

Socialism and Adventure, Politics and Entertainment: Martine Monod's Novels in the GDR

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Studies concerning the role of literature in the German Democratic Republic have often focussed on the manner in which authors expressed themselves within the strictures of genre, form and contents imposed, while little attention has been paid to the actual reading preferences of East German readers. Just as the popular discourse did not always correspond to the official discourse, readers did not always read what they were supposed to read, and if they did, they did not always do so for the "right" reasons. The success of French author Martine Monod (1921-85) in the GDR in the 1950's and 1960's demonstrates that her works, incorporating the familiar, canonical traditions of Critical and Socialist Realisms, also met the desire for entertainment and for the "dépaysement"¹ to glamorous, sometimes historical, foreign worlds through reading. This interesting combination accounts for the popularity of Monod's novels among a wide public but also explains why this author was published in the GDR and promoted as a literary figure.

As almost every aspect of life, literature in the GDR was regulated by party programs and official resolutions. The "Hauptverwaltung Verlage und Buchhandel" (Administration for Publishing Houses and Book Trade) of the Ministry of Culture controlled publishing houses.² Deciding what was acceptable for publication and consumption, this administration established a canon of literature for the GDR. This canon included authors from different time periods and countries who were linked to a humanist and realist tradition culminating in the official doctrine of Socialist Realism. School curricula and book reviews in the press also propagated what and how the government wanted its citizens to read.³ Oftentimes, forewords and afterwords situated for-

eign works in their historical and political contexts and provided an interpretation for the reader. However, it was up to readers themselves to choose from the variety of genres, authors, and time periods available, and significantly, to choose what not to read. Frequently, realist novels were a popular choice, corresponding to the demand for linear, traditional narration and thereby an accessible and familiar way of writing.

Martine Monod was one of these realist authors, whose popularity in the GDR as well as in other Eastern European countries⁴ was due to the fact that her novels were acceptable for publication but also palatable for the average reader. As a Communist writer from a capitalist country, Monod validated the existence of the socialist system in her novels and later condoned the contemporary politics of the GDR government explicitly in personal interviews. Espousing some of the principles of Socialist Realism in her novels, she was rooted in the humanist, Critical Realist tradition of canonical French authors from the 19th century. Combined with historical and adventurous plots, this made her works accessible to a variety of readers from different educational backgrounds. Monod's novels also responded to the East German reader's desire for entertainment, for "dépaysement." Her "exotic" characters and sets take the reader far away from their own world, far away from "Politinformation," "Kampfgruppe," "Wandzeitungen," and other realities which structured everyday life for most East Germans. Monod created human worlds without dwelling on violence and misery as many early Soviet novels did.

Book reviews illustrate reviewers feared that in Monod's novels entertainment might prevail over the political message. Criticizing her writings for lacking literary quality, they indirectly scolded the East German reader for reading for the wrong reasons. If the saying goes that every people has the government it deserves, the GDR government did not have the people they desired. The average reader read for leisure and retreated to a less politicized space apart from the official doctrine, a space in which socialism and its ideas of equality and peace had their place without being dogma. Just as Martine Monod's books proposed many East Germans believed in a better, socialist world and were at the same time intrigued by adventure, glamour and romance. This discrepancy between official and popular discourses constitutes a statement in itself. Implicitly this is saying "Wir sind das

Volk," which much later during the fall of 1989 became the most pointed slogan. "Wir sind das Volk, and we therefore choose ourselves what we like to read." East German readers had their own version of socialism, one that included them as active participants while resisting indoctrination and coercion ("Gängelung") in their private lives. Monod's novels and, to a lesser extent, her persona conformed to the special, private brand of socialism that East German readers had created for themselves. At the same time, her vita as resistance fighter and Communist made her the ideal proponent of a positive, affirmative image of the socialist cause and of the GDR itself.

Coming from a middle-class background, Martine Monod earned a *licence* in English from the Sorbonne in Paris. In 1941, she joined the French resistance movement where she met her future husband, François Monod, Communist poet and editor of the publishing house *Éditeurs Français Réunis*. After World War II, she became a member of the French Communist Party. In 1948, her first novel *Malacerta* was serialized in the newspaper *Ce Soir* by Louis Aragon and published by *Éditeurs Français Réunis* in 1950. Continuing to work as a film critic and journalist, Monod was active in the *Union des Femmes Françaises*, a Communist women's organization, and the *Comité National des Écrivains*, which united ex-Résistance writers. She translated novels from English and worked for newspapers like *Libération* and *Les Lettres Françaises*, again under Aragon's direction. In 1954, she completed her novel *Le Whisky de la Reine* (*The Queen's Whisky*), for which she received the *Prix Fénéon*. In 1955, *Éditeurs Français Réunis* published her following short novel *Le Nuage* (*The Cloud*), followed by *Normandie-Niemen* in 1960. From 1961 on, Monod worked for *Humanité*, the newspaper of the French Communist Party, where she later headed the political department of the Sunday edition. In 1968, she published *Israël tel que je l'ai vu* (*Israel As I Saw It*), in which she condemns the politics and warfare of Israel. Her report *Deux ou trois choses que je sais de l'Union soviétique* (*Two Or Three Things I Know About the Soviet Union*)⁵ (1973) is an enthusiastic and melodramatic account of her visit to the Soviet Union. Glorifying the existing system and not offering any critical insight, the book is difficult to read and suggests that she truly knew little about the reality there.

