

The Division of Germany in Literature. A Review

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I

Historical events require interpretation —and the interpretations themselves, since they are drawn into historical processes, are again exposed to constant change.

These changes of meaning of historical facts normally take place very slowly. But not always. The incredibly accelerated development of historical events that recently like a storm blew —and still blow— over Eastern and Central Europe, in Germany since autumn 1989, is a rare case for the reflecting minds of scholars engaged with the analysis and interpretation of historical facts: a great opportunity for a better understanding of the historical process. Philology is among those disciplines that can profit from the sudden outburst of acceleration in the evolution of mankind.

Gains could come especially from the analysis of the role literature played in the period before those rapid changes. For the changes as such function as a sort of *ligne de partage des eaux*, as a watershed, beyond which everything looks different. Everything has to be looked at anew, that means for us as scholars of literature that all the texts concerned with the definition and shaping of the world, as it had been before, have to be read again. And it is fascinating to realize that we ourselves as subjects are shaped by the tendencies, ideologies and the so-called realities of history, that we ourselves have changed in the last three years: we realize that we look at the world around us with different eyes, that we read with different eyes the texts that we believed to know and understand so well.

Now, Europe is Europe, America is America. But the decision to speak here about the role literature played in building the border and shaping the differences between the two Germanies in the period of the

division of our country, this decision was made under a certain hypothesis. That hypothesis was that there are some not so much political, but rather anthropological assumptions and convictions expressed in our literature from 1945 onward, which to review and re-consider might be of relevance not only in Germany and Europe but also in Asia, for example in India. So I do hope that —be it after a while of hesitation— one might find it worthwhile to enter with me into the adventure of re-reading and re-discussing some especially successful texts, or parts of texts, by famous German authors, written during the time of the German division between East and West.

Before I actually take up the paper with the German and the Spanish versions of my text-examples, I owe you some explanation on my criteria of selection and my way of presenting these texts:

a) I will concentrate on and restrict my attention to a number of literary texts that refer —either from the side of the German Democratic Republic or from the side of the Federal Republic of Germany— to the difference between the two Germanies, to the fact of the division, the borderline. This reference can be a very implicit, a very indirect one —for literature, especially in the 20th century, as you well know, has developed very delicate ways and means to allude to facts of the political context. I therefore count on your keenness on literary details, your curiosity culture —and your patience.

b) I try to imagine and to describe the process of reference and counter-reference in the literatures of the two Germanies to the differences between their social and political systems *as a dialogue*, a sometimes indirect and almost uninterrupted dialogue. Of course, the term dialogue here is not free from metaphorical implications. A real dialogue implies the existence of clearly definable phases of turn-taking: one side speaks out, the other one answers, and so on. This turn-taking cannot be precisely identified in the dialogue I am going to describe: the turns of reacting to each other tend to overlap. But still, there is on both sides the constant awareness of what the other does.

Since it is impossible to give a detailed survey on the whole dialogical process between the two German literatures or rather between the two Germanies in the medium of literature, from 1945 right up to 1989, I hope to narrow my scope. I do this by using two different methods of arguing, of presenting my views, two methods that vary in their grade

of explicitness and elaboration. My talk therefore will consist of two markedly different parts:

The first phase of the intra-German literary dialogue will be reconstructed much more widely by the representation of several texts or parts of texts. Here I try to apply the so-called method of induction.

But before that, I shall try to describe and define briefly the later phases or rather tendencies of the dialogue. In the first part, the texts may figure as examples and will therefore only be mentioned. My way of arguing in the first part of my paper may therefore be called deductive.

II

1. It is remarkable and it turned out to be of high relevance for the relation between the two Germanies, that the literary discussion on the implications of the division of Germany was opened by the side of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) —even before the two states had been founded as such. The opening was brought forward in a mood of surprising self-confidence, of much ideological conviction and anthropological self-confidence on the side of the East. The intellectual elite of the then shaping GDR apparently had many more ideological convictions and aims than their colleagues in the West. They had a consistent theory of history and of society in history. This phase of self-confidence in an aggressive and provocative mood, lasted from 1946 right up to the beginning of the sixties. Here the foundations for the anthropological concepts of the GDR were laid. The generally optimistic outlook, the acceptance of the prerogative of the state to define the future of the society and to prescribe the themes, the style and form in the arts, lead to a highly consistent appearance of the literary scene as a whole.

I shall deal more explicitly with this phase in the second part of my paper.

2. The reaction from the side of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) to this ideological challenge came with great delay, great hesitation and lack of decisiveness, and it was marked by the following tendencies: the refusal of theoretical (ideological or philosophical) terms in answering the challenge from the other side; instead of that, the use of metaphorical expressions, especially a preference for grotesque images in referring to the reality of the division of our country. That phase of indifference and avoiding a clear attitude towards the problems of social theory can be

observed from the middle of the fifties and it lasted as long as right into the middle of the seventies. The following texts may serve as examples for those indirect, metaphorical or grotesque ways of dealing with the reality of the GDR: Arno Schmidt: *The Heart of Stone (Das steinerne Herz)*, 1956; Uwe Johnson: *The Third Book about Achim (Das dritte Buch über Achim)*, 1961; Horst Bienek: *The Cell (Die Zelle)*, 1968. The only author who at least tried to enter into the arena of ideological terms was H. M. Enzensberger in his essays, to some extent even in his poetry: *The Defense of the Wolves (Die Verteidigung der Wölfe)*, 1958, and *Vernacular Language (Landessprache)*, 1960.

