



MAX KADE CENTER FOR GERMAN-AMERICAN STUDIES

NOVEMBER 1997

Author Ruth Klüger to Speak about Holocaust Experiences

Ruth Klüger's autobiographical work *weiter leben*, an account of her experience in surviving Auschwitz, has won wide acclaim in Germany. Now also available in paperback, the book has sold 200,000 copies. It has been translated into Dutch, Italian, French, Spanish, Czech, and Japanese. Klüger has received numerous literary awards, including the Niedersachsen Prize, the Grimmshausen Prize, the Gryphius Prize, Rauriser Prize of Austria, and, most recently, the Heinrich Heine Prize. She will read selections from her book, for the first time in English. Ruth Klüger taught at the University of Kansas from 1970 to 1972, and is currently professor emerita of the University of California at Irvine. Her presentation "A Jewish Childhood under the Nazis" will be on Wednesday, December 3 at 3:30 p.m. in 330 Strong Hall.

The following is a review of Klüger's *weiter leben: Eine Jugend* by our recent visiting professor, **Egon Schwarz**:

Although this book represents autobiographical holocaust literature, its highly intelligent approach distinguishes it from most examples of the genre. Its non-sentimental abstraction and psychological impartiality matches the best in the literature of moral philosophy. Like her predecessors, Ruth Klüger is drawn to aphorism. Fake pieties surface only to be dissected and eliminated. None of them can prevail against the insights derived from the extreme trials she had to endure.

Klüger's spiritual and intellectual document describing personal suffering is balanced by reflection, abstraction, and synthesis. Beneath her self-analysis, the images of her childhood, her incorruptible psychology, and her search for truth, lies the inexorable nonverbal reality that is not supposed to exist. But it does: the *Anschluss*, the exclusion of the Jews from their hard-working social positions, the deportations, Theresienstadt, Auschwitz, the "selection," trying to cheat one's way out of dying in the gas chamber, the workcamp Christian-

stadt (the author regrets the inability of people to remember the names of smaller camps just because it is easier to recall only the famous concentration camps), the strategies and hardships of trying to go on with one's life ("weiter leben"), the period after the war when being a Jew does not immediately cease to be a stigma all at once, and the never fully successful attempt to return to normality. *Weiter leben* is a significant book, a piece of sad history, but it is also an attempt to penetrate into the center of human emotions of people and, without tolerance for any cheap excuses, to describe the true motives for action and thought.

It makes sense that Ruth Klüger repeatedly addresses female readers; after all, at first she experienced the cruel exclusion and then the even more fatal world of the concentration camp not only as a Jew but also as a female. But why does she believe that only men read things that were written by other men? Has she forgotten about her male readers who are enthusiastic about the book?

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Ruth Klüger asserts ironically that the troublesome details of her autobiography—for example, the fact that toddlers, much younger than she, were deported—should become required common knowledge for Germans. Now, thanks to the success of *weiter leben*, German-speaking readers have indelible images as constant reminders. If and when a translation becomes available, English-speaking readers will be able to view the holocaust from an entirely new perspective. *Weiter leben* is one of the finest works about the most disgraceful period of German history.



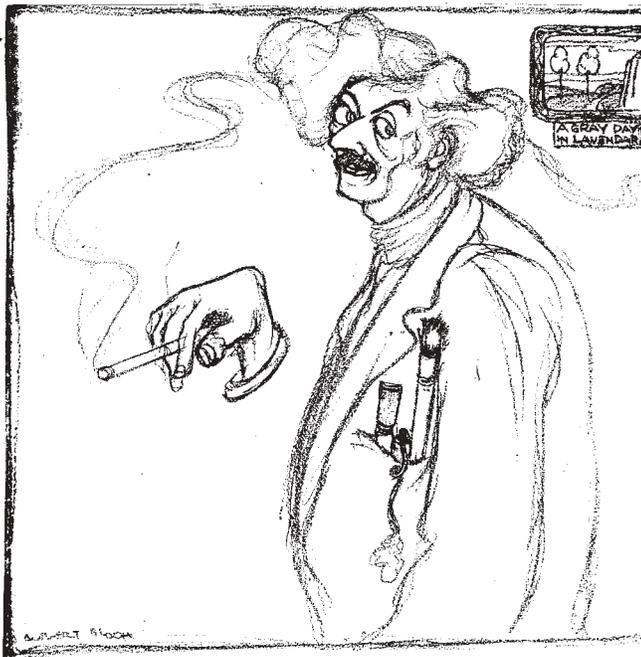
Albert Bloch made preliminary sketches on a copy of the 1936 University of Kansas commencement brochure. He incorporated the caricature of Hitler in his painting *The March of Clowns* (1941).

