Lives of Faust

Lives of Faust

The Faust Theme in Literature and Music

A Reader

Revised Edition

Edited by Lorna Fitzsimmons

Walter de Gruyter · Berlin · New York

♾ Printed on acid-free paper which falls within the guidelines
of the ANSI to ensure permanence and durability.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Lives of Faust : the Faust theme in literature and music : a reader / edited by
Lorna Fitzsimmons. – Rev. ed. p. cm. – (De Gruyter textbook)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-3-11-019823-2 (alk. paper)
1. Faust, d. ca. 1540 – Fiction. 2. Faust, d. ca. 1540 – In literature. 3. Faust,
d. ca. 1540 – Songs and music. 4. Faust, d. ca. 1540 – Songs and music –
History and criticism. I. Fitzsimmons, Lorna, 1957 –
PN6071.F33L58 2008
809'.93351–dc22

ISBN 978-3-11-019823-2

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche
Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet
at http://dnb.d-nb.de.

Printed in Germany
Typesetting: Dörlemann Satz, Lemförde
Cover design: deblik, Berlin
Printing and binding: AZ Druck und Datentechnik GmbH, Kempten

Contents

Acknowledgements

Every effort has been made to contact copyright holders. Permission to reproduce the following is gratefully acknowledged:

Peter Werres, "The Changing Faces of Dr. Faustus," *Doctor Faustus: Archetypal Subtext at the Millennium*, ed. Armand E. Singer and Jürgen Schlunk, Morgantown, West Virginia UP, 1999, 1–23.

Osman Durrani, *Faust: Icon of Modern Culture*, Helm Information, Mountfield, East Sussex, 2004, 25–28, 244, 351–352, 362–364, 379.

Philip Mason Palmer and Robert Pattison More, *Sources of the Faust Tradition*, New York, Haskell House, 1965, 82–126, 239–243.

Gerald Strauss, "How to Read a *Volksbuch*: The *Faust Book* of 1587," *Faust through Four Centuries*, ed. Peter Boerner and Sidney Johnson, Tübingen, Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1989, 27–39.

The Historie of the Damnable Life and Deserved Death of Doctor John Faustus, ed. William Rose, London, Routledge, 1925. Reprinted by permission of Taylor and Francis, Ltd., Abingdon.

Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*, ed. David Wootton, Indianapolis, Hackett, 2005, xi, xiv-xxiv.

Klaus L. Berghahn, "Georg Johann Heinrich Faust: The Myth and Its History," *Our* Faust*? Roots and Ramifications of a Modern German Myth*, ed. Reinhold Grimm and Jost Hermand, Madison, U Wisconsin P, 1987, 3–21.

Gounod, *Faust*, Angel Records, Record Number SDL-3622.

Gounod, *Faust*, G. Schirmer Inc., London/New York, 1966, Scene I Act III, Scene I Act IV.

Steven R. Cerf, "The Faust Theme in Twentieth-Century Opera: Lyric Modernism," *Zeitschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Linguistik* 66 (1987), 29–41.

Paul Valéry, "My Faust," *The Collected Works of Paul Valéry*, vol. 3, *Plays*, ed. Jackson Mathews, tr. David Paul and Robert Fitzgerald, Princeton, Princeton UP, 1960, 29–30, 36–41.

Karl Shapiro,"The Progress of Faust," *Selected Poems*, Random House, 1968, 121–122. Reprinted by permission of Harold Ober Associates, Inc., New York.

Paul M. Malone, "Faust as Rock Opera," in Durrani, op. cited, 263–275.

Preface

Lorna Fitzsimmons

Eric Bockstael edited the first edition of this book in 1976. Professor Bockstael's intent was to complement the television course *The Lives of Dr. Faust*, which he developed for Wayne State University's University Studies and Weekend College Program. The course on Faust had grown out of a course in Wayne State's experimental interdisciplinary general education program, partially funded by the Ford Foundation. Martin M. Herman, former Chair of Wayne State's Monteith College, recalls the original course well: "The original course attempted to survey humanity's view of itself: sometimes grandiose, monumental and noble – the magisterial view of mankind; at other times, insignificant, petty, and base – the worm's eye view of human activity. Central to the former category was a segment on the Faust legend: i.e., Marlowe, Goethe, Berlioz, Gounod, and Thomas Mann, plus art works by Michelangelo and Henry Moore. Included in the latter, were satirical works by Juvenal, Molière, Swift, Voltaire, Gilbert and Sullivan, Hogarth, and Daumier. The course's capstone was provided by Igor Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress*, an opera with a libretto by W. H. Auden and Chester Kallman that incorporated and combined both Faustian and satirical elements." In his Preface, Bockstael explains why the segment on Faust was developed into a separate course: "Suffice it to say that the myth of Faust is one of the most outstanding expressions of Western man's search for knowledge, freedom, creation of his own existence and attempts not to succumb to the humdrum of life ..."

Today, over thirty years later, the number of universities offering courses centering on Faust discourse has grown significantly. Demand, both in and beyond the academe, remains high. The academic institutionalization of Faust studies is, of course, intricately enmeshed with the far-reaching commercialization of Faust discourse in the post-World War II period. Many students today are introduced to Faust themes as they listen to rock music, view video games, or shop for shoes, whether in the United States, Europe, Asia, or elsewhere. The popularity of Faust discourse is increasingly global, its audiences increasingly diverse, and its producers less rarely women.

In revising *Lives of Faust*, I have followed the first edition's aim of providing key texts by which to gain a broad understanding of the shifting contours and contexts of the Faust theme. Essays by Peter Werres,

Osman Durrani, Gerald Strauss, David Wootton, Klaus L. Berghahn, Henry Bacon, Steven R. Cerf, and Paul M. Malone bring the collection up-to-date.

I am appreciative of the support of Mrs. Julie Bockstael-Poll; Martin M. Herman, Professor Emeritus of Humanities, Wayne State University; Roslyn Schindler, Chair, Interdisciplinary Studies, Wayne State University; and Jane Hoehner, Director, Wayne State University Press.

Introduction

The Changing Faces of Dr. Faustus

Peter Werres

Is Faust the German tragedy, the dark German genius of high-flying dreams and Icarian crashes[1] *in nuce*, or is Faust more than just a German phenomenon? In 1939, Thomas Mann concluded that the occident has recognized the symbolic value of the Faust figure for its deepest essence.[2] Earlier this century, the conservative cultural philosopher Oswald Spengler (1880–1936) had discussed the Faustian in his controversial treatise known in the English-speaking world as *The Decline of the West*. He identifies the Faustian in the soul of the particular period of culture which we have inherited; our art, our morals, our science, our politics – all that the West has contributed to the history of civilization is Faustian culture, Spengler contends. He claims that Faustian aspiration is the key to all creative activities and personalities of post-medieval Western civilization.

* * *

The views of Spengler and Mann have prevailed: Together with a handful of other notorious dead white European males,[3] the figure of Dr. Faustus

---

[1] Especially in the aftermath of WWII, Germany has often been described as a country exhibiting a schizoid split, a place where idyll lives side by side with horror, where deep feeling and deep thought coexist with total coldness and goose-stepping – something Thomas Mann describes throughout his *Doctor Faustus*. The literary reference frequently employed in this context is Goethe's Faust moaning: "Zwei Seelen wohnen, ach, in meiner Brust,/ Die eine will sich von der andern trennen" ("Two souls, alas, are dwelling in my breast,/ and one is striving to be severed from the other" ll. 1112–13), a quote that has long become part of every German thesaurus.

[2] Remarks later published in the essay collection *Adel des Geistes* (1945).

[3] Out of the entire body of Western lliterature, Salvador de Madariaga selected four men – Faust, Hamlet, Don Juan, and Don Quixote – a composite of which would represent most of the Western experience: "Don Juan is one of the great Europeans of the spirit. With Faust, Hamlet and Don Quixote, he makes up the constellation of the four brightest stars of our European firmament .... [A]rtists are on even stronger ground [than philosophers and historians] ... in pointing to the world of European immortals as the highest, richest and brightest source of European consciousness and life" (*Don Juan as a European Figure*, Byron Foundation Lecture No. 22 [Nottingham: Univ. College, 1946]1).

is by now generally considered one of the archetypal manifestations of modern Western experience and has, beyond that, come to symbolize humankind's quest for ever greater knowledge and understanding.

It all started with the experience of the historical Dr. Faustus, excommunicated as a heretic, a victim of the political and religious tensions of his day, whose mysterious death contributed to the subsequent legends that have arisen surrounding his character. Over time, the changing faces of Faust have often shown bizarre distortions. Earlier this century, the Faustian drive for understanding and achieving gestalt in the physical and metaphysical context was first perverted by some literary scholars of the Nazi times and then wholeheartedly embraced by German politicians.

Archetypal Faust, of course, has all the elements of Western hubris and thus something of modern Western Everyman, who believes himself to have all the answers and often displays a coquettish attitude toward self-destruction – something that can also be sold to the modern consumer, from Mephisto footwear to Faust wine and Magic Cards. In 1958 even the quest for the long-elusive proof of a mathematical formula turned into a Faustian tale. An anthology entitled *Deals with the Devil*[4] contains a short story by Arthur Poges, "The Devil and Simon[5] Flag." Simon bets his soul on the devil's not being able to provide him with the answer to the question, "Is Fermat's Last Theorem correct?" After a day, the devil returns and admits defeat[6] – a rare occasion in a Faustian tale.

Over time, the Faust myth has simply become what an earlier age would have called "one of the literary bibles of the occident." Speaking of

---

[4] Ed. Mike Resnik et al. (New York: Ballantine, 1994 [reprint]).

[5] The very choice of the first name Simon is an allusion to signing one's soul away. Simon Magus was one of the numerous forerunners of the later Faust character. He had sought to buy the gift of the Holy Spirit by entering into a pact with the devil. From the Old to the New Testament, from Theophilus to Calderón's *Prodigious Magician*, we encounter "pre-Faustian" tales all sharing the same underlying phenomenon. Among the legends not yet discussed in literary scholarship is that of thirteenth-century Viking pirate Eustace the Monk, feared as the "Black Monk," who supposedly entered into a pact with the devil to make his ship invisible – something that apparently did not work all that well, as he was caught and beheaded at sea.

[6] Which comes as no surprise: In *The Last Problem* (Publications of the Mathematics Association of America, 1990), E. T. Bell had written that civilization would, most likely, come to an end before Fermat's Last Theorem could be solved. This Holy Grail of mathematics was actually uncovered only three years after Bell's prediction (356 years after Fermat's challenge) and, according to its discoverer, Princeton professor Andrew Wiles, without the devil's help.

bibles: some time ago, Jehovah's Witnesses were handing out *Watchtowers* with the headline "Beware the 'Faust Syndrome,'" Faust as universal man falling prey to evil temptations of all kinds? In 1991, and again in 1995, my interdisciplinary seminar on "Substance Abuse and Literature," which used the Faust myth as a metaphorical reference point, drew huge student crowds at George Washington University. In its May 1992 issue, the magazine *Musician* ran a cover story on "Drugs & Booze & Creativity: Dealing with the Devil." It also offered a Faustian interpretation of a self-indulgent life in the narcissistic fast lane as a sure one-way street to hell. The pact signed in blood is everywhere; whether musician, painter, or poet, whether American, French, Russian, or German, the image always fits. Case in point: The immortal Russian Sergej Jessenin, who seemed to have it all: the magic poetic touch, money, and one of the most beautiful women of his time, world-famous dancer and firebrand Isadora Duncan – had written himself a pact with a one-way ticket to alcoholic self-destruction; he penned his last poem – appropriately – with his own blood before hanging himself.

Just as is true for other archetypal Western figures,[7] the literature on the Faust figure is simply oceanic. Between 1900 and 1965 alone, Faust appeared as the subtext for more than two hundred literary creations. Not surprisingly, an MLA database search will yield, just for the years 1963 to the present, 1144 entries for items concerning themselves with modern Faust experiences. Needless to say, there are also numerous, virtually countless musical references to Faust, including works of such mainstream composers as Louis Spohr, Franz Liszt, Robert Schumann, Gustav Mahler, Charles-François Gounod, Hector Berlioz, Arrigo Boito, Edvard Hagerup Grieg,[8] and Ferrucio Busoni.[9] Film, the youngest of the media, now, at the millennium, looking back at its first century of existence, has been quick to embrace the Faust legend.