One particular feature of essays, fiction and general discussion of political concepts in the FRG in those years deserves to be looked at closer: the tendency to locate successful revolutionary processes somewhere outside of Europe, if possible in some exotic country. The social heroes of this period were: Mao Tsetung, Ho Chi Minh, Fidel Castro, Che Guevara. Why this dislocation and translocation? Within the dimension of neighborhood, in the close range of vicinity, the socialist movement, the "really existing socialism" had already begun to loose its attraction. The prove for possible success had to be gathered from far away. To make the utopia concrete, to some extent at least, it was shaped as "allotopia", as the better reality not anywhere, but elsewhere. And elsewhere had to be beyond the short range of vicinity.

3. At the end of the sixties the most fruitful phase in the development of literature in the GDR begins, and many of the texts written from then on became bestsellers in the FRG as well, some only in the FRG. Now the critique of the ideology of the own state can be formulated, which had been blocked or held back before. This speaking out still had to be accomplished under the pressure of censorship—a necessity that inspired poets to invent new ways of saying the truth, while avoiding direct conflict with those in power, since the times when the first fables about the lion and the mouse were told. Some works from the period worth mentioning are:

The songs and poems of Wolf Biermann: *The Harp of Wire (Drahtharfe)*, 1965; *With the Tongues of Marx and Angels/Engels (Mit Marx und Engelszungen)*, 1968; *Germany, a Wintertale (Deutschland, ein Wintermärchen)*, 1972; *For my Comrades (Für meine Genossen)*, 1972; Christa Wolf: *Reflecting on Christa T. (Nachdenken über Christa T.)*, 1968; Ulrich Plenzdorf: *The New*

Sufferings of the Young W. (Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.), 1973; Reiner Kunze: *Sensitive Ways (Sensible Wege)*, 1969, *Those wonderful Years (Die wunderbaren Jahre)*, 1976.

In all those books the other Germany, the main anthropological concepts being discussed or applied there, are always present —albeit in the most implicit way.

4. The place where the next turn in the dialogue between the two Germanies is being formulated is —on both sides. From the middle of the seventies onward the wall was broken down —metaphorically at least: the literary scenes of the two parts of the country began to drift towards each other. This was brought about not so much by the Human-Rights-Agreements of Helsinki, which were signed by the GDR as well, but the fact that some of the most successful authors of the GDR left their part of the country or had to leave it.

Most of them openly stated from the beginning that they still regarded themselves as faithful socialists, but that they could not agree with the “really existing socialism” in the part of Germany and the world, where they had happened to live. For them it was a hard task to refuse the applause to escape the embrace of the conservative, liberal or rightwing critics and sponsors —a fight that was sometimes won, as by Biermann, Braasch and others, sometimes, as I see it, partly lost, as by Kunze. This led to a tendency in literary texts to formulate a sort of “symmetrical critique” of the social systems in both German states. What had to be criticized here, the arrogance and brutality of the capitalistic market, was the arrogance and ignorance and bureaucracy of the state-apparatus there, especially of the Party. The text that may stand for that tendency was Biermanns Song “German Miserere” (“The Bloch-Song”), published in the collection of poems *The Prussian Icarus (Preußischer Ikarus)*, 1978.

5. Since the wall fell, the regime in the GDR has collapsed, some books have appeared that —in an immediate reaction— tried to deal with the disappointed hopes set upon an ideology that, above all, had promised to improve the life of the people. They turned out to become “Glances back in Anger”. I want to mention three titles: Stefan Heym: *Built upon Sand (Auf Sand gebaut)*, 1990; Christa Wolf: *What remains (Was bleibt)*, 1990; Reiner Kunze: *Code-Word Lyrics (Deckname Lyrik)*, 1991.

Since 1990, especially as a result of the above mentioned book of Christa Wolf, an angry controversy is raging among the intellectuals

of the re-unified Germany, in which also the most famous authors, like Grass, Biermann and Enzensberger, are taking part.

On the surface the discussion is about the traces of self-pity and self-celebration Christa Wolf has shown in her last book; but underneath, a problem has begun to show consequences that will—as I believe—shape the future development of German literature deeply: the discrepancy between two different understandings of the role of the writer society, of which one has grown in the GDR, the other in the FRG. There are signs that some aspects of the experience of literary life in the former GDR will not be lost completely. By that I mean the experience that it is possible and necessary for an author to take social responsibility, not just to function according to the rules of a system—be it the system of an ideology or the system of the book-market in a liberal state.

I now shall go back to the first period of GDR-literature, concentrating on individual texts and particular problems.

III

1. The first text I want to present is by Bertolt Brecht: “Aufbaulied” (“The Song of Construction” or rather: “Reconstruction”) from 1946.

