In the midst of racist pogroms, East German workers striking to combat their exploitation by Western business, and the recently legalized eviction of asylum-seekers accused of draining the welfare state, the passing of a tightened abortion law in 1993, now among the most restrictive in Western Europe, aroused little popular attention or protest in Germany. Three years earlier, the question whether to maintain the liberal East German laws on reproductive rights, or the much more paternalistic legislation in the West, was explosive enough to threaten the unification proceedings. The abortion issue attained tremendous symbolic weight, because it had come to signify the progressive accomplishments of a regime denigrated as totalitarian and inhumane by triumphant West German conservatives. At the same time, the inability of women in both parts of the formerly divided country to avert the dismantling of the last “sociopolitical measure” in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) signals the rifts within feminist constituencies and critiques. The important role East German feminists had played in the “revolution” of 1989 failed to precipitate a unified and invigorated feminist movement and a more powerful negotiating position in the post-Wall patriarchy. While the threat to reproductive rights is not the central concern of this essay, it illustrates the very real effects the recent and ongoing rewriting of German history has on women, which I propose to trace in the domain of cultural production, through the discourses of feminist theater and performance.
Feminists now confront the questions of how far material equality between men and women had actually been achieved in the GDR; of how the ostensible equality of GDR-women relates to their resistance to large-scale and long-term feminist organizing, borne out by recent years; and of how socialist feminism which first emerged in that state during the mid-1970s and resurfaced in 1989, negotiated a patriarchal critique with a commitment to socialism. These troublesome questions revolve largely around the paradoxical structuration of socialist femininities in political and personal discourses, which is summarized by the misnomer “double burden.” Rather than describing one person working two jobs, it designates the practice of contradictory ideologies in public and in private: while the market and the law recognize no difference between the genders, the home is characterized by a sexual division of labor familiar from other, nonsocialist societies. This contradiction has grave consequences for the articulation of socialist subjectivities in the performance genres discussed here, which include the public discourse of the theater as well as the private but theatrical discourse of the so-called protocol. The protocol-genre arranges mostly anonymous testimonials into collective, oral histories which differ considerably from official accounts. It has predominantly been used by women, and highlights the discrepancies between dominant gender prescriptions and subjective experiences. Since the demise of the socialist state was arguably brought about by vast numbers of people sharing a dissatisfaction with the status quo that had never been publicly acknowledged or redressed, I believe that the personal documents collected in the protocol-volumes illuminate precisely those contradictions whose accumulation and intensification precipitated the ideological collapse. In the first section, a reading of two plays, Doris Paschiller’s One Great Family and Monika Maron’s Ada and Evald, shows the ways in which East German women experienced, addressed, or challenged the contradiction of the “double burden,” especially in view of the strict ideological control exerted by state agencies over public articulations of a political critique. The second section will examine GDR women’s representations of subjectivity in a collection of protocols, for their interpellative and/or critical function vis-à-vis official constructions of a socialist subject. These two sections are situated within the nascent feminist critique in the GDR during the 1970s and early 80s. The third section examines the female/feminist identities which emerged in the
protocols published between 1990 and 1991 and which revised the “private” mode of representation and address set up by the earlier texts.

At present, the dialogue between feminists from both sides of the former border is stalled. While GDR-feminists resent the admonitions of their capitalist “sisters,” West German feminists accuse their Eastern counterparts of complicity with a paternalistic state, thereby risking to duplicate the hegemonic dynamic of condemnation that has fanned the sociopolitical tensions of the last years. The East-West strife among German women illustrates the entanglement of feminist critiques with nationalist imperatives and constraints, which might prove instructive to a movement increasingly self-conscious about the multiple axes of power crisscrossing its heterogeneous constituencies.

During the 1970s, the contradiction between the promise of equality and the praxis of women’s socioeconomic disadvantage sharpened. The government expected women to shoulder the “double burden” of productive and reproductive labor, granting them economic equality in the marketplace, but failing to challenge domestic role-divisions. A calcifying bureaucratic apparatus continued to dispense an egalitarian rhetoric that was no longer implemented through social policies (contrary to official claims), nor experienced at the subjective level. In the mid-seventies, the burgeoning GDR women’s literature interpreted these contradictions as symptoms of patriarchal structures, even though the term “feminism” was used with great reluctance due to its Western baggage. The socialist feminist discourse which emerged in women’s writing suggested that gender difference and “female” alternatives might yield remedies to the current crisis when imagined concomitantly and dialectically to the state’s gender legislation and the principle of gender equality which were supported by women’s organizations. The nascent feminist literature provided not only insights and impulses in regard to the vicissitudes of gender in the GDR; it also yielded a fresh perspective from which to invoke a socialist utopia. That place of “innocence” which some feminists endeavored to carve out, however, was no vacant ideological space. Rather, it was fraught with cold war anxieties and taboos, and configured as adversarial to state socialism. Feminist literature, attempting to speak from a socialist perspective outside of “real existing socialism,” was caught in a defensive posture, constantly forced to prove its loyalty to a state that
suspected its authors of collaboration with the West German women's movement.

Women writers and literary critics in the GDR were visibly uncomfortable with the task of defining and evaluating a "women's literature" whose Western manifestation opposed its own, patriarchal-socialist society. As late as 1989, GDR-critic Ilse Nagelschmidt insisted on the "integrative" aim of socialist women's literature which advocates socialism rather than opposing it, illustrating feminists' effort at legitimation if not apology. Writers accepted the critique of the patriarchy as a peripheral contradiction and subordinated it to the utopia of communism, a goal shared by both genders. With this maneuver, GDR feminism reproduced some of the dominant culture's exclusions and blind spots.

Moreover, the innovative gesture of socialist feminist literature, namely the articulation of a radical critique of the patriarchy with the goal of fundamental social change, was not accompanied or sustained by any social movement. Women's fiction registered the missing base in the displacement of emancipatory impulses to the level of fantasy, the surreal and the grotesque, which by virtue of their subjective formulations gained access to the state-controlled, public repertoire of images. Women's plays were either censored when executing similar moves (Ada and Evald), or caught in the shackles of socialist realism (One Great Family). The small number of plays written by women during the 1970s and 80s demonstrate a shift from public discourse toward more personal modes of expression. They attest to women's desires, wishes, and utopian longings, but they also register the policing and suppression of those impulses. GDR women's literature, including the drama, functioned not only as a counter-discourse to the socialist patriarchy, but also as a dominant discourse vis-à-vis those who refused the politics of integration. This mechanism can be most clearly observed in the arena of sexuality, in which female noncompliance threatened the socialist subject's national allegiance. Here, difference from the sexual/socialist order was invoked only to be crossed out: alternatives are either deplored as an absence, marked as fantasy, or negated. Since the relation of the socialist subject to state ideology was cast in terms of compulsory heterosexuality, the exploration of political or sexual alternatives fell off the dramatic horizon.

