

# Goldsmiths Research Online

*Goldsmiths Research Online (GRO)  
is the institutional research repository for  
Goldsmiths, University of London*

## Citation

Toscano, Alberto. 2021. The Faust Variations. *Historical Materialism*, 29(1), pp. 162-173. ISSN 1465-4466 [Article]

## Persistent URL

<https://research.gold.ac.uk/id/eprint/30444/>

## Versions

The version presented here may differ from the published, performed or presented work. Please go to the persistent GRO record above for more information.

If you believe that any material held in the repository infringes copyright law, please contact the Repository Team at Goldsmiths, University of London via the following email address: [gro@gold.ac.uk](mailto:gro@gold.ac.uk).

The item will be removed from the repository while any claim is being investigated. For more information, please contact the GRO team: [gro@gold.ac.uk](mailto:gro@gold.ac.uk)

# **The *Faust* Variations**

**Alberto Toscano**

Reader in Critical Theory, Department of Sociology, Goldsmiths,

University of London, UK

a.toscano@gold.ac.uk

## **Abstract**

This essay explores Jameson's reading of Goethe's *Faust II* in *Allegory and Ideology*, putting it into dialogue with enquiries into Goethian allegory by other Marxist critics, namely Georg Lukács, Cesare Cases and Franco Fortini. Allegories of monetisation and dispossession in *Faust II* are explored, along with the limits of Lukács's partial devaluation of the allegorical. The essay focuses in particular on how Jameson's reading of *Faust II* can be interpreted as an allegory of theory itself, and in particular of the dialectic, thereby returning us to Lukács's own parallel reading of *Faust* and Hegel's *Phenomenology*, albeit in a different key.

## **Keywords**

allegory – Cesare Cases – dialectic – Franco Fortini – J.W. Goethe –  
Fredric Jameson – Georg Lukács

It is perhaps not controversial to argue that the mainstream of Marxist theory and literary criticism has harboured considerable reservations about the cognitive and political valences of allegory. To the extent that it goes beyond delineating the contemporary pre-eminence of allegorical modes and recodes historical materialism as itself allegorical in nature, Jameson's *Allegory and Ideology* poses a complex challenge to established habits of dialectical criticism. In what follows, I want to explore this challenge through the prism of Jameson's reading of allegory in Chapter 8: 'Dramatic: *Faust* and the Messages of Historicism'. Though Jameson does not thematise it here, Goethe's *Faust* – to be more precise, *Faust II*, which is also the principal object of Chapter 8 – provided the occasion for one of the most significant and symptomatic Marxist engagements with the question of allegory, namely Georg Lukács's '*Faust Studies*', written in Moscow in 1940. For Lukács, in *Faust II*, Goethe appears as the great artist of a transitional epoch, both striving to maintain a holistic and humanist aesthetic and giving form to a disintegrating world. By contrast with the great nineteenth-century realists so dear to Lukács, Goethe stands as 'the last defender of the aesthetic laws of the "artistic

period” who creates, with their help, a great terminal art’.<sup>1</sup> The titanic effort creatively to conserve these aesthetic laws is particularly evident in what concerns allegory. It is in the context of Goethe’s crucial correspondence with Friedrich Schiller in the late 1790s that he develops one of the most incisive statements regarding the difference between symbol and allegory, one that will govern much of Lukács’s own thinking about *Faust*, and especially about the transition between Part I (1808) and Part II (1831). As we read in Goethe’s *Maxims and Reflections*, in an aphorism from 1825:

My relationship with Schiller was based on the decisive bent of both of us towards one object; our shared activity rested on our differing ways of striving to achieve this object. On a slight disagreement between us which we once discussed and of which I am reminded by a passage in his letter, I made the following reflections. There is a great difference whether a poet is looking for the particular that goes with the general, or sees the general in the particular. The first gives rise to allegory where the particular only counts as an example, an illustration of the particular; but the latter in fact constitutes the nature of poetry, expressing something particular

