Prologue

What do men and women most desire? For what would they be willing to barter their immortal souls? These two questions have haunted society for centuries, and these eternal queries find their fullest embodiment in the Faust legend.

The literature of the Western world has been dominated by a few pervasive myths that have obsessed human consciousness for hundreds of years. A number of these immediately rush to mind: the Cinderella fantasy (perhaps the formative myth of our Western civilization); the biblical story of David and Goliath; the folk tale of Jack the Giant Killer or St. George and the dragon; the narrative of King Arthur, the Round Table, and the Holy Grail. My study focuses on another of the seminal legends that define Western culture: the magical Faust story. This hardy legend found its roots in the marshy soil of medieval folklore, budded in the Renaissance, blossomed in nineteenth-century drama and opera, and flowered in twentieth- and twenty-first-century drama, opera, novel, and cinema.

This memorable story has been told and retold in novels, prose fiction, and drama by such distinguished prose writers as Washington Irving, Ivan Turgenev, Mikhail Bulgakov, and Thomas Mann, and such eminent playwrights/writers as Christopher Marlowe, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, George Sand, W. B. Yeats, A. V. Lunacharski, Frank Wedekind, Michel de Ghelderode, Dorothy Sayers, Paul Valéry, Lawrence Durrell, Václav Havel, David Mamet, and David Davalos, as well as such lesser-known playwrights as Arthur Davidson Ficke.

Moreover, the Faust legend has had a profound influence on music, art, and cinema, as well as literature. This pervasive legend has inspired songs by Ludwig van Beethoven, Franz Schubert, and Modest Mussorgsky; orchestral and choral works by Robert Schumann, Richard Wagner, and Felix Mendelssohn; symphonies by Franz Liszt and Gustav Mahler; and operas by Hector Berlioz, Charles Gounod, Arrigo Boito, Ferruccio Busoni, Sergei Prokofiev, and Igor Stravinsky. Indeed the list of Faust's musical adapters

reads like a "Who's Who" of the musical world. In addition, the legend has been vividly illustrated by painters, including Rembrandt van Rijn, Eugène Delacroix, Salvador Dalí, and Max Beckmann. Finally, this archetypical tale has provided the theme for numerous films, dating from the days of the silent screen until contemporary times.[1]

Since to discuss all of the incarnations of the Faust legend in Western literature would require several volumes rather than one, my study will, reluctantly, limit its exploration to the influence of the Faust narrative on drama and film – eschewing all musical compositions and prose adaptations – and, even here, limitations of space and time require a most selective treatment.

Of course, this legend has remained popular throughout the centuries primarily because it recounts a spellbinding story: a man, striving for transcendence of human limitations, pursues the forbidden secrets of the occult and sells his soul to the Devil in return for some desirable goal – power, knowledge, wealth, fame, or youth. I use the term "man" advisedly here since the Faust figure is traditionally male, and all of the Faust avatars treated in this study with the exception of Yeats's Countess Cathleen and Wedekind's Franziska are male.

However, despite the fascination of the Faust narrative, my study contends that the durability of this legend and its pervasive influence on the literature of the Western world also derives from its adaptability to the mores of many different epochs and countries. Indeed, I argue, the Faust legend has served throughout the years as a kind of Rorschach test, in which the narrative assumes different shapes depending on the perspective of the author who adapts it and the customs and values of the period in which it is written, with the meaning of the legend shifting to reflect the zeitgeist of a given era or place. Thus the Faust avatar's desideratum – the goal for which the hero sells his soul – often reflects the values of a specific society, even as the character of the Devil evolves to represent a particular culture's concept of evil.

Chapter 1: The Background of the Faust Legend

Assuming that one cannot fully appreciate the later permutations of this archetypical tale without some knowledge of the legend's history of origin, I begin my examination by delving into the fertile loam of medieval folklore to search for the roots of the Faust story. The Magus legend provides the deepest of these roots, since many of the stories later told about Faust appeared earlier in the accounts of charismatic conjurors such as Simon Magus, St. Cyprian, and Theophilus, all of whom have been cited as possible forerunners of Faust. The medieval biblical cycle plays,

focusing on the theme of temptation and fall and featuring malicious Devils and presumptuous Antichrists, supply another important root. Finally, the medieval morality plays, with their Everyman figures, cunning Vice tempters, and *psychomachiae* between good and evil, furnish a significant radical source for this literary mandrake.

