East German regime did not value genuine trust itself, as Lewis suggests, it clearly understood the potential power of trust amongst its people, which therefore needed to be regulated as far as possible and, in some situations, actively manipulated and undermined. As this chapter will illustrate, this meant performing and cultivating relationships of trust with potential IMs and encouraging informants to build trust or exploit existing interpersonal trust with their targets. This went hand-in-hand with another key mechanism of control, and an explicitly stated aim in the Stasi’s notorious 1976 directive on “Zersetzung”: the deliberate “instigation of mistrust and mutual suspicion within groups of personal circles and organizations.”¹⁴ “Zersetzung” rested on a complex balance between trust and mistrust. Trust had to exist for it to be undermined, but there also had to be knowledge about the possibility of betrayal (and that knowledge manifested itself in mistrust).

The regime’s attempt to monopolise knowledge and trust, then, were mechanisms of power, which sought to curtail its citizens’ ability and willingness to grant each other trust and share knowledge. Yet this precluded neither individual expressions of defiant trust nor the formation of “communities of trust and distrust” at a societal level, which could serve as forums for exchanging formal and informal knowledge, including rumours and gossip.¹⁵ Whereas state attempts to construct regimes of trust and distrust were expressions of vertical power relations and mechanisms of control, the notion of communities of trust and distrust points to “horizontal bonds”¹⁶ and networks which were harder to regulate and control. These kinds of communities are particularly important because trust, like knowledge, is relational and habitual. Drawing on the work of the sociologist Barbara Misztal, Hosking advocates treating trust as “‘habitus’ in Bourdieu’s sense, that is, as a constituent of a socially learned environment.” In this understanding:

[e]veryday routines and habits are a crucial aspect of trust. They reduce social complexity, enabling us to function on “auto-pilot” for much of our life, and so they save our effort and attention for the unfamiliar and challenging. Families, friends and work colleagues

12 Lewis, *State of Secrecy*, xxxii–xxxiii.

13 Tikhomirov, “The Grammar of Trust and Distrust,” 319–22.

14 Cited in Betts, *Within Walls*, 40.

15 Tikhomirov, “The Grammar of Trust and Distrust,” 322–26.

16 Tikhomirov, “The Grammar of Trust and Distrust,” 324.

develop familiar practices which simplify mutual interaction and construct a community identity, consisting of those people with whom we feel most at ease and with whom we communicate most readily. By the same token those practices delineate boundaries separating the “in-group” from the “out-group.” Trust and distrust exist in mutual symbiosis.¹⁷

While the Stasi’s efforts to disrupt such routines and networks made it harder for people to judge the boundaries between those in- and out-groups, the examples in this chapter show that people did trust those in their inner circle and that there was significant distrust of those outside it, that is, of those they did not know. Our research demonstrates the circumstances under which trust was possible and reveals examples of communities where knowledge about the Stasi was shared on the basis of trust and where the issue of mistrust was openly confronted. In these contexts, trust was not devalued—nor automatically a sign of naivety—but a precious, if precarious, commodity. As we shall see, building and sustaining relationships of trust, even or perhaps especially with the knowledge that they might be infiltrated and undermined, was a potential means of resisting the state’s repressive strategies.

Acting Friendly, Performing Trust: Encounters with the Stasi

The GDR regime’s desire to gather as much intelligence as possible about (suspected) dissident or troublesome citizens—its aspiration to “know everything,”¹⁸ as Lewis puts it—relied on building relationships of trust with them. MfS officers had to build trust, or at least the pretence of trust, with potential informants for their collaboration to be effective. According to Betts, Stasi protocols asserted that “the informer was to be treated with ‘utmost respect,’ and agents were encouraged to cultivate ‘genuine human bonds’ with them. Trust and reliability were the favourite watchwords used, and it seems to have succeeded with many.”¹⁹ Writing about Paul Wiens, who served as a “high-ranking informant in literary circles” from 1962 until 1982,²⁰ Lewis suggests that “the Stasi managed to create the impression that Wiens had in his officer a genuine friend, an illusion of trust the Stasi liked to foster, while it remained

17 Hosking, “Trust and Distrust,” 108.

18 Lewis, *State of Secrecy*, xxxiii.

19 Betts, *Within Walls*, 46.

20 Lewis, “The Secret Lives and Files of Stasi Collaborators,” 32.

quietly vigilant.”²¹ For Wiens, meanwhile, their meetings seemed to fulfil some kind of “deep-seated human need.”²²

The building of friendly rapport and performance of trust are also evident in meeting reports contained in the file of Sascha Anderson, aka IM “David Menzer.” As we have noted, Anderson was one of the most notorious informants amongst the younger generation of writers. After quite erratic and sporadic meetings from 1975 onwards, Anderson began meeting more regularly with the Stasi from 1980. At one meeting in November that year, Anderson’s handler and the latter’s superior offered Anderson a glass of *Sekt* to acknowledge cooperation to date. According to the report, Anderson was noticeably surprised by this gesture, “was er auch zum Ausdruck brachte, da er, wie er sich äußerte, doch nicht viel getan hätte. Darauf wurde seitens des Genossen Major Schurz eingegangen mit dem Hinweis, daß es natürlich in Zukunft notwendig sei, daß sich die Zusammenarbeit in kontinuierlicher und inhaltlicher Richtung entscheidend verbessern muß” (which he also voiced, because, as he put it, he hadn’t yet done much. In response, comrade Major Schurz made the point that it would of course be necessary for future cooperation to show significant improvement in terms of continuity and content).²³ The somewhat odd gesture of a celebratory glass of *Sekt* was therefore pre-emptive and loaded with further expectations of the informant. Nonetheless, the report indicates that the meeting also gave Anderson the opportunity to express doubt, perhaps even scepticism, and to seek clarification from the officers, thus gaining additional, albeit partial knowledge about the purpose of their collaboration:

Der IM sagte, daß ihm der Verbleib seiner Informationen nicht klar sei. Ihm wurde geantwortet, daß es für uns als Sicherheitsorgan in erster Linie auf die Feststellung von Tendenzen in dem Bereich, in dem er Einblick hat, ankommt. In einem längeren eindeutigen Gespräch wurde der IM letztendlich überzeugt, unser Organ bei der Erfüllung seiner Aufgaben zu unterstützen.²⁴

[The IM said that the whereabouts of his information was unclear to him. He was given the answer that our primary concern as a security agency is the identification of trends in the area into which he has insight. In a lengthy, unambiguous conversation, the IM was ultimately persuaded to support our institution in fulfilling its tasks.]

21 Lewis, “The Secret Lives and Files of Stasi Collaborators,” 35.

22 Lewis, “The Secret Lives and Files of Stasi Collaborators,” 35.

23 Report of meeting with IMS “David Menzer,” dated November 8, 1980, 79.

24 Report of meeting with IMS “David Menzer,” dated November 8, 1980, 79.

A few months later, in early 1981, the Stasi reported, “daß sich das Vertrauensverhältnis zwischen Mitarbeiter und IM immer weiter festigt” (that the relationship of trust between [MfS] employee and IM was continuing to solidify) which was evident, according to the reporting officer, in the quality of the intelligence that Anderson was providing.²⁵ These examples can certainly be read as evidence of the tactics employed by the Stasi to reel in, manipulate, and control their recruits. They also seem to point to what Lewis refers to as the “one-way street” of trust.²⁶ But we also see that the MfS recognised how the performance and outward semblance of trust between officers and informants was essential in order to extrapolate knowledge about GDR citizens and that, conversely, the perceived usefulness of the particular type of knowledge they received from Anderson was proof of that relationship of trust.

Although the MfS failed in its attempts to recruit the writers interviewed for this study, those recruitment episodes are instructive of the performative nature of trust in the Stasi’s relationship with potential informants. We have explored these writers’ recollections of these attempted recruitments in chapter 1, reflecting on how intuitive or heuristic knowledge about the Stasi helped them respond to these approaches. Here we draw on the author interviews, Stasi files, and later written accounts to examine how the Stasi attempted to create bonds of trust in order to extract knowledge from these would-be informants. In their accounts of the Stasi’s attempts to recruit them when they were still teenagers, both Moog and Kolbe recall gestures made by the recruiting officers to give their potential young informants the impression of familiarity and respect, to buy their trust and flatter them into collaborating. In her interview with Windsor, Moog notes that the Stasi officers “versuchten sich auch so kumpelhaft zu geben” (tried to act like buddies) and offered her cigarettes, an act of informal rule-breaking given her young age (14) at the time. In later conversations with others affected, Moog identified this seemingly minor gesture as “[ei]ne Masche ... so ‘Guck mal, bei uns darfst Du auch mal eine rauchen schon, was sonst gar nicht möglich ist’”²⁷ (a ploy ... like “look, with us you’re allowed to smoke, which is normally not possible.”) In her case, the gesture was misjudged; in fact, she described the scene and the Stasi officers’ performed chumminess retrospectively as “gruselig” (creepy), not least because she was disconcerted by how much they already knew about her and how she spent her free time. In a short story entitled “Es ist 15 Uhr” (It is 3 p.m.) which she later published

25 Report of meeting with IMS “David Menzer,” dated February 17, 1981, 160, and report of meeting with IMS “David Menzer,” March 3, 1981. See also Lewis, “The Secret Lives and Files of Stasi Collaborators,” 38.

26 Lewis, *A State of Secrecy*, 35.

27 Interview with Christa Moog, August 25, 2021.

based on this experience of attempted recruitment, Moog ties the gesture with the cigarette directly into this ominous sense of prior familiarity: “Er klopft die Zigaretten aus der Packung. ‘Sie rauchen doch sonst. In der Milchbar, nach der Schule.’”²⁸ (He taps the cigarettes out of the packet. “You’re usually a smoker. In the Milk Bar, after school.”) In their efforts to recruit Moog to gain knowledge about her social circle, the Stasi officers tried to create a relationship of trust. However, the intuitive knowledge Moog holds about these kinds of approach (as described in chapter 1) makes these efforts to build trust on the basis of familiarity frightening and therefore counterproductive.

In Kolbe’s case, the gestures made by the MfS were primarily related to his nascent career and quest for independence as a young poet on the cusp of adulthood. From the Stasi’s point of view, this made him potentially exploitable, whether as a collaborator or opponent of the state. The files indicate that Kolbe had come to their attention earlier in 1975 after a poetry reading at the “Haus der jungen Talente”—likely the one described by Kolbe in *Die Situation*, as discussed in chapter 1. A report on the reading claimed it had included texts “mit sehr zweifelhafter Aussage und fragwürdigem politisch-ideologischen Wert und Inhalt” (very dubious messaging and questionable political-ideological value and content).²⁹ Another slightly later report notes that Kolbe held contradictory attitudes, opposing his school’s rigid structures and methods, on the one hand, but demonstrating a strong class consciousness, on the other.³⁰ The same report illustrates an awareness that Kolbe had problems in his parental home related to his literary pursuits and that his intellectual confidence led to constant confrontations with his mother and stepfather, as Kolbe also intimated in the interview with Windsor. The Stasi’s knowledge of Kolbe’s fraught home life may have made him seem attractive and susceptible as a candidate for recruitment: according to Betts, “[c]hildren from broken homes were easy recruits” while the “children of Stasi agents were particularly favoured recruits for restocking the ranks of informers, since they were seen as already being inured to the cardinal virtues of trust and secrecy.”³¹ Kolbe arguably fell into both these categories. By the time the MfS approached him, however, he was already in his late teens and known to be “sehr schwer von einer vorgefaßten Meinung abzubringen” (very difficult to dissuade from a preconceived opinion).³²

28 Moog, “Es ist 15 Uhr,” 41.

29 Information report on reading at “Haus der jungen Talente,” dated March 13, 1975, 3.

30 Investigation report on Uwe Kolbe, September 19, 1975, 6–7.

31 Betts, *Within Walls*, 46.

32 Investigation report on Uwe Kolbe, September 19, 1975, 6.

Kolbe's invitation to the FDJ "Poetenseminar" (Poetry Seminar) in Schwerin in the summer of 1975 can be seen as one of the Stasi's gestures to draw him into their trusted network. Participation at such an event was certainly double-edged. As seen in chapter 1, Kolbe recalled being surprised about the invitation and speculated in his interview with Windsor that his biological father, a Stasi officer, must have had a hand in it.³³ In his 1994 essay *Die Situation*, Kolbe acknowledges that it gave young writers the opportunity to meet with prominent experienced authors such as Heinz Kahlau and Stephan Hermlin to learn writing techniques and workshop their own texts. At the same time, he notes that the "Jungens von der Sicherheit standen durchaus penetrant zur Seite der Veranstalter oder waren identisch mit ihnen" (the chaps from the [state] security stood quite obtrusively alongside the organisers or were identical with them) and describes the Poetenseminar as a "Bestandteil langfristiger pädagogischer Stasi-Bemühungen" (component of the Stasi's long-term pedagogical endeavours).³⁴ According to Kolbe, it was therefore not a coincidence that a man claiming to represent the cultural department of the Berlin municipal authorities had visited his home in the same week he was attending the seminar, showing interest in his work.³⁵ Kolbe also recalled the city officials' conspicuous curiosity about his personal interests and problems and their "nette materielle Offerte, ja, der Köder" (nice material offering, the bait).³⁶ At this stage, he took up the offer and asked them for a typewriter, which, according to the MfS, Kolbe had been particularly pleased to receive, since it afforded him a much needed degree of independence in writing his poetry without the need for support from his family.³⁷ Yet Kolbe's prior, intuitive knowledge about state surveillance made him immediately suspicious that the typewriter might be bugged, even before his would-be recruiters had revealed themselves as Stasi agents and the purpose of their encounters; he hid the typewriter on a ledge in his bathroom and later returned it having never made use of it, indicating that their attempt to buy his trust (with a view to buying his knowledge) had failed.³⁸

The practice of dangling "enticements" and "carrots of inducement" before potential young recruits to "cajole" them into "spying on dissident adults or 'hostile negative youth'" is well-known.³⁹ In addition to their performed friendliness and material gestures discussed above,

33 Interview with Uwe Kolbe, June 1, 2021.

34 Kolbe, *Die Situation*, 8.

35 Kolbe, *Die Situation*, 8.

36 Interview with Uwe Kolbe, June 1, 2021.

37 Report on a further conversation with Uwe Kolbe, dated December 8, 1975, 20.

38 Kolbe, *Die Situation*, 9–10; Interview with Uwe Kolbe, June 1, 2021.

39 Betts, *Within Walls*, 46.

the Stasi sought to encourage Moog and Kolbe to take the chance to become part of an exclusive group. However disingenuous, the process of attempted recruitment also entailed signalling a willingness and desire to trust possible informants, which can be seen as a method of engendering and constituting the potential recruit's trustworthiness; a manipulation of the idea, often discussed in relation to educational settings, that showing someone "trust may create trustworthiness."⁴⁰ The recruiting officers tried to give Moog the impression, "dass ich sowas wäre, wie eine, die sie auserwählt hätten, und was auch, wenn man da zu denen gehörte, die sie da jetzt eben dafür bestimmt hatten, dass man da auch Vorteile hätte" (that I was someone they'd chosen specially and if you belonged to those who they'd identified [for the task], you'd also get benefits).⁴¹ Besides the possible material benefits, Moog described the sense that her cooperation would also carry less tangible rewards of greater freedom and room for manoeuvre, and membership of a privileged group: "Und das, also, sollte so sein, dass man da noch einen Raum vielleicht bekommen könnte, den sonst vielleicht gar keiner bekam, nur diejenigen eben, die da, ja, die sie eben, wie gesagt, so gewählt hatten" (And, well, it was supposed to be the case that you might get space that no-one else got, only those who, yes as I said, they'd selected).⁴² The rhetoric of belonging to an exclusive group chosen to carry out the special task of informing on others, in this case her classmates and above all members of the church group "Junge Gemeinde," divided Moog and her peers into those who could (or might) be trusted by the state, and those who could not. By identifying her as specially chosen and by instilling in her the state's confidence and willingness to trust her as a loyal and effective informant, the MfS arguably sought not only to test her trustworthiness but also to render her trustworthy. In their attempt to recruit Kolbe, the Stasi also deployed the common argument that talented writers like him might become "eine Zielscheibe des Gegners" (a target for the enemy).⁴³ In his recollection, their pre-emptive approach was framed as a means of counteracting this threat and thus entailed initiating him into a trusted inner circle: they asked him to pass on information from his visits to the jazz bar "Große Melodie," as well as the youth club where Bettina Wegner and Klaus Schlesinger held their "Kramladen" performance evenings and all cultural events and encounters "bei denen der Gegner tätig werden könnte, angesichts dessen sie ihrerseits, wie gesagt, nur tätig wurden, weshalb sie mich hiermit in ihr Vertrauen zögen ..." (where the enemy might be operating,

40 Lahno, "On the Emotional Character of Trust," 183.

41 Interview with Christa Moog, August 25, 2021.

42 Interview with Christa Moog, August 25, 2021.

43 Kolbe, *Die Situation*, 9.

in view of which they were, as mentioned, only taking action themselves, which was why they were placing their trust in me ...).⁴⁴

In both cases, the Stasi's performance of familiarity and attempt to generate trust and trustworthiness backfired. According to Moog, the Stasi approached people who, like her, were known to be "kontaktfreudig ... und interessiert" (sociable ... and curious) and who spent plenty of time with wide circles of friends.⁴⁵ However, instead of betraying these networks by joining the Stasi's exclusive club of intelligence-gatherers, Moog was more inclined to mistrust the officers, based on her gut feelings and knowledge acquired in the familial setting, and immediately betrayed the Stasi to her parents and her best friend. In contrast to Moog, Kolbe initially considered attempting to double-cross the Stasi with the aim of exploiting their efforts to draw him into their risky operation of trust and mistrust to gain knowledge about suspected oppositional activity in the cultural scene. But after discussing the matter with his friends who advised him against his foolhardy plan to play such a "doppeltes Spiel" (double game), he also ultimately declined the MfS's advances, giving the excuse that he did not, in fact, have the requisite nerves to be trusted as a reliable informant.⁴⁶ While Kolbe refers to this line of argument retrospectively as "feige" (cowardly) and "irgendwie peinlich" (somehow embarrassing),⁴⁷ it also shows an active reversal of the Stasi's own "watchwords"⁴⁸ of trust and reliability. Like Bernd Wagner, as we saw in chapter 1, both Moog and Kolbe not only blew their cover as potential informants by telling family and friends about the Stasi's propositions but also inverted the Stasi's regime of trust and distrust, passing knowledge in the opposite direction. Instead of agreeing to pass potentially incriminating knowledge about acquaintances vertically to the MfS, they spread knowledge about their encounters with the latter horizontally to others within their own communities of trust.

Talking to the Stasi: Mobilising Trust as Reciprocal Strategy

The Stasi's performance of trust and familiarity was sometimes met with reciprocal tactics by potential recruits or targets themselves, enabling them to strategically acquire or withhold knowledge. This could transpire in quite unlikely ways. In a slightly different kind of encounter with the Stasi, Ekkehard Maaß recalled allowing a Stasi officer to visit him at home on a

44 Kolbe, *Die Situation*, 9.

45 Interview with Christa Moog, August 25, 2021.

46 Interview with Uwe Kolbe, June 1, 2021.

47 Interview with Uwe Kolbe, June 1, 2021.

48 Betts, *Within Walls*, 46.

few occasions in the mid-1980s after the latter had approached the former on the street and offered him a lift home after a concert. Interestingly, Maaß brought this episode up in his interview with Windsor following a question about trust. He framed his recollection not only as a “delicate Geschichte” (delicate story) but also in terms of a general sense of familiarity and friendliness in the GDR—“Wir haben uns auch gleich geduzt, in der DDR duzen sich alle” (we immediately addressed each other with the familiar “Du,” everyone uses “Du” in the GDR)—and his own personal disposition to openness towards others: “Als ich in meine Wohnung eingezogen bin, hab’ ich als erstes außen eine Klinke angebracht. Also, meine Türe ist immer offen” (When I moved into my apartment, the first thing I did was put a handle on the outside. So, my door is always open).⁴⁹ Although he was not initially suspicious of his visitor, Maaß recalls quickly understanding that the man was from the MfS when he placed a box of tea on the table. In this case, Maaß interpreted the gesture not as a ploy or a bribe, as we saw with Moog and Kolbe above, but as a form of compensation, “als wolle er sich für seinen Besuch entschuldigen, damit hat er sich enttarnt” (as though he wanted to apologise for his visit, and in doing that he broke his cover).⁵⁰

In fact, Maaß’s experience of the Stasi officer appealed to his own sense of openness, goodwill, and mutual interest and understanding. According to Maaß, the officer explained that the MfS, as an organisation, was not united in approach and that his aim was to prove to the Stasi leadership, whom he described as Stalinist hardliners, that the artistic scene he had been observing for years was politically harmless, if not irrelevant:

Ihr macht künstlerische, literarische Veranstaltungen. Ihr lest Euch Gedichte vor, ne. Selten, dass diese Gedichte politisch sind, wie die von Wolf Biermann, oder so, also vordergründig. Ok, die passen jetzt nicht so gut in den sozialistischen Realismus, aber ihr seid doch keine Aufwiegler. Ihr wollt doch nicht Erich Honecker stürzen.⁵¹

[You put on artistic, literary events. You read poems to each other, right? It’s rare that these poems are political, like Wolf Biermann’s, or something like that, I mean outwardly. OK, they don’t fit in well with socialist realism, but you’re not agitators. You don’t want to overthrow Erich Honecker].

An over-determination of the apparently apolitical nature of the scene is evident here, reminiscent of the accusations that one of Sascha Anderson’s

49 Interview with Ekkehard Maaß, July 30, 2021.

50 Interview with Ekkehard Maaß, July 30, 2021.

51 Interview with Ekkehard Maaß, July 30, 2021.

key roles as IM was to depoliticise the scene.⁵² Indeed, the Stasi officer's frank assessment, including his critique of his superiors, might be seen as a further tactic to perform trustworthiness and gain Maaß's trust and cooperation in return. Notably, this tactic involved proffering knowledge about (claimed) internal disputes within the MfS and its covert activities within the underground literary scene as a method to construct trust, presumably in the hope that such a willingness to share information would be reciprocated.

Yet Maaß' recollection suggests that this was not a simple scenario of Stasi manipulation versus his own naivety (even though he seemed to agree with his visitor's assessment of the scene). Rather, it illustrates a kind of cautious mobilisation of trust on both sides. According to Maaß, the Stasi man was also strategically open about his need to speak to people within the scene, "damit ich das meinen Offizieren, meiner Führung klarmachen kann, dass ihr gar nicht diese politischen Feinde seid, für die ihr gehalten werdet" (so that I can make it clear to my officers and my leadership that you are not the political enemies that you are thought to be).⁵³ In this context, Maaß was prepared to talk, but not to inform:

Eigentlich hätte man ihn gleich rausschmeißen können. Aber man kann ja nicht über sein Wesen. Ich bin von meinem Wesen her ein sehr freundlicher Mensch, und der war auch sympathisch, ne. Und ich fand das auch interessant, mit dem zu reden. Aber ich sagte, ich gebe nichts preis über Andere.⁵⁴

[Actually, I could have thrown him out straight away. But you can't overcome your nature. I'm a very friendly person by nature, and he was also likeable. And I also found it interesting to talk to him. But I said I won't give anything away about others.]

For Maaß, the episode was built around his apparent inclination to trust, on the one hand, but an awareness of the need to keep the conversation in check—that is, not to respond to knowledge-sharing with knowledge-sharing—on the other. Importantly, these encounters also presented an interesting opportunity for Maaß to learn more about "was die Stasi so denkt" (what the Stasi thinks).⁵⁵ The extent of the Stasi officer's honesty about his purportedly honourable intentions is arguably less significant here than the respectful, if not friendly dynamic that seemed to develop between the two men and Maaß's understanding of this situation as one

52 Kulick, "Entpolitisieren, Entsolidarisieren, Kontrollieren."

53 Interview with Ekkehard Maaß, July 30, 2021.

54 Interview with Ekkehard Maaß, July 30, 2021.

55 Interview with Ekkehard Maaß, July 30, 2021.

that enabled him to extrapolate knowledge, however uncertain, from the Stasi through a tentative, yet strategic display of openness and trust.

Maaß's discussion of this episode in the interview illustrates his lingering uncertainty about both the epistemological and the ethical implications of his apparently friendly engagement with a Stasi representative. On the one hand, Maaß shows an ongoing inclination to believe the Stasi officer's claim that he was seeking knowledge to placate his superiors rather than incriminate Maaß and his acquaintances:

Also im Nachhinein, glaube ich, dass dieser Mann sogar ehrlich war. Also, dass er zwar natürlich bei der Stasi war, seine Arbeit gemacht hatte, das was er als Auftrag hatte. Aber ich glaube, dass er tatsächlich der Meinung war, man muss die Stasi-Obersten, Mielke und diese ganzen Stalinisten, die muss man davon überzeugen, dass hier eigentlich eine Künstlerszene wächst, die für die DDR 'ne Bereicherung sein könnte. Also, so ungefähr war sein Konzept. Genauer weiß ich auch nicht.⁵⁶

[In retrospect, I believe this man was actually being honest. He was, of course, a member of the Stasi, and he did his job, did what he was assigned to do. But I believe he actually thought that the Stasi colonels, Mielke, and all those Stalinists, had to be convinced that an artistic scene was actually growing here that could be an asset to the GDR. So, that was roughly his concept. I don't know the exact details either.]

On the other hand, as the final sentence of this quotation indicates, Maaß concedes that even his post-Wende knowledge of this Stasi officer's intentions and integrity remains vague and ultimately unsubstantiated. Moreover, he still questions the overall wisdom of his trusting nature and actions in this case: "Im Nachhinein ist es auch so, dass ich nicht weiß, ob ich—Also Jürgen Fuchs, hätte ihn sofort rausgeschmissen. Aber, man ist eben so, wie man ist" (in retrospect it's also the case that I don't know—Well, Jürgen Fuchs would have thrown him out straightaway. But you are how you are.)⁵⁷ Ultimately, however, Maaß's unhesitating disclosure of these encounters—"Ich hab natürlich darüber gesprochen" (of course I talked about it)—not only made him "nicht dicht" (not watertight) from the Stasi's point of view but also points to an essential trust within his own circles that enabled him to reveal such knowledge about his semi-willing interaction with the Stasi, presumably with an awareness that this might be controversial: "es gab Leute, die das verurteilt haben. Die

⁵⁶ Interview with Ekkehard Maaß, July 30, 2021.

⁵⁷ Interview with Ekkehard Maaß, July 30, 2021.

haben gesagt ‘Was? Du hast mit der Stasi geredet. Du bist’n Idiot. Also, mit solchen Leuten redet man nicht!’” (there were some people who strongly disapproved. They said “What? You talked to the Stasi. You’re an idiot. You don’t talk to people like that!”).⁵⁸ Unlike those who agreed to become informants, talking to the Stasi by no means prevented Maaß from talking about the Stasi.

According to Maaß, the Stasi man in question was called Mittelhäuser who, it was later revealed, had been the handler of several young writer-informants. Mittelhäuser’s willingness to offer testimony in an early post-Wende documentary film “Förräderi” (Betrayal) appears to have earned him a further degree of respect retrospectively; Maaß states that although Mittelhäuser neither showed his face nor said anything of great import in the film, it was good to have heard “eine Originalstimme eines Stasi-Mitarbeiters” (an original voice of a Stasi employee).⁵⁹ This is noteworthy given our general societal tendency to mistrust “perpetrator testimony,” as Sara Jones has explored.⁶⁰ In the context of our research, Maaß is not alone in his willingness to grant a degree of (retrospective) trust to former Stasi officers in order to understand how MfS employees navigated the system. In fact, Bettina Wegner mentions in her interview with Windsor that she has built a genuine friendship with a former Stasi officer who contacted her after the Wende to apologise for the part he played in the surveillance she and Schlesinger were subjected to. It was in this context that Wegner first addressed the issue of trust in the interview, without direct prompting. One key insight she has gained through this contact relates to the lack of trust and stable knowledge within the Stasi’s own structures: “Er hatte da nur eine einzige Kollegenperson, zu der er Vertrauen hatte ... Also, die hatten untereinander noch mehr Misstrauen als wir die Beobachteten untereinander. Dit hab ick dann verstanden”⁶¹ (He only had one colleague he could trust ... So there was more distrust amongst them than amongst those of us who were under observation. I understood that then.) For our purposes, two aspects are illuminating here: firstly, that Wegner’s acquisition of and apparent trust in this knowledge has come about on the basis of an interpersonal relationship, in this case (an unlikely) friendship;⁶² and, secondly, the attention she draws to

58 Interview with Ekkehard Maaß, July 30, 2021.

59 Interview with Ekkehard Maaß, July 30, 2021.

60 Jones, “Testimony through Culture.”

61 Interview with Bettina Wegner, August 23, 2021.

62 Wegner’s post-Wende building of trust with and acquisition of knowledge from the former Stasi officer contrasts with Gabriele Stötzer’s account of an encounter in 2019 with “Gunter H.” the Stasi officer who had interrogated her in 1977. When asking him questions about her arrest, the interrogator repeatedly denied having knowledge, despite Stötzer’s offer to show him documents: “Ich

differing degrees of trust and distrust within the Stasi's own apparatus and amongst their targets.

Emotions and Evidence: Cultivating Trust and (Mis)Deciphering Trustworthiness

Understanding how trust functioned in the GDR is of particular interest for our study of knowledge and secrecy because trust is “necessary ... in order to face both the known and the unknown ... It offers a way of reducing uncertainty. It lies somewhere between hope and confidence, and involves an element of semi-calculated risk-taking.”⁶³ In light of the unstable forms of knowledge discussed in chapter 1, the stakes of both reducing uncertainty and taking semi-calculated risks were particularly high. As the philosopher Benjamin McMyler suggests, trust “seems to involve something more than a rational disposition to cooperate with or rely on others.”⁶⁴ This is arguably even more pronounced in societies shaped by authoritarian structures, fragile knowledge, and precarious social relations (whether in dictatorships or beleaguered democracies). The GDR is a useful case study to explore the tension between understanding trust as a cognitive attitude or an affective one; moreover, it underscores the fact that this is a false opposition since the cognitive and affective dimensions of trust are, in fact, inseparable. As McMyler explains, “the more we view trust as a cognitive attitude based on evidence, the more difficult it becomes to accommodate the intuitive sense in which trust involves a kind of interpersonal dependence on the person trusted; and the more we view trust as a noncognitive, affective attitude, the more difficult it becomes to make sense of the way in which trust seemingly is and ought to be responsive to evidence.”⁶⁵ Knowing who to trust and trusting what to know in the GDR literary sphere entailed

weiß das nicht, ich bin ein kleines Licht gewesen ... So 'ne Konstruktion gab es nicht, habe ich noch nie gehört ... Den Namen habe ich nie gehört, und sowas hätte ich nie gemacht ... Nein davon weiß ich nichts. Und ich will auch nichts sehen. Ich werde bestreiten, dass ich diese Berichte geschrieben habe und dass das meine Unterschrift ist.” (I don't know, I was nobody of importance ... That kind of structure didn't exist, I've never heard that ... I've never heard that name, and I wouldn't have done anything like that ... No I don't know anything about that. And I don't want to see anything. I'll dispute that I wrote those reports and that that's my signature.) In Stötzer's recollection of their encounter, there is a conspicuous lack of trust and a corresponding lack of knowledge-sharing on Gunter H.'s part. See Stötzer, *Der lange Arm der Stasi*, esp. 278.

63 Hosking, “Trust and Distrust,” 96.

64 McMyler, *Testimony, Trust, and Authority*, 114.

65 McMyler, *Testimony, Trust, and Authority*, 114–15.

both intuitive, interpersonal trust—akin to “blinkered vision”⁶⁶—and seeking or deducing signs of trustworthiness in a context where such evidence was scant or unstable.

The Stasi’s tactics of exploiting relationships of trust blurred the lines between trust and mistrust and further intensified the tensions between the cognitive and affective facets of trust. Just as they used the performance of trust in their relationships with informants, Stasi officers also often explicitly told IMs to build trust with people they informed on as they were more likely to access and acquire personal and political information that way. Indeed, the ability to win people’s trust was an asset that the Stasi sought after and praised in their informants.⁶⁷ Examples of this are abundant. Lewis writes, for instance, that the MfS described Paul Gratzik, who would become IM “Peter,” as “having the necessary ability to work with young people and as knowing ‘how to win their trust.’”⁶⁸ Similarly, IM “Marion,” Paul Wiens’s daughter Maja, was deemed useful because she had “won the trust of several operatively known actively hostile persons and was producing extensive operatively significant information and evidence in the course of the operation.”⁶⁹ An assignment document for Anderson/“David Menzer” in 1980 indicates that trust in these contexts was to be built on the pretence of naturally developing friendship—“auf der Grundlage von natürlichen Möglichkeiten, die Sie aus dem bisherigen Kennenlernen erarbeitet haben” (on the basis of natural opportunities that you have acquired in the process of becoming acquainted).⁷⁰ This, in turn, was a mechanism of secrecy intended to conceal any trace of the Stasi’s involvement. Anderson was explicitly instructed to establish this personal connection with his target “nur auf der Basis von vertraulichen Gesprächen. Das Ziel muß sein, daß Sie ein Vertrauensverhältnis herstellen und das [*sic*] daraus weitere Möglichkeiten ableiten lassen, was Sie dann zur Abschöpfung operativ interessanter Informationen nutzen können” (on the basis of confidential conversations only. The goal must be to establish a relationship of trust and enable further options to emerge from this, which you can then use to extract information of operational interest).⁷¹ When IMs followed these orders and did their job effectively (from the Stasi’s point of view), their betrayal of their target was both a betrayal of interpersonal trust and a betrayal of knowledge gained through trust.

66 McMyler, *Testimony, Trust, and Authority*, 114.

67 See Betts, *Within Walls*, 46.

68 Lewis, *A State of Secrecy*, 28.

69 Cited in Lewis, *A State of Secrecy*, 126.

70 Assignment document for IMS “David Menzer,” dated December 16, 1980, 135.

71 Assignment document for IMS “David Menzer,” dated December 16, 1980, 135.

The deliberate building of trust in order to exploit targets and gain knowledge was a counterpart to the notorious tactics of *Zersetzung*, which included the deliberate cultivation of distrust (to undermine existing bonds of trust). The Stasi's dealings with Klaus Schlesinger and Bettina Wegner illustrate this dual approach. The OV "Schreiberling" files reveal that Schlesinger was a direct target of their tactic of deliberately sowing seeds of doubt, suspicion, and mistrust, as we noted in chapter 1. Alongside allowing him to travel, this included further detailed plans to conjure suspicion that he was spying for the MfS—for example, through anonymous letters both to him and his acquaintances in West Berlin—and to push him, in turn, to suspect and accuse others of spreading such rumours.⁷² Meanwhile, with the opening of her files, Wegner, like countless others, discovered that someone she had assumed to be a close friend—whose real identity Wegner did not reveal in the interview with Windsor—had in fact been an unofficial informer "von recht übler Art" (of the really bad kind), as Wegner put it.⁷³ Reading the file revealed to Wegner that the IM's specific "Legende," the cover story concocted by the Stasi to gain access to knowledge about her, depended on the performance and cultivation of trust: "sie sollte mir ein Konzert in Leipzig verschaffen, mit mir dahinfahren und Vertrauen aufbauen, und versuchen, Freundinnen zu werden. Hat alles geklappt" (she was supposed to get me a concert in Leipzig, go there with me and build trust, and try to become friends. It all worked out).⁷⁴

Wegner and Schlesinger were not only targets of complementary Stasi tactics but can also be seen as representatives of both sides of a dialectic of trust and mistrust in the GDR literary sphere: Wegner adopted a stance of radical trust and openness, while Schlesinger resorted to radical distrust and vigilance. Reports in the files make repeated references to Schlesinger's tendency to distrust those around him—perhaps because of the Stasi's direct interventions to this end. The same files—as well as Wegner's retrospective interview—suggest that she, like Maaß, was generally inclined to be more trusting of others, despite the climate of uncertainty, and even to be wary of excessive mistrust. In one instance, described by an IM with the code name "Vera," the IM reports having to tread carefully in conversation with Schlesinger, Wegner, and another acquaintance because "Schlesinger reagiert auf jede Frage mit Mißtrauen"

72 Plan for long-term political-operative "Zersetzung" measures in OV "Schreiberling" and other focus procedures of department XX/7, dated January 18, 1978, esp. 38–40.

73 Interview with Bettina Wegner, August 23, 2021.

74 Interview with Bettina Wegner, August 23, 2021.

(Schlesinger reacts to every question with suspicion).⁷⁵ In a discussion about the future of Wegner's event series "Kramladen," which was being monitored by the Stadtrat für Kultur, Schlesinger reportedly warned his then wife not to underestimate one particular colleague, suggesting "der arbeitet bestimmt für die Staasi! [*sic*]" (he probably works for the Stasi!).⁷⁶ According to IM "Vera," Wegner objected to this claim and retorted: "Du immer mit Deinem übertriebenen Mißtrauen. Bei Dir ist ja jeder zweite ein Spitzel der Staasi [*sic*] ... Natürlich haben die Ohren überall, aber ich glaube eher, die sitzen unter den Besuchern" (You, with your constant exaggerated distrust. For you, every second person is an informant for the Stasi ... Of course they have ears everywhere, but I think they are sitting among the visitors).⁷⁷ The key issue here is not whether Wegner or Schlesinger were correct in their intuitive assumptions but rather the openness with which they exchange that uncertain knowledge about the nature of the Stasi's presence (which is not doubted *per se*) and the way they each navigate that uncertainty. We also see Wegner's inclination to think the Stasi threat was most likely to come from a secondary circle, in this case the audience, than their immediate network, and her belief that mistrust could be just as ill-founded and potentially counterproductive as trust.

The reports from IM "Vera" suggest that her relationship with Wegner was also based on a close friendship (though she is almost certainly not the IM Wegner refers to in her interview with Windsor). In the aforementioned report, "Vera" notes that their conversation not only covered Wegner's difficulties with the "Kramladen" and Schlesinger's writing and travel plans, but also what she called general topics like health, children, and other everyday worries. Their private encounters at Wegner and Schlesinger's home often lasted until late into the evening. On one occasion, when Schlesinger was out, "Vera" had no trouble asking Wegner about the content of manuscripts that her then husband had left lying around: "da ist sie ohne Mißtrauen bereit, Auskunft zu geben ganz im Gegenteil zu Schlesinger selbst" (she's prepared to give information without mistrust, quite the opposite of Schlesinger himself).⁷⁸ Even in a situation where IM "Vera" felt her relationship with Wegner had cooled, this was attributed to Schlesinger's influence and a wider

75 Summary report by IM "Vera" on the development of her contact with Wegner and Schlesinger since early February 1976 (OV "Schreiberling"), dated March 26, 1976, 103.

76 Summary report by IM "Vera" about the development of her contact with Wegner and Schlesinger, dated March 26, 1976, 104.

77 Summary report by IM "Vera" about the development of her contact with Wegner and Schlesinger, dated March 26, 1976, 104.

78 Summary report by IM "Vera" about the development of her contact with Wegner and Schlesinger, dated March 26, 1976, 107.

crisis following the couple's involvement in protests against Biermann's expulsion, rather than a breakdown of trust:

Ich weiß auch nicht, warum Bettina in letzter Zeit so unnahbar ist. Da steckt bestimmt ihr Mann dahinter, der ja schon immer ein bißchen gegen unseren Kontakt queruliert hat, ohne daß ich sagen kann, daß er direkt unfreundlich mir gegenüber war. Ich kann mir nicht vorstellen, daß ich bei Bettina Mißtrauen erzeugt habe. Sicher bin ich ihr in der gegenwärtigen Situation zu bedeutungslos und wenig nützlich.⁷⁹

[I don't know why Bettina has been so unapproachable lately. Her husband is probably behind this, he's always been a bit grouchy about our contact, although I can't say that he was directly unfriendly towards me. I can't imagine that I've aroused distrust from Bettina. No doubt I'm not important or useful enough to her in the current situation.]

In "Vera's" detailed account of numerous unsuccessful attempts to engage with Wegner in the kind of confidential and intimate conversation they were evidently accustomed to, she mentioned two occasions when Wegner apologised for being "kurz angebunden" (brusque) and not responding to a written note "Vera" had sent her.⁸⁰ Despite these signals of continued sympathy on Wegner's part, she insisted on postponing a full conversation until the following month because she was too preoccupied with her own problems to be able to discuss "Vera's" seemingly urgent "Sorgen" ("worries"); the use of inverted commas around "Sorgen" in the report indicate that this was a cover story based around a close friendship. Interesting in this case is IM "Vera's" suggestion that Wegner was naturally trusting, but nonetheless pragmatic in her approach to their relationship. Moreover, the report suggests that Wegner's reluctance to discuss both the Biermann affair and more personal matters with "Vera" had not stopped her from mentioning, thus passing on partial knowledge, that she and Schlesinger were being subjected to ongoing reprisals and that the other protest signatories, "die sie alle als ihre 'Freunde' bezeichnete, vieles 'Böse' über sich ergehen lassen müßten" (all of whom she described as her "friends," were having to endure a lot of "sinister stuff").⁸¹

79 Report by IME "Vera" on Bettina Wegner-Schlesinger (OV "Schreiberling"), dated February 9, 1977, 68.

80 Report by IME "Vera" on Bettina Wegner-Schlesinger (OV "Schreiberling"), dated February 9, 1977, 66.

81 Report by IME "Vera" on Bettina Wegner-Schlesinger (OV "Schreiberling"), dated February 9, 1977, 67.

Wegner's approach to trust is arguably an exemplary case of trust as an intuitive and affective attitude resting on interpersonal dependence. At the same time, it bears the seemingly paradoxical hallmarks of trust as a "*strategic decision* to take a risk in the condition of uncertainty," based on "non-rational" and "incalculable elements."⁸² In her interview with Windsor, Wegner recalls reading in a report by the aforementioned unnamed IM that the task of befriending Wegner had been straightforward because "die Wegner ist so vertrauensdusselig" (Wegner is so gormlessly trusting).⁸³ The IM's language, as recalled by Wegner, is derogatory and suggests naivety or stupidity, even irrationality, on Wegner's part. By contrast, Wegner herself commented that "vertrauensselig" (blissfully trusting) would have been a more appropriate word:

Weil, dit wollt' ich nich' verlieren. Vertrauen in Menschen. Und bei den meisten hat sich's ja och als richtig erwiesen. Ich möchte nich' mein Vertrauen in Freunde verlieren und misstrauisch an jeden Menschen. Ich hab' gesagt, für mich, is' egal. Und ick bin stolz, dass ick vertrauensdusselig war, und sie hinter[listig] ... Weil Misstrauen macht ganz viel, ja, normalen Umgang miteinander unmöglich. Wenn Du bei jedem denkst 'Isser, isser, könnt' er, könnt' er?' Dit macht alles kaputt. Da bin ick lieber vertrauensdusselig.⁸⁴

[I didn't want to lose that. Trust in people. And in most cases, it turned out to be right. I don't want to lose my trust in friends and become suspicious of everyone. I said, I don't care. And I'm proud that I was gormlessly trusting and that it was her who was deceitful ... Because distrust does a lot, right, it makes normal interactions with each other impossible. If you think "is he, is he, could he, could he?" about everyone. That destroys everything. Then I'd rather be gormlessly trusting.]

In her own interpretation, then, Wegner's trusting nature was not naïve or irrational but a kind of emotional strategy; an invaluable mode of human behaviour, a sign of resilience, and, in the final instance, a source of pride. We have seen in chapter 1 that Wegner was not immune from the suspicions built on intuitive knowledge. This emphasis on "trusting anyway" indicates a conscious choice—a form of resistance to Stasi power—to not let those intuitions influence her relationships with others. Furthermore, if trust was a source of agency and resistance in Wegner's case, chapter 3 will demonstrate that Schlesinger was by no means inhibited by his paranoia

82 Misztal, *Trust in Modern Societies*, 15. Our emphasis.

83 Interview with Bettina Wegner, August 23, 2021.

84 Interview with Bettina Wegner, August 23, 2021.

and distrust but also galvanised by precisely those feelings to counteract the Stasi's surveillance and infiltration of his life.

The ambivalent interplay between the emotional and cognitive dimensions of trust and mistrust can also be seen in the contrast between Kolbe's relationship with his biological father, Ulrich, who was deployed from the beginning of the OPK initiated in 1981 (though his interventions in his son's life may have begun earlier) under the code name FIM "Werner Weber,"⁸⁵ and his relationship with another close male figure, Peter Mugay, who Kolbe later described as a "väterliche[r] Freund" (fatherly friend)⁸⁶ and who reported on Kolbe as IM "Albert" from around 1984, ostensibly, he would later claim, because he wanted to protect him after his mentor Franz Fühmann had passed away.⁸⁷ As we saw in chapter 1, Kolbe had long held suspicions—and believed to have what he referred to as "alle Indizien" (all indicators)—that his father worked for the MfS, although he could never be certain, and often confronted him about it. In those moments of confrontation, when Kolbe voiced his distrust openly, his father attempted to proffer (false) counterevidence of his trustworthiness. For example, Kolbe recalled his father arguing that he could not possibly work for the Stasi because his (Ulrich's) mother and four siblings lived in West Germany which made him unsuitable for such a role.⁸⁸ Nadine Nowroth states that "Werner Weber's" FIM file is replete with examples of how he tried to dispel his son's suspicions.⁸⁹ In one report, "Werner Weber" noted that Uwe Kolbe's suspicions had probably been fuelled by "eine dritte Person" (a third person), a stage technician at the Mecklenburg theatre, where rumours had circulated about his involvement with the MfS. Furthermore, Kolbe had found his father's "legendierte [*sic!*] Tätigkeit beim Aufbau-Verlag ... immer wieder unglaublich ... nachdem der ihm bekannte Verlagsleiter ihm gegenüber eine Bekanntschaft mit mir verneinte und später 'sich erinnerte'" (cover-story about working at the Aufbau publishing house ... increasingly unbelievable ... after the publishing director, whom he knows, denied knowing me only to "remember" later on).⁹⁰ The involvement and utterances of third parties is instructive

85 Nowroth, "Schutzraum Familie?," 122. Nowroth notes that there was some variation in the code name used; in early documents, for example, he appears as IM "Hans Weber" which Nowroth assumes to be an error.