Monod belonged to a group of writers and journalists operating apart from the French literary establishment and from attempts at

avant-garde. At a time, where literature in France was dominated by existentialist thinking, where literary magazines such as *Tel Quel* (1960) and *L'Ephémère* (1971-73), the writers of the *Nouveau Roman* and the playwrights of the *Théâtre de l'Absurde* proposed new esthetics and where the "Collège de la Pataphysique" ridiculed the self-importance of the literary establishment, the writers around *Les Lettres Françaises* had a more positivistic approach to literature. An "engaged" author in the manner of the existentialists, Monod's life and her works were informed by her *Résistance* experience and her political activity as a Communist. The publishing houses, the journals, and the political organizations she worked for shared this background. Louis Aragon, ex-surrealist, novelist, and director of *Ce Soir* and *Les Lettres Françaises* was the most successful of this group of writers. Also a member of the Communist Party, he applied the principles of Socialist Realism in his later works, which suggests that Martine Monod may have been familiar with this doctrine as well. Through intertextual references as well as her at times imitative style and plot, the author positions herself clearly in the tradition of French literature, certainly too much so to establish her own voice among a plethora of innovative writers in her own country. Therefore, her works and those of colleagues Charles Spaak, André Wurmser and others, with their straight-forward, passionate story-telling, left no more than an ephemeral imprint on French literature.

Forgotten in France, Martine Monod is not mentioned in histories of French literature, and none of her books appear in the collections of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. Only the *Lexikon der französischen Literatur* (VEB Bibliographisches Institut Leipzig 1987), an encyclopedia acclaimed by Romance studies scholars in the GDR, devoted a 24-line entry to Martine Monod, citing her alongside famous authors such as philosopher and essayist Michel Montaigne. Written in French for a French audience, her novels were quickly translated into German and immediately achieved a remarkable success. However, some thirty years later, it is impossible to retrace who exactly decided to publish Monod's novels and why. No critical works on Monod are available, no records evidence how and why her works found their way to the GDR; her translators were impossible to locate.⁶ Only her books and the memory thereof in people's minds as an unofficial canon testify to her past celebrity. Articles in GDR news-

papers reported on Monod's visits to Berlin and highlighted her role as a media authority.

When Martine Monod visited the GDR twice in 1961, three of her works had already established her there as a "best-seller" author. As is obvious from the articles, she received much attention, not so much as a writer but as an "institution," a familiar role for writers in both France and the GDR.⁷ Due to her background, Monod lent herself as a commentator on the social and political situation. She also functioned as a sort of "ambassador," who upon return wanted to enlighten the French public:

So wie sie in der "Wolke" in literarisch vollendeter, ganz unkonventioneller Form ein Grundproblem unserer Tage, den Kampf gegen den Atomtod aufgreift, so sieht sie in der Einladung unseres Magistrats vor allem die Möglichkeit, die französische Öffentlichkeit über Berlin richtig zu informieren.⁸

"Berlin" here refers to the the erection of the Berlin Wall, which she seems to view as a legitimate attempt to protect the existing system. Moreover, her statements promulgated in the newspapers backed the official discourse:

Sie weilte in beiden Teilen der Stadt und verglich die Ruhe und Besonnenheit im demokratischen Berlin mit der Hysterie und Sensationsmache jenseits des Brandenburger Tores. Daß ihr amerikanische Journalisten damals allen Ernstes glauben machen wollten, die Kampfgruppenmänner und Volkspolizisten seien verkleidete Russen, läßt sie so nebenbei als Anekdote einfließen.⁹

Indirectly supporting the GDR government in their decision to build the "antifaschistischer Schutzwall," she evaluates the situation as calm and prudent, while it was certainly induced by intimidation and confusion. Following the party line, Monod's remarks may have justified the situation for some, but they probably alienated those who were adversely affected by the event. When she participated in the festivi-

ties for the 12th anniversary of the GDR, she found more conciliatory words:

Wir Franzosen sehen mit so viel Hoffnung und so viel Freude auf die DDR, weil wir in diesem Teil Deutschlands einen so großen Respekt vor der Kultur und eine so große Liebe zum Frieden finden. Wir Franzosen, innerhalb von vierzig Jahren zweimal Opfer des deutschen Militarismus, sehen in diesem wahren Deutschland unsere Schwester, und darum bin ich so glücklich, wenn ich hier bei Ihnen sein kann.¹⁰

Monod gives the impression of speaking for all French people when she praises the GDR as a peace-loving, cultured country. She concedes this "true Germany" its legitimate place among other nations, such as France, and confirms that it symbolize the hope for a better Germany. Integrated in the official discourse, her words may sound somewhat exaggerated. Yet, her presence gave hope and strength to people, producing an early "Dean-Reed-Effekt"¹¹. With this term I attempt to describe the effect created by an artist from a Western country (such as Dean Reed, Perry Friedman and others) endorsing the existence of the GDR in official statements as well as through their public appearance. A foreigner from the West was received with great curiosity in the East, especially since travel to the West was virtually impossible for the average GDR citizen. The fact that these artists were relatively unknown at home seems to not have diminished their acceptance in the GDR. Hans-Dieter Bräuer has discussed Reed's reception in the USSR and gave the following explanation:

