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## John Shreve: Nur wer sich ändert, bleibt sich treu. Wolf Biermann im Westen

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Zeitlich unterschieden die Autoren in diesem Prozeß zwei Perioden: 1. eine Übergangsperiode, die mit dem Ende des Zweiten Weltkrieges einsetzt und ungefähr bis in die sechziger Jahre reicht, und 2. eine Periode der "entwickelten sozialistischen Gesellschaft," die dem Funktionsbezug zwischen Literatur und Wirklichkeit in den siebziger Jahren nachgeht und untersucht, welche neuen Ideen und Tendenzen wirksam werden und wie Literatur und Literaturtheorie die sich bietenden neuen Entwicklungsmöglichkeiten auszuwerten beginnen.

Wie das bearbeitete Material zeigt, läßt sich eine einheitliche Entwicklungslinie nicht ohne weiteres aufstellen. Dazu waren die historischen, kulturellen und wirtschaftlichen Voraussetzungen in den einzelnen Ländern zu unterschiedlich. Die Festigung der sozialistischen Gesellschaft nach 1945 verlief also nicht synchron, und nicht alle nationalen Literaturen konnten an die Leistungen der Vorkriegszeit anknüpfen und diese produktiv weiterführen.

Auch der Übergang von einer Periode zur anderen fand in den einzelnen Literaturen zur gleichen Zeit statt. In den jugoslawischen Literaturen bahnen sich neue Tendenzen bereits auch 1948 an; in der ungarischen Literatur bildet das Jahr 1956 die Zäsur. Die slowakische Literatur weist bereits sehr früh einen starken Hang zur Individualisierung auf, und L. Novomeskys Ruf nach Einheit von ästhetischem Standard und revolutionärer Bewußtheit konnte sich nach anfänglicher Ablehnung sehr bald wieder durchsetzen. In der tschechischen Literatur kann das Jahr 1968 als Zäsur zwischen den beiden Perioden angesetzt werden.

Auch im Themenbereich weisen die Literaturen der sozialistischen Länder Unterschiede auf, obwohl bei allen der Rückblick auf Krieg und Faschismus sowie der Wandel im gesellschaftlichen Gefüge im Vordergrund stehen. Bei den Tschechen erscheint als neues Motiv die Besiedlung des von den Deutschen geräumten Grenzgebietes; bei den Slowaken sind es die Bewältigung der klerikal-faschistischen Vergangenheit und der nationale Aufstand, bei den Südslawen der Kampf der Partisanen.

Die Themen der Übergangsperiode begegnen sich auch in den sechziger und siebziger Jahren, doch verbinden sich jetzt objektive soziale Probleme mit moralischen und psychologischen Konflikten. Nicht mehr die Massen oder der positive Held, sondern der zweifelnde, reflektierende Mensch, der sich seiner Verantwortung bewußt wird, stehen im Vordergrund. Die Hinwendung zum Individuellen und Emotionalen läßt sich in allen sozialistischen Literaturen nachweisen. In der UdSSR, der Tschechoslowakei, in Bulgarien und Jugoslawien kommt es zur Entfaltung des historischen Romans, doch weist dieser in jedem der Länder spezifische Ursachen und Entwicklungsmerkmale auf. In der polnischen Literatur kann man das Anwachsen der Dorfprosa beobachten. Gleichzeitig weitet sich das Spektrum des künstlerischen Verfahrens. Philosophische Reflexionen, freies Umgehen mit Zeit und Raum, lyrische Abschweifungen, kritische Analysen kennzeichnen die Werke dieser Periode. In der Literaturkritik macht sich die Tendenz zur vergleichenden Betrachtungsweise und Bewertung bemerkbar.

Die Zielsetzung des Sammelbandes war es, die Entwicklung der sozialistischen Literatur darzustellen. Diesem Prozeß wurde jedoch nicht in allen Gattungen nachgegangen. Mit Ausnahme der Krakauer Avantgarde (1945-65) gelang die Lyrik überhaupt nicht zur Darstellung. Die dramatische Literatur blieb ebenfalls unberücksichtigt, und auf die Kurzgeschichte wurde nur gelegentlich verwiesen. Über die tschechische Übergangsperiode kann sich der Leser lediglich in der Einführung informieren. Diese kritischen Bemerkungen mindern jedoch in keiner Weise den Wert des Sammelbandes, auf den Literarhistoriker und Kritiker bei der Beurteilung der neuesten Entwicklung nicht werden

verzichten können. Der gut dokumentierte und mit einem Personen- und Sachregister ausgestattete Band macht sehr deutlich, daß Politik und gesellschaftliche Veränderungen den Ruf nach künstlerischer Freiheit und ästhetischen Werten nicht zu unterdrücken vermochten.

