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Klaus Sauer: Anna Seghers

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approach provides one with an orientation to certain intellectual categories which, according to Jonsson's argument, would likely play a significant role in GDR fiction other than Kunert's or that of the other authors whose thinking is briefly treated here. My only argument with the book is that it does not deal with the non-literary positions of the "counter-elite" and "strategic leadership group" fully enough. Though Jonsson succeeds admirably in pointing out connections between literary and non-literary positions, he does not use enough evidence in his documentation of the latter to quell my suspicions that his ostensibly representative account of the two groups' positions is not in fact representative. Nevertheless, the book is full of information about Kunert and his works and may be regarded as a valuable initial study of the conflict between the "counter-elite" and the "strategic leadership group" in the GDR.

Anthony K. Munson
University of Minnesota

Anna Seghers. by Klaus Sauer. Autoren-
bücher 9. München: Verlag C. H. Beck, 1978.
183 pages.

Any book dealing with the literary career of an author as prolific and rich as Anna Seghers risks falling into bland but safe description, sweeping generalization, or a rehashing of ideas that have already been discussed better and more critically elsewhere. In this book, Anna Seghers, Klaus Sauer successfully avoids these pitfalls. He presents us with a thoughtful survey of Anna Seghers' life and work, stressing continuity without minimizing the complexities of change and development in her literary style and content.

Unlike similar books, this one does not begin with the usual: "Anna Seghers was born..", but rather plunges into a comprehensive discussion of the author's views on: fascism, socialism, art, literature and humankind; these topics are developed in Seghers' novels and short stories from her earliest to the most recent. While this section is excellent it is not meant for the casual reader of Anna Seghers and may discourage those who cannot make connections. The second section is

the obligatory biography, which Sauer keeps brief and includes some interesting information not to be found elsewhere. Throughout the book, Sauer draws important connections between biographical and socio-historical events which help to understand some of the style and content of Seghers' literature. The blending of biographical and historical fact with its impact on aesthetic production is one of the strongest points in this book. The third and perhaps best section of Sauer's book deals with Seghers' concept of art and the role of the artist in society. While some things remain constant, Sauer highlights those changes that make Seghers' literary development an exciting, on-going process. There are discussions of her relationship to Georg Lukács, Rosa Luxemburg and the whole concept of spontaneity in literature and social change. Sauer offers insights into Seghers' stance to concepts such as: "Unmittelbarkeit der künstlerischen Phantasie", "Spontanität", and "literarisches Bewußtsein" --all very crucial aspects of Seghers' development. There is also an attempt made to deal with Seghers' strengths and weaknesses as a member of the literary establishment in the GDR of the 50's and 60's and the influence she had.

Sections four through six are divided according to time periods which are determined by historical events that effected profound changes in the author's life, attitudes, and literary style. While these sections are given continuity by developing certain key themes and ideas, the individual works are never pressed into a rigid mold, but rather each is approached with commendable freshness. In the last of these sections, the one dealing with her later works (1947-77), Sauer makes some cogent points regarding Die Entscheidung and Das Vertrauen, two novels written in the mode of socialist realism and generally ignored or rejected by western critics. Except for minor differences of interpretation or emphasis, this reviewer would wholeheartedly recommend Klaus Sauer's book to anyone interested in Anna Seghers. It captures the variety and depth of this author's work without oversimplification and adds a great deal toward understanding a complex and prominent German literary figure of the twentieth century.

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