

GOETHE'S FAUST IN ENGLISH:
PROBLEMS OF POETIC FAITHFULNESS

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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ROBERT ABBOTT



GOETHE'S *FAUST* IN ENGLISH:
PROBLEMS OF POETIC FAITHFULNESS

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A thesis submitted to the School of Graduate
Studies in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Department of German and Russian
Memorial University of Newfoundland

September 8, 1988

St. John's

Newfoundland



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ISBN 0-315-78112-2

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Abstract

This study explores some of the main reasons why Goethe's *Faust* has not been satisfactorily translated into English, and concludes that an elusive but discernable quality of "poetic faithfulness" is largely absent from most English-language versions of the work. This quality is defined and described at length in the introduction, with reference made both to the general background and the specific problems of *Faust* translation. A middle section of six chapters, each one devoted to a short passage from one of six chosen scenes from *Faust*, gives examples of the passage from five major English translations and discusses the background of the passage, its specific translational difficulties, and the translators' success or failure in approaching fidelity to the original poetry. Finally, the conclusion summarizes the various approaches to translating *Faust*, as well as the work of the chosen translators, and offers concluding remarks on the difficulties, shown in the quoted examples, of translating the work into English with a high degree of poetic faithfulness.

Acknowledgements

I should like to express my gratitude to the Memorial University School of Graduate Studies, for financial assistance granted through two graduate fellowships, and especially to Dr. Richard Ilgner, for his unfailing patience, interest, and advice.

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INTRODUCTION

Most North American students encountering Goethe's *Faust* for the first time face the daunting prospect of looking for a good English translation, and while a well-stocked university library will offer anywhere from five to a dozen versions, few of them can sustain interest beyond the required reading. Allowing that translations by definition always represent "second best" and can never equal the original, we must sadly agree with David Ball's conclusion that most English translations of *Faust* have the muse's curse of unreadability on them:

For all who do not read German, Goethe's poem stands in the rank of world masterpieces only by hearsay; in other words, for most ... who come to read *Faust*, it really does not exist as literature.¹

This study, therefore, shall seek to establish the reasons why *Faust I* has not been satisfactorily translated into English, and conclude that an elusive but discernable quality we shall call "poetic faithfulness" is largely absent from most English-language versions of the work.

All this is certainly not for want of effort: it was the duty of every nineteenth century intellectual to come to terms with Goethe, and hosts of scholars, lawyers, and dilettanti, drawn to *Faust* like moths to bright light, paid tribute with their own

¹David Ball, "On Translating Goethe's *Faust*," The Germanic Review, 55 (Washington: Heldref Publications, 1980), p. 29. Hereafter cited as David Ball, "On Translating."

translations of the work.² One of the earliest *Faust* translators, Lord Leveson Gower, declared his work "an exercise while learning the language,"³ and the poet Shelley apparently turned to translating to pass the dry spells between inspirations of original composition, for he saw the translation of *Faust* as an opportunity both to study the great poet and to sharpen his own precision of expression.⁴ Later in the century, as a body of English translations began to form, scholars and writers were attracted by the idea of improving (and rivaling) earlier versions. Important translators like Bayard Taylor and John Anster saw a kind of heroic or even Faustian quest in their striving to render the vast work into English.⁵ As late as 1961, Bayard Quincy Morgan declared his allegiance to the old school with this statement of his motivation for translating *Faust*:

It is inevitable that men of poetic ability will attempt to transmit to their compatriots some of the esthetic charm they feel in savouring the original.⁶

In most cases this enviable confidence, appreciation, and dedication did not come equipped with great skill, and we must regret that the early *Faust* translators paid

²37 editions of Part I and II, 138 editions of Part I, and 15 editions of Part II are listed in Hans Henning, Faust-Bibliographie, part 2, vol. 1 (Weimar: Aufbau Verlag, 1966), pp. 106-131. For studies of the early translations cf. Lina Baumann, Die englischen Übersetzungen von Goethes Faust (Halle: Niemeyer Verlag, 1907), and Julia Haskell, Bayard Taylor's Translation of Goethe's Faust (New York: Columbia University Press, 1908).

³Paula Kittel, English Translations as Commentaries on Debated Passages in Goethe's Faust, Diss. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1938), p. 15.

⁴Timothy Webb, The Violet in the Crucible (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1976), pp. 40-50. Hereafter cited as T. Webb, The Violet.

⁵Adolph Ingram Frantz, Half a Hundred Thralls to Faust (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1949), p.257.

⁶B.Q. Morgan, "On the Translating of Goethe's *Faust*, Part II," Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature, vol. 10 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1961), p. 33. Hereafter cited as B.Q. Morgan, "Translating."

insufficient heed to the difficulties of putting Goethe's elevated, varied German into genuine, readable English. In an early essay on *Faust* translation D. Boileau supplied many useful observations on the German language, stressing its status as a "primary" language, like Sanskrit, and its almost unlimited capacity for flexibility and the making of compounds, ellipses, and onomatopoeic words and phrases.⁷ Other familiar characteristics of Goethe's German which have defied early and modern translators include the wealth of abstractions, the concentration of expression, the many difficult compounds and prepositional adverbs like "herauf," which often have the added force of rhyme, the many unaccented or "feminine" endings so often made stiff and unwieldy by resorting to "-ing," "-ed," and "-ion," and a word like "Plunder" which *Faust*-translator Stuart Atkins calls "ein falscher Freund, d.h. ein deutsches Wort mit einem so offensichtlichen englischen Äquivalent, daß der Übersetzer unachtsam wird."⁸ In his excellent article on literary translation, John Whaley points out that while the iambic mode is natural to English, the trochaic is the main rhythm of German and it often appears in basically iambic meters, so it is natural that a quintessentially German poet should embody one of the most characteristic qualities of the language:

[Goethe's] instinctive sense of process, for the dynamic rather than the static description has him often finding his rhyme on the verb, whether conjugated or infinitive but so often with the weak feminine ending of the unaccented

⁷ D. Boileau, A Few Remarks on Mr. Hayward's English Prose Translation of Goethe's Faust (London: Treuttel, Würtz, Richter, and Wacey, 1834), pp. 34-58.

⁸ Stuart Atkins, "Goethes *Faust* auf Englisch: Übersetzung als Interpretation," the German version of Stuart Atkins, "On Translating *Faust*," in Johann Wolfgang Goethe: One Hundred Years of Continuing Vitality (Lubbock: Texas Tech Press, 1984), pp. 256-57. Hereafter cited as Atkins, "*Faust* auf Englisch." For studies on the uniqueness of Goethe's use of words cf. Otto Pniower, "Zu Goethes Wortgebrauch," Goethe-Jahrbuch, vol. 19 (Frankfurt a. M., 1898), p. 229-47, and A. Baumeister, "Hoechst. (Gebrauch des Superlativs in den letzten Akten des *Fausts*)," Goethe-Jahrbuch, vol. 17 (Frankfurt a. M., 1896), p. 218.

syllable.⁹

Goethe himself, noted by Eckermann in the conversation of December 30, 1823, felt the difficulty of translating English into German was that the power of the many English monosyllables is lost when expressed in German polysyllables.¹⁰ The converse is certainly true in the opposite direction, for the uninflected language cannot easily equal the greater momentum, density of texture, and possibilities for rhyme in the German. Thus Bayard Quincy Morgan correctly observes in his "law for the translator" that "the danger of distortion (of actual meaning) is markedly increased by such poetic devices as short lines, feminine cadences, and triple or multiple rhymes."¹¹

The problem of line length was and is omnipresent for the poetical translator of *Faust*, for the work's variety of meters and forms includes choric odes, alexandrines, blank verse, free verse, hexameters, trimeters, trochaic tetrameters, idiosyncratic two-beat lines, the so-called *Faustverse*, plus Goethe's adaptation of Hans Sachs' *Knittelverse*.¹² The four-line folk-song stanza of Gretchen's spinning-wheel song, for example, so successful in Goethe's German, really needs a longer line to work in English, for the narrow space of the short line -- best suited to nonsense verse and nursery rhymes -- severely confines word-shifting to achieve rhyme and thereby limits the available

⁹John Whaley, "On Translating the Quality of Goethe's Poetry," Publications of the English Goethe Society, 49 (Leeds: W.S. Maney and Sons LTD., 1978-79), pp. 136-37.

¹⁰J.P. Eckermann, Words of Goethe, trans. unknown (New York: Classic Publishing Company, 1933), p. 42.

¹¹B.Q. Morgan, "Translating," p. 34.

¹²For studies of Goethe's use of *Knittelverse* and the three types of *Faustverse* cf. Walter Haupt, Die poetische Form von Goethes Faust. Eine metrische Untersuchung (Leipzig: Rudolf Haupt Verlag, 1909), and Alexander Hohlfeld, "Zu Goethes Reimen, besonders in *Faust*," Monatshefte für Deutschen Unterricht, vol. 35, no. 3/4 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1943), pp. 195-204.

rhyming words.¹³ Moreover, the apparent similarities of German and English language and prosody have tempted many translators to abandon their home tongue and succumb to a slavish metrical fidelity, the bane of so many poor renditions of *Faust*, and we shall see many examples that bear out the observation of translator Alan Duff: "Whatever material he is working in, the translator will be taking the *content* of the source [original] language and reshaping it in the *form* of the target language. ... As soon as the form of the source language dominates, the translation suffers."¹⁴

The myriad difficulties of such a disparate work as *Faust* make the translator's overall approach the true lynch-pin of his success, and it shall be seen that a striving to stick doggedly to one narrow strategy is a major cause of failure in translating *Faust*. Since opinions and personal tastes are so various and even violent, it is unlikely there will ever be final agreement on methods of literary translation. Most of the nineteenth century translators of *Faust* were cautious, scholarly amateurs who probably followed the Earl of Roscommon's advice:

Take pains the *genuine* Meaning to explore,
There *Sweat*, there *Strain*, tug the laborious *Oar*.
Search *ev'ry Comment* that your Care may find,
Some here, some there may hit the Poet's *Mind*.¹⁵

Shelley, emphasising the active and imaginative component of translation, had no time for the "owl-eyed faculty of calculation," and believed no amount of study and scholarship could produce true poetry:

¹³Paul Wiegand, "Problems in Translating the Chorus Mysticus in Goethe's Faust II," The German Quarterly, vol. 33, no. 1 (Appleton, Wisconsin: Van Rooy Printing Company, 1960), pp. 22-27.

¹⁴Alan Duff, The Third Language (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1981), p. 4.

¹⁵The Earl of Roscommon, "An Essay on Translated Verse [1684]," in T. Webb, The Violet, p. 19.

Poetry is not like reasoning, a power to be exerted according to the determination of the will. ... The toil and the delay recommended by critics, can be justly interpreted to mean no more than a careful observation of the inspired moments, and an artificial connection between their suggestions, by the intermixture of conventional expressions; a necessity imposed by the limitedness of the poetical faculty itself. ... Compositions so produced are to poetry what mosaic is to painting.¹⁶

A typically modern, common-sense compromise of sorts can be found in the four following "duties" of the Classical translator, proposed by F.L. Lucas: 1) He should aim at giving sensitive readers "the same sort of pleasure they would get from reading the original with a reasonable knowledge of classics." 2) He should be true to the spirit and personality of the author. 3) He should be faithful to the spirit and atmosphere of the author's period. 4) He should aim for fidelity in detail and add nothing of his own to the work.¹⁷

In the common parlance of translation, one of the most unfortunate truisms is that the literary translator usually has to choose between "faithful ugliness and faithless beauty:" that is, he must decide whether his first duty is to the accuracy of meaning or to the overall effect of the original work.¹⁸ For a translator of *Faust*, faced with important decisions on the formal appearance of the work, this central problem means a choice between prose and poetry, the latter embracing the strictness of attempting to reproduce original meters and line lengths, the unlimited freedom to alter original forms to English conventions, theatrical purposes, etc., to make adaptations or

¹⁶ Percy Bysshe Shelley, "A Defense of Poetry," in J.H. Smith and E.W. Parks, eds., The Great Critics (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1932), pp. 578-79.

¹⁷ F.L. Lucas, Greek Drama for the Common Reader (London: Chatto and Windus, 1967), pp. xiii- xiv.

¹⁸ For an excellent bibliography of historic quotations and aphorisms on translation, cf. Reuben A. Brower, ed., On Translation (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1959), pp. 271-93.

"Nachdichtungen," and, of course, many combinations of approaches. Here again, opinions of knowledgeable writers vary wildly and are sometimes contradictory: Goethe himself praised the prose translations of Shakespeare by Wieland and Eschenbach and thought prose could capture the essence of poetical works.¹⁹ Matthew Arnold, in his famous essay "On Translating Homer," usually argued for poetic translation, saying it is more difficult than prose but still desirable because the "matter" in poetry cannot be given without some sense of its "manner," though he concluded it is probably best to translate *Faust* "in prose only," it being one of those great works "composed of parts so disparate that one translator is unlikely to have the requisite gifts for poetically rendering all of them." Besides that, "Mr. Abraham Hayward's prose translation ... is not likely to be surpassed by any translation in verse."²⁰ Perhaps Arnold would have agreed to the prospect of a group translation or collaboration on *Faust* such as that which produced the King James Bible, but he might not have consented to Alfred Ames' suggestion of making a mosaic of the best passages from English translations of *Faust* with the help of a computer.²¹ In an area where agreement is rare, most translators believe in the importance of a homogeneous version (difficult with more than a pair of translators) that sings with a distinct "voice," either in poetry or prose, since the translation of the poem involves, first and foremost, an interpretation and a synthesis of its parts to effect a unified recreation in the medium of the target language.

¹⁹ J.W. von Goethe, Dichtung und Wahrheit, III, 11, in Goethes Werke, vol. 9 (Hamburg: Christian Wegner Verlag, 1957), p. 493. However, cf. also p. 13.

²⁰ Matthew Arnold, On Translating Homer (New York: AMS Press, 1971), p. 174 and p. 128.

²¹ Alfred Ames, "Some English Mosaics from Faust," Monatshefte für Deutschen Unterricht, vol. 20, no. 6 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1937), pp. 266-271. For an interesting reply cf. Heinrich Henel, "Faust-Translations and Faust-Mosaics. A Reply to Ames," Monatshefte für Deutschen Unterricht, vol. 30, no. 2 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1938), pp. 71-79. Hereafter cited as Heinrich Henel, "Faust-Mosaics."

Thus the translator of *Faust* is especially stricken by the dilemma of "faithless beauty" in meters and verse forms or by "faithful ugliness" in bare prose. Those of the prose school claim it offers the only genuine hope for the necessary compromise of putting the work into English, since the more exacting standards of prose ensure a rigorous fidelity to the meaning, and the business of searching for rhymes inevitably sacrifices much of the "sense" to the "sound;" the proponents of poetic translation maintain the essence or spirit of any poem is entirely determined by the sound and metrical arrangement of the words, and to change a passage of poetry into prose, even of the same language, is to destroy its identity as a poem:

In translating a lyric from one language to another, not only the sense but also the rhythmic movement, stanzaic structure, and, as far as possible, the rhyme scheme must be preserved. If these essentials of form are changed, the product may be a good poem, but it is not a translation of the original.²²

Northrop Frye has also argued convincingly that the sound-associations of any text, either poetic or prosaic, are essential to the building up of the appropriate "linguistic response" to it: it is, for example, the printing of verses in separate paragraphs that gives the Bible its "rhythmically discontinuous quality, between poetry and prose ... connected with the paratactical structure of Hebrew," showing the intimate connection between the sheer "look" and sound of a written text and ultimate responses to it.²³

The main argument against prose translation of poetry is, therefore, that the reader's pleasure is lessened and often destroyed, as *Faust* translator Jean Malaplate observes:

²²Alfred Ames, "Some English Mosaics from Faust," Monatshefte für Deutschen Unterricht, vol. 29, no. 6 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1937), p. 271.

²³Northrop Frye, The Great Code (Toronto: Academic Press Canada, 1981), p. 207.

... die Verse in einem poetischen Werk [sind] nicht nur hinsichtlich ihrer primären Bedeutung zu betrachten ... Sie bilden vielmehr eine polyphonische Struktur, in welcher eine besondere Auswahl der Worte, der Platz derselben, ihre Klangfarbe und ihr gegenseitiges Tonverhältnis gemeinsam mit ihrer eigentlichen Bedeutung auf den Leser oder Hörer wirken.²⁴

Since *Faust* is so obviously not merely a philosophical treatise or a straightforward narrative, a verse translation seems to be the only way of preserving at least some of its original quality and transferring some of the work's original pleasures into English. Logically, a poet should be the ideal word-smith to find suitable English forms and verses, and there has been a good deal of professional contempt in *Faust* criticism about the necessity of *Faust* translators being poets, to do justice to the work.²⁵ Yet this has not been the legacy of our *Faust* translations: Shelley's translations, though resplendent, are fragments and unabashed "Nachdichtungen," and while lesser poets like Bayard Taylor, Louis MacNiece, Randall Jarrel, C.F. MacIntyre and Barker Fairley have produced versions of *Faust*, they are all of uneven quality (perhaps the most fruitful arrangement for a translation pairs a scholar of the work's source tongue with a skilled writer of the target language, as evidenced by the excellent collaborations on several translations of sacred Indian writings).²⁶

Any decision about prose or verse approaches, or indeed any qualitative judgements of *Faust* translations, must be based on concrete examples, so it is essential

²⁴ Jean Malaplate, "Zur Problematik der Übersetzung Goethescher Poesie ins Französische: *Faust I* und *II*," lecture given at the 69th meeting of the Goethe Society, Weimar, work-group G, 1985.

²⁵ Cf. David Ball, "On Translating," p. 29, Heinrich Henel, "Faust-Mosaics," p. 77, and Paul Wermuth, Bayard Taylor (New Twayne Publishers, 1973), p. 150.