---

<sup>1</sup> Lukács 1968, p. 245.

without any thought of the general, and without indicating it. Now whoever has this living grasp of the particular is at the same time in possession of the general, without realizing it, or else only realizing it later on.<sup>2</sup>

The conundrum which Lukács's own reading of *Faust II* strives to confront is the coexistence of Goethe's normative depreciation of the allegorical – as generic, abstract, deprived of that 'living grasp of the particular' without which a cognition of the general is sterile – and his copious use of allegory, as he shifts from the 'little world' of *Faust I* to the 'great world' of *Faust II*. Lukács deals with this problem of style at different levels, which we could term phenomenological, philological, and aesthetic. Phenomenologically – using this term in the Hegelian sense, to which we shall return below – *Faust II*'s penchant for allegory is linked to the passage from the 'naïve historicism' of *Faust I* to a 'reflected historicism'.<sup>3</sup> Given the social content of *Faust II*, namely the dissolution of feudal relations and chivalric subjectivities, and the fermentation of capitalism (paper money and land appropriation) in the 'intermundia' of feudalism, the phantasmagorical and allegorical form taken by the poetic representation is in keeping with the transitional character of its historical object, that imperial court 'which

---

<sup>2</sup> Goethe 1998, pp. 33–4. This passage and the one below are discussed in Luperini 1991.

<sup>3</sup> Lukács 1968, p. 183.

phosphorizes like a ghost because of its inner rottenness'.<sup>4</sup> As Lukács notes, remarking on the profound differences between the representation of feudalism's eclipse in *Faust II* and Goethe's 1773 play *Götz von Berlichingen*:

The totality of the present thus reveals determinates which did indeed exist in themselves at the time, but which subsequent history alone has made clear and lucid for us. This is why the historical foundation of the second part (acts I and IV) is a grotesque *danse macabre* in which – as in the ancient *danses macabres* – not mere individuals appear but social types; a *danse macabre* in which even people appear as phantoms[.]<sup>5</sup>

Philologically, Lukács identifies the origins of the style of *Faust II* in the allegorical form of Goethe's courtly spectacles, his *Masquerades* [*Maskenzügen*]; in the 1807 fragment *Pandora*, understood as a dramatisation of the opposition between contemplation and action; and in the influence of Pedro Calderón de la Barca and 'Oriental' poetry. What does Goethe develop in these earlier experiments and draw from these older sources? According to Lukács, 'elements which are appropriate for

---

<sup>4</sup> Lukács 1968, p. 188.

<sup>5</sup> Lukács 1968, p. 184.

the decorative and poetic expression of powerful intellectual abstractions and a comprehensive typification of men and human relations'.<sup>6</sup> Here is of course the clue to the aesthetic and normative (and thus, incipiently political) dimension of Lukács's perspective, the translation of the allegorical into the *typical*. To claim Goethe's allegories in *Faust II* as 'poetically genuine' and devoid of the sterility usually associated to this device, Lukács has to claim that the allegorical figures of the second part are not 'coded' but instead represent 'a highly *direct* typification of characters who express in a clear and distinct manner the essentials of their representative role in the destiny of the species and whose generic character is immediately evident'.<sup>7</sup> By way of exemplification, he advances the figures of Baucis and Philemon, the tragic victims of a 'devastating attack on the pre-capitalist idyll', itself a moment in the non-tragic 'course of a great historical necessity'. And yet, much as Lukács wishes to depict a Goethe who bends the abstractness of allegory to the sensible wealth of symbol (and perhaps this is what the 'type' ultimately allows), he concludes his '*Faust Studies*' with the recognition that as the terminal poet of an unfinished transition, Goethe could not evade the 'discrepancies [that] arise between the objective demands of expression, which have become necessary', namely in the 'allegorizing tendency' of

---

<sup>6</sup> Lukács 1968, p. 249.

