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Frank Wagner: "... der Kurs auf die Realität." Das epische Werk von Anna Seghers (1935-1943)

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statistics, to substantiate their arguments. Occasionally there is even mention of some remaining difficulties which women in the GDR still encounter. Questions are raised whether women make use of all offered possibilities to further their professional and political development, whether they fulfill their obligations toward their children and families, and, though criteria such as personal happiness and individual fulfillment are never mentioned, women's health is discussed attentively. E. g.: In 1975 maternal mortality per 10,000 births was 2.3 in the GDR, 4.0 in the FRG. Infant mortality, per 1000 births, 15.9 in the GDR, 19.6 in the FRG. Comparisons with the US are not given. The lower infant and maternal mortality rates are even more interesting when we realize that in the GDR 87% of the women work outside their homes, in the FRG barely 40%.

Despite the tremendous strides GDR women have made in their socio-economic standing, the change of roles within the family structure is difficult to assess, because the re-orientation of roles is a psychological rather than socio-political phenomenon, often resisted by a large segment of the male population, even when lip-service is paid to it. Irmgard Morgner's statement (also made in 1975) in Leben und Abenteuer der Trobadora Beatriz that ". . . it is never pleasurable for a ruling cast to lose their privileges and difficult to give them up voluntarily," seems to hold true also for a considerable number of GDR men in the seventies. But then, in another thirty years--the book covers the past thirty years--another generation will have grown up, and sex prejudices in the GDR may have been overcome. One is inclined to believe so, particularly when reading the chapters on marriage, family, health-care, and the counseling done in these areas.

Perhaps it would be a bold gesture, but I would not consider it entirely inappropriate to send a translated version of the book to the various departmental heads of our own Department of HEW. They might be enlightened.

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". . . der Kurs auf die Realität:" Das epische Werk von Anna Seghers (1935-1943). By Frank Wagner. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1975. 318 pages. DDR 10, - M.

Wagner examines three major novels and several short stories written during the author's
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exile in France and Mexico. Her purpose in all these works, according to Wagner, is to depict reality, which is for Seghers the life of the people, class struggle, and the human striving for historical progress. The main concern of Die Rettung is the growing political consciousness of the main character, the unemployed miner Bentsch. Bentsch's problem is a subjective one which has serious political consequences: he must develop a philosophy which will remain steadfast in the long course of history and yet be appropriate to his present situation. Wagner sees the issue of whether the individual will be blown about by the winds of history or become one of its movers as the main theme of Die Rettung and central to all of Seghers' works.

Wagner briefly summarizes the main ideas of Seghers' antifascist essays and speeches as well as of her correspondence with Lukács during the 1930's. While this information is necessary groundwork for his discussion of Das Siebte Kreuz and Transit, not much new is imparted here. More useful are two short pieces included at the back in a section entitled "Dokumente": Seghers' essay "Zum Schriftstellerkongreß in Madrid" and her short story "Wiedersehen," which first appeared in Die neue Weltbühne in 1938. Neither of these works was included in the essay collection Über Kunstwerk und Wirklichkeit edited by Sigrid Bock.

In his essay on Das Siebte Kreuz Wagner discusses the role of the narrator as imparter of a history which otherwise would have been lost, the role of organized help in the successful escape of Heisler from the concentration camp, and the importance of the common people as a source of strength during times of adversity. Perhaps most interesting are the sections on the short stories "Die schönsten Sagen vom Räuber Woynok" and "Sage von Artemis," which Wagner terms "Phantasiestücke." He observes correctly that these pieces should not be dismissed as mere exercises in imagination, but that they enhance the longer works. The two pieces demonstrate in a fanciful manner the importance of story-telling: only in the openness of relating the events of his life to others does the individual experience himself as a personality, and the communal consciousness is the prerequisite for political action. The discussion of Transit is a revised version of an essay which appeared in Weimarer Beiträge in 1969. The novel is regarded by some critics as pessimistic and therefore an anomaly among Seghers' historically optimistic works. While Wagner admits that the novel was written under emotionally trying circumstances as the German Army continued to advance, he maintains

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
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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

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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.

William A. Pelz
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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 passiert", "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.