

# Our Short Life: Building and Dwelling in Late Socialism



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*Our Short Life* (*Unser kurzes Leben*), DEFA's film adaptation of Brigitte Reimann's 1974 best-selling novel *Franziska Linkerhand*, directed by Lothar Warneke and based on a screenplay by Regine Kühn, premiered at Berlin's International Cinema at Karl-Marx-Allee on January 15, 1981. This essay will situate the film in regard to Reimann's novel and in relation to the cultural discourses about gender equality, community, and the built environment in East Germany (GDR) into which the film intervenes. Like Reimann's novel, Warneke's film uses the built environment as a spatial metaphor for the GDR's inability to provide a sense of place for the thick networks of relationships and solidarities of socialist modernity.

## 1. From Franziska Linkerhand to Our Short Life

Warneke's 1969 directorial debut, *Dr. med. Sommer II*, is generally considered to be the exemplar of the documentary realism tendency with which Warneke was identified at DEFA, along with Herrmann Zschoche, Rainer Simon, and Roland Gräf. Documentary realism marked a return to films about contemporary life in the GDR after the banning of a group of films at the notorious 11th Plenary Session of the SED Party in December 1965 and its aftermath that led DEFA to turn largely to historical and genre films in order to avoid potentially controversial contemporary topics.<sup>1</sup> Less a school than a shared set of aesthetic affinities, the films associated with documentary realism were often filmed on location with diegetic sound and lay actors, gesturing back to the look and feel of Italian neorealism, which had offered East German filmmakers an alternative to a monumentalizing socialist realism at least since the Berlin films of Gerhard Klein and Wolfgang Kohlhaase in the 1950s (Feinstein 199). Like the 1965/66 banned films, documentary realism focused on everyday life and on the claims of individuals to happiness and fulfillment in socialist society (Schittly 183). What distinguished these films from those of the early 1960s, though, was the now explicitly personal horizon of their focus. Whereas films treating contemporary life in the GDR before the late 1960s, so-called *Gegenwartsfilme* (films of the present moment) had been animated by a strong sense of the present as a moment of historical and political transformation and as a stage in the formation of a new society, the *Alltagsfilme* (films of everyday life) of the GDR's latter decades were characterized by a kind of ahistorical "diurnal" temporality (Feinstein 7). This in turn coincided in many ways, however, with Erich Honecker's rise to power in 1971 and the increasing focus on consumerism, everyday life, and social stability under real existing, or late, socialism (Pugh 186).

*Our Short Life* is very much an *Alltagsfilm* using the massive prefabricated concrete housing estates called *Plattenbausiedlungen*, which continue to dominate the landscape of the former East Germany, as metaphor for the GDR as a whole. These housing estates, initially hailed as the harbingers of socialist modernity, became, as the GDR stagnated into the 1980s, emblems of the loss of the collective political horizon of socialism (Bivens 148-9, Pugh 303, 306). Warneke's film bears this tension between the enervated collective utopian fantasies that continued to haunt real existing socialism and the isolated individuals encased in the concrete of the *Platte* in its very title, with its urgent framing of a fleeting singular plurality. Increasingly, the built environment of the GDR came to stand less for a socialist homeland, or *Heimat*, bound together through collective labor, reciprocity, and social inclusion than for a desolate "border landscape" (Reimann 1998 491) suspended between a blurred past and a distended, cyclical present shaped by isolation and pathology.<sup>2</sup> In films like *Our Short Life* or Herrmann Zschoche's *Insel der Schwäne* (*Island of Swans*, 1982), filmed in the sprawling *Platte* of Berlin's Marzahn district, we see how, as the literary critic Maria Brosig puts it in her discussion of *Franziska Linkerhand*, "the lack of a socialist residential environment leads to a mindless everyday life, boredom, and alcoholism, to violence and criminality" (Brosig 80).

