

Foreword

The conference whose proceedings are contained in this volume took place in Edinburgh from 28-31 August 1989. Holding any kind of conference in the city at Festival time seemed like a good idea, and one on the reception of Romanticism in the literature of the GDR especially so. Here was clearly a subject of very considerable interest and significance. Whether, in the light of recent developments, the timing of our conference could be seen as felicitous or not, is perhaps a matter of opinion. We certainly lay no claim to any particular prescience in this regard. One might speculate how far the events of autumn 1989 represent 'the translation of poetic aspiration into political reality' (see below 231, n. 46), and to what extent such aspirations may have been shaped and conditioned by an awareness of the Romantic heritage. But then again one might prefer not to do so.

A first round of letters to colleagues at German departments in Britain who were known to the organizers through their research in either or both of the relevant areas produced an encouraging response. It might have been less so had we insisted on a narrow definition of Romanticism, but we make no apologies for having cast the net wide. If *Germanisten* (particularly German ones) will make life difficult for themselves by arbitrarily drawing the demarcation lines in such a way that the effectively marginalize several major figures, that is their problem. (And at least one of us would argue vehemently that any definition of Romanticism which excludes Hölderlin is inherently absurd.) Nor was the notion of 'reception' to be taken in any narrow sense. We were interested in all forms of affinities, whether elective or not.

It was seen as essential that writers and academic colleagues from the GDR should attend the conference, but early invitations to Christa and Gerhard Wolf, as well as Günter de Bruyn, Stephan Hermlin and Heinz Czechowski, proved unsuccessful, though good wishes were conveyed by all. We were, however, fortunate in gaining the financial support of the British Council in Berlin/ GDR which enabled us to invite Ursula Heukenkamp and Margret Liebezeit (both Humboldt-Universität Berlin) as guest speakers. We were equally fortunate in securing the attendance of Elke Liebs and Hannes Krauss from the Universities of Essen and Münster to contribute to our conference through their presence and papers.

Among colleagues from British universities we were happy to be able to draw on the expertise of both senior members of staff and postgraduate students, allowing us to extend the range of topics and discussions over as wide an area as possible. The present volume includes all the papers delivered in Edinburgh, with the addition of one on Bobrowski which we would have been delighted to hear, had the author not been prevented from participating. With minor adjustments we offer the papers here in the order in which they were given over the three days of the conference (the evenings were kept strictly free for Festival purposes!). A degree of cross-fertilization was already evident at the time, and we hope that something of this and the freshness of the spoken word has survived the translation into print. Regrettably, what it is not possible to convey is the liveliness of the discussions which followed each two-paper session. The contributors could hardly have hoped for a more informed, alert and appreciative audience.

We should like to thank *all* who participated, in whatever capacity, for making the conference a stimulating, exciting and memorable occasion. Our special thanks go to Dr Manfred Rudolf, Cultural Attaché of the GDR Embassy, who not only supported the conference from its initial conception and gave useful suggestions for fund-raising, but also delivered a 'Begrüßung' at the formal opening of proceedings. We should also like to thank our now retired Head of Department, Nick Furness, who encouraged us in our first diffident steps in conference organization, gave us constant support throughout, and delivered the welcoming address at the sherry reception. We are grateful to the Royal Bank of Scotland for generously sponsoring the conference; to Jutta Gaskill for transcribing some of the papers onto disc; and especially to our departmental secretary, Sheila Wagg, without whose sustained work throughout the entire period of preparation the conference could not have taken place.

*Karin McPherson, Howard Gaskill, Andrew Barker
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