<sup>7</sup> Lukács 1968, p. 250.

*Faust II*, and ‘the subjectively compelling mode of expression of the poet’ – in other words, his desire for symbolisation.<sup>8</sup> Whence Lukács’s concluding critical observation regarding those sections of *Faust II* that remain ‘cold and hard, without human transitions; sections in which the allegorical element preponderates too much’.<sup>9</sup>

The great Marxist Germanist Cesare Cases, who served as a consultant on Franco Fortini’s remarkable Italian translation of *Faust*, distanced himself from Lukács’s ‘Studies’ – to which he otherwise acknowledged a great debt – precisely on this point. For Cases, Lukács hesitates between a recognition of the historical-phenomenological necessity of the allegorical and a normative-aesthetic repudiation of it, in keeping with Goethe’s own strictures. Both assume the separation of essence and appearance, the universal and the particular, which is our fate under capitalism, but then try to pass off allegory as something else (for instance, the type). For Cases instead, ‘Goethe is forced to use allegory to express the reality of capitalism, which empties appearance of any specific essence and reduces it to pure phantasm of a single essence, which is money’.<sup>10</sup> And, to counter Lukács’s devaluation of the allegorical, he reminds us both of the use that the Marx of the *Manuscripts* makes of

---

<sup>8</sup> Lukács 1968, p. 252.

<sup>9</sup> Lukács 1968, p. 253.

<sup>10</sup> ‘Gli Studi sul *Faust* di György Lukács’ (1985), in Cases 2019, p. 152. On the link between allegory and conceptual abstraction in Goethe, and Lukács’s struggles in his *Aesthetics* and other texts to provide a new form of Goethian *Erlebnis* (lived experience) adequate to capitalist conditions, especially via his theory of the type, see the acute reflections in Luperini 1991.



Mephistopheles' paean to money's protean power (as Lukács himself had done)<sup>11</sup> and of the 'masquerade' that accompanies monetisation in Act I of *Faust II*. It is, Cases writes, 'in this phantasmagoria that is celebrated the triumph of money, the elimination of every natural element and its substitution with artificial products: not for nothing does the parade open with the beautiful Florentine flower sellers peddling artificial flowers'.<sup>12</sup> Following Heinz Schläffer's work on *Faust II* and the 'allegory of the nineteenth century', also cited by Jameson, Cases can challenge the idea that Goethe's work is relayed and surpassed by the more adequate representation of capitalism in Balzacian realism. To the contrary, for Cases it is the allegories of *Faust II*, more than the realist novel, which can give due primacy to the processes of commodification and reification, recognising that allegorical 'abstraction is the only adequate way to express the abstraction of money'.<sup>13</sup> It is no accident, then, that it is only in the twentieth century, and especially after the implosion of Lukács's Third-International socialist horizon, that one can recover the adequacy of allegorical writing to capitalist real abstraction and comprehend Goethe's work in that vein.

---

<sup>11</sup> Marx 1992, pp. 376–7.

<sup>12</sup> Cases 2019, p. 152. 'And we think it meritorious, / even highly laudatory, / that our artificial flowers / bloom resplendent all year long' (v. 5096–9). To underscore the place of the commodity, Cases also quotes verses 5114–5 of *Faust II*, 'What is sold and those who sell it / well are worth your crowding closer'. Goethe 2014, pp. 132–3.

<sup>13</sup> Cases 2019, p. 154. Cases also engages with Schläffer and the German debate on *Faust*, including in Marxist circles, in Cases 2019, pp. 107–33. He also explicitly deals with Lukács's confrontation with Benjamin's treatment of baroque allegory in Cases 1985, p. 103.