Ever since the posthumous publication of *Franziska Linkerhand*, there had been plans to bring Reimann's novel to the screen. Initially, both the DEFA Studio and the East German television studio (Fernsehen der DDR)<sup>3</sup> laid claim to the rights and each studio developed treatments for a film project (Kannapin/Lund 122). The project, originally associated with Rainer Simon, languished throughout the 1970s, due in part to the controversial subject matter of Reimann's novel, which addressed a number of subjects generally avoided in the East German public sphere, from the legacy of Stalinism, to rape and suicide. By 1979, GDR television had given up on their *Franziska Linkerhand* project, and DEFA reassigned



the film project to director Lothar Warneke and scriptwriter Regina Kühn. The film that resulted is a truncated version of Reimann's novel, focusing tightly on the character of Franziska herself and reducing the story to a manageable dramatic arc (Kannapin/Lund 123). *Our Short Life* follows Franziska (Simone Frost) from disappointment to disappointment without discernible narrative closure (Pugh 307). As the film opens, we see Franziska walking away from her drunken husband in a desolate field. Escaping from her failed marriage, Franziska, the star student of the prestigious architect Reger sets out to test herself in a small city, where she is greeted by the prosaic everyday reality of industrialized building. Upon her arrival, Franziska is told in no uncertain terms by Schafheutlin (Hermann Beyer), the city's chief architect, that this is "no place for experiments" and informed, "we have one single task: to build apartments for our working people, as many, as quickly, and as cheaply as possible." Franziska finally manages to convince the local authorities to allow a competition for the design of the old city center, a competition that she wins only to learn that the project will be "indefinitely postponed." The film ends with Franziska and Schafheutlin contemplating Aristides, a statue in the cemetery adjoining the city planning offices, which Franziska describes as an angel expelled from heaven after a failed uprising.

This scene captures well the tone of Reimann's novel. Along with her generational peers Christa Wolf and Volker Braun, Reimann made her literary reputation during the Bitterfeld movement, which, under the slogan "Greif zur Feder Kumpell!" ("Take up your pen, chum!") aimed at overcoming the separation of art from work through a radical extension of literary communication: not only sending writers into production sites, but also encouraging workers themselves to take up writing.<sup>4</sup> Under the auspices of Bitterfeld, Reimann moved to Hoyerswerda, the model for *Franziska Linkerhand's* Neustadt, in 1960.<sup>5</sup> Reimann's fictional Neustadt refers to more than a single city, however, representing rather what might be called a distinctive socialist way of life. New towns like Stalinstadt (now Eisenhüttenstadt), Hoyerswerda, Halle-Neustadt, and Schwedt "were designed not merely to house the working masses required for major new industrial plants; they were based in a far more ambitious vision and designed to produce built environments in which a new socialist lifestyle could be realized and socialist communities flourish" (Fulbrook 57). These new cities were flash points of East German literary production since the late 1950s. This cultural status was consolidated in Reimann's own 1961 breakthrough novel *Ankunft im Alltag* (*Arrival in Daily Life*), which gave its name to the socialist realist subgenre of the *Ankunftsroman*, a type of novel of development in which young protagonists are integrated into the everyday work life of the GDR.<sup>6</sup>

In 1965, the year that closed with the abrupt breaking off of the Bitterfeld movement at the 11th Plenary Session, Reimann began her major work, *Franziska Linkerhand*, a novel that occupied Reimann until her death in 1973. Although Reimann was unable to complete the novel, it remains perhaps among the most impressive East German novels and a central reference for women's writing in the GDR. Initially conceived as another novel of arrival, *Franziska Linkerhand* expanded and mutated throughout the 1960s into a book that resists classification, combining distinct narrative voices and modes. *Franziska Linkerhand* not only links the personal and the political, the intimate and the public, but puts these poles to work in a complex literary archeology of the taboos and blind spots of East German history. The sustained critique of East German city planning for which the novel is best known is intertwined with a complex exploration of daily life in the GDR and the unmetabolized remainders of East German Stalinism.

Reimann had initially celebrated the "optimistic landscape" (Reimann 1997 121) of Hoyerswerda, but by 1963 she was increasingly skeptical about socialist urban planning. That year she published an article "Bemerkungen zu einer neuen Stadt" ("Observations on a New City") in the *Lausitzer Rundschau* castigating the standardization of the new cities and neighborhoods springing up in the Eastern Bloc and linking their lack of atmosphere and intimacy to the proliferation of neurosis, alcoholism, and petty violence in Hoyerswerda. "A city of standard buildings can become a problem," Reimann wrote in her article, "since the environment, architecture shapes people's attitude toward life in the same measure as literature, art, music, the production process, physics, and automation" (Reimann 2001 20). Here, as in *Franziska Linkerhand*, the city is conceived as a social system, with its own media of circulation and communication. In other words, architecture is not just the design of buildings in the novel, but it is a kind of master trope that encompasses all of the other modes of social practice listed above, for the shaping and organization of historical experience. The diagnosis of the impasse of the city becomes the diagnosis of East German socialism itself as a stalled dialectic.

