Neustadt: Affect and Architecture in Brigitte Reimann's East German Novel *Franziska Linkerhand*

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ABSTRACT: The author reads Brigitte Reimann's novel *Franziska Linkerhand* as an exploration of the complex relationship between urban planning and affect in 1960s East Germany (GDR). East German architecture sought to ameliorate the prewar proletarian milieu. Yet, as Reimann's novel demonstrates, East German urban policy erases the positive aspects of this milieu, for example, vernacular history and sociability, along with the negative ones of deprivation and subalternity, causing the binding function of the city to collapse in Reimann's fictional Neustadt. The GDR's urban planning created a contradiction between the anonymous and provisional character of urban space and a suspended longing for *Heimat*, which Reimann describes in terms of a struggle between utopian desire and boredom. The sense of provisionality Reimann locates in Neustadt is paralleled in the novel's structure, as the indeterminacy of the past fragments the present of the narrative.

Keywords: *boredom, German Democratic Republic (GDR), narrative, provisionality, Brigitte Reimann, urban planning, utopia, vernacular history*

In their book *Plattenbau privat*, photographers Susanne Hopf and Natalja Meier document the interiors of sixty apartments in P2 buildings, a standardized design introduced in the early 1960s that still accounts for millions of homes in the territory of the former GDR. Rather than consigning the GDR to the past, these pictures reveal how

that history continues to work in the present. The photographs, which capture the living rooms of these dwellings from identical angles, bear witness to the ingenuity of P2 dwellers in individualizing the identical layouts. At the same time, the photographs portray hollowed-out spaces of an eclipsed socialist vision of equality and social progress, now filled with a combination of Western commodities and recognizably Eastern objects. These images thus mark both the passage of time between these two orders, the GDR and the Berlin Republic, and their continued coexistence. In other words, Hopf and Meier's pictures document both the creation and the erasure of history, as the viewer seeks not only visible signs of German unification, indexed precisely by the surfeit of commodities, but also signs of the *disappearance* of the GDR. Here we are confronted with the epitome of the post-*Wende* gaze on GDR culture: the search for "was bleibt" in the negotiation of sameness and difference, continuity and rupture, conformity and *Eigensinn*. Yet precisely this complex negotiation shaped East German experience before *and* after 1989. The GDR thus becomes a sort of vanishing horizon, concealed behind the marketing campaigns of *Ostalgie* and *Stasi* horror stories.

This dynamic is not a product of the disappearance of the GDR, but was already that of the GDR itself as a society that was always under way, straining against a fascist past, the capitalist other of the omnipresent West, and the demands of an increasingly ineffective party-state. As the *Übergangsgesellschaft* of the 1960s gave way to the actually existing socialism of the 1970s and 1980s, the historical teleology of the GDR had ceased to function in the lives of East Germans long before the fall of the Wall. Yet the dominant discourse of the Berlin Republic, even as Germany steeps in various nostalgias, remains as future-directed where the East is concerned as that of the Sozialistische Einheitspartei (SED). Twenty years ago it was socialism on the horizon, now it is "Western-ness," or perhaps "German-ness." In both cases, personal and cultural engagements with everyday experience and vernacular histories rooted in the previous dispensation are too often dismissed as potentially threatening regressions, variations on the theme of "Vergangenheitssucht aus Furcht vor der Freiheit" (Bisky 127), as one critic has described the increasingly differentiated meditations on post-GDR identity in the last decades. Then as now, the stress on the future paradoxically reveals a stuckness, a breakdown of teleological ideologies of history, attenuating the present even as that present is elongated through anticipation,

and contributing to what Katie Trumpener has identified as the insistently palimpsestic quality of much of East German literature in the 1970s and 1980s. This palimpsestic quality, "in which characters find a superimposed veil of memories—voluntary, involuntary, personal, collective, historical, subjective—overlaying, coloring, or muffling the world around them" (Trumpener 40–41), has if anything become more pronounced since the *Wende* in the works of post-GDR authors such as Christa Wolf or Wolfgang Hilbig.

To return to *Plattenbau privat*, one might argue that the shared *punctum*, to borrow Roland Barthes's well-known term, of the photographs lies in a complicated interplay of palimpsestic, or indeed *eigensinnig*, deployments of furniture, books, and other artifacts and commodities of quotidian self-care, on the one hand, and the identical spaces in which these displays of self are contained, on the other. Here, we are reminded of Ernst Bloch's notion of the hollow space, or *Hohlraum*, of capitalist modernity.[1] Already in the Weimar Republic, Bloch argued that "a hollow space has been formed in which everything appears boundlessly relative" (Bloch 402) because of the collapse of traditional ideologies and life worlds under the onslaught of urbanization and mass culture, where "even cynicism takes on an objective status" (Bloch 402). This hollow space itself, as Bloch points out in his essay "Poetry in Hollow Space," "creates an extensive zone of stimulation" (Bloch 101); it demands to be filled. Looking at Hopf and Meier's photographs, one sees these empty spaces as much as their contents—each apartment is photographed twice along an identical axis and, more important, without the people who live in it. According to Hopf and Meier, the dweller's absence allows for "eine objektive Perspektive . . . die der Intimität des abgebildeten privaten Raumes eine strenge Sachlichkeit entgegensetzt." In the attempt to reveal a "Bestandteil der Kulturgeschichte des Alltags," the book exposes the effects of these post-GDR zones of stimulation, the palimpsests that people have built around themselves in an effort to achieve presence and fullness in their own empty spaces (Hopf and Meier 5). The viewer is left with traces, fragments of histories without the subjects that might lend them coherence, creating the effect of ruins, images that, to quote Charles Merewether, "collapse temporalities," reminding us "of finitude as both disruption and continuity" (Merewether 25).

In this article, I argue that this dynamic of continuity and disruption in post-1989 culture as regards the former GDR can to a degree be read as part of the restless legacy of socialism itself. Already in

the 1960s, the GDR's putative golden age, Brigitte Reimann's work highlighted the spatial dislocation of memory and experience in the GDR's urban landscape in a way that seems to resonate particularly well with the post-*Wende* experience in the East. Reimann's *Franziska Linkerhand* is a novel about a young architect in Neustadt, a fictional city built from the ground up in rural East Germany. Reimann labored for ten years without completing the novel, which focalizes its narrative of everyday life in the GDR through the prism of exactly the kind of architecture Hopf and Meier document. This article describes Reimann's account of East German urban space in terms of the displacement of what might be termed the *vernacular* or the *popular*. In the vacuum of the new city, severed from personal and collective history, subjects are exposed to precisely the "zone of excessive stimulation" mentioned by Bloch, a hollow space that they fill as they can. The article goes on to locate this hollow space in the GDR's attempt to erase the spatial coordinates of the German working class milieu, thus grounding the affect of provisionality that dominates Reimann's novel, with its repeated invocations of being "unterwegs" in the disjointed relationship between the GDR's built environment and vernacular experience. Like Hopf and Meier's photographs, Reimann's book is a profound meditation on the relationship between objects, experience, and time out of joint.

