

DDR-Kolloquim '79

The 1979 "DDR-Kolloquim" organized by the Akademie der Wissenschaften der DDR-Berlin was held on June 19 and 20. The general topic discussed was "DDR-Literatur im internationalen Kontext". Various specialized sections which met to present and discuss papers included:

1. Internationale Tendenzen sozialistischer Literaturrentwicklung.
2. Krieg und Faschismus als Gegenstand der Literaturen.
3. Mensch, Natur und Zivilisation.
4. Auseinandersetzung mit Geschichte und Gegenwart.
5. DDR-Literatur in Geschichte und Gegenwart. Methoden ihrer Darstellung.
6. DDR-Literatur in der Auseinandersetzung.
7. Internationale Aufnahme der DDR-Literatur.

BOOK REVIEWS

Inventur: Lyrisches Tagebuch. By Manfred Streubel. Halle-Leipzig: Mitteldeutscher Verlag, 1978.

It is refreshing to encounter some verse from the GDR which is not patently political, which intends to be neither a provocation nor a warning, offers neither utopias nor bland clichés, but instead is a lyrical defense of a naturally symmetrical world. The "city angel" with scorched wings (of one of these texts) is a metaphorical projection of Streubel, tossing from the towers "Luftballons, knallbunte Botschafts-Bons." Streubel's diary presumes to do not much more than take stock of his immediate world and himself. The 91 texts are confrontations with nature, family, society, and his own past and present. The seasons, forest and fauna, familiar places and festivals, outdoor work and workers, artists and art, disappointments and hopes, simple pleasures and tasks, solitude and community are his subjects; the tone is fresh and not without humor. At times Streubel mixes poetic and prosaic elements very effectively: mein Junge auf dem Motorrad; Postbotin; alte Mühle. His obsessive use of alliteration, rhyme, and the manner of delaying modifier, subject, or object, however, obtrudes. This collection attests a very good minor poet.

Karl S. Weimar
Brown University

Von Craig bis Brecht: Studien zu Künstlertheorien in der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts. By Joachim Fiebach. Berlin: Henschelverlag, 1975. 392 pages. 15 M.

In his book Von Craig bis Brecht, Joachim Fiebach, Chairman of the Theater Department at the Humboldt University in Berlin, investigates the development of "Theatertheoretisches Denken" from the end of the 18th century to Brecht. In doing so, he touches upon topics, such as reception and communication theory, which are not often discussed in theoretical works from the GDR. In addition, his book contains a wealth of information on the ideologic and aesthetic function of the theater. His method is historical; however, the reciprocal relation between theater and the corresponding cultural/historical background is not developed.

In his analysis of theater development prior to 1917, Fiebach postulates that the tendency to "irrationalize" the theater led to a crisis in theater theory which resulted in new possibilities for development for the theater at the time of the October revolution. After this crisis, Fiebach sees two main tendencies emerge in theatrical theory. In one tradition (from Artaud to the Living Theater), theater became ever more mythologized: the product of individual phantasies. It finally dead-ended with the Living Theater in the late 1960's when theatrical production became confused with reality itself. The other major tendency was dominated by Wachtangow, Kerschenzow, Eisenstein, and Piscator. Fiebach sees this trend culminating in the theoretical and practical work of Meyerhold, and above all, Brecht. Brecht's great contribution, according to Fiebach, is in his correct assessment of the "die lektische Beziehungen zwischen Wirklichkeit und nichtillusionistischem Darstellen," which led to the conclusion that art and reality are not, and should not be, identical. This is no new theoretical approach for those who follow developments in GDR literary theory.

And yet it is a valuable and far-reaching book, which contains a wealth of information and insights, particularly on the concept of revolutionary/socialist theater since 1917.

Joan E. Holmes
University of Kansas