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A Reconsideration of the Domestic in GDR Literature

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The boundaries between the public and the private spheres have always been fluid, permeable, and malleable, though the causes of and reasons for these shifts and adjustments have varied widely. Here I will explore the unique situation that arose in the German Democratic Republic (GDR), when the socialist state altered the definition and nature of these two realms by eliminating the element of public debate that is so central to Jürgen Habermas's concept. According to family law in the GDR, the family unit served as *die kleinste Zelle der Gesellschaft* ("the smallest cell of society") and could thrive only under socialism. The GDR sought to repurpose the family as a reflection of its larger political construction, and in the preamble to the *Familiengesetzbuch* ("family law code") claimed that more liberties and greater gender equality were available with this system than under capitalism.[1] Employing Renate Apitz's *Evastöchter* ("Eve's Daughters"), Elfriede Brüning's *Partnerinnen* ("Female Partners"), Sarah Kirsch's "Merkwürdiges Beispiel weiblicher Entschlossenheit" ("A peculiar example of feminine determination") and Dorothea Kleine's *Jahre mit Christine* ("Years with Christine"), texts from the 1970s and early 1980s, I will demonstrate that the processes of producing, dispersing, and consuming state-sanctioned knowledge and behavior inevitably permeate the porous boundaries that attempt to separate domestic life from work and politics. While the protagonists are carrying out what they see as the anticipated and satisfactory responses to situations, unpredictable consequences test the limits of personal relationships as well as the protection offered by and expected of the private sphere. Consequently, the members of the private sphere are compelled to react to the unintentional and unexpected state

intrusion; the protagonists are forced to reevaluate the nature and source of private knowledge, in order to rediscover the stability that they had previously enjoyed. Though the private sphere is usually associated with the production of unprofitable goods and future citizens, reproductive labor, here it is a means to maintain state influence, and there is an obligatory restructuring that has the potential to salvage the fragile and vulnerable institution.

David Bathrick's *The Powers of Speech. The Politics of Culture in the GDR* (1995) is arguably the most significant reconsideration of the public sphere in the context of post-war Germany. Because earlier scholars focused on the development of the bourgeois public during past centuries, previous conclusions had to be reassessed when discussing alternative political and social structures, such as socialism. Bathrick suggests that GDR society had three public spheres: firstly, the official one under Party control; secondly, West German media; and thirdly, "counter public enclaves that sought to break into or establish dialogue with the officially dominating voices" (34). Marc Silberman has since suggested that the literary public sphere should be added as a fourth (7). He argues that the GDR further complicates existing conceptions by equating the state with the public sphere, and the ruling class with the working class: "the party then assumes the traditional function of the public sphere because it represents in principle the identity of all class interests in the socialist society" (Silberman 6). The state and the public sphere became thoroughly intertwined, and the role of debate was largely reduced to ceremony. While much of the focus of recent research has been on defining the public sphere, there has been some analysis of its unique interpenetration with the private sphere given the political structure. Dorothy Rosenberg reminds us that: "The private sphere, as it has developed since the industrial revolution, has been characterized by those activities necessary to production which were not profitable and thus not commercialized and taken over by the public sphere" (154). While some forms of state intervention in more private matters are familiar, such as fertility and education, distinctive situations arose due to more aggressive regulation and party influence in the GDR, including "an increasing tendency to shift communicative processes into the private sphere in order to avoid the supervision that pervaded the official public sphere" (Silberman 25). This led to what Silberman dubs a "dualism of the private and the official," as citizens found alternate sites to express their complaints and reservations, in an

attempt to keep them out of the Party's eyes and ears (25). The level and nature of interaction between these two realms was heavily influenced by the high percentage of women in the workforce, a topic to which I will now turn.

