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Hanns Cibulka: Thüringer Tagebücher

Ralph Ley
Rutgers University

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government. Whoever broke the taboo of this code was widely condemned, and if it happened in artistic circles, well, then the public was and is likely to hear it articulated. This moral codex is the least understood aspect of life in the GDR and manifestations of it continue to be ridiculed and belittled in the West (including by some former GDR writers), all of which itself is an expression of the difficulties in communication between East and West which are expected to continue into the next century.

Part III, "Aktendämmerung," should probably be read first, especially the two informative articles by Klaus Michael and Petra Boden, which trace the history of the Prenzlauer Berg and describe the structures in force which limited writers. Source material from the Stasi files of Anderson and Schedlinski are also presented in this section.

The last section, "Debatten im Feuilleton" contains a selection of articles which had previously appeared in journals and newspapers on the topic, including Biermann's acceptance speech for the Georg Büchner Prize. The selected bibliography at the end of the book is extremely useful for anyone interested in further researching the phenomenon of the Prenzlauer Berg.

PHIL MCKNIGHT
University of Kentucky

Cibulka, Hanns. *Thüringer Tagebücher*. Leipzig: Reclam Verlag, 1993. 279 pp.

Hanns Cibulka is a respected member of the so-called middle generation of GDR writers; their first publications coincided with the infancy of the Republic. His writings are based largely on personal experiences: childhood in Bohemia, six years in the German infantry, three years as a POW in Italy, life in and around his adopted homeland, the towns, fields, forests, and hills of Thuringia. They have found expression in a steady, if not superabundant, stream of poetry, largely rimeless, based on classical and classicistic models with a distinct modernist influence (e.g., the verse of Giuseppe Ungaretti). A great deal of the poetry is taken up in a very form-conscious way with meditations on nature which tend toward the abstract and the monotonous. Barely known in West Germany, Cibulka received good treatment at the hands of his GDR publishers because he was talented, because he gave an occasional nod to the socialist cause, and (very important!) because he cultivated the German heritage. All of this far outweighed his growing expressions of concern about the pollution of the environment (to be sure, the poet never explicitly singled out the ruling Party for blame). And in 1986 he was honored by the

publication of a selection of his poetry, *Losgesprochen: Gedichte aus drei Jahrzehnten*.

In line with his predilection for autobiography, Cibulka has also written a number of diary-like novels as well as actual diaries. Three of the latter are collected in the present volume, and in many ways they can serve as a commentary on the not always readily comprehensible poetry. In the first diary, *Liebeserklärungen in K.* (initially published in 1974), the "K" refers to two towns. The first is Kochdorf in Thuringia, where the poet is spending his summer vacation and where Goethe once spent some time writing love-letters to Charlotte von Stein. The second is Kremenez in German-occupied Poland in the winter of 1942-43, where the poet was convalescing from a wound inflicted in the Soviet Union. Here he fell in love with a Polish college student named Halina, who was reduced to scrubbing floors in the military hospital for a living—a genuinely touching brief encounter, the history of which is interspersed with meditations on the coziness of half-timbered houses, the wonders of language, the beauty of locust trees, the "Prussian State" as a piece of precision machinery reducing life to function, and the prevalence of intellectual superciliousness and arrogance in everyday life, to name a few. For having dated a German soldier the Polish woman is given the dirtiest jobs in the hospital by the head nurse. For having dated a Polish woman Pvt. Cibulka is sent right back to the Eastern Front by the head doctor, instead of to a replacement company in Vienna. Indirectly his love for Halina saves the future poet's life. Overwhelmed by a desire to stay alive he volunteers for the Africa Corps in Kiev and is eventually taken prisoner in Italy, whereas 90% of his company comrades perish in the Don Basin. The story of Hanns and Halina provides the only real-life excitement in the three diaries. Unfortunately, an imagined rendezvous on a bridge in Kochdorf some 30 years later falls flat.