---

[7] As regards, for example, literature pertaining to one such archetypal figure, Don Juan, see Armand E. Singer, *The Don Juan Theme: An Annotated Bibliography of Versions, Analogues, Uses, and Adaptations* (Morgantown: West Virginia UP, 1993) with its over three thousand entries.

[8] Who set Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* to music.

[9] Even the grandmaster of musical drama, Richard Wagner, dabbled in Faustian material. While in the end no grand Faust opera was created, Wagner left us an often-performed Faust *Overture*, and it is also hard to overlook that topos and gestus of his *Rheingold*'s closing scene closely mirror the core of the last act of Goethe's *Faust II* (the old, godlike figure under the illusion that all has been accomplished, just when all is about to be lost).

One would be pressed for space were one to attempt, within the pages allotted here, merely to provide a list of the names of authors, composers, and other artists who created works inspired by the Faust legend. With regard to literature, an essay could, space permitting, criss-cross in and out of the Germanic literatures to follow the trail of Faust, from the original German folk book on Doctor Faustus (published by Spies in Frankfurt in 1587) and Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* (already nine editions by 1640), to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Faust*,[10] Friedrich Maximilian Klinger's Faust novel, Nicolaus Lenau's and Ernst August Friedrich Klingemann's Faust plays, Jakob Michael Reinhold Lenz's *The Judge from Hell*, Matthew G. Lewis's *The Monk*, Christian Dietrich Grabbe's *Don Juan and Faust*,[11] Wilhelm Hauff's "Cold Heart," Lord Byron's[12] *Manfred*, Henrik Ibsen's stage adaptation of a Norwegian folk tale, *Peer Gynt*, considered the "Nordic Faust," George Sand's *The Seven Strings of the Lyre*,[13] Victor Hugo's *Interior Voices*, Adalbert von Chamisso's *Faust* and *Peter Schlemihl*, Ivan Sergeyevich Turgenev's *Faust*, Gustave Flaubert's *The Temptation of Saint Anthony* (three versions),[14] Fyodor Dostoyevski's and Mikhail Lermontov's Faust-inspired oeuvre, Leo Tolstoy's "How Much Land Does a Man Need," Paul Valéry's *My Faust*, Stephen Vincent Benét's "The Devil and Daniel Webster," Joseph Conrad's *Victory*,[15] Hermann Hesse's "An

---

[10] Goethe's *Faust I* and *Faust II* are generally considered the greatest, if not the ultimate, Faust representation. E. M. Butler, in *The Fortunes of Faust* (London: Cambridge UP, 1952), ended up categorizing all post-Goethean Faust literature into either would-be-Goethean, non-Goethean, un-Goethean, or anti-Goethean.

[11] An interesting mix of the Faust and Don Juan characteristics. For a more recent attempt along these lines, see Albert Camus's plans to write "Don Faust et Dr. Juan."

[12] Byron himself was often referred to as "the son of Faust." As such, he was actually eulogized in Goethe's *Faust II* in the figure of Euphorion. Ibsen's entire *Peer Gynt* has also been interpreted as one monumental homage to the Faustian in Byron.

[13] In *Les sept cordes de la lyre* (1839), Sand examined her inner creative workings – Renan had referred to her as "la harpe éolienne de notre temps."

[14] In 1873, Turgenev (who, under the influence of Byron, had himself dabbled with a Faustian interpretation of the St. Anthony legend) wrote the introduction to the never-to-materialize Russian edition of this work, which portrays the protagonist's thirst for knowledge, for a perfect understanding of the nature of existence, and the metaphysical angst of his temptation.

[15] For a Faustian assessment, see Alice Raphael, *Goethe the Challenger* (New York: Jonathan Cape and Robert Ballon, 1932), especially the chapter "Joseph Conrad's Faust."

Evening with Doctor Faustus," J. R. R. Tolkien's "A Leaf by Niggle," Mikhail Bulgakov's *Master and Margarita*, and so many others.[16] Of interest for our purpose at hand are also Klaus Mann, troubled son of Thomas Mann, and his controversial 1936 novel *Mephisto*[17] (cinematic adaptation 1981), as well, of course, as Thomas Mann himself and one of the greatest novels of the last century before the millennium, his *Doctor Faustus.*[18]

As regard *Faust* the literary subtext, a more comprehensive, phenomenologically oriented *explication de textes* could focus on the following developments:

a) Changing representations of the actual pact, from a one-way ticket to hell (in the folk book and for Marlowe, Lenau, and Klingemann) to the possibility of redemption (Goethe: a bet, rather than a pact) and the more modern concept of the pact in which one is informed years after a "deal" that one has been "under contract" for some time (examples: Ibsen, Thomas Mann – we do not know we are in chains until the chains have become so strong that we can no longer break them on our own).

Chapter 6 of the original Faust Book left nothing to the imagination:

> I have written it with mine own hand and blood, being in perfect memory, and-hereupon I subscribe to it with my name and title, calling all the infernal, middle, and supreme powers to witness of this my letter and subscription.
>
> John Faustus, approved in the elements, and the spiritual doctor.[19]

---

[16] For a detailed analysis of Faust-related topics see the essay collection *Faust through Four Centuries: Retrospect and Analysis*, ed. Peter Boerner and Sidney Johnson (Tübingen: Niemeyer 1989) as well as the comprehensive annotated bibliographies of literature on the Faust theme by Hans Henning: *Faust Bibliographie* (Berlin-Weimar: Aufbau Verlag, 1966–76) and William E. Grim: *The Faust Legend in Music and Literature* (Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 1988–).

[17] Klaus Mann's stinging novel, subtitled "Roman einer Karriere," chastises the fictitious actor Höfgen for having compromised his conscience and his art in order to be a success under the Nazi regime. Höfgen and his pact – signed with the powers that be in the blood of millions of others – was widely understood as a portrayal of Gustav Gründgens, successful actor and director during *and after* the Nazi times, who was generally considered the ultimate performer of Goethe's Mephisto character.

[18] Even after half a century, by the close of the millennium, this novel is still a known entity, albeit not necessarily in a positive way: *"Doctor Faustus"* was the answer to a 1998 *Jeopardy* question: "What is the title of Thomas Mann's most unfinishable novel?"

[19] Quoted from the first English translation of the Faust Book, provided by P. F. Gent in 1592.

By contrast, and in what would appear only a hallucinatory encounter with the prince of darkness – echoing the devil's appearance in Dostoyevski's *The Brothers Karamazov* – Thomas Mann's Adrian Leverkühn is given the following explanation about the state of affairs:

> To be short, between us there needs no crosse way in the Spesser's Wood and no cercles. We are in league and business – with your blood you have affirmed it and promised yourself to us, and are baptized ours. This my visit concerns only the confirmation thereof. Time you have taken from us, a genius's time, high-flying time, full XXIV years *ab dato recessi*, which we set to you as the limit.[20]

b) changing forms of human affection, ranging from nearly complete lack thereof, a manifestation of self-indulgent, solipsistic drives (e.g., Grabbe, Ibsen), to a search for a soul mate with whom to share concerns at the depth of one's existence, capacity for compassion, and altruistic service and thus ultimate redemption (e.g., Goethe[21]) or condemnation (e.g., Grabbe, and virtually all Slavic Faust characters, where the focus tends to shift away from Faust to Mephisto, symptomatic of a schizoid, divided self) or a mix thereof (e.g., Ibsen and perhaps Thomas Mann). Mann, for instance, purposely stresses Adrian's persistent "avoidance of physical contact (220)" and explains:

> That he could have as many love-affairs as he chose seemed to satisfy him, it was as though he shrank from every connection with the actual because he saw therein a theft from the possible. (169)

Along the same lines one could also, within a larger framework, describe the gradual transformations of Faust-figures not permitted to love altogether (folk book: love as undesirable competition for the diabolic) to modern Faust, who is often portrayed as incapable of loving (i.e., from external givens to internal ones). In chapter 9 of the folk book, entitled "How Doctor Faustus would have married, and how the Devil had

---

[20] *Doctor Faustus*, trans. H. T. Lowe-Porter (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948) 248.

[21] At the end of *Faust II*, the creative moment is not supplied by the devil but by Faust himself, and not for solipsistic but for altruistic ends. This way, Faust would not be merely temporarily satisfied as in the past, but finally, in a lasting fashion, by satisfying others. And it is this moment of realization that Faust wants to *"last"* – the magic word, on account of which the Devil *thinks* he has won his bet.

almost killed him for it," Mephistopheles tries to persuade the obstinate doctor:

> "Sweet Faustus, think with what unquiet life, anger, strife, and debate thou shalt live in when thou takest a wife; therefore change thy mind." ... Faustus said unto him, "I am not able to resist nor bridle my fantasy; I must and will have a wife, and I pray thee give thy consent to it." Suddenly upon these words came such a whirlwind about the place that Faustus thought the whole house would come down; ... he was taken and thrown into the hall, that he was not able to stir hand nor foot. Then round about him ran a monstrous circle of fire, never standing still, that Faustus fried as he lay and thought there to have been burned."

Conversely, over the course of Adrian's aforementioned encounter, the devil confides:

> A general chilling of your life and your relations to men lies in the nature of things – rather it lies already in your nature; ... the fires of creation shall be hot enough to warm yourself in. Into them you will flee out of the cold of your life. (249)

c) Changing concepts of condemnation (as the price for having selfishly enjoyed the privileges of Mephistophelian services). For the folk book and Marlowe's Doctor Faustus, for instance, punishment is external; it is perceived as concrete and physical. As a result, Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus* pleads to be dissolved into nothingness so that he does not have to pay the ultimate price for his "damnable life."

> (The clock strikes twelve.)
> It strikes, it strikes! Now body, turn to air,
> Or Lucifer will bear thee quick to hell!
> O soul, be changed into small water-drops
> And fall into the ocean, ne'er to be found.
> (Thunder, and enter the Devils.) (5, ii)

This type of existential dissolution, disintegration, depersonalization, is exactly what Ibsen's Peer, as modern man, fears when his time comes. His punishment is internal: towards the end of act 5, "at a cross-roads," a "button moulder" with a huge casting-ladle intends to melt Peer down into the big depersonalized melting pot out of which new creations are to come.

> THE BUTTON MOULDER: Well, as you can see, I'm a moulder of buttons. You must go in my ladle.
> PEER GYNT: What becomes of me there?
> THE BUTTON MOULDER: You'll be melted down.

> PEER GYNT: Melted? ... I'm certainly not an exceptional sinner.
> THE BUTTON MOULDER: Ah, but, my friend, that's exactly the point; in the strictest sense, you're no sinner at all. That's why you escape the ordeal of the Pit and go, with the rest, in the casting-ladle.[22]

He explains that Peer was to have been a shining button on the waistcoat of the world, yet this button had a flaw, its "hook" was not formed properly, so it could not permanently attach itself to its larger surroundings, his *Mitwelt*,[23] could not take the step from "I" to "Thou" and "We." Peer's self-centered, noncommittal attitudes (motto of his *Innenwelt*: "To Thine Own Self Be Enough") robbed him (and those he encountered) of a truly human experience, of the experience of non-solipsistic love and attempts at altruistic service (as portrayed in Peer's unnamed counterpart/alter ego, who appears briefly in acts 3 and 5, and, albeit ambiguously, in the fifth act of Goethe's *Faust II*).

In intertextual play, a), b), and c) are frequently intertwined in presentations of the archetypal Faust theme. One such, also one of the most recent literary manifestations of Faust as a literary subtext, can be found in Vaclav Havel's *Temptation* (1987), where Foustka (alias Faust) meets world history, and the death throes of a perverted Real Socialism end up foreshadowing a crisis of reason altogether. In philosophical terms, the original Dr. Faustus of the folk book, who stood at the threshold to the age of reason, is no longer such a distant character at the turn of the millennium, with its often-conjured up notions about the end of the age of reason, if not of history altogether.[24] Havel gives us a taste of the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle:

> FISTULA [Mephistopheles]: My dear sir, the truth isn't merely what we believe, after all, but also why and to whom and under what circumstances we say it.[25]

A detailed study of the changing artistic frameworks available for Faustian settings would also reveal a circular motion: From the folk books and puppet plays on Dr. Faustus in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to

---

[22] Henrik Ibsen, *Peer Gynt: A Dramatic Poem*, trans. Peter Watts (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1970) 197. This, and the later quoted p. 217, echoes Dante's *Inferno*: In the Vestibule of Hell we find all the fence-sitters, mealy-mouthed, non-committal characters, being eternally tortured by wasps.