86 Kolbe, "Uwe Kolbe über IM *Albert* alias Peter Mugay," 33. Kolbe used the same term in his interview with Windsor.

87 Interview with Uwe Kolbe, June 1, 2021; Kolbe, "Uwe Kolbe über IM *Albert*," 35.

88 Interview with Uwe Kolbe, June 1, 2021. See also Kolbe, "Die Sache mit V.," 152.

89 Nowroth, "Schutzraum Familie?," 134.

90 IM "Werner Weber" cited (without date) in Nowroth, "Schutzraum Familie?," 134.

here: Kolbe seemed more inclined to trust the knowledge circulating as rumours passed on by the stage technician and make inferences from the publishing director's initial "mistake" than he was to believe his father. To counteract this, "Werner Weber" reported that he had written Kolbe a strongly worded letter and claimed that this kind of direct attack, as he put it, had previously proved effective in improving their relationship, which meant, by extension, greater access to information (from his son).⁹¹

Another report records an encounter when Kolbe directly broached the issue of mistrust. On this occasion, "Werner Weber's" assignment had been to visit his son in Prenzlauer Berg, not long after Kolbe had been denied permission to travel to the West.⁹² According to "Werner Weber," his son showed "eine deutliche Zurückhaltung" (a clear reticence) and addressed him in a friendly tone but with "sehr massiv vorgetragenen Mißtrauen" (heavily laid-on mistrust), remarking sarcastically that his father must surely have known that he was actually not in Berlin at all, but had been in Tübingen/FRG for two days already.⁹³ In response, "Werner Weber" once again went on the offensive:

[I]ch [wurde] sehr ernst und erklärte Uwe KOLBE unmißverständlich, daß ich wüßte, daß er mir seit langem mißtraue, er sich jedoch damit abfinden müsse, daß ich aufgrund unseres ganz persönlichen Verhältnisses mein Interesse an ihm aufrechterhielte, ob es ihm gefalle oder nicht, und ich erklärte nachdrücklich, daß ich ausschließlich "in eigenem Auftrag" bei ihm sei und erwarte, daß er mir das endlich abnehme.⁹⁴

[I became very serious and explained to Uwe KOLBE in no uncertain terms that I knew that he had long distrusted me, but that he would have to accept that, because of our very personal relationship, I would maintain my interest in him, whether he liked it or not, and I explained emphatically that I was with him exclusively "on my own behalf" and that I expected him to finally believe me.]

Kolbe seemed to accept his father's explanation that he was visiting in response to a phone call from a friend who was concerned about Kolbe's oppositional poems. In "Werner Weber's" assessment, this cover story had succeeded "vor allem aufgrund ihrer ganz direkten Erklärung und im weiteren Verlauf des Zusammenseins gab es keinen Anhaltspunkt, daß

91 IM "Werner Weber" cited (without date) in Nowroth, "Schutzraum Familie?," 135.

92 Report by "Werner Weber" (not marked as IM here) on Uwe Kolbe, dated September 22, 1981.

93 Report by "Werner Weber" on Uwe Kolbe, dated September 22, 1981, 154.

94 Report by "Werner Weber" on Uwe Kolbe, dated September 22, 1981, 155.

ihm Zweifel kamen” (above all because of this very direct explanation and for the rest of our meeting there was no reason to think he had any doubts).⁹⁵ At the end of his six-page document detailing the knowledge he had acquired from and about his son, Kolbe’s father appeared vindicated by his confrontational tactic: “Nach diesem Gespräch habe ich den Eindruck, daß der weitere Kontakt intensiver und unkomplizierter ausgebaut werden kann. Besonders günstig wirkte sich meiner Meinung nach der Umstand aus, daß ich aus einer offensiven Position her das Gespräch mit ihm führen konnte” (After this conversation, I have the impression that further contact can be expanded more intensively and more easily. In my opinion, the fact that I was able to conduct the conversation with him from an offensive position was particularly beneficial).⁹⁶

These examples certainly demonstrate “Werner Weber”/Ulrich Kolbe’s deception and manipulation of their father-son relationship. At the same time, these interactions illustrate the tactics FIM “Werner Weber” was compelled to adopt in order to retain, or regain, even the tiniest element of his son’s trust. If there were to be any semblance of trust in Kolbe’s attitude to his father, then some form of counterevidence was required to offset the signs that made him suspicious in the first place. This, in turn, gives insight into Kolbe’s navigation of the uncertainty surrounding his father’s collusion with the SED and GDR state. Despite his scepticism and suspicions, Kolbe seemed most receptive, however cautiously and superficially, to his father’s feigned yet partial honesty about his ideological and paternal concerns when this was performed as a frontal assault of openness, based on arguments that seemed to contain a degree of plausibility. This is not to suggest that Kolbe naively interpreted that openness as evidence of his father’s trustworthiness, but rather to point to his alertness and apparent responsiveness to both emotional arguments and seemingly rational indicators of trust and distrust in their fraught relationship. This ambivalence surrounding (dis)trust correlated with the instability of Kolbe’s knowledge of his father’s intentions and complicity in the state’s surveillance apparatus.

In contrast to his relationship with his father where the issues of trust and distrust were confronted at least partially openly, Kolbe claims to have had a kind of “Urvertrauen” (basic trust) in Peter Mugay (IM “Albert”), an unconditional trust that he had shown no-one else, and which he had not questioned until after the opening of the files.⁹⁷ Even then, it took some time before his trust fully dissipated and he garnered the evidence he required to establish that it was Mugay behind the alias “Albert”: “IM *Albert* war offenbar jemand, der viel von mir wußte,

95 Report by “Werner Weber” on Uwe Kolbe, dated September 22, 1981, 155.

96 Report by “Werner Weber” on Uwe Kolbe, dated September 22, 1981, 159.

97 Kolbe, “Uwe Kolbe über IM *Albert*,” 34.

eine Art Familienmitglied. Erst die Veröffentlichung einer Karteikarte in *Focus* im August 1993 half mir auf ... Aber ich steckte den Kopf in den Sand. Ich wollte einen eigenen Beweis, einen offiziellen der Gauck-Behörde ...”⁹⁸ (IM *Albert* was obviously someone who knew a lot about me, a kind of family member. It was only the publication of an index card in *Focus* in August 1993 that helped me ... But I stuck my head in the sand. I wanted my own proof, official proof from the Gauck authority ...). As more documents came to light, it became clear that this IM knew “verblüffend viele Details” (an astonishing amount of detail) about Kolbe’s travels, love life, work projects and schedule.⁹⁹ Mugay had such privileged access and enjoyed Kolbe’s trust to such an extent that the “information” he passed on to the MfS—“ein hübsches Psychogramm” (a nice psychogram) as Kolbe put it—could not always be used operationally because it would have blown his cover. We might say that Mugay sometimes had too much knowledge gained through too much trust to operate effectively in secret.

Alongside the palpable anger about Mugay’s betrayal of the knowledge acquired through their relationship of trust, Kolbe speculates retrospectively about the reasons for his incautious openness towards this man in particular. Mugay lived next door to his mother and stepfather in Prenzlauer Berg and was at that time editor of *Neue Zeit*, the official newspaper of the East German CDU:

Unter anderem lag es daran, daß sich hier zur Schrankwand meiner Eltern ein paar tausend Bücher gesellten. Vielleicht ließ ich mich gerade die Mischung aus vertraut schlichtem Milieu und geistigem, allemal politischem Interesse die Scheu ablegen. Dabei lag im Politischen der einzige latente Streit, der—wie oft in Familien üblich—des lieben Miteinanders willen nicht ausgetragen wurde.¹⁰⁰

[One of the reasons was that there were a few thousand books on the other side of my parents’ wall. Perhaps it was the mixture of familiar, unpretentious surroundings and intellectual, certainly political interest that made me let my guard down. That said, politics were our only point of latent conflict, which—as so often in families—wasn’t discussed in the open for the sake of preserving harmony.]

It might be argued that their interpersonal relationship simply seemed strong enough to Kolbe, and Mugay apparently gave him no overt reason to mistrust him—unlike Ulrich Kolbe who had to work hard to convince his son to trust him. Nonetheless, this retrospective account suggests

98 Kolbe, “Uwe Kolbe über IM *Albert*,” 33.

99 Kolbe, “Uwe Kolbe über IM *Albert*,” 34.

100 Kolbe, “Uwe Kolbe über IM *Albert*,” 34.

that Mugay's intellectual habitus, as well as mutual respect and political curiosity provided sufficient evidence of Mugay's trustworthiness for the young Kolbe, albeit rather more implicitly and intuitively than as evidence he explicitly sought out.

Familiarity and Frolleagues:¹⁰¹ (Semi-)Professional Networks and the Role of Reputation

In line with Hosking's comment that trust is one of the "least noticed" aspects of social life, Kolbe commented in his interview with Windsor that he was more aware of and able to say more about why he had distrusted some people—regardless of whether he was correct to do so—than why he had trusted others:

Ja, das ist eine gute Frage. Ja, warum? ... Ja, ist schon komisch, weil das ist sowas ganz wi-, eigentlich sogar Wichtiges, Atmosphärisches, weil wem vertraue ich warum? Aber das ist eigentlich, das ist natürlich Psychologie, ja? Darüber hat keiner nachgedacht ... Es ist schon merkwürdig. Also ich ... wüsste mehr, ich weiß mehr vom Misstrauen als vom Vertrauen, wie das funktioniert hat ...¹⁰²

[Yes, that's a good question. Yes why? ... Yes, it's strange, because it's something very important, atmospheric, because who do I trust and why? But that's actually, that's psychology of course, right? Nobody thought about it ... It's quite strange. I know ... more about mistrust than about trust, how that worked ...]

From this perspective, trust is understood as something impressionistic and indeterminate—based on intuitive knowledge—not the outcome of a conscious thought process, whereas the causes and functions of mistrust are assumed to be detectable and knowable. This presumed distinction seems to be largely borne out in Kolbe's approach to his relationships with his father and Mugay, although our close analysis of those examples above illustrates that his (instinctive) decisions about whether, why, and how far to trust them were often more complicated in practice.

While he claims he had not given it much thought at the time, Kolbe's further reflection on the mechanisms of trust in the interview with Windsor reveal his recognition that the decision to trust had in fact required "bestimmte Indizien, bestimmte Sachen" (particular indicators, particular things). Precisely because the question of trust had been so "kitzelig"

¹⁰¹ A portmanteau of "friend" and "colleague."

¹⁰² Interview with Uwe Kolbe, June 1, 2021.

(tricky), it was important that there had been “irgendwo einen Punkt des Vertrauens ... Also einen Grund: Der und der ist okay, weil der ...” (a point of trust somewhere ... A reason: so and so is okay, because ...).¹⁰³ As we shall see in this section, those points or indicators of (presumed) trust were sometimes based on personal inference or professional appreciation, but they also depended on social environment and context as well as reputation and recommendations. If suspicions were spread through hearsay and rumour, then word-of-mouth could also establish common ground and trust. According to Kolbe, for example, “man hörte natürlich von diesen und jenen und wenn ich jemanden kennenlernte, von dem ich schon mal gehört hatte über Freunde oder so, dann war ja alles gut. Dann war das vorbereitet” (you of course heard of this or that person and if I met someone I’d already heard about from friends or so, then everything was fine. Then the ground was prepared.)¹⁰⁴ In this light, assumptions about a person or group’s trustworthiness were themselves often based on a kind of second-hand knowledge, reliant on the judgement and endorsement of others, which in turn required trust in the authority of their knowledge about the presumed integrity of the new or common acquaintance(s) in question.

In the unofficial literary scene, shared experiences and the circumstances in which people met were an important factor in establishing trust; in Kolbe’s recollection, at parties, for instance, or in other private, if not “illegal” contexts.¹⁰⁵ Wagner recalled sensing a generalised distrust “in größeren anonymen Versammlungen” (larger anonymous gatherings), whether in the official Writers’ Union or church circles.¹⁰⁶ Despite his awareness that even in closer informal settings there was always the possibility that someone was “dabei,” he felt a greater sense of security around the writers and artists he met who lived and worked “unter gleichen, ähnlichen Bedingungen ... sich so durchgeschlagen haben, illegale Ausstellungen gemacht haben ... Also dass da unbedingt, also da eine vergleichbare Lebenserfahrung und ein einfacheres Einverständnis war, als zum Beispiel der jüngeren Generation gegenüber” (under the same or similar conditions ... who struggled along, took part in illegal exhibitions ... That there was certainly comparable life experience and a simpler mutual understanding than with the younger generation, for example).¹⁰⁷ Since freelance writers did not have work colleagues in a more conventional sense, personal introductions within these networks were crucial: in Kolbe’s words, for example, “die Einführung durch einen Freund, durch einen andern Vertrauten. Das war natürlich das Einfachste dann.

103 Interview with Uwe Kolbe, June 1, 2021.

104 Interview with Uwe Kolbe, June 1, 2021.

105 Interview with Uwe Kolbe, June 1, 2021.

106 Interview with Bernd Wagner, October 20, 2020.

107 Interview with Bernd Wagner, October 20, 2020.

Also wenn der und der sagte: ‘Der ist okay,’ oder: ‘Das lohnt sich,’ oder so, dann klar! Dann knüpft man auch den Kontakt” (so an introduction through a friend, through another confidante. That was the simplest way. If so and so said: “He’s okay” or “it’s worth it” or similar, then sure! Then you also make the contact.)¹⁰⁸ This was particularly important because, in Kolbe’s view, “Freundschaft war das Grundsätzliche, der grundsätzliche Umgang miteinander” (friendship was fundamental, the fundamental way of interacting with each other):¹⁰⁹ other than familial ties, the “wir”¹¹⁰ (or “in-group,” to borrow Hosking’s term)¹¹¹ to which one belonged was mostly determined by friendship in contradistinction to “‘die’ da” (them out there),¹¹² i.e., the state and its various agencies. Existing contacts and friendships thus gave rise to further relationships of trust through which knowledge could be circulated.

Literary friendships were also established on the basis of professional admiration; as Kolbe recalled, “[a]lso wenn man jetzt nen Text von jemandem in die Hand bekommt, dann sagt man ja klar: ‘Oh, das ist was.’ ... Und, oder: ‘Den möchte ich gern kennenlernen’ oder ‘die’” (when you get hold of someone’s text and then you say: “oh, that’s quite something.” ... And/or: “I’d like to meet him or her”).¹¹³ In her interview with Windsor, Gabriele Stötzer noted that she and Bernd Wagner had become friends after meeting at an exhibition and reading in Berlin, organised by and for the women she refers to as “die verlassenen Frauen” (abandoned wives).¹¹⁴ A report by IMB “Fritz Müller” (Sascha Anderson) on an event matching this description suggests that Stötzer had read a text reflecting on her experience in prison and several texts about gender relations.¹¹⁵ According to Stötzer, Wagner liked what he heard at the reading and immediately invited her to contribute to *Mikado*; later in the interview she also noted that Wagner was always most enthusiastic about precisely those texts based on her experiences in prison. After that first encounter, Wagner often visited her in Erfurt “[und hat] die ganze Szene auch mitkonsumiert, auch mit frei gefühlt” (and consumed the whole scene along with us, felt free with us).¹¹⁶ In this sense, personal respect and trust could be inferred or generated through aesthetic and political judgement, which led, in turn, to the expansion of networks

108 Interview with Uwe Kolbe, June 1, 2021.

109 Interview with Uwe Kolbe, June 1, 2021.

110 Interview with Uwe Kolbe, June 1, 2021.

111 Hosking, “Trust and Distrust,” 108.

112 Interview with Uwe Kolbe, June 1, 2021.

113 Interview with Uwe Kolbe, June 1, 2021.

114 Interview with Gabriele Stötzer, June 14, 2021.

115 Report by IMB “Fritz Müller” on an exhibition and two events in a Berlin apartment [name of host redacted], dated December 12, 1983.

116 Interview with Gabriele Stötzer, June 14, 2021.

and creative collaborations, sometimes across different cities and artistic scenes. We also see Stötzer's willingness to share knowledge and personal experience of state repression through testimonial writing, something we explore more in chapter 3.

Underground publications like *Mikado* not only created opportunities for literary exchange away from state censorship but also emerged from and rested on relationships of trust amongst friends and mutual acquaintances. In his interview with Windsor, Wagner claimed he had not been "vernetzt" (networked) in a political sense, for example in the peace or environmental movements or in church circles, but that *Mikado* had been "ein Netz in dem Sinne, dass man sich gegenseitig getragen hat" (a network in the sense that we supported each other).¹¹⁷ In Kolbe's recollection, the decision to work with Wagner and Trolle to expand the underground publication he had initially produced alone as "Der Kaiser ist nackt" (The Emperor's New Clothes) had come about in an informal setting, "eines Tages mit denen, ich weiß nicht, wir haben Skat gespielt, irgendwas gemacht" (one day I was, I don't know, playing skat with them, doing something).¹¹⁸ Together, they covered different literary genres,—poetry, prose, and drama, respectively—and each collected texts "aus seinem Freundeskreis" (from his circle of friends),¹¹⁹ which they discussed and collated at editorial meetings, literally assembling and folding each issue themselves. In the foreword to a West German collection of selected *Mikado* texts, the editors noted that this kind of collective work had been a new experience for them, motivated in part by their common search "nach einer erfrischenderen Form des Zusammenlebens, die hinausgeht über trostloses Zusammensitzen in Kneipen, über unnützes Herumdiskutieren hinter verschlossenen Türen" (for a more refreshing form of coexistence that extended beyond dismally sitting around together in pubs, beyond fruitless discussions behind closed doors).¹²⁰ The practical production of these journals also required help from wider networks: Wagner mentions a pressman who lived in his apartment block who helped print the covers (each designed by a different artist) and a friend of Kolbe's who secretly made 100 copies of each issue by smuggling thousands of pieces of paper in and out of the ministry he worked at where he had rare access to a copy machine.¹²¹ Kolbe, in turn, noted that he knew the printer through Bärbel Bohley.¹²²

117 Interview with Bernd Wagner, October 20, 2020.

118 Interview with Uwe Kolbe, June 1, 2021.

119 Interview with Bernd Wagner, October 20, 2020.

120 Kolbe, Trolle, and Wagner, "Mikado 1–12," 8.

121 Interview with Bernd Wagner, October 20, 2020.

122 Interview with Uwe Kolbe, June 1, 2021.

As Wagner recalls, the people who helped them produce *Mikado* were often at greater risk than the writers themselves, who were “einigermaßen geschützt, so durch [eine] gewisse Art von Popularität” (protected to an extent, by a degree of popularity).¹²³ In addition to the mysterious appearance of one issue of *Mikado* on Kolbe’s father’s desk, which Wagner recalled in his interview with Windsor,¹²⁴ the MfS was certainly aware of the underground publication via informants like Anderson. In *Die Situation*, Kolbe ridicules “Fritz Müller’s” technical observation about the offset printing used, and notes that such information could have had consequences for the printing press operator.¹²⁵ Nonetheless, Wagner notes in his interview with Windsor that no serious betrayal of trust or knowledge had occurred in their network: “das Beglückende beim Studium der Stasi-Akten [war], dass nicht einer aus diesem Kreis um *Mikado* herum Zuträger bei der Stasi war. Also das sprach für unser menschliches Gespür, oder die Intaktheit eines Freundeskreises” (when reading the Stasi files it was gratifying [to discover] that not a single person associated with the *Mikado* circle was a whistle-blower for the Stasi. That spoke for our human intuition, or the integrity of a group of friends).¹²⁶ In this sense, their intuitive and collective knowledge about each other’s trustworthiness and reliability served as a protective measure to ensure certain knowledge remained concealed from the MfS. As we shall see in chapters 3 and 4, the networks surrounding samizdat publications like *Mikado* also enabled covert (and sometimes overt) resistance to state surveillance and transported knowledge about the Stasi in the form of literary fiction.

Trust was of course not guaranteed or unconditional even in situations where most of the fundamental conditions of a close-knit community based on mutual introductions and common interest and experience appeared to be met. In chapter 1 we saw Wagner’s claims that he had disliked Anderson even without knowing about his collaboration with the Stasi. Similarly, Kolbe recalls that in Ekkehard Maaß’s kitchen, “wo’s auch schön war und wo man sich traf und die Suppe aß oder so ... trotzdem hab ich da nicht alle gemocht und nicht allen vertraut” (where it was nice and where we met up and ate soup and such ... I still didn’t like and trust everyone there).¹²⁷ In another anecdote, Kolbe remembered feeling

123 Interview with Bernd Wagner, October 20, 2020.

124 Interview with Bernd Wagner, October 20, 2020.

125 Kolbe, *Die Situation*, 39. The document in questions is a report by IMB “Fritz Müller” on a follow-up meeting of the “Zersammlung,” dated May 3, 1984. A similar point is made in Wagner, “Stasi-Gift,” 12; The “Zersammlung” (dis-meeting) was a “marathon reading” held over several evenings from March, 5–11, 1984, in Prenzlauer Berg, organised by the poets Bert Papenfuß and Stefan Döring. See Dahlke, “Underground Literature?,” 162.

126 Interview with Bernd Wagner, October 20, 2020.

127 Interview with Uwe Kolbe, June 1, 2021.

uneasy at a birthday party for Bärbel Bohley when Gerd Poppe made a general remark that “irgendjemand ist doch immer dabei” (someone or other is always one of them [i.e., working with the Stasi]). Because he and his then girlfriend were the only people present who did not know many others at the party, Kolbe (incorrectly) thought Poppe’s comment was directed at him: “Das Fatale in der Situation damals war, ich fühlte mich gemeint ... plötzlich fühlte man sich schon angesprochen und dachte ‘Na der Affe!’” (the fatal thing about that situation back then was I felt like he was talking about me ... You suddenly felt like you were being addressed and thought “what an idiot!”).¹²⁸

A dynamic of uncertainty and suspicion towards a newcomer in a close circle of friends is captured in Moog’s short story “Die Fete” (The Party), which she wrote while she was still in the GDR but was not able to publish until she moved to the West.¹²⁹ Like the texts we explore in chapter 4, the story is permeated with themes of knowledge and secrecy. It paints a picture of a “Truppe von acht, neun Leuten, und wir kennen uns schon ’ne ganze Weile” (troop of eight or nine people, and we’ve known each other a good while).¹³⁰ Moreover, the narrator claims that the friends share a similar mindset: “Ich meine, uns kann keiner was vormachen” (I mean, no-one can pull the wool over our eyes).¹³¹ However, this coherence and confidence is rattled when one of the friends, Moni, invites a new person, Stefan, to her party, taking pity on him because she sees him hanging around on his own. In contrast to the familiarity of the existing friendship group, Stefan stands out because he does not speak to anyone: “Er war schließlich das erste Mal da und kannte noch keinen richtig” (after all it was his first time being there and he didn’t really know anyone yet).¹³² When he leaves the room to use the bathroom, one friend voices unease and suspicion about Stefan; another claims “daß er’s sogar aus sicherer Quelle wüßte, daß der Verdacht ... stimmt. Er hätte’s bloß noch nicht sagen wollen” (that he even knows from a reliable source that the suspicion ... is right. He just hadn’t wanted to say anything yet).¹³³ At no point is the Stasi named or spoken aloud by the characters but rather referred to implicitly as “die” (them)—just as Kolbe described in his interview. In Moog’s story, a conversation ensues about the signs, based on “rules of thumb” like those we saw in chapter 1, that may or may not be evidence of Stefan’s complicity and the Stasi’s tactics. Ultimately, Stefan is asked to leave the party; the narrator

128 Interview with Uwe Kolbe, June 1, 2021.

129 Moog, “Die Fete.”

130 Moog, “Die Fete,” 5.

131 Moog, “Die Fete,” 5.

132 Moog, “Die Fete,” 9.

133 Moog, “Die Fete,” 10.

comments, “Irgendwie muß er die Situation aber doch gleich begriffen haben (somehow he must have grasped the situation immediately anyway), pointing to another form of intuitive knowledge, this time on the part of the accused.¹³⁴ After he has left, the friends continue to discuss the importance of retaining a protected private sphere:

“... Ich will wenigstens abends, wenigstens hier meine Ruhe haben. Den ganzen Tag haben sie einen schon unter Kontrolle.”

“Ist doch so. *Wir* kennen uns. Und ich will mit den Leuten zusammen sein, die ich kenne.”

“Schön ausgedacht haben sie sich das. So ’n Typ hier einschleusen, der dann immer dabei ist.”¹³⁵

[“... At least in the evenings, at least here I want to be left in peace. They already have us under surveillance the whole day long.”

“Exactly. *We* know each other. And I want to be with people who I know.”

“They cooked that up nicely for themselves. Smuggling a guy in who’s then always around.”]

Nonetheless, the friends are left with a sense of uncertainty about whether they were right to suspect Stefan, and that anyone could be spying on the others. Moog’s story is thus a fictional treatment of how unstable knowledge could disrupt existing relationships of familiarity and how moments of suspicion could turn trust into mistrust. A Stasi evaluation of “Die Fete” describes the story as characterised by “Mißtrauensvisionen” (visions of mistrust), “Verfolgungssyndrom” (persecution syndrome) and “Angst vor der Kontrolle” (fear of control), which allegedly demonstrated “eine Unsouveränität in der Haltung der M.” (a lack of sovereignty in M’s attitude) that could only be overcome with the “Vernichtung dieser Angst” (eradication of that fear).¹³⁶

According to the Stasi files, Moog read a story fitting this description at a semi-private reading in Magdeburg in late 1982, attended by 60–70 people, which was overheard and (probably) mistitled “Vertrauen” (Trust) by “David Menzer” (Sascha Anderson).¹³⁷ In “Menzer’s” dismissive

¹³⁴ Moog, “Die Fete,” 11.

¹³⁵ Moog, “Die Fete,” 11. Emphasis in original.

¹³⁶ Evaluation of literary works by Christa Moog by IM without code name, dated December 2, 1982, 110.

¹³⁷ In her interview with Windsor, Moog noted that she had never written a story entitled “Vertrauen” but confirmed that the story mentioned in Anderson’s report was almost certainly “Die Fete.” Interview with Christa Moog, August 25, 2021.

words, the story was about a person “innerhalb eines Freundeskreises” (within a circle of friends) suspected of working for the “Staatssicherheit” (state security) and “drückt in einer unfertigen und dilettantischen Form das Verhältnis zu Außenseitern in einer Gesellschaft aus” (expresses, in an incomplete and dilettantish way, a society’s relationship to outsiders).¹³⁸ Interestingly, Moog’s reading also sparked a discussion amongst attendees about the importance of trusting each other and about addressing questions of trust openly. In the context of our study, Moog’s story and the ensuing discussion are not only good examples of how knowledge could be captured and circulated in the form of literary fiction, as we shall see in more detail in chapter 4, but also demonstrate that the relationship between interpersonal knowledge and trust was embedded and explicitly negotiated in everyday interactions and public consciousness.

In Kolbe’s recollection, the extent of mutual suspicion versus mutual trust amongst friends and colleagues depended greatly on the groupings and locations of different underground scenes. If he remained sceptical or cautious in Berlin—whether for personal or political reasons—he claims to have taken a more open approach to the connections and friendships he made in the Dresden scene—“interessanterweise ... da bin ich vollkommen vertrauend reingegangen” (in Dresden, interestingly, I went in with complete trust). Kolbe attributed this to the way in which the contacts had come about (“aber das lag auch wieder über die, wie die Kontakte geknüpft worden sind”) suggesting that he had confidence in those relationships that was both instinctive and grounded in prior experience and trust.¹³⁹ Stötzer recalls her initial contact with Anderson came about through their mutual acquaintance, Ralf Kerbach, and that knowledge circulating in the underground scene about Anderson’s reputation as a non-conformist writer had led her to invite him to Erfurt: “wir wussten, das war im Untergrund so’n bisschn erzählt, der durfte nicht mehr lesen in der Öffentlichkeit, weil er einfach nicht konform geschrieben hat, also haben wir gedacht, wir geben ihm einen Raum und der sollte zur Ausstellungseröffnung von Kerbach lesen” (we knew, that was talked about in the underground scene, he wasn’t allowed to read in public because his writing didn’t conform, so we thought we’d give him a space and he should come to read at the opening of Kerbach’s exhibition.)¹⁴⁰ As we saw in chapter 1, that contact soon turned to personal enmity and not only gave Anderson the opportunity to betray the knowledge he gained about Stötzer and her circles, but also to damage

138 Report by IM “David Menzer” on an exhibition in Magdeburg [host’s name redacted], dated December 8, 1982, 48.

139 Interview with Uwe Kolbe, June 1, 2021.

140 Interview with Gabriele Stötzer, June 14, 2021.

her reputation. However, Stötzer claims that she remained undeterred by Anderson's attempts to discredit her:

Das hat mir aber auch nichts ausgemacht, weil ich ja immer, ich hab immer irgendwie ne Lösung gefunden in der Zeit. Man findet immer ne Lösung, übrigens ... Sucht Verbündete und ihr findet die, weil es gibt auch immer die, die so sind wie wir selber sind. Ja? Weil wir sind ja auch nicht vom Mond, sondern wir sind von dieser Welt und in dieser Welt gibt's eben ähnliche, ja, Freunde oder Interesse.¹⁴¹

[That didn't bother me though, because I always, I somehow always found a solution at the time. You always find a solution by the way ... Look for allies and you'll find them, because there are always people who are like us. Right? Because we're not from the moon, but from this world and in this world there's similar friends or interests.]

While Anderson in particular and the Stasi more generally were successful in extracting many files full of knowledge about Stötzer and her acquaintances, and repeatedly sought to interfere and disrupt her networks, they did not, ultimately, stop her from continually rebuilding her social circles and reinvesting trust.

We have seen that the decision to trust always involves a degree of semi-calculated risk-taking and that knowledge gained both intuitively and at second hand often remained unstable and incomplete but nonetheless informed GDR citizens' negotiation of state surveillance and repression. This was also the case for assumptions made about trustworthiness based on professional reputation and personal contacts. As Misztal writes, "[a] person's reputation, by shaping our anticipation of what a given type of individual should be, serves as a warrant for trust and as a measure of distanciation."¹⁴² While reputation is certainly "open to manipulation and stereotyping," Misztal also highlights that both reputation and trust can nevertheless "be seen as important means for reducing the complexity and ambiguity of social reality."¹⁴³ In the GDR, the instability of knowledge and potential for Stasi interference exacerbated that ambiguity yet also increased the importance of making assumptions or deductions about people based on reputation and other indicators of trustworthiness in order to navigate the complex realities of social life. The implications of this became especially acute in moments of heightened political tension. In early 1988, during a trip back to East Berlin from his temporary domicile in the West, Kolbe gave what he later called a "flammende Rede" (blazing speech) in

141 Interview with Gabriele Stötzer, June 14, 2021.

142 Misztal, *Trust in Modern Societies*, 121.

143 Misztal, *Trust in Modern Societies*, 121.

the Gethsemanekirche.¹⁴⁴ In this speech, Kolbe criticised the GDR leadership and declared his solidarity with members of the group “Frieden und Menschenrechte” (Peace and Human Rights) who had been arrested at the infamous Liebknecht-Luxemburg demonstration on January 17. In doing so, he also pointed, subtly but openly, to the Stasi’s role in quashing vital debate and dissent, calling for “produktive[r] Konflikt anstelle von Rufmord und Staatssicherheitskampagne” (productive conflict in place of slander and state security crusades).¹⁴⁵ The following day, Kolbe sent a copy of his declaration to the director of the Berlin City Library, Professor Heinz Werner, via a close personal contact who had previously worked with Werner at the library:

anbei übergebe ich Ihnen eine Erklärung, welche ich gestern, am 4.2.88 verlesen habe. Ich mußte es tun, und ich stehe zu dem Text. Ich bitte Sie, einen Platz in Ihrem Schreibtisch dafür beanspruchen zu dürfen. Verzeihen Sie die Eigennützigkeit dabei: Ihre Bibliothek scheint mir ein guter Ort, Ihre Person die vertrauenswürdigste. Im Falle von Härten—die ich nach gestrigen Reaktionen nicht ganz ausschließen kann—bitte ich Sie um Freigabe des Papiers (Sie wissen es in die richtigen Hände zu legen).¹⁴⁶

[I’m enclosing a declaration which I read yesterday, on February 4, 1988. I had to do it, and I stand by the text. I’m writing to ask you to find a space for it in your desk drawer. Please forgive my selfishness: your library seems to me a good place, and you seem the most trustworthy person. In case of severe repercussions—which I can’t rule out after the reactions yesterday—I ask that you release this document (you’ll know the right hands in which to place it.)]

Referring to his request for Werner’s assistance as “‘der ‘offizielle’ Teil” (“the ‘official’ part”) of his letter, Kolbe switched to a more personal tone to beg for Werner’s understanding and apologised that they had not been able to meet personally on this occasion. Kolbe’s letter indicates an active decision to place trust in Werner and implies that this rested to a considerable extent on Werner’s habitus, institutional status, and cultural authority, as well as their connection through a mutual acquaintance who was a professional associate of Werner’s and an intimate friend of Kolbe’s.

Unbeknownst to Kolbe, Professor Werner took possession of Kolbe’s letter and declaration “um die Sicherheitsorgane über deren Inhalt informieren zu können” (in order to inform the security services

144 Interview with Uwe Kolbe, June 1, 2021.

145 Declaration read in the Gethsemanekirche, Berlin on February 4, 1988, 9.

146 Letter from Uwe Kolbe to Prof. Heinz Werner, February 5, 1988.

about their contents).¹⁴⁷ Indeed, a preceding memorandum suggests that Werner was probably also IM “Walther” (though the nature of the documentation means this cannot be said with full certainty).¹⁴⁸ It is clear, however, that Werner was prepared to inform his superiors in the Berlin municipality about this issue and that the documents ultimately landed with the MfS.¹⁴⁹ In its own documentation, the MfS surmised that Kolbe’s trust was partly based on his knowledge of Werner’s long-standing contact with a correspondent of the West German *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ) and with several diplomats at the “Ständige Vertretung” (Permanent Representation) of the Federal Republic in the GDR: “Möglicherweise zog daraus Kolbe die Schlußfolgerung, daß er durch Prof. W. die von ihm erhoffte Rückversicherung erwarten kann (It is possible that’s why Kolbe came to the conclusion that he could expect to receive the counter-insurance from Prof. W. he was hoping for).¹⁵⁰ Elsewhere, the MfS stated that Kolbe believed he would receive “gewisses Verständnis” (a degree of understanding) from “IM ‘Walther’ wegen dessen Liberalismus und der ihm bekannten Verbindungen (StV und FAZ-Korrespondent)” (because of the latter’s liberalism and known contacts [Permanent Representation and FAZ-correspondent]).¹⁵¹ In this sense, it seems that political reputation and social capital associated with particular networks and affiliations also played into Kolbe’s expectations of Werner’s trustworthiness. His mis-deciphering of Werner’s trustworthiness appears to have been shaped not simply by a lack of knowledge but also by certain “preconceptions” (or rules of thumb) which led him to misinterpret the “reputational information”¹⁵² he had at his disposal with regard to Professor Werner. As a result, Werner’s western contacts and their personal connection seemed to weigh more in Kolbe’s judgement than the likelihood of his connection with the MfS through his role as director of the city library. This, in turn, affected the nature of the knowledge Kolbe had shared on the basis of that presumed relationship of trust: Kolbe had entrusted his speech to Werner as a means of spreading knowledge about the repressive East German state. Moreover, by asking him to release the declaration and accompanying information of the backlash its author was

147 Information on Uwe Kolbe’s participation in “hostile-negative activities” [undated, Feb. 1988].

148 Memorandum from Oberstleutnant Scholz to Gen. Oberst Schenk, dated February 9, 1988.

149 Information on Uwe Kolbe’s participation in “hostile-negative activities” [undated, Feb. 1988].

150 Information on Uwe Kolbe’s participation in “hostile-negative activities” [undated, Feb. 1988].

151 Memorandum from Oberstleutnant Scholz to Gen. Oberst Schenk, dated February 9, 1988.

152 Misztal, *Trust in Modern Societies*, 126.

expecting to face, Kolbe had also assumed that Werner would support his open confrontation with the state, something we will discuss in more detail in chapter 3. However, in Werner's hands, the declaration remained incriminating evidence of Kolbe's (perceived) dissidence.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that trust and knowledge were intimately intertwined in the GDR literary sphere, and both generated and sustained through networks. The importance of trust is underscored by the fact that the Stasi itself sought to perform trust, for example during attempted recruitments or instructing their informants to build friendships, in order to acquire knowledge about its citizens, while also aiming actively to undermine trust through methods of *Zersetzung*. Nonetheless, the chapter has also demonstrated that writers and citizens were able to exercise and mobilise trust as means of withholding or redirecting knowledge horizontally, rather than passing it vertically to the Stasi. Precisely because it involved a considerable degree of risk, the decision to trust (or not) was a crucial form of agency, informed by intuition and habitual practices, while assumptions about another person's trustworthiness rested on a combination of interpersonal, experiential, evidential, and reputational knowledge.

Although our authors might have been more aware of the power of distrust in GDR society, our analysis of their interviews, files, and writings illustrate that trust played an integral role in their daily and literary lives and was sometimes discussed and negotiated openly, particularly when it came to navigating state surveillance and repression. The communities of trust (and distrust) that formed in and beyond the literary sphere were also epistemic communities that provided frameworks in which knowledge could be communicated and absorbed. By sharing their stories and by engaging with each other's knowledge about the Stasi, critical literary figures not only challenged the state's "regimes of trust and distrust" but also its attempts to maintain a monopoly on knowledge production and circulation.

3: Looking Back at the Stasi

NEGOTIATING THE “PUBLIC secret” of the Stasi relied on varied forms of political agency and gave rise to many kinds of political identities. This chapter will examine how critical writers used knowledge about the Stasi to counter the threat that the secret police posed to individuals. We will explore how the psychological impact of knowing one was being watched triggered various actions to resist state power. As we have seen throughout this book, writers and other artists who openly criticised the regime developed a heightened sensitivity to surveillance, which at times resulted in tensions between deliberate action and irrational fear, impairing their ability to resist repressive authorities. “Looking back” at the Stasi—that is, attempting to counteract the East German secret police’s surveillance measures—was not an easy thing to do. Nonetheless, critical intellectuals did develop strategies to respond to surveillance. This ranged from poking fun at the Stasi in humorous representations, to open confrontation, legal intervention, and covert action to protect vulnerable individuals. Following Barth’s premise that knowledge is “what a person employs to interpret and act on the world,”¹ the primary focus of this chapter is therefore not on how knowledge was gained but rather on how knowledge was deployed in the service of resistance.

Living in the Panopticon: Paranoia and Resistance

The surveillance methods of the Stasi have gained new relevance in the light of current algorithmic control—or what Gary T. Marx calls “New Surveillance.”² Recent scholarship has engaged with the prolific pre-digital surveillance state to understand how it has informed current discourses on surveillance, exploring analogies and differences between contemporary surveillance culture and Stasi surveillance. As Lewis highlights, the “human intelligence collection” of the East German secret police is reminiscent of the datafication of humans for the profit-making of monopolistic tech companies.³ Shoshana Zuboff describes this “new economic order that uses human experience as free raw material for hidden commercial practices of extraction, prediction, and sales” as

1 Barth, “An Anthropology of Knowledge,” 1.

2 See Marx, “A Tack in the Shoe,” or Marx, “Soul Train.”

3 Lewis, *A State of Secrecy*, xiii.

“Surveillance Capitalism.”⁴ Lewis refers to the Stasi’s “mode of human contact surveillance” as “sticky surveillance” to describe the pervasive nature of the Stasi’s human-contact-based techniques, which, as we saw in chapter 2, involved the performance, cultivation and, exploitation of relationships of trust. Lewis states:

Détente was for Mielke merely an extension of class warfare by other means, and he feared especially the “politics of human contacts.” As he discovered, the advantage of deploying human intelligence collection was that informers were able to approach their targets naturalistically and thereby achieve a relationship far closer than was possible through technological forms or information harvesting. Because the source of surveillance was not geographically fixed in one place (as occurs with a camera or bugging device), surveillers were able to zoom in on their objects. Parasite-like, they could attach themselves to their targets, if not physically, then at least socially and potentially even emotionally.⁵

Borrowing Gilles Deleuze’s notion of “rhizomes,” Lewis further describes the Stasi’s inter-connected and non-hierarchical network of informants as “rhizomatic surveillance”: she notes that, “the image of a rhizome describes especially well the Stasi informers’ main modes of operating as they crept surreptitiously from one secret assignation to the next.”⁶ The Stasi’s informant network operated like a web, allowing the Stasi to reach into every corner of GDR life, from workplaces to social gatherings, creating an environment where anyone could be potentially under suspicion. The Stasi had spread its web over its population, evoking the “control society” which Deleuze famously anticipated for a contemporary world dominated by algorithmic control.⁷ Interestingly, Lewis also describes the underground literary scene itself as rhizomatic, comprised of the kinds of networks and contacts we trace and analyse in this book.⁸

As we have seen, the Stasi’s extensive surveillance created a culture of anxiety, fear, and suspicion, which had an impact on the ability of individuals to create relationships of trust. We have shown already that opponents of the GDR regime knew only too well that they were under the watchful eye of the state’s secret police. Being watched changes how we think and act. In this respect, Hille Koskela’s observation that surveilled space “affects the ways in which ‘reality’ is conceptualized and understood”

4 Zuboff, “Big Other.”

5 Lewis, *A State of Secrecy*, 101.

6 Lewis, *A State of Secrecy*, 102.

7 Deleuze, “Postscript on the Societies of Control.”

8 See Lewis, “Creative Outlets.”

is pertinent.⁹ The complexity of being watched is reflected in Ekkehard Maaß's choice of words: "man wusste sich immer beobachtet" (you always knew you were being watched—see chapter 1). The grammatical reflexivity in the German "sich wissen," literally "to know oneself" resonates with the reflexivity on the level of content. The verb "wissen" (to know) takes a reflexive pronoun ("sich"), indicating that the subject—the generic "man" represents both *the knowing subject* and *the object of observation* through the lens of the external gaze. In short, Maaß's wording suggests an internalised observation characteristic of panoptic mechanisms.

The constant surveillance of the Stasi—or at least the perception of it—can indeed be understood in the framework of the "panopticon" which has arguably become the most wide-spread metaphor for centralised, that is, top-down surveillance. Originally conceived by utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Bentham in 1785, the "panopticon"¹⁰ was designed around the idea that the mere possibility of surveillance would encourage individuals to regulate their own behaviour, conforming with societal expectations. Internalising the gaze of the "other," that is, social norms and codes of behaviour, would lead to "self-governance," or rather, to an automated disciplining of the self. Michel Foucault later elaborated on Bentham's prison model in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of a Prison* (1975),¹¹ and developed the theory of "panopticism," introducing the term "disciplinary power" to describe the process of self-policing, in which individuals internalise external surveillance to conform with societal norms. Foucault's theoretical elaborations on the panopticon complicate the one-sidedness of surveillance, as his framework allows the watchers themselves to become visible and subject to observation.

The triggering force of panoptic self-disciplinisation is anxiety. As suggested in the initial idea of Bentham's penitentiary design, inmates—who could not see the guard in the watchtower—faced the constant possibility of being watched, but had no certain knowledge that surveillance was or was not present at any given time. Anxious about making errors and fearing the potential danger of being caught and penalised, the inmates would comply with the rules. From Bentham's utilitarian perspective, focusing on maximising collective well-being, and in line with his visions as social reformer, panoptic mechanisms were believed to lead to a productive and flourishing society. The downsides of such systems are, as often discussed, the way the panopticon nourishes paranoia. Individuals who want to conform to these disciplinary powers as they

9 Koskela, "The Gaze Without Eyes," 243.

10 Bentham, *The Panopticon Writings*.

11 See Foucault's theoretical development of Bentham's Panopticon in Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, esp. ch. 3, "Panopticism."

fear the punitive consequences, as well as individuals who resist the panopticons in which they live, are prone to develop an overly heightened sense of awareness of potential surveillance.

The material in the Stasi archives mirrors the paranoia of the Stasi officers about potential subversive activity; IM reports also reveal the impact of surveillance—of living in the “panopticon”—on the mental state of those being observed. As we saw in chapter 1, Franz Fühmann acted as an advisor and key supporter of emerging critical writers. In a file note dated May 25, 1977, Fühmann is reported as stating, “daß er ständig kontrolliert wird, daß seine Post 6-8 Wochen geht” (that he is being constantly controlled and that his mail takes six to eight weeks).¹² He concludes from the length of the mail delivery process that he is constantly being monitored. Various IMs observed “daß sich bei ihm [Fühmann] so etwas wie Verfolgungswahn herausbildet” (that he [Fühmann] is developing something like a persecution complex).¹³ In another report dated November 2, 1976, the IMS “Dölbl” observes:

daß Fühmann gegenwärtig psychisch sehr anfällig ist. Er vertrete beispielsweise die Meinung, daß die Parteiführung jedes Wort, das er schreibt, gegen ihn anwenden würde. Es existiere eine sog. “Kladde,” in der jede seiner Äußerungen, ob in Wort oder Schrift, registriert werde.¹⁴

[that Fühmann is currently very vulnerable psychologically. He was of the opinion, for example, that the party leadership would use every word he wrote against him. There is a so-called “Kladde” (notebook) in which every utterance he makes, whether spoken or written, is registered.]

Heuristic knowledge (e.g., the rule of thumb that delayed post means that it is being intercepted) results in a state of paranoia, affecting Fühmann psychologically. Uwe Kolbe’s wording in a letter to Fühmann illustrates well how shared knowledge about the repressive measures of the Stasi is embodied: “Ich höre so ‘Geschichten,’ also rieche, habe die Nase voll von diesem Gestank aus Polizeimaßnahmen, Ausquetschen irgendwelcher unschuldiger [sic] Mädchen ... Ja, wahrscheinlich einfach ... geborgen, wahrscheinlich s e l b s t so wenig gefährdet in den haarsträubenden Existenz- und Staasi-Katastrofen. Ich find’s bedenklich, daß ich so angstlos bin, was meine [sic] Sein betrifft.” (I hear such ‘stories,’ that is smell, I’m fed up with this stench of police measures, squeezing out innocent girls ... Yes, probably simply ... sheltered, probably m y s e l f so little

12 File note dated May 25, 1977.

13 Source from IM “Anna Harloff,” dated December 2, 1978.

14 Meeting report by IMS “Dölbl,” dated November 2, 1976.

endangered in the hair-raising existential and Stasi disasters. I find it troubling that I am so unafraid when it comes to my own being).¹⁵ However, as we will show in this chapter and the next one, critical artists resisted this form of disciplinary power in both subtle and confrontational ways. They made use of the subversive power of literature, questioning and critiquing through their writings the ways in which disciplinary systems shape individual behaviour, and they also used their knowledge of the Stasi to confront surveillance directly.

