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Werner Mittenzwei: Der Realismus-Streit um Brecht. Grundriß der Brecht-Rezeption in der DDR 1945-1975

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listen und antikapitalistisch gesonnene BRD-Bürger aller Couleurs wird dem Bürger, soweit er Leser und Rezipient der schönen Literatur und sich auf literarische Feierabendbesinnlichkeit einzuschränken gewillt ist, der Zugang zur Literatur aus dem unfreien, d. h. sozialistischen Teil Deutschlands behördlicherseits einstweilen noch nicht versperrt. Heißt das, daß man sich der durchschlagenden Wirkungslosigkeit von Literatur so sicher ist? Oder sollen gar die literarischen Importe des Klassenfeindes einem herrschaftsfreien Diskurs kulturräsonnierender Privatleute zugeführt werden mit dem Zwecke, der allseitig entwickelten mündigen Persönlichkeit zum historischen Durchbruch zu verhelfen? All diesen zum Thema gehörigen und gewiß höchst delikaten Fragen geht die vorliegende Studie von Manfred Behn (leider) nicht nach. Unter "Rezeption" versteht sie ausschließlich die literaturwissenschaftliche, literaturkritische und (in begrenzterem Umfang) publizistische Aufnahme, Verarbeitung und Wertung der epischen DDR-Literatur innerhalb des kulturellen Kommunikationsraums der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Innerhalb dieser Grenzen jedoch leistet Behn Pionierarbeit: seine chronologische Rekonstruktion der literaturwissenschaftlichen Rezeption der DDR-Prosa in der BRD basiert auf einer profunden Kenntnis und gründlichen Aufarbeitung der Rezeptionsdokumente, die indes nicht als wertfreie Bruchstücke einer nicht weiter hinterfragten historischen Rezeptionsfaktizität präsentiert werden. Vielmehr hat Behns Untersuchung den Zuschnitt einer methodischen Metakritik, die, indem sie ihre Gegenstände rekonstruiert und beschreibt, zugleich deren Konstitutionsbedingungen und Erkenntnisgrenzen reflektiert-- und weitgehend (mit gewichtigen Argumenten) kritisiert. Dieser Anspruch wird indes nicht in allen Teilen der Arbeit mit gleicher Überzeugungskraft eingelöst. Obwohl Behns Studie die "literarhistorischen und gesellschaftstheoretischen Grundlegungen der Rezeption der neueren DDR-Literatur thematisiert, erweist sich der Gegenstand als wohl doch zu komplex, als daß er sich hinreichend auf 174 Manuskriptseiten darstellen ließe. Weiterführende Spezialuntersuchungen (insbesondere auch zur Rezeption des "Bitterfelder Wegs") bleiben insofern nach wie vor ein Desiderat der einschlägigen Forschung. Auch die zeitgeschichtliche Vermittlung der dargestellten literaturwissenschaftlichen Rezeption mit den gesellschaftlichen und ideologischen Rahmenbedingungen, innerhalb derer sie stattfand--wäre

noch differenzierter zu erschließen. Wer immer aber--als Germanist, Lehrer, Publizist oder Studierender--die lohnende Mühe nicht scheut, sich gründlicher mit der Rezeption von DDR-Literatur in der BRD zu beschäftigen, wird auf die Lektüre von Behns Buch nicht verzichten können. Eine informative und instruktive Untersuchung, die, obgleich keine Einführung, auch für den Lesbar ist, der einen ersten Zugang zum Thema sucht.

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Der Realismus-Streit um Brecht: Grundriß der Brecht-Rezeption in der DDR 1945-1975. By Werner Mittenzwei. Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau-Verlag, 1978. 211 pages.

The latest installment in Werner Mittenzwei's continuing debate with the phenomenon of Brecht is a thoughtful and informative book. It was written not only to trace in detail the stages through which the GDR response to Brecht has moved, but also to shed light on what its author considers to be some of the fundamental changes in GDR literature during the 1970's. The first enterprise is rather straightforward and descriptive, the second more theoretical and analytic. Given that Brecht had spent so many years in exile, it is perhaps not remarkable that relatively little was known of him in Germany after World War II. Paradoxically, it was primarily the Soviet cultural officers Dymshitz and Fradkin who called the Germans' attention to their compatriot during those years. Apart from Lukács' well known 1945 charge of formalism, there was little debate until 1948 and 1949, when a series of articles and a special Brecht issue of "Sinn und Form" appeared. This initial discussion centered around the nature of the epic theater and the problem of decadence, both exemplified on the great success of Mutter Courage: experimentation designed to serve the progress of socialist art became largely misunderstood and suspect. This phase was followed by another great lull until the mid-50's, when the polemic turned against the bourgeois-idealistic and existentialist interpretation of Brecht. However, it was only toward the late fifties that Brecht's aesthetics gained determined supporters among the ranks of Marxist critics. Slowly Brecht came to be seen as the center of the development of socialist realism rather than as an outsider.