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Sakowski, Helmut. *Wie brate ich eine Maus*. Berlin: Verlag Neues Leben, 1987. 168 pp.

Writing about the plight of an eleven-year-old coping with the imminent divorce of his parents may not be the most effective way of making a social statement, but in this book it gives rise to a host of colorful, witty, and heartening observations. The protagonist, Raoul Habenicht, aka. Gibbon Habenicht, has to repeat the fourth grade, and during the story he tries to decide how to explain this to his classmates. Although he is shuffled about, spending time with each parent and his grandparents, Raoul actually plays host to his elders, in that he appears to be more skilled at parenting them.

Stylistically, Sakowski is highly successful and convincing in letting us listen to young Raoul listen to himself talking about grownups, life, his peers and pets. Despite its intentions, the book is well beyond the conventional label of *Jugendliteratur*, since it is much more of an adult presentation than that of a child. Its homespun wisdom and vivid characters are surpassed only by the central role played by the tomcat, Munzo, for whom the title of the story was clearly intended.

Laser beams emanating from Munzo's eyes and seen in the clever illustrations that accompany the piece connect him with the protagonist, Raoul, in many fresh and intricate ways. Of all the discoveries made by Raoul as he seeks to adjust to his parents' separation, the most convincing is that nature and its animals, be they the tomcat he adopts or a wild stag that invades his grandmother's garden, are far more knowledgeable than the adults about him. The simple truths, he discovers, are the most elusive, and require intelligence and a sense of humor of any would-be observer.

Careful, loving attention is also paid to life on the farm and to the portrayal of Raoul's paternal grandparents, whom Raoul prefers to the grandparents who live in a city. Here one readily recognizes the author's familiarity with that particular milieu, a testimonial of sorts to Sakowski's works from the sixties. Farming and forestry are very much a part of the author's past. However, it seems that another theme characteristic of the author outweighs both of these--that of the liberated woman. In her quest for independence, Raoul's mother is every bit the *Frau im Mittelpunkt*, who challenges social mores and successfully withstands the pressures imposed by her own family.

This book may not be a major contribution to GDR literature, but it is a provocative and insightful tale of individuals, young and old, seeking their places in a society oftentimes not so very different from our own.

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Shreve, John. *Nur wer sich ändert, bleibt sich treu. Wolf Biermann im Westen*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1989. 230 pp.

Since November 1976 Wolf Biermann has lived in "exile" in the Federal Republic of Germany. Barred from returning to the GDR, his homeland of choice, Biermann was forced to make a life for himself in the West. John Shreve's examination of Wolf Biermann's life and works since the expatriation attempts to shed light on Biermann's activities since 1976.

Biermann, a "living legend" in the GDR, has lost much of his

appeal. Shreve points out that not much is written about him anymore:

Es ist stille geworden um Wolf Biermann. In der Tat. Er steht nicht mehr im Rampenlicht wie früher in seiner dunklen Ost-Berliner Altbauwohnung. Er wird weder verfolgt noch verboten und ist daher für die Medien weniger interessant als früher. Seinem Leben hier [in der Bundesrepublik] fehlt die Dramatik. Es ist heute schwerer Wolf Biermann einzuordnen. Er ist keine Legende mehr.

The one-time East German dissident has no similar role to play in the West. Despite his exile, however, Biermann did indeed find much about which to write. He has produced eight records and three books, each of which Shreve examines: *Trotz alledem* (1978), *Hälfte des Lebens* (1979), *Eins in die Fresse, mein Herzblatt* (1980), *Wir müssen vor Hoffnung verrückt sein* (1982), *Im Hamburger Federbett* (1983), *Die Welt ist schön* (1985), *Seelengeld* (1986), and *VEB-volkseigener Biermann* (1988) as well as the books *Preußischer Ikarus* (1978), *Verdrehte Welt--das seh' ich gerne* (1982), and *Affenfels und Barrikade* (1986).

Shreve's book will interest scholars of contemporary literature and culture, particularly those studying the GDR. As a critical work, the book contains one flaw: Shreve's discussions of the records often resemble reviews, detracting from the interpretative flow of the work. This tendency is particularly disturbing in the analysis of *Im Hamburger Federbett*. He evaluates the songs without considering their political function. This reviewer would prefer more analysis of the works and a better presentation of the concept of Wolf Biermann as a Westerner.

This flaw does not detract from the importance of the study in general. And there are some particularly enlightening chapters including the discussion of *Wir müssen vor Hoffnung verrückt sein*, particularly the song "Von den Menschen." In this instance Shreve emphasizes the interrelationship of the light, hopeful music, with the pessimistic lyrics. The bibliography is thorough, noting all of the editions of Biermann's works and listing numerous reviews.