Having canvassed the literary influences on the Faust legend, this chapter undertakes a search for the historical Faust. Although the background of this itinerant sorcerer has been much debated, scholars agree that there existed a man called Johann Faustus, whose surname means "auspicious," perhaps a Latin cognomen granted the magician in recognition of his magical exploits.[2] In 1587, the numerous accounts of this widely traveled, rather shady miracle worker were compiled by an unknown author and published by a devout Protestant named Johann Spies as the *Historia von D. Johann Fausten*, popularly known as the *German Faustbook*. Unfortunately, there exists no contemporary English translation of the *German Faustbook*; however, sometime between 1587 and 1592 a mysterious figure, identified only as P. F. Gent (Gentleman), adapted this text into English, and this English version, popularly referred to as the *English Faustbook*, has been widely accepted by scholars as the source for Christopher Marlowe's great tragedy, *Doctor Faustus*. Because of its literary significance, I will base my discussion on this English version. Fortunately, however, John Henry Jones, editor of the version of the *English Faustbook* on which I base my analysis, has translated large portions of the German original into English, and, relying on this translation, I compare the *German* and *English Faustbooks*, delineating how each contributes its own vision to the Faust legend.

The *Faustbooks* introduce the basic formula that will pervade many of the subsequent dramatic versions of the legend: the two dominant figures, the protagonist Faust (or Faustus) and his demonic antagonist and tempter Mephostophiles,[3] the first time in folklore or scripture that this name had been associated with the Devil; the contract inscribed in blood, echoing the legend of Theophilus; the female seductress distracting Faustus from repentance and leading him to damnation; and the degeneration of the protagonist, although not all of Faust's later avatars suffer the damnation inflicted on the protagonists of both *Faustbooks*.

Chapter 2: Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*

Both the *German* and the *English Faustbooks* represent a paradoxical blending of soaring aspiration and groveling lust, of grandiose dreams and ignoble desires, of rollicking humor and tragic despair. In the second

chapter of this book, I demonstrate the influence of the *English Faustbook* on Marlowe's tragedy, showing how Marlowe retained the hybrid structure of his source (part tragedy, part jest book) and the mutilated form of its hero (part titan, part buffoon). If anything, Marlowe, an insatiable dramatic innovator, exacerbated the paradoxical quality of the original text, creating one of the most problematic plays and oxymoronic heroes in all of literature.

Few works of literature have occasioned such vehement debate as Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*. Commentators adopting a heroic interpretation of the tragedy see the play as a celebration of Faustus, the humanist hero of Renaissance individualism, who barters his soul in return for all the things the Renaissance privileged: knowledge, beauty, power. Conversely, Christian apologists read the play as a religiously orthodox drama condemning Faustus as a damned sinner. After seeking to guide the reader through the labyrinth of critical controversy surrounding the tragedy, I conclude that the play validates both the Christian and humanist readings, depicting a hero whom we can simultaneously admire and censure, sympathize with and deplore. The presence of contradictory perspectives evoking markedly divergent responses to the multifaceted hero suggests that in *Doctor Faustus* Marlowe penned an interrogative drama that brilliantly argues on both sides of the question.

In this play, his most often read and most frequently performed drama, Marlowe also anticipates Shakespeare, not only by scripting one of the first interrogative dramas in English literature but also by creating the first fully developed, internalized tragic hero to tread the English stage. This chapter also demonstrates how Marlowe's play codifies the basic characteristics of the Faust narrative that will pervade many of the subsequent dramatic versions of the legend: the Devil as tempter, the blood-inscribed contract, the femme fatale luring Faust to his damnation, and the downward trajectory of the protagonist. Moreover, Marlowe's balancing of contradictory perspectives – especially the heroic and ironic interpretations of his hero – will influence Goethe's *Faust* and many of the subsequent dramatizations of the Faust legend.

Chapter 3: Goethe's *Faust*

The third chapter of the book begins by tracing the debasement of the Faust legend in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when the Faust story continued to be dramatized not only in truncated revivals of

Marlowe's play but in folk dramas and puppet shows throughout England, Germany, and the rest of Europe. Increasingly, these plays stressed the comic shenanigans that had accreted around the Faust tradition, finally degenerating into degrading *commedia dell'arte* treatments of this once-tragic story, in which Marlowe's suffering overreacher declined into a pathetic Harlequin.