This intention – Lukács taken beyond Lukács by subtracting the socialist-humanist telos of his aesthetic judgments – is also at work in the reading of *Faust II* in *Allegory and Ideology*, which provides a tour, at once dizzying and nuanced, through allegory's variations in Goethe's text. Money, that catalyst of allegorical abstraction, is of course foregrounded by Jameson, who notes that the passage from the 'little world' of the first part to the 'great world' of the second is marked, among other things, by Mephistopheles' invention of money as an inflationary instrument designed to placate the Emperor's subjects. In this, *Faust II* anticipates the way in which monetary circulation poses 'a crucial representational problem for all modern narrative literature, in which money is too impersonal and collective an institution to be dealt with in its fundamental structure',<sup>14</sup> while it also signals 'the advent of a radically new historical temporality' – as Jameson notes with reference to Wagner.<sup>15</sup>

We could thus argue that the representational problem is doubled and displaced by a problem of periodisation, having to do with the nexus of money and capitalism; in Lukács's estimation, the diabolical invention of money in Act I stands more as a destructive force vis-à-vis the reproduction of feudal relations than as a form of capitalist value per se. Money's 'magical enlargement of the radius of human action', ironically

---

<sup>14</sup> Jameson 2019, pp. 288–9.

<sup>15</sup> 'Wagner as Dramatist and Allegorist', Jameson 2015, p. 49. On money and allegory, see also Fletcher 2012, pp. 397–8.

noted by the young Marx in the 1844 Paris Manuscripts, does not eliminate the historical fact that ‘without a revolution of the relations of production, without a development of the productive forces, the petrification and decomposition of these conditions is accelerated by the infiltration of money’.<sup>16</sup> Now, while Lukács describes Mephistopheles’ (and not Faust’s...) role in Acts IV and V, taken up with the drama of ‘polderisation’ and expropriation, as concentrating in one ‘symbolic poetic figure’ the so-called ‘primitive accumulation’ of capital, and the introduction of productivity as the dominant principle of social life and action, we may wonder whether Jameson’s focus on property rather than industrial productivity isn’t more adequate to the transitional imaginary of *Faust II* – namely when he notes the theme of ‘land tenure and of the commodification of the soil, of individual versus collective ownership, in the final drama of eminent domain and the wresting of land from sea’.<sup>17</sup> We can see how Mephistopheles is here a kind of operator of transition(s), giving partial lie to an identification of Faust’s famous *streben* (striving) with any heroism of bourgeois subjectivity<sup>18</sup> – though he can also function,

---

<sup>16</sup> Lukács 1968, pp. 198–9.

<sup>17</sup> Jameson 2019, p. 289. As Jameson also notes about that final act, over which so many interpretive disputes have been staged: ‘Whatever the transcendental conclusion the drama owes itself to stage, the raw exploitation and land grab of the final act, the blind man’s delight at the commotion of the lemurs waiting for his death, which he joyously takes like a slumlord to be the sound of the erection of new buildings and the creation of new value – all this grimly marks the close approach of the centenarian [Faust] to the unvarnished realities of his own postrevolutionary era’ (Jameson 2019, p. 297).

<sup>18</sup> On the problem of subjectivity in Goethe, see Löwenthal 1989. Goethe’s critique of false subjectivity, and of its aesthetic correlate, dilettantism, could also be linked to the problems of crisis and transition. As he remarked to Eckermann in 1826: ‘all epochs in a state of regression and dissolution are subjective, in contrast all progressive epochs have an objective direction . . . our present time is a regressive one since it is a subjective

as Jameson notes with regard to the class allegory of Gretchen's tragedy in *Faust I*,<sup>19</sup> as a bearer for feudal nostalgia, offering Faust 'not so much personal and physical youth as the historical youthfulness of an older social system, with its transparent power structure and its hitherto unimaginable security, its unambiguous roles and satisfactions'.<sup>20</sup>

