LITERATURE, 1880 TO THE PRESENT DAY
By ALAN BEST, Senior Lecturer in German
in the University of Hull*

I. General

LITERARY HISTORIES AND SURVEYS. Deutsche Literatur: eine Sozialgeschichte, 9. Weimarer Republik — Drittes Reich: Avantgardismus, Parteilichkeit, Exil: 1918–1945, ed. Alexander von Bormann and Horst Albert Glaser, Reinbek, Rowohlt, 410 pp., contains 28 contributions on various literary and cultural aspects. Clearly not for those who like their criticism sanitized, the merit of this study is the integration of individual works into the context of social currents. ‘Great novels’ (Zauberberg, Malte, Berlin Alexanderplatz, Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften) are supplemented by portraits of H. Mann and Brecht. Traditional, exotic and ‘völkisch-nationalsozialistische Erzähl literatur’ provide self-contained thematic stepping-stones coalescing neatly into a cogent and highly readable account. Titles, dates, etc., abound, but the social background is well set and the growing politicization of the literary public in Weimar is traced. The careful sectioning with clear headings provides easy signposts through individual articles. From avant-garde to continuity in Austrian literature, the reader is given a clear pattern to follow. The bibliography is extensive and clearly defined and there are detailed ‘Zeittafel’ and indexes. This is a useful companion to Professor Ritchie’s study on National Socialist literature (see below). Die Literatur der DDR, ed. Hans-Jürgen Schmitt, Munich, Hanser, 588 pp., is structured in three major sections: ‘Literatur und Politik im Sozialismus’, ‘Gattungen, Publikum und Institutionen’, and ‘Phasen der Literaturentwicklung’. It is a thorough, balanced and on the whole sensible presentation, with notes, bibliography and a good index. Günter Hartung, Literatur und Ästhetik des deutschen Faschismus. Drei Studien, Berlin, Akademie, 314 pp.


*I am grateful to the University of Hull for a grant facilitating my work on this contribution.