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Review of Framing Faust: Twentieth-Century Cultural Struggles

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Review of Framing Faust: Twentieth-Century Cultural Struggles

Abstract

The scope of *Framing Faust: Twentieth-Century Cultural Struggles* is very ambitious, as Inez Hedges concedes at the outset. Rather than attempting to survey "the entire landscape of the Faustian," she narrows her focus to "the ways in which the Faustian rebel has surfaced in some of the most important cultural crises of the twentieth century" in order "to explore the Faustian myth in its various political, aesthetic, and social contexts" (xiii). While the topic appears very broad at first, the author skillfully demonstrates her expertise in European film and surrealism as she excavates little-known archival material and countless lesser-known Faust texts. Hedges begins with the history of film and Faust films. In the first chapter, "Faust and Early Film Spectatorship," she notes that the Faust theme was "the subject of over two dozen films in five different countries before 1913." She offers a fascinating account of Georges Méliès's Faust films produced between 1897 and 1904. Rather than documenting life as the Lumière brothers did, he turned his camera toward the imaginary realm and quickly invented special effects. As Méliès's became more adept at these tricks, they played a larger role in his Faust films. In view of the early history of film, it is worth noting that Goethe had dreamt of a Faust film, according to Ulrich Gaier. Hedges continues with a brief analysis of Richard Ridgely's 1915 film *The Magic Skin* and concludes with readings of well-known German Faust films.

Disciplines

European History | European Languages and Societies | German Language and Literature | Translation Studies

Comments

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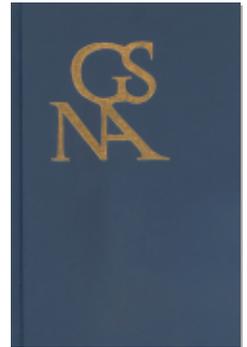
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Framing Faust: Twentieth-Century Cultural Struggles (review)

William H. Carter

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1996) und andererseits die *Lehrjahre* zu einem hybriden Künstler-Bildungsroman (Hellmut Ammerlahn, *Imagination und Wahrheit*, 2003) verklärt werden, arbeitet die Verfasserin die unterschiedlichen Ansätze zur Theorie des Bildungsromans auf und stellt die Problematik der Gattung in den Horizont der Modernisierungsfrage. Dabei sind besonders beeindruckend die Gründlichkeit, mit der die Sekundärliteratur erfaßt wird, und die Historisierung, die zur Erfassung der Erzählstruktur unternommen wird. Die Verfasserin löst die narratologischen Grundbegriffe wie Erzähler, Leser und Perspektive aus dem werkimmanenten Kontext heraus, historisiert sie und verbindet sie mit Fragen des Inhalts. In dieser Bezugnahme auf die Modernisierung ist die besondere Leistung dieser Arbeit zu sehen: "Die entscheidenden Änderungen in der Wende zur Moderne" werden "an der Erzählstruktur und—damit zusammenhängend—an der Gestaltung der fiktiven Welt und des Romanganzes" aufgewiesen: "Diese Änderungen sind ein Pendant der Änderungen in der Auffassung des Subjekts und der Erfahrung der Welt" (317). Für die Untersuchung der beiden Romane ergibt sich daraus, dass es sich bei Wielands *Geschichte des Agathon* noch um eine aufklärerisch-didaktische Entwicklungsgeschichte handelt, während im Vergleich dazu Goethes *Lehrjahre* sich als Roman des autonomen Subjekts erweisen. "Der Held der *Lehrjahre* begegnet der Welt als ein modernes, individuelles Subjekt," wie Saariuoma in ihrer Zusammenfassung erläutert (320). Die *Lehrjahre* sind kein Bildungsroman aufgrund des Inhalts der Bildung oder des Bildungsziels, "denn ein endgültig festgelegter Inhalt ist für den Prozess der Bildung überhaupt nicht bestimmbar" (323). Die Verfasserin zitiert Goethes Charakterisierung der *Lehrjahre* als "Ganzes ohne Ende" (an Fritz Jacobi, 17. Okt. 1796). Die Bildung wird als nicht vorgegebenes "Sinnmuster" verstanden: "sowohl der Held selbst als auch der Leser kommen erst aufgrund längerer Interpretationsarbeit der Erfahrungen Wilhelms darauf, in der Bildung die sinngebende Struktur des Ganzen zu suchen" (322). Das bedeutet jedoch nicht, dass das "Sinnmuster" je vollkommen verwirklicht wird und das Leben als sinnvolles Ganzes zu verstehen ist. Liisa Saariuoma, Professorin für allgemeine und vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft an der Universität Turku, Finnland, hat damit die Diskussion um die *Lehrjahre* als Bildungsroman auf eine neue Ebene gestellt. Ihr Buch verdient höchste Aufmerksamkeit der Goethe-Forschung.

