

immediate impact. For a study of the function of the book in the media marketplace see: Ulrich Saxer, "Das Buch in der Medienkonkurrenz", in: *Lesen und Leben*, eds. Herbert G. Göpfert, Ruth Meyer, Ludwig Muth, Walter Rüegg (Frankfurt/M.: Buchhändler-Vereinigung GmbH, 1975), 206-243.

62 Hanns Lothar Schütz, "Nicht mit unserer schnellen Gesellschaft da 'reinbrettern'", in: *Bbl.*, 93/21.11.89, 3661.

63 Schütz, 3661-3662. See additional suggestions by Hans Altenhein, "Stimme der DDR", in: *Bbl.*, 90/10.11.89, 3591.

64 Schütz, 3661.

65 Ulrich Wechsler, "Go East oder Kapitalismus in der Kultur", in: *Bbl.*, 42/25.5.1990, 1783.

66 Wechsler, 1783.

67 "Fürstenhaus strebt die Mehrheit bei 57 sächsischen Buchhandlungen an", in: *Bbl.*, 44/1.6.1990, 1817. See also: Hanns Lothar Schütz, "Verführung ins Trabi-Land", in: *Bbl.*, 44/1.6.1990, 1828-1833.

68 Hage, "Nach der Zensur", 13.

69 With regard to international literary reception in the United States, it seems that diverse forms of expression are limited to reception within, or recognition by, subcultures (e.g. academic audiences, university students, intellectual communities, minorities). Popular reception of translations (bestsellers) occurs only when the work is effectively "uncoupled" from the original context of production and is largely determined by the foreign context. (See: Rectanus, *German Literature in the United States*)

70 See for example an interview with Sascha Anderson, "Die Generation nach uns ist freier", in: *Der Spiegel*, 36/86, 78.

71 In general the value of the author's image, and reader identification with his/her works, becomes more important as the author achieves an audience, readership or market. (The more well-known an author becomes, the more his/her name is used to promote a book.) This market could be relatively well-defined, as is the case for certain fiction genres (e.g. Westerns), or much larger and diffuse, in the case of bestsellers. In both cases, however, the author's image, and the perceived relationship of that image to his/her works, tends to become a commodity which overshadows other aspects. This seems to be the case for international bestselling authors as well as for authors who achieve a cult status within a market.

72 Emmerich, 468-470.

## THE AMERICAN FEMINIST RECEPTION OF GDR LITERATURE (WITH A GLANCE AT WEST GERMANY)

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To discuss the feminist reception of GDR literature in the United States (or West Germany, for that matter) is to raise the question not only of cultural difference, but of the political difference between different forms of feminism. Specifically, it means to take up the question of the difference between feminism in the West and, as that curious cold-warlike phrase would have it, feminism "under socialism."

In the mid-1970s several things brought this relationship into particularly sharp focus: (1) the rapid and dynamic development of feminist theory and literary scholarship in the West was generating a keen interest in women writers; (2) in the GDR a new proto-feminist body of women's literature was emerging; and (3) the development of GDR studies as a new field of scholarly inquiry in the United States was providing the means for exchange and mediation between these two otherwise quite unrelated feminisms. These three developments converged and, in converging, established the terrain on which the feminist reception of GDR literature in the United States took shape. It is around this convergence and its implications that I will focus my reflections in this essay. My argument, in brief, is that in the course of the 1970s the path of influence between and among these three different movements took a strange and circuitous route: from

GDR women writers to American feminist Germanists to American GDR-Marxists back to GDR women writers and feminists.

In particular, I will argue that, while American feminism overall has to date remained virtually unaffected by the work of GDR women (or men, for that matter), this does not hold true in reverse. In fact, I propose that the theory and practice of American feminism in the 1970s contributed significantly to the shaping of GDR scholarship in this country by its radical challenge to the traditional Marxist paradigm within which this scholarship had been framed. In the dialogues and debates that took place among the overlapping circles of new left journals like *New German Critique*, feminist organizations like Women in German, and American GDR scholars, feminist perspectives played an important role in the developing critique of Marxism itself. In turn, through the active exchange between feminist Germanists in this country and women writers in the GDR, this critical rethinking of Marxist paradigms from a feminist perspective affected the development of a critical consciousness in the GDR. In the fourth of her *Kassandra* essays (presented in 1983 as the Frankfurt Lectures on Poetics) Christa Wolf likened this development (at least as she experienced it), to a virtual paradigm shift:

Mit der Erweiterung des Blick-Winkels, der Neueinstellung der Tiefenschärfe hat mein Seh-Raster, durch den ich unsere Zeit, uns alle, dich, mich selber wahrnehme, sich entschieden verändert, vergleichbar jener frühen entscheidenden Veränderung, die mein Denken, meine Sicht und mein Selbst-Gefühl und Selbstanspruch vor mehr als dreißig Jahren durch die erste befreiende und erhellende Bekanntschaft mit der marxistischen Theorie und Schweise erfuhr.<sup>1</sup>

I begin around 1975. By the mid 1970s feminist theory and feminist literary studies had established themselves as legitimate fields of inquiry within American universities. The call for a radical revision of literary scholarship from the perspective of gender that had been initiated in the late 1960s by texts like Mary Ellman's *Thinking About Women* (1968) and Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* (1969) had begun to show results. By 1975 the publication of the first review essays and the first anthologies both attested to the impact feminism had already had on literary studies and pointed ahead to the impact it was to have on the critical inquiry of western culture at large.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps the best indicator of the degree to which feminist literary studies had arrived was the fact that major commercial publishers were investing in it.<sup>3</sup>

In western Europe the incursion of feminism into the academic and literary public spheres was also well under way by the mid-1970s. In fact it was precisely around the mid-decade mark that some of the texts that were subsequently to become landmarks in the history of contemporary feminist theory appeared: In France, Hélène Cixous' "Le rire de la méduse" and, co-authored with Catherine Clément, *La Jeune née*, were published in 1975; Luce Irigaray's *Spéculum de l'autre femme* had been published a year earlier, the same year in which Julia Kristeva had taken up the question of woman in her work.<sup>4</sup> In England, Sheila Rowbotham (particularly with her 1973 study, *Woman's Consciousness, Man's Time*) had laid the groundwork for a socialist-feminist analysis of culture, while Juliet Mitchell had proposed and initiated a feminist revision of psychoanalysis.<sup>5</sup> In West Germany, the first contribution to feminist theory, Alice Schwarzer's *Der "kleine Unterschied" und seine großen Folgen* appeared in 1975, while the "feminine aesthetics" debate was launched a year later with the publication of Silvia Bovenschen's essay on this question.<sup>6</sup>