Along with her generational peers Christa Wolf and Volker Braun, Reimann made her literary reputation during the Bitterfeld movement, which in the early 1960s 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 (Gerlach 1). Under the auspices of Bitterfeld, Reimann and her second husband, the author Siegfried Pitschmann, moved to Hoyerswerda, which, in 1960, provided Reimann with the model for her own Neustadt.[2] Reimann's fictional Neustadt refers to more than a single city, representing rather what might be called a distinctive socialist life world. New towns like Stalinstadt, 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, particularly Hoyerswerda and the nearby Schwarze Pumpe brown coal works, were flash points of East German literary production since the late 1950s. The Schwarze Pumpe combine

acquired a particular weight in the East German imaginary as an isolated and lawless place, where money was easy and morals were loose. This cultural status was consolidated in Reimann's own 1961 breakthrough novel *Ankunft im Alltag*, which gave its name to the socialist realist subgenre *Ankunftsroman*, or novel of arrival, a story of development in which young protagonists are integrated into the everyday work life of the GDR. Indeed, Schwarze Pumpe, along with sites like the uranium mines at Wismut and the new *Eisenhüttenkombinat Ost* (EKO) in Stalinstadt, was a central part of East Germany's *Aufbauromantik*, with its mythos of "the wild East," which Reimann celebrated in *Ankunft im Alltag*, creating a homology between the gold rushes of the American western frontier of the nineteenth century and the GDR's own socialist construction. Julia Hell has argued that *Ankunft* is "steeped in nostalgia for this era and the man with whom it was associated: Stalin" (*Post-Fascist Fantasies* 130). Thus, the central question of this earlier novel is how to bind the enthusiasm of the youth to the GDR's socialist project now that Stalin is dead and "die Goldgräberzeiten sind vorbei."[3]

Reimann began *Franziska Linkerhand* in 1963 as a second *Ankunftsroman*, intending to narrate the path of an idealistic young architect into the everyday compromises of socialist urban planning (Helwerth 43). For the next ten years, Reimann struggled with her novel, leaving it incomplete on her death in 1973. In these ten years, Reimann's commitment to the GDR was undermined by a succession of shocks and disappointments, from the rigidity of cultural life in the wake of the disastrous Eleventh Plenum[4] of 1965, which abruptly ended the period of relative cultural openness in the early 1960s, to the Warsaw Pact invasion of the CSSR in 1968 and the last hope for democratic socialism in the Eastern Bloc (*Abschied* 214, 217).[5] Already in 1965, in a letter to the architect Hermann Henselmann, Reimann wrote that she had at last found the proper entry point into her story, "eine Geschichte ohne Fabel, immer schwebend zwischen Erinnerung, Erlebnis, und Gespräch" (Reimann and Henselmann 47).[6] A 1967 journal entry links the retreat from plot to Reimann's own growing uneasiness with developments in the GDR:

> Ich weiß selbst, das Buch besteht aus lauter Abschweifungen, kann es aber nicht erklären, warum ich's gerade so schreiben will: einfach Leben ballen, Alltäglichkeit mit Zufälligem, Nicht-Notwendigem. [. . .] Protest gegen die Fabel, die Roman-Konstruktion, die mir zu kristallen, zu rein erscheint, zu künstlich, zu klar in einer unklaren Gesellschaft. (*Abschied* 205)[7]

In this conception of a book of digressions, we again see the tension between hollow space and palimpsest discussed above. Indeed, the question of narrative cannot be separated from the question of space in Reimann's work, since she is implicitly telling the story of a city, and yet, as we shall see, Neustadt is less a location than the name of an empty space in Reimann's novel. Reimann picks up on this notion of the unraveling of the urban fabric, providing an almost mimetic counterpoint with her own narrative construction, attempting to write a solution to the question posed by the critic Margid Birken: "wie gestaltet man menschliche Beziehungen einer noch ortlosen Welt?" (38)

I. UNTERWEGS

Her *bildungsbürgerliche* upbringing and her modernist architectural training condition the aspirations that Franziska brings to Neustadt. The city, from Franziska's viewpoint, is not simply an aggregate of buildings, but a communicative medium and life world. Thus, by vocation the architect is someone who "[. . .] nicht nur Häuser entwirft, sondern Beziehungen, die Kontakte ihrer Bewohner, eine gesellschaftliche Ordnung" (*Franziska Linkerhand* 540). The equation of the built environment and communication is made explicit in a small joke played by Franziska when she places a quote by Louis Mumford, intentionally misattributed to Marx, on the office bulletin board, reading: "Die Stadt ist die kostbarste Erfindung der Zivilisation, die als Vermittlerin von Kultur nur hinter der Sprache zurücksteht" (337). The central artery of this circulation is the street, eulogized by Franziska as

> die tröstliche, atmende, hundertäugige Doppelzeile von Trottoirs und Schaufenstern, in der du allein sein kannst, oder unter Leuten, und in der ein Schritt, ein Blick der Anfang einer Geschichte sein kann, die vielleicht geschrieben wird, vielleicht schon zu Ende ist, eh du den ersten Satz buchstabiert hast. (515)

Reimann's description of the street and the city as a scene of narrative production reminds one of Michel de Certeau's evocation of the urban space as the writing of everyday life, composed of the activities of "ordinary practitioners of the city [. . .] whose bodies follow the thicks and thins of an urban 'text' they write without being able to read it" (Certeau 93). These figures of circulation and exchange central to the modernist conception of urbanity break down in Reimann's descriptions of Neustadt, dominated by imagery of spatial and affective con-

finement. As opposed to the metropolitan street, unfolding like a story, Neustadt is an empty container of meaningless, disconnected echoes, with its "Bewohner der Zellen, die ihre Signale aussandten, Lebenzeichnen, Stimmen, Musik, Geräusche" (*Franziska Linkerhand* 231). Franziska describes the town as "totes Gewebe," a "Schlafviertel" (566), and a "Labyrinth aus Beton, anonymen Straßen und Wohnsilos für eine geplante und statistisch erfaßbare Menge von Bewohnern mit ihren eingeplanten, kaum erforschten Bedürfnissen" (244). Indeed, on her arrival, Franziska is told in no uncertain terms by Schafheutlin, the city's chief architect, that Neustadt is "kein Experimentierfeld" and that "wir haben nur eine Aufgabe: Wohnungen für unsere Werktätigen zu bauen, so viele, so schnell, so billig wie möglich" (143–44).

The lack of coherence is a central theme in Reimann's descriptions of the city. Composed of *Wohnkomplexe*, Neustadt is almost completely lacking in spaces for social interaction. The city center, intended to link the complexes together and provide cultural venues, recreational facilities, and other amenities for the population, is continually postponed for bureaucratic and financial reasons.[8] In the face of Schafheutlin's argument that the *Wohnkomplexe* are the most economic means of laying out the city, Franziska denounces them as "ein Haufen Angerdörfer [. . .] Mord an der Stadt," (340) continuing to reproach Schafheutlin, and the urban planning policy he represents, for having destroyed the street (342). Indeed, what is lacking in Neu-stadt is any sense that the *Wohnkomplexe,* or indeed the individual buildings, is an element of a complex whole. "Was nützt die schönste Gestaltung der einzelnen Häuser," Franziska wonders, "wenn ihnen der gemeinsame Nenner fehlt, die planetarische Idee, die zur Stadt verbindet?" (336). Her question paraphrases an essay by Henselmann. What are essential, he writes, are not the facades of the individual buildings, but rather the "Zueinanderordnung der Wohngebäude und ihre Verbindung zu den anderen Bauten" (152). Commenting on the typically rigid arrangement of apartment buildings in the GDR's *Wohnkomplexe*, Henselmann writes, "das sture Nebeneinander von Wohnzeilen entspricht nicht dem Miteinander der Menschen in unserer Gesellschaft," lending to the typical residential area the "unangenehmen Beigeschmack des typisierten, nämlich eines administrativen und dekretierten Lebens," rather than expressing "das dem Sozialismus eigentümliche Widerspiel von familiärer und gesellschaftlicher Lebenssphäre" (Henselmann 152).

