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The Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: *Faust* as Jung's Myth and Our Own

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This paper is a meander through Jung's opus, following the thread of Goethe's *Faust*, and a reflection on Faust's meaning for our own times.

Goethe's great drama gives us a story line for our times: We are Faust. We have made a bargain with the devil for enormous power over the earth. We have committed crimes against nature and humanity for the sake of more land, more energy, more destructive capacity. We have murdered that loving old couple, Baucis and Philemon, who hosted the god in his disguise as a homeless wanderer. We are haunted by Faustian guilt about melting glaciers, rising seas, the fate of the salmon.

Jung, whose psychology can be described as an amplification of Goethe's *Faust*, saw it as his ethical task to take on Faust's guilt. He placed an inscription over the gate of his home at Bollingen that read: *Philemonis Sacrum—Fausti Poenitentia* (Shrine of Philemon—Repentance of Faust). This resonates over the years and speaks to our current ethical dilemmas.

Goethe, Jung's Ancestor

> Faust was Jung's lifelong companion.
>
> —Edward Edinger (p. 9)

I wandered into Goethe's *Faust* some 15 years ago and have not stopped my wanderings since. I agree with Jung that "one cannot meditate enough about *Faust*" (*Letters*, p. 89). However, I must confess that this conversion took place after much resistance. What was I resisting? My father. He, who was a

Larry Vigon, *Two Snakes*, 2001.
Acrylic on paper, 14″ x 11″ (35.6 cm x 27.9 cm).

learned professor, who had been raised and educated in Germany, who knew *Faust* better than I knew *Hamlet*, said to me over and over again: "What kind of an education is it if you haven't read Goethe's *Faust*?" Now my father was pushy, and my father was domineering, and my father was always right. I never gave him the satisfaction, during his lifetime, of hearing me tell him how important *Faust* had become to me.

But when I found myself preparing to teach an introductory course on Jungian psychology at Pacifica, my father's ghost showed up, still ranting about *Faust*. At the same time I was visited by Jung's mother, as she appears in *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, telling Jung that it was time he read *Faust*. These two, an unlikely pair, put their heads together and came up with a plan for my class: *Faust* would provide the "basic outline and pattern," which, by the way, is precisely what Jung said *Faust* did for him (*MDR*, p. 235).

It is as though *Faust* provided a template, a map, for the development of Jung's psychology. *Faust* provided . . . a dramatic and experiential way into such concepts as shadow, anima, libido, the descent to the underworld, alchemy, and *coniunctio*.

My father and Jung's mother were absolutely right. *Faust* turned out to be a fine entryway into Jungian psychology. I was amazed at how pervasive *Faust* is throughout Jung's opus. It is as though *Faust* provided a template, a map, for the development of Jung's psychology. *Faust* provided my students with a dramatic and experiential way into such concepts as shadow, anima, libido, the descent to the underworld, alchemy, and *coniunctio*. These concepts came alive for them, and they could see them in their own lives.

Faust is also of value to those of us who know Jung's ideas well. Jung, after all, is a lifelong companion to many of us. If *Faust* was his lifelong companion, shouldn't *Faust* be our companion too, perhaps even our kin? Remember, Jung contemplated the possibility that Goethe was his kin:

> It had been bruited about that my grandfather Jung had been an illegitimate son of Goethe's. This annoying story made an impression upon me insofar as it at once corroborated and seemed

> to explain my curious reactions to *Faust*. I was instinctively familiar with that concept which the Indians call karma.
>
> *Faust* struck a chord in me and pierced me through in a way that I could not but regard as personal. Most of all, it awakened in me the problem of opposites, of good and evil, of mind and matter, of light and darkness. Faust, the inept, purblind philosopher, encounters the dark side of his being, his sinister shadow, Mephistopheles, who in spite of his negating disposition represents the true spirit of life as against the arid scholar who hovers on the brink of suicide. My own inner contradictions appeared here in dramatized form.... The dichotomy of Faust–Mephistopheles came together within myself into a single person, and I was that person. In other words, I was directly struck, and recognized that this was my fate. (*MDR*, pp. 234–235)