Meanwhile, in the GDR, women were also engaging in public debate on what, in traditional Marxist parlance, was still commonly referred to as the Woman Question. Unlike in the West, however, their engagement did not take the form of political activism in behalf of women's liberation nor was it articulated in the form of feminist theory. In the GDR, rather, where oppositional

politics tended to be played out in the cultural sphere, feminism took this form also: protest was registered in the form of fictions. In the process, a series of publications of new work by women writers began to emerge around the mid-seventies: in 1974 Christa Wolf's *Selbstversuch*, Brigitte Reimann's *Franziska Linkerhand*, Gerti Tetzner's *Karen W.* and Irmtraud Morgner's *Leben und Abenteuer der Trobadora Beatriz nach Zeugnissen ihrer Spielfrau Laura*; in 1975 Charlotte Worgitzky's *Die Unschuldigen* and Helga Schubert's *Lauter Leben* in 1975; and in 1976 Christine Wolter's *Wie ich meine Unschuld verlor*. With the publication of these texts which radically redefined a field that had traditionally been dismissed as trivial--the field of *Frauenliteratur*--the GDR literary and cultural scene was suddenly and dramatically changed. For not only were these texts by women but, as Sara Lennox has noted, they were consciously and self-confidently about women.<sup>7</sup> It was a literature that was remarkable in a number of ways: its volume,<sup>8</sup> its feminist content,<sup>9</sup> and finally the fact, remarkable in itself, that it was (and to date remains) the only such body of work to come out of a socialist country.<sup>10</sup>

At this very time, GDR scholarship had also begun to establish itself as a new and growing field of inquiry in the United States. From 1975 on the existence of national and regional conference sessions on GDR literature, a *GDR Bulletin*, and the institutionalization of an annual conference on the GDR in Conway, New Hampshire were providing the means for information exchange and dialogue between intellectuals and scholars in the United States and the GDR.<sup>11</sup> The new interdisciplinary journal of German Studies, *New German Critique*, which had been founded just a year earlier, in 1974, had already begun the mediation process between "us" and "them"--i.e. between Western academic Marxists and GDR socialists--by devoting its second issue to the GDR. This process was not only continued, but given an important new dimension, when in response to the marginalization of women and the prevailing lack of feminist consciousness in the developing American/GDR dialogue, another group--Women in German--was founded, also in 1975. In fact, it was at a GDR conference in St. Louis, Missouri in 1974 that Women in German was conceived, so to speak, when the women in attendance realized that they had much to say, but no official public forum in which to say it.<sup>12</sup> From its inception, therefore, Women in German was a central, indeed crucial, element in this mediation process.<sup>13</sup>

As the membership and activities of these various groups--Women in German, *New German Critique*, the *GDR Bulletin* collective in St. Louis, and the Conway conference participants--intersected and overlapped--a public sphere of sorts was developed in which feminist, Marxist, and GDR scholars met. All of the participants were changed in the process. Feminist literary scholars (as least in *Germanistik*) became aware of women and their literature in the GDR, an awareness which challenged them to acknowledge and, in so doing, rethink the culture-bound nature of western concepts of feminism. Marxists learned to include gender as a critical category in their analyses. However, it was American GDR scholarship that was most significantly affected by the dialogue between and among these different groups. As a result of the fact that the strong feminist presence in the circles of *New German Critique* and American GDR scholarship insistently focused attention on the centrality of the "woman question," the debates around feminist issues that were initiated and carried out in these circles became a force in the move toward a critical interrogation of American Marxist theory and practices.<sup>14</sup>

Much has happened since the mid-1970s in all of the fields whose intersecting histories I have sketched thus far. GDR scholarship has continued to develop: it is now, both in the United States and West Germany, an established scholarly field. GDR women have continued to develop and expand not only the range of GDR women's literature, but the range of perspectives that the

"woman question" in their society entails.<sup>15</sup> Feminism in the West has also continued to grow and, in the process, redefine itself.<sup>16</sup>

What has not changed is the relationship (or absence thereof) of feminism "here" to women "there." On the whole, it is safe to say that GDR literature, even when it raised questions of gender and/or was written by women, has had no measureable impact on Western feminist communities at all.<sup>17</sup> In light of the striking historical convergence between the two phenomena I described earlier--the development of feminist theory and women's literature as a field of scholarly activity in the West and the simultaneous, albeit unrelated, development of a body of women's literature in the GDR informed by a distinctly feminist consciousness--this lack of information and, it seems, interest, is particularly curious. When one considers the fact that at the very time that American feminists like Mary Ellman and Kate Millet were "thinking about women" (as the title of Ellman's 1968 study of sexist assumptions in literary criticism put it), GDR women like Christa Wolf were also doing so in books like *Nachdenken über Christa T.*,<sup>18</sup> one might indeed have expected amore active exchange to have developed. As a body of literature that raised some of the very questions that women and feminists here were also grappling with--the double burden of work and family, the oppressive effect of gender roles on human relationships and sexuality, the relationship between the construction of gender and the political, social, and economic needs of a particular society at a particular time--GDR women's literature might well have found considerable, or at least noticeable, resonance within feminist circles in the United States. This, however, did not happen. A random sample of American feminists (excepting colleagues in German literature and cultural studies) drew a blank when I asked them what they knew about GDR women writers. In fact, they knew nothing about GDR women at all. "There must be something," they would say, embarrassed to admit that they couldn't think of anything, "let me think ... Ah yes, Christa Wolf!"

Why this blank? To begin with there is the mundane and obvious matter of accessibility: relatively little has been translated<sup>19</sup> and of the few texts in translation most are hard to find and all but unavailable to anyone without access to university libraries. The fact that Christa Wolf is known, but others not, can in large part be attributed to the fact that she is the only GDR woman whose works are easily accessible to American readers: she alone among GDR women writers is published by a major American press (Farrar, Straus & Giroux) with both trade- and academic market distribution.<sup>20</sup> More important, however, is the fact that the process of cross-cultural translation and exchange is not a disinterested process. We don't simply take what is there: we take what we need and find useful. Moreover, there is the matter of which "we" we mean. For there are many different feminist constituencies. In a discussion of the feminist reception of GDR literature in the United States, for example, we must distinguish between at least three different constituencies: the feminist women's community at large, feminists in academia, and feminists in *Germanistik*. It is thus feminist receptions--in the plural--of which we are actually speaking.