Reimann, like Henselmann, centers her critique on the reproduction of standardized urban elements without apparent connection

to any coherent theory of how citizens use the city, and focused on the administration rather than the facilitation of civility. In their first conversation, Ben Trojanowicz, a former journalist jailed during the political repressions of the late 1950s, who now drives a dump truck in Neustadt, provides Franziska with a concept for her dissatisfaction, "Wohnstadt": "der so bezeichneten Stadt wird nur eine Funktion zugebilligt; sie bietet Wohnung, Schlafstätte, eine Tür, die man hinter sich abschließen kann, das alte Spiel Familienleben zwischen Tisch und Bett, nicht mehr" (*Franziska Linkerhand* 359). Denouncing the city as a "eine Siedlung von Fernsehhöhlen," Trojanowicz calls Neustadt an urban planning debacle, "ein Debakel, weil die Stadt ihre Funktion verfehlt, indem sie Kommunikationen nicht fördert, sondern verhindert, Lebensbereiche und Tätigkeiten ihrer Bewohner nicht vermischt, sondern trennt [. . .]. Eine amputierte Stadt!" (358). The sparse uniformity of the new city, with its sweeping empty squares, leaves its citizens exposed in its imposing openness, chasing them back into their cluttered apartments. Even as the GDR's urban policy blocks the development of what Certeau calls "ways of operating," the individual appropriation of social space (Certeau xix), it projects an overly narrow set of social norms centered on the domestic sphere and a peculiar consumer society developing in the GDR of the 1960s.[9]

The critique of Neustadt as an "amputated city" stands in contrast with Reimann's earlier novels, which were marked by the sense of social anticipation that characterizes much of East German literature up until the mid-1960s.[10] The heroic socialist-realist *Aufbau* novels of the 1950s, like Eduard Claudius's 1951 *Menschen an unsrer Seite,* always tied the construction of a particular industrial object to the solidification of a community of collective labor around that site, converting *Betrieb* into *Heimat*.[11] Yet a disavowed negativity is never far from the surface in these novels, and, as Reimann points out in *Franziska Linkerhand*, this laboring collective is always under erasure, because there is always a new construction site. "Die Zeit schleppte sich hin," Franziska muses on the paradox of stagnation and transformation in Neustadt, continuing, "die Zeit verging rasend schnell. Heute sitzt ein Fremder, wo gestern ein Bekannter saß" (*Franziska Linkerhand* 384). Into the late 1960s, the GDR was indeed a country of wanderers. Entire populations of workers moved from site to site, from the dam at Sosa to the iron foundries of Stalinstadt, from the shipyards of Warnow to the Schwarze Pumpe, and from there to Schwedt or Boxberg, following the industrial expansion of the GDR, proletarian nomads, living

in temporary workers' barracks as fleeting as their social networks. Indeed, even at its inception, Hoyerswerda was a transient and interstitial construction. Reimann noted in her diary that the very raison d'être of the city built around Schwarze Pumpe is fleeting. Hoyerswerda and its fictional counterpart Neustadt are temporary cities: "Die Kohle geht zuende, vielleicht ist Hoy in zwanzig Jahren eine Geisterstadt wie die verlassenen Goldgräber-Siedlungen," Reimann wrote in a 1968 entry (*Abschied* 212).

From the late 1950s onward, provisionality emerges in several East German prose works as a covert thematization of the experience of the GDR's great construction sites. In his short prose piece "Die Leute von Hoywoy," Volker Braun elevates this sense of nomadic provisionality to the essence of East German proletarian subjectivity.[12] The proletariat has transformed the world through its ceaseless movement, and now "wie das Bier in ewigem Kreislauf zwischen Hahn und Kehle und Feld und Hahn [. . .] unterwegs ist, so zogen wohl sie durchs Land, in ständigem leichtem Kreisen um Häuserblocks und Industrieteile, ohne Halt" (Braun 11). Franziska is herself not immune to what Reimann characterizes as "die ganz fragwürdige Romantik unseres provisorischen Lebens" in an earlier novel (*Geschwister* 93). Trojanowicz castigates her for her infatuation with a construction worker, asking, "und was hat er Ihnen noch erzählt? Elegisches vermutlich, keine Freundin, immer unterwegs, die Nächte im Wohnwagen, Kneipe, mal Kino, zum Glück gibt's Dumas, trotzdem vermißt er was, ein richtiges Zuhause, manchmal hat er das Wanderleben einfach satt" (*Franziska Linkerhand* 400). The wandering construction worker has become yet another cliché of socialist life by the mid-1960s, no longer a transitory moment of the brave beginnings of socialist construction, but a permanent part of the East German experience. Reimann's use of provisionality as an affect points less to a dispensation of demiurgic mobility than to a paradoxical quality of confinement and indeterminacy, the "constant light circling" evoked by Braun giving way to the heaviness of waiting. With the romanticism of socialist construction waning, the city itself becomes little more than a station on the way to more of the same.

Indeed, already in the late 1950s, Hans Marchwitza, a pioneer of proletarian-revolutionary writing in the Weimar Republic and author of *Roheisen*, his epic account of building the EKO and one of the key texts of East German *Aufbauliteratur*, was one of the first to thematize this sense of vertigo inscribed within socialist construction. His

abortive attempt to carry Hein Leder, protagonist of *Roheisen*, into a new novel about the Schwarze Pumpe, opens with a description of the construction site as an eternal return, where the pioneering act of subduing nature within and without is repeated ad infinitum:

> Hebekrane, Schrapp- und Schaufelbagger, Eisengeklirr und Gerappel von Karren und Kipperwaggons, Gehupe und Schreie verrieten den Werktag in einem neuen "Alaska." Auch die alten Vagabunden—und Spott- und Lastergesichter vermisste man nicht, ohne man sich all diese Nomadenscharren nicht vorstellen konnte; – alles war da, auch das alte Barackenleben, die Saufereien und was nur an Verwirrtheit und überschwänglichen Hoffnungen und Langweile zusammengeraten konnte;--nichts fehlte, wahrhaftig nichts. Auch Hein Leder war dabei, auch ihn, den soliden, qualifizierten Hochöfner, der schon zehntausende Tonne Roheisen gezapft hatte, mußte der Teufel noch einmal reiten und ihn in diesen längst hinter sich geglaubten Wirbel noch einmal von neuen hineinstrudeln lassen. (Marchwitza 722:1)[13]