Knowledge, Mistrust, and a “Nachspiel für die Staasi”

Chapter 2 demonstrated that trust, however fragile and unstable, underpinned the sharing of knowledge and enabled GDR citizens to exercise agency. Here, we turn to the interaction between mistrust and action. A key example of this is given by the experience of Klaus Schlesinger. As we have seen in chapter 2, Schlesinger was extremely mistrustful—conspicuously so, according to IM reports. For example, in the IME file “Heinrich,” dated February 26, 1975, it is reported that: “Überhaupt musste ich bei meinem Besuch feststellen, daß Schl. sehr mißtrauisch ist. Als ich zum Bsp. meinen Tabak aus der Aktentasche holte, beugte er sich über den Tisch und sah in meine Tasche” (during my visit I realised that Schl. is very suspicious. For example, when I took my tobacco out of my briefcase, he leant over the table and looked into my bag).¹⁶ However, the fear of being watched—a fear that emerged from his knowledge of the Stasi’s presence in the literary scene—did not curtail Schlesinger’s actions. On the contrary, Schlesinger’s paranoia boosted his agency and led him to challenge the Stasi.

We see this, for example, in his response to a search of the apartment that Schlesinger shared with Wegner. In an IM report on Schlesinger and Wegner, the following is noted: “Die ‘Stasi’-Leute hätten dabei jeden Winkel der Wohnung fotografiert” (in the process, the “Stasi”-people had apparently photographed every inch of the apartment).¹⁷ Schlesinger suspects that the Stasi had a different goal in the search of their flat to merely confiscating books and “Biermann-Platten” (Biermann records) because of their “DDR-feindlichen Inhalts” (content hostile to the

15 Letter from Kolbe to Fühmann, dated September 14, 1984. Emphases in original.

16 Report by IME “Heinrich,” dated February 2, 1975.

17 Information about Klaus Schlesinger and Bettina Wegner in OV “Schreiberling,” dated October 2, 1976.

GDR).¹⁸ According to IM “Heinrich’s” account: “K. Schl. schätzte ein, daß es sich bei dem von den Mitarbeitern des MfS angegebenen Grund nur um einen Vorwand handle, um—so Kl. Schl.—hier mal die Nase reinstecken zu können” (K. Schl. guessed that the reason given by the MfS employees was only a pretext—according to Kl. Schl.—to get the chance to stick their noses in here).¹⁹ The use of “schätzte ein” (guessed) in the IM-report indicates that Schlesinger reacted and acted according to his “gut feeling” in Gigerenzer’s sense.

Indeed, various IM reports on the apartment search state that Schlesinger claimed to have seen through the Stasi and identified their true intentions. In these accounts, we see an emphasis on intuitive knowledge paired with suspicion, anger, and contempt. According to IMF “André” on October 25, 1976, for example, Schlesinger “[l]ieß sich dann aus über die ‘hinterhältigen Praktiken der Staasi [sic]’” (went off about the ‘underhanded practices of the Stasi’).²⁰ He is represented as someone who is not only critical of the MfS but ready to confront the organisation head on, threatening the secret police with consequences (“Nachspiel für die Staasi [sic]” (consequences for the Stasi)).²¹ Moreover, it seems he followed through on these threats: according to the same IM report, Schlesinger successfully lodged a major complaint with the attorney general, following which the Stasi had to return most of the confiscated items.²² Wegner, on the other hand, seems to have taken the house search with composure: “Sie habe das Ganze mit Fassung getragen, denn sie kenne ja die ‘Praktiken der Staasi [sic].’ ... Bettina bezeichnete den Vorfall als Rechtsbruch und als ‘typisch für die Staasi [sic]’” (she had taken the whole thing in her stride, because she knew the “practices of the Staasi.” ... Bettina described the incident as a breach of the law and “typical of the Stasi”).²³ This situated knowledge about the Stasi and their typical methods helped Wegner resist the attempt to intimidate through such an open invasion of privacy.

“Paranoia” derives from the Greek word ‘para-noeo’, meaning “madness” or “derangement.”²⁴ Formed from the prefix “para” (“beyond”) and “nous” (“mind” or “intellect,”) the term suggests a departure from

18 Information about Klaus Schlesinger and Bettina Wegner in OV “Schreiberling,” dated October 2, 1976.

19 Information about Klaus Schlesinger and Bettina Wegner in OV “Schreiberling,” dated October 2, 1976.

20 Report by IMF “André,” in OV “Schreiberling,” dated October 25, 1976.

21 Report by IMF “André,” in OV “Schreiberling,” dated October 25, 1976.

22 They did not return the Biermann records. See Report by IMF “André,” in OV “Schreiberling,” dated October 25, 1976.

23 Report by IM “Vera,” in OV ‘Schreiberling’, dated October 15, 1976, 243.

24 “Paranoia,” Oxford English Dictionary (Oxford: Oxford University Press) <<https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/137147>> (accessed May 4, 2025).

rational or normative thought. One could argue that in this incidence Schlesinger deviated from prescribed social norms, assigning his own meanings and rules to create “Handlungsräume” (spaces for agency) in Alf Lüdtke’s understanding of “Eigen-Sinn.”²⁵ In becoming increasingly paranoid, Schlesinger attempted to construct his own structures of meaning to regain a sense of control over his world. Lüdtke refined the concept of “Eigen-Sinn,” a term originally coined by Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge,²⁶ to describe how industrial workers carved out personal spaces for independent action. However, as Lüdtke also stresses, the diffuse meanings of *Eigen-Sinn* allow the concept to be expanded and applied to a variety of contexts:

Eigen-Sinn zielt in viele Richtungen, ist häufig diffus, lässt sich schwer oder kaum eindeutig zurechnen. Und auch seine Ausdrucksformen bleiben vielfach mehrdeutig, tragen vielleicht zur Absonderung und Isolation derer oder dessen bei, die sich ihr bedienen. Das aber ist zugleich der Reiz des eigenen Sinnes. Dieses Eigene erfreut und befriedigt, kräftigt oder beruhigt womöglich nur den Eigensinnigen oder die Eigensinnige selbst. Das Eigene ist nicht das Ergebnis einer politischen Organisation oder einer gesellschaftlichen Bewegung; es ist die Frucht dieser oder jener Aktivität, die einzelne Personen entwickeln, durchsetzen und aller meistens ohne großes Getöse einfach tun.²⁷

[Eigen-Sinn aims in many directions, is often diffuse, is difficult or almost impossible to attribute clearly. And even its forms of expression often remain ambiguous, perhaps contributing to the segregation and isolation of those who utilise it. At the same time, however, this is the appeal of its own sense. This individuality pleases and satisfies, strengthens or calms possibly only the obstinate or the obstinate themselves. What is one’s own is not the result of political organisation or a social movement; it is the fruit of this or that activity that individuals develop, implement and usually simply do without much ado.]

Schlesinger, however, does in fact present “Eigen-Sinn” with “großes Getöse” (“much ado”) through legal action against one of the most powerful institutions in the state apparatus. And whereas Lüdtke’s account of the concept excludes the notion of resistance, it is inherently present in the “Eigen-Sinn” of this author. In this respect, the English translations “stubbornness” or “obstinacy,” which imply refusal and resistance,

25 Lüdtke, *Eigen-Sinn*.

26 Negt and Kluge, *Geschichte und Eigensinn*.

27 Lüdtke, *Eigen-Sinn*, 14.

resonate as much as notions of “wilfulness” and “sense of one’s own.”²⁸ In this chapter, we explore how such stubbornness, obstinacy, and wilfulness were combined with knowledge about the Stasi gained through direct encounter, intuition, rumour and gossip to respond—often with “much ado”—to Stasi surveillance.

Political agency resulting from fear of Stasi action was not always founded on (or only on) profound mistrust of others. The networks of trust that built up around Wegner and Schlesinger within their East German milieu were not only crucial for allowing those networks to thrive in an environment of uncertain knowledge, the kinds of trust developed in these networks (as described in chapter 2) also fostered agency. Notably, these networks were activated for political purposes and pragmatic mutual support in the face of Stasi interference. For example, Wegner recalls: “Also, wenn irgendeiner plötzlich nicht mehr da war, hatte man unwillkürlich im Kopf, ‘Könnte verhaftet sein’” (so, if someone was suddenly no longer there, you involuntarily had in your head, “could have been arrested”).²⁹ The fear that someone’s absence could mean they had been arrested is another example of instinctive or intuitive knowledge shaped by collective experience in an environment of state control and surveillance which necessitated a general awareness of the almost constant risk of detainment. In response to such situations, Wegner indicates that there was an immediate collective attempt to confirm what had happened—“Dann ham wir sofort untereinander telefoniert: ‘Wer weiß was—,’ und haben kontrolliert, ob da einer wiederkommt” (then we immediately phoned each other: “Who knows what—,” and checked to see if that person had come back).³⁰ This points to an interdependence, a bond of solidarity and interpersonal loyalty, which assumed and relied on the trustworthiness of others in the network. Wegner’s recollections also indicate that this kind of knowledge exchange within the community of trust (about the whereabouts and potential arrest of an acquaintance) would also lead, in the final instance, to action: “Und wenn einer nicht wiederkam, dann haben wir gesammelt und ’nen Anwalt bestellt. Dit war eigentlich dit, wat man machen konnte” (and if someone didn’t come back, we collected the money and called a lawyer. That was actually the only thing you could do).³¹ Such moments amongst groups with shared experiences and interests suggest that Wegner and her acquaintances knew what steps might be taken to confront and challenge state power through collective action.

28 See also Lüdtke’s reflections on the English meanings of the concept (Lüdtke, *Eigen-Sinn*, 12–13).

29 Interview with Bettina Wegner, August 23, 2021.

30 Interview with Bettina Wegner, August 23, 2021.

31 Interview with Bettina Wegner, August 23, 2021.

As we have seen in chapter 2, trust also shaped how individuals positioned themselves with regard to sensitive information. While silence or reticence in group discussions could arouse suspicion (see chapter 1), Wegner offers the counterexample of a poet-artist in their friendship circle who deliberately withdrew from politically sensitive conversations about the regime's cultural policies at social gatherings. He did so out of fear that he might, under interrogation, inadvertently betray his friends. Wegner described this stance—his precautionary openness and self-awareness—as “eine Art vorbeugende Dekonspiration” (a kind of preemptive “Dekonspiration”) which earned him respect:

Wir fanden dit alle ok. Und dann [*laughs*] dann war's schon auch ein Spruch zum Lachen “Peter, kannst mal inne Küche gehen.” Aber lustig [*gemeint*]. Und er hat dann gesagt “Ok,” und is inne Küche gegangen. Also, gerade wenn man irgendwelche konkreten Aktionen besprechen wollte ... Dit wollte er eben nich' ausplaudern, wenn sie ihn denn holen.³²

[We all thought it was ok. And then [*laughs*] it was also an inside joke: “Peter can you go into the kitchen?” But it was meant to be funny. And then he said “Ok” and went into the kitchen. So, just when you wanted to discuss any specific actions ... He just didn't want to blab it if they came for him.]

Peter knew his friends were discussing sensitive matters but was deliberately not privy to the details, while his honesty meant that Wegner and company knew about the nature of his reluctance and discretion and trusted that their knowledge could not be betrayed by this particular person. All of this rested on shared understandings of the kinds of knowledge the Stasi might try to extract from them, and how. In this context, Peter could assert a conscious refusal to acquire certain kinds of knowledge, exercising a particular form of epistemic agency.

Countersurveillance: (Semi-)Open Confrontations to Open Observations

Asserting resistance and agency could also mean flipping the mirror and “looking back” at the Stasi. By watching the Stasi—confronting the secret police with its own means—GDR writers demonstrated that breaking out of the panopticon—or at least reversing panoptic mechanisms—was possible in practice. Foucault provides the theoretical foundations for this reversion:

32 Interview with Bettina Wegner, August 23, 2021.

The Panopticon may even provide an apparatus for supervising its own mechanisms. In this central tower, the director may spy on all the employees that he has under his orders: nurses, doctors, foremen, teachers, warders; he will be able to judge them continuously, alter their behavior, impose upon them the methods he thinks best; and it will even be possible to observe the director himself.³³

In Foucault's revision of Bentham's model, the imbalance of this regime of watching is corrected to a certain extent, as the seer can also be seen. Foucauldian panopticism entails a decentralisation of authority, whereby the inspector is also subject to surveillance, paving the way for what Gilles Deleuze has called "control society" describing the complete decentralisation of surveilling instances in an increasingly technologically controlled world.³⁴ The move "from the act of directly watching to the probability of being watched"³⁵ in Foucault's account results in a renegotiation of power. The decentralisation of the act of watching is paired with an internalisation of the gaze, such that those being watched become auto-surveillants. For Foucault, then, the panopticon represents "the diagram of a mechanism of power"³⁶ and thus a "laboratory of power."³⁷ Foucault's framework decentralises power and thereby helps us understand how acts of looking back could challenge the Stasi's authority.

As we have seen throughout this book, prominent authors who were critical of the state and party gained knowledge about the secret police through direct confrontation in the contexts of "open" observation and attempted recruitment as informants. They shared that knowledge within their networks as a method of "en/countering surveillance." "Countersurveillance" is a key term in the interdisciplinary field of surveillance studies and implies anti-surveillance measures aimed at "curbing new forms of surveillance,"³⁸ that is, surveillance from below or reversed surveillance.³⁹ Gary Marx contends that countersurveillance may also mean a "turning of the tables" where surveillance technologies subvert the would-be controllers and benefit those being controlled.⁴⁰ What all these approaches to defining countersurveillance have in common is that they highlight the neutralisation and resistance of surveillance as the main goals. In the pre-digital society of the GDR, countersurveillance was at

33 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 204.

34 Deleuze, "Postscript on the Societies of Control," 3–7.

35 Elmer, "Panopticon – Discipline – Control," 23.

36 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 205.

37 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 204.

38 Lyon, *The Electronic Eye*, 175.

39 See, for example, Mann, "Sousveillance: Inverse Surveillance in Multimedia Imaging."

40 Marx, "A Tack in the Shoe," 384.

work as a method of political resistance. These acts of “countersurveillance” were attempts at self-protection and protest in an effort to sustain a minimum of privacy, freedom, and autonomy.

Countersurveillance occurred in various forms. Individuals who fell under the gaze of the Stasi did not always seek direct confrontation of the kind described in Schlesinger’s case but often employed more subtle strategies of resistance. Creating counter-legends or inventing cover stories were also methods of semi-open confrontations to gain more knowledge about the Stasi. A notable example of this tactic can be found in a report by the IM “David Menzer” (Sascha Anderson), recounting a scenario relating to a Berlin-based punk band with close connections to the Prenzlauer Berg literary scene.⁴¹ According to the transcript of “Menzer’s” spoken report, a former member of the band had been summoned to a meeting where she was confronted with two men from the MfS, who tried to convince her to acquire copies of the lyrics sung by the band. Later in the report, he also notes that the Stasi tried to reassure her that they did not expect her to spy on the whole band, but to use her to get close to the lyricist. The existence of this IM report demonstrates that this encounter did not remain concealed from others—that is, the former band member spoke about it with others. Indeed, “Menzer” also relays the chain of contacts through which knowledge of this incident was distributed: after the former band member told her partner (also a member of the band) about her encounter, he then told the lyricist. Through their conversations, the band members recognised the Stasi’s approach as an attempt to test the former band member’s suitability as possible informant.

Most interesting for our present purposes is the group’s own adoption of a kind of “Legende” (legend or cover story) in response. In the story they elaborated—and which Anderson relayed back to his MfS officers—the band members altered the chain of information to claim that the former band member had not told her partner about the Stasi assignment but had instead told the lyricist’s wife, framed as a conversation between women. They also planned for the lyricist’s wife to accompany the former band member to the designated meeting point. Anderson surmises that the group was keen to see “was das für Typen sind, die dort die Texte in Empfang nehmen, mit welcher Konsequenz ist mir nicht klar” (what kind of guys they are who come to collect the texts, with what consequence I’m not sure).⁴² Although the band members’ intentions

41 Report by IM “David Menzer” on the Berlin punk group “Rosa Extra,” dated November 11, 1981. The band name is visible in the document heading but the names of the band members have been redacted throughout the document by the Stasi Records Archive.

42 Report by IM “David Menzer” on the Berlin punk group “Rosa Extra,” dated November 11, 1981, 93.

and the ultimate outcomes remain unclear to us, too, a number of aspects stand out when it comes to thinking about knowledge and confrontations with the Stasi. By developing their own cover story, the group were in some ways imitating and appropriating the Stasi's own covert methods in order to find out more for themselves. Similarly, although it is not clear how openly she would appear at the meeting, the incorporation of the lyricist's wife into the planned handover suggests the group's intention to send a signal back to the Stasi that their contact with the former band member had not remained a secret. As such, they employed different shades and combinations of revelation and concealment as a way of exercising agency. Moreover, their subtle change of narrative was strategically crafted to enable the lyricist's wife to attend the second meeting, an act of deliberate misinformation and semi-open confrontation that undermined the surveillance effort and disempowered the Stasi in a subtle way. At the end of the report, "David Menzer" comments on a general sense of "Unsicherheit ... unter den jungen Berliner Lyrikern der DDR, durch Dinge die im Äußern (sic) wie Bspitzelung aussehen" (uncertainty ... amongst the young Berlin poets of the GDR through things that have the outward appearance of spying).⁴³ Although the information did make its way back to the MfS via "Menzer," the band's actions nonetheless illustrate an attempt to counteract that generalised uncertainty and destabilise the process of intelligence-gathering.

Countersurveillance here is enacted through dialogue in a network, something that we also see in the accounts of other literary intellectuals. In her interview with Windsor, for example, Christa Moog recalls how Stasi collaborators lay in wait for her during the professional training ("Facharbeiterbrief") that she was required to complete after finishing high school and also later when she was a university student in Halle. She describes how they kept calling her in for questioning ("Vorladungen") at the university. Feeling increasingly vulnerable and anxious, she gathered her courage and confided in the university chaplain about being followed and harassed by the Stasi:

Ich hab' ihm das alles erzählt, und ich hab' ihm auch gesagt, ich kann das nicht mehr aushalten. Und ich hab' Angst davor, aus'm Haus zu gehen. Und, dass irgendwie—Ich kann irgendwie nicht mehr. Und was kann ich machen? Und dann hat er eine Verbindung aufgenommen irgendwie, und es hörte auf. Es hörte auf mit dieser Beschattung, und dass dann immer jemand—Auch mit diesen Vorladungen. Ja, hörte auf.⁴⁴

43 Report by IM "David Menzer" on the Berlin punk group "Rosa Extra," dated November 11, 1981, 94.

44 Interview with Christa Moog, August 25, 2021.

[I told him all this and I also told him I couldn't take it anymore. And I'm afraid to leave the house. And that somehow—somehow I can't take it anymore. And what can I do? And then he somehow made a connection and it stopped. It stopped with the tailing, and that someone was always—Also with the summonses. Yes, it stopped.]

Moog describes a situation where the combination of obvious shadowing and “Vorladungen” (summonings) required a form of semi-open confrontation to open observation. Moog took action in opening up to the chaplain. She assumed the chaplain must have activated contacts to stop the Stasi pursuing her; he must have mobilised his network to curtail this open observation of Moog—at least, for the time being: “Also, der hatte irgendwie doch Kontakte. Es gab sowas, dass Pfarrer doch zu wichtigen Stellen ja, da irgendwie Verbindungen hatten” (well, he did have contacts somehow. There was such a thing that pastors had connections to important places, yes, somehow“).⁴⁵ We might note the crucial role that the ability to trust played in Moog's ability to confront the Stasi in this way: she needed to trust the pastor with the knowledge she had gained through her encounters with the secret police, to trust that he would know what to do and that he would act in her best interests. In this case, her trust was based on a relationship of religious or pastoral care. Moog's example shows that knowledge of the Stasi, including intuitive knowledge, was not only a tool for deciding whom to trust or mistrust—as we have seen in chapter 2—it could also underpin efforts to counteract the intrusive tactics of the secret police.

Schlesinger and Wegner were also subject to open surveillance. For example, Wegner recalls cars pulling up outside their house and then being followed in a manner that was so obvious they were clearly meant to notice it.⁴⁶ As we have seen, the couple's response to their encounters with and knowledge of surveillance was to assert different kinds of agency, from the legal action in response to the house search (described above) to open acknowledgement of the Stasi's presence at events and performances. In one such case, Wegner recalls having two glasses of sparkling wine sent to the table where the Stasi officers were sitting, metaphorically speaking out loud the public secret that the Stasi were watching and letting them know that she had identified them. The response of the two officers was to leave the venue.⁴⁷

Ekkehard Maaß recalls similar encounters with the Stasi in the interview with Windsor. He notes that he used to confront Stasi collaborators

45 Interview with Christa Moog, August 25, 2021.

46 Interview with Bettina Wegner, August 23, 2021.

47 Interview with Bettina Wegner, August 23, 2021.

who were observing the readings in the underground scene of the Prenzlauer Berg:

Und ich stand also immer an der Tür. Und sobald die Lesung begonnen hatte, schlich ich nach draußen ... weil dort an dem Küchenfenster immer ein Stasi-Mann stand am Anfang, um zu gucken, was hier los ist. Und den hab' ich dann immer laut angesprochen, ja, "Guten Abend, zu wem wollen Sie denn?" und dann ... war der dann über die Höfe, die waren damals alle offen, nach hinten verschwunden.⁴⁸

[And so I always stood at the door. And as soon as the reading had started, I sneaked outside ... because there was always a Stasi man standing at the kitchen window at the beginning to see what was going on. And I always spoke to him loudly, yes, "Good evening, who do you want to see?" and then ... he disappeared to the back via the courtyards, which were all open at the time.]

This is a similar tactic to Wegner's sending of sparkling wine to the Stasi officers at the youth club described above, or Stefan Heym's sending of coffee to the car of the Stasi officers posted outside his home noted in the Introduction.⁴⁹ It is a kind of radical openness, revealing the presence of the Stasi, but also the individual's knowledge about that presence. We see in the case of both Wegner and Maaß the effectiveness of this approach in diverting the immediate threat: in both cases, the Stasi officers leave the scene of surveillance.

We see in this way how knowledge can empower and enable agency—an agency that might be asserted through actively revealing that knowledge to different audiences. In a report by IM "Hermann Schneider" from August 4, 1977, Wegner's confrontational behaviour during a party at the US embassy is described as follows:

Auch aus anderen Gesprächen konnte ich entnehmen, daß sich viele der Anwesenden sehr negativ über die DDR bzw. nicht über die DDR als Staat, sondern die DDR im Augenblick gegenüber den Vertretern der amerikanischen Botschaft äußerten ... Ich stellte nach kurzer Zeit fest, daß Bettina Wegner ständig Leute, mit denen ich mich unterhielt, von diesen Künstlern, z.B. [redacted] u.ä. beiseite nahm und ihnen etwas anscheinend über mich sagte. Sie tat das recht unvorsichtig, sodaß ich das durch Beobachtungen feststellen konnte. Der Verdacht wurde dann mir gegenüber von der Glick bestätigt, mit der ebenfalls die Wegner gesprochen hatte und die Glick sagte mir, die Wegner hätte gesagt, daß ich ein nicht besonders ehrlicher

48 Interview with Ekkehard Maaß, July 30, 2021.

49 Heym, *Nachruf*, 806.

Mensch sei ... sagte sie mir, daß diese hinter meinem Rücken verbreitet, daß man sich bei mir etwas vorsehen müsse.⁵⁰

[I could also gather from other conversations that many of those present were very negative about the GDR, or rather not about the GDR as a state, but about the GDR at the moment, in relation to the representatives of the American embassy ... After a short time I realised that Bettina Wegner was constantly taking people I was talking to from these artists, e.g. [redacted] and the like, aside and apparently saying something to them about me. She did this quite carelessly, so that I was able to establish this through observation. The suspicion was then confirmed to me by Glick, with whom Wegner had also spoken, and Glick told me that Wegner had said that I was not a particularly honest person ... she told me that she was spreading the word behind my back that people should be a little careful with me.]

What we see here is an interesting complex of looking and looking back and using (intuitive) knowledge to counter surveillance. The IM is observing Wegner and the other artists, drawing them into and recording conversations in which they reveal their critical attitudes towards the GDR. Wegner is in turn observing the IM talking to her colleagues and—using her suspicion (or intuitive knowledge) about the IM—deduces what is behind his actions. She uses those deductions to counter the surveillance by confronting it directly, that is, by revealing to her colleagues what she believes she knows.

Critical writers might also use their experiences with the Stasi to confront surveillance openly in the semi-public and public spheres to which they had access. Bernd Wagner wrote direct complaints or appeals to various authorities after the Stasi had attempted to recruit him and after his trips to West Berlin and abroad were not authorised, demanding meetings with those responsible. In 1983, Wagner wrote to Herman Kant as President of the Writer's Union. In the letter, he is open about the Stasi's approach, noting that an employee of the MfS visited him and stated that in order to obtain approval to visit West Berlin, he would need to agree to pass on information about conversations with colleagues and his circle of acquaintances, something he vehemently refused to do: "Mit meinem Schreiben an Sie, das ich als Eingabe zu betrachten bitte, erhoffe ich eine Aufklärung des Falles" (with my letter to you, which I ask you to consider as a formal complaint, I hope that the case will be clarified).⁵¹ In 1985, Wagner even wrote to Erich Mielke, the head of the MfS, to complain that his travel approval had been withdrawn without any clear indication

50 Report by IM "Hermann Schneider," dated August 4, 1977.

51 Letter from Bernd Wagner to Hermann Kant, dated June 17, 1983, 61.

of why. He demands that Mielke explore the reasons behind the decision and to correct it—if that cannot be done, he requests a meeting, “in der über diese und über evt. damit in Zusammenhang stehende Probleme gesprochen werden kann” (in which these and any related problems can be discussed). Interestingly, Wagner states that he is turning to Mielke in the assumption, “dass eine Regelung der mich betreffenden Angelegenheit nur innerhalb des Ministeriums für Staatssicherheit möglich ist” (that the matter concerning me can only be settled within the Ministry of State Security).⁵² In this sense, Wagner is directly confronting the organisation responsible for surveillance in the assumption that they are the body that have the power to correct decisions made on the basis of that surveillance (in this case, about permission to travel). At the same time, he is speaking (or rather writing) openly the public secret that writers are subject to surveillance and that the secret police have influence on cultural-political decision-making in the literary sphere.

These open confrontations were attempts to obtain public explanations for rejected visas and draw attention to the complicity of the Writers’ Union with MfS (notably Kant was registered as an informant until 1978). Wagner demanded a written statement from Kant, asking:

ob und wie weit er bereit ist, seine Mitglieder vor derartigen Übergriffen zu schützen, inwieweit er sich die Reisepraxis von dritter Seite bestimmen lassen will; ein Gespräch zwischen mir, einem leitenden Mitarbeiter des SV der DDR sowie einem Verantwortlichen des MfS über das dargelegte Ereignis.”⁵³

[whether and to what extent it is prepared to protect its members from such attacks, to what extent it wants to have its travel practices determined by a third party; a conversation between me, a senior member of the SV of the GDR and a responsible person in the MfS about the event described.]

In this way, these letters are also characterised by various shades of knowing and not-knowing—about who in the state apparatus, and beyond, was responsible for these matters—and an effort to bring clarity to (and make public) these opaque systems of control. The uncertainty about who was responsible and how decisions were made revealed in these letters is exemplary for what has been called the “vierte Zensor” (fourth censor).⁵⁴ Coined by the East German writer Erich Loest in his book *Der vierte Zensor* (*The Fourth Censor*, 1984), the term refers to censorship by publishers, self-censorship, and party censorship as a fourfold censorship complex

52 Letter from Bernd Wagner to Erich Mielke, dated January 28, 1985, 159.

53 Letter from Wagner to Kant, dated June 17, 1983.

54 Loest, *Der vierte Zensor*.

alongside state-institutionalised censorship. It is a form of unofficial, opaque control influencing cultural policy in untraceable ways.

The audiences for this confrontational knowledge-sharing might be even more public. We have seen examples throughout this book of critical writers sharing their literary representations of the Stasi to different audiences, something that we will explore in more detail below and in chapter 4. However, critical intellectuals also made open statements in the public domain that included reference to the secret police. For example, as we saw in chapter 2, Kolbe gave a speech at the Gethsemanekirche in February 1988, in solidarity with demonstrators who had been arrested at the Liebke-Luxemburg demonstration on January 17 that year, a date that has come to symbolise the clash between peaceful civic resistance and authoritarian Stasi control. In his declaration, Kolbe criticised the hypocrisy of the East German regime, which preached tolerance but failed to act on political changes emanating from the Soviet Union:

Wenn nicht jetzt der produktive Konflikt anstelle von Rufmord und Staatssicherheitskampagne tritt, hat diese sozialistische Gesellschaft den Rubikon überschritten. Sie wird ihre behaupteten und ihre vorhandenen Vorteile gegenüber anderen Systemen nicht beweisen oder nutzen können, wenn sie sich in einen Friedhof des selbstständigen Denkens verwandelt.⁵⁵

[If productive conflict doesn't take the place of slander and state security crusades right now, then this socialist society has crossed the Rubicon. It won't be able to prove or make use of its postulated advantages over other systems if it turns itself into a burial ground of independent thought.]

In his interview with Windsor, Kolbe recalled that his speech led to his only official “Belehrung” (caution) directly at the hands of the Stasi; to that point, all other reprimands and admonitions had come from representatives of other state institutions.⁵⁶

Kolbe's entrusting of the speech typescript to Professor Werner, the director of the Berlin state library, discussed in chapter 2, was a pre-emptive measure taken to make the declaration and the expected repercussions public, not least through Werner's known contacts with West German journalists and diplomats. A month later, after he had returned to his temporary domicile in the West, Kolbe himself appeared on the West German television programme “Kennzeichen D.”⁵⁷ In that interview, he spoke

55 Declaration read in the Gethsemane-Kirche Berlin on February 4, 1988, 9.

56 Interview with Uwe Kolbe, June 1, 2021.

57 Report on an interview with Uwe Kolbe on “Kennzeichen D” on March 9, 1988, dated March 11, 1988.

about the GDR state's escalation surrounding the events of January 17 and commented that "Fürbittgottesdienste" (intercessory prayer services) were the "einzige Öffentlichkeit" (only public) one could turn to in the East: "Also es wäre für mich in dem Sinne ein Leichtes gewesen, natürlich, in einer hiesigen Zeitung meine Erklärung ... abdrucken zu lassen. Aber das war nicht, was ich wollte, und gleichzeitig sah ich die Vorgänge so prinzipiell, daß ich keine Chance hatte, den Mund geschlossen zu halten dabei" (I mean, in that sense it would have of course been easy for me to have the declaration printed in a newspaper here [in the West]. But that wasn't what I wanted, and at the same time, I had such a fundamental view of the course of events that keeping my mouth shut was not an option).⁵⁸

Here we see Kolbe's awareness of the important difference between confronting the Stasi within and outside the GDR's borders (earlier in the interview he describes himself as someone with "zwei Beinen in zwei Deutschländern" [two legs in two Germanies]).⁵⁹ At the same time, he takes the opportunity to inform a wider West German audience about the technicalities and aims of the Stasi's processes:

Ich bin direkt vom Ministerium für Staatssicherheit vorgeladen und belehrt worden über den Paragraphen 220, über den der öffentlichen Herabwürdigung. Und ich hörte, daß ich wie gesagt nicht der einzige war, dem es so erging ... Und Zweck? In meinem Falle, kann ich nur unterstellen, geht es einfach darum, wie mir konkret mitgeteilt worden ist ... daß es so nicht weitergeht in der DDR, daß man damit einen Paragraphen erfüllt, daß man einfach ein Rechtsbrecher ist, was ja absurd ist. So, und daß man das einfach nicht wiederholt.⁶⁰

[I was summoned directly by the Ministry for State Security and cautioned according to Paragraph 220, the law on public degradation. And I heard that, as I said, I wasn't the only one who had experienced this ... And the purpose? In my case, I can only assume, it's simply about, as I was specifically told ... that things can't continue like this in the GDR, that doing so would constitute a violation of a law, that one is simply a lawbreaker, which is absurd. So, and that you just don't do it again.]

According to the MfS, Kolbe's decision to speak openly in this interview—an additional public confrontation across the inner-German

58 Transcript (GDR State Committee for Radio) of ZDF interview with Uwe Kolbe, moderated by Dirk Sager, "Der harte Kurs der SED – DDR-Innenpolitik in der Sackgasse," dated March 10, 1988, 154.

59 Transcript of ZDF interview with Uwe Kolbe, dated March 10, 1988, 153.

60 Transcript of ZDF interview with Uwe Kolbe, dated March 10, 1988, 154.

border—was in active contravention of the assurance he had given Klaus Höpcke that he would not engage in future “hostile-negative activities,” which had been a condition of his being allowed to travel back to the Federal Republic.⁶¹ As such, it can be seen as a further act of defiance and refusal to acquiesce to the state’s disciplinary and silencing tactics.

Covert Actions from the Underground

These everyday semi-public and public acts of confrontation and resistance in the literary sphere sat alongside (and were often in support of) the artistic and intellectual resistance within the alternative literary scene. The underground production and circulation of forbidden literature and essays was inspired by the culture of *samizdat*—“a mass phenomenon in the later decades of the Soviet Union, during the years under Brezhnev commonly referred to as Stagnation (*Zastoi*).”⁶² *Samizdat* provided important channels for asserting intellectual and artistic freedom as acts of resistance, creating an “Ersatzöffentlichkeit” (alternative public sphere) under socialism. *Samizdat*, which in Russian literally means “self-published” or “self-publishing house,” is the publishing or distribution of printed works without official authorisation and bypassing the control of state censorship authorities. Hundreds of small magazines and art journals—especially in the Prenzlauer Berg—were produced, circumventing the censorship of the GDR state.

Artistic production and activities in the underground literary scenes were intentionally hidden from the broader public to target small, alternative audiences. As the editors of *Mikado* explained in the foreword to a collection of texts from their journal, published in West Germany in 1988: “wir wollten einfach eine *andere* Öffentlichkeit, die die Worte des Einzelnen bündelt, gegen—und miteinander sprechen läßt” (we simply wanted a different kind of public sphere, one that bundles the words of the individual and allows them to speak against and with each other).⁶³ In this way, the editors and authors of *samizdat* works assumed they would find suitable readers who would grasp and value their writings, especially owing to their shared experiences and points of reference. We discuss the importance of situated readership and its relationship to knowledge further, alongside analysis of *samizdat* work, in chapter 4.

It took considerable courage—even for established regime-critical writers—to circumvent state censorship, given their situated (and imperfect) knowledge of Stasi surveillance. Kolbe noted that one very established

61 Report on an interview with Uwe Kolbe on “Kennzeichen D” on March 9, 1988, 185.

62 Von Zitzewitz, *The Culture of Samizdat*.

63 Kolbe, Trolle, and Wagner, “Mikado 1–12,” 9. Emphasis in original.

writer declined the invitation to contribute to *Mikado* because of what Kolbe termed “Stasiangst” (Stasi fear): “Und da, also, ganz konspirativ bei ihm und so, und der hatte, es war deutlich, also er hatte so Stasiangst, ja, aber das hatten alle! Das ist ja, es gibt ja immer wieder diese Beispiele, dass Leute bei Gesprächen das Radio eingeschaltet haben” (and there, so, quite conspiratorial with him and so on, and he had, it was clear, so he was so afraid of the Stasi, yes, but everyone was! That’s, there are always these examples of people switching on the radio during conversations).⁶⁴ According to Kolbe, the same writer warned him about the political and reputational risks that such underground publishing might have: “Also, er ging dann mit mir auch aus der Wohnung raus, ins Treppenhaus und sagte: ... ‘entweder ihr kriegt richtig Ärger, sie verbieten’s und stecken euch ins Gefängnis oder was, oder sie [d.h. andere] sagen, ihr seid doch sowieso von der Stasi!’” (so he took me out of the apartment, into the stairwell and said: ... either you’ll get into real trouble, they’ll ban it and put you in prison or something, or they [i.e., others] will just say you must be from the Stasi anyhow).⁶⁵ Although he agreed with this argumentation, at least in retrospect, Kolbe recalled being disappointed at the colleague’s response, but nonetheless vowed to persist with the *Mikado* project: “Und dann habe ich gesagt: ‘Na ja, Gott. Schade, aber wir machen weiter!’” (and then I said: “oh well, my God. Pity, but we’ll persist”).⁶⁶ In Kolbe’s recollection, he and his co-editors were prepared to meet the potential backlash, whether directly from the Stasi or another state ministry, with open protest and felt that they had a kind of “dreifacher Schutz” (three-way protection) given their own respective positions as a writer already published in the West (Kolbe), a member of the official GDR Writers’ Union (Wagner), and a member of the Verein der Verfolgten des Naziregimes (Association of the Victims of the Nazi Regime, Lothar Trolle).⁶⁷ They were willing, if necessary, to make their covert resistance overt.

The cultural underground scene thus provided space to take action and counter-surveil in the most literal sense of the term “*sousveillance*” which derives from the French words for “sous” (below) and “veiller” (to watch). Coined by Steve Mann in 1998, the term *sousveillance* (watching from below), which emerged as an antipode to surveillance (watching from above), is a form of “reflectionism” meant to describe “a philosophy and procedures of using technology to mirror and confront bureaucratic organizations.”⁶⁸ As Mann, Nolan, and Wellman elaborate further:

64 Interview with Uwe Kolbe, June 1, 2021.

65 Interview with Uwe Kolbe, June 1, 2021.

66 Interview with Uwe Kolbe, June 1, 2021.

67 Interview with Uwe Kolbe, June 1, 2021.

68 Mann, Nolan, and Wellman, “Sousveillance,” 332–33.

Reflectionism becomes *sousveillance* when it is applied to individuals using tools to observe the organizational observer. *Sousveillance* focuses on enhancing the ability of people to access and collect data about their surveillance and to neutralize surveillance. As a form of personal space protection, it resonates with Gary Marx's (2003) proposal to resist surveillance through non-compliance and interference "moves" that block, distort, mask, refuse, and counter-surveil the collection of information.⁶⁹

The artistic underground scene naturally lacked the technological advancements that Mann's notion of "*sousveillance*" includes. However, the political actions taken to circumvent SED censorship for artistic production—which required countersurveillance—resonate with this concept. In that sense, "*sousveillance*" can be understood as "surveillance from below," that is, an inverse panopticon where dissident GDR citizens attempted to outwit the Stasi for the sake of artistic freedom—and they did so based on the intuitive and situated knowledge they held about the secret police. Watching back from the underground is different from the direct confrontations seen in the examples of countersurveillance described above; it was a subversive way to challenge authority and reclaim artistic and intellectual autonomy.

For example, after her release from prison, Gabriele Stötzer moved in underground artistic circles and women's groups, and employed both conspicuous and inconspicuous strategies to deal with ongoing state surveillance. Frequently, Stötzer played on the fear of revelation as a method of countersurveillance. She made contact with the prominent writer Christa Wolf and spoke openly about this connection, drawing on the knowledge that the state would be less likely to enact openly repressive measures against authors famous in the West. In the interview with Windsor, Stötzer recalls:

Oder ich hab gesagt: "Ich kenn Christa Wolf." Damit die Stasi'n bisschen Schiss hat wen ich alle kenne, die Westbeziehungen hatten, weil das war wichtig, wenn du jemanden im Westen hattest und das wurde da publik gemacht, dann warste auch geschützt.⁷⁰

[Or I said: "I know Christa Wolf." So that the Stasi would be a bit scared about who I knew who had relationships in the West, because that was important, if you had someone in the West and it was made public, then you were also protected.]

69 Mann, Nolan, and Wellman, "Sousveillance," 333.

70 Interview with Gabriele Stötzer, June 14, 2021.

When she and her acquaintances organised underground exhibitions or readings, they talked openly about them so that word got around, and the Stasi had to think twice about intervening and making their interference apparent. In the interview with Windsor, Stötzer refers to this as “Flucht in die Öffentlichkeit” (escape into the public sphere). Stötzer describes this interweaving of openness and secrecy as a kind of game that they played with the Stasi:

wir haben auch damit gespielt. Zum Beispiel bei den Pleinairs, da haben die immer verboten, dann haben wir heimlich eingeladen, dann haben wir doch’n Pleinair gemacht, ein Jahr. Beim zweiten, beim dritten Mal, dann haben die Stasi dann Sascha Anderson eingesetzt, weil ein Jahr haben wir Pleinair gemacht, da haben wir das öffentlich ausgestellt. Das zweite Jahr war verboten, da haben wir die Leute hintenrum eingeladen. Haben doch’n Pleinair gemacht, haben es aber nicht mehr offiziell, sondern privat als Fest gemacht oder irgendwas.⁷¹

[but we also played with it. For example, at the plein-air, they always banned it, then we secretly invited people, then we did a plein-air after all, one year. The second, third time, the Stasi appointed Sascha Anderson, because one year we did plein-air, we exhibited them publicly. The second year was forbidden, so we invited people in the backdoor. We still did a plein-air, but we didn’t do it officially anymore, we did it privately as a party or something.]

In this way, they use the power of revelation—that is widespread knowledge about the event—to make it difficult for the state to ban the activity. The Stasi respond by covertly infiltrating the plein-air using an IM about whom very few had any suspicions (or intuitions) that he might be working with the Stasi and ultimately banning it. The critical artists respond by moving to “secret” invitations and a private—covert—party: no longer official, but very likely (given the presence of Anderson) nonetheless known to the MfS.

Other strategies were more covert from the start. According to the Stasi files, Stötzer organised her own unofficial observation of an underground art studio in Erfurt to make sure that it was secure as a meeting point. This countersurveillance is documented by an IM with the code name “Lutz Müller” and is worth citing at some length:

Bewußtseinsmäßig entwickelt sich die Kachold [Stötzer’s name at the time] Bestrebungen ... ein neues “Zentrum” zu schaffen. Diese Aktivitäten sind jedoch gleichzeitig verbunden mit einem gewissen

71 Interview with Gabriele Stötzer, June 14, 2021.

Verfolgungswahn, der selbst anderen Szenenmitgliedern auffällt. So berichtete K., daß bei einem Ausräumen der ehemaligen Wohnung ... auf der gegenüberliegenden Seite der Straße ein Mann von der Stasi gestanden hätte und diese Maßnahmen beobachtet hätte ... Zur Gewährleistung einer hohen Sicherheit im Zusammenhang mit der P[ergamentergasse] 41 zukünftig gedachten Rolle wurde durch die K. im Zusammenwirken mit dem [redacted] eine Beobachtung der P41 organisiert. Diese Beobachtungsmaßnahmen wurden von einer als Kohlenarbeiter tätigen Person in der ersten Etage des Nachbargrundstückes wohnhaft sowie von einer mir zur Zeit noch unbekannten Person auf der gegenüberliegenden Straßenseite getätigt und sollen bis ca Ende September durchgeführt werden.⁷²

[Kachold [Stötzer's name at time] consciously develops efforts to create ... a new "centre." At the same time, however, these activities are associated with a certain persecution mania that even other members of the scene notice. K. reported that during a clear-out of the former flat ... a man from the Stasi had been standing on the opposite side of the street and had observed these measures ... To ensure a high level of security in connection with P[ergamentergasse] 41 in the future, K. organised observation of P41 in cooperation with [redacted]. These observation measures were carried out by a person working as a coal miner who lives on the first floor of the neighbouring property and by a person on the opposite side of the street, who is still unknown to me at the moment, and are to be carried out until around the end of September.]

As in the case of Fühmann and Schlesinger, the IM here interprets Stötzer's actions as being driven by a state of paranoia. A state that was deliberately evoked by the Stasi among GDR citizens, particularly in the context of *Zersetzung*, but which is described here (as in the case of Fühmann and Schlesinger) as an unfounded mental overreaction of the individuals being observed. Stötzer's response is to adopt covert methods that are reminiscent of those used by the Stasi: quite literally a form of countersurveillance.

Indeed, the knowledge that they were being observed by the Stasi—a knowledge gained through intuition and direct encounter—did not only provoke confrontational responses. These writers and authors also sought to conceal their potentially subversive actions from the secret police, avoiding conspicuous behaviour and adhering to stated rules in order not to attract attention. For example, Stötzer reveals the following about the Erfurt underground scene:

72 Report by IM "Lutz Müller" in OV "Toxin," dated September 10, 1982.

Wir standen immer mit dem einen Fuß im Knast und das wussten wir alle. Wir wussten alle, dass es den Asozialenparagrafen gibt. Es sind viele Leute immer mal von uns weggegangen, die waren im Gefängnis, die kamen wieder raus ... Aber ich wusste eben, was man nicht machen darf. Also, ich hab nie mehr in der Straßenbahn beschissen. Weißte, alles was kriminell war: du darfst keine Schulden haben, du musst deinen Strom bezahlen, das, das, das. Du darfst bestimmte Sachen, die unter Asozialität fallen, die dürfen nicht passieren, ja?⁷³

[We always had one foot in jail and we all knew that. We all knew that there was an antisocial clause. A lot of people left us from time to time, they were in prison, they got out again ... But I just knew what you weren't allowed to do. So, I never cheated on the tram again. You know, everything that was criminal: you're not allowed to have debts, you have to pay your electricity, this, this, this. You're not allowed to do certain things that fall under antisocial behavior, right?]

She recalls helping a friend pay her electricity bill so that she would not attract the authorities' attention for such so-called "asocial" behaviour.⁷⁴ What we see here is the diverse ways in which revelation and secrecy were interwoven not only in the actions of the secret police, but also in those who they observed. Stötzer uses her knowledge of the Stasi (much of it gained through direct confrontation) to make strategic decisions on when to deploy openness as a tactic and when to use secrecy or even public conformity to keep herself and those around her safe.

Laughing at the Stasi: Humour as a Means of Resistance

Humour and its various forms like satire, cynicism, irony or jokes are a long-established means of social criticism. The subversive nature of humour challenges authority and undermines prevailing ideologies. Humorous depictions of the Stasi were not only a means to circulate knowledge about them but also a way to express critique against the entire surveillance apparatus. Accounts of humour as criticism, subversion, and transgression have been made by thinkers such as Terry Eagleton, Umberto Eco and Peter Sloterdijk on various occasions.⁷⁵ Eagleton's *Humour* (2019) engages with the many functions of this complex phenomenon through history, philosophy and psychoanalysis, focusing on the semiotics of laughter. Replace sentence with: Grappling with the myriad implications and

73 Interview with Gabriele Stötzer, June 14, 2021.

74 Interview with Gabriele Stötzer, June 14, 2021.

75 Holm, "Against the Assault of Laughter," 32. See also Eagleton, *Humour*, and Eco, "The Comic and the Rule."

notions of humour, Eagleton suggests “splic[ing] the incongruity thesis”—defined as a break with cognitive or social expectations—“with the release theory”, and concludes that “humour happens for the most part when some fleeting disruption of a well-ordered world of meaning loosens the grip of the reality principle.”⁷⁶ It is precisely this releasing effect of all forms of humour that sets social criticism free.