[23] To use the terminology of Swiss analyst Ludwig Binswanger, who defined different realms of existence with compounds ending in *-welt*.

[24] See Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: The Free Press, 1992) 55–142.

[25] *Temptation*, trans. Marie Winn (New York: Grove/Atlantic, 1989) 60.

the highbrow literary achievements of the nineteenth and the early twentieth century and, subsequently, to the multimedia avenues of our times, i.e., a return to popular genres that helped communicate the story of the archetypal figure at the time of its original conception.

So, the legend of the white European male known as Dr. Faustus is certainly widespread in the West, but how alive as a subtext is it in today's world? To answer this question we first have to take a hard look at the changing faces of literature itself, i.e., we have to face up to the changing recognition of the respective genres which in our days may prove capable of acting as a medium for the legendary figure.

It has often been observed that contemporary culture is experiencing the "gradual end of the classical age of reading,"[26] that it no longer has any use for conspiratory literary codes, for the cryptography that characterizes much of mainstream recent literature, especially German literature. In a world that shows less and less interest not only in the written word but in words altogether (often preferring icons or other visual images instead), new, and in some cases very ancient, forms of communicating messages have emerged or reemerged. Popular literature has been taking over (and in some cases has, as is the case with the Faust legend, actually taken back) much of the terrain slowly abandoned by so-called highbrow literature. Even when dealing with emotionally troublesome legacies, popular culture genres may manage to turn what is difficult to express, even the supposedly unspeakable,[27] into something to be communicated – including scary aspects of the Faust myth. Two examples:

Faust, a story that started as a folk-book and puppet show in the sixteenth century and later came to fascinate much of intellectual Europe, has recently resurfaced in prime time as an episode of the funny social satire[28] *The Simpsons*, an American TV series (also aired in Germany) with great popular appeal to the young and the young at heart. Although

---

[26] Alvin Kernan, *The Death of Literature* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1990) 134.

[27] See, for instance, for our times, Art Spiegelman's award-winning 1986 comic series on the holocaust, *Maus I* and *II*. Shocking, yet not new: following sixteenth-century German *Bänkelsang* tradition, some of the earliest German and Dutch Faust books had a comic-book appearance.

[28] As early as 1862, brainy satires on Faustian literature began to surface: See, for instance *Faust. Der Tragödie dritter Teil*, for which a Deutobold Symbolizetti Allegoriowitsch Mystifizinsky took tongue-in-cheek credit, ridiculing the deep gloom-and-doom mood among the post-Goethean German Faust disciples of the time. (This Goethe parody was actually penned by the well-known Tübingen scholar Friedrich Theodor Vischer.)

mainly aimed at teenagers, the particularly brainy episode in question, "The Devil and Homer Simpson," was created by some brilliant satirists,[29] and its inspired lunacy appeals to even the most seasoned Faust aficionado. With the concept of the jury from hell, we encounter the Faust myth filtered through Benét's intertext, "The Devil and Daniel Webster." In this most popular American Faust tale, the focus appropriately shifts away from the Faust character to what once was considered America's most glamorous profession, the law. In an earlier American period, it was the lawyer Daniel Webster who got Jabeth Stone off the devil's hook by arguing his case before a jury of the dead. In our more enlightened times of lawyer bashing, the legal counsel botches his case and steals away – he literally bails out through the bathroom window – leaving it to the very unlikely eternal female Marge (short for Margaret, i.e., Goethe's Gretchen?) to save a beleaguered Homer Simpson – all of this in good Faust tradition: even legally speaking, Homer's soul is the property of his wife Marge.

Lawyer-bashing (all in character: the original Faust was, after all, Herr Doktor Jurisprudentiae, unhappy with his profession) and redeeming love also characterize an earlier filmic tongue-in-cheek reference to the Faust myth, the 1967 British film *Bedazzled*, a brainy British comedy supposedly with no higher inspirations than entertainment. Here we find the Faust theme intertwined with the myth of King Midas[30]: the Devil, as usual, gives people what they want, or rather, what they ask for. (Beware of what you wish for.) In *Bedazzled*,[31] Stanley Moon, an unlikely Faust character who, like Goethe's Faust, has a vial with poison on his shelf but who prefers – unsuccessfully – to attempt suicide by hanging himself, subsequently, under the Devil's guidance, fails to capitalize on any of his seven wishes and self-destructs under the weight of the seven deadly sins. Again lawyer bashing, *Bedazzled* provides an attorney as the living antithesis to the Faustian drive, allegorically represented by one of the seven deadly sins, sloth; the attorney ends up falling back into a drunken stupor while witnessing the damned man's signature. For convenience's sake, the

---

[29] The producer of *The Simpsons*, Matt Groening, incidentally, is of German descent and his series often portrays a fascination with German contradictions.

[30] In a twisted way, King Midas was a precursor to the Faust character: human hubris testing the territories beyond sensible human wishes and desires, something that also echoes through numerous European fairy tales, i.e., The Grimm Brothers' "Der süße Brei."

[31] Directed by Stanley Donen, screenplay by Peter Cook, music by Dudley Moore, with Raquel Welsh as "Lust" and a Devil with business cards.

Devil, who, as usual, has all the best lines, signs the contract with blood drawn from the lawyer.

Seeking the saving grace of the eternal female, Stanley Moon yearns to be united with his co-worker at the fast-food-place, yet the devil drags him through all the deadly sins, assuring him: "We'll get to that later." "That" is the object of the un-hero's desire, Margaret Spencer: whether play, novel, or comic, some aspects of the Faust myth never change – two hundred years earlier, Goethe's Faust suffered the same diversionary tactics at the hands of Mephisto. Yet even lowly Homer's Marge and Margaret Spencer understand that whoever is capable of giving his soul to another human being cannot possibly sell it to the devil. That is why all Mephisto characters attempt to spoil any gratifying moment of connectedness in their efforts to hold the "eternal female," the natural corrective of goodness, at bay – see "b" above. And only the Faust figures not self-absorbed and forever in love with themselves are capable of such giving in the first place – see "c" above.

With the reemergence of Satanic cults among the young at the close of the millennium, recent years have, again, seen a virtual explosion of Faust-inspired artistic creations, especially in the more popular genres. In the *Dead End Kids*[32] (in which five Mephistos request five signatures from Faust with five different Pens), several other American avantgarde plays, and recent American movies (mostly without any stated literary ambitions), including *Pale Rider, Oh God, You Devil, Needful Things*,[33] and *Tombstone* (in which the cast is watching Goethe's *Faust*), the Faust myth is alive, as it is in *The Jersey Devil* (now available as a video game) and *Angel Heart*, a Faustian tale with heavy bloodletting, describing a private eye's descent into hell in pursuit of a missing person who opted out of a pact with the devil. Even the blockbuster *Jurassic Park* offers obvious Faustian connotations, as, in the ultimate loss of gestalt,[34] the instinctual, primordial meets the high-tech world. And in the 1997 thriller *Devil's Advocate*, souls are lost (to the devil) as cases are won by a powerful New York City law firm.

Faust and classical music are a well-known entity. Two recent examples: In 1952, Brecht composer Hanns Eisler enraged the East Ger-

---

[32] Produced by the Theatre Morgan in 1983.

[33] Based on Stephen King's novel of the same title.

[34] The two faces of the dia-bolic appear throughout: primordial intoxication and icy, remote matter-of-factness. (In Nietzschean terms, this reflects a loss of gestalt, where the Dionysian does not join forces, but conflicts, with the Apollonian.)

man cultural bureaucracy with his *Johann Faustus* libretto (his opera was not performed until 1974), and German/Russian composer Alfred Schnittke's semi-atonal *Historia von D. Fausten*, based on the Hamburg Faust Book, premiered in early 1998, just months prior to the composer's death.

But what about contemporary popular music? In *Crossroads*, a guitarist sells his soul to the devil to become the perfect blues guitar player. The Charlie Daniels Band's "The Devil Went Down to Georgia" pitches a fiddler against the prince of darkness. Musically as well, the Faust myth reappears in ever new forms: in 1997, for instance, Washington's Kennedy Center presented "Faust in Africa," a three-day KenCen festival featuring, among others, South Africa's Handspring Puppet Company with life-sized wooden figures and deafening rap, presenting Faust as a jaded administrator and his devilish advocate as a weasely bureaucratic clerk. In what may well amount to the ultimate merging so far of genres and media, the French group Friches Théâtre Urbain invited audiences on a world tour from Washington to Perth, Australia, to follow the hair-raising journey of Faust, as Mephistopheles and fellow devils lead him to destruction. This roving street procession, entitled *Mephistomania*, featured outrageously exotic costumes, mostly paralyzing though at times inspiring music, and colorful pyrotechnics (mainly, erratic fireworks accentuated by blinding distress flares). In this internet-advertised 1997 street-theater happening, five towering characters on stilts were flailing three-meter-long heavy bamboo poles, supposedly for support, growling noisy and largely incomprehensible dialogue, merging, as it seemed, Artaud's Theater of Cruelty with Primal Scream Therapy. Faust appeared lost in all the extravaganza.[35]

Too extravagant for most of us? What about Faust and sports? In *Damn Yankees*,[36] a musical romp based on the Faust theme, a desperate fan strikes a deal with the devil to interfere with the fortunes of a failing baseball team, the New York Yankees. Recently there was a considerably less diabolic spin-off (with a happy ending – no parental guidance required): *Angels in the Outfield*.[37]

---

[35] On-line criticism provided by Mar Bucknell in *The Western Review* (westrev@iinet.net.au) concluded that "hell is a place where bad French actors shout a lot."

[36] The 1958 film version was directed by George Abbott.

[37] Faust and politics? Hardly a week goes by without some reference – the most recent journalistic one, as of this writing, George F. Will's "Faustian Deal in California" (*The Washington Post* 24 May 1998: C7).

Yet how alive is Faust presently in so-called highbrow literature? Very much so. Havel's above-quoted play *Temptation* is but *one* example of many. To show that Faust is, indeed, very much alive as a subtext of literature in the more traditional sense, I will follow the trail of Faust's pact with the devil into the latter part of our century to two telling examples of texts embedded with Faustian markers. One example concerns itself with what has been perceived as *the* Faustian pact of our times, technology-driven progress as part of a diabolic design[38] to destroy our planet's equilibrium (the ecosystems upon which human life depends for its existence). The other example mixes these concerns with gender issues, observations on the male/female dichotomy: how male is the Faustian drive per se (in the eyes of a female writer) and how and where does the eternal female feature today? The two novels to be discussed are products of German-speaking Europe (one from Switzerland, the other from the former German Democratic Republic), yet they both aspire to transcend the Germanic realm. Toward the end of our millennium, these two literary works portray some of the most ponderous dilemmas of our times.

In Max Frisch's modern classic *Homo Faber* ("Man the Maker"), terminally ill without being aware of it, the hero builds dams against elemental forces, erects lifeless barriers against the flow of life, just as Goethe's Faust did toward the end of his life. As was typical for Faber's 1950s generation of robotic technocrats, who had signed their pact with technology with the blood of others,[39] he insists on being the creator from scratch, on starting with a tabula rasa, thus, in ruthless Faustian hubris and in a self-defeating way, destroying nature by working against rather than with it.[40]

The novel begins where Goethe's *Faust II*, act 5, left off (prior to the latter's often criticized apotheosis). It shows the protagonist, with his ex-

---

[38] The editor of the magazine *The Futurist*, Edward Cornish, once used the Faust analogy to describe humankind's love affair with technology. He contended that when the Industrial Revolution arrived, man entered into a Faustian bargain with the machine.

