

1976

Alexander Stephan: Christa Wolf

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Recommended Citation

Deschner, Margareta (1976) "Alexander Stephan: Christa Wolf," *GDR Bulletin*: Vol. 2: Iss. 3. <https://doi.org/10.4148/gdrb.v2i3.359>

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literary interpretation. Jack Zipes (Bertolt Brecht oder Friedrich Wolf?...) traces the development of GDR drama to these seemingly divergent figures, examining the way GDR official cultural policy has incorporated both positions in a process of legitimation. He refers to both recent theatre productions, as well as to plays not performed in the GDR. The real process of legitimation appears as part of a dialectical process within a literary work itself.

P.M. Lützeler ("...Zur Darstellung sozialer Mobilität im Roman der DDR") discusses the role of education and re-education in novels as different as Ole Bienkopp and Nachdenken über Christa T.

Pat Herminhouse ("...Zur Darstellung der Frau im Roman der DDR") focuses both on the depiction of women in the GDR novel as well as the attempt within literature to overcome the gap between the ideal and the real. She bases her analysis on three phases -- Aufbau, Ankunft, and das veränderte Bewusstsein -- which are linked to the economic development of the GDR.

The last essay ("...reden von uns zu uns") by Silvia Schlenstedt, a literary critic in the GDR, an "insider's" perspective on recent GDR lyrics, stands, even more than Weimann's, in sharp contrast to the others. Most striking is her almost natural acceptance of the developments in the GDR; her treatment is more explanatory than functional.

The volume provides a useful and insightful analysis of aspects of GDR literature. Despite opaque moments, it offers a thoroughness and depth too often absent in interpretations of GDR literature.

Charlotte Gebhardt
Dartmouth College

ANTHOLOGIES: ONCE AGAIN!

Bettina pflückt wilde Narzissen, hrsg. Manfred Jendryschik (Haale/Saale: Mitteldeutscher Verlag, 1976), 443 pp.

In addition to the five anthologies of short prose reviewed in the last issue of the Bulletin, this volume deserves serious consideration. Originally published in the

GDR in 1972, it has been extremely popular there and was recently re-issued in a large edition, to judge by its availability in book stores. Larger than any of the other volumes reviewed, it has the additional advantage of being a hard-bound book at the reasonable price of GDR publications. Sixty-six stories by forty-four authors, many of them seldom included in Western anthologies, offer a fairly representative spectrum of the development of the short story in the GDR from the early 1950's through the 1970's. Old-timers, such as Eduard Claudius, Otto Gotsche, Bodo Uhse and Friedrich Wolf, are included as well as recognized masterpieces by Kunert, Morgner, Bobrowski, Fühmann, and Kant (to mention those pointed out by A. Stephan as ill-represented in the volumes he reviewed). All the more noticeable in this rich selection is the inexplicable exclusion of any work at all by Christa Wolf. Equally regrettable, but readily explainable, is the absence also of Sarah Kirsch, whose first prose works did not appear until 1973. All told, the anthology is a suitable choice for introducing students to a wide range of GDR prose writing.

-Patricia Herminhouse
Washington University

Alexander Stephan, Christa Wolf (Autorenbücher 4). (München: C.H. Beck, 1976), pp. 143.

The new series of "Autorenbücher" is published with the co-operation of Verlag C.H. Beck and the journal Edition Text + Kritik, which in 1975 brought out a 56 page issue on Christa Wolf. Among the contributors was Alexander Stephan, whose article "Die 'subjektive Authentizität' des Autors" reads like a pre-condensation of his present volume, a valuable introduction to Christa Wolf, and a sensitive criticism, refreshingly free of dogmatic labels.

The book might be called Nachdenken über Christa Wolf, without intending to indicate any lack of precision or method in the critic. It recognizes that Christa Wolf has undergone a definable development in her dialogue with the GDR's successive socio-political phases. However, it takes seriously Wolf's demand for a

singular respect -- from herself as well as her readers -- toward the narrative "I", whether expressed in the first or the third person, who has the right to remain undefined, only sought after, as the "fourth dimension" of her fiction. Thus, "nachdenken" becomes an exercise in performing the same thought figures as the characters in the author's mind.

The first chapter deals with Wolf's biography in light of her work, and establishes the above mentioned "subjektive Authentizität". Wolf has remained throughout her production an insider in the GDR; especially where the dialogue with existing social realities has become her own internal debate.

The second chapter analyzes Christa Wolf's individual works, both in the larger context of GDR history, as well as in the context of the author's growing self-assurance and knowledge that she not only "belongs" to but performs a unique critical task among GDR authors.

The most penetrating and successful discussion is devoted to Christa T. Among its merits are the critic's capacity to uphold Christa Wolf's own tension between Christa T., the individual in search of her search of her self and the "great time" in which she lives. This "I" is analyzed in a threefold tension: to her own generation, to the painful Nazi past and to the literary heritage of the nineteenth century. The allusions to the figures and ideas of the German literary past may not be quite as "cryptic" as Stephan suggests. He makes a great deal of sense of the indebtedness of the two Christas to their literary forefathers!

The third chapter contains valuable information about interviews with Christa Wolf and an evaluation of her own critical activity, with a brief analysis of Wolf's best discussion partners, living and dead. What Stephan has demonstrated with his Christa Wolf analysis, he brings out in the juxtaposition of two quotes. Seghers: "Was erzählbar geworden ist, ist überwunden!" Wolf: "Was überwunden werden muss, soll erzählt werden."

In summary: a flexibly and accurately handled analysis which gives the critic's viewpoint with clarity, but which does not preempt the task of thinking from Christa Wolf's reader.

- Margareta Deschner
S.M.U., Dallas

NOTES IN BRIEF

Useful Addresses

Book store addresses in the FRG from where GDR materials can be ordered:

PROGRESS BUCHLADEN, Oxfordstr. 10, 53 Bonn 1
BRÜCLAR VERLAG GMBH, Ackerstr.3, Postfach 1928
4 Düsseldorf
WELTKREIS VERLAG GMBH, Brüderweg 16, 46 Dortmund
KUBON & SAGNER, Postfach 68, 8 München 34
GEBRÜDER PEDERMANN, Kurfürstenstr. 111,
1 Berlin 30

Research in Progress

The session on Literature of the GDR at the Northeast Modern Language Association Convention, held April 8-10 at the University of Vermont, Burlington, Vt., included the following papers:

Alexander Stephan, UCLA, "Zwischen Volksfront und Realpolitik: Pläne der Exils-KPD für eine deutsche Nachkriegskultur."

Erika Salloch, Washington College, Maryland, "Das Amerikabild bei Günter Kunert."

Ronald H.D. Nabrotzky, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa, "Die DDR - Heines verwirklichter Lebenstraum."

The session was chaired by Irmgard Taylor, SUNY, College at Cortland. The next NEMLA Convention will take place in April 1977 in Pittsburgh, PA. The chairman of the GDR session will be Klaus-Peter Hinze, Cleveland State University, Cleveland, Ohio, the secretary Katherine M. Littell, Bucknell University, Lewisburg, PA.

Philip D. Sweet, 833 Starwick, Ann Arbor, Mi. 48105 is currently writing a dissertation on "Style and Reception. A Study of the Poetry of Peter Huchel", at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. Advisor is Ingo Seidler