The remainder of the chapter discusses Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's recuperation of Faust in his monumental two-part drama, with Part I appearing in 1808 and Part II published in 1833 after Goethe's death. I base the majority of my analysis on the translation of Parts I and II by David Luke although I also make frequent reference to the alternative translations by Walter Arndt and Charles E. Passage. Goethe transforms Marlowe's ambiguous hero – part heroic overreacher, part folksy buffoon – and his great but equivocal play – part searing tragedy, part comic morality – into a magnificent drama that fits no category, a phantasmagoric epic with a biblical play frame, a fully tragic hero, and a surprise happy ending. Chapter 3 compares Goethe's masterpiece to Marlowe's tragedy and demonstrates how each play mirrors the zeitgeist of its own historical period as well as the vision of its creator. Marlowe's play reflects a society torn between allegiances to traditional pieties and the emerging secular discourse. Over a hundred years later when Goethe wrote his version of this venerable legend, the emerging discourse had become the dominant one, and Goethe's vision of Faust celebrates this dominant discourse – secular, empirical, humanist, and individualist.

However, no matter how different the ethos animating these two versions of the Faust story, Goethe's drama continues the innovations introduced by Marlowe, creating one of the great interrogative dramas of all time. As with Marlowe's tragedy, Goethe offers two contrary readings of his hero and his quest, raising the following question. Is the play ultimately a celebration of its aspiring hero who before his death denies the use of magic, achieves his desideratum, dies triumphant and in a state of grace, and is ultimately redeemed? Or does Faust's striving, even at the denouement of the play, result only in failure and frustration, leaving a trail of broken bodies and shattered lives in its wake? After seeking to guide the reader through the mountain of scholarship on the drama, I conclude that, as with Marlowe's play, Goethe's masterpiece validates both the celebratory and ironic readings, balancing both interpretations with stunning equipoise as it convincingly argues on both sides of the question.

Goethe's *Faust* also redefines good and evil for the Enlightenment and Romantic periods. In the "Prologue in Heaven," God identifies virtue with activity and striving, evil with inactivity and inertia. After Goethe's great cosmic drama, ceaseless striving and indefatigable aspiration became forever associated with the Faustian spirit.

Chapter 4: Post-Goethe Dramatic Versions of the Faust Legend

The two centuries following Goethe's publication of the two parts of *Faust* witnessed a proliferation of dramas (some intended for the stage, some not) based on the Faust legend. As I began this project, I was surprised at the number of plays inspired by this ubiquitous legend, representing the United States, Britain, and a cross-section of European countries. Indeed, it appears that sometime in their lives many established writers have had a yen to write a Faust play. This seems true whether the author is a playwright like Frank Wedekind, Michel de Ghelderode, David Mamet, or David Davalos, or a novelist like George Sand or Lawrence Durrell, or a mystery-story writer like Dorothy Sayers, or a poet like W. B. Yeats, Arthur Davison Ficke, or Paul Valéry, or a political polemist like A. V. Lunacharski or Václav Havel. I thus realized that I must set strict guidelines in my selection of plays lest I drown in a plethora of theatrical scripts.

First, this chapter is devoted to adaptations of the Faust story, not to dramatizations of the two seminal Faust plays, Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* and Goethe's *Faust*. In defining "adaptations" I follow Linda Hutcheon who considers adaptations to be a subgenre of "intertextuality"; according to Hutcheon, "we experience adaptation (as adaptations) as palimpsests through our memories of other works that resonate through reception with variation."[4] Hutcheon further praises the "adaptive facility" as "the ability to repeat without copying, to embed difference in similarity, to be at once both self and Other."[5] In my opinion, all of the works analyzed in this chapter serve as palimpsests to previous versions of the Faust legend, and many of these adaptations also display the fluidity between self and Other celebrated by Hutcheon. Julie Sanders, in her indispensable guide *Adaptation and Appropriation*, develops this definition to observe that "we associate adaptation with reinterpretations of established, canonical texts in new generic contexts or perhaps with relocations of the source text's cultural or temporal setting." Moreover, "an adaptation most often signals a relationship with an informing source text either through its title or more embedded references."[6]

