Arlene A. Teraoka: The Silence of Entropy or Universal Discourse: The Postmodernist Poetics of Heiner Müller

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correct department, the rules had to be bent slightly
to accomodate the unusual nature of the birth.

Other such bureaucratic idiosyncrasies occur when
Marietta tries to re-enter the country with her baby
and also when she tries to claim the money owed her
for being a mother. She cannot receive this money
because, although she has her baby as proof of
motherhood, there are no medical records verifying the
pregnancy.

Lothar Höricke takes a rather simple story, the
premise for which was a dream, and develops an inter­
esting juxtaposition of dream and reality and manages
to poke fun at some of the more ridiculous bureau­
cratic maneuvers of the GDR. Höricke manages to
criticize without causing his novel to become tedious
critique.

Carol Anne Costabile
Washington University

Geschichte der Deutschen Literatur – vom 18. Jahr­
hundert bis zur Gegenwart, 1918–1980, Band III. Hrsg.
Viktor Zmegac, Athenäum, Königstein/Ts., 1984. 876 S.

The concluding book in Viktor Zmegac’s three vol­
ume history of German literature covers the period
1918 to 1980. The third volume is divided into six
sections providing analyses of the various epochs and
literary trends in the different German-speaking coun­
tries since 1945. The chapter on GDR literature, upon
which this review will focus, was written by John
Milfull.

Milfull, like the other authors on their respective
fields, offers not only a thematic overview of specific
trends but also individual interpretations of exemplary
works. He begins his study with the early years of
the GDR and the questions facing the literary "Remi­
granten." Their primary concern, the establishment of
a socialist-oriented literature, is considered with regard
to Milfull’s four "Geburtshelfer" of the GDR literary
tradition: Anna Seghers, Bertold Brecht, Eduard
Claudius, and Stephan Heym. Although sharing a basic
fundamental approach, each of the authors represents a
unique position and/or concept, and the plurality of
their methods significantly shaped subsequent literary
trends. Milfull is correct in pointing to the gradual
"Entdoggmatisierungsprozeß" in GDR writing which, in
spite of several setbacks in the 60s, proved to be a
central element in establishing a productive literature.
Moreover, Milfull does not limit his analysis to an
overview of literary genres and representative names.
Instead he focuses on the writer and his or her audi­
ence and examines "wirkungsaesthetische Probleme bei
Lyrik, Drama und erzählender Prosa." His approach is
convincing for he sees literature within the overall
context of "Kulturpolitik der DDR" and in its relation­
ship to the working class population. Furthermore, he
never loses sight of theoretical concerns and the oft­
occurring contradictions resulting from putting theory
into practice. In terms of "Rezeption," Milfull recog­
nizes one distinction within the genres, namely that
while novels and theater pieces are received quite
differently in East and West, GDR poetry seems im­
une from such distinguishing traits. Thus poets such as
Bobrowski, Kunert, Kunze, and Kirsch enjoy what
can be termed a "gesamtdeutsche Leserschaft."

Another strength of Milfull’s contribution is his
depiction of the literary climate in the GDR, in par­
ticular his exposition of the first Bitterfelder Kon­
ferein (1959) and the resultant literary maxims.
Finally, the interpretations of works by numerous
authors (e.g. Seghers, Brecht, Wolf, Neutsch, Kant,
Strittmatter, Hermlin, Müller, Braun, Plenzdorf, Hacks,
Morgner, Mickel) provide detailed commentary illu­
strative of overriding trends in GDR literature.

Greg Divers
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The Silence of Entropy or Universal Discourse: The
Postmodernist Poetics of Heiner Müller. By Arlene A.
Teraoka. New York University Ottendorfer Series. Neue

In Kuhnian terms most dissertations are "normal
science," i.e. the detailed demonstration of generally
established views, using familiar models. Rarely, if ever, does one expect a dissertation to break new ground and establish new rules. Ms. Teraoka's book is one of those rare cases. Making judicious use of the Frankfurt School's critique of the Enlightenment and of Peter Szondi's theory of modern drama, she undertakes a successful analysis of Heiner Müller's project of deconstruction as presented in his major and most difficult plays of the 1970s, Leben Gundlings, Hamletmaschine, and Auftrag. After first establishing some of Müller's aesthetic ideas relevant for this period of his dramatic writing, Teraoka provides some brilliant and convincing readings. She argues that Müller's main concern in these plays is the deconstruction of authority and privilege, of the artist in society, of Europe in the world, of paternalistic and oppressive structures everywhere. With close attention to the text and Müller's poetics she shows his critique of the Enlightenment, bourgeois models of drama and teleological history in Leben Gundlings. Hamletmaschine extends this critique by focusing both on the betrayal of the revolutionary impulse by the intellectual who knows but does not act on his knowledge and on the anti-rational revolutionary counterforce represented by Ophelia and sexuality. The failure of reason and teleology in history, of Lessing and Hegel, of bourgeois perceptions, necessitates a new view of history and of the conflicts between men and women, fathers and sons, revolutionaries and counter-revolutionaries, oppressors and oppressed. In Der Auftrag the scope widens to include the now also superceded Brechtian model of the socialist Lehrstück judged in the light of the world-wide conflicts between a Third World consciousness of otherness and oppression and European modes of thinking, exploitation, privilege and betrayal of the utopia of revolution.

While Teraoka does not establish them herself, anyone familiar with Müller's earlier work will detect connections, e.g. to Philoktet, which is illuminated by the concept of betrayal of the revolutionary impulse. She also raises many questions requiring further exploration. For instance, is it possible to insist on a postmodernist openness to interpretation, the universal discourse of the title, and be politically relevant in actual historical terms? This question may also be a useful, non-polemical restatement of the old accusation levelled against Müller that his plays are "geschichtspessimistisch." Teraoka, it appears, is perhaps more sanguine about the chances for a revolution of the oppressed Third World, based on the models of Lautreamond, Artaud, and Fanon, than Müller himself seems to indicate in his plays.

One may also want to draw some of the conclusions which Teraoka tactfully leaves to the reader about the betrayal of Marx and socialist utopia in various peoples' democracies around the world, an issue which masks the very real question whether permanent revolution is either possible or desirable in historical actuality rather than in the theories of intellectuals, the authors of drama or political essays. It will also be necessary to investigate the nature of the relationship of reason and revolt, especially if the latter appears in the shape of unreason which may also be Fascism, or just revolt for no particular end, creating a new and different form of oppression.

In short, this is a seminal book for Müller studies. It provides some very convincing readings for his most difficult plays and raises serious issues, especially in light of his most recent play, Wolokolomsker Chaussee, in which he returns to a post-Stalinist Lehrstück model, i.e. a post-Brechtian one. No future work on Müller can be taken seriously that does not engage this genuinely important book, nor can any future discussion of postmodernism proceed without it.

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Über die Fähigkeit zu trauern. Das Bild der Wandlung im Prosawerk von Christa Wolf und Franz Fühmann.

Dieses Buch ist, im Jahre der Kontroverse um die faschistische Vergangenheit des österreichischen Bundespräsidenten Waldheim, ein zeitgerechtes Buch, das Beachtung und eingehende Lektüre verdient. Es befaßt sich mit dem--nunmehr etwas abgegriffenen--