

THE DEVIL HIMSELF:

AN EXAMINATION OF REDEMPTION IN THE FAUST LEGENDS

by

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(Under the Direction of Katharina M. Wilson)

ABSTRACT

Careful readers can see Faust everywhere; he continues to appear in film, in politics, and in various forms of popular culture. From *Hrotsvit*, to *Spies*, to Marlowe, Goethe, Mann, Mofolo and even Levin's *Rosemary's Baby*, Faust is a fascinating subject because he is so human; the devil (in whatever form he takes—from poodle to bald androgyne) is representative of our desires—many of which we are fearful of expressing. He fascinates because he acts on the very desires we wish to repress and reveals the cultural milieu of desire in his damnation or redemption.

It is from this angle that I propose to examine the Faust legends: redemption. Though this dissertation is, ideally, part of a much larger study on the redemption topoi in literature, Faust exemplifies the problems and definitions. Studied most often as a single text subject, say Goethe's *Faust* or Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper," redemption lacks significant research on its own grounds, despite its prevalence in literature, except where it is encoded within the discussion of the function of literature itself. I propose, instead, that Redemption has a four related, but separate, uses in literature and literary interpretation involving sacred, secular,

political, and aesthetic redemptions. In order to elucidate the matter, I will use the Faust legends and the appearance of redemption within them.

INDEX WORDS: Redemption, *Faust*, *Rosemary's Baby*, *Frankenstein*, *Manfred*, *Hrotsvit*, *Doctor Faustus*, *Mephisto*, Aesthetics, Walter Benjamin, Penitential

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Gordon, who not only tolerated the process but actually (and bravely) married me during it. Thank you.

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INTRODUCTION

When I first began to work on the subject of redemption, I envisioned a project substantially different from the one that appears here. Initially, I was investigating the redemption of female characters in modern literature; that is, I had noticed a rather distinct trend in the last thirty or so years in which female characters—generally legendary figures such as Lilith, Mary Magdalene, and Freydis Eiriksdottir or fairy-tale characters such as The Wicked Witch of the West and Cinderella’s stepsisters—were being revised, or redeemed if you prefer, by contemporary authors who either recontextualized the character’s deeds or fleshed her out more fully. In either case, an odd literary brand of feminism was clearly at work: saving the bad girls.¹

I stumbled onto this subject through decidedly non-literary means when Sarah McLachlan christened her all-female tour Lilith Fair, after the legendary first wife of Adam, in 1996. One significant feature of their namesake’s mythology was repackaged in order to be more palatable to twentieth-century feminists by transforming misogynistic images and language into ones of feminine power:

¹ See Gregory MacGuire’s *Wicked: The Life and Times of The Wicked Witch of the West and Confessions of an Ugly Stepsister*; Joan Clark’s *Eiriksdottir: A Tale of Dreams and Luck*; and Dan Brown’s *The DaVinci Code*.

In her revision of the story, McLachlan chooses the "parts that can guide us in our lives" and discards the elements that displease her. McLachlan's version, which informs the masses of Lilith Fair attendees, ignores the parts of the story that vilify her or call her a demon, because these alterations are "surely only the rantings of terrified men who were trying to keep other women from getting any silly ideas." (Westmoreland 4)

Lilith's legendary demon stories were being written out of the *herstory* passed to a generation of Lilith Fair fans.² Is it reasonable to discount stories of Lilith's "bad" (read: socially unacceptable) behavior and reductively revise "masculine" mythmaking? Curious, too, were the depictions of Lilith that so often remade her into Mother Nature-cum-Lady Godiva, complete with long hair and no clothing.³ It was apparent that the authors (as well as McLachlan) were altering the legends in order to "rescue" the figures from the bad behavior to which they had been relegated. The word that continually came to mind as I read the new characters was redemption—the figures were being saved from their "sins."

It did not take long for the most significant problem to appear in my notes: I was not really defining what I meant by "redemption," a word with terrifically

² This was not the first such transformation of Lilith's role; one can see similar recontextualizations occurring in 1970's era Jewish Feminist literature and criticism including the 1976 founding of the magazine *Lilith* and Judith Plaskow's 1979 "The Coming of Lilith: Toward a Feminist Theology."

³ An image wrought with problems of objectification, which seem no less problematic. Granted, the connection between Lilith and Godiva is an interesting one; the one sought to force her husband's hand in matters of sexual relations and the other in matters of the taxation of Coventry.

nuanced meanings. I thought, foolishly, that I could simply explain myself in the introductory remarks and be on my way; surely I could examine the criticism of redemption and forge a solid meaning or, at least, a reasonably comprehensive notion of it. At this point, significant problem number two arose: nobody else was explaining it either.⁴ Rather than continuing research into problems in the feminist redemption of warrior women figures, I found myself gravitating toward how we write about redemption.

Socially, legally, politically, and religiously, the notion of redemption has a long and storied history, which will be considered in more detail in Chapter One. One of the most famous recent struggles with the various meanings of redemption occurred during the 1990s fight to commute the death penalty sentence of Karla Faye Tucker. Convicted in 1983 of murdering two people as they slept, Tucker's subsequent religious and social conversions sparked a tremendous controversy regarding the nature of redemption. Early in her incarceration, the drug addicted Tucker⁵ turned to Alcoholics Anonymous and to Bible Study in order to come to

⁴ At least in the world of literary studies. Much more can be found on the subject in religion and law, of course.

⁵ Boudreau and others have suggested that a significant part of Tucker's popularity as an anti-capital punishment figure stemmed not from her religious conversion but from her beauty and, moreover, her troubling childhood story. Boudreau points out that "her biography became a part of her story to a degree that is rare in public discussions about death-row inmates, where the crime is usually the focal point, if not the only point, of the story" (192). In this sense, Tucker's case is far more complicated than Tookie Williams' (discussed below) because the argument against capital punishment was never just about her faith and works in prison; Tucker's childhood, her drug abuse, even her gender, were just as important to the discourse as religious or social change. See Boudreau's *The Spectacle of Death* or Karen Beckman's "Dead Woman Glowing: Karla Faye Tucker and the Aesthetics of Death Row Photography" in *Camera Obscura*.

terms with her crimes. She became, as Kristin Boudreau notes, “an ideal Penitent” (189). While in prison, Tucker reportedly worked to provide “ethical guidance” to women in prison and outside (192). When she finally decided to ask for clemency, she did so largely on the grounds that she was now a different person—she had changed. Scores of witnesses agreed with the assessment that the formerly drug-addled, violent prostitute who had committed the murders was entirely different from the woman who “was trying to learn to be someone better” (qtd. in Boudreau 190).

Tucker had, ostensibly, followed all of the rules of redemption: she recognized her actions sinful, she confessed (first defiantly, eventually with shame), and she was paying her penance through her prison sentence and her outreach. Nevertheless, then Governor Bush denied the reprieve, writing that because “the courts, including the United States Supreme Court,’ had ‘reviewed the legal issues in this case’ and denied all appeals, he would do the same” (Berlow). Socially speaking, Bush saw no possibility of redemption for Tucker, though he acknowledged that “judgments about the heart and soul of an individual on death row are best left to a higher authority” (qtd. in Boudreau 205).

For Governor Bush, the need for clemency came down to legal briefs: had the courts exhausted all possibilities. No room was allowed for “redemption”—and, as Boudreau notes, the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles does not recognize redemption as a mitigating factor (203). Tucker was executed on February 3, 1998.

Another recent case in which redemption—this time a more secular one—was invoked occurred with the pending execution of Crips founder Stanley “Tookie” Williams in California on December 13, 2005. Convicted of killing four people in 1979, Williams had since renounced the gang life and even helped broker a truce between the Newark, New Jersey branches of the Crips and the Bloods in May 2004. Beginning in early 2005, as it became clear that Williams had exhausted all opportunities to appeal his conviction and penalty, his supporters began to advocate for clemency from Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. The reason they provided was simple: Williams had been redeemed by his life and works in prison, which in turn outweighed the gravity of the crime he was to be put to death for. Governor Schwarzenegger ultimately denied the petition for clemency, remarking that “Without an apology and atonement for these senseless and brutal killings, there can be no redemption” (5). Schwarzenegger’s vision of legal redemption, in this case the sparing of Williams’ life, insists that at two elements were required in order to proceed: the sin must be followed by both confession and penance. Unlike Tucker, who confessed to the murders immediately, Williams steadfastly denied any culpability in the murders; consequently, Schwarzenegger suggests that his penance alone did not warrant clemency because the apparent change might have been insincere. Schwarzenegger writes at great length about the history of the Williams case in his letter of denial, citing the successive legal decisions that upheld the conviction, negating any opportunity for Williams to be held up as an example of the wrongly convicted.⁶ Apparently, Governor Schwarzenegger understood

⁶ Innocence would have, in this case, changed the action of redemption from that of relief

redemption as a relief that necessarily assumes guilt. According to Schwarzenegger's handling of the plea, since Williams was indeed guilty (thus the inclusion of the lengthy case history), then he must confess and ask forgiveness for the crimes rather than simply asking for redemption, which is itself not legally synonymous with forgiveness.⁷ Redemption appears to require a very specific path: the guilty party must make a confession, do penance,⁸ and only then turn to the state for clemency. Thus, redemption can best be understood here as an act that occurs between the guilty and the authority, wherein the authority has the power to decide whether or not the confession and penance are worthy.

Schwarzenegger's proscription of redemption⁹ is one that can be seen time and again in legal treatises, religious doctrine, and literature, where we find characters such as Raskolnikov, whose redemptive journey follows the one noted above: his crime is followed by his confession to Sofya and his penance in Siberia. Literature is also often concerned with the social redemption (often through marriage) of an innocent who is forced to live in an overtly wicked world.¹⁰ Several

from the death penalty to freedom. Either way, Williams would have been redeemed.

⁷ Because forgiveness can happen without action on the part of the guilty.

⁸ In this case, penance can be understood in two ways: the prison time and Williams' anti-gang work in the forms of children's books and truce negotiations.

⁹ Redemption is synonymous with clemency here.

¹⁰ The problem of the "redeemed innocent" is certainly an interesting one, as they would seem to be without need of "redemption". One of the most famous stories is that of the Biblical Joseph, who was sold into slavery by his jealous brothers, redeemed from slavery, and in turn had the opportunity to do the same for his brothers. As it is unusual to find an "innocent" Faust, I will not further engage this odd (though certainly present) form of

nineteenth-century sentimental novels come to mind immediately, including Susan Warner's *The Wide, Wide World* and Louisa May Alcott's *Work*,¹¹ each of which concern themselves with the redemption of the young female protagonist from the horrors of orphanage, the working class, unfortunate marriages, and the like. Like Ellen Montgomery, many of these women do not appear to need spiritual redemption (Susan Warner's own religious ideology dictated that only through suffering can a "good Christian woman" be formed), but their texts often insist that they need a social redemption in a marriage, which in turn allows the women to become ideal figures within the nineteenth century "cult of domesticity." Rama is redeemed to his home in the *Ramayana*, as is Odysseus. Contemporary horror films such as *Hellraiser* and *The Exorcist*, like the Gothic tradition they are indebted to, are replete with redemption and damnation themes. However, the clearest example of redemption's multiplicity of meaning appears in the many treatments of the Faust legend, so it is to these texts I will turn to analyze the various modes.

Authors of the Faust legends have sometimes condemned the characters to damnation and at other times redeemed them; critics have read the legend as addressing virtually every subject from practices of education, to historical treatments of magicians and witches, to psychoanalytic critiques of human nature. Faust remains symbolic of a human desire for power, domination, knowledge, and fear. We can see Faust everywhere; he continues to appear in film, in politics, and

redemption. Instead, I will limit my commentary to those redemptions that generally follow the Burkeian path of guilt, penance, and redemption.

¹¹ Interestingly, Both Warner and Alcott were forced by circumstance to write.

in various forms of popular culture.¹² Ira Levin's *Rosemary's Baby*, for instance, is a Faustian piece. Rosemary's husband willingly barter her body as an incubator for hell's offspring in return for his career success; one can see parallels to Goethe's Gretchen story and the "pact with the devil" motif in general. Faust characters are fascinating subjects precisely because they are so damnably human; their actions with the devil (in whatever form, from poodle to bald androgyny) represent our desires—many of which we are fearful of expressing. They fascinate us because they act on the very desires we wish to repress, and reveal the cultural milieu of desire in their damnation or redemption.

Such images of cultural responses are particularly prevalent in works that consider events of the twentieth century, perhaps because of an increasingly global awareness of the potential problems of desire and redemption made manifest in the wars and genocides featured (and ignored) in the ever-expanding visual media. In her *Insanity as Redemption in Contemporary American Fiction*, Barbara Jean Lupack uses insanity as a metaphor for redemption, wherein only the "insane" can make the world right. She uses, for example, the bizarre world of Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* to highlight her thesis. Here, redemption appears to signify "change" in a political and social sense. She writes

It is easy to see how, in a world as devoid of meaning as the one that all these fictional characters inhabit—a world modeled closely on the real modern world—madness is both a legitimate response and an effective challenge to

¹² My students have occasionally accused me of seeing Faust in everything, so I will tread lightly here.

the superficial sanity of the social order and the historical process...And only those who are victims of the system can bring about real reforms in it. (18)

We can see here both the action and the religion of Lupack's use of "redemption." Here, she clearly suggests that one form of redemption would be a radical change in social structure, wherein, as she repeatedly notes, "the inmates run the asylum." The social ramifications are evident—the subversion of an established societal order—, but the religious connotations extant in her use of redemption are less obvious, though still intact. In the case of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (to which she refers repeatedly), McMurphy's role is that of the redeemer, who leads the rest of the asylum towards redemption. He, like Jesus, encourages the subversion of a corrupt authority.

Madness is, in fact, an oft-used metaphor for what is needed in order to bring about redemption. Greg Johnson similarly suggests in his "Gilman's Gothic Allegory: Rage and Redemption in 'The Yellow Wallpaper,'" by suggesting that the woman's insanity frees her from the degradation of nineteenth-century American womanhood. But is one really redeemed by crawling around like a bug, unable to participate in any form of society? While she is certainly "delivered" from the societal and marital state of affairs she in which she exists, is she really "redeemed" in even a secular sense?

Sue Kossew's "The Politics of Shame and Redemption in J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*" uses redemption in yet another way, following the paths traveled by white South African father and daughter after her violent rape. Interestingly, it is the

rape that seems to function as the penance here and, by extension, the daughter acts as the redeemer-figure. David Lurie (the father) can be redeemed only through his daughter and, thus, her rape and eventual decision to marry according to African—rather than Western—law and tradition. Here we find one of the most powerful and troubling visions of redemption: the political. Readers familiar with Coetzee’s *oeuvre* are not likely to be surprised by this novel; the politics of South Africa are part of his most common themes; however, *Disgrace* presents a highly complex vision of political redemption within South Africa, particularly in the figure of the daughter, who realizes that her survival depends on “marrying,” so to speak, tribal tradition. The redemption here is an active political and personal one. David Lurie must be “redeemed” socially for his liaisons with a student, and South Africa must be redeemed from its racial tensions. Not surprisingly, as Kossew points out, there exists an allegory for the changing South African in the novel within the rape of Lurie’s daughter, “Coetzee’s novel also resonates with the national public spectacle of shame, confession, and forgiveness¹³ that was the Truth and Reconciliation Commission...” (155). Lurie’s “delivery” may not be particularly religious, though Kossew’s article suggests as much, but the political allegory is strong and active.

A fourth use of “redemption” can be found in Leo Bersani’s *The Culture of Redemption*, wherein the work of art itself can be seen as “redemptive” for the

¹³ These three notions—shame, confession, and forgiveness—are integral parts to redemption—both religious and literary.

society of readers at large. One might suggest, here, that such was Dante's intent with *La Divina Commedia*: a book that offered a spiritual redemption to those readers who understood its message, as opposed to the romance read by Paolo and Francesca, dooming them to eternity in a whirlwind. Though Bersani rejects outright the idea that art has the power to redeem itself or its viewers, he attributes this vision of the power of art to "the creation of what Nietzsche called the theoretical man—who Nietzsche claimed first appeared in the West in the person of Socrates—the man who attributes to art the power to "correct" existence" (2). The externalization of redemption is not the focus herein, but is certainly relevant to the working definitions of aesthetic and political redemption that I will be using. One cannot escape the reality that in reading books concerned with redemption—especially a political redemption—the theme is both inter- and extra-textual. Certainly this is the case in Klaus Mann's *Mephisto* and also, I argue, in the South African contribution to the Faustian legend material—Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka*. Both of these twentieth century authors entertain a corrective possibility for their readership within their novels.

Strikingly, within the brief overview of essays here, only Kossew attempts to define "redemption" in any useful way, and she relies only on the religious pattern for redemption: shame, confession, and redemption. Few essays and books attempt to tackle redemption motifs profoundly. Among them, Christopher Deacy's *Screen Christologies: Redemption and the Medium of Film* seems to have the most overt attempt to define his usage of the term "redemption." Here, in this excellent

reading of films noirs, redemption is roughly equivalent with the overcoming of separation between God and man or, in the case of the films, the separation of audience from action—especially the actions of the “Christ-figure.”¹⁴ Deacy defines redemption as “...overcoming the split between God and Man, Man and his Word, and Man and his world” (Deacy 51). Rosemary Reuther, on the other hand, explains that in her view

Redemption is not primarily about being reconciled with God from whom our human nature has become totally severed due to sin, rejecting our bodies and finitude...Rather, redemption is about reclaiming an original goodness that is still available as our true selves, although obscured by false ideologies and social structures that have justified domination or some and subordination on others. (8)

In each of these definitions, God is secondary to a redemption that is very much about man’s redemption in the world (socially) rather than to God (spiritually), a trait that becomes increasingly common in the later Faust texts.

The Faustian narrative tends to span all of these definitions of redemption—from madness to politics to aesthetics, in part because, as with the Lilith stories that initially inspired this project, it has been subject to numerous revisions since its nascent appearances in Medieval European texts, where the legend was coded in

¹⁴ This division between audience and object has interesting and significant parallels to Walter Benjamin, but I will return to this point later.

the familiar terms of the church:¹⁵ temptation, sin, penance (which may be performed by or on a scapegoat), intercession, and salvation. Indeed, the figure upon whom the penitential violence can be wrought—the Christ-figure or scapegoat—is manifest repeatedly in the Faust legend material: Gretchen, upon whose mind and body such violence is surely wrought, comes to mind most readily. Several from Thomas Mann’s *Doctor Faustus* are likewise memorable: the body of Rudolf Schwertfeger, the mind of Inez Rodde Institoris, and the body of poor Nepomuk. Nevertheless, it seems unlikely to me, then, that redemption—a least in Faustian texts—is merely a series of revisions of the Gospel narratives. The texts are far more complex than that, aware as they are of the political and social realities of the periods and cultures in which they were produced.

For instance, current usage of the term “Faustian,” particularly in America, tends to focus on the danger of a pact, rather than the possibility of redemption, so when I recently typed “Faustian” into an Internet search engine,¹⁶ I was not surprised when of the first fifty, some forty were politically themed treatises on one “Faustian bargain” or another, including Robert Scheer’s “Bush’s Faustian Deal with the Taliban” from the *L.A. Times* and Lance Morrow’s “The Faustian Bargain of Stem Cell Research” from *Time.com*. A few others were attempts in blogs and other formats to define “Faustian bargain” or “Faustian society.” One notable entry

¹⁵ Which are virtually identical to the requirements laid out in Schwarzenegger’s letter.

¹⁶ Or, in a more colloquial usage, I “Googled” it.

offered a how-to-guide on selling one's soul to Satan.¹⁷ My personal favorite, however, was an advertisement for a romance novel by Kallya Valanis—*The Faustian Complex*, whose tagline reads “hell hath no fury like a woman scorned...or cheated on.” From these modest selections, we can see how widely spread Faustiana really is—from politics to the kitsch. Faust is alternately lauded as a symbol of empowerment (as in Valanis, apparently) and condemned, as in Morrow, who also invokes Prometheus in a decidedly non-Romantic way using both legends as figures of hubris.

In keeping with contemporary usages of the term, these fifty sites tend to highlight one particular aspect of the Faustian legend material: the pact with a devil. This is likely the best known part of the legend—man's hubris leads to apostasy in order to achieve secular ends: a man's soul for a woman, for knowledge, for a political appointment, even for professional advancement. Certainly stem-cell research and cloning sound like the necromancy and divination that Johann Faustus studied and are the very stuff of Shelley's *Frankenstein* (a Faust without an anthropomorphic God or Devil). The Faust texts and internet citations reveal a fascination with the possibility of human glory that is somehow tainted or evil. None of the Faust texts (then or now) are particularly far removed from the Genesis stories wherein Eve and Adam are punished for seeking knowledge prohibited to humans, nor are they distant from the primary crisis in Genesis—the fall of man.

¹⁷ For those interested: Crabtree, Vexan. “Selling Your Soul to Satan.” *Description, Justification, Philosophies, Satanism*. 01 January 2002. <http://www.dpjs.co.uk/sell.html>. 15 July 2005.

Indeed, the Bible also repeats these motifs in the “Tower of Babel” story as human beings attempt to reach beyond their station; the tower literally *falls* and looses linguistic chaos on humankind.

It is odd, though, that the Faust figure has become synonymous with the infernal. The notion of a Faustian Bargain is at this point metonymic; it comes to associate Faust with Mephistopheles and conflates the human and the demonic. Until relatively recently, Faust was treated as a man—one engaged in a pact with the devil, yes, but a man nevertheless; it is, after all, the Mephistopheles character who is literally demonic, not Faust. The metonymic trend seems to appear during the twentieth century treatments of the legend, most noticeably in Klaus Mann’s *Mephisto* and Thomas Mann’s *Doctor Faustus*, both of which treat the Faust legend in contemporary political allegories of fascist Germany, and I will argue that the events of World War Two and the advent of film brought about this conflation of Faust and the infernal.

So, while bearing in mind the various traditions associated with redemption, I propose a four-fold examination of redemption in several of the Faust texts, each chosen for either the importance in perpetuating the legend (such as Spies, Marlowe, and Goethe) or their significant revisions of the material.¹⁸ In Chapter One, I examine the origins of redemption in both legal and religious terms, with a particular focus on patristic exegetical writings and medieval penitentials. From

¹⁸ The interpretive strategies employed here are loosely related to the “four-fold method”: literal, allegorical, tropological, and anagogical are here secular, political, sacred, and aesthetic. The associations are by no means exact.

these analyses, as well as the literary ones cited above, I derive a four-fold usage of redemption: sacred, secular, political, and aesthetic. The first is closely related to Augustine's notion of a sacrificial Christ murdered for the betterment of humanity, whereas the second "redemption" is often a psycho-social one. In Chapter Two, I examine the earliest of the Faust texts, each of which forms part of the foundation for the narrative. I begin the detailed study of the sacred understanding of redemption by looking into Hrotsvit's "Basilus" and "Theophilus," Spies' *Faustbuch*, and Marlowe, seeking to understand both the social implications of the texts and their visions of redemption. In Chapter Three, I focus on the second understanding, secular redemptions, such as can be seen in Goethe's *Faust*, Byron's *Manfred*, Shelley's *Frankenstein*, and Levin's *Rosemary's Baby*. The first three of the texts demonstrate a profound change in the Faust character that had evolved after Marlowe; Levin's book and Polanski's film version of it particularly perpetuates the focus on the mother that had occurred in Goethe and thereafter. The third definition regards the political redemption in works that can be understood as allegories and are covered in Chapter Four, where I address Thomas Mofolo's fascinating Faustian revision of South African history, *Chaka*, Klaus Mann's *Mephisto*, and the twentieth century's most famous Faust: Adrian Leverkühn of Mann's *Doctor Faustus*. Each of these texts imagines the postcolonial or World War II eras through the lens of the Faust narrative and accelerates the image of Faust as himself infernal. Finally, we turn to the possibility of art as the penitential act of humanity in Chapter 5, which examines the conflation of aesthetics and politics

found in both Klaus and Thomas Mann's works, which further engages the problem of art and creation in the midst of the atrocities of World War II.

CHAPTER 1

REDEMPTION, PENANCE, AND VIOLENCE

Whether it is a literary, historical, religious, or theoretical phenomenon, redemption offers a possibility of hope—of improvement—of the human condition or humanity itself; all of the denotations tend toward hope: freeing from bondage, reclaiming the land of the past, etc. The *Oxford English Dictionary* provides some eight definitions for redemption; its root, redeem, has an additional twelve.

Etymologically, redemption comes from the Latin *redimĕre*, the meaning of which suggests “buying back” or “returning to a state of grace” as its primary usages. In modern contexts, it retains that notion, adding “the action of freeing a prisoner, captive, or slave by payment,” “freeing, delivering, or restoring,” “atonement,” and, in Christian contexts, “humankind’s deliverance from sin and damnation” through the purchase of grace with Christ’s blood, and act celebrated at Communion. Such notions are also present in the various words used to designate redemption in Hebrew. Both *g’l*¹⁹ and *pdh* suggest the legalistic denotations with the former

¹⁹ According to Kohlenberger’s Hebrew/English Concordance, *g’l* [also rendered *gā’a*] first appears in *Genesis* 48:16 as (in the NRSV) as “He blessed Joseph, and said, “The God before whom my ancestors Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day, the angel who has **redeemed** me from all harm, bless the boys; and in them let my name be perpetuated, and the name of my ancestors Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude on the earth.” The NIV translates the same as “delivered”. In this context, the usage is similar to the Christian notion of redemption wherein through the spilling of Christ’s blood, humankind’s sins are paid for—and humankind is thus “saved”.

“...[signifying] the buying back of a man or thing that had once belonged to one or one’s family but had got lost” and the latter “the ransoming of a man or thing whose fate otherwise would be destruction, consecration, or slavery” (qtd. in Stock 51). *G’l* is the term most often associated with the English usage of “ransoming Israel,” as it is largely restorative, rather than paying out in order to claim signified by *pdh*²⁰

G’l is also translated variously as “Redeemer,” “Defender,” “kinsman-redeemer,” “close relative” (once in *Numbers* 5:8), and “avenger.” In total, *g’l* is repeated some 103 times (primarily in *Leviticus*, *Ruth*, and *Isaiah*), and its variant *g’e’ullâ* an additional 14 times. *G’l* appears to primarily signify an act of salvation, one of revenge, or of the actor redeemer figure and *g’e’ullâ* to the purchase of property. Oddly, *g’â’al* has a secondary usage that seems antithetical to the first: to defile or stain. This usage occurs 11 times in the Old Testament and almost exclusively in the texts of the Prophets. It appears in *Ezra*, *Nehemiah*, *Isaiah*, *Lamentations*, *Daniel*, *Zephaniah*, and *Malachi*.

²⁰ Kohlenberger’s Hebrew/English Concordance suggests that *pdh* [also rendered *pādâ* or *padah*] first appears in *Exodus* 13:13: “Redeem with a lamb every firstborn donkey, but if you *do not* redeem it, break its neck. Redeem every firstborn among your sons....” In this usage, *pdh* apparently suggests a symbolic act of payment to God—the consecration of the firstborn son as Kohen (the family’s emissary to the Holy Temple) or the sacrifice of the firstborn lamb (which can be substituted for a donkey), etc. According to Rabbi Shraga Simmons, however, events after this first command in *Exodus* complicated the tradition:

But then came the incident of the Golden Calf. When Moses came down from Mount Sinai and smashed the tablets, he issued everyone an ultimatum: "Make your choice -- either God or the idol" (*Exodus* 32:26). Only the tribe of Levi came to the side of God. At that point, God decreed that each family's first-born would forfeit their "Kohen" status -- and henceforth all the Kohanim would come from the tribe of Levi. (*Numbers* 3:11-12)

Which brings us to the mitzvah of *Pidyon Ha’Ben*. Since the first-born child is technically a "Kohen" whose potential cannot be actualized, he has to be replaced (so to speak) by a Kohen from the tribe of Levi. This is accomplished by the father of the baby offering the Kohen a redemptive value of five silver coins for the boy.

Consequently, the usage of *pdh* changes in *Numbers*, where it clearly refers to an economic, rather than symbolic, redemption:

The first issue of the womb of all creatures, human and animal, which is offered to the LORD, shall be yours; but the firstborn of human beings you shall redeem, and the firstborn of unclean animals you shall redeem. Their redemption price, reckoned from one month of age, you shall fix at five shekels of silver, according to the shekel of the sanctuary (that is, twenty gerahs). But the firstborn of a cow, or the firstborn of a sheep, or the firstborn of a goat, you shall not redeem; they are holy. You shall dash their blood on the altar, and shall turn their fat into smoke as an offering by fire for a pleasing odor to the LORD; but their flesh shall be yours, just as the breast that is elevated and as the right thigh are yours. (*Num.* 18:15-18)

(Stock 51). One can easily see the events of, say, *Oedipus at Colonus* in these terms when Theseus grants a final home in Athens to the dying exile, Oedipus. He is restored to a place (even if not either his original or married home) before death; in return, Athens will be granted privileges for protecting the body of Oedipus. Much of the language surrounding the recontextualizations of female mythical characters refers to a “reclaiming” of the character from enslavement by misogynist gender systems.

A character’s potential for redemption is often vital to how a text functions, how we respond as readers, and how we author our cultural mores. Even agency is a problem: does the character find redemption for him/herself or does a scapegoat or other intercessory figure act on behalf of the character? For instance, as Richard Wolin sees it, redemption acts as a *deus ex machina* for men of proper faith—redemption of sins.²¹ Redemption in Wolin’s purview is a fake, a charlatan—especially in terms of a sacred redemption, wherein grace may very well have more influence than good deeds, penance, or the good confession and baptism. In other words, like the theatrical device to which he refers, redemption is little more than a parlor trick and has nothing to do with human work and everything to do with a chance of divine intervention. Why, then, all the penance and good works to ensure

Pdh appears some 60 additional times in the Old Testament. Variants of the form including *p^edah’ēl*, *p^edûyim*, *p^edût*, *pidyôn*, and *pidyôm* appear an additional 11 times. In general, translators have simply used “redeem” for *pdh*, though occasionally, as in *Isaiah* 35:10, it is translated as ransomed.

²¹ Wolin, Richard. *The Aesthetics of Redemption*. I am intrigued by Wolin’s invocation of the much derided trick of coincidental salvation (*deus ex machina*) in his discussion of redemption. It seems to me that this particularly anti-religious derision is particularly critical of Goethe, whose Faust is saved through the intervention of Gretchen and Mary.

redemption's arrival? Thus, even the agent of a character's redemption may create further ambiguity; Leslie Marmon Silko's Tayo must seek the cattle on his own and find his own way back to the land, Betonie makes clear to him, yet it is Betonie's ceremony that makes it possible, so who exactly is the agent of Tayo's redemption?

