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Andreas Reimann: Das ganze halbe Leben. Gedichte

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Das Ganze Halbe Leben. Gedichte. By Andreas Reimann.
Halle-Leipzig: Mitteldeutscher Verlag, 1979.

These forty-seven poems, with their intriguing title, display considerable talent, a mastery of tight traditional form, rhymed and unrhymed verse, colloquial speech, sprung syntax, some telling insights, occasionally rather unclear "messages," and bold enigmatic imagery. Reimann (born 1946) has chosen a tripartite arrangement and moves skillfully from subjective consciousness to social concern, from personal recollections, contacts, and experiences (Herkunft), through self-reflection in love, liquor, loneliness, anger, ambition, to difficult encounters and adjustment (Übergang). This is very forcefully enunciated in the opening and closing lines of the first poem, "Bitte im Frieden:"

"Leiser sprich, Land, daß ich dich hör!"

(and) "Leise ist leichter, Leicht sein ist schwer.
Tun wir das schwerste, um uns zu verstehn,
daß aus uns selbst in die dauer wir gehn.
Land, das ist einfach. Ja, leiser spricht,
daß ich dich höre! Dann hörst du auch mich."

The transition evolves from a carefree youthful prank ("Versäumter Sommer") to a somewhat sarcastic revision of Hölderlin's "Hälfte des Lebens" marking the halfway point of the poet's life ("Dialog im Dreissigsten Jahr"):

"Mit gelben Birnen hängst im geäst
ein schattenlaub: die fruchte reiften schneller
als ihre esser. ... (to which the poet adds:)
die fruchte sind gelobt, doch nicht verdaut."

And the dialogue ends with the tree admonishing the poet to grant the past peace and to move on:

"Schlepp weg, was an ihm wuchs. Verteils. Verschenks.
Und lern von ihm, wie man gelassner reift."

The second and weakest part begins and ends with a love that persists, pardons, and parts; "Jetzt, und was, und wie; Zu guter letzt"). The third section, longer by two texts than the preceding two, moves through irritations, irregularities, injustices, great and small, to the "sign" of the last poem--which seems anticlimactic and not very convincing. Reacting intensely to a bloody T.V. film of murder he is consoled by the thought: "... daß jegliche andre im schwertspruch als maßlos sich selbst entlarvt." In the end we are all subject to such justice. It seems as if his mortal mentor, now beyond this world (a note identifies him as Georg Maurer), understands and comforts him. The "message," however, is either opaque or platitudinous, or both. Furthermore the ruptured sonnet form seems to betray the "consolation." The most interesting and arresting poem of all is "Tramp." It reveals the poet's dilemma in the metaphor of the hitch-hiker. With ink-stained hands, and with no means of his own, he waits by the side of the road; whether he's out to seek, or flee, or return home, depends on others: "welcher leichtsinn, einfach loszugehen!
Welche torheit: warten, dass es geht."

But everything in its time, and it's summer: the time to travel to the end of the world. He proudly watches the chrome-plated vehicles roar by and then accents a ride in a mud-spattered car. He marvels at the driver's care-free trust but sadly notes the gap that separates them:

"Irgend etwas setzt uns ausserstand,
uns zu deuten. Welche jahre trennen,
fremder, uns? Wo bin ich ausgestiegen?
Ach, wo liessen wir uns beide stehn?"

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