My encounter with *Faust* came much later in life than Jung's—Jung was 15 (*Letters*, p. 88), I was pushing 50—but something fell into place for me, and I understood why Jung considered Faust "the most recent pillar in that bridge of the spirit which spans the morass of world history, beginning with the Gilgamesh epic, the *I Ching*, the Upanishads" (*Letters*, p. 89). I too found myself responding as though *Faust* gave me an outline, an understanding of the myth we are living.

But before I get into more detail about that, let me tell you a bit about Goethe, and about his *Faust.*

Goethe was born in Frankfurt am Main in 1749. There are some strong similarities in his childhood to Jung's early life and influences. Goethe's father, like Jung's, had a dry and didactic temperament. Goethe felt connected to his grandfather, who had the gift of "second sight." Goethe, like Jung, was comfortable with the occult and the irrational from childhood. In late adolescence Goethe became ill. Alice Raphael, who is the author of an excellent book, *Goethe and the Philosopher's Stone,* and was, by the way, a founding member of the Analytical Psychology Club of New York, writes:

> While physical and emotional problems contributed each their share, yet another factor in this complex situation must be reconsidered—namely, Goethe's conflict with religious authority. His inner difficulties took form at the period when he was preparing for confession in the Lutheran church his family attended. He writes ... that a text upon the Communion had, early in his life, made a profound impression upon him. Then the following words are quoted, concerning a text, namely ... "that one

> who unworthily partakes of the sacrament *eateth and drinketh damnation to himself.*" (p. 10)

I gather from this that the young Goethe feared participating in the sacrament of confession when he did not truly feel it. Like Jung, Goethe had a deeply religious nature, but could not swallow traditional religion.

> Goethe's illness caused him acute physical as well as mental suffering. . . . His mother . . . added to the personal care she gave her son the counseling of her most intimate friend, Fräulein Susannah Katherina von Klettenberg. She listened patiently to Goethe's intellectual quaverings and seekings, yet did not hesitate to tell him that his illness had occurred because he had not reconciled himself with God. (p. 10)

It's worth noting that Fräulein von Klettenberg was a member of the Moravian Brethren, and had guided Goethe's mother and sister into that society. The Moravian Brethren were associated with heretical teachings going back to the Albigensians in the 13th century. A Dr. Metz, also a member of this circle, produced an alchemical cure for Goethe: salt. Goethe recovered from his illness. He became fascinated with alchemy and began to study it. In a footnote, Raphael quotes Jung in *Psychology and Alchemy*: "The *Rosarium philosophorum* says: Who therefore knows the salt and its solution knows the hidden secret of the wise men of old" (p. 23). She refers to Paracelsus, who made a correspondence between mercury (spirit), sulphur (soul) and salt (body). We can surmise from this that Goethe, like his creature Faust, needed to get into his body.

Goethe worked on *Faust* for more than 60 years—from its conception around 1770, when he was a young man in his twenties, to its completion in 1831, a year before his death. The *Urfaust* (ca. 1772–1775) probably included the Gretchen tragedy. Later fragments included the "Witch's Kitchen" and "Forest and Cave" scenes. At Schiller's repeated urging, he returned to Part I in 1797—but did not finish it until 1806. He began work on Part II in 1825.

Here is part of a letter Goethe wrote to Wilhelm von Humbolt, who urged Goethe to publish *Faust* during his lifetime. It is, Raphael tells us, his last letter, dated March 17th, 1832. Goethe died a few days later.