In each instance the reception is shaped by the different needs and interests of that particular constituency. The non-academic feminist community, for example, is, for the most part, interested in literature by and about women that has use value for women in their daily lives, usually by providing one of two things: entertainment or information. For this readership, which depends largely on materials available through local bookstores (and only few communities are fortunate enough to have a women's bookstore), marketing and distribution factors become critical: simply put, what is not readily available is less likely to be read. For this non-academic, i.e. general feminist, readership, therefore, the reception of GDR literature is more or less limited to Christa Wolf for the very reason mentioned earlier: the distribution provided by her American publisher. This relative accessibility is also one of the

factors that have made Wolf a staple (if not a "classic") among American feminist readers. The only problem with this otherwise no doubt desirable status is that, as she is incorporated into the feminist canon, she tends to be read less as a German (much less a GDR-German) writer, than as a woman--indeed a Great Woman--writer.<sup>21</sup> Feminist academics make up yet another constituency. For this group, the use value of literature is measured in somewhat different terms, namely by its ability to provide either information or theoretical perspectives that are useful in their work. Judging from the texts and references that circulate, feminist academics as a whole have obviously not found work produced in the GDR to be of use or interest for their own work. The fact that virtually nothing in the way of feminist theory has come out of the GDR thus far is undoubtedly a decisive factor in this regard.<sup>22</sup> To the extent that this lack of interest is not only affected by, but in turn affects, the availability of texts, lack of interest and lack of availability thus join in a mutually reinforcing negative cycle. The one group on whom and through whom GDR literature has had a noticeable impact is thus the third, and by far the smallest, of the three I mentioned: feminists in *Germanistik*. This, therefore, is the group on which my analysis of the feminist reception of GDR literature will, for the most part, be based.

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In considering the relationship between feminist readers in the West and women writers in the GDR it is important to remember the obvious, but often forgotten, fact that feminism means different things in different contexts. GDR women writers, notably Wolf and Morgner, have consistently stressed the fact that basic terms such as "woman," "Mensch," "freedom," "happiness" or, as in this case, "feminism" carry different meanings in the context of their society than in West Germany, say, or the United States. Since this awareness of difference informs (consciously as well as unconsciously) our responses to the literature of people writing in cultural contexts foreign to our own, the nature and consequences of these responses have been the focus of much discussion of late.

One obvious response is to avoid what is foreign and remain within the boundaries of what we have claimed as our own. Feminist critiques of the canon in its traditional (i.e. exclusionary) form notwithstanding, this avoidance tactic is also common in feminist circles: we, too, tend to work with what we know, i.e. with what seems familiar. The resulting comfort of not having to confront the limitations of our cultural ignorance is buttressed politically by the argument that by staying on our own turf we avoid the imperializing gesture of appropriating the other within our interpretive sphere.

However, this argument holds only in theory, if at all. For, so as not to be limited by too narrow a definition of what is "ours," we have also learned to adjust the categories in such away that a variety of otherwise heterogeneous texts--including ones from cultures that, strictly speaking, are not our own--can nevertheless be incorporated into "our" cultural sphere. This appropriative gesture has been and continues to be standard practice in literary scholarship. Feminist scholarship often repeats the same gesture. The argument is that such a gesture is not an act of appropriation when it is motivated by a feminist impulse. Then, supposedly, it becomes a kind of embrace that brings women writers and readers together into cross-cultural and transhistorical sisterhood. This position is based on a particular definition of feminism that defines options in terms of gender polarity: either to be nobodies in patriarchy or to unite as women in no-man's land.<sup>23</sup> From such a perspective, factors that threaten the illusion of intra-gender unity such as class, race, ethnicity, even the time and place in which lives and texts are shaped, appear secondary, if not negligible.

An important early study of Christa Wolf from a feminist perspective, Myra Love's "Christa Wolf and Feminism: Breaking the Patriarchal Connection,"<sup>24</sup> is essentially based on such a con-

cept of feminism. Arguing that others "have made valuable contributions to the elucidation of Wolf's work by discussing it in light of its relationship to social and philosophical developments in the GDR," Love proposed that "[t]here is another sense in which one may locate Christa Wolf's writing within a historical context, one which, though of less immediate specificity than the development of the GDR, is no less actual. I refer here to patriarchy" (31). Reading *Nachdenken über Christa T.* in light of analyses of patriarchal structures deriving in the main from Derridean categories, she concludes that in *Christa T.* [t]he patriarchal model of reality ... is subverted" (33) by the form of narration, and that the text is an illustration of what the radical American feminist Mary Daly calls women's "revolutionary participation in history" (41).

This strategy of reading from what I would call a "cultural feminist"<sup>25</sup> perspective is typical of the Western feminist reception of Christa Wolf. Through much of the 1970s and into the 1980s this was the perspective that within American feminism and its institutionalized academic form, i.e. women's studies, tended to dominate the public discussion of women's issues. Cultural feminism was based on the assumption that women, in some essential way, were different from men. On the basis of this assumption, women's literature was read as what German feminists called *Identifikationsliteratur*: literature that functioned as a mirror confirming what one already knew about women (and, by extension, men). GDR women's literature was read no differently. As young American women's studies students read *The Quest for Christa T.*, the protagonist's troubles confirmed their sense that their problems were indeed universal: regardless of the system, the times, or the culture, they believed, men oppressed women and women had identity problems. Thus, in the mid-seventies "the difficulty of saying 'I'" was lifted from Wolf's text to become a slogan in circles of the American women's movement. As Wolf herself followed *Nachdenken über Christa T.* (1968) with *Selbstversuch* (1973) and then *Kassandra* (1983), this cultural feminist reading of her work as a reflection of a world deeply divided by gender polarities was strongly reinforced.<sup>26</sup>

While cultural feminism may have been the dominant, i.e. most popular and popularized strain of American feminism in the 1970s, it was not the only one. Socialist feminism was a strong and visible force also. For women whose feminism had been formed within the context of left politics, socialist-feminism was the most obvious position. Indeed, for such women whose intellectual and political formations were, on the other hand, new left analyses of culture, consciousness, and subjectivity, socialist-feminism was more than a logical choice: it was the promise of a utopian synthesis.

There were, however, several obstacles in the way of such a synthesis. For one, within American academic circles most of the work informed by an explicitly socialist-feminist perspective was being done by political scientists, economists, and sociologists.<sup>27</sup> This meant that, for the most part, it tended to be quantitative. Moreover, for many socialist feminists the move to feminism often involved little more than adding the category of gender to the paradigm of class analysis without reconceptualizing either the theory or practice of left politics. This, in turn, meant that precisely those aspects of human experience that feminist and new left critical theories had shown to be profoundly political--the personal, the aesthetic, the cultural (in fact, the very aspects that cultural feminism emphasized)--were often again either ignored or marginalized.

