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October 1988

Review of *Christa Wolf "Nachdenken über Christa T."* by Wolfram and Helmtrud Mauser

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Shirer, Robert K., "Review of *Christa Wolf "Nachdenken über Christa T."* by Wolfram and Helmtrud Mauser" (1988). *German Language and Literature Papers*. 19.

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Wolfram and Helmut Mauser. *Christa Wolf "Nachdenken über Christa T."* (*Uni-Taschenbücher*, 1457). München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1987. Pp. 120. Paper DM 17,80.

Nachdenken über Christa T. is one of the most widely discussed novels in GDR literature, and a reviewer therefore approaches a new book-length interpretation with some trepidation. However, Wolfram and Helmut Mauser's study is fresh, insightful, and clearly written. The volume simultaneously does justice to a very difficult text and situates it intelligently in the context of GDR literature of the 1960s and 1970s. While their interpretation is not exhaustive, the authors demonstrate familiarity with the large body of Wolf literature, and their notes point the reader to other interpretative approaches.

The interpretation focuses on the complex of tensions between the provocative personality of Christa T. and the *realexistierender Sozialismus* of the society in which she lived, between the narrator and her protagonist, and between the narrator and her readers. The authors follow a brief introduction with an "exemplarische Lektüre" of the fifteenth chapter, the chapter in which the narrator reflects upon the implications of the Hungarian uprising of 1956 for Christa T.'s and her own — and, by extension, her readers' — attitudes towards postwar Eastern European socialism. The Mausers use a number of words and phrases from the text, for example "Lichtwechsel," "Nachdenken," and "Versuch, man selbst zu sein," to begin to develop their view of Christa T.

The authors see Wolf's text as the major first step in the development of her "Ästhetik der Erkundung" (p. 89), an approach to narrative prose concerned not primarily with characters or plots, but with the thorough investigation of and reflection upon specific themes. In deference to their conclusion, the authors arrange the main body of their interpretation as a series of thematic investigations which build upon each other and culminate in the discussion of Wolf's aesthetic. They again use key words and phrases, drawn from the text and from Wolf's other writings, as chapter headings in order to establish the themes for examination. Beginning with "Die tiefe Unruhe" (p. 24) which prevents Christa T. from merely blending into her society and which provides the utopian impetus to her character, they examine variously the means the protagonist and her narrator use to take advantage of that restlessness, the complex relationship of protagonist, narrator, author, and readers, and Christa T.'s unconventionality. Most impressively, they discuss the utopian power of the text itself in "Produktivkraft Literatur" (p. 69), an elegant essay which provides a lucid answer to those who persist in seeing resignation and defeat in the figure of Christa T. The authors see her instead as a woman who, by her steadfast rejection of preconceived roles and her constant efforts to allow her own identity to develop and to grow, represents a consistent provocation and counter-example for the orthodox, technocratic, male-dominated social order of the German Democratic Republic.

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