²⁶ Cf. W.B. Yeats and Shree Purohit Swami, translators, The Ten Principal Upanishads (London: Faber and Faber, 1937), and Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood, translators, The Song of God: Bhagavad-Gita (New York: Mentor Books, 1972).

to go to the works and see how translators have fared. It shall be seen that most major translations of *Faust* are made up of variously successful and unsuccessful passages, and lack *in toto* a quality we shall call "poetic faithfulness." A translation faithful to the poetry-- the sum total of essential emotions, associations, responses, and effects of the work in the original language-- should be a largely uninterrupted experience, written in idiomatic English with a sustained sense of assurance and skill (i.e. nothing amiss) in the retelling, and fidelity in the highest possible degree to the form and content of the original. This latter degree of "physical" fidelity is the contentious area where the intuition of the translator (and the critic) is most acutely involved and where he should strive at all times for the best comprehension and subsequent reformulation of the poetic essence of the passage, even at the expense of strictly formal imitation in the target language. Bearing in mind that the reader neither forgets he is reading a recreation nor expects it to truly equal the force of the original, he should nonetheless reasonably expect the translation to be readable and not continually impaired by the typical signs of poetic unfaithfulness -- unnecessary anachronism, obvious line-padding, and unenglish-sounding constructions and rhythms, all of which stem from lapses of taste or skill, or from a sycophantic devotion to the mechanics and not the poetry:

The length, movement, and rhyme of Goethe's lines serve a definite purpose, they are not there for their own sakes, but to express something. ... The translator's task and duty are to produce, as nearly as possible, the poetic effect, not the same meter.²⁷

It is important to clarify exactly what is meant here by "poetic" and by "faithful," beginning with the latter. It goes without saying that a high degree of accuracy, both to

²⁷ Heinrich Henel, "Faust-Mosaics," p. 73.

the physical facts of form and content and to the historical details and background, is necessary to a translation of any great work, but particularly to *Faust*. In his comprehensive study of Goethe's works, especially *Faust*, Wilhelm Emrich has shown in great detail:

... daß es bei Goethe ein streng gesetzlich in sich zusammenhängendes, durch sein Gesamtwerk vom Sturm und Drang bis zur Spätklassik sich entwickelndes Gefüge von Symbolen gibt, das sämtliche Gestalten und Problemkreise der Faust II-Welt bereits vorgeformt in sich enthält.²⁸

Thus any translator of *Faust* who does not steep himself in this great universe of recurring symbols and motifs, who does not acquaint himself with Goethe's own compelling thoughts on poetry and aesthetics, or who neglects to consult many sources of philosophy, etymology, prosody, and eighteenth century vocabulary, will be unable to communicate a full understanding of the "Inhalt" or content in *Faust*, and his translation shall be correspondingly inaccurate. Still, it is important not to equate this kind of inaccuracy with ultimate unfaithfulness to the "poetry" of the work: obviously, a translator should not lengthen or shorten any text, even for the sake of clarity, and he should be mindful of Stuart Atkins' advice not to make any poem more or less "difficult" in translation than it was in the original;²⁹ but we shall see examples in the quoted passages from *Faust* showing that this kind of textual accuracy can become a kind of strait-jacketing pedantry, which constricts the text in its zeal to enhance and elucidate, and therefore poses its own obstacles to an unhampered reading of the work. It shall also be seen that small inaccuracies which so offend the specialist usually do far less

²⁸ Wilhelm Emrich, Die Symbolik von Faust II: Sinn und Vorformen (Bohn: Athenäum-Verlag, 1957), p. 9.

²⁹ Atkins, "Faust auf Englisch," p. 265.

harm than unnaturalness of expression and faultiness of rhythm, for it is a faithfulness to the overall poetic effect of the work, embracing all the physical and historical facts of *Faust*, which must be sought if the translation is to find a convincing home in the new medium of English.

Since the "poetic" half of our formulation begs the question a little, a certain limitation to all such estimates must be admitted, and an apology for its necessary elusiveness must be made. Offering a more precise yardstick or "golden mean" for measuring poetry, original or translated, is extremely difficult and probably futile. Mathew Arnold proposed his famous "touchstones" for great poetry, suggesting one might avoid the fallacies of the "historic" or the merely "personal" estimate and arrive at a true appreciation of verses by comparing them to examples of acknowledged greatness:

Indeed there can be no more useful help for discovering what poetry belongs to the class of the truly excellent ... than to have always in one's mind lines and expressions of the great masters, and apply them as touchstones to other poetry. Of course we are not to require this other poetry to resemble them. ... But if we have any tact at all we shall find them ... an invaluable touchstone for detecting the presence or absence of high poetic quality, and also the degree of this quality.³⁰

A.E. Housman, insisting that poetry should be "more physical than intellectual," gave a practical test: if one repeats a line of true poetry silently to oneself while shaving, the hairs on one's chin bristle or, alternatively, one feels akin to the famous phrase of Keats, "everything that reminds me of her goes through me like a spear;"³¹ Robert Graves also

³⁰ Matthew Arnold, "The Study of Poetry," in J.H. Smith and E.W. Parks, eds., The Great Critic (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1932), p. 630.

³¹ A.E. Housman, in R. Ellman and R. O'Clair, eds., The Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry (W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1973), p. 97.

suggests that true poetry or "Muse Poetry," distinguished from "Apollonian poetry" composed with conscious knowledge of rhetoric, prosody, and Classical example, is best tested by its physical effect on readers, which is "what the French call *friktion*, and what the Scots call a "grue" -- meaning a shudder provoked by fearful or supernatural experiences;³² while T.S. Eliot denied the possibility of defining or measuring poetry at all:

I prefer not to define, or to test, poetry by any means of speculation about its origins; you cannot find a sure test for poetry, a test by which you may distinguish between poetry and mere good verse, by reference to its putative antecedents in the mind of the poet.³³

Goethe's own ideas about poetry stayed remarkably consistent throughout his long life in the art and it is the above mentioned passage from Dichtung und Wahrheit that is of particular interest to the translator of *Faust*:

Ich ehre den Rhythmus wie den Reim, wodurch Poesie erst zu Poesie wird, aber das eigentlich tief und gründlich Wirksame, das wahrhaft Ausbildende und Fördernde ist dasjenige, was vom Dichter übrig bleibt, wenn er in Prosa übersetzt wird.³⁴

Whilst the passage reiterates Goethe's love of the concrete and his notion of poetry as a living, tangible entity, we should not conclude from it that *Faust* can, with the master's blessing, best be translated and left in prose; rather, we shall see that unless a translator fully understands and subsumes this poetic essence of "was vom Dichter übrig bleibt" and then brings to bear all his scholastic, linguistic, and poetic skill on the task of

³² Robert Graves, "The Dedicated Poet," in On Poetry: Collected Talks and Essays (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1969), p. 286.

³³ T.S. Eliot, The Use of Poetry and The Use of Criticism (London: Faber and Faber, 1964), p. 140.

³⁴ J.W. von Goethe, Dichtung und Wahrheit, III, 11, in Goethes Werke, vol. 9 (Hamburg: Christian Wegner Verlag, 1957), p. 493.

recreating the poetic effect of *Faust* in English, the translation will be lacking and will have fallen short of the high, perhaps barely attainable goal of poetic faithfulness. Thus we shall see that Goethe's own ideas in this case might be of limited practical use to the working translator of *Faust*, who has the obligation not just of distilling the essence from another's poem but of using all the resources of the target language to communicate the body and flavour of the original.

Legitimate criticism of translated poetry can, of course, be just as ineffable and difficult to objectify, though certain common-sense points suggest themselves: an English language translator of *Faust* cannot be expected to maintain a constant "grue" in his readers -- especially since the original does not -- nor should he be constantly shackled to the touchstone of the original by excessive comparison with its lines. Indeed, once we have decided the translator has properly understood the "information" of the text, has digested the period of the work down to the last word, and has achieved a convincing reformulation of its general tone and poetic effect, we must agree with Peter Newmark that a good deal of subjectivity is inevitable in judging degrees of poetic faithfulness or any other high standards of literary translation:

After mistakes have been "proved" by reference to encyclopaedias and dictionaries, experts have to rely on their intuition and taste in preferring one or two or three good translations of a sentence or paragraph. Their final choice at this level is as subjective as the translator's choice of words, but they must be ready to give reasons for their choice. ... The experts, the third readers, have to decide intuitively whether the text is natural. ... In the case of expressive writing the criterion is: "Would he write that?"³⁵

The method of comparative study chosen here is that of a "passage" study, in which one excerpt from each of six chosen scenes from *Faust* shall be given by five

³⁵Peter Newmark, Approaches to Translation (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1981), p. 18.

translators. Each of the six chapters is devoted to a scene and follows a regular presentation format: for example, Chapter II or "Prolog im Himmel" begins with the chosen passage (lines 243-270) in the original German, followed by a short introduction to it outlining its essential import and specific translational problems, and then versions of the passage from our five translators, with each quoted passage followed by a brief discussion of its particular quality and general success or failure in achieving poetic faithfulness. The six scenes from *Faust I* are chosen, within the scope of the study, both to give some sense of the entire *Faust* drama, and to show the widest possible range of styles, poetic forms, and challenges faced by the translator. The passages are: the "Zueignung," with its formal structure and nostalgic, lyrical mood; the Archangel Hymn of the "Prolog im Himmel," with its ethereal atmosphere and difficult feminine endings; lines 386-409 of "Nacht," written in *Knittelverse* with a sharp contrast in the last twelve lines; the famous song of "Gretchens Stube," with its two-stress iambic lines and quintessentially German syntax; lines 4128-4143 of "Walpurgisnacht," with a ribald exchange between Faust, Mephistopheles, and the two witches, in *Faustverse*; and the intensely emotional opening thirty-two lines of "Trüber Tag," written in "Sturm und Drang" prose.

The five translations have been chosen as modern representatives from the three broad categories of prose, adaptation or "Nachdichtung," and original meters translation, which have all been granted critical acclaim, influence upon other *Faust* translators, or repeated printings in several editions -- in short, they are the best English versions of *Faust* our aforementioned undergraduate is likely to come across. In their order of appearance in the study, the translators are: 1) Bayard Taylor (1825-78), a

scholar-poet squarely of the nineteenth century, who did the first major English version of *Faust I* in original meters (1871), which had great influence on subsequent translations and on American letters in general. 2) Walter Arndt (1916-), who, during a varied career as diplomat, press correspondent, and professor of languages, carries on from Taylor by attempting to reproduce Goethe's original meters, with the added touch of infusing the English version wherever possible with "Goethian" energy and vibrance. 3) Walter Kaufmann (1925-), a professor of philosophy and writer on literature, religion, and general intellectual history, who strives to stay as close as possible to the original verse but allows for alterations of line-length when German meters make no sense in English. 4) John Prudhoe, a professor of drama, whose translation of *Faust* is a performance version adapted to enhance its stage-worthiness and to elucidate its many obscure allusions to an English-speaking audience. 5) Barker Fairley (1887-1985), the poet, painter, and noted Goethe scholar, who has written with authority on Goethe's poetry but has produced a prose translation that endeavours to transfer the poet's meaning wholly into modern, idiomatic English.

The limitations of any such passage study are immediate. One obviously cannot give the full effect of a *Faust* translation from brief excerpts, yet the chosen sections are key moments which offer something of the drama's scope and show a fair cross-section of a translator's ability to handle important passages of quite varying style and weight, for the original itself is an extraordinarily layered work, with many unified but largely independent scenes of contrasting poetic qualities. It is true that the excerpts are all from Part I and no student of *Faust* needs to be reminded of the importance of Part II by Harry Levin's jaded remark, "Faust need scarcely have invoked the cosmos to seduce a

native girl;³⁶ but Part I is really the only logical place to start in a study of this scope intended for the general reader of *Faust* in English. Part I sets the machinery of the *Faust problem* in motion, it poses a wide array of dramatic and translational difficulties, Part II notwithstanding, and it is the natural place for our harried undergraduate to begin, as it is simply the part of *Faust* most often staged and read.³⁷ Finally, since critics of translations are notorious beckmessers, prone to much unfair niggling and finger-pointing in their disappointment at the sight of beloved foreign works in dowdy new garments, every attempt shall be made to allow the translated passages their chance at a fresh recreation of the poetry, without undue cavilling at minor details or yoking to the original lines, and Northrop Frye's observation that every translation must be a "miracle of tact" shall be taken to heart as good advice for the critic.³⁸

³⁶ Harry Levin, "Faust still Striving and Straying," New York Review of Books, Nov. 1976, p. 14. Cf. George O'Donnell, Sir Theodore Martin and his Translation of Goethe's Faust, Diss. (New Haven, Conn.: Princeton University Press, 1921), p. 213.

³⁷ This is also shown in recent, respectable publications and reprints of Part I in translation. Cf. J.W. von Goethe, Faust, Part One, trans. David Luke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), and J.W. von Goethe, Faust: a Tragedy, trans. Stuart Atkins (Cambridge, Mass.: Suhrkamp/Insel Publications, Boston, 1983).

³⁸ Northrop Frye, The Great Code (Toronto: Academic Press Canada, 1981), p. 4.

Chapter I: ZUEIGNUNG

- | | |
|----|---|
| | Ihr naht euch wieder, schwankende Gestalten,
Die früh sich einst dem trüben Blick gezeigt.
Versuch' ich wohl, euch diesmal festzuhalten?
Fühl' ich mein Herz noch jenem Wahn geneigt?
Ihr drängt euch zu! nun gut, so mögt ihr walten,
Wie ihr aus Dunst und Nebel um mich steigt;
Mein Busen fühlt sich jugendlich erschüttert
Vom Zauberhauch, der euren Zug umwittert. |
| 5 | |
| 10 | Ihr bringt mit euch die Bilder froher Tage,
Und manche liebe Schatten steigen auf;
Gleich einer alten, halbverklungenen Sage
kommt erste Lieb' und Freundschaft mit herauf;
Der Schmerz wird neu, es wiederholt die Klage
Des Lebens labyrinthisch irren Lauf,
Und nennt die Guten, die, um schöne Stunden
Vom Glück getäuscht, vor mir hinweggeschwunden. |
| 15 | |
| 20 | Sie hören nicht die folgenden Gesänge,
Die Seelen, denen ich die ersten sang;
Zerstoben ist das freundliche Gedränge,
Verklungen, ach! der erste Widerklang.
Mein Leid ertönt der unbekannten Menge,
Ihr Beifall selbst macht meinem Herzen bang,
Und was sich sonst an meinem Lied erfreuet,
Wenn es noch lebt, irrt in der Welt zerstreut. |
| 25 | |
| 30 | Und mich ergreift ein längst entwöhntes Sehnen
Nach jenem stillen, ernsten Geisterreich,
Es schwebet nun in unbestimmten Tönen
Mein lisplnd Lied, der Äolsharfe gleich,
Ein Schauer faszt mich, Träne folgt den Tränen,
Das strenge Herz, es fühlt sich mild und weich;
Was ich besitze, seh' ich wie im Weiten,
Und was verschwand, wird mir zu Wirklichkeiten. ³⁹ |

³⁹ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust, eine Tragödie*, in *Goethes Werke*, Erich Trunz, ed., vol. 3 (Hamburg: Christian Wegner Verlag, 1957), p.9. Hereafter cited as Goethe, *Faust*.

The "Zueignung" is an apostrophe and also a kind of occasional poem, composed at the prompting of Schiller in late June of 1797. Apart from intermittent efforts in 1788 and 1789 to prepare the play for publication as *Faust: Ein Fragment* (1790), over twenty years had passed since Goethe had composed what is now called the *Urfaust* (1775), and the four elegiac stanzas of the "Zueignung" spell out the mood of the mature poet as he encounters the early manuscripts and resolves to take up the thread of his interrupted work. Although the completed *Faust* bears no formal dedication to a specific person or group, the second and third stanzas of the "Zueignung," particularly lines 17-20, clearly pay fond tribute to the friends of his youth who encouraged his early efforts. *Faust* commentators since H. Dünzter and W. Aßmann have generally concluded the crux of the "Zueignung" lies in Goethe's realization that his *Faust* "jetzt nicht mehr einem treubgegeisterten Freundeskreis, sondern dem ... kalten Publikum ertöne,"⁴⁰ and their case is strengthened by the famous letter to Wilhelm von Humboldt of March 17, 1832, in which Goethe writes:

Es sind über sechzig Jahre, daß die Konzeption des *Faust* bei mir jugendlich von vorne herein klar, die ganze Reihenfolge hin weniger ausführlich vorlag.
 ... Ganz ohne Frage würd' es mir unendliche Freude machen, meinen werten, durchaus dankbar anerkannten, weitverteilten Freunden auch bei Lebzeiten diese sehr ernsten Scherze zu widmen, mitzuteilen und ihre Erwiderung zu vernehmen.⁴¹

There are other interesting notions of the "Zueignung"'s ultimate sources and origins (including one that it is a dedication to F. M. Klinger, the remembrance of whom was

⁴⁰W. Aßmann, "Zu Goethes *Faust*," *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen*, Vol. 9 (Braunschweig, 1851), p. 287.

⁴¹Letter to Wilhelm von Humboldt, *Goethes Briefe*, vol. 4 (Hamburg: Christian Wegner Verlag, 1967), p. 481. Hereafter cited as *Goethe, Briefe*.

occasioned by Goethe being mistaken for him by a beautiful woman),⁴² but, essentially, the "Zueignung" might best be considered a kind of personal dedication of the poet to the theme that occupied him most of his long life.

Goethe remained, of course, first and foremost a lyric poet, and his use of a subjective, lyrical vein for the first of his three preludes or introductions to the *Faust* drama is entirely appropriate. Choosing the form of the *ottava rima*, a kind of sonnet derived from Italian romances and usually associated with reflective, melancholy moods, Goethe uses an iambic pentameter interspersed with trochees and anapests, and divides each of the *stanze* into a group of eight five-beat iambic lines, woven together in the following rhyme sequence: *abababcc*. The language of the "Zueignung" is essentially simple and understated, though Goethe's command of diction is omnipresent, as in the evocative "Zauberhauch ... umwittert" (line 8) and the "Dunst und Nebel" (line 6), a trope called hendiadys, which suggests both the dim perceptions of the poet and the "mists" of obscurity and superstition enveloping the age of the *Faust* drama to come.⁴³ Probably the best example of this subtlety is the first couplet which, as demonstrated by Julius Franz Schütz in his excellent appreciation of Goethe's verse, is a forbidding test of a translator's skill:

Im Höhepunkt der ersten Verszeile -- "wieder" -- steht als hellster Akzent das
"i;" es ist unendlich weich eingeleitet, durch das "w," es ist verlängernd, gerne
festgehalten, "je," es ist weich und behutsam entlassen, nicht nur durch das

⁴²Hans Petsch, "Wenn es lebt, irrt es in der Welt zerstreut," N.F. des Jahrbuchs der Goethe-Gesellschaft, vol. 28 (Weimar, 1966), p. 319. Cf. also Julius Franz Schütz, "Wortkunst und Klangbau in Beispielen aus Goethes *Faust*," in J. F. Schütz and others, Jahr der Ehrfurcht (Graz and Vienna: Leyham Verlag, 1949), p. 19.

⁴³Cf. letter to Schiller, June 22, 1797: "Unser Balladenstudium hat mich wieder auf diesen Dunst- und Nebelweg gebracht, und die Umstände raten mir ... eine Zeitlang darauf herum zu irren." In Goethe, Briefe, vol. 2, p. 280.

"d," sondern durch die ganze zweite Silbe in der das tonlose, farblose "e" dem "r" des Abschlusses jede Härte nimmt. Dieses "wieder" ist sehr geliebt, diese Gestalten sind ersehnt. ... Das erste Wort "Ihr" ist wie ein Auffahren aus der Ruhe des Alters, wenn gleich noch unbetont, weil erst allmählich die Wertung der Erscheinung eintritt. Aber immerhin, an den beiden "i" Wörtern ruht alles, es könnte abgekürzt auch ein Ausruf sein: "Ihr--wieder" Die erste Zeile enthält alle seelischen Themen der "Zueignung," ja des ganzen "Faust" in ihren Klangbildern.⁴⁴

The faithful translator must, then, somehow communicate a combination of fond nostalgia and eager, uncertain expectancy, sustain a convincingly though unobtrusively "personal" tone, and show a command of prosody approaching Goethe in subtlety and judiciousness.