Doris Paschiller's drama One Great Family (1975) retains the realist style, but turns the genre against the ideology it was meant to sustain. With depressing accuracy, the play traces the development of its protago-
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nist, Conny Rosen, who throws off the shackles of her marriage with much enthusiasm, only to settle for relationships which represent no great improvement. The formerly obligatory happy ending of the socialist realist drama, its sense of purpose, and its confidence in achieving utopian goals, are missing completely from Paschiller’s play. Instead, it exhibits an unprecedented sobriety in the face of obstacles and timespans looming ahead, and the realization of the sluggish pace of historical processes.

Sexual desire in women’s literature of the seventies and eighties measured the gap between individual happiness and social progress. Marriage as a symbol of calcified social structures, and women’s desire for self-determination could no longer be forced into harmony. The critique of marriage prompted the search for alternatives. In One Great Family Conny, who leaves her husband shortly after her thirteenth wedding anniversary, joins a group of students who spend most of their time in a bar. Her initial illusions about the fun life at the side of Victor are shattered when she becomes pregnant and Victor demands she have an abortion. The “great family,” which offers Conny a place but little sympathy, does not fulfill her hopes for a good future, but represents at best a first step away from the bad past. When Victor asks Conny in the final scene why she still comes to the bar, she answers: “Where else should I go? We are One Great Family, and we will run into each other wherever we go. And we’ll have to learn how to get along.”

The traditional roles which the nuclear family reproduces are not superseded by a socialist model of gender relations. Instead of providing ready-made utopias, the play offers a rough sketch of the possibility of “Menschwerdung” (becoming human), a frequent term in GDR women’s literature.

Conny’s journey from the privacy of her living room into the public space of the bar suggests the loose network of friendships and acquaintances as one social alternative to the nuclear family. Among these relations, female friendships, such as the bond between Conny and the singer Batseba, a single, independent woman, occupy a privileged position. Dependency and domination are replaced by the principle of support according to individual need, which requires a greater degree of maturity and sensitivity. In the GDR, where alternative life-styles were not encouraged and rarely practiced, Paschiller’s insistence on finding alternatives to marriage challenged patriarchal role divisions in the private sphere. However, the single woman who searches for an autonomous identity is always embedded in the context of the “great family,” so as to preempt
possible separatist or antisolcist interpretations. Thus, the critique of
the patriarchy remains within the bounds of reformist suggestions for
improvement, and gender roles continue to be securely locked within the
rhetoric of the family.

Monika Maron's drama *Ada and Evald*, which was published in a book
of short stories by a West German press in 1981, uses fantastic and
surreal elements in a style which aligns it with GDR women's fiction of
the time. By leaving the realist register, it not only suggests utopian
wishes, as in the "miracle" of the final tableau, but attempts to convey
gendered power structures through the means of allegory and metaphor. Its
fantastic images of desire explode realist representation and its con-
straints. The relationship between Ada and Evald appears torment
d and frozen in rituals. Only Ada's friend Clara, who falls out of the heterosex-
ual economy due to her size and weight, refuses the perpetual return of
the same. She breaks out of the patriarchal model of history which
constructs progress as humanity's victory over nature, by uniting herself
with a tree. Only a miracle can end the self-destructive dynamic of
"techno-scientific socialism" (an SED formula). That ideology has taken
the instrumentalization of reason to such extremes that its formerly eman-
cipatory thrust has turned into its opposite. Clara's fantastic wedding
signals the necessity for a solidarity of the oppressed; however, it also
risks duplicating the dominant equation of femininity with nature which
has sustained women's exclusion from political power and historical
agency.

Intimacy among women gained importance in female (self-)representa-
tions of that decade, but it also marks the limits of the socialist feminist
critique, delineating the borders where demands for integration run
counter to an emancipatory agenda. Brigitte Reimann's novel *Franziska
Linkerband*, which was adapted as a play in 1978, formulates the appeal
for female solidarity as an existential necessity when the protagonist's
girlfriend kills herself after Franziska turns to a man for love. Here,
the survival of the individual woman is at odds with the heterosexual
reproduction of the system that denies her subjecthood. The lesbian's
death marks heterosexuality as a choice with fatal consequences, sug-
gestin an alternative to homophobia and designating sexuality as a possi-
ble site of social change. The women writers' subscription to an ideology
to be realized together with the men is inscribed in their texts' commit-
ment to heterosexuality, even though its social institution, marriage, be-
came the target of criticism. In literary representations, heterosex became the arena of gender contestations where ideological constraints became the most visible.

Paschiller marks heterosexuality as the site of women's exploitation and oppression where patriarchal property relations prevail. With Batseba's dystopic demand for paid sexual intercourse — exempting those "capable of love" — Paschiller takes the idea of socializing reproductive services to the extreme, and thus foregrounds the limits of the egalitarian paradigm for feminist politics. The principle of economic equality as model for interpersonal relations is thrown into question, suggesting instead that the utopia of "love," modeled not on equality but on the "wish for fulfillment and self-determination," provides the ground for change in the socioeconomic realm as well.

Maron characterizes heterosexual frustration as a fundamental law, and sexual desire fosters the eroticization of passivity and stasis:

CLAIRCHEN: You're always babbling about love, sadly enough you don't know what you're talking about. You don't see the logic. Which is this: Ada waits for Evald because he doesn't love her. (To Ada) Why don't you wait for Suicy who loves you.

ADA: Because I don't love him.

CLAIRCHEN: Wrong. Because you'd have to stop waiting. And what would you do then?

This recognition mobilizes the women's sexual and political imagination so that they can break out of the loop of eroticized passivity, traditional femininity, and political stagnation. By marrying a tree, Clara leaves the level of human relationships, which can be read as a sign for unimaginable, unrepresentable sexualities. Her "love" emphatically marks a blank, utopian space in patriarchal discourse. In a dream scene, Ada rehearses liberation through a role-play in which she plays Evald, and Clara plays Ada. In this way, she comprehends and distances herself from ritualized behavior patterns and becomes capable of overcoming them. That step empowers her to reclaim the language which Evald and the patriarchal "word-thieves" have stolen from her. Freedom, longing, hope, happiness — terms that have been appropriated and instrumentalized by a stale political rhetoric, are recuperated from an imaginary position outside of socialist reality. Maron stages that wish, but marks it as unrealistic within extant gender and ideological structures, twice removed through the role-reversal within the dream. The breaking away from oppressive roles is
here dramatized in the interaction of two women; Evald’s cry for Ada at the end remains unanswered. Ada and Clara exemplify two alternatives to heterosexual constraints: while the former signals the refusal of traditional role expectations, the latter marks the leap into the unknown. Within the androcentric parameters of Maron’s drama, the women’s sexuality cannot be represented realistically. When Clara and Ada vanish from the dramatic horizon, women’s exclusion from cultural production is reinscribed into the text.

