BETWEEN PAST PERFECT AND FUTURE PERFECT

EAST GERMAN FEMINIST UTOPIAS IN SELF-PUBLISHED TEXTS

IN THE TIME OF THE GERMAN UNIFICATION

By
Swantje Höft

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Supervisor: Assistant Professor Hadley Z. Renkin

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Abstract

In this thesis, East German feminist publications are analyzed with respect to their imaginations of feminist utopias, which included visions of a socio-ecological transformation of the GDR into a radically democratic socialism, ideas about an intersectional reformulation of Marxist ideas (Behrend & Maleck-Lewy, 1991, p. 9), as well as the necessity to demasculinize of existing utopias. In the aftermath of the Fall of the Berlin Wall, the reform government opened the press, which led to an explosion of independent, self-published magazines (Tröger, 2021, p. 985). East German feminists used this opportunity and founded a realm of feminist magazines, and books, which will be analyzed in this thesis as in relation to their function as subaltern counterpublics (Fraser 1990). The East German woman's movement was one of the most important ones in the Soviet Bloc (Martens, 2001, p. 1), they participated in the GDR opposition, creating their own organizations, organized the first occupation of State Security headquarters, and had an important role in the so-called Round Tables of the GDR opposition. On the analytical level, I will operate with the concept of disidentification by the cultural theorist José Esteban Muñoz, as a process of identity formation that negotiates belonging through "working on and against" Western influences (1999, p. 11). I will show how these feminist utopias where a form of hope that functioned as critique of the post reunification neoliberal politics in united Germany, since East German feminists wanted to create alternative utopias for the future and safeguard this memory for upcoming generations. But their female utopias have been stored on the graveyard of lost futures after the demise of state socialism. This loss of futures created ambivalent emotions among East German feminists, which oscillated between feelings of hope and hopelessness, and a sort of 'East German feminist melancholia'. With this thesis, I aspire to contribute to the research on GDR feminisms and show that feminist ideas and knowledge are not Western by default, but Eastern and Western thought was mutually constitutive of one another, even during the Cold War.

Author's declaration

I, the undersigned, **Swantje Höft**, candidate for the MA degree in Gender Studies declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

Vienna, 14 of June 2022

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Signature

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1. Introduction

"People are influenced by what is thought and done around them. There is neither freedom of thought nor freedom of action. In the East you were agitated, in the West, you are manipulated - far more sophisticated. When we have socialism again, I'll apply to be an agitator."

(Interviewee in RL 1995, p. 212)

"Never is the utopia of humanity living together in freedom and equality more fleeting than in the moment of trial and error. Feminists live between all chairs"

Zaunreiterin (anon., 1993, p. 11).

About thirty years ago, feminists from the German Democratic Republic (hereafter GDR) considered that democratic socialism, a reformed and ecologically oriented version of state socialism, was the utopia for a feminist future. From where did these visions arise and how did they fade?

With my thesis, I aim to retrieve these feminist utopias and emancipatory visions of the future at the time of the German unification and pursue the reasons for their disappearance. I will draw on the utopian moments between the Fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989, and the German reunification of the GDR and the Federal Republic of Germany (hereafter FRG) on October 3, 1990. Numerous East German feminists had been part of vibrant protests for democratic socialism against the Socialist Unitary Party (SED) before the German reunification (Kahlau, 1990; Sänger, 2005a; Young, 1999). Indeed, it were East German feminists who first brought women's rights to the so-called Round Tables, i.e. the committees where the GDR opposition discussed their reform plans, and after the end of East German socialism, it was these feminists who fought in vain to preserve the women's rights and gender equality achievements of the GDR. Before 1989, the SED controlled newspapers and magazines through pre-publication censorship. After the Fall of the Berlin Wall, the newly-elected reform government passed a resolution to open the SED monopoly on the press (Tröger, 2021, p. 985). This led to a "press spring", an explosion of independent, self-published magazines by the GDR

opposition movement, including feminist activists (ibid.). By tracing the trajectory and thoughts of the GDR feminist movement in these publications, I will repudiate the prevailing image that sees feminists from the Soviet Bloc as mere recipients of Western theory, which neglects their role as producers of their own theoretical approaches (Blagojević Hughson, 2004).

After the Fall of the Berlin Wall, the different living conditions of women in the GDR raised also great curiosity in Western scholarship. Its focus on difference as in 'difference-from-the-West' (Navickaitė, 2016, p. 126), looked usually at the meta-level, trying to evaluate the effects of socialism on gender, and often reaching the conclusion that socialist states failed "to deliver on their emancipatory promises" (Kamenitsa, 1998, p. 4). Commenting on Western scholarship on GDR novels, the literary theorist Wolfgang Emmerich noted that these studies are more interested in the experiment of socialism than in the literature itself (Emmerich 1994a:193). The same tendency of an overlap between Cold War assumptions with the 'Western gaze' can be observed in many areas of Western scholarship on (post-)socialism (Navickaitė, 2016, p. 119). With my master thesis, I strive to contribute to provincializing the normative subject of feminism and the foundational liberal and colonial assumptions that underpin it (cf. Mahmood 2001), by showing that feminist scholarship does not travel unilaterally from West to East (Ahmed, 2017, p. 4). I will do this by showing how during the Cold War, feminist activists from both German states were exchanging ideas and inspired each other. I will do so by tracing the cyclical character of feminist ideas in the German setting by concentrating on the feminist appropriations of utopian futures within GDR feminisms and its textual manifestations, such as self-published magazines before and after 1989, as well as samizdats and books.

My thesis will challenge the persisting Cold War paradigms in the theory production of history and gender studies (de Haan, 2010). By exploring the under-researched field of East German feminists' self-published magazines, I aim to destabilize the 'Western gaze' by exposing the knowledge production of GDR feminisms, in doing so, my work seeks to undermine the

enduring assumption that feminist theory is Western by default (Bonfiglioli & Ghodsee, 2020; Mohanty, 1984, p. 333; Tlostanova et al., 2016, p. 213, 2019). On the analytical level, I will operate with key concepts taken from the cultural theorist José Esteban Muñoz, namely his reception of Ernst Bloch's concept of hope as a form of critique, and his concept of disidentification, which represents processes of identity formation that negotiate belonging through "working on and against" Western influences (Muñoz 1999: 11). My research shows that disidentification was a vehicle of survival for East German feminists in the face of their constant denigration within persisting Cold War power imbalances in German society. As research vocabulary, I will engage with the term "GDR feminism" to describe the East German women's movement, a term coined by Angelika Bammer (1990:187), using it in the plural. Contrary to previous research on GDR feminisms, I will not change the descriptive term when referring to before and after the Fall of the Berlin Wall. There are two reasons for this. First, there is no clear line of demarcation since "the turn" or "change" - *die Wende[1]* - was a process that lasted between one and two years. Second, despite the incisive political cut of 1989, East German feminists continued to explicitly formulate their positions. East-West approximations after 1989 arose rather gradually. In addition to the term "GDR feminisms", I will render to the adjectives "East German" and "West German" in capital letters to indicate inner German structural inequalities during and after state socialism as well as collective and subjective markers of identities.

Methodologically, this master thesis will be orientated towards hermeneutic, inductive, and theory-generating inquiry. I will reflect on the interpretative implications of the terms of analysis since social relations are also textually mediated and texts can be understood as social events (Fairclough, 2003a, p. 21). Furthermore, I will draw on Norman Fairclough's critical

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[1] The term 'the turn' is commonly used to describe the period of the reunification. Indeed, the German term Wende was coined already before the Fall of the Berlin Wall by the GDR politician Egon Krenz to refer to the domestic reforms of the GDR.

discourse-analytical reflections; more specifically, I will engage with his notion of agency since it permits, us to comprehend social agents not as completely free, but instead as partially determined by "causal powers" embedded in each situation (ibid:22). Fairclough insists that these conditionalities "still leave social agents with a great deal of freedom in texturing texts" (ibid). I should add that I appreciate this account of agency on a general level since all social agents face socio-institutional limitations of various kinds (K. Ghodsee, 2015, p. 249). Moreover Fairclough's remarks on 'women's agency' seem especially helpful to me when dealing with a dictatorial state apparatus such as that of the GDR, whose repression and censorship was pervasive nonetheless always porous (Penezic, 1995, p. 8). My research will offer glimpses of how women's dissidence took place inside and outside of the state structures of the GDR.

A central methodological challenge of my thesis is that in the social group which I analyze, i.e. East German feminists, the investigated and the investigators overlap on most occasions. This is so because many activists were academics who later wrote books and articles about East German activism, frequently interviewing their own peers. Due to such congruent nature of the content so produced, and the resulting difficulty of distinguishing the voices of the analyzed and the analyzers, I decided to cite both as categories of materials as sources. I believe that this is sensible given that both an analysis of the GDR's feminist movement and a text published by an East German feminist are always results of consciously made selections on part of their authors. For my analysis, this implies that findings will always consist of representations of East Germans, pre-selected by themselves in different roles, whether as authors, editors, or scholars. On the whole, the source material which I subsume under 'feminist self-publishing', consists of three genres: East German feminist samizdat, post-1989 journals, and books.

To obtain the sources for the empirical analysis of my thesis, I visited three German feminist and women's archives[2] that have collected GDR feminist literature in a digitalized and analog format. The thesis represents a thematic selection of the voices and subjectivities of GDR feminists. I cannot thoroughly address intersectional perspectives and diverse viewpoints here but only lay some of the groundwork for future study.

Continued research is relevant because the feminist tradition of the GDR is not well-known, even though the feminist movement of the GDR was one of the most important ones in the Soviet Bloc (Martens, 2001, p. 1). Hence, with this thesis, I aspire to contribute to the research on GDR feminisms and make a step towards a more nuanced understanding of what GDR feminisms was along the lines of scope and depth.

Before getting to the key findings, the German historical context needs to be disentangled in several ways, which will be the theme of the Chapters. I will begin with the question of the points of contact and the interdependence of feminist ideas and activism during the Cold War (chapter 2). Concretely, I will outline the sources of contention between East and West German feminists, juxtaposing their difference in attitudes and their discursive arenas. Although caution is advised not to reify the categories of East and West (cf. Cerwonka 2008), the conflicts between East and West German feminists are so integral to the topic of my analysis that it would be unwise to disregard them. And, perhaps even more relevant to the core interest of the analysis, these conflicts and tensions were repeatedly raised by East German feminists and cannot be overlooked in the research material. Ultimately, all other findings should be understood against the background of this conflictual relationship.

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[2] The archive I used were the state-funded Digital German Women's Archive (*Digitales Deutsches Frauenarchiv*, hereafter DDF), the FFBIZ (Women's Research, Education and Information Center) based in Berlin, and *MONALiesA*, a feminist library and archive from Leipzig that has an extensive archive of GDR feminism. Due to capacity restrictions during the Covid-19 pandemic, I could unfortunately not visit the *GrauZone* archive.

Having presented essential background information, chapter 3 will introduce two parts that are crucial for the following analysis, the source material, and how East German feminist practices of publishing can be understood as dissent or dissidence and intervene in the public sphere of pre and post-Wall Germany. I will present Nancy Fraser's term of a subaltern counter-public, which helps to understand the different forms of resistance of East German feminists, who simultaneously opposed and defied the GDR state apparatus, and still remained in many ways faithful to its socialist promises. This will be discussed in the background of the so-called 'literary feminism' of GDR women's writers, and their ambiguous relationship with the GDR state apparatus.

Following this, I will undertake the analysis of the core findings, which will be divided into the utopian aspirations of GDR feminists and their disappointments after the demise of East German socialism (Chapter 4). Chapter 5 complements the theoretical approaches by embedding them in an array of memories, impressions, lived experiences, and emotional sentiments by East German contemporary witnesses. Their accounts of everyday life in the GDR, the Fall of the Berlin Wall, and the economic restructuring of the 1990s are important sources for making sense of their theoretical thoughts. The loss of feminist futures during the swift change during the unification produced in some a sentiment of 'East German feminist melancholia'. Finally, I will ask the famous question of the GDR writer Christa Wolf: "What remains?"[3], and follow these remnants, as well as the work of remembrance and imagination of feminist futures (Chapter 6). Throughout this thesis, the rich feminist thought of East German feminists will participate in destabilizing hardened assumptions about (post-)socialist feminism, as well as in provincializing enduring East-West power imbalances, by inverting the dominant perspective of whose voice is placed in the center of the analysis.

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[3] See the title of the book with the same question *Was bleibt:Eine Erzählung* by Christa Wolf (1990).

2. Contact Zones and Contact Taboos

To comprehend the context of gender politics in the GDR, we need to also briefly outline the gender politics in the FRG. First, I will examine the differences in gender politics, and following this, I will illustrate how the meaning of feminism and women's activism varied significantly during the forty-year-long division of Germany during the Cold War (Mittman 2007:771). Ultimately, I will draw on the East-West encounters of feminist activists of the GDR and FRG and their conflicts and cooperations, which are crucial to understanding how GDR feminists employed their strategy of disidentification.

2.1. Gender Equality in FRG and GDR

In equality-oriented socialist rhetoric, women's struggle was seen to be an integral part of the class struggle, and a crucial marker of socialist utopia. In the GDR, gender equality was constitutionally anchored with special protection for mothers and children and the promotion of female work (Kranz, 2005). These policies were successful when the GDR was known for obtaining one of the highest female employment rates in the world.[4] A considerable contribution to the compatibility between paid work and motherhood was that the GDR had very well-developed public childcare infrastructures and after-school care programs (Einhorn 1993:132-3,262; Martens 2001:6). The GDR's promotion of a dual-earner model, that fostered the economic independence of women, had a positive impact on many parts of women's lives, from less economic dependence on intimate partners to a more satisfying sexual life (K. R. Ghodsee, 2018, p. 134ff; Herzog, 2010, p. 113). Table 1 shows the differences in women's equality in post-Wall East and West Germany until today:

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[4] See Lippmann, Georgieff, and Senik (2016), Mayer and Solga (2010), Rosenfeld, Trappe, and Gornick (2004), and Witte and Wagner (1995).

Table 1 Socio-economic situation of East and West German women.

