

1987

## Ute Brandes: Zitat und Montage in der neueren DDR-Prosa

Marilyn Sibley Fries  
*University of Michigan*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://newprairiepress.org/gdr>



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/).

---

### Recommended Citation

Sibley Fries, Marilyn (1987) "Ute Brandes: Zitat und Montage in der neueren DDR-Prosa," *GDR Bulletin*: Vol. 13: Iss. 2. <https://doi.org/10.4148/gdrb.v13i2.831>

This Review is brought to you for free and open access by New Prairie Press. It has been accepted for inclusion in *GDR Bulletin* by an authorized administrator of New Prairie Press. For more information, please contact [cads@k-state.edu](mailto:cads@k-state.edu).

scheiden, was für diese Menschen auf dem Theater notwendig ist." (S. 68, Hervorhebungen vom Rezensenten).

Gegen Ende des Buches wird die Frage angeschnitten, warum diese Meisterschüler zum Film gegangen sind. Eine der Antworten ist: "in der Brechtschen Technik ist schon soviel Film, vor allem Montage ... insofern war es kein Abschied." Vergleichbares gilt für das vorliegende Buch selbst. Es ist auf unaufdringliche Weise montiert: da sind die autobiographischen Berichte von 1950, die Tagebücher von 1953, Notate und Szenenfotos zum Urfaust, Gedichte, ein Notenblatt mit Korrekturen von Brecht, ein Briefwechsel zwischen Helene Weigel und Wilhelm Pieck, zeitgenössische Rezensionen. All das ist eingestreut in Gesprächsprotokolle, denen (absichtsvoll?) jede Überheblichkeit fehlt.

Volker Gransow  
Berkeley

Zitat und Montage in der neueren DDR-Prosa. By Ute Brandes. Frankfurt am Main, Bern, New York: Peter Lang, 1984. (Forschungen zur Literatur- und Kulturgeschichte, Vol. 3). 227 pp.

Through its careful development of a theoretical typological scale and structural analysis of six recent works of GDR fiction, Brandes's volume underscores, while it does not focus on, GDR literature's radical departure from realistic narrative within the past two decades. The value of this book for research on GDR literature lies, however, not in the illustration of the already known, but rather in the methodology used to delineate the variations in one particularly prominent technique employed by those authors for whom text and world demand a greater differentiation than that allowed by socialist realism.

The questions raised here have to do with subversion--sometimes political, always

made possible by the introduction of quotation and montage as literary devices. Quotation, used to varying degrees by the several authors discussed, is no longer the tool of the narrator/author with which he/she flaunts Bildung and lends authority to the text; montage reflects (as the modernist avant garde recognized early on) the non-structure of the world in the fragmented structure of text. In one respect, Brandes's investigation demonstrates the extent to which GDR fiction has caught up with developments and devices familiar in Western literature since the early twentieth century; having finally overcome the suspicion of formalism and modernism, these authors are in a position, if not to recreate the wheel, then certainly to jump onto it. The belatedness of this aesthetic development does not, to be sure, make their works or the discussion of them any less interesting--I appreciate this book immensely.

Brandes's thesis is based chiefly on theories developed by Herman Meyer and Volker Klotz. Her particular investigatory strategy involves, however, a concentration on the "Erzähler als Schlüsselfigur in einem fiktiven Text" (13). Klotz's typology provides the boundaries of her scale: quotation, "die Tätigkeit des Erzählers," stands at one extreme, while montage, "die Tätigkeit des Autors," occupies the other. Quotation remains generally a narrative function within an organic and logical text; montage strives "dem Leser einen Denkimpuls zu geben, der weit über die Lektüre des einen Textes hinausgeht" (15). Together they function as "borrowed language," and Brandes will argue that this element permits a far more reliable indication of the nature of the relationship between individual and world than pronouncements made by narrators or fictional characters.

The textual analysis of the various works arranges them according to these extremes, and locates them in terms of their position on this

scale. Erich Köhler's Hinter den Bergen (1976), stands "(i)n seiner einperspektivischen Gestalt, in der Totalität seiner fiktiven Welt...als Eckpunkt in unserer Typologie" (57). Christa Wolf's Kein Ort. Nirgends (1979) forfeits the unilateral perspective evident in Köhler, and creates a referential narrative that confuses the narrative position ("Wer spricht?"). The quotations in this work have a double function: "als biographische Belege aus dem Leben der Dichter machen sie die historischen Gestalten... zu Bezugspunkten für Vergleiche zwischen zwei Zeitaltern" (95). The narrator's occasional loss of control, when "er" sich mit (den Dichterfiguren) identifiziert und von den Gesprächen und Zitaten gesteuert wird, anstatt sie selbst zu steuern" (97), does not, finally, undermine the "reibungslöse Ablauf der Handlung" (97); this tension in the narrator's function permits the temporal ambiguity of the work, which can, nevertheless, still be understood as an historical narrative that possesses a cohesive narrative structure and purpose.

This possibility no longer exists in Plenzdorf's Die neuen Leiden des jungen W. (1972), which operates with four "Informationsebenen," and in which no pains are taken to create smooth transitions between narrative and quotation. Brandes identifies the Goethe-quotations in this work as "der eigentliche Schlüssel für die Persönlichkeit des jungen Edgar" (112); they function both as mouthpiece and as actual voice and are, as such, the hidden articulation of the younger Edgar's psyche. The literary quotation thus provides "(d)ie eigentliche Aussage über das Leben und subjektive Denken des Helden" (120). Brandes's structural analysis of the function of quotation in this text permits a new and extremely convincing reading, particularly as regards the interpretation of Edgar's death. In her typology, this work moves toward greater reader involvement, and the narrator's responsibility weakens gradually as the typology shifts from

GDR Bulletin, Vol. 13 [1987], Iss. 2, Art. 18

quotation to montage.

