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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores how the Institut für Literatur ‘Johannes R. Becher’, an East German institution for the training of writers, negotiated tensions that arose from the conflicting demands between literary and political values. The Institute had the objective to foster emerging literary talents according to the socialist ideal of a working writer, but often found students and staff drawn towards more autonomous literary values that were incompatible with the views of the East German Socialist Unity Party. As a result, the Institute’s practices fluctuated between toeing the party line and pursuing literary ambitions.

An overview of the existing scholarship shows that the Institute and its function have been highly politicised and hardly subjected to analyses that allow for a more nuanced appraisal of its practices. As a result, the study of the Institute has not been able to transcend the binary differentiation between assent and dissent and the Institute is either presented as a liberal haven or an orthodox academy with little artistic value. This thesis addresses this issue by applying Bourdieu’s’ theory of cultural production, more specifically his notion of field, capital and habitus, to the study of the Becher Institute. Three case studies that form the core of this dissertation investigate how cultural capital in its institutionalised, embodied, and objectified form was accumulated, converted and exchanged by the Institute, how it tried to reconcile the tensions between cultural policy and creative aspirations and how these tensions affected the Institute’s common habitus.

The first case study will show how the Institute’s founding shaped the institutionalised capital it represented and question the importance that has been attributed to prominent political figures during the founding process. The second case study examines the role of the lecturer and the influence their embodied capital had on the Institute. Two lecturers, working writer Werner Bräunig and poet Georg Maurer, and their representation of the Institute’s multiple habitus will be the focus of the analysis. The third and final case study is dedicated to objectified cultural capital in the form of the Institute’s publications during the 1970s. The Institute’s orthodox publications have so far been overlooked by scholars in favour of its more controversial literary output, which gives a misleading impression of the Institute’s literary output that I aim to amend.

By developing a sociological framework for the study of the Institute, this thesis is able to investigate the Institute and its practices as a social and literary space under the watchful eye of the Socialist Unity Party, without denying its pedagogical and cultural dimensions. The findings will reveal a deeply conflicted institution that struggled throughout its existence to resolve the tensions between literary ambitions and political restraints as well as the contradictions within the literary field itself.
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INTRODUCTION

On 30 September 1955, the Institut für Literatur Leipzig welcomed its first intake of students. Over the next 35 years, approximately 950 aspiring writers attended the Institute, among them Erich Loest, Ralph Giordano, Adolf Endler, Werner Bräunig, Sarah and Rainer Kirsch, Heinz Czechowski, Barbara Köhler, and Kerstin Hensel. The Institute offered three different courses of study: a three-year full-time course, a one-year distance learning course and a so-called Sonderkurs. The latter was designed for established writers and workers in the literary industry, ran for nine months, and provided specialised training for editors, children’s book authors or translators. In order to attend the Institute, applicants had to have finished an apprenticeship or graduated from a university. They also were expected to have published at least one piece of writing as proof of their literary ability. The core of the curriculum was formed by creative seminars for prose, poetry and drama. Alongside other subjects, such as history, German and Soviet literature, Marxism-Leninism and Russian, the students were also required to spend several months working in state-owned companies, which, in accordance with the Bitterfelder Weg, encouraged cooperation and collaboration between workers and writers.

The SED’s vision of literature as a tool to engage the working class in cultural production and remove the distinction between elitist and popular culture as a means to increase morale among the working population, meant that the Institute functioned within the interface of politics and cultural production.¹ Thus, it continuously found itself torn between the writers’ desire to create original literary works and the Party’s attempt to consign art to a purely functional role within its socialist agenda. A ‘Wechselschritt zwischen Anpassung und aufrechtem Gang’, as Christel Berger called it,

was the result of this contradiction between political and artistic integrity the Institute tried to resolve.\(^2\) However, conflict did not only arise between ideological and creative positions. In his speech given at the Institute’s 30th anniversary, director Hans Pfeiffer spoke of a ‘Spannungsverhältnis’ that pointed to another source of tension that affected its practices:


The question of how and if literary talent could be fostered also defined the Institute’s conception and methods, ranging from pro-nurture sentiments that understood the Institute as central to the cultural sphere of the GDR to pro-nature views that questioned the very existence of an institution dedicated to the training of writers. Pfeiffer’s confidence when stating that a mixture of nature and nurture would create the right environment for talent to grow was not representative of the Institute’s actual practice which was characterised by continuous re-evaluations of its approach to teaching its students how to produce literary texts.

Further sources of tension and insecurity affected the Institute. Were admissions supposed to only take literary talent into consideration or were a student’s political allegiances of equal importance? If a student developed dissident views, was he to be reported to the Party and expelled or did members of staff have the power and obligation to rehabilitate him? Was the Institute’s purpose to offer its students a general education alongside their literary studies or was it supposed to focus exclusively on literary instruction? The question at the heart of the Institute was surely much simpler

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\(^3\) ‘Die Schule und das Leben. Aus der Festrede des Direktors des Instituts “Johannes R. Becher” Prof. Hans Pfeiffer zum 30. Jahrestag der Gründung’, without date, Sächsisches Staatsarchiv Leipzig (StStAL), Institut für Literatur 20311, Nr. 524.
but not easily answered: Was the Institute itself oriented towards autonomy and internationally validated literature or was its orientation heteronomous and aimed towards a conception of literature in line with the SED’s expectations?

This thesis has two interlocking objectives. The first is to explore the tensions and contradictions that characterised the Institute from its creation to its closure. So far, scholars have identified some of the tensions mentioned above but have failed to determine their origins and effects. There has also been a tendency to characterise the Institute either as a Party-loyal institution with little literary prestige, or as a subversive space where autonomy could develop with limited outside interference. With the aid of Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of cultural production, the tensions inherent to the Institute’s conception can be explored and the binary opposition of assent and dissent can be further differentiated to allow for a more nuanced analysis of institutional practices. Bourdieu’s notion of fields, capital and habitus will provide me with the concepts and critical vocabulary to expose hidden mechanisms and motivations that affected and shaped individual and institutional practices in cultural, political and economic contexts. Thus, this study will be able to move beyond identifying and evaluating contradictions at the Institute and allow for the reconstruction of the structures, exchanges, and motivations behind them.

The second objective is to fill gaps in the study of the Institut für Literatur ‘Johannes R. Becher’ Leipzig. In order to do so, I will consult various sources. First and foremost, this study will be informed by archival material, most of which has not yet been examined in detail in the existing scholarship. I base my analysis on holdings at four different German archives: the Saxon State Archive in Leipzig where the Institute’s files are held, the Federal Archive in Berlin-Lichterfelde where MfK files relating to the archive are stored and the Archive of the Academy of the Arts and the German Literature Archive in Marbach both of which hold personal archives of writers.
connected to the Institute. I will also consult various published sources that will allow us to gain a better understanding of the Institute’s practices. As such, this thesis is an attempt to move away from the polarised debates surrounding the Institute and I will argue that a plethora of political and aesthetic positions coexisted at the Institute and that politically controversial episodes in its history should not be overemphasised. The primary sources combined with Bourdieu’s theory of cultural production enable me to develop a nuanced understanding of the Institute and its role in the cultural sphere of East Germany and reveal an institution that was not only shaped by external, cultural-political factors, but also had to overcome considerable internal tensions.

In chapter one I will give an overview of the literature in which the Institute features. These publications can be divided into four categories: articles and publications about the Institute written during its existence, autobiographical accounts written by the Institute’s alumni, historicised accounts of the Institute written post-1990 and scholarly publications that refer to the Institute within a wider cultural context or make the Institute the centre of their study. My analysis of trends in the literature written about the Institute will show three gaps that this thesis aims to address: a high level of subjectivity and tendency to exaggerate the Institute’s role in the literary field, selective and decontextualised material that focuses almost exclusively on prominent individuals and the lack of a theoretical framework for an analysis of institutional practices that transcends the binary opposition of assent and dissent.

The second chapter explores the possibilities and limitations of applying Bourdieu’s theory of cultural production to the Institute. The value of Bourdieu’s theory for the analysis of East German cultural institutions and spaces has been demonstrated in several studies and publications so far. The contradictions between

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two different and incompatible forms of capital, political and literary capital, are especially relevant to the study of the Institute. It was dependent on political capital to legitimise its existence in the cultural landscape of the GDR. At the same time, it could not justify its operations as a legitimate literary academy without accumulating symbolic literary capital by following international literary trends. Examining the Institute’s practices through Bourdieu’s concept of habitus will allow me to investigate how individuals influenced the Institute’s practice and vice versa. This will show that the institution and its teaching staff struggled to find a strong, homogenous habitus and often wavered between autonomous and heteronomous practices.

Within the scope of this thesis it is impossible to provide a comprehensive analysis of the Institute’s practice, which is why the following three chapters and their case studies each focus on one specific form of capital and the way the Institute was able to accumulate, transfer, and exchange it. Each case study will also examine a clearly defined time period in the Institute’s history. This will allow me to demonstrate how the Institute’s tensions and contradictions became visible during decisive moments in its history.

In the third chapter, I will investigate how initial capital could be gathered to create a literary institution. Looking at the period from 1950, when the founding of a literary academy in the GDR was discussed for the first time, to 1957, when most obstacles encountered during the Institute’s creation had been overcome. This chapter will show that the institutionalised capital accumulated during the Institute’ founding phase determined its perception by others and that symbolic political capital attached itself far more easily than symbolic literary capital. As a result, scholars have overestimated the role played by prominent figures such as Walter Ulbricht, Johannes

R. Becher and Alfred Kurella. I will show that it was in fact due to low-ranking cultural functionaries and their organisational and ministerial background that the project of founding the Institute was endowed with the forms and amounts of capital it needed to become reality. Cultural-political events in the early 1950s also meant that the plans to found a literary Institute first had to accumulate enough political capital to make progress.

The fourth chapter will focus on the mid-1960s. I will examine the embodied cultural capital the Institute had at its disposal in the form of its lecturers. Werner Bräunig, the Institute’s prose lecturer, and Georg Maurer, who taught poetry, will serve as case studies. Bräunig, a working writer who is closely linked to the Bitterfelder Weg, attracted the Party’s criticism at the 11th Plenary of the Central Committee for the pre-publication of an excerpt from a novel he had been writing. Maurer, on the other hand, was a highly educated poet whose students valued him for his apolitical poetry seminars. He was one of very few lecturers who brought symbolic literary capital to the Institute. As the Institute depended on individuals whose embodied symbolic capital it could be linked to, Maurer was able to evade public criticism. With the help of Bourdieu’s notion of habitus I will show the extent to which both lecturers were able to negotiate tensions at the Institute and within the wider national literary field.

The final chapter investigates if the Institute succeed in reconciling its tensions through its publications. At the core of the chapter are three in-depth analyses of publications that were produced by the Institute during the 1970s. I will show how its habitus was articulated through objectified cultural capital and how some publications shaped its reputation during its existence and after its closure. Much like the symbolic political capital that attached itself to the Institute during its founding phase and the symbolic literary capital brought to the Institute by Maurer, the symbolic literary capital accumulated through one particular publication became synonymous with the Institute’s
published identity. When reconstructing the Institute’s habitus during the 1970s with the help of its publications, we will see that the published face of the Institute was in fact marked by heteronomy and a sense of self-awareness that could not attract symbolic literary capital.
1. ‘Dichterschule oder Kaderschmiede’? The Literature on the *Institut für Literatur ‘Johannes R. Becher’ Leipzig*

Despite wide interest of scholars in cultural-political developments in the GDR, the Institute has been somewhat overlooked as an object through which to study cultural practices in the GDR. However, this is not to say that the Institute has gone unmentioned; it is featured, to varying degrees, in different types of publications. The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of the literature on the Institute and to identify the main trends in the existing scholarship, its strengths and the gaps that remain. Taking the findings into account, I will argue why a closer, more meticulous study of the Institute is necessary in order to better understand the role of the Institute in the GDR.

The literature in which the Institute features can be divided into four categories that are characterised by an increasing degree of objectivity and a progression towards methodological diligence in the treatment of the Institute. The first category consists of publications written about and by the Institute during its existence. Among these publications are articles published in East German newspapers and journals such as *Neues Deutschland, Sonntag, Weimarer Beiträge* and *Forum*, as well as essays and anthologies written by members of the Institute. The second category is made up of autobiographical accounts written by former students and members of staff. Those alumni of the Institute who published autobiographies mention the Institute to various extents and their attitudes towards the Institute are remarkably negative, ranging from frustration with teaching practices to a feeling of intellectual and creative detachment. The third category encompasses historicized accounts of the Institute written after its *Abwicklung* in 1990. The day the Institute was officially dissolved by the state of Saxony, 31 December 1990, initiated
the process of the closing of the ‘Johannes R. Becher’ Institute which was finalised in 1993. The institution’s remodelling and reopening in 1995 as the *Deutsches Literaturinstitut Leipzig* (DLL) allowed for a more historical approach to the Becher Institute by the publications of this category. As we will see when taking a closer look at these publications, it was not until 2005 that the Institute was considered as the subject of historical accounts in its own right. Although 15 years had passed since its closure, many of these publications remain closely tied to the institutionalised training of writers: the majority of authors in this category can be directly linked to either the ‘Johannes R. Becher’ Institute or its successor. The texts of this category claim to be historical accounts, yet they remain largely subjective, selective and descriptive. The texts in the fourth category offer a more objective treatment of the Institute and can be broadly described as academic literature about GDR cultural history. These publications share an academic and analytical perspective on cultural practice in East Germany but differ greatly in the degree to which they feature the Institute. Some publications only make passing references to the Institute in order to exemplify broader trends and developments in East German history and cultural practice. These publications may mention the Institute when referring to authors who studied at the Institute or were in other ways affiliated with it. The Institute is also mentioned when it played a larger role in culturally and politically significant events of the GDR and therefore primarily serves an illustrative purpose. On the other end of the scale there are scholarly publications and accounts that make the Institute the main object of enquiry and analyse specific practices and events relating to the Institute. Although the quantity of publications featuring the Institute is generally low, this sub-category encompasses the fewest publications by far.

I will now take a closer look at each category, highlighting and exemplifying the existing knowledge about the Institute, prevalent approaches and limitations. The following
discussion will raise questions about the reliability and representativeness of the existing publications and inform the basis of the theoretical approach taken in this thesis. As mentioned above, the first group of publications comprises articles, essays and texts written about or authored by members of the Institute during its existence. They range from articles in newspapers informing the East German public about the Institute’s function to a short run of a student magazine and an anthology about the Institute itself.\footnote{Institut für Literatur Johannes R. Becher and Ursula Beyer, \textit{Zwischenbericht: Notate und Bibliographie zum Institut für Literatur "Johannes R. Becher"}, Leipzig (Leipzig: Bibliographisches Institut, 1980).}

To give a more detailed example of newspaper coverage of the Institute, we will look more closely at \textit{Neues Deutschland} (ND), the SED’s main organ. During the thirty five years of the Institute’s existence, 322 articles mentioning the Institute were published in ND. Articles, comments or interviews relating to the Institute averaged five to ten per year, but the degree of coverage fluctuated considerably. The two-year span from 1959 to 1960, for example, shows a particularly high number of publications; during those two years, a total of 33 articles were published in ND.\footnote{In 1959, seventeen articles were published. Sixteen articles were published in 1960.} During its first four years the \textit{Literaturinstitut} had remained nameless and was only named after Johannes R. Becher in 1959. A small number of relatively short articles reported this occasion. An unusually extensive article of 1,800 words, written by its director Max Zimmering, was also published in connection with the naming of the Institute and detailed its aims and functions.\footnote{Max Walter Schulz, 'Das Institut für Literatur erhält den Namen "Johannes R. Becher". Schreiben und Lernen', \textit{Neues Deutschland}, 138 (1959).} The Institute was also mentioned in connection with the \textit{Bitterfelder Konferenz} which took place on 24 April 1959 and which was attended by some of the Institute’s students. The publications from 1960 draw attention to events and individuals at the Institute, such as the return of Nikolai Janzen, who taught at the Institut from 1955 to 1960, to the Soviet Union and the
publication of the Institute’s first yearbook *Ruf in den Tag*.4 The newspaper articles show the Institute from a close-up, functional perspective and focus on dates and events relevant to the Institute itself, presenting and promoting it publicly in a positive light.

An exception to the positive portrayal of the Institute in the national press is an often-referenced exchange of letters, accompanied by interviews and comments in various newspapers, about an excerpt from a novel that the Institute’s prose lecturer Werner Bräunig had been working on. The working title of the novel that was never published during GDR times was *Hinter dem eisernen Vorhang*. It has now been edited by Angela Drescher and was published in 2007 as *Rummelplatz*, the title under which the controversial excerpt had been pre-published in *Neue Deutsche Literatur* (ndl).5 The extract was received negatively by Party officials and some readers due to the unorthodox portrayal of workers at a fair.6 The letters are a testament to the intersection between literature and politics in the GDR during the cultural-political crackdown in 1965.7 The events involving the Institute in the mid-1960s play a central role in other publications and I will examine the significance and implications of this when taking a closer look at the third and fourth categories of publications about the Institute. We will also return to the relationship between the Institute and the SED during the early and mid-1960s in the fourth chapter.

Members of staff were also featured in other publications, such as journals, and the contributions often reflected the individuals’ fields of expertise. Many of Max Walter

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4 'Internationales Kulturmosaik', *Neues Deutschland*, (1960); Werner Ilberg, 'Dem Leben, der Wahrheit zugewandt', *Neues Deutschland*, 194 (1960).
7 Herbert Hentschel and others, 'Das Erz des Lebens und der Literatur. Wismut-Kollegen schreiben an Werner Bräunig zum "Rummelplatz"', *Berliner Zeitung*, (1965); Medizinalrat Dr. med. Roßner, 'Ich kenne unsere Wismut-Kumpel', *Neues Deutschland*, 336 (1965); Werner Bräunig, 'Nicht die Schwierigkeiten ihre Überwindung! Antwort auf einen offenen Leserbrief', *Neues Deutschland*, 344 (1965); "Rummelplatz und Leben. ND-Gespräch mit Fritz Selbmann', *Neues Deutschland*, 346 (1965); "... doch nicht auf Kosten der Wahrheit". Nationalpreisträger Horst Salomon an Werner Bräunig', *Neues Deutschland*, 346.
Schulz’s publications, for example, are interviews or articles about the Institute, its function and aims. These publications span most of Schulz’s term as the director of the Institute, from ‘Brückenschlag vom Gestern zum Morgen: über die Aufgaben des Instituts für Literatur in Leipzig: NZ Interview’, which he gave in his first year as director, to ‘Schöpferische Schule für begabte Autoren’ and ‘Gespräch mit Prof. Max Walter Schulz zum 20jährigen Bestehen des Instituts für Literatur “Johannes R. Becher”’, both published in 1975.8 The publications in this category, despite offering a look at the Institute from the perspective of its contemporaries, need to be carefully read against the cultural-political context of state socialism and its mechanisms of control.

Articles and other texts written by or featuring lecturers for newspapers and journals are, however, not the only type of publications belonging to this category. There is also literature published by the Institute under its own name such as its two yearbooks and three issues of a students’ magazine that only appeared in manuscript form.9 Other publications by the Institute itself include Tauchnitzstraße - Twerskoi Boulevard: Beiträge aus zwei Literaturinstituten, which was published in collaboration with the Gorky-Institute in Moscow, an issue of Neue Deutsche Literatur from June 1970 dedicated to the Institute’s fifteenth anniversary and featuring contributions by staff and students from the Institute, as well as

Selbstermutigung, a collection of essays written by the members of staff published in 1986.¹⁰ These publications allow us to take a closer look at the Institute’s self-image and the image it wanted to portray in public. Without an intermediary agent such as a newspaper or journal, it was able to publish content that did not have to conform to external formats. Some of these titles will play a central role in the analysis of the Institute’s published face of the 1970s in chapter five. As publications by an institution about itself, its practices and its literary output, they will allow me to reconstruct its conflicted self-image.

The second category of literature dealing with the Institute consists of testimonies written by the Institute’s former students and members of staff. Typically, these references are found in autobiographical publications. As the genre suggests, these accounts are highly subjective and written retrospectively, often in the 1980s. The Institute’s alumni all share a sceptical, sometimes even wholly negative, view of their time in Leipzig. Erich Loest, one of the Institute’s first students in 1955, for example, wrote about the first one-year-course at the Institute in his autobiography. His verdict is simple: ‘[er] weinte dem vergangenen Jahr keine Träne nach’.¹¹ Ralph Giordano, another student from the Institute’s first course, had come from Hamburg under the patronage of the West German Communist Party. He also remembers his time at the Institute as one of disillusionment: ‘zurück nach Hamburg, weg von der Herrschaft der Apparatschkis und fort von einem Druck, den ich vorher nicht gekannt hatte’.¹² Heinz Czechowski, who studied at the Institute from 1958 to 1961, also recounts his time at the Institute which he associates with ‘so etwas wie ein mehr oder oder

¹¹ Erich Loest, Durch die Erde ein Riß: Ein Lebenslauf, (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1981). In his autobiography, Loest refers to himself in the third person. The pronoun I have inserted in this citation was chosen in keeping with the third-person narration.
minder verstecktes Rebellentum, das sich vor allem in den Eskapaden der ehemaligen Wismut-Kumpel Horst Salomon und Werner Bräunig im Café Naschmarkt äußerten.\textsuperscript{13} Gert Neumann writes about his exmatriculation from the Institute for ideological reasons in 1969 in his autobiography \textit{Elf Uhr}. He describes the events leading up to his expulsion from both Institute and SED as ‘eine geistige Treibjagd’ in which the Party’s notion of literature took away the writers’ dignity.\textsuperscript{14}

Later students also reflect on their time at the Institute, be it in autobiographical form or in interviews. Kerstin Hensel (a student at the Institute from 1983 to 1985) and Barbara Köhler (1985-1989) both speak briefly about their time at the Institute in Leipzig in Birgit Dahlke’s \textit{Papierboot: Autorinnen aus der DDR – inoffiziell publiziert}.\textsuperscript{15} Hensel explains that she followed the advice from lecturers and published her poetry in SED-run journals while she remained largely unaware or at least unaffected by the underground literary scene. Barbara Köhler, on the other hand, admits that to her one of the most advantageous feature of the Institute was the opportunity to discuss literary and political issues with like-minded writers. A radio broadcast by Stephan Reinhardt from 1997 traces the Institute’s history through voice-overs and interview excerpts that feature former students and staff of the Institute such as Loest, Giordano, Czechowski, Endler, Helga M. Novak, and Rainer Kirsch.\textsuperscript{16}

\textbf{Endler, for example, remembers the Institute as a chaotic place:}

\begin{quote}
Das war so diese Generation der Muschkoten, der Landser, die eigentlich die Atmosphäre des ersten Lehrgangs am Institut für Literatur studiert hat, mit viel Trinken, mit viel Skat spielen, mit viel zynischen Witzen, mit der auch die sozusagen Artikulationen etwa des Norddeutschland bedacht wurden. Es war eine sehr anarchische Phase am Anfang des
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{13} Heinz Czechowski, \textit{Die Pole der Erinnerung: Autobiographie} (Düsseldorf: Grupello, 2006), pp. 90-91.
\textsuperscript{14} Gert Neumann, \textit{Elf Uhr}, (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1981), p. 22.
\textsuperscript{16} This citation and following: Stephan Reinhardt, ‘Kaderschmiede und Dichterschule. Das Literaturinstitut Leipzig’, (WDR, 1 May 1997).
Loest, who attended the same course as Endler, considered the Institute a waste of time. Already published, he did not feel the need for further studies and did not agree with the political education at the Institute. In *Durch die Erde ein Riß*, his studies are presented as a confirmation of his progressing disillusionment with East German socialism: ‘Hier ging es nicht um Literatur, sondern um Macht über Literatur’. Giordano’s experiences in *Die Partei hat immer Recht* are similar. He portrays the Institute as a stronghold of political orthodoxy where critical thoughts were not appreciated and Giordano establishes a direct connection between his time at the Institute and his break with the GDR. Giordano eventually left the GDR after his one-year course at the Institute and Loest’s fate is well-known. After a seven-and-a-half-year imprisonment in Bautzen (1957-1964), Loest continued to publish and live in the GDR until he left the East German Writers’ Association (DSV) in 1979 and moved to West Germany in 1981. In both cases disillusionment with the Institute was closely associated with disappointment with the SED. Distancing themselves from the GDR and its political structures, Loest and Giordano simultaneously distanced themselves from the institution. In their autobiographical accounts, the Institute becomes a representation of a repressive socialist state. Czechowski, who found a friend and mentor in Georg Maurer, had mixed feelings about the Institute. Valuing certain lecturers, the library and the social network he became a part of, Czechowski nevertheless noticed the ideological restraints at the Institute. He later regretted not opposing these restraints more directly. The Institute played an important part in Czechowski’s literary career and many writers he collaborated with, especially

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17 Loest, *Durch die Erde ein Riß*, p. 268.
19 Czechowski, *Die Pole der Erinnerung*, p. 100.
members of the *Sächsische Dichterschule*, were also connected to the Institute. Czechowski therefore acknowledged the Institute’s impact on his writing despite his concerns. It is important to note, however, that it was the interaction with members of the Institute rather than the tuition itself that Czechowski valued.

One may suspect that the number of alumni, an often-quoted number is 950 students over 35 years, would also lead to a multitude of opinions about the Institute. After all, each author endows the Institute with a specific function within his or her biography. However, a truly diverse range of opinions about the Institute cannot be detected in the above-mentioned testimonies. Most authors explicitly state that they do not perceive the training they received at the Institute as central to their literary success. It needs to be pointed out, however, that the above testimonies all originate from authors who were internationally successful. Attributing some of their success to the Institute may have damaged their reputation outside of East Germany. Of course, not all alumni embarked on careers as writers. Helmut Richter, whose publication about the Institute we will examine shortly, estimates that only one third of the Institute’s graduates continued in this profession. The other two thirds often found employment in the cultural sector, such as in publishing houses, the DEFA or at the MfK. This means that the majority of alumni have not left autobiographical accounts of their time at the Institute and its importance and meaning for those individuals cannot be traced.

The third category and the publications it encompasses differ greatly from the previous two. The following texts are factual accounts engaging with the Institute from a historical perspective and were all published after the Institute’s *Abwicklung* in 1990/91.


Ulrich Kiehl offers a more detailed account in his bibliography of literature published in Leipzig from 1955 to 1990.\textsuperscript{22} He writes about the Institute’s founding, Alfred Kurella’s role as the first director, the influence of Bitterfeld on the Institute, and the curriculum. His account of the general atmosphere at the Institute is interesting, as he claims: ‘Entgegen späteren Auffassungen und Darstellungen kann das vorherrschende Studienklima am Institut über weite Zeitspannen als “liberal” eingeschätzt werden.’\textsuperscript{23} Kiehl continues: ‘Seit Ende der siebziger Jahre bis Mitte der achtziger Jahre herrschte bei einer erheblichen Anzahl von Studenten eine allgemeine Unzufriedenheit über die vermittelten Lerninhalte vor. Viele vertraten die Ansicht, unter einer “Käseglocke” zu studieren’. Unfortunately, Kiehl does not provide evidence for these claims and his short account highlights important tensions at the Institute without exploring their existence further.

In 2004, Linde Rotta published her account in the form of the radio feature ‘Die Schulbank der roten Dichter. Das Leipziger Literaturinstitut’.\textsuperscript{24} Rotta’s account focuses on the first decade of the Institute’s existence. She takes a close look at the first group of students to study at the Institute and outlines the varying interests involved in its foundation. She also highlights the reluctance of some young writers to become associated with the Institute, which I will investigate more closely in the third chapter.

The strength of Rotta’s broadcast is its focus on some members of staff that are only marginally features in other publications. Among these is the Institute’s first librarian, Karl Hans Löwe. Other publications, such as Czechowski’s autobiography, mention the Institute’s extraordinary library, but fall short of going into more detail. Rotta describes


\textsuperscript{23} This citation and following: Ulrich Kiehl, \textit{Die Literatur im Bezirk Leipzig 1945 – 1990}, p. 29.

Löwe as a highly intellectual and educated individual with a vast knowledge of international literature, which was reflected in his choices of new library acquisitions. Rotta claims he had chosen works by Joyce, Kafka, Hemingway and Sartre over works by socialist realist writers. Even though distrust from within the Institute’s ranks led to a review of Löwe’s work, the findings, according to Rotta, remained inconclusive. Löwe left the GDR not long after the inquest. With the case of Löwe, Rotta is able to bring less prominent staff at the Institute to the foreground, showing how publications about the Institute with an historical interest are able to offer an account of the Institute’s organisation and administration that is not covered by newspaper articles, literary essays and biographical accounts.

Rotta concludes her broadcast with the following statement on the tensions between state politics and the writers throughout the Institute’s existence:

Das Aufbegehren gegen die Staatsmacht hat auf das Institut nie wirklich übergegriffen, nicht einmal in den Wendewochen. Bis zum Schluss kennzeichnen Konspiration und Geheimnis [...] das Verhältnis zwischen der DDR und ihren Dichtern.

Rotta identifies these tensions, but ultimately falls short of making connections on a larger scale about cultural policy and dissident behaviour. Therefore, her claim that the Institute remained essentially passive in the face of cultural restrictions needs to be investigated further before it can be generalised. Recounting the Institute’s history with little or no reflection on its representative potential for GDR cultural history is the common bond of the publications that fall into this category. Rotta’s account nevertheless offers a degree of objectivity that the other publications in this category lack: she is unaffiliated with the Becher Institute itself as well as its successor. We will see in the following instances that authors who have published similar historical accounts about the Institute were often themselves former students of the Becher Institute and, in the cases of Helmut Richter and Josef Haslinger, even directors of the Becher Institute and the *Deutsches Literaturinstitut*.
Leipzig respectively. This of course poses the question of whether the publications offer objective accounts. As we will see, it was difficult for someone so closely tied to the Institute to remain fully impartial.

Josef Haslinger has published two articles about the Institute. In ‘Deutsches Literaturinstitut Leipzig’, he offers a very detailed description of the history of the Becher Institute and the Deutsches Literaturinstitut Leipzig. For example, he documents a larger number of students, academic and administrative staff than any other publication on the Institute. In this regard, it is a very helpful source when identifying significant individuals and their general role at the Institute. Haslinger is one of few authors, for instance, to mention an ‘Arbeiter- und Bauernquote’ at the Institute which was eventually abandoned. He also describes the role of the DSV in matters of matriculations and influence on employment decisions in more detail than other publications. In his second article, “Greif zur Feder, Kumpel!” Das Institut für Literatur “Johannes R. Becher” (1955-1993), Haslinger focuses exclusively on the Becher Institute and gives a detailed account of student-lecturer relationships. He describes the relations between students and lecturers as strained, highlighting the ideologically dogmatic behaviour of individuals such as Alfred Kurella, Dieter Herrde (deputy director) and Nikolai Janzen (professor of philosophy) and the students’ aversion to them. Haslinger also provides examples of more positive student-lecturer relationships, most notably the case of poetry lecturer Georg Maurer. Surprisingly for a chronicle of the Institute, archival references about the Institute available at, for example, the Sächsisches Staatsarchiv in Leipzig, the Bundesarchiv in Berlin-Lichterfelde or the Archive of the Academy of the Arts, Berlin, are absent.

Haslinger highlights moments of friction as well as cooperation between the Institute and the State. He refers, for example, to the *Bitterfelder Konferenz* of 1959 as a significant event for the Institute which influenced its development in many ways: students focused their literary activities on the life of the worker and writing workers and the newly founded *Zirkel schreibender Arbeiter* brought forth a large number of prospective students. Writing workers also received support from the Institute that was tailored to their needs in the form of the *Sonderlehrgang für schreibende Arbeiter*. Haslinger also discusses the matter of students at the Institute working for the Stasi and spying on fellow students and lecturers. However, there seems to be an overemphasis on dissident students and employees, such as Werner Bräunig, Dieter Mucke and Erich Loest, who merely represent one ideological extreme; regime-orthodox and policy-supportive writers as well as writers who behaved neutrally are not featured to the same extent, which is a key limitation of most publications of this category.

Helmut Richter published an article on the Institute to celebrate its fiftieth anniversary in September 2005. At six short pages, Richter brings together most of the well-known facts about the Institute, including a short paragraph on the debate surrounding the Institute’s location, which will be examined more closely in chapter three, controversies surrounding students and lecturers in the mid-1960s and late 1970s and the resistance to the Institute’s closure. But Richter also identifies a network of personal relations that have not been mentioned in other publications. Richter claims, for instance, that Kurt Kanzog, assistant director under Alfred Kurella, influenced the decisions to employ Georg Maurer as lecturer of poetry and, later on, Gerhard Rothbauer as lecturer of stylistics and world

literature. In addition to this, Richter also supplies a list, which he himself acknowledges as selective, of fifty writers that have emerged from the Institute. Overall, Richter’s text takes on an informal, celebratory tone that underlines the occasion for the article. However, maybe due to the informal tone or the absence of references, the article as a whole leaves gaps and inaccuracies. Statements such as ‘eigentlich müsste das Matrikelbuch abgedruckt werden’ and, speaking about Rothbauer, ‘ein [...] fast legendärer Institutslehrer’ need to be treated with care. A look at Richter’s biography gives a possible explanation for the sometimes exuberant portrayal of the Institute: Richter himself studied at the Institute from 1961 to 1964 and was again affiliated with the institution from 1980; he even acted as its director from 1990 to 1992 leading up to and during its closure. As such, Richter’s publication, despite being scholarly in form, may also be considered autobiographical and suited for the second category, due to its content. Overall, the publications in this second category constitute a sometimes more and sometimes less reliable array of historical information that depict the Institute’s impact on individuals connected to it. The intention of the aforementioned publications is largely to give an introduction and first impression of the institution without necessarily linking events at the Institute to national trends and events.

The fourth and final category consists of scholarly publications in which the Institute is featured. The role the Institute plays in these texts ranges from marginal, such as in publications about the history and cultural policy of East Germany, to essential, for example in the small number of academic studies of the Institute itself. The Institute features in a number of key publications about history, literature and the arts in the GDR. It appears in publications like Emmerich’s Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR and Manfred

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29 Helmut Richter, 'Institut für Literatur Johannes R. Becher', pp. 72-73.
Jäger’s *Kultur und Politik in der DDR* as well as in Joachim Walther’s *Sicherungsbereich Literatur.*\(^{30}\) Of course the focus of these publications rests on broader trends and developments within the East German cultural sphere and the Institute primarily serves as an example to illustrate a particular concept.

The founding and naming of the Institute feature as a condensed anecdote in Manfred Jäger’s *Kultur und Politik in der DDR.* The story Jäger tells of Becher as a ‘merkwürdiger Fall eines Kulturministers in einer Übergangszeit’ is the most popular and amusing episode from the Institute’s early years: Becher is reported to have been especially averse to official demands ‘an den Dichter, der Bedürfnisse befriedigen, Befehle erfüllen und das Denken andern überlassen soll’\(^{31}\). Becher explicitly took issue with the idea of a literary institution dedicated to the training and schooling of young writers, as a passage from his diary on 7 January 1950 quoted by almost every publication about the Institute shows: ‘Ein tolles Stück. Der noch zu gründenden Akademie der Künste wird ein Entwurf zur Bildung eines Literatur-Erziehungs-Instituts (Internats) eingereicht’\(^{32}\). In 1958, the institution Becher seemed so fervently opposed to was posthumously named after him. In retrospect, the irony is hardly lost on anyone.\(^{33}\) Jäger places this anecdote in his chapter ‘Krisen und Kulturschwankungen nach dem Tode Stalins 1953-1959’ within the subchapter ‘Nach dem 17. Juni: Künstler gegen Kontrollinstanzen’. In the section about Becher’s ‘Reflexionen zur Verteidigung des Poetischen’, the Institute in its embryonic state serves as a cautionary tale of the institutionalised repression of literary freedom and, in this context,


\(^{31}\) Emmerich, *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR,* p. 76.


\(^{33}\) I will investigate how representative this episode really is for the founding of the Institute in the second chapter.
it is implied that Becher’s wariness was justified.\textsuperscript{34} The Institute and its practices are implicitly characterised as an orthodox *Kontrollinstanz* that Becher rightly opposed.

Only a few pages later and still within the same chapter, the Institute is mentioned in a very different context. The narration has moved on to the Fourth Writers’ Congress in January 1956 which was attended by Georg Maurer, lecturer of poetry at the Institute from 1955 to 1971. Jäger portrays Maurer as a liberal, outspoken writer: ‘der Lyriker und von vielen jungen Autoren hochgeschätzte Lehrer am “Institut für Literatur”, nahm vor der Sektion Dichtkunst kein Blatt vor den Mund’.\textsuperscript{35} By mentioning the Institute and one of its lecturers in this context, the implications about the Institute seem almost opposed to those made earlier. Instead of adhering to Party politics, Maurer spoke freely and critically about East German poetry. This portrays the Institute as a space for free thinkers and critical debate by association. It is not surprising that this paradoxical, almost contradictory characterisation of the Institute goes uncommented in Jäger’s publication as the Institute is, of course, not the centre of Jäger’s investigation.

In his *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR*, Wolfgang Emmerich gives a brief overview of the Institute, treating it as an example of how literary production was institutionalised by the state.\textsuperscript{36} He lists the Institute’s directors, some of its better-known students as well as the different courses on offer. The Institute is linked to the *Bitterfelder Weg* as a ‘Pflanzstätte eines neuen Typus von Arbeiterschriftstellern’. Emmerich limits the Institute’s success to the early 1960s when Maurer and ‘eine Gruppe hochbegabter junger Gedichtemacher’ - Emmerich alludes here to the poets of the *Sächsische Dichterschule* - met at the Institute, but

\textsuperscript{34} Becher’s aversion to a literary academy and the ironic turn of events when the Institute was named after him are also featured in: David Clarke, ‘Parteischule oder Dichterschmiede? The Institut Für Literatur ’Johannes R. Becher’ from Its Founding to Its Abwicklung’, *German Studies Review*, 29 (2006), 87-88.; Haslinger, p. 1543.; Haslinger, p. 583.; Richter, ‘Institut für Literatur “Johannes R. Becher”’, pp. 70-71.

\textsuperscript{35} Emmerich, *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR*, p. 80.

\textsuperscript{36} This citation and following: ibid. p. 45-46.
also concedes that the Institute brought forth remarkable young writers in the 1980s like Kurt Drawert, Kerstin Hensel, Berbara Köhler and others. The Institute is also linked to the MfS and identified as one of the first literary institutions to be monitored by the MfS. Emmerich’s *Kleine Literaturgeschichte* gives a more detailed account of the Institute than is the case in Jäger’s *Kultur und Politik in der DDR*, yet it barely scratches the surface of the Institute’s role in the literary sphere of the GDR.

Joachim Walther’s *Sicherungsbereich Literatur* sheds more light on the relationship between the Institute and the Stasi. Walther gives the Institute a more central role within the cultural organisations of the GDR by dedicating a short introductory paragraph to the Institute. In this paragraph, he outlines the structure and aims of the Institute and lists its directors and a selection of well-known lecturers like Maurer, Bräunig, Rothbauer, Marianne Schmidt and Trude Richter. His account of the Institute’s founding is short and the claim that the institution was founded ‘auf Betreiben Alfred Kurellas’ is somewhat misleading by seemingly accrediting the Institute’s creation to Kurella alone. Walther’s account is an example of the critical distance towards the Institute that sets this category of publications apart from the previous one. While Richter, writing about successful alumni of the Institute, claimed ‘eigentlich müsste das Matrikelbuch abgedruckt werden’, Walther states: ‘Von den Absolventen konnte sich jeweils nur ein geringer Teil als Schriftsteller profilieren’. It needs to be noted, however, that Walther measures the success of a writer by international standards; the individuals he identifies as distinguished writers - Loest, Giordano, Fred Wander, Adolf Endler, Sarah and Rainer Kirsch, Czechowski and Bräunig - are all writers who were recognised outside the GDR. Writers who were exclusively successful within East Germany go unmentioned.

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37 This citation and following: Walther, *Sicherungsbereich Literatur*, pp. 43-44.
38 Richter, 'Institut Für Literatur “Johannes R. Becher”', p. 72.
Walther situates the introduction to the Institute within his chapter on ‘die kulturpolitische Machthierarchie’ of the GDR along with, among others, the Politburo, the Central Committee, the MfK and MfS, the DSV, FDJ and the Kulturbund. Mentioning the Institute in this context shows Walther’s recognition of the important role much smaller institutions played in the East German cultural-political hierarchy. The strength of Walther’s treatment of the Institute lies in his examination of operational investigations (OV) within the literary organisations of the GDR. Walther identifies several OVs at the Institute during the 1960s, such as the OV ‘Schriftsteller’, running from October 1961 to August 1963, which investigated Rudolf Bartsch, Hasso Grabner, Werner Bräunig and Werner Lindemann. During this time an unofficial collaborator (IM) whom Walther identifies as Günter Görlich can be placed at the Institut under the codenames ‘Student’ and ‘Wegener’. Walther presents a report concerned with the Institute among other things. This report, dated 24 January 1969, states that members of staff as well as students have collaborated with the Stasi and it is pointed out: ‘unter den Studenten des Instituts gab und gibt es eine Konzentration von Personen, die bereits vor Studienbeginn operativ aufgefallen sind’. The same report also refers to Georg Maurer, who is described as ‘einseitig ästhetisch orientiert und politisch weltfremd’. The report from which this information was taken is followed up by minutes of a meeting in which the situation at the Institute was discussed. Walther highlights the central questions raised in this meeting: ‘Was [ist] ein literarisches Talent? Wer [ist] für ein Studium am Institut geeignet?’ The consensus in these matters was that a clear-cut policy for admissions was needed. Walther is

39 Walther mentions other smaller institutions as well, e.g. the Institut für marxistisch-leninistische Kultur- und Kunstwissenschaft, the Zentralinstitut für Literaturgeschichte an der Akademie der Wissenschaften der DDR and the Büro für Urheberrechte.
40 Walther, *Sicherungsbereich Literatur*, p. 149.
41 Ibid., p. 492; 647.
42 This citation and following: ibid. p. 752.
of course more interested in the Stasi’s involvement with the Institute as a cultural organisation and does not comment further on these findings. As we will see in the following chapters, these two questions belong to a set of questions, contradictions and insecurities that the Institute itself, not just those monitoring it, was struggling to answer.

Walther’s *Sicherungsbereich Literatur* is undoubtedly a good starting point for gathering objective information about the Institute itself as well as the power structures within which it was situated. The extensive use of archival references on which Walther bases his observations shows that there are sources that have not yet been fully exhausted for an in-depth assessment of cultural and institutional practices at the Institute. Yet, due to the very nature of Walther’s publication, the portrayal of the Institute adds to the perception of the Institute as a cultural institution torn between resisting and conforming to political ideology. This implies that certain aspects of the Institute’s history and practice may remain unmentioned, unclear or misrepresented, such as its founding or the institutional and individual practices outside the context of the Institute’s relationship with the MfS. The same assessment can be made of the other publications in this category; despite giving great prominence to individuals and their role in the literary sphere of East Germany, the Institute as an integral institution of literary production in the GDR is mostly overlooked or its existence oversimplified.

The following publications fill this gap by making the Institute the centre of their investigations. Until recently, only David Clarke had written about the Institute in an attempt to bring its history and cultural-political events together.44 In the earlier of his two articles on the Institute, Clarke is mostly interested in defining and comparing survival

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44 Clarke, 'Parteischule oder Dichterschmiede? '; David Clarke, 'Das Institut "Johannes R. Becher" und die Autorenausbildung in der DDR', in *Views from Abroad - Die DDR aus britischer Perspektive*, ed. by Peter Barker, Marc-Dietrich Ohse, and Dennis Tate (Bielefeld: Bertelsmann, 2007), pp. 175-85.
strategies developed by the Institute during its active years. This allows for a new perspective on events and individuals that have also featured in the publications of other categories. For instance, he outlines the founding of the Institute and focuses on decisions and developments made on an organisational level. Whereas Haslinger, for example, pays attention to the friction between Alfred Kurella and Johannes R. Becher, Clarke highlights the struggle for autonomy and power between the DSV and the Ministry of Culture. Clarke’s article also takes a more analytical approach to the role of the writer and the Institute itself in the GDR. Whereas Richter, for example, praised every student who had attended the Institute, Clarke draws attention to the countless options that were available for aspiring writers in the GDR. Yet, he points out that fostering freelance writers was not an objective of the Institute, but rather forming writers who were both loyal to and dependent on the socialist state. As a supporting argument for this hypothesis, Clarke outlines the history and aims of the Bitterfelder Weg as the counter development to the emancipation of regime-critical East German writers. The Bitterfelder ‘principle of the writer as worker among workers, participating in and assisting their ideological development’, Clarke argues, was also the overt aim of the Institute. This allows for a much needed critical perspective on the inherent contradiction upon which the Institute was founded, and Clarke rightly points out that students at the Institute were removed from the background of production and expected to devote all their time to intellectual matters in accordance with the Institute’s curriculum. Their studies encouraged the aspiring writers to see themselves as individuals that were detached from the working class by the nature of their education, which bore the danger of bringing forth a ‘writer’, not a ‘cultural

45 Clarke, ‘Parteischule oder Dichterschmiede?’, p. 90.
functionary in the service of the working class'.\textsuperscript{46} In his 2007 article, Clarke concludes that despite the Institute’s efforts to reconcile the divide between working and writing, its efforts remained futile.\textsuperscript{47}

Clarke also introduces the term \textit{Nischenöffentlichkeit} in connection with the Institute’s structure and function. With reference to Walter Süß, Clarke defines this niche public sphere as ‘a space, specific [...] to the Institut für Literatur, in which a limited group of individuals is allowed or is able to create the space for free discussion, but where the ideas that emerge from that discussion cannot reach the general populace’.\textsuperscript{48} Clarke argues that this trait is potentially dangerous for the Institute as it challenged the SED’s total claim on culture and public opinion while being at the same time financially and politically dependent on the state’s support. This concept is not new in the context of cultural production in the GDR. Günter Gaus coined this term in 1983 and it has found its way into other publications, such as Mary Fulbrook’s \textit{Anatomy of a Dictatorship}, in which she dedicates an entire chapter to East Germans ‘leading a double life of outward conformity with private authenticity’.\textsuperscript{49} Establishing connections between the Institute’s history and existing research on East German socialism makes Clarke’s articles unique among all publications and allows for a more objective and contextual study of the Institute that is much needed.

David Clarke applies a critical approach to the nature of developments at the Institute as well as the Institute itself by questioning the compatibility of its socialist founding conviction with the intellectual and critical tendencies that are inherently linked to

\textsuperscript{46} Clarke, ‘Parteischule oder Dichterschmiede?’, p. 91.
\textsuperscript{47} Clarke, ‘Das Institut "Johannes R. Becher" und die Autorenausbildung in der DDR’, p. 181.
\textsuperscript{48} Clarke, ‘Parteischule oder Dichterschmiede?’, pp. 91-92.
literary production. His chronological account of liberal and restrictive tendencies at the Institute rests mostly on the same events as the publications in the third category, such as Werner Bräunig, Dieter Mücke and the 11th Plenary as well as the discussion in 1979 between Joachim Nowotny and students from his prose seminar. Clarke is able to engage critically with these events that have only been described in other publications and can relate them to national cultural-political events and tendencies. Through his discussion, Clarke is able to expose a contradiction at the very heart of the Institute: by enabling a niche public sphere, students were removed from their industrial background. Instead of becoming working writers, the social and pedagogical conditions at the Institute encouraged the formation of freelance writers without ties to the working population.

