

German and English Literature of the Inter-War Period

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This book collection focuses on the inter-war period 1919-1939 and includes works of fiction as well as non-fiction from Germany, England and, in cases of exceptional interest, the US. The works selected for inclusion are regarded as representative of this period with regard to their authors, publishers, subject matter, manner of publication and suffering from censorship. This explicit focus on the historical period between the two World Wars is also the reason why only first editions are systematically included. The novels and novellas, anthologies and essays assembled here are meant to evoke different aspects of the culture of the inter-war years. The collection includes idealizing memoirs of the Great War and tales of its terror, it features socially critical novellas that reflect on the problems of bourgeois society, it includes political novels that react to the rise of totalitarian ideologies and escapist narratives that exhibit a wilful blindness to political developments. In this regard, no facet of the period's culture is excluded a priori from the collection's frame.

The limitation to works in German and English is based solely on the narrow linguistic abilities of the collector; it is by no means irrevocable. Nevertheless, the juxtaposition of these two national literatures in the collection and the intricacies of Anglo-German relations between the wars have imperceptibly and over several years steered the collection into a more and more political direction; titles like Count Pückler's *Einflussreiche Engländer* ('Influential Englishmen') and Harold Scarborough's *England Muddles Through* are symptomatic of this development. Nevertheless, many of the novels included in the collection speak of social matters closer to home - the bourgeois struggle for economic survival; love as seen through the lense of the new-born psychoanalysis; a new sexual liberation that still excludes women.

The collection was begun in 2008, when I bought a book by Stefan Zweig for the sole reason that it seemed to exemplify so many of the aspects we associate with the inter-war years. It is being built on modest means; this and the qualification that the titles included be first editions means that it is growing only slowly. Nonetheless, further extension of the collection is intended. Currently, several works of English travel writing are under review for acquisition. I am also planning to include works of Italian literature of the period once my knowledge of that language has progressed far enough. The works of Curzio Malaparte, for instance, are obvious contenders.

Bibliography of the Collection

Ivy Compton-Burnett,

Men and Wives (London: Heinemann, 1931)

Description: 1st ed., 8vo., 367 pages, hard cover (cloth) lacking d/j, otherwise very good

Comment: There is no special reason why this and no other novel by Compton-Burnett is part of the collection; the collector always wanted to include one of her works and this first edition was the first (reasonably priced) he came across. As always, the author focuses on the hell of Edwardian family life. The novel stands out in that it is the only one in her oeuvre the protagonist of which dies.

Walter Flex,

Der Wanderer Zwischen Beiden Welten (München: Beck, [1924])

Description: 243.-255. Thsd., 8vo., 104 pages, hard cover with gilt lettering, good condition

Comment: This novella constitutes an exception from the frame of collecting in two ways. Firstly, it was first published in 1916, thus preceding the inter-war period. It is included nonetheless, because Flex's romantic portrayal of the Great War was highly influential throughout the 1920s and was later instrumentalized by the Nazis. The inclusion of a later edition, secondly, is an effect of the scarcity of first editions of this title.

Leonhard Frank,

Bruder und Schwester (Leipzig: Insel, 1929)

Description: 1st ed., 8vo., 268 pages, hard cover (cloth) lacking d/j, slight lean and rubbing to spine, pages browned, fair condition

Comment: Like Schnitzler's *Traumnovelle*, Frank's novel about an incestuous relationship between brother and sister comes in the wake of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis, exploring a fateful relationship intolerable to bourgeois society. Like all of his works, the novel fell prey to the Nazi book burnings of 1933. The novel's emphasis on fate provides an interesting contrast to Ivy Compton-Burnett's much more detached treatment of a like relationship in *Brothers and Sisters*, published that same year.

Stefan George,

Das Neue Reich (Berlin: Georg Bondi, 1928)

Description: 1st ed., 8vo., 149 pages, hard cover (cloth) with gilt lettering, very good condition

Comment: *Das Neue Reich* ('The New Empire') is the last published collection of poems of George, the greatest German symbolist poet. It contains the famous poem "Das Geheime Deutschland" ("Secret Germany") to which Claus von Stauffenberg is said to have alluded in his last words before being executed for his attempt at Hitler's life in 1944.

Ernst Jünger,

Afrikanische Spiele (Hamburg: Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt, 1936)

Description: 1st ed., 8vo., 225 pages, hard cover (cloth) lacking d/j, good condition

Comment: This novel is a fictionalized account of an event in Jünger's early life: In 1913, he left his school and parents to join the French Foreign Legion. The story not only explains Jünger's lifelong fascination with the heroic, but also expounds the motivations of young men who romanticise soldiering on the eve of the Great War.

Sinclair Lewis,

It Can't Happen Here (Garden City, NY: Sun Dial Press, 1935)

Description: 1st ed., 8vo., 458 pages, hard cover (cloth) in slightly frayed d/j, good condition

Comment: Lewis' novel is the only one in the collection written by an American. It owes its inclusion to both the author's extraordinary reaction to European fascism - the book tells the story of a fascist seizure of power in the US - as well as to his exemplary inability to understand how dangerous fascism really was.