Shreve takes his title from Biermann's *Affenfels und Barrikade*: "Ich will die schon gemachten meiden, will stattdessen Mal neue Fehler machen. Und ich muß ja springen: Nur wer sich ändert, bleibt sich treu." Shreve and Biermann himself indicate that in order to survive, Biermann had to adapt. He adapted, but he never surrendered his old beliefs. He remained true to himself. Typical themes of Biermann's work in the West include: a divided Germany (not two distinct nations), songs about political battles (in Greece, Nicaragua, Poland), love songs (songs which concentrate on the contradictions in life and in love). Shreve indicates that Biermann's motivations have not been altered, only that the political emphasis has shifted away from "die große Politik" ("der real existierende Sozialismus"); more often Biermann presents the conflicts of "die kleine Politik," the daily relationships of people to each other at work and in love.

One could say that Shreve completed his book too soon. The tone of the book excludes the possibility of Biermann's return to the GDR, and only hints at the possibilities for reform offered by Gorbachev and the Soviet Union. Since publication the circle has been completed. Biermann was allowed to perform once again in the GDR.

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Smith, Colin E. *Tradition, Art and Society. Christa Wolf's Prose*. Essen: Verlag Die Blaue Eule, 1987. 365 pp. DM 58.

Christa Wolf first presented her Cassandra project in a 1982  
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series of poetic lectures at the University of Frankfurt. The broad, public GDR reception of the project began with the printing of the fourth lecture on women's writing in *Sinn und Form* in 1983, at the same time the entire project was published in the Federal Republic. Wilhelm Girnus responded to the isolated piece from the complete work with a scathing critique of Wolf's use of German translations of ancient Greek texts, which had led to reinterpretations of mythological figures like Apollo and of texts by Sappho. Above all Girnus called into question Wolf's programmatic positing of a separate social aesthetic history for women and men. This debate concerning differing, gendered interpretations of reality, which began in *Sinn und Form* was continued upon the GDR printing of the entire project in 1984 in the cultural weekly *Sonntag*. Heated discussions in the GDR over feminist re-visionings of the prepatriarchal past, and struggles in the FRG against the stationing of medium range nuclear missiles in the two Germanies focused readings of Christa Wolf's *Kassandra* and the *Frankfurter Poetik-Vorlesungen* in 1982-1984 on the political and aesthetic radicality of Wolf's demands.

Colin E. Smith's *Tradition, Art and Society. Christa Wolf's Prose* responds to these reception trends by calling attention to other facets of the literary and political context within which Christa Wolf has developed her writing. Smith concludes that the Cassandra lectures and monolog are "a new and fascinating experiment for Wolf" but that they are not "radically innovative" (292). He emphasizes continuity in Wolf's development from 1960-1984 of "aesthetic perception" as a mediation between rational analysis and sensual experience.

When, in *Der geteilte Himmel*, Rita Seidel contemplates the Monet painting in her sanatorium room, she is able to remember her final separation from Manfred on the other side of the Berlin Wall and her disappointment with socialist factory life (53-58). Smith argues that the healing potential of aesthetic perception hinted at in this early work becomes ever more central to Wolf's writing process. Wolf's grounding in the German bourgeois literary tradition is further demonstrated, according to Smith, by her allusions to Theodor Storm and Thomas Mann in *Nachdenken über Christa T.*, "suggesting a preference for this tradition over writers more reconcilable to Socialist Realist theory" (94). Smith reads *Kindheitsmuster* as "an aesthetic Bildungsroman" which shows the progress and doubts of a developing author (190). In *Kein Ort. Nirgends*, Smith points to the visual image as a distancing device for Heinrich von Kleist, much as it was for Rita Seidel, with which to put the present and the past in a different perspective (215). In addition to visual images, Smith points to the growing importance of "vital qualities of speech" for Wolf's construction of aesthetic perception in *Kassandra*. Smith disagrees with Barbara Lersch who sees in this rhythmic language a feminist aesthetic, although Wolf even names at the beginning of the fourth poetic lecture works by French feminist theorists, which influenced her thinking about women's writing (339). A glance at GDR reviews and articles about *Kassandra* would show the work's radical introduction of feminist politics and aesthetics within the GDR context. He sees Wolf's *Kassandra* project as one of the "interesting attempts by modern writers to integrate documentary material and topical comment with inventive prose" (292). Smith describes the *Kassandra* project as at once presenting "formal perfection" (282) and a lack of fully integrating reading of Aeschylus into the travel report parts of the lecture (283). Smith makes clear "Wolf's debt to German classical aesthetics" over the course of her literary career (51).

*Tradition, Art and Society* is a thorough introduction to Wolf's fictional works specifically for those less familiar with literary developments in the GDR. It could be especially helpful for teaching *Der geteilte Himmel* or *Nachdenken über Christa T.* in an