[39] Already in Goethe's *Faust II*, act 5, the price for unconditional progress is paid not by Faust, the architect of great schemes, but by simple people like Philemon and Baucis and, very tellingly, by a stranger who found refuge in their hut after being shipwrecked at sea – having escaped the wrath of the elements, he burns to death in the supposed safe haven in a man-made blaze.

[40] The old view – Faber's view – saw economic development and free-market principles as incompatible with environmental concerns. Yet with the hands on the clock moving toward the fateful hour, much of humankind has by now recognized that development and environmental stewardship simply must go hand in hand.

clusively quantitative approaches[41] relying on soulless technology, as the destroyer of all that he touches; the devil always gives people what they ask for, literally. One is not only reminded of Faust, but again, as noted in an earlier context, of King Midas, himself tricked by a supernatural offer he did not think through. It is inevitable that "Man the Maker," advocating, in the absence of truly utopian vision, nothing but shortsighted technological progress, will over time end up destroying the future of the people in supposedly developing areas of the globe whom he claims to be helping. His building of dead things to suppress the forces of life destroys, in a perverted Faustian drive, the future of others, just as Faust's visionary designs of progress in Goethe's *Faust II* destroy the existence of Philemon and Baucis, who lived in peace and in harmony with nature.[42]

More immediately, Faber ends up destroying his own personal future by causing the death of the only living thing he ever created: his daughter. Again, parallels to Goethe's driven, solipsistic Faust character abound, from Faber's Walpurgis Nights in Cuba to his damming of natural flow patterns, which may also be interpreted as blockage of natural generational flows (a father's love affair with his daughter), resulting in a stagnant, sterile life. Just as Faber sold his soul to the lifeless technology he helped create, so his heart is captured by the sight of his own flesh, his daughter.[43] The shockingly young age of fifty-year-old Faber's lover – who not only *could* be his daughter but actually *is*, without his knowing it – reminds us of doomed young Gretchen in Goethe's *Faust*. With Gretchen, Faust attempts to turn the clock back, seemingly allowed to start anew. He fails and ends up blinded, like Oedipus. Similarly, Faber's falling in love with a child-woman less than half his age may also be seen as a futile effort to regain his own youth. It constitutes in itself a narcissistic act, a manifestation of a solipsistic relationship (see "b" and "c" above), of being blindly in love with oneself, especially with a projected image of one's own younger self: Goethe's Faust first encounters Gretchen when looking in a mirror. Destructive Homo Faber (in his blind hubris, both

---

[41] Faber has a hard time realizing that not everything that counts can be counted. Again, parallels to Goethe's *Faust* are obvious.

[42] Both Faust and Faber fight nature, supposedly to help others. In both cases, they deal with the power of water.

[43] Earlier, Faber had committed a truly solipsistic act, when, in a love embrace, he ended up kissing his own arm by mistake. His relationship with his daughter, whom patriarchal Faber insists on renaming "Sabeth," constitutes the ultimate manifestation, on one level at least, of his viewing women as sex objects to be molded, reflecting his own brilliance.

life-giver and life-taker, responsible for large-scale environmental destruction and the death of his daughter) sees his young counter-image (as if in a mirror) right in front of him. In order to stay in character, he subconsciously *has* to eliminate his only live creation, hence he destroys what could have saved him. The laconic remark that the father destroyed everything, his lover, his daughter, and thus his future, constitutes the very last entry in Faber's diary and the last words of a novel which is, after all, entitled *Homo faber*, i.e., *constructive* man. In terms of classical mythology, Faber is thus to be equated not with gods that create but with the god of the dead, of the underworld, with Hades, or, as regards his attempts at god-likeness, in Christian terms, with Lucifer. Faustian Faber is thus, in a schizoid way, also Mephistopheles.

Not only does Goethe's *Faust*, again, come to mind, but also, ultimately, the melding of the Faust and Mephisto characters in much of modern representation[44]: in Mikhail Lermontov's *A Hero of Our Time*, the protagonist Pechorin is a schizoid character; one of his personalities is Faust-like, the other Mephistophelian, and the latter comes to dominate. Brecht's *Good Person of Szechwan* constitutes a more modern representation of the same phenomenon:

> Yes, it is me. Shui Ta and Shen Teh, I am both of them.
> Your original order
> To be good while yet surviving
> Split me like lightning in two people.[45]

The same duality also permeates, as mentioned earlier, much of Dostoyevski's work, from *Crime and Punishment*, to his *Devils* and his *Brothers Karamazov*. In the latter, the focus shifts away from Faust to his opponent/alter ego Mephisto: the devil appears to speak with thoughts out of the Protagonists' own minds. In a curious reversal of Genesis, one of the protagonists concludes: "I think if the devil does not exist, and man has created him, he has created him in his own image" (part I, book 2, ch. 6). In *Crime and Punishment*, the split nature of Raskolnikov is apparent from

---

[44] This also holds true for the arts: see, for instance, the illustration entitled *Circle Limit IV* by popular graphic artist M. C. Escher.

[45] Bertolt Brecht, *The Good Person of Szechwan*, trans. John Willet, ed. John Willet and Ralph Manheim (New York: Arcade, 1994) 105. The schizoid Faustian element is also evident in Brecht's earlier *Saint Joan of the Stockyards*, where cut-throat but doomed meat-packing boss Mauler yearns for his better half in the Salvation Army girl Joan. (Entire sections of this play, incidentally, parody rhythm and diction of Goethe's *Faust*.)

his very name: connecting the prefix *Ras* meaning "asunder," "torn to parts" to *kolot* (meaning "to split") renders the Russian equivalent of the Greek "schizo," "to split," "to be divided."[46]

While Faust appears only in palimpsest fashion in Frisch's *Homo Faber*, Christa Wolf's *Accident* is replete not only with Faustian allusions but actually refers to Faust himself throughout.[47] In her 1987 novel, Wolf delves back into the world of mythological images and fairy tales to get to the bottom of what she perceives as the Faustian in Western society gone awry: "I'll have to reconsider the destinies and decisions of modern Faust."[48] The novel could well be subtitled "Therapeutic Approaches to the Faust Syndrome," as Wolf puts a new spin on things: No longer is the Faustian seen as a genius's striving for greater insight and deeper connectedness. According to Wolf, plain and simple, something is wrong with the male brain,[49] literally: the author's "day's news" is a parallel account of the removal of her brother's brain tumor in a far-away hospital and emerging news about the Chernobyl nuclear disaster.

Wolf attempts to delineate a causal connection between male obsessive thought and its inhuman products such as nuclear and thermonuclear weaponry and technology,[50] with their potential for global destruction. Gazing at the sky which is, after the nuclear accident, no longer the harbinger of life and growth but of doom, the author ponders:

---

[46] See introductory remarks on Faust as perhaps more than just a German phenomenon.

[47] Over a dozen times total.

[48] *Accident: A Day's News*, trans. Heike Schwarzbauer and Rick Takvorian (New York: Farrar, 1989) 93.

[49] "At which crossroads did evolution possibly go so wrong!" (Wolf 65). "Highly gifted, very young men who – driven, I fear, by the hyperactivity in certain centers of the brain – have not signed a pact with the devil (oh brother! the good old devil! would that he still existed!), but rather with the fascination with a technical problem" (62). "Like the rats ... continuously pressing the 'desire button.' Where is the center of desire in the brains of those scientists?" (47).

[50] "Such catastrophes do not break in from heaven or hell, but overspecialization in technology and science seems to develop, almost without fail, into dystopia" (Ute Brandes, "Probing the Blind Spot: Utopia and Dystopia in Christa Wolf's *Störfall*," *New German Studies* 18.2 [1990]: 106). At the same time, Wolf, as the first-person narrator, is, ironically, relying on advanced laser technology for her brother's brain surgery and on the blessings of the computerized telephone system to keep in contact with the hospital in question.

> How strange that a-tom in Greek means the same as in-dividuum in Latin: unsplittable. The inventors of these words knew neither nuclear fission nor schizophrenia. Whence the modern compulsion to split into ever smaller parts, to split off entire parts of the personality from that ancient being once thought indivisible. (29)

In her novel, Wolf juxtaposes insular male knowledge and productivity as exhibited by Faber and his peers[51] – with the perceived superiority of the female (motherly/sisterly) mode of intuition and productivity (compare, for instance, the above-mentioned Mother Gaia cult in Grece, now the basis of feminist Gaia Theory) which, for some time now, has in the eyes of *some* feminists constituted the most essential emancipatory female claim.[52]

Faustian men are in usually abusive denial about their being violent agents of a destructive Mephistophelian paradigm bent on destroying the saving grace of love:

> Deep down, everybody knows that if the gratification of their deepest desire is not granted, does not succeed, or is denied, then they ... create substitute gratification and cling to a substitute life, a substitute for life, the entire breathlessly expanding monstrous technological creation, a substitute for love. (Wolf 32)

For Wolf, Faust is not a German phenomenon; it is a universal male phenomenon.[53] Through history, the writer contends, women have not entered into the Faustian bargain – the ruthless Faustian quest is the manifestation of a fear-based, uncentered, schizoid personality, a solipsistic male aberration, a male "blind spot." In leitmotif fashion, Wolf, throughout her novel, refers to the German folk tale of "Little Brother and Little

---

[51] In this regard, Wolf's novel echoes the anti-Faustian, Cassandra conclusion of act 2 of Friedrich Dürrenmatt's 1962 play *The Physicists*: "Our science has become horrible, our research dangerous, our knowledge fatal" (*Cassandra* also happens to be the title of an earlier Wolf novel). In Dürrenmatt's play, everything simply runs its course – from murders to nuclear proliferation.

[52] For details, see Alexander Kluge and Oskar Negt, *Öffentlichkeit und Erfahrung: Zur Organisationsanalyse von bürgerlicher und proletarischer Öffentlichkeit* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1972) 50. As regards Christa Wolf herself, see Christiane Zehl Romero, "Remembrance of Things Future': On Establishing a Female Tradition," and Karin McPherson, "Female Subjectivity as an Impulse for Renewal in Literature," both in *Responses to Christa Wolf*, ed. Marilyn Sibley Fries (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1989) 108–27 and 149–61, respectively.

[53] Hard to overlook is the fact that virtually all Faust authors and their protagonists are, after all, male – Emma Tennant's 1993 novel *Faustine* being one notable contemporary exception.

Sister." Men are like "little brother," who was bewitched and turned into a vulnerable buck deer[54] that now instinctively follows the call of the hunting bugle, seeking out danger, forever returning wounded from the hell-bent chase, to be tended by "little sister."

In Wolf's eyes, women ("little sister") may show, out of an understanding, non-egotizing, *constructive*, nurturing sense of "social motherhood" based on feminine knowledge, the way for men to free themselves from the curse of being forever egomaniacal, critical, and controlling in their fight to keep their alienated position in the world. Wolf thus juxtaposes the potentially *destructive* nature of a self-centered, yet splintered male self with the creative energies of the self-enclosed, harmonizing female world.

The destructive and self-destructive protagonist of Frisch's *Homo Faber* was, figuratively speaking, an accident waiting to happen. Wolf's *Accident* constitutes an after-the-fact assessment. Both novels serve as powerful reminders that, at the millennium, Faust as a subtext is as alive in high-brow literature as he presently is in popular literature.

Forever changing, Faust has always demanded our attention in the German-speaking and the whole of the modern Western world, in traditional literature and fringe genres, in earlier centuries and at the millennium. For all the diverse artistic representations of the Faustian, for all the morphing faces of Faust, Heraclitus's axiom holds: "Nothing endures like change" – yet with a corollary: The more the Faust myth changes, the more it endures. It is our myth, and we must go on confronting it.

---

[54] The original and several later Faust books, as well as Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, can be considered intertexts of this very Grimm fairy tale: they include an episode where Mephistopheles's magic turns a character into a deer and others into hounds to chase him down.