A particular merit of this part of Mittenzwei's discussion is the attention he pays to locating Brecht's work in the shifting sands of the definitions of realism current in the sixties--from Goraudy's loosely-knit conception to Lukács' reflection theory, which Brecht rejects in favor of Lenin's more active reflection theory. The major project of the seventies has been to come to terms with Brecht in the context of the classical tradition: Mittenzwei concludes that Brecht's category of productivity is the materialist reversal of the idealistic conception of the development of personality in Weimar classicism (148).

In the meantime, many writers, like Peter Hacks, Heiner Müller, and Helmut Baierl, have turned their backs on Brecht. Mittenzwei sees the "Brecht-Müdigkeit" (152) of the seventies as an aspect of the aesthetic emancipation of GDR literature. Several changes become apparent in the seventies: the task of art is thought less to be directly and practically effective. Opposed to Brecht's notorious trust in science, interest is now directed to the "durchschlagende Kraft des Ästhetischen" (156). And the struggle between socialist modernism and the tradition, which reached its apex in the Brecht-Lukács debate and for decades fired the discussion on realism, has been replaced by other interests. Mittenzwei demonstrates the new aesthetic considerations that are demanded by the changed social situation. The development leads from hesitation, through acceptance, and ultimately to a complete questioning of Brecht's artistic solutions, but constant questioning of the given was one of the methods most dear to the dialectical theory and practice of Brecht himself.

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Literatur der USA im Überblick. Von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart. By Karl-Heinz Schönfelder and Karl-Heinz Wirzberger. Leipzig: Philipp Reclam jun., Verlag. 1977. 547 pages.

This volume offers an account of American literary history. It omits footnotes and references to secondary sources and intends to serve as an introduction for the general reader to the vast subject of American literature. Schönfelder is the author of the first five chapters which cover the earliest periods

of American literature from the pre-colonial and colonial times to the end of the First World War (pp.7-312). The remaining five chapters and brief afterword were written by Wirzberger (pp.313-512). The afterword briefly summarizes the major trends in modern American literature. The bibliography is, of course, selective rather than comprehensive, but it includes Soviet sources which are too frequently and often unjustly neglected by western scholarship.

The Marxist-Leninist approach provides the narrative background for a narration of the social and economic history of the USA and offers the general quality distinction between "progressive" and "non-progressive" authors, works, or trends. The literature of the earlier periods is treated in considerable detail due largely to the relative paucity of writers. The authors of this volume are at pains to provide quantitatively equal coverage of the periods treated by each of them. This conforms to the strict historicism of a Marxist-Leninist literary history, but in so short a volume it at times leads to overly brief treatments of significant modern authors such as Hemingway, in favor of relatively lengthy treatments of writers like William Dean Howells or Frank Norris. This inequality in the treatment of individual writers does not, however, reflect a political attitude. It is the result of two authors being accorded an equal number of lines to deal with an equal number of American writers. On the whole, both authors have admirably coped with the restraints imposed by a one-volume history of some 300 years of literature.

Their accounts of the various directions or tendencies in American literature take particular note of the conflict between the realists and the non-realists. This is an example of reductionism and cannot be entirely the fault of the relative brevity of the volume. It reflects a somewhat formulaic approach to judgments of literary quality, even in a socio-political sense. The lack of any systematic account of the popularity of certain authors, works, or tendencies allows for some historical distortion. This is particularly true of the second half of the book in which Chapter VI (pp.416-446), entitled "Die progressive amerikanische Literatur der dreissiger bis sechziger Jahre", might lead a reader unfamiliar with American literature to believe that Abraham Polonsky, Alvah Bessie, Jack Conroy, Philipp Bonosky, Howard Fast et