Lukács, as we have seen, had already tied the vicissitudes of style in *Faust* to the 'great transitional epoch' Goethe was writing in, an epoch whose very historicity 'strain[s] the sensible unity of the forms and characters and, in increasing measure, tend[s] to burst it'.<sup>21</sup> The theme of transition in Jameson's reading is just as emphatic, but its overtones differ. As he puts it programmatically, 'we will read Goethe as the poet of a contradictory absolutism, as the subject of a uniquely transitional historical moment which, like the sun striking the statue of Memnon, releases him into an incomparable literary engagement with all the then imaginable genres'.<sup>22</sup> Accordingly, allegory here does not to simply define a stylistic

---

one'. As Löwenthal observes: 'I alluded to inwardness as an always present focus of disease of the German situation. I feel strengthened in my analysis when I find nearly the same expressions in Goethe. In a conversation with Eckermann on January 29, 1826 he said of an acquaintance: "he suffers from a common illness of today, from subjectivity." And he adds: "I would like to cure him of it." Critical consciousness has searched for two hundred years for a way of curing this illness, but it has not been found' (p. 95).

<sup>19</sup> This matter is also dealt with in one of Lukács's '*Faust Studies*', 'The Tragedy of Gretchen' (Lukács 1968, pp. 217–34). The nexus of class and allegory is at the centre of one of Jameson's key texts of film criticism – Jameson 1977.

<sup>20</sup> Jameson 1977, p. 290.

<sup>21</sup> Lukács 1968, p. 157.

<sup>22</sup> Jameson 2019, p. 291. Parenthetically, we can note that a different coding of Goethe as a poet of transition will entail a divergent evaluation of the sense in which *Faust* is 'a tragedy' (as its subtitle tells us). Transition understood in terms of the stylistic and historical multiplicity foregrounded by Jameson ultimately cannot be reconciled with a reading of *Faust*, such as Lukács's, which sees it as threading tragic episodes into a non-tragic whole (with the latter being characterised as historical necessity). See Lukács 1968, pp. 180–1 and *passim*. If Goethe is anti-tragic, for Jameson it is not so much in a Hegelian,

option impelled by the tendential abstraction of a capitalist society, bringing about the quietus of the 'artistic period'; it comes to constitute, in spite of Goethe's own aesthetic preference for the symbol, the cognitive form and orientation of his final masterpiece. Drawing on the symptomatically spatial figure used by Goethe in a letter to Schiller to describe his 'incommensurable' opus ('an enormous family of sponges'), Jameson underscores the 'allegorical interplay' of 'distinct historical styles' that 'gives the text its unique meaning, in a transition or historical interregnum unparalleled elsewhere'.<sup>23</sup>

It is here not otiose to corroborate Jameson's insight with the testimony of *Faust's* Italian translator Franco Fortini, a great Marxist literary critic (and poet) in his own right, who also introduced the Italian translation of Jameson's *Marxism and Form*. In the preface to his translation, Fortini reflected on the technical and stylistic problems posed to any translator by the way in which *Faust* operated as a 'poem dressed in literature, or rather in ten different literatures – from rococo to neogothic, Alexandrine to Elizabethan – which announces 70 or 80 years in advance of the first avantgardes the destruction of secular literary institutions and, to a certain degree, of poetry itself'.<sup>24</sup> For Fortini too, allegory was the key

---

as in a Nietzschean vein, in terms of 'the discovery of the life-giving powers of strong forgetting as a way of consigning guilt ... in that endless resurrection and renewal of primal innocence' (ibid.).

<sup>23</sup> Jameson 2019, p. 289.