> More than sixty years have passed since the conception of Faust was clear before me, in my youth . . . . Of course it would give me infinite pleasure to dedicate and communicate, even in my lifetime, these very serious jests to my honored . . . and widely scattered friends, as well as to hear their answers. But the times

> are really so absurd and confused that I am convinced that my earnest, persevering endeavors about this curious construction would be ill rewarded, and, driven on the beach, they would lie like a wreck in ruins. (p. 251)

Goethe felt that Part II would not be comprehensible or acceptable in his time. So he never allowed it to be published. Even in our time it's run into difficulties. One of his translators, Walter Kaufman, doesn't bother to translate most of Part II and scolds Goethe for having "indulged himself" and not striving for economy (p. 31). No wonder Goethe was nervous. I imagine him sealing up *Faust* Part II in a big package and sending it into the future to his great grandson, Jung.

Goethe swam easily in unconscious realms. David Luke, in his Introduction to the *Selected Verse*, describes the young Goethe: "He would frequently make poetry in a state approaching somnambulism or trance, sometimes waking and leaping out of bed in haste to scrawl down what had come to him before he forgot it, as he often did. The lines beginning '*Über allen Gipfeln* . . .' (1780), probably the most famous of all German lyrics, were suddenly scribbled on the wooden wall of a mountain hut" (p. xxvi). This poem was woven into my childhood, often recited at bedtime by my German-speaking parents, to encourage sleep.

Über allen Gipfeln
Ist Ruh
In allen Wipfeln
Spurest du
Kaum enen Hauch
Die Vögelein
schweigen im Walde
Warte nur, balde
Ruhest du auch.

I like Milan Kundera's translation, found in his novel *Immortality*, in which Goethe is a character.

On all hilltops
There is peace,
In all treetops
You will hear
Hardly a breath.
Birds in the woods are silent.
Just wait, soon
You too will rest.

As you can hear, the poem is about sleep; it is about being part of the natural world, the hills, the trees, the birds; it is also about death.

Faust, the Storyline

I want to tell you the *Faust* story, in brief, which is hard to do, since it is so complex and many faceted. But first, a word about the translations of *Faust*. I know I sound like my father, but there is no good translation. The German is beautiful, earthy, metrical, and rhymed. To my ear, the rhymed translations, like that of Walter Arndt in the Norton Critical edition (very helpful for its articles on backgrounds and sources) has a forced quality. It loses soul and earthiness. It's like a tinny marching band when it should be a symphony. Barker Fairley's prose translation, though it loses much poetically, gives us the sweeping scope, the down and dirty humanity of Goethe's wild and chaotic drama, so that's the one I mostly use.

Like Job, *Faust* is set within the cosmic drama of a bet between God and the devil, about whether the devil can lead God's servant, in this case, Faust, astray.

Faust is a famous professor and alchemist at the university. When we meet him he is in the grips of a midlife crisis. He's lost all joy in life and in learning. He tries to do a magical operation to invoke the Earth Spirit, hoping it will lead him to a larger life. But the Earth Spirit is much more powerful than Faust had bargained for. Faust goes from inflation to deflation and becomes suicidally depressed. He says:

> I'm not like the gods. I know it now. I'm like the worm . . . that feeds on the dust and is crushed to nothing by the passing foot. (p. 12)

What saves Faust from drinking poison is the sound of Easter bells and the chorus singing: Christ is Risen! Though he is no longer a practicing Christian, the familiar music reminds him of his childhood faith, and of life's possibilities.

Enter Mephistopheles, in the form of a black poodle who swells into a monster and then steps out of a cloud into Faust's study in the form of a wandering scholar. Mephistopheles strikes a bargain with Faust: I'll be your slave in this life, if you'll be my slave in the next. "No problem," says Faust, who doesn't even believe in the next life.

Thus begins a series of adventures, with Mephistopheles as Faust's constant companion. They leave the dry and dusty halls of academia for a tavern, then a witch's kitchen. With the help of Mephistopheles and the witch, Faust becomes young again and falls in love with a naive

Christian girl, Gretchen, whom he seduces and ruins. He also has some wild adventures at Walpurgis Night, a Witch's Sabbath. Part I ends with the Gretchen tragedy: Faust and she have inadvertently caused the death of her mother, her brother, and her child. Faust, who is ambivalent about how close he wants to be to her, tries, in the end, to save her. She is mad with grief, won't be saved. But when she dies, a voice from above proclaims her saved.

