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## Christa Wolf: Divided Heaven

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Krumpel, Heinz. Lebensprozeß und Moral.  
Berlin: Vlg. d. Wissenschaften, 1977.

Auf welcher Grundlage entsteht moralisches Bewußtsein, wie wirkt es auf den materiellen Lebensprozeß der Menschen? Welche Verbindungen gibt es andererseits zwischen der jeweiligen ökonomischen Grundlage der Gesellschaft und der Herausbildung bestimmter Moralvorstellungen? Auf diese und andere Fragen gibt die Schrift Antwort.

Mensch -- Wissenschaft -- Technik. Versuch einer marxistischen Analyse der wissenschaftlich-technischen Revolution. Hrsg.: M. Buhr und G. Kröber. Berlin: Akademie, 1977.

## BOOK REVIEWS

Divided Heaven. Christa Wolf. Translated by Joan Becker. Introduction and bibliography by Jack Zipes. New York: Adler's Foreign Books, 1976. 265 pages.

One recurrent problem western, even Marxist Western readers and reviewers have with GDR literature is a misconception of what constitutes a genuine "political reading" of a novel or play. Through our training and ideological modification we tend to look at those literary works as somewhat shallow, easy-to-decode "messages" from the other side of the Berlin wall: how much criticism and dissent is explicit, how much more is implicit and ambiguous? Thus we reduce a novel such as Divided Heaven to a rather feeble attempt at voicing some opposition against the negative aspects of the East German regime and by doing so we often ignore the real political scope of the work. (The lucid analysis of Robbe-Grillet by the Goldmann student Jacques Lenhardt, "Lecture politique du roman," could serve as a helpful model for anyone trying to understand literature from the socialist countries.)

Rereading Christa Wolf's Divided Heaven after about eight years made me realize how quickly I had categorized it then as a veiled protest novel, a cautious "roman à thèse" which essentially said all the things we in the west had of course known for years. That is precisely why a renewed reading comes as a shock, for this novel about the dual German reality and its human implications is much more than a substitute for a humanist socialist pamphlet. Christa Wolf did not need to resort to a lit-

erary medium to express exactly how she felt about certain theories and practices in her country. This novel deals with those situations as well, but only in the way a novel incorporates and reshapes reality to transcend it, to open up new possibilities and new experiments in human living.

Rita, the main character of the novel, is not blind to the shortcomings of the society she lives in, as she is confronted with them at almost every stage of her life, at home, at school and on the job. But she disagrees with Manfred's decision to leave the GDR for a more fundamental reason: "He had not gone away out of protest, but had just given up. This going to the west was not a new experiment but the end of all experiments...It did not matter any more what he did."

The background for this judgement is clearly summarized in the introductory essay by Jack Zipes, "Christa Wolf: Moralism as Marxist." Zipes puts the work in its proper socio-historical context and stresses its significance both for the development of Christa Wolf's own philosophical position and for the growing self-awareness and self-criticism of her generation of writers in the GDR. In this light the simple plot, the "Republikflucht" of Manfred and the resulting separation of the couple, becomes merely a symptom of the more fundamental contradictions facing this particular transitional society. At the end of the novel Rita feels that these contradictions can be overcome, even if she has no clear idea of the future, her future and that of her country: "But she was not afraid." It is a very open-ended work, which seems to throw the search for a solution back at the reader in the GDR and, indirectly, in the West. "The curtain closed and all the questions open," as Brecht would say.

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Little Giant in the World of Sport: Sports Comparison Study GDR -- Canada. By Doug Gilbert et al. Toronto: Kontakt Presse, 1976. 64 pages.

A Wonderful Experience: Spartakiad Games in the GDR. By Eberhard Bock et al. Dresden: Verlag Zeit im Bild DDR, 1975. 30 pages.

At the 1976 Olympics the GDR placed second in the gold medal standing and third overall. Such a strong showing has given rise to much