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Jonathan Steele: Inside East Germany. The state that came in from the cold

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that the apparent lack of political positivism is due to the narrative technique, which is ". . . einen Schwankenden in eine wankende Welt zu schicken." With the politically uncommitted first-person narrator, Seghers is able to delve into the psyches of both those who shape history and those who are driven by it. Wagner's thesis is well-argued and appeals to those who wish to see consistency in Seghers' writing.

Wagner's book is a good introduction to Seghers' exile work and is a worthwhile contribution to the secondary literature.

Kathleen Bunten
Alta Loma, California

Inside East Germany. The state that came in from the cold. By Jonathan Steele. New York: Urizen, 1977. 227 pages.

To attempt a survey of the development of the German Democratic Republic for the English-reading public is a difficult task. Along with the natural complexity of the subject, the author must overcome the twin barriers of ignorance and prejudice which cloud an objective understanding of the GDR. Nevertheless, Jonathan Steele has succeeded in producing a critical yet sympathetic critique which is both scholarly and highly readable. In addition to drawing upon the available printed sources, Steele has interviewed numerous significant figures from the GDR such as Robert Havemann, Stefan Heym and Jurgen Kuczynski to cite only a few. This latter research supplies this work with both colorful anecdotes and useful political insights which greatly enhance its value. The author's investigation is broad in scope, covering historical background, cultural life, ideology and current trends. Of course, such a sweeping introductory volume leaves many topics discussed only superficially. Thus, the question of the nature of the GDR state is treated with a resulting lack of clarity. The author takes issue with those theorists who view the GDR as "state-capitalist" or in some other way governed by a new class. Yet, he fails to fully develop his own position giving the reader many apparently contradictory assertions. For example, Steele states that to "talk of a 'new class' is wrong. Decision-making, it is true, is in the hands of a relatively small elite. But the elite is not

closed." (147) Since no attempt is made to settle this issue beyond placing the GDR within the German socialist tradition, statements such as these are all the more vague. Any such flaws, however, should be placed within the context of a project aiming at a factual narrative rather than a theoretical discourse. It is a virtue that Steele does not become lost in a forest of ideological rhetoric which would have rendered his book unintelligible to all but a few. While it is unfortunate that so many vital and interesting aspects of GDR political life are left outside any coherent political framework, this in no way detracts from this book's overall worth. This volume is to be highly recommended to all who wish to learn more about the GDR.

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Im Querschnitt. Volker Braun. Gedichte, Prosa, Stücke, Aufsätze. Herausgegeben von Holger J. Schubert. Mit einem Vorwort von Dieter Schlenstedt. Halle-Leipzig: Mitteldeutscher Verlag, 1978. 345 Seiten. 12,50 M.

In diesem Buch wird eine Auswahl der Gedichte, Theaterstücke, Prosa und Aufsätze Volker Brauns dargeboten. Neben bekannten (z.B. "Die Kipper", "Der Hörsall"), teils auch weniger bekannten Werken enthält der Band eine Reihe von Erstveröffentlichungen. Als solche gelten die Gedichte "Das Verbrechen", "Vom reichen B.B.", "Gedankenkindermord", "Lied der Gleichen", "Vom Besteigen hoher Berge", desgleichen die Anekdoten "Der erfahrene Aktivist", "In einer alten Landschaft", "Bratsker Geschichte", "Irrtum vom Amt", "Was sonst noch passierte", "Der Augenzeuge", "Keine Anekdote" und "Banaler Vorfall". Von den Gedichten sei neben den an Brecht gemahnenden das auf Lenin zurückgreifende "Vom Besteigen hoher Berge" hervorgehoben, besonders jedoch "Gedankenkindermord", und zwar weil es eine kritische Dimension besitzt, die auf die Schwierigkeiten des Autors mit seinen "Freunden" hinweist, die ihn in seiner schöpferischen Tätigkeit behindern. Von der Kurzprosa sticht "Banaler Vorfall" hervor; DDR-interne Probleme werden hier in einem einprägsamen Bild beleuchtet.