The data on women's contribution to the household income and children born outside marriage was taken from Ferree (1995:13–14). It is important to notice that the variable 'contribution to the household income' is not comparable data since the different values of currencies, their purchasing power, and the calculation of salaries differed significantly between capitalism and state socialism. The rates of unpaid work compare women living with their partners and working part-time, a group that shows the highest differences are taken from the German Federal Statistical Office (Destatis, 2004, p. 96), as data for the Gender Pay Gap and female employment rate before 1989 (Destatis, 2015, p. 10) and the rates of childcare coverage (ibid. 57). The data from the Gender Pension Gap is taken from a recent DIW research (Hammerschmid & Rowold, 2019).
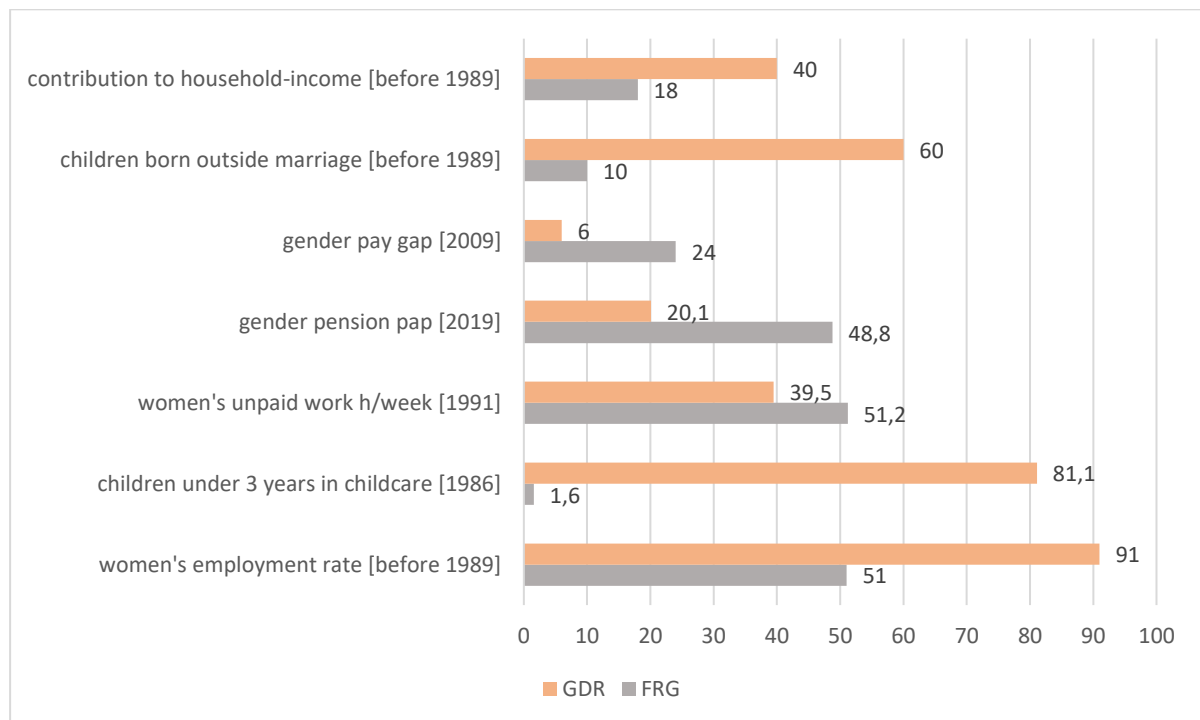
The Federal Republic of Germany was and still is a prototype of a family-centered welfare state. The male-breadwinner model was endorsed by tax and insurance policies that discouraged female-paid labor, favored economic dependence, and kept female biographies centered around unpaid 'family work' (Geisler & Kreyenfeld, 2005, p. 4). In the FRG, daycare was rare, which retained the habit that children returned early to their homes, which in turn hampered the combination of paid employment with motherhood (Herzog, 2010, p. 129).

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2.2.Short Trajectories of Feminist Activism in the FRG and GDR

Feminism is the product of the political culture in a country (Šiklová, 1993, p. 80), this includes ideological premises, gender arrangements, and other discursive arenas. An encyclopedia from the FRG described feminism in 1990 as "a stream of the women's movement that aims to liberate women from the societal discrimination and oppression through the change of social relations" (HS 1995:59).[5] In the FRG, the so-called New Women's Movement emerged out of the discontent that female activists had with the ongoing sexism and gender-blindness among male activists in the student protests of 1968 (Doormann, 1982, p. 238). The feminist activism in West Germany was always also directed toward the "blindness to the patriarchy of the left" (Jansen, 1991, p. 115). The New Women's Movement got divided into a debate between a more autonomist pole, that was critical of official state institutions and a more moderated pole that did not hesitate to receive funds from the state (Hampele-Ulrich, 1993, p. 184).

This West German understanding of feminism contrasts with the GDR's universal encyclopedia which described feminism in 1986 as a "manifold bourgeois stream of the contemporary women's movement in capitalist countries, […] it presents the emancipation of women mainly as a psychological and sexual problem, instead of a socioeconomic problem" (ibid.)[6] Before the Fall of the Berlin Wall, feminism and patriarchy were not common concepts in the GDR, since they were not part of the official socialist vocabulary (Bock, 2020b, p. 67). Jessica Bock found in her research on the women's movement in Leipzig, that many groups distanced themselves from the Western bourgeois concept of feminism (2020b, p.217). This rejection did not hinder them from redefining the concept of feminism for their own purposes, such as in the case of the names of working groups on 'feminist theology', 'feminism', or 'female culture' (Bock, 2020b, pp. 231, 252, 257). In 1989, just a few women's activists openly identified as feminists, but this

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[5] Helwerth and Schwarz (1995:59) cite the Mayers Großes Taschenlexikon (1990) Mannheim/Wien/Zürich, volume 7, page 26.
[6] BI Universallexikon (1986) Leipzig, volume 2, page 135.

changed completely during the subsequent months of the *Wende,* as the use of the word feminism in the magazine *Ypsilon* illustrates (Breitling 1990, p.31; HS 1995, p.62).

Womens' organizing in the GDR is divided by scholars into state feminist and nonstate or unofficial organizations (Bock, 2020b; Nagelschmidt, 2018; Wang, 2016). Important research has been done in the field of national and international socialist women's organizations (Armstrong, 2016; Bonfiglioli, 2014; Chase, 2015; de Haan, 2010; Donert, 2013; K. Ghodsee, 2019; Haan et al., 2012; McGregor, 2016). In the GDR, the state feminist association the called Democratic Women's League of Germany (DFD) had its origins in the antifascist resistance in the Second World War and turned into the women's mass organization of the GDR was known to be relatively loyal to the socialist party (Doormann, 1982, p. 237). While the DFD had 1.5 million members in 1987, the Free German Trade Union Federation even had 4.9 million female members (Sänger, 2005a, p. 58). Feminist organizations in the GDR explicitly called themselves 'independent' to distance themselves from the DFD (Hampele-Ulrich, 1993, p. 83). The existence of grass-roots gay and lesbian activist circles in the 1970s and 1980s[7] contradicts the widely held assumption that the state-ordered GDR's gender policy hindered the creation of a women's movement in the GDR (Hampele-Ulrich, 2000; Hornig & Steiner, 1992; Nave-Herz, 1994, p. 88). Despite being a country where three-quarters of the population were atheists, many forms of opposition were based on the Lutheran church, which offered relative freedom and shelter to homosexual groups from the State Security that attempted to infiltrate them (Martens 2001, p.11; Schenk 1993, p.161). Lesbian and gay groups were not permitted to exist outside the church until the late 1980s when they became a matter of public debate (Schenk 1993, p.161).

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7 See the research of Bühner (2015:117), Krautz (2009), Krug (2007), McLellan (2012) and Schenk (1993:160).

2.3. The Independents Women's Association (UFV)

The reform period started long before the Fall of the Berlin Wall. It began with a growing political crisis in the summer of 1989 due to public protests and mass escape via Hungary (Hampele-Ulrich 1993, p.180; HS 1995, p.167). The 'peaceful revolution' began on September 4, 1989, with a so-called Monday demonstration in Leipzig and extended across all major cities in the GDR in the following weeks. The protests culminated in the 40th anniversary of the GDR, on October 7, 1989, and the mass demonstration at the Berlin *Alexanderplatz* on November 4, 1989, where three groups of the GDR elite campaigned for democratic reform of the GDR: dissidents, reform-oriented party functionaries, and socialist intellectuals (Brie, 2000, p. 151).

These weeks in autumn were perceived by many participants as a unique, pleasurable exhilarating state, and seemingly unrepeatable (HS 1995, p.169). An interviewee recalls: "it was those three, four weeks when people simply had the courage - that was so infectious, that people encouraged each other!" (ibid.). The sensation that suddenly everything functioned according to different rules was sustained by extremely spontaneous actions of protest. One outstanding event was the occupation of local State Security (Stasi) headquarters by feminist activists early morning of December 4, 1989, in the city of Erfurt (Stötzer, 2018). The feminist takeover of the Stasi building was the first occupation of that kind (ibid.). Many Stasi occupations followed in the next months. An organizer remembers how rapidly the idea was accomplished:

> *"We talked in the evening, my friend and I, about the fact that after the events in Berlin it would be necessary to occupy the Stasi here. We talked about it again at breakfast [...] and then went and organized the Stasi occupation, which took place an hour later. That's something, you know, that I could never have thought of. That I dare to think that I intend to occupy the Stasi." (Interviewee of HS 1995, p.168)*

The feminist activists mobilized women's groups, a workers council, and a public prosecutor, and obtained access to the Stasi headquarters (HS 1995, p.169). The Stasi employees were so taken aback that they let it all happen (ibid.). GDR feminists did not just occupy the Stasi's

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buildings, they were also concerned with its dissolution, took part on all committees of the local Round Tables, organized rallies, participated in developing a new constitution, and were in the spotlight and sought-after interview partners (Hampele-Ulrich 1993, p.186; HS 1995, p.169–70). At the Round Tables, they won rooms and money for the feminist infrastructure they demanded, consisting of equal opportunity commissioners, women's centers, and women's shelters (Bock, 2019, p. 126). Ina Merkel, one of the initial spokespeople of the UFV, said with confidence: "Since we came into existence no political group or party in the GDR can avoid the women's question" (Hampele-Ulrich, 1993, p. 180).

The need to found a political organization intensified when women noted the absence of gender-specific needs and women's themes were not convincingly represented in the reform programs of the GDR opposition (Hampele-Ulrich, 1993, p. 182). The Independent Women's Organization (UFV) was founded at a meeting of about 1200 women from the entire republic at the People's Stage (*Volksbühne*) in East Berlin on December 3, 1989 (Hampele-Ulrich, 1993, p. 180). The spontaneous character of the UFV founding moment, which started as a women's party (*Frauenfest*), was also pointed out by the East German feminist activist Eva Schäfer:

> *"When [...] in response to a spontaneous call, 1,200 women from all regions of the GDR met [...], it was one of those moments when even the patriarchy that had survived real socialism seemed to be breaking down" (Schäfer, 2011, p. 7).*

The UFV founding event gathered representatives of over 60 grass-roots, and state-based women's groups and individual women, such as from non-governmental women's and lesbian groups, church networks, academics, and reformers from the SED in short: women from the most diverse circles joined from their hitherto hidden and separate circles to discuss the future of their country together for the first time (Schäfer, 2011, p. 7). The highlight of the event was the reading of the UFV manifesto entitled "You cannot make a state without women" by Walfriede Schmitt, in which the feminists proposed a radical transformation of the GDR (Dölling, 2011, p. 19; Hampele-Ulrich, 1993, pp. 180, 184). The manifesto demanded the

participation of women in political power "carried by the will to actively intervene in the current renewal processes" (Dölling, 2011, p. 19, 21). This was to be archived by seizing "the chance to claim and assert in a renewed socialism the diversity of our ways of life, our individual diversity, our needs" declared the UFV spokesperson, Ina Merkel (1990, p.31).

Regardless of the UFV's self-understanding as an umbrella organization, lesbians had an important role in setting up and working within the UFV. For instance, it is estimated that half the office work was done by lesbians (Hampele-Ulrich 1993, p.189; Schenk 1993, p.163). There is no internal contradiction in this since lesbian activism in the GDR did not necessarily take the form of separatism and indeed often stood up for the rights of all women (Mittman, 2007, p. 786).

The UFV had its heyday in the short period between the large demonstration of November 4, 1989, and the Fall of the Berlin Wall and its influence became increasingly limited after the elections of March 1990, resulting in the association's dissolution in 1998 (Dölling, 2011, p. 22; MONALiesA, 2021). From the very beginning, the UFV had the problem of finding a practical relationship between its two aims to be both a political organization and a network of autonomous women's initiatives. To bridge this difference was difficult because the UFV's two sides obeyed different logics and often followed divergent interests (Dölling, 2011, p. 23). The

UFV saw itself as a political mouthpiece for the interests of all women (Hampele-Ulrich 1993, p.186).

Figure 1 UFV's Election Poster "All women are Brave! Strong! Beautiful!".

Source: Print by Anke Feuchtenberger 1990, provided by the archive DDF, CC.

On 18 March 1990, the only free and democratic elections took place in the GDR. The UFV decided to run in these elections in a coalition with the newly founded Green Party (Hampele-Ulrich, 1993, p. 185). The coalition experienced a huge electoral defeat (ibid, p. 185,7). This setback was subsequently often interpreted as a loss of visibility and the start of the end of the UFV since these electoral results had a disappointing and sobering effect on GDR feminists (Bock, 2020b, p. 17; Dölling, 1991, p. 4; Hampele-Ulrich, 1993, p. 187; Miethe, 2000, p. 16). Nevertheless, after the signing of the unification treaty on October 3, 1990, the UFV once more formed a coalition with other grass-roots civil society movements (Alliance 90' Citizens for Citizens) and won seats in municipal and state parliaments (Hampele-Ulrich, 1993, p. 187). However, as the UFV activists felt "not taken seriously" in the male-dominated groups, they went on to form a separate political party in September 1991 which opened itself to West

German feminists (Hampele-Ulrich 1993, p.189, 191). This discontent towards both the male domination within the GDR opposition and the FRG is visible in a quote in the magazine *Ypsilon*: "Freedom instead of socialism? Whose freedom? Free socialism? We were promised freedom and they wanted freedom, but not ours" (Breitling, 1990, p. 30).

2.4. Post-1989 East and West German Feminist Encounters

2.4.1. Contact Zones between East and West

During the Cold War, both German states influenced each other more than commonly acknowledged. A mutually constitutive relationship existed also between East and West German feminists, long before the inner German border opened in 1989. Forms of contact were, for example, the clandestine trafficking, exchange, and discussion of Western books or reading tours and other visits abroad, as well as other forms of personal contact, such as by way of letters.[8] GDR feminists were influenced and inspired by classical feminist authors like Virginia Woolf, Simone de Beauvoir, and Kate Millet, which could be found in libraries of the Humboldt University in Berlin, where 'Second Sex' (1949) was already available in 1951 (Bock, 2020b, p. 67; Martens, 2001, p. 19; Weise, 2003, p. 238). West German feminists were also inspired by the socialist feminist's notion of paid work as liberation, as showcased by the GDR's gender policy (Martens, 2001, p. 19). Another idea that traveled from East to West Germany was the utopian visions of East German women's writers (Bammer, 1991, p. 63). Cross-border solidarity actions of East and West German feminists were practiced by supporting printing

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[8] See among others Bock (2020b:67-68); Bühner (2018); Hampele-Ulrich (2000:182); Helwerth and Schwarz (1995:71). For instance, Karin Dauenheimer, the founder of Working Group Homosexuality (*AK Homosexualität*) in Dresden maintained correspondence with people from the FRG, the US, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and Sweden (Bühner, 2018).

material for underground publishing, such as in the case of the samizdat publication *frau anders* (Karstädt & Zitzewitz, 1996, p. 191; Kenawi, 1995b, p. 192; Sänger, 2005a, p. 166).[9]

2.4.2. East-West Debates and Misunderstandings

Given the previously existing contacts and cooperation among East and West German feminists, the opening of the Berlin Wall has offered a real chance to build a joint feminist movement. Feminists started to organize congresses, conferences, and workshops together (Bock, 2020a), but these encounters were often marked by misunderstandings, disagreements, and other tensions. What happened?

The differences between East and West German feminists became visible when they prepared to organize a congress with the aim of jointly designing strategies to strengthen the position of women in the process of unification (Bock, 2020a). The East-West women's congress was hosted by activists from the GDR, and from the FRG, in April 1990 over two days on two sites, each one in East and West Berlin (Bock, 2020a; Weibblick, 1999, p. 36). The congress began with a protest against the alleged internationalist claim of the congress and the simultaneous absence of migrant, Afro-German, and Jewish women and their realities in the congress program (Bock, 2020a).[10]

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[9] Eva Sänger shows how the lesbian samizdat *frau anders*, founded by the church-based group *Homosexuelle Liebe. Evangelische Studentengemeinde* from Jena, received financial support from students in Tübingen and an ecumenical lesbian association the '*Maria und Martha Netzwerk*' (2005:165-6).
[10] Apart from Bock's archival findings, I did not find more information about this incident.

