Gruppe 47 at Princeton University
A Word of Welcome

I should like to extend warm greetings to the writers of Gruppe 47 and their friends gathered at Princeton University.

The National Carl Schurz Association has assisted Americans for more than thirty years in establishing greater awareness of and closer ties with intellectual forces emerging in Western and Central Europe.

We hope that this special supplement to our publication—the AMERICAN-GERMAN REVIEW—will serve as an aid in making students and teachers more familiar with a world of young, self-critical and challenging creative thought—so essential to the continuing development of our society.

HARRY W. PFUND, President
National Carl Schurz Association, Inc.
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GRUPPE 47 AT PRINCETON UNIVERSITY
APRIL 21–25, 1966

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I am pleased to welcome the distinguished German intellectuals, known as Gruppe 47, convening for readings and discussion in the United States for the first time. And, I am gratified that Princeton will have the opportunity to share the experience of their presence on the University campus with a wide cross-section of Americans through The Princeton University Conference on April 25, 1966 entitled "The Writer in the Affluent Society" and this special issue of the American German Review.

The Princeton University Conference, a program for the exchange of ideas initiated in 1966, is designed to provide encouragement and opportunity for discussion and the sharing of mutual interests between members of the University community and persons engaged in any of many productive enterprises in the world at large. Princeton's primary objective in the Conference is to improve access to basic ideas, whatever their source, and to stimulate communication between the interdependent elements of society.

The pattern of analysis and constructive criticism that has identified Gruppe 47 as a positive force in European letters is consistent with the best tradition of American education, and makes Princeton University pleased to host our invited guests.

ROBERT F. GOHEEN
WHY PRINCETON?

More than whim or narrowly professional interests prompted Victor Lange, Chairman of the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures at Princeton University, to extend an invitation to the Gruppe 47. And certain associations with the name of Princeton surely played a role in Hans Werner Richter’s acceptance (the group had previously responded only once to a formal invitation to hold its meeting outside of Germany—in Sweden in 1964).

Princeton has long been in a favorable position to mediate between Europe and America, between writer and public. There is the humanistic orientation of undergraduate and graduate education at the University, which has numbered among its faculty some of America’s finest critics and scholars. There are the internationally renowned Gauss Seminars in Criticism, established by that master-critic R. P. Blackmur, which attract literary figures each year from the world over for a series of critical exchanges that are, in their own way, not unlike those of Gruppe 47. In addition, the Princeton University Conferences assure constant interaction on literary and other topics between the University and the public.

In turn, a brilliant succession of authors-in-residence—Saul Bellow, Philip Roth, William Meredith and others—prevents the University from falling into narrowly academic patterns of thought, reminding us by their presence that literature is written by men committed to life in the contemporary world. The presence of Gruppe 47, then, is different from other episodes in the University’s general design to mediate actively in the dialogue between author, scholar and public, solely in the scope of the enterprise.

If these are some of the factors motivating the University’s invitation, other associations contributed to the plausibility of the venture. For Princeton deserves a still unwritten chapter in the history of twentieth century German literature and intellectual life. As a haven for émigrés after 1935—men escaping from the same horrors that still obsess many of the Gruppe 47 in their works—Princeton became the home of a constellation of distinguished German intellectuals including Albert Einstein, the art historian Erwin Panofsky, and philosopher and historian Erich Kahler. In Princeton, Hermann Broch composed The Death of Vergil, wrote his grand study of Hofmannsthal, and completed his novel The Innocents. A Princeton audience first heard Thomas Mann’s famous lecture on The Magic Mountain, written during the hours stolen from the composition of Joseph the Provider. The guest list of Thomas Mann’s home on Stockton Street reads like a roll call of German literature in exile. One might say that Gruppe 47 held many meetings in Princeton, a decade before the establishment of its younger counterpart.

