

Meyer-Gosau, Frauke, ed. *Christoph Hein. TEXT + KRITIK*. Heft 111. München: edition text + kritik, 1991.

This collection, in the familiar TEXT + KRITIK format, is a bit thin, both literally and figuratively. Of the 105 pages, fourteen are taken up by the "Auswahlbibliographie" compiled by Heinz-Peter Preußner and Karl Hammer. While it will prove useful, it is by no means exhaustive. The decision not to list individual essays and pieces by Hein is regrettable, since this makes it more difficult to establish the chronology of the discussions in which he has been participating. For that matter, a brief outline of Hein's life and works would have increased the utility of the volume.

Of the ten contributions, three are by Hein. Again, withholding of bibliographical information about when they appeared makes for a small frustration. At a time when we need more concrete facts and less murky speculation about the last years of the DDR and the onset of the new Germany, it is important to know when "A World Turning Point" or "Vorwort zum Bericht der Untersuchungskommission" were first uttered and under what specific circumstances. The interview conducted with Frauke Meyer-Gosau, where Hein is clearly already distancing himself from the new German order, highlights the swift pace of change in things. It is a telling irony that Hein insists in the interview on the importance of precision in literary affairs (89), while the editors of this volume seem to be operating against that ideal.

Without analyzing them in detail, one can say of the texts by Hein that they are of a piece with his skilled, complex maneuvers through the German intellectual minefield. For many Germans, this will doubtless continue to be an irritation. For the foreign observer, it is difficult to appreciate the dilemmas in which writers such as Hein have been placed, but there is something in Hein's cynicism that does appeal to me more than strident nationalism might. "In der Geschichte der Welt und der einzelnen Länder aber gab es und gibt es keine Wendepunkte" (89): that seems a useful hypothesis when rewriting the history of the last few years.

The remaining contributions discuss various aspects of Hein's work and its reception. Two essays, by Jens-F. Dwars and by Hannes Krauss, deal with *Der fremde Freund/Drachenblut*. Martin Krumbholz discusses the major historical dramas, while Michael Töteberg provides an overview of some responses by DDR theater critics to Hein's plays. Joachim Lehmann examines the problems of history and

historiography in *Horns Ende* and *Tangospieler*. "Das Spiegelkabinett unseres Kopfes": Schreibverfahren und Bilderwelt bei Christoph Hein" by Neva Slibar and Rosanda Volk attempts to cover, in ten pages, imagery and the process of writing in Hein's prose. They touch upon important topics, but cannot really explore them in such a brief space. Finally, Eckhard Thiele raises provocative questions about the meaning of Hein's public statements since the "Wende," detecting in them an ambivalence with respect to the end of the DDR. Thiele is sharply critical of Hein's stance:

Wo Christoph Hein in dieser Situation, drei Wochen nach der Grenzöffnung, noch eine 'große Chance (...), auf deutschem Boden erstmals wirklich Sozialismus aufzubauen,' schließlich die 'letzte Chance' sah, war und ist unbegreiflich. (77)

It is only incomprehensible for polemicists.

Yet paranoia runs deep and even the most sympathetic commentators have difficulties with Hein. Just who is he, who was he? This volume does not move forward very much in providing answers. The refusal to be more precise with dates and facts in the documentation is symptomatic of an unwillingness or inability to come to terms with the problems posed by Hein for any neat, tidy literary history. How is one to evaluate male authors who are continually in opposition? Hein does not make it easy, as when he declares: "Ich bin der Leser, für den ich schreibe, ich schreibe für keinen anderen" (86). That may be his view, but it remains our task as critics and historians to map such formulas and such authors, to make sense where the talk of the day sees confusion. To the extent that this volume documents a set of responses and paves the way for further research, it makes a contribution--but it could have done much more.

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