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The Devil Only Knows:
The Origins of Faust at the Crossroads of Magic, Medicine, and Science

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Comparative Literature

by

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June 2023

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March 2023

The Devil Only Knows:

The Origins of Faust at the Crossroads of Magic, Medicine, and Science

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by

Dustin Wayne Lovett

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To my wife and my committee, may I one day be able to reward your patience with more than these few pages.

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FIELDS OF STUDY

Studies in 20th-Century German Literature with Profs. Jocelyn Holland, Wolf Kittler, and Catherine Nesci

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Studies in Faust Literature with Profs. Wolf Kittler, Cynthia Skenazi, and Christina Vagt

ABSTRACT

The Devil Only Knows:

The Origins of Faust at the Crossroads of Magic, Medicine, and Science

by

Dustin Wayne Lovett

The story of Faust and his bargain with the devil has become one of the foundational myths of Western epistemology and its dangers. However, while a large body of excellent scholarship exists on the early development of Faustian literature from its origins to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's epochal *Faust* of 1808, surprisingly little attention has been paid to the specific questions of knowledge at issue in the tradition inaugurated by the 1587 *Historia von D. Johann Fausten* or how those questions relate to the Faustian phenomenon's surprising and enduring cross-cultural popularity in the centuries before Goethe. By taking a cultural-archaeological approach, in the sense of Michel Foucault, to the Early Modern corpus of Faustian literature, this project reconceptualizes that corpus as an archive in which the connections between the European intercultural phenomenon of Faust and contemporaneous shifts in epistemological discourse become legible. Moreover, this project reframes the question of knowledge within Early Modern Faust literature according to Ludwick Fleck's theories about the socio-cultural contingency of scientific thinking within a given era, opening a new avenue for analyzing the place of Faust as a literary figure within the Scientific Revolution.

By comparing the first Faust book to similar contemporaneous works, it becomes clear that the *Historia* served as a unique form of narrative popular science literature addressing demonological and natural philosophical issues of interest throughout Europe at the turn of the seventeenth century, enabling the *Historia* to achieve exceptional success in translation and theatrical adaptation. This early Faustian literature both reflected and contributed to the dissemination of a skeptical movement within Early Modern European philosophy at the same time that the heterogenous ideologies written into the various early works of Faustian literature both reflected and contributed to an increasingly heterogenous epistemological landscape. The intimate entanglement of early Faustian literature with popular approaches to scientific thinking throughout the Early Modern period ultimately serves to explain its surprising popularity and longevity in as tumultuous an intellectual era as that of the Scientific Revolution and highlights the potential comparative literary analysis presents as a tool within intellectual history.

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Introduction

Faust, the name has become a totem, at least in the West, both for the perilous desire for knowledge and as the embodiment of an age when devils and eternal damnation seemed as real and near at hand as black magic and witchcraft. For most, that world has receded into history and its reality into metaphor. Yet, Faust remains an integral facet of Western culture. If you were to ask why we still think, talk, and write about this sixteenth-century German magician, why we still hear about the "Faustian themes" of books, films, and videogames or politicians who cut "Faustian bargains," the answer would inevitably come back: Goethe. Johann Wolfgang Goethe did not invent Faust or his story, although his innovations have indelibly altered the cultural memory of both. Faust was a historical, if obscure, German magician known to Martin Luther, contemporary to Paracelsus, and the subject of folklore even during his lifetime. He first entered literature in the sermons and anecdotes published in the decades immediately following his death but was transformed fully into a literary character by the anonymous 1587 German chapbook, the *Historia von D. Johann Fausten*, translations of which swept across Central and Western Europe, most prominently inspiring Christopher Marlowe's *Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*. Although magnificent in its own right and preceding Goethe's *Faust, a Tragedy* by more than two centuries, there can be little doubt that it was the latter which elevated into world literature and an enduring cultural touchstone what had, after its initial international success, largely receded into a parochial folktale.

Other, more interesting questions follow from that of who is responsible for Faust's continued cultural prominence. For instance, why would Goethe take up a two-hundred-year-

old tale of sorcery in the era of the bourgeois drama and *bildungsroman*? How did such a profoundly strange story even survive into—let alone thrive within—the so-called Age of Enlightenment? While the former question has provided the basis of a great deal of scholarship, stretching from the nineteenth through the twentieth century, the latter has largely been broken up, the Renaissance and Enlightenment Faust texts treated as related but discreet puncta in a tradition rather than chapters in a cohesive story of cultural development. Thus, although some scholarly works have explored particular cultural aspects of the Faustian reception history, such as Frank Baron's consideration of the *Historia* in terms of the contemporaneous witch trials in *Faustus on Trial* or Goethe's exposure to eighteenth-century Germany's culture of mysticism in Rolf Christian Zimmermann's *Das Weltbild des jungen Goethes*, Faust scholarship still lacks a coherent account of why the figure of Faust and the literature that grew up around him should persist in popularity throughout the Early Modern period, despite the era's monumental cultural shifts. In other words, what is it about a work conceived at a time and place still obsessed with witchcraft and demons that could speak so forcefully to the imagination of those living after the Scientific Revolution and in the midst of a supposed Age of Reason? Even works like E. M. Butler's magisterial *Fortunes of Faust* and Charles Dédéyan's monumental *Thème de Faust dans la littérature européenne*, which trace the genealogy of the Faust tradition and taxonomy of the Faustian types from the chapbook to Thomas Mann's *Doktor Faustus*, offer no cohesive argument for Faust's cultural endurance before Goethe secured a place for him in the world literary canon. Taking up the question of what made Faust still so compelling, so relevant, two-hundred years after his entrée into literature, I hope, in the present work, to offer a satisfying account not only of

how Faust's story survived its first two centuries but of what significance that holds for the relationship between literary and scientific cultures in the Early Modern epoch.

"New Philosophy Calls All in Doubt"

As a source and system of power and knowledge, magic inheres both as an essential element in the Faust tradition and the Western fable of the Scientific Revolution. Magic represents perhaps the oldest and most complete system of knowledge devised by humans (Barnes 7; Freud 681–2; Zimmermann 329 n.320). Irrational from, because incompatible with, the perspective of modern scientific thought, systems of magical knowledge have, for millennia, provided explanations for nearly every extant phenomenon, even beyond what present-day science can confidently explain, that adhere to internally consistent, logical, and thus, strictly speaking, rational principles. Historically, moreover, magical thought has readily integrated itself into more recognizably scientific systems in both the Ancient and Medieval West, supplementing the limited scope of Aristotelian physics or Scholastic natural philosophy, but also in the Early Modern period, alongside the nascent "new science." Hence, that the *Historia*, replete with necromancy, astrology, and demonology could pass as a work of "popular science" in the sixteenth century may baffle the modern reader (Wiemken LIV), but it is also not clear exactly when it ceased to be so. Where traditional, positivistic narratives present the empirical "new science" of Isaac Newton and the skeptical "new philosophy" of René Descartes vanquishing magic and Scholastic superstition to make way for the Age of Reason and modern science, the mid-twentieth-century revisionist historiography of Lynn Thorndike and Frances Yates present magic as the handmaiden of modern science. If, as some argue, Thorndike and Yates overstate the case (Copenhaver

"Natural Magic" 262), Newton's dabbling in alchemy and the roots of Descartes's skepticism in his day's demonic paranoia nevertheless argue that the story of modern science's development is more fraught and the place of magic within it more ambivalent than simplistic narratives of progress would allow, and the same can be said for the age of Voltaire and Linnaeus, which they shared with Mesmer, Cagliostro, and Swedenborg.

What should we make of this ambivalence? One way to conceptualize it is as the breakdown of one scientific paradigm, or thought style (*Denkstil*), to borrow from Ludwick Fleck instead of Thomas Kuhn,[1] and its replacement by another, in this case the natural philosophical by the natural scientific (Fleck 105–7; Kuhn 10–11). Broadly, the natural philosophical thought style of the Early Modern period can be characterized as Scholastic in its reliance on ancient authorities, chiefly Aristotle, and Christian theology and Neoplatonic in the magical rationales it incorporated to account for phenomena that fell outside of Aristotelian physics, while the natural scientific has generally been understood as secular and reliant on direct observation and experimental reproducibility. Although these characterizations represent historiographic ideals more than historical realities, they provide a convenient, if simplified, frame for understanding the transition in scientific thought style that occurred during the Early Modern period. Historiographically, two key intellectual moments characterize this transition, the Scientific Revolution of the sixteenth and seventeenth century and the Enlightenment of the seventeenth and eighteenth, but insofar as these terms imply events in the narrow sense, inflection points with a clear before and after, the conceal more than they reveal. They are events of *longue durée*, unfolding across centuries at different paces in different places and among different populations, and more to

[1] Kuhn makes no secret of Fleck's influence on his conceptualization of scientific paradigms, and both thinkers' terms will be used throughout, according to the analytical nuance required in each given instance (Kuhn xli).

the point, events which emerged out of and developed in conflict with a much longer, overarching historiographic moment, namely that of Old Europe.

In a discussion of late-Medieval superstition, specifically magical thinking in religious practice on the eve of the Reformation, Michael Bailey offers an avenue for conceptualizing the ambivalence between magical and scientific thought styles in pre-Modern Europe by adapting the idea of Old Europe, used mainly to describe economic and political structures persisting from the Medieval period until the beginning of the Modern era, into "an Old Europe of beliefs and mentalities that endured until the 1700s" in spite of scientific and cultural innovations ("Late-Medieval Crisis" 660). These Old European "beliefs and mentalities" manifestly extend beyond the question of religious superstition. The concept originates in Dietrich Gerhard's economic work *Old Europe: A Study of Continuity, 1100–1800*, but beyond economics and specific questions of superstition, those dates delineate the period in which the European episteme was largely shaped by the Christian-Aristotelian thought style now known as Scholasticism.[2] Over the first half of this period, the Scholastic thought style developed into the dominant thought style in Europe. As such, it became the arbiter of knowledge, of what was true, of how to think, and what could be thought (Fleck 105–7). Like thought styles in every era, however, Scholasticism should not be thought of as some invisible force emerging from nowhere to impose its way of thinking on European societies.

Rather, the Scholastic thought style grew out of the European "thought collective" (*Denkkollektiv*) of the Middle Ages. Fleck suggests that if we define a thought collective as, "a community of people who relate to each other through the exchange of thought or in

[2] Those we now refer to as "Scholastics" would have been more likely to think of themselves as "Peripatetics," that is, followers of Aristotle's Peripatetic School.

interaction with one another's theories, we then possess in it the engine of social development for a field of thought, a certain body of knowledge, thus for a particular thought style" (46).[3] In other words, if the scientific community, those responsible in Western interculture for not just the exchange of ideas but their testing and evaluation, in a given era can reach a strong enough consensus within a large enough field of knowledge, it can, as a thought collective, articulate a thought style that sets the epistemological conditions for understanding the world. Such a thought collective existed for much of the period of Old Europe, giving rise to the Scholastic thought style, which, at its peak in the fourteenth and fifteenth century, was capable of rationally explaining nearly every phenomenon according to the logic of its style.

By the sixteenth century, however, intellectuals across Europe had begun to register the explanatory limitations and contradictions of the Old European Scholastic natural philosophy, but even as elements of this structure were overturned and replaced with theories in the new thought style that provided better explanations of observed phenomena and achieved scientific consensus, the remaining elements would persist until they, too, were eventually overturned and a new consensus was reached. Thus, the new science that arrived at the turn of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, with its preference for observation, mechanical theories, and experiment, did not replace the older Scholastic and Neoplatonic structures of knowledge overnight. Because the undermining of one branch of natural philosophy did not necessarily implicate another, the fact that Isaac Newton could, on the one hand, overturn long-cherished principles of Aristotelian physics while, on the other, pursuing research into the Neoplatonic realms of alchemy and astrology only seems irrational in

[3] "als Gemeinschaft der Menschen, die im Gedankenaustausch oder in gedanklicher Wechselwirkung stehen, so besitzen wir in ihm den Träger geschichtlicher Entwicklung eines Denkgebietes, eines bestimmten Wissensbestandes und Kulturstandes, also eines besonderen Denkstiles."

hindsight. Few thinkers then, as now, were prepared to abandon the entire edifice of knowledge that had been built up over centuries without a convincing replacement.

This process of building consensus anew left the Early Modern European landscape of scientific knowledge, the accumulated product of scientific endeavors, highly heterogenous. Preceding the commencement of this process in the scientific realm, however, the outbreak of the Reformation had already fractured the European theological topography. Famously, Richard Popkin traces the emergence of skepticism in European intellectual life to the Reformation's questioning of fundamental Catholic beliefs and claims to a monopoly on religious knowledge (5).[4] As the loss of religious consensus within the Catholic church saw the formation of numerous new denominations with rival theological interpretations of what constituted religious knowledge, the loss of scientific consensus, affecting now one, now another branch of the tree of knowledge, precipitated the emergence of rival schools of thought, some attempting to supplant the traditional knowledge fields, others to maintain or reform them, much as the Catholic church persisted following its breakup. Unsurprisingly, then, with the disintegration of the Old European consensus in science and religion, claims of knowledge, both those rooted in traditional theology and natural philosophy as well as those in line with the Reformation and new science, faced skepticism and ambivalence. John Donne's 1611 poem, "An Anatomy of the World" captures this sentiment succinctly.

> And new philosophy calls all in doubt;
>
> The element of fire is quite put out;
>
> The sun is lost, and th' earth, and no man's wit

[4] While Luther's testimony at the Diet of Worms provides a striking origin story, Ian Maclean in "The 'Sceptical Crisis' Reconsidered: Galen, Rational Medicine and the Libertas Philosophandi" offers a compelling counterargument that various philosophical traditions already established in Europe by 1520 participated in the same kind of critical analysis associated with sixteenth-century European skepticism.

Can well direct him where to look for it. (205–8)

Donne's "new philosophy" is the new science, which had already proposed dispensing with Aristotelian physics' reliance on the elements of earth, water, air, and fire and overturned the geocentric model wherein the sun and planets had spun around the earth. The vertiginous ambivalence and uncertainty at the loss of a coherent vision of the cosmos, which Donne captures here, expresses a characteristic concern of Early Modern epistemological discourse, and moreover, the very concern at the heart of early Faustian literature.

Faust, the Last of the "Old Europeans"

This work proposes the Faustian tradition as a particularly rich field in which to seek to understand this persistent ambivalence within Early Modern epistemologies. In many ways, the tradition presents an ideal archive, in the discursive sense which Michel Foucault has given the term, for analyzing the contradictions and vacillations of thinking both magically and scientifically in this era (178–9). Even the historical Faust exists almost exclusively as a discursive figure, a caricature onto whom contemporaries from Trithemius to Luther projected their attitudes towards magic. Ultimately, Faust comes down to us "more book than person" as Joseph Görres put it, absorbing the legends of earlier magician and becoming the "seal" placed upon the tradition of searching for knowledge by magical means that reached its apogee in the figure of the bad doctor with his wavering conscience (237).[5] Faust the magician and diabolist par excellence thus emerges on the threshold of the Scientific Revolution as a cultural signifier, in Central and Western Europe at least, of the

[5] "Fauſt iſt daher gewiſſermaßen mehr Buch als Perſon, alles was von ſeinen Zauberkünſten die Geſchichte ſeines Lebens erzählt, iſt früher viele Jahrhunderte ſchon als Tradition im Volke umgelaufen, und Fauſt's Bildniß war gleichſam das Siegel nur, was man auf die Sammlung Aller gedrückt."

promises and perils of magical thought. But what exactly is magical thought? The idea is elusive because the term can cover such a range of phenomena. Many, but by no means all, of the magical phenomena known to the Early Modern period will be discussed over the course of this work. As relates specifically to the Faust literature primarily at issue here, magic, in general, serves as both an object of study and technique of practice through which the studier and practitioner, often one in the same, hope to gain special epistemological insight. Faustian literature presents a textual body wherein centuries of natural philosophical thought meet Early Modern concerns about demonology, elite disquiet over shifting paradigms of knowledge merge into a broader anxiety surrounding magic and witchcraft, and the theological confrontations of the Reformation play out within and around the Faustian narratives themselves, reflecting and participating in the agon of the era's shifting cultures of knowledge and scientific thought. When this literature first appeared at the turn of the seventeenth century, Faust's command of magic seemed to place him at the forefront of the search for certain knowledge in the midst of growing uncertainty. However, as the natural scientific thought style began to predominate over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Faust comes to signify a scientific fringe.

This, above all, is what singles out the Faustian literature of the Early Modern period as such an instructive archive in which to explore the era's ambivalence toward magic within structures of knowledge. When Faust first appears in popular literature, he represents the "new man" of the Renaissance, pursuing knowledge at all costs, but as the Scientific Revolution progresses and gives way to the Enlightenment, he becomes a figure of the old guard, of Old Europe and the vain persistence of magical thinking in the face of a new consensus around natural science. Faust's virtue as a discursive signifier stems from the

change in interpretation he undergoes over the course of the Early Modern period, as cultural attitudes toward magic shift, so too do attitudes toward Faust, and understanding the transformations of Faust from person to book to tradition simultaneously reveals the extent of the preservation of Old European magical culture within the very heart of the New Europe's scientific progress.

This exploration of the development of Faustian literature and its implications for understanding the place of magic in the scientific construction of knowledge in the Early Modern period will focus primarily on the period from the appearance of the *Historia* in 1587 to Goethe's *Urfaust*, composed some years before his 1790 *Faust. Ein Fragment*. In its first chapter, it will, however, also reach back before the *Historia* to explain the place of magic in the natural philosophical knowledge structure of the sixteenth century during the lifetime of the historical Faust and at the outbreak of the Reformation. Between these historical bookends, this study will analyze the twists and turns, translations, adaptations, and magic manuals that define the development of the Faustian legend and literature and its implications for the persistence of magic in scientific thought.

Chapter One: Faust in His Time

1. The Faustian Era

In cultural memory, the European sixteenth century stands Janus-faced astride the line that separates the Middle Ages from the Renaissance in narrative history, looking backward toward the medieval, the credulous, the magical and forward toward the modern, the skeptical, and the scientific. Though it would make a fine emblem for the traditional view of the time, this Manichean vision of Early Modern knowledge relies on a hindsight bias that divides the period into stark ideological dialectics —Reformation and Counter-Reformation, Scholasticism and Humanism, magic and "new science"—privileging those movements thought to represent progress toward our present age of techno-secular enlightenment but obscuring the ideological tumult and messiness that characterized the period and its immediate legacy. That is not to say that ideological divides like these, did not exist in the sixteenth century, for they defined it, and it is out of them that many culturally important narratives, the Faust legend among them, emerged. These divides did not, however, correspond neatly to historiography's finely drawn distinctions and broad labels, nor did those involved in the era's controversies share our present perspectives or sense of history's arc. Moreover, these ideological clashes would have appeared to many as merely individual battlefields in the true dialectic struggle of the age, naïve as it may now seem: that between the diabolic and the godly. By probing the place of knowledge, particularly occult knowledge, in this ultimate struggle, the Faust legend comes to embody, blur, and occasionally transcend many of the other contradictions that boiled over in its day. In this

light, Faust might serve as a fitting emblem himself for what has already been called the Faustian century,[6] or even for the Early Modern era as a whole.

2. Faust the Person

Before Faust the book, however, there really was Faust the person. Scattered but consistent references throughout the first half of the sixteenth century describe an itinerant *scholasticus* wandering central Europe, perhaps even as far as Paris, using the name Faustus, proffering horoscopes, and seeking patronage. Magic and its ambiguous place in sixteenth-century European society defined Faust's reputation even in life, and he earned, at best, a mixed reputation, both finding powerful patrons and being chased out of several German cities under accusations ranging from disturbing the peace to pederasty. The very first historical document linking the name Faust to magic, a letter from the humanist abbot Johannes Trithemius already encapsulates the ambivalence of the historical record regarding the man who would be a legend, at the same time that it helps illustrate the simultaneous integrality and abstrusity of magic's place in the era. Trithemius's friend, the court astrologer to the Electoral Palatinate, Johann Virdung had written him about a man whose acquaintance he wished to make, but in his reply dated 20 August 1507, Trithemius had little nice to say:

> This man, about whom you write me, Georgius Sabellicus, who has dared to call himself Prince of the Necromancers, is a vagrant, a windbag, and a bum; he deserves to be flogged, so he won't dare continue to teach despicable things that contradict the holy church. What, after all, are the titles he has given himself, other than signs of a

[6] See the excellent 2013 anthology of essay, *The Faustian Century: German Literature and Culture in the Age of Luther and Faust*, edited by J. M. van der Laan and Andrew Weeks, which the present work relies on throughout.

> most foolish and absurd mind that proves he is a windbag and not a philosopher? Thus, he claims the following title, believing it suits him: Magister Georg Sabellicus, Faustus junior, wellspring of necromancers, astrologers, second of the magicians, chiromancer, aeromancer, pyromancer, second in hydromancy. Just look at the foolish audacity of this man! Is it not madness to call oneself the wellspring of necromancers? Moreover, one who is ignorant of almost all the arts should rather call himself a windbag than a magister. So, his worthlessness is obvious to me. When I was returning from the Brandenburg Margraviate a few years ago, I encountered this man near the city of Gelnhausen. There I was told of every kind of knavery he had performed with great temerity. When he learned of my presence, he fled the hostel. No one could convince him to introduce himself to me. The description of his foolishness he so memorably sent to you he had brought to me by a citizen. (312)[7]

These opening sentences of Trithemius's letter are a briar patch of thorny historiographical questions, the first of which is the name—Georgius Sabellicus, Faustus junior—used by the figure we now know as Faust. This name poses an unresolvable puzzle illustrative of the vexing limits on what we can know about Faust as a person. The most likely answer is that the name represents, at least in part, a humanistic *nom de guerre* of the sort common in the era, as Trithemius, *alias* Johann Heidenberg could himself attest. Sabellicus may, for

---

[7] "Homo ille de quo mihi scripsisti Georgius Sabellicus, qui se principem necromanticorum ausus est nominare, gyrouagus, battologus, et circuncellio est, dignus qui uerberibus castigetur, ne temere deinceps tam nefanda et ecclesiae sanctae contraria publice audeat profiteri. Quid enim sunt aliud tituli quos sibi assumit, nisi stultissimae ac uesanae mentis inditia, qui se fatuum non philosophum ostendit? Sic enim titulum sibi conuenientem formauit. Magister Georgius Sabellicus, Faustus iunior. fons necromanticorum, astrologus, magus secundus, chiromanticus, agromanticus, pyromanticus, in hydra arte secundus. Vide stultam hominis temeritatem, quanta feratur insania, ut se fontem necromantiae profiteri praesumat, qui vere omnium bonarum literarum ignarus fatuum se potius appellare debuisset quam magistrum. Sed me non latet eius nequitia. Cum anno priore de Marchia Brandenburgensi redirem, hunc ipsum hominem apud Geilenhusen oppidum inueni, de quo mihi plura dicebantur in hospitio friuola, non sine magna eius temeritate ab eo promissa. Qui mox ut me adesse audiuit, fugit de hospitio, et a nullo poterat persuaderi, quod se meis praesentaret aspectibus. Titulum stulticiae suae qualem dedit ad te quem memorauimus, per quendam ciuem."

instance, be a reference to the classical Sabelli, alleged possessors of magical secrets. Georgius is the Latinized form of Georg, a name multiple sources connect with Faust and which may very well have been Faust's true given name, as Frank Baron insists ("Faustus of the 16th Century" 43), but then again, it might have been Johann or Jörg, names that appear in other sources. Faust(us) itself might have been a sobriquet, a reference to Augustine's Faustus the Manichaean or Simon Magus's disciple in the *Golden Legend*, or it may have been his actual family name. This question will come up again in Chapter II, but for now, it is worth considering what Trithemius's letter illustrates about the world and era in which the historical Faust lived.

Beyond the question of Faust's name, three things stand out in Trithemius's letter: first, the low estimation he has of Faust's character and magical abilities, second, his implication that Faust is involved in spreading teachings counter to those of the church, and third, the lack of any mention of the devil. Nevertheless, Trithemius's dismissive attitude toward Faustus here should not be understood as a dismissal of magic per se. After all, not only did he address the letter to an astrologer, in fact to *the* German astrologer *par excellence* of the early sixteenth century, but the abbot took a great interest in questions of magic himself and had paid a considerable personal and professional cost because of it, which no doubt contributed to the invective that dripped from his quill. In fact, Trithemius had sent a letter just four days before the one concerning Faustus, in which he defended himself against charges of necromancy and diabolism, insisting he only studied black magic to know what superstitions were circulating and that, for his part, he only believed in "natural magic" (Gantenbein 100). His own reputation as a sorcerer ultimately prevented Trithemius from ever realizing his vision for his magnum opus, *Steganographia*, as a textbook for applied

natural magic, limiting publication during his lifetime to the cryptographic study *Polygraphia* in 1508[8] (101). In this light, Trithemius's resentment toward an itinerant diviner brashly claiming to be a master of necromancy and other illicit magical arts can readily be understood.

The Scholastic Worldview

To sixteenth-century scholars, the distinction Trithemius sought to make between natural and diabolical magic represented a crucial but sometimes blurry division within the natural philosophy of the era between the licit and illicit within magic, and consequently, superstition and proper religious practice. As incoherent as such categorizations may seem to the modern reader, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, they not only framed a rational worldview, but a proper understanding of the physical universe depended on resolving their ambiguities (Clark "Scientific status" 354). This is because the existence of "magic" (or *magia* in the supranational Latin in which the issue was largely debated) as part of physical reality was largely taken for granted throughout Europe's Medieval and into its Early Modern period. However, the rubric of what constituted magic was much larger than what the term connotes today and covered virtually all "wonders" (*mira*), that is phenomena lacking a clear physical or religious explanation. Before the thirteenth century, church authorities generally considered all such wonders, including those naturally occurring,

[8] Trithemius seems to have abandoned the *Steganographia* sometime around 1499 when a manuscript version fell into the wrong hands and led to his first denunciation for necromancy, but three volumes were eventually published in 1606 and were subsequently placed on the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* in 1609. Like the *Polygraphia*, which may have been intended as its apologia, the *Steganographia* that was eventually published seems primarily concerned with cryptography, but Trithemius encoded his messages into a work on magic and demonology that seems to have crossed a line in many contemporaries' eyes (Zambelli 76).

demonic[9] (Kieckhefer "Specific Rationality" 134). Nevertheless, the infusion of classical—particularly Aristotelian—learning into the West from the Arab world in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries brought with it a new intellectual interest in magic. In fact, in the early thirteenth century, magic took its place within medieval Aristotelian natural philosophy, and soon after, clerical scholars, William of Auvergne perhaps first among them, began employing the term "natural magic" (*magia naturalis*) to explain certain natural wonders that occurred by occult, that is not readily explicable, means without recourse to the demonic (Bailey *Fearful Spirits* 61).

These developments led medieval scholars of natural philosophy to divide magic broadly into two categories: natural magic, sometimes called "white magic," and demonic magic, also known as "black magic," or necromancy. As opposed to natural magic, which resulted from occult but natural explanations and was generally deemed acceptable, scholars imputed the efficaciousness of black magic to the workings of demons, and without their intervention such magic was believed ineffectual. As it developed conceptually, magic shifted in medieval Europe from an object solely of theological concern to a field of natural philosophical inquiry. Whether and to what extent it should be understood within the late medieval and Early Modern context as a science is, to say the least, a fraught question and one that will recur throughout this work. The twenty-first century mind perhaps rebels against the very notion. Certainly, it does not meet modern scientific standards of secularity and falsifiability. Nor would modern standards have meant anything in an era when no distinction yet existed between religious and scientific explanations, when the natural world

[9] Because such magic was thought to be the work of spirits, and Roman Catholic orthodoxy generally precluded the existence of neutral spirits, the gods or nature spirits to whom pagan religions had attributed such wonders were transformed into demons with the advent of Christianity and their works thus naturally into demonic magic.

was believed wrought by God to teach humanity (Walsham 166). However, as scholars such as Brian Copenhaver, Stuart Clark, and Richard Kieckhefer, among many others, have demonstrated through numerous works, natural magic presents a rational system for ordering knowledge about the world that offers consistent, internally logical explanations. Insofar, it can and should be considered a science suited, not to our present age, but to its own, the Scholastic age.

In the Medieval Aristotelian tradition, now generally referred to as Scholasticism,[10] science was empirical but not in the way the term is employed today. Rather than seeking out large bodies of new experimental data to compare and analyze, scholars in the sixteenth century preferred to think analytically about a small body of evidence, creating a scientific system that was not experimental or even necessarily mathematical but fundamentally logical (Sylla 180). This evidence came from authoritative sources, the Bible first and foremost but also the Church Fathers as well as classical and Arab natural philosophers approved by the church. From these authorities, Early Modern scholars assembled a coherent vision of the physical universe, the study of which they called *philosophia naturalis*, or natural philosophy. They also derived a credible scientific theory of magic, the empirical basis for which rested on a doxographic tradition of induction and the indirect experience of data through a natural philosophical literature that, rather than representing evidence, came to constitute it (Conpenhaver “Natural Magic” 265–80). Where mainline natural philosophy focused on those parts of the physical world that fit into the classic schema of Aristotelian physics involving the four qualities (hot, cold, moist, and dry) and evident causes, effects

[10] Scholastics themselves would have been more likely to employ the term Peripateticism since they saw themselves as Aristotle’s heirs, having only corrected his pagan errors and brought his teachings in line with biblical truths. Scholasticism as a term to describe the syncretic philosophical system that dominated the high Medieval period and persisted into the seventeenth century developed

considered natural but insensible, thus unintelligible in the traditional schema, and arising from occult causes fell under the purview of natural magic. An overview of such phenomena, like that provided by Clark, would include: "gravitation, magnetism, the generation of lower animal forms, the ebbing and flowing of the tides, the effects of electricity, the working of poisons and their antidotes, and the strange behavior of many individual plants, minerals, and animals" (Clark "Witchcraft and Magic" 259). This list, incidentally, presents some of the first phenomena to which the "new science" of Francis Bacon and Isaac Newton, *inter alia*, would devote themselves over the course of the seventeenth century. However, it is also missing the two most popular areas of natural magical inquiry: the power exerted by astral bodies on the bodily humors and the wondrous properties of minerals, particularly precious metals, in solution, in other words, astrology and alchemy, perhaps the most consequential subfields of natural magic in the development of modern science.

Faust the Necromancer

More consequential to the reputations of Faust and Trithemius in their own era, however, were the illicit branches of magic, necromancy chief among them. In the context of the historical Faust's claims of mastery and the accusations against Trithemius, necromancy should not be understood in its narrow sense of conjuring the dead, which sixteenth century scholars generally considered impossible, but in the more general sense of "black magic."[11] Such magic involved the use of signs, incantations, and rites to achieve seemingly unnatural results, such as making someone fall in love or learning of future events. However, although

[11] This more indiscriminate use of the term in the medieval and Early Modern periods seems to have resulted from confusion between the Latinized Greek *necromantia* (lit. "death divination") and the Latin neologism *nigromantia* (lit. "black divination").

illicit, necromancy existed within the same framework of Scholastic natural philosophy as natural magic and so could not violate its physical laws. Thus, it could not actually bring the dead back to life or break the rules of causality. Only true miracles (*miracula*) could suspend the laws of physics, life and death, cause and effect, and miracles required God's direct intervention. For this reason, despite popular views to the contrary, necromancer's incantations and rites alone could not possibly produce wonders or predict the future with any accuracy because such causes were entirely out of proportion to their effects. However, because demons possessed incredible preternatural powers,[12] such outsized effects were thought possible with infernal assistance. Hence, black magic of all types—including the chiromancy, aeromancy, pyromancy, and hydromancy Faust claims to have mastered—fell under the rubric of demonic magic.[13] Thus, it may seem strange then that a cleric as highly placed as an abbot might be credibly accused of such practices, let alone that someone would openly brag about his mastery thereof, but necromancy seems to have been a relatively common occurrence, a cause for concern but, at the turn of the sixteenth century, not overmuch.

In fact, necromancy had been a perennial issue within the ranks of the church and universities throughout the Middle Ages and would remain so well into the Early Modern era. Already by the eleventh century, when Anselm of Besate in his *Rhetorimachia* indicted his cousin for performing a love spell learned from a book of demonic magic, the figure of

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[12] Following Thomas Aquinas, demons were not considered "supernatural" but rather "preternatural," which meant their powers, though formidable, were circumscribed by natural laws (Bailey, *Fearful Spirits* 66).
[13] Chiromancy, or "palm reading," is still *au courant* in the West as a way of having one's fortune told at fairs and carnivals. Aeromancy, pyromancy, and hydromancy were forms of magic involving the manipulation of air, fire, and water respectively, also mostly for the purpose of predicting the future. Trithemius uses the unusual term "agromanticus," which I take to be a printer's error in the *Epistolae Familiares* of 1536 for "acromanticus," i.e. "aeromancer" (312). Wiemken likewise translates the term as "Aeromant" (xviii). Palmer and Moore seem to read the word as a variant of *geomanticus*, translating it as "diviner with earth," indicating he was claiming to be a geomancer (84). However, whether Fausts neglected to claim mastery of aeromancy or geomancy, the lapse surely resulted from modesty regarding his overabundant magical talent.

the learned cleric performing efficacious magical rites outside the bounds of accepted religious practice had emerged (Bailey *Fearful Spirits* 54). This image of the cleric *cum* necromancer would come to replace that of the Pagan or Jewish sorcerer of earlier eras in the popular imagination as the figure of magical knowledge *par excellence*, and not without reason. Necromancy represented an elite form of magic that required at least some learning as well as access to items considered innately powerful, such as consecrated objects, *sacramentalia*, or books of magic—grimoires—themselves, and the temptation to misuse such access gave rise veritable clerical "underworld" trading in necromantic magic, whether with good- or ill-intent, to help others or harm them, or simply for personal gain (Bailey *Fearful Spirits* 56; Peters 73). As Jean-Patrice Boudet notes in *Entre science et nigromance*, this clerical "inframonde" would have consisted of poor, low-ranking clerics without much better to do than devote themselves to the exigent demands of time and mental energy required for the study of black magic (386–87). For such men, the legal and reputational risks would also likely have been outweighed by the "world of profit and delight" magic seemed to promise.

Although nothing in Trithemius's letter or other documentation on the historical Faust points to a career of the cloth, as an apparently itinerant and independent scholar, dependent on patronage and intellectual odd jobs, Faust's position in society would, if anything, have been more precarious. As a man educated in the Scholastic system, he would also almost certainly have had access to a magical, in addition to a Peripatetic, education. Nearly all scholastics would have had some experience with elite forms of magic including astral magic and astrology, the rudiments of which they might even have been taught within their official curricula, or divination and necromancy, which they may have learned from the shadow

subculture described above (Bailey *Fearful Spirts* 57). As an abbot and widely known, well-connected humanist, Trithemius would obviously occupied a very different position in society, and the 1508 publication of his *Antipalus maleficiorum*, a bibliography dedicated to Joachim of Brandenburg of licit and illicit occult works then in circulation, provides at least a reasonable scholarly explanation for his collection of necromantic tomes. However, any learned figure who engaged at all with magic, even natural magic, courted a reputation as a necromancer. Hence, Roger Bacon and Albert Magnus, two thirteenth-century luminaries who promoted astrology and the other "new" sciences arriving from the Arab world, found themselves credited as great necromancers and the authors of various grimoires, some circulating not only into the Early Modern era but into the Modern as well, and this despite Bacon explicitly warning against necromancy and even attempting to debunk some of its claims (Bailey *Fearful Spirits* 67; Davies 37, 39, 100)[14]. Even learned popes, most notably Sylvester II at the turn of the eleventh century, became associated with necromancy, as did classical figures merely associated with learning, such as, remarkably, the poet Virgil, reputed throughout the Middle Ages as a wizard and author of grimoires (Davies 24).

This association with learning and otherwise innocuous figures arose from the understanding, noted above, that necromancy, as opposed to sorcery and witchcraft, represented an elite, bookish form of magic. Thus, necromancers were generally referred to as "magister," or "master," regardless of whether they had actually attained that academic degree, then the highest conferred through education alone (Boudet 388). Although there is some indication the historical Faust may have in fact achieved the degree of magister, this ambiguity likely provoked Trithemius sarcasm about how Faust ought to "rather call himself

[14] Published in the early sixteenth century, the grimoire known as *Secreta Alberti*, or *The Secrets of Albert*, was among the first magic books in print, and two later grimoires, the *Grand* and *Petit Albert*, were reprinted in the nineteenth-century French collection of colportage known as the *bibliothèque bleue* (Davies 98).

a windbag than a magister." Moreover, even beyond its illicit nature, necromancy itself occupied an ambiguous place among the arts. As Boudet observes, necromancy: "is sometimes considered, if not a liberal art, at least a mechanical art, indeed first among them, just above alchemy [. . .] or the martial arts. Magicians were, thus, masters of an imaginary guild outside the social order" (389).[15] For someone in Trithemius's scholarly position, a humanist theologian and historian already recognized for his mastery of the liberal arts, devotion to an *ars mechanica* would already have entailed a loss of prestige, but the necromantic arts, in particular, would have called into question just how he had attained his position and his learning. Devils, of course, might have helped him into office, and grimoires like the *Ars Notoria* promised magical means of mastering both the trivium and quadrivium (Davies 15). For those in the clerical underworld or itinerant *scholasticii* like Faust, however, possession of such redoubtable technical skill could only increase their prestige and offer them a means, if not of advancement, then at least to get by.

Necromancy was, after all, ultimately a marketable skill with a range of applications from the relatively benign to the exceedingly malign. While it could, for example, be employed for purposes as innocuous as protecting someone from harm or disease or for finding a lost or stolen object, and perhaps the thief along with it, the four goals Kieckhefer identifies as the principal motivations of necromancers all have a more sinister undercurrent:

> [T]hey were often tasked with killing; they sought to influence others' wills and spirits, provoking love or hate, gaining favor, compelling someone to accomplish a specific action, or rendering them mad; they claimed to create illusions, as when a boat or horse was supposed to carry a person, when demons would provide an

[15] "est parfois considérée sinon comme un art libéral, du moins comme un art mécanique, voire comme le premier d'entre eux, juste au-dessus de l'alchimie [. . .] ou de l'art militaire. Le magicien est donc le maître d'une corporation imaginaire qui échappe à l'ordre social."

elaborate banquet with entertainment, or when a dead person seemed to return to life; and, perhaps more commonly, they would ask spirits to appear in mirrors or other reflective surfaces to a young boy and answer questions about the future or secret matters.

("Magie et sorcellerie" 29) [16]

The foregoing list illustrates why, in a time credulous of magic's efficaciousness, necromancy was a cause of concern, not just legally but epistemologically and theologically as well, but also valuable as a skillset. From a legal, as well as ethical, standpoint, the ability to kill magically provides obvious reason to worry. After all, how does one solve a magical murder, committed at a distance and without a weapon, except perhaps by recourse to magic of one's own? Fortunately, however, knowledge of lethal magic seems to have been exceedingly rare. In the necromantic tomes that have survived to the present day, very few contain any spells at all that purport to take another's life directly through ritual magic, and those that do offer only a handful of such spells, proposing instead to render their targets' helpless without necessarily killing them (Boudet 362). Nevertheless, the mere suspicion that someone was capable of killing magically, or employed someone who could, would have lent a certain cachet in the rowdy sixteenth century. Likewise, the control necromancers could supposedly exert over others' will or their senses raised troubling questions about the very perception of reality, but along with the ability to learn secrets about the present moment or

[16] "ils étaient souvent chargés de tuer ; ils cherchaient à influencer l'esprit et la volonté, incitant à l'amour ou à la haine, provoquant des faveurs, contraignant à accomplir une action spécifique, ou rendant fous ; ils disaient créer des illusions, comme celles où un bateau ou un cheval étaient censés transporter une personne, où des démons apportaient un banquet élaboré avec des divertissements, où un mort semblait revenir à la vie ; et plus communément peut-être, ils demandaient aux esprits d'apparaître à un jeune garçon dans les miroirs ou d'autres surfaces réfléchissantes, pour répondre à des questions concernant le futur ou des affaires secretes."

the future, it also seemed to present opportunities to those who could command it, or at least trade on the possibility that they could.

Based on Trithemius's letter, the historical Faust's magical claims seemed to have rested largely on his ability to perform illusions, divine the future, and glean secret knowledge. This last point might even have earned him a particularly nefarious reputation. In the second half of his letter to Virdung, Tritehemius elaborates on some of Faust's particular claims:

> Clergymen in that city [Gelnhausen] told me he had announced before many people that he possessed such knowledge and recollection of all the sciences that he, even if all the works of Plato and Aristotle were to be lost and vanish from people's memory, was, due to his genius, capable, like another Hebrew Ezra, to restore them completely and better than before. When I later spent time in Speyer, he came to Wurzburg and apparently bragged with similar vainglory that our savior Christ's miracles were not so wonderful, explaining he could do everything Christ had done whenever and as often as he liked. During lent of that year, he came to Kreuznach and boasted there in the same foolish fashion, explaining that he was the most important practitioner of alchemy there had ever been and that he knew and could bring about whatever people wished. However, at the time the post of schoolmaster was unoccupied in that city. At the insistence of your lord's magistrate, Franz von Sickingen, a man exceedingly fond of mystical matters, it was granted him. Yet, soon he began to carry on the most nefarious fornication with the boys. When his enjoyments came to light, he fled the punishment awaiting him. That is all I can report from certain testimony about this

man whose arrival you await with so much anticipation. When he comes to you, you will find a heedless fool instead of a philosopher. (313)[17]

This continuation of Trithemius's letter, insofar as his sources truly are "certain" and his narration reliable, paints a vivid—and lurid—portrait of the historical Faustus.[18] The most serious accusation Trithemius levies against Faust, that of pederasty, obviously deserves attention. Although it does not, prima facie, seem to relate to magic, instead purporting to speak to Faust's overall bad character, it may in fact have an explanation rooted in divination. As noted above, one of the most common employments of necromancy was for conjuring a spirit into a reflective surface to answer questions posed by a young boy. According to one surviving grimoire, which describes the ritual in *experimentum* for finding a stolen object, the surface could be "a sword, a mirror, a crystal, or the fingernail," but it was clear that a "virgin boy" and "full moon" were indispensable (in Thorndike 407).[19] It is not hard to imagine how someone coming upon a wanderer like Faust sitting just behind a young boy, holding a mirror or sword in front of him, and whispering questions in the boy's ear might jump to certain conclusions.

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[17] Referebant mihi quidam in oppido sacerdotes, quod in multorum praesentia dixerit, tantam se omnis sapientiae consecutum scientiam atque memoriam, ut si uolumina Platonis et Aristotelis omnia cum tota corum philoso- phia in toto perisset ab hominum memoria, ipse suo ingenio uelut Ezras alter Hebraeus, restituere uniuersa cum praestanti- ore ualeret elegantia. Postea me Neometi existente Herbipolim uenit, eademque uanitate actus in plurimorum fertur dixisse praesentia, quod Christi Saluatoris miracula non sint miranda, se quoque omnia facere posse quae Christus fecit quoties et quandocunque uelit. In ultima quoque huius anni quadra- gesima uenit Stauronesum, et simili stulticiae gloriosus de se pollicebatur ingentia, dicens se in Alchimia omnium qui fuerint unquam esse perfectissimum, et scire atque posse quicquid homines optauerint. Vacabat interea munus docendi scholasti- cum in oppido memorato, ad quod Francisci ab Sickingen Baliui principis tui, hominis mysticarum rerum percupidi promotione fuit assumptus, qui mox nefandissimo fornicationis genere cum pueris uidelicet uoluptari coepit, quo statim deducto in lucem fuga poenam declinauit paratam. Haec sunt quae mihi certissimo constant testimonio de homine illo, quem tanto ucnturum esse desyderio praestolaris. Cum uenerit ad te, non philosophum, sed hominem fatuum et nimia temeritate agitatum inuenies.

[18] For doubts regarding Trithemius's account, see *War Dr. Faustus in Kreuznach? Realität und Fiktion im Faust-Bild des Abtes Johannes Trithemius*.

[19] "Ut intelligatis, debetisscire quod cum Luna est plena, tota illa umbra videtur in plenilunio, spiritus a natura dant responsa nec decipiunt sicut quando fit experimentum ad inveniendum furtum cum puero uirgine in corpore polito, sicut in ense, speculo, crystallo vel ungue, ubi est deceptio magna."

It is also, of course, entirely possible that the historical Faust truly was an ephebophile. Nor is the one explanation necessarily mutually exclusive of the other. Ritual magic, after all, may have presented him with an excuse to isolate his victims. The connection between Faust's magical career and alleged sexual deviancy would reemerge some decades later when records indicate that safe passage through the city of Nuremberg was denied to "Doctor Faust the great Sodomite and Nigromancer" by its vice-mayor in 1532.[20] Frank Baron, the renowned Faust scholar, sees these later charges merely as evidence that the allegations Trithemius's relays in his denunciation had circulated in learned, humanist circles causing Faust's ill-repute to proceed him. Specifically, he speculates that Willibald Pirckheimer, a member of the Nuremberg city council and consultant to Emperor Maximilian I in addition to being Trithemius's friend, had some connection to Faust's rejection (Baron "Faustus of the Sixteenth Century" 47). However, Pirckheimer had died in 1530 and Trithemius correspondence would not be published until 1536, so such speculation is rather tenuous. Moreover, despite the inveterate prejudice that links homosexuality to pederasty, the record provides no description of Faust's alleged partners—or victims—making a definite connection impossible. The truth may never be known, but it seems from Trithemius's letter as well as the ban from the city of Nurnberg that questions about the historical Faust's character were inseverable from his reputation as a magician.

Faust's magical claims, as relayed in the letter, stand out in light of the legend that later formed around him but would not have seemed so remarkable *per se* at the time. Setting aside for the moment his boasts about his alchemical capacities, Faust's claims all implicitly

[20] The complete entry in the city records states: "Doctor fausto, dem groszen Sodomiten und Nigromantico zu furr, glait ablainen. Burgermeister Junior" (in Palmer and Moore 90).

evoke his own "princely" domain: necromancy. The possibility of magically recovering or restoring the lost and fragmented texts of Antiquity, of course, answered the burning desire of sixteenth-century Humanist scholarship, but whereas Ezra was able to "restore all the sayings of the prophets who had gone before, and to restore to the people the law given by Moses" through divine inspiration (Eusebius 461), despite Faust's claims of being able to accomplish it through sheer genius and eidetic memory, such a feat would have required diabolic assistance, particularly to restore them to a condition "better than before." While the magical quest for knowledge would become central to the later legends and literature around Faust, along with the figurative and literal resurrection of figures from Antiquity, the links between Faust's magical and gnostic pursuits already defined his reputation while still alive, particularly in the realm of prognostication. While some of Faust's prognosticative claims were recorded under the licit banner of astrology, as detailed in "Faust as Astrologer" below, others are bound up with his status as a necromancer, such as a peculiar incident related in the *Waldeck Chronicle*. On 23 January 1536, during the siege of the Anabaptist Münster Rebellion (*Täuferreich von Münster*) in that city by Franz von Waldeck, Prince-Bishop of Münster, records state: "that noted necromancer Dr. Faust, stopping that day on his way from Korbach, foretold that the city would, without a doubt, be taken by the bishop that very night" (in Palmer and Moore 91).[21] Since no other source for his foreknowledge is given and Faust is introduced as a "noted necromancer," it seems appropriate to conclude that the

[21] "23 Jan. an. 1536. quo tempore insignis ille Nigromanticus D. Faustus eo ipso die Corbachii diuertens, praedixit, fore nimirum, vt cadem nocte vrbs Münster ab Episcopo expugnetur." Palmer and Moore translate this passage as, "It was at this time that the famous necromancer Dr. Faust, coming on the same day from Corbach, prophesied that the city of Münster would surely be captured by the bishop on that very night." Their reading of *divertens* to mean "coming" instead of "stopping," adding magical movement to prognostication in the passage's description of Faust's deeds since Korbach is some eighty miles from Münster as the crow flies. While this would be within the capabilities of a necromancer with demonic assistance and is not contradicted by any apparent skepticism toward necromancy in the text, it does not seem to me the most obvious reading of the passage.

chronicle's author credited Faust's prediction to demonic insight. Although demons had no true knowledge of the future, their long lives and copious experience lent them uncanny predictive powers, not to mention they possessed the power to effectuate themselves much of what they predicted, even if it would not otherwise occur. To someone who believed in demons, Faust's claims of being able to know things long since lost or yet to occur would have seemed at least plausible.

The same also holds for his claims of being able to duplicate Christ's miracles. Just as Ezra had needed God's intervention to push human memory beyond its limits, Christ had needed to suspend the physical laws of the universe in order to perform his miracles: turning water into wine, multiplying fish and bread, walking on water, recalling the dead to life, etc.[22] Because only God, and Jesus by extension, could suspend the workings of the universe, neither necromancers nor even demons could perform true miracles, whether it be transforming one substance into another, creating something out of nothing, or any other physically impossible feat. They could, however, perform illusions that resembled miracles. As Kieckhefer notes above, for necromancers this required the complicity of demons whose preternatural powers allowed them to do the seemingly, but not actually, impossible. Hence, Faustus could conceivably have had a demon possess a corpse and so simulated its resurrection or have it invisibly hold him while he "walked" on water. Such actions were thought to be within the capabilities of demons. Thus arises the question of why the Vice-Mayor of Nuremberg and the Bishop of Münster, who clearly knew Faust's reputation as a necromancer, did not have him arrested, tried, and burned at the stake? For that matter, why

[22] In fact, the scriptural miracles of Christ seem to have been carefully curated during the compilation of the Bible to avoid resemblance to the magic of the time, although accusations that Jesus had merely been a great magician nonetheless persisted during the early development of Christianity (Davies 16).

did Trithemius, a figure of authority who believed in the reality of witchcraft, merely advocate for flogging Faust and nothing more serious (Clark "Witchcraft and Magic" 263; Zambelli 64, 66)?

To the extent that such questions can be answered, there are two main avenues of explanation. For one, it should be emphasized that, according to surviving records, capital punishment for magic-related crimes, witchcraft and necromancy included, was exceedingly rare in the centuries before the first outbreak of witch trials in the fifteenth century and in the decades between the end of those trials and the second wave in the mid-sixteenth century (Boudet 450–7, 466; Peters 82–3).[23] Even Trithemius, who had discoursed against witches in his *Liber octo quaestionum*, written in response to Maximilian I's questions for the 1505 Diet of Cologne but published in 1515, never advocated burning as a punishment (Zambelli 65). Hence, to the extent any authorities took Faust's claims seriously, his punishment was unlikely to be any harsher than the local imprisonment described by Erasmus in his 1501 letter to Antoon van Bergen about a man and his wife found guilty of necromancy (9). It would make sense, then, for a city simply to deny such a man entry rather than risk the potential expense of jailing him or his vengeance. Some four years before Faust was turned away from Nuremberg, in 1528, the city of Ingolstadt, which had apparently granted him entry, decided to turn the soothsayer "Dr. Jörg Faustus of Heidelberg" out "to spend his penny elsewhere," but importantly, before leaving, said doctor "swore not to avenge himself or play tricks on the authorities because of the order" (in Palmer and Moore 90).[24] A report

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[23] Even during the first wave of witch trials, executions for magical offenses seem largely to have been limited to regions in southern France and Germany, northern Italy, and Switzerland (Boudet 458; Peters 75).

[24] "Am Mitwoch nach viti 1528 ist einem der sich genannt 'Dr. Jörg Faustus von Heidelberg gesagt, dass er seinen Pfennig anderswo verzehre, und hat angelobt, solche Erforderung für die Obrigkeit nicht zu ahnden noch zu äffen." Incidentally, whatever caused the Ingolstadt authorities to lose patience with Faust seems to me a likelier cause of Nuremberg denying him entry than a humanist conspiracy.

by Johann Weyer included in the 1586 edition of *De praestigiis daemonum* demonstrates why exacting such an oath from Faust may have been seen as necessary. According to Weyer, the “master of the black arts Faustus” had been arrested in Batenburg “for his evil tricks” and, while in custody, managed to play another “trick” resulting in the local chaplain losing much of the skin on his face (294).[25] Given the risks, real and supposed, such a prisoner presented and the unlikelihood of a death sentence, it made sense for most authorities rather to forego any risks and send a man like Faust on his way, continually making him someone else’s problem while constraining him to the itinerancy that would become one of the hallmarks of his life.

