

Dollinger, Roland, Wulf Koepke, and Heidi Thomann Tewarson, eds. *A Companion to the Works of Alfred Döblin*. Rochester: Camden House, 2004. 309 pp. \$85.00 cloth.

Among the major modernist authors, few are so closely associated with a single work as is Alfred Döblin. Although he authored over a dozen novels and numerous stories, plays, radio dramas, and autobiographical texts, as well as essays on literary, philosophical and political topics, many non-specialists would be hard pressed to name a single work of Döblin's beyond his great novel *Berlin Alexanderplatz: Die Geschichte vom Franz Biberkopf*. This imbalance existed to some extent even during Döblin's lifetime. He had, to be sure, established his literary name as early as 1910, when his stories began to appear in Herwarth Walden's Expressionist periodical *Der Sturm*, and a few of his novels enjoyed a degree of popular success (particularly his "Chinese novel" of 1915, *Die drei Sprünge des Wang-lun*). But the publication of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* in 1929 brought Döblin a new level of critical acclaim as well as commercial success: the novel sold more in the first weeks after its appearance than all of Döblin's previous works combined and established him as one of the leading literary figures of the Weimar Republic. His career suffered severely with the collapse of the republic, however, and the works he produced in exile and after the war had a difficult time finding receptive audiences. The current volume attempts to address this imbalance and does an excellent job of introducing readers to the full range and at times baffling variety of Döblin's production.

Most of the essays focus on a particular text or a few related texts. The volume thus moves chronologically from early works through the Weimar period to exile in France and the United States and finally to Döblin's return to Germany after the war.

Interspersed with these analyses of literary milestones are several fascinating essays addressing broader historical or biographical issues, such as Döblin's work as a practicing psychiatrist and his relation to psychoanalysis, his engagement with technological media such as film and radio, and his relation to Judaism and later conversion to Catholicism.

The overriding diachronic structure of the volume makes for clarity and allows readers quickly to gain an overview of some of Döblin's more demanding works. The danger is that this structure requires extensive plot summarizing, which at times becomes excessive, as if assuming that the reader will not actually have read (or will not read) the work itself. It also isolates the major works from each other, hindering connections that might otherwise have been drawn given a more topical organization. Questions of gender, for example, seem particularly relevant in an author long fascinated by ideas of gender wars and "sacred prostitution," and while such questions appear in a number of the volume's essays they never receive systematic treatment. Issues of genre also might have emerged more clearly: the variety and sheer weirdness of some of Döblin's conceptions call for more comment. How, for example, does an author best known for experimenting with modernist techniques and topoi such as interior monologue, montage, and mass media also produce a massive work like *Berge Meere und Giganten*, with its clear affinities to science fiction and fantasy genres and its ecological themes? What underlying factors allow Döblin to move between such seemingly disparate concerns?

To be sure, the committed reader will perceive these latent broader issues and will ultimately find material to start connecting the dots. And some of the essays that ostensibly focus on a single work are in fact much more ambitious in scope: Neil H.

Donahue's essay on *Wallenstein*, for example, expands into a fascinating investigation of points of contact and tension between avant-garde linguistic technique and historical narrative. Yet the chronological, work-by-work approach means that this volume often leaves readers to formulate for themselves the broader questions lurking within Döblin's complex oeuvre. This tradeoff may well have been inevitable, given the general lack of familiarity of most of Döblin's texts. Here is where the volume stands to perform an invaluable service by demonstrating to a wider readership that Döblin is far more interesting than the common equation of his output with *Berlin Alexanderplatz* recognizes.

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