I The Historical Faustus

Osman Durrani

The story of Faustus is rooted in a climate of transition from naive faith in redemption to increasing focus on sinfulness that required hard work if it was to be overcome. In these turbulent times, the legendary doctor's life cannot be satisfactorily mapped or reconstructed. His itinerary is a confusing one that criss-crosses Germany and resembles that of a travelling huckster, fortune-teller and lowly apothecary. Many scholars have attempted to inquire into his biography and examine the possibility that there may be specific and verifiable events at the root of the tradition. Could there have been a single individual on whom the Faust legend was largely or exclusively based? This is an intriguing question that has been answered in many different ways; Hans Henning's bibliography lists 183 articles and books purporting to give information about the historical figure. Two groups of scholars believe that Faust's identity can be pinned down: those who follow Günther Mahal in locating his birthplace in the south-western town of Knittlingen in 1480, and those who, with Frank Baron, take it to have been Helmstadt near Heidelberg some fifteen years earlier. The name of Knittlingen, sometimes spelt 'Kundling', occurs in manuscripts by Johann Mennel [also Manlius] and Johann Wier [also Wierus, Piscinarius], as well as in Philip Melanchthon's table-talk; these date from the 1560s (Meek, 36–40). By contrast, the literary Faust Book has him see the light of the world in the eastern province of Saxony, but without hinting at his dates. It is probable that stories about many different savants and magicians, including Johannes Tritheim, Georg Helmstetter, and Cornelius Agrippa, had some effect on the content of the later chapbook. One critic actually suggests that they must have been a team or a family business, a hypothesis that neatly gets round the two names (Johann and Georg) and incompatible dates. That there were father-and-son teams of this type operating in the field of 'alternative therapy' is easily proven (Peukert, 55–74).

If there was a single Faustus, this person must have been widely travelled and have laid claim to an array of different skills, given the contradictory material that has been recorded. The sixteenth-century documents that refer to him vary in scope and reliability. To judge by the picture they convey, one or several figures were touring Europe under the name of 'Faustus' between 1500 and 1540. It has proved impossible to pin him down to a single individual with a recognisable biography. He is 'the classic outsider, rootless, a will o' the wisp, passing, like Socrates and

Jesus Christ, without a personally written legacy to assert his true identity' (Jones, 3). All the evidence we have is in the form of isolated snippets, *Faustsplitter* or 'splinters'. The incomplete and contradictory records were first collected in large numbers by Alexander Tille in a compilation entitled *Die Faustsplitter in der Literatur des sechzehnten bis achtzehnten Jahrhunderts* ('The Faust fragments in the literature of the sixteenth to eighteenth century'), a portion of which was translated into English by Philip Palmer and Robert More. The 'evidence' that is advanced by several German towns (Simmern, Heidelberg, Knittlingen, Roda, Wittenberg, Leipzig, Staufen) that they were the magician's birthplace or temporary domicile must remain suspect, though later authorities have used such contradictory data to provide a stimulus to the local tourist industry. A largish number of locations (Nuremberg, Ingolstadt, Erfurt, Bad Kreuznach, Gelnhausen, Rebdorf) rely on manuscript references to support their claims to have been visited by him. An association with the University of Heidelberg, where one 'Georg Faust' matriculated in 1505, is unreliable. The name was entered in the records, but there is nothing to suggest that this individual was identical with the magician. The literary text on which later Faust traditions are based gives a birthplace (Roda) and names a university (Wittenberg), yet there are no references in the chronicles of either to the magician's birth or employment there. Marlowe turns Roda into 'Rhodes', which led Victor Hugo to assume the Mediterranean island to have been his birthplace (Meek, 63).

What remains is a multitude of short, strangely unconnected and incompatible statements that provide tantalising glimpses of an itinerant charlatan's reception in various German towns, castles and monasteries. Baron regards eight of these as authentic, Mahal seven; both scholars use them to support conflicting theories as to the man's provenance. Yet ultimately, 'There can be no coherent biography of the historical Faust. The image we have of him is a colourful mosaic, patched together from the incidental and sharply contradictory statements of his contemporaries. Here, it often happens that legend and reality are closely intertwined' (Reske, 10). It is a short step to the contention, first put forward in 1808 by Joseph Görres and later taken up by Friedrich Engels, that the Faust stories were the invention of the common people, the *Volk*, and that the chapbook (*Volksbuch* or 'folk-book') was like a folksong in that it had no individual author. Just as in Britain stories about various outlaws were assimilated into the 'iconic' figure of Robin Hood, Faust has a stereotypical dimension that shows the influence of magicians and tricksters like Friar Bacon and Till Eulenspiegel. What is clear is that, from its inception, the legend incorporates many incongruous beliefs and prejudices typical of

the age through a kind of 'montage technique' (Baron (1989), 13f; Burke, 171; Allen, 583). It also shows how people imagined progress to be achievable by diabolical intervention.

Works Cited

Marguerite de Huszar Allen, 'The Reception of the *Historia von D. Johann Fausten*', *German Quarterly* 59 (1986), 582–94.

Frank Baron, *Doctor Faustus from History to Legend.* Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1978.

– *Faustus on Trial. The Origins of Johann Spies's 'Historia' in an Age of Witch Hunting.* Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1992.

– 'Der historische Faustus im Spiegel der Quellen des 16. Jahrhunderts. Von der Astrologie zum Teufelspakt', in Baron/Auernheimer, 84–107.

– 'Georg Lukács on the Origins of the Faust Legend', in Boerner/Johnson, 13–25.

Frank Baron and Richard Auernheimer (eds.), *War Dr Faustus in Kreuznach? Realität und Fiktion im Faust-Bild des Abtes Johannes Trithemius.* Alzey: Verlag der Rheinhessischen Druckwerkstätte, 2003.

Peter Boerner and Sidney Johnson (eds), *Faust through Four Centuries. Retrospect and Analysis. Vierhundert Jahre Faust. Rückblick und Analyse.* Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1989.

Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe.* London: Temple Smith, 1978.

John Henry Jones (ed.), *The English Faust Book. A critical edition based on the text of 1592.* Cambridge: University Press, 1994.

Günther Mahal (ed.), *Der historische Faust. Ein wissenschaftliches Symposium.* Knittlingen: Faust Archiv, 1982.

– *Faust starb in Staufen. Nachforschungen über ein verschwiegenes Faktum.* Vaihingen: Wilfried Melchior, 1986.

– *Faust. Die Spuren eines geheimnisvollen Lebens.* Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1995.

Harold Meek, *Johann Faust. The Man and the Myth.* London: Oxford University Press, 1930.

Philip Mason Palmer and Robert Pattison More. *The Sources of the Faust Tradition from Simon Magus to Lessing.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1936. Rptd New York: Octagon, 1966.

Will-Erich Peukert, 'Dr Faustus', *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 70 (1947), 55–74.

Hermann Reske, *Faust: eine Einführung.* Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1971.

Documents

Letter of Johannes Tritheim[1] to Johannes Virdung.[2]

The man of whom you wrote me, George Sabellicus, who has presumed to call himself the prince of necromancers, is a vagabond, a babbler and a rogue, who deserves to be thrashed so that he may not henceforth rashly venture to profess in public things so execrable and so hostile to the holy church. For what, other than symptoms of a very foolish and insane mind, are the titles assumed by this man, who shows himself to be a fool and not a philosopher? For thus he has formulated the title befitting him: Master George Sabellicus, the younger Faust, the chief of necromancers, astrologer, the second magus, palmist, diviner with earth and fire, second in the art of divination with water. Behold the foolish temerity of the man, the madness by which he is possessed, in that he dares to call himself the source of necromany, when in truth, in his ignorance of all good letters, he ought to call himself a fool rather than a master. But his wickedness is not hidden from me. When I was returning last year from the Mark Brandenburg, I happened upon this same man in the town of Gelnhausen, and many silly things were told me about him at the inn, – things promised by him with great rashness on his part. As soon as he heard that I was there, he fled from the inn and could not be persuaded to come into my presence. The description of his folly, such as he gave to you and which we have mentioned, he also sent to me through a certain citizen. Certain priests in the same town told me that he had said, in the presence of many people, that he had acquired such knowledge of all wisdom and such a memory, that if all the books of Plato and Aristotle, together with their whole philosophy, had totally passed from the memory of man, he himself, through his own genius, like another Hebrew Ezra,[3] would be able to

---

[1] Johannes Tritheim (1462–1516), physicist, humanist, writer. Abbot of the monastery at Sponheim near Kreuznach from 1485 to 1506. Then, after a short stay in Berlin, abbot of the monastery of St. James at Würzburg. Tritheim combined great learning with an inclination to the fantastic, which led to a considerable reputation as a magician.

[2] Johannes Virdung of Hasfurt was mathematician and astrologer to the Elector of the Palatinate, and a professor at Heidelberg.

[3] Cf. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, tr. by K. Lane, London, 1926. Vol. I, V, viii, 461: "– for when the Scriptures had been destroyed in the captivity of the people in the days of Nebuchadnezzer, and the Jews had gone back to their country after seventy years, then in the time of Artaxerxes, the king of the Per-

restore them all with increased beauty. Afterwards, while I was at Speyer, he came to Würzburg and, impelled by the same vanity, is reported to have said in the presence of many that the miracles of Christ the Saviour were not so wonderful, that he himself could do all the things which Christ had done, as often and whenever he wished. Towards the end of Lent of the present year he came to Kreuznach and with like folly and boastfulness made great promises, saying that in alchemy he was the most learned man of all times and that by his knowledge and ability, he could do whatever anyone might wish. In the meantime there was vacant in the same town the position of schoolmaster, to which he was appointed through the influence of Franz von Sickingen,[4] the magistrate of your prince and a man very fond of mystical lore. Then he began to indulge in the most dastardly kind of lewdness with the boys and when this was suddenly discovered, he avoided by flight the punishment that awaited him. These are the things which I know through very definite evidence concerning the man whose coming you await with such anticipation. When he comes to you, you will find him to be not a philosopher but a fool with an overabundance of rashness. – Wurzburg, the 20th day of August. A.D. 1507.

Letter of Conrad Mutianus Rufus[5] to Heinrich Urbanus.[6]

Eight days ago there came to Erfurt a certain soothsayer by the name of George Faust, the demigod of Heidelberg, a mere braggart and fool. His claims, like those of all diviners, are idle and such physiognomy has no more weight than a water spider. The ignorant marvel at him. Let the theologians rise against him and not try to destroy the philosopher

---

sians, he (God) inspired Ezra, the priest of the tribe of Levi, to restore all the sayings of the prophets who had gone before, and to restore to the people the law given by Moses." Quoted by Eusebius from Irenaeus.

[4] Franz von Sickingen (1481–1523), imperial counsellor, chamberlain and general, greatest of the "free knights," friend of Ulrich von Hutten and by him interested in humanism. Supporter of the Reformation.

[5] Conrad Mutianus Rufus (1417–1526). Canon of the Church of St. Mary's at Gotha. His real name was Konrad Muth. He led a studious life as a humanist and philosopher and was ranked by the humanists with Erasmus and Reuchlin, despite the fact that he never published any of his writings.

[6] Heinrich Urbanus, student and later friend of Mutianus Rufus, and through him interested in humanism. From about 1505 he was steward of the Cistercian cloister Georgenthal at Erfurt.

Reuchlin.[7] I heard him babbling at an inn, but I did not reprove his boastfulness. What is the foolishness of other people to me? – October 3, 1513.

From the Account Book of the Bishop of Bamberg,[8] 1519–1520.

The annual accounts of Hans Muller, chamberlain, from Walpurgis[9] 1519 to Walpurgis 1520.

Entry on February 12, 1520, under the heading "Miscellaneous."

10 gulden given and presented as a testimonial to Doctor Faust, the philosopher, who made for my master a horoscope or prognostication. Paid on the Sunday after Saint Scholastica's Day[10] by the order of his reverence.

From the Journal of Kiliam Lieb,[11] July 1528.

George Faust of Helmstet said on the fifth of June that when the sun and Jupiter are in the same constellation prophets are born (presumably such as he). He asserted that he was the commander or preceptor of the order of the Knights of St. John at a place called Hallestein[12] on the border of Carinthia.

From the Records of the City of Ingolstadt.

(a) Minutes on the actions of the city council in Ingolstadt.

Today, the Wednesday after St. Vitus' Day, 1528. The soothsayer shall be ordered to leave the city and to spend his penny elsewhere.