The second explanation relates to the fact that Trithemius along several other authoritative figures manifestly did not take Faust’s grandiose claims seriously. Magic may have presented a rational explanation for certain phenomena in sixteenth-century Europe, but that did not mean that people at the time always thought it the most rational explanation for a given phenomenon, or that magicians were free from suspicions of charlatanism and fraud. This is a point worth emphasizing since it gets to the heart of a common misunderstanding about the late-Medieval and Early Modern mentality. Although magic existed as part of the intellectual and experiential framework of the sixteenth century, that does not mean that people, particularly the educated, saw it everywhere at work or credited every magical claim. Importantly, Trithemius’s letter never mentions a real suspicion that Faust has made a pact with the devil, nor does it specify which miracles Faust claimed to perform. Some, after all, could have been counterfeited with the practical illusions of what is now called “stage magic.” For example, turning water to wine could be simulated with a trick bottle that poured

[25] “dieser schwarzkünstler Faustus seiner bösen stück halben.” This incident is discussed at greater length below in “Faust as Alchemist.”

both water and wine while a false-bottom container could serve to make it appear the magician had caused fish and loaves to multiply. Trithemius clearly thinks that Faust is full of it, and he was not alone in this opinion.

Faust the Charlatan

Another humanist, Mutianus Rufus, *alias* Konrad Muth, also had a run in with Faust about five years later in a tavern in Erfurt. Mutanius described the encounter in a letter to Heinrich Urbanus dated 7 October 1513: "Eight days ago a certain chiromancer arrived named Georgius Faustus, the Demigod of Heidelberg, a mere showoff and simpleton. His profession and that of all soothsayers is feckless. The uneducated wonder at it. —I heard him boasting in the inn. I did not chastise his impudence. What is a stranger's madness to me?" (in Palmer and Moore 87–88).[26] Although much briefer than Trithemius's assessment, and apparently based only on first-hand experience, Mutanius's judgment of Faust largely coincides with the abbot's. In his condemnation of divination, however, he goes much farther, or is at least more explicit. Nevertheless, as straightforward as Mutanius's condemnation appears, it should be born in mind that it would likely not have been intended to include astrology *per se*, for reasons discussed below, but rather the forms of divination thought inefficacious without the intervention of spirits, such as the chiromancy Mutanius explicitly mentions or the various elemental "mancies."

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[26] "Venit octavo abhinc die quidam chiromanticus Erphurdiam, nominee Georgius Faustus, Helmitheus Hedebergensis, merus ostentator et fatuus. Eius et omnium divinaculorum vana est profession. Rudes admirantur. —Ego audivi garrientem in hospitio. Non castigavi iactantiam. Quid aliena insania ad me? " In its surviving, printed form, the letter contains an error: "Helmitheus Hedebergensis" is gibberish and must represent some kind of copying, or printing, error. The phrase is almost always read as "Hemitheus Hedelbergensis," i.e. "the Demigod of Heidelberg." The phrase has some bearing on the debate over Faust's identity and will be discussed in Chapter II.

While Trithemius and Mutanius's reports stand out as among the earliest evidence for Faust's historical existence and the nature of his magical practice, they might be taken as the prejudiced condemnations of the overeducated or simply records of early indiscretions in a long career were it not for another account from much later in Faust's life. In 1539, Philipp Begardi, the city physician in Worms, published the *Index Sanitatis*, a guidebook of sorts for seeking appropriate medical treatment and identifying a competent doctor, which contains a description of Faust in its fourth chapter, a chapter devoted to identifying various medical frauds, quacks, and swindlers (Sudhoff 109). Begardi's description is crucial to understanding Faust's historical reputation outside of elite circles not long before his death. It reads:

> There is another well-known and important man whom I would not have mentioned were it not for the fact that he himself had no desire to remain in obscurity and unknown. For some years ago he traveled through almost all countries, principalities and kingdoms, and himself made his name known to everybody and bragged much about his great skill not only in medicine but also in chiromancy, nigromancy, physiognomy, crystal gazing, and the like arts. And he not only bragged but confessed and signed himself as a famous and experienced master. He himself avowed and did not deny that he was and was called Faust and in addition signed himself "The philosopher of philosophers." The number of those who complained to me that they were cheated by him was very great. Now his promises were great like those of Thessalus likewise his fame as that of Theophrastus. But his deeds, as I hear, were very petty and fraudulent. But in taking or – to speak more accurately – in receiving money he was not slow. And afterwards also, on his departure, as I have

> been informed, he left many to whistle for their money. But what is to be done about it? What's gone is gone. I will drop the subject here. Anything further is your affair. (XVIIr)[27]

Clearly, Begardi shared Trithemius and Mutanius's low estimation of Faust's claims, but his description reveals the ways in which the magician's reputation had grown, both as a personage and a charlatan, in the intervening decades. While he concurs with the Waldeck chronicler that Faust has since made quite a name for himself, to the humanists' accusations of magical fraud, the good doctor Begardi adds related ones of medical fraud. Begardi also emphasizes that Faust has traveled more widely than the smattering of Western and Southern German cities mentioned so far would suggest, but while similar exaggerations would ultimately serve to enlarge Faust's legend, Begardi may have had the opposite intention here. Being well-traveled is not always a positive distinction, and in the context of the chapter wherein he describes Faust, Begardi is likely implying a connection between Faust's travels and the practice of similar wandering scholars engaged in "experimental," in the sense of "magical," medicine who, once they had fleeced their victims sufficiently, would betake themselves to Italy where it seems they could swindle a doctor's degree from the universities

[27] "Es wirt noch eyn namhafftiger dapfferer mann erfunden : ich wolt aber doch seinen namen nit genent haben / so wil er auch nit verborgen sein / noch vnbekant. Dann er ist vor etlichen jaren vast durch alle landtschafft / Fürstenthuomb - vnnd Königreich gezogen / seinen namen jederman selbs bekant gemacht / vnd seine grosse kunst / nit alleyn der artznei / sonder auch Chiromancei / Nigramancei ¡ Visionomei / Visiones imm Cristal /vnd dergleichen mer künst / sich höchlich berümpt. Vnd auch nit alleyn berümpt, sonder sich auch eynen berümpten vnd erfarnen meyster bekant vnnd geschriben. Hat auch selbs bekant / vnd nit geleugknet / dasz er sei / vnnd heysz Faustus, domit sich geschriben Philosophum Philosophorum etc. Wie vil aber mir geklagt haben, dasz sie von jm seind betrogen worden, deren ist eyn grosse zal gewesen. Nuon sein verheyssen ware auch grosz / wie des Tessali : dergleichen sein rhuom / wie auch des Theophrasti : aber die that / wie ich noch vernimm, vast kleyn vnd betrüglich erfunden : doch hat er sich imm gelt nemen, oder empfahen (das ich auch recht red) nit gesaumpt / vnd nachmals auch imm abzugk / er hat / wie ich beracht / vil mit den ferszen gesegnet. Aber was soll man nuon darzuothuon, hin ist hin / ich wil es jetzt auch do bei lassen /luog du weiter / was du zuschicken hast."

and then make a merry career abroad (Sudhoff 110).[28] Interestingly, on this question of magical and fraudulent medicine, Begardi invokes both Thessalus, not Hippocrates's son but Thessalus of Tralles, who rose from being a humble weaver to become Emperor Nero's court physician but whose unorthodox practices Galen, and so the Early Modern medical establishment, viewed with contempt, and Theophrastus, by whom he meant not Aristotle's successor but Philippus Aureolus Paracelsus Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim, better known as Paracelsus. Given Paracelsus's prominence, comparing Faust's fame to his certainly speaks volumes, but Begardi's choice of comparison is no doubt intended to reflect negatively on both of them, emphasizing their dubiousness as physicians and their suspect embrace of illicit occult practices.

Regarding both Faust's illicit magical practices, Begardi's report largely aligns with Trithemius's of more than thirty years prior, but it also indicates a few intriguing differences and developments. The explicit reference to "crystal gazing," for one, does offer some evidence for the possibility, outlined above, that the charges of pederasty against Faust might have resulted from a misunderstanding about this, nonetheless illegal, divination practice. Intriguingly, Begardi not only places a strong emphasis on Faust's "confessing" to be a "master," a common shorthand for magician (Boudet 388), but on Faust's refusal to "deny" his name. Why would Faust want to deny his name? While this may be an allusion to the inauspicious connections of the name Faust to Simon Magus and Manichaeism, most likely Begardi's surprise stems from the infamy that name seems to have collected over the intervening decades, infamy enough to be turned away from cities and perhaps, if posterity is

[28] Incidentally, this practice may explain where Faust obtained, assuming he did actually obtain, his doctor's degree since no German university has a record of awarding it to him. The historical Faust's educational attainment will be discussed further in chapter two.

any indication, to have become shorthand itself for necromancy. As such, Faust seems to have dropped the "wellspring of necromancers" moniker only to pick up that of "philosopher of philosophers," likely a continued nod to his supposed polymathy.

Odd as it may seem for a physician concerned with medical fraud to dwell on Faust's necromantic boasting, Begardi's concern would not have seemed misplaced in an era when necromancers claimed, however fraudulently, to be able to resolve certain health issues through black magic. The pagan magic scrolls that became diabolic grimoires, for example, indiscriminately mixed healing spells with *maleficium*, and many necromantic *experimenta*, "spells" as we now know them, concerned themselves with questions of fertility, some, though fewer, with contraception (Kieckhefer "Specific Rationality" 134; Boudet 423). Ironically, even Trithemius himself provided Joachim the Elector with some necromantic *experimenta* for erectile dysfunction (Zambelli 15). Thus, it would not be surprising if those with afflictions beyond the medical science of the time turned to necromancy instead of medicine, but it certainly would be a concern for as devout a physician as Begardi trying to advice the public on how to seek physically and spiritually appropriate care (Sudhoff 106–8). Given Begardi's devotion, it seems unlikely he would doubt demonic efficacy, even in matters of healing. Counterintuitively, most of the demons invoked by the necromancers of the era were meant, ostensibly at least, to help, not harm, humans (Boudet 383). Nevertheless, whatever his beliefs about diabolic magic generally, Begardi makes it clear that, like Trithemius and Mutanius though perhaps for practical rather than theoretical reasons, he sees Faust's particular claims as bunkum and fraud.

Something that stands out in the list Begardi provides of Faust's vaunted masteries is that of physiognomy. Although, crystal gazing and chiromancy had a more direct connection

to “nigromancy,” physiognomy enjoyed some legitimate scientific status within natural philosophy because of its connection to astrology, but because it was thought merely to reveal the truth of how astral influence had shaped a person’s personality through outward signs, it was not considered a true form of divination (Boudet 332). While, unsurprisingly given the range of their competencies, demons were purported experts in physiognomy (James I and VI 15), so were some prominent figures within the legitimate sixteenth-century astrological community who pursued physiognomy as a complementary practice to their stargazing (Boudet 332). Physiognomy, then, seems somewhat out of place on Begardi’s list. Perhaps Begardi harbored some doubts about its scientific merit; perhaps he meant to mock the wide range of Faust’s claims. Regardless, the inclusion of both chiromancy and physiognomy among Faust’s claimed expertise, presents an intriguing echo in one of the last reports of Faust during his lifetime of potentially one of the first.

In 1490, a certain Georg Helmstetter prepared a somewhat unconventional horoscope for Peter Seuter, who would become a Doctor of Law and prominent lawyer in the Bavarian city of Kempten. Frank Baron has long maintained that Georg Helmstetter is the historical Faust’s birth name, and that the Georg Helmstetter who prepared this horoscope would go on to adopt the sobriquet “Faustus” (“Who Was the Historical Faustus?” 297, 300; “Faustus of the Sixteenth Century” 43–4; *Faustus on Trial*). If Baron’s supposition is correct, Begardi’s description in the *Index Sanitatis* nearly fifty years later would form a remarkable bookend to Faust’s prognosticative career, for what made Helmstetter’s horoscope so peculiar was its preparation “through the arts of judicial astrology, physiognomy, and chiromancy” (in Baron

"Who Was the Historical Faustus?" 301).[29] In 1534, Seuter sent that horoscope, accompanied by the above description, to his friend, a humanist scholar knowledgeable in astrology named Nicolaus Ellenbog who was not impressed: "I am returning the horoscope prepared for you by a certain Helmstetter, for I was unable to make it out fully and even less to understand it, especially since I am ignorant of chiromancy. […] To sum up, I am unable to learn from his work, and I took care to return it to you immediately" (Baron "Faustus of the Sixteenth Century" 44).[30] Behind Ellenbog's politeness to his friend, I believe one can read the same dubiousness with which Trithemius, Mutanius, and Begardi all approached Faust's claims. If we accept that all of these documents refer to the same person, then they chart a picaresque career of roughly fifty years, wherein the same man who gained the reputation among many, including Martin Luther and Philip Melanchthon as Chapter II will show, of a mighty soothsayer and necromancer also garnered derision as a simple cheat and a fraud.

In fact, it may have been the dubiousness with which many, from Trithemius to Begardi, approached his grandiose claims, the belief that he was a simple charlatan, that spared him any serious punishment. Nowhere do Faust's doubters voice the suspicion that Faust is really involved in diabolism. They simply do not believe he can do what he says he can. As such, "the despicable things that contradict the holy church" Trithemius accuses Faust of teaching do not likely involve devil worship or even outright heterodoxy, let alone heresy. If that were the case, he would almost certainly have advocated a harsher punishment than "flogging," and Mutanius might have done more than laugh off his boasts. While it is

[29] "[…] nunc tibi transmitto, una cum nativitate mea quam magister Georgius Helmstette[r] ex iudicio astrologiae, phisonomiae et chyromantiae artis mihi composuit."
[30] "Iudicium nativitatis tuae per quendam Helmstetter editum tibi remitto, quod ego nec ad plenum quidem legere potui, et multo minus intelligere, eo quod chiromantiae sim inexpertus. Figuram signavit caeli cum duodecim domibus, sed gradus signorum (qui omni modo hinc necessarij sunt) praetermisit. Sed nec planetas cum suis signis et gradibus apposuit. In summa ex scriptis illius me resolvere nequeo, quare rursum vt ad te irent quantocius curavi" (in Baron, "Who Was the Historical Faustus?" 301).

possible the abbot is alluding to Faust's blasphemous claims to be able to duplicate Christ's miracles, it seems more likely that Trithemus's vague accusation, like Mutanius's dismissal of Faust's divinatory ability or Begardi's incredulity at his healing powers, has more to do with Faust's claims to be able to perform necromantic acts without ever acknowledging the assistance of demons, and thus of the fraught theological and natural philosophical understanding of what was acceptable and what was possible within the field of magic, in other words: superstition.

Early Modern Superstition

The Early modern concept of superstition, or *superstitio*, eludes easy definitions. This is in part because it does not correspond perfectly to our modern use of the term. In many ways, superstition in this period differed markedly from our modern conception and might, as Michael Bailey suggests, be understood in part as "an excess of religion, literally 'religion observed beyond proper measure,'" meaning more or less "improper religious rites and observances" (Bailey, "Late-Medieval Crisis" 633). In this sense, superstition applied to numerous folk beliefs in which the rites and rituals of the church were turned toward magical rather than religious ends, one of the most commonly cited being that of "baptized bells," i.e., church bells on which a priest had performed the sacrament of baptism, rung during thunderstorms to drive away the demons that had provoked the storm. Perhaps the most common object employed for superstitious rituals, however, was the Bible itself, which, as Owen Davies notes, "people placed under their pillow to protect them from witches and evil spirits, or touched when swearing oaths. It was also used in popular divination [. . .] Passages written on scraps of paper were used as healing charms, and the psalms were read for

magical effect" (3). Since these rites lacked a scriptural or doctrinal basis, they also lacked any efficacy from a theological standpoint. However, they clearly demonstrate the intimate entanglement of the concepts of superstition and magic.

Superstition had been a concern in Christianity going back to the church fathers, especially Augustine and Isidore of Seville who wrote extensively about it and its entanglement with magic. To the early church, magic represented an aspect of superstition but one separated from other superstitious acts by malicious intent. Although different writers throughout the Middle Ages and Early Modern period use the terms somewhat differently and sometimes seemingly interchangeably, Kieckhefer offers a "rule of thumb" for differentiating the use of the terms superstition and magic: "*superstitio* implied irrational and improper religious practice, while *magia* suggested more often either a sinister or an occult rationality" ("Specific Rationality" 134). For Isidore, who framed much of the early Medieval concept of magic, it represented a distinct and essentially evil category of superstition. Moreover, as a pre-Scholastic scholar, Isidore was not reasoning from within the limits of causality established in Peripatetic physics and so asserted what would remain the popular understanding of how magic functioned even as later scholarly opinion deemed it erroneous, to wit, that magical incantations could be efficacious in themselves: "Mages are those commonly called evildoers [*malefici*] for the magnitude of their crimes. They disturb the elements and people's minds and cause their deaths without recourse to poison but sheerly through the power of their incantations" (in Boudet 13).[31] The reference specifically to poison here may seem odd, but recall that the workings of poison remained occult well into the Early Modern period and so poison represented a form of magic. This also helps

[31] "Magi sunt, qui vulgo malefici ob facinorum magnitudinem nuncupantur. Hi et elementa concutiunt, turbant mentes hominum, ac sine ullo veneni haustu violentia tantum carminis interimunt."

explain why, despite Isidore's avowal of its possibility, very few explicitly murderous necromantic spells have survived. However efficacious their incantations, Necromancers likely discovered it was easier to just poison their victims (Boudet 362). While causing murder and madness certainly qualify as evildoing, given the range of deeds one could presumably perform with magic, the question of why Isidore and the early church viewed magic as inherently evil naturally arises.

Ultimately the early Christian association of magic with evil arose from magic's association with paganism, specifically with the pagan deities who supposedly granted magic power. With the advent of Christianity, pagan deities were recast as fallen angels, demons in other words, and *ipso facto* the magic powers they had granted their followers became demonic magic (Kieckhefer, "Specific Rationality" 134). Thus, for Isidore, all magic is inherently evil because it is the fruit of an evil tree: "In every aspect the demonic art has arisen from the baleful alliance of humans and evil angels. So, they are all to be avoided by Christians and, accursed, should be entirely repudiated and condemned" (in Boudet 13).[32] What makes magic possible, then, is the "alliance" (*societas*) with a demon who confers magic powers on a mage (*magus*), making their incantations effective. Since magic emanated from demons posing as deities in order to trick mortals into damning themselves through idolatry,[33] Isidore left little room for a concept of non-demonic magic. Moreover, the undifferentiated nature of pre-Christian magic offered no clear path for preserving beneficial magic while rejecting what was harmful. Surviving Greek magical texts, as well as the *Sefer HaRezim* of Hellenistic Judaism, promiscuously mix healing spells with those intended to bring fortune, kill, or render sexually submissive (Kieckhefer "Specific Rationality" 134).

[32] "In quibus omnibus ars demonum est ex quadam pestifera societate hominum et angelorum malorum exorta. Unde cuncta uitanda sunt a christiano, et omni penitus execratione repudianda atque damnanda."
[33] Book I of Milton's *Paradise Lost* renders this particular theological concept beautifully.

Hence, the helpful had to be thrown out with the baleful lest one risk damnation. Prayer thus represented the only recourse of the faithful, who would have to request their wonders from God or the saints and hope they fit into the divine plan. This dualistic vision left the early Medieval church with no explanation for natural wonders except the trumpery of spirits, formerly considered natural but now recognized as fallen. This understanding of magic and the natural world would, however, change over the course of the Middle Ages, bringing further complications to the concept of superstition.

As mentioned above, the High Middle Ages witnessed a shift in thinking about occult processes that resulted in the creation of a new category of non-demonic, "natural" magic. The influx of classical texts and commentaries thereon from the Arab world starting in the twelfth century sparked a revival, even a "renaissance" *avant la lettre*, of scientific thought in Western Europe, resulting in the development and promulgation of a new Scholastic philosophical system, and culminating, arguably, with the completion of Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologica* in 1274. Scholasticism, as an intellectual project, worked to reconcile theology with Aristotelian philosophy in order to produce a coherent cosmology capable of rationally explaining the workings of the Christian universe, in both its mundane and wondrous aspects. The thinking of Church Fathers like Augustine and Isidore could not be discarded, but it had to be reworked to fit into the new framework. With regards to Isidore's concept of magic, this meant carving out a larger space for the natural and reducing the sphere of demonic activities, effectively creating two categories of magic by the thirteenth century: natural and demonic magic. Since neither form of magic could violate the laws of physics, both had to be brought into compliance with the new Aristotelian system of natural philosophy. The mechanics of demonic magic thus had to be rethought.

Within an Aristotelian framework, causes and effects had to be commensurate. Hence, it could not be, as Isidore had believed that a mage's incantations could directly affect others. Words and gestures had no power in themselves. Rather, a demon would have to perform the magical action itself, and as a preternatural creature, it could only do so by manipulating natural forces. Hence, whereas all magic had once been considered demonic, within Scholastic natural philosophy, demonic magic became reclassified as essentially natural magic (Clark "Scientific Status" 364). What separated the two in a technical sense was solely the intermediacy, if not intercession, of demons. Theoretically this would have made demons superfluous to anyone with sufficient skill in manipulating natural magic, but such ability was thought beyond human ken. As spirits, demons relied on the superhuman speed and abilities their incorporeal form granted them to create their illusions as well as the great knowledge and experience they had collected since their fall to inform their divinations. Demons might have technically been considered natural, but they belonged to the category of the preternatural, along with angels, at the extreme of physical possibilities and so no mortal could hope to keep up with them. Although demons were no longer understood to grant magical powers as in the Isidorian model, no spirit would serve a mortal out of the goodness of its heart, since it possessed neither. As such, this new classification of demonic magic did not eliminate the need for a mage to enter into an "alliance" (*societas*) with a demon.

Thus, while this increasingly rationalized vision of magic opened up the possibility of licit magical practices, it simultaneously meant an ever more clearly defined illicit status for necromancy and for the role of demons within it. Nevertheless, the practice of demonic magic continued to thrive, with priestly necromancer taking the place of the pagan priests of old, and the names of Satan and his devils effacing those of the old gods in magical texts

(Davies 21). In his *Fearful Spirits, Reasoned Follies*, Bailey observes that, although the practice of magic had been forbidden to clergy by canon law since the early Middle Ages, some necromantic clerics no longer bothered to hide their proclivities, openly admitting that they summoned demons but simultaneously claiming that they could command and control them without risk to their own souls (Bailey *Fearful Spirits* 58, 67). Avowed clerical necromancers reasoned that the miracle of exorcism—which the Catholic church averred priests could perform and which itself incidentally resembled a magical rite in many respects—gave them power over demons and when combined with licit astral magic enabled them to compel those demons to do their bidding. However, Thomas Aquinas's refuted this reasoning as superstitious both on scientific grounds, based on the fact that astral bodies could only affect the will of sentient creatures by affecting their bodies, and spirits had no such bodies to affect, as well as on theological grounds, because the scriptures never define exorcism as giving any more control over demons than driving them out of a given creature or location (68–69). These clerics' belief in their power over demons highlights at once how the upending of old systems of knowledge and belief unsettles conceptions about the limits of the possible and how Scholastic syncretism's melding of natural philosophy and theology complicated both. Theological questions now often had natural philosophical components and vice versa, and as Aquinas's refutation illustrates, this had repercussions for the understanding of *superstitio* and magic generally.

Aquinas's demonstration of the faulty thinking that underlay the necromantic rites meant to control demons reveals the extent to which Scholastic scholars brought new natural philosophical models of scientific thinking and reason to bear on questions of superstition. If Trithemius did, as seems likely, have charges of superstition in mind when he accused Faust

of teachings that contradicted the church, it was likely on similarly rationalist grounds. As Bailey observes regarding the efforts of certain Medieval luminaries to rationalize approaches to superstition: “Certainly they demonstrate how false is the dichotomy that would define superstition in the Middle Ages always as a ‘perversion of religion’ and would allow that only in the modern era did it become a ‘perversion of reason’” (*Fearful Spirits* 73). By the sixteenth century, magic, whether sinister and demonic or simply occult and natural, represented a rational system, particularly to someone like Trithemius with an informed and abiding interest in it, embedded within both natural philosophy and Catholic theology. Faust’s claims, on the other hand, would have appeared fundamentally irrational, at least from the perspective of mainstream natural philosophy. Although, some scholars have argued that the historical Faust may have believed his claims were in line with more cutting-edge theories of natural magic (Baron “Faustus of the Sixteenth Century” 46), many of Faust’s claims, as detailed above, were quintessentially necromantic, and for necromancy to be effective, demonic intervention was indispensable. Even Isidore’s superseded assertions about the efficacy of mages’ incantations had posited demonic agency as the source of their power. Since he makes no boast of demonic association, and none of his doubters seem to suspect any, the historical Faust’s claims of elemental divination, impossible knowledge, and wonderworking amounted to irrational assertions that ran against what the church knew to be true about the world physically and metaphysically, *ergo*: *superstitio*.

3. Faust the Natural Magician

Although he emphasizes them much less than the necromantic boasting, Trithemius report does also present Faust’s claims of engagement with largely licit forms of natural

magic, in fact the two dominant and most enduring magical sciences of the time: alchemy and astrology. Of the two, most of the direct historical evidence of Faust's existence, as well as his magical occupation, relates to his astrological practice. This is unsurprising, if only for the fact that, by the sixteenth century, the science of astrology had become the most celebrated and established of the magical sciences in Europe and nowhere more so than in Faust's homeland, the Holy Roman Empire. Throughout continental Europe, nearly every court worthy of the name had its astrologer, the universities' *mathematici* busied themselves casting horoscopes, physicians consulted star charts before administering treatments, and where available, farmers checked the astrological calendar before planting or reaping. If this pervasiveness astonishes the modern reader, they need only pick up the nearest tabloid, watch the info screen on the metro, or click through any number of websites to learn their daily, weekly, or monthly horoscope. Sidereal thinking has persisted, with varying degrees of cultural and scientific clout, for millennia, and Faust was contemporary to the golden age of Renaissance astrology.

Early Modern Sidereal Thinking

In order to understand the historical Faust's place in his society, it helps first to understand the extraordinary place of astrology within that society. From the time of its reintroduction via Arab translation and commentary in the twelfth century, the science of the stars occupied an ambivalent position in Western culture. Aristotle's *Physics*, all-important to the development of Scholasticism and Medieval natural philosophy, for instance, arrived in Western Europe through these Arab astrological texts, but astrology did not differentiate between, what we now think of as, the astronomical and divinatory aspects of stargazing

(Sylla 177–8, Hübner 9). The *ars mathematica* made our present-day divisions of astrology and astronomy synonymous: Astrologers tracked the movements of the heavens in order to measure their potential impacts on earth.[34] From its reintroduction into the West, astrology met with strong theological condemnation from some quarters, both because it seemed to flout the Bible's repeated condemnations of divination[35] and even because of the Aristotelian physics that underlay it.[36] Despite such resistance, astrology carved out a special place in Medieval and Early Modern European thinking and cosmology. It took its place in the liberal arts' quadrivium as part of astronomy and by the fifteenth century had become de rigueur in the courts of worldly and ecclesiastical princes across the continent (Bailey *Fearful Spirits* 80). Astrology undoubtedly owes its success in Medieval and Early Modern Europe to its being both a scientific technique, by the standards of its day, for prognostication and something much more. Regarding this period, Robin Barnes observes that the European obsession with the stars represented "an incessant quest to develop a logical and comprehensive understanding of the universe, an astrologically founded cosmology" (7). Striking as such a statement may seem, it is preciously the secondary nature of astrology's

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[34] Isidore of Seville had attempted a distinction in the sixth century, but this seems to have gone largely unheeded for about a millennia (Hübner 9). By the mid-fourteenth century, some signs of divergence had begun to show as witnessed by separate appointments at Oxford's Merton College, astrology and astronomy remained largely synonymous and inseparable throughout the sixteenth century, even in the face of calls, largely from Catholic and especially Jesuit theologians, for abandoning the former and embracing the latter (Boudet 300; Barnes 181).

[35] *Leviticus*: 19, 20; *Deuteronomy*: 18; *2 Kings*: 21; *1 Chronicles*: 10; perhaps most clearly, however, *Isiah*: 47:

> Stand now with thine enchantments, and with the multitude of thy sorceries, wherein thou hast laboured from thy youth; if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail. Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee. Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame: there shall not be a coal to warm at, nor fire to sit before it. (12–14)

[36] Most infamously, the University of Paris's Condemnation of 1210 forbade members of the Arts Faculty, although not the Theological Faculty, from reading Aristotle's books on natural philosophy or their commentaries, and its Condemnation of 1277 took specific aim at a number of specific astrological and Peripatetic propositions. Along with the intervening Condemnation of 1270, that of 1277 also took aim at magical texts, indicating a perceived connection between astral and demonic superstition (Bailey, *Fearful Spirits* 94–5).

prognosticative aspect, resulting incidentally from its more totalizing framework, that permitted it to flourish in the Christian West.

Intrinsic to Scholastic natural philosophy, astrology fit into a different conceptual category than other forms of divination. Whereas the various "-mancies" were thought to rely on demonic intervention, as outlined above, Aristotelean physics proposed that heavenly bodies exerted occult but natural power on the physical elements and so affected all physical bodies, influencing their conditions and development, in a consistent and measurable, that is knowable, way. Since these affects were regarded as natural and ineluctable, proponents of astrology did not regard their observations as divination in the superstitious sense but rather as reasoning from observable natural phenomena, in other words: science.[37] The distinction between astrology and other forms of divination is thus essential for understanding European culture in this era. In the *Inferno*, for example, Dante Alighieri condemns diviners to hell in "Canto XX" but in "Canto XXII" of *Paradiso* apostrophizes "the sign that follows Taurus:"

> O stars of glory, constellation steeped
>
> in mighty force, all of my genius—
>
> whatever be its worth—has you as source[38] (110–14)

In the juxtaposition of Dante's condemnation of diviners and celebration of astrology within the *Commedia*, the modern reader sees the unnaturalness of divination contrasted with the naturalness of astrology. The "force," or rather "virtue" (*virtù*), Dante credits Gemini with

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[37] While its scientific status found widespread acceptance by the late Medieval period, its exact place in the hierarchy of knowledge remained a local matter. Throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries it received its own professorial chairs at many Italian and imperial universities, as well as at Oxford's Merton College and the universities of Krakow and Salamanca, but elsewhere it remained either an extracurricular pursuit or subsumed within the medical curriculum (Boudet ; Barnes).

[38] […] 'l segno
che segue il Tauro […].
O gloriöse stelle, o lume pregno
di gran virtù, dal quale io riconosco
tutto, qual che si sia, il mio ingegno

exercising on his genius is the occult influence through which the stars influenced humans, animals, the natural world, and thus the course of history. Moreover, Dante's lauds Gemini as he passes through it into the celestial sphere on his way into heaven, emphasizing not only astrology's place in the natural order but in the divine order and hence within Scholastic syncretic natural philosophy.[39]

When appraising the acceptance of astrology as a science, modern readers should not marvel overmuch at Medieval and Early Modern credulity in occult forces. Gravity and magnetism are no more visible, however more demonstrable, than astral virtues.[40] As observed above, what constitutes science must be rethought within the Scholastic framework of the times, which valued logical induction from authoritative sources over personal empirical observation. More than just one science among many, astrology formed the basis of a natural philosophical worldview with implications for nearly every other Early Modern science, and medicine perhaps above all.[41] In his *Entstehung und Entwicklung einer wissenschaftlichen Tatsache*, Ludwik Fleck takes this sidereal-based scientific framework as his point of departure in developing his theory of the effect overdetermined ways of thinking have on knowledge structures. Fleck focuses in particular on the early fifteenth-century diagnosis of syphilis's reliance on connections with Scorpio, the astral virtue of which was supposed to affect the genitals, to identify it as a venereal disease (8). This presumed connection to the stars resulted in special attention being paid to predicting outbreaks of the

[39] That Christianity could incorporate astrology into its religious worldview should not be too surprising. From its Babylonian origins, Western astrology was always highly syncretic and adaptable to different religions, be it Egyptian, Greek, or ultimately, the Abrahamic faiths (Hübner 32).
[40] In fact, Newton faced scathing criticism, from Leibnitz and others, for the apparently "occult" nature of his explanation and their similarities to astrological "action at a distance" (Clark "Witchcraft 260; Garin 5–6).
[41] Medicine and astrology were particularly closely associated in the Early Modern period. Charles V of France founded a college dedicated to medicine and astrology in Paris in 1371, for instance, and most court physicians acted simultaneously as astrologers until the latter became a separate position in the fifteenth century, astrology was widely practiced among burgher physicians, especially in the empire (Boudet 309; Barnes 74–5).

"French disease," as syphilis was widely known, outside of France at least, through astrological readings (Barnes 33).[42] Astrological medicine's ability to correctly diagnose a disease type but not its mechanism, led Fleck to observe that "the sixteenth century was not in a position to substitute a natural scientific, pathogenetic concept of syphilis for this mythic-ethical one. There exists a stylistically coherent connection between all—or many—concepts in an epoch that refer back to their mutual influence" (17).[43] Fleck refers to this stylistic coherence as a thought style (*Denkstil*) and describes how it can exert a profound effect on an era's understanding of what constitutes knowledge: "Knowledge in every time period has always been systematic, proven, applicable, and evident in the view of any given participants. All outside systems have been contradictory, unproven, inapplicable, and fantastic or mystical to them" (30).[44] Most Early Modern Europeans took the explanatory value of astrology for granted, finding in it a sufficiently "logical and comprehensive understanding" of the world to justify its wide application. By the sixteenth century, astrology had become much more than a mere a means of prognostication. It was a way of thinking, and so its failures did not engender doubt in its adherents any more than contradictory dietary advice does in modern medical science. However, the reach of astrology as thought style extended far beyond the diagnosis of disease.

By the turn of the sixteenth century, Europeans of nearly every class would have had some frequent interaction with astrology. Kings, counts, bishops, and burghers did, of course,

[42] Outbreaks of other diseases were likewise tied to astrological phenomena. In 1348, for example, the medical faculty at the University of Paris issued a report linking the outbreak of the Black Plague to "astral influences on the earth's atmosphere" (Bailey, *Fearful Spirits* 107).

[43] "Es stand dem XVI. Jahrhundert gar nicht frei den mystisch-ethischen Syphilisbegriff für einen naturwissenschaftlichen, pathogenetischen einzutauschen. Es besteht eine stilgemäße Bindung aller – oder vieler – Begriffe einer Epoche, die auf ihrer gegenseitigen Beeinflussung beruht."

[44] "Das Wissen war zu allen Zeiten für die Ansichten jeweiliger Teilnehmer systemfähig, bewiesen, anwendbar, evident. Alle fremden Systeme waren für sie widersprechend, unbewiesen, nicht anwendbar, phantastisch oder mystisch."

have horoscopes cast on any number of questions. However, Eugenio Garin, reflecting on the place of astrology in Early Modern Europe, observed the extent to which astrology "was not so much a technique of prediction as a general conception of reality and of history" that "permeated customs and the whole of life with its concepts" (93). Seemingly innocuous astronomical observations, like using the stars for orientation and navigation or tracking the phases of the moon to know the tides in a given harbor, take on a different significant recast in the sixteenth century thought style. In medicine, these same phases of the moon, along with other celestial markers, defined a physician's phlebotomy schedule, the propitious time to perform the bleedings now so infamously central to the pre-Modern doctor's craft. The calendars astrologers fashioned were also known as, and served as, almanacs offering meteorological predictions and recommending times to reap, sow, and butcher, but they also reached deeply into nearly every aspect of life, defining everything from the right times for personal hygiene and the weaning of children to travel, construction, and making friends (Barnes 27).[45] Exactly how much astrology shaped the life of any one person is now impossible to know and would likely have varied regionally and between social classes. The vast majority of surviving almanacs from the fifteenth century come from Italy and the empire, and over the course of the sixteenth and early-seventeenth century, the volume of imperial almanacs would come to dwarf other parts of Europe (Boudet 301; Barnes).[46]

[45] Sebastian Brant, whose complicated views on this subject are explored below, mocks both the dubious theological basis and ubiquity of this popular form of astrology in his classic *Ship of Fools*:
Einem Christenmenschen nicht zusteht,
Daß er mit Heidenkunst umgeht
Und merkt auf der Planeten Lauf,
Ob dieser Tag sei gut zum Kauf,
Zum Bauen, Kriegen, Eheschließen,
Zur Freundschaft und was ähnlich diesen.

[46] While suggestive of more expansive astrological cultures, the variety and number of surviving calendars from Italy and the HRE may be the result of the extreme political decentralization in these territories, their relatively high number of universities, and the fierce commercial and intellectual rivalries between their polities leading to

Moreover, within the HRE, the majority of such publications from the turn of the sixteenth century on were printed in the German vernacular, likely diffusing astrological knowledge and culture more widely throughout an increasingly literate, though not necessarily Latin educated, laity (Barnes 17).

Although the ubiquity of astrological thinking had changed the tenor somewhat, it did not put an end to the theologically-motivated criticism of astrology. Nevertheless, the humanists Giovanni Pico della Mirandola and Sebastian Brant, perhaps the two most famous critics of astrology at the turn of the sixteenth century, themselves demonstrate just how inescapable the astrological thought style was at the time. Pico's 1489 *Disputationes adversus astrologiam divinicatrium*, for instance, has become famous as a denunciation of judicial, i.e., predictive, astrology. However, Pico himself remains most famous for the 900 theses of his 1486 *Conclusiones philosophicae, cabalisticae et theologicae* wherein he combined Neoplatonic, Hermetic, and, as the title suggests, Cabalistic philosophy to argue for a more powerful form of natural magic, which would exert a profound influence on figures like Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa and on the debate around natural magic throughout the remainder of the Early Modern period (Janecek 63; Zambelli 30, 53). Pico's opposition to astrology, then, did not represent opposition to its magical claims of occult power. In fact, Paola Zambelli, connecting Pico's work with his more astrologically-inclined teacher Marsilio Ficino, asserts that "Working on a basis of Neoplatonism, Orphism, and Hermeticism, the two philosophers had reintroduced the traditional astrological theory of the correspondences between celestial bodies and 'elementated' bodies" as part of an argument

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multiple competing publications as well as more geographically-targeted forecasts. Printing innovations, such as wider margins in which to make personal notes, in German-language calendars may also have encouraged holding on to what was otherwise essentially ephemera (Barnes 210).

to establish the independence of magic from the intervention of spirits (2).[47] Hence, Pico's own magical worldview rested on an occult, sympathetic connection between the "quintessential" or "ethereal" matter of the Aristotelean heavens and earthly matter, including human bodies, composed of the four elements, which allowed them to be affected at a distance, the core contention of astrology. As such, his *Disputationes* did not contest the presumed scientific basis of astrology. Rather, like Savonarola before him and Martin Luther after him, Pico objected on moral and theological grounds to granting too much credulity to astrological prognostication, which seemed to replace humanity's free will and God's will with natural determinism, something unacceptable to the author of *De hominis dignitati* (Garin 4). In challenging, not the scientific assumptions of astrology, but instead its practical abuses, Pico's objections in his *Disputationes* fit a pattern of criticism echoed in Brant's astrological mockery.

Sebastian Brant was a German contemporary of the Italian Pico, but where Pico made his name as an iconoclastic theologian asserting the orthodoxy of natural magic, Brant's legacy rests largely on his 1494 allegorical verse satire *The Ship of Fools* (*Daß Narrenschyff ad Narragoniam*). With the same withering wit he uses to skewer nearly every element of fifteenth century society, Brant turns to astrology in Chapter 65: "On Observing the Heavens" ("Von achtung des gestirns"). His stance in *The Ship of Fools*, like Pico's in the *Disputationes*, ultimately represented an ethical-theological, not a scientific, criticism, as these early verses demonstrate:

> The future now fills every brain,
>
> What the firmament and stars

[47] By saying Ficino and Pico "reintroduced" this theory, Zambelli overstates the case, since it had been an essential aspect of the Western reception of Arab astrological texts, but they certainly reinvigorated its theoretical elaboration.

And the planets' courses tell us

Or disturb in God's counsel.

People think they should know

What God means to do with us,

As if the stars provide necessity

And all things follow *them*,

And God were not Lord and Master. (65.7–15)[48]

Note that here Brant does not question the fundamental assumptions of astrology but rather their abuse in the form of prognostication. Brant shows his concern at what he views as a widespread obsession with knowing the future and that, in their pursuit of this obsession, his contemporaries are evincing a hubris that borders on blasphemy in at least two ways: firstly, by thinking themselves entitled to know the will of God, and secondly, by either conflating the planets' course with God's will or, worse still, falling into the natural determinism that sees the heavens and not God as the source of fate. Insofar, Brant's critique aligns with Pico's, but it must also be noted that, while Pico may have pursued other magical avenues, Brant himself practiced judicial astrology (Boudet 331) and was, as Barnes notes, "a zealous believer in celestial prediction and an avid consulter of the annual prognostications" (45). Rather than writing this off as mere hypocrisy, understanding Brant's distinction between his

[48] uf kunftig ding man ieß vast lendt,
was das gestirn und firmament
und der planeten lauf uns sag
oder got in sim rot anschlag,
und meinent, das man wissen söll
alls, das got mit uns wirken wöll;
als ob das gstirn ein notturst bring
und im noch müsten gan all ding,
und got nit her und meister wer.

own, presumably appropriate, practice and those superstitious practices he mocked clarifies much about the status of astrology at the turn of the sixteenth century.

For Brant, as for most practicing astrologers in the era, the question was one of precision and mutability. To suggest a fatalistic connection between the stars and the sublunary world courted the blasphemous determinism Pico and Brant objected to vociferously. However, sidereal science could, legitimately, peer into general possibilities and so suggest courses of action, which, with God's help, could avert disaster or secure prosperity. This was the form of astrology, most calendar and practica writers professed at the beginning of the sixteenth century, and concerns like those voiced by Pico and Brant did not go unheeded. Most astrologers of the period prefaced works of this type with a reminder that they were presenting only what might be, and God would be the ultimate arbiter of the future. Arguably, such caveats served to prolong the scientific viability of sidereal explanations, since prognosticative failures could be and were attributed to divine intervention, thus papering over the insufficiencies of astrological prediction. Moreover, they acted as legitimation for the widespread obsession with the stars that Brant observes was filling "every brain" and seems to have penetrated every level and aspect of society. Brant did, however, note another danger in this obsession, namely that it might lead someone to "pursue the black art" of necromancy (65.49).[49] After all, in a culture desirous to know all things to the point of obsession, the temptation would always exist to cross the line into the realm of forbidden knowledge, whether for fame or profit or personal satisfaction, and that is, after all, the very kernel of the Faust story.

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[49] "oder der schwarzen kunst nochstell"

Faust As Alchemist

Although more direct historical references, unsurprisingly given the profession's popularity in sixteenth-century central Europe, depict Faust as practicing astrology, yet popular tradition gives equal, if not greater, weight to Faust's alchemical endeavors. Less direct evidence to instantiate this image has survived, beyond Trithemius's report of Faust's gasconading on the subject, but what has adds further color to an already colorful figure. Johann Weyer, a celebrated demonologist and one of Faust's contemporaries, reports in the 1568 and later editions of his monumental tome on Early Modern demonology *De Praestigiis Daemonum* a second-hand account of Faust using alchemy for a cruel prank. In order to show "what a strange swindler and adventurer" Faust was, Weyer reports how Johan Dorstenius, chaplain of Batenburg and Weyer's source for the tale, offered Faust wine while the latter was in the town's jail in exchange for Faust's offer "to teach him many good arts and make him an exceptionally adept man," but when the wine ran out, and the chaplain expressed his desire to go to the town of Grave for a shave, Faust proposed that

> if he would give him more wine, he would teach him an art for ridding himself of his beard without a razor and all of that. Since the chaplain agreed at once, he told him simply to retrieve arsenic from the pharmacist and thoroughly rub his beard and chin with it, not breathing a word that is should be prepared and ground with other ingredients first. As soon as he had done this, however, his chin began to grow warm and burn so that, not only did his hair fall out, but his skin along with his flesh also came off. (Weyer 294)

Weyer's anecdote echoes those of Trithemius and Rufus in its portrayal of Faust as a swindler, braggart, and ne'er-do-well, in contrast to the relative seriousness with which the

above letters related to his astrological work treat him. Importantly, however, rather than build on the lurid accusations of Trithemius and the vice-mayor of Nuremberg, Weyer impugns Faust's character by casting him as a drunk and a malicious prankster. Insofar as the purportedly wronged chaplain, and Weyer as his spokesman, can be taken at his word, Faust's cozening of the simple chaplain for nothing more than wine and amusement emphasizes the darker turn Faust's reputation takes over the sixteenth century. At the same time, it shows that Faust's boasts of alchemical knowledge were not entirely empty, even if he did not always employ them for worthy ends, as one of the other surviving anecdotes about Faust's alchemical practice attests.

In 1516, Faust appears to have taken lodgings at the monastery in Maulbronn, a town in Southwestern Germany located in what is thought to be his home region of Württemberg, where he worked as a *Wunderdoktor*, that is, a quack physician hawking snake oil, a common enough occurrence in that or any era that he seems to have drawn little attention ("Faust in Maulbronn" 483). This characterization clearly agrees with Trithemius and Rufus's earlier portrayals. Interestingly, however, here Faust seems to have left behind a tangible legacy. Faust supposedly came to stay in Maulbronn at the request of the monastery's abbot who wanted him to put his vaunted alchemy skills to work creating gold, and the room that housed the laboratory in which he purportedly worked mixing his potions and attempting to turn lead into gold, labeled the *Faustküche* (literally "Faust Kitchen"), though now bricked up, still exists (484). Likewise, the tower in which he supposedly stayed during his time in Maulbronn is now known as the *Faustturm* ("Faust Tower"). While both the Maulbronn and Weyer anecdotes maintain a certain air of historical plausibility, they, like almost every aspect of the historical Faust's life are simultaneously so hopelessly entangled with the

Faustian legend, both the aspects of it he seemed determined to construct during his own lifetime and what sprang up after his death, that it remains impossible to fully separate history from story.

4. Faust the Legend

While the historical Faust had clearly cultivated his own legend well before his death, shuffling off this mortal coil allowed that legend to take on greater dimensions. Moreover, the decidedly mixed reputation the magician had earned as either a charlatan or powerful necromancer solidified in favor of the latter during the years following his demise. Johannes Gast's recollections in *Convivales Sermones* certainly attest to this, as does an entry in the *Zimmern Chronicle*, written ca. 1563. The entry places Faust's death "at or at least not far from Staufen, the town in Breisgau" around the time of the 1541 Regensburg Reichstag and suggests his enduring appeal as a figure of folklore: "He was, in his day, as marvelous a necromancer as could be found in German lands during our time, who over and over performed so many strange deeds that he will not easily be forgotten for many years to come" (604).[50] The entry goes on to state that he died an old man, imputing his death to the spirit he called his "brother-in-law," before relating a variation of the tale, also found in Gast, in which Faust sics a spirit on some monks who refuse him hospitality. The *Zimmern Chronicle* strongly suggests that Faust's enduring memory rests on the stories already surrounding him, but the "many strange deeds" now attributed to him are no longer on the order of the scams and pranks Mutanius Rufus, Philipp Begardi, and the rest ascribe to him,

[50] "Es ist auch umb die zeit der Faustus zu oder doch nit weit von Staufen, dem stetlin im Breisgew, gestorben. Der ist bei seiner zeit ein wunderbarlicher nigromanta gewest, als er bei unsern zeiten hat mögen in deutschen landen erfunden weiden, der auch sovil seltzamer hendel gehapt hin und wider, das sein in vil jaren nit leuchtlicheu wurt vergessen werden."

nor do they merely reflect the skill in astrological or chiromantic divination admired by his friends. The diabolism implicit in the claims Trithemius records Faust making thirty-some years before, and which the bishop had not taken seriously, had become explicit in Faust's legend. By the end of his life, Faust's reputation had caught up to his claims.

Faust in the Reformation

That this reputational shift occurred alongside the tectonic theological shifts of the mid-1500s is by no means a coincidence. The growth of Faust's legend would prove inextricably bound up with the Reformation. One need look no further for confirmation than the instigator of the confessional earthquake that was the Reformation, Martin Luther. Inarguably Faust's most famous contemporary, Luther's *Table Talk* (*Tischreden*) includes a conversation from 1537, roughly four years before Faust's death and two before Begardi's dismissive portrait, in which the magician is taken quite seriously:

> Mention was made of scoffers and the magic art whereby Satan would blind men. They said much about Faust who called the devil his brother-in-law and had let it be known that "If I, Martin Luther, had but held out my hand to him, he would have ruined me, but I would not have feared him. I would have extended my hand in the name of the Lord God my protector, for I do believe much sorcery [*multa veneficia*] is committed against me. (454)[51]

The linguistic oddities of *Table Talk* entries like this one, having been written down as personal recollections in a mixture of Latin and German dialect, mean that there is some

[51] "De ludificatoribus et arte magica fiebat mentio, quomodo Sathan homines excaecaret. Multa dicebant de Fausto, welcher den Teufel seynen schwoger hies, vnd hat sich lassen horen, wen ich, Muartin Lutter, ihm nur di handt gereycht hette, wolt er mich vorterbet haben; aber ich wolde in nicht geschawet haben, porrexissem illi manus in nomine Domini Deo protectore. Nam credo in me multa veneficia contra me structa esse."

ambiguity of meaning in certain phrases. For instance, in their *Sources of the Faust Tradition*, Palmer and More translate "hat sich lassen horen" as "the remark was made" instead of "had let it be known" and "vorterbet" [Modern German: *verdorben*] as "destroyed" instead of "ruined" (93). In the former case, their translation has Luther himself asserting the magician's power to harm him rather than responding to a threat made by Faust. However, it seems more consistent grammatically and logically, as well as more in line with the other contemporaneous reports on Faust's character for him to have made the boast himself.[52] In the case of "destroyed" versus "ruined," the difference is somewhat finer. The Grimm brothers' dictionary attests to the older participle form of *verderben* that appears in the above passage, as well as the word's possible meaning of "destroyed" used by Palmer and More, both of which differ from the verb's modern form and meaning, but the Grimms' entry for "verderben" also cites Luther several times in usage examples, always to illustrate the word's more modern meanings of "ruin" or "spoil" (Grimm and Grimm "verderben"). Moreover, the examples the Grimms cite from Luther always relate to the spiritual sense of "ruin" conveyed by *verderben*, which has significance for the sort of threat Faust represents within early Lutheranism, as will be expounded below. Regardless, Luther's response, including his reference to the other magical threats he believes he faces, shows he takes Faust and his threats seriously.

In trying to understand what accounts for the sudden seriousness with which a major religious figure like Martin Luther would treat someone like Faust, who had previously been

[52] The Faust scholar J. M. van der Laan has provocatively suggested that Luther may not have meant his contemporary Faust here but one of the other (semi-)historical Fausti, namely Faustus the Manichean or Faustus, Simon Magus's disciple (129). While it is always worth reminding ourselves that we can never be too certain about these things, the detail about calling the devil his "brother-in-law," which is also found in the *Zimmern Chronicle* above as well as Johann Weyer's *De prastigiis Daemonum*, seem to corroborate the identity of Luther's Faust.

regarded as no more than a troublesome charlatan, it helps to keep in mind the reframing of the world occasioned by the outbreak of the Reformation. Most immediately, there were propagandistic reasons for playing up the threat Faust, and sorcerers like him posed. Just as Marx in the *18th Brumaire* describes those participating in Napoleon III's coup or the English Civil War as styling themselves on earlier revolutionary models, there is a strong sense that Luther, still early days in the Reformation, is borrowing trappings from the previous Apostolic age to confirm his legitimacy. In any event, there is no question that Luther is posing in the episode above as a hero in the Biblical mold, showing himself unwavering in his faith. To wit, he has clearly cast himself as one of the apostles confronting Simon Magus (*Acts* 8:9–24), here played by Faust. As noted above, Faust's name would also have contributed to this, since he shared it with one of Simon Magus's disciples in the popular collection of saints' lives known as *The Golden Legend*. Nor did this portrayal of Faust as the new Simon Magus end at Luther's table. Instead. it became something of an early Lutheran trope.