If, as Julia Hell has argued, Brigitte Reimann's problem in *Ankunft im Alltag* is how to settle into the prosaic everyday life of work after the end of the *Aufbauromantik* of the 1950s, Marchwitza's problem in the "Schwarze Pumpe" manuscript is precisely that it never ends. The "difficulties of the first hour" are endlessly repeated, only to be revoked and struggled for once again. Having literally made his home in Stalinstadt, Hein is sent forth to do the same thing over again in Hoyerswerda, driven by the dialectics of historical progress and the irreducible kernel of the past: "immer, wenn er glaubte, das Gewesene überwunden zu haben, kam irgendein neuer Umstand und warf ihn in die frühe Verzweiflungs- und Haßstimmung zurück" (Marchwitza 722:40). Marchwitza's text alternates between a longing for stability, *Heimat*, community, and the relentless drive of socialist construction. Countering Hein's longing for his lost *Heimat*, Marchwitza's narrator intones: "nein, lieber Hein, deine schöne Stalinstadt war nicht schon die ganze neue Welt, hier graben wir noch immer an ihrem unermesslichen Fundament" (721:12). As long as the socialist homeland is under construction, there is no home for Hein Leder. There is nothing romantic about this repetitive work in Marchwitza's manuscript; instead, what emerges is the pain of the repetitive disavowal of one's own home in the act of constructing the collective *Heimat*.[14]

Whereas Marchwitza's manuscript still holds out the promise of *Heimat*, *Franziska Linkerhand* replaces the anticipation of a socialist homeland with the dull trauma of its foreclosure, and yet the ceaseless movement of construction continues, increasingly evacuated of mean-

ing. In another context, Julia Hell has pointed out precisely this imagery of dynamic standstill, of "relentless movement without goal" and "industrial practice without plan" in the works of the author Wolfgang Hilbig and the painter Neo Rauch ("Wendebilder: Neo Rausch and Wolfgang Hilbig" 281). Anticipating these post-*Wende* figures, Reimann depicts the GDR as a life world in which industrial modernity's productive telos has become uncoupled from social content, a society of people in constant motion yet going nowhere. In the denial of social anticipation, the provisional emerges as a central trope of the novel, and this suspension of social momentum acquires an almost ontological weight. *Franziska Linkerhand* uses the trope of provisionality to capture the paradox of a socialism that is showing signs of decay even in the moment of its construction, "eine Übergangslösung [. . .] wie diese ganze provisorische Stadt, ihre provisorische Straßen, und provisorischen Plänen" (*Franziska Linkerhand* 345). In this dispensation, socialist construction becomes "ein Zwischenspiel," a "Grenzlandschaft" (491), suspended between a blurred past and an uncertain future (491). *Franziska Linkerhand* captures the residual restlessness of this provisional life in the figures of workers "unterwegs" between home and work:

> Hinstarren, müde oder zerstreut, auf die beschlagene Scheibe, an der das Licht abfließt (Weg und Haltestelle sind übervertraut wie Körperfunktionen), eine Hand in der Lederschlaufe, pendeln sie durch die unbestimmte Viertelstunde zwischen Werktor und Wohnungstür, Arbeit und Abendbrot, gehen schaukelnd, aus den Knien, der Schaukelneigung in einer Kurve nach, sehen, sehen nicht, wie zappelnde Reklame rot weiß grün hinter der Scheibe gerinnt, sie sind unterwegs, nichts weiter [. . .]. (207)

This "being underway" is not a journey into the Communist future so much as a waiting propelled forward by the accumulation of repetitive experience, such that it is this very accrual of substance—furniture, factories, advertisements, personal histories—that seems to foreclose the possibility of arrival and blur the boundary between motion and inertia. It has become, as Trojanowicz puts it, a "hackneyed literary swindle" (509).

Taking Franziska's temporary housing dormitory as a metonym for Neustadt, Reimann describes the city's resistance to the sort of social binding that would ground some notion of *Heimat*: "Ein verrücktes Haus, und lauter verrückte Leute, oder einsame, oder Vagabunden, oder diese schüchternen und höchmütigen Einzelgänger, oder einfach Leute, die warten. Ich hatte es satt, in einem Wartesaal zu wohnen. Ich dachte, ich habe dieses provisorische Leben satt" (*Franziska Linker-*

hand 466). The figuration of the GDR as a waiting room is prominent in Reimann's novel and links *Franziska Linkerhand* to more contemporary discussions of the phenomenological qualities of East German socialism. Both Slavoj Žižek and Charity Scribner have recently evoked what Heiner Müller referred to as the "waiting room mentality" (Žižek 41) of the GDR in their attempts to grasp the particularity of actually existing socialism *vis-à-vis* late capitalism. In a 1992 interview, Müller explained the paradoxically frozen temporal experience of the future-directed GDR thusly:

> There would be an announcement: the train will arrive at 18:15 and will depart at 18:20, and it never did arrive at 18:15. Then came the next announcement: the train will arrive at 20:10. And so on. You went on sitting there in the waiting room, thinking, it's bound to come at 20:15. That was the situation. Basically, it's a state of Messianic anticipation. There are constant announcements of the Messiah's impending arrival, and you know perfectly well that he won't be coming. And yet somehow, it's good to hear him announced all over again. (Müller and Höet 96–97)[15]

For Žižek, the function of this messianic attitude is to direct the attention of the waiting subject to the inert materiality of her surroundings, whereas Scribner writes apropos of this waiting room mentality, "if travel is a kind of death which renders the world banal, waiting engenders the accrual of substance." Thus "DDR citizens enjoyed more contact with the earth on which the waiting room was built; caught in this delay, they deeply experienced the idiosyncrasies of their world, all its topographical and historical details" (qtd. in Žižek 42).[16] With the figure of being "unterwegs," Reimann's novel unites the two tropes, waiting and travel; for, as Müller alludes, waiting not only decelerates the flow of time, but also unsettles it, doubling experience into a present under erasure and a perpetually postponed future.

Franziska Linkerhand draws attention to the accumulation of objects that gather in this improvised space; her descriptions of Neustadt tend to concentrate on the banal, on the accumulation of temporary objects that have become permanent features of the landscape through the quixotic industry of the citizens who

> wissen, eines Tages werden Computer das fernere Schicksal der Stadt errechnen, also das Schicksal ihrer Bewohner, ihre künftige Behausung, ihre neuen Berufe, Chemiearbeiter statt Bergmann zum Beispiel; trotzdem richten sie sich ein wie für die Ewigkeit, zeugen Kinder und pflanzen Bäume, und sie machen Gärten aus öden Rasenflächen: sie machen sich eine Heimat. (*Franziska Linkerhand* 517)

Reimann's many descriptions of a landscape dominated by accumulated objects, through which the people of Neustadt attempt to build a *Heimat* within the *Hohlraum* of actually existing socialism, interrupt and arrest her narrative. The novel's collection of case histories, from the imaginary protocol of Franziska's lover Trojanowicz, which details his arrest in the wake of the Hungarian uprising of 1956, to the more everyday accounts of characters like Frau Hellwig and Franziska's neighbor Frau Bornemann, is in itself a sort of accrual of substance in the sense described by Scribner—a narrative by-product of waiting.[17] Reimann poignantly captures this being stuck "unterwegs" in the story of Frau Hellwig, the proprietress of one of Neustadt's few pubs. Frau Hellwig spent most of her adult life caring for the children of a farmer who took her in during the migrations of the immediate postwar years, waiting for them to leave home so that she, Frau Hellwig, could go to Leipzig and work in a grand hotel, only to realize, after years of waiting for her life to begin, that this was in fact already the life she had led. As the present overwhelms the future in Reimann's narrative, Franziska realizes "daß, was Frau Hellwig damals für Vorbereitung gehalten hatte, schon das Leben selbst gewesen war, vielleicht sogar die ihr gemäße Art von Glück" (*Franziska Linkerhand* 183). Neustadt thus becomes a kind of homeland by default, a place where one finds oneself "hängengeblieben" (529).