Dean Reed ist für die Bürger des Sowjetlandes nicht nur ein Künstler, denn davon gibt es viele, er ist für sie ein Mensch, ein Freund der Sowjetunion, der auch in seinem Leben das tut, wofür er in seinen Liedern eintritt; ein Mensch, der die Menschen liebt und ihr wichtigstes Gut, den Frieden. Er verkörpert das andere, das gute Amerika, ein Land mit einer großen Kultur; ein Land, das große Persönlichkeiten hervorgebracht hat; ein Land, dessen wissenschaftliche und technische

Leistungen in der Sowjetunion bewundert werden; ein Land, mit dem in Frieden zu leben der Wunsch jedes Sowjetbürgers ist.¹²

Reed's background also explains his role in the GDR. Martine Monod, too, came from a great culture, one even closer and more connected with Germany through its tradition and history than the US. While Reed had the Old World's fascination with the United States in his favor, Monod's success may also have been due to the deeply engrained, rather one-sided admiration Germans have had for France and the French culture, which, as we will see later, also manifests itself in the preferred literature. Furthermore, Monod represented a female, more humane perspective, that of the French people rather than its government. As a woman writer she was a proponent of the socialist, "female" system as opposed to the capitalist, "male" system in which she lived.¹³ Hence, Martine Monod was an authority and a media figure constructed and embraced for her political message but also for her foreignness, a combination that applied to her most popular books as well. While the official promotion and the exotic appeal and celebrity of an author may entice a reader to pick up a certain book, this does not influence the decision to keep on reading or to recommend it to others. Monod's books found their place on East German bookshelves because they provided a blend of different literary traditions and met a variety of reading preferences.

Martine Monod's novels complied with some stipulations of the official literary doctrine of Socialist Realism in the GDR.¹⁴ Although her protagonists stem from noble or bourgeois rather than working class backgrounds, they experience political insights that make them act against oppression and injustice. They often take sides with the cause of the working class, and could be characterized as "unaware" heroes ("unbewusste Helden")¹⁵. Martine Monod clearly differentiates between good and evil. As a partisan author ("parteiische Autorin"), she denounces capitalism as an exploitative and aggressive system and reveals her sympathy with the lower classes. In so doing but also by addressing her readers in a simple language and by choosing traditional literary forms such as the historical novel, she demonstrates her solidarity with the masses ("Volksverbundenheit"). Monod's novels are moralistic and offer a clear-cut view of society. Although critical,

they are optimistic and anticipate a bright future as Socialist Realist novels are supposed to do.

Straightforward in style and composition, Martine Monod writes in the tradition of the Critical Realists of the 19th century (such as Zola, Balzac, Maupassant), who were part of a canon of literature in the GDR and who were considered predecessors of Socialist Realist literature.¹⁶ Like these authors, Monod takes an omniscient authorial stance, evaluating what is happening for the reader. Detailed character descriptions, a solid plot and exact descriptions suggest a semblance of greatest possible reflection of reality. Anticipations and previews allow readers to follow and to interpret the plot easily according to the intentions of the author.¹⁷ These characteristics put Monod's novels in the context of other books published in the GDR. They also make her books accessible and easy to read for East German readers, who are familiar with the French tradition. While Socialist Realism was the official doctrine, it was not the only way books were written in the GDR,¹⁸ and it was not necessarily what people enjoyed reading the most. Many East German readers favored adventurous plots in historical and exotic environments, romance and glamor.

Statistics have shown that the GDR was still a country of book readers ("Leseland"), although watching TV was the preferred pastime.¹⁹ In the official discourse, the historical novel fulfilled a didactic function: bringing the past to life and constructing it as a prehistory leading to the (socialist) present, instructing the reader about the 'historical determination' of the existence of the GDR. Socialist popular literature was to counteract "Schund- und Kitschliteratur" from the West,²⁰ and the fact that these kinds of texts were scarcely available in the GDR contributed to readers satisfying their needs for entertainment through literature, such as light French feuilleton literature from the mid-1800's. According to a poll from 1955, prose with historical content and popular literature (Unterhaltungsliteratur) were of the most interest to readers (24% and 32% respectively).²¹ In 1970, workers and clerical workers preferred travel books, adventure and mystery books, historical novels and biographies to contemporary novels. Surveys from 1978/79 demonstrated that Alexandre Dumas and other French writers were the preferred authors.²² Novels about foreign lands and historic times, with adventures and romantic love stories were more appealing to many readers than stories pertaining to their own lives. Noel

Macainsh noted for one adventure bestseller that it ranked among contemporary GDR texts:

"One unexpected, incidental detail is that, in 1970, Marcus Clarke's *For the Term of his Natural Life* was eighth in the list of preferred authors, just below Alexandre Dumas and Dieter Noll, and just above Erik Neutsch and Hans Fallada. In the 25-30 age group, adventure novels are the most preferred form of reading, and Clarke's novel seems to have been perceived in that category."²³

Even this type of adventure novels still implies a relatively educated reader, choosing literature of a certain quality for their leisure. Nevertheless, this is not what Minister of Culture Johannes R. Becher had in mind when he postulated an educated nation ("gebildete Nation")²⁴ and it was not the role the masses were supposed to play. Wolfgang Emmerich has summarized this in the following statement:

"Die Arbeiterklasse, die eigentlich zum neuen Kulturträger werden sollte, verhielt sich eher kleinbürgerlich. Man las lieber Margaret Mitchells 'Vom Winde verweht' statt Willi Bredel..."²⁵

Willi Bredel stands for "Aufbau- und Produktionsliteratur," for literature dealing with everyday life in the GDR from a Socialist Realist, propagandistic perspective. Jay Rosselini has explained this desire of East Germans to experience exotic landscapes rather than being educated in their leisure time as an expression of their discomfort with their own life contexts.²⁶ Richard Albrecht has viewed this as seeking distance from everyday life rather than its literary doubling in contemporary socialist literature and has observed similar attitudes for readers in the Federal Republic.²⁷ Considering that most GDR readers were restricted in their traveling, this desire for "Tapetenwechsel" and for glamorous or adventurous sets and plots found its expression in their choice of texts from Western cultures, that were physically and historically closer to their own than for example the Russian/Soviet culture. This may account for the fact "that literary works find unex-

pected readers in unexpected places at unexpected times,"²⁸ such as Monod's novels did. Her books induce a mental "dépaysement", a change of scenery, where readers can leave their ever-present reality to travel to strange countries, eras, and worlds. While especially Monod's *Malacerta* and *Le Whisky de la Reine* may be read as adventure novels and for entertainment only, all of her works evoke foreign landscapes. Since publishing houses in the GDR were specialized, their different programs created certain expectations. Thereby categorizing Monod's novels into different popular genres, this may have contributed to finding their readers and therefore to their success. A closer look at the novels themselves and their reception in the media will illustrate how they navigated more or less successfully between official expectations and the individual reading worlds of East German readers.

The publishing house Rütten & Loening published Monod's first novel *Malacerta* in 1952.²⁹ Rütten & Loening bears the heading "Historische Romane" in its logo and was known for its editions of historical novels and of works of 19th century authors, such as Dumas, Zola or Balzac. Just like these, *Malacerta* and *Le Whisky de la Reine* are page-turners, entertaining and absorbing; they deal with historical events and are written in a traditional, "non-formalist" style.

Malacerta provides a mixture of adventure, romance, and political issues. The protagonist, Claudio Malacerta, comes from a noble Italian family. After exuberant erotic and criminal adventures, he joins the workers in the Paris June riots of 1848. While at first he does this only to please his friend Alexandre, and Marianne, a proletarian girl who rejected him, he later becomes an ardent fighter for workers' rights. The novel is influenced by canonical French authors: irony and wit recall Voltaire's *Candide*, turbulent adventures are reminiscent of the Cloak and Dagger novels by Alexandre Dumas. The symbolism is somewhat clumsy and overstated: Marianne, the name of Malacerta's love interest, is also the name of the female symbol for the French Republic; Stendhal's novel *The Red and the Black* is evoked by the recurring themes of the red and the black. Important elements in the novel are its humor as well as slapstick situations. While describing an interesting historical background, *Malacerta* is mostly an entertaining novel with frequent intertextual references to canonical French literature.

In his afterword, Wolfgang Richter emphasizes the historical

and political significance of the book, which for the (East) German reader may become secondary to the entertainment:

Die von der Verfasserin gewählte Darstellungsweise kann es mit sich bringen, daß dem deutschen Leser die Bedeutung oder Tragweite einer Anspielung auf historische Ereignisse und Gestalten nicht ohne weiteres verständlich ist.³⁰

Richter seems to be aware of the "faulty," superficial reading the book may receive as an amusing Cloak and Dagger novel. He continues to highlight the educational element and offers the following instructions as to how to interpret the text:

So wurden die Opfer der Junitage nicht vergeblich gebracht. Millionen Menschen in aller Welt scharten sich in den folgenden Jahrzehnten um die Fahne der Arbeiterschaft. Heute ist es die gesamte fortschrittliche und friedliebende Menschheit, die gemeinsam mit den Arbeitern einer profitsüchtigen und kriegslüsternen Bourgeoisie den Kampf angesagt hat.³¹

Supplying the historical and political angle from which the novel should be read, he shows how the book is supposed to relate to the lives of GDR readers. The polemics and the schoolmasterly tone of Richter's afterword seem unnecessary, considering the contents of *Malacerta*. Even a superficial reading cannot miss the clear, almost clichéd stance the protagonist and the narrator take for the cause of the working class.

Monod's second novel, *Le Whisky de la Reine*, is more elaborate and more serious in tone than *Malacerta*. Rütten & Loening published it as *Der Whisky der Königin* in 1955,³² before Volk und Welt republished the book as an issue of *Romanzeitung* in 1956. This series featured popular fiction (often contemporary classics) in a monthly brochure. Due to its low cost and its availability at newspaper stands, *Romanzeitung* reached a wide and varied readership. The frivolous title of the novel and the 31 illustrations by Paul Rosié in the Rütten &

Loening edition set the tone for a light reading experience and prepare for a plot involving popular themes, such as romantic love and film. Yet, this novel also has a very clear political message. *Der Whisky der Königin* refers to Queen Victoria, who despite the puritan morals she imposed, was purported to have love affairs and to drink whisky every night. It evokes England at the turn of the century, a stuffy, hypocritical society in which the protagonist, smart and beautiful Annabel, grows up. As a young woman, Annabel escapes an arranged marriage with a much older man by fleeing to the United States. There she works in the film business, which Monod depicts as corrupt and full of contradictions and antagonisms. Annabel and her husband Stanley, however, make documentaries about the life of the workers. Although from an upper-class background, Annabel surrounds herself with ordinary, "real" people, workers and house workers. Reluctantly, Stanley leaves to fight in the First World War and is killed when he protests against the intervention into Soviet Russia. Annabel travels to Europe to find out the truth about her husband's death.