Reflecting on ancient comedy, where the comic serves “only as an instrument of social control,” Umberto Eco outlines “types of comic” that work as a form of social criticism in his essay *The Frames of Comic Freedom* (1984).⁷⁷ With reference to Luigi Pirandello’s essay *On Humor* (1908),⁷⁸ Eco draws an important distinction between humour and the comic which he describes as “an umbrella term covering disparate phenomena.”⁷⁹ He explains that while the comic is the “perception of the opposite” which, in line with theories on incongruity, causes laughter thanks to shared cultural codes, humour is rooted in “the ‘sentiment’ of the opposite,” which “attempts to reestablish and reassert the broken frame.”⁸⁰ Elaborating on this distinction, Eco concludes that whereas comedy takes place within the frames of societal norms (carnival as a case in point), humour allows for a “possibility of transgression,”⁸¹ subverting those frames. Hence “the performance of humor acts as a form of social criticism.”⁸²

Taking a different point of departure, Sloterdijk explores humour as a subversive force in *Kritik der zynischen Vernunft* (*Critique of Cynical Reason*, 1983). Contrasting modern and ancient cynicism (“kynicism”), he carves out two types of social character. Sloterdijk criticises “modern ideology critique” for its detachment from “the powerful traditions of laughter in satirical knowledge, which have their roots in ancient kynicism.”⁸³ He argues further that modern cynicism has become an “enlightened false consciousness” which, although still able to recognise critique, has lapsed into a state of resignation and thus fails to put criticism into action. The ancient form of cynicism, however, employs humour, satire, and bodily expression to challenge established norms and authority.⁸⁴

The archival material reveals numerous instances where humour was used to criticise the Stasi in the form of sarcastic representations and jokes that trivialised the authority of Stasi officers aligning with the “kynical”⁸⁵

76 Eagleton, *Humour*, 88.

77 Eco, “The Frames of Comic ‘Freedom,’” 7.

78 Pirandello, “On Humor.”

79 Eco, “The Frames of Comic ‘Freedom,’” 7.

80 Eco, “The Frames of Comic ‘Freedom,’” 7.

81 Eco, “The Frames of Comic ‘Freedom,’” 8.

82 Eco, “The Frames of Comic ‘Freedom,’” 8.

83 Sloterdijk, *Critique of Cynical Reason*, 16.

84 Sloterdijk, *Critique of Cynical Reason*, 5–6.

85 Sloterdijk, *Critique of Cynical Reason*, 4.

tradition, that is, more generally speaking, with forms of humour that function as subtle social criticism questioning the status quo and offering spaces for resistance. This humorous trivialisation as a strategy is frequently based on the widespread bias against Stasi officers as “stupid” in GDR society. The common typification of the Stasi man as a “langhaariger Typ ... von der Staatssicherheit” with a “Notizbuch in seiner Hemdtasche” (long-haired guy from the State Security with a notebook in his shirt pocket)⁸⁶ contributes to these sarcastic and cynical portrayals. Humorous images of Stasi collaborators with notebooks in their shirts became widely recognised stereotypes which also allowed GDR citizens to make light of the repressive surveillance system under which they lived, for “all humour involves” release, a “deflationary effect”, as Eagleton highlights with reference to Freudian theory.⁸⁷ In that sense, humour was not just employed as a personal coping mechanism but also a collective strategy. Such comical representations were shared through “jokes,” both spreading knowledge about the Stasi and offering a subtle but effective way to resist the omnipresent gaze of the Stasi. For example, and as we have seen in chapter 1, Kolbe comments in his interview with Windsor: “Als solches nahm man die Stasi schon wahr, aber das war so wie: Na ja, das sind doch Idioten. Guck mal, die da” (in that sense, you could certainly spot the Stasi, but it was like: “Well, they’re idiots. Look at them over there.”).⁸⁸

Humour also became a direct method of confrontation, as seen in the performances of Wegner. She used her situated knowledge of the Stasi and her platform to subtly mock the Stasi officers in the audience, making light of their presence with remarks such as, “Jetzt müßt ihr den Bleistift zücken” (now you need to take out your pencils) or “Notizbuch kann geschlossen werden” (notebook can be closed).⁸⁹ In this way, Wegner made the presence of the state security service a theme of her performances, alluding to the stereotypical representations of Stasi officers as men in grey suits who are never without their notebooks and pencils. It becomes evident that jokes and humour were both a weapon of resistance and a way of indicating knowledge—in this case about the Stasi and how its officers might be identified. That such jokes would only have been understood by those “in the know” (that is, those with the necessary knowledge to understand the reference) means that Wegner is here also gesturing towards a shared awareness of the “public secret” of

86 Report by IME “Heinrich” on event with Bettina Wegner in the “Allende-Klub” on June 22, 1977, dated June 29, 1977, 260.

87 Eagleton, *Humour*, 22; see also 11 for a direct reference to *Freud’s Der Witz und seine Beziehung zum Unbewußten* (Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious).

88 Interview with Uwe Kolbe, June 1, 2021.

89 Report by IME “Heinrich” of event with Bettina Wegner, dated June 29, 1977, 260.

surveillance. By integrating such humour into her performances, Wegner not only resisted the Stasi's monitoring of her but also created a space where shared understanding of the "public secret" of surveillance could foster solidarity and create a subtle form of collective resistance.

The fragile and unreliable nature of this kind of knowledge is hinted at by IME "Heinrich" who recounts that the result on one occasion was "ein regelrechter Verfolgungswahn"⁹⁰ (a real persecution complex) in which people were suspected of being informants by the mere fact that they were unfriendly or had a notebook in their pocket. This highlights the pervasive anxiety fostered by the Stasi, where even the most mundane actions were imbued with suspicion. Humour, in this sense, acted as a way to cope with and critique the absurdities of the surveillance state, turning the Stasi's attempts at control into a subject of ridicule. These were all attempts to demystify the Stasi by portraying them as foolish bureaucrats, rendering their power and authority as less intimidating. Humour thus served as both as form of knowledge acquisition as well as circulation and an important strategy for critique, offering a way to challenge the status quo while simultaneously providing a means for the oppressed to reclaim some measure of agency.

At the same time, it becomes clear that there is a tension in the way the Stasi is represented in the primary material, as it is depicted both as an all-seeing and powerful entity and as a figure of fun whom people made jokes about as a form of release and resistance. This tension exposes the fragility of the Stasi's claim to epistemic authority: while the organisation positioned itself as the ultimate knower, these mocking representations highlight the gap between its totalising self-image and the everyday realities experienced by citizens. Humour and irony thus functioned as a form of epistemic resistance, allowing citizens to reassert their capacity to interpret and narrate their own social reality in the face of an oppressive regime seeking to monopolise truth.

This dynamic is particularly evident in the following IM report detailing the activities of Schlesinger and Wegner, in which the officers' inability to interpret an obvious situation, and the self-parodying tone of their exchange, inadvertently highlight their incompetence in a way that borders on the humorous and reveals the very cracks in epistemic authority that citizens often targeted:

Als wir mit dem Klaus runtergegangen sind und wir dann in die U-Bahn gegangen sind, ist dir da was aufgefallen? Was ist dir denn da aufgefallen? Na, daß da jemand stand, der Schl. aufgefallen sein könnte. *Du meinst also*, daß der Mann, der dort stand, mit einem

90 Report by IME "Heinrich" of event with Bettina Wegner, dated June 29, 1977, 260.

relativ mittellangen Haar, straff durchgekämmt, braunen Mantel an, Brillenträger, dort einen Beobachtungsposten bezogen hat ... *Du meinst also*, daß Schlesinger aus der Existenz dieser Person zu diesem Zeitpunkt, an diesem Ort hat schließen können, daß er überwacht wird ... das ist *natürlich eine nicht konkrete Absicherung der Dinge*.⁹¹

[When we went downstairs with Klaus and then went into the subway, did you notice anything? What did you notice there? Well, that there was someone standing there who might have noticed Schl. *So you mean* that the man who was standing there, with relatively medium-length hair, tightly combed, wearing a brown coat and glasses, had taken up an observation post ... *So you mean* that Schlesinger could have concluded from the existence of this person at that time, in that place, that he was being watched ... that is *of course a non-concrete safeguarding of things*.]

The passage above describes a conversation about whether an individual was under surveillance, noting the absurdity of the situation. The lack of quick understanding, suggested by the questioning or the need to confirm an otherwise obvious fact, seems to shore up the stereotype of the stupidity of Stasi employees. The questioning, as if confirming an obvious fact—"You mean that Schlesinger could deduce from the presence of this person at this location that he was being watched?"—exemplifies the stereotype of Stasi employees as overly cautious and, at times, clueless. This depiction plays into the widespread narrative of the Stasi as a force incapable of achieving real control, adding a layer of irony to the situation. Moreover, the rhetorics of the reporting IM—repetitive gestures and ironical tone—seem to suggest that they are parodying themselves. As we shall see in chapter 4, humour and satire was also employed by writers in their fictional representations of the MfS, which also circulated as forms of knowledge in the literary sphere.

Writing as Resistance

For the writers and artists of the underground scene, their artistic and literary practice constituted one of the clearest forms of resistance. The coming together of critical intellectuals in Ekkehard Maaß's salons, in other unofficial venues, or in the semi-public spaces of the Church, often gave this resistance a sense of collective strength. In the post-Wende publication *Sprachzeiten*, Peter Böhlig describes the significance of Maaß's salon as a "Kristallisationspunkt" (crystallisation point) for the non-conformist art scene in East Berlin, that attempted "dem

91 Report by IM "Karl," in OV "Schreiberling," dated December 8, 1976, 273. Emphasis added.

Staat unabhängige demokratische Freiräume abzutrotzen” (to wrest independent democratic freedoms from the state).⁹² The sense of collectivity in Böthig’s description is strengthened by his description of the “Mentorenschaft” (mentorship) provided—uniquely—in Maaß’s salon by recognised authors such as Christa and Gerhard Wolf, Heiner Müller, Franz Fühmann, Volker Braun and Elke Erb.⁹³

Similarly, in her interview with Windsor, Christa Moog recounts readings and concerts in the cultural underground scenes of Magdeburg where punk gigs took place in churches. Moog was in awe of the punk bands’ “mutige Texte ... *Macht kaputt was euch kaputt macht*“ (courageous texts ... *break what breaks you*): “Und dann liefen die alle mit solchen nach oben gestylten bunten Haaren und schwarzen Klamotten und Ringen überall in den Ohren und Nasen und es war so ’ne Szenerie wo man dachte, ‘Mann, die lassen sich jetzt auch hier nichts mehr sagen’” (and then they were all walking around with their colourful styled-up hair and black clothes and rings all over their ears and noses and it was a scene where you thought, “Man, they’re not going to let anyone say anything to them here either”).⁹⁴ She notes that she was certain that these meetings would be infiltrated by the Stasi (though this knowledge appears to have been intuitive in Gigerenzer’s sense): “Also, dieses Punktreffen und Dichtertreffen, das war sicher absolut durchsetzt von der Stasi. Da hatten die sicher ’ne richtige Delegation abgesandt, nich’ nur ein oder zwei, die da berichtet haben und alles aufgenommen haben und so” (so, this punk and poets’ meeting, that was certainly totally infiltrated by the Stasi. They must have sent a real delegation, not just one or two, who reported there and recorded everything and so on).⁹⁵ The fact that those attending knew that there were informants in the audience makes these meetings an example of open confrontation—a confrontation that was underpinned by the lyrics of some of the songs, as Moog recalls: “Zurückschlagen, sich wehren, sich nich’ unterdrücken, sich nich’ Angst machen lassen, auch so, in die Offensive gehen, und, sich was trauen, und die können uns nicht unterkriegen, oder sowas” (fight back, defend yourselves, don’t suppress yourselves, don’t let them scare you, go on the offensive, and dare to do something, and they can’t get us down, or something like that).⁹⁶ But it was the collective nature of the meeting, the coming together of people around a common sense of defiance that allowed Moog to feel less afraid and a stronger sense of security:

92 Böthig, “Vorbemerkung,” in *Sprachzeiten*, 7.

93 Böthig, “Vorbemerkung,” in *Sprachzeiten*, 8.

94 Interview with Christa Moog, August 25, 2021.

95 Interview with Christa Moog, August 25, 2021.

96 Interview with Christa Moog, August 25, 2021.

... also, da bei diesem Punktreffen in Magdeburg, also, da hatte ich dann schon auch den Eindruck, dass die Stasi sich auch irgendwie in gewisser Weise ohnmächtig fühlen musste. Denn das waren auch so viele und so geballt. Und so, da konnte man ja nicht so massenweise verhaften oder verhören, und so. Aber, tja.⁹⁷

[So, at that meeting in Magdeburg, I had the impression that the Stasi must have felt powerless in a certain way. Because there were so many of them and they were so concentrated. And so, you couldn't arrest or interrogate them en masse, and so on. But, well.]

We know for example from the events at the Umweltbibliothek (Environmental Library) in November 1987 (when seven people were arrested) and from the Luxemburg-Liebke demonstration in early 1988 (when more than 100 people were arrested, as described above) that the Stasi could indeed arrest individuals en masse.⁹⁸ However, Moog's recollection gives a sense of how shared knowledge, sentiment, and experience could underpin resistance to the Stasi's power.

Nonetheless, resistance was not always collective. Individual texts could also form a kind of "looking back." In chapter 4, we will explore in more detail how different writers represented the Stasi in literary form along a spectrum of concealment and revelation. Here we will look at a particular kind of writing as resistance: life writing or testimony. There is an extensive body of work on testimony—understood as an account of personal experience produced by an individual with that lived experience—performed through different cultural media.⁹⁹ Sara Jones and Roger Woods note that testimony—in whatever form—is always produced in a contested context, in which the experiences of the testifier are either unknown or not believed.¹⁰⁰ As Jones puts it elsewhere, the "witness gives an account of something he or she has directly experienced for the benefit of an audience that has not."¹⁰¹ Testimony then is about passing on knowledge as a form of resistance against ignorance or forgetting of suffering—suffering that one has undergone oneself and suffering experienced by others like you. The concept of *testimonio*, emerging in the

97 Interview with Christa Moog, August 25, 2021.

98 Kettelhake, "Vom Suchen und Finden"; "Freedom for those who think differently," *Revolution and the Fall of the Wall* <<https://revolution89.de/en/awakening/arrests-and-expulsions/freedom-for-those-who-think-differently>> (accessed May 30, 2025).

99 For an overview see Jones and Woods, *Palgrave Handbook of Testimony and Culture*.

100 Jones and Woods, "Introduction." As Günter Thomas puts it, the "witness enters into a *hotly contested and unstable reality*" (italics in original). Thomas, "Witness as a Cultural Form of Communication," 93.

101 Jones, "Testimony through Culture," 260.

Latin American context and described most prominently by John Beverley, emphasises the political potential of personal accounts. Beverley defines *testimonio* as having the function of communicating “repression, poverty, subalternity, imprisonment, struggle for survival,” as representative of the experiences of a social class or group.¹⁰²

Testimony is thus about the communication of knowledge in a context in which the testifier has reason to fear they will not be believed. Indeed, the epistemic value of testimony is widely disputed. In analytic philosophy, as we have seen in chapter 2, testimony is seen as knowledge at “second hand,” its reliability dependent on the trust and authority placed in the testifier and the reasonableness of that trust.¹⁰³ However, when it comes to testimony to traumatic experience, different considerations apply in what Sibylle Schmidt describes as the *ethical-political* approach.¹⁰⁴ Here, the accounts of those who have suffered violence come to acquire “*existential or embodied truth*”; that is, the knowledge seen to be contained in the testimony is linked inextricably to the body of the witness and its co-presence with that suffering.¹⁰⁵ Nonetheless, as Jones shows, embodied truth is only recognised if the witness is considered to have the necessary authority and respect to speak about this topic: perpetrators have also been physically present at moments of extreme suffering and, yet, we are generally reluctant to trust their testimonies, subjecting their accounts to greater scrutiny than that provided by victims.¹⁰⁶ Moreover, it is not only perpetrators who find themselves not believed; women and other marginalised groups also struggle to find an “adequate witness” in Gilmore’s terms, who will hear, read, and trust their accounts on their own terms.¹⁰⁷ Women who have been incarcerated are likely to experience a double marginalisation.¹⁰⁸

As we saw in chapter 1, Stötzer wrote an account of her imprisonment as a way of passing on knowledge to others, especially her friends. The account in question was entitled “Dabei sein und nicht Schweigen” (Being Present and Not Silent), a 30-page, typewritten account based on her experiences—and the experiences of others—in Stasi remand prison and in the women’s prison facility in Hoheneck. “Dabei sein” is one of Stötzer’s earliest written pieces, produced between 1978 and 1979.¹⁰⁹

102 Beverley, *Testimonio*, 32.

103 See, for example, Scholz, “Das Zeugnis anderer,” 34–35; Krämer and Weigel, “Introduction,” xv; McMyler, *Testimony, Trust, and Authority*; Lackey and Sosa, *The Epistemology of Testimony*.

104 Schmidt, “Wissensquelle oder ethisch-politische Figur?,” 47.

105 Krämer and Weigel, “Introduction,” xii. Italics in original.

106 See Jones, “Testimony through Culture,” and Schmidt, “Perpetrators’ Knowledge.”

107 Gilmore, *Tainted Witness*, 4; Michael, “Gendered Testimonies.”

108 Colvin, “Dancing through the Next Minefield,” 590.

109 Horakova, “Learning from the Underground,” 138.

According to Anna Horakova, the “text is an exercise in objectivity”—at least, it is stylised as such—“and an attempt to convey a sphere that the majority of East Germans did not experience.”¹¹⁰ Although this was not printed in an underground periodical, copies of it circulated independently.¹¹¹ In this sense, Stötzer’s text meets Jones’s definition of testimony as an account of a lived experience by an individual who was present at an event for the benefit of others who were not. It is mostly written with an external focalisation, recounting the experiences of nameless actors, employing a third-person heterodiegetic narrator, and making extensive use of the passive voice and impersonal pronoun “man.” These features mean it lends itself to being read as the account of a group of sufferers, rather than that of a single individual, and as a form of resistance through revelation.

Questions of secrecy, knowledge, and societal (dis)trust are deeply embedded in Stötzer’s text. This is seen in the title, which underscores the directness of knowledge acquired by being “dabei” (there at the time) as well as an imperative to speak out. It is also addressed in the opening of the text, which is framed in terms of self- and socially imposed silence, secrecy, and taboo: “Es ist eigenartig, daß den Gefangenen in der DDR bei Entlassung aus der Haft ... nicht ans Herz gelegt wird, von ihren Erlebnissen hinter den Gefängnismauern keinem etwas zu erzählen” (it is strange that prisoners in the GDR are not advised not to tell anyone about their experiences behind prison walls when they are released from prison).¹¹² Such a demand was not necessary, Stötzer continues, because most former inmates wanted to suppress and found it difficult to articulate their experiences and, most importantly, because:

Knast und alles was damit zusammenhängt ist nicht gesellschaftsfähig. Die Gefangenen aus den Strafvollzugsanstalten nehmen das Grau der Gefängnismauern mit in ihre Existenz als freigelassener DDR-Bürger, werden zu den “schwarzen Löchern” der Gesellschaft.¹¹³

[Prison and everything associated with it is not socially acceptable. The prisoners from the penal institutions take the grey of the prison walls with them into their existence as released GDR citizens, becoming the “black holes” of society.]

110 Horakova, “Learning from the Underground,” 139.

111 Extract from a report by IMB “David Menzer” undated; interview with Gabriele Stötzer, June 14, 2021.

112 Stötzer, “Dabei sein und nicht Schweigen,” 1.

113 Stötzer, “Dabei sein und nicht Schweigen,” 1.

The implication is that former prisoners like Stötzer embody and are potential purveyors of knowledge about the experience of arrest and imprisonment, but their social marginalisation means they are not granted the authority to testify to those experiences and become enigmatic “public secrets” themselves. We might recall Kolbe’s comments discussed in chapter 1 about the sense that the prison experience could not be fully grasped by those who had not been directly affected.

The former prisoners thus suffer epistemic injustice,¹¹⁴ as they are not granted the possibility of sharing their experiences and an adequate witness to receive them, all whilst the Stasi has extensively documented every detail of their lives through its own hostile perspective. Horakova suggests that the opening of Stötzer’s text “sets out to counter two oppressive forces that have compounded the secrecy surrounding the GDR’s penitentiaries,” that is, “the complacency of the public” and the “censorship.”¹¹⁵ “Disregarding both mechanisms,” Horakova continues, “Stötzer’s text testifies to the dehumanizing conditions of imprisonment.”¹¹⁶ By writing and sharing this text, Stötzer not only reveals aspects of her experiences but also emphasises the need for “öffentliche[s] diskutieren und anzweifeln” (public discussion and questioning) about the mechanisms of state security and justice that were mostly conducted “hinter verschlossenen Türen” (behind closed doors):

solange Formulierung, Verkündung und Abbüßung der Strafgesetze die Öffentlichkeit ausschließt, ist auch derjenige, an dem sich exemplarisch vollzieht, wovor jeder einzelne der Gesellschaft sich fürchtet und angstvoll abwendet, ist der Strafgefangene der DDR weiter aus der gesellschaftlichen Öffentlichkeit dieses Landes ausgestoßen.¹¹⁷

[prisoners of the GDR—those who are made to undergo what every member of society fears and anxiously turns away from—will continue to be ostracised from the social sphere of this country as long as the formulation, proclamation, and enforcement of penal laws are excluded from public view.]

We might view the format of Stötzer’s text itself—a “Gedächtnisprotokoll” (a protocol written from memory)—as an imitation of the Stasi’s own documentary style, minuting the details of experience. Here that detail is drawn from memory of that experience by an individual who lived through it, that is from an internal perspective, but which imitates the cold external gaze of the Stasi who document what they observe. Stötzer’s

114 Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*.

115 Horakova, “Learning from the Underground,” 138.

116 Horakova, “Learning from the Underground,” 138.

117 Stötzer, “Dabei sein und nicht Schweigen,” 1.

text bears similarities in this regard to works such as Jürgen Fuchs's *Vernehmungsprotokolle* (Interrogation Protocol), first published in 1977, in which Fuchs gives an account from memory of his interrogation by the Stasi whilst in remand prison.¹¹⁸ Stötzer also wrote such "memory protocols" following encounters with other state representatives, for example, after a meeting with the Erfurt municipal cultural department when her unauthorised "Galerie im Flur" (Gallery in the Hallway) was shut down in 1981.¹¹⁹

"Dabei sein und nicht Schweigen"—sometimes referred to in the files as her "Haftbericht" or "Knastbericht" (prison report)—is written as a detailed, dense report covering diverse aspects of the physical, material and psychological conditions in the prison. According to Horakova, the text is "[r]eplete with facts," and Stötzer's personal experiences are "buttesse[d] ... with reports, statistics and official documents."¹²⁰ These narrative and stylistic features—along with the external focalisation, passive voice, and impersonal pronouns—are part of the text's revelation and concealment: the deeply personal experience of imprisonment is extrapolated to an abstract, documentary level, concealing individual identities, including the author's. At the same time, the text's documentary character implies that its revelation is full and authoritative and therefore should be believed, that is, function as a medium of knowledge. This type of revelatory document stands in contrast to other written forms mentioned within it: Stötzer characterises the relationship between the accused and the interrogator, for example, as "eine fast kreative Gemeinschaft" (an almost creative community) as they struggle over the formulation of sentences in the interrogation records.¹²¹ This hints at the "fictions" contained within the Stasi files themselves and Stötzer's (or the unnamed "accused's") own agency in attempting, under extremely challenging conditions, to shape the record that the Stasi holds on her:

Spielt der Gefangene aber nicht mit, wehrt er sich gegen allzu-
glatte Formulierungen, ringt er um jeden Satz, jedes wertbeladene
Wort, läßt er streichen, korrigieren, neu formulieren bevor er seine

¹¹⁸ Fuchs, *Vernehmungsprotokollen*.

¹¹⁹ Memory protocol of conversation between councillor Günter Steppat, an unnamed minute-taker (from the MfS but representing the interior ministry) and Gabriele Kachold and Ulrich Gater, reproduced in Stötzer, *Der lange Arm der Stasi*, 158–60. According to MfS reports, this "Gedächtnisprotokoll" was also distributed within Stötzer's network. Information about the liquidation of a private gallery in Erfurt, dated April 8, 1981. She also produced an extensive documentation of interviews with friends and acquaintances who frequented the gallery which is contained in her papers at the AuL.

¹²⁰ Horakova, "Learning from the Underground," 139.

¹²¹ Stötzer, "Dabei sein und nicht Schweigen," 5.

Unterschrift unter das Protokoll setzt, entsteht bald eine feindlich-aggressive Stimmung auf beiden Seiten, die von Haß, Trotz und oppositionellem Schweigen getragen wird.¹²²

[However, if the prisoner does not play along, if he resists overly smooth formulations, if he struggles with every sentence, every value-laden word, if he has it deleted, corrected, and reformulated before he signs the protocol, a hostile and aggressive atmosphere will soon develop on both sides, fuelled by hatred, defiance, and oppositional silence.]

The accused are not permitted to write anything themselves but are required to sign each page of the interrogation, presumably as a sign of authentication and legitimisation: “es ist angeraten, den Text vorher genau durchzulesen, auch wenn man die Thematik schon bald nicht mehr ertragen kann” (it is advisable to read the text carefully beforehand, even if you soon find the subject matter unbearable).¹²³ On writing letters home from remand prison, Stötzer recounts the attempt “in kompliziertesten Wendungen irgendetwas über sich, den Fall oder die Anstalt ‘nach draußen’ zu bringen” (to get something about oneself, the case or the institution ‘out there’ in the most complicated turns of phrase).¹²⁴ She notes the frustration and disappointment that the full meaning of these personal concealed messages can rarely be “erraten”¹²⁵ (guessed or decoded) by the recipient of the letter: that is, they cannot find an “adequate witness” in Gilmore’s terms.

Copies of “Dabei sein” made it into the Stasi files via “David Menzer” (Anderson), whose reports also reflect on the nature and purpose of the text. According to “David Menzer,” Stötzer claimed that she wrote the report for herself as a kind of “Gedächtnisprotokoll” (memory protocol) but also gave it to other people “um mit ihnen ins Gespräch zu kommen und sie mit Dingen bekannt zu machen, die sie nicht kennen”¹²⁶ (to get into dialogue with them and introduce them to things they don’t know)—emphasising further that Stötzer saw this text as a medium of knowledge. Indeed, “David Menzer” characterised the work as an “extra emotionslosen Informations- und Verhaltensbericht ... zur Verbreitung und zur Bekanntmachung mit dem Knast” (extra unemotional information and behaviour report ... for dissemination and to make known

122 Stötzer, “Dabei sein und nicht Schweigen,” 5.

123 Stötzer, “Dabei sein und nicht Schweigen,” 5.

124 Stötzer, “Dabei sein und nicht Schweigen,” 9.

125 Stötzer, “Dabei sein und nicht Schweigen,” 9.

126 Information from “David Menzer” about a report by Gabriele Kachold, “dabeisein und nicht schweigen,” in OV Toxin, dated April 14, 1981.

the prison)¹²⁷ and later suggested that it was the beginning of Stötzer's ambition to turn her direct experiences into "dokumentartige Literatur" (documentary-like literature).¹²⁸ According to "David Menzer," several copies of the text existed and it was read by "sehr viele Erfurter und Berliner" (many people from Erfurt and Berlin) and had also been passed on to Christa Wolf.¹²⁹

In Stötzer's recollection, Anderson's reception of the text was steeped in misogyny and part of his wider attempt to isolate and discredit her as a producer of knowledge whose testimony might be reasonably believed. In the interview with Windsor, Stötzer notes that lots of people thought she was "psychopathisch" (psychopathic), something she appears to attribute to Anderson's efforts to undermine her. She recalls reading "bei Sascha" (in Sascha's work)—presumably in the Stasi files—his response to her reading from the "Knastsache" (prison thing) in the underground scene: "Die ist ja total verrückt.' Ja? Und: 'Die hat sowieso schon lesb-, die ist sowieso lesbisch oder hat sowieso ... ist bisexuell.' Oder: 'Ist Psychopath'" ("She's totally crazy." Yes? And: "She's a lesb- anyway, she's a lesbian anyway or ... is bisexual anyway." Or: "Is a psychopath").¹³⁰ We might note the presentation of women's accounts as "irrational," is a long-standing method of discrediting them as witnesses to their own experience.¹³¹

In a letter to Joachim Walther in 2002, Stötzer claimed: "Zu meinem dokumentarischen Knasttext sagte [Christa Wolf], ich solle es nicht weiterreichen, es würde mich gefährden" ([Christa Wolf] told me not to pass on my documentary prison text, that it would endanger me).¹³² Stötzer reiterated this in her interview with Windsor, noting that Wolf advised her "tu die ins Schubfach und zeig die niemandem" (put it in the drawer and show it to no-one).¹³³ Wolf herself recalls this incident in her autobiographical text *Ein Tag im Jahr* (2003), noting that she spoke to a friend about "[das] Mädchen ... das wegen einer Unterschrift gegen die Biermann-Ausbürgerung auf Hoheneck eingesperrt war" (the girl ... who was imprisoned in Hoheneck because of a signature against the Biermann expulsion).¹³⁴ We get a sense of Wolf's guilt as she describes her decision

127 Extract from a report by IMB "David Menzer" undated.

128 Report by IMB "David Menzer" about the "Galerie im Flur," Erfurt, dated May 6, 1981, 157.

129 Report by IMB "David Menzer" about the "Galerie im Flur," dated May 6, 1981, 158; information from "David Menzer" about a report by Gabriele Kachold, "dabeisein und nicht schweigen," 106.

130 Interview with Gabriele Stötzer, June 14, 2021.

131 Gilmore, *Tainted Witness*, 16.

132 Letter from Gabriele Stötzer to Joachim Walther, January 9, 2002.

133 Interview with Gabriele Stötzer, June 14, 2021. See also Horakova, "Learning from the Underground," 136.

134 Wolf, *Ein Tag im Jahr*, 244.

to maintain contact with the “girl”: “An ihr wischen sie sich die Füße ab, während ich schreibe, verlegt werde, auf einem Empfang herumstehe” (they wipe their feet on her while I’m writing, being published, standing around at a reception).¹³⁵ Wolf’s strong advice to Stötzer not to attempt to publish the text does not mean that the younger author did not communicate knowledge about imprisonment to the older one; in fact, it is clear from Wolf’s account that she was deeply affected by Stötzer’s text, but wanted to protect the author from the potential repercussions of disseminating that knowledge more widely.

Wolf’s fictionalisation of this encounter in *Was Bleibt* (1990) is further testament to the impact that Stötzer had on her, as she appears in Wolf’s novella as the “Girl” who shows the older narrator-protagonist her manuscript.¹³⁶ Horakova argues that “Wolf’s substantial engagement with Stötzer and her prison writings in *Was Bleibt* must not be overlooked. The established author’s strategy of placing the younger writer and her manuscript intertextually in *Was Bleibt* counteracts her marginalisation not only before, but also after 1989.”¹³⁷ Whereas the narrator-protagonist “struggles to divulge the implications her surveillance has for her socialist ideals ... the Girl emerges as someone who cannot be held back from acting.”¹³⁸ Not only does the Girl “disregard[] the protagonist’s recommendation not to publish her manuscript” but her prison writing gives the narrator-protagonist a glimpse of “a coveted, new language that would help overcome the paralysis imposed by the conflict she experiences between the Stasi surveillance and her self-censorship.”¹³⁹ The protagonist even “positions her own inadequate critique of the Girl’s text after she skims through its first few pages”¹⁴⁰ when she notes, “Es war mir nicht gegeben, einen guten Text für schlecht zu erklären oder die Autorin eines guten Textes nicht zu ermutigen. Ich sagte, was sie da geschrieben habe, sei gut. Es stimme. Jeder Satz sei wahr. Sie solle es niemandem zeigen. Diese paar Seiten könnten sie wieder ins Gefängnis bringen” (It wasn’t for me to call a good text bad or not to encourage the author of a good text. I said that what she had written was good. It was no lie. Every sentence rang true. She shouldn’t show it to anybody. These few pages could land her in prison again.)¹⁴¹ In Horakova’s reading, the “linguistic renewal” needed in the East German literary sphere is

135 Wolf, *Ein Tag im Jahr*, 246.

136 Horakova, “Learning from the Underground,” 132.

137 Horakova, “Learning from the Underground,” 138.

138 Horakova, “Learning from the Underground,” 140–41.

139 Horakova, “Learning from the Underground,” 141. Horakova draws here on Samson, “Die ‘neue Sprache’ bei Christa Wolf.”

140 Horakova, “Learning from the Underground,” 142.

141 Wolf, *Was Bleibt*, 76, cited in Horakova, “Learning from the Underground,” 142. Translation by Schwarzbauer and Takvorian.

“textually indexed as already having taken place in the writing of authors such as Stötzer” and others of the “fourth generation” who “possess a more effective language for critiquing socialism and are not afraid to use it, as Wolf admits.”¹⁴² Although Horakova suggests that Wolf had indeed gained knowledge from Stötzer’s writings and “carv[ed] out space in her own writing for Stötzer’s marginalized voice,” the fact remains that *Was Bleibt* was not published and read for over a decade after Stötzer had sought out Wolf’s support, meaning that her acknowledgement and endorsement of Stötzer’s authority as a witness and a writer remained concealed.¹⁴³ Wolf might in this sense be understood as a semi-adequate witness to Stötzer’s testimony.

Conclusion

Both the creation of counter-legends and the sharing of personal accounts reveal how knowledge functioned as a form of resistance in the GDR. Semi-open confrontations—through the manipulation of information, subversion of state narratives, and the collective sharing of experience—enabled individuals to reclaim agency within a culture of surveillance. As this chapter has shown, figures in the literary sphere operated within a precarious balance of concealment and exposure, drawing on their situated knowledge of Stasi tactics to protect themselves, build solidarity, and resist the mistrust sown by informants. Resistance took shape not only through texts but also in gatherings like Maaß’s salon or punk poetry meetings in churches that acted as crucial spaces where people came together around shared defiance. Even knowing these were likely infiltrated by the Stasi, participants relied on shared codes and common understanding to sustain a fragile sense of solidarity and open confrontation.

Drawing on panoptic theory, this chapter has demonstrated how surveillance in the GDR engendered not only a pervasive climate of fear, distrust, psychological distress, and paranoia but also forms of resistance deeply intertwined with mistrust and knowledge. We have seen how individuals like Schlesinger transformed their heightened suspicion and paranoia into deliberate, strategic acts of defiance using legal channels to openly confront the Stasi. Others, like Wegner, built strong relationships of trust within literary and activist groups. These networks helped people

142 Horakova, “Learning from the Underground,” 143.

143 Horakova, “Learning from the Underground,” 138. Horakova notes that although Wolf provided Stötzer with material support, “this generosity did not always entail backing the young author and her oeuvre” (Horakova, “Learning from the Underground,” 137), something Stötzer also emphasised in her interview with Windsor. Interview with Gabriele Stötzer, June 14, 2021.

support each other, stay alert, and take action together when needed. We have also shown how these acts of resistance ranged from subtle narrative manipulations and humour that deflated the Stasi's authority to overt confrontation, showing how knowledge became a vital means of reclaiming autonomy. In the same vein, humour functioned as a subversive channel for knowledge, enabling moments of deflation and transgression by using irony, cynicism, and satire to undermine and trivialise the Stasi. Circulating jokes about the "Stasi man," that is, mocking the secret police, helped these critical intellectuals not only to make light of the repressive system but to reverse power structures by taking a critical stance. Testimony, meanwhile, transformed knowledge into documentary form, resisting enforced silence by recording what was meant to remain hidden. Stötzer's "Dabei sein und nicht Schweigen" offered an alternative epistemic space that questioned the state's dominant narratives. Whereas this chapter has primarily shed light on how knowledge served as a form of agency, chapter 4 explores how literary fiction mediated the tension between concealment and revelation, and how texts circulated knowledge of the Stasi and its surveillance methods.

4: Literature as Knowledge—Between Revelation and Concealment

AS WE HAVE seen, writers, as the supposed purveyors of *Ersatzöffentlichkeit* (replacement public sphere) in the GDR,¹ were viewed with deep suspicion by the state. Through their mechanisms of control, the Stasi attempted to uncover the “secrets” of the literary intellectuals whom they assumed to be harbouring oppositional intent, and at the same time ensure that these secrets did not enter public knowledge. The tactics—for example, the recruitment of literary IMs and “open” observation—also meant that in their efforts to find out the secrets of their subjects, the Stasi were required to reveal some of their own. We have shown in this book how writers acquired knowledge about the Stasi, how they circulated this knowledge within their networks, how that knowledge underpinned trust and mistrust, and how knowledge could also support agency and “countersurveillance.”

However, the role of writers as the purveyors of *Ersatzöffentlichkeit* did not (or at least not principally) relate to their interactions with one another; rather, it was the literature itself that was seen as providing a plurality of discourse in an otherwise tightly controlled public sphere. In this chapter, we consider literature—specifically literary fiction—as a means by which authors circulated knowledge, including knowledge about the Stasi. In this way, we argue that literature could (and can) function as a “medium of knowledge”;² however, it is a medium that is quite distinct from the embodied and interactional forms studied so far in this book. Literary fiction occupies a particular position in terms of its relationship to the world external to the text and to knowledge of it; yet the writers interviewed for this book repeatedly pointed us towards their literary works as representations of their experiences and as complementary to their first-person accounts. This complex relationship between fiction and the world ‘as it is’ means that literary fiction can itself be understood as part of the “public secret”: an “unstable and uncapturable blending ... of concealment and revelation.”³ In this chapter, we explore this proposition through a series of case studies—including, but going beyond the authors that constitute the focus of this book. Each case study represents a

1 Herminghouse, “Literature As ‘Ersatzöffentlichkeit?’”

2 Barth, “An Anthropology of Knowledge,” 3.

3 Taussig, *Defacement*, 50.

different strategy or approach to concealment and revelation and a different relationship with the intended audience(s). In our analysis we explore the literary texts themselves for what they have to say about the Stasi, knowledge, secrecy and revelation. Where available, we will complement this analysis with readings from unpublished archival material and published reception that indicates if and how the text was read and by whom.

Literature and Knowledge

That *Öffentlichkeit*—or revelation—was expected of literary authors in their relationship to power is seen in the reception histories of critical texts and, perhaps most tellingly, in the fierce criticism of GDR authors after the collapse of the GDR. As discussed in the Introduction to this book, following the publication in 1990 of *Was bleibt*, a literary text that recounts the experiences of a female GDR writer subject to intense observation by the Stasi, Christa Wolf was accused of being a “Staatsdichterin” (state scribe) who was now attempting to present herself as a victim of the state. It did not seem to matter to her accusers that *Was bleibt* was not marked as autobiographical or referential; they read it as a sharing of knowledge by the author about her own life. The debate that ensued focused on the role of literary authors in an authoritarian state and the extent to which literature should have a political function.⁴ Literary texts were, in this sense, supposed to convey knowledge about the experience of living in the GDR, including the public secret of the Stasi.

But what does “knowledge” mean in relation to literary fiction? As we have argued throughout this book, knowledge cannot be conceived of as something that is “out there” to be found by anyone with the right skills. Knowledge is “inevitably situated in a particular place and moment”⁵ and must “always be analysed from within the interactions with other persons.”⁶ Literature might in this sense function as what Fredrik Barth terms a “medium of knowledge”:⁷ a process through which knowledge is shared and constructed. Indeed, as literary scholars many of us tend to assume or accept this premise without question. We work with what John Gibson describes as a “humanist intuition”; that is, the “thought—or hope—that literature presents the reader with an intimate and intellectually significant engagement with social and cultural

4 See Wolf was dubbed “Staatsdichterin” by Ulrich Greiner: Greiner, “Mangel an Feingefühl,” 66. For a full documentation of the literature debate in the early 1990s see, Anz, *Es geht nicht um Christa Wolf*.

5 Harris, *Ways of Knowing*, 4.

6 Glaeser, *Political Epistemics*, 163.

7 Barth, “An Anthropology of Knowledge,” 3.

reality,” but that it does so through a vision of “*other* worlds.”⁸ And yet is it not strange that we put faith in the idea that fiction—which makes no claim to extra-textual referentiality—might in fact be referential to something extra-textual?

Rita Felski similarly references the “widespread intuition that works of art reveal something about the way things are.”⁹ Felski notes that debates around what “literary texts reveal or conceal” are long-standing, but remain unresolved.¹⁰ In her own engagement with this problem, she aims to undo the tendency to equate “reference with reflection and mimesis with mirroring.”¹¹ That is to say, in order to understand literary knowledge, we need to go beyond the assumption that when we say that literature provides knowledge of the world we are suggesting a simplistic equation of text and reality, and ignoring the complex relationship between sign and signifier and the self-referentiality of language. Felski states that we need to “relinquish the false picture of a reality ‘out there’ waiting to be found” and instead think of “literary conventions as devices for articulating truth rather than as obstacles to its discovery”¹²—that is, we might add, as media of knowledge. Mimesis in this understanding is not an attempt—doomed to failure—to recreate exactly the world in the text, but “an act of creative imitation.”¹³ Our use of language (including literary language and forms) is, as Felski argues, embedded in our experience of the world, our “practices of knowing.”¹⁴ Our literary re-descriptions of the world are creative reimaginings that “can augment our understanding of how things are.”¹⁵ One notable feature of literary fiction is “its ability to read minds,”¹⁶ and the recreation of the world from the perspective of “deep intersubjectivity ... what it feels like to be inside a particular habitus.”¹⁷ In this way, literary knowledge offers a subjective and creative insight into the “meaningfulness of a world as it is lived by its inhabitants,” which is quite distinct from the idea of knowledge as “the correct representation of an independently given reality.”¹⁸

John Gibson’s book is similarly an effort to reconcile the non-referentiality of literary fiction with the “intuition” that it can nonetheless tell us something significant about reality—that is, to show how “*other*

8 Gibson, *Fiction and the Weave of Life*, 2.

9 Felski, *Uses of Literature*, 77.

10 Felski, *Uses of Literature*, 77.

11 Felski, *Uses of Literature*, 77.

12 Felski, *Uses of Literature*, 84.

13 Felski, *Uses of Literature*, 85.

14 Felski, *Uses of Literature*, 86.

15 Felski, *Uses of Literature*, 86.

16 Felski, *Uses of Literature*, 89.

17 Felski, *Uses of Literature*, 92.

18 Felski, *Uses of Literature*, 92.

worlds” can be used to provide knowledge of “*our* world.” Like Felski, Gibson seeks to understand what is particular about the literary recreation of the world. A question that others have answered with assertions that fiction can be a source of “moral knowledge”¹⁹ or that “certain important truths about the world” can only be conveyed in literary form,²⁰ a form that extends our vision of the world and makes “us reflect and feel about what might otherwise be too distant for feeling.”²¹ Gibson engages with both continental and analytic philosophy to show that both poststructuralism’s insistence that there is nothing outside of the text and the focus on truth and reference in the analytic approach preclude literature from being a direct vision of our world. Gibson’s solution is to conceive of literature as playing “a crucial role in the construction of those narratives in virtue of which we give sense to our characteristically human practices and experiences.”²² Literature, for Gibson, is an archive of “standards of representation” of cultural forms through which we can say “*this* is jealousy, *this* is anger, *this* is suffering” and have a shared understanding of what is meant. In our context, these “standards of representation” might include “this is life in a state dominated by secrecy,” “this is paranoia,” “this is suspicion,” “this is trust.”²³

Felski stresses, that the potential for what she—following Paul Ricoeur—describes as “transfiguration” can only come into being through the reader, who brings their own knowledge to the text: “readers are shaped by what they read, even as they cannot help but impose on texts what they already know.”²⁴ Similarly, Gibson argues that “literature turns out to offer what is best described as a *fulfilment* of the knowledge we bring to it, a completion of our understanding of how our concepts and words function to unite us with others and our world.”²⁵ Indeed, if we combine Gibson’s insights with the constructivist position that views knowledge as situated, then we need to add that the “shared understanding” offered by literature is only created in context and through communication. If all knowledge is produced in relation to something else, then literary knowledge—even knowledge about supposedly “timeless” human emotions or “standards of representation”—is no more “out there” for the taking than any other form. In this sense, literature can only function as knowledge if it is read. The particular form that readership takes determines the nature of the knowledge produced through the

19 McCormick, “Moral Knowledge and Fiction.”

20 Nussbaum, *Love’s Knowledge*, 6.

21 Nussbaum, *Love’s Knowledge*, 47.

22 Gibson, *Fiction and the Weave of Life*, 50.

23 Gibson, *Fiction and the Weave of Life*, 70–73.

24 Felski, *Uses of Literature*, 87. Felski refers to: Ricoeur, “Time and Narrative: Threefold *Mimesis*.”

25 Gibson, *Fiction and the Weave of Life*, 11.

literary text. Literary production in the GDR provides the ideal site to explore this proposition, as its readership was structured not only by the vagaries of the literary market but also by censorship, state control, and the availability of a second audience in a radically opposed political and social system in the West.

An interesting case study here is that of Uwe Kolbe's poem "Kern meines Romans," which contained within it a "hidden" poem that was highly critical of the state and party. The first letter of each capitalised word spells out the following:

Eure Maße sind Elend
 Euren Forderungen genügen Schleimer
 Eure ehemals blutige Fahne bläht sich träge zum Bauch
 Eurem Heldentum den Opfern widme ich einen Orgasmus
 Euch mächtige Greise zerfetze die tägliche Revolution²⁶

[Your dimensions are misery
 Your demands are met by sycophants
 Your once bloody flag puffs lazily to your belly
 I dedicate an orgasm to your heroism and sacrifice.
 May you mighty old men be torn to shreds by the daily revolution]

However, cracking the code contained in Kolbe's hidden poem required an "adequate reader"—akin to Gilmore's "adequate witness" described in chapter 3²⁷—and the publication and reception history of this text shows that even within the GDR it did not always meet with one. In his interview with Windsor, Kolbe recalls that the contact for Aufbau Verlag in the Office for Publishing and Book Trade intimated that they noticed the poem was an "interessanter Text" (interesting text), but that after discussion they had decided to publish it anyway.²⁸ This indicates that the body that functioned as censor in the GDR had indeed been an "adequate reader," but had decided—much to Kolbe's surprise—to ignore the coded message in the poem. Nonetheless, the Stasi files suggest that the poem did not in fact meet with an "adequate reader" until it was released onto the GDR book market. A report dated May 4, 1982 states that on submission to the anthology *Bestandsaufnahme 2* (Inventory 2), Kolbe's work was read by different informants, including those in key positions, as well as lecturers in the publishing house. None recognised the critical

26 Kolbe, "Kern meines Romans."

27 Gilmore, *Tainted Witness*, 4.

28 Interview with Uwe Kolbe, June 1, 2021.

statements in Kolbe's "Machwerk" (concoction).²⁹ In a file note dated May 11, 1982, we are told that the publisher had learned about the hidden poem from reader circles in the book trade; another file note dated May 18, 1982 points directly to a reader who returned the book to their local library, demanding to know why such a work was allowed to circulate.³⁰ The Stasi files also contain records of meetings with leading functionaries such as Klaus Höpcke, who quite clearly understood who were the targets of Kolbe's poetological attack.³¹ The poem was also printed in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and *Der Spiegel* and Kolbe regarded it as being his "größter ... Erfolg in Westdeutschland" (my greatest ... success in West Germany).³² Within the GDR, the response was a withdrawal of the anthology from circulation, severe restriction on Kolbe's opportunities to publish and read from his work, and a rejection of his application to join the Writers' Union. More significantly in our context is the knowledge that Kolbe revealed with his poem about the repressive atmosphere in the GDR and his own rage about the treatment of his friends, especially—as he notes in the interview with Windsor, the treatment of Frank-Wolf Matthies by the publisher (Mitteldeutscher Verlag) and the Stasi. At the same time, he conceals that knowledge in a way that requires an adequate reader to uncover it.

