

1978

## Recent Conferences

various authors

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## CALL FOR PAPERS - MLA 78

Contributions are being solicited for a Special Session at the 1978 MLA Convention on the topic "Poetry and Politics in the GDR." Brief papers of 3-4 pages (close analysis, recent developments, etc.) should be submitted by March 25 to Ann Fehn, Dept. of Germanic Languages, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA 02138, or to Sara Lennox, Dept. of German, Univ. of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA 01003.

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### THIRD ANNUAL EUROPEAN STUDIES CONFERENCE

The Third Annual European Studies Conference will be held on October 12-14, 1978 in Omaha, Nebraska. This conference, sponsored by the University of Nebraska at Omaha, is to be an interdisciplinary meeting with sessions devoted to current research, research techniques, and teaching methodologies, as well as to traditional topics. Abstracts of papers should be submitted by May 1, 1978 to Professors Garcia and Jung, Dept. of FL, Univ. of Nebraska at Omaha, Omaha, Neb. 68101.

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### MOUNTAIN INTERSTATE FOR. LANG. CONFERENCE

This year's Mountain Interstate Foreign Language Conference will be hosted by Berea College, and will be held October 12-14, 1978. The program will include a section on GDR literature, which will be organized by Theodor Langenbruch (Dept. of ML, Geo. Inst. of Tech., Swann Hall, Atlanta, Geo. 30332). Paper proposals concerning short prose and poetry are particularly welcome. The deadline for submitting two-page summaries and abstracts is April 15. For further details (such as abstract forms) contact Prof. Alberto Fuentevilla, MIFLC President, Berea College, Box 627, Berea, Ky., 40404.

## RECENT CONFERENCES

### MLA CONVENTION CHICAGO 1977

The program featured two sessions exclusively concerned with GDR literature, and at least two further sessions which included GDR literature. Details concerning three of these sessions were given in the October 77 issue of the Bulletin. The fourth session to be mentioned

was a workshop "Technology and Marxism." It was chaired by David Bathrick and included, in addition to papers on "Aspects of Technology in Marx and Rousseau" and "Ernst Jünger's Arbeiter," a presentation by Helen Fehervary "Prometheus Rebound: Technology and the Dialectic of Myth." This paper discussed direct references to the Prometheus myth (Heiner Müller), interpreted the "positive hero" of early GDR literature (especially industrial novels) as a Promethian figure, and demonstrated the dialectic of progress in Biermann's poem "Der Aufsteigende" (1968).

The special session "A Taxonomy of Socialist Realism," chaired by Adele Rickett (and intended to be continued next year), attempted to identify common as well as different elements in Chinese, Soviet, and GDR novels. Beyond this, more basic methodological problems were discussed, such as origins and definitions of the novel, significance of the author-reader relation, and evaluative problems (didactic versus esthetic function of literature).

The two sessions devoted entirely to GDR literature attracted almost one hundred participants each. The seminar "Short Prose Fiction," chaired by Richard Zipser, presented different methodological approaches (predominantly structuralist): Karl-Heinz Schoeps analyzed the narrative structure of Christa Wolf's "Blickwechsel," Ann C. Fehn investigated basic binary oppositions and central metaphors in Volker Braun's "Unvollendete Geschichte," and Jack Zipes illustrated the episodic structure of Riner Kunze's Die Wunderbaren Jahre. The discussion of the last paper centered around the question if there is something "typically German" about bureaucratic structures and attitudes in East and West Germany, and whether Kunze was aiming, with his book, at this aspect of the "deutsche Misere." No general agreement was reached on this matter; however, there was a consensus that GDR literature of the kind discussed in this session is highly stimulating for American classrooms, presenting and provoking alternative thinking. In his response to the three papers, Jürgen Hoegl gave a critical analysis and showed interrelations in their findings: Artistic structures correspond to the themes of con-

trast between past and present (Wolf), and between actual and possible present (Braun and Kunze). The potential for self-actualization was seen as a central concern for all three authors.