In the case of another source of redemption material—the New Testament accounts of Jesus' death and resurrection—the agent is clear²². Jesus is meant to be the intercessory figure for mankind. There are four “standard” accounts of this event, one each in the four gospels. The Synoptic Gospels differ little from one another; John's account is somewhat more descriptive. The central story includes the Last Supper, the betrayal by Judas and denial by Peter, the bringing of Jesus before some combination of Pilate, the council, and/or Herod. Luke contains scant information on the trials prior to the crucifixion, while John, Mark, and Matthew describe the ordeal at length. Despite the multiple versions of the story, even a casual reader can discern the following about redemption:

²² According to Morrison's Analytical Concordance to the Revised Standard Version, the New Testament uses “redemption” considerably less frequently than in the Old Testament. It appears in several forms about 17 times. These forms include *agorazō*, *exagorazō*, *lytroō*, *lytriōsis*, and *apolytrōsis*. The first of these, *agorazō*, refers to buying in a market (*agora*) and appears only in Revelation 14. The general usage seems to follow the patterns of the Old Testament Hebrew with meanings ranging from buying back (*exagorazō*) to ransoming (*apolytrōsis*).

1) Redemption requires the intervention of a figure upon whom some sort of violence can be wrought. Not only is this visible in the Gospel accounts, it is apparent in the hagiographic tradition²³ that follows.

2) Humanity requires the intervention of a body (a corporeal god in this case) upon whom the redemptive action (which is not redemption itself, but penance) can be wrought.²⁴

3) Redemption is necessarily an event that occurs “outside” the human in question. The story reveals this in two ways: Jesus has to split from the corporeal world in order to achieve his own redemption (the resurrection).

4) Redemption is not the act but the reward that must be preceded by action. Penance (the death of Jesus in this case) must be paid in order for humanity to be granted redemption.

Redemption is a reward for the action of penance, irrespective of the secular or sacred concerns of the redemption. Oedipus’ wanderings and his self-inflicted blindness are part of the penance (in addition to the ritual suggested by the chorus in order to atone for stumbling into the grove of the Furies) paid for the reward of burial land in Athens. Theseus suggests as much when he remarks that Oedipus need not be buried still as an exile, “If there be no compulsion, then methinks to rest in banishment befits not thee” (33). Likewise, the whole of *Ceremony* makes

²³ This is particularly important to the Faust Legend material, as the original form of the legend appears to function as the reverse of a Saint’s Life tale—perhaps Faust is the “Sinner’s Life”.

²⁴ Both of these notions are themselves important and are discussed at length below.

clear that the restorative ceremony (the actions of penance) is ongoing and the reward is the cessation of fear, anger, and drift in Tayo.

The Work of Redemption

Confusion over the meaning of redemption is not unique to literary studies; religion, after all, has debated the subject for eons. Even in the immediate aftermath of Christ's death and the rise of a Christian church, followers debated among themselves about salvation. Sects splintered off over some of the less clearly defined issues. One of the models for imagining redemption was a legal one; Augustine Stock notes in his essay "The Development of the Concept of Redemption," the term "exemplifies how legal concepts may be turned into religious concepts, and these in turn give rise to further social legislation and serve as the model for an even higher form of the same concept" (49). Thus our multiplicity of meanings derives in part from the many natures that redemption inhabits; indeed, if we take Stock at his word, the definition of redemption is constantly changing. At its first moment, redemption simply means, "taking back what belongs to family" (Stock 49). Here again, one can see the economic associations inherent in the term.

Stock illuminates another example of both the sacred and secular understanding of redemption in the story of *Exodus*—one that became the basis for further legislation regarding redemption: Israel should care for the weak, remembering what the Lord had done for them in *Exodus*, when they were themselves downtrodden and defenseless. Thus, the events of Exodus "redeemed" the Israelites by freeing them from enslavement and by creating a new social order

in which the “downtrodden” would be protected. “The great deliverance from Egypt,” writes Stock, “was construed as a proper act of redemption, on the model of the ordinary social laws regarding the deliverance of slaves” (58). He notes, however, that the desire for redemption to be a virtue of the government “remained largely wishful thinking,” a fact that would later help transform the legal notion of protection into a religious one (Stock 53). Stock uses the ancient custom of the levirate marriage²⁵ to demonstrate this kind of transformation. Relying on legal forms of redemption was successful, says Stock, if you happened to “belong to a rich and powerful family,” but who would protect the weak in the rest of the population? In the case of levirate marriage, this intended legal remedy for the widow might fail in simply the refusal or inability of a family to adhere to such a practice. Indeed, the custom fell out of favor and the practice of marrying a widow to her brother-in-law was eventually outlawed.²⁶ Thus, the widow is easily left unprotected by the law, so, as Stock suggests, the practice of protection (and “redemption”) becomes increasingly the domain of religion: “As a consequence of the failure of the law, the social reformers placed their faith in God” (56). The religious world, then, became the repository of redemption, and the concept shifted from a legal to a religious and social one. Stock cites another ancient definition of redemption that is more closely tied into a Christian understanding of the relationship between penance (sacrifice)

²⁵ The levirate marriage was intended to protect widows. As can be most clearly witnessed in the Book of Ruth, this practice of marrying a widow to a kinsman (preferably a brother) of her dead husband had two aims: 1) her protection and 2) keeping the property in the family (Stock 56).

²⁶ As readers of *Hamlet* are no doubt aware, the practice came to be seen as a form of incest.

and salvation. He notes that “redemption in its most archaic form—that of “taking back of blood”—survived as the principle basis for the most advanced of all metaphorical references to redemption, for the metaphor of the spiritual redemption of God” (49). Indeed, Christians understand the sacrifice of Christ at Calvary as the final blood atonement necessary for salvation; consequently, blood sacrifice is rendered obsolete and replaced by other forms of penance.

By the time Paul began to write the various Epistles, the notion of redemption in religious terms was fairly common, though he occasionally conflates the economic and the religious, as in Corinthians I when he remarks that “you are not your own; you were bought with a price”(1 Cor. 6:20). This notion of the ransoming of humanity by God is not particularly new (though Paul’s attempt to liken it to the buying of a temple prostitute here is a bit unusual as Stock notes); one can hear the same sentiment in “O Come, O Come Emmanuel” when choirs sing to God to “ransom captive Israel.” Paul’s suggestion is simple: the grace available for salvation is made manifest in the sacrifice of Christ; the human body should serve God’s purposes.²⁷ Stock further remarks, “Spiritual redemption is the noblest redemption. It is redemption not from material sufferings, loss of land, or liberty or blood,” which represent the “legal notions of redemption,” but from moral, religious sufferings, iniquity, wickedness, and despair” (Stock 60). Paul tends to use both ideas, linking them metaphorically. And this habit bears out one of the most difficult parts of understanding Pauline theology; as Paula Fredriksen points out, “the transformation of the human condition [redemption] will be marked, indeed, by

²⁷ The notion of the servile body appears repeatedly in notions of redemption.

the transformation of the human body”(50). Thus, as with a metaphorical link between the legal (which is human-centered) and the spiritual (which is God-centered), Paul links the body and the spirit in his discussions of redemption.

In general, we can see three major modes of thought with respect to redemption extant in the early church. As Brian Murdoch notes,

There has always been debate (and especially in the Middle Ages) about the precise nature of the Redemption in terms of mediation, sacrifice, ransom, reparation, and restoration. The debates have moved from the Augustinian concept of expiation by the sacrifice of Christ to the theory (voiced by Anselm of Canterbury and refining the concept of substitution) of satisfaction (with added discussions of the devil’s rights and the notion too of redemption of a pledge), and ultimately to the doctrine of salvation by grace alone. (1)

Murdoch summarizes the historical progression of redemption, tracing the notion from ancient Christianity to the Protestant Reformation. In the earliest era, redemption referred to the sacrifice of the Christ as penance for human sin. Indeed, as later commentaries would indicate, this act paid in full the penitential responsibility of all Christians. Ultimately, Protestants came to view redemption as a gift from God in which no person had the wisdom or foresight to know precisely for whom the penance was paid.

As the struggle over the understanding of redemption became a pressing concern of early Christian thought, the older, legal and social Hebraic notions became increasingly theological. In Augustine, for instance, it is impossible to

separate a religious notion of redemption from original sin because, he writes “...as we share in Adam’s humanity, so we share in his guilt and punishment” (Cambridge 223). And despite his insistence on human culpability, the theory of human redemption was, as James Wetzel remarks, “relentlessly God-drawn”; that is, Augustine’s notions of grace and redemption are wholly ensconced in his examination of predestination. The matter is one of grace—not human work. Augustine writes “There is only one difference between grace and predestination, that predestination is the preparation for grace, while grace is the giving of the gift” (qtd. in Wetzel 50-51). For Augustine, then, grace was a gift to the predestined saints (and, by contrast, a gift denied those who were not).²⁸ Indeed, as Fredriksen notes, for Augustine “God does not save the just or the righteous, for there are only sinners; it is his grace alone that makes sinner’s righteous” (144). Grace is singularly important in patristic writings and, indeed, is a substantial part of the later Protestant Reformation, when the new denominations, such as the Calvinists, abandoned good works in favor a rather Augustinian focus on grace alone.

Religious fathers continually weighed in on the notions of redemption. The dualist Christians, whose understanding of God and redemption is rooted in Greek theology, suggest that the High God ...could not be involved in change. The One was ‘perfect, free from passion, free from change’—and, accordingly, free from any direct involvement in the physical universe”; thus, goes the claim, *this* High God

²⁸ And, of course, the function of foreknowledge in Augustine’s work is important here. God knows who will “deserve” grace and who will not, thus allowing an unbiased selection of predestined saints.

must be the father of Christ, because the embodied God of *Genesis* was too “busy, jealous, [and] opinionated” to create Christ who would “bring saving, transforming knowledge of a God whose revelation could never be inferred from creation (Fredriksen 137). The dualist vision of redemption is based on this notion of two Gods, and redemption could only be brought about by “the High One,” who was not an anthropomorphic representation of humanity and creation. This dualist vision is not so far removed from the accounts that precede it, wherein we see a god on high (removed from direct association with humanity) and a corporeal god who descends to live among the human race.

Origen’s influential writings,²⁹ on the other hand, suggest only a single God, and one that yearns for universal salvation: “For God wants redemption for all his creatures...even the Devil would be brought round—and he has all the time in the world” (Fredriksen 141). Origen places no time-contingency on salvation; the notion of an “imminent return” of Christ had, by this point, waned significantly. Unlike Augustine’s predestination, Origen’s theology was one of a profoundly open grace. Like Paul, Origen understood redemption in terms of body, but not in the physical flesh Paul suggested. Rather than a defeat of death, Origen saw a “defeat of faulty understanding, of ignorance; like *kata pneuma*, it means understanding, and so loving, God” (Fredriksen 142).

In the early formation of the church, the Church Fathers appear to have more or less believed that most sins were redeemable; as Christine Trevett

²⁹ Fredriksen humorously remarks that before Origen “much of the Christian writing...is the intellectual equivalent of street-fighting” (139).

notes, “The Montanist was a purist. No tares might grow among the wheat...(114).” We have little extant literature from the followers of the “New Prophet,” Montanus; with the exception of Tertullian’s texts, a few quotations from the leaders of the movement that appear in other texts, and a several inscriptions, we are left with few paths on which to follow the sect’s ideas.

What we do know is this: the Montanists represented a far more punitive and rigorous approach to morality and forgiveness than did the Catholic Church. For instance, they strongly disavowed second marriages³⁰ and heartily praised both fasting and martyrdom. In fact, they praised martyrdom to such a degree that they were occasionally accused of being too eager to embrace death (Trevett 123). However, it is unlikely that Montanists were the “lemming-like” fools “rushing toward martyrdom” that they were assumed to be; moreover, Tertullian is probably responsible for this image anyway (Trevett 123). As Trevett notes, given the paucity of extant texts, one could easily suppose that Tertullian used “the excuse of the Paraclete to impose a harsher discipline more congenial to his own temperament” (117). Certainly rumors swirled about the Montanists obsessions with death and martyrdom. Augustine records stories in which the Montanists prepare the Eucharist

...from the blood of a year old child, which they draw off its whole body by means of minute puncture wounds, and mix it with flour, and thence make

³⁰ Tertullian actually seems to be against marriage in general: “Marriage...was allowable in Tertullian’s thinking but it was a second-best option nevertheless. Marriage dulled the spiritual faculties...” (Trevett 112).

bread. If the child die, the consider him to be a martyr; if he live, he is considered to be a high priest³¹. (Heine 163)

In all actuality, as Trevett suggests, the stories of the Montanist obsession with martyrdom outstrip the realities. True, Tertullian promoted that “martyrdom brought the keys to paradise itself and readiness for it brought spiritual gifts and privileges” (Trevett 121). But, in general, most Christian sects believed more or less the same thing as the Montanists on this point and that “martyrs, like angels, apostles, and patriarchs, acted as intercessors” (Trevett 122). One of the Prophets³² (Tertullian does not say which one gave the oracle) does suggest that

If you should die for God, as the Paraclete instructs, not in mild fevers and on your beds, but in martyrdoms; if you take up your cross and follow the Lord as he himself commands, your blood is the complete key to Paradise.

(Heine 7)

Preparation, Trevett suggests, was as of great significance to Montanism as martyrdom itself (128). This seems in keeping with the overall rigor the Montanists are associated with. Robin Lane Fox remarks that “The heart of Montanism...lay in a faith that the Spirit could speak personally, bringing Christian ‘discipline’ up to the mark” (qtd. in Trevett 120).

³¹ This seems to be a case of “the more things change the more they stay the same.” Many subsequent groups would be accused of similar acts involving child sacrifice—from Knights Templar to Satanists.

³² Montanus, Priscilla, and Maximilla.

On the matter of the rigor of forgiveness, we have more commentary from the Montanists, on which the Paraclete states that “The Church can pardon sin, but I will not do it, lest they commit other offences” (qtd. in Heine 93). Only God, through his spiritual Church, could govern forgiveness³³ (93). Post-baptismal sins were absolutely unredeemable; no amount of grace could overcome these deeds.

Tertullian feared that even martyrdom could be used by “...fornicators and other gross sinners [who] crept into prison’s cells to kiss the martyrs’ bonds or else to gain absolution (116).” Whereas the catholic Church had issued an edict declaring that adultery and fornication could be forgiven after penance,³⁴ the Montanists argued no such thing. Trevett clarifies Tertullian’s position on forgiveness saying that

Wherein in time past Tertullian *had* allowed a second plank after wreckage on the rock of post-baptismal temptation, it was no longer so. He had once allowed a final, post-baptismal chance in respect of apostasy, fornication, and idolatry, but Tertullian feared that such an ‘indulgence of the Lord’ might lead to laxity. Despite that fear, he had continued to teach that *once only* penance was allowable. The process of *exomologesis*³⁵ was stringent and humiliating enough. (115)

³³ Tertullian remarks that acts of the “Church of the Spirit [are] done by a spiritual man [apostle or prophet], not the Church which consists of a number of bishops” (qtd. in Heine 93).

³⁴ Trevett jokes that “it seems there was still a hard line against the mortal sins of murder and apostasy” (115).

³⁵ Confession.

Exomologesis was only one of many ways in which Christians have to work toward redemption. The process of redemption follows four basic steps: recognition, confession,³⁶ restitution, and absolution. Recognition is simply the personal acknowledgement of sin, which is in turn followed by either public or private confession. At this point, Christians (and this is true of fictional characters and legendary figures as well) are often required to “do penance.” The penance may not be obvious; it may not even be successful; nevertheless, we can see the practice of penance throughout Western texts. A sinner comes before the confessor (be it a bishop, priest, or deacon), confesses his or her sins, and is given a “penance” to perform in order to be forgiven. At least, this is the pattern that seems to emerge, promulgated by Henry Charles Lea and others who suggest that penance was and remains merely a form of social control.³⁷ Finally, absolution may be granted after the proper performance of the penance.

³⁶ This need not be a private confession, such as in the Catholic Sacrament of Penance. For most mainline Protestant churches, confession is either wholly private (as in prayer) or a public, collective recitation of confession, such as appears immediately before Holy Communion in the Episcopal Holy Eucharist Rite I:

Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against thee in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved thee with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of thy Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in thy will, and walk in thy ways, to the glory of thy Name. Amen. (Book of Common Prayer)

Notice how the confession follows the first two steps of redemption. The confession first recognizes, and then confesses, sin—and it covers a multitude of them.

³⁷ Lea, Henry Charles. *History of Auricular Confession and Indulgences in the Catholic Church*. For a detailed analysis, please see Mansfield, Mary. *The Humiliation of Sinners: Public Penance in Thirteenth Century France*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1995.

While an interesting, and not entirely far-fetched notion, the idea that penance is entirely about social order avoids its sacred aspects. The theory of social control renders penance as an entirely secular set of punishments. Rather than coming to a clearer understanding of man's responsibility to God, such penance underscores man's responsibility within his community. Even the doctrine of predestination (and the doctrine of grace alone) presents very obvious community problems: What about the other guy? As Edward Oakes remarks, "...so by a weird reversal of intent, the doctrine [of Predestination]—originally intended to forestall pride—ends up making the believer feel set apart and better off than the *massa damnata*, from which pathetic mass he has been plucked by an apparently arbitrary decree from God" (214). Thus, a penitential order associated with social control could, in theory, negate this "setting apart" through humiliating public penance, thereby reestablishing the responsibility of the individual to the community.

In *The Literature of Penance in Anglo-Saxon England*, Allen Frantzen suggests an alternative model to the social-control one: Franzen's model protects a two-prong assessment of penance and redemption:

The theory of social control is unsatisfactory because it equates penitential practice with behavior modification and manipulation, exaggerating its restrictive influence. But penance was not a punishment: it was a cure. And the penitential was not only a list of sins and penalties for them; it was a blueprint for the sinner's conversion, didactic or catechetical as well as disciplinary. (4)

The payment of penance, then, not only reconnects sinner and community, but should prevent those same sins from occurring in the community again (by way of public renunciation and humiliation). “The purpose of penance was first and most obviously the reconciliation with God that promised eternal salvation,” comments Mansfield, “but it was also the reconciliation with the institutional church through the authority of its sacraments and priests...Public penance acts out a utopian dream: It declares hope that God’s justice can be visible on earth” (17).

On the whole, it is not surprising that redemption in a Christian tradition would tend to be violent. One need only look at the crucifixion and resurrection of the Christ as the penance for all Christians, the violence of which echoes the original usage of redemption—“the buying back with blood.” Religiously speaking, the crucifixion of Jesus symbolizes the atonement of the sins of all humankind. In practice—especially literary practice, however, it became less a singular action of atonement and more a model for all forms of Christian atonement. In other words, the penance required for redemption would have to somehow mimic the death of Christ—without necessarily killing off the sinners³⁸. What significance a church or society placed on penance and what forms of penance were used varied according to time and place. Part of this, of course, stems from the penitentials themselves, each of which might have prescribed different acts of penance to follow confession. Such documents assert the power the church held at the time, serving penitential punishments for sins ranging from the minor to sins of the body. Such acts might

³⁸ Thereby leaving death to the martyrs, who are seen as the Christological *figurae* of redemption.

range from confession, fasting, and pilgrimage to, as Mansfield recounts, standing outside the church for the purpose of public humiliation:

...An entry in the register of Bishop Quinel of Exeter reported the penalty incurred by one Jane Baschet, convicted of adultery: “Jane should stand outside the church at Bedeford on Sundays and feast days during the whole of Lent, until the Thursday before Easter, and then come to Exeter to be reconciled, as is the custom.” (95)

Such penitential acts tend to inflict some form of violence upon the sinner (even though it may be psychological), and they often have a very public aspect, and serve to, as Sarah Hamilton writes “help ensure every Christian his or her salvation.”³⁹

Rhetorical Redemptions: Benjamin and Burke

Redemption is not absent from secular philosophical texts; for Nietzsche’s “Case of Wagner,” the notion is, in fact, quite important. Nietzsche remarks in his “Meditation on Schopenhauer” that nature “...wants to make the life of man significant and meaningful by generating the philosopher and the artist—that is certain in view of her own urge in the need of redemption” (qtd. in Kaufmann 172). Nietzsche, as Walter Kaufmann points out, is not being “supernatural” in his remark about nature, rather, “by empirical observation, concentrating on art, philosophy, and religion, Nietzsche finds that humanity has not become “better” through history; i.e., he fails to find bigger artists and philosophers in his own time

³⁹ Hamilton, Sarah. *The Practice of Penance 900-1050*. Suffolk, Boydell Press, 2001.

than, say, in the age of Plato or Leonardo” (Kaufmann 173). Yet, somehow or other, the notion that we can “improve” remains pervasive throughout history.

If we look, for instance, at the works of Walter Benjamin and Kenneth Burke, both of whom address redemption with respect to language, we can see this drive toward a great truth and reconciliation in language and philosophy of the twentieth century, some one hundred years after Nietzsche pointed out the futility of the goal. At first glance, Benjamin’s “Theses on the Philosophy of History” would even seem to posit some of Nietzsche’s suggestion about the failure to redeem.⁴⁰



Figure 1

*Mein Flügel ist zum Schwung bereit,
Ich kehrte gern zurück,
Denn blieb ich auch lebendige Zeit,
Ich hätte wenig Glück.”(qtd. in "Theses" 257)*

The Klee painting and the Scholem poem above are the geneses of Benjamin’s ninth thesis. Benjamin does not include the painting in the text, instead using the poem as an epigraph and creating the painting by means of *ekphrasis*; thus we have an image, created verbally rather than visually, and then an allegorical

⁴⁰ The following section on Benjamin is a revision of the text originally found in Chapter 1 of my Master’s Thesis *Benjamin’s Opera*.

inscription,⁴¹ which names the object of the angel's glance—the past: "A Klee painting named *Angelus Novus* shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his wings are spread" (257). The first two lines of the poem say virtually the same thing: "My wing is ready for flight, I would like to turn back." The angel, in Benjamin's view, is a bundle of potential energy—that energy with the capacity to become kinetic with the application of force. The angel is on the verge of moving away, but has not yet done so. Though Benjamin will call the force that is pushing the angel "progress," it is essential to remember that the angel is not yet in motion—that the angel remains in the present, only on the verge of being pushed on into the future.

Benjamin's comment on the direction of the angel's gaze is easily the most fascinating part of his verbal re-creation of the painting. Klee's angel appears to be gazing to the left.⁴² Rather than seeing in this image a new angel's delight or curiosity (that is, a desire to see), Benjamin reads the angel's gaze as a sign of a desire to move away from whatever it has been contemplating—this unseen something to the left (which is the past). Of course, Benjamin provides a name for this something in his "inscription": the angel is looking back into history.

The angel's gaze is that of the historical materialist: struck with silence in the face of the world historical spectacle of destruction and disintegration.

...While the storms called progress and chronological time hurl the angel into

⁴¹ Bahti remarks: "Then one is given a 'picture,' not the real picture by Klee (or its reproduction), which may or may not be known to us, but a verbal image that describes or 'presents' it to us" (187).

⁴² The left is, not coincidentally I think, the direction of the past on a standard timeline.

the future, the angel's gaze remains directed toward the catastrophic panoramas of the past, trying to prevent possible blind spots in our historical vision and memory, chiasmas that would deny ubiquitous suffering.

(Koepnick 167)

We have two distinct views of history implicit in this allegoric inscription. In the one, apparently the human view, history is a "chain of events," while for the angel it is an ever-growing single catastrophe. This synchronic vision of the world is familiar to Gospel readers as well, particularly from the opening verses to John: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God" (John 1:1-2).⁴³ God and Word are simultaneous in a beginning that is constant. For Benjamin, the angel's view of history is an opportunity to redeem the past, to "[seek] happiness, fulfillment, or 'redemption'⁴⁴ [*Erlösung*] in present occasions and opportunities (which otherwise pass away) so a historical presentation...ought to redeem the past—its missed opportunities—in the present" (Bahti 189). The motif of redemption is something that unapologetically reoccurs in Benjamin's work; redemption can exist in Benjamin's framework because, as he reminds his readers, humans are fallen beings. In the allegory (the way language expresses the problem of the loss of Adamic language), the connection between word and thing is severed. Benjamin sees redemption through the lens of allegory: "For something can take on the allegorical form only for the man who has knowledge," i.e., the man who has eaten of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good

⁴³ This passage is also familiar to readers of Goethe's *Faust*, as these are the verses which flummox the scholar near the beginning of the play.

⁴⁴ This is a notion we must return to with allegory as well. Through (the violence of) allegory, we are able to seek redemption in decay. Note that the violence as a means for salvation is here quite similar to the violence wrought on the body of the scapegoat.

and evil and hence fallen into the world of human language (*OTD* 229). Allegory bridges the gap between word and meaning, precisely because it exists in the space between signifier and signified. Benjamin's view of allegory subverts hierarchical layers of meaning by allowing readers to fill in the space between language and meaning based on their own knowledge.⁴⁵ For Benjamin, it is through allegory that humans can redeem language—and, thus, themselves.

The beginning of the "inscription" reads, "The angel of history must appear like this [*muß so aussehen*]."⁴⁶ Why "must" it appear as it does in his reading? In Benjamin's overall theory, history is a matter of looking backward, with most historians looking toward the victorious past without any particular sense of horror. In the seventh thesis, Benjamin writes, "For without exception the cultural treasures have an origin which [the historical materialist] cannot contemplate without horror. ...There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism" (256). Granted, this is partly a cliché-driven notion: the winners write history. Nevertheless, for Benjamin the historian is beholden to the recoverable or saved texts, and those texts are largely the texts of the victorious peoples. Therefore, history and historical scholarship are rooted in warfare and murder, the sins of humanity and the very reasons why humanity continues to need redemption. This secularization of redemption is intriguing; though rooted in

⁴⁵ This seems to me to be an early expression of his desire to hand the means of film production to the masses.

⁴⁶ This is Bahti's translation. Though I will regularly make use of the standard translations by Harry Zohn and John Osbourne, Zohn's translation of this essay in particular has been the subject of much derision. Bahti notes: "Zohn has: 'This is how one pictures the angel of history.' Rather than an active interpretation ('one pictures'), there is here a passive interpretation with an imperative construction ('must appear [to]'). The unfolding allegory of the angel of history 'must' appear 'this' way, for its description is enfolded in, and inscribed in the service of, the allegorical structure of the emblem" (187).

religion (specifically, original sin), Benjamin's redemptive story is more closely allied with linguistics and history—as are some of the later interpretations of the Faust legend.

Melancholy is inspired by what Benjamin calls the Baroque's "allegorical way of seeing," which stems from the awareness that the world has been emptied of meaning, both by the Fall and by the Reformation. More precisely, the widening schism between meaning and image/language leads to this way of seeing the world. The characteristics of allegory that Benjamin sees are

the pictorial imagination, and emblematic structures, the ubiquity of ruin and fragmentation, the draining away of significance from objects and meaning from life, the concomitant preoccupation with Death and the passage of time, the tendency to treat the world as if it were a book, containing not a known language but a jumble of hieroglyphs, a Babel of obscure, encoded, conflicting scripts. (Spencer 64)

Rather than a simple definition of allegory as "something that says one thing and means another," Benjamin's allegory is rooted in fragmentation and decay in the relationship between meaning and language. However, Benjamin also suggests that such decay can be overcome—redeemed—through allegory.

'[T]he characters of the *Trauerspiel* die," writes Benjamin, "because it is only thus, as corpses, that they can enter into the homeland of allegory. It is not for the sake of immortality that they meet their end, but for the sake of the corpse" (*OTD* 217). The corpse for Benjamin is the ultimate sign of decay—the emblem of the separation of soul and physical body (soul and body standing allegorically for meaning and the word). Allegory is always reaching toward decay and, ultimately, toward death. But this comment is among the most momentous in Benjamin's text,

because the very desire for the decay of the body and the separation of the body and spirit is the point at which redemption can occur. Bahti explains this reversal in Benjamin: "'Observed from the point of view of death' means, not a static or permanent perspective, but the very dying away of death. At the end of a process of decay or falling (*Verfalls*), the occasion—death—itself 'falls away.' Death means, allegorically, life," a comment that bears striking similarities to the redemptive ends of Jesus' penance-death (280). By looking into death—the corpse—redemption is possible, and it is only through this reversal that redemption can occur.

Benjamin presents this redemption as the moment at which allegory loses the specific knowledge it once required and, at once, finds new meaning; the dead figurative idiom is resurrected:

Allegory, of course, thereby loses all that is most peculiar to it: the secret, privileged knowledge, the arbitrary rule in the realm of dead objects, the supposed infinity of a world without hope. All this vanishes with this *one* about-turn, in which the immersion of allegory has to clear away the final phantasmagoria of the objective and, left entirely to its own devices, re-discovers itself, not playfully in the earthly world of things [the corpse], but seriously under the eyes of heaven. And this is the essence of melancholy immersion: that its ultimate objects, in which it believes it can most fully secure for itself that which is vile, turn into allegories, and that these allegories fill out and deny the void in which they are represented, just as, ultimately, the intention does not faithfully rest in the contemplation of bones, but faithlessly leaps forward into the idea of resurrection.

...Knowledge of good and evil is, then, the opposite of all factual knowledge.

...This knowledge, the triumph of subjectivity and the onset of an arbitrary rule over things, is the origin of allegorical contemplation. In the very fall of man the unity of guilt and signifying emerges as an abstraction. The allegorical has its existence in abstractions; as an abstraction, as a faculty of the spirit of language itself, it is at home in the Fall.” (*OTD* 232-4)

The interpretive leap ("faithless leap") from the literal body of language to the allegorical and subjective spirit fills the void left in the separation of signifier and signified, providing a step closer to a redemption that may or may not be completely possible.⁴⁷ Too, Benjamin suggests that the guilt, which necessarily precedes the desire for redemption, is a result of signification—the means of human expression. Allegorical interpretation can move language closer to truth—to redemption—and the expiation of the guilt of signifying.

