

in Lenz's previous narrative works. (See S. Dickson, "The Novels of Hermann Lenz," *IFR*, 7, No. 1 (1980), 39-42, and S. Dickson, "Hermann Lenz: Tagebuch vom Überleben und Leben," *IFR*, 8, No. 2 (1981), 169).

S. Dickson

KENNETH HUGHES, ED. &
TRANS.

*Franz Kafka: An Anthology of
Marxist Criticism*

Hanover, New Hampshire:
University Press of New England,
1981. Pp. xxviii. + 290.

With this anthology, Professor Hughes aims to encourage an East-West dialogue on Kafka by making Marxist writings on that author more accessible and better known. He hopes, too, to dispel the notion that Marxist criticism is uniform and monolithic. Further, he offers his book as suitable for use in courses on literary criticism. The bulk of the material he presents (he excludes Georg Lukács and Walter Benjamin as too familiar) is indeed little known. Yet of the twenty-five pieces in this volume, only six (from the Russian) were previously inaccessible to those who—contrary to Hughes's expectations of Kafka experts as formulated in his preface—read German and English. But Kafka interests many others who will welcome these translations which can be criticized only insofar as elegance of style is sometimes sacrificed to an anxiety to remain faithful to the original. Almost all the pieces are extracts and some are compiled from two sources by the same hand. The editor does, however, duly indicate his use of scissors and paste. He provides a useful introduction, isolating the main points at issue and explaining some key terms while maintaining a studied neutrality.

The contributions are arranged in three groups. The first consists of pieces published between 1948 and 1962 by the German-American Hannah Arendt, the American Howard Fast, the East Germans Klaus Hermsdorf and Helmut Richter, and the Russian Dimitri Zatonsky. It is not clear why Hannah Arendt's essay, which is not

Marxist, is included. Second come papers read at the 1963 Prague (Liblice) conference on Kafka by Paul Reimann, Eduard Goldstücker, Ernst Fischer, Alexej Kusák, and Roger Garaudy (all taken from *Kafka aus Prager Sicht*, 1965), and an article by Jiří Hájek published in 1967. The third section brings Soviet responses to these papers. They date from 1964 to 1977. Here the title of an essay by Zatonsky is misprinted, though correct on Hughes's contents page, and the source of Avner Zis's piece is not given. The division into three sections highlights the significance of the Prague conference.

Zatonsky, in 1959, acknowledged that Kafka portrayed some part of "the anti-human order of capitalistic relations," but firmly denounced what was, in his view, Kafka's candidly antirealistic method, his negation of progress and debasement of humanity. With unsurprised distaste, Zatonsky observed that Kafka, alongside Joyce, became "supports for the contemporary aggressive bourgeois aesthetic . . . which strives to desecrate the whole world, to spit on everything sacred so that . . . the foulness and depravity of bourgeois conditions does [sic] not stand out so clearly" (p. 17). Kafka was seen to reject the healthy tradition of realism, faith in humanity, and the possibility of progress. He marked a beginning of the decadent modernism which was none other than a ploy to make the evils of capitalism seem inevitable. Howard Fast, in 1950, had expressed himself more succinctly: Kafka sat "very near the top of the cultural dung-heap of reaction" (p. 12). Hermsdorf and Richter provided more detailed interpretation and historical explanation, but neither aimed to challenge the established Marxist verdict. Kafka was not acceptable to communist aesthetics or ideology.

