

1999

Two books by Brigitte Reimann

Judith H. Cox

Birmingham-Southern College

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Recommended Citation

Cox, Judith H. (1999) "Two books by Brigitte Reimann," *GDR Bulletin*: Vol. 26: Iss. 1. <https://doi.org/10.4148/gdrb.v26i0.1283>

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Reimann, Brigitte. *Ich bedaure nichts: Tagebücher 1955-1963*. Ed. Angela Drescher. Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1997. 428 p.

Reimann, Brigitte. *Alles schmeckt nach Abschied: Tagebücher 1964-1970*. Ed. Angela Drescher. Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1998. 463 p.

Brigitte Reimann, one of the representatives of the first generation of GDR women writers, was a rising star on its literary scene at the time of her death in 1973. Her career documents the literary history of the GDR during its first quarter century and her works reflect the issues that confronted society as well as literature in the GDR. With these two volumes of journal entries Angela Drescher has provided a valuable and welcome addition to Reimann scholarship. We now have available a more complete picture of both the private and professional Reimann, as well as additional insight into the cultural and political scene of the GDR from 1955 to 1970.

Reimann was a voracious personal journal writer. In her diaries she tells the story of her life--an interesting life and an interesting story. The diaries are very readable and engaging. The reader learns about her many flirtations and affairs, her several marriages, her work, and her many health problems. She seemed to realize that her diaries would be read and probably even intended them to be, because she frequently worried about how they sounded: "Warum schreibe ich all dieses überflüssige Zeug? Eine unglaublich dusselige Schwatzsucht. Statt von Begegnungen zu sprechen, von Ereignissen, die in eine Art Tagebuch gehören, wie Reiner K. es sich vorstellt." She even burned her diaries from the years 1947 to 1954, feeling that those particular diaries were too immature. Immediately afterwards, however, she had regrets: "... und jetzt tut mir das Herz weh, als hätte ich etwas Lebendiges vernichtet, irgendein Teil von mir selbst. Wären die Tagebücher nur ein wenig sachlicher und nüchterner [...], so hätten sie wenigstens einigen dokumentarisches Wert ..."

Even more important to literary scholarship than insight into Reimann's personality is what the diaries reveal about events and other personalities in the GDR. Brigitte Reimann was actively involved in literary activities of the GDR (which were naturally cultural/political activities as well): she was a member of the GDR writer's union, she participated in the *Bitterfelder Weg* program, she belonged to an *Arbeitskollektiv*, and attended and participated in *Tagungen* of the SED. She often wrote about various persons' opinions and speeches or about discussions that occurred at official events or in small groups, and from time to time she made references to political events and the situation in the GDR. An example is an entry from August 21, 1968, following the

Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia: "... man erfährt nichts über ihr Schicksal. Und welche Hoffnungen haben wir auf das 'Modell' CSSR gesetzt! Unfassbar, daß immer noch, immer wieder mit diesen Methoden des Stalinismus gearbeitet wird.... Wir sind so erbittert--kein Vertrauen mehr (falls wir jemals diese Sorte 'Vertrauen' hatten)."

An extremely valuable aspect of both volumes is the *Anmerkungen*. This section provides extensive explanations and clarifications of persons, organizations and events mentioned in the diaries. These help to make these books readable for those less familiar with the GDR and provide helpful information for scholars on the more cryptic references in the entries. One finds explanations of events in Reimann's life and in the GDR, explanations of abbreviations, extensive clarification of quotes and references, and background information on or explanation of issues raised at, for example, the *VI. Parteitag der SED*, as well as where to find the articles, speeches, and *Protokolle* referred to. The editor explains who the people mentioned are (their positions in the GDR and roles in Reimann's life) and provides information such as the following: "Wie sich herausgestellt hat, wurde B.R. seit Mai 1961 von der Staatssicherheit durch verschiedene IM beobachtet, und das Telefon wurde abgehört; Postüberwachung scheint es jedoch nicht gegeben zu haben." Portions of letters provide further insight or background for an entry: "Nur--wie kann man denn in Frieden Bücher schreiben, wenn man Unrecht zwar nicht tut, aber duldet?" Each volume also has an extensive *Personenverzeichnis*.

Angela Drescher should be applauded for undertaking this enormous task. She states that it was absolutely necessary to make some cuts, since the material she worked with comprised over 1324 typed pages. Shortened or cut was repetitive information and details from the private sphere ("aus persönlichkeitsrechtlichen Gründen"). At other times the editor has made small additions to clarify sentences. One might question some of those editorial decisions. Take, for instance, two sentences omitted from the entry from August 30, 1956: "Wieviel kostbare Arbeitszeit ist wieder verstrichen! Und es tut mir bitter leid um jede Minute, die ich nicht schreiben kann." These provide an additional glimpse into Reimann's personality. In this case, one can hardly argue that cuts were necessary.

These volumes are a great addition to Reimann scholarship. Her diary entries are interesting reading, not only for those interested in knowing more about Reimann, but as documents of events and personalities involved in the literary history of the first decades of the GDR.

Judith H. Cox
Birmingham-Southern College