Rediscovering Albert Bloch at the University of Kansas

Born in 1882 in St. Louis, Albert Bloch was trained in a local art school and from 1900 to 1905 worked as a free-lance draftsman for several newspapers in both St. Louis and New York. Bloch's cartoons attracted the attention of William Marion Reedy, editor of *The Mirror*, a St. Louis-based political and literary journal with a national readership. Reedy hired Bloch in 1905 to contribute to *The Mirror*, which over the next four years published almost two hundred of Bloch's "Kindly Caricatures" of prominent St. Louisians, each of which was accompanied by a text written by Reedy. In 1908, with Reedy's encouragement and financial support, Bloch went to Europe to continue his artistic training. Though he visited museums in London and Paris, Bloch settled in Munich, and there studied independently, eschewing traditional academic instruction. An encounter with reproductions of the work of Wassily Kandinsky in the catalogue of the 1909 *Neue Künstlervereinigung München* (NKVM) exhibition encouraged Bloch to seek out progressive members of the Munich artists' community and eventually to pursue modernist experiments in his own paintings.



ADOLPHUS BUSCH



DAWSON WATSON, Albert Bloch's art teacher in St. Louis

In 1911 Kandinsky, along with his friend Franz Marc, visited Bloch's studio and soon thereafter proposed that the American exhibit his works with the NKVM. When conservative members of that society opposed Bloch's participation, Kandinsky and Marc protested, and invited Bloch to join them in their new venture, the first exhibition of *Der Blaue Reiter* (The Blue Rider), which opened in Munich in December 1911. Bloch showed six canvases in the first Blue Rider exhibition, more than any other artist except Gabriele Münter, who also showed six. He also exhibited eight works in the second and final Blue Rider exhibition, devoted to graphics and watercolors, which opened in March 1912 in Munich. Thereafter Bloch participated in other major avant-garde shows such as the 1912 international *Sonderbund* exhibition in Cologne and the 1913 *Erster Deutscher Herbstsalon* in Berlin. In December 1913, Herwarth Walden gave Bloch a solo exhibition at his famous Berlin gallery *Der Sturm*, and in 1916 Bloch shared an exhibition with Paul Klee at the same gallery. Meanwhile, the Chicago collector Arthur Jerome Eddy helped to arrange for solo exhibitions of Bloch's

work in Chicago and St. Louis in 1915, and became an important patron of the artist.

Following his return to the United States in 1921, Bloch held a solo exhibition at the Daniel Gallery in New York, but thereafter chose to withdraw from the art market; he never showed again at a commercial gallery, and exhibited only by invitation. After living briefly in St. Louis, Bloch taught for a year at the Academy of Fine Arts in Chicago (1922-23) before accepting the position of head of the department of painting and drawing at the University of Kansas in the fall of 1923. For the next twenty-four years, Bloch taught art at the University, leaving his imprint on countless students, several of whom went on to pursue successful careers as artists and teachers. He also initiated and taught the first courses in the history of art at the University of Kansas.

Bloch retired in 1947, but he continued to be an active painter, completing numerous canvases in the subsequent decade. He died in 1961, survived by his second wife, Anna Francis Bloch, whose dedication, knowledge, and accessibility have made the rediscovery of Bloch possible.



RUDYARD KIPLING

I did my stint of newspaper drudgery, magazine illustration and the like, sandwiched in amongst regular contributions of political and portrait caricatures to my dear old Bill Reedy's "Mirror"... I had the great benefit of a good bit of private criticism from painters whom I respected, in New York, Paris, Munich; and then, somehow, I came into contact, during the Munich days, with Marc and Kandinsky.