In 2013, the Saxon State Ministry for Science and the Arts and the Saxon Academy of Science funded a research project that aims to investigate writing processes at the Institute. The project is based at the DLL and overseen by Hans-Ulrich Treichel, professor of German literature at the DLL. Four of the five research assistants have studied creative writing at the DLL. The project has brought forth two publications so far, an introduction to Sarah Kirsch’s ‘Im Spiegel. Poetische Konfessionen’, published in Sinn und Form and a recent article about writing processes at the Institute, both authored by Isabelle Lehn, Katja Stopka and Sascha Macht. Both publications make extensive use of archival holdings as well as seminar papers and literary theses held at the DLL. The aim of the study is to evaluate the cultural-political importance of the Institute ‘als Ausbildungsstätte zahlreicher

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In order to do so, the authors investigate four topics: the history of the Institute, its cultural-political influences, the aesthetic quality and socio-political relevance of writing originating from the Institute, and the teaching practice, especially in regard to the question whether or not writing could be taught at an institution.

As such, Lehn et al. offer the first comprehensive periodisation of the Institute according to cultural-political events and changes in the SED’s cultural policy. The authors also look beyond historical facts and archival material by integrating the literary output of the Institute’s alumni into their analysis. The Institute’s teaching practice is described as didactic experimentation in the context of controversial debates about the question whether or not writing could be taught. This assessment is supported by an in-depth discussion of seminars informed by archival sources with a commendable analysis of Wieland Herzfelde’s prose seminar (1955/56). The authors also present a detailed account of Dieter Mucke’s expulsion on ideological grounds in November 1965 that demonstrates the power relations between the Institute and the MfK meticulously. This makes these publications the most comprehensive and thoroughly researched resource on the Institute.

Although the historical account offered by Lehn et al. exceeds most other publications on the Institute, some common assumptions about its founding are not called into question and will need to be addressed in the third chapter. For instance, it is claimed that the Institute was founded in ‘1955 auf Beschluss der SED-Parteiführung’ and that ‘Kurella die Leitlinie des Instituts maßgeblich [prägte]’. The admission practice which is a recurring source of debate between the Institute and the MfK is also not problematised: ‘Um ein Studium am Becher-Institut aufzunehmen, galten hingegen klare Kriterien.

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52 This citation and following: Lehn, Macht, and Stopka, 'Literarische Schreibprozesse', pp. 77-78.
Begabung allein reichte nicht aus: Eine vorhergehende Berufsausbildung (Studium, Lehre) war genauso Bedingung wie erste Veröffentlichungen'. Although it is true that students were expected to have studied or worked before attending the Institute, there were disagreements about what constitutes talent and how much attention should be paid to students' political opinions as part of the admission process. These issues will be explored in more detail throughout the following chapters.

So far, only one publication has applied a theoretical context to the practices at the Institute. Leon Hempel’s article ‘Die agonale Dynamik des lyrischen Terrains. Herausbildung und Grenzen des literarischen Feldes der DDR’ investigates the expression of autonomous sentiments in East German poetry. One section of this article is dedicated to Georg Maurer’s creative poetry seminar as ‘ein gesonderter Ort’.\(^{53}\) Using Bourdieu’s notion of fields and habitus, Hempel describes the seminar as an ideologically untainted space that was invoked by Maurer’s habitus of a ‘durch und durch bürgerlicher Pädagoge’.\(^{54}\) Nevertheless, Hempel believes that Maurer’s seminars never challenged the Party’s power and always promoted literature in a socialist context.\(^{55}\) By using Bourdieu’s categories, Hempel is able to identify and discuss the sources and effects of the tension between ideology and creativity that other accounts of the Institute have only been able to allude to.

We will return to Bourdieu’s theory of cultural production in the following chapter and examine Maurer’s role as a lecturer of poetry in chapter four.

The discussion of publications on the Institute has shown three main weaknesses that this thesis aims to address: the purpose and perspective of the publications themselves;


\(^{54}\) Hempel, 'Die Agonale Dynamik des lyrischen Terrains', p. 21.

\(^{55}\) Ibid., p. 22.
selective and de-contextualised approaches; and a lack of conceptualisation and theoretically informed analysis. Each category of publications about the Institute has its own merits and limitations due to the purpose of each publication and the perspective taken by each author. The articles, essays, monographs and anthologies written about the Institute during its existence have to be read under the assumption that cultural policy and practice could have affected the choice of topics, discussions and discourses promoted in these pieces.

The first two categories are neither able to nor intend to offer a full historical overview of the Institute. The publications by Rotta, Haslinger and Richter are more successful in giving the reader a better understanding of the Institute’s history and practice. Giving details about key events at the Institute, well-known and lesser-known students, lecturers and directors and highlighting the Institute’s participation in the cultural sphere of the GDR, these publications offer valuable insight into the development of the institution. However, apart from Rotta, the authors in this category are all closely linked to the Institute, which raises the question of their motivation to write about it. Josef Haslinger has written most extensively on the subject. Although he did not study at the Becher-Institute itself, he has taught at the DLL as a professor of literary aesthetics since 1996. As the German Literature Institute exists as part of the University of Leipzig, it featured in Geschichte der Universität Leipzig, an anthology published in celebration of the university’s six hundredth anniversary. Richter studied at the Institute from 1961 to 1964 and returned to the Institute in 1980 after working as a freelance writer. Despite giving a largely accurate historical account of the Institute, the perspective, approach and purpose of these sources need to be questioned. Instead of giving an unbiased account, some of these texts can be likened to hagiographies due to their reverential and uncritical view of the Institute. Despite
the quality of the publications by Lehn et al., their direct connection with the DLL needs to be taken into account. However, the authors display a greater awareness of the source material’s strengths and weaknesses than most scholars on the Institute:

So liefern die offiziellen Akten des Instituts aus historischer Perspektive authentische Momentaufnahmen und sprechen mithin eine ganz andere Sprache als die Zeitzeugenerinnerungen, die als rückwirkende Zuschreibungen und Sinnkonstruktionen immer in einen größeren biografischen Zusammenhang zu stellen sind. Gleichzeitig ist aber zu fragen, inwieweit die offiziellen Akten des Instituts im Moment ihres Entstehens bereits manipuliert wurden – etwa zum Zwecke pragmatisch-ideologischer Absicherung bzw. der Selbsterhaltung, was neben Rechenschaftsberichten auch Sitzungs- und Seminarprotokolle betrifft.56

Lehn et al. raise a very important point by questioning the intention and motivations with which not only secondary literature about the Institute was written, but which equally apply to archival resources.

The second main weakness is the selectivity and de-contextualisation found in most historical publications about the Institute. This applies especially to time periods that feature prominently in several publications such as the Institute’s founding, the mid-1960s and the late 1970s. Haslinger, Richter, Rotta and Clarke, for instance, focus on the founding years. The founding period is indeed a pivotal phase in the Institute’s history. However, so far the literature on the Institute has tried to identify the role of well-known individuals. As we will see in the third chapter thanks to a fuller examination of archival sources, this has led not only to an over-emphasis on prominent individuals but also to the omission of low-ranking Party functionaries who played key roles in the creation of the Institute. This thesis will re-examine some of the prominent events at the Institute that are widely featured in the literature on the Institute. However, it will also allow other events to emerge in the analysis and at the same time allow the prominent events to be understood within their cultural-political context.

56 Lehn, Macht, and Stopka, 'Literarische Schreibprozesse', p. 80.
The third and final point of critique is that no publication has tried to investigate the history of the Institute using a theoretical approach. Most publications lack any theoretical or methodological framework, which means that many aspects concerned with the institutional practice cannot be explored further as the necessary critical perspective is lacking. As the examination of Jäger’s treatment of the Institute shows, the Institute mostly features on the sidelines of comprehensive publications on cultural policy in the GDR. Marginalising the Institute may run the risk of over-generalising not only its function, but also its implied common practice. By using it as an example of imposing political ideals on the creative act of writing, but also associating the Institute with individuals such as Georg Maurer, who were successful in creating a space for liberal sentiments within an orthodox cultural sphere, a contradiction is created but never explained or resolved. Clarke’s publications address the need for the Institute to be investigated more thoroughly; misconceptions stemming from other publications need to be rectified and fundamental questions about the Institute’s function and its role in the literary and social sphere of the GDR need to be asked and, where possible, answered.

Most publications about the Institute discuss the ideological strain put on students and lecturers. The issue is approached in terms of assent and dissent only.\(^{57}\) This is a somewhat problematic concept as it does not allow for ambiguity and may hinder the answering of the more complex questions this thesis will pose. Most of all, it makes the assumption that the Institute and its practices cannot be examined outside the context of state socialism. Although it cannot be denied that the political ideology of the GDR significantly influenced practices at the Institute, defining the institution exclusively through state socialism politicises it to an extent that may not represent its practices truthfully. One

\(^{57}\) This becomes apparent even in the wording of the titles of some publications, such as ‘Parteischule oder Dichterschmiede?’ (Clarke, 2006) and ‘Die Schulbank der roten Dichter’ (Rotta).
of the questions this thesis will aim to answer is how the relationship between literary talent and the teaching of writing at an institution played out at the Institute. The concept of teaching young writers how to become successful authors is, naturally, not limited to the Becher Institute. Throughout this thesis, parallels will be drawn between the Institute in Leipzig and its predecessor, the Maxim Gorky Institute in Moscow, which was founded in 1933. But there are also other institutions dedicated to teaching creative writing, such as the Iowa Writers’ Workshop at the University of Northern Iowa and other creative writing programmes, such as the one at the University of East Anglia.\footnote{Clarke mentions these creative writing programmes in ‘Das Institut “Johannes R. Becher” und die Autorenausbildung in der DDR’. There are, of course, many more creative writing courses in and outside the context of higher education.} Examining the Becher Institute only in the context of the East German dictatorship would also mean that fundamental tensions, such as the question of whether literary mastery can be taught and the implications of institutionalising creative processes, could not be examined in comparison to other non-socialist writing programmes.

When examining the behavioural patterns of students and lecturers, more needs to be taken into account than whether or not they were supporters of the regime in order to understand how personal, political, pedagogical and literary expectations and ambitions were consolidated. Furthermore, it also needs to be asked if it was even possible to consolidate these factors, if they complemented each other or competed with one another. These questions are highly dependent on the individual that is being considered and cannot be simply explained in binary terms.

My aim is therefore to combine existing and newly gained knowledge about the Institute with a theoretical framework that allows me to analyse in more detail than has thus far been done how a literary institution in the GDR was able to manage the tensions and
contradictions inherent to its situation. Choosing a sociological approach to cultural practice allows me to examine literature and education within a theoretical framework that moves beyond the binary comparisons that are often drawn between culture, art, creativity and the socialist dictatorship in studies of GDR cultural practice. In order to accomplish this, Pierre Bourdieus theory of cultural production will form the theoretical basis of the upcoming chapters. His notion of fields and capital will enable me to discuss not only the political, but also the literary dimensions. An enhanced interpretation of Bourdieus concept of habitus will add a third, social dimension to my analysis on the level of the institution as well as that of the individual. Through the interrelations between fields, capital and habitus I will be able to demonstrate how the Institute functioned in political, social and literary contexts. The following chapter will not only outline the key concepts of Bourdieus theory, but also argue in favour of its suitability for the analysis of the East German cultural sphere.
Bourdieu’s theory of social practice has found applications in many fields of sociological research, ranging from the study of intellectuals and entrepreneurs to mathematics education and hospital hierarchies. Especially in recent years, there has been an increasing interest in applying Bourdieu’s concepts to the study of institutions, such as the admission practices in higher education in England, institutional and social change at a South-African university and the contextualisation of new institutionalism. The versatility of Bourdieu’s concepts in uncovering relationships of dependency, motivation and status also makes them useful tools in the study of the East German literary sphere. In *Literarisches Feld DDR*, scholars have applied Bourdieu’s theory to the conditions and forms of literary production in the GDR; Laura Bradley has utilised Bourdieu’s understanding of control and restriction in her study of GDR theatre censorship post 1961; Matthew Philpotts has investigated the behavioural patterns of journal editors; and Matthew Philpotts and Stephen Parker have applied Bourdieu’s theory to the study of the literary journal *Sinn und Form*.  

In this section, I will present three concepts central to the application of Bourdieu’s theory in this thesis: fields, capital and habitus. These concepts will enable me to explore

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the tensions and challenges facing the Institute that have not yet been sufficiently investigated in the existing literature. The notion of fields, for instance, will help us to grasp the contradictory political and cultural expectations the Institute wanted to meet while the Bourdieusian approach to capital will contribute to the understanding of status and power hierarchies inside and outside of the Institute. Applying the notion of habitus to the Institute and those connected to it, on the other hand, will allow us to take a look at motivations and dynamics that are likely to have influenced decision making processes at the level of the individual as well as the institution. In order to demonstrate the value of these concepts for understanding the interplay between individuals, organisations and institutions, the following sections will introduce each concept and explain their relevance to the study of the Institute.

2.1 Fields and Capital: Investigating Sites of Struggle and Domination in Society

The argument central to Bourdieu’s theory of social practice is that there are two common misconceptions about society and the way it functions. First, he challenges the assumption that the distribution of economic capital (monetary assets such as savings and properties) among the members of society paints a true picture of society itself. Instead, Bourdieu suggests that one also has to consider other categories of capital that may not be as visible as money and other material possessions. Secondly, Bourdieu questions the presumption that access to forms of capital is free and equal for all members of society in such a way that any member of society can accumulate a large amount of capital instantaneously. He illustrates this with a roulette metaphor. The game of roulette represents an imaginary universe of perfect competition or perfect equality of opportunity, a world without inertia, without accumulation, without heredity or acquired properties, in which every moment is perfectly independent of the previous one, every soldier has got a marshal’s
Bourdieu disagrees with this view of society in two respects. First, ‘changing one’s social status quasi-instantaneously’, which corresponds to winning a game of roulette, is not possible (46). The accumulation of cultural capital is impossible without the investment of time and personal labour and therefore not a quality that can be immediately awarded or attained. In fact, unequally distributed privileges, such as family-owned cultural goods and family-specific cultural practices, increase an individual’s capacity to climb the social ladder so that cultural capital is inherited and reproduced. Secondly, just as capital cannot be instantaneously accumulated, it can also not be taken from its bearer within a short space of time whereas one’s bet in a game of roulette can be lost within seconds. For the structure and functioning of society this means that perfect competition and equality are misconceptions of a field in which ‘everything is not equally possible or impossible’ (46). Those individuals born into a privileged family have better means to acquire cultural capital than those born into less fortunate circumstances. The order of the social world according to Bourdieu can therefore best be described by an analysis of the distribution of capital in its various forms among its members at a given moment in time. The inequality in the distribution of resources creates friction within society as individuals are driven to act on their desire to accumulate more capital in different contexts. For an institution like the Becher Institute this means that from the moment of its foundation, it is also imbued with a certain kind of capital that cannot be changed from one moment to the next. The organisations that created it and that invested their efforts into the new institution also transferred a certain amount of their capital onto the Institute. The third chapter will

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investigate this capital transfer during the Institute’s founding further and show how the founding capital the Institute acquired had a significant influence on how it was perceived by others.

Without redistributive policies to challenge inherited privilege, the unequal distribution of capital only results in the reproduction of the existing social order by further privileging those who already possess large amounts of capital and disadvantaging those with little capital. This view of a society defined solely by capital distribution may create the impression of an otherwise static construction. However, Bourdieu refrains from defining society as a single space in which individuals act and interact and instead defines it as a construct that consists of many smaller spaces, each with its individual characteristics. These spaces – or fields, as Bourdieu calls them – are spheres in which capital itself is defined and validated. Bourdieu suggests that in each field

in accordance with particular laws, there accumulates a particular form of capital and where relations of force of a particular type are exerted. This universe is the place of entirely specific struggles, notably concerning the question of knowing who is part of the universe.5

There are a number of fields whose sum represents the whole of society, for example: the political field where influence and power are measured in terms of political capital, the economic field in which monetary and entrepreneurial assets are defined as economic capital. One could also think of intellectual field in these terms. Accordingly, the intellectual field would be governed by intellectual capital in the form of schooling and academic achievements. The desire of agents – individual persons – to obtain positions of influence in their field of choice creates a continuous sense of struggle for recognition and legitimisation in a field, as agents in the same field with similar objectives are in constant competition with each other. The competitive factor applies to individuals as well as institutions and in the

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case of the Institute can be traced on the level of the behaviour of individuals as much as on
the level of the Institute as a whole. This makes the Becher Institute an agent in its own
right, desiring to make a name for itself in certain fields in order to validate and increase
 certain types of capital.

Clearly, the literary field is central to the study of the Institute. The literary field
Bourdieu describes is occupied by agents involved in the production and circulation of
literary goods. Among the professions that are typically found in the literary field are
producers, for instance novelists, poets and playwrights, but also intermediary agents such
as editors, representatives and publishers that act as negotiators between the literary and
economic field. These actors aspire to accumulate literary capital in order to support and
further their role and position in the literary field. Bourdieu explains:

The literary field [...] is an independent social universe with its own laws of functioning, its
specific relations of force, its dominants and its dominated, and so forth. Put another way,
to speak of “field” is to recall that literary works are produced in a particular social universe
endowed with particular institutions and obeying specific laws.6

Both literary works and literary actors are therefore dependent on the power relation within
the literary field and the position of the literary field in relation to a dominant field, for
which Bourdieu uses the term field of power. Bourdieu identifies two opposing extremes with
regard to the specific laws, rules and power relations that characterise the literary field: the
autonomous and heteronomous poles. Those writers obeying rules external to the literary field
are located towards the heteronomous pole, whereas those who orient themselves to the
specific rules and capital of the literary field are located towards the autonomous pole:

The literary or artistic field is at all times the site of a struggle between the two principles of
hierarchization: the heteronomous principle, favourable to those who dominate the field
economically and politically [...] and the autonomous principle [...], which those of its
advocates who are least endowed with specific capital tend to identify with degree of
independence from the economy.7

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6 Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, 163.
7 Ibid., p. 40.
Literary capital itself is associated with the independent, autonomous pole representing literary innovation and progression unconcerned with economical or political gains. Bourdieu therefore describes the literary world as the economic world reversed. The aim of an autonomous literary actor is not only to ignore but consciously avoid the heteronomous pole of the literary field and the economic capital that is associated with it:

Producers and vendors of cultural goods who ‘go commercial’ condemn themselves, and not only from an ethical or aesthetic point of view, because they deprive themselves of the opportunities open to those who can recognize the specific demands of this universe and who, by concealing from themselves and others the interests at stake in their practice, obtain the means of deriving profits from disinterestedness.⁸

This represents a reversal of the economic world in so far as economic capital is avoided at all cost. The commercial mass production of literature may result in a financial profit for those actors involved, but, economic success in the literary field usually excludes the recognition of the work itself by literary actors. However, applying Bourdieu’s theory to cultural production in East Germany is not as straightforward as assuming that the reversal of the economic world also applies here.

For this reason, scholars who critique the use of Bourdieu’s theory of cultural production in the context of the GDR question if the field theory can be successfully applied to the East German socialist state. Henning Wrage, for example, has reservations in two regards. First, he doubts whether applying Bourdieu’s notion of fields leads to an accurate portrayal of the special relationship between East German culture and politics and, secondly, argues that a primarily sociological approach is bound to fall short of offering new literary insights.⁹ Admittedly, the opposition between literary and economic capital that emerges in Bourdieu’s analysis of capitalist societies does not express the fundamental

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⁸ Ibid., p. 75; italics in original.
‘Loyalitätskonflikt zwischen Schriftsteller und Politik’ that is so distinctive of literary production in the GDR.¹⁰ Instead of economic values competing with literary ideals, the latter stood in competition with political values conveyed through the SED. Therefore, political capital was the currency of choice for heteronomous literary agents in the GDR and heteronomous political capital needs to be seen as the counterweight to autonomous literary capital. The instances in which the existing scholarship attempted to identify assent or dissent at the Institute can therefore also be rephrased as moments and actions through which members of the Institute positioned themselves extremely close to the heteronomous or autonomous pole of the literary field. They attempted to accumulate either politically-sanctioned, heteronomous literary capital or autonomous literary capital, which was considered unorthodox by the political field represented by the SED and its mechanisms of controlling cultural production.

In contrast to the literary field, the political field is occupied by official politicians, lobbyists, representatives of organisations and also, to a certain degree, the voting public. The political capital that can be acquired in this field is essential for any actor aspiring to obtain a prestigious position within the field. The various fields that exist in any society rarely co-exist without difficulty and, depending on the socio-economic system, one field may become the field of power, imposing its rules and expectations on the other fields.¹¹ If the field of power imposes rules and a value system on the literary field, for example a political ideology, autonomous actors will aim to disobey these rules and disregard external values. The special significance of the political field for the study of cultural production in the GDR is, of course, that the cultural field was subordinated to the political field, making the latter the field of power. This is where Bourdieu’s framework becomes particularly

¹⁰ Hempel, 'Die agonale Dynamik des lyrischen Terrains., p. 17.
¹¹ Bourdieu, The Field of Cultural Production, 37-38.
interesting in the context of the Institute: exploring whether the Institute followed heteronomous or autonomous practices will reveal not only whether it subjugated itself to the SED or followed liberal artistic values, but also which forms of capital it was able to accumulate and transfer and whether it ultimately chose an autonomous approach to cultural production, as some publications on the Institute suggest.

The power relations between the literary field and the political field of East Germany created a dilemma for the Institute and the writers associated with it. The opposing pole of the sub-national literary field created a division between literary actors:

Dies formte das literarische Feld so, dass auf der einen Seite sich diejenigen Schriftstellerinnen und Schriftsteller positionierten, die zwar nicht den prinzipiellen Zusammenhang von Politik und Literatur infrage stellten, jedoch das Politische als Ausgangspunkt eigener inhaltlicher und ästhetischer Darstellungsmöglichkeiten ansahen. Ihnen gegenüber standen diejenigen, die eine starke inhaltliche und formale Nähe ihrer Literatur zur kulturpolitischen Linie der SED vertraten.12

If literary actors wanted to devote themselves to the accumulation of literary capital, they had to disregard the rules of the field of power. This meant that they had to avoid political capital in order to occupy a position close to the autonomous pole of the sub-national literary field. Without political support, these writers struggled, for instance, to publish their works in the GDR. Politically heteronomous actors, on the other hand, stood a better chance of being published in East Germany. Their political affiliations, however, often automatically excluded them from gathering literary capital.

At the same time, the literary field of East Germany cannot be understood as an isolated phenomenon. Political capital and literary capital function rather as currency in interlocking, overlapping and opposing national and international fields. As such, the East German literary field can also be defined through its affiliation with some literary fields and

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its opposition to others. The East German literary field was, for instance, opposed to the West German literary field and the definition of capital in these two sub-national literary fields differed greatly. Whereas the political field was the field of power in the GDR, the economic field played the superordinate role in the Federal Republic. Heteronomous East German writers stood little chance of being published in West Germany, whereas autonomous East German writers who found it impossible to publish in the GDR or were politically subversive, such as Wolf Biermann, Jurek Becker and Reiner Kunze, were able to succeed in West Germany. The East German literary field can also be seen in the context of the much larger Socialist international field which united the national literary fields of the socialist countries and offered a platform for socialist writers. Being a heteronomous, politically compliant literary agent was imperative for anyone searching for recognition within this field. At the same time, we cannot equate the national literary fields of different socialist states as national politics differed at times. This becomes especially visible in the East German literary field during crackdowns in cultural policy as well as phases of liberalisation. Whenever the SED’s cultural-political line wavered, this inevitably affected cultural institutions. For instance, Philpotts and Parker argue in relation to Sinn und Form which had succeeded in accumulating large amounts of autonomous literary capital within the restraints of the East German literary field, that

relations in the field of power in the early 1950s were highly erratic and, more specifically, that shifts in the field in 1952 and 1953 threatened the strategic position of Sinn und Form and threw its continued existence into doubt. Only the re-assertion of intellectual authority after 17 June 1953 and the easing of heteronomous pressure [...] allowed the journal to affirm its legend in the mid-1950s.13

Much like the journal, the Institute found itself in difficult situations during fluctuations in the SED’s cultural policy. I will show in the third chapter that the unstable cultural-political line of the SED in the early 1950s affected the Institute’s founding phase in similar ways.

The geo-political situation between East and West Germany also posed challenges for cultural institutions in the GDR. Although the SED tried to establish a clear line between East and West Germany and side with other socialist states ideologically, the shared language, history, culture and geographical proximity blurred the lines between the two Germanys. This meant that the Institute, especially its staff and students, at times felt the desire to gather autonomous literary capital which in turn opened possibilities in West Germany. At the same time, this usually resulted in disobeying the roles of the field of power, leading to sanctions in various forms. The best-documented example in the context of the Institute is of course the controversy surrounding Werner Bräunig in 1965, the circumstances of which I will further investigate in the fourth chapter. I will examine further successful as well as unsuccessful attempts by members of the Institute to accumulate autonomous literary capital in the case of poetry lecturer Georg Maurer in chapter four and a published seminar discussion led by prose lecturer Joachim Nowotny in chapter five. In all of these cases, we will see how autonomous literary capital attracted literary agents despite their affiliation with the seemingly heteronomous Institute.

Much like the opposition between the East and West German literary fields, the values of the socialist international field were called into question by the much bigger international literary field. On an international level, literary and intellectual capital is bestowed upon the actors closest to the autonomous pole. Pascale Casanova explains:

The international literary field is organized according to the opposition between, on the one hand, at the autonomous pole, the literary fields which are the most endowed with capital, and on the other hand, the most deprived national fields or emergent fields which are usually dependent on national political authorities. There is a structural homology between
each national field and the international literary field: the national fields are also structured according to the opposition between an autonomous cosmopolitan pole and a heteronomous national and political pole. [...] The position of each national field in the world structure depends on its proximity to one of the two poles, that is, on its volume of capital.\textsuperscript{14}

With its orientation towards the heteronomous pole, the domestic literary field of the GDR, controlled by the socialist ideology of the SED, did not correspond to the values of the international field. The centre of the international literary field is its autonomous and international pole where literary innovation is located.\textsuperscript{15} International literary capital can only be accumulated here, which meant that the sub-national literary field of the GDR as well as its actors lacked the autonomous literary capital necessary to be internationally recognised. As a national, politically motivated institution, the Institute and heteronomous writers close to it were unable to occupy a position in which they could successfully gather literary capital in the international literary field.

Each literary field can also be understood as a subfield of the much larger intellectual field which does not only comprise the producers and promoters of art, but also its critics and those occupied with analysing and interpreting cultural practices and artefacts. As a part of this larger field, the literary field and its internal division are externally defined by the standards of the intellectual field. In the intellectual field, knowledge is both produced and circulated. If the perception, definition or appreciation of art changes as a result of practices in the intellectual field, the understanding of autonomy and heteronomy in the literary field could change drastically. Actors in the intellectual field are driven primarily by the desire to accumulate intellectual capital in recognition of their practice in the intellectual field as, for instance, an academic, editor, publisher or critic.


Capital in Its Different Forms and States

As we have seen, there are more variables that define an individual’s position in society than just their economic capital. In ‘The Forms of Capital’, Bourdieu introduces two further categories of capital which he refers to as cultural and social capital. Each type of capital can exist in four distinct forms: the embodied, objectified, symbolic and institutional state. An individual acquires cultural capital in the embodied state, which Bourdieu describes as ‘long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body’, by means of socialisation and education.¹⁶ These dispositions are inextricably linked to on who has invested time and effort into accumulating this form of capital at a ‘personal cost’ (48). Not only is this form of cultural capital forever attached to the person who invested time in its acquisition and can therefore not be transferred to others, but in a capitalist society it is almost impossible to attain high levels of cultural capital without sufficient resources or other forms of inherited capital. The more economic capital an individual has at their disposal during his time of initial accumulation of cultural capital (e.g. through parents), the longer they can be educated, thus accumulating more cultural capital than others who were unable to further their education due to lack of funds. Likewise, the more an individual is exposed to cultural capital while growing up – either at home in the form of books, paintings and other cultural artefacts or by taking part in certain activities, such as visits to museums and galleries –, the more cultural capital they will acquire during their socialisation. If that is the case, the dependence of successful initial capital accumulation on inherited cultural capital creates a negative feedback loop. Those families having large amounts of cultural and economic capital at their disposal are able to support their children better than those who lack capital; positions of high prestige in society that can only be filled by someone with large amounts of capital are

¹⁶ Bourdieu, ‘The Forms of Capital’, p. 47. Further references to this source are given after quotations in the text.
thus more likely to be held by someone coming from an already privileged family than by someone who did not receive considerable support from their family. This puts society into danger of splitting into an upper class that has vast amounts of embodied cultural capital and a lower class deprived of this form of capital, with little permeability between the two. It is this feedback loop the GDR sought to break by making education easily accessible, affordable or free of charge and compulsory until the age of seventeen. The Institute was also committed to this principle and offered its courses not only free of charge but also in combination with very generous bursaries. In the fourth chapter of this thesis, I will explore the embodied cultural capital of two of the Institute’s best-known lecturers, Werner Bräunig and Georg Maurer, in order to investigate how it enabled them to negotiate the tensions arising from their profession and their practice at the Institute.

Cultural capital in its embodied state is, as its name suggests, inseparably linked to the individual who has acquired it. It must, however, not be mistaken for any form of formal acknowledgement of successful inculcation or assimilation such as academic qualifications which Bourdieu calls cultural capital in its institutionalised state. The latter form of capital comes in the constant, reliable and comparable form of educational and academic titles (50-51). Cultural capital in its institutionalised state is still as closely linked to its bearer as cultural capital in the embodied state, i.e. it disappears with the death of its bearer and cannot be transferred onto another individual. At the same time, it is ‘academically sanctioned by legally guaranteed qualifications’, which means that this form of capital is more readily recognised as legitimate cultural capital than in its embodied state (50). Cultural capital in the embodied state lacks this dimension of official approval and is therefore ‘predisposed to function as symbolic capital, i.e., to be unrecognized as capital and recognized as legitimate competence’ (48). In the third chapter, I will investigate the
relationship between institutionalised capital and the creation of the Institute in order to determine the capital exchanges necessary to found the institution and their effect on its reputation.

Another possibility for an individual to make their embodied cultural capital transmissible is to produce ‘cultural goods (pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc.), which are the trace or realization of theories, problematics, etc.’ (47). Even though the embodied cultural capital cannot be directly transmitted, it can be used to create objectified cultural capital which is transferable in the form of material ownership. By circulating their cultural capital in the form of books, actors in the literary field are able to transform their embodied cultural capital into objectified cultural capital which in turn can be exchanged for other forms of capital, such as economic capital in the form of royalties, or symbolic capital. Unlike cultural capital in the embodied state, cultural capital in the objectified state can be independent of its actor and can create its own economic and symbolic value. At the same time, it has to be stressed that cultural capital in its objectified state is utilised by agents in their struggle for power in and between different fields. Objectified cultural capital will be especially useful in the fifth chapter, in which I will investigate a number of the Institute’s publications during the 1970s and attempt to determine how these publications shaped the Institute’s reputation in the short and long term.

After having explored the embodied, institutionalised and objectified states of capital, we will now turn to a state in which capital can occur that functions altogether differently: symbolic capital. Bourdieu understands symbolic capital as any form of capital ‘that is disavowed, misrecognized and thereby recognized, hence legitimate, a “credit” which, under certain conditions, and always in the long run, guarantees “economic”
profits’. A common misrecognition of capital is an exaggerated amount of ‘prestige, reputation, fame’ that is connected to a single agent and perceived as ‘legitimate’. Earlier on, we have considered the inherent contradiction between economic and literary success in the literary field and how economic success alone does not equal a gain of prestige in the literary field. Only those actors who are disinterested in the values that are imposed on the literary field by the field of power – the economic field in this example – are in a position to accumulate symbolic capital in the literary field. Bourdieu explains:

When the only usable, effective capital is the (mis)recognized, legitimate capital called ‘prestige’ or ‘authority’, the economic capital that cultural undertakings generally require cannot secure the specific profits produced by the field – not the ‘economic’ profits they always imply -- unless it is reconverted into symbolic capital. For the author, the critic, the art dealer, the publisher or the theatre manager, the only legitimate accumulation consists in making a name for oneself, a known, recognized name, a capital of consecration implying a power to consecrate objects (with a trademark or signature) or persons (through publication, exhibition, etc.) and therefore to give value, and to appropriate the profits from this operation.

Symbolic literary capital can primarily be accumulated by adhering to the principles of rarity and exclusivity which, by definition, exclude commercialisation. Unlike economic capital, symbolic literary capital enables its holder to further pursue their career and capital acquisition in the literary field. Accumulating and transferring symbolic literary capital is, therefore, the ultimate objective of any autonomous literary institution that seeks to occupy a powerful position in the international literary field. In the case of the Institute, economic capital has to be substituted with political capital, of course. Yet, the same logic applies: striving for political capital would automatically prevent the Institute from accumulating and transferring symbolic literary capital to itself and its associates. On the other hand, trying to generate symbolic literary capital through autonomous practice would have positioned the Institute in opposition to the field of power and put its existence at risk. Investigating

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17 Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, 75.
19 Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, 75.
whether the Institute desired to be internationally recognised as an influential source of literary talent and establishing its success in doing so will help us to better understand the Institute’s self-perception and ultimate aspirations. Was it able to appease the field of power while also accumulating symbolic literary capital or was a double agency impossible, as Bourdieu seems to suggest?

Bourdieu introduces a third form of capital which he calls social capital. Unlike economic and cultural capital, social capital is not generated and accumulated by one individual alone, but rather comes into being through an individual’s association with a group of others. By becoming a member of or being associated with political parties, activist groups, artistic circles, academic organisations or professional networks, individuals can accumulate social capital and increase the value of other forms of capital they possess in a ‘continuous series of exchanges in which recognition is endlessly affirmed and reaffirmed’ (51). Thus, social capital acts as a ‘multiplier effect on the capital he [the actor] possesses in his own right’ (51). Bourdieu explains this form of capital and its effect as follows:

Social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a ‘credential’ which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word. (51)

As we shall see, the notion of social capital is of great importance for the analysis of the distribution and conversion of capital at the Institute in numerous ways. The Institute can of course be understood as a local institutionalised network of individual actors, but the concept of social capital can also be applied on a national level: the nationwide organisation of writers in the GDR as well as the emergence of circles of writers who preferred not to be openly associated with the SED serve as further manifestations of writers being organised or organising themselves in lager networks.
Thinking of social capital as a form of capital, as Bourdieu suggests, proves somewhat difficult without considering the context in which the social network has formed. For example, the social capital generated by a literary group such as the Sächsische Dichterschule or the Gruppe 61 does not equate to the social capital generated by FDJ groups. It seems more practical to think of social capital as a state in which certain capital can occur. Literary circles would then generate literary capital in its social state much like members of the FDJ would have attained political and possibly economic capital in its social state by making acquaintance with other individuals in a space organised by the field of power. The implications of social capital for the organisation of writers in the GDR will be explored in more detail when discussing the role of the lecturer Georg Maurer in section two of chapter four.

Capital in the Bourdieusian sense can be accumulated, invested or exchanged in a number of ways as the states and forms in which it occurs are fluid. The three states in which cultural capital can occur are especially relevant for the study of the Institute. From a student perspective, the Institute had a validating effect: Students who applied to study at the Institute had to prove their literary talent, or embodied literary capital. As explained earlier, embodied cultural capital is closely bound to the individual and difficult to measure. The Institute only accepted students who had at least one publication to prove their literary abilities. Regardless of where their work had been published, once their writing had been printed, the embodied literary capital invested by the writer entered the objectified state and thus became tangible and quantifiable. Objectified literary capital allowed emerging writers to enter the Institute, which promised an even more effective exchange of capital. Through tuition by established writers who invested their embodied cultural capital into the Institute, students were able to further increase their embodied capital until they graduated. The
certificate of graduation finally changed their literary capital from the embodied into the institutionalised state which greatly benefited the students: the embodied literary capital that brought them to the Institute had now entered the validated, widely recognised and easily transferable institutionalised state which in turn could be exchanged for other forms of capital.

2.2 Habitus: Accounting for Individual Behaviour

While Bourdieu’s work on the forms of capital and the notion of the field mainly focus on the depiction of society and cultural practice on a macro level, he also considered the implications of his theory for individuals who partake in capital exchanges and aspire to occupy positions in their respective fields of practice. In order to understand and analyse individual actions in this context, Bourdieu introduces the notion of *habitus*. His most elaborate definition of habitus highlights the genesis of individual behaviour in reaction to the agent’s surroundings as a reciprocal process. Accordingly, an individual’s habitus can be understood as

> durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. Objectively ‘regulated’ and ‘regular’ without being in any way the product of obedience to rules, they can be collectively orchestrated without being the product of the organizing action of a conductor.\(^{20}\)

Individual and field complement each other in the development of an agent’s habitus; while the agent’s intention to occupy a certain position in a field urges him to behave in a certain way, hoping to accomplish a capital exchange that will bring him closer to that position, the reaction to his behaviour acts as encouragement or discouragement of this very behaviour. Depending on if the agent received additional capital and succeeded in his attempt to

occupy his chosen position or if he was not and was refused the desired position or capital exchange, the demonstrated behaviour will either be employed more often and become a part of the agent’s habitus, or it will be discarded and most likely employed no further. Therefore, habitus can best be understood as ‘a system of shared social dispositions and cognitive structures which generates perceptions, appreciations and actions’. 21

This definition of personal habitus begs the question of how conscious and deliberate an agent’s actions and therefore habitus are. 22 Bourdieu admits that there is no ‘simple answer’ to the question if agents use ‘conscious strategy, cynical calculation’ when negotiating their position in a field. 23 He believes that ‘... lucidity is always partial and is, once again, a matter of position and trajectory within the field, so that it varies from one agent and one moment to another’. However, it is not just circumstance which influences an agent in his behaviour. Bourdieu speaks of an individual’s habitus in close connection to the impact socialisation and upbringing have had on the agent.

It is within each state of the field that – as a function of the structure of the possibles which are manifested through the different positions and the properties of the occupants (particularly with respect to social origin and the corresponding dispositions), and also as a function of the positions actually and potentially occupied within the field (experienced as success or failure) – the dispositions associated with a certain kind of social origin are specified by being enacted in structurally marked practices; and the same dispositions lead to opposite aesthetic or political positions, depending on the state of the field in relation to which they have to express themselves. 24

The socialisation process an agent has been subjected to makes him more likely to show certain forms of behaviour. In addition to this, the stages of education an individual has to complete in order to accumulate cultural capital in its institutional form also have an impact on that person’s dispositions, beliefs and behaviour. Agents will, in one way or another,

23 These quotations and following: Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, p. 72.
embody what they have been exposed to and attempt to recreate behavioural patterns that they have become familiar with during the course of their socialisation.

While the discussion of habitus so far has focused on its advantages and limits for the analysis of individual behaviour, the concept of habitus can also be understood as a set of dispositions, beliefs and behaviours common to a group of people associated with the same institution. Bourdieu speaks of a common or institutional habitus in this case. In his analysis of André Gide’s role as the editor of the literary journal *Nouvelle Revue Française*, he explains this common habitus as the journal’s inherent ethos that ‘unites the members of what one calls “the nucleus”’ which ‘co-opts’ less frequent contributors of the journal and is responsible for its individuality by defining its ‘marker in the classification struggles located in any field’.²⁵ According to Matthew Philpotts, assigning a habitus to non-human actors in the literary field, such as a literary journal, allows for its conceptualisation ‘as an actor in its own right’. In this case, ‘the interaction between the personal habitus of the editor and the institutional habitus of the journal’ allow for a new approach to the analysis of the relationship between institution and individual actor.²⁶ This concept is not only valid in regard to a journal; an educational institution, too, is characterised by its specific institutional habitus. This enables us to think about the Institute as a collective of literary and intellectual actors that may share a common habitus.

The common habitus of the Institute can best be described as a multiple habitus consisting of three surprisingly contradictory dispositions. We have already seen that the Institute, as an agent in the literary field of the GDR, had to obey certain rules imposed on literary production by the field of power and therefore had to show heteronomous political dispositions in line with SED politics. The second set of dispositions corresponds to the

habitus of a worker. The resolutions of the *Bitterfelder Weg* which some scholars link closely to the Institute illustrate this aspect of the shared habitus at the Becher Institute. This habitus promotes the work of a writer as comparable to industrial labour. Opposed to this habitus are the dispositions of the intellectual that also form an integral part of the common habitus due to the highly academic nature of instruction and practice at the Institute. As intellectuals, members and students of the Institute did not necessarily see themselves as labourers or political subjects, but felt the obligation to participate in debates about cultural policy and the arts.

Given the conflicting demands literary production was faced with, the tripartite nature of the Institute’s common habitus may not come as much of a surprise. Instructors and students alike were driven by the desire to produce literature of high quality, thus embracing potentially autonomous tendencies of the literary field in order to accumulate symbolic literary capital. At the same time, the field of power imposed a political conviction on literary actors who, in order to comply with these external demands, had little choice but to pursue heteronomous literary capital in order to uphold their position in the domestic literary field. As a result of the politically imposed socialist ideology that characterised heteronomous literary production, the act of writing was recategorised and not understood as an intellectual activity, but rather as a form of labour. The intellectual dimension of being a literary actor was, at times, suppressed by the political obligation to empower the worker and the shift in the perception of a writer as a worker and not necessarily an intellectual. David Clarke argues that the Institute did not necessarily promote the officially sanctioned concept of the socialist writer:

Das Studium am Institut diente, trotz der Beteuerungen seines Personals dem Staat gegenüber, immer mehr dazu, Studierenden die Möglichkeit einzuräumen, ein Bild von sich als Intellektuellen zu entwickeln, das wenig mit der Verbundenheit der Arbeiterklasse zu tun
This observation can be easily translated into Bourdieu’s terms: The common habitus at the Institute was not equally represented by its three components. Instead, it was dominated by an autonomous understanding of the role of the writer that did not correspond to GDR cultural policy.

The somewhat static nature of Bourdieu’s understanding of habitus has been pointed out as problematic by critics and is not always reconcilable with the complex reality of the domestic literary field in which the Institute had to operate. In light of the Institute’s tripartite habitus and the conflicts arising from the encounter between Institute and individual literary actors, a more dynamic definition of habitus is needed. Bernard Lahire has elaborated on this aspect. He takes issue with the empirically unproven coherence and homogeneity that Bourdieu assumes as the basis of habitus and proposes ‘a more complex vision of the individual as being less unified and as the bearer of heterogeneous habits, schemes, or dispositions which may be contrary or even contradictory to one another.’ He stresses that it is not only the plurality of dispositions that makes for an inconsistent habitus, but that the plurality of contexts, in which certain dispositions are triggered, is an equally influential factor. This definition of habitus based on a plurality of dispositions, contexts and habitual actions offers a more adaptable approach to analysing the institutional habitus of the Institute.

While Bourdieu allows for some variations in an individual’s habitus, Lahire’s understanding of habitus allows for an individual’s dispositions to fundamentally contradict each other. He explains these *intra-individual variations* as contradicting behaviour and

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27 David Clarke, 'Das Institut "Johannes R. Becher" und die Autorenausbildung in der DDR', p. 185.
28 Bernard Lahire, 'From the Habitus to an Individual Heritage of Dispositions. Towards a Sociology at the Level of the Individual', *Poetics*, 31 (2003), 344. Subsequent references are given after quotations in the text.
preferences when ‘the same individual does this and that, likes this but likes that as well, likes this but on the contrary detests that, etc.’. Lahire believes that there is not only a multitude of dispositions accumulated in a single individual, but that these dispositions also differ from each other in terms of their strength and durability:

There are stronger and weaker dispositions; in turn, the relative strength or weakness of dispositions depends in part on the frequency with which they are actualized. A permanent habit is not internalized within a few hours. On the other hand, certain dispositions may weaken or peter out for lack of conditions under which they may be actualized, or because of conditions curtailing them.

This understanding of habitus makes it possible to better analyse the multiple habitus of the Institute and the seemingly contradictory habitus of individuals who are trying to negotiate their position in the literary field of the GDR. Students at the Institute were not only exposed to the field of power with its heteronomous expectations of writers, but at the same time taught about literature and writing from an autonomous point of view. The habitus of the Party-loyal working writer was extended by the habitus of the literary intellectual as the students had to navigate multiple contexts.

Lahire considers this plurality of contexts that actors have to negotiate and comes to the conclusion that behaviours and dispositions that have been activated in one context cannot be readily transferred to another situation. Some practices are ‘strictly limited to particular social situations or fields of practice’. The plurality of dispositions and the contextual activation of certain behaviours can explain the emergence of what Clarke calls a niche society at the Institute in the 1980s. The autonomous dispositions that were developed by many students as a result of their exposure to the intellectual part of the institutional habitus could not be activated in the public literary field of the GDR. In a space

30 Lahire, 'From the Habitus to an Individual Heritage of Dispositions', p. 339.
31 Ibid., p. 343.
32 See: Clarke, 'Das Institut "Johannes R. Becher" und die Autorenausbildung in der DDR'.

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secluded from the public, whose existence was facilitated by the Institute, students were able
to discuss and criticise cultural policy as practised by the SED.

Having discussed the notions of capital, field and habitus, it is necessary to
understand the interface between individual and society, or in Bourdieu’s terms agent and
field. How do agent and individual habitus map on to a field and the available positions?
The link between agent and field is what Bourdieu refers to as a position-taking. In the literary
field, a position-taking can be the publication of a monograph, a letter to the editor by a
well-known author or a speech at a literary event. Depending on the relation between the
literary field and the field of power, these actions may also have political significance. At any
given moment in time, there are a number of possible position-takings available to an agent.

Bourdieu elaborates:

Every position-taking is defined in relation to the space of possibilities which is objectively realized
as a problematic in the form of the actual or potential position-takings corresponding to the
actual positions; and it receives its distinctive value from its negative relationship with the
coeexistent position-takings to which it is objectively related and which determine it by
delimiting it. It follows from this, for example, that a position-taking changes, even when
the position remains identical, whenever there is change in the universe of options that are
simultaneously offered for producers and consumers to choose from. The meaning of a
work (artistic, literary, philosophical, etc.) changes automatically with each change in the
field within which it is situated for the spectator or reader.33

A position-taking never happens in a vacuum. Instead its meaning can only be gathered by
interpreting it in relation to prior position-takings by the same agent and other position-
takings by other agents. If a writer who has established his position close to the
autonomous pole of the literary field publishes one of his poems in a literary journal that is
known for its heteronomous practice, a discrepancy will be created between his existing
position-takings and the latest position-taking. Whereas the heteronomous actor affirmed
and reinforced his position, the established position of the autonomous actor is called into
question. Changes in the literary field of the GDR as a result of fluctuations in cultural

policy could also affect the possible position-takings and their reception by the literary and political fields. For instance, the publication of Ulrich Plenzdorf's *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* in *Sinn und Form* in 1972 was made possible by a more lenient phase of cultural policy brought about by Erich Honecker's promise of *no taboos*. As this phase of liberalisation led into a period of restrictive cultural policy, the literary field changed as a result. Under the new circumstances, a similar publication would not have been possible, which certainly affected the reception of the work in the mid-1970s.

