

East-German writer has reached the freedom he has aspired to, that he is now permitted to try new literary styles and modernistic artistic devices, and that he can now deal with unconventional themes and individualistic subject matter. Most of the thirty-five writers included in this collection were born in the thirties or forties; it is therefore understandable that the war and its effects on Germany appear, if at all, in the far background of their stories. While writers of the older generation still deal with motifs and images of the war, the younger authors show a greater interest in the present and the future of their country. And although some of them deal with and refer to socialism, they are not tendentious or partisan. A few of them even stress the humorous and ironical aspects of the system they live in; and this makes their writings congenial and appealing. *Erzähler aus der DDR* is a valuable collection of different narrative forms and varying themes and motifs; it should be recommended to literary critics and historians as well as students of comparative literature.

S. Elkhadem

SIEGFRIED MANDEL

Group 47: The Reflected Intellect
Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ.
Press, 1973. Pp. 232. \$8.95.

Group 47 "became a legend in its time." "Some have called its existence mythical and its definition impossible." It "is a paradox": "It is one man, Hans Werner Richter, and at the same time an expanding and contracting constellation identifiable by several constant stars." It is (or was) "a loosely-knit association of writers who periodically exhibited their wares . . . engaged in critical debate over socio-literary-aesthetic issues, and assisted in revitalizing all forms of literary expression inside and outside the fluid group. It kept alive because it never hardened into a school of style or inflexible ideology."

Siegfried Mandel's third contribution to the Crosscurrents/Modern Critiques series is an especially welcome volume, for it is

the first detailed treatment in English of the colorful, fascinating, prestigious, but also (as the preceding quotations may illustrate) protean Group 47. Mandel devotes his opening chapter and postscript to the history and nature of the Group; he offers, for instance, particularly informative comments on *Der Ruf* (the "news-leaf" published in Munich between August 1946 and April 1947 and the seedbed from which the Group sprang) and the changing styles of the literature read from the "electric chair" during the regularly scheduled Group meetings between 1947 and 1967. Briefly: after the so-called *Trümmerliteratur* had run its course, during the fifties, the "discovery" of such writers as Joyce, Kafka, and Faulkner encouraged Group members to produce a rich body of literature varying in styles and techniques; "in the sixties, trends became even more diffuse, flowing mainly into two channels: politically active literature, more intense than ever since the end of the war, and avant-gardism"—Mandel's *bête noire*—"which created hybrid forms of literature and aimed a massive assault upon every literary tradition." The 1968 meeting, scheduled to be held near Prague, was canceled because of the military invasion of Czechoslovakia; and as Richter himself informed Mandel, "I then promised the Czech writers that we would not again hold group meetings until it would be possible to do so in Prague." In 1972, however, Richter relented and called a small meeting at his Berlin home, but now Group 47 probably has passed into literary history. "Would it be possible," Richter questions, for members of the new generation "to go along with the ground rules of Group 47? I would hardly think so." As distinguished as the productions of Group members have been, Mandel points to an important "enigma": the "past," that is, the Nazi regime and the catastrophic war, was "not in any significant measure objectified through literature." Of course, the fiction of Günter Grass is the great exception.

Because of the "fluid" nature of the Group itself, it is understandable, I suppose, that the major portion of Mandel's book is a survey of works written by authors who have been at one time or another members of the Group; or, in other words, the book presents an overview of much of the important contemporary literature written in German. Reading Mandel's chapters on fiction, poetry, the radio play, the documentary,

and the stage (television is omitted) is similar to touring a museum of contemporary art with an expert guide, who necessarily moves rapidly, works largely with generalizations, combines historical and critical comments, and sometimes offers quick evaluations. Though there are obvious dangers in such a "tour," in general Mandel offers a very handy collection of brief but judicious critical judgments. Naturally readers will worry about some omissions and inclusions, and about some possible inaccuracies and misjudgments. From my point of view, Mandel's desire to survey contemporary German literature causes him to deviate at times too much from Group 47 itself: for instance, a number of pages are allotted to Rolf Hochhuth, who has had no association with the Group; and the most lengthy comments on a single author are those on Paul Celan, who obviously interests Mandel but who read at a single Group meeting. Or to note the type of small omission which all readers will probably discover, Mandel refers, without enthusiasm, to what he implies is Jakob Lind's only novel, *Landscape in Concrete*; unfortunately, Lind did publish a successor, the virtually unreadable *Ergo* (1967; *Eine bessere Welt*, 1966). Given some of the material that Mandel is forced to observe, it is not at all surprising that he sometimes drops the neutral tone of much modern criticism. In one important case his personal viewpoint may or should annoy many readers; not only does he distrust "avant-gardism," but he concludes his chapter on "the radio play" with this extraordinary pronouncement: "Experimentation, in my vocabulary, means unsuccessful art." Indeed! And what would happen to art if many people used such an absurd "vocabulary"? To turn to something within the realm of good sense, I believe that Mandel's chapter on fiction is the best of the surveys in the volume; in this case the Group itself remains clearly in view as the individual artists parade by. After noticing the work of Richter and Alfred Andersch, Mandel comments in chronological order on a number of Group prize winners, as well as several other more or less well-known figures: Heinrich Böll (prize, 1951), Ilse Aichinger (1952), Adriaan Morriën (1954), Martin Walser (1955), Günter Grass (1958), Uwe Johnson, Peter Handke, Hubert Fichte, Peter Bichsel (1965), Jürgen Becker (1967), Ingeborg Bachmann (1953, for poetry), Jakob Lind, and Tadeusz Nowakowski. The book concludes with a very

useful appendix: a chronological list of the thirty meetings of the Group (month, year, place indicated), a list of the two hundred authors who have read at the meetings, identification of the ten prize winners (to the above, add Günter Eich, 1950, and Johannes Bobrowski, 1962), and a "Selected Bibliography" divided into several sections (that on "Individual Authors" nearly ignores articles and therefore is much too selective).

If one does not go to the book expecting detailed criticism of individual works of literature and if one adds a few demurrers, *Group 47: The Reflected Intellect* lives up to the claim of Harry T. Moore, the general editor of the Crosscurrents series—"a first-rate work of literary history illuminated by first-rate criticism." Perhaps for a good while to come Mandel's book will remain the best source of information about the phenomenal Group 47.

Daniel P. Deneau

RUTH S. EL SAFFAR

Novel to Romance: A Study of Cervantes's Novelas ejemplares
Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1974. Pp. 189. \$9.50.

The *Novelas ejemplares* (1613) of Miguel de Cervantes have been divided, traditionally, into two groups: the idealistic or Italianate novels (written early) and the realistic or national novels (written late). Between these two extremes there is a buffer zone in which idealism is tinged with realism. This is usually referred to as Cervantes's period of transition (for a summary of this traditional criticism see J. L. Alborg, *Historia de la literatura española* [Madrid: Gredos, 1967] II, 91-119). The situation seems remarkably simple, yet, in actual fact, it is not, for there are many unsolved (and perhaps insoluble) problems to be taken into account. There is, for example, no established chronological order for the twelve tales which combine to form the exemplary novels; further, it is almost certain that the order in which they appear in the 1613 edition has little to do with the order in which they were