Article 18 of the GDR's 1949 constitution guaranteed equal pay for equal work, and with the assistance of numerous governmental programs implemented to support this goal, 91.2% of women were employed by the end of the 1980s (Budde 10). However, women were still responsible for the upkeep of the household, and without the aid of hired help for all but the elite.[2] Initially the GDR tried to socialize housework among many other aspects of society, but by the 1970s the government conceded that this labor was still done individually and largely by women (Sachse 268). Consequently the monthly *Haushaltstag* ("household day") or *Hausarbeitstag* ("housework day") was expanded and became law in 1977 for working mothers, single women over 40, and qualifying men, providing an additional day to complete domestic duties (Sachse 276).[3] This "double burden" of working in and outside of the home meant that women were expected to contribute to society in ways that their husbands did not and could not, yet power resided almost exclusively in the hands of men and gender inequality remained (Sudau 80). The multifarious demands and responsibilities women faced are a frequent theme of literary critique, and I argue, tied to the varied attempts to depict the reality for GDR citizens in forms such as *Protokolliteratur*.[4] Decades of repression and control, propaganda and censorship, resulted in citizens longing to recount and depict their unsanitized everyday lives and experiences (Andress 25). Perhaps because of the inherent impossibility of such a broad and subjective task, museums, films, and literature about the "authentic" GDR continue to pervade contemporary cultural production.[5] Former GDR citizens have not finished processing their pasts or reconciling their pasts with the present.

The literary works discussed here portray women who are torn between the private and public spheres, because of their "double burden," including some who are wrestling with simply delineating boundaries and respective duties. The first figure is a single woman and valued colleague who undertakes what becomes a challenging path to motherhood. "Merkwürdiges Beispiel weiblicher Entschlossenheit" ("A peculiar example of feminine determination") was first published in

1973, four years before Sarah Kirsch was expatriated (Kirsch 91). The first few sentences of the short story outline the problem the protagonist faces and its cause. Ms. Schmalfuβ is 28 years old and still childless because she only possesses four instead of the usual six "kleine Schönheiten" ("small beauties") that common opinion says every woman has (7).[6] Because she is physically deficient she suffers in her private life, though she is respected and valued at work, where she is assiduous and devotes her free time to many volunteer positions. Ms. Schmalfuβ decides to have a child because she is able and no longer wants to be selfish, but does not think of marriage because she has lived alone for too long and has peculiarities that would harm the relationship. She first tries to convince a coworker to merely help her conceive a child, then she asks a doctor about artificial insemination; neither man is willing to assist her. Ms. Schmalfuβ then begins the process of adoption, and this has negative consequences at work as she no longer has as much time to devote to it and her emotional state has changed. The narrator remarks: "Sie benahm sich wie eine schwangere Frau und gab zu Bermerkungen Anlaβ" ("She behaved like a pregnant woman and gave cause for remarks"; 21). While on a museum trip she organizes for her coworkers, a painting of the Madonna enables her to see beauty in herself finally, and envision her own kind of virgin birth, as she imagines herself holding a child. Due to the proximity of Christmas, a personnel shortage, and Ms. Schmalfuβ's persistence, she is able to take the child home from the orphanage before all of the formalities are complete. The story concludes with her suggestion that the Cultural Ministry introduce a new superstition: "wer morgens einen Kinderwagen trägt, hat den Tag Glück" ("[s]he who carries a stroller in the morning is happy all day"; 24), suggesting that she has finally found some personal contentment in adopting the child.

Ms. Schmalfuβ becomes a mother, which conforms to the state's view of a woman's natural role and a source of fulfillment, but at the end of the story she is still unwed, her reputation at work has suffered, and the state is not satisfied that she is a qualified parent. Though her desire for motherhood conforms to social norms, she is alone and has been forced to reprioritize her two "burdens"; consequently she is no longer such a generous colleague. It seems that she has found the path to joy as she has fulfilled her own desires, but the reader is not certain what the future holds for the new family or if Ms. Schmalfuβ will suffer professional consequences. The state has permitted her to adopt,

thereby enabling her to establish her own unique family and have the bond she longed for, though rather haphazardly and the results may be fleeting.