Most notably, Luther's collaborator Philip Melanchthon, the intellectual formulator of Lutheranism and Luther's successor to the mainstream Lutheran movement, referred to Faust several times during his university lectures at Wittenberg from 1549 to 1560. In one such lecture, first printed by Melanchthon's former student, Christopher Pezelius, in the 1594 *Explicationes Melanchthoniae*, Melanchthon drew a specific parallel between Simon Magus and Faust by comparing the flight of the former over Rome to that of the latter over Venice: "There [before Nero] Simon Magus flew into the sky, but Peter prayed that he would fall. I believe that the Apostles faced great trials, even if not all have been written down. Faustus,

too, tried this in Venice but was badly dashed against the ground" (455).[53] Here, Melanchthon is specifically referring to the story of Simon Magus's death in the *Golden Legend*,[54] which occurs when the apostle Peter prays for the mage's flight to end, ostensibly to demonstrate the power of miracle over magic. Melanchthon's juxtaposition of the two magicians, down to their failure to maintain flight, demonstrates the identification between Faust and Simon Magus. Although Melanchthon gives no explanation for Faust's sudden descent, it is important to note that unlike Simon Magus, Faust walks away from his crash landing, if not unscathed. By inference then, Faust, the new Simon Magus, may have been even more powerful than the original, and yet, not unlike the original, he never seems to measure up to the menace such power would suggest.

In a story related by Augustin Lercheimer, the *nom de plume* of Philip Melanchthon's student Hermann Witekind, in *Christlich bedencken und erjnnerung von Zauberey*, a demonological treatise which we will return to in the following chapter, Faust confronts Melanchthon who he says has been denigrating him, threatening the latter that "one day when you go to eat, I will make all the hares in your kitchen fly out through your chimney, so you will have nothing to eat with your guests," but of course, Faust's threat is again empty because "the devil could not steal from the saintly man's kitchen" (86).[55] This story, like Luther's above, is meant to illustrate that the devil, and by extension the sorcerers who rely on his power, cannot harm those of solid faith. However, it, like the other stories that come

[53] "Ibi Simon Magus subvolare in caelum : sed Petrus precatus est, ut decideret. Credo Apostolos habuisse magna certamina, etiamsi non omnia sunt scripta. Faustus Venetiis etiam hoc tentavit. Sed male allisus solo."
[54] This would suggest that by unwritten trials, Melanchthon more precisely means those not recorded in scripture.
[55] "Der spricht wider zu jm : Herr Philippe, ir fahret mich alleinal mit rauchen wurten an, ich wills ein mal machen wann ir zu tische gehet, daß alle häsen in der kuchen zum schornstein hinauß fliegen, daß jr mit ewern gesten nicht zu essen werden haben. Darauff antwortet im Herr Philippus : Daß soltu wol lassen, ich schiesse dir in deine funst. Vnd er ließ es auch : Es konte der teufel dem heiligen man seine küche nicht berauben."

down to us from contemporary sources, seem to paint as Faust, at best, an equivocal nemesis, more a merry prankster than a dangerous necromancer. This points to a central tension and incongruity within the early depictions of Faust. He is often described as being powerful, but all that power only ever realizes petty ends.

At first glance this ambivalence seems to arise from the parallax between the expectations of the dangers posed by powerful sorcerers based on present-day depictions in popular media and those actually perceived by figures like Luther and Melanchthon. Across confessional divides in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, religious thinkers and leaders saw the true danger posed by wizardry and witchcraft as being essentially spiritual in nature. Affliction with *maleficium* posed a trial on the order of a “crisis of conscience,” which called the faithful to look inward, repent, and endure the magical visitation with Job-like patience (Weyer 469). Since the devil cannot harm the truly pious, indeed cannot even touch a hare on their table, the only thread a sorcerer can present is to unmask one’s lack of piety or to drive one to despair. This spiritual danger, however, contrasts markedly not only with today’s expectations but also, to all appearances, with the true concerns of the Early Modern era’s common people. Court testimony from average citizens and early journalistic forms like the broadside and *Warnschrift* [“warning writ”] focused on the immediate material harm ostensibly caused by *maleficium*, including loss of livestock, illness, and crop failure (Bailey “Diabolic Magic” 382). The tension between Faust’s presumed power and his expressed threat thus emerges out of the disparity between the concerns of the general laity and the clergy, hence the ambivalence in his portrayal as a new Simon Magus. His magical prowess had to be played up to attract attention, but he likewise had to be thwarted by the faithful at every turn to focus that attention on the true, spiritual threat magic posed.

However, the spiritual threat posed by sorcerers like Faust did not end with the crises of conscience they could evoke but extended to the danger they posed as examples of and temptations to superstition. Believing themselves afflicted by *maleficium*, the average person might turn to superstitious means of protection, such as talismans or folk magic, and so perhaps unwittingly find themselves relying on countermeasures considered equally demonic by the religious authorities. In the *Table Talk* entry above, magic users in general and Faust in particular are grouped among the "ludificatoribus," the "scoffers" at God's law. For the generation of the Reformers, sin in general was something much more powerful than it had been for the generation of humanists including Trithemius and Mutanius Rufus, as well as for most of the late Scholastics (Cameron *European Reformation* 139), and this applied in particular to superstition, against which Luther and his followers took a much harder line (Scribner 354). By contrast, as Trithemius's attitude toward Faust demonstrates, many humanists at the turn of the sixteenth century had not considered it an especially dire threat. Like Sebastian Brant, whose *Ship of Fools* was discussed in the previous chapter, for example, Erasmus famously approached superstition as something worthy of ridicule in his 1511 *In Praise of Folly* (*Moriae econium*), but for the generation of the Reformers, superstition was hardly a laughing matter.[56] Superstition, as outlined above, had long been a pervasive problem in the Catholic church, and there had been a growing current since the fourteenth century that viewed it with greater seriousness, linking it directly to alliance with the devil, a current which became torrent with the outbreak of the Reformation (Bailey *Fearful Spirits* 157). That torrent would, of course, sweep away thousands of lives, mostly

[56] Alongside Trithemius, Erasmus provides another point of reference for a major humanist's attitude toward superstition as related to sorcery. In his *Epistles*, letters 143 and 148, Erasmus discusses the case of a convicted sorcerer from Orleans. While he speaks disapprovingly of the sorcerer and the accomplices among his family, he does not describe the incident as a particularly serious matter and voices no opinion on the punishment the sorcerer himself receives, which was life imprisonment on bread and water (5–11).

women’s, in the witch hunts that followed, but it would also raise Faust’s prominence to new heights and sweep him into European popular literature.

Chapter Two: Faust in Print

1. Faust the Book: Popular Science and Demonology in the Late Sixteenth Century

For scholars of the Early Modern era, the year 1560 presents an important threshold in periodization. For one, the years following it mark the beginning of the Early Modern era's infamous mass witch trials across Central and Western Europe, and with them the vast majority of the continent's witchcraft executions. These years also saw the outset of an age of confessionalism when intense confessionalization across Protestant and Catholic Europe would define battle lines, both figuratively and literally, between the Christian denominations. William Monter, in his contribution to the fourth volume of *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe*, connects these two movements within a shared period from 1560 to 1660 during which the organization and professionalization of Protestant churches achieved by 1560 and the reorganization of the Catholic church following the Council of Trent fostered an atmosphere of repression and punishment for any perceived doctrinal deviancy, exacerbating the social tensions and paranoia that motivated the witch hunts (11). Critically, both the confessionalization and the witch trials of the era drew attention to contradictions within the existing Scholastic natural philosophical worldview, contributing to nascent shifts in scientific discourse and thought style.

The Faust literature that emerges after 1560, above all the anonymous 1587 first Faust book, the *Historia von D. Johann Fausten* but also the biographical sketch in Manlius's 1563 *Locorom Communium Collectanea*, provides a particularly vivid illustration of how these theologically-rooted movements impacted scientific thinking. In its participation in the demonological discourse that expanded massively in response to the witch trials, this early

Faustian literature makes legible the degree to which questions of magic and witchcraft were problems of natural philosophy, particularly medicine and physics, as much as they were theological concerns. Likewise, as Lutheran works of edification and propaganda, these early works demonstrate some of the ways in which doctrine necessitated certain scientific commitments. Moreover, the *Historia* draws attention to the ways the confessionalization of this era extended not just into the theological but also the natural philosophical fields as confessional curricula began to deviate from each other, increasing the heterogeneity of Early Modern scientific thought. All of these currents converge in the print literature about Faust that emerges after 1560, making of those works a monument, in the literary archaeological sense, to some of the crucial ambivalences at work as the European sixteenth century flowed into the seventeenth.

2. 1563: A Wizard in the Age of Witch Trials

Although the currents of confessionalism and the witch trials' legacy had been present throughout the early formation of the Faust legend, their particular convergence in the first Faust "biography" in print during the watershed year of 1563 marked the Faust legend as a particular useful vehicle for representing the anxieties of an age, and in so doing exposing the ambivalences of its way of thinking. 1563 represents a major, if oft overlooked, turning point in European history. In that year, the Council of Trent concluded, marking the beginning of an organized Counter-Reformation, but importantly, it was a year that also saw the burning of sixty-three suspected witches at the stake in the southwestern German city of

Wiesensteig, launching the era of mass executions in European witch trials (Behringer 11).[57] It was also the year in which Johannes Mennel, Latinized as "Manlius," who had been Philip Melanchthon's student and famulus, published his *Locorum Communium Collectanea* [*Collections of Passages for Common Use*], a collection of anecdotes about Melanchthon and other scholars, as well as excerpts from Melanchthon's lectures. Among these excerpts and anecdotes is one attributed to Melanchthon and purporting to provide a biographical sketch of the historical Faust, but which rather presents an outline of the mature Faust legend and the basis for future Faustian literature.

The First Biography of Faust

Beyond its claim to be the first biography of Faust, the *Locorum Communium*'s sketch crystallizes the Faust legend's place within the confessional and demonological constellation of the late sixteenth century. Specifically, it fixes in print the idea of Faust as a learned necromancer and connects his legend with growing demonological concerns, presenting an outline that the 1587 *Historia* would fill in and modify. Originally written in Latin, the *Locorum Communium* was translated into German in 1566, which also made it the first printed text about Faust that would be available to a non-Latin readership, even if the overall nature of the book's material might not have interested a popular audience. The passage is somewhat long, but the most biographically relevant sections of it are worth quoting at length:

[57] Monter points out that, while this is the first mass execution of suspected witches, the first mass hunt began in the Pyrenees region of the Kingdom of France in the spring of 1562 with the trials of at least three dozen accused witches, but the appeals to these trials upheld *only* three executions while confirming banishment for many (21).

I knew someone with the name of Faust from Knittlingen (small town not far from my homeland) the same man who went to school in Krakow where he learned magic, as they frequently used to do in that place, even openly teaching such an art. He went here, there, and everywhere saying many secret things. He once wanted in Venice […] to fly into the sky. Immediately the devil led him aloft but wracked and pounded him that, when he came back to earth, he lay there as if dead. Yet, he did not die that time.

A few years ago, the day before his final end, this same Johannes Faust sat very sadly [in an inn] in a village in Württemberg […] he said to the innkeeper: should he hear anything in the night, he should not be afraid. At midnight there was a great commotion in the building. In the morning, Faust would not get up. And when it was nearly midday, the innkeeper took several men with him and went into the bedroom wherein he lay. There they found him lying dead next to his bed; the devil had twisted his head to face backward. During his life, he had a dog that went with him, which was a devil, just like that filth who wrote the book about the vanity of the arts. (Manlius 46r–47r)[58]

[58] Because it is likelier to have reached a wider contemporary audience, I have translated from the 1566 German edition rather than the original Latin: Ich habe einen gekennt / mit Namen Faust von Kundling / (ist ein kleines Stättlein / nicht weit von meinem Vatterland) / derselbige da er zů Crockaw in die schůl gieng / da hatte er die zauberey gelernet / wie man sie dann vor zeiten an dem orth sehr gebraucht / auch offentlich solche kunst geleeret hat. Er gieng hin und wieder allenthalben / und sagte viel verborgene ding. Er wolt einsmals zů Venedig […] hinauff in Himmel fliegen. Alsbald füret jn der Teuffel hinweg / und hat jn dermassen zermartert / unnd zerstossen / daß er / da er wider auff die Erde kam / vor todt dar lag / Doch ist er das mal nicht gestorben.

Vor wenig jaren ist derselbige Johannes Faust / den tag vor seinem letzten ende / in einem Dorff im Wirtemberger land […] da hat er zum Würt gesagt: So er etwas in der nacht hören würde / solte er nicht erschrecken. Vmb mitternacht ist im hause ein grosses getümmel worden. Des morgens wollte der Faust nicht auffstehen. Vnd als es schier auff den Mittag kam / hat der Würt etliche menner zů jme genommen / vnd ist in die schlaffkammer gangen / darinn er gelegen ist / da ist er neben dem bette tod gelegen gefunden / vnd hatte jm der Teuffel das angesicht auff den rucken gedrehet. Bey seinem leben hatte er zwen hund mit jm lauffen / die waren Teuffelen / Gleich wie der vnflat / der dac büchlein geschrieben hat von vergeblichkeit der künste.

Of particular interest to the Faustian literary tradition is that the magician Faust is referred to here for the first time by the given name Johann(es), as opposed to Georg or Jörg, as in earlier sources. He would continue to be identified with this name, allowing for local variants, at least until Goethe renamed him Heinrich.[59] Besides changing Faust's first name, Manlius's text also emphasizes Faust's learning for the first time, placing the site of his magical education at a university. In the paragraph immediately preceding the biography of Faust, Manlius presents Melanchthon's recounting of a story in which the "Abbot of Sponheim," meaning Trithemius, who was "also a great magician," conjures a meal of fish (46r). This juxtaposition, which would have been much to Trithemius's chagrin given his feelings toward Faust, followed closely by the details of Faust's education, has the effect of recoding Faust as a learned magician rather than a mere trickster. Despite his earlier reputation, Faust would henceforth become so closely associated as to become synonymous with learned magic, to the extent that even recent works on magic and witchcraft refer to learned magic in terms of "Faustian magic" (Monter 40). Placing Faust's studies at Krakow specifically, however, whether the detail is invented or historical, introduces a key element of the Early Modern cultural discourse on magic into Faust's biography, namely the cultural ambivalence toward academics and academic institutions themselves for their complicity in

[59] Much hay has been made in Faust scholarship over the years about this name discrepancy. Frank Baron, for instance, has insisted for decades that the historical Faust's real name must be Georg Helmstetter ("Faustus" 43). Christa Knellwolf King, on the other hand, has used it to suggest there may not even have been a single historical Faust but rather multiple (19). Regardless, this passage in the *Locorum Communium*, in combination with corroborating evidence, has been treated as at least somewhat authoritative, and the present-day Faust museum is located in Knittlingen. Matriculation records from Heidelberg University list a "Johannes Faust ex Simmern" as receiving a bachelors with honors in 1509 (Wiemken xv). This would correspond well to Manlius's biography above, Knittlingen being in the region of Simmern, but would fit poorly with the other historical reference points. For example, Faust would have been quite old, for that time, when he received his degree in order to die "an old man," as the *Zimmern Chronicle* states, only 30 or so years later (604), and it would mean he still had not completed any degree by 1504 when Trithemius attests Faust was claiming to be a doctor. The two simplest explanations would be that either there were two historical Fausts whose deeds had become entangled by the 1560s, or Melanchthon had simply confused or conflated the two when reminiscing to his students.

propagating forbidden magic, particularly when those institutions were associated with new and equivocal forms of knowledge and with conflicting religious opinion.

The evocation of the University of Krakow as openly teaching magic reflects a trope of the time that certain universities taught magic as part of their curricula. While scholarship sometimes treats this as fact (Gantenbein 94), evidence is rarely forthcoming. Regardless, the trope extends back to at least the thirteenth century when Toledo was considered the seat of illicit magical learning, before Salamanca replaced it in the fifteenth century (Davies 26–8). The reputation of these Iberian universities no doubt stems from their location at a point of contact between the Christian, Islamic, and Jewish cultures and as sites from which Muslim learning, including magical learning, entered the West through translation into Latin (Bailey "Demonic Magic" 363). Interestingly, in a 1561 letter, published as part of the 1577 *Epistolae Medicanales*, the Swiss polymath naturalist and physician Conrad Gessner, musing about Paracelsus's diabolist proclivities including "vain astrology, geomancy, necromancy, and the like prohibited arts," traces these arts back to Celtic druids taught by demons "underground" before adding "which, as is well known, was still occurring at Salamanca in Spain within living memory. Out of this school issued those commonly called 'wandering scholars,' among whom Faust, who died not so long ago, is remarkably well known" (in Tille 14).[60] That Manlius and Gessner disagree about whether Faust got his education in Krakow or Salamanca is less important than that even independent sources now insist on Faust belonging among the diabolical but learned magicians.

[60] "Astrologiam vanam, Geomantiam, Necromantiam, et hiusmodi artes prohibitas exercent. Equidem suspicor illos ex Druid arum reliquijs esse, qui apud Celtas veteres in subterraneis locis a daemonibus aliquot annis erudiebantur: quod nostra memoria in Hispania adhuc Salamancae factitatum constat. Ex illa schola prodierunt, quos vulgo scholasticos vagantes nominabant, inter quos Faustus quidam non ita pridem mortuus, mire celebrator." The "subterraneis locis" in which this demonic instruction was to have occurred was actually applied literally to the University of Salamanca, under which a secret cave full of forbidden knowledge was supposed to exist, incidentally a trope carried over earlier stories about the University of Toledo (Davies 27).

Nevertheless, the disagreement between Gessner and Manlius points to an important tension within the magical discourse of the age, alluded to in the previous chapter, but which had become increasingly fraught in the leadup to the witch hunts, the distinction between natural and demonic magic. Importantly, as Gessner's letter demonstrates, the magic supposedly taught at Toledo and later Salamanca was usually characterized as demonic and was also taught secretly, literally "underground" in a cave. Thus, it makes sense to attribute the education of Faust, whose reputation for diabolism had grown over the preceding decades, to Salamanca. Granted, there is some ambiguity in Gessner's use of "school," which could mean something like the tradition of magic associated with Salamanca rather than the university itself, but discursively it serves the same function of linking Faust to a university long rumored to teach demonic magic. In contrast, the evocation of Krakow in the passage above is more equivocal. Manlius's tone when addressing the teaching of magic at Krakow is not outright condemnatory, likely because any magic taught openly, aboveground, would have to have been natural magic. Moreover, the University of Krakow's reputation for magic likely arose from the university's prominence as the leading institution for the study of astrology after the fifteenth century (Barnes 20). Because his teacher, Melanchthon, had been a prominent advocate for the place of astrology in the curriculum, Manlius may have hesitated to condemn it outright, instead relying on the implication that Faust's magical education at Krakow had served as a sort of "gateway drug" for his later diabolism. Regardless, the move from Salamanca to Krakow represents a major shift in reframing the center of magical concern from the cultural contact zones of the Mediterranean to the confessional contact zones of Central Europe.

On a confessional level, Manlius's attribution of the sketch to Melanchthon further strengthens the connection to the Lutheran giant outlined at the end of the previous chapter. The eminent Faust scholar Frank Baron, in his early *Doctor Faustus from History to Legend*, makes a thorough case for being skeptical of this attribution (Baron *Doctor Faustus* 76–7), but its veracity is largely beside the point. By having Melanchthon profess to have known Faust, indeed placing their births in neighboring villages, Faust's role as an antagonist to early Lutheranism takes on added depth. In effect, Faust becomes not just a new Simon Magus but an anti-Melanchthon, the theologian's dark double. Manlius does, of course, continue the development of the Faust as Simon Magus theme by repeating and fleshing out Melanchthon's anecdote about Faust's flight in Venice. In doing so, however, Manlius ties that strand of the early Faustian legend into his era's ever-growing discourse around demonology and witchcraft.

The *Explicationes Melanthoniae*'s version of Melanchthon's anecdote provides no explanation for how Faust might have flown, nor does it seem preoccupied with it. The point of the anecdote had merely been to draw parallels between the Apostolic age and that of the Reformation. The *Locorum Communium*'s version, however, specifies that it is the devil that bears Faust aloft before inexplicably beating him up and causing him to fall back to earth. These explanations place Faust's flight within an Early Modern debate about the possibility of flight. The question of whether witches could actually fly, on broomsticks or otherwise, was fiercely debated throughout the sixteenth and into the seventeenth century, presenting one of the central points of demonological contention in the era because it was not just a matter of faith but a problem of physics, an edge case for the whole Christian Peripatetic model of reality (Clark "Witchcraft and Magic" 165). These issues will be more fully

explored later in this chapter, but here it is important to note that, in order to defend Melanchthon's statement, Manlius seems to have felt it necessary to weigh in on the mechanism by which such flight could occur, that is, that the devil could use his preternatural strength and ability to fly to lift Faust into the air as if Faust himself were flying. The *Locorum Communium*'s commitment to the reality of magical flight thus depends on its confessional commitment to justifying Melanchthon's assertion. This telling instance represents one of the now infamous features of sixteenth century scientific thinking, argument from authority. Such arguments use the pronouncement of authorities, in this case Melanchthon, as evidence for which rational explanations would have to be found post facto. Similarly, why the devil would then cast Faust back down really only seems explicable in terms of the fact that Faust had to crash to parallel Simon Magus's fate, and the devil having taken Faust up could send him back down.

Additionally, Manlius's biography echoes the connections to diabolism made by Gast fifteen years before in the *Convivales Sermones*. Again, it is the devil that kills Faust, but rather than being strangled as a substitute punishment for what he would have received from a witchcraft trial, Faust has his head completely turned around in an apparent allusion to the fate of sorcerers, witches, and diviners in Canto XX of Dante's *Inferno*. Faust is likewise again accompanied by a dog, though the reader now learns that this is unequivocally a devil where before Gast had only surmised. Interestingly, Manlius's account immediately compares Faust's canine devil to that of Agrippa.[61] This may have been to head off the suspicion that the devil dog, which had first been associated with Agrippa, had merely been

[61] In his *De praestigiis daemonum*, which will be discussed below, Johann Weyer, who had been Agrippa's mentee and had often walked the dog in question (apparently named Monsieur), explains the origins of this legend as resulting from Agrippa being "too childishly fond of this dog," i.e., treating him in many ways like a person, and knowing about the goings on in the world despite not leaving his library, knowledge which came to be attributed to the dog rather than the letters from friends which were its actual source (113).

grafted onto the Faust legend (Dédéyan 23). However, although this sentence has received surprisingly little attention from scholars, it is crucial to note here that Agrippa is not associated with his explicitly magical *De occulta philosophia*, but rather the skeptical *De incertitudine et vanitate scientiarum atque artium*. This would make some sense coming from Melanchthon who had restructured the Lutheran education system in opposition to the old Scholastic model but had maintained the prominence of Aristotle (Cameron "For Reasoned Faith" 34; Grafton 241). It stands to reason Melanchthon or his disciples might have seen an attack on the Christian Aristotelian system of science as diabolically motivated. In consequence, the *Locorum Communium* for the ihye associates Faust with skepticism of his era's scientific system of knowledge, providing the impetus for what would become the basis of his future reputation.

Demonology and Its Discontents

In the 1540s and 50s, when witch trials were sporadic and mostly individual, these tales of demonic flight, canine familiars, and death by devil, would likely have made for edifying stories about the danger of diabolism, but by the 1560s, they seemed emblematic of a much wider societal problem. While the concept of something one might call a "witch" has existed since Antiquity, and witch trials themselves predate the Early Modern, with the first major trials taking place in second half of the fifteenth century, a particular concept of witchcraft came to dominate the sixteenth century. The consequences have been so far reaching that the epochal *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe* series felt justified calling its fourth volume, focused on the Early Modern period, *The Period of the Witch Trials*. Figures from as recently as the 1990s put the death toll of the European witch hunts at close to

60,000 (Levack 21–6). However, Monter makes a strong case that the actual figure is somewhat lower at roughly 30,000– 35,000 executions 1550–1650 and 40,000 across the larger witch-hunting time frame of the mid-fifteenth to early-eighteenth century (13–6). Even reduced, these numbers are staggering, and the fact that the vast majority coincide with both the confessional age and the Scientific Revolution is sobering.

Where the early testimonies of the historical Faust's life and career draw out the disparity between accepting the reality of magic in general and the acceptance of specific magical claims, and Faust's nascent legend calls attention to that between the dangers religious elites perceived in magic and the perception of the laity, the extraordinary success of the first Faust books in the closing decades of the sixteenth century itself represents one of the central contradictions of the confessional age. After all, how can it be that the age dominated by the persecution of witches, the vast majority of them women and uneducated, would see the enduring literary representation, not just of magic in the era but arguably of Western magic in general, emerge as a learned necromancer? As with the question of the danger posed by magic itself, the answer has to do with the disparity between elite opinion and the common people's perception of whence that threat emanated. By the late-sixteenth century, elite opinion in these matters expressed itself through works of demonology, the branch of syncretic Christian-Aristotelian science that sought to codify knowledge about demons, including the workings and workers of diabolic magic. Originating with the pronouncements of church fathers, like those of Isadore and Augustine outlined in the previous chapter, demonology became systematized alongside natural philosophy as Scholasticism achieved its classical form around the turn of the fourteenth century (Bailey *Fearful Spirits* 57). However, demonology generally served as a special topic within larger

works until the first major outbreak of witch trials in the fifteenth century (Peters 79). The following sketch of the historical development of demonology and witch trials in Europe makes no pretense to completeness but means only to provide the necessary background to understand their role in framing and influencing early Faustian literature.

While the modern Western imagination has no difficulty conjuring the image of a witch today—a cackling old woman with a crooked nose and her trusty magical cauldron and broomstick near at hand—these traits belong, mostly, to later fictional representations. What exactly constituted a witch in the time when they were widely considered not only real but dangerous, though, has always proven a fraught question.[62] Naturally, Medieval and Early Modern authorities sought guidance from the Bible. Unfortunately, the Bible, though clear in proscribing punishments, offers little in terms of definitions. While the King James Bible states rather unequivocally in *Exodus* 22:18 "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live," and in *Leviticus* 20:27 "A man also or woman that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death: they shall stone them with stones: their blood shall be upon them," such passages assume one already knows what it means to be a witch or wizard. Other Early Modern Bibles, including the Vulgate and the Luther Bibles, offer their own challenges to interpretation. The Vulgate, more precisely the *Vulgata Clementina* which became the official Catholic text in 1592, for instance, uses the masculine "malefic[i]" in the first instance, i.e., "casters of *maleficium*,[63] and "pythonicus," a masculine form of "pythoness"

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[62] This extends to the question of terminology, particularly in English, when discussing "witchcraft." Although "witchcraft" seems to specify demonic magic performed by women, the term was applied broadly in the era of the witch trials, which could involve the prosecutions of both men and women, as well as the educated and uneducated. Stuart Clark notes that "Over and over again in the [demonological] literature we find the term 'witch' being applied to *anyone* who practiced the 'cunning' arts, whether as private individual or professional expert" ("Witchcraft and Magic" 118).

[63] "Maleficos non patieris vivere" (*Exodus* 22:18)

here representing both genders, in the second.[64] Luther's Bible offers "Zauberinnen," the feminine form of "magicians,"[65] and "Wahrsager und Zeichendeuter," or "soothsayers and divinators," respectively.[66] Even taken together, these various terms paint a rather broad semantic picture.

What is described as a "witch" in English is characterized specifically by *maleficium* in Latin but by magic in general in German. The word "wizard" likewise generally connotes a male magician but does not specify divination as the reason for a death sentence as the Latin and German do. This comparison means to show that the seemingly simple concept of "witch" and "witchcraft" quickly becomes murky when one attempts to trace it back to its ostensible root in Christianity. Even when the first major witch trials erupted in the fifteenth century, there was no coherent concept of witchcraft that united them (Bailey "Diabolic Magic" 372). Moreover, as detailed in the previous chapter, many of the magical activities cited here seem to overlap with activities that were, at least provisionally, sanctioned in Western society, raising the question of what made witchcraft distinct enough and frightening enough in the Early Modern period to lead to so much anxiety and ultimately to death on such a grand scale?

The evocation of a "familiar spirit" in *Leviticus* 20:27 provides at least some indication.[67] Since there was broad theological agreement that all sprits were either angels or demons, the "witches" whose execution the Bible demanded must be consorting with

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[64] "Vir, sive mulier, in quibus pythonicus, vel divinationis fuerit spiritus, morte moriantur : lapidibus obruent eos : sanguis eorum sit super illos" (*Leviticus* 20:27)

[65] "Die Zauberinnen sollst du nicht leben lassen" (*2. Moses* 22:18).

[66] "Wenn ein Mann oder Weib ein Wahrsager oder Zeichendeuter sein wird, die sollen des Todes sterben. Man soll sie steinigen; ihr Blut sei auf ihnen" (*3. Moses* 20:27).

[67] Interestingly, while the Vulgate explicitly repeats this notion, "vel divinationis fuerit spiritus" (*Leviticus* 20:27), Luther's German does not. This may, however, simply indicate that the presence of a spirit, or demon, was assumed for any "soothsayer and divinator," at least for those meriting death.

demons. In witch trials, these familiar spirits would often be identified as any pet or other animal of the accused's perceived to act strangely or show signs of intelligence, hence the modern association of witches and cats. The strong associations of diabolic magic with these types of familiars also provides the reason that in Gast, Manlius, and other early sources Faust is so often associated with a devil in the form of a dog.[68] However, although concern about demonic magic had been an issue within the European cultural imagination for centuries, there do not appear to have been any formal accusations of consorting with a familiar demon until the charge was brought posthumously against Boniface VIII after his death in 1303 (Boudet 469). That this charge should first be made against such an elite, male figure draws attention to the fact that persecutions for diabolism originally focused on educated men.

In fact, the witch trials had their first analogue in the early fourteenth century when Pope John XXII, convinced of a magical plot against him, oversaw a church council that declared for the first time that diabolism was heresy, while having the Inquisition round up and prosecute many clerics on charges of having made demonic pacts (Bailey "Diabolic Magic" 368). These prosecutions mark the first serious persecution of diabolists based on the suspicion of a demonic conspiracy, a notion that would become incredibly powerful over time. They also seem to have solidified the idea of learned necromancers as the premier practitioners of diabolic magic, at least within the imaginations of other learned men. The first recorded case of charges related to this demonic conspiracy being brought against a woman is the 1324 witch trial of Alice Kyeteler of Kilkenny, Ireland, which also involved a familiar spirit. However, that case stands apart in that it did not lead to a wider witch hunt,

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[68] Although the demonic dog would be soon be durably replaced in the Faust legend by the anthropomorphic Mephistopheles, Goethe famously splits the difference, having Mephistopheles first appear as a dog.

and the bishop who led it was eventually discredited (Peters 68–9). Nevertheless, by the turn of the fifteenth century, many ecclesiastical and secular authorities would be convinced that most magic was diabolic in nature, and some began to see it essentially as a demonic conspiracy to ruin Christian society (Bailey "Diabolic Magic" 371; Boudet 465; Peters 74). This notion of conspiracy would prove crucial in the development of the mentality that undergirded the witch hunts to come.

Witch hunts would, nevertheless, remain relatively rare, until the middle of the fifteenth century. Throughout the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, the focus remained by and large on educated male magicians, until the period around 1440, when the witch hunts begin to accelerate, and the focus shifted away from learned necromancy toward popular witchcraft and away from men toward women (Boudet 450–66). These witch trials remained mostly regional—spreading along trade routes from the lower Rhone through Southern France to Northern Italy, Eastern Switzerland, the Rhineland, and the German Alpine states—and, with the pre-1500 number of executions for witchcraft and sorcery likely under 1,000, never came close to the devastation that would follow a century later (Peters 75; Boudet 466). Nevertheless, these trials contributed greatly to the growing body of demonological literature. In fact, their relationship to demonology created a vicious circle wherein existing demonological texts would frame the prosecutions for witchcraft and sorcery, and those same prosecutions would add immediacy and evidence to demonologists' claim, spurring the production of more demonological texts (Peters 79). As noted above, this would ultimately lead to the production of works devoted solely to demonology, including Jean Vineti's *Tractatus contra Daemonum Invocatores* (1450, *Treatise against Conjurers of*

Demons) and Nicholas Jacquier's *Flagellum Haereticorum Fascinariorum* (1458, *The Lash of Enchanter Heretics*).

However, it would be a mistake to think that these demonological texts *caused* the witch hunts in any meaningful sense. Recent scholarship has coalesced into a consensus that elite opinion like that of the demonologists did not drive the witch hunts (Boudet 489; Peters 79). Rather, witch hunts were largely led from the bottom of society, motivated by the complex interaction of material conditions, like crop failures and local economic crises, exacerbated by social forces, from societal upheaval to the petty grudges and feuds of daily life. For the common people, the actual harm allegedly wrought by a witch's *maleficium* represented the essential concern while the diabolism supposedly underlying the act remained the concern of the elite and figured only secondarily in most trials (Clark "Witchcraft and Magic" 114; Bailey "Diabolic Magic" 377; Peters 79). Instead of the motivation for witch hunts and trials, demonology provided a framework that allowed for the identification of the cause of a community's troubles. Demonological concerns likely filtered down, in simplified form, through sermons and the prompting of confessors to the common people (Bailey *Fearful Spirits* 191; Peters 73). At the same time, the more theoretical demonological texts would have circulate among lay and ecclesiastical magistrates who would have weighed their arguments and counterarguments when trying and sentencing those accused of witchcraft or sorcery.

Perhaps the most important work to come out of this period remains the infamous *Malleus Maleficarum* (*Hammer of Witches*), written by Heinrich Kramer and published in Speyer in 1487. The work represents a maximalist work of demonology, not only credulous itself of nearly every claim made about demons and witches but overtly hostile to any with

the temerity to doubt even the most outlandish claims.[69] Its notoriety rests in part on its longevity and popularity, seeing 13 editions by 1520 and another 16 from 1574 to 1669 (Peters 81). However, the *Malleus* never found unequivocal acceptance and remained the subject of a great deal of contention and even skepticism (82). Kramer, after all, only wrote the *Malleus* after his own witchcraft prosecutions in Innsbruck fell apart in the face of considerable legal skepticism about his methods and evidence (Bailey "Diabolic Magic" 372). This legal skepticism, which should not, however tempting, necessarily be taken as skepticism of witchcraft in general, proved the undoing of other high profile witch trials in the late fifteenth century, contributing to a dramatic decline in accusations and arrests by the turn of the sixteenth century and leading the Parlement of Paris in 1491, for example, to rehabilitate the memories of a dozen people previously executed for witchcraft (Peters 83). While this initial wave of witch trials had largely subsided by 1500, clearing the air for an era of expansion of magical thought and literature, it left behind a body of demonological literature and ideas upon which the next and much larger wave of trials would build on after 1560. This wave would sweep the Faust legend along with it, bringing it into print just as the new trials and a new generation of demonologists were emerging.

In 1563, the same year that the *Locorum Communium* was published and the Wiesensteig witchcraft executions took place, the first edition of Johannes Weyer's *De Praestigiis Daemonum et Incantationibus ac Venificiis* [*On the Illusions of Demons and Incantations As Well As Poisons*], inaugurating a new era of demonology, in more ways than one. Weyer's work has become celebrated in the Modern era for its apparent skepticism toward claims of witchcraft. However, Weyer's skepticism in *De praestigiis* really only

[69] Interestingly, the *Malleus* makes little mention of familiar spirits beyond quoting from *Leviticus* 20:27, perhaps indicating that, although part of the discourse of sorcery, it was not yet of universal concern (44).

applies to witchcraft narrowly understood as forms of magic considered diabolical and practiced by uneducated women, not to diabolical magic itself.[70] Rather, Weyer's work focuses on the dangers presented by learned male magicians. In fact, the second book of *De praestigiis*, which is devoted entirely to that subject, contains a chapter describing some of the most notorious magicians, to which Weyer would add Faust in the 1568 edition. Although *De praestigiis* includes a previously unrecorded anecdote about the historical Faust, the biographical information he presents, including Faust's birthplace, education, and death seem to have been taken directly from Manlius's text cited above, suggesting, in combination with its later addition, that Weyer likely only added Faust after reading the description of him in the *Locorum Communium* (Weyer 108). By focusing on men like Faust, *De praestigiis* emphasizes the contradiction between the theoretical concerns often embodied in demonological literature, which had tended to focus on the diabolism of educated necromancers since the fourteenth century, and the practical reality of largely prosecuting uneducated women, as well as some uneducated men.

This discrepancy between the actual victims of the witch hunts and the subjects of the theoretical discussion in demonological texts persisted throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, with only the *Malleus* itself showing a fixation on the idea of an especially feminized witchcraft (Bailey "Diabolic Magic" 378). This phenomenon likely resulted in part from the inertia of a tradition stretching back to the prosecutions of the early fourteenth century, and from the more deeply rooted association of magic with learned male necromancers rather than female witches. It seems equally likely that the relatively

[70] This is reflected in the very structure of *De praestigiis* with Book 1 devoted to describing the nature of the devil's power, Book 2 focusing on the dangers presented by learned magicians, Book 3 refuting the idea of *Lamiae*, or female witches, and the powers typically ascribed to them, Book 4 explaining how those supposedly afflicted by witchcraft are instead being visited by demons, Book 5 detailing treatments for *maleficium*, and Book 6 recommending appropriate punishments for various diabolical and magical offenses.

homogenous authorship and readership of such works also played a role. In works written by highly educated men for other highly educated men, learned diabolists who resembled author and reader except that they had fallen off the straight and narrow path doubtlessly made more relatable subjects than uneducated women on the margins of society. It was simply a world they better understood.

In the case of *De praestigiis*, Weyer clearly intends to exploit the contradiction in elite versus popular opinion to discourage the prosecution and punishment of supposed witches. Thus, the opening chapter of *De praestigiis*'s Book 3 offers a definition of "Lamia," the word Weyer uses for "witch," that calls the whole concept into question, "I use the term *Lamia* for a woman who, by virtue of a deceptive or imaginary pact that she has entered into with the demon, supposedly perpetrates all kinds of evil-doing, whether by thought or by curse or by glance or by use of some ludicrous object unsuited for the purpose" (166). Weyer's definition undermines the concept at every turn. A witch's pact with the devil can only be "deceptive or imaginary," she can only "supposedly" carry out evil deeds, and the means by which she is presumed to carry out such deeds are "ludicrous." The next several chapters of Book 3 explain why witches cannot be held accountable for any diabolism attributed to them, to wit, because women's mental and spiritual frailty and propensity for melancholia make them particularly susceptible to demonic illusion and suggestion, meaning any confessions they make or pacts they are supposed to have made can only be the products of deluded imagination (Weyer 173–81). In relying on such arguments, Weyer meant to keep actual accused women from the pyre and preferably out of jail in the first place, but their strong current of misogyny further strengthened the theoretical connection between diabolic magic and the learned male magician. Thus, by deflecting theoretical concern away from

witches and toward necromancers, Weyer's arguments made more space in the demonological imagination for a figure like Faust.[71]

While it is impossible to fully know the impact a work like *De prastigiis* had in its day, there are some indicators from which to extrapolate. On a practical level, Weyer's work arrived just as Europe's deadliest century of witch hunts was getting underway, so clearly Weyer's arguments could not hold back that tide. Nevertheless, William Monter observes that the Dutchy of Cleaves-Mark, where Weyer served as court physician to Duke Wilhelm V, heeded his counsel, as did Basel, where all the sixteenth-century Latin editions and Weyer's own German translation of *De Praestigiis* were printed, as well as the Palatinate, and the United Provinces, all of which saw far fewer witchcraft prosecutions then their neighbors due to Weyer's influence there (21).[72] Unfortunately, for those living outside this handful of regions in the HRE, Weyer's influence exerted itself largely in the theoretical rather than political space. Still, its theoretical influence does appear to have been considerable. Between 1563 and 1660, *De praestigiis* saw seven Latin editions between, two editions of Weyer's own German translation, four editions of German translations by others, and two French editions (Mora LXXXIX–XCI). For a dense, voluminous scholarly work of the time, this is an impressive figure that speaks to the interest, as well as controversy, it generated in its time. Importantly for the Faust tradition, its influence also spread to the anonymous author of the *Historia von D. Johann Fausten*, which will be discussed in depth in the following subchapter as well as the chapters that follow. In that work's foreword,

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[71] Weyer does not mention Faust in the first edition of *De praestigiis*, but he receives a longer passage that seems to derive in part from the *Locorum Communium*'s biography and in part from a first-hand account in the fourth Latin edition of 1568.

[72] All of these places, except Cleves-Mark itself, which was nominally Catholic but where Weyer was personally present, were places where the Reformed church predominated, a fact that Monter explains by noting that Basel was a major center of Reformed printing whence ideas would likely have flowed to other Reformed regions, although he concedes that this influence did not carry over to other parts of Reformed Switzerland.

Weyer is the only non-Biblical source cited against the use of sorcery.[73] Weyer thus seems to have exerted at least some direct influence on the demonological thinking in early Faust literature.

Overall, Weyer's biggest contribution to demonology appears to have been in pushing it into an increasingly natural philosophical sphere of argument. Although he cites church and classical authorities—and does not refrain from sometimes using their words as arguments in themselves—Weyer primarily uses naturalist arguments throughout *De praestigiis* to demonstrate the impossibility of many claims made about witchcraft, including those of earlier demonological texts like the *Malleus*. In terms of controversy, Weyer became an object of scorn for hardline demonologists later in the sixteenth century, including the French intellectual Jean Bodin and the King of Scotland and England, James VI and I.[74] Bodin dedicates a whole afterword in his own demonological tome, *De la Démonomanie des Sorciers* (*On the Demonomania of Sorcerers*, 1580) to refuting Weyer (437–90), and James, in the preface to his *Daemonolgie* (1597) accuses Weyer of having been a sorcerer himself for his lenient approach to punishing alleged witches (xix). However, even those who attempted to refute him were compelled to argue on Weyer's own natural philosophical terrain. Moreover, Weyer's rejection of feminine witchcraft and rejection of natural philosophical argumentation would find many admirers, not least of all Augustin Lercheimer, the pseudonym used by Hermann Witekind (sometimes Wilken), whose own 1585 demonological work *Christlich bedenken und erinnerung von Zauberey* exerted a large

[73] The reference is to the story of a magician in Salzburg who tries to charm all the snakes from the surrounding area to gather in one ditch, so they can be killed, but he is instead killed by the snakes (Weyer 110; *Historia* 11–2).
[74] The views of these somewhat unlikely demonologists will be discussed below in chapters 3 and 4 respectively.

influence on the first Faust book due to the plethora of Faust stories it used to illustrate its own demonological claims.

3. 1587: The *Historia* and the Natural Philosophy of Evil

In 1587, Johann Spies published an anonymously authored chapbook entitled *Historia von D. Johann Fausten* in Frankfurt am Main.[75] In it, the various currents that had hitherto shaped the Faust legend would converge along with many of the folktales then circulating about him to shape an exceptionally strange but undeniably influential work. Before the sixteenth century was out, it would see more than twenty editions in German alone, translations into multiple European languages, as well as a spin-off starring Faust's assistant Wagner, the so-called Wagner book of 1593, and a sanctimonious imitator, Georg Rudolf Widman's 1599 *Wahrhaffitgen Historien*. Moreover, it would serve as the model for all future Faustian literature, although none of its successors would quite match its protean structure and genre-defying character. Part anti-*vita*, religious propaganda, demonological treatise, astrological commentary, proto-science fiction, travelogue, and picaresque, the *Historia* seemingly attempted to be all things to all readers. The book itself is divided into four parts, but these parts evince little internal coherence. This lack of formal coherence and the discrepancy of style and quality between some chapters led to decades of speculation that a Latin Faust novel must have preceded the German *Historia* (Haile "Reconstruction" 177). However, such a novel has never been found and is not likely to exist.

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[75] The full title of the book is worth noting, for the summary it provides of its contents: *Historia von D. Johan Fausten/ dem weitbeschreyten Zauberer unnd Schwartzkünstler/ Wie er sich gegen dem Teuffel auff eine benandte zeit verschrieben/ Was er hierzwischen für seltsame Abentheuwer geschen/ selbs angerichtet vnd getrieben/ biß er endtlich seinen wol verdienten Lohn empfangen* ("History of Dr. Johann Faust/ the Widely Decried Magician and Master of the Black Arts/ How He Signed Himself over to the Devil for a Set Time/ What Sort of Strange Adventures He Undertook Himself and Befell Him in the Meantime/ until He Finally Received His Well-Earned Reward").

The dream of a lost Latin original for the *Historia* arises from a desire to elevate the origins of Faustian literature, but it fails to take the first Faust book seriously for what it is: an experiment in middlebrow narrative demonology. Previous Faust scholarship has largely focused on the demonological aspects of the *Historia* in terms of specific textual elements, such as the pact or the conjuration of Mephistopheles, and their historical connections, while treating them separately from the text's natural philosophical chapters. However, reframing the *Historia* as a narrative demonological text rather than a narrative featuring demonological elements brings a greater, though by no means complete, coherence to its contents. Read in this way, Mephistopheles becomes a structuring element as much as a character, enabling Faust's explorations of natural philosophical questions implicated directly or tangentially in diabolic magic. Consequently, the existence and nature of diabolic pacts becomes a crucial point for the possible reception of a work like the *Historia*.

As mentioned in the preceding section, demonology, particularly after Johann Weyer's *De praestigiis*, became a locus for natural philosophical debate. More to the point, demonological literature presented some of the most provocative edge cases within the natural philosophical framework of Christian Aristotelianism, testing the limits of its explanatory power with questions of flight, physical transformation, and the physical qualities of spiritual matter. Beyond the question of demonic pacts, Stuart Clark has identified five central topics that nearly every Early Modern demonological text strove to address: the influence of demons on the body and mind, the possibility of flight, the possibility of metamorphosis, the possibility of demonic reproduction, and the power of words ("Witchcraft and Magic" 165–6). All of these topics make their appearance in the *Historia* and will be addressed in the remainder of this, as well as the following two chapters.

The complexity and consequences of the various resolutions to these considerations would contribute to the persistence of demonological texts and argumentation long after the witch trials and within scientific organizations like the British Royal Society (Clark "Witchcraft and Magic" 136). Moreover, it is this interpenetration of demonology and natural philosophy that makes the *Historia* into a monument to the way of "thinking with demons" that pervaded the turn of the seventeenth century and as such makes the incongruities and contradictions of its scientific thought style visible in such a unique fashion.

The Reader's Faustian Bargain

Perhaps no element in the *Historia*'s Faust narrative better represents the place of the fraught relationship between natural philosophy and demonology in the thinking of its time than Faust's pact with the devil, signed in blood and handed to Mephistopheles. Essential as this document has become to the Faust mythos, the *Historia* is the first printed work to actually attribute such a pact to Faust. Since some sort of pact, or *societas*, endangering the would-be sorcerer's soul was thought necessary to incentivize a demon to act on their behalf, a pact could be inferred from accounts like those of Gast or Manlius, but the *Historia* makes such a pact explicit, presenting a physical document signed and sealed with blood. Such physical contracts between mortals and devils had long been part of the Christian tradition related to diabolical magic. Although, as indicated above, pacts with the devil were vanishingly rare in European criminal prosecutions before the fourteenth century, they nonetheless play a key role in several of the saints' lives, or *vitae*, recounted in the *Golden Legend*, the most popular collection of that devotional genre. With the arrival of the witch craze in the fifteenth century, they increasingly featured in witch trials as well as

demonological texts. However, the peculiar place of Faust's pact within the *Historia*'s narrative framework vis-à-vis its readers brings the central contradiction of the diabolic pact to the fore: how can you trust what a devil says?

Most likely the *Historia*'s pact drew inspiration from Witekind's *Christlich bedencken*. Although implied in earlier Faust stories, no pact actually appears in any of the works on Faust before that work. Even Witekind does not describe Faust's pact directly, only making passing references that presume its existence, but many of the important narrative details about it presented in the *Historia* emerge from passages in his the *Christlich bedencken*. The length of Faust's pact comes from an anecdote about Faust's escape from the Wittenberg authorities due to the timely advice of his familiar—but still unnamed—spirit, "from whom he was gruesomely killed not long thereafter after he had served him four-and-twenty years" (Lercheimer 111).[76] The *Historia* takes this up as the length of time for Faust's pact, and it becomes the standard length of his pact thereafter.[77] Likewise, the fact that Faust is forced to sign a second pact derives from a story in *Christlich bedencken* wherein, "The oft mentioned Faust once undertook to convert [back to Christianity], but the devil threatened him so fiercely, made him so scared, so frightened, that he signed himself over to him anew" (Lercheimer 131).[78] This second iteration of the pact signing occurs late in the *Historia*, similarly after Faust nearly repents and returns to the Christian fold. However, while "signing himself over" anew necessarily implies Faust had already signed himself over a first time,

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[76] "Von dem er nicht lang darnach grewlich getödtet ward, alß er jm vier vnd zwengig jar gedienet hatte." The anecdote about Faust's flight from Wittenberg also occurs in the *Locorum Communium*, indicating that Witekind may have taken it from there, although he may also have heard it from Melanchthon or from local Wittenberg rumors (Manlius 47r.). Regardless, the detail about the twenty-four years of service is absent from Manlius.

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[78] "Der vielgemelte Fauſt hat im ein mal fürgenommen, sich zu bekehren , da hat im der teufel so hart gebröwet , so bang gemacht, so erschreckt, daß er sich im auch auffs new hat verschrieben."

and the specificity of twenty-four years of service indicates that term was agreed to earlier, Witekind gives no details about Faust's initial pact.

Nevertheless, *Christlich bedencken* seems to provide the source for many of the pact's other key details as well. Immediately after the story of Faust's flight from Wittenberg, the reader finds the story of a down-and-out Wittenberg University student who meets a stranger in the woods outside of town offering him money "as long as he will give himself over [to the stranger] in writing, not with ink, however, but with his own blood" (111).[79] In the *Historia*, Faust will likewise first encounter Mephistopheles in the woods outside of Wittenberg and, famously, write his pact with the devil in his own blood. This student has been identified with Valerius Glockner, the son of Naumberg's mayor whom Martin Luther interrogated in 1533 about having formed a pact with the devil (Baron *Faustus on Trial* 114–5; Wiemken XXVII). According to Luther himself, in *Tischrede* 3739, he effected Glockner's reconversion through prayer and the laying on of hands, but he makes no mention of a written, physical pact (581–2). In Witekind's retelling, Luther's prayers and ministrations force the devil to return the pact (Lercheimer 111).[80] Just as Luther had once recast himself as an apostle facing Simon Magus in the form of Faust, this story casts Luther in the role of St. Basil.

The *Golden Legend* relates several tales of diabolic pacts amongst the *vitae* it tells. The version of the Glockner story related in *Christlich bedencken* most closely resembles a story of St. Basil in which a slave, driven by the devil to covet his master's daughter, signs a pact with the devil in order to attain the girl, but St. Basil intervenes, convincing the slave to repent and praying fervently until the pact is returned to him on the breeze (de Voragine 109–

[79] "so fern er sich jm ergebe vnn verschreibe nicht mit dinten, sondern mit seinem eignen blute."
[80] Witekind's version of the story seems to base itself on Melanchthon's recounting of the Glockner incident in his lectures (Baron *Faustus on Trial* 115–6).

11). Similarly, the *Golden Legend* contains the story of a certain Theophilus who, through the mediation of a sorcerer, sought to regain his lost clerical office by turning to the devil who required he write and sign a renunciation of his faith in his own blood, but Theophilus was saved when the Virgin Mary, seeing his sincere repentance, returned the document to him (543). These stories found echoes in the sixteenth century when the alleged pact would be presented as evidence in trials for diabolic magic. In 1537, Luther corresponded with an Erfurt pastor, Aegidius Mechler, who had been involved in the trial of a man convicted of diabolism and who described to Luther a pact found in the man's house abjuring his faith in return for wealth (Baron *Faustus on Trial* 112–3 note 7). Like his predecessors in the *Golden Legend*, however, the mad did repent, although unlike them he was executed nonetheless.[81] While these stories demonstrate the long tradition that leads to Faust's pact in the *Historia*, they also demonstrate what sets Faust's story apart from what came before. In all of these stories, those who sign pacts with the devil are ultimately saved, spiritually at least, whereas Faust is damned. Moreover, in all of these stories, pacts are made with the devil for some tangible benefit, wealth, power, or sex, whereas Faust seals his pact in order to gain knowledge he cannot obtain by mortal means.

