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Dennis Tate: The East German Novel: Identity, Community, Continuity

Robert Acker
University of Montana

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includes Faust, the Venetianische Epigramme, Urworte, Orphisch, Goethe's reception of Byron, and comparisons with Herder, the contributions do form a coherent whole. Dietze himself describes them as sharing an "Anregungsfunktion" (8), in that they explore the dialectical nature of Goethe's works to arrive at a new interpretation relevant to socialist concerns. "Goethe, das heißt heute und hier: die allseitige, schöpferische, kritische Aneignung aller wertvollen Elemente jenes gewaltigen Humanismuskonzepts, das er, mit anderen zusammen, ausarbeitete, ohne es realisieren zu können, es könne eines nicht mehr fernen Tages doch das Schöne real und das Reale schön machen, dem Menschen und seinen unerschöpflichen Fähigkeiten so würdig wie angemessen" (129).

This quotation (the latter part of which curiously resembles Schiller's example of Schwärmerei in the Asthetische Briefe illustrates how Dietze's often homiletic tone occasionally obscures the sophistication of his thought. But, as especially his study of Goethe's and Herder's attitudes toward historical change shows, Dietze is not really guilty of "comes-the-revolution" reductionism. Rather he establishes the "Grundcharakter" of Goethe's works by revealing their dialectical tensions within the context of their times. He paints a convincing portrait of Goethe as a progressive force who, in his youth, helps to usher in bourgeois values and then, in his maturity, calls those now-established values into question. Only occasionally do the seams show in this appropriation, as with the question of who wins Faust's bet with Mephisto: if the "Augenblick" is viewed as historical, reasons Dietze, then Faust's final vision describes, Communism and history are on his side. The inexorable forces of change doom Mephisto, who represents first feudal and then capitalistic values.

In the main, however, this collection of essays admirably fulfills Dietze's purpose: to suggest a new, Marxist appreciation of Goethe's works as a whole. (Amazingly, as he points out, no such study yet exists, at least in the form of a monograph). It accomplishes this task with learning and style.

Bruce Duncan
Dartmouth College

The East German Novel: Identity, Community, Continuity

by Dennis Tate. Bath: Bath University Press, 1984. viii + 264 pages.

The author has chosen 20 exemplary prose works to illustrate trends in the historical development of the East German novel. A most lucid introduction explains in capsule form Lukacs' theory of the "Entwicklungsroman" and its importance for one's understanding of GDR literature: according to Tate, literary production is basically the result of a reaction, positively or negatively, to Lukacs' demands. Authors either accept Lukacs' and Party guidelines and attempt to create large works which encompass many decades of social and political development, or they revolt against his precepts by concentrating on the subjective private and personal fates of outcasts. In a series of five chapters Tate explains and amplifies his thesis: he analyzes Becher's Abschied, "war novels" such as Noll's Die Abenteuer des Werner Holt, and industrial novels of the "Bitterfelder Weg" such as Neutsch's Spur der Steine, all of which fall within the Lukacs school, and then subjective (auto)biographies, like Wolf's Nachdenken über Christa T. or Reimann's Franziska Linkerhand, and finally literary depictions of the "deutsche Misere" like Braun's

Unvollendete Geschichte, both of which represent alternative literary forms in opposition to the Lukacs ideology. The text proper is followed by a useful bibliography, a chronological table, and an index.

Tate scrutinizes his major novels in copious detail and shows their relationships to many other GDR prose pieces. The work is well researched, quite clearly written, and reveals a conscientious scholar who has obviously devoted a great deal of study and contemplation to his subject. What disturbs me most is that the historical parameters become fuzzy midway through the work. Tate views the period between 1965 and 1981 as a fairly contiguous whole--Honnecker's takeover in 1971 and the "exile period" beginning in the mid-Seventies are depicted as having little effect on what he terms the alternative literary scene, which for him assumes paramount importance. In a bit too glib of an argumentation the author forces selected novels of these 15 years into a preconceived scheme and is thus compelled to dismiss a great many others as peripheral. A literary history should give some sense of the totality of the process, as Tate does so admirably in the first half of his study, and should take account of social and political factors. While there is much to be said in favor of the claim that an "anti-Lukacs subjective school" has developed in contemporary GDR prose, one should not ignore concurrent trends or relegate them to obscurity.

Tate also has the annoying habit of structuring his study into too much of a wooden outline form, and one has the impression of an over-dependence on index cards. Transitions are sometimes awkward and long transgressions frequently interrupt the arguments. Comparisons between the novels sometimes become tedious

and cumbersome, so that the reader tends to lose the connection between the analysis of the novels and the succinct historical overviews that precede them. These reservations aside, however, this study is an admirable attempt to survey the complex development of GDR prose, and this paperback would make a handy supplementary guide for both student and teacher in a GDR novel course.

Robert Acker

University of Montana

Heliotrop. Gedichte.

von Eva Strittmatter. Berlin und Weimar: Aufbau-Verlag, 1983. 127 Seiten. M 7,60.

Der stattlichen Reihe von Gedichtbänden, die Eva Strittmatter bereits vorgelegt hat, ist ein weiterer hinzugefügt worden: Heliotrop. Das Titelgedicht steht in der Mitte der aus vier nicht näher benannten Sektionen bestehenden Sammlung, in der 87 Gedichte enthalten sind. Es wird auch als Klappentext verwendet; ihm kommt sicher zentrale Bedeutung zu. Die Sehnsucht und Suche nach dem Glück und ihre schliessliche Erfüllung im Alter ist das Hauptmotiv des Gedichtes. Eng verbunden damit sind folgende für die Lyrik Strittmatters typische Motive und Aspekte: Liebe und Erneuerung des Sinnenlebens, Tag und Nacht, Natur- und Zeiterlebnis, Jugend und Alter, Blumen- und Farbsymbolik. Hinzu kommt der Bezug zur literarischen Tradition, die Frage nach dem Verhältnis von Literatur und Wirklichkeit. Denn die Dichterin findet die Blume Heliotrop, der sie nur immer in der Literatur begegnete, ausgerechnet in Weimar: "Und nun und nun und in diesem