II. "STÄDTE OHNE VERGANGENHEITEN SIND WIE MENSCHEN OHNE GESCHICHTE"

The critique of Neustadt as a non-place, or a "border landscape," in Reimann's novel circles around the specific problem of the city's relationship, or, more precisely, the city's refusal to enter into a relationship, with German working-class urban traditions. Plagued by Franziska's criticisms and reproaches, Schafheutlin insists that she lacks "die richtige Optik" for understanding Neustadt's accomplishments (341). The city has the lowest rents in Europe; it has kindergartens, day care, and health care facilities. "Wir haben ein für alle mal mit den vom Profitstreben diktierten Praktiken des Kapitalismus Schluß gemacht," Schafheutlin explains, "das ist eine historische Leistung, Häuser ohne Hinterhöfe, die Wohnsiedlung im Grünen—" (344). Whereas Franziska's "konservative" attitude toward architecture derives from the canon of modernist architectural aesthetics and the image of the architect as artist (390), Schafheutlin's is attuned to the reality of the

proletarian tenement neighborhoods on the outskirts of industrial cities, with their overcrowding and lack of basic services. The *Hinterhöfe* of the working class *Mietskaserne* built in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were of course the iconic space of the proletarian milieu. One need only recall the works of Heinrich Zille and the Weimar Republic films inspired by his drawings, with their "undernourished children, workers, wretched girls, organ-grinders in ugly backyards, destitute women and non-descripts idling away their time" (Kracauer 143). Communists and leftist social critics going back to Friedrich Engels often mobilized these cramped courtyards as metaphors for the spatial marginalization and social exclusion of the proletariat, revealing the uncanny truth of the Hausmann-esque grand avenue.[18] Eduard Claudius provides this description of entering a working class district in his 1942 novel *Salz der Erde*: "[. . .] als drehten sich alle Häuser, zeigten ihm nun ihre wahre schäbige Seite, ist es, als zeige ihm sein Land nun den Rücken, die Fassade der Hinterhöfe ist das wirkliche Gesicht der Heimat, ihr hohlwangiges und verzweifeltes Antlitz" (Claudius 29). Yet even as the nation shows the working class its back, or at best peers into the *Hinterhöfe* with the culinary gaze deplored by Walter Benjamin, workers tyrannized one another with their very overpresence.[19] In the 1930s, the dissident Communist Otto Rühle described the claustrophobia and provisionality of life in the *Mietskaserne* of industrial Germany as a direct hindrance to proletarian solidarity, swallowed up by the overcrowding, unrest, and instability of a life spent in the stifling panopticon of the proletarian milieu (Rühle 401–5).

With its vast open spaces and kitsch-cluttered apartments, Neustadt is an attempt to redress the traditionally overcrowded and underserviced living spaces of the working class and the legacy of "combat at close quarters," that relentless pressure of crowded bodies, which the historian Alf Lüdtke posits as the essence of proletarian experience (213). The longing for personal space, precisely in the form of that interiority ridiculed by Franziska as petit bourgeois, is cast in Reimann's novel as a product of sense memory, a claustrophobia lingering from the all-too-recent experience of postwar scarcity and historical deprivation. The response given by a "typical" worker's wife to a foreign delegation visiting Neustadt is emblematic of this attitude:

> ja, wir sind zufrieden, ja, wir fühlen uns schon wie zu Haus (die alte Heimat, Espenhain, Blöhlen, Zwenkau, verdunkelnde Rauchwolken und Erinnerung an ein baufälliges Siedlungshaus, nasse Wände, Klobüdchen im Hof; den Garten allerdings, grüne Bohnen, Phloxbüsche rosa, die

> Kirschenbäume vermisst man doch), also zufrieden, eine Wohnung wie erträumt, zwei Zimmer, Bad, Einbauküche, Miete 57, eingeschlossen Fernheizung, ja, wir sind so dankbar, unser Staat, sagt mein Mann [. . .] (*Franziska Linkerhand* 519)

This grateful stance, while no doubt crafted for its audience, gestures toward the "symbolische Befreiungsgefühl" that Wolfgang Engler has described in the original application of industrial construction methods in the GDR and the comparatively spacious and sunny *Plattenbauwohnungen*, with their modern kitchens and plumbing. Architectural historian Simone Hain describes this original intention of the P2 in her introduction to *Plattenbau privat* in terms of overcoming the crowded heaviness of traditional dwellings (Hain 6–7).[20] Beyond the modularity of the apartments themselves, the arrangement of the buildings 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 toward Alexanderplatz, built in the 1960s,

> ohne fest miteinander verkettet oder zum Viereck aufgestellt worden zu sein, bildeten sie immer neue Figurationen miteinander, je nachdem, aus welcher Perspektive man sie betrachtete. Derart ermutigten sie ihre Bewohner, es ihnen nachzutun und statt starrer Verbindungen bewegliche einzugehen, flexible, auflösbare. (58)

Engler links this newfound ethos of movement to the abolition of the traditional *Hinterhof*, 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 *Hof* became a sort of "offene Konvention" (Engler 58). In cities like Hoyerswerda, consisting exclusively of newer construction, this space of the *Hof* was less abolished than it was extended over the entire city, with its large green spaces full of children and drying laundry between buildings, "[. . .] Vorgeschmack auf die 'anonyme' Gesellschaft inmitten der Gemeinschaft" (59). At the same time, Engler notes the problematic character of this anonymity in Hoyerswerda, where the lawns were largely off-limits, and there was a lack of intimate, semiprivate spaces in the midst of the barren openness of these same lawns. "Das Neue gab sich in der Provinz eher spröde, einsilbig," as opposed to the older cities like Berlin, where the *Plattenbau* marked, at least initially, a release from the density of the surrounding cityscape (59).