What has made Faust emblematic, his turn to diabolism in order to gain knowledge, also makes his pact, as presented in the *Historia*, so remarkable. Historical figures renowned for their great learning from the Biblical King Salomon and the Roman poet Virgil to Pope Sylvester II became associated with diabolic magic over the course of the Medieval period. Their magical reputations, however, grew out of their reputations for knowledge and wisdom whereas the *Historia* grafts a story of knowledge onto Faust because of his existing magical

[81] Luther reports the broad outlines of this story in *Tischreden* 3618A and B (459–60).

reputation. Before the *Historia*, other than Trithemius's mockery of Faust's academic pretensions, only Manlius and Gessner dwell on Faust's education and then only insofar as it relates directly to magic. The *Historia* not only makes Faust a Doctor of Theology but has him pen, in his own blood, a pact stating:

> Having undertaken to speculate on the *elementa*, but not finding the skill among the gifts bestowed and graciously shared with me from above and unable to learn it from men, I have thus submitted myself to the present spirit sent to me, who calls himself Mephistopheles, a servant of the infernal Prince in the Orient; having elected him to teach and instruct me therein, who in return has promised me in all things to be subservient and obedient in all things.[82]

The first phrase above, which immediately follows the contract's pro forma preamble, dives straight into Faust's scientific motivation where Faust's language cannot help but strike the modern reader. The use of "speculate" in the Faust book will be discussed more fully in the following chapter, but suffice it to note that here it is in tension with its older meaning of "seeking to research (God)" and a derogatory connotation emerging at the time of the Reformation having to do with research unmoored from Biblical tradition (*dwds* "spekulieren"). Similarly, the use of the Latin *elementa* for "elements" indicates a scientific usage with a tension between the Aristotelian elements (earth, water, air, fire) and the concept of "first principles." Faust wants to learn about the composition of the world but also about the principles by which it operates. However, there is a third connotation to the concept

[82] "Nach dem ich mir fürgenommen die Elementa zu speculieren/vnd aber auß den Gaaben/ fo mir von oben herab bescheret/vnd gnedig mitgetheilt worden / solche Geschickligkeit in meinem Kopff nicht befinde / vnnd solches von den Menschen nicht erlehrnen mag/ So hab ich gegenwertigen gesandtem Geiſt/der sich Mephoftophiles nennet/ ein Diener deß Hellischen Printzen in Drient/mich untergeben/auch denselbigen/mich solches zuberichten vnd zu lehren/mir erwehlet."

of elements here, to wit, the use of the elements in divination.[83] This last meaning seems to speak more to Faust's magical proclivities than his desire for scientific knowledge about the workings of the world, but these concepts are not necessarily separate in a magical-scientific mentality wherein to know the secrets of the elements is to know both how the world works and how to use its working to gain magical foresight or achieve wonders.

In the *Historia*, Faust's turn to diabolism as a source of knowledge and as a source of power are never fully separate. Before signing the pact, Faust presents Mephistopheles with two separate wish lists in chapters 3 and 4 respectively. The first focuses on gaining knowledge, more specifically *forschen*, or "researching," with Mephistopheles's help (18), while the second focuses more on the physical abilities and uses for Mephistopheles he hopes to gain from a deal. These separate sets of demands confuse the question of Faust's primary motivation in seeking a pact but are likely products of the split nature of the text, which, aside from the biographical chapters that elaborate on the *Locorum Communium*'s sketch, features chapters focused on Faust's scientific endeavors on the one hand and those dedicated to his adventures and pranks on the other. Faust signs the pact "Johann Faustus, practiced in the elements and Doctor of Theology," further suggesting the inextricability of his magic and scholarship (*Historia* 23).[84]

Nevertheless, the pact's focus on Faust's search for knowledge through diabolic research and instruction, as well as the fact that roughly the first half of the book is devoted to that research, indicates that the *Historia*'s author believed that aspect of Faust's story would be of primary interest to readers. In other words, the main function of the *Historia* was to serve as work of demonology, but less dense—and for many no doubt boring—than

[83] These elemental forms of divination—geomancy, hydromancy, aeromancy, and pyromancy—are discussed in the previous chapter.
[84] "Johann Faustus / der Erfahrne der Elementen/vnd der Geistlichen Doctor"

scholarly works like those of Weyer or Bodin. Helmut Wiemken, in his introduction to the 1961 *Doctor Fausti Weheklag*, a combined edition of the *Historia* and Wagner book, characterizes the *Historia* aptly as a work of "popular science" (LIV). Its readers would have looked to it to answers for their scientific questions but also for entertainment. Frank Baron has speculated that the *Historia*'s relatively short length and "movement in the direction of fiction," which I take to mean narrativization, are results of its publisher's sense for profit and public interest (*Faustus on Trial* 2).[85] However, Baron leaves open what sort of readership the *Historia* would have been directed toward, other than to suggest they would have been confessionally orthodox Lutheran. The prolific Faust scholar Günther Mahal asserts that the *Historia*'s readership must have been educated, which stands to reason since the text not only assumes its audience can read German but expects it also to recognize the occasional Latin word or phrase (*1599* 18). However, what exactly constitutes an educated sixteenth-century reader is not necessarily straightforward, and the educated readership anticipated by the *Historia* would almost certainly have been quite different from that of a work like *De praestigiis*.

A tendency exists simultaneously to assume all pre-modern readers were necessarily educated and to flatten all education, as if educated-uneducated were a strict dialectic in Old Europe rather than a spectrum of outcomes and competencies as it is today. Robert Scribner, the great scholar of German culture, identifies three basic categories of readers in Early Modern Germany: those who read only in German, including translations into German, those

[85] Baron also asserts that the *Historia*'s publisher, Johann Spies, whom he suggests is likely identical with its author, was primarily motivated by religious concerns in publishing the story and that it served as a posthumous quasi-witch trial for Faust (*Faust on Trial* 2–5). While religious, particularly Lutheran, ideology suffuses the *Historia*, the idea that the text could act as a trial of any sort really only makes sense for the biographical chapters that bookend the narrative. The demonological, natural philosophical, and magical picaresque chapters that make up the majority of the book argue for different priorities, particularly as they relate to Faust's scientific explorations.

educated in Latin but who still read mostly in German, including German translations of Latin, and those reading largely in Latin (249). The last of these categories would have, in general, represented the most educated part of the populous and would have been the intended audience for demonological works like *De praestigiis* or the *Malleus Malificarum* originally written in Latin. While, theoretically, the German translations of these works would have been available to every category, their density and the amount of scientific knowledge they presume the reader already has would have required at least a middling education, as such their readership would likely have been confined to Scriber's second category. By the 1580s demonological works including Jean Bodin's *De la Démonomanie des sorciers* and Hermann Witekind's *Christlich bedencken* were being composed in the vernacular, but for the same reasons, these works, too, would likely have been aimed at the latter two categories rather than the first. Nevertheless, truly popular demonological literature did exist.

In fact, a whole genre of popular literature about devils, known as *Teufelsbücher* or "devil books," proliferated in Lutheran regions from the mid-sixteenth through seventeenth centuries. The first of these works, Johann Chryseus's *Hoffteufel*, which took the form of a play, appeared in 1544. Works in this genre included titles such as *Sauffteufel* (1551, "Drinking Devil"), about the dangers of intemperance, and *Hosenteuffel* (1555, "Pants Devil"), about the corruption of morals through fashion. The strange naming convention of the books stems from an idea that took hold in Protestant thought that there must be a particular devil associated with each vice (Roos 9). However, these works were mostly short and non-narrative social polemics written by Lutheran pastors, with their titular devils serving as mascots rather than characters (Mahal *1599* 40). The main readership for these

works would have come from Scribner's first group of readers and, moreover, would likely have helped expand that potential reader pool. By the early-sixteenth century, the print culture that had been developing since the second half of the fifteenth century had helped spread elementary education and functional literacy among the urban classes, a phenomenon catalyzed in part by interest in "printed works of piety" and which contributed to the spiritual debates that defined the generation of the Reformation (Scribner 236). *Teufelsbücher* would have been aimed largely at this group of pious and literate, if otherwise un- or minimally educated, readers. Such readers would have struggled to understand Witekind's *Christlich bedencken*, let alone a translation of Weyer's *De praestigiis*, but the *Teufelbücher* phenomenon offered a means of bringing demonology to the masses.

Despite what the titles might suggest, most *Teufelsbücher* had little to do with demonology proper, focusing instead on a social critique of the effects wrought by the eponymous devil. Nonetheless, at least three titles from this genre endeavored to convey Protestant demonology to the lay reader, Ludwig Milchius's 1563 *Zauberteuffel* ("Magic Devil"), Jodocus Hocker's 1564 *Wider den Bannteuffel* ("Against the Hex Devil"), and the three-part *Teufelselbs* (1568, "Devil Himself") by Hocker and Hermann Handmann who took over the project after Hocker's death. This latter work was meant to be a comprehensive demonological reference for Lutherans, compiling and answering all their questions (Roos 98). However, given its audience, the *Teufelselbs* focused almost exclusively on summaries of the theological aspects of demonology, rather than the natural philosophical issues involved. This left a niche open, which the *Historia* would fill about a generation later.

It comes as perhaps no surprise that the peak of the *Teufelsbücher* genre coincided with the publication of the *Historia*. The publisher Sigmund Feyerabend, who had been

printing pirated editions of successful *Teufelsbücher* in Frankfurt since 1565, gathered these works into a collection he called the *Theatrum Diabolorum* in 1569. A second, expanded edition followed in 1575, and a two-volume third edition would see the *Theatrum* reach its maximum extent in 1587/8, simultaneously marking the apogee of the genre (Roos 62, 67). Understandably, the *Historia* has been unable to escape association with the *Teufelsbücher*, which no doubt laid the groundwork for its success, and the great scholar of European culture Robert Muchembled has even gone so far as to include the *Historia* among the works in this genre (Muchembled 155; Osborn 52; Roos 48). However, where the *Teufelsbücher* focus on a single form of demonic temptation explained in a sort of satiric homily, the *Historia* evinces more ambition both in its scope and narrative delivery.

If the *Teufelsbücher* represent a sort of lowbrow demonology and works like *De praestigiis* or even *Christlich bedencken* highbrow demonology, then the *Historia* carves out a comfortable middle in both content and style. The *Historia*'s readership would thus likely have differed a bit from both as well. It would likely have found readers in Scribner's second group of those educated in Latin but who preferred reading in German, a category that likely included the vast majority of educated readers, considering that circa 80–90% of those who graduated from German universities attained only a basic arts education (Scribner 247). However, it would likely have also appealed to a broader liminal group that straddled Scribner's first two categories, the equivalent of those who fit Ben Jonson's famous description of Shakespeare as having "small Latin and less Greek," that is, who had received a good basic education but who either never attended or never matriculated from a university. It is important to note that this group could also have contained women educated by tutors or family members, meaning that, while doubtless the work envisioned a male readership,

female readers would certainly have existed. Readers in this subcategory would likely have had difficulty making it through a work like Weyer's or Witekind's but could be expected to read through the *Historia* without issue.

Assuming this depiction of the *Historia*'s readership is accurate, it is worth wondering: would educated—even if not overly so—readers accept the premise that the *Historia* told a true story? It is generally speculated in Faust scholarship that the *Historia*'s original readers would have accepted it as a work based in reality, representing a more-or-less accurate biography of Faust (Weeks 223; Allen "Reception" 585). After all, the existence of Faust would have been an object of old but still living memory in 1587. Nevertheless, as Marguerite de Huszar Allen observes, comparing probable responses to the *Historia* to those of Orson Welles' audience during his famous 1938 radio broadcast of *The War of the Worlds*, "there was probably a wide range of responses to the truth of events related in the chapbook, depending on the education and religious practices of the readers" ("Aesthetics" 153). Allen follows this with examples of highly educated people, such as Martin Luther, Philp Melanchthon, and Herman Witekind, who believed in the physical reality of the devil, of demonic pacts, and magic. However, it seems highly unlikely, given the religious and intellectual culture of the sixteenth century already explored in the present work, that these would truly have been questions for the majority of the *Historia*'s readership. Even so, this idea of a spectrum of belief amongst the *Historia*'s readers is an important one to keep in mind, particularly with regard to its specific demonological claims.

The *Historia* purports on its title page to be "Compiled and set in print, mostly from the writings [Faust] left behind as a terrible example, abhorrent lesson, and true-hearted

warning to all arrogant, curious, and godless people" (3).[86] Faust's pact purportedly counts among these writings found in his home after his death (*Historia* 22). What then would readers have made of such unlikely phrasing in Faust's pact as "gifts bestowed and graciously shared […] from above," clearly meant as reminder to the reader not to show similar ingratitude for God's gifts? It is impossible to know for sure, but the answer would likely have depended as much on the individual context of each reader then as would audience responses to works "based on a true story" in the present day. Savvy readers would no doubt have taken many, if not all, individual claims of the *Historia* with a grain of salt. Any exaggerations or changes could, after all, simply be taken as artistic license to achieve the stated goal of acting as a warning to any would-be Fausts. However, for the book to function as primer in demonology and natural philosophy, as it seems it was mostly intended to do, the reader had to at least accept the premise that Faust had bargained his soul to the devil in exchange for knowledge and that the *Historia* somehow accurately conveyed what Faust had learned. Given the intellectual and ideological commitments of the time, as laid out in the preceding sections and chapter above, this premise would at least be plausible. Damning documents were "found" during witch trials all the time. Why wouldn't Faust have left a record of his diabolical doings? However, accepting the *Historia*'s premise leads inexorably to the contradiction at its heart. How can you trust the devil?

This contradiction remains unresolved and unresolvable in the text. The *Historia*'s "Foreword to the Christian Reader,"[87] itself makes clear that only the worst can be expected when one "seeks […] truth and belief from the spirit of lies and murder, good counsel and

[86]"Mehrertheils auß seinen eygenen hinderlassenen Schrifften / allen hochtragenden / Fürwizigen vnd Gottlosen Menschen zum schrecklichen Beyspiel, abscheuwlichen Exempel / vnd treuherziger Warnung zusammen gezogen vnd in den Druck verfertiget."

[87] "Vorred an den Christlichen Leser."

instruction from a witting and declared enemy" (11),[88] and yet, for its narrative to make sense, Faust must seek precisely these things from the Lord of Lies. More to the point, to have any purpose as a text, the reader must also accept as true those things Faust learns from his pact. To resolve the paradox, Wiemken proposes looking to Faust's rejection of the Bible's absolute authority, "to wit, if one leaves behind the footing of rock-solid belief in the infallibility of the Bible, the devil would then also lose […] the character of a liar as a matter of principle" (LXI).[89] This solution makes a plausible reading of Faust who, before turning to magic, "placed the Holy Scriptures behind the door and under the bench" (*Historia* 14),[90] and who, after agreeing on terms of service with Mephistopheles, "thinks the devil is not as black as one paints him nor hell as hot as one says, etc." (*Historia* 21).[91] Faust, having set aside the Bible to focus his research on magical texts and ultimately turning to the devil as a new authority capable of answering his questions, does seem to abandon the Biblical perspective that would have warned him not to trust the devil's word. From a narrative perspective, then, Faust's trust in the devil becomes explicable. What of the "Christian reader," however?

Presuming that the expected reader of Faust had not lost their own faith in the Bible's infallibility, the only reasons they would have to trust Mephistopheles's word on the workings of the cosmos would come from a mix of cultural expectations and textual cues. The belief that demons' great age and experience as well as abilities to move quickly and manipulate natural magic gave them secret knowledge beyond mortal ken was already codified by Thomas Aquinas and featured prominently in demonological texts around the

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[88] "bey den Lügen und Mordgeist warheit und Glauben / bey einem wissentlichen vnnd abgesagten feind guten Rabt und Lehr […] suchet."
[89] "Verließ man nämlich den Boden des felsenfesten Glaubens an die Unfehlbarkeit der Bibel, so verlor auch der Teufel […] den Charakter des Lügners aus Prinzip."
[90] "die H . Schrifft ein weil hinder die Thür vnnd vnter die die Bank gelegt."
[91] "meynet der Teuffel wer nit so schwartz / als man jhn mahlet / noch die Hell so heiß / wie mann davon ſagte / etc."

time of the *Historia* (Bailey *Fearful Spirits* 68; Clark "Witchcraft and Magic" 262; Weyer 26). Whether demons could be trusted as sources of information, even by those with whom they had contracted themselves remained ambiguous. At least some experts maintained they would mix their lies with the truth in order to secure the trust of those whose souls they hoped to win (James I and VI 15). This appears to be the theory relied upon by the *Historia* in order to justify its conceit of Mephistopheles as a reliable demonological authority. On two occasions the *Historia* specifically says Mephistopheles is lying or deceiving Faust with an illusion, in chapters 22 and 24 respectively. Ironically, these instances of pointing out Mephistopheles's deceit are likely meant to strengthen his credibility throughout the rest of the book, since the text seems to be suggesting it will tell the reader when Faust is being deceived, at least in factual matters.[92] In spiritual matters, devils were never to be trusted. Although they maintained their knowledge of everything since creation, their fall from grace was thought to have cut them off from spiritual truth (Clark *Thinking with Demons* 161). Moreover, since it was agreed that demons' main aim was the corruption of souls, they were most likely to lie to that effect. Thus, Mephistopheles denies throughout the *Historia*, in terms similar to those employed by the devil in the *Golden Legend*, that any possibility of redemption remains to Faust. However, for a Christian raised to rely on God's forgiveness for even grave sins and with stories of others having escaped diabolic pacts, these lies would be obvious enough.[93]

If, then, the reader accepts as true the reality of Faust's pact and those pronouncements of Mephistopheles's unrelated to Faust's salvation and not designated explicitly as lies or tricks by the text, would the reader not then be complicit themselves in

[92] The contents of these two chapters, their place in the Early Modern demonological world view, and their possible consequences for reading the *Historia* and its translations will be discussed in the following chapter.
[93] The *Historia* also makes this explicit in the old neighbor's attempts to reconvert Faust in chapter 52.

Faust's sin? The *Historia* never reflects on this question, and it is impossible to know how many readers the thought ever occurred to. The text presents Faust's pact and everything he learns from it to the reader to indulge the reader's curiosity while punishing Faust eternally for that same curiosity. In a sense, the *Historia* cannot resolve its central ambivalence because that ambivalence is its *raison d'être*. Faust becomes the reader's surrogate, indulging in the reader's magical power fantasy and the reader's scientific curiosity while leaving the reader all the fruits of that sin to enjoy while suffering in the reader's place for his indulgence. That these are fruits from a poison tree need not bother the reader since Faust has already paid, and dearly, for them. It is no doubt the latter-day realization of this relationship that made Faust the martyr for knowledge the eighteenth century sought. However, in the sixteenth century, it made him the reader's double through whom they could get answers to their burning questions from the devil himself.

Disputations Demonological and Medical

Although the *Historia* approaches many demonological questions through its narrative, using Faust and Mephistopheles' actions to demonstrate various aspects of its demonological interpretation of the world, it also conveys a great deal of that vision in series of narrative-light, popular-science-heavy chapters generally referred to as the "disputations," so called because several of the chapters use variants of the word in their titles. The word seems an odd fit. "Disputation" in German carries similar connotations of a scientific debate as it does in English, and in 1587, it would have been even more closely associated with a *disputatio*, the academic exercise in which a scholar would defend a number of theses, such as Luther's famous 95, in open debate. The form of the *disputatio* had particular resonance

within demonology since the *Malleus Malificarum* is structured as one. However, the back and forth between Faust and Mephistopheles in no way resembles such a scholastic exercise.[94] The *Historia* uses "Disputation" interchangeably with "Colloquium" and "Frag" ("question") in its chapter titles, suggesting the text understands the word to mean something more like a learned dialogue of questions and answers, particularly in the context of the chapter contents themselves, which read like diabolical philosophical dialogues. Dialogues were a popular form of didactic literature at the turn of the seventeenth century, and James VI and I would adopt the form for his own *Daemonologie*.[95] The "disputations" are thus best understood as philosophical dialogues in which Mephistopheles takes questions from Faust, and later Faust from his colleagues, and dispenses what the reader is meant to understand as definitive answers, coming from the most knowledgeable source possible.

Faust's disputations with Mephistopheles take place mostly in chapters 11 through 22, following the end of the *Historia*'s first set of biographical chapters. These disputations cover a number of demonological and natural philosophical questions that the author clearly felt would hold the reader's attention despite disrupting the story's narrative flow. After an interlude for Faust's journeys to hell, into space, and around the world, they resume in chapters 28 through 32 but with Faust now answering his colleagues' questions. That the disputations bookend Faust's early magical adventures also suggests the *Historia* intended to serve a primarily didactic function despite its clear secondary emphasis on entertainment. Nonetheless, presenting its scientific claims within its narrative frame would likely have

[94] The first chapters to actually use "disputation" in their titles are the chapters in which Faust and Mephistopheles are negotiating the terms of their pact, specifically chapters 3 and 4 with 5 using the term "colloquium," further indicating an alternative meaning for "Disputation" in the *Historia*.
[95] It is, of course, possible that James was influenced by the *Historia*'s English translation in composing his *Daemonologie*, and there is some overlap in its depiction of necromancers and Faust. However, the philosophical dialogue was a common form and the Faust of the chapbooks a composite of the era's image of the necromancer, so any influence would not necessarily have been significant or decisive.

made the *Historia* more engaging to its readers than more formal works of demonology. In this, the *Historia* resembles an early work of speculative fiction with the complication that it was not necessarily recognized as fictional by its audience. Moreover, in purporting to present demonological claims as related by one of the very demons in question, the *Historia* posited an unimpeachable authority, particularly with regards to its strictly theological claims.

Even in its day, demonology posed a particular epistemological challenge as a science because it required a reconciliation of “the explanatory languages of both theology and natural philosophy” (Clark “Scientific Status” 354). In some ways, this made demonology a fully syncretic science and thus, perhaps, the ultimate expression of the Scholastic worldview, but it also meant that demonologists were working at the edge of the known and knowable. The first disputations between Faust and Mephistopheles, for instance, address questions regarding the nature of hell, Lucifer’s fall, and the organization of devils, extra-Biblical questions likely of great interest to the *Historia*’s readers but the answers to which could only be speculation—unless the devil himself were the source. With regard to the *Historia*, at least, Mephistopheles could make even such theological questions knowable. However, of most interest to the present study, is Mephistopheles’s response to Faust’s question about the devil’s power in chapter 15, where the otherwise unknowable of the theological realm makes direct contact with the experiential reality of the physical world.

Throughout Faust’s theological questioning, Mephistopheles strikes a reluctant tone in giving away information, something at evidence after Faust asks about the extent of the devil’s “rule, counsel, power, affliction, temptations and tyranny (*Historia* 34).”[96] To this

[96] “Regierung / Raht / Gewalt / Angriff / Versuchungen vnd Tyranney.”

suitably academic multi-part question, Mephistopheles responds that “you should not have desired such from me, for it touches on our secrets, although I can do nothing for it” (34).[97] Admonishments like this doubtlessly intend to increase both the reader’s interest in such information because of its apparent secrecy and the reader’s credence of the *Historia*’s claims overall because it seems to offer knowledge only reluctantly wrung from a demon by force of a pact. Somewhat ironically, this increases the reader’s debt to Faust, who paid for this knowledge with his life and eternal soul, even as the *Historia* emphasis his wickedness in doing so. In response to Faust’s somewhat convoluted question, Mephistopheles’s answer indicates it should be understood as a reference to how the devil exercises his power over humans with regards to their physical and mental health, one of the central questions Stuart Clark identifies as central to the era’s demonological works.

It was commonly held by Early Modern demonologists that, through their knowledge of how to manipulate sublunary bodies, demons could afflict humans through disease and possession (Clark *Thinking* 163). What stands out in the *Historia*’s approach to the question is its emphasis on the mental aspects of the devil’s interactions in the disputation while maintaining a relative silence on the physical ailments attributed to demons in works like *De praestigiis*. Mephistopheles points out that the devil’s work is, “manifestly to be seen every day, such that this one falls to his death, another hangs, drowns, or suffocates himself; the third is stabbed, in despair or the like” (*Historia* 34).[98] In all of these acts, the physical harm is either stated to have been perpetrated by the victims themselves or suggested to have been bought about through their actions. By not specifying the direct role of the devil in these acts, Mephistopheles indicates that the devil works indirectly in bringing about the results. This

[97] “soltu solchs von mir nicht begert haben / denn es trifft unser Heimligkeit an, wiewol ich nicht hinüber kan.”
[98] “alle Tage Augenscheinlich zusehen / daß einer zu Todt fällt / ein ander Erhenkt / Ertrånckt / oder Ersticht sich selbs / der Dritte wirt erstochen / Verzweiffelt vnd dergleichen.”

happens through the despair Mephistopheles mentions, which demons are able to stoke in their victims. Curiously, the *Historia* does not provide a description of the physical mechanism of this influence. Fortunately, Weyer provides a naturalist explanation in line with the *Historia*'s depiction:

> At some point the Devil enters into these bodies, or does not even enter in but agitates and infects the useful humors of the body, or carries the harmful humors into the principal bodily parts […] or disturbs the brain's spirits and imbues them with multifarious forms, and sometimes excites them so that the vital force in these people comes forth more powerfully than in sane people. (Weyer 283)

Here, Weyer provides an explanation for how the devil causes both physical and mental ailments largely by relying on the humoral theory of medicine. Humorism linked body and mind through the humors, which affected both one's physical health and emotional state. However, although Weyer links the devil's ability to affect the body and mind to an ability to physically manipulate the body's humors, he hesitates to state with certainty exactly how this happens, instead proposing various plausible scenarios. This uncertainty may be the reason the *Historia*'s author did not want to put a specific medical theory in Mephistopheles's mouth, or it may just be that the author was afraid of losing readers in the weeds of such details. Why the *Historia* remains silent on the question of physical diseases thought to be caused by demons is unclear, although it does not explicitly reject the proposition.[99] Nevertheless, understanding how humors might be manipulated in combination with what

[99] This is not to say that the *Historia* does not endorse the notion that demons can commit physical assault. Mephistopheles repeatedly threatens and commits acts of physical violence against Faust, and the old man who attempts to reconvert Faust is visited at home by demons acting as poltergeists in chapter 53. However, Mephistopheles makes no mention of demon-borne disease.

Weyer asserts about "disturbing the brain's spirits" to excite victims' vital forces gets at the heart of the affliction the *Historia* emphases at the expense of physical maladies: possession.

Although the present-day conception of "possession" has largely been shaped by extreme depictions in works of popular cultural, perhaps none as influential as *The Exorcist*, the Early Modern concept covered a broad range of mental phenomenon. These covered conditions we would associate with mental and mood disorders today, as well as mental illness, self-harm, and suicidal ideation as suggested by Mephistopheles initial reply to Faust. In reliance on possession as an explanation, Early Modern physicians like Weyer experienced what Ludwick Fleck called a "stylistically consistent thought constraint," that is, possession represented a plausible explanation for certain mental phenomenon consistent with humoral theory and demonology otherwise inexplicable within the natural philosophy of the time and (107).[100] This is not to say that everything that would now be considered a mental disorder or illness would immediately be seen as possession. In *De praestigiis*, for instance, Weyer quotes Philip Melanchthon asserting that, "Although sometimes there are natural causes for frenzy, or delirium or madness," these conditions can also be brought about by demons, "whether accompanying natural causes or not" (469). Thus, possession could represent either a cause or comorbidity depending on the patient. Possession also applied to phenomena far removed from what would be considered symptoms of mental illness today. For instance, Mephistopheles reveals to Faust the names of specific devils who "incited" (*reizte*) various Biblical figures to sin and bad decision resulting in death and disaster (*Historia* 34–5). This includes the decision of King David to take a military census,

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[100] Fleck explores the question of possession as a medical explanation in a discussion of Paracelsus's writings on the case of a patient supposedly possessed by a demon. He notes that Paracelsus relies on the concept of "wonder" to resolve the apparent contradiction between the fact of possession despite the presence of the means supposedly meant to realize salvation from such affliction (39).

which mysteriously results in the deaths of 70,000 Israelites in *2 Samuel* 24,[101] and the temptation of Solomon to pray to foreign idols in *1 Kings* 11:4. When Mephistopheles chides Faust that he really needs look no further than himself for examples of demonic affliction, Faust responds by asking "Have you thus also possessed me" (*Historia* 35)?[102] Faust's question explicitly frames all of the demonic actions described in the chapter under the umbrella of possession, despite their apparent differences. The sins explicable at least in part by possession thus did not end with suicide, massacre, and idolatry but also extended to Faust's own cardinal sin of curiosity.

If the idea of agitated humors makes sense for many of the actions incited by possession, especially those having to do with heightened emotional states, others, such as the temptation to worship strange gods or pursue forbidden research, seem to involve more complicated mental processes. This is particularly true in Faust's own case. Mephistopheles replies to his question about whether he has been possessed by explaining that at every turn demons had incited him to greater sin, "Yes, why not? For as soon as we saw your heart, the thoughts with which you carried on, and that no one else could be of use to you in your undertaking and work […] we made your thoughts and research still bolder and more insolent […]. Finally, we brought you to the point that you gave yourself to us body and soul" (*Historia* 35).[103] Mephistopheles's assertion that demons made Faust's "thoughts and research bolder and more insolent," combined with the intellectual and imaginative nature of his sins, implies something beyond what humors could effectively explain. Here, what Weyer

[101] The *Historia* inaccurately places the number of dead at 60,000 (34).
[102] "So hastu mich auch besessen?"
[103] "Ja / warumb nicht? Denn sobald wir dein Herz besahen / mit was Gedancken du vmbgiengest / vnd wie du niemand sonste zu deinem solchen Fürnemen vnnd Wad kondtest brauchen vnd haben […] so machten mir deine Gedancken vnd Nachforschen noch frecher und kecker […] Letzlich brachten wir dich dahin / daß du dich mit Leib vnd Seel vns ergabest."

writes about demons' ability to disturb the "brain's spirits" becomes operative as an explanation. In the passages quoted above, Weyer is somewhat vague about the mechanism of this disturbance, but he clarifies the process elsewhere in *De praestigiis*. For instance, "Having obtained from God the power of forming [phantasms] and impressing them upon physical spirits of the soul," Weyer claims devils can provoke visions (188), and "Furthermore […] the human intellect can be assisted by the good intelligence of an angel, so as to arrive at a knowledge of something by reason of an illumination […]. And the Devil can do the same by means of his undiminished natural power" (189). This claim may strike modern readers as extraordinary. However, beginning from the premise that humans have souls, which are the seat of the intellect, and that those souls are composed of physical—if simultaneously spiritual—matter, it follows that a creature, be it angelic or demonic, composed of a similar physical matter could directly influence its functions. This would have provided physician-scholars like Weyer a naturalist explanation for both religious revelations and ecstatic visions and demonic possession.

By filling Faust's head, or more precisely the spirit in his brain, with suggestions and images of what he could achieve if only he had the devil's help, the demons that possessed Faust drove him, or at least encouraged him, along the road to damnation. Faust's reaction to Mephistopheles's revelation is telling: "Worse, I have ensnared myself. If my thoughts had been godly and I had kept praying to God and had not let the devil enroot himself so much in me, I would not have met with such evil of body and soul" (*Historia* 35).[104] This confession is, of course, meant as a warning aimed at the *Historia* readers to stay on the straight and narrow path or risk falling prey to possession themselves. It emphasizes a recurring theme of

[104] "Auch habe ichmich selbst gefangen / hette ich Gottselige Gedancken gehabt / ynd mich mit dem Gebett zu Gott gehalten / auch den Teuffel nicht so sehr bey mir einwurtzeln lassen / so were mir solchs Vbel an Leib vnnd Seel nicht begegnet."

personal responsibility in the *Historia*. Everyone is responsible for their sins and for seeking their salvation. Nonetheless, the implications of Faust's statement are unsettling to say the least. Any lapse of faith, any interest too keen in matters best left alone could invite demonic possession, making it ever harder to turn back toward salvation. That said, Faust also realizes the means by which he could theoretically have prevented possession in the first place or stopped it once it had begun, namely by remaining unwaveringly faithful and prayerful.[105]

More than just expounding demonology in its disputation chapters, the *Historia* also demonstrates demonological principles in its adventure and biographical chapters.[106] In one such instance, Faust sics Mephistopheles on the pious old neighbor who had tried to convert him back to the Christian fold after Mephistopheles dissuades Faust from conversion with threats of physical violence and convinces him to sign a second pact.[107] Angry, Faust demands the old man's life, but Mephistopheles, after first attempting to frighten the old man as a poltergeist, is unable to make inroads and is forced to abandon his assault. Reporting his failure to Faust, Mephistopheles admits that "he was unable to get at him, because he was harnessed, meaning with prayer" (*Historia* 105).[108] "Harnessed" here means armored, and the passage is explicit that the old man's pious prayers have granted him a protection from the devil that Faust, in his impiety, lacked. Moreover, the chapter ends by noting, "Thus God protects all pious Christians against the evil spirit, so long as they give themselves to God and follow his commands" (105).[109] In this passage as in Faust's realization of his own possession, the *Historia* seems to suggest that the Godfearing have nothing to fear from the

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[105] This solution, of course, recalls
[106] See section "" below.
[107] The story of the pious old neighbor is another anecdote apparently borrowed from Witekind's *Christlich bedencken* (86).
[108] "er hette jhme nicht beykommen können / dann er geharrnischt gewest seye / das Gebett meynende."
[109] "Also beschützet Gott alle fromme Christen / so sich Gott ergeben vnnd befehlen wider den bösen Geist."

devil and that pious prayer provides effective armor against possession. However, it also demonstrates that those like Faust who have made pacts with the devil can send their spirits against the innocent, confirming one of the great fears of the age of the witch trials, if also shifting responsibility for such attacks from witches to necromancers. In its focus on personal responsibility, the *Historia* seems to suggest that demonic possession results either directly from particular sinful choices or from a lack of piety that would otherwise have prevented the demonic assault. Nevertheless, in caveating the protection afforded by God to those who submit themselves to him and his commandments, the *Historia* omits the harder questions of how one knows whether one's faith and obedience to God is sufficient, or what if one finds themself in a state in which it is difficult or impossible to act on their piety?

De praestigiis, as a more specialized work of demonology, presents possession more clearly as a medical condition. Further it explains how the risk of such is exacerbated by certain preexisting conditions, "Melancholics are of this sort, as are persons distressed because of loss or for any other reason […] There are also the people without faith in God, the impious, the illicitly curious […], the envious, those who cannot restrain their hatred, the malicious, old women not in possession of their faculties" (180–1). Clearly Faust has become the very embodiment of the "impious" and "illicitly curious," but while the envious, malicious, and hateful all represent sinners of some sort, melancholics, the bereaved, and those "not in possession of their faculties" do not. Weyer's reference particularly to old women who are no longer fully in command of their minds has everything to do with the witch hunts and trying to justify why they might be possessed through no fault of their own. Yet the very admission that the devil may strike the most vulnerable, while it offers a plausible explanation for mental disorders within the syncretic medical thinking of the time,

reveals a contingent world, in which unwavering faith and constant prayer represent the only possible defenses, even for those without the faculties to fully rely upon them. In these cases, presumably one would be dependent on the prayers of pious neighbors like Faust's. Weyer quotes Melanchthon to this effect in *De praestigiis*, citing his view on a series of supposed possessions in Rome, where "poor maidens" were being tormented "by devils as a sign of punishment for Italy and for other nations," that the malady of possession "can be ended and the devils expelled, by the sincere prayers of pious men" (470). However, underlying this assertion is the acceptance that the innocent, poor maids and old crones alike, might be possessed not as punishment for their own sins but for those of others.

Because the old neighbor is shown to be fully in command of his mind, the *Historia* does not explicitly tackle the question of demonic possession in the senile, but it does do so indirectly. In explaining the Biblical case of Solomon turning to foreign gods because of demonic possession, the *Historia* omits that Solomon does so only when very old and at the behest of his wives, potentially suggesting senility (*1 Kings* 11:4). If Solomon, to whom God had twice appeared, could be possessed in his dotage, how likely was it that the average reader could maintain a piety as perfect as Faust's neighbor? As for Faust himself, scholars have often labeled him as a melancholic for his brooding and emotional responses throughout the *Historia* (Meyer 208; Münkler 294). If Faust is a victim of the devil as much for his inborn temperament as his curiosity, then he becomes all the more a sympathetic figure. Moreover, if melancholia is a result of humoral imbalances of the sort demons can cause by possession, which then allows them to incite their victims further, the worldview that produced the *Historia*, and which it in turn attempts to explain, is an extremely contingent one. Any number of accidents, whether of inborn temperament, personal loss, aging, or

necromantic neighbors could leave one open to demonic possession with all of its consequences.

It is thus little wonder that the era strikes us in the present day as extremely paranoid, nor is it any wonder that readers would seek comfort in any morsel of certain knowledge about their world that they could glean from works like the *Historia*. With its supposed first-hand account of the workings of devils, the *Historia* offered its readership insight into one of the central preoccupations of a Europe embroiled in the anxiety provoked by the witch trials at the end of the sixteenth century. No doubt of greatest importance to those readers, it suggested they could ward off the devil by maintaining an unshakeable piety, albeit while hinting at just how contingent that was on divine Providence. This question of Providence, implicit throughout the demonological disputations with regard to what God allows and prevents, becomes explicit in the natural philosophical disputations that follow, for even as it suggests the contingencies of a spiritual universe inhabited by demons, the *Historia* also suggests the determinism of a natural world ruled by the stars. Pushing his demonological questioning of Mephistopheles too far, Faust asks in chapter 17 what Mephistopheles would do in his position, Mephistopheles tell Faust that he would repent and seek God's forgiveness but also suggests that Faust will never be able to bring himself to repent. Mephistopheles then refuses to answer any more of Faust's theological questions.[110] This refusal marks the end of the *Historia*'s first part and is repeated at the beginning of its second part, which advertises itself as "the other part of these stories about Faust's adventures and other

[110] Faust tries to get around this at the end of his disputations with Mephistopheles in chapter 22, by asking the ultimate syncretic question about how God created the world and humankind, but Mephistopheles answer is the explicit lie alluded to earlier, which will be addressed at length in the following chapter.

questions."[111] These questions concern natural philosophy, but a natural philosophy dominated almost singularly by the heavens.

Disputations "Mathematical" and Meteorological

Transitioning from questions about demons and questions about the stars may seem like a non sequitur to modern readers, but there is an internal logic to the juxtaposition related to interest in the era about these two powerful natural forces that presented a source of ongoing public concern and debate throughout the sixteenth and into the seventeenth century. Additionally, the *Historia*'s emphasis on the transition from Faust and Mephistopheles's first subject of disputation to their second gives it narrative significance. By opening the *Historia*'s second section by noting that Faust begins making astrological calendars "when he was no longer able to elicit a response from the spirit to his godly questions," the text provides a justification for Faust to end his explicitly demonological questioning, even if he has not asked every conceivable question, and move onto questions about the stars. Textually, then, it is a shift to the next voice in the *Historia*'s thematic polyphony and one with a certain coherence. Both demons and the stars stood for the occult, that is, invisible, but seemingly omnipresent forces in Early Modern life that many of the era's best minds saw as the defining features of the natural world, and thus about which the *Historia*'s readers would doubtless have questions. Nor are the astrological disputations devoid of demonology. Perhaps most of all, though, where demonology was thought to impart knowledge about crucial aspects of the spiritual world, the sidereal sciences were thought to explain the most

[111] "der ander Theil dieser Historien / von Fausti Abenthewren vnd andern Fragen." The "adventures" referred to here are Faust's journeys to hell and around the world, which will be discussed in the following chapter, and his into the heavens, which will be discussed in chapter 4.

important aspects of life in the material world. Hence, the two Early Modern sciences complemented each other. Both likewise represented edge cases of the explanatory power of Christian Aristotelianism, and in the case of astronomy, it was an explanation already beginning to unravel in the wake of Copernicus. At the same time, where the *Historia*'s exploration of demonology gestured at a terrifying contingency in the spiritual mechanics of salvation, however, its turn toward astronomy and astrology reveals a fatal contradiction in the vision it embraces of a Melanchthonian cosmic Providence caught between an oppressive astrological determinism and an ostensible allegiance to free will.

More than just a complementary science to demonology, astrology had also become a truly popular science by the end of the sixteenth century. From the turn of the sixteenth century on, the majority of practicas published within the Holy Roman Empire were printed in the German vernacular, and by 1587 the number of annual practica editions in German was still rising steadily as part of a trend that had begun in the mid-sixteenth century and would still not reach its high point for more than a decade (Barnes 173). Alongside these practicas containing predictions for the coming year of major events and the general fortunes of princes and peoples were the vernacular calendars, or almanacs, the astrological forerunners of their modern counterparts, which helped diffuse astrological thinking more widely through an increasingly literate, though not necessarily Latin educated, public. While the earlier almanacs of the fifteenth century had offered some important dates and astronomical information, their focus had been on lunar tables and information on eclipses primarily for use in timing medical treatments, particularly the now infamous practice of bleeding, or phlebotomy, but by the sixteenth century, these had evolved into more fulsome calendars offering advice based on astrological calculations that reached into nearly every

aspect of daily life from travel and business to husbandry, hygiene, childcare, and friendship (26–7). It is within this context of astrological ubiquity and popularity that the *Historia* positions Faust as having earned his fame not only as a necromancer but as an astrologer and uses that as a point of departure for its series of disputations on astronomy astrology, astronomy, and meteorology.

Likely trading on the reputation as a prognosticator that the historical Faust had made during his lifetime, the *Historia* casts him as the greatest astrologer and calendar maker of his day. Obviously, this diverges wildly from the opinions of Faust's divinatory skills expressed by many of his more illustrious contemporaries in the previous chapter, but it fits both with the general tendency of the Faust figure to subsume all of his magical predecessors' legends into his own growing mythology and with the specific tendency of the *Historia* to depict Faust as the diabolist *nonpareil*. In chapter 18, the first of part 2, in the *Historia* the reader learns of Faust,

> His practicas, too, which he dedicated to princes and great lords were so accurate because he followed his spirit's auguries and interpretations of events and things to come, which thus also proved true. So, too, did people praise his calendars and almanacs above others, for he placed nothing in the calendar that did not transpire, so when he placed fog, wind, snow, moisture, warmth, thunder, hail, etc. it then came to pass. […] In his practicas, he also named the very hour when some future event was to happen, warning each domain in particular when they would be afflicted, this one with scarcity, that one with war, a third with widespread death, and so on. (44)[112]

[112] "So stimpten auch seine Practicken / die er Fürsten vnnd grossen Herren dedicierte / vbereyn / Denn er richtette sich nach seines Geistes Weissagungen vnnd Deutungen zufünfftiger ding und Fäl / welche sich auch also erzeigten. So lobte man auch seine Calendar vnd Allmanach vor andern / denn er setzte Nebel / Windt / Schnee / Feucht / Warm / Donner / Hagel / etc. hat sichs also verloffen. […] Er machte auch in seinen

These three sentences reveal a great deal about the *Historia*'s worldview. Dedicating practicas to princes and lords was a common practice in the sixteenth century, as was the focus on apocalyptic events like crop failures, war, and death, but being able to not only accurately but precisely predict when such events would happen was unheard of. With regard to Faust's calendars, today's meteorologists can still only dream of a precise 10-day weather forecast, let alone a full year of accurate predictions. If the register seems off between the equal praise of Faust's predictions of war and famine in his practicas and the precision of his weather forecasts, the connection would perhaps have been intuitive to the *Historia*'s readers. As Keith Thomas observes in *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, in sixteenth-century societies dependent on the harvest, "it was not possible for a weather forecast to remain simply a weather forecast. Inexorably, it carried with it a chain of far-reaching consequences of a social and political character" (334).[113] Thus, Faust's ability to accurately predict the weather would also have contributed to his ability to predict the challenges facing various polities. It is precisely this uncanny accuracy that makes Faust the ideal astrologer in the *Historia*, the very fulfillment of the dream of astrology, to accurately predict the future through scientific analysis of the stars.

Perhaps surprisingly, the *Historia* does not balk at the fact that Faust's prognostications are demonically informed. Instead, it reserves its criticism for the vague and unscientific work of "inexperienced *astrologi* [who] make their practicas according to hunches and what they think is best" (45).[114] This sentiment echoes common complaints

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Practicken Zeit vnd Stunde / wann was Künfftiges geschehen solt / warnete ein jede Herrschafft besonder / als die jetzt mit Theuwrung / die ander mit Krieg / die dritte mit Sterben / vnnd also forthan / sollte angegriffen werden."

[113] As a case in point, the largest witch hunts during the period from 1560–1660 occurred during periods of repeated bad harvests (Monter 23).

[114] "Vnerfahrne Astrologi machen jhre Practica nach gutem Wohn vnd Gutdüncken."

about the vagueness and universal applicability of the astrological predictions found in calendars and almanacs, complaints which became increasingly prominent after the mid-seventeenth century (Thomas 335–6). Of course, even taking the scientific status of astrology as seriously as was generally done in the sixteenth century, predictions of the precision exhibited by Faust in the *Historia* are plainly impossible as described. They answered a dream of perfect scientific knowability at odds with the religious vision of a world in which God interceded providentially on behalf of the faithful. Thus, sixteenth-century astrologers tended to temper their predictions with acknowledgments, sometimes presented as hopes, that God would change his mind and their predictions would not come to pass. Andreas Rosa's practica for the year 1596 provides an illustrative example in his entry for the month of May where, after describing the likelihood of a late thaw because of the sun's position in the cold sign of Virgo, writes, "may gracious God for the sake of Christ graciously turn such away and drive it over his foes and ours, maintaining and blessing for us, however, the coronation of the field's love and beauty for our daily bread" (B-iii).[115] It is, of course, hard not to read this as a hedge or a preemptive defense, should the prediction prove false. However, this sort of statement is entirely consistent within a syncretic thought style that sees astral influence as a natural property that can be calculated scientifically but which can at any time be redirected by the will of God. In this context, the fantasy expressed in Faust's unerring prognostications thus expresses not only an impossibility but seems, at least, to come close to a denial of God's sovereign will.

Impossible or not, the *Historia* seems to have inflated Faust's astrological reputation to the point that Rosa felt the need to defend his own approach against it. In the same practica

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[115] "Wolle der gnedige Gott / vmb Chrifti willen /solchen gnedig abwenden /vnd vber seine vnnd vnsere Feinde treiben Uns aber die liebe ond schöne Des Feldes Kronung/zu unserm teglichen brot erhalten vnd segnen."

for 1596, Rosa specifically condemns astrology as pursued by Theophrastus, meaning Paracelsus, Faust, and Michael Scotus (A-iii). This seems to indicate that the *Historia*'s claims about Faust's astrological skill were taken seriously by at least some readers.[116] That it is Mephistopheles who teaches Faust to predict events with such preternatural accuracy does not seem to be an issue. Faust may be damned by his means of getting it, but the knowledge Faust gathers is still good. The lack of condemnation perhaps indicates just how deeply entrenched the dream of a perfected astrological had become in at least some quarters of European society by the late sixteenth century. However, although present throughout Europe since at least the twelfth century, astrology had become increasingly embroiled in the confessional conflicts of the sixteenth century and so the *Historia*'s affirmation of judicial, i.e., predictive, astrology as a licit science represents a confessional position-taking in the growing divide over the theological and scientific status of astrology.

Printed in 1587 by a Lutheran printer in a majority Lutheran city, it is hardly surprising that the *Historia* not only asserts the essential truth of astrology but seems to advocate its broad use. The Protestant, particularly the Lutheran, cities of the HRE accounted for roughly 90% of the German vernacular astrological literature boom in the century following 1530, a situation which had a material basis in the less urban and less literate Catholic population of the empire (Barnes 173). However, this Lutheran quasi-monopoly on vernacular also resulted from increasingly strict institutional restrictions on what constituted licit astrology. In 1586, the year before the *Historia*'s publication, Pope Sixtus V issued a bull, *Coeli et terrae*, reiterating and tightening the Catholic church's stance against judicial

[116] It cannot be ruled out that Rosa is referring to the astrological practice of the historical Faust, but given the time in which he is writing, the vernacular audience he is writing for, and his simultaneous allusion to the legend of Michael Scotus, it seems most likely he is referring to the Faust of the *Historia*, not the Faust Philipp Begardi took to task more than 50 years before.

astrology, for all intents and purposes as an anti-Lutheran measure (Mahlmann-Bauer 148–50). This anti-astrological stance traced back to the ninth article of the "Ten Rules Concerning Prohibited Books" issued by Pope Pius IV for the Inquisition's *Index of Forbidden Books* following the Council of Trent in 1564, which restricted licit astrology to "natural observations" related to "navigation, agriculture or the medical art."[117] This rule effectively banned texts on judicial astrology, including practicas like those composed by Faust, within Catholic territories. Already by 1570 the Jesuit mathematician Christopher Clavius had excluded astrology entirely from his commentary on Sacrobosco's *De Sphaera*, the thirteenth-century astronomical treatise that served as a primary textbook for astronomy from the Medieval period until the early seventeenth century, effectively banning it from the Catholic curriculum (Collins 341).[118] These increasingly anti-astrological measures across the later-sixteenth century represent a confessional counterpoint to the place astrology assumed in Lutheran science after the university curriculum reforms undertaken by Philip Melanchthon at Wittenberg in the 1530s and 40s, reforms which placed astronomy and astrology at the center of a new conception of natural philosophy.

Although astrology's popularity in central Europe long predated him, Philip Melanchthon, whose influence on Early Modern German thought has earned him the moniker *Praeceptor Germaniae*, played the key role in making it into a central facet of

[117] The full text of the ninth article takes aim at diabolic magic and divination more generally before turning to the question of judicial astrology: "All books and writings dealing with geomancy, hydromancy, aeromancy, pyromancy, oneiromancy, chiromancy, necromancy, or with sortilege, mixing of poisons, augury, auspices, sorcery, magic arts, are absolutely repudiated. The bishops shall diligently see to it that books, treatises, catalogues determining destiny by astrology, which in the matter of future events, consequences, or fortuitous occurrences, or of actions that depend on the human will, attempt to affirm something as certain to take place, are not read or possessed. Permitted, on the other hand, are the opinions and natural observations which have been written in the interest of navigation, agriculture or the medical art" (Pius IV).

[118] This did not meant astrology was absent from Catholic countries or Catholic medicine. Rather, it restored the situation that had existed before the fifteenth century inclusion of astrology in university curricula, i.e., medical students would be expected to learn astrology outside of the classroom. Nevertheless, it had the effect of largely keeping astrological predictions out of the public discourse in Catholic territories.

Lutheran cultural and scientific thinking. For Melanchthon, astronomy not only represented the most important of the mathematical sciences—placing it above even the "pure" numerical sciences of geometry and arithmetic—but also an essential part of philosophy writ large (Methuen 393–3). Clavius's 1570 commentary on *De Sphaera* rejecting astrology can be seen as a response to Melanchthon's own 1531 introduction to Sacrobosco astronomical work, which offered a Providentialist interpretation of astronomy that included a defense of astrology and would be reprinted twenty-four times over the next fifty years (Kusukawa 126–9, note 22). Melanchthon would build on this thinking in his 1549 *Initiae doctrinae physicae*, his own natural philosophical textbook, which prominently addresses astronomy and astrology in its very first chapter. In that opening chapter, Melanchthon does away with the distinction usually observed between natural philosophy, or physics, which typically applied only to sublunary bodies, and astronomy, which addressed celestial bodies, collapsing both into natural philosophy with the justification that what happened in the higher spheres causally effected bodies on earth (Kusukawa 148–9). In Melanchthon's natural philosophy, then, earth and the heavens form a single system, united by the influence the heavenly bodies exert on the earthly. This new natural philosophy also rearticulated natural phenomena in terms of their relationship to divine Providence, but otherwise, Melanchthon's system in the *Initiae doctrinae* remained recognizable within the Christian Aristotelian tradition. His cosmology adhered to the geocentric Ptolemaic-Aristotelian model inherited from Sacrobosco, rejecting the heliocentric model proposed by Copernicus in 1543.[119]

The idea of a popular science work on natural philosophical topics including astrology and astronomy would not have been novel in 1587. Melanchthon had encouraged a

[119] Interestingly, Melanchthon did include Copernicus's revised calculations of Ptolemy with regards to solar and planetary motion (Kusakwaw 148).

general education in the rudiments of astrology as early as 1542 (Barnes 149). Like the popular works on demonology represented by the *Teufelsbücher*, popular works on natural philosophical topics aimed at laymen had begun to proliferate in Protestant cities in tandem with the growth of lay education, but these tended either to focus on hygiene and herbology or specific meteorological events (159). Although astrological timing might have been included in the former for maximum effect or astrological interpretation in the latter to explain its origins and import, these were not necessarily works from which readers would glean a general understanding about the workings of the cosmos. Nevertheless, German mathematicians did publish vernacular literature tackling astrology and astronomy directly, including the physician Eucharius Rösslin, Jr.'s 1534 *Kalender mit allen Astronomischen haltungen* ("Calendar with all astronomical positions") and the anonymous 1545 *Astronomia. Teutsche Astronomei*, both published like the *Historia* in Frankfurt. Although works like these often included elements opposed by reform-minded mathematicians as superstitious, they also frequently bore strong similarities to more academically oriented works, citing frequently from standard works in the field and requiring a strong grasp of arithmetic and geometry (158). These works also tended to be quite long and dry, with both Rösslin's *Kalender* and the *Astronomia*, for example, being around 150 pages of dense type.