⁴⁴ Julius Franz Schütz, "Wortkunst und Klangbau in Beispielen aus Goethes *Faust*," in J. F. Schütz and others, Jahr der Ehrfurcht (Graz, Vienna: Leyham Verlag, 1949), pp. 19-20.

DEDICATION

Again ye come, ye hovering Forms! I find you,
as early to my clouded sight ye shone!
Shall I attempt, this once, to seize and bind you?
Still o'er my heart is that illusion thrown?
Ye crowd more near! Well then, be power assigned you
to sway me from your misty, shadowy zone!
My bosom thrills, by youthful passion shaken
that magic breezes round your march awaken.
Of joyous days ye bring the blissful vision,
the dear, familiar phantoms rise again,
and, like an old and rarely sung tradition,
First Love returns with Friendship in his train;
renewed is pain: with mournful repetition
is tracked life's devious, labyrinthine chain,--
named are the Good whose cheating fortune tore them
from happiness and left me to deplore them.
They hear no longer these succeeding measures,
the souls to whom I earlier cantos sang:
dispersed the friendly troop with all its pleasures,
and still, alas! the echoes first that rang!
I bring the unknown multitude my sorrows--
their very plaudits give my heart a pang--
and those beside, to whom my Song has mattered,
if still they live, wide through the world are scattered.
There grasps me now a long-unwonted yearning
for that serene and solemn Spirit-Land;
my song, to faint Aeolian murmurs turning,
sways like a harp string by airy whispers fanned.
I thrill and tremble; tear on tear is burning;
and the stern heart is tenderly unmanned:
what I possess, I see far distant lying,
and what is lost grows real and undying.⁴⁵

⁴⁵J.W. von Goethe, Faust: Part One, trans. Bayard Taylor (New York: Collier Books, 1963), p. 42.
Hereafter cited as Faust, trans. Taylor.

Bayard Taylor's *Faust* translation (1871) was the first successful attempt at a verse translation in original meters, and it satisfied readers and set the standard of *Faust* translations for generations thereafter.⁴⁶ From a strictly technical point of view Taylor's achievement is considerable, for he does preserve Goethe's meters, with only slight variations, and captures much of the right atmosphere and tempo. Unfortunately, the translation bears out the observation that if masterworks grow in time, translations age, and the stale odour of Victorian "poesy" hanging about almost every line is likely the result of Taylor's struggling to reproduce Goethe's original meters. The persistent "ye" of the first two stanzas is, according to one's taste, quaint, noble, or simply off-putting to modern ears (especially in the vocative of "ye hovering Forms" in line 1), but there are some far more serious problems: line 3, for example, with "to seize and bind you" provides a brutal and misleading substitute for "festzuhalten," and line 5 with "be power assigned you" is the first sign of the strain to conform to Goethe's feminine rhymes. Similarly, line 22 with "give my heart a pang" and line 25 with "long-unwonted yearning" are examples of translations which physically resemble the original ("macht meinem Herzen bang" and "längst entwöhntes Sehnen") but sound completely bookish and lack-lustre in English. There are also some curious inaccuracies, such as the substitution of "awaken" for "umwittert" in line 8, the syntactical confusion caused by the inversion of lines 7 and 8, and the questionable departure in line 16 from the original's "vor mir hinweggeschwunden." Taylor's most painful lapses occur in the final

⁴⁶Taylor actually worked from an early attempt in original meters entitled Faust: A Tradgedy, tr. Charles T. Brooks (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1856). Cf. also Juliana Haskell, Bayard Taylor's Translation of Goethe's Faust (New York: Columbia University Press, 1908), and Adolf Ingram Frantz, Half a Hundred Thralls to Faust (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1949), pp. 155-166.

feet of rhyming couplets, often bringing otherwise successful lines to a sad end: lines 2 and 4, and the "fanned" and "tenderly unmanned" of lines 28 and 30 are examples of this. Thus despite some happy moments, such as lines 10-13, line 19, and a good final couplet, Taylor's rendition of the "Zueignung" has not grown old as gracefully as his beloved original, as it is marred by a long out-dated poetic diction and by many unsuccessful attempts to reproduce Goethe's meters.

Dedication

Once more you near me, wavering apparitions
 That early showed before the turbid gaze.
 Will now I seek to grant you definition,
 My heart essay again the former daze?
 You press me! Well, I yield to your petition,
 As all around, you rise from mist and haze;
 What wafts about your train with magic glamor
 Is quickening my breast to youthful tremor.

5

You conjure up delightful days and places,
 And there ascends so many a cherished shade;
 Like an old legend's half-forgotten graces,
 First love's and friendship's echoes are replayed;
 Old grief revives, a mournful plaint retraces
 Life's labyrinthine and erratic gait,
 And names the dear ones who, by fortune cheated
 Of blissful hours, before me have retreated.

10

They do not listen to the later cantos,
 The souls to whom I once intoned the first;
 Long waned those early echoes and mementos,
 The friendly multitude, alas, dispersed.
 Indifferent ears my song of sorrow enters,
 Their very praises weigh upon my heart,
 And those my lyre might still have pleased and flattered,
 If living yet, are swept abroad and scattered.

15

And I am seized by long-unwonted yearning
 For that domain of spirits calm and grave,
 To tenuous notes my lisping song is turning,
 Like Aeol's harp it fitfully would wave,
 A shudder grips me, tear on tear is burning,
 With softening balm the somber heart they lave;
 What I possess I see as from a distance,
 And what has past, to me becomes existence.⁴⁷

20

25

⁴⁷J.W. von Goethe, Faust A Tragedy, trans. Walter Arndt (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1976), p. 1. Hereafter cited as Faust, trans. Arndt.

The task of a new translator [of *Faust*] is to be, on the one hand, more Goethean than the many versions which abandon the original for some verbal vehicle more congenial to the translator than to the poet, ostensibly smarter, racier, more "English;" and for a line with enough bumps and pot-holes in it to keep the passenger on his toes and feeling Modern. This is easy. But it is also his task to produce a translation which improves on more form-respecting versions by attaining a higher fidelity over both long and short run; following the metrics with less shirking of the musically indispensable feminine rhymes; maintaining a fresher diction, but with the original's quota of necessary archaisms; and reaching a higher poetic level without smoothing or prettifying the original. This is more difficult, but not beyond reach.⁴⁸

For all his laudable intentions and "mole-like researches over the weary years,"

Walter Arndt's translation still poses some barriers to an unencumbered reading of *Faust* in English. His rendering of the "Zueignung" has a high-sounding, slightly pompous ring about it which does not well serve the more subdued shades of the original, and draws attention to itself. This is due, first of all, to Arndt's choice of words, which includes the following: "apparitions" for "Gestalten," "daze" for "Wahn," the gaudy "magic glamor" for "Zauberhauch," the inexplicit "cherished shades" for "liebe Schatten," "intoned" for "sang," and "lave" of line 30. The structural departures from the original, such as the rhetorical inversions of lines 7-8 and 15-16 (except for "retreated") and lines 19-20 are skilfully handled, but once again the over-all effect is of a self-consciously "poetic" style where the original is usually simple, understated, and straightforward -- as in lines 4, 8, 18, and 30.

Arndt's desire to produce not a "target-oriented" but a "base-oriented" translation that transmits the original "grandeur and magic of the language alone" seems to be

⁴⁸Walter Arndt, "Translating *Faust*," in Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust: a Tragedy*, trans. Walter Arndt, ed. Cyrus Hamlin (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1976), p. 356.

intruding in his "Zueignung,"⁴⁹ and one sees his skilful craftsmanship and happiest moments jarred by heavy-handedness and questionable taste: lines 9-12, for example, show considerable ingenuity but are ruined by the aforementioned "cherished shade" and by the jingling alliteration of "delightful days;" the rhetorical rearranging of lines 19-20 does not enhance the poetry of the original ("verklungen, ach, der erste Widerklang") and the addition of "mementos" in line 19 to facilitate the "a"-rhyme with "cantos" and the half-rhyme with "enters" shows a rough seam in Arndt's versification and strengthens the latin beat introduced by "cantos." Most unfortunately, this same line 21 has the novel and interesting "song of sorrow" entering "indifferent ears"(a misleading version of "unbekannte Menge," recalling the poet's personal attachment to his now departed friends) in a near burlesque of an important lyrical moment of the "Zueignung."⁵⁰ The final stanza, arguably Arndt's best, is also an example of what is most wrong with this translation: in lines 25-26 the effect of omitting the article "a" and inverting the modifiers to pad out the meter is decidedly stale and inflated, whereas Goethe's lines are simple and clear; in the next couplet the hesitation and liquid alliteration of the original is broken by the staccato punching of a persistent "t" and by the erroneous and "unnecessarily" archaic "fitfully would wave." The final couplet is very successful, with "existence" alluding to the extent and importance of the poet's preoccupation with his past life and suggesting a suitably Goethean connection

⁴⁹Ibid, p. 359.

⁵⁰Goethe eventually kept the misprint in the first edition of *Part I* (*Leid* for *Lied* in line 21) which became known as "schöpferischer Druckfehler." Cf. Werner Kraft, "Leid und Lied: Zu Goethes 'Ihr naht euch wieder ...,'" Das literarische Deutschland, no. 4 (Heidelberg, 1950), p. 5, and Karl Julius Schröer, "Mein Leid ertönt der unbekannten Menge," Chronik des Wiener Goethe-Vereins, vol. 1 (Vienna, 1886), p. 8.

between life and literature, but is perhaps not enough to redeem such an insistently poetic version of the "Zueignung" as Arndt's.

DEDICATION

You come back, wavering shapes, out of the past
 In which you first appeared to clouded eyes.
 Should I attempt this time to hold you fast?
 Does this old dream still thrill a heart so wise?
 You crowd? You press? Have, then, your way at last.
 As from the mist around me you arise;
 My breast is stirred and feels with youthful pain
 The magic breath that hovers round your train.

5

10

15

20

25

30

With you return pictures of joyous days,
 Shadows that I once loved again draw near;
 Like a primeval tale, half lost in haze,
 First love and friendship also reappear;
 Grief is renewed, laments retrace the maze
 Of life's strange labyrinthine career,
 Recalling dear ones who, by fortune's treason
 Robbed of fair hours, passed before my season.

They will not hear me as I sing these songs,
 The parted souls to whom I sang the first;
 Gone is that first response, in vain one longs
 For friendly crowds that have long been dispersed.
 My grief resounds to strangers, unknown throngs
 Applaud it, and my anxious heart would burst.
 Whoever used to praise my poem's worth,
 If they live, stray scattered through the earth.

And I am seized by long forgotten yearning
 For that kingdom of spirits, still and grave;
 To flowing song I see my feelings turning,
 As from aeolian harps, wave upon wave;
 A shudder grips me, tear on tear falls burning,
 Soft grows my heart, once so severe and brave;
 What I possess, seems far away to me,
 And what is gone becomes reality.⁵¹

⁵¹Walter Kaufmann, trans., Goethe's Faust: the Original German and a new Translation (New York: Anchor Books, 1963). Hereafter cited as Faust, trans. Kaufmann.

The third and final representative of our "original meters" school of translating, Walter Kaufmann, is not so much a stickler for metrical fidelity as the other two, but he does offer the following creed for a translator of *Faust*:

... while a translator cannot compete with the original poet -- except occasionally in short poems -- he can and should try to be faithful to the poet's meaning and form. Meter should be preserved as far as possible, and one has no right to add or subtract lines.⁵²

Kaufmann's handling of the "Zueignung" is undoubtedly the most convincing so far, showing a very solid grasp of its import and intent. The original rhythms are preserved admirably and everything Goethe "says" is eloquently captured. There are some departures from the original but most of them do not distract: in lines 2, 4, and 13, for example, Kaufmann has slightly changed the syntax but nevertheless penetrated to the truth of the passage and maintained the straightforward elegance of Goethe's language. The "youthful pain" of line 7 is a workable solution to a difficult problem (also rhyming convincingly with "round your train"), and lines such as 26 and 30, in which modifiers are added and the word order is substantially altered, are nonetheless unwaveringly faithful to Goethe's poetry. One might have wished for different lines 25-26 (perhaps with the indefinite article, and "domain" instead of "kingdom"), for a less mundane solution to "mein lispelnd Lied" of the treacherous lines 27-28, and for a better end-rhyme to the final couplet than the disappointing jingle of "away to me" and "reality," but these are minor complaints about a translation of the "Zueignung" which sets a very high standard of literal and poetic faithfulness, as well as general readability.

⁵²Walter Kaufmann, "Introduction," Faust, trans. Kaufmann, p. 47.

Dedication

- The transient wraiths that filled my troubled brain
 In former time, present themselves a-new.
 Shall vision try to capture them again?
 Shall fancy find the ecstasy it knew?
 They crowd on me! So, good, let them remain:
 The whisperings of wizardry pursue
 These paths where they emerge from vaporous mist
 And startle youth awake within my breast.
- 5
- They bring with them the forms of halcyon days:
 The shades of many whom I loved are here,
 Like ancient music from forgotten lays
 First-love and friendships formed in youth appear.
 Pain is revived as I retrace the ways
 Of life's sad labyrinthine mad career,
 Naming the noble souls whom darkness claimed
 From happiness, whose cheating fortunes waned.
- 10
- 15
- The souls who heard my early measures climb
 Shall never hear the sequel that I bring.
 The comradeship is now dispersed and Time
 Has muffled every early echo's ring.
 Unknown attenders hear the woes I rhyme:
 Though they applaud, I'm still afraid to sing.
 If those who once enjoyed my poem's birth
 Live still, they wander scattered over the earth.
- 20
- 25
- 30
- A longing, long-resisted year by year,
 To walk that solemn spirit-realm again
 Holds me. Elusive music fills my ear,
 The Aeolian harp of song half forms its strain,
 Yet terror chills me still, tear follows tear
 And strength of heart is mollified in pain:
 All I possess seems distant and I see
 All that I lost as true reality.⁵³

⁵³J.W. von Goethe, Faust, The Tragedy Part One, trans. John Prudhoe (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1974), p. 3. Hereafter cited as Faust, trans. Prudhoe.

With John Prudhoe's version of *Faust* we have a translation dedicated to accentuating the theatrical, stage-worthy possibilities of the original. In his essay "On Translating Goethe and Schiller for the English-speaking Stage," Prudhoe set forth his approach to Goethe's dramas: he rejects prose as too "flat" a medium to capture the psychological import of *Faust* and he proposes the use of a basic four-beat, rhyming verse "suggestive of Hans Sachs" to set the "medieval tone" of Part I.⁵⁴ Well aware rhymed verse translations of *Faust* can quickly descend to doggerel (especially in the many passages where Goethe deliberately uses anachronisms), Prudhoe suggests the style of T.S. Eliot's dramatic verse as a corrective to any stale overtones of Shakespeare, paying particularly close attention to the length of the lines, since it is Goethe's changing of line length (i.e. varying pentameter with hexameter) which, he says, gives a sense of flow and conversational spontaneity to rhymed, elevated speech.

Barker Fairley has pointed out Goethe's constant awareness of the stage in Part II and its conspicuous absence in Part I of *Faust*, which makes Prudhoe's performance-oriented version all the more welcome.⁵⁵ His "Zueignung" is indeed interesting, but the liberties taken are great enough to raise questions about the overall faithfulness of the translation. He stays close to the original metrics, emphasizing the iambic feet, while wisely avoiding the feminine endings (except for the final couplet), and there are some very effective lines such as 10-11, 25, and 27. The music of his verse does acquire a slightly droning regularity, but much more serious breaches of fidelity occur in the

⁵⁴ John Prudhoe, "On Translating Goethe and Schiller for the English-speaking Stage," Theatre Research International, 2 (1970), pp. 28-31.

⁵⁵ Barker Fairley, "On translating *Faust*," German Life and Letters, 23 (1969), p. 61.

ambiguities of lines 15-16 and 26-27, resulting from clumsy enjambments, and in the several changes to the text which sometimes distort the meaning of the original. For example, the "wraiths" and "whisperings of wizardry" of the opening, while effective enough, make it much more magical and "Arthurian" than the original, and the change in the all-important opening couplet from a direct address to a more mundane narrative statement -- no doubt for the sake of the audience -- is regrettable. Conversely, the directness of his line 30 overly emphasizes the tentative gropings of the poet, reiterated with the unjustifiable addition of the word "still" in lines 22 and 29, and this coupled with the ever-present desire to "bring off" the "Zueignung" before an audience nearly destroys lines 29-30, where the original lyric's most ecstatic moment is smoothed out by the addition of "yet" and the blatantly ugly "mollified in pain." In short, Prudhoe's "Zueignung" is much more a dramatic monologue than an elegiac lyric and although a reasonable stage-worthiness has been achieved, the original's lyricism has been smoothed over, and one hears the even, melodious voice of the actor over the poet's.

DEDICATION

You shifting figures, I remember seeing you dimly long ago, and now
 I find you coming back again. I wonder should I try to hold on to
 you this time. Have I the inclination, have I the heart for it?
 You draw closer out of the mist. Very well then, have your way.
 The magic breeze that floats along with you fills me with
 youthful excitement.

You bring back joyful days and joyful scenes and you recall
 many folk who were dear to me. Early love, early friends rise
 from the past like an old tale half-forgotten. The pain comes
 back and with it the lament that life should be so wayward, so
 confused, and I go over the names of those good people who left
 this life before me, cut off by some ill chance from further
 happiness.

Those that I wrote for then will not see what follows now.
 The friendly throng is dispersed; the early responses have died
 away. I write now for the unknown crowd whose very approval I
 dread. If there are any now alive who were pleased with my
 verses, they are scattered far and wide.

And a great desire seizes me -- a desire I have not felt for
 years -- to return to this solemn realm of the spirit. My song
 resumes hesitantly, insecurely, like an Aeolian harp. I am shaken
 through and through. The tears come freely and my heart is
 softened. All my world seems far away, and what was lost has
 become real and immediate.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ J.W. von Goethe, Faust, trans. Barker Fairley (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), p. 2.
 Hereafter cited as Faust, trans. Fairley.

Barker Fairley is one of those translators who throws up his hands at the disparate verse forms in a long poem like *Faust* and declares that since poetry cannot really be transfused from one language to another, the best one can do is render the meaning of the original into clear, lucid prose.⁵⁷ He certainly achieves this in his "Zueignung," for once the reader recovers from the shock of seeing a solid block of print he must admit that most of the original has been faithfully distilled into a readable, modern prose idiom, with no excessive liberties or jarring inconsistencies. One might question the interpretation of "Have I the inclination, have I the heart for it," and substitutions like "I go over the names" for line 15 and "what follows" for "die folgenden Gesänge," which are truer to the spirit of the prose than to the original poetry. As in Prudhoe's version, a lyrical suppleness of expression has given way to an evenness or flatness of tone but it only noticeably fails Goethe in the last stanza, where Fairley at least brings in some dashes in line 25 to break the regularity and try to match some of the poet's new-found creative ecstasy. But apart from these quibbles and a few wrong-spirited phrases ("early love" for "erste Lieb" and the too-meditative "realm of the spirit" for "Geisterreich") Fairley's choice of words is appropriate and unpretentious and the total effect is convincing. One critic claims that Fairley's prose strategy for a work like *Faust* is bound to fail in the lyrical passages and must end up sounding like "the notes at the bottom of the page in a Penguin Anthology of German Literature."⁵⁸ But insofar as such notes are useful to the student of Goethe, Fairley's version of the "Zueignung" must be considered successful, if not totally satisfying or poetically faithful.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 59.