Benjamin is not alone in identifying the revelation of redemption in language, though his insistence that allegory is part of the code is unusual; both Benjamin and Kenneth Burke conceive of redemption as a rhetorical act. Burke's work on rhetoric and redemption offers one way of codifying not only what is meant by "redemption," but why critics and authors alike have a junkie-like compulsion to return to it. He suggests, in *Rhetoric of Religion*, that the human condition is a "redemption drama," defined in discrete moments each attempting to preserve Order. In Christian terms, Order is defined and exemplified by God, particularly in Genesis and the Gospels, wherein the plan for the world's creation, fall, and

⁴⁷ An ambiguity that makes sense in light of Benjamin's oeuvre. His theories of translation announce similar themes. Translations (each one an interpretation) moves humans closer to "truth" when synthesized.

penance are articulated. In secular terms, one may think of the function of a government providing order upon social chaos. Burke writes:

Here are the steps
In the Iron Law of History
That welds Order and Sacrifice

Order leads to Guilt
(for who can keep commandments!)
Guilt needs Redemption
(for who would not be cleansed!)
Redemption needs Redeemer
(which is to say, a Victim!)

Order
Through Guilt
To Victimage
(hence: Cult of the Kill)...(Burke 4-5)

The redemption drama follows a guilt-purification (penance⁴⁸)-redemption process that can be seen unfolding not only in *Genesis* and the Crucifixion stories, but in very modern contexts as well. If we follow Burke's logic, redemption is made necessary by guilt, which is, in turn, driven by a need to create an Order that is

⁴⁸ Which can be performed either "suicidally,' as in Mortification, or 'homicidally,' in the slaying of scapegoats..." Burke later clarifies (223).

never properly fulfilled. His exemplary text is the Ten Commandments, and he suggests that human nature, no matter how ordered life might be if the commandments were followed, tends to violate the Order it desires. Adam, Eve, and the Fall are obvious examples of this violation. Lilith's refusal to acquiesce to Adam's demands of sexual domination exemplifies the legendary content of the dismissal of Order, and Faust's bargain with the devil could very well signify a literary one.

Yet, Burke suggests, the failure to maintain Order makes manifest guilt, which drives a need to "redeem" oneself from the guilt. Thus, following a profoundly familiar trope, human beings desire penance for its sins. Thus, Burke seems to suggest, the expiation of guilt by the Church or another entity of Order⁴⁹ is a natural consequence of human guilt. Mansfield would seem to agree with the assessment when she comments that "the guilt, not the temporal penalty was the block to eternal salvation, and its cure, contrition or confession (depending on the theologian) came to receive more attention than the satisfactions that remitted the *poena*"⁵⁰(35). The Church offers the restoration of Order and the cleansing of the feelings associated with disOrder. This occurs, both in Burke and in the Medieval penitentials, by means of paying some sort of penance, and Burke categorizes these

⁴⁹ All of the entities, including church, are created in order to fulfill the need to make amends and counter guilt. In Benjamin's terms, Order is found in allegorical interpretation.

⁵⁰ Penalty due.

into two groups: the suicidal (as in mortification of the flesh) and the homicidal (the scapegoat).⁵¹

Christ's redemption drama certainly seems to bear out at least these first two events. Human guilt (and the Fall, in particular), necessitates penance. Rather than extracting penance from all humanity, God becomes corporeal and becomes either the suicidal perpetrator or the victim of penitential excess. Christ, in fact, enacts both positions, as the God who comes to flesh to be killed for the sins of the many and as the man killed by a government system fearful of Christ's potential political power. Burke, though he notes that Christ's death surely exemplifies the moment of purification as a martyr, does not allow that the scapegoat (which Christ also was) may be redeemed in the violence of penance. David Bobbit suggests that

...Burke ignored the fact that once this form becomes self-reflexive, the guilt then turns back upon the perpetrator and the victim/scapegoat becomes purified not only in his or her own eyes, but also in the eyes of society. (Bobbit 120)

This purification can lead to the recognition of martyrdom. Moreover, this exemplifies the violence that tends to appear concomitant with penance—and, ultimately, redemption.

Burke's work singles out a piece of redemption literature of some importance: the body on which penance can be wrought and redemption then achieved. The figure of Jesus exemplifies this body, hanging on a cross as an offering of penance

⁵¹ Note his insertion of order upon the chaos of penitential need.

for all mankind. Likewise, Hrosvit's Basilius offers his own body up for the penance for another man. Other examples of the penitential body involve the long-term fasting of medieval anchorites and other religious figures, flagellants, as well as other examples collected in various medieval penitentials that suggest the proper penance for any given sin ranging from ill-begotten gains to specific sexual acts to treason, murder, and apostasy.

The various accounts of Faust's sins seem to ask how much a man can sin before he becomes "unredeemable." Interestingly, this question is by no means limited to sacred redemptions—we ask similar questions in secular contexts. Can a fraud, child molester, or murder be redeemed in the eyes of God—or, for that matter, in the eyes of the society in which he or she must live? What is Faust's greatest crime and is it against man or God? The answer to this question transforms throughout the legend material. For the earliest authors of the Faust texts, the character's transgressions are primarily against God, and it is through Him or a pious intercessory figure that redemption might be found. It is also in these early accounts that the first traces of the infernal Faust might be seen, particularly in the *Faustbuch*. In general, the Faust works of Hrosvit, Marlowe, and Spies either mimic or reverse the patterns of redemption seen in the Gospel accounts and suggested by Burke: sin, guilt, penance. Whether the character is redeemed or damned, however, is dependant upon the cultural mores that envelope the author and the text.

CHAPTER 2

SACRED REDEMPTIONS

Well that's it boys, I been redeemed! The preacher warshed away all my sins and transgressions. It's the straight-and-narrow from here on out and heaven everlasting's my reward!

–Delmar, *Oh Brother Where Art Thou?*

The Faust legends are relatively diverse, so it seems appropriate to acknowledge the similarities that unite these characters. The archetype precedes the “real” Faust by several centuries and is recognizable from a number of hagiographic tales, including those of Saints Basilus and Theophilus, whom Hrotsvit chose as her subjects in two of her legends. The Faust character began as the story of an apostate: a sinner who sells his soul to gain his desires.

In the earliest Faust texts, the relationship between culturally entrenched religious beliefs and the damnation or salvation of the Faust characters is fairly self-evident. These Fausts were often warnings to readers: Marlowe’s chorus solemnly notes that

Faustus is gone, regard his hellish fall,
whose fiendful fortune may exhort the wise
Only to wonder at unlawful things:
Whose deepness doth entice such forward wits,

To practice more than heavenly power permits. (5.3.5-9) Marlowe aptly reflects the Calvinist worldview that surrounded him, even if he ultimately attacks it. Herein lies the problem for texts concerned with the relationship between desire and apostasy. At what point does desire become a sin? For the early Faustus, especially those of Marlowe and Spies,⁵² the answer is simple: the desire becomes sin when Faust chooses to sign away his soul for Knowledge. As with the tree in the Genesis stories, the fruit of Faust's desire leads to his expulsion from Grace and his eventual violent death; the promises of Mephistopheles and the serpent are identical: the Knowledge of Good and Evil. As a result, these Fausts are irredeemable; not only did they surrender to desire, but both Marlowe and Spies make clear that Faust also surrenders his hope for Salvation, committing the mortal sin of *Tristitia*—despair. In each instance, Faust suffers both a physical and spiritual death, shrouded in dark violence.

Hrotsvit

As with all such generalities, we find exceptions to the story, particularly in the case of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim, whose work precedes that of Spies by some four hundred years and tends to have what can only be called a more optimistic approach to redemption. In this case, Hrotsvit falls squarely into opposition with Reformation Faust texts. Her texts (and, it would seem, her God through divine intervention) allow for redemption even after an act of apostasy—or even several acts of apostasy. Her religious worldview is far removed from Tertullian's damning

⁵² Johann Spies was not the author, who remains unknown, but the editor/publisher of the chapbook. In general, I will refer to the text simply as *Faustbuch*.

one. The redemptive action in both “Theophilus” and “Basilius” is rooted in a universal grace; that is, each story represents the willingness of God to forgive humans of sin—even apostasy. As Patricia Silber notes, Hrotsvit’s views on sin and God’s redemptive mercy are somewhat shaky theologically precisely because it is “boundless for those who repent” (190). Thus, Hrotsvit’s apparent acceptance of this rather Origenian notion is especially intriguing.

Eril Hughes points out that Hrotsvit was, nevertheless, quite familiar with Augustine doctrine and applied it in her texts, particularly with regard to the use and enjoyment of the world.

Hrotsvit’s primary method of using Augustinian distinction between enjoyment (loving something for its own sake) and use (employing something to obtain the eternal things which are truly worthy of love) appears in her characters who illustrate either incorrect enjoyment or correct use of the world. In many of Hrotsvit’s plays, the characters having excessive devotion to an earthly love exemplify the incorrect use of the world. (64)

Not surprisingly, this can also be seen in Hrotsvit’s legend material. The servant in “Basilius” surrenders his soul (albeit as a result of machinations by Satan) for the love of a beautiful woman, while Theophilus does the same for the want of a worldly (if religious) position. Both of these situations represent incorrect use of the world. One is founded in lust (“Basilius”) and the other in avarice (“Theophilus”).

Hrotsvit’s legends, though they precede the formation of the Faust myth itself, bear several similarities to the later works. The most obvious connection is

found in the *psychomachia* present in all of the Faust texts—the struggle between virtue and vice; in Hrotsvit’s case, the struggle is allegorical and between God and Satan. While in most cases, the struggle is engendered by an act of apostasy, it is here committed by Theophilus and Proterius’ servant, each of whom sells his soul in order to gain what he desires. Likewise, both texts contain a sacrificial body upon which penance can be paid for the redemption of Theophilus and the servant; this sacrificial body also appears repeatedly in later reworkings of the Faust legend. In Hrotsvit, moreover, a human or semi-divine figure (as in the case of “Theophilus”) acts as the conduit by which grace can be made manifest; this intermediary figure is required by Catholic orthodoxy which demands an intercessory figure between God and man. Like Christ, this figure may even find it necessary to sacrifice his or her corporeal or spiritual body.⁵³ One final element of the later Faust tales that is not to be found in Hrotsvit is the prohibition against love.

In “Basilus,” Hrotsvit weaves the tale of a young servant of an “honored” man, Proterius. Like many of the Faust characters that follow, Basilus is a man, a servant, who makes a pact with the devil, agreeing never to take communion again in exchange for the love of Proterius’ daughter, who would normally be far above his own station in life. As is frequent, however, Satan creates the servant’s plight as

⁵³ The intercessory figure who may have to risk violence and/or death is a notion still very familiar today. Take, for instance, the role of Father Karras in William Beatty’s *The Exorcist*, whose role is not altogether different from that of the “savior” mentioned in Chapter 1. Like the redemptive savior, this figure must allow him or herself to be made victim if necessary. Thus, in Beatty’s film, the very act of exorcism (which is fairly similar to what Basilus is doing in the legend) puts the body and spirit of the Priest at risk. *The Exorcist* so heavily relies on the potential for “infection” of the intercessory figure that it spawned a sequel (*Exorcist III*) following that very notion.

vengeance against Proterius' faith in God. This legend is, however, as much about the servant (who acts more as a catalyst to the plot than a "protagonist") and Satan as about Saint Basilius, who acts as the intercessory figure between the servant and God; he also proscribes the penance needed from the servant. Again, however, the servant is but a means to an end, because Satan's goal has a great deal more to do with Proterius than with the servant.⁵⁴ This is one way in which this particular story is so different from the Faust legends that will follow. Rather than the Faust figure (the servant, in this case) being the center of the story—the one sought by Satan—here he is a secondary figure at best.

As with many of the early Fausts, the servant seeks out the aid of a "magician" in order to gain his desires; in this case, he desires the love of a woman already committed to a convent by her father and who is, in any case, far outside his own station. The magician points out the source of his dilemma: "I don't believe I hold the power so bold/ to join a high-born lady as consort to her slave" (22). Claiming to lack the ability to overcome such odds, the magician suggests another tactic to the servant:

But if according to my way you're willing to obey
 The prince of eternal dark to whose commands I hark, Then he can
 quickly act and your desires grant
 If only nevermore Christ's name you will adore. (22)

⁵⁴ Proterius hoped that "[his daughter's] immortal soul/ Forever adorned would be With gems of perfect virginity" and, thus, kept her cloistered with other "virgins fair". She was, of course, in a convent.

This is the temptation scene typical to the legend, and it bears many similarities to the Faust legends that will follow it. Hrotsvit includes an intercessory figure between the future apostate and Satan; this figure, of course, is most recognizable as Mephistopheles, though in this case he is a daemonic magician, rather than a demon proper. As Marguerite de Huzar Allen notes in her *The Faust Legend: Popular Formula and Modern Novel*, the Faust stories tend to invert the patterns of the hagiographic tales. Thus, the existence of the intercessory figure makes perfect sense: the Mephistophelean figure acts as the perverse saint.

In the case of “Basilus,” the magician’s foil comes in two forms. First, the wife, upon suspicion that her servant husband had signed a compact with Satan, tears at her hair and laments her defiance of her father’s advice not to marry the servant. The violence she inflicts upon herself acts as a private penance and confession of her own sins. She then becomes the intercessory figure (and, thus, prefigures Basilus’ role) for her husband when she extracts the truth of his deeds from him and then seeks out the assistance of Bishop Basilus, who becomes the second intercessory figure. He advises the servant on how to redeem himself in the eyes of the Lord; in other words, Basilus prescribes the necessary penance. Once the servant’s wife entreats him to redeem himself, he seeks the assistance of Basilus, the bishop. Basilus, despite the servant’s despair of mercy,” tells him that

... You don’t need to dread

Your future, nor doubt that divine grace shall abound, Because God’s only
Son, the mildest judge of all,

Has never turned away a repentant sinner;

If you rue your sins, he will grant help. (26)

Basilus has the servant interred in a private cell, “so Christ he might implore and his enormous sins deplore” (26). The servant remains there for more than forty days, which is a standard period of fasting and penance.⁵⁵ As he is there for so long (several more days than forty-three; it may be equivalent to the forty-six days that make up the period of Lent), there is no doubt that Hrotsvit considers apostasy a significant sin; however, she also sees a God that will not turn away any sinner, regardless of deeds. We can see in her work a connection to Origen, who suggested similar themes.

Hrotsvit’s second Faust-type legend continues this universal love theme and follows the hagiographic pattern closely, even more so than “Basilus.” The Faust character in “Theophilus,” unlike “Basilus,” is the title character; it is over this good man, we are told, that the Devil becomes quite jealous:

But the savage enemy of all humankind soon came to loathe this patient soul, and with that same cunning with which he had erstwhile deceived out first parents, he assailed the inmost heart of this just man, bringing before his frail mind very often the quiet delights of his former position of influence and the heavy lot of the loss of prestige he had lately sustained. (163)

⁵⁵ Such as in Lent. The other two lengthy fasts on the liturgical calendar are the fast of Nativity (during Advent) and The Apostolic Fast, which begins after All Saint’s Day and continues through June 28.

Hrotsvit's position in regard to the former vicar is very clear even in this brief suggestion of the devil's machinations against him. Theophilus is "just" and "frail"; even the fall of Adam and Eve is treated with a light touch: they were deceived by the sinning of the devil, rather than "sinful." This light rhetorical touch reveals the stance of grace with which Hrotsvit approaches those sinners who can be redeemed.

Theophilus is a humble vicar at the start of the legend, who conducts himself "unassumingly toward his people" and is "gentle to all" (159). Hrotsvit reveals the worth of the vicar by noting that his door was always open to the needy. Thus, when the bishop dies, Theophilus is offered the opportunity to become the next bishop; he declines, "saying he was infected with many vices and was not fit to rule the holy people of Christ" (161). Apparently as a result of this protest, Theophilus is replaced as vicar by the new bishop. It is at this point, when Theophilus becomes idle and the devil begins to work a plan against the former vicar.

The foundation having been laid for Theophilus' susceptibility, Hrotsvit's legend next reveals a hagiographic perversion that is practically *de rigueur* for the Faust tales: a daemonic intercessory figure has to spur Theophilus to action.

At length the perverted wretch [Theophilus], in the blindness of his heart, sought out speedily a certain wicked Jew who had deceived many of the faithful by his magic fraud, and, falling before him and groveling at his feet, Theophilus pleaded amid tears for his wicked help. (163)

The rhetoric has radically changed now; rather than the pitiable, just victim of a devil's plot, Theophilus is now a "perverted wretch" with a heart consumed by envy.

As in “Basilus,” it is this kind of mad desire that makes possible the contract with the devil.

Theophilus’ release from the deed is not long in coming, as “Adorable Goodness touched this erring soul with a just fear” (167). Unlike the servant in “Basilus,” Theophilus has no human to intervene on his behalf; neither is he consumed by a psychological manifestation of guilt. Rather, Hrotsvit’s attributes (uniquely to the Faust material) Theophilus’ desire for mercy and release from his demonic bondage directly to *Divine* intervention. The Virgin Mary acts as his intercessory figure when he pleads for forgiveness, not a human being. Hrotsvit also dismantles her previous trope of the violence inflicted on the body in “Theophilus.” Rather than a scourge of demons attacking the sinner (or even the intercessory figure, as in “Basilus”), Theophilus performs very recognizable penances such as fasting:

Eight times in the space of five days he tarried [at the Temple of the Immaculate Virgin] weeping with contrite heart over his sins, satiating himself with bitter tears, denying himself every refreshment of dainty food, and very often the sweet rest of sleep in supreme effort of keeping watchful in his holy purpose. (169)

When Mary appears, she chastises him for his apostasy, allows him to confess and to lament, and successfully takes his case to the “Judge of all” (179). Her appeal is, of course, successful, and Theophilus is allowed to die in the grace of God, rather than under the power of the Devil.

Interestingly, there is no sacrificial body in “Theophilus.” The only *body* upon which violence is wrought externally is the body of Jesus, and the acts occur only in a story recounted by Mary, not for Theophilus himself; the demons leave Theophilus alone when he begins to crave repentance, which offers a striking contrast to the other legend materials. The description Mary provides is rhetorically similar to the one Hrotsvit recounts in “Basilus”:

...Who suffered for our sakes, to be afflicted with revilings and to be struck with buffetings and blows; and He suffered His sacred Back to be beaten with many scourgings and His beautiful face to be polluted with vile spittle....(177)

Unlike here, the servant in “Basilus” suffers physically for his own sins, “I can hardly bear the punishments of dark spirits,” he tells Basilus, “They beat men and tear me with continuous strokes, And besiege me ceaselessly with hard and heavy stones. Mostly they oppose me and bitterly reproach me because I came and of free will became one of theirs” (26).

Hrotsvit’s approach is significant for a number of reasons. First, she allows for grace and redemption in both cases, significant both as from an authorial theological perspective and in comparison to many of the later Faust tales.⁵⁶

Clearly, apostasy is a “forgivable” sin in Hrotsvit’s world view; moreover, as she reveals early in the text, Satan is “the author of all evil” in “Basilus” (21). While this description is a standard euphemism for Satan, it is of particular significance here as it partially absolves the sinner of responsibility for his sins. Thus the fact that this same trope appears in the beginning of Goethe’s *Faust* may serve as one

⁵⁶ This is also interesting biblically, as in the case of Simon Peter “denying Christ”.

identifying mark of the “forgiven” Fausts. Indeed, Hrotsvit’s treatment of the Devil is generally intriguing; he tends to be almost comically jealous of humanity and God. This trope is, of course, not especially unique; one can find comic devils virtually everywhere.⁵⁷ As Patricia Silber points out,

...Hrotsvit, whose plays are centered to such a degree on the contests between good and evil, would have drawn...on the view of the devil as a threatening but essentially comic figure made familiar by the mystery plays. This comic devil arrived from patristic writings and from the Apocrypha and is marked by a boastful aspiration to God’s throne and his ignorance of God’s plan for Redemption⁵⁸...They tempt people, but are frequently confused and inept as they go about it. They speak in rants couched in low or vulgar language. (178)

The devils of “Theophilus” and “Basilius” certainly seem to bear out Silber’s claim. Hrotsvit describes Satan of “Basilius” as a frustrated creature:

Like a lion he roared and in fury thus deplored...’Never do you stay faithful to me, you Christians, but as soon as I ordain your desire to obtain, then promptly you flee and to Christ take your plea. Me you desire and scorn after the gifts I had borne, and Full trust you embrace in Christ’s mercy and grace, because he’s willing to grant to those who repent His forgiveness sublime

⁵⁷ And, from the point-of-view of the Romantics in any case, the Devil can also be heroic—as in the case of Milton’s Satan in *Paradise Lost*.

⁵⁸ This is particularly striking in Goethe’s Faust.

regardless of the crime...Give me a note by your own hand wrought and I shall quickly act to show my might's effect. (23)

This Satan is not at all ignorant of the plans for Redemption; in fact, he is all too aware of them because he seems to be fulfilling the desires of humans only to have those same humans turn back to Jesus and beg for mercy, thus breaking the covenant Satan had with them. In an attempt (though it turns out to be a failed one) to prevent this from occurring again,⁵⁹ he insists on a contract that states the servant's intention to discard the word of God and communion. As it happens, this written contract is apparently quite useless in Hrotsvit's worldview. The Satan of "Theophilus" is not given to the ranting of the one in "Basilius"; instead, we see the slick flatterer described both as a serpent and "accursed deceiver." This Satan is somewhat more menacing than the openly defeated one encountered in "Basilius." The weakness of the characters is perhaps why redemption is so very possible within Hrotsvit's constructions (and that of Goethe): Evil is foolish; moreover, evil tells all of its foolish plans.⁶⁰ The Satan of "Basilius" openly reveals his inadequacies and still expects to rule in the end. In Hrotsvit's worldview, humans have no power over God's grace; thus, they cannot simply decide to forego it.

Her treatment of the forgiven apostate most closely resembles the Saint's Lives legends she was familiar with, and her vision of redemption a relatively

⁵⁹ It is intriguing that Hrotsvit's servant is allowed to keep what he bargained with the devil for—his wife.

⁶⁰ This is a trope that will recur throughout literature and film; Many of James Bond's great successes come as a direct result of the resident bad guy telling Bond everything he plans to do; hence, Bond is later able to foil those plans.

uncomplicated sacred one.⁶¹ Hrotsvit does not concern herself greatly with the stuff of politics and other forms of secularism that will become so important in the later Faust legend materials. One must be aware, however, that the very treatment of the forgiven apostate is radically altered in the years after Hrotsvit's legends; she preceded the man Faust by some five hundred years. She never knew of the legend material that would spring up about Faust.

The "historical" Faust (if such a man existed at all) is elusive at best. The generally accepted notions of his life are these: he was born in Knittlingen in or around 1480, and though no record exists of him having attended any university for formal education or training, he variously assumed titles of Doctor, Magister, and Commander of the order of the Knights of Saint John. His death remains as shrouded in mystery as his life, though it is believed that he died violently (perhaps as a result of an alchemical experiment gone awry) around 1540. The few firsthand accounts indicate that he was regarded as a "windbag, charlatan, rogue or pervert" (J. Williams 5).⁶²

⁶¹ Actually, there are political motivations in Hrotsvit's forgiving love; these will be dealt with in Chapter 4.

⁶² John Williams suggests that this one-sided view of Faust is, at best, problematic. "The very fact that Faust was so well known to his contemporaries is of some significance...; and anyone who was paid so generously for a horoscope by the Bishop of Bamberg...must have been more than a mere charlatan or traveling quack. Hans Henning suggests that Faust might have stood midway between the uneducated tricksters and the scholars of his time; and Mahal has suggested a psychological profile of Faust as an autodidact of humble origins, with all the insecurity and resentment of the self-made man...(5).

The accounts of his apostasy first begin to surface some forty years or so after his demise.⁶³ Williams notes that as the legend grew, Faust was endowed with the scholarly achievements and attributes of the likes of Paracelsus, Agrippa, and Nostradamus, as well as the pranks and troubles most commonly associated with Till Eulenspiegel in German legends. On the one hand, Faust is a “Renaissance Scholar, [and] the speculative seeker of truth beyond all scholastic or humanistic traditions”; on the other, he was a man who chose to attempt to claim “powers beyond those properly given to him [by God]” (J. Williams 6). The first longer work to approach the Faust legend on these terms was the infamous *Volksbuch* (chapbook), *Historia von D. Johann Fausten, dem weitbeschreyten Zauberer und Schwartzkünstler*,⁶⁴ edited and published by one Johann Spies in 1587.

Herein we encounter a fantastically different vision of redemption and the apostate. Spies’ *Faustbuch* sets down many of the traits readers recognize from later Faust texts: his “dissatisfaction with conventional scholarship; his pact in blood with the devil, or...his agent Mephistopheles; the master-servant relationship, to be reversed at the expiry of the twenty-four year term,” chief among them and

⁶³ Frank Baron cites the historical figure of Trithemius, a Renaissance magician, within the context of the Faust legend. He suggests that this magician, who advised the emperor at times, was central to the creation of the Faust legend. He wrote several tracts defending the arts of necromancy and magic as humanist, rather than diabolical. Indeed, he attacked the figure of Faustus as a Fraud. Though highly regarded in the courts during his lifetime, “later generations did not remember Trithemius’ arguments and pious distinctions. They remembered primarily his interest in magic, which, to be sure, was seen as diabolical; Trithemius became a servant of the devil...the enemy of Faustus became Faustus himself” (306)

⁶⁴ The English translation with which Marlowe would have been familiar was somewhat more pointed in its declaration of theme: *The Historie of the Damnable Life, and the Deserved Death of Doctor Iohn Faustus*

virtually “[obscuring] the historical Faust (Williams 7). *Historia* was, as with many of the Faust texts to follow, a condemnation of Faust’s activities. It claimed to “serve as a terrible example and well-meant warning to all arrogant, presumptuous and godless men—as well a cautionary tale to the faithful of the snares of the devil” (J. Williams 6).

As Allen notes, little about *Doctor Faustus* can be separated from Luther’s teachings, even the very structure of the text itself: “...Luther’s criticism of the saint’s legends, like his rejection of the Catholic cult of saints and of the Medieval Catholic concept of imitation, paved the way for the Faustian reversal of the saint’s life” (26). Not surprisingly, the content and “tenor” of the Faust books that immediately follow the Protestant Reformation are likewise influenced by Luther and, in particular, by his written works on magicians and the Devil. As such, *Faustbuch* manifests a number of striking differences from Hrotsvit’s legends—even in the apostasy scene, and the movement toward an inverted saint’s life legend (sinner’s life, if you will) is quite obvious in the *Faustbuch*. First, Faust rather actively seeks out the devil, rather than being the passive victim of daemonic machinations.

You haue heard before, that all *Faustus* minde was set to study the artes of Necromancie and Coniuration, the which exercise hee followed day and night: and taking to him the wings of an Eagle, thought to flie ouer the whole world, and to know the secrets of heauen and earth; for his Speculation was so wonderfull, being expert in vsing his *Vocabula*¹, Figures, Characters,

Coniurations, and other Ceremoniall actions, that in all the haste hee put in practise to bring the Diuell before him. (Chap. 2)

This Faust deliberately conjures the devil figure for the purpose of his own gain. Like the servant and Theophilus, the gain that Faustus seeks is highly personal; he seeks knowledge of the black Arts. This Faust also attempts to remain in control of the situation even at the moments of creating the contract. Rather than having the deal set out before him (as in *Hrotsvit*), Faust makes certain demands of Mephistopheles, including the strict obedience of the demon, the fulfillment of all Faust's desires, and absolute honesty in all answers (2). Faust was to sign (in blood of course) an oath surrendering the following:

First, that Doctor *Faustus* should giue himselfe to his Lord *Lucifer*, body and soule. Secondly, for confirmation of the same, he should make him a writing, written with his owne blood. Thirdly, that he would be anemie to all Christian people. Fourthly, that he would denie his Christian beleefe. Fiftly, that he let not any man change his opinion, if so bee any man should goe about to dissuade, or withdraw him from it. (Chap. 4)

This pact is far more detailed than that of "Theophilus," but is almost identical to the one in "Basilius." It appears, however, to be more binding, for when Faust attempts to break it, he finds it impossible—even long before his death. The viability of the oaths in *Hrotsvit*, on the other hand, is never in question—even Satan realizes how accessible forgiveness was to the sinners. In *Faustbuch*, though, Faust's momentary consideration of acting on his desire to marry (which would

have been in violation of the prohibition against love), makes manifest the following:

Sodainlie vpon these words came such a whirle-winde about the place, that *Faustus* thought the whole house would come down, all the doores in the house flew off the hookes: after all this, his house was full of smoke, and the floore couered ouer with ashes...he was taken and throwne into the hall, that he was not able to stir hand nor foote: then round about him ran a monstrous circle of fire⁶⁵, neuer standing still...Hereupon appeared vnto him an ougly Diuell, so fearefull and monstrous to beholde, that *Faustus* durst not looke on him. (Chap. 9)

For the first time in the Faust legends a frightening and threatening Devil appears. Though the servant in “Basilus” was stoned and pulled on by demons, there never appears a moment of doubt on Hrotsvit’s part that Basilus, the servant, and Jesus will persevere. This devil beats Faustus back into submission; no longer is there a semblance of Faustus’ control over his situation. Neither is there a suggestion of God’s intervention in the situation, such as is seen in “Theophilus.” This Faust figure is presented from the outset as unredeemable; he whines about his plight instead of asking forgiveness.

One important feature of *Faustbuch* is Faust’s end, which Marlowe echoes in his play. Faust does not simply die and fall into damnation, he is torn asunder by demons; what the demons were prevented from doing in “Basilus” through the

⁶⁵ This image is repeated in Goethe.

intervention of community prayer actually happens here.⁶⁶ Spies includes a warning to his readers, voiced by Faust and seconded by the narrator. *Faustbuch* concludes with an oration by Faust to his students regarding his transgressions; upon his departure from them, he is killed by the demons. Allen rightly suggests that the scene is a reversal of the Last Supper of Jesus wherein his betrayal and death are announced (23). Faust announces his own betrayals (the apostasy) and the coming of his violent death, which he cautions his students not to interfere with. He announces his fellowship with the devil in a final cautionary confession:

I beseech you let this my lamentable ende to the residue of your liues bee a sufficient warning, that you haue God alwayes before your eies, praying vnto him that he would euer defend you from the temptation of the diuell, and all his false deceipts, not falling altogether from God...visit earnestly and oft the Church, warre and striue continually agaynst the Diuell with a good and stedfast beliefe on God, and Iesus Christ, and vse your vocation in holiness...for I dye both a good and bad Christian; a good Christian, for that I am heartely sorry, and in my heart alwayes praye for mercy, that my soule may be deliuered: a bad Christian, for that I know the Diuell will haue my bodie, and that would I willingly giue him so that he would leaue my soule in quiet...(Chap. 63)

Faust's oration follows a predictable course in confessions: the confession of guilt, the acknowledgment of the need for penance, the warning to others, and the desire

⁶⁶ As Basilius leads the servant into the church, the demons "...[snatch] the man's left arm and [pull] with curses course the servant with great force" (27).

for forgiveness. This scene acts as a formal act of contrition and a confession—even a public humiliation of Faustus. Extraordinarily, he wills his body over to substantial pain—knowing or recognizing no hope for a different outcome. Lacking in this version of Faust is any sense that his desire for mercy will be granted by anyone other than the students to whom he directs his comments. Having forsaken God, Faust is left alone.