The production statistics show that feminist plays by women were rarely seen on the stage of GDR theater.¹⁴ The orchestration of “political” discourses by state agencies into public spectacles of consent, and the rising stakes of engaging in a public, political debate exemplified by the wave of expulsions after 1976, effected a change in sites of political articulation. In the absence of counter-cultural spaces, entire institutions in the GDR – such as the theater – became ideologically charged, and turned into potential sites of dissent. I will return to this point later in the essay. The legitimate theater posed the danger of illegitimate interpretations, and was therefore subjected to a high degree of censorship. The representation of contradictions between Party rhetoric and individual, lived experience could no longer occur in public, but was displaced to the “personal” genre of the testimonial. Protocol-collections such as Maxie Wander’s *Guten Morgen, Du Schöne* (Good Morning, Beautiful, 1978) became one construction-site for a critical socialist subject.¹⁵ The other locus, of course, was the prison and the insane asylum, where the drama of dissent and dissidence was staged covertly.

The protocol functioned as a particularly East German genre, by carving out a voice situated in and speaking from the realm of subjective experience which challenged official, monolithic formulations of a socialist subject.¹⁶ It lent itself to the articulation of gender contradictions which had been confined to the personal arena, barred from public visibility and political import. Wander’s landmark collection of women’s testimonials made an important contribution to identity politics in the GDR, carving out a female subject position that challenged the ostensibly gender-neutral concept of the socialist New Man, embodied by the worker-hero. As a document of women’s consciousness-raising in the GDR, it called attention to the tensions and discrepancies between public and private acts and experiences of gender, but most importantly, it questioned the egalitarian
paradigm as a valid political goal for the future of socialism. Couched in the terms and language of personal experience, Wander’s critique of real existing socialism was better equipped to address the shortcomings of dominant gender ideology than the public discourse of the drama, although Christa Wolf’s claim that the protocol does not obey the rules of literature, and escapes the trap of self-censorship seems somewhat disingenuous. The book’s ostensibly apolitical, often lyrical tone exemplifies the “cunning of slave language, the outsmarting of the censor” which Andreas Huyssen notes in regard to subjective, literary discourses in the GDR. The collection deployed a “private” style and mode of address that endeavored to recover and mobilize precisely those energies and impulses that had been excluded from political discourses and which Wolf, who wrote the introduction, regarded as essential for the improvement, even survival, of a socialist society. Central to this enterprise, as in much socialist women’s fiction at the time, are dreams, visions, and fantasies. They mark what has been suppressed, censored, and rendered impossible. “When I am continually prevented to deviate from the prescribed path, at home, at school, at work, in politics, even in love, it makes me angry and drives me back into the dream,” says one of them. But the dream also points to the hopes, to the longing for alternatives to a flawed reality which these women imagine, and which suggest a politics of “love.” That term, partially evacuated from its patriarchal, romantic meanings, and operating as a utopian notion in socialist-feminist discourse, marks the potential of solidarity and community that was lost in the progress of “techno-scientific socialism,” and which Christa Wolf calls “sisterliness” in her Introduction.

Last night, I had one of my Kafka-dreams. I always have those when I’m about to die of thirst. A dream of tender love with someone whose face I do not see. And so, early in the morning I run into the city where it is the most crowded, and I want to find him again. But I have a big belly and old breasts, and it is too late. I have dreamt of this man since I was a child, and I still have this longing for the absolute. (20)

Thus begins Wander’s collection of women’s voices. The displacement of the longing for absolute fulfillment by the dream calls attention to subjective and objective mechanisms of censorship which jettisons Lena K.’s desire from the realist register and articulates it in the language of irrationalism. Lena’s longing for “love” indicates a reorientation from the politics of equality to one of difference, sensuality, and wholeness, as
Wolf suggests in her Introduction. By offering “love” as a remedy, this first paragraph posits a radical challenge to the rationalized, patriarchal system.

The intimate explorations of socialist subjectivity, while purporting to “speak privately,” actually created a performative, quasi-dramatic genre built on dialogue, diversity, and collective enunciation. In her preface Wander emphasizes the collection’s function of rendering audible what had gone unheard, but also wants to provoke resistance, asking her readership to engage in a productive reception of the texts (7).

The seventeen protocols collected by Wander chart a feminist departure from socialist gender ideology. The volume sets out with the voices of exemplary socialist women whom the GDR’s gender policies and programs have turned into successful, self-assured, and unquestioning party members. Lena K.’s biography, the first piece in the anthology, provides a point of departure for Wander’s critical project. As an academic, party functionary, and mother of three, Lena epitomizes the successful GDR-woman, yet her report throws the accomplishments of socialist femininity into doubt. Lena describes her life as highly instrumentalized: “All of that [her professional, political, and sexual success] is only possible if I can organize and discipline myself, yes, if I become as functional as a machine” (32). In conforming to patriarchal standards of effectivity, she duplicates the most stereotypically derogatory evaluations of her own gender. While Lena K. never questions her gender identification, the reader is led to ask if male standards guarantee a fulfilled life. Her story marks the limit of the egalitarian ideology, and signals the longing and search for alternatives which run through the following pieces.

The largest group of protocols presents those whose lives deviate from the norm, and who raise criticism of “real existing socialism” as a stagnant set of rules rather than a system inspiring its citizens with the spirit of collectivity. Students protest the all-too-orderly process of socialization in the schools. Women who have achieved all the system has to offer, like the physicist Margot W. who has turned to painting, question and reject it. Rosi S., a secretary, questions the decreed historical optimism and sense of accomplishment touted by the party when she describes socialism as a house with red wallpaper: “When you scratch the red color, all the old crap comes to light, one layer beneath the other, back to the times of the empire” (70). Rosi views the current ideology as a thin veneer that has
replaced previous belief systems in name only, not in actual behavior. She contends that socialist society has failed to cope with its fascist past, by encouraging conformism and dogmatism instead of curiosity, risk-taking, and the courage to change. Yet her criticism is founded on a communist sense of solidarity and commitment. Change, she contends, must be motivated by love, whether for oneself, one's partner, or society.

