

included Leib Kvitko (executed in 1952), whose poems were memorized by millions of Soviet school children, and Rachel Baumvol, the author of several books of nursery rhymes, who was recently allowed to leave for Israel. The study of Yiddish led the late Uriel Weinreich, the Columbia linguist, to the general subject of languages in contact. Similarly, a scholar in the field of Yiddish literature must really be a comparatist, with Slavic literatures as one of his main areas of competence.

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POETRY IN EAST GERMANY: ADJUSTMENTS, VISIONS, AND PROVOCATIONS, 1945–1970. By *John Flores*. Yale Germanic Studies, 5. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1971. xiv, 354 pp. \$12.50.

After a long period of neglect, the literature of East Germany currently seems to be fashionable in the West. Books devoted to this subject almost outnumber those on West German literature. The reasons for this are partly political (the revaluation of the GDR by the Brandt government) and partly cultural (the emergence of an independent, self-conscious new generation of East German poets and novelists). John Flores's book on East German poetry from 1945 to 1970 is the first comprehensive study of the subject in English (it compares very favorably indeed with Gregor Laschen's *Lyrrik der DDR*, Frankfurt am Main, 1971). The author, who is an assistant professor at Stanford University, spent a year in Berlin on a Fulbright research grant. He sets out to summarize the development of poetry in the GDR under the somewhat arbitrary headings "adjustments," "visions," and "revisions." Problems of adjustment were certainly acute for poets such as Stephan Hermlin, Franz Fühmann, Peter Huchel, and Johannes Bobrowski, to whom Flores devotes the main part of his book. The conflict between instant comprehensibility on the one hand and the officially required generalities on the other proved too much for this older generation. It was not until authors such as Wolf Biermann, Volker Braun, and Karl Mickel developed a style well suited to the new political situation after the Berlin Wall was built that East German poetry really came into its own. Flores's detailed interpretations of Huchel and Bobrowski are illuminating and introduce some new aspects of the work of these poets, whereas his perceptive comments on Biermann, Kunerts, and Braun often tend to diminish the considerable differences in quality and significance of the poems discussed.

The difficulty facing every Western critic of East German poetry goes beyond the normal analysis of creative literature. The temptation to seek antigovernment sentiments in almost every line seems to be irresistible, even for a sober scholar like Flores. Thus his selection of representative poets is not entirely unbiased: there is no mention of Uwe Gressmann; Erich Arendt is unaccountably dismissed; and so is Georg Maurer, whose influence on many of the younger poets simply cannot be ignored. Admittedly it is not easy to come to terms with poems that contain "powerful, driving sections" but are made unreadable by "empty socialist realist platitudes," as Flores says. His work represents a piece of good solid research and will serve well as an introductory survey of East German poetry until such time as a more balanced and definitive study appears.

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