Faust's death scene is a violent anti-martyrdom. He cannot be a martyr, as he is a sinner, but his death is reminiscent of those remembered as martyrs, though he ends in Hell, rather than in heaven. It begins at midnight with a mighty wind reminescent of other violent struggles earlier in the text:

...with that the hall doore flew open wherein Doctor *Faustus* was, then he began to crie for helpe, saying: murther, murther, but it came foorth with halfe a voyce hollowly: shortly after they heard him no more. But when it was day, the Students that had taken no rest that night, arose and went into the hall in the which they left Doctor *Faustus*, where notwithstanding they found no *Faustus*, but all the hall lay besprinckled with blood, his braines cleaving to the wall: for the Diuell had beaten him from one wall against another, in one corner lay his eyes, in another his teeth, a pitifull and fearefull sight to beholde. (Chap. 63)

The students eventually find his mangled body upon a pile of horse dung. His ignoble death seals the contract *Faustbuch* begins with its readers: the witnessing of the punishment of such a transgression as apostasy. The devil is no longer the

frustrated imp or slick deceiver; he is violent, powerful, and scary as hell. The chapbook says little about the events in store for Faust in Hell, only that Satan lies when he tells him that it won't be as bad for him because he came willingly. The events of Faust's death, rather, foreshadow the violence that he will endure, and, by extension, the violence to be endured by anyone who dares to make a pact similar to Faust's.

Marlowe's play is clearly modeled on *Faustbuch*, as the endings are virtually identical. Yet, as critics have long pointed out, it is peculiar that Marlowe, given his own religious beliefs, appears to profess the chapbook's ideals. In fact, Marlowe seems to reengage one of the old debates regarding redemption: predestination. If anything, *Faustbuch* accepts the bid of predestination—Faust is narrated as hopeless (literally) from the beginning, but Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, written in an age of entrenched Calvinism, appears to be a not-so-subtle, if oft-misunderstood,⁶⁷ response to the doctrine of predestination. As David Riggs notes, "Divine justice was supposed to terrorize the reprobate into good behavior; yet the godless had ample reason to disbelieve in a God who had already condemned them to sin and damnation, regardless of their earthly conduct" (241). This reaction is one of the reasons that foreknowledge had to go hand-in-hand with predestination in Augustine; in order for Order to remain, God must have known who would do right and who would sin.

⁶⁷ I am guilty of this particular misreading too. When I first encountered Marlowe, I thought him a rather preachy punisher of the noble scholar. It is all too obvious now what the source of my problem was: I had read Goethe first.

Unlike *Faustbuch's* Faust, Marlowe's Faustus pleads for mercy, yet his cries go apparently unheard and certainly unanswered. In his final soliloquy, Faustus repeatedly cries out for forgiveness, only to be answered by the sound of the clock counting down the moments until his death.

The stars move still, time runs, the clock will strike:

The devil will come, and Faustus must be damned!

O, I'll leap up to my God! Who pulls me down?

See, see where Christ's blood streams in the firmament? One drop of blood will save me. O my Christ!—

Rend not my heart for naming of my Christ!

Yet will I call on Him! (5.2.150-156)

Marlowe's Faust dies unanswered. Whether this is a matter of his despair, his specific sin, or an uncaring God, has been the subject of much debate. Rowland Wymer describes the scene as one of abject abandonment:

Looking up, Faustus sees neither regions for the mind to wander in, nor the mercy of God, but only the relentless clockwork of the universe in which he is trapped. Like other tragic heroes, he is made subject to an order of nature which he can do nothing to alter. (510)

The final moments of Faust's existence seem to support the notion that Marlowe's play was a reaction to, rather than an advocate of, the Calvinist doctrine of Predestination. "If Marlowe was tilting at anything," remarks McAlindon, "it was at the harshness of Christian theology itself, especially as exaggerated by the

Reformation emphasis on human weakness and corruption” (219). Far from being diametrically opposed to Hrotsvit’s worldview, Marlowe seems to support her reading of Faust; for both authors, something is direly wrong in a world in which mercy has no place for all.

McAlindon suggests that such oaths as we see in Marlowe, Hrotsvit, and the other Faust tales can be taken lightly and even dismissed because “It was common knowledge that oaths and covenants ‘which promise to do evil and unlawful things’ are not binding; to respect them was judged as a double offence against God” (215). That the servant and Theophilus willingly broke the oath is testament to why both could be forgiven—they each held out hope for forgiveness. Neither of the Faustus in Marlowe and *Faustbuch* does so; consequently, they offended both in the act of apostasy itself and further in their failure to understand the Church’s teaching that such oaths are not binding.

Additionally, perhaps because it was meant for visual consumption than because of a recontextualization of the character of Faust, the violence in Marlowe’s play seems somewhat toned down from Spies. Gone from the death scene are the accounts of Faust’s blood and brains streaking the hallway. Audience members are instead told that “O, help us heaven, see here are Faustus’ limbs/ torn asunder by the hand of death” (5.3.6-7). Much of the violence in Marlowe’s text, such as the rending of Faust’s leg in 4.5, is quite farcical rather than awe-inspiring.

Nevertheless, Marlowe presents audiences with the first Faust *tragedy*. Gone is the corrective comedy of Hrotsvit, wherein Order is restored and redemption

succeeds. Too, the violent demise of Spies' Faust can hardly be understood as tragic; the chapbook never allows its readers the necessary sympathy for Faust. Marlowe does. Marlowe makes this story tragic; as McAlindon reminds us, "one must also acknowledge that Faustus' repeated failures to win God's mercy do communicate the sense of a relentless and cruel fate, and the whole Christian concept of eternal damnation is exposed by Marlowe in all its horror" (219). The doctrine of predestination so central to Calvinism as well as the focus on a God-centered grace by the Reformation in general forces Marlowe's Faust into damnation. His misreading of Scripture, his flaws (which are all too human—pride, lust) lead to the inevitable conclusion of his damnation. McAlindon remarks that "a sense of cruel fatality hangs over this tragedy whose hero originally seemed so clearly responsible for what happened to him" (216). If beholden to grace alone, asks the play, this is what will happen to those for whom there is none?

Sacred redemptions of the sort found in these episodes of the Faust legend tend to be focused on (even if they are meant as warnings) the relationship between God and the individual. These Fausts are not yet allegories of humankind, as will be later manifestations of the figure will be. Secular redemptions, on the other hand, tend to be conceived with the division and reconciliation of the individual and the community in mind. A secular focus does not necessarily suggest that a text is a-religious or anti-religious; rather, as later Faust texts demonstrate, religious connotations of redemption shift back toward the early social ones, such as those concerned with marriage, maternity, and slavery, and the changes appear to mirror

more fundamental societal transformations, particularly in terms of the relationship between man, science, and religion and between genders.

CHAPTER 3

SECULAR REDEMPTION AND THE MOTHER

Do you know how it races around us in a great spiral, getting closer and closer?
And unless I'm mistaken, an eddy of fire follows closely wherever it goes.
(Goethe 31)

Readers familiar with the Faust legends had to know something was amiss when the poodle strolled in. Like the devils of Hrotsvit's legends, Goethe's Mephistopheles tends toward the ridiculous, and, as with Hrotsvit's sinners, Faust is ultimately redeemed. However similar their devils and the outcomes of their sins, the texts are quite different in their approach to redemption and its relationship to the divine. Redemptions such as those found in Goethe, Byron's *Manfred*, and Shelley's *Frankenstein* are highly secular. They are concerned less with God, mercy, and despair than with psychology, responsibility, and power, and the penances paid are reflective of this change; rather than prayer and fasting such as we see in Hrotsvit, the penances in this later group of Faust narratives are largely domestic. Ira Levin also treats the Faust legend in *Rosemary's Baby* rather secularly, though religion is touched upon tangentially. Neither Rosemary nor Guy Woodhouse is particularly religious; in fact, the primary religious source of story is Roman Castavet and his fellow worshippers of Satan. The only other religious

icon⁶⁸ to appear in either Levin's novel or Polanski's film version is the Pope who arrives in New York at a point at which Rosemary cannot see him at the stadium herself but is forced to merely watch his image on television.

These changes would appear to shift the framework of redemption back from religion to a socio-legal one. We can see examples of this usage particularly well when we study literature that considers the slave trade. Phillis Wheatley's challenge to "Christians" in America in her poem "On Being Brought from Africa to America" strongly voices both sacred and secular notions of redemption: "Once I redemption neither sought nor knew/...Remember Christians, Negroes black as Cain/ May be may be refined, and join the Angelic train."⁶⁹ Wheatley uses the terms in a wonderful double entendre here: the sacred redemption as part of her burgeoning Christianity and the secular one in her release from the bondage of slavery by John and Susannah Wheatley. Oedipus' redemption from exile by Theseus would also be an appropriate example.

Secular redemption can be best understood in light of two interpretive strategies. Firstly, as with Marlowe, this redemption is best understood within the context of the text and the world in which it is conceived. Goethe and the English Romantics lived in a far more secular period than did Marlowe or, of course, Hrotsvit. The Faust figures simply modeled the paradigmatic shifts that had given the secular world increased importance over the religious in everyday matters; this

⁶⁸ And he is treated iconically, not really as a discrete human.

⁶⁹ From *The Bedford Introduction to Literature*. Michael Meyer, ed. 7th edition. 2005.

shift can be seen most easily in the focus on the formation of a utopia in Goethe's second part of *Faust* and in Shelley's concern with social justice in *Frankenstein*. Each of the Faust figures in this chapter have unique redemptions: Goethe's "Old Man" shows him mercy in the end; Shelley's Victor, whose world is fundamentally devoid of God, finds no redemption, despite the number of sacrifices made in the novel; Byron's Manfred overcomes the spirit world through his own Will to do so; finally, Levin's Rosemary becomes mother to the Anti-Christ in the most oblique reversal of hagiography to date, particularly in its treatment of Rosemary as Mary.⁷⁰

Like the texts above, Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "Yellow Wallpaper" can best be understood as a secular redemption; as Greg Johnson⁷¹ suggests, it is madness formed in opposition to social codes of the day (which prescribed intellectual and physical rest for treatment of post-partum depression) that "redeems" the narrator. Clearly, if insanity is redemptive for this woman, then it is redemptive in her secular—not sacred—world; The text is, in fact, devoid of religion. Gilman's female protagonist post-partum depression eventually manifests itself as the psychosis she endures at the well-meaning hands of her hyper-rational husband John. She describes herself in her first-person narration as a woman trapped: by class, by convention, by expectations. Even in her madness, she remains constrained by

⁷⁰ As roses were often used to signify Mary, she is in fact a double Mary, which is intriguing in light of the reversals of the Marian hagiography that exist otherwise in Levin's novel. Many thanks to Katharina Wilson for pointing this out.

⁷¹ After Susan Gubar and Sandra Gilbert in *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*.

societal demands: “I am getting angry enough to do something desperate. To jump out of the window would be admirable exercise, but the bars are too strong to even try” (262). The physical window bars represent those very societal expectations that she resists within the text: suicide, madness, and writing (only at the behest of the treatment).

She is further trapped by the hideous yellow wallpaper plastered up in the room in which she is kept “for her health.” Johnson rightly points out the feminist allegory involved in the story—the madness frees her to write without boundaries and from the bands of society. She “willingly accepts madness over repression, refusing a life of unhappy, silent repression” (522). Yet, it remains in the end that she is mad—she becomes animal-like in the final moments—either a bug when she is “creeping” around the room or a snake as she “can creep smoothly on the floor” (262). With the sole exception of her ability⁷² to record her thoughts, she is dehumanized in the end of the story. While the themes certainly exemplify secular redemption—there is no return to God or a divine figure—the analysis of insanity as redemptive is troubling, though it is a common way of understanding literary madness (Mann’s Adrian Leverkühn is an excellent example). Her dehumanization seems antithetical to redemption; she is still trapped—only now psychologically instead of physically and socially. However, madness in Gilman text (as in Mann)

⁷² It is noteworthy that each her psychosis tends to worsen after she has not written for a period. This underscores Jane’s reticence to heed John’s warnings regarding social and intellectual stimulation in the first place; every time she stops writing, her symptoms get worse.

acts as redemption of the *g'f* type, as it is restorative: only in madness is the narrator's freedom to act restored to her.

The narrator's plight is not entirely unique in the texts examined in this chapter. In fact, if one additional theme threatens to overwhelm the secular redemptive thread, it is the negative vision of motherhood; as with the inversion of Mary in Levin and the post-partum psychosis present in Gilman, each of the Faust texts presents an unnatural mother who sharply contrasts with the hagiographic image of the Virgin. Gretchen commits infanticide, and Victor becomes a mother even as Shelley's remaining "potential mothers" are denied the chance to procreate. Byron presents a beautiful, though ultimately weak, mother in the Witch of the Alps, while Levin's Rosemary stands as an inverted Mary who simultaneously manages to be the most stereotypically "natural" mother of the group.

I suspect that there are several reasons for the repetition of motherhood in the secular tales, but, they are at the very least a secular reprisal of Marian hagiography and part of the tradition of inversion seen in the earliest of the Faust tales. The shift in the treatment of the Mary figure (she was a figure of divine intercession in earlier texts) mirrors the changes that followed the Protestant Reformation. The Marian-figures of later Faust works are sympathetic, if troubled. They are unwaveringly human, which befits the tendency in Protestant Reform to reject what was perceived as "too much veneration...almost idolatrous worship" of Mary by the Roman Catholic Church. Reformists rejected any "deification" of Mary,

attempting to use her as a figure of excellent womanhood. Luther remarked in his 1531 Christmas Sermon that

She is the] highest woman and the noblest gem in Christianity after Christ ...
 She is nobility, wisdom, and holiness personified. We can never honor her
 enough. Still honor and praise must be given to her in such a way as to injure
 neither Christ nor the Scriptures. (Sermon, Christmas 1531).

This remark neatly summarizes the way that Mary came to be imagined in the post-Reformation period. Thus, the women of the Faust legends eventually inverted even this shift.

Reading redemption—and Mary—in a secular light is by not meant to suggest that the texts are devoid of religion, however; Goethe's, in particular, is not. Readers meet God in the prologue as he and Mephistopheles make their wager on Faust, mirroring the biblical story of Job. The ways of understanding the relationships between fiction and religion were changing; Lessing and Goethe make this abundantly clear. We can, indeed, consider the presence of redemption here in light of the desires that preceded its conversion to a religious effect: correction of social order. Yet, as Wheatley's poem suggests, we may, indeed, see both sacred and secular forms within a single text, thus transforming both religious and social orders.

Transforming Faust

Critical tradition rightly suggests that after Lessing, Goethe had to redeem Faust. However, the length of time it took for him to complete the text is testament

to the careful weaving that Goethe undertook in order to provide Faust with his end. Goethe's Faust is not, as we have seen, the first of his kind to find redemption; Hrotsvit's Theophilus and the servant had already accomplished that great feat. Indeed, Lessing had clearly intended for the same to happen, but as Klaus Berghahn remarks, "[m]aybe it is blessing for German literature that Lessing finished his *Nathan der Weise* instead of his *Faust*, and that he left the Faust myth for Goethe to work on" (13). The body of Goethe's work took some sixty years to complete, making a massive depository of intellectual growth and transformation. His *Faust* reveals Goethe's growing discomfort with the initial celebration of constant striving.

The transformation of Faust from the being found in Spies and Marlowe to the one found in Goethe is a fairly complicated path.⁷³ As we have already seen, the *Faustbuch* was translated into English in or around 1588. Shortly thereafter, Marlowe produced his tragedy. Both of these texts, in various garbled forms, made their ways back to the continent, where they became a part of the puppet-play tradition. It is unlikely that Goethe knew the Spies text directly, as it appears to have been unknown to eighteenth-century audiences. Williams argues that Goethe "appears to have read Marlowe's play for the first time only in 1818, long after the publication of Faust I" (16).

⁷³ A more complete account of this movement can be found in Berghahn's essay and John Williams' book.

By the time Lessing and Goethe approached the Faust myth, it had fallen into what might be called decay.⁷⁴ According to Williams, the image of Faust had reached such a point that when

Moses Mendelssohn [heard] that his friend Lessing [was] planning a drama on the subject of Faust, [wrote] to him in disbelief, promising himself great amusement at Lessing's discomfiture when the sophisticated theatergoers of Leipzig burst into Laughter at the very mention of the words "O Faustus! Faustus!" (13).

The Faust figure had become a merely ridiculous product intended for the masses; nevertheless, Goethe's work would attempt to rehabilitate Faust as a grand figure of German myth. In this instance, we can see a highly secular "redemption" of the figure of Faust, who had transformed from a cautionary figure to laughingstock.

The publication of Goethe's *Faust* once again shifts the image of the Faust character and turns him into an allegory for "universal man." The significance of these changes cannot be understated; each successive period reinvented the Faust figure;

⁷⁴ This entirely depends on how one views art. Is it, as suggested by notion of Faust's "fall," a product not meant for widespread consumption, or is it meant for the edification of all? The marionette tradition of the Faust myth did not die out completely, however. In 1994, a South African troupe, the Handspring Puppet Company, under the direction of William Kentridge staged "Faustus in Africa" and met with acclaim. Kentridge's notes describe Faust as an intermediary between cultures and cultural assumptions :

All this with the aim of finding a place where the play ceases to be a daunting other - the weight of Europe leaning on the Southern tip of Africa - and becomes our own work. The lexicon of images gave us the starting point to develop the characters, the settings, the interactions of the scenes of the play.(...) This world of images became the bedrock in which to test the idealism of Goethe's Faust against the rather more earthy materialism of colonial Africa. To see if a riposte could be given to Hegel's high handed dictum (written at the same time that Goethe was writing his Faust) that "after the pyramids, World Spirit leaves Africa, never to return."

each time, he wears the religious and ethical codes of his day. In the space between Hrotsvit and Goethe, the figure moves from cautionary to tragic to comical and finally to mythic.

This territory (and most others on Goethe, for that matter) has been extensively covered before, and I do not wish to simply restate what has been said already. So, let us return to the problem at hand. When Goethe takes on Faust in the aftermath of Lessing, he inherits a mythological figure that has become fodder for puppet-plays and has already been reconfigured by Lessing as a mythical hero. Passion, especially for knowledge, “had to be vindicated” (Berghahn 12). Goethe could do no less than follow Lessing’s lead. As Berghahn notes, “...Goethe already knew from Lessing’s fragments [that] Faust could no longer be condemned in a secular age like that of the Enlightenment, when Hell had lost its chill and the devil its sting” (18). Readers familiar with Goethe can see the ways in which redemption shifts back onto secular grounds. However, since Goethe himself includes a God figure in the opening scene, a voice of God at the end of the Gretchen sequence, and angels in the end, religion can hardly be considered as vanquished in Goethe. How then can we understand secular redemption through him?

As in Hrotsvit, the God of Goethe is a forgiving one. As Goethe notes in a letter to K.E. Schubarth, he notes that “You felt correctly about the ending of the play. Mephistopheles is only allowed to win half the wager, and when the other half of the guilt rests with Faust, then the Old Man can use his right of grace to the merriest of endings” (qtd. in Berghahn 18). The comment announces one of the

most obvious changes made in Goethe; no longer is there merely an oath committed to paper and penned in blood. Instead, we find two wagers: God and Mephistopheles then Faust and Mephistopheles.

The first wager is perhaps the most surprising. Mephistopheles suggests "...You'll lose him yet/ if You grant me permission/ to guide him gently down my road" (10). God agrees to Mephistopheles' wager, remarking that "...a good man, in his groping intuition,/ is well aware of what's his proper course" (11). The old man is highly optimistic, and the angels around him constantly sing his praise. Put simply, if Mephistopheles fails, he must return to heaven to be—in effect—a laughingstock. What a transformation of character! Goethe's Mephistopheles simultaneously embodies both the seducer of "Theophilus" and the fool of "Basilius," making him the most developed devil we have encountered so far.

As with all such wagers, however, the shadow of Job cannot be overlooked. In Job, as in Goethe, God and the Devil come together in a wager over a human being. In the case of Old Testament Job, it is his faith that is tested in a series of horrific personal losses and other trials. Much like Goethe's God and Mephistopheles, the same figures in Job seem to have a good rapport; it is God who points out Job to Satan. Apparently jealous, Satan responds with "Does Job fear God for nothing? Have you not put a fence around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But stretch out your hand now, and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face" (Job 1: 9-11). Twice God and Satan come to

wager over Job, and twice Satan obeys the requirements of the wager: in the first that he not harm Job himself, and in the second that he not kill Job. Though the wagers are largely ignored by the end of the book, Job's Satan appears to be a model for the more fully realized Mephistopheles, particularly in their respect for the rules of the wager.

Likewise, both Job and Faust are eventually redeemed. Job's redemption is a very secular one, as he is restored to his previously held land and wealth. Yet, Faust can hardly be seen as a Job figure, despite the similar wagers. Faust, unlike Job, enters into his own wager with Mephistopheles. Job may appear to seek knowledge in the disputations, but he also acknowledges by the end of the text that he needs no such knowledge nor should he have demanded it: "Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know" (Job 42:3). Goethe's *Faust*, on the other hand, subverts Job's failure to desire knowledge by redeeming Faust precisely because he is a seeker.

The second wager, between Mephistopheles and Faust, is somewhat more typical of the Faust material. In this instance, Mephistopheles suggests (seduces?) the general emphasis of the pact: "I'll bind myself to serve you *here*, be at your beck and call without respite; and if or when we meet again *beyond*, then you'll do the same for me" (43). The terms he lays out are clear: they will switch master/slave roles upon the end of Faust's life. It is Faust, however, who both clarifies the deal and adds the most significant terms:

If on a bed of sloth I ever lie contented,
 may I be done then and there!
 If ever you, with lies and flattery,
 can lull me into self-complacency
 or dupe me with a life of pleasure,
 may that day be the last for me! (44)

Though the pact is signed, as always, in Faust's blood, his pact is unique because it explicitly acknowledges Mephistopheles' power to deceive. Up to this point, only the narrative voice in *Faustbuch* seemed aware of the possibility of deception by the devil figure. And, of course, Mephistopheles has the first pact with God to consider as he challenges Faust. Heinrich Faust is attentive enough to realize Mephistopheles' power over him and gives the respect due the demon in their pact for Faust's soul.

Alan Cotrell analyzes *Faust*, rightly I think, as a meditation on the balance between reason and imagination. There is a God figure in *Faust*, an affable and optimistic teacher who gladly wagers with the charming spirit of Mephistopheles. And, it is Mephistopheles who first voices the troubles with reason; these are the very troubles we find Faust struggling with in his dry, dusty study. "Reason, Mephisto implies, is used by man to justify perversity. The argument was a powerful one at the time, for the Enlightenment had enthroned '*la raison*' as the crowning attribute of human beings" (Cotrell 243). Reason works well until it fully

supplants an emotional and imaginative life, Goethe seems to argue in *Faust*.

Cotrell remarks that

Goethe does not wish to ridicule intellect or understanding... Were we to abandon intellect, we would slide into a swamp of superstition, emotion, wild fantasy, and the like. In its proper context intellectual thinking is the cornerstone of the edifice of culture which rises above such a swamp. It is only when intellect is enthroned to the exclusion of what Goethe calls “*Vernunft*,” and to the exclusion of imagination and love, that other faculties atrophy through negligence. We then run the risk of forgetting why we built the edifice in the first place. It was to house human beings, to provide room for the cultivation of higher faculties and the practice of higher arts. If man forgets this, an imbalance occurs. (246)

Indeed, this is exactly what Part I of *Faust* seems to bear out as Faust swings between the hyper-rational self who gets mortally stuck on translating the first phrase of the gospel of John and the free-spirited imp who unwittingly seduces Gretchen into madness.

The first of these symbolizes the worst of the Enlightenment, wherein imagination gave way to reason; the second is the worst of the Romantics when nature (which is uncontrollable) asserts its dominance. Part Two of *Faust*, contends Cotrell, exemplifies this dual mode after Faust’s grief over Gretchen’s madness is assuaged:

The whole problem now lies on a deeper level, for on the face of it the purposes are altruistic: dikes, fertile land wrested from watery chaos, canals, settlements, civilization, a new order, a new society...The ends are noble, inspiring. Yet, precisely because the vision and the thought behind it are monumental, the error of self-deception carries with it the potential for monumental catastrophe as well. (248)

In addition to his previous sins, Faust's willingness to engage the use of murder and Mephistopheles' magic ultimately puts him in a precarious position—no matter how noble the ends he tries to meet are.

And noble do they appear to be. Repeatedly in *Faust*, our hero is confronted by social forces that lead him to violence. In the first instance, the infamous Gretchen tragedy, three acts of murder condemn the lovers and almost drive Faust into the waiting arms of Mephistopheles. In the first two murders, the violence cannot redeem through sacrifice; it can only condemn Gretchen and Faust. Gretchen's mother is inadvertently killed by the concoction brewed by Faust to help her mother sleep more soundly; her death weighs heavily on Gretchen; the spirit (which may also be her conscience) asks her if she is "...now praying for your mother's soul,/ that by your fault is gone to long, long agonies⁷⁵" (97). Valentine, Gretchen's soldier-brother, is the second victim and dies in a ridiculous parody of a duel between himself and Faust. Perhaps the folly of duals is meant to be addressed; whatever the events that drove the men to dual (in this case Faust's use of Gretchen)—one will not walk away. Mephistopheles, displaying a level of

⁷⁵ Because her sudden death precluded Extreme Unction for her.

violence recognizable from Marlowe's ugly demon and the ranting threats of the devil in "Basilius," slows Valentine's draw, causing the young man to cry out "It is like fighting with the devil! And what is this, my hand is becoming numb" (95). The Demon then commands Faust (already we can see the break down of the master/slave dialectic that they had previously agreed on) to slay the hampered soldier. Clearly Faust would not have been able to defeat Valentine without supernatural intervention; his clever knowledge would not have sufficed.

The third example is the death and redemption of Gretchen. Having committed infanticide by drowning her child by Faust, she loses her sanity. Unlike Gilman's protagonist, Gretchen's madness is anything but redemptive. She calls upon Faust to save their dead child from the waters in which she drowned/baptized him. Faust fears the mad woman in the cellar and refuses, promising instead to free her from her cell: "If pleas and reasons are of no avail,/ I'll carry you away against your will" (118). Only Gretchen seems aware that the bars of the cell are not what trap her—it is, instead, the madness itself.

Goethe reveals the sacred inclination of his redemptions in the death of Gretchen. In spite of her madness, she cries out longingly for "Divine justice, in you I place my trust" (119). She longs for order and control and, as do the heroes of the Hrotsvit legends; she cries out for mercy, but is willing to accept whatever God wills. In a strong foreshadowing of Faust's demise, Mephistopheles predicts wrongly that Gretchen will be judged and condemned, only to be corrected (laughingly, one might suppose) by an angelic voice singing "She is saved." In fact,

much of the Gretchen tragedy foreshadows what will happen to Faust in the end of Part Two.

The love Faust shares with Gretchen “will temporarily give his life the focus and meaning that it had lacked,” remarks Jane Brown in her interpretive study of *Faust* (94). However briefly, Faust is freed of his obsessive rationalism; at the same time, he is diseased by obsessive lust. Brown further notes a specific temptation for Faust in the Gretchen tragedy when she refuses to leave her cell, saying “I so much like to be here where you are staying” (116). This is almost precisely the terms Faust sets forth in his wager with Mephistopheles. “...The desire to strive must overcome the desire to tarry or Faust will be damned” (Brown 102). Thus, Faust’s otherwise heartless refusal to stay with Gretchen becomes a part of his own salvation; he must forgo the comforts of Gretchen’s love in order to continue seeking.

Faust Two, which is most readily understood as the uniting of Classical and Modern art and thought in the marriage of Helen and Faust, reveals a second series of problematic means and ends. As Cotrell suggests, Faust’s eventual redemption is an uncomfortable one at best. In the course of both parts of *Faust*, he has no obvious qualms about using Mephistopheles’ magic in order to gain his desires (which are many). The most noble of these desires is the utopian community that Faust envisions. Faust scoffs at Mephistopheles’ suggestions of palatial comfort as that which intrigues him; indeed, readers can easily understand that those very palaces would have been the end for Faust—their comforts designed to stop his

seeking. Instead, Faust reveals that “the ocean far below attracted my attention;/ it surged and rose to towering heights;/then it abated, scattering its waves...” (257).

Faust recognizes the opportunity to wage war on chaos and despotism (the second of which is a familiarly Romantic tendency). He gladly enlists Mephistopheles to aid with his magic in order to achieve his end, willing, even, to commit murder as necessary. His actions are so unworthy that he is finally struck blind by Care, one of several allegorical characters in the drama. So, why is Faust redeemed?

Even considering God’s rather jolly behavior in the Prologue, this seems out of place; however, it is precisely his constant striving that saves him now as it did at the moment of Gretchen’s pleading. The wager he made with Mephistopheles is upheld and allows his redemption; even the mercy of the Old Man is ultimately irrelevant in the face of the pact. No longer is the oath treated as a dangerous subjugation of religion; now it is to be honored and fulfilled—irrespective of intent or the being with which the wager was made. Faust is redeemed because the pursuit of intellect is enough to warrant salvation. No penance and no confession; there is only a quest to know that saves Faust. In many ways, Goethe’s Faust avoids the *psychomachia* of the previous incarnations of the figure. His quest for knowledge is granted nobility from the Prologue in Heaven, so the struggles between virtue and vice—most clearly present in the Gretchen sequence—are muffled. As Susan von Rohr Scaff points out,

the God of Faust understands that human beings must ‘strive’ to avoid capitulation yet will fall into sin with every effort. This insight, along with

God's confidence in Faust, mitigates our denunciation of Faust's arrogant destructiveness. (158)

Byronic Heroes and Faustian Bargains: Faust in England

Goethe was not the only Romantic figure fascinated with Faust; Lord Byron and Mary Shelley each explore the myth in more or less secular and highly Romantic ways. Certainly, traces of the Faust legend are by not as prevalent as those of Prometheus in the English Romantic tradition, but they are still present.⁷⁶ Neither Byron's nor Shelley's Faustian figures commit apostasy at least in part because they do not strongly reference a god whom they could deny or repent to anyway.