The other seminar on GDR literature ("How Divisive is Dissidence?") was chaired by Helen Fehervary. It explored the historical and ideological roots of dissident writing (Heiner Müller, Wolf Biermann, Thomas Brasch). Marc Silberman described Müller as a leninist artist who focuses on new contradictions (such as the clash between Party ideology and individual perceptions); Müller uses the stage as a laboratory of social fantasy, aiming at ceaseless learning from defeat. David Bathrick saw the main "defeat" in the transition of the working class (or society as a whole) from its status as historical subject to that of object of a privileged hierarchy, with the concomitant loss of critical exploration and compensatory legitimization efforts. Wolfgang Müller, who was added to the panel, spoke similarly of the "ossification of Marxism in theory and practice," the ideological monopoly of the SED, and the blocking off of undesired opposition and even of unwanted communication.

The discussions of both seminars converged on the philosophical, social, and political implications of GDR literature, rather than concentrating on the esthetic function of the texts. The common denominator was open exploration of alternatives. Both sessions are to be combined at the 1978 MLA Convention under the general topic "Literature and Politics." Ann C. Fehn and Sara Lennox were elected to organize the 1978 seminar.

Theodor Langenbruch  
Geo. Inst. of Technology

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#### BAD-GODESBERG CONFERENCE

A conference with the title: "Die Deutsche Frage im Spiegel der Deutschen Literatur", held at the Karl-Arnold Bildungsstätte in Bonn-Bad Godesberg from Sept. 30 to Oct. 2, 1977 saw the revitalization of the "Archiv für DDR-Literatur und DDR-Germanistik" by Jörg B. Bilke, who had originally founded it in 1970. The agenda also included the following presentations:

- "Gibt es 2 Literaturen in Deutschland?", Eberhard Mannack, Kiel.

- "Zersprungene Identität: Bildnisse des Schriftstellers in Beiden Deutschen Literaturen", Bernhard Greiner, Freiburg.
- "Der 17. Juni in der Literatur der DDR", Heinrich Mohr, Osnabrück.
- "Peter Huchel: Ein Gesamtdeutscher Lyriker?", Bernhard Gajek, Regensburg.
- "Die Deutsche Teilung im Lyrischen Gedicht", Gerhard Kluge, Nijmegen.

Sigmar Faust and Gerald Zschorsch also related their experiences with "Kulturbürokratie" and "Staatssicherheitsdienst". The conference concluded with the formation of the study group "DDR-Literatur und DDR-Germanistik", which will concentrate its discursive efforts on the state of Kleist research in the GDR and the reception of FRG literature in the GDR. The group will reconvene in March 1978.

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#### INTERNATIONALER HOCHSCHULFERIENKURS FÜR GERMANISTIK

Der Kursus, der vom 8. Juli bis zum 30. Juli 1977 in Berlin stattfand, wurde für Methodiker, Lektoren und Lehrer der deutschen Sprache durchgeführt und war so gestaltet, daß Probleme des Fremdsprachenunterrichts und der angewandten Linguistik im Vordergrund standen.

Zugleich war Gelegenheit gegeben, sich im Gebrauch der deutschen Sprache auf der Grundlage sehr verschiedenartiger Hefte, zu vervollkommen. Die Lehrmaterialien betrafen Landeskunde, Literatur, Linguistik, und Fachkunde. Die Literaturhefte bilden nach meinen bisherigen Erfahrungen als Sommerkursteilnehmerin ein interessantes Beispiel zur Erarbeitung und Verwendung von literarischen Texten und sollen hier genauer besprochen werden. Zur Wahl standen eine kleine Auswahl aus der Lyrik der DDR, Texte von Kant, A. Seghers, S. Kirsch, Th. Mann und Becher.

Das Material ist so aufgebaut, daß jedes Thema in drei Teilen angeboten wird: 1) Text, 2) Aufgaben und Übungen zum Erfassen von Inhalt und Gestaltung des Textes und 3) Lehrerheft. Die Hefte sind so angelegt, daß sie die Lehrer des Auslandes mit einigen Texten der DDR-Literatur bekannt machen, zu einer Wortschatzerweiterung durch Übungen zur Lexikologie beitragen und zu Diskussionen über die methodischen Aspekte des Textverständnisses im Fremdsprachenunterricht anregen. Die Veröffentlichung dieser Materialien könnte die Lehrer anregen, literarische Texte in ihren Lehrstoff einzubeziehen.

