

## Book Reviews

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GOETHE'S *Faust*. The Original German and a New Translation and Introduction by Walter Kaufmann. Part One and Sections from Part Two. Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc. 1961. \$4.50.

The new translation of Goethe's *Faust* by the Princeton philosopher Walter Kaufmann has set itself an ambitious aim. It wants to supersede the prevailing Victorian translations and revise the American public's misconceptions of the drama and its author, if not of German literature in general. The spirited introduction rightly points out Goethe's contempt for rigid rules of language and prosody and establishes a just claim for his large and diversified sense of humor—two sides of the poet usually overlooked by those judging him solely on the basis of Bayard Taylor's and other such translations. Mr. Kaufmann provides the reader with a fresh and sympathetic account of Goethe's life, he acquaints him with the history of the Faust theme, and he briefly surveys Marlowe's treatment of the subject. The rest of the introduction is devoted to a discussion of the distinctive merits of Goethe's *Faust* from the point of view of a modern reader who is not a native German, to a few notes on obscure allusions, and to a detailed summary of the parts omitted in the subsequent translation. The specialist can hardly find anything new in Mr. Kaufmann's remarks, but will readily admit that they are well written and nicely calculated to arouse and hold the general reader's interest.

At times, to be sure, in his consideration of the average American reader Mr. Kaufmann has gone too far. E.g. the beginning of *Faust II* is reported as follows: "Goethe says farewell to the forceful directness of Part One and announces that from now on he will offer something more artful: not life itself, but a 'many-hued reflection'." This is hardly adequate, and still less adequate is the synopsis of the third act of Part Two, the Classical Walpurgis Night. Among other things the reader must wonder why Mephistopheles suddenly becomes Phorkyas, as no reason is given for this change of character.

But let us forget these shortcomings of the introduction and rather discuss the main achievement of the book, the translation of *Faust I* in its entirety, inclusive of the *Zueignung* and the *Vorspiel auf dem Theater*, and of the scene *Anmutige Gegend* and the whole fifth act of *Faust II*. These scenes will indeed give the general reader a proper idea of the whole of Goethe's drama, and it will give him a better idea than Louis Macneice's abbreviation of *Faust* for the British Broadcasting Company, admirable as that may be in other respects. Mr. Kaufmann will also give to the general reader an inkling of Goethe's form, which B. Q. Morgan's correct prose translation of about the same scenes for the Library of Liberal Arts does not even attempt

to do. And when the reader in addition knows some German he can with the help of Mr. Kaufmann's translation spell out the original German text, which has been provided side by side with the English version. A comparison with translations of the complete *Faust*, like those by Priest or van der Smissen, would of course be out of place on account of Mr. Kaufmann's more restricted goal.

Naturally, no verse translation of Goethe's masterpiece can at the same time be fully correct and also aesthetically pleasing. Mr. Kaufmann has taken justifiable liberties by sometimes altering Goethe's rhyme scheme and by generally restricting the number of female rhymes, which in English must form the exception rather than the rule. But for the sake of a rhyme he has also sometimes added ideas and expressions not in the original. E.g. Faust in line 398 describes himself as "a mole," in line 923 he sees the townsmen leaving their "musty stables." Mephisto in line 2932 states: "That's all, my purse is empty, though not of course my breast." Sibyl, in line 3546, has told Lieschen the news "in front of the school." But all this cannot be found in the German. Conversely, forceful Goethean expressions like "des Bases Grundgewalt" (l. 2086), "du holdes Himmelsangesicht" (l. 3183) or "die Jammerknechtschaft" (l. 4452) find a rather weak English rendering.

Incorrect or questionable translations occur in l. 530 ("Und sieht die Welt kaum einen Feiertag": "And sees the world on holidays alone"), l. 1034 ("Mein Vater war ein dunkler Ehrenmann:": "My father was obscure, if quite genteel"), ll. 1042 ff ("They made red lions." No, they didn't. But they mated the red lion to the lily—which would call for an explanatory note), l. 2844 ("Als wären's eben Pifferling'": "Like toadstools or some worthless things."), l. 4255-56 (The bagpipe is the soap-bubble, it does not blow one.), l. 11496 ("As with a curse I now descend." But Care does not descend, she merely leaves Faust alone), ll. 11954-55 ("Uns bleibt ein Erdenrest Zu tragen peinlich:": "To carry earth's remains Still has distressed us.") The king of Thule dines "at evenfall," and the translation of the "Zwinger" scene is hardly satisfactory. Finally, in a number of instances Goethe's German is not quite as coarse as Mr. Kaufmann's English. Cf. ll. 2251, 2261, 2598, 3292, 4123, and also ll. 2115-16:

A decent lad of real flesh and blood  
Is far too good to be her stud.

Still, on the whole Mr. Kaufmann's English rendering is a very commendable approximation to the German original. "Vorspiel auf dem Theater," "Prolog im Himmel," "Vor dem Tor," "Strasse," the Valentine scene make smooth and delightful reading, and the English on the whole is lively, fresh, and devoid of stilted clichés. The spirit of Goethe's drama is faithfully interpreted, and instances of felicitous and ingenious renderings are numerous.

