

Mollmann, Steven

Username: scm08007
Email: steven.mollmann@uconn.edu

TN#: 337417 



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New Trends in 20th Century Drama: A Survey since Ibsen and Shaw.

By FREDERICK LUMLEY. New York: Oxford University Press, 1972. ix + 418 pp.

The century was already half over when this work first appeared as *Trends in 20th Century Drama* (1956). Thus, "new" is inappropriate for a fourth edition with, by and large, the same center of gravity. Then as now, the first two thirds consist of thematic chapters on major authors and developments from early to mid-century and the final third, of sections on cultural areas (Britain, U.S.A., France, other European countries), plus a review of theater in relation to mass media. The downgrading of certain authors and addition or upgrading of others, mainly in the latter omnibus sections, scarcely lends much freshness to Lumley's format or interests. But his section "The Image Breakers," expanding on some mere two pages originally devoted to Dürrenmatt, does form a happy exception. Here Lumley finds that *Der Besuch der alten Dame* "raises Dürrenmatt to the level of the leading playwright of our times," pays extended attention to Max Frisch, and explores the work of Peter Weiss, whose *Marat Sade* he deems "one of the most important plays in the contemporary theatre." In contrast, in an updating of Ionesco and acknowledgment of Adamov and Genet as luminaries of French "anti-theatre," he detects virtually nothing to which his humanist sentiments can respond and sticks with his earlier position, reiterated in the fourth edition as "The Case against Beckett." If Theater of the Absurd has inevitably become "the mainstream," Lumley prefers iconoclasts who help us make the painful transition "between two ages," rather than producing only "an incoherent exaggeration of life. . . with. . . lack of continuity." Avowedly partisan, he opposes the cult of "false pessimism" which "threatens to destroy the humanistic framework so essential for the concept of tragedy." The tenets of the concept in question appear so evident to him that he does not bother to explain them.

We may infer, however, that Lumley's predilection for "traditional" versus "schismatic" modernism allies him with the inventor of this distinction, the critic Frank Kermode, perhaps the leading British exponent of belief in Western civilization and need for the survival of humane values in literature. Regrettably, Lumley does not display his countryman's intellectual and stylistic powers on behalf of this noble cause. From its simplistic starting contrast between a "pessimistic" Pirandello and "optimistic" Giraudoux, the book is predicated on the biographical fallacy. For example: "Pirandello's work can only be appreciated fully as a parallel to his life" (p. 19); "*Siegfried* is not Giraudoux's masterpiece, but in no other play can we identify the author so closely with his leading character" (p. 45). We hear nothing adequate about Pirandello's thought, even though the playwright himself left a wealth of critical commentary and discussed the roots of his dramatic revolution in such great romantics as Tieck, Friedrich Schlegel, and E.T.A. Hoffmann. We learn far too little about analogous contemporary experimentation in the early decades of the century: for example, nothing at all about Ramón del Valle-Inclán's theater of the *esperpento* ("absurd, grotesque") in Spain or Vsevolod Emilevich Meyerhold's anti-illusionistic theater in Russia. When Lumley tries to act as a spokesman for the standards of "any Christian — indeed. . . any self-respecting — society," the discussion, as in the case of Sartre, can degenerate into opinionated rambling. The result is merely that the playwright's "negative and destructive" practice is assigned to the general camp of subversion, rather than to some more precise category.

Despite its good index, the book is not a resource for those browsing for background in the intellectual and technical history of drama. Rather, its impressionistic psychologizing and philosophizing furnishes a document of a

particular kind of taste. Outside a few translated plays in the Anglo-American repertory, the theater of nations beyond France seems to have only tangential significance. In fact, though Lumley appreciates several playwrights whose language is German and dislikes a number whose language is French, French writing and literary attitudes influence him. He addresses himself, in a prewar conversational tone, to the great English-speaking audience which, traditionally, has been more receptive to French views and which had even shaped a large part of its repertory of "world" drama as elements in a literary hegemony engineered by the metropolises London, Paris, and New York. In compensation, he offers a richer coverage of British authors and developments and relates important information about the successes of Ustinov, Pinter, and Rattigan in film and television. We gain a sound feeling for the succession of moments in modern British theater.

Typical of the looseness in argument and syntax is the use of a clause without any clear antecedent in the course of complaining about O'Neill's faults as a writer (" . . . as in the two examples already given" [p. 116]): The book is replete with sloppy constructions, using "like" in unlikely ways, and with typographical, grammatical, and spelling errors which distract. The bibliography lists O'R as still associated with Tulane and there is no representation of other reliable American publications such as *Drama Survey*, *Modern International Drama*, etc. Among the books which could beneficially be added as references is George Wellwarth's *The Theatre of Protest and Paradox* (1964).