In discussing the various post-Goethe dramas channeling the Faust legend, I have also tried to discriminate between "adaptations" and "appropriations." Within Shakespeare studies there exists a rich matrix of criticism devoted to defining these terms and discriminating between adaptation and appropriation, with some critics associating appropriation with a kind of "seizing" or "thievery," usually for political motives.[7] However, for my purposes, I will adopt the distinction offered by Sanders, who explains that "appropriation frequently effects a more decisive journey away from the informing text into a wholly new cultural product and domain," displaying a greater distance from the so-called source than adaptation, along with a possible shift in media.[8] Following this criterion, I would identify Yeats's significant contribution, *The Countess Cathleen*, and Wedekind's provocative play, *Franziska*, as appropriations rather than adaptations, since neither of these dramas, although providing a palimpsest for the most salient features of the Faust legend, contains any explicit reference to the Faust narrative. Similarly, Sand's *A Woman's Version of the Faust Legend: The Seven Strings of the Lyre*, although including a character named Mephistopheles and making oblique references to the Faust story, nevertheless departs markedly from the traditional scenario of the Faust legend. Finally, Davalos's *Wittenberg*, although foregrounding a protagonist named Doctor Faustus, nevertheless features no tempter and contains no explicit reference to the diabolical contract. But, then, the action of this play occurs in the halcyon days before Doctor Faustus's fatal conjuring of Mephistopheles and serves as a kind of prequel to Marlowe's tragedy, foreshadowing much of the action of this seminal drama. Thus, I consider these four plays sufficiently removed from the original source to constitute appropriations rather than adaptations. All of the adaptations analyzed in this chapter contain explicit references to the Faust narrative, featuring a character named Faust, or a derivative thereof, and including his antagonist Mephistopheles, or his surrogate, among the dramatis personae, while making some reference to the diabolical contract. The substitutes for Mephistopheles include Veit Kunz in Wedekind's *Franziska*, Nicholas Satan in Ficke's *Mr. Faust,* Diamotoruscant in Ghelderode's *The Death of Doctor Faustus: A Tragedy for the Music Hall*, Fistula in Havel's *Temptation*, and Magus in Mamet's *Faustus*. In addition, I have excluded plays that claim parentage from the Faust legend, either through title or dramatis personae, but which actually bear only a tenuous relationship to the Faust tradition; these include Tommaso

Landolfi's *Faust 67*, Edgar Brau's *Fausto*, and two unfinished fragments, Paul Valéry's *The Only One or the Curse of the Cosmos* and John Evelyn's *A Tragedy of Faustus*.

Despite their obvious relevance to the Faust narrative, many of the selected plays adapted for a contemporary audience eschew as anachronisms some of the most salient characteristics of the Faust formula as established in the *Faustbooks* and Marlowe's tragedy: the overreaching hero, the demonic tempter, the blood-inscribed contract, the female seductress, the degeneration of the Faust figure, and even the supernatural architecture. It is important to note here that the Faust tradition as inherited from Goethe often varies markedly from that associated with Marlowe. Although both conventions feature an aspiring hero, the Goethean format stresses the diabolical wager rather than the blood-signed contract, the redemptive female rather than the femme fatale, the amelioration rather than the degeneration of the hero – although this final point has been much debated – and, of course, the ultimate salvation of the Faust figure instead of his damnation. Nevertheless, notwithstanding their frequent departures from the traditional Faustian blueprint, the selected plays all vividly illustrate the central thesis of this study, demonstrating the manner in which playwrights have adapted the Faust legend to reflect the ethos of their own particular historical period.

In yet another way these adaptations/appropriations differ from their progenitors: although the seminal dramas of the Faust legend, Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* and Goethe's *Faust*, have inspired abundant scholarly commentary, the criticism on post-Goethe dramatic adaptations/appropriations of the legend is comparatively sparse. I am hopeful that this book will generate interest in these little-known but always intriguing dramas.