A sizable number of protocols exhibit the damage extant conditions have done to women, in effect turning them into subjects incapable of socialism and precariously close to bourgeois gender ideology. Several of them inhabit the newly constructed sleeper cities of the industrialized Southeast. In critical GDR-literature, these so-called “newtowns” had come to represent techno-scientific socialism at its worst, turning the promise of a new beginning, affordable comfort, and communality into concrete nightmares reflecting the bureaucratic response to economic exigencies. While Ruth B. responds to her alienated existence with despair, others, like Doris L., demonstrate the commodity-oriented mentality fostered by such an environment. Doris associates happiness with a pair of expensive boots, illustrating the loss of utopia on the subjective level of imagination and desire.

Sexuality operates as a differentiating factor between the “true” and the “real existing” socialists: while Rosi and Margot are erotically voracious, Doris is frigid. Overall, the book displays a range of sexual experiences, expressions, and desires, extending from same-sex attraction to promiscuity and open relationships, which challenges the sanctioned, monogamous norm. Wander renders the ideological crisis of the GDR in the mid-seventies in the language of sexuality, offering a specifically socialist manifestation of the feminist tenet that the personal is political. Good Morning, Beautiful reveals the sexual hierarchy in socialist Germany, toppled by the privileged practice of heterosexual monogamy, as a collective collusion not unlike the petrified dogmas sustaining the political hierarchy and its party functionaries. The protocols suggest that a sexual ideology which insures the division of erotic practices into correct and incorrect, moral and immoral ones through surveillance and self-censorship, prevent rather than facilitate the identification of individuals with the larger social order. The student Susanne T., who is taught in school to repeat party rhetoric but watches Western television at home, parallels Angela N., who lies to her parents about her sexual activity, and feels contempt for them because of the hypocrisy they solicit. The perpetua-
tion of oppressive morals is not ascribed to state repression, but rather to the individual, quotidian reproduction of outdated values and inhibitions.

Wander deflects the danger of autonomous, female sexualities or bonds between women, by focusing on the compensatory effects of friendships between women. The girlfriend, albeit the object of erotic desire at times, as Lena K. and Barbara F. report, is often the only source of solidarity, help, and care in a life otherwise devoid of love, as is the case with Doris L. The most noteworthy document in this respect is certainly the piece “The Grandmother,” in which the 74-year-old Berta H., who otherwise does not think highly of her fellow females, speaks of her intimate connection with the women of her large family. On the one hand, this protocol highlights the regenerative effects of those bonds which benefit the hard-working women but ultimately sustain the system which oppresses them. On the other hand, Berta H.’s long life exemplifies real changes in women’s living conditions, which is probably why the piece was accorded the place of honor at the end of the book. The improvements which socialism brought to women are illustrated by Berta’s daughter-in-law Anna who “participated in the progress of the village” and, despite continual pregnancies, worked for the establishment of a school, a kindergarten, and a community laundry. “I raised eight of her children, one died when it was only a few weeks old. Anna started out in the cow-barn, then she worked in the fields. Now she drives the new harvester-threshers. She could only do all of those things because of me, the grandmother” (192). Berta’s sacrifices have contributed to the eradication of those circumstances which made them necessary: her grandchildren already have “real jobs and don’t understand what hardships we went through” (193).

Finally, the book includes the voices of those whose lives testify to the accomplishments of the GDR. Berta H. and Karoline O. are older women whose biographies cross ideological divides. Their personal knowledge of the past places the socialist state, despite all its flaws and shortcomings, in historical perspective as the most beneficial, egalitarian, and just model of human organization. Overall, however, Wander’s collection pays remarkably little attention to the past, focusing instead on the present and the future. References to West Germans are uniformly negative, assuaging the fear that a feminist critique implies an outside perspective and a conspiracy with capitalist women.

Wander turned personal narratives into poetic literature while main-
taining the fiction of authenticity. That technique was able to sidestep censorship, since any overtly political references are missing from the text, yet as a whole the collection throws into doubt the patriarchal assumptions underlying socialist gender legislation. It stresses the necessity to break the silence concealing individual differences, doubts, questions, experiments, errors, and variations in the process of becoming socialist. The book issued a call to replace egalitarianism as the foundational paradigm of socialism, with the acknowledgment and celebration of diversity. Wander's collection stresses the necessity to mobilize individual fantasies and efforts for a shared ideological goal, if the socialist state did not want to put that very goal at risk. While criticizing "real existing" structures and practices, feminist literature like Wander's collection took over the task of ideological interpellation which the state and its apparatuses performed with increasing difficulty.

*Good Morning, Beautiful* applied categories of "private" experiences to public discourse when it suggested a politics proceeding from love and "sisterliness." It also politicized the private as the realm of emotions and energies the state couldn't afford not to tap as a powerful, national resource. Endeavoring to do just that, Wander's book, while expanding the parameters of gender performance, duplicated certain silences and invisibilities within dominant discourse. Only with hindsight do the omissions become apparent. Despite the many erotic moments between women, representations of lesbian sexualities or life-styles are missing from this book, along with those dissident voices who did not share in the unspoken consensus of Wander's interviewees, that socialism, despite its many flaws, was in any case preferable to capitalism.\(^{22}\) Like the drama, the protocol refrained from depicting nonheterosexual desires or inter-generational bonds among women, which took center stage in Western feminist discourse of the 1970s. Feminist literature in the GDR never contested the homophobic casting of the female subject's commitment to an ideology administered by men in the terms of heterosexuality. Women writers challenged the dominant conflation of criticism with sabotage, yet implicitly agreed that a sexuality not oriented toward men was treason. Ursula Sillge's book *In-Visible Women*, published in 1991, excavates a history of lesbian persecution in the GDR, which is based on that assumption.\(^{23}\)

*Good Morning, Beautiful* created a space for the discussion of questions and conflicts concerning gender — a space which the theater denied them.
Twelve years later, GDR women authors responded to Wander with the book *Good Night, Beautiful*, continuing the dialogue among and about women in socialism. Many small and studio theaters recognized the dramatic potential of this “pre-literary” genre. They used it by putting Wander’s women on stage, thereby creating further opportunities for a dialogue between women and enabling them to touch across biographies and experiences. In her Introduction, Wolf called attention to the polylogical aspect of the collection. She could not foresee the extent of cross-talk initiated by Wander, which would span the decades. Its subjective and collective mode of communication carved out a cultural space that Wolf described as “more spontaneous[,] also more sociabl[e] than the structures of the novel or the drama.” \(^{24}\)

Wander’s protocols created an alternative performance site to the state theater, not only in terms of content, but especially in terms of a communicative structure based on a multiplicity of voices, on contradiction during and across moments of enunciation, and the informal articulation of individual and collective utopias. Collections like Wander’s stimulated and participated in the informal, but highly reliable networks of communication located in the private sphere. In 1989, Nagelschmidt noted the difficulties and pleasures involved in buying feminist books and discussing them with friends.\(^{25}\) They attest to the transformation of the private sphere into a growing site of civic consciousness and responsibilities, which has prompted many East European feminists to recast the public/private split in terms of state and family as more appropriate to political culture in socialist societies.\(^{26}\) In the following section, my reluctance to adopt these terms will become clear, since the 1980s witnessed the emergence of semi-public, quasi-political spaces and relations. Although feminism, or any of the other oppositional practices that emerged during the 1980s, was not formally recognized for the political alternatives it suggested, since political decision making remained the sole prerogative of the state, women’s consciousness-raising was no longer restricted to the family or the home.