Bertolt Brecht: “Aufbaulied”

3

Und das Schieberpack, das uns verblieben
 Das nach Freiheit jammert früh und spät
 Und die Herren, die die Schieber schieben
 Schieben wir per Schub aus unserm Staat.
 Fort mit den Trümmern
 Und was Neues hingebaut!
 Um uns selber müssen wir uns selber kümmern
 Und heraus gegen uns, wer sich traut!

4

Denn das Haus ist hin, doch nicht die Wanzen
 Junker, Unternehmer, Potentat.
 Schaufeln her, Mensch, schaufeln wir den ganzen
 Klumpatsch heiter jetzt aus unserm Staat.
 Fort mit den Trümmern
 Und was Neues hingebaut!
 Um uns selber müssen wir uns selber kümmern
 Und heraus gegen uns, wer sich traut!

It is probably the most prominent and the best known poem of the early years of the GDR¹ and it gives one a hint of the innermost cavern of self-understanding —and maybe of self-deceiving as well— of the elite within the new social entity on the eastern side of Germany. I am referring especially to “*Schaufeln... aus unserem Staat*” (Shovelling... something out of our state) —which implies the believe in the possibility of “shovelling” all wrong and guilt-bearing elements in the immediate past out of one part of Germany and— where to? Well, there can be no doubt about that: onto the other, the western side. (This implication will become even more clear, when we come to text No. 3.) These elements, of which the “first socialist society on German ground” hopes to rid itself are ominous: fascism and antisemitism. The inner core of the Hitlerian ideology and program. There is no need to point out that the most profound reasons for the shock on both sides that befell Germany after the fall of the Third Reich, were these two: the realization of having unleashed an offensive and aggressive war against our European neighbours and having murdered six million European Jews —the realization of the second fact having even greater impact on the conscience of most Germans. And now this gesture of “shovelling” all that out of one’s own soul into someone else’s. The fact that such a text was written and published is one thing, another one is that this song was considered to be programmatic and was made into a sort of subsidiary national anthem.

It seems that two presumptions were entangled with each other: the believe that the elite of the new state, which in fact could be proud of having been antifascist from the first rising of Hitler, could speak on behalf of the whole eastern half of German population in not accepting responsibility for fascism and antisemitism, and, secondly, the conviction that the good, the “correct” historical and social concept of the elite could be made general in East Germany by simply being prescribed.

2. Another text by Brecht, written even earlier, while the author was living in California: B. Brecht: “Pride” (“Stolz”), 1946.

Bertolt Brecht: “Stolz”

Als der amerikanische Soldat mir erzählte
Wie die wohlgenährten deutschen Bürgertöchter

¹ Cf. Hans Jürgen GEERDTS, comp., *Literaturgeschichte der DDR in Einzeldarstellungen*, p. 647.

Käuflich waren für Tabak und die Kleinbürgertöchter für
Schokolade
Die ausgehungerten russischen Sklavenarbeiterinnen jedoch
unkäuflich
Verspürte ich Stolz.

This one needs some explanation: Brecht certainly was no racist. The “Russian girl” or rather “woman” showing a self-esteem that the German girls and women do not have, is not privileged by nationality and race but by the fact of having been brought up in a political system that has the concept of shaping the right consciousness (the one that leads to that true self-esteem to be observed in the behavior of the poor Russian women labourers in Germany) — a result of a social education brought about within only one and a half generations. The new morality as a rapid result of the correct social system. Why not follow that example? Of course one has to follow it —if the assumption was correct, that the right consciousness (“das richtige Bewußtsein”) can be made the general one in such a short time by public decree.²

3. And a third text by Brecht, who was the most important author for the young GDR and who might well be called the leading intellectual of that state:

Bertolt Brecht: “Der anachronistische Zug...”

1

Frühling wurd’s in deutschem Land.
über Asch und Trümmerwand
Flog ein erstes Birkengrün
Probweis, delikat und kühn

2

Als von Süden, aus den Tälern
Herbewegte sich von Wählern
Pomphaft ein zerlumpter Zug
Der zwei alte Tafeln trug.

3

Mürbe war das Holz von Stichen
Und die Inschrift sehr verblichen

² Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

Und es war so etwas wie
Freiheit und Democracy.

4
Von den Kirchen kam Geläute.
Kriegerwitwen, Fliegerbräute
Waise, Zitterer, Hinkebein —
Offnen Maules stand's am Rain.

5
Und der Blinde frug den Tauben
Was vorbeizog in den Stauben
Hinter einem Aufruf wie
Freiheit und Democracy.

6
Vornweg schritt ein Sattelkopf
Und er sang aus vollem Kropf:
"Allons, enfants, god save the king
und den Dollar, kling, kling, kling."

"The Anachronistic March" ("Der anachronistische Zug"), 1947, among the texts presented here, is the most explicitly comparing one. The three eldest democracies in the world are quoted and at the same time denounced by what is considered their weak point: France, England, the United States of America. Freedom of speech, representative democracy and free (secret and general) elections are being thus refused from the viewpoint of the early GDR.