In this chapter, we explore this relationship between knowledge and readership by considering a series of texts that took different routes to reach audiences of different scales and in different contexts, sometimes across staggered periods. These texts can be seen as occupying along the way different positions on the spectrum between total revelation and total concealment of knowledge. By exploring paths to publication and undertaking close readings of a range of texts, we demonstrate that the revelatory character of literary texts dealing with the Stasi often stood in inverse relation to the size and composition of readership(s) they reached. That is, the more open and revelatory a text was in terms of content and literary style, the more limited its circulation within the GDR. This, in turn, has repercussions for each text's character and potential as a medium of knowledge. To illustrate this, the chapter is

29 Review of operative information relating to Uwe Kolbe's publication of a so-called "Machwerk" by Oberstleutnant Gröger (in OV "Poet"), dated May 4, 1982. This explanation was not readily accepted, as other files indicate (see Information on the freelance writer Uwe Kolbe, dated March 18, 1982). The publisher was disciplined for the appearance of the poem: Memo dated April 30, 1982.

30 Information on the young poet Uwe Kolbe, dated May 11, 1982, 57; Information dated May 18, 1982, 62.

31 See the series of documents on this episode in BArch MfS AP 10820/92, 57–83.

32 Interview with Uwe Kolbe, June 1, 2021.

structured around a scale or spectrum of readerships, beginning with the most limited and moving through to the largest audiences reached.

Knowledge without Echo: Literature for the Drawer

Our first point of reflection on the relationship between secrecy, knowledge, literature, and its readers is literature written not for publication, but “for the drawer.” Paradoxically, this literature often only comes to be known after the decision to conceal it is revised, that is, when it is published after all. In the case of the GDR, this revelation of hidden literature has most often come after 1989 and therefore in a radically changed political and social context, in which much of what it would have revealed to its readers is already widely known. We might view *Was bleibt* as exemplary of this practice: one point of contention in the debate that followed its publication was the statement in the text that it had been completed in 1979 and revised for publication in 1990. Wolf’s detractors argued that its publication in 1979 would have been a sensation, revealing the experiences of an author subject to intensive observation and terrorisation by the Stasi; its publication in 1990 stripped it of that revelatory power.

The *Literaturstreit* (literature debate) highlights the importance of the political moment in the reception of literary works and the extent to which they will be read as a form of knowledge. The critical response to *Was bleibt* was bound up with efforts to discredit all things GDR, including its most famous author; Wolf’s own biography, as one who stayed in the GDR and remained committed to socialism despite her doubts, also irritated several Western critics.³³ Günter Kunert’s recent novel *Die zweite Frau* met with a quite different response.³⁴ The text was—Kunert claims—completed in 1974/1975, but remained hidden for 45 years, appearing in 2019 with Wallstein Verlag. The novel is a biting satirical depiction of life in the mid-late GDR, including shortages, widespread ennui, paranoia, and the presence of the Stasi. Particularly interesting in our context is the representation of how knowledge was—or rather was not—passed through personal networks.

The protagonist Barthold is searching for an appropriate fortieth birthday present for his wife Margarete Helene. Finding nothing on the shelves, he ends up in an “Intershop” where—in a moment of impatience—he quotes loudly from the French philosopher Montaigne’s *Essays*. Meanwhile, Margarete Helene is nurturing paranoid fantasies about her husband and a certain “Elfi”; a faded postcard, a bra found in

33 Anz, *Es Geht nicht um Christa Wolf*.

34 Kunert, *Die zweite Frau*. Further page references will be given in parenthesis in the text.

the rubble of a garden shed, and finally a set of bones buried under that rubble are woven into a vision of her husband as murderer of “die zweite Frau” (the second woman/wife). When Stasi officer “Müller” appears at her door, she fears that is why he is there. However, her irritation at her husband’s evasive responses to her own questions about “Elfi” lead her to decide not to tell him about “Müller’s” visit. Barthold is therefore taken completely by surprise when “Müller” reappears. It emerges that the Stasi’s interest is, in fact, in Barthold’s contact with a certain foreigner: a man named “Mohnteine” (i.e., Montaigne). In the middle of the interrogation, the couple’s neighbour, Herr Forster, appears and begins to brag about the Western pornography that he has smuggled across the border, not realising the identity of their visitor. The couple resolve to warn Forster; however, following an alcohol-fuelled (probable) hallucination of Forster and Margarete Helene having sex, Barthold decides not to pass on that knowledge.

The passages in the novel in which the Stasi officer appears produce knowledge about life in a state marked by an (apparently) omnipresent secret police. The form that knowledge takes can be described as everyday—based on generalisations or truisms (including the presumed stupidity of the Stasi, reflecting the use of humour as resistance discussed in chapter 3) and implying the Stasi’s presence as a public secret:

besäße nicht gleich jedermann die Kenntnis, eigentlich mehr als Kenntnis, ein den Nervenbahnen eingetragter Informationsgehalt etwa, dass gewisse Institutionen außerhalb, eigentlich sogar mehr überhalb von Verordnungen stehen und möglicherweise eigene, natürlich geheime Verordnungen und Gesetze haben. (110)

[didn’t everyone already have the knowledge, actually more than knowledge, information imprinted on the nerve pathways, for example, that certain institutions are outside, actually even above, regulations and possibly have their own, naturally secret, regulations and laws.]

The narrator notes that because the Stasi officer introduces himself as “Müller,” his name is probably “Schmidt” (105); the narrative voice reflects laconically that “es ist immer ein junger Mann, ältere Jahrgänge weisen erstaunlich wenig Affinität zu diesem Berufszweig auf” (it is always a young man, older age groups show surprisingly little affinity to this profession, 107). In this way, Kunert’s novel has the potential to function as a “standard of representation” in Gibson’s terms: this is the impact of a public secret—a half-known unknown—on ordinary individuals who are trying to live their otherwise un-extraordinary lives.

The reception of the text in 2019 confirms this reading of the work as transmitting a form of knowledge about the GDR: Kunert is described as speaking “Klartext” (in plain language),³⁵ as offering an antidote to *Ostalgie* (nostalgia for the East) through his representation of the oppressive state,³⁶ and the novel is read as a form of “Selbstverständigung” (exploration of the self),³⁷ as “Flaschenpost” (a letter in a bottle) from the distant past,³⁸ and the absurd situations of its protagonists as satirical, but “allesamt typisch ... für Zeit und Schauplatz” (all typical ... for the time and setting).³⁹ Tilman Krause states quite clearly that the novel can provide knowledge about what it was like to live in the GDR—knowledge that is acquired—breathed in—almost effortlessly in the process of reading:

Was in der DDR alles nicht einfach so ging, wie der allgemeine Mangel das Leben beherrschte, wie das Spitzelwesen immer mehr ein Klima der Angst erzeugte, das kann man im Übrigen noch einmal sehr hautnah inhalieren, wenn man jenen Roman liest ...⁴⁰

[The things that just didn’t work in the GDR, how life was dominated by general deprivation, how the system of informants created an increasingly intense climate of fear—this can all be inhaled again very closely when you read this novel.]

In his review, Jochen Schimmang points towards the “public secret” of the MfS, noting that it is known that the Stasi was “so gut wie allwissend und doch zugleich stockdoof” (as good omniscient and at the same time as dumb as a post).⁴¹ It is unclear if Schimmang considers that to be common knowledge at the time of writing the novel in the mid-1970s or on its publication in 2019—as we have seen, Kunert’s text implies the former.

And yet, can the text play the role of a medium of knowledge if it is confined to a drawer? Does it not require a reader to recognise and appropriate that knowledge? Can a medium of knowledge exist as such if it has no echo? Kunert had previously published the majority of his works in the West German Hanser Verlag.⁴² The (most likely correct) assertion

35 Böttiger, “Die Stasi kennt Montaigne nicht.”

36 Greiner, “Wer ist Mohnteine?”

37 Schimmang, “Preis dem Romancier.”

38 Geißler, “Flaschenpost.” See also Eger, “Der Meister und Margarete.”

39 Geißler, “Flaschenpost.”

40 Krause, “Ich bin ein entheimateter Mensch.”

41 Schimmang, “Preis dem Romancier.”

42 For a discussion of Kunert’s publication strategies and encounters with censorship, see Costabile-Heming, “Rezensur.”

on the dustjacket, repeated throughout the reception of the novel, that it was “in der DDR ‘absolut undruckbar’” (completely unpublishable in the GDR) thus leaves the obvious question: but what about elsewhere? Why did Kunert not offer it to his regular West German publisher?

There is no clear answer to this; however, one suggestion leads us back to the question of the reader. Cornelia Geißler notes that, in contrast to Kunert’s first (and only other) novel, *Die zweite Frau* is thematically “eindeutig in der DDR zu Hause” (clearly at home in the GDR).⁴³ Mladen Gladić notes that Kunert himself confirms this view: “Er hätte ihn nicht einfach in einem West-Verlag veröffentlichen können, betont Kunert. Denn dann hätte *Die zweite Frau* genau einen Leser gehabt: Erich Mielke” (Kunert emphasises that he could not simply have published it in a Western publishing house. Because then *Die zweite Frau* would have had precisely one reader: Erich Mielke).⁴⁴ We might note that this is hyperbole; that texts published in the West frequently found their way back into the GDR and were circulated in secret (such texts therefore occupy another position on the spectrum of revelation and concealment, as will be discussed below). Nonetheless, the implication in Kunert’s statement is that it is a GDR readership that is needed to construct the knowledge archived in this text; and yet, also that it was written with the recognition that it would never reach that audience. In the context of authoritarian censorship, the text that reveals all ends up being that which is concealed most completely. What we do not know is if the text found a GDR readership at all; that is, if it was circulated among Kunert’s family and close acquaintances. The discussion of Stefan Heym below indicates that this was common practice for at least some GDR authors writing texts that they knew could not be published in the state in which they lived. After unification, and its rediscovery and publication in 2019, the novel does find a wider readership, for whom—if the newspaper reviews cited above are any indication—the text appears to confirm already pre-conceived knowledge about what the GDR was like.

Stolen by the Stasi: Satirical Fiction and Hostile Readership

While Kunert belongs to the most well-known and canonical East German writers, our next example takes us to a figure who was and remains almost entirely unknown in the GDR literary field. The author in question is Ralf-Günter Krolkiewicz, who wrote short stories and poems alongside his (better known) career as an actor and director.⁴⁵

43 Geißler, “Flaschenpost.”

44 Gladić, “Roman Nr. 2.”

45 See Buchholz, “Von der Ohnmacht,” esp. 180–82.

Krolkiewicz's papers are housed in the Archiv unterdrückter Literatur der DDR (Archive of Suppressed Literature in the GDR) and a collection of his poetry and short prose works, *Nirgends ein Feuer mehr* (Never a Fire Again), was published in 2006 as part of a series titled "Die Verschwiegene Bibliothek" (The Silenced [or Secret] Library) funded by the Bundesstiftung Aufarbeitung and edited by Ines Geipel and Joachim Walther. The labelling of these archival and publication contexts points to the historical concealment of Krolkiewicz's writings until their "silence" could be broken well into the post-Wende period. The dust cover of *Nirgends ein Feuer mehr* describes Krolkiewicz as a "verbal aufmüpfige[r] Autor" (verbally rebellious author), whose literary career was abruptly ended after only two public readings.

In an interview conducted by Geipel and Walther in 2004, Krolkiewicz noted that he had never really considered publishing his writing, although it was an important aspect of his creative life, but that he had found audiences for his work that gradually progressed from the private to the (semi-)public:

Ich habe aber eine Öffentlichkeit insofern hergestellt, dass ich immer in einem Freundeskreis, der auch immer größer wurde, vorgelesen habe. Es gab auch ein Interesse für das, was ich machte, weil es etwas anderes war als die offizielle Literatur. So und dann ging das weiter, dass ich mich traute, ich gehe einfach mal öffentlich lesen.⁴⁶

[But I did create a public space in the sense that I always read aloud to a circle of friends, which grew ever larger. There was also interest in what I was doing because it was different from official literature. And then it went on to the point where I dared to go and read in public.]

As we have seen throughout this book, writers and artists in unofficial scenes across the GDR shared their writings, and with them their knowledge, at unofficial readings and cultural gatherings. Krolkiewicz was part of a smaller cultural scene in Potsdam, which he says was "sicherlich nicht so durchorganisiert wie im Prenzlauer Berg" (certainly not as completely organised as in Prenzlauer Berg), where he and his acquaintances also found creative ways to reach select audiences by organising exhibitions and private readings in apartments: "wir haben also versucht, die Texte lesender Weise unter die Leute zu bringen" (we tried to get the texts out to people by way of reading aloud).⁴⁷ Ironically, he recalls being approached to give a reading for the official Writers' Union at the end

⁴⁶ "Gespräch mit Ralf Günter Krolkiewicz."

⁴⁷ "Gespräch mit Ralf Günter Krolkiewicz."

of the unofficial reading that would ultimately lead to his arrest, “wo ich eigentlich dachte, oh Gott, jetzt klappt das vielleicht doch” (where I actually thought, oh God, maybe it’ll happen after all). Nonetheless, he stressed that he never entertained the “Illusion” that he might become a published author and make writing his “Brotberuf” (bread-and-butter job).⁴⁸ Significantly, he noted a difference in the reception of his works at readings and the lack of attention he received (or expected to receive) from other writers or editors: “Und das war so merkwürdig, dass die Resonanz bei Lesungen sehr groß war und mir war klar, wenn ich das irgendwo hinschicke, dass das dann keinen interessiert ... Ich habe Elke Erb mal was geschickt. Und da gab es nicht einmal ein Gespräch” (And it was so strange that the response at readings was so great, and I knew that if I sent it somewhere, no one would be interested ... I once sent something to Elke Erb. And there wasn’t even a conversation). These comments suggest that he had begun to find what we might call “adequate listeners” at his readings but that there was ultimately little opportunity to reach a wider readership.

Krolkiewicz’s texts therefore only reached limited audiences—and even then, usually fleetingly and aurally. Moreover, those audiences included the IMs who reported on him, after which his texts were seized by the MfS and only read by the hostile Stasi reader (until publication in 2006). Krolkiewicz’s readings from his literary works at unauthorised events and to students in Potsdam and Dresden had already attracted the Stasi’s attention, before his last public appearance on June 21, 1984 at the youth club “Spartacus” in Potsdam, where he had read 21 poems and four short stories to an audience of about 90, amongst them informants for the MfS.⁴⁹ According to the Stasi, Krolkiewicz’s reading was met with divergent reactions: “Sie reichte[n] von recht drastischen ablehnenden Zwischenrufen bis hin zu lautstarken Beifallskundgebungen, besonders seitens der durch K. geladenen Gäste bzw. seiner Sympathisanten” (they ranged from quite drastic negative interjections to loud applause, especially from the guests invited by K. or his sympathisers).⁵⁰ A week after this reading, the *Operativer Vorgang* “Bühne” was initiated against Krolkiewicz who was accused of “öffentliche Herabwürdigung” (public degradation) and “staatsfeindliche Hetze” (anti-state agitation). During a search of his apartment on July 6, 1984, the Stasi located and made copies of the texts Krolkiewicz had read at the Spartacus club, and three days later he was arrested.

48 “Gespräch mit Ralf Günter Krolkiewicz.”

49 Walther, “Ralf-Günter Krolkiewicz,” 150.

50 Report on Krolkiewicz’s reading at the “Spartakus” club in Potsdam, dated July 10, 1984, 169. See also Walther, “Ralf-Günter Krolkiewicz,” 151.

According to the Stasi, Krolkiewicz's satirical short story "Der Dissident" (The Dissident) had been a cornerstone of that last reading in Potsdam,⁵¹ while a handwritten report on the search of his apartment suggests that they had been specifically looking for this text (it is referred to as "das gesuchte 3 seitige Schriftstück" [the sought-after three-page document]).⁵² The Stasi's reading of "Der Dissident" forms a significant part of the opening report of the OV "Bühne," in which they claim "K[rolkiewicz] greift im Stück wahre Begebenheiten auf und verpflanzt sie in die Handlung des Stückes" (K[rolkiewicz] takes up true stories and transplants them into the storyline of his piece).⁵³ Amongst the "true stories" they claim to recognise is the, by that point publicly known, debacle around Uwe Kolbe's hidden poem, discussed earlier in this chapter. "Der Dissident" is indeed a parody of the oppositional literary scene itself, as well as the ageing GDR regime, its cultural functionaries, and the Stasi.⁵⁴ Yet the Stasi's notion of transplanted true stories is (unsurprisingly) somewhat simplistic. As we shall demonstrate, Krolkiewicz's satirising and fictionalising techniques are both revelatory and concealing, playing with themes of secrecy and state surveillance, as well as the instability and transformation of knowledge in the public sphere. The main protagonist, Edmund L, is a 50-year-old critical writer—still considered to be "literarischer Nachwuchs" (new literary talent, 17) and described by the third-person narrator as "ein Geheimtipp" (hidden gem, 17)—who writes a hidden poem with a coded message calling for the assassination of "unser[] Erste[r] Vorsitzender" (our First Secretary of the party and state council, 17). The secret text is decoded by a "pfiffige Bibliothekarin" (a smart librarian, 17), an adequate reader of sorts, who contacts Edmund L but promises "sein Geheimnis zu wahren" (to keep his secret, 17). However, because he dreams of making his name as a dissident—as he is convinced this will secure him a contract with the West German publisher Suhrkamp—Edmund is eager for his subversive act to be made public. Indeed, he decides to announce it himself:

So enthüllt Edmund L. in seinem der linken *alternativen* Szenerie zugeordneten Stammcafé *Heide* lauthals den wahren Sinn seines Pamphlets. Ein gefährliches Unterfangen. Besonders in diesem Café, in dessen unmittelbarer Nähe die Genossen der *Inneren Hygiene* leben und arbeiten und hier ihren Dienstkaffee

51 Opening report of OV "Bühne" (Krolkiewicz), signed by Hauptmann Münn, Oberleutnant Tuda, and Oberst Knorr, dated June 28, 1984, 8.

52 Report by Oberstleutnant Fischer and Major Keil on the conspirative search of Krolkiewicz's apartment, dated July 5, 1984, 86.

53 Opening report of OV "Bühne" (Krolkiewicz), dated June 28, 1984, 11.

54 "Der Dissident" reproduced in Krolkiewicz, *Nirgends ein Feuer mehr*, 17–21. Subsequent page references are given in parenthesis in the text.

schlürfen: Wessen Nähe übrigens ist bei uns vom Kaffeetrinken dieser Genossen verschont ...

So erhofft Edmund L. händeringend seine Verhaftung in der folgenden Nacht (18; *italics in original*).

[So Edmund full-throatedly reveals the real meaning of his pamphlet in his local café *Heide*, associated with the left-wing *alter-naïve* scene. A dangerous undertaking. Especially in this café, in the immediate vicinity of which the comrades of the *Internal Hygiene* live and work and where they sip their work coffee: Whose proximity, by the way, is spared from the coffee drinking of these comrades ...

In this way, Edmund L. desperately hopes to be arrested in the coming night.]

This is not only a jibe at the “alter-naïve” literary scene to which writers like Edmund belong, a play on the word “alternative,” but a thinly veiled representation of the omnipresent Stasi and the everyday nature of their surveillance tactics. Krolkiewicz’s recasting of the MfS as the “Ministerium für die innere Hygiene”—a ministry responsible for internal cleanliness rather than security—is recognisable to the reader (or listener) and arguably evokes further sinister parallels with the Gestapo. Moreover, it is materially visible through the handwritten edits in his typescript (Figure 1), which was seized by the Stasi, where we see the words “genossen der staatssicherheit” crossed through and replaced with “genossen der inneren hygiene.”⁵⁵ During one of the many interrogations in which he was compelled to explain the intentions and meanings of his writings, Krolkiewicz explained he had made this alteration ahead of the public reading: “Diese Änderungen habe ich im Rahmen der Überarbeitung des Werkes vorgenommen, weil ich anfängliche ‘Plattheiten’ beseitigen wollte, um meine Absicht deutlicher zum Ausdruck zu bringen.”⁵⁶ (I made these changes while I was revising the work because I wanted to remove any initial ‘triteness’ in order to express my intention more clearly). While they were pushing him to explain the story’s incriminating content, the writer gave his interrogators insight into the literariness of his text, especially his use of satire and (a superficial form of) camouflage, which ostensibly conceals but ultimately reflects his critique of the GDR. In a later interrogation, Krolkiewicz was compelled to spell out his intention to illustrate with this particular passage, “daß der Staat ein Netz von Sicherheitsbeamten hat, die die Aufgabe haben, öffentliche Äußerungen zu begutachten und zu kontrollieren” (that the state

55 Original typescript in StAufarb, AuL, Ralf-Günter Krolkiewicz, 43-I.

56 Interrogation of Ralf-Günter Krolkiewicz, transcript dated July 9, 1984, 105–17 (112).

der dissident
 edmund l. ~~ist~~ eigentlich literat. allerdings waren erst einige seiner
 kleineren arbeiten in ~~nachwuchs~~ dem nachwuchs vorbehaltenen
 anthologien erschienen. edmund l. ~~galt~~ also trotz seiner fünfzig
 jahre noch immer als hoffnungsvoller literarischer nachwuchs. das
 ist bei uns durchaus nicht unüblich. in einem lande, in dem die
 regierung ^{höhen im allgemeinen nicht} (einem mummienkabinette gleicht) sind anerkannte künstler
 entweder tot oder über hundert jahre alt, alles andere ist entweder
 mehr oder minder hoffnungsvoller nachwuchs oder verkannt genial.
 edmund l. ist ein kritischer autor. ein geheimtip, ^{niemand wagt davon} ~~keiner kennt ihn~~.
 sein letztes ganz grosses ding war eine aneinanderreihung zusammen-
 hangloser wörter, die jedermann für totalen schwachsinn hielt.
 da ihr autor durch gelegentliche namennennung, von erolgen, wenn
 auch mässigen, konnte im entferntesten nicht die rede sein, bekannt
 war, steckte man den text in eine anthologie schreibender arbeiter.
 dort schien dieser blödsinn am unauffälligsten placiert.
 eine pfiffige bibliothekarin kam jedoch hinter das geheimnis des textes.
 sie las von jedem wort mit ungerader stellenzahl im ^{jeweiligen} ~~ersten~~ ^{ersten} buch-
 staben und entdeckte eine aufforderung zum mord unseres ^{vorsitzenden}.
 (so versucht sie übrigens jetzt hinter das geheimnis anderer kritischer
 autoren zu kommen) sofort nach ihrer skandalösen entdeckung hatte sie
 edmund l. angerufen, ihm aber versichert, sein geheimnis zu wahren.
 was sich edmund l. mit einem giftigen lachen verbat, ja mehr noch, er
 forderte sie zur verbreitung dieser entdeckung auf ~~nachwuchs~~ ~~keinemfalls~~ ~~unterstützung~~. spätestens hier muss man sich über ihn
 wundern. wieso hat ein autor interesse an der entdeckung nahezu illegal
 geäusselter politischer absichten? bei beantwortung dieser frage
 entdecken wir edmund l.s. tiefste und verborgenste wuschvorstellung,
 ausser der, der gatte seiner mutter werden wollen. kurz gesagt, er
 träumte von einer edition seiner werke bei suhrkamp. auch mit paper-
 back und rowohlt wäre er sehr zufrieden gewesen. das war sein traum,
 oder sollten wir es besser sein trauma nennen: ein ausseiger zu sein.
 nicht, dass er sich jemals so richtig drin gefühlt hätte, aber so
 richtig draussen auch nicht. als dissident mit einem nahezu staats-
 feindlichen gesamtwerk und dann bei suhrkamp gedruckt zu werden, das
 ist immerhin was. ^{aber was ist} ~~da bekommt das uot-sein echten sinn und verkehrt~~
 sich er du dich versiehst in sein genaues gegenteil.
 so enthüllte edmund l. in seinem der linken ^{alternativen} ~~szenerie~~ zugeordneten
 stammscafe lauthals den wahren sinn seines pamphlets. ein gefährliches
 unterfangen. besonders in diesem cafe, in dessen unmittelbarer nähe
 die genossen der ~~staatsfeindlichen~~ ^{in wessen nähe} lebten und arbeiteten und hier ihren
 dienstcafe trinken. (in wessen nähe übrigens ist bei uns vom cafetrinken
 dieser genossen verschont?) ~~es~~ ^{sok} hoffte edmund l. händeringend ~~es~~

Figure 1 "Der Dissident," by Ralf-Günter Krolkiewicz,
 original typescript with author's handwritten edits.
 StAufarb, AuL, Ralf-Günter Krolkiewicz, 43-I.

has a network of security officers whose task it is to survey and monitor public utterances).⁵⁷ The decision to change the name of the ministry, he explained, was to ensure the story was not “plump” (clumsy) and to give it an “Allgemeingültigkeit” (universality) since “eine derartige Überwachung durchaus in anderen Ländern zu beobachten ist” (that kind of surveillance can certainly be observed in other countries). We might say that the Stasi interrogators simulated the role of “inadequate reader” in order to force Krolkiewicz to unpack his own work.

The premise of the fictional Edmunt L’s quest for notoriety rests on the shared common knowledge that public displays of opposition—in this case, the public revelation of an initially secret form of opposition—would usually lead to arrest by the omnipresent secret police. Rather than using that knowledge to circumvent the authorities’ gaze, Krolkiewicz’s protagonist believes he can outwit them and instrumentalise their repressive apparatus to garner attention for himself. Much to Edmunt’s dismay, however, news breaks that the “Erster Vorsitzender” has in fact been exposed and executed as a double agent, meaning Edmunt’s calculated attempt to get arrested as a dissident has spectacularly backfired, and his failure to foresee this unknown possibility has turned his staged dissidence into accidental conformity:

Ein Schauer des Entsetzens packt ihn: Wie ist das möglich, er liegt mit seinem Pamphlet nichts ahnend auf Linie. Der Erste Vorsitzende ein Agent, noch dazu ein Agent des US-Imperialismus, unglaublich. So hätte er ja, diese Möglichkeit einkalkulierend, ein Loblied auf den Ersten Vorsitzenden singen müssen und wäre ganz sicher längst verhaftet (19).

[A shudder of horror grips him: How is this possible? His pamphlet has unwittingly brought him into line. The First Secretary is an agent, and an agent of US imperialism at that, unbelievable. If he’d taken that possibility into account, he would have had to sing the First Secretary’s praises and would surely have been arrested by now.]

With this turn of events, Edmunt’s hidden poem in fact brings him “Anerkennung in der Öffentlichkeit” (public recognition), as an MfS report put it, “da er politischen Instinkt bewies, als er vor der Entlarvung des 1. Vorsitzenden bereits von dessen Schuftigkeit überzeugt war und zum Mord aufrief” (because he showed political instinct when he was already convinced of the First Secretary’s villainy and called for his assassination before he was exposed [as an agent]).⁵⁸ Worse still, Edmunt

57 Interrogation of Ralf-Günter Krolkiewicz, transcript dated September 20, 1984, 148.

58 Opening report of OV “Bühne” (Krolkiewicz), dated June 28, 1984, 8.

fears that the “Genossen des *MdiH*, *Ministerium der Inneren Hygiene*” (comrades from the MdiH, Ministry of Internal Hygiene) will now invite him to give a public reading, “und von seinen Freunden im Café wird er, im Verdacht ein *Hygiene-Spitzel* zu sein, furchtbar verprügelt und fortan gemieden (and he’ll be terribly lambasted and isolated by his friends from the café who will suspect he is a *Hygiene spy*, 19). Here, Krolkiewicz plays with those common forms of suspicion and mistrust that we have seen throughout our book, based on assumptions that public privileges must come at the cost of collaboration.

Furthermore, he points to the difficulty of trying to influence other people’s assumptions about oneself in a public sphere shaped by unstable knowledge and often arbitrary power structures. Indeed, as the story continues, it becomes increasingly absurd and increasingly crude. Having accepted an invitation to speak at the congress of an official literary association mockingly named “*RosarotHimmelblau*” (RosypinkSkyblue), Edmund resolves to cause a scandal by dropping his trousers and masturbating and passing wind on stage. While the reactions to his performance are mixed—first silence, then confusion, and some insubordinate applause—the scene is transformed when the next speaker, the “Vorsitzende[r] der Pioneerorganisation” (Chairman of the Pioneer Organisation) does not condemn but rather imitates Edmund’s obscene actions, evoking enthusiasm from the audience (19–20). Despite his best efforts, Edmund’s attempts to cultivate his image and become known as a dissident (in order to gain the attention of a West German publisher) are misinterpreted and overwritten by the dynamics of opportunism and conformism in the satirised GDR cultural establishment. Ultimately, it is his new position as a celebrated and prize-winning author that finally gets Edmund the West German contract he desires.

There is much in Krolkiewicz’s bitingly satirical writing that draws on and generates shared knowledge about life—particularly as an artist—in an authoritarian state, the decrepit and opportunistic nature of the state leadership and its apparatus, and a lack of honesty and open discussion in the tightly controlled public sphere. Krolkiewicz only had limited opportunity to discuss his texts and the knowledge they conveyed with listening audiences and a select group of friends before his arrest. In one of his interrogation reports, Krolkiewicz noted that a colleague had told him that “Der Dissident” did not work well as a story and that he had considered revising it or even destroying it.⁵⁹ Elsewhere he noted that the applause he received and discussion of “Der Dissident” at a reading in Dresden showed him that the audience had understood the work, “und es gab auch einzelne Personen, die ‘sauer’ waren, weil ich mich ... über die Dissidenten lustig machte”(and there were individuals who were

59 Interrogation of Ralf-Günter Krolkiewicz, transcript dated July 10, 1984, 123.

“peeved” because I made fun of the dissidents).⁶⁰ Finally, however, the knowledge conveyed by Krolkiewicz’s texts was above all that which could be gleaned by the hostile Stasi readership, who deemed them to be evidence of the writer’s own dissident stance and quest for fame (somewhat ironically given the themes and plot of “Der Dissident”).⁶¹ Their evaluations were shaped by what Walther calls the “reduzierte Wahrnehmung der Verfolger” (reduced perception of the persecutor) and Krolkiewicz was pushed during interrogations to provide evidence to support their conclusions. According to Walther, Krolkiewicz had initially tried to convince the Stasi that his writing was critical and irreverent, but not hostile. Yet, he was ultimately forced to accept that his interrogators had read and understood his writings “politisch konsequenter, als er sich selbst bis dahin eingestehen wollte” (with greater political consistency than he had cared to admit to himself thus far).⁶² In his post-Wende interview with Geipel and Walther, Krolkiewicz commented that the Stasi was “klüger” (cleverer) than him, “und nicht ganz zu unrecht. Die haben dort was gesehen, was mir selber noch gar nicht bewusst war” (and that wasn’t entirely unjustified. They saw something there was I wasn’t yet conscious of myself).⁶³ In this sense, he seems to concede that the knowledge which the Stasi acquired from his writing was not simply a distortion or misrepresentation, however reductive their reading of his work might have been. His writing might be said to have intuitively captured and thus conveyed aspects of political and cultural reality in the GDR. In the Stasi’s hands, however, the stolen manuscripts became a medium of knowledge which ultimately led to his imprisonment and expatriation.⁶⁴

Underground Revelation: Counter-Publics and Cross-Border Smuggling

In the unofficial or underground literary scenes, literary production and related activities were usually deliberately concealed from the wider public

60 Interrogation of Ralf-Günter Krolkiewicz, transcript dated August 29, 1984, 129.

61 The opening report of the OV “Bühne” comments, for example: “Mit derartigen Arbeiten verfolgt K. das Ziel, in der Öffentlichkeit berühmt zu werden und Anerkennung zu finden” (with these kinds of works, K. seeks to become famous and gain public recognition). Opening report of OV “Bühne” (Krolkiewicz), dated June 28, 1984, 11.

62 Walther, “Ralf-Günter Krolkiewicz,” 153.

63 “Gespräch mit Ralf Günter Krolkiewicz.”

64 Walther, “Ralf-Günter Krolkiewicz,” 151. In a secret hearing that took place in November 1984, Krolkiewicz was sentenced to 18 months in prison but was expatriated to the West after a year.

and intended for limited and alternative audiences who were reached through unofficially organised literary salons and unauthorised samizdat “publications.” As we have seen in chapter 3, the editors of the underground journal *Mikado* wanted a *different*—more open and pluralistic—public sphere.⁶⁵ Reflecting more recently on the purpose and importance of *Mikado*, Bernd Wagner suggested that this was not just about creating a different public, but also the opportunity to establish “eine eigene Gegenöffentlichkeit ... eine nicht unbedingt besonders politische, aber völlig authentische, subversive Gegenöffentlichkeit” (our own counter-public ... a not necessarily particularly political, but a completely authentic, subversive counter-public).⁶⁶

The editors and authors of samizdat texts worked on the assumption that—despite concealing their activities from a broader public—they would find enough readers (or listeners at literary gatherings) who would understand and appreciate their works, not least on the basis of shared experiences and points of reference. The importance of situated readership is reflected in the West German *Mikado* collection, in the editors’ assumption:

daß die hier versammelten Texte einem Leser aus der Bundesrepublik weniger sagen als dem, der die Erfahrungen der Schreiber teilt, bleibt doch zu hoffen, selbst der übersättigsten Leserschaft wird nicht verborgen bleiben, daß die Mehrzahl der Texte aus ernster zu nehmenden Gründen geschrieben wurden als, sich eine Spalte im Feuilleton zu ergattern oder aufzuspringen auf das sich lustig drehende Karussell der Stipendienvergabe und Bestenlisten.

[that the texts collected here mean less to a reader from the Federal Republic than to someone who shares the writers’ experiences, though the hope remains that even the most satiated readership won’t be unaware that the majority of these texts were written for more serious reasons than to win a column in the feuilleton or to jump on the carousel of scholarship allocation and bestseller lists].⁶⁷

While it may not have been written with the explicit intention of imparting knowledge, whether underground or across borders, the implication here is that literature that circulated in the East German underground but which was also published in West German anthologies would not only reach reading publics of different scales, but also different types of reader

65 Kolbe, Trolle, and Wagner, “Mikado 1–12,” 9. Emphasis in original.

66 Wagner and Blohm, “Im Osten war der Teller absolut leergegessen und abgeleckt,” 59.

67 Kolbe, Trolle, and Wagner, “Mikado 1–12,” 10.

who would bring different types of knowledge to those texts—and by extension also acquire different types of knowledge from them.

At the same time, the GDR's counter-publics were subject to (more or less) intense surveillance by the Stasi and its informants so that the MfS also became part of the audience for these underground performances and publications, as we have seen throughout this book. This was one of the many "known unknowns" surrounding state surveillance which have come up time and again in our research, and which were met with different responses and strategies by those participating in underground activities. Our interviews with Kolbe, Wagner, and others demonstrate their clear awareness, if not outright expectation, that the state, especially the MfS, would show an interest in their underground endeavours, as well as an awareness that the Stasi's reactions were often deliberately inconsistent. Wagner, for instance, comments: "man [hat] auch schon mit einer Wahrnehmung auch durch die Stasi selber gerechnet ... Das Perfide war ja, jedenfalls in meinem Fall so, die ausbleibende Reaktion" (you certainly assumed the Stasi would take notice ... The perfidious thing, in my case at least, was the lack of reaction).⁶⁸ In general, Wagner suggested that the editors received relatively little feedback on *Mikado* from readers in East Germany:

Und das war nun keine konzertierte Aktion der Stasi, aber wir haben relativ wenig an Rückmeldungen auf unsere doch paar Jahre dauernde Bemühungen mit dieser Zeitschrift bekommen. Am ehesten noch von anderen Schriftstellern, die uns dann ihre Texte angeboten haben. Also Schreiben ist eben das, was man trotzdem macht. Egal wie, oder ob irgendwelche Leser reagieren.⁶⁹

[And it wasn't a concerted action by the Stasi, but we got relatively little response to our efforts with this magazine, which lasted a few years. If anything, it mostly came from other writers who offered us their own texts. Writing is something you do regardless. No matter how, or if, any kind of readers react.]

This apparent lack of feedback raises interesting questions for our study of audience and knowledge. We know that *Mikado* did find a limited but significant readership—Kolbe notes in his interview with Windsor that Adolf Endler had given the magazine the accolade "*Sinn und Form des Undergrounds*."⁷⁰ But Wagner's comment suggests that reader responses remained personal and intangible, and we might say that this was even more so the case when that particular type of reading was risky, as it was in

68 Interview with Bernd Wagner, October 20, 2020.

69 Interview with Bernd Wagner, October 20, 2020.

70 Interview with Uwe Kolbe, June 1, 2021.

the case of such underground literature. Open discussion and knowledge exchange based on this reading either happened in private or not at all.

Not all of the literary texts read or circulated underground were directly concerned with depictions or critiques of the GDR state. However, for those writers who chose to tackle the GDR's "public secrets" in their texts, unofficial literary production offered considerable scope for openness, or for bolder experimentation with revelation and concealment, both textually and in terms of publication and circulation. Bernd Wagner's own satirical short story "Wie Tute bis zum HSV durchkam" (How Tute got through to HSV) is one good example of a text that took on the Stasi in the East German literary underground but also found its way—initially via a covert route—to West German audiences. Originally written in 1983, the story was published in *Mikado* in 1985 and appeared a year later in a West German anthology entitled *Geh doch rüber! Begegnungen von Menschen aus Ost und West* (Why don't you go over there? Encounters between people from East and West), edited by a West German under the pseudonym Per Ketman (whose real name is Frank Blohm).⁷¹ Indeed, the origins of the text and its route to publication in *Mikado* and Ketman's West German anthology are not only closely intertwined but also offer insights into different tactics of revelation and concealment.

In his interview with Windsor, Wagner notes that Blohm had approached him for a text to be included in his anthology on East-West encounters around the same time that he was working on *Mikado* with Kolbe and Trolle: "ich kannte keine Tabus mehr ... Also ich war auf eine Weise vogelfrei, und das Schlimmste, was mir passieren konnte, war, dass sie mich vorzeitig in den Westen abschieben, ne? (I no longer knew any taboos ... In a way I was already an outlaw and the worst that could have happened was that they would shove me off to the West prematurely.)"⁷² In conversation with Blohm in 2019, Wagner commented that the tale was also "prädestiniert" (predestined) for the kind of subversive counter-public he and his co-editors sought out with *Mikado* and would certainly not have been accepted for publication with *Aufbau*, even if he had been preparing a new collection at the time (which he was not).⁷³ Blohm's own introduction to their conversation suggests that Wagner's experience of state interference even made him resistant to making minor alterations for the West German anthology: "Ich wollte ihn überzeugen, zwei halbe Sätze zu ändern. Als er das sah, empörte er sich: 'Das ist ja wie hier, Zensur!'"

71 Wagner, "Wie Tute bis zum HSV durchkam." Further page references are to the 1986 edition and are given in parenthesis in the text.

72 Interview with Bernd Wagner, October 20, 2020.

73 Wagner and Blohm, "'Im Osten war der Teller absolut leergegessen und abgeleckt,'" 59.

Heute sagt er dazu: ‘Alte Reflexe, wenn jemand etwas aus meinem Text ändern wollte’⁷⁴ (I wanted to convince him to change two half-sentences. When he saw that, he was outraged: “that’s like here, censorship!” Today he says: “Old reflexes, when someone wants to change anything in my text.”) Blohm’s use of a pseudonym for the original version of *Geh doch rüber!* was a tactic of concealment designed to protect the East German contributors (so that their contacts could not be traced back) and to facilitate later revelation through the publication in the West; moreover, the texts that became part of the anthology were smuggled out of the GDR covertly by contacts Blohm had gained through Jürgen Fuchs and Roland Jahn.⁷⁵ By the time Ketman/Blohm was barred entry into the GDR in 1985, enough texts had reached him via what he called “die geheimen Transportschienen” (secret transportation tracks).⁷⁶

Written at a time when Wagner had detached himself from the GDR’s official literary scene and evidently felt he and his writing already had one foot in the West, Tute’s story reflects his own disdain for and defiance of state power and is characterised by the kind of resistant humour we have seen in chapter 3 and in both Kunert’s and Krolkiewicz’s writing earlier in this chapter. The story is prefaced with a motto quote from the 25th canto of Dante’s *Inferno*—“Es reckte, als er schwieg, der Dieb die Hände mit durchgesteckten Daumen beid empor” (100; His words now reached their end. And then the robber hoisted hands on high—a fig-fuck formed in each.)⁷⁷—and a note, capitalised and enclosed in parentheses, that the ensuing story had been overheard in the “Grosse Concordia” pub in Weissensee. The main tale is then told by a first-person narrator, Tute, in strong Berlin dialect, about the time he penetrated the Stasi’s security barrier and managed to meet the players from the Hamburger Sportverein football club after they had played a match against BFC Dynamo, the East Berlin team sponsored by the Stasi (and other state institutions). In Wagner’s own words, the story is “eine wunderbare Geschichte, wie ... ein schlichter Berliner, Weißenseer, Kneipengänger, Trinker und Fußballfan, die Stasi an der Nase herumführt, indem er es schafft, durch ihren Sicherheitskordon durchzukommen, und ins Hotel zu den HSV-Spielern, und mit denen zu saufen und sich da ein Trikot signieren zu lassen” (wonderful story of how ... a humble Berliner, Weißenseer, pub-goer, drinker and football fan fools the Stasi by managing to get through their security

74 Wagner and Blohm, “‘Im Osten war der Teller absolut leergegessen und abgeleckt,’” 58.

75 Blohm, “Ein Taschenbuch gefährdet die Staatssicherheit,” 16–17.

76 Blohm, “Ein Taschenbuch gefährdet die Staatssicherheit,” 21.

77 Translation taken from the Penguin Classic translation of *The Divine Comedy* by Robin Kirkpatrick—here p. 110.

cordon and into the hotel to the HSV players, to drink with them and get them to sign a football jersey).⁷⁸

After three unsuccessful attempts, Tute concocts a plan to force his way past the uniformed “Schutzengel” (guardian angels) wearing “Anzüge grüne Schlipse gelbe Hemden un Parteiabzeichen” (suits green neckties an’ Party badges, 101) and into the hotel lift. Delighted to find the Hamburg players in the bar, Tute proposes a toast to the West German team: “Na dann erst ma Prost auf euren Sieg über die Stasis. Ich kann euch garnich sagen wat mir das für eine Genugtuung is” (well then, cheers to your victory over the Stasis. I can’t tell you what satisfaction that gives me, 102). For Tute, as he tells his listeners in the Weissensee pub, “[s]ie waren die Engel un nicht die grünen Schlipse unten im Foyer” (*they* [the players] were the angels and not the green ties down in the foyer, 102). Having secured a signed shirt to prove to his friends that the story wasn’t invented—the rest of the text is shot through with references to its unbelievability—Tute recounts how he left the hotel triumphantly with a conspicuous parting shot at the guards in the foyer; the obscene hand gesture directed to God in Dante’s original, now directed at the supposedly omnipotent “yellow shirts” in Tute’s story:

un dann hab ick so gemacht (*Es reckte Tute die Hände mit durchgesteckten Daumen beid empor*), “so,” hab ick gesacht, “ihr Schweine wat ick will das schaffe ick,” un ick hörte richtig ihre Unterkiefer klappen un raus durch die Hoteltür un rein ins nächste Taxi un ab. (104)

[an’ then I did this (*Tute hoisted hands on high—a fig-fuck formed in each*)⁷⁹ “there,” I said, “you swines, I do what I want,” an’ listened as their jaws dropped and left through the hotel door straight into the next taxi.]

With hindsight, Wagner has highlighted his belief that Tute was the kind of person who ultimately contributed to the collapse of the GDR by refusing to comply and by exercising that agency: “Also die Bevölkerung, die nicht mehr mitgemacht hat, die einfache Bevölkerung” (I mean, the population who no longer went along with things, the simple population).⁸⁰ In her afterword to the 2019 reproduction of *Geh doch rüber!*, Annette Simon comments how the protagonist Tute combines “draufgängerische Unverfrorenheit mit Situationskomik und dem Stolz über den Mut eines auf sich gestellten Individuums” (daredevil audacity with situational

78 Interview with Bernd Wagner, October 20, 2020.

79 Translation adapted from Kirkpatrick’s translation of *The Divine Comedy*.

80 Interview with Bernd Wagner, October 20, 2020.

comedy and pride in the courage of a self-reliant individual), which Simon notes is also a form of “Bewältigung” (mastery or coping).

