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## Johannes Bobrowski: Literarisches Klima. Ganz neue Xenien, doppelte Ausführung

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articles which appeared in the original edition. The result is that the articles become more numerous as we proceed towards the present, thus tacitly reflecting the philosophy that the more recent the time period the more valid its essays in providing an overview of the "most important and most interesting" aspects of the history of GDR literary criticism. Such a methodology is surely spurious. In fact, the combination of elimination and expansion which produced this second edition may prove to be its greatest drawback. However, the chief editor's plans to publish supplementary volumes to cover each subsequent decade of GDR literary criticism is a welcome future alternative.

In deciding to include an era of criticism actually predating the formation of the GDR the editors provide us with a helpful glimpse at the work of those (e.g., Becher, Brecht, Seghers, F. Wolf, A. Zweig) who were most actively preparing the ground for a viable post-war German socialist literature. One is struck by the predominance in this section, and indeed throughout the collection, of criticism by the artists themselves, which sufficiently attests to the significant role they have played in defining, interpreting and evaluating literary production in the GDR.

The inclusion of articles dealing with controversies is one of the anthology's most interesting aspects. Such issues as the Brecht/Lukács debate, the epic/dramatic controversy in drama, the discussion of Formalism, the lyric debate, and the deliberations on Socialist satire are all brought to the fore. However, one misses the voice of such faded luminaries as Huchel, and the single article focusing attention on the most sensational, if not most controversial, work of the early 70's (Plenzdorf's Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.) is all too skimpy. There is no discussion of the innovative and high-quality dramaturgical efforts of Heiner Müller. Indeed, the entire range of essays does not devote much print to drama except in the earlier years.

The programmatic statements interspersed throughout the collection are welcome inclusions in that they serve as reminders of the cultural-political climate of the time. Speeches by Pieck and Ulbricht are offered, but any statement by Honecker, such as his address before the Eighth Party Congress in 1971, is curiously missing.

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Literarisches Klima: Ganz neue Xenien, doppelte Ausführung. By Johannes Bobrowski. Ed. by Gerhard Rostin, Postscript by Bernd Leistner, Illustrations by Klaus Ensikat. Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1978. 110 pp.

Eric Trunz's note, in the Hamburg Goethe edition, to the 33rd Xenie provides a good picture of the general tone of Goethe's epigrams: "Man vermutet, 'K' sei Kosegarten und der 'Tadler' sei Tieck, doch das ist unsicher, und wieder ist alles zugleich ins Allgemeine erhoben" (I, 520). Future editors will rarely be forced to make similar statements about Bobrowski's "ganz neue Xenien". Although the personal references, to be sure, usually have general as well as specific implications, they leave little to the imagination of the reader who is familiar with the German literary scene. But if many of the references are clear now, that may not be the case in the near future. The first annotated Bobrowski edition will require a lot of space to explain lines like "Unter geteiltem Himmel tritt Ole Bienkopp die Spur der / Steine im Herbstrauch..." ("Neue Erfolgstitel," 30) and "Ganz in Weiß kommt Gaspard, am Rüsseltier-Chronometer / rückt der Zeiger..." ("Hollerer," 73), to cite but two of dozens of examples. These and other Xenien will lose their force with time, as the figures they address pass into history, including perhaps even one of my favorites, "Die Zukunft der Gruppe 47" (80). But now they are lively and current and downright fun to read.

As the examples quoted above indicate, the title of the collection aptly describes the subject of most of the poems. A few are directed at GDR writers (Walter Victor seems to be Bobrowski's favorite), but most refer to the Group (or non-group--see p. 60) 47 and its members. In addition, some deal with the literary tradition of Hamann, Herder, and Goethe. Bobrowski is in many respects a traditionalist, and his peculiar blend of traditionalism and modernity is often reflected in the poems. The form itself is one example. The elegiac couplet is an old form, and Bobrowski follows the rules. But he doesn't imitate Goethe's language, and interesting tensions

develop between the traditional structure, the often choppy rhythm (in several instances a word is split between two lines), the contemporary subject matter, and the author's unique blend of traditional values and progressive social concerns. For the most part, even when the invective seems spirited, the poems are ultimately light and good-natured. Occasionally a very serious theme emerges, accompanied by an apparent softening of tone, as in "Hochhuths Stellvertreter"(44).

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