In the turbulent years around reunification, the protocol as a genre based on collective memory, and by virtue of its collage-like, fragmentary shape, proved congenial to addressing a society in transition. It accommodated the need to rethink the past and come to terms with it, often in painful processes of confrontation and self-examination. The fragmentation and proliferation of identities that occurred around reunification is signaled
by the newly specialized identities of their speakers. In the years 1990 and 1991, there appeared a collection of lesbian protocols, an anthology of theater women’s voices, and a book of letters and dialogues by women writers, in addition to the three books of testimonials by what is still simply identified as “GDR women,” indicating a sense of liberation from the leveling effects of egalitarianism, even as they testified to the devastating effects the erosion of social equality had on women’s biographies.27 In the following section, I will focus on two of those collections. The anthology You Can’t Make a State Without Us (1990) matches Wander’s book in its range of ages, regions, and social strata, and exceeds it because it includes many voices that had been suppressed.28 The book I Am My Own Capital (1991) traces the impact of the historic changes on the lives and experiences of women in East Berlin theater.29

These archeological texts,30 chronicling a system that has ceased to exist but continues to shape the lives of its former citizens, now make possible an assessment of gender and sexuality in the GDR as acts performed in the interstices of official policies and individual realization.31 They also track the subjective effects of reunification on a population that was particularly hard hit by processes of rationalization, both in the sense of dropping to the bottom of the economic scale, and in the sense of being cast as a stand-in for socialism at large, as the popular discourses around abortion rights have illustrated once again. The feminization of socialism, which has become particularly pronounced in the 1990 controversy around Christa Wolf, is one important aspect of a larger dynamic that can be observed in present inter-German relations, namely the shift from political debate and controversy to moralizing admonitions, confessions, and absolutions.32 The interpretation of state socialism as the direct heir of the Third Reich, facilitated by the already existing cold war rhetoric of totalitarianism, was dramatized in the ubiquitous talk-show-trials on television, which recreated the post–World War II tribunals.33 Such a scenario, in which West German “hosts” played judge and jury, cast its Eastern “guests” in the role of defendants who must prove their innocence. That task became increasingly difficult since the interrogation tended to repeat the self-righteous question “why did you stay?” and implied that the only “good” GDR citizens were the ones who had abdicated their citizenship, or at the very least their party membership.

In the historical context of reunification, the term “protocol” took on the ominous overtones of trial records. Especially in the later volume,
Insofar as interviewees identified with the role assigned to them, the subjective documents presented in these anthologies merely reflect the power dynamic between East and West which was perpetually reenacted in the mass media. However, in the absence of public media that conveyed the perspective of East Germans and enabled a dialogue among them about their own history, the protocols contributed to the task of “collecting diverse views of GDR history” (108). Together, these anthologies assemble a mosaic of observant, critical, sometimes dissident subjectivities which eschewed the rhetorical ruts illustrated by a joke circulating in East Berlin in 1990, that “at present, 15 million resistance fighters are persecuting 15 million stalinists” (50). The period from February 1990 to November 1991 covered by the two anthologies records the turning of relief and self-confidence into guilt and shame—subjective responses to the larger economic, ideological, and cultural developments in the wake of the GDR state.

You Cannot Make a State Without Us records the voices of GDR women during February and March of 1990, a time when the oppositional citizens’ groups were operating in high gear toward the pending elections which would decide the GDR’s future. It was also a time of vigorous feminist organizing in the newly founded Unabhängiger Frauenverband (UFV, Independent Women’s Union), the umbrella organization for a growing number of women’s groups. The anthology, edited by two self-described feminists from either side of the former Iron Curtain, acknowledges its allegiance to the GDR women’s movement in its title (which quotes the UFV’s manifesto), in its concern with feminist issues (from the GDR’s sociopolitical measures to underwear and sexual practices), and in its choice of interviewees, some of whom were longtime feminist activists. The collection captures the brief moment of East-West feminist collaboration despite ideological differences. Lux/Fischer’s book attempts a historical retrospective of the GDR; they deploy a feminist critique that is clearly historicized as socialist in order to map a broad terrain of political subjectivities. Their joint venture also foreshadowed the differences between Eastern and Western feminism which led to the present strife and stall. “Whether a woman likes or dislikes her breasts is no longer interesting to [Western] feminists,” East German journalist Petra Lux remarks wryly, and begs to differ. Nanette Funk points out that terms like
"women's equality" were "associated with contempt and disrespect for women, rather than commitment to women's dignity and equal worth as persons"; after the collapse of state socialism, many Eastern feminists wished to explore women's difference in the context of the newly created women's culture.34 To West German feminists, that project seemed dated, contributing to the prejudice that East German women were "behind" and had to be taught about feminism. Lux's Austrian collaborator Erica Fischer writes, "My superior technical equipment, my childlessness, my political inactivity secured me advantages which my conscience did not always bear easily." Other Western feminists were less self-critical when they regarded their Eastern sisters as liabilities rather than partners in a shared learning process.

The differences of both volumes from Wander's collection shed some light on the (self-)censorship to which the earlier book had been submitted, but also on the changes in GDR culture since the publication of Good Morning, Beautiful. The women who speak to Lux/Fischer and Ullrich neither share a commitment to the defunct socialist state, nor to socialist ideology. Some mourn the end of the SED regime while continuing to believe in the Marxist critique, others question the survival of "the idea" without people to realize it; most express relief at the demise of the regime. In contrast to Wander, the women in State bracket neither politics nor sexuality in same-sex relationships. The collection provides a sense of the many ways in which women's feminist (and other critical) practices destabilized the socialist state and, conversely, were hampered by it in myriad ways in addition to being outright persecuted. The collections reveal histories of political repression and dissidence, eschewing the division between private and public in which Wander had largely participated. Avoiding the impression of an "army of resistance fighters," they nevertheless attempt to excavate those biographies that are at risk to be twice suppressed: once as political undesirables under socialism, and again after reunification, when West Germans granted dissident status to a select few while condemning the GDR population at large.