It was here that literature, in particular the female-voiced and proto-feminist literature being produced by women in the GDR, played a particularly important role. For this was a literature that not only described, but imagined, what a synthesis of socialist and feminist visions might look like in practice.<sup>28</sup> Not surprisingly, therefore, given its conceptual grounding in Marxist theory and its political affiliation with socialist movements, it was the socialist-feminist perspective that in the decade of the seventies defined

the American reception of GDR women's literature. Thus, whereas the search for cultural models took French intellectuals to China in the mid-seventies, left feminists in *Germanistik* looked to the GDR. Indeed, for a brief period, roughly from the publication of Wolf's *Nachdenken über Christa T.* in 1968 to the expulsion of Wolf Biermann from the GDR in 1976, the GDR appeared to some left intellectuals in the West (notably in the United States, where physical distance facilitated the projection of such fantasies) as the possible site of a concrete utopia. Like the protagonist of Irmtraud Morgner's *Trobadora Beatriz* and with a similar mixture of ignorance, hope, and naivete, they believed that this might be "[ein] Ort des Wunderbaren."<sup>29</sup> In her foreword to Maxie Wander's *Guten Morgen, du Schöne* (1978) Christa Wolf reinforced such a vision by suggesting that the GDR really was a state in which the changing consciousness of women--the desire and need "als ganzer Mensch zu leben"--was revolutionizing the entire society.

For left feminists in the West the work of women writers from socialist countries provided invaluable material with which to put their own theories to the test, particularly the claim that socialism provided the basis for a society consonant with feminist principles. Literary texts of all kinds, not just documentary texts, were thus often read less as literature than as historical documents. The interest they elicited was both anthropological and political: what was this culture like, we wanted to know, and what was it like for women? What could we learn by reading these texts about the relationship between class and gender politics? For many feminists on the left, socialist-feminism promised a possible alternative to either bourgeois feminism or male socialism. And in the blazing of this "third path," GDR women writers were seen as allies.

With her sophisticated and historically sensitive grasp of the need to understand the dialectical relationship between what, in the context of 1970s Marxism, were still commonly referred to as "material conditions" and forces like desire and language, Christa Wolf was regarded by many not only as the main architect of this "third path," but as the principal guide along the way. Texts like *Christa T.*, for example, suggested a new way of writing that mediated between the terms of Marxist analysis on the one hand and the impulses of cultural feminism on the other: a writing in which the "political" and the "personal" were conjoined. Between a Marxist discourse that insisted on a "we" in which the "I" was all but subsumed, and a bourgeois-feminist discourse that focused so much on the "I" that the "we" was all but forgotten, Wolf constructed an "I"--a gendered "I"--embedded in the "we" of historical community. Community and individuality, she showed, were not only both possible, but necessarily joined.<sup>30</sup>

Both from the perspective of Western-style socialist feminism and of those GDR women writers who were increasingly conscious of themselves not just as writers, or GDR writers, but as women writers, it was evident that concepts basic not only to Marxist theory, but to the lived reality of a socialist state had to be recast in light of the needs and experiences of women. Primary among these was the concept of "production." From Christa Wolf through Brigitte Reimann to Irmtraud Morgner, GDR women showed that (for women at least) production included reproduction in the broadest sense of the word, encompassing child care and housework as well as the emotional work of nurturing and maintaining relationships. Morgner's work, notably her *Trobadora Beatriz*, was particularly influential in this regard. For Morgner's argument that we need to rethink all the categories--work, love, desire, resistance, even revolution--from the perspective of women reinforced and complemented the arguments of feminists in the West.

In today's political climate we cannot talk of either socialism or feminism as if they mean what they meant a decade ago. In the late seventies socialist feminism still had a strong voice within the context of West feminist and left movements, while in the GDR women like Morgner and Wolf were still writing hopefully about a

socialist-feminist synthesis. Now both socialism and feminism, both as international movements and as ideologies have changed dramatically. In a post-modern, post-feminist, post-socialist age of "empires in decline,"<sup>31</sup> neither cultural feminism nor socialist-feminism are functional paradigms from which to think about women or look at the world. How, then, we might ask, in this context of dissolving boundaries and crumbling ideologies, can feminists in the West read GDR literature?

A study by a West German feminist literary critic, Marlis Gerhardt's *Stimmen und Rhythmen: Weibliche Ästhetik und Avantgarde* (1986) implicitly takes up this question. Gerhardt proposes what I would call a post-modern, deconstructive-feminist approach to GDR literature. Referring to writers like Virginia Woolf, Christa Wolf, Heiner Müller, and Ingeborg Bachmann who, in her view, exemplify the fatal consequences of cultural images such as "woman" or "man" because these images in effect prevent or deny the possibility of any genuinely authentic human (i.e. non-gendered) experience, Gerhardt argues for a textual politics of radical deconstruction. Positing that the cultural images of "man" and "woman" function as the legitimating myths of patriarchy, she argues that they (myths and images alike) must be systematically destroyed. In the process, she maintains, patriarchy itself will be dismantled. And thus, she concludes, the de(con)struction of cultural images is perhaps the ultimate feminist revolutionary act.

Given these premises Heiner Müller, not surprisingly, emerges as a feminist front-runner, the one who "wie kaum ein anderer, die Frage nach der Vernichtung des männlichen Ichs durch seine Geschichte auf die Spitze [treibt]" (Gerhardt: 77). Since men and women alike are "in gleich verhängnisvoller Weise in die überholten Strukturen der männlichen Geschichte verwickelt" (81), his acts of destruction liberate both sexes from their death by patriarchy. This approach to Müller is not new: Already in 1975 an all-women's cast in Austin, Texas had used their experience with *Mauser* as an example of the feminist potential of Müller's plays.<sup>32</sup> Several years later, in 1980, David Bathrick, arguing along the lines of Klaus Theweleit's *Männerphantasien*, proposed not only that Müller could be read in feminist ways but that this, in fact, was the end toward which Müller himself was writing. Müller's technique of bringing the repressed and perverted side of male histories to the surface was, as Bathrick saw it, an "antipatriarchal" move.<sup>33</sup> Several years later, in 1982, Helen Fehervary proposed a similar reading of Müller in terms of what she called a "deconstructive aesthetic."<sup>34</sup> Following upon Bathrick and anticipating Gerhardt, she, too, saw Müller's de(con)struction of the myth of the author by exposing the gendered subjectivity of his authorial authority as a move to dismantle the cultural structures of patriarchy.

