

Victor Klemperer. *The Language of the Third Reich: LTI: Lingua Tertii Imperii, A Philologist's Notebook.* London and New Brunswick: Athlone Press, 2000. x + 296 pp. \$32.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8264-5777-6.

Roderick H. Watt. *An Annotated Edition of Victor Klemperer's Lti Notizbuch Eines Philologen (Studies in German Thought and History, Vol 17 - German Language Edition).* Lewiston: E. Mellen Press, 1997. x + 362 pp. \$119.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-88946-351-6.



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Brief Notes on Two New Editions of Victor Klemperer's *LTI*

Victor Klemperer became known first among scholars of the Third Reich specifically and of totalitarian societies generally through his book *LTI*, first published in 1947. For years it was one of the few real treasures Western day-trippers could find in GDR bookstores. The little book details the romance philologist's observations, from the 1920s to the end of the war, regarding how language functions and changes in a totalitarian society. Like Orwell, Klemperer saw the power language had over people and carefully documented, with his philologist's eye and ear, what would become the newspeak of German society under the Nazis. From the beginnings of the *Bewegung* to

Klemperer's yellow *Stern*, from *Blitzkrieg* to *Endsieg*, Klemperer discusses in detail and with irony the transformation of his beloved German into a tool of oppression and misinformation. It is brilliant and compelling, and still holds lessons for every student of history, politics or language. Klemperer's diaries—four fat volumes in German—have become better known lately, as has a selection of the diaries from the war years, mainly because of Klemperer's clever observations on life, as a Jew married to a non-Jewish woman, under the Nazis. The diaries appeared in Germany in various editions in the 1990s and in English in two volumes in 1999 and 2001, published as trade paperbacks for use in the classroom by Random House. They make for fascinating reading, too. *LTI*

is simply a close look at one specific aspect of that life.

Both Roderick H. Watt and Martin Brady have done a service for those who teach Klemperer's important book to undergraduates or to students at any level just coming to German studies from other fields. Watt has reproduced Klemperer's German text of *LTI* and added copious and thorough notes in English, set at the end of each chapter, which explain all sorts of things: references to Nazi acronyms (for example, BDM, PPK, MG, and DAF), literary references (Kleist to Tacitus), contemporary political points (Blutfahne, Ariernachweis, Bund Oberland), places and people. While many of the notes are tedious and unnecessary for most readers (for example, notes to *KZ* and *der zweite Weltkrieg* and *das dritte Reich*), most would be useful for students of the period. But would anyone reading this book need these kinds of simple notes? The intended audience has to be those who can read the original German text, but who are also English speakers who can read the English notes, that is, almost exclusively, Anglo-American students of German studies, undergraduates certainly, who have enough German to handle the text, but evidently not enough historical knowledge to understand many of Klemperer's references. So, although it is an odd project, it is one that belongs in most good undergraduate college and university libraries. Like most Mellen imprints, this is produced from camera-ready copy, which shows in several mis-aligned pages; moreover, my copy is poorly bound. One would wish for something better at \$119.95.

Brady's translation of *LTI* is clear and accurate, and captures well Klemperer's irony and his punning. Since the book is about specific words and their usage, Brady does well to include Klemperer's original German in brackets in most relevant instances, which makes this book a wonderful teaching tool and reference source for students who do not know German. Unlike Watt's book, however, Brady's translation is available in

paper and thus could be used as a textbook for students in a general undergraduate course on Weimar and Nazi culture and society.

Watt has written most recently on the ways in which Klemperer's critique of Nazi language holds true for his perceptions of the language of the Soviet Bloc after the war. His work here along with Brady's excellent translation open up Klemperer as an approachable and valid subject for undergraduate research and study, even for students with limited German abilities. For German studies scholars, however, neither book will be of much use. They should turn instead to the solid and growing body of secondary work.

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