1995

Jeanette Clausen and Sara Friedrichsmeyer, eds.: Women in German 9. Feminist Studies in German Literature and Culture

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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)

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Clausen, Jeanette and Sara Friedrichsmyer, eds.
Women in German 9: Feminist Studies in German
Literature and Culture. Lincoln: University of

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 revaluation 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
Trivialliteratur. 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. Grießhaber-
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.
Pickar demonstrates this bias in an interpretation of Margarethe, a character that is marginalized by both the "judgmental" narrator and, hence, by literary critics. In the second article dealing with a 19th century topic, K. Sieg rediscovers four plays (Petra Zehlen's 1951 comedy Dramaturgie und Liebe, Regina Halstedt's musical, Wer ist hier von gestern? oder Hausfrau gesucht, Berta Waterstradt's 1958 drama Ehesache Lorenz, and Rosel Willer's 1963 Gelegenheit macht Liebe) analyzing the discrepancies between Sein and Bewußtsein as these women dramatists come to grips with the issue of gender equality in the GDR. She interprets how each female dramatist negotiates contradictory messages regarding women's identity and roles in the socialist state during the Aufbauzeit. This discussion is complemented by K. von Ankum's analysis of the contradictory development in GDR abortion legislation. Von Ankum concludes that the 1972 law legalizing abortion demonstrated control of the SED over women's bodies and not a move toward women's equality.

F. Eigler and K. Eysel offer feminist revaluations of GDR literature. Eigler explores the works by writer Elke Erb and performance artist Gabriele Kachold, both, in her estimation, marginalized artists of the alternative cultural movement of the Prenzlauer Berg. Analyzing the content, context and form, an aspect neglected in literary criticism of engaged GDR literature, Eigler discovers innovations on the linguistic and stylistic level that reflect in both artists' works an awareness of gender and power relations. Eysel focuses on the politics of nationalism in Wolf's Kassandra and argues persuasively that Wolf reveals the connections between GDR nationalist and imperialist and colonialist discourses in her adaptation of the patriarchal myth of antiquity and offers instead an alternative vision of identity that is transnational in character.

The final articles address the urgent issue of racism, calling our attention to its various forms. P. Waschescio begins this sequence with an introduction to (West) German essayist, poet, and dramatist Gisela von Wysocki. Waschescio recognizes in von Wysocki's first drama Abendlandleben (1987) a deconstruction of masculinist Enlightenment discourse with its binary thinking and its complicity in the process of colonialism. The following article offers the first lengthy interpretation of Ruth Klüger's weiter leben (1992). According to D. Lorenz, this childhood memoir represents a feminist challenge to a much needed Jewish Vergangenheitsbewältigung. S. Lennox introduces two contributions by participants of the 1992 Women in German Conference on "Racism in Germany." With her personal coming-of-age narrative, Afro-German activist Ika Hügel identifies the links between national identity, nationalism, and racism. She thereby offers to Germans and North Americans activist strategies against racism. Identifying herself as a white "Christian" woman in Germany, Dagmar Schultz reflects on the different racisms in Germany and examines public policy that allows for racism and anti-Semitism in particular. She ends her article with a call to the women's movement in both Germany and the United States to clarify the connection(s) between sexism, racism, anti-Semitism and classism.

The Yearbook ends with the editors' thoughtful discussion of the problems of new historicism for feminists. The broad spectrum of topics, feminist approaches and information on women's history, contemporary culture, and politics make this Yearbook a valuable and necessary resource for Germanists.

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Dieses Buch stellt den dritten Band einer wohl noch nicht abgeschlossenen Reihe dar, die den Briefwechsel zwischen Autoren und Vertretern des Aufbau-Verlags dokumentiert. Die ersten beiden Bände erschienen unter den Titeln "Allein mit Lebensmittelfilmen ist es nicht auszuhalten..." (Nr. 1) und "...und leiser Jubel zögere ein" (Nr. 100); sie decken die Zeit von 1945-1949 bzw. 1950-1959 ab. In der Fortführung sind sowohl die Namen von bekannten DDR-Schriftstellern (etwa Brigitte Reimann, Anna Seghers, Christa Wolf oder Erwin Strittmatter) als auch relativ unbekannten (z.B.