Figure 2 Poster of the East-West Women's Congress, 27-29 of April 1990.

Source: DDF, CC.

Controversies between East and West German feminists began when East German women brought men to the congress, to the chagrin of West German feminists, who supported women-only spaces. When an East German television cameraman was about to enter the venue, some West German feminists started blocking the door and punched him, stating that "it is a women's congress, men do not have access" (HS 1995, p.130; Landero 2018, min 01:06). This harsh reaction caused incomprehension among East German feminists (ibid, p.131), who were not used to men-free spaces and viewed women's emancipation as a common societal goal that could only be accomplished together with men (Bock 2020, p.66; see also Cerwonka 2008, p.813).

The recorded discussion between East and West German feminists revealed that constructive debate was not possible at the time. Consequently, the East-West Congress stands for the failure of post-Wall feminist solidarity as it ended in mutual reproaches (Bock, 2020a; Weibblick, 1999, p. 36). Jessica Bock, however, cautions that this interpretation falls short, since out of the working groups at the congress a joint position paper was formulated. This was the first joint paper of the East and West German women's movements that united indispensable demands

for a gender-just unification process (ibid.). Hannelore Scholz, on the other hand, remembers in her article 'East-West Barriers' in *Weibblick*:

> *"The initial curiosity, the openness to discussion, the readiness for solidarity and also for joint political activity has given way to a general irritation." (Scholz, 1993, p. 25)*

On other occasions, the diverging views about the participation of men escalated even more. An article in *Zaunreiterin* reports how East and West German feminists planned to gather for a Walpurgis Night in May 1990 to which only women were admitted (Jahnke, 1990, p. 17). This access restriction irritated the East German public, who had never experienced this setting before (ibid). Jahnke writes: "The numbers and the loudness of the autonomous man-haters from the FRG prevented them from getting along with each other. Soon screeching 'men out' came from one direction, and 'men in' from the other" (ibid.). The author how the situation "culminated in not even wanting to allow a male piano player inside" (Jahnke, 1990, p. 17). The statements of the article show how escalation took unbelievable dimensions. But the article also reveals that GDR feminists perceived the exclusion of men not just as resentment and a lack of solidarity, but also as acts of men-hating, an attitude shared in other Central-East European countries (Cerwonka, 2008, p. 813; Martens, 2001, p. 3; Šiklová, 1993). The texts show that the cultural clash was on both sides, West German feminists were not used to the participation of men and children in feminist gatherings (HS 1995, p.109; Weibblick 1999, p.36), and East Germans feminists, on the contrary, were astonished that no childcare was provided in West German feminist meetings (ibid.).

The East German journalist Gislinde Schwarz and the West German journalist Ulrike Helwerth were sent to report about the congress (HS 1995, p.10). Both were shocked by the hostile disputes during the congress (ibid.). They started a conversation about it before the entrance and ended up making a project about the different viewpoints expressed in feminist meetings in the 1990s, interviewing 30 feminists from the Eastern and Western parts of Germany. The result was a book (Figure 4), whose title could be translated as 'Of Mommies and Women

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Libbers' (1995). These interviews bear witness to the East-West hostilities at the time so that the book is still regarded as controversial (Bubeck & Schenk, 2020b, 2020a).

Helwerth and Schwarz interviews showed different mindsets toward utopias: many West German feminists saw utopias as illusions, and preferred to speak instead of emancipatory actions as small steps such as "principles of action", "decency" or "upright walk", while many East German feminists did not see the need to renounce utopias, since without utopia "the door is opened to cynicism" (interviewee in HS 1995, p.196). But the literary scholar Angelika Bammer found that this difference resulted in a fertile East-to-West transfer of ideas (1991, p.63):

> "Texts by GDR women writers, especially those in which a strong utopian dimension was articulated, were vital to the development of West German feminism not only because they gave voice to a utopianism that the latter lacked, but also because, in so doing, they pointed to issues that Western feminist utopian projections all too often ignored."

Another striking variation which, Helwerth and Schwarz found was the motives and goals of their feminist commitment (1995, p.82). One of their interviewed East German feminists regarded West German feminists' use of "the personal is political" to be depoliticizing because according to her individual emancipation overrides the collective emancipation of all women (ibid., p.82–84). According to Helwerth and Schwarz, these examples show that for East German feminists, women's emancipation was generally a collective endeavor (ibid., p.84-5). The US scholars Lorena Martens (2001, p.207) and Brigitte Young (1999, p.17) described US-American feminism in contrast to GDR feminisms as "interest group feminism", focusing mainly on social cleavages outside of class. In addition, Martens noted that the Western feminist 'sameness-difference debate' did not exist in the GDR, where "women had nothing to gain in presenting themselves as the same to men, and little to lose by presenting themselves as different" (Martens, 2001, p. 20).

An anonymous article in *Zaunreiterin* shows how this cultural clash was no less heated on the practical level. In 1993, an article named *'"Sisterhood is beautiful" or we sell each other'* criticized West German feminists' paternalism in the post-reunification project-based work of women's activists:

> *"Experience: it almost never works - too many privileges of individual women are at stake. 'Feminism' is the name of the associated cue ball that gets tossed back and forth as needed at the moment." (anon., 1993, p. 9)*

As the author goes on to lament "What almost always dies in the process is commonality ('sisterhood is beautiful'), or the enforcement of the originally envisaged goal" (ibid.). While the author's comment shows striking similarities with the current critique of the nonconstructive dynamics of neoliberal identity politics, the author goes beyond that. She denounces the exploitative consequences of unchallenged privileges, pointing at the discrepancy between manifested intentions and practices, explaining how new and innocent members are exploited and have "still much to learn" if they are still so motivated (ibid.). Exploiting their peers "in no way prevents them from dealing with 'feminist' content, scattering empty words, denouncing discrimination and oppression" (ibid.). While the anonymous author generally agrees with those feminist contents, she complains that "it makes me damn sad when the majority makes it easy on themselves - holding accountable and denouncing structures that largely run perfectly on from within themselves" (ibid.). The article has to be seen in the context of the post-Wall competition for state funds, aggravated by the initial inequalities in know-how (Bock, 2019, p. 126; HS, 1995, p. 31).

West German feminists saw themselves as more experienced in feminist questions given that the West German women's movement had existed for twenty years (HS 1995, p.31). Margarete Mitscherlich suggested that the GDR women's movements needed to "catch up" with the West (1991, p.104), and another West German interviewee suggested that East German feminists needed a "crash course" or "tutoring" in feminism (HS 1995, p.33). Yet another West German

feminist compared the attitudes of East German feminists to those from the "third world" in order to indicate their "backwardness" (Helwerth & Schwarz, 1995, p. 25). At one point in the congress, an East German woman yelled "Why do you talk about us when you don't even know us?" (Funk 1994, p.311). An interviewed East German activist remembered feeling like "an ape from the monkey house [at the zoo]" when she interacted with West Germans (Guenther, 2012, p. 162). An East German interviewee described these attitudes as acts of defensiveness from West German feminists: "They feel the attack on their achievements, but we only think differently because of different socialization" (HS 1995, p.32). Helwerth and Schwarz described the West German privileged position as the home-field advantage of knowing the rules (1995, p.24).

Funk notes that one of the major power imbalances was the inequality of discourse in which West German feminism was set as standard, and East German feminists' thoughts were perceived as deviation (ibid, p.319). This deficit perspective of gender-related activism in the GDR runs through the landscape of Western gender studies scholarship, arguing on the basis of scope, size, and influence (Bock, 2020b, p. 18; Miethe, 2006, p. 61,65). Some scholars even argued against the existence of a women's movement in the GDR, because they did not find any of its constituent features (Hampele-Ulrich, 2000; Hornig & Steiner, 1992; Nave-Herz, 1994, p. 88). A host of scholars have criticized the normative assumptions of these features to measure the impact of social movements, arguing that they are modeled on parliamentary democracies and fail to grasp how the particular circumstances of women's activism from the Eastern Bloc (Cerwonka, 2008, p. 810,812; Degen, 2000, p. 33; Einhorn & Sever, 2003; Miethe, 2006, p. 67; Šiklová, 1993). The East German scholar Ingrid Miethe makes the case that the goal of feminist activism in the GDR was not to seek public attention, but rather to stay imperceptible, in order to escape state repression while organizing in small and trust-based circles (Miethe, 2006, p. 66). Samirah Kenawi concludes that therefore the GDR women's

movement should not simply be evaluated on the lack of impact on the outside, since it changed a lot for the women involved in it (1995b:497).

Returning to the East-West congress, the East German activist Astrid Landero illustrates West German paternalism: the luminaries of the West German women's movement came to the East-West Congress giving a lot of good advice:

> *"And they wanted our best, of course, but so did the SED, we were pretty tired of that."*
> *(Landero, 2018, p. 02:19)*

Gislinde Schwarz, too, felt she was being exposed to a paternalism that resembled that of the SED: "I cannot take over prefabricated things again, trust blindly again" (1990a). Schwarz concludes that an East-West feminist movement "only works if we take each other seriously. Arguing with each other but not as teacher and student" (Schwarz, 1990a). In the light of these divergences, a book about the conversation between the writers Margarete Mitscherlich (FRG) and Brigitte Burmeister (GDR) was titled 'We have a contact taboo' (1991), which stands for the state of East-West relations at that time.

2.4.3. East-West Cooperations

In spite of the above, dissonances between East and West German feminists were by far not the only forms of contact. I will give a few examples of these cooperations, which, however, cannot in any way exhaust the multitude of them. I will give some short examples, which For instance, the West German feminist Frigga Haug was so enthusiastic about the East German feminist movement, that she made a little booklet out of letters from the UFV founding event (Merkel, 2011, p. 32). In the Ernst Bloch Conference on 'Democracy and Socialism', which was held in the West German city of Tübingen, East and West German feminists took part and discussed together the German unification „a close analysis and consideration of our mutual previous conditions are indispensable to work out future strategies and life utopias" (Jansen, 1991, p.

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111). Further East-West cooperations took place in the feminist magazines: In 1991, *Ypsilon* solemnly announced that "the editorial staff now includes seven East German and also two West German women" (1991, p. 3).

A shared interest was also the figure of the witch, as exemplified in the abovementioned joint organization of the Walpurgis Night. The Berlin-based collective of East and West German feminists, named their group after the figure of a witch in Slavic folklore: *Baba Jaga.*

Figure 3 Women's Strike Day, 8 March, 1994.

Source: Courtesy of the photographer Ulrike Baureithel ©

Another occasion of cooperation was a nationwide women's strike on International Women's Day, which was organized by East and West German feminists in 1994. The organizers joined forces to say "We've had enough!" to the manifold existing discriminations against women after the *Wende* (Balke Estremadoyro, 2019; Notz, 2018) The strike was coordinated by the newly founded strike committee of the UFV (Baureithel, 2018; Notz, 2018).

2.5. Summary

The chapter has highlighted a series of post-unification power imbalances and confrontations and shown how these left many East German women with the feeling that they were part of a second-class women's movement (Bock, 2019, p. 126; Kulke et al., 1992; Rohnstock, 1994). How were these controversies handled by East German feminists, and how did they deal with them?

In the post-reunification publications about the apparent disparities between East and West German women, various authors established the habit to call feminists from the FRG and GDR "separated sisters" (Hömberg, 1994), "foreign sisters" (HS 1995, p.20-37), "stepsisters" (Rohnstock, 1994) or "disagreeing sisters"(Bock, 2019), and "foreign sisters turned into brothers" in titles and subtitles (Brandes & Decker, 2019, p. 38). As suggestive as the use of the term "sisters" might be to describe the situation of post-Wall Eastern and Western feminist relations, it does tell us something about the perception of those relationships. This frequent use of the terminology "sisters" could illustrate, on the one hand, that there is a sense of belonging and commonality between East and West German women, but on the other hand, the type of adjectives used to grade the intensity of the qualifier could hint toward a sense of division, estrangement, and conflict. According to the grammatical relation of the two composed words, the noun "sisters" could stand for the foundation and the adjective, which is a gradient that qualifies the attributes of the noun and could stand for the East-West divide. While the noun could stand for the foundational relation between East and West German feminists, chosen adjectives are describing how their relationship is perceived by the authors. Interestingly, most of the books which employ the "sisters" metaphor[11] are written by East German women. It is clear that East German women have been disproportionately affected by these disputes, as well

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[11] An exception is the West German Ulrike Helwerth, the co-author of the book *Muttis und Emanzen* with Gislinde Schwarz (1995), Tanja Brandes grew up West Germany but her mother fled from the GDR (2019).

as by the persisting Cold War uneven power relations, East and West German feminists'
unequal access to resources and positions are therefore also more concerned with the
concomitant asymmetries (Bock, 2019, pp. 125–126).

3. Subaltern Counterpublics: GDR's Literary Feminism and Samizdats

In this chapter, I will contextualize East German 'feminist self-publishing' by introducing the
three overlying genres of the sources, subsumed under the term, and elucidate their
interconnection amongst themselves, with GDR literature in general, and East German women
writers in particular. I will begin by locating the political significance of East German 'feminist
self-publishing' as a subaltern counterpublic.

3.1. Subaltern Counterpublics between Dissent and Dissidence

Samizdat is the term for underground published texts in socialist states that circulated
clandestinely through the population and reached public attention (Komaromi, 2015, p. 13).
Komaromi analyzed samizdat literature from the USSR, using Nancy Fraser's
conceptualization of a subaltern counterpublic (2015, p.11). Fraser endorses that "members of
marginalized social groups, such as women, workers, peoples of color, and gays and lesbians",
have frequently taken advantage of alternative publics to "invent and circulate
counterdiscourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their
identities, interests, and needs" (1990, p.67). Fraser proposes to call this sphere "subaltern
counterpublics in order to signal that they are parallel discursive arenas" (ibid.). By assuming
multiple publics, which are more or less established and influential, and repeatedly complement
and compete with one another, Fraser elucidates how samizdats diversify public discourses
rather than ceding to them, summarizes Komaromi (2015, p.11). Samizdats' characteristics of

contestation and complementation directly relate to the scholarship on the GDR's samizdat culture which not only employs the term counterpublic (*Gegenöffentlichkeit*), but also substitute public (*Ersatzöffentlichkeit*) to capture their political role (Emmerich 1994; Sänger 2005). According to Fraser, subaltern counterpublics have two tasks in women's groups. "On the one hand, they function as spaces of withdrawal and regroupment; on the other hand, they also function as bases and training grounds for agitational activities directed toward wider publics. It is precisely in the dialectic between these two functions that their emancipatory potential resides" (Fraser, 1990, p. 68).