⁵⁸David Ball, "On Translating," p. 29.

Chapter II: PROLOG IM HIMMEL

(Der Herr. Die himmlischen Heerscharen. Nachher Mephistopheles.)

(Die drei Erzengel treten vor)

- RAPHAEL. Die Sonne tönt nach alter Weise
In Brudersphären Wettgesang,
Und ihre vorgesriebne Reise
Vollendet sie mit Donnergang.
Ihr Anblick gibt den Engeln Stärke,
Wenn keiner sie ergründen mag;
Die unbegreiflich hohen Werke
Sind herrlich wie am ersten Tag.
- GABRIEL. Und schnell und unbegreiflich schnelle
Dreht sich umher der Erde Pracht;
Es wechselt Paradieseshelle
Mit tiefer, schauervoller Nacht;
- Es schäumt das Meer in breiten Flüssen
Am tiefen Grund der Felsen auf,
Und Fels und Meer wird fortgerissen
In ewig schnellem Sphärenlauf.
- MICHAEL. Und Stürme brausen um die Wette,
Vom Meer aufs Land, vom Land aufs Meer,
Und bilden wütend eine Kette
Der tiefsten Wirkung rings umher.
Da flammt ein blitzendes Verheeren
Dem Pfade vor des Donnerschlags;
- Doch deine Boten, Herr, verehren
Das sanfte Wandeln deines Tags.
- ZU DREI.
- Der Anblick gibt den Engeln Stärke,
Da keiner dich ergründen mag,
Und alle deine hohen Werke
Sind herrlich wie am ersten Tag.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Goethe, Faust, p.16.

The "Prolog im Himmel," which begins the Faust drama proper, was a major stumbling block to Goethe's recognition among early nineteenth century English reviewers, who saw German literature in general and Goethe's *Werther* and *Faust* in particular as a dangerous and unhealthy influence on public taste. The critic William Taylor expressed this in an article for the *Monthly Review* in 1810, in which he attempts to sum up the proper attitude to *Faust*:

On the whole the absurdities of this piece are so numerous, the obscenities so frequent, the profaneness so gross, and the beauties are so adapted to German relish, that we cannot conscientiously recommend its importation, and still less the translation of it, to our English students of German literature.⁶⁰

Early translators like John Anster and Francis Leveson Gower were careful to omit the blasphemous "Prologue" from their versions of *Faust*, and even though it was eventually acknowledged and exonerated by the influential *Quarterly* magazine, John S. Blackie could still claim, in a postscript to his translation of 1834, he would never be convinced that "the tone of careless familiarity in which things divine are here spoken of, was in any wise worthy of the great poet from whom it came."⁶¹ Even some of the great literary figures of the day were shocked at the daring of the "Prologue" and the "Walpurgisnacht:" Wordsworth was repulsed by what he called "a profligacy of inhuman sensuality in his [Goethe's] works which is utterly revolting," and Coleridge actually refused an offer of 100 Pounds to translate *Faust*, saying "I debated with myself whether it became my moral character to render into English ... much of which I

⁶⁰ William Rose, "Goethe's Reputation in England during his Lifetime," in William Rose, ed., Essays on Goethe (London: Cassel and Company Limited, 1949), p. 159.

⁶¹ T. Webb, The Violet, p. 172.

thought vulgar, licentious, and blasphemous.⁶² It was thus left to Shelley, no stranger to controversy or charges of atheism, to courageously attempt a translation of the "Prologue," which in many ways still stands as the most interesting and convincing of English versions.⁶³

There are at least three features of the "Prologue" which exemplify Goethe's unique conception of the Faust theme. First of all, the pact between God and Mephistopheles sets the dramatic machinery in motion and immediately focuses the play's central concern on the nature of the human condition, rather than the traditional concerns of damnation and the black arts, and introduces the essential nature of each player: Mephistopheles as a cynical spirit of negation, Faust as hapless man caught in a vacuum of his desires, and God as an omnipresent force of creativity and light. Secondly, it is an organic link with the final scene of the drama -- both end in heavenly aether with an all-knowing God forgiving Faust -- and it symbolizes, in mini-epic scope, the final progression of the three preludes to *Faust* in a Goethean journey from lyrical subjectivity (*Zueignung*) through the dramatic clash of the subjective with the objective (*Vorspiel auf dem Theater*) to a purely objective universe propelled by God's divine playfulness. Finally, the "Prologue" introduces the notion of Faust's "striving," upon which rests Goethe's entire conception of the theme. In making the pact with Mephistopheles God admits "Es irrt der Mensch, solang er strebt," but at the same time "ein guter Mensch, in seinem dunklen Drange,/ ist sich des rechten Weges wohl

⁶²Ibid., pp. 172-174. Cf. also Rosemary Ashton, "Coleridge and Faust," *Review of English Studies*, 28 (1977), pp. 156-167, and J. M. Noseworthy, "Coleridge on a Distant Prospect of Faust," *Essays and Studies*, vol. 10 (1957), pp. 69-90.

⁶³For an excellent analysis of Shelley's translations from *Faust* cf. T. Webb, *The Violet*, pp. 188-203.

bewußt," so his instinct for truth and rightfulness shall never abandon him, though he be momentarily beguiled. Thus the seeds of Faust's ultimate salvation are hinted at in the "Prologue," where the role of the Devil is subordinated to the will of God, who arranges the pact such that his mischievous envoy will only win Faust's soul if he can truly satisfy his yearning to the point where Faust will leave off striving and say, to that moment, "Verweile doch, du bist so schön!"

For the translator, the most difficult part of the "Prologue" is the opening hymn which M. Montgomery calls "that great song of the archangels with which the Prologue in Heaven opens, which strikes the keynote of the whole poem and contains ... a whole theodicy in 28 brief lines."⁶⁴ The idea of having God and the three archangels as speaking characters recalls Milton's *Paradise Lost* and the mystery plays of the middle ages, and it, along with the "Prologue"'s obvious analogy to the biblical story of Job, contributes to an appropriately medieval mood for the following scene "Nacht" which has the troubled Faust brooding in his "hochgewölbten engen, gotischen Zimmer."⁶⁵ These exalted choruses celebrate the eternal freshness and immutable order of God's universe, reflected in the firm regularity of a four-beat iambic Faust verse. Goethe avoids monotony here by minor metrical variations, as in lines 265-266, a vigorous diction, and a rising rhythm, all of which produce a tone of remarkable conviction and otherworldliness. If this were not daunting enough for the translator, he must also contend

⁶⁴ Marshall Montgomery, Studies in the Age of Goethe (Oxford: University Press, 1931), p. 11. For detailed discussion of the theology of the "Prologue" cf. Montgomery, Studies, pp. 11-39, and Dietrich Mahnke, "Leibniz und Goethe, Die Harmonie ihrer Weltansichten," Weisheit und Tat (Erfurt: Arthur Hoffmann, 1924).

⁶⁵ For a comparison of early sources cf. Job (1:6-12), Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Book III, and William Empson, Milton's God (London: Chatto and Windus, 1965).

with ubiquitous feminine rhymes and some difficult trisyllabic end-stops (*Donnergang,*
Sphärenlauf, and *Erde Pracht*) and he must sustain an impression of controlled
forward motion in hymn-like verse whose overall effect is one of stately, ethereal beauty.

PROLOGUE

IN HEAVEN

(The Lord, Heavenly Hosts, Afterwards, Mephistopheles.)

(The Three Archangels come forward.)

- 245 RAPHAEL. The sun-orb sings, in emulation,
mid brother spheres, his ancient round;
his path predestined through Creation
he ends with step of thunder-sound.
- 250 The angels from the vision splendid
draw power, whose measure none can say;
the lofty works, uncomprehended,
are bright as on the earliest Day.
- 255 GABRIEL. And swift, and swift beyond conceiving,
the splendor of the earth goes round,
Day's Eden-brightness still relieving
the awful Night's intense profound;
- 260 MICHAEL. And rival storms abroad are surging
from sea to land, from land to sea,
the chain of deepest action forging
round all, in wrathful energy.
- 265 There flames a desolation, blazing
before the thunder's crashing way.
Yet, Lord, Thy messengers keep praising
the gentle movement of Thy day.
- 270 THE THREE. Since Thou remainst uncomprehended,
this vision gives the angels power,
and all Thy works, sublime and splendid,
are bright as in Creation's hour.(Heaven opens.)⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Faust, trans. Taylor, p.58.

Unfortunately, the same qualities that marred Taylor's "Zueignung" are in abundance in his "Prologue." The striving for fidelity in the metrics has produced much wordy padding, as in line 243 and most of line 248, and to the faulty inversions of lines 247, 257, and 261. His choice of words shows a fondness for sticking in "poetic" words, some of them mistranslations, where the original is simple and straightforward -- "sun-orb" for "Sonne," "Night's profound" for "tiefer Nacht," "desolation" for "Verheeren," "vision" for "Anblick," and the stubborn "keep praising" for "verehren." The most damaging change has occurred in the rhythm, where the inexorable, measured movement of the original has become self-conscious and choppy, full of mid-line commas (12 to Goethe's 4). In fairness to Taylor there are some successful moments -- "ancient round" of line 244 hints nicely at the music of the spheres, "deep bases" of line 256 is as musically sound as the original's "Grund," and "gentle movement" is the best version of "sanfte Wandeln" among our five translators -- but these are all but lost in the wake of lines like "the ocean tides in foam are breaking" and feminine endings like the rhyme "the angel's power/Creation's hour," and the general stiffness of tone is even carried over into the immediately following speech of Mephistopheles, which should by contrast be colloquial and familiar.

PROLOGUE in HEAVEN

THE LORD, HEAVENLY HOST. Later, MEPHISTOPHELES.

(The THREE ARCHANGELS step forward.)

- 245
- RAPHAEL. The sun contends in age-old fashion
With brother-spheres in hymnic sound,
And in far-thundering progression
Discharges his appointed round.
His aspect lends the angels power,
While none may gauge his secret way;
Sublime past understanding tower
Those works as on the primal day.
- 250
- GABRIEL. The earth's resplendence spins and ranges
Past understanding swift in flight,
And paradisiac lucence changes
With awe-inspiring depths of night;
The ocean's foaming seas run shoreward,
On rocky depths rebound and rear,
And rock and ocean hurtle forward,
Sped by the ever-hurrying sphere.
- 255
- MICHAEL. And tempest roars, with tempest vying,
From sea to land, from land to sea,
In their alternate furies tying
A chain of deepest potency.
A flash of fiery disaster
Precedes the thunder on its way;
- 260
- And envoys, though, revere, o Master,
The gentle progress of Thy day.
- 265
- THE THREE. (in unison) This aspect lends the angels power,
As none may gauge Thy secret way,
And all Thy sovereign works still tower
Sublime as on the primal day.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Faust, trans. Arndt, pp.6-7.

Arndt has wrought an exalted tone in a verse that is more confident and rhythmically secure than Taylor's, but he often annuls the total effect with odd phrases and jerky turns in the verse. The opening three lines, for example, are quite masterly until line 246 where the sun "discharges his appointed round" (of ammunition, perhaps, to make his "far-thundering progression"?), and almost every couplet is similarly marred. There are also hints of ambiguity (line 252) and padding (line 269), and evidence of a tin ear in lines 251 and 256. Michael's stanza, the most successful of the three, has a fresh and interesting solution to the problematic lines 261-262 and Arndt nicely brings out the distinction in the original between the two refrains (lines 248 and 268), though one might object to the unnecessary parallelism brought into line 259, as well as the choice of "aspect" for "Anblick" and "gauge" for "ergründen." Arndt seems bent on proving Thomas Gray's observation that "the language of the age is never the language of poetry,"⁶⁸ for his often praiseworthy version of the archangels' hymn is written in a too effusive language of no particular age and is not served by the many attempts to make it, as Arndt says, "more Goethean" than other translations.

⁶⁸ Letter to West, 1742, in M. H. Abrams, A Glossary of Literary Terms (U.S.A.: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1971), p. 131.

PROLOGUE IN HEAVEN

The Lord, the heavenly hosts.

Later, Mephistopheles.

The three Archangels step forward.

RAPHAEL:

The sun intones, in ancient tourney
With brother spheres, a rival air;
245 And his predestinated journey,
He closes with a thundrous blare.
His sight, as none can comprehend it,
Gives strength to angels; the array
Of works, unfathomably splendid,
250 Is glorious as on the first day.

GABRIEL:

Unfathomably swiftly speeded,
Earth's pomp revolves in whirling flight,
As Eden's brightness is succeeded
By deep and dread-inspiring night;
255 In mighty torrents foams the ocean
Against the rocks with roaring song--
In ever-speeding spheric motion,
Both rock and sea are swept along.

MICHAEL:

And rival tempests roar and ravage
From sea to land, from land to sea,
And, raging, form a chain of savage,
Deeply destructive energy.

There flames a flashing devastation
To clear the thunder's crashing way;
265 Yet, Lord, thy herald's admiration
Is for the mildness of thy day.

THE THREE:

The sight, as none can comprehend it,
Gives strength to angels; thy array
Of works, unfathomably splendid,
270 Is glorious as on the first day.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Faust, trans. Kaufmann, pp. 83-85.

As in his excellent translation of the "Zueignung," Kaufmann stays close to the original, but this time he gets mixed results. Lines 245 and 263, for example, physically resemble the original but end up sounding stilted and lines 246 and 256 have been saddled with prepositional phrases which are quite inexplicable (the latter's "with roaring song" is unequivocal about the musical possibilities of "Grund"), unless he set out to dynamite what he considered intentionally staid poetry. Kaufmann's palette of verse music ranges from the tasteful alliteration of lines 254 and lines 257-258, to the heavy brass of the "r" for stormy lines like 256 and 259 (with the final interposed punch of "raging" in line 261), to the unsubtle jingling of "deeply destructive energy" and "flames a flashing devastation." In the refrain he chops up the simple directness of the original with many parenthetical insertions and an odd caesura before the last foot of the second line of each and he ignores the distinction between the original's "wenn" (though) in the first refrain and "da" (since) in the second. There is even an uncharacteristic ambiguity resulting from "His sight" in line 247 and "The sight" in line 267, and the "thy" of lines 265, 266, and 268 is equally surprising from a man who declares himself dedicated to a translation free of "theeing and thouing."⁷⁰

⁷⁰Walter Kaufmann, "Introduction," Faust, trans. Walter Kaufmann, p. 4.

PROLOGUE IN HEAVEN

The Lord. The heavenly hosts. Later, Mephistopheles.

(The three Archangels step forward.)

RAPHAEL: The sun's majestic song competes
In consort with his brother spheres,
245 His thundrous chariot completes
A progress destined through all years.
His light renews the angels' strength
Though none may comprehend its ray,
And heaven's high unfathomed length
250 Shines bright as on creation's day.

GABRIEL: Swifter than mere thought can fly
The panoply of earth revolves.
First paradise delights the sky
Then from its glow dread night evolves.
255 The sea is whipped to foaming wrath
Against the crag's deep-grounded base,
The sea and crags are carried off
By motion of the planets' race.

MICHAEL: And storms contest the sovereign throne
From sea to land, from land to sea,
Till all that lives within their zone
Is chained to their malignancy.
The scorching flames of heaven sear
The thunder's unimpeded way,
265 Yet, Lord, Thy angels still revere
The temperate progress of Thy day.

ALL THREE: Your light renews the angels' strength,
Since none can penetrate its ray
And all creation's mighty length
270 Shines bright as on creation's day.⁷¹

⁷¹ Faust, trans. Prudhoe, p.10.

The first and most striking thing about this translation is the extent to which Prudhoe has taken liberties and added things without sacrificing the feel of the original. Many of the departures are courtly allusions ("majestic song" of line 243, "thundrous chariot" of line 245, and "sovereign throne" of line 250) which are appropriate to impressionable heavenly vassals, and the extended association of God and his creative energy with sunlight in lines 247-250 is licentious but Goethean in spirit. The few lapses, such as the slip on the penultimate word "all" in line 246, the questionable rhyme on "evolves" (line 254), and the addition of "malignancy" in line 262, are small next to the rhythmic sureness of lines 255-258 and the simplicity of lines 263-266 (Prudhoe is the only one of our five translators who alludes directly to lightning here, as in the original). He also catches the aforementioned distinction between "wearn" and "da" in the second line of the refrain. His substitution of "light" for "Anblick" in lines 247 and 267 does work, although the "high unfathomed length" for "unbegreiflich hohen Werke" which served line 249 is less successful when carried into "creation's mighty length" in line 269 as it almost contradicts the sentiment of lines 265-266. All things considered, Prudhoe offers a convincing and readable account of the hymn that is faithful to the spirit if not the letter of the original and, strangely enough, he is the only one of our translators whose hymn is better than the speech of Mephistopheles that follows it.

PROLOGUE IN HEAVEN

The Lord. The heavenly host. Then Mephistopheles. The three archangels step forward

RAPHAEL

The sun resounds among the singing spheres with its ancient music and, thundering loud, completes its course. The angels cannot fathom it, but the mere sight gives them strength. The great, the incomparably great, works of creation are splendid as on the first day of the world.

GABRIEL

And with speed incredible the earth revolves in its glory, the radiance of paradise alternating with deep and dreadful night. Sea-floods storm at the base of the rocks, and sea and rocks alike are whirled in the swift motion of the spheres.

MICHAEL

And tempest on tempest rages from sea to land, from land to sea, forming a chain of mightiest energy. Dread lightnings flash before the thunderclap. But your messengers, O Lord, revere the gentler processes.

ALL THREE

The angels cannot fathom it, but the mere sight gives them strength. And all your mighty works are splendid as on the first day.⁷²

⁷² Faust, trans. Fairley, p. 6.

Once again, the shock of seeing this passage in prose reminds us that we inevitably grant some leniency to a prose translation dedicated to giving us a clear idea what is said in *Faust*. If we allow this "handicap" from the outset, we should conclude that Fairley's version of the hymn is surprisingly effective. He writes lucidly and with a sure sense of rhythm throughout the many successful lines, which never sound like paraphrases, and only "with speed incredible" and "with deep and dreadful night" in Gabriel's speech depart a little from the modern idiom. The refrain has a few problems -- Fairley ignores the play on "wenn" and "da," uses the questionable "mighty works" for "hohe Werke," and he has the same first line both times, ignoring the difference between "Ihr Anblick" and "der Anblick" -- but his rhetorical restructuring makes good sense for the prose, as does the flourish "the great, the incomparably great" of Raphael's speech, and the parallel structure added with "tempest on tempest" in Michael's opening lines (whereas it did not work for Kaufmann). Prose, of course, cannot possibly suggest the flow of cyclical processes imitated in the measured cadence of Goethe's verse, and there is a distinct effect of flatness and compression here, but Fairley remains true to the bounds of his medium and achieves a kind of "prosaic faithfulness" in the "Prologue."