— Albert Bloch, letter to Edward A. Maser, 20 June 1955, reprinted in *Albert Bloch: A Retrospective Exhibition of his Work from 1911*

Bloch and Literature

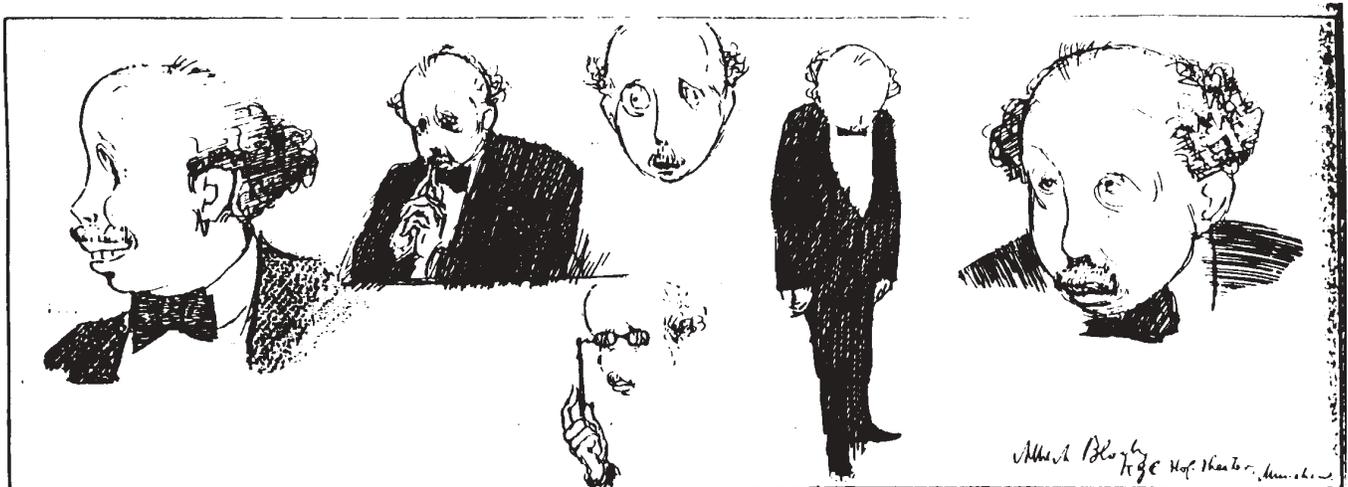
Bloch became an admirer of Karl Kraus in 1914 and strove to enhance the appreciation of the Austrian critic in the United States. He translated significant portions of Kraus's poetry and prose.

Even before Bloch met Kraus, he was a severe Austrian critic of his times. In more than two hundred caricatures, to which William Reedy, the editor of the *Mirror*, provided biting prose texts, Bloch scrutinized the powerful political, business, and cultural personalities as well as the social problems of St. Louis. The persistent attacks on human folly and its tragic consequences are constants in Bloch's work. In an illustrated essay Bloch surveyed German and Austrian literature in 1913, just before the outbreak of the war; he analyzed twenty prominent writers (including Hermann Bahr, Thomas Theodor Heine, Heinrich Mann, Arthur Schnitzler, and Karl Kraus). The article focuses on the promise and weaknesses of these writers. It also represents Bloch's determination to communicate to the American public a greater appreciation of German and Austrian culture. Though Bloch's early work (including some of the earliest known comic strips) provides important documentary material for

the history of journalism, his later satirical work (including paintings, prose writings, poetry, and translations) represents important contributions to German literature and German-American studies.

Franz Marc's request of 1915 to translate his essay "*Das geheime Europa*" into English helped Bloch discover his talent as a translator. Bloch's most important contributions to German studies were in this field. The correspondence with Marc shows that Bloch took his task as translator very seriously. He was determined to communicate his friend's analysis of the European crisis and his vision of peace precisely and persuasively. He faced a far more ambitious task when he undertook to translate works of Karl Kraus in the 1920s. Inspired by ideas of Kraus, Bloch developed his own theory of translation. He called his translations "reconstructions," which often involved radical departures from literal translation, but which allowed him to remain faithful to the impact of the original text in form and content.

Theodor Haecker (later known for his opposition to Hitler), whom Kraus consulted in evaluating Bloch's efforts, wrote effusively about the high quality of Bloch's work. On the basis of Haecker's recommendation, Kraus designated Bloch as his authorized translator into English. Bloch's



RICHARD STRAUSS (Munich, 1909)

translation of Kraus's poems appeared in 1929. A selection of Bloch's translations of Kraus's aphorisms, which W. H. Auden edited, remains unpublished.

