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## Norman Rudich, ed.: Amerikanische Literaturkritik im Engagement. Beiträge zur marxistischen Literaturtheorie und Literaturgeschichte

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al. enjoyed considerable popularity in American literary circles. A comparison of this period's treatment in the GDR volume with the treatment of such writers in a similarly proportioned history of American literature written in the west indicates the slight influence accorded these writers in the west. Yet it is because of such chapters and because of this type of evaluative approach that this volume can interest American readers.

The descriptive treatment of Black American literature throughout the work is useful and, from the author's point of view, objective. Thus James Baldwin is increasingly a disappointment while LeRoi Jones is a much praised writer. Much modern and contemporary American poetry is highly praised for its social and political engagement, especially during the years of the Indochina war, as are also certain now virtually "classic" American playwrights such as Eugene O'Neill or Arthur Miller.

This volume offers a valid historical summary of American literature and for western readers interesting and at times not quite predictable appraisals of "major" and "minor" American authors.

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Amerikanische Literaturkritik im Engagement: Beiträge zur marxistischen Literaturtheorie und Literaturgeschichte. Ed. by Norman Rudich. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1978. 7,-M.

This East German collection of ten essays by American Marxists is based for the most part on a collection published in 1976 by Ramparts Press under the title Weapons of Criticism: Marxism in America and the Literary Tradition. Also edited and with an introduction by Norman Rudich, Weapons of Criticism contained eighteen essays which had been stimulated by two recent developments in Marxist literary activities: the discussion group of the American Institute for Marxist Studies which was established from 1968 to 1970 and held monthly meetings in New York and the Marxist Forum of the Radical Caucus at the 1972 annual meeting of the Modern Language Association. Only seven of the original essays, those dealing exclusively with American

literature, are included here. The remaining three are taken from other sources in the successful effort to further sharpen the American focus of the East German edition. A preface by the East German writer Robert Weiman orients the reader to the subject and the edition. An excellent introduction by Rudich outlines the development of Marxist literary criticism in the United States and some of his own ideas on Marxist literary criticism.

The ten essays selected for the East German edition cover a variety of subjects from Marxist theory to criticism of individual authors and works. The first five, all from the original collection, Weapons of Criticism, are theoretical in nature and include studies by Fredric Jameson, Sidney Finkelstein, Gaylord C. LeRoy, Lee Baxandall, and David G. Stratman. They range from essays on aesthetic theory (Finkelstein) to an attempt to unite literary scholarship and political activism (LeRoy). Richard Wasson's essay on new Marxist criticism appeared originally in the Fall, 1968, issue of Science and Society. Peck argues convincingly that the revival neglected the importance and scope of Marxism in America in the thirties.

Three first-rate essays on individual American authors conclude the collection. H. Bruce Franklin's study of Melville and Annette T. Rubinstein's essay on Henry James appeared in Weapons of Criticism. Ernest Kaiser's essay entitled "William Styron's Nat Turner: Ten Black Writers Respond," (Boston, 1968), criticizes Styron's treatment of black history in The Confessions of Nat Turner as well as a number of careless reviews of the best-selling novel.

This ably translated collection of American essays will offer German language readers a valuable introduction to recent developments and attitudes in Marxist literary theory, history, and criticism in the United States. For readers in the GDR, it will provide an opportunity to examine similarities and differences in Marxist criticism in their own country and may serve to suggest that for all the shortcomings their American Marxist counterparts find in a capitalistic society, one of them is obviously not the suppression of different points of view.

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