Given current feminist attention to issues of power and difference (the engagement, for example, with issues of race, 'first world' colonialism and its relationship to language, discourse, and the production of theory), Müller is of interest to feminists in a number of ways. For Müller identifies as revolutionary subjects those who have been marginal to or even outside the traditional bounds of what, from a Western hegemonic perspective, has been designated as "Culture"--the uneducated, the peoples of the "Third World," women. However, precisely the radical cultural critique that makes Müller compelling to feminists is also what makes him problematic. To begin with, the privileging of outsider-ness and implicit romanticizing of oppression is uncomfortably reminiscent of the early 1970s Marcusean belief in the revolutionary potential and historical role of the so-called counterculture in the early 1970s--women, Blacks, students, and youth.<sup>35</sup> Hotly debated then, the historical irresponsibility of such a position has since become unmistakable. Therefore, to focus on the outsider as the most authentic and thus most revolutionary subject doubles back, in a disturbing way, to a form of cultural and essentialist feminism that most feminists today (and probably even Müller himself) would ultimately find untenable. For it deconstructs

patriarchy only to reconstruct woman as a site of new myth-making.

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The three feminist approaches to GDR literature that I have outlined--the cultural feminist, the socialist feminist, and the deconstructive feminist--cannot be ordered into a sequence along historical, much less "politically correct," lines. They are all, in their own way, useful and problematic at once; they all occurred, and continue to occur, simultaneously. However, my ordering does reflect my sense that the last approach, namely that of a deconstructive feminism, particularly fits the current state of theoretical and political discourse of Western-style feminism, notably in the left intellectual circles in which GDR literature is most likely to be read. In that sense I see this approach as symptomatic of shifts in feminist approaches to literature in general and expect more such readings of GDR literature by both male and female writers to appear in the future.

In a discussion of the reception of GDR literature from a Western feminist perspective one fact bears repeating despite its obviousness, namely the considerably different histories of women and feminisms in a socialist society like the GDR on the one hand and Western capitalist democracies like the United States or West Germany on the other. Particularly significant in this context is the fact that feminist consciousness in the GDR not only had an altogether different starting point from most feminisms in the West, but developed in what in some ways appears to be almost the opposite direction. Early works by GDR women identified in the West as feminist--Wolf's *Christa T.*, Morgner's *Trobadora Beatriz*, Reimann's *Franziska Linkerhand*--focused on gender in its social context, insisting not only that gender was historically constructed and socially experienced, but that it was only one of the factors (and not necessarily the primary one) shaping social and personal identities. Western feminism, meanwhile, particularly in the early to mid-1970s, tended to focus on gender as a primary, and even essential, determinant of behavior, identity, and power. Within feminist circles and women's studies classrooms, stories of women's lives were often read as mere variations on a universal theme that crossed time and culture: the oppression of women at the hands of men. Indeed, it often seemed that what Western feminists liked best and most readily identified with in the texts of GDR women was that they, too, appeared to be victims: Christa T., like Esther Greenwood,<sup>36</sup> died young; male/female relationships didn't work any better in Irmtraud Morgner's (East) Berlin than in the (West) Berlin of a young feminist writer, Verena Stefan, writing on the other side of the Wall.<sup>37</sup> In defensive solidarity, good feminists were called on to be "woman-identified." It was precisely in reaction against this dehistoricized form of feminist universalism that the work of GDR women writers was greeted with such enthusiasm by left feminists. For while Western-style feminism tended to see women's victimization purely in terms of gender, the GDR texts were more likely to see it within a larger social context. In *Trobadora Beatriz*, for example, Morgner described the problems between women and men as a social disease that women, time, and socialism, could cure, while in Stefan's *Häutungen*, it is the men who are sick and the only cure is for women to leave. To the extent that the work of GDR women writers posited gender as a historical formation--as part of and contingent upon a complex configuration of factors such as class, race, ethnicity, age, and sexual identity--they functioned as an important counterbalance to the dominant Western strain of ahistorical feminist essentialism.

At the same time, the inability (or refusal) of GDR women to identify gender as a historically primary category, their insistence on seeing women (including themselves as writers) as loyal citizens of their state or, simply, as people (*Menschen*) often made Western feminists impatient and angry. For the refusal of writers like Wolf and Morgner to identify themselves as feminists--i.e.

to be "woman-identified"--was also seen negatively as a refusal to recognize and acknowledge the fact that women were, in fact, oppressed precisely because they were women and this within states that--whether capitalist or socialist--were all undeniably patriarchal.

By the late 1980s Western feminism, at least in its theoretical articulations, had moved, for the most part, from a woman-identified stance to the study of gender. The focus was now on the construction and role of gender in identity formation and its effect on the relations of power in both public and private spheres.<sup>38</sup> From an insistence on the otherness of women, feminist attention had shifted to the otherness among and in women. At the same time, in the GDR, precisely those writers most identified in the West with feminism, notably Morgner and Wolf, were producing texts like *Amanda* and *Kassandra* that to Western feminist ears had a distinctly cultural-feminist ring. This shift, not only in tone but, more importantly, in a view of history, is particularly striking in *Kassandra* where women are defined not only as separate from men, but in opposition to them. In *Kassandra* Wolf depicts the struggle for survival in gender terms. Moreover, as this text puts it, this struggle has the givenness of the mythic dimensions in which the narrative is cast. Gender, in other words, is not deconstructed, as had become critical practice in the West; rather, it is set in place with a vengeance.

These differences obviously affect the degree to which we find each others texts to be useful. However, as the current focus on difference within Western feminism has shown, attention to difference is not only intellectually, but politically, necessary. In a globally interconnected world we must be mindful of the nature and consequences of our interdependencies and rethink our position in light of contingencies. For these reasons, I believe that GDR literature continues to be useful to feminists in the West. For one, the perspective of women whose writing is informed by their experience of having lived in and with the vision of a socialist society, can add an important historical perspective to feminist discussions in the West. In light of this difference the textual strategies of women writers here and there can be seen as responses to the limitations and possibilities of the context in which they are writing. Moreover, despite their differences, the works of women writing in the GDR and of feminists in the West not only share basic concerns--the state of our environment, the nuclear threat, the dangerous consequences of science and technology unchecked by ethics or reason, the corrosive and deadly effect of sexism, racism, anti-Semitism and other forms of prejudice--but are viewing these issues from the perspective of gender. What do these matters have to do with women, they and we are asking, and what can we--as women--do to change them? And it is here, I believe, that we are joined, across differences, in common cause.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Christa Wolf, *Kassandra: Voraussetzungen einer Erzählung* (Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1983): 131.