Although Stanley dies, the book ends on an optimistic note as Socialist Realist novels do; its ending could be the beginning of another novel. A new, socialist, society is anticipated, of which Stanley saw the beginnings in Russia. The composition of the novel has been compared to Charles Dickens' novels, another "Critical Realist" writer.³³ Like Dickens', Monod's characters are either good or evil; action dominates over psychological insight. Although a member of the upper class, Annabel is shown as someone who strives for peace and justice, and in so doing, finds personal happiness. The author denounces capitalism, war and violence, contrasting them with the power of love. All these elements are embedded in a historical and cultural background that for East German readers meant a double "dépaysement": Through the lens of a French author, they could journey to different times, and to two attractive foreign countries, England and the United States.

East German critics belittled the novel as purely entertaining and of little literary value. The reviewer H.F. for example sees artistic problems yet admits that this 'little novel' boasts an interesting plot, a description of the era and of the characters and ironical points that mostly hit the mark. The novel "ist für Leser geeignet, die auf nicht allzu belastende Weise gut unterhalten sein wollen,"³⁴ which is in it-

self a tautology. Another reviewer, Dr. Melies, emphasizes that the book is written in "der geistreichen, spritzigen Form eines Pariser Boulevardromans" and regards the plot as a pretext for frivolous sentimentalities with subtle morals.³⁵ Again, reviewers disregarded the humanistic message of this novel, certainly because, unlike most contemporary GDR literature, it comes in the disguise of a story about love, adventure, history and attractive settings.

Martine Monod's most successful novel *Le Nuage* (The Cloud) was published by Dietz under the title *Die Wolke*. Between 1957 and 1962, the book saw 12 printings with a total of 136,000 copies. In 1957 alone, three editions totaling 15,000 copies were sold. Dietz was owned by SED³⁶ and therefore edited the so-called "Klassiker", Marx, Engels, and Lenin, as well as documents and protocols of party congresses. Dietz occasionally also published war accounts such as *Das Himmelfahrtskommando* by F.C. Weiskopf. Unlike usual Dietz publications, the dust jacket of *Die Wolke* features the captivating photograph of the serene face of a beautiful young woman. This as well as the enigmatic title (which commonly associates something pleasant) attracts immediate attention and points to the "human" content of the story. Indeed, this novel is of more than political significance. Here, Monod draws on an authentic incident: following tests of the American super H bomb near the Bikini atoll in 1954, a Japanese fishing junk navigating at almost a hundred miles from the indicated safety zone was contaminated by the explosion. All of the 23 crew members showed the symptoms of exposure to radioactive radiation as observed at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. One of them died. While the safety zone was expanded, the tests continued.

In Martine Monod's novel, it is an American yacht which witnesses the testing. The protagonist Patricia, the eighteen year-old daughter of an oil millionaire, is most severely affected. While her father is busy doing business, her mother Catherine stays by her bedside. A romance develops between Catherine and the doctor who was aboard the yacht. This doctor Vincent Malvern had become disillusioned and passive due to his experiences in World War II. When Patricia dies a slow and painful death, Catherine is shaken and decides to mobilize people against nuclear arms.

This short and concise novel is preceded by a quote from Racine's classical tragedy *Iphigénie* (1674), and Jeanne Stern has re-

marked on the affinity to Racine's play without giving further details. In *Iphigénie*, as in the mythology, Iphigénie is the daughter of the king and will be sacrificed to the gods, whereas Patricia, the daughter of the oil millionaire in *Die Wolke* is sacrificed for political interests. Just as a classical French *tragédie* is composed of five acts, the story develops in five chapters. The realistic plot complies with the principle of "vraisemblance" (verisimilitude). However, other principles such as the unity of place, plot and time are not observed. Monod also counteracts the principle of "bienséance" (decorum): not only does the dying take place on stage in *Die Wolke*, the details of Patricia's painful, excruciating death are at the center of attention for most of the novel. The conflict culminates in the catastrophe, Patricia's death, and a cathartic moment in the end, when her mother decides to alert people to the dangers of nuclear weapons. The novel is written in rigid, matter-of-fact language. While these characteristics may indeed evoke Racine's drama, the descriptions of Patricia's dying are reminiscent of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* and Dumas' *La Dame aux camélias*.

Die Wolke addresses the danger of a nuclear conflict, which preoccupied many East Germans at the time. Monod makes this news item a human story by turning it into an individual tragedy. Setting it in the upper-class of American society and making a young woman from a privileged background the victim serves several purposes. Opening with another instance of "dépaysement", this time by prying into a luxurious milieu, a dream world for readers everywhere, the shock value of the tragedy is enhanced. Put in a seemingly closer cultural context (than the lives of Japanese fishermen), the incident becomes more tangible and more sympathetic. Monod educates the reader about the event on the Bikini atoll. The novel conveys the powerful message that a nuclear war will not spare anyone.