Part II. We are introduced to an empire in a state of decay. Mephistopheles helps the emperor out by creating paper money, which leads to an inflationary situation. The emperor asks for more and more, insisting that Faust introduce him to the greatest lovers of all time—Paris and Helen. This requires Faust's descent to the realm of the Mothers, a very dangerous adventure. In a play within a play we see Faust try to grab Helen from Paris. Big mistake! Mephistopheles saves him.

Mephistopheles . . . is both a seducer and initiator into larger consciousness, like the snake in the Garden of Eden; but he is cruel and inhuman . . .

Meanwhile, back in Academia, Faust's former student Wagner is trying to create Homunculus, the little man who is the Philosopher's Stone, the goal of the alchemical opus. Homunculus does not come to life until Mephistopheles enters the scene. Homunculus becomes Faust's guardian angel and spirits him off to the pagan South. Here, with Mephistopheles' help, Faust wins Helen.

In fact, Faust gets pretty much everything his greedy ego demands, becoming a great robber baron and land developer. In the end he causes the death of two good old souls, Philemon and Baucis.

The fate of Faust's soul is controversial, for Gretchen (shades of Dante's Beatrice) intervenes and brings his soul to heaven. Has he has gotten away with murder? Or is this a moment of grace? By giving himself so fully to life, by living his shadow, has he become, in his death, whole?

Faust as Jung's myth

Let's look more closely at the themes in *Faust* that dramatize Jung's ideas. Clearly the devil, Mephistopheles, is Faust's shadow. And though this devil is a trickster, of questionable morality, he brings life and pleasure back into Faust's dried-up life. As Joseph Henderson wrote:

> In accepting the wager of Mephistopheles, Faust put himself in the power of a "shadow" figure that Goethe describes as "part of that power which, willing evil, finds the good." Faust had failed to live out to the full an important part of his early life. He was accordingly, an unreal or incomplete person who lost himself in a fruitless quest for metaphysical goals that failed to materialize. (*Man and His Symbols*, p. 121)

When Jung, at his mother's urging, read *Faust*, he wrote:

> It poured into my soul like a miraculous balm. "Here at last," I thought, "is someone who takes the devil seriously and even concludes a blood pact with him—with the adversary who had the power to frustrate God's plan to make a perfect world."
>
> Faust was plainly a bit of a windbag. I had the impression that the weight of the drama and its significance lay chiefly on the side of Mephistopheles . . . whose whole figure made the deepest impression on me. . . . Mephistopheles and the great initiation at the end remained for me a wonderful and mysterious experience on the fringes of my conscious world . . . .
>
> At last I had found confirmation that there were or had been people who saw evil and its universal power, and—more important—the mysterious role it played in delivering man from darkness and suffering. To that extent Goethe became, in my eyes, a prophet. (*MDR*, p. 60)

Who is this Mephistopheles who made such a deep impression on the young Jung? In the play Mephistopheles refers to his "old crony, the serpent" (p. 30), and in *Aion* Jung refers to "Mephistopheles, whose 'aunt is the snake' (as) Goethe's version of the alchemical familiar Mercurius." Jung says of the snake that it "signifies evil and darkness on the one hand and wisdom on the other. Its unrelatedness, coldness and dangerousness express the instinctuality that with ruthless cruelty rides roughshod over all moral and any other human wishes" (*CW* 9ii, p. 234). That's a pretty good description of Mephistopheles. He is both a seducer and initiator into larger consciousness, like the snake in the Garden of Eden; but he is cruel and inhuman, as in the Gretchen tragedy when Faust is beginning to show some real feeling for her plight.