The focus of the collection is on the uncovering of feminist identities and organizations at odds with the hierarchical structures of the SED as well as the male-dominated "revolutionary" citizens' groups. The feminist biographies in State are characterized as a series of struggles with institutions as well as internalized gender roles. The critique of patriarchal structures frequently moves across various sites of resistance. In the case
of Petra L., that includes opposition to xenophobia, whereas the SED's lip service to "international solidarity" did nothing to end the exclusion of and discrimination against foreigners living in the GDR. The formation of critical identities, however, was continually checked by state control and intimidation. Salomea G., a German Jew who returned to the GDR after years of exile in Australia, testifies to the difficulties of organizing a women's consciousness-raising group in the late 1970s: after a few weeks and great fluctuation among participants, "only four women were left, and two of them, perhaps even three, were sent by the secret police or at least reported back to them. Of course, that is not the right atmosphere for consciousness raising" (137). Salomea's experience calls attention to the changing political topography of the GDR in the 1980s. The state and its security agencies created (or at least condoned) certain pockets of social space that were designated "oppositional," "resistant," or "critical." Officially, they were outside of its purview, but nevertheless remained under its surveillance. The Church played an important role in this scenario, since much of the oppositional activity during the late 1970s and 80s took place under its aegis, including feminist, pacifist, environmentalist, and homosexual organizations. At the same time, the state quelled the spontaneous, uncontrolled expression of dissenting subjects and practices. Ursula Sillge, co-founder of the first nonchurch-affiliated gay/lesbian club in the GDR, reports the SED's attempts to sabotage that enterprise, preferring homosexuals to remain within the already existing associations sponsored by the Church. In this way, the state carefully engineered the invisibility of its dissenting citizens, while allowing some measure of disagreement. By tracking the state's attempts at ideological containment, the protocols note its failures.

Lux/Fischer's protocols map a complicated notion of sexual politics, no longer bound by the monogamous, heterosexual mandate to which Wander had subscribed. Neither do they add up to a naive sexual glasnost, in which a range of "liberated," open sexualities supplants the socialist state's instrumentalization of women's reproductive capacities and its tendency to restrict and make taboo erotic expression. The women in State describe the impoverishment and alienation of sexual relations subordinated to the state's agenda of population growth. The most illuminating testimonial in this respect is a text entitled "My life is messed up" by the 45-year-old Silvia, an office worker in East Berlin. She points to the contradiction between the state's liberal sociopolitical measures and the
lack of eroticism: “The joy of sex, sex as pleasure, was a taboo topic. It wasn’t that the pill and officially sanctioned abortion rights created an openness for such an idea. . . . Day care and the kindergarten, all that worked out well so that these young mothers became something like breeding machines” (38). She concludes, “there was no eroticism, no humor, no drive. The uniformity of our lives has broken the men and made them indifferent” (40). She is excited by sex shops, lingerie, pornos, dildos, and vibrators, all of which have for the first time become readily available to GDR citizens after the opening of the borders. Feeling cheated out of individualized options for erotic pleasure, Silvia constructs a narrative of sexual liberation that peaks in Beate Uhse’s sex toy imperium, a chain which rapidly expanded eastward after reunification. Reacting against a lifetime of egalitarian gender ideology which, to her mind, turned women into “worker bees,” Silvia’s longing for the celebration of difference culminates in the dream of complementary gender roles and codes of behavior, of gentlemen holding open doors and ladies in makeup and fancy clothes.

Others, like the canteen manager Johanna B., are more critical of the “liberation” the West has to offer. At a West German train station, she was asked by three different men to turn a trick, which appalled her, because it illustrates the benefits of “sexual freedom” for men but not necessarily for women. Her own experiences testify to a remarkable degree of sexual autonomy. Johanna reports that one day (before unification), her husband had bought an expensive porno magazine on the black market: “He paid 60 Marks for it in a bar. I said, I’ll cut your allowance for next week” (119). This remark highlights the contradiction between female self-confidence bought at the expense of a puritanical, sex-negative egalitarianism on the one hand, and sexual liberation purchased for the price of gender inequality as well as class differences on the other. Textile workers in a plant now manufacturing underwear for the prestigious West German Schiesser brand illustrate the same contradiction: their latest product, named “Slipididu,” is more attractively designed than the simple ribbed knickers of previous decades, which only came in two variations: pink and beige. Yet the women can no longer afford the sexy panties they sew, and it is questionable whether their sex lives will improve much, considering their increased anxiety and sheer exhaustion resulting from higher productivity norms. Silvia’s interpretation of egalitarianism captures the social implications of instrumentalized sexuality: “If a girl
doesn't take the pill and has a child at age 16, well, she has a child. There is no finger-pointing, not even if she's unmarried, not even if she has a black baby. That is indifference, no one cares” (38). In view of the resurgence of sexism, discrimination against single mothers, and racism since then, her assertion points to the limits of sexual liberation under capitalism. The protocols in State, by recording subjective damages resulting from a rationalistic ideology and instrumentalized social practice, and by refraining from giving or implying solutions (as Wander had done), called for sexual experimentation during a time of political change. Their open-endedness registers the brief period of much-needed reflection and search for alternatives, which was short-circuited by the March 1990 elections when the East German population voted overwhelmingly for the West German ruling party, the conservative Christian Democrats.

The groups whose histories are loosely sketched in Lux/Fischer's protocols developed a feminist critique of the socialist patriarchy and its contradictions which shaped the most intimate experiences of gender. The women who in 1989 organized in the UFV participated in the project of the opposition movement, namely to formulate an agenda for building democratic socialism. In addition, they recognized the importance of creating alternative forms of political organization, exemplified by the round table, minimal consensus, collective reflection — and quotas.36 In the course of those months, however, feminist activists and programs were progressively marginalized “through the streamlining of politics towards professionalization and efficiency,” resulting in a re-masculinization of politics.37

In the liminal moment between socialism and capitalism, Lux/Fischer assembled heterogeneous subjectivities and accounts of GDR history. In State, the women take stock of a system that imposed difficulties and hardships on most of its citizens, as well as dispensing privileges to some. Many voice resentment at having been cheated out of material comfort, as well as professional or life-style choices. However, even in the deeply disorienting year of 1990, most women in State pride themselves on having managed their personal and professional lives in a competent manner. In the face of looming unemployment, loss of financial security, and ideological reorientation, many refuse to be pressured into quick decisions, but take the time to withdraw and recenter themselves. That step indicates a still-intact sense of security which is missing from Capital, assembled only a few months later. Despite the fear of an uncertain future
which pervades most protocols, the optimistic title of *You Can’t Make a State Without Us* is programmatic, exuding a sense of self-assurance and confidence that is shared by some of the women Renate Ullrich began interviewing in October 1990. However, the sense of productive contradiction gradually fades from the later collection. The differentiated reckoning with forty years of GDR history is superseded by examinations of one’s own complicity and guilt, which accompanied the daily, horrifying revelations of party mismanagement and abuse of power.