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Ebrhard Babr

Inez Hedges, **Framing Faust: Twentieth-Century Cultural Struggles**. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2005. 241 pp.

The scope of *Framing Faust: Twentieth-Century Cultural Struggles* is very ambitious, as Inez Hedges concedes at the outset. Rather than attempting to survey "the entire landscape of the Faustian," she narrows her focus to "the ways in which the Faustian rebel has surfaced in some of the most important cultural crises of the twentieth century" in order "to explore the Faustian myth in its various political, aesthetic, and social contexts" (xiii). While the topic appears very broad at first, the author skillfully demonstrates her expertise in European film and surrealism as she excavates little-known archival material and countless lesser-known Faust texts. Hedges begins with the history of film and Faust films. In the first chapter, "Faust and Early Film Spectatorship," she notes that the Faust theme was "the subject of over two dozen films in five different countries before 1913" (13). She offers a fascinating account of Georges Méliès's Faust

films produced between 1897 and 1904. Rather than documenting life as the Lumière brothers did, he turned his camera toward the imaginary realm and quickly invented special effects. As Méliès became more adept at these tricks, they played a larger role in his Faust films. In view of the early history of film, it is worth noting that Goethe had dreamt of a Faust film, according to Ulrich Gaier ("Goethes Traum von einem *Faust*-Film," *Fausts Modernität: Essays* [Stuttgart: Reclam, 2000]). Hedges continues with a brief analysis of Richard Ridgely's 1915 film *The Magic Skin* and concludes with readings of well-known German Faust films.

The next two chapters consider the Faust tradition within the political contexts of Nazi Germany, the German Democratic Republic, the Russian revolution, the French Popular Front, and Ecological Socialism. Chapter two, "German Fascism and the Contested Terrain of Culture," is devoted largely to Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus* and Klaus Mann's *Mephisto*, along with sections addressing "Goethe in the Cultural Battlefield," the use and abuse of fairy tales, and a brief discussion of the Else Lasker-Schüler play *Ich und ich*. The third chapter, "Socialist Visions: Faust and Utopia," considers the works of Anatoli Vasilievich Lunacharski (*Faust and the City*), Léon Blum (*Nouvelles conversations de Goethe avec Eckermann*), Georg Lukács (*Goethe und seine Zeit*), Hanns Eisler (*Johannes Faustus*), and Volker Braun (*Hinze und Kunze, Hans Faust*). While drawing attention to often overlooked Faust texts, the attempt to address these works, as well as their social and political contexts, within the span of twenty-three pages yields a more informative than thoroughly analytical result.

Hedges returns to close reading and analysis in the following chapter, "Gendering Faust." She revisits Louisa May Alcott's *A Long Fatal Love Chase* and *A Modern Mephistopheles* before turning to Frank Wedekind's *Franziska*, "a play about a Faustian woman" that "shows an awareness of the limitations to self-realization that society imposed upon women in his time" (104). Hedges then applies an adept reading of *Révolutions pour plus d'un Faust* by Hélène Cixous, who "engages extensively with Goethe" (106). Finally, she analyzes *Faustine* by Emma Tennant, emphasizing her employment of surrealist imagery and the Faustian desire for youth. In the next chapter, "Anti-Fausts and the Avant-Garde," Hedges deals with modern treatments of Faust including: Gertrude Stein's opera libretto *Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights* (1938), the opera *Votre Faust* by Michel Butor and Henri Pousseur (Valéry's *Mon Faust* is conspicuously absent in this study), and Alfred Schnittke's "Faust Cantata." One of Hedges's most important contributions to Faust scholarship is her presentation and analysis of the American avant-garde filmmaker Stan Brakhage and his lengthy engagement and interpretation of the Faust tradition and Goethe's *Faust* in particular.