These works did feature numerous woodcut images, used much the same way demonological texts employed frequent anecdotes, to break up the monotony of the text and illustrate its key points. However, like the vernacular demonology texts of Bodin or Witekind, these texts were essentially technical in nature and would likely have been difficult for readers without a robust education, like those in Scribner's first category. For instance, figure 2 at the end of this section presents page xxviii recto of Rösslin's *Kalender*, which

offers guidelines for bloodletting but employs astrological symbols and Latinate medical jargon throughout, probably making it inaccessible to those with only a rudimentary education. Here, the *Historia* fulfills much the same role in the astronomical sphere that it does in the demonological, to wit, presenting the key concepts of the field, as established by widely accepted authorities, in a concise and entertaining matter. The disputations, after all, are meant to answer readers' questions by having Mephistopheles answer Faust's, and by working these Q & As on meteorology, astrology, and astronomy into its narrative framework, the *Historia* also suggests a cohesiveness lacking in works devoted to only one topic or neatly divided into separate considerations. This thematic cohesion reflects the Lutheran Providentialist view underlying Melanchthon's *Initia doctrinae* and is further enhanced by its continuation into the realm of demonology.

Melanchthon's astral vision permeates the *Historia*'s natural philosophical disputations. Although the opening questions of the *Historia*'s natural philosophical disputations establish the scientific reality and reliability of astrology, the remaining focus largely on astronomical and meteorological topics. These disputations move without distinction between the astronomical movements of celestial bodies and the meteorological effects these movements have on earth, sometimes within the same chapter, indicating a natural philosophical unity reflective of Melachthonian scientific thinking. When, in attempt to get around his spirit's embargo on theological questions, Faust asks Mephistopheles about the "heavens' course, adornment, and origin,"[120] Mephistopheles confirms a syncretic cosmos in the Melanchthonian vein, telling Faust that "the God who made you also made the world and all the elements under heaven […] and divided the waters from the waters calling

[120] "deß Himmels Lauff / Zierde vnnd Vrsprung."

the firmament the heavens. Thus are the heavens spherical and disc-like […] and above in the heavens it also looks like a crystal" (*Historia* 46–7).[121] Here, the creation of the Aristotelian elements and cosmos is worked into the Biblical story of God's creation of humans and the earth. The description of the creation of the firmament draws its language directly from *Genesis* 1:6, but now the division "of the waters from the waters" serves as an explanation for why the heavens are spherical and translucently crystalline as they are in the Ptolemaic-Aristotelian model of concentric celestial spheres. Mephistopheles's discourse thus serves to confirm for readers that both the Christian story of creation and classical account of cosmology are true and do not contradict each other. The devil then goes on to offer a concise primer on the elemental division of the cosmos, the seven classical planets, celestial motion, and how elemental interactions cause weather, all points consistent with the tradition reaffirmed by Melanchthon in his introduction to *De Sphaera* and *Initiae doctrinae*.

Perhaps most importantly, the astronomical disputations within the *Historia* also affirm the earth's special Providence within the divine system. The cosmological model Mephistopheles articulates to Faust in the *Historia* is a geocentric one in which the heavens contain "twelve radii that encircle the earth and the water" (47).[122] "The earth and the water" here refer to the earth as a whole, and the radii refer to the representations of the cosmological spheres on charts from the era, not dissimilar to present-day maps of planetary orbits except with the earth at the center. The twelve radii Mephistopheles describes can be seen in figure 1 at the end of this section, which is an image of a Portuguese cosmological chart from 1568. The two sublunary spheres beyond the earth itself correspond to an inner

[121] "Der GOtt , der dich erschaffen hat / hat auch die Welt / vnnd alle Elementa unter dem Himmel erschaffen […], vnd theilet die Wasser vom Wasser […] So ist der Himmel Kuglecht vnnd Scheiblecht […] vnnd sihet auch oben im Himmel wie ein Cristall."
[122] "zwo̊lff Vmbkreiß / welche die Erde vnnd das Wasser vmbringen."

sphere of air and an outer sphere of fire, then thought to compose the earth's atmosphere, the next seven spheres belong to the planets, including the sun, followed by the firmament where the stars are affixed, which is in turn surrounded by the sphere of the prime movers, and finally everything is encompassed by the empyrean realm of God beyond the stars. Not only does earth reside at the center of this universe in this schema, however, but God speaks to those on earth through the rest of the cosmos. In the second set of natural philosophical disputations, in which Faust answers his colleagues' questions about meteorological and astronomical phenomena, Faust combines naturalistic with astrological explanations, articulating a Melanchthonian astronomy of a natural universe charged with theological meaning.

This combination of the natural and theological comes through most clearly in Faust's description to his colleagues of falling stars and comets. Faust points out that these are not actually falling stars but merely "sparks"[123] and that "no star falls from the heavens without God's special Providence. Should God want to punish the people and land, thereupon such stars bring heavens' clouds with it, thereby bringing great flooding, or heat, and ruin of people and lands" (*Historia* 75).[124] Important in Faust's explanation is that, as a rule, the stars are fixed in the firmament in line with classical astronomy, and the so-called "falling stars" seen at night are merely some kind of natural sparks. However, God does have the power to intervene miraculously and alter the laws of nature, causing a star to actually fall, but he would only do this as Providential punishment. Interestingly, Faust's explanation for the form that punishment would take is naturalistic, explaining how, in falling, the star would

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[123] "Butzen."

[124] "Vnd fällt kein Stern / one Gottes sondere verhengnuß / vom Himmel / es wölle dann Gott Landt vnd Leut straffen / alsdann bringen solche Stern das Gewölck deß Himmels mit sich / dardurch folget groß Gewässer / oder Brunst / vnd verderbung Land vnd Leut."

disturb the “clouds,” which here means the airy part of the atmosphere’s two spheres, either bringing down great rains from the clouds in that sphere, or removing the clouds and exposing the earth to the great heat from the fiery sphere of the upper atmosphere. Similarly, Faust provides a naturalistic explanation for the creation of a comet resulting from the moon coming too close to the sun’s heat reminiscent of Aristotle’s own explanation in the *Meteorologica* (51). In the same way that this natural origin does not prevent a comet from representing a “Prodigum” or “Monstrum” of God’s wrath, bringing with it “uprisings, war, or death in the realm as from pestilence,” in addition to the same meteorological disasters a true falling star would occasion (*Historia* 73),[125] neither does its theological significance mean that it cannot cause these calamities naturally. As fiery celestial bodies, comets were thought to be able to effect both the weather and the humors of living creatures, increasing the likelihood of certain actions (Aristotle *Meteorologica* 55; Thomas 334). The *Historia*, thus, presents a cosmology in which even divine Providence becomes a natural phenomenon, open to natural scientific as well as theological understanding, but in this, it only strengthens the determinism it hints at with Faust’s astrological predictions.

The *Historia*’s description of comets and fallen stars as signs of God’s Providence fit neatly within Melanchthon’s natural philosophy, but in merging Melanchthonian mathematics with demonology, the Faust book reveals the core tension at the heart of Early Modern Lutheran Providentialism. For Melanchthon, God had written warning of his wrath into the heavens, such that astrologers capable of interpreting those signs could provide humans fair warning in order that they might repent, pray, and potentially convince God to spare them (Metheun 395). After explaining the origin and significance of comets, Faust

[125] “Auffruhr / krieg oder sterben im Reich / als Pestilentz.”

alludes to his source of information, "the evil spirits equipped with their instruments to know the Providence of God" (*Historia* 73).[126] In this passage, the three forces that, according to Melanchthon, determine human fate meet: the stars whose influence inclines us toward certain actions, the devils who tempt us to certain actions, and the Providence of God, which can save us despite our sinful actions (Barnes 147). Human will for Melanchthon, as for Luther, was hardly free and so weak compared to these forces as to hardly count, leaving humans entirely reliant on God's grace to save them. That grace, however, is scarce in the *Historia*. In fact, Faust's reference to the evil spirits capable of learning God's Providence recalls something Mephistopheles tell him at the beginning of their disputations that calls into question whether God's wrath despite being foreknown can ever be averted.

Demons, like all natural creatures, have their place in the cosmos, and the natural philosophical disputations not only specify where that is but what they do there. In his description of the cosmos, Mephistopheles tells Faust that demons live in the airy sphere of the earth's atmosphere, hidden among the clouds (*Historia* 47). Later, when asked by a colleague about storms, Faust explains that devils manipulate the air when the winds blow strongly to create thunder in this region above the earth (76). Intriguingly, although it reveals how close to humans demons dwell, the *Historia* offers no indication where angels live within the physical universe. More than just being able to manipulate the weather as a consequence of living in the airy sphere above the earth, demons are also able to study the stars and their influence more clearly and accurately than humans. As Mephistopheles tells Faust when he first inquires about astrology, "it is the hidden work of God, which humans cannot fathom as we spirits who float beneath the heavens, who can see God's Providence

[126] "bösen Geister / so die verhängnuß Gottes wissen / mit jren Jnstrumenten gerüst sind."

and make deductions therefrom" (45).[127] Accordingly, astrology does not represent forbidden knowledge but merely knowledge hidden from humans by overcast skies and the amount of time necessary to study it fully. Mephistopheles has been able to teach Faust to make such accurate astrological predictions because devils live so long and reside within easy sight of the stars, enabling them to perfect the mathematical sciences, but this perfection brings with it troubling implications.

While the uncanny accuracy of Faust's astrological predictions, mentioned earlier in this section, at first seem to hint at a determinism opposed to God's sovereignty, the *Historia* reveals them to be signs of a determinism resulting from that divine sovereignty. As Mephistopheles informs Faust, "I could also make for you, Herr Faust, an eternal chronicle for writing practicas and calendars or researching nativities, year after year. As you've seen, I've never lied to you" (*Historia* 45).[128] Here Mephistopheles makes explicit the question of how Faust could know that the devil was telling him, and by extension the reader, the truth, with the precision of the predictions resulting from Mephistopheles's instructions offering the ultimate proof point. In doing so, however, the devil also reveals that such predictions can be carried out ad infinitum. Because these calculations are made by reading God's providence and deducing effects from the causes writ there, this natural determinism actually reflects God's sovereign will. It implies, however, that God has already determined what will happen regardless of the prayers and petitions, or perhaps, already taking them into consideration. The *Historia*'s vision of astrology, then, is of a perfectible science, capable of precisely predicting the future, but a science that, in achieving perfection, loses its primary

[127] "es sind verborgene Werck GOTtes / welche die Menschen nicht / wie wir Geister / die wir im Lufft / unter dem Himmel schweben / die Verhängnuß Gottes sehen / vnd abnemmen / ergründen können."
[128] "Ich kondte dir auch / Her Fauftc / Practica vnd Calender zu schreiben / oder von der Natiuitet zu erforschen / ein ewige Auffzeichnung thun / vnd also ein Jahr vmb das ander / wie du gesehen hast / daß ich dir nie gelogen hab."

function, namely predicting events so that they can be prevented through prayer or human action. There is a feeling of predestination here, at least in the natural realm, if not in that of salvation. While it is possible that the *Historia*'s anonymous author held crypto-Calvinist leanings on this point, it suffices to think that the author simply took the scientific thinking of the time to a logical conclusion and there encountered a contradiction between the natural philosophical and theological assumptions within that thought style.

In the realm of nature, the God that emerges in the *Historia* is reminiscent of the Deist vision of divine watchmaker, which will emerge over a century later, except that the *Historia*'s God also permits devils a freedom denied to humans by the Providence written in the stars. What the *Historia*'s disputations ultimately reveal is a humanity caught between the extreme contingency of demonic action and the extreme determinism of natural events. While this should suit the Lutheran worldview, forcing humans to rely on God's grace for salvation, that vision of grace is ultimately at odds with the scientific vision expounded in Faust's disputations with Mephistopheles. There is an inherent contradiction in a world of astral determinism and demonic manipulation that depends on humans to arrive at repentance while demons stoke their humors and pray for deliverance from inevitable catastrophes, the outcomes of which God set in the stars at the beginning of time. The scientific thought style encoded within the *Historia* thus reveals the contradiction at its heart, a world of demons, humors, and astral influences would, theoretically, be perfectly knowable but incompatible with the religious structure that guarantees its validity.

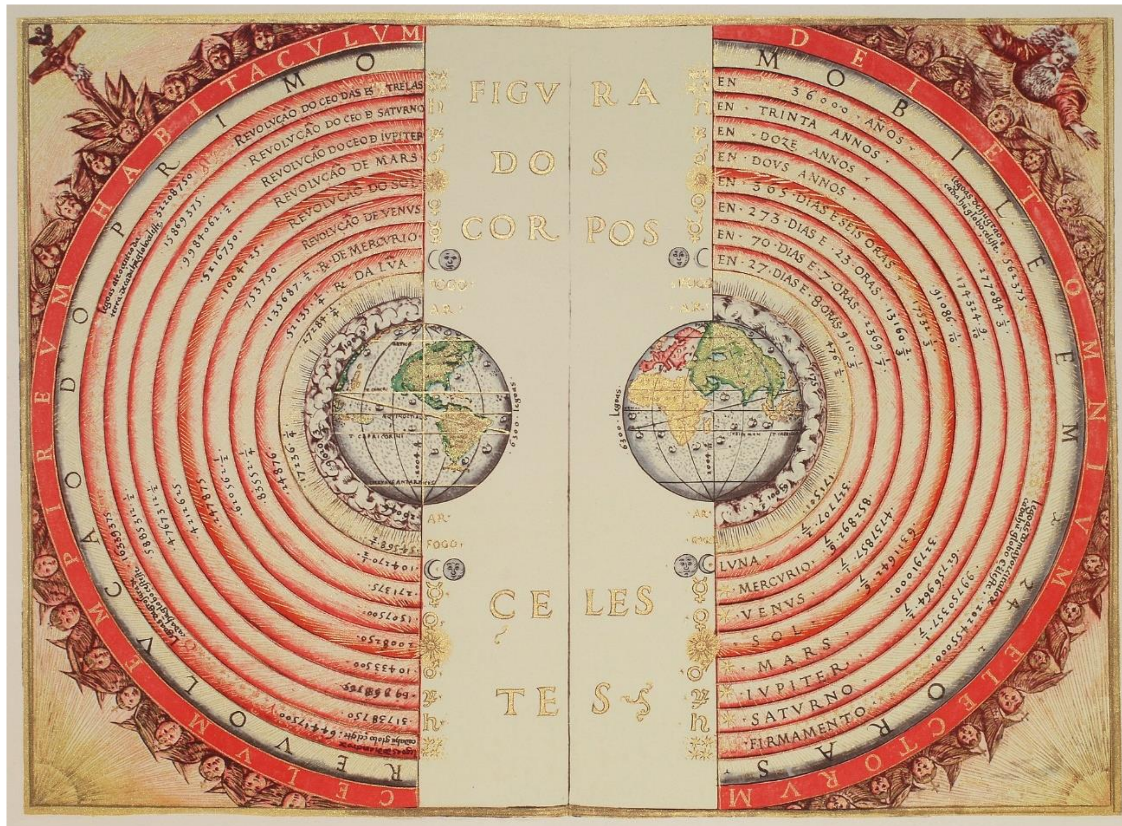

Figure 1: Bartolomeu Velho’s 1561 *Carta General do Orbe* depicting the cosmographic model referenced by Mephistopheles.

XXVIII

Dergleichen so ☽ nicht ist vom ☊ vnd ☋ auff 12. Grad/ soll mann nit lassen.

Es sol auch ♄ nit sein in ☌ □ odder ☍ mit ♂/ Dann dise Aspect mit allem fleiß zumeiden sind.

¶ Aspecten so die Aderlässe fürdern.

☌ ☾ vnd ♃/ Deßgleichen ☾ vnd ♀/ machen erwelt lassen/ alleyn das Venus nit sei entzündt/ oder fast nahe bei der sunnen sei.
□ ☾ vnd ♃ Dergleichen ☾ vnd ♀/ ist ein seer gůt lässe.
⚹ ☾ vnd ♃ Deßgleichen ☾ vnd ♀/ ein vast gůt lässe.
△ ☾ vnd ♃ Deßgleichen ☾ vnd ♀/ vast gůte lässe.
△ vnd ⚹ ☉ vnd ♃ oder ☾/ machen gůte vnd erwelte lässen.
△ ☾ vnd ♂ oder ⚹/ ☾ vnd ♂/ Erwelte lässen.

¶ Welche glider in der Lässe außgenommen werden.

Im ♈. würt außgenommen die hauptader.
Im ♐. werden die hüff außgenommen.
In ♎. Arßbacken forder teyl außgenommen.
In ♒. Schinbeyn außgenommen.
Im ♋ Lung vnd hertz adern außgenommen.
Im ♓ Füß adern außgenommen.

¶ Bequeme alter zum Schrepffen.

Von der ☌ biß zum ersten quartir/ ist Lässe gůt für die Jugent/ Von dem selbigen biß zur ☍ ists gůt für die Jugent vnd mänlich alter. Von der ☍ biß zum andren vierteyl/ ists gůt für die männlichen vnd alten. Von dem letzsten vierteyl/ biß wider zur ☌ ists alleyn gůt für die alten.

¶ Regel zur Lässe.

Nach viertzig Jaren des alters sol die hertzader nit geschlagen werden.

Nach fünfftzig Jaren aber ist die median nit zuschlagen.

Endtlich nach 60. Jaren sol mann gar keyn ader/ dañ auß merck licher vrsachen lassen.

Regeln von der Aderlässe.

In fewrigen Zeychen ist gůt lässe den Phlegmaticis/ Als in ♈/ ♐/ Außgenommen ♌/ dann er ist ein hauß ☉/ darinn mann nit läßt.

In lüfftigen Zeychen ist gůt lässe den Melancholicis / Als inn ♎

vñ

Figure 2: Page xxviii recto of Eucharius Rösslin’s 1534 *Kalender*

Chapter Three: Faust in Translation

1. The Skeptical Turn in the European Episteme

The initial success of the *Historia* in 1587 was remarkable. It saw three editions that year alone and would see seventeen more by 1599, with several editions going through multiple print runs (Jones "Introduction" [*English Faust Book*] 9). Enabled by expanded literacy and the distribution infrastructure of the Early Modern German printing industry, including the Frankfurt Book Fair where Johann Spies introduced the Faust book, the *Historia* became a German bestseller *avant la lettre*. However, in an era before copyright protection, Spies quickly lost control of what might have been his golden goose and seems ultimately to have seen little profit from it. Of those twenty editions, Spies seems to have contributed only two. The rest were pirate editions from which he would have earned nothing. In a mordantly ironic twist, Spies would even end up having to sell his house to a Frankfurt "Junker" by the name of Dr. Johann Faust (Münkler 153). Spies's situation would not have been unusual for the time, but the sheer success of the *Historia* was. What is even more unusual is that the *Historia* did not remain merely a German phenomenon but quickly spread through translation to become perhaps Europe's first "international bestseller" in Low German (1588), Danish (1588), English (1588/92), Flemish (1592), French (1598), and Czech (1611).[129] As a vernacular work in an era still dominated by translations from Latin and Greek, the mere fact of the *Historia*'s translation stands out. However, given its peculiar

[129] Granted, at the time, the territories in which Flemish and Czech were spoken formed part of the Holy Roman Empire, and Low German would now be considered a dialect rather than a separate language. However, the *Historia*'s successful translation into Danish, English, and French alone qualify it for the anyway anachronistic "international bestseller" title. The discrepancy in the date of the English translation will be expounded below.

content and explicitly Lutheran worldview, the extent of its reach and enduring popularity in translation mark it as a significant phenomenon in Early Modern European culture.

The rapid spread of the *Historia* across confessional lines both in German-speaking lands and abroad demonstrates that its Lutheranism was not viewed as essential to its story. The pirate editions, as well as Spies's own attempts to reassert control over the text, resulted in some variation within the corpus of stories in the *Historia*. Mostly this meant expanding the contents of the book's later chapters with more anecdotes about Faust, most of them likely from the oral stage of his folk anti-heroification. However, by 1588 editions began to appear showing alterations to suit Catholic readers, namely the removal of passages explicitly critical of Catholic institutions (Münkler 160). The *Historia*, then, must have spoken to more ecumenical cultural trends both in and beyond the border of the Holy Roman Empire's "German Nation." As in the previous chapter, this chapter will argue that it spoke to something vital in the episteme of the time, specifically the epistemic concern over how much could truly be learned through the old forms of speculation derived from the ancient authorities and Fathers of the Church but a concomitant anxiety over the alternatives.

That it was interest in the *Historia*'s epistemic explorations more than his zany tricks and travels that sustained international interest in the Faust legend can in part be surmised from the lack of enduring success its unauthorized sequels had, such as the infamous 1593 Wagner book and 1594 *Second Report of Doctor John Faustus* which focused on magical antics over natural philosophy and cosmology. Moreover, the sheer length of time many of the *Historia*'s translations remained in print seem unlikely to reflect a sustained interest in amusing anecdotes about an obscure German figure, out-of-date travelogues, or fire-and-brimstone religiosity. The heyday of the witch trials was long in the past when the Danish,

Dutch, English, and French translations finally fell out of print well into the eighteenth century (Münkler 163; Jones "Introduction" [*English Faust Book*] 10; Cazaux 46). Of these translations, the latter two prove particularly revealing about the Western European episteme on eve of the Scientific Revolution.

On one level, the English and French translations of the Faust book stand apart in that they represent the greatest cultural leap of any of the early translations, crossing linguistic, confessional, and political borders at the same time. On another, these translations stand out because they would become participants in the epistemological discourse around skepticism in England and France respectively at a time when their intellectual cultures were undergoing the profound shifts in thought style that would make way for an episteme characterized, at least in part, by the new science and mechanical philosophy of the Scientific Revolution. The English translation, the *Historie of the damnable life, and deserued death of Doctor John Faustus* (hereafter "the English Faust Book"), would not only contribute in its own right to the era's discourse around religious and intellectual skepticism but would also go on to spawn an English Faust tradition through Christopher Marlowe's *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus* (hereafter *Doctor Faustus*). Although it would leave no immediate Faustian heirs in the French literary tradition,[130] *L'Histoire Prodigieuse et lamentable du Docteur Fauste* (hereafter French Faust book) nevertheless represents the work of a tutor of Catherine de Bourbon and Henri IV, who would become chaplain to the former and historian to the latter, Pierre-Victor Palma-Cayet, who uses his translation to position the biography of Faust simultaneously as an *exemplum* of the dangers of skepticism

[130] That would only come after the translations of Goethe's *Faust* by Madame de Staël (1813) and Gérard de Nerval (1828).

and an illustration of the validity of extreme skepticism in the midst of the French *crise pyrrhonienne*.

This chapter will seek to explain both the material and epistemological conditions of possibility for the translation of the *Historia* into English and French and what these specific translations in comparison with the German *Historia* reveal about the heterogenous epistemic landscape of Central and Western Europe at the close of the sixteenth century. To my knowledge, no pervious scholarly work has offered an in-dept comparative analysis of both the English Faust Book and French Faust Book,[131] nor, despite their obvious interest to the history of translation, has anyone undertaken a translation-theoretical analysis of these texts either individually or together. This chapter presents, then, for the first time, a comparative, translation-theoretical analysis of the relationship between the German *Historia* and both its English and French translations, as well as their relationship with each other.[132] Although several good comparative analyses of the *Historia* and the English Faust Book exist, literature on the French Faust Book and its relationship to the *Historia* remains underdeveloped and is exceedingly rare in English-language scholarship.[133] This no doubt stems from the fact that, despite its own enduring popularity, the French Faust Book did not generate an independent Faustian literary tradition in French. Nonetheless, this chapter will make the case for the importance of both the English and French Faust books in both the Faustian tradition and Early Modern European episteme.

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[131] Charles Dédéyan comes closest in the first volume of *Le Thème de Faust dans la littérature européenne*, but where he dedicates a whole chapter of analysis

[132] It would a worthy scholarly endeavor to take this further with a comparative analysis of the first Dutch, Danish, and Czech translations as well, but such lies beyond my current linguistic proficiencies.

[133] Richard Hillman's brief "Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* and the French Translation of the *Faustbuch*" stands out in this regard, though its focus rests more on the religious than natural philosophical questions raised by the texts.

2. The Conditions of Faustian Possibility: Faust in the European Interculture

Translations do not simply happen. A decision to undertake a laborious project has to be made with some perception of the source text's intercultural value, with some expectation that a readership awaits the text in the receiving culture, and generally with an eye toward some sort of benefit whether materially for the translator, culturally for the receiving cultural, or ideally both. The translation theorist Lawrence Venuti describes the situation succinctly, "Far from reproducing the source text, a translation rather transforms it by inscribing an interpretation that reflects what is intelligible and interesting to receptors" ("World Literature" 180). Although previous analyses of the English and French Faust books have explored the transformations their translations have occasioned, they have largely passed quickly over questions of intelligibility and interest, when they have touched on them at all. However, these aspects of translation, particularly in the case of culturally and historically significant translations matter all the more because they help us understand how and why works take on the significance they do. Precisely because translation is not just a intercultural act between the source and receiving culture but a deeply socio-cultural act within the receiving culture itself, popular translation tell us a great deal about the way of thinking within a translating society.

The socio-cultural conditions and consequences of translation have received increasing attention since the turn of the millennium, inviting keener observations of the social attitudes and conditions inscribed within a given translation. As Michaela Wolf observes in her introduction to *Constructing a Sociology of Translation*, "On the one hand, the act of translating, in all its various stages, is undeniably carried out by individuals who belong to a social system; on the other, the translation phenomenon is inevitably implicated

in social institutions, which greatly determine the selection, production and distribution of translation and, as a result, the strategies adopted in the translation itself" (1). One implication of this is that translation assumes a difference in the social systems and institutions, not to mention language, between the source and receiving cultures. In any description of modern translation, it is assumed that different languages belong to different cultures, usually different nations, with their own regulating social forces. However, before the Reformation, the social assumptions and language of communication among the literate classes throughout Europe were relatively homogenous. Latin dominated the European Middle Ages as the premier medium of international communication and literature, creating an interculture of shared philosophy, theology, and literary corpora, which saw little need to translate between vernaculars. Thus, translation was overwhelmingly from Latin into the vernacular. Following the Reformation, however, as religious figures like Luther and Calvin increasingly wrote in the vernacular, the social systems and institutions involved in literary production and translation became increasingly local and national, leading to a weakening of the European interculture and a greater need for translation.

To the extent that translation's raison d'être depends on a sufficient degree of linguistic and socio-cultural difference between two groups, its popularity often depends on the degree of comprehensibility between two groups. This seeming contradiction ultimately helps explain the success of the early translations of the *Historia*. As the translation theorist Gideon Toury observes, the cultural values of receiving cultures play a prominent role in the selection of texts for translation (53). Although a text must be different enough from those in the receiving culture to justify a translation, it must also appeal sufficiently to that culture's interests to meet with popular success. By the 1580s, the development of both *Teufelsbücher*

and popular astrological literature discussed in previous chapters had created a distinct German-Lutheran literary culture. Although interest in demonology and astrology were ubiquitous in sixteenth-century Europe, these texts were likely too culturally and confessionally specific to make good candidates for translation. The *Historia*, however, generalized elements from both genres and combined them within a narrative that made this material well-suited to translation because of its embeddedness within the European interculture. While it is true that the Reformation weakened the European interculture, it by no means destroyed it,[134] and the centuries of shared intellectual and literary history made the Faustian literary phenomenon possible and make it useful today as an archive of the Early Modern era's intellectual discourse.

The Market and the Patron

In the case of the English and French translations, as with Spies's *Historia*, no wealthy patron seems to have commissioned or financed the work. In fact, the foreword to the *Historia* makes clear the work was motivated by perceived public interest, "For many years now there has been common and great discussion in Germany about Dr. Johannes Faust, about that widely decried magician and master of the black arts' several adventures, and everywhere a great demand for a planned *Historia* of Faust at inns and social gatherings" (5).[135] Nevertheless, both the *Historia*, and its French translation make appeals to powerful patrons. In his dedication, Spies appeals to Caspar Kolln and Hieronymus Hoff, like-minded

[134] Nor has the European interculture every been destroyed, as witnessed by the coherence of phrases like "European values," however questionable the concept. If anything, the European interculture has only expanded into the Western interculture.
[135] "Nach dem nun viel Jar her ein gemeine vnd grosse Sag in Teutschlandt von Doct. Johannis Fauſti, deß weitbeschreyten Zauberers vnnd Schwarzkůnſtlers mancherley Abenthewren gewesen, vnd allenthalben ein grosse nachfrage nach gedachtes Fausti Historia bey den Gastungen vnnd Gesellschafften geschicht."

friends from his schooldays who had attained important offices in Frankfurt (Baron, *Faustus on Trial* 10–1). Cayet, in turn, dedicates his translation to the influential "Comte de Chomberg," i.e., Gaspard de Schomberg (*alias* Schönberg, 1540–1599), a counselor to Henri IV, governor of Marche under him, and commander in his army (Cazaux 49na). In neither case, however, do the patrons seem to have provided financial backing. Rather, these dedications serve a protective function, associating controversial, potentially even dangerous in the context of the witch trials, works with powerful figures who can guarantee the orthodoxy of their contents and indemnify their producers.

Such defensive measures seem to have been warranted. For instance, the writer and publisher of the first known adaptation of the Faust book, the 1588 *Reimfaust* (*Rhyme Faust*), which following a common practice at the time transposed the original prose into verse, were jailed. Scholarly consensus holds that this is mostly due to the fact that they did not first seek or receive permission to publish from the local religious authorities (Mahal 12). This seems to have been less clear to the jailed publisher whose correspondence from the time indicates he had a sense the material was dangerous in the then current climate and was concerned about potential consequences (Münkler 161). P.F.'s English translation, on the contrary, lacks any dedication, indicating a sense of security about the reaction of both the public and authorities. This may have stemmed from the comparatively less comprehensive nature of the witch hunts in England as well as the less deadly outcomes of the witch trials compared to German- or French-speaking regions (Monter 13). The book market into which P.F. introduced the EFB seems thus in many respects to have been freer than the French or German book markets.

A Recognizable Problem, a Recognizable Figure

In order for the translation of the *Historia* to have made sense at the turn of the seventeenth century, at the most basic level, its premises would have to have been intelligible to readers in the receiving cultures. To wit, readers would have to accept at least the plausibility of the devil as a figure, the plausibility of magic as a technique, and the conceit that someone, knowing that it was wrong, would willingly make a deal with the devil in exchange for knowledge and power, expecting that deal to be fulfilled. Not only do readers of the *Historia*'s translations seem to have accepted the plausibility of these premises, but their actuality. The translations of the *Historia*, like the German text, were widely accepted as true and biographical (Jones "Introduction" [*English Faust Book*] 1).[136] The unprecedented speed of translation and ready acceptance of Faust and his preoccupations points to a preexisting shared cultural framework, in other words, a European interculture persisting across increasing confessional and national divides that made Faust immediately recognizable. Moreover, the instant and lasting popularity of the *Historia*'s translations, point to a shared Early Modern episteme in which Faust's cosmological, natural philosophical, and even chorographical investigations resonated with readers, despite the dubious means by which he undertakes them, and could be accepted as accurate experience, or at least valid speculation.[137]

No doubt other, more local motivations would have underlain some of the early motivation behind the translations of the *Historia*. What were likely the earliest translations,

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[136] We should not be too quick to judge Early Modern readers for their credulity. At the time, even the leading intellectuals of the day accepted the reality of diabolic magic, and the witch trials would have provided constant institutional confirmation of the reality and danger of diabolic contracts. Present-day conspiracy theories find ready believers, even among the educated, with far less institutional scientific support.

[137] It is likely, if ultimately uncertain, that Faust's adventures became less credible with the passage of time but may have received the same intellectual consideration now afforded to science fiction.

those from 1588 into Low German and Danish, for instance, were also the only early translations of the *Historia* likely meant for majority Lutheran readerships. Confessionalism may thus have played a part in motivating their translations. That said, in the sixteenth century, before the advent of standardized languages, Low German described the mutually intelligible languages spoken in the northern domains of the Holy Roman Empire, but at the time it would also be used to refer to Dutch, and consequently, the 1588 translation is sometimes referred to as a Dutch translation (Münkler 163). This would have opened the Faust book's readership up to the large population of the United Provinces who adhered to the Reformed church. Nevertheless, in the case of the Low German translation, there may also have been a more direct motivating factor than Lutheranism. If Johannes Weyer is to be believed, the historical Faust himself had made it at least as far as Batenburg on the Meuse during his lifetime, making it likely that foreknowledge of Faust would have increased interest in a translation of the *Historia* (294).[138] This would also have applied to the, ostensibly Catholic, Flemish translation undertaken in Antwerp in 1592, which is also referred to as the Dutch translation (Jones "Introduction" [*English Faust Book*] 10). In these cases, then, one could argue that either confessional interests or cultural memory may have encouraged translation, but this can hardly be said for the English and French translations.

Neither England nor France boasted a large Lutheran population, nor could either boast of a direct connection to Faust. Nevertheless, Faust fit into the long, shared tradition of legendary diabolists and historical scholars transformed posthumously into learned necromancers. By the thirteenth-century, Jacobus de Voragine's *Golden Legend* had

[138] The 1611/12 Czech translation, although undertaken decades later, likely also benefited from Faust being a known figure throughout the Holy Roman Empire, the seat of which was in Prague 1583–1612. It is also, of course, possible that Faust was also a known figure in Denmark at the time of the 1588 translation. However, as I argue in this chapter, knowledge of the historical Faust did not present a precondition for a successful translation.

established narrative models of magicians who turn to demons for power. The *Golden Legend*'s contributions to the legend of Simon Magus are touched upon in the previous chapter, along with its inclusion of a demonic pact in the *vita* of St. Basel, but the text also features the story of St. Cyprian, within the *vita* of St. Justina, who likewise contracts with the devil but is saved. As part of the *Golden Legend*, these stories circulated widely throughout Europe both in Latin and in translation. As incunabula, there were more editions of *The Golden Legend* printed than the Bible, suggesting that these stories would have been widely known by the time the Faust books arrived in translation (Reames 4). For English and French readers of the Faust books, Faust's story would also have echoed those of famous Medieval figures like Albertus Magnus, Michael Scot, and Pope Sylvester II, as well as Faust's own well-known contemporaries like Cornelius Agrippa, Trithemius, and Nostradamus, all of whose legends had been partly absorbed into Faust's own (Meek 154). Moreover, Faust's drive for knowledge and willingness to turn to magic to attain it in the Faust books would likely have reminded early readers of their contemporaries John Dee and Giordano Bruno both of whom had spent time and made names for themselves in England, France, and the Holy Roman Empire. Thus, even without a direct connection to Faust, models for understanding him, his motivations, and even his methods abounded in sixteenth-century Europe.

The widespread public interest in demonology and astrology that made the made the *Historia* successful as a work of popular science likewise prevailed in England and France. With regard to demonology, perhaps the witch hunts and trials raging across Europe at the end of the sixteenth century provide the clearest indicator of both a surviving European interculture and shared episteme. Witch trials proliferated throughout England and France as

they did in the Holy Roman Empire, although the death tolls in each polity would ultimately vary widely. William Monter estimates that, at the height of the witch trials 1560–1660, over 20,000 were executed in the Holy Roman Empire, roughly 2,500 in France, and a few hundred in England, with the discrepancies both generally and regionally within those territories having mostly to do with the organization of the legal system and evidentiary standards rather than differences in demonological thinking (9–17). Both Protestant and Catholic demonology largely shared the same goals, methods, and theoretical underpinnings, which stemmed from a shared conception of the universe and natural causation owing to their shared Scholastic heritage (Cameron "For Reasoned Faith" 35–6). Thus, the same inherited thought style shared across these cultures that made witchcraft plausible in each, made Faust's diabolism intelligible. At the same time, the weaknesses and incongruities in this intellectual inheritance, which the *Historia* had exposed in Germany, were no less apparent in England and France where they made Faust's epistemic dilemma equally recognizable.

Although interest was not at quite the same fever pitch as in German-speaking lands, vernacular astrological literature nonetheless evinced a strong popularity in sixteenth-century England and France. Despite interest in the subject, from the fifteenth through the first half of the sixteenth century, England produced little astrological literature of its own, instead importing most of it from the continent in translation until figures, like the aforementioned John Dee, revived an interest in the mathematical sciences during Elizabeth I's reign (Thomas 357). Thus, the English Faust book arrived at a propitious time for astrological interest in England. In France, the situation was somewhat reversed. Beginning with the print translation of Regiomontanus's astrological work into French, France had witnessed a sustained interest in vernacular astrological publications that began to flourish, if on a more

modest scale compared to what was happening in the Empire, around the time of Nostradamus's astrological predictions in the 1550s (Rivest 75). Research on vernacular astrological works in France after the 1550s is scant, but undoubtedly the Council of Trent's 1563 "Ten Rules Concerning Prohibited Books" would have negatively affected production, and the *Coelia et terrae* bull of 1586 would likely have largely put an end to it, at least in Catholic-controlled areas. The restrictions on astrological literature in Catholic France might, however, have acted to increase the French Faust book's appeal since official condemnation does not necessitate a lack of popular interest.

Skepticism and the Discursive Role of the Faustian Translations

This common intercultural and epistemic landscape across border and confessional lines in late-sixteenth-century Europe established propitious conditions for the rapid translation if the *Historia* into a variety of European languages. At the same time, bringing even a relatively faithful translation of the *Historia* to print could only mean inviting into a new idiom the same discursive intervention into the epistemic debates of the era the text had presented in German. For instance, because of their shared intellectual interculture, as well as the relative fidelity of the English and French translations of the passages in question, the contradiction between astrological determinism and demonological contingency analyzed in the previous chapter likewise inheres in both the English and French Faust books. The question of freewill was central to confessional polemics in the sixteenth century, and the Faust books' exposure of the paradox it posed within a Christian-Aristotelian natural philosophical framework that took both demons and the stars seriously would have resonated across confessional lines. However, as a work of popular demonology and natural

philosophy, the Faust books' greatest intervention into the epistemological discourse of its era would be as vehicles for promoting skepticism, and the similarities and differences between the German text and its translations articulate the fault lines along which the European episteme was beginning to shift at the end of the sixteenth century.

The revival of intellectual skepticism, or at least its renewed prominence, in the Early Modern era proved crucial both to the Faust books and to the wider epistemic shift in which they take part. Certainly, Faust represents an emblematic representation of Renaissance skepticism. Despite having reached the summit of learning available at a sixteenth-century university, Faust doubts he knows it all, indeed is willing to wager his soul that there is more to know and ultimately offers it up in order to so. Nor is he even willing then to take the devil's word for it but goes beyond speculation, taking it upon himself to investigate phenomena in person. Intellectual skepticism thus forms an essential part of the Faust book's narrative, but as will be explored below, religious skepticism likewise forms one of the key structuring elements of that narrative. In his epochal *History of Scepticism*, Richard Popkin traces the origins of modern Western philosophical and scientific thought to an Early Modern skeptical crisis, specifically a *crise pyrrhonienne*, brought about by the confluence of the Reformation and a revival of interest in Pyrrhonian skepticism occasioned by the Latin translations of the surviving works of Sextus Empiricus. In Popkin's articulation of the crisis's origins, Luther's rejection of the Catholic church's framework for religious knowledge marked the beginning of an epistemic shift in the West that would spread from the questioning of the criteria for religious to that of natural philosophical knowledge (1–

2).[139] Popkin's particular theses have since been challenged, especially his seemingly monocausal claim for the intellectual origins of the new science and his singular focus on Pyrrhonian skepticism.[140] Nonetheless, the importance of the skeptical current in Early Modern thinking, whatever its origins, in creating the necessary conditions for a fundamental shift in scientific thought style remains undeniable, and the English and French translations of the *Historia* would form part of that current.

As observed above, translations do not represent repetitions so much as transformations of textual material, even when they depart minimally from their source. By the standards of their time, both the English and French texts represent faithful translations of the *Historia*, but their departures are telling in the ideological and epistemological differences they embody and promote. In translating, translators offer an interpretation of a source text as they understand it, and as they think it will be most understandable to their readers in the receiving culture. All translators, intentionally or not, thus inscribe a discursive presence within a translation (Hermans 69). Moreover, by changing the linguistic medium and cultural context of the source text, the translation's textual message necessarily changes as well. Any text within a literate culture exists and is understood within an intertextual relationship to others. For example, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, the German *Historia* is best understood dialogically in relationship to Weyer's *De praestigiis* and Lercheimer's *Christlich bedenken*, as well as the works of Agrippa and Paracelsus. Venuti

[139] Popkin's *History of Scepticism* saw three editions during his life with different subtitles adjusting its temporal scope: *From Erasmus to Descartes* (1960), *From Erasmus to Spinoza* (1979), and *From Savonarola to Bayle* (2003). Although the third edition moved the date that Popkin set for the reintroduction of philosophical skepticism into Western discourse back to the fifteenth century, he maintained it was Luther who opened the "Pandora's box" (5).
[140] For example, Ian Maclean's "The 'Sceptical Crisis' Reconsidered: Galen, Rational Medicine and the Libertas Philosophandi," offers a concise account framing Early Modern skepticism as part of a longer intellectual tradition of anti-authoritarianism in the West stretching back as far as the thirteenth century.

refers to these relations as a work's "intertext," observing that "A translation recontextualizes the source text by creating a receiving intertext that replaces relations to the source literature with relations to literary traditions in the receiving culture" ("World Literature" 185). Thus, translation replaces, or at least alters, the cultural and intertextual context of the source text in order to make the translation legible within its new context. By extension, however, translation necessarily adds a new discursive element into the receiving culture's intertext, and in the case of the *Historia*, this meant contributing to ongoing debates about the place and role of skepticism.

The same shared episteme of the European interculture that enabled the rapid translation of the *Historia* likewise meant its skeptical elements, at least the most pronounced, were as legible to readers as its demonological and astrological content. Because the intellectual foundations were largely the same, cracks visible anywhere would be visible everywhere once pointed out. On one level, the *Historia*'s relationship to texts like *De praestigiis* and *Christlich bedenken* suggest that it was meant, at least implicitly, to encourage skepticism toward the idea of witchcraft by opposing it to the learned necromancy of Faust. Though removed from this intertext, the English Faust book would likely have been understood in relationship to Reginald Scot's 1584 *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, a work of demonology skeptical of witchcraft and most magical claims that approvingly cited both Weyer and, interestingly, Agrippa (35). The hope may have been that readers would consider how, if a scholar like Faust had to go through such pains to contract himself to the devil and ultimately had so little to show for it, a feeble and illiterate old woman could similarly

contract herself and supposedly wield greater power.[141] In a demonological context informed by Scot who blamed the Catholic church for maintaining the superstitions underlying the witch trials (530), English readers may also have seen an even stronger connection between the Faust book's skepticism toward Catholic institutions and its other skeptical positions.

Presenting itself as a Catholic work, the French Faust book excises the most explicitly anti-Catholic passages from the *Historia*, as had the German Catholic editions, including the depictions of the gluttony and debauchery of the pope and Catholic clergy in Rome.[142] This obviously cuts the work off from the Protestant intertext it possessed both in its Lutheran source culture as well as in England. However, in France, particularly Catholic France, the French Faust book would have been understood within a particularly rich intertext of skeptical literature, namely the 1569 translation of Sextus Empiricus's *Adversus mathematicos* by Gentien Hervet, alias Gentian Hervetus, Jean Bodin's 1580 *De la Démonomanie des sorciers*, and Michel de Montaigne's *Essais*. Although Hervet's translation was into Latin, which would have limited its readership, he argued explicitly for the use of the Pyrrhonic philosophy contained therein to be weaponized against Calvinism (Popkin 67). Bodin's *Démonomanie* provides a particularly interesting intertext for the French Faust book as a demonological work in French that not only takes a credulous view of witchcraft but expressly considers Pyrrhonic epistemology in its introduction to the work before rejecting it in favor of an empirical approach, however questionable that may sound from a modern perspective (Bodin 59–81). Finally, the publication of Montaigne's *Essais* would have meant that the French Faust book arrived in an intellectual culture already open

[141] That James VI and I saw the need in his *Daemonologie* to address the discrepancy between necromancy and witchcraft explicitly and justify their equal punishment may indicate this skeptical approach had some effect (5).

[142] Although certain structuring elements meant to inculcate skepticism related to the veneration of the saints could not be removed, Cayet's preface enables a pro-Catholic reading of these elements.

to the questioning of authority and received knowledge, including on questions of magic and witchcraft.

Both despite and because of the local contours of the epistemological debates around skepticism in the Holy Roman Empire, England, and France, the *Historia* along with its English and French translations could play an important discursive role as representative and participant. As with the demonological and natural philosophical questions explored in the previous chapter, the *Historia* and its translations could take advantage of their narrative form to depict and communicate skeptical attitudes in a manner comprehensible to broad audiences. At the same time, taking advantage of the special discursive position of translation and the translator to interpret the source text for the receiving culture, the English and French Faust books depart in significant ways from each other and the *Historia* in terms of how they present the skeptical elements of the early Faustian narrative. On a narratological level, these departures alter the character and significance of Faust's intellectual striving, but on a metanarrative level, these departures signify different epistemological aspects of and approaches to a shift in scientific thought style that would mark the beginning of the transition away from thinking within the Scholastic epistemic paradigm and toward that of the new science. In order to fully understand the importance of the Faust books as documents of these shifts, it is worth adopting and building on Terrence Cave's concept of "downstream context" in the Early Modern Period.

Because the full context of Early Modern texts necessarily eludes us, so many cultural artefacts and other reference points having been lost, Terence Cave has proposed a somewhat more expansive diachronic understanding of Early Modern context, to wit, looking not only to works already extant when a text was produced to understand that text's contextual

meaning. In "Locating the Early Modern," Cave proposes a concept of "downstream context" meant to "supply clues to what the writer thought he or she was doing, what the text was meant to do or say" and to use such context to "provide a rhetorical frame of reference, since rhetoric is a use of language arising from particular circumstances, targeting particular listeners or readers, and striving to make certain things happen" (21). Cave proposes differentiating downstream context from reception history largely on an ad hoc methodological basis rooted in intellectual history but nevertheless seems to have direct readings of a text in mind (22). In this chapter, I propose to further extend this concept of downstream context beyond original works to translations and beyond direct readings to texts that echo key aspects of the Faust books without necessarily having been influenced by them. Specifically, this chapter will look to works by Sir Francis Bacon and René Descartes crucial to the development of new scientific thinking as contextual reference points to support its readings of the English and French Faust books respectively. Rather than argue that Bacon or Descartes were directly influenced by the Faust books, their use as downstream context for Faustian literature means only to show that, although preceding both thinkers' major philosophical treatises by decades, the Faust books can be understood within their time to have evoked some of the same ideas as the *Novum Organum* or *Meditationes de Prima Philosophia*, if in a much more rudimentary and popular form.

3. The English Faust Book

The Uncertain Origins of the Translation and Translator

As noted above, many of the artefacts that could serve to contextualize texts in the Early Modern period no longer exist, and this holds true for many of the earliest documents

that could contextualize the oldest surviving text of the English Faust book. However, at present, there is no way to say with certainty when Faust landed on English shores, or at least in the English language. The oldest extant copy of the English Faust book is a single exemplar held by the British Library and dated 1592. It proclaims to be "The / Historie / of the damnable / life, and deserued death of / *Doctor Iohn Faustus*, / Newly imprinted, and in conueni- /*ent places imperfect matter amended :* / according to the true Copie printed / *at* Franckfort, *and translated into* / *English by* P. F. *Gent.*" (134).[143] The title itself makes explicit that the surviving text is not the first edition, but there has long been a controversy about when that first edition might have appeared. The earliest date that has been suggested for the English Faust book's publication is 1588 and internal peculiarities suggest a composition no later than 1590.[144] Because the exact date of publication does not bear on the arguments of the present work, suffice it to note that the English Faust book does not contain the stories added to the *Historia*'s corpus in post-1588 editions, so it is almost certainly based on a Frankfurt edition from before that year, perhaps even Spies's first edition.

The identity of the Faust book's pseudonymous translator, P. F., Gent[leman], remains a mystery.[145] The "gentleman" likely indicates someone with, or at least claiming, a university education and thus a claim to the title, but even that is speculation. Nevertheless, P.F.'s discursive presence defines the English Faust book, which condenses, summarizes, and improves its source material in ways that would scandalize a present-day translator. It is also

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[143] I have here departed from the standard presentation of titles in contemporary English in order to duplicate the typographical peculiarities of the English Faust book's title page.

[144] John Henry Jones offers a thorough explanation of the various considerations that go into these dates in the introduction to his modernized, scholarly edition of the text, *The English Faust Book* (52–72), as does Frank Baron in "The Early Date of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*."

[145] Jones proposes an obscure but suitable figure by the name of Paul Fairfax who enters public records after being arrested at the behest of the Royal College of Physicians for hawking dubious medical cures as an unlicensed "empiric" (31–3). The similarities between Fairfax and the historical Faust are striking and might explain the former's interest in the latter.

widely considered better as a literary work than its source. That said, these differences are largely on the level of stylistics, the English translation does remain recognizable as a translation of the *Historia*, following it closely in form and content while only departing from it substantively in a few details. On the one hand, these details prove crucial to the epistemological as well as confessional approaches that differentiate the English Faust book from its source, but on the other, it is the complicated interplay of differences and similarities between source and translation that defines the contours of the epistemic shift to which both bear witness.

Religious Skepticism and Faust the Anti-Saint

That the *Historia* and its English translation exhibit some confessional differences is hardly surprising. Although Lutheranism had been influential in the formation of the Church of England, by the time of the Elizabethan Settlement of 1558–1563, which established it as the only legal religious institution in the realm, the Anglican church had taken a Calvinist bent. Hence, the English Faust book lacks the embedded quotations and paraphrases of Luther that mark the *Historia* as expressly Lutheran (Allen "Reception" 584). In fact, John Henry Jones rightly observes a "Calvinist tendency" in P. F.'s translation, which he associates with the translation's focus on "intemperance" ("Introduction" [*English Faust Book*] 18), but a clearer instance of this tendency may be found in moments like that at the end of the first chapter. In P.F.'s translation, this chapter ends by observing that Faust "made his soule of no estimation, regarding more his worldly pleasure than yº joyes to come : therfore at yº day of iudgement there is no hope of his redemptiō" (EFB 136). This anticipation of God's judgment in a chapter detailing Faust's wickedness from birth smacks

of predestination and goes much further than the German, which merely states that "therefore there should be no excuse for him."[146] Nevertheless, these confessional flourishes are, on the whole, unobtrusive, and the uninitiated reader would likely have no more noticed the Calvinism of P.F.'s translation than the Lutheranism of the *Historia*. What most stands out confessionally about both the *Historia* and the English Faust book is that they are clearly Protestant and fundamentally anti-Catholic.