Carl-Erdmann Pückler,

Einflussreiche Engländer (Berlin: Frundsberg, 1938)

Description: 1st ed., 8vo., 160 pages, hard cover (cloth) in original d/j, good condition

Comment: In this book, Prussian civil servant Count Pückler presents short portraits of influential British politicians, including Neville Chamberlain, Lloyd George and, even then, Winston Churchill. The book is symptomatic of the Reich's foreign policy's focus on Britain; however, in 1939 Pückler wrote a less civil sequel called "Wie stark ist England?" ("How strong is England?").

Edwin Redslob (ed.),

Vermächtnis (Dresden: Limpert, 1930)

Description: 1st. ed., 8vo., 178 pages, hard cover (cloth) with gilt lettering, spine and boards slightly faded, otherwise good to very good

Comment: This volume collects letters and poems of victims of the Great War in order to construct their *Vermächtnis* ("Legacy"). The collection shows how, halfway between two wars, the death of soldiers in the field is increasingly glorified and how the story of their ignoble deaths is rewritten to make them "heroes" in German memory.

Harold E. Scarborough,

England Muddles Through (Macmillan: New York, 1932)

Description: 1st ed., 8vo., 265 pages, hard cover without d/j, good condition

Comment: Scarborough, at the time London correspondent of the *Herald Tribune*, undertakes a survey of post-war Britain that is all the more significant if one reads it as a survey of *pre-war* Britain; he analyses the loss of Britain's world power and the population's reaction to that as well as various economical and cultural consequences of the First World War.

Arthur Schnitzler,

Therese. Chronik eines Frauenlebens (Berlin: S. Fischer, 1928)

Description: 1st ed., 8vo., 391 pages, hard cover (cloth) lacking d/j, bent to spine, gilt lettering on spine and front boards faded, fair condition

Comment: The last novel of Schnitzler is a work of sharp criticism of the bourgeois society before WWI. It tells the story of Therese, a stand-alone young woman who suffers a steep social decline. The author uses modernist modes of narration as well as Freudian concepts of psychology to emphasise the realism of the story.

Arthur Schnitzler,

Traumnovelle (Berlin: S. Fischer, 1926)

Description: 1st ed., 8vo., 136 pages, hard cover (cloth) lacking d/j; slight bent to spine, otherwise good condition

Comment: In this short novella about a Viennese doctor who is drawn into a decadent underworld, Schnitzler attempts a portrait of the bourgeois subconscious in conflict with the restrictive demands of civil life. The book was banned in Nazi Germany.

Herrmann Steinhausen (pseud. Eugen Gürster),

Die Rolle des Bösen in der Weltgeschichte (Stockholm: Bermann-Fischer, 1939)

Description: 1st ed., 8vo., 79 pages, soft cover lacking d/j, good condition

Comment: Rather than the eponymous 'evil in world history', Steinhausen (Gürster) explores the particular evil of his day (fascism), along with his own notion that nihilism's relativization of the terms „good“ and „evil“ has contributed to this catastrophe. The book was written in the years of his Swiss exile.

Bruno Vogel,

Es Lebe der Krieg! (Leipzig: Die Wölfe, [1924])

Description: 1st ed. (?), 8vo., 71 pages, soft cover, wear and repairs to spine, fair condition

Comment: Probably a rare first edition of this anti-war collection of fragments and stories by Vogel, all exposing the horrors of war in the most direct manner possible. The texts are accompanied by expressionist woodcuts by Rüdiger Berlit. The book was banned immediately after its publication.

Franz Werfel,

Die Vierzig Tage des Musa Dagh, 2 vols. (Berlin-Wien-Leipzig: Zsolnay, 1933)

Description: 1st ed., 8vo., 556 and 583 pages, hard cover (cloth) lacking d/j; slight rubbing on spine, otherwise very good condition

Comment: Published in 1933, this novel about the Armenian genocide of 1915 was banned in Germany the following year. Its story focuses on the struggle of an Armenian community in its fight against Ottoman Turkish forces in order to avoid deportation and is based on extensive historical research.

P.G. Wodehouse,

Thank You, Jeeves (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1934)

Description: 1st ed., 8vo., 312 pages, hard cover (cloth) lacking d/j; slight shelfwear, foxing and browning throughout, otherwise good condition

Comment: The first of Wodehouse's Jeeves-and-Wooster novels, this book owes its inclusion in the collection both to Wodehouse's masterful portrayal of a social stratum that would be transformed beyond recognition by WWII and to the collector's partiality for his works.

D.B. Wyndham-Lewis and Charles Lee,

The Stuffed Owl. An Anthology of Bad Verse (London: Dent, 1930)

Description: 1st ed., 8vo., 236 pages, hard cover (cloth) lacking d/j, minor fraying to spine, otherwise good

Comment: This anthology is part of the collection mainly for its entertainment value; however, Wyndham-Lewis and Lee's commentary of the "bad poetry" they have selected also exemplifies the particular nature of inter-war literary journalism: They ridicule the greatest British poets in merciless manner, whilst their own work relies on a new style that combines quick wit, a creative association of ideas and superficial knowledge.

Stefan Zweig,

Der Kampf mit dem Dämon (Leipzig: Insel, 1925)

Description: 1st ed., 8vo., 321 pages, hard cover (cloth) lacking d/j, good condition

Comment: In this attempt at writing a „typology of the mind“, Zweig explores the character of three German „geniuses“: Hölderlin, Kleist, and Nietzsche. The book is dedicated to Sigmund Freud, whose understanding of psychology provides a model for Zweig's study.