German writer and dramatist Heiner Müller famously described the GDR as a waiting room (Müller and Hoet 1992 96-97), and the suspension of historical telos in actually existing socialism manifests itself both in *Franziska Linkerhand's*



ffective dynamic of boredom and aggression and in its narrative structure, an intertwined multiplicity of perspectives and quasi-autonomous episodes. The novel fractures into memoir and ethnography, proliferating with case histories of Neustadt inhabitants. One of these is Franziska's mercurial lover Trojanovicz (portrayed in *Our Short Life* by Gottfried Richter), a former journalist who Franziska discovers had been swept up in the wave of repression against intellectuals following the 1956 uprising in Hungary. Reimann inserts an imagined protocol of Trojanovicz's persecution into the novel, which allows her to return to the ambiguous legacy of the 1950s, this time with an eye to the repressions and show trials that unfolded alongside the romance and enthusiasm of socialist construction. These passages, along with the more explicit depictions of suicide and sexuality, were stricken from the 1974 edition of the novel published in the GDR following Reimann's death, only to be restored in 1998. In Warneke's film, the legacy of the enthusiasm and terror of socialism's beginnings in East Germany is only hinted at in mysterious innuendos and through unexplained disappointments concealed in the enigmatically interwoven pasts of Trojanovicz, Schafheutlin, and Jazwauk. Indeed, if *Franziska Linkerhand* can be read as a narrative archeology of the GDR, these pasts can no longer be unearthed in the world of *Our Short Life*, or there is no interest in doing so.

At the same time that *Our Short Life* expresses the impasses and melancholia of late socialism, it expresses a structure of feeling through the character of Franziska that is ambitious, hopeful, and socially engaged. This was a set of characteristics that was embodied in increasingly gendered ways by the 1980s, as DEFA developed its own particular, socially critical forms of the women's film. Precisely because the Honecker regime laid such emphasis on the terrain of the everyday, this realm became politicized by the 1980s, and *Alltagsfilme* in turn became increasingly socially critical in their depictions of ordinary life, serving communicative functions that journalism could not in the East German public sphere (Schieber 267). Women, at once economically decisive and socially marginalized in the GDR, became the privileged perspective of critique in the DEFA films of the 1980s, which depict women's labor as monotonous, degrading, and under the direction of men. Even *Our Short Life's* Franziska, surely a qualified professional, is the exception that proves the rule. She manages to elicit professional respect from the film's male figures, but she is always shown in the company of men and treated very differently by them than the secretary, barmaid, and female workers who are the film's other women characters. In films like *Our Short Life*, Evelyn Schmidt's *Das Fahrrad* (*The Bicycle*, 1981), and Konrad Wolf's *Solo Sunny* (1979), the GDR is still largely a men's world in which women must struggle to make a place, despite the SED's official assurances to the contrary. The women of early 1980s DEFA films in general "stand far down on the social ladder, infringe upon the rules of morality, neglect their children, steal, drink, refuse the iron law of society that raises work to the primary content of life," and precisely through this outsider perspective come to embody the position of the positive heroes of late socialism (Schieber 270). As outsiders and dreamers under duress, these characters preserve the determination to live a life worth living. The determined refusal of the late socialist impasse, the desire for movement, activity, and engagement comes across almost programmatically in *Our Short Life* when Franziska approaches Trojanovicz in the crowded and rundown pub and tells him the tale of the Persian architect given wings by love, concluding "I would rather have thirty wild years than seventy well-behaved and unhurried."

### 2. Neustadt and Neue Stadt

Franziska's *bildungsbürgerliche* (educated middle-class) upbringing and her high modernist architectural training condition the aspirations that she brings to Neustadt. The *Neues Bauen*, or new building, including the *Bauhaus*, had served as a training ground and source of inspiration for many in the East German architecture and design community, including Hermann Henselmann, one of the lead architects of Berlin's Stalinallee boulevard (now Karl-Marx-Allee), and as a literary model for Reger, with whom, furthermore, Brigitte Reimann was in regular correspondence from 1963 onwards.<sup>7</sup> After the turn away from the historicist wedding cake style in the mid-1950s, these models could be discussed more openly. The interest in *Neues Bauen* ran in different directions in the east, though, than it did in the west. Whereas stylistic and aesthetic questions dominated in the west, in the east the interest lay "in prewar architects' political ideals and in their attempts to effect social change through architecture" (Pugh 134).

