

a popular organizer who became a legend during the Civil War. The "Wiederbegegnung" of the two is far less than a lovers' reunion, or far more: it is only the meeting of their eyes in silence; speech is too great a risk. Neither the uncertainties of political exile nor the constant vigilance of covert politics provides a very solid heritage on which to base the future. The seeds of such a base are suggested only at the very end of Wiederbegegnung, as Celia's child Luisa lies awake at night, trying to reconstruct the past from which she came, but about which she knows nothing. The legend she creates for herself of a father who had been there all along, is followed by the partisans' legend of the same man, Alfonso Varela, hero of the Civil War, who may still be alive somewhere, fighting under another name. In both stories, concrete communication between human beings is so uncertain that powerful personal ties and powerful political expressions are only preserved in the imagination, or better, in the memory.

Although it is nearer to the present, the historical context of the story Steinzeit seems quite unreal compared to that of Wiederbegegnung. It is probably not unintentional on Seghers' part that so little becomes known of the experiences that produced the Vietnam veteran called Gary. Perhaps Seghers assumes her readers know enough already of the forces that drive this American soldier to flee any kind of identity, but his abstinence from almost all thought of the past tends to lead the reader into a disorienting fog.

The voyage into this fog, however, is described with a merciless consistency. Gary's "only true friend" was his Vietnam buddy who gave him a new identity -- the passport of an anonymous Colombian with an equally anonymous name, José Hernández. Gary's Vietnam parachute training enables him to highjack a plane and disappear with his ransom into the South American jungle. His greatest skill is the ability to conform -- to any language, any culture, any occupation. Only the Indian music and dances can he not imitate. Gary is compelled to flee deeper and deeper into the jungle each time a job or a relationship with a woman threatens to bring him into contact with the real world. His inability to trust his last friend Hilsom even with chance references to his past compels him to undertake his fatal mountain crossing. Looking back, the anthropologist Hilsom has Gary to thank for some explanations of Indian customs, but it is Gary's presence, and disappearance, in the jungle that his notebooks can never explain.

The shifts of narration in Wiederbegegnung and

the unsolved mystery of Steinzeit force the reader to keep asking questions. Why does Seghers write as "we" here and there while relating the movements of history? Did the U.S. Air Force bomb Vietnam or America back into the Stone Age? Gary's fragmented thoughts lead him only this far: The Vietnam War "cost us our flesh and bones. It cost me even more." He cannot ask himself what that cost has been. That is Seghers' question.

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Schriftsteller und literarisches Erbe: Zum Traditionsverhältnis sozialistischer Autoren.
Hrsg. von Hans Richter. Berlin und Weimar: Aufbau Verlag, 1976.

"Wir sind meines Erachtens ... nie genug darauf eingegangen, an welche Literatur die unsere anknüpft." (S.8) Diesen Satz von Anna Seghers aufgreifend haben sich die Autoren des Buches zum Ziel gesetzt, "der komplizierten Realität literarischen Erbes als einem zentralen Gegenstand aus Geschichte und Gegenwart der sozialistisch-realistischen Literatur möglichst gründlich nachzukommen." (S.8) In fünf Einzelbeiträgen setzen sie sich mit der Erbeaneignung von Maxim Gorki, Johannes R. Becher, Erich Weinert, Bertolt Brecht und Anna Seghers, Autoren von großer Bedeutung für die Entwicklung sozialistisch-realistischer Literatur, auseinander. Dabei geht es ihnen insbesondere darum, die grundlegende Frage realistischer Literatur, nämlich die Frage nach ihrem Verhältnis zur Wirklichkeit, mit einzubeziehen und zu zeigen, daß "das Traditionsverhältnis eines Autors und seines Werks ... als ein integrierender und dann auch ganz wesentlicher Bestandteil der Frage nach dem Wirklichkeitsverhältnis zu begreifen und zu handhaben" ist. (S.9) Exemplarisch verdeutlichen sie an Werken der genannten Autoren deren unterschiedliche Aneignung und Verarbeitung des literarischen Erbes und ihre daraus resultierende individuelle "Handschrift". An den Beispielen wird offenbar, wie sich gleiche politisch-weltanschauliche Grundhaltungen mit einer jeweils unterschiedlichen Beziehung zum literarischen Erbe verbinden und in der poetischen Praxis, auch bei gleicher literarischer Zielsetzung, zu verschiedenen Ergebnissen führen. Das Buch empfiehlt sich eher den Lesern, die sich mit den behandelten Autoren und ihrem Werk auseinandersetzen wollen als den an der Erbe-Diskussion allgemein interessierten.

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