We quote at random:

ll. 367-368:

Of Course, I am smarter than all the shysters,  
The doctors, and teachers, and scribes, and Christers.

ll. 2201-02:

*Frosch*: Are you perchance a virtuoso?  
*Mephisto*: Oh no, the will is great, the power only so-so.

l. 11451:

In his progression agony and joy.

Thus, one may really recommend the new translation to the general reader as a good approximation of the German text and a highly useful introduction into the original, but with one important exception. This exception is the German text itself which is reproduced here rather carelessly. The reviewer counted at least 46 errors in the poetic lines and 15 additional ones in the scene titles. There are instances of misleading punctuation marks, of missing umlaut, of false readings of Goethe's lines. The king of Thule does not count "seine Städt im Reich," but "seine Städt' und Reich" and does leave everything to "seinem Erben," not "seinen Erben." In line 3466 "leidlich" is printed as "liedlich," Gretchen's eyes in line 4195 are the eyes "einer Toten," not "eines Toten" as Mr. Kaufmann has it. And ll. 11123-24 are falsely attributed to Baucis, and precede ll. 11121-22 which are wrongly credited to Philemon. Finally in the German page titles for pages 422-502 the "der" of "Tragödie" should of course not be capitalized.

Fortunately, the proof-reading of the English parts of the book on the whole is better. Annoying is the stage remark for the first scene of Part two, where Faust is seeking "twilight sleep," while the text should read "seeking sleep. Twilight." Annoying is also line 2951 ("Please tell me no more") which should read "Please tell me more." In l. 11058 "grandam" should become "grandma." Smaller errors occur in ll. 967, 4367, 11933, and in the first line of the last paragraph on p. 27.

We may hope that Mr. Kaufmann's new English version will gain some popularity not only among the general public, but also in English courses on European literature and on German literature in translation; it should indeed play its deserved part in relegating Bayard Taylor's once satisfactory translation to the limbo of merely historical achievements. But when this should come to pass, the publisher should consider it his duty to hand over the German text to an experienced Goethe scholar who would erase all the many printing errors that have marred an otherwise good production.

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*Bulletin Signalétique, Section 19: Sciences Humaines, Philosophie.* Revue trimestrielle. Paris: Centre de Documentation du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique. Vol. XV, No. 4 (1961). Vol. XVI, No. 1 (1962). Price (outside France): 85 NF.

*Bulletin Signalétique*, one of the major bibliographical achievements of our time, is published in France as a

quarterly by the Center of Documentation of the Ministry of National Education. The fact that it is a cooperative undertaking by many specialists on various subjects attracts an international reading public. It is a pleasure to call the attention of American students and teachers in the modern language field to this important publication. Anyone working in the field of linguistics or literature will find that it contains a wealth of useful information, much of which may not easily be accessible elsewhere.

Founded in 1946 as *Bulletin Analytique*, it originally devoted most of its space to "résumés" and critical annotations of important contributions to scholarship in the physical and biological sciences. Only gradually was its scope and coverage extended to the humanities as well. It was not until 1955 that Literature and Linguistics were added in a separate section under the able direction of Jean Paris, Distinguished Professor of French Literature at Smith College.

In the past sixteen years, the number of magazines screened and indexed has grown from a mere thirty publications in 1946 to more than 2,000 in 1962, while the number of abstracts has increased from 300 per issue to over 30,000 per year. In spite of this truly impressive growth, the Center is constantly adding to its exchange system. Recent additions included such countries as Japan, the Soviet Union, and Pakistan.

There is hardly any other bibliographical tool of this nature which surpasses the *Bulletin Signalétique* in comprehensiveness: each of the two issues under discussion contains annotations or reviews of over 6,000 monographs, dissertations, or journal articles, varying in length from five to twenty-five lines. 33 pages of the first issue of 1962 contain a listing of all journals which have been indexed. All entries are consecutively numbered, commencing with the beginning of this series in 1955, and an extensive system of cross-references enhances the usefulness of this bibliography.

In conclusion, mention should be made of the Center's additional services in providing, at a minimum cost, not only all original publications listed in the bulletin, but also translations (even from such languages as Finnish, Turkish, Chinese, and Japanese), and microfilms and photostatic copies of books and articles.

The dynamic editor and his staff deserve our admiration and sincere appreciation for a job well done. No reputable college or university library in this country can afford to overlook this valuable research tool.

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HELBLING, ROBERT E. AND BARNETT, ANDRÉE, M. L., *Le Langage de la France moderne*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961, x+353+C pp.

Cet excellent texte, destiné aux étudiants de troisième ou à ceux de quatrième année du *college*, est écrit en français (à l'exception de la préface ainsi que des passages de thème). Les auteurs en expliquent le titre de la façon suivante:

While the book is essentially devoted to the study of the modern French idiom, it also gives certain "profiles" of contemporary French life. Every one of its fifteen chapters