

JOURNAL NOTES

Deutsche Bücher, Bd. IX (1979) Nr. 2

This issue features interviews with two GDR writers presently living in the West: Hans Ester's "Gespräch mit Thomas Brasch", pp. 85-98, and "Gespräch mit Sarah Kirsch", conducted by Ester and Dick von Stekelenburg, pp. 100-113.

Central to the interview with Brasch, in addition to his remarks on cultural politics in the GDR, are extended comments on Rotter, in which he develops analogies to Georg Büchner's Woyzeck.

The interview with Kirsch likewise focuses on her relationship to the cultural-political scene in the GDR and her move to the West. Of particular interest are her comparison of the GDR to "ein strenges Elternhaus, das man gern hat, aber..." and her enthusiasm for Maxie Wanda's Guten Morgen, du Schöne: "besser als das, was ich einige Jahre früher gemacht habe." The interview concludes with some insights useful on her poetic method.

Both interviews include bibliographies of the authors' published works.

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Neue Deutsche Literatur, Vol. XXVII, Nr. 7-9.

The July 1979 issue of NDL begins with a novel by Armin Müller entitled Der Magdalenenbaum.

Prose selections by Egon Richter and Kurt David are followed by the poetry of Manfred Streubel, Ulrich Grasnik, Klaus Körner and others. Hinz Entner discusses some of the new works in the field of fantastic literature in a section entitled "Gut gemeint -- gut gemacht?" Entner is not impressed with most of the works, but applauds the attempt to pose unconventional questions.

"Stimmen aus der CSSR" presents five manuscripts from Czech and Slovakian younger generation prose authors. Reviews of several works, including Christa Wolf's Kein Ort-Nirgends, can be found in the "Neue Werke" section of the July issue.

The August issue of NDL is entitled Poetische Realität and contains either poetry selections or essays on poetry. Some of the poets re-

presented are Paul Wiens, Volker Braun, Uwe Berger and Hans Brinkmann. Hanns Cibulka follows his poetry selection with "Notizen über das Schreiben" in which he discusses a poet's feelings and intuition, and wonders "...woher die Gedanken kommen, die man niederschreibt..." Helmut Preissler contributes an essay entitled "Derlei hörte ich gern" about some of Brecht's poetry. Ursula Heukenkamp discusses the change of landscapes in GDR poetry in her essay "Nichts bleibt natürlich..." She concludes that poems about nature have changed their character, that nature no longer represents the self-evident environment of man or the mirror of man's hopes, but nature itself has become problematic. "Mit der Erfahrung, daß die Landschaft im sozialen Leben eine bestimmte, auf wirkliche Bedürfnisse treffende Funktion hat, sieht sich Natur anders an."

The only prose selection in the August issue is a story by Joachim Nowotny called "Weiberwirtschaft." Continued from the July issue is the section "Stimmen aus der CSSR" which this time presents poetry selections by 12 Czech and Slovak poets.

Concluding the issue is a lengthy "Neue Werke" section, a two-page list of new publications, and a speech by Rainer Kerndl, "Die Verwirklichung menschlicher Ideale", which was delivered at a conference of authors from 20 countries of Europe and America. The purpose of the conference was to discuss the responsibility of the author for the freedom and future of the coming generation.

The September issue deals with Erich Weinert and begins with his translation and commentary of Eugene Pottier's poem "Denn die Commune war schon da." The next several pages are devoted to some of Erich Weinert's correspondence with Arnold Zweig.

A talk with Sergej Tulpanow, who was the director of the division of information of the Soviet military administration in Germany after the war, is entitled "Zeit des Neubeginns." The article is about his duties (which books to publish, etc.) in the cultural realm. Included are some documents and photos from the period.

This issue also includes poetry by Walter Werner, Helmut Preissler, Wulf Kirsten, and Reiner Putzger. Harald Dorall writes on the life and work of Eberhard Panitz.

Prose selections include an excerpt from a forthcoming novel by Jochen Laabs entitled Der Ausbruch (sequel to his 1971 novel Das Grashaus) about the dissolution of a marriage, and Rolf Floss' "Mit Brüderchen Merkel auf Montage" from a forthcoming book, Tanzstunden eines jungen Mannes. Following this selection is a conversation with Laabs about his book, especially the characters, and about literature in general.

In the "Neue Werke" section, Jürgen Engler reviews several recent works of criticism of GDR literature, and in the "Umschau" section G.E. Brjanski discusses GDR literature in Russian literary journals and magazines. There are a number of letters to Erik Neutsch on his work "Zwei leere Stühle" which was published in the May 1979 issue of NDL.

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L76 Demokratie und Sozialismus, Köln

"Wo sind wir zuhause? Gespräch mit Stephan Hermlin", Freibeuter, 1 (1979), Berlin/West.

Karl-Heinz Jakobs: "Ich kann die Lernfähigkeit des Systems heute nicht mehr erkennen", die horen, 2(1979), S.133-141.

"Ich versuche, lebendig zu leben. Gespräch mit Jürgen Fuchs", Spuren, 5 (1979), S.19-21.