GERALD GILLESPIE · *Stanford University*

Expressionism as an International Literary Phenomenon: 21 Essays and a Bibliography.

Edited by ULRICH WEISSTEIN. Didier-Akademiai Kiadó, Paris-Budapest, 1973, 360 pp.

This volume is a collection of essays, some devoted to the theoretical problems of Expressionism, others to Expressionism and its relation to various movements and art forms, still others to Expressionism in individual countries. The editorial work along with a useful bibliography — an international, interlingual enterprise — were done by Ulrich Weisstein. (Spanish-Portuguese as well as Czech and Slovak Expressionism are not treated due to circumstances beyond the editor's control.) Weisstein also contributes the first two theoretical chapters, one on Expressionism as an international literary phenomenon, the other on the question of whether Expressionism should be regarded as a style or a *Weltanschauung*. His cautious conclusions are: Expressionism is a *Weltanschauung* because it involves the "soul state," it is Activism in its socio-political aspects, and it is also a style because it focuses on the *how* rather than on the *what*.

G. Vajda traces Expressionism back to the "mainstream of contemporary Idealistic thought," naming Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, but also Kant and Husserl its "spiritual fathers." He emphasizes that the voluntaristic character of Expressionism is due to its aiming at the essence of things. As opposed to the Expressionists, Vajda claims, Classicists, Realists, and even Naturalists "subordinated their art to a representation of a reality which was independent of them" (46). True, Expressionism can only be measured against a norm: but what is the norm? Certainly, objectivity is one of the most elusive of norms. The choice of characters and the execution of plot subjectivizes "objective

reality" but can we not also claim that every work of art is an objectivization of a world view imposed by the artist on his medium?

I. Foreign Influences on German Expressionism

A. Arnold, in his essay "Foreign Influences on German Expressionist Prose," postulates that although it is generally accepted that Expressionistic style in prose tends toward parataxis, ellipsis, and, ultimately, syntactical distortion, Expressionists "were ready to use any style whatsoever" (81). Thematically, the transformation of the human being into a new, preferably extraordinary, creation stands in the center and thus Nietzsche's influence is emphasized. Expressionism was strongly affected by Futurism, and French and other Italian influences are also mentioned here in addition to the effect of Wilde, Shaw, and Dostoevsky.

Foreign influences on German Expressionist poetry are discussed by R. Grimm and H.J. Schmidt who claim that French Symbolism and the rebellion of Baudelaire and Rimbaud had a great effect on the young generation in Germany. However, this influence is not traced further. (Baudelaire was deeply impressed by E.A. Poe who, in turn, was directly influenced by E.T.A. Hoffmann; thus, by the time German Expressionism was born, the development had gone full circle.) German Expressionist drama and its foreign models are investigated by H.F. Garten. The political and social issues are traced to the years of World War I and the author claims that with this "left wing fixation" the movement lost its character "for the essence of Expressionism was the spiritual regeneration of man, unrelated to any social program" (68).

E.R. Brinkman, comparing and contrasting literary movements with Expressionism, concludes that one of the points where Dadaism and Expressionism meet is "the turning from art to action" (103). He postulates that the most important "ancestor" of the Modernists was Apollinaire in whose work they all could find a common denominator.

II. Expressionism in Painting, Music and Film

One of the most interesting essays of this volume, "Expressionist Literature and Painting," was contributed by P. Hadermann. He states that the intensity of subjective life is conveyed by Expressionism with more vigor than by any other style in the past (112) because man is expressed in it as an equal to his world. After discussing the major groups — Der Blaue Reiter, Die Brücke, Die Novembergruppe, Die Aktion, etc. — in their artistic and social function, the author points out the very peculiar Expressionism of Austria where the decaying monarchy created an artistic climate more closely akin to the morbidity of the *fin-de-siècle*. Also thought-provoking is the statement regarding the Expressionist technique of juxtaposing nearly interchangeable images, a process equated with the pictorial conception of the Expressionist artists who also presented the object on a single level — the artist's subjectivity alone determining the relationships and proportions (136).

Another enjoyable contribution is H.A. Lea's study on Expressionist literature and music. Lea proposes that "... Expressionism is a stage through which the arts had to pass in their development from Romanticism to abstraction" (142), pointing out that the functional use of ugliness can already be found in Beethoven and that the combination of the *elevated* and the *popular* were also steps toward a more modern music. Schönberg, Berg, and Webern, before adopting the twelve-tone method, also wrote Expressionist music and even some Expressionist texts. Lea emphasizes that the turning to atonal music was a revolutionary development of more radical proportions than any new literary evolution. The breakdown of harmony

creates a *Verfremdung* that actually may intensify the piece beyond its ordinary capacity. (For a definition of *Verfremdung*, Lea quotes Brecht whose argument is almost identical with Shklovskij's definition of *ostranenie* in *Art and Form*, 1919.)

