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Holger J. Schubert, ed.: Im Querschnitt. Volker Braun. Gedichte, Prosa, Stücke, Aufsätze

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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.

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.

Darüber hinaus werden in dem Buch auch das "Vorspiel in den höheren Regionen" (zu "Die Kipper") sowie das Theaterstück "Großer Frieden" erstmals veröffentlicht. Dieses Stück ist kurz vor der Drucklegung des Bandes abgeschlossen worden, und durch die Aufnahme deises Werkes erhält die Auswahl besonderes Gewicht. Der "Große Frieden" spielt in China vor unserer Zeitrechnung, hält sich an historische Gegebenheiten, ist aber kein Geschichtsdrama im engeren Sinne des Wortes. Braun gestaltet das Schicksal eines zu früh gekommenen Revolutionärs (Gau Dsu) und vermittelt dem Leser/Zuschauer die Lehre, daß es nach dem Sieg darauf ankommt, ein den gesellschaftlichen Verhältnissen entsprechendes Programm für den Aufbau einer neuen Ordnung zu entwickeln. Nur so ließen sich die Ideen des "Buches der Riten" verwirklichen. Ein kenntnisreiches Vorwort von Dieter Schlenstedt ist der Auswahl vorangestellt. Schlenstedt betont die Gattungsvielfalt der Werke Brauns und hält fest, daß das Buch verschiedene Stufen eines noch nicht abgeschlossenen Reifeprozesses widerspiegelt. Wenn man nach einer Grundformel für das dichterische Anliegen des Autors suche, ließe sich "Brüderlichkeit" als solche verstehen.

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Zur Planung kultureller Prozesse. By Erhard John. Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1978. 222 pages. 5 M.

John's book seeks to serve two main purposes--to be both a scientific investigation of the cultural processes set in motion by the GDR (theory) and also a source of useful tips for the busy cultural functionaries charged with supervising and promoting these processes (practice). The author is explicit about the overriding political and ideological aim of all cultural activities--to produce socialist personalities and a socialist way of life as conceived by the SED. The economic factor is also highlighted in the recurrent question "How can cultural activities help find the solutions to our economic tasks?" In this last respect John notes that, given the limited financial

resources available for cultural activities, these should always be selected according to which are socially most useful. Thus, in a factory for instance, expenditure on cultural activities can be justified to the extent that they bring nearer the solution of the political, ideological and economic problems facing that factory. One is struck by the way in which these pressures combine to produce an unmistakable undercurrent of Bevormundung in the planning process. It is cultural functionaries who must decide "which cultural activities should be offered under which circumstances to which social strata and groups...One may not assume that what is necessary in cultural life is spontaneously and subjectively striven for by working-people...On the other hand not everything which people subjectively strive for is objectively necessary for the development of their culture."

This quotation gives a sample of a basic fault in the book: much of its theorizing takes the form of pedestrian generalization (allied with ideological jargon and a tendency to over-conceptualize) which will not make many readers anxious to plough this particular field more than once, especially as the rewards do not always appear commensurate with the effort necessary to gain them. For example, John offers the reader, as a summary of recent cultural-sociological research and its theoretical analysis, the platitude that the more highly developed a person's Kulturniveau and his interests in the cultural sphere are, the more likely it is that he will belong to more than just one cultural organization. The reader waits in vain for a critical presentation of specific identifiable examples from real life of the work of the cultural functionary--the local, worm's eye view of cultural processes. This would have made John's work livelier and infinitely more interesting to read, would have enabled him to measure some of the general theory against the yardstick of specific practice, and would have provided the reader with a taste of that elusive but invaluable commodity--detailed empirical data. Even in a book like this, which is intended as an outline of the planners' central concerns, there must surely be room for the breath of living evidence.

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