

Summary

Trust and Utopia

Essays on Literature

Hermann Broch maintained that literature involves what he called “impatience for cognition”, and writers seek to grasp the multiple meanings of reality in a given pattern that would allow us to believe that we are capable of understanding ourselves and our world. Many claim that this is impossible. What such doubters need is the motto of another writer, Hermann Hesse, who repeated that in order to achieve the possible, we should always attempt the impossible. After all, literature is also exercises with the impossible, especially nowadays, when its culture-shaping role has so markedly lost its significance. So is something bad happening to literature? Not necessarily. The seventeen essays in this book deal with the most diverse literary phenomena of the 20th and 21st centuries (including the work of Edgar Allan Poe, Robert Walser, Franz Kafka, H.P. Lovecraft, Philip K. Dick, J.M. Coetzee, Jonathan Littell, Karl Ove Knausgård, and Haruki Murakami), and convince the reader that literature will continue to perform the role of a pedagogical institution. It may be a school for creating consciousness, especially at a time when various fields of life, experiences, knowledge and science have lost significant contact with each other as a result of ongoing specialisation, nationalisms, ideologies and faiths.

Translated by Rob Pagett