Elfriede Brüning's *Partnerinnen* ("Female Partners," 1978) is structured as a narrative told by four women whose lives intertwine. Johanna, a journalist turned secretary, is about to receive an award for women, celebrating her decades of willing service (*Frauen-Einsatzbereitschaft*). She recounts her struggle raising her two children alone after the Second World War, and how both spent extended periods in a state-run home (*Dauerheim*), permitting her to take advantage of occupational advancements and related travel opportunities. She eventually gave up a prestigious position so that she could live with her children again. The second figure is Barbara. She is ten years younger than Johanna and also a journalist, now chief reporter. Barbara has been able to advance professionally because Johanna ultimately felt that she had to be home with her children. Barbara is married to Reinhard, a blind writer, and they do not have children, though she has had an abortion without his knowledge. Renate is the third narrator, and Barbara hires her to serve as Reinhard's secretary. Barbara has given her the task of interviewing Johanna for her award. Renate has two children, from two men, and recently adopted a young boy. She and Reinhard begin a romantic relationship and he moves in with her and her children. The final figure is Rita, Johanna's daughter. She is now a housewife, because she was unable to manage the demands of both a job and motherhood. She is resentful about her own childhood and feels that her mother neglected her, thus she puts on a façade of having a healthy marriage and happy life. Johanna knows her daughter is miserable, though she does not yet know that Rita's oldest daughter has run off with an older, married musician. All of these women struggle to find balance in their lives, and none of them have been able to achieve both personal and professional success according to the state's definitions.

The women are aware that the choices they make affect not only one's own life, but those of colleagues as well. Johanna's decision to stay home with her children, after coincidentally finding out that her son was partially taking care of himself at a very young age, led to Barbara's success, as she was given those responsibilities. Years later Barbara is in a similar position and must decide if she wants to help

Renate be a more successful journalist, but understands that this will eventually cause her to fail, literally to fall apart. "Wenn ich [Barbara], meine Position ausnutzend, Renate zum beruflichen Erfolg verhülfe, sie mit Aufträgen oder Reisen überhäufte und sie dadurch zwänge, den Frauenkonflikt unserer Tage auszutragen, genau wie ich es muβte – wird sie dann, sich zersplitternd, nicht ebenfalls scheitern?" ("If I [Barbara], using my position, were to help Renate to attain professional success, were to pile on assignments or trips and thereby were to force her to fully experience the woman's conflict of our day, just as I had to – would she then, herself cracking, not also fail?"; 74). Shortly afterwards Barbara says that she will never know if she has paid too dear a price for her accomplishments. She has climbed the journalist's ladder, but her husband has left her and she has no children; she is alone.

Renate is probably the happiest of the four women, or has at least found fulfillment both professionally and personally, though through socially unsanctioned measures. Her children are by two men, she has never been married, and she recently adopted an abandoned boy from the same kind of state-run home that Johanna put her children in decades before. He has trouble in school and in many social situations, but Renate has worked with him and he is making great strides. Reinhard, Barbara's husband and Renate's lover, has recently moved in with them and everyone is adjusting well. Though she previously had several side jobs to earn a living, Johanna is giving her larger tasks, but as quoted above, her motivations are not pure. Renate is aware of the paradoxes women face. "Die Emanzipation der Frau, auf die Spitze getrieben, trägt wohl stets eine Portion Egoismus in sich. Scheinbar gelingt sie nur, wie bei Barbara, wenn sie auf Kosten der Umwelt geschieht. Also hat die Emanzipation ihre Grenzen? Ich glaube, ja." ("The emancipation of women, carried to an extreme, always contains a portion of egoism in it. Apparently it only succeeds, like in Barbara's case, when it happens at the cost of what is around it. So does emancipation have its limits? I think so"; 109). Renate has crafted her own blended family, to use contemporary terminology, but at the risk of social rejection and professional failure. All four of these women have struggled with how to effectively prioritize their two roles, but there is not one obvious, universal solution. The text suggests that a larger reconsideration of society's structures and priorities is required, as the public and private spheres serve distinct functions.[7]

