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Das verschlafene 19. Jahrhundert? Zur deutschen Literatur
zwischen Klassik und Moderne (review)

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gated to the notes; once again it would serve the convenience of the reader if academic book designers could be persuaded to put notes at the bottom of the page instead of in the back. These are just nit-picks, however; the book illuminates the convoluted generation of the nationalistic discourse in Germany, effectively countering still-circulating simplistic notions about “the Germans.” We must be grateful to Peterson for devoting himself to so much of what we, in all probability, would prefer not to read, and we will not envy him his long hours with Luise Mühlbach.

New Haven, Connecticut

—Jeffrey L. Sammons

Das verschlafene 19. Jahrhundert? Zur deutschen Literatur zwischen Klassik und Moderne.

Herausgegeben von Hans-Jörg Knobloch und Helmut Koopmann. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2005. 205 Seiten. €26,00.

The distinctive status of nineteenth-century German-language** literature (as contrasted with social realism in other European traditions) has been much discussed. [**Note: Both in the volume under review and here, “German literature” refers to Austrian and Swiss literature as well.] The decisive effects of the belated founding of the German nation in 1871 are well-known: for much of the century there was no single urban center, so that the sociogeographic tension between the capital and the provinces—a phenomenon fundamental to English and French realist fiction—was absent; the self-identification of the writing and reading population was provincial rather than national; and industrialization—a major focus of European social realism—advanced at a slower rate because it was local and particular rather than unified. But assessments of the concomitant literary production differ widely. They are often negative, tracing the path forged by Georg Lukács and Erich Auerbach, who decried the narrowly provincial, epigonal, and otherworldly quality of nineteenth-century German literature; others, following the turn in scholarship brought about by Richard Brinkmann, praise the narrative innovations of nineteenth-century German literature and redefine realism accordingly. *Das verschlafene 19. Jahrhundert* takes a polemical approach to a study belonging to the first category, Heinz Schlaffer’s controversial *Die kurze Geschichte der deutschen Literatur* (2002), which reduces German literature to a few noteworthy epochs and characterizes the period between 1830 and 1900 as stagnant.

The thirteen essays in the volume at hand were prepared for a symposium devoted to Schlaffer’s book that took place in South Africa in March 2004. The collection is international, including contributors working in India, South Africa, France, and the United States as well as Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. The authors treat the titular subject from a range of perspectives, but several leading themes and dichotomies emerge. For example, the tension between the epigonal and the progressive is a defining current, its particular parameters indicated by the volume’s subtitle. Contributors take differing stances on the influence of the classical-romantic era. Hans-Jörg Knobloch downplays it, arguing that politics has a stronger impact than religion on nineteenth-century literature. Theo Elm elucidates Büchner’s satire of romantic idealist thought in *Leonce und Lena*, and Manfred Misch shows the ways in which Wilhelm Busch’s poetry thwarts the moral and aesthetic standards still held by authors and readers in the post-Goethean era. By contrast, Keith Bullivant notes that the social

novel is accorded a lower status by German critics because of the enduring power of classical-romantic aesthetics, which valued attention to the inner life more highly than depictions of the external, social world.

At the other end of this dichotomy, several authors in the volume illuminate forward-looking elements in nineteenth-century literature. Elm notes the ways in which *Leonce und Lena* looks ahead to modern psychology and existentialism; Kurt Bartsch presents Nestroy as a forerunner of the avant garde and theater of the absurd; and Eckhardt Momber compares the language of the elderly Fontane with that of the late Gottfried Benn. Taken together, the essays in this volume affirm the Janus-faced character of nineteenth-century literature, variously looking back to classicism-romanticism and anticipating modernism.

A second dichotomy prominent in these essays is that between provincialism and cosmopolitanism or globalism. This tension is implicit in the concepts explored by Helmut Koopmann, "Heimat, Fremde und Exil," whose significance he demonstrates in such writers as Eichendorff, Börne, Heine, Chamisso, Droste, and Meyer. Karl Guthke's lively article illustrates the legacy of a global consciousness, born in mid-eighteenth-century Europe, in Immermann's *Münchhausen*, in which he distinguishes two types of travel: one type, satirized in the novel, which seeks exoticism for the sake of thrills, and a second type in which exoticism contributes to the traveler's experience and education, or *Bildung*. In a somewhat similar vein, Anil Bhatti concentrates on the case of India in discussing the "kompensatorischen Kolonialismus" (178) resulting from Germany's failure to achieve actual political and economic success in the flourishing nineteenth-century enterprise of colonization. Citing Goethe's formulation of an inverse relation between nationalism and "das allgemein Menschliche" (175), Bhatti points up the ambivalence of nineteenth-century German thinkers toward Indian art, language, and culture, represented on the one hand by India enthusiasts Georg Forster, August Wilhelm Schlegel, and Carl von Hügel, and on the other by Heine, Marx and Engels, and Hegel, whose attitude is significantly more distanced.