With its tradition of commitment to literature and with its fateful history as host to an earlier generation of German writers, Princeton is the obvious place for this exciting new confrontation: between past and present, between Europe and America, between the writer and his most challenging public.
GRUPPE 47:
Thumbnail Sketch

By Theodore Ziolkowski

It is fitting that the Gruppe 47 should hold its 1966 meeting in the United States. In one sense, for better or worse, it owes its existence to American influence. Over twenty years ago the idea was born in this country—not, to be sure, in the plush lounges of an Ivy League campus, but in the barren yards of Middle Western prisoner-of-war camps where a new generation of German intellectuals—Alfred Andersch, Hans Werner Richter, Walter Kolbenhoff, Walter Mannen and others—passionately debated the future of their vanquished land. In 1946, back in a Germany that had to build a new life from the ruins of the past, Richter and Andersch began publishing Der Ruf, a short-lived journal aimed at the political reconstruction of Germany on sound democratic principles. Its editorial policy was equally hostile to communism, to non-selective programs of denazification, and to the concept of collective guilt which totally ignored German responsibility to the Hitler regime. For reasons that are still obscure—some of those concerned suspect Russian intervention—the American occupation authorities revoked the journal's license the following April.

Almost immediately, Richter began planning a second satirical journal, Der Skorpion. Having applied for a license and solicited contributions, he invited the participants to a meeting in September, 1947. The license was refused; Der Skorpion never appeared. But the Gruppe 47, named for that fateful year, was born. The associates, who found themselves with articles but no journal, read their contributions aloud to one another and criticized them. Thus was established the pattern of spontaneous, frank criticism to which the group has adhered ever since.

In the twenty years of its existence its concerns have shifted. From the primarily political tendencies of the

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first years, it has moved toward an increasingly literary orientation. Absolute straightforwardness of utterance has often given way to stylistic experimentation. The hard core of politically oriented writers has gradually made way for a chorus of critics with largely aesthetic concerns. But the sense of honest, face-to-face criticism, through which the characteristic profile of postwar German literature was shaped, has been maintained. Emerging from the frustrations of obscure young journalists to become the representative voice of present-day German literature, the Gruppe 47 owes its existence to one man alone: Hans Werner Richter. From its circle have gone forth writers who have become famous the world over, and are eagerly read on both sides of the Iron Curtain—Heinrich Böll, Günter Grass, Uwe Johnson, Peter Weiss, and others. For many the Gruppe 47 and its prestigious prize have been the springboard to success. But this unique association is neither a club nor an organization nor a writer's workshop; it is at most an annual literary cocktail party to which Richter alone extends the invitations. Richter's guest list is no weary document to which he keeps adding names. Every year he sits down to draw it up anew according to a sole criterion: literary promise and continued activity. And each year he concludes the meeting on the same tentative note: "I hope we'll meet again, sometime, somewhere." Fortunately for the state of postwar German letters, it has not been too long between times.

The recipients are not invited in order to bask in the praise of a fan club; they are expected to expose themselves on the "electric chair" to the sharp and brutal criticism of their works. The most successful writer may "fall" with his newest manuscript; the young unknown may be boosted to success almost overnight.

Whether his manuscript wins praise or is subjected to the most painful dissection, the reader is not allowed to say a word; his defense can be conducted only in an eloquent rhetoric of smiles, downcast eyes, or trembling lips. The only sure way not to be invited a second time, says Richter, is to prove oneself unable to accept criticism. And rare is the aspiring young writer who
does not part with almost masochistic eagerness to read his efforts before his future peers; rare is the established "graduate" who is not tempted, after the adulations of a popular press, to test his mettle again against the open fire of those who "matter"—his fellow writers. Even if the criticism is sometimes unfair or at least ill considered, the writer's next work will probably be better. For this is, ultimately, the greatest value of the group: the idea that someone cares enough about your writing, about writing in general, to sit ten hours a day for three days, listening with a painful intensity to more than twenty new manuscripts. Surely only the most arrogant critic is convinced that his instant judgment of a poem, a story, a scene from a drama, is infallible. But he cares enough to listen—and at the meetings of the group close to a hundred skilled, committed writers listen professionally, excusingly, indignantly—perhaps even virtually—to everything that is read before them. Probably the only wholly damning criticism is the unanimous expression of boredom. Otherwise the reader is sure to profit from the craftsmanlike comments of his fellow writers—somewhat less, perhaps, from the more brilliant, but often dogmatic critiques of the flashy tribunal of professional critics in the front row.