Bourdieu’s notion of habitus along with his field theory and forms and states of capital will inform and structure the following three chapters and allow me to reconstruct and discuss the tensions and contradictions that were inherent to the Becher Institute from its creation to its closure. The changes in state of capital students could expect from attending the Institute and the benefits connected to those capital transformations can also be observed at an institutional level. Of course, the way in which the Institute generated, invested and exchanged cultural capital differs greatly. The following three chapters will each examine one form of capital, its significance for and use by the Institute in more detail. First, I will look at how institutionalised cultural capital was created during the founding of the Institute. Although we will see that this state of capital was highly politically charged, I will show that the Institute’s habitus in the mid-1950s was not necessarily as orthodox as it is often presented. Secondly, the importance of embodied cultural capital will be explored through the case studies of the lecturers Werner Bräunig and Georg Maurer. The notion of habitus will allow me to show how both individuals negotiated several competing dispositions in their roles as lecturers and writers during the mid-1960s. Lastly, I will explore the way in which the Institute’s habitus was expressed through its objectified literary capital in the form of publications. By applying Bourdieu’s notions of field, capital and habitus I
will show that the Institute did not consistently orient itself towards heteronomous values in its teaching practices, curriculum design and publications despite its politically charged founding struggles and frequently tried to appease the field of power while at the same time giving in to the temptation of acquiring symbolic cultural capital.
3. Institutionalised Capital: Creating a Literary Institute in the Unstable East German Literary Field of the Early 1950s

The circumstances surrounding the founding of the Institut für Literatur has been cause for much speculation and the exact stages of planning the Institute and its eventual founding in September 1955 have only been superficially reconstructed in the existing scholarship. Like Kiehl, most scholars identify the fourth Party Conference (30 March - 6 April 1954) as the moment of the decision to found an institution for the training of writers in the GDR. Walter Ulbricht made the announcement and is therefore named as the driving force behind the project in some publications on the Institute. Johannes R. Becher is also commonly connected to the idea of founding a literary academy through an entry from his dairy dated 7 January 1950. In this entry, which I will analyse in more detail later, Becher appears to oppose the founding of an East German literary academy. The seemingly contradictory statements Becher and Ulbricht made, four years apart and under very different circumstances, have been pointed out by most scholars. The location of the Institute is also often discussed in the existing scholarship, although a definite reason why Leipzig was chosen has yet to be found. There are, however, two prominent theories. The first is that Becher himself opposed the founding of the Institute in Berlin in order to minimise Alfred Kurella’s influence in the capital.² The other is that Leipzig was chosen over Berlin because

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¹ Kiehl, Die Literatur im Bezirk Leipzig 1945 – 1990, p. 27.
of its reputation as a ‘Buchstadt’. However, the circumstances surrounding the founding of
the Institute are not as uncertain as Kiehl would like us to believe.

In this chapter, I will take a closer look at the founding of the Institut für Literatur by
re-examining the sources on which the existing scholarship has based its findings. In
addition to this, I will also include in my analysis archival material that has so far not found
its way into publications about the Institute. This will allow me to reconstruct the Institute’s
founding phase in detail. The archival documents consist of proposals for the founding of a
literary institute, minutes of meetings in which the founding was discussed and letters and
exchanges between individuals. They tell a story of the rejection of the very idea of a literary
academy on the one hand and the relentless support of the cause by dedicated functionaries
on the other. In light of the new findings from these documents, some of the claims about
the Institute’s founding will need to be questioned. The archival material shows that, first,
the founding of the Institute was a much longer process than it has so far been assumed,
secondly, the involvement of well-known politicians and functionaries such as Walter
Ulbricht and Johannes R. Becher has been overemphasised and thirdly, the reason for
choosing Leipzig as the Institute’s location was neither the city’s literary tradition nor
Berlin’s aversion to Kurella.

With the help of these sources, I will focus on highlighting and analysing the many
obstacles that had to be resolved in order to eventually open the Institute. I will also
investigate the tensions and contradictions that emerged in the process of creating the
Institute and which continued to shape its common habitus, reputation and self-image for
decades to come. The most noticeable tension those campaigning for a literary academy
faced was widespread scepticism among the members of the literary and political fields as
well as the general public about the value of such an institution. A common view was that if
young talent had blossomed in the past without being instructed how to write, writers would still be able to emerge without the state spending further resources on them. A less materialistically motivated reservation was the doubt whether it was even possible to teach someone how to write in an institutional setting. This led to recurrent difficulties in the Institute’s admission practice: as a creative institution within a political hierarchy, should talent be the primary selection criterion or should political loyalty be considered as well? Should autonomous writers be fostered at the Institute or should they be categorically excluded? Could the Institute possibly attempt to rehabilitate autonomous writers in the eyes of the Party? Closely connected to this is the probably most fundamental source of tension at the Institute: What was its founding ethos and did it result in a predominantly autonomous or heteronomous common habitus?

Some of these questions have already been touched on in the existing scholarship. However, there has not yet been a comprehensive reconstruction and analysis of the Institute’s founding which is, of course, still shrouded in speculation and half-truths. This also means that the tensions the Institute faced during the 35 years of its operation have not been traced back as far as they could have been. Before examining the Institute’s founding at a micro-level, I will propose a division of the Institute’s founding period into three stages which acknowledge not only the timeline of events leading up to its founding, but also their context.

**Three Stages of the Institute’s Founding Process**

The Institute’s founding can be divided into three distinct phases that not only show the complex struggle of the supporters of the Institute, but are also indicative of the East German literary field in the early 1950s. The first phase consists of two proposals made for a literary academy in the GDR in early 1950. The first proposal for the founding cannot be
located and Becher’s reaction to it in his diary is the only remaining trace. A second, surviving proposal from mid-February 1950 can be read as an opposition to the first proposal as well as a testament to the struggle for power between the literary field and the political field. The analysis of this phase also draws on a written exchange between Becher and writer and functionary Franz Hammer in early 1950 about literary training for young writers in the GDR that has not yet been connected to the early proposals to found a literary institute in East Germany.

After a visit to the Gorky Literary Institute in Moscow organised by the DSV in 1953, Annemarie Reinhard submitted a third proposal which marks the beginning of the second phase in the planning of the Institute. In this phase, we can see Reinhard’s proposal, overseen by the DSV, advance to a stage of actual planning, making her the person who successfully instigated the founding of the Institute, yet her name does not appear in this context in the existing scholarship. Reinhard and her DSV colleagues played a crucial, yet neglected, role in the early stages of planning the Institute. The DSV’s involvement shows how the founding of the Institute was eventually implemented not only through the support of a large number of literary actors, but especially through the dedication of a select number of political functionaries. One of the reasons why Reinhard’s proposal was more successful than its predecessors was the fact that, as a member of the DSV committee for the founding of the Institute, she was able to introduce the idea of an East German literary academy into the formal organisational context of the East German Writers’ Association. This connection meant that much needed institutional cultural capital was invested in the project, which, as an easily transferable form of capital, could be exchanged for the recognition and support from the political field the project needed in order to commence. However, the DSV was unable to endow the planning of the Institute with sufficient
institutional and financial capital to complete its founding and the second phase ends with the DSV entrusting the MfK with the project in 1954. With a change of the patronage it seems logical to assume a distinct break in the way the project was handled. However, some functionaries transferred to the MfK together and formed a constant in the Institute's founding process by remaining in charge of the project. The findings concerned with this phase are largely informed by archival sources, mainly minutes of meetings, which have not yet been examined. The sources show that the creation of the Institute was indeed neither a pet project of Walter Ulbricht's nor an episode in the Institute's history that can be adequately covered in anecdotal form as several scholars have done.

The third and final phase of the Institute’s founding began with the MfK’s involvement in the project and ended with Alfred Kurella’s departure from his post as the Institute’s director in late 1957. It may seem counter-intuitive that the planning phase of the Institute is presented as having ended two years after its opening. However, we will see that even though the official announcement of the founding of the Institute was made on 3 February 1955 and the Institute welcomed its first students on 30 September 1955, the planning of the Institute had not yet been completed. Alfred Kurella, who was in charge of finalising the Institute’s creation after his move to East Germany in February 1954, faced many practical issues before and during his term as director that even his vast reserves of heteronomous political capital could not easily resolve. Some of these issues have been discussed in passing by the existing scholarship, such as the struggle to convince authors to become the Institute’s first students and the decision to base the Institute in Leipzig instead of Berlin. However, more remains to be accounted for, such as the reasons for these issues and their delayed resolutions. The findings relating to the final stage of the Institute's founding also draw on documents held by various archives, such as minutes of meetings,
written exchanges between those involved in the Institute’s founding and autobiographical accounts written by the Institute’s first students.

Reconstructing the birth and early operation of a cultural institution in the GDR during the 1950s raises questions beyond practicalities and the individuals involved in the process. In many instances, the documents that detail the planning of the Institute show how the involvement, patronage and actions of individuals affected the creation of the Institute. These instances range from seemingly mundane actions such as regular planning meetings to personal visits to the Gorky Institute in Moscow and an intervention by the Ministry of Finance that threatened the creation of the Institute mere months before its intended opening. With the help of Bourdieu’s notion of cultural capital, especially in its institutionalised form, I will demonstrate how the initial capital necessary for the founding of the Institute was gathered and in which forms this capital was transferred to the Institute.

The birth of a cultural institution is, by definition, a crucial process in its history. The habitus shared by its members of staff and associates is established and main capital flows are determined before it even begins its operation. As I explore in more detail in this chapter, there were at least two fundamentally different scenarios of how an academy for the schooling of writers could function: either as an autonomous literary institution dedicated to the creation of symbolic literary capital or as an institution which subordinates itself to the field of power and its heteronomous values. An institution oriented towards autonomous values would have to rally support from individuals who had accrued large amounts of symbolic literary capital. The institution may be able to gain internationally recognised writers and literary critics as patrons to the institution or even engage them in the institutional practice, for example by employing them as regular or visiting lecturers. By association with such individuals a part of their embodied symbolic literary capital could be
transferred onto the institution, thus increasing its degree of legitimacy in the autonomous realm of the sub-national literary field of the GDR. The literary prestige now held by the institution would no longer be symbolic literary capital in its embodied form, but instead institutionalised symbolic literary capital.

Institutionalised cultural capital ‘confers entirely original properties on the cultural capital which it is presumed to guarantee’.3 Institutionalised cultural capital differs from embodied cultural capital in so far as it is no longer attached to ‘the same biological limits as its bearer’ (50). Through institutionalisation, cultural capital enters an objectified state, it is ‘academically sanctioned by legally guaranteed qualifications, formally independent of the person or their bearer’ (50) which changes the way that the cultural capital is perceived. In its institutional state, cultural capital can ‘secure belief’ and ‘impose recognition’ (51). The students of such an autonomously oriented literary institution would benefit greatly from the symbolic institutionalised literary capital which would otherwise perhaps be hard to accumulate within the span of the few years a course at the Institute would have taken and which was more widely, even internationally, recognised due to its institutionalised state. The common habitus of such an institution would be marked by international literary standards that encourage autonomous literary values and disavow political claims on literary production. The institutionalised symbolic literary capital of an autonomous literary academy would, for instance, have opened prestigious, fast-track careers in the national as well as international literary fields for its students.

The second possibility, a heteronomous literary institution in East Germany, would rely on fundamentally different forms and flows of capital. Instead of drawing on symbolic literary capital, the institution would have to mobilise sub-national, heteronomous political

3 Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital', p. 47. Further references are given after quotations in the text.
capital and subordinate itself to the field of power in order to gain the support of the SED. Lecturers employed by this institution would have to originate from the heteronomous pole of the East German literary field or the international Socialist literary field in order to bring embodied heteronomous literary capital to the institution. Writers originating from a heteronomous position in the Socialist literary field would also be able to bring heteronomous literary capital and symbolic political capital to the institution. Symbolic political capital would become the main currency at a heteronomous literary institution and it is this form of capital that the institution would bestow on its graduates in the institutionalised form.

The line between autonomous and heteronomous dispositions and position-takings was, of course, not so clearly defined and often crossed by the Institute, as we will see throughout this thesis. With regards to the Institute’s founding, however, I will argue that it was ultimately political, not literary, capital that made the creation of the Institute possible and that this form of capital determined the institutional capital the Institute was able to bestow on its students. Political capital was also the reason why the Institute was often perceived as a political rather than a literary institution by the national and international public during its existence as well as after its closure in 1990.

3.1. Difficulties of Accumulating Initial Capital: First Proposals for the Founding of a Literary Academy (1950-1952)

As previously mentioned, the first proposal for the founding of the Institute in the GDR does not seem to have survived. However, the earlier mentioned diary entry by Johannes R. Becher, dated 7 January 1950, gives us an idea of what may have been suggested in the proposal:
Ein tolles Stück. Der noch zu gründenden Akademie der Künste wird ein Entwurf zur Bildung eines Literatur-Erziehung-Instituts (Internats) eingereicht als Mittel, realistische Kunst zu erzielen. Im Kampf gegen den Formalismus hyperformalistische Retortenexperimente. 'Ideologische Durchblutung' wäre die Aufgabe des Literaturseminars, meint der unfreiwillige Spaßmacher.4

Judging by Becher’s choice of words, he was not convinced by the proposal. He did not believe in the purpose of the dogmatic, instrumentalised institution for the ideological rather than artistic training of writers the proposal seemed to suggest. Richter argues that Becher’s critique should not be interpreted as a general rejection of the concept of the institutionalised training of writers. Rather, Becher spoke out ‘gegen die Art und Weise, nicht aber gegen das Prinzip’ of a literary academy.5 Becher also seems somewhat appalled that an ambitious project such as the founding of a new institution would be proposed to the AdK before its own founding had been completed.6

Becher’s position on the Institute has so far only been interpreted in direct connection with the first proposal and the eventual founding of the Institute. But on closer inspection, Becher’s diary entry can also be understood in the context of the emerging debate that divided the political field into supporters of the Soviet ideal of a unified Germany and separatist ambitions of the SED leadership.7 This tension eventually affected cultural-political debates over a period of five years and had a long-lasting effect on East German cultural history.8 The orthodox fraction supported a narrow interpretation of Socialist Realism. Their sentiments were most openly expressed in an essay authored by N.

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6 For a detailed account of the AdK’s founding informed by archival evidence see: Matthias Braun, Kulturinsel und Machtnstrument: Die Akademie der Künste, die Partei und die Staatssicherheit, (Göttingen: Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 2007).
Orlow, a pseudonym that is still the subject of speculation today.⁹ Orlow complained: ‘Leider sind in einigen Kunstzweigen der DDR noch Tendenzen des Verfalls und der Zersetzung, des Mystizismus und Symbolismus, die Neigung zu einer verzerrten und unrichtigen Darstellung der Wirklichkeit sowie ein flacher und vulgärer Naturalismus festzustellen.’¹⁰ The supporters of the all-German line, on the other hand, sided with Hungarian philosopher Georg Lukács, who believed that Socialist Realist works were often ‘künstlerisch reizlos und trocken, ihre Darstellungshöhe reiche nicht aus, um damit in breiten Kreisen selbst innerhalb der Arbeiterklasse starken und unmittelbaren Eindruck zu erzielen’.¹¹ Becher appreciated Lukács’s opinion, ‘war in seinen Urteilen vielfach von ihm abhängig’.¹²

In 1949, when ‘the threat from the dogmatists did not yet look so grave’, Becher found himself pressed to comment on his position on formalism.¹³ When he admitted that he had ‘strong reservations’ against it, he was accused of ‘inadequate support for the anti-formalism campaign of the SED’.¹⁴ The resulting pressure in turn forced him to take a more orthodox stand in public than he did in private. In his 1950 diary and his collection of aphorisms from 1952 to 1957, Becher admits that he believes ‘the poet cannot be called upon to produce poetry only in the service of politics’. Drawing on archival material that only became available after the opening of archives in the former Soviet Union in the 1990s, Peter Davies argues that Becher’s actions were characterised by ‘ambivalence about the

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¹² Ibid.


direction of SED cultural policy’ as early as 1945. Indeed, the institutions Becher was involved in establishing, the Kulturbund, the AdK and its thick literary journal *Sinn und Form*, embody an all-German approach that was not necessarily in line with the dogmatic interpretation of cultural policy the SED began to develop in its attempt to legitimise its claim to power.

The kind of solidarity and sense of responsibility felt by left-leaning intellectuals was dangerous, since it implied both a critical attitude to power and an open-minded willingness to approach politics and culture in an all-German, indeed pan-European, dimension. [...] It is therefore of vital importance to recognise that the viability of the GDR and the hold on power of those who wanted to accelerate integration into the Soviet sphere rested on an attempt to create an antagonism to the West qualitatively different from the democratic and socialist aspirations of many left-leaning artists and political figures.

The *integrationists*, a term used by Davies for those favouring a swift integration of the GDR into the people’s democracies of the Soviet Bloc, employed a partisan approach to practices in the cultural field. They were opposed by supporters of an all-German line.

Johannes R. Becher’s rejection of the founding of a literary academy whose common habitus would be determined by dogmatic educational ideology is hardly surprising in this context. The overt political agenda which Becher believed to have identified in the proposal went against his belief of writers being first and foremost intellectuals. He believed that a writer should only become a political figure as a result of and not as a prerequisite for literary endeavours. Hence his conclusion: ‘die Befürwortung des Literaten-Internats: dämlich’.

Despite the fragmented knowledge we have of the first proposal, the nature of and reaction to the proposal reveal the sub-national literary field of the GDR to be in a state of flux. The ongoing debate between integrationists and supporters of an all-German line can

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also be explored in Bourdieu’s terms. As the authoritative power in the political field, the Party’s lack of clarity in its cultural policy towards all-German and integrationist sentiments meant that the field of power did not impose itself on the literary field in this fundamental debate. This resulted in a national literary field in which the characteristics of the heteronomous and autonomous poles were not clearly defined, and establishing whether a certain position in the national literary field would yield national political capital or if it held the potential to create symbolic literary capital was not always possible. As Becher reacted to the first proposal of founding a literary academy under these circumstance, a narrow reading of his diary entry in response to the proposal only scratches the surface as it can also be understood as a symbolic act by Becher in the confrontation between all-German and integrationist literary values.

Little more than a month after Becher’s diary entry, on 15 February 1950, a formal proposal for the founding of a national literary academy in the GDR was circulated in the Referat Literatur of the Central Committee (ZK). Tucked away in the Federal Archive holdings for the Central Committee of the SED in Berlin-Lichterfelde, it is hardly surprising that this four-page proposal has so far been overlooked by scholars on the Institute. This is regrettable because this second proposal raises central questions about the role Becher really played in the early stages of founding the literary academy and is an important part of the Institute’s founding. The second proposal opens with the claim that given the students’ literary talent and aptitude, ‘die nicht erlernbar oder lehrbar sind’, an institution dedicated to the training of emerging writers would facilitate ‘das Nachholen des Bildungsweges zur Ausweitung des Themenhorizontes, die dialektische Logik zur Beherrschung der Materie und Stoffe und die Gestaltung der Sprache mit dem Ziel ihrer dichterischen und

18 ’Das Deutsche Literatur-Institut’, Berlin, 15 February 1950, Bundesarchiv Berlin (abbreviated in the following as ‘BArch’) DY 30/IV 2/9.06/264.
künstlerischen Gestaltung’.

This opening statement highlights two issues that would become central and hotly debated topics not just during the Institute’s founding, but also throughout its 35 years of existence: is literary aptitude teachable and if not, is the very concept of a literary academy absurd? And: should a literary academy focus on literary skills or should it provide its students with a more general education alongside their literary studies? The proposal resolves these questions by demanding proof of prospective students’ literary talent which could then be further fostered at the academy. The affirmative stance on improving the students’ general education is hardly surprising given the disruptive effect WWII had on the education of the young generation that would begin their professional careers in the 1950s. The aim of a literary academy, according to this proposal, was therefore not only to focus on training writers, but also to provide general education in the form of history and foreign language classes for instance. The proposal furthermore identifies the need for more vocational training in the literary field and advocates the training of writers, journalists, archivists, literary critics and literary pedagogues. Even though the concept of working writers had not yet become a prominent subject of debate in 1950, the proposal clearly anticipates the need for pragmatic skills in order for future students to take on roles in the literary field other than freelance writers. However, it does not yet aim to reintroduce its alumni to the reality of working class life, which would be the primary aim of the Institute in later years.

The institution envisioned in the proposal had a predominantly pragmatic character. In the proposed curriculum an explicit reference to the study of Socialist Realism can only be found in the fourth, and final, semester without any further clarification, such as exemplary works to be studied. References to political and ideological training are absent,

implying that the proposal may have originated from an all-German position and favoured an institution with an autonomous common habitus. Among the individual works suggested for the course of study are Molière's *Der eingebildete Kranke* and Georg Büchner's *Woyzeck*. Especially the fragmentary nature of the latter work and its critique of society seem to contradict the idealism of Socialist Realism. Considering that *Woyzeck* is as prominent in the proposal as Socialist Realism itself, the interpretation of a literary canon seems to be an all-German one.

The proposal closes with a final plea for the creation of an institution for the training of writers, implying that the GDR could otherwise lose touch with other countries and their literary achievements:


The position this proposal takes in relation to the question of whether or not writing can be taught is one of the least compromising ones we will encounter during the Institute's founding. The argument that it must be possible to teach and learn how to write if other countries are schooling their writers may not convince everybody. However, the author of the proposal seems to be primarily concerned that the GDR is not following international trends and developments in the cultural sphere. In his list of successful literary institutes, the only reference to a Soviet institution is the Gorky Literary Institute in Moscow. Later discussions about the founding of an institute for the training of writers would ignore the fact that creative writing had also been taught in West Germany and the United States of America. The proposal, however, acknowledges these institutions of literary instruction,

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which further emphasises the autonomous, internationally oriented approach to literature particular to this proposal. Unfortunately, the signature on the proposal is hardly legible. This means that the advocate of a broad-based East German literary academy – possibly a Peter Ross or Peter Voss – and his motivation to propose the founding of such an institution may remain unknown. We will return to the question of authorship of this document later.

**Johannes R. Becher versus Franz Hammer**

Following the death of Heinrich Mann on 11 March 1950, commemoration services were held in many East German cities in his honour. Mann had been in the process of returning from exile in California to East Berlin to take up the position as the president of the AdK. At one service in Bad Liebenstein, a small town home to the Heinrich-Mann-Sanatorium, Arnold Zweig, who succeeded Mann as the president of the AdK, and Alfred Kantorowicz commemorated the late writer. They were joined by Franz Hammer, a member of the Kulturbund, who used the opportunity to promote the founding of a literary academy. The article about this proposal and the commemoration service in the SED-run daily *Neues Deutschland* (ND) entitled ‘Heinrich-Mann-Institut’ clearly laid its focus on the proposal rather than the service itself. After naming the occasion, time and guests in the first half of the article, the second half summarises:

> Als Vertreter des Kulturbundes schlug der Schriftsteller Franz Hammer bei dieser Gelegenheit vor, ein “Heinrich-Mann-Institut” zu schaffen, das ähnlich wie im ‘Gorki-Institut’ in Moskau begabten jungen Schriftstellern die Möglichkeit gibt, sich mit dem fortschrittlichen deutschen Kulturgut auseinanderzusetzen und auf ihr künftiges geistiges Wirken vorzubereiten.21

Even though Hammer’s vision of a literary academy cannot be critically assessed given the brevity of the account, the prominent focus on the Gorky Literary Institute in the Soviet

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21 ‘Heinrich-Mann-Institut’, in *Neues Deutschland*, March 31 1950, p. 3.
Union is one that will recur across the various proposals made in this founding phase and the Moscow institution warrants a closer look.

It is hardly surprising that the cultural functionaries of the GDR turned to Moscow for guidance on how to train emerging writers. In 1930, the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (RAPP) tried to mobilise ‘shock-workers’ in an attempt to involve the working class in the production of socialist literature.\(^{22}\) Even before then, leading actors in the literary field had realised that young writers needed aesthetic and ideological direction on their way to becoming successful state writers. Until 1933, this role was fulfilled by a number of literary journals that would offer ‘lit consultancies, which had to explain to an author what was required for artistic writing’. Maxim Gorky ran the lit consultancy of the journal Literaturnaia ucheba and became the ‘foremost leader in “producing” Soviet writers’. However, this was not an ideal delivery system of literary instruction for young writers. Issues such as the lack of opportunities to obtain literary qualifications could not be adequately addressed by lit consultancies which often lacked qualified members of staff.\(^{23}\) Something had to be changed in order to be able to provide the institutionalised and embodied literary capital participants of the lit consultancies demanded. In September 1932, the Central Executive Committee of the USSR addressed this shortcoming by ordering the establishment of a literary institute named after Maxim Gorky to commemorate his fortieth anniversary of literary activity.\(^{24}\) Now, there was a place where emerging writers could profit from the tuition of seasoned writers who had acquired large sums of embodied literary capital and leave the institution with a certificate that acknowledged the institutionalised literary capital with which

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\(^{24}\) Ibid. p. 340.
graduates were endowed after their studies. At the same time, the materialisation of said tuition in the form of an institute that occupied a physical building meant an increase in symbolic cultural capital that could not be matched by the lit consultancy system. The Maxim Gorky Institute – officially named the All-Union Workers’ Literary University – welcomed its first students in Hertzen’s House on Tverskoi Boulevard, Moscow, on December 3, 1933 and thus became ‘the only educational enterprise in the world at that time where professional poets and writers were moulded’.

Even though the accounts the Gorky Institute’s numerous alumni have given of their studies are predominantly positive, it cannot be denied that the institution itself was aligned with Party politics and promoted Socialist Realism and the working writer. The subordination of a literary institution to the political field and the acceptance of an ideologically oriented syllabus may have made the Gorky Literary Institute a suitable reference for supporters of an SED-run, heteronomous literary institution in the GDR.

Franz Hammer’s involvement in the training of young writers did not go unnoticed by Johannes R. Becher. Despite Hammer’s involvement with the Arbeitskreise junger Autoren (AJA) which he founded in Thuringia in 1946, Becher remained fundamentally unimpressed by Hammer’s achievements. The few published letters between both writers bear witness to an exchange between two literary actors who disagreed about the finer details of literary production in many respects. In a letter dated 24 May 1950, Becher questions Hammer’s claim of having successfully instructed workers in creative writing at a workshop in Ilmenau, Thuringia. Hammer, whose letter to Becher is not published, must have supported his claim

\[25\] Ibid. pp. 342-43.
by mentioning the interest shown in his project by the media. Becher’s verdict is devastating:

> Alles, was Sie schreiben, spricht nicht im Mindesten von dem Erfolg Ihrer Literaturerziehung [...] Die Leseproben würden mich interessieren, nicht die reporterhafte Umrangung der öffentlichen Lesung. Daß, in ihre berufliche Arbeit zurückgekehrt, gar bald jeder Teilnehmer die stark befürchtende Wirkung des Lehrgangs spürte, beweist ebenfalls noch lange keine literarische Leistung [...] Ich erlaube mir darüber hinaus auch die Meinung, daß zu solchen Lehrgängen nicht diejenigen herangezogen werden, die wirklich etwas zu lehren haben, sondern daß junge Autoren dort Wichtigtuer und solchen Leuten überlassen werden, die einem jungen ernsthaften Autor nichts Ernsthaftes zu bieten haben.28

Even though Becher’s response is aimed at the dilettante organisation and advertising of Hammer’s workshop, his opinion of what the professional training of writers should and should not be like becomes very clear. To Becher, the literary output and its quality mattered: ‘denn ich gehöre leider zu den etwas realistischen Literaturbeurteilern, die nicht von Deklamationen und Behauptungen sich einschüchtern lassen, sondern handgreiflich sehen wollen, was bei einem solchen Lehrgang herauskommt’. Becher also had a clear idea of who was and was not suitable to provide literary training and those who taught at the workshop were nothing more than ‘Wichtigtuer’ in Becher’s eyes. As no names are mentioned in the letter, it remains unclear as to which exact qualities Becher criticised, but it can be assumed that he valued literary expertise in the form of embodied literary capital in whoever intended to act as a writing tutor.

The letter nevertheless shows that Becher did not just confine his thoughts about the training of writers to the relative privacy of his diary, but was willing to defend his idea of literary training in front of others.29 It also provides further proof of the former’s participation in the debate of literary training in the GDR in the early 1950s. The most surprising insight revealed by this letter, however, is Becher’s confession of having commented on the issue of literary training using a pseudonym: ‘Ich bekenne, daß ich unter

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28 Becher, *Briefe*, pp. 397-98. The following quotation is taken from the same source.
29 As Becher wrote his diary entries with the intention of eventually publishing them, the term ‘privacy’ is applied in its broadest sense here.
The pseudonym used by Becher bears an uncanny resemblance to the signature found on the proposal from 15 February 1950, raising the intriguing possibility that Becher himself could have authored the second proposal using the mentioned pseudonym – or at least that he had some involvement with it. Unfortunately, no further evidence of Becher using this pseudonym exists. If this proposal can indeed be attributed to Becher, a shift in the depiction of his attitude towards the institution that would be named after him in 1958 is necessary. Under these circumstances, his role can no longer be cast as the passive critic of a dogmatic Kaderschmiede, but would instead have to be seen as the covert advocate of an all-German literary academy in the GDR.

Despite the fact that plans to found a literary academy in the GDR existed as early as 1950, the proposals discussed here failed to instigate a serious public debate about the necessity and practicalities of a literary institution. The debate would only be re-opened in 1952 by a different set of literary actors as the following section will show. This does, however, not lessen the importance of these proposals for the analysis of the Institute’s founding phase.

First, the existence of the two early proposals shows that the history of the Institute begins much earlier than previously assumed and Becher’s response in his diary may hold more than just anecdotal significance. Secondly, the proposals can be interpreted as symbolic acts undertaken by literary actors, such as Franz Hammer, in an attempt to position themselves in the unstable literary field of the GDR in the early 1950s. Thirdly, if acted upon, an all-German proposal for the founding of a literary academy would have given the broad-based faction of the literary field an advantage over its partisan counterpart.

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30 Becher, Briefe, p. 397.
As such, the proposals are further evidence not only of an individual but rather a collective struggle between heteronomous and autonomous actors for power in the emerging and still unstable literary field of the GDR. And lastly, the question as to why the proposals failed to generate a bigger debate in the sub-national literary and political fields needs to be asked. Compared to the proposal of a literary institution in 1953, the 1950 proposals were admittedly poorly timed. With the national literary field torn between all-German and integrationist demands, there was no consistency within the field that would have made it possible for actors to accumulate the symbolic political capital necessary to lend significance to such a proposal. In the following section we will see that once the political and literary fields had settled in 1953, positions could be more easily defined. Most importantly, as we will see, structures had been put into place that would enable individuals with less symbolic literary and political capital to successfully initiate the planning of an institution for the training of writers in the GDR.


Um die Jungen auf das Niveau der Erfahrenen zu bringen, ist das viel besprochene, viel gefürchtete, viel erwartete Institut für Literatur notwendig[...] Ich schlage dem Kongreß vor, eine Kommission zur Vorbereitung des Instituts zu wählen. Sie müßte die Arbeitsweise bereits bestehender Institute gleicher Art in den uns befreundeten Ländern prüfen, vor allem die Arbeitsweise des Maxim-Gorki-Instituts.\(^{31}\)

These words were spoken by the writer Kuba on the final day of the Third Writers’ Conference (22-25 May 1952). Kuba’s speech acts as a bridge between the first and second phase of the Institute’s founding. By spring 1952, many members of the DSV had noticed problems among young and emerging writers to establish themselves in the literary field.

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Writers such as Walther Victor, Willy Bredel, Anna Seghers, Friedrich Wolf and Kuba agreed that the older generation of writers was too eager to criticise the younger generation in their literary efforts instead of offering much needed constructive criticism and literary instruction. Kuba had already commented on the situation of young writers in the GDR earlier at the conference: he believed young writers lacked ‘Wissen und Technik’ as well as knowledge of German literary traditions. He argued that this was not the young writers’ fault as only few established writers had helped them in their efforts despite the younger generation’s eagerness to succeed: ‘Man kann nicht sagen, daß die Jugend kein Talent hat! Man kann noch nicht einmal sagen, daß die Jugend sich nicht Mühe gegeben hätte, zu lernen und zu studieren.’ The only positive example Kuba mentioned for the training of young writers were workshops that had been organised by the DSV in Bad Saarow, Brandenburg, from which he believed young writers profited greatly.

Kuba’s call for the ‘viel besprochene, viel gefürchtete, viel erwartete Institut für Literatur’ indicates that there had been an ongoing debate about creating a literary academy between 1950 and 1952, one that has not as of yet been identified in the existing scholarship on the Institute. This is hardly surprising as it seems the debate was not held in public. There are no traceable newspaper articles or further written exchanges between individuals that can substantiate Kuba’s claim from today’s perspective. It is therefore reasonable to assume that the Institute was mostly a topic of conversations rather than part of an official agenda at meetings or conferences. By 1952, sentiments about such an institution already differed greatly. Kuba’s position in the debate appears to have been in full support of a literary academy. Interestingly, Kuba did not question the necessity of Marxist education as part of the training of an East German writer:

32 Kuba quoted in: Carsten Gansel and Tanja Walenski, Erinnerung als Aufgabe?, p. 449. The following quotations are taken from the same source.

Kuba’s public demand for the integration of Marxism-Leninism into the training of young writers differs greatly from the earlier, hardly politicised proposals. This development may be the result of the SED taking a more decisive course in cultural policy in 1951. In this context, Otto Grotewohl’s statement on arts and politics in his speech for the founding of the State Commission for Artistic Affairs on 31 August 1951 is often quoted: ‘Literatur und bildende Künste sind der Politik untergeordnet, aber es ist klar, dass sie einen starken Einfluss auf die Politik ausüben. Die Idee der Kunst muss der Marschrichtung des politischen Kampfes folgen.’

The approach the SED took on cultural production was by no means undisputed and some writers, such as Bertolt Brecht, fought for more autonomy in the literary field. However, the Third Writers’ Conference marks the moment when the political mission of an East German literary institute was no longer questioned. From now on, it seems, political capital was indispensible even for cultural endeavours. However, the project only started making progress a year later and proved to be a time-consuming undertaking.

In late February 1953, the DSV held a meeting to discuss the division of tasks within its secretariat. The protocol of this meeting states that Werner Baum and Peter Nell, both DSV secretaries, were immediately entrusted with the preparation of the literary

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Werner Baum had been working for the DSV since September 1952 as a member of the Rechts- Beruf- und Sozialkommission, and he became a secretary of the DSV in 1953. Peter Nell (1907-1957) was a writer, journalist and, since 1945, a Vorstandsmitglied of the DSV. One month later, a draft detailing the public role of the DSV was presented which also included a summary of the future role of the literary institute:

Das Institut für literarisches Schaffen hat einmal die Aufgabe insbesondere die aus den Reihen der Werktätigen kommenden literarischen Begabungen mit dem nötigen Rüstzeug für die schriftstellerische Arbeit zu versehen. Das geschieht durch 1. langfristige Schulungen, 2. kurzfristige Arbeitsseminare für Schriftsteller, die an bestimmten Themenkomplexen arbeiten. Die weitere Aufgabe des Instituts ist es, die Erfahrungen aus der Tätigkeit des Verbandes, aus der kritischen Diskussion der Schriftsteller und der öffentlichen Kritik auszuwerten und die wissenschaftlichen Grundlagen für die ideologische Schulung und fachliche Förderung der Mitglieder zu erarbeiten.37

As this statement shows, the DSV intended the Institute’s duties to be twofold. On the one hand, the Institute was to equip promising writers with the necessary writing skills; on the other hand, the Institute was also expected to advise the DSV on literary and ideological matters. As such, the Institute was intended to be an integral part of the DSV, assimilating public debates and ideological demands into literary practice. It is worth noting that the DSV wanted to foster ‘aus den Reihen der Werktätigen kommende[…] literarische[…] Begabungen’. This shows that even at this early stage of planning, the selection of students was marked by two criteria: their working background and their literary talent. Factors such as age or political beliefs were seemingly not yet of concern to the DSV.

Two months later, in May 1953, a delegation of writers visited the Maxim-Gorky-Institute for Literature in Moscow with the intention of using this institute as a model for

the new East German literary academy. Among them were Kuba and Annemarie Reinhard, a writer, DSV and Party member, who would become the chairwoman of the Dresden branch of the DSV in 1956. Even though her literary output is quantitatively small, she received several national literary awards and was a frequent contributor to the Writers’ Congresses. Her evaluation of the visit to the Gorky Institute, which she intended to be ‘eine Diskussionsgrundlage’, suggests yet another - different - focus for the training of writers:

Aufgabe eines Literatur-Institutes müsste m.E. sein, nach dem Vorbild des Gorki-Institutes in Moskau uns auf den Erfahrungen des Sowjetischen Schriftsteller-Verbandes aufbauend jungen Schriftstellern die wissenschaftlichen Grundlagen für ihre Arbeit zu vermitteln. Es geht also nicht um eine gute Allgemeinbildung, die jeder Bürger der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik durch Abendschule, Volkshochschule usw. erwerben kann. Auch nicht um das ABC der schriftstellerischen Arbeit, die sich bei uns jeder Interessierte ebenfalls durch das Studium unserer literarischen und kulturpolitischen Zeitschriften, entsprechender Bücher, durch Mitarbeit in literarischen Zirkeln und den Sektionen oder Arbeitsgemeinschaften des Deutschen Schriftsteller-Verbandes aneignen kann, sondern, wie gesagt, um wissenschaftliche Arbeit.

Reinhard revisits a key issue of the February 1950 proposal which emphasised the institution’s vital role to provide its students with a general education in addition to improving their literary skills. Reinhard disagrees with the notion that a literary academy has to address educational deficits of its students and instead assumes the educational disadvantages of the young generation would be fully addressed by the GDR’s portfolio of evening courses. She argues that literary knowledge and skills should not be made part of the institution’s curriculum, as writers’ circles and DSV already provided this form of literary training. Instead, Reinhard demands the academic training of students. Her plans for the Institute were ambitious: she intends for lecturers to be ‘Fachleute [...] und nicht Amateure’ responsible for one subject only which was to be taught according to a rigid curriculum at university level and with the discipline of higher education, including biannual

38 David Clarke, 'Das Institut "Johannes R. Becher" und die Autorenausbildung in der DDR', p. 175.
exams. Her demand for qualified teaching staff echoes Becher’s sentiments insofar as future lecturers were expected to possess a certain amount of embodied literary capital. Throughout her proposal, Reinhard draws on the organisational structure of the Gorky-Institute in matters such as the salary and choice of lecturers. But she also highlights the importance of ongoing literary activities of students alongside their studies. Despite the academic nature of the institution envisaged by Reinhard, she stresses the destructive impact theory-heavy instruction can have on creativity and productivity.

Her recommendations for admissions standards had already taken on the form that would be used for the recruitment of the first year’s students: writers under the age of 45 who could prove their literary talent in the form of publications could either apply for or be recommended by the DSV to take part in the academy’s courses. There was no mention of students needing to come from a working background or disclose their political affiliations. Reinhard proposed a two-year course system with above-average bursaries for the students reflecting their life circumstances while also allowing for them to have extra income by publishing outside their studies. She was thereby acknowledging that economic capital was indispensable for the students and possibly necessary to attract emerging writers who may have otherwise embarked on careers as freelance writers instead of attending the Institute. Reinhard’s curriculum envisioned optional classes in English, French, Italian and Spanish alongside the obligatory Russian language classes, and it allowed four hours per month for the teaching of foreign literary history. The same amount of time each was allocated to German, Russian and Soviet literary history. Reinhard reasoned: ‘Ich glaube, dass so bei aller

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41 Foreign literature, according to Reinhard, was ‘west- und südeuropäische, skandinavische, amerikanische Literatur, Literatur der Länder der Volksdemokratien, asiatische Literatur usw.’. Annemarie Reinhard, “Über die Einrichtung eines Literatur-Institutes in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik”, without date, AdK, Paul Rilla Archiv, Nr. 6
nötigen Beschränkung ein einigermaßen richtiges Verhältnis geschaffen werden kann.”

Although the curriculum would be fundamentally revised before being put into practice in 1955, Reinhard nevertheless succeeded in creating a ‘Diskussionsgrundlage’ with her report. Most aspects covered by her already suggest the final organisational structure of the Institute and the report created a basis on which the planning of a literary academy in the GDR could begin in earnest. While the proposals from 1950 served a discursive purpose, Reinhard’s proposal can be said to have had a direct impact on the creation of a literary academy in the GDR.

On 9 October 1953, the *Vorstandskommission zur Vorbereitung des Literaturinstitutes* met again. Among those present were Hans Marchwitza, Franz Fühmann, Annemarie Reinhard, Dr. Walther Poilatschek, Werner Baum, Alfred Könner, Erhard Scherner and Christa Wolf. Peter Huchel, Prof. Dr. Alfred Kantorowicz, Paul Rilla and Georg Rahm had also been invited but could not attend. Despite the early stage of planning, the matters discussed at this meeting were surprisingly specific. After briefly discussing the necessity of the institute, matters such as the enabling of academic working order at the Institute, the planning of the Institute’s curriculum and the employment of assistants were addressed. Annemarie Reinhard stressed - surprisingly and contrary to her initial proposal - ‘daß es in besonderem Maße auf die Hebung des Allgemeinwissens und auf die Erklärung der gesellschaftlichen Zusammenhänge für die jungen Schriftsteller ankommt’. Here, Reinhard seems to have moved away from her vision of writers who had already pursued a general level of higher education in evening school before attending the Institute. Instead, she acknowledges the Institute’s responsibility not only to provide literary instruction, but also

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to raise the level of the students’ general knowledge. Franz Fühmann proposed to model the Institute’s creative courses closely on those of the Gorky Institute. The protocol states:

Koll. Fühmann machte den Vorschlag, entsprechend dem sowjetischen Vorbild, ständig mitarbeitende führende Schriftsteller als Tutoren zu verpflichten, das heißt, sie müßten in den verschiedenen Seminaren für das literarische Schaffen mit Unterstützung der Assistenten des Instituts die Leitung der Seminare übernehmen. [...] Auf diese Weise wird eine wirklich schöpferische Atmosphäre in diesen Seminaren und eine ständig kontrollierte und lebendige Anleitung der Hörer geschaffen.

The inspiration Fühmann took from the Gorky Literary Institute is of a very practical nature. Fühmann focuses on the degree of creativity necessary for successful writing tuition and the Gorky Institute’s success in providing a creative atmosphere for its students. This makes him one of the first individuals involved in the planning of the Institute to translate the theoretical planning of the Institute and its curriculum into institutional practices.

Interestingly, Fühmann’s idea of creative writing instruction is oriented towards an autonomous practice of literary production that would generate symbolic literary capital rather than heteronomous literary capital. As we will see in chapters four and five, putting theory into practice would at times be a difficult undertaking for staff and students at the Institute. When comparing Reinhard’s vision of the Institute with Fühmann’s, we can observe a striking difference in terms of their main ambitions for the Institut: Reinhard envisioned an academic institution with a focus on literary-critical and essayistic production, whereas Fühmann suggested putting creative seminars and literary production at the heart of the institution. It has to be noted that there were differences of opinion about the core objective of a literary institute as early as 1953. The tension between creating original literary works and taking an academic, critical approach to literature will re-emerge at a later point in this chapter and also in the context of the roles of the Institute’s lecturers in chapters four and five.
Despite the promising discussion of the project in DSV-meetings, plans for the Institute did not progress as quickly as expected. The Institute is not discussed at later meetings and hardly any developments in the planning process can be traced apart from the question of where to open the Institute. Kuba suggested at the Third Writers’ Conference to base the Institute in Weimar and to use Schloß Belvedere: ‘Tradition, Lage, Größe - alles spricht dafür, daß es eine Schule, ein Ort schöpferischer Arbeit und Erholung für Schriftsteller sein sollte’. Reinhard took this suggestion into consideration in her proposal, admitting: ‘Soviel ich unterrichtet bin, ist vorgesehen das Schloss Belvedere in Weimar. Ich kenne dessen Räume nicht’. Until 1954, Weimar seems to have been the first choice for a literary academy, yet, no supplementary documentation of discussions regarding this choice of location or correspondence with authorities in Weimar can be traced, suggesting that no attempts had been made by the DSV to secure premises for the academy. The speed at which the planning of the Institute progressed eventually increased in September 1953, when Werner Baum’s responsibilities within the DSV changed: “Mit Wirkung vom 7. Sept. 1953 wird der K. Baum von seiner Funktion als geschäftsführender Sekretär entbunden und übernimmt vollverantwortlich die Vorbereitungsarbeit für die Gründung des Literatur-Instituts”. Delegating the project to Baum may have been an attempt to accelerate the planning process of the Institute and to progress more quickly with the project in the second half of 1953. Considering the Institute was intended to open in 1954, the lack of documentation regarding curriculum planning, staffing and other logistic issues throughout 1953 implies either that such discussions were not written down in the form of protocols or

44 Kuba quoted in: Gansel and Walenski, Erinnerung als Aufgabe, p. 454.  
that the planning of the Institute was not as vigorously pursued as the events in 1952 and early 1953 seemed to promise.47

A Question of Political Capital: The Founding of the Institute Changes Hands

In light of the little progress that had been made, members of the DSV decided to turn to the Party for help. In the highly publicised *Aussprache zwischen Ministerpräsident Otto Grotewohl und führenden Kunst- und Kulturschaffenden* Kuba addressed the issue of founding a literary institute once again:

> Noch ein letztes möchte ich sagen zu unserer Künstlerorganisation. Wir haben große Unterstützung von seiten der Regierung. [...] Mit den Geldern der Regierung sollte mehr den Talenten aus der Arbeiterklasse geholfen werden, die jetzt an einem bestimmten Punkt stehen und nicht weiterkommen, weil nämlich Talent allein nicht hilft, sie brauchen Voraussetzungen. Hier müssen wir helfen. [...] Was wir also brauchen, ist ein Institut für Literatur, ein Institut für Schriftsteller. Wir haben einen solchen Plan ausgearbeitet und werden ihn in Kürze der Regierung unterbreiten.48

Jochen Staadt thinks he is able to detect resignation in Kuba’s response claiming that the “Organisationskörper im Schriftstellerverband” dieser Aufgabe nicht mehr gewachsen sei’.49 Given the lack of progress, this seems to be an apt diagnosis indicating that the capital transfers available to the DSV were not sufficient for the creation of a literary academy after all. Kuba’s explanation for the difficulties encountered while planning the Institute seem indeed not only of an organisational but also of a financial nature. The DSV seems to have lacked the political capital needed to be financially able to found the Institute. The restraints placed on actors, even a mass organisation like the DSV, in the literary field of the GDR become very apparent under these circumstances. In order to remain operational in the literary field, the DSV depended on aid from the field of power. Creating a literary

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institution was impossible without the consent and help of the Party. The power held over the literary field by the political field was set to increase even more in the following year.

The dynamics of the cultural field changed considerably in 1954 when the *Ministerium für Kultur* was founded on 7 January.\(^{50}\) These changes also affected the plans for the Institute. On 23 March 1954, changes in the staffing of the DSV Secretariat were announced and once again affected Werner Baum: “Das Sekretariat ist einverstanden, daß Kollege Werner Baum im Ministerium für Kultur als Abteilungsleiter für Gegenwartsliteratur eingesetzt wird. Der Termin des Ausscheidens aus dem Verband wird bestimmt, sobald ein Nachfolger gefunden ist”.\(^{51}\) Together with Baum, the project of founding the Institute changed hands from the DSV to the MfK.