---

[7] Johann Reuchlin (1455–1522). Capnio was the Greek form of his name. He was learned in jurisprudence and languages (especially Greek and Hebrew). For many years he was in the service successively of Count Eberhard of Württemberg, Johann von Dalberg at Heidelberg, and Duke Ulrich of Württemberg. In 1519 he became Professor of Greek and Hebrew at Ingolstadt and from 1521 held the same chair at Tübingen. In 1511 he was involved in a bitter quarrel with the theological faculty at Cologne.

[8] George III Schenk of Limburg was Bishop of Bamberg from 1502 to 1522.

[9] i.e. May 1st.

[10] Saint Scholastica's Day fell on Friday, February 10, 1520.

[11] Kilian Leib was the prior of Rebdorf in Bavaria.

[12] Hallestein. According to Schottenloher this is probably Heilenstein in Styria which at one time was the seat of the Knights of St. John.

(b) Record of those banished from Ingolstadt.

On Wednesday after St. Vitus' Day, 1528, a certain man who called himself Dr. George Faust of Heidelberg was told to spend his penny elsewhere and he pledged himself not to take vengeance on or make fools of the authorities for this order.

Entry in the Records of the City Council of Nuremberg, May 10, 1532.

Safe conduct to Doctor Faust, the great sodomite and necromancer, at Fürth refused.

The junior Burgomaster.

From the Waldeck Chronicle.

Francis I by the grace of God, son of Philip II (Count of Waldeck) by his second marriage, Bishop of Münster, on June 25, 1535, invested the city of Münster which had been occupied by the Anabaptists and captured it with the aid of princes of the Empire under the leadership of Hensel Hochstraten. John of Leyden,[13] the boastful pretender, who called himself King of Israel and Zion, was executed together with Knipperdollinck and Krechting, their bodies being torn with red-hot pincers, enclosed in iron cages and suspended from the tower of St. Lambert's Church and the 23rd of January, 1536. It was at this time that the famous necromancer Dr. Faust, coming on the same day from Corbach,[14] prophesied that the city of Münster would surely be captured by the bishop on that very night.

---

[13] John of Leyden, originally a tailor, became a leader of the Anabaptist movement in Münster and set up there the "Kingdom of Zion" proclaiming himself king. Krechting was his chancellor. Knipperdollinck was mayor of Münster during the Anabaptist regime.

[14] A small town in the principality of Waldeck, about eighty miles southeast of Münster.

Letter of Joachim Camerarius[15] to Daniel Stibar.[16]

I owe to your friend Faust the pleasure of discussing these affairs with you. I wish he had taught you something of this sort rather than puffed you up with the wind of silly superstition or held you in suspense with I know not what juggler's trick. But what does he tell us, pray? For I know that you have questioned him diligently about all things. Is the emperor victorious?* That is the way you should go about it. – Tübingen, the 13th of August, 1536.

From the Tischreden of Martin Luther.[17]

God's word alone overcomes the fiery arrows of the devil and all his temptations.

When one evening at the table a sorcerer named Faust was mentioned, Doctor Martin said in a serious tone: "The devil does not make use of the services of sorcerers against me. If he had been able to do me any harm he would have done it long since. To be sure he has often had me by the head but he had to let me go again."

From the Tischreden of Martin Luther.

Mention was made of magicians and the magic art, and how Satan blinded men. Much was said about Faust, who called the devil his brother-in-law, and the remark was made: "If I, Martin Luther, had given him even a

---

[15] Joachim Camerarius (1500–1574). His real name was Joachim Liebhard. 1518, a teacher of Greek at Erfurt. 1521, he went to Wittenberg where he became a friend of Melanchthon. 1526, became teacher of Greek at the Gymnasium in Nuremberg. 1535, was called to Tübingen to reform the university. 1541, called to Leipzig for the same purpose. Camerarius' importance is beyond dispute. He was the best philologist of his time; and he wrote many works, mostly in the field of philology, but also of history and biography. He enjoyed an international reputation.

[16] Daniel Stibarus was a city councilman of Würzburg.

[17] Martin Luther (1483–1546), reformer and founder of the Protestant church. The *Tischreden* were published in Eisleben by Aurifaber in 1566. They give the comments and discussions of Luther in the informal circle of his family, friends, and acquaintances, as they had been recorded by Aurifaber himself and by numerous other intimates of Luther. The passage quoted is found in Chap. I, § 47 of the Aurifaber edition of 1566.

* Ed. note: war between the Emperor Charles V and King of France, François I.

hand, he would have destroyed me; but I would not have been afraid of him, – with God as my protector, I would have given him my hand in the name of the Lord."

From the Index Sanitatis of Philipp Begardi.[18]

There is another well-known and important man whom I would not have mentioned were it not for the fact that he himself had no desire to remain in obscurity and unknown. For some years ago he traveled through almost all countries, principalities and kingdoms, and himself made his name known to everybody and bragged much about his great skill not only in medicine but also in chiromancy, nigromancy *(necromancy)*, physiognomy, crystal gazing, and the like arts. And he not only bragged but confessed and signed himself as a famous and experienced master. He himself avowed and did not deny that he was and was called Faust and in addition signed himself "The philosopher of philosophers." The number of those who complained to me that they were cheated by him was very great. Now his promises were great like those of Thessalus;[19] likewise his fame as that of Theophrastus.[20] But his deeds, as I hear, were very petty and fraudulent. But in taking or – to speak more accurately – in receiving money he was not slow. And afterwards also, on his departure, as I have been informed, he left many to whistle for their money. But what is to be done about it? What's gone is gone. I will drop the subject here. Anything further is your affair.

---

[18] Philipp Begardi was city physician in Worms. The *Index Sanitatis* is of the year 1539.

[19] Thessalus was a Greek physician of the first century A.D. He lived in Rome during the reign of Nero and was buried there. He considered himself superior to his predecessors but Galen, while often mentioning him, always does so in terms of contempt.

[20] Theophrastus, i.e., Philippus Aureolus Paracelsus Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim (1493–1541), physician and chemist. Bombastic in fact as well as by name, inclined to charlatanism, suspected of supernatural powers and himself promoting the suspicion, he is nevertheless credited by modern scholarship with genuine service in the fields of medicine, chemistry, and pharmacy.

Letter from Philipp von Hutten[21] to His Brother Moritz von Hutten.

Here you have a little about all the provinces so that you may see that we are not the only ones who have been unfortunate in Venezuela up to this time; that all the abovementioned expeditions which left Sevilla before and after us perished within three months. Therefore I must confess that the philosopher Faust hit the nail on the head, for we struck a very bad year. But God be praised, things went better for us than for any of the others. God willing I shall write you again before we leave here. Take good care of our dear old mother. Give my greetings to all our neighbours and friends, especially Balthasar Rabensteiner and George von Libra, William von Hessberg and all my good comrades. Pay my respects to Herr N of Thüngen, my master's brother. Done in Coro in the Province of Venezuela on January 16th, 1540.

From the Sermones Convivales of Johannes Gast.[22]

Concerning the Necromancer Faust

He puts up at night at a certain very rich monastery, intending to spend the night there. A brother places before him some ordinary wine of indifferent quality and without flavor. Faust requests that he draw from another cask a better wine which it was the custom to give to nobles. Then the brother said: "I do not have the keys, the prior is sleeping, and it is a sin to awaken him." Faust said: "The keys are lying in that corner. Take them and open that cask on the left and give me a drink." The brother objected that he had no orders from the prior to place any other wine before guests. When Faust heard this he became very angry and said: "In a short time you shall see marvels, you inhospitable brother." Burning with rage he left early in the morning without saying farewell and sent a certain raging devil who made a great stir in the monastery by day and by night and moved things about both in the church and in cells of the monks, so that they could not get any rest, no matter what they did. Finally they deliberated whether they should leave the monastery or destroy it altogether. And so they wrote to the Count Palatine concerning the misfortune in

---

[21] Philipp von Hutten (1511–1546) was one of the leaders of the Welser troops in Venezuela, where he met his death. The letter would seem to indicate that Faust had made predictions concerning the fortunes of the expedition in Venezuela.

[22] Johannes Gast († 1572) was a Protestant clergyman at Basle. His *Sermones Convivales* were very popular. The quotation is from the second volume, published in 1548.

which they were involved. He took the monastery under his own protection and ejected the monks to whom he furnishes supplies from year to year and uses what is left for himself. It is said that to this very day, if monks enter the monastery, such great disturbances arise that those who live there can have no peace. This the devil was able to bring to pass.

Another Story about Faust

At Basle I dined with him in the great college and he gave to the cook various kinds of birds to roast. I do not know where he bought them or who gave them to him, since there were none on sale at the time. Moreover I never saw any like them in our regions. He had with him a dog and a horse which I believe to have been demons and which were ready for any service. I was told that the dog at times assumed the form of a servant and served the food. However, the wretch was destined to come to a deplorable end, for he was strangled by the devil and his body on its bier kept turning face downward even though it was five times turned on its back. God preserve us lest we become slaves of the devil.

From the Explicationes Melanchthoniae,[23] Pars. II.

There [in the presence of Nero] Simon Magus tried to fly to heaven, but Peter prayed that he might fall. I believe that the Apostles had great struggles although not all are recorded. Faust also tried this at Venice. But he was sorely dashed to the ground.

From the Explicationes Melanchthoniae, Pars. IV.

The devil is a marvellous craftsman, for he is able by some device to accomplish things which are natural but which we do not understand. For he can do more than man. Thus many strange feats of magic are recounted such as I have related elsewhere concerning the girl at Bologna.

---

[23] Philipp Melanchthon (Greek for Schwarzert) (1497–1560) was a co-worker of Luther and after him the most important figure in the German Reformation. From 1518 on he was professor of the Greek language and literature at Wittenberg. After Luther's death he became the head of the Protestant church.

The *Explicationes Melanchthoniae*, or *Postilla Melanthoniana*, as they were called in the Bretschneider and Bindseil edition of Melanchthon's works, were published by Christopher Pezelius, a former student of Melanchthon, in 1594ff., and they reproduced Melanchthon's commentaries on the Scriptures, delivered between 1549 and 1560.

In like manner Faust, the magician, devoured at Vienna another magician who was discovered a few days later in a certain cave. The devil can perform many miracles; nevertheless the church has its own miracles.

From the Epistolae Medicinales of Conrad Gesner.[24]
Letter from Gesner to Johannes Crato[25] of Krafftheim.

Oporinus of Basle, formerly a disciple and companion of Theophrastus, narrates some wonderful things concerning the latter's dealings with demons. Such men practice vain astrology, geomancy, necromancy, and similar prohibited arts. I suspect indeed that they derive from the Druids who among the ancient Celts were for some years taught by demons in underground places. This has been practiced at Salamanca in Spain down to our own day. From that school came those commonly called "wandering scholars," among whom a certain Faust, who died not long since, is very celebrated.

From the Locorum Communium Collectanea of Johannes Manlius.[26]

I knew a certain man by the name of Faust from Kundling,[27] which is a small town near my birthplace. When he was a student at Cracow he studied magic, for there was formerly much practice of the art in that city and in that place too there were public lectures on this art. He wandered about everywhere and talked of many mysterious things. When he wished to provide a spectacle at Venice he said he would fly to heaven. So the devil raised him up and then cast him down so that he was dashed to the ground and almost killed. However he did not die.

---

[24] Conrad Gesner (1516–1565), a Swiss teacher, physician, and scholar. His scholarly activity was enormous. His main fields were zoology and botany, but he did tremendous work also in medicine, in philology, and in the editing and translating of Greek and Latin writers. His writings in these fields were encyclopedic.

The letter is dated Zurich, August 16, 1561.

[25] Johannes Crato was Physician in Ordinary of the Emperor, Ferdinand I.

[26] Johannes Manlius (Mennel) of Ansbach was at one time a student under Melanchthon. In the *Locorum Communium Collectanea* (1563), Manlius gives extracts and quotations "from the lectures of D. Philipp Melanchthon and accounts of other most learned men." The passages cited are quoted from Melanchthon.

[27] i.e. Knittlingen, not far from Bretten, Melanchthon's birthplace.

