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October 1988

## Review of *German Poetry: An Anthology from Klopstock to Enzensberger*. Edited by Martin Swales

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Hayden-Roy, Priscilla A., "Review of *German Poetry: An Anthology from Klopstock to Enzensberger*. Edited by Martin Swales" (1988).  
*German Language and Literature Papers*. 13.

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Published in *German Quarterly* 61 (1988), 563-565.

Published by the American Association of Teachers of German (AATG)  
112 Haddontowne Ct. #104, Cherry Hill, NJ 08034-3668 USA

<http://germanquarterly.aatg.org/>

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*German Poetry: An Anthology from Klopstock to Enzensberger*. Ed. Martin Swales. London/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987. 208 pp. \$39.50 cloth; \$11.95 paper.

In *German Poetry: An Anthology from Klopstock to Enzensberger*, noted Germanist Martin Swales offers a volume designed to introduce English speakers to German lyric poetry from the mid-eighteenth century to the present. Seventeen poets are included, each represented with several poems (between six and eight is the norm, with Goethe at the high end with eighteen, and Novalis at the low, with two). The poems are in German only; Swales' introduction and notes (an introductory paragraph on each author and brief synopses of each poem along with some formal observations) are in English. It is not a comprehensive anthology. Swales has selected what he hopes is a "representative sample" from the works of the poets in this period "who have produced a lyric corpus that is significant in both quantity and quality," in order that the thematic and stylistic "signature" of each poet be perceptible to the reader (p. xii). His selection is guided not only by the canon, but also by the historical development he perceives within German poetry: ". . . the history of the German lyric charted by the poems in this volume shows us how increasingly, in the course of the nineteenth century, the subjectivity of the lyric poem gradually changes from rapt, absorbed unreflectivity into an increasingly problematic, self-questioning condition" (p. 6).

At the beginning of this development stand Klopstock and, most importantly, Goethe. In Goethe's lyric poetry was expressed an easy, harmonious union between self and the world, the spiritual and the material, that was almost immediately felt to be an unattainable ideal. Already for Schiller the sense of lost union was seen to be the peculiar plight of modern sensibility. Swales discusses this in his introduction in the context of Schiller's *über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung* and underscores the point again through the poems he selects: "Die Götter Griechenlands," "Die Ideale," and "Nänie." (Because of Swales' commitment to his historical schema he allows only the elegaic Schiller to speak, whence the conspicuous absence of "An die Freude" or the historically optimistic "Die Künstler.") In the writings of the remaining poets in the anthology this sense of estrangement continues to be expressed.

Swales pursues this problem by asking a wide range of questions of these poets' writings. How is the transcendent sphere depicted? How does consciousness affect the relationship to the divine? The answers range from Schiller's lament of "[d]ie entgötterte Natur," to the redemption of things through poetic "saying" in Rilke's ninth Duino Elegy. How does the poet portray nature, and what is being said about man's place within the natural order? Here the sense of spiritual and physical oneness with nature in Goethe contrasts with the discrepancy between springtime and the self in Brentano's "Frühlingsgeschrei eines Knechtes aus der Tiefe," and in Paul Celan's "Eспенbaum"; it also contrasts with the material unity recovered, ironically, in Brecht's "Vom ertrunkenen Mädchen." To what extent and why does the poet critically reflect on the problem of writing poetry and the poetic tradition? Here the answers range from Hölderlin's ". . . und wozu Dichter in dürftiger Zeit?" to Heine's debunking of romantic poetry, to Brecht's implication of Goethe's view of nature in "Liturgie vom Hauch." What relationship exists between the form of the poem and its content? How is metaphor employed? Is the poet drawing on public symbols or creating private ones? Or is there an allegorical disjunction between the sign and its meaning? Swales does not provide rigorous formal analyses of the poems in his notes, but with regularity makes mention of some formal aspect, be it the overall structure, or, more frequently, particular elements (metaphor, assonance, enjambement, etc.).

Swales' historical schema lends this book of poetry a degree of thematic coherence unusual for a general anthology. And within this coherence lively—even heated—dialogues emerge, brought into focus through the cross-references within the poems themselves (Brecht's "Liturgie vom Hauch" with its citation of Goethe's "über allen Gipfeln . . ."; references to Brecht's "An die Nachgeborenen" in Celan's "Ein Blatt, baumlos . . ." or in Enzensberger's "Zwei Fehler") and through Swales' many comparisons in the notes.

Some weaknesses must also be noted. Beyond the overarching historical schema of the self-questioning lyrical subject, we are given relatively little historical background on the poets or the poems. We are not told when the poems were written, when or where they were published, and in many cases the biographical references in the poems are not elucidated. (By contrast Swales does include this information in his *Goethe: Selected Poems* [Oxford, 1975], much to its benefit.) Swales does not explain references in the poems to mythological figures, as would be helpful for most students expected to read this volume. The reader will also get relatively little help from Swales in understanding the vocabulary and syntax used in the poems. This is

not necessarily a weakness, but instructors should be aware that the volume assumes a high level of language proficiency. Finally, one wishes that Cambridge Press had priced the book more in line with the pocketbooks of its student readership.

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