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# Ingeborg Münz-Koenen, et al.: Literarisches Leben in der DDR 1945-1960. Literaturkonzepte und Leseprogramme

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into the plight of youthful members of the working class in their confrontation with the forces of German capitalism and fascism. The opening story, "Die Flucht aus dem Eden," a former luxury hotel in Berlin, recreates in animated fashion the anxious, uncertain atmosphere of post-World-War I Germany. While focusing on the fate of a young, unemployed Berliner, Grünberg's story assumes momentous proportions when the hero becomes witness to the assassination of Karl Liebknecht, a founder of the German Communist Party, and his associate Rosa Luxemburg in the Eden Hotel.

The story "Die Getreuen vom Galgenberg" (1965) mirrors events in the area around Halle during the Kapp uprising in March of 1920. Here Grünberg provides a more historical than literary testimony to the heroic efforts of the workers in their battle against Kapp's followers. Although physically defeated, the tenacious spirit of their resistance provides a rallying point and a legacy of solidarity for the other proletarians of the new Weimar Republic.

The briefest story in the collection, "Das verlorene Ich" (1932), is an interesting account of a SPD official who is accidentally brutalized by the police during a worker demonstration in 1929. As a result, the man loses his memory. Unaware of his former identity and able to find help and compassion among members of the working class, he assumes a new identity and becomes an active supporter of their cause.

The fourth and concluding work, "Heimkehrer Burscheidt" (1948), recreates in impressive and poignant terms the saga of a generation of narrow-minded bourgeois who, blinded by the glitter of Hitler's grandiose plans, became enthusiastic Hitler Youth, eager members of the Wehrmacht, and surprised witnesses to the defeat and bankruptcy of Hitler's Germany.

The hero of the story, Konrad Burscheidt, represents millions of his fellow Germans, both East and West, who experienced this period. What makes Burscheidt stand out is his realization that postwar Germany is philosophically unchanged and, thus, it becomes his mission to educate the youth of the new generation in a spirit of self-reliance and personal initiative within the framework of a democratic, humanistic, peace-oriented, new Germany.

Burscheidt, in short, becomes a spiritual founding father of the GDR. These posthumously collected stories, with an informative epilogue by Hans Baumgart, are based in part on Grünberg's own experiences. In many respects they have greater historical and documentary merit than literary quality. Nevertheless, they provide an interesting personal assessment of that very important period of recent German history, so especially meaningful to the older generation of GDR citizens.

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Literarisches Leben in der DDR 1945 - 1960: Literaturkonzepte und Leseprogramme. By Ingeborg Münz-Koenen, et al. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1979. 348 pages. 11,-- M.

As the title indicates, this book is not a history of literature but an investigation of the practical philosophical and political goals of literature in an emerging socialist state.

In her introductory essay, "Literaturverhältnisse und literarische Öffentlichkeit 1945 bis 1949," Ingeborg Münz-Koenen is concerned with the way literature reached the public and how this public was educated to meet altered political realities. She considers the new government's direction of publishing houses, schools, libraries, and the daily press in its efforts to create a new socialist reader. Ursula Reinhold's treatment of "Humanismus und Realismus in der Diskussion (1945 bis 1949)" shows how writers in the liberal democratic tradition from Goethe to Hauptmann were employed to further distinctly political goals. She views realism both in terms of the form-content debate and as the revolutionary process carried out in the GDR. In the third chapter, "Theoretische Diskussionen und praktisches Bemühen um die Neubestimmung der Funktion der Literatur an der Wende der fünfziger Jahre," Leonore Krenzlin advocates a re-evaluation of the literature of the fifties: although much of this literature was historically necessary and even successful in shaping GDR society, Krenzlin maintains that many of these works are problematical, because they tended to ignore real conflicts and to

idealize reality. The best works of the fifties, claims Krenzlin, are those in which the authors actively dealt with such conflicts.

Although recent evaluations tend to belittle or to ignore the phenomenon of Bitterfeld, Therese Hörnigk's essay on "Die erste Bitterfelder Konferenz" depicts it as an expression of a desire to bring the world of work and literature into a closer relationship and thereby raise the cultural level of the working class. In this attempt, the worker-reader was as important as the worker-writer, a fact which has been somewhat forgotten.

The concluding essay by Gudrun Klatt, "Proletarisches-revolutionäres Erbe als Angebot," traces tendencies in the treatment of proletarian-revolutionary art from the first third of the century during the formative years of the GDR. Of particular interest is her attempt to delineate unresolved problems in dealing with the socialist avant garde.

As a whole, this book is interesting and informative, although it occasionally suffers from repetition and a defensive posture vis-a-vis certain criticism in the Federal Republic. It is of value to anyone who seeks a cultural analysis which goes beyond the study of literature as a thing in itself.

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Werk und Wirkung Thomas Manns in unserer Epoche: Ein internationaler Dialog.

Herausgegeben von Helmut Brandt und Hans Kaufmann. Berlin und Weimar: Aufbau-Verlag, 1978. 410 pages. 12.-- M.

Werk und Wirkung Thomas Manns is a collection of papers which were given at the 1975 Thomas Mann Conference in Weimar--more or less that is. As the introduction explains, not all the papers from the conference were included (some appeared in a special Thomas Mann issue of the Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Friedrich-Schiller-Universität, Heft 3/1979), and a few new essays were added.

Subtitled "An International Dialogue," the volume includes contributions from

the GDR, from other socialist countries, and from a few Western scholars such as Hans Wysling and André Gisselbrecht. By far the largest number of papers comes from the GDR. Since the book is not only intended for the Thomas Mann specialist in that country and can indeed be of interest to a much more diverse group of readers, an appendix with a few words on each of the authors would have been helpful.

Altogether there are twenty-five essays and an introduction. The essays are divided into three groups, "Positionen," "Probleme und Werke," and "Wechselbeziehungen und Wirkungen" and range in topics from large overviews such as Dmitri Satonski's "Thomas Mann als Repräsentant unseres Zeitalters," Antal Mádl's very good "Haltung, Humanismus und Weltanschauung bei Thomas Mann," and Hans Wysling's already well-known "Thomas Manns Deskriptionstechnik," to discussions of particular works, especially later ones. Questions of literary relations, such as Joseph Pischel's "Bezüge zu Thomas Mann in der aktuellen theoretischen Selbstverständigung der DDR-Schriftsteller," which is of particular interest to students of GDR literature, make up the last section. In spite of the number of contributors and the variety of topics, the overall impression the reader receives from this volume is one of agreement and, to a certain degree, even repetition. The emphasis is firmly upon Thomas Mann, the conservative Bürger who, in the course of his long life and contrary to the development of his class, becomes a staunch advocate of democracy, a "militant," and finally a "socialist humanist." This view is outlined in the introduction and repeated and varied in many of the essays, with references to the same evidence recurring. There is a concerted effort to claim Thomas Mann for the socialist countries by paying special attention to his literary and personal ties to them and, above all, to his sympathetic pronouncements toward socialism, the Russian Revolution, and the emerging GDR. Thomas Mann, we hear, has been and still is better appreciated in the East than in the West. And certainly his--for his generation, background, and beginnings--striking development in political and social thinking is, in the present volume, enjoying the full attention it deserves and has not always received in the West.

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