4. The following text is only to be analyzed with some respect to its intimacy and delicacy: S. Hermlin: "Time of Togetherness" ("Zeit der Gemeinsamkeit"), 1949.

There seem to be two heroes in this text, one a young Jewish fighter in the Ghetto of Warsaw (fighter against the Nazi-soldiers), the other a German post-war communist and writer. But those two are in fact one. The passage where the identity of the two is established runs as follows:

Stephan Hermlin: "Die Zeit der Gemeinsamkeit" (1949)

Der Brief in meiner Tasche war das Lebendigste in der Welt. Es wäre mir nicht eingefallen, daß man einen Brief nicht im Dunkel lesen kann; ich stellte mir auch nicht die Frage, warum ich ihn gerade jetzt lesen sollte, nachdem ich den ganzen Tag hindurch vielleicht selber

Gründe vorgeschoben, die mich am Lesen gehindert hatten. Eher hätte ich geglaubt, daß B., der mir den Brief anvertraut hatte mit der Bemerkung, es handle sich um ein einzigartiges, so gut wie unbekanntes Schriftstück, das ihm in die Hände geraten sei, nachdem man es unter manchen von Regen und Schmutz fleckigen Dokumenten entdeckt habe, wobei er spüren ließ, daß ich die Überlassung des Briefs seiner besonderen Gunst zu danken hätte — eher hätte ich geglaubt, sage ich, daß B., der mir seit Jahren Phantom gewesen sei, etwas ganz und gar Unwirkliches, ein Substitut des Bewußtseins gewissermaßen, und daß ich diesen langen Brief, den man nicht unbedingt einen Brief zu nennen braucht und dessen Beginn und Ende übrigens nicht aufgefunden wurden, von seinem Verfasser selbst erhalten hätte, weil er ihn für mich bestimmt hatte und weil mir seine Züge so nahe, so ähnlich sein mußten wie das Gesicht, das ich jeden Morgen im Spiegel erblicke.

The two can be one in the imagination of the German writer, due to a chain of surrogates, one substituted for the other: since the writer-Ego is a communist, he is cosmopolitan and a fighter for human freedom in his own right, therefore he can consider himself the true heir of the fighting Jew who died in the ruins of the Warsaw Ghetto; therefore he is the one who inherits the letter of the dead man with its last will: the testament of a man fighting for freedom up to the last breath.

Now, Hermlin is a Jew himself, he was an emigrant from Hitler-Germany; so, he, as an individual, has a good reason to figure himself as the legitimate heir of Mlotek, the fighter. But it is another question of intercultural morality, what impact such a text could make for example on a Polish Jew in Israel, for whom the GDR was a state that never took up diplomatic relations with Israel, which refused to pay any reparation on behalf of Germany as a whole —and for whom Stefan Hermlin after all was a leading intellectual of that state.

5. At the end of the forties already, in the very first years after the foundation of the GDR, a general discussion took place in order to establish which work of the literary heritage should be canonized as obligatory reading within the schools and universities —and what, on the other hand, should be banned. Since the socialist state reserved for itself the right and the power to shape totally the inner lives of individuals, the line between, good and forbidden books was drawn sharply. One of the scholars in the field of literature who provided the arguments for that selection of a suitable literary heritage for the young socialist state was

Georg Lukacs. Permitted and canonized were the “Weimarian Classics” and the so-called “realistic writers” of the last century and the beginning of the 20th like Raabe, Fontane, Heinrich Mann and Thomas Mann. Banned was the whole tendency of Expressionism, writers who were regarded as surrealist and nihilistic, like Kafka. The keyword, under which all those writers were banned, was “decadence”. That dimension of literature, the free play and push of the uncontrolled forces of inner life of man, speaking through images not fit for rationalistic explanation, that as well was shovelled over the borderline cutting right through Germany.

Looking back from now one can understand the anthropological concept behind that policy: the irrational side in the human individual—the emotional, the dreamy, the unconscious parts of human existence—was not only underestimated but also devaluated, denounced as not essential and not appropriate for the “new man” one wanted to create by educational means. The firm belief that this was possible, that mind and soul of individuals in a centrally organized state could develop on command, that rationality and consciousness would be the dominant forces of inner life and existence—that belief formed the literature in the GDR and became the guiding line for literary theory and dogma. Put into Freudian terms: what took place was a collective act of repression (“Verdrängung”). Young, sensitive, self-reflective writers like Franz Fühmann suffered badly from this restrictive policy, as he was later to write in *The Fall of the Angel (Der Sturz des Engels)*. He was not able to accept that the works, for example of Georg Trakl, had been discredited and discharged as un-sound, immoral and decadent.

6. But the unconscious, the realms of dreams and nightmares, the dimension of existence and fate, the dark elements even within the history of mankind, forcing us towards our own destruction, that tendency in mankind that we are today more aware of than ever before, all that, underestimated as it was in the early years of the GDR, could of course not be completely pushed aside. The first doubts, whether the educational shaping of the inner life of all the individuals in a society could be accomplished in the predescribed way, came soon. They came, strange enough as it may seem today, at the same time, while the process of defining the anthropological concept of the totalitarian state was still in the making.