In their book reviews, contemporary East German critics denied that the book is a novel (as declared on the cover) and called it only a short novella. Hilde Kahlau for example criticized the entertaining element, the fact that it is situated in High society, and that it ends with romance. The language is denounced as light-weight and casual. She also sees the book addressing masses of indifferent people in capitalistic countries.³⁷ Other critics contend that the novel does not pretend to be a great work of art and see it as literally tendentious prose. Comparing these evaluations with the number of editions of

Die Wolke in the GDR, the discrepancy between official reviewers' standards and those of the actual readers is quite obvious. This harsh criticism of the novel implies a criticism of its success and thereby of the readers who chose it. While the book does not have the material for an all-time classic, it addressed the fears and desires of many at the time and fictionalized an important humanistic message.

Monod's last novel, *Normandie-Njemen* was published by Deutscher Militärverlag in 1962 (1-15,000 copies), and again in 1963 (numbers unavailable). Deutscher Militärverlag, later Militärverlag der DDR, was controlled by the Ministry of National Defense and had for its goal "to promulgate the military traditions of the proletariat as well as to strengthen the combat power of the armed forces and to improve the defense preparedness of the people."³⁸ The publishing house printed documentaries, political studies and espionage stories as well as fictionalized accounts of World War II, such as Harry Thürk's *Pearl Harbor*. These publications responded to the preference of a predominantly male readership for suspense and war accounts. Verlag Kultur und Fortschritt³⁹ printed the novel as a licensed edition for the reader's club "Book of the Month" in 1964 ("Lizenzausgabe für die Lesergemeinschaft Buch des Monats").

Martine Monod wrote *Normandie-Njemen* after an original film script by Elsa Triolet, Charles Spaak and Konstantin Simonow. The novel also dramatizes a real event. In a brief foreword, Monod states: "Everything in here is absolutely true and everything is entirely made up."⁴⁰ In 1942, French pilots, condemned to idleness by the agreement of Montoire,⁴¹ deserted from North Africa, joining a Red Army squad to fight against the Nazis. The novel depicts the everyday lives of these pilots, their daily contacts and the developing friendships with Soviet soldiers, as well as the destruction, the misery and the suffering inflicted upon ordinary people by the war. This experience unites the pilots despite their different class backgrounds and nationalities. Here, Monod takes up a theme developed in Jean Renoir's film *La Grande Illusion* from 1937, though this anti-war film leaves no doubt that the comradeship of the war is limited to that experience only.⁴² Published at the height of the Cold War, the novel reiterates a tradition of friendship between the French and the Soviets and shows them in a positive light. *Normandie-Njemen* reconfirms that the Soviet Union and by extension the other Eastern block countries are equal partners in the

community of nations.

Further publications by Monod in the GDR include translations of articles from *Humanité* and *Les Lettres Françaises*: "Ich sah den Atomtod" in *Aufbau* 4/1958 and "Wie eine Superproduktion entsteht" in *Das Magazin* 3/1961. *Das Magazin* also ran articles of which the original French versions could not be found: with Henri Quiqueré: "Bandilleros, Toreros und ein Stier" (1/1966) and "Irland mit geballten Fäusten" (10/1970) as well as the short story "Das Flugzeug aus London" in 1960. Monod covered a variety of subjects: political commentary, cultural reports, travel accounts, love stories. *Das Magazin* was one of the most popular magazines in the GDR, featuring high-quality, entertaining, and often erotic articles, short stories, poems, and one artistic nude photograph per issue. Monod's appearance in this magazine indicates that she was regarded as an author of trivial literature with some serious ambitions. The choice of the novels and articles published in the GDR indicates that those in charge of book production knew their readers well. Monod's last two political reports *Israël tel que je l'ai vu* and *Deux ou trois choses que je sais de l'Union* would not have appealed to a public exposed to polemics and indoctrination in their daily lives.

Martine Monod's success in the GDR is due to a combination of elements. As a literary persona, she was acceptable for leaders and for readers alike. The author validated the socialist reality and the official politics, and recognized the *raison d'être* of the GDR. More or less skillfully rooted in the familiar French literary tradition, her novels fit the official view that Critical Realism be the predecessor of worker's literature but also emulated popular models. Elements of Socialist Realism fused with adventurous plots in historical and exotic environments met the reading preferences of East German readers. Bridging different traditions and doctrines and satisfying a variety of reading expectations, Monod's novels entered this private sphere of East German living, of which socialist ideals were one component among others. But most importantly, besides providing adventure and a view of other worlds that endorsed living in the socialist GDR, Martine Monod's was a "humane" voice, imploring a better future, visualizing a world of love and peace.

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Notes

¹The French word "dépaysement" means first of all the move away from one's own country, one's displacement, but may also have the positive connotations of "Tapetenwechsel". I am using the term to describe a sort of "place warp".