Other useful concepts to understand in which way GDR feminist self-publishing has been able to contest dominant discourses are dissent and dissidence as exemplified in Zsófia Lóránd's analysis. In her research on new feminism in Yugoslavia, Lóránd argues that the term dissidence does not fit the Yugoslav women's movement and its practices, and employs the term dissent instead (Lóránd, 2018, p. 9). According to Lóránd, Yugoslav feminists searched for critical positions, they created a microspace, where nonconformist ideas could be discussed, and where subversive ideas were disseminated (ibid.). But since they did not face pre-publishing censorship for their texts, and were not imprisoned for their writings, they consequently, did not need to resort to underground publishing as samizdat (Lóránd, 2018, pp. 9–10). Lóránd's distinction might also be helpful for understanding, and analytically differentiating, the different forms of dissent and dissidence in East German gender-related activism. Along the lines of Lóránd, I would like to distinguish between East German dissent and dissidence. Dissident describes the feminist self-publishing by various actors from activists to GDR writers, who sometimes enjoyed a certain degree of social benefits. On the other side, I would qualify more radical forms of East German feminist activism as dissidence, since they involve political agitation and impacting disruptions, such as the participation in protests and Round Tables of

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the GDR opposition, the organization of rallies, and the first Stasi occupation, but also underground activities such as the publication of samizdats.

In summary, East German feminist counterpublics took, depending on each situation, either the role of dissenting to dominant discourses, which can be also understood as subversively reframing dominant discourses according to their interests,[12] or a typical confrontative dissidence, either be it in underground movements or within political organizations.

Table 2 The Three Genres of Source Material

Genre	Content	Titles of the analyzed pieces
1) Samizdats before 1989	Attitudes, impressions, political discussions	frau anders
2) Feminist magazines after 1989	Meaning, political discussions	Weibblick, Zaunreiterin, FÜR DICH, Ypsilon
3) Post-1989 feminist publishings	Biographical testimonies, Utopian visions, dialogues, interviews, political discussions	Stiefschwestern, Muttis und Emanzen, In Zwischenzeiten, Entmännlichung der Utopie, Ohne Frauen ist kein Staat zu machen, Das Kollektiv bin ich

3.2. East German Samizdats

In the GDR, uncensored samizdat publications, also called grey literature or unofficial publications, served as a counter-public in which a myriad of political questions was addressed, that were suppressed in the official and censored public sphere.[13] In the period between 1985-1989 around 175 publications appeared and were multiplied with photocopies and circulated across the country (Knabe, 1999, p. 300; Sänger, 2005b, p. 160). GDR literature in general, and the pivotal influence of its women's writers, can be interpreted as an actor of change, that already shared the aspiration to improve the GDR, oriented towards reformed socialism (Brie,

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[12] In her theorization of the East German woman's movement Miethe (2006:66), builds on Rita Noonan's (1995) investigation of the Chilean women's movement during the Pinochet dictatorship, which found that a strategy was to mobilize the public discourse according to their interests, without being interpreted as an opposition.
[13] See the scholarship of Hubertus Knabe (1999:206–307), Ilko S. Kowalczuk (2002:49–99), Patrick von zur Mühlen (2000:121–33) and Eva Sänger (2005b:160). The situatedness of West Berlin in the middle of the GDR made also tamiszdat, texts smuggled and published in the FRG, very common in the GDR.

2000, p. 151). But the gaze of the GDR opposition, and the intelligentsia, was not oriented towards the west, but towards the east, toward the reforms within the USSR (Brie, 2000, p. 151). Given the ideological premises of the cold war, socialism was seen as superior and therefore more susceptible to reform, because the power of capital made capitalism irreversible (Brie 2000, p.157). This inclination towards the USSR is illustrated by the naming of the GDR samizdat *GlasNot*, referencing the USSR's *glasnost* reform movement (Bock, 2020b, p. 302). The substituted word for *Nost*, the German word *die Not*, which translates as need or misery, probably stood for the political reforms the samizdat authors called for.[14]

Eva Sänger analyzed the lesbian samizdat *frau anders - Infoblatt für Lesben* (misses different - info sheet for lesbians) which was founded by the 'Homosexual Love. Protestant Student Community' from the city of Jena, and published starting from the beginning of the year 1989 until 1993 (Sänger, 2005b, p. 165). While the legal system of the GDR did not criminalize female homosexuality, contrary to male homosexuality which was criminalized in 1968 and enacted through §175, lesbianism was nevertheless publicly ostracized and remained therefore hidden (Sänger, 2005b, p. 161). But legal equality for all homosexuals in most areas came only in July 1989 (ibid.).

Sänger found that in heteronormative GDR society, *frau anders* functioned as a forum in which collective feelings of a 'we' in distinction to gay groups were formed through mutual recognition and revaluation of their sexual orientation (Sänger 2005, p.165,169). Thus, the samizdat functioned as a place of self-understanding and exchange of experiences for lesbians (Sänger 2005, p.159). The magazine contributed to the networking and emergence of informal feminist groups, and as a platform for discussion, which encouraged the development of a collective self-understanding and life path (ibid.). It also opened up space for alternative action

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[14] The titles of other samizdat journals might confirm this hypothesis, such as attack/placard (*Anschlag*), damage (*Schaden*), upheavals (*Aufbrüche*), antipedagogy (*Antipädagogik*), and opening time (*Öffnungszeit*).

plans by enhancing relationships among women (ibid.). The samizdat *frau anders* promoted solidarity and shared approaches among women regardless of their sexual orientation (Sänger, 2005b, pp. 169–170). This position derived from the widespread interpretative pattern that lesbians were not seen to be foremost as defined by their homosexuality but as women in a patriarchal society (ibid, p.170).

The way in which the surveillance apparatus, the GDR's State Security (Stasi) constrained the conditionalities of dissidence, and even dissent, is illustrated by the number of infiltrated spies into the well-known samizdat subculture in Prenzlauer Berg in East Berlin. After the erosion of the Stasi in Spring 1990, it came to light that two important figures of the GDR's samizdat scene have been working as informers for the Stasi (Dahlke, 1997, p. 19; Emmerich, 1994a).

3.3. Feminist magazines after 1989

At the end of 1989, GDR-feminist activists made use of the new press freedom to publish without censorship and did not hesitate to create feminist print media inspired by the amateur and do-it-yourself published samizdats. With the demise of state control instances like the Stasi and the pre-publishing censorship, GDR feminists had entirely different possibilities to set up a counter-public that was no longer required to remain imperceptible and hide. East German feminists did not miss this opportunity, they protested loudly in front of governmental departments, used public spaces, like the *Volksbühne*, for their purpose, and circulated their ideas, thoughts, and agendas via the newly founded feminist zines. The published feminist magazines included *Weibblick* (1992-2000) from the UFV, *Zaunreiterin* (1989-1995) from Leipzig, *LILITH* (1994 -2001) from Halle, *Ypsilon* from Berlin, and *InFemme* (Mittman, 2007, p. 764; Röben, 2019; Schnalzger & Weidner, 2018). About these magazines, there is barely any research in the English language, except by Elisabeth Mittman (2007) and Martha Wörsching

(1994) on *FÜR DICH*. There is slightly more scholarship in the German language, such as Eva Kaufmann (1992, 1994), and publications by the DDF, universities, and other platforms, such as Vera Linß (1991), Bärbel Röben (2019), Uta Schlegel (2003), Barbara Schnalzger and Sabrina Weidner (2018), and Sabrina Zachanassian (2021), but this scholarship is far from being exhaustive. Amongst other things, there has been no research on the East German feminist utopias in these magazines.

The historian Jessica Bock outlines the beginning of the feminist magazine *Zaunreiterin* (1989-1995), the name can be translated as "fence rideress". The magazine was founded in the summer 1989, but had its first publication after the opening of the GDR press monopoly (Bock 2020, p.303–10), these overlapping conditions clarify why pre-1989 samizdats and post-1989 feminist magazines cannot be clearly separated from each other. The editors of *Zaunreiterin* explicitly intended to create a feminist autonomous counter-public:

> *"We are taking the initiative for a collective public sphere, which for us means nothing less than creating a female infrastructure because we no longer want to leave political responsibility to others." (Zaunreiterin editor interviewed in Bock 2020, p.305)*

The magazine *Zaunreiterin* had in common with the Berlin-based *Ypsilon* that their artistically elaborated design was meant to make art and journalism permeate one another (Kaufmann, 1994, p. 134). *Ypsilon's* "eye-catchingly beautiful" experimental drawings distinguished each issue from another (Kaufmann, 1994, p. 135). Some of the editors of *Ypsilon* were connected to the UFV, that is why when the magazine ceased to exist, they continued with the successor magazine *Weibblick* (1992-2000), which afterward became the official voice of the UFV (ibid, p.764). Both magazines shared the audience of educated, urban East German women, for which they were accused of being elitist by other feminist activists (ibid.). This accusation shows that besides the intention to create a classless society, other forms of resources, such as education, still created social cleavages in the GDR.
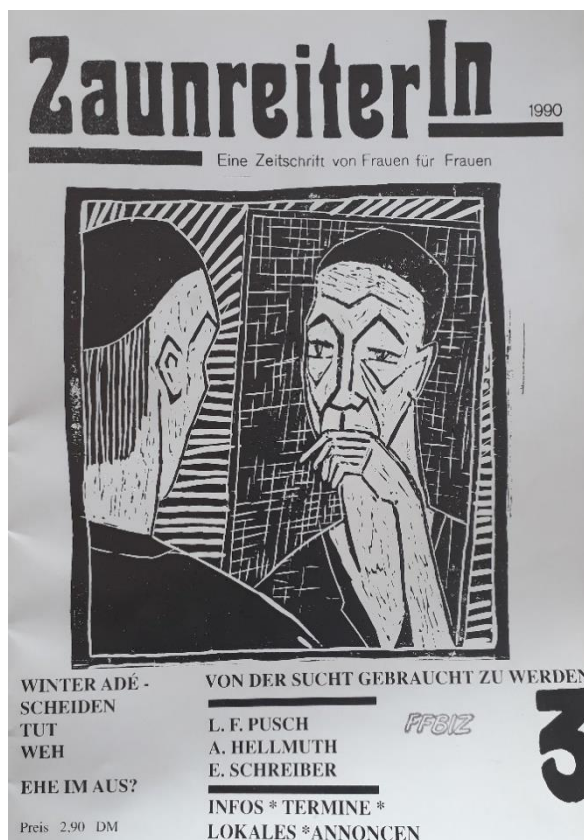
Figure 4 Zaunreiterin Cover 1990/3.
Source: FFBIZ.
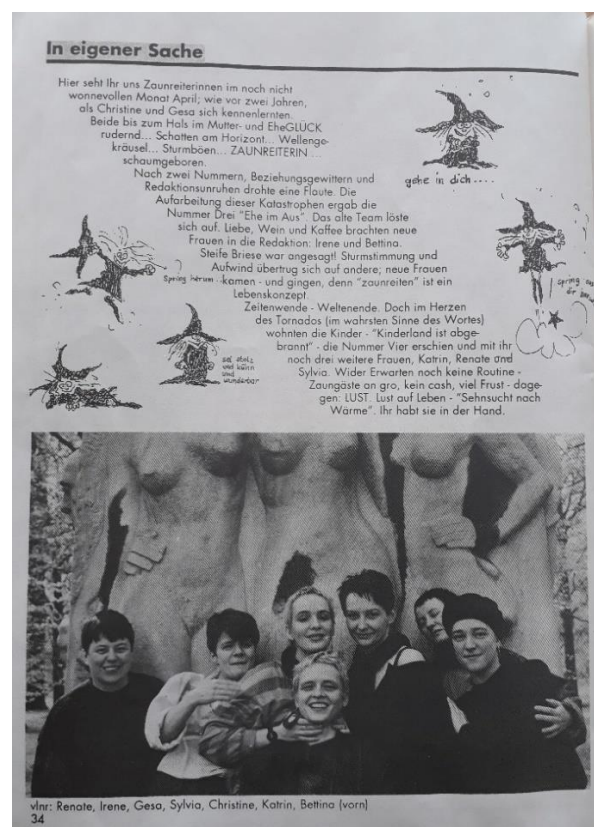
Figure 5 Zaunreiterin Editorial Team 1991/5, p. 34.
Source: FFBIZ.

The editors of the different feminist magazines clearly pursued the goal to be inclusive and represent multiple perspectives in the magazines, as their choice of topics from lesbianism, racism, migration and citizenship, able-bodiedness and disability, feminized labor, sexual orientation, motherhood, the role of men in feminist struggles, critical masculinity, to concerns of age shows.

Figure 6 Picture in Ypsilon 1991/6, p.23.

Source: MONALiesA.

I also analyzed the weekly women's magazine of the GDR, *FÜR DICH* which has undergone an extraordinary transformation. Being founded by the official woman's organization of the GDR in 1963, and with a circulation of one million copies per year, *FÜR DICH* was the most important voice of the GDR's women's press, and could significantly influence the public opinion in the GDR (Schröter, 2020; Stone, 1994, p. 158; Zachanassian, 2021). During the protests in the autumn of 1989, the magazine became the platform and mouthpiece of reformists, when a new editorial board was elected (Wörsching, 1994, p. 147). The transformation of FÜR DICH was an important gain for East German feminists since the pervasive dissemination of the magazine, brought their texts to a wider public. The magazine was shut down in June 1991, because it could not compete with better-financed West German women's magazines (ibid, p.139, 150).

3.4. About GDR Literature and Literary Feminism

Since the 1970s, East German women's literature was well known and praised in the GDR and FRG, and internationally (Emmerich, 1994a, p. 7; Nagelschmidt, 2018). Inside the GDR, East German women's literature was a precondition for the grass-roots beginnings of the feminist movement (2020b, p.60) and influenced also the three genres of samizdats, post-1989 zines, and self-published books. Several interviewed feminist activists underscored the deep impression the œuvre of GDR writers, such as Christa Wolf, Maxi Wander, Sarah Kirsch, and Irmtraud Morgner, had left on their feminist path (Bock, 2020b, p. 63; Klässner, 2011, p. 14; Martens, 2001, p. 3). The East German literary scholar Hannelore Scholz affirms that literary studies and reform goals have been indisputably linked in the GDR (1991, p.73). The West German political scientist Christiane Lemke coined the term 'literary feminism' to describe a "GDR specific form of feminism" (1991, p.250-1). Feminist novels provided a ground of comparison on which East German women could test out if they were really enjoying as much emancipation as the socialist doctrine advocated (Bock, 2020b, pp. 63–64). The scholar Romana Katrin Buchholz points to the conspicuously self-confident female characters within literary feminist novels (2015, p.179). Buchholz describes the collective function of literary feminism making the private both political and public, like in Maxi Wander's intimate testimonies (2015, p.161). Like GDR samizdat culture, literary feminism was giving silenced and taboo topics a voice in the public sphere, themes such as female sexuality, contraception, abortion, sexual violence, and rape (Bock, 2020b, pp. 64–65).

Figure 7 UFV election advertisement.
Source: DFD, CC.

A concrete example of the influence of literary feminism on GDR feminisms is the use of the "I". GDR's women's writers problematized frequently the use of personal pronouns, in particular the difficulty of women to say "I" (Dahlke, 1997, p. 130). Interestingly the UFV took this problem and made it one of their election slogans. The UFV advertising slogan was: "For women who have the courage to say I". Addressing taboo content through a substitute public, was not just a mission of women's writers and poets, many GDR authors could be interpreted to be part of a certain *littérature engagé* since they wholeheartedly subscribed to the mission of improving the GDR through critique, as the literary scholar Wolfgang Emmerich argues (1994d, p.179,184). Many of these authors had internalized the socialist mission (1994d, p.179). The literary scholar Wolfgang Emmerich himself shares a similar experience since he left the GDR at the age of 17 for reasons of political deviation, and yet for a long time, he continued to strive for a socialist utopia (Emmerich, 1994a, p. 10). In the following chapters, we will see how GDR feminists experienced similar sentiments of loss of a coherent social order, and the crumbling of the reputation of the institutional settings they were embedded in.

