

UNDER THE NEOMOON

Wolfgang Hilbig, translated from German by Isabel Fargo Cole

1. Stories in *Under the Neomoon*'s first section portray a wild natural world: riotous grass thickets, encroaching forests, an overgrown orchard. What is the narrator's relationship to nature? What does nature symbolize to him, and how does it contrast with the other spaces in which he finds himself?
2. The narrator comments, "Money is a surrogate for language" (pg. 48). How does the narrator's relationship to language change throughout these stories? According to him, what causes language to lose its meaning?
3. How does the narrator play with perspective, especially through pronouns? What impact does a change in perspective have on a given story?
4. How do the stories in *Under the Neomoon*'s second section represent being imprisoned? What narrative strategies do they use to show the effects of confinement on the mind and on language?
5. Compare the figure of the stoker in "The Workers: An Essai" and "The Stoker." Is the stoker an analogue for the narrator/writer? What are the stoker's qualities and what do they communicate about the narrator?
6. "Why was he still putting up with this?" the stoker asks of his poor work conditions (pg. 138). What is the narrator's view of work in these stories? What structural conditions about work does he draw attention to?
7. "Bungalows," "The Precinct of Peace," and "The Stoker" contain racialized stereotypes of Asians, Africans, and Arabs. How do the stories position racialization within the context of East Germany and twentieth-century politics? What connection do they suggest between racialized or subaltern others and political conflict?
8. The narrator seeks to "resist the linguistic processes that seek to dispose of [him]" (pg.79). How does language dispose of people? How do these stories resist disposal, and what linguistic strategies do they use to do so?



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