Byron and Shelley both approach redemption without consideration of a god-figure. In the case of Shelley, the possibility of redemption (and even the failure to achieve it) is both personal and social: Victor symbolizes the hyper-rationality and hyper-romanticism that leads to the destruction not only of him but of his domestic society. His attempts to subvert the female in birthing mirror her own anxieties of procreation.⁷⁷ Justice is horrifically polluted and only partially restored in her novel; the domestic world is left in chaos. However, redemption is found, though not for Victor, but for his double: Walton. Victor confesses his transgressions to Walton

⁷⁶ Shelley's subtitle (*The Modern Prometheus*) connects the novel directly to the Promethean myth, and Byron wrote his poem "Prometheus" the same summer he penned "Manfred." And while Byron's *Manfred* is more significant as a Prometheian text than a Faustian one, it is an interesting a unique approach to the Faust legend and therefore of interest here.

⁷⁷ Not only the death of her mother shortly after Mary Shelley's birth, but the serious difficulties she had encountered in childbearing herself. Of her five pregnancies, only one child survived into adulthood.

and encourages him to abandon the isolation that has consumed him (symbolized by the ice-locked ship). Byron's Manfred is equally secular, but in the spirit of the Byronic Hero, his will (rather than, say, an external monster or a confession) is the force that overcomes and redeems Manfred of his sins; he needs no god or spiritual being to intercede on his behalf. He takes from the Promethean myth the rebellion against the authority of Zeus, and the quest to take the flame (better understood as knowledge for the Romantics) to humanity. Prometheus exemplifies the human ability to overcome an authoritative spirit world. Likewise, Byron takes the image of rebellion partially from *Faust*.⁷⁸ James Thompson notes that

From Faust Byron takes limitless aspiration but rejects the idea of a voluntary compact with evil. It is the potentiality of the human will that fascinates and haunts him. In Satan Byron finds the myth of ultimate rebellion...[and] a symbol of the human condition. (407)

⁷⁸ Leslie Marchand, among others, in fact dismisses the influence of Goethe's *Faust* on Byron's Manfred, remarking that "the ways in which Byron departed from the Faust story are more striking than the resemblances" (qtd. in Klapper 67). Klapper offers an excellent, if dated, overview of those who agree with Marchand's assessment. Indeed, in the wake of some of the (primarily German) suggestions that Byron had simply appropriated *Faust* into English, Byron defends his play in a letter to John Murray, writing "Many thanks for the Edin[burgh] R[evue] which is very kind about Manfred—and defends its originality—which I did not know anybody had attacked.—*I never read*—& do not know if I ever saw—the 'Faustus of Marlow'...but I heard Mr. [Monk] Lewis translate verbally some scenes of *Goethe's Faust* (which were some good and some bad) last Summer—which is all I know of the history of that magical personage..." (Byron 268). The determination to deny Goethe's influence seems a tad disingenuous on Byron's part—and Marchand's, perhaps—given the rather striking similarities in character. Klapper provides an excellent overview of the similarities, some of which are discussed herein. There are far more similarities between Byron and Goethe than Byron and Marlowe, and Byron dismisses any notion of a Marlovian or Goetheian influence in a letter to John Murray dated October 23, 1817, saying "'...which I never read nor saw...The devil may take both the Faustus's, German and English—I have taken neither" ("Letters" 270).

Byron's vision of Faust is far more human-centered, and thus secular, than any that preceded it. While Goethe's Heinrich was rescued by *Mater Gloriosa* and Gretchen, Manfred has only himself for salvation. Moreover, there is no attempt to blame the spirit world for leading Manfred into a path of "sin"; he accuses himself only.

The first lines of *Manfred* read as if they simply translate the opening lines of the scene in which readers meet Faust the study.⁷⁹ In both cases, numbness pervades the speech of the Faust figure. Manfred decries what knowledge lacks for him, that

Sorrow is Knowledge: they who know the most
Must mourn the deepest o'er the fatal truth,
The Tree of Knowledge is not that of Life.
Philosophy and science, and the springs
Of Wonder, and the wisdom of the World,
I have essayed, and in my mind there is
A power to make these subject to itself—
But they avail not... (125)

Byron makes clear that like Goethe's Faust, his Manfred is a seeker of knowledge, though that knowledge ultimately brings melancholy. Goethe's Faust decries the same melancholia by remarking that he has

⁷⁹ In fact, parts of the texts were so similar, that Goethe initially accused Byron of something akin to plagiarism. As Ulrich Wesche notes, "Goethe's reaction upon reading Byron's *Manfred* was a mixture between astonished admiration and half-concealed annoyance" (286). Indeed, Byron had not read Goethe's *Faust*, and claimed that he did not know German at all. As it happened, Monk Lewis had, over the course of weeks, translated much of it orally to Byron, hence his partial familiarity with the text.

...studied now, to my regret
 Philosophy, Law, Medicine,
 And—what is worst—Theology
 From end to end with diligence.
 Yet here I am, a wretched fool
 And still no wiser than before...
 I may well know more than all those dullards,...
 Be unbothered by scruples of doubts
 And fear neither hell nor its devils—
 But I get no joy from anything either. (13)

For each man, the failure of Knowledge to provide joy is troubling, and each turns away from worldly knowledge to that to the spirit world (which may also symbolize aspects of their own minds). Faust, desiring greater knowledge, turns to magic and invokes the Earth Spirit, whose arrival immediately strikes fear into the once-boastful scholar: “Alas, I lack the strength to face you” (16). Likewise, Manfred turns to the spirit world, seeking Oblivion, but he does not call upon them with promises such as “My heart is now completely yours!/Obey, Obey although my life should be the price (Goethe 16). Instead, Manfred demands the arrival of the sprits, calling “Ye shall not elude me!/... I do compel ye to my will,--Appear!” (126).

Unlike Faust, Manfred has control over the spirits who feed his desires. When Manfred confesses his lost love to the Witch of the Alps, she suggests, in a Mephistophelean fashion, that he “...swear obedience to my will, and do/ My

bidding..." (141). Manfred refuses, castigating her for the notion that he might willingly "...be the slave/ Of those who served me" (141). Likewise, when confronted with death, Manfred stares down all who would try to control him by Spirit.

In a reversal of earlier Faust legends, Manfred offers his body to be torn limb-from-limb rather than be subject to the intellectual will of the Spirits.

Nor will I hence, while I have earthly breath
To breathe my scorn upon ye—earthly strength
To wrestle, though with spirits;

What ye take shall be ta'en limb by limb. (158)

In previous versions of the legend, Faust may very well be aware of what is in store for him (and this seems particularly true of Marlowe) at the end of his life, but this Faust calls on it to happen rather than simply submitting. In the first instance, the rending of the body is a punishment meant to symbolize what will happen in Hell; in the second, the rending is a physical manifestation of a mental struggle of Will. As it happens, Manfred succeeds in fending off the Spirits, crying out that "The Hand of Death is on me—but not yours!" (158).

Manfred's remarks regarding death and will are highly significant in a thoughtful understanding of secular redemption. While this is not redemption of self and society, *per se*, it is clearly removed from religion and penance. Manfred even ridicules the abbot's suggestion of penance for sins. Whatever the outcome, and Manfred himself is convinced of his poor choices even in the end of his life, he declares freedom of man from spirit:

The Mind which is immortal makes itself requital for its good or evil thoughts,—Is its own origin of ill and end—And its own place and time; its innate sense, when stripped of this mortality...is absorbed in sufferance or in joy, born from the knowledge of its own desert. (158)

Secular redemptions, including the ostensible one of Manfred, require no god-figure, and they may only suggest the presence of a sacrificial body; Manfred offers his own body up for penance, but refuses to submit to the will of the spirits. In this sense, that the self and will is all that is required for redemption, we can see some correlations with another English Faust: Victor Frankenstein.

Of Mary Shelley's novels,⁸⁰ the one most inescapably committed to a notion of redemption is *Frankenstein*, wherein readers are subjected to Victor's attempts to redeem humanity from death (and, in so doing, deify himself), the monster's desire for redemption through love, and, perhaps most importantly, the redemption of neither. Victor never exhibits a sense of responsibility. His major flaw is his overwhelming sense of pride and ambition; even in his deathbed confession to Walton, Victor steadfastly denies that he is responsible for the actions of the monster, who, in turn, accepts his fault in the terror that he had wrought on the Frankenstein family. And, Victor has a point. If we come to understand the

⁸⁰ As it happens, however, Shelley approaches the Faust legend twice in her writing; she takes it up again, in a rather more humorous fashion in "The Mortal Immortal: A Tale". Mockingly, she presents Cornelius Agrippa as "Satan" to his young assistant. At his love's insistence, Winzy accepts Agrippa's offer of employment, stating afterwards that "In spite of the most painful vigilance, I had never detected the trace of a cloven foot; nor was the studious silence of our abode ever disturbed by deamonic howls" (316). Indeed, if anyone acts as a Mephisto in here it is Bertha herself, who harps on poor Winzy throughout the story. While this is reminiscent of the "Basilius" story, it certainly lacks the charm of that love.

monster as a being in its own right, then he must be culpable for his actions. What Victor fails to acknowledge (unlike the monster) is that he is responsible for failing to warn those around him, simply because he feared being thought mad. Victor allows justice to be denied in the face of his fears—repeatedly—through his failure to confess. His confession to Walton comes too late to save his family, even if the confession does serve to redeem Walton, both from his self-imposed isolation and, symbolically, from the ice itself.

Shelley's novel lacks a concrete Mephistophelian figure—at least one who is obviously a devil. Secondly, it lacks a pact with such a figure. Victor's only pact is to his own obsession, rather than to an external devil. One might argue that the combined conversations with M. Krempe and M. Waldman act as a kind of Mephistophelean moment, but their roles are hardly distinct in Victor's planning. The novel is, however, replete with the bodies of sacrificial victims: Elizabeth, Clerval, William, Justine, and M. Frankenstein all bear the scars of Victor's guilt, but have no ability to redeem him. Victor, on the other hand, at least tacitly self-identifies as Faust, when he chastises Walton, saying

Learn from me, if not by my precepts, at least by my example, how dangerous is the acquirement of knowledge and how much happier that man is who believes his native town to be the world, than he who aspires to become greater than his nature will allow. (38)

He recognizes in himself the Faustian knowledge seeker, but identifies the tendency as a dangerous one. He also makes a confession here that is remarkably similar to

the ones found in Marlowe and Spies. This should by no means be understood as a warning against knowledge by Mary Shelley, rather the problem lies in Victor, not his pursuit of learning:

...sheer chance and perversity figure prominently in the way Frankenstein pursues his studies, which reinforces the constant implication that he is too wrapped up in *what* he is doing to be conscious of *why* he is doing it. (Seed 329)

Indeed, when held up against Clerval and Faust, Victor is a poor example of the seeker of knowledge. Rather than a quest for knowledge for its own sake, Victor's desires lay in the cementing of his own fame and adoration:

A new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would own their being to me. No father⁸¹ could claim the gratitude of his child so completely as I should deserve theirs. (38-9)

As in Goethe, the ends and the means to achieve them become problematically enmeshed as Victor's quest to control death ends up killing most of his family.

Shelley and Goethe find additional common ground in the notion of balance. As Victor creates the monster, he becomes quite literally consumed by his desires: "My cheek had grown pale with study, and my person had become emaciated with confinement" (39). Yet, Shelley suggests that his pursuits are not in and of themselves demonic (especially when one considers the beautifully educated

⁸¹ And rightly so as Victor, far from the God-father he envisioned, becomes the absent mother.

monster that will eventually appear), the problem comes in a failure to balance rational scientific life with the familiar spirit:

If the study to which you apply yourself has the tendency to weaken your affections and to destroy your taste for those simple pleasures in which no alloy can possibly mix, then that study is certainly unlawful, that is to say, not befitting the human mind. (40)

In such terms, Victor is given several opportunities to redeem himself to his society: the marriage to Elizabeth, the various returns of Clerval to nurse Victor to health, etc. Unfortunately, the symbol of Victor's obsessive imbalance already roams the earth, destroying each moment of happiness Victor has the chance to fulfill.

Redemption comes through family, not God, in this text.

Victor first sacrifices his redemption when, in his cowardice, he allows Justine to be hanged for the murder of young William. Justine becomes a sacrificial victim, but ultimately, her death is for naught because Victor does not return to the fold of the family, nor does he reveal the existence of the symbol his continual striving for knowledge and gain. The means (self-preservation) do not justify the ends (the death of Justine). This is a reversal of the self-preservation in Goethe's Gretchen sequence, wherein Faust's decision to abandon Gretchen does, in fact, lead him toward redemption.

The most intriguing image of sacrifice and redemption in the novel comes when Victor temporarily becomes the embodiment of the demon as he rends the body of the female monster apart. The female, claims the monster, would give him a

domestic sphere in which to exist (therefore redeeming him), allowing him to leave Victor to rebuild his own life. When Victor instead “trembling with passion, tore to pieces the thing on which I was engaged,” he momentarily acts as the devil figures that destroy the earlier Fausts (145). The destruction of the female monster is especially significant because it eliminates the possibility that she will become mother. At the end of the novel, the only mother left is Victor himself—the mother who abandoned the child.

Anne Williams suggests that Harold Bloom’s standard reading of *Frankenstein* as “the Romantic myth of the self,” misses something in the understanding of Shelley’s text, which navigates the worlds between the Romantic in its attachment to Prometheus and Gothic in its dark maternal mythology:

to take *Frankenstein* seriously is to recognize in Gothic the symptoms of disturbances within the Symbolic order...It follows that the appearance of Gothic conventions in many Romantic texts signals not a lapse into the “popular” and the “sensational,” but the high Romantic struggle to accommodate the power of the mother. (179)

Thus, one can understand Shelley’s *Frankenstein* as a novel struggling between the Father and the iconic mother; here, though, the maternal fails miserably. Reading Williams’ in terms of Faust, rather the Prometheus,⁸² further clarifies this failure as Shelley appropriates the Faust myth, but turns it on its head. Gone are the trappings of the Symbolic structures handed down by the church: no penance, no

⁸² Of course, reading Prometheus makes perfect sense, given the subtitle of the novel.

confession, no sin, no God. The Father is wiped out of the myth entirely! Instead, we find a Faust dedicated to becoming God by becoming mother.

Victor shares other trappings familiar to Goethe's Faust as both characters have a penchant for reading the alchemical classics of texts of Agrippa and Paracelsus. Indeed, both are responsible for creating life within the lab, but only Victor is contemptible for it (largely because Faust speaks to the Homunculus, rather than fleeing from it). Shelley's Victor acts, then, as a negative Faust, one whose striving to know became a matter of self-preservation and self-glorification. The focus on self—rather than domestic life—then, prevents Victor's redemption with his society.⁸³

Guy's Bargain, Rosemary's Baby

Ira Levin's *Rosemary's Baby* and Roman Polanski's film version of it present audiences with a conundrum: rather like Goethe's *Faust*, wherein his sins are wrought upon the body of Gretchen, Guy Woodhouse's bargain with the devil is wrought on the body of his wife, Rosemary. So, who is Faust and who is Mephistopheles in the text? During the course of the texts, Rosemary is drugged, raped, impregnated, and tortured by the coven of witches and the devil himself. She suffers the agony of her pregnancy under the reproachful eye of her husband. It is not immediately apparent how she is rewarded for a pact, but she is by becoming the mother she always desired to be. Guy, for his part, gains success in his acting career (as with Victor and Goethe's Faust, at the expense of others).

⁸³ His friendship with Walton notwithstanding.

Images of religion are fleeting in both the novel and the film. Though some reviewers, Jo McManis among them, have described Rosemary as a devout Catholic, the texts simply do not bear that out. She is fascinated, to be sure, by the arrival of the Pope in New York, and she even dreams of him during her drug-laden rape, as she excuses herself for missing his visit. He releases her from the “sin” saying in a scene filled with more than a little dream-interpretation humor on Levin’s part:

“Jackie tells me you’ve been bitten by a mouse,” he said. “Yes,” Rosemary said. “That’s why I didn’t come see you.” She spoke sadly, so he wouldn’t suspect she’d just had an orgasm.

“That’s all right,” he said. “We wouldn’t want to jeopardize your health.”

“Am I forgiven, Father?” she asked.

“Absolutely.” (117)

While this scene could, perhaps, be understood as (as Ambrusetti does) “a powerful ironic juxtaposition...[as] Rosemary is ensnared...and impregnated by the worshipped demon at the gathering of witches on the very night that Pope Paul [celebrates] Mass...at Yankee Stadium,” to do so misses Levin’s gleeful humor (135). The misinterpretation of “mouse” with the mousse prepared for Rosemary (and which she is at least subconsciously aware is responsible for her current state), the appearance of the iconically perfect Catholic widow Jackie Kennedy, and the bashful need to disguise her sexuality from the Pope are highly comic—to the point of being slapstick. Polanski’s working of this scene is more similar to Ambrusetti’s

description because the images of the Pope and Jackie Kennedy are juxtaposed against the image of Satan raping Rosemary.

In certain respects, Rosemary cannot be a Faust figure. She is not the one to make the pact with the Castavets and, as I mentioned before, with the exception of motherhood, she gains little from her union with Satan. Guy, as Fausts go, is a fairly mundane one. This struggling actor is the narrative fool almost from the beginning as Rosemary continually repeats his pathetic vita “He was in *Luther* and *Nobody Loves an Albatross* and a lot of television plays and commercials” (12). He is flattered by Roman with almost ridiculous ease when Roman suggests remembering him from a performance of *Luther* (77). McManis suggests that “not only does Guy lack the magnitude and defiance of his literary predecessors, but he is also more despicable...” (33-34). While there is some apparent truth to this, we have ample examples of self-indulgent Fausts that precede Guy: Victor, in particular, comes to mind. The comment also ignores some of Heinrich Faust’s behavior, including the murders committed at his behest. Klaus Mann’s Hendrik⁸⁴ also makes choices that are unaccountably horrific and self-serving. Guy is certainly a weak Faust, but his motives vary little from many of his predecessors who desired power.

Rosemary, however, does make what could be called a “faustian bargain” in the course of the novel. After coming to know the Castavets (and, in Rosemary’s

⁸⁴ It must be acknowledged that it is very likely that McManis was unaware of this particular Faust when she published her 1971 essay. It had already been banned for sometime and remained largely unknown for another ten years—until the novel was made into a film and subsequently re-released.

case, becoming deeply bored by them), she unwittingly agrees to go along with Guy's own pact when she agrees to begin a family. For a moment, then, she becomes Faust to her husband's manipulative Mephisto. Levin's novel, then, splinters the Faust pact among several people, and splinters the redemption by allowing it for only one of the Fausts. Indeed, it is highly significant that Rosemary is the one to really get what she wants—not Guy. The novel makes clear early on that she desires motherhood more than almost anything. Guy gets a career but apparently, in a Shelley-like moment, loses his domestic sphere in the process—Rosemary effectively abandons him in the final stages of the text.

As with *Frankenstein*, the nature of redemption here is almost wholly domestic, despite of the religious images it is couched in. Guy remains unredeemed at the end of the novel, because he is pushed out of the family by Rosemary, who now understands his role in the novel's events. Polanski's tableau of this rejection is particularly telling, as Rosemary walks by Guy without so much as acknowledging his presence—annihilating his place as husband-father. Rosemary, on the other hand, achieves the redemption that Victor sought when she becomes mother to the offspring of Satan. At first repulsed by the figure in the black bassinet, she then takes control of the situation, refusing to allow the coven to name the child “I understand why you'd like to call him that, but I'm sorry, you can't. His name is Andrew John. He's my child, not yours, and this is one point I m not even going to argue about. This and his clothes. He can't wear black all the time” (307). This is a redemption between self and ideal and, one might suppose, between self

and society as Rosemary gains control not only over her desire to be a mother but over the coven itself—precisely because she is Mother.

Mothering Faust

Following the work of Katerina Kitsi-Mitakou in her essay “None of Woman Born,” and Carolyn Merchant in her *The Death of Nature*, I strongly believe that the medicalization of the birthing process is a largely responsible for the transformation of the Faustian mothers from divine to domestic. Such socio-historical changes certainly inform Shelley’s novel, but so many of the Faust texts in this period have dead, dying, or absent mothers that they should not be ignored.⁸⁵ As Carolyn Merchant points out, the Scientific Revolution allowed men into the birth chamber for the first time, removing any sense of “divinity” (which would have been borne of mystery) for the women in the birthing bed:

Symbolic of these changes were the midwife and the witch. From the perspective of the male, the witch was a symbol of disorder in nature and society, both of which must be brought under control. The midwife symbolized female incompetence in her own natural sphere, reproduction, correctable through a technology invented and controlled by men—the forceps...For women, the midwife symbolized female control over the female reproductive function (155).⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Many critics agree with this particular assertion. While mothering in *Frankenstein* has been examined at length, the tradition with *Faust* is somewhat more lacking. See Robert Anchor’s “Motherhood and Family in Goethe’s *Faust*: Gretchen’s Mother and the Gretchen Tragedy.”

⁸⁶ Once can certainly see how Gilman’s text fits into this process as the Jane’s own ideas about what would help her go ignored or ridiculed.

Such feminine control is manifestly absent in this group of Faust texts. While the early texts, such as Hrotsvit's had strong female intervention (both human and divine) and some the later texts, such as Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus* (though not necessarily *Chaka* or Szabó's film version of *Mephisto*), it is largely missing from Goethe, Shelley, and, to an extent, Levin.

The primary mother figure within the Faust legends initially was Mary; she intervenes on behalf of Theophilus in Hrotsvit's text. In the later Fausts (from Goethe to the present) the role mother changes dramatically; primarily, they lose their divinity or even their quasi-divinity. Gretchen is, of course, the first of the mother figures in Goethe's text, and she is an unquestionably problematic one as she commits infanticide. She is followed by Helen who vanishes in the wake of her child's death, crying "An Ancient saw, alas! Holds true for me as well: beauty and happiness can form no lasting union" (250). Mothers, it seems, do not fare well in the life of Heinrich Faust⁸⁷; Mohammed Niazi suggests that the deaths of these mothers is necessary because they "are sacrificed to Faust's striving, and expenditure that underwrites the very apotheosis of motherhood forming such a crucial part of our understanding of the '*Ewig-Weiblich[en]*'" (221). Though certainly a part of a general 19th century interest in the figure of mother (and her various permutations), the Eternal Feminine in Goethe is constantly defiled, ignored, or abolished—perhaps in order to perpetuate Faust's striving for knowledge (Niazi 229, n. 2). Thus, as with the earlier Mary figures, these women

⁸⁷ To say nothing of Gretchen's mother, who is killed or Faust's, about whom, Anchor points out, we hear nothing.

remain important to Faust's redemption, but they are not the intercessories or authors (as is the wife in "Basilus"); they become in Goethe the sacrificial bodies upon which penance can be exerted.

A Mary figure nevertheless remains present in the text, as *Mater Gloriosa*, acting on behalf of the penitent Gretchen, allows the girl to lead a confused Faust toward the heavenly light (305). Gretchen is here transformed into an agent of Faust's salvation, rather than a victim of it, and the Faust legend's glorifying of the Eternal Feminine in Mary is recapitulated. Indeed, as Christoph Sweitzer points out, "...the *Mater Gloriosa*...thus replaces the Lord as the highest authority when it comes to the assessment of the value of human life" (138). So, as Cyrus Hamlin notes, Gretchen becomes to Faust what Beatrice is to Dante in the *Divine Comedy*—intercessory and guide⁸⁸. This scene—and its transfer of power to the female—is not only oddly contradictory in light of the treatment of female characters throughout Goethe's text, but it also reinserts a spiritual dominion into a text that constantly wavers between sacred and secular in its concerns.

Significantly, the spiritual mode is revived through the otherwise defiled feminine figure. This return of the mother figure to her savior position in the Faust tales is significant in that it reflects the general restoration of the Faust legend that occurs in Goethe; Faust recovers from the purported foolishness of the puppet plays, but only after a descent (or several descents) into chaos in Goethe's text: the murder of Valentine, Gretchen's death, *Walpurgisnacht*, the other murders committed on

⁸⁸ See Hamlin, Cyrus. "Tracking the Eternal-Feminine in Goethe's Faust II." *Interpreting Goethe's Faust Today*. Ed. Jane Brown, Meredith Lee, and Thomas P. Saine. Columbia: Camden House, 1994. pp.142-155.

his behalf, etc. Each of murder represents the figure's degeneration. His salvation and the glorification of Mary, on the other hand, signify the restoration of the figure as a modern man—one familiar with the classics, with idealism, with science, and with religion—and the lauding of his quest for knowledge.

However, like Victor Frankenstein, Goethe's Faust attempts to completely circumvent the mother's role and importance in creation. The influence of Goethe on Shelley appears to be reciprocal; as Robert Anchor points out Goethe might have had Shelley's novel in mind as he wrote parts of *Faust Two*, especially the Homunculus episode, wherein Faust and Wagner create "an undersized, brainy, endearing, miniature Faust, who cannot wait to being striving" (35). Faust's Homunculus, particularly in the final respect, may "playfully counter" Shelley's domestically-inclined monster. Homunculus's first greeting seems to confirm Anchor's reading. He immediately begins seeking out his creator (as does Victor's monster), humorously calling for his *Väterchen* (Atkins translates this as "daddikins").

The medicalization of the birth process (and the simultaneous secularization of the female ideal—from Mary to the "domestic goddess") occurs openly in both texts. Faust's assistant Wagner openly rejects the ways of "old-fashioned procreation," dismissing it as "folly" (Goethe 175). Victor is not as openly dismissive, though the novel is replete with words and images that suggest conception, etc. Anne Mellor reminds us that Professor Waldman consistently refers to nature as a woman to be penetrated, and Victor would

attempt not only to penetrate nature and show how her womb works but actually to steal or appropriate that womb...in order to become the acknowledged...and gratefully obeyed father of a new species. His project is thus identical with that of bourgeois capitalism: to exploit nature's resources for both commercial profit and political control. (132)

This Marxist understanding of Victor's work is important for two reasons. First, his obsession with the ends is part of his downfall and his unredeemability; just as Goethe required the reinsertion of the domestic sensibility in Faust, Shelley recognizes Victor as a "[product of being] taught to see nature 'objectively', as something separate from [himself]..." (Mellor 130). So, as Victor's domestic/emotional sensibilities wane, his family begins to die; he does not formally confess his own guilt in those deaths until he is on his own deathbed. Their sacrificed bodies cannot alone redeem him; if there is any potential for his redemption—spiritually or secularly—he must confess. Secondly, Mellor's remark reveals how Walton can be redeemed: through a more emotional analysis of the natural and domestic worlds.

Victor appropriates even the language of reproduction, referring to his work in the lab as his "labour" and remarking that

No one can *conceive* the variety of feelings which bore me onwards, like a hurricane, in the first enthusiasm of success. Life and death appeared to me ideal bounds, which I should first break through, and pour a torrent of light into out dark world. (38)

The description suggests not only the storm of excitement, but the progression of labor from the first contractions to the birth itself.⁸⁹ The description of the monster, up until it opens its “watery eyes,” is narrated in a gentle, paternal tone: “His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful!—Great God! His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath...”(56).

Significantly, Victor’s first dream after the monster’s “birth” is of his Elizabeth, who morphs into his dead mother. With the creation of the monster, he mechanizes and destroys maternity.

The mother figures in *Frankenstein* and *Manfred* are significantly secular, devoid of a profoundly Marian role or even a particularly sacrificial one. Byron’s Witch of the Alps represents the mother figure in *Manfred*, but her role is limited to that of confidant, though she encourages Manfred to obey her will. It is to her that Manfred confesses his crime against his love. She does offer him a form of salvation, suggesting that she can grant him the forgetfulness he seeks if only he will “...swear obedience to my will, and do/ My bidding...”(141). Manfred, of course, rejects the offer. While a feminine figure of some spiritual power exists in the play, her help is forsworn; once again, the mother is abandoned in the Faust narrative.

Of course, readers must also recognize that her help would be the damnation of Manfred in the agreement to surrender his will to her. Shelley’s mothers are likewise devoid of the power to intercede on behalf of *Frankenstein*’s Faust. In the early parts of the novel, Elizabeth is an ineffectual Mary at best; her attempts to

⁸⁹ See Andrea Breemer Frantz’s *Redemption and Madness: Three Nineteenth-century Feminist Views on Motherhood and Childbearing*. Las Colinas: Ide House, 1993 for a more detailed analysis.

intercede on Victor's solitude are completely ignored or unheeded by the intended target. The women can be credited only with the generation of Victor himself and his obsession with creating life from death; it is, after all, Caroline Frankenstein's death and Elizabeth Lavenza's illness that inspire Victor's desire to overcome the human limitation of death. No other female mothers can exist in the narrative because Elizabeth and Justine, the only potential mothers, are murdered. As Kitsi-Mitakou rightly points out, the women of *Frankenstein* are in worse shape than those in Goethe's *Faust* because "[a]lmost all female bodies in the novel are turned into corpses even before they are given the chance to experience motherhood" (212). Only the female monster, who Victor destroys in fear of her hideous progeny, is recognized as a potential mother. Victor—at least from the point of view of the monster—is the only character imbued with the power of motherhood—a perverse motherhood at best. Kitsi-Mitakou compares this invasion into motherhood to the 18th century drawings by William Hunter, in which "the male scientist penetrates into [the uterus'] most intimate workings and secrets and can now materialize man's most extreme fantasy: creation of life outside the womb" (212).

While Levin's novel does not remove the woman from the birthing process (even if she is left unaware of the details), Rosemary's power over her own body is substantially denied. She is, as noted above, raped and forcibly impregnated. During the course of her pregnancy we can see the medicalizations of birth that are

familiar to modern readers⁹⁰; here, Rosemary's pregnancy pain is ignored and belittled by the medical establishment and her husband.