3.5. Summary

In this chapter, we have seen how East German feminist self-publishing can be understood as Nancy Fraser's subaltern counterpublic (1990). But, we have also seen how the room for maneuver to counteract has very different limitations during and after the collapse of state

socialism. Before 1989, East German feminist publishing had to deal with pre-publication censorship, and the danger to be infiltrated by the Stasi, which lead to clandestine the samizdat publishing and imperceptible forms of gathering. The example of the samizdat *frau anders* practiced these two functions of subaltern counterpublics (Fraser, 1990, p. 68). After the Fall of the Berlin Wall, the situation changed for East German feminists, as the evolution of magazines *Zaunreiterin* and *FÜR DICH* descriptively depicts. In sum, East German feminist self-publishing has been oscillating between dissent and dissidence, depending on the context, but traces of the Fraserian functions of a subaltern public-sphere, namely building social alliances and training agitation, can be found in several textual and activist practices.

In the last part, we have seen how literary feminism shaped the cognitive foundations of GDR feminisms, and also paved the way by opening the imaginary space of different worlds to foster critical self-reflection and dreams of what could be possible. Ute Wölfl coined the term "speech worlds" to convey the imaginary worlds that Irmtraud Morgner created in her prose (2007). Jessica Bock called these feminist imaginaries that East German literary feminism has built 'emancipatory utopias' (2020, p.66).

4. Traces of Hope

4.1. Desired Futures: Approaches to Feminist Utopias

"Without utopia, women become stupid and ugly." (HS 1995, p.19)

This feminist adaptation of the Hungarian dissident and novelist György Konrád's quote "Man becomes stupid and ugly when he has no utopias" (1985) illustrates the UFV's eagerness for recycling male slogans and redefining their statements. A practice that was directly influenced by GDR's women writers. For instance, Irmtraud Morgner makes in her novel Amanda (1995) a "humorous inversion of II. Thesis of Feuerbach of Marx 'Philosophers have hitherto

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interpreted the world masculinely; we must interpret it femininely in order to be able to change it humanly' (cited in Scholz 1991, p.79). In Chapter 6, we will see how this way of recycling encoded meaning is one of the manifold creative practices of disidentification (Muñoz, 1999, p. 31).

The interviewees in Katrin Rohnstock's and Astrid Landero's book aimed to think on "a subject they have refused to talk about for so long: Reflecting about dreams" (1995, p.211). Continuing that "even if no one talks about it, we do have utopias, or as some prefer to say today, visions" (ibid.). The shift from the wording 'utopias' to 'visions' reveals already a move towards the adaptation to West German standards of the 'politics of small steps' (HS 1995, p.199–200) since the interviews were conducted between 1992-1994. The way the interviewee commented "as some prefer to say" sarcastically comments on this assimilation to West German wording and standards, and implicitly also criticizes the West German hegemony. One interviewee presents utopian visions of the future as a source of strength in times of uncertainty: "If we don't know who we will be, we don't know who we are. I need the visions to give me strength" (RL 1995, p.212). "It is impossible to live without utopias" claimed an interviewee (HS 1995, p.190). Another interviewee starts to reflect on human nature, stating how humans as social beings are utterly determined:

> *"People are influenced by what is thought and done around them. There is neither freedom of thought nor freedom of action. In the East you were agitated, in the West, you are manipulated - far more sophisticated. When we have socialism again, I'll apply to be an agitator." (RL 1995, p.212)*

The interviewee's radical position to aim to fight for socialism as an agitator is also echoed in another quote: "As Lenin said 'you have to force people to their happiness'" (RL 1995, p.218). The interviewees continue, to daydream is a way "to survive" (ibid.). Hereby, they bring up contemporary demands for a better future such as "a fulfilled vision of the future for me would be a general reduction in working hours" (ibid, p.219) or "everybody should have a minimal income, no matter if working or not" (ibid, p.220). Later we will see how the East German

economist Gerda Jasper inspects debates about 'the future of work', and encourages the self-development of women, and their temporal sovereignty (1991, p.19).
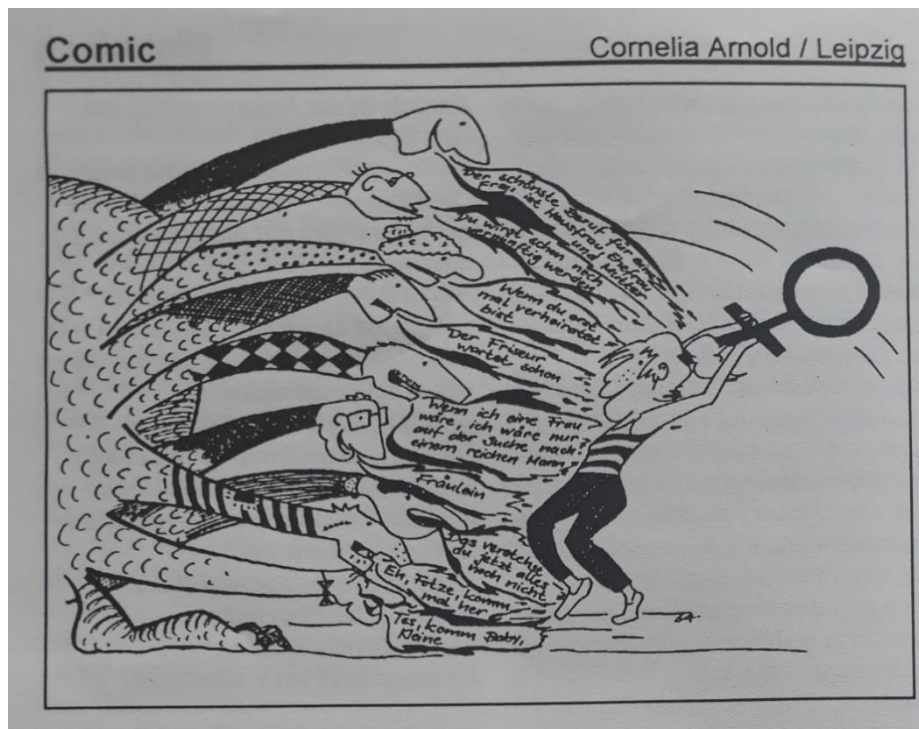
Figure 8 Carton on women's power in Zaunreiterin (1994, p.22).

Source: FFBIZ.

A feminist utopia was understood as full participation in politics and bearing half of the responsibility, it was more than changing some laws, it meant to make "social structures that are no longer male-centered, but rather people-centered" (Klässner, 2011, p. 14). Echoes of this humanist approach have appeared in earlier quotations. The UFV understood the change of gender relations as an immanent component and as a form of movement for a fundamental change in social structures (Dölling 2011, p.19). The UFV aimed to transform not just women's lives, but understood their agenda as transforming society as a whole: "A women's movement that, without an overall social concept, is oriented only toward the assertion of female partial interests will end up marginalizing itself" (Merkel, 2008, p. 882). The partial interests of women were made politically viable to make them disappear as partial interests in the long term (Dölling, 2011, p. 19). The reform goals of the UFV went beyond the renewal of political

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institutions and targeted the social order (Hampele-Ulrich, 1993, p. 184). They demanded a 50/50 quota in all positions (Merkel, 1990, p. 35), as well as a separation of powers by four, which exceeds the separation of powers in Western democracies by introducing the fourth power of a "democratic public" (ibid, p.36).[15] They demanded foundational democratic forms, and the anchoring of the diversity of opinion in the constitution (ibid, p.37). Other demands were (ibid.):

1. *Modern socialism, in a Germany that is part of the EU*
2. *ecological reorganization of the economy*
3. *democracy, self-administration, and a transparent public sphere*
4. *multicultural society*
5. *solidarity among all social groups*

The UFV's orientation toward a social, environmentalist democratic socialism has numerous precedents within the feminist thought of East German groups, such as Women for Change (Bock, 2020b, pp. 224–226), who cited the report 'Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women' (1985) from which they took the idea of gender quotas in political and cultural associations, published by the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF) (Bock 2020b, p.225-6). According to Jessica Bock, this citation can be seen as further evidence that the actors of the non-governmental GDR women's movement saw themselves as part of the international women's movement and used its ideas and demands for their own situation (Bock, 2020b, pp. 225–226).

In the previous chapter, we have seen how GDR's literary feminism provided essential food for thought, especially for those who were searching for utopias and did not want to be squeezed into the prefabricated patterns of socialist ideology (Nagelschmidt, 2018). However, Emmerich would disagree with Nagelschmidt's assessment since the very focus on the concept of utopia

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[15] The UFV ideas seem to differ from the Fourth Estate theory that advocates for an open press as fourth power since they regard the public sphere with a plurality of opinions in a broader context than press. Nevertheless, a deeper investigation is required for a thorough to answer this question.

has to be understood precisely in the context of the socialist project within the GDR's social imaginary. Literary reflections about utopias are based on this socialist utopian imaginary, such as in the poem of Günter Kunert 'On the way to utopia' illustrates (Emmerich, 1994a, p. 117), since the orientation toward utopian goals were embedded in daily practices and an unavoidable part of the everyday life in the GDR (Mühlberg, 2000, p. 19). According to the socialist orientation toward utopian imaginaries, it is perhaps not surprising that an interviewee was convinced that her "societal utopia is socialism" (HS 1995, p.195). The fact that the future would be socialist was an implicit consensus (Brie, 2000, p. 155), to such a degree that at the mass demonstration for a reform of the GDR, on November 4, 1989, no speaker demanded the opening of the Berlin Wall, nor German unification (Brie, 2000, p. 151). The abovementioned titles of the East German samizdat magazines have shown that the GDR's reformist intelligence was slanted towards the perestroika in Moscow since socialism seemed the only alternative, and thus the undisputed basis of a reform (Brie, 2000, p. 151; Yurchak, 2005). The argumentation of *FÜR DICH* was also in this line:

> *"Of course, travel alone does not constitute a new quality of socialism. Perestroika in the GDR must go further, embracing all areas." (1989, p.7)*

The quote shows, how the grading of socialism through quality symbolizes the consensual character of the socialist system as the right and only path. The editor of the samizdat *frau anders*, Bärbel Klässner, illustrates in her euphoric outcry the East German demand for a third way – not in the sense of Tony Blair and colleagues – but based on this consensus, democratic socialism that unites the best of both systems and ends the Cold War (O'Driscoll, 2011, p. 38).

> *"Everything, everything seemed changeable, a great unprecedented democratic transformation of a society that would leave behind capitalism and GDR socialism!" (Klässner, 2011, p. 15)*

Another quote reveals not just how feminist utopias are thought through a societal dimension, including tackling all forms of domination, but also how they contained a critique of the imbalance of individualist freedom and social responsibility:

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> *"feminism is the utopia of a society in which freedom and social responsibility are brought back into balance" (Interviewee in HS 1995, p.85).*

Other statements also adhere to the unbroken faith in a fundamentally different future:

> *"There will be another world that functions according to different laws than the present one. It will be a world that has overcome the teething troubles of socialism." (RL 1995, p.223).*

Interestingly, the demand for a women-oriented renewal of socialism came also from the women's mass organization of the GDR, the Democratic Women's League of Germany (DFD), which was known to be loyal to the Socialist Unitary Party: "The socialism in the GDR needs to be renewed and there is no renewal of socialism without women" (DFD, 1990, p. 56).[16] The GDR's political parties and civil society movements alike shared the consensus of a 'renewal of socialism' and the need for a feminist reform (Hampele-Ulrich, 1993, p. 184).

A recurring theme in the personal memories of the GDR is a school essay that had to be written on "one day in the year 2000" (Köhler 1995, p.6; RL 1995, p.212). This remembrance confronts them with the ruins of their former social reality, which are also the ruins of a shared consensus of a socialist utopia. These childhood memories mirror most painfully how the future they imagined in the past, has become itself part of the past. This childhood memory reflects the situation when the tomorrow of the past gets the yesterday of today. The past future that was once and is no longer, becomes almost unreal as referred to in the poem line that adopts fairy tale vocabulary: "in the land ONCEUPONATIME behind the seven mountains" (capitalization as in the original, Köhler 1995, p.5–6).

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[16] The DFD and independent feminist groups like the UFV and Lila Offensive did not have a close relationship, on the contrary, the DFD was frequently mocked for being the handmaiden of the socialist functionaries. For example, in a protest of the Lila Offensive in 1989 the DFD was caricatured as an acronym for being servile (*D-dienstbar*), obedient (*F-folgsam*) and dull (*D-dumpf*) (Hömberg, 1994, p. 41).

4.2. Demasculinization of Utopia

The Ernst Bloch Conference 'Democracy and Socialism' took place two years after the feminist protests (1989-1990), one year after the Reunification treaty, and the monetary union between the FRG and former GDR (1990). From a reformist perspective, this period was not a very optimistic one. The UFV was commissioned to create the new working group 'Demasculinization of Utopia' for this Conference (Behrend, 1992, p. 36). The two historians and co-founders of the UFV, Eva Maleck-Lewy, and Hanna Behrend set up this working group and published a conference book about it. The working group built on the shared idea that "utopia as a human concern must be de-masculated since patriarchal utopias always contained elements of exclusion" (Behrend, 1992, p. 37).

> *"The title of the working group was meant to express that utopia, in order to become a generally human concern, would have to be de-masculinized (or counter-gendered), since the utopias developed so far under humanistic approaches, which were nevertheless ultimately determined patriarchically, always contained elements of exclusion. (Behrend 1991, p.155)*

Behrend's and Maleck-Lewy's version of feminist, democratic socialism starts with a critique of the GDR: "the absence of capital interests had proved to be no guarantee of women's emancipation" (1991, p.6). The argumentation evolves, stating that even the elimination of private property is not enough, because the right to dispose of the means of production can also oppress the powerless if it is an absolute monopoly of violence like it was in the GDR (ibid.). This interpretation explained why the UFV saw the need for a separation of powers into four. "The struggle against class antagonism must be complemented by the contradictions of gender and race" (ibid.). According to Bloch, the Marxist utopia to abolish all relations of oppression makes Marxism irreplaceable (Behrend & Maleck-Lewy, 1991, p. 9). This is thought to be the common utopian project of Marxism and feminism (ibid.).

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"One of the decisive social-theoretical achievements of feminism over classical Marxism is the recognition that exploitation as a relation of subordination and power of groups of people over others is by no means located only in the social production of food, but 1.) also outside it in the sphere of the reproduction of life and, 2.) that the exploitation taking place in social reproduction is also based on gender relations. The unequal valuation of services in the two spheres of reproduction and the unequal distribution of burdens between the sexes is primarily the cause of women's disadvantage in all spheres of social life." (Behrend and Maleck-Lewy 1991, p.9).

In summary, the advantage of feminism over Marxism-Leninism is that not only production but also reproduction is included (ibid.). And the inequality of how work is evaluated and reimbursed, and the gendered share of work in total, re-produces gender inequalities (ibid.). Behrend and Maleck-Lewy advocated for an intersectional approach to a reformed Marxism, and work with the concepts of double and triple exploitation, to explain the necessity of an intersectional approach:

"Marxist statements about society and its future need to be 'gendered' and de-masculinized; their relation to the world needs to be examined, in which, in addition to the exploitative relations of white male workers by equally white male entrepreneurs, there is also the double exploitation of white women by entrepreneurs and workers, and the triple oppression of black women and women of color by white men and by black men." (Behrend & Maleck-Lewy, 1991, p. 11)

In what follows I will review the conference book, chapter by chapter since the inspiring ideas of Behrend and Maleck- Lewy will be expanded and challenged in multiple directions. The West German social scientist Gisela Notz interprets utopia to be a form of refusal of "male norms" and recognition (1991, p.56–57).