Chapter III: NACHT

O sähst du, voller Mondenschein,
 Zum letztenmal auf meine Pein,
 Den ich so manche Mitternacht
 An diesem Pult herangewacht:
 390 Dann über Büchern und Papier,
 Trübsel'ger Freund, erschienst du mir!
 Ach! könnt' ich doch auf Bergeshöhn
 In deinem lieben Lichte geln,
 Um Bergeshöhle mit Geistern schweben,
 395 Auf Wiesen in deinem Dämmer weben,
 Von allem Wissensqualm entladen,
 In deinem Tau gesund mich baden!

Weh! steck' ich in dem Kerker noch?
 Verfluchtes dumpfes Mauerloch,
 400 Wo selbst das liebe Himmelslicht
 Trüb durch gemalte Scheiben bricht!
 Beschränkt von diesem Bücherhauf,
 Den Würme nagen, Staub bedeckt,
 Den, bis ans hohe Gewölb' hinauf,
 405 Ein angerauht Papier umsteckt;
 Mit Gläsern, Büchsen rings umstellt,
 Mit Instrumenten vollgepfropft
 Urväter-Hausrat drein gestopft –
 Das ist deine Welt! das heißt eine Welt!⁷³

⁷³ Goethe, Faust, p. 21.

Whilst the angels sing in praise of God's universe, the next scene shows Faust brooding in his dank study, unsatisfied by the "Anblick" of creation and striving to know "was die Welt/Im Innersten zusammenhält." This whole scene, modelled on the subgenre of the monodrama -- popular in the eighteenth century and known to Goethe through French sources -- represents two stages in the complex composition of *Faust*: lines 354-605 with the opening monologue, the conjuring of the Earth Spirit, and the conversation with the famulus Wagner date from the early 1770's, while lines 606-807, with Faust relapsing into despair to be saved by the sound of Easter bells and choruses, were written about twenty years later and added to the 1808 version of *Faust I*. Lines 606-1770 make up what Goethe himself called the "great lacuna," which some critics consider one of the most visible seams in the layered construction of *Faust*.⁷⁴ It is true that Faust's suicidal despair mounts quickly (90 lines) in the monologue after Wagner's exit, and the association of Faust with Christ in a setting the night before Easter is a distinct departure from the text of the *Urfaust*. But this transformation of Faust from a prototypical romantic hero, who thirsts for true knowledge and challenges the Earth Spirit, to a more archetypal tragic figure (hence the suicide motif), whose ultimate salvation is prefigured, is a central element in Goethe's conception of Faust and certainly one of his most bold and important departures from the legend.

Lines 386-409 continue the expression of Faust's dissatisfaction with his academic pursuits and his claustrophobia of body and spirit. Watching the moon rise, he thinks of all the time he has spent walled up in his study, still unable to penetrate beyond the appearance of things and sick of the dead knowledge he has piled up which, like the

⁷⁴Cf. Emil Staiger, Goethe, vol. 2 (Zürich and Freiburg: Atlantis Verlag, 1956), pp. 34-56.

reflected light of the moon, generates no vital power of its own. These two stanzas occur just before the middle of the opening monologue and they contrast the language of the "sentimental sublime" of eighteenth century nature poems⁷⁵ (lines 392-397), which foreshadows the scene "Wald und Höhle," with the shock of the passionate "Sturm und Drang" style tirade against dead knowledge in lines 398-409, which points to the casting off of Faust's medieval scholasticism and the renaissance of the "Osterspaziergang." The intentional anachronisms and the many passages of near doggerel in "Nacht" seem to indicate a fondness for the idealism of Herder and a desire to show the multilayered texture of history, legend, and living poetry in this pivotal scene, carrying all early manifestations with it. If so, this goes against Goethe's own dictum that a poet should know philosophy but keep it out of his work, and one might easily imagine Goethe's amusement at commentators bristling at inconsistencies and indecorous passages of *Faust*.

Since "Nacht" is the scene most likely to be closely read, it behooves a translator to scrutinize lines 386-409 and pay attention to its many typically Goethean symbols. The passage is an excellent example of the most frequent verse form used in *Faust*, the Faust verse, and it shows many colours from Goethe's extraordinary sound palette: we hear dark, open vowels of "O sähst du, voller Mondenschein" intoning the despondency of the first six lines, then melting into the floating "e"'s and the soft liquids and "d"'s of the next six, followed by the rattling rhythms and sputtering "b," "st," and "pf" sounds of lines 398-409. The couplet at lines 400-401 is particularly effective, with the fleeting

⁷⁵Cyrus Hamlin, footnote in Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust: a Tragedy*, trans. Walter Arndt, ed. Cyrus Hamlin (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1976), p. 11.

appearance of "liebe Himmelslicht," snuffed out by a wrenched accent on "trüb" and slammed shut on "bricht," and since the vocabulary and the prosody are so well suited to the impatience and claustrophobia of Faust, the translator would do well to remember John Whaley's reworking of Pope's advice: "the point to be found is not sound, nor sense, but sound and sense combined, sense in sound."⁷⁶ The translator must acknowledge the satirical tone and archaic odour hanging about this passage but not be tempted into a caricature of a frustrated professor whose sentiment is mawkish and whose passionate rage is trite.

⁷⁶John Whaley, "On Translating the Quality of Goethe's Poetry," Publications of the English Goethe Society, 49 (1978-79), p. 153.

Night/ Lines 386 to 409

O full and splendid Moon, whom I
 have, from this desk, seen climb the sky
 so many a midnight, would thy glow
 for the last time beheld my woe!

390 Ever thine eye, most mournful friend,
 o'er books and papers saw me bend.
 But would that I, on mountains grand,
 amid thy blessed light might stand,
 with spirits through mountain caverns hover,
 395 float in thy twilight the meadows over,
 and, freed from the fumes of lore that swathe me,
 to health in thy dewy fountains bathe me.

Alas! my prison still I see!
 This drear, accursed masonry's
 400 a dungeon that the sun attains
 but dusky through painted panes.
 Hemmed in by many a toppling heap
 of books worm-eaten, gray with dust,
 which to the vaulted ceiling creep,
 405 amidst them smoky papers thrust;
 with glasses, boxes, round one stacked,
 with instruments together hurled,
 ancestral lumber jammed in, packed:
 that is my world--if such's to call a world!⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Faust, trans. Taylor, p. 70.

Taylor achieves the right atmosphere in these two stanzas, even if his Faust appears more wistful than despairing, but the price of metrical fidelity is again high. Any hope for flowing, English-sounding poetry is hacked to pieces in the first four lines, with a hopelessly over-burdened caesura unraveling line 388 and a right-spirited choice of words in "splendid" and "glow" padding the line to mimic the bounce of Goethe's accents. The few good things like the nice irony of the moon's "blessèd light" (especially after "leider auch Theologie" in line 356) and the generally good diction -- except perhaps in "fumes of lore" for "Wissensqualm" and "ancestral lumber" for "Urväter-Hausrat" -- seem like happy accidents amid feminine endings like "swathe me/bathe me," "I see/masonry's" (the latter almost rescued by a clever enjambment), and unfortunate inversions in lines 391, 394, and 395. The second half of the passage is generally more successful, hampered only by a flagging of momentum in the last two lines, due to an ill-placed caesura in line 408 and the flaccid second half of line 409 being connected to the first statement by a dash, where the original has exclamatory force.

Night / Lines 386-409

Oh full moon radiant, would that you,
 Who many a midnight vigil through
 Have found me wakeful in this chair,
 Might look your last on my despair!

390 As over books I used to bend,
 You would appear to me, sad friend;
 Ah, would that on mountain ways
 I wandered by your lovely rays,
 Might haunt with sprites a cavern rift,

395 On meadows in your twilight drift,
 And rid of learning's fetid fume,
 Bathe whole my spirit in your spume!
 Woe! stuck within this dungeon yet?
 Curse this dank frowsty cabinet,

400 Where even Heaven's dear ray can pass
 But murkily through tinted glass!
 Entombed within this book-lined tower,
 Which dust envelops, worms devour,
 By fumigated charts unrolled

405 As high up as this vault can hold;
 In instruments all choked and furled,
 Hemmed in by flagon, jar, and trunk,
 Stuffed tightly with ancestral junk--
 This is your world! Call this a world!⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Faust, trans. Arndt, p. 11.

This is Arndt's best translation so far, perhaps because the passage is so well suited to his "Goethean" brogue. Without lampooning the original, Arndt captures the atmosphere of Faust's situation in his arcane but appropriate diction and he shows a willingness to play with the original structures, as in lines 386-389 and 402-405, for the sake of readability in English. There are still some whiffs of Victorian poesy, with "spume" (Tau) rhyming on "fetid fume" and "dungeon yet" on "cabinet," but they do not seem so out of place in this recreation of Faust's study, for they are surrounded by inventive rhymes and subtleties: line 389 is especially evocative, as is "lovely rays" of line 393 (this suggestion of the moon as Faust's deceptive sun is reiterated in the timely and successful "dear ray" of line 400), and words like "vault," "furled," "trunk," and "junk," work extremely well in the appropriately clanking word music of the last five lines. Arndt brings out the contrasts in the first and second stanzas by simply preserving the youthful freshness of lines 392-397 and the forcefulness of lines 400-409, and ends up with the most passionate and poetically faithful version of this passage treated here. While many will find this highly strung pitch overbearing when sustained through the entire monologue, these two stanzas are well served by the confidence and rhythmic drive displayed here.

Night/ lines 386-409

Full lunar light, that you might stare
 The last time now on my despair!
 How often I've been waking here
 At my old desk till you appeared,
 390 And over papers, notes, and books
 I caught, my gloomy friend, your looks.
 Oh, that up on a mountain height
 I could walk in your lovely light
 And float with spirits round caves and trees,
 395 Weave in your twilight through the leas,
 Cast dusty knowledge overboard,
 And bathe in dew until restored.

Still this old dungeon, still a mole!
 Cursed be this moldy walled-in hole
 Where heaven's lovely light must pass
 And lose its luster, through stained glass.
 Confined with books, and every tome
 Is gnawed by worms, covered with dust,
 And on the walls, up to the dome,
 400 A smoky paper, spots of rust;
 Enclosed by tubes and jars that breed
 More dust, by instruments and soot,
 Ancestral furniture to boot--
 405 That is your world! A world indeed!⁷⁹

⁷⁹Faust, trans. Kaufmann, pp. 95-97.

Kaufmann's translation in general is characterized by simple and intelligent solutions to the many problems of putting *Faust* into English, and though his version of this passage is faithful to the form and meaning of the original, he seems to shoot just wide of the mark. As in all the translations of this passage, and in the original, we can get the basic tenor of the whole thing from the opening apostrophe -- "Full lunar light, that you might stare." In spite of the exclamation mark in line 387, the measured pace and legato phrasing of the opening is sustained beautifully throughout to line 397 with many unusual touches, such as the addition of "trees" and "leas" and the novel "Cast dusty knowledge overboard," complementing a convincing echo of Goethe's lyric voice. The second group of verses is also quite readable but it does not achieve much of a contrast in language or tone. Line 398 is noticeably weak and low-key, and Kaufmann's fondness for liquids, carried over into this section with phrases like "still a mole," "walled-in hole," and "lose its luster," takes the edge off the original and extends the wistful nostalgia of the first passage. There are also some questionable additions like "spots of rust" in line 405 -- to catch the rhyme on "dust" which, by appearing also in lines 387, 396, and 407, becomes a little pedantic -- and "soot" to make a frivolous rhyme on "to boot" in lines 407-408. Kaufmann's translation, therefore, while fresh and immanently readable, does not succeed in transferring into English the feel of lines 400-409, and the mood remains closer to ironic vexation than mounting despair.

Night/ Lines 388-409

Bright moon! How many nights I'd ask
 Your presence with me at this desk.
 Sad friend of midnight who would gaze
 On books and parchments, would my days
 390 And all my suffering were past,
 And this night's visit was your last.
 Or that, on some tall mountain's height
 I wandered in your well-loved light,
 Commanded with spirits in the caves
 395 Of hills, found meadows washed with waves
 Of moonlight! Freed from learnings mist
 I'd bathe in dew and rise refreshed.
 But yet I am a prisoner. Still
 Walled-up in this accursed hell!
 400 The paintings on the window even
 Serve to deflect the light of heaven.
 This pile of books, a dungeon wall
 Rising to the ceiling's dome!
 Worm eaten! Dusty! And a pall
 405 Of smoke-stained paper charred to chrome
 Crowns all. Row after serried row
 Of glasses, instruments galore,
 Lumber, boxes by the score—
 That is your world, my friend! If you call it so.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Faust, trans. Prudhoe, p. 16.

Strictly speaking, Prudhoe takes far too many liberties with these lines to have produced a "faithful" translation, but when strategies and definitions are put aside, one must acknowledge the skill with which he has reproduced the poetry of the original. While staying close to Goethe's metrics, Prudhoe alters a great deal and brings about much of the same levelling-off effect of his archangel choruses. First of all, he conceives of the passage as one unit by joining the two verse paragraphs together. Then, by rearranging the first six lines and turning the idea of "herangewacht" in line 389 into "I'd ask" (now in line 386) and linking this to the next section beginning at line 392, Prudhoe achieves a unified symmetry where the original is the more spontaneous outcry of a cloistered spirit -- "Ach, könnt ich doch auf Bergeshöhn." The effect of "But yet I am a prisoner" is similarly understated compared to the original "Weh! steck' ich in dem Kerker noch!" but Prudhoe has a definite momentum in mind for these lines, and the tempo starts to accelerate in line 402. The verse then acquires the proper exclamatory punch in line 404 and a nicely satirical, percussive bite with "smoke-stained paper charred to chrome/Crowns all" (lines 405-406), and it continues in a controlled gallop, with a fine rhyme on "galore" and "by the score," until the dash at the end of line 408. The wry observations of the last line effect a controlled ritardando and round off the passage, thereby linking it tidily to what precedes and what follows it, in a way foreign to the brute force of the original: "Das ist deine Welt. Das heißt eine Welt!" Thus one is tempted to conclude much of this translation seems like a victory of English orderliness over Teutonic energy, but Prudhoe's achievement is nonetheless impressive when one considers the effortless readability and technical success of the passage.

from Night

Oh if this were the last time the full moon found me here in my agony. How often have I sat at my desk among my books watching for you in the deep of night till at last, my melancholy friend, you came. Oh to be out on the hilltops in your lovely light, floating among spirits at some cavern's mouth or merging into your meadows in the dimness. Oh to be clear, once and for all, of this pedantry, this stench, and to wash myself in your dew and be well again.

But where am I? Still a prisoner in this stifling hole, these walls, where even the sunlight that filters in is dimmed and discoloured by the painted panes, surrounded from floor to ceiling by dusty, worm-eaten bookshelves with this sooty paper stuck over them, these instruments everywhere, these beakers, these retorts, and then, on top of that, my family goods and chattels. Call that a world?⁸¹

⁸¹ Faust, trans. Fairley, p. 8.

If Prudhoe's version of this passage rounded off its rough edges and "unified" its structure, Fairley's rendition all but obliterates any of the original poetry. Wisely avoiding the opening address, Fairley opens with the sensible "Oh if this were the last time the full moon found me here" but he picks it up in the next line and continues in the same rhetorical vein with "Oh to be out on the hilltops" and "Oh to be clear," which produce a tone of whining rather than longing. Although the choice of words is good and the sentence structures are clear, there is a general feeling of a slightly strained mixture of the poetic and the prosaic: everyday phrases like "where am I?" and "Call that a world?" rub shoulders with "my melancholy friend" and "deep of night," and while the assonance of the many open vowels in the first section works well, the consonance of "dimmed and discoloured," "painted panes," and "floating among spirits at some cavern's mouth or merging into your meadows" ("your" presumably referring to the moon) sounds odd and out of place. The second section is particularly disappointing, and though Fairley tries to hint at the mounting intensity by combining everything and framing the passage with two short questions, the words do not have enough explosive charge, except for "retorts," and the colloquial frustration of "Call that a world?" is not sufficiently prepared for and is spoilt by the question mark. Clearly, a passage like this loses a great deal when put into even the most lucid prose, yet one must admit that Fairley unassumingly effects a kind of droning melancholy in the reader, even though he does not capture the more grandiose despair of the original.

Chapter IV: GRETCHENS STUBE

3375 GRETCHEN *am Spinnrade allein.*
 Meine Ruh' ist hin,
 Mein Herz ist schwer;
 Ich finde sie nimmer
 Und nimmermehr.

3380 Wo ich ihn nicht hab',
 Ist mir das Grab,
 Die ganze Welt
 Ist mir vergällt.

3385 Mein armer Kopf
 Ist mir verrückt,
 Mein armer Sinn
 Ist mir zerstückt.

Meine Ruh' ist hin,
 Mein Herz ist schwer;
 Ich finde sie nimmer
 Und nimmermehr.

3390 Nach ihm nur schau' ich
 Zum Fenster hinaus,
 Nach ihm nur geh' ich
 Aus dem Haus.

3395 Sein hoher Gang,
 Sein' edle Gestalt,
 Seines Mundes Lächeln,
 Seiner Augen Gewalt,

3400 Und seiner Rede
 Zauberflus,
 Sein Händedruck,
 Und ach sein Kuß!

3405 Meine Ruh' ist hin,
 Mein Herz ist schwer;
 Ich finde sie nimmer
 Und nimmermehr.

Mein Busen drängt
 Sich nach ihm hin.
 Ach dürft' ich fassen
 Und halten ihn,

3410 Und küssen ihn,
 So wie ich wollt',
 An seinen Küssen
 Vergehen sollt'⁸²

⁸² Goethe, Faust, pp. 107-109.

The so-called "Gretchen-Tragedy" (lines 2605-3834), included in the *Urfaust* of 1775, makes up the entire second half of Part I and remains Goethe's boldest departure from traditional sources of the Faust legend. Many suggestions have been offered to account for the importance Goethe gave this episode, and it has been variously considered a reflection of an age preoccupied with seduction, an attempt on the poet's part to purge himself of his own misgivings about relations with women (in particular with Friederike Brion), a development of the single reference to a seduction in the Pfitzer *Faust* book of 1674, and a typically "Sturm und Drang" denunciation of middle-class society, written in response to the execution, for infanticide, of one Susanna Margarethe Brandt in Frankfurt on January 14, 1772.⁸³ Whatever the ultimate source or combination of sources, the Gretchen tragedy came to assume an essential significance for *Faust*, although not because of the themes of libertinism and infanticide that spawned so many operatic imitations, wrong-headed sociological interpretations, and "Modelltheorien."⁸⁴ There is no doubt about the criticism of Gretchen's bourgeois world, an environment built largely upon repressing the dark side of human existence Faust is compelled to explore, but hints of the full import of the Gretchen episode are found in line 4583 (with the half-demented Gretchen saying "Wir werden uns wiedersehen") and lines 12069-75 with the intercession of a Penitent Spirit on Faust's behalf ("UNA POENITENTIUM, sonst *Gretchen genannt*"). Just as Faust acts as the instrument of her destruction, Gretchen becomes the instrument of his ultimate salvation by

⁸³ Ernst Beutler, "Die Kindsmörderin," in Ernst Beutler, Essays um Goethe, vol. 1 (Leipzig: 1941), pp. 98-114.