<sup>24</sup> Fortini, 'Prefazione', in Goethe 2012, p. lix.

both to the formidable task of the translator (transcoding the ‘family of sponges’ across the historical palimpsest of an alien verse) and to *Faust II*’s contemporaneity, but especially to how Goethe’s transition might resonate with and inflect our own – following ‘a more general movement in postmodernity from the symbol to the allegory’.<sup>25</sup> Explicitly marking his debt to and distance from Lukács’s ‘Studies’, Fortini noted the way in which *Faust II* could appear

with the characters typical of dissolution, of parody, of irony, of abnormality; but this ‘catastrophe’ could appear as the paradoxical *assemblage* of a tradition and, at the same time, as itself a tradition. The stylistic syncretism and the eclecticism of the figurative and verbal material of *Faust II* ... allow us to experience the whole work as the anticipation and prophecy of a profound condition of our age: the co-presence and cohabitation of different degrees of authenticity and life, of the crystallised and the fluid, of the semi-living and the semi-feral, of ‘idols’ and organisms. ‘We are allegories’, we read [in *Faust II*], and many today are aware of the obscure allegorical character – which is to say, the larval character, in the sense of

---

<sup>25</sup> ‘Eurotrash or *Regieoper*?’, Jameson 2015, p. 179.

mask, role and allusion – of our humanity, as groups and individuals.<sup>26</sup>

Something like a transition out-of-joint transpires from this passage, a sense that Goethe's partially reluctant plunge into allegory speaks to a time – which is to say to an experience of historicity – which is not endowed with the directionality and momentum that Lukács could still assume. Or, following Jameson's reading, we could say that transition is rethought, and in part spatialised, as 'a superposition of several time periods that comment on one another'<sup>27</sup> – where paradoxically such allegorical spatialisation could be regarded as a condition for a true 'reflected historicism', to appropriate Lukács's own formulation.<sup>28</sup> The allegorist becomes the 'master of ceremonies' who allows the full maturation of a historicist perspective on styles that are thereby transmuted into 'historical symptoms', where the failure of the symbolic union of Greece and Germany (in its classical-Mediaeval key as the betrothal of Faust with Helen; in its modern one as the heroic demise of their child Euphorion – a stand-in for Lord Byron dying for Greek national liberation at Missolonghi) is itself a dialectical lesson. Strikingly, Jameson

---

<sup>26</sup> Goethe 2012, p. lxxiv.

<sup>27</sup> Jameson 2019, p. 292.

<sup>28</sup> This resonates with the claim that '[i]f Allegory had a middle name, it would be Antinomy. It lives, according to an old phrase, in "divided and distinguished worlds".' Fletcher 2012, p. 382.

invites us to see in Faust not a twisted striving towards realism but, in a bravura passage on *Faust II* as a 'reading play', which calls to mind other visionary moments in his writing,<sup>29</sup> a veritable upheaval of the very coordinates of literary visuality:

The normal transpositions of description are here subverted by the pretext of some hallucinatory immediacy; and even the written emergences and disappearances – for it is always in a strange space of unheard of visual spectacles that figures suddenly arise against their blank background and just as unexpectedly vanish – come laterally across the field of vision of the inner and imaginary eye like hallucinatory images which have their own momentum: the eye does not turn in their direction to observe them, as is the case with more mimetic written description, but submits their passage from outside the immobilized gaze and across it into another nothingness. This inner eye posited by the reading play does not look (let alone read). It is passed through, and the reading of such

---

<sup>29</sup> I'm thinking not just of the well-known probings of the schizophrenic synaesthesias that accompany the postmodern, but, for instance, of that wonderfully disorienting panorama from *Valences of the Dialectic* where Jameson tells us how 'within this horizon of immanence we wander as alien as tribal people, or as visitors from outer space, admiring its unimaginably complex and fragile filigree and recoiling from its bottomless potholes, lounging against a rainwall of exotic and artificial plants or else agonizing among poisonous colors and lethal stems we were not taught to avoid'. Jameson 2009, p. 608.



works at its most intense approximates a drugged state, a pharmacological trance.<sup>30</sup>

Could we not advance the somewhat scandalous hypothesis that this catachresis of the allegorical text is also, after a fashion, a phenomenology of theoretical writing itself? After all, as *Allegory and Ideology* makes plain (including in the *Faust* chapter), Jameson's preoccupation with the allegorical remains anchored in a political and aesthetic desire for cognitive mapping, and we should perhaps take this hallucinatory moment of allegory as interlinked with allegory's oblique totalising powers. In a sense, Jameson could be seen here to bend the stick away from Lukács's domestication of allegory into type, while also trying to do justice to the aesthetic or even sensory dimensions of the allegorical.

