Anneliese Löffler, ed.: Auskünfte: Werkstattgespräche mit DDR-Autoren

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This book is a collection of interviews with some 27 GDR-authors, that have all previously appeared in the Weimarer Beiträge (1968-74). The publication (and republication without change) of this volume reflects a highly favorable reaction to the interview format as a method of gaining acquaintance with how literary works come into being, as well as with the author's unrehearsed views on a variety of cultural and political issues. Although the question of the genesis, development, and realization of a literary idea is the one most frequently asked in these interviews, other matters that are commonly dealt with include the role of tradition in the writer's work, his views on the efficacy of literature, and his ideas on future projects and future plans in general.

What ineluctably results from the "dialectic" of these interviews is a valuable view of the artist as an individual and as a human being—something that is not always clearly gleaned through a reading of the writer's works. The fame of the writers interviewed ranges from the internationally well-known to the relatively obscure, and from the older generation (including Apitz, Gotsche, Joho, Lorbeer, Maurer, Renn, Selbmann, and von Wangenheim) to the "second" generation (including de Bruyn, Deicke, Kant, Kunert, Nachbar, Pitschmann, Wiens, Wolf) to the "third" generation (V. Braun, Hammel, Kohlhauf, Neutsch, Nowotny). Other than Braun, there are no very young writers in this book.

Reprinted in chronological order and with only minor emendations, the interviews usually vary in length from 15 to 25 pages. However, the conversations with Hermann Kant and Christa Wolf are considerably longer. The editor's introduction, the first part of which is particularly helpful, provides a general orientation to the interviews. Additionally, the appendix contains some very handy biographical sketches of the interviewees, along with a list of their most prominent publications. No secondary literature sources are included. The interviewers, together with their credentials and institutions, are listed as well.

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