Now to turn to the challenges of married life as portrayed in Renate Apitz's "Spinat mit Ei" ("Spinach with egg"), published in *Evastöchter* ("Eve's daughters," 1983). Betty and her husband Heinz are chosen to represent her shift at a Railroader Day competition. The prerequisites are that the couple has been married a long time and has a harmonious marriage. Betty is not their first choice, but remarkably the only employee who fulfills all of the requirements: she is a hard worker, is a representative for other workers, has two children and has been married for 28 years. Heinz designates himself as the coach for his wife, concerned with assuring that she has the same knowledge as her colleagues, so she will win the competition. One key theme of the story is knowledge, its nature, and who has it, as is reflected in this passage:

> Betty schaut Heinz verdutzt an. "Kann Bildung passieren?" "Stell dich nicht so an, du sollst herausbekommen, was die anderen Brigaden sich gemeinsam angesehen haben, was sie also wissen können. Das erfragt der Rundfunk und stellt dann sicher Fragen aus den Bereichen. Man muβ sich anpassen." Betty staunte wieder einmal über Heinz. Was der alles wuβte! Auf den konnte sie bauen. (32)
>
> Puzzled, Betty looked at Heinz. "Can education happen?" "Don't make such a fuss. You're supposed to find out what the other brigades have seen together, in other words what they could know. That's what the broadcast will inquire about and then will surely ask questions about those areas. One must conform." Betty marveled once again at Heinz. All the things he knew! She could count on him.

Following Heinz's suggestion, in an attempt to acquire missing knowledge, they visit the Pergamon Museum in Berlin and Sansoucci Palace in Potsdam, she reads an unnamed work of contemporary literature, and they choose her token leisure activities. "Heinz fand auf jede eventuelle Frage eine sozialistische Antwort. Betty las und lernte. Heinz reduzierte ihren Anteil an der Hausarbeit auf ein Minimum" ("Heinz found a socialist answer to every potential question. Betty read and studied. Heinz reduced her portion of the housework to a minimum"; 36). Heinz is concerned with making Betty a well-educated socialist citizen, but the reader soon discovers that this is not the real shortcoming.

When the big day arrives, Betty and Heinz are off to a great start in the competition. During a later phase, the couples answer questions

about each other, and Betty feels confident when she writes spinach with egg as Heinz's favorite food. However, the couple's answers to this question do not match and they lose. Heinz tells Betty that he wrote pot roast with dumplings because they eat it most Sundays. Though he enjoys spinach, at least the way his mother cooked it, Betty does not like it so he told her she does not have to fix it. The story concludes with Betty buying spinach to surprise Heinz, but the final sentence reveals that she still does not have the whole picture, as she will not fix it like her mother-in-law. "Nur von einer kleine Prise Koriander wuβte sie [Betty] nichts" ("Only she [Betty] didn't know about the little pinch of coriander"; 38). Betty is described as a woman who not only performs her job well and is respected in the workplace, but as a wife with domestic ability who enjoys being at home. Ironically, it is this personal, private knowledge that should have led them to win the competition, not the many facts Heinz favored. After the competition Betty suggests that they take a vacation with some savings, the same prize they just failed to win, but Heinz is uninterested: "die hübschen Wochenenden hat er in Potsdam und Berlin gehabt. Danke. Er will eine prinzipielle Klärung ihrer Situation. Sie, Betty, habe ihn nie verstanden. 'Es geht hier nicht um Spinat, damit wir uns recht verstehen, es geht um…'" ("He had the best weekends in Potsdam and Berlin. Thank you. He wants a fundamental clarification of their situation. She, Betty, never understood him. 'It's not about spinach, so that we understand each other, it's about...'; 38). An unexpected telephone call for Heinz to go to work abruptly ends their discussion and the story. A friendly competition between co-workers, meant to build camaraderie and commend enduring families almost destroys a marriage; ironically, it is because the couple did not really know each other. Heinz and Betty dutifully prepared for the match, but no excursion, lecture, or book could have taught them this answer. Their employer, the state, did not intend to breach the bond that holds together the family, and in fact was looking for a way to celebrate them, yet the consequences could have been destructive. It seems that the two will stay together, though they will have to find a way to restore their broken bond.