Further themes that reappear in the course of the volume serve to link nineteenth-century German literature to other cultures rather than to isolate it. For example, the critique of materialism and the class system, central to the fiction of Balzac and Dickens, is present in German-language literature of the time as well, as Bartsch emphasizes with respect to Nestroy's œuvre and Manfred Durzak shows in Spielhagen's novel *Zum Zeitvertreib*. Similarly, several essays in this collection treat nature and/or science, whose interaction is of crucial interest to nineteenth-century western thought: Wolfram Fues's close reading of Keller's poem "Winternacht," Momber's perceptive analysis of parallels between natural imagery and human behavior in *Effi Briest*, and, most systematically, Christine Maillard's densely documented, comparative study of the relationship between literature and scientific thought in the second half of the century.

The collection contains occasional statements idealizing German culture, and one perceives a defensive tone here and there, although these instances are elsewhere counterbalanced by avowals of the relative weakness of certain German texts. Given the apparent need to defend nineteenth-century German literature, it is odd to find a contributor pitting one German author against another, as Durzak does in insisting on the ways in which *Zum Zeitvertreib* is superior to *Effi Briest*. But in sum, the wealth of perspectives and insights offered by the volume renders the title a rhetorical

question. These essays remind us that nineteenth-century-German literature was neither sleepy nor sleeping through the events of the day; it simply experienced its own kind of wakefulness.

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—Gail Finney

A Companion to the Works of Thomas Mann.

Edited by Herbert Lehnert and Eva Wessell. Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2004. xviii + 345 pages. \$90.00.

A companion can be either a friend or a *vade mecum*, a person who accompanies you or a book that you carry around and consult. This volume is appropriately entitled a companion, since you can treat it as one in both these senses: you'll like it, you can trust it, and you'll frequently refer to it because it is so useful.

It comprises seventeen chapters that, taken together, discuss all of Mann's major novels, most of his short fiction, and many of his essays and other writings. The front matter includes a helpful list of his works, a list divided into narratives, selected essay collections in German and in English, diaries, and collected works. The dates of composition and publication are given for each work. Most, though not all, of the English translations are mentioned, too. The back matter includes a select bibliography as well as an index. The bibliography lists about 150 primary and secondary sources. The index lists names, subjects, works, and places ranging from "Adorno" to "Zurich."

Four of the chapters, counting the introduction, are by Herbert Lehnert, one of the book's co-editors. These are the first and last two chapters. They accordingly frame the book and lend it Lehnert's stamp. The introduction explains Mann's main themes and narrative traits, noting that his style may seem conservative or realistic but that his fictional worlds are anarchic or unstable; that his fiction transforms, and does not directly depict, experiences such as his unconsummated homoerotic relationships; and that his ironic resistance to ideologies has helped his work endure well beyond its initial audience of *Bildungsbürger*. Lehnert's chapter on Mann's beginnings and *Buddenbrooks* reinforces these points, stressing his sibling rivalry with his brother Heinrich, his debt to Nietzsche's *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, and his condition as a social and sexual outsider. Lehnert takes *Die Betrogene* to be about both coping with the prospect of death and wishing for sexual liberation. He reads *Königliche Hoheit* and *Der Erwählte* as quasi-comedies symbolic of Mann's sexual and artistic concerns.

Lehnert's co-editor Eva Wessell, like four of the other contributors, writes about one of Mann's other major novels. Wessell treats *Der Zauberberg* together with his "war essays." She explains how Mann remained true to his initial idea of writing a humorous account of German nonalignment and how he did not allow Settembrini and Hans Castorp to become mouthpieces for the political agenda of *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*. Peter Pütz tells how *Joseph und seine Brüder* blurs spatial, temporal, and other conceptual boundaries according to the novels' shared principle of "mutual penetration," "reciprocal exaltation," "poeticized eroticism" (175), and "universal transitoriness" (177). Werner Frizen remarks on the main characters of *Lotte in Weimar*, tying Mann's deconstruction and deflation of Goethe to the accounts of him given by Lavater, Riemer, the novelist Ludwig Häberlin, and the psychoanalyst Felix Aaron Theilhaber. Hans Rudolf Vaget, in what may be the most substantial chapter