Yet the note of nostalgia for the old *Heimat* in the woman's response invites the exploration of another side of urban "modernization" in the GDR. Reimann's contemporary Werner Bräunig addresses this problem directly in his 1971 prose collection *Gewöhnliche Leute*.[21] Set in Halle-Neustadt, these stories depict urban spaces cleansed from tradition and history. The collection opens with the warning, "der Mensch [. . .] braucht seine Straße. Wer die nicht hat, nicht einmal in der Erinnerung, ist schlimm daran" (Bräunig 5). The street functions in Bräunig's story as a repository for collective and personal experience, a set of visual and affective cues that interpellate the subject as the subject of a particular community and its history; a material guarantee against the instability of memory. *Gewöhnliche Leute* is an account of a specific kind of crisis that could be characterized by the loss of collectivity and historical orientation previously afforded by the street and its social, semiotic, and mnemonic functions. The landscape of Halle-Neustadt appears in Bräunig's stories as a threatening and disorienting emptiness, an unreadable surface. "Städte ohne Vergangenheit sind wie Menschen ohne Geschichte," Bräunig writes (104–5). Halle-Neustadt alleviates the historical deprivation of the working class, but in doing so, it creates a lack:

> Wir sind in Straßen groß geworden, die lange vor uns da waren, in engen Wohnungen und lichtlosen Hinterhöfen, im Ruß und in der Patina der Jahrhunderte—endlich haben wir menschliche Behausungen, haben Raum und Farben und Hellichkeit, aber wir sind darauf nicht vorbereitet. Wir sind noch nicht ganz fertig mit dem alten, das uns immer umgab und durchdrang und das uns gewohnt war. Wir sind mit der Stadt noch nicht fertig und noch nicht mit uns, das sind wir nie; aber wir wissen es plötzlich und leben intensiver, oder wir spüren die Unruhe und wissen nur ihren Namen nicht. (Bräunig 105)

The elimination of claustrophobic spaces of traditional working-class life is described in this passage as being somehow premature, pulling apart the same proletarian subjects that are being liberated. Neustadt pulls apart the familiarity that was balled up in the confined spaces of the proletarian life world, and yet the proletarian *habitus* that accrued in the narrow spaces of capitalist urbanity is left suspended in their absence. Linking personal daily experience with a sort of working-class collective memory, Bräunig's stories equate the reshaping of urban space with a sort of group amnesia, which, even if it is experienced by most of the figures in his stories, is never really shared. The restlessness without name, which Bräunig evokes here as the dim sense of a social-

ist future, seems also to refer to the missing element of collectivity, as Bräunig's characters find themselves increasingly sunken into solitude: "er aß, trank ein Bier, es war alles in Ordnung, aber irgend etwas fehlte" (119). In Bräunig's Neustadt, history is transformed into a vague anxiety, a vague memory of an "unerlebte und versunkene Vergangenheit" (66). This blockage of affective or vernacular history relates not only to the paradoxical displacement of the proletarian milieu in a city full of displaced proletarians, but also to Neustadt's aggressive modernity as a city without markers of vernacular history in the urban landscape. Like Bräunig's account, Franziska's meditations on Neustadt's lack of social coherence repeatedly return to this point of "ein neues Stadtgebilde, traditionslos" (*Franziska Linkerhand* 541). The material indeterminacy of the collective historical dimension in Neustadt parallels a pervasive sense of disorientation in the novel, a structure of feeling that Franziska denotes as "Begegnungen mit einem Leben im Konjunktiv" (482).

Critic John Czaplicka has diagnosed a tendency in post-Stalinist building across the Eastern Bloc, with its exaggeration of "the uniformity and monotony often attributed to the modern in architecture," to "become a utopian abstraction meant to stand against the local architectural heritage" (175). As a result, cities and their dwellers were deprived to varying degrees of their own material history and vernacular memory (Czaplicka 178). The standardized *Plattenbausiedlungen* stood for the projects of class equality and modernization at the heart of SED ideology (Hannemann 13). Many critics have noted ambivalence toward the traditional proletarian milieu on the part of East German elites that went beyond this emphasis on modernization within the practice of urban planning and the trope of the new city in the GDR. As a socialist variation of creative destruction, the erasure of the proletarian milieu also served to repress the material signifiers of recent German history. In his autobiography, *Krieg ohne Schlacht*, Heiner Müller connects the destruction of proletarian spaces in the GDR, especially in the 1980s, with the desire to negate the proletarian *habitus*, which retained the taint of the German working class's capitulation to Nazism: "das proletarische Berlin ist durch die großen Baumaßnahmen der SED beseitigt worden [. . .]. Es lief alles darauf hinaus, die Zeit von 1933 bis 1945 zu verdrängen. Das durfte es nicht gegeben haben [. . .]. Und damit wurde auch das proletarische Milieu liquidiert" (89; qtd. in Gleber 132).

When Trojanowicz, who grew up in the *Hinterhöfe* of working-class Berlin, attacks Neustadt for blocking social communication, he does

not hold up, as might Franziska, the *Bauhaus* as a countermodel, but rather the *Laubenkolonien*, or garden colonies, of prewar Berlin, with their "Stachelbeerwein, Polka vom Grammophon, vor gemütvoller Laube, später Versteck für einen Flüchtling [. . .] ein Fall wie hundert andere, weinumrankte Budchen als Treffpunkt von Illegalen" (*Franziska Linkerhand* 532). These spaces of working class leisure were not only the locations of family and community festivities, but also of political organization and antifascist resistance. This "denkwürdig[e], ein Berlin eigentümliches Kapitel in der Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung," is familiar, for example, from Bertolt Brecht and Slatan Dudow's 1932 film *Kuhle Wampe* (532). The aspect of proletarian sociability represented by the *Laubenkolonien* is introduced in the novel as a counterpoint to Franziska's insensitivity to the working-class context of living, for it is precisely this proletarian mode of association that Franziska condemns:

> Nachbarschaft übern Gartenzaun, den ich verbannt habe aus theoretischen Erwägungen über Kommunikation, Nähe, Gemeinsamkeiten, absichtlich und geringschätzig: Spießerfreuden nach Feierabend [. . .] Was weiß ich wirklich von den Leuten? Was von ihren Wünschen? Die dünne Höhenluft der Ideen über Urbanität. Diktatur meiner eigenen Wünsche und Vorstellungen. (*Franziska Linkerhand* 532)

The *Laubenkolonien*, tenements, and *Hinterhöfe* of Berlin and other older cities are legacies of class exploitation, but at the same time, they are a primary scene of proletarian culture and class formation that is excised in Neustadt. The *Laubenkolonien* discussed here can also be seen in relation to the concept of the "Siedlung im Grünen," evoked by Schafheutlin as a defense of Neustadt's layout and dismissed by Franziska as a "geschminkte Leiche" (385), a nineteenth-century dream that has returned to destroy the street as an artery of social interaction (342). Nevertheless, this idea of cross-fertilization between city and country is a recurrent one in modern architectural theory, and in fact provided the initial idea for the Stalinallee, before being rejected in the context of increasing ideological tension in the early 1950s (Engler 37–38).[22] The *Wohnkomplexe* thus recapitulate the austere gesture of modernist architecture, the sweeping away of urban density, against the more spontaneous and practical working-class solution to the antagonism between town and country in the *Laubenkolonien*.