²Between 1951 and 1956 this office was called 'Amt für Literatur und Verlagswesen.' See Emmerich, Wolfgang. *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR*. Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1981. 29. and Weßel, Daisy. *Bild und Gegenbild. Die USA in der Belletristik der DDR*. Opladen: Leske + Budrich, 1989. 23. Dietrich Simon has stated that publishers had a certain freedom in their choices, although the administration had the final say. See Jacobs, Peter. "Die Welt ist sein Feld. Der Verlag Volk und Welt wird 50 Jahre alt - ein Gespräch mit seinem Chef Dietrich Simon." *Berliner Zeitung*. 31 May/1 June 1997: 23.

³Wolfgang Emmerich has hinted at this creation of the canon through the market, the media, school curricula, etc. See Emmerich, Wolfgang. "Für eine andere Wahrnehmung der DDR-Literatur: Neue Kontexte, neue Paradigmen, ein neuer Kanon." *Geist und Macht: Writers and the State in the GDR*. Eds. Axel Goodbody and Dennis Tate. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1992. 17.

⁴*Le Nuage* (Die Wolke) was also published in other socialist countries, such as Czechoslovakia: Monodova, Martine. *Mrácko*. Trans. Nina Neklanova. Praha: Svobodné Slovo Melantrich, 1956. With illustrations.

⁵The title plays on that of a popular film by Jean-Luc Godard: *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle* (Two or Three Things I Know about Her) from 1967.

⁶Contacts with the GDR publishers in 1988/89 and with their successors in 1997 did not provide any more background. With the exception of *Malacerta* (translated by Rudolf Schacht) all novels were translated by Christine Hoepfner. Since the focus of this paper is not a translation critique, and since the translations convey the spirit and content of the originals quite accurately, I did not investigate this aspect any further. For a critical study on the representation of war in the novels of Martine Monod see Pfitzner, Ina. *Zur Darstellung des Krieges im Romanschaffen von Martine Monod*. Diplomarbeit, Sektion Romanistik der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin: Fall 1989.

⁷Emmerich has posited this historical place for writers in French society (19). This long-standing tradition points back to Voltaire, Madame de Staël, and Emile Zola and found a new impetus in the existentialist postulate of the "engagé" (committed) writer. According to Emmerich, writers in the

GDR were to assume this role within the "Literaturgesellschaft." However, apart from this official doctrine, writers in the GDR did establish themselves as authorities, culminating in their role during the Wende in 1989, and explicitly at the demonstration in Alexanderplatz in Berlin on November 4, 1989. Elizabeth Mittman has examined this role of writers as "a mouthpiece of the people" on the example of Christa Wolf. Mittman, Elizabeth. "Locating a Public Sphere: Some Reflections on Writers and Öffentlichkeit in the GDR." *Women in German Yearbook 10*. Eds. Jeanette Clausen and Sara Friedrichsmeyer. University of Nebraska Press: Lincoln & London, 1995. 19-37.

¹Lupescu, Valentin. "Meinungen: Immer mehr Franzosen begreifen..." *Berliner Zeitung*. 6.10.1961, 3.

²Ibid. Since her words are given as reported speech, it is ultimately impossible to ascertain what she did and did not say.

³Stern, Jeanne. "Begegnung mit Martine Monod." *Neues Deutschland*. 1.7.1961.

⁴Dean Reed, an American singer, was enormously popular in the Eastern block and in South America. He settled in the GDR where he married actor Renate Blume. He died under mysterious circumstances in 1989. Reed, Dean. *Dean Reed erzählt aus seinem Leben. Aufgeschrieben von Hans-Dieter Bräuer*. Leipzig: Edition Peters, 1984. I am using the comparison with Dean Reed only to illustrate this one aspect. Reed as a movie actor and singer naturally achieved a different kind of popularity, also due to his friendly, relaxed personality and his good looks.

⁵Ibid. 68/69.

⁶The feminization of the GDR in contrast to the FRG has been articulated in several recent studies, such as Stein, Mary Beth. "The Banana and the Trabant: Representations of the 'Other' in a United Germany." *The Berlin Wall. Representations and Perspectives*. Eds. Ernst Schürer, Manfred Keune and Philip Jenkins. New York: Peter Lang, 1996. 333-346. 342. The fact that Christa Wolf was one of the most noted GDR authors accepted both by the government and the people as well as abroad may also be due to her unique perspective as a woman. Mittman has characterized her work and that of others as providing "access to alternative visions for a society beyond both capitalism and patriarchy." (33) Seen in this light, Christa Wolf did what East German readers choosing Martine Monod's books did: they did not question the idea of socialism itself and did not overtly oppose the state, but they did dream of other worlds and of a place where the individual can be just an individual.

⁷The criteria for Socialist Realism used here are those layed out in high school literature textbooks rather than the doctrine as it was discussed and altered over decades.

⁸Parigger, Marleen and Stef Pixt. "Zur Unterhaltungsfunktion von

Literatur. Der Zusammenhang von ästhetischer Theoriebildung und ideologischen Prämissen." *DDR-Roman und Literaturgesellschaft*. Eds. Jos Hoogeveen and Gerd Labrousse. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1981. 61-102. 153.

⁹Lukács, Georg. *Realism in our Time*. London: Harper Torchbooks, 1964.

¹⁰See Gerlach, Ingeborg. *Der schwierige Fortschritt. Gegenwartsdeutung und Zukunftserwartung im DDR-Roman* (Königstein/Is., 1979), 15.

