
Drama as Protest and Prophecy: the historical drama of the Jungdeutschen

Von Edward McInnes (Edinburgh)

Die an den Jungdeutschen relativ interessierte Forschung hat das Drama allerdings noch nicht in gebührender Weise neu bewertet.

Der Verfasser zeigt, daß für die Jungdeutschen das Theater ein politisches Faktum war, und er geht auf die Versuche, zur Verwirklichung eines nationalen Dramas beizutragen, ein — Versuche, die sich fast ausschließlich auf das historische Drama bezogen. Sie versagten aber in ihrem großen Bestreben, ein nationales Drama durch das Medium des politischen Protests zu schaffen — ihre Glorifizierung revolutionären Märtyrertums geschah ohne konstruktive soziale Implikationen.

Vgl. auch ‚Maske und Kothurn‘,
16. Jg. (1970), S. 320—324.

The relative upsurge of critical interest in the Jungdeutschen, evidenced in some notable recent publications,¹⁾ has brought with it a renewed concern with many aspects of their literary work but has not as yet elicited a re-appraisal of their dramas. This, it seems to me, is particularly regrettable since it is precisely in the sphere of drama that existant criticism, meagre and largely dated as it is, is most incomplete and unconvincing.²⁾ This failure

¹⁾ Among the most interesting of these are: W. DIETZE, *Junges Deutschland und deutsche Klassik*, 2nd ed., 1958; J. HERMAND, *Das junge Deutschland, Texte und Dokumente*, 1966; E. W. DOBERT, *Karl Gutzkow und seine Zeit*, 1968.—I await with interest the publication of P. DEMETZ's book: *Die Dichter und die Revolution*, one section of which is devoted to a study of Gutzkow.

²⁾ The most valuable studies in this vastly neglected sphere of criticism are in my judgement the following: F. BROSSWITZ, *Heinrich Laube als Dramatiker*, Diss. Breslau 1906; P. WEIGLIN, *Gutzkows und Laubes Literaturdramen*, 1910; E. METIS, *Karl Gutzkow als Dramatiker*, 1915; H. BESSLER, *Studien zum historischen Drama des jungen Deutschland*, Diss. Leipzig 1935. Fruitful as these studies are in important respects, their value is restricted by two basic inadequacies. In the first place none of them succeeds in clarifying the relation of Young German drama to the classical tradition and, in spite of various theoretical reservations, continue in practice to approach it in terms of categories and expectations derived from a largely unacknowledged Aristotelian presuppositions. BESSLER (see above, pp. 66 ff.) seems at least to recognise this failure, but has not contributed significantly to its solution. Secondly, criticism of the dramatic endeavours of the Jungdeutschen has been radically impeded by the tendency to assume an unproblematic relationship between critical pronouncement and