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Review

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or the ambitious sixteen-volume Reclam *Deutsche Literatur in Text und Darstellung* edited by Best and Schmitt, not to mention *Das Studium der deutschen Literatur* by Ruttkowski and Reichmann. Too few illustrations were used in this book (seventy-five in all), and a few of them unwisely, such as an abstract program cover for Steirischer Herbst '84 which communicates nothing (p. 277) or a badly butchered Nazi literary blacklist from 1938 (p. 216), the latter a startlingly sloppy lay-out job. On the other hand, there are also well-chosen illustrations: a photograph of a scene designer's model for the set of Frisch's *Andorra* (p. 288) and the program for the 1942 US premiere in New York of Brecht's *Furcht und Elend des Dritten Reiches* (p. 224).

The chapters that treat the twentieth century comprise almost half of the book; this strategy stems apparently from the desire to appeal to modern readers rather than from the wish to provide more thorough coverage of less readily accessible periods. The problem of overlapping epochs is dealt with merely by an inside-back-cover table. In summary, an adequately sound if unimaginatively realized literary history survey.

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BENN, GOTTFRIED. *Prose, Essays, Poems*. Ed. Volkmar Sander. The German Library 73. New York: Continuum, 1987. Pp. xl, 293. \$24.50, cloth; \$10.95, paper.

The editors of the German Library Series have been generous to Gottfried Benn. Benn, by some estimates a minor writer, has been given his own volume, close to 300 pages. This might be justified by Benn's exemplary fate, a theme stressed in E. B. Ashton's lively foreword: Ashton considers Benn's popularity a consequence of parallels between his development and that of many Germans. Reinhard Paul Becker has written an excellent introduction to the volume, in which he gives a general overview of Benn's intellectual biography; Becker does not overlook the author's brief entanglement with National Socialism.

The prose and essay selections, which encompass about two-thirds of the volume, read remarkably well. Benn was a master craftsman, and many of his exacting and powerful formulations come through in translation. There is a great variety in selection: some of the early Rönne stories, a primitive piece on genius and degeneracy, an extremely callous radio dialogue from 1930, the nihilistic "Wolf's Tavern," analyses of the Third Reich, the eloquent "Pallas," the Glas-Blower chapter of *Der Ptolemäer*, an unabashedly apolitical letter to a German weekly, and quite a bit more. The famous "Probleme der Lyrik" is not included.

Two major themes run throughout the volume: first, Benn's obsession with the ego, in part an ego in dissolution; second, a stress on formal expression as an answer to nihilism. One could argue that the focus on subjectivity would have found more appropriate expression in a comic setting; Benn's prose is virtually without irony. The blind embrace of form meanwhile in sentences such as the following, "Style is superior to truth, for it contains the proof of existence in itself" (p. 158), is abhorrent. According to the same logic, historical atrocities are superior to normative theories which might help us avoid such atrocities.

Forty-two poems have been translated, the work of eighteen translators. The styles, in terms of both form and content, range from literal to free translation. Poetry is notoriously difficult to translate, and Benn, who placed great emphasis on form, does not always translate well. Some of the best renditions are of his simpler, more realistic late-period, for example, "What's Bad" (p. 253) and "Meeting People" (p. 271 and pp. 286-88). The German is printed on facing pages. Splendid is the inclusion of alternate translations, especially useful when one considers the problems of diction, syntax, rhythm, and rhyme that arise in the translation of lyric. The inclusion of alternate translations not only enhances our understanding of the original, it is pedagogically useful: students with some German can see how translations that succeed in one respect may fail in another. The practice also has an interesting psychological effect: one is motivated to try one's own translations. In addition, the multiplicity of translations brings home a major quality of art: one form of beauty does not exclude another.

The volume is a representative collection of

a writer whose best moments, though few and far between, reach the heights of world literature.

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HAAS, WERNER & GUSTAVE BORDING
MATHIEU. *Deutsch für alle*. 3rd ed. New York:
Wiley, 1987. Pp. xiv, 585. \$36.00, cloth.

According to the authors' introduction, this third edition of *Deutsch für alle* presents a "habit-forming conceptual approach" (p. v) for first-year German; "students are invited to use their eyes, ears, mouth, and mind in active practice of German" (p. v). The textbook's eighteen chapters begin with a dialogue designed for oral practice and followed by questions personalized to engage students in creative practice. Contrastive pronunciation drills concentrate on the German vowel system. Grammar explanations are succinct and complemented by "situation-oriented" (p. v) exercises. Special sections alert learners to common errors. Reading selections are aimed at mature adults and followed by vocabulary and guiding questions. Each chapter ends with situations inviting students to use German freely. A written review of grammar structures in the chapter and a section called *Sprechen leicht gemacht!* with open-ended activities complete each chapter.

New additions to the third edition of *Deutsch für alle* include an annotated instructor's edition with marginal notes and an answer key for textbook exercises; an English-German vocabulary list of active vocabulary; revisions to "give more time to the instructor" (p. vii); and more communicative classroom activities. Revisions ensure cultural authenticity and avoid "unwitting sexist attitudes" (p. vii).

The two strongest features of *Deutsch für alle* involve areas that are generally problematic in first-year German texts: The grammar explanations are truly "user friendly," and the reading selections are not only well adapted to the corresponding chapters but also mature and often quite engaging. The grammar explanations are simple and clear. Further, they include useful suggestions generally not in-

cluded in language texts, as well as amusing anecdotes aimed at helping students cope with common difficulties. Quotes by Mark Twain are called upon in discussions of gender (p. 11) and word order (p. 67); Snoopy is seen surrendering to prepositions (p. 127); and a Mae West quip (!) is used to call attention to the importance of properly placed separable prefixes. The caution notes that primarily regard common interference problems constitute a useful collection of reminders for the student to refer to outside the classroom. The exercises accompanying the grammar sections are less inspired, often bordering on the mechanical and artificial types that the authors are trying to avoid. Some exercises are unusually difficult (for example, those on pages 133 and 135 in chapter five) or confusing (for example, the exercises on page 213 in chapter seven). Exercises on the simple past (chapter eight) make its use unusually clear with a minimum of effort. The reading selections in chapters three, ten, and fourteen are genuinely original ones. They present a-b-c's of tourist hints, German idioms, and German words used in English, respectively. Chapters seventeen and eighteen provide mini-tours of all the German-speaking countries in the final reading selections. These are complemented by good-to-excellent introductory dialogues in later chapters (for example, chapters ten, eleven, sixteen, and seventeen).

The authors' endeavors to supply situation-oriented exercises and interesting synthetic situations are less successful. Situations are suggested in English (chapters one through eighteen), which would seem to defeat the purpose of encouraging students to speak German. The amount of material in the various chapters is often uneven. For example, chapters three and eight seem "underloaded" while chapters one, five, and seven present massive amounts of new material. Likewise, the appearance of the text is uneven: photos and figures are often misplaced (pp. 44, 50, 84, 95, 172, 189, 243, 376, 458, 467) or at least confusing (pp. 40, 136, 157, 215, 244, 246, 332, 374, 432). In general, however, the photos and captions provide interesting topical possibilities for the creative sort of activities aimed at by *Deutsch für alle*.

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