The anti-Catholic worldview represented in the *Historia* and English Faust book has both an explicit rhetorical and an implicit structural level. On the explicit level, Faust requests that Mephistopheles appear to him as a "gray Frier," giving the popular association of monks and friars with vice a demonic edge (EFB 138).[147] Granted tales of demons disguising themselves as monks go back to the Middle Ages (Bailey *Fearful Spirits* 171), and Weyer recounts several such stories himself (53–5), in a Protestant text after the Reformation, the polemics of Mephistopheles are clear. Likewise, Mephistopheles' insistence that Faust cannot marry after his pact but can have any number of mistresses can hardly be read as anything other than an indictment of the supposed chastity enforced on the clergy by the Catholic church.[148] The *Historia* and English Faust book further attack the hypocrisy of the Catholic church during Faust's journey to Rome where, in St. Peter's, "Faustus saw notwithstanding in that place those that were like to himselfe, proud, stout, wilfull, gluttons, drunkards, whoremongers, breakers of wedlocke, and followers of all manner of vngodly

[146] The first chapter of the *Historia* ends: "setzte seine Seel ein weil vber die Vberthůr, darumb bey ihm kein entschuldigung seyn sol" (15).
[147] In the *Historia*: "grauwen Můnchs" (17).
[148] It is interesting to note that in the *Historia* Mephistopheles promises Faust that he may select any woman he sees, and a women "Jn solcher Gestalt vnnd Form sol sie bey dir wohnen" [in such shape and form shall stay with you] (29). The implication here, confirmed in the next sentences is that these "women" are actually devils, presumably succubae. However, in P.F.'s translation, the women are real, and Faust, "might haue any woman in the whole Citie brought to him at his command" (147). Whether this change resulted from the censor's request or from an agreement with Scot about the dubious proposition of intercourse with spirits (75), cannot now be known.

exercises" (178).[149] Such characterizations of the Catholic clergy, particularly in Rome long predated the Reformation and can even be found in the second tale of Boccaccio's *Decameron*, but after the Reformation, such polemical attacks carry more weight because they imply an obvious alternative to submitting to the guidance of a depraved curia. Nevertheless, these passages present relatively superficial and well-worn criticisms of Catholicism, and the most egregious of them, the scenes in Rome, were simply excised for both the editions of the *Historia* printed in Catholic regions of Germany as well as in the French Faust book. There are, however, critiques of Catholic doctrine in the structure of the *Historia* too fundamental to remove in translation.

For Protestants, rejecting the Catholic church also meant rejecting much of the vast body of narrative literature that had developed over the centuries to bolster the church's institutional claims, most prominently the stories of the saints' lives. The use of stories about Simon Magus, Cyprian, and the slave from the *vita* of St. Basel contained in Jacob de Voraigne's *Golden Legend* in shaping the Faust legend and the conditions for its rapid literary dissemination have been addressed above. Still, the importance of these saintly legends goes even deeper. Luther and his followers recast the hagiographies contained in works like de Voraigne's as "Lügenden," Luther's own coinage from the German for "lie" (*Lüge*) and "legend" (*Legende*), insisting any moral value in such stories had been corrupted by the Catholic church (Allen "Aesthetics" 159; "Reception" 590). The *Historia* emerges as the embodiment of this criticism, transforming the legend of Faust into an anti-*vita* with Faust as an anti-saint. This insight into the structure of the *Historia* originates with Marguerite de Huszar Allen's seminal 1985 *The Faust Legend: Popular Formula and*

[149] In the *Historia*: "Doct . Fauſtus sahe auch darinnen alle seines gleichen , als vbermut , stoltz , Hochmut , Vermessenheit , fressen , sauffen , Hurerey , Ehe bruch , vnnd alles Gottloses Wesen deß Bapſts und seines Seschmeiß"

Modern Novel. In an article summarizing that work, Allen articulates the *Historia*'s inversion of the *vita* formula,

> The holy life of the saint striving to imitate Christ is inverted into the unholy life of Faustus who makes a pact with the Devil. The deeds and miracles Faustus performs become misdeeds and magic. […] Emulation by the reader is explicitly discouraged by the portrayal of Faustus' terrible end and by the polemical framework which transforms an exemplary biography into a cautionary tale. ("Reception" 588).

Beyond adapting a familiar aesthetic structure to make the somewhat disjointed Faustian narrative comprehensible, this inversion of the *vita* formula represents an implicit but potent criticism of the *vita* form itself. It implies that the stories promoted by the Catholic church could just as easily be, and in fact were, about impious frauds and diabolists twisted to look like pious miracle workers. For Protestants who believed that the age of miracles had passed with the apostles, the lampooning of saints' lives would have been of a piece with other Protestant attacks on Catholicism, including that Catholic rituals had been established by devil to ape true religion and that priests supposedly working miracles were simply magicians (Cameron *Enchanted Europe* 171, 209). *Vita*, in this reading, were just more instruments of the devil to lead the flock astray.

Moreover, as Allen suggests, by transforming Faust's legend into an anti-*vita*, the *Historia* calls into question the exemplary nature of the saints' lives. Wiemken notes that the thirteenth-century *Speculationes Hisoricae* records, perhaps for the first time, the story of a magician, an eleventh-century priest name Palambus, who made a pact with the devil and was damned, but this marks a rare exception in pre-Faust literature (xxv). In all of the *vitae* in *The Golden Legend* that involve selling one's soul to the devil, when the diabolist repents

and (re)converts to Christianity, there is an intercession by the Virgin Mary who destroys the contract and forgives the magician's sins. Simon Magus is an exception to this because he never accepts Christianity and never repents, but Faust, a lapsed Doctor of Theology, does repent. Thus, Faust's damnation would have come as something of a shock, the profound rupture of a standard formula, to the first generation of Faust book readers. Faust's repentance, though in part motivated by fear of bodily death and restrained by fear that his transgression is too great for God's forgiveness, is certainly more convincing than the conversions Jacob de Voraigne records. The break in tradition indicated by the difference between Faust's fate and that of his forerunners in the *vitae* represents a critique of the notion that one might sin greatly, even make a deal with the devil, and then rely on eleventh-hour repentance and the intercession of the Virgin to sneak into heaven. Faust's damnation thus embodies the Protestant critique of the cult of the saints and traditional Catholicism as presenting a "series of levers" to pull for spiritual gain (Cameron *European Reformation* 429). Ultimately, then, the very structure of the *Historia* is meant to awaken skepticism in its readers toward not only the narratives championed by the Catholic church but the church doctrines that depend on them, including those as fundamental as the veneration and intercession of the saints.

The skepticism toward essential aspects of the Catholic religious thought baked into the very structure of the *Historia* would have made it attractive in the English Protestant context. Even if the more explicit passages directed against the practices of the Catholic clergy were suppressed, the structure of the Faust book itself was intended to call Catholic

doctrine into question.[150] By 1930, Harold Meek had already recognized the *Historia*'s likely role as subtle sixteenth-century religious propaganda meant to sew doubts among Catholic readers without alienating them or raising their hackles by attacking their faith directly (158–60). Like the Holy Roman Empire, after a serious of back-and-forth religious struggles, England was confessionally divided, even if ostensibly now united in the Anglican church. While Elizabeth I may have had no interest in making windows into men's souls, she did expect her subjects in the Anglican pews every Sunday regardless of how they prayed at home. How then to reach the crypto-Catholics and bring them around to true religion? The English Faust book would have seemed as attractive a solution to English Protestants as those in Frankfurt.

If the *Historia* was stoking skepticism against the Catholic church's claims to authoritative religious knowledge by calling into question the means by which it claimed to possess that knowledge, consequently the *Historia* was also stoking skepticism against the church's other claims to knowledge, especially those concerning natural philosophy. The Christian Aristotelianism of Scholastic natural philosophy had largely rested on the Catholic church's institutional authority to guarantee that the compromises between Aristotelian and Christian orthodoxy it upheld were real. In this way the Catholic church had acted as the guarantor of reality in the sense in which Hans Blumenberg speaks of "guaranteed reality" (*garantierte Realität*) as the defining reality schema of the Middle Ages and Early Modern periods (11). Evoking Descartes *cogito* as its culmination, Blumenberg explains this mindset as developing since Augustine to frame reality as reliant on a guarantee in the face of potential demonic illusion, with "God as the guarantor responsible for the reliability of

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[150] Pierre Cayet, perhaps having first encountered the *Historia* as a member of the Reformed church, seems to evade this danger in his translation by reframing the narrative in a manner discussed below.

human perception" and serving as a perpetual "third authority" or "absolute witness" (12).[151] Since humanity lacked direct access to God, the Catholic church had acted as God's representative on earth, mediating experiential claims to determine what was real. In other words, the church could enforce consensus among the Catholic European thought collective, determining what was admissible as fact and what constituted knowledge in both spiritual and temporal matters. With the Reformation, Luther recast, at least for Protestants, the Holy Scriptures themselves as God's earthly representative not the institutional church, effectively ending the Catholic church's monopoly on the interpretation of reality and thus knowledge production (Popkin 2). Because this applied not only to spiritual knowledge but also knowledge of the natural world, the two not being entirely extricable, Faust's natural philosophical speculations beyond the prescribed authorities represent an inevitable consequence of the loss of the Scholastic consensus. However, how those speculations are presented marks a major point of difference between the *Historia* and its English translation.

Invisible Translation and the "Insatiable Speculator"

At the height of its epistemic dominance, what we now call Scholasticism defined a rational, coherent thought style that allowed for the coexistence of the natural, supernatural, and preternatural within a knowable universe. It did so, in part, by enforcing a series of compromises between the natural philosophy of Aristotle, first and foremost, as well as Ptolemy, their Arab commentators, and Christianity theology. With the reintroduction of Plato, the Neoplatonists, and Lucretius to the West during the fifteenth century, Aristotle's

[151] "Gott als der verantwortliche Bürge für die Zuverlässigkeit der menschlichen Erkenntnis, dieses Schema der *dritten Instanz*, des absoluten Zeugen, ist in der ganzen Geschichte der mittelalterlichen Selbstauffassung des menschlichen Geistes seit Augustin vorbereitet."

absolute influence had already begun to wane, and when this combined with the movement of skepticism triggered by the Reformation, the dam of Scholastic consensus in the sciences broke (Popkin 79). Although many Reformers, Philip Melanchthon chief among them, argued for maintaining Aristotle's primacy within a syncretic scientific system along redrawn but familiar lines, by the late sixteenth century, even many Lutheran scientists, including the leading astronomers Tycho Brahe and Johannes Kepler, were willing to criticize Aristotle, and recent discoveries, like that of a new star in 1572, called his cosmology into question (Barnes 241, 262).[152] Thus, in being skeptical of the purported accuracy and completeness of his day's scientific knowledge, Faust represents a major intellectual current of his day, albeit the means he chooses to overcome those limitations are dubious to say the least. Nevertheless, the *Historia* and English Faust book frame his intellectual pursuits, and his personal character, in starkly different ways with important consequences for the story's purpose as a negative exemplum.

In the *Historia*, many of Faust's actions are frequently greeted with moralistic condemnation, and his philosophical speculations are no different. However, as is the case with the *Historia*'s criticism of his intellectual musing, these condemnations are sometimes contradictory. Hence, the reader learns that

> Since Dr. Faust had a teachable and quick mind and was qualified and inclined to study, he later made it so far in his exams by the rectors that they examined him for his masters degree surrounded by 16 masters whom he surpassed and beat through his attentiveness, questioning, and cleverness, so when he had studied his portion, so was

[152] A present-day reader may be surprised not to find Copernicus's 1543 *De revolutionibus* on this list, but despite now marking the beginning of the Scientific Revolution, it still had gained little traction even by the end of the sixteenth century and would not gain general acceptance for decades still.

> he a Doctor of Theology. At the same time, he also had a stupid, nonsensical, and proud mind, so that people always called him "the speculator." (*Historia* 14)[153]

In this passage, Faust is simultaneously the smartest one in the room and a fool, possessing a mind at once "teachable and quick" and "stupid, nonsensical, and proud." This contradiction can somewhat be reconciled if one accepts the text's apparent moral distinction between being worldly-wise and spiritually so, in which case Faust could be considered brilliant in intellectual matters, including theology, and an idiot in the moral matters, those that truly matter. However, the question of the seemingly derogatory epithet "the speculator" remains. Was not the majority of science at the time, being non-experimental, "speculative," as we now understand the term? Yes, and some of the derogation may stem from the *Historia*'s general anti-clerical and anti-elitist tendency (Weeks 218). However, during the Reformation and particularly in a Lutheran context, *spekulieren*, the German equivalent of "speculate," gained the pejorative connotation of "researching, contemplating on a 'fantastical' basis (i.e., not resting on Biblical tradition)" ("spekulieren").[154] In fact, the next sentence tells us that Faust, "for a while laid the Holy Scriptures behind the door and below his bench" (*Historia* 14).[155] Thus, the *Historia*'s criticism of Faust and his actions seems to grow out of its praise for his intelligence. Instead of setting his mind to the study of Scripture, Faust's focus is on worldly matters beyond the scriptural guarantee of reality. By implication, forsaking the

[153] Als D. Faust eins gang gelernigen vnd geschwinden Kopffs / zum studiern qualificiert und geneigt war / ist er hernach in seinem Examine von den Rectoribus so weit kommen / daß man jn in dem Magistrat examiniert / vnnd neben im auch 16. Magistros, denen ist er im Gehöre / Fragen vnnd Geschickligkeit obgelegen vnd gesieget / Also / daß er seinen Theil gnugsam studiert hat / war also Doctor Theologiæ. Daneben hat er auch einen thummen, vnsinnigen vnnd hoffertigen Kopff gehabt / wie man in denn allezeit den Speculierer genennet hat.

[154] "forschen, nachdenken auf phantastischer (d. h. nicht auf biblischer Überlieferung beruhender) Grundlage."

[155] "hat die H. Schrifft ein weil hinder die Thůr vnnd vnter die Band gelegt."

certain knowledge offered by the Bible for uncertain speculations beyond it is foolish because it creates the temptation to seek certainty from illicit sources.

There is, nonetheless, something perverse, or at least deeply ambivalent, about condemning someone for seeking extra-Biblical knowledge in a work like the *Historia* that exists in large part to answer readers' extra-Biblical questions. Intentionally or not, this projection of the reader's desires onto Faust and his consequent ridicule resonates with the inverted *vita* structure of the *Historia* to reinforce the sense that has developed in the modern era that Faust is a martyr for the new science (Preedy 162). Early Modern readers learned vicariously through Faust what they most wanted to know, but they did not necessarily thank him. This dissonance, however, is missing from the English Faust book, which does not disparage Faust's speculation.

Where the *Historia* castigates Faust for his speculation, its English translation treats it in a more neutral manner. The equivalent passage in the English Faust book reads, "But Doctor Faustus within short time after hee had obtayned his degree, fell into such fantasies and deepe cogitations, that he was marked of many, and of the most part of the Students was called the *Speculator*" (136). Here, Faust's title of "Speculator" carries no obvious derogatory connotations but serves rather as a neutral descriptor of his personality and behavior. To an extent, the English even gives it an almost affectionate tone, like a nickname bestowed on an eccentric professor. Why this shift in the translation? One possibility is that it results simply from the lexical differences in the languages. In English, the word "speculator" seems not to have carried the negative connotations of its German equivalent in the sixteenth century. The *OED* offers the following definition for the word's relevant meaning, its first entry for that word, "One who speculates on abstruse or uncertain matters;

one who devotes himself to speculation or theoretical reasoning," and the example it gives from the sixteenth century proves particularly apropos, "The philosophers, speculatours of naturall thynges" ("speculator"). This presents the possibility that P.F. either did not himself understand the negative connotations of the German "Speculierer" or did not think his readers would and made the choice to remove those connotations in the English. If this reflects P.F.'s thinking, however, other translation strategies remained available to him.

In his French translation, for instance, Cayet faced a similar lexical dilemma but chose to keep the *Historia*'s moral condemnation of Faust's speculations. The French Faust book translates the passage in question like so: "Then, afterward, he still had the foolish and proud head, as they say, of the curious speculators" (68).[156] As in English, the sense of the French "speculateur" in this period seems to be at least neutral, if not positive. Antoine Furetière's 1690 *Dictionnaire universal* defines the word as, "one who engages in the contemplation, the admiration of God's grandeurs and of mysteries, of natural and celestial causes"[157] ("spéculateur"). Nevertheless, Cayet endeavors to maintain the moralistic chiding of the *Historia*, and to do so, changes "speculator" from a nickname to a category and gives it the contextually negative descriptor of "curious," associating it with the sin of *curiositas* toward divine matters. P. F. could easily have adopted a strategy similar to Cayet's. However, the English translator's removal of the narrator's derogatory in this scene fits into a larger pattern.

As previously noted, the *Historia* repeatedly denigrates Faust throughout its narrative, no doubt to prevent the reader from identifying too closely with, let alone emulating, him. The English translation, on the other hand, and in contrast to its French counterpart, all but

[156] "Puis apres il eut encore sa teste folle et orgueilleuse, comme on appelle, des curieux speculateurs"
[157] "Qui s'attache à la contemplation, à l'admiration des grandeurs de Dieu & des mysteres, des causes naturelles & celestes."

removes this moralistic commentary from the text. Unquestionably this has contributed to the frequent observation that the English Faust is more likable and sympathetic than his German source (Jones "Introduction" [*English Faust Book*] 13; King 43). It is much easier, after all, to like and identify with someone when you are not constantly being told why they are detestable, which is not to say that the English Faust book gives the sense it approves of Faust's actions. On the contrary, it maintains the first chapter's condemnation of Faust, some of which is quoted above, as well as that at the end, and condemns specific sinful actions of his. It does not, however, provide the ongoing moralistic critique of Faust as a person found in the *Historia*, opening the door to identifying with Faust's motives, if not the means by which he pursues them. In this way, relatively small omissions in the English translation, absences which may even go unnoticed by an inattentive bilingual comparison of the English Faust book and its source, potentially alter the orientation of the work toward its protagonist and thereby also its ethical-epistemological framework.

Within translation theory, one of the most contentious topics since at least Friedrich Schleiermacher's 1813 "On the Different Methos of Translating" ("Über die verschiedenen Methoden des Uebersetzens") has been the question of translation's relationship as a discursive medium between cultures. Schleiermacher famously frames the question in terms of whether a translation moves the author toward the reader or the reader toward the author, i.e., does it sacrifice its authentic foreignness to appeal more to a domestic readership, or risk alienating the domestic reader by retaining some of its foreign qualities (48–9),[158] but by the twentieth century, the subject had come to be understood in metaphors of fluency and visibility. Translations that read fluently in their receiving language render the translation and

[158] In that essay, Schleirmacher also criticizes the practice of paraphrasing, which P.F. makes frequent use of in the English Faust book (45–6).

the translator invisible. Because the translator's work appears seamless, causing no cultural, linguistic, or stylistic difficulties for readers, readers can forget they are reading a translation. This smooth reading experience has often been championed as the ideal of translation, but Schleiermacher and his successors have drawn attention to its ethical thorniness. In *The Translator's Invisibility*, Venuti describes the central illusion of fluency in translation as, "The more fluent the translation, the more invisible the translator, and, presumably, the more visible the writer or meaning of the foreign text" (1). In cases like that of the English Faust book, however, the fluency of the translation, achieved in part by removing bothersome distractions like the *Historia*'s frequent moralizing potentially moves the reader further from the intention of the foreign text. The *Historia* is intent on disrupting any identification with its protagonist, its English translation is more ambivalent.

In this specific instance, by treating Faust *qua* "speculator" neutrally, perhaps even amiably, the English Faust book legitimizes his speculations, at least to an extent. Jones understands the English Faust book's damnation of Faust to result in large part from his speculations ("Introduction" [*English Faust Book*] 18). The passage Jones cites, which comes at the end of the chapter analyzed earlier wherein Mephistopheles explains how devils were able to manipulate Faust, seems to support this, "had not I desired to know so much, I had not been in this case," but the continuation of the passage complicates the claim, "for hauing studied the lives of the holy Saints and Prophets, & therby thought my self to vnderstand sufficient in heauenly matters, I thought my self not worthy to be called doctor Faustus, if I should not also know the secrets of hell, & be associated with the furious Fiend thereof; now therefore must I be rewarded accordingly" (EFB 153). Faust's association between his desire for knowledge and his damnation clearly applies here specifically to his desire for knowledge

about hell. Having not yet begun his natural philosophical disputations with Mephistopheles, Faust can hardly be referring to his desire to know about worldly matters. This passage, which has no equivalent in the *Historia*, seems to limit Faust's foolish and sinful pursuit of knowledge to extra-Biblical spiritual knowledge, rather than extra-Biblical knowledge per se. Moreover, in combination with the earlier omission of criticism for Faust's speculations, and a later addition in which Faust, again without criticism, during his world travels enters his name at the University of Padua as "the vnsatiable Speculator" (176), this passage seems tacitly to legitimize Faust's skepticism and speculation in matters of natural philosophy.

The manner in which the relatively subtle differences between the *Historia* and its English translation accumulate to the point that the English Faust book seems to be much more amenable to Faust's pursuit of knowledge has previously been noted, but both the cultural causes and translation mechanisms of these changes remain underexplored. It has been observed, for instance, that the English translation "adds emphasis to Faustus's desire for knowledge" (Thomas and Tydeman 172). Observations have been relatively less clear on why this should be so. One possibility has to do with what Venuti refers to as the inherent "violence" of translation: "the reconstitution of the foreign text in accordance with values, beliefs, and representations that preexist it in the translating language and culture, always configured in hierarchies of dominance and marginality, always determining the production, circulation, and reception of texts" (*Translator's Invisibility* 14). This violence is of a piece with the need to find intertexts described above but asserts that beyond the need to integrate a translation within the receiving culture's textual tradition, the translation must also be fashioned in accordance with that culture's values. But did sixteenth-century English culture as a whole value natural philosophical speculation more than their German neighbors? This

hardly seems likely given that the natural philosophical contents of the *Historia* and English Faust book are largely the same. Instead, it is worth thinking about the violence of translation and the discursive position of the translator in a situation of heterogenous values within a culture.

Between the lines of the *Historia*'s constant denigration of Faust and his intellectual pursuits, one can read an attempt to curb the skeptical impulses of the late sixteenth century. On the one hand, the *Historia* relays the story of a scholar whose skeptical impulses lead to his destruction. On the other, it also relays to its readers the knowledge he supposedly gains through his impiety. It is a book in some ways at war with itself and with its motivating ideology, a conservative Lutheranism that wants to champion the Scriptures as the only certain knowledge amidst a shifting episteme but that also knows that there is a hunger among those with a little education, proverbially the most dangerous amount, for knowledge not contained in the Bible. The *Historia* hopes to sate this hunger and discourage further skeptical speculation by frequently pointing to Faust as a negative example. This implies an ideological program on the part of the author, or perhaps publisher, to influence the limits readers set on their own skepticism. P.F. takes advantage of the translator's invisible discursive presence to subtly undo this ideological work and give the English Faust book a different epistemological orientation. One should be satisfied with the spiritual knowledge contained within the Scriptures, but it is not wrong to be skeptical about the state of natural philosophical knowledge. This is certainly not ethical by modern translation standards. Without knowledge of German, sixteenth-century English readers would have no idea they were being presented a different world view from that of the source text. However, P.F.'s translation widens the aperture on the Faustian discursive field.

Ultimately, the *Historia* and English Faust book represent two different ethical approaches to the epistemological ambivalence that resulted from the growing skepticism toward the Christian Peripatetic account of nature at the end of the sixteenth century. The *Historia*, the more ambivalent of the two, tries to have its cake and eat it too, reinforcing the idea that pursuing any extra-Biblical knowledge is foolish while offering its readers just enough such knowledge that it can hope they remain satisfied enough not to pursue their own speculations. The English Faust book leans into a division between spiritual speculation beyond the Scriptures and speculation into the Book of Nature, explicitly condemning the former while tacitly approving the latter. These two approaches, one largely negative, the other largely positive, likewise characterize Faust's transition from speculation to empiricism within the texts.

From Speculation to Empiricism

As observed in the previous chapter, the *Historia*, and by extension its translations, served as middlebrow works of popular literature largely reliant on the, counterintuitively, presumed honesty of demons in matters of knowledge for the credibility of the information it conveys. This dependence on Mephistopheles's credibility makes chapter 22 of the *Historia*, the last of the disputation chapters, stand out both for its title and content. The chapter bears the descriptive title of "A Question of Doctor Faustus's, How God Created the World and of the First Birth of Humans, Whereto the Spirit Gives Him a Completely False Answer According to His Custom" (*Historia* 48).[159] Such a title can only have a disruptive presence in a text that relies on Mephistopheles's good word for much of its raison d'être. After all, if

[159] "Ein Frage Doctor Fausti / wir Gott die Welt erschaffen / vnd von der ersten Geburtdeß Menschen / darauff jme der Geist / seiner art nach / ein ganz falsche Antwort gab."

it is the spirit's custom to give false answers, what else has Mephistopheles told Faust that is false? Can the reader really trust anything they have read? The title alone seems intended to stoke the reader's skepticism in the text of the Faust book itself, threatening to destabilize the very coherence of the work.[160] Perhaps the text, according to its custom, hopes to have its cake and eat it too by reminding the reader that devils are not to be trusted while nonetheless hoping that the reader will not apply this to the preceding chapters. Regardless, the titular "false answer" that Mephistopheles gives to Faust's question of creation not only brings their disputations to an end but marks a turning point in the epistemological trajectory of the work.

The chapter begins in a somewhat strange fashion, with a sullen Faust, having heard so much about hell and thus the fate that awaits him, uncharacteristically reticent. Mephistopheles, reminding Faust what a good servant he has been and how he has answered all of Faust's questions so far, eventually coaxes the question out of Faust that has been troubling the bad doctor. As the chapter title indicates, Faust asks about the creation of the world and humankind to which he receives a false answer. The specific nature of the answer, however, will have major consequences for the skeptical tenor of the narrative. The passage in question reads:

> The spirit hereto gave Doctor Faustus a godless and false report, saying the world, my Faust, is unborn and immortal. Likewise, the human race has been here forever and had no origin in the beginning, and the Earth had to nourish itself, and the Sea separated itself from the Earth. They were then a friendly pair. It was as if they could speak to each other. The Earth desired his realm from the Sea, including fields, meadows, forests, and the grass or greenery, and in return gave the fish, water and

[160] In fact, the French Faust book will exploit this instability in a manner detailed below.

> everything within it. To God they only granted the creation of humans and the sky, so that they would ultimately have to be subservient to God. From this realm sprang the four realms of the air, fire, water, and earth. (*Historia* 48–9)[161]

Self-contradictory and muddled, Mephistopheles's answer reads like gibberish. First, humans have existed forever, but later God creates them. Earth and water seem to predate the sky, ergo space, so it is not clear where this creation could be happening. However, there is a certain a method to this madness. One of the surprisingly few Faust scholars to devote much attention to the passage, Christa Knellwolf King sees "Christian, Gnostic and animistic traditions (familiar, for example via Classical antiquity) […] freely intermingled in this passage" (57). This reading seems plausible from a twenty-first century vantage point, but Gnosticism and animism did not represent major intellectual preoccupations at the end of the sixteenth century. While only touching on the passage in passing, Jones observes that Mephistopheles's statement on the eternal nature of the world evokes Aristotle's cosmology, which seems indisputable ("Introduction" [*English Faust Book*] 15). Rather than evoking "Gnostic and animistic traditions," however, the spontaneous division of land and sea, and the creation of nature without divine intervention, as well as the seemingly spontaneous generation of the elements, is almost certainly meant to recall Lucretius's *De rerum natura*. By the turn of the seventeenth century, Lucretian atomism had become a serious challenger to Scholastic natural philosophy, and a mangled form of Lucretius's account of creation

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[161] Der Geist gab Doctor Fausto hierauff ein Gottloſen vnd falschen Bericht / sagte / die Welt / mein Fauste / ist vnerboren vnnd vnsterblich / So iſt das Menschliche Geschlecht von Ewigkeit hero gewest / vnd hat Anfangs kein Vrsprung gehabt / so hat sich die Erden selbsten nehren müssen / vnnd das Meer hat sich von der Erden zertheilet / Sind alſo freundtlich mit einander verglichen geweſt, als wenn ſie reden köndten. Das Erdreich begerte vom Meer seine Herrschafft / als Ecker / Wiesen / Wälde / vnd das Graß oder Laub / vnnd dargegen das Wasser, die Fisch / vnd was darinnen ist / Allein GOtt haben sie zugeben / den Menschen vnnd den Himmel zu erschaffen / also daß sie leßlich Gott underthänig seyn müssen. Auß dieser Herrschafft entsprungen vier Herrschafften / der Lufft, das Feuwer / Waſſer und Erdreich.

seems intended here (Copenhaver *Magic in Western Culture* 367). Thus, though King is correct that the accounts are "freely intermingled," the intention seems to be a parody meant to remind readers of the variety of contradictory pagan accounts of the world's origins while heavily implying the devil had likewise been the pagan philosophers' source, thus dramatizing the difficulty of reconciling Christian and classical etiology.

Even beyond the declaration in the chapter's title that Mephistopheles is lying, the chapter takes pains to emphasize the contradiction between the Biblical account and Mephistopheles's pagan pastiche. In the first editions of the *Historia*, an apostil directly beside the beginning of Mephistopheles's account paraphrases Luther in declaring: "Devil, you lie! God's Word hereof teaches otherwise" (48).[162] This marginal note works in concert not only with the chapter's title but also Faust's reaction to Mephistopheles to promote the Biblical account of creation over the pagan. Having listened to Mephistopheles, "Doctor Faustus speculated upon it, but it would not stick in his mind because he had read how in the first chapter of *Genesis* Moses told it differently, so Dr. Faustus did not say much in reply"[163] (49). Again, Faust's speculation enters the picture, but here, importantly that speculation has specific content, the confrontation of the Biblical creation story and Mephistopheles's pagan muddle. Clearly, the *Historia* stacks the deck against Mephistopheles's account, from its inconsistency to the Lutheran apostil and the fact that Faust's mind will not fully accept it, making it clear to the reader that the Biblical account is true and pagan teaching based on infernal deceit. The Bible clearly emerges as the source of truth, God's guarantor of reality on earth, and Faust looks like a fool for being unable to decide between it and Mephistopheles's balderdash. Perhaps this chapter has received relatively little attention

[162] "Teuffel du leugst / Gottes Wort lehrt anders hievon."
[163] "Doctor Fauſtus speculierte dem nach / vnnd wolte ihme nicht in Kopff / Sondern wie er Genesis am Ersten Capitel gelesen, daß es Moyses anders erzehlet / also daß er Doct. Faustus nicht viel darwider sagte."

because of its obvious moral, but it is crucial to understanding Faust's representation of intellectual skepticism and its consequences in the *Historia*, for Faust's inability to decided between the two accounts resembles the Pyrrhonic *epochê* Sextus Empiricus describes in *Adversus Mathematicos*, albeit in travestied form.

In this chapter, Faust confronts the contradiction at the heart of Early Modern natural philosophy, namely the incompatibility of the classical and Christian worldviews syncretized within the Scholastic thought style. Just as Faust's speculations represent the intellectual skepticism of an era no longer beholden to the authority of Scholasticism and the compromises it made between Christian theology and Aristotelian natural philosophy, Faust's turn to disputations with Mephistopheles represents the search for a new authority that can resolve questions raised by the old. Faust's explicit recognition of a contradiction between Mephistopheles's pseudo-pagan natural philosophical origin of the world and the Christian account as well as his state of *epochê* when presented with both by two authorities presages the end of syncretic philosophy and the beginning of a separation between theology and natural philosophy. As Fleck observes, the coincident expression of contradictory epistemic premises demonstrates "how at the moment of new thought styles' birth contradiction emerges as the expression of the intellectual 'conflict of fields of view'" (56n40) because at the height of a system of thinking's dominance such contradictions are unthinkable and do not even enter the field of view, or if they do, are quickly rationalized away (35).[164] If Faust's open recognition of this contradiction represents, which is not to say constitutes, the birth of the new-scientific thought style in which theology and the natural sciences must be disentangled, that paradigm would still require centuries to mature. Within

[164] "[W]ie in Momenten der Geburt neuer Denkstile der Widerspruch als Ausdruck des geistigen 'Streites der Gesichtsfelder sich einstellt.'"

a discursive archive, like that formed by Faustian literature, Foucault observes that "Contradiction functions, then, in the course of discourse as the principle of its historicity," and moreover, that such profound contradictions are what give rise to intellectual discourse itself (206).[165] What this scene records about its moment in the history of Western thought is the intellectual confrontation with the contradiction at the heart of its epistemic paradigm for the past five centuries: a natural philosophy capable of explaining the world but not its origins forced to serve a theology capable of explaining the origins of the world but not the world itself. This chapter serves as an inflection point in the *Historia*, just as the moment it memorializes served as an inflection point in history. Skeptical now of the old authoritative accounts, of the Biblical account, and not of Mephistopheles's account, Faust moves from speculation and disputation to empirical investigation, undertaking magical research expeditions to gain firsthand knowledge.

However, the characterization and framing of this shift varies greatly between the *Historia*, and its translations. The radically different framing of the French Faust book will be discussed below, but the English Faust book deserves special attention again for how omission serves to alter the characterization of Faust's intellectual pursuits. In chapter 20 of the English Faust book, the chapter in the translation in which Faust asks the final question of his disputations with Mephistopheles, the devil gives no false answer, in fact, gives no answer at all to Faust's question.[166] When Faust inquires, "how and after what sorte God made the world, and all the creatures in them, and why man was made after the Image of God," Mephistopheles replies, "*Faustus* thou knowest that all this is in vaine for thee to aske, I know that thou art sorry for that thou hast done, but it auaileth thee not" (EFB 163). The

[165] "La contradiction fonctionne alors, au fil du discours, comme le principe de son historicité."
[166] Because the English Faust book condenses some chapters and eliminates others, its chapter numbers do not correspond to those of the *Historia* after chapter 6.

English Faust book thus completely cuts out Mephistopheles's account of creation and makes no mention of any explicit falsehood on Mephistopheles's part. There has been, fittingly, some speculation as to why this passage is missing in the English translation. Censorship seems the most likely explanation, given the passage's exploration of a sensitive issue in both religion and science, but that does not exclude editorial considerations, which may also have played a part (Jones "Introduction" [*English Faust Book*] 16; Empson 87–8). Regardless, this omission has obvious narrative significance for Mephistopheles's credibility as a scientific authority, but as a consequence, it has even bigger repercussions for the characterization of Faust regarding why he undertakes his empirical investigations in the following chapters and how that frames the empirical movement in natural philosophy.

Following his final disputation with Mephistopheles, Faust undertakes his famous series of journeys to experience the world, and what lies beyond it, firsthand. Faust journeys first to hell (Ch. 24), then into the heavens (Ch.25), and finally across Europe (Ch. 26). Several things mark Faust's first journey as intriguing. Mephistopheles has already described hell in detail during their disputations, but now Faust wants to see it for himself rather than trusting to the devil's authority. Moreover, Faust asks for a different devil, either Belial or Lucifer, to act as his guide rather than Mephistopheles (*Historia* 52).[167] The text of the *Historia*, however, makes explicit that this journey is illusory and does not actually occur, raising important epistemological questions, which will be handled below in discussing the French Faust book. It may seem curious to frame Faust's journey throughout Europe as a scientific endeavor, but while the Age of Exploration has become more associated with the geography and ethnography of overseas colonialism, chorography within Europe was

[167] Neither ends up acting as Faust's guide. In the end a different devil, Beelzebub, carries Faust through hell.

essential to updating natural philosophical knowledge, which at that time included both physical and social geography, about the continent itself since in this domain in particular ancient sources could carry only historical authority.[168] Faust's journey would also have carried other empirical resonance particularly in relation to his association with Paracelsus. By the time of the *Historia*'s publication, the reputations and legends of Faust and Paracelsus, particularly on questions of magic and medicine, had become thoroughly entangled (Gantenbein 98–9), so Paracelsus's claims to have gathered much of the knowledge he cites as empirical during his travels may well have been top of mind to those reading about Faust's adventures (Koyré "Paracelsus" 171). Within the text of the *Historia*, however, it is Faust's journey through the heavens that proves the most important from the perspective of nascent empiricism. Redolent of science fiction, the chapter makes the text's best case for magic as a technique for scientific investigation. In chapters 28 through 32 of the *Historia*, 25–29 of the English Faust book, Faust himself answers questions from colleagues concerning astronomy and meteorology based on his observations during his astral travels, making the case for direct empirical observation in natural philosophy, if by magical means.

From the vantage point of the twenty-first century, we know that Faust's shift from doxographic to empirical knowledge emblematizes an early stage of a larger shift in the European epistemic paradigm, but readers at the time would have known only that it reflected a contemporary current of opposition to traditional learning. In a literary archeological sense, the presence of such "intrinsic oppositions" as that between authoritative

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[168] Ironically, the *Historia* uses Hartmann Schedel's nearly century-old 1493 *Nuremberg Chronicle* for most of its chorographic information. While the French Faust book is content to translate this information as is, the P.F.'s English Faust book updates and expands Faust's journey, potentially with first-hand information (Jones "Introduction" [*English Faust Book*] 27).

speculation and empirical investigation in the *Historia* articulates the "*additional development*," the historical movement, so to speak, of Early Modern epistemology (Foucault *Archéologie* 210–11). By depicting Faust's own shift in the 1580s, well before empiricism had fully established itself, the Faust books again take part in the phenomena they depict. Importantly, however, the differences between the German and its English translation also present two different but intelligible strands of development for the emergence, or reemergence, of empiricism. Faust's motivations differ according to his characterization in the *Historia* and the English Faust book. The *Historia*'s depiction of Faust trying and failing to reconcile contradictory but authoritative accounts in the Scholastic manner juxtaposed with the beginning of his expeditions, after a one-chapter pause, implies that consciousness of this contradiction motivates Faust to investigate matters that he was content to speculate or dispute about before. Following the revival of competition in the natural philosophy from non-Aristotelian authorities, such a motivation makes both psychological and historiographic sense and likely reflects one of the primary reasons there was so much openness to empiricism, particularly outside the universities.

What, then, of Faust in the English Faust book? Without Mephistopheles's false account to plunge him into an even more radical skepticism, how would Faust's sudden turn to experiential investigation be understood in the context of still embryonic empiricism? To understand, it may be enough to look to the works of Sir Francis Bacon. Although Bacon's writings on empiricism largely follow the publication of the English Faust Book, they can nonetheless provide the sort of downstream context outlined above. In his most famous work on empiricism, the 1620 *Novum Organum*, Bacon outlines a turn to empiricism based not on the contradictions between the ancient authorities and the Bible, as well as each other, but

rather on the insufficiency of the methods of disputation and speculation for arriving at true knowledge. In aphorism 71, Bacon explains, “Now the wisdom of the Greeks was professorial and much given to disputations, which is a kind of wisdom most hostile to the search for truth” (*Novum* 80). After taking aim at disputation, Bacon also addresses speculation, “No one has yet been found of such steady and strict purpose as to decree and compel himself to sweep away common notions and speculations, and to apply his understanding […] to a fresh study of particulars” (*Novum* 106). By “particulars” Bacon here means data gathered by experience. Clearly, Bacon takes a much more hostile attitude toward speculation and disputation than does the English Faust book, but more important than the relative tenor of their depictions is the conclusion that the two traditional forms of knowledge acquisition are insufficient. One need not be skeptical of any specific contradiction but rather of the doxographic tradition wherein, “men of learning […] have taken certain rumours of experience—as it were, tales and airy fancies of it—on which to base or confirm their philosophy; yet, nonetheless, they have accorded them the weight of legitimate evidence” (Bacon *Novum* 107). In this reading, the absence of a specific moment of doubt turns Faust’s epistemological shift from one of negative to positive motivation, looking for evidence itself rather than seeking to resolve a controversy.

Nevertheless, given that the *Novum Organum* appears some thirty years after the English Faust book, it is worth pausing on the question of its contextual value. There are reasons to believe that the ideas Bacon expresses in 1620 had already been percolating at the time of the English Faust book’s publication. Bacon himself, for instance had already expressed his dissatisfaction with the episteme of his day in writing as early as 1592 in his “In Praise of Knowledge,” part of an occasional piece entitled *A Conference of Pleasure*. In

this earlier work, Bacon complains of the state of knowledge that "All the philosophy of Nature which is now received, is either that of the Grecians, or that other of the Alchemists […] The one neuer faileth to multiplie words, and the other ofte faileth to multiplie gold" (*Conference* 14). Over the course of the piece, Bacon criticizes the speculative disputations based on the former and the unempirical experimentation of the latter. Thus, at the time when the oldest extant copy of the English Faust book was being printed, Bacon was already himself expressing the dissatisfaction with epistemological methods that can be read into the English Faust. Contemporary readers of the *Historia* and English Faust book, then, can have some confidence that they are not necessarily projecting an empirical turn into the Faustian material but that it could have been understood as such, even if no such explicit descriptions survive. That said, the epistemological value of this turn depends not only on its perceived motivation, as in the case of the *Historia* and its English translation, but also the mitigation of the skepticism stoked by the text. Empirical data, after all, only has value if the senses can be believed, and in the era of the witch trials, that was not given. Despite remaining faithful to events as related in the *Historia*, by completely reframing its skeptical framework, the French Faust book opposes Faust's empirical turn itself with a radical skepticism that opens a path for yet another development in the epistemic shift of the era.

4. The French Faust Book

Published in Paris in 1598, *L'Histoire Prodigieuse et lamentable du Docteur Fauste*, Pierre-Victor Palma-Cayet's French translation of the first Faust book presents one of the most fascinating episodes in the translation history of the Faust book. Although it proved popular enough in France to go through at least fourteen new editions or reprints from 1603

to 1674 issued by printers in either Paris or Rouen, unlike its German source, the *Historia von D. Johann Fausten*, or P.F. Gent[leman]'s *Historie of the Damnable Life and Deserved Death of Dr. Iohn Faustus*, its English translation, Cayet's work left no progeny and so has frequently been neglected by Faust scholarship. However, if P.F.'s translation has had a larger impact on the historical trajectory of Faustian literature overall, albeit chiefly as the source in turn for Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*,[169] it may nevertheless be that Cayet's oft-overlooked French translation provides a better understanding of the first Faust book's place in sixteenth-century European confessional and intellectual history. Although *L'Histoire* did not leave the cultural mark of the German *Historia* or the English *Historie*, the biography that led Cayet to his translation, and the theological framework in which his foreword situates it, marks the first explicit acknowledgment of Faust as an emblematic figure of the religious skepticism that have become the era's legacy.

A Faustian Translator

Unlike the anonymous writer of the *Historia*, its pseudonymous English translator, or the historical personage of Faust himself, Pierre-Victor Cayet, seigneur de la Palme—otherwise styled as Palma-Cayet—is a recognizable historical figure about whom a considerable amount is known. Born into humble circumstances in Montrichard in 1525, a gentleman sponsored his education in Paris where he caught the attention of Pierre de la Ramée, alias Petrus Ramus, who encouraged him to convert to Calvinism and study in Geneva. From Geneva he traversed Germany, learning the language and Reformation theology, before returning to France where Jeanne d'Albret, Queen of Navarre, made him a

[169] Marlowe's adaptation of the English Faust book and its consequences for the subsequent development of Faustian literature will be developed at length in chapter 4 of this work.

tutor to her son, the future Henri IV. How long exactly Cayet served the Navarrese court is unclear, but he seems to have instructed Catherine de Bourbon in religion before she named him her chaplain in 1584 and brought him to Paris in 1593 (Haag 945). He reconverted to Catholicism in 1595, not long after his former pupil, now the King of France, whose exploits Cayet chronicled in his *Chronologie septenaire* in 1605 and *novenaire* in 1608 earning him the official title of *chronologue*, or "chronicler." After his reconversion, Cayet became Professor of Oriental Languages and later also of Hebrew at the Collège de Navarre in 1596, as well as a Catholic priest and a Doctor of Theology in 1600, and died in 1610, just over two months before the assassination of Henri IV. Because of his spiritual about-face so late in his long life, questions about Cayet's true beliefs clouded his last years, and not only in strictly religious matters.

The exact motivations of Cayet's renunciation of Calvinism and return to the Catholic church in 1595 are impossible to know, but they almost certainly involve a synod of the Reformed Church of France defrocking him earlier in the same year. Although the synod's true motivations for taking action against Cayet remain somewhat opaque, in its summary of the complaints against Cayet, the synod mentions, among other concerns, that "he devoted himself fully to the curious sciences one ordinarily calls *Petrus Magus*" (Haag 946).[170] "Petrus Magus" is a bit obscure but is presumably meant to indicate a "magic stone," i.e., the philosopher's stone. These "curious sciences" would then be alchemy. Cayet's official return to Catholicism took place in November of 1595, and already by December, Protestant polemicists were accusing him in print of practicing magic (Haag 948). If these accusations can be explained away as attempts by former coreligionists to disparage an apostate, it is

[170] "il s'addonnoit tellement aux sciences curieuses qu'on l'appeloit ordinairement Petrus Magus."

harder to explain how, as Pierre de L'Estoile records in his journal for 13 October 1608, Cayet was implicated in a legal imbroglio involving magic rings, in which an alleged magician and counterfeiter implicated him, claiming he had been the one to order them (*8* 176). Assuming there is some truth behind these repeated accusations, Yves Cazaux notes that the Navarrese court was rife with hermetic pursuits, and Cayet may well have developed magical interests there (21–2). It would seem, then, that Faust and his translator shared more than just a literary connection, and that would prove enough for the former's legend to overtake the latter by the time of his own death.

Pierre de L'Estoile, turn-of-the-seventeenth-century memoirist, knew Cayet and mentions him several times in his *Mémoires-Journaux*, which have provided historians with such an important firsthand account of the reigns of Henri III and IV. De L'Estoile's entry on 11 March 1610, the date of Cayet's death offers a stark depiction of Cayet's mixed reputation at the end of his life,

> Today our Master Victor Cayet was interred in Saint-Victor-lès-Paris, a good doctor and scholar but a bit uncertain, confused, and troubled in his theology; grand alchemist and life of the party as was apparent from his clothes and mule, which would often eat wafers. It was also said that he studied necromancy and that if he could have attained perfection in that great art, for which he strove and exerted himself, it would have been the crowning achievement of his life: because the devil would have taken him away.
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> (*10* 385)[171]

[171] "Ce jour, fust enterré, dans l'eglise Saint Victor lés Paris, nostre maistre Victor Cayet, bon docteur et docte, mais un peu douteus, confus et brouillé en sa théologie; grand alquemiste et souffleur, comme il paroissoit à ses habits et a sa mule, qui en mangeoit souvent des oublies. On disoit aussi qu'il estudioit à la necromance; et que s'il eust peu atteindre à la perfection de ce bel art, après lequel il suoit et travailloit beaucoup, c'estoit la

If the historical Faust were French instead of German, this could easily have been his obituary. It hardly seems credible that a translator of the Faust book could seriously have been accused of having sold his own soul to the devil, but such was the case with Cayet. The Genevan theologian and fellow Professor of Oriental Languages Théodore Tronchin accused him of having sold his soul in order to win any theological debates, while others accused him of having made a pact in order to learn so many languages (Dédéyan 99–100).[172] An "Epigramme sur la mort de notre Me Cayet"[173] put out almost two weeks after his death claimed "to have found waxen images with many other objects and instruments of magic and devilry even a pact he made with the devil " (Cazaux 24–5).[174] Coming only after his translation of the Faust book, these accusations seem to have been inspired by his connection to the infamous necromancer, but his double apostasy, combined with his reputation for alchemy and magic, clearly made Cayet into a doubtful enough figure that even those like de L'Estoile who seemed to have liked him personally could not dismiss accusations of diabolism out of hand.

The remarkable convergence of Faust and Cayet's reputations bears emphasizing, on the one hand, because it shows how relevant, even plausible, the figure of Faust was to his European contemporaries, and on the other, because it clearly seems to have affected both the context and reception of the French Faust book. Taking Voltaire at his word that he knew nothing about Faust before arriving in Germany, his ignorance of Cayet and his *Histoire Prodigieuse* is the more lamentable because of how well they suit the theme in his *Lettres* to

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couronne de sa vie: car le diable l'eust emporté." It is also possible that "mule" should be read as "slipper," in which case Cayet was known for his shoes and eating a lot of wafers himself.

[172] In addition to French and German, Cayet seems also to have known Spanish, Italian, Latin, Hebrew, and at least enough about Arabic, Armenian, Syriac, and Ethiopian to write a treatise on them (Dédéyan 99).

[173] "Epigram on the Death of Our Master Cayet"

[174] "avoir trouvé des images de cire, avec plusieurs autres pièces et instruments de magie et diableries même un pacte qu'il avait fait avec le diable."

the Prince of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel. It is also somewhat surprising, given Voltaire's own interest in the era of Henri IV, which had led him to write his *Henriade* in 1728, that he had not learned more about one of Henri's chief chroniclers. Cayet, the religious turncoat suspected of heresy and even diabolism on all sides, could well be the posterchild for those "accused of speaking ill against the church." In fact, it is by displacing his own murky religious standing onto Faust that Cayet leaves his most significant mark on the Faustian tradition.

A Prodigious Title

Pierre-Victor Palma-Cayet's *Histoire Prodigieuse et lamentable du Docteur Fauste*, stands out, not only in the Faust tradition, but in translation history and theory as an edge case in which the translator attempts to subvert, indeed reverse, the meaning of a source text without departing significantly from its narrative or style. In other words, Cayet's translation combines relative fidelity to the word with radical infidelity to the spirit of the text. What immediately sets Cayet's 1598 translation of the *Historia* apart from the German original or the translations that precede it is the fact that it was undertaken, or at least presented, as an explicitly Catholic translation. As detailed above in parts 1 and 2 of the present chapter, the *Historia* clearly, but not expressly, marks itself as a Lutheran text, and the English translation capitalizes on the unstated nature of its source's confessional affiliation in order to assimilate the text as a generically Protestant narrative that presents a sustained but subtle polemic against various Catholic practices and dogmas. Curiously, then, other than the suppression of the scene in which Faust and Mephistopheles visit Rome and the pope, which the Catholic censors in Paris certainly would not have permitted, Cayet's translation does not deviate from

his source in any remarkable way. Cayet instead attempts to reverse the confessional polemic of his source text by reframing it, first by recontextualizing it with the French title he chooses, then by offering an explicitly anti-Protestant reinterpretation in the foreword he attaches to his translation, a reinterpretation that also situates both Faust and the Reformation writ large as symptomatic of the skepticism taking hold in European intellectual life.

Like the title of the English Faust book, the French translation's title acts a signal to readers, telling them how to understand the text. The very long full title of the German source text, the text of which progressively tapers in size on the title page of the first edition, delivers a summary of its contents and relies on the book's dedication and foreword to indicate that Faust's story is to be condemned, not imitated, a point that would not necessarily have been obvious in light of the foregoing literature of deals with the devil detailed earlier in this chapter. In contrast, P.F.'s English translation, or at least the oldest surviving edition thereof, eschews dedication and foreword, relying instead on its succinct, punchy title, *Historie of the Damnable Life and Deserved Death of Dr. Iohn Faustus*, to signal the appropriate reader attitude toward its contents. However, where the English translation's title functions in lieu of a foreword to indicate that the narrative should be read as a negative exemplum, Cayet's title works in tandem with the "Epistre,"[175] part dedication, part foreword, that precedes the text proper to recontextualize and reinterpret the significance of Faust's story.

Specifically, the French translation's title, *L'Histoire Prodigieuse et lamentable du Docteur Fauste*, recasts the Faust tale in terms of the prodigy literature popular in the second half of the sixteenth century. While modern readers might misread the *prodigieuse*, or

[175] "Epistle."

"prodigious," of the title in its derived figurative sense, Cayet's contemporaries would have recognized it instantly as referring to the prodigies that seemed to abound all around them, warning signs of great change and God's wrath. Prodigies have, of course, featured in literature since antiquity. Livy's historical works are filled with references to various prodigies and acts of propitiation to angry deities. However, by the sixteenth century, it was no longer a question of sacrificing a set number of oxen to Jupiter but of trying to suss out the mysterious will of the Christian God through teratoscopia, or the interpretation of prodigies (Cameron *Enchanted Europe* 184). In the second half of the sixteenth century, the literature of prodigies, erstwhile the province of the learned, opened up to popular audiences with the 1560 publication of Pierre Boaistuau's *Histoires prodigieuses*, which anthologized numerous stories of prodigies from a variety of sources.[176] Boaistuau's work was immensely popular, going through multiple reprints, editions, and adaptations and continuing to expand until it reached its maximum extent in 1598, the same year Cayet published his Faust translation.