Stefan Heym's 5 Tage im Juni (1974) illustrates the transition to the montage form; the historical events (of June 1953) are documented by actual news materials set off from the fictional narrative. "Heyms...Erzähltechnik markiert eine geradezu idealtypische Mittelposition auf unserer Typenskala zwischen einsinnig organisierten Zitierweisen in der realistischen Prosa und multiperspektivischen Montageformen in den Texten der Moderne" (144). While the work is clearly a novel, it resembles a careful Protokoll of the five days in question and proclaims a clear didactic message. Brandes notes that "(Heyms) Auswahl von dokumentarischen Zeugnissen orientiert sich nicht mehr an der komplexen Realität, sondern an der beabsichtigten Wirkung des Werkganzen" (142), so that the work is closer to the traditional realist novel than to the open forms of montage technique. In reutilizing literary forms familiar already in the revolutionary-proletarian novels of the 1920s, however, Heym does leave open a critical crack. Because the documentary materials are external to the mediation and understanding of the narrator, the interpretation of the facts must be made separately by the reader.

The remaining works analyzed (Volker Braun: Unvollendete Geschichte, Plenzdorf: kein runter kein fern) demonstrate an appropriation of those literary techniques described as "'revolutionär-avantgardistisch'" (144). In producing a narrative that illustrates the fragility of language, Braun appeals to his reader for aid in resolving contradictions between the real and the ideal and in locating an unambiguous meaning. Plenzdorf, finally, by eliminating the narrator, denies any immanent gesture of communication between author and reader; the reader becomes, via the inner monologue of the central character, immediate witness to the discrepancies and contradictions between self

and world.

The scholarship of Brandes's study is unusually solid throughout; she establishes with admirable clarity the parameters of her structural approach, and is most successful in examining the several works in question within her typological frame. The whole is exemplary of the methods of structural analysis. I am impressed by the care with which Brandes attends to her methodological system, and convinced by her results. But I remain, finally, nagged by the question of how these works would fare if removed from the GDR context. Within it, they are striking and often bold, and some describe a quantum leap that is quite thrilling; but how do they compare to other works that ask similar questions and utilize similar techniques? If GDR fiction has caught up with Western (post)modernism, a corollary could also be said to be true: the alienation of the individual, the crisis of language, and the discrepancy between base and superstructure have penetrated the collective consciousness of the GDR. But I am writing myself into a paradox here--insisting on a shared universality in the contemporary human condition that is, however, idiosyncratic in its literary reflection. This is perhaps unfair to Ute Brandes, whose project clearly does not set out to address these issues, and who concludes, quite correctly, that "...die DDR-Literatur trotz dieser Öffnung zur Pluralität noch ganz sie selbst in ihren idealistisch-moralischen Aspekten (ist)" (214-215). My questions should thus be seen as testimony to the beneficial provocation of her volume rather than construed as criticism.

Marilyn Sibley Fries  
University of Michigan

Sibley Fries: Ute Brandes: Zitat und Montage in der neueren DDR-Prosa  
Kathleen J. LaBahn, Anna Seghers' Exile Literature. The Mexican Years (1941-1947). American University Studies. Series I, vol. 37. New York: Peter Lang, 1986.

Es gab einmal eine Zeit in Deutschland, in der angehende Wissenschaftler ihre Dissertationen im Privatdruck vervielfältigen ließen und den größeren wissenschaftlichen Bibliotheken zur Verfügung stellten. Ein Vorteil dieses Verfahrens war, daß sich der/die Doktorand/in nicht mit einem Verleger abzugeben brauchte, der als Geschäftsmann mit Auslagenziffern und Absatzquoten zu rechnen hat und seinen Autoren einen entsprechend hohen Druckkostenzuschuß abverlangt. Ein anderer Vorteil lag darin, daß die begrenzten Mittel der Universitätsbibliotheken nicht durch den Ankauf von zumeist krass überbewerteten Büchern strapaziert wurden.

Kathleen J. LaBahn hat 1983 an der Washington University mit einer Dissertation promoviert, die offensichtlich der vorliegenden Studie in der Lang-Reihe American University Studies zuvordere liegt. Ich kenne diese Dissertation nicht, aber man kann davon ausgehen, daß sie solide gearbeitet ist. Deutlich umrissen und klar eingegrenzt ist das Thema, durchsichtig der Aufbau, korrekt die Zitierweise und einigermaßen komplett die Bibliographie. In zwei Kapiteln wird auf die Aktivitäten der Exilanten in Mexiko eingegangen. Einzelanalysen sind Texten wie "Der Ausflug der toten Mädchen", "Das Ende" und "Die Saboteure" gewidmet. In einem gesonderten Abschnitt wird auf Anna Seghers Essays eingegangen.

Überarbeitet oder nicht - zu einem Buch, das der Exil- und Seghersforschung neue Impulse gibt, ist diese Dissertation nicht geworden. Dazu verbleiben die Textanalysen zu sehr im lästig abgesteckten Rahmen der Segher-Interpretationen. Dazu fehlt es aber auch an Archiv- und Quellenforschung. Dabei hätte sich gerade auf diesem Gebiet einiges tun lassen: So