Levin is cagey about exactly what is happening to Rosemary, but it appears that she is reacting physically to the being she is incubating.⁹¹ After her doctor dismisses her worries over pain, telling her that they would fade in a day or two, the narrative reveals: "the pains weren't gone in two days; they were worse, and grew worse still, as if something inside her were encircled by a wire being drawn tighter and tighter to cut it in two" (Levin 151). When Rosemary demands to see another doctor, Guy tells her that he will not pay for her to do so. Polanski skillfully visualizes Levin's narrative with Mia Farrow's pitifully thin, haggard Rosemary, who comes to look more like a zombie in *Night of the Living Dead* than an expectant mother by the time the pain subsides. Time and again we see her lean against walls and phone booths, apparently sapped of strength. Interestingly, the pain finally fades when she refuses to be made subservient again to Guy's power over her body.

In the final events of Levin's novel, however, we return to the familiar reversals of the early Faust narratives and the most explicit mothering of Faust. Faust becomes woman when Rosemary inverts the role of the Mary by birthing and celebrating the arrival of the Anti-Christ—a child conceived in rape rather than

⁹⁰ Certainly more so than were the creations of Victor's monster and Faust's Homunculus.

⁹¹ She also, inexplicably, develops a taste for raw meat.

divine origin.⁹² The entire final scene consciously reverses the Nativity. Guests arrive, bearing gifts, from all over the world. And, as Roman points out, little Andrew is born on June 25th: “Exactly half-year round from you-know. Isn’t it perfect?” (300).

These Faustian texts have several commonalities, one of which (*Manfred* notwithstanding) is the tendency to focus on the restoration of family and/or society. In many ways, this serves to mirror the sacred redemptions in which humanity was restored to God. The sacrificial bodies of Rosemary, Elizabeth, the female monster, Manfred, and Gretchen likewise emulate the “Christ-figure” familiar from the early Faust texts. Indeed, one can understand the agony of Rosemary’s pregnancy as a part of a perverse penance that leads to her rather unusual redemption. One element of *Rosemary’s Baby* that will also occur in the politically-themed texts of the next chapter is the tendency find a splintering of the Faust figures that often ends up conflating Faust and Mephistopheles. A nearly identical splintering occurs in Thomas Mofolo’s *Chaka*, which, like *Rosemary’s Baby*, directly confronts the paradigmatic shifts in the spiritual lives of a culture. Levin examines, such as in the Pope dream, the decreasing role of religion in popular culture—he is an icon more of the ilk of rock star than religious father. Mofolo similarly examines the decline (and fear of) traditional, pagan religious of South Africa in the face of Christian missionary work and the fractures that exist within such considerable cultural shifts.

⁹² Roses, of course, are iconic of Mary, so Rosemary’s very name insists on the understanding of the connections to Mary. She is the double Mary.

Regardless of the type of redemption narrative, the Faust legends tend to reflect the cultural changes wrought by religious and political upheaval: the Reformation, the medicalization of birth and the removal of the mother's power, the arrival of missionaries in Africa, the increasing power of popular culture in the advent of the television, etc. The modern Fausts reveal the fractured culture from which they spring in the splintering of Faust and the occasional conflation of him with Mephistopheles. In Chapter Four, I consider the role these narrative and cultural fractures play in political redemptions, which tend to be allegorical. Benjamin's contention that allegory acts as a bridge between fragments of meaning are most significant here, because in light of the splintering of Faust and the conflation of him with Mephistopheles, the meanings of the tales and their redemptions are best understood as allegory.

CHAPTER 4

THE POLITICS OF REDEMPTION

This was in fact the book's crude and intriguing prophecy: that henceforth popular myths, or better, myths trimmed for the masses, would be the vehicle of political action—fables, chimeras, phantasms that needed to have nothing whatever to do with truth, reason, or science in order to be productive nonetheless, to determine life and history, and thereby prove themselves dynamic realities.
(T. Mann 386)

Serenus Zeitblom's concerns above bear an important relationship to the whole of this project. Each successive adaptation of the Faust myth examines or reacts to the society which engenders it. Nowhere, however, is this more obvious than in the political manipulations of myth that can be seen especially clearly in the twentieth century; Faust becomes a political vehicle. Thus, our third manifestation of redemption is, obviously, a political form. In the three works covered in this chapter, Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka*, Klaus Mann's *Mephisto*, and Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus*, the Faust legend is transformed into an allegory of political pacts made to ensure power. From texts such as these we can derive the most common popular usage of "Faustian bargain": an agreement struck with a person or party generally viewed as dangerous or untrustworthy—the ostensible devil. As in *Rosemary's Baby*, the figures of Faust and Mephistopheles are often conflated in these novels, especially in *Doctor Faustus* and *Mephisto*; this tendency seems to stem from the political territories the novels attempt to engage: Pre-colonial South

Africa and World War II Germany. The moral ambiguities inherent in the historical events are made manifest through this metonymic treatment.

Political redemptions are not unique to the twentieth-century Fausts. John R. Williams suggests that Act I of Goethe's *Faust Two* can be understood as an allegory of "Prussia in the 1780s, or alternatively, of France in the years before the Revolution...but also the whole Western Response to classicism over a vast historical time-scale" (101). We can see political elements even in Hrotsvit, whose universal grace motif may have as much to do with her theology as the politics of the abbey in which she lived. As with the other political texts, Hrotsvit's symbols and themes can be read allegorically. In this case, the universal grace granted in the legends may be an apology of sorts for Otto I's forgiveness of his rebellious brother Henry. Otto was, of course, not only the ruler of Saxony (and the East Frankish Kingdom in general), where Gandersheim stood, but was the uncle of its abbess—Gerberga. As Jay Lees points out, despite the Henry's rebellion and the problems of succession that led to it, the brothers "got along quite well from 941 until Henry's death in 955" (23). Thus, Otto's grace towards his brother is prefigured by the grace found in the legends. Likewise, Henry's actions were mitigated in her *Gesta Oddonis* when Hrotsvit suggests that Henry is led to rebellion by "*antique inimici*, the ancient foe or wicked enemy" (Lees 20). The phrase recalls the descriptions of the devil in the legend, suggesting that Henry was controlled by evil forces and was at least partially faultless in the rebellion, just as the servant and Theophilus are partially blameless in Hrotsvit's legends. As a result, her legends, in addition to the more obviously political *Gesta*, serve to

“[salvage] the reputation of Henry of Bavaria” and justify Otto’s grace toward his brother.

With the notable exception of *Mephisto*, the literary treatments of politics and Faust material are somewhat more faithful to the supernatural elements of the legend than current news reductions tend to be. Chaka makes a deal with supernatural figure, as does Adrian; however, it should be noted that both authors create these deals ambiguously. Both novels ask readers to consider the possibility that these men are simply mad; that the devils are creations of their own imaginations. A similar trap was set for Rosemary, whose husband tried to convince her that she was imagining everything about the rape, pregnancy, and the actions of the Castavets. In the cases of Adrian and Chaka, however, it is not another character who tries to convince them that they are mad; instead, the narratives insist that the reader leave the possibility of madness ever open. Klaus Mann, on the other hand, makes no pretense of supernatural interference or agreement in his *Mephisto*; Hendrik Höfgen’s deal is with the Nazi Socialist government. The matter is absolutely clear in the novel. Of the many things Höfgen might be to the text—even completely self-deceived—mad is not one of them.

Political concerns tend to be somewhat more global than the concerns found in chapter two, which posit the relationship between the individual and the society in which he or she exists. These redemptions, however, are better understood in terms of use and misuse of power—especially the power of a state. As with the other understandings of redemption, the political usage does not necessarily suggest that salvation will occur. Mofolo’s novel may be one of the best examples of the political

redemption in the Faust material, and in the case of Chaka it is clear that redemption does not occur for Chaka himself, and it remains unclear whether or not it could happen for the society he led. We can see the fear and hatred of colonialism and the working out of what we will come to understand as postcolonial theories in this novel. Mofolo, whom we will come to understand as doubly dispossessed—under South African rule because he is black and under Zulu rule because he is not Zulu—imbeds these political fears into the body of his Faust: King Chaka.

Likewise, in Mann's *Doctor Faustus*, the salvation of Adrian is ambiguous, and the salvation of Nazi Germany, for which Adrian's tale can be understood as something of an allegory, is equally unclear. *Mephisto* provides another example of the allegorical use of Faust material to understand and explain the events unfolding in Germany in the early part of the twentieth century.⁹³ Klaus Mann's novel engages the relationship between art and politics, but he does so in a highly scathing satire on his former brother-in-law, Gustaf Grundgens. Though his Faust, Hendrik Höfgen, remains alive at the end of the novel, he leaves readers with no doubts as to what the outcome of the choices he makes in the course of things will be.

This tendency to allegorize Faust is endemic to all three of these manifestations of the Faust legend, a fact that cannot help but recall Benjamin's comments regarding allegory. He suggests that in allegory, human language can attempt to be reconciled with a greater truth; the things that cannot be said can be made manifest. The historical realities that inspired each of these novels make it

⁹³ *Rosemary's Baby* bears some rather peculiar similarities to Klaus Mann's novel, and had Levin had access to *Mephisto* one might more closely associate the text with it than with any of the other Faust texts. One cannot help but notice the ease with which the actors (Guy and Hendrik) are convinced to improve their acting careers through "questionable" means.

foolish to call the government the patsy of the devil overtly. Klaus Mann probably comes closest to actually doing it, and his novel suffered bans in Germany and elsewhere for being inflammatory. Presenting politics in the body of the Faust legends makes perfect sense because the legends always reflected the social, religious, and political *zeitgeist* of their respective times, and it is in the realm of politics that we most clearly see the slow corruption of the notion of the Faustian bargain. In fact, each of these new Fausts bears a strong resemblance to some facet of Goethe's Faust in *Part Two*, where we are faced with the problem of his diabolical means against his noble ends.

King Chaka as Faust Figure

Chaka the King is one of the most colorful historical figures in Zulu history. While there is no common consensus (as with Faust) on what he looked like, his war and leadership styles, the extent of his power and violence, nor even the English rendering of his name,⁹⁴ these unknowns provide for the legendary figure a canvas upon which fiction writers can paint a vibrant and, in the case of Mofolo, politically charged tale. As Swanepoel points out, Mofolo grew up in Lesotho, "a country which was established under pressure of Zulu expansionism" (23). Shaka is an enormous figure in Zulu and Sotho history, and his cruelty is a renowned part of his legend; doubtless, the peoples of Lesotho were aware the stories of Shaka (and, most likely witnessed him in action).

⁹⁴ One sees it variously as Shaka and Chaka. Or, in the case of my high school physics teacher who liked to use him as part of word problems involving coconuts (and, on occasion, the man himself) falling from cliffs: Shakazulu.

Mofolo's appropriation of the Faust legend is fairly obvious in the context of the novel, but just what his sources were remains the subject of some mystery. Though we can say with some certainty that Mofolo attended Morija Teachers Training College, his records were destroyed in a fire, so we have no access to what, exactly, his studies covered (Swanepoel 23). In addition to reflecting the oral stories he undoubtedly was exposed to, Mofolo's imaginative history of King Shaka bears a number of striking similarities to historical accounts and later collected histories.⁹⁵ Nevertheless, it is Mofolo's inventive collusion between the Zulu legend and the German texts that makes this novel so intriguing; Mofolo transforms the Faust legend into the symbolic apparatus for Chaka's madness and ruthlessness, rendering the novel politically sensitive. This treatment of Chaka renders him as no hero; he is not a religiously dangerous figure as in the *Faustbuch*, but he is unrecoverable nevertheless, particularly if *Chaka* is understood as a political allegory on the agony of the colonized.

Mofolo, of course, does not employ the standard vision of King Shaka, which is better expressed by Mangosuthu Buthelezi⁹⁶, leader of the KwaZulu in a speech at Clermont Township: "As sons and daughters of Africa, there is no praise song

⁹⁵ For more detailed information on Mofolo's reputed sources, see Swanepoel, C.F. "Historicity and Mofolo's *Chaka*: A Comparison of Text and Possible Sources. *South African Journal of African Language*. Vol. 8, 1, 1988. pgs. 23-27

⁹⁶ Buthelezi's vision of Shaka is, of course, more complex than that quote allows. In A speech on King Shaka Day in 2004, he recalled the cautionary aspects of Shaka's reign and the repeated acts of colonialism that surrounded it:

We must never forget that the strife and divisions that the Zulu nation reaps were the harvest of colonialism and conquest. Our forefathers were not party to our Kingdom's destruction after the defeat of King Cetshwayo's Regiment in the Battle of Ulundi in 1879, which paved the way for the British colonisers to divide our Kingdom into thirteen kinglets...The reconciliation of our peoples cannot be complete until our Kingdom is totally restored.

that we can compose which would rise to the greatness of King Shaka. He was virtually a walking, living, ruling human miracle.” Compare this image to Mofolo’s account, wherein

In these wars, Chaka killed all the married people, the old people and the children, that is to say the older people who had become accustomed to being ruled by their own kings and could never be changed into true Zulus; and as for the children, he killed them for fear that they would be a hindrance and become a pitiful sight when their parents were no more. (Mofolo 136)

For Buthelezi, Shaka was a hero; for Mofolo, he was a madman, bent on the destruction of the communities he overpowered. Mofolo’s Chaka is a merciless killer; he engineers the most efficient means of killing the greatest number of warriors and preserving only the “youth who would forget their original homes ... [and] the girls [who] were made into slaves who served the armies...” (136).

In keeping with a Faustian tradition, Mofolo’s novel includes a Mephistophelean character, here the mysterious *isanusi*.⁹⁷ Unlike Goethe’s Mephistopheles, whom Faust calls into his presence, the *isanusi* arrives unbidden and, apparently, prepared to tempt Chaka with political power. Like the early Faustus, Chaka is in a state of mind all-too-prepared for the arrival of the devil figure:

And when he thought of the day when he came back from rounding up the calves, and found that there was a plot against him, and the day the boys surprised him in the fields, and about the lion and the hyena, he realized that

⁹⁷ The word *isanusi* literally means diviner or magician. In English, the same figure is often rendered as “witch doctor”

here on earth people live by might only, and not by right; he decided that here on earth the only person who is wise and strong and beautiful and righteous is he who knows how to fight with his stick; and he decided that, from that day on, he would do just what he pleased, and that, whether a person was guilty or not, he would simply kill them if he so wished, for that was the law of man. (Mofolo 35)

It is precisely Chaka's desire for power that allows the *isanusi* to enter his life. Faust does not always have to seek out his Mephisto; very often the "doctor" will come to him. The desire for power is not particularly new to the legends either, as we see the same in Goethe, Mann, and Shelley, whose Victor is physically consumed by his desires. Certainly, we see such an exchange in Levin, because Guy does not have to seek out or call to the Castavets; they recognize in him (and Rosemary) an opportunity. Though it has many of the trappings made familiar in the older versions of the legend, Mofolo dramatically transforms the legend when he unites qualities of both Mephistopheles and Faust in Chaka; this association of the two legendary figures is endemic to the later Faust texts and opens the novel to an examination of allegorical intent.

The figure of the *isanusi* is a shadowy one at best, bearing not just a little resemblance to both the Mephistophelean figures and contemporary imaginings of Rasputin. His arrival into Chaka's life is first predicted by his mother, Nanda, who tells him that "you must not put yourselves to trouble looking for the doctor, for he will come to you of his own accord, since he will divine for himself where you are" (Mofolo 26). He is, as Derek Wright reminds us, "perpetually surrounded by a dream-halo and is seen by no-one except Chaka" (44). Like the earlier Mephistos,

Isanusi does arrive—not sought for this time, but certainly welcomed. Once the *isanusi* approaches Chaka, he asks of Chaka complete allegiance. This, of course, is a fairly familiar trope at this point, but his “reward” remains in the shadows, whereas in the European Faust texts the direction of Faust’s soul was always clear.⁹⁸ The *isanusi* remarks “First, before we go into any details, I ask you whether you bind yourself to observe all of my commandments completely? I am asking because there is nothing I can do unless you so bind yourself” (40). This request recalls the one made in “Basilius,” when the devil demands the servant’s absolute honor to the blood oath: that he will completely and forever forswear Christ. The *isanusi* points out something fairly similar when he exhorts Chaka never to try to back out of a command:

It is the law of the profession that in matters of this nature, or of curing someone...a doctor should lay down his conditions which the people have to abide by or refuse right at the beginning if those conditions are too difficult because, if they do not refuse at the very start, the doctor will still claim his reward... (41)

Notice the difference between this and the oath in “Basilius.” Always in Hrotsvit’s text exists a possibility of intervention and redemption, hence the devil’s temper tantrum and the subsequent oath to forswear Christ. Here, no such possibility is apparent, for even if Chaka (the patient) flees, once the “treatment” has begun, Isanusi can claim reward. He couches the entire offer in terms of medicine and healing, giving an appearance of trustworthiness and wisdom.

⁹⁸ Faust was meant to go to Hell in the afterlife.

Agreeing to the terms, Chaka asks merely for the right to ascend his father's kingship, which he has been denied. "I do not have many wishes." Chaka continues, "My heart yearns for the kingship for which I was born, which will slip out of my hands simply because I have bad luck. I say to you, work on me so that kingship should be restored to me (41)." Isanusi⁹⁹ increases the stakes by asking if this is truly all that Chaka wants, thereby setting the pattern that will be borne out throughout the novel: Chaka will make a request; Isanusi will ask if that is all that Chaka desires, and Chaka will concede that, indeed, he wants more. In this case, Chaka replies "If you can make me into a great king, one who is independent, to whom all lesser kings owe allegiance, I shall be very grateful" (41). The penance to be paid on earth for each incremental upgrade is progressively more violence, including the murders of his wife and mother by his own hand, just as Chaka's demands become large in scope. Noliwa and Nandi are unusual sacrificial beings, and their deaths bear more resemblance to Frankenstein's family than to the crucifixion of Jesus.

The most powerful example of Isanusi's influence over Chaka comes when he asks Chaka "What do you choose for yourself, Noliwa or the kingship" (123)? The prize for the murder of his wife would be a "kingship...such as will give you territory so big that, if a man started from here where you are, as a young man going to the ends of your empire, he would walk until he grew old before he returned" (100). Chaka agrees (having no choice, really) to murder his wife and does so. This act marks the end of Chaka's humanity in the novel. Our narrator recounts

⁹⁹ Chaka is eventually commanded by the *isanusi* to call him by the name of Isanusi, rather than "doctor" in order that he may hear Chaka calling (Mofolo 45).

After Noliwa's death, Chaka underwent a frightful change in both his external appearance and also his inner being, in his very heart; and so did his aims and deeds. Firstly, the last spark of humanity still remaining was utterly and finally extinguished...; his ability to distinguish war and wanton killing or murder vanished without a trace...Secondly, his human nature dies totally and irretrievably, and a beast-like nature took possession of him; because although he had been a cruel person before this, he has remained a human being, his cruelty but a human weakness...and with Noliwa's blood he had branded himself with an indelible mark which resembled that of the kings of Isanusi's homeland. (127-128)

Again the narrator confirms the inextricability of Chaka's oath to Isanusi. Chaka becomes something else entirely under Isanusi's tutelage—something not precisely human. Moreover, though we know little about the kings of Isanusi's homeland, beyond the blood-branding he describes here, it is made fairly clear that they are extremely powerful beings.

Each successive murder recalls the domestic crisis that appears in earlier versions of Faust, most particularly in Shelley and Goethe. Chaka violates his domestic responsibilities in the most horrific possible ways; indeed, he acts both as the Faust and the devil in so doing¹⁰⁰. Chaka does not require the hand of Isanusi in the murders unlike Faust, who needed the supernatural aid of Mephistopheles. Chaka's brothers then violate their own domestic responsibilities by turning the blades in on Chaka. Isanusi's reward is taken in this final violation when, in

¹⁰⁰ Recall that in Goethe, Mephistopheles has to guide Faust's hand in the duel against Valentine and while Faust orders the murders in Part two, he sends Mephistopheles to commit them.

rhetoric that sounds very much like Spies and Marlowe, Chaka is visited by spirits and physically ripped apart. Unlike some of the Fausts that precede him, Chaka makes no attempt to warn others away from his choices; however, he does bear witness to his crimes in his memories in the moments before he is murdered:

His deeds once more passed before his eyes; and of all the people he had removed from the earth before their time, the one he saw was Noliwa... When Noliwa's apparition vanished, Nandi's came into view, and as soon as their eyes met, Chaka tried to scream but his voice would not come out...Dingana observed that Chaka was dreaming...{he} came nearer to Chaka as if to admire the feathers, and then in a flash he stabbed him so that the spear went into his body and then appeared on the other side; Mhlangana stabbed him in the back, and his spear came out in front, while Mbopha's entered the side; all those spears met inside Chaka's stomach, and at that very moment Isanusi appeared before Chaka to demand his reward. (166-7)

One marked difference from the other Faust texts is the murder at the hands of Chaka's brothers. Rather than torture wrought by demons as part of the oath of apostasy, Chaka's body is torn apart by the very humans he betrayed in order that they may gain his political power. Yet, the actions of Dingana, Mhlangana, and Mbopha also mirror those of the demons in the earlier Faust texts; their blades tear Chaka apart in a manner not unlike the demons that rend Faust apart in Marlowe and in the *Faustbuch*.

The murder by the brothers is certainly a politically motivated one; Dingana makes no secret of it. However, politics have a prominent place in several other facets of *Chaka*, including in the inability to redeem Chaka at the end of his life.

Firstly, Isanusi has been interpreted politically in several different ways, including Wright's assertion that the *isanusi* is "an incarnation of the poisonous power-hunger to which Chaka succumbs in his own nature" (44). Conversely, Ayi Kwei Armah notes that the figure could be a rather "neutral bystander and warning prophet" (Wright 44). One unusual aspect to this character is the helpmates he brings with him, Malunga and Ndlebe. We can see the political machinations at work in their deeds, as they "[prepare] the people's minds, those of men and women alike, so that they should feel that every deed performed by Chaka is good for no other reason than it is performed by Chaka who has been sent by the gods among the people" (122). They also engage in, in effect, medicating the masses so that "even where they might have doubts, their minds should react without intelligence" (123).

Secondly, as a piece of fiction concerned with colonialization, even if it is a matter of colonialization of one African tribe by another,¹⁰¹ the matter of the politics here is clear. In addition to being the Faust character, Chaka makes the kind of Faustian bargain we hear discussed in popular media with respect to politics. On the one hand, Chaka makes that Faustian Bargain with Isanusi in order to gain earthly kingship and power; yet, his followers do the same when they abide by his rule of law. These followers, however, are given something of a free pass by Mofolo, as they are made into mere pawns in Isanusi's game through drugging and brainwashing. Each gambit in this novel seems to be part of Mofolo's, who was, recall, a member of the oppressed nation, political commentary.

¹⁰¹ And that is not the entire concern. Mofolo is every bit as aware of European colonization as Achebe and Aoyika who follow him.

This is not to say that Mofolo's novel is bereft of an awareness of the colonialization of the Cape by Europeans. Chaka's last words to his brothers, as he dies as "You are killing me in the hope that you will be kings when I am dead, whereas you are wrong, that is not the way it will be because *umlungu*, the white man, is coming, and it is he who will rule you, and you will be his servants" (167). This rich contrast to his own rule is quite telling. The novel acts as the voice of the doubly dispossessed: first by Chaka and then by the Europeans.¹⁰²

Fascism and Faust: Mann to Mann

Though the first Mann most readers remember with respect to the Faust tradition is Thomas, his son Klaus published a novel treating the Faust legend and its relationship to the rise of the fascist Nazi state in 1936, some ten years before his father.¹⁰³ And while the political interpretations of Thomas Mann's text have been hotly contested throughout the years, no such debate can exist with respect to his son's novel. So blatantly obvious is the symbolism linking Nazi Socialists and the Faust legend, Klaus Mann's *Mephisto* remained on a banned list in West Germany from the 1960's until after the novel was made into a film in 1981. Shrouded in an opulently ironic tone, the text conflates the roles of Faust and Mephistopheles in ways quite similar to *Rosemary's Baby* and *Chaka*.

Hendrik Höfgen is the single most foolish Mephistopheles of the modern Faust tales, but he is also the self-deluded Faust of the legend. Based none too

¹⁰² Swanepoel points out that the colonization of Mofolo's forefathers can be seen even linguistically, as their native tongue (Sotho) are unified with Zulu: "The language Mofolo used in his works was officially standardized in 1906. It is a mélange of an estimated 85% Sotho and 15% Zulu lexical features" (23).

¹⁰³ Actually, Heinrich Mann, Thomas' brother, also treats the legend in his *Der Blaue Engel*.

covertly on the actions of his former brother-in-law, Mann's novel chides the hapless—if extraordinarily fortunate—Höfgen constantly. The actor turned political patsy is a most fascinating version of the Faust mythology in response to WWII. At the end of his essay on the film version of *Mephisto*, Alain Piette remarks “Höfgen’s seductive power is so strong that it briefly seduces both us and him into thinking that his fame may indeed help him to save some lives” (141). He is correct about István Szabó’s film, where Höfgen is at least nominally heroic in his actions, as he tries to save his half-Nigerian/half-German mistress from the clutches of the Nazi Party he works for. The novel, however, gives Höfgen no such heroic bearing, reducing him to a clown who believes that he has the power to protect people as he colludes with the government: “How brilliantly the director dissembled! It was a performance truly worthy of a great actor. One might almost have thought that Hendrik Höfgen cared only for money, power, and fame instead of undermining the regime” (240). And, of course, from the point of view of the narrator, these are exactly the things Höfgen cared about, though he regularly claimed the contrary, telling Otto Ulrichs “It’s not a comfortable strategy, but I must persevere with it. I am now in the middle of the enemy’s camp. From the inside outwards I am undermining his power...” (240). The mendacity of his remarks is all too evident in the preceding events in the novel. As Piette remarks, “Höfgen’s skill is histrionics, not politics” (138).

Göring, Hitler...each major party member, though Mann does not name them in the text, is held up for the same kind of mockery as we see the narrator attack Höfgen with. The field marshal is the “fat leader” with a penchant for theater and costume. To his birthday party, he wears a

bottle green coat looked like a smartly cut smoking jacket. On his chest blazed a small silver star—his only decoration...The outlandish height and breadth of his monstrous frame were enough to strike terror and awe in all around him—all the more because, despite his ludicrous appearance, there was little reason to find anything comic about him. (15)

The Party members, except for Höfgen, become fat, false, and terrifying. Höfgen, though, only becomes corpulent on his fame, because he is unable to terrify anyone; even his Mephistopheles is a dandy:

Hendrik made the Prince of Darkness into a rascal that the Lord of Heaven in His infinite goodness sees in him and honors from time to time with His company—for Mephisto is, of all the spirits that deny him, the least troublesome to the Almighty. Hendrik's Mephisto was a tragic clown, a diabolical Perriot. His shaved head was powdered as white as his face, his eyebrows painted grotesquely high, his blood-red mouth stretched into a fixed smile...The result was a shimmering landscape that set off the hypnotic jewel-like eyes of this Satan. (152).

Mephistopheles is Hendrik's finest role, one he returns to when it is time to make overtures to the Nazi Party once they gain control. Hendrik also plays Faust, of course, bending to the will of Göring and the Party, agreeing to alter his own history to reflect proper Kultur: the divorce from a rebellious, liberal wife; the deportation of his half-African lover; the reporting of subversive activity of his rival Miklas. Every change he makes is a small shifting of his role; he is, after all, an actor, we are reminded. Indeed, when he oversteps his bounds with the General he is only an

actor. Actors can be replaced easily; Höfgen is merely cast in another role and left devoid of the power he desires.

The players in this political allegory are as likely to be called by the position they represent as they are by name, a tendency that is familiar to readers of allegory. Moreover, the satire that Mann constructs has two levels: the literal rise of Höfgen to power and the symbolic rise of the Nazi Party, which engaged in much of the same desire for power as we see in its minion, Höfgen. However, *Mephisto* is significant not only for this scathing political satire, but for the connection that Mann draws between politics and art within the Faust motif. The world of theatre encapsulates a microcosm of the rise of the Nazi Power—the unexpected aesthete¹⁰⁴ at the helm, the protection of choice people and the casting off of others. The image of Faust as the pinnacle of German man had already been adopted by the Party when Mann wrote the novel; rather than an infinite seeker of knowledge, he became fashioned by Otto Spengler and others in terms of violence and power: “War is a prime fact of Life, of Life itself...The beast of prey is the highest form of mobile Life...In the Faustian Kultur the proud blood of the beast of prey revolts against the tyranny of pure thought” (qtd. in Fierce 189). The Faust whose ends justified his means became the symbol of culture. Klaus Mann toys with this vision of Faust by

¹⁰⁴ Spotts reminds us that Hitler was heard to say on many occasions that he regretted the cause of going to war because it took away from his aesthetic ideals: “It is a pity that I have to wage war on account of that drunk instead of serving the works of peace,” Hitler once remarked about Churchill’s refusal to drop out of the war (xi). Another time he promised that “The funds which I shall devote to these [efforts of building and art] will vastly exceed the expenditures which we found necessary for the conduct of this war” (xii). His rhetoric here is not altogether distant from Höfgen’s; each presents himself as paying a penance in order to achieve a greater end.

presenting a fool-Faust whose ends were self-serving and whose means were often despicable.

Thomas Mann, like his son, tends toward patterns of doubles in his treatment of the Faust legend, particularly those which allegorically link political and aesthetic concerns. The most significant of these is the allegorical linking of the fates of Adrian Leverkühn and Germany. Leverkühn is the Faust figure of the novel, so Germany is also Faust, just as we see in *Mephisto*. Moreover, Adrian's musical creations seem to reflect, at least in the mind of his biographer Serenus Zeitblom, the political events that surround their creation. This constant paralleling of aesthetic and political mirrors a tendency within the Nazi party, whose political recontextualizations of German literary figures (Faust among them) formed a sizeable part of the Nazi mythology. Likewise, artistic productions that did not fit the mythology were summarily destroyed. So, when Zeitblom confesses a hope for German defeat it is not because of any particular anti-nationalist fervor or desire to protect fellow members of humanity, but because

...because [Adrian's] works would be buried beneath [German victory], covered with the curse of proscription and forgetfulness for perhaps a hundred years, thus missing its own age and receiving historical honor only in a later one. (34)

Zeitblom's point is sound, given the political and cultural climate in Germany at that point, particularly toward "Modernist" music, which had become increasingly hostile.

Composers such as Hanns Eisler and Kurt Weill [believed] that music would change the world. That was precisely what conservatives feared and their response extended from rejection on aesthetic grounds to repudiation on political ones...Atonality, dissonance, social chaos, Bolshevism, internationalism, and Jews were regarded as ingredients of one unholy brew that was fatally poisoning German culture (Spotts 268).