¹¹Gerlach, 115.

¹²See Emmerich, 21. With an annual publication of about 140 million books, the GDR was leading in the world besides the Soviet Union and Japan.

¹³Parigger, 148.

¹⁴Rosselini, Jay. "Zur Funktionsbestimmung des historischen Romans in der DDR-Literatur." *DDR-Roman und Literaturgesellschaft*. Eds. Jos Hoogeveen and Gerd Labrousse. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1981. 77.

¹⁵Vgl. Albrecht, Richard. "Das Bedürfnis nach echten Geschichten." *Jahrbuch zur Literatur in der DDR*. Bd. 4. Bonn: Bouvier Verlag Herbert Grundmann, 1985. 191.

¹⁶Macainsh, Noel. "Literary Reception in East and West Germany." *Quadrant*. April 1984, 44-49; 47. Clarke, Marcus. *Lebenslänglich*. Translated by Karl Heinrich, Nachwort Anselm Schlosser. Berlin: Volk und Welt, 1962. At least four printings. This novel, set in 1827 tells the story of an English nobleman sentenced for life and deported to the prison colonies in Australia.

¹⁷See Schmidt, Ulrich. "Abschied von der 'Literaturgesellschaft'?" *Anmerkungen zu einem Begriff. Text + Kritik. Literatur in der DDR. Rückblicke*. Ed. Heinz Ludwig Arnold. München: edition text + kritik, 1991. 45-52.

¹⁸Emmerich, 49.

¹⁹Rosselini, 75.

²⁰Albrecht, Richard. "'Leseland' DDR oder das Bedürfnis nach 'echten Geschichten': Versuch über Leseverhalten, Lektüreinteressen und Leseerfahrungen in der DDR." *Germanistische Mitteilungen*. 26/1986. 15-26. 23.

²¹Macainsh 47.

²²Martine Monod. *Malacerta*. Transl. Dr. Rudolf Schacht. Berlin: Rütten & Loening, 1952.

²³Richter, Wolfgang. "Nachwort." Ibid. 249.

²⁴Ibid. 254.

²⁵Monod, Martine. *Der Whiskey der Königin*. Transl. Christine Hoepfner. Berlin: Rütten & Loening, 1955.

²⁶Wurmser, André. "Les dons du ciel." *Les Lettres Françaises*. 13 May 1954.

²⁷H.F. *Die Buchbesprechung*, 1/1956, 35-36.

³⁵Dr. Melies. "Bücher kritisch gelesen. Zu Martine Monods der Whisky der Königin." *Weltbühne*. 43 (1955): 1375-76.

³⁶Emmerich, 21.

³⁷Kahlau, Hilde. *Buchbesprechungen. Die Wolke*. Der Bibliothekar 1 /1958. 51-52.

³⁸See Decker, Bernhard H. "The Wall as Seen Through the Eyes of Border Guards: The Border as a Literary Topos within the Framework of Socialist Defense Readiness Education." *The Berlin Wall. Representations and Perspectives*. Eds. Ernst Schürer, Manfred Keune and Philip Jenkins. New York: Peter Lang, 1996. 119-125. 120.

³⁹Kultur und Fortschritt, founded in 1947, was owned by the German-Soviet Friendship Society (Gesellschaft für Deutsch-Sowjetische Freundschaft) before it became part of Volk und Welt. See Jacobs.

⁴⁰Translation mine. 1.

⁴¹The agreement between Pétain and Hitler in October 1940.

⁴²As an interesting detail, Charles Spaak, co-writer of the script for *Normandie-Niemen*, was also the scriptwriter of *La Grande Illusion*.

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"Like a Stone Thrown into Water:" The Testimony of Magnus Hirschfeld

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Introductory Lecture to "The First Institute for Sexual Science (1919-1933)," an exhibit on loan to the Max Kade German Cultural Center, University of Cincinnati, OH USA, from the Magnus-Hirschfeld-Gesellschaft e.V., Berlin. The exhibit opened at the *Focus on Literatur* 4th Annual German Graduate Student Conference, October 15-16, 1999.

It was in 1895 that Magnus Hirschfeld, a Jewish medical doctor in Magdeburg, published the pamphlet *Sappho und Sokrates* under a pseudonym. In the preface to a later work, Hirschfeld explains to the reader that he "... was moved to write [*Sappho und Sokrates*] by the suicide of a young officer, one of my patients, who shot himself on the night he married, and left me his confession" (Sex xii). Hirschfeld describes *Sappho und Sokrates* as "... a stone thrown into water which, falling, sets up waves that go on spreading" (Sex xii). Hirschfeld's intention was to move homosexuality from the arena of illness to a natural condition. The work also serves a sociological function as an attempt by Hirschfeld to legitimize homosexuality to the bourgeois society at large. In this paper I wish to analyze one) what Hirschfeld meant to achieve via his writings, two) how he presents his theories, and three) to what extent his arguments were successful. To this end I will examine the writings of some of Hirschfeld's contemporaries.

Redefining the "Uranian"

Hirschfeld founded his research largely on the works of Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, a German lawyer. Like Hirschfeld, Ulrichs was homosexual, and the prejudice that he encountered led him to analyze himself, others like him, and their position in society. In the 1860s,