Bloch did not restrict his translation activities to Karl Kraus; he translated the poetry of Georg Trakl, and in doing so he was again engaged in a pioneering effort. He also translated poems of Matthias Claudius, Johann Wolfgang Goethe, Eduard Mörike, Paul Zech, and Else Lasker-Schüler. Because of the high quality of these translations that span over three centuries of German literature, the publication of a dual-language anthology became an important component of our project *Albert Bloch: German Poetry in War and Peace*. Persistent interest in the topics of war and peace provided the volume coherence. Bloch's selection and translations represent a valuable resource for understanding the intellectual and spiritual coordinates of his art work.

Two recent dissertations have been part of the effort to rediscover Bloch. Werner Mohr completed his study of Albert Bloch's pioneering role in introducing the writings of Karl Kraus in America in 1995. Elke Champion focus on Bloch's correspondence with Sidonie Nádherny,



GUSTAV MAHLER



KARL KRAUS

and she has been able to show how Nádherny's relationship with Kraus is a key to understanding the development and content of Kraus's poetry.

History of the Project

Spring semester 1987: Professor Helmut Arntzen (University of Münster) as a Max Kade Visiting Professor of German urged colleagues at the University of Kansas to take advantage of these valuable untapped resources to bring to light Bloch's importance in modern art and literary history.

June 1992: The German foundation Alexander von Humboldt-Stiftung provided a matching grant of \$15,000 for the Bloch project.

April-May 1992: First scholarly conference about Albert Bloch in conjunction with the symposium for German-American Studies. Speakers: Helmut Arntzen, Hans Esselborn, Janice McCullagh, Werner Mohr, Marla Prather, and Robert Sudlow.

October 1993: The first working meeting on Albert Bloch at the University of Kansas. Participants: Henry Adams, Frank Baron, Anna Bloch, Richard Green, David

Cateforis, Richard Detsch, Robert Lind, and Janice McCullagh.

March 1994: The second working meeting on Albert Bloch in Münster, Germany, with Helmut Arntzen, Frank Baron, Hans Esselborn, Philipp Fehl, Annegret Hoberg, Werner Mohr, Maria Schuchter, August Stahl, and Erika Wimmer.

May 1995: A grant of \$71,000 from the National Endowment of the Humanities awards.

December 1995: Publication of *Albert Bloch: German Poetry in War and Peace*. A Dual-Language

Anthology. Poems by Karl Kraus and Georg Trakl with Translations, Paintings, and Drawings by Albert Bloch. Ed. by Frank Baron. Lawrence, Kansas: The Max Kade Center for German-American Studies, 1995, 303 pp.

January 1997: Publication of the illustrated essay volume *Albert Bloch: Artistic and Literary Perspectives*, edited by Frank Baron, Helmut Arntzen, and David Cateforis. Munich: Prestel and the Lawrence: Max Kade Center for German-American Studies, 1997.

1997: Albert Bloch retrospective exhibition at three locations:

- 1) January 26-March 16, 1997: The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Kansas City
- 2) April 16-July 6, 1997: Munich Museum of the Blue Rider (Lenbachhaus)
- 3) October 3-December 7, 1997: Delaware Museum of Art, Wilmington, Delaware

At the same time, a documentation was prepared by Frank Baron and James Helyar and was shown at the Watson Library. Subsequently, the show traveled to Munich and Eutin, Germany.

Reviews of the Retrospective Exhibitions

Kansas City Star, January 26: Kandinsky was a major influence on the early Bloch. . . . Where the Russian and the American diverged was on the value of pure abstraction. "For Bloch, abstract art was too sterile. He needed to hold on to the physical world," Conrads observed. Some of the best paintings of his Blue Rider period—the color-block cityscapes, the portrait of a be-deviled cabaret performer titled "The Green Domino," do just that, while borrowing from the evolving vocabulary of abstraction.

American Art Review, January-February: Although his name is unfamiliar to most contemporary art historians, Albert Bloch (1882-1961) was one of the most significant American modernist painters active in Europe during the 1910s. . . . While his paintings of the 1910s may be understood within the context of international modernist trends, his later work defies easy categorization. During his American years Bloch undertook a highly personal creative journey, carried on without regard for the changing fashions of the art world and with no expectation of public acknowledgement. "On the whole," the painter wrote, "I am an impossible creature, quite willing to remain an obscure, rough-hewn square peg, if only I may keep my inward freedom." Bloch understood and accepted the obscurity that his independence insured him, and contented himself in the pursuit of his own vision. More than three and a half decades after his death, the remarkable result of that pursuit are at last receiving the recognition that Bloch himself refused to seek.