Dorothea Kleine's *Jahre mit Christine* ("Years with Christine," 1981) also deals with a troubled marriage and is written from three interwoven perspectives: Christine, a manager whose office is broken into; her husband Mattes, who is the thief; Lieutenant Peter Berg, the police officer who is assigned to the case. Christine and Mattes play reversed roles within the family. She is the successful manager of a cannery while he is a mechanic, and Mattes is responsible for a majority of their daughter's care and does the cooking and cleaning. Their marriage is not an especially happy one. Christine is having an affair with a co-worker, and Mattes feels that Christine overvalues work and does not give her family enough time. According to Mattes: "Sie [Christine] kann nur Weltprobleme lösen, die kleinen Dinge des Alltags bereiten ihr Schwierigkeiten" ("She [Christine] can only solve global problems; the small things of everyday life cause her difficulties"; 39). While there are at least moments of contentment, Mattes's frustration leads him to break into his wife's office in the middle of the night and steal crucial documents, which puts Christine's job in jeopardy. Mattes leaves the city on a sort of soul-finding mission, and seeks out a teenage girlfriend. Christine is thus forced to care for their daughter Jenny alone, while trying to handle a crisis at work. At the same time Lt. Berg is living on his own for the first time, has a younger girlfriend, and faces his own moral dilemma because he has been asked by Stefan, a colleague, to help his son David, who has been arrested for breaking into a sport center. "Berg begriff damals, daβ man auf zwei Arten leben konnte, man konnte sich den Problemen stellen, und man konnte sich hinter Paragraphen und Weisungen verstecken. Mit einemmal wuβte Berg, er würde Stefan helfen, was immer geschah, er würde zu ihm stehen" ("Berg understood then that one could life in two ways. One could face one's problems or one could hide behind paragraphs and orders. Suddenly Berg knew that he would help Stefan, whatever happened, he would stick by him"; 35). David commits suicide before Lt. Berg is able to help him, but it does make him reconsider his priorities and help Christine. He concludes that Mattes committed the robbery in order to save his marriage, and to protect it from "das Eindringen einer fremden Welt in seine häusliche Idylle" ("the penetration of a foreign world into his domestic idyll"; 136). Mattes's actions will potentially destroy the family and what he so values, but he sees punishing Christine and her employer as the only viable retaliation for her neglect.

Though all of the evidence suggests that Mattes is the thief, and though Christine is told that she must divorce Mattes in order to retain her job, she follows Lt. Berg to the town where she and her husband grew up in an attempt to salvage their marriage. Earlier in the story

Christine describes an idyllic Sunday afternoon the family spent together. "Bald wird es bei uns nach frischgebrühtem Kaffee duften, nach Kuchen, der gerade aus dem Ofen gezogen worden ist, nach Familienharmonie und Wohlverhalten. Die geschiedene Frau von Wohnung 13 wird sich einsam fühlen wie an keinem Tag der Woche" ("Soon it will smell like freshly brewed coffee here, like cake that was just taken out of the oven, like family harmony and good behavior. The divorced woman in apartment 13 will feel alone like on no other day of the week"; 57). The family has had moments of joy and Christine is prepared to rescue their family, which has been invaded and torn open by her job. Despite all of her complaints, Christine believes Lt. Berg when he says: "Wenn Sie es wollen, wird alles wieder gut" ("If you want it to, it will all turn out alright"; 141). Mattes seems a little less confident of his future, as he has found his teenage love Jessica, and feels not only at home, but like a family in her simple dwelling with her daughter. Lt. Berg realizes that his girlfriend is similar to Christine, and that this is not what he wants for himself. He, like Mattes and Christine, will have to fight to achieve the domestic idyll and protect it from permeation by the public sphere.