Anna Pegoraro  
Univ. Turin, Italien

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## WEIMAR II 1977

From 27 July until 19 August 1977, I attended the 23rd "Internationaler Hochschulferienkurs für Germanistik" in Weimar, sponsored by the "Sektion Literatur- und Kunstwissenschaft" of the Friedrich-Schiller-Universität in Jena. This was one of six courses for faculty (two each in Weimar and Leipzig, one each in Berlin and Karl-Marx-Stadt) and four for students (in Halle, Rostock, Greifswald, and Berlin) held during the summer of 1977. I chose a course with a primarily linguistic, rather than literary emphasis. There were 85 participants in Weimar II, with about 65 of these from socialist countries, the remainder from capitalist nations. There was one other American participant.

The course itself featured five main kinds of activities, often with several events each day, so that the three-week program was full and varied. There were 1) twelve lectures on linguistic and cultural topics (10:30-12:00), most of which were very informative; we were further divided up into 2) language groups of a dozen or fewer, which met daily (8:30-10:00) to work on advanced stylistic exercises in colloquial German (particularly interesting to German teachers). Each participant chose one of six 3) study groups which met five times in the afternoon (2:30-4:00) to deal with a specialized aspect of language, culture or GDR literature. There were several 4) bus excursions in Thuringia, to Buchenwald, Eisenach, the Wartburg, Mühlhausen, Ilmenau, and other Goethestätten, as well as informally arranged trips by train to Jena, Naumburg, and Dresden. In the evenings (7:30-9:00), there were 5) open discussions with various guests from the GDR cultural establishment (scholars, a minister of education, an author, a filmmaker, and a TV commentator). There were additionally concerts, theater performances and films. All participants were encouraged to drop by the local club of the Kulturbund, where music, refreshments, mail-pick-up, and current newspapers (none in English, however) were available, and where it was possible to chat at length about the GDR.

A tone of friendly candor characterized the entire course, and there were no questions which met with evasive answers, including such subjects as Biermann and literary dissent, travel restrictions, Eurocommunism, and Western influence. All lectures and discussions were, for Western standards, politicized to varying degrees, but one grows quickly accus-

tomed to this. The degree of politicization ranged from militant-defensive to liberal-pluralistic, but always remained civil and rational. Only on the subject of the Federal Republic was there occasionally an atmosphere of irritated hostility. There was at no time any suggestion that we were not to go, do, see whatever we wished. One felt a distinct desire for active cooperation with Western scholars, and not only with those sympathetic to socialism.

"WEB Coethe", as the various "Nationale Forschungs- und Gedenkstätten" in Weimar are popularly called, was naturally a principal attraction. Goethe's presence in Weimar (along with that of Schiller, Herder, Wieland, Crasch, and Liszt) is felt everywhere. It is apparent that the GDR has spent a great deal of time, care, and money to establish an open-museum atmosphere (Erbepflege) which makes Weimar especially interesting to the foreign Germanist. The town seems at times a bit sleepier than other cities in the GDR because of the historical presence, but it is also thoroughly charming and a delightful city to explore on foot. For an American Germanist whose familiarity with the GDR has been largely limited to day trips to East Berlin, there may be some apprehension about an extended visit to the GDR; in my view, wholly without cause. I was made to feel welcome everywhere, often more so than in the FRG. Although I was sometimes asked difficult questions, particularly regarding the neutron bomb (which is universally seen with horror and revulsion in the GDR), I met no hostility. I was fortunate enough to follow my three weeks in Weimar with a week and a half in Berlin and Neubrandenburg as a guest of the "Liga für Völkerfreundschaft", during which time I was able to talk with a broad variety of people (artists, mayors, trade union functionaries, museum curators, collective farmers, factory workers, and educators). After having read extensively about the GDR, my extended visit there this summer was a welcome immersion as I had previously only been in the GDR for a few days at a time. Participation in a "Hochschulferienkurs" normally costs M450,-- for faculty members and M300,-- for students, and this fee includes tuition, all excursions, room, and board. I can recommend Weimar II without reservation and suspect that the other courses are no less well organized and administered.

Richard Rundell  
New Mexico State Univ

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