In the midst of this three day literary orgy sits the stern but benign figure of Hans Werner Richter, perhaps the only man in Germany today with the tact, psychology, and authority to control the explosive mixture that one writer has called a "concentration of cerebral poison." For the group is not a cozy community of kindred spirits. Perhaps the only sentiment fusing for three turbulent days this seething discord of styles, views and generations is a passionate commitment to literature. And Richter is the only man around who actually knows all the writers present. Moving quietly through the crowd or sitting calmly beside the reader, he signals for order with a tinkling Alpine cowbell and calls everyone politely by name. Those whom he cannot call by name are firmly asked to leave. The glamorous world of literary management may lurk outside, waiting to pounce on the successful debutee with the most enticing blandishments of television, radio and publishing. But inside the atmosphere is strictly professional, keenly focused on the work at hand. A Norwegian journalist remarked last year, after three days of effort, that it was as hard to get into the meeting as into heaven.

This peripatetic literary coffee-house has a stature that is attested best, perhaps, by the attacks constantly leveled against it—by portly politicians offended by its liberalism, by professors disdainful of a "literature engagée" committed to the present, by critics and writers who remain still unvisited. Undeniably, the prize of the group, which is awarded at irregular intervals more or less at Richter's whim, bears more prestige than almost any of the more highly endowed prizes supported by the moneys of German industry or politics. Its reputation is such that Richter, when he looks around the room after a successful meeting and inquires which publishers would care to contribute, can be sure to collect a substantial sum for "furthering" the young writer who has made a good impression and won a majority of the secret ballots of all participants. Say what one will about the critical standards represented within the group; its prizewinners constitute an honor roll of postwar German letters, East and West.

Many of the writers who will be present in Princeton were scarcely able to read, much less write, when Richter and his friends laid their plans for the political and intellectual reconstruction of Germany. Their writing often differs radically from the stark realism and controlled understatement of the late 'forties. And the original participants cannot look back and feel that all of their hopes for a new Germany have been fully realized. But when Richter asks for silence and summons the first writer to the "electric chair" in Whip Hall, the atmosphere will be the same as that which prevailed when the founding group first read their works to one another in a spirit of absolute honesty and critical integrity. And perhaps one of the twenty-one authors—including eight unknowns—who will read this year will be next year's literary sensation, still another product of Hans Werner Richter's cause and of the group's faith in that cause. Gruppe 37, for three days a year, is a brilliant example of democracy in action.
THE PRINCETON UNIVERSITY CONFERENCE
A PROGRAM FOR THE EXCHANGE OF IDEAS

The Writer in the Affluent Society

The voice of the writer has in the past carried a special authority: it has echoed the conscience of the race and has called forth the visions by which men live. Yet in our century social and technological forces have not merely jeopardized his role as model and guide but have sometimes condemned him to irrelevancy, or have made him, willingly or reluctantly, an instrument of the economic or political establishment. In the affluent society he has been flattered by the blandishments of public opportunity and personal reward—cajoled by the enticements of status and security. Have these rewards undermined the writer’s independence of perception and judgment? Or have they contributed to his integrity and craft by driving him to seek new ways, within the framework of detachment and protest, of life and expression?

The 79th Princeton University Conference, which brings together a remarkable and representative group of American and European men of letters for a one day symposium, provides the occasion for an examination of those forces in contemporary Western society that shape the character and function of our literature.

Meeting Director:
Victor Lange, Chairman, Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures, Princeton University

Administrative Director:
John C. Sapoch, Jr.