<sup>2</sup>The first American anthologies of feminist literary theory and criticism were Susan Koppleman Cornillon, ed., *Images of Women in Fiction: Feminist Perspectives* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1972) and Josephine Donovan, ed., *Feminist Literary Criticism: Explorations in Theory* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1975). In 1975 the first review essay, Elaine Showalter's "Literary Criticism," appeared in the recently founded journal of American feminist scholarship, *Signs*. Annette Kolodny's "Some Notes on Defining a Feminist Literary Criticism" was published in the second issue of *Critical Inquiry* that fall.

<sup>3</sup>In 1972 Alfred A. Knopf published Patricia Meyer Spacks' *The Female Imagination* and in 1977 Doubleday followed suit with Ellen Moers' *Literary Women: The Great Writers*.

<sup>4</sup>Julia Kristeva, "Les femmes, ce n'est jamais ça," *Tel Quel*, Nos. 57-58 and *Des chinoises* both appeared in 1975.

<sup>5</sup>Sheila Rowbotham, *Woman's Consciousness, Man's World* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1973); Juliet Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (New York: Random House, 1974).



<sup>6</sup>Silvia Bovenschen, "Über die Frage: Gibt es eine weibliche Ästhetik?," *Ästhetik und Kommunikation*, No. 25 (1976).

<sup>7</sup>Sara Lennox, "'Nun ja! Das nächste Leben geht aber heute an': Prosa von Frauen und Frauenbefreiung in der DDR," in *Literatur der DDR in den siebziger Jahren*, ed. Peter Uwe Hohendahl and Patricia Herminghouse (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1983). This article, along with Patricia Herminghouse's "'Der Autor nämlich ist ein wichtiger Mensch': Zur Prosa" and Ursula Heukenkamp's "Poetisches Subjekt und weibliche Perspektive: Zur Lyrik," in *Frauen Literatur Geschichte: Schreibende Frauen vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Hiltrud Gnüg and Renate Möhrmann (Stuttgart: Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1985) were the first thorough and thoughtful overviews of contemporary GDR women's literature from a feminist perspective.

<sup>8</sup>In a lecture on "The Role of Women's Literature in the GDR" (Emory University, October 1988), Christiane Lemke noted that a quarter of all contemporary literature in the GDR is being produced by women, a percentage she felt was substantial.

<sup>9</sup>The feminist perspective of these texts is particularly noteworthy in light of the fact that, unlike in the United States and West Germany, there was no women's movement in the GDR.

<sup>10</sup>In Poland and Hungary there is no feminist public voice to speak of. In Czechoslovakia there are a few instances of women speaking out as women, notably Eva Kanturkova whose documentation of the women of Charter 77 has been translated both into German [*Verbotene Bürger: Die Frauen der Charta 77* (Munich: Langen Müller, 1982)] and English [*My Companions in the Bleak House* (Woodstock, NY: The Overlook Press, 1987)]. With the exception of Natalya Baranskaja's description of daily life in the Soviet Union from the perspective of women [German: *Woche um Woche: Frauen in der Sowjetunion* (Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1979)], feminist texts from the Soviet Union have been either *samizdat* or exile publications: the first feminist *samizdat* publication by the Leningrad feminist collective was immediately impounded and resulted in the exile or imprisonment of most of its contributors. Other texts available in English are Tatjana Mamonova, *Women and Russia: Feminist Writings from the Soviet Union* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), and Julia Voznesenskaya, *The Women's Decameron* (New York: Henry Holt, & Co., 1987). Why the development in the GDR has been so different, i.e. why the GDR, in contrast to other eastern European countries, has had such a relatively active public debate on the Woman Question, is a topic for another essay. The factors, no doubt, are complex and myriad, ranging from the culturally different ways gender roles and male/female relationships have been shaped in these countries to their different social, political, and economic histories.

<sup>11</sup>In 1974 the first session on GDR literature was held at the MLA; the first International Symposium on the German Democratic Republic was held at the World Fellowship Center outside of Conway, New Hampshire in the summer of 1975 (since 1980 the conference proceedings have been published as *Studies in GDR Culture and Society*, with Margy Gerber as chief editor); the *GDR Bulletin*, edited by Patricia Herminghouse, began publication that same year.

<sup>12</sup>With its international membership network, quarterly newsletter, annual conferences, and (since 1985) scholarly journal--the *Women in German Yearbook*--Women in German has ever since constituted just such a forum.

<sup>13</sup>Already at the second Women in German conference an entire half-day was devoted to a session on women in GDR literature. When Women in German began inviting women writers from German-speaking countries as special guests to their annual conferences, two GDR writers--Irmtraud Morgner and Helga Schütz--were among the first to be invited: Morgner and Schütz attended the 1984 conference in Boston.

<sup>14</sup>A good illustration of the high degree of feminist awareness that marked American GDR scholarship almost from the beginning is the second volume of *Studies in GDR Culture and Society* (1982) in which essays either with a feminist perspective or on women writers (or both) make up over half the entire issue. As a review of *The Women in German Yearbook* suggests, the GDR-awareness of feminist scholarship has lagged somewhat behind in comparison: until the late 1980s, the *WiG Yearbook* had published relatively little material on the GDR. A notable and important exception was its publication of Dorothy Rosenberg's bibliography on women prose writers in the GDR (*Women in German Yearbook* 4, 1988). *New German Critique* has played an interesting--and important--role in regard to the relationship between feminism and GDR scholarship. In the first few issues (including the special GDR issue, spring 1974) neither women nor feminist perspectives were included.

Subsequently, however, *New German Critique* presented itself as a regular and reliable source of information and critical perspectives on the situation of women in the GDR. In fact, it was in *NGC* that some of the first explicitly feminist texts by Wolf (*Selbstversuch*) and Morgner (excerpts from *Trobadora Beatriz*) were made available in English.

<sup>15</sup>See, for example, work written in the 1980s by, among others, Helga Königsdorf (*Respektloser Umgang*, 1986), Monika Maron (*Flugasche* and *Die Überläuferin*, 1981 and 1986, respectively), Irmtraud Morgner (*Amanda. Ein Hexenroman*, 1983), and Christa Wolf (*Kassandra*, 1983).