To demonstrate the mixed feelings, the ambiguity, the ambivalence of the early GDR-literature I want to present three short poems, almost lyric

aphorisms, of the same author who created the metaphor of “shovelling over” all the so-believed garbage of history, B. Brecht:

Bertolt Brecht: “Die Lösung”

Nach dem Aufstand des 17. Juni
 Ließ der Sekretär des Schriftstellerverbands
 In der Stalinallee Flugblätter verteilen
 Auf denen zu lesen war, daß das Volk
 Das Vertrauen der Regierung verscherzt habe
 Und es nur durch verdoppelte Arbeit
 Zurückerobern könne. Wäre es da
 Nicht doch einfacher, die Regierung
 Löste das Volk auf und
 Wählte ein anderes?

Bertolt Brecht: “Böser Morgen”

Die Silberpappel, eine ortsbekante Schönheit
 Heut eine alte Vettel. Der See
 Eine Lache Abwaschwasser, nicht rühren!
 Die Fuchsien unter dem Löwenmaul billig und eitel.
 Warum?
 Heut nacht im Traum sah ich Finger, auf mich deutend
 Wie auf einen Aussätzigen. Sie waren zerarbeitet und
 Sie waren gebrochen

Unwissende! schrie ich
 Schuldbewußt.

Bertolt Brecht: “Vor acht Jahren”

Da war eine Zeit
 da war alles hier anders.
 Die Metzgerfrau weiß es.
 Der Postbote hat einen zu aufrechten Gang.
 Und was war der Elektriker?

Even here the underlying comparison with the other side of the border can be seen. No text written in those years was outside of the implicit dialogue with the West. The keywords are: “elections”, “dream” and —given indirectly only— the unconscious heritage of Nazism, visibly in the gesture or posture of a man, for example in his “way of walking” (“Gang”). All these texts belong to the *Elegies from Buckow* (*Buckower Elegien*), written in the summer of 1953, immediately after the “uprising of the 17th of June”.

7. But it was not just a problem of giving in to the power of a totalitarian state. No, it was not even a mere misunderstanding of the human soul, an error or something like that. In the self-assured, provocative attitude of literature in the GDR there was much more: real belief, true hope, a strong utopian tendency, real inspiration.

Franz Fühmann has explained this phenomenon best: what made the rationalistic ideology of socialism so attractive, especially to intellectuals and writers, was the consistence and coherence of that concept, the great perspective, the completeness of its explanations of all aspects of history, of social and individual life, of economy as well as philosophy, of psychology as well as education, morality and law, of international politics as well as international aid and assistance. The longing for such an all-round concept, for the all-comprising view, was what allured the writers, what made them loyal. But: loyal to whom? To that institution, that was in charge of the whole: the party, the state, the collective, the society, the theory of dialectic materialism, defining itself as strictly scientific.

It is strange to see that for the rational and enlightened mind of those writers, as they understood, there was a strong father, maybe even father-god, back at the wheel. And with regard to that the disillusionment, the doubts, the revealing self-reflection, the remorse, came immediately after the enchantment.

To show this change in the mind of the certainly greatest writer of the whole history of the GDR, I have selected three passages from two books of Christa Wolf. The first two are from *The Divided Heaven* (*Der geteilte Himmel*), finished in 1961, some weeks after the building of the Berlin Wall (the fact of the wall being mentioned at the very end of the text), and one from *Patterns of Childhood* (*Kindheitsmuster*), that was published in 1976. Between those two books there was another one, *Reflecting on Christa T.* (*Nachdenken über Christa T.*), where the process of self-reflection already is the main theme.

Christa Wolf: "Der geteilte Himmel" (1963)

Rita kam jeden Abend zu spät nach Hause und wurde immer erregter, je länger Schwarzenbach dableib. Zum erstenmal erlebte sie, wie eine höhere Hand in die Geschehnisse gewöhnlicher Leute eingriff, die kleine Friseurin, den Brigadier, den Abteilungsleiter aus der Stadtverwaltung packte. Ach, der? dachte sie manchmal zweifelnd. Und die auch? Hatte es ihr an Phantasie gefehlt, daß sie sich diese Menschen immer nur in ihrem alltäglichen Kreis denken konnte? Mußte erst einer von weit her kommen wie der nüchterne Schwarzenbach, um mühelos den

gewöhnlichsten Leuten alles mögliche Ungewöhnliche zuzutrauen?

“Zwanzig”, sagte Erwin Schwarzenbach am vorletzten Abend. “Nicht schlecht für einen Kreis.”

“Neunzehn”, verbessert ihn Rita. Sie verbarg eine kleine, ziehende Enttäuschung —woher kam die eigentlich?

“Zwanzig”, sagte er und reichte ihr, auch jetzt gleichmütig, noch einen Fragebogen über den Tisch. Der war nicht ausgefüllt, aber in der ersten Spalte stand mit seiner Schrift ihr Name.

Ach, ich? dachte sie nun und war nicht so überrascht, wie sie es hätte sein sollen.

