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Geschichte der deutschen Literatur. 1789 bis 1830

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Geschichte der deutschen Literatur: 1789 bis 1830. Von Autorenkollektiven unter der Leitung von Hans-Dietrich Dahnke, Thomas Höhle und Hans-Georg Werner. Geschichte der deutschen Literatur von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart, Band 7. Berlin/GDR: Volk und Wissen, 1978. 967 pages. 35,- M.

Volume 7 of the eleven-volume, GDR Geschichte der deutschen Literatur covers the literary periods generally conceived by bourgeois scholarship as Classicism and Romanticism. From the outset, however, this literary history breaks with the tradition of Stil-epochen and applies the orthodox Marxist framework of political chronology to organize the cultural material. Thus, the volume is divided into two major sections, edited and written by two different collectives: "From the French Revolution to the Fall of the Holy Roman Empire (1789-1806)" and "From the Anti-Napoleonic Independence Movement to the July Revolution (1806-1830)." Each of these is then divided, once again, into two subsections. As a result of this framework, the literary history does not rely on chronology solely as a continuum punctuated by the great names and works of German literature, but also attempts to relate the forces of social change to specific events in the cultural sphere. The primacy of political economy as an organizing principle ~~eschens~~ a mechanistic base/superstructure model, although occasional generalizations about an author's progressive or reactionary response to events in the political sphere are translated into literary judgments. Indeed, this Marxist approach opens the literary history to a far wider scope than is usually the case. For instance, besides chapters on topics such as the beginnings of mass literature, the development of a profit-oriented book market, and journalistic writing (especially by democrats and revolutionaries), there are extensive sections on social history and political movements as they relate to cultural developments. Both classical and romantic literature are seen as a product of and a response to the ugliness and prosaic quality of bourgeois attitudes under early capitalism in Germany. Within these confines, the authors try to avoid the traditional clichés in Marxist

literary criticism. They present neither a normative and idealistic apology for German Classicism nor a rigorous rejection of Romanticism on political grounds. Nonetheless, the collectives do resort to well-worn definitions of realism as the yardstick of progressive literary currents. Thus, such debatable concepts as Widerspiegelung, das Typische and das Repräsentative surface frequently, and--particularly in evaluating Romanticism--the ideological function of the fantastic as an outlet for utopian desires is neglected.

The volume is rounded out with numerous visual aids often not found in other literary histories--sociological and political maps, charts, portraits, reproductions of paintings (some in color) and, of course, photographs of title pages. In addition there are extensive notes (60 pages) drawing on the most recent research in Eastern and--less so--in Western Europe, and a detailed index of names and works. This literary history offers a carefully edited introduction to literary culture during a period of intense political ferment in Germany. The historical material goes far beyond what is usually presented in such works, while the literary analysis remains within a rather traditional framework.

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Bilanz mit Vierunddreißig oder Die Ehe der Claudia M. By Wolfgang Licht. Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau-Verlag, 1978. 269 pages. 8,50 M.

The question raised by this novel is an intensely interesting one, especially in the context of an emerging women's consciousness in the literature of the GDR, namely: to what extent is it possible in the sensitive ambience of the present day for a male author to write using a female voice to project his view of gender relations?

The first-person narrator and main figure of this novel is the Claudia M. of the title, who might be said to be undergoing a mid-life crisis, in which she questions and reassesses her expectations of life,