Leonore Krenzlin: Hermann Kant

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DEUTSCHE BÜCHER

The first 1981 issue of Deutsche Bücher (Vol. XI, No. 1) contains a lengthy "Gespräch" with Adolf Endler, providing useful and provocative insights into the work of this often difficult poet. The colloquy, which began as an interview of Endler by Gregor Leschen and Ton Naaijens in November, 1980, was subsequently edited and enlarged by Endler. As a result, it elaborates much more extensively on significant points than the more spontaneous interview. Of particular interest is the anger with which Endler registers the lack of resonance his work has had in the GDR (none of his three volumes of poetry was ever reviewed in any of the major literary journals there). Describing his writing as "ein stetes Anschreiben gegen Festgeschriebenes," Endler analyzes the "grotesken Widerspruch ... zwischen den des theoreti­sch-anthropologischen Anspruchs und der eventuellswidrigen Erschaffung dessen, was ihm begünstigen soll, (das Gedicht)" which led him to turn to prose writing. The Endler feature concludes with a pre-publication excerpt from his novel Nebbich, which confirms his own estimate of it as prose, "welche die in der DDR geltenden Konsventionen in bezug auf reinidische Literatur weit hinter sich lässt." The "Gespräch mit Jurij Brezan (p. 85-94) in Heft 2 of the same year is a product of an interview with Martinus de Waal-Wilke at the Leipzig book fair in spring 1981 and focuses on Brezan's self-perception as a Sorbian writer and the discrepancy between advances in technology and the continuing moral-ethical backwardness of mankind which led him to write Krabat oder Die Verwandlung der Welt: "Wie viel freilich die Kunst beitragen kann, diesen heute Bedrohlichen Morgen tückischen Zustand zum Guten zu verändern, weiß ich nicht. Manchmal ist mir, als sei hier die Kunst wie ein Steinzeitäger gegenüber einem Panzer." An excerpt from his current work-in-progress, Der Alte Mann und der Tod (working title) concludes the Brezan feature.

BOOK REVIEWS


This is a useful and quite competent book, although, since it is an ambitious monograph on one of the GDR's best writers, one wishes that it would have been more incisive in several important ways.

I have little quarrel with any of Krenzlin's analyses of specific works; these seem to me to be insightful, judicious and sensitive, and the accents are set correctly.

The readings center on Krenzlin's efforts to locate the special characteristics of Kant's work in his reflection of the structure of the Bildungsroman, in favor of a retrospective illumination of the fascist dictatorship and the early years of the GDR. Thus Die Aula "lehrt dem Leser, wie vorher wohl nicht kein anderes Buch, ins Bewusstsein, dass der sozialistische Staat der Gegenwart bereits auf eine Vergangenheit zurückblicken könnte." (62) And it did this by means of a particularly didactic structure in which the episodic "entweder衛weise keine zusätzliche, der Deutung sich erst allmählich öffnende Schicht. Der Leser ist viel­mehr eingeladen, die gedankliche Auseinandersetzung mit der Vergangenheit auf Iswallsche Weise mitzuvollziehen." (73) This is true even of Der Aufenthalt; Krenzlin is keenly sensitive to the fact that novel's very important aspect of development, but she simultaneously sees it as an analysis of an "Umschlagspunkt ( ... ) in Grossaufnahme." (164) Not everything in these readings is completely satisfactory. For one thing, she is generally too reluctant to express negative criticism, except in the most inescapable cases.

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