Thus, the Modernist style was recognized as both aesthetic and political, and was thus denounced. Instead, Wagner's operas became the pawns of political propaganda.

Even Adrian's encounter with the devil is quickly paralleled by Zeitblom's accounts of political events in Germany. The central allegory is obvious here: Adrian's submission to the devil's empty promises of creativity parallels the mythical promises of the Nazi party to the German people. However, it is important to note that the allegory does not paint either Adrian or the German people as sheep who blindly follow their leader. Rather, as Scaff notes, "Leverkühn discerns at the time of his conversation with the devil that the pact extends him sterile illumination" (157). So why commit to empty promises—whether *Volk* or Adrian? The choice to follow the devil appears odd in light of Adrian's growing knowledge that the promise of creativity is hollow. Scaff points out, however, exactly what it is that allows Adrian—along with his political doubles in the allegory: "Leverkühn must only *feel* uplifted *as though* by a creative power" (157).

Likewise, the Volk only need feel as though they too are freed from the pressures of a post-war depression.

Adrian's initial encounter with the devil is typical of Faust material in several respects, beginning with the quasi-supernatural appearance of the devil himself. The devil, Adrian records, comes in a gust of cold after the cessation of another migraine. Too, as in several of the other versions, Adrian does not obviously call upon the devil, but is approached by him when "we saw that your case was entirely worth our attention, that it was a case of favourable disposition, out of which, presupposing but a little enkindling, incitement, and inebriation, something lustrous might be made" (245). Scaff suggests that devil could appear precisely at that moment because of the failures of love that Adrian had already committed: "Leverkühn's estrangement, and incapacity to love, stands behind the threat of artistic sterility that Mann identifies in a comment on the novel as the condition predisposing the modern Faust to a devil's pact" (153). As Scaff notes, it is precisely Adrian's detachment from humanity that makes him a prime target for the devil's wiles, as the detachment from love has already taken place.

Many of the reflections on political and aesthetic concerns are products of Mann's relationship with Theodore Adorno, who said of art in the post-WWII era: "To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric" (qtd. in Subotnik 18). Rose Subotnik reads this particular quotation as Adorno's reaction against the failure of humanity apparent in the Nazi rise to power. He simply cannot "imagine any further logical development of bourgeois humanism itself" (Subotnik 18). If one reads history in the manner of Adorno, the fatal compromise of German culture came bitterly with the rise of the Nazi Socialists, a rise that, in Peter Viereck's words "would annihilate

our liberties, our very bodies and our most basic ethics” (14). Mann apparently holds some sympathy at least for Adorno’s cultural/historical analysis, remarking in a response to Viereck that

Essentially the German spirit lacks social and political interest...And in so decidedly social and political a time as ours, this often so productive deficiency may truly take on a fateful, indeed, a disastrous character. In the face of problems of the times it may lead to efforts at solution which are poor evasions and by way of being mythical substitutes for truly social situations. (361)

In other words, rather than finding solutions for social anxiety, mythologies of honor (as in Wagnerian opera) and oppression (by whom ever the current scapegoat is—in this case, the Jews) are invented. Thus, in its tendency to lay hope at the feet of the mythical *Volk*, Romanticism failed the humanity it intended to celebrate; nowhere is this more evident than in the Nazi lauding of Wagner’s mythology as symbols of German greatness.¹⁰⁵

Adrian’s compositions, *Apocalypse*, in particular, follow the Modernist mode of atonality rather than Wagnerian Romantic style. The music in the text is, of course, almost entirely fictitious, a product of the collaborative efforts of Mann and Adorno. Since these are pieces that can be performed only within the world of the novel, we find music here that is oddly beholden to the words of the narrative. This is an ironic twist on Mann’s part—the music cannot be performed, only theorized; it is unreachable except through Mann’s explicit delineation. If atonality can be

¹⁰⁵ Not simply that Wagner is a great composer, therefore we are also great. Here we envision Wagner’s operas as our mythological history and symbols of the importance of our culture.

understood as music beholden to theory, then Mann's music for Adrian is the epitome of that theoretical music. Aside from his admitted appropriation of Adorno's *Philosophy of Modern Music* to describe the fictional compositions, Mann's silent music recalls Adorno's musing that "The possibility of music itself has become uncertain" in Adrian's music (112). Adorno's remark, like many of Mann's comments on the aesthetic within the frame of the novel, is politically charged. He suggests that music is being destroyed by those who claim to be its salvation. "That certain freedom," he writes, "into which it undertook to transform its anarchistic condition was converted in the very hands of this music into a metaphor of this world against which it raises its protest" (112). Music, Adorno claims, exists as a space in which intellectual and emotional freedom can reign against repression.

He notes further, echoing Goethe's attempts to derive balance, that it is not twelve-tone alone which can overcome political and personal repression, instead

It is rather to be achieved through the amalgamation and absorption of the twelve-tone technique by free composition—by the assumption of its rules through the spontaneity of the critical ear. Only from the twelve-tone technique alone can music learn to remain responsible for itself; this can only be done if music does not become victim to the technique. (115)

Adorno recognizes music as a significant political power, which makes sense in light of the political sensibilities of Modernist composers. In seeking freedom, which the Nazis would refer to as decadence and decay in music, the composers sought to wrest music from the strict rule of tonality—by embracing dissonance which, as Charles Rosen reminds us, is not "inherently unpleasant or nasty" (24). Thus, Adorno sees a redemptive—even politically so—possibility in music, one that in

turn breathes an understanding of how Mann ends *Doctor Faustus*. Adrian's final composition, *The Lamentations of Doctor Faustus*, follows Adorno's plea above nearly to the letter; to state it another way, Mann creates the music that Adorno theorizes—to the extent that the music is quite literally impossible because it exists only in the novel.¹⁰⁶ Music (albeit extant music) has long been seen in the novel tradition as a way to embrace passion or to demarcate emotion that the novel, in its realist mode, cannot hope to express without crossing into the ridiculous (Lindenberger 150). Mann certainly uses music to this familiar end, though he adds a symbolic component to the meaning of music in the novel, for it is through the compositions that the theme of Faust's redemption is played out. The most significant of the compositions for our purposes are *Apocalypse* and *Lamentations*.

Adrian's earlier composition, *Apocalypse*, is created in or about 1925-6, shortly after his encounter with the devil (475). Its style, Zeitblom recounts, is received with "a lot of angry shouts and insipid laughter, [but also] was a great sensation" (475).¹⁰⁷ Scaff accounts for this particular piece of music as a symbolic "hell"; that is, "He toils under a binding vision of the world's end, an "absolute" idea that demands an equally compulsory structure. The resulting fixed form...also replicates the eternality of hell" (157). Once again, however, Mann's aesthetic world doubles his political: as Adrian composes the oratorio, Germany is "selling" its soul to the Nazi Party—sliding into hell, if you will.

¹⁰⁶ And quite without adequate description to, in fact, play the pieces Mann describes. The only phrase for which Mann gives specific notes is the famed repetition of *Hetaera Esmeralda*, which we will look at momentarily.

¹⁰⁷ A description that cannot fail to bring to mind Igor Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*, which famously caused riots upon its premiere.

Zeitblom remarks that “...dissonance is the expression of everything that is lofty, serious, devout, and spiritual, while the harmonic and tonal elements are restricted to the world of hell or, in this context, to a world of banality and platitudes”; this statement is reminiscent of Höfgen’s understanding about the banalities of criticism with regard to his *Hamlet* (394). Likewise, it demonstrates a moment in which Adrian is not aligned completely with either the demonic or the political equivalent thereof; instead, here he embraces the musical form derided by the current political regime. In fact, he reverses the cultural expectations regarding dissonance and harmony by making the hated dissonant tones part of those things that are heavenly. Despite its focus on hell, then, *Apocalypse* can be understood as a moment of hope for Adrian and—by extension—Germany. Whatever the popular/political demands of the day, Adrian is still capable of producing music that is detached from external/political desires.

For Adorno and Mann, Scaff suggests, Adrian’s strict style is one that demarcates loneliness and lovelessness, a symbolic recapitulation of Adrian’s pact to foreswear love (154). It would be foolish to suggest, though, that Adrian never gives or receives love in the course of the novel. Indeed, one of the major crises for the composer is that each person to whom he gives his love—Echo, Rudolf—is destroyed by some fateful chance. Echo is felled by a disease long thought controlled, and Inez murders Rudi in the throws of jealous madness. Inez’ madness does not exist in a vacuum in the novel, though, for it is suggested that Adrian’s encounter with the devil may merely be a manifestation of the disease he contracted from Esmeralda, which might go far in explaining the significant repetition of

disease metaphors in the oath scene. Zeitblom even wonders if Adrian was not deliberate in his selection of Esmeralda,

...was it not love as well—or what was it what obsession, what act of will recklessly tempting God, what impulse to incorporate the punishment in the sin, or finally, what most deeply secreted desire to receive and conceive the demonic, to unleash deadly chemical change within his own body was it—that caused him, though warned, to spurn the warning and insist on possessing that flesh? (165)

The encounter with the prostitute, Esmeralda, is both a momentary expression of love (physical, in this case) by Adrian and the beginning of his fall. This is particularly true if one understands Adrian's encounter with the devil to be symptomatic of the disease he contracted from her. Indeed, his confession scene, which is nothing if not maniacal, is easier to understand in such terms, if significantly less rich.

Love is not, however, presented only as an act of madness or of impossibility (as in the case of Adrian). Instead, Zeitblom underscores the devil's prohibition of love for Adrian by connecting it to grace. This is not unlike the prohibitions against returning to Christ that are seen in earlier Faust texts; if love is synonymous with grace, the devil must prohibit it. However, in another doubling, Mann mirrors domestic love with love of country, suggesting the possibility of grace not only for Adrian but for Germany as well:

The ineluctable recognition of hopeless doom is not synonymous with the denial of love. I, a simple German man and scholar, have loved many things German; indeed, my life (insignificant, but capable of fascination and

devotion) has been dedicated to the love, the often terrified, always fearful, but eternally faithful love of a significant German human being and artist, whose mysterious sinfulness and horrible end have no power over this love—which perhaps, who knows, is but a reflection of grace. (T. Mann 474)

It is clearly not a lack of love for Germany that forces Zeitblom to see the very real possibility of its destruction; rather, he suggests that it is great love that allows him to see the imminent political doom. Likewise, it is his love for Adrian that allows him to face the demonic qualities of Adrian's life. Nevertheless, Zeitblom is not without hope for Germany or for Adrian; he sees that his love for Adrian (and Germany) may be a mirror for grace—the kind of universal grace we see in Hrotsvit's politics and legends.

Mann provides his Faust with the familiar confession scene, in which Adrian reenacts the perverse Last Supper of his predecessors. As it happens, Zeitblom makes evident, Adrian does not merely invite close friends, but also several less well-known acquaintances, including an old couple, the Schlaginhaufens. As Adrian's confession unfolds, the couple stands to leave. Zeitblom records "Not two minutes later, we heard the loud rattling noise of their car starting out in the courtyard and realized that they were driving off. This was very disturbing for some, since it meant the loss of the vehicle by which many of them had hoped to be transported back to the train station" (Mann 524). Now, in the midst of Adrian's confession, whether we accept that it is based in an actual event or is merely the ramblings of a madman, it is the difficulty to be had in returning to the station that is first "disturbing" to the gathering of humanists. The apathy with which the majority of those gathered react is typical of one particular element in the novel: the

reaction of the characters toward the rise of the Nazi party and, moreover, the allegorical implication that these non-fictional humans tended toward that very same apathy in response to Hitler. Worse, however, for Zeitblom, is the deliberate suppression of rage against the political machine—suppressed in order to protect art, learning, and curiosity.¹⁰⁸

Allegorically speaking, the most astonishing part of Adrian's last composition, *Lamentations of Doctor Faustus*, is the final passage, wherein, Zeitblom records, "...the chorus loses itself and which sounds like the lament of god for the lost state of his world, like the Creator's sorrowful "I did not will this" (515). Certainly this moment can be read in both symbolic worlds of the novel. Musically, it brings to bear the pain of Nepo's death and Adrian's agony at the end of his life; politically, the agony of a nation which, as Zeitblom records "...has been so razed to the ground that one does not even dare hope that Germany will be able anytime soon to engage in any sort of cultural activity...¹⁰⁹(528). Yet, despite the despair over Germany and the mirrored end of *Lamentations*, wherein "...this dark tone poem permits no consolation, reconciliation, transfiguration," hope still manages to survive the final moments in the novel and in *Lamentations* (515). Though Adrian

¹⁰⁸ Klaus Mann levels similar charges in his own book, though with considerably less philosophizing on the matter. To his staunchly liberal first wife, Barbara, Höfgen remarks that "You have no concept of the real seriousness of these things...You approach everything playfully, in a mood of detached curiosity—revolutionary faith is an interesting psychological phenomenon for you" (113). In the face of the rise of fascism, the problem here is simple. Many people reacted to the rise with an air of disdain and or "detached curiosity," failing to actually give fascists their due concern.

¹⁰⁹ The irony in this remark is painfully obvious. Hitler's grand vision involved building and artistic achievements, not desolation, yet, those very grand designs helped to dismantle, in Zeitblom's reading (and, perhaps Mann's as well), cultural achievement in Germany.

holds no hope for his own redemption (in this case, a sacred one), the cantata ends on what can be understood as a hopeful note: “But the tone, which is no more, for which, as it hangs there vibrating in the silence, only the soul still listens, and which was the dying note of sorrow—is no longer that, its meaning changes, it stands as a light in the night” (515). The cantata ends in ambiguity, as does Adrian, who is felled by a stroke before his death. What, then, of the music’s double? The political redemption of Germany remains equally ambiguous, ending, as the novel does, in 1940, well before the Nazis’ defeat. The final line, however, has a silent hope that mirrors that of the cantata’s end. An intercessory figure, not unlike Hrotsvit’s Saint Basilius, prays for the soul of Germany. This figure stands very much alone in the text, though he is joined by a number of “Christ-figures,” the most obvious of which is Nepo, who may help bring Adrian to his redemption.

The multiplicity of interpretation regarding Mann’s *Doctor Faustus* is almost as varied as definitions of redemption. What is clear, however, is that his novel does for the figure of Faust something akin to what the feminist revisions try to do to Lilith and other such figures; it acts as a politically concerned redemption. Just who is supposed to be redeemed is a more complicated problem. Critics, including David Ball, have suggested that one can understand *Doctor Faustus* as a correction to Goethe’s heroic Faust; if Goethe’s Faust can be read as the German man and the pact with the devil as the rise of Nazi Germany (which Zeitblom certainly seems to advocate), then *Doctor Faustus* may be understood as an attempt to undermine the bargain set up there. Yet, one cannot deny the end of *Lamentation*, as Scaff argues,

restores Adrian/Faust in a “triumph over despair” (163). Perhaps, however, Mann’s reworking of Faust serves to redeem the figure aesthetically, by wresting it out of the mythology that had been built around it in 1930’s and 40’s *Germanistik*. Faust, after all, is not redeemed at the end of *Lamentations*; like the Faust of Marlowe and *Faustbuch*, he descends into hell. It is Adrian, not Faust, who is redeemed in the end of the novel; thus, it is Germany—now without Faust—for whom there is hope.

CHAPTER 5

AESTHETIC REDEMPTION, OR ART AFTER AUSCHWITZ

It is easy to see that the book did not bear its menacing title in vain, for it dealt with violence as the triumphant counterpart of truth. It made it possible to understand that the truth's fate was loosely related to that of the individual, indeed identical with it—and that fate was devaluation.

(T. Mann 386)

I remarked at the opening of the previous chapter that I intended to bifurcate the political and the aesthetic definitions as much as possible. I did the same with the quotations that head the two chapters, as this is the continuation of the paragraph quoted in Chapter 4. This part, however, alludes to one of the most difficult matters with respect to redemption: the role of aesthetics. This fourth, and final, branch of redemption addresses the relationship (hinted at by Adorno and Mann) between aesthetic production and the world. That is, these texts may seek to use their art in order to redeem the art that came before (and, perhaps, those that will follow) and the world in which they exist. One could argue that the very act of recontextualizing a figure—say Faust—in different places and epochs is attempt to do just this—redeem a figure; I suggest as much at the end of the previous chapter. And, certainly, we can understand Goethe's vision of Faust this way. No longer a fool or a figure of doom and damnation, Faust becomes, however briefly, an intellectual hero. He is redeemed, secularly and aesthetically, by his author.

We can see the matter of aesthetic redemption in two ways. In the first, a character may be redeemed by art within the confines of the text. We often see art presented as the catalyst for restoration, particularly in politically charged novels. In *Mephisto*, art is far too corrupted by politics to redeem anyone, though art was certainly treated in the Nazi period as a means of returning to glory. Aesthetic redemption can also be understood in the restoration of art itself, however. The most engaging example of this, particularly in light of Faust, is in the restoration of art after World War II in *Doctor Faustus*. In order to see how aestheticized redemption works, we must first return to Walter Benjamin, asking if Adorno is right: can poetry exist after Auschwitz?

Redemptive Art

South Africa's Zakes Mda engages the possibility of redemptive art,¹¹⁰ which is nearly always tied up in politics. In *Ways of Dying*, aesthetic creation restores some dignity and humanity to the people of the shanty town. Set as it is during Apartheid collapse, the novel's fascination with politics is evident. However, it is not politics that can redeem the shanty town's citizens because it is politics that keeps killing them. Instead, the art of Toloki, Noria, and Jwara serves to redeem the poor:

¹¹⁰ Definitions of obscenity that require that art have a "redeeming value" seem to suggest that art must be "redeeming" in order to be art (or to have artistic value at any rate). What, exactly, is meant by "redeeming" in such contexts is an intriguing question, though I suspect it is largely secular in nature—that is, what can be accepted as "art" ultimately instructs an audience on the moral/aesthetic codes of a given society. Mda has a far more simple and, for me, affirming way of handling the question in his novel: art brings joy to its audience.

They watch him draw colorful pictures of children's faces, and of children playing merry-go-round in the clouds...They laugh and make fun of the strange expressions on their purple, yellow, red, and blue faces...Others come and look at Toloki's work, and say it is the work of a genius...As usual, they cannot say what the meaning is. It is not necessary to say, or even to know, what the meaning is. It is only enough to know that there is a meaning, and it is a profound one. (Mda 200)

Mda makes the significance of art more clear in the final moments of the novel, when the smell of burning tires, which had previously heralded the death of a child, begins to encircle the shacks. "But this time it is not mingled with the sickly stench of roasting human flesh. Just pure wholesome rubber" (212). The redemption is brought about by Toloki's drawings and Noliwa's songs, which serve to reconnect the fractured community.

Likewise, *Mephisto* examines this need for aesthetic redemption. Time and again, Höfgen reminds himself and his readers that he is merely an actor playing the role assigned to him: "What do men want from me? Why do they pursue me? All I am is a perfectly ordinary actor..." (K. Mann 263). Yet, as the text makes clear, Höfgen uses his acting to manipulate; this is particularly true of the Mephisto role, which he uses to ingratiate himself with the general. Rather rapidly in the course of the novel, art becomes a function of politics. Höfgen, too, becomes a puppet of those same political persuasions—based on whoever is pulling the purse strings at any given moment. Moreover, the ability to criticize art becomes a mere tool of the

political realm; thus, anyone nominally acceptable by the political standards will be reviewed well. Others will be panned. Höfgen knows that no matter how pathetic his performance of Hamlet is, he will be applauded for it: “I was not Hamlet, he said to himself miserably. The newspapers will assure me that I was every inch the Prince of Denmark. But they will be lying” (257). Art is far too corrupted by politics to be itself redeemed or to redeem Höfgen in the end.¹¹¹

Both Thomas and Klaus Mann recognized the relationship between aesthetics and politics under the Nazi regime and embedded the rhetoric in their novels. Indeed, in their invocation of the Faust legend they mirror and then splinter the intentions of Nazi Aesthetics. Time and again we are told in *Mephisto* that “the days of cultural Bolshevism are over...We now produce neither Semitic nor Gallic works but German art” (167). The Nazi party imagined the shift away from “cultural Bolshevism” as the redemption of German culture. As Spotts reminds us, “One of [Hitler’s] foremost objectives was... to create a Germany in which culture was supreme and German culture a model for the world...” (28). In order to accomplish such a feat, non-German art, like non-German peoples had to be devalued. German art (and, by extension, German people) were mythologized. Faust came to be representative of that supremacy in Georg Schott’s *Goethes Faust in heutiger Schau*, wherein Faust is

¹¹¹ There is a serious problem with analysis such as the one Klaus Mann makes through Höfgen here. Art is very often used as a political tool, and equally as often we only criticize those that we do not care for the message of. Art does not exist in a social vacuum; I’m not convinced it ever has or should.

The genial man, dissatisfied with mere material possessions, and constantly striving after higher goals. Faust is ruthless when it comes to achieving his desired objectives and joins up with the Devil himself if necessary to reach them...The true sign of a Faustian man is the fact that he strives not for himself, but rather for his people, the *Volk*, and any crime committed on this path of striving must be seen in such a perspective. (Belgum, et. al 158-159)

Thus, fascism reads Faust within the context of means justifying the ends which allows for a fairly simple validation for their own violent means. Thus, the political world gains control of the aesthetic. Aesthetics and politics, as both Manns make clear in their novels, become tightly intertwined and even indistinguishable, a problem that Walter Benjamin addresses in one of his last essays. What happens when the interpretation of art (and even art itself) is usurped by a political force?

Art Redeemed

While Benjamin focuses on the redemptive possibilities in allegory in his early work, his late ones adapt the framework of redemption and shift the source from linguistic fragmentation in allegory to mechanical reproduction of art. In both cases, Benjamin suggests the importance of decay: first of language and then of what Benjamin calls “aura.” He defines the notion of aura in his essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in which he suggests that the control of art is also a control of thought. Thus, he sees the war films of the Nazi period as particularly dangerous as violence and war become the principle focus of art. He offers the following on the aestheticization of war, particularly by Filippo Marinetti

and the Futurists: “Mankind, which in Homer’s time was an object of contemplation of the Olympian gods, now is one for itself. Its self-alienation has reached such a degree that it can experience its own destruction as an aesthetic pleasure of the first order” (242). Art, according to Benjamin, is emptied of its redemptive function when we can watch our own destruction over and over again, which empties apocalyptic images of their awe-inspiring power.

Benjamin describes this transition as a product of the ability to reproduce art mechanically: film instead of live plays or literature, the photo of the cathedral instead of the experience of the thing in itself. What changes in the mechanical reproduction is the absence of “aura”—the unique presence of the artwork, which can only be felt in the original. Though Benjamin clearly sees the positive potential of mechanical reproduction (and the consequent destruction of aura), he is clear that the very elements that could free the masses are equally able to be used in enslaving them. Such a conundrum can be seen in his reading of film production—particularly in what Benjamin calls the fascist movement’s aestheticization of war. To put this in other words, it is precisely humankind’s mechanical capabilities that allow us the capacity to ponder and aestheticize—and even to create the means to achieve—annihilation of the human race. Thomas Mann alludes to such problems in a letter from 1941, in which he describes German Nationalism as “mechanized mysticism” (364). It has both a mythological faith in its own self-worth/creative power and the destructive capabilities to ensure its own dominance.

In the ensuing years, art (and, indeed, film) has become increasingly obsessed with the annihilation of man—*Testament*, *The Stand*, and even *Dr. Strangelove* testify to this from within popular culture, each toying with the end of the world. Benjamin died before the first Atomic bombs were dropped in Nagasaki and Hiroshima, yet his essay seems to portend such an event—the massive destruction of humankind borne of the collective creative genius of Albert Einstein, Robert J. Oppenheimer, and others.¹¹² These events, even more than the fascist Futurist movement that so vexed Benjamin, necessarily altered the considerations of politics and the aesthetic world.

In his essay “Art versus Violence,” Lawrence Friedman remarks “[a]lthough fantasies of world destruction have existed, this is the first time in the history of man that, thanks to his ever-expanding intellect, the possibility of total destruction has become a reality” (333). As with Benjamin, Friedman believes that the modern age is one of expanding technological capabilities, not all of which are entirely beneficial to humankind, particularly if one considers the appropriation of such technology by the political machine for the purposes of controlling the masses. Benjamin accuses fascism of using such means remarking that the

...logical result of Fascism is the introduction of aesthetics into political life. The violation of the masses, whom Fascism...forces to its knees, has its counterpart in the violation of an apparatus which is pressed into the production of ritual values. (241)

¹¹² How easy is it, too, to describe these men as Fausts?

Here we find several of Benjamin's key terms in the "Work of Art" essay, most importantly the use of the "apparatus" for ritual means. This comment is closely related to his definition of aura, which is destroyed in the advancement of technological/mechanical reproduction of art.

In the age of mechanical reproduction, the likeness of a work can be easily and quickly reproduced, thus rendering the ritual value of the "authentic,"¹¹³ unique object obsolete. It is to this uniqueness that Benjamin appends the term "aura." He defines aura

...as the unique phenomenon of a distance, however close it may be. If, while resting on a summer afternoon, you follow your eyes a mountain range on the horizon or a branch which casts a shadow over you, you may experience the aura of those mountains, of that branch. (223)

Aura is the unique quality of an original work of art that is indicative of its cult value; that is, the value ascribed to art which cannot be reproduced and is likely to be found within the confines of a museum or a private collection, its dignity preserved by distance from the masses. In such a location, the artwork assumes a religious (hence cult) function wherein the chosen few can worship the artwork in its sacred, secluded location. If we accept Benjamin's suggestion that the cult value

¹¹³ Benjamin differentiates between the mechanical reproduction and the manual one, which is generally regarded as a mere forgery: "Confronted with its manual reproduction...the original preserved all its authority; not so *vis à vis* technological reproduction" (220). He credits the superiority of the technological reproduction to two things: the independence of it from the original and the ability to be in situations the original is denied. Unfortunately, I am convinced that the latter is also responsible for the proliferation of Monet umbrellas and carpets, Degas coffee mugs, and Velvet Elvis paintings.

of art is an outgrowth of its “original use value” (in ritual), then Benjamin’s desire to see the end of aura is made clear: “for the first time in world history, mechanical reproduction emancipates the work of art from its parasitical dependence on ritual” (224). The location of the original becomes virtually irrelevant in the face of reproduction, because the cult appeal declines and art is severed from ritual and religion.

This section of Benjamin’s essay bears a striking resemblance to Marinetti’s 1909 manifest founding Futurism. One particular area they agree upon is the need to sever art from ritual and cult values (such as the display of the artwork in a museum). Marinetti exclaims “We will destroy museums, libraries, academies of every kind, will fight moralism, feminism, and every opportunistic or utilitarian cowardice” (Hulten 514). Certainly more rhetorically violent than Benjamin, Marinetti insists on the leveling of all forms of institution and the radical equality of humankind (a premise that Benjamin attacks in the “Work of Art” essay), while also encouraging aesthetics to embrace violence/violent change and to return to “primordial elements,” in which art becomes a function of political struggles, rather than art for its own, aesthetic sake (514). Interestingly, Benjamin sees the Futurist movement as the continuation of the *l’art pour l’art* movement in the nineteenth century. He traces the genealogy via the attempt to separate art from the human senses, relegating it instead to a function of political ideology.

The functional shift comes about as aura decays in the face of mechanical reproductions and happens as the result of two desires: “...to bring things ‘closer’

spatially and humanly,...and to overcom[e] the uniqueness of every reality by accepting its reproduction” (223). Rather than permitting the art a cultic distance, the contemporary viewer demands that art be brought to him—made available to him in his own time and space. This can be achieved by way of several means, including photography, lithography, and filmmaking, all of which reproduce art in such a way that it can be easily disseminated and viewed—even at home—by the masses. In addition, we can see the evidence of this desire to reach the thing by way of the reproductions in such things as picture-postcard books, television travel shows, magazines, news video, and photo books, each of which, Benjamin would remind us, displays images wholly different than what is available to the human eye.

Two examples come to mind here: aerial photos of cityscapes (or, indeed, the Earth) and autopsy photos. Both of these types of photography render the object differently than it can be seen by the unaided eye. The city is displayed as a huge, uniform beast, while the corpse is presented pornographically; that is, the body is rendered in discrete sections¹¹⁴ rather than as a whole; some parts are not even recognizably “human,” and the corpse-object is fashioned into an object of the gaze that does not have to recognize any humanity, for the corpse-object is merely dead.

Benjamin sees a potential result in the declining sacred function of art (the decaying of aura): the substitution of politics for ritual. He presents this argument by recognizing both the positive and negative potentials of such a switch. If politics

¹¹⁴ By “cut up” I am referring to the gaze of the subject as pornographic one, not to the act of the autopsy itself.

in art works for the good of humanity, then Benjamin sees great potential in the art world—especially in filmmaking, but only if the masses have access to the means of production. If that access is denied, then the political machine can too easily attempt to control them, as Benjamin suggests of fascist films. He suggests that the means of this control comes about when the masses, denied of the means of aesthetic production, are led to believe in the authenticity of the reproduction—a false aura. If the aura can be imitated and disseminated, then a false authenticity may be embraced by the masses for whom Benjamin otherwise sees such potential in filmmaking. From his perspective, the possibility of a proletarian revolution through art is intriguing but presents some serious problems, particularly if the technological capabilities that might spark such a revolution are appropriated by politics. “The film,” remarks Benjamin,

makes the cult value recede into the background...by putting the public in the position of the critic, but also by the fact that at the movies this position requires no attention. The public is an examiner, but an absent-minded one.
(Benjamin 240-41)

The public becomes a passive receiver in the face of mechanical reproduction, rather than the active one that had to seek out the work of art. Furthermore, as Benjamin points out, film does not allow for the contemplation involved in viewing a painting; the images of film constantly change, making the particular difficult to isolate and study during viewing. The problem with fascism, as Benjamin sees it, is that the politics themselves become aestheticized. War (the ultimate political machine) can

become a spectacle of art and an extension of the subjugation of the individual human to the societal machine. To this end, Marinetti remarks “War is beautiful because it initiates the dreamt-of metallization of the human body” (qtd. in Benjamin 241).

