Andreas Albrecht: Entfernung zu einem Ort. Gedichte

Thomas Di Napoli
Louisiana State University

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Contextually the poems deal alternately with the common folk and their lives -- "Vollständiger Bericht über Brigade Kegeln" and "Betriebsausflug Oranienbaum 25.5.1978" -- or with the famous figures of world history, particularly its artists and intellectuals: Bach, Van Gogh, Nietzsche, and Brecht. The author resists to such juxtaposition in an effort to show that everyone contributes in a unique and meaningful way to society's progress: "Allesamt baum was fürs nächste Jahrtausend" (18).

The collection's most telling flaw is its lack of precision and of structure in both individual poems and as a whole. Almost all the poems are written in an effusive unrhymed free verse and contain all-too-clever metaphors, which simply do not work -- "Pubertierende Braunkohlenindustrie" (11) being just one example. Only in Section II has the author shown himself to be a more consummate poet, fully conscious of form and its relationship to content, as for instance, in the poem "Platonische Liebe" (36), where the spacing of the verses visually renders the poem's theme.

Andreas Albrecht initially made a name for himself as a writer of prose with the enthusiastic reception in 1981 of a collection of stories entitled Unter Umständen die Liebe. Unfortunately his first attempt at poetry, Entfernung zu einem Ort, is less impressive. Despite a rather general, laudatory afterword by Rudo Malschert, which seeks to place Albrecht firmly in the fold of younger GDR poets artistically committed to the state and its people, the work fails as pure poetry. There are 83 poems in the collection, grouped into five roughly equal sections, the titles of which refer to aspects of an imaginary train journey undertaken by the author: "In Richtung der Gleise," "Platonische Liebe," "Stadt auf freiem Feld," and "Unvollendete Kanäle." The cycle opens with the description of an apparent occurrence -- "Ziemlicher Vorgang" -- in which Albrecht, referring to himself by name, likens himself to the vagabonds of old, hitchhiking rides on passing trains, uncertain of their destinations, and sure only of their desire to travel and to experience.

In the poems which follow it is the author's imagination which becomes the vehicle for a dizzying journey to people and places, both near and far. The train itself recurs often as the central image of movement forward through time and space, enabling one to ride as far and as fast as one can, until the journey's end: "Im Februar/ Mit der Eisenbahn fahren hell beleuchtet zur Nacht/ Hinter die Sterne wo der Zug ein letztes Mal hält/ Mit der Eisenbahn fahren, über Erde hinaus/ Bis der Schaffner die Laterne einschaltet" (71).