Perhaps it is not entirely an accident that, as the Berlin Wall is finally dismantled, Rathenow seems to be overcoming a weakness in critical judgment. *Sterne jonglieren* consists of only 28 short poems. While many are modest in scope, every one, without exception, is well realized.

Boria Sax
Pace University


The idea that poetry can fully transcend its time and place is a romantic legacy, but the fact is that we read a translation of an ancient Chinese poem far differently than we read a contemporary American one. Our understanding of the cultural context determines the questions we ask and the expectations with which we approach a manuscript. Since the dismantling of the Berlin Wall, it is hard even to open a book from the GDR without feeling a slight perplexity. Is this creation East German? German? European?

*Zärtlich kreist die Faust*, a new collection of poems by Lutz Rathenow, belongs to a tradition that I would characterize as "East European." The spare construction, folk motifs, and stylistic vision may be found in other GDR poets who have taken their inspiration largely from Slavic cultures. Among the major representatives of this style are Johannes Bobrowski, Peter Huchel, Heinz Cibulka, and Kito Lorenc.

Rathenow celebrates harsh landscapes like those of the European plains. Among the images he uses repeatedly are snow, autumn leaves, and bare trees. A representative piece, short enough to give in its entirety, is "Das letzte Gedicht":

Ein störrischer Baum,
der nicht aufblüht,  
nicht eingeht,  
der keine Neigung zeigt,  
seinen Zustand zu ändern

Gone are the occasional melodrama and the coy word games which added a note of self-consciousness to *Zangengeburt*, Rathenow's first collection of poems.

Rathenow first became known largely as a political writer. It is paradoxical that now, in a time of enormous upheavals, he should produce a collection of poems that are almost militantly apolitical. This could, perhaps, be understood as a symptom of disillusionment with the public realm, but Rathenow continues elsewhere to speak out on social issues. I prefer to understand this book as a check against the hubris that accompanies almost any revolutionary change.

Boria Sax
Pace University


The twanzig Beiträge des vorliegenden Sammelbandes sind ein Gemeinschaftsunternehmen des Zentralinstituts der Akademie der Wissenschaften der DDR und des Instituts für Slawistik und Balkanistik der Akademie der Wissenschaften der UdSSR. Die Verfasser verfolgen die Entwicklung des sozialistischen Realismus in der UdSSR und suchen aufzuzeigen, wie sich dieser nach 1945 in der DDR, der Tschechoslowakei, in Polen, Jugoslawien, Bulgarien, Ungarn und Rumänien durchzusetzen beginnt und wie Inhalt und Form der Literatur sowie ästhetisch-theoretische Forderungen im Rahmen des gesellschaftlichen Entwicklungsprozesses programmatische Funktion annehmen.