At the *Vollversammlung junger Autoren* in Leipzig, 6-7 March 1954, Hermann-Ernst Schauer, who started working for the MfK when his position at the State Commission for Artistic Affairs was transferred to the MfK, spoke about the Ministry’s founding and its plans for East German literature:

> Ebenso begrüßt das Ministerium für Kultur den Vorschlag des Schriftstellerverbandes, ein Institut zur Ausbildung unseres literarischen Nachwuchses ins Leben zu rufen. […] Wir wollen darüber gemeinsam beraten, um Mittel und Wege zu finden, daß ein solches Institut in nicht allzu ferner Zukunft jungen begabten Menschen, besonders aus der Arbeiterklasse und der werktätigen Bauernschaft, seine Tore öffnet.\(^{52}\)

Schauer’s statement proves that there had already been discussions about the future of the Institute under joint supervision by the DSV and the MfK, creating the impression that the young MfK may have initially envisaged the Institute as a joint project with the DSV. While staffing changes had already been agreed to and the project itself had likely (at least in part) changed patronage from the DSV to the MfK, Walter Ulbricht officially announced the

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plan to found a literary academy on the fourth Party Conference of the SED, March 30 – April 6, 1954 in Berlin:

In der Literatur brauchen wir neue volkstümliche Werke, die noch mehr als bisher den Kampf um die Wandlung der neuen Menschen in unserer Arbeiterklasse, der werktätigen Bauernschaft und der Intelligenz darstellen, das heißt, die zu gestalten verstehen, unter welchen oftmals harten Widersprüchen, Klassenkämpfen und menschlichen Konflikten unser Aufbau seinen Sieg erringt. [...] Von großer Bedeutung für die Weiterentwicklung unserer Literatur wird die baldige Schaffung eines Literaturinstituts sein, das die sowjetischen Erfahrungen weitgehend auswertet.53

The impact Ulbricht’s statement has had not only on the creation but also on the history of the Institute is astounding. I will show shortly that the amount of political capital the project gained by being directly and publicly endorsed by Ulbricht was so immense that it may have been the deciding factor protecting the Institute’s founding from being rejected at the last minute. Given Ulbricht’s prominence, it comes as no surprise that his reference to the Institute is commonly referred to in the scholarship as the moment of the official decision to found the Institute. The transfer of symbolic political capital onto the Institute when Ulbricht announced its founding was so successful that it still affects its perception today. In his section on the founding of the Institute quoted at the beginning of this chapter, Kiehl claims that one of the few things known for certain about the Institute is that it was founded after Walter Ulbricht’s suggestion on the fourth Party Conference of the SED. But as has been demonstrated through the archived protocols, the DSV had already been working on founding a literary academy for two years. Günther Rüther also attributes a key role to Ulbricht in the founding of the Institute:


Rüther clearly overestimates the degree to which Becher and Ulbricht had so far been involved in the creation of the Institute. Also, Leipzig had not yet been considered as the location for the Institute. It can be assumed that Rüther based his assumption of Becher’s sabotage on the writer’s diary entry, and he therefore credits Ulbricht with the realisation of the plans based on his statement at the Party Conference. Ulbricht’s symbolic political capital that existed at the time seems to have been powerful enough for contemporary analysts to buy into it. Clarke, on the other hand, questions the treatment of the Institute as ‘a pet project of Walter Ulbricht’s’ and questions the role Ulbricht had played so far in the Institute’s creation.55

The MfK’s involvement indeed accelerated the process of founding the Institute. Baum began working for the Hauptabteilung Schön Literatur of the MfK and by July 1954, he had worked out a detailed plan for the founding of the Institute that exceeded any preparations made by the DSV. Baum suggested for the Institute to offer a basic 5-year course and an advanced 2-year course for the training of writers, literary critics and editors. He allowed for the DSV to have a certain degree of power over who would be allowed to enrol, proposing: ‘Die Auswahl der Studierenden erfolgt durch das Ministerium für Kultur auf Vorschlag des Deutschen Schriftstellerverbandes. Der Aufnahmekommission müssen mindestens zur Hälfte Mitglieder des DSV angehören’.56 This meant that the MfK would not be exclusively in charge of recommending students. The DSV could put its own candidates emerging from AJAs forward, but the power to veto candidates also rested with the MfK due to its presence on the admissions committee. A similar arrangement was

55 Clarke, ‘Parteischule Oder Dichterschmiede?’, p. 88.
56 This citation and following: Vorlage für das Sekretariat. Werner Baum, 17 July 1954. BArch DR1/7901.
suggested for the position of the Institute within the organisational framework of the Party: ‘Die Hochschule untersteht dem Ministerium für Kultur und arbeitet eng mit dem Deutschen Schriftstellerverband zusammen’. The MfK seemingly held more power over the Institute than the DSV, but the impression was maintained that the latter still held a significant degree of influence on the proceedings at the Institute. The dominant position of the MfK can be interpreted as a result of the increasing institutionalisation of the power the political field held over the literary field of the GDR.

During his first months of planning the Institute for the MfK, Baum encountered particularly persistent bureaucratic opposition and blockages while trying to secure a location for the Institute. Instead of recommending Weimar, like Kuba did in 1952, Baum now argued in favour of establishing the Institute in Berlin:

\[\text{Die Schule muss in unmittelbarer Nähe von Berlin errichtet werden, da für die Lehrtätigkeit Kräfte von den Akademien und der Humboldt-Universität verpflichtet werden müssen. Ferner müssen die führenden Schriftsteller, die alle in Berlin wohnhaft sind, zur schöpferischen Anleitung herangezogen werden.}\]

This marks the beginning of a long search for a city willing to accommodate the Institute. Baum’s reasons for establishing the Institute in Berlin are plausible and of a practical nature. The Institute’s need to be run by qualified academics and experienced writers made Berlin an obvious choice. A month later, Alexander Abusch reiterated Baum’s propositions and announced: ‘Der Genosse Friedrich Ebert wird beauftragt, dem Ministerium für die Unterbringung der Hochschule ein geeignetes Gebäude nachweisen zu lassen’.\footnote{Vorlage. Alexander Abusch, 17 August 1954. BArch DR1/7901, p. 396.} Friedrich Ebert, mayor of East Berlin, must have suggested considering \textit{Schloss Friedrichsfelde} in Berlin-Lichtenberg for housing the Institute. There are numerous documents that show the careful consideration of the building’s suitability. An architect was hired to survey the building, and blueprints of \textit{Schloss Friedrichsfelde} reveal that a function had been allocated to each room;
several class rooms, a lecture hall, an office for the director, a staff room and a students’ club room had all been pencilled neatly into the building’s floor plan. However, by mid-June 1954, the offer of Schloss Friedrichsfelde was withdrawn and Schloss Buch was instead suggested. However, when Baum and Seidel visited Schloss Buch they discovered that it was also being used as a Kinderwochenheim and could not be used by the Institute. Seidel begins to question whether it would be possible to locate the Institute in Berlin after all:

Oberbürgermeister Ebert stellt sich ja in seinem Brief nicht nur gegen das Projekt Friedrichsfelde, sondern überhaupt gegen die Aufnahme des Institutes in Berlin. Wenn tatsächlich ein Beschluss des Sekretariats vorliegt, wonach Schulen nicht mehr in Berlin errichtet werden sollen, dann dürfte das Vorhaben überhaupt gefährdet sein. Nach unserer Einschätzung würde bei einer Verlegung des Instituts in die Republik eine Gewähr für qualitative Ergebnisse nicht gegeben sein.

Neither Ebert’s letter nor any information on whether or not the establishment of new schools and institutes had indeed been restricted can be traced, but from June 1954 onward, Berlin was no longer considered as a possible location for the Institute and Seidel’s fears that the Institute might have to be located outside of the capital became reality. The task to find a suitable location, an acceptable property and qualified members of staff was set aside for the Institute’s director Alfred Kurella, who had returned to the GDR from his exile in Moscow earlier that year; he took on a leading role in the founding of the Institute with the help of Annemarie Reinhard and Werner Baum among others. The struggles and opposition Kurella would face before and after opening the Institute were foreshadowed by the obstacles Reinhard, Baum, Nell and Seidel had already had to overcome. Berlin closing its doors on the Institute meant that the capital’s supply of literary experts could not be taken advantage of.

59 This citation and following: Schloss Buch. Seidel an das Sekretariat Abusch. 16 June 1954. BArch DR1/1321
The analysis of the second phase of the Institute’s founding shows that there has been much confusion about the developments that eventually led to its establishment. The existing scholarship heavily relies on symbolically charged connections between the Institute and leading figures such as Johannes R. Becher and Walter Ulbricht. Examining archival sources has made it possible to identify individuals who were immediately involved in the Institute’s founding and their actions that made the creation of the Institute possible. It has also been shown that the change of patronage from the DSV to the MfK was not necessarily a seizure of power, but rather a necessary step as the DSV was not prepared for the ambitious project and looked to the MfK for assistance. The founding of the MfK can be understood in Bourdieu’s terms as an institutionalisation of the power held by the political field over the cultural field. By 1953, the rules of the field of power had become less ambiguous than they had been in 1950. This development was so far-reaching that it can even be traced in the different proposals for the founding of a literary institute. When the planning of the Institute gained momentum, it was already clearly subordinated to the political field. It can even be argued that it was only through the involvement of the MfK that the project was able to be realised. The DSV admitted to having financial and organisational difficulties in founding the literary institute; it lacked the economic and political capital to successfully create a new institution in the literary field of East Germany.

As we will see more clearly in the following section, the patronage of the MfK came at a cost. The authority held over the Institute by the MfK endowed the former with symbolic political capital and, as a result, anchored it in close proximity to the heteronomous pole of the sub-national literary field. While it was the symbolic political capital that made the creation of the Institute possible in the first place, this also meant that
the Institute itself lost its attraction for autonomous writers who were opposed to heteronomous values of literary production by definition.


The focus will now lie on two very different obstacles that Alfred Kurella had to overcome when he became the Institute’s first director. On the one hand, Kurella was faced with the dilemma of reconciling the apparent contradictions between political subordination and autonomous literary values. Public scepticism about the necessity and implications of a literary institution overseen by the MfK was widespread. The effect that public opinion had on the project of founding the Institute can be traced with the help of some of Kurella’s responses, most notably his speech for the Institute’s opening with the apt title *Von der Lehrbarkeit der literarischen Meisterschaft*. However, the identity of those against the founding of the Institute and their reasons for such a position are much harder to trace. This implies that such criticism was uttered mostly in private. Despite the lack of information, an attempt will be made to reconstruct the debate surrounding the Institute in an effort to shed light on the prejudices and reservations held against the Institute and to help understand why certain phases of the Institute’s establishment proved more difficult for Kurella and his helpers than anyone could have anticipated.

On the other hand, Kurella still had to make many practical arrangements as the opening date of the Institute was drawing nearer. After the DSV and MfK had planned the role and structure of the Institute on paper, Kurella was left in charge of realising these plans in little more than a year. This posed several difficulties for Kurella, such as the lack of suitable instructors and space for the Institute in Leipzig and a general unwillingness of young writers to enrol at the Institute. The practical issues Kurella was faced with have so
far only been mentioned in passing. In this section, archival sources will help us to better understand the scope of these issues, which in some cases may have caused Kurella to unwillingly make choices that contributed to the development of autonomous dispositions at the Institute as early as 1955/56.

Finally, the question of Kurella’s significance for the formation of a common habitus at the Institute will be addressed. Based on his involvement in the teaching and everyday proceedings at the Institute as well as the reports on Kurella by students of the first year, it will be argued that his impact on the Institute needs to be reconsidered. Instead of coming to the conclusion that Kurella implemented a dogmatic practice at the Institute, the analysis of his role as director show that his lack of involvement in the teaching at the Institute and his frequent absences from Leipzig point in the opposite direction. Kurella failed to fulfil his role as director of the Institute. Instead of acting as a representative of a heteronomous institutional habitus, he only addressed unrest and criticism among students once they had reached a critical point and for the most part allowed autonomous tendencies to develop covertly among the Institute’s students. As a result, the common habitus of the Institute during Kurella’s term as director is characterised by a lack of respect for authoritative figures, such as Kurella himself, and a sense of autonomy among the Institute’s first students.

Alfred Kurella returned from his exile in Russia in February 1954. By 1 April he was working for the MfK and was in charge of finalising the Institute’s founding. A protocol of a meeting to discuss the founding on 28 April 1954 attended by Kurella, Erwin Kohn (DSV), Werner Baum and Siegfried Seidel (both by then working for the MfK)
Hauptabteilung Schöne Literatur) shows that the project was supervised by Kurella, Kohn, Baum, Seidel and Hermann Schauer (MfK, Hauptabteilung Künstlerische Lehranstalten) from April 1954 onward. The assistance of Annemarie Reinhard was also requested. The urgent matters that Kurella and his colleagues still needed to address were the finer details of the curriculum, the selection of students, the building and location for the Institute, the establishment plan and the budget for 1954 and 1955. Even though a list of subjects and the number of lecturers required for them existed, there were no specific recommendations as to who might be suitable and available to teach. Although the plans focusing on Berlin had been thwarted, the option to move to Leipzig had not yet been discussed. In order to plan the Institute’s curriculum, Kurella suggested referring to the syllabi of other literary institutes, among them the Gorky Institute. In order to gain more insight into the Russian institution, the plan was for a delegation of 3 to 5 members to visit Moscow a second time, which, for reasons undocumented, never happened. However, Annemarie Reinhard, who had been in charge of supervising an exhibition organised by the DSV in Moscow in June 1954, visited the Gorky Institute on her own on 1 July. She reported to Kurella:


The information Reinhard collected in Moscow may be one of the reasons why the plans drafted at the meeting on 30 April were amended. Instead of offering a two-year course

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beginning in January 1955 and a five-year course beginning in September 1955, the Institute began its operation with a one-year course in September 1955 and never offered a course running for more than three years. Another likely reason for the radical change of plans was the practical issues Kurella would encounter from April 1954 until 1957. The practical challenges and information from the Gorky Institute may explain why, despite the relative continuity of individuals involved, the changes made to the Institute’s plans in 1954 were the most drastic since planning had begun in 1952.

For the greater part of 1954, protocols and correspondence suggest that things progressed without much interference, the most heated discussion being a brief exchange between Seidel and Willi Lewin about the exact name of the Institute. Lewin criticised the plan to name the Institute *Hochschule für Literatur* because he found the name pretentious. Seidel countered Lewin’s critique with the explanation that the term *Institut* implied the literary academy was inferior to academic institutions and was in fact not commonly used in an educational context.64 This shows that even the naming of the Institute was affected by capital exchanges. An ‘inferior’ name can result in less symbolic capital that an institution about to be born inevitably needs to create interest and attract individuals who themselves could invest their symbolic capital in the Institute. In the end, the Institute could not be named ‘Hochschule’ due to the fact that it did not receive that status until 1958.65 The disagreement between Seidel and Lewin is symptomatic of the same central tension between academic and creative aspirations that had already surfaced between Reinhard’s and Fühmann’s positions one year earlier; the apparent lack of clarity over the Institute’s founding purpose had still not been resolved.

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65 Haslinger, 'Deutsches Literaturinstitut Leipzig', p. 1547.
When and why the decision to name it *Institut für Literatur* was reached cannot be accurately traced. However, on 3 February 1955 ‘die Bildung des Instituts für Literatur’ was officially announced. At this point, the question of where to open the Institute was also resolved: Leipzig. The language of the official, matter-of-fact announcement conveys the impression of an uneventful and smooth planning phase when in fact, less than three weeks earlier, the plan to open the Institute was almost postponed by a year. Werner Baum informed Alexander Abusch:

> Wie mir soeben vom Genossen Hirsch mitgeteilt wird, hat die Regierungskommission zur Einsparung von Haushaltsmitteln, die im Staatsekretariat für Hochschulwesen getagt hat, das Institut für Literatur gestrichen, obwohl der Kommissionsvorsitzende als Richtlinie ausgegeben hatte, daß Politbüro-Beschlüsse nicht durch die Arbeit der Kommission berührt werden sollen.

An outline of the events that led to the cut in funding for the Institute was compiled by Baum. According to him, the politburo agreed to the founding of the Institute on 15 December 1954. On 3 January 1955, the directive was passed on to the State Secretary for Higher Education via the *HA Schöne Literatur*, and on 7 January 1955, the directive was accepted by the Secretary. A version of the directive was then prepared for the signature of Johannes R. Becher in his position as Minister of Culture. The next day, a decision by the Ministry of Finance threatened the progress that had been made. Baum reported: ‘Am 20. Januar vormittags wird vom Ministerium der Finanzen mitgeteilt, daß die Haushaltsmittel für das Institut aus dem Haushaltsplan des Ministeriums für Kultur gestrichen wurden, der Staatsekretär legt sofort Protest ein.’ With the funding for the Institute withdrawn, Werner Baum and Alexander Abusch tried to find the reason for this unexpected threat to

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67 Werner Baum to Alexander Abusch. Berlin, 17 January 1955. BArch DR1/1322
69 Ibid.
the funding of the Institute. Karl Tümmler, a consultant of Becher’s, accounted for this
decision as follows:

Mittwoch, den 19. Januar 1955, 16,45 Uhr, hatte ich ein Gespräch mit Kollegen Generski,
Ministerium für Finanzen, Kollege Generski hatte den Vorsitz der Regierungskommission
zur Einsparung von Haushaltsmitteln, in der die Streichung des Instituts für Literatur
vorgeschlagen worden war. Das Staatsssekretariat für Hochschulwesen war dort in
Vertretung für alle Fachministerien, Hochschulen Institute usw. Kollege Generski gab mir
auf meinen Hinweis, dass es sich hier im einen Beschluss des Politbüros handle, zur
Auskunft, dass das Ministerium für Finanzen ungeachtet dessen dem Politbüro vorschlagen
wolle, die Bildung des Instituts bis zum Jahre 1956 zurückzustellen.

The decision to cut the Institute’s funding was quickly overturned without any paper trail.
The politburo, of which Walter Ulbricht was a member, seems to have been able to easily
reverse the Ministry for Finances’ decision. Whether it was Walter Ulbricht himself or
another member of the politburo who took a stand in favour of the Institute it can be
assumed that political capital was wielded and exchanged for a continuation of the
Institute’s founding. However, this was not the only obstacle that would have to be
overcome.

Securing Material Resources – Finding a Home for the Institute

Over the course of 1955, a number of issues had to be resolved by Kurella. First of all, the
question of where precisely the Institute’s premises should be located had not been
resolved by the announcement in the Gesetzesblatt. Though Leipzig had been chosen to
accommodate the Institute, an empty property suitable for the Institute was impossible to
come by. Secondly, the interest shown by promising writers in the Institute was
disappointing. When the Institute tried to recruit writers who were already successful, such
as Erich Loest, it was met with an unwillingness to invest a year of their time in attending
an institution they claimed to know very little about. In addition to the shortage of rooms
for the Institute, it seems that it was equally difficult to find suitable accommodation for the
students. Some students would have to move to Leipzig with their families, and the supply
of empty apartments in Leipzig did not meet the Institute’s demand. The fourth issue faced by the Institute was the unavailability of suitable teaching staff in Leipzig. Kurella praised Leipzig and its academics in an interview conducted less than two weeks before the Institute’s opening, saying: ‘Nachdem Berlin uns nicht hat aufnehmen wollen, wurde Leipzig gewählt, an dessen starke Universität wir uns anlehnen können’.

However, Kurella had already realised that most of the Institute’s seminars and courses had to be taught by guest lecturers as many suitable candidates were unwilling to commit to teaching at the new institution or had already agreed to work for a different employer.

The final months before the Institute’s opening see Kurella gathering support and securing much-needed resources to overcome the lack of premises for the Institute and to attract students and staff. It may seem self-evident that finalising the plans for the Institute at a bureaucratic level did not mean that they could be seamlessly implemented; however, the difficulty of making the Institute a reality cannot be underestimated. Kurella’s efforts in this regard show the practicalities involved in mobilising capital needed for the Institute to take physical shape.

The scholarship on the Institute implies that once Berlin had been discounted as a location for the Institute and Leipzig had agreed to house the Institute, the struggle to find a home for the Institute had come to an end. This conclusion could not be further from the truth as a document in the Federal Archive’s holdings for the MfK proves. This document, which has not found its way into the publications on the Institute, lists the unsuccessful attempts undertaken to secure a building for the Institute.

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71 Bundesarchiv DR1 8355, pp. 88-92.
The initial suggestion to use Villa Hark had to be discarded as the building was being used by the Ministry for Work for the training of teachers at vocational schools. The 35 teachers who lived in the villa during their training would have been able to be relocated in time. Instead, a residential flat was suggested. This eight-room flat was indeed temporarily used in 1955 – after the widow of a doctor was moved to an alternative flat, much to her disapproval. Kurella summarised the issues he still had to overcome in a letter to Johannes R. Becher on 5 September 1955, little more than a fortnight before the Institute’s intended opening on 20 September. Kurella felt compelled to write to Becher informing him of the state of affairs ‘da die Lage zu ernsten Bedenken Anlass gibt’. This letter has also so far been overlooked by scholars. Yet it is an important document in the context of the Institute’s founding: the desperate measure to write a letter to the Minister of Culture shows how unsuccessful Kurella had been in finalising the Institute’s founding. Despite Kurella’s connections and the MfK’s backing of the Institute, he had so far been unable to pull together all that was necessary for the Institute to open its doors. The interim solution for the Institute’s teaching rooms was, as Kurella pointed out to Becher, ‘für die Unterrichtszwecke eigentlich unzureichend’. Kurella’s letter is an attempt of the Institute’s director to engage Becher in the Institute’s founding and to mobilise his sub-national political capital. Becher’s backing would transfer some of his political capital to Kurella and increase his ability to negotiate with the authorities in charge of allocating properties in Leipzig. However, it seems that the shortage of suitable teaching space in Leipzig could not be overcome in time for its opening. The flat served as its first location with the long term solution being to eventually move into a building used by the Theaterhochschule after it had

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72 Ibid.
73 Letter from Alfred Kurella to Johannes R. Becher. Leipzig, 5 September 1955. BArch DR1/8226. The following quotations are taken from this document.
moved to Berlin. However, Kurella was not convinced of this solution and complained ‘wann das geschieht, ja ob das geschieht, lässt sich im Augenblick nicht übersehen’.

The lack of appropriate teaching quarters was not the only problem Kurella struggled to overcome. Finding ‘noch so bescheidene Einzelzimmer’ in Leipzig for the Institute’s first students proved to be equally difficult. Kurella admits that the authorities in Leipzig were able to offer flats that could be shared by three to four students, but he believed that shared accommodation was inappropriate for the Institute’s students, most of whom were in their thirties and intended to move to Leipzig with their families. Kurella demanded individual rooms or flats but complained: ‘Die Auskünfte der städtischen Behörden lassen [eine] termingemässe Beschaffung der Zimmer als recht fraglich erscheinen.’

Securing Symbolic Resources – The Search for Staff and Students

The employment of lecturers proved extremely difficult for Kurella: ‘Trotz monatelanger Bemühungen ist es nicht möglich gewesen, für die wichtigsten Fächer – Gesellschaftswissenschaft, Philosophie und Ästhetik, deutsche Literaturgeschichte – erfahrene ältere Lehrer im Professoren- oder Dozentenrang für das Institut zu gewinnen.’ Kurella succeeded in finding young instructors for the Institute, some of whom were still in the process of finishing their doctoral theses. Despite their advanced teaching, Kurella was only able to secure salaries ‘im Range von Oberassistenten’. Kurella had to resort to hiring visiting lecturers to fill the Institute’s final vacancies, ‘was natürlich für die Kontinuität des Unterrichts gerade bei einer Anstalt wie der unseren wenig erwünscht ist’. The Institute’s location in Leipzig seems to have limited his choice of available lecturers and writers to join the Institute ‘entweder, weil die Unmöglichkeit einer Dauerbesetzung erst in jüngster Zeit
klar wurde, als die meisten Dozenten in Urlaub und nicht mehr erreichbar waren oder weil in Leipzig keine entsprechenden Lehrkräfte zu finden sind, die nicht überbesetzt wären'.

This could mean that some of the Institute’s staff had to be hired for pragmatic reasons. This needs to be kept in mind when equating members of staff to the Institute especially during the Institute’s early years. Guest lecturers, for example, may have been employed out of necessity and despite their position in the literary field. Kurella also admitted that the lack of teaching staff meant that the syllabus could not be finished and that it was impossible to plan the schedule and content of lectures for the first weeks at that point.

The only development Kurella seemed content with was that 28 students, ‘fast ausnahmslos [...] Schriftsteller von über 30 Jahren, die schon mehrfach publiziert haben und sich zur Teilnahme an diesem Lehrgang nicht ohne Mühe freimachen konnten’, had enrolled at the Institute. Kurella’s summary of the state of affairs fifteen days before the scheduled opening of the Institute, ‘bedenklich, ja alarmierend’, was not the least exaggerated. Kurella was ultimately unable to keep his promise of opening the Institute on 20 September. Due to the circumstances outlined above, the opening had to be postponed by 10 days. The problems encountered by Kurella cannot exclusively be explained by logistical shortcomings such as the lack of empty, restored properties. Kurella openly admits his frustration with covert prejudice against the Institute which seems to have also contributed to the slow progress made by him in the past 17 months:

Es wird Ihnen bekannt sein, Herr Minister, dass in verschiedenen Kreisen offen oder versteckt Bedenken gegen ein solches Institut im Prinzip bestehen. Bei den Vorbereitungsarbeiten sind wir nicht selten auf Widerstände gestossen, die hier ihre Ursachen haben. So wie die Dinge jetzt liegen, besteht die Gefahr, dass die Idee des Instituts durch einen mit starken Mängeln belastenden Beginn der Arbeit kompromittiert wird, und dass die vorhandenen Bedenken dadurch einen Schein der Berechtigung erhalten. Das gilt übrigens auch für die Schüler selber: Bei manchen von ihnen mussten wir Widerstände
Kurella’s concerns are hard to prove. The resistance he referred to is almost impossible to trace due to its covert nature. Interestingly, Ralph Giordano who attended the Institute’s first course wrote about Hans Mayer’s initial reaction to his decision to study in Leipzig. Both had a chance encounter while visiting Warsaw in August 1955. Giordano told Mayer about his intention to study at the Institute to which Mayer supposedly replied: ‘Ah, das Institut für Literatur werden Sie besuchen? Ich kondoliere, ich kondoliere von ganzem Herzen!’

Kurella was considered to be the embodiment of the Institute by many. As a ‘Natschalnik’ who had secured vast amounts of symbolic heteronomous political capital, far more than any other of the lecturers that were eventually hired, and in his post as the Institute’s director, it seems only logical to assume Kurella’s personal habitus would shape the institutional habitus as well. Ralph Giordano retraces his thoughts about Kurella when he was told that he had been offered a place at the Institute as a delegate from West Germany:

Von Kurella war bekannt, daß er nach zwanzigjähriger Emigrationszeit aus der Sowjetunion zurückgekehrt war, um ‘wichtige Aufgaben’ zu übernehmen. Von ihm als Schriftsteller kannte ich nur ein schmales, inhaltlich und stilistisch nicht sehr aufregendes Büchlein ‘Ich lebe in Moskau’, wußte aber, daß er während des Zweiten Weltkriegs im Nationalkomitee Freies Deutschland eine Rolle gespielt und als Übersetzer einen Namen hatte - eine für junge Genossen lebende Legende. Ich begegnete ihm zum erstenmal im Frühjahr 1955, und was mich sogleich für ihn einnahm war, daß er stotterte. Dieser Sproß des deutschen Großbürgertums, der früh zur marxistischen Bewegung in Deutschland gefunden hatte, war mir grundsätzlich sympathisch. ’Im Herbst wird es losgehen, etwas ganz, ganz Neues’, warb er enthusiastisch. Was nicht nötig war - ich wollte unbedingt am ersten Lehrgang des Instituts für Literatur teilnehmen.

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75 Giordano, Die Partei hat immer Recht, p. 132.
77 Ibid.
As an individual, Kurella certainly made an impression in the Institute’s first intake of students. Giordano was primarily attracted to the symbolic political capital attached to Kurella and the Institute. Giordano’s enthusiasm would not last, and as we have seen in the first chapter, he became deeply disillusioned with the GDR’s interpretation of socialism as well as with the Institute itself. But before the Institute had opened, even the ever-critical Erich Loest was impressed by Kurella’s background:

Als der Erste Weltkrieg begann, war er neunzehn, vielseitig gebildeter rheinischer Arztsohn, Wandervogel. Er tauchte aus dem Trommelfeuer als ein anderer auf: Sofort war er Mitglied der KPD, Mitbegründer der Kommunistischen Jugendinternationale; als deren Delegierter mogelte er sich 1919 nach Moskau durch, wo er Lenin begegnete; das wurde ihm zum unauslöschlichen Erlebnis. Seine Schüler wußten es als erstes und raunten es weiter: Dieser Mann hatte mit Lenin gesprochen. Ihn umgab rotes Charisma.  

Although Loest acknowledged Kurella’s symbolic political capital, he was slightly more critical of the apparent lack of symbolic literary capital Kurella brought to the Institute than Giordano: ‘Lang war die Liste seiner Übersetzungen, kulturpolitischen Schriften und Essays, schmal die der epischen Versuche.’ Loest goes even further in his assessment of Kurella as the Institute’s director. He believed that Kurella instructed the teaching staff at the Institute to pay more attention to the students’ cultural-political instruction than their literary training: ‘in einer Sitzung der Dozenten legte er sein Konzept vor: Ziel des Instituts wäre es erst in zweiter Linie, schriftstellerische Kenntnisse zu vermitteln[…] Hauptziel sei, die Schüler zu befähigen, die Beschlüsse der Partei mit den Mitteln der Literatur den Massen nahezubringen.’ The feeling of dissatisfaction befell not only the students. In an excerpt from an interview that Kurella kept in his personal files, he is quoted:

Alle [Studenten] sind ebenso unzufrieden mit dem ersten Lehrgang wie wir Lehrenden. Bei zweien geht die Unzufriedenheit so weit, daß sie das bei uns verbrachte Jahr als verlorene Zeit betrachten und meinen, sie hätten am Institut nichts lernen können.

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78 Loest, Durch die Erde ein Riß, pp. 256-57. The following citations are taken from this source.
It remains unclear, which two students had voiced their disappointment with the first course so clearly or what exactly they took issue with. However, it is telling that the lecturers were themselves dissatisfied.

However impressive Kurella’s symbolic political capital was, it did not keep the students from observing and criticising his practices as the director, and it is in light of the everyday running of the Institute that they began to take issue with him. Giordano, for example, criticises the passive presence of the Institute at the Fourth Writers’ Conference: ‘Am Leipziger Institut war nichts vorbereitet worden, Kurella die personifizierte Passivität.’ The lack of ambition Kurella showed at the Writers’ Conference was symptomatic of his demeanour at the Institute. Loest observed Kurella closely:

   ‘Kurella war da und war nicht da. Sein sechzigster Geburtstag lag hinter ihm, da mußte er sich sputen, wollte er noch aufsteigen. Direktor dieses Institutes war er, den Professorentitel hatte er bei dieser Gelegenheit eingeheimst, die nächsten Sprossen aber waren in Berlin zu erklimmen, und so war er immer häufiger dort. Seine Studenten genossen bald eine ruhige Zeit [...]’

Loest was unimpressed by the institutionalised cultural capital Kurella had gained when he was given the title of professor as part of his position as the director. He seems to take issue with the way in which Kurella gained the title and the capital associated with it that had nothing to do with academic achievements and was instead part of a job offer. Loest’s claim that Kurella was mostly absent from the Institute due to other engagements – most of them in Berlin – can easily be traced and confirmed in Kurella’s calendars that are held in the Archive of the Academy of the Arts. It seems that once the Institute had begun its operation, he left most of his administrative duties to vice director Dieter Herrde and taught very little himself. This, however, did not mean that all founding efforts had come

80 Giordano, Erinnerungen eines Davongekommenen, p. 303.
81 Loest, Durch die Erde ein Riß, p. 262.
82 See for example the correspondence in Kurella’s reference file from 1955 to 1956, most of which was handled and signed by Dieter Herrde. SStAL, Institut für Literatur 20311, Nr. 14.
to a successful close. Some subjects were still taught by visiting lecturers and the envisioned three-year courses only commenced in September 1957. Kurella was intent on accruing even more political capital which, as Loest rightly pointed out, was impossible at a young, unpopular literary academy in Leipzig more than 150 kilometres outside the capital. In a letter to Becher dated 8 September 1957, Kurella informed him of his plans to leave the Institute:


Kurella’s reasons for leaving the Institute may make it sound like he was intent on accruing more literary capital, however, as Loest pointed out, most of Kurella’s publications were of primarily political and not literary character. His dedication, at least in writing, to the Institute is a central theme, but so is his careerism. He wanted to publish more in the future and, possibly jokingly, referred to being symbolically rewarded for his efforts in the form of the National Prize of East Germany which he later did receive – in 1969. The reason Kurella gives for his resignation in a letter to Johannes R. Becher is altogether different:

Sehr geehrter Herr Minister!
Im Gefolge der Ihnen bekannten, meine Familie betreffenden Ereignisse, die einen tiefen Einschnitt in mein Leben bedeuten, sehe ich mich außerstande, die Funktion des Direktors des Instituts für Literatur weiter wahrzunehmen. Ich bitte Sie daher, mich dieser Funktion zu entbinden.84

The seemingly contradictory reasons Kurella gives are typical of official and private correspondence and support Lehn et al. in their experience that archival evidence can point

83 Alfred Kurella to Johannes R. Becher, 8 September 1957, AdK, Johannes-R.-Becher-Archiv Nr. S1411.
84 Alfred Kurella to Johannes R. Becher, Leipzig, 9 September 1957, BArch DR1/8387.
in multiple, conflicting directions. The overtly heteronomous political reputation Kurella brought to the Institute in the form of his embodied symbolic political capital would continue to be attached to the institution and be passed on to the Institute’s graduates in institutionalised form long after he had left for Berlin.

1957 marks a caesura in the Institute’s history for several reasons with Alfred Kurella’s resignation only being one. He was succeeded by Max Zimmering, who remained director for four years. After two years of working as the Institute’s librarian, Löwe had fled the GDR under suspicious circumstances in 1957 and was replaced by a librarian named Anders.\(^85\) After the Institute’s first course had run for a year and the second course for two years, the Institute offered its first three-year-course in 1958. The three-year-course was offered regularly from then on. And last but not least, the issue concerning the Institute’s estate was resolved: in August 1957, the Institute moved into a villa on the Karl-Tauchnitz-Straße. The acquisition of its own building after struggling to find a suitable space for over three years plays a central role in the Institute’s self-perception. The address emerges in the title of several publications that emerged from the Institute and I will investigate the meaning a material building had for Institute in the fifth chapter.

3.4. Founding the Institut für Literatur – A Question of Political Power?

With the analysis of the three stages that led to the eventual creation of the Institut für Literatur in Leipzig I have attempted to investigate three central questions: How could initial capital be gathered to create a literary institution in the GDR of the early 1950s? Which form did this capital take? And to what extent did the capital accumulated during the

\(^{85}\) Protokoll über die Sitzung des Bibliotheksausschusses am 26.6.1958, Leipzig, SStAL, Institut für Literatur, Nr. 358.
Institute’s founding phase determine – and how much does this continue to determine – its perception by others?

The documentation of the Institute’s founding has revealed new insights into the importance of individual agents and organisational structures in the sub-national literary field of the early to mid-1950s. The debates between integrationists and supporters of an all-German line made the first proposals for the founding of a literary academy rhetorical fight for power in the unstable literary field rather than an earnest attempt to create a new cultural institution. With the SED’s more decisive course in cultural policy from late 1951 onward, the conditions for founding new institutions in the literary field of the GDR seem to have changed considerably. Institutions and organisations imposed on the literary field by the field of power, most prominently the MfK, became immediately more powerful in the creation of new institutions. Yet, individuals were still able to act as blockages or enablers, such as Friedrich Ebert, who seems to have made the Institute’s location in Berlin impossible, or Annemarie Reinhard and Werner Baum who were able to advance the planning process in several instances due to their personal commitment. However, the bureaucratic measures that ensured the founding of the Institute were only part of the founding struggle. The practical side of the Institute’s creation confronted Alfred Kurella with obstacles that were, in part, impossible to overcome within seventeen months. Scepticism about the nature of the Institute on the one hand and a lack of resources such as suitable lecturers and adequate properties in Leipzig on the other were further challenges for the project.

We have seen that symbolic national political capital was indispensable for the founding of the Institute. This form of capital could only be bestowed on the project by the MfK, a cultural institution that had just emerged from the field of power when the DSV
realised it lacked the economic capital to create such a literary academy by itself. Through its functionaries, the MfK was able to mobilise the finances, administrators and – with limited success – property to make the Institute a reality. Only within the MfK did the necessary channels exist to secure the necessary facilities, administrative staff and financial means. Ultimately, the founding of the Institute is a display of the increase in power of the political field and its affiliated organisations. With the emergence of the MfK in 1954, a body was created that was able to limit and influence newly emerging cultural institutions such as the Institute. The price the Institute had to pay for the MfK’s patronage was the loss of its appeal to autonomous literary actors who may have chosen to avoid being associated with the Institute because of its seemingly strong ties with the political field. This answers the question of the form of capital the Institute was able to accumulate in its founding stage. Through the MfK, symbolic political capital was transferred to the Institute. Due to the symbolic state of the political capital, individuals unfamiliar with the daily running of the Institute would have been likely to overestimate the degree to which the institutional practice was following heteronomous principles. The fact that Alfred Kurella, himself highly endowed with symbolic heteronomous political capital, was made the Institute’s first director would have contributed to its heteronomous reputation that was at odds with how Kurella managed the Institute, its staff and students. The reputation of the Institute as a stronghold of socialist literary practice is even now still appealing to scholars, many of whom try to assess it in terms of ‘Kaderschmiede’, ‘Bank der Roten Dichter’ and ‘Parteischule’. In this regard, archival material has helped to identify the symbolic, misrecognised nature of some of the political capital the Institute held during its early years of operation.
4. Embodied Cultural Capital: Examining the Role of the Lecturer

In this chapter, I will look at tensions at the Institut through the role of its lecturers. I will show that tensions between autonomous desires and heteronomous expectations permeated and defined everyday practice on an institutional as well as individual level. The analytical category that will inform this chapter is cultural capital in its embodied form. This will allow me to investigate the same contradictions we have already observed during the Institute’s founding from a different perspective and in a different context, namely student-lecturer interactions. The choice to focus on the lecturers’ role rather than that of the students was made for two reasons. Firstly, the archival material concerned with the Institute’s teaching staff proved more detailed than that relating to students. Whereas student files, as far as they were accessible, hold substantial information mostly for students who had attracted attention for their autonomous actions, the archival holdings featuring lecturers are more yielding. Personnel files, minutes of Institute meetings, individual and collective publications allow for a balanced analysis of capital transfers and habitus formation. Secondly, lecturers generally spent a longer period of time at the institution than students, who, if enrolled in the Direktstudium, graduated after three years. Lecturers therefore had more opportunities to be influenced by institutional practices and, depending on their level of seniority and symbolic literary capital, were in turn in a position to shape institutional practice themselves.¹

This chapter will focus on two of the Institute’s lecturers: Georg Maurer and Werner Bräunig. Both lecturers are among the most frequently mentioned to have worked at the Institute. However, a detailed analysis of how they transferred skills and knowledge

¹ The research undertaken by the DLL promises to reveal more insights into the role and literary self-perception of the emerging writers who attended the Institute.
onto their students has not yet been featured in the scholarship.² Bourdieu’s category of embodied cultural capital will allow me to investigate the transmission of literary capital in the context of seminars and non-institutionalised situations.

Maurer and Bräunig share only a few similarities. Both were leaders of creative seminars in which autonomous sentiments arose frequently. Students valued both lecturers and enjoyed interacting with them inside and outside the institutional context. However, the similarities seem to end here. Born in 1934, Bräunig belonged to the young generation of authors who entered the literary field in the early 1960s, whereas Maurer, Bräunig’s senior by 27 years, had already published his first collection of poems by 1936. Maurer was a poet and led the Institute’s poetry seminar, while Bräunig mostly wrote short stories and was in charge of the prose seminar. The lecturers’ backgrounds were also decidedly different which affected their personal habitus and literary output. Maurer was born into a family of intellectuals and studied art history, German and philosophy in Leipzig and Berlin. As a soldier during the Second World War, he worked as an interpreter in Bucharest and returned to Leipzig in 1945. Before working at the Institute, he was a freelance reporter for the *Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk Leipzig*.³ Bräunig came from a family of workers that he himself described as highly dysfunctional.⁴ After a tumultuous youth that saw Bräunig imprisoned for one year after trading contraband, he worked for various state-owned manufacturing plants and in 1957 began working for the VEB Wismut as a lignite miner.⁵

He joined the Wismut’s AJA the same year and was encouraged to attend the Institute in

² For a detailed reconstruction of Wieland Herzfelde’s teaching practice during his prose seminar in 1955/56 see: Lehn, Macht, and Stopka, ‘Literarische Schreibprozesse’, pp. 86-89.
⁴ In his hand-written CV attached to his application for admission to the Institute, Bräunig wrote: ‘Mein Vater [...] schrieb eine gute Handschrift. Davon bekam ich, und manchmal auch meine Mutter, des öfteren eine Kostprobe.’ StStAL, Institut für Literatur Leipzig, Nr. 924.
1958. After finishing his studies in 1961, Bräunig stayed at the Institute and worked on developing its *Fernkurs* before becoming the lecturer for the prose seminar.

Maurer and Bräunig embodied fundamentally different, to some extent even opposing, forms of cultural capital and occupied two different positions in the sub-national literary field. As an intellectual who had distinguished himself before working at the Institute, Maurer was oriented towards autonomous literary values but did not oppose the field of power directly. Bräunig, on the other hand, came from a heteronomous literary position and personified the principles of the Bitterfelder Weg to such an extent that he is often mentioned alongside Christa Wolf, Karl-Heinz Jakobs, Erik Neutsch, Franz Fühmann and others who represented the aesthetics and empowerment of the working class in their literary works. The Bitterfeld-slogan ‘Greif zur Feder, Kumpel!’ is even partially attributed to Bräunig. He clearly brought large amounts of embodied heteronomous literary capital to the Institute and would have greatly appeased the field of power, had there not been the *Rummelplatz* controversy that I have already outlined in chapter 1. The embodied symbolic literary capital Maurer brought to the Institute may have been less attractive to the field of power; however, Maurer was one of very few lecturers who were able to lend the Institute a small amount of international recognition. As such, both lecturers embody the contradictions and interplay between heteronomy and autonomy at the Institute and allow me to investigate why a seemingly Party-loyal working writer came under harsh criticism whereas an autonomously-minded poet was considered an invaluable asset to the Institute.

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7 Angela Drescher makes this claim in: Angela Drescher, "Aber die Träume haben doch Namen". Der Fall Werner Bräunig", in *Rummelplatz*, ed. by Angela Drescher (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 2007), pp. 625-74 (pp. 630-31). Haslinger, on the other hand, only mentions Bräunig as a co-author of the phrase. See: Haslinger, 'Deutsches Literaturinstitut Leipzig', p. 590.
The period I will examine more closely in this chapter is the 1960s. The focus on this decade allows me to investigate events that were formative for both lecturers. In Bräunig’s case, the 1960s see him gaining experience and confidence as a young writer and lecturer during the first half of the decade and also cover the events of the 11th Plenary that affected him to such an extent that his pedagogical and literary ambitions steadily decreased until his early death in 1976 aged 42. The 1960s are an important decade in Maurer’s professional life as the Institute took in several talented young poets during this decade that would thrive under Maurer’s tutelage and become part of the poet collective Sächsische Dichterschule. The history of the Institute in the mid-1960s seems to be synonymous with the public criticism of Werner Bräunig’s novel Rummelplatz at the 11th Plenary in December 1965. The focus on the 11th Plenary as a decisive moment in the Institute’s history is not surprising as the event itself represented the height of repressive cultural policy in the 1960s and led to fundamental debates among members of the Party and the Institute. The number of expulsions of students who had openly criticised the SED also increased during this time. The 11th Plenary was a crucial moment for the Institute and its members. Bourdieu believes that it is in such moments of crisis ‘when the objective reality of each of the positions and their relationship is unveiled and the values which do the veiling are reaffirmed’. During such a turning point or, as Bernd Hüppauf refers to it, Kulturkrise, stakes and tensions that would otherwise have remained hidden are revealed under the pressure applied during the crisis and as a result of the sense of self-determination felt by individual actors or groups of individuals. The selection of documents from the archives

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8 Jäger, Kultur und Politik in der DDR: 1945-1990, p. 119. Of the students who were expelled during this time, Dieter Mucke, Andreas Reimann and Helga M. Novak (then Vigfússo) are most frequently mentioned.

9 Bourdieu, The Field of Cultural Production, p. 79.

of the Institute and the MfK discussed in this chapter expose a struggle at the Institute that preceded and outlasted the 11th Plenary and was concerned with an issue mostly detached from cultural policy: the habitus of the lecturer. This debate takes on bigger dimensions than the controversy surrounding Bräunig the existing scholarship has focused on.

In the build up to as well as the aftermath of the 11th Plenary, Bräunig’s critique led to an investigation of the Institute’s practice as well as a review of its teaching practices. However, their literary production is also where significant differences between both lecturers can be found. Even before teaching at the Institute, Maurer promoted an idea of poetry that was characterised by a strong belief in the autonomy of literature. For this, he was valued by his students ‘da er in den fünfziger Jahren die Lyrik nicht in den Dienst der Hymne auf den sozialistischen Sieg gestellt hatte, sondern ihre subjektive Ausdruckskraft bewahrte’.11 Coming from an intellectual background, Maurer appreciated the autonomous qualities of poetry and took on an apolitical position where and when possible. Bräunig, born in 1934 and Maurer’s junior by 27 years came from a working class background. Bräunig, on the other hand, became closely connected to the Bitterfelder Weg in the late 1950s and believed in the heteronomous values of political writing. He published mainly newspaper articles, short stories and reportage but also worked on his Wismut novel Rummelplatz. Bräunig’s literary habitus was governed by his heteronomous political dispositions. As the case studies will show, it is not the apolitical poet-lecturer Maurer whose habitus is called into question by authorities, but rather the writer-lecturer Bräunig.

The Institute’s common habitus was marked by fundamental tensions and contradictions. As the fundamental question whether it should pursue heteronomy or autonomy in literary production and training was never fully answered, there was room for

interpretation for staff and students as to which paradigm to follow and whether or not to pursue orthodox political or autonomous literary capital. In addition to this, the lecturers themselves hardly subscribe to one habitus. At the Institute, there were three archetypical habitus, each of which resonated more or less with individual lecturers. One habitus was that of the pedagogue. In their role as educators, lecturers were involved in the training of young writers. The size of intake and type of tuition offered by the Institute meant that students and lecturers interacted with each other frequently on a professional and personal level. Another habitus was that of the writer. Lecturers were themselves producers in the literary field: they wrote and published works of literature or academic texts. Therefore, they had a position in the literary field and, like other writers, had to negotiate, reaffirm or adjust their position frequently. The third and final habitus was that of the politician. Due to the dominance of the political field over the literary field, the lecturers also played a political role. The multiplehabitus was not realised in the same way by all lecturers. One or two parts may have been more dominant. A writer-lecturer, for example distinguished himself primarily through literary production, subordinated teaching to writing and did not take a very active role in political issues. A lecturer-writer, on the other hand, would have made teaching his priority and acted on his literary ambitions second. Other lecturers may have been politicians first and writers second. Here, an obvious example would be Alfred Kurella who was career-minded within the political field and published works that were above all politically motivated. Each of the three main habitus could itself be expressed differently. The habitus of a writer can be sub-divided into the habitus of a poet (Dichter) and that of a writer (Schriftsteller), for example. In the case of Bräunig and Maurer we will see two very different realisations of the habitus of the lecturer which will enhance our
understanding of how the tensions and contradictions the Institute as a whole faced were negotiated on the level of the individual.

The Ideological Situation at the Institute

Documents concerning the teaching practices at the Institute in the early 1960s show that three main concerns had been a topic of conversation between the Institute and the MfK long before the controversy surrounding Bräunig: the relationship between lecturers and students, the composition of the Institute's studentship, and the lecturers' behaviour. In December 1961, director Max Zimmering submitted a report about the current political and ideological situation at the Institute to the Ministry’s division for educational institutions (Sektor Schulische Einrichtungen). The Ministry had asked the director how the new intake of full-time students in September 1961 and members of staff reacted to the construction of the Berlin Wall which had begun on 13 August 1961. Zimmering confirmed that there were 'keinerlei falsche Einschätzungen oder schwankende Haltungen' thanks to the ‘günstige Zusammensetzung unseres Lehrkörpers’.\(^\text{12}\) In regard to the staff’s position on political and ideological matters, Zimmering believed, ‘daß man die gegenwärtige [...] Situation an unserem Institut als gut bezeichnen kann’. The position of the current students, Zimmering believed, was also ‘günstig’.\(^\text{13}\) The average age of the writers who began their studies in 1961 was 30 and many of the students had ‘lange Parteierfahrung’ - all in all a politically orthodox group of students that Zimmering described as ‘außerordentlich sorgfältig ausgewählt’. Although the director could not yet make a definitive prognosis as the students had only studied at the Institut for one

\(^{12}\) This and all other citations in this paragraph unless stated otherwise: ‘Einschätzung der Direktion des Instituts für Literatur “Johannes R. Becher” Leipzig zu den nachfolgenden Punkten’, Max Zimmering, 19 December 1961, SStAL 20311 Institut für Literatur, Nr. 12.