The contradictory evaluations and conclusions offered by the protocols in *State* illuminate a politicized terrain of personal experience, engagement, and activism which defies the impression conveyed by Western media, that the opposition movement in the GDR had suddenly sprung into existence in 1989. However, Lux/Fischer’s attention to dissident biographies, a much-needed project, may lead one to romanticize the events of the fall of 1989, or to overestimate the practice of resistance garnered from *State*. In 1991, sociologist Hildegard Maria Nickel, a prominent figure in GDR women’s studies, flatly stated that the GDR women’s movement had done too little too late. Whether that is correct or not (and Wilke’s analysis would suggest a different explanation for the UFV’s failure to impact the political apparatus), it appears useful and necessary to investigate those subjects who were predisposed to voicing criticism and who, in the fall of 1989, stood at the forefront of political change, and examine their relation to a feminist critique of the socialist state. Renate Ullrich’s book *I Am My Own Capital*, published by the Center for Theater Documentation and Information, illustrates the East German notion of theater work as social work and, at best, as political activism, which also motivated the Center’s publication of the collected flyers, public letters, and pamphlets produced by theater artists during the fall of 1989, when artists were instrumental in creating public forums for discussions, both in the theater and in the street, turning the latter into a “tribunal of the people.” The protocols collected by Ullrich, a theater scholar from East Berlin, map the arrangement of critical, even oppositional subjects within a paternalistic provider state, elucidating that paradox which, I believe, explains in part the opposition movement’s failure to bring about the renewal of socialism, as well as the swift implementation of capitalist principles and structures. My reading of Ullrich’s protocols is guided by the assumption that indeed, democratic socialism would not have been possible without a challenge to patriarchal structures, as
the UFV (and Lux/Fischer) had asserted. However, just as it is important to resist the tendency to heroize the dissident speakers in _State_, I would similarly refuse to dismiss Ullrich’s partners as accomplices.

Assembled roughly a year after _You Cannot Make a State Without Us, I Am My Own Capital_ records not only the growing fears and existential uncertainty of its subjects, but also a changed outlook on the past. The sense of an exploding multiplicity of voices and perspectives which characterizes _State_ is gradually replaced by the discovery of a shared identity as a GDR woman, a process that parallels the dismantling of the East German state, its institutions, and social programs. Although both Ullrich and her interlocutors have lived in East Germany, the editor stages a series of East-West confrontations by phrasing her questions in the language of West German feminism. Since only one identifies as a feminist, feminism in this collection serves in some ways as a stand-in for the Western system with which the theater artists have to contend, and the women’s responses to Western feminist rhetoric frequently reflect the refusal to believe in any system of organized thought. “Another social utopia? Not for me,” says the young actress Gabriele Streichhahn who tries to survive with a one-woman show (122). That disillusioned stance in part undergirded East German women’s reluctance to mobilize against their disenfranchisement under West German law.

Ullrich’s interviewees report the first tangible impact of capitalism on their lives, including unemployment and loss of child care. They record their first confrontations with homeless people and beggars in the streets and on stage, and they report their reactions to the resurgence of anti-Semitism and racism. The women describe their theaters’ efforts to cope with lack of funding, changed audiences, and a new role in a society that no longer privileged literature or theater and in which the stage had to compete suddenly with modern technology and mass-produced entertainment and information.

The production hierarchy of the theater provides an apt metaphor for social apparatuses in the GDR, foregrounding the subjective, individual re/production of power relations while maintaining a focus on the material conditions framing them. The women in _Capital_ address notions of collectivity, responsibility to an audience, and commitment to continued experimentation, but also questions of privilege and complicity, of arranging oneself with a bureaucracy pursuing a politics of inhibition, intimida-
tion, and prevention. These concerns are similar to the ones dominating the culture-at-large. Whereas the majority of women is critical of the institutionalized curtailment of the “creative, subversive” aspect of art, few are willing or able to articulate power differences in terms of patriarchal oppression (107). Ullrich, borrowing vocabulary from West German theater women, raises issues such as the gendered division between actor and director, women’s performance of roles written by male playwrights, the relation between actresses as professional gender role models and spectators, and female/feminist perspectives of history. Only a small number of interviewees recognizes the rivalry between actresses competing for a scarcity of roles, and the dependency on male directors and administrators for patronage and support as instances of patriarchal injustice. Trained in applying materialist categories to social relations, several acknowledge covert financial disadvantage and deplore the shortage of “good” roles for women. In the course of the book, they also point to the effects of capitalism on women, at the same time that they refuse to be driven into an adversarial position toward men. Unfortunately, it would seem that these women’s solidarity with their male comrades is unilateral, as the changing status particularly of women from the erstwhile GDR in the united Germany has shown.

The organization of the theater sheds light on two distinct modes in which power relations and socialist subjects were produced in the GDR. On the one hand, the theater, like other bureaucratic apparatuses run by party functionaries, operated as a technology of repression, meting out privileges to those who demonstrated compliance, and censoring the (political and dramatic) representation of dissident subjects. Capital provides numerous examples of biographies shaped by cultural-political repression and continual hindrances. Brigitte Soubeyran concludes that critical intelligence was usually punished and harangued, while mediocre opportunism was consistently rewarded.

On the other hand, the theater was defined as an institution that resisted state ideology, a position which was able to absorb the emotional and political energies of its participants and effectively solicit socialist identifications. Theater artists had worked under a stable system of censorship and oppositional readings, which produced stable, dissident subjects defined by way of their distance from official ideology. While relying on an adversarial relationship toward the state as the common, unspoken
referent in the performers’ interaction with the audience — a constellation that is now thrown into crisis — the theater institution is based on internal homogeneity, continuing to duplicate within its own walls the male-dominated hierarchy that characterizes the political culture at large. Bonding on the basis of their shared resistance to external pressures, its members resisted any critiques they perceived as divisive. That structure prevented a feminist challenge to the male-dominated theater apparatus, and neutralized critical impulses not directed against the enemy outside. In this way, these oppositional identities themselves served to stabilize a system built on unequal access to authority and power.

The designation of the theater as a critical, even dissident space left other axes of power, such as gender, unquestioned, and purchased stable, “oppositional” identities at the price of a feminist perspective or critique. Unlike the feminists introduced by Lux/Fischer, most of Ullrich’s interlocutors agree with the official doctrine that in the GDR, the secondary contradiction of gender inequality has been resolved. As artists, many of these women belonged to a somewhat privileged class, often enjoying the opportunity to travel even to Western countries and a measure of financial security unknown to most Western actors or directors. Like the sociopolitical measures that secured women’s financial independence, these privileges had not been negotiated or fought for, but constituted rewards that were dispensed from above, assuring the acquiescence, even gratitude, of those who benefited from the paternalistic “provider state.”