“Alles wäre leicht”, sagte Rita zu Schwarzenbach, “wenn sie dort als Kannibalen’ auf den Straßen herumliefen, oder wenn sie hungerten, oder wenn ihre Frauen rotgeweinte Augen hätten. Aber sie fühlen sich ja wohl. Sie bemitleiden uns ja. Sie denken: Das muß doch jeder auf den ersten Blick sehen, wer in diesem Land reicher und wer ärmer ist. Vor einem Jahr wäre ich mit Manfred gegangen, wohin er wollte. Heute...”

Das ist es, was Schwarzenbach wissen will. “Heute?” fragt er gespannt.

Rita überlegt. “Der Sonntag nach meinem Besuch bei Manfred war der dreizehnte August”, sagt sie, ohne direkt auf Schwarzenbachs Frage zu antworten. “Früh, als ich die ersten Nachrichten gehört hatte, ging ich ins Werk. Als ich sah, daß ich nicht die einzige war, wurde mir bewußt, wie ungewöhnlich es war, daß so viele am Sonntag in den Betrieb kommen. Manche waren gerufen worden, andere nicht.”

Schwarzenbach weiß, was sie sagen will. Es ist nicht sehr verschieden von dem, was er selbst, was sie alle an jenem Sonntag erlebt haben.

“Liebten Sie ihn nicht?” fragte Erwin Schwarzenbach. “Haben nicht viele Mädchen blindlings nur danach gefragt? Warum nicht auch Sie?”

Als ob ich es nicht versucht hätte! Wie viele Nächte habe ich wach gelegen und versuchsweise “dort” an seiner Seite gelebt, wie viele Tage hab ich mich gequält. Aber die Fremde ist mir fremd geblieben, und dies alles hier heiß und nah.

“Der Sog einer großen geschichtlichen Bewegung...”, sagt Erwin Schwarzenbach und nickt. Rita muß lächeln. Auch er.

Aber wer sagt denn, daß sie nicht sogar damals, an Manfreds Seite, in diesem elenden Park, etwas Ähnliches empfunden hat?

The implications of these passages from Christa Wolf’s book are, as follows:

Rita, a young, gifted girl, is surrounded by several men, markedly senior to her: Schwarzenbach (her colleague, the discoverer of her

intellectual abilities, a close friend and potential lover), Meternagel (leader of a workers-brigade, fatherly friend, admirer, sponsor, teacher, most trusted person in the world), Ernst Wendland (director of the firm, friend, potential lover and partner). Manfred, her fiancé, also ten years older than Rita, is the youngest of them all, closest to Rita's own generation!

One can read that book now as the confession of love —love for a great father-figure, father as well as potential lover, whereas the rational and clear decision for the “great historical movement”— including the side-glance to the west, where there is no such great perspective —can now be read as a document of a profound self-deception. A young woman, not knowing herself pretends to love the “great historical movement” and loves her father-*imago*.

It is impressive and moving how Christa Wolf has worked herself into an understanding of the forces of the unconscious within herself. She reaches there by revealing and re-wording her childhood. So she ends up with the confession that it is necessary to count on and cope with the unknown within ourselves. Since any social system tends to deny, to underestimate, to devaluate and even to suppress, at least to cover up, those inner forces, those potentially disastrous and potentially saving emotions within us, it is the duty of the artist and writer to balance that deficit within the society in which he happens to live. It was true for the Nazi-Era, it was true under a degenerated socialist system, it is true in a capitalistic world-market system. That confession of Christa Wolf can be seen in the passage quoted from *Patterns of Childhood*.

Christa Wolf: “Kinderheitsmuster” (1976)

(Heikel bis heute, der Verbindung nachzugehen, die sich damals zwischen dem namenlosen Judenjungen, den Nelly durch Leo Siegmann kannte, und der weißen Schlange hergestellt haben muß. Was hat der blasse picklige Junge mit Kröten, Spinnen und Eidechsen zu tun? Was diese wiederum mit der gläubigen fanatischen Stimme, die in jener Sonnenwendnacht vom brennenden Holzstoß her rief: “Rein wollen wir uns halten und unser Leben reifen lassen für Fahne, Führer und Volk!”

—Nichts, möchtest du sagen, nichts haben sie miteinander zu tun. So muß die richtige Antwort lauten, und was gäbest du darum, wenn sie auch noch wahr wäre. Ein Mann deines Alters, dem nach seiner eigenen Aussage seine Kindheit ins “Nichts” versunken ist, erklärt: Bis heute könne er nicht unbefangen —das heißt ohne Schuldgefühl—, mit einem Juden reden. Du überlegst, wie man ohne die Kenntnis der

eigenen Kindheit Bildnisse machen kann —der Mann ist Bildhauer—, zum Beispiel für Kinder. Kein Vorwurf. Eine Frage.)

Wie weiß man also nicht. Doch es geschah, daß sie, Nelly, durch eine Vermischung und Verquickung scheinbar entlegener Bestandteile das Wort "unrein" nicht mehr hören konnte, ohne gleichzeitig Ungeziefer, die weiße Schlange und das Gesicht jenes Judenjungen zu sehen. Wir wissen wenig, solange wir nicht wissen, wie dergleichen geschieht.