\(^{13}\) The Institute was running two parallel courses, one running from 1960 to 1963 and on running from 1961 to 1964. Zimmering was referring to the students of the latter course here.
semester, the document strongly suggests that everything seemed to promise a successful
and trouble-free three-year course.

In early 1963, however, an apologetic report was sent from the Institute’s
Parteileitung to the SED. An undated draft of this report can be found in the Institute’s
archive along with the final version dated 20 March 1963. Both documents carry the title
‘Dokument zur ideologischen Situation am Institut für Literatur “Johannes R. Becher”’.14
The versions differ somewhat in their content; the message, however, is identical in both
documents: the ideological situation at the Institute was unsatisfactory for which the
students were partly and staff mostly to blame. The undated document explains:

Das Institut für Literatur ’Johannes R. Becher’ ist in der letzten Zeit seiner Aufgabe, eine
wesentliche Rolle im kulturellen Leben unserer Republik zu spielen, nicht voll gerecht
geworden. [...] Die ungenügend kämpferische Haltung in den Auseinandersetzungen
resultierte aus der ungesunden Atmosphäre, die im Institut herrschte.15

Some lecturers, the report pointed out, even believed ‘die Kulturpolitik sollte in Richtung
einer sogenannten “toleranten Parteilichkeit” geändert werden’ and convened their courses
accordingly. Apparently, ideologically questionable poems had been published in
‘Tauchnitzstraße 8’, a journal published by the Institute presenting works by its students.
There were two issues of this journal that were published in 1962 and a ‘Sonderheft’ which
was published as the third issue in 1963. Some poems published in ‘Tauchnitzstraße 8’
caused concern among the readers of the journal because they were ‘kritiklos dargeboten
und nicht diskutiert’.16 The students must have been granted aesthetic freedom at the

14 ‘Dokument zur ideologischen Situation am Institut für Literatur “Johannes R. Becher”’, without author,
without date, SStAL 20311 Institut für Literatur Nr. 538; ‘Dokument zur ideologischen Situation am Institut
für Literatur “Johannes R. Becher”’, without author, Leipzig, 28 March 1963, SStAL 20311 Institut für
Literatur Nr. 538.

15 ‘Dokument zur ideologischen Situation am Institut für Literatur “Johannes R. Becher”’, undated. The
following citation is taken from the same source.

16 Werner Eggerath felt compelled to write in a personal letter to Max Zimmering: ‘[...] die letzte Ausgabe [...] hat mich einfach aufs Kreuz geworfen. [...] Lieber Max, du muß jetzt kämpfen. Du darfst keine persönlichen
Rücksichten nehmen, diese Blätter sind in der letzten Ausgabe einfach ein Skandal.’ Werner Eggerath, Berlin,
8 January 1963, SStAL 20311 Institut für Literatur Nr. 41.
Institute that did not comply with the heteronomous expectations imposed on the Institute and the literary field as early as 1962. In addition to this, there seems to have been a hierarchical order among second-year students that was not addressed by the teaching staff so that a relationship between students developed that could be compared to that between ‘Offiziere und Fußvolk’. It seems that autonomously-minded students united against their heteronomous peers: ‘Wir duldeten, daß Mitglieder der Parteileitung aus dem zweiten Studienjahr als Zuträger und Denunzianten bezeichnet wurden, weil sie versuchten, parteiliche Gespräche zu führen und Information an die Parteileitung gaben’. Despite the magnitude of the staff’s shortcomings, the undated report affirmed: ‘Die Unklarheiten und ihre Wurzeln sind erkannt, Mißverhältnisse der Genossen untereinander und zur Partei korrigiert, die Fehler der Leitung und der Parteiorganisation ausgesprochen.’ And, unsurprisingly, the official dated version ends optimistically:

Erst jetzt, nach zwei Jahren hingeschleppter und nicht beendigter ideologischer Auseinandersetzungen haben sich die Fronten wieder formiert. [...] Wir meinen, daß wir auf dieser Position, aufbauend auf unseren Erfolgen, in der Lage sind, die Auseinandersetzungen zu Ende zu führen, in Zukunft derartige Fehler zu vermeiden und gemeinsam mit der Leitung des Instituts die noch nötigen Veränderungen, besonders in der Auswahl der zukünftigen Studenten, schnell durchzuführen.

In 1963, the selection criteria for students were still a source of tension at the Institute. The 1961-intake of students was presumably not governed by politically heteronomous principles, which necessitated the ideological ‘Auseinandersetzungen’ in order to address the major fault line that had formed between autonomous and heteronomous students. The admissions practices still relied on the search for talent rather than political orthodoxy and remained a symptom of the inherent contradiction between political and symbolic literary capital that any cultural institution in the GDR had to negotiate. The fact that there were

17 ‘Dokument zur ideologischen Situation am Institut für Literatur “Johannes R. Becher”’, Leipzig, 28 March 1963. The following citation is taken from the same source.
18 ‘Dokument zur ideologischen Situation am Institut für Literatur “Johannes R. Becher”’, undated.
ideological and political problems at the Institute before the 11th Plenary and before Max Walter Schulz became the Institute's director in 1964 has not been addressed by publications about the Institute. After the initial founding struggles, the controversy surrounding Werner Bräunig, his novel and his dissenting students is commonly presented as the next crucial moment in the history of the Institute. As the two documents cited above point out very clearly, both the Institute’s director and the SED were aware of the potential for autonomy and questioning of the political order at the Institute as early as March 1963. The director’s solution to the problems was to simply assert: ‘Die Institutsleitung muß den Erziehungs- und Bildungsprozeß straffer, operativer und individueller leiten und für eine kollektive Arbeit der Dozenten sorgen.’

By 1964, the Institute, the MfK and the DSV recognised the effects generational change had had on the Institute as well as the necessity of adjusting the institutional practice accordingly. In the draft of a document outlining the collaboration between the three organisations received by the MfK on 3 July 1964, two reasons are given for the need to change the course structure. First, an increase ‘der bildungsmäßigen Voraussetzungen’ due to a higher number of students who had attended institutions of higher education had been registered by the Institute’s staff. Thus, the ‘Unterschied zwischen jungen Autoren und schreibenden Arbeitern’ was slowly diminishing. Secondly, the average age of the Institute’s students was steadily decreasing at the same time. The embodied cultural capital students had acquired was now of a quality that meant the Institute could focus on increasing its literary capital. Generational change had resolved one of the Institute’s early

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20 Dokument zur ideologischen Situation am Institut für Literatur “Johannes R. Becher”, undated.
21 This reference and following ‘Entwurf zu Vereinbarungen, die wissenschaftliche und operative Zusammenarbeit zwischen dem Institut für Literatur, dem Ministerium für Kultur (als staatl. Träger des Instituts) und dem Deutschen Schriftstellerverband betreffend, without author, without date, BArch DR1/597.
tensions: the curriculum no longer had to accommodate classes that provided the students
with general education. However, the decreasing average age had consequences that proved
difficult for the Institute to cope with: as a direct result of the students’ young age, the
amount of ‘Lebenserfahrung’ students could draw on in their writing and the number of
students who were Party members also decreased. The Institute, the MfK and the DSV
agreed to react to these changes by no longer dividing the students into higher and lower
ability classes in academic subjects but rather to counsel students with educational gaps
individually. Furthermore, in response to the lack of life experience, the importance of
work placements was emphasised. Students were now expected to choose a ‘festen
Praktikumsbetrieb’ where they would spend one third of their course. The document urged
the Institute to ensure that each student would take on some responsibilities during the
placement instead of playing a ‘Zaungast’. As a result of the time spent on those placements
– the Institute’s leadership recommended ‘Redaktionen, Dramaturgien, Lektorate, Schulen
und Parteileitungen’ – students were expected to produce at least one piece of writing
suitable for publication in the form of reportage, a scene, a short story or a poem.
Furthermore, the decision was made for an ‘Immatrikulationskommission’ consisting of
three members of the Institute, a representative of the MfK as well as a member of the
DSV’s Nachwuchskommission to choose who would be allowed to study at the Institute and
whose application would be rejected.

In mid-December 1964, this agreement was followed by a ‘Perspektivplan’ that
covered the Institute’s duties and planned development from 1965 to 1970.\textsuperscript{22} The work
placements were reduced to only one quarter of the total duration of studies and instead of
gathering work experience at one place, various work placements at different employers

\textsuperscript{22} All following references: ‘Perspektivplan des Instituts für Literatur “Johannes R. Becher”, Leipzig’, without
author, 15 December 1964, BArch DR1/597.
were envisioned – still with the expectation that the students would combine the placements with ‘konkreten publizistischen Aufträgen’. More importantly, the Institute decided to limit student intake to only one three-year course every year to avoid running two parallel courses. The Institute planned to use the freed-up teaching capacities to develop ‘eine entschieden engere Zusammenarbeit mit den literaturgeschichtlichen Instituten der Karl-Marx-Universität’. However, a legal issue seems to have prevented the Institute from offering courses that were recognised at university level: The official statute described the Institute as possessing the character of an institution of higher education instead of actually being ‘eine Kunsthochschule’. The Perspektivplan also encompassed a summary of the lecturers’ professional aims from 1965 to 1970. All lecturers were either composing pieces for publication, working on a dissertation or they had plans to become knowledgeable of a new aspect of literary history or creative writing in order to offer new seminars at the Institute. Kurt Kanzog, for example, was intent on becoming acquainted with radio dramas and planned on going on a work placement at a radio station for up to four weeks to do so. As we can see from this, the training and development of the Institute’s staff was also an important aim of the Institute and ensured that the lecturers had the time and obligation to increase their embodied and objectified cultural capital through research and publications.

The archival records concerned with institutional and teaching practice show that ideological and pedagogical concerns had already been dealt with by the Institute and the MfK before the 11th Plenary. Although the exact reasons and circumstances of the MfK’s worries about the ideological situation at the Institute cannot be fully reconstructed, it cannot be denied that the Institute was already reprimanded for fostering literary autonomy before Max Walter Schulz replaced Max Zimmering as the Institute’s director and before
the 11th Plenary. The documented exchange between the Institute, the DSV and the MfK, despite giving a general impression of the pedagogical practice at the Institute, does not provide much information about individual lecturers and their roles in instructing and developing young writers. For a deeper understanding of the relationships between lecturers and students at the Institute, the focus will now shift to the lecturing practices of Werner Bräunig and Georg Maurer.
4.1 Der Arbeiter-Schriftsteller: Werner Bräunig

Werner Bräunig studied at the Institute from 1958 to 1961. After completing his studies, he remained at the Institute as an *Assistent* and was given the task to aid in the development of a distance learning course at the Institute. Later, he was promoted to *Oberassistent* and entrusted with the creative prose seminar. With his background of having worked as a miner for the VEB Wismut, emerging from the *Volkskorrespondentenbewegung* and direct involvement in the 1959 Bitterfelder Konferenz, his trajectory was that of a working writer and essentially a representative of what the Party had hailed as the future of East German literature since Bitterfeld. Yet, Bräunig is less remembered for his heteronomous trajectory: The scholarship on Werner Bräunig focuses in large part on his being publicly criticised by the SED at the 11th Plenary of the Central Committee. Excerpts from Bräunig’s novel in progress, *Rummelplatz*, were interpreted as subverting the role of the worker and the Party line. Drescher and Walther also look beyond the events at the Plenary in 1965 and point to a surveillance operation run by the MfS against Bräunig and some of his peers during their student years under the code name ‘Schriftsteller’. As such, the analysis of Bräunig’s behaviour in the mid-1960s has primarily focused on his actions as a student and a writer. Archival sources show that Bräunig’s behaviour had more serious repercussions for the Institute and Bräunig’s reputation as a lecturer than has been implied thus far. As Bräunig, along with intellectuals such as Wolf Biermann and Robert Havemann, found himself at the centre of the Party’s critique of new developments in the

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23 Emmerich, *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR*, p. 129.
25 see: Drescher, "Aber die Träume haben doch Namen". Der Fall Werner Bräunig‘ pp. 664-666; Drescher mistakenly calls the *Operativer Vorlauf* (OV) ’Autor’. Walther speaks of an OV ’Schriftsteller’ in connection to Bräunig and other students at the Institute that ran from ca. 1960 to 1963. See: Walther, *Sicherungsbereich Literatur*, p. 149.
national cultural field, the Institute was subsequently subjected to the Party’s scepticism. Students and lecturing staff found themselves under close scrutiny. Given his influence on young writers in the early and mid-1960s, a closer investigation of Bräunig’s habitus as a lecturer is necessary.

On 1 December 1965, a conversation between the first secretary of the DSV, Prof Dr Hans Koch and Hans Baumgart, the head of the literature division of the ZK’s Cultural Department took place. The minutes of this meeting, kept by the federal archive, have so far not been examined by scholars of the Institute.26 The document reveals information about a lack of study discipline at the Institute as well as an attempt to undermine the Party’s cultural policy at the institution. Koch had previously been informed by Ursula Steinhaußen, who was a member of the DSV’s Nachwuchs kommission, about a recent development at the Institute:

\begin{quote}
\end{quote}

This information prompted Siegfried Wagner, head of the Cultural Department of the ZK, to immediately contact Paul Fröhlich, a member of the ZK’s politburo. Fröhlich’s assistant informed Wagner ‘daß seines Wissens nach das Problem des Studentenklubs am Literatur-Institut der Bezirksleitung bekannt sei’. One day later, Siegfried Wagner forwarded a report about a meeting of Party delegates at the Institute to Erich Honecker and added his evaluation of the current situation at the Institute. Copies of this letter were also made available to Walter Ulbricht and Kurt Hager, a member of the ZK’s politburo.27 Among

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27 Wagner an Erich Honecker, without place, 2.12.1965, BArch DY30/IV A 2/9.06/73.
those present at the meeting were three members of the SED Bezirksleitung Leipzig: Gerhard Dahne, Eduard Klein and Hans Koch. The report raised questions about the Institute’s matriculation practices, the way in which some lecturers conducted their seminars as well as Max Walter Schulz’s efforts in his role as the director of the Institute. The latest intake of students was criticised for having the lowest number of Party members since the Institute’s founding; out of 29 students, only 5 were official SED members. This meant that for the first time since 1955, the students who were Parteigenossen were in the minority. The reason given in the report for this development was the following: ‘Diese Situation ist Auswirkung einer falschen Immatrikulationspolitik, die nur quantitativ orientiert war und politisch-klassenmäßige Voraussetzungen überhaupt nicht berücksichtigte.’

Also, some students seemed to have been accepted at the Institute without having been recommended by the DSV or another Party-run writers’ organisation. As a result, the report claims, the participation of the new students in seminars was disappointing and their general demeanour was marked by lethargy and lack of study discipline.

The conduct of Helga Vigfússon (Helga M. Novak), Andreas Reimann and Dieter Mucke was cause for special concern. A study by the latter, written for Werner Bräunig’s prose seminar, caused a minor controversy at the Institute and is one of the incidents involving Bräunig and the Institute that is often referred to in the existing scholarship. Mucke’s piece was heavily criticised at the meeting: ‘Die Studie ist offen parteifeindlich, gipfelt in solchen Wendungen wie “mit sozialistischem Gruß: Heil Hitler” und dem Bild eines Eimers voller ausgespuckter und gargekochter Parteiabzeichen; wendet sich gegen die

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“Spießer mit Parteiabzeichen” usw.’. As a result of this incident, Bräunig’s behaviour as a seminar leader was investigated at the meeting. Bräunig explained that he only allowed the work to be discussed in class as he was – rightly – under the impression that other students had already been aware of Mucke’s work. Those present at the meeting did not necessarily disagree with Bräunig’s decision to make Mucke’s study a subject of discussion in the seminar by pointing out the piece’s ideological flaws and treating it disapprovingly. However, it was Bräunig’s failure to inform the Parteileitung and Institutsleitung beforehand that was held against him. As a lecturer in front of his students and in the seminar he was supportive of the SED. He criticised Mucke for his comments on the political system and made an example of his work during the seminar. Although some of the questions asked by the members of the Bezirksleitung at the meeting on 1 December 1965 seem to have been aimed at implicating Bräunig in the Mucke incident, the general consensus among students and staff refuted the allegations against Bräunig: ‘Sie wiesen auf die parteiliche Qualität gerade dieser Seminarführung hin’. His disposition to believe in a social order supportive of the working class as he presented it in his literary works corresponded to his behaviour in class when he defended the Party line. However, he was not willing to expose one of his students to investigations by the Party and used the freedom he enjoyed as a lecturer at the Institute to discuss Mucke’s text that would have been censored in a different context. This allowed the creative prose seminar to develop into what Clarke described as a niche and allowed for extremely autonomous, in Mucke’s case even subversive, sentiments to be voiced within the Institute’s walls. Bräunig’s habitus as a lecturer was, in this situation and in this specific context, characterised by his disposition to promote the importance of a

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socialist system for the worker while at the same time guarding his student from disciplinary action by the Party and using the discursive freedom he enjoyed as a lecturer at the Institute to discuss a highly dissident text in his seminar.

Faced with the students’ disruptive behaviour, the lecturers were forced to find a way of taming the youth of the literary field. One simple option was to instil Party discipline by confronting the students directly. Yet, the report implies, the lecturers shied away from this solution, as did staff and students at other educational institutions:


The lecturers were seemingly confronted with the fundamental choice of either installing Party discipline or allowing the students to claim a space in which to express their freedom as artists. The tension between allowing autonomous expression and giving heteronomous corrections was resolved by the lecturers simply by remaining passive when they could take a heteronomous position. Lahire’s notion of contextual dispositions can explain why politically orthodox students and lecturers behaved this way. At the Institute and, it is implied, at other educational institutions, lecturers and students were only accepted by students when not activating their heteronomous positions. The negative feedback that would have followed an orthodox position-taking could have discouraged the individual to act on this disposition again. In order not to take too dogmatic of a heteronomous position in the training of young writers, the lecturers and Party representatives had adjusted their dispositions according to this context and had taken a more autonomous approach which was sure to appease the students:

Um die Situation ‘In die Hand zu bekommen’, stimmten Instituts- und Parteileitung der Bildung eines Studentenklubs unter studentischer Selbstverwaltung zu, der der ‘Selbsterziehung’ der Studenten dienen sollte. In diesem Klub, dessen Träger der DSV sein
This student club had already made contact with Wolf Biermann and Robert Havemann. Havemann, whose works were being circulated among the students at the time, had already agreed to take part in a club evening, given that neither the Institute nor he himself would suffer from this. The Party’s intervention in this matter uncovered more issues that were cause for concern in the eyes of the SED’s delegates. Whereas Mucke’s behaviour and Bräunig’s reaction initially raised suspicion, the practice at the Institute in dealing with the students’ demands for more autonomy ended up being the main focus of the meeting: ‘Für die Diskussion ist charakteristisch, daß die Genossen Studenten zum großen Teil entschieden selbstkritischer und offener Stellung nehmen als die Genossen Dozenten, von denen einige nicht oder nur formal sprachen’.

In a letter written by Gerhard Beck, secretary of the AG Schreibende Arbeiter, to Heinz Kimmel, acting leader of the Cultural Department of the ZK, and forwarded to Honecker, Georg Maurer is also criticised for his failure to identify critical comments about the regime and for his praise of West German literature and its economic success in one of his poetry seminars. Although director Max Walter Schulz is said to have addressed the matter ‘mit aller Kraft’, some lecturers, most prominently Bräunig, were said to have isolated the director from the students by secretly mocking him. Allegedly, Bräunig was organising the club activities and Beck quoted an informant’s report: ‘[Bräunig] ginge politisch auf den Strich, weil er sich westdeutschen und ausländischen Schriftstellern beim internat. Schriftstellertreffen in Weimar und Leipzig geradezu angeboten hätte, in einer Art, in der er sein Gesicht verliere.’ The emotive and highly offensive language exposes the significance the informer placed on Bräunig’s behaviour. Bräunig’s behaviour that could accumulate

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31 This citation and following: Gerhard Beck, Berlin, 2.12.1965, BArch DY30/IV A 2/9.06/73.
symbolic international literary capital for himself and the Institute was a direct contradiction of the heteronomous beliefs held by the informant. This crisis exposes the fundamental values at stake in the confrontation of autonomous and heteronomous literary values that led the informant to make remarks that would cost Bräunig a considerable amount of his embodied political capital. The claims were refuted at a second meeting with the Parteileitung at the Institute on 8 December, but their existence shows the rapid radicalisation and propagation against Werner Bräunig even before the 11th Plenary.

At the follow-up meeting on 8 December 1965, the Institute's staff took full responsibility for the ideologically unclear situation at the Institute, acknowledging that those students who tried to assert the Party's position at the Institute were unable to reach regime-critical students 'denn hinter ihnen steht nicht das gesamte Dozentenkollektiv'.

At this point in time and considering this open admission that the lecturers had not represented the SED in the manner expected of them, an agreement on how to improve the ideological situation at the Institute seemed to be the logical conclusion. Faced with a more hostile and invasive field of power, the lecturers who had thus far acted upon their autonomous dispositions were now aware of the need to appease their critics. Heteronomous position-takings that were more in line with the habitus of a Party-pedagogue would have to be taken to negotiate the crisis in which the Institute and its staff and students found themselves. However, a day before the meeting, a letter published in ND gave substantial cause for concern and, as the report of this meeting shows, the discussion of this letter took over the meeting. The letter in question was written by Klaus Höpcke, editor of the ND's cultural section, and four Wismut-Kollegen. In this letter, Bräunig's portrayal of Wismut miners in Rummelplatz was harshly criticised. According to the

report of the 8 December meeting, this view was not shared by staff and students at the Institute. On the contrary:

Genossen Studenten brachten in der Diskussion ihre Befürchtung zum Ausdruck, mit der Diskussion um Bräunigs 'Rummelplatz' beginne eine neue Kampagne, wie sie seinerzeit in der 'Freiheit' (Halle) gegen das Buch von Christa Wolf geführt wurde. Deshalb möchten sie sich voll hinter Werner Bräunig stellen und ihn davor schützen.\textsuperscript{33}

While the Institute’s staff and students were defending Bräunig, Hans Kert, the head of the MfK’s \textit{Sektion Schulische Einrichtungen} and Hans Mrowetz visited the Institute on 10 December to discuss the ideological malpractice that had taken place. It was mentioned that Horst Nalewski, lecturer at the Institute since 1959, had displayed ‘unrichtige Auffassungen über einige Erscheinungen unserer Literaturpolitik’ by allowing students to borrow Kafka’s works from the Institute’s library.\textsuperscript{34} To prevent the situation from getting worse, it was decided that the Institute would from now on be controlled by the \textit{Sektion Schulische Einrichtungen} and the \textit{Abteilung Kader} of the MfK. The change in leadership held the potential to drastically change the situation the lecturers faced. With the possibility of harsher rules and closer scrutiny being imposed on the Institute, the circumstances under which autonomous dispositions could be fostered were unlikely to persist.

In spring 1966, four months after the 11th Plenary, Bräunig was asked to answer a number of questions. A document in the federal archive headed ‘Zu den mir vorgelegten Fragen’ contains Bräunig’s self-critical response to these questions. It cannot be reconstructed who exactly posed these questions, but the apologetic and formulaic content of the document implies involvement by a division of the MfK. This could possibly have been a strategy of the \textit{Sektion Schulische Einrichtungen} and the \textit{Abteilung Kader} of the MfK employed in order to expose the situation and latest developments at the institution they

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{34} Aktennotiz zu einigen Erscheinungen ideologischer Sorglosigkeiten am Literaturinstitut “Johannes R. Becher”, Berlin, 10 December 1965, BArch DR1/597.
were now overseeing. Once again, the creative seminars proved to be cause for concern and Bräunig felt pressed to comment on the way he had conducted the prose seminar:

Die mir ausgesprochene strenge Rüge erscheint mir angesichts der Sorglosigkeit in der Führung dieses Seminars gerechtfertigt; ich habe daraus, wie aus der gesamten Kritik, die nötigen Schlussfolgerungen gezogen und jedes weitere Seminar gründlich und parteilich vorbereitet und durchgeführt.35

Bräunig seems to have realised that the shift in cultural policy and Party control had led to a change of circumstance in which he could no longer act upon his disposition to discuss literary works openly. The autonomous positions he acted upon, maybe to gain symbolic literary capital among his students as discussed earlier, were no longer sustainable in the context of increased Ministry surveillance. Instead, he assured the Ministry of his heteronomous intentions and behaviour as a lecturer, an indication that Bräunig adjusted his habitus according to the situation at the Institute.

Bräunig must have also been asked about his custom of joining some students at a nearby pub after work. He confirmed this but also insisted that he had not behaved inappropriately or drunk heavily. Bräunig also had to explain a publication in the West German literary journal *kürbiskern*. The opinion expressed in this article ‘spiegelt die Ansichten westdeutscher Intellektueller und natürlich seines Verfassers wider, nicht meine’, Bräunig explained. Bräunig intended to use the misunderstanding productively by formulating his opinion on this matter and publishing it together with the letters exchanged between him and Friedrich Hitzer about Bruno Gluchowski’s novel *Der Honigkotten* that initiated the publication in *kürbiskern*. The document closes with a generic and formulaic response: ‘Ich stimme mit der Politik unserer Partei in allen Punkten, also auch in der nationalen Frage, überein, und habe diese Politik auch in allen Gesprächen mit westdeutschen Schriftstellern und Kulturschaffenden vertreten.’ Bräunig was clearly trying

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35 This citation and following: ‘Zu den mir vorgelegten Fragen’, Werner Bräunig, Leipzig, 1.4.1966, BArch DR1/597.
to appease the authorities through his role as a writer-lecturer after the 11th Plenary instead of causing more controversy than the publication of excerpts from Rummelpflatz already had done. The change in habitus Bräunig brought about shows the degree to which he himself embodied the contradictions of the Institute. Bräunig pursued autonomous literary capital in the form of exchanges between students and lecturer or in his literary works. When the SED’s crackdown on cultural policy made the accumulation of autonomous cultural capital more precarious, he resorted to his heteronomous dispositions at the cost of autonomy in the prose seminar. Bräunig’s starting point as an orthodox worker-writer meant that he had developed the heteronomous dispositions necessary to negotiate a narrower cultural-political course. At the same time we will see that the autonomous dispositions he had developed at the Institute were so durable that Bräunig was unable to fully return to the dispositions of a worker-writer.

The unrest among lecturers after the Ministry’s inspections of early 1966 also remained, possibly aided by a generational shift in the ranks of lecturers themselves. Trude Richter, born in 1899 and lecturer of Russian at the Institute starting in 1957, felt increasingly alienated from other lecturers in general and Bräunig in particular. Even a year after the close inspection of the Institute, Richter wondered if Bräunig’s rightful place was at the Institute as an educator of future writers.36 She was wary of Bräunig’s close connection with Rainer Kirsch and Karl Mickel, despite Bräunig’s efforts of acting politically responsibly. Richter even demanded Bräunig be relieved of his position as lecturer. Klaus Gysi, as the documents confirm, was also in favour of removing Bräunig from his duties at the Institute. However, Max Walter Schulz remained hesitant and feared ‘damit Werner Bräunig in den Augen bestimmter Kreise in der DDR und im Westen zu

36 This citation and following: ‘Aktennotiz’, without author, Berlin, 28.2.1967, BArch DY30/IV A 2/9.06/73.
einem Märtyrer zu machen’. It is reasonable to assume that Bräunig was aware of individuals questioning whether he was a suitable lecturer for the Institute and less than a month after Trude Richter’s statement, Bräunig asked Schulz to be relieved of his post at the Institute explaining that ‘mein Verhalten [...] gegenüber dem Institut einem Lehrer und Seminarleiter nicht gemäß war’. He continued to explain why he believed he could no longer remain at the Institute: ‘der Schriftsteller rebelliert ein wenig gegen den “Lektor”, der im Lehramt nun einmal einbegriffen ist’. Like Kurella’s letter to Becher in which he discusses the reasons for leaving the Institute, Bräunig’s letter of resignation clearly points to the tension between his pedagogical duties and literary ambitions. Bräunig found the habitus of an ideologue-lecturer, i.e. the combination of political dispositions and those of a worker, incompatible with his habitus as a writer. In an attempt to defend his position as a writer in the literary field of the GDR, Bräunig proceeded to publish short stories and articles that were in compliance with GDR cultural policy from that point on. Despite support from fellow writers, he abandoned his work on Rummelplatz altogether just eight months after leaving the Institute.\(^\text{37}\)

The kind of contradictory behaviour shown by Bräunig is, according to Lahire, not uncommon. The different situations in which an individual needs to decide which action to take may trigger opposing dispositions in the individual. Stronger dispositions may be acted on more frequently than weak ones which may require the individual to face a certain context in which they can be actualised. In the role as a lecturer, Bräunig was exposed to more than just the Institute’s tripartite habitus consisting of political subject, state worker and writer. Being a Dozent confronted Bräunig, and any other lecturer at the Institute, with a new space of possibles. The role of a lecturer could be interpreted and acted out in a

\(^{37}\) Drescher, ”Aber die Träume haben doch Namen”. Der Fall Werner Bräunig’, p. 664.
number of ways. A lecturer with a strong political trajectory, such as Nikolai Janzen for example, interpreted and filled his role as that of a party pedagogue, emphasising the part literature and writing played for state socialism more than autonomous tendencies that were developing in the sub-national literary field. This form of habitus was oriented towards symbolic political and heteronomous literary capital that held a lot of power in the sub-national field of the GDR and the international Socialist literary field, but was not recognised outside them. On a formal level, this manifestation of the Dozent was highlighted by lecturers who were also Party members being referred to as Genosse Dozent in the minutes of Institute meetings. However, at the very centre of being a lecturer at a literary institution lie the dispositions for developing a very different set of behavioural patterns. Instead of responding to the heteronomous values associated with the political values of the institutional habitus, the values associated with the ideal of a writer-lecturer with a clear orientation towards autonomous literary values may be more appealing. Another possible role for a lecturer at the Institute was therefore that of a lecturer-writer by putting the educational mission of working at the Institute before that of being a writer in his own right. As will be shown later in connection with the Sächsische Dichterschule as well as other graduates of the Institute, Georg Maurer was a lecturer who established a very positive and lasting rapport with his students, fostering their literary skills while being a successful poet himself. However, he was at times criticised for a lack of overt Party support.

Werner Bräunig’s habitus changed from the day he entered the Institute as a student and his dormant autonomous dispositions that he now had the space to express were strengthened in the context of the Institute. The heteronomous dispositions he developed during his socialisation up to September 1958 became less and less actualised. As
a lecturer, Bräunig tried to bridge the contradictory expectations he faced at the Institute. His loyalties now lay with his autonomous literary ambitions and like-minded colleagues and students. The former, as one can tell from the posthumously published *Rummelplatz* as well as other literary interests, such as his interest in the *Dortmunder Gruppe 61*, were focused on the life, experiences and importance of the working class, especially the personal growth of individual workers in the heavy industry. When Mucke, his student, crossed a line set by the Party, as discussed above, he addressed this behaviour disapprovingly in his seminar but failed to inform the authorities in advance. Instead of exposing his student’s shortcoming to the Party, he tried to protect him. As such, Bräunig’s autonomous values originated from a heteronomous position and he did not question East German state socialism itself.

In the case of Werner Bräunig, the Institute seems to have failed to foster the promising dispositions with which he joined the institution in 1959. As the archival documents have shown, he was by no means the only lecturer who occupied an autonomous position in his attempt to combine the Institute’s tripartite habitus and the multiple positions available to a *Dozent* with the expectations imposed on each member of staff at the Institute by the field of power. In the mid-1960s, the leadership of the Institute seems to have done little to provide aesthetic and political guidance and to enable the lecturers to take a clear stand when negotiating the ever present crisis that arose from the contradiction between literary autonomy and political heteronomy. Instead of forming a politically streamlined collective, each lecturer of the Institute was operating mostly as an individual. What sets Bräunig apart from other lecturers who were faced with the young students in 1965 was that Bräunig and his novel-in-progress had already been singled out as a negative example for the 11th Plenary. The Institute, its staff and leadership were unable to support Bräunig and help him re-establish himself as a writer-lecturer.
4.2 Der ‘Meister’: Georg Maurer

The students who began their studies in the early 1960s challenged the teaching staff in a particular way: they were part of a generation of writers and young poets who became known for their ‘anspruchsvolle, fordernde Auftritt’ which sparked public debate in the 1960s. Among these writers were some poets who formed durable connections with each other as well as their lecturers at the Institute, for example Heinz Czechowski (student from 1958-1961) and Adel Karasholi (1962-64). A lecturer well-known for his strong bond with this young generation was Georg Maurer. Under his tutelage, poets such as Rainer and Sarah Kirsch (1963-1965) developed their literary skills and eventually, along with other poets not associated with the Institute, formed a collective known as the Sächsische Dichterschule. The Institute and Georg Maurer in particular enabled these students to connect artistically and to develop a style of poetry that would allow them to withdraw from political matters to a degree. This close connection between a lecturer and subversive students may have caused suspicion among the Party leadership of the Institute much like interactions between Bräunig and his students had done. But unlike his younger colleague, Maurer was held in high regards as a lecturer not only by colleagues, students, fellow writers and the MfK and was even awarded the title of professor in 1961. What set Maurer apart from other lecturers and made him more successful in reconciling the contradictions between the autonomous ambitions of his students and heteronomous restraints imposed by the field of power?

38 Heinz Czechowski in a letter to Karl Mickel, 6 February 1975, Deutsche Literaturarchiv, A: Czechowski.
39 See: Emmerich, Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR, p. 224.
40 Ibid. p. 227.
On 11 November 1955, Alfred Kurella met with Maurer, presumably to offer him a position at the Institute.\(^41\) By this point, Maurer had already accumulated considerable symbolic literary capital, for example by protesting against the Party’s censorship mechanisms only two years earlier. Leon Hempel summarises:

[Maurer] verfasst 1953 unter dem Titel *Die Autoren und ihre Helfer* einen Artikel gegen das Gebaren der Zensurbehörde, der von dieser aber zurückgewiesen wird. [...] In einem weiteren knappen Beitrag des Jahres 1953 appelliert er angesichts der Schwärme von Festtagslyrik in der DDR-Presse an Kritiker und Redakteure, 'echte Maßstäbe' für die Beurteilung von Dichtung aufzustellen, um Begabungen jenseits nur formelhafter Bekenntnisse zu stärken.\(^42\)

Maurer’s pleading for literary quality and diversity is reminiscent of Becher’s exchange with Franz Hammer concerning the *Arbeitskreise junger Autoren* in spring 1950 and although Maurer’s protest does not relate to the Institute, it nevertheless shows that the Formalism debate not only affected the Institute’s conception, but also its future members of staff. It is hard to say whether Kurella turned to Maurer because of or despite his symbolic literary capital. As we have seen in the previous chapter, Kurella was struggling to staff the Institute due to the shortage of qualified and available lecturers in Leipzig. Although it is uncertain if Maurer was hired out of necessity, he is proof that individuals with an intellectual and autonomous approach to literary production were hired by the Institute. Once employed, the Institute’s leadership interfered little with the lecturers’ teaching. This enabled lecturers like Maurer to distribute their embodied literary capital in their seminars with relatively few institutional and cultural-political constraints.

Dieter Herrde, in his function as deputy director, confirmed Maurer’s future employment at the Institute only one week later. Teaching had already officially begun, yet

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\(^41\) Alfred Kurella, Taschenkalender 1955, Leipzig, AdK Alfred-Kurella-Archiv Nr. 1319.
the post for the ‘Arbeitsgruppe für Lyrik’ was only filled in late November by Maurer, whom Herrde thanked profusely:

Es ist uns eine ganz besondere Freude, Ihnen heute für Ihre Bereitwilligkeit zu danken, an unserem Institut mitzuarbeiten. [...] Wir erkennen sehr Ihre Bemühungen an, sich trotz Ihrer anderweitigen großen Verpflichtungen zur Verfügung zu stellen, um das junge Unternehmen mit Ihren reichen Erfahrungen zu Unterstützen.43

The poetry workshop, as Herrde called it, was also called the ‘Seminar für Dichtung’ as a later letter written by Kurella suggests.44 At first, Maurer was paid hourly, but in 1957, Herrde, secured a permanent, albeit initially part-time, position for the ‘wertvolle künstlerische Lehrkraft’.45 It is at this point in time that Maurer also became the permanent convenor of the \textit{schöpferisches Seminar Lyrik}. Maurer worked at the Institute until 1970, leading the poetry seminar for a total of 13 years. It is unclear if the ‘Seminar für Dichtung’ that Kurella refers to is in fact the creative seminar for poetry. Kanzog dates the beginning of Maurer’s employment as the leader of the creative seminar to 7 January 1957.46 If both seminars were indeed the same, Josef Haslinger’s calculation that Maurer taught the seminar for 15 years would be correct.47 Considering Maurer’s position of influence over young writers at the Institute, Haslinger concludes: ‘Seine Bedeutung für die Entwicklung und das Ansehen der DDR-Lyrik ist unumstritten’. Given Haslinger’s close connection to the Institute, his assessment of Maurer’s influence on East German poetry and its reputation may be somewhat exaggerated. Nevertheless, Haslinger’s statement raises the question of how exactly Maurer acted and positioned himself as a lecturer at the Institute.

45 ‘Vertrag mit Georg Maurer’, Leipzig, 15 December 1955, SStAL 20311 Institut für Literatur Nr. 34; Dieter Herrde to Schrödter, Leipzig, 4 January 1957, BArch DR1/1321
46, Kurt Kanzog, Leipzig, 16 March 1962, SStAL 20311 Institut für Literatur Nr. 12.
47 This citation and following: Haslinger, ‘Deutsches Literaturinstitut Leipzig’, p. 1547.
Maurer, like every other lecturer, was presented with a position at the Institute that he himself could define through choosing his position-takings. Similar to Bräunig, Maurer also emphasised his relationship to his students, even outside the institutional context:

Maurers Seminare bilden innerhalb des Institut seine ‘Mittlerinstanz’, die den seitens der Politik formulierten Auftrag an die Dichtung mit dem Selbstanspruch von Dichtung verbindet. Ihr doppeltes Moment zwischen offiziellen Auftrag und sächlichem Anspruch dürfte darin zum Ausdruck kommen, dass ihre gewissermaßen private Seite auch in häuslicher Atmosphäre ihre Fortsetzung findet, etwa in Gesprächen mit Maurer. Zwischen dem Lehrer und den Schülern entwickelt sich ein persönliches Verhältnis, dass durch Maurer schließlich noch dadurch bestätigt wird, dass er einem Teil seiner Schülerschaft die volle Anerkennung als Dichterkollegen zollt, wo diese sich von seinen ästhetischen und auch politisch loyalen Standpunkten abzusetzen beginnen.48

We will return to the question of Maurer’s loyalty to the Party shortly. Maurer’s close relationship with his students that was converted into mutually beneficial social capital and his intellectual and literary embodied capital set him apart from many colleagues. A letter written by Kurt Kanzog to the MfK’s Sektor Arbeit shows for which qualities in particular Maurer was valued at the Institute: ‘seine essayistischen Arbeiten, u.a. über das Werk Johannes R. Bechers; vor allem aber die Entwicklung einer ganzen Reihe unserer hoffnungsvollsten jüngeren Dichter’.49 Academically, Maurer was extremely successful. Born into a family of teachers, Maurer studied art history, German and philosophy in Berlin and Leipzig. In 1934 he discontinued his studies and worked as a local reporter and art critic before joining the Wehrmacht as a translator in 1940.50 In 1945, Maurer began writing in earnest and received the title of professor in April 1961. His progression as a literary actor and the rapid accumulation of symbolic capital that went along with it was quite unusual as Heinz Czechowski remarked: ‘Ein Lyriker als Professor -- das war im bisherigen Deutschland, Ost wie West, ein besonderer Fall. Sein hohes Ansehen brachte ihm

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49 Kurt Kanzog, Leipzig, 16 March 1962, SStAl 20311 Institut für Literatur Nr. 12.
But as Kanzog pointed out, Maurer was not solely focused on accumulating symbolic capital in his role as literary critic and writer - he also influenced and nurtured many young poets at the Institute who would become distinguished actors in the GDR’s literary field.

The strongest connection formed between Maurer and some of his students was, as mentioned earlier, the *Sächsische Dichterschule*. The connection between the young poets themselves and their older lecturer has not been artificially construed, but stems from a mutual sense of shared literary identity. This becomes clear in a letter Czechowski wrote to Maurer congratulating him on his title of professor: ‘Und ich glaube auch im Namen aller meiner Mitstudenten zu sprechen, wenn ich Ihnen versichere, dass wir in dieser Erklärung mehr als nur Ihre Auszeichnung als Lehrer - man kann bald sagen: einer Generation junger Lyriker - erblicken.’

Gerrit-Jan Berendse defines the *Sächsische Dichterschule* as a ‘lockere Gruppierung (meist) gleichaltriger Lyriker [...] die Anfang der sechziger Jahre in der DDR-Öffentlichkeit, und schon bald darauf in aller Welt, zum ersten Mal Aufmerksamkeit und Beachtung erlangte’. He limits this network of poets to nineteen individuals, seven of which were students at the Institute during the second half of the 1950s and the 1960s.

The name of this literary network of poets has been coined by Adolf Endler, who was a member of the Dichterschule himself, and reflects the geographical space and literary background shared by most of the poets. Although the degree of identification with Saxony varied from poet to poet as not all of them were born there, the region can be regarded as

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51 Czechowski, *Die Pole der Erinnerung*, p. 86.
52 Heinz Czechowski, without place, without date, Georg-Maurer-Archiv Nr. 612.
53 Gerrit-Jan Berendse, *Die "Sächsische Dichterschule": Lyrik in der DDR der sechziger und siebziger Jahre*, (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1990), Introduction, p. IX
the group’s common denominator. Berendse observes that ‘die meisten der Nicht-Sachsen
[haben] entweder in Leipzig am Johannes R. Becher-Institut für Literatur [...] oder sonstwo
an einer sächsischen Universität studiert oder in einer sächsischen Stadt gelebt’.\(^{55}\) The
Institute seems to have played a central role in the emergence of the group as it facilitated
the establishment of personal and professional connections between its students. For those
members of the *Sächsische Dichterschule* who studied at the Institute, Georg Maurer was of
exceptional significance. Karl Mickel and Sarah Kirsch wrote in an essay published after
Maurer’s death: ‘Oft, wenn wir etwas taten oder schrieben, fragten wir: Was würde Maurer
dazu sagen? Und suchten so zu handeln, daß Maurer uns billigen könne. Oder wir nahmen
uns vor: Wenn wir mit dem und dem fertig sind, fahren wir nach Leipzig zu Maurer’.\(^{56}\) The
collective of poets adopted a common habitus that was characterised by strong intellectual
tendencies, much like the dominant traits of the multiple common habitus of the Institute;
the writers were representative of a generation of intellectuals that believed themselves to be
able to enter into a critical yet constructive dialogue with the Party. Berendse asserts in
regard to the *Dichterschule*: ‘Ihre Angehörigen äußerten sich kritisch zu kulturpolitischen
Misständen, ohne jedoch dabei ihre marxistischen Ideale zu verraten’.\(^{57}\) Out of all the
students, Heinz Czechowski recalled Maurer’s teaching method in the most detail:

> Er nahm also beispielsweise ein Gedicht eines Schülers über den Mond, ein Mondgedicht,
und holte sich 20 Gedichte von Claudius bis Alberti, wo das Thema Mond eine Rolle spielte,
und verglich diese Texte miteinander, so dass man also dann ganz schnell merkte, was für
Scheiß man gebaut hatte.\(^{58}\)

\(^{55}\) Ibid. pp. 130-40.
\(^{56}\) Cited in: ibid. p. 140.
\(^{57}\) Gerrit-Jan Berendse, ‘Spiele der Revolte: Karl Mickel und die konspirative Poetik der Sächsischen
It is this method of comparing and contrasting poetry by drawing on his literary capital that Maurer became known for as a lecturer and that students in his seminars seem to have appreciated.

Many of Maurer’s students have fond memories of him as a literary mentor. Most prominently featured are members of the Sächsische Dichterschule, but that does not mean that other young poets at the Institute did not thrive under Maurer’s tutelage. One often-overlooked poet is Adel Karasholi, a Damascus-born poet writing in Arabic and German who fled Syria and settled in Leipzig in 1961. He studied at the Institute from 1962 to 1964, attended the Theaterhochschule Leipzig later on and worked at the German Institute of the Karl-Marx-University Leipzig where he finished a dissertation in 1970 on ‘Brecht und das arabische Theater’ in 1970. Karasholi’s work has generated interest among German as a foreign language scholars as his texts are linguistically and culturally engaging teaching and learning materials. He also often features as a case study in publications on migrant literature. As a young poet in Leipzig, Karasholi was profoundly affected by Maurer’s teaching. He wrote several poems and anecdotes that illustrate his admiration of Maurer as a lecturer and writer. Maurer seems to have played an important role in Karasholi’s literary development, helping him overcome a creative crisis, as this poem written in March 1967 with the title ‘An Maurer’ implies:

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Aus dem Land der Märchen,
dem Land des tausendundneunten Elends war ich gekommen
in die großen Städte der Hochkonjunktur,
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Wo alles verboten ist:
der Eingang, der Durchgang, der Ausgang.
Wo die Sachlichkeit triumphiert
und die chemisch bereitete Kartoffelsuppe.

3
In diesen Schneewäldern erfroren mir die Schmetterlinge,
die fröhlich-trunkenen. [...] 

4
Er aber, er
warf die prophetischen Muscheln aufs Eis,
weis mir den Weg zum Grund der Quelle,
zum Schatz der Schneewälder.
Er gab mir das Wort, das unsere:
Zu bändigen die Wolke,
um feiern zu können die Hochzeit der Natur.
[...] 

Maurer was not only committed to supporting his students in their creative development, 
but he also helped them in publicly establishing themselves as writers. In the case of 
Karasholi, Maurer urged him to publish a selection of his poetry and praised his 
‘interessante und eigenständige Gedichte, die einen Duktus hätten, den deutsche Dichter 
nicht haben können’. 