This spatial repression of the proletarian milieu is legible in Reimann's treatment of affect among the dwellers of Neustadt. In

Reimann's portrayal, the amelioration of the historical proletarian context of living negates not only working-class traditions in their negative but also their positive sense, as sociability, not to mention the solidarity and collective discipline that the SED demanded of its ruling class, seem, in Reimann's account, to dissolve into a sex-addled, alcohol-fueled frenzy of violence. This insight allows us to approach the repeated problem of disorientation in Neustadt from another angle. Neustadt is a city that is unable to provide people with a sense of their own history and context. Furthermore, the open spaces and roomy apartments of Neustadt do not do away with the frustration, boredom, and violence that were the affective counterpart to traditional proletarian tenement quarters. Indeed, much like the *Hinterhof* in Engler's account, claustrophobia seems to burst any spatial boundaries in *Franziska Linkerhand*, becoming the affective medium of the city, as Franziska reacts to a foreign delegation's report on Neustadt:

> Santé, Gesundheit, health. Was unsere Gäste nicht sahen: die Schlägereien am Lohntag, die Betrunkenen. [. . .] die Rettungswagen mit Fahne und Martinshorn: da hat mal wieder einer den Gashahn aufgedreht, vermutete oder sagte, wer Blaulicht blinken sah; die Kinderbanden, die in den Kaufhallen klauten [. . .] Glatte Fassaden, eine affektfreie Stadt [. . .] Gesund? Nein. Die Haut steril wie ein chirurgisches Instrument, aber unter der Haut ein kranker Organismus. Diese Mischung aus Gleichgültigkeit und Aggressionslust [. . .] Es gibt Abende [. . .] an denen die Luft knistert [. . .] eine Spannung, die mir bange macht wie nahendes Gewitter [. . .] die Alten vorm Fenster, in jeder Wohnung dasselbe Programm [. . .] die Hausantennen [. . .] kein Kino-Freitag. Kein Tanzabend in diesem Bumslokal in der Altstadt. Die Halbstarken an einer Straßenecke, die gelangweilten Mienen [. . .] trotz der zottigen Mädchen. Gelangweilt? Ich weiß nichts von ihnen, nicht, was sie denken und reden—wenn sie überhaupt mal reden—spüre bloß, es breitet sich was vor, Eruption, Affekt, ein Ausbruch angestauter Aggressivität. (520–21)

Boredom, aggression, suicide, alcoholism, and rape underlie a pathological normality in Reimann's description of Neustadt. The repression of the proletarian milieu extends to repress collectivity as such, denying the need for the *social* itself on the part of its citizens under the guise of satisfying their material needs. In the midst of a generalized "*Budenangst*," Reimann frames the suspension of collectivity in terms of a proliferation of individual pathologies, a struggle of "jeder gegen jeden" (148) against the boredom that "schleicht durchs Haus" in Neustadt "wie ein geruchloses Gas" (578). *Franziska Linkerhand* depicts the pervasive aspect of boredom in Neustadt as literally a

matter of life and death, linking boredom and suicide through the overdetermined metaphor of boredom as odorless gas. When asked what there is to do in Neustadt at night, a young worker answers, "man kann fernsehen. Man kann schlafen. Man kann sich aufhängen" (502).[23] A young doctor informs Franziska that Neustadt has about two suicides per week, mostly on Sundays (588). Following the funeral of a murdered construction worker, the house supervisor shows Franziska the graves of Neustadt's dead, mostly suicides, almost none over thirty years old (525).

Reimann's take on boredom as an affect of frenetic paralysis echoes Anna Seghers's invocation of boredom as "a serious threat, an oppressive narrowing of the world," with its gesture toward the confinement of the traditional proletarian experience (*Entscheidung* 442). The remedy held out by Seghers and other authors of the GDR's heroic phase of construction—that is, collective labor as a mode of infusing meaning into the lives of individuals—no longer functions in Reimann's text. As Fredric Jameson has pointed out, 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" ("The Politics of Utopia" 38). Yet, paradoxically, Reimann's relentless foregrounding of boredom, and even suicide, is where her novel aligns itself with the discourse of utopia. As Peter Osbourne has recently argued, "there is a utopian function to boredom in modernity as the basis of a distinctive experience of possibility" (37). This linkage of boredom to utopia has to do with the essentially negative function of utopian thought as "the determinate negation of what is" (37). Osbourne stresses utopian thought's affinity with the possible, the indeterminate. Utopian thought resists any specific content, and here lies its correspondence both with modernity and with boredom, because, in Osbourne's formulation, boredom "is one of the main temporal forms of the experience of *abstraction* that characterizes the culture of modernity more generally" (37; emphasis in original). Utopia, as a clearing away of the old, opens the space that boredom occupies as "the *affective intensification* of possibility, per se" (41; emphasis in original).

Following Jameson's writings on utopia, we can see how the utopia erupts as a *negative* characteristic of Neustadt, legible precisely in the symptoms Reimann describes. In his "Utopia, Modernism, and Death," Jameson appeals to a particular structure of "characterological and pedagogical formation" that developed in the second world,

a socialist culture that evolved beneath and often despite the official public discourses of socialist realism (73–74). Here, Jameson locates the utopian aspect of actually existing socialism precisely in its failure, in the hollow space of a postcapitalist social order that derived less from the achievement of some sort of positive utopia than from the lacunae that these real socialist life worlds opened in the capitalist order. Jameson's thinking here seems particularly relevant to a discussion of Reimann's Neustadt as a *Hohlraum* as Bloch conceives the term. What is important here is the ambivalently utopian dimension of this empty space, as from this space, according to a palimpsestic principle, can develop the "small worlds liberated from the terror of abstract time and uniformity" that Bernd Hüppauf describes as the constituent elements of vernacular culture, or a presentiment of *Heimat* (93).

This is to say that the utopian aspect of East German socialism lay precisely, according to this reading, in its inertia, or, *pace* Heiner Müller, in its deceleration of experience (*Zur Lage der Nation* 11). In his reading of Andrei Platonov's novel *Chevengur*, Jameson shows how the collapse of the prerevolutionary world "leaves those people who were once its constituents 'free,'" in the negative sense of dispossession, "but also ready to be reassembled into new forms of collective life" ("Utopia, Modernism, and Death" 83). Much like the USSR in the aftermath of the civil war, the GDR emerged out of an experience of unprecedented violence and destruction, with a population whose previous lives were marked by war, geographical dislocation, and state terror.[24] It is in this opening, which Jameson describes as "world reduction" ("Utopia, Modernism, and Death" 90), where social disruptions interrupt the order of life, liberating those within this dispensation from the claims of the reality principle, that the utopian erupts as an opening to the free play of the eccentricities, neuroses, compulsions, and manias that constitute the self as a historically embodied entity (99). Of course, Marxism has always understood itself as a critique of utopia through practice, and it was precisely in the emphasis on the *construction* of socialism as a present and tangible thing that the cultural producers of the early GDR sought to counter the "longing for content" integral to both boredom and utopian thinking (Marx 190, ctd. in Osbourne 41).

Yet, as Jameson points out, the second part of the utopian process should be thought of less as utopian construction, as in the language of building socialism, than as a "kind of desiring to desire, a learning to desire, the invention of the desire called Utopia in the first place,

along with new rules for the fantasizing or daydreaming of such a thing" (90). Reimann's novel implies that this longing remained unsatisfied in the GDR, leaving citizens free to burrow into their own pathologies, creating a narrative edifice self-consciously pocked with "Hohlräume der Gefühle," as Seghers describes spaces of human experience all too often neglected by the socialist project ("Aufgaben der Kunst" 168).

Reimann's novel reflects this dispensation in its very structure, a story without any discernable end, which Reimann could neither finish nor abandon (*Abschied* 300). This incompleteness seems rooted in a contradiction between the expansiveness of the text, with its attention to the proliferating minutiae of "waiting room GDR" and the palpable indeterminacy and foreclosure that fragment Reimann's unfinished novel. In this way, Reimann's narrative, in its splitting, doubling, and circling back on itself, seems like an attempt to answer the question posed by the exhaustion of the Marxist-Leninist model of historical teleology already in the GDR. To return to the discussion of *Plattenbau privat* with which this paper began, Hopf and Meier's living rooms can also be read as waiting rooms, no longer places to wait for socialism, but rather for the final eradication of the GDR and the arrival of full Western-ness. Like Reimann's description of Neustadt's urban landscape, these photographs represent a waiting game played out in the world of objects, this time against the birthmarks of socialism.