I can only hope that some of the experiences of the literary dialogue between the two Germanies of the last decades will not be lost in a reunified country. To sum up, I would like to mention three crucial aspects of the relation between the author and his public:

a) Literature has the great chance of working as a freelance-morality, but its best possibilities are reduced and finally lost, when it decides to *serve* any institutional ideology;

b) literature betrays its own possibility of keeping the future of mankind open, when it allows itself to be instrumentalized into a medium of persuasion of the individual to delegate moral responsibility to an already installed collective power;

c) a genuine aim for literature in the highly complex conditions of social life nowadays seems to be: to elaborate and bring to light the normally invisible consequences of the ruling system that tend to shape the unconscious structures of the individuals.

In trying to do that, the subject of the writer is his own model-case.

Primer texto

Bertolt Brecht: "Canción de construcción"

3

Y a la bola de aprovechados que se nos quedó
y que llora por la libertad de la mañana hasta la noche
y a los señores que empujan a los aprovechados
a empujones los empujaremos fuera de nuestro estado.

Fuera con los escombros.

¡Que se construya algo nuevo!

De nosotros mismos nos tenemos que preocupar

y ¡que salga en contra de nosotros el que tenga el valor!

4

Si la casa está demolida, quedan los zánganos,
los terratenientes, los empresarios, el potentado.

¡Que traigan las palas, hombre, apaleemos alegremente
toda la pacotilla fuera de nuestro estado.

Fuera con los escombros.

¡Que se construya algo nuevo!

De nosotros mismos nos tenemos que preocupar

y ¡que salga en contra de nosotros el que tenga el valor!

Segundo texto

B. Brecht: "Orgullo"

Cuando el soldado americano me contó

cómo las bien nutridas hijas de los burgueses alemanes

se vendían por tabaco y las hijas de los pequeños burgueses
por chocolate

mientras que las famélicas rusas del trabajo forzado no

eran venales

Sentí orgullo.

Tercer texto

B. Brecht: "La marcha anacrónica"

1

Llegó la primavera a la tierra alemana.

Las cenizas y los escombros

se cubrieron, a título de prueba, del primer verdor
de los abedules, delicado y atrevido

2

Cuando desde el sur, desde los valles,

de electores se vino acercando

una pomposa marcha en hilachas

cargando dos viejas tablas

3

Carcomida la madera

la inscripción muy deslavada

y era algo como

Libertad y Democracy

4

De las iglesias llegaba el repique de campanas

las viudas de los combatientes, las novias de los pilotos

huérfanos, temblequeantes, claudicantes-

boquiabiertos se paraban a la orilla.

5

Y el ciego le preguntó al sordo
 qué era lo que estaba desfilando en las polvaredas
 siguiendo un llamamiento como
 Libertad y Democracy

6

En primera fila marchaba un cabeza de chorlito
 cantando a voz en cuello:
 “Allons, enfants, god save the king
 y al dólar, tintin, tilín.

Cuarto texto

Stephan Hermlin: “El tiempo de la comunidad”

La carta en mi bolsa era lo más vivo en el mundo. No se me hubiera ocurrido que no se puede leer una carta en la oscuridad: tampoco me hice la pregunta de por qué justo ahora tenía que leerla, después de haber pasado el día entero buscando pretextos que me impidieran la lectura. Más bien hubiera pensado que B., quien me confió la carta observando que se trataba de un documento único, prácticamente desconocido, que le cayó entre las manos, después de que se descubrió entre otros documentos manchados por la lluvia y el polvo, y haciéndome sentir como un favor especial el que me cediera la carta —más bien hubiera pensado que B., a quien conozco desde hace años y lo volví a encontrar después de mucho tiempo, fuera un fantasma, algo totalmente irreal, un sustituto de la conciencia, por así decirlo, y que esta larga carta, que no necesariamente tiene que llamarse carta y cuyo principio y fin, por lo demás, no se encontraron, la había recibido directamente de parte de su autor porque él me la había destinado a mí y porque sus rasgos me eran tan cercanos, tan parecidos como la cara que cada mañana veo en el espejo.

Quinto texto

B. Brecht: “La solución”

Después de la insurrección del 17 de junio
 mandó repartir el secretario de la asociación de escritores
 hojas volantes en el paseo Stalin
 en las cuales se podía leer que el pueblo
 perdió la confianza del gobierno
 y que sólo podía recuperarla
 por trabajo redoblado. ¿No sería en este caso
 más fácil que el gobierno
 disolviera el pueblo
 y eligiera otro?

Sexto texto**B. Brecht: “Mañana malévola”**

El álamo blanco, una belleza conocida en todo el pueblo
 hoy, una vieja bruja. El lago
 un charco de aguas negras, ¡no remover!

Las fucsias debajo de la boca de dragón, baratas y fatuas.

¿Por qué?

Hoy por la noche en el sueño vi dos dedos, señalando hacia mí
 como hacia un leproso. Dedos gastados por el trabajo y
 rotos.

¡Ignorantes! grité,
 la conciencia culpable.

Séptimo texto**B. Brecht: “Hace ocho años”**

Érase un tiempo
 cuando todo aquí era diferente
 La mujer del carnicero lo sabe.

El cartero camina con la frente demasiado en alto.

Y ¿qué fue el electricista?

Octavo texto**Christa Wolf: “El cielo dividido” (1963)**

Cada noche, Rita llegaba demasiado tarde a casa y cada vez se excitaba más, mientras más tiempo se quedaba Schwarzenbach. Por primera vez presencié cómo una fuerza mayor se metía en los destinos de la gente común y corriente, cómo cautivaba a la pequeña peluquera, al miembro de la brigada, al jefe de departamento de la municipalidad. Ah, ¿éste? pensaba ella a veces, dudosa. Y, ¿aquella también? ¿Habría carecido de fantasía porque tan sólo se imaginaba a esa gente en su ambiente cotidiano? ¿Tenía que llegar alguien como el sobrio Schwarzenbach para sospechar las cosas más descomunales de parte de la gente más común?

“Veinte”, dijo Erwin Schwarzenbach la penúltima noche, “no está nada mal para un distrito.”

“Diecinueve”, lo corrigió Rita. Ocultó un ligero tirón de desencanto
 ¿por dónde le habrá surgido?

“Veinte”, dijo él y, aún ahora ecuánime, le pasó otro cuestionario por encima de la mesa. No estaba lleno, pero en el primer renglón y escrito por su mano estaba el nombre de ella.

Ah, ¿yo?, pensó y no se sorprendió tanto como se tenía que haber sorprendido.

“Todo sería fácil”, dijo Rita a Schwarzenbach, “si allá caminaran en la calle como caníbales o si se murieran de hambre, o si sus mujeres

tuvieran los ojos enrojecidos por el llanto. Lo que pasa es que ellos se sienten a gusto. Es que nos tienen lástima a nosotros. Piensan: salta a los ojos quién es más rico y quién más pobre en este país. Hace un año me hubiera ido con Manfred, a dónde él quisiera. Hoy...

Esto es lo que quiere saber Schwarzenbach. “¿Hoy?”, pregunta con viva atención.

Rita se pone a pensar. “El domingo después de que fui a ver a Manfred fue el trece de agosto”, dice, sin contestar directamente la pregunta de Schwarzenbach. “En la madrugada, cuando había escuchado las primeras noticias, fui a la planta. Cuando vi que no era la única, me di cuenta de cuán extraordinario era que tanta gente fuera a la planta, un día de domingo. A algunos los habían llamado, a otros no.”

Schwarzenbach sabe lo que ella quiere decir. No es tan diferente de la vivencia que él mismo, que todos ellos habían experimentado aquel domingo.

“¿Usted no lo amaba?”, preguntó Erwin Schwarzenbach. “¿No es que muchas jovencitas exclusiva y ciegameamente se preocupan por esto? ¿Por qué usted no?”

Como si yo no lo hubiera intentado. ¿Cuántas noches me quedé sin sueño e intenté imaginarme cómo viviría “allá” a su lado, cuántos días me atormenté. Pero la tierra lejana permanecía alejada, y aquí todo está ardiendo y cercano.

“El imán de un gran movimiento histórico...”, dice Erwin Schwarzenbach e inclina la cabeza en señal de asentimiento. Le da risa a Rita. ¡Hasta él! Pero, ¿quién quisiera negar que ella en aquel momento, al lado de Manfred, en este miserable parque, hubiera sentido algo similar?

Noveno texto

Christa Wolf: “Patrón de infancia” (1976)

(Muy delicado hasta hoy día el tratar de aclarar la relación que se tenía que haber trabado en aquel entonces entre el muchacho judío sin nombre, al que Nelly conoció por conducto de Leo Siegmann, y la víbora blanca. ¿Qué tiene que ver el muchacho pálido y granujoso con los sapos, arañas y lagartijas? Y, ¿qué tienen que ver éstos por su parte con la voz creyente fanática que en aquella noche de solsticio llamó desde la fogata: “¡Mantengámonos puros y hagamos que madure nuestra vida en aras de la bandera, del Führer y del pueblo!”

—Nada, querrás decir, no tiene nada en común. Ésta tiene que ser la respuesta correcta, y ¡cuánto darías porque fuera cierto! Un hombre de tu edad, cuya niñez, como afirma, se hundió en la “nada”, constata que hasta hoy día es incapaz de hablar ingenuamente, o sea sin sentimientos de culpa, con un judío. Te pones a pensar cómo es posible, sin conocimiento de su propia niñez, hacer esculturas —el

hombre es escultor—, por ejemplo para niños. Ningún reproche, es una pregunta.)

Bueno, no se sabe cómo. Sin embargo, se dio el caso que ella, Nelly, mezclando y confundiendo elementos supuestamente remotos, ya no podía oír la palabra “impuro” sin ver al mismo tiempo alimañas, la víbora blanca y la cara de aquel muchacho judío. Sabemos muy poco en tanto que no sepamos cómo se dan esas cosas.

(Traducciones de Marlene RALL)

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