Indeed, for many influential architects in the GDR, prefabricated building held out the promise not only of a solution to the housing question, but reflected a quasi-systems theoretical approach to the built environment. By the 1960s, in the midst of the scientific-technical revolution, "Ulbricht and the SED viewed East German society as a complex system"



(Pugh 137). Franziska's view of the city is precisely as a medium that links and regulates the subsystems of daily life—labor, leisure, and dwelling—through flexible, familiar, and accessible circuits of communication. “In what language,” she asks, “are living and dwelling two different concepts?” The city, from Franziska's viewpoint, is not simply an aggregate of buildings, but a communicative medium and a way of life. The equation of the built environment and communication is made explicit in a small joke Franziska plays when she places a quote by Lewis Mumford, intentionally misattributed to Marx, on the office bulletin board reading: “The city is the most valuable discovery of civilization, which stands only behind language as a facilitator of culture.” At the same time, the reevaluation of the prewar built environment and the “spontaneous community” of the older proletarian milieu and the *Mietskasernen* (tenements) that was underway in the GDR already in the late 1960s influences *Our Short Life's* attitudes toward the city (Pugh 148). This was part of a preservationist shift not only in the GDR, but in West Germany and in the USA as well. Jochen Staadt draws a parallel between Reimann's speculations on the deleterious effects of the anonymity of the GDR's new cities here and in *Franziska Linkerhand*, as well as Alexander Mitscherlich's 1965 polemic *Die Unwirtlichkeit unserer Städte* (*The Inhospitability of Our Cities*) published in 1965 in West Germany (Staadt 224). Curtis Swope also points to Reimann's own interest in Jane Jacobs's 1961 book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (Swope 166). Franziska's vision of a new city in *Our Short Life* centers then not only on creatively overcoming the spatial separation of work, dwelling, and leisure imposed by the layout of the city, but also on integrating the new structures with the older districts, in “connecting the old to the new in completely different ways.”

By the mid-1960s, the standardized and industrially produced *Plattenbau* were the rule for building in East Germany, for reasons both economic and political, since the rapid expansion of East German industry necessitated the cost-effective mass production of housing stock. The standardized *Plattenbausiedlungen* stood at the same time for the projects of class equality and modernization at the heart of SED ideology (Hannemann 13). It was conscious policy of the GDR to build new cities around large new industrial complexes in relatively isolated areas of the GDR, and Hoyerswerda, built near the sprawling Schwarze Pumpe brown coal refinery, was among the first of these new towns. Between 1957 and the late 1960s, Hoyerswerda's population expanded from 7,000 to 50,000 people. Furthermore, Hoyerswerda saw the first large-scale deployment of the technique of building structures with prefabricated concrete plates, becoming the first city in the GDR to consist almost entirely of *Neubauten* (new buildings). Under financial pressure to house the influx of workers at Schwarze Pumpe, Hoyerswerda was planned as a series of relatively autonomous *Wohnkomplexe* (residential complexes). Not only did the buildings themselves form an impersonal and incoherent appearance, but the complexes also lacked articulation in their spatial relation to one another. The city's center, which was to link and integrate the *Wohnkomplexe*, as well as provide spaces for cultural and social interaction, was not even begun until 1968 (Schweizer 136-7). Hoyerswerda thus reflected the disjunction between housing construction and urban planning, to the relative neglect of the latter, in the GDR (Hannemann 64).

The critique of the monotony of socialist architecture was not long in coming, and Reimann found herself at the forefront of it. A polemically entitled editorial published in the local *Lausitzer Rundschau* in 1963, “Kann man in Hoyerswerda küssen?” (“Can You Kiss in Hoyerswerda?”), created a backlash, to which Reimann responded with her earlier mentioned article. The piece expressed her concern at the lack of cultural and communicative infrastructure in the city and the lack of individuality, atmosphere, and intimacy in East Germany's new cities generally. A number of motifs that would later find their way into *Franziska Linkerhand* and *Our Short Life* are already present in this article. First, Reimann makes a speculative connection between “a city of standardized buildings” and psychic neurosis. Reimann sees this neurosis rooted in the absence of any outlet for activity outside of work and sleep. She goes on to describe the “impression of small town claustrophobia” given by the “boring facades of the avenues” and the “rows of trash cans and drying laundry on lines” (Reimann 2001 20-21). Reimann is careful to insist that these problems are not a local phenomenon, but rather a problem of socialist architecture generally, from Berlin to Bucharest. Reimann's article tapped into a popular and widespread uneasiness with East Germany's new architecture and provoked wide discussion (Helwerth 39-42). The standardized architecture that Reimann criticizes in her article became increasingly prominent in the East German landscape up through the 1980s, since GDR housing policy favored cheap new building over the expensive renovation of decayed existing housing stock (Hannemann 88). From the late 1960s on, these prefabricated neighborhoods become increasingly prominent as an object of cultural representation and critique. In 1972, these buildings appear in Heiner Carow's *Die*



*Legende von Paul und Paula* (*The Legend of Paula and Paula*), interspersed with the demolition of older working class apartment buildings, in an image that suggests the GDR's disjointed relationship to its own urban heritage and the working class traditions inherent in these buildings (Blunk 213 and Pugh 141-150, 190-195).