Lawrence Journal World, February 6: The early work was more spontaneous with a tendency toward the dramatic, a tad of sensational use of brilliant color. They sort of go with youth," Mrs. Bloch said. "As he grew older, he reconsidered what his objective really was."

"Once in Lawrence, his works become more personal and more mature as one would hope the art of an older man would be," said David Cateforis, a KU assistant professor of



RODIN

art history. "It was more profound, more difficult, not as immediately appealing. It's not so buoyant or bouncing in composition."

His later paintings took on an eerie, spiritual quality, but also emanated hope.

"The major story of Bloch's life was not his association with The Blue Rider," Cateforis said, "but the continuation of his own vision."

Pitch Weekly (Kansas City), February 6: The first two rooms of the large Albert Bloch retrospective at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art are most impressive. In them one glimpses a true horizon of modernism. . . . Much of his later work reflected imagery of a broken world examined in the light of Christian symbolism, not the sort of thing a twice victorious America in general, or a post-war heroic abstract expressionist art world found (finds?) valuable.

With this show, the Nelson has given us an alternative, personal view—though not regional one, in spite of Bloch's KU professorship.

University Daily Kansan, February 19: The exhibit at Watson Library contains Bloch's lively caricatures, magazine covers he created for the St. Louis Mirror, his English translations of German poetry, and a chronological history of his life. It is sponsored by the Max Kade Center for German-American Studies and the University of Kansas Libraries.

New Times (Kansas City), March 6-12: Viewing the range of Bloch's work at the Nelson, it's not hard to understand why he attracted the avant-garde European artists' attention. Bloch's images are consistently subtle, hypnotic, and provocative. He was himself a deeply spiritual man who throughout his life shied away from any aspect of

self-promotion. . . . His work is marked by innovation, generosity, and ethereal beauty.

The Christian Science Monitor, February 27: We are accustomed to thinking that all the major American artists are known at this point," says Henry Adams, cocurator of the exhibition, who thinks this is a rare example of a major artist resurfacing. We haven't had a chance to look at Bloch's work as a whole. This is really the first truly serious show of his work. I think that Bloch ranks with just about any of the major American modernists."

Welt am Sonntag (Munich), April 13: Er gehörte als einziger Amerikaner zur kleinen Gruppe radikaler Neuerer, die München vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg unter dem Signum des "Blauen Reiters" den Ruf einer revolutionären Kunststadt

einbrachten. Er schuf ein beachtliches male-risches und graphisches Werk. Er dichtete und wollte durch seine Übersetzungen Dichter und Schriftsteller wie Goethe, Trakl oder Karl Kraus in den USA bekanntmachen.

Süddeutsche Zeitung (Munich), April 18: Die Wiederentdeckung lohnt. Sie bietet ein überraschend starkes Frühwerk, das Elemente Kandinskys und Marcs, später Campendonks und Klees aufnimmt, ohne daß diese Einflüsse einen peinlich epigo-nalen Eindruck hinterlassen. . . . Immer wieder tauchen in seinen Bildern aktive Harlekin- und in sich versunkene Pierrotfiguren auf. Und zunehmend beschäftigt ihn das Spirituelle. Seine Suche nach einer höheren Realität, verkörpert die kühle, gleichsam ins Sphärische erhobenen "Sommernacht" von 1913 mit ihren geisterhaft bleichen Gestalten."

Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, May 13: Der Maler Albaert Bloch, aus einer Familie deutsch-böhmischer Juden stammend, die im neunzehnten Jahrhundert in die Vereinigten Staaten ausgewandert waren, ist in Amerika kaum, in Deutschland wenig bekannt; ob man ihn in Tschechien wahrnimmt, bleibt dahingestellt. Dabei zählte er zu den Gründungsmitgliedern des "Blauen Reiters", nahm an allen wichtigen Aktivitäten der Gruppe teil, war an 17 Ausstellungen von Herwarth Waldens "Sturm"-Galerie zu Berlin beteiligt, wurde gesammelt—und vergessen. . . . Auf dem Weg der



MUNICH SKETCHES

Kulturkritik war Bloch von Karl Kraus gebracht worden, der zur Identifikationsfigur seiner zweiten Lebenshälfte wurde. Er verehrte ihn wie einen Heiligen, kaufte alle Nummern der Zeitschrift "Die Fackel" zusammen, er korrespondierte mit Kraus-Freunden und -Fans und übersetzte ihn—darunter lange Passagen aus den "Letzten Tagen der Menschheit"—ins Englische. überhaupt gehört die Beschäftigung mit Literatur zu den wesentlichen Tätigkeiten Blochs in Amerika. Er war ein glänzender Übersetzer deutscher Lyrik, von Goethe bis Trakl, und schrieb selbst Gedichte und Essays. . . . Alles im allem ist dieser hochtalentierte Mann mehr als ein skurriler Nischenkünstler die Beschäftigung mit ihm verspricht noch manche Überraschungen.

