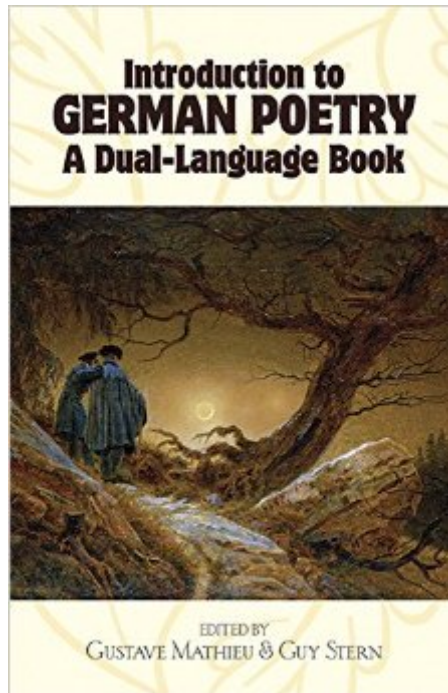


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Introduction To German Poetry: A Dual-Language Book (Dover Dual Language German)



Synopsis

The poems in this anthology represent a panorama of the main trends in the development of the poetry of the German-speaking people. Beginning with a minnesong of the early Middle Ages and a poem of the seventeenth century, the book then focuses on the Age of Goethe (1749-1832). Inspired by Goethe and his contemporaries, German poetry was able to develop according to its own genius and to advance along new lines that eventually led to the period of Expressionism and Post-Expressionism with which this anthology ends. Included here are the full German texts of 39 poems-lyrics, ballads, philosophical verse, humor, student songs-and three selections from longer works by Goethe, Novalis and Lenau. Some of the other poets represented are Walther von der Vogelweide, Schiller, Hölderlin, Heine, Rilke, Brecht, Hermann Hesse, Stefan George, Gryphius, Platen, Scheffel, Conrad Ferdinand Meyer and Albrecht Haushofer. For each poem, this book includes an expert literal English translation on the facing page. You'll also find a biographical and critical discussion of each poet, textual information and a portrait of the poet. Here is a wonderful opportunity to discover the depth and richness of the German poetic tradition, and learn the language at the same time.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Introduction to German Poetry: A Dual-Language Book," edited by Gustave Mathieu and Guy Stern, is a wonderful anthology. It contains the work of thirty-four poets, mainly ranging from the

18th to 20th centuries. For the most part each poet is represented by a single short poem or excerpt, although some are represented by two or three pieces. The poems are presented in bilingual format, with the German and English versions on facing pages; this makes the book especially useful for those who are learning, or brushing up on, German. A note on the copyright page indicates that this book "is an unabridged and updated republication of the work originally published under the title Invitation to German Poetry" in 1959. This is a diverse and enjoyable collection which shows how, in the hands of a skilled craftsman, the German language can be an instrument of great power and amazing beauty. The poems cover many topics and are varied in tone. Some of the poets whose work is represented include Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Friedrich Schiller, Rainer Maria Rilke, Hermann Hesse, and Bertolt Brecht. For each poet there is a picture and a short biographical note; I found this supplemental material to be very informative. Some of my favorite pieces in this collection are as follows. Heinrich Heine's "Ich wollte, meine Lieder" ("I Wish That All My Songs"): a delightfully witty and funny variation on the love poem. Viktor von Scheffel's "Altassyrisch" ("Old Assyrian"): a humorous story-poem about a drunkard in an ancient tavern; it has the delicious flavor of a drinking song. Detlev von Liliencron's "Die Musik kommt" ("The Music's Coming"): uses wonderfully rich language to evoke the sights and sounds of a military marching band.

I don't know if I would call this an introduction. It's more of a introductory source anthology by which I mean a compilation of poems by major poets with very little in the way of commentary, explanation, or analysis. This book has no footnotes, a three page introduction, and- despite claims to the contrary on the back cover -no substantial critical apparatus. There is no substantial discussion of German poetic form or ways in which it differs from English poetry. Most poets get a half page biographical blurb- which I guess the editors thought was sufficient criticism -before you are thrown into their poetry. The half page blurbs aren't even dense as far as half page blurbs go: the pages are 5 x 9 with inch wide margins and the font is about 10pt font size. This review is longer than all the bios save perhaps Goethe, who gets a page and a half biography. I'm not competent enough in German to test the "literal English translations" that oppose the German verse, but I have my doubts. Even as a source anthology this book has faults. First and most glaringly, there are 34 poets covered in this 169 page anthology. That means, at maximum, the authors could give each poet five pages. Since each poet's poems are given in both German and English that means that each poet usually gets a half page biography and one poem. Heine and Goethe get three poems a few others get two. I don't know how they expect us to understand anything about

the poet based on one poem. Another problem is the failure of the authors to cite sources. I was impressed when they included a poem by Nietzsche, and I wanted to check that poem out in the context of his work, but alas Mathieu and Stern don't tell us where they pulled the work. Is it in the "Gay Science"? Maybe "Will to Power" or "Dionysius Dithyrambs"?

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