

Progressivism had passed to Hyde Park and the New Dealers.

For the general reader, *Midwestern Progressive Politics* will provide an interesting and readable account of a continuing fundamental reform drive in American history. The historian will regret that Nye did not "dig deeper and broader" into the problem.

*University of Kentucky*

Robert S. Maxwell

*Amerikanische Dichter und die deutsche Literatur.* By J. Wesley Thomas. (Goslar: Volksbuecherei Verlag, 1950, pp. 176. Bibliography and index. \$1.80.)

Professor Thomas' book tells, in broad outlines, the story of the influence that German letters have exerted on American writers and thinkers during three and a half centuries. Discussing first the early New England contacts with German books and thought, Professor Thomas then devotes seven chapters to the nineteenth century—to New York writers such as Charles Brockden Brown, Irving, Cooper, and Bryant; to the precursors of Transcendentalism (among them, Everett, Ticknor, and Bancroft); to the Transcendentalists themselves and their relation to German Romanticism (Emerson, Margaret Fuller, etc.). Speaking of the Southern authors, Professor Thomas indicates that it was particularly Poe who went to German literature for some of the plots of his short stories. Among the writers in the "genteel tradition" who show contacts with German letters, Longfellow, Motley, and Melville are mentioned; Lessing's influence on Lowell as well as Goethe's and Jean Paul's importance to the American literary scene from 1835 to 1865 are discussed more fully. The next two chapters treat the three "experimental" poets (Whitman, Emily Dickinson, and Lanier) and the "gilded age," in which Bayard Taylor, Mark Twain, Howell, and Henry James—idealists and realists alike—occupy a significant place in the appreciation and transplanting of German culture. After a brief evaluation of the movement of the St. Louis Hegelians (William Torrey Harris *et al.*) and their influence on American thought, the book concludes with a chapter on the twentieth century.

The record of German letters in America is impressive, and yet Professor Thomas has been careful in not overstating

his case. Basing his work on investigations of numerous scholars in the field, he has written an interesting and vivid account of German-American literary and cultural relations. Where previous investigations are not available, he suggests influences and connections which more detailed research is likely to bear out. Only rarely is he unconvincing when he cites a "probable" German source for an American work.

Of course, Professor Thomas is fully aware of the many gaps that exist in the history of the intellectual and literary relationship of the two countries under discussion, and his study indicates the areas in which additional research is to be done. The picture is particularly incomplete in the twentieth century. The impact of the recent German refugee writers on American literature is perhaps too early to evaluate fully; it is, however, an important chapter in German-American relations which awaits careful study.

The tremendous influence that Goethe has exercised far into the present century is merely touched upon. A full treatment of Thomas Wolfe and a full treatment of Santayana, to mention only two examples, could well be included here. Oliver Alden, the hero of Santayana's *The Last Puritan*, is imbued with German culture by his governess, Irman Schlote, "a priestess of the Goethe cult." Almost all of Thomas Wolfe's writings show evidence that the American felt close to the German sage. In a little known essay, "Brooklyn, Europe, and I," Wolfe described his trip to the Goethe house in Weimar where "the great spirit," "the personification of the idea of world literature," "the most magnificent and most typical exemplification of German culture" became alive, gave him a feeling of strength and confidence and made him understand the meaning and the aim of all human existence, namely to expel disbelief and the base and trivial things in life.

Anybody interested in the intellectual history of America will benefit from this study of its relation with another country from the beginning when the influence was one-sided to the present century when "America begins to pay back her cultural debt which it contracted in Europe so that it contributes to the present exchange of ideas as much as or more than it receives." The German publisher is to be congratulated on having printed this book by an American professor and scholar on a subject which is significant in providing a basis for an understanding of the relations between the two countries.