⁸⁴ Barker Fairley, Goethe's Faust: Six Essays (Oxford: University Press, 1953), p. 63.

representing, through her authentic love and self-sacrifice, an embodiment of the highest object of Faustian striving -- the "Ewig-Weibliche" of the final *Chorus mysticus* -- for the whole Gretchen tragedy is really the lynch-pin in Goethe's attempt to show that the contraries of Faustian and Mephistophelian impulses are necessary to life and that Gretchen shall, like Werther, come to grief by dwelling in a universe of her emotions, and by being forced to swim against the tide of her society when it thwarts her individuality.

Goethe has traditionally disconcerted critics (and translators) by disregarding both the conventions of the drama and the philosophical needs of the argument in *Faust* when a purely lyrical or emotional eventuality presents itself, and this is certainly true of the Gretchen tragedy, which seems to be written "for its own sake."⁸⁵ For its part, the scene "Gretchens Stube" (lines 3374-3413) was obviously composed without reference to the preceding scene "Wald und Höhle" -- Gretchen's distress is clearly not based on the belief Faust has left her, as Mephistopheles claims in lines 3330-31 -- but it does serve the function of providing a motivation for the discussion of religion in "Marthes Garten" and explaining Gretchen's acceptance of Faust's sleeping potion for her mother, for the scene is essentially a declaration of her deep and selfless love for Faust.

Gretchen's speech, like her values and beliefs, contrasts with Faust's in that it is still rooted in oral tradition and ancestral rhythm, so it is fitting that in a quiet moment at the spinning-wheel she should speak a rhymed, song-like monologue about her powerful and confused feelings (she does the same in her prayer to the Virgin in "Zwinger" and in her mad, Ophelia-like songs in the final scene of Part I). These

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 44.

episodes achieve an intense, lyrical focus on Gretchen and formalize her emotions in a way that is certainly difficult to translate effectively: the song at the spinning-wheel, not necessarily sung, is wrought in simple four-line, rhymed stanzas with a loose two-stress iambic beat, but recurring words like "hin," "ist mir," and "nimmermehr" (the latter made especially difficult after the effective drone of "Nevermore" in Poe's "The Raven!") are deeply embedded in a German idiom and necessitate changes in the basic structures when put into English. Fortunately for the translator there are few feminine endings, but it shall be seen that a smooth and adequate translation of these wistful verses into English is no easy task.

MARGARETE'S ROOM

- GRETCHEN (*alone at the spinning wheel!*). My heart is sad,
 3375 my peace is o'er,
 I'll find it never
 and nevermore.
 When gone is he,
 the grave I see,
 3380 the world is gall
 and bitterness all.
 Alas my head
 is racked and crazed,
 my thought is lost,
 3385 my senses mazed.
 My heart is sad,
 my peace is o'er,
 I'll find it never
 and nevermore.
 3390 To see him, only,
 at the pane I sit,
 to meet him, only,
 the house I quit.
 His lofty gait,
 3395 his noble form,
 the smile of his mouth,
 his glances warm,
 and the magic flow
 of his talk, the bliss
 3400 in the clasp of his hand,
 and, ah! his kiss!
 My heart is sad,
 my peace is o'er,
 I'll find it never
 3405 and nevermore.
 My bosom yearns
 for him alone;
 ah! might I clasp him,
 and hold, and own!
 3410 and kiss his mouth,
 to heart's desire,
 and on his kisses

at last expire!⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Faust, trans. Taylor, pp. 236-38.

Taylor's version of the spinning-wheel song is generally good and has aged better than the other parts of his translation we have seen. The basic feel is still a little antiquated: phrases like "my peace is o'er," "to meet him, only," and "the house I quit" are definitely quaint, though still workable and perhaps defensible in view of Gretchen's middle class, hence speech-conscious background. Some lines, like the harsh and academic "my head/is racked and crazed" and "my senses mazed" are doubtful, but the successful refrain (with its reversal of the first two lines to avoid ambiguity) and indeed the last four stanzas show ingenuity in the verse, flexibility in the rhythm, and sensitivity to the essence of the original. Typically, when Taylor paints himself into a corner by trying to mirror the original in a difficult moment, as in the fifth stanza, the result is strained; when he dares to play with the inner structures for the sake of clarity, as in the addition of "the bliss in" (stanza 7) and "alone" and "own" (stanza 9), the result is convincing. Stanza 6 is an especially good example of simplicity and success, though the substitution of "his glances warm" for "seiner Augen Gewalt" does seem to be a concession to the rhyme with "noble form," whatever one might think of its poetic faithfulness.

GRETCHEM'S CHAMBER

GRETCHEN *by the spinning-wheel, alone.*
GRETCHEN.

- 3375 My peace is gone,
 My heart is sore;
 Can find it never
 And nevermore.

- 3380 When he is fled,
 My soul is dead,
 My world is all
 As bitter gall.

- 3385 My wretched head
 Is all askew,
 My bit of sense
 All come in two.

My peace is gone,
My heart is sore;
Can find it never
And nevermore.

- 3390 Just him I spy
 At the window for,
 Just him I fly
 To meet outdoor.

- 3395 His noble frame
 Tall gait and stand,
 The smile of his lips
 His eye's command,

- 3400 And then his speech
 Of magic bliss,
 His hand on mine,
 And oh, his kiss!

My peace is gone,
My heart is sore;
Can find it never

3405

And nevermore.

My bosom strains
Unto his clasp,
Ah, could I gather
And hold him fast,

3410

And kiss him, oh,
The way I felt,
Under his kisses
Would swoon and melt!⁸⁷

⁸⁷ Faust, trans. Arndt, pp. 82-83.

This rendition of Gretchen's song is much more strictly iambic than Taylor's, and while it is basically readable, Arndt's restless diction often disturbs the evenness of the translation, turning it into an alternation of successful with questionable couplets. Stanza 3 has the odd "My wretched head/Is all askew" followed by the nicely self-effacing "My bit of sense/All come in two," while stanza 6, with its prosaic and empty "his speech/Of magic bliss," and stanza 10, where the simplicity of the first three lines is bludgeoned by "Would swoon and melt," are similarly marred. Some questions also come in stanza 2 with "When he is fled" (suggesting what Mephistopheles erroneously claims in lines 3330-31), in stanza 6 with the inventive but not totally satisfying "stand," and in the completely unfortunate stanza 5. The all-important refrain is straightforward and good, though Arndt rather pedantically stamps out the meter by omitting "I" from the third line and making two words out of "nevermore," and many will be unconvinced by the substitution of "sore" for "schwer" in "Mein Herz ist schwer," though Kaufmann and Prudhoe also use it.⁸⁸ As in his "Zueignung," Arndt has unfortunately interrupted the continuity of his translation by refusing to leave well enough alone.

⁸⁸As late as 1917, Yeats could write "And now my heart is sore" in line 14 of his poem "The Wild Swans at Coole."

GRETCHEN'S ROOM

GRETCHEN (*at the spinning wheel, alone*):

3375 My peace is gone,
 My heart is sore;
 I find it never
 And nevermore.

3380 Where him I not have
 There is my grave.
 This world is all
 Turned into gall.

3385 And my poor head
 Is quite insane,
 And my poor mind
 Is rent with pain.

3390 My peace is gone,
 My heart is sore;
 I find it never
 And nevermore.

3395 For him only I look
 From my window seat,
 For him only I go
 Out into the street.

3400 His lofty gait,
 His noble guise,
 The smile of his mouth,
 The force of his eyes,

3405 And his words' flow--
 Enchanting bliss--
 The touch of his hand,
 And, oh, his kiss.

3410 My peace is gone,
 My heart is sore;
 I find it never
 And nevermore.

My bosom surges
For him alone,
Oh that I could clasp him
And hold him so,

3410

And kiss him
To my heart's content,
Till in his kisses
I were spent.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ Faust, trans. Kaufmann, pp. 321-23.

This translation by Kaufmann is also an example of good work marred by a few severe problems, especially in the more troublesome spots. The refrain is fine, with a nice suggestion of the strangeness of Gretchen's new and troubled feelings in the wistful "I find it never" of the third line, and indeed most of the poem is convincing and readable, but the second stanza's "Where him I not have/There is my grave" is a slavish attempt to ape the original format, and stanza 5 is either an unfortunate lapse or a mischievous parody of Gretchen's simpleness. The line "my poor mind/Is rent with pain" is also not the best rendition of "Mein armer Sinn/Ist mir zerstückt," and yet everything else in the song reads effortlessly and is certainly poetically faithful: stanza 6 is the truest among the five translations, stanza 7 is a model of ingenious simplicity, and the last two stanzas are laudable translations of Goethe's words. It is, therefore, a great shame stanzas 2 and 5 are such spoilers in an otherwise excellent version of the spinning-wheel song.

Gretchen's Room

Gretchen alone at the spinning-wheel

- 3375 My peace is gone,
 My heart is sore,
 I'll find it never
 Nevermore.
- 3380 Denied him here,
 My death is near,
 The world and all
 Is turned to gall.
- 3385 My aching head
 Can think no thought,
 My aching sense
 Becomes distraught.
- 3390 My peace is gone,
 My heart is sore,
 I'll find it never
 Nevermore.
- 3395 I gaze through windows
 For him alone,
 I seek him only,
 Leaving home.
- 3400 His mien is noble,
 His carriage tall,
 His lips are smiling,
 His eyes enthrall.
- 3405 His eloquence--
 Enchanted bliss,
 His touch-- delight!
 And oh! His kiss!
- 3410 My peace is gone,
 My heart is sore,
 I'll find it never
 Nevermore.

My spirit yearns
To have him here,
To clasp him to me
And hold him near.

3410

To kiss here
With longing breath,
And in my kisses
Greet my death.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Faust, trans. Prudhoe, pp. 114-15.

Prudhoe's usual intelligence and unpredictability are present in this passage. As in Arndt's translation of this song, the anapestic feet in lines 3378 and 3395-97 have been ironed out, which does not accentuate the wistfulness and delicacy of Gretchen's speech but rather furthers the impression she is actually singing, in the regular style of a folk-song. The refrain is exemplary and stanza 5 is an excellent solution to lines that confound most translators. Stanzas 3, 6, and 7, on the other hand, have words like "distraught," "mien," "enthral," and "eloquence," which sound too schooled for a folk-song by Gretchen, and neither the empty "with longing breath" for "wie ich wollt" nor the vague "my spirit yearns" for "Mein Busen drängt" do justice to the sudden flare-up of passion in the last two stanzas, where Prudhoe has also removed the exclamation marks and toned down the utterance. The German folk-song element is also strengthened by the explicit mention of the death-wish in the last line, and while the ingenuity and independent effectiveness of this translation is without question, there is a troubling sense that there is much more of the tasteful, scholarly translator about this passage than there is of the poet.

scene 15 GRETCHEN'S ROOM

GRETCHEN alone, at the spinning-wheel

My heart is heavy, my peace is gone. I shall never find my peace again.

When he's not there, its like the grave. The whole world, all of it, is soured.

My poor head is quite unhinged, my thoughts are broken to pieces.

My heart is heavy, my peace is gone. I shall never find my peace again.

If I go to the window, I'm looking for him. I'm looking for him, when I leave the house.

His tall figure, his walk, his smile, his piercing gaze.

His magic words, the feel of his hands. And, oh, when he kisses me.

My heart is heavy, my peace is gone. I shall never find my peace again.

My body, yes, my body wants him. Oh just to take him and just to hold him.

And kiss and kiss him the way I'd like, though I die of the

kissing.⁹¹

⁹¹ Faust, trans. Fairley, p. 59.

This passage from Fairley's version is an example of the chief danger of a prose translation of *Faust* -- ending up with a poetic utterance hanging on a barren skeleton in the no-man's-land between poetry and prose. Fairley has certainly served up the material essence of the verse, but this passage demands the formalized structure only a ballad-like stanza can give it, for it is precisely through metrical speech that Gretchen, as we have seen, achieves some kind of sensible order in her moments of powerful emotion. As it is here, the spinning-wheel song hangs in a limbo of fragmentary, prosaic thoughts, and by setting off each stanza in a separate line and repeating the unrhymed refrain, Fairley makes what might have been a defensible, if bland, confession of Gretchen's feelings sound empty, tiresome, and slightly unbalanced. Such a lack-lustre reading is all the more disappointing, since Gretchen's song is one of the best examples in *Faust* of early "Sturm und Drang" directness giving way to formalized elegance in a later revision, and Fairley, who knew this and much more about *Faust* than most, could surely have captured some of that in his flexible prose.

Chapter V: WALPURGISNACHT

FAUST(*mit der Jungen tanzend*).

Einst hatt' ich einen schönen Traum;

Da sah ich einen Apfelbaum,

4130 Zwei schöne Äpfel glänzten dran,
Sie reizten mich, ich stieg hinan.

DIE SCHOENE. Der Äpfelchen begehrte ihr sehr,
Und schon vom Paradiese her.

Von Freuden fühl' ich mich bewegt,
Dass auch mein Garten solche trägt.

MEPHISTOPHELES: (*mit der Alten*):

Einst hatt' ich einen wüsten Traum;

Da sah ich einen gespaltnen Baum,

Der hatt' ein - - -;

So -- es war, gefiel mir's doch.

4140 DIE ALTE. Ich biete meinen besten Gruß

Dem Ritter mit dem Pferdefuß!

Halt Er einen - - bereit,

Wenn Er - - - nicht scheut.⁹²

⁹²Goethe, Faust, pp. 129-30.

Although there is no evidence connecting the Faust tradition with the May Day witches' sabbath on the Brocken, it is the scene "Walpurgisnacht" that took most of Goethe's attention when he resumed work on *Faust* in 1797. The scene is a logical extension of the hocus-pocus in "Hexenküche" -- indeed, "Die Alte" who dances with Mephistopheles may be intended as the witch from this earlier scene, for she is called "Hexe aus der Küche" in an early sketch of "Walpurgisnacht" -- and while the scene may be theatrically impossible, it has the dramatic function of an interlude, giving Gretchen's story the time necessary to reach its climax (including the birth of her child and her imprisonment) and intensifying the tragedy by showing Faust seeking oblivion at a wild party, with Mephistopheles trying to keep her fate from Faust by distracting him with his best diversions, which Faust shall later call "abgeschmackte Zerstreuungen."

Goethe originally conceived this scene on a larger scale with more picaresque detail, in the style of the many books of medieval folk tales and pseudo-scientific lore he found in the ducal library in Weimar, but as we saw in the scene "Nacht," where Faust puts off much of the wizardry and superstition of the chapbooks and begins to represent the plight of modern man, Goethe's view of this scene changed from a specific emphasis on the orgiastic revels of the witches' sabbath to a more generalized May Day festival important to the drama's larger purpose. In short, the "Walpurgisnacht" came to depict the grosser, animal end of the spectrum of humanity, contrasting as a kind of drunken mirage with the satirical exposé of human folly in the amiable, escapist vagaries of the following scene "Walpurgisnachtstraum."

The poet still manages a true *tour de force* in this scene, combining effortless lyrics, dialogues, double-entendres, and worldly jibes with the bacchanal of the witches'

revelry, amid a host of caricatures aimed at some of Goethe's contemporaries. Lines 4128-41, with their blatant sexual innuendo in the folk style, show Goethe's enjoyment at challenging norms of decency and decorum, though it seems that the original publisher thought it wise to leave out the strongly suggestive bits and print lines 4138-39 and 4142-43 with dashes. But as Walter Kaufmann points out, the text becomes far less obscene when one actually adds the necessary words:

One gathers that the publisher balked at printing, "the witch farts," and that Goethe, very characteristically, complied -- by allowing him to print "the witch f--s." The point here is exactly the same in the original German. The exchange between Mephisto and the old witch ... was bowdlerized in the same way: as long as "hole" could not be printed, Goethe also substituted a dash for "tremendous" and, in the next line, for "big" -- and similarly in the witch's reply. Ever since, *Faust* has been printed that way, and readers have supposed that the intended text is infinitely coarser than it is in fact.⁹³

There is certainly an echo from the Song of Songs in these rhymes,⁹⁴ and along with the comic relief and diversion, there are connections between this repartee and the pairing in the scene "Garten" which underscore typically Goethean contrasts:

Es ist nicht zu übersehen, daß Goethe in dieser Metaphorik die wuchshaft-üppige gegen die zerstörte Natur setzt, daß auch die Aufwärtsbewegung Fausts (in dem Besteigen des "Baums") die Gegenbewegung Mephists auslöst. Man wäre daher versucht (zumal diese Parallelen wohl beabsichtigt ist), wie in der Gartenszene das Teuflische nur als Gegenbild zu dem jetzt um so heller heraustretenden Natürlich-Menschlichen zu nehmen, wenn nicht auch die junge Hexe fraglos zum Gefolge Mephists gehörte.⁹⁵

⁹³Walter Kaufmann, in "Introduction," Faust, trans. Kaufmann, p. 26-27.

⁹⁴*I say I will climb the palm tree and lay hold of its branches. Oh, may your breasts be like clusters of the vine, and scent your breath like apples, and your kisses be like the best wine that goes down smoothly, gliding over lips and teeth.*

⁹⁵Paul Requadt, Goethes Faust I: Leitmotivik und Architektur (Munich: W. Fink Verlag, 1972), p. 301.

Something of a translator's humour and *personality* is revealed in a ribald passage, in the same way the comprehensiveness and scope of a dictionary can be measured by its store of scatological words. In this passage from the "Walpurgisnacht," a measure of wit and naturalness of language is necessary to make the exchange believable, and very close attention must be paid to the metrics, since the success of all such verse depends on the quality of the versification and the cleverness of the rhyme. Above all, naturalness must be sought in the wit of the exchange, and Mephistophelian overtones of the scene should not be too explicit here.

WALPURGIS NIGHT

- FAUST (*dancing with the pretty Young Witch*).
 A lovely dream came once to me,
 in which I saw an apple tree.
 In it shone lovely apples two
 and tempted me to climb thereto.
- 4130 YOUNG WITCH. Apples have been your great desire
 e'er since in Eden was your sire.
 And I am moved with joy to know
 that such within my garden grow.
- 4135 MEPHISTOPHELES (*dancing with the Old Witch*).
 An ugly dream once came to me,
 in which I saw a cloven tree.
 In it there was a great big split,
 yet, wide as 'twas, I fancied it.
- 4140 OLD WITCH. In kindest welcome I salute
 the knight who has the cloven foot!
 Have the right plug a-ready here,
 if thou dost not a vacuum fear!⁹⁶

⁹⁶ Faust, trans. Taylor, pp. 278-80.

Though Taylor is generally faithful to the meaning and form of these lines, he does not quite capture the necessary simplicity and naturalness. He gets off to a good start in the first stanza, though this is interrupted a little by the inversion of line 4130 and the addition of "thereto" in line 4131 to make the rhyme, and he does alter the original meaning by changing "ich stieg hinan" to "tempted me to climb," perhaps to reinforce the theme of temptation in the next couplet. Taylor is alone among our five translators in calling Faust's dancing partner simply "Young Witch," and his line 4133 of her reply is an inventive solution to "vom Paradiese her," but the inverted word order, the unnecessary "e'er," and the unfortunate "sire" slow things down and sound amateurish. The replies of Mephistopheles and the Old Witch are fairly successful, with surprising bluntness in "great big split" in line 4138 and the image in lines 4142-43, yet there is still a bending of natural speech to facilitate rhymes, especially in lines 4138-39 and 4142-43, and words like "ugly" (for "wüst"), "plug," and "vacuum" are not the best choices. In general, this passage is not badly translated, but it still has enough antiquated ballast to make it too unenglish to be considered poetically faithful.