A definition of Expressionist film on the basis of technique is rendered by L.H. Eisner. She points out that in contrast to the Reinhardtian tradition, Expressionist lighting technique was based on *clash*, and maintains that there is altogether no more than a handful of pure Expressionist films. She also has gone on to discuss one more point: to what extent the very existence of film and the possibility of a cinematic approach to life influenced Expressionism.

III. Expressionism in Western Europe and in the United States

In a stimulating article, R. Vowles discusses Expressionism in Scandinavia and the inherent antinomy: movement vs. national identity. Despite such, German Expressionism found no fertile soil in Norway, and Swedish Expressionism was definitely Strindbergian. According to Vowles, the Danish scene was even more complex. The theater was directly influenced by German Expressionism, though the satirical rather than the visionary function of German Expressionism prevailed. As a bridge between the East and the West, folklore, prominent in Eastern Europe, found its way into Expressionist works. A detailed discussion is provided by P. Hadermann and J. Weisberger on Expressionism in Belgium and Holland. According to the authors, Expressionism never dominated the Dutch scene while the Flemish response was thoroughly complicated by the national issue. Important periodicals like *Goedendag*, the *Aula*, and *Ruimte* are discussed here. Due to the traditional French orientation, following a brief success limited to the northern parts of Belgium, Expressionism quickly lost ground to other -isms. Similarly in Holland, a desire for "stricter control" soon made the Dutch artists return to the "regular forms of syntax, meter and rhyme" (258).

Two articles deal with English Expressionism and one with the American theater. U. Weisstein views Vorticism as an outgrowth of Expressionism manifesting itself primarily in the poetry of Ezra Pound. He also investigates Vorticism and Expressionism as they differ in intention, and, briefly, Pound's theory on Vorticist music.

B. Mitchell, in his contribution "Expressionism in English Drama and Prose Literature," rightly maintains that it was primarily a strong anti-German bias that hindered the direct impact of Expressionism in England although the plays of Kayser and Toller were successful in London. One can only agree with Mitchell that the themes themselves could have held little attraction for the English. Even in the case of Ireland's O'Casey, the author claims a parallel development of theme and style rather than the direct impact of German Expressionism.

In tracing the influence of Expressionism on the American theater, M. Valgema investigates the work of playwrights like O'Neill, Odets, Cummings, and Rice, among whom O'Neill directly spoke of his indebtedness to Strindberg and the Expressionist movement. The author also treats the younger generation of dramatists — A. Miller, Albee, etc. — and while never actually stating explicitly, he obviously views Expressionism as more of a technique of expression than as an independent movement in literature.

IV. Russia and Eastern Europe

Two essays are devoted to Expressionism in Russia: E. Bristow's "Expressionist Stage Techniques and the Russian Theater" and V. Markov's "Russian Expressionism." Bristow discusses the theater of Meyerhold and

his views on the grotesque. Also, analyzing some of V. Mayakovsky's poems, he states that "expressionistic devices are combined with futuristic themes" (216). V. Markov goes even further and questions the very existence of a genuine Expressionism in Russia where the self-appointed leaders of the movement claimed it to be a "synthesis of all facets of Futurism" (317). Since Imagism overpowered the literary scene, Markov contends that the few "would be" Expressionists tried first to join the movement but were "eventually given a cold shoulder" (320). Finally, in this delightfully written essay, Markov emphasizes that the second phase of Russian Expressionism, connected with the names of Lapin and Gabrilovic, actually came closer to the German model than any of its simultaneous variants.

Z. Konstantinović contends that the Slovenians were the first among the South Slavs to publish "decidedly" Expressionist poetry. Of the Croats, the author considers Krleža and Simić as Expressionists. According to Konstantinović, in Serbia Expressionism burst in and then disappeared in an "unexpected and vehement" fashion, while in Bulgaria — the most influenced by Russian literature — it was introduced by G. Milev. In this southern region Expressionism took a different profile for each country; therefore, the author's remarks regarding the themes and ideologies of South Slavic Expressionism are of special interest. He claims them to be leftist and to retain close ties with folk poetry.

A. Dima and D. Grigorescu claim that no organized group of Expressionists existed in Rumania and that Expressionism made its influence felt primarily in the plastic arts. It was socially oriented — Tonitza, Marulescu, Cristae, etc. are discussed here — and, again, had lively contacts with folklore.