The *Platte*, with their modernist functionalist aesthetic, were a break both with the Stalinist wedding cake architecture of the GDR's founding years, exemplified in Berlin's Stalinallee, and with the crowded tenements and back courtyards of traditional working class Berlin. Wolfgang Engler has described "the symbolic feeling of liberation" inspired by the original application of industrial construction methods in the GDR. The comparatively spacious and sunny *Plattenbauwohnungen*, with their modern kitchens and plumbing, offered a standard of living that was a welcome relief to East German workers accustomed to the crowding and deprivation of prewar tenements. Simone Hain describes this original intention of the P2, a prefabricated apartment building type that would come to dominate the built environment of the GDR, in terms of overcoming the crowded heaviness of traditional dwellings (Hain 6-7).<sup>8</sup> Beyond the modularity of the apartments themselves, the arrangement of the buildings and the open spaces between them captured a sense of spatial opening and possibility. Engler writes lyrically of the buildings along the second section of Berlin's Karl-Marx-Allee, the continuation of the renamed Stalinallee westward towards Alexanderplatz, built in the late 1960s,

...without being firmly linked to one another or arranged in a quadrangular fashion, they formed continually new figurations with one another depending on the perspective from which one viewed them. In this fashion, they encouraged their inhabitants to follow their lead and instead of fixed relationships to enter into relations that were mobile, flexible, soluble (Engler 58).

Engler links this newfound ethos of movement to the abolition of the traditional courtyard, and the resulting relaxation of the classical division between inside and outside into an ensemble of buildings arranged such that there was no such enclosed anterior space. Rather than a space of confinement, the new kind of courtyard became a sort of "open convention" (Engler 58). In cities like Hoyerswerda, on the other hand, consisting exclusively of newer construction and without a preexisting urban fabric, the claustrophobic space of the proletarian courtyard was less abolished than it was extended over the entire city, where the lawns were largely off-limits, and there was a lack of intimate, semi-private spaces in the midst of the barren openness of these same lawns. "The new showed itself in the provinces as rather cheap and monosyllabic," as opposed to the older cities like Berlin, where the *Plattenbau* marked, at least initially, a release from the density of the surrounding cityscape (Engler 59).

It is precisely the lack of coordination in the built environment that concerns Franziska. "Living here, working there, and leisure somewhere else entirely—and the communication, really where? Maybe on the bus or the tram?" Her question paraphrases a 1967 essay by Henselmann, where he bemoans the lack of the very flexible relationality between structures in the provincial new cities that Engler praises in the Karl-Marx-Allee. Henselmann writes, "The insistent horizontal spacing of apartment blocks does not correspond to the cooperation of people in our society," leading to the typical residential area the "unpleasant aftertaste of the standardized, that is to say an administered and decreed life," instead of expressing "The interaction of familiar and social spheres of life particular to socialism" (Henselmann 152). In their first conversation at a ball for municipal workers, Trojanovicz, who now drives a dump truck, provides a sharper critique, describing the city as a "settlement of TV caves," and declaring, "this city has fallen short of its function."

### 3. Feeling and Affect in Late Socialism

Trojanovicz's depiction of the city anticipates Heiner Müller's famous description of the *Platte* as "fuck cells with district heating" (Müller 132), highlighting the social anomie of real existing socialism. *Our Short Life* is likewise concerned with the built environment of the GDR as a space of amputated collectivity. In Reimann's literary treatment, this social impasse is treated in political and biographical terms, in terms of shared history and unshared life experience. Warneke's film treats this question much more on the level of feeling and affect. Boredom, aggression, suicide, alcoholism, and rape underlay a pathological normality in the film's representation of Neustadt, where we seldom see the intimate spaces of an interior, but rather anonymous rows of apartment houses stretching endlessly across the horizon. This is much more than a critique of the aesthetics of the GDR's new towns, but strikes at the very heart of the GDR's legitimacy as a workers'

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state, since boredom, violence, substance abuse, degraded mass culture, and so forth can “be diagnosed as so many results of a society unable to accommodate the productiveness of all its citizens” (Jameson 2004 38).