In Chapter 4, I shall discuss the following adaptations and appropriations: George Sand, *A Woman's Version of the Faust Legend: The Seven Strings of the Lyre* (written in French, 1838); W. B. Yeats, *The Countess Cathleen* (written in English, 1892–1913); A. V. Lunacharski, *Faust and the City* (written in Russian, 1908–16); Frank Wedekind, *Franziska* (written in German, 1911); Arthur Davison Ficke, *Mr. Faust* (written in English, 1913–22); Michel de Ghelderode, *The Death of Doctor Faustus: A Tragedy for the Music Hall* (written in French, 1925); Dorothy Sayers, *The Devil to Pay* (written in English, 1939); Paul Valéry, *My Faust* (written in French, 1940); Lawrence Durrell, *An Irish Faustus* (written in English, 1963); Václav Havel, *Temptation* (written in Czech, 1985); David Mamet, *Faustus*

(written in English, 2003); and David Davalos, *Wittenberg* (written in English, 2008).

Chapter 5: Cinematic Fausts

The fifth chapter of the book traces the fortunes of Faust as he thrived in both European and British movies while also migrating to America, continuing to mesmerize audiences in the cinema as he had earlier charmed them in the theater. Or perhaps it is the devilish Prince of Darkness with his many aliases (Mephistopheles, Mr. Scratch, Applegate, and Henry O. Tophet, to note only a few) who is the real star of this long-running hit. There have been numerous cinematic adaptations and appropriations of the Faust legend in multiple different languages; thus I have had to be extremely limited in the selection of films to treat in this chapter. Because of the abundance of films from which to choose, I have selected to analyze only those that adhere most closely to the traditional formula as established by the *Faustbooks* and both Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* and Goethe's *Faust*, although following this blueprint has meant the exclusion of a number of provocative films: *The Picture of Dorian Gray, The Cabin in the Sky, The Devil and Max Devlin*, and *The Devil's Advocate*, to mention only a few.

Moreover, in my analysis of cinematic treatments of the Faust legend, as in my discussion of dramatic recreations of the Faust story, I have tried to distinguish between adaptations and appropriations. Again, applying the definition offered by Sanders, I define adaptations as films that make explicit reference to the Faust legend, featuring a character named Faust and a Mephistophelian figure. I define appropriations as films that have a greater distance from their source and thus are not explicitly based on the Faust legend and usually make no explicit reference to either Faust or Mephistopheles, but that nevertheless contain most of the characteristics of the traditional Faustian format and provide palimpsests for the earlier Faust narratives.

I begin this chapter with an analysis of the only cinematic adaptation of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* of which I am aware, the Nevill Coghill/Richard Burton version, produced in 1967. Because the Coghill/Burton film departs markedly from Marlowe's script, I consider it an adaptation rather than a dramatization of Marlowe's drama. I then treat the following foreign film adaptations of the Faust narrative: F. W. Murnau's silent film *Faust* (German, 1926), René Clair's, *The Beauty of the Devil* (French, 1952), Jan Švankmajer's *Faust* (Czech, 1994), and, the most recent film to be explicated in this study, Alexander Sokurov's *Faust* (Russian, 2011). I shall

also analyze the following British and American cinematic appropriations of the Faust narrative: *The Devil and Daniel Webster* (1941), *Alias Nick Beal* (1949), *Damn Yankees* (1958), *Bedazzled* (1967), *Oh, God! You Devil* (1984), *Crossroads* (1986), *Angel Heart* (1987), and a remake of *Bedazzled* (2000).

All of the foreign films I consider – and a majority of those I exclude – make explicit reference to the Faust legend, featuring the dramatis personae associated with this narrative and deriving their provenance primarily from Goethe's drama. Conversely, only one of the English-language films that I analyze, the Coghill/Burton adaptation of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, overtly identifies with the Faust narrative, even though all of these English-language films exhibit most of the salient characteristics of the legend as identified above. This marked disparity between European and British/American Faust films may be due to the durable influence of Goethe's *Faust* on the European cinema. Conversely, although all of the English-language films analyzed in this chapter show the influence of Marlowe and Goethe, the primary inspiration, at least for the American Faust films, is neither Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* nor Goethe's *Faust*, but that icon of American Faust films, *The Devil and Daniel Webster*, and the blockbuster musical hit, *Damn Yankees*.

Epilogue

The Epilogue of the book will summarize both the unifying characteristics and the marked differences to be found in the many dramatic and cinematic adaptations/appropriations of the Faust legend. In the Epilogue, I will also speculate on the reason for the legend's durability and its continuing relevance to our contemporary society.