Through Goethe, we can thus see allegory both as a cognitive mastery of styles conquered in the throes of transition ('reflected historicism') *and* as a potentially hallucinatory aesthetic. This is perhaps testament to Jameson's own practice of theoretical writing, where moments of 'trance' can be reconciled with that strategic and combinatorial

---

<sup>30</sup> Jameson 2019, p. 298. Jameson's comments can be usefully complemented by Ladislao Mittner's emphasis on the splitting of *Faust II* into monologues, on the one hand, and (allegorical, illusionistic, demiurgic) spectacles, or 'revues', on the other. Faust himself 'periodically disappears, only to reappear, often in disguise, but he reappears not so much to act, as to make or let others act, and, above all, to witness a spectacle created by him or by others'. Mittner 2002, p. 982.

mastery of styles and interpretive codes which may take the name of metacommentary, or indeed of Marxism – which is not a final world-view subsuming without remainder other theories but a theoretical practice that has a multiplicity of theories as its material. We could hazard, then, that as a thinking in and of *interregnum*, in and from *intermundia*, Marxist theory is also allegorical,<sup>31</sup> in the sense that Jameson argues that in allegory ‘the multiple and incommensurable codes of the traditions must nonetheless be used in order to convey the unrepresentable by way of our inevitable failure to represent’; while these codes are ‘all [...] as ideologically and metaphysically tainted as they are indispensable’.<sup>32</sup>

Thus, a recognition, following Jameson, that ‘[a]llegory allows all such codes and yet reworks them by way of their juxtaposition and the acknowledgment of their multiplicity’,<sup>33</sup> also brings the allegorist closer to the dialectician. This permits us, by way of conclusion, to recover an aspect of Lukács’s reading that might be felt to chime with Jameson’s project in *Allegory and Ideology*, namely the parallel reading of *Faust* and

---

<sup>31</sup> On the question of Marxism’s relation to the allegorical, which provided the initial occasion, in a critical dialogue with Althusserianism, for Jameson’s systematic use of that four-level theory of allegory that is the *organon* for *Allegory and Ideology*, see the crucial chapter ‘On Interpretation: Literature as a Socially Symbolic Act’ in Jameson 1983, pp. 1–88. Jameson had already sought to interpret Benjamin’s and Bloch’s thought in terms of the Mediaeval allegorical model in Jameson 1971, pp. 60–1; pp. 116–17.

<sup>32</sup> Jameson 2019, p. 307. This link between allegory and the unrepresentable contrasts with Goethe’s theory (rather than practice) of allegory, as a kind of integral (and thus impoverished, abstract) expression. As a posthumously published note lays out: ‘Allegory transforms an object of perception into a concept, the concept into an image, but in such a way that the concept continues to remain circumscribed and completely available and expressible within the image. Symbolism transforms an object of perception into an idea, the idea into an image, and does it in such a way that the idea always remains infinitely operative and unattainable so that even if it is put into words in all languages, it still remains inexpressible’. Goethe 1998, p. 141; and the commentary in Luperini 1991, pp. 91–5.

<sup>33</sup> Jameson 2019, p. 307.

