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BOOK REVIEW

A STUDY OF LITHUANIAN-GERMAN LITERARY TIES

Anatole C. Matulis, LITHUANIAN CULTURE IN MODERN GERMAN PROSE LITERATURE (Vienna: R. Spies and Co., 1966).

In this analytical and critical study, the author continues the traditional interest of the western European scholar in the culture of the Baltic lands, especially the Lithuanian. Admittedly, an analytical and critical presentation of all these so-called literary genres, the lyrical poetry, the drama, and the prose, would, assuming the same breadth and depth of treatment as that exhibited in this case, have produced an opus magnum. Hence, the author did well to limit his efforts to the field of prose literature, specifically, that produced by Hermann Sudermann, Ernst Wiechert, and Agnes Miegel, the last of whom, by the way, he knew personally and whom he revered. Hence also the dedication of this work.

After an introduction in which the author defines his theme he offers a well-structured picture of his studies and findings. Thus, he presents a panorama of the history of the Lithuanian cultural element in German Literature and touches upon such men as Hamann, Herder, v. Goethe, Brentano, v. Chamisso, v. Eichendorff, v. Gaudy, Dahn and, among the more recent intellects, K. Plentzat, A. K. T. Tielo, O. Woehrlé and others. Here, brief excursions into the fields of the drama and of lyrical poetry seem, for the sake of the completeness of the historical picture, appropriate. The next significant study deals with the delineation of the Lithuanian people: the farming population, the fishermen and ferrymen, the servants, and other, miscellaneous segments of the Lithuanian people. From the people, the author proceeds to their language and the customs. He emphasizes the national costumes, the folksong, the wedding and burial ceremonies, the "talka", the distinctive pre-marital situation called "auf-Prob" and the Midsummer Feast. There follows an even more significant study of Lithuanian religion and mythology, accompanied by a picture of the Lithuanian village and homestead. The conclusion which the author draws points to a basically similar treatment of the Lithuanian "natural-cultural profile" on the part of Sudermann, Wiechert and Miegel underscoring, of course, a common and genuine perception and evaluation of the phenomenon.

Since the writer of this review does not consider it his duty to take an issue with any aspect of the total picture presented but rather to describe the subject matter at hand, it becomes also a matter of interest to point out that in this study Professor Matulis evinces a background knowledge far broader and more profound than might seem necessary to accomplish his purpose. The use and intrinsic function of abundant footnotes and footnote material more than sufficiently verify this observation. The critical insight into the subject matter is frequently continued from the text into the footnotes, especially when additional facts or explanations or further arguments seem advisable. It is also in the footnotes that the author's knowledge of the background material shines through most clearly and effectively.

All in all, *Lithuanian Culture in Modern Prose Literature* is a solidly grounded study executed with substantial scholarship. While it may be said that the chapter, "The History of the Lithuanian Cultural Element in German Literature," offers stimulus for further studies — and what doctoral candidate would not be thankful for such possibilities — the studies of "Lithuanian Customs" and "Religion and Mythology" are especially noteworthy. A few omissions of the definite or indefinite article (cf. p. 12, or p. 16) do not mar the very readable print nor the visual composition of the individual pages. However, considering the unusual breadth of authors and titles mentioned by the author, indexes for both at the end of the text would have been helpful.

I feel that at the present time when large segments of the Western and Eastern European populations live in a state of universal dispersion, vital cultural concepts more than physical accomplishments constitute focal points of consciousness and pride.

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