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NOTES

1. In my discussion of Bloch's concept of the *Hohlraum* and its application to discussions of the built environment, I am influenced by Bernd Hüppauf's article "Spaces of the Vernacular: Ernst Bloch's Philosophy of Hope and the German Hometown."

2. On the early history of Hoyerswerda, see Palutzki 148–86.

3. For a detailed reading of *Ankunft im Alltag* and the fantasy structures of the East German novel of arrival, see Hell, *Post-Fascist Fantasies* 123–31. The topos of the "wild East" is given iconic status in East German film. Frank Beyer's 1966 film version of Erik Neutsch's novel *Spur der Steine*, which was

banned shortly after its release, openly alludes to the cultural imagery of East German construction sites as a kind of Wild West in its shots of the brigadier Hannes Balla and his carpenters in their traditional carpentry costumes, with their black vests and wide-brimmed hats, resembling cowboys or gunfighters. In the film, SED functionaries call the undisciplined Balla a "Texas King" because of his coarse manners and rebellious heroism on the work site. For a reading of *Spur der Steine* as a sort of "Eastern," which substitutes the heroics of socialist labor invested with a "populist manliness" for the mythic freedom of the American Western genre, see Kramer 136ff. For a good account of the wild years of the Wismut mines, see Drescher.

4. The Eleventh Plenum of the Central Committee of GDR's ruling SED took place in December of 1965. The plenum was planned to address the country's economic policies, but SED functionaries used the summit to launch a comprehensive attack on the fruits of the relatively liberal cultural and youth policies that had been implemented after the construction of the Berlin Wall. Many writers were reproached with pessimism about East German society, pornography, and nihilism. Film production was particularly singled out, with the entire production run of the year 1965 being shelved. The Eleventh Plenum represented a sudden and dramatic reversal of these policies, which represented a deep and traumatic rupture in the lives and careers of many writers, artists, and filmmakers, who now realized that their critical engagement with East German society was no longer welcomed or even permitted. On the Eleventh Plenum, see Agde and Mittenzwei.

5. The various developments of these years, from the Bitterfeld Movement in literature to the renegotiations of socialist realist aesthetics in film and the visual arts, as well as the abrupt repression of these initiatives by the SED in 1965, are well documented in Agde.

6. Hermann Henselmann was one of the GDR's most prestigious architects, whose career covered the extremes of the *Bauhaus* and the Stalinallee, and who was a personal friend of both Reimann and Bertolt Brecht. On Henselmann, see Engler (39) and Reimann and Henselmann.

7. Jones (385) gives an excellent account of the narrative construction of Reimann's novel.

8. This was also the case in Hoyerswerda, where the city center was built, in a form greatly reduced from the original plan, in the 1970s (Palutzki 153).

9. On consumption in the GDR, see Kaminsky and Merkel.

10. The trope of emptiness and anonymity in relation to East German cities does, however, become more dominant in the 1970s. See, for example, Loest.

11. On the emphasis on social cohesion and local identification in East German *Aufbau* literature, see Heukenkamp and Bivens.

12. Braun spent the late 1950s and early 1960s working in an excavation brigade at Schwarze Pumpe, where he took part in the circle of writing workers led by Reimann (Reimann, *Ich bedaure nichts* 135).

13. Marchwitza had apparently stumbled onto more than he could handle in Hoyerswerda and was unable to finish this novel. In her diaries, Reimann recounts meeting Marchwitza at the GDR writers' retreat in Petzow. Reimann

found Marchwitza "einsam und schon ein bißchen zu kindhaft," wondering if his reminiscences, jokes, and platitudes expressed wisdom or senility. Reimann writes:

> Er wollte einen Roman über Pumpe schreiben. An einem der letzten Abende sagte er, er habe den Roman beiseitegelegt, er habe das Gefühl, er könne das nicht mehr bewältigen, auch wolle er von der Vergangenheit erzählen, über Dinge, die er kenne. Dies schien uns Erkenntnis und Eingeständnis, daß er von der Welt—der Republik, der Arbeiterklasse 1961, nicht viel weiß, nicht genug weiß, das er sie vielleicht gar nicht mehr begreift. (*Ich bedaure nichts* 225–26)

14. Marchwitza's incomplete manuscript thus foreshadows Erik Neutsch's sprawling Bitterfeld *Gesellschaftsroman, Spur der Steine*, where this same life of enforced restlessness becomes a source of insecurity and loss. Hannes Balla, outlaw construction brigadier at the fictional Buna Works, requires the entire nine-hundred-page narrative apparatus to convince himself that for a man such as he, being at home nowhere, "die *Heimat* ist überall," a curious reversal of Marx's famous dictum that the worker has no fatherland (Neutsch 911).

15. See also Scribner 127.

16. See also Braun's post-*Wende* piece "Die Reisende," where those waiting for a train that never arrives eventually construct homes out of the station, the platform, and their own luggage.

17. This protocol is a sort of narrative re-imagining of Trojanowicz's persecution in the wave of repression targeted at intellectuals, most famously the arrests and trials of Wolfgang Harich and Walter Janka, in the GDR in the wake of the events of 1956, particularly Khrushchev's secret speech at the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU. Reimann based this account largely on the cases of the writers Erich Loest and Reiner Kunze, who were both caught up in the SED's "ideological counter-offensive" (Reimann and Wolf 138, 184–5). On the attacks on intellectuals in the late 1950s, see especially Mittenzwei 144–63 and Meuschel 162–68.

18. See Engels 18 for a discussion of the causal relationship between Haussmann's famous transformation of Paris and the immiseration of the working class in Second Empire Paris.

19. Writing of the Weimar Republic's documentary *Neue Sachlichkeit*, Benjamin noted that "it has succeeded in transforming even abject poverty, recording it in a fashionably perfected manner, as an object of enjoyment" (230).

20. 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* that is itself now an icon of GDR interior design (Hain 7–8; see also Engler 622–4).

21. Bräunig was a central figure in the Bitterfeld movement. As a former miner at the notorious Wismut uranium mines, he had been an early pro-

moter of working-class writing in the GDR and apparently coined the phrase "Greif zur Feder, Kumpel!" His novel *Rummelplatz*, an excerpt of which was published in *Neue Deutsch Literatur* and which has recently been published in its entirety for the first time by Aufbau Verlag, was one of the catalysts for the SED's attack on writers at the Eleventh Plenum. See Wolf 344–54. On Bräunig, see Gerisch and Drescher.

22. On the popularity of the concept of the "city in the garden" in Germany after the Second World War, see Schivelbusch 14–18.

23. The repeated mentions of suicide in Neustadt were largely censored in the 1974 edition of the novel. See Bonner's afterword (619ff).

24. See Geyer and Jarausch 317–41 for their account of the first half of Germany's twentieth century as an epoch of rupture, dislocation, and discontinuity.

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