The Stasi files suggest that, before this story was published in *Mikado*, Wagner had read a story entitled “Wie ich zum HSV kam” (How I got to HSV) at a youth club in Leipzig in September 1984 to an audience of thirty people.⁸¹ Despite the misunderstanding of the title here, this is clearly the same Tute story and was deemed to contain “negative und verunglimpfende Äußerungen über das MfS” (negative and defamatory utterances about the MfS).⁸² While there is no direct evidence to suggest the informant had assumed the story was autobiographical, Wagner interprets the misheard title as “symptomatisch für die Dummheit der Stasi” (symptomatic of the Stasi’s stupidity), something which the story itself ridicules: “dass ich das nicht sein kann, ein einigermaßen heller Kopf hätte das sofort erkannt” (the fact that it can’t be me, a reasonably bright mind would have recognised that immediately).⁸³ A second Stasi report clearly recognises the distance between the author and narrator-protagonist but nevertheless offers a simplistic interpretation of the text and the knowledge it conveys from the informant’s point of view, which also hints at the kind of “rules of thumb” we saw in chapter 1: “In dieser Erzählung kam es dem Autor nach Meinung des IM offenbar darauf an, zu zeigen, daß es den Mitarbeitern des MfS nicht nur nicht gelang dieses Vordringen zu verhindern, sondern diese auch gut erkennbar waren (Anzugsordnung: grünes Hemd, gelber Binder) bzw. sind” (In the IM’s opinion, the author of this short story apparently wanted to show that the employees of the MfS not only failed to prevent this advance, but that they were, and are, also easily recognisable (dress code: green shirt, yellow tie)).⁸⁴

In his interview with Windsor, Wagner describes the story as “Rollenprosa” (role prose) based on a story he had overheard in a pub with some added literary “Pfeffer und Salz”⁸⁵ (pepper and salt), and intimated in his conversation with Blohm that reality is sometimes “verrückter als das, was man sich ausdenken kann”⁸⁶ (crazier than anything you can invent yourself). Given the intricate fictional and narrative devices Wagner employs, the matter of whether Tute’s story is true is both questionable and beside the point when it comes to reading this text as a medium of knowledge. According to the Stasi, Wagner’s reading

81 Extract from daily report of BV Leipzig, Abt. XX on Wagner’s reading in Leipzig, dated September 7, 1984.

82 Extract from daily report of BV Leipzig, dated September 7, 1984.

83 Interview with Bernd Wagner, October 20, 2020.

84 Summary report on Wagner’s reading in Leipzig by Oberstleutnant Wallner, dated September 11, 1984, 144.

85 Interview with Bernd Wagner, October 20, 2020.

86 Wagner and Blohm, “Im Osten war der Teller absolut leergegessen und abgeleckt,” 58.

in Leipzig found little “Anklang” (echo) and the subsequent discussion was “schleppend und ohne operative Relevanz” (sluggish and without operative relevance).⁸⁷ This lack of open reaction does not necessarily mean that the knowledge contained and conveyed in Wagner’s text went unnoticed by the audience. Through its publication in *Mikado*, moreover, with its circulation of 100 copies that were passed around amongst acquaintances, the text would have found an additional limited but not insignificant readership familiar with the images and “standards of representation” it contains and (re-)produces: this is the omnipresence—not to mention perceived absurdity and fallibility—of a state security apparatus purporting to protect GDR citizens from the capitalist West; this is everyday resistance and individual agency.

Through its publication in Blohm/Ketman’s volume, the text also reached a West German audience. According to the original foreword of *Geh doch rüber!*, the book was an invitation “die Menschen ‘drüben’ jenseits von Grenzen und ideologischer Voreingenommenheit kennen-zulernen” (to get to know the people “over there” beyond borders and ideological prejudice) and described as “der Anfang eines Gesprächs” (the beginning of a conversation).⁸⁸ Blohm comments that the anthology received “wohlwollende Rezensionen in verschiedenen Printmedien und Radiosendern wie WDR und Deutsche Welle” (favourable reviews in various print media and radio stations like WDR [West German Radio] and Deutsche Welle).⁸⁹ The volume had a print run of 6000 copies, “wovon leider nur wenige in die DDR gelangt sein dürften” (of which sadly very few would have made it into the GDR).⁹⁰ We do know, however, that an exposé of the anthology made its way to the Stasi via IM “Fritz Müller” (Anderson), and that the MfS commissioned two “Experten-IMs” (expert informants) to evaluate the book once it appeared in 1986.⁹¹ While one offered the assessment that the volume took a dismissive but not hostile position on the GDR,⁹² the second noted that the GDR came off much worse than the FRG: “[Die DDR] wird als zurückgeblieben, starr und stur beschrieben. Mief, Muff, Enge, Feigheit und Dummheit scheinen überall im Lande zu herrschen ... Besonders oft wird die sozialistische Staatsmacht (MfS, Grenzer, ABV) verunglimpft”⁹³ (the GDR is described as backward, rigid, and stubborn. Dreariness, stuffiness, narrow-mindedness, cowardice, and stupidity seem to reign throughout the country ... The socialist state

87 Summary report on Wagner’s reading in Leipzig, dated September 11, 1984.

88 Per Ketman, “Vorwort,” 12.

89 Blohm, “Ein Taschenbuch gefährdet die Staatssicherheit,” 29.

90 Blohm, “Ein Taschenbuch gefährdet die Staatssicherheit,” 29.

91 Blohm, “Ein Taschenbuch gefährdet die Staatssicherheit,” 27.

92 Cited in Blohm, “Ein Taschenbuch gefährdet die Staatssicherheit,” 27.

93 Facsimile reproduced in Blohm, “Ein Taschenbuch gefährdet die Staatssicherheit,” 28.

power (MfS, border guards, ABV [police]) is vilified with particular frequency.) As we saw in the case of Krolkiewicz, the Stasi's reception of this book—and Wagner's story more particularly—was certainly reductive but ultimately, in contrast to Krolkiewicz, rather more tolerant, if not indifferent, than hostile. However, "Tute's" complex, partially concealed path to publication in both East and West meant that its revelatory potential was realised in constrained but varied underground and cross-border contexts.

Revelation by Concealment: The Use of History and Myth

Wagner's text offered a kind of total revelation that could be published in the GDR in only a very small print run, circulating amongst a highly selective audience. However, that does not mean that no representation of the Stasi could be found in GDR literature: an author just had to find a way to bypass the censor, ideally without compromising the literary knowledge they wished to convey. Censorship in the GDR could be described as another "public secret": something that was well-known even if it did not officially exist. Prominent GDR authors were familiar with the need to wrangle with editors, publishers and even high-ranking members of the SED in order to get their works into print (see Introduction). They also developed tactics for bypassing the censor and revealing knowledge about the state in which they lived that could nonetheless reach its intended audience directly.⁹⁴ Literature set in historical, biblical, or mythical contexts emerged in the GDR, especially in the 1970s, for a variety of reasons. As Wolfgang Emmerich suggests, in some cases, it simply gave free rein to the poetic imagination, but the historical or mythological could also serve a parabolic function, pointing towards contemporary events whilst avoiding censorship.⁹⁵ Emmerich cites three authors as standing out for their use of myth, Franz Fühmann (e.g., "Das Geliebte der Morgenröte" (The Beloved of the Dawn), 1978; "Das Ohr des Dionysius" (The Ear of Dionysios), 1985), Irmtraud Morgner (*Leben und Abenteuer der Trobadora Beatriz nach Zeugnissen ihrer Spielfrau Laura*, 1974; *The Life and Adventures of Trobadora Beatrice as Chronicled by her Minstrel Laura*, 2000); *Amanda. Ein Hexenroman* (Amanda. A Witch Novel, 1983), and Christa Wolf (e.g., *Kassandra*, 1983; *Cassandra*, 1984).⁹⁶

It is the last of these examples that we will explore in this chapter. Christa Wolf was one of the most successful and well-known writers in the GDR. Initially committed to the rebuilding of the "antifascist" state,

94 See, for example: Jäger, "Das Wechselspiel"; Jones, "Writing in Ambiguity."

95 Emmerich, *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR*, 334–35.

96 Emmerich, *Kleine Literaturgeschichte*, 343.

she became disillusioned with the practices of “really existing socialism” and increasingly critical of the regime. She was the subject of intense Stasi (open) observation, especially after the Biermann Affair in 1976, as she details in her autobiographical text *Ein Tag im Jahr* (2003) and fictionalises in *Was bleibt* (1990).⁹⁷ As revealed in 1993, Wolf also served briefly as an IM between 1959 and 1962, something that she later claimed to have repressed (see Introduction).⁹⁸ Based loosely on the Cassandra⁹⁹ of Greek mythology, the eponymous protagonist—princess, priestess and prophetess of Troy—reflects on her life as she approaches the gates of Mycenae, where she knows she will be killed. Her memories of life in Troy are of an increasingly authoritarian state, whose ideals are repeatedly sacrificed in the name of winning a war (started on false pretences) with a more powerful enemy. A central aspect of that authoritarianism is an ever-expanding security apparatus, ruled over by the hated Eumelos, whose power grows as the war progresses:

Die Leute des Eumelos waren an der Arbeit. Sie hatten Anhänger unter Palastschreibern und Tempeldienern gewonnen. Auch geistig mußten wir gerüstet sein, wenn der Grieche uns angreife. Die geistige Rüstung bestand in der Schmähung des Feindes (von “Feind” war schon die Rede, eh noch ein einziger Grieche ein Schiff bestiegen hatte) und im Argwohn gegen die, welche verdächtig waren, dem Feind in die Hände zu arbeiten.¹⁰⁰

[Eumelos’s people were at work. They had won disciples among the palace scribes and servants in the temple. We must be armed mentally, too, if the Greeks attacked us, they said. Mental armament consisted in defamation of the enemy (people were already talking about the “enemy” before a single Greek had boarded ship), and in distrust of those suspected of collaborating with the enemy.]

97 See also Georgina Paul, “‘Ich, Seherin, gehörte zum Palast,’” 92.

98 A good summary of Wolf’s biography and political positioning is given in Borgwardt, *Im Umgang mit der Macht*, 267–393. A documentation of Wolf’s involvement with the Stasi as informant can be found in Vinke, *Akteneinsicht Christa Wolf*.

99 We will use the spelling “Cassandra” to refer to the figure in Greek mythology and “Kassandra” to refer to the figure in Wolf’s text.

100 Wolf, *Kassandra*, 276. Further page references will be given in parenthesis in the text with an indication of the section of the work from which the citation comes. All translations of this text will be taken from Wolf, *Cassandra*, translated by Jan van Heurck—here p. 63. Further page references for the translation will be given in parenthesis in the text with an indication of the section of the work from which the citation comes.

Kassandra is much more than a roman-à-clef; however, it is difficult not to read this as a critique of the GDR, the better state that nonetheless debases its ideals for the sake of an unwinnable war and which comes increasingly under the command of a power-hungry secret service. In this sense, *Kassandra* can be viewed as a “standard of representation” in Gibson’s terms: this is authoritarianism, this is how the pursuit of power corrupts utopian ideals, this is a world driven by patriarchal violence. As Astrid Köhler puts it referring to both *Kassandra* and Wolf’s later text *Medea: Stimmen* (which also draws on classical myth and was published in 1996):¹⁰¹ “In ihrer Modellhaftigkeit ... weisen beide Geschichten sowohl über sich selbst als auch über ihren jeweils aktuellen Entstehungshintergrund hinaus” (in their exemplary nature ... both stories point beyond themselves and beyond the context in which they originated).¹⁰²

Wolf’s post-Wende diary text, *Ein Tag im Jahr*, is shot through with references to *Kassandra*, interwoven with reflections on world politics in the late 1970s and early 1980s and the role of the writer in the GDR. This provides insight into how Wolf’s engagement with contemporary concerns, her fear of the very real threat of world-ending nuclear conflict and her reflections on her role as a socialist intellectual, fed into her reading and re-writing of the Cassandra myth. She describes “das tiefere Eindringen in *ihre* [Kassandra’s] Zeit, in *ihre* soziale und geographische Lage, *ihr* mögliches Bewußtsein und das gleichzeitig über jede Vorstellung hinaus fortschreitende Wachsen der Gefahr, in der wir selber sind” (the deeper penetration into *her* [Kassandra’s] time, into *her* social and geographical situation, *her* possible consciousness and at the same time the danger which we are in ourselves, which is continuing to grow beyond all imagination).¹⁰³ Wolf adds that she sees it as a kind of authenticity, “das mitzuliefern, was in den Tagen, Wochen, Monaten, in denen ein Manuskript entsteht, sonst noch geschieht” (to include the things that also happen in the days, weeks and months in which a manuscript is produced).¹⁰⁴ We would note that one of those “things that also happen” was the intense Stasi observation of Wolf and her family following the Biermann expatriation.¹⁰⁵ Indeed, the entry for the September 27, 1979 in *Ein Tag im Jahr*, suggests that Wolf was working on the *Kassandra* manuscript at the same time as *Was bleibt*.¹⁰⁶

The four lectures published alongside (and in many ways, as part of) the story—initially in a companion volume and later as a compilation—are

101 Published in English as *Medea: A Novel* by Virago in 1998.

102 Köhler, *Brückenschläge*, 36. See also Hilzinger, *Christa Wolf*, 130.

103 Wolf, *Ein Tag im Jahr*, 295–96. Italics in original.

104 Wolf, *Ein Tag im Jahr*, 296.

105 This entry is dated September 27, 1981.

106 Wolf, *Ein Tag im Jahr*, 252.

not set in a mythical time and as such were more direct in their critique of both East and West in the context of the nuclear arms race.¹⁰⁷ This did not escape the notice of the Stasi, who describe the essays as formulating Wolf's political and ideological critique in "Klartext" (plain language) in contrast to the story itself in which the questions Wolf raises reach the reader only through "komplizierte Vermittlungen" (complex mediations) which reduce the "politische Schärfe" (political sharpness) of Wolf's message.¹⁰⁸ One of these lectures was subject to censorship with the GDR edition appearing as a "gekürzte Fassung" (shortened version) and with eight removed passages being indicated with ellipses. As Peter Graves argues, where censorship usually functions to conceal, in this act it also worked to reveal itself.¹⁰⁹ It is the readers who must do the work to complete this revelation; they must infer what the three dots might suggest in terms of the publication process and they must source and compare the editions to uncover what has been hidden.¹¹⁰ Angela Borgwardt notes that this act of revelation was a deliberate response by Wolf to the demand that she edit her text: she agreed to remove the passages only if their absence was made clear in the revised version.¹¹¹ This was an effective method of bringing the censorship to the attention of GDR readers, as "Abschriften der Kürzungen kursierten und wurden mit großem Interesse aufgenommen" (copies of the cuts circulated and were received with great interest).¹¹² As Borgwardt points out, this episode also shows the effectiveness of using myth as a means of concealment: the story was published in its original form, tolerated "aus taktischen Überlegungen ... getragen von der Hoffnung, dass die komplizierte Erzählweise und der schwierige Stoff sowieso nur einen eingeschränkten Leserkreis finden würde" (out of tactical considerations ... borne by the hope that the complicated narrative style and the difficult subject matter would only find a limited readership anyway).¹¹³

But the essays do more than reveal the public secret of censorship: they also speak to Wolf's understanding of the relationship between

107 McDonald, "Who's Afraid of Wolf's Cassandra," 267.

108 Assessment of the text "Kassandra" by Christa Wolf, dated June 4, 1983, 225.

109 Graves, "Christa Wolf's 'Kassandra,'" 944.

110 See Graves for an analysis of the passages that were removed. Graves, "Christa Wolf's 'Kassandra.'"

111 Borgwardt, *Im Umgang mit der Macht*, 372–73.

112 Borgwardt, *Im Umgang mit der Macht*, 373. The Stasi files also contain such a list, though it is unclear how it was compiled or by whom: Additions to the Aufbau Verlag edition of Christa Wolf's "Kassandra," no date.

113 Borgwardt, *Im Umgang mit der Macht*, 373. This interpretation is supported by the assessment in the Stasi files. See Assessment of the text "Kassandra" by Christa Wolf, dated June 4, 1983.

knowledge, fiction, and myth. W. E. McDonald notes the impact of setting the essays alongside the fictional text, with the two formats offering contrasting claims about their relationship to reality and truth: “a fictional autobiography of the last hours in the life of a mythical character followed directly by an account of the conditions under which that fiction was produced.”¹¹⁴ McDonald adds that despite these very different forms, “the literary themes of the *Erzählung* and the knowledge claims of the *Voraussetzungen* are all but identical.”¹¹⁵ The four essays indicate how Wolf perceived the relationship between history and myth and how literature founded on a mythical story might reveal knowledge about the present. The lectures—presented in different forms (travelogues, open letter, diary)—recount the process of writing and especially Wolf’s visits to Greece to explore the Cassandra mythology and the history and memory of the civilisation(s) from which those myths emerged. We see a complex interweaving of history, myth, and imagination in Wolf’s descriptions: she seeks out the material traces of the world in which Cassandra would have lived, yet also tries to read between the lines of the myth (written and dominated by men) to reimagine Cassandra as “Kassandra”—a feminist figure of antipatriarchal resistance who might offer the key to finding a different form of coexistence.

In the “*Zweite Vorlesung*” (Second Lecture, translated in the English edition as “The Travel Report Continues, and the Trail is Followed”), Wolf describes the relationship between myth and reality as complex and as deeply connected to the aesthetic:

Den Mythos lesen lernen ist ein Abenteuer eigener Art; eine allmähliche eigene Verwandlung setzt diese Kunst voraus, eine Bereitschaft, der scheinbar leichten Verknüpfung von phantastischen Tatsachen, von dem Bedürfnis der jeweiligen Gruppe angepassten Überlieferungen, Wünschen und Hoffnungen, Erfahrungen und Techniken der Magic—kurz, einem anderen Inhalt des Begriffs “Wirklichkeit” sich hinzugeben. (“*Zweite Vorlesung*,” 77)

[To learn to read a myth is a special kind of adventure. An art that presupposes a gradual, peculiar transformation; a readiness to give oneself to the seemingly frivolous nexus of fantastic facts, of traditions, desires, and hopes, experiences and techniques of magic adapted to the needs of a particular group—in short, to another sense of the concept of “reality.” (“The Travel Report Continues...,” 196)]

114 McDonald, “Who’s Afraid of Wolf’s Cassandra,” 268. It should be noted that in the Aufbau edition of the text, the essays in fact precede the story.

115 McDonald, “Who’s Afraid of Wolf’s Cassandra,” 269.

In the third lecture—translated in the English edition as “A Work Diary about the Stuff Life and Dreams are Made Of”—Wolf describes it as a “Tatsache” (fact) that the myths of ancient Greece reflect some form of “Wahrheit,” (truth) but in the literary “Konzentrationsprozeß” (concentration process) that myths undergo to be transmittable across generations, historical figures are simplified to “Idealgestalten” (ideal figures) and vast periods of time “zusammengeschmolzen” (fused together) (“Dritte Vorlesung,” 155–56; “A Work Diary...,” 261–62). Emmerich describes Wolf as attempting “diese Synthese aus einer Historisierung des Mythos und der Erweckung seiner poetischen und utopischen Potenzen, die über den in ihm festgehaltenen historischen *Status quo* hinausweisen” (this synthesis of a historicisation of the myth and the awakening of its poetic and utopian potential, which point beyond the historical status quo captured in it).¹¹⁶

Part of this means creating Cassandra’s inner world, her thoughts, feelings, and consciousness. This is a kind of knowledge that, as Felski notes, only literature can offer: the “ability to read minds.”¹¹⁷ In the story itself, this manifests in a shift after the first paragraph from the third to the first person: “Mit der Erzählung geh ich in den Tod” (“Keeping step with the story, I make my way into death,” *Kassandra*, 209; *Cassandra*, 3). In the first lecture, we see this construction of Cassandra’s emotional world in process. Wolf states: “Ich denke sie [Kassandra] mir frei von Gottesfurcht. Doch eine andre ‘Schuld’ mag ihr zu schaffen machen: daß sie in stande war, sich so weit außerhalb des eignen Volks zu stellen” (I imagine her [Cassandra] as free of religious awe. But another “guilt” may have given her trouble: She was able to position herself outside her own people,” “Erste Vorlesung,” 22; translated in the English edition as, “Travel Report about the Accidental Surfacing and Gradual Fabrication of a Literary Personage,” 152). Wolf’s construction of Cassandra’s “guilt” fits with her use of this figure as an analogy for the GDR writer (including herself), who risks being distanced from her “people” owing to a proximity to power. Cassandra comes to realise that she too “gehörte zum Palast” (“was owned by the palace,” *Kassandra*, 282; *Cassandra*, 69).¹¹⁸ The gradual loss of “Glaube” (belief) in the gods of ancient Greece (in the sense of devotion, rather than questioning their existence) can also be read in the light of Wolf’s own dwindling belief in really-existing socialism. In this way, Wolf’s ability as an author of fiction to “read minds” allows her to abstract from her own experience, explore, and present as a “standard of representation” the perils of closeness to political power. In this regard, the post-Wende revelations about Wolf’s brief involvement

116 Emmerich, *Kleine Literaturgeschichte*, 343.

117 Felski, *Uses of Literature*, 89.

118 See Paul, “Ich Seherin gehörte zum Palast,” 95–96.

with the MfS as an IM shed new light on Cassandra's statement that it is "der Eumelos in mir" (the Eumelos inside me) that prevented her from shouting the truth to the people (rather than only to Eumelos) that Helen of Troy was a fabrication, a lie designed to justify war (*Kassandra*, 282; *Cassandra*, 69).

Mcdonald explores Cassandra's search for self-knowledge as being produced not (or not primarily) through rationality, but through stories, images and the body.¹¹⁹ A kind of knowledge that is uncertain and which Mcdonald contrasts with the rational, patriarchal, dominating knowledge of Eumelos: "There is no mode of knowing that does not also mislead or deceive. To claim otherwise would be to fall back into the overweening claims of patriarchy; only Eumelos and his kind can be 'sure,' and therefore beyond the reach of knowledge. Men's claim for absolute knowledge is nothing but rationalized domination."¹²⁰ Cassandra literally (albeit not always willingly) speaks truth to power; she sees the future "weil sie den Mut hat, die wirklichen Verhältnisse der Gegenwart zu sehen" ("because she has the courage to see things as they really are in the present," "Dritte Vorlesung," 128; "A Work Diary...," 238). As Köhler notes, Cassandra's visions are not supernatural, but the result of her courage to examine reality as it is and—we might add, building on Mcdonald—on the basis of knowledge that is intuitive rather than calculated.¹²¹ In this way, in *Kassandra*, Wolf also represents ways of knowing and speaking knowledge that resist the knowledge construction of the Stasi in its observation and recording of every last detail of its subjects, but almost total lack of interest in their humanity.

This is also part of Wolf's "re-visioning of the myth"¹²²—her re-visioning of the story based, as the *Vorlesungen* suggest, on a close "reading" of the Cassandra figure as the "first woman who knew the truth about the patriarchy, and whom everyone now believes."¹²³ In contrast to her later text, *Medea: Stimmen* (1996), Wolf's story is not without hope: a hope that is embodied in the alternative existence led by the women and few men in the caves outside the boundaries of Troy.¹²⁴ As Emmerich puts it: "Sie entwirft auch in der Imagination von Leben der

119 Hilzinger similarly states that "Kassandra lernt nicht nur, den eigenen Sinnen zu trauen, sondern auch, auf die Sprache ihres Körpers zu hören" (Kassandra learns not only to trust her own senses, but also to listen to the language of her body). Hilzinger, *Christa Wolf*, 137.

120 Mcdonald, "Who's Afraid of Wolf's Cassandra," 275.

121 Köhler, *Brückenschläge*, 35. See also Hilzinger, *Christa Wolf*, 136.

122 Weingartz, "Rewriting Cassandra." Klingmann describes it as "entmythologisierter Mythos" (demythologised myth). See Klingmann, "Entmythologisierter Mythos."

123 Mcdonald, "Who's Afraid of Wolf's Cassandra," 279.

124 See Köhler, *Brückenschläge*, 37.

Frauen in Höhlen am Skamandros eine Utopie des anderen Lebens” (she also designs in her imagining of the lives of the women in the caves by the Skamandros a utopia of another life).¹²⁵ The idyll Wolf creates in *Kassandra* is a non-place, a utopia that conveys a desire, not a reality. This too is a kind of knowledge that fiction can offer—knowledge about what might be possible, not only what is.

We see that Wolf’s text(s), based in myth and passing the critical eye of the censors, could reveal knowledge about the secret police, life in a panopticon, the perils of collaboration, the threat posed to humanity by patriarchal forms of power, and about the potential for a future outside of those structures. And yet it requires a particular kind of reader also to read *Kassandra* as containing knowledge about the GDR; a reader who is able to read between the lines, to pick up on vocabulary choices that make a link to the present moment and that indicate what is not being said explicitly. As we have noted, GDR readers were often adept at this. Interestingly, the (unnamed) Stasi reviewer picks out a passage that can be read as a clear reference to the activities of the MfS as an example of where Wolf’s text appears to offer “unmittelbare Verdeutlichung” (direct clarity) of its otherwise concealed message:

Er [Eumelos] zog die Schrauben an. Er warf sein Sicherheitsnetz, das bisher die Mitglieder des Königshauses und die Beamtenschaft gedrosselt hatte, über ganz Troia, es betraf nun jedermann.¹²⁶

[He [Eumelos] tightened the screws. He cast his security net (which hitherto had strangled the royal household and the civil service) across all of Troy; now it applied to everyone.]

However, this form of concealment also allowed GDR reviewers to deny the existence of any allegorical similarities and to advise against the search for “realhistorische Sachverhalte” (real historical facts).¹²⁷ In an interview in 1993, Wolf herself points towards this dynamic: “Ich wartete gespannt, ob sie [die Zensoren] es wagen würden, die Botschaft der Erzählung zu verstehen, nämlich, daß Troja untergehen muß. Sie haben es nicht gewagt und die Erzählung ungekürzt gedruckt. Die Leser in der DDR verstanden sie” (I waited anxiously to see if they [the censors] would dare to understand the message of the story, namely that Troy must fall. They didn’t dare and printed the story unabridged. Readers in the GDR understood it).¹²⁸

125 Emmerich, *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR*, 344.

126 Assessment of the text “Kassandra” by Christa Wolf, dated June 4, 1983, 226. The passage can be found in *Kassandra*, 318; *Cassandra*, 102.

127 Graves, “Christa Wolf’s ‘Kassandra,’” 945.

128 Quoted in Paul, “Ich Seherin gehörte zum Palast,” 94.

Revelation without Readers: Publication in the West

If Wolf's use of myth both reveals and conceals knowledge of the Stasi, the impact of authoritarianism in the GDR, and the fear of nuclear conflict in a divided continent, our next text—much like those unpublished or published only in the underground scene—seemingly conceals nothing.¹²⁹ Stefan Heym's *Collin*, first published by Bertelsmann Verlag in Munich in 1979, recounts the story of party-loyal writer Hans Collin who is recovering in an elite clinic after suffering an apparent heart attack. Inspired by literary critic Theodor Pollack, Collin has begun to write his memoirs, including episodes from his engagement in the Spanish Civil War and in the early years of the GDR, when he was a (silent) witness to the show trial of his friend Georg Havelka. A leading Stasi officer, Wilhelm Urack, who was implicated in the show trials of the 1950s, is hospitalised alongside Collin and also haunted by the ghosts of the past; however, unlike Collin, Urack remains convinced that there can be no wrong-doing if what is done is in the name of the party and the socialist revolution. The two men believe themselves to be locked in a battle to survive; a battle that Urack ultimately wins.

Born in 1913 to a Jewish family, and an antifascist from an earlier age, Heym was one of the youngest literary exiles from National Socialist Germany. After being expelled from his grammar school in 1932 for writing an anti-military poem, he moved to Berlin to finish school and begin his studies. After the accession to power of the NSDAP in 1933, he fled first to Czechoslovakia (where he worked for German newspapers in Prague) and then, in 1935, to the United States where he completed his education. He established himself as a successful writer in the USA, worked for the US psychological warfare unit during World War II, and became a US citizen. In 1948, at the height of McCarthyism, Heym made the decision to return to Europe, first to Czechoslovakia, and then, in 1952, to Germany, choosing—as a committed socialist—to live in the GDR. He rapidly ran into conflict with the SED regime and became one of its most vocal and well-known critics, who nonetheless supported the idea of socialism and remained in the GDR until the end.¹³⁰

The plot of *Collin* revolves around questions of revelation and concealment. It is both the burden of knowledge, the desire to conceal unpleasant facts (also from oneself) and the need for revelation that is the cause of Collin's health problems and their potential cure. Collin's literature becomes a source of knowledge for his doctor, Christine Roth,

129 Interestingly, Peter Graves considers that Heym's writing suffers from the decision not to use historical or mythological allegory, "where contemporary issues can be addressed obliquely and he can deploy his mischievous humour to greater satirical effect." Graves, "Authority, the State and the Individual," 347.

130 For a complete biography, see: Hutchinson, *Stefan Heym*.

albeit an imperfect one. She reads his novels in an attempt to learn more about her patient and his past, but the historical events they recount are partially concealed and sanitised in their fictionalised forms. Roth reflects: “verhüllte und vertuschte der Autor nicht immer, indem er zu offenbaren schien? Wie viele höchst verschiedenartige Schalen mußte man entfernen, bis man zum Kern gelangte?” (“didn’t an author always reveal things by appearing to conceal them? How many shells of how many thicknesses did you have to remove until you got to the core of the matter?”).¹³¹ It is Collin’s memoir that promises to “nichts auslassen, was wesentlich sei zum Verständnis unsrer Zeit und ihrer Menschen und seiner eignen Person, soweit diese ihm erkennbar” (“leaving out nothing that was essential to the understanding of our time and its people, as far as they would reveal themselves, and of his own person,” *Collin* (1981/1979), 19; *Collin* (1980), 19). Collin’s manuscript conveys this knowledge to a limited readership: he reads extracts to Christine and it is stolen and read by Urak. Nonetheless, it remains unfinished and unpublished at the end of Heym’s novel: Collin wonders if those who live in the GDR will ever read his “Wahrheiten” (truths), or if they are instead destined for “irgendwelche Verleger im Westen, die eine Sensation witterten” (some publishers in the West who scented a sensation, *Collin* (1981/1979), 296; *Collin* (1980), 301).

Heym’s novel is marked as fiction and yet it has been frequently read (including by the Stasi)¹³² as drawing its main characters from Heym’s own experiences and from the history of the socialist movement.¹³³ Havelka can be viewed as a lightly fictionalised Walter Janka—the writer and publisher convicted and imprisoned in the 1950s for “counter-revolutionary conspiracy.” The character Julius Faber, also a victim of the show trials of the 1950s, has much in common with Paul Merker—convicted for espionage in the broader international context of the Rajk trial in Hungary in 1949 and the Slánský trial in Czechoslovakia in 1952.¹³⁴ Like Merker, Faber is demoted to running a state-owned restaurant in a small town, a position in which Collin re-encounters his old comrade, and (with very little resistance) abandons him when he is attacked by an angry mob of “workers” (*Collin* (1981/1979), 126–27; *Collin* (1980), 129–30). The literary critic Theodor Pollack, who prompts Collin to write his memoir, shares many

131 Heym, *Collin*, 64. Further page references are given after the abbreviation “*Collin* (1981/1979)” in the text in parenthesis (referring to the 1981 edition of the first publication in 1979). Translations are taken from the Hodder and Stoughton edition—here 66. Further page references are given after the abbreviation “*Collin* (1980)” in the text in parenthesis. As with many of his works, the translation was completed by Heym himself.

132 Summary report on OV “Diversant” (Stefan Heym), dated April 26, 1977.

133 See e.g., Borgwardt, *Im Umgang mit der Macht*, 234–36.

134 See Brown, *Paul Merker, the GDR, and the Politics of Memory*.

features with Heym himself, including the loss of a daughter in Auschwitz (*Collin* (1981/1979), 30; *Collin* (1980), 31) and emigration to the United States during World War II, including serving in the American army (*Collin* (1981/1979), 17; *Collin* (1980), 17). It is also easy to see parallels between the struggles of Collin to write his memoir “leaving nothing out” and Heym’s production of a text that addresses directly the trials of the 1950s, the power wielded by the State Security Service (embodied by the ultimate survival of Urack), and the motivations and methods of the Stasi (especially the observation of Urak’s dissident grandson, Peter.)¹³⁵ Heym himself was the subject of open observation, as he details in his autobiography *Nachruf* (Obituary, 1988); his knowledge of their methods increased further when he came across a bundle of file notes dropped carelessly in front of his home by one of the officers observing him.¹³⁶ We might also view *Collin* as one in a series of texts by Heym that offer fictional explorations of controversial historical figures in the socialist movement, including *Lassalle* (1969), which was also initially published only in the West, and the post-Wende publication *Radek* (1999).¹³⁷

The plan to publish the manuscript in the West generally meant keeping the existence of the text secret while it was being composed in the East. Heym discovered after the opening of the Stasi files that his home had been infiltrated by IM “Frieda” who was the couple’s housekeeper, a discovery he describes in the opening to the text *Der Winter unsers Mißvergnügens* (The Winter of our Discontent, 1996).¹³⁸ *Der Winter* gives an account of the Biermann Affair from Heym’s perspective and as a series of diary entries. The archival record shows that Heym did indeed write at least the first draft of this text in the immediate aftermath of the Biermann expulsion: a report of a meeting with “Frieda” dated December 16, 1976 notes that the manuscript is already 88 pages.¹³⁹ “Frieda” is reported as adding that Heym locks the manuscript away whenever he leaves the house: “Dies widerspricht vollkommen seinen sonstigen Gewohnheiten, da er sonst die laufenden Arbeiten immer auf seinem Schreibtisch offen liegen läßt” (this completely contradicts his usual habits, as he always leaves the work in progress lying open on his desk). *Der Winter* is a further example of a text seemingly written “for the drawer,” and published years later, reframed and in a different social and political context. Heym appears to have made efforts to keep the manuscript secret until he felt

135 E.g., *Collin* (1981/1979), 90, 105, 160–63; *Collin* (1980), 92, 108, 163–66 See Reinhard K. Zachau’s discussion of where “Heym himself might be hiding in his characters.” Zachau, “The Stasi as the Force of Evil,” 51.

136 Heym, *Nachruf*, 806–11.

137 Heym, *Lassalle/An Uncertain Friend*; Heym, *Radek*.

138 Heym, *Der Winter unsers Mißvergnügens*, 9–15.

139 Report on meeting with IMV “Frieda,” dated December, 16 1976.

the time was right to “reveal all”—efforts that were ultimately unsuccessful. A Stasi summary report on Heym dated April 26, 1977 notes that the manuscript was completed in February 1977 and that it could be “durch zielgerichteten IM-Einsatz konspirativ dokumentiert” (secretly documented through the targeted deployment of an informant).¹⁴⁰

The April 1977 report focuses principally on Heym’s actions during and subsequent to the Biermann expulsion and his leading role in drafting and disseminating the open protest letter. However, the report also contains a reference to *Collin*, including details on the planned publisher and the potential connection to Walter Janka.¹⁴¹ A summary report dated November 9, 1977 indicates that an IM (likely “Frieda”) was able “das Manuskript ‘Collin’ unter strengster Beachtung der Konspiration fototechnisch [zu dokumentieren]” (to document the manuscript ‘Collin’ in photographs, ensuring strict secrecy).¹⁴² We see here that the Stasi were also among the first readers of this manuscript and that they had knowledge of Heym’s plans to publish well before its appearance in 1979 in West Germany. They also knew when he had likely smuggled the manuscript across the border, noting that he copied the text before his trip to readings in the Federal Republic in November 1977, but those copies were no longer in his home. What is interesting from the perspective of knowledge and secrecy is that the Stasi do not make this information public (e.g., by arresting Heym or restricting his travel); in fact, they stress that the IM should operate “unter strengster Beachtung der Konspiration” (ensuring strict secrecy). Heym too is reported as keeping the project “außerordentlich intern” (exceptionally internal) with only his closest friends knowing about it.¹⁴³ Both sides operate with a complex interweaving of secrecy and knowledge. Heym’s text reveals knowledge of the 1950s trials and the activities of the Stasi and the Stasi’s own assessment of the text makes clear that they were aware of that intention.¹⁴⁴ However, prior to publication, both parties operate to keep knowledge about the text under wraps—or, in the case of the Stasi, knowledge about their knowledge of the text.

This dynamic changes on publication, as Heym actively seeks publicity for his work in both Germanies. A report dated February 6, 1979 details the author’s and publisher’s plans for the promotion of *Collin*. Much of this is standard—pre-announcements about the book’s appearance, comments by Heym in the media, and sending copies to journalists—all

140 Summary report on OV “Diversant” (Stefan Heym) dated April 26, 1977.

141 Summary report on OV “Diversant” (Stefan Heym), dated April 26, 1977.

142 Summary report on OV “Diversant” (Stefan Heym), dated November 9, 1977.

143 Undated report. Likely 1977 or 1978.

144 Undated report. Likely 1977 or 1978.

designed to give the book visibility to Western audiences (and anyone in the East accessing Western media). However, Heym reportedly also asks that a copy be sent directly to Erich H. (the report notes dryly that this probably means Erich Honecker) and Klaus Höpcke (then Deputy Minister for Culture). According to a file note dated September 23, 1980, Heym states in a reading from *Collin* in Sweden in 1980 that he writes his books “zuerst ... für die DDR-Leser” (above all ... for GDR readers) and that it is only those readers who can completely understand them. Heym adds that he is confident that *Collin* will appear in the GDR one day, noting that *Lassalle* (1969 in FRG/1974 in GDR) and *Der König David Bericht* (1972 in FRG/1973 in GDR), both once banned, have now been published in the country.¹⁴⁵

The report of November 9, 1977 notes that Heym and his wife recognise that the content of *Collin* is politically explosive and fear that they will have to leave the GDR if the text is published in the West.¹⁴⁶ In fact, the response of the SED regime was to punish Heym through legal means, charging and convicting him for breaching exchange controls in relation to the Western publication; subsequently, in June 1979, he was expelled from the Berlin Writers' Union, alongside eight other critical authors who had been charged with the same offence, or written in protest at the SED's actions.¹⁴⁷ It seems that Heym saw his ideal reader in the East and that his decision to publish in the West was a recognition that reaching his ideal reader would entail compromising the text—toning down its revelations—in a way that would not be acceptable to him. Publication only in the West was also—as Borgwardt notes—a revelation of censorship in the East.¹⁴⁸

Heym's stance as an unwaveringly critical intellectual did not mean he was unwilling to compromise and negotiate for the publication of his works behind the scenes, as Jones has shown.¹⁴⁹ The request to send a copy of the text to Honecker may be seen as confrontational, but it might also have been tactical (or we might even say hopeful): the publication of *Der König David Bericht* in the GDR in 1973 was the result—at least in part—of a request by Honecker himself that this possibility be explored.¹⁵⁰ However, this hope was misplaced, as *Collin* was never published in the GDR. As Malcolm Pender wrote in 1984:

145 Report on a visit by Stefan Heym to Stockholm, dated September 23, 1980.

146 Summary report on OV “Diversant” (Stefan Heym), dated November 9, 1977.

147 See the documentation in: Walther et al., *Protokoll eines Tribunals*.

148 Borgwardt, *Im Umgang mit der Macht*, 237.

149 Jones, *Complicity, Censorship and Criticism*, 94–147.

150 See Krämer, “Der Hase und der Igel,” 91. Heym describes in his autobiography how Honecker revealed to him in a meeting that the publication of *Der*

Heym, latterly unpublished in the East, functions in political circumstances which have deprived him of all real links to his readership since he is writing in the reality of a divided Germany for a public whose problems he does not know at first hand and who, conversely, cannot assess at first hand the framework within which he is writing yet who exploit his work to bolster their own preconceptions.¹⁵¹

If the intended audience was the average East German, the reveal-all knowledge in this text only found an “adequate reader” through covert means: smuggled across the border and passed hand-to-hand. Borgwardt notes that the reception of the text in West Germany emphasised Heym’s courage, “die Geheimpolizei und ihre Methoden so offen beschrieben und den Stalinismus unter literarische Anklage gestellt zu haben” (to have described the secret police and their methods so openly and to have brought Stalinism under literary indictment).¹⁵² This reception resonates with that of Kunert’s text in the now united Germany forty years later. However, the only records of resonance amongst an East German readership are the decision to take repressive measures against the text’s author and the hostile (and at the time secret) reviews of the Stasi readers.

Conclusion

With the case studies presented in this chapter, we have demonstrated how literary fiction served in different ways and contexts as a “medium of knowledge” about the “public secret” of the Stasi and the strategies employed by GDR writers and citizens to navigate the realities of life in an authoritarian and carefully monitored society. In each of the texts explored, our chosen authors construct a relationship with those extra-textual realities by (re)imagining lived experiences, building on the knowledge acquired personally and through their networks, in acts of “creative imitation,” to return to Felski’s terminology.¹⁵³ In doing this, they both drew on and expanded a repertoire of the kind of “standards of representation” described by Gibson, which codified shared understandings and symbols, in more or less recognisable patterns and signs, of state surveillance and its repercussions in the literary sphere and everyday life. Many of the texts (and paratexts) explored show the authors’ self-reflexive awareness of the literariness of their writing and their thematisation of the role of revelation and concealment in their construction of knowledge.

König David Bericht in the GDR was a result of his own personal intervention. See Heym, *Nachruf*, 785.

151 Pender, “Stefan Heym,” 48.

152 Borgwardt, *Im Umgang mit der Macht*, 237.

153 Felski, *Uses of Literature*, 85.

Overall, we have given a flavour of the complex interweaving of revelation and concealment, secrecy and knowledge, in literature produced in and about the GDR. We have described this as a spectrum of revelation and concealment with regard to fictionalised representations of the “public secret” of the Stasi and the literary techniques employed, as well as the paths these texts took to publication and reception. However, we might also see it in terms of a see-saw: each act of revelation often brought with it a degree of concealment and one must be weighed in relation to the other. Publication in the West reached a potentially large reading public but resulted in a form of concealment from a readership in the GDR, meaning the knowledge would not be completed by its (primarily) intended audience but instead received in a manner shaped by very different experiences, knowledge structures, and expectations of literary fiction. Bypassing censorship in the GDR through the use of history, myth and allegory, meanwhile, relied on an appropriately sensitised or “adequate” readership that was able to decode that form of concealment to reveal the knowledge within the text. Presenting work at private and semi-public readings, publishing in underground journals or sharing manuscripts hand-to-hand allowed total revelation to small audiences, often in the form of critical satire with thinly (if at all) veiled references to the MfS and other state institutions; in these contexts, authors had to hazard the risk, often knowingly, that reader responses to their work would remain private or that part of their audience would likely be hostile and anxious to prevent a text (or even whole oeuvres) reaching a wider readership. Finally, some works of literary fiction deemed (by their own authors) to be too revelatory were deliberately withheld and the knowledge they contained remained concealed as long as the GDR state existed. After the Wende, hidden and/or suppressed texts begin to emerge and reach the public sphere; however, this is not a public that could even be imagined at the time of writing.

Conclusion

Knowledge as Resistance—Revealing the Public Secret

WE STARTED THIS book seeking to flip the script in research on the relationship between the literary sphere and the Stasi by asking not what the secret police knew about those that they were observing, but what these critical intellectuals knew about the secret police. We have demonstrated throughout the book that the answer to this question is that they knew a great deal. Writers, and others critical of the SED regime, developed intuitive or heuristic knowledge in Gigerenzer's terms that helped them to identify when the Stasi was likely to be present, when an individual in their circle of acquaintances might or might not be trustworthy, when they were the victims of the machinations of *Zersetzung*, or when a friend might be in trouble. They developed these "rules of thumb" based on information circulating in their networks, which in turn was collected through moments when the Stasi revealed itself, especially during "open observation" and attempted recruitment of informants. Knowledge was also gained at "second hand" from individuals who had direct experience of incarceration and interrogation, which they shared with those around them.

In almost all cases, we see that this knowledge is fragile, partial, uncertain and—as revealed after the Wende—sometimes simply wrong. The authors we interviewed frequently admitted that they suspected and trusted the wrong people. Nonetheless, this partial knowledge was crucial for the very ability of the "Szene" (scene) and other oppositional groupings to function as such; for networks of individuals critical of the state to emerge despite the widespread (justified) paranoia that was the result of living in the panopticon. In such a context, trust is crucial—those in the underground needed to trust one another even when they could never know for sure that such trust was well-placed. Heuristic and second-hand knowledge underpinned that trust, which in turn made resistance and "countersurveillance" possible. Knowledge—however uncertain—allowed critical writers to assert a small amount of power over one of the most powerful organs of the authoritarian

state. It allowed them to call out the public secret of the Stasi's presence by addressing them directly, bringing them coffee, sending them champagne, ridiculing them, taking legal action against them, and—of course—writing about them. The acquisition of knowledge then became a form of resistance that is based on revelation.

In Wagner's "Stube und der Herr," the "Herr" describes secrecy as being the root of every dictatorship:

...so ist doch jeder an dieses Geheimnis gekettet, die große Masse der Nichteingeweihten dadurch, daß sie es zu entschlüsseln versuchen muß, zu deuten durch Gerüchte, zu entlarven und lächerlich zu machen durch Witze, deren hohe Kultur geradezu das Kennzeichen der Diktatur ist.¹

[... so everyone is chained to this secret, the great mass of the uninitiated by having to try to decipher it, to interpret it through rumours, to expose and ridicule it through jokes, the high culture of which is virtually the hallmark of dictatorship.]

This fictionalised account, published after the Wende, reflects succinctly the position of the critical intellectuals—the "uninitiated"—who are the focus of this book. Secrecy was at the core of how they were able to operate in the GDR. They had secrets that they needed to keep hidden from the secret police; at the same time, they used encounters with the secret police to "decode" and mobilise the Stasi's secrets against them. We can see what the "Herr" means by a "chain." Secrecy and revelation were thus intertwined with one another and that intertwining made possible both trust and agency. Trust depended on keeping the secrets of those you trusted and being willing to share some of your own; agency depended on knowing some of the secrets of the Stasi and being ready to reveal them.

We noted in the Introduction to this book the role that secrets—and "public secrets"—play in society, creating insiders and outsiders, those "in the know" and those who are excluded. In this way, secrecy—especially the "public secret"—is also closely connected to power. Taussig cites Elias Canetti's dictum that "'secrecy lies at the very core of power'" and Foucault's analysis in *History of Sexuality* that secrecy is indispensable to the operation of power.² In his analysis of "secret societies," Georg Simmel sees these as emerging especially in contexts of "public unfreedom, of a policy of police regulation, of police oppression" and as appearing dangerous for those in power precisely because of its secrecy.³

1 Wagner, "Stube und der Herr," 308–9.

2 Taussig, *Defacement*, 57.

3 Simmel, "The Sociology of Secrecy," 483.

The extensive observation of and efforts to control critical intellectuals operating in the East German underground scenes of the 1980s suggests that the Stasi saw these groupings as a “secret society” in Simmel’s terms. Using their own secret means, the Stasi sought to uncover their membership, actions, motives and intentions with the aim of dissolving the perceived threat that these critical intellectuals represented.

And yet, despite the central role secrecy played in their lives, our analysis in this book demonstrates that the subjects of Stasi observation were, in fact, less interested in secrecy than in knowledge and revelation. Of course, that does not mean they did not have secrets—secrets designed to protect those operating in a way that put them at risk of arrest, secret manuscripts that were shared with only a very small group (or not at all), and secrets about their personal lives that they wanted to keep to themselves. A very particular group in the “scene”—the informants—had secrets that they kept from friends and colleagues but shared with the Stasi. Nonetheless, as this book has shown, critical intellectuals in the GDR knew only too well that their operations were *not* secret, that the Stasi infiltrated events and friendship groups, intercepted post, and stole unpublished manuscripts or made recordings of readings from them. They saw value in gathering and sharing knowledge about the Stasi’s operations. This knowledge—partial, fragmented, and created and disseminated within the specific social context—allowed them to trust when trust should not have been possible and supported counter- and sousveillance.

