

1988

Travel and Exchange

various authors

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NOTES IN BRIEF

Women in GDR Literature

Ulrike Wheeler recently completed a master thesis at Purdue University titled Women in GDR Literature: Analysis and Translation of Four Short Stories About Single Mothers. The thesis contains four short stories translated by Ulrike Wheeler.

"Candida" by Christa Müller

"Sibylle N." by Irina Liebmann

"Kuckucksreife auf der Insel" by Waltraut Lewin

"Der hilfreiche Rabe" by Maria Seidemann

TRAVEL AND EXCHANGE

19th Annual Internationaler Hochschulferienkurs für Germanistik in Halle an der Saale

The 19th annual Internationaler Hochschulferienkurs für Germanistik in Halle an der Saale took place from the 5th to the 25th of July, 1987. Thirty different countries were represented by more than 120 participants who were housed in a "Studentenheim" of the Martin-Luther-Universität, Halle-Wittenberg. Professors, assistants, and students of the university served as course directors, "Lektoren," and "Betreuer," and various faculties of the university provided the majority of the guest speakers and lecturers. This report will focus on the daily lessons and discussion groups, guest speakers and readings, excursions, and miscellaneous social activities.

The daily lessons began at 8:15 a.m. In addition to literary topics (e.g. Prometheus in literature and art, text analysis of excerpts from Helga Königsdorf's Hochzeit in Pizunda, Jugendsprache der DDR as exemplified by Ulrich Plenzdorf's Die neuen Leiden des jungen W., the role of Halle in literature), there were "Sprach- und Phonetikübungen" concentrating on problem areas of the German language for non-native speakers. Selected lessons dealt with methodology of teaching German as a foreign language with consideration of "Sprach- und Lernspiele," use of

specific literary texts with the aim of portraying national culture, and practices employed in language lab. The afternoon sessions were organized under the heading "Club-Themen." These meetings, ideally 50-50 lecture and discussion, were led by both guests and "Kurslektoren." Professor Rüdiger Bernhardt provided an overview of contemporary trends with a talk on "das Identitätsproblem in DDR-Prosa der 80er Jahren" and "Zum Geschichtsbild in der Lyrik." Anneliese Löffler, Mitglied des Vorstandes des Schriftstellerverbandes der DDR, reviewed the 10th annual "Schriftstellerkongreß" and spoke on the writer's role in GDR society. Other literary topics included "Mit Lessing in Berlin" and anti-fascist satire from 1933-45. In the area of language study Dr. Ulla Fix focused on "Sachtexten aus der DDR" and developmental tendencies of the German language. The role of modern technology in language instruction was addressed in "Vom Sprachlabor zum Sprachcomputer." And finally a look back in history through a present-day socialist perspective was offered by Professor Hans Hübner: "Preußen im Geschichtsbild und in der Traditionspflege der DDR."

Between lesson and discussion groups there were regular guest lectures. Topics here varied; history, politics, the environment, culture, language and literature could sum it up. Several of the "Vorträge" are worthy of mention, among them Professor Bernhardt's presentation on "Dokument und Fiktion in der gegenwärtigen Literatur der DDR." Two other lectures well received were given by the main representatives of a socio-linguistic approach to literary studies in the GDR, Professors Gotthard Lerchner and Hans-Georg Werner. The latter spoke on "Philosophische Probleme in Georg Büchners Dantons Tod," offering a Marxist interpretation of the text, while the former addressed the notion of "Kreativität der Sprachverwendung als Kennzeichen von Sprachkultur." Denying that language is to be written only according to fixed rules and adopting Humbolt's concern for the character of language, Lerchner argued that the best writers, particularly those with creative tendencies, set the standards for prevailing language norms. His talk was, in a word, stimulating. Such, however, cannot be said about other lectures. The talk on "Umweltschutz" for example, was disappointing.

