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Expressionism as an International Literary Phenomenon. 21 Essays and a Bibliography by Ulrich Weisstein

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*Monatshefte*, Vol. 69, No. 4 (Winter, 1977), pp. 457-459

Published by: [University of Wisconsin Press](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30156890>

Accessed: 22/06/2012 14:16

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to the Elizabethans as the "Chronicle Play." Likewise, just as both Shaw and Brecht learned much from the Elizabethans, so did both learn much from the same unlikely mixture of fairground comedians, sports, film, Marx, and the Bible.

For all of the attention paid both to influences and to parallel trends in thought in the two writers, Schoeps is not a fanatical source hunter. With remarkable balance, he also pays careful attention to major differences between the two writers. Though one might carp at relatively minor points such as Schoeps' largely unquestioning acceptance of Elisabeth Hauptmann's otherwise unsubstantiated recollections of Brecht's use of sources, and of the rather rigid idea of Brecht as an unrelenting anti-Aristotelian, they do not detract at all from this remarkably balanced and thorough study of the affinity of two of the most significant contributors to progressive theatre theory and practice.

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—John Fuegi

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

*Edited by Ulrich Weisstein. Comparative History of Literatures in European Languages 1. Budapest: Akadémia Kiadó, 1973. 360 pages.*

Of the 21 essays, two are basic introductory chapters by the editor who raises most of the issues that ought to be considered in such a study, thereby making some of the comments of his contributors seem repetitious. One essay (by Vajda) focusses on the philosophical background of E.; three on the foreign influences of E. (Garden, Grimm/Schmidt, and Arnold); three on the relationship of literary E. to painting, music, and film (Hadermann, Lea and Eisner); two compare and contrast E. with Dadaism and Vorticism (Brinkmann and Weisstein); and ten deal with the impact and the role of E. in different countries, notably England, the United States, and eastern and southeastern European countries.

In addition to Weisstein's own contributions, the three essays on the relationship of literary E. to painting, music, and film are the most rewarding in the book. Lea's long article on E. and music is probably the first attempt to define what is E. music. Showing an impressive knowledge of Schoenberg, Webern and Berg, Lea convincingly describes E. music as the music of transition, as a mixture of the old and the new. He illustrates what he calls the "musical quotes" in Schoenberg, the "death of the traditional march" in Berg and stresses the pedagogical aim of E. composers. Eisner gives a short and useful definition of the E. elements in film, pointing out that only the E. settings were of lasting influence. Hadermann's essay, though relatively general, sheds some useful light on a series of parallels between E. and art and literature.

Of the three essays dealing specifically with the influences on German E., I found the study of influences on E. prose by Arnold to be the most substantial.

Brinkmann's essay on Dadaism and E. opts for the former which he defines as a permanent category while the term E. is assigned only a historical significance. To substantiate what he says, Brinkmann uses too few examples, but the theme of his paper raises a crucial issue which will occupy critics of modernism for a long time to come. Weisstein's analysis of Vorticism, one of the most thoughtful in the volume, is basically a historical study.

The essays on Expressionism in other countries are typical surveys. Their authors discuss the impact, or the lack of it, of German Expressionism in their respective countries, discuss the most representative authors and artists, and the periodicals and circles which propagated E. Most, if not all, stress that the original impulse of E., coming directly from Germany, was amalgamated with indigenous traditions to produce a phenomenon quite distinct from its German counterpart. The similar pattern which these essays follow reveals that they must have been commissioned for this publication, and several authors, while bringing a great deal of new factual material, are not entirely sure of their subject matter. Two of the ten essays are concerned solely with the theater (Valgemaë on E. and the American theater and Bristow on E. in Russian theater). Despite the reasons given by Weisstein one wishes that more space in this volume were devoted to the theater. While the essay by Valgemaë documents quite thoroughly the pervasive influence of E. on the American theater well into our time, the essay by Bristow concentrates essentially on Meyerhold and regrettably stops short of the 1920's which has been frequently described as the E. period of the Soviet theater. An exception among the ten contributions is Markov's well researched study of E. in Russia. He describes his study as an "external history" of Russian E. and calls the Russian E. (especially Ippolit Sokolov and Boris Lapin) one of the groups which "tried to build a new avant-garde poetry on the ruins of pre-revolutionary Russian Futurism." As can be seen from these brief comments, Markov limits himself to lyric poetry and does not include the important area of the theater.