While it may seem that retired widows would no longer have to concern themselves with work, this is the dilemma in "Sorgen der Gasmannsfrau Tosca B," a radio play monologue (*Hörspielmonolog*) in Apitz's *Evastöchter*. The narrator Tosca is a recently retired meter reader for the gas company, and has turned being a good neighbor into her full-time job. As the monologue begins, Tosca is appalled that Mrs. Kienzeln has just asked her to volunteer with the Democratic Women's League of Germany (*Demokratischer Frauenbund Deutschlands*).[8] She compains: "Kommt die Kienzeln bei mir und fracht, ob ick die Kassierung mache fürn DFD. Icke. Sach ick: Is ja wohl nischt für sone olle Frau, so treppuftreppab. Sacht die Kienzeln, ich hätt doch sowieso keene ordentliche Funktion inne Jesellschaft" ("Mrs. Kienzeln comes to me and asks if I'll do the collecting for the DFD [Democratic Women's League]. Me? I say: That's not for some old lady, up the stairs, down the stairs. Mrs. Kiezeln says to me, I didn't have a proper function within society anyway"; 46). The tension between the women arises around the accusation that Tosca no longer occupies a proper social position now that she is retired. She quickly clarifies that though she is called a *Gasmannsfrau*, a meter reader's wife, she in fact was the meter reader, until the age of 62. Now she watches children in the afternoons

and helps others when she can. Tosca vehemently defends her actions and usefulness. "Aber sagn Se doch mal selber, bin ick nich 'n nützlicher Mensch in mein Haus? Muβ mir da die Kienzeln anpfeifn von wejen die Kassierung von DFD? Bei wen solln sich die Hauswerker denn meldn könn, oder wenn 'n Fremder mal wat fragn will. Eener muβ sich doch son biβken für sein Haus verantwortlich fühln" ("But tell me yourself, aren't I a useful person in my house? Does Mrs. Kienzeln have to reprimand me because of not collecting for the DFD? Whom should the handymen report to, or what if a stranger wants to ask something. Someone has to feel a little responsible for his house"; 49). Tosca sees herself as the caretaker of the building and its inhabitants, and therefore as sufficiently valuable to society. The narrative ends with Tosca explaining why she so eagerly opened the door for Mrs. Kienzeln, namely because she thought it was her former colleague, Hermann, making his yearly rounds to read the meters. Now she is concerned because he is late. "Villeicht is Hermann ooch krank, und det macht keen jutn Eindruck, wenn so ville Leute uh ihn wartn. Die janzen Fraun, die ihrn Haushaltstach vasitzn!" ("Maybe Hermann is sick, and that doesn't make a good impression when so many people are waiting on him. All the women who are wasting their household day"; 50). In the final sentences Tosca contemplates calling the gas company, and would even consider going back to work for them if they needed her to fill in, part-time perhaps.

Tosca has made herself valued in her building, whether by opening the door for repair men or passing along keys when a car is broken down. She does not do these tasks in exchange for payment or status, rather she sees it as a way to help others as well as society as a whole, and occupy her time in a productive manner. Not everyone shares this perception, however, and at least one woman thinks that Tosca needs to take on a more formal volunteer position. In the end she appears only to want to be needed. She does not suggest that she would return to her job at the gas company because she misses the income, rather she longs for the social interaction that came with reading meters, hence her concern that Hermann has not yet arrived. Particularly relevant to this story is that one of the central goals of the Democratic Women's League was to encourage unemployed women to enter the workforce ("Lexikon"). When Mrs. Kienzeln asks Tosca to become more active in the organization, she forces Tosca to reconsider her life, and what it

means to be productive in and contribute to society. Again the reader is not left with a tidy conclusion, but the suggestion that a reevaluation is in order.