The second journal, *Dornburger Blätter* (1972), records the poet's meditations and observations while spending his summer vacation in Dornburg, which contains a castle where Goethe once stayed. Cibulka has a field-day describing the natural wonders of the Saale Valley, and such man-made marvels as the Naumburg Cathedral and the Cistercian church at Schulpforte (we are told twice that Klopstock, Fichte, and Nietzsche studied there). He treats us to a panegyric on Goethe's *Metamorphose der Pflanzen*, quotes in leitmotif fashion from the Goethe-Eckermann conversations, cites Hölderlin's *Empedocles* as he recalls reading it almost 30 years earlier while waiting in a foxhole for the Americans to parachute into Sicily, offers commentaries on Kleist, Rilke, and Bobrowski, gives us a history lesson on the Saxons in Thuringia,

laments the pollution of trees and streams, expresses a disdain for the automobile because only the stroller can really penetrate a landscape, pronounces the Bible the greatest poetic work of world literature, and tells us that the task of the human race lies in becoming and not just in being. The most exciting event of Cibulka's stay in Dornburg is a gigantic traffic jam occasioned by the breakdown of a T-32 tank on Main Street.

In the last of the journals, *Wegscheide* (1988), the poet writes about his stay in a little cottage in the middle of the *Thüringer Wald* which he rented from March to December upon retirement from his position as head of the district library in Gotha. The motto of the journal, a quotation from Dostoevsky asserting that it is hard to believe that anybody can walk past a tree and not be happy, becomes flesh and blood as Cibulka proceeds to depict in minute fashion the effects of the changing seasons on nature. The journal owes its title to Cibulka's insistence that technology will destroy humankind unless there is a spiritual regeneration and to this end he even enlists the services of Meister Eckhart, who was born near Gotha. The laments about pesticides and herbicides are much louder than in the previous diary, and concerns about the environment and nuclear destruction come to be shared by a cabinet-member named Robert, who is the only neighbor with whom the poet associates. The intellectual climax of the journal is a detailed description by Robert of the destructive force of a nuclear bomb; it comes across as artificial, as a lecture by a professor or a lengthy quotation from a treatise. The spiritual climax is a moving poem in prose to the lowly sparrow, an attestation of Cibulka's reverence for life, one of the qualities that can compensate for the boring stretches of his journals. Another is a deep religiosity, epitomized in the poet's own version of St. Anselm's ontological argument: "Dass der Mensch das Zeitlose denken kann, ist das nicht schon ein Zeichen dafür, dass es das Zeitlose gibt?" (261)

RALPH LEY
Rutgers University

Clausen, Jeanette and Sara Friedrichsmeyer, eds.
Women in German 9: Feminist Studies in German Literature and Culture. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994. ISBN 0-8032-9754-8

The ninth *Women in German Yearbook* represents a rich contribution to an often neglected area of German Cultural Studies, namely German Women's Studies. The *Yearbook's* fifteen articles investigate social, political, historical, and literary texts

spanning the middle ages to the present. The articles are arranged in chronological order according to topic, and a helpful abstract precedes each article. Despite the wide range of topics and feminist approaches, all authors engage in a feminism that strives toward meaningful social change. The juxtaposition of essays reveals an, according to the editors, unanticipated recurrence of concerns and issues. The authors of the articles problematize the politics of identity in literature and culture as it relates to gender difference, class, race and nationality.

In the first article, A. Allen provides an overview of the development of Women's Studies in West Germany and the US during its early phase between 1966 and 1982. Although Women's Studies in both countries share a similar theoretical basis, Allen uncovers the different roots, i.e. cultural and political contexts, the divergent social composition of Women's Studies advocates in each country and their intellectual paradigms. This comparison offers us a reevaluation of strategies to transform knowledge, the utopian goal toward which both Women's Studies in Germany and the US continue to work. The article serves as a thoughtful introduction to the *Yearbook*. The rest of the volume is loosely organized into three sections. The first articles provide interpretations of literary and cultural texts from the middle ages to the 19th century, the middle section is devoted to GDR Studies, and the last section deals with issues of colonialism and race.

The two articles on medieval texts of the first segment investigate modes of discourse. S. Morrison engages in gynocriticism as she questions the pejorative classification of 15th century German adaptations of *chansons de geste* by Elisabeth von Nassau and Eleonore von Österreich as *Trivilliteratur*. Bearing in mind the work and the producer of the work, she analyzes the construction of identity through discourse. In the second contribution to medieval studies, C. Griebhaber-Weninger also investigates gender-specific differences in discourse and modes of interaction in Harsdörffer's 17th century *Frauenzimmer Gesprächspiele* and demonstrates how current gender-specific modes of interaction may be traced back to a long tradition of female education.

The 19th century is the focus of the next two articles. F. Pickar contributes a feminist close-reading of Droste-Hülshoff's canonical text, *Die Judenbuche*, revealing Droste's sensitivity to the plight of women as well as a gender-bias or, in her words, misogyny in traditional literary criticism.