What are the weaknesses of this volume? It is uneven, not so much in quality, as in coverage. Weisstein himself explains in his preface why he does not have essays on E. in the Latin countries of Europe (France, Italy, Spain, Portugal) as well as South America. This gap is serious for several reasons: This omission involves several major countries, two of which participated in modernism in a significant way, France in Dadaism and Italy in Futurism. An essay on E. vis-à-vis Italian Futurism (the comments by Arnold notwithstanding), and one on French modernist tendencies as compared to E. are essential to our understanding of E. as an international phenomenon.

Secondly, Weisstein refers to several other publications which complement the present volume: *Bilancio dell'espressionismo* (Florence, 1965), *Ekspresionizam i hrvatska književnost (Kritika)*, 1969), *L'Expressionisme dans le théâtre européen* (Paris, 1971), *Expressionismus als Literatur* (Bern, 1969), and the proceedings of the *Convegno Internazionale di Studi sull'Espressionismo* in 1964 most of which have been published separately. I find this argument not really satisfactory since relatively few scholars can handle all the languages required. If all of the works mentioned are important, then more of them should be translated into English or German, thereby making them available to a greater number of readers.

Any reader familiar with one of the topics or authors will, of course, find errors in factual details. There are also a number of typographical and spelling errors: the article on E. in Poland contains several dozen mistakes in the spelling of Polish titles. Further, a sample check of the index shows that not all the

occurrences of an author's name in the text are listed in the index, and the bibliography, despite its comprehensive and international scope, could be supplemented by additional important sources. Such "kleine Schönheitsfehler" do not, however, detract from the value of the book.

The study of this volume leads to several conclusions. 1. the most promising approach to the analysis of E. should be interdisciplinary, with the examination of international aspects of this movement forming a necessary but only intermediate step. The international approach, though not without its rewards, tends to produce "influence" studies, and the problem with such studies is that either the influence is exaggerated, depriving the receiving country of its intellectual or artistic independence, or the influence is described as negligible in order to preserve the integrity of the home product. In either case, the result is somehow unsatisfactory. The essays on E. and the east European countries exemplify this problem best.

2. This volume has not solved the long-standing question about E. as a synonym for modernism, but the editor should be credited for assigning this question a prominent place. While Weisstein, in his introductory essay, insists on differentiating between E. and other modernist tendencies, several of his contributors take the opposite, broader view. This is probably the main reason why Weisstein states that he disagrees with the opinions of contributors, even finding some of them "untenable." Unless I am blinded by my own bias, it seems to me that, on balance, this volume supports the use of E. as a synonym for modernism.

3. One could also speculate that the continuing discussion of E. in an international context will focus on the question whether E. or Dadaism comes closer to being a definition of modernistic tendencies. Some of this debate surfaces in the essay by Brinkmann.

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—John M. Spalek

### **Essays on Brecht. Theater and Politics.**

*Edited by Siegfried Mews and Herbert Knust. University of North Carolina Studies in the Germanic Languages and Literatures 79. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1974. 238 pages. \$10.75.*

As the title suggests, *Essays on Brecht* is a collection of 13 essays on various aspects of the author's work. The editors explain in a brief introductory note that no particular occasion or circumstance, aside from the fact "that both general and specific problems of Brecht research remain unresolved," instigated a volume of this kind. Because of their own interest in Brecht, the editors solicited essays and arranged the texts "somewhat loosely" in three sections: (1) "theory of drama" (3 essays), (2) "individual plays" (8 essays), and (3) "politics proper" (2 essays).

The individual essays do indeed accomplish the editors' stated intentions: to advance research in various areas and to stimulate discussion. Reinhold Grimm offers a detailed account of Brecht's debt to Naturalism—German and European. Karl-Heinz Schoeps stresses that "catalytic impulses" from Shaw affected Brecht's work. Herbert Knust details the converging and diverging concepts in