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Review Essay: Wickram, Jörg. *The Golden Thread [Der Goldfaden]*

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Wickram, Jörg. *The Golden Thread* [*Der Goldfaden*]. Trans Pierre Kaufke. University of West Florida Press, Gainesville 1991. xv + 167 pp, bib. \$24.95.

Pierre Kaufke's translation, *The Golden Thread*, of Jörg Wickram's *Der Goldfaden*, is a welcome addition to the list of editions available for those who wish to study and teach Medieval and Renaissance works in English translation. The book begins with a six-page introduction (pp vii–xii) by Ronald Salter, briefly setting the work in its critical and historical context and placing it as part of Wickram's *oeuvre*: the novel, he tells us, fits into the traditions of *Volksbuch* and *Schwank* and stands as an 'early prototype of the German *Entwicklungsroman*' (p xi). A shorter translator's note (pp xiii–v) provides Kaufke's rationale for the edition (this is the first English translation of the novel) and the criteria used in translation of the work: Kaufke cites the critical edition upon which his translation is based (the 1968 edition by Hans-Gert Roloff), states his intent 'to retain the flavor of the older text' (p xiii) by using some archaic language and fairy-tale motifs, and enumerates several stylistic devices of the original that he does not try to replicate, for example, certain types of repetitions, redundancies, paired synonyms, and formulaic phrases.

The novel contains sixty-eight chapters, each provided with a two-to-four line summary of that chapter's plot: The son of a Portuguese shepherd, working as a kitchen helper in the castle of the local count, falls in love with the count's daughter. The daughter gives Lionel (the translator's version of Wickram's Lewfried) a golden thread, which he sews underneath his skin near his heart as 'a clever symbol of the precious bond which henceforth ties their hearts together' (p viii). When found out, Lionel must flee the wrath of the count and thus encounters adventures, hardships, and tribulations before the young lovers are happily reunited.

This English version of the novel is entertaining and reads very well; Kaufke succeeds in capturing the tone and flavor of the original German, characterized by an apparent and sometimes deceptive simplicity of language, a straightforward narration of plot, and a naive acceptance of the improbable (sewing a thread under one's skin, for example). The reader is unaware of any break in style or slip of the pen. The volume is extremely free of printing errors.

The translation is followed by a select bibliography of approximately forty works — most in German (pp 161–3), the bibliographic information for 'Jörg Wickram's Collected Works' (p 165), and a list of eighteen 'Editions of *Der Goldfaden*' (p 167). Lacking are any attempts at a truly critical apparatus; the few footnotes relate to embedded song texts (nn 21, 25) or corrections of factual information contained in the novel (n 106). One finds no index, no critical notes. What does greatly enhance this edition is the inclusion of twenty-six woodcuts taken from Rütten and Loening's 1963 reedition of Clemens Brentan's adaptation of *Der Goldfaden* into modern German (p xiii).

This book is not recommended for, nor is it intended to serve as the basis for, critical research; it does provide a view of life and love in the sixteenth-century German social scene for those for whom the original is not accessible.

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