Neue Zürcher Zeitung, July 2: Neben den Bildern, die vor allem dem

vergessenen "Blauen Reiter" gewidmet sind, aber auch die frühen Karikaturen und sein Spätwerk in Auszügen dokumentieren, ist vor allem der Katalog nicht nur durch seine Aufsätze, sondern vor allem durch die erstmals veröffentlichte Korrespondenz eine Fundgrube. Ein begleitender Essayband würdigt das künstlerische und literarische Gesamtwerk Blochs.

The Philadelphia Inquirer, October 17, 1997: Now [Bloch's] work has been resurrected through an exhibition organized by the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City and the Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus in Munich. The show of 30 paintings

and 30 works on paper has come to the Delaware Art Museum in Wilmington, its final venue. . . . The exhibition does reveal that in his Munich phase Bloch readily absorbed the ideas of the Munich avant-garde, especially those of Marc and Kandinsky. Their influence is manifest in paintings called *Mountain* and *Winter* (Marc) and *Night II* (Kandinsky). . . . In the American half of his career, Bloch's immersion in this theme becomes more lugubrious and more obviously spiritual. . . . Bloch's late style is characterized by a somber palette, especially his use of white to evoke an otherworldly ambience.

Other reviews about the Bloch exhibition in Munich appeared also in Dresden, Berlin, Nürnberg, Passau, Salzburg, and Konstanz.

In spring 1998 the Max Kade Center expects to obtain copies of **Albert Bloch's** writings and correspondence. In this way the center will become an important resource in the United States for research on this enigmatic artist, author, and translator.



Ariadne Press in California has accepted **Werner Mohr's** book on Albert Bloch and Karl Kraus for publication. This book is based on Mohr's KU dissertation of 1995: "Albert Bloch as Caricaturist, Social Critic, and Authorized Translator of Karl Kraus in America."



The **Alexander von Humboldt-Stiftung** has agreed to support the efforts of the Max Kade Center to extend its scope to exile studies by purchasing books needed. The foundation has responded to our request by ordering a set of basic reference works, and it has agreed to help with future needs.



Gert Sautermeister of the University of Bremen will be our Max

Kade visiting professor during the spring semester 1998. He will give a public lecture on a topic yet to be announced. Professor Sautermeister has published numerous books on authors and works from the classical period of German literature to the present. He will be offering a course on exile literature and a seminar on Friedrich Schiller.



KU's **Second Annual Graduate Student Colloquium for German** will take place on February 20-21 in the Max Kade Center. The talks will include topics such as "Wilde Frauen," "Exile Studies and Literature," "Resisting the Nature Cliché," and "Dysfunctionalism and Madness."



Dr. Jochen Stollberg (Frankfurt Library) will speak about the holdings on exile literature and research possibilities. The date of his lecture has been set tentatively for April 22.



Working in the context of the Center's research program on German-American settlement dialects in

this region, **William Ballew** recently completed his dissertation on "The Low German Dialect of Concordia, Missouri." Concordia and neighboring Cole Camp in western Missouri have attempted in recent years to revive their Low German language use through annual "theatre" performances in the dialect. Ballew's study focuses on the factors leading to the death of Low German in Concordia.



With funding from the Bukowina-Institute in Ausburg, Germany, and the Bukovina Society of the Americas in Ellis, Kansas, the Max Kade Center recently published a collection of essays entitled *German Emigration from Bukovina to the Americas*, edited by **William Keel** (KU) and **Kurt Rein** (University of Munich), 1994 Max Kade visiting professor at KU. The book examines the emigration, settlement history in Kansas and other states, Canada and Brazil, as well as the culture and dialects of German-speaking immigrants from the Austrian imperial crownland known as Bukovina (now divided between Rumania and Ukraine).

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