<sup>16</sup>On a general level, feminism itself has changed, both politically and conceptually, as its focus shifted from the study of women to the analysis of gender, i.e. from the 1970's assumption of sisterhood to the exploration of difference in the 1980s. On the level of literary scholarship, feminist work has changed not only how we think of literature, but also what we do with it as critics. One sign of this change is the fact that gender has become an indispensable category in literary and cultural studies.

<sup>17</sup>Actually, neither East nor West German women--their theory or their literature--have had a noticeable impact on feminist discourses outside of the German-speaking world. In anthologies of feminist theory and literary scholarship published in the mid- and late-1980s [e.g. Gaye Green and Coppelia Kahn, *Making a Difference: Feminist Literary Criticism* (New York and London: Methuen, 1984); Elaine Showalter, *The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature & Theory* (New York: Pantheon, 1985); Nancy K. Miller, *The Poetics of Gender* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986); Shari Benstock, *Feminist Issues in Literary Scholarship* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987)], German women or German feminist perspectives are completely absent. On the other hand, as if to show that German feminism does exist, albeit in a world apart, Gisela Ecker's *Feminist Aesthetics* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985) is exclusively German.

<sup>18</sup>The literal translation of Wolf's second novel, *Nachdenken über Christa T.*, would be "thinking about Christa T."

<sup>19</sup>*Literature of the German Democratic Republic: A Bibliography*, ed. Margy Gerber and Judith Pouget (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984) is an invaluable resource. An update is in process. In addition to the translations already mentioned in *New German Critique*, short prose selections by GDR women writers appeared in *German Feminism: Readings in Politics and Literature*, ed. Edith Hoshino Altbach, Jeanette Clausen, et al. (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1984). Dorothy Rosenberg and Nancy Lukens are completing an anthology of GDR women writers in English translation.

<sup>20</sup>In a survey of courses taught at American universities in the area of "German and Women's Studies" compiled in 1983 for *Women in German* by Sydna Stern Weiss and Sidonie Cassirer, Christa Wolf emerged as the only German women writer consistently and frequently taught: three of her texts (first and foremost, *Nachdenken über Christa T.*, then, much less frequently, *Der geteilte Himmel* and *Selbstversuch*) were included in 32 of 38 courses listed. In comparison, Morgner (with *Trobadora Beatriz*) and Seghers (with *Ausflug der toten Mädchen*) were included in only five courses each. *Christa T.* was also the only text by a GDR woman writer included in the readings for Women's Studies courses listed in the survey.

<sup>21</sup>This universalizing gesture of appropriation is symptomatic of West German approaches to GDR literature as well. Even the work of as historically minded a scholar as Sigrid Weigel, such as her study of contemporary women's literature, *Das Lächeln der Medusa. Schreibweisen in der Gegenwartsliteratur von Frauen* (Dülmen-Hiddingsee: tende, 1987) operates, to a large extent, on such assumptions. For, as it turns out, not only does the "Frauen" of Weigel's title actually mean German women, but, even more specifically, it means West German. Once these moves are in place, Christa Wolf can be included as another example of "contemporary women's literature" without any reference to the specificity of the context out of which she is writing. She can be appropriated into a pan-German women's literature. The problem is less with the strategy itself than with the fact that it remains unacknowledged.

<sup>22</sup>In this respect, there is actually not much difference between East and West German feminisms and their respective receptions: the former has not generated much interest because of the relative absence of an elaborated theoretical perspective; the latter because its theoretical texts have been seen as basically derivative of American and French models.

<sup>23</sup>The work of the American feminist literary scholars, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, to whose most recent project, *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century* (Yale University Press; Vol. I: *The War of the Words*, 1988; Vol. II: *Sexchanges*, 1989; Vol. III: in process) I am alluding here, exemplifies this approach.

<sup>24</sup>Myra Love, "Christa Wolf and Feminism: Breaking the Patriarchal

Connection," *New German Critique*, No. 16 (Winter 1979): 31-55.

<sup>25</sup>Cultural feminism identifies the cultural sphere as the primary locus of struggle, emphasizing the development of autonomous and "woman-specific" cultural forms as a means of women's emancipation from patriarchy. Cultural feminism is linked (often even congruent with) a radical feminist political stance that assumes women's oppression to be the primary oppression and patriarchy to be the root system of all other oppressive systems (such as class or race).

<sup>26</sup>See, for example, the introduction to *Cassandra* in the West German feminist magazine *Emma* (March 1983): "Es geht in dieser Erzählung um zwei Kriege: den der Griechen gegen die Troer und um den der Männer gegen die Frauen. Die Wurzeln des ersten liegen schon im zweiten" (p. 22).

<sup>27</sup>Particularly influential in the construction of a socialist-feminist theoretical perspective was the work of women like Heidi Hartman, Nancy Hartsock, Zillah Eisenstein, Eli Zaretsky, and Batya Weinbaum.

<sup>28</sup>The interest in the possibility of such a synthesis led to a rediscovery of Alexandra Kollontai, whose work was not only reissued in its original, uncensored form, but in some cases published for the first time in translation. Kollontai's *Autobiography of a Sexually Emancipated Communist Woman* was republished and her prose work, *Love of Worker Bees*, was published for the first time in English translation in 1978.

<sup>29</sup>It is with this very image that *Trobadora Beatriz* (in the first and last sentence of the narrative) begins and ends.

<sup>30</sup>In the search for models which would allow for both Marxist and feminist approaches, Herbert Marcuse was much discussed in the early to mid-70s. In the Madison, Wisconsin *New German Critique* collective a veritable "Marcuse Debate" raged for several months in 1975. In the course of this debate, Marcuse's ahistorical and essentialist romanticizing of what amounted to "woman's nature" was contrasted to Christa Wolf's position which grounded feminist consciousness in a material understanding of women's historical situation.

<sup>31</sup>I am borrowing the term from Timothy Garton Ash's essay "The Empire in decay" (*The New York Review of Books*, September 29, 1988: 53-60). The concept of a "post-feminist" age was launched into public discussion by Betty Friedan herself, particularly with the publication of her book, *The Second Stage* (1981).

<sup>32</sup>Betty Nance Weber, "Mausers in Austin, Texas," *New German Critique*, No. 8 (Spring 1976): 150-156.

<sup>33</sup>David Bathrick, "Affirmative and Negative Culture: The Avant-Garde Under 'Actually Existing Socialism' – The Case of the GDR," *Social Research*, vol. 47, no. 1 (spring 1980): 166-187.