The tone was often on the level of an elementary school science report, and little was said regarding concrete proposals for environmental protection, especially in terms of international cooperation. Likewise the lecture "Linguistische Studien zur gesprochenen Sprache," though satisfactory as a primer on linguistics, did little to stimulate specialists in the field. Evening sessions also featured guest lecturers. One of the highlights of these colloquia was a talk given by Professor Eberhard Poppe "Zu Fragen der Außenpolitik der DDR." The mood of his talk was open. He addressed a number of issues, some controversial, and impressed many participants with a flexible attitude conducive to improved international understanding. Two contemporary GDR writers held evening readings which reflected a number of trends discussed in Professor Bernhardt's lectures. Werner Heiduczek, author of Abschied von den Engeln, read from his novella Reise nach Beirut, while Daniela Dahn read short feuilleton-like prose from her book Spitzenzeit and spoke about her forthcoming "Protokollroman" Prenzlauer Berg on that traditional working class district of Berlin. Both authors demonstrated more than just the use of documents and non-fictional material in their work, and in the post-reading discussions on the whys and wherefores of these specific trends, one learned how contemporary writers fill the gap left by an admittedly lacking GDR press. In other words, what the average reader does not find in the newspaper, i.e. detailed portrayals of societal concerns, he or she will seek in documentary-like "Belletristik."

Other activities, under the heading "Club-Themen," took place outside an academic setting. Participants had the chance to meet with citizens from the modern residential district on the other side of the Saale river, Halle Neustadt, visit the "Zentrum für Bildende Kunst" or "VEG Pflanzenproduktion--Thomas Müntzer," and tour the local television studio. There were also numerous excursions scheduled which took participants outside Händel's birthplace. One had the opportunity to make day trips to Weimar, Leipzig, Wittenberg, Erfurt, Dresden, Berlin, Dessau-Wörlitz, Naumberg, etc., i.e. one could travel on one's own. Finally there was no deficiency of purely social gatherings. Between organized get-togethers like "ein geselliges Beisammen-

sein im Studentenklub der Universität "Turm" and the dinner party with dance band on the final evening, guests and hosts gathered in the Uni-Bierstube or the improvised "Café" set up on the top floor of the dormitory. The overall schedule was, to say the least, full. And except for the occasional elevator stuck between dorm floors--usually after midnight when the Hausmeister slept--things ran quite smoothly.

Greg Divers
Washington University/FU Berlin

CONFERENCES

FOURTEENTH NEW HAMPSHIRE SYMPOSIUM ON THE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

The 1988 Symposium will be held June 22-29, 1988 at the World Fellowship Center in Conway, NH. The central theme of the 1988 Symposium will be "Dimensions of Change in the GDR." As in past years, the Symposium will be interdisciplinary: economists, political scientists, sociologists, and other social scientists, as well as Germanists and specialists in the areas of art, music, theater, and the media are invited to participate. The five seminars will involve the treatment of topics from the perspective of various disciplines.

One day of the Symposium will be devoted to discipline-oriented workshops. Social scientists and Germanists will meet in separate, parallel sessions to hear papers on more discipline-specific topics, discuss issues and directions of current research in their fields, and/or continue discussion of papers given in the seminars. The workshop organizers are: Literature: P. Herminghouse, Univ. of Rochester; Economics and Politics: H. Jacobsen, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik; and Social Questions: Manfred Lötsch, Akademie für Gesellschaftswissenschaften.

For more information on the program contact Margy Gerber, Dept. of German, Russian and E. Asian Languages, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green,

OH 43403. For information on the Symposium location, travel arrangements, etc., contact W. Christoph Schmauch, World Fellowship Center, Conway, NH 03818, tel. (603) 356-5208.

THIRTEENTH ANNUAL EUROPEAN STUDIES CONFERENCE

The Thirteenth Annual European Studies Conference, sponsored by the University of Nebraska at Omaha, will be held October 6-8, 1988 and is to be an interdisciplinary meeting with sessions devoted to the scholarly exchange of information, research methodologies, and pedagogical approaches. Sample areas of interest are: Arts and Literature; Science and Technology; Current Issues and Future Prospects in Cultural, Political, Social, Economic or Military Areas; Education and Socialization; Business; International Affairs; Religion; Ideology; Philosophy; Urban Affairs, and Europe and the Third World.

For information contact Bernard Kolasa, Political Science, Conference Coordinator; or Louise Morgan, Conference Secretary, College of Continuing Studies, PKCC, University of Nebraska at Omaha, Omaha, Nebraska 68182-0361, tel. (402) 554-3617 or (402)554-8300.

VISITING LECTURERS

HELGA SCHUBERT

The GDR writer Helga Schubert will be in the United States from the beginning of April through the middle of May 1988. She will teach a seminar on contemporary GDR short prose at the Purdue University Calumet Campus.

Schubert, who also works as a psychologist, has written stories, radio and television plays, and film-scripts. She was awarded the Heinrich-Greif-Preis in 1983 and the Heinrich-Mann-Preis of the Academy of the Arts in 1986.