Countersurveillance, which we have described as a form of agency, was thus frequently centred on the revelation of the secret: as Kolbe described in the interview with Windsor, the effect of saying “Guck mal, die da” (look at them over there) was to diminish the threat that the Stasi represented.⁴ The forms of agency described in this book are different expressions of “look at them over there”—from the casual pointing towards the Stasi officers present at a reading, to the decision to take the MfS to court. The artistic output of these critical intellectuals, including their literary fiction, is a particular mode of saying “look at them over there.” It is one that can create alternative worlds, condense experience into its core components that can reveal knowledge not only about the GDR, but also create “standards of representation” that give the reader insight into secrecy, paranoia, resistance, oppression, and dictatorial control beyond the immediate context in which the text was written.⁵ As we saw in chapter 4, critical writers also used their literary fiction to explore the concepts of secrecy and knowledge and the complex entanglement of revelation and concealment. We see the construction and circulation of

4 Interview with Uwe Kolbe, June 1, 2021.

5 Gibson, *Fiction and the Weave of Life*, 79.

partial, unreliable, intuitive knowledge described in the interview material reflected in the attempts of literary characters to navigate worlds dominated by secret police control. The type of knowledge conveyed by these texts was determined and transformed by the situation and scale of the readership they reached. The political context(s) in which they circulated and the audience's familiarity with codes and reading practices, whether in East or West, affected the revelatory potential of literary fiction.

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault shows how knowledge and power are interconnected, forming the foundation of modern "disciplinary" systems—illustrated through the panopticon—the effects of which we have explored in chapter 3.⁶ What we see in this book is a different kind of intertwining of knowledge and power, a power that is exerted through revelation. Critical intellectuals produced and circulated knowledge about the secret police and revealed it in different forums and through different media—from the literary reading to the literary text. In this way, these writers used what Taussig describes (following Canetti) as the "explosive" potential of revelation to resist the power of the public secret.⁷ That revelation could, however, only ever be partial. The Stasi never had complete access to all aspects of an individual's life; however, the knowledge they gathered through extensive observation and the infiltration of "trustworthy" informants, meant that the MfS had more, and more reliable, knowledge about those they were observing than those subjects could ever have expected to have on the secret police. The knowledge produced by the Stasi was moreover recorded in minute detail, creating an archive that, as Jeffrey Wallen puts it, "incarnates a potential knowledge that exceeds our own" and "generates the suspicion that someone or something knows us better than we know ourselves."⁸

Before the collapse of the SED regime in 1989, the end of the GDR in 1990, and the opening of the Stasi files in 1992, the efforts of critical intellectuals to usurp the power of secrecy through revelation was incomplete. There was so much they did not know, or could not know for certain, and the archive's knowledge surely exceeded their own. In this sense, we can see the drive after the Wende to make fully public the content of the Stasi files as a continuation of the practice of using knowledge and revelation as a form of resistance. Numerous critical intellectuals have published excerpts from the files as compilations (e.g., Reiner Kunze's *Deckname "Lyrik,"* 1990; Erich Loest, *Der Zorn des Schafes* (The Wrath of the Sheep, 1990), integrated into short essays (e.g., in the various contributions to the *StasiSachen* volumes edited by Andreas Mytze, 1991–1996), or even interwoven into lengthier autobiographical works (e.g., Günter Kunert,

6 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*.

7 Taussig, *Defacement*, 57.

8 Wallen, "Narrative Tensions," 270.

Erwachsenenspiele (Games for Adults), 1997; Jürgen Fuchs, *Magdalena*, 1998).⁹ In a very early example, Stefan Heym reproduces in his 1988 autobiography *Nachruf* excerpts from the Stasi files that he found dropped (presumably) accidentally outside of his house.¹⁰

As we saw in the Introduction, Lutz Rathenow describes this drive towards “radikale Offenlegung” (radical revelation) as being the only way of banishing the “Zombie Staatssicherheit” (Stasi zombie) to the “Reich der Geschichte” (realm of history) once and for all.¹¹ Rathenow’s description suggests an assertion of power, a final act to destroy the hold that the Stasi—and the public secret that they represented—had over the lives of these individuals. That final victory can only take place through a radical act of countersurveillance, the radical revelation of the knowledge, the “true secret,” that the Stasi wanted to keep concealed. Barbara Miller notes that many victims of the Stasi had an ambivalent relationship with the files but hoped that they might be able to help them reconstruct the past—that is fill in gaps in their knowledge about what had happened to them and why.¹²

Several of the authors who are the focus of this study also turned to the Stasi files after unification. How they recount this experience demonstrates the impact of this final act of revelation. Together with a group of women from her artistic and feminist circles, Gabriele Stötzer was involved in the occupation of the Stasi headquarters and archive in Erfurt in December 1989, describing the occupiers’ decision as being based on a view that the files were the property of the people about whom they had been compiled. Stötzer saw this both as a collective undertaking and as a kind of personal revelation and calling: “Und ich hab da wirklich wie so’n Licht gesehen, das Licht des Knastes, das kam irgendwie auf mich zu und da dachte ich, die [the other women] sind bei mir wegen der Magie, ne?” (And I really saw a kind of light, the light of prison, that was something heading my way and I thought, they [the other women] are here because of something magic, right?).¹³ In that context, Stötzer accompanied the other women as someone with knowledge of the Stasi and the very building they wanted to occupy: “Ich war schonmal drinne, wo die rein wollten ... ich war ja Knastologin in dem Moment” (I’d already been inside the place where they wanted to go ... in that moment I was a jailbird.)¹⁴ In the interview with Windsor, she states that she decided

9 Kunze, *Deckname “Lyrik”*; Mytze, *StasiSachen 1–6*; Kunert, *Erwachsenenspiele*; Fuchs, *Magdalena*.

10 Heym, *Nachruf*, 807–10.

11 Rathenow, “Akteneinsicht als Therapie,” 94.

12 Miller, “Wiederaneignung der eigenen Biographie,” 372.

13 Interview with Gabriele Stötzer, June 14, 2021.

14 Interview with Gabriele Stötzer, June 14, 2021.

she could not, however, work for the Stasi Records Authority in the immediate post-Wende period, because they demanded a declaration of continued secrecy, which she was not prepared to give—for her, this should be a moment of revelation, not further concealment.¹⁵

Indeed, in her introduction to *Der lange Arm der Stasi*, Stötzer indicates the satisfaction she eventually gained from accessing, and revealing, the files:

... man erkennt auch: Die Erfolge der anderen waren zeitlich begrenzt, ihre Macht war endlich, die andere Seite ist untergegangen, und man selbst sitzt hier und hält deren misslungene Arbeit in den Händen. Hinter allen Unterstellungen und dem Vernichtungswillen erkennt man Grimassen von Angst, die auf die Opfer projiziert wurden, sieht ihre unbeweglich tönernen Mitte, die in Sand zerfallen ist ... Dieser Moment ist erhellend, denn diese damals wirklich empfundene eigene Angst bekommt Gründe, wird ein fremd inszeniertes Ungeheuer, das sich eines Tages doch gegen die gerichtet hat, die sie inszeniert haben. Und man begreift in all der anschaulichen Machtlosigkeit seine eigene Kraft, die die an das sozialrealistische Totem Glaubenden entmachtete.¹⁶

[... you also recognise: the successes of the others were limited in time, their power was finite, the other side has gone under, and you yourself are sitting here holding their failed work in your hands. Behind all the insinuations and the will to destroy, you recognise the grimaces of fear that were projected onto the victims, you see their immovable clay centre that has crumbled into sand ... This moment is illuminating, because the fear you really felt at the time is given reasons, becomes a monster staged by others, which one day turns against those who staged it. And in all the vivid powerlessness, one realises one's own power, which disempowered those who believed in the social-realist totem.]

This sense of having overpowered the “monster” is reminiscent of the feelings of those victims who are now guides at the Stasi prison memorial at Berlin-Hohenschönhausen. As Sara Jones shows, the idea of touching the material evidence of the regime's failure—for Stötzer, holding the files, for the guides at Hohenschönhausen, occupying the interrogator's chair—functions as a kind of “symbolic reparation” and form of vengeance that can contribute to a sense of (transitional) justice.¹⁷ Maaß describes a similar sense of satisfaction, here couched in the language of revelation (“seeing through”) and acquisition of

15 Interview with Gabriele Stötzer, June 14, 2021.

16 Stötzer, *Der lange Arm der Stasi*, 11.

17 Jones, “Simply a Little Piece of GDR History?,” 174.

knowledge about previously guarded secrets: “Also, im Nachhinein diese Unterdrückungsmethoden durchschauen zu können, das ist eine wahn-sinnige Sache” (so, being able to see through these methods of suppression in hindsight is an incredible thing).¹⁸

Our interviewees describe being able to piece together aspects of their lives that had remained hidden before the opening of the files. We have seen in chapter 1 that Kolbe did not get confirmation of his suspicions about his father until the opening of the files (however incomplete). Wagner describes the files as providing structure and chronology to his memory of the attempted recruitment.¹⁹ Moog recalls her attempt to leave the GDR through an (arranged) marriage with a British citizen living in Paris. She did not know until the opening of the files why the approval for her to leave the GDR was not granted for four years, a period she describes as one of the hardest of her life. The files reveal to her that it was the Stasi who blocked the process, refusing to grant approval while the *Operativer Vorgang* against her remained open: “Das erfuhr ich eigentlich nicht. Ich wusste nicht. Also, wie gesagt, also die Zusammenhänge hab’ ich erst im Nachhinein aus der Stasi-Akte erfahren” (I didn’t actually find out. I didn’t know. So, as I said, I only learnt about the connections afterwards from the Stasi file).²⁰ The files reveal that there were multiple plans to arrest Maaß—something he continually feared. The files show why these were not followed through, that is, owing to fear of unmasking the Stasi’s “wichtigsten ‘Agenten’ Sascha Anderson” (most important “agent” Sascha Anderson).²¹ In his interview with Windsor, Maaß adds that Anderson’s betrayal resulted in an archive of recordings and documentation of the scene that would not otherwise exist: “Sascha Anderson [hat] seine Freunde, unseren Freundeskreis, an die Stasi ausgeliefert und verraten. Gleichzeitig hat er ein Stück dieses Lebens dokumentiert und diese Dokumentation erweist sich jetzt als wertvoll” (Sascha Anderson handed over his friends, our circle of friends, to the Stasi and betrayed them. At the same time, he documented a part of this life, and this documentation is now proving to be valuable).²²

However, the experience of revelation can also be a painful one. In “Stube und der Herr,” Wagner’s fictional “Herr” describes the files as a kind of poison: “Jetzt nachdem ich die Akten durchgelesen habe, fühle ich mein Leben von Akten, Wanzen und Kanzlisten vergiftet” (now that I’ve read through the files, I feel my life has been poisoned by files, bugs

18 Interview with Ekkehard Maaß, July 30, 2021.

19 Wagner, “Stasi-Gift,” 8.

20 Interview with Christa Moog, August 25, 2021.

21 Böthig, “Vorbemerkung,” in *Sprachzeiten*, 8.

22 Interview with Ekkehard Maaß, July 30, 2021.

and administrators).²³ In her interview with Windsor, Bettina Wegner describes the files as contaminated and touching them as giving her the feeling of being unclean:

Und außerdem hab ick dann Waschzwang gekriegt. Also immer, wenn ick in dem [Stasi records] Amt war—Also, ick denk mal, jede halbe Stunde musst‘ ick auf Klo [und] mir die Hände waschen. Und wenn ick denn zuhause war, war wieder weg, der Waschzwang [*laughs*]. So dass man dit Gefühl hatte. Tja. Ick hatte dit Gefühl, meine Hände sind dreckig, wenn ick dit—Was die sich so allet ausgedacht haben.²⁴

[And then I also got a washing compulsion. So whenever I was in the [Stasi records] office—well, I think I had to go to the loo every half hour [and] wash my hands. And when I got home, the compulsion to wash was gone again [*laughs*]. So you had that feeling. Well. I had the feeling that my hands were dirty when I did it—the things they came up with.]

For both Wagner’s fictional “Herr” and Wegner, the contaminating effect of the files comes from the detailed knowledge that they provide on the Stasi’s methods and the extent to which they had infiltrated the lives of those critical of the state, filling them with “files, bugs, and administrators.”

The poison and contamination of the files can also come from another quarter, that is, the certainty that they appear to provide about individuals, which has the potential to undo the bonds of trust founded on uncertain knowledge. We have seen in chapter 2 Wegner’s anger over the trusted friend who was revealed to be an IM, as well as Kolbe’s discovery that Peter Mugay, a close family friend, had spied on him as IM “Albert.”²⁵ Maaß describes his emotions at discovering the extent of Anderson’s complicity, which was revealed only by the files and not by Anderson himself. Referring to Anderson’s 2002 autobiography, *Sascha Anderson*, Maaß describes the files as “ehrlicher als das Buch von Anderson” (more honest than Anderson’s book), adding “seine Arbeit für die Stasi war schlimmer als Verrat” (his work for the Stasi was worse than betrayal).²⁶ Beyond the authors that are the

23 Wagner, “Stube und der Herr,” 295.

24 Interview with Bettina Wegner, August 23, 2021.

25 In Kolbe’s interview with Windsor and his essay about Mugay in *Stasi-Sachen*, he implies he began receiving ominous silent phone calls after Mugay’s outing as a former IM, pointing towards an insidious “Nachleben” (afterlife) of paranoia and mistrust following these revelations. Interview with Uwe Kolbe, June 1, 2021, and “Uwe Kolbe über IM *Albert* alias Peter Mugay,” in Mytze, *StasiSachen* 6, 35.

26 Maaß, “Ein Betroffener über die Stasi-Mitarbeit von Sascha Anderson,” 142.

focus of this book, we find accounts of critical intellectuals who discovered that those closest to them had been informants. Examples include Susanne Schädlich's description of the impact of discovering that her uncle (Karlheinz Schädlich) had been an informant and his subsequent suicide (*Immer wieder Dezember* (Always December Again), 2009),²⁷ and Vera Wollenberger's (now Lengsfeld) moving account of finding out that her husband Knut Wollenberger had been working for the Stasi. Wollenberger notes laconically: "Ich habe einen Mann verloren, der nie mein Mann war" (I lost a husband, who was never my husband). The title of Wollenberger's text "Eine zweite Vergewaltigung" (A Second Rape) points towards the emotional impact of the discovery, which Wollenberger states she was nonetheless glad she made.²⁸

On the other hand, the presumed certainty of the files could not always prevent the "Stasi zombie" from destroying relationships beyond the existence of the ministry that had created it. Wegner describes how Schlesinger gained early access to the files because a rumour was circulating that he had been an IM—we might recall from chapter 1 that this was a rumour that the Stasi deliberately put into circulation before the Wende. After the Wende, this rumour was—Wegner reports—affecting Schlesinger's work and causing him to receive cancellations for readings. Wegner describes her disappointment particularly at Sarah Kirsch, a long-standing friend, who did not call Schlesinger to ask if the rumours were true but instead cut off all contact. When Wegner called to confront her, she hung up. Wegner notes: "Also, da hat die Stasi noch ihre Wünsche erfüllt gekriegt, nachdem sie schon nich' mehr das Ministerium hatten" (well, the Stasi still got their wishes granted after they no longer had the ministry).²⁹

Indeed, opening and publishing the Stasi files may have been a radical act of revelation and a final act of resistance. However, it did not end the epistemic injustice experienced by victims of Stasi persecution: epistemic injustice is understood here to mean the marginalisation of these individuals as knowing subjects and failure to recognise their knowledge systems as valid.³⁰ Even with the destruction of the organisation that compiled them, the files still presented an alien "hostile" version of the self that—as Lewis notes—often did not correspond to the memories of those affected.³¹ In *Archive Fever*, Derrida describes the archive as a "place of consignation," whose structure codetermines the "archivable meaning."³²

27 Schädlich, *Immer wieder Dezember*.

28 Wollenberger, "Eine zweite Vergewaltigung."

29 Interview with Bettina Wegner, August 23, 2021.

30 See Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*; Mitova, "Decolonising Knowledge Here and Now."

31 Lewis, "Reading and Writing the Stasi File."

32 Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 18.

Jones has explored the disjuncture between lived memory (what Derrida refers to as *mnémé* or *anamnesis*) and the externalised memory of the archive, which will always be fixed at the time of writing and through the hostile gaze of the Stasi.³³

And yet, as noted above, many authors felt compelled to integrate this hostile gaze into their literary fiction and non-fiction after unification, and all the authors we interviewed referred to the files in their account of their lives in the GDR, even before being prompted to do so. We recall Wallen's observation of the archive "as a haunting presence for all autobiography," that makes us fear loss of control over our own accounts of self.³⁴ In this context, Wagner's "Herr" asserts:

Ich wollte damit sagen, daß die Staatssicherheit nicht nur mich beobachtet hat, sondern umgekehrt ich auch sie. Meine Akte existiert zwar nur im Geiste und ist auch keine richtige Akte, aber auf jeden Fall lebendiger als die dünnen Protokolle der Staatssicherheit. Und ich lasse mir von denen nicht meine Version nehmen, auch wenn sie nur auf Erinnerungen, Vermutungen und Halluzinationen beruht.³⁵

[I wanted to say that the State Security was not only watching me, but that I was also watching them. My file may only exist in my mind and is not a real file, but it is certainly more vivid than the meagre protocols of the state security. And I won't let them take my version away from me, even if it's only based on memories, assumptions and hallucinations.]

As we have seen throughout this book, critical intellectuals were indeed watching the Stasi who were watching them. They created forms of knowledge that may have been intuitive and partial, but it was knowledge that was deeply tied to the experiences, memories, and identities of those operating in the East German underground. The final act of knowledge-based resistance is thus disregard for the hostile representation of the files, or its integration into a form that nonetheless asserts the validity of the knowledge system based on "memories, assumptions and hallucinations."

These literary acts of resistance take many forms. Kolbe, for instance, has referred to his 2014 autobiographically inspired novel *Die Lüge*³⁶—which presents a father-son story set in an unnamed but recognizable authoritarian state—as "eine erfundene Erinnerung—oder erinnerte Erfindung" (a fabricated memory or a remembered fabrication).³⁷ In

33 Jones, *The Media of Testimony*, 72.

34 Wallen, "Narrative Tensions," 270.

35 Wagner, "Stube und der Herr," 313.

36 Kolbe, *Die Lüge*.

37 Dotzauer, "Uwe Kolbes Roman 'Die Lüge.'"

the interview with Windsor, Kolbe noted that he spent a year and a half researching his father's story, including at the Stasi Records Office, but ultimately discarded the archival material he had collected and decided against using it in his book—an act of casting off that refuses to grant authority to the files.³⁸ In addition to her documentary book *Der lange Arm der Stasi*, Stötzer's post-Wende writings include her 2002 literary memoir *Die bröckelnde Festung* about her experiences in Hoheneck.³⁹ The text does not include a genre attribution, but is described by one reviewer as a "literarischer Erfahrungsbericht"⁴⁰ (literary report on experience) and is a recognizable reworking of her testimonial text "Dabei sein und nicht Schweigen."⁴¹ As we noted in chapter 3, that original text was composed primarily using the impersonal third-person pronoun "man." In *Die bröckelnde Festung*, Stötzer shifts to the more personal, but nonetheless somewhat distanced, third-person "sie." In doing this, she asserts the memories and experiences that she had already committed to paper, but which could only circulate clandestinely, and claims them for an unnamed female prisoner-protagonist. Finally, the establishment of the Archiv unterdrückter Literatur at the Bundesstiftung Aufarbeitung—which houses numerous unpublished manuscripts, some of which were retrieved from the Stasi files—and the publication of the series "Die Verschwiegene Bibliothek"—including works by Stötzer, Krolkiewicz and many others—can be seen as literary counter-archives that give belated resonance to writers and works deemed dangerous by the Stasi.⁴² In this sense, it is the creation and revelation of other worlds, the representation of knowledge and experience in literary form, and the reception of that knowledge by a new "adequate reader" in the united Germany that is needed to finally achieve epistemic justice for those persecuted by the Stasi.

38 Interview with Uwe Kolbe, June 1, 2021.

39 Stötzer, *Die bröckelnde Festung*.

40 Hillauer, "Zeit hinter Mauern."

41 Stötzer also noted in her interview with Windsor that she had written a book based on her prison notes.

42 Geipel and Walther, *Gesperrte Ablage*; Neteler, "Die 'Verschwiegene Bibliothek.'"

Bibliography

Archival Materials

Sascha Anderson (IM “David Menzer”/“Fritz Müller”)

Bundesarchiv

Report of meeting with IMS “David Menzer,” dated November 8, 1980, BArch MfS AIM 7423/91 Beifügung Bd. 1, 78–79.

Assignment document for IMS “David Menzer,” dated December 16, 1980, BArch, MfS AIM 7423/91 Beifügung Bd. 1, 135–36.

Report of meeting with IMS “David Menzer,” dated February 17, 1981, BArch MfS AIM 7423/91 Beifügung Bd. 1, 160–61.

Report of meeting with IMS “David Menzer,” March 3, 1981, BArch MfS AIM 7423/91 Beifügung Bd. 1, 171–72.

Report by IM “David Menzer” on the Berlin punk group “Rosa Extra,” dated November 11, 1981, BArch MfS AIM 7423/91 Beifügung Bd. 4, 92–94.

Report by IMB “Fritz Müller” on [name redacted] arrest and reaction to November 4, 1983, dated November 11, 1983, BArch MfS AIM 7423/91 Beifügung Bd. 12, 1–2.

Franz Fühmann

Bundesarchiv

Meeting report by IMS “Dölbl,” dated November 2, 1976, BArch MfS AOP 3764/89, Bd.1, 231–40.

File note dated May 25, 1977, BArch MfS AOP 3764/89, Bd.2, 226.

Source from IM “Anna Harloff,” dated December 2, 1978, BArch MfS AOP 3764/89, Bd.3, 362–63.

Letter from Kolbe to Fühmann, dated September 14, 1984, BArch MfS AOP 3764/89, Bd. 5, 264.

Stefan Heym*Bundesarchiv*

Report on meeting with IMV "Frieda," dated December 16, 1976, BArch MfS AOP 25507/91, Bd. 12.

Summary report on OV "Diversant" (Stefan Heym), dated April 26, 1977, BArch MfS AOP 1066/91, Bd. 1.

Summary report on OV "Diversant" (Stefan Heym), dated November 9, 1977, MfS AOP 25507/91, Bd. 30.

Undated report. Likely 1977 or 1978. BArch MfS ZAIG 4462.

Report on a visit by Stefan Heym to Stockholm, dated September 23, 1980, BArch MfS AOP 26320/91, Bd. 18 Beifügung.

Uwe Kolbe*Bundesarchiv*

Report on a conversation with Uwe Kolbe, dated September 16, 1975. BArch MfS 1082/91, Bd. 7, 11–13.

Report on a further conversation with Uwe Kolbe, dated December 8, 1975, BArch MfS 1082/91, Bd. 7, 19–21.

Information report on reading at "Haus der jungen Talente," dated March 13, 1975, BArch MfS 1082/91, Bd. 7, 3–4.

Investigation report on Uwe Kolbe, September 19, 1975, BArch MfS 1082/91, Bd. 7, 6–7.

Report by "Werner Weber" on Uwe Kolbe, dated September 22, 1981, BArch MfS AP Nr. 10820/92, 154–59.

Information on the freelance writer Uwe Kolbe, dated March 18, 1982, BArch MfS AP 10820/92, 166.

Memo dated April 30, 1982, BArch MfS AOP 1082/91, Bd.10, 24.

Review of operative information relating to Uwe Kolbe's publication of a so-called "Machwerk" by Oberstleutnant Gröger (in OV "Poet"), dated May 4, 1982, BArch MfS AOP 1082/91, Bd.10, 28–29.

Information on the young poet Uwe Kolbe, dated May 11, 1982, BArch MfS AP 10820/92, 56–58.

Information dated May 18, 1982, BArch MfS AP 10820/92, 62–63.

Report by IMB "Fritz Müller" on a follow-up meeting of the "Zersammlung," dated May 3, 1984, BArch MfS AOP 1082/91, Bd. 1 (OV "Poet"), 210–11.

Declaration read in the Gethsemane-Kirche Berlin on February 4, 1988, BArch MfS HA II Nr. 16894, 8–9.

Letter from Uwe Kolbe to Prof. Heinz Werner, February 5, 1988, BArch MfS HA II Nr. 16894, 7.

Memorandum from Oberstleutnant Scholz to Gen. Oberst Schenk, dated February 9, 1988, BArch MfS HA II Nr. 16894, 5.

- Information on Uwe Kolbe's participation in "hostile-negative activities" [undated, February 1988], BArch MfS HA II Nr. 16894, 6.
- Report on an interview with Uwe Kolbe on "Kennzeichen D" on March 9, 1988, dated March 11, 1988, BArch MfS AP Nr. 10820/92, 184–85.
- Transcript (GDR State Committee for Radio) of ZDF interview with Uwe Kolbe, moderated by Dirk Sager, "Der harte Kurs der SED – DDR-Innenpolitik in der Sackgasse" (The SED's hard course – GDR domestic politics at a dead end), dated March 10, 1988, BArch MfS HA XX/9 Nr. 1523, 153–55.

Ralf-Günter Krolkiewicz

- Bundesstiftung zur Aufarbeitung der SED-Diktatur (StAufarb), Archiv unterdrückter Literatur in der DDR (AuL)*
- "Der Dissident," original typescript in StAufarb, AuL, Ralf-Günter Krolkiewicz, 43-I.
- Opening report of OV "Bühne" (Krolkiewicz), dated June 28, 1984, 7–12, copy in StAufarb AuL, Ralf-Günter Krolkiewicz, 43-II.
- Report by Oberstleutnant Fischer and Major Keil on the conspirative search of Krolkiewicz's apartment, dated July 5, 1984, 85–86. Copy in StAufarb AuL, Ralf-Günter Krolkiewicz, 43-II.
- Interrogation of Ralf-Günter Krolkiewicz, transcript dated July 9, 1984, 105–17 (112), copy in StAufarb, AuL, Ralf-Günter Krolkiewicz, 43-II.
- Report on Krolkiewicz's reading at the "Spartakus" club in Potsdam, dated July 10, 1984, 166–72, copy in StAufarb AuL, Ralf-Günter Krolkiewicz, 43-II.
- Interrogation of Ralf-Günter Krolkiewicz, transcript dated July 10, 1984, 118–23 (123), copy in StAufarb, AuL, Ralf-Günter Krolkiewicz, 43-II.
- Interrogation of Ralf-Günter Krolkiewicz, transcript dated August 29, 1984, 125–32 (129), copy in StAufarb, AuL, Ralf-Günter Krolkiewicz, 43-II.
- Interrogation of Ralf-Günter Krolkiewicz, transcript dated September 20, 1984, 146–51 (148), copy in StAufarb, AuL, Ralf-Günter Krolkiewicz, 43-II.
- "Gespräch mit Ralf Günter Krolkiewicz am 02. August 2004," in StAufarb AuL, Ralf-Günter Krolkiewicz, 43-I.

Ekkehard Maaß

Bundesarchiv

- "Bericht des IM 'David Menzer,'" in *Sprachzeiten: Der Literarische Salon von Ekke Maaß. Eine Dokumentation von 1978 bis 2016*, ed. Peter Böthig (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2017), 94–97.

Christa Moog*Bundesarchiv*

Opening report of Operativer Vorgang ‘Dichter,’ February 9, 1982, BArch MfS BV Erfurt AOP 1251/83, Bd.1, 23–30.

Evaluation of literary works by Christa Moog by IM without code name, dated December 2, 1982, BArch MfS BV Erfurt AOP 1251/83 Bd. 2, 110–11.

Report by IM “David Menzer” on an exhibition in Magdeburg [host’s name redacted], dated December 8, 1982, BArch MfS AIM 7423/91 Beifügung Bd. 2, 48–49.

Gabriele Stötzer

Memory protocol of conversation between councillor Günter Steppat, an unnamed minute-taker (from the MfS but representing the interior ministry) and Gabriele Kachold and Ulrich Gater, reproduced in Gabriele Stötzer, *Der lange Arm der Stasi* (Leipzig: Spector Books, 2022), 158–60.

Bundesarchiv

Extract from a report by IMB “David Menzer” undated, BArch MfS BV Erfurt AOP 1753/86, Bd. 2, 46.

Information about the liquidisation of a private gallery in Erfurt, dated April 8, 1981, BArch MfS BV Erfurt AOP 1753/86 Bd. 2, 90–91.

Information from “David Menzer” about a report by Gabriele Kachold, “dabeisein und nicht schweigen,” in OV Toxin, dated April 14, 1981, BArch MfS BV Erfurt AOP 1753/86, Bd. 2, 106.

Report by IMB “David Menzer” about the “Galerie im Flur,” Erfurt, dated May 6, 1981, BArch MfS BV Erfurt AOP 1753/86, Bd. 2, 157–58.

Report by IM “Lutz Müller” in OV “Toxin,” dated September 10, 1982, BArch MfS BV Erfurt AOP 1753/86, Bd 2, 360–61. Document dated October 29, 1982.

Report by IMB “Fritz Müller” on an exhibition and two events in a Berlin apartment [name of host redacted], dated December 12, 1983, BArch MfS AOP 1753/86 Bd. 4, 8–9.

Bundesstiftung zur Aufarbeitung der SED-Diktatur (StAufarb), Archiv unterdrückter Literatur in der DDR (AuL)

Gabriele Stötzer, “Dabeisein und nicht Schweigen,” undated, 1–30 (1). Copy in StAufarb AuL, Gabriele Stötzer, 78/Band IV.

Gabriele Stötzer, Galerie im Flur – Protokolle 1981, StAufarb AuL Gabriele Stötzer, 78/Bd. I.

Letter from Gabriele Stötzer to Joachim Walther, January 9, 2002, StAufarb
AuL Gabriele Stötzer, 78/Bd. I.

Bernd Wagner

Bundesarchiv

Letter from Bernd Wagner to Hermann Kant, dated June 17, 1983, BArch
MfS AP Nr. 36564/92, 60–61.

Extract from daily report of BV Leipzig, Abt. XX on Wagner's reading in
Leipzig, dated September 7, 1984, BArch MfS AP Nr. 36564/92, 139.

Summary report on Wagner's reading in Leipzig by Oberstleutnant Wallner,
dated September 11, 1984, BArch MfS AP Nr. 36564/92, 144–45.

Letter from Bernd Wagner to Erich Mielke, dated January 28, 1985, BArch
MfS AP Nr. 36564/92, 159–60.

Bettina Wegner / Klaus Schlesinger

Bundesarchiv

Report by IME "Heinrich, dated February 2, 1975, BArch MfS AOP
12438/83, Bd.1, 47–49.

Summary report by IM "Vera" on the development of her contact with Weg-
ner and Schlesinger since early February 1976 (OV "Schreiberling"),
dated March 26, 1976, BArch MfS, AOP 12438/83, Bd.1, 103–10.

Information about Klaus Schlesinger and Bettina Wegner in OV "Sch-
reiberling," dated October 2, 1976, BArch MfS AOP 12438/83, Bd.1,
237–38.

Report by IMF "André," in OV "Schreiberling," dated October 25, 1976,
BArch MfS AOP 12438/83, Bd.1, 249–50.

Report by IME "Vera" on Bettina Wegner-Schlesinger (OV "Schreiberling"),
dated February 9, 1977, BArch MfS AOP 12438/83, Bd. 2, 66–68.

Report by IME "Heinrich" on event with Bettina Wegner in the "Allende-
Klub" on June 22, 1977, dated June 29, 1977 in OV "Schreiberling,"
BArch MfS AOP 12438/83, Bd.2, 260–61.

Report by IM "Hermann Schneider," dated August 4, 1977, BArch MfS
AOP 12438/83, Bd.3, 30–33.

Report by IM "Karl," in OV "Schreiberling," dated December 8, 1976,
BArch MfS AOP 12438/83, Bd.1, 267–75.

Report by IM "Vera," in OV "Schreiberling," dated October 15, 1976, BArch
MfS AOP 12438/83 Bd.1, 239–43.

Plan for long-term political-operative "Zersetzung" measures in OV "Schrei-
berling" and other focus procedures of department XX/7, dated January
18, 1978, BArch MfS AOP 12438/83, Bd. 4, 34–41.

Christa Wolf

Bundesarchiv

Additions to the Aufbau Verlag edition of Christa Wolf's "Kassandra," no date, BArch Archiv der Außenstelle Magdeburg, Abt. XX 3748, 11.
 Assessment of the text "Kassandra" by Christa Wolf, dated June 4, 1983, BArch MfS Teilablage A 123/76, Bd. 6, 225–26.

Unpublished Interviews (all conducted by Tara Talwar Windsor)

Interview with Bernd Wagner, October 20, 2020
 Interview with Bettina Wegner, August 23, 2021.
 Interview with Christa Moog, August 25, 2021.
 Interview with Ekkehard Maaß, July 30, 2021.
 Interview with Gabriele Stötzer, June 14, 2021.
 Interview with Uwe Kolbe, June 1, 2021.

Published Sources

Abrams, Lynn. *Oral History Theory*. 2nd edn. London: Routledge, 2016.
 Alighieri, Dante. *The Divine Comedy*. Trans. by Robin Kirkpatrick. New York: Penguin Books, 2013.
 Anderson, Sascha, and Elke Erb, eds. *Berührung ist nur eine Randerscheinung*. Cologne: Kiepenheuer und Witsch, 1985.
 Anderson, Sascha. *Sascha Anderson*. Cologne: DuMont, 2002.
 Argelès, Daniel. "“Das waren wir nicht!”: The Image of East Germans and the GDR as a Narrative Problem after 1989 in Klaus Schlesinger's *Die Sache mit Randow*." In *Twenty Years On: Competing Memories of the GDR in Postunification German Culture*, ed. by Renate Rechten and Dennis Tate, 57–68. Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2011.
 Barck, Simone, and Siegfried Lokatis. *Zensurspiele: Heimliche Literaturgeschichten aus der DDR*. Halle: Mitteldeutscher Verlag, 2008.
 Barck, Simone, Martina Langermann, and Siegfried Lokatis, eds. *Jedes Buch ein Abenteuer: Zensur-System und literarische Öffentlichkeiten in der DDR bis Ende der sechziger Jahre*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1997.
 Barth, Fredrik. "An Anthropology of Knowledge." *Current Anthropology*, 43, no. 1 (2002): 1–18.
 Bathrick, David. *The Powers of Speech: The Politics of Culture in the GDR*. London: University of Nebraska Press, 1995.
 Bentham, Jeremy. *The Panopticon Writings*. London: Verso, 1995.
 Berbig, Roland, Arne Born, Jörg Judersleben, Holger Jens Karlson, Dorit Krusche, Christoph Martinkat, and Peter Wruck, eds. *In Sachen Biermann: Protokolle, Berichte und Briefe zu den Folgen einer Ausbürgerung*. Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 1994.

- Berendse, Gerrit-Jan. *Grenz-Fallstudien: Essays zum Topos Prenzlauer Berg in der DDR-Literatur*. Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 1999.
- Berger, Peter L., and Thomas Luckmann. *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. London: Penguin Books, 1966.
- Betts, Paul. *Within Walls: Private Life in the German Democratic Republic*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Beverly, John. *Testimonio: On the Politics of Truth*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004.
- Bialas, Wolfgang. *Vom unfreien Schweben zum freien Fall: Ostdeutsche Intellektuelle im gesellschaftlichen Umbruch*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1996.
- Blohm, Frank. "Ein Taschenbuch gefährdet die Staatssicherheit [2019]. Zur Geschichte von 'Geh doch rüber!'" In *Geh doch rüber! Revisited: Eine Ost-West-Lesebuch und seine Geschichte*, ed. by Frank Blohm, 9–31. Berlin: Lukas Verlag, 2019.
- Borgwardt, Angela. *Im Umgang mit der Macht: Herrschaft und Selbstbehauptung in einem autoritären politischen System*. Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag, 2002.
- Böthig, Peter, and Klaus Michael, eds. *MachtSpiele: Literatur und Staatssicherheit*. Leipzig: Reclam, 1993.
- Böthig, Peter, ed. *Sprachzeiten: Der Literarische Salon von Ekke Maaß. Eine Dokumentation von 1978 bis 2016*. Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2017.
- Böttiger, Helmut. "Die Stasi kennt Montaigne nicht." *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, March 6, 2019, 12.
- Boyer, Dominic. "Visiting Knowledge in Anthropology: An Introduction." *Ethnos* 70, no. 2 (2005): 141–48.
- Bradley, Laura. *Cooperation and Conflict: GDR Theatre Censorship 1961–1989*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Brady, Philip. "Prenzlauer Berg – Enclave? Schrebergarten Powerhouse?" In *Prenzlauer Berg: Bohemia in East Berlin*, ed. by Philip Brady and Ian Wallace, 1–17. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1995.
- Brown, Alexander. *Paul Merker, the GDR, and the Politics of Memory: "Purging Cosmopolitanism"?* London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2024.
- de Bruyn, Günter. *Vierzig Jahre: Ein Lebensbericht*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1996.
- Buchholz, Matthias. "Von der Ohnmacht unterdrückter Autorinnen und Autoren und der retrospektiven Macht der Archive. Das Archiv unterdrückter Literatur in der DDR." In *Wie mächtig sind Archive? Perspektiven der Archivwissenschaft*, ed. by Rainer Hering and Dietmar Schenk, 165–87. Hamburg: Hamburg University Press, 2013.
- . "The Archive of Oppressed Literature in the German Democratic Republic." *Comma* 1–2 (2016): 41–54.
- Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen der Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, ed. *"Eingeschränkte Freiheit" – Der Fall Gabriele Stötzer*. Berlin: BStU, 2014.

- Bundesstiftung Aufarbeitung, *Wer war wer in der DDR? Ein Lexikon ost-deutscher Biographien* <<https://www.bundesstiftung-aufarbeitung.de/de/recherche/kataloge-datenbanken/biographische-datenbanken>> (accessed August 12, 2024).
- Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung and Robert-Havemann-Gesellschaft e.V., eds. "Bettina Wegner", *Jugend Opposition in der DDR* <https://www.jugendopposition.de/zeitzeugen/145522/bettina-wegner> (accessed August 12, 2024)
- Childs, David, and Richard Popplewell. *The Stasi: The East German Intelligence and Security Service*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1996.
- Colvin, Sarah. "Dancing through the Next Minefield, or How and Why We Should Read the Stories of Women Prisoners." *German Life and Letters*, 67, no. 4 (2014): 589–603.
- Cooke, Paul, and Andrew Plowman. "Introduction." In *German Writers and the Politics of Culture: Dealing with the Stasi*, ed. by Paul Cooke and Andrew Plowman, xv–xxi. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.
- Cosentino, Christine, and Wolfgang Müller. "Die Kunst der Rebellion: Zur Lyrik des 'Prenzlauer Bergs', als er noch hinter der Mauer lag." In *im widerstand/in mißverständnis: Zur Literatur und Kunst des Prenzlauer Bergs*, ed. by Christine Cosentino and Wolfgang Müller, 5–22. New York: Peter Lang, 1995.
- Costabile-Heming, Carol Anne. "'Rezensor': A Case Study of Censorship and Programmatic Reception in the GDR." *Monatshefte*, 92, no. 1 (2000): 53–67.
- . "Jürgen Fuchs: Documenting Life, Death and the Stasi." In *German Writers and Politics of Culture: Dealing with the Stasi*, ed. by Paul Cooke and Andrew Plowman, 213–26. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.
- . "Surveillance and the GDR's Cultural Sphere." *German Life and Letters*, 72, no. 3 (2019): 335–56.
- Crick, Malcolm R. "Anthropology of Knowledge." *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 11 (1982): 287–313.
- Dahlke, Birgit. *Papierboot: Autorinnen aus der DDR – inoffiziell publiziert*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1997.
- . "Underground Literature? The unofficial culture of the GDR and its development after the Wende." In *Rereading East Germany: The Literature and Film of the GDR*, edited by Karen Leeder, 160–179. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.
- Deiritz, Karl, and Hannes Krauss, eds. *Verrat an der Kunst? Rückblicke auf die DDR-Literatur*. Berlin: Aufbau Taschenbuch, 1993.
- Deleuze, Gilles. "Postscript on the Societies of Control." *October* 59 (1992): 3–7.
- Deloglu, Katharina. "'Dann verlieren sich die Vorschriften des Widerstandes.' Die Lyrik Uwe Kolbes in den literarischen Feldern der Vorwendezeit (1976–87)." PhD diss., Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, 2015.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*. Trans. by Eric Prenowitz. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.

- Dotzauer, Gregor. "Uwe Kolbes Roman 'Die Lüge': Die Lachnummer Wahrheit." *Tagesspiegel*, February 19, 2014 <<https://www.tagesspiegel.de/kultur/die-lachnummer-wahrheit-3546451.html>> (accessed May 31, 2025).
- Eagleton, Terry. *Humour*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2019.
- Eco, Umberto. "The Comic and the Rule." In *Faith in Fakes: Travels in Hyperreality*, trans. by William Weaver, 269–78. London: Vintage, 1998.
- . "The Frames of Comic 'Freedom.'" In *Carnivall!*, ed. by Thomas A. Sebeok, 1–10. Berlin and New York: De Gruyter Mouton, 1984.
- Eger, Christian. "Der Meister und Margarete." *Mitteldeutsche Zeitung*, February 13, 2019.
- Emmerich, Wolfgang. "Between Hypertrophy and Melancholy – The GDR Literary Intelligentsia in a Historical Context." *Universitas*, 8 (1993): 273–85.
- . *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR*. Expanded new edition. Berlin: Aufbau, 2000.
- . "Deutsche Intellektuelle: was nun? Zum Funktionswandel der (ost-deutschen) literarischen Intelligenz zwischen 1945 und 1998." In *After the GDR: New Perspectives on the Old GDR and the Young Länder*, ed. by Laurence McFall and Lothar Probst, 3–27. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001.
- . "Deutsche Schriftsteller als Intellektuelle: Strategien und Aporien des Engagements in Ost und West von 1945 bis heute." *Zeitschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Linguistik*, 31 (2001): 28–45.
- Felski, Rita. *Uses of Literature*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2008.
- Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Trans. by Alan Sheridan. London: Penguin, 1991.
- Fricker, Miranda. *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Fuchs, Jürgen. *Magdalena*. Berlin: Rowohlt, 1998.
- . *Vernehmungsprotokollen*. Berlin: Jaron, 2009.
- Gallinat, Anselma. "Power and Vulnerability: Secrecy, Social Relationships and the East German Stasi." *Perspectives on Europe*, 45, no. 1 (2015): 46–52.
- Geipel, Ines. *Zensiert, verschwiegen, vergessen: Autorinnen in Ostdeutschland 1945–1989*. Düsseldorf: Artemis & Winkler, 2009.
- Geipel, Ines, and Joachim Walther. *Gesperrte Ablage: Unterdrückte Literaturgeschichte in Ostdeutschland 1945–1989*. Düsseldorf: Lilienfeld Verlag, 2015.
- Geißler, Cornelia. "Flaschenpost: Günter Kunert findet zufällig ein Manuskript wieder – das erweist sich als funkelnder Roman." *Berliner Zeitung Feuilleton*, February 6, 2019, 21.
- Gibson, John. *Fiction and the Weave of Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Gigerenzer, Gerd. *Gut Feelings: The Intelligence of the Unconscious*. London: Penguin, 2007.

- . *Rationality for Mortals: How People Cope with Uncertainty*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Gigerenzer, Gerd, and Wolfgang Gassmeier. "Heuristic Decision Making." *Annual Review of Psychology*, 62 (2011): 451–82.
- Gilmore, Leigh. *Tainted Witness: Why We Doubt What Women Say about Their Lives*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2017.
- Gladić, Mladen. "Roman Nr. 2: Fund 1974 schickt Günter Kunert einen Mann in den Intershop. 2019 kommt er wieder. Eine späte Begegnung." *Der Freitag*, February 21, 2019, 20.
- Glaeser, Andreas. *Political Epistemics: The Secret Police, the Opposition, and the End of East German Socialism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011.
- Goldstein, Thomas W. *Writing in Red: The East German Writers Union and the Role of Literary Intellectuals*. Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2017.
- Graves, Peter J. "Christa Wolf's 'Kassandra': The Censoring of the GDR Edition." *Modern Language Review*, 81, no. 4 (1986): 944–56.
- Graves, Peter. "Authority, the State and the Individual: Stefan Heym's Novel *Collin*." *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 23, no. 4 (1987): 341–50.
- Greiner, Ulrich. "Mangel an Feingefühl." In *"Es geht nicht um Christa Wolf": Der Literaturstreit im vereinten Deutschland*, ed. by Thomas Anz, 66–70. Munich: edn Spangenberg, 1991. Orig. published in *Die Zeit*, June 1, 1990.
- . "Wer ist Mohnteine?" *Die Zeit*, March 7, 2019.
- Harris, Mark. "Introduction: Ways of Knowing." In *Ways of Knowing: New Approaches in the Anthropology of Knowledge and Learning*, 1–24. New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2007.
- Hawley, Katherine. *Trust: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Herminghouse, Patricia A. "Literature As 'Ersatzöffentlichkeit'? Censorship and the Displacement of Public Discourse in the GDR." *German Studies Review*, 17 (1994): 85–99.
- Hendel, Annekatrin, dir. *Anderson*. IT WORKS! Medien <<https://itworks-medien.com/films/anderson/>>. (accessed August 13, 2024).
- Heym, Stefan. *Lassalle*. Munich: Bechtle, 1969.
- . *Der König David Bericht*. Munich: Kindler, 1972.
- . *Collin*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1980.
- . *Collin*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1981. First published by C. Bertelsmann Verlag in Munich in 1979.
- . *Ahasver*. Munich: Bertelsmann, 1981.
- . *Nachruf*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1990. First published in Munich by C. Bertelsmann in 1988.
- . *Radek*. Munich: Bertelsmann, 1995.
- . *Der Winter unsers Mißvermögens: Aus den Aufzeichnungen des OV Diversant*. Munich: Goldmann, 1996.
- Hillauer, Rebecca. "Zeit hinter Mauern." *der Freitag*, October 18, 2002 <<https://www.freitag.de/autoren/rebecca-hillauer/zeit-hinter-mauern>> (accessed May 31, 2025).