In the same month, an article written by Karasholi about Maurer was published in 
the SED-issued Arabic journal *Al-Matschall*. The German translation of this article was 
titled: ‘Georg Maurer - Dichter, Lehrer, Mensch’. Karasholi’s perception of Maurer shows 
that he was more than just a lecturer and a writer to his student. Karasholi saw great 
humanity in Maurer and identified with him on a personal and artistic level. This sentiment 
was shared by other students as well. Looking back at his studies at the Institute, Adolf 
Endler regretted not having attended the courses at the Institute as much as he could have 
and admitted: ‘Da war nicht die schlechteste Atmosphäre. Für Georg Maurer würde ich

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sogar sterben, und das ist keine Floskel.’\textsuperscript{64} Sarah Kirsch admitted: ‘Maurer verdanke ich viel, wenn er auch feige war, was wir ja wussten.\textsuperscript{65} The students mentored by Maurer during the 1960s seem to remember their time at the Institute in much more positive terms than earlier students like Loest, Giordano, and Endler, whose accounts I have outlined in the first chapter. While this is a sign of Maurer’s talent as a pedagogue and person, it also shows how Kirsch’s claim that Maurer showed signs of cowardice – although the context remains somewhat unclear – is surprising at first when compared to Czechowski’s memory of handing Maurer the first draft of his final thesis: ‘Pflichtübungen, wie eine Kantate für das Hydrierwerk Zeitz oder eine Hymne zur Eröffnung des 1. Deutschen Turn- und Sportfestes’ were parts of Czechowski’s portfolio of texts written during his studies at the Institute.\textsuperscript{66} Czechowski admitted that he was ashamed of those texts although they were popular pieces of writing at the Institute, ‘konnte es doch so seine sozialistische Reputation bestätigt finden.’ Czechowski was surprised by Maurer’s reaction to the orthodox texts: ‘[Er] hat sie mir allesamt gestrichen’. When he was invited to join a poetry reading in honour of the Institute’s tenth anniversary but was unable to attend, Czechowski replied:

Ich weiß nicht, ob Ihr auch Gedichte von nicht Anwesenden lesen lasst, Maurer deutete so was an. Nun nehmt nicht gerade das Harmloseste, sondern wagt was, auch wenn es dem persönlichen Geschmack nicht immer entspricht. Ich weiss jedenfalls was meine Gedichte in der Flut von Gebrauchs- und Verbrauchslyrik wert sind, und das lasse ich mir auch nicht nehmen.\textsuperscript{67}

In keeping with Maurer’s dislike for functional poetry, Czechowski remained unapologetic for writing poems that did not necessarily fulfil official expectations after he had left the

\textsuperscript{64} Adolf Endler, Berlin, 7.8.1965, AdK, Berlin, Georg-Maurer-Archiv Nr. 1186.
\textsuperscript{66} This and following two citations: Czechowski, Die Pole der Erinnerung, p. 85.
\textsuperscript{67} Heinz Czechowski to Max Walter Schulz, Halle, without date, AdK, Berlin, Georg-Maurer-Archiv 1186.
Institute. The ‘Meister’ as Maurer was sometimes referred to by his former students, had clearly left an impression on Czechowski.\(^{68}\)

Although the majority of student comments about Maurer as a lecturer suggest that he undermined heteronomous literary production at times when it did not satisfy his aesthetic taste, Maurer may, as Sarah Kirsch claimed, have given in to the field of power’s expectations when necessary. An MfS-issued transcript of a wiretapped conversation between Hans Mayer, professor for contemporary literary history at the Karl-Marx-University in Leipzig, and Karola and Ernst Bloch somewhat clears up this confusion. The Blochs and Hans Mayer were talking about Maurer’s behaviour at a *Lyrik-Symposium* on 31 March 1960. The transcript reads: ‘Herr Mayer habe ihr [Karola Bloch] gesagt, daß der Herr Huchel den Eindruck gehabt habe, daß dieser Herr [Maurer] nur deshalb diesen komischen doktrinären Standpunkt vertreten habe, weil sein Brötchengeber, der Zimmering, daneben gesessen habe.’\(^{69}\) The fact that Maurer’s heteronomous behaviour makes for a conversation topic between Mayer and Karola Bloch implies that Maurer’s behaviour at the symposium must have differed from his usual behaviour. The only explanation Peter Huchel, who knew Maurer personally, could give for Maurer’s dogmatic position at the symposium is that Zimmering’s presence may have been a contributing factor. This shows, yet again, how practices at the Institute differed from position-takings that represented it publicly and that the contradictions that characterised the institution were also embodied in its lecturers.

It is likely that Sarah Kirsch was also referring to this kind of erratic behaviour when she spoke of his cowardice. In public situations, Maurer’s heteronomous dispositions seem to have outweighed autonomous ones, which is why Maurer’s public demonstration of

\(^{68}\) Heinz Czechowski in a letter to Karl Mickel, 6 February 1975, Deutsches Literaturarchiv, A: Czechowski.

Party loyalty showed inconsistencies with his apolitical behaviour in poetry seminars. However, it was not only Maurer’s changing behaviour that created a sense of inconsistency among his peers and students, but also the constant contradiction between public sphere and institutional practice that students noticed: ‘Im Zerrspiegel des Lehrbetriebs am Institut ergab sich ein merkwürdiges Bild: Maurers großzügige Seminare, seine Liberalität; engherziger Dogmatismus, dem er, so gut es ging, auswich.’

Czechowski’s account points once again to a creative seminar as an autonomous space where the field of power could be renounced at the Institute. The comments by Maurer’s former students about his behaviour illustrate the plurality of social contexts and social groups Maurer had to navigate in his role as a poet-lecturer. Professionally, Maurer’s autonomous dispositions were activated and he was able to act upon his beliefs that literature should be aesthetically and not necessarily politically pleasing. In public contexts, the pressure of particular situations seems to have activated a different set of dispositions. By passing from the institutional community into the public and therefore politicised community, Maurer may have found himself obliged to satisfy heteronomous demands in an attempt to be accepted by the company in which he found himself. Maurer’s dispositions as a lecturer must have been finely adjusted to his evaluation of the situations and contexts with which he found himself confronted.

Unfortunately, the situation in which Sarah Kirsch accused Maurer of cowardice can no longer be reconstructed, but the other pieces of evidence point to the conclusion that the latter had created a space at the Institute and more precisely in his seminars, which was relatively free from rules and restrictions imposed on literary production by the field of power. However, instead of relying on the same set of dispositions in the public and institutional sphere, Maurer was careful to obey the same rules and limitations that he

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70 Czechowski, *Die Pole der Erinnerung*, p. 103.
managed to elude in the context of his *schöpferisches Seminar Lyrik*. Despite being able to position himself close to the heteronomous pole when needed, Maurer was never a member of the SED and ‘verhielt sich der politischen Linie der DDR gegenüber reserviert. Sein Denken war eher kosmopolitisch, er bezeichnete sich philosophisch als zwischen Kant und Marx befindlich.’

Maurer clearly possessed both autonomous and heteronomous dispositions that manifested themselves in different contexts. Maurer’s position as a lecturer resonated with some of his more liberal colleagues at the Institute, as Czechoswki noticed: ‘Heute scheint mir, daß Maurers hoher Anspruch auch die anderen Dozenten beeinflusst hat. Dr. Kanzog [...] und Dr. Nalewski, beide Schüler Hans Mayers, betrachteten die politische Gebrauchslyrik eher mißbilligend’.

Overall, Maurer displayed a well-rounded personality. First and foremost, he was a poet-lecturer who remained politically passive where possible and acted outspokenly heteronomous only where and when necessary. The reactions to Maurer’s behaviour ranged from the admiration on the part of his students, to the inspiration from his colleagues to the distrust from the SED. Unlike Bräunig, however, Maurer managed to avoid public criticism, mostly by adjusting his behaviour based on the social situations and different contexts he found himself in. Instead of writing what has been referred to as ‘Gebrauchslyrik’, he promoted a form of poetry that was centred more around subjectivity and the role of the individual within the collective than around the role of the collective itself through his own work and in the poetry seminars at the Institute.

Although the MfS had only little interest in a comprehensive surveillance of the literary scene according to Joachim Walther, the MfS maintained numerous IMs at the

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71 Ibid. p. 86.
72 Ibid. pp. 85-86.
Institute from the late 1950s onward, among them students as well as staff.⁷⁴ However, Georg Maurer does not seem to have been a subject of much interest during an intense period of observation in the early 1960s. Maurer’s name only appears much later, in 1969, when the Institute was accused of enrolling a number of ‘Personen, die bereits vor Studienbeginn operativ aufgefallen sind.’⁷⁵ As a lecturer, Maurer did not receive praise in the Stasi report. He was found to be ‘einseitig ästhetisch orientiert und politisch Weltfremd’ as well as having been supportive of ‘solche negativen Personen wie Rainer und Sarah Kirsch sowie Andreas Reimann’ in the past.⁷⁶ Although Maurer was closely associated with students the MfS was suspicious of, Maurer himself was not directly approached by the authorities for his involvement in contributions to the development of his students. Maybe it was due to his diplomatic behaviour in public and the symbolic capital he had amassed as a literary scholar and writer that Maurer was never directly confronted about the concerns raised in the report.

### 4.3 Implications of the Cultural-Political and Generational Changes for the Role of the Lecturer

As the cases of Werner Bräunig and Georg Maurer have shown, the teaching staff at the Institute had to constantly negotiate their position not only within the literary and political fields, but also in their professional field at the Institute. Here, they had to negotiate their position and accumulate capital as colleagues and lecturers. Autonomous literary capital was a crucial asset for lecturers in student-teacher interaction as the prestige it bestowed on them was recognised by the students as literary prestige and authority. Heteronomous

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⁷⁴ Walther, *Sicherungsbereich Literatur*, p. 149.
⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 752. Ideological concerns arising from the Institute’s enrolment policy were a recurrent issue throughout the 1960s and will be examined in more detail in the next sub-chapter.
⁷⁶ Ibid., quoting Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (BStU), Zentralarchiv (ZA), Hauptabteilung (HA) XX/Auswertungs- und Kontrollgruppe (AKG) 804, p.188.
literary capital, on the other hand, was a form of capital most members of staff avoided. This strategy paid off in the microcosm of the Institute and lecturers whose heteronomous dispositions outweighed autonomous sentiments in public could simultaneously please the field of power and the unorthodox newcomers in the literary field. If autonomous dispositions fostered within the Institute became more dominant and heteronomous dispositions were not realised in public any more, such as we have seen in the case of Bräunig’s pre-published *Rummelplatz* chapter, this could lead to Party sanctions. Archival resources do not imply that a struggle for power among the lecturers was the norm, although Trude Richter, lecturer of Russian and Soviet literature at the Institute, complained in early 1967 that some members of the *Dozentenkollektiv* were undermining her position. Known for her authoritarian pedagogical views, Richter was one of the most orthodox lecturers at the Institute and may have felt threatened by more autonomously minded colleagues. Richter’s complaint seems to be personal rather than symptomatic of the role of the lecturer and is outweighed by a number of sources that imply establishing a position as a lecturer in relation to the students was a far more difficult struggle for the Institute’s teaching staff.

In February 1965, the lecturers met to discuss, among other things, their impressions of the current students. Each of the lecturers gave a brief evaluation of participation and discipline in their courses. Kurt Kanzog told his colleagues that he was unhappy with his and his students’ performance in the seminars. He struggled to establish a routine and the students’ behaviour ranges from passivity to lively engagement. Although

78 A report written by Rolf Jahn, head of the Ministry’s literature section, implies that Richter ostracised Jürgen Bonk, a lecturer who was very popular among the students, to such a degree that he had left the Institut as a result. See: Rolf Jahn, ‘Bericht über einen Besuch des Instituts für Literatur “Johannes R. Becher” in Leipzig’, Berlin, 12 May 1961, BArch DR1/7725.
79 This and all following citations: ‘Protokoll über die Institutssitzung am 17.12. 1965’, SStAL 20311 Institut für Literatur, Nr. 358.
there were some students who attended his seminars regularly, he noticed: ‘Nach jedem Klubabend fehlte etwa 1/4 der Studenten’. Maurer’s experience concerning student attendance was very similar: most students did not attend his seminar, which was the first seminar on a Monday, or they arrived two and a half hours late. He had only seen four of his students so far. On the other hand, Trude Richter found her students generally well-prepared. Apart from different levels of activity in her seminar, she noticed an ‘unterschiedliches ideologisches Niveau’ among her students. A general consensus among the teaching staff seemed to be that the current students were lacking in general knowledge. Nalewski complained about ‘Unkenntnis, Unwissen, Scheu’ among his students and summarised: ‘es fehlen Bildungsvoraussetzungen auch bei den Begabten. Das erschwert die Arbeit sehr’. The students’ previous education had been overestimated which was difficult for some lecturers to accommodate. Horst Pickert complained ‘dass die von ihm vorgetragenen Dinge nicht verstanden werden, so dass er durch Detailerkläuterungen vom Hauptthema abkam.’ Despite the pessimistic testimonies of many members of staff, Max Walter Schulz had a more positive opinion about the new intake of students which he believed was ‘nicht schlechter als die vorhergehenden.’

There seems to have been a more complex question underlying this staff meeting than the students’ performance alone and Schulz addressed a bigger issue at the end of the meeting: ‘Gen. Schulz stellt die Frage, ob wir zu einem ausgeprägten Lehrer-Schüler-Verhältnis kommen sollten wie bei den Universitäten’. This staff meeting, which was being held while the 11th Plenary was taking place, already foreshadowed some of the critique that the Institute would have to face in the coming weeks and months. With a new intake of students that was lacking in experience and general knowledge, would a more defined teacher-student relationship, as it was presumed was the case at universities, be an
appropriate change to achieve better discipline and educational progress among the students? The minutes of the meeting continue: ‘[Schulz] ist nicht der Meinung. Der Lehrer muß eine Persönlichkeit sein. Man darf sich nicht zu sehr von den Studentenmeinungen beeinflussen lassen. Wir müssen erreichen, daß der Lehrer als eine geformte Persönlichkeit auftritt’. Schulz believed that the lecturer’s duty was more than to teach the curriculum; for him, a well-developed personality was as important as not letting student opinion influence the lecturer’s position.

The lecturers faced a difficult challenge: they were expected to personify the Institute’s heteronomous qualities while disregarding the students’ demands for autonomy. Yet, we have seen that even the Institute was characterised by tensions and contradictions inherent to the sub-national literary field of the GDR and autonomy was indeed sought by lecturers regardless of whether their starting position was autonomous or heteronomous. Schulz expected his staff to occupy fixed positions to which the students had to adjust in order to take on capital. However, the cases of Werner Bräunig and Georg Maurer have shown that the lecturers’ position was fluid and they were facing the same tensions between autonomy and heteronomy. The young generation of writers who attended the Institute in the 1960s clearly confronted their lecturers with a set of unique challenges. Internal autonomy and liberalism may have helped some students to develop a literary aestheticism that allowed them to avoid propagandistic writing while still toeing the Party line, while others demanded autonomy in the national literary field and at the Institute.

This points to a crisis at the Institute that was unfolding at the Institute in the 1960s that was not directly caused by the 11th Plenary and even preceded it. The Plenary certainly drew attention to the situation in Leipzig, and the MfK now suspicious of the autonomy seemingly enjoyed by staff and students at the Institute stepped forward and demanded to
be informed about the ideological situation. The findings of the inquiry were that it was not just the young generation that had allowed the common habitus at the Institute to take on autonomous characteristics. The practice and behaviour of the lecturers were called into question by the ministry as well as the lecturers themselves. A number of debates among the lecturers as well as with the MfK ensued that threatened to change the structure and function of the Institute substantially.

At the 9th Plenary of the Central Committee in April 1965, Walter Ulbricht identified a tendency in the literary field to establish modernist aesthetics and objected to this forcefully, claiming autonomous writers ‘befinden sich in einem Irrtum’. The opposition against autonomous literary practice had grown strong in the GDR months before the 11th Plenary. On 25 November 1965, Ulbricht had invited East German writers and literary critics to join him in a one-sided discussion about the development of GDR literature and wondered publicly about Bräunig’s latest publication: ‘Wem soll das nützen? Brauchen wir das für die Erziehung der Jugend von heute?’ The agenda that would dominate the Plenary had indeed been set several months before in December 1965. It is therefore hardly surprising that some practices at the Institute had not gone unnoticed by the official authorities. One of the earliest reports concerning ideological concerns at the Institute in the mid-1960s is dated 8 December 1965. Based on his experience in the philosophy and political economics seminars, Horst Pickert, who was listed in the Perspektivplan as responsible for the philosophy seminars at the Institute, wrote a ‘Bericht über die Arbeit im gesellschaftswissenschaftlichen Grundstudium’. It is unclear what exactly prompted Pickert to write this report, but his verdict is damning:

Besonders in den letzten Wochen hat sich erwiesen, daß die politisch-ideologische Erziehung unserer Studenten durch das gesamte Institutskollektiv noch nicht den Anforderungen genügt. [...] Prinzipielles Auftreten wird als Dogmatismus abgewertet. Es bestehen Zweifel an der führenden Rolle der Partei in Kunst und Literatur.\textsuperscript{82}

In Pickert’s eyes, it was the teaching staff’s responsibility to address the situation in all seminars, not only in the seminar on Marxism and Leninism. Eight days later, on the first day of the 11th Plenary, another report was written, this time by Horst Nalewski, the Institute’s deputy director. He attributed the ideological shortcomings at the Institute to two factors: the practice of admissions and the behaviour of the teaching staff. Regarding the admission practice of past years, Nalewski offered the following criticism:

Wir haben einige Studenten aufgenommen im Herbst 1964 bzw. 1965 (Heinze, Vigfusson, Mucke, Semmler), die entweder schon mehrmals gescheitert waren oder vor denen wir gewarnt worden sind. Wir haben sie dennoch aufgenommen, obwohl wir um das Risiko wußten, haben aber insofern versagt, als wir in sehr ungenügendem Maße diese Studenten besonders beobachteten bzw. betreuten [...] Im Falle der ehemaligen Studenten Vigfusson war unser vorrangiger Gesichtspunkt für die Immatrakulation ihr bedeutendes Talent.

The admission of Helga Vigfusson, or, as she was known after her divorce, Helga M. Novak, did not follow the Perspektivplan from 1964. The Institute’s leadership had once again subordinated heteronomy to autonomy.

Heinz Czechowski met Helga Novak in 1965, four years after he had graduated from the Institute. Czechowski remembered the part he and Georg Maurer played in bringing Novak to the Institute as follows: ‘Helga [...] war gekommen, um sich um einen Studienplatz am Literaturinstitut zu bewerben. Ich fuhr mit ihr nach Leipzig zu Georg Maurer, der, offensichtlich von ihr beeindruckt, dafür sorgte, daß sie “außerplanmäßig” immatrikuliert werden konnte.’\textsuperscript{83} An undated report criticises the lack of thoroughness in the recruitment of students harshly, claiming: ‘Der “Mut”, solche [politisch fragwürdige] Talente aufzunehmen, war nicht begründet durch kollektiv beratene notwendige politisch-

\textsuperscript{82} ‘Bericht über den ideologisch-erzieherischen Zustand am Institut für Literatur “J. R. Becher” und die eingeleiteten bzw. geplanten Maßnahmen’, Horst Nalewski, Leipzig, 16 December 1965, SStAL 20311 Institut für Literatur, Nr. 41. Following citations are from the same source.

\textsuperscript{83} Czechowski, \textit{Die Pole der Erinnerung}, p. 111.
erzieherische Maßnahmen’.\textsuperscript{84} It seems that Maurer was able to strike a bargain to bring the promising autonomous Novak to the Institute. This shows that there were ways to elude the control of the MfK and the DSV even though the agreement between the Institute, the MfK and the DSV was the following: ‘Beschlüsse der Imm[atrikulations]-Komm[ission] über Aufnahme oder Ablehnung des Bewerbers haben nur Gültigkeit, wenn sie einstimmig gefaßt werden.’\textsuperscript{85} Maurer seems to have vouched for Novak with his embodied literary capital and was thus able to overrule the members of the admission committee who had opposed Novak’s admittance.

The defiant behaviour of teaching staff and the Institute’s management was the next point Nalewski criticised. For a long time, he believed, ‘ein ideologischer Liberalismus’ had been developing among the Institute’s staff. Nalewski believed this liberalism to be the main cause of certain incidents at the Institute. These were fostered by classing the Institute ‘als Kunstinstitut, das den Studenten und Dozenten eine gewisse Ausnahmestellung zugestehen mußte (absolute Offenheit, Narrenfreiheit).’\textsuperscript{86} He explained that many lecturers failed to address autonomous tendencies among the students, arguing that ‘Furcht vor Unannehmlichkeiten und die Sorge, sich seinen liberalen Ruf zu wahren, verleiteten manchen Dozenten, mitunter Argumente im Raum stehen zu lassen, die ihn zwar mit einer gewissen Unbehaglichkeit erfüllten, die jedoch nicht kräftig widerlegt wurden.’\textsuperscript{87}

\textsuperscript{84} ‘Wodurch sind die Erscheinungen der ideologischen Sorglosigkeit am Literaturinstitut verursacht?’, without author, without date, BArch DR1/597. Although this report is undated, it refers briefly to a demonstration on the Wilhelm-Lauschner-Platz in Leipzig on 31 October 1965, which makes it highly likely that it was written in response to the events that Nalewski’s report also refers to.

\textsuperscript{85} ‘Entwurf zu Vereinbarungen, die wissenschaftliche und operative Zusammenarbeit zwischen dem Institut für Literatur, dem Ministerium für Kultur (als staatl. Träger des Instituts) und dem Deutschen Schriftstellerverband betreffend’, without author, Leipzig, 3 July 1964, BArch DR1/597.

\textsuperscript{86} ‘Entwurf zu Vereinbarungen’, BArch DR1/597.

\textsuperscript{87} ‘Bericht über den ideologisch-erzieherischen Zustand am Institut für Literatur “J. R. Becher” und die eingeleiteten bzw. geplanten Maßnahmen’, StStAL 20311 Institut für Literatur, Nr. 41.
In the aforementioned undated report, the anonymous author finds even harsher words for the situation at the Institute in late 1965, accusing the *Institutsleitung* of creating an unnecessarily liberal atmosphere:

> Der Absicht der Institutsleitung, die schöpferischen Potenzen der Studenten durch eine Atmosphäre des Vertrauens, durch grenzenlose Offenheit zu fördern, [...] folgte eine Praxis der Duldung auch falscher, skeptischer und liberalistischer (aber offener) Meinungsausdrückungen seitens der Studenten.\(^8\)

Pickert and Nalewski both acknowledged the staff’s failure to create a more formal atmosphere for the students at the Institute. But whereas Nalewski and Pickert both seemed confident this crisis would be competently addressed and dealt with internally, the opinion expressed in the undated report exposes the staff’s efforts as futile: ‘Völlig ungenügend waren hingegen die Maßnahmen der Institutsleitung, den Ergebnissen dieser Art Offenheit [...] gewachsen zu sein. [...] Das liberalistische Zurückweichen der Lehrer wurde durch sie selbst und die Parteiorganisation des Instituts nicht erkannt.’ The anonymous author even claims that without intervention from a higher authority, the students would have had the power “sich die Lehrer nach ihrem Bild zu formen”. The repercussions of the repressive turn in cultural policy meant that the Institute had to face an investigation by the MfK.

At a meeting on 9 February 1966, Nalewski presented the ideological situation and political issues at the Institute in front of the Ministry’s *Kommission kulturelle Massenarbeit*. He began by outlining the change in the student body observed by the Institute’s staff: ‘Die früheren Studenten waren reifer und älter als die seit etwa zwei Jahren Studierenden. 80 bis 100% waren Mitglieder der SED, während von gegenwärtig 26 Studierenden nur 5

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\(^8\) This citation and following: ‘Wodurch sind die Erscheinungen der ideologischen Sorglosigkeit am Literaturinstitut verursacht?’ BArch Dr1/597.
Mitglieder der SED sind.\textsuperscript{89} Regarding admissions practices, Nalewski conceded that proof of talent had been more important than an applicant's political position. In addition, Nalewski admitted, the Institute’s leadership ‘hat im letzten halben Jahr Liberalisierung gehuldigt’ and the lecturers were not working closely together. The various reports coming from the Institute as well as from supervising positions in the Ministry did not bode well for the Institute and its existence in the repressive cultural political climate of 1966. With an intake of students that had been recruited with talent, not ideology, in mind, a dysfunctional team of lecturers and an already established atmosphere of aesthetic and ideological liberalism, what was the MfK-approved future of the Institute going to look like?

Rethinking the Function of the Institute

In late April 1966, the Hauptverwaltung Belletristik of the MfK received the Institute’s Perspektivplan outlined for the years 1967-70. Gerhard Dahne, the leader of the division, commented on this plan on 25 April. He pointed out that the plan acknowledged the problematic situation at the Institute and managed to reintegrate the Institute into the ‘allgemeine sozialistische Bildungssystem der DDR’ by adjusting its admission policy and assessment practices.\textsuperscript{90} However, Dahne was not fully optimistic that this change in the Institute’s policies was going to be enough to turn the Institute, its staff and students around: ‘Aus meiner jahrelangen Kenntnis der Situation am Institut weiß ich jedoch, daß alle bisher aufgetretenen Schwierigkeiten nicht in erster Linie das Resultat fehlender schriftlich fixierter Programme und Richtlinien gewesen sind’. He believed that two main

\textsuperscript{89} This citation and following: ‘Information über die Sitzung der Ständigen Kommission kulturelle Massenarbeit vom 9.2.1966’, Schreyer, Leipzig, 11.2.1966, BArch DR1/597.

\textsuperscript{90} ‘Zum Perspektivplan des Instituts für Literatur “Johannes R. Becher”’, Gerhard Dahne, without place, 25 April 1966, BArch DR1/597. The following references are taken from this document.
issues had to be addressed: the Institute’s objectives and the composition of the teachers’
collective. Dahne found very clear words to address the first issue:

Ursprünglich bestand die Hauptaufgabe des Instituts darin, sozialistische Schriftsteller zu
fördern und auszubilden, die in der Vergangenheit auf Grund ihrer Klassenzugehörigkeit
unter den Bedingungen des Faschismus sich nicht hatten entwickeln können. Heute, über 20
Jahre nach Beendigung des Krieges, hat sich diese Aufgabe überlebt. Das Institut braucht
eine andere Perspektive. [...] Hier behaupte ich, daß der Aufwand nicht mehr das Ergebnis
rechtfertigt.

Dahne’s suggestion was to turn the Institute from a place of literary and general education
into an Institute dedicated only to those writers who had already established themselves.
This was in accordance with the Institute’s observation that most of its recent students
came from a higher education background and were no longer in need of the same amount
of general education as students in past years had been. Although not explicitly mentioned
in Dahne’s commentary, this change of perspective also meant that the students selected to
study at the Institute could be politically vetted more thoroughly. Unlike an emerging writer
who might only have published a small number of short stories, poems or reports in local
magazines, an already established writer had a more solid position and it can be assumed
that an Institute dealing exclusively with established writers was less at risk of fostering
dissenting writers. For Dahne, there was also a second cause for concern unrelated to the
structure and aims of the Institute. He was worried that the Institute might be incapable of
attracting successful writers for a very specific reason:

Meines Erachtens ist die Zusammensetzung des Lehrkörpers äußerst ungünstig. Nach dem
Ausscheiden von Georg Maurer wird es keine profilierte Lehrerpersönlichkeit am Institut
mehr geben. [...] Selbst Max Walter Schulz als Direktor stellt nicht die
Schriftstellerpersönlichkeit dar, um das Institut zu einem Magneten werden zu lassen. Das
Gesicht des Dozentenkollektivs wird von Nachwuchswissenschaftlern und -autoren
bestimmt. Sie selbst sind alle noch zu sehr Suchende, als daß sie eine voll wirksame
Erziehungs- und Bildungsarbeit leisten [sic] könnten. Die Qualität dieses Dozentenkollektivs
wird auch in Zukunft nicht sichern, daß aus dem Literaturinstitut ein literarisch-kulturelles
Zentrum von Bedeutung wird.

Dahne shows an understanding of the Institute’s need for symbolic literary capital. He
believed that after Maurer leaving the Institute it suffered a huge loss of this symbolic
capital which in turn led to a decrease in interest in its courses among promising, talented writers. It seems that Georg Maurer was the sole source of symbolic literary capital at the Institute. When he left the Institute, his embodied symbolic literary capital was no longer attached to it, which shows that a successful transfer of Maurer’s capital to the Institute never took place. Max Walter Schulz neither brought symbolic literary capital to the Institute nor was he intent on accumulating it for the institution. His habitus as a ‘minor literary intellectual [...] with a strictly national reputation [...] and] little appreciable capital of his own’ was not subject to change during his post as director.  

Dahne, on the other hand, was lobbying for a fundamental transformation of the Institute. He envisioned a new function for the Institute and demanded drastic changes be made to the staffing of the Institute. Those writers who were teaching at the Institute, it is implied, should not be in charge of forming emerging writers but were themselves in need of further support by the Institute, if it was staffed by more renowned writers.

By limiting the student intake to already established writers and staffing it with more experienced writers who had already accumulated a large amount of symbolic literary capital, the Institute would have likely been able to develop an international reputation albeit at the expense of heteronomy. Dahne sent his comments to Bruno Haid, the Head of Hauptverwaltung Verlage und Buchhaltung. Haid was in full agreement with Dahne’s suggestions and claimed that ‘wenn es nicht gelingt ein künstlerisches Zentrum zu entwickeln, die Existenz des Instituts sehr fragwürdig wird, weil alles andere durch Universitäten und Germanistik-Institute genausogut, wenn nicht besser, gelehrt werden kann’. Haid forwarded Dahne’s letter alongside his comments to Horst Brasch, a member of the Central Committee of the SED. With demands for a fundamental change of the

92 Bruno Haid, Berlin, 29 April 1966, BArch DR1/597.
Institute throughout the ranks of the Party, a change to the Institute’s function and structure seemed inevitable.

Two documents in the Institute’s archive detail the structure and function of the Institute in May and November 1967, one year and one year and six months after Dahne and Haid’s proposal respectively. The earlier document is mostly concerned with Bräunig’s suspension from teaching in spring 1967. However, there is also a paragraph dedicated to measures that had been taken in response to the critique of the Institute. A permanent work placement had been agreed with the VEB Kombinat “Otto Grotewohl” and reports on the placement had been passed on to the SED-Bezirksleitung. The admission practices had also been adjusted:

Erstmals wurde die Immatrikulation für das nächste Vollstudium mit einer zweitägigen Aufnahmeprüfung verbunden. [...] Das Kriterium für die Aufnahme war die Überzeugung der Kommission, daß der Bewerber ein unserem Staat, unserer Partei ergebener, der Methode des sozialistischen Realismus verpflichteter Autor zu werden verspricht.

In addition to allowing only SED-loyal writers to study at the Institute, steps were taken to also bind more established writers to the Institute. The annual and genre-specific Sonderlehrgang was born. In the later of the two documents, a change in student supervision is mentioned. Each student was now mentored by a lecturer. The latter was entrusted with ‘besondere pädagogische Verantwortung für die zu betreuenden Studenten’. All in all, the members of the Institute were very pleased with these developments, although they also acknowledged the need for further work: ‘wir [sind] in der Verbesserung der

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94 ‘Gemeinsame Stellungnahme der Parteileitung und der Institutsleitung zu einigen Punkten, die die Arbeit des Instituts betreffen’, SStAL 20311 Institut für Literatur, Nr. 41.
95 The second Sonderlehrgang which was scheduled to run from January to July 1968, for example, was dedicated to dramatists. See: ‘Zur Funktion, Struktur und Perspektive des Instituts für Literatur Johannes R. Becher in Leipzig’, without author, Leipzig, 10 November 1967, SStAL 20311 Institut für Literatur, Nr. 852.
96 ‘Zur Funktion, Struktur und Perspektive des Instituts für Literatur Johannes R. Becher in Leipzig’, SStAL 20311 Institut für Literatur, Nr. 852.
klassenmäßigen Erziehung ein gutes Stück vorangekommen, ohne damit sagen zu wollen, daß wir damit schon über den Berg wären.97

4.4 Conclusion: The Temptation of Symbolic Capital

Through case studies of Werner Bräunig and Georg Maurer I have shown that the role of the lecturer was realised in many different ways at the Institute and that the lecturers’ embodied cultural capital and habitus shaped teaching practices at the Institute significantly. In Bräunig’s case, the institutional habitus encouraged his previously weak and unarticulated autonomous dispositions to emerge. The worker-writer diverged from his heteronomous practice and explored autonomous forms of literary production, which resulted in a break with his literary output and teaching practice that ultimately brought him to the attention of the MfK. However, the teaching practice of other lecturers was characterised by similar autonomy. Georg Maurer’s aesthetic confession categorically undermined the importance of politics and socialist ideology for literary production. These autonomous values were part of his habitus as a poet and his teaching practice and as such were valued and adopted by many of his students in their own writing. As we have seen, Maurer had a far more formative influence on his students than Bräunig, yet the former was never investigated as relentlessly as the latter. Two factors may have acted against Bräunig and in favour of Maurer: Bräunig had come to the Party’s attention at a crucial time when political functionaries desperately needed artists and intellectuals to validate their change of cultural policy. Maurer’s apolitical writing meant that he could never misjudge the possibilities and restrictions of heteronomous literary production. He did not get the attention of the Party during the cultural crisis of the mid-1960s. At the same time, Maurer

97 ‘Gemeinsame Stellungnahme der Parteileitung und der Institutsleitung zu einigen Punkten, die die Arbeit des Instituts betreffen’, SStAL 20311 Institut für Literatur, Nr. 41.
knew how to act in various contexts and social communities and he had accumulated an amount of symbolic capital both as a writer and intellectual by 1965 that no other lecturer could match. He was therefore a valuable asset to the Institute, which may have diverted attention away from Maurer and his teaching practices while Bräunig's methods and the institution's practices in general were subjected to thorough inspections. Maurer's embodied symbolic capital became associated with the Institute, but this only lasted for the duration of his employment. The Institute never managed to take on his symbolic literary capital and with Maurer's retirement, his embodied symbolic literary capital no longer benefited the Institute. Although the field of power was opposed to symbolic literary capital, it seems that it was nevertheless intent on increasing the Institute’s international reputation in the wake of the 11th Plenary.

A maybe even more important fact about the Institute’s functioning during the 1960s has been revealed by examining the available archival records. Many issues Alfred Kurella, Werner Baum and Annemarie Reinhardt encountered during the founding phase still remained more than 15 years later. The exact criteria for enrolling promising students were still hotly disputed: Should heteronomous students be preferred over autonomous students? Was literary talent more important than Party loyalty? Lecturers recommended young writers to the Institute based on their talent and, in the case of Helga Novak, even despite ideological concerns. At the same time, MfK delegates stressed the importance of enrolling only students strongly supportive of the SED. A proper commission in charge of admissions had existed in theory since the Institute's founding but up until 1967, enrolments were finalised internally. The special position the Institute occupied as an institution of higher education was also still subject to debate. As the Institute was founded
with the characteristics but not the title of an institution of higher education, it met with limitations but also with the possibility of defining its own discursive space.

Fundamental questions, such as whether staff and students at this Kunstakademie should enjoy freedom of expression in order to foster creativity that was central to the writing practice, had been part of the debate about the Institute and its function since 1951. 16 years later, the same questions were still being discussed between the Institute and the MfK, and, the records show, no definite answers were found. The essential question of what the exact function of the Institute was or should be was raised again in 1967 but was never satisfyingly answered. The changes to the Institute’s practice that had been demanded by the MfK in 1966 never took place and many issues remained causes for concern throughout the Institute’s existence, such as the tension between literary talent and ideological orthodoxy and the question whether or not writing is a teachable skill to begin with. Without a common habitus that was overtly heteronomous and imposed political ideology on the Institute’s staff, dispositions connected to the habitus of the writer determined Bräunig’s and Maurer’s actions and led them to pursue symbolic literary capital despite the possibility of being sanctioned by the field of power. The following chapter will show that issues caused by contradictory dispositions within the Institute’s common habitus persisted into the 1970s and characterised not only the Institute’s founding struggle and its lecturers, but also its publications.

98 ‘Entwurf zu Vereinbarungen’, BArch DR1/597.
5. Objectified Cultural Capital – Capital Exchanges through the Written Word

‘Es wird [...] beschlossen, daß die Kollegen des Instituts keine Publikationen, Interviews o.ä., die das Institut betreffen, aus dem Haus geben, ohne daß diese von der Leitung bestätigt sind.’

In late 1979, the Institute’s director Max Walter Schulz clamped down on the Institute’s relaxed attitude towards publications written by members of staff. The reason for this new regulation was an article published in the July 1979 issue of the literary journal *Weimarer Beiträge.* This particular issue was dedicated to young writers under the title ‘Gespräche mit jungen Autoren’. Its five contributions explored the relationship between the young generation of writers and literary themes such as the role of the reader, the importance of the chanson and the relationship between a text and a scene. One of these conversations, ‘Vorbild - Leitbild’, originated from the Institute’s prose seminar led by Joachim Nowotny. The conversation between Joachim Nowotny and his final-year students Wolfgang Berger, Stephan Ernst, Ingrid Hildebrandt, Rainer Hohberg, Annerose Kirchner, Christine Lindner and Thomas Rosenlöcher took place between winter 1978 and spring 1979. In the conversation, the students discussed their literary role models from international socialist as well as international modern literature. Some of these role models as well as general remarks made by the students and Nowotny were yet another instance of a creative seminar providing a forum for unorthodox sentiments.

The *Vorbild-Leitbild* discussion has been subject to the most thorough critical attention. But other publications should not be overlooked as they provide useful insight.

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1 ‘Beschlußprotokoll der Institutssitzung am 4. 9. 1979, Leipzig, 10 September 1979, SStAL 20311, Nr. 3.
2 The literary journal *Weimarer Beiträge* had been in existence since 1955 and was being circulated by various publishers. Since 1964, the journal was published by Aufbau-Verlag.
4 Clarke offers the most comprehensive analysis of the discussion and its repercussions. In: Clarke 'Parteischule oder Dichterschmiede?'.

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into the Institute’s history and methods, as Lehn et al. show in their research.\(^5\) Reading the existing scholarship, one could be forgiven for thinking that other, more heteronomous publications emanating from the Institute were of little importance. However, literary output produced by and about the Institute, newspaper articles about its function and aims, two yearbooks in the 1960s and a short-lived series of *Institutsblätter* in the early 1960s being only a few examples, warrant closer attention. As durable and material representations, publications play a key role in the accumulation and exchange of cultural capital. While the student-teacher interactions I have presented in the previous chapter showed the transfer of embodied cultural capital, the analysis of the Institute’s publishing practices will demonstrate how objectified cultural capital was created and validated. I have shown that institutionalised and embodied cultural capital was defined by fundamental tensions inherent to the literary field of the GDR. The same contradictions can be found in the objectified cultural capital available to the Institute.

A closer look at publications also offers the opportunity to reconstruct the Institute’s public face and its identity as an author. Bourdieu suggests that objectified cultural capital has a characteristic that sets it apart from other possible states:

> Cultural capital in its objectified state presents itself with all the appearances of an autonomous, coherent universe which, although the product of historical action, has its own laws, transcending individual wills, and which [...] therefore remains irreducible to that which agent or even the aggregate of the agents, can appropriate.\(^6\)

He explains that objectified cultural capital is used ‘as a weapon and a stake in the struggles which go on in the fields of cultural production’. These struggles are realised through position-takings which as a whole become representative of the agent. If we understand

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\(^6\) This citation and following: Bourdieu, ‘The Forms of Capital’, p. 50.
publications as the simultaneous production of objectified cultural capital and a position-taking, this also expresses the habitus of the author.

Michel Foucault’s notion of the author function describes this phenomenon in a similar fashion. In his essay ‘What is an author?’ Foucault argues that by attributing certain texts to an author their discourse creates an image of this author.\(^7\) He defines the author ‘not, of course, in the sense of the speaking individual who pronounced or wrote the text, but in the sense of a principle of grouping of discourses, conceived as the unity and origin of their meanings, as the focus of their coherence’.\(^8\) The concept of the author function is therefore neither defined by nor limited to individual authors; Foucault himself questions whether the existence of a single individual or the very notion thereof is even beneficial to the understanding of a text. This means that the Institute can be treated as an entity with its own author function in order to show that its public face was not solely marked by controversy and cultural-political dissidence, as the existing scholarship and its focus on Nowotny implies. In this context, Foucault’s notion of the author function can supplement our understanding of objectified cultural capital as a state of cultural capital that is not only defined by but also transgresses the embodied cultural capital that was invested into it. The publications bearing the Institute’s name, although authored, edited and published with the help of many individuals, accumulated objectified cultural capital for the Institute. In turn, the Institute endowed its affiliates with the cultural capital it gained through the publication, transforming the capital from the objectified to the institutional and eventually back into the embodied state. Similar to the unifying and transformational effect of cultural capital, the capital generated through publications also reflects on the author function: the content

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and form of the Institute’s publications reflects directly onto its author function and defines its discourse accordingly. Therefore, the discourse and capital generated by its publications become a part of the common habitus.

In this chapter, I will examine the Institute’s objectified cultural capital in the form of four of its key publications from the 1970s that take the form of anthologies. The analysis will show that characterising this decade in the Institute’s publication history as a time of dissidence and cultural-political unrest alone, as has been done so far, is an oversimplification. At the same time, I will demonstrate that the Institute’s written output is a vital part in the study of its practice and should not be marginalised. We will see capital being exchanged through the written word and many of the Institute’s contradictions and uncertainties permeate its publications. First, I will briefly outline the Vorbild-Leitbild discussion and examine it as a position-taking and capital exchange. This will not only illustrate the discourse the scholarship has created in relation to the Institute’s publishing activity but also demonstrate that tensions between autonomy emerging from creative seminars and the heteronomous demands made by the field of power were still affecting the Institute in the late 1970s.

The following case studies predate the Vorbild-Leitbild discussion. By presenting them in chronological order I can trace trends and their development in the Institute’s publishing practice before the controversy caused by Nowotny and his students. This approach will allow me to show that the self-confident articulation of unorthodox opinions was exceptional and not symptomatic of publications that bore the Institute’s name. The first publication I will look at in detail was published nine years earlier. In 1970, the Institute celebrated its fifteenth anniversary in the form of a special issue of the Neue
Deutsche Literatur. The June 1970 issue, dedicated almost exclusively to the Institute, will shed light on how it defined itself in the public sphere after 15 years of existence. The second publication I will examine in this chapter is an anthology written by the Institute’s lecturers in collaboration with the lecturers at the Maxim Gorky Literature Institute in Moscow. This will give me the opportunity to compare and contrast the forms of capital each institute injected into the anthology and the implications for their respective common habitus. The third and final publication is the Institute’s self-authored and self-published bibliography Zwischenbericht from 1980. Not only will this case study bring us back to our starting point near the end of the 1970s, but it will also offer a look at a publication that was published shortly after the seminar discussion in Weimar Beiträge but was fundamentally different from it. Each publication shows signs of conflict and contradiction that were a direct result of the irreconcilability of autonomous aspirations and heteronomous constraints. As we shall see, the Institute was unable to defuse the tensions seen in the earlier chapters and ultimately failed to present a coherent, unified position through its objectified cultural capital.

The Vorbild-Leitbild Discussion

It can be argued that the controversy the discussion provoked was largely due to Nowotny’s reluctance to interfere with or disrupt his students whenever the discussion touched on sensitive subjects. From the beginning of the Vorbild-Leitbild discussion, Nowotny referred to himself as ‘Moderator’ and did not take on the role of instructor that

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10 Schulz and Pimenov, Tuchnitzstraße – Twerskoj Boulevard: Beiträge aus zwei Literaturinstituten.
may have been expected of him. Instead, he drove the discussion forward, at times even going so far as to entice his students to make controversial statements. For example, Nowotny confronted Stephan Ernst about his unusual choice of literary role model:


Ernst explained that Hamsun’s realistic and unembellished representation of life fascinated him: ‘Es war irgendwie eine Gegenkraft zur Schulauffassung, zum Staatsbürgerkundeunterricht, zur Ideologie’ (12). Hamsun was an especially controversial literary role model due to his literary sympathies with Nazi Germany and, in the context of the Institute, made for an extremely unorthodox role model. However, Nowotny did not interfere at this point and moved the conversation on to a slightly less controversial subject. Soon, however, the conversation returned to the friction between the young writers and the society they lived in. Thomas Rosenlöcher argued: ‘Wenn unsereins so stark auf sich selbst zurückgeworfen ist, Lesen zu einer Art geistigem Ausbruchsversuch wird, wie es Stephan [Ernst] beschreibt, so liegt das weniger am Leser, sondern an seinen geringen Aussichten usw., hat eben gesellschaftliche Ursachen’ (15). Clarke summarises the controversy contained in Rosenlöcher’s statement:

> The provocative, perhaps foolhardy, nature of these remarks is clear enough given that these are students of an institution still nominally committed to producing socialist writers from ‘Kader der Arbeiterklasse’, but it is difficult to imagine that they first emerged spontaneously in the context of the interview. (14)

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12 *Weimarer Beiträge*, Vol. 7, 1979, p.11. Further references to this discussion are given after quotations in the text.

13 Knut Hamsun’s literary works cannot solely be summed up by nationalist tendencies, but his political position leading up to and during the Second World War meant that he was seen as someone who strongly sympathised with the National Socialists. For a nuanced analysis of Hamsun’s works and life see: Harald S. Næss, *The Three Hamsuns: The Changing Attitude in Recent Criticism*, *Scandinavian Studies*, 32 (1960). Hamsun was not an altogether atypical literary influence on East German writers. Bertolt Brecht also read his works extensively. See: Ronald Speirs, *The Poet and ‘Die dritte Sache’: Brecht's Letters*, *German Life and Letters*, 36 (1983), 377.

14 Clarke, *Parteischule oder Dichterschmiede?*, p. 96.
It seems indeed unlikely that students would voice these opinions for the first and only time in the context of this conversation as neither Nowotny nor any other students intervene to challenge Rosenlöcher’s opinion. At one point, Nowotny himself makes a somewhat problematic statement. He believed that finding a literary role model is a deeply personal, subconscious process and as such could not be externally influenced. Nowotny concluded: ‘Das macht es der Kulturpolitik so schwer, vielleicht unmöglich, bestimmte Vorbilder “installieren” zu wollen’ (16). The discrepancy, pointed out by Nowotny, between the unpredictable consciousness of artists and the will of the socialist regime to control this consciousness was taken up by Wolfgang Berger,

Naja, man ist in den fünfziger/sechziger Jahren durch die Volksbildung gegangen, und man ist in bestimmter Weise politisch und ideologisch erzogen worden. [...] Dann geschieht folgendes: Wie auch die Massenmedien Vorbilder produzieren, werden diese Vorbilder von den Massenmedien selbst wieder verschluckt [...]. Es entsteht ein luftleerer Raum, in den ganz einfach etwas anderes herein muß, aber hier setzt schon die Furcht vor einem weiteren Vorbild ein’. (17)

Nowotny did not challenge this interpretation of state media as a manipulative instrument. Instead, he opened up the controversial point even further:


Ernst answered: ‘Die Literatur ist eine Art Opposition’ (17). Again, Nowotny did not diffuse the situation. When asked by Nowotny if he believed that a socialist society would ever fully represent the opinion of the individual, Ernst replied: ‘Das wird nie erreicht werden können’ (18). This statement also went undisputed, but other students steered the discussion in a less controversial direction.

Clarke rightly claims that ‘if these remarks, which go unchallenged by Nowotny and the other students present, are reflective of the general debate within the Institut für Literatur, then they are certainly evidence of the Institute's potential as a
“Nischenöffentlichkeit”. As such, the Institute would allow its students to express their dissent in the safe environment of the Institute without having to fear being publicly criticised for their opinions. However, as this conversation between Nowotny and his students was objectified in a public position-taking, the state had to intervene. Clarke points out that the publication of the *Vorbild-Leitbild* discussion prompted two investigations by the politburo the outcome of which can no longer be traced. It is possible that the Institute was able to address the MfK’s concerns internally without further investigations thanks to its political capital. Clarke’s notion of a niche public sphere existing at the Institute is a valuable concept. Autonomy was tolerated, even encouraged at the Institute’s creative seminars as long as it remained within the niche public sphere. However, if it was objectified publicly the field of power intervened. In the case of Nowotny’s seminar discussion, the scholarship has concentrated on such an incident as a representation of the Institute and its position.

In light of Schulz’s announcement in September 1979 that publications originating from Institute staff would have to undergo more intense scrutiny in the future, the importance of publications for the Institute and its image becomes evident. The introduction of a review process shows that there were internal concerns about how publications reflected on the Institute. Publications such as the *Vorbild-Leitbild* discussion held the potential of accumulating cultural capital in the objectified state almost instantaneously. As Bourdieu points out, objectified cultural capital demonstrates that its originator possesses access to two types of capital: economic capital that allows the production of the object and embodied cultural capital that makes its creation possible. In the case of the Institute, economic capital had to be supplemented by political capital which

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15 Ibid.
enabled agents in the domestic literary field of the GDR to gain access to the means of producing journals, books and other material literary products. For the Institute, its publications were proof of embodied cultural capital in the form of staff and student writers and political capital that had been invested in the bureaucratic process of obtaining printing permission and access to the printing works from the field of power. The field of power, more precisely the MfK, took the publisher’s political capital as a guarantee that the planned publication would adhere to heteronomous literary values. A pre-publication censorship process that applied to books was waived altogether for journals. However, once a position-taking had taken a material, objectified form it was subjected to close scrutiny.