From Marinetti’s charge, one may see the connection between the mechanical reproduction of art (which destroys the unique aura) to the mechanical (technological?) reproduction of the human being within the war machine: the indestructible “super-soldier” or even the encasing of man inside the metal tank or plane. Each renders the most human attributes as mechanical. Marinetti further advocates such technological renovations on the human form in the 1913 manifesto: “Man multiplied by the machine. New mechanical sense, a fusion of instinct with the efficiency of motors and tamed forces” (518). If our creative expression can be duplicated at such a rate and the aura falsely reinserted by politics, then part of what makes us “human” has been eliminated. No longer is it necessary to mediate ritual with art; now art acts in the domain of politics, emptying itself of dignity and rendering the human as an object of contemplation (even pornographic contemplation). So while the potential for change is certainly in the hands of the audience, Benjamin fears apathy—an apathy that could allow fascism to take possession of the means of production and insert a false air of authenticity.

An example of the reinsertion of aura, one is reminded of “The Most Photographed Barn in the World” in Don DeLillo’s *White Noise*. The barn itself holds no interest for the onlookers, only its status of multiple reproductions on film.

Lutz Koepnick, in his *Walter Benjamin and the Aesthetics of Power*, discusses this intriguing example of Benjamin's aesthetic theory in his examination of DeLillio's novel. For Koepnick, *White Noise* is a metaphor for the ways in which fascism can appropriate art—or even life—for a political purpose.

In this passage, we follow Hitler scholar Gladney and his friend Murray to a Midwestern tourist attraction known as the most-photographed barn in America, a pastoral scene produced for the circuits of commodity consumption and the cameras of a myriad of visitors. Taking a photograph of a barn becomes a religious experience. It amplifies rather than destroys the barn's unique presence in time and space... Aura here emerges as an effect of mechanical reproducibility. It is manufactured by people taking pictures of other people taking pictures, and thus, it is the result of the postauratic desire to take home the event in the form of a photographic copy. Yet although it's a human fabrication, the aura of the barn holds the spectator in check. A mere simulation, it nevertheless engenders submissive and highly conformist spectator positions. (Koepnick 5)

Rather than a cult value, the mechanically reproduced work of art has an “exhibition value” inscribed by the ability to distribute art for the masses to experience. Fascist aesthetics encourages the false reinsertion of aura and, perhaps, even a false consciousness. In so doing, fascist art has the ability to make the audience identify with “that which forces them into submission and conformity and ultimately, fosters their destruction” (Koepnick 4). The mechanization of drama

(which is now film) and the removal of the aura from art necessarily alter aesthetics; the post-auratic works films and photographs only attain uniqueness, or aura, through a secondary reinsertion of aura, frequently through an appeal to nationalism (as in fascist aesthetic politics).

We can see such a defiant attempt to breathe nationalism into the space of aura in Marinetti's 1915 manifesto, in which he centers Futurism in Italy and encourages artists to embrace radical patriotism:

All liberties should be given to the individual and the collectivity, save that of being cowardly. Let it be proclaimed that the word Italy should prevail over the word Freedom...Futurist poets, painters, sculptors and musicians of Italy! As long as war lasts let us set aside our verse, our brushes, scalpels, and orchestras! The red holidays of genius have begun! There is nothing for us to admire today but the dreadful symphonies of the shrapnels and the mad sculptures that our inspired artillery moulds among the masses of the enemy. (Hulten 601)

We can see in this call to arms both the nationalist and totalizing rhetoric that pervaded fascism. Even the artist must join the war effort—but not by, as Benjamin calls it, by politicizing art (which he suggests was the role of communism) but by aestheticizing politics. We can see this aestheticization in Marinetti's comments above, particularly when he describes the falling shrapnel as a “symphony.” Such pronouncements worry Benjamin because of what they will destroy—the masses are the ones that fight the wars and jingoistic nationalism fed

by the strident aesthetically rendered war will lead them from the ease of apathy (in which the rhetoric can seep in without contemplation) to burning nationalist pride that results in the deaths of the many.

The means of aesthetic technology, Benjamin asserts, is denied to the masses, thus preventing them from controlling its output. This decay heralded the control over the output of the aesthetic machinery found in fascist films and, as Benjamin notes, in capitalist ones as well: “In Western Europe the capitalistic exploitation of the film denies consideration to modern man’s legitimate claim to being reproduced [on film]” (Benjamin 232). He suggests that the masses, rather than existing merely as a collective spectator, should be allowed to control what is filmed, and should themselves film and be filmed; Benjamin compares such a distribution of technology to the ability of the masses to become authors through letters to the editor (Benjamin 232). Once the masses have control over the production machinery, they can put the tools to use for their own purposes.¹¹⁵ However, the denial of the masses’ right to the means of production prevents such a freedom, relegating them to spectators. These spectators are then at the mercy of those who control the means of production. Benjamin’s perceptive theory about film suggests that the medium allows art to be taken out of private collections (what he calls “cult value”) and given to the masses (“exhibition value”). Without such a provision, he fears (rightly, it seems) that the new technology can be used to control the populace,

¹¹⁵ One wonders what Benjamin would have thought about the proliferation of handheld camcorders, which allows the means of production for film to be far more widely distributed. This would appear to be a fulfillment of his vision of the cameras in the hands of the masses.

rather than freeing it. He prophetically¹¹⁶ muses that the failure to use technology for the good of humanity results in war, the destruction of humanity:

If the natural utilization of productive forces is impeded by the property system, the increase in technological devices, in speed, and in the sources of energy will press for an unnatural utilization, and this is found in war...The horrible features of imperialistic warfare are attributable to the discrepancy between the tremendous means of production and their inadequate utilization in the process of production— in other words, to unemployment and the lack of markets. (Benjamin 242)

Denied the ability, through whatever means, of keeping the productive forces properly balanced, humankind turns to war. What brings man to war is always a matter of property, so far as Benjamin's Marxist perspective allows.

Once, however, the tremendous technological advances outpace the distribution of property, technology can become the pawn of politics. In other words, had Benjamin lived long enough to see it, he might have attributed the Atomic Bomb to a the fascist control of the property system, wherein the technology was not put to the "good" use of creating jobs, but the "bad" use of warfare. I would be remiss here if I failed to point out that it was not the dream of the Futurists that created and utilized the catastrophic bomb—it was a capitalist/democratic republic.

¹¹⁶ While what he says is true of any war, I think that his commentary is especially prescient of some of the events of World War II that he did not live to see: the death camps, the A-bomb, etc. Each of these represents a use of technology to the detriment of, rather than the improvement, of humanity.

Thus we must remember that while Benjamin focuses primarily on Futurism and fascism, the results of the technological advancement can come from any direction.

Pirandello, Benjamin, and the Death of Drama

Turning once again to the destruction of aura in the age of mechanical reproduction, we can examine Benjamin's conversation with Pirandello in the "Work of Art" essay to more completely describe the aesthetic situation. In the essay, Benjamin focuses on Pirandello's *Si Gira* [*The Notebooks of Serafino Gubbio: or, Shoot!*], which engages many of the same questions Benjamin has, particularly in terms of a genealogy and hierarchy of aesthetic reproduction. Pirandello and Benjamin both describe the rather peculiar relationship between painting and filmmaking in the course of their work. Benjamin points out that painting does not have the same consequences as film, because "the painting invites the spectator to contemplation; before it the spectator can abandon himself to his associations" (238). We know already that such abandonment of self is impossible in the face of the rapidly changing movie frames. Pirandello's Georgio Mirelli's paintings, the only painted representations of any consequence in the novel, seem to be a part of film culture despite a lack of any direct exposure to it—still frames of the movies, perhaps. Thus, we see the human painter presented as the camera—as a machine reproducing the visible world of a face.

Interestingly, Benjamin suggests that portraiture is the last attempt to retain the ritual element of art—particularly in the Renaissance cult of beauty. At the time Mirelli painted the series of six portraits, Varia Nestoroff was not yet

involved in the film industry, yet this series of canvases, so much like a series of frames on a film strip, seems to foretell her later involvement in film. Additionally, Pirandello takes great pain to describe actors as little more than models for the painter-camera:

In exile, not only from the stage, but also in a sense from themselves.

Because their action, the *live* action of their *live* bodies, there, on the screen of the cinematograph, no longer exists: it is their *image* alone, caught in a moment, in a gesture, an expression, that flickers and disappears (106).

As in a painting, the actor in a silent movie is reproduced as an image without voice, rather than an active being. Nevertheless, Pirandello appears to view the paintings more favorably than film when he describes the light that Mirelli imposed upon the portraits of the Nestoroff: “The assumption of that body of hers into a prodigious life, in a light by which she could never, even in her dreams, have imagined herself as being bathed and warmed...”(263). These paintings, conceived in love (or at least lust), establish the feelings of the artist for the model in ways that Pirandello does not address with filmmaking, where there is only impassivity on the part of the camera-artist, ostensibly because of the actual intervention of technology between the cameraman and the actor.

That Pirandello is better known as a playwright than a novelist should come as no surprise to even the most casual reader of *Gubbio*. Repeatedly he, through Gubbio's notes, chastises the new medium of film for the changes and hardships it has wrought upon theater. The playwright's voice is evident throughout the novel,

but nowhere more explicitly than in the moments after Gubbio's confrontation with the Nestoroff at the tiger's cage. The crisis for traditional works—especially drama—is here made clear:

...[W]ith its mechanical reproduction, being able to offer at a low price to the general public a spectacle that is always new, fills the cinematograph halls and emptied the theaters, so that all, or nearly all the dramatic companies are now doing wretched business. (105)

This specter of mechanization is essential to Pirandello's critique of film, as the camera is repeatedly associated with a vampire, a spider, and a tiger. The camera draws life out of the actors, leaving them "torn from that direct communion with the audience" (105). Thus, it seems that the mechanization of acting was destroying the craft, rendering actors as mere props—particularly during this era of silent films.

Whether the advent of the sound film changed his perspective or his own aesthetic/political theory simply differed from Pirandello's, Benjamin does not rapidly dismiss film, despite his agreement that the intercession of the camera destroys the actor's aura. Benjamin notes that

The aura which, on stage, emanates from *Macbeth*, cannot be separated from that of the actor. However, the singularity of the shot in the studio is that the camera is substituted for the public. Consequently, the aura that envelops the actor vanishes, and with it the aura of the figure he portrays. (Benjamin 229)

Here we can deduce the “place” of aura, which heretofore appeared to be a part of the art work itself. The aura, rather like the Kantian sublime, exists in the space between the audience’s perception and the thing-in-itself. Once the audience becomes mechanized (the camera taking its place), the aforementioned apathy can take place. The mechanized camera does the work of contemplation and the human audience is left to be pulled in to the world of the film without time to think about the scenes presented.

The very fact that Pirandello’s narrative is presented as Gubbio’s own notebooks questions of the relationship between the film and literary cultures, one which Benjamin also briefly entertains. Undoubtedly, the literary culture comes out victorious for Pirandello, with a single, but prominent exception, namely the desire by great authors to join in the filmmaking frenzy: “Eminent authors, dramatists, poets, novelists, come here, all of them regularly and solemnly proposing the 'artistic regeneration' of the industry” (107). Here, of course, the writers all but sell themselves to the film industry, rather than being renewed by it.

Whether he was completely aware of it or not, the style of Gubbio’s literary presentation seems to be mediated by film itself. Told from the point of view of the camera (or at least its operator— though Gubbio certainly acts as camera in some situations and sees himself in such a role), the narrative easily slides between one temporal reality and another: between Gubbio’s life in Rome and his previous time spent in the company of Georgio Mirelli. Constructing the narrator as the camera may also account for the remarkable visual aspects of this novel, including the

climax. However, even the opening scenes of the novel, as Gubbio relates his first experiences in Rome, are quite cinematic. So too is the first flashback to Gubbio's history with Mirelli. Here the narrative pans the scene, in much the way a camera would for film: "Next I see the room from which one goes down to the garden...It has a floor of large, square tiles of terra-cotta, a trifle worn with use" (39). The novel, however, can provide for the senses that the silent films could not; readers can hear the "growl of the beast and the horrible gasp of the man" as the tiger mauls Nuti (332). Pirandello employs film in the writings of Gubbio, and he shows the ways in which literature surpasses film.

For Gubbio, the act of writing is simply cathartic: "I rid myself of my professional impassivity, and avenge myself as well; and with myself avenge ever so many others, condemned like myself to be nothing more than *a hand that turns a handle*" (8). Here, Pirandello recognizes that the artist is becoming mechanized, just as Marinetti encourages in his manifestos (this is not such a stroke of luck, the novel was written contemporaneously with the manifestos). It is in these moments of written expression (those outside the narration of the plot), that Gubbio becomes the critic and that the voice of Pirandello the playwright is so clear:

[H]ow are we to take seriously a work that has no other object than to deceive, not ourselves, but other people? And to deceive them by putting together the most idiotic fictions, to which the machine is responsible for giving a wonderful reality? (87)

The deception of film appears to differ from a similar deception in theater by purporting to be something real. Theater, whatever its pretensions, is limited by its theatrical space. Film, able to move between spaces as needed, has no such limitations and can therefore masquerade as reality. Pirandello also despises the severing of the actor/audience relationship; he defends the position of the actors, saying

[T]hey do not hate the machine merely for the degradation of the stupid and silent work to which it condemns them; they hate it, first and foremost, because they see themselves withdrawn, feel themselves torn from that direct communion with the public from which in the past they derived their richest reward, their greatest satisfaction: that of seeing, of hearing from the stage, in a theatre, an eager, anxious multitude follow their *live* action, stirred with emotion, tremble, laugh, become excited, break out in applause (105).

Such things as audience response, of course, are missing in film. What perhaps is most telling about Pirandello's animosity toward film is not the position of the actor, but his concern over the writers of the scripts, who must be, as Polacco tells those whose scripts he rejects, stupid. "As film it won't go: I tell you, my dear fellow, it's too subtle, too subtle" (108). Whether Polacco was entirely truthful with the rejected writers is irrelevant, the position of the playwright (and by extension, literature) is nevertheless threatened by the insipid medium that can produce visual stories from the basest of scripts. Film can produce a sham and make it real, the writing—the

authenticity—is of little real concern or value. Actors are rendered as images and the playwrights as useless. More than a little fear appears in Pirandello's voice in the novel, as theater had already taken a beating from the film industry.

Benjamin discusses one final aspect of film culture that is an extension of Pirandello's above concerns about the deceptive qualities of film—the reinvention of aura through the “spell of personality” (Benjamin 231). Denied the connection with the audience extant in live productions of drama, the actors turn to commodity—more specifically, to personality outside the studio. From this is borne the cultic worship of celebrity—the paparazzi following the star of the moment, the angst over a celebrity's death (illness, divorce, childbirth, marriage, or plastic surgery), and even the proliferation of celebrity autopsy photos testify to this false reinsertion of ritual into film. The dead celebrity is worshiped as a god.

This celebrity worship is not far removed from the new mythologies created in Nazi Germany. Siegfried and Faust are heroes to be worshipped; their values are to be followed. The ritual value of the Faust figure had long since disappeared, of course; with the ability for wide dissemination of the text after 1450, Faust became commodity, the aura of the texts obliterated by mass production. So, by the time Thomas Mann began *Doctor Faustus*, the aura of Faust had long since been destroyed. No longer was he the warning for the masses; rather, he is reworked as a fool and then a hero. The Nazi Party had re-ritualized the figure as heroic mythology (the “mechanized mythology” Mann refers to in Benjamin's quotation). Mann circumvents this re-ritualization of Faust by creating a new figure—Adrian—

and confining Faust himself to music—music that is itself confined to the silence of the novel. The purpose appears to be two-fold: the compositions elucidate the possibilities for grace for Adrian and for Germany while seeking to restore Faust to seeker of knowledge, rather than Fascist hero. The key to redemption in *Doctor Faustus* is art and the possibilities of expressing love (which is synonymous with grace) through that art.

Adrian's compositions, especially *Lamentations* and *Apocalypse*, embody several of Benjamin's notions. *Apocalypse* exemplifies the false and the mechanical. Based on the book of Revelation, the composition also ponders the annihilation of the human race, coldly and distantly. This is the problem, of course, that Benjamin recognized in the aestheticization of war: the viewers are emotionally distant from atrocity. For him, the only way to avoid this was to put the film apparatus into the hands of the masses, allowing them to create rather than to contemplate their own destruction. Ostensibly, such creations would be motivated by emotion, not just ideology. Thus love, and not just destruction, could be filmed and contemplated. Mann recognized in Goethe and in Germans in general a tendency to detachment as Scaff notes, Mann saw Germans as

...inclined to abstract or mystical thinking, an affliction Mann calls "musicality" and connects with Faust, who is a "musical" figure. Such extraordinary intellectuality inhibits the normally responsive human sensibilities, and Mann's Leverkühn mirrors the national tendency to alienation. (153)

Apocalypse is heavily imbued with this contemplative detachment and loneliness. It is starkly terrifying for Zeitblom who describes it as an “attempt to subsume within it...the life-history of music, from its premusical, elemental, magically rhythmic stages on up to its most complicated perfection...(393). Several times, Zeitblom remarks on the mechanization of the human sounds in the oratorio. The first instance is the inclusion of speakers “whose use the composer specified at various points to produce directional and acoustic gradations that had never been heard before...” (396). This particular instance is not as terrifying for Zeitblom as the other manipulations of sound (indeed, he is both impressed and distressed by the very notion of using speakers for an oratorio) but it admirably represents that technological control over humans that Benjamin both feared and lauded and that Mann saw as symbols of detached manipulation.

A primitive sound, the *glissando*, haunts Zeitblom in his recollection of the composition. It sounds, he says, “terrifying,” “dangerous,” “malevolent,” and, as it happens, mechanized. Most of the *glissandi* emanate from the brass instruments, before the human voice, the most familiar version, begins. These barbaric, or past, sounds are

the most bone chilling sound... [especially in] the application of the *glissando* to the human voice (which as the first object of tonal ordering had, after all, been liberated from its primal howl across a range of pitches,...it is

horrifyingly reproduced by the chorus of the *Apocalypse* when it assumes the role of screaming humanity upon the opening of the seventh seal. (393-4)

The effect of the sliding tone is a decent: from earth to hell, from present to past. And, it is fear-inspiring. It also evokes part of the political problem in the novel; that is, the sliding scale that removes us to a past tradition imitates a political system enjoined to a Romantic tradition that idolizes a past, especially a mythological past.

Zeitblom notes that the role of the Whore of Babylon is assigned to a coloratura soprano, which he qualifies as surprising and, moreover, “oppressive, dangerous, [and] malevolent” (394). Traditionally speaking, this is not as surprising as Zeitblom would have it seem. Coloraturas are almost always tragic and occasionally malevolent figures. The Whore of Babylon exemplifies the coloratura convention of the *femme fatale*, similar to Mozart’s Queen of the Night. Disturbed by the mechanization of the human voice when the coloratura is “at times so completely like a flute” and the trumpets and saxophones become the voice of the devil and his minions, Zeitblom describes a composition in which humanity is given over to music—even the voice of the Whore becomes flute. This process of mechanization is a recognizable from Mann’s own remarks on Nazi mythology as well as Benjamin’s.

Love, as noted earlier, is not absent in the text, which problematizes any assumption that Adrian is unredeemable; there is always a way out available in *Doctor Faustus*. Adrian must find a balance between his detachments and his

desire. The figure in Mann's novel that must be mentioned here—because she connects so strongly to the love theme—is the woman Adrian names “Esmeralda.” She not only infects him with the syphilis that may be responsible for giving him his extraordinary creative genius and, eventually, kills him, but she infects his very music. Zeitblom reveals early on:

there is a conspicuously frequent use of a figure, a sequence of five or six notes, that begins with an H (which Anglo-Saxons call a B) and ends on a Es (known in the English-speaking world as an E-flat) with E and A alternating in between....: H-E-A-E-Es: *Hetaera Esmeralda*.” (166)

The musical figure here also doubles in the text, as has been pointed out by many critics, as both Esmeralda and Frau von Tolan, an Adrian supporter. When Adrian acts on his desires for Esmeralda, he may relegate himself to death, but it is also his first foray into love. That the name repeats throughout his scores is significant, of course; it can be read as both a theme of love and one of loneliness, of connection and of hell.

Adrian's final composition, Scaff notes, reverses much of this—especially the loneliness problem. It also returns the Esmeralda theme to his music. “The artist who is moved by love,” she writes, “fashions new and valuable works. The creative spirit is liberated from bondage to the self and to the past, and a new strength, at once sexual, political, and aesthetic breaks out of oppression” (161). The artist moved by love can be redeemed from the slavery of mechanical detachment; the art he or she creates can redeem others. For *Lamentation*, Adrian is absolutely “moved

by love.” To be sure, it is a love entrenched by the sadness over the loss of young Nepo, but it is love that Adrian finally possessed nonetheless. Zeitblom’s effusive description of the *Lamentation* alludes, strongly, to several important aspects of the old Faust tales (and *Hrotsvit*, in particular): penance and the release from despair:

But from a creative viewpoint, from the viewpoint both of music history and personal fulfillment, is there not something jubilant, some high triumph in this terrible gift for redress and compensation...Does it not imply a recovery...of emotion’s highest and deepest response to a level of intellectuality and formal rigor that must first be achieved for such an event—the reversal, that is, of calculated coldness into an expressive cry of the soul...—to occur? (510)

Lamentation acts as Leverkühn’s penitential confession and immediately precedes his verbal one. The *Hetaera Esmeralda* theme occurs at the moment of Faustus’ pact with Mephisto. *Apocalypse* also returns; apparently in keeping with Adorno’s suggestions about music, Mann’s final composition is both expressive and strict, and “the lamentation...reverses the diabolic mockery of the oratorio, replacing ridicule with an uncharacteristic admiration” (Scaff 162). Like the *Apocalypse*, it looks back on music of the past; this time, instead of mechanized voices and horror, the past is made present in reverberations-echoes: “like an exercise over all the expressive characters ever present in musical history, which here, then, by a kind of process of alchemic distillation, are refined and crystallized to basic forms of emotional meaning” (513). Thus, we can see the phrasing as an attempt to have *Lamentation*

look back on *Apocalypse* in repentance. Humans are returned to human voices, rather than flutes; instruments sing, symphonically this time and not as devils. Rather than the contemplation of destruction found in *Apocalypse*, *Lamentation* contemplates love and connection; Zeitblom's description of that connection is deeply reminiscent of the Fausts of Shelley and Goethe—both of whom must learn that intellectuality must be balanced by emotion. In the end, the coldly intellectual Faust of fascism is dead and damned, but Adrian is redeemed through the music and love.

We can, as Benjamin fears, contemplate the end of the human race as if it were a painting on a wall, existing in a different reality from our own. For Mann and Benjamin, this is a dangerous situation. It allows us to be detached from our own destruction and perhaps even play a part in it. I suspect that Benjamin is right in that the destruction of aura and consequent aestheticizing of politics is somehow related to the atrocities of World War II (WWI for Benjamin); the omnipresent image of humankind as machine is indicative of a mindset in which terrified Benjamin.

Though it has been suggested otherwise, Mann does not so much destroy Faust as restore him. Adrian's education in emotion is not altogether different from what happens to Victor Frankenstein, Heinrich Faust, Theophilus, and the other Fausts who preceded him. Faust is, if nothing else, a figure always in need of learning, whether that be in faith, obedience, or emotion. The Fascist Faust had

nothing to learn but coldly prepared to destroy in order to achieve his ends. By wresting Faust away from fascist readings of the figure, Mann redeems him.

CONCLUSION

What redeems it is the idea only. An idea at the back of it; not a sentimental pretense but an idea; and an unselfish belief in that idea—something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to... —*Heart of Darkness*

Redemption, of course, is not limited to the Faust legend material, as the quotation from *Heart of Darkness* reminds us. We can see elements of a concern with it throughout literature and, perhaps more importantly, criticism. If we walk away from *Mephisto* with nothing else, we should see the tendency to desire redemption from our heroes—whoever they may be. Such tendencies are clear in the *Odyssey*, particularly as my students read it: Odysseus' pride gets the best of him. He has to redeem his own foolish behavior—bragging his own name to Polyphemus, for instance. Zeus' remark in Book I reminds readers of the foolish tendencies of humans to blame gods for their own troubles.

If I may digress into popular culture for a moment, one of the most significant “epics” for my generation is that of George Lucas' *Star Wars*. Blame Lucas for the obsessions of this dissertation perhaps, because I am among the many who allowed their childhoods to be shaped in part by the then *Star Wars* trilogy. As an adult, I waited impatiently for the arrival of each new installment of the prequel, which recounts the fall of Anakin Skywalker. Why *Star Wars* here? The sextet of films recounts, if simply, the fall and redemption of the hero—Anakin. Not unlike

Hendrik of *Mephisto*, Anakin is manipulated by the forces surrounding him. At once desiring power and obedience to the “Jedi Code” (which, apparently, cannot really be reconciled), Anakin falls into the path of the “Evil Empire” in what otherwise appears to be a righteous indignation when his superior, Mace Windu, attempts to kill a prisoner, rather than taking him before the Senate. In the original trilogy, Luke Skywalker, Anakin’s son, quests to defeat the empire and, ultimately, redeem his father by willingly acting as a sacrificial body. In exchanging his own life for his son’s, Anakin makes a penance and is redeemed (both religiously and socially) in the eyes of the narrative and of Luke.

A modern fable of good and evil, fall and redemption. Sure, it lacks the literary qualities of a Goethe or a Hrotsvit, but the power of the story—the purchase of the dark arts—is a powerful one, no matter how ham-handedly it is told. Perhaps it is too difficult to identify with the too perfect Amidalas and Leias of the world, so we gravitate toward recognizable imperfection. No matter how annoying Luke and Anakin manage to be (and whiny they are), there is that something—the promise of hope perhaps—that draws legions of viewers back to the films. That something also exists in the Faust stories, whether they are used to educate, to admonish, or to engender admiration.

How we talk about or imagine redemption is clearly enough encoded in how we understand our own cultures. From Marlowe’s trouble with Calvinism to Mann’s allegory of art and a fascist state, the stories of how we exist within our world fold, unfold, and reappear throughout traditions. To return to *Star Wars* for a

moment, even a casual viewer can discern the differences between the politics that informed the first trilogy (released in 1977, 1980, and 1983) and the prequels (released in 1999, 2002, and 2005). The “Evil Empire” as understood in the seventies and eighties clearly reflects the American relationship with the then USSR as the phrase “evil empire” was used to describe the Soviet Bloc at that time. Even “Star Wars” became part of the lexicon of the Cold War, referring, of course, to the dream of a space-based defense system. The prequels, and especially the third one, *Revenge of the Sith*, react to US policy with respect to the Middle East. Subtle (if one can accuse Lucas of such a thing) references to President George W. Bush’s foreign policy abound.

As with many allegories, however, the political associations fade. My sons do not see the Empire the way I—who grew up on military installations during the Cold War—do. They do not yet fully comprehend the political commentary embedded in the most recent release either. There must be something else that allows this film to transcend our generations. I think, not particularly uniquely, that the fascination with *Star Wars* is less about the nifty starship fights and costumes or the political allegories. Rather, it is the story, though not particularly original in its scope, which attracts the legions of fans. Can or should a man be saved despite his iniquities? How do we mean saved? What it means to be redeemed in any given time, space, or production may change between generations and cultures, but the need to write about redemption seems to remain constant.

Much of popular culture is rooted in such basic notions of sin and redemption. The popularity of Tim Lahaye's *Left Behind* book series evidences the recent concerns with secular redemption; film and television are replete with examples of secular redemptions from hookers with hearts of gold to a son's determination to clear his father's sullied name. The notion of a political redemption pervades not only art but news; art in reinvented and reimagined time and again. The multiplicity of meaning is, of course, not a new one. The Hebrew *pdh*, after all, is identical in meaning to our English notion of "redeeming" humans from bondage; the sense of *g'l* is not different from the stories in which a son tried to buy back his families' farm from the bank or corporation.

Likewise, it is unlikely that we will see Faust fade anytime soon. Virtually every art form has dealt with Faust at one moment or another: literature, painting, music—opera adores the dramatic content available in Faust. Various films have approached the "soul-selling" aspects of Faust, even films that do not otherwise attempt to treat the Faust theme. The figure is an important one precisely because it illuminates the possibility—or impossibility in some cases—of our own redemption.

It this desire—our own redemption—that I believe drives the attempts to recreate old stories within our own cultural frameworks. Goethe certainly attempted to rehabilitate Faust; likewise, the authors who visit Lilith and the Wicked Witch of the West make attempts to imagine their figures' actions within a contemporary paradigm. We reveal our current anxieties in our reconfigurations:

the ability of the scientific man to categorize and understand the world—perhaps to the limits of human capabilities—in Goethe; Mann’s example of the political machine that threatens to overwhelm us physically and aesthetically; Levin’s recognition of the secularizing power of popular culture; Marlowe’s concern about the flagrant abuse of religious power; Shelley’s fear of the medicalized and mechanized birth process—a fear mirrored in Benjamin’s anxiety over the mechanization of art; or a desire to create a new mythology that empowers women, the Lesotho, or the poor.

Redemption has four common usages, and each culture and time will tend to focus on one definition more closely than another based on the current cultural struggles. The Faust legend is a convenient thematically, certainly, but also because the transformations between the texts (some subtle, others major) reveal the cultural desires and anxieties present at their composition. The legend appears to move effortlessly from the sacred redemptions in Hrotsvit to the secular ones in Shelley, Goethe, and Byron, to the political concerns of Mofolo, Mann, and Mann. In general, such a systematic trend is not visible, largely because most redemption narratives do not have the scope available for study that the numerous Faust texts provide. We may encounter several modes of redemption in a single text; this is especially true in *Mephisto* and *Doctor Faustus*, where politics and aesthetics are tightly bound together.

We have at our disposal a number of texts whose redemption narratives are significant and understudied. When we encounter redemption in current trends, do

we see political, social, or spiritual hopes for turning? What remains is this: each attempt to approach redemption comes back to the original sense of the word: a return. It may be a return to God, a return to land, a return to freedom, or even a return from dangerous ideology. The “return” (perhaps turn is more apt) may be to an unrealized utopia. Each successive turn in the Faust legend bespeaks the importance of the figure, upon which we can witness our own cultural assumptions about our own guilt and redemption.

What then of the legendary figures whose changing stories originally inspired this study? Having laid out the various definitions of redemption in this dissertation, I believe that the recontextualizations of Lilith, Mary Magdalene, Freydis and others can be best understood as political ones; rather than a satirical or allegorical examination of a modern event, these texts imbue the figures themselves with contemporary feminist values and attempt to free them from a virgin/whore dichotomy that relegated them to the status of the “bad woman.” Like Thomas and Klaus Mann’s allegories, the new feminist Liliths speak to their contemporary world with an eye toward changing the status quo.

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