That system facilitated these women’s arrangement within extant power structures. The “provider economy” fostered an attitude which, according to GDR cultural critic Irene Dölling, was largely responsible for the lack of a sustained feminist critique or movement that could have halted the disappearance of the GDR’s social net, of which the latest instance is the recent abortion ruling.

At the same time that Ullrich endeavors to record “diverse views of GDR history,” her book charts the shrinking cultural/political ground for such a project. The signposts of politicized biographies, including party or dissident activism, which Lux/Fischer had noted, tend to slip into justifications of party membership and a litany of dates of dissociation. Nevertheless, the protocol offers a feminist historiographical model, not only in its concern with women’s issues and organizations, but in focusing on the margins of the dominant melodrama of cold war heroes and
villains, and salvaging what has already fallen victim to the rationalization of postwar German history. Finally, these documents allow for a rigorous assessment of the question whether we as materialist feminists discard the notion of women's emancipation based on legal and economic equality, or, in the words of feminist scholar Frigga Haug, "[i]n rejecting the former model of socialism, are we dismissing a model of women's emancipation whose fruits we have yet to harvest." The growth of feminist movements in Eastern European countries, shaped by decades of socialist rule as well as diverse indigenous traditions, has produced feminist strategies which differ drastically from those addressed to late capitalism. Since so many of the central assumptions held by materialist feminists in capitalist countries rest on notions that were part of hegemonic, and often oppressive, practices, women's experiences in socialist systems cannot but inflect and inform the theorizing and politicking of Western feminists as well. I believe that the personal and critical documents charting socialist feminism, a frequently effaced discourse, offer a position of critical intervention in the current creation of a post-Communist world order in the arenas of national, parliamentary politics, East-West leftist debates, and international dialogue among feminists.

NOTES

I wish to thank the Henschelverlag in East Berlin, especially Maria Tragelehn, for generously granting me access to their archive.

3. In 1971, the eighth congress of the ruling Socialist Unity Party (SED) confirmed the return to traditional role divisions by assigning reproductive work to women. The family code of law, which was passed in 1965, had already signaled the reversal of earlier policies designed to integrate women into the labor force and socialize reproductive labor. In contrast, the family code of law reassigned primary responsibility for housework and child-rearing to women. See Susanne Stolt, "Leitbilder — Leidbilder: Zur Frauen- und Familienpolitik der SED," in Irmtraud Morgner's Hexische Weltfahrt, ed. Kristine von Soden (Berlin: Elefanten Press, 1991), 92–100.
4. The official, party-affiliated women’s organization was the Demokratischer Frauenbund Deutschlands (DFD, Democratic Women’s Union of Germany), founded in 1947.


8. Irina Liebmann, another young author who began to write during the mid-eighties, resembles Maron in the use of those techniques. In her plays too, surreal images function allegorically. Quatschfresser: Theaterstücke (Frankfurt: Frankfurter Verlaganstalt, 1990).


14. Peter Reichel, “Anmerkungen zur DDR-Dramatik seit 1980. Teil 1,” Weimarer Beiträge 29, no. 8 (1983). In my research at the archives of the drama publisher Henschelverlag, I have found only six plays by GDR women written between 1975 and 1985, four of which address gender issues. Maron’s plays were published in West Germany. It should be noted that these figures do not accurately represent women’s dramatic production during this timespan, because other publishing houses sometimes published plays. In addition, some theaters staged pieces that had not been approved or published by Henschelverlag, the state drama publisher.


16. The genre was not, however, invented by GDR authors. West German leftist and feminist Erika Runge is commonly credited with publishing the first
collection of personal narratives, and using the term "protocol" to highlight the documentary character of these subjective reports. Runge, _Bottroper Protokolle_ (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1968).


19. Wander, “_Guten Morgen, Du Schön_,” 7. Further references to this work will be included parenthetically in the text.

20. Lennox notes: “Lena K. pours all those needs into the vessel of romantic love which remain unfulfilled in the society she lives in. She realizes full well that her longing for love springs from her wish for fulfillment and self-determination and that the unattainability of this love — as the allusion to Kafka suggests — is caused by a social system whose structures not only prevent this love, but makes the longing for it appear irrational” (233, 234).

21. For instance, the title figure of Brigitte Reimann’s novel _Franziska Linkerhand_ is an architect who designs one of those communities.

22. For protocols of those women who wished to leave the GDR and were incarcerated after their application for an exit visa, see Ulrich Schacht, ed., _Hohenecker Protokolle: Aussagen zur Geschichte der politischen Verfolgung von Frauen in der DDR_ (Zurich: Ammann Verlag, 1984). The title promises an examination of gender-specific persecution in the GDR, which the text does not deliver.


29. Renate Ullrich, _Mein Kapital bin ich selber: Gespräche mit Theaterfrauen in_
Berlin-O 1990/91 (Berlin: Zentrum für Theaterdokumentation und -information, 1991). Further references to this work will be included parenthetically in the text.


31. Social scientist Christine Eifler contends that “women’s self-realization and self-perception came up against limits set by themselves and by society, and thus their very individuality is of general significance.” Christine Eifler, “Identitätsbruch als Orientierungschance: Zu den Nachwirkungen der (auf-)gelösten Frauenfrage in der DDR,” in Kulke et al., Wider das schlichte Vergessen, 37.


33. I have discussed the public staging of the East-West encounter in “The Revolution Has Been Televised: Reconfiguring History and Identity in Post-Wall Germany,” Theatre Journal 45, no. 1 (March 1993).

34. Funk and Mueller, Gender Politics and Post-Communism, 6.

35. Sillge, Un-Sichtbare Frauen, 102.


38. Hildegard Maria Nickel, “Modernisierungsrückstände im Einigungsprozeß: (k)ein einig Volk von Schwestern,” in Kulke et al., Wider das schlichte Vergessen, 41.

39. The Zentrum für Theaterdokumentation und -information, now renamed Haus Drama in (East) Berlin, documented the revolutionary involvement of many GDR theaters during the fall of 1989 as part of their publication Theaterarbeit in der DDR. Wir treten aus unseren Rollen heraus: Dokumente des Aufbruchs Herbst ’89. The editors list nine demonstrations initiated by theater professionals between November 4 and November 20, 1989.

40. Ullrich, like some of her interview partners, attended the symposium “Die Sprache des Theaters und die Frauen,” organized by the West German association of theater women (Frauen im Theater — FiT) in the summer of 1991, which for the first time brought together theater women from both Germanies. She acknowledges her debt to West German feminist discourse, Ullrich, Mein Kapital bin ich selber, 54.