> Faust: A prisoner, a condemned criminal, locked in a dungeon, exposed to the cruelest torture, the dear girl and so

> ill-fated. . . . And meanwhile you distract me with your vulgar entertainments. . . .
>
> Mephistopheles: She's not the first.
>
> (*Faust*, pp. 76, 77)

There is a wisdom inherent in what Jung calls "the natural mind [that] says the terrible things, the absolutely straight and ruthless things" (cited in Edinger, p. 32). This shows up just a few lines later when Mephistopheles challenges Faust to take responsibility for his own behavior:

> Who was it that brought her to ruin? Was it me or was it you?
>
> (*Faust*, p. 77)

In Edinger's invaluable book, *Goethe's Faust*: *Notes for a Jungian Commentary,* he writes of Mephistopheles:

> He is the spirit of negation, Carlyle's "Everlasting No," and the principle of heroic defiance exemplified by Milton's Lucifer. He is the power principle on which the very existence of the ego is based. To say no is the primal act of *separatio*, the act which establishes the ego as the arbiter of its own existence. It is the original sin that generates initial consciousness. (pp. 29–30)
>
> What does it mean to make a pact with the Devil? From the standpoint of conventional consciousness it means having commerce with evil, the forbidden thing, the irrational, the repressed, the denied, the despicable—in a word, with the unconscious. . . .
>
> The theme of service, who is to serve whom, is highly relevant. It points to the ultimate fact of individuation, namely, the fact that the ego is fated to serve the Self. (p. 32)

And Jung writes:

> Mephistopheles is far more than sexuality—he is also power; in fact, he is practically the whole life of Faust, barring that part which is taken up with thinking and research. (*CW* 6, p. 206)

In an early essay—a favorite of mine, "The Type Problem in Poetry"—Jung describes Faust as a "medieval Prometheus" who defies the "accepted gods" (*CW* 6, pp. 187–88). In that passage he quotes Mephistopheles' self-description, a phrase we find quoted over and over again in Jung's work:

"part of that power which would ever work evil yet engenders good." That, in a nutshell, describes the ethical dilemma of the shadow.

Mephistopheles' realm is much larger than the Christian worldview. He cavorts with witches, has a snake as a crony, transforms himself into a dog, a monster, and then into human form, performs all kinds of magic, is, Jung tells us, "the strange son of chaos" (*CW* 9ii, p. 208). In his presence things come to life—Faust, Homunculus. He is "part . . . of the darkness that gave birth to light. Light that in its arrogance challenges Mother night" (p. 21). Jung quotes this famous phrase in *Mysterium*, in his description of Luna, who, he says, "is really the mother of the sun, which means, psychologically, that the unconscious is pregnant with consciousness and gives birth to it. It is the night, which is older than the day" (*CW* 14, p. 177).

In Goethe, Jung tells us (*CW* 6, p. 221) "the *worship of the soul* [is] symbolized by the *worship of woman*." Gretchen, Edinger explains, represents "the first stage in the development of the anima, the instinctual stage" (pp. 44–45). Her death represents a failed *coniunctio*. But Mephistopheles, in his chaotic way, leads Faust onward. We find ourselves in an empire in total disarray. Mephistopheles has taken the role of the Emperor's fool. Here is how the situation is described by members of the State Council:

> Lawlessness becomes law and has its way, and a whole world of wrong is the result. . . . The whole world is breaking up and destroying all decency and propriety. . . .
>
> What madness is abroad in these disordered days. There isn't anyone that isn't killing or being killed. . . .
>
> Everything's on borrowed money, the beds we sleep in and the bread we eat. (Faust, pp. 85–86)

Sound familiar? Mephistopheles, that trickster, comes up with a scheme involving paper money, based on the "futures" of mining treasure from the earth. The empire looks rich now, though we know it's a trick, and the Emperor puts Mephistopheles and Faust in charge of the underground. And, the Emperor says, he wants to "see Paris and Helen right away" (*Faust*, p. 105