If, as mentioned above, Franziska represents something of a late socialist positive hero in the film it is precisely due to her determined insistence that East German society accommodates and makes use of her productiveness. She continually expresses the self-confidence of her training, informing Schafheutlin upon their acquaintance, “I have learned to fight against bad implementation, against complacency, and against intellectual laziness.” This is not merely self-confidence, however, but a socially committed sense of calling. As the film closes and Franziska learns that her planned city center will not be built, she salvages a photograph of Frau Hellwig (Barbara Dittus), the proprietress of the local pub and one of the many citizens who had previously thought of themselves as simply passing through the city, but have instead ended up stuck in the *Platte*.

Indeed, as Franziska attempts to find her way in late socialism, the dominant affective trope of the film becomes a sense of provisionality and this also applies to Reimann’s novel as well (Bivens). The unbraiding of the political project of the socialist homeland in the late GDR becomes spatialized in the GDR’s built environment in films like *Our Short Life* and *Island of Swans* as a kind of infinitely extended space without points of reference, orientation, or familiarity. In other words, what we are shown is the failure of the GDR to produce a sense of place, a felt sense of social, collective relational situatedness (Casey 23). As Emily Pugh puts it, “The SED could build houses, but it could not build homes” (149). The GDR’s built environment thus comes to reflect the GDR as a whole, inflecting the particular space time of late socialism as a waiting room, which Warneke stages through a series of documentary inserts of workers riding a bus, staring vacantly out the window, ceaselessly “on the way” without destination (Pugh 306). In this diurnal non-place, time itself becomes a problem. Is there too much? Too little? The problem of measuring the time of “our” time of life in the abstract, without the metric of social experience and historical learning process becomes insoluble for the characters of Warneke’s film. “I am 26 years old and have not yet lived,” Franziska muses, “only prepared for life.” Franziska’s insistence on *using* her time stands as a provocation to the film’s older characters, who share an experience of wounding that Franziska can feel but not know even as it shapes the world around her as one of ever-increasing “lock-ins.” Just as the capacity to shape the built environment of the GDR in variable and creative ways was increasingly limited throughout the 1980s by the increasing centralization of planning on the P2 building type (Pugh 140), Schafheutlin, Trojanovicz, Gertrud, and Frau Hellwig spin in ever smaller circles, as their radii of action become ever more limited and rehearsed, so that they each gradually become caricatures of the selves they might have been. Like Aristides, the fallen angel who instigated an uprising in heaven, these survivors of the shipwreck of socialist construction do not divulge their secrets (in the novel, they do), but instead inform Franziska in direct and indirect ways that she “will learn to live with less” and try to teach her how that is done. The film closes without decision, as did Reimann’s unfinished novel; we do not know if Franziska will develop what a colleague describes as the “correct measure for the evaluation of our success,” which requires “time and persistence,” or whether she will return to Reger, where she can work on representative buildings at the expense of participating in the spatial reshaping of the socialist everyday life. In either case, one is reminded of Kafka’s famous parable on parables, but this time in an inverted form, such that Franziska wins each time in the parable only to lose in reality.

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<sup>1</sup> On the 11th Plenary Session and the banned films, see Richter and Agde.

<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, translations are by the author.

<sup>3</sup> Fernsehen der DDR (DDR-FS), was the state owned television broadcaster in the GDR from 1972 to 1990.

<sup>4</sup> On the *Bitterfelder Weg*, see Gerlach and Mittenzwei.

<sup>5</sup> On the early history of Hoyerswerda, see Palutzki 148-186.

<sup>6</sup> On *Ankunft im Alltag* and the novel of arrival, see Hell.

<sup>7</sup> See Reimann 2001. On the *Neues Bauen*, see Hake.

<sup>8</sup> Not only were the furnishings to be modular, arranged in varying patterns according to the *Eigensinn* of the inhabitants, but the walls themselves were to be movable in order to encourage diverse living arrangements. These experiments were broken off for economic reasons, which officials concealed behind appeals to the taste of the working masses, presumptively uninterested in this kind of thing. The modular furniture of the early 1960s gave way by the 1970s to the heavy *Schrankwand* (wall unit) that is itself now an icon of GDR interior design (Hain 7-8, see also Engler 622-4).