

Arndt, Christiane, and Silke Brodersen, eds. *Organismus und Gesellschaft: Der Körper in der deutschsprachigen Literatur des Realismus (1830-1930)*. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2011. 218 pp. € 27,80 paperback.

On the cover of this collection is the disarticulated torso of Munich's Bavaria statue, a photograph no doubt intended to embody the premise of Arndt and Brodersen's joint venture: to dissect representations of the body in German Realist literature from 1830-1930. For a volume on Realism to venture so far into the 20th century is perhaps unusual, but the editors' choice does well to accommodate the historical and cultural scope of the seven contributing essays. Stifter begins a series that subsequently progresses through Keller, Storm, and Raabe to feature the most of the dominant voices associated with German Realism. Less familiar faces round out the collection; carrying the reader from one century into the next are discussions involving fascinating yet often overlooked personalities like Gabriele Reuter, Hedwig Dohm, Carl du Prel, Wilhelm Bölsche, and Artur Dinter. This time frame finds Realism at its most productive and attuned to the tensions of a society unsettled by emerging scientific and technological developments. As outlined in the introduction, the rise of natural sciences such as physiology, microbiology, and pathology fundamentally altered the cultural configuration of the human body, disassembling its basic structural components yet facilitating its reassembly into a modern subject, one conscious of its organic nature as well as its relation to the greater social organism. Given its temporal and stylistic positioning, literary Realism is particularly predisposed to the present the "poetologische Inszenierung des materiellen Körpers" (13). Until now the intersection of the two has been largely neglected. The present volume attempts to address this lacuna in an informative and enjoyable reading experience that does not quite live up to its full potential.

Presenting a coherent totality is always a challenge for edited volumes, and the editors of this volume have certainly assembled a corpus of strong essays, all perfectly competent showings of literary analysis by their own right. When taken as a whole though, the resultant effort is uneven and disjointed. The most edifying contributions fulfill the terms promised by the book's title and introduction, deftly maneuvering between science and socioeconomics, individual and community, history and literature. Arndt in particular shines with an investigation into how societal anxieties about protection and infection in Raabe's *Zum wilden Mann* are agitated by evolving scientific understanding of hygiene and microbiology. Similarly attentive to both individual and social bodies, Brodersen explores the material minutia of Stifter's "Körperlandschaften" in light of Humboldt's micro-/macrocosmic narratives. Alternatively, Joseph Metz probes Stifter's dead bodies and how their "Dinghaftigkeit" signifies the capitalist decay later discussed by Benjamin. Paul Fleming sets Keller's *Spiegel, das Kätzchen* against Feuerbach's material anthropology with an entertaining and persuasive reading, while Elisabeth Strowick deconstructs the poetology of perception in Storm's *Der Schimmelreiter*. The only article explicitly appraising the gendered body is Susanne Balmer's essay, which demonstrates

how female authors such as Reuter and Dohm appropriated conventional *Pflanzenmetaphorik* and Darwinist discourses to subvert essentialized constructions of femininity. Nicholas Saul supplies an impressive finish, connecting the Spiritualist obsession with the material body to the racist-nationalist rhetoric of 20th century.

Despite its scientific slant, this collection ultimately amounts to a series of close textual readings. As such, it best serves scholars in the fields of German and literary study, especially those with a vested interest in the authors and issues at hand or wishing to enhance existing knowledge. Readers are free to enjoy each essay in any order and on its own terms, but should not expect wide-ranging discussions or general impressions. Still, the editors state that this volume represents but the initial stages of the investigation of *Organismus* and *Gesellschaft* in 19th-century literature, a complex and substantial project which hopefully leads to several publications. This reviewer, for one, would wish to see future editions expand beyond microcosmic readings of select texts to offer a macrocosmic appreciation of Realism's literary and historical context, whether regarding scientific or technological innovations, socioeconomic superstructures, or any one author. In addition, bringing German Realism into dialogue with authors falling outside its purview while also exploring instances of intermedial encounters with painting, photography, and music would not only yield fruitful, fascinating, and perhaps unexpected results, but enrich an already intriguing and exciting project.

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