"Oneiric Faustus: Repression and Liberation in the Cold War Era," the final chapter, maintains that American film noir is a genre that frequently "present[s] characters who are confronted with a 'Faustian bargain'" (159). She considers John Farrow's 1948 *Alias Nick Beal* "the most overtly Faustian of all the noir films" (160). Like the Faust films of Méliès and Brakhage, Farrow's film is not generally known, in this case, because it is at the UCLA film archive. I am not well enough versed in film noir to say whether I would agree with her conclusions, but she clearly questions the boundaries of what may or may not be considered the Faustian proper. Hedges follows this provocative reading with Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita* and Kerouac's *Dr. Sax*. The chapter continues with a brief excursion into "Faust and Rock Stardom" followed by analyses of *The Devil's*

Advocate (Taylor Hackford, 1997) and the *Spawn* comic-book series. Hedges appropriately concludes with Czech director Jan Svankmajer's *Lekce Faust* (1993), where both film and surrealism meet to produce a text that is undoubtedly Faustian while, at the same time, extending beyond the traditional framing of Faust.

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Fritz Breithaupt, Richard Raatzsch, and Bettina Kremberg, eds., **Goethe and Wittgenstein: Seeing the World's Unity in its Variety**. Frankfurt/Main: Peter Lang, 2003. 172 pp.

Goethe's influence on the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein is subtle and indirect. In his status as "canonical classic" Goethe was certainly part of Wittgenstein's education, but paradoxically his most profound influence was mediated through other thinkers. It is possible to trace, for instance, the roles of Emerson and William James with regard to nature, on one hand, and of Schopenhauer, Otto Weininger, and Oswald Spengler with regard to morphology, on the other. "Thus, the point of looking at parallels between Goethe and Wittgenstein," writes Joachim Schulte, a leading authority and one of the contributors to this volume, "cannot really be the discovery of this or that identifiable influence Goethe may have had on Wittgenstein" (56). Rather, the elucidation of parallels is important for grasping the character of each, "expressions of certain types of attitude or temperament" (56). In this the contributors to this volume are very successful. While this volume is sponsored by *Wittgenstein-Studien*, contributors also underline the modernity in much of Goethe's thought.

The nine essays collected here grew out of a workshop hosted in Leipzig in Spring 2000, occasioned by the 250th anniversary of Goethe's birth and the 50th anniversary of Wittgenstein's death. They build on the foundational work done by Schulte, especially in his *Chor und Gesetz* (Frankfurt, 1990), and by M. W. Rowe, now collected in his *Philosophy and Literature* (Aldershot, 2004).

James C. Klage focuses directly on the problem of influence, noting that Wittgenstein never cites Goethe as an explicit influence. Nevertheless, he finds links, especially through their shared interest in the problem of causality as it relates to explanation. Alfred Nordmann also looks at causality and explanation, exploring parallels with both Goethe and Georg Christoph Lichtenberg. Nordmann focuses on Wittgenstein's insistence that philosophy does not intervene in nature, but leaves things as they are. In a similar way Goethe's morphological approach claims no privileged access to truth, but is simply one intermediary case in a series of approaches.

A number of the essays focus on Goethe's morphological method, especially as developed in the *Metamorphosis of the Plants*, finding affinities with several of Wittgenstein's philosophical strategies. Matthias Kross is interested in Wittgenstein's move from engineering to philosophy, pointing to the importance of Goethe's search for the *Urbänomen*. Fritz Breithaupt notes that both Goethe and Wittgenstein reject the notion of some "deeper" level or truth that underlies appearance, some Platonic idea or extra-linguistic reference. He sees an analogy between Goethe's *Urbänomen* and Wittgenstein's concept of the language-game: for both appearance is about "and" without "end" (89). Nikos Psarros finds an exception to this. Where various scholars have found echoes of Goethe in