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# Helmut Brandt and Hans Kaufmann, eds.: *Werk und Wirkung Thomas Manns in unserer Epoche. Ein internationaler Dialog*

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idealize reality. The best works of the fifties, claims Krenzlin, are those in which the authors actively dealt with such conflicts.

Although recent evaluations tend to belittle or to ignore the phenomenon of Bitterfeld, Therese Hörnigk's essay on "Die erste Bitterfelder Konferenz" depicts it as an expression of a desire to bring the world of work and literature into a closer relationship and thereby raise the cultural level of the working class. In this attempt, the worker-reader was as important as the worker-writer, a fact which has been somewhat forgotten.

The concluding essay by Gudrun Klatt, "Proletarisches-revolutionäres Erbe als Angebot," traces tendencies in the treatment of proletarian-revolutionary art from the first third of the century during the formative years of the GDR. Of particular interest is her attempt to delineate unresolved problems in dealing with the socialist avant garde.

As a whole, this book is interesting and informative, although it occasionally suffers from repetition and a defensive posture vis-a-vis certain criticism in the Federal Republic. It is of value to anyone who seeks a cultural analysis which goes beyond the study of literature as a thing in itself.

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Werk und Wirkung Thomas Manns in unserer Epoche: Ein internationaler Dialog.

Herausgegeben von Helmut Brandt und Hans Kaufmann. Berlin und Weimar: Aufbau-Verlag, 1978. 410 pages. 12.-- M.

Werk und Wirkung Thomas Manns is a collection of papers which were given at the 1975 Thomas Mann Conference in Weimar--more or less that is. As the introduction explains, not all the papers from the conference were included (some appeared in a special Thomas Mann issue of the Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Friedrich-Schiller-Universität, Heft 3/1979), and a few new essays were added.

Subtitled "An International Dialogue," the volume includes contributions from

the GDR, from other socialist countries, and from a few Western scholars such as Hans Wysling and André Gisselbrecht. By far the largest number of papers comes from the GDR. Since the book is not only intended for the Thomas Mann specialist in that country and can indeed be of interest to a much more diverse group of readers, an appendix with a few words on each of the authors would have been helpful.

Altogether there are twenty-five essays and an introduction. The essays are divided into three groups, "Positionen," "Probleme und Werke," and "Wechselbeziehungen und Wirkungen" and range in topics from large overviews such as Dmitri Satonski's "Thomas Mann als Repräsentant unseres Zeitalters," Antal Mádl's very good "Haltung, Humanismus und Weltanschauung bei Thomas Mann," and Hans Wysling's already well-known "Thomas Manns Deskriptionstechnik," to discussions of particular works, especially later ones. Questions of literary relations, such as Joseph Pischel's "Bezüge zu Thomas Mann in der aktuellen theoretischen Selbstverständigung der DDR-Schriftsteller," which is of particular interest to students of GDR literature, make up the last section. In spite of the number of contributors and the variety of topics, the overall impression the reader receives from this volume is one of agreement and, to a certain degree, even repetition. The emphasis is firmly upon Thomas Mann, the conservative Bürger who, in the course of his long life and contrary to the development of his class, becomes a staunch advocate of democracy, a "militant," and finally a "socialist humanist." This view is outlined in the introduction and repeated and varied in many of the essays, with references to the same evidence recurring. There is a concerted effort to claim Thomas Mann for the socialist countries by paying special attention to his literary and personal ties to them and, above all, to his sympathetic pronouncements toward socialism, the Russian Revolution, and the emerging GDR. Thomas Mann, we hear, has been and still is better appreciated in the East than in the West. And certainly his--for his generation, background, and beginnings--striking development in political and social thinking is, in the present volume, enjoying the full attention it deserves and has not always received in the West.

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