- Hilzinger, Sonja. *Christa Wolf*. Tübingen: J. B. Metzler, 1986.
- Holm, Nicholas. "Against the Assault of Laughter: Differentiating Critical and Resistant Humour." In *Comedy and Critical Thought: Laughter as Resistance*, ed. by Julie Webber, 31–44. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018.
- Horakova, Anna. "Learning from the Underground: Christa Wolf and the Fourth Generation of GDR Writers." In *Christa Wolf: A Companion*, ed. by Sonja E. Klocke and Jennifer R. Hosek, 131–45. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018.
- Hosking, Geoffrey. "Trust and Distrust: A Suitable Theme for Historians?" *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 16 (2006): 95–115.
- Hutchinson, Peter. *Stefan Heym: The Perpetual Dissident*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- Jäger, Manfred. "Das Wechselspiel von Selbstzensur und Literaturlenkung in der DDR." In *Literaturentwicklungsprozesse: Die Zensur der Literatur in der DDR*, ed. by Ernest Wichner and Herbert Wiesner, 18–49. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1993.
- Jones, Graham M. "Secrecy." *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 43 (2014): 53–69.
- Jones, Sara. "Conflicting Evidence: Herman Kant and the Opening of the Stasi Files." *German Life and Letters*, 62, no. 2 (2009): 190–205.
- . "'Ein reines Phantasieprodukt' or 'Hostile Biography'? Günter de Bruyn's *Vierzig Jahre* and the Stasi Files." In *German Life Writing in the Twentieth Century*, ed. by Birgit Dahlke, Dennis Tate, and Roger Woods, 196–207. Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2010.
- . "Wie man 'das Gruseln' lernt: Stefan Heym, Autobiographie und die Stasi-Akten." In *Autobiographie und historische Krisenerfahrung*, ed. by Heinz-Peter Preusser and Helmut Schmitz, 117–26. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2010.
- . *Complicity, Censorship and Criticism: Negotiating Space in the GDR Literary Sphere*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011.
- . "Writing in Ambiguity: Negotiating Censorship in the GDR." In *Writing under Socialism*, edited by Sara Jones and Meesha Nehru, 11–27. Nottingham: Critical, Cultural and Communications Press, 2011.
- . *The Media of Testimony: Remembering the East German Stasi in the Berlin Republic*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.
- . "'Simply a Little Piece of GDR History?': The Role of Memorialization in Post-Socialist Transitional Justice in Germany." *History & Memory*, 27, no. 1 (2015): 154–81.
- . "Testimony through Culture: Towards a Theoretical Framework." *Rethinking History*, 23, no. 3 (2019): 257–78.
- Jones, Sara, and Roger Woods. "Introduction: Testimony in Culture and Cultures of Testimony." In *Palgrave Handbook of Testimony and Culture*, ed. by Sara Jones and Roger Woods, 1–20. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023.

- Kabić, Slavija. *Ein Königreich für ein Kind: Kindheit und Jugend in der deutschsprachigen Kurzgeschichte zwischen 1945 und 1989*. Cologne: Saxa, 2007.
- Kachold, Gabriele [Stötzer]. *zügel los*. Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau-Verlag, 1989.
- Kant, Hermann. *Abspann: Erinnerungen*. Berlin: Aufbau, 1991.
- . “Rede in Marburg.” In *StasiSachen* 3, ed. by Andreas W. Mytze (= *europäische ideen* 81 (1993)): 11–12.
- Keller, Dietmar, and Matthias Kirchner, eds. *Biermann und kein Ende: Eine Dokumentation zur DDR-Kulturpolitik*. Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1991.
- Ketman, Per. “Vorwort.” In *Geh doch rüber: Begegnungen von Menschen aus Ost und West*, ed. by Per Ketman, 10–12. Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1986.
- Kettelhake, Silke. “Vom Suchen und Finden – Stasi-Razzia in der Umweltbibliothek.” *Deutschland Archiv*, November 26, 2018 <www.bpb.de/281016>.
- Klingmann, Ulrich. “Entmythologisierter Mythos: Die Problematik des Wissens in Christa Wolfs ‘Kassandra.’” *Zeitschrift für Germanistik*, 1, no. 2 (1991): 270–79.
- Köhler, Astrid. *Brückenschläge: DDR-Autoren vor und nach der Wiedervereinigung*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007.
- Köhler, Astrid. *Klaus Schlesinger: Die Biographie*. Berlin: Aufbau, 2011.
- Kolbe, Uwe. *Abschiede und andere Liebesgedichte*. Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau Verlag, 1981.
- . “Kern meines Romans.” In *Bestandsaufnahme 2: Debütanten 1976–1980*, ed. by Brigitte Böttcher, 82–83. Halle and Leipzig: Mitteldeutscher Verlag, 1981.
- . *Hineingeboren. Gedichte 1975–1976*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1982.
- . *Bornholm II. Gedichte*. Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau Verlag, 1986.
- . *Die Situation*. Göttingen: Wallstein, 1994.
- . “Uwe Kolbe über IM Albert alias Peter Mugay.” In *StasiSachen*, 6, ed. by Andreas Mytze (= *europäische ideen* 96 (1996)): 33–35.
- . *Renegatentermine. 30 Versuche die eigene Erfahrung zu behaupten*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1998.
- . “Die Sache mit V.” In *Die Stasi in der deutschen Literatur*, ed. by Franz Huberth, 151–55. Tübingen: Attempto Verlag, 2003.
- . *Vinetas Archive. Annäherungen an Gründe. Essaysammlung*. Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2011.
- . *Die Lüge. Roman*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2014.
- Kolbe, Uwe, Lothar Trolle, and Bernd Wagner, eds. *Mikado oder Der Kaiser ist nackt: Selbstverlegte Literatur in der DDR*. Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1988.
- Krämer, Herbert. “‘Der Hase und der Igel. Oder: vom Kampf des Zensors mit dem Abweichler.’ Zur Zensurgeschichte von Stefan Heyms *Die Schmähschrift* und *Der König-David-Bericht*.” In *Stefan Heym*:

- Socialist-Dissenter-Jew* / Stefan Heym: *Sozialist-Dissident-Jude*, ed. by Peter Hutchinson and Reinhard K. Zachau, 79–95. Bern: Peter Lang, 2003.
- Krämer, Sybille, and Sigrid Weigel. "Introduction: Converging the Yet-Separate Theoretical Discourses of Testimony Studies." In *Testimony/Bearing Witness: Epistemology, Ethics, History and Culture*, ix–xli. London and New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017.
- Krause, Tilman. "Ich bin ein entheimateter Mensch." *Die Welt*, March 2, 2019.
- Krolkiewicz, Ralf-Günter. "Der Dissident." In *Nirgends ein Feuer mehr*, 17–21. Frankfurt am Main: Edition Büchergilde, 2006.
- Kulick, Holger. "Entpolitisieren, Entsolidarisieren, Kontrollieren. Ein Nachtrag: Die Rollen von Szene-IMs wie Sascha Anderson oder Rainer Schedlinski am Prenzlauer Berg." *Horch & Guck* 29 (2000): 30–39 <<https://web.archive.org/web/20110415002138/http://www.horch-und-guck.info/hug/archiv/2000-2003/heft-29/02905-kulick/>> (accessed May 29, 2025).
- Kunert, Günter. *Erwachsenenspiele: Erinnerungen*. Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1997.
- . *Die zweite Frau*. Göttingen: Wallstein, 2019.
- Kunze, Reiner. *Deckname "Lyrik": Eine Dokumentation*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1990.
- LaCapra, Dominick. *History and Criticism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985.
- Lackey, Jennifer, and Ernest Sosa. *The Epistemology of Testimony*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Lahno, Bernd. "On the Emotional Character of Trust." *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, 4, no. 2 (2001): 171–89.
- Leeder, Karen. *Breaking Boundaries: A New Generation of Poets in the GDR*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996.
- Lehmann, Joachim. "Die Rolle und Funktion der literarischen Intelligenz in der DDR: Fünf Anmerkungen." *Der Deutschunterricht*, 5 (1996): 59–67.
- Lewis, Alison. "'Foiling the Censor': Reading and Transference as Feminist Strategies in the Works of Christa Wolf, Irmtraud Morgner, and Christa Moog." *The German Quarterly*, 66, no. 3 (1993): 372–86.
- . "Reading and Writing the Stasi File: On the Uses and Abuses of the File as (Auto)Biography." *German Life and Letters*, 56, no. 4 (2003): 377–97.
- . *Die Kunst des Verrats: Der Prenzlauer Berg und die Staatssicherheit*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2003.
- . "The Secret Lives and Files of Stasi Collaborators: Reading Secret Police Files for Identity and Habitus." In *Secret Police Files from the Eastern Bloc: Between Surveillance and Life Writing*, edited by Valentina Glajar, Alison Lewis, and Corina L. Petrescu, 27–55. Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2016.

- . *A State of Secrecy: Stasi Informers and the Culture of Surveillance*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2021.
- . “Creative Outlets: Collective Creativity in the Underground Literary and Artistic Cultures in the GDR.” In *‘Dangerous Creations’: Papers from a Roundtable Discussion*, ed. by Aoife Ní Chroidheáin, 3–12. Taylor Institution Library, 2022.
- Loest, Erich. *Der vierte Zensor: Vom Entstehen und Sterben eines Romans in der DDR*. Munich: Bertelsmann, 1984.
- . *Der Zorn des Schafes*. Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1990.
- Lüdtke, Alf. *Eigen-Sinn: Fabrikalltag, Arbeitererfahrungen und Politik vom Kaiserreich bis in den Faschismus*. Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1993.
- Lyon, David. *The Electronic Eye: The Rise of Surveillance Society*. Oxford: Polity Press, 1994.
- Maaß, Ekkehard. “Und das ist geschehn. Ein Betroffener über die Stasi-Mitarbeit von Sascha Anderson: Es war mehr als Freundesverrat.” *Berliner Zeitung*, July 25, 2002.
- . “Vom Pfarrhaus in Schönburg zur Schönhauser Allee.” In *Die Ausbürgerung*, ed. by Fritz Pleitgen. Berlin: Ullstein, 2001.
- Mann, Steve, Jason Nolan, and Barry Wellman. “Sousveillance: Inventing and Using Wearable Computing Devices for Data Collection in Surveillance Environments.” *Surveillance & Society*, 1, no. 3 (2003): 331–55.
- Mann, Steve. “Sousveillance: Inverse Surveillance in Multimedia Imaging.” In *Proceedings of the 12th Annual ACM International Conference on Multimedia (MULTIMEDIA '04)*, 620–27. New York: ACM, 2004, doi/10.1145/1027527.1027673.
- Marx, Gary T. “A Tack in the Shoe: Neutralizing and Resisting the New Surveillance.” *Journal of Social Issues*, 59, no. 2 (2003): 369–90.
- . “Soul Train: The New Surveillance and Popular Music.” In *Lessons from the Identity Trail: Anonymity, Privacy and Identity in a Networked Society*, ed. by Ian Kerr, Valerie Steeves, and Carole Lucock, 377–97. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- McCormick, Peter. “Moral Knowledge and Fiction.” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 41, no. 4 (1983): 399–410.
- McDonald, W.E. “Who’s Afraid of Wolf’s Cassandra – Or Cassandra’s Wolf: Male Tradition and Women’s Knowledge in *Cassandra*.” *The Journal of Narrative Technique*, 20, no. 3 (1990): 267–83.
- McMyler, Benjamin. *Testimony, Trust, and Authority*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Mertova, Patricie, and Leonard Webster. *Using Narrative Inquiry as a Research Method: An Introduction to Critical Event Narrative Analysis in Research, Teaching and Professional Practice*. London: Routledge, 2019.
- Michael, Klaus. “Eine verschollene Anthologie: Zentralkomitee, Staatssicherheit und die Geschichte eines Buches.” In *Machtspiele: Literatur und Staatssicherheit*, ed. by Peter Böthig and Klaus Michael, 202–16. Leipzig: Reclam, 1993.

- Michael, Olga. "Gendered Testimonies at the Dawn of the Twenty-First Century." In *Palgrave Handbook of Testimony and Culture*, ed. by Sara Jones and Roger Woods, 91–116. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023.
- Miller, Barbara. "'Wiederaneignung der eigenen Biographie': The Significance of the Opening of the 'Stasi' Files." *German Life and Letters*, 50, no. 3 (1997): 369–77.
- . *Narratives of Guilt and Compliance: Stasi Informers and their Impact on Society*. London: Routledge, 1999.
- Misztal, Barbara A. *Trust in Modern Societies: The Search for the Bases of Social Order*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996.
- Mitova, Veli. "Decolonising Knowledge Here and Now." *Philosophical Papers*, 49, no. 2: 191–212.
- Mittenzwei, Werner. *Die Intellektuellen: Literatur und Politik in Ostdeutschland, 1945–2000*. Berlin: Aufbau, 2003.
- Moog, Christa. *Die Fans von Union. Geschichten*. Düsseldorf: Claassen, 1985.
- . "Es ist 15 Uhr." In *Grenzen/los: Liebe zwischen Ost und West*, ed. by Bernhard Meier, 39–43. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1988.
- Moog, Christa. *Aus tausend grünen Spiegeln. Roman*. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1991.
- Mundt, Hannelore. "Katherine Mansfield Revisited: Constructions of the Self in Christa Moog's *Aus tausend grünen Spiegeln*." *Women in German Yearbook*, 14 (1999): 225–43.
- Münkler, Herfried. "Antifaschismus und antifaschistischer Widerstand als politischer Gründungsmythos der DDR." *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 45 (1998): 16–29.
- Myers, David G. *Intuition: Its Powers and Perils*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002.
- Mytze, Andreas W., ed. *StasiSachen 1 = europäische ideen 76* (1991).
- , ed. *StasiSachen 2 = europäische ideen 77* (1991).
- , ed. *StasiSachen 3 = europäische ideen 81* (1993).
- , ed. *StasiSachen 4 = europäische ideen 84* (1993).
- , ed. *StasiSachen 5 = europäische ideen 91* (1994).
- , ed. *StasiSachen 6 = europäische ideen 96* (1996).
- Negt, Oskar and Alexander Kluge. *Geschichte und Eigensinn: Geschichtliche Organisation der Arbeitsvermögen. Deutschland als Produktionsöffentlichkeit. Gewalt des Zusammenhangs*. Frankfurt am Main: Zweitausendeins Verlag, 1981.
- Neteler, Simone. "Die 'Verschwiegene Bibliothek.'" *Deutschlandfunk*, July 1, 2005 <<https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/die-verschwiegene-bibliothek-100.html>> (accessed May 31, 2025).
- Ní Chroidheáin, Aoife, ed. *"Dangerous Creations": Papers from a Roundtable Discussion*. Oxford: Taylor Institution Library, 2022.
- Nowroth, Nadine. "Schutzraum Familie? Strukturen und Typologien von Bespitzelungsprozessen innerhalb von Künstlerfamilien in der DDR – Eine Untersuchung von vier Fallbeispielen im Spannungsfeld von Akten und Adaptionen." PhD diss., Trinity College Dublin, 2016.

- Nussbaum, Martha C. *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- Paul, Georgina. "Ich, Seherin, gehörte zum Palast': Christa Wolf's Literary Treatment of the Stasi in the Context of her Poetics of Self-Analysis." In *German Writers and the Politics of Culture*, ed. by Paul Cooke and Andrew Plowman, 87–106. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.
- Pehnert, Lutz, dir. *Bettina*. solo:film/Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg (rbb), 2022 <<https://www.solofilmproduktion.de/blog/2021/6/30/pt66a-awzfw52rgsgi0emnk8qc2ppd-p729x>> (accessed August 12, 2024).
- Pender, Malcolm. "Stefan Heym." In *The Writer and Society in the GDR*, ed. by Ian Wallace, 34–51. Tayport: Hutton Press, 1984.
- Pirandello, Luigi, and Teresa Novel. "On Humor." *The Tulane Drama Review*, 10, no. 3 (1966): 46–59, doi.10.2307/1125162.
- Plenzdorf, Ulrich, Klaus Schlesinger, and Martin Stade, eds. *Berliner Geschichten – 'Operativer Schwerpunkt Selbstverlag': Eine Autoren-Anthologie: wie sie entstand und von der Stasi verhindert wurde*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1995.
- Rathenow, Lutz. "Akteneinsicht als Therapie." *Rheinische Merkur/Christ und Welt*, June 1, 1990. Repr. in *Vernichten oder Offenlegen? Zur Entstehung des Stasi-Unterlagen-Gesetzes*, ed. by Silke Schumann, 93–96. Berlin: BStU, 1995.
- Richter, Angelika. *Das Gesetz der Szene: Genderkritik, Performance Art und zweite Öffentlichkeit in der späten DDR*. Bielefeld: transcript, 2019.
- Ricoeur, Paul. "Time and Narrative: Threefold Mimesis." In *Time and Narrative*, vol. 1. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.
- Ring, Annie. "Collaboration as Collapse in the Life Writing and Stasi Shadow-Documents of Monika Maron and Christa Wolf." In *Secret Police Files from the Eastern Bloc: Between Surveillance and Life Writing*, ed. by Valentina Glajar, Alison Lewis, and Corina L. Petrescu, 115–36. Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2016.
- . *After the Stasi: Collaboration and the Struggle for Sovereign Subjectivity in the Writing of German Unification*. London: Bloomsbury, 2017.
- Rüther, Günther. "Franz Fühmann: Ein deutsches Dichterleben in zwei Diktaturen." *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, 13 (2000).
- Samson, Gunhild. "Die 'neue Sprache' bei Christa Wolf. Utopie und Wirklichkeit." *Germanica*, 25 (1999) <<http://germanica.revues.org/2342>>.
- Saupe, Achim, and Helen Roche. "Testimonies in Historiography and Oral History." In *The Palgrave Handbook of Testimony and Culture*, ed. by Sara Jones and Roger Woods, 65–90. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023.
- Schädlich, Hans-Joachim, ed. *Aktenkundig*. Berlin: Rowohlt, 1992.
- Schädlich, Susanne. *Immer wieder Dezember: Der Westen, die Stasi, der Onkel und ich*. Munich: Droemer, 2009.
- Schimmang, Jochen. "Preis dem Romancier." *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, March 6, 2019.
- Schlesinger, Klaus. *Michael. Roman*. Rostock: Hinstorff Verlag, 1971.

- . *Alte Filme*. Rostock: Hinstorff Verlag, 1975.
- . *Fliegender Wechsel: Eine persönliche Chronik*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1990.
- . “Macht, Literatur, Sicherheit.” In *Feinderklärung: Literatur und Staatssicherheit*, edited by Heinz-Ludwig Arnold. *Text + Kritik*, 120 (1993): 29–35.
- . *Die Sache mit Random*. Berlin: Aufbau, 1996.
- . *Von der Schwierigkeit, Westler zu werden*. Berlin: Aufbau, 1998.
- . *Trug*. Berlin: Aufbau, 2000.
- . *Die Seele der Männer*. Berlin: Aufbau, 2003.
- Schmidt, Sibylle. “Wissensquelle oder ethisch-politische Figur? Zur Synthese zweier Forschungsdiskurse über Zeugenschaft.” In *Politik der Zeugenschaft: Zur Kritik einer Wissenspraxis*, ed. by Sibylle Schmidt, Sybille Krämer, and Ramon Voges, 47–66. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2011.
- . “Perpetrators’ Knowledge: What and How Can We Learn from Perpetrator Testimony?” *Journal of Perpetrator Research*, 1, no. 1 (2017): 85–104.
- Scholz, Oliver R. “Das Zeugnis anderer – Sozialer Akt und Erkenntnisquelle.” In *Politik der Zeugenschaft: Zur Kritik einer Wissenspraxis*, ed. by Sibylle Schmidt, Sybille Krämer, and Ramon Voges, 23–45. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2011.
- Simmel, Georg. “The Sociology of Secrecy and of Secret Societies.” *The American Journal of Sociology*, 11, no. 4 (1906): 441–98.
- Sloterdijk, Peter. *Critique of Cynical Reason*. Trans. by Michael Eldred. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987.
- Stötzer, Gabriele. *Erfurter Roulette*. Munich: P. Kirchheim-Verlag, 1995.
- . *Die bröckelnde Festung*. Munich: P. Kirchheim Verlag, 2002.
- . *Der lange Arm der Stasi: Die Kunstszene der 1960er, 1970er und 1980er Jahre in Erfurt*. Leipzig: Spector Books, 2022.
- Summerfield, Penny. “Oral History as an Autobiographical Practice.” *Miranda*, 12 (2016): 1–16.
- Taussig, Michael. *Defacement: Public Secrecy and the Labor of the Negative*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999.
- Thomas, Günter. “Witness as a Cultural Form of Communication: Historical Roots, Structural Dynamics, and Current Appearances.” In *Media Witnessing: Testimony in the Age of Mass Communication*, ed. by Paul Frosh and Amit Pinchevski, 89–111. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.
- Tikhomirov, Alexey. “The Grammar of Trust and Distrust under State Socialism after Stalin. Introduction.” *Journal of Modern European History*, 15 (2017): 313–29.
- Toegel, Edith. “Terrible Alternatives: Dilemma and Character in Klaus Schlesinger’s Works.” *Colloquia Germanica*, 23, no. 1 (1990): 17–32.
- Vinke, Hermann, ed. *Akteneinsicht Christa Wolf: Zerrspiegel und Dialog*. Hamburg: Luchterhand, 1993.
- Wagner, Bernd. *Reise im Kopf*. Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau Verlag, 1984.
- . “Wie Tute bis zum HSV durchkam.” *Mikado*, 3 (1985): 1–4.

- . “Wie Tute bis zum HSV durchkam.” In *Geh doch rüber! Begegnungen von Menschen aus Ost und West*, ed. by Per Ketman, 100–04. Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1986.
- . *Ich will nicht nach Österreich*. Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1987.
- . *Der Griff ins Leere: 11 Versuche*. Berlin: Transit, 1988.
- . “Stasi-Gift: Über Akten, Verbände, Literatur und einige IMs.” In *Stasi-Sachen*, 4 (= *europäische ideen* 84) (1993): 7–14.
- . “Stube und der Herr.” In *Die Wut im Koffer: Kalamazonische Reden 1–11*, 291–363. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1995. Expanded new edition—first published in 1991.
- . *Paradies*. Berlin: Ullstein, 1997.
- . *Die Sintflut in Sachsen. Roman*. Frankfurt am Main: Schöffling & Co., 2018.
- . *Verlassene Werke*. Leipzig: Faber & Faber, 2022.
- Wagner, Bernd, and Frank Blohm. “‘Im Osten war der Teller absolut leergegessen und abgeleckt’: Bernd Wagner im Gespräch mit dem Herausgeber.” In *Geh doch rüber! Revisited: Eine Ost-West-Lesebuch und seine Geschichte*, ed. by Frank Blohm, 58–63. Berlin: Lukas Verlag, 2019.
- Wagner, Bernd, and Cornelius Wüllenkemper. “Etwas auf die Beine stellen, wofür man einzustehen bereit ist: Ein Gespräch über die Untergrundzeitschrift ‘Mikado.’” *Sinn und Form*, 75, no. 2 (2023): 165–70.
- Wallace, Ian. “Teacher or Partner? The Role of the Writer in the GDR.” In *The Writer and Society in the GDR*, ed. by Ian Wallace, 9–20. Tarrytown: Hutton Press, 1984.
- . “The Politics of Confrontation: The Biermann Affair and its Consequences.” In *Geist und Macht: Writers and the State in the GDR*, ed. by Axel Goodbody and Dennis Tate, 68–80. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1992.
- Wallen, Jeffrey. “Narrative Tensions: The Archive and the Eyewitness.” *Partial Answers*, 7, no. 2: 261–78.
- Walther, Joachim. *Sicherungsbereich Literatur: Schriftsteller und Staatssicherheit in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik*. Berlin: Christoph Links, 1996.
- . “Gabriele Stötzer – Untertauchen um aufzutauchen.” In *Gabriele Stötzer, Ich bin die Frau von Gestern*, 207–19. Frankfurt am Main: Edition Büchergilde, 2005.
- . “Ralf-Günter Krolkiewicz – Von der Einsamkeit der Welt, oder: Der fatale Wunsch dazuzugehören.” In *Ralf-Günter Krolkiewicz, Nirgends ein Feuer mehr*, 147–57. Frankfurt am Main: Edition Büchergilde, 2006.
- . “Angsträume und literarische Gegenwelten.” In *Gesperrte Ablage: Unterdrückte Literaturgeschichte in Ostdeutschland 1945–1989*, edited by Ines Geipel and Joachim Walther, 29–36. Düsseldorf: Lilienfeld Verlag, 2015.

- Walther, Joachim, Wolf Biermann, Günter de Bruyn, et al., eds. *Protokoll eines Tribunals: Die Ausschlüsse aus dem DDR-Schriftstellerverband 1979*. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1991.
- Weingartz, Gisela. "Rewriting Cassandra: Christa Wolf's Re-visioning of the Myth." *Myth & Symbol*, 5, no. 2 (2008): 37–57.
- Wesser, Grit. "Learning (How) to Trust Your Gut: Suspicion, Stasi, and Socialisation in the Former East Germany." Paper presented at the European Association of Social Anthropologists Conference, Belfast, UK, July 26–29, 2022.
- . "Das Erinnern an die Staatssicherheit im DDR-Alltag. Methodische Herausforderungen bei der Freilegung verwobener Gedächtnisschichten." In *Wie erinnern und vergessen wir? Psychologische, neurophilosophische und geschichtswissenschaftliche Zugänge*, ed. by Agnès Arp, Christiane Kuller and Bernhard Strauß, 33–49. Gießen: Psychosozial-Verlag, 2024.
- Wichner, Ernest, and Herbert Wiesner, eds. *Literaturentwicklungsprozesse: Die Zensur der Literatur in der DDR*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1993.
- Wickenberg, Ernst-Peter. "Wir wußten sehr viel... Erinnerungen an Literaturgeschäfte mit der DDR." In *Feinderklärung: Literatur und Staatssicherheit*, ed. by Heinz Ludwig Arnold. *Text + Kritik*, 120 (1993): 99–102.
- Wilke, Manfred, and Michael Kubina. "Von der Aussagekraft der Akten." In *Feinderklärung: Literatur und Staatssicherheit*, ed. by Heinz Ludwig Arnold. *Text + Kritik*, 120 (1993): 89–97.
- Wolf, Christa. *Cassandra: A Novel and Four Essays*. Trans. by Jan van Heuck. London: Virago, 1984.
- . *Was Bleibt. Erzählung*. Frankfurt am Main: Luchterhand, 1990.
- . *Kassandra: Vier Vorlesungen – Eine Erzählung*. Berlin: Aufbau, 1993. First published in Berlin and Weimar by Aufbau Verlag in 1983.
- . *What Remains and Other Stories*. Trans. by Heike Schwarzbauer and Rick Takvorian. London: Virago, 1993.
- . "Eine Auskunft." *Berliner Zeitung*, January 21, 1993. Repr. in *Akte-neinsicht Christa Wolf: Zerrspiegel und Dialog*, ed. by Hermann Vinke, 143–44. Hamburg: Luchterhand, 1993.
- . *Ein Tag im Jahr 1960–2000*. Munich: Luchterhand, 2003.
- Wollenberger, Vera. "Eine zweite Vergewaltigung." In *Aktenkundig*, ed. by Hans-Joachim Schädlich, 123–30. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1992.
- Zachau, Reinhard K. "The Stasi as the Force of Evil: Collin's Faustian Struggle with the Stasi Boss Urack in Stefan Heym's *Collin*." In *German Writers and the Politics of Culture*, ed. by Paul Cooke and Andrew Plowman, 41–55. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

- von Zitzewitz, Josephine. *The Culture of Samizdat: Literature and Underground Networks in the Late Soviet Union*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021.
- Zuboff, Shoshana. "Big Other: Surveillance Capitalism and the Prospects of an Information Civilization." *Journal of Information Technology*, 30 (2015): 75–89.

Index

- adequate/ideal reader 35, 148–9,
153, 156, 176, 181–2, 183, 187,
194
 - adequate listener 155
 - inadequate reader 159
- adequate witness 135, 137, 139,
142, 148
- agency 25, 26, 34, 35, 37, 39, 52,
88–9, 104, 109, 112–13, 116–17,
118, 124, 131, 142–3, 166, 168,
184–5
 - Eigen-Sinn 111–12
 - Handlungsräume (spaces for
agency) 111, 124, 129–30
 - looking back 35, 105, 113,
119, 125, 134, 186–7, 193
 - open confrontation 15, 60,
104, 105, 100, 114, 115–23,
133, 142, 185–6
 - see also* secrecy, withholding
knowledge
 - see also* trust, mobilising trust,
sharing knowledge, trust as
resistance
 - writing as resistance 132–43
- Akademie der Künste 30, 31
- Alighieri, Dante
 - The Divine Comedy* 165–6
- Anderson, Sascha 9, 22, 30, 31, 51,
57–8, 65, 73–4, 79–80, 84, 95,
97, 99–100, 115–16, 126, 139–40,
168, 190, 191
- antifascism 2–3, 169–70, 177
- Archiv unterdrückter Literatur der
DDR (Archive of Suppressed
Literature in the GDR) 7–8, 16,
27, 33, 154, 194
 - Die Verschwiegene
Bibliothek 33, 154, 194
- arrest 27, 33, 53, 60, 61, 62, 65–6,
102, 134, 137, 155, 184, 186
- Aufbau (publishing house) 21, 29,
31, 33, 89, 148, 164
- authority 35, 128, 131
 - epistemic authority 60, 94,
131, 135, 137
- autobiographical writing 17, 25–6
 - informants 9, 11–13
 - victims 8–9, 15, 26, 187–8,
193
- Bautzen (prison) 41, 66
- Becker, Jurek 21 n.89, 50
- Berlin
 - East 6, 28, 31, 100, 101–2,
140
 - Weissensee 27, 165–6
 - West 14, 28, 29, 46, 66, 90,
119
- Bentham, Jeremy 107, 114
- Bestandsaufnahme 2* 148
- Biermann, Wolf 79, 109
 - expatriation (1976) 4, 21, 28,
29, 31, 32, 48, 66, 87, 140,
170, 171, 179–80
- Blohm, Frank (pseudonym Per
Ketman) 164–5, 168
 - Geb doch rüber! Begegnungen
von Menschen aus Ost und
West* 164–6, 168–9
- Bohley, Bärbel 96, 98
- Böthig, Peter
 - Sprachzeiten* 31, 51, 132–3
- Brasch, Thomas 27

- Braun, Volker 6, 31, 133
 Brecht, Bertolt 2
 Brüsewitz, Oskar 65
 Bundesstiftung zur Aufarbeitung der SED-Diktatur (Federal Foundation for the Study of the Communist Dictatorship in Germany) 16, 154
- censorship 7–8, 11, 16, 96, 120–1, 123, 137, 148, 153, 154, 164–5, 169, 172, 176, 181, 183
 publication ban 30, 149
 self-censorship 7–8, 120, 141
 church 51–2, 53, 70, 77, 94, 96, 116–17, 120–1, 132, 133, 142
 communism *see* socialism
 countersurveillance 10, 35, 59–60, 113–16, 119, 125–7, 144, 184, 186–7, 188
 sousveillance 124–5
- Dekonspiration (deconspiracy) 14, 23, 42, 47, 78, 113
 Deleuze, Gilles 106, 114
 control society 106, 14, 120
 Derrida, Jacques 24, 192–3
 Deutsche Welle 168
 disciplinary power 107, 109
 dissent/dissident literature 4, 5, 8, 9, 15, 24, 45, 62, 67, 70, 72, 76, 102, 125, 148–9, 156–61
 Dresden 5, 100, 155, 160
- Eagleton, Terry 128, 130
 Eco, Umberto 128
 Endler, Adolf 163
 environmental movement 96, 134
 epistemic in/justice 35, 137, 140, 192–4
 Erb, Elke 6, 30, 31, 133, 155
 Erfurt 5, 32–3, 63, 95, 100, 126–8, 140, 188
- Faktor, Jan 6, 58
 Felski, Rita 26, 146–7, 174, 182
 Foucault, Michel 24, 107, 113–14, 185, 187
Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung 103, 149
- Freie Deutsche Jugend 45, 76
 Fuchs, Jürgen 32, 66, 81, 165
 Magdalena 20, 188
 Vernehmungsprotokolle 138
 Fühmann, Franz 6, 23, 30, 31, 61–2, 89, 108, 127, 133, 169
- “Gedächtnisprotokoll” (protocol written from memory) 137–9
 Geipel, Ines 33, 154
 Gethsemanekirche (Gethsemane Church) 102, 121
 gossip, *see* rumour
 Gratzik, Paul 84
 Greiner, Ulrich 4
- Halle 116
 Harich, Wolfgang 4
 Hauptverwaltung Verlage und Buchhandel (Main Office for Publishing and Book Trade) 7, 148
 Haus der Jungen Talente (House of Young Talent) 27, 54, 67, 75
 Hermlin, Stephan 62, 76
 Heym, Stefan 2, 4, 9, 15, 23, 29, 118, 177–82
 Abasver 15
 Collin 15, 29, 36, 177–82
 Der König David Bericht 15, 181–2
 Lassalle 179, 181
 Nachruf 15, 179, 188
 Radek 179
 Der Winter unsers Mißvergnügens 9, 179–80
- Hilbig, Wolfgang 20, 26
 history of everyday life 17, 26
 Hoffmann, Hans Joachim (Minister for Culture) 31
 Hoheneck (prison) 32, 33, 135, 140, 194
 Hohenschönhausen (remand prison) 65, 66, 189
 home search 53, 109–10
 Honecker, Erich 29, 65, 79, 181–2
 Honecker, Margot 32
 Höpcke, Klaus 122, 149, 181

- humour 35, 51–2, 105, 128–32,
143, 151, 165, 185
jokes 130–1, 185
satire 36, 129, 156–61
stereotypes/typifications 130,
132
Hungarian Revolution (1956) 4
- infiltration 31, 34, 69–70, 126
Inoffizielle Mitarbeiter (unofficial
co-worker, i.e., informant) 8, 9,
11–14, 21, 23, 29, 48–9, 61, 70,
72–4, 84, 106, 108, 109, 115,
118–19, 131–2, 155, 163, 167,
168, 174–5, 179–80, 186
family 44–5, 62, 70, 89–91,
190, 192
friends 70, 85–8, 91–3, 191–2
identifying informants 42,
48–60, 98, 116
recruitment 11, 13–14, 23, 29,
31, 32, 34, 39–48, 60, 74–8,
114, 115, 144, 184
interrogation 23, 27, 65, 138–9,
157, 159, 160–1
intuition, *see* knowledge, heuristic
- Jahn, Roland 165
Janka, Walther 178, 180
Jena 32
Johannes R. Becher literary
institute 28
June 17, 1953 4
- Kahlau, Heinz 76
Kant, Hermann 4, 12, 29, 47,
119–20
“Kennzeichen D” (West German
television programme) 121–2
Kerbach, Ralf 100
Kirsch, Sarah 29, 192
Kluge, Alexander 111
knowledge
archival knowledge 21–5,
187–94
constructivism 10, 38, 145,
147–8
direct/embodied
experience 34, 35, 62–7, 108,
128, 134–5, 136–8, 184
false knowledge 14, 49–50, 53,
56–7, 58–9, 68, 184
fragmented/uncertain
knowledge 13, 14, 37, 39–40,
41–2, 44–5, 48, 49–51, 52,
54–7, 66–7, 68, 81, 107, 112,
116, 120, 131, 184, 186, 190,
193
heuristic 14, 34, 35, 37–68,
75, 76, 104, 108, 110, 117,
175, 184, 193
behaviour as a
heuristic 45–6, 49, 52, 53,
55–7, 58–60, 151
clothing as a heuristic 43,
130, 151, 166–7
material gesture as
heuristic 76, 79
moral heuristic 52
reputation as
heuristic 94–5, 101–4
literature as knowledge 26,
35–6, 97, 98, 100, 144–83,
186–7
humanist intuition 145–6
standard of
representation 26, 35, 147,
151, 168, 171, 174, 182–3,
186
power 10–11, 11–12, 25,
184–5, 187
second hand 34, 35, 41, 42,
60–7, 94, 101, 135, 184
shared knowledge/
experiences 94, 108, 112, 134
160, 162
unstable knowledge 17, 22, 33,
34, 53, 83, 91, 99, 101, 160
see also secrecy, revelation
see also testimony
see also trust, sharing knowledge
- Kolbe, Ulrich (IM “Werner
Weber”) 31, 76, 89–91, 92, 97

- Kolbe, Uwe 1, 5, 13, 17, 20, 22, 29, 30–1, 42–6, 55–7, 58, 60, 66–7, 74–8, 89–98, 100, 101–4, 108–9, 121–4, 130, 137, 148–9, 156, 163, 164, 190, 191, 193–4
Abschiede und andere Liebesgedichte 30
Bornholm II 31
Der Kaiser ist nackt 30, 96
Die Lüge 31, 193–4
 “Die Sache mit V.” 31, 44
Die Situation 31, 44, 57, 67, 75–6, 97
Hineingeboren 5, 30
 “Kern meines Romans” 30, 148–9
Renegatentermine 31
Vinetas Archive 31
- Krolkiewicz, Ralf-Günter 36, 153–61, 165, 169, 194
 “Der Dissident” 156–61
Nirgends ein Feuer mehr 154
- Kunert, Günter 150–3, 165, 182
Die Zweite Frau 35–6, 150–3
Erwachsenenspiele 187–8
- Kunze, Reiner
Deckname “Lyrik” 20, 187
- Leipzig 167–8
Leseland DDR 2
- life writing 25–6, 134
 lived experience 136
 Stasi files as life story/“hostile biography” 24–5
- Literaturstreit* (literature debate) 4, 16, 145, 150
- literary salon 5, 31, 79, 132–3, 142, 162
- Loest, Erich
Der Vierte Zensor 20, 120
Der Zorn des Schafes 187
- Lüdtke, Alf 111
- Maaß, Ekkehard 1, 5, 17, 22, 31, 42, 50–1, 65, 78–82, 97, 107, 117–18, 132–3, 142, 189–90, 191
- Magdeburg 5, 99, 133–4
- Matthies, Frank-Wolf 66–7, 149
- memory 40, 59, 173, 190, 192–4
 cultural circuit 19–20, 25
 personal 19, 21, 26, 44, 46, 47–8, 51, 137–8
- Merker, Paul 178
- Mielke, Erich 29, 47, 81, 106, 119–20,
- Mikado* 5, 23, 29–30, 33, 58, 95, 96–7, 123–4, 162–4, 167–8
- Mitteldeutscher Verlag 12, 149
- Moog, Christa 1, 5, 13, 17, 22, 23, 31–2, 39–42, 49, 52, 60, 61, 66, 74–8, 98–100, 116–17, 133–4, 190
Aus tausend grünen Spiegeln 32
 “Es ist 15 Uhr” 32, 74–5
Die Fans von Union 32
 “Die Fete” 32, 98–100
- Morgner, Irmtraud 169
- Mugay, Peter (IM “Albert”) 89, 91–3, 191
- Müller, Heiner 31, 133
- myth 15, 36, 169–76, 183
- narrative enquiry 17
- Negt, Oskar 111
- networks 18, 27, 96–7, 106, 116–17
see also trust, personal and professional networks
- Neue Zeit* (official newspaper of the East German CDU) 92
- Öffentlichkeit* (publicness) 11, 16, 122, 123, 126, 137, 144, 145, 154, 162
- open observation 11, 15–16, 23, 35, 114, 116–18, 144, 179, 184
- Operative Personenkontrollen (OPK, operative personal surveillance) 22–3, 89
- Operativer Vorgang (OV), operative procedure 22–3, 28, 54, 85, 155–6, 190
- oral history 17, 18, 20

- panopticon 35, 105, 107–8, 113–14,
176, 184, 187
 inverse panopticon 125
 panoptic mechanisms 107, 113
paranoia 14, 37, 68, 88–9, 107–8,
110–11, 127, 142, 150, 184, 186
Penzdorf, Ulrich 28
Poppe, Gerd 98
post-positivism 17, 26
Potsdam 154, 155, 156
Prague Spring (1968) 4, 27, 62
Prenzlauer Berg 5–7, 9, 29, 31, 56,
58, 67, 90, 92, 115, 117, 123, 154
prison 8, 27, 32, 41, 58, 62–6, 128,
135–42, 184, 188, 194
- Rathenow, Lutz 11–12, 13–14, 39,
66, 188
referentiality 17, 22, 36, 145–6
resistance *see* agency
revelation 11, 12–14, 15–16, 26, 35,
116, 126, 128, 142, 159, 184–94
 literature as revelation/
 concealment
 cross-border smuggling 36,
 164–9
 literature written “for the
 drawer” 7, 26, 35, 150–3,
 179, 183
 publication in the West 36,
 162–3, 168, 177–83
 satirical writing 36, 156–61
 underground/counter-
 publics 36, 161–9
 use of history and myth 36,
 169–76
 see also Knowledge, literature
 as knowledge
 see also testimony
 see also Dekonspiration
 see also open observation
 see also recruitment
rumour 14, 16, 18, 23, 29, 51,
53–4, 57, 71, 85, 89–90, 94, 185,
192
Samizdat 26, 27, 33, 97, 123–4, 162
Schädlich, Susanne 192
- Schedlinski, Rainer 9
Schlesinger, Klaus 1, 6, 13, 23, 24,
27–9, 53–5, 65, 77, 85–9, 109–12,
115, 117, 127, 131–2, 142, 192
 Alte Filme 28
 Berliner Geschichten 28
 Berliner Traum 28
 Michael 28
 *Von der Schwierigkeiten, ein
 Westler zu werden* 29
- secrecy
 power 11, 12–13, 185–6
 public secret 11, 12, 14, 15,
 16, 26, 35, 43–4, 49, 59, 66, 67,
 105, 120, 130–1, 137, 144, 145,
 151, 152, 164, 169, 172, 182–3,
 184–94
 secret society 13, 185–6
 withholding/concealing
 knowledge 81, 97, 104
 see also revelation
- Seghers, Anna 2
show trials 4, 177, 178–9, 180
Simmel, Georg 13, 70, 185–186
Simon, Annette 166–7
Sloterdijk, Peter 128, 129
socialism 3–5, 26, 141–2, 171, 174,
177, 179
social reality 101, 131
“Spartacus” youth club
 (Potsdam) 155
Spiegel, Der 149
Stade, Martin 28
Ständige Vertretung (Permanent
Representation of the Federal
Republic of Germany) 103
Stasi files 8, 9, 11–12, 21–5, 31, 44,
47–8, 51–2, 54–5, 57–8, 59, 65,
69–70, 85, 89, 91–2, 97, 109–10,
115–16, 126–7, 138–9, 140,
187–94
 use in fiction 20, 193–4
 see also life writing
Stasi-Unterlagen-Archiv (Stasi Records
Archive) 16, 20–3, 189
Stasiangst (Stasi fear) 109, 124

- Stötzer, Gabriele 1, 5, 9, 17, 23,
32–3, 53, 58, 82–3 n.62, 95–6,
100–1, 125–8, 188–9, 194
 Die bröckelnde Festung 20, 194
 “Dabei sein und nicht
 schweigen” 32, 135–42, 194
 Erfurter Roulette 33
 Frauen für Veränderung 33
 Galerie im Flur 33, 138
 Ich bin die Frau von Gestern 33
 Künstlerinnengruppe Erfurt 33
 Der lange Arm der Stasi 9, 33,
 189, 194
 zügel los 33
- Suhrkamp (publishing house) 30,
156
- surveillance 24, 28–9, 33, 35, 36,
58, 69, 70, 76, 99, 105–9, 112,
117–18, 141, 142, 156–7, 159,
163
 see also countersurveillance
- suspicion 18–19, 23, 33, 76, 85–6,
89, 91, 98, 106, 110, 119, 131,
160
- testimony 95–6, 134–40, 143
 perpetrator testimony 81, 135
- Trolle, Lothar 5, 29, 96, 124, 164
- trust 34–5, 106
 affective and cognitive
 dimensions 34, 83–4, 88,
 89–91, 93
 betrayal (of trust and
 knowledge) 84, 91, 92, 97,
 100–1, 102–4
 communities of trust and
 distrust 34, 35, 71, 78, 104,
 112
 distrust/mistrust 14, 35, 37,
 39, 49–51, 53–4, 55–7, 59, 68,
 69–72, 82–3, 85–6, 88–91, 93,
 97, 99, 109, 112, 142, 136,
 144, 160, 184
 families 41–2, 44, 62–4, 71–2,
 89–91
 friendship 84, 85–7, 89, 91–2,
 94–5, 96–7, 98–100
 habitual trust 71–2
 interpersonal trust 82, 83–4,
 88, 92, 100, 112
 low trust society 2, 14, 56,
 69–70
 mobilising trust/strategic
 trust 78–82, 104
 performative trust 34, 72–8,
 79–80, 84, 85, 104
 personal and professional
 networks 34, 42, 51, 52–3,
 61–2, 71–2, 86, 93–104, 112,
 115–16, 117, 142–3, 150, 184,
 186
 power 34, 70–1
 regimes of trust and
 distrust 34, 71, 78, 104
 sharing knowledge 2, 6, 10,
 14, 16, 34–5, 37, 42, 47, 51,
 63–6, 68, 71–2, 74, 78, 80–1,
 86–7, 94–5, 101–3, 104, 115–
 16, 144, 185
 trustworthiness 19, 34, 77–8,
 80, 84, 89, 91, 93, 94, 97, 100–
 4, 112
 trust as resistance 72, 88,
 142–3
- unofficial/underground culture 5,
31, 32–3, 35, 36, 53, 94, 96–7,
100, 118, 123–8, 132–4, 154–5,
161–2, 164, 183, 186, 193
- U-Haft (Untersuchungshaft, Stasi
custody/remand prison) 32, 63,
67, 135, 138–9
- Voigt, Fritz-Georg 21, 48
- Wagner, Bernd 1, 5, 13–14, 17, 20,
22, 36, 46–8, 55, 57–60, 94–7,
119–20, 124, 163–9, 190
 Der Griff ins Leere 30
 Ich will nicht nach Österreich 30
 Paradies 30
 Reise im Kopf 30
 Die Sintflut in Sachsen 30
 Verlassene Werke 20 n.89, 30
 “Wie Tute bis zum HSV
 durchkam” 164–9
 Die Wut im Koffer 30, 59–60,
 185, 190–1, 193
- Walther, Joachim 8, 33, 140, 154

- Wegner, Bettina 1, 6, 17, 27–9,
49–50, 51–5, 65, 77, 85–9, 110,
112–13, 117–19, 130–1, 142, 191,
192
- Werner, Heinz 102–4, 121
- West Germany 15–16, 149, 153,
180, 182
- Westdeutscher Rundfunk
(WDR) 168
- Wieckenberg, Ernst-Pieter 14–15
- Wiens, Maja 84
- Wiens, Paul 72–3
- Wolf, Christa 4, 6, 12, 15, 23, 125,
133, 140–2, 145, 169–76
Ein Tag im Jahr 32, 140–1,
170, 171
- Kassandra* 15, 36, 169–76
- Medea. Stimmen* 171, 175
- Was bleibt* 4, 15, 32, 141–2,
145, 150, 170
- Wolf, Gerhard 6, 31, 33, 133
- Wollenberger (Lengsfeld), Vera 192
- Writers' Union 12, 28, 29, 94, 119–
20, 149, 154
expulsions (1979) 4, 29, 181
- Zersetzung (dissolution, i.e., of
oppositional groups) 6, 8, 24,
27–8, 34, 35, 54, 55, 71, 85, 104,
127, 184

