The German Lyric of the Baroque in English Translation

Schoolfield, George C.

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The present book has been written to serve three ends. First, it is meant to introduce the German lyric of the seventeenth century to people who, while perhaps interested in European literary matters, cannot read German well enough to make out Baroque texts, and who, most likely, are not aware that Germany possessed a literature in the seventeenth century. The German Baroque, so well known to cultured Americans in its musical and architectural manifestations, deserves to be made accessible from its literary side as well.

In the second place, the book is intended to aid those undergraduates who have decided to concentrate in German. It may help them to understand Baroque German a little better; it may make them realize that, despite the evidence of Gryphius’ tragedies and Opitz’s Buch von der deutschen Poeterei, the seventeenth century can offer genuine reading pleasure.

Finally, the book has been written because the author enjoyed writing it, a confession, to be sure, which may cause his dishonorable discharge from even the disciplinary battalions of scholarship.

The reader’s attention is called to a matter at which, if he will, he may take umbrage. All texts have been reprinted just as they appear in the listed source, which means that some poems appear with modernized spelling while others do not. Since the book had a pedagogical purpose, it seemed better not to modernize the texts taken from original or unrevised printings: thus the student should learn to cope with some of the peculiarities of the pre-classical language.

It will be noted, too, that the author has, except in a very few cases, avoided the use of feminine rhyme. The poems containing the “very few cases” represent the germ-cell of the book, translations made at the beginning of the undertaking. Very soon the author saw that the gain in music to be had from the use of English feminine rhyme could not make up for the loss in sense. In abandoning feminine rhyme, he joined good company, as one can tell by a glance at Shakespeare’s sonnets or at Weckherlin’s attempts to write English poetry.
The author's special gratitude must go to Professor Ernst Oppenheimer of Carleton University, Ottawa, who suggested the idea of the book some years back. Since then, Professor Oppenheimer, by polite inquiry about his godchild, has prodded the lazy author into activity more than once.

Warm thanks must also go to Professor Curt von Faber du Faur, who has allowed the author to use the German Literature Collection at Yale University, and to quote poems from some of its holdings.

Three other scholars have also distinguish themselves by remarkable goodness of heart: Professor Klaus Jonas of the University of Pittsburgh, Professor Blake Lee Spahr of the University of California at Berkeley, and Professor George de Capua of Cornell University. Professor Spahr was particularly kind in his provision of Birken material to the author.

Everyone knows that all scholarly books owe their completion to some preceptor, muse, or Maecenas; this position of honor, for the present book, is held by three typists: Miss Estellie Smith, Mrs. Daniel Johnston, and Mrs. Robert Harris.

Finally, the author's thanks must be expressed to Professor Frederic Coenen of the University of North Carolina, for his sympathetic interest in the undertaking, and to the Council on Research of Duke University, which provided generous financial support of the book's publication.

As an envoy, the author would like to say of his book what Aurora Königsmarck said of Charles XII after her defeat at Altrannstädt: "Kanske har han bara nödmynt i pungen, men jag älskar honom ändå."

George C. Schoolfield

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