The dust jacket for *Evastöchter* features a quote from its author Renate Apitz that urges: "Dieses Buch sollten Frauen Männern zum Frauentag schenken, damit sie lernen, mit wem sie es zu tun haben!" ("Women should give this book to men for Women's Day, so that they learn whom they are dealing with!").[9] It is not surprising that stories of these domestic struggles were primarily written by women, as they faced these dilemmas personally. These texts are tied to the trend of documentary literature and *Protokolliteratur* that emerged in the late 1970s, most notably with Maxie Wander's *Guten Morgen du Schöne* ("Good morning beautiful one", 1978).[10] These genres were revolutionary at the time and praised for their authenticity. Prominent author and GDR citizen Christa Wolf, in her preface to Wander's collection, writes: "Nicht das geringste Verdienst dieses Buches ist es, authentisch zu belegen, wie weitgehend die Ermutigung, an öffentlichen Angelegenheiten teilzunehmen, das private Leben und Fühlen vieler Frauen in der DDR verändert hat" ("It is not the smallest merit of this book to prove authentically how extensive the encouragement to take part in public affairs has changed the private lives and feelings of many women in the GDR"; 11). In each of the stories discussed here the public sphere has invaded the private, not positively as Wolf suggests, but harmfully and through no fault of the protagonist. The pervasion of one's professional life into the family means that the private sphere has to restructure itself and reinforce its boundaries, though several of these stories do not provide optimistic conclusions. The state, which in the GDR became the public sphere, is unable to perform all of the duties of the family, and these authors explore alternative constructions. None present a viable model for reform, rather these narratives attempt to bring an unpopular subject to the foreground, to give voice to the elusive life of the average citizen.

NOTES

[1] The preamble to the *Familiengesetzbuch* states: "Mit dem Aufbau des Sozialismus entstanden gesellschaftliche Bedingungen, die dazu führen, die Familienbeziehungen von den Entstellungen und Verzerrungen zu befreien, die durch die Ausbeutung des Menschen, die gesellschaftliche und rechtliche Herabsetzung der Frau, durch materielle Unsicherheit und andere Erscheinungen der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft bedingt waren."

"Societal conditions were created with the building of socialism that led to the liberation of family relationships from the distortions and the perversions that were conditioned by the exploitation of human beings, the social and legal discrimination against women, the financial insecurity and all other symptoms of bourgeois society" (Sudau 78).

[2] For example the politicians and bureaucrats who lived in the Wandlitz settlement outside of Berlin had employees to care for their households, children, and the property. Grimm's *Das Politbüro privat* is told from the point of view of these employees.

[3] The law was initially implemented in 1952, but it only applied to a small segment of the population (Sachse 258).

[4] Andress defines *Protokolliteratur*, which seems to be a genre unique to the GDR, as distinct from yet related to oral history, autobiography, and documentary literature. "Während in der Protokolliteratur die Gesprächspartner ihr Leben selbst erzählen - von Autoren vermittelt -, zeichnen die Verfasser von Biographien und Porträts ein Leben nach.... In der Protkolliteratur bleibt der autobiographische Aspekt im Vordergrund, und zwar in einer Form, die im allgemeinen als Oral History bezeichnet wird" (2-3). Unless otherwise noted the translations are my own: "While the interlocutor describes his/her own life - conveyed by authors - in protocol literature, the writers of biographies and portraits trace a life.... In protocol literature the autographical aspect remains in the foreground, and indeed in a form that is generally characterized as oral history."

[5] Filmic examples include *Good bye, Lenin!* and *Das Leben der Anderen*; Jana Hensel's *Zonenkinder* is an early example of the last generation of GDR children coming to terms with Unification.

[6] There is irony in her last name, which means "narrow foot," yet she is described as having "langen, breiten, flachen...Füβen" ("long, wide, flat feet"; 7).

[7] Brüning's *Wie andere Leute auch* and *Septemberreise* both deal with mothers who have strained relationships with their daughters. *Wie andere*

Leute auch is highly autobiographical; Brüning's daughter was largely raised by her grandmother, because Brüning was working.

[8] The story is written in the dialect of the region around Berlin. I did not attempt to replicate any kind of dialect in my translations.

[9] The reference is to International Women's Day, which is 8 March, and was widely celebrated in the GDR.

[10] Wander recorded women talking about their lives, and then turned them into a series of portraits. It is unclear which words are from the women themselves, or what Wander changed.

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