PROGRAM

Alexander Hall/Princeton University

Monday, April 25, 1966

MORNING SESSION: The Writer and His Public

The Impact of Affluence: Opportunity or Constraint?
William Jovanovich/Erich Fried/William Meredith

The Effectiveness of the Writer: Privy Counselor or Court Jester?
Günter Grass/Lois Lee Fiedler/Marcel Reich-Ranicki

AFTERNOON SESSION: The Writer and His Work

New Forms: Fashion or Necessity?
H. Magnus Enssenberger/Sean Sontag/Walter Höllerer

The Pressures for Commitment: Art or Propaganda?
Peter Weiss/Eric Bentley/Hans Mayer
Whig Hall, Princeton University. Gruppe 47 holds its readings in this home of the 380-year-old American Whig-Cliosophic Society, believed to be the oldest undergraduate debating group in the world.
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Verlag Hoffmann und Campe  
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Dieter Wellenho  
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Lufthansa German Airlines, offices in principal cities of the U.S.A. and Canada.
**INFORMATION SOURCES ON GRUPPE 47**

Despite its prominent position in contemporary German literature, there is little information of a systematic sort available regarding Gruppe 47. The following items, written chiefly by “members” of the group, will be found more reliable than the random articles appearing from time to time in the press.


**Reinhard Lottau, “What about Gruppe 47?”** Yale German Review. (Spring, 1965), Pp. 34-36

**Marcel Reich-Ranicki, Literarisches Leben in Deutschland.** München: Piper, 1965

**Works Available in English**

**Aichinger, Ilse**


*Herod’s Children.* Translated by Cornelia Schaeffer. New York: Atheneum, 1958

*Flight to Affar.* Translated by Michael Bullock. New York: Coward-McCann, 1958

**Andersch, Alfred**


**Bachmann, Ingeborg**

*The Thirtieth Year.* Translated by Michael Bullock. New York: Knopf, 1964

**Biehl, Heinrich**


*Traveller, If You Come to Spa...* Translated by Mervyn Savill. London: Arco, 1956

*The Bread of Our Early Years.* Translated by Mervyn Savill. London: Arco, 1957


**Elser, Gisela**


**Lufthansa German Airlines, offices in principal cities of the U.S.A. and Canada.**
Grass, Günter
Cat and Mouse. Translated by Ralph Manheim. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1963

Johnson, Uwe
Speckulations about Jacob. Translated by Ursule Molinaro. London: Jonathan Cape, 1963

Koeppen, Wolfgang

Lens, Siegfried


Lettau, Reinhard

Lind, Jakob
Soul of Wood. Translated by Ralph Manheim. New York: Grove Press, 1965

Richter, Hans Werner
They Fell from God’s Hands. Translated by Geoffrey Sainsbury. New York: DuPont, 1956
Beyond Defeat. Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett, 1962

Rohrbach, Klaus

Schubel, Ernst


Walser, Martin
Marriage in Philippiusburg. Norfolk, Conn.: New Directions, 1961

Weiss, Peter
(Compiled by Edward F. Ricker)

Anthologies and Journals
Encounter XXII/4. (April, 1964). “Germany—A Special Number”
Great German Short Stories. Edited and Introduced by Stephen Spender. New York: Dell, 1960
New Young German Poets. Edited and Translated by Jerome Rothenberg. San Francisco: City Lights, 1959
Odyssey Reviews. 1962/1 (March, 1962)
PRIZE OF THE GRUPPE 47

The prize is awarded at irregular intervals. Since it was conceived primarily as a means to support unknown writers and to publicize their names, established writers who read at the meetings are automatically excluded from consideration. (The winners, of whom many are internationally known today, were still beginners at the time of the award.) The prize is awarded only for an unpublished manuscript read at a meeting of the Gruppe 47, and the recipient is determined by secret ballot of all participants present at that year’s meeting. The prize is supported at present by voluntary and spontaneous contributions from roughly a dozen leading German publishers. Previous winners have been:

1950 Günter Eich
1951 Heinrich Böll
1952 Ilse Aichinger
1953 Ingeborg Bachmann
1954 Adrian Morris
1955 Martin Walser
1958 Günter Grass
1962 Johannes Bobrowski
1965 Peter Schäfer

"If we could first know where we are, and whither we are tending, we could then better judge what to do, and how to do it.”

Abraham Lincoln