Figure 9 Book Cover Entmännlichung der Utopie (1991)

"Only women who refuse to serve men, and women who refuse to admire 'heroes' will endanger the male world order" (ibid., p.56). This echoes the declaration of Christa Wolf that "male norms" are obsolete, by simultaneously underscoring that the oppression of women can only be lifted if men also question their roles (Buchholz, 2015, p. 343).

The East German literary scholar, Brita Baume confirms that

"It is not the woman who is the deficient being that must first be 'filled up' according to patriarchal norms, but the deficiency lies in patriarchal (and all other structural) relationships of domination. In this respect, it is about a de-patriarchization of utopia as a redesign of social utopias from a feminist perspective" (Baume, 1991, p. 102).

Scholz expands on this thought connecting it to women's repeated feelings of unwellness in patriarchal societies: "It is precisely the discontent, its uneasiness, it is the longing for something else that points to a utopian accent" (Scholz, 1991, p. 79). In consequence, members of the UFV, like Walfriede Schmidt, wanted to establish women's power through the "female principle" (Weibblick, 1999, p. 39). The very titles of the post-1989 feminist magazines reinforce this perspective *Weibblick* translates literally as "the sight of the crone", the name of the magazine the *Ypsilon*, which probably stands for Y-chromosome, has the subtitle "magazine from a woman's point of view". This inversion of what according to patriarchal standards would

be perceived to be 'in deficit' (Baume, 1991, p. 102), echoes the criticism of patriarchal norms formulated in difference-feminism. and proposes that:

> *"We need a new way of thinking about the world. We have a knowledge that is no longer sufficient for us" (ibid.).*

In conclusion, utopias cannot be demasculated if domination and subjectivity are based on patriarchy whether capitalist or socialist (Scholz 1991., p.72). Consequently, "women have to make their own designs, this presupposes their becoming a subject so that the different demands and needs of women can be registered at all!" (ibid.).[17] Scholz reminds us that for the writer Christa Wolf women "became utopia bearers" exactly because they had no part in male culture (1991, p.77). For Wolf women's absence in male cultures, gives them a privileged position to be bearers of utopia (ibid.). Wolf's stance reminds the intersectional approach that "marginalized subjects have an epistemic advantage" (Nash, 2008, p. 3). Scholz connects Wolf's idea with the notion of refusal of Gisela Notz: "the utopian dimension lies in the woman's outburst and departure. In conquering a refusal attitude that resists the prevailing norms and constraints. In this sense, a potential of resistance develops that characterizes her becoming a subject" (Scholz, 1991, p. 81). Notz continues to reflect on utopias for real change: "For this, we need an idea of a better life-work-world, we need visions for the future and concrete utopias how this world should be shaped" (Notz 1991, p.57). She concludes that an imaginary, so-called feminist "speech worlds", or 'emancipatory utopias', but also material space is needed to further develop utopias: "For the development of these utopias and their implementation, we need spaces for play, thought and action in all areas of society" (ibid.). The utopias in the samizdat *frau anders* have evolved around Notz's idea of creating a mental and

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[17] Scholz follows the modernist assumption of a totally free emancipated subject and alleges that East German women have not been full subjects under socialism. For a critique on the normativity of the subject in feminist thought, see (Mahmood, 2001).

physical space: the samizdat set up self-organized leisure time activities, such as offering lesbian holidays called "lived utopia-women creative vacations" (Sänger, 2005b, pp. 168, 179).

Other authors in the congress book discussed the changing living conditions of single mothers in the aftermath of 1989 and revindicated new life models, such as expressed in the demand of the UFV for "transferring privileges linked to marriage to all forms of life" and "a special social security for single parents and single women and men" (Drauschke and Stolzenburg 1991, p.59, 61). The East German literary scholar Hannelore Scholz asks whether it is the time for the welcome or the farewell of Ernst Bloch's 'Principle of Hope' (1991, p.68)

The West German sociologist Mechthild Jansen adds that ideas about a different world, of Blochian concrete hope, are also required to be able to imagine utopias:

> *"Without the idea of something possible other than better, we cannot perceive the 'bad' of our reality. Without the ability to shape the future and to change social conditions, we cannot see ourselves as acting subjects" (Jansen, 1991, p. 103).*

Jansen continues to outline a social constructivist interpretation of social utopias: they "are not finished sketches but foundations for life possibilities that will always be renegotiated. Utopias are provisional points of orientation, stimulation for reflection" (1991, p.104). This understanding resembles Bloch's processual-concrete notion of utopias, which are "thus something very fruitful. By being critically aware of its world, it points to the possible other and motivates to act towards this other" (Maleck-Lewy, 1991, p. 118). Thus, Bloch's concept of concrete utopia expresses what is historically possible and socially necessary (ibid.). But Eva Maleck-Lewy has not only praise for Bloch reasoning, that he also failed to comprehend the historical significance and force of the women's movement and grouped it under the superficial analysis of 'bourgeoise group utopias' (1991, p.120).

Towards the end of the book, Eva Maleck-Lewy cited the women's rights activist Louise Otto-Peters, who in the democratic-bourgeoise revolution in 1848, founded a women's magazine, in order not to forget women in times of the turmoil:

> *"In the midst of the great upheavals in which we all find ourselves, women will find themselves forgotten if they forget to think of themselves!" (Louise Otto-Peters cited in Maleck-Lewy 1991, p.120).*

In Otto-Peters's sentence, the notion of the "I", the woman that thinks and acts on behalf of her personal needs, as we have seen before in the advertising of the UFV, encourages women to think for themselves and make their voices heard (see Figure 9, page 43). I would interpret this citation as an implicit message, that with the historical reference of the women's rights activist Otto-Peters, wants to encourage East German to make their voice heard in the time of the German unification.

4.3. Summary

In this chapter, we have seen how the feminist thought of literary feminism and the non-governmental feminist movement of the GDR to see a utopian potential in the "female gaze" and women's principles that make them, bearers of utopia (Christa Wolf cited in Scholz 1991, p.77). This chapter showed that the idea of a demasculinization of utopia was also shared outside of the working group. In this chapter, we have also seen the concrete utopian visions of the UFV to create democratic and social socialism, which was influenced by the feminist thought of other East German woman's groups and international women's organizations such as the WIDF.

In the second part of the chapter, we have seen the influence of Ernst Bloch's concept of concrete utopias and their processual character in the working group on demasculinizing utopias. This working group showed the insufficiencies of Marxism in fully grasping female

oppression and showed the necessity to tackle various axis of oppression through an intersectional approach. Their promotion of heterogeneous and inclusive utopias underlines the association of "male" elements with practices of exclusion (Behrend, 1991, p. 155, 1992, p. 37). Ultimately, the desire of the working group, not just to be heard, but also to be remembered, might be also what Behrend and Maleck-Lewy referred to in the introduction chapter, when they claimed that they would like to contribute to the 'memory work' (Behrend & Maleck-Lewy, 1991, p. 6).

5. Traces of Hopelessness

5.1. Life in the GDR

5.1.1. Reflecting Ideological Investment during German Socialism

"I loved this state very much" disclosed one interviewee (HS 1995, p.149). Another specified that the identification with the GDR was made of the collective '*we*', "we had a strong identification with everything that made up the GDR" (HS 1995, p.150–51). If the collective '*we*' was formative of belonging in state socialism, it was this subjective identification with the collective '*we*' that became both *raison d'être* and justification for the widespread collaboration with the, in parts, abusive state apparatus. An interviewee critically reflected the far-reaching complicity among former GDR citizens: "Everyone, whether they admit it today or not, was involved in the insane project of socialism. Many were possessed by the belief that they could change the world" (RL 1995, p.107). The ideology of state socialism, created, with its lineal and modernist orientation towards the future, the illusion of a better life that needed to be built continuously built in the present (Glaeser, 2011, p. xi).

In the previous chapters, we have seen how this vision of an ideal future functioned like a teleological organizing principle of the present, the future, and the past. It shaped the entire life

course of former GDR citizens. Fairclough illustrates how this directedness of ideologies with a pronounced promise of salvation, relies strongly on value-laden propositional assumptions, and assumptions about "how the future will be" (Fairclough, 2003b, p. 55). According to Glaeser, the very success of socialism was predicated on the promise of its superior guidance and insights into the social and economic conditions (2011:xi). The notion of superiority was grounded in the sense "to follow the right path": "We have all, I think, internalized the dictum that we live in the better country" (HS 1995:151). Emmerich showed how this notion of a better society was also well represented among members of the GDR opposition, the GDR intelligentsia whose yearning to be meaningfully involved and needed, was gratified by the collective task of building a socialist utopia (Emmerich, 1994b, p. 214). Wolfgang Emmerich exemplifies how GDR writers dealt with their feeling of redundancy and futility through the experiences of the protagonist characters in their novels, whose former activities and skills became irrelevant under the *Wende* (O'Driscoll, 2011, p. 52). Emmerich observes that GDR literature became a space for the imagination of 'better socialism', a beautiful yet mendacious fairy tale (Emmerich, 1994b, p. 217). We have seen before how GDR feminists also drew from this imaginary space. A line from the poem, "*Á la recherche de la Révolution perdue*" by the Barbara Köhler, critically reflects on the pleasure the author found as a child in ideological promises:

> "We believed in LA REVOLUTION as we believed in Santa Claus or the Easter Bunny in
> the childhood rituals we still insisted on when we knew better [...]" (Köhler 1995, p.6)

Köhler emotively narrates her memories of a GDR child who was convinced by the socialist utopia, creating - like its namesake, Marcel Proust's '*A la recherche du temps perdu*' - Köhler an interwoven composition of contemporary and past images, which brings individual memories and collective experiences together. Since in the GDR's society, personal biographies and society were deeply intertwined, propositional assumptions "about what is or can be or will be the case" should be held up by both (Becker & Merkel, 2000, p. 9; Fairclough, 2003a, p. 55).

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Apart from employment, the collective was one of the two central principles of everyday life in the GDR (Becker and Merkel 2000, p.10). Köhler defines the GDR's collectivity as "a 'we' that describes the defensiveness of the 'I'" (1995, p. 5), indicating that the collective 'we' was a way to escape individual accountability. The French sociologist Frédéric Lordon points out that promises are necessary to keep bodies temporally and energetically invested in the collective project, individuals are required to forget that their desire has been tailored, and by consent, made their own (Lordon, 2014, p. 51). In other words: "To produce consent is to produce in individuals a love for the situation in which they have been put" (2014, p.61).[18] Lordon's suggestion sheds a different light on GDR feminists' preference for socialism, his analysis disenchants the belief in the socialist utopia as the "right path".

Notwithstanding, East Germans feminists' radicalism and the abovementioned intersectional criticism of "patriarchal socialism" indicate that Lordon's insights cannot explain the entire complexity of GDR feminists' thought. The following paragraph of Köhler's poem drastically shifts the angle, from innocent childhood beliefs to a more radical stance. Köhler identifies openly with communist ideals and the West German Red Army Faction (RAF), whom she describes as the "last executers of impotence" (1995, p.6).

> *"I remember the year seventy-six, the death of Ulrike Meinhof, the expulsion of Rolf Biermann[19], the year seventy-seven, Mogadishu[20] and Stammheim[21]. The RAF was the last executor of our impotence." (Köhler 1995, p.6)*

The following part of the paragraph of Köhler's poem beautifully epitomizes the very human ambivalence of holding in to a vision of the future that "was already over"; understanding those who leave the GDR and still feeling betrayed and staying in the GDR:

> *"Then, when our friends left, one by one, they took our reasons for staying also with them. We understood them and felt betrayed. We got used to the fact that everything was just*

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[18] That the need for system sustaining promises is not specific to socialism, is self-evident. See for example Anna L. Tsing beautifully narrated passage on how the linear narrative of progress keeps people standing up from the bed every morning (2015:21).

[19] The writer Rolf Biermann was expatriated from the GDR in 1976, which caused protest among East German intellectuals.

[20] The RAF hijacked a plane in Mogadishu.

[21] The criminal trial against the RAF was hold in the prison complex of Stammheim.

coming to an end, but the end was not in sight. We stayed BECAUSE THERE WAS NO
SENSE, because we could not remember, because the future was already over - maybe these
were also the reasons for those who left." (Köhler 1995, p.6)

Köhler's simultaneous belief in socialism and the disillusionment over its real implementation

was relatively common among East German feminists. Among the interviewees of Helwerth

and Schwarz, the irrefutable belief in socialism experienced sooner or later, a break, depending

on each biographical circumstance (1995, p.153).

5.1.2. Care in the GDR

In this part, I will critically discuss the gender equality achievements of the GDR at the

background of the term welfare dictatorship, coined by the US-German historian Konrad H.

Jarausch. With this term, he aspired to grasp the GDR's central contradiction between

socialism's emancipatory rhetoric of 'care' and repressive control or 'coercion' within a single

analytical category (Jarausch, 1999, p. 60). While the duality between progressive claims and

the repressive realities is certainly not unique to state socialism, this duality is relevant in the

analysis, because the interviewees kept bringing up notions of repression and unconcern for the

well-protected life in the GDR (RL 1995, p.101). I will proceed with examples of the Janus-

faced character of care in the GDR, starting with an illustrative anecdote. After Bertolt Brecht's

theater piece *The Trial of Lucullus* was forbidden in the GDR, Brecht met the SED's general

secretary Walter Ulbricht to convince him to rethink the ban of his theater piece. Brecht failed.

After that encounter, Brecht ironically quipped "Where else in the world is there a government

that shows so much interest and care for its artists" (cited in Emmerich 1994b, p.179).

With respect to the GDR's gender policies, the majority of the population was satisfied with it,

after all (Guenther, 2012, p. 158; Thelen, 2005, p. 2). This confirms the thesis of Krassimira

Daskalova, which states that gender policies in state socialism were often "women-friendly"

(2007). More differentiated opinions were shared among East German feminists. On one side,

a common interpretation was that the GDR's intentions to archive gender equality were sincere, but the roots of patriarchy were too deeply inscribed in German culture that, it could not be wiped out in a time span of 40 years, as stated the new editor of *FÜR DICH* Frieda Jentzschmann (1990, p. 27). Other critics of the GDR described the state as a form of "patriarchal socialism" was built on the standards and living realities of men (Schwarz, 1990b, p. 10), and questioned the SED for being a party of 'old-white men', in other words, a "GDR-gerontocracy" (Schenk 1993, p.37). Here the most frequently voiced criticism was that the SED never appealed to men as fathers and caretakers of children, and solely targeted women for these tasks (Einhorn, 1992, p. 143; Ferree, 1993). It is clear that for GDR feminists a consistent gender equality politics should be built on the active participation of men for in domestic and care work (Martens 2001, p.15). Like East German feminists before, Jarausch interprets the political style of the SED as patriarchal paternalism, "which was concerned for the powerless populace with an "unique combination of social services, material security, and artistic cultivation" (1999, p. 60).

But we will see now how East German feminists' appreciation of protection involves two more levels. In line with the assertation that the reconstruction of the past is always shaped by concerns of the present (Misztal, 2003, p. 14), I argue that the former GDR citizens' longing for social protection says more about the present situation, the neoliberalism in united Germany, than about the past, the GDR. For example, an interviewee stated that she felt unprotected in the FRG (RL 1995, p.103–4). It was in face of the economic insecurities, like the fear of losing a job or the experience of unemployment which was new for many GDR citizens (Watson, 2001, p. 46) that the economic security of the socialist world regained attention and attraction. In the aftermath of the German reunification, the disadvantaged part of the East German

population, such as contract workers,[22] single parents, women, and the elderly, were particularly exposed to unknown levels of poverty.