In reviewing recent West German journals two major developments are to be recorded. L76, its circulation down to 3200 and deprived of a publisher since the Europäische Verlags-Anstalt was sold off by the Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund, faces a serious crisis now that Hoffmann und Campe have declined to take it over. In consequence Number 13, which was scheduled by Carl Grützmacher on "Die Darstellung der Frau im DDR-Roman", has not yet appeared.

Nothing daunted by the uncertain fate of L76, Klaus Wagenbach launched his Freibeuter, a new cultural and political quarterly, in an edition of 21000 copies in time for the 1979 Frankfurt Book Fair. In line with the policy of the Wagenbach Verlag, the journal is to include contributions by GDR authors. Represented in the first issue are Franz Fühmann, "Der Haufen. Satire auf der Satz Sorites", and Stephan Hermlin, "Wo sind wir zuhause?", an interview with Klaus Wagenbach on the occasion of the publication of Hermlin's Abendlicht.

Two other GDR authors are interviewed in recent West German journals: Karl-Heinz Jakobs, whose novel Wilhelmsburg was published by Claassen in 1979, in die horen (summer 1979) and Jürgen Fuchs, whose collection of poetry Tagesnotizen appeared in Rowohlt's series das neue buch, in Spuren, a socialist journal published in Cologne (October 1979). Spuren devotes much of this number to the theme "Der gespaltene Horizont - Kulturzustände in der DDR" and includes articles on architecture by Gabriele Schubert, on painting by Sieghard Pohl and on Christa Wolf by Barbara Hahm.

Taken together the three interviews given by writers belonging to three different generations provide a fascinating spectrum of opinion in the GDR:

Hermlin, the oldest of the three, viewing the country against the background of his experience as a communist since the Thirties, concerned at the lack of democratic tradition and tolerance in Germany and critical of those who seek to avoid the awkward questions of young people, but nonetheless committed to the GDR:

"Ich habe natürlich ein bestimmtes Heimatgefühl in der DDR, einfach deshalb, sie mag nun sein wie sie will, weil sie die erste staatliche Verkörperung der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung ist...".

Jakobs, expelled from the SED and the Schriftstellerverband and consequently without a publisher in the GDR, sceptical of the relevance of socialist realism, a term he is no longer able to define, and unwilling to accept that the system can be reformed (the interview is entitled: "Ich kann die Lernfähigkeit des Systems heute nicht mehr erkennen"), describing his "Parteilichkeit" in terms of a commitment to the people rather than to the system of the GDR!

And Fuchs, representative of a younger generation, who lack the experience of Hermlin, measuring the system against the writings of Karl Marx and Rosa Luxemburg and finding it wanting, now living in West Berlin after his release from prison but resisting the term "dissident": "Ich bin Staatsfeind, Internationalist - undeutsch, wenn es ums Streitmachen geht."

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Weimarer Beiträge, Vol. XXV, Nr. 9 and Nr. 10

Recent issues of Weimarer Beiträge include several articles of interest to scholars in the United States. In the August issue three essays discuss problems of literary reception: Dietrich Sommer's short piece on the psychology of reading, Hans-Georg Werner's treatment of reception and literary history and Gotthard Lerchner's discussion of the relationship to other critical approaches (including semiotics). In addition the essay by Isolde Dietrich and Dietrich Mühlberg on the cultural history of the workers' movement corresponds to a growing interest in social phenomena which are not reduced to simple reflections of either political or economic structures, i.e. not Kulturpolitik but culture as the sum of popular culture and everyday life. This latter aspect reappears in Anneliese Neef's report on the social-democrats and the woman's question, a straight-forward pro-Bebel account spiced up with a polemic against West German radical feminists' emphasizing sex more than class. Horst Groschopp's review of the reprint of Otto Rühle's cultural history of the proletariat also contributes to discussion of a broad concept of culture and the social significance of subjectivity. The piece is interesting particularly because of Rühle's anti-bolshevist communism.

The September issue includes an enquête on literature and art in the GDR with a variety of reminiscences. Klaus Kändler's review of the anthology Literaturkritik der DDR 1945-1975 (ed. Klaus Jarmatz, Christel Berger, Renate Drenkow) is noteworthy, since he reappraises the whole development of GDR literature. He rejects monolinear simplifications, emphasizing instead the central historical ruptures from the standpoint of the current antagonism between GDR critics and authors. His reviewing literary criticism permits him to characterize, albeit vaguely, contemporary developments. For example, the return to catharsis in the so-called subjective literature of the seventies is related to a theoretical distancing from Brecht's aesthetics.

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Sinn und Form. Beiträge zur Literatur.
published six times a year by the Deutsche Akademie der Künste (Berlin/Ost). Nos. 2-4 (1979)

Heinz Flavius begins his interview with the Soviet writer, Fjodor Abramow by posing a question about the relationship between history and the present. Abramow's somewhat less than surprising answer that, "... um die Gegenwart zu verstehen und sich des Seins bewusst zu werden, in dem wir leben -- muß man die Vergangenheit kennen.(455)", could easily be taken as the leitmotif for the entire issue. It is certainly a thought which runs through most of the contributions presented and is, in fact, the idea which ties all them together into a cohesive whole.