For a variety of reasons, including a determination to challenge the vestiges of Stalinism, patriotism, greater sympathy with modernism, and even admiration for Kafka as a writer, several speakers advanced different views in Prague. They were Czechs and Western Marxists who saw Kafka as a victim of the establishment grip on literary criticism in Eastern Europe or used him to protest against that grip. They stressed that he revealed the wickedness and decay of capitalism; that he sympathized with the suffering proletariat even if he did not recognize it as the class of revolution. Goldstücker argued that Marxist methods needed to be refined to do justice to Kafka, who belonged to the humanist tradition and who

gave, in *The Stoker*, a valid criticism of the socialist movement of his time, its vague ideas, national rivalries, and lack of militant resolution. Kusák called Kafka a "monumental realist" and a great literary model, and implied that socialist realism was perhaps old fashioned, and certainly not the only valid form of artistic expression. He claimed that Kafka was "the great poet of man's alienation in modern industrial society" and "the poet of our absurdities" (p. 102f.). In other words, remnants of alienation and of absolute institutional power were still present in socialist states. The Austrian Fischer made the same point: the fight against bureaucracy and dogmatism described by Kafka was still meaningful in the socialist world.

Hughes's essay "The Marxist Debate" (in *The Kafka Debate*, edited by A. Flores, New York, 1977) clearly and succinctly described the issues raised by these papers. There he reveals something that does not emerge from this anthology, namely that Hermsdorf and Richter were present in Prague but did not align themselves with the "revisionist" tendencies. Where Fischer said that *The Trial* "penetrates more deeply into the darkness of the late capitalist world" than *Buddenbrooks*, Hermsdorf stood by the greater realism and greater stature of Mann. That was the orthodox view. For since 1934, as Hughes explains in his introduction, communists were officially committed to realism in art. To claim Kafka as a realist was precisely to demand, in Fischer's words, that he be granted a permanent visa. Hughes's introduction announces an intellectual debate, but when he states that for Marxists politics and aesthetics are necessarily connected, he hardly prepares the reader for arguments on aesthetics that are thinly disguised political arguments. Only by referring to the notes on the contributors at the end of the volume will the uninformed reader learn that Goldstücker had to emigrate to England after the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, and suppose that some of the speakers in Prague were risking their careers.

The Soviet reaction to the Prague conference was immediate. Evgeniya Knipovich declared that many of the papers read there were Marxist "mainly in their terminology" (p. 186). Zatonksy denied that alienation could exist in a socialist society or that any progressive literary tradition could be based on pessimism, weakness, and despair, (i.e. on Kafka). That basic Soviet verdict is reiterated in the latest contribution

to this volume: Yuri Barabesh, writing in 1977, extends some understanding to Kafka as a victim of capitalism, only to proclaim that his work is unwholesome. If Hughes gives more space to Boris Suchkov than to any other critic, it is not because the essay from his book *Liki Vremeni (Images of the Age, 1969)* departs markedly from other Soviet commentaries in its conclusions, but because Suchkov's treatment of Kafka is more comprehensive. Suchkov, who edited the Soviet edition of Kafka's works, ranges widely over his writings, compares him with other writers and defines his own critical criteria with some care, countering the postures adopted at Prague systematically if often without direct reference to them. He shows little sign of exploring an avenue suggested by Vladimir Dneprov in 1965. Dneprov comes closer to some of the Prague positions when he sees in *The Castle* a struggle between traditional and modernist literary elements, and in its hero a tenacity of hope to which a Marxist could extend qualified approval. A more extended extract from Dneprov's book would have been appropriate. For he is an exception among Soviet critics, one who, despite his distaste for dark pessimism, recognizes that Kafka's "fantastic symbols" are more powerful witness to reality than mimetic representations which strive for "total similarity," and who can therefore compare him favorably with Dostoevsky, Gogol, Maupassant, and Dickens (see Roman Karst, "Kafka and the Russians" in *Perspectives and Personalities: Studies in Modern German Literature Honoring Claude Hill*, 1978, pp. 181 ff.; Karst gives a wider and less neutral survey than Hughes).