A few years ago this same John Faust, on the day before his end, sat very downcast in a certain village in the Duchy of Württemberg. The host asked him why, contrary to his custom and habit, he was so downcast (he was otherwise a most shameful scoundrel who led a very wicked life, so that he was again and again nigh to being killed because of his dissolute habits). Then he said to the host in the village: "don't be frightened tonight." In the middle of the night the house was shaken. When Faust did not get up in the morning and when it was almost noon, the host with several others went into his bedroom and found him lying near the bed with his face turned toward his back. Thus the devil had killed him. While he was alive he had with him a dog which was the devil, just as the scoundrel[28] who wrote "De vanitate artium" likewise had a dog that ran about with him and was the devil. The same Faust escaped in this town of Wittenberg when the good prince Duke John had given orders to arrest him. Likewise in Nuremberg he escaped. He was just beginning to dine when he became restless and immediately rose and paid the host what he owed. He had hardly got outside the gate when the bailiffs came and inquired about hin.

The same magician Faust, a vile beast and a sink of many devils, falsely boasted that all the victories which the emperor's armies have won in Italy had been gained by him through his magic. This was an absolute lie. I mention this for the sake of the young that they may not readily give ear to such lying men.

From the Zimmerische Chronik.[29]

That the practice of such art [soothsaying] is not only godless but in the highest degree dangerous is undeniable, for experience proves it and we know what happened to the notorious sorcerer Faust. After he had practiced during his lifetime many marvels about which a special treatise could be written, he was finally killed at a ripe old age by the evil one in the seigniory of Staufen in Breisgau.

---

[28] i.e. Cornelius Heinrich Agrippa von Nettesheim (1486–1535), author, physician, and philosopher. He, like so many others, was also suspected of being a sorcerer.

[29] The *Zimmerische Chronik* is a Swabian chronicle of the 16th century. The authors were Count Froben Christoph von Zimmern († 1566 or 1567) and his secretary Hans Müller († ca. 1600). The work centers about the history of the Swabian noblemen who later became the Counts of Zimmern. It contains an invaluable store of legends and folklore.

(After 1539). About this time also Faust died in or not far from the town of Staufen in Breisgau. In his day he was as remarkable a sorcerer as could be found in German lands in our times. He had so many strange experiences at various times that he will not easily be forgotten for many years. He became an old man and, as it is said, died miserably. From all sorts of reports and conjectures many have thought that the evil one, whom in his lifetime he used to call his brother-in-law, had killed him. The books which he left behind fell into the hands of the Count of Staufen in whose territory he died. Afterwards many people tried to get these books and in doing so in my opinion were seeking a dangerous and unlucky treasure and gift. He sent a spirit into the monastery of the monks at Luxheim[30] in the Vosges mountains which they could not get rid of for years and which bothered them tremendously, – and this for no other reason than that once upon a time they did not wish to put him up over night. For this reason he sent them the restless guest. In like manner, it is said, a similar spirit was summoned and attached to the former abbot of St. Diesenberg by an envious wandering scholar.

From the De Praestigiis Daemonum of Johannes Wier.[31]

John Faust was born in the little town Kundling and studied magic in Cracow, where it was formerly taught openly; and for a few years previous to 1540 he practiced his art in various places in Germany with many lies and much fraud, to the marvel of many. There was nothing he could not do with his inane boasting and his promises. I will give one example of his art on the condition that the reader will first promise not to imitate him. This wretch, taken prisoner at Batenburg on the Maas, near the border of Geldern, while the Baron Hermann was away, was treated rather leniently by his chaplain, Dr. Johannes Dorstenius, because he promised the man, who was good but not shrewd, knowledge of many things and various arts. Hence he kept drawing him wine, by which Faust was very much exhilarated, until the vessel was empty. When Faust learned this, and the

---

[30] Compare the story cited above from Johannes Gast.

[31] Johannes Wier (1515–1588) was a Dutch physician and particularly known as an opponent of the prosecution of witches. The *Praestigiis Daemonum* (1st ed. 1563) was an appeal to the emperor and princes in Wier's campaign against superstition. The passages relating to Faust appear from the first time in the fourth edition (1568). For a study of the historical value of what Wier has to say, see the introduction to van't Hooft, *Das Holländische Volksbuch vom Doktor Faust.* Hague, 1926.

chaplain told him that he was going to Grave, that he might have his beard shaved, Faust promised him another unusual art by which his beard might be removed without the use of a razor, if he would provide more wine. When this condition was accepted, he told him to rub his beard vigorously with arsenic, but without any mention of its preparation. When the salve had been applied, there followed such an inflammation that not only the hair but also the skin and the flesh was burned off. The chaplain himself told me of this piece of villainy more than once with much indignation. When another acquaintance of mine, whose beard was black and whose face was rather dark and showed signs of melancholy (for he was splenetic), approached Faust, the latter exclaimed: "I surely thought you were my brother-in-law and therefore I looked at your feet to see whether long curved claws projected from them": thus comparing him to the devil whom he thought to be entering and whom he used to call his brother-in-law. He was finally found dead near his bed in a certain town in the Duchy of Württemberg, with his face turned towards his back; and it is reported that during the middle of the night preceding, the house was shaken.

From the Von Gespänsten of Ludwig Lavater.[32]

To this very day there are sorcerers who boast that they can saddle a horse on which they can in a short time make great journeys. The devil will give them all their reward[33] in the long run. What wonders is the notorious sorcerer Faust said to have done in our own times.

From the Chronica von Thüringen und der Stadt Erffurth of Zacharias Hogel.[34]

a) It was also probably about his time [1550] that those strange things happened which are said to have taken place in Erfurt in the case of the

---

[32] Ludwig Lavater (1527–1586), for many years preacher and finally head of the Protestant church in Zurich. His work *Von Gespänsten* (1569) was very popular and was also translated into French and Italian.

[33] Literally: pay for course and steed, and money for shoeing and saddle.

[34] Hogel's chronicle was written in the 17th century. Its source, however, is the Reichmann-Wambach chronicle of the middle of the 16th century. This latter work is now lost. The parts relating to Faust were entered in the chronicle by Wolf Wambach, who continued the work which had been begun by his brother-in-law Reichmann. The story of the efforts of the monk Klinge to convert Faust probably came to Wambach fairly directly.

notorious sorcerer and desperate brand of hell, Dr. Faust. Although he lived in Wittenberg, yet, just as his restless spirit in other instances drove him about in the world, so he also came to the university at Erfurt, rented quarters near the large Collegium, and through his boasting brought it to pass that he was allowed to lecture publicly and to explain the Greek poet Homer to the students. When, in this connection, he had occasion to mention the king of Troy, Priam, and the heroes of the Trojan war, Hector, Ajax, Ulysses, Agamemnon, and others, he described them each as they had appeared. He was asked (for there are always inquisitive fellows and there was no question as to what Faust was) to bring it to pass through his art, that these heroes should appear and show themselves as he had just described them. He consented to this and appointed the time when they should next come to the auditorium. And when the hour had come and more students than before had appeared before him, he said in the midst of his lecture that they could now get to see the ancient Greek heroes. And immediately he called in one after the other and as soon as one was gone another came in to them, looked at them and shook his head as though he were still in action on the field before Troy. The last of them all was the giant Polyphemus, who had only a single terrible big eye in the middle of his forehead. He wore a fiery red beard and was devouring a fellow, one of whose legs was dangling out of his mouth. The sight of him scared them so that their hair stood on end and when Dr. Faust motioned him to go out, he acted as though he did not understand but wanted to grasp a couple of them too with his teeth. And he hammered on the floor with his great iron spear so that the whole Collegium shook, and then he went away.

Not long afterward the commencement for masters was held and (at the banquet given in connection therewith), in the presence of the members of the theological faculty and of delegates from the council, the comedies of the ancient poets Plautus and Terence were discussed and regret was expressed that so many of them had been lost in times gone by, for if they were available, they could be used to good advantage in the schools. Dr. Faust listened to this and he also began to speak about the two poets and cited several quotations which were supposed to be in their lost comedies. And he offered, if it would not be held against him, and if the theologians had no objections, to bring to light again all the lost comedies and to put them at their disposal for several hours, during which time they would have to be copied quickly by a goodly number of students or clerks, if they wanted to have them. After that they would be able to use them as they pleased. The theologians and councilmen, however, did not take kindly to the proposal: for they said the devil might inter-

polate all sorts of offensive things into such newly found comedies. And after all, one could, even without them, learn enough good Latin from those which still existed. The conjurer accordingly could not exhibit one of his masterpieces in this connection.

He was accustomed to spend a good deal of his time while he was in Erfurt at the Anchor House of Squire N. in the Schlössergasse, entertaining him and his guests with his adventures. Once, when he had gone to Prague in Bohemia, a group of such guests gathered at the inn and, because they desired to have him present, begged mine host to tell them where he was. And one of the guests jokingly called Faust by name and begged him not to desert them. At that instant someone in the street knocks at the door. The servant runs to the window, looks out and asks who is there. And behold, there, before the door, stands Dr. Faust, holding his horse as though he had just dismounted, and says: "Don't you know me? I am he whom they have just called." The servant runs into the room and reports. The host refuses to believe it, saying that Dr. Faust was in Prague. In the meantime he knocks again at the door and master and servant again run to the window, see him, and open the door, and he is given a cordial welcome and immediately led in to the guests. The host's son takes his horse, saying that he will give it plenty of feed, and leads it into the the stable.

The squire immediately asks Dr. Faust how he had returned so quickly. "That's what my horse is for," says Dr. Faust. "Because the guests desired me so much and called me, I wanted to oblige them and to appear, although I have to be back in Prague before morning." Thereupon they drink to his health in copious draughts, and when he asks them whether they would also like to drink a foreign wine, they answer: "Yes." He asks whether it shall be Reinfal,[35] Malmsey, Spanish, or French wine. And when one of them says: "They are all good," he asks for an auger and with it makes four holes in the table and closes them with plugs. Then he takes fresh glasses and taps from the table that kind of wine which he names and continues to drink merrily with them. In the meantime the son runs into the room and says: "Doctor, your horse eats as though he were mad; he has already devoured several bushels of oats and continually stands and looks for more. But I will give him some more until he has enough." "Have done," says the doctor, "he has had enough; he would eat all the feed in your loft before he was full." But at midnight the horse utters a shrill neigh so that it is heard throughout the entire house.

---

[35] An Istrian wine highly esteemed in Germany in the middle ages.

"I must go," says the doctor, but tarries a little until the horse neighs a second and finally a third time. Thereupon he goes, takes his leave of them outside, mounts his horse and rides up the Schlössergasse. But the horse in plain sight rises quickly into the air and takes him back through the air to Prague. After several weeks he comes again from Prague to Erfurt with splendid gifts which had been given to him there, and invites the same company to be his guests at St. Michael's. They come and stand there in the rooms but there is no sign of any preparation. But he knocks with a knife on the table. Soon someone enters and says: "Sir, what do you wish?" Faust asks, "How quick are you?" The other answers: "As an arrow." "No," says Dr. Faust, "you shall not serve me. Go back to where you came from." Then he knocks again and when another servant enters and asks the same question, he says: "How quick are you?" "As the wind,", says he. "That is something," says Dr. Faust, but sends him out again too. But when he knocked a third time, another entered and, when he was asked the same question, said he was as quick as the thoughts of man. "Good," said Dr. Faust, "you'll do." And he went out with him, told him what he should do, and returned again to his guests and had them wash their hands and sit down. Soon the servant with two others brought in three covered dishes each, and this happened four times. Thirty six courses or dishes were served, therefore, with game, fowl, vegetables, meat pies and other meats, not to mention the fruit, confections, cakes, etc. All the beakers, glasses, and mugs were put on the table empty. Soon Dr. Faust asked each one what he wished to drink in the way of beer and wine and then put the cups outside of the window and soon took them back again, full of just that fresh drink which each one wanted to have. The music which one of his servants played was so charming that his guests had never heard the like, and so wonderful as if several were playing in harmony or harmoniums, fifes, cornets, lutes, harps, trumpets, etc. So they made merry until broad daylight. What was to be the outcome? The man played so many tricks that the city and country began to talk about him and many of the nobility of the country came to Erfurt to him. People began to worry lest the devil might lead the tender youth and other simpletons astray, so that they also might show a leaning towards the black art and might regard it as only a clever thing to do. Since the sorcerer attached himself to the squire in the Anchor House, who was a papist, therefore the suggestion was made that the neighboring monk, Dr. Klinge, should make an effort to tear him from the devil and convert him. The Franciscan did so, visited him and spoke to him, at first kindly, then sternly; explained to him God's wrath and the eternal damnation which must follow on such doings; said that he was a well

educated man and could support himself without this in a godly and honorable way: therefore he should stop such frivolity, to which he had perhaps been persuaded by the devil in his youth, and should beg God for forgiveness of his sins, and should hope in this way to obtain that forgiveness of his sins which God had never yet denied anyone. Dr. Faust said: "My dear sir, I realize that you wish me well; I know all that, too, which you have just told me. But I have ventured so far, and with my own blood have contracted with the devil to be forever his, with body and soul: how can I now retract? or how can I be helped?" Dr. Klinge said: "That is quite possible, if you earnestly call on God for grace and mercy, show true repentance and do penance, refrain from sorcery and community with the devil, and neither harm nor seduce any one. We will hold mass for you in our cloister so that you will without a doubt get rid of the devil." "Mass here, mass here," said Dr. Faust. "My pledge binds me too absolutely. I have wantonly despised God and become perjured and faithless towards Him, and believed and trusted more in the devil than in Him. Therefore I can neither come to Him again nor obtain any comfort from His grace which I have forfeited. Besides, it would not be honest nor would it redound to my honor to have it said that I had violated my bond and seal, which I had made with my own blood. The devil has honestly kept the promise that he made to me, therefore I will honestly keep the pledge that I made and contracted with him." "Well," says the monk, "then go to, you cursed child of the devil, if you will not be helped, and will not have it otherwise." Thereupon he went to his Magnificence, the Rector, and reported it to him. The council was also informed and took steps so that Dr. Faust had to leave. So Erfurt got rid of the wicked man.

