

1976

Volker Gransow: Kulturpolitik in der DDR

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Recommended Citation

Ritmeester, Tineke and LaBahn, Kay (1976) "Volker Gransow: Kulturpolitik in der DDR," *GDR Bulletin*: Vol. 2: Iss. 4. <https://doi.org/10.4148/gdrb.v2i4.365>

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Kraefft, Hans-Joachim: Wegzeichen. Rudolstadt: Greifenvlg., 1976.

In einer schlanken, konzentrierten Erzählung gestaltet der Autor das Leiden eines sensiblen Künstlers an seiner spätbürgerlichen Umwelt.

Loest, Erich: Die Oma im Schlauchboot. Berlin: Eulenspiegelvlg., 1976

Diese Kurzgeschichten sind pointiert in Dialog und Situation, ihr Witz resultiert aus der genauen Beobachtung konkreter Vorgänge und gesellschaftlicher Verhaltensweisen.

Schulz, Jo: Laufen ohne Vordermann. Vlg. Nation, 1976.

In seinem ersten Roman erzählt der Autor das Schicksal des Sebastian Bratt, der nationalistisch erzogen, hitlergläubig in den Krieg marschiert, plötzlich auf sich allein gestellt, ohne Vordermann sich selbst entscheiden muß.

Stade, Martin: Siebzehn schöne Fische. Berlin: Buchvlg. Der Morgen, 1976.

Muß Alter Einsamkeit bedeuten? Gibt es --wenn schon nicht einen Generationskonflikt--dennoch Generationsunterschiede? Gefährdet die fortschreitende Technisierung die Umwelt des Menschen? Martin Stade stellt in seinem neuen Buch Fragen und in Frage.

BOOK REVIEWS

New German Critique No. 9 Fall 1976

The current issue of New German Critique includes several pieces of special interest to those concerned with GDR literature and cultural policies. Bulletin readers should be aware of two essays in particular. First, in "Vacation from Reality," Heinrich Mohr discusses Rolf Schneider's novel Die Reise nach Jaroslaw (VEB Hinstorff in 1974 and Luchterhand, 1975) within the context of the controversy stirred up by Ulrich Plenzdorf's Die neuen Leiden des jungen W. While Mohr does examine the structure of the Schneider novel and the literary connections to Plenzdorf, the key to his argument lies in the

social message he is able to distill: individual psychological rebellion coupled with the retention of the status quo. The issue also contains an interview with Schneider by Peter Hutchinson.

The second essay of major interest is Jay Rosellini's report, "Poetry and Criticism in the German Democratic Republic: the 1972 Discussion in the Context of Cultural Policy." Rosellini sees the discussion which took place in the pages of Sinn und Form and Weimarer Beiträge as part of "an ongoing conflict of views concerning the dialectics of revolutionary development in the GDR." He outlines the opposition between the "subjectivist" or "philosophical" poets and their more orthodox critics. While the debate revolved generally around issues of form, it is significant, according to Rosellini, as an indicator of a potential debate over politically charged questions of content.

The issue also includes a translation of a Brecht poem "the Rearing of Millet" with a short introduction by David Bathrick. There is also a series of articles (including an interview) on Ernst Bloch.

Gransow, Volker: Kulturpolitik in der DDR, Volker Spiess Vlg., (West) Berlin, 1975
Gransow's Kulturpolitik in der DDR provides its readers with a fairly comprehensive and up to date introduction to the history of the GDR and its cultural policy. By presenting his material in an almost-chronological fashion, Gransow makes it particularly accessible to those who have had no previous exposure to the GDR. The book is divided into four sections. Part A contains a survey of pluralistic, methodologic paradigms of socialist societies, which Gransow rejects in favor of his own paradigm drawn from scientific socialism. Part B contains a much needed and clear analysis of the Marxist concept of culture, which is indispensable for an understanding of socialist cultural policy in the GDR. Gransow shows the historical development and modification of this concept of culture, drawing heavily from Marx, Lenin and, to some extent, Stalin. Mao's concept of cultural revolution is explicitly rejected as irrelevant and relegated to a convenient footnote. Part C constitutes the main body of the book and deal with the history proper of the GDR since its inception. GDR cultural policy is looked at through a close analysis of its institutionalization. In part D, the author takes a closer

look at cultural programs within the context of the factories. This part also contains an interesting survey of GDR foreign policy, particular in relation to the Bundesrepublik.