But there is another aspect of the GDR, which makes former GDR citizens complain about the FRG. It is the emotional component of the economic 'reassurance', as Barbara Köhler has put it, which the GDR provided (1995, p.5). As mentioned above, 'following the right path', offered a certain comfort to the GDR population. But there was more than that: the socio-ideological cohesion of the GDR became a nostalgic sentiment for "human warmth" (Sharp, 1994, p. 182) in contrast to the de-solidarization and animosity in the West German society (Interviewee in HS 1995, p.180). Various East German feminists underscored notions of the "warmth of everyday life" in the family, in collective surroundings (Sänger, 1992, p. 36), and a thorough "social fabric" (HS 1995, p.180) which produced a "fundamental feeling of solidarity" (Sänger, 1992, p. 36).

To summarize, the sensation to follow the right path had a self-soothing effect on GDR citizens, but the material security state socialism provided, was especially for vulnerable groups, like single mothers - around 18 percent of all mothers – an offer a very tangible form of salvation (Einhorn 1993, p.54; Martens 2001, p.7).

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[22] Similar to the workers' migration of the so-called *Gastarbeiter*innen* in the FRG, the GDR created numerous bilateral contracts with other socialist states to bring young men to get professional training and work in the GDR (Rabenschlag, 2016). The immigration of the predominantly male workers, which were called contract workers (*Vertragsarbeiter*innen*), was presented as help among socialist brother countries but consisted mostly of state-regulated labor exploitation (ibid.).

5.2. Traces of Helplessness: East German Feminist Melancholia

"Imagine it is socialism and no one goes away"

Christa Wolf cited in FÜR DICH (1989, p.7)

"And then a past came upon us. We had not expected that. And just when we thought that now the future would begin."

Barbara Köhler (1995:5)

The initial feelings of joy, euphoria, and optimism turned soon into feelings of bitterness, disillusion, the grief of lost hopes, and political disenchantment (Gallinat, 2016, p. 203; Guenther, 2012, p. 170). In the feminist texts, I analyzed, those "bittersweet memories" (Hodgin & Pearce, 2011, p. 2) are bound to the recurring division before and after the official reunification treaty in October 1990. This twofold way of relating to the German unification exposes the in-between position of the GDR feminists (see Table 3).

Table 3 Associational Ambivalences of the Wende

AUTHOR/MAGAZINE	YEAR/ ISSUE	RECURRING THEME	CONTEXT OF THE QUOTE
ZAUNREITERIN	1990/3	Women between the worlds	Comment by the editorial team
FÜR DICH	1990/9	Awakening, upheaval, break…?	Name of the issue
IRENE DÖLLING	1991	Hope and Helplessness	Title of the article
ZAUNREITERIN	1993/10	Dreams against reality	Name of the issue
HANNAH BEHREND	1999	*Hope and Despair*	Title of the article

Wolfgang Emmerich refers to the post-1989 feelings of the GDR opposition and intelligentsia as a *furor melancholicus* (1994b, p. 218) since there was "an anger for which they could not

find a target" (Guenther, 2012, p. 162). The melancholic expression of anger and impotent stubbornness is tied to a hazy sense of loss and meaninglessness (Emmerich 1994, p.176). Another interviewee describes "I feel a helpless numbness in these circumstances" (RL 1995, p.106). Katrin Rohnstock explains her emotions in *Ypsilon*:

> *"I sense a paralyzing depressiveness, a fear, a disorientation everywhere. I think because we've lost the goal that our grassroots movement originally had: a socialist non-patriarchal society." (Merkel & Rohnstock, 1990, p. 7)*

The different testimonies epitomize sensations of unprocessed grief, a sense of stagnation that could be interpreted as an 'East German feminist Melancholia'. We will build on the emotional state of melancholia, and its shared affective traits of ambivalence with disidentification in Chapter 6 (Muñoz, 1999, p. 51).

5.2.1. Capitalism and Other Discontents

Helwerth and Schwarz outlined how all the stories of their interviewees about their first encounter with West Germany consisted of a mixture of feelings, from fascination to disappointment, and anxieties (HS 1995, p.172-4). But concerning their personal situation, many interviewees, draw positive conclusions about the impact the *Wende* had on their lives, from fewer travel restrictions to travel to professional reorientation (HS 1995, p.182–83; RL 1995, p.96). This quote shows also a certain duality:

> *"The luck of die Wende: hope. the misfortune of die Wende: the conquerors civilize us. Economy and politics produce pressure to perform and succeed. The pressure to profile deforms, poisons; the sold laughter" (RL 1995, p.100).*

The phrase "sold laughter" is reminiscent of the title of the article *"Sisterhood is beautiful" or we sell each other* in the feminist magazine *Zaunreiterin* (anon., 1993). The GDR and its citizens were imagined to be sold[23], stolen, and contaminated by capitalism (Ypsilon, 1990, p.

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[23] Apart from being a subjective experience, this refers to the factual privatization of the GDR's state property the holding company *Treuhandanstalt* during the economic collapse of the GDR (Roesler, 1994, p. 505). The *Treuhand* coordinated and

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44). Statements related to West Germany frequently thematize the rejection of meritocratic principles, mass consumption, and the omnipresence of profit-driven values (Merkel, 1990, p. 31; Mittman, 2007, p. 779). Concludingly, GDR feminists "never wanted the FRG" and West German capitalism (HS 1995, p.15; Merkel 1990, p.31). An interviewee laments: "I wanted a different way. And the women in the women's movement all wanted that. Hence this loss of home also hurts" (HS 1995, p.186). Negative impressions of the life in the FRG culminate in a relentless condemnation of so-called "late capitalism", in the face of which, the socialist past shimmered all the brighter (RL 1995, p.137):

> *"Money rules life. [...] I am horrified by the force of this money economy. I should have known, I studied it. Capitalism is as our textbooks said - only worse." (Cited in RL 1995, p.105)*

Many East German feminists were preoccupied with the potential changes that the German reunification could entail for women's rights. Shortly before the final disintegration of socialism, the UFV spokesperson Ina Merkel alerts: "Do we want to reunite with the gentlemen in Bonn, to replace the dictatorship of the Politburo with the dictatorship of the Federal Chancellery?" (1990, p.30) In the UFV manifesto, Ina Merkel insists to be wary:

> *"Reunification would mean taking three steps back in the women's question - it would mean, to exaggerate: women back to the kitchen. It would mean fighting again for the right to work, fighting for a place in kindergarten, for school meals. It would mean giving up much of what has been painstakingly achieved, instead of raising it to a new qualitative level." (Merkel, 1990, pp. 130–131)*

An interviewee thinks of her hopes back in 1989 "They have all been shattered. And I have the feeling that history is now moving back twenty years, and in the big two hundred years." (HS 1995, p.196). The legal assimilation of the GDR into the FRG eradicated completely the orientation to reform socialism, which became the basis for nostalgic memories of the reform

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sold GDR holdings as fast as possible to private owners and restructured East German companies to make them profitable, and liquidized those that could not be made profitable at the cost of massive job losses (Kellermann, 2021, p. 2; Roesler, 1994, p. 505).

period (Hampele-Ulrich, 1993, p. 184). In *Zaunreiterin* Samirah Kenawi further elaborates on these sensations (1993, p.8):

> *"After a period of turmoil and involvement, I feel increasingly uprooted and homeless, a stranger in my own country. Sometimes it seems to me that the GDR never existed. Not because I can't remember, but because my present reality and the values that surround me have almost nothing to do with that other life. 'nothing is valid anymore.'"* (Kenawi 1993, p.8)

Kenawi reported how the drastic disappearance of her living reality, and the ruins of the state she lived in triggered feelings of losing the sense of reality. The symbolic erasure of traces of socialism was conducted so fast in the early 1990s, that the past began to feel unreal, even surreal. Samirah Kenawi utilized a metaphor of fragility to express her feelings: "my illusions of being able to change the glass house GDR were crushed" (Weibblick 1999, p.39). The sensations when the moral order and commonsense crumbles away have been depicted by Drauschke and Stolzenburg as "values and illusions are collapsing in us like houses of cards" (1991, p.59). The metaphor of the falling house of cards allows one to empathize with how severe the breakdown must have been for those involved. In essence, the melancholia of East German feminists is expressed as a collective mental state of being homeless and helpless, of being disoriented and surrounded by future-orientated hopes that lost their purpose. East German feminists' hopes lost their object and have been deposited in the cemetery of lost futures. But in face of the eradication of the socialist past, this graveyard of alternative futures has been erased by force. Köhler captures the situation sensitively: we were stuck in a traffic jam with "no detour, no way out" (Köhler, 1995, p. 5). The initial euphoria has already been replaced by 'anti-utopias': "They were Cassandra calls, and they articulated the failure of ideals" (Braun, 1991, p. 34).

But there have been also more optimistic ways to relate to the demise of socialism. The destructive force of the breakdown of the Soviet bloc instigated a sense of transience, which

also produced courage and a glance of hope. The interviewee gives a wonderful synopsis of the cheerfulness of the demise:

> *"This dying away [of the GDR] also had something comical. In the movie 'Zorba the Greek' there is a wonderful scene at the end: the cable car, built with the efforts of all the villagers and blessed by the church, collapses. Zorba hits his boss on the shoulder and shouts: 'Old man, have you ever seen a thing collapse so beautifully in your life?' And dances a wild sirtaki." (RL 1995, p.99, squared brackets by myself)*

Demolition as a form of unfounded cheerfulness is also celebrated on the cover of the book "In Between Times. Two Eastern women, politics, men and life in general."[24] published by East German feminist activists Katrin Rohnstock and Astrid Landero (1995). The book presents the dialogue between two women and friends that first met at the UFV founding event in 1989: Esther was a single mother and politician of the SED and Gesine was part of the GDR opposition.

Figure 10 Book Cover In Zwischenzeiten (RL 1995)
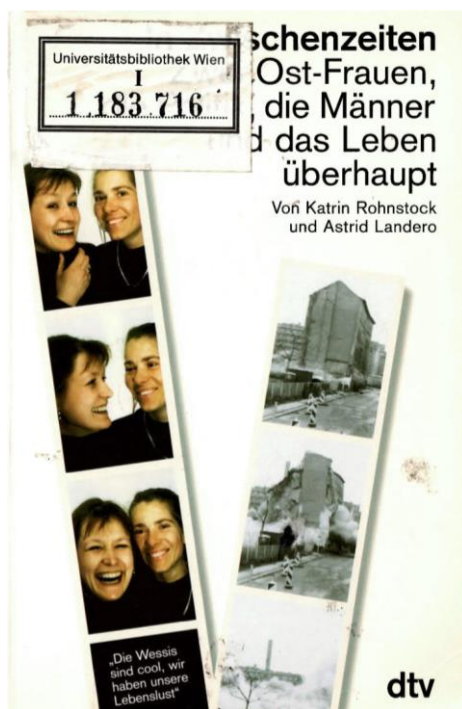
The book cover shows two photo strips. One in the background is in black and white and shows a GDR building being demolished. The other stripe is in color and shows the two friends laughing, it is made in the style of a photo booth. The quote at the bottom contains "The Wessis are cool, we have our lust for life." Köhler's interpretation of the failed and forgotten revolution of the GDR as a "carnival of joyful despair" captures very well how ambivalent sentiments, such as cheeriness, and helplessness, seem to accompany one another.

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[24] The original title in German is "*In Zwischenzeiten. Zwei Ost-Frauen, die Politik, die Männer und das Leben überhaupt.*"

5.3. Summary

In this chapter, we have seen how East German feminists reflected on their living experiences in the GDR, the *Wende*, and the adaptation to the new economic system. We could also sense how they negotiated their position towards the GDR state from a retrospective, and their former standpoints of loyalty and complicity with the system were evaluated in another manner. In this chapter, we saw that the counterdiscourse of the GDR opposition remained attached to its adversary (the socialist state), letting it dictate the questions and paths in which to think about change (Emmerich, 1994b, p. 215). Thus, the irrefutable adherence to faith in socialism became a template of directionality of thought. This was in particular the case of GDR feminists, for whom the insights about the GDR's gender equality achievements compared to the equality insufficiencies of FRG might have reinforced their ideological commitment to Marxism-Leninism. Emmerich notes "the fact that the Western system was not very attractive in many respects, and that it also allowed crimes on a large scale, made it easier for the hope-seeking intellectuals of the GDR to cling to their sham existence" (1994b, p.216). But we have also seen how Lordon's question of "tailored consent made one's own" is too simple to grasp the ambiguities of consent, dissent, and dissidence in GDR feminists thought and actions. Ultimately, the post-1989 discontents and disillusionments tell us much more about the present concerns than about the past.

6. What remains: Memory Work and Future Work

6.1. Archiving Lost Futures

> *"Our page-long conceptions of a new society of equal rights have become rustling paper and, after a year, treasure troves for female historians." (Behrend & Maleck-Lewy, 1991, p. 5)*

This quote refers to the proposals full of reform ideas from the UFV and other feminist actors, that have been left behind in the turmoil of the German reunification. While sifting through the documents, I kept coming across the question of memory, which Behrend and Maleck-Lewy raised. In the background of the graveyard of lost futures, they decided that they wanted to make a contribution to commemorate these feminist utopias and secure the pluralization of futures (1991, p.6). Feminist utopias can be thought of by Bloch as "wish landscapes", which are capable of extending "the territory of futurity" (cited in Muñoz 2009, p.5).

It was in the same atmosphere, Samriah Kenawi, a pioneer in East German women's archive collections, decided to found a feminist archive (Bock, 2019, p. 123). She started to collect documents in 1988 and founded the East German feminist archive *GrauZone* in Berlin (ibid.). Samirah Kenawi is a key figure in the East German women's movement. She participated in and founded feminist theological circles in Leipzig, as well as the UFV and Lila Offensive, and published the book 'Women's Groups in the GDR' (Kenawi, 1995b), which was one of the earliest and most broad research projects conducted about the emergence of the GDR's feminist movement. In 1993, Kenawi published a text in the feminist magazine *Zaunreiterin*, in which she launched an open call for the foundation of an archive (1993, p. 8). Any material on the GDR's feminist awakening could be forwarded to her (ibid.).

> *"The memories of it are not full of transfiguration and sentimentality for me. But I think we were on our own way to emancipation from the power of the (great) fathers. We seem to be cut off from that path, hurled away to another place at another time. I think we have to reorient ourselves - but how, without a point of reference? That's why I want to collect the documents of the GDR women's movement." (Kenawi, 1993, p. 8)*

Kenawi explains how the archive will be a place to process the events and work through the sense of lost futures. The practice of collecting material traces, and accumulating evidence from the past, which has become so far away that it feels almost surreal, might satisfy a reparative urge to digest. The scattering of unfulfilled hopes and uncompleted dreams left an open wound, which will be taken care of through the archive. Symbolically, at least some aspects of the past

remain controllable and provide a basis for an emotional repair. By storing material remnants as 'linking objects' in a feminist archive, may "help to continue to have contact with the past" (Volkan, 1999, p. 169). To conclude, the East German feminist archives have become a self-made, and emancipatory solution to digest the past, where memory politics of national remembrance in united Germany have failed. After 1990, further women's and lesbian archives and libraries were established in East Germany: *MONALiesA* in Leipzig, *Stadtarchiv* Dresden, *Lila Archiv* in Meinigen, Gender Library for Transdisciplinary Gender Studies at Humbolt University in Berlin (Bock, 2019, p. 122).