The orthographic parallels between *Histoires prodigieuses* and *L'Histoire prodigieuse et lamentable du Docteur Fauste* are obviously glaring, but the place of the allusion to Boaistuau in Cayet's own title requires some unpacking if we are to understand his translation strategy.[177] On a marketing level, it makes sense to give your book a similar title to another very popular work, but it obviously raises ethical questions from a translation perspective. The answers to those questions are not entirely straightforward. As explained in

[176] The full title of the work is *Histoires prodigieuses les plus mémorables qui ayent esté observées, depuis la Nativité de Iesus Christ, iusques à nostre siècle: Extraites de plusieurs fameux autheurs, Grecz, & Latins, sacrez & profanes*.
[177] The *lamentable* in Cayet's title also clearly calls to mind *Histoires tragiques*, the title of Boaistuau's own popular 1559 translation of Matteo Bandellio's *Novelli*. Cayet likely thought incorporating both would go too far.

chapter two above, the *Historia* emerged out of the genre of *Teufelsbücher*, or "devil books," endemic to Early Modern Germany. Cayet would likely have encountered these books during his travels in Germany, which coincided roughly with the height of their popularity, but he would also have known that they were unknown in France. Moreover, Faust's name, which was already circulating in folktales, would have been recognizable to German book buyers in a way it would not have been in France, despite the magician's supposed sojourn in that country. In this case, Cayet is substituting allusions to Boaistuau's *Histoires prodigieuses* for the *Historia*'s connections to the *Teufelsbücher*. This may seem incongruous at first, but in *Une histoire du diable*,[178] Robert Muchembled describes these two genres as serving roughly the same literary function in their respective cultures (162–3). This would seem, then, to validate Cayet's changes in his translation of the *Historia*'s title.

On its own, this title might be justifiable. Although the *Historia*'s foreword makes clear that it is presenting "the terrible example of Dr. Johann Faust,"[179] i.e., Faust's story as a readily legible *exemplum* of what not to do rather than a *monstrum* requiring interpretation to discern God's will, it also claims only to contain "printed only what may serve everyone for warning and improvement" (12).[180] This language of "warning and improvement" is consistent with much of the prodigy literature of the time, which saw in prodigies harbingers of the world's end and thus calls to repentance before the Last Judgment (Clark *Thinking* 365–6). Johann Spies, the original printer of the *Historia* was himself no stranger to prodigies in popular literature and even published a type of periodical known as a *Warnschrift*, literally "warning writing," called the *Newe Zeitung*, or "New Newspaper," focused on local occult happenings and prodigies thought to be warnings from God (Baron *Faustus on Trial* 86).

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[178] *A History of the Devil*, available in English translation by Jean Birrell.
[179] "das schrecklich Exempel D. Johann Fausti."
[180] "allein das gesetzt/ was jedermann zur Warnung vnnd Besserung dienen mag."

However, a “prodigious story” only functions within a particular epistemological context and requires the identification of what in a story is prodigious and what this *monstrum* demonstrates about God’s will. Cayet provides his readers with this context in his own foreword, but in so doing, Cayet also radically reinterprets his source material. Attempting to turn the implicitly anti-Catholic polemics of the Lutheran *Historia* against Protestantism, Cayet’s translation draws the text explicitly into the era’s raging discourse of skepticism and in so doing exposes the radical epistemological instability of the text.

A Skeptical Translation

In his opening “Epistre” to le Comte de Comberg, Cayet identifies the prodigiousness of Faust’s story not primarily with his turn to diabolic magic but his skepticism regarding the church and its dogma. After briefly telling the story of how he supposedly received the Faust book, talked it over with his learned friends, and was advised to translate it, Cayet presents his readers with the framework for interpreting Faust’s story,

> Even in the present day, when because of the novelty introduced into Religion against the ancient customs of the Holy Fathers and Doctors of the Church, and in great contempt of them, one sees many who, having once begun to doubt their own conscience, want to rise to the heights of heaven and give voice to the secrets and mysteries of God, whom they mock and blaspheme. We see that this was the cause that moved poor Faust to seek out evil spirits; at least as it says here, knowing that he could not resign himself to the decisions of those Doctors and moreover giving himself to such masters that he thought he saw Paradise and Hell with his own eyes, as well as the very foundations of the earth. It is the damnable effect of this liberty,

> which many affect today, to be their own judges, according to their own good sense and individual mind, of all the questions that present themselves. (49–50)[181]

This reinterpretation is staggering. Without departing markedly from his German source text in the actual body of his translation,[182] Cayet attempts to invert the significance of almost every confessional signifier therein. The wicked Dr. Faust becomes the "poor Faust" misled by the doubts engendered by "the novelty introduced into Religion." That is to say, Faust is just another victim of the Reformation, hence the "lamentable" nature of his story. Such a portrayal robs Faust of the agency essential to the Protestant understanding of his fate described in part 1 above. It thus nullifies ethic of personal responsibility, which Robert Muchembled saw as the key element of modern Western culture to emerge from the Protestant response to Early Modern demonomania (149). Where the Reformation and all its confessional conflicts remain subtext in the *Historia* and its English translation, Cayet makes them central to his reframing of the Faust tale. Although he never names Luther, Calvin, or any other Reformers, his contrast of religious novelty with "the Holy Fathers and Doctors of the Church" rather than, say, the Bible, which he only mentions much later in his foreword, establishes that Faust's doubts and subsequent sins result from the loss of the institutional structure of the Catholic church.

[181] "Mesmes pour le temps present, auquel pour le nouveuté, introduicte en la Religion, contre l'usage ancien des saincts Peres anciens Docteurs, et à leur tresgrands mespris; on en void plusieurs, après qu'ils ont une fois entré en doute de leur propre conscience, vouloir monter jusques au plus hault des cieulx; et mettre leur langue à travers les secrets et mysteres de Dieu, dont ils abusent en derision et blaspheme. Nous voyons que ce a esté la cause qui a meu le pauvre Fauste, de rechercher les esprits malins; au moins comme il le met icy, à sçavoir qu'il n'avoit peu se resouldre par les decisions desdits Docteurs, et pourtant s'estoit-il donné à de tels maistres, pour penser voir comme à l'œil Paradis et Enfer, et mesmes mes fondemens du monde. C'est le damnable effect de cete liberté, que plusieurs affectent aujourd'huy d'estre juges par eux mesmes, et selon leur bon sens et esprit particulier, de toutes les questions qui se présentent."

[182] This is of course excepting the removal of the episode in the Vatican, but again, it is unlikely Catholic censors would have permitted that passage and may even have been the ones to remove it.

If the beginning of Cayet's dedicatory foreword clarifies what is "lamentable" about Faust's story, the closing address reveals what is "prodigious" about it and so completes the framework Cayet erects to structure his reinterpretation of the source material. Cayet begins his closing remarks by directly addressing the Comte de Chomberg, "God grant grace to your generous, brave, and most constant German nation, sire, that it will see itself one fine day truly reunited in the Catholic faith, in the bosom of out holy mother Roman Church, leaving behind all those monstrous opinions, which have proliferated there since that miserable defection" (53).[183] The word "monstrous" here both carries its modern meaning of "horrible" but also connects to the "prodigious" of Cayet's title. Faust's story, like the scandalous religious ideas circulating in Germany, is a *monstrum*, a prodigy registering God's displeasure with the Protestant rebellion against the Catholic church. This makes of Faust's turn to diabolism just another heresy symptomatic of the Reformation, for which God's wrath would only be assuaged when Germany, homeland of the Reformation, follows France's example, "in that every illicit practice has again been purged from it, and we all live in the love of God and our neighbors" (Cayet 53).[184] Setting aside for the moment questions about the accuracy of his depiction of France in 1598, Cayet implies here that, by returning to Catholicism, Germany can leave behind the conditions of religious novelty that gave rise to Faust in the first place. This would seem to complete Cayet's framework, transforming a subtly anti-Catholic polemic into a blatantly anti-Protestant prodigy story about the dangers of breaking from the mother church, presto chango.

[183] "Dieu face la grâce à vostre genereuse brave et constantissime nation Germanique, Monseigneur, de se voir une bonne fois bien reunie en la foy Catholique, au giron de nostre mere saincte Eglise Romaine, pour delaisser tant d'opinions monstrueuses, qui y ont pullulé depuis cette miserable defection."

[184] "tellement que toute practique illicite en soit repurgée, et que nous vivons tous en amour de Dieu et de nos prochains."

However, Cayet's conclusion fails to address the skepticism, which according to his foreword lies at the heart of Faust's motivations but also represents a larger social and religious issue. This omission weakens the strength of his argument by avoiding such a crucial problem but not before situating the Faust book within a discourse that highlights not only the epistemological instability of the text itself but of its cultural context. Although Cayet never actually uses the term, in the passage from the beginning of his foreword quoted above he alludes to at least three types of skepticism: spiritual ("many who, having once begun to doubt their own conscience"), sensory ("he thought he saw Paradise and Hell with his own eyes"), and intellectual ("this liberty, which many affect today, to be their own judges"). The first of these he links directly to "the novelty introduced into Religion against the ancient customs of the Holy Fathers and Doctors of the Church," by which he assuredly means Martin Luther's break from Catholic dogma. In positing that historical moment as the cause of many wavering consciences, Cayet anticipates Richard Popkin's epochal *History of Scepticism*, which argues that Luther's rejection of the Catholic church's monopoly on truth opened a "Pandora's box" that unleashed a skeptical crisis throughout Early Modern Europe (5). While this would tend to strengthen Cayet's argument, his evocation of the other two types only undermines it.

The difficulty Cayet encounters results from his own foreword's relationship to these skeptical currents, a relationship that can best be described as "troubled." In his *Pré-Histoires*, Terence Cave analyzes sixteenth-century French texts, which he sees as *troublé*, or "troubled," exhibiting "une réaction complexe, et souvent irrationnelle, devant un phénomène mental inquiétant (une 'fêlure'), que ce soit le pyrrhonisme, la croyance

hétérodoxe, la sorcellerie ou la conscience de soi" (16).[185] Cayet's foreword wrestles with at least the first three of these "faultlines" as it attempts to use their presence in the Faust book paradoxically to discredit Protestantism itself. If Cayet wants to demonize the spiritual skepticism that swept through Europe with the outbreak of the Reformation, he also seems to be caught up himself in the influence of the Pyrrhonic skepticism that took hold, particularly in the French Counter-Reformation in the wake of 1569 publication by Gentian Hervet Sextus Empiricus's *Adversus Mathematicos* and *Hypotyposes* in Latin translation.[186] Cayet's assertion that Faust's dilemma represents the "damnable effect" of an assumed freedom to judge everything according to "good sense" and one's "individual mind" seems to be leaning into the Pyrrhonic arguments current in the French Counter-Reformation that, given the fallibility of human knowledge and senses, one should defer to traditional authority. However, his position is so extreme and so skeptical of human reason that he ends up walking the fine line of heretical fideism. Cayet's position ultimately raises more questions than it answers about what led Faust to damnation. If our good sense and our minds do not suffice to pass judgment on questions presented to us, what are they for? What are we to do when faced with questions on which the Doctors of the Church presented no opinion? Thus, in attempting to dispel the skepticism that the *Historia* had turned toward the irrationality of Catholic doctrine, Cayet ends up courting an irrationality of his own.

Nevertheless, it is the question of sensory skepticism as it relates to demonic illusions, which reveals the most about the shaky epistemological ground not only that Faust

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[185] "a complex reaction, and often irrational, in the face of an unsettling mental phenomenon (a 'faultline'), whether it be Pyrrhonism, heterodox belief, sorcery, or the consciousness of the self."

[186] In an interesting parallel to Cayet's confessional project in his foreword, Sextus's *Hypotyposes* had actually been translated and published first by the moderate Calvinist Henri d'Estienne in 1562. Hervet reprinted d'Estienne's work after his own, reframing it according to his own Counter-Reform project to have it serve Catholic orthodoxy (Cave 34–5).

stands—or thinks he stands—on but that Cayet himself and indeed many Early Modern thinkers were forced to take for granted. Specifically, in his foreword, Cayet alludes to two specific episodes in the Faustbook, one in which Faust is made to think he has been to hell before dying and another in which Mephistopheles shows, or at least claims to show, Eden and hell to Faust. The second incident occurs in a chapter entitled "Wie Doct. Faustus in die Hell gefahren," or "How Dr. Faustus Rode into Hell," in the eighth year of his twenty-four-year pact.[187] In the chapter, Faust believes he is taken to hell, but a marginal note in the German text explains that "For it was but a sheer fantasy or dream" (53).[188] This clarification is repeated at the end of the episode when Faust reflects on his supposed trip: "Sometimes he took it for certain that he had been there and seen it. Other times he suspected the devil had only put on a show for his eyes, which for that matter is true" (55).[189] This certainly fits Cayet's description by which Faust, unwilling to take the word of the traditional authorities for it, attempts to see hell for himself, only to be misled by the devil. However, when Mephistopheles shows paradise to Faust, meaning the physical Garden of Eden, during their trip around the world, there is no textual indication in Cayet's German source that the devil is casting another illusion for Faust, nor does he add one. While his claim that Faust only "thinks" he sees paradise seems to rest more on his theological conviction than textual interpretation, it reflects the extent to which the acceptance of demons as real actors troubles any sort of stable epistemology, leaving open the constant possibility that what one thinks one sees merely results from a diabolic illusion.

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[187] Cayet translates this chapter title as "Comme le Docteur Fauste fut en Enfer," or "How Doctor Faust Was in Hell."

[188] "Denn es war nur eine lauter Phantesey oder Traum." Cayet translates this note closely in French as "Comme tout cela n'estoit qu'une fantaisie ou un songe" (106).

[189] "Einmal nam er jm gewißlich für/ er were drinnen gewest/ vnd es gesehen/ das ander mal zweiffelt er darab/ der Teuffel hette jhm nur ein Geplerr vnnd Gauckelwerck für die Augen gemacht/ wie auch war ist"

Such a reading, of course, calls nearly all of what occurs in the *Historia* into doubt. To Cayet's credit, the *Historia* leaves itself open to such a reading, particularly in the chapter containing Mephistopheles's false creation story. This would then seem to cast doubt on everything else Mephistopheles says, just as the illusion of hell could be understood to call into question all of what Mephistopheles claims to show Faust, completely destabilizing the narrative's entire epistemological structure. However, in emphasizing these problems within the text, Cayet inadvertently draws his readers' attention to the same problems outside of it. In a world in which demons are taken seriously, how can one ever know what is real? Cayet runs into this issue within the discourse of his own foreword when he tries to describe how to resist the evil, explaining that we must "manage ourselves in such away that the angel of Satan cannot take us by surprise because it is accustomed to transform itself into an angel of light,"[190] and finding himself unable to articulate exactly how one can avoid being tricked by a devil that can pose as an angel, Cayet pivots to celebrating the power of the rite of exorcism to drive out any devils found to already be possessing mortals (50). Where Cayet tries to argue that Faust is deceived because he rejects the teachings of the church, he must ultimately acknowledge that, in a world of demons, not even the Doctors of the Church can guarantee the certainty of one's experiences.

By expressly situating the Faust book within the sixteenth-century discourse of skepticism, Cayet reveals just how thoroughly the book reflects its times. Pyrrhonic skepticism and skepticism anent the senses when magic was suspected often mixed, however uneasily, in demonological literature. Jean Bodin in his then celebrated, now infamous for his hardline stance against witches *De la démonomanie des sorciers*, or "Of the Demonomania

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[190] "nous disposer en sorte que l'ange de Satan ne nous puisse surprendre: car il est coustumier de se transfigurer en ange de lumiere."

of the Sorcerers," of 1580 for example, suggests that "One doe does not need to opine against the truth when one sees effects & does not know their cause. For one must arrest his judgment about what is happening" (74).[191] Bodin thus suggests a Pyrrhonic approach when faced with potentially diabolic illusions, but he tempers this with a suggestion that skepticism has its limits and one should appeal first to common sense and then, in difficult cases, to experts and judges (Bodin 79). The inevitable result in Bodin's book is that witches should be burned. In his essay "Des boiteux," traditionally translated as "On Cripples," Montaigne also famously takes up the question of how to understand the claims made about and even by accused sorcerers. His concludes that "In the end, it is placing very great value on one's conjectures to roast a man alive" (Montaigne 1010).[192] In these two examples, positions staked out around Cayet's rejection of common sense and reliance on dogma to avoid being misled, demonstrate some of the diversity of thought around these issues at the end of the sixteenth century. Where Cayet seems closer to Bodin, although the former is more extreme, in preferring the opinions of experts, he has more sympathy for "poor Faust" than Bodin shows for his sorcerers, and where Cayet's pity seems to meet Montaigne's, Montaigne rejects the notion that experts' conjecturers about sorcery are necessarily correct.

The illusions, and possible illusions, lies, and possible lies, that populate the Faust book reflect anxieties, exacerbated by the witch hunts that form the backdrop to these debates, regarding how one can ever be sure of what one sees and what one knows in an enchanted world of angels and demons. Undoubtedly, the most famous evocation of such illusions occurs, not in the Faust book, but in René Descartes's 1641 *Meditationes de Prima Philosophia*, now better known as *Meditations on First Philosophy*. In its first meditation,

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[191] "Il ne faut donc s'opiniastrer contre la vérité, quand on voit les effects, & qu'on ne sçait pas la cause. Car il faut arrester son jugement à ce qui se faict."
[192] "Après tout, c'est mettre ses conjectures à bien haut pris que d'en faire cuire un homme tout vif."

Descartes conjures his own famous spirit: “Let me therefore suppose therefore that, no truly good God, font of truth, but some evil spirit, as powerful as cunning, putting all of his industry into deceiving me” (66).[193] Descartes’s choice of metaphor is clearly no accident, nor is it fully abstract. As Cayet’s attempts to reverse the polemics of the *Historia*’s skepticism reveal, these concerns about epistemology were present and active in concerns in the Early Modern era. For the Faust book’s readers, the stakes far exceeded those of mere abstract philosophy.

[193] “Supponam igitur non optimum Deum, fontem veritatis, sed genium aliquem malignum eundemque summe potentem et callidum omnem suam industriam in eo posuisse, ut me falleret.”

Chapter Four: Faust in Transition

1. Introduction: Faust in the Age of Reason

What place could a story about devils and magic have after the Scientific Revolution? In the Age of Reason? That depends on what you understand the Scientific Revolution to be and how you understand reasoning within the Age of Reason. At the end of the sixteenth century, the *Historia* and its translations appeared as representations of, and capitalizations on, a current of skepticism toward the Christian-Aristotelian paradigm that then dominated the European episteme. They gave voice to a growing intellectual opposition to Scholasticism that we now associate with the new science, but confusingly, the Faust books spoke this opposition in the language of magic. With his magic Faust is able to leave the earth for the stars and find the "Archimedean point" from which he can see the truth about the earth's relationship to the cosmos—no matter that Faust's truth happens to reflect the Ptolemaic schema underlying Scholastic astronomy and astrology. What is important in Faust's journey into space, like his journey around the world, is that he takes it himself.

Faust's drive for knowledge begins in speculation, moves through disputation, and arrives at empirical investigation, and it is not inconsequential that the heavens should feature so prominently in Faust's active engagement with knowledge. In *The Human Condition*, Hannah Arendt proposes that Galileo's observations and experiments with the telescope, in confirming the heliocentric theory of Copernicus and the orbital theories of Kepler, likewise created an Archimedean point, even if Galileo never actually got to leave the earth, which instigated a reimagining of the earth's relationship to the cosmos that in turn created the intellectual conflict from which modern science was to emerge (257–9). Arendt frames the

intellectual conflict initiated by this pivotal moment in the Scientific Revolution in terms of an opposition between the *vita contemplativa* and the *vita active*,

> Perhaps the most momentous of the spiritual consequences of the discoveries of the modern age and, at the same time, the only one that could not have been avoided, since it followed closely upon the discovery of the Archimedean point and the concomitant rise of Cartesian doubt, has been the reversal of the hierarchical order between the *vita contemplativa* and the *vita activa*. (289)

In this framework, the *vita contemplativa* stands for the doxographic speculative tradition of the Scholastic paradigm, and the proponents of the new science represent the *vita activa*. As a result of the latter's success in not only proposing theories but proving them, not with literary erudition, but with empirical evidence, whether observational or mathematical, it dethrones the former, establishing a new scientific paradigm, that of modern science. Read as a neat dialectic, a switch that takes Europe from Medieval to modern with a snap of Galileo's fingers, the frame is not very helpful. It skips to the end of a long process. However, Arendt herself frames the opposition of these *vitae* as a conflict of values, and their reversal in importance merely reflects the outcome of an ambivalent struggle between these two epistemological approaches that lasts from the late sixteenth century through the end of the eighteenth. The Scientific Revolution is no more or less than the discursive opposition created by the ambivalent struggle between these epistemologies, its revolution complete when the reigning paradigm at the beginning of the cycle had been replaced by a new scientific consensus with a new thought style.

With regard to the Age of Reason, perhaps it is better to speak of an age of competing reasons. Stuart Clark has proposed that, as an alternative to thinking strictly in terms of the

Scientific Revolution, we might think instead of "various loose conceptual schemes—Aristotelian, mechanistic and, yes, magical—that, competing or mingling allowed individual thinkers to ground their explanations of phenomena in a preferred cosmology ("Witchcraft and Magic" 155). This approach has the advantage of making some sense of the incongruous facts of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As the Scholastic thought style slowly lost its authority, the lack of a coherent paradigm made space for a number of heterogenous theories. Thus, someone like Isaac Newton could at once reject astrology, embrace the new astronomy and mathematics, and yet also embrace alchemy. As alchemy became increasingly Neoplatonic and mystical, it likewise became increasingly divorced from Aristotelian physics, and as it became more closely associated with Paracelsus, it became more experimental (Collins 346). These characteristics made it attractive to figures like Newton or Robert Boyle who saw it as potentially complementary to their work rather than opposed to it.

Even as elite scientific figures like Newton turned away from astrology, however, the increasingly literate working class turned toward it. *Moore's Vox Stellarum*, a popular astrological practica that began in seventeenth-century England, did not reach its maximum distribution, a staggering 353,000 copies annually, until the end of the eighteenth century (Curry 101). Although he would never have called it such, the force Franz Mesmer supposedly used to treat his high-society patients in Vienna and Paris in the second half of the eighteenth century was essentially astrological in nature, merely updating the idea of "astral virtue" to the more enlightened "animal magnetism" (Campion 186). Grimoires, many attributed to Faust, likewise kept up a brisk sale throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth century, with some of them still being written in the middle of the latter century (Davies

119–22). What's more, the witch trials continued into the eighteenth century, even in France where Louis XIV's edict of 1682 ostensibly decriminalized witchcraft and declared magic mere superstition (Monter 50). Throughout this era of major scientific advances, then, magic remained a persistent presence at every level of society, and yet, by the end of the eighteenth century, a consensus would form around the theories and methods of the new science, constituting a new thought style that, though it certainly never eradicated them, would push these magical beliefs and practices out of the sciences and into smaller segments of society. The question remains: how did this happen?

Although no singular or even definitive answer seems capable of explaining such a major shift in intellectual paradigm, the arrival at a new consensus likely occurred when the natural scientific paradigm achieved sufficient explanatory power to be considered a comprehensive replacement for the Scholastic natural philosophical. Brian Copenhaver sees the gradual decay of magical and occult theories as linked with the decay of Aristotelianism, and vice versa, through the Aristotelian concept of hylemorphism, the distinction between matter and form in Aristotelian, particularly Christian-Aristotelian, natural philosophy and metaphysics that allows for objects to possess occult qualities and enables action at a distance (*Magic in Western Culture* 365–6). With regard to theories of magic, natural and otherwise, the concepts of occult qualities and action at a distance provided the last bastions of the *vita contemplativa*. As long as the mechanisms behind phenomena like gravity, magnetism, electricity, and the like remained unknown, they could be explained by magic. As the experimental methods of the new science found coherent explanations for these phenomena in line with a new thought style, the space available for natural magic within natural philosophy shrank ever smaller.

This presents an obvious issue for the Faustian tradition. Faustian works both literary and theatrical continued to be produced across the seventeenth and eighteenth century, but if the Faust story was essentially magical and yet had taken on dimensions of the *vita activa* and its drive for observation and experience, was it not working against itself? This crucial ambivalence, the tension between the *vita contemplativa* of traditional Scholasticism and the *vita activa* of the new science, which runs through the heterogenous intellectual culture of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries finds its reflection in the Faustian literature produced within them. Hence, the utility of Early Modern Faustian literature as an archive of the era's intellectual currents. The oppositions and contradictions operating in European society at large find expression in and between the different genres of Faustian works, ultimately finding their most acute reflection in Goethe's *Urfaust*.

2. The Latter-Day Faust Books

Beyond the numerous printings and editions it spawned, beyond its translations, its adaptations, and its unauthorized sequels, the *Historia* also inaugurated a roughly 150-year tradition successor Faust books in German. While the *Historia*'s translations in Dutch, Danish, English, and French would continue to be reissued and reprinted into the eighteenth century,[194] new editions and printings of the *Historia* seem to stop rather abruptly before 1600 (Mahal *1599* 16). The reason remains somewhat obscure. By then, no doubt, the initial excitement of the literary craze had worn off, and true, by 1599, the first of the *Historia*'s three German successors, Georg Rudolff Widman's *Wahrhafftigen Historien* ("True [Hi]Stories"), had arrived in print. For reasons that will become clear, however, it seems

[194] In the case of the English and French translations, at least, the new editions and printings were frequent enough that it is likely those Faust books were only briefly, if ever, out of print before the middle of the 1700s.

strange that this book should so suddenly and completely supplant the *Historia*. Regardless, after the appearance of Widman's *Wahrhafftigen Historien*, no new German editions of the *Historia* are recorded until the nineteenth century. The two other German Faust books, Christian Nikolaus Pfitzer's 1674 *Das ärgerliche Leben* and the 1725 *Johann Faust* by the pseudonymous Christlich-Meynenden ("Christian Thinking"), both derive from Widman's text rather than the *Historia*. After 1599, the *Historia* seems to fade away, forgotten for more than 200 years until Goethe reawakens interest in the history of the Faust tale.

Although the latter-day Faust books all recount a version of the Faust tale recognizable from the *Historia*, the changes they make to the hypotext have major consequences for their place in epistemological discourse of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Widman and Pfitzer's Faust books are much, much longer than the *Historia*, Christlich-Meynenden's much, much shorter, but all three cut almost the entirety of the *Historia*'s second part. This means cutting the natural philosophical disputations, Faust's expeditions and investigations, and Faust's natural philosophical replies to colleagues based on his investigations. Hence, the *Historia*'s successors cannot function as works of popular science as it had, nor do these later texts have any connection to the current of empiricism in Western culture, which had only grown stronger in the meantime. Moreover, though its successor Faust books cast doubt on specific claims in the *Historia*, Faust "the Speculator" disappears from them along with any mention of speculation, taking from the Faust story its fundamental skepticism of the Scholastic episteme. What remains, then, is ultimately a series of less exciting Faust books, intellectually more conservative, traditional and Christian-Aristotelian, but for all that, still representative of the thinking in their era, only a different aspect of it. If the *Historia* sits on the bleeding edge of the shifting Early Modern episteme,

best understood in the context of figures like Kepler, Bacon, and Descartes, its successors sit in the slightly uneasy middle in the company of those who intuited that, for stories like those about Faust to be true, the Scholastics had to be right about the important things, devils and the stars for instance. If the *Historia* had become an unlikely champion of the *vita activa* and natural philosophy, its successors tried to maintain the primacy of the *vita contemplativa* and theology.

Faust at the Turn of the Century: Georg Rudolf Widman's *Wahrhafftige Historien*

Whatever the reason, republication of the *Historia* ceased in 1599, and Georg Rudolff Widman founded a new dynasty of Faust books. It seems strange that Widman's *Wahrhaffitgen Historien* should have brought an end to the *Historia*'s line in no small part because they are such different books.[195] Günther Mahal suggests, somewhat improbably, that Widman and the *Historia* would have shared the same readership, meaning the educated (*1599* 18). However, as discussed in chapter two above, this observation flattens the question of education in the Early Modern period, transforming it from a spectrum to an on-off switch. Both the degree of education required to read the *Wahrhafftigen Historien* and the type of person who would want to do not necessarily line up with those conditions for the *Historia*. By Elizabeth Butler's reckoning, Widman's work shortens the *Historia*'s narrative by about a third but adds so much commentary that the *Wahrhafftigen Historien* balloons to more than three times the length of its hypotext (22). This commentary follows at the end of each

[195] The full title of Widmann's work is: *Warhafftigen Hiſtorien von den grewlichen vnd abſchewlichen Sünden vnd laſtern / auch von vielen wunderbarlichen vnd felgamen ebentheuren: So D. Johannes Faustus Ein weitberuffener Schwarzkünftler und Erkzäuberer / durch ſeine Schwarzkunft / biß an ſeinen erſdrecfliden end hat getrieben. Mit nothwendigen Erinnerungen und ſchönen erempeln, menniglichem zur Lehr vnd Warnung außgeſtrichen und erkleyret, durch Georg Rudolff Widman*.

chapter under the heading “Errinerung” (“Reminder”) and makes no secret of its author’s learning, citing Biblical, classical, and contemporary sources to explain what is happening in each chapter or to criticize the depiction of a phenomenon in either the *Historia* or another source whence it has drawn its Faust stories. Widman’s diligence in finding sources on Faust’s life and activities outside the *Historia*, led no less a figure in Faust studies than Harry Haile to declare, “Faust research began in earnest with Georg Rudolf Widman” (“Widman’s” 355). Fittingly, the *Wahrhafftigen Historien* reads like an academic work, and as such, it is hard to imagine many of the same readers enthralled by the *Historia*’s narrative presentation of natural philosophy and demonology would be equally captivated by a work with a 2:1 ratio of erudite commentary to narrative.

Given the higher intellectual niveau of Widman’s Faust book, one would be forgiven for thinking that the *Wahrhafftigen Historien* would focus all the more on Faust’s desire for knowledge. However, the opposite is the case. Instead, the focus shifts to more general desires:

> [B]ecause I have not been enlightened by God, the creator, and yet am capable of magic, to which my nature is also inclined by heavenly influence, added to which it is certain and known that the earthly god whom the world tends to call the Devil is so experienced, mighty, powerful, and skillful that nothing is impossible for him, I turn to him according to whose promise he should always do and fulfill for me what my heart, mind, sense, and reason desire and want to have. (Widman 329)[196]

[196] “dieweil ich benn von GOtt dem Schöpffer nicht alſo erleuchtet, vnnd doch der Magiae vehig bin, auch dazu meine Natur von Himliſcher influenßen geneigt, zu dem auch gewiſ vnd am tag iſt, das der irdiſch Gott, den die Welt den Teuffel pflegt zu nennen, ſo erfahren, mechtig, gewaltſam vnd geſchickt iſt, das jm nichtes vnmüglich, ſo wende ich mich zu dem, vnnd nach ſeiner verſprechung ſol er mir alles leiſten vnd erfüllen, was mein Hertz, gemüth, Sinn und verſtandt, begehret und haben wil.”

All mention of a desire for greater knowledge about the *elementa* than can be learned from mortals vanishes from Faust's pact with Mephistopheles in Widman. Rather than complain that God did not make him smart enough to learn, or any mortal smart enough to teach him, what he wanted to know, here Faust merely justifies siding with the devil because God never "enlightened" him in the spiritual sense The focus of Faust's pact and overall depiction in the *Wahrhafftigen Historien* rests not on his drive for knowledge but for enjoyment and the fulfilment of less intellectual desires. Why this change? It certainly complicates Faust's motivation for engaging in the demonological disputations, which Widman keeps. In his foreword, Widman claims that, unlike the writer of the *Historia*, he has the "true Original by Johann Wäyger," the name he uses in place of Christoph Wagner, and it is possible this source, assuming it existed, contained different text for Faust's pact (278). On the other hand, Widman is likewise clear in his foreword that he is not including all the stories in the *Historia* but instead that "in this book there should be enough, though still not everything that might trouble innocent ears and hearts" (278).[197] Since most of the chapters Widman excises are those dealing with natural philosophy and Faust's investigations, it would seem his concern was that Faust's pursuit of knowledge might "trouble" his readership.

Nevertheless, Widman's Faust does address astrology directly in his pact, complicating the shift in focus away from knowledge. When Faust refers to "heavenly influence" in the passage above, he means astral influence and is referring to the earlier chapter 4 entitled "Faustus Searches in His Books for What Sort of Complexion He Has."[198] Complexion here refers to the balance of Aristotelian qualities in a body, as well as humors with reference to human bodies, which supposedly determined a person's temperament and

[197] "daß in diesem Buch dagegen ein genuͤge geschehen soll / jedoch das auch nicht alles / was zuͤchitge ohren vnnd hertzen betruͤben muͤcht / sol erzehlet werden."
[198] "Fauſtus ſucht in ſeinen Büchern, was Complexion er habe."

aptitude. In this chapter, Faust wants to know whether he has any talent for conjuring before he tries to summon a demon. How he goes about it is interesting, "As he now for this sake diligently turned to his books and arts, he found out that, according to a reading of the stars, he was not only gifted with a superb *ingenio*, wisdom, and reason but also so that spirits would have a special inclination and attraction to him" (Widman 296)[199] Here Widman not only leans into the idea that Faust is a genius but acknowledges the utility of his astrological practice even before Mephistopheles improves his technique. This passage unreservedly accepts the notion, still widespread in many Western subcultures, that a properly read horoscope can reveal a person's natural talents and interests. In his "Erinnerung" on the subject, Widman confirms this stance, "As far as Faustus wanting to know his complexion, therein he did no wrong to himself. However, he had wanted to know so that afterward he could continue in his unchristian plans the more at ease" (Widman 297).[200] Faust's use of astrology, then, was not wrong in itself, only its sinful aims. Following this acknowledgment, readers might expect a scholarly explanation about how astral influences affect the body's composition of qualities and balance of humors and thus shape human personality, but no such explanation is forthcoming. Instead, Widman turns his commentary to the question of religious superstition and whether ghosts are real.

Throughout the *Wahrhafftigen Historien* Widman adopts the same approach to any natural philosophical issues. Any magical phenomenon that fits within the Christian-Aristotelian paradigm meets no resistance from Widman, but he also offers it without any

[199] "Wie er nun vmb dieſes willen ſeinen Büchern vnnd künſten fleiſſig obgelegen, hat er ſo viel befunden, und erfand, das er nach anzeig des geſtirns und ſonſt nicht allein mit einem herrlichen Ingenio, weißheit vnd verſtandt begabet were, ſondern auch, das die Geistere eine sonderliche inclination vnd zuneigung zu ihm haben ſolten."

[200] "So viel angehet, daß Fauftus ſeine complexion hat wiſſen wollen, daran hat er an ihm ſelbs nicht vnrecht gethan. Er hat es aber wiſſen wollen, damit er hernach in ſeinem vnchriftlichen vorhaben defto getröfter fortfahren kondte."

explanation of its mechanism and, in fact, often goes far out of his way to avoid offering an explication. Thus, in his commentary on the chapter that describes Faust's success as an astrologer, Widman does not take on Mephistopheles's role of explaining the structure of the cosmos or how astral influence affects the weather.[201] Instead, he makes a distinction between astronomy and astrology, which he dose not explicitly define but which seems to define astronomy as the licit science of the stars and astrology as its illicit twin, tracing the origins of astronomy to the Biblical Seth, noting orthodox Lutheran objections to astrological prophecy, and describing ancient festivals tied to particular times of year (Widman 446–53). Nevertheless, Widman celebrates Ptolemy, the leading authority in Scholasticism associated with both of what we would now call astrology and astronomy, "In the time of M. Antonius [Aurelius] lived Ptolemaeus, the celebrated *astronomus* who is rightfully remembered. For God maintained this high art entirely through this singular Ptolameus until our own time" (447).[202] Widman's high praise of Ptolemy resonates with his acknowledgment of the role astral influences play in various aspects of life and nature despite his ostensible repudiation of astrology. Moreover, alongside Widman's citations of Melanchthon, it represents an explicit endorsement of the Christian-Aristotelian worldview. In fact, throughout the *Wahrhafftigen Historien*, Widman's "Erinnerungen," with their appeals to the ancient and Biblical authorities and Scholastic scientific principles, not only articulate the Christian-Aristotelian worldview but, in context of the chapters Widman removes from the Faust book corpus, a defense of it.

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[201] The closest Widman comes to a description of astronomy is a brief mention of three types of celestial motion, that of the firmament, that of the planets, and that of the so-called trepidant, but he offers no clarity on their relationship to each other, the earth, or astrological influence (457–8).

[202] "Zu den zeiten M. Antonini hat Ptolemaeus der hochberühmbt Astronomus gelebet, deſſen billich gedacht wirdt. Denn GOtt hat dieſe hohe kunſt ganß durch dieſen einigen Ptolemaeum erhalten biß auff vnſere zeit."

By cutting the question of natural philosophical knowledge out of the Faust story as much as possible, reducing it to a series of anecdotes and general warnings or acknowledgments, Widman seems to be responding to a threat he perceives the *Historia* as posing to confidence in the Peripatetic thought style. Cutting out Faust's speculations, the natural philosophical disputations and responses to colleagues, and Faust's empirical expeditions ultimately means cutting the skeptical heart out of the *Historia*. Further, by omitting even explanations stylistically consistent with Christian Aristotelianism on relevant topics like astrology, Widman shows that he expects his readership either already to know the basics or not to, in which case he seems unwilling to offer knowledge to the uneducated. What defines the *Historia* and its translations intellectually, as the previous two chapters have shown, is its response to a desire for knowledge on the part of its readers and a recognition of a current of skepticism toward the old authorities running through European culture at the close of the sixteenth century. Widman seems to have recognized this and worried that these tendencies could only "trouble innocent ears and hearts." Otherwise, it is hard to explain why he would make the cuts he did. That Widman's apparent program to resist the intellectual skepticism and endorsement of empiricism, whether witting or unwitting, in the *Historia* has gone unremarked in Faust scholarship so far speaks, at least in part, to the relatively little attention that has been paid to Widman in particular and to the relationship of the Faust books to the history of science in general. That said, even King's *Faustus and the Promise of the New Science* makes only passing mention of Widman's Faust book, passing it over as a cash grab that lacks the episodes of Faust's adventures because it derives from an older source text (30–31).[203] Whatever the case may be, the inattention to the

[203] King also may have been misled in her conclusions about Widman because she seems to have accidentally

importance of Widman's changes to the Faust book corpus becomes all the more unfortunate in light of his influence on the tradition until its end in the eighteenth century.

Stars and Doctors: Pfitzer's Faust Book

Roughly 75 years had elapsed since the publication of Widman's *Wahrhafftigen Historien* when Christian Nikolaus Pfitzer published his own *Das ärgerliche Leben und schreckliche Ende des viel-berüchtigten Erz-Schwarzkünstlers Johannis Fausti* (*The Vexing Life and Horrible End of the Much Ill-Reputed Arch Master of the Black Arts Johannes Faustus*) in 1674. More intriguing than why it took three quarters of a century to produce a new Faust book is how little would seem to have changed in the interim judging from Pfitzer's work. Although he removes a few chapters, shortens some, and adds a few of his own, the narrative text in Pfitzer's Faust book is overwhelmingly the same as Widman's.[204] What differentiates it as a new Faust book, then, is not its narrative but its commentary, which Pfitzer replaces with his own at the end of almost every chapter causing both the size of the book and the ratio of commentary to narrative to swell even beyond Widman's. What's more, though coming more than seven decades later, Pfitzer's thinking and scholarly approach differ little from his Widman's, and his program appears nearly identical: use the story of Faust to warn good Christians away from evil and promote the Christian-Aristotelian worldview. Münkler identifies various editions of the *Historia* as Pfitzer's likeliest sources for the few chapters he adds to the Faust book, but none of these are the chapters having to

consulted an edition of Pfitzer's Faust book, the same consulted and cited in the present work, understandably mistaking it for Widman's because of a confusing title page in 1880 Adelbert von Keller edition (30n11, 31n12).

[204] Hence Pfizter's subtitle: *Erstlich vor vielen Jahren fleißig beschrieben von Georg Rudolph Widmann; Ietzo, aufs neue übersehen, und so wol mit neuen Erinnerungen, als nachdenklichen Fragen und Geschichten, der heutigen bösen Welt, zur Warnung, vermehret, Durch Ch. Nikolaus Pfitzer Med. Doct*.

do with natural philosophy or Faust's empirical adventures (182). This means that, given the opportunity to reframe Faust's story around its earlier themes of the search for knowledge by new means, Pfitzer consciously chose to go in the opposite direction.

From a twenty-first-century perspective, while a project essentially defending the Scholastic thought style might make sense in 1599, in 1674, after Kepler, Galileo, Descartes, and Boyle, it can only seem anachronistic. However, such a view results from a parallax error caused by reading the past backward from the present. As Lucien Febvre points out in his short piece on the witch trials, even through the middle of the seventeenth century, many if not most of the leading French intellectuals, Le Père Marsenne and Pierre Gassendi among them, either rejected heliocentrism or were indifferent to it (14). This may seem all the stranger since both Marsenne and Gassendi represent two of the earliest and most prominent mechanist philosophers, but thought in this era of transition was highly heterogenous, and they were no exception (Copenhaver *Magic in Western Culture* 380, 386). Nonetheless, more telling than his decision not to include the chapters from the *Historia* resonant with empiricism and new approaches to science is Pfitzer's decision not to cite or even reference the figures of the new science. This stands out most when it comes to the chapters on Faust's astrological practice.

In Widman's astrological chapters, he heavily emphasizes the role Faust's shift from the study of theology to medicine plays in his embrace of astrology. Although Pfitzer includes the fact that he is a Doctor of Medicine on his work's title page and does edit some of Widman's wording in these chapters, he does not remove the explicit connection between Faust's medical and astrological studies. Thus, when Faust begins his descent from theology into magic, Pfitzer informs us that "he set aside his previous studium theologicum, diligently

set about the art of medicine, and under this pretext applied himself to the researching of the stars' movements, learning how to cast nativities and to tell people what sort of fortune and misfortune, etc. they should expect to experience from the moment of their birth on" (62).[205] Mention of Faust's use of his medical studies to disguise his astrological studies again occurs in the chapter on Faust's renown as an astrologer (Pfitzer 223). In his commentaries to both chapters, Pfitzer does not contradict nor even mention the connection between medicine and astrology. After all, what's to mention? Although astronomers and other proponents of the new science had grown increasingly skeptical, even hostile, toward astrology, it still retained a prominent place in medical practice, and as late as 1704 Richard Mead, a vice-president of the British Royal Society and Isaac Newton's physician, could write a book on astral influences on health, *De Imperio Solis ac Lunae in Corpora Humana*, which would remain in print until the middle of the eighteenth century (Curry 60; Campion 186). More surprising, then, in Pfitzer's wide-ranging commentaries on the stars is that, although he frequently cites ancient authorities including Ptolemy (225), readers of Pfitzer's Faust book would come away never having heard of a Copernicus, a Kepler, or a Galileo. Pfitzer makes no mention of the controversies, certainly he would not have thought to call them "advances," in the field, even to refute them.

Like Widman, Pfitzer uses his commentary to uphold the increasingly tenuous Peripatetic paradigm, and like Widman, Pfitzer prefers to fight for this traditional thought style by excluding any opposing current of thinking that might "trouble" his readers. This at once fully ensconces Faust in the *vita contemplative* of the Christian-Aristotelian system but only from the outside, so to speak. Faust no longer seeks knowledge himself but is instead

[205] "sezte er sein bisher betriebenes Studium Theologicum beyſeits, legte ſich mit Fleiß auf die Arzneis Kunſt, und unter solchem Vorwand befleißigte er sich zu erforſchen den Himmelslauf, lernete Nativität stellen und den Leuten, was sie von ihrer Geburts-Zeit an für Glück und unglück erleben sollen, u. s. f, verkündigen."

enveloped in a layer of learning seemingly meant to contain and counteract the skepticism and active empirical search for knowledge in the *Historia* viewed as posing a threat, if not in itself than in the way it represents a current of opposition within European thought, to the epistemic paradigm of Christian-Aristotelianism. By removing material potentially supportive of alternate ways of thinking, Pfitzer and Widman seem to be seeking to cut off the possibility of Faust being viewed as a martyr for the intellectual counterculture and so returning him to his pre-*Historia* role as a bumbling negative exemplum, a latter-day Simon Magus and nothing more.

The End of a Tradition: The Faust Book of Christlich-Meynenden

It would be another half-century before the next German Faust book appeared in 1725, *Des Durch die ganze Welt beruffenen Erz- Schwarz-Künstlers und Zauberers Doctor Johann Faust*, better known as "the Faust book of Christlich-Meynenden" after its pseudonymous author.[206] As Pfitzer largely copied Widman's text, Christlich-Meynenden largely copies Pfitzer, with the major difference that they[207] reduce the size of the Faust book from a tome hundreds of pages long to a 30-some-page chapbook by removing the erudite commentary, doing away with the chapter structure, and shortening most of the episodes into a summary form. These changes sufficed to make it the first "truly popular folkbook" about Faust since the *Historia*, meeting with massive success within German-speaking Europe and providing the basis for chapbooks that circulated throughout the eighteenth century (Butler

[206] Its full title is: *Des Durch die ganze Welt beruffenen Erz- Schwarz-Künstlers und Zauberers Doctor Johann Faust, Mit dem Teufel auffgerichtetes Bündnüß, Abentheurlicher Lebenswandel und mit Schrecken genommenes Ende, Auffs neue übersehen, In eine beliebte Kürze zuſammen gezogen, Und allen vorſeßlichen Sündern zu einer herzlichen Vermahnung und Warnung zum Druck befördert von Einem Christlich-Meynenden*.
[207] Because the identity of Christlich-Meynenden is unknown, and it is less certain in the eighteenth century that a man wrote it, I will be using the singular "they" as pronoun.

29). However, despite some pretensions to enlightened skepticism, Christlich-Meynenden's Faust book only further reduces the place of knowledge in what remained of the Faust book tradition.

Although it does away with the extensive commentary employed by Widman and Pfitzer, the Faust book of Christlich-Meynenden does not let its text go fully uncommented. Whereas the previous Faust books had insisted upon the truth of the Faustian tale, in their address to the "impartial reader,"[208] Christlich-Meynenden opens the veracity of the story up to doubt: "The present sheets should rightly assert either the truth of the history of the world-renowned master of the black arts, DOCTOR Johann Faustus, with unimpeachable rationale, or if this is not possible, lay the falsehood of the same before the eyes of gallant world" (3).[209] The opening sentence of the first Faust book in the Age of Enlightenment thus holds a lot of promise for a skeptical reckoning with the magic and demons of the Faust legend. On this promise alone, Faust scholarship long considered Christlich-Meynenden's work an example of Enlightened literature (Münkler 191). However, a closer examination of the book's text reveals that, while the text does call some factual aspects of the Faust legend into question, it never does so with regard to the questions of demons or magic.

This becomes clear when observing which passages receive skeptical commentary and which do not. For example, the book's text calls Faust's doctorate into question, "[T]he University of Ingolstadt after three years had passed granted him the title of a doctor of medicine, although many, even those who still put some stock in this story, doubt this"

[208] "Unpartheyischer Leser."
[209] "Gegenwärtige Blåtter solten billig entweder die Wahrheit der Historie des Welt-bekannten Schwarz-Künstlers DOCTOR Johann Faustens, mit unverwerfflichen Gründen behaupten, oder wo dieſes ja nicht möglich, die Falschheit derselben der galanten Welt deutlicher vor Augen legen."

(Christlich-Meynenden 5).[210] The doubt the text speaks of comes from the controversy over where Faust's education took place and what degree he received. Where the *Historia* had maintained that Faust received a doctorate in theology from Wittenberg, Widman and Pfitzer claim it was a doctorate in medicine from Ingolstadt. The relocation to Ingolstadt had likely served an anti-Catholic polemical purpose and to distance Wittenberg from association with Faust (Münkler 173). Changing his degree to medicine probably served both to distance associations with theology from those with Faust and to more fully recreate Pliny the Elder's schema of magic originating from the confluence of religion, medicine, and astrology (Pliny XXX.I). Hence, Christlich-Meynenden's evocation of doubt points to conflicting supposedly factual accounts about the life of Faust. When it comes to the passages concerning Faust's conjuration of Mephistopheles, his interactions with the devil, and his magic deeds and pranks, Christlich-Meynenden's text registers no such doubts. To do so would, of course, interfere with the religious purpose of the text, which was to warn against imitation of Faust's sins, but was that still relevant in 1725?

If the continued association of magic and medicine in 1674 seems strange from a twenty-first-century perspective, the sheer prevalence of magic and demonology even in educated culture throughout the eighteenth century will prove baffling. As late as 1703, medical dissertations on demonology were still being published in France (Clark *Thinking with Demons* 188), and leading up to the 1736 repeal of the witchcraft laws, it remained a popular subject of theoretical speculation in England (Clark "Witchcraft and Magic" 136). Merely a decade before the publication of Christlich-Meynenden's Faust book, three university students in Jena died in a fire caused by trying to conjure a spirit to lead them to

[210] "die Ingolſtädtiſche Universität […] ihm nach verfloſſenen drey Jahren den Titel eines Doctoris Medicinæ ertheilet, woran zwar viele, auch ſelbſt diejenigen, welche dieſer Geſchichte noch einigen Glauben beylegen, zweifeln."

treasure (Gantenbein 98). The last witchcraft executions in Bavaria did not even take place until 1722 (Monter 50). Thus, the Faust book of Christlich-Meynenden retained an amount of topical relevance in its day surprising from a modern perspective. However, like Widman and Pfitzer, in fact even more than their predecessors, Christlich-Meynenden foregoes any question of Faust's engagement with any epistemic issues. Not only does Faust not regain his desire for natural philosophical knowledge when it is more relevant than ever, but Christlich-Meynenden even strips the Faust book of even questions of demonological knowledge, cutting Faust's demonological disputations with Mephistopheles such that only Faust's questions remain while Mephistopheles's answers are omitted. With Christlich-Meynenden, Faust's role as a seeker of knowledge comes fully to an end, as does the original tradition of the Faust book. However, Faust's search for knowledge continued in the other Faustian tradition, the theatrical, and it would be thence that Faustian literature would reemerge later in the eighteenth century.

3. Faust on the Stage

Alongside the Faust book tradition, and almost contemporaneous with it, is another Faust tradition and one more popular in the stricter sense of the term: the Faustian theatrical tradition. Moreover, as Faust's hunger for knowledge disappeared from the latter-day German Faust books, and the Faustian figure in literature become fixed as an object of Peripatetic contemplation ensconced within a continuation of the Scholastic paradigm, it was the popular theatrical tradition of Faust, both on the boards and in the puppet theaters, that preserved the current of skeptical opposition to the Scholastic thought style and still hinted at Faust's drive toward the *vita active*. All of this would be most powerfully expressed in

Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, the first of the conventional Faust plays, which would be brought by English players to the German-speaking regions of Europe in the late sixteenth century. There, it would be adapted and rewritten over the next two centuries by various German theater troupes. Importantly, it would also be taken up for the German puppet theater whence it seems to have had the greatest effect on later literature. Throughout two centuries of transformation, much of Marlowe's epistemological focus would be lost but a suggestive core would remain to be taken up again by eighteenth-century authors.

Marlowe's Doctor Faustus and the Vita Activa

The exact date Christopher Marlowe wrote the *Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* remains unknown and now likely unknowable. Because it almost certainly depends on the unknown date of the English Faust book, references to the two works have been used to date each other. All that can be said with confidence is that Marlowe could have plausibly written *Doctor Faustus* anytime between 1588 and the date of his murder in 1593. The earliest print edition, known in scholarship as the A-text, appeared in quarto in 1604,[211] followed by a longer quarto in 1616, known as the B-text.[212] As William Empson observes in his posthumous *Faustus and the Censor*, the earlier text of *Doctor Faustus* is a "ruin," but even the latter edition probably extended by other authors after Marlowe's death does not fill in all the lacunae, which Empson suspects were made in the play by the Elizabethan censors (39–44). It would not be surprising if *Doctor Faustus* had attracted the attention of the censors. Probably written to capitalize on the popularity of the English Faust book, Marlowe's play

[211] This is the date commonly given, but the book was actually registered in 1601 and likely first appeared then, but as with the English Faust book, the oldest extant edition seems not to be the first (Empson 39).
[212] I will be making use of the A-text in my analysis, although all of my observations apply equally to the B-text, which does not differ substantially in the passages cited.

proved immensely popular itself. However, it also proved controversial and is cited as instigating at least one riot and possibly more caused by the fear that the actual devil had appeared on the stage (Chambers 424nc). Genevieve Guenther advances the theory that one of the principal reasons audiences may have expected the devil to appear arose as a result of the conjuration scene, which may have made spectators feel as if they were witnessing or even taking part in a real conjuration (48). These incidents point to the intimacy created between the audience and the actions of Marlowe's Faust, and in the same way the audience seems to have been thrilled and frightened by the stage magic, it is worth wondering whether they were also caught up in the intellectual tumult of the play.