It is part C of this book that proves to be the most problematic. In spite of an obvious attempt to seem objective, Gransow's approach accepts and reiterates the party line on Kulturpolitik as articulated at the VIII. Party Congress. We believe that if this book was intended for the newcomer to Kulturpolitik in the GDR, then a more critical attitude on Gransow's part would have been appropriate and would certainly not have undermined his approach; on the contrary, it would have strengthened it.

The critical reader is left with the suspicious feeling that Gransow purposely does not incorporate certain historical turning-points which have had a direct impact on the course of cultural policy in the GDR. Should not any author on the history of the GDR, who implies objectivity, at least render the events of Budapest '56 and Prague '68? True, Gransow does mention the workers' rebellion of June 17th, 1953, in the GDR, but, here too, the reader is left with the uncomfortable feeling that Gransow does not critically assess internal factors leading to this event and chooses to focus more on external elements. Even though a plethora of background information tends to sometimes surprise and often confuse the reader, this book does provide an invaluable survey of GDR Kulturpolitik. But, despite the excessive use of footnotes (more than 800 in 130 pages) many questions remain unanswered. For instance, in connection with his discussion of the Harich group, Gransow refers to the "definitive" critique of Harich's position made by Rugard O. Gropp, but the reader is never told who Gropp is nor what his function might have been. Nor does Gransow deal well with one of the overriding questions of Kulturpolitik in the GDR, namely, why some authors are able to criticize the system while others are ostracized or even imprisoned. Indeed, one begins to question where Kulturpolitik leaves off and Partei politik begins.

For the reader who wants an introduction to the relationship between culture and politics in the GDR, Gransow offers a starting point, but one which must be read critically and which above all, must be supplemented by further reading on this topic. For those who have already acquired a more sophisticated knowledge of the GDR this book has very little to offer that is new.

Dialog und Kontroverse mit Georg Lukacs.
Hrsg. von Werner Mittenzwei. Leipzig:
Reclam, 1975. 475 Seiten.

Die in diesem Bande versammelten Aufsätze über Georg Lukács und sein Verhältnis zu deutschen marxistischen Schriftsellern und Theoretikern verdient die besondere Beachtung aller Forscher, die an der Entwicklung der DDR interessiert sind. Fast zwanzig Jahre nach der Eliminierung des ungarischen Philosophen aus dem Kanon der ostdeutschen Literaturwissenschaft sucht man erneut die Auseinandersetzung mit ihm. Stehen wir vor einer Wiedergutmachung oder gar vor einer Lukács-Renaissance, wie sie in Amerika zu bemerken ist? Zweifellos besteht der Wunsch, nach vielen Jahren des Schweigens dem Mann Gerechtigkeit widerfahren zu lassen, dem die Literaturwissenschaft der DDR mehr verdankte als irgend einem anderen Forscher. Denn Georg Lukács' Schriften waren es, an denen sich die Literaturkritik zwischen 1947 und 1956 orientierte. Sein Konzept der deutschen Literaturgeschichte war das Gerüst für die ersten Gehversuche, seine Realismustheorie der Rückhalt für die Bewertung von Geschichte und Gegenwart. Nach der Ungarischen Rebellion rechnete man mit ihm ab und zieh ihn des Revisionismus. Vergleicht man die 1975 vorgelegten Aufsätze mit der älteren Kritik, so fällt der Unterschied sogleich ins Auge: Im Vordergrund steht nicht mehr die Absicht, Lukács' Fehler nachzuweisen, sondern das Bemühen, sein Werk aus der geschichtlichen Gesamtsituation zu verstehen und zu würdigen, auch dort, wo es problematische Folgen gehabt hat. Ein Stück marxistischer Theoriesgeschichte, das lange verschüttet gewesen war, wird mit Sorgfalt und Sachverstand aufgearbeitet. Bemerkenswert ist, daß die Mitarbeiter bewußt auf eine ideologische Abstimmung verzichtet haben, so daß widersprüchliche Beurteilungen der gleichen Sachverhalte stehen geblieben sind. Abgesehen von der ausführlichen Einführung des Herausgebers, die Lukács' Entwicklung von seinen idealistischen Frühschriften bis zu seiner späten marxistischen Ästhetik verfolgt (und dabei zum ersten Mal auch offen seine Bedeutung für die DDR zur Sprache bringt), ist der Zugang der verschiedenen Beiträge indirekt: Man rekonstruiert die Gespräche und Auseinandersetzungen von Lukacs mit anderen führenden marxistischen Theoretikern und Künstlern. Diese kontrastierende Verfahren erweist