East German feminist activists continued to create small initiatives to remember their feminist activism at the time of the German reunification. I had the impression that these initiatives of remembrance were mostly directed at themselves, and their own sharing of experiences and commemoration, rather than a wider public. One side of remembrance was the subaltern counterpublic of the feminist magazines themselves. They regularly had special editions about the *Wende*, mostly around autumn, and poems like Barbara Köhler's "*Á la recherche de la Revolution perdue - an inner-German monologue*" were republished in *Ypsilon* or Gislinde Schwarz's "Farewell to the GDR" was republished in local East German magazines. In 1999, *Weibblick* dedicated an extensive special to the commemoration named "All Women Flew High - 10 Years of Women's *Wende*" (1999). In 2009, twenty years after 1989, the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation organized the conference "Women's Awakening '89. What we wanted - What we became" (Schäfer 2011, p.7). About 150 former protagonists from the founding event of the UFV participated, reflecting on the situation in retrospect. This conference also resulted in a conference book, in which the different speeches were printed. In this book, Irene Dölling stresses the importance of commemorating the women's rising since this "women's political experiment" (Schenk) "is often lost in the turbulences of the countless memorable events of the

Fall of the Wall and the so-called 'peaceful revolution'" despite their active participation (Dölling, 2011, p. 17).

6.1. Between Disidentification and Assimilation

The velocity of change and huge unemployment deepened the difficulties of adaptation for East German feminists. Bärbel Klässner recalls "we spent the next few years to find our way in the Federal Republic of Germany" (2011, p.15). East German feminists had to cope with the private reorganization, the fear for their jobs, the demands of the new bureaucracy, and social insecurity brought the women to the brink of exhaustion (Bock, 2019, p. 126, 2020b, p. 255). Schenk complains in the magazine *Weibblick*: "The problems of everyday subsistence (job, rent, daycare, school, etc) absorb a lot of energy and time" (1993, p.39), and Klässner seconds that "No time to develop something new, something of our own" (2011, p.15). Scholz follows suit: "Thus, a contradictory process of individualization has been set in motion, which is subjective responsibility for life's risks" (Scholz, 1993, p. 25). Jessica Bock observed that this time-intensive process of adaptation brought East German feminists to almost disappear from the public sphere (2019, p.126).

At the level of the East German feminist movement, the turning point in 1990, induced an institutionalization of the movement, often described as *Frauenprojektbewegung* - women's project movement' (Schimkat, 1998). East German feminists began to create associations to be able to apply for state funding on a project basis (Aleksander, 2005; Hornig & Steiner, 1992). In *Weibblick*, Schenk cautions about the side effects of this institutionalization: "The amount of work and time needed to secure the existence of the project can take on such proportions that the content work is reduced in an extreme way" (1993, p.39). The scholars Kenawi (1995a, p.110), Miethe (2000), and Schimkat (1998, p.51) agree that the process of institutionalization

and adaptation to the West German bureaucracy depoliticized the GDR's women's movement and led to its end. Jessica Bock does not share this observation in her dissertation on the feminist movement in Leipzig in the years 1980 and 2000 (2020, p.19).

<div align="center">***</div>

Allaine Cerwonka aptly views the articulation of difference as an imperfect solution to Western hegemony since the categories of so-called East and so-called West are inherently "slippery" categories (2008, 816,821, 824). Accordingly, another approach is needed to conceptually grasp how the East German identity was produced in their feminist publishing. Redi Koobak and other scholars have proposed the use of the term 'disidentification' for the post-socialist context as "a useful concept for understanding the way in which feminist artists from Eastern Europe work on and against Western influences in order to reconfigure Western hegemonic and normative timelines" (Koobak, 2019, p. 172; Muñoz, 1999; Tlostanova et al., 2016). In what follows, I will show that the term disidentification by the cultural theorist José Esteban Muñoz captures how East German feminists have been formulating their self-image and identity in the last chapters. Utilizing the previous textual examples, we have seen how East German feminists have recycled the quotations of well-known men (Marx, Konrád). The appropriation stands, according to Muñoz for a "third mode of dealing with dominant ideology, one that neither opts to assimilate within such a structure nor strictly opposes it; rather, disidentification is a strategy that works on and against dominant ideology" (Muñoz 1999, p. 11). More than a middle way disidentification combines and contradicts dominant ideologies, but also neat modes of counteridentification. But the playful character of identity formation via disidentification also allows to better cope and make sense of lost futures, and find ways to process what happened, on an individual, but sometimes also in a collective manner.

Another reason for which I would consider East German feminists' identity construction as a mode of disidentification is because of their repeated articulations of ambivalences and "in-between spaces" (Table 3). The notion of in-betweenness is also illustrated in the metaphor of feminists living between chairs, which anonymous author in *Zaunreiterin* has used:

> "*Never is the utopia of humanity living together in freedom and equality more fleeting than in the moment of trial and error. Feminists live between all chairs*" (anon., 1993, p. 11).

Muñoz reads the process of disidentification as part of the work of mourning, namely the process through which after a loss of a loved object a gradual detachment is attained (1999, p.52). When unfinished mourning is a mode of stagnation in the melancholic state, the creative identity formation through disidentification accommodates the grief of the lost object, or in this case of East German feminists, lost futures, in the here and now. Like melancholia, disidentification is an "ambivalent structure of feeling that works to retain the problematic object" (Muñoz, 1999, p. 71). How mourning was also a conscious motivation of East German meetings, shows his announcement for an East Germans women's congress in Frankfurt Oder (in East Germany), invited by the UFV from 6-7 October 1990, published in the magazine *Ypsilon*: "There we can mourn, rage, rant, console together over our lost, stolen GDR" (Ypsilon, 1990, p. 44). Also, Ina Merkel reflected on the inevitability to feel pain in the process of the morning:

> "*But maybe it [depressiveness] is a necessary transitional stage. There is also grief work to be done. I have the feeling that I have to say goodbye to the GDR now, it is like a child that died too soon.*" (Square brackets by me, Merkel and Rohnstock 1990, p.7)

Ina Merkel added, referring to the ideological investment in the socialist GDR, that this investment was like a drug. The metaphor of the drug relates to her feelings of numbness, which created skepticism in her towards the use of a new drug (capitalist FRG).

> "*Having to live without deception brings withdrawal symptoms at first. The old drug is missing, and it is not immediately replaceable with a new drug. I also don't know if it's good to look for a new drug right away.*" (ibid.)

6.2. Memory Work and Future Work

In the background of the Cold War, and the forty-year-long division of the two German states, the Muñozian notion of working "on and against the dominant ideology" (1999, p.11) is a complex construct in which East German feminists' forms of disidentification interact. East German feminists were confronted not with just one dominant ideology, but at least two dominant ideologies, those from the Eastern and Western blocs. While adopting the ideological template of socialism as a utopian project, they accept to "work with" the dominant ideology of socialism, but simultaneously "worked against" the ideological template of the other dominant ideology (capitalism). But, with their sharp criticism of the patriarchal norms and male-oriented rules in German socialism, East German feminists developed, as we have seen before, an ambivalent position, that would allow me to read "on and against" also in several other ways. For instance, East German feminists also worked "on and against" the male-dominated GDR opposition, or "on and against" West German feminists.

Muñoz connects disidentification to temporality since the practice to disidentify produces both a draft for alternative utopias and political formation in the present (Muñoz 1999, p.200). Disidentification is a point of departure and ultimately a form of building, that "takes place *in the future and in the present*" (italics in the original, Muñoz 1999, p.200). In this sense, collective memories are never just orientated towards the past but establish also a sense of continuity toward the future (Misztal, 2003, p. 15). The formation of identities through disidentification contained and "require(d) an active kernel of utopian possibility" (Muñoz, 1999, p. 25). Examples of micro-practices of utopianism can be found in the micro-spaces and lesbian holidays organized by the samizdat *frau anders* (Sänger, 2005b, pp. 168, 179), feminist occupation of the Stasi, or the very founding event of the UFV. Several East German feminists who participated in this spontaneous founding event, described how they were impressed by

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the collaboration among different groups, the creativity of social organization, and hope for an East German feminist rising. Following Muñoz, we can interpret this form of events as identity-shaping and consolidating, which in its futility was an "affirmative yet temporary utopia" (Muñoz, 1999, p. 31). At this moment in time, in December 1989, the building of new ideas could be interpreted as part of a disidentificatory performance, of making their own feminism, which "offers a blueprint for a possible future, while at the same time, staging a new political formation in the present" (Muñoz 1999, p.200).

When the working group 'Demasculinization of Utopia' aimed to contribute to the 'memory work' and diversification of utopian ideas (Behrend & Maleck-Lewy, 1991, p. 6), then memory work became a way to conjure possible futures from the past. This brings us to another function of intersubjectively shared memories: they are "providing people with understandings and symbolic frameworks that enable them to make sense of the world" (Misztal, 2003, p. 13). Memories are in an implicit manner part of "worldmaking", but also explicitly since utopian visions are also part of collective memories. Since the 'memory work' of feminists, like Behrend and Maleck-Lewy (1991, p.6), contains always the dimension of utopian "worldmaking", "speech worlds" (Wölfel 2007), or "emancipatory utopias" (Bock 2020b, p.66), like in GDR's literary feminism, that some form of what could be called 'future work' is always implied. In Hannelore Scholz's words "utopias are analyses of an end time and at the same time designs made toward a future" (1991, p.70–71).

7. Conclusion

In this thesis, I aimed to look beyond the evaluation of feminism in state socialism by entering concretely into imaginary worlds and feminist thought of GDR feminists by analyzing their

self-published texts. These feminist's ideas and thoughts showed in the example of GDR feminists, that women's activists from socialist states were not just receiving feminist thought from the Western countries but creating their own theoretical approaches which were influential across the borders of the Soviet Bloc, in this case mostly in West Germany. With Cerwonka, we have seen how the underpinning categories of these uneven power structures are fictitious since there is no neat difference between Eastern and Western feminisms (2008, p. 821,824). In this thesis, I have argued that GDR feminists are no monolithic bloc. It is important to note that the common traits of the findings are a generalization of the observation of the analyzed data and cannot speak for all the actors involved.

Chapter 2 outlined the mutually influential yet conflicting relationships and encounters between East and West German feminist activists. East German feminists used disidentification to cope with the persistence of power imbalances in German feminism, recycling labels and turning them into a tool of empowerment (Muñoz, 1999, p. 4). In Chapter 3, I drew on Nancy Fraser's concept of a subaltern counterpublic, to grasp the function of 'East German feminist self-publishing, which competes and complements the dominant discourses, and ultimately diversified the voices in the public sphere. Fraser stressed the twofold function of subaltern counterpublics for women's activists, the use of spaces for withdrawal and exchange, and training grounds for agitational activities.

In chapter 4 the utopian visions of GDR feminists were outlined. On one side we saw their holistic and intersectional accounts of a feminist transformation of society and the concrete ideas on how to reorganize gender arrangements in democratic socialism. This all-embracing perspective reached from gender-sensitive language and child education to opening marriage law to all forms of life to fifty-fifty gender quotas in political committees. Their feminist approach was ecumenical in the sense that it is inclusive of various groups. Following the overarching tendency not to narrow down the groups of interest in feminist struggles in GDR,

on the contrary, rather there is an eagerness to open up and expand the groups of interest with which they showed solidarity. The East German wide-reaching approach reminds me of bell hooks' "feminism is for everybody" (2000). Nevertheless, the goal 'to speak for all' provided difficulties of its own.

In the second part of chapter 4, we saw how the idea to demasculinize utopia was also shared outside of the working group and linked to the GDR feminists' aspiration to overcome patriarchal forms of exclusion and oppression. Their position which draws on the utopian potential of female values reminds different feminist accounts since women's exclusion from the male spheres makes them bearers of utopia (Christa Wolf cited in Scholz 1991, p.77). In summary, feminist utopias require an imaginary component, such as feminist "speech worlds", or "emancipatory utopias", but also material resources and infrastructures to translate the ideas into reality. This implies having one's hands-free to engage in the project of feminist utopias, literally making time for a feminist future, which might also be what Gerda Jaspers demands when she mentions the significance of woman's time sovereignty for female emancipation (1991, p. 19).

Chapter 5 analyzed how the unexpected self-dissolution of the GDR, how the sense of loss of social environment, and the loss of feminist futures and utopian hope produced feelings of helplessness among East German feminists, which I described as 'East German feminist Melancholia'. Drauschke and Stolzenburg have aptly depicted the sensations when the commonsense a collapse " in us like houses of cards" (1991, p.59). But it also became apparent how this could trigger a certain crumbling of a fixed idea of the self, and therefore a reordering at least on the personal level as an opportunity for change. With Muñoz we have seen that both melancholia and disidentification retain the lost object, emotional ambivalence (Muñoz, 1999, p. 71).

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Chapter 6 outlined how East German feminists produced their own archives, and commemorative events, practices that could be described as mnemonic disidentifications. Other forms of subaltern counterpublics were created notions of feminist futures to do "memory work" and "future work by proposing alternative utopias by East German feminists. Ultimately, we have seen how the Muñozian notion of identity formation through working "on and against the dominant ideology" (1999, p.11) was complex and inherently ambivalent negotiation of belonging, since the collapse of state socialism, exposed them to a variety of dominant ideologies. In the background of the post-reunification retraditionalization of gender roles, the re-emergence of conservative gender politics (cf. Young 1999), and the pitilessness of neoliberal capitalism in the early 1990s, the utopian imaginaries have not just the function to envision a better future, but the "critique of what is present" (Muñoz, 2009, p. 37).

8. Annex

8.1. Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

Abbreviation/Name	Meaning	Explanation
Bundestag	German parliament	West German parliament and also the name of the parliament of united Germany
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany (*Bundesrepublik Deutschland*)	also known as West Germany – is the area occupied by the Allied forces (FR/UK/US) after the end of the Second World War
FFBIZ	Women's Research, Education and Information Center. (*Das feministische Archiv Berlin*)	
DDF	Digital German Women's Archive (*Digitales Deutsches Frauenarchiv*)	
DFD	Democratic Women's League of Germany (*Demokratischer Frauenbund Deutschlands*)	
GDR	German Democratic Republic (*Deutsche Demokratische Republik*)	also known as East Germany – is the area of Soviet occupation zone after the end of the Second World War
Ossi		pejorative but common and colloquial term to describe West Germans.
Ostalgie	Nostalgia for the East	nostalgia for the life in the former GDR
RAF	*Rote Armee Fraktion*	The 'Red Army Fraction' was a radicalized subgroup of the West German socialist student movement of 1968 which went underground and started terrorist attacks in the FRG.
Round Table	*Runder Tisch*	Series of meetings of the GDR opposition for a democratic transition of the GDR
Stasi	*Staatssicherheit*	GDR State Security
SED	Socialist Unitary Party (*Sozialistische Einheitspartei*)	Ruling party of the GDR
UFV	Independent Women's Association (*Unabhängiger Frauenverbund*)	independent women's organization founded on the 3rd of December 1989
Volkskammer	chamber of the people	GDR parliament

Wessi		pejorative but common and colloquial term to describe West Germans.
ZK	Central Committee (*Zentralkommittte*)	Executive board of leadership
Wende	'the turn'	describes the period of the reunification.

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