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Commentary: Should GDR Literature Be Treated Separately from That of Other Postwar German Literature?

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"Literature of the GDR" (Spring, 1976), Dr. Basil Mogridge, Department of German, Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada. Texts to be used are: H. Walwei-Wiegelmann (ed.): *Neuere DDR-Literatur, Texte und Materialien für den Deutschunterricht* (Schöningh, Paderborn) M. Hamburger (ed.): *East German Poetry, An Anthology* (Carcanet, Cheadle Hulme, England) L.-W. Wolff (ed.): *Fahrt mit der S-Bahn, Erzähler der DDR* (dtv) U. Plenzdorf: *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* (Suhrkamp).

"Literature of the GDR" (Spring, 1976), Margareta Deschner, Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas, 75275. (Requests bibliographies from GDR courses of colleagues who might be willing to share them.

COMMENTARY: SHOULD GDR LITERATURE BE TREATED SEPARATELY FROM THAT OF OTHER POSTWAR GERMAN LITERATURE?

Certainly some scholars would advocate such a view, due to the establishment in 1949 of a separate socialist German state with a social order which is diametrically opposed (officially, at least) to that of the Federal Republic.

On the other hand, however, much of post-1945 German literature deals with either the inter-war (1918-39) period or with World War II and its aftermath. Those events were shared by the German people as a whole. The deprivation, horror and suffering experienced by Germans are dealt with in a similar manner by authors in both East and West who treat common themes of war guilt, national division and materialism.

Even with two German states, the German nation still exists (in the legal sense) and, despite occupation, division and the like, most citizens of these states still consider themselves "German" first. In addition, the legislation, politics and achievements of the Federal Republic are closely watched in the GDR, more so than vice-versa. Personal experience suggests that one tends to find more evidence of the "ultra-German"

in the GDR than in the Federal Republic. Even the young people, although they may appear different superficially, share the basic values of their ancestors. It was for these reasons that this author treated GDR literature as part of the overall postwar German literature.

The seminar which I taught at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro explored post-war German literature as it reflects many of the historical events which had been treated in a previous seminar: "Political and Social Contrasts in the Two Germanies." Thus it was stimulating to analyse the effects of two differing social systems upon a literature rooted in the same past. Not only were the literary selections able to bring into a more personal focus many of the events previously studied within an historical frame of reference, but they also portrayed everyday life of Germans in both states.

Works selected were: Brecht's Three Penny Opera (although written in 1928, it was chosen for its "socialist" element and the fact that it is one of the major works of an individual who played such an important role in the GDR in the 1950's); Grass' Dog Years, Cat and Mouse; Hochhuth's Soldiers and The Deputy; M. Hamburger's East German Poetry; P. Weiss' The Investigation; Hesse's Narcissus and Goldmund; Uwe Johnson's Speculations about Jacob; Rolf Schneider's Deep Waters and Christa Wolf's Divided Heaven.

Through discussions of these works, students were presented with significant questions regarding their own behavior, were they to find themselves in similar situations. Morality versus expediency, caring for others as well as for oneself, the eternal quest for "happiness"--these questions exemplify some of the themes in the required texts. It goes without saying that, given the concerns and interests of today's university youth, such topics served as stimuli for lively discussions.

Some of the presentations growing out of this seminar were: "Bob Dylan and Wolf Biermann: The Revolutionaries," "Nazi Germany and Recent German Literature," and "The Theatrical Innovations of Constantine Stanislavski and Bertolt Brecht."

The majority of students who took both seminars found that their cultural and literary horizons had expanded in view of the in-depth analysis of the subject matter. One student remarked that he was tired of concluding his Euro-

pean history courses either at Stalingrad or with May 8, 1945; or, at best, with a mere skimming of post-World War II events, leaving him without any genuine grasp of the important role played by the German-speaking countries in postwar Europe.

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Literatur der Arbeitswelt in der DDR (Heidelberg: Quelle und Meyer Uni-Taschenbücher, 1974); Udo Abicht's review of Christa Wolf's Unter den Linden (Berlin und Weimar: Aufbau, 1973) and Frank Hirschbach's review of Zur Theorie des Sozialistischen Realismus, ed. Hans Koch et al (Berlin: Dietz, 1974). Issue number 5 of New German Critique (1975) also contained Sara Lennox' review of Robert Weimann's "New Criticism" und die Entwicklung der bürgerlichen Literaturwissenschaft (München: C. H. Beck, 1974).

The forthcoming issue of Minnesota Review contains David Bathrick's review of "The Politics of Reception Theory in the GDR".

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

EUROPÄISCHE IDEEN

Heft 8 (1975) der Zeitschrift europäische ideen enthält auf SS. 1-9 eine Zusammenfassung des Symposium der Europäischen Akademie Berlin im November 1974 zum Thema "Zwei deutsche Staaten--eine deutsche Kultur?" In teils stark verkürzter Form werden Beiträge von Dettmar Cramer, Alfred Kantorowicz, Adolf Dresen, Dieter Hildebrandt und Achim Freyer wiedergegeben. Auf den folgenden Seiten finden sich eine Aussage von Hans Lindemann und Kurt Müller zu ihrem Buch Auswärtige Kulturpolitik der DDR (Bonn-Bad Godesberg, 1974) sowie kurze Beiträge über das geplante Kulturabkommen und die Einheit der deutschen Sprache.

Heft 13 (erscheint bald) derselben Zeitschrift wird Interviews mit Peter Hacks, Volker Braun und Heiner Müller u. a. enthalten sowie der Artikel "DDR-Dramatik in der UdSSR" von Henry Glade. Die Hefte sind beziehbar durch die Redaktion, 1 Berlin 37, Mühlenstr. 17B.

REVIEWS

The forthcoming number 6 of New German Critique contains reviews of several recent important GDR books: Ciliane Crips' reviews of Manfred Jäger's Sozialliteraten (Düsseldorf: Bertelsmann, 1973) and Bernhard Greiner's Von der Allegorie zur Idylle: die

BASIS 5

Basis 5 Jahrbuch für deutsche Gegenwartsliteratur (1975), now published as a Suhrkamp Taschenbuch, contains six essays on GDR topics:

Jost Hermand: "Zukunft in der Vergangenheit. Zum Gebrauchswert des kulturellen Erbes";

Paul Michael Lützeler: "Goethes Faust und der Sozialismus. Zur Rezeption des klassischen Erbes in der DDR";

Helen Fehervary: "Marx und Hölderlin in der DDR";

Uwe-K. Ketelsen: "Das 'sozialistische Menschenbild' als dramentheoretisches Problem in der DDR-Literatur";

Götz Großklaus: "West-östliches Unbehagen. Literarische Gesellschaftskritik in Ulrich Plenzdorfs Die neuen Leiden des jungen W. und Peter Schneiders Lenz"; and

Andreas Huyssen: "Auf den Spuren Ernst Blochs. Nachdenken über Christa Wolf."

IRMTRAUD MORGNER

Intraud Morgner's Leben und Abenteuer der Trobadora Beatriz (Berlin und Weimar: Aufbau, 1974) is temporarily out of print. An interesting interview with Morgner by Karin Huffscky on feminism and her book can be found in Frankfurter Rundschau No. 188 (August, 1975), p. 11 under the title "Produktivkraft Sexualität souverän nützen."