Walpurgis Night

- FAUST. [*dancing with the YOUNG ONE*]
 In a fair dream that once I dreamed,
 An apple-tree appeared to me,
 On it two pretty apples gleamed,
 They beckoned me; I climbed the tree.
 THE FAIR ONE.
 You've thought such apples very nice
 Since Adam's fall in Paradise.
 I'm happy to report to you,
 My little orchard bears them too.
- 4130
- MEPHISTOPHELES. [*with THE OLD ONE*]
 In a wild dream that once I dreamed
 I saw a cloven tree, it seemed,
 It had a black almighty hole;
 Black as it was, it pleased my soul.
- 4135
- THE OLD ONE. I welcome to my leafy roof
 The baron with the cloven hoof!
 I hope he's brought a piston tall
 To plug the mighty hole withall.⁹⁷
- 4140

⁹⁷ Faust, trans. Arndt, p. 102.

Arndt shows subtlety and invention in this exchange, as well as a willingness to change the original a little for the sake of clarity. Faust's opening verse is given the rhyme scheme *ab ab* plus a lilting upbeat, with an anapest and a spondee in the first two feet and a fine dactylic second foot in the second line (though the semicolon dividing the last line should perhaps have fallen more naturally after "gleamed" in the third line), and whereas Mephistopheles' reply in the original is an exact metrical parody of Faust's rhyme, Arndt varies it with a successful enjambment in the second line and a semicolon after "hole" in the third line.

The lines of the two witches are also quite successful, with excellent clarity in the speech of "The Fair One" and an interesting rendition of "Ich biete meinen besten Gruß" as "I welcome to my leafy roof," perhaps intended as a parody of the tree-motif of line 4131. Arndt's diction works with the passage here, as words like "almighty" and "please my soul" in lines 4138-39 are wonderfully Mephistophelian, and "piston tall" of the last couplet also suits the lively character of the exchange. One unique feature of this translation is the word "black" modifying "hole" in lines 4138-30: while the other translators fill the blank in the original line with a reference to the size of the hole, Arndt has made an imaginative gesture by offering other equally valid connotations and possibilities. Whether Arndt wanted "black hole" to suggest the hollow immensity and intense gravitational force of a collapsed star is doubtful, but his rendering of this and the entire exchange maintains a lively spirit and a convincing naturalness, and one feels that the meaning and form of the original have been well served.

WALPURGIS' NIGHT

FAUST (*dancing with the young one*):
 A pretty dream once came to me
 In which I saw an apple tree;
 Two pretty apples gleamed on it,
 They lured me, and I climbed a bit.

THE FAIR ONE:
 You find the little apples nice
 Since first they grew in Paradise.
 And I am happy telling you

That they grow in my garden, too.

MEPHISTO (*with the old one*):
 A wanton dream once came to me
 In which I saw a cloven tree.
 It had the most tremendous hole;
 Though it was big, it pleased my soul.

THE OLD ONE:
 I greet you with profound delight,
 My gentle, cloven-footed knight!
 Provide the proper grafting-twig,
 If you don't mind the hole so big.⁹⁸

⁹⁸ Faust, trans. Kaufmann, pp. 379-81.

As usual, Kaufmann provides this passage with a faithful, professional translation with some mild distractions. One wishes somehow that phrases like "pretty dream," "gleamed on it," and "I am happy telling you" did not sound so "translated," though the surprising thing about this passage is the strangely belligerent tone of the "Old One," whose greeting to the "gentle" Mephistopheles with the unfortunate "profound delight" is much more sarcastic than the good-humoured ribbing of the original. All the choice bits of the last two stanzas are adequately interpreted, but Mephistopheles' reply to Faust's dream has no subtlety or charm, and the effect of "grafting-twigs" is academic and artificial. Thus the passage as a whole is surely workable, yet cannot be considered totally satisfying or poetically faithful.

WALPURGIS' NIGHT

FAUST (*dancing with the young witch*)
 One night I dreamed that I could see
 The beauty of an apple tree.
 Two rosy apples were the prize.
 That charmed me—I began to rise.

4130

THE BEAUTIFUL WITCH From Eden on, men never tire
 Of apples such as you desire.
 My garden, I can say with pleasure,
 Provides such fruit ... in *ample* measure.

4135

MEPHISTOPHELES (*with the Old Witch*)
 One night I dreamed that I could see
 A crevice in a cloven tree.
 The hole the lightning-flash could rend
 Was large—but still it served my end!

4140

THE OLD WITCH The warmest welcome greets you here
 My cloven-footed cavalier.
 Don't fear to enter the witch's grot
 But be upstanding with all you've got.⁹⁹

⁹⁹ Faust, trans. Prudhoe, p. 139.

Prudhoe rises to the occasion of this repartee with a set of naughty variations on Goethe's themes, brimming with double-entendre and sometimes approaching a "Nachdichtung" in its departure from the original. One might reasonably object that the ellipsis and the italics on "ample" in line 4135 are unnecessarily blatant, that lines 4138-39 are contrived, and that "Don't fear to enter the witch's grot" is a little unnatural and rhythmically faulty, even though the spirit of the exchange is infectiously lively. There is also great liberty taken with the opening stanza: the first line has Faust dreaming of the "beauty" of the tree, which might be the result of padding to get the rhyme on "see/tree," and the last line leaves no doubt that Prudhoe is not preoccupied with any Goethean symbolizing about trees. In all, there is much infectious life and some unabashed bawdiness here, especially in the final couplet of each stanza, so even though some liberties are taken, they do not seem too harmful to the spirit or intent of the passage.

WALPURGIS NIGHT

FAUST *dancing with the young one*

Once I had a lovely dream. I saw an apple tree with two shining apples on it. I climbed up after them.

THE PRETTY ONE

You've always liked apples, ever since Paradise. It pleases me to think that my garden bears them.

MEPHISTOPHELES *with the old one*

Once I had a lurid dream. I saw a cleft tree. It had a big hole in it. Big as it was, I liked it.

THE OLD WITCH

My compliments to the knight of the hoof. Hold ready you know what, unless you funk it.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ Faust, trans. Fairley, p. 72.

The only verse to be found in this translation of *Faust* occurs in Gretchen's mad song in the scene "Kerker," though one wishes that Fairley had seen fit to versify both the spinning-wheel song and these lines from the "Walpurgisnacht." This prose rendition of the dance is literal and flat, conveying none of the lascivious charm that grins through the original and makes it believable. The effect of Mephisto's retort is particularly crude and bald, especially in the last two lines which here do not continue the parody of Faust's lines, and the whole exchange has a disjointed, unconnected rhythm with no sense of flow. As a result, the last remark by the "Old Witch," though more lively than the rest, stands out for want of preparation, and the effect of the phrase "funk it," particularly on North American readers, will probably seem either quizzical or distasteful. Clearly, the choice of short, truncated sentences which work so well elsewhere is disastrous in a passage that demands, like a good limerick, either metrical formality or consummate craft to be convincing, and Fairley's prose has communicated less than the bare skeleton of this odd corner of *Faust*.

Chapter VI: TRÜBER TAG. FELD

Faust. Mephistopheles

FAUST. Im Elend! Verzweifeld! Erbärmlich auf der Erde lange verirrt
und nun gefangen! Als Missetäterin im Kerker zu entsetzlichen
Qualen eingesperrt das holde unselige Geschöpf! Bis dahin!

5 dahin! -- Verrätherischer, nichtwürdiger Geist, und das hast
du mir verheimlicht! -- Steh nur, steh! Wälze die teuflischen
Augen ingrimmend im Kopf herum! Steh und trutze mir durch deine
unerträgliche Gegenwart! Gefangen! Im unwiederbringlichen
Elend! Bösen Geistern übergeben und der richtenden
10 gefühllosen Menschheit! Und mich wiegst du indes in
abgeschmackten Zerstreuungen, verbirgst mir ihren wachsenden
Jammer und lässest sie hülfslos verderben!

MEPHISTOPHELES. Sie ist die Erste nicht.

FAUST. Hund! abscheuliches Untier! -- wandle ihn, du unendlicher Geist!
15 wandle den Wurm wieder in seine Hundsgestalt, wie er sich oft
nächtlicher Weile gefiel, vor mir herzutrotten, dem
harmlosen Wandrer vor die Füße zu kollern und sich dem
niederstürzenden auf die Schultern zu hängen. Wandl' ihn
wieder in seine Lieblingsbildung, daß er vor mir im Sand auf
20 dem Bauch krieche, ich ihn mit Füßen trete, den
Verworfnen! -- Die Erste nicht! -- Jammer! Jammer! von keiner
Menschensee zu fassen, daß mehr als ein Geschöpf in die
Tiefe dieses Elendes versank, daß nicht das erste genug tat
für die Schuld aller übrigen in seiner windenden Todesnot
25 vor den Augen des ewig Verziehenden! Mir wühlt es Mark und
Leben durch, das Elend dieser Einzigen; du grinsest gelassen
über das Schicksal von Tausenden hin!

MEPHISTOPHELES. Nun sind wir schon wieder an der Grenze unseres
Witzes, da wo euch Menschen der Sinn überschnappt. Warum machst
30 du Gemeinschaft mit uns, wenn du sie nicht durchführen kannst?
Willst fliegen und bist vorm Schwindel nicht sicher? Drangen
wir uns dir auf, oder du dich uns?¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ Goethe, Faust, pp. 137-38.

Einige tragische Szenen waren in Prosa geschrieben, sie sind durch ihre Natürlichkeit und Stärke in Verhältnis gegen das andere, ganz unerträglich. Ich suche sie deswegen gegenwärtig in Reime zu bringen, da denn die Idee wie durch einen Flor durchscheint, die unmittehbare Wirkung des ungeheuren Stoffes aber gedämpft wird.¹⁰²

Much speculation has arisen about why Goethe versified two of the original three prose scenes from the *Urfaust* in later revisions -- "Auerbachs Keller" for *Faust: Ein Fragment* (1790) and "Kerker" for *Faust: Der Tragödie Erster Teil* (1808) -- and the above quotation from Goethe's letter to Schiller of May 5, 1798 says something of the importance he attached to "Trüber Tag," the only prose scene left in its early form. One of the oldest scenes in the poem, "Trüber Tag" forms a direct link with "Die Seelen, denen ich die ersten [Cantos] sang" of the "Zueignung," for it was Goethe's impassioned reading of Faust's tirade against Mephistopheles that so deeply impressed his circle of friends in Weimar. Some critics still hold that Goethe, influenced by Shakespeare's use of prose for Falstaff's drunkenness and Ophelia's madness, became self-conscious about the roughness of his original inspiration and then spoilt much of the simplicity and directness of the *Urfaust* by cloaking it in a veil ("Flor") of rhymed language, but most seem convinced the prevailing classicism of Goethe's mature personality was necessary and beneficial to the final distillation of *Faust*.¹⁰³

¹⁰² Goethe, Briefe, vol. 2, p. 343.

¹⁰³ For examples of these views cf. Richard Flatter, "The Veil of Beauty: Some Aspects of Verse and Prose in Shakespeare and Goethe," Journal of German Philology (Urbana, Ill., 1951), pp. 437-50; Erich Schmidt, "Deutsche Reimstudien," Sitzungsbericht der Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, Nr. 23 (Berlin, 1900), pp. 445-48; and Reinhold Schwinger, "Urfaust und Faust I: Vergleich ihrer sprachlichen Gestalt," Zeitschrift für Deutsche Bildung, vol. 9 (Frankfurt a. M., 1938), pp. 380-92.

The position of "Trüber Tag" is, therefore, all the more interesting. After the wild "Walpurgisnacht" and the dream-like "Walpurgisnachtstraum," Faust seeks solitude in nature (as he does in "Wald und Höhle" and as Goethe certainly would have done) but this time his self-searching erupts in an attack on Mephistopheles, and the natural scene, again reflecting Faust's mind, is a dark, foreboding sky over an open field. In the intervening time, Faust has somehow learned the extent of Gretchen's misfortune -- her shame, her flight from home, her imprisonment -- and by aiming his genuine outrage at Mephistopheles he shows he is still "sich des rechten Weges wohl bewußt," even though his passion and self-absorption blinds him to the truth of the situation:

... we can say that Faust extricates himself from the destructive role by thrusting Mephistopheles into it and standing beside Gretchen against him. Thus while the alignment in terms of plot is Faust and Mephistopheles against Gretchen, at the deeper level it is Faust and Gretchen against Mephistopheles. The discrepancy ... comes out fully in the scene "Trüber Tag," in which Faust denounces Mephistopheles outright as the destroyer, speaking as if he had no part in what had happened.¹⁰⁴

As well, this scene, whose ostensible dramatic function is to portray the above, is another example of the poet showing himself willing to trust his poetic instinct, by prefacing the almost unbearable "Kerker" with "Trüber Tag" and not flinching at its rough but profound expression of Faust's half-understood guilt and rage.

A translator's chief task here must be the approximation of passionate but believable speech and tense, powerful diction. The many exclamatory utterances like "Bis dahin!" and "Jammer! Jammer!" are not easily brought off, and Faust's speeches can become maudlin and emasculated if the translator does not start in a convincing rhythm and refrain from unnecessary histrionics and eye-rolling. Fortunately, the off-

¹⁰⁴Barker Fairley, Goethe's Faust: Six Essays (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), p. 49.

hand clarity of Mephistopheles' answers make a wonderful contrast to Faust's near hysteria, and the absence of a difficult verse form allows the translator more room to take aim at the poetic essence of the passage.

FIELD: OVERCAST SKY

(FAUST and Mephistopheles.)

FAUST. In misery! In despair! Long wretchedly astray, and now imprisoned! That sweet, unfortunate creature shut in a prison as a criminal, and prey to fearful torments! To this has it come? to this?--Treacherous, contemptible spirit! thou didst conceal it from me! Stay! Stay! rolling thy diabolic eyes in fury! Stay and despite me with thy intolerable presence! Imprisoned! In misery that can never be undone! Delivered up to her own evil spirits, and to condemned, unfeeling fellow-men! And thou hast lulled me, meanwhile, with inane distractions; hast concealed from me her ever growing wretchedness; hast suffered her to come to hopeless grief and ruin!

MEPHISTOPHELES. She is not the first.
 FAUST. Dog! abominable monster!--Transform him thou Spirit Infinite! transform the serpent back into that canine form in which he likes to scamper on before me, to roll before the unsuspecting traveler's feet, then leap upon his shoulders when he fell! Transform him once again into that favorite shape, that he may crawl upon his belly in the dust before me, that I may kick the dog, the profligate! Not the first*!!--The misery! O the misery of it! what no human soul can grasp, that more than one being should have sunk into these depths of misfortune, that the first of them, in her writhing mortal-shame before the eyes of the Eternal Forgiver, did not expiate the guilt of all the others after. The wretchedness of this single one alone pierces the very marrow of my bone and life, whilst thou, indifferent, dost smirk to think about the fate of thousands!
 MEPH. Now we're at our wits' ends again! at the point where your mortal minds break under the strain. Why didst thou enter into alliance with us, if thou art not able to endure its terms. Wilt fly, and are not secure against dizziness?! Did we thrust ourselves upon thee, or thou thyself upon us?¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ Faust, trans. Taylor, p. 296.

Taylor provides a fair rendition of "Trüber Tag," but though he is not burdened by feminine rhymes or difficult versification, his translation is still impaired by an over-serupulous faithfulness to the letter of the text, and when he does restructure the original, the results are not usually for the better. Line 2, for example, with "That sweet and unfortunate creature" moved from the end to the beginning of the sentence, is made less continuous and interesting; the original "hülflos verderben" is poorly and redundantly translated as "come to hopeless grief and ruin;" the exclamation mark instead of the original comma after the first "Stay!" in line 5 has lifted a subtle and necessary "Luftpause" from the flow of the speech (strangely, Taylor later elongates and thereby dampens the emotive power of the similar "Jammer! Jammer!" in line 20). Phrases like "despite me" in line 6, "these depths of misfortune" in lines 21-22, and "the very marrow of my bone and life" in lines 25-26 sound unenglish because they have been left to resemble the original so closely, and though the sentence beginning "Wilt fly" in line 31 has "not secure" moved to the middle for the sake of clarity, it still does not come off. Taylor's overall choice of words is tolerable, though "wretched" appears twice in the first speech (for "Erbärmlich" and "Jammer"), and "profligate" for "der Verworfene," while semantically correct and tolerable, sounds odd. One might also forgive the inversion in "Spirit Infinite" amidst much otherwise readable "theeing" and "thouing," but "condemned" in line 8 is a faulty translation of "richtend," and the addition of "her own" to "evil spirits" in this line is probably an unnecessary reference to the haunting of Gretchen in the scene "Dom." Thus Taylor's version of this scene seems disfigured by his frequently over-zealous striving to reproduce every literal hint and strain of the original lines.

DREARY DAY

A Field

FAUST. MEPHISTOPHELES.

FAUST. In misery! Despairing! Long roaming the earth, a wretched waif, and now imprisoned! Locked up in the dungeon as an evildoer to suffer appalling torture, the lovely, luckless creature! To this! To this pass!--Faithless, degraded spirit--and this you concealed from me? Yes, stand there, stand! Roll those demon eyes in your head in speechless spite! Stand there and defy me with your unbearable presence! Imprisoned! In unredeemable ruin! Abandoned to evil spirits and to judging, unfeeling mankind! And through it all you lull me with insipid distractions, hide me from her deepening wretchedness, and let her helplessly perish!

MEPHISTOPHELES. She is not the first.

FAUST. Cur! Abominable monster! Transform him, thou infinite spirit, change the viper back into its dog shape, as it was pleased to lope before me of a night, tumbling at the harmless wanderer's feet and dragging him down by the shoulders as he fell. Return him to his favorite guise, that he may crawl on his belly on the sand before me, and I may spurn him with my foot, the offal!--Not the first!--Pitious grief! Too pitious for human soul to grasp, that more than one being should have sunk to this depth of misery, that the first did not atone enough for the guilt of all the rest, writhing in deathly agony before the eyes of the Eternally Forgiving! I am rent to the living core by this single one's suffering; you pass with a carefree grin over the fate of thousands!

MEPHISTOPHELES. There we are, back once more at our wits' end, where your human minds snap. Why make common cause with us if you cannot see it through? You would fly, yet are not proof against vertigo? Did we obtrude ourselves on you, or you on us?¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ Faust, trans. Arndt, p. 110.