Marlowe introduces his *Doctor Faustus* with a monologue that would come to define the Faust tradition after him, first in theater, and then overall. In line with the feelings of complicity brought on by the later conjuration scene, Chloe Preedy suggests Faust's lengthy initial monologues indicate he is speaking directly to the audience in line with Elizabethan stage conventions (162). Preedy focuses in *Marlowe's Literary Scepticism* on the religious skepticism Marlowe expresses in his plays, and so she sees Faust as making the audience complicit in his atheism. This may well be, but while Marlowe's expressions of religious skepticism in his plays have received a great deal of scholarly attention, the intellectual skepticism expressed in *Doctor Faustus* likewise deserves careful scrutiny. Faust's opening monologue, for instance, represents something of a bait-and-switch with regard to expectations about Faust as a scholar. The play's prologue seems to be drawing a contrast between the *vita activa* of warriors and lovers and the *vita contemplativa* expected of scholars by first stating that the play's protagonist is, "Not marching now in fields of Trasimene / […] Nor sporting in the dalliance of love" (Marlowe Pro.1,3), but instead is, "the

man that in his study sits” (Pro.28). The idea that a scholar sits in a study while warriors march and lovers sport reinforces the standard view of scholars then, and frankly now, opposing the *Bellatores* and *Laboratores* who take an active part in the world from the *Oratores* whose duty it is to observe and think rather than do. Once Faust begins to speak, however, this differentiation collapses.

Rather than merely evoke Faust’s speculations, Marlowe depicts Faust actively considering the Scholastic system, as represented by the four university faculties of Philosophy, Medicine, Law, and Theology, and rejecting it. In his explicit rejection, Marlowe’s Faust goes far beyond the Faust of the chapbooks, as well as beyond the formal skeptical principle of suspending one’s judgment. Nor is there anything subtle about Faust’s rejection.

> Settle thy studies, Faustus, and begin
>
> To sound the depth of that thou wilt profess:
>
> Having commenced, be a divine in shew,
>
> Yet level at the end of every art,
>
> And live and die in Aristotle's works.
>
> Sweet Analytics, 'tis thou hast ravished me!
>
> [*He reads*] *Bene disserere est finis logices*.
>
> Is, to dispute well, logic's chiefest end?
>
> Affords this art no greater miracle?
>
> Then read no more; thou hast attain'd that end:
>
> A greater subject fitteth Faustus' wit:
>
> Bid *On kai me on* farewell. (Marlowe 1.1.1–12)

Discontent with mere being “a divine,” Faust desires to achieve the end of every art. In his use of “end,” Marlowe almost certainly intends a double-entendre. Faust ostensibly does not set out to reject Scholasticism but to master it, and so, on the one hand, “end” seems to refer to the notion that one could reach the end of each branch of scholastic knowledge and thus perfect the system as a whole. On the other hand, as Sarah Wall-Randell, rightly observes, by “end” Faust also means the “use value” (266). Wall-Randell is referring specifically to Faust’s view of texts, but Faust is not referring here merely to texts but to entire branches of knowledge. As he considers each branch of the Christian-Aristotelian tree, he wants to know what each does and what one can do with it, ultimately finding them all lacking. This attitude in itself opposes the contemplative role traditionally assigned to scholars, at least with regard to philosophy and theology, and so presages his rejection of that traditional system of thought itself. Thus, it is no surprise that Faust begins his intellectual demolition with Aristotle, the central pillar of Scholastic thought although the implications of how he goes about this deserve some attention.

In lines 7 and 12 Faust quotes phrases in Latin and Greek but neither are from Aristotle. Having received a masters from Cambridge, Marlowe would surely have been able to quote Aristotle had he intended to, so there must be some other intent behind these quotations. The first, “Bene disserere est finis logices,” which Faust translates in the next line, is a paraphrase of Petrus Ramus’s opening line to his *Dialecticae libri duo*, “Dialectica est ars bene disserendi: eodemque sensu logica dicta est” (6).[213] At first, Ramus may seem a strange choice to quote in what amounts to a repudiation of Scholasticism. Ramus was in part known as a critic of the Scholastic system, but his criticisms were mild and his reception of

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[213] “Dialectic is the art of disputing well and is called logic in the same sense.” This is the same Petrus Ramus under whom Cayet studied. Ramus also appears in Marlowe’s *Massacre at Paris* (1589/93).

Aristotle sympathetic (Guillory 699). By lumping Ramus into his consideration of Aristotle, Faust not only dismisses Aristotle but his commentators all the way up to his contemporaries. Faust's dismissal also extends beyond Aristotle's logic. "On kai me on," or "being and not being," has to do with ontology and thus metaphysics not logic. That specific phrase has also been traced to the *Adversus Mathematicos* of Sextus Empiricus, further suggesting Marlowe's skeptical intent (Hamlin 258). Together, this indicates that Faust is calling the validity of the full breadth of Aristotelean thought into doubt.

Having knocked down the main pillar of Scholasticism, Marlowe's Faust then topples Galen and medicine, Justinian and law, and finally Jerome and theology. If Faust's concern truly is the utility of knowledge, its capacity for action, rejecting theology makes some sense, but medicine and law? The former he dismisses as, "A petty case of paltry legacies! / […] Too servile and illiberal for me," a verdict he likewise generalizes to canon law in the "universal body of the Church" (Marlowe 1.1.30,33,35). For Marlowe's Faust, then, the actions enabled by legal knowledge are simply too paltry. With regard to medicine, Faust notes that he has already achieved what can be achieved with Galenic medicine but finds it insufficient: "Wouldst though make men to live eternally, / Or, being dead, raise them to life again, / Then this profession were to be esteemed" (Marlowe 1.1.24–6). This seems an awfully high bar to clear, not to mention one approaching blasphemy, if the goal truly is only to find a use for knowledge. It becomes clear that Faust has engaged in bad scholarship, stacked the deck of his arguments, cherry picked his examples, and employed specious arguments to arrive at a forgone conclusion, i.e., that magic is the only meaningful science (Ingram 75). Why? Because it promises a field of almost unlimited action: "O, what a world of profit and delight, / Of power, honour, of omnipotence / Is promised to the studious

artisan" (Marlowe 1.1.55–7)! For Marlowe's Faust, like his predecessor in the English Faust book, magic represents both an object of study and a technology both for extending the capacity to gain knowledge and for improving one's quality of life. The question of why Marlowe felt the need to cast doubt on the whole Scholastic knowledge apparatus just to have his Faust arrive at this conclusion nonetheless lingers. Important here is the word "artisan," anathema to the traditional *vita contemplativa* but essential to an understanding of knowledge as something that acts in the world by making and doing.

It seems that, for Marlowe, in order for his Faust to make sense as a scholar who moves about the world and acts within it, his Faust had to break for a thought style that depended on sitting in a study reading the old authorities, not to produce new knowledge but merely to repurpose ancient knowledge. Although it is impossible to know for sure, Faust's opposition to Christian-Aristotelianism may also reflect Marlowe's own. At the time Marlowe studied at Cambridge, it had a reputation for growing opposition to Scholasticism, even as it remained securely ensconced in Oxford (Dietrich 14). Marlowe also associated with the "Northumberland Circle," known for its promotion of Lucretian atomism (Hirsch 72). Regardless, Marlowe would have had contemporary models to draw on, including John Dee. In his day, Dee was a renowned mathematician, but he was equally infamous for the magical and alchemical practices for which he is best remembered today. Compared to astrology, alchemy in the sixteenth century, though widespread, was looked down upon and not included in university curricula precisely because it involved experimentation, which smacked of craftsmanship and was thus artisanal, not scholarly, work (Collins 345). In envisioning Faust's need to break away from Scholastic thinking to achieve his magical aims, it is unclear whether Marlowe also understood that the very idea of learned necromancy as

understood in the sixteenth century depended on the very Scholastic thinking Faust was repudiating, but Marlowe certainly hints at the limits of magic he saw in the English Faust book.

As someone with an MA from Cambridge, Marlowe was in a good position to judge how the English Faust book, like the *Historia* it was based on, did not, could not, actually present any new knowledge. Whatever Marlowe thought about magic himself, if he thought much about it at all, he makes clear that it does not live up to Faust's expectations, at least in the realm of epistemology. In act 2, scene 1, when Mephistopheles gives Faust a book of magic spells, Faust ask for a book, "where I might see all characters and planets of the heavens, that I might know their motions and dispositions" (168–70). When Mephistopheles shows him that they are in the same book as the spells, Faust asks for another book, "wherein I might see all plants, herbs, and trees that grow upon the earth" (2.1.173–4). Mephistopheles shows him that these, too, can be found in the same book, and Faust cries out in despair, "O, thou art deceived" (2.1.176). The scene suggests that Mephistopheles either has no new knowledge for Faust or that, if he does, all the world's knowledge together can fit in just one book. This sense that Faust can expect no new knowledge from Mephistopheles is strengthened two scenes later when Faust disputes astronomy with his devil and finds his answers no different from those in an astronomy textbook, exclaiming in exasperation, "Tush, these slender trifles Wagner can decide. / Hath Mephistopheles no greater skill" (2.3.48–9)? These scenes certainly represent a joke at the expense of the supposedly "new" knowledge contained within the Faust books, but they also hint at the fact that Mephistopheles, ultimately a creature of the Peripatetic imagination cannot know anything outside of it. Nevertheless, these scenes provide Marlowe's Faust his implicit motivation for

undertaking his own empirical investigations into the stars "To know the secrets of astronomy" and around the world "to prove cosmography" (3.Ch.2,7), but due to the limits of sixteenth-century stagecraft, these adventures can mostly only be represented in a brief chorus between the second and third acts. What Marlowe's Faust learns once he reaches the Archimedean point in his dragon-yoked chariot, he does not share on the stage.

Faust in German Theater: From English Players to Puppets

Ironically, given the Faust legend's German origins, Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* formed the cornerstone of the German Faustian theatrical tradition. Although much of the power of its language and its intellectual audacity would fade over time, a powerful enough kernel would survive into the eighteenth century to be picked up by Lessing and Goethe. Evidence does exist of a folk play about Faust in Nuremburg in 1587 (Jones "Introduction" [Faustus and the Censor] 33), and there are other scattered reports of pre-Marlowe Faust productions of varying levels of credibility as well, but after its introduction, Marlowe's play would become the model for all those that came after (Creizenach 34–41). English plays were first brought to German lands sometime in the decade before 1600 when English players, seeking to make money during theater closures in London tried their luck on the continent. The first known performance of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* on the continent occurred in Graz in 1608 (Butler 69). However, it is possible that Marlowe's play arrived in the early 1590s when Robert Browne led several members of the Admiral's Men, the company for which Marlowe wrote most of his plays, over to the continent in the first English theatrical expedition on the continent (Lande 55). When, how, and by whom the play was first translated into German, no record remains. Nor have any of the versions performed

by actors in German survived in any form other than what can be gleaned from the various descriptions and advertisements that did outlast the years.

These scattered bits of ephemera and recollection do not give modern researchers much to go on. They do, however, provide a string of performance dates reproduced in nearly every work on the subject: 1626, 1651, 1661, 1666, 1668, 1679, 1688/90, 1696, 1738, 1742, 1767, 1770, and 1790. These dates speak to an enduring interest in the play, or rather plays, for it seems there were several versions, just as the, sometimes derogatory, observations of contemporaries speak to the popularity of the various German Faust dramas (Butler 70). These performances took place in German-speaking cities all over the Holy Roman Empire, speaking to the reach the story still had in German popular culture. The continuation of the witch trials, particularly in Southern German lands, until the turn of the eighteenth century likely contributed to the early popularity of the Faust plays, perhaps the more so since many of the later victims of these trials were male (Monter 50). No doubt the continued popularity of astrological and alchemical medicine, grimoires, and the persistence of natural magic in popular culture likewise made the story more plausible and thus engaging than we might expect today. That said, just as spectators do not need to believe in the efficacy of magic to appreciate Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* today, spectators in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries did not need to believe in it to enjoy the Faust plays then. One need look no further than Voltaire.

While most of the surviving descriptions of German Faust plays provide a plot outline that largely resembles Marlowe's with a few additional notes about staging, Voltaire's brief description of a Faust play he witnessed deserves some attention for the context in which he presents it. When Voltaire mentions Faust in the "Lettre sur les allemands" one of his *Lettres*

*à son altesse Monseigneur le Prince de **** sur Rabelais, et sur d'autres accusés d'avoir mal parlé de la religion chrétienne*,[214] published in 1768, he appears to have been completely unfamiliar with the figure until his time in Prussia acquainted him with German theater:

> I only know your famous Doctor Faustus from the play in which he is the protagonist and which is performed in every province of your empire. In it, your Doctor Faust does regular business with the devil. He writes him letters that fly through the air on a string; he receives replies from him. One sees miracles in every act, and the devil takes Faustus away at the end of the piece. They say he was born in Swabia and that he lived during Maximilian I's reign. I do not think he received any greater reward from Maximilian than from his other master, the devil. (47)[215]

Of some interest here is Voltaire's confirmation of the popularity of the Faust plays throughout the Holy Roman Empire in mid-eighteenth century, likewise his description of the special effects that seem to dominate his impressions of the play. Granted, it is not clear how much of the German Voltaire would have understood. More interesting, regardless, is the context Voltaire gives to this description. He places it within a book about famous figures accused of defaming Christianity, indicating he accepts the historicity of Faust, if certainly not his magical prowess, and his final comment about Maximilian suggest he thinks there is a political element to the legends that grew up around Faust. This intimation receives some reinforcement from the next paragraph in which Voltaire seems to compare Erasmus to

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[214] "*Letters to his highness the Prince of **** on Rabelais and Others Accused of Having Spoken Ill of the Christian Religion*." The Prince in question is Karl Wilhelm Ferdinand von Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel (1735–1806) who was also G. E. Lessing's patron.

[215] "Je ne connais votre fameux docteur Faustus que par la comédie dont il est le héros, et qu'on joue dans toutes vos provinces de l'empire. Votre docteur Faustus y est dans un commerce suivi avec le diable. Il lui écrit des lettres qui cheminent par l'air au moyen d'une ficelle: il en reçoit des réponses. On voit des miracles à chaque acte, et le diable emporte Faustus à la fin de la pièce. On dit qu'il était né en Souabe, et qu'il vivait sous Maximilien 1er. Je ne crois pas qu'il ait fait plus de fortune auprès de Maximilien qu'auprès du diable son autre maître. »

Faust, at least along the dimension of being accused by all confessions of irreligion. Voltaire, however, does not, probably cannot, reveal anything about Faust's language or characterization in the piece. In this, his description fits with most others. Without a surviving text from these plays, the only sources we have for Faustian theater of the seventeenth and eighteenth century are the puppet plays.

The puppet plays, perhaps the most popular form of popular theater, seem to have sprung from the German theater pieces themselves having sprung from Marlowe. When the first puppeteer shook the strings of a Faust marionette cannot be determined, but the first mention of such a play in print occurs in 1698 (van der Laan 136). It appears that the puppet plays developed along a similar trajectory to those in the regular theater with the exception that over time the comedic elements, present since Marlowe came to predominate. A. Bielschowsky, one of the researchers who helped catalog and record these puppet plays in the nineteenth century, complains that this increasing predominance of comedy stemmed from an increase in the percentage of the audience made up of children over time (1). This suggests at least that for much of the history of the puppet plays did not represent the children's alternative to stage productions but rather a general alternative. Unlike with the stage productions, several texts for the puppet plays exist. However, most puppet theater companies appear not to have actually used scripts and so researchers and enthusiasts recorded all of these texts in the nineteenth century by various means (Bielschowsky 1; Sommer 731). Nearly all of them show signs of tampering from their recorders (Butler 96). Their intentions had likely been to present these texts in their best light but clear modernization and improvement of the language, as well as borrowing stylistic elements from famous German authors of Faust works, make most of these texts completely unreliable

as guides to what the eighteenth century plays that inspired the likes of Goethe and Lessing were like. Nevertheless, Creizenach demonstrates through various linguistic and structural characteristics that the puppet play associated with the city of Ulm presents the oldest extant form of a German Faust play, and other scholars agree with him in this (Creizenach 58–9; Butler 96; Palmer and More 244). Therefore, with the caveat that it did not appear in print until 1847, an analysis of Faust's opening monologue in the Ulm puppet play and its relationship to the Faustian theatrical tradition follows.

Like Marlowe's play, the Ulm puppet play begins with a prologue. Unlike Marlowe's play, rather than being read by a single actor, this prologue takes place in hell and features a conversation between Pluto, Charon, and other unnamed devils. The prologue in hell seems to have developed as a distinctive feature of German Faust plays as they began to diverge more from Marlowe's work (Butler 71). In the Ulm play it serves mainly to set up Faust's temptation. Faust himself appears, as in Marlowe, sitting in his study whence he delivers the monologue that appears to have likewise become a fixture of Faustian drama in German:

> No mountain without valley, no cliff without stone, no study without effort and work. […] Someone likes to paint, the other architecture, this one is a poet, that one a good orator, this one is a good philosopher, that one a good *medicus*. This one here applies himself to the *stadium theologicum*, thinking thereby to achieve honor and fame, as I have done since my childhood. […] But what is that? I am a doctor and remain a doctor. But I have heard and read much more about the planets' qualities and that the heavens should have a *forma sphaerica* or round. But I would wish to see everything and grasp it with my hands. Therefore, I have determined to set aside the *stadium*

theologicum for a time and feast myself upon the *studio magico*. (*Doktor Johann Faust* 785)[216]

In reading this monologue, one hears the distant echo of Marlowe but much more as well. The language is much cruder than Marlowe's, much more straightforward and, though trying to reflect academic verbiage, unable to capture Marlowe's erudition. Philosophy, medicine, and theology are present, but law has been replaced with various arts. More importantly, however, where Marlowe's Faust is from the beginning set upon the *vita activa*, this German puppet Faust reflects a much greater ambivalence. He hopes to gain "honor and fame" from the *vita contemplativa* of theology because of its traditional primacy but admits that his interests lie in astronomy. What's more, he wishes like Marlowe's Faust to take an active role in the world. The fact that his expression of a desire to seize everything comes immediately after his discussion of the heavens seems to gesture to his own journey amongst the stars, but unfortunately, no such scene survives in the Ulm puppet text. To this end, the puppet Faust wants to take up the study of magic, but he only wants to set theology aside "for a time."

It is a much more ambivalent Faust who speaks from the little stage of the Ulm puppet theater than spoke from the boards in London in Marlowe's day. To the extant the Ulm text is a reliable representation of the German theatrical tradition of Faust in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, it presents a tradition much less confident than its distant

[216] Kein Berg ohne Thal, kein Felsen ohne Stein, kein Studiren ohne Müh und Arbeit. Man sagt zwar im gemeinen Sprüchwort: quot capita, tot sensus, viel Köpf, viel Sinn. Der eine hat Lust zur Malerkunst, der andere zur Architektur; dieser ist ein Poet, jener ein guter Orator, dieser ein guter Philosoph, jener ein guter Medicus. Dieser legt sich auf das Studium theologicum, gedenket dadurch Ehre und Ruhm zu erlangen, wie ich denn solches auch von meiner Kindheit an gethan, und durch Hülf meiner Präceptoren es so weit gebracht, dasz ich allhier in Wittenberg summum gradum Doctoratus cum laude empfangen habe. Aber was ist es? ich bin ein Doctor und bleib ein Doctor. Habe aber viel mehr gehört und gelesen von der Planeten Eigenschaften und dasz der Himmel in forma sphaerica oder rund seyn soll; aber Alles zu sehen und mit Händen zu greifen, möchte ich wünschen, deszwegen habe ich mich entschlossen, das Studium theologicum ein Zeitlang auf die Seite zu setzen und mich an dem Studio magico zu ergötzen.

source in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*. Where Marlowe's Faust cannot wait to be rid of the Scholastic paradigm in every branch of knowledge, the Ulm puppet Faust dithers between the contemplative tradition and a desire for action and experience. Where Marlowe's Faust wants to shake the foundations of knowledge and thought, the Ulm puppet Faust speaks from the crumbling edifice of those foundations, excited by the prospect of what lies beyond but hesitant to leave what he knows for more than "a time." Whether truly authentic or not, it is a sentiment that certainly resonates with that which Goethe captures in his *Urfaust*.

4. The First Fragment of the Last Faust in Old Europe

Hab nun, ach, die Philosophei,

Medizin und Juristerei,

Und leider auch die Theologie

Durchaus studiert mit heißer Müh.

Da steh ich nun, ich armer Tor,

Und bin so klug als wie zuvor. (Goethe *Urfaust* 1–6)[217]

These almost familiar, almost immortal lines, open Goethe's *Faust in ursprünglicher Gestalt* or, as it is more commonly known, the *Urfaust*.[218] Although a few orthographical

[217] Now, alas, I've studied philosophy
Medicine and jurisprudence
And, sadly, theology too
Through and through, with ardent effort.
Yet, here I stand, poor fool that I am,
No wiser than I was before.

[218] "Faust in Its Original Form" and "Original Faust" respectively. "Original" is the common translation for *ursprünglich* in this context but somewhat overdetermines the meaning suggested by the German, which can also mean "primitive" or "primary," particularly since what determines the "original" state of a work of art is a fraught and thorny question. Nevertheless, *Urfaust* seems to reflect the form in which Goethe first gave a public reading of a draft of his *Faust* (Trunz 747).

differences and a somewhat more colloquial diction separate them,[219] the strength of Faust's famous lament already appears fully formed in this early draft of the scene which begins with the monologue and continues through the summoning of the earth spirit and which constitutes the first scene in this early draft and the first wherein the reader meets the disaffected scholar himself in *Faust I*. The oldest surviving version of Goethe's Faustian epic is an unassuming manuscript. The text is thought to reproduce the draft Goethe read before the ducal court in late 1775, reported in a letter by the Graf zu Stolberg, Friedrich Leopold (Trunz 424). Copied sometime between Goethe's 1775 arrival in Weimar and his 1786 departure for his Italian journey by Luise von Göchhausen, a companion of Duchess Anna Amalia of Weimar, the *Urfaust* represents the oldest known draft of Goethe's *Faust* as a coherent, if fragmentary, whole (747). Despite Friedrich Leopold presenting the 1775 draft as already "half-finished" in that same letter, it would take Goethe some 33 years to bring his Faust to fruition. Unquestionably a work of *Sturm und Drang*, the *Urfaust* already contains most of that genre's elements present in the completed *Faust I*, namely the "Gretchen tragedy" (*Gretchentragödie*), the opening monologue, and the summoning of the earth spirit, which survived by and large unchanged across the decades it took Goethe to finish the first part of his *Faust*.[220] Of these survivals from the *Urfaust*, the very first scene, embracing Faust's monologue on the insufficiency of academic knowledge and his summoning of the earth spirit, will serve as this study's endpoint, for in it, Goethe recapitulates—in

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[219] Compare to the opening lines of the monologue in *Faust I*:
Habe nun, ach! Philosophie,
Juristerei und Medizin,
Und leider auch Theologie
Durchaus studiert, mit heißem Bemühn.
Da steh‘ ich nun, ich armer Tor,
Und bin so klug als wie zuvor! (354–9)

[220] Although the pact scene also features unquestionable *Sturm und Drang* overtones, it is not present in the *Urfaust* but does appear, in part, in Goethe's 1790 *Faust. Ein Fragment*, which represents a middle draft between the *Urfaust* and *Faust I*.

microcosm—much of the formal and thematic richness underlying the preceding Faustian literature.

The Faustian Choice

As an introduction to Faust's character, the *Urfaust*'s opening scene is crucial to Goethe's text, but in a work that so often diverges from the tradition that inspired it, it is also the scene that most directly connects Goethe to earlier Faustian literature and the magical culture whence it sprang, and it is in this scene that the young Goethe's interests most align with the Faustian material handed down to him. Moreover, the two unite at perhaps the last best time for such a composition. The *Urfaust* takes Faust's desperate striving for occult knowledge so earnestly because the young Goethe did as well. Both were, so to speak, products of the last great age of Western magic. The last decades of the eighteenth century mark the symbolic end of the Early Modern era and of Old Europe with it. There are reasons enough to justify this, the French Revolution included, but among them one might add that the 1770s and 80s brought the final defeats of magical explanations within the natural sciences and the ever-after separation of magic and mainstream science in the West. Hence, the *Urfaust*, particularly its opening scene, presents a pivotal moment in the history Faustian literature: the end of the Old European Faust.

For the young Goethe, his choice of Faust from among the cultural material "at hand" for a poetic vehicle was very much an active choice. In fact, he made his decision to pursue an adaptation of the Faust legend in spite of the expected disapproval, if not derision, of his then mentor, Johann Gottfried Herder. In his memoirs of that time, *Dichtung und Wahrheit*,

published decades later from 1811 to 1833, Goethe describes both his motivation for taking up an adaptation of Faust and the need he felt to keep his work a secret from Herder:

> I concealed most carefully from him my interest in certain objects that had taken root in me and were slowly but surely trying to assume poetic form. These were Götz von Berlichingen and Faust. The life story of the first had struck a chord within me. The image of a raw, well-meaning self-reliant man in wild, anarchistic times fascinated me deeply. The significant puppet play fable about the other hummed and tingled polyphonically within me again. I, too, had wandered through the entirety of knowledge and had been shown early enough its vanity. I had also probed it every way I could in my life and had always returned more unsatisfied and tormented. (413–14)[221]

This short passage reveals a great deal, both about how Goethe came to the Faustian material and the scorn such material drew from the intellectual elites of the Enlightenment. It establishes Goethe's desire to adapt Faust as early as 1770 or 1771. In it, Goethe makes explicit that his interest in the Faustian material stemmed from its relationship to questions of knowledge, specifically its utility. The desperation Faust expresses in his monologue at the insufficiency of worldly knowledge, then, is Goethe's own. Interestingly, given its place in the German theater repertoire and the availability in his day of a popular Faust chapbook, that Goethe identifies the Faust tale firstly as the "significant puppet play fable" indicates that not only did his own primary connection to the material pass through the puppet stage, but he

[221] "Am sorgfältigsten verbarg ich ihm das Interesse an gewissen Gegenständen, die sich bei mir eingewurzelt hatten und sich nach und nach zu poetischen Gestalten ausbilden wollten. Es war Götz von Berlichingen und Faust. Die Lebensbeschreibung des erstern hatte mich im Innersten ergriffen. Die Gestalt eines rohen, wohlmeinenden Selbsthelfers in wilder anarchischer Zeit erregte meinen tiefsten Anteil. Die bedeutende Puppenspielfabel des andern klang und summte gar vieltönig in mir wieder. Auch ich hatte mich in allem Wissen umhergetrieben und war früh genug auf die Eitelkeit desselben hingewiesen worden. Ich hatte es auch im Leben auf allerlei Weise versucht, und war immer unbefriedigter und gequälter zurückgekommen."

expected his readership would have had a similar experience. A certain defensiveness seems to adhere to Goethe's use of "significant" (*bedeutend*), almost as if he were still defending the adaptation of a puppet play from Herder's ghost, or at least his equally high-minded successors. However, the objections of Herder, and by extension the champions of eighteenth-century Enlightenment literature represented by French classicism, were not necessarily focused on its adaptation from a work meant for children but rather on its perceived medieval irrationality (Zimmermann 52). Hence, Goethe feels he must equally conceal his interest in the story of Götz as well, which although it lacks the magic and demons of the Faust legend, tramples all over the *vraisemblance* and *bienséances* of the French classicist model.

Nevertheless, the centrality of demons and magic to Faust's tale represent simultaneously one of the essential attractions of the material for Goethe and perhaps the single most important reason he wanted to conceal his interest from Herder. In explaining why he had begun to hide certain "unenlightened" interests of his from Herder, Goethe references the latter's treatment of his love for Ovid, "Er hatte mir den Spaß an so manchem, was ich früher geliebt, verdorben und mich besonders wegen der Freude, die ich an Ovids 'Metamorphosen' gehabt, aufs strengste getadelt" (*Dichtung* 413).[222] Given Herder's well-known penchant for the literature of antiquity, this may come as some surprise. However, he was not alone in disregarding the work. By the second half of the eighteenth century and particularly in the German language, the *Metamorphoses* had lost some of the prestige it had enjoyed as a source of inspiration for some of the great works of the Middle Ages and Renaissance, although it continued to provide the material for a number of French operas and

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[222] "He had spoiled my fun in so many things I had loved before and chided me in the strongest terms particularly for the joy I took in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*."

burlesques (Munari 37, 40). Perhaps Goethe's mentor simply found the work too bizarre and dissonant or himself unconvinced by the didactic and allegorical readings of Ovid's mythological masterpiece that had been plied by scholars for centuries. Alternatively, it may be rather that Herder was aware that, since the late-Medieval period at the latest, such readings had turned *The Metamorphoses* into source text for occult knowledge, and in warning Goethe off of it, he was also dissuading him from other pursuits.

While other classical works prominently featured magic, not least of all the other surviving Latin *Metamorphoses* by Apuleius, better known as *The Golden Ass*, Ovid's elevated authorial status, testified to by his influence on late-Medieval and Early Modern authors from Dante and Boccaccio to Shakespeare and Molière, along with the sheer breadth of mythological knowledge contained in his *Metamorphoses* lent him an air of authority beyond the rhetorical. This elevated status, however, only emphasized the dissonance between the decidedly pagan contents of Ovid's opus and the Christian culture in which it was read. Efforts to reconcile the two led some late-Medieval and Early Modern translators and interpreters to rewrite and reinterpret the *Metamorphoses* into a Christian moral-allegorical framework, such as the famous fourteenth-century *L'Ovide moralisé*. However, by the sixteenth century, both scientific and magical interpretations of Ovid had emerged. Barthelémy Aneau, for instance, lays out a three-part allegorical interpretation of the text according to natural philosophy, ethics, and history in the introduction, or "Preparation of the path toward reading and comprehending of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and all fabulous poems," to his 1557 edition of the first three book of the *Metamorphoses*.[223] He then declines to undertake a theological reading,

[223] "Preparation de voie à la lecture & intelligence de la *Metamorphose* d'Ouide, & tous Poëtes fabuleux."

> Because that would be to mix Heaven and earth & things sacred with the profane […] I am not adept enough in alchemy […] such that I voluntarily confess not to understand it and have read neither ancient Greek or Latin authors who have taken it up in this sense and do not know if Ovid and the ancient Greeks from whom he received his work ever thought about it. So, I leave that explication to those who understand it. (Aneau c5–6)[224]

That Aneau felt the need to address the issue of the *Metamorphoses* as an alchemical allegory at all suggests the prominence of such readings in the sixteenth century. The difficulty in parsing Aneau's tone makes it hard to tell whether he is being as matter-of-fact about his ignorance of alchemical interpretations as he had been about his hesitance regarding theological ones, but it is also possible to read a subtle irony in Aneau claims not to know if Ovid or his sources "ever thought about it." Regardless, Aneau likely did not want to alienate any readers or potential patrons by scorning alchemy at a time when, as will be expounded in chapters 1–3 below, it was widely, though not universally, viewed as a credible science.

One might expect this credibility to have exhausted itself by the eighteenth century, but it proved remarkably tenacious. Although he does not name a specific source for an alchemical-allegorical reading of Ovid,[225] Aneau would likely have had something in mind like *Le Grand Olympe*, a text likely completed sometime between the late fifteenth and mid-sixteenth centuries, which survives in several manuscripts and presents just such a reading (Kuntze 79–80). Neither Goethe nor Herder is likely to have known *Le Grand Olympe*, but

[224] "Car cela est mesler le Ciel auec la terre: & les choses sacrée auev les prophanes" before adding, "Ie ne l'ai aussi adaptée à l'alchimie […] pourceque je confesse volontiers ne l'entendre pas, et n'ay leu ancien auteur Grec ne Latin qui en tel sens l'ayt prinse, et ne say, si Ouide et les vieux Grecs, dont il a reduict son oeuvre, jamais y pensèrent Pource je délaisse celle exposition à ceux qui l'entendent."

[225] Aneau does, however, name three alchemists among "autres" whom he associates with such readings, "Suidas," "Chrysogon," and "Polydor" (c5), but these are rather generic pseudonyms associates with alchemy, and their identities cannot reliably be determined (Kuntze 12).

Herder's disapproval of Goethe's interest in Ovid likely stemmed from more recent works in this allegorical tradition and his suspicion that they were Goethe's true reason for interest in Ovid (Zimmermann 54). Whether in the form of the 1667 *Kurze Erklärung über die höllische Göttin Proserpina Plutonis Hausfrau, was die philosophischen poetae als Ovidius, Virgilius und andere dadurch verstanden haben*, the 1680 work of Prof. Jakob Toll, *Fortuita, in quibus praeter critica nonnulla tota fabularis historia Graeca, Phoenicia Aegyptia ad chemiam adseritur*, or that of the Benedictine Antoine-Joseph Pernety's near-contemporary *Les Fables Egyptiennes et Grecques devoilées et réduites au mème principe avec une explication des hieroglyphs de la Guerre de Troye* of 1758, someone in the mid-eighteenth century with an interest in the occult would have been able printed works that presented an interpretation of Ovid's mythological work through an alchemical lens (Kuntze 122–3). The young Goethe certainly possessed such an interest, and if Herder's disparagement of the *Metamorphoses* was indeed motivated by concerns about Goethe embracing mystical rather than enlightened pursuits, those concerns were well justified.

Although he does not explicitly link his interest in Ovid to his interest in alchemy, the proximity of Goethe's descriptions of both pursuits and the disdain they receive from the forbidding figure of Herder certainly implies a connection. As Goethe explains regarding his alchemical pursuits during this time, "Above all, I hid my mystic-cabbalistic chemistry and everything related to it from Herder, even though I still truly enjoyed working to develop my understanding of it in a more logically consistent manner than it was conveyed to me" (*Dichtung* 414).[226] The reference to "mystic-cabalistic chemistry" calls to mind Georg von Welling's *Opus mago-cabbalisticum et theosophicum*, a notoriously obscure hermetic-

[226] "Am meisten aber verbarg ich vor Herdern meine mystisch-cabbalistische Chemie und was sich darauf bezog, ob ich mich gleich noch sehr gern heimlich beschäftigte, sie consequenter auszubilden, als man sie mir überliefert hatte." Goethe details some of these experiments in the 8th book of *Dichtung und Wahrheit* (341–4).

alchemical text of the early-eighteenth century. Goethe had read Welling alongside works by Paracelsus, Basilius Valentinus, and other alchemists during his 1768–70 convalescence, when Susanne von Klettenberg, Goethe's dear friend and spiritual advisor during this time, introduced him to alchemy as well as the physician, Dr. Metz, whose alchemically-concocted "cure-all" Goethe credited with saving his life (*Dichtung* 338–42). For the Fräulein von Klettenberg, however, alchemy had been more an expression of faith than a scientific pursuit, and this, combined with the infamous obscurantism of Welling's text, no doubt prompted Goethe's search for a "more logically consistent manner" of understanding alchemy. The secrecy, at least from Herder, of these pursuits connects Goethe's alchemy with his interest in Faust as well as Ovid, suggesting that occultism exerted a strong influence on Goethe's literary interests at the time, and while alchemy remained at the center of his occult pursuits, he also took an interest in other forms of magic.

That Susanne von Klettenberg should see in alchemy an expression of faith might strike contemporary readers as peculiar, but it was very much in the spirit of the times, particularly in Germany in the third quarter of the eighteenth century. In Goethe's approach to the occult, on the other hand, one perceives more Faustian motivations, namely the desire for secret knowledge. He expresses as much in a letter of 11 May 1770 to his friend E. T. Langer wherein he writes:

> Then again, I'm secretly seeking to acquire a little knowledge of *the* great books, which the learned rabble in part marvels at and in part derides and both because it doesn't understand them. Fathoming their secrets, however, is the peculium of the sensitive sage. Dear Langer, it really is a joy when one is young and has apprehended

the insufficiency of the greater part of scholarship to stumble upon such a treasure. (in Gray 263)[227]

This passage, read alongside those from *Dichtung und Wahrheit* above, provides both a clear indication both of how the young Goethe saw his intellectual situation as comparable to that of the literary Faust as well as just how much had changed in the scientific culture of Europe in the intervening two centuries between the publication of the first Faust book and Goethe's penning of his *Urfaust*. Where Faust's magical research had been in line with the natural philosophical paradigm of his time but over the line in terms of acceptability because of the risks they presented, risks born out of their perceived efficacy, Goethe recognizes his own magical research as out of step with the growing, though not yet complete, natural scientific consensus. Faust had hidden his magical endeavors for fear of the legal consequences. Goethe hid his for fear of the reputational consequences. Nevertheless, Goethe clearly understands himself to be part of an alternative school of thought, not an isolated occultist. After all, he speaks of a part of the "learned rabble" that wonders at the great works of magic even if it cannot understand, and might not, like Goethe himself, necessarily avow that wonder publicly. Moreover, he was writing to his friend Langer about his research, even as he hid it from Herder, and he had not learned about these "great books" in isolation but through von Klettenberg and the circle around her, including his own doctor, the man who had saved his life. These were not outcasts and fools but educated, intelligent people who, like the young Goethe, balked at the "insufficiency" of natural science to explain all they saw and felt.

[227] "Und dann, such ich unter der Hand, mir eine kleine Literarische Kenntniss *der* grosen Bücher zu verschaffen, die der gelehrte Pöbel theils bewundert, theils verlacht, und beides weil er sie nicht versteht: deren Geheimnisse aber zu ergründen nur ein Pekulium für den empfindsamen Weisen ist. Lieber Langer, es ist doch würcklich eine Freude, wenn man iung ist und die Insuffizienz des grössten Theils der Gelehrsamkeit eingesehen hat, noch auf so einen Schatz zu stossen."

Thus, even in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, Goethe still had motive and opportunity to take Faust and his turn to magic seriously. In the decades that would follow Goethe's 1775 reading of his Faust draft before the Weimar court, advances in the understanding of chemistry, electricity, and magnetism would largely spell the end for the perception that magic offered any real avenue to knowledge, as the consensus around natural science and its attendant thought style pushed all others to the fringes. The first scene of Goethe's *Urfaust* captures, then, a fleeting conviction, faith that the insufficiency of science could still be overcome by turning to magic, and because Goethe still takes Faust seriously when he writes his *Urfaust*, he manages to inscribe into it a final summary of what the Faust tradition had been and signified historically at the moment just before its significance would have to change to remain relevant. If Faust had been the seal placed on the folkloric tradition of magicians that preceded him, the first scene of Goethe's *Urfaust* was the seal placed on the preceding literary tradition.

The Failure of Magic

The beginning of Faust's opening monologue in the *Urfaust*, quoted above, reads as a plaintive allusion to its counterpart in Marlowe's, contrasting the brashness of sixteenth-century excitement at the prospect of discarding traditional thought with the weariness of the late-eighteenth century that had endured the long process of doing so. However, Goethe did not actually read Marlowe until 1818, some 40 years after he first read excerpts from the *Urfaust* at court (Trunz 473). Any resemblance that exists between Goethe's *Urfaust* and Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* resulted from whatever distant echoes of the Elizabethan playwright Goethe caught in the declamations on the German stage or in the puppet plays of

his youth. Nevertheless, the difference in attitude between Marlowe's brash, exuberant Faust and the jaded scholar Goethe presents is striking. Even more than the Ulm puppet Faust, perhaps the closest we will ever come to knowing what inspired the young author's image of Faust, Goethe's old scholar embodies a deep ambivalence between the currents of the *vita contemplativa* and the *vita activa* whose opposition finds their fullest expression in the early Faust tradition in this, the last work in that tradition.

This ambivalence finds its first expression in Faust's renunciation of traditional knowledge. As with Marlowe, by naming the four faculties, still in use in Goethe's day, Faust rejects the whole traditional edifice of knowledge. However, the rejection of knowledge Goethe's Faust makes is much more fundamental than Marlowe's. Where Marlowe's Faust simply claims to have learned all there is to learn and found no use for it, Goethe's declares, "Don't imagine I know anything properly / Don't imagine I could teach anything" (Goethe *Urfaust* 18–9).[228] This rejection of the *vita contemplativa* goes much deeper. Having never actually learned anything, Goethe's Faust has nothing actually to teach. All of the knowledge collected in the traditional manner counts as useless not just because it has no practical value but because it has no value at all. Nonetheless, when he turns to the subject of magic, it is not power Goethe's Faust seeks for himself as Marlowe's did, but knowledge that he might consider actually valuable,

> Thus, have I given myself to magic
>
> To see whether through the power and mouth of a spirit
>
> I don't learn some secret,
>
> So that I no longer, in a sour sweat,

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[228] "Bild mir nicht ein was rechts zu wissen / Bild mir nicht ein ich könnt was lehren."

Speak of which I know not.

So that I may see what holds the world

Together at its core

Look at all the force at work and seeds

And rummage no more among words. (Goethe *Urfaust* 24–32)[229]

Erich Trunz rightly points out that the vision of magic Faust presents here differs markedly from the magic, which will feature throughout the rest of the finished *Faust I* (514). Later, the use of the term "magic" ("Magie") will refer to various magical tricks, such as those performed by Mephistopheles, but never again to this type of epistemological technique of gaining "secret" and therefore valuable knowledge.[230] What Faust seeks here is precisely what the young Goethe sought from his own magical studies (Gray 6). It is this sincere expression of belief in magic as a useful tool to achieve scientific knowledge that marks Goethe's *Urfaust* as the last of the Old European Fausts and also what makes magic's ultimate failure in the scene so devastating. However, there is a contradiction in what Faust wants from magic and how he wants to get it that often goes overlooked in this passage, a contradiction that precisely has to do with looking. Even as Faust complains of having learned nothing from his studies and expresses optimism at never having to read again, he desires only to "see" and "look" at the forces that drive the world. Unlike even the Ulm

[229] Drum hab' ich mich der Magie ergeben,
Ob mir durch Geistes Kraft und Mund
Nicht manch Geheimniß würde kund;
Daß ich nicht mehr mit sauerm Schweiß,
Zu sagen brauche, was ich nicht weiß;
Daß ich erkenne, was die Welt
Im Innersten zusammenhält,
Schau' alle Wirkenskraft und Samen,
Und thu' nicht mehr in Worten kramen.

[230] Even as late as 1784–6, Goethe worked on a poem that ultimately remained a fragment about Rosicrucianism called "The Secrets" ("Die Geheimnisse," Gray 64).

puppet Faust, Goethe's Faust does not want to "grasp everything" with his hands. Goethe's Faust, however tired of the *vita contemplativa*, cannot think beyond it. He wants the knowledge that comes with the *vita activa* but does not want to break a "sour sweat."

Faust's contradictory desire, to know the action of creation by looking, already suggests a fundamental contradiction between the concept of learned magic as a technique for gaining the sort of useful, empirical knowledge it seems he seeks. Observation, of course, belongs to empirical techniques, but Faust's perusal of the symbol of the macrocosm seems to suggest the sort of observation he intends. Looking at the symbol, he declares

> How everything weaves into a whole
>
> One acts upon the other and lives
>
> As heavens' powers climbing up and down […]
>
> What a show! But alas only a show
>
> Where do I finally grasp nature! (Goethe *Urfaust* 94–6, 101–2)[231]

Here, Faust hopes to gain knowledge by looking at a magic symbol. Importantly, in the hermetic tradition in which Goethe himself read, the symbols of the microcosm, the individual, and the macrocosm, the whole of creation, also stood for the power of perception and the power of action respectively (Zimmermann *II* 247). Thus, Faust again expresses his desire to understand the work of creation but wants to see it merely by looking at a book. Rather than experimental or even experiential observation, Faust hopes to attain active knowledge passively, and in this, the contradiction between the magic Faust seeks to use,

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[231] Wie alles sich zum Ganzen webt,
Eins in dem andern wirkt und lebt!
Wie Himmelskräfte auf und nieder steigen […]
Welch Schauspiel! aber ach! ein Schauspiel nur!
Wo faß' ich dich, unendliche Natur?

dependent upon the contemplative Scholastic framework he despises, and the active, experiential knowledge he seeks to gain becomes unmistakable. However, he has not yet faced the full tragedy of that contradiction.

Faust must finally face the contradiction between the knowledge he desires and the system of thought through he which he hopes to attain it when attempts to learn the secrets of creation from the Earth Spirit. As soon as the Earth spirit appears, Faust recoils. The scholar who has dreamt of nothing but looking at the vital forces of the world, cannot stand the sight of the spirit he summons, crying out "Terrible face" (Goethe *Urfaust* 130)![232] The Earth Spirit, explaining its nature, tells Faust

> In the flood of life, in the storm of deeds,
> I surge up and down
> Weaving here and there
> Birth and grave
> An endless sea
> A changing life
> Thus do I create on the roaring loom of time
> And knit the Godhead's living dress […]
> You resemble the spirit you comprehend,
> Not me! (Goethe *Urfaust* 149–56, 159–60)[233]

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[232] "Schröckliches Gesicht!"

[233] In Lebensfluthen, im Thatensturm
Wall' ich auf und ab,
Webe hin und her!
Geburt und Grab,
Ein ewiges Meer,
Ein wechselnd Leben,
Ein glühend Leben,

Understandably, this interaction crushes Faust. Until that moment, Faust had dreamed of what magic could do, but in that moment, Faust comes face to face without what it cannot do. It cannot, or at least will not give him the knowledge that he seeks. Even when magic seems at its most efficacious, when the Earth Spirit appears, that appearance might as well have just another show, for he profits just as much from it. In David Luke's notes to his translation, he associates the spirit with "the creative and destructive force of Terrestrial nature" (151n14). Albrecht Schöne likewise notes that under the heading "Erdgeist," or "Earth Spirit," in a mythological dictionary Goethe frequently consulted the term refers to the first creature, which subsequently created all others and is synonymous with nature (216). Faust, then, has tried to use magic to go to the source of natural philosophy, nature itself, but there he finds that true natural knowledge is the knowledge of action and experience, not that of contemplation. In Goethe's *Urfaust*, the conflict between the *vita contemplativa* and the *vita activa* resolves as it will in the eighteenth century overall, in a revolution that sees the *vita activa* claim primacy and, in so doing, deal a death blow to the concept of magic as an epistemological technique.

So schaff' ich am sausenden Webstuhl der Zeit,
Und wirke der Gottheit lebendiges Kleid. […]
Du gleichst dem Geist, den du begreifst,
Nicht mir!

Afterword

The *Urfaust* of the young Goethe represents the end of the original Faust tradition, the last work in the Early Modern Faustian archive, because it was written with an openness, a credulity toward magic as both a scientific discipline and a technique to gain knowledge attainable through no other means. That not even Goethe could imagine Faust's success presaged the end of Old European thought and the rickety remains of Christian-Aristotelianism on which it rested. Soon alchemy and astral influence would vanish from Western medical practice. Modern natural science would replace natural philosophy, and Goethe's *Faust* of 1808 would inaugurate a new Faust tradition in which magic becomes mere metaphor. Although Goethe would retain the first scene in Faust's study almost completely as it appears in the *Urfaust*, later scenes in the mature *Faust* of 1808 see Mephistopheles and the witch travesty the awe with which Faust holds magic in this scene. If the *Historia*'s tradition ends here to be replaced by a modern tradition that rejects its central premises, why concern ourselves with it? One could, of course, argue that Thomas Mann takes the original Faust tradition back up in his own 1947 *Doktor Faustus*, meaning the tradition is not completely obsolete. One could also argue that belief in demons persists in many fundamentalist religions and that astrology is, if anything, again on the rise in the twenty-first century. However, the greater relevance of Early Modern Faust literature resides in what it tells us about the birth pangs of modern Western thought, specifically the heterogeneity of scientific thinking throughout the Scientific Revolution and Enlightenment.

Throughout this work, I have sought to make the case that early Faustian literature matters because, viewed as a cultural archive, it provides an exceptionally lucid picture of

how the currents of Early Modern European epistemological discourse of the time both found its reflection in and was disseminated by non-elite cultural products. Although a historical personage, Faust, as a figure, was almost entirely born out of the religious and natural philosophical discourse of the sixteenth century. No works of his own survive, if he ever produced any, and so we can only reconstruct him through his contemporaries' accounts of him, accounts invariably shaped by their attitudes toward his magical claims and their plausibility within a way of thinking, a thought style, that accepted the physical reality of magic and demons and claimed knowledge of the rules by which they operated. What we can piece together from these accounts is the portrait of an itinerant *scholasticus* and probable swindler who exaggerated his credentials as a physician and astrologer, two entwined professions at the time. This historical Faust lived in the high era of Old Europe, the late Middle Ages, in which what this work has called the Scholastic thought style, a syncretic, doxographic system of science resting on the twin dogmas of Catholic Christian theology and Aristotelian physics and championing the *vita contemplativa* as the royal road to knowledge, predominated. Although the *Historia von D. Johann Fausten*, the first work in a tradition of Faustian literature that would last nearly two centuries, would appear only a few decades after the death of its historical namesake, it was a very different Europe that greeted it.

If the anecdotes that sprang up around the historical Faust spoke to general preoccupations with the possibilities of divination and conjuring demons in the first half of the sixteenth century, the literature around him that developed with the *Historia* and its translations speak to a world in which those preoccupations had become urgent anxieties in the century's second half. Faust's claims to command demons to provide him with knowledge and perform wonders, met with incredulity by many of his contemporaries,

became widely accepted facts in the midst of the Reformation, and amidst the wave of confessionalization and witch trials that swept Europe in the wake of the Reformation, Faust became an emblematic figure, particularly among Lutherans, for the dangers of diabolism. However, in this period, Faust also transforms into an emblematic figure of learning gone wrong, and when these aspects of Faust's growing legend meet in the *Historia*, what results is a strange work of narrative popular science that uses Faust's story to address many of the Early Modern period's thorniest issues around demonology, natural philosophy, and knowledge about the physical world more generally but also evince the weaknesses in the predominant explanatory models of the universe. The rapid and successful translations of the Faust book, on the one hand, demonstrate that these issues predominated in Europe beyond the borders of the Holy Roman Empire, but they also emphasize, through their individual differences, the increasing incoherence of the Scholastic thought style's characterization of physical reality.

The enduring popularity of the Faust book translations and of the figure of Faust in the theatrical adaptations of Christopher Marlowe and his German successors up to the second half of the eighteenth century testify to a persistent resonance with European audiences throughout the Scientific Revolution and Enlightenment. Faust's inability to reconcile the competing authorities of the ancients and the Bible presages the end of syncretic Scholastic thinking. Similarly, Faust's abandonment of theology for medicine and thus for natural philosophy becomes symbolic of the cultural shift in the sciences away from spiritual and toward physical reality and his abandonment of the *vita contemplativa* for the *vita activa* symbolic of the shift from the doxographic-thinking of Scholasticism to empirical-thinking of the new science. However, that Faust never abandons magic, that it

remains an efficacious tool for him, likewise represents the heterogeneity of thought throughout the Early Modern period. Magic, as conceived in the Early Modern period as a physical force, depended on a certain understanding of physics essential to Scholastic thinking but ultimately incompatible with a modern understanding of matter and causality. The persistence of astral magic, in the form of mesmerism's animal magnetism, and alchemy in medicine until the late eighteenth century speak to a fact captured in Early Modern Faust literature, namely that the rejection of one element in an outdated system of thought does not imply the rejection of all or an immediate replacement of one thought style with another.

What this comparative analysis of Early Modern Faust literature ultimately hopes to offer is a new perspective on the role of cultural products in both disseminating and shaping attitudes toward scientific change. Faust emerges from the Early Modern period as the emblematic Western figure of knowledge and its dangers because he accompanied the emergence of modern Western scientific thinking throughout the slow breakdown of the older Scholastic paradigm. The questions that initially preoccupied Faust, questions of demonology and astral influence on the sublunary world, no longer interest most of us, at least not as scientific questions, but Faust's pursuit of them continues to resonate with us because it reminds us of the contingency and uncertainty of knowledge. Inscribed in Faust's fantastical, fictional tale is the intellectual history of one of the most pivotal eras in Western history, and even if the initial tradition of Faustian literature has since come to an end, the uneasy mixture of magic and science that still accompanies the tradition after Goethe still carries its echo.

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D. Johannes Faustus Ein weitberuffener Schwarzkünftler und Erkzäuberer / durch ſeine Schwarzkunft / biß an ſeinen erſdrecfliden end hat getrieben. Mit nothwendigen Erinnerungen und ſchönen erempeln, menniglichem zur Lehr vnd Warnung außgeſtrichen und erkleyret, durch Georg Rudolff Widman. *Das Kloster, vol. 2*, edited by Johann Scheible, Stuttgart: Scheible, 1846, pp. 273–834.

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