Hegel's *Phenomenology*. While militating against 'point-by-point' allegories, or allegories of personification,<sup>34</sup> dialectical thought refracted in a Goethian mirror does appear as a kind of allegoresis, one which, in its juxtaposition of multiplicity, undoes the dialectic's customary association with chronological and teleological linearity. While ultimately wanting to uncover the developmental master code, or 'strict ordering principle' (historical necessity, the destiny of the species) beneath its individual or figural 'abbreviations', Lukács has to recognise the allegoresis (in Jameson's sense) at work in the 'roundelay of "forms of consciousness" in the *Phenomenology of Mind*, where the Parisian Terror comes after Diderot's Rameau only to be followed by Antigone',<sup>35</sup> thereby affirming the presence in both *Faust* and the *Phenomenology* of 'a fantastic-discontinuous, subjective-objective time and time-sequence'.<sup>36</sup> It is thus only in a hallucinatory spatialisation of historical (and stylistic) referents that the logic of historical time can transpire through the empirical reality of chronological time, and the dialectic come to be (re)born out of the spirit of allegory. Perhaps it is only through such a rethinking of time that allegory and communism will no longer make such 'strange bedfellows'.<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>34</sup> Jameson 2010, pp. 124–5.

<sup>35</sup> Lukács 1968, p. 178.

<sup>36</sup> Lukács 1968, p. 179.

<sup>37</sup> Jameson 1971, p. 116 (with reference to Bloch): 'Allegory and Communism make strange bedfellows'. Commenting on the centrality of *Faust* to the *Principle of Hope*, Jameson will propose that Bloch's Marxism may be more Goethian than Hegelian in kind (p. 140), and that 'a kind of allegorical

## References

- Cases, Cesare 1985 [1971], 'Benjamin, l'allegoria e il barocco', in *Il testimone secondario. Saggi e interventi sulla cultura del Novecento*, Turin: Einaudi.
- Cases, Cesare 2019, *Laboratorio Faust. Saggi e commenti*, edited by Roberto Venuti and Michele Sisto, Macerata: Quodlibet.
- Fletcher, Angus 2012, *Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode*, New Edition, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Goethe, Johann Wolfgang 1998, *Maxims and Reflections*, translated by Elisabeth Stopp, Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Goethe, Johann Wolfgang 2012 [1970], *Faust*, edited and translated by Franco Fortini, Milan: Mondadori.
- Goethe, Johann Wolfgang 2014, *Faust I & II*, edited and translated by Stuart Atkins, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Jameson, Fredric 1971, *Marxism and Form: Twentieth-Century Dialectical Theories of Literature*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Jameson, Fredric 1977, 'Class and Allegory in Contemporary Mass Culture: *Dog Day Afternoon* as a Political Film', *College English*, 38, 8: 843–59.
- Jameson, Fredric 1983 [1981], *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*, London: Routledge.
- Jameson, Fredric 2009, *Valences of the Dialectic*, London: Verso.
- Jameson, Fredric 2010, *The Hegel Variations: On the Phenomenology of Spirit*, London: Verso.
- Jameson, Fredric 2015, *The Ancient and the Postmoderns: On the Historicity of Forms*, London: Verso.
- Jameson, Fredric 2019, *Allegory and Ideology*, London: Verso.
- Löwenthal, Leo 1989, 'Goethe and False Subjectivity (1982)', in *Critical Theory and Frankfurt Theorists: Lectures-Correspondence-Conversations*, New Brunswick: Transaction.
- Lukács, Georg 1968 [1940], 'Faust Studies', in *Goethe and his Age*, translated by Robert Anchor, London: Merlin.

---

structure is built into the very forward movement of the Utopian impulse itself, which always points to something other, which can never reveal itself directly but must always speak in figures, which always calls out structurally for completion and exegesis' (p. 143). Jameson also explores *Faust* in terms of Adorno's and Mahler's diverging responses to the ending of *Faust II* in Jameson 2015, pp. 101–6.

- Luperini, Romano 1991, 'Symbol and Allegory: From Goethe to Lukács, from Marx to Benjamin', *Differentia: Review of Italian Thought* 5, 13: 91–108.
- Marx, Karl 1992, *Early Writings*, translated by Rodney Livingstone and Gregor Benton, Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Mittner, Ladislao 2002 [1977], *Storia della letteratura tedesca. II. Dal pietismo al romanticismo (1700–1820)*, Volume 3, Turin: Einaudi.