What do men and women desire? For what will they barter their immortal souls? These two questions have haunted Western society, and these persistent queries find their fullest embodiment in the Faust legend. This memorable story, told and retold in novels, prose fiction, and drama, has also profoundly influenced music, art, and cinema. Sara Munson Deats explores its impact, tracing the development of the Faust topos from the seminal works of Marlowe and Goethe to the large number of dramatic and cinematic adaptations which have fascinated audiences and readers throughout the centuries. Her study traces the durability of this legend and its pervasive influence on the literature of the Western world, in which it has been adapted across time, languages, and nations to reflect the concerns of a given era or place. This is the first comparative analysis of the Faust legend in drama and film.

Sara Munson Deats is a Distinguished University Professor Emerita at the University of South Florida. Former President of the Marlowe Society of America, she has published over fifty essays on early modern drama. Her twelve published books include three collections of essays on Christopher Marlowe, co-edited with Robert Logan; a collection of essays on Marlowe’s Doctor Faustus; and Sex, Gender, and Desire in the Plays of Christopher Marlowe (1997), for which she received the Roma Gill Award.
THE FAUST LEGEND

From Marlowe and Goethe To Contemporary Drama and Film

SARA MUNSON DEATS

University of South Florida
I gratefully dedicate this book to my mother, Eula Bea Munson, who taught me to overreach

“Ah, but a man’s reach should exceed his grasp,
   Or what’s a heaven for?”

Robert Browning
“Andrea del Sarto”
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1.1 Doctor Faustus. Frontispiece to *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* by Christopher Marlowe, published in 1897. This drawing presumably represents a portrait of the historical Johannes Faustus. Photograph by Universal History Archive/Universal Images Group/Getty Images.

2.1 Woodcut of Faustus conjuring Mephistopheles. Title page to Christopher Marlowe’s *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus*, 1631 edition. Photograph by Culture Club/Hulton Archive/Getty Images.

3.1 Goethe’s *Faust*. “Faust at Work,” after a painting by Rembrandt. Photograph by Culture Club/Hulton Archive/Getty Images.

3.2 Mephistopheles’s “Prologue in the Sky” from Goethe’s *Faust*. Photograph by Historical Picture Archive/Corbis Historical/Getty Images.


5.2 Devil of an Actor. Emil Jennings plays the winged Mephistopheles in the 1926 silent film *Faust*, directed by F. W. Murnau. Photograph by John Kobal Foundation/Getty Images.

5.3 Walter Huston plays Mr. Scratch in the 1941 film, *The Devil and Daniel Webster*, directed by William Dieterle. Photograph by John Springer Collection/Corbis Historical/Getty Images.
Acknowledgements

This study is the result of my life-long fascination with the Faust legend. This interest, originally sparked in a graduate seminar offered by my mentor R. W. Dent of UCLA, developed into a dissertation comparing the English Faustbook to Christopher Marlowe’s Doctor Faustus, and this fire continued to burn brightly throughout the years as I taught and wrote about Marlowe and participated actively in the Marlowe Society of America. In the early 1990s my colleague Flora Zbar invited me to give a plenary address comparing the treatment of the Faust legend in Marlowe and Goethe at an interdisciplinary conference at the University of South Florida. Discovering Goethe’s Faust was a monumental event in my scholarly life; to paraphrase John Keats, I felt like a watcher of the skies when a new planet swims within her ken, and my interest in the Faust legend ignited anew. At that time, I conceived a plan someday to write a book analyzing the various treatments of the Faust legend in drama and film. Twenty-five years later I submitted my manuscript to Cambridge University Press.

Completing this study did not take a village, perhaps, but this book certainly benefited markedly from the support and assistance of many friends, colleagues, and institutions. First, I am grateful for all the aid I have received in locating not easily available information on the many plays, films, and productions discussed in this study. Special thanks must go to Nils Frischknecht and Martina Maria Sam for the insights they provided me personally on the premiere production of Goethe’s complete Faust at the Goetheanum and also on subsequent productions of Goethe’s complete play at the same venue. Also, my deepest appreciation goes to the library staff at the University of South Florida, which worked tirelessly to seek out information on the often obscure texts and criticism that I analyze in this volume.

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**Abbreviations**

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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>GPB</strong></td>
<td><em>German Faustbook</em></td>
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