The issue is, in short, a nostalgic retrospective, bringing into focus the role of socialist authors in an ever-changing world. The opening selection sets the tone and gives direction to the rest of the issue; it is a congratulatory letter from First Party Secretary, Erich Honecker, to the editor of Sinn und Form, Wilhelm Girnus, on the occasion of the journal's -- and the country's -- 30th anniversary. Honecker's letter briefly reviews the often troubled times in which both the republic and the journal grew up.

The letter-form itself gives the issue an informal tone, which is maintained throughout by the remaining contributions, many of which are themselves letters.

There is, for example, an open letter from Anna Seghers to Christa Wolf on the occasion of Wolf's 50th birthday; in it, Seghers expresses her feelings about Wolf's Kindheitsmuster and, in particular, the significance that this novel had for the writers of her generation. She then goes on to recall thoughts she had had on the publication of Wolf's earlier works, Der geteilte Himmel and Nachdenken über Christa T.. Seghers ends her letter with an allusion to Wolf's most recent work, Kein Ort.Nirgends, and the similarity it shares with an earlier work of her own. There are letters from Alfred Kurella to his wife, written between 1941-1943, in which Kurella's hopes and fears, his joys and disappointments are evident. They are selections from a soon-to-be-released edition of his war letters and are published the first time in this issue of Sinn und Form.

Parallelling Kurella's letters are those of Louis Fürnberg to Stephan Hermlin, Johannes R. Becher, Christa Wolf, and Ludwig Renn among others; they too are from a future edition of his letters to be published by the Aufbau Verlag.

Also in this issue are prose selections by the Polish author, Henryk Worcell and by the West Berlin writer Edgar Hilsenrath, poems by Jürgen Rennert, an essay by Robert Weimann, which examines from an historical perspective the relationship between art and its public in a socialist system, some personal thoughts on Russian literature by Peter Biele, and Hartmut Zenker's "Unterwegs mit G." which picks up the leitmotif of the issue in its opening sentence: "Bin ich doch nur ein Vorfahre von künftigen anderen, im Leben wie auf der Reise... (308)". The story will be continued in forthcoming issues of the journal.

Finally the issue contains a literary triptych of sorts, made up of a dramatic dialogue by the Greek writer Jannis Ritsos, a reflective prose piece by Günter Kunert about Ritsos, and some follow-up correspondence between Kunert and the editors of Sinn und Form regarding this work, entitled Antäus.

The third issue of 1979 opens with two poems by Persian poets, whose revolutionary message is unmistakable. Through the publication of such verses as, "Dies alles schrieb ich hier so grob, so tief ergrimmt, / damit der Schah sich's doch vielleicht zu Herzen nimmt (494)", the editors have clearly voiced their solidarity with the recent turn-of-events in that troubled land.

The most prominent authors included are Ulrich Plenzdorf, Günter Kunert and Rainer Kirsch. If Plenzdorf's excerpt from his novel, Legende vom Glück ohne Ende, is any indication, then this latest work of his promises to be as exciting as his "Werther". Kunert is represented by a lauditory essay about another of the issue's contributors, the 33-year-old writer, Hans Löffler, whom Kunert compares to Robert Walser, Kafka, und Kleist! It's a great deal of praise for a young author, whose only publication to date, Gedichte und Geschichten, has just appeared. Kirsch is directly responsible for three of the issue's selections: his translation of poems by the Soviet poet, Sergej Jessenin, a caustic essay by Eugen Ruge, taking Kirsch to task for what he considers loose, even feeble, approximations of the original, and Kirsch's unequivocal response.

On May 7 of this year the Academy of Arts met in Berlin to discuss the topic, "Kunst im Kampf gegen den Faschismus". The fourth issue of Sinn und Form presents a number of selections dealing with this periodically recurring theme in GDR literature. Other significant contributions include an exchange of letters between Günter Kunert and the editor, Wilhelm Girnus, debating Kunert's outspoken concern for environmental dangers resulting from an unchecked use of science and technology and from an over-zealous belief in "progress".

The serialization of Hartmut Zenker's novel, Unterwegs mit G., begun in the second number of the journal, is continued here.

There is an open letter from leading GDR social scientist Jürgen Kuczynski to Günter de Bruyn regarding his recently-published Märkische Forschungen. In his letter, Kuczynski expresses a fondness for the book, mitigated only by what he considers an ending unfair to the hero.

Following this letter, there is a more objective critique of the de Bruyn work by Karin Hirdina, who very articulately discusses what is, without a doubt, the dominant stylistic device in the story: irony. Finally, Friedrich Dieckmann reviews one of the most popular books to appear in the past two years: Silvester mit Balzac by Wolfgang Kohlhaase.

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FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES

CALL FOR PAPERS AT THE MLA

The Midwest MLA is soliciting papers for its 1980 meeting. The theme is Post-War Literary Trends in the German Speech Area. Finished papers should be mailed by April 15, 1980 to: Marian Musgrave
Professor of English and
Director of Black World Studies
121-C Upham Hall
Miami University
Oxford, Ohio 45056