

A Place Revisited: Editor's Preface

When, in 1991, I revisited my hometown Halberstadt after a 35 years' absence, the impact was of a kind to make me wish for seeing the motif or theme of revisiting a place reflected in literature. The result was a *Connotations* symposium in Halberstadt, in July 1997, where scholarly talks and discussions on *A Place Revisited* were shaded off by the *genius loci* of a place none of the participants had ever thought to either visit or revisit.

My coeditors and I have agreed to present the Halberstadt talks not in a body but successively in three issues of *Connotations*. Otherwise we should deviate from our programme of mixing *Articles* and *Discussion* and, moreover, from keeping our promise to publish the contributions we have accepted for publication as soon as possible. It is hoped that, in the three instalments of talks on *A Place Revisited*, the chronological order of the symposium can still be grasped.

When it comes to the talks themselves readers will find that the authors have responded to the overall thematic question in different ways: to some of them the revisited place is a *locus* of memory, to others "revisiting" means a writer's focusing on a certain place and, last but not least, the revisiting of a place is found and discussed as a thematic unit in a literary work. This last aspect is what I had originally thought of, only to realize, by way of bibliographical research, that the motif or theme is as good as critically unexplored; it is generally taken to mean a critic's turning (again) to a literary subject.

The theme *A Place Revisited*, which is certainly of poignant relevance in the present world, is, strangely enough, far from being exhausted in literary criticism. It is a challenge in more than one respect. If, therefore,

readers take issue with the absence of critical debate (and I could not agree with them more) they are invited to come and fill the gap by submitting responses or any other kind of contribution germane to the subject. We did, of course, discuss the talks there and then in the *Gleimhaus*, even so much so, that no one volunteered for taking notes and writing a report instead of participating. It goes without saying that, for such a policy, I do not claim our readers' approval, but hope that they will understand.

Inge Leimberg