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# Margy Gerber and Roger Woods, eds.: The End of the GDR and the Problems of Integration. *Studies of GDR Culture and Society* 11/12

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chronologische Überblick - was im Fall von Christa Wolf so weit führt, daß *Patterns of Childhood* im ersten, *The Quest for Christa T.* im zweiten und *Divided Heaven* erst im dritten Kapitel behandelt wird.

Thomas Fox hat sich nicht die Aufgabe gestellt, eine germanistische Abhandlung zu schreiben. Seine Ausführungen gehen dementsprechend auch nur selten über die behandelten Werke hinaus. Neue, gar gewagte Thesen werden nicht erprobt; Selbstaussagen der Autoren kaum herangezogen; Querverweise auf andere Prosatexte halten sich in engen Grenzen. Um die angepeilte allgemeine Leserschaft nicht zu verschrecken, kommen die wichtigsten DDR-ForscherInnen aus den USA, demokratisch verteilt, jeweils nur wenige Male zu Wort. Eine Auseinandersetzung mit bestehenden Forschungsergebnissen wird nicht angestrebt. Kurz: *Border Crossings* liefert genau das, was sein Autor intendiert hat, "an accessible and comprehensive overview... of prose fiction... available in English translation... to reach as wide an English speaking audience as possible."

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Gerber, Margy and Roger Woods, eds. *The End of the GDR and the Problems of Integration. Studies of GDR Culture and Society 11/12.* Lanham, New York, London: University Press of America, 1993. 240 pp.

The GDR may have come and gone; the New Hampshire Symposium keeps on going and will be in its 20th year next summer. And there is good reason for at least a temporary extension of its work. With formerly secret archives now being accessible, with former GDR officials being more willing to talk openly, and with a greater distance in time giving us a more favorable coign of vantage, research about all aspects of the former East Germany should flourish and furnish us with valuable insights for at least another decade. And during that decade people in the five new Länder will continue to live, speak, think, and write differently from their fellow citizens in the old Federal Republic.

The volume under consideration combines the symposia of 1990 and 1991. No explanation is furnished why they were not published separately but it might be surmised that the rapid passing of the events taking place during those years rendered many lectures, given in the summer of 1990 or even 1991, out-of-date by the publication date in 1993. In fact, the element of transitoriness is very obvious to the reader in 1994. This is especially true of the first four essays which deal with civil society, public opinion, and the opposition during the last years of the GDR and the first years of the new Länder.

Mike Dennis defines the concept of civil society and then traces its development in the 70's and the growth of a kind of opposition in the 80's (with a green, or maybe yellow light from Gorbachev). He tries to explain why these movements collapsed without ever creating a true socialist alternative. John Sandford similarly chronicles the dissident movements and asks but does not really answer the question why they had so little impact on post-Wende history. Departing from the catchy phrase, "Ohne Frauen ist kein Staat zu machen," Virginia Penrose describes a few attempts by women's organizations to attain a degree of prominence and influence in old and new parties or administrative bodies but the problems of women in the new states grew out of proportion to those of other groups, and women in the East do not seem to be very receptive to feminism. Roger Woods deals with the gap between the intellectual left and the population as a whole, a subject touched upon by several other discussants. The heady feeling of "Wir bleiben hier," the discussion of a new and better GDR, the idea that the eastern part had much to contribute to a new partnership, the great hopes for "Bürgerbewegungen" quickly evaporated, and the

author is far more optimistic about developments than reality has confirmed.

The next six essays deal with GDR literature, four of them—almost a third of the book—with Christa Wolf. Nancy Lauckner re-reads two novels by Stefan Heym and comes to the conclusion that they advocated a more profound critique of party and government (*5 Tage im Juni*) and a democratic-socialist utopia (*Schwarzenberg*). Anna Chiarloni gives us a sensitive review of recent poetry by older and younger authors on the themes of exodus, November of 1989, and its aftermath, and finds bitterness, resignation, self-criticism, euphoria, dread, and hope.

In an extraordinarily well-written essay by Therese Hörnigk we receive an analysis of Christa Wolf's *Sommerstück*, a book that has been overlooked in her oeuvre. A much-too-long essay by Nancy Lauckner examines Wolf's *Publizistik*, most of it best forgotten. Unlike most of the earlier critics of *Was bleibt* Reinhard Andress weighs the literary qualities of the text, calling it a study of permanent fear which leads the author to behave in a morally questionable but wholly understandable manner. The question of guilt in an authoritarian society is sensitively discussed. Christiane Zehl Romero finds cogent arguments to suspect that the recent harsh criticism of Wolf was fueled by sexual politics and anti-feminism. The critics, mostly men, use a vocabulary that they would not employ in articles about Braun, Müller, or even Kant. Though earlier a "good girl" in GDR politics, Wolf has also been a militant advocate of women's affairs and has found a new language that was a clear alternative to state socialism. She has paid a high price for staying with her people.

The final four essays deal with more recent topics. Under the ingenious title "Zwischen Amnestie und Amnesie" Joachim Walther describes the activities of SED, Stasi and writers union in the field of literature, singling out Hermann Kant as the chief wire puller and apologist. Walther pleads for a thorough investigation of the past and a clear portray of facts before proceeding to eventual reconciliation and forgiveness. Suffering from a rather inept translation, Christoph Kleßmann's essay nevertheless comes through as a profound piece which compares the vigorous yet often devious anti-fascism of the GDR with its failure to come to grips with Stalinism after 1956. He advocates a more thorough discussion of the connection between anti-fascism and Stalinism; will there be historians in the former GDR who can do it?

Birgit Gebhardt writes a justifiably bitter account of the disintegration and eventual extinction of the Academy of Sciences and beyond that the research potential of the former GDR. Hopeful initiatives toward

self-reform and democratization were snuffed out by a superficial evaluation, entirely at the hands of West German examiners and a brutal "Abwicklung" which threw out the child with the bathwater. However, the author overlooks the vastly inflated nature of the GDR research apparatus and activities. Heinz Kersten contributes what is largely a catalog of recent DEFA products with a few comments on past, present, and future of film production.

Looking at this and previous volumes and the symposia from which they were selected, there is no doubt that the history of the GDR is mirrored in them in objective and often subjective images. But often the articles were largely descriptive and narrow in scope, as was to be expected as the drama was still in progress. Perhaps now that the curtain has fallen, a longer-range view of larger area-topics is in order for future convocations. And befitting the American participation and locale, wouldn't it be logical, interesting, and challenging to set aside a future meeting entirely to examine the American view of the GDR, even though such a self-examination may be painful for some of us?

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