

1980

Journal Notes

various authors

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GDR BULLETIN

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JOURNAL NOTES

Neue Deutsche Literatur, Vol. XXVII, Nr. 11-12

The November 1979 issue of Neue Deutsche Literatur entitled "Bewusst in der Geschichte sein" contains examples from current GDR historical literature as well as essays and conversations about the possibilities and functions of the historical novel.

Rosemarie Schuder talks about her use of historical subjects and people-- especially those of the Middle Ages.

It is not so much the individual who interests her, but the relation of an historical person to the struggles of the time and that person's influence on them. This conversation follows an example from Schuder's work, entitled "Welt und Traum des Hieronymus Bosch: Ein Diskurs."

In a section called "Möglichkeiten des Historischen" the NDL questions several authors on their relation to the historical novel and, especially, to historical material. Wolfgang Joho responds that an historical novel answers the question of our origins, and Gotthold Gloger says he writes historical novels so that his (especially, young) readers get an inner relationship to their history. Johannes Arnold sees in the historical novel, "Die Möglichkeit, eignes Erleben aus der Zeitgeschichte in historischem Gewand sichtbar zu machen." Responses by Inge von Wangenheim and Waldtraut Lewin are also included.

Essays on historical subjects in this issue include Werner Neubert's "Friedrich II. und die Literatur der Deutschen", Ernst Wenig's essay on Ewald Christian von Kleist entitled "Versuch einer preussischen Legende", and others. Additional literary selections include several poetry selections on historical subjects, excerpts from novels, and theater pieces. The book review section also deals exclusively with works on historical subjects, including Bernd Leistner's book on the Goethe references in recent GDR literature.

The December NDL issue is entitled "Das so Bekannte noch einmal lernen", and features a review of Stephan Hermlin's "Abendlicht" by Hermann Kant, a story by Heinz Knobloch entitled "Das Grammophon" (which is published in a Moscow anthology of Berlin authors), and an excerpt from a forthcoming book by Heinz Czechowski called "Paris--erdichtete Stadt". This issue also contains poetry by Wilhelm Thaczyk, Adolf Endler, Thomas Rosenlöcher, Uwe Kolbe, and Marianne Bruns, and a story, "Am Vorabend", by Hartmut Zenker. The remainder of the NDL's December issue deals primarily with literature from Latin America. A 60-page section, "Ein Kontinent und seine Literatur", contains a "Nebeneinanderstellen von literaturpolitischer Äusserung und Erzählung, Autorinterview und Darlegung neuer Tendenzen einzelner Literaturen", in order to acquaint the reader with the current literary achievements and state of the art in Latin America. Short biographies of each of these authors can be found in "Zu unseren Beiträgen". The "Neue Werke" section contains three reviews of Erik Neutsch's Zwei leere Stühle and in the "Umschau" section one can find a number of letters to Erik Neutsch about the same book.

Judith H. Cox
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Weimarer Beiträge Vol. XXV (1979), Nr. 10-11.

Three essays in the October issue investigate the problem of the status of a cultural dimension in society. Jürgen Marten's outline of the "theoretical problems of the planning of socialist cultural development" is of interest particularly due to the attempt to isolate a concept of culture. By treating purely economic productivity as a prerequisite but not necessarily as an indicator of social, i.e. cultural progress, he establishes a relative decoupling of a socio-

cultural realm, which suggests a revision of the traditional base-superstructure model. Cultural activities of course remain an object of general social planning but a relative independence is implied. Cultural relationships are broadly defined as those "in which not only specific aspects of personality development play a role but rather in which the development of the personality is directly decisive." Specific manifestations include individual aesthetic genres, cultural mass media and work culture. Märten's notion of a cultural sphere includes the total network of institutions "concerned with the production, preservation and distribution of cultural objects and activities," which is apparently a response to contemporary West German literary-sociological investigations into the institutional character of art.

Similar thematizations of the societal character of aesthetics are evident in both Herbert Letsch's essay on the "aesthetic forming of the environment" and in Johanna Rosenberg's account of Lu Märten's theory of art. Märten is placed in the context of the radicalization after 1918/19, and her important theoretical work is linked to the thought of Brecht, Eisler and Piscator. According to Rosenberg, the key issue -- in terms of the development of Marxist aesthetics -- is Märten's break with the legacy of Mehring, who had concerned himself primarily with works of literature. Märten, on the other hand, proceeded from an analysis of the status of the artist in the production process and attempted to explain the origin of art in the light of the division of labor. Her attention to technological developments, architecture and the plastic arts as well as her attempts to apply Marxist social theory to artistic production (as opposed to the development of a Marxist version of Hegelian aesthetics, which Wittfogel favored) led to ties to the Bauhaus, which however were not fully satisfying.

The November issue includes a series of articles on Lessing, in particular discussions of Ernst und Falk (Wolfgang Heise), Minna von Barnhelm (Hans-Georg Werner), Philotas (Volker Riedl) and Lessing's relationship to European theater (Rolf Rohmer). The discussion section includes an interesting exchange of letters between Jürgen Kuczynski and Siegfried Rönisch, the chief editor of Weimarer Beiträge. Kuczynski takes issue with Rönisch's apologetic account of the status of GDR literary criticism in the fifties and early sixties, and he attacks the enmity which

authors such as Seghers, Strittmatter and Brecht once had to confront. Indeed he even exhorts today's GDR critics to study Hans Mayer's anthology of great works of German literary criticism. Furthermore he rejects positions put forward by Hermann Kant at the Seventh Writers' Congress. In particular he speaks of new social antagonisms in the GDR, involving a decline in work discipline and a growing bureaucracy, implying that these could be made the subject of literary treatments. He also rejects Kant's contention that current ideological struggles "are becoming sharper," and he consequently hints at a critique of Kant's literary program. Rönisch's reply unfortunately remains on a very general level and does not speak to Kuczynski's specific points.

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RECENT LITERATURE

Albrecht, Andreas. Unter Umständen die Liebe: Erzählungen. (Edition Neue Texte). Berlin und Weimar: Aufbau-Verlag, 1980.

Berger, Uwe. Der Schamanenstein. Menschen und Orte: Erzählungen. Mit Illustrationen von Karl Erich Müller und Otto Paetz. Berlin und Weimar: Aufbau-Verlag, 1980.

Borchert, Jürgen. Je dunkler der Ort ... : Ein Ludwig-Reinhard-Roman. Rostock: Hinstorff Verlag, 1980.

In dem biographisch-historischen Roman geht der Autor der "Klappersteine" den Lebensstationen des Boizenburger Rektors, des bürgerlichen Demokraten und Publizisten Ludwig Reinhard nach.

Branstner, Gerhard. Der Esel als Amtmann oder das Tier ist auch nur ein Mensch: Fabeln. Berlin: Buchverlag Der Morgen, 1980.

Braun, Johanna und Günter. Der Irrtum des großen Zauberers: Phantastischer Roman. Berlin: Verlag Das Neue Berlin, 1979.

Brézan, J. Der Brautschmuck und andere Erzählungen. Berlin: Verlag Neues Leben, 1979.