Arndt has managed to combine some of the best features of other translations, particularly Taylor's, and produce a good account of "Trüber Tag." He follows the original closely, suggesting the sonorous lament in Faust's despair, the only occasional distraction being his over-fondness, like Kaufmann's, for alliterative clusters of consonants (more skilfully handled by Fairley), which can become predictable and self-serving, as in "lovely luckless creature," "speechless spite," and "unredeemable ruin" [sic]. Arndt's predilection for vaguely "poetic" words and phrases is also here -- "Cur," "of a night," "spurn him with my foot," "[you] are not proof against vertigo" -- but most everything else works well, and moments like "insipid diversions" ("abgeschmackte Zerstreuungen") and "of the Eternally Forgiving" ("des ewig Verzeihenden") are excellent. Most of all, Arndt sustains a sense of rhythm that flags only momentarily in lines 23-25, where the imposed parallel structure and the semicolon are clear but not as powerful as the original, and he has done no real damage to the meaning, form, and intent of the passage.

DISMAL DAY

Field

Faust. Mephistopheles.

FAUST:

In misery! Despairing! Long lost wretchedly on the earth, and now
imprisoned! As a felon locked up in a dungeon with horrible
torments, the fair ill-fated creature! It's come to that! To
that!--Treacherous, despicable Spirit--and that you have kept
from me!--Keep standing there, stand! Roll your devilish eyes
wrathfully in your face! Stand and defy me with your intolerable
presence! Imprisoned! In irreparable misery! Handed over to evil
spirits and judging, unfeeling mankind! And meanwhile you soothe
me with insipid diversions; hide her grief from me, and let her
10 perish helplessly!

MEPHISTO:

She's not the first one.

FAUST:

Dog! Abominable monster!--Change him, oh infinite spirit! Change
back this worm into his dog-shape, as he used to amuse himself in
the night when he trotted along before me, rolled in front of the
feet of the harmless wanderer and, when he stumbled, clung to his
shoulders. Change him again to his favorite form that he may
crawl on his belly in the sand before me and I may trample on him
with my feet, the caitiff!--Not the first one!--Grief! Grief!
past what a human soul can grasp, that more than one creature has
20 sunk into the depth of this misery, that the first one did not
enough for the guilt of all the others, writhing in the agony of
death before the eyes of the ever forgiving one! The misery of
this one woman surges through my heart and marrow, and you grin
imperturbed over the fate of thousands!

MEPHISTO:

Now we're once again at your wits' end where your human minds
snap. Why do you seek fellowship with us if you can't go through
with it? You would fly, but get dizzy? Did we impose on you, or
you on us?¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ Faust, trans. Kaufmann, pp. 399-401.

There are some problems here which keep Kaufmann from attaining a full measure of poetic faithfulness. His first departure from the original is his use of the dash instead of the comma in the middle of line 4, which wrenches the rhythm and helps make "and that" ambiguously refer to "It's come to that!" (an otherwise excellent version of "Bis dahin!"). In the next two sentences, in which Kaufmann stubbornly attempts to mirror the original word order, the result is decidedly unenglish, and Faust sounds too histrionic. The musical value of the consonance and alliteration of phrases like "long lost" and "growing grief" is also negated by their essential triteness, and the rhythm of Faust's second speech, not aided by "caitiff" in line 18 or "the first one did not enough" in lines 20-21, is surprisingly turgid and the overall effect prosaic. Even Kaufmann's title for the scene is the most derivative and least effective among the five translators, all of whom, except Taylor with his unusual "Overcast Sky," choose "Day" plus alliterative substitutes for "Trüb" such as "Dreary," "Dismal," "Dark," and "Dull." As usual, Kaufmann shows a fine grasp of Goethe's meaning and form in this scene, but much of the poetry has escaped from between the lines, and the scene is a curious and uneasy amalgam of good and bad lines, clear prose, and flailing arms.

Dark Day**Open Country****Faust. Mephistopheles**

FAUST Suffering! Despairing! Left so long ... so pitifully ...
 to grope her way across the world and now locked up. That poor
 innocent creature thrown in a dungeon like a criminal and made
 to suffer hideously! Has it then come to this! To this! Despic-
 5 able, treacherous spirit, you concealed it from me!--You stand
 before me, stand there rolling eyes of diabolic anger! Confront
 me with a presence I detest and cannot bear to look on! She is
 in prison. Suffering past redemption. Delivered to evil spirits
 and the cold, unfeeling censure of humanity! And meanwhile you
 10 have cradled me in vile distraction--told me nothing of the
 sufferings heaped upon her, but left her to perish helplessly.

MEPHISTOHELES She's not the first.

FAUST Bastard-dog! Brute!--O great immortal Spirit, change his
 form again! Return this serpent to its poodle's form, when he
 was still content to trot at night in front of me, to roll and
 play before the innocent feet of the wanderer, then jump on
 his shoulders if he fell. Or change him to the shape that's
 dearest to his heart! Let him creep on the sand before me on
 his belly and let me set my foot on his depravity!--Not the
 20 First!--The pity of it! The pity! No human soul could ever
 comprehend that more than one creature must be drowned in the
 billows of such misery. Why was not the agony and death suf-
 fered by the first enough to atone for the guilt of all the
 rest in the eyes of the All-Merciful? The suffering of this
 25 one girl alone seers me to the marrow--to the heart--and you
 can grin complacently at the fate of thousands!

MEPHISTOPHELES So! We're back at the frontiers of our mind, at
 the point where human-understanding fails. Why bother to ally
 yourselves with us, if you're not prepared to see it through?
 30 You want to fly--and suffer from vertigo? Did we force our
 company on you--or you on us?¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ Faust, trans. Prudhoe, pp. 148-49.

Typically, Prudhoe's translation from "Trüber Tag" is intelligent, if not effortlessly "English," and doubts arise only when we consult the strict meaning and the speech rhythms of the original. He has generally toned down the fury of Faust's speeches (though not as much as in his translation from "Nacht") by adding an extra ellipsis to line 1, by turning line 4 ("Bis dahin!") and lines 21-26, broken into two sentences, into rhetorical questions, and by omitting five exclamation marks. The overall rhythm is also disquieted by purposeful touches like "locked up" in line 2, "then" in line 4, and "The pity of it" for "Jammer!" with its too powerful echo of Shakespeare's Othello (IV, i, 205-6), and the generalizing tendency of lines 6-7, with "rolling eyes of diabolical anger" and "a presence" for the specific charges in the original, and line 19 -- "let me set my foot on his depravity" -- slightly blankets the personal wrath of Faust's attacks. Prudhoe has also made two additions whose ironic implications are unwarranted -- "Suffering past redemption" for "Im uiwiederbringlichen Elend," and "poodle's form" for "Hundsgestalt"¹⁰⁹ -- and despite the excellent "Bastard-dog" of line 13, the lucidity of lines 21-28, and the uniformity of the diction, Prudhoe's way of wrestling down a passage and reapportioning its effects for the sake of unity and control has held him back from achieving poetic faithfulness. One might say that in Prudhoe's version Faust passionately implores "How could you," while Goethe has Faust screaming "How dare you."

¹⁰⁹Since "Trüber Tag" was written before there was a poodle in the scene "Vor dem Tor" and the appearance of an evil spirit as a dog belongs to the legends, there is no need to alter the flavour of the scene with a reference to an earlier detail in the present poem.

SCENE 23 DULL DAY. A FIELD

Faust. Mephistopheles

FAUST

An outcast, driven to despair. Wretchedly wandering the wide earth and now at long last a prisoner, a condemned criminal, locked in a dungeon, exposed to the cruellest torture, the dear girl is so ill-fated. Had it to come to this? And you kept it from me, you vile, you treacherous spirit. Yes, you can stand there and roll your devil's eyes in fury. Stand and defy me with your intolerable presence. A prisoner. In hopeless misery. At the mercy of evil spirits and the unsparing censure of mankind. And meanwhile you distract me with your vulgar entertainments, keep her desperate plight from me, and leave her to meet her end alone.

MEPHISTOPHELES

She's not the first.

FAUST

You beast. You foul monster. O infinite spirit, turn this reptile back into its canine form, the dog, that used to run ahead of me on my evening walks, roll at the feet of the unsuspecting strangers and jump on their shoulders when they tripped over him. Turn him back into the shape that suited him so that he may crawl again in the sand at my feet and let me spurn him, him the lowest of the low. Not the first! Oh the shame of it, beyond human power to comprehend, that more than one of us mortals reached this depth of misery, that the death-agony of the first was not enough to clear all the others in the eyes of the great forgiver. The suffering of this single one racks me, marrow and bones. But you pass over the fate of thousands with a grin, unmoved.

MEPHISTOPHELES

Here we are again at the edge of our intelligence. A step more and you people go stark mad. Why do you have dealings with us if you can't go through with it? You want to fly and you're afraid your head'll swim. Did we force ourselves on you or you on us?¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ Faust, trans. Fairley, pp. 76-77.

The key of this passage is also definitely minor and the dynamic mezzo-piano rather than forte. Fairley chooses a sombre, reflective opening, and Faust's first speech slowly increases in intensity and volume until it finally begins to erupt at line 14. Like Prudhoe, Fairley has excised exclamation marks, but his supple prose is more effectively and scrupulously managed: at the opening, the undertone of the wide vowels and soft "w"s of "wandering the wide earth" ends in the clank of the dungeon door with "condemned criminal," and his alliteration does not seem contrived like Kaufmann's or self-conscious like Taylor's. Fairley occasionally varies the structure to make the English sensible, and though his sparse use of punctuation keeps the tone relatively low-key, his precise, clear diction and true ear in places like lines 6-9 and all of Faust's second speech, as in "turn this reptile back into its canine form," keep things moving forward. In all, Fairley's restraint, like Prudhoe's, attempts to make "Trüber Tag" a more organic preparation for "Kerker," and though his skill is accomplished it rather misrepresents Goethe's intentions by shying away from "Sturm und Drang" honesty, especially since Goethe's extensive pruning of the *Urfaust* expressly left "Trüber Tag" in its pristine form.

CONCLUSION

Part A: General Remarks on Translating Faust

One should perhaps furnish one's own version as the proper answer to unsatisfactory translations, but the foregoing passages from our five *Faust* translations have shown at least that poetic faithfulness, like ordinary faith, is a fairly rare quality, most identifiable by its absence. The most distressing thing about translations of great works is that the reader is constantly seeking a perfect mixture of fidelity to the work's content combined with a realistic reformulation in the new language, so that many praiseworthy translations usually fall short of this ideal. Our quoted translators of *Faust* have shown that limited poetic success is possible in the three broad categories of prose, adaptation or "Nachdichtung," and original meters translation, each of which can illuminate some corner of *Faust*: the original meters approach, striving to hold true to the poet's intent, relays something of the true look and flavour of the original, which demands the most of his skill and taste to be convincing; the adaptation, allowing greater freedom to work unencumbered in the speech rhythms of the target language, often comes close to the pristine excitement or poetic rush of the original language, despite the reader's sense that the voice is not truly the poet's; and prose translations, at their best, can do the important and difficult job of clearly laying out the aesthetics and the "Problematik" of a complex work like *Faust*, though little of the poetry can be

reproduced and the effect usually remains entirely above the neck. However, none of our translators, as we have seen, has been able to sustain a consistent fidelity to the "poetry" without falling prey to some of the dangers and temptations of translating *Faust*.

It seems, then, that the achievement of this total quality of poetic faithfulness consists not only in taking an unswerving aim at the poetic essence of a literary work -- "was vom Dichter übrig bleibt" -- apprehended through long study and then reproduced by technical processes, but also in aiming away from the dangers of dogmatism in approaching a translation of *Faust*. Those of the prose school are inclined to a general slackness of expression, becoming over-stretched in moments of intense emotion and often quite ridiculous in lyrical scenes, which arises from forsaking the poetry in an attempt to accurately communicate the unadorned meaning of the text even when there is none. The "Nachdichter" or adaptor of *Faust*, of course, lives on the border between freedom and licence, and must be careful not to disfigure the original with cuts or changes, or to obliterate the period of the piece with anachronistic language or detail. The gravest danger is faced by the original meters translator, who doggedly pursues difficult verses and feminine cadences, and risks violating his oath of faithfulness to the poet by irreparably abusing the target language with unnaturalness of expression and faultiness of rhythm.

We have also seen some hidden, insidious perils in the quoted translations. The attempt to preserve the effect of the original German by using similar constructions, cognates, or "falsche Freunde" can only be brought off with the greatest taste and skill, and several examples of this temptation, ending in strained English, have been seen in

the translations by Taylor and Kaufmann. A translator's overfondness for certain consonants, alliterative pairs, and rhetorical constructions was particularly noticeable in Kaufmann's version, and inappropriate word choices or unintentional anachronisms (such as Fairley's Faust "sitting in his den" from "enge Zelle") have also marred several passages. Also damaging can be academic urges to highlight or elucidate textual details that end up as odd-sounding blunders, as in Kaufmann's "Walpurgsnacht" and "Trüber Tag," as well as attempts to artificially jump up the original through a superficial understanding of Goethean concepts and the aforementioned symbol-network of *Faust*, which is evident in Arndt's version.

Faust-translator Stuart Atkins has correctly observed both these types of dangers, which might be described as dogmatism and lack of technical finish, and he offers three sensible points of orientation for the translator of *Faust* which might help him steer around this Scylla and Charybdis, where so many of our chosen passages were wrecked, and point him in the direction of faithfulness to the poetry of the original and a proper home in the new language:

1 Man soll -- wo möglich -- nie einen Text ausdehnen, was besonders wichtig ist im Falle von *Faust* ... ; 2 "Man sollte einen Dichter in der Übersetzung nicht schwieriger machen, als er für seine Leser ursprünglich war -- freilich auch nicht leichter;" 3 Man soll auf der Hut vor fremdsprachlich wirkenden Verstößen gegen den normalen Sprachgebrauch sein.¹¹¹

This last rule is particularly important, for it is ultimately the translation's ability to sing convincingly and consistently in the medium of the target language, which stands as the final proof that a translator has avoided most of these pitfalls and achieved faithfulness to the poetry of the original.

¹¹¹Atkins, "*Faust* auf Englisch," p. 265.

Part B: Summations of Quoted Translators

In the following summation, it shall be seen that each of the chosen translators is characterized by a recognizable personality and a particular translational strategy, without which their versions would be worthless, and yet, paradoxically, it seems to be these very qualities which most distract us from an uninterrupted reading of their *Faust* in English, by inhibiting poetic faithfulness in their succumbing to the many traps and dangers: Taylor, for example, sacrificed readability in English on the altar of metrical fidelity, providing a version which, while not without a certain charm and dignity, is disfigured by many padded lines, badly wrought feminine endings, and by the translator's notion that poetry consists in the tasteful arrangement of "poetical" words in decorative patterns, which nevertheless have no real force behind them and therefore evoke vague memories of poetry, not the real thing. Similarly, Arndt has ransacked rhyming dictionaries and perhaps the poems of Tennyson for his eclectic vocabulary, but here the language of Taylor is cranked up and driven at breakneck speed throughout the whole translation in Arndt's frantic effort to be more "Goethean" than the original and not "shrink" from original meters, and while the ride is sometimes exhilarating and convincing, as in the "Walpurgisnacht" and in "Sturm und Drang" passages, we must conclude that this insistently "poetic" strategy, crudely grasping at and tossing in stock Goethean associations of energy, nature, and light, shows a definite lack of proportion and taste, with inappropriate bravura and histrionics even in the "Prolog" and the

Zueignung, and rather than doing much embarrassing damage to *Faust* in a Norton Critical Edition, should perhaps be declaimed only in private.

Kaufmann's translation is something of an exception in that he appears to have no particular technical approach to translating *Faust* other than a legitimate desire to repair some of the faults of earlier translators and provide an intelligent and practical translation, in original meters, that is not afraid to make small changes to the original in the interest of general readability. He has largely accomplished this and has avoided trying the reader's patience by attempting to elucidate all that is obscure in *Faust*, and yet we have seen how all the passages from his translation, with the exception of the *Zueignung,* have been interrupted by an unexpected jarring word here or an odd turn of phrase there (as in the second stanza of Gretchen's spinning-wheel song) and how a general lack of technical finish, in the form of a tin ear, and lapses of taste, in his overfondness for alliterative pairs, have impaired the poetic faithfulness of a good, thoughtful translation.

Our final two translators, while not of the "original meters" camp, also bear out our observation of the strain put on poetic faithfulness by obstinate approaches: Prudhoe's rendition, verging on the unfashionable *Nachdichtung,* nonetheless offers an interesting answer to the question of whether or not Goethe's *Faust* is better on stage or in print. As one might expect from a performance version using T.S. Eliot's dramatic verse as a model, there is a certain droning regularity in the verse, a sense of the mellifluous actor's voice rounding off the high and low ends of Goethe's language. The liberties taken are great and are usually linked to the exigencies of writing for the English-speaking stage -- rough edges are smoothed out; medieval moods and associations

abound, as in the "Prolog" and the "Zueignung;" whole passages, like the "Nacht" speech, are reapportioned and unified; the rapture of the "Zueignung" is flattened out and the lyric made into a more dramatic monologue. But with great technical skill, Prudhoe manages a true and convincing re-creation of the original, which might surely inspire a spectator or student to attempt the literary pleasures of *Faust* in the original German. Of the five translations discussed here, Prudhoe's stands best on its own feet, and while its ultimate faithfulness remains questionable due to the nature and extent of the necessary liberties in such an adaptation, the translator's ingenuity, taste, and workman-like attitude to his execution rescue his strategy from the censure of flagrant faithlessness and produce mostly convincing results.

Finally, the prose translation of Fairley, as we have seen, shows much skill and forethought, but we must conclude that his attempt to render the "communicative value" of *Faust* in prose and make, as it were, a piano-version of this massive symphony, cannot be considered totally successful or even satisfactory. Fairley sticks doggedly to his prose, even in the spinning-wheel song and the "Walpurgisnacht" exchange, and thereby achieves some kind of consistency or stylistic unity, but the result is a flattening out of the original poetry into, at best, good rhetoric and insight, and, at worst, odd-sounding, even maniacal nonsense. Perhaps it was Goethe's aforementioned preference for prose translation that convinced Fairley, a poet and Goethe scholar, to so totally forsake metrical speech, but surely no such approach, however skilful, can succeed in animating such a work as *Faust* by refusing to use all the poetical resources of the target language and thereby bleeding the work of most of its colour and life force.

It is clear from the study of the above sections from these five translations of *Faust* that passages showing poetic faithfulness, or moments of a pure and convincing sense of nothing amiss in a translation true to the form and intent of the original and at ease in the new language, are to be found in each of the above versions, regardless of their approach, for this quality might well express the kind of firm goal and objective ideal, toward which the translator strives, which should govern his choice of translational strategy and remain the focus of his entire approach. While musical analogies are usually deleterious to discussions of poetry, one might observe that the art of the literary translator, like that of the interpretive musician, is one of simultaneous humility and self-assertion, involving the aggressive application of all the talent at one's disposal and all the tricks of one's medium to the unveiling of both the creator's original intent and the objective truth of the form revealed in the composition. Thus Arndt's virtuoso word-mongering and anachronism, Kaufmann's sudden errors, and Taylor's old-fashioned turns and graces all draw attention to the incomplete or faulty technical preparation of the "performer," while Prudhoe's and Fairley's "transcriptions," however well done, remain adaptations of sorts, leaving one with the sense of not really having been approached as the author should have intended, translations aside.

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