However, this affair with the aforesaid sorcerer probably took place in this year or shortly before or afterwards, during the lifetime of Dr. Klinge.

b) Also the Lord God afflicted Dr. Klinge, the above mentioned obdurate monk and abbot in the Franciscan cloister in Erfurt, so that he despaired of his life. But he recovered again and, because it was reported to him that they said of him in the city that he had become Lutheran, he wrote and published his book called *Catechismus Catholicus*, printed in 1570 in Cologne. And in the introduction he bore witness that he would remain in the doctrine which he had preached in Erfurt for thirty-six years. And this was the monk who wanted to turn and convert the notorious Dr. Faust from his evil life. Dr. Klinge however died in the year 1556 on the Tuesday after Oculi,[36] on which Sunday he had still preached in the

[36] 'Oculi' is the fourth Sunday before Easter.

church of Our Lady. And he lies buried in that church opposite the chancel, where his epitaph may be seen.

From the Christlich Bedencken of Augustin Lercheimer.[37]

He was born in a little place called Knittlingen, situated in Württemberg near the border of the Palatinate. For a time he was a schoolmaster in Kreuznach under Franz von Sickingen: he had to flee from there because he was guilty of sodomy. After that he travelled about the country with his devil; studied the black art at the university in Cracow; came to Wittenberg and was allowed to stay there for a time, until he carried things so far that they were on the point of arresting him, when he fled. He had neither house nor home in Wittenberg or elsewhere; in fact he had no permanent abode anywhere, but lived like a vagabond, was a parasite, drunkard, and gourmand, and supported himself by his quakery. How could he have a property at the outer gate in the Scheergasse in Wittenberg, when there never was any suburb there, and therefore also no outer gate? nor was there any Scheergasse there.

* * *

He was choked to death by the devil in a village in Württemberg, not at Kimlich near Wittenberg, since there is no village by that name. For he was never allowed to return to Wittenberg after he had fled from there to avoid arrest.

* * *

I do not touch upon other trival, false, and nasty things in the book. I have pointed out these particular things because it has vexed and grieved me greatly, as it has many other honest people, to see the honorable and famous institution together with Luther, Melanchthon, and others of sainted memory so libelled. I myself was a student there, once upon a time. At that time the doings of this magician were still remembered by many there.

* * *

[37] Augustin Lercheimer von Steinfelden (1522–1603) was professor of Greek at Heidelberg from 1563 to 1579. From 1579 to 1584 he held the same chair at Neustadt on the Hardt. From 1584 to his death he was again at Heidelberg as professor of mathematics.

The lewd, devilish fellow Faust stayed for a time in Wittenberg, as I stated before. He came at times to the house of Melanchthon, who gave him a good lecture, rebuked and warned him that he should reform in time, lest he come to an evil end, as finally happened. But he paid no attention to it. Now one day about ten o'clock Melanchthon left his study to go down to eat. With him was Faust, whom he had vigorously rebuked. Faust replied: Sir, you continually rebuke me with abusive words. One of these days, when you go to the table, I will bring it about that all the pots in your kitchen will fly out of the chimney, so that you and your guests will have nothing to eat. To this Melanchthon replied: you had better not. Hang you and your tricks. Nor did Faust carry out his threat: the devil could not rob the kitchen of the saintly man, as he had done to the wedding guests of whom mention was made before.

From the Operae Horarum Subcisivarum of Philipp Camerarius.[38]

We know, moreover, (not to mention Scymus of Terentum, Philistes of Syracuse, Heraclitus of Mytilene, who as we read were very distinguished and accomplished sorcerers in the time of Alexander the Great) that among the jugglers and magicians who became famous within the memory of our own fathers, John Faust of Kundling, who studied magic at Cracow where it was formerly publicly taught, acquired through his wonderful tricks and diabolical enchantments such a celebrated name that among the common people there can hardly be found anyone who is not able to recount some instance of his art. The same conjurer's tricks are ascribed to him as we have just related of the Bohemian magician.[39] Just as the lives of these magicians were similar, so each ended his life in a horrible manner. For Faust, it is said, and this is told by Wier, was found in a village in the Duchy of Württemberg lying dead alongside his bed with his head twisted round. And in the middle of the preceding night the house was shaken. The other, as we mentioned a little while ago, was carried off by his master while he was still alive. These were the fitting rewards of an impious and criminal curiosity. But to come back to Faust. From those in truth, who knew this imposter well, I have heard many things which show him to have been a master of the magic art (if indeed it is an art and not

---

[38] Philipp Camerarius (1537–1624) was the son of the Joachim Camerarius previously mentioned. He was trained in law at Leipzig, Tübingen, Strassburg, Basle, and in Italy. From 1581 to his death he was prorector of the university at Altdorf.

[39] The magician referred to is Zyto.

the jugglery of a fool). Among other deeds which he performed there is told one in particular which may seem ridiculous but which is truly diabolical. For from it may be seen how subtly and yet seriously, even in things which seem to us ridiculous, that arch conjurer, the devil, undermines the well being and safety of mankind ... It is reported that Faust's deception was of this kind. Once upon a time when he was staying with some friends who had heard much about his magician's tricks, they besought him that he should show them some sample of his magic. He refused for a long time, but finally, yielding to the importunity of the company, which was by no means sober, he promised to show them whatever they might wish. With one accord therefore they besought him that he should show them a full grown vine with ripe grapes. For they thought that on account of the unsuitable time of the year (for it was toward the end of December) he would by no means be able to accomplish this. Faust assented and promised that they should immediately see on the table what they wished but with this condition: they should all wait without moving and in absolute silence until he should order them to cut the grapes. If they should do otherwise they would be in danger of their lives. When they had promised to do this, then by his tricks he so befuddled the eyes and senses of this drunken crowd that there appeared to them on a beautiful vine as many bunches of grapes of marvellous size and plumpness as there were people present. Made greedy by the novelty of the thing and athirst from too much wine, they took their knives and awaited his orders to cut off the grapes. Finally, when Faust had held these triflers in suspense for some time in their silly error, suddenly the vine with its grapes disappeared in smoke and they were seen, each holding, not the grapes which each thought he had seized, but his own nose with his knife suspended over it so that if anyone had been unmindful of the directions given and had wished to cut the grapes without orders, he would have cut off his own nose. And it would have served them right and they would have deserved other mutilation, since, with intolerable curiosity, they occupied themselves as spectators and participants in the illusions of the devil, which no Christian may be interested in without great danger or rather sin.

II The Faust Books

How to Read a *Volksbuch*: The *Faust Book* of 1587

Gerald Strauss

How we see a subject depends first and foremost on how we have framed it. When the subject is a text of little intrinsic depth, frame is everything. It is not to disparage a prominent item in the German literary canon to say that in the *Faust Book* of 1587 we have such a text. This is a fact established by its acknowledged identity as a *Volksbuch* aimed by its makers at a particular class of consumers and intended to serve objectives in part commercial and in part educational (cf. Burke; Muchembled, *Popular Culture*; Bollème). If we are to discover the book's meaning, or point, we must look for it in these objectives. In its peculiar combination of episodic construction, shrewd catering to common tastes, and preachy censoriousness, the anonymous *Historia von D. Johann Fausten* is the very paradigm of a late medieval-early modern *Volksbuch*, a user-friendly article, attractively packaged, designed to grab and hold attention, and capable of leaving some sort of enduring mark on the mind of the targeted reader. Obviously, popular literature should entertain. It has long been understood that it was also intended to uplift, or at least to instruct. But to what purpose? And in whose interest? Reflecting what trends in the cultural and social processes of its time? These questions have not often been put to the products of the early printing press in Germany. I think a review of some current historical thinking on early modern Germany can help us in developing suitable attitudes toward the *Faust Book* itself, and toward the whole literature of sorcery, witchcraft, and devilry of which it is the foremost example.

Frame, to repeat, is everything. As the time frame within which the *Faust Book* must be read, Renaissance and Reformation have exerted a determining influence on our understanding, for they function not merely as chronological labels but also as conceptual tags of great suggestive power. Not so very long ago, "Renaissance" stood for the victory of individuality over collectivism and the triumph of creative innovation over tradition and conformity, while "Reformation" was synonymous with deliverance from spiritual subjugation and a turning away from religious superstition. No longer. We do not nowadays set Middle Ages and Renaissance in such drastic opposition to one another. On the contrary: the weight of scholarship has decisively tipped the scales against the old

notion that in the fifteenth century a burst of inventiveness broke the stranglehold of a long period of inertia and stagnation. And as for the Reformation: only the most denominationally committed scholar would now speak of the age of state churches and orthodoxy as a time of religious emancipation. As a result, we have been gaining very different sight lines on the period's personalities, events, and cultural products. Faustus and his book are examples. To portray him as a prefiguration of the Enlightenment, a titanic intellectual rebel, is to misread a text distorted by the wrong historical frame. Barbara Könneker argued this twenty years ago in a fine article on what she saw as a coherent central conception at work in the *Faust Book*. But more can be said toward an interpretation adequate to the intention of the book's producers; above all, there is a more appropriate historical setting to be brought into focus.

What preoccupied the sixteenth century, in Europe generally and in Germany in particular, was not the philosophical or aesthetic challenge of Rome and Greece or the promise contained in the rediscovered gospel. It was a much more concrete phenomenon in the lives of people: the all-pervasiveness of political aggrandizement. Saying this is only to repeat the observation of scores of contemporaries, many of them made uneasy by the apparently inexorable drift of events. This drift was speeding the processes of judicial and administrative consolidation in cities and states, vastly strengthening central authorities and the bureaucracies they were putting into place. The Reformation in particular created unprecedented opportunities – in Catholic no less than in Protestant parts – for concentration of powers in the hands of princes and magistrates, for these powers now included oversight of ecclesiastical as well as of secular institutions. In the aftermath of the abortive uprisings of the 1520s, state and church authorities resolved to prevent a repetition of these frightening events by drawing the reins of law and government even tighter. There can be no doubt that life for all but the most inaccessibly situated men and women in urban and rural Germany became more rule-bound, more closely surveyed, and more rigorously directed in the sixteenth century than it had been at any time in the recent or distant medieval past.

All this is quite well understood. What has not been so well established is the linkage between these developments and a contemporaneous effort on the part of Europe's ruling groups to undermine, and ultimately to replace, the expressions of popular culture. Again, it was the religious shakeup of the sixteenth century that created opportunities for what has been called "a systematic attempt by some of the educated ... to change the attitudes and values of the rest of the population" (Burke 207). To give