<sup>34</sup>Helen Febervary, "Autorschaft, Geschlechtsbewußtsein und Öffentlichkeit: Versuch über Heiner Müller's *die Hamletmaschine* und Christa Wolf's *Kein Ort. Nirgends*," in *Entwürfe von Frauen in der Literatur des 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Irmela von der Lühe (Berlin: Argument Verlag, 1982): 132-154. Febervary, like Bathrick, used *Hamletmaschine* as the basis of her analysis.

<sup>35</sup>Already then, in the 1970s, Christa Wolf's careful reflections on the complex relationships between gender, power, and history in texts like *Christa T.* seemed infinitely more useful than Marcuse's ahistorical, romanticizing essentialism that hailed women as the guardians of authenticity.

<sup>36</sup>Esther Greenwood is the protagonist of Sylvia Plath's novel, *The Bell Jar* (1963), a text that became a virtual cult text in the early years of American women's studies.

<sup>37</sup>Verena Stephan's *Häutungen* (Munich: Frauenoffensive, 1975) became a rallying point for West German feminism.

<sup>38</sup>See, for example, the self-conscious reflections in this process in Alice Jardine and Paul Smith, eds., *Men in Feminism* (New York/London: Methuen, 1987).

## INTERVIEW MIT PETER GOSSE

Peter Gosse wurde 1938 in Leipzig geboren. Er studierte Hochfrequenztechnik in Moskau (1956-1962) und war bis 1968 als Diplomingenieur in der Radarindustrie tätig. 1971 erhielt er eine Aspirantur am Institut für Literatur Johannes R. Becher in Leipzig, wo er heute als Dozent tätig ist. Gosse ist vor allem als Lyriker bekannt. Das Interview wurde im Herbst 1990 von Fritz König (University of Northern Iowa) geführt.

**König:** Wie stellt sich die literarische Szenerie in der "noch-DDR" jetzt dar, im Herbst 90, ein knappes Jahr nach Beginn der Wende?

**Gosse:** Laß mich, bevor ich auf Deine Frage eine Antwort versuche, ein Wort zur literarischen Landschaft in der DDR vor dem Umbruch sagen. Diese war eine durchaus reichgegliederte und erfreulich heterogen; gute Autoren lassen ja von der Zensur nicht in ihrem Werk herumkorrigieren, erforderlichenfalls veröffentlichten sie im Westen. Das eigentlich Verbindende dieser Literatur war, daß sie weder affirmieren noch dissidieren wollte. Sie redete also weder der Obrigkeit nach dem Mund noch stellte sie diese vollkommen in Frage, und der zweitgenannte Aspekt bedarf wohl einer Erläuterung.

Das Gesellschaftsgefüge namens DDR war ja im Verfolg einer bedeutenden Absicht auf den Weg gebracht worden, zudem von ausgewiesenen Antifaschisten. (Honecker hatte unter Hitler 10 Jahre eingessen). Die besagte Absicht bestand darin, durch die Gleichheit aller zu gemeinschaftlichem Reichtum zu gelangen. Indem ein jeder seine Lebensnotwendigkeiten wie Miete, Brotpreis oder Kosten für ärztliche Betreuung praktisch zum Nulltarif abdecken konnte, wie sollte er da--so war die illusorische, aber sympathische Mutmaßung--zögern, sich für das Gemeinwohl nach Kräften ins Zeug zu legen! Nun, das Gegenteil trat ein: allgemeine Erzeugungsunlust aus Motivationsmangel und damit--gemessen jedenfalls am westlichen Deutschland--Armut. Die mißfiel einem jeden, und so war das System nur durch Pression--durch Ummauerung und Bespitzelung--zusammenzuhalten. Je massiver aber derlei Korsette geschmiedet sind, umso rigoroser brechen sie in sich zusammen. Das haben wir erlebt als ein kaum in Worte zu fassendes Glück, aber eben auch als ein Verlustempfinden im Hinblick auf heroische Brüderlichkeitsutopien, deren Nichtrealisierbarkeit sich schmerzhaft herausgestellt hat. Die hiesige Literatur kann und will jetzt aus dieser ihrer Eigen-Tradition nicht heraustreten, so weit ich sehe. Was frisch hinzukommt, ist einerseits (besonders hier in Leipzig) das wundervolle Erlebnis eines friedfertig und entschlossen sich erhebenden Volkes und andererseits das lähmende Gefühl eines verbannten, an irrige Hoffnungen gehefteten Lebens--dies nun bei unterschiedlichen Autoren in unterschiedlicher Akzentuierung. Es ist klar, daß die jüngeren Schriftsteller, die den sogenannten Real Existierenden Sozialismus nur als Gängelung und Bevormundung erlebt haben (d.h. ohne die utopischen Menschheitsentwürfe der Anfangsphase), jetzt auch keine Desillusionierung empfinden--ich rede etwa von den Lyrikern des Prenzlauer Bergs in Ost-Berlin.

**König:** Du sagtest vorher: "so weit ich sehe"--wie weit kann man sehen? Wie sieht es mit dem Publizieren aus, welche Entwicklungen im Veröffentlichungswesen zeichnen sich ab?

**Gosse:** Die Verlage in der DDR, insbesondere die mit Gegenwartsliteratur befaßten, mußten "sich nicht rechnen," wie man derzeit sagt, d.h. brauchten nicht effizient zu sein. Scharen von Lektoren waren damit befaßt (was ich gut finde!), ansatzweise talentierte Texte angehender Schriftsteller zusammen mit diesen zur Druckreife zu bringen, also in mühseliger Arbeit handwerkliche Mängel in den Manuskripten zu beheben. Das ist natürlich vorbei. Wichtiger noch ist, daß die ostdeutschen Leser jetzt erst einmal--verständlicherweise--Autoatlanten für Westeuropa kaufen und die dazugehörigen Autos gleich mit.

Kurzum, die hiesigen Verlage haben keine oder eine düstere Zukunft. Die Konkurrenz der westlichen Taschenbuchverlage ist eminent; und nicht das große Buch wird mehr in die Schlagzeilen geraten, sondern der leicht zu konsumierende Bestseller. Selbst die Akademie-Zeitschrift *Sinn und Form* (vom Periodikum des Schriftstellerverbandes der DDR, der *Neuen Deutschen Literatur*, ganz zu schweigen) bangt um ihre Fortexistenz ab Januar 91. Was mich angeht, so sehe ich auf lange Frist die Dinge optimistischer. Die Leute gerade in den fünf Bundesländern, die sich auf dem Gebiet der DDR in wenigen Wochen bilden, werden wieder zur Nach- und Vordenken (und das heißt ja auch: zum Lesen seriöser).