The highly subjective yet well-argued points in the discussion would have appealed to autonomous literary actors in the GDR and West Germany. Drawing comparisons between international and East German literature and cultural policy in a critical manner exemplified the liberal, autonomous attitudes that were allowed to develop in the Institute’s creative seminars. Such a display of ideological opposition to the field of power was a step towards the autonomous pole of the domestic literary field for the Institute and held the potential of accumulating symbolic literary capital. However, the statements would in turn have angered its supporters in the political field and threatened the Institute’s relationship with its political creditors. This was a risky trade-off as it would have effectively hindered the Institute from gathering its most vital currency: domestic political capital. As objectified cultural capital cannot easily be revoked, after all the discussion had already been published and circulated in Weimarer Beiträge, the field of power had to intervene and Schulz agreed to establish control mechanisms to discourage further autonomous position-takings. The

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internal review of future publications was likely to be one of these mechanisms that would ensure a heteronomous publishing practice at the Institute from 1979 onward.

5.1 ‘15 Jahre Literaturinstitut “Johannes R. Becher”’: Celebrating the Institute through a Literary Journal

Nine years before the controversy caused by Nowotny and his prose students, the Institute seemed to have just overcome the shock of the 11th Plenary and its observation by the MfK which lasted through much of the late 1960s. 1970 finally gave the Institute a reason to celebrate again: its fifteenth anniversary. To mark the occasion, the June issue of the DSV’s literary journal *Neue Deutsche Literatur* (ndl) exclusively published pieces written by lecturers and students of the Institute. As an interaction between two organisations this publication is an amalgamation of the DSV’s identity with the identity of the Institute. Ndl was one of the most prominent literary-cultural journals of the GDR and with an all-German approach that lasted into the 1960s was intent on accumulating autonomous literary capital when possible. In terms of the Institute’s author function, we must therefore recognise that the publication as a whole represents not only the Institute, but also the DSV and ndl. Despite the celebratory nature of the ndl issue, this publication does not hold a prominent position in the scholarship on the Institute and has, for the most part, been overlooked. Five years after the Institute’s practice had been fundamentally called into question by the MfK, this collection of Institute-related articles held the potential to become a decisive action on part of the Institute. Depending on the contributors to and literary quality of the journal issue, the Institute could generate domestic literary capital and solidify its good standing with the

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political field or create symbolic literary capital which in turn could endow the Institute with international acknowledgement. Would it yield to Party pressure by producing an ideologically uncontroversial journal issue or would the Institute stress its progressive literary tendencies instead?

By the definition of objectified cultural capital as capital in the form of ‘material objects and media [which] is transmissible in its materiality’, even physical aspects of the publication are of importance.\textsuperscript{20} Visually, the Becher Institute issue adhered to ndl design conventions: soft-bound, crown octavo format with the cover page’s upper third reserved for the journal’s title, volume and year. Traditionally, the cover of each monthly ndl issue was printed in a different colour. For the June 1970 issue a deep magenta was chosen. The journal’s title is printed in white, whereas the lower two thirds of the front cover provides information about some of the contents in smaller, left-indentated, black print. The first line simply reads: ‘15 Jahre Literaturinstitut Johannes R. Becher’. The dedication is written in the same font and size as the subsequent titles of select contributions giving the impression that the Institute’s anniversary held the same importance as the individual contributions associated with it. The fact that the anniversary is acknowledged on the cover as the issue’s occasion attributes a degree of authorship to the Institute. Thus, the individual contributors are grouped together under its author function. The following five contributions are listed on the cover page: Max Walter Schulz, ‘Der Ochsenweg’; Georg Maurer, ‘Revolutionsskizzen’; Werner Bräunig, ‘Hafen der Hände’; Klaus Wolf, ‘Theater über Theater’; and Joachim Nowotny, ‘Der glückliche Stragula’. The featured titles showcase the representation of each literary genre at the Institute. The names of the five featured authors would have been familiar to the ndl’s general readership, but their respective roles at the

\textsuperscript{20} Bourdieu, ‘The Forms of Capital’ p. 50.
Institute as director, lecturer of poetry, lecturer of prose, lecturer of drama and assistant lecturer of prose may have only been known to some readers familiar with the Institute. Although the authors’ exact roles are not made explicit, the list of contributors on the cover is nevertheless a deliberate statement of the Institute, what it represents and the embodied literary capital it had at its disposal.

The first thing a reader would see after opening the journal is the table of contents. Just a brief glance at it reveals the Institute’s household names of the time: director Max Walter Schulz, Georg Maurer, Hans Pfeiffer, Werner Bräunig, Joachim Nowotny and Peter Gosse. A number of pieces written by its current students were also chosen, with three seminar essays on Buchenwald written by final-year prose students highlighting the Institute’s emerging talent. The issue also included an interview with Trude Richter in which she talked about the Maxim Gorky Institute in Moscow, among other things. After the 11th Plenary left the Institute and its lecturers in turmoil, the Institute seems to have seized the opportunity its anniversary in 1970 offered to re-introduce its work to the East German public. The table of contents shows us more than just the who and what. In their monograph on the Academy of the Arts’ thick literary journal Sinn und Form, Stephen Parker and Matthew Philpotts examine how the symbolic capital available to Sinn und Form can already be measured by its table of contents:

If, as Bourdieu suggests, a journal’s table of contents represents ‘an exhibition of the symbolic capital available to the enterprise’, then, as an institution in the German intellectual field of the early 1950s, Sinn und Form was clearly extremely richly endowed.\(^{21}\)

In comparison, the ndl issue did not even come close to the prestige that Sinn und Form was able to amass in its issues from the 1950s with the typical contributor being ‘an established German writer in his (or her) sixties, either a western exile or a non-conformist, non-SED

figure from the GDR’. Looking at the table of contents of the June 1970 ndl issue the reader would have found the contribution by the director along with those of several members of staff flanked by a select number of contributions written by students. All contributors were members of the Institute and, at first sight, politically as well as literally oriented towards autonomy. Domestically, this was advantageous, but it is obvious that this ndl issue cannot be considered a publication with the potential of accumulating large amounts of symbolic capital in the international literary field. The choice of contributors is limited in two respects. First, the pieces were published in a journal overseen by the DSV. Secondly, the issue was dedicated to the Institute and its contributions were limited to those from the Institute. By 1970, the Institute seems to have secured enough heteronomous literary capital and domestic political capital to create objectified cultural capital by publishing a collaborative ndl issue celebrating the Institute’s anniversary.

The issue opens with Max Walter Schulz’s ‘Etwas Dialog über die Tradition des Lernens und Schreibens’. As early as the title, the readers’ attention is drawn to the relationship between educational and literary practice that had been subject to debate so often since the process of creating a literary academy had begun. The loaded topic is also mirrored in the form Schulz chose for his article: an open and in part confrontational dialogue between ‘dem Fragenden’ and ‘dem Antwortenden’. Would Schulz finally be able to reconcile the apparent contradictions between talent and instruction, creative expression and ideological demands that had been a source of tension at the Institute for over fifteen years?

22 Parker and Philpotts, Sinn und Form: The Anatomy of a Literary Journal, p. 44.
23 Although Werner Bräunig had been criticised for his too liberal approach in Rummelpatz, he had since published mostly heteronomous short stories and articles and Maurer, although oriented towards autonomous literary values, was able to appease the field of power in crucial moments as we have seen in 4.2.
24 Max Walter Schulz, ‘Etwas Dialog über die Tradition des Lernens und Schreibens’, Neue Deutsche Literatur, 18 (1970), 3-7. All following references to this dialogue are given after quotations in the text.
The dialogue begins with the questioner asking if it is correct that Becher, after whom the Institute was named, explicitly said he was against the kind of writer training practised at the Institute (3). The respondent refers to the Institute’s founding claims that Becher’s reluctance was his way of analysing the situation: ‘Becher räsonierte eine Zeitlang gegen die Sache. Das war bei ihm mehr oder weniger ein taktisches Räsonieren, um die überzeugenden Argumente zu finden für das Institut’ (3). After all, the respondent continues, the fact that the Institute was part of the MfK, with Becher as its minister, indicates his final blessing of the Institute. However, the logic of this answer seems a little flawed. After all, this could also imply Becher’s unease with the Institute and subordination of it to the MfK could have very well been the result of a desire to exert control over the new institution. As we have seen in the second chapter, archival evidence does not support the claim that Becher was in any way deeply personally involved with the Institute and its daily operation as Minister for Culture. The superficial nature of the reply given in Schulz’s piece does not escape the questioner and the latter presses for clarification. The respondent evades the issue even further by positioning the Institute as the successor of organisations favoured by Becher, such as the League of Proletarian-Revolutionary Authors. However, the answer still does not seem to satisfy the questioner and although he tries to interrupt the respondent, the latter falls into a lengthy tract about the socialist literary tradition and writers such as Goethe, Lenin, Becher and Gorky. In the end, both sides can only agree on the ‘gesellschaftliche Auftrag in der Literatur’ and a shared opposition to the Western literary scene referred to as ‘notable literarische Kreise andernorts’ (6-7).

The unresolved debate between the two sides portrayed in the essay seems a very odd choice for the preface of the journal. Schulz’s piece is accurate and honest insofar as the questioner embodies a perceived public resentment against the Institute. Schulz thereby
gives covert criticism relating to the Institute and its practices a voice in his piece. The public scepticism and reluctance towards the Institute, the perceived mismatch of Institute and patron, as well as literary talent and institutionalised education are recurring themes in the Institute’s history. However, Schulz does little to resolve the recurring questions and one might even claim that the contribution in fact highlights the issue of the Institute’s contested legitimacy and fails to appease its critics. This unveils an even deeper-rooted unease: if even the director was unable to convincingly argue in favour of the Institute in a written, hypothetical dialogue, did the Institute doubt its own value?

Following Schulz’s contribution are ninety pages of primarily literary contributions that do not pick up on the questions that have been raised by Schulz. A chapter titled ‘Der Ochsenweg’ from a novel by Schulz (8-36) is followed by an excerpt from Georg Maurer’s Revolutionsskizzen (37-39). A scene from Hans Pfeiffer’s TV programme ‘Leben und Tod Thomas Müntzers’ (40-52) precedes a short story written by Werner Bräunig, ‘Hafen der Hände’ (53-59). After these works by Institute lecturers, literary works by students are published, first of all Klaus Wolf’s improvisational dialogue ‘Lederstrumpf und Bohrwerk’ taken from Theater über Theater (65-77), which is then followed by pieces produced by three students on the topic of Buchenwald (78-97). The focus on literary texts after Schulz’s opening piece takes the reader’s attention away from the debates and uncertainty surrounding the Institute.

It is Joachim Nowotny’s essay ‘Über Prosa reden’ (98-105) that finally takes the reader back to the subject of the Institute’s practice: ‘Einer, der vor uns auf diesem Stuhl gesessen hat, brachte jüngst einen Essay heraus, betitelt: Prosa schreiben’(98). The essay Nowotny referenced, and whose title is clearly mirrored in Nowotny’s essay, was written by

25 We will return to the Buchenwald contributions at a later point.
Werner Bräunig and published two years earlier. Nowotny argued that unlike the process of writing about prose, during which the author can take his time to develop his argument, speaking about prose is a very vague and ambiguous undertaking, ‘weil uns im Eifer des Gefechts nichts Besseres einfällt oder einfallen kann, weil wir gezwungen sind zu reden, wie wir nun einmal reden: Ungenau und drumherum, bei dem geringsten Zeichen des Verstehens im Gesicht des anderen schon zufrieden mit dem, was wir da so hingesagt haben’ (98-99).

Nowotny believed that there was a need to find orderly names for literary matters through writing and talking about prose, the difficulty of which confronted writers with a dilemma: ‘Soll denn der Erzähler keine Romane mehr schreiben, weil unsere Zeit so hochkompliziert ist?’ (102). Nowotny argued that it is more important than ever to face the complexity of literature and life. He described literature as a landscape that is contested:

Aber dann kommen die anderen. Jene, die ihre Fahne plötzlich auf unseren Boden setzen und zu erkennen geben, daß sie nicht aus unserer Welt sind, daß sie andere Vorstellungen von ihr haben, die den unseren diametral entgegenstehen. Und dann bedauern wir, was uns da passiert ist. Hätten wir doch den Boden exakt markiert, als ‘unser’ ausgewiesen, als unwiderruflich unser.

Nowotny concluded his essay by urging writers to take possession of the world ‘bis sie ganz und gar unser ist’ (103). The crude call to literary arms seems to serve as a justification for all the imprecisions that may arise when talking about prose and could be interpreted as the lecturer’s attempt to defend any offence that the discussion of literature may cause to some people. This tension would, of course, become stronger and take on a new importance in the Vorbild - Leitbild discussion published in Weimarer Beiträge nine years later.

Other contributions do not deal with equally fundamental questions as Schulz’s and Nowotny’s essays have, but fulfil an equally important function: they are short accounts of how alumni remember their time at the Institute. In a brief memoir of his studies at the

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27 Nowotny, 'Über Prosa reden', p. 103.
Institute from 1958 to 1961, Hans-Jürgen Steinmann remembers how writing before attending the Institute had been easy, almost naive (121-122). In his opinion, the benefit of the Institute was to form bonds with fellow students and to become more conscious of one’s writing:

Was das Institut konnte, war: Richtung anzugeben, Möglichkeiten zu zeigen und Fragen zu stellen. Das Schreiben ist schwerer geworden - und schöner. [...] Zwölf Jahre her, daß man dort angekommen, zusammengekommen ist. Als ob es gestern gewesen wäre; wir sind zusammengeblieben.28

Steinmann’s piece succeeds in conveying a shared mentality more than Schulz and Nowotny were able to in their texts. However, the sense of community Steinmann describes, one of finding a direction together and learning in an environment where questions can be asked, indicates an institutional practice that was to some degree ambiguous and unstable. Peter Gosse’s description of the Institute’s Sonderkurs echoes Steinmann’s sentiment of the importance of plurality in a literary course of study (123-125).

Having taken part in one of the Sonderkurse, Gosse explains that it was not just the literary education he received that made him value the course. It was also ‘Außerliterarisches’ and ‘handliche Gesellschaftsprognose’ that made him develop as a writer.29 Gosse valued the flexibility and deliberate incompleteness of the course: ‘Der Lehrplan wurde uns nicht als unveränderlich aufgetischt. Zwischen Lehrenden und Lernenden wurde er abgestimmt auf Fähigkeiten und Bedürfnisse, und zwar nur für einige Wochen im Voraus. [...] Aber diese sozusagen gleitende Projektierung ermöglichte Höherwertiges’ (124-125). Gosse’s summary of the Institute’s curriculum does not paint the picture of an orthodox institution that adhered to rules and guidelines imposed on its practice by external bodies. On the contrary, centring its teaching practice primarily around students’ likes and dislikes without adhering

to a general curriculum shows that lecturers themselves were not always confident in striking a balance between student demands and external expectations.

The interview with Trude Richter reflects on the Institute’s practice in broader terms. When confronted with the term ‘künstlerische Meisterschaft’, Richter explained that the question of whether or not literary mastery could be taught was hotly debated during the Institute’s founding period. In the end, a consensus was reached ‘daß “Begabung als solche” natürlich nicht lernbar sei, daß sie aber, einmal vorhanden, “gefordert und entwickelt werden” könne’ (128). The interviewer agreed with Trude Richter, but also implied that this agreement was not shared by everyone: ‘Nun ja, über die Notwendigkeit des Instituts wird es - bei uns jedenfalls - keine Meinungsverschiedenheiten mehr geben’ (128). The interviewer, M. Schmidt, is likely to be Marianne Schmidt, a former ndl contributor and lecturer at the Institute at the time of the interview. The use of the phrase ‘bei uns’ implies that while the members of the Institute were convinced of its necessity, this sentiment was still not shared by everyone and the divide between supporters and critics of the Institute was as apparent in 1970 as it had been in the early 1950s. After Max Walter Schulz, Trude Richter is the second senior member of the Institute to draw attention to negative sentiments towards the Institute in the ndl issue. The interview closes by highlighting the relationship between the Becher Institute and the Maxim Gorky Institute in Moscow, where Trude Richter had been a visiting lecturer at least once a year since the 1950s. Since 1969, the collaboration between the two literary institutions had increased and would eventually culminate in a joint publication in 1975, the collaborative *Tauchnitzstraße - Twerskoi Boulevard* monograph we will look at in more detail in the following section.

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The contributions we have looked at so far do not convey the sense of an institution that had found stability and succeeded in developing a common habitus in its fifteen years of existence. Students valued the friendships they developed at the Institute, but did not speak of a consistent teaching practice. Lecturers were still defending the Institute’s existence against the public belief that it did not serve a valuable purpose. Despite the contributors’ efforts to demonstrate the Institute’s importance and success, these efforts were ultimately counter-productive and the failure to establish the Institute as an indispensable actor in the literary field of the GDR is apparent throughout the ndl issue.

In addition to the theoretical articles there is, as already mentioned, a collection of literary texts that deserves closer inspection: the essays on Buchenwald written by students Siegfried Weinhold, Waldemar Spender and Elisabeth Semrau-Gross.\(^\text{31}\) As literary contributions, the student essays were better suited to accumulate symbolic literary capital as, in theory, they could explore literary themes and forms non-fictional contributions could not convey that would resonate with the autonomous values of the literary field. Instead of theorising the institutional practice of training writers, the selected essays were an actual result of the Institute’s efforts and, depending on their quality and content, held the potential to demonstrate or call into question the Institute’s success in training emerging writers.

Writing about Buchenwald was a significant undertaking in itself as the liberation of the camp had far-reaching implications in the GDR. It has been most notably converted into a novel by Bruno Apitz under the title *Nackt unter Wölfen* in 1958.\(^\text{32}\) The great significance given to the anti-fascist resistance in Buchenwald as not only a birthplace of German communism but also as ‘the ideal founding stone on which to construct a German

\(^{31}\) All three students studied at the Institute from 1967 to 1970.

anti-fascist state’ meant that writing about Buchenwald had to strictly adhere to the now politicised narrative surrounding it.  

The three student pieces adapt the Buchenwald myth in different ways. Siegfried Weinhold’s piece is written in keeping with the original founding myth, while Waldemar Spender shifts the focus to the younger generation and their detachment from the myths surrounding the founding of the GDR in his contribution. The final piece, written by Marianne Schmidt, departs from the traditional history of Buchenwald and presents the subject matter in an innovative way. The students’ pieces stand out as the texts are able to disregard the tensions and contradictions that characterise the previously discussed pieces. This suggests that the students were more successful in taking a position through their writing than senior members of staff. A closer examination of each contribution will show how this was accomplished.

The first piece of the students’ contributions is a short story by Siegfried Weinhold (78-84) with the title ‘Lampe mit Pferd’. The lamp in the title was given to the narrator by his former partner Margot, with whom he has a daughter, Elena. Margot is now living with another man and the narrator has custody of Elena. On a seemingly normal afternoon, while listening to the radio and drinking coffee, the narrator, whose name is not revealed, becomes deeply unsettled by looking at the lamp. He notes how the lamp’s foot is possibly made from dark marble and its leg from brass, but looking at the shade makes him want to destroy the lamp: ‘Es war ein gewöhnlicher Lampenschirm in Kegelform, bespannt mit einer dünnen Folie, die aussah wie Menschenhaut’ (79). Through the course of the story, the narrator only slowly reveals the underlying trauma that causes him to despise the lamp.

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As a young man, he was imprisoned in Buchenwald and during a day of arduous physical labour, he became mesmerised by a horse trotting past and stopped digging. Another inmate, called Kawalec, hit him across his chest with a shovel, splitting his skin and obscuring the tattoo of a horse the narrator had on his chest. The wife of the Buchenwald commander, Ilse Koch, was riding past the working inmates. She gently touched another inmate’s arm with her whip before riding off. After complimenting the inmate on his beautiful tattoo of a ship, a guard told the inmate that he did not have to work any more that day and he was to report to the barracks as ‘Volksgenossin Koch’ had asked for him. The story is interrupted at this point by the following lines that reveal the fate of the inmate: ‘M. DUBOST: Man hat also Menschen gehäutet? BALACHOWSKY: Man hat die Haut abgezogen und dann gegerbt. (Aus Dokumenten des Internationalen Militärgerichtshofs Nürnberg)’ (83).

Just as abruptly as the story is interrupted, it continues and the narrator explains how Kawalec, who hit him with his shovel - and more than likely saved his life - cut away the narrator’s tattoo the very same day. The story continues with the account of how Margot gave the lamp to the narrator without knowing of the atrocities the narrator had faced in Buchenwald. She asks: ‘Und: Freust du dich über die Lampe? Was soll ich ihr sagen? Es ist eine schöne Lampe’ (83). The story conveys many messages, from exposing the fascist atrocities committed at Buchenwald to the prison camp inmates’ spirit of resistance against their tormentors. But more than anything, the importance of overcoming personal trauma and fighting against fascist cruelty lies at the centre of Weinhold’s story. At one point, the narrator, a former writer for a communist newspaper, asks: ‘Aber was vermag die Feder gegen brutale Gewalt?’ (p. 80). However, instead of resigning himself to the fact that only little can be done, the story ends with the narrator telling himself: ‘Die
Lampe ist nicht schlecht. Sie scheint heller als meine alte. Wenn ich nachts nicht schlafen kann, werde ich bei ihrem Licht schreiben können, ohne daß ich mir die Augen verderbe’ (84). This statement is, of course, highly symbolic and can be read metaphorically as an expression of the narrator’s resolve to fight peacefully through the medium of literature against fascist threats in (the) light of the traumatic German past. But it is not only the narrator who claims this heritage as part of his own identity. By association, the author Siegfried Weinhold clearly sided with this orthodox interpretation of the Buchenwald myth. As a student who wrote this short story as part of his course, the Institute itself is positioned in line with the politically loaded founding myth.

The second piece is another short story, titled ‘zögernd gehen’, written by Waldemar Spender (84-88). In this story, a different approach to the Buchenwald topic is taken. In ‘zögernd gehen’, the narrator and his friend K. go on a hike together. Initially, it is not clear where the two are headed, although the way there or the destination itself seems discomforting and K. asks the narrator: ‘Traust du dir zu, mit mir hinzugehen’ (84)? Indeed, climbing up a hill on their way to their destination on top, the narrator finds the beech forest they have to walk through ‘unheimlich’ (85). From a short piece of dialogue the reader learns that something terrible has happened here: “Hättest du es geglaubt, das da oben?” fragt er. [...] “Nein”, sage ich. “Ich war vierzehn, damals. Aber unsere Eltern?” “Auch die nicht”, sagt K’ (85). The name of the site, Buchenwald, is not used although the beech forest is clearly an allusion to Buchenwald in German. The fact that the story is about a disaster caused by man only becomes clear once K. and the narrator have reached the top and are walking through a gate into a yard. The narrator finds it hard to reconcile the scope of the tragedy with the site:

Es ist alles so klein, sagt mein Verstand, als wir vor dem Tor stehen. Er weigert sich, es zu glauben. Es ist alles so klein.
Als wir das Tor wieder passieren, bin ich den ersten Eindruck nicht los. Viel zu klein, pocht es in meinem Schädel. Dafür. (86)

The narrator and K. are uneasy not only with the place and its history, but even more significantly with their feelings towards the site. K. seems to feel guilty and ashamed when he admits: “Es ist seltsam mit dem menschlichen Verstand. [...] Vor Jahren hat mich das alles viel mehr bewegt. Ist unser Gefühl anders geworden?”

The name of the narrator’s friend, K., is reminiscent of other literary characters, like Kafka’s Franz K. (Der Prozess) and K. (Das Schloss), as well as Herr K. or Herr Keuner of Bertolt Brecht’s parables. Similar to the latter, there is a moral dilemma at the centre of Spender’s story: people’s memories fade and atrocities from the past may lose their horror as time goes on. Instead of directly engaging with the implication that the terror of National Socialism may slowly be fading in the memory of the East German public - a serious accusation that had so far only been levelled at the West Germans for their way of engaging with the Nazi past - the narrator tells K. about an incident from his childhood. An old man told the narrator’s mother, whose physical and mental health had been steadily deteriorating since the death of her husband: ‘Mit einem Toten kann man nicht leben’ (87). Since her encounter with the old man, the narrator’s mother moved on and her health improved significantly. K. swiftly responds to this anecdote: ‘Mit einem Toten kann man nicht leben. [...] Aber, wenn schon nicht mit einem, wie dann mit vielen?’

The narrator finds solace in the fact that he and K. are actively engaging with their past, despite their fading memories of Buchenwald: “Wir sind ja hier”, sage ich. “Wir sehen das alles”, sage ich. “Wir erinnern uns doch”, sage ich’ (87). K. and the narrator make their way to the graves on site and the narrator remembers a Tyll Ulenspiegel story in which
Tyll’s parents are burnt for being heretics.\textsuperscript{34} Tyll wears his parents’ ashes in a bag around his neck and draws ‘Kräfte [...] für seine kämpferische Fröhlichkeit’ (88) from the ashes. Transferred to the narrator’s dilemma, this seems to imply that he takes strength and conviction for the communist and socialist cause from his visit to Buchenwald. K. on the other hand takes the old man’s advice to heart. Without even having listened to the narrator’s musings, he has started to walk away, taking ‘die große Treppe, die nach oben zu immer breiter wird’ (88). The narrator follows suit.

The message conveyed by this short story seems somewhat different from the first. The story highlights that the young generation, like Spender only 14 years old when the reality of National Socialist terror was finally exposed by the Allied Forces, has a different, uneasy relationship with the Buchenwald myth. The short story does not pass judgement on the narrator or the protagonist as both face the future symbolised by the staircase with very different feelings about Buchenwald and how to deal with the commemoration site. There are unanswered questions and an unsettling suspicion that people will forget about the labour camp soon, all of which make this short story a less orthodox treatment of the Buchenwald myth. While the first story unquestioningly promotes the role communism played and continues to play in the fight against anti-fascism, the second story paints a somewhat problematic picture of the public’s engagement with Buchenwald, and the commemoration of a GDR founding myth.

The third and final piece of the Buchenwald feature was written by Elisabeth Semrau-Gross, who later married Max Walter Schulz and taught at the Institute from 1972, and chose a different format for her story titled ‘Reflexionen über eine Buchenwaldepisode’ (88-97). She chose a literary collage to engage with a scene taken from Apitz’s \textit{Nackt unter}

\textsuperscript{34} Tyll Ulenspiegel is the Low Saxon variation of Till Eulenspiegel, a vagrant and trickster from Northern German folklore.
Wölfen in which two thousand German political prisoners were promised freedom by the commander of Buchenwald in autumn 1944 if they enlisted in the Wehrmacht. After hours of making the prisoners stand in the camp’s courtyard, there is still no reaction: ‘Der ungleiche Kampf endete mit dem Sieg der Gefangenen, mit dem Sieg der deutschen Kommunisten - denn nicht ein einziger ließ sich für die faschistische Armee werben’ (89).

In 15 independent sections, Semrau-Gross elaborates on this scene. Most sections are personal, sometimes autobiographical, accounts of Semrau-Gross’s attempt to find a personal connection to the scene and the two thousand prisoners involved.

She remembers two friends, Eva L. and Paul H., both of whom had been imprisoned in Buchenwald. She cannot know how she herself would have acted in the courtyard, but she can admire and respect the people, especially her friends, for their courage and resilience. She also includes the view of her 17-year-old son, whose attitude is not dissimilar to that expressed in Spender’s short story:

Na ja, das ist Geschichte! Man hat Achtung vor ihnen, und ich spüre auch etwas wie Entrüstung oder so, aber es ist mir, als ob ich etwas über eine andere Welt lese. Es erstaunt mich, ja. Aber ob das vor fünfundzwanzig oder vor zweihundert Jahren war, das ist mir kein Unterschied’. (p.90)

Semrau-Gross defends her son’s statement by recounting that when she was about to start her first year of school, accounts from the First World War seemed equally distant to her, but within less than two years, World War Two had begun.

Other accounts worked into this piece are extracts from works written by victims of National Socialism, such as Peter Fischl, who was killed in Theresienstadt in 1944 aged 15 and Jaques Lusseyran, who writes about forgetting the cruelties of Buchenwald in order to maintain his ‘Lebenskraft’ (92). Lusseyran’s quote is followed by an extract from Eugen Kogon’s Der SS-Staat. Kogon had also been imprisoned in Buchenwald and seconds Lusseyran’s account of emotional distress: ‘Der Empfindungsreichtum wurde fast
automatisch herabgesetzt. Die Seele schuf sich eine schützende Kruste, die nicht mehr jeden starken Eindruck zum Empfindungsmembran durchließ’ (92). Kogon may not have been an obvious choice for this collage despite his Buchenwald experience. Kogon was an active communist, but worked for the US Army after the liberation of Germany and continued to live and work in West Germany, taking part as a witness in the Nuremberg trials of Nazi doctors, one of whom he had assisted in Buchenwald.

Semrau-Gross’ engagement with the Buchenwald myth is the most artistically creative and innovative of the three pieces. Archival material shows that the technique Semrau-Gross employed in this seminar work was praised by Max Walter Schulz. In his appraisal of Semrau-Gross’ final projects, he wrote: ‘Die drei Studienjahre erbrachten für sie eine erste Ernte an Prosa. Im Wesentlichen reifte die erzählende Prosa und das Porträt. Auch die Skizzen und die Buchenwaldreflexionen leben von verknappten, von reportmäßig reflexiv aufgearbeiteten Geschichten. [...] Einschätzung: Sehr gut’.35 Semrau-Gross’ personal honesty and the conflicting accounts she chose to make part of her reflexion as well as the non-conventional form set it clearly apart from the first more orthodox short story by Weinhold.

The order of the three pieces shows a movement from an orthodox interpretation of the Buchenwald myth to a more open and ambiguous rendering of the same material. The contradictions between the pieces but also their interconnections and the progression from one to the next show the many facets of political allegiances and creative ideas brought together under one roof at the Institute in Leipzig. The essays seem to paint a picture of artistic practice at the Institute that tried to please orthodox demands while at the same time exploring more autonomous ideas. As Max Walter Schulz’s praise shows, this

was encouraged at the Institute. Publishing pieces like the one written by Semrau Gross held the potential to generate a small amount of literary capital by reimagining a founding myth within orthodox ideology while simultaneously allowing for some openness within this context. The emergence of plurality from a heteronomous position can be classed as the Institute’s attempt ‘to open up alternative spaces for public speech from within [the] framework’ of the East German literary and cultural field.\[36\]

As a conscious and collaborative position-taking by the Institute, the June 1970 issue of *Neue Deutsche Literatur* is hard to categorise. Without taking the students’ literary texts into consideration, the contributions by senior members of staff Schulz, Nowotny, Steinmann, Gosse and Richter fail to paint a clear picture of what exactly the Institute’s ambitions were in the early 1970s. It certainly is neither a bold political nor revolutionary literary position-taking. The self-conscious and evasive dialogue between a questioning outsider and a defensive insider, the almost foreboding monologue about the vague and unpolished nature of speaking about prose, the nostalgic review of learning and socialising at the Institute, the praise of curricular flexibility and spontaneity and the contrasting professional look at institutional practices in Leipzig and Moscow all point in various directions while having one thing in common: a - sometimes cautiously - positive outlook at the Institute’s past and future. After the shock of the 11th Plenary, the Institute had found its feet again. However, a sense of having to justify the Institute’s aims, practices and indeed existence remained among apologetic references to debates and opinions dating as far back as the Institute’s founding. The orientation towards the institution in Moscow mirrors the relationship both institutes shared in the early 1950s with the Becher Institute imitating and learning from the Gorky Institute. This connection remained somewhat anecdotal in the

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ndl anniversary issue, but was strengthened in the following years and eventually culminated in a unique co-authored publication in 1975.

5.2 ‘Für die Erziehung einer neuen Schriftstellergeneration’: Literary Collaboration between Leipzig and Moscow

While the Institute’s anniversaries were always commemorated in some way, such as open days with literary events, articles in the East German press or the anniversary issue of ndl, the occasion for Tauchnitzstraße – Twerskoi Boulevard - Beiträge aus zwei Literaturinstituten was altogether different. In this publication from 1975, lecturers from the Gorky Institute in Moscow and the Becher Institute in Leipzig contributed to a joint publication in order to showcase their differences and similarities. The book bears witness to the increased professional and creative exchange between the Gorky Institute and the Becher Institute in the 1970s and offers great insight into the intellectual and academic aspects of the lecturers’ habitus. The table of contents shows that the individual contributions address a breadth of topics ranging from literary criticism (Maschinski, Szczeposn) and pedagogical reflections (Kanzog, Rosow) to literary works (Schulz-Semrau). The publication therefore presents the opportunity to compare the author function of both institutes through the position-takings made by their contributions.

Based on the subject matter, the individual pieces can be classed into five different categories: two introductory notes – one written by Max Walter Schulz and one by Vladimir F. Pimenov, who was the director of the Gorky Institute; four pieces illustrating the teaching practices at the institutes – two for each institute; eight essays concerned with issues affecting the socialist literary field in the 1970s; nine essays concerned with literary

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37 Schutz and Pimenov, Tauchnitzstraße – Twerskoi Boulevard. Further references to this publication are given after quotations in the text.
criticism; and one literary piece written by former student and by then assistant Elisabeth Semrau Schulz. The question of which part of the lecturers’ habitus is expressed to its fullest in this publication can therefore already be answered by reading the table of contents: two categories, developments in the socialist literary field and literary criticism, encompass seventeen of the total twenty-four contributions. This is an indication of the forms of objectified cultural capital the publication was predestined to create for both institutes. As theoretical contributions far outweigh literary pieces, Tauchnitzstraße – Twerskoi Boulevard is a material representation of the embodied literary and intellectual capital both institutes had at their disposal through the lecturers’ literary expertise.

Most of the nine pieces concerned with literary analysis focus on a single writer. Fjodor Birjukov, lecturer at the Gorky Institute, chose to write about the Soviet writer Mikhail Aleksandrovich Sholokhov who turned 70 in 1975, (27-42) and whom Birjukow believed to be the ideal socialist writer, representing equality, brotherhood and peace between nations. Unlike most contributors, Birjukow succeeded in showing a connection between his chosen subject and German literature: Erwin Strittmatter valued Sholokhov’s work (37-38). Valeri Dementjev, also lecturer in Moscow, established another parallel between Leipzig and Moscow. His essay ‘Zur Majakowski-Tradition in der sowjetischen Dichtung’ (43-56) focuses on a poet in whom Max Zimmering had already taken an interest in 1955. However, Dementjev seems unaware of this connection. Lev Oserov finds another point of contact between German and Soviet literature in his essay ‘Original und Nachbildung’ (126-137). He wrote about the translator Fyodor Tyutchev, who translated works by Heinrich Heine.

The other essays show that the lecturers were mostly concerned with their respective national literary fields. Inna Vischnevskaya analysed Nikolai Gogol’s theatre aesthetics in her essay ‘Über einige Aspekte der Theaterästhetik Gogols’ (289-297) and Semyon Machinsky wrote a comparative essay about ‘Lenin, Tolstoi und die ästhetische Analyse’ (77-99). Alexander Mikhaylov supplied a literary and historical analysis of the October Revolution with ‘Epos der Revolution’ (100-118), whereas Victor Pankov reports on important issues and new forms of expression in Soviet literature by focusing mostly on works about Lenin his associates in ‘Historische Wege eines neuen Menschen’ (138-147). The two contributions by lecturers from Leipzig are not just concerned with any East German writers: both essays focus on lecturers at the Becher Institute. Ursula Sczeponik's piece ‘Anmerkungen zur konzeptiven Selbstverständigung eines Erzählers’ (257-277) is about Joachim Nowotny and his attempt to define his position as a writer. The other contribution, ‘Betrachtungen im Umkreis eines Gedichtes von Georg Maurer’ (57-66), was written by Peter Gosse and provides a literary analysis of Maurer’s poem ‘Ankunft’.

The second category of contributions is also concerned with literary criticism, but instead of focusing on an individual writer, these essays aim at wider concepts that were relevant to writers at the time. Of the seven essays, four were written by members of the Becher Institute: Joachim Nowotny, Max Walter Schulz, Gerhard Rothbauer and Marianne Schmidt. The three contributions from the Gorky Institute were composed by prose lecturer Grigory Baklanov, director Vladimir Pimenov and lecturer Alexander Vlassenko. In his essay ‘Wie wir schreiben’ (11-26), Baklanov uses his story ‘Karpuchin’ as an example to argue that a writer needs to actively take part in society in order to write about relevant topics. He believes that the process of writing from conceiving the idea for a book to the finished publication is shaped by the time and the society in which the writer lives. While
this contribution remains largely theoretical, Vladimir Pimenov’s intention is to expose the need for current topics in Soviet Drama. In ‘Gegenwart würdigen heißt an Zukunft denken’ (148-161), Pimenov complains that many ‘classic’ playwrights are featured in Russian theatres but hardly any ‘working’ playwrights gain publicity. He stresses the following: ‘Unsere Dramatiker sind werktätige Menschen, die sich ständig auf ihren geliebten Beruf konzentrieren. Von ihnen hängt das Schicksal des gegenwärtigen Theaters ab, seine Gegenwart und Zukunft’. But it is not only theatre itself that will benefit from fostering contemporary talents; Pimenov points out that theatre professionals feel their primary task is to fight against bourgeois ideology through art and as such contribute positively to a socialist society.

Alexander Vlassenko writes about a multinational literature that is encouraged by the Communist Party in ‘Einheit in der Vielfalt’ (298-310). He believes that there are many processes that promise positive developments in the national socialist literary fields: ‘Diese Prozesse zeugen davon, daß jedes Volk, sogar das der Bevölkerungszahl nach kleinste, unter den Bedingungen einer sozialistischen Gesellschaft Großartiges auf dem Gebiet der Kultur hervorbringen kann’ (301). The Party’s care for and support of international writers, Vlassenko argues, become especially evident in the existence of the Gorky Institute which itself is proof of the growth of the international socialist literary field. Although the contribution has a very optimistic tone, it cannot ignore a growing fear among smaller socialist countries: ‘Es soll nochmals betont werden, daß der Prozeß der Annäherung der nationalen Literaturen nicht zu einer Nivellierung führt, obgleich die russische sowjetische Literatur mit ihrer reichen ästhetischen Erfahrung eine führende Rolle spielt’ (305). Underlying this statement seems to be the fear of a domination of the international socialist literary field by Russian literary actors. The contributions by the lecturers from Moscow are
concerned with the future development of their national literary field as well as the potential of the international socialist literary field and show that the Russian literary field had substantial issues to overcome in the mid-1970s. Of course writers in the GDR also faced obstacles, albeit of a different nature, as a close look at the contributions from Leipzig will show.

The four theoretical East German essays are ‘Soziale Prägnanz’ by Joachim Nowotny, ‘Literaturkritik und junge Autoren’ by Marianne Schmidt, ‘Der Zwölfe im Peloton’ written by Gerhard Rothbauer and ‘Pinocchio und kein Ende’ by Max Walter Schulz. Joachim Nowotny deals with the most abstract question out of all East German essays collected in Tauchnitzstraße – Twerskoi Boulevard. In ‘Soziale Prägnanz’ (119-125), Nowotny claims that there are clear definitions of what constitutes poetry and drama; Prose, however, lacks these definitions as it is hard to draw a line between prose, journalism, essays and everyday language. This observation prompts Nowotny to ask what exactly constitutes ‘Sinn und Wesen der Kunstprosa’. It is in this context that he uses the term ‘soziale Prägnanz’ which, according to Nowotny, helps define what is and is not prose. To be sozial prägnant in Nowotny’s terms means for a literary work to be part of the past and present:

Wir [Prosaleute] produzieren direkt vor Ort. Wir nehmen das Problem und das Wort unmittelbar aus dem Alltag, formen nur ein wenig um, und auch das gewissermaßen unter den Augen der Leute. [...] Soziale Gebundenheit ist die Grundbedingung unseres Schaffens, aber ohne den Willen zur sprachlichen Prägnanz sind wir nicht auf der Höhe des Maurers. (122)

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39 Max Walter Schulz’s contribution would later lend its title to a small collection of his literary works. See: Max Walter Schulz, Pinocchio und kein Ende. Notizen zur Literatur, 2., (Halle; Leipzig: Mitteldeutscher Verlag, 1980).
Nowotny shows, with his homage to the craft of the brick layer, that prose needs to emerge from everyday life, while also being linguistically refined by the writer.\(^{40}\) According to Nowotny, literary ambition and everyday reality must never be separated ‘in einer Gesellschaft, in der Geist und Tat so sehr aufeinander angewiesen sind wie in der unsrigen’ (121). Most importantly, he believes that literature is not only a means of portraying reality in the present, but it also has significance for the future:

> Wenn wir darüber [das alltägliche Leben des Arbeiters in der DDR] nicht mit der Prägnanz, die einem solchen Engagement angemessen ist, schreibend Auskunft geben, dann dulden wir, daß unsere großen revolutionären Vorgänge ihrer wesentlichsten Dimension beraubt werden: der menschlichen. (125)

As a refined yet people-oriented medium, Nowotny believes prose to be an important factor in the construction of a socialist society.

Marianne Schmidt’s essay ‘Literaturkritik und junge Autoren’ (208-223) is of a more pragmatic nature. She notes that many new authors have entered the literary field of the GDR since 1969. To speak of a young generation, however, would be wrong, she believes. Rather, for her there were two generations: those authors born in the 1920s and those born in the 1940s. While the older generation focused mainly on the active fight against fascism in their works, the 20 to 40-year-olds often explored the relationship between a young protagonist and society. As these authors had not yet been born when the National Socialists were defeated, they found it harder to identify with the antifascist movement and instead chose to focus on self-representation in their works. However, the focus on the individual was still located within a socialist context. It was common for stories to unfold in the GDR and to focus on moral dilemmas in which the protagonist wished to reach his full potential (215). These works were not always unproblematic, as Schmidt notes, but her

\(^{40}\) The metaphor of the brick layer is cleverly chosen. Although the context makes it very clear that Nowotny is primarily referring to the profession, *Maurer* could also be understood as a well-hidden homage to Georg Maurer.
appeal to literary critics is to be understanding of these issues. She underlines that it is the critics’ responsibility not to pass judgment on the writer, but to encourage him to write wisely. Schmidt’s essay is clearly informed by her own experience with young writers at the Institute and her empathy for the struggles of the generation of writers expected to promote socialism in their works without ever having personally opposed military fascism. The fact that Schmidt felt the need to address what she perceived as unfair criticism of the younger writers may indicate a discrepancy between expectations towards emerging writers at the Institute and the national literary field.

Gerhard Rothbauer also deals with a generational issue in his essay ‘Der zwölfte im Peloton’ (187-207). Rothbauer recalls the atrocities committed under National Socialism in detail and warns that these details are in danger of only being remembered as numbers and statistics – not as actual crimes. Drawing on his experience with the young generation of students at the Institute, Rothbauer asks to what extent this issue applies to young writers:

Die bloßen Fakten kennen Sie nicht aus Erfahrung, die vielleicht berechtigten Fragen an die Väter machen allein noch keine Literatur [...] Können sich die Jungen selber aus unserer Geschichte entlassen? Sind sie nicht auch als Söhne verbunden mit der Zeit ihrer Väter, aller ihrer Väter? Und so gehört diese Epoche auch heute noch zur Geschichte der Jungen, sie müßt als ihre Geschichte in ihrem Bewußtsein bleiben, auch wenn sie ihr gegenüber unbelastet sein könnten. (203)

Rothbauer’s answer is simple: literature can counteract the objectification of immorality by dealing with the question of guilt in the context of the Second World War and as such it is the responsibility of young writers to reinvoke the inhumanity the generation of their fathers experienced. The dismissal of the West German 1968-movement – ‘die vielleicht berechtigten Fragen an die Väter machen allein noch keine Literatur’ – could be a thinly veiled criticism of West German literature written by the young generation. While Schmidt asks for an understanding and encouraging approach to young writers and their works, Rothbauer seems less sympathetic.
The last contribution concerned with contemporary issues written by a Leipzig lecturer is ‘Pinocchio und kein Ende’ by Max Walter Schulz (224-244) in which Schulz muses about the relationship between talent and craftsmanship using Carlo Collodi’s children’s novel as a parallel. Schulz compares talent to the special piece of wood from which Gepetto carves Pinocchio: ‘Dieses gewöhnliche Stück Holz ist ein außergewöhnlich empfindliches Stück, eine bedeutende Ausnahme. [...] Es ist ein Talent. Es vermag sich originell zu artikulieren, und es besitzt [...] den schönsten Hang zur aggressiven Naivität’ (224-225). As such, Pinocchio becomes the ‘Modellfall poetisch-literarischer Talententwicklung’ (225). Much like lecturers and students at the Institute, Pinocchio defies Gepetto in every way: creator and creature do not see eye to eye - Pinocchio defies Gepetto in every way when it comes to ‘Generationsfragen, diese sich produktiv reizenden Widersprüche’ (228). Schulz sees these contradictions and inter-generational tensions as subversive tendencies that are often present in talented characters: ‘Die schöpferische Phantasie, dieses schnelle, ungezügelte Roß, gehorcht am liebsten, selbst in katastrophalen Situationen, dem Schenkeldruck eines tatenlustigen Helden. So im Leben, so in der Kunst’ (232). Soon Schulz struggles to find parallels between the narrative and the role talent plays in the training of young writers. He admits:

Zu Anfang wurde hier ein wenig mit der Sache gespielt. Die Figur des Pinocchio wurde als Modellfall für die Entwicklung eines literarischen Talents ausgegeben. Natürlich stimmt das nicht ganz [...] Was trotzdem stimmt, ist, daß der liebe Pinocchio in allem, was er uns vorführt, das unbedingte, ganze Talent seines Schöpfers beansprucht. (239)

Schulz believes that a young writer cannot establish himself in the literary field without talent. In the context of the often-debated question about the relevance of literary talent for a young writer to study at the Becher Institute, Schulz’s essay makes the unambiguous claim that literary talent is indispensable. Interestingly, he seems to imply that the creator, i.e. the lecturers, also have to possess talent, although it remains unclear whether he is referring to
literary or pedagogical capacities. Schulz elaborates: ‘Die Arbeit des Schreibens ist die
ersönlichkeitsgebundene Praxis der Einheit von Stoff, Idee und Methode. Am Anfang ist
der Stoff. Idee und Methode werden in der Regel erst beim Schreiben ertastet und
gefunden’ (243). If one understands ideas and methods of writing to include political
orientation, dedication to socialism and compliance with literary norms such as Socialist
Realism, it could be argued that Schulz believed literary talent should be given priority over
political and literary convictions as they could be worked on while the young author was
exploring his own writing. As previous cases, such as Helga Novak and Dieter Mucke, have
shown, attempts to foster talent in young writers lacking commitment to socialism were
often unsuccessful.

The next six contributions are arguably the most telling pieces about institutional
practices and educational credos promoted by both institutions. They each highlight
different aspects that show the similarities as well as differences between the Becher
Institute in Leipzig and the Gorky Institute in Moscow. First, we will turn to the two
introductory texts written by the institutes’ directors. The first thing to be noticed is the
coordinated titles. Max Walter Schulz’s introduction is titled ‘Tauchnitzstraße - Twerskoi
Boulevard’ (7-8), whereas Pimenov chose the inverted version ‘Twerskoi Boulevard -
Tauchnitzstraße’ (9-10). Schulz explains the choice of titles: ‘Unter uns haben die
Straßennamen schon Symbolcharakter angenommen’ (8). The two prefaces promise a close
and harmonious collaboration between Leipzig and Moscow.

In his introduction, Schulz stresses that the publication brings together authors and
literary scholars from both institutes in a new format by featuring contributions about
literary education and essays about the ‘Lehrbarkeit des kreativen Schreibens’. By using the
term Lehrbarkeit des kreativen Schreibens, Schulz achieves two things. First, he refers back to
the debate about the *Lehrbarkeit der literarischen Meisterschaft* that Kurella first brought to light in 1955. Secondly, Schulz also succeeds in semantically taking a small step forward. Instead of *literarische Meisterschaft*, Schulz introduces the term *kreatives Schreiben*. This is the first time that the term creative writing is used in a publication about the Institute. Secondly, Schulz introduces another recurring theme: the controversial definition of *Lehrbarkeit*. In a statement that includes the teaching staff of the Gorky Institute, Schulz explains:

Wir verstehen solche Lehrbarkeit als eine Einheit von künstlerischer und wissenschaftlicher Erkenntnisbildung, die der Kultur des literarischen Talents dient, mithin Talent voraussetzt. [...] Unsere Schulen hegen nicht die Absicht, Schreibarten zu stiften, an denen die Schulmethode erkennbar wird. (7)

At the Institute, as well as in the East German literary field, the extremely heteronomous literary capital that could be accumulated through functional literature seems to have lost its value by 1975 and was open to public criticism. The publication also foregrounds the Institutes’ function as *Dichterschulen* and not *Parteischulen*, which indicates that their self-conceptualisation was now primarily characterised by literary aspirations.\(^4\) However, the tenor was still heteronomous: ‘[Es] kommt [...] uns an auf die Eigenständigkeit der sozialistischen Schriftstellerpersönlichkeit’ (7).

Vladimir F. Pimenov chooses a different focus in his introduction. He stresses the growing friendship and collaboration between the two institutes and believes that the friendship has enabled an exchange about *Lehrfragen*: ‘Darunter ist sowohl die Berufsausbildung als auch die sittliche Erziehung der Persönlichkeit zu verstehen’ (9). What exactly Pimenov classes as *sittliche Erziehung der Persönlichkeit* remains unclear. However, he places more emphasis on the political background of both institutes than Schulz:

Auch diese gemeinsame Publikation zweier Literaturinstitute ist ein klarer Ausdruck der immer fester werdenden Beziehungen zwischen zwei Kulturen, zwei Völkern und zwei Literaturen. Unsere Institute haben dabei ein gemeinsames Ziel: Junge Schriftsteller im Geist lebendiger sozialistischer Parteilichkeit zu erziehen. (10)

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\(^4\) The blurb, written by Günter Jacobi, refers to the institutions twice as ‘Dichterschulen’.
Pimenov even goes as far as to say that the joint publication can be regarded as ‘ein - im besten Sinne - politisches Ereignis, als ein ebenso informatives wie problemoffenes Gespräch auf dem Weg unserer immer fester werdenen Freundschaft’. It seems that the Russian director is far less hesitant and even proud to mention the political foundations which, after all, have brought the two institutes together. This is a profound difference between the directors’ introductions with Schulz leaning towards a creative, apolitical institutional identity and Pimenov adopting an overtly heteronomous standpoint.

Apart from the directors’ introductory pieces, there are another four publications with a direct connection to one of the institutes: Kurt Kanzog’s ‘Respektlose Übungen zu produktiven Zwecken’ (67-76); Hans Pfeiffer’s ‘Dialogübungen’ (162-181); Victor Rozov’s ‘Ratschläge an junge Schriftsteller’ (182-186); and Pavel Taran’s ‘Wie wir deutsche Literatur darbieten’ (278-288). In his contribution, Kurt Kanzog asks how a productive relationship between the students and classic literary works could be established. He presents an approach he has trialled in his creative drama seminar: to imagine and write an additional scene for Goethe’s Faust. The title of Kanzog’s contribution implies that this raised the question among students and other lecturers if such a task was disrespectful of the literary masterpiece. Kanzog argues against this concern, because it encouraged the students to engage deeply with the original work. He exemplifies the task with the work of several students, but criticises that the submissions were generally too sentimental and occasionally crossing ‘die Grenze zum Kitsch’ (75). Overall, Kanzog had wished for ‘freieres, selbstbewußteres Umgehen’ mit der literarischen Vorgabe (75).

Hans Pfeiffer also offers a glimpse into his teaching practices. His thesis is that the process of writing is simultaneously easy and hard for a writer – because writing is both a
talent and a strenuous effort. That also means that each writer feels most at home in the genre that is easiest for him to write in as Pfeiffer believes talent to be genre specific:

Für den erfahrenen Schriftsteller, ob Romancier oder Dramatiker, ist das 'gemäßäße' Schreiben kein Problem, er hat es im Verlauf seiner künstlerischen Entwicklung entdeckt, erprobt und bestätigt. Die jungen Schriftsteller, die wir bei uns ausbilden, sind dagegen oft noch auf der Suche nach der ihnen gemäßen Äußerungsform. Das bringt für uns einige pädagogische und methodische Fragen mit sich. (164)

Pfeiffer explains that students are supported in their search for the genre in which they feel most comfortable by making them take part in at least two genre-specific creative seminars:

‘das erfordert von der Seminarführung eine Arbeitsweise, die das dramatische Talent fördert und episch oder lyrisch fixierte Autoren für das dramatische Genre interessiert’ (164). Although each student was encouraged to develop a well-rounded personality as a writer, Pfeiffer stresses: ‘Wir wollen keinen literarischen “allroundman”’ (164). Just like Kanzog, Pfeiffer gives an example of how he tried to engage his students in one of his seminars:

Als Aufgabe wurde [dem Fernkurs] die Situation gestellt: Jemand erwartet jemanden. Gemeinsam überlegen wir, welche inhaltlich konkreten Situationen die Grundsituation ergibt. Wer wartet, wer wird erwartet, unter welchen gesellschaftlichen und individuellen Umständen vollzieht sich die Wartesituation, was erwartet der eine vom andern, wie verläuft die Wartesituation selbst, welche emotionale Atmosphäre ergibt sich, wie geht die Wartesituation aus, erfüllt sich die Erwartung, wird sie enttäuscht usw. Die eingereichten Arbeiten der Fernstudenten zeigen eine vielfältige inhaltliche Thematik. Sie reicht vom Kriegserlebnis über die Gestaltung eigener persönlicher Probleme bis zum Versuch, in einer Miniatszene gesellschaftlich allgemeine Prozesse zu erfassen. (173)

Pfeiffer’s conclusion is that the totality of dramatic dialogue could indeed not be explored in this one task. Yet, he valued the exercise because the students were able to experience first-hand how dramatic dialogue starts out as an imitation of reality and eventually takes on a representative function. The contributions from Kanzog and Pfeiffer both have an underlying apologetic tone, as if they had to justify and not just present their teaching practices and choice of tasks. This stands in stark contrast to the contributions from their
Russian colleagues and shows that even senior lecturers were still unable to identify and promote an institutional practice when it came to the instruction of students.

‘Ratschläge an junge Künstler’ is a reconstructed monologue by playwright Viktor Rozov, who taught at the Gorky Institute from 1958 for many years and was in the habit of organising his lectures without a detailed curriculum at hand– much like Maurer. However, this is where the parallels end. While the lecturers at the Becher Institute struggled to define what they were able to expect of their students, Rozov’s welcome to his students was very direct:

Du bist ans Literaturinstitut, an eine Hochschule für Schriftsteller gekommen, um Dichter zu werden. Und am meisten werde ich an euch das Künstlerische schätzen. Ich hoffe, daß staatsbürgerliches Bewußtsein euch schon im Kindergarten, in der Schule und am Arbeitsplatz anerzogen wurde. Ihr kommt bereits als erwachsene, reife Menschen hierher und in die Literatur. (182)

Rozov assumes his student had already developed a political awareness before arriving at the Gorky Institute. He believes that talent cannot be taught and that he can only help his students to acquire the necessary techniques and theoretical knowledge they need to improve their writing skills. In its function of enabling young writers to expand their writing skills, the Gorky Institute is seen as a ‘Schriftstellerlaboratorium’ by Rozov (183). No East German lecturer had ever stated the experimental nature of a literary institution in such an unapologetic and confident manner. At the same time, Rozov had very little patience with modern movements in the international literary field.

Im Westen gibt es die verschiedensten Abweichungen vom Realismus: Intellektuelles, Absurdes, psychopathologisches Theater, Antitheater usw. Allen Abweichungen vom Realismus wohnt etwas inne, was verwirrt und verhext, doch mit der Zeit wirkt der Zauber nicht mehr und die Mode überlebt sich. (185)

At least in this contribution Rosow seems to have reconciled the tension between literary freedom of expression and formal allegiance to Socialist Realism. Rosow treated his students with absolute strictness and warned them that writing and being published were privileges that needed to be earned: ‘Deshalb solltet ihr, bevor ihr daran geht, ein Stück zu
schreiben, gut überlegen, ob ihr das Recht habt, vom Publikum Aufmerksamkeit zu verlangen und es zu belehren’ (184). What makes Rozov’s piece stand out among the other contributions in this publication is his unforgiving stance on issues concerning the training of young writers. Unlike lecturers in Leipzig, who were to some degree still searching for their definition of the role of the lecturer, the content of their seminars and the role of a socialist writer, Rozov he was able to answer each question confidently.

The final contribution in Tauchnitzstraße - Twerskoi Boulevard we will examine is ‘Wie wir deutsche Literatur darbieten’ by Pavel Taran. At the Gorky Institute, German literature was part of a course module on world history. German literary history at the Gorky Institute started with the Nibelungenlied, but authors such as Marx, Engels, Heine, Thomas (especially Doktor Faustus) and Heinrich Mann were also compulsory reading for the students in Moscow. Special attention was, of course, paid to East German writers such as Becher, Anna Seghers and Bertolt Brecht. Taran explains: ‘In den genannten Schriftstellern sehen wir die Begründer der neuen sozialistischen Literatur in der DDR, die sich ja wesentlich die Methode des sozialistischen Realismus zu eigen gemacht hat’ (283).

Lecturers and students also kept up to date with contemporary East German literature because it exposed ‘die im Lande vollzogenen und sich vollziehenden sozialen Umgestaltungen sowie Änderungen’ (285). Surprisingly, Taran openly admits that lecturers and students in Moscow do not limit their studies of German literature to the East German literary field: ‘Wir verfolgen auch die Entwicklung der schöneigsten Literatur des anderen deutschen Staates, der BRD, insbesondere natürlich die Publikationen progressiver Autoren’ (286). Taran certainly uses the term progressive from a socialist point of view, yet the attitude towards West Germany at the Gorky Institute seems more relaxed than was the
case in Leipzig where most West German literature was only available from a *Giftschränk* with written permission from a lecturer.\(^{42}\)

*Tauchnitzstraße – Twerskoi Boulevard* allows a direct comparison of the institutional habitus at both literary institutes. Unsurprisingly, both institutions faced a number of issues together: the role of literary talent in the training of young writers, the importance of a clear political stance by students and lecturers, the contradiction between writing as an art form and writing as a Party tool and the role played by literature in a socialist country. However, despite their similarities – after all the Becher Institute was modelled on the Gorky Institute in many respects – each Institute seems to have found its own answers and coping mechanisms. While the lecturers from Leipzig wrote lengthy justifications of their teaching methods and choice of seminar tasks, at least one lecturer from Moscow took an unapologetic stance that was a sign of institutional confidence and being at ease with the habitus of a lecturer.

Next to the contributions from the lecturers of the Gorky Institute, the Becher Institute cannot hide the fact that even its director and lecturers were still struggling to establish - maybe even define - the Institute and its core ethos. The contributions that held the potential to finally move on from the self-conscious debates about literary talent, political conviction and teaching practices show the lecturers still going in circles in these matters without any indication that the circle would be eventually broken.

### 5.3 Zwischenbericht - The Institute Looks back on its own History

In 1980, the Institute published a bibliographic anthology, *Zwischenbericht. Notate und Bibliographie zum Institut für Literatur 'Johannes R., Becher', Leipzig.*\(^{43}\) Archival evidence shows

\(^{42}\) See: Reinhardt ‘Kaderschmieder und Dichterschule’.

\(^{43}\)
that the planning of the publication was agreed to by the Institute and the MfK, but who initiated the project remains unclear. In July 1979, Max Walter Schulz and Kurt Kanzog reported to Spaeth, head of the section for labour economy and labour rights: ‘[Die Bibliothekarin des Instituts, Ursula Beyer,] übernahm den Auftrag, eine bibliographische Dokumentation des Instituts in seiner 24-jährigen Entwicklung federführend über den Verlag “Bibliographisches Institut” Leipzig zu erledigen’.

This put Beyer in charge of editing the publication at a potentially difficult time: The editing process would have been nearing its completion in late 1979 after the Vorbild-Leitbild discussion in Weimarer Beiträge had angered the MfK and prompted Max Walter Schulz to supervise publications originating from the Institute more thoroughly. At 112 pages, Zwischenbericht is a detailed account of what had been written about the Institute and lists most publications by its staff and students, from newspaper interviews to radio plays and novels dating back to the Institute’s founding in 1955. Zwischenbericht can be understood as the Institute’s effort to construct its own identity as an author through carefully selected texts in an attempt ‘to cut out from everything [the individual] could say and from all that he does say every day at any moment, the still trembling outline of his oeuvre’.

By doing so, the Institute was trying to establish its own history through selected publications and painting a heteronomous, politically orthodox picture of its own practices.

As Zwischenbericht did not contain any new literary texts, it could not generate new literary capital. Yet, the possibility to unite texts from various authors and different moments of the Institute’s history could generate either objectified symbolic cultural or

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43 Becher and Beyer, Zwischenbericht: Notate und Bibliographie zum Institut für Literatur "Johannes R. Becher", Leipzig. Further references to this publication are given after quotations in the text.
44 Max Walter Schulz and Kurt Kanzog to [?] Spaeth, Leipzig, 18 July 1979, BArch DR1/11511.
objectified political capital for the Institute depending on the nature of these texts. Publishing an anthology can therefore be understood as a symbolic position-taking by gathering texts, events and authors connected to the Institute and objectifying them in the form of a book. The author function becomes easily visible in this position-taking as the Institute makes a conscious effort to select from its literary output those texts it believes to be suitable for the highly representative status of a collection of works.

Although revealing of crucial information about the institution’s self-perception – one must only think of yearbooks, anniversary journal issues, websites, newsletters and brochures – scholars do not yet seem to have taken an interest in institutional anthologies.\(^{46}\) The current focus seems to lie primarily on anthologies of canonical literature, especially in regard to their suitability for educational contexts.\(^{47}\) In the case of Zwischenbericht, its meticulously gathered institutional history and reflections on the Institute’s practices written by its members of staff have informed research into the methodology and conception of the Institute’s teaching practices undertaken by Lehn et al.\(^{48}\) However, publications like Zwischenbericht can also be understood as strategic publications that an institution could use to its advantage. Jeffrey R. Di Leo, who researches anthologies from a pedagogical perspective, explains that ‘anthologies represent a repackaging of primary sources’.\(^{49}\) It is exactly this repackaging of already published texts that makes Zwischenbericht a fascinating case study. Both the selected texts and their authors are a testament to the variety of high-ranking political and literary actors that have been linked to the Institute.

\(^{46}\) Anthologies published to celebrate the anniversary of a journal have, on the other hand, generated more interest among scholars. See for example: Parker and Philpotts, *Sinn und Form: The Anatomy of a Literary Journal*, pp. 74, 76.


\(^{49}\) Ibid., p. 9.
The process of selecting and arranging these texts is where an anthology editor’s motivation becomes visible. In the case of the Institute, it reveals the institutional habitus Zwischenbericht was intended to portray. In this section we saw how the Institute tried to rewrite its own history in orthodox cultural-political rather than in literary terms with its first and only anthology. As such, Zwischenbericht acts almost as a counterweight to the controversial Vorbild-Leitbild discussion that preceded the anthology only by a matter of months.

Like the previous publications, Zwischenbericht can be investigated as a form of cultural capital in the objectified state that acts as a position-taking on the Institute’s part in its struggle in the East German literary field. As such, it has material as well as symbolic value. The publication’s materiality plays a central role. Encased in a dark beige dust jacket, the cover simply featured the publication’s title in right aligned plain black letters, and following in a second line in capitals Notate und Bibliographie zum Institut für Literatur “Johannes R. Becher”, Leipzig. The dust jacket is made of thick and soft paper, similar to that used for packaging goods. This gives the publication an industrial appearance and soft touch without giving it an unfinished feel. The actual cover of the publication is made of white carton that was left blank. Soft-bound and in octavo format, the bibliography does not take the format of a conventional hard-bound book. In fact, its appearance is somewhat reminiscent of a thick literary journal. For a bibliography, this seems like an informal, almost temporary choice. In terms of its materiality, Zwischenbericht seems intentionally understated to highlight the publication’s provisional nature. Instead of trying to create an image of itself as a finished, flawless product, the publication, and ultimately the Institute itself, presented itself as a work in progress.

The visual and textual design of the interior is very interesting. The first page of the bibliography carries the title of the publication in capitals. The title, which is left-justified, is
printed in black on the page’s upper third. The font is simple and at one centimetre not very big in size considering it is the only word on the page. The simple design of the first page makes the reader focus on the significance of choosing Zwischenbericht as the title for a publication that represented the literary output by and about the Institute. Zwischenbericht seems like an unusual title for an anthology. Most literary anthologies aim to be representative and authoritative selections of influential works that already are or could one day become canonical. Although some texts featured in the anthology, for instance Alfred Kurella’s ‘Von der Lehrbarkeit der literarischen Meisterschaft’, had become canonical works at least in the context of the Institute, it was not the primary intention to publish an authoritative representation of the Institute. A Zwischenbericht is, by definition, something that is not final, yet gives an account of what has happened so far with the implication that much more is yet to come. Produced internally with the aim to inform external readers, a Bericht is a formal source for transparency in the practices of businesses and institutions. In the case of the Institute, the Zwischenbericht can be interpreted as the Institute’s attempt to give an account of its practice and, through this, a justification for its existence and value to the public. This shows a sense of self-awareness the Institute had about not only its achievements but also things it wanted to achieve in the future. On a material and editorial level, Zwischenbericht accentuates the Institute’s flexibility and adaptability.

The second page of Zwischenbericht features a small black and white pencil drawing of the Institute’s building on Tauchnitzstraße in Leipzig. The drawing invokes a second form of objectified cultural capital, beyond the publication itself, in the form of the building that houses the Institute. The style of the drawing is minimalistic with slightly crooked lines that were most likely drawn free-hand. The focus only on prominent features of the building and the use of worm’s-eye view give the drawing clean, stylised appearance. The building is
at the same time inviting and intimidating, towering over the beholder who cannot see what is happening inside. The drawing is printed unaccompanied by any reference to its title or artist. Only a look at the publication information reveals that Barbara Cain was in charge of design and cover. She attended the Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst in Leipzig, an institution with whom the Becher Institute collaborated on occasion between 1973 and 1978. This is further evidence that the Institute’s primary intention was not to invoke embodied cultural capital by printing Cain’s drawing of the Institute. Instead, the physical representation of the Institute was a display of the objectified political capital accessible to the Institute. This is not only visible in the form of the drawing. If we consider the joint publication with the Gorky Institute, its title also invokes the objectified cultural capital that the location and housing of both institutions supplied: Tauchnitzstraße – Twerskoi Boulevard.

Putting a material existence to the Institute was clearly an important factor.

A look at the table of contents of the Institute’s anthology shows that Zwischenbericht can be divided into two parts. The first part consists of seven short pieces of writing, or Notate. The second half offers a quantitative overview of the Institute’s achievements in 25 years of existence in the form of a list of alumni and their publications, as well as key publications by and about the Institute. The texts of the first half are speeches, an open letter, seminar talks and a newspaper article. The first two speeches were given by Alexander Abusch (11-12) and Alfred Kurella (13-20) at the Institute’s opening ceremony. The following open letter was written by Max Walter Zimmering in 1964 (21-24). Zimmering’s letter is followed by a speech given by Max Walter Schulz on the Institute’s tenth anniversary (25-33). The last three texts are contributions by three lecturers who each represent one literary genre. First, Georg Maurer asks the question ‘Was vermag Lyrik?’

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Hans Pfeiffer’s contribution is taken from his opening lecture of a drama seminar (34-42) and the last piece is an article on discussing prose written by Joachim Nowotny (47-49). Before examining these texts in detail, I will take a closer look at the second, quantitative section of the publication.

The second half of *Zwischenbericht* is a bibliography dedicated to the Institute’s current and former lecturers, guest lecturers and alumni. It begins with an overview of the Institute’s history in the form of a list of selected events dating from 30 September 1955 to September 1979. Institute’s achievements and its involvement in the literary sphere of the GDR are foregrounded by mentioning, for example, its relocation to Karl-Tauchnitz-Straße in August 1957, the beginning of each new course and successful collaborations between the Institute and other institutions. Moments in which the field of power intervened, such as the Institute’s participation in the 11th Plenary, are absent. The history of the Institute is followed by a list of references to texts written about the Institute beginning with six of the Institute’s own publications and then tracing monographs, articles and essays dealing with the Institute over an impressive total of seven pages. Most of the publications were written by members of staff, most prominently Max Walter Schulz, Georg Maurer, Max Zimmering, and Trude Richter. However, students’ publications about the Institute are also listed, such as short stories and poems written by first-year students that were frequently published in the literary journal *Forum*.

Then the focus shifts to the Institute’s members of staff that are listed meticulously. The first list section is dedicated to the Institute’s lecturers. Prominent names include Max Walter Schulz, Marianne Schmidt, Joachim Nowotny and Hans Pfeiffer. The lecturers’ names are arranged according to seniority and whether they are current or former employees of the Institute. Each entry consists of two sections and follows the same
pattern: after the individual’s name, their academic titles are stated, followed by ‘Schriftsteller’, unless their publications were purely academic in nature. This is followed by the description of their position at the Institute, such as ‘Direktor’, ‘Oberassistent’ or ‘Lehrfach Ästhetik u. Kulturtheorie’. If the individual held an official position and was, for example a member of the AdK or secretary of the DSV, this is mentioned subsequently. The last line of the first section lists any official awards the individual had earned, such as a national prize, Verdienstorden or Kunstpreise such as the Johannes-R.-Becher-Medaille. Schulz’s entry, for example, looks like this:

Prof.; Schriftsteller.
Direktor; Lehrfach Prosa.
Vizepräsident des Schriftstellerverbandes der DDR; Mitglied der Akademie der Künste der DDR.
Nationalpreis;
Vaterländischer Verdienstorden;
Johannes-R.-Becher-Medaille;
Arthur-Becker-Medaillle;
Kunstpreis des FDGB;
Kunstpreis der Stadt Leipzig.

As such, the first section of the staff profiles, although usually no longer than six lines, was a display of the embodied and institutionalised national cultural as well as political capital the Institute had at its disposal through its employees. Whereas the seven texts from the anthology section may have left doubts about the Institute’s capabilities, the distinction of each lecturer left little to be desired. Through the academic achievements of its lecturers, the Institute effectively transferred their institutional capital onto itself and positions held in political institutions, such as Nowotny’s position as vice president of the DSV, accumulated and showcased the institutionalised political capital the Institute could secure through its employees.

The second section invokes the lecturers’ capital in a different state; it is dedicated to their publication histories and begins by stating their fields of expertise, such as ‘Lyrik,
Prosa, Dramatik’ for Peter Gosse or ‘Literaturgeschichte’ for the Institute’s lecturer of German literary history (1848 - present) Friedrich Albrecht. Then, preceded by the year of publication, the individual’s best-known titles are chronologically listed. In the case of Hans Pfeiffer, this list encompasses 47 titles. Others, such as Ursula Szepenik, who had replaced Bräunig in his function as assistant for the distance learning course, had not yet published any titles. The meticulousness of the publications lists may be due to the fact that Zwischenbericht was edited by librarian Ursula Beyer. However, each publication was an addition of objectified literary capital to the Institute. This shows that the approach taken to capital accumulation differed in both halves of the anthology. In the first half, the Institute tapped into the capital reserves of previously published pieces written by prominent individuals by publishing the pieces in full or abridged form. We will see that these publications were of a problematic nature and raised difficult issues. Nevertheless, the effort to generate cultural capital was essentially qualitative. The second half, however, clearly tried to impress the reader with quantity rather than quality.

This impression is strengthened further in the following sections. A brief list identifies former lecturers without going into much detail other than their subject and the period during which they worked at the Institute. The names would have been familiar to most readers, such as Werner Bräunig, Nikolai Janzen and Georg Maurer. The same type of list can be found for present and former visiting lecturers on the following page, although the names become less recognisable. The following 37 pages of alumni and their publications make up most of the second half. In alphabetical order, the students’ names are typeset in small capitals followed by the years they attended the Institute and a chronological list of their published works. The title of each publication is given followed by an abbreviation indicating its literary genre (narrative, poetry, children’s literature, play,
Lesser-known alumni with relatively few publications, such as Jürgen Köditz, Peter Löpelt or Christos Polichrinidis are listed next to Erich Köhler, Erich Loest and Helmut Preißler respectively and no distinction is made between nationally or internationally successful writers and alumni who followed a non-literary career after their studies at the Institute.

I will now return to the first half of the publication that features pieces by Becher, Abusch, Kurella, Zimmering, Schulz, Maurer, Pfeiffer and Nowotny. The organisation of texts and textual elements in Zwischenbericht follows a pattern. The principal texts are written by prominent political functionaries and the Institute’s directors, all of whom were well-known nationally. Representing one genre-specific schöpferisches Seminar each, the lecturers’ texts were also written from authoritative positions of the national literary field. This allows for a clear distinction between the qualitative output the Institute could point to and the quantitative dimension of the Institute’s practice illustrated by the lists in the second half. A feature that stands out in terms of editing is the lack of contextual information in the first half. The contributions stand next to each other without any attempt to offer transitions between the texts that vary greatly in content and date of first publication. The reader is left to fill the gaps and to determine the significance of each text in the context of the Institute.

The connection between the Institute and Abusch as well as Kurella invokes the political capital the Institute on which it was founded in 1955 and on which it could still draw. Following these political patrons with texts by Zimmering and Schulz, Kurella’s successors, presents the two directors as part of an orthodox political tradition. The choice of lecturers to represent the literary genres is also quite telling. Hans Pfeiffer and Joachim Nowotny were current lecturers of drama and prose respectively, when Zwischenbericht was published. Their contributions represent the thoughts and practice at the Institute in the
late 1970s, whereas Georg Maurer had retired from teaching poetry at the Institute in 1970 and had passed away in 1971. Until 1980, no permanent successor for Maurer’s post had been found. Still, instead of choosing a text by the Institute’s interim poetry lecturer, Helmut Richter, who could have represented the current approach to teaching poetry at the Institute, an essay by Maurer from 1968 was chosen. This is easily explained if one thinks again of the table of contents as ‘an exhibition of the symbolic capital available to the enterprise’.51 The symbolic literary capital that Maurer brought to the Institute, largely due to his autonomous approach to poetry as we have seen in the previous chapter, could apparently not be matched by any successor. This symbolic literary capital is crucial for Zwischenbericht: The choice of contributors draws on the individuals with the most political and literary capital available to the Institute in order to convert their cultural capital into objectified cultural capital for the Institute. By including the texts in Zwischenbericht and connecting their authors to the Institute via the public position-taking, the Institute attempted to transfer their capital to itself. Ultimately, this capital transfer was mainly successful due to the symbolic capital supplied by the authors. However, the type of capital brought to the publication by each contributor varies greatly. Alfred Kurella’s speech invoked heteronomous political capital, whereas Georg Maurer’s essay bestowed autonomous literary capital on the anthology.

A closer look at the texts in the first half will help us categorise the type of capital generated in the first half of Zwischenbericht. Although the texts are mostly in chronological order, there is no commentary to guide the reader.52 At the end of each text, the reader finds references to where the texts had previously been published, but the lack of further

52 The only contribution that does not follow the chronology is Joachim Nowotny’s text about the discussion of prose in seminars which was published in 1970. The previous text by Hans Pfeiffer was written in 1979.
contextual information makes it hard to grasp that the texts represent 25 years of developments and changes at the Institute and, indeed, in the literary and political fields of the GDR. A closer look at the individual pieces will show the dispositions and position-takings that defined the published face of the Institute as of 1980.

The very first text found when opening the publication is a short quote by Johannes R. Becher:

"Aber diejenigen sind im Irrtum, die meinen, Begabung bestehe nur aus Intuition. Begabung setzt sich aus vielerlei Elementen zusammen, und nicht zuletzt kommt sie auch dadurch zustande, daß ein begabter Mensch alles, was er zu seiner Begabung benötigt, heranholt, an sich zieht und sich aneignet." (5)

A reference to where Johannes R. Becher’s words were taken from is not given, but the choice of this passage as an opening statement indicates that a central issue concerning the Institute’s existence and practice in training writers had still not been fully resolved: the relationship between literary talent and literary training. Although Becher encouraged young people to expand their knowledge and skills instead of exclusively relying on their talent, it remains unsaid how exactly this should be done. Using this quote in *Zwischenbericht* makes a case for the value of the Institute as a place where young and talented writers could learn and acquire the skills necessary to complement their talent. However, Becher does not necessarily make a point for the institutionalisation of literary training. His words could also be interpreted as advising young writers to gain further knowledge independently through own research and self-study. The quote is followed by a short anonymous text, most likely written by the publication’s editors, outlining the Institute’s structure and aims, stressing that East German society and literature are inseparable and that by fostering literary talent, the Institute was also an integral part of society. Beginning the publication by justifying its own purpose and significance has quite the opposite effect. The following texts by Abusch and Kurella only increase the impression of anxiety and discomfort.
A shortened version of Alexander Abusch’s speech given on 30 September 1955 at the Institute’s opening is chosen as the first main text. The same speech had already been published in an unabridged version in the later of the Institute’s two yearbooks *Ruf in den Tag* in 1962. In his speech, Abusch addresses the question that was raised by Becher’s quote. Abusch reacts to the public’s ‘Frage nach Sinn und Zweck eines solchen Instituts’ by pointing out that students were chosen based on their existing literary talent. He stresses: ‘Zu dem Neuen, Großen in unserer werdenden sozialistischen Gesellschaft gehört auch unsere feste Überzeugung, daß vorhandene Talente viel mehr als bisher ausgebildet und dadurch zu vollendeteren künstlerischen Schöpfungen befähigt werden können’ (11-12).

The following speech by Alfred Kurella, titled ‘Von der Lehrbarkeit der literarischen Meisterschaft’, had already been published in the Institute’s first yearbook from 1960. In his speech, Kurella polemically addresses the wide-spread scepticism towards the Institute. He argues that talent cannot be taught, but that the means through which talented writers can express themselves can be improved upon through methodical development in an institutional setting.

The three texts, Becher’s quote and Abusch’s and Kurella’s speeches are important testaments to the Institute’s founding struggles and it seems hardly surprising that texts from three notable individuals were chosen to open the Institute’s anthology for the political capital they could lend to the publication. *Zwischenbericht* was able to secure capital by objectifying Becher’s embodied cultural capital as well as Kurella’s symbolic political capital. However, when looking beyond the contributors’ names, the content of their contributions becomes less of an obvious choice for an institutional anthology. The

Kurella’s speech is followed by an extract from a letter written by the Institute’s second director, Zimmering, titled ‘Eine Lanze für das Zeitgedicht. Aus einem Brief an junge Freunde der Lyrik’. The letter is taken from the SED’s daily newspaper Neues Deutschland, from the issue published on 11 April 1964. In his letter, Zimmering addresses the GDR’s young readership who had voiced their dissatisfaction with East German poets ‘die auf politische Ereignisse lauern, diese dann zum Vorwand nehmen, um ihre Verse zu zimmern’ (23). Zimmering would have preferred they make everyday matters the subject of their writing. Zimmering agrees with the demands of the young readers but explains that the poets are like an orchestra in need of tuning and conducting (22). Zimmering’s letter is followed by the third and, at the time, current director Max Walter Schulz’s contribution: a speech directly referencing Alfred Kurella’s opening speech in its title: ‘Nochmals über die Lehrbarkeit der literarischen Meisterschaft’. Schulz gave this speech on the Institute’s tenth anniversary in 1965. This speech was first published in Max Walter Schulz’s Stegreif und Sattel Anmerkungen zur Literatur und zum Tage in 1968. Schulz’s speech takes on a far more sombre tone than the others by opening with the realisation that the Institute’s ‘Probezeit’ was coming to an end:

Eines Tages verliert auch in der sozialistischen Gesellschaft der Gedanke, der richtig erkannt und praktisch umgesetzt wurde, die Unschuld der richtigen Erkenntnis und muß sich beweisen als effektive gesellschaftliche Produktivkraft, als sichtbarer Erfolg auf seinem gesellschaftlichen Gebiet. (25)
Schulz argues that the Institute’s aims have to change to remain relevant. Students would no longer need to make up for the education they missed during the Second World War. Instead they would need to be encouraged and guided in their attempts to acquire the foundations of Socialist Realism (30). Schulz’s arguments for the Institute’s change of objectives are plausible and the need for a change in institutional practice in the face of an ending ‘trial period’ in September 1965 foreshadowed the imminent crisis.

Zimmering as well as Schulz speak of generational issues in the sub-national literary field of the GDR. While Zimmering explained why the young generation was dissatisfied with contemporary East German poetry in general, Schulz’s piece is focused on the Institute. Here, generational change took the shape of new educational needs, but Zimmering believed that the Institute had also entered a new stage in its life and, with its tenth anniversary, had overcome adolescence. As we have seen in chapter four section three, the Institute was indeed nearing a defining moment in its existence in 1965. But instead of maturing, a young, demanding intake of students and the criticism of Bräunig’s Rummelplatz at 11th Plenary left the Institute in a state of turmoil. The first half of Zwischenbericht is an attempt to establish the texts by Becher, Abusch, Kurella, Zimmering and Schulz as seminal texts in the Institute’s history. However, it seems questionable how much relevance these texts really held in 1980. We have seen in chapter three that the cultural-political climate surrounding the Institute was very different to that of the late 1970s. Especially Abusch’s and Kurella’s texts touched on existential debates about the Institute’s value that may have created a sense of valid concerns among readers in 1980.

55 As already mentioned, this speech was given at the Institute’s tenth anniversary in 1965. Speaking of Socialist Realism in 1980, when Zwischenbericht was published, probably made this speech seem outdated to some readers.
After drawing on the political and literary capital of the Institute’s leadership through texts that convey a degree of uncertainty and anxiety, the final three articles in the first half of Zwischenbericht attempt to draw the reader’s attention to the excellence of literary tuition offered by the Institute. Georg Maurer’s contribution ‘Was vermag Lyrik?’ is taken from an introductory speech Maurer had given at the Institute’s tenth anniversary celebration. Maurer speaks of the difficulties young poets face and quotes extensively from Goethe, Mayakovsky and Marx. According to Maurer, young East German poets were often accused of putting too much emphasis on subjectivity and using unrefined language (41). Maurer, however, sides with the young generation of poets, arguing ‘wenn man meint, daß bei einer Verletzung von Tabus sich nur unerwünschte Wirkungen zeigen, so irrt man’ (42).

In his essay ‘Warnung und Ermunterung’, which was taken from an opening lecture for the creative drama seminar in 1979, Hans Pfeiffer speaks of the hardships playwrights face’ (43-46). His first observation is that the number of students attending the drama course was high despite drama still being the smallest literary genre. There seems to be a hint of envy when Pfeiffer observes: ‘Mit den Prosaleuten können wir zwar zahlenmäßig nicht konkurrieren, das liegt in der Sache, Prosa machen alle. [...] Stückeschreiben ist ein hartes Brot, man kann sich die Zähne daran ausbeißen’ (43). He warns his students not to think of one literary genre as better than the others and encourages them to think of a playwright as ‘Teil eines kollektiven Kunstunternehmens’ (44). His final point stands in contrast to Maurer’s praise of the subjectivity employed by the young generation of writers. Pfeiffer cautions his students against accepting the sovereignty of plays: ‘In dieser neuen zweiten Wirklichkeit der Bühne tritt der Dichter zurück, in die Kulisse, in die Versenkung,
auf den Schnürboden. [...] Die Subjektivität des Dramatikers schafft eine Welt und muß sich sofort aus ihr zurückziehen’ (44).

The last contribution, ‘Über Prosa reden’, was written by Joachim Nowotny and represented the creative prose seminar (47-49). It is the same, albeit shortened, text that had already been published in the June 1970 ndl issue which celebrated the Institute’s fifteenth anniversary and has already been examined in chapter five. Nowotny’s essay mirrors Maurer’s belief that language cannot always be perfect and refined. To return to a previous quote of Nowotny’s: ‘wir werden viel Worte für einfache Dinge benötigen, weil uns im Eifer des Gefechts nichts Besseres einfällt oder einfallen kann, weil wir gezwungen sind zu reden, wie wir nun einmal reden: Ungenau und drumherum’ (47). The different concepts of subjectivity Maurer, Pfeiffer and Nowotny use show how each lecturer was able to teach independently of others. Although it can be argued that Maurer speaks of a different kind of subjectivity than Pfeiffer, it seems that there was no institutional consensus about the role a writer’s personality and subjectivity should play in creative processes. It also seems questionable whether or not other lecturers supported Maurer’s and Nowotny’s statements that language did not always need to be refined in its form to aid the creative process.

It is striking to encounter evidence of the same uncertainty about the teaching practice that has significantly shaped the embodied cultural capital at the Institute’s disposal in a publication authored by the Institute and therefore in objectified form. Zwischenbericht shows that tensions still had not been resolved 25 years after the Institute’s founding. On the contrary, uncertainties and contradictions were given a more durable, material form and thus determined the Institute’s author function. Despite the selection of texts in the first half of the publication invoking sub-national political capital, Zwischenbericht did not generate any new symbolic literary capital for the Institute. The inclusion of Maurer’s text about
poetry is further evidence that embodied symbolic literary capital was not readily available after his leaving and objectifying this capital in the form of a publication was one option available to the Institute to retain some of Maurer’s reputation.
5.4 Conclusion: The Power of Objectified Cultural Capital

The Institute’s difficulty with defining and communicating its own identity permeates its publications. This becomes especially clear in *Tauchnitzstraße – Twerskoi Boulevard*. Next to the contributions from the lecturers of the Gorky Institute, the Becher Institute could not hide the fact that even its director and lecturers were still struggling to establish - maybe even define - the Institute and its common habitus. The contributions that held the potential to finally move on from the self-conscious debates about literary talent, political conviction and teaching practices showed the lecturers still contemplating these matters without any indication of overcoming the tensions.

With the publication of *Zwischenbericht* in 1980, the Institute chose to not cater to the interests of both cultural and political capital. Instead, we see an almost exclusive orientation towards heteronomous, nationally validated political capital in its quantitative approach to generating cultural capital. In this regard, the anthology is somewhat reminiscent of Franz Hammer’s exchange with Becher which we have seen in the first section of chapter three. The quantitative results Hammer interpreted as a sign of the success of the *Arbeitskreise Junger Autoren* were dismissed as insufficient by Becher, who preferred to judge the success of writer training by the quality of the resulting literary output. *Zwischenbericht* managed to secure more objectified heteronomous literary capital for the Institute than other publications such as the *Vorbild-Leitbild* discussion. However, we have also seen that *Zwischenbericht* was not a typical anthology. It stressed the provisional character of the Institute without making the claim of being a concise and definite publication on the achievements of the Institute. The June 1970 issue of *Neue Deutsche Literatur* had a better capacity to secure sub-national literary capital with the essays on Buchenwald written by final-year prose students showcasing the literary talent fostered at
the Institute. Without taking the literary texts into consideration, however, the contributions by senior members of staff fail to paint a clear picture of the Institute’s common habitus in the early 1970s as uncertainties about the Institute’s purpose and the instruction of writers re-emerge. As a whole, the publications authored by the Institute in the 1970s show that a clear distinction between autonomous and heteronomous practice cannot be made. Individual pieces within the same publication may invoke different forms of cultural capital and a clear distinction between assenting heteronomy and dissenting autonomy can therefore not easily be made in the context of this cultural institution.

As we have seen in this chapter, objectified cultural capital played an important role for both the Institute’s self-representation and self-perception. The four publications I have presented here show the familiar picture of an institution that was characterised by tensions and insecurities. The publication that was able to secure the largest amount of international literary capital, the *Vorbild-Leitbild* discussion among Nowotny and his students, was also the most severely punished position-taking we have seen in this chapter and is rather atypical of the Institute’s literary output during the 1970s. Interestingly, this article is the most widely referenced publication connected to the Institute after Werner Bräunig’s *Rummelplatz*. This shows how objectified autonomous literary capital retains its value much longer than objectified heteronomous literary capital. The misrecognition of symbolic cultural capital also explains why many of the Institute’s publications have so far been overlooked by scholars as cultural objects. In this context, Bourdieu’s framework allows importance to be placed on cultural artifacts with little to no symbolic capital. This renders orthodox works significant and allows for their wider implications to be recognised. In the case of the Institute, the closer examination of such publications has shown an amalgamation of literary experimentation, anxious self-awareness and a possibly self-
perceived need to justify the Institute’s existence that can easily be overlooked in the light of other more controversial publications. With the help of Bourdeiu’s framework, these seemingly contradicting characteristics can be explained without polarisation as position-takings that explore the Institute’s space of possibles without the necessity of political motivation.
CONCLUSION

Negotiating the Tensions between Literary Ambition and Political Constraints: The Institut für Literatur ‘Johannes R. Becher’

As I have demonstrated throughout this thesis, the sociological framework developed by Pierre Bourdieu can provide valuable insights into the practices of an East German cultural institution that exceed the binary distinction between political compliance and opposition to which many observers and scholars of the Institute have subscribed. I have questioned these assumptions through Bourdieu’s definition of autonomy and heteronomy and presented a more nuanced image of the Institute. My analysis of the Institute’s practice was able to take literary and social dimensions into consideration and show how autonomous sentiments can emerge from a heteronomous position without necessarily questioning the status quo of the ruling Party. At the same time, the irreconcilable contradictions between literary production and state socialism must not be underestimated. The study of institutionalised, embodied and objectified cultural capital in the context of the Institute has shown that the tensions between the heteronomous and autonomous poles of the East German literary field and its domination by the political field have affected the Institute not only at different points in time, but also in different ways.

The struggle for institutional cultural capital in the early and mid-1950s was not an isolated incident but rather a process symptomatic of a newly-emerging literary field in which heteronomous and autonomous values had not yet been clearly defined. The success in founding the Institute was ultimately due to the establishment of the political field as the field of power. Through the MfK’s organisational structure, low-ranking functionaries were able to rally support and accumulate the necessary political and economic capital where
individual writers and the DSV had failed. Walter Ulbricht was believed to have played a central role in the founding process. However, archival evidence does not support this claim and it seems that Ulbricht’s mentioning the Institute at the fourth Party Conference marked the moment some of his symbolic capital was transferred to the Institute. This moment in the history of the Institute has also shown how easily symbolic political capital attached itself to institutions in the ideologically charged literary field of the early 1950s. This begs the broader question of whether or not connections that have been made between prominent individuals and institutions truthfully reflect the degree of influence the former had on the common habitus of the latter. In the case of the Institute, the answer is a definitive no.

At the same time, embodied cultural capital brought to the Institute by individual lecturers played a crucial role in the shaping of the Institute’s common habitus. In turn, the Institute greatly affected the lecturers’ habitus. The nature of teaching at the Institute required its teaching staff to identify with a multiple habitus that encompassed creative, political and pedagogical dispositions. I have demonstrated that the inherent contradictions between these dispositions greatly affected teaching staff and their practice. Lecturers were accused of changing their behaviour to appease students, Werner Bräunig’s habitus as a writer was sanctioned by the Party, and although Georg Maurer was able to remain apolitical in his lectures, he felt it necessary to give in to ideological expectations in public situations. The Institute’s success as a literary institution depended on employing lecturers with symbolic literary capital in order to attract promising literary talents. However, it never developed a common habitus that empowered lecturers who wanted to pursue symbolic literary capital. Interestingly, the need for international recognition was acknowledged by the MfK’s Gerhard Dahne and shows that the field of power recognised the need for a
degree of autonomy within the cultural field. The timing of Dahne’s call for a more prestigious Institute in 1966 was oddly timed during one of the SED’s harshest crackdowns on cultural policy and hints at the possibility of a dissonant common habitus even within the MfK.

The demand for autonomy becomes very clear in the context of the creative seminars which have emerged throughout my analysis as spaces for autonomous discussions at the Institute. Clarke’s suggestion that the seminars functioned as a niche public sphere has been reinforced by my findings. The autonomy emanating from the seminars does not only stand out from the teaching practice. In the case of the Vorbild-Leitbild discussion, I have shown that the unorthodox sentiments expressed in a prose seminar led by Joachim Nowotny have been converted into objectified cultural capital when they were published in Weimarer Beiträge. The symbolic literary capital that was generated by this publication has shaped the way the Institute’s publications in general have been perceived by scholars. Most publications on the Institute refer to its more controversial literary output, which has led to more heteronomous publications being overlooked. My analysis of three predominantly heteronomous publications from the 1970s has shown a different side of the Institute’s habitus. Whereas the Vorbild-Leitbild debate had rebellious and reckless undertones, the ndl issue, Tauchnitzstraße – Twerskoi Boulevard, and Zwischenbericht revealed a self-conscious and conflicted institution that found it impossible to overcome tensions and contradictions that had been present since its founding. This shows that publications that have succeeded in generating symbolic literary capital should not receive preferential treatment over heteronomous ones when trying to establish an institution’s – or individual’s – published identity.
Most of all, the application of Bourdieu’s theoretical framework has contributed to a sociological interpretation of the Institute’s practice. The founding phase can be understood as an ideological trial of strength between heteronomous and autonomous agents who saw the creation of an East German literary institution as an act that could potentially solidify the status of heteronomous or autonomous values in the sub-national literary field. Therefore, the debate mirrored in the first proposals tells a tale of an emerging literary field in which individual agents were trying to establish a power relation. Whether literary or political values would prevail, was not apparent until the founding of the MfK in 1954 enabled the political field’s domination over the literary field. The role of a yet-to-be-founded literary academy in the GDR during the formalism campaign shows the importance held by such a cultural institution for the development of a young cultural field. The tension between autonomous and heteronomous literary values can also be traced among lecturers, as the case studies of Werner Bräunig and Georg Maurer showed. The role and function of the lecturer was a surprisingly controversial matter. The significance ofliterarily accomplished writers, such as Maurer, for the Institute and, indeed, the sub-national literary field was acknowledged by political functionaries. The role of assenting of dissenting sentiments was, in this case, subordinate to literary prestige and international recognition. However, this is not to say that the Institute did not react to external and internal pressure. While archival material has supported the at times difficult relationship between the institution and the MfK that plays a central role in the existing scholarship on the Institute, its published face of the 1970s shows the Institute in a self-conflicted and anxious light despite the political liberalisation during this decade. The existence of seemingly contradicting practices, often simultaneously driven by literary ambitions and socialist ideals in the broadest sense, shows that the Institute operated on more than just a
narrow political platform. Its identity as a cultural institution in the GDR, however fragile and self-conscious, transcended the binary division of assent and dissent. Understanding its position in the East German cultural sphere in Bourdieu’s terms allowed me to examine not only tensions between political ideology and literary revolt, but also friction between literary values, individual dispositions and institutional constraints.

I believe the application of Bourdieu’s theory of cultural production holds yet more potential for the analysis of institutional practice in East Germany. In the case of the Institute, its founding struggle, staffing choices, interactions and capital exchanges with individuals and institutions, as well as its own publishing activity have revealed aspects of institutional practice that have not yet been identified in the existing scholarship. As it is impossible to provide a more comprehensive study of the Institute within the limits of this thesis, there is still scope for further research. The DLL’s research into writing processes at the Institute overseen by Hans-Ulrich Treichel promises to generate these much-needed insights into the Institute’s practices through archival records. The MfK’s Section for Educational Establishments oversaw several other artistic institutions within higher education, such as music conservatories in Berlin, Dresden and Weimar, a drama academy in Leipzig, a college of fine arts in Berlin and a college for industrial design in Halle. These institutions have not yet been subject of substantial research, but would lend themselves to a contrastive analysis with the Becher Institute. A comparison between the institutions’ common habitus and the way in which tension and contradictions affected institutional practices would increase our understanding of the dynamics that shaped the relationship between the political and cultural fields in the GDR within the context of higher education. Especially a comparison of the founding phase of these institutions may reveal more about power structures within the MfK and shed light on whether the creation of other cultural
institutions was marked by similar capital exchanges and tensions to those which we have seen in the case of the Becher Institute.
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