There are, as Hughes claims, differences between the various Marxist views of Kafka: minor ones among the orthodox, considerable ones between them and the revisionists. Their disagreement on the political and therefore human significance of his work is analogous to disagreements among Western interpreters who find religious and existential meanings in the same oeuvre. All too often, however, the critics on display here, believing that they have diagnosed decadence and its causes in capitalism, appear reluctant to investigate further the complicated interrelationships between social reality, intellectual phenomena, and artistic expression. The questions they ask and the answers they give are less varied than those found in Western criticism. Ultimately—or primarily—they are concerned with politics. Hughes's anthology does provide interesting material for the student of literary criticism, who will have to ask whether literary

judgment can ever be a purely aesthetic matter. It leaves the reader skeptical about the fruitfulness of a dialogue between those who hold conflicting beliefs on aesthetic values and the definition of truth. Suchkov puts many a Western colleague to shame by referring to literature in English, Czech, French, and German. His essay shows, however, that familiarity with foreign ideas need not weaken prejudice.

But what can we learn about Kafka from this anthology? The non-expert can find more facts and more varied interpretations elsewhere. The expert will note that most of the pieces in this volume concentrate on statements of principle, general descriptions and blanket verdicts and offer little detailed textual analysis. Richter's commentary on two parts of *Description of a Struggle* is a notable exception. Here there is insight into Kafka's portrayal of an alienation which is so often mentioned in this volume as if it were the concern of sociologists rather than literary critics.

J.L. Hibberd

GRAHAM HOLDERNESS

D.H. Lawrence: History, Ideology and Fiction.

Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1982. Pp. 248.

Holderness approaches Lawrence's works from a materialist and historical perspective—literary works, he believes, can only be understood fully when they are related to their historical and ideological contexts. The study focuses only on works in which Lawrence addresses his native society, the small mining town in the English Midlands where he grew up.

First of all Holderness defines the terms he uses. His understanding of realism is closely linked to that of the Marxist critic Georg Lukács. He also draws on the theories of the French critic Louis Althusser and his followers Pierre Macherey and Terry Eagleton who argue that literature is closer to ideology than to scientific knowledge. A writer's description of history is not objective: instead his image of reality is shaped by ideologies which Holderness defines as "structures of social practice, thought, be-

lief, value and unconscious assumption" (p. 10). Another key term is aestheticism. Although Lawrence was often critical of this cultural movement, he was nevertheless influenced by it.

In the next chapter, Holderness points out what he sees as shortcomings in previous attempts to analyze Lawrence's realism. (He takes issue in particular with the criticism of T.S. Eliot and F.R. Leavis.) Such critics based their analysis only on the depiction of society they found in Lawrence's works—they did not use independent historical sources to measure Lawrence's accuracy. Lawrence's view of society is not, however, necessarily authoritative, as the different social models to be found in his works demonstrate.

Holderness surveys the development of the mining industry in the English Midlands and uses this as background to measure the accuracy of Lawrence's depiction of society. He then turns to Lawrence's cultural milieu in his formative years (family, church, Eastwood social life and friends). The political, economic and social conflicts evident in the mining industry, he argues, were reflected in Lawrence's cultural milieu; they were decisive in shaping Lawrence's character, ideology and works.

In the next two chapters, Holderness focuses on the struggle between aestheticism and realism in *The White Peacock* and *The Trespasser*. In both these works, he believes, aestheticism triumphs over realism. In both these works, the real world is portrayed as coarse, vulgar, ugly and animalistic. To escape from reality, the protagonists flee into an aesthetic world of culture and refinement.

In the next works, "The Odour of Crysanthemums" and *Sons and Lovers*, Lawrence directly addresses actual social reality. Throughout *Sons and Lovers* (Lawrence's only realistic novel, according to Holderness), Lawrence depicts the wounding and violent contradictions in the mining community. Paul's life is set within a wide social context, and the conflicts within the Morel family typify the clash of values in the mining community as a whole. Holderness believes that the relationship between the individual and society in Lawrence's works is always tragic: the individual is rooted in a society which cannot fulfil his needs.

After *Sons and Lovers*, Holderness notes a change from a realistic to more symbolic and mythological styles. The next chapter