

Elke P. Frederiksen and Elizabeth G. Ametsbichler, eds. *Women Writers in German-Speaking Countries: A Bio-Bibliographical Critical Sourcebook*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998. 561p.

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This bio-bibliographical reference work on women writers from German-speaking countries is the first of its kind in English. In almost 600 pages the volume presents essays on 54 women writers from the 10<sup>th</sup> century through the present, from Hrotsvit von Gandersheim, Hildegard von Bingen, Mechthild von Magdeburg, Catharina Regina von Greiffenberg, Anna Louise Karsch, Annette von Droste-Hülshoff, Elisabeth Langgässer, to Irmtraud Morgner and Christa Wolf, to name only some of the prominent women writers treated here. The entries were written by leading scholars in the fields of *Germanistik* and women's studies.

Each essay is organized chronologically according to the author's last name or common pseudonym (e.g., Anna Seghers is located under "S"). All entries are carefully researched and written, and include information on the writer's biography, major themes and narrative or poetic strategies, and a survey of criticism. Completing each entry is a bibliography of works by the author, translations, and a listing of secondary sources and works cited in the entry.

This volume's strength lies in its consistency; each essay is similar in style and tone, a tribute to the editorial expertise of Frederiksen and Ametsbichler. The scholars selected to contribute are also authorities on their respective authors: Sara Lennox on Ingeborg Bachmann, Ruth-Ellen B. Joeres on Hedwig Dohm and Marie Luise Kaschnitz, Ruth Dinesen on Nelly Sachs, to name just a few.

As a research tool, the editors have included a variety of appendices and indexes that make the book accessible to a range of users from a multiplicity of perspectives. Included is a list of the authors by date for quick chronological reference and a selected bibliography of a variety of texts ranging from general reference works, theoretical and methodological discussions, critical anthologies, socio-historical studies, as well as reference works on specific periods. Finally, three indices (name, subject, title) make cross-referencing and item searching a breeze.

A drawback to this volume is its limited scope. Of the women writers treated, the majority is of German or Austrian origin; exceptions include Rose Ausländer, Libuse Moníková, and Erica Pedretti. Currently, the study of minority literatures in Germany is expanding, and there are a number of Afro-German, Turkish-German, and Rumanian-German writers who have been omitted. The editors admit in their preface that this absence stems from their inability to find qualified con-

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tributors on such topics. Given the relative frequency of Turkish-German and Afro-German women's literature as themes at a variety of conferences, this is a deficiency that will certainly be rectified in a subsequent edition. This reviewer hopes that the publisher and the editors will endeavor to update and enhance the reference work, as the field of German-language literature by women expands and flourishes.

The volume's publisher, Greenwood Press, is well known for its reference tools. This current book makes an excellent companion volume to *Women Writers of Germany, Austria, and Switzerland: An Annotated Bio-Bibliographical Guide* (1989), also edited by Elke Frederiksen; in the preface the editors note that this project is an outgrowth of the earlier undertaking. Both of these publications complement another Greenwood reference work, *The Feminist Encyclopedia of German Literature* (1997), edited by Friederike Eigler and Susanne Kord. I highly recommend the purchase of this sourcebook for libraries. Reference works of this type tend to be expensive, but this resource also would make an excellent addition to departmental and personal libraries. ❀