Hungarian Expressionism is treated by M. Szabolcsi. Making a clear distinction between Expressionism as a movement and a stylistic device, this renowned author postulates that not just in Hungary "but in the whole of Europe. . . Expressionism can be the result of a step-by-step evolution from Symbolism, with Symbolist Expressionism constituting an intermediate stage" (288). Thus he also refers to "unconscious" and "proto" Expressionist artists. The essay devotes considerable space to L. Kassák, the leader of the Hungarian avant-garde, and to his journals *Tett* and *Ma*, as well as to his *Manifesto*. Szabolcsi also treats a part of Expressionist ideology, branching out to serve as the emotional basis of Hungarian fascism — its language becoming the idiom of the right wing press. The only name missing from this otherwise excellent and objective essay is B. Balázs. An investigation of his work (especially his "Bluebeard's Castle") and his views on film-making would have added valuable new insights to the study of Hungarian Expressionism.

By contrast, J.J. Lipski, in his essay on Polish Expressionism, does not seem to distinguish between method and movement. His efforts to separate the essential ideas pertaining to Polish Modernism, interpreting in seven points the "fundamental incompatibility between Expressionism and Symbolism," are not always successful. Traditionally, Lipski considers S. Przybyszewski the "godfather" of Polish Expressionism and his journal *Zycie* the first Modernist periodical. The *oeuvre* of J. Kasprówicz, W. Berent, and the plays of S. Wyspiański are discussed and the latter's *Wyzwolenie* (1903) "might well be regarded as one of the first Expressionist dramas written in European literature" (305). Granted the effect of the *Młoda Polska* was to influence every trend in modern Polish literature, the author fails to clarify the difference between it and the Scamander group — a much greater difference than merely a chronological one. Of some interest is the discussion of the Czartak group whose advocacy of the uncorrupted element in the peasantry and in folk art is a familiar phenomenon in every East European country. At the end of the article, Lipski returns to discussing writers — B. Schulz and K. Trucha-

ski — who were raised in "a cultural borderland" and were, therefore, greatly influenced by German literature. The lack of Czech and Slovak contributions creates not only a gap in an otherwise unusually complete treatment of Eastern Europe, but also "robs" (possibly uninitiated) Western reader of the important theoretical achievements of the Prague Literary School of J. Mukarovsky, R. Jakobson, and others, a group whose activities and publications would be extremely relevant. The topic of this volume is virtually inexhaustible and although the contributors illuminated many dark corners, there are always points which the reader could raise. I would have welcomed more discussion regarding the grotesque as well as some theorizing regarding the possible effects on Expressionism of psychoanalysis, especially the Jungian theory of the "collective unconscious." This work, written on a generally high level, is the first in the series *A Comparative History of Literatures in European Languages*, a project launched at the Belgrade Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association. It is to be hoped that sequel publications of a comparable quality will soon follow.

MARIANNA D. BIRNBAUM · *University of California, Los Angeles*

The Commentators' Despair: The Interpretation of Kafka's "Metamorphosis."

by STANLEY CORNGOLD. Kennikat Press, 1973. Port Washington, N.Y. 267 pp.

By focusing an entire book on the one story, Stanley Corngold is able to open his discussion to all possible approaches to "The Metamorphosis", a work well chosen as a paradigmatic text against which to test the enterprise of criticism. The conception of the book, and even its form, is suggestively Kafkaesque: two brief but highly condensed essays are followed by a "critical bibliography," 217 pages long, in which everything that has ever been written about "The Metamorphosis" is presented in summary. The more important arguments given at length, and insubstantial pieces are sometimes represented by a single quotation. Some repetition is inevitable, and unimportant in a book to be used for reference. In apparent contradiction to this tolerance of repetition, however, is the author's reluctance to reiterate his own opinions: sometimes he comments on the arguments, sometimes not. Corngold says in the "Preface": "The fact that I have not glossed an abstract should by no means be held to imply either that I think a particular interpretation uninteresting or that I necessarily agree with it." His own essays are expected to function like Kafka's parables, reverberating through the interpretations of others. But it remains frustrating when critics like Emrich and Politzer are expounded without comment. Both the unity and the reference function of the book are impaired.

Corngold sees Kafka criticism as falling into two basic categories: the "symbolic," which maintains a psychological continuity between the Kafka-hero and the "real" world of human relationships; and the "allegorical," which denies such continuity, stressing the total "otherness" of Kafka's fictions, their inexplicability in any terms except their own. Corngold's own approach is allegorical, although he maintains that Kafka's allegory "includes the representation of symbolic consciousness." A symbolic interpreter would of course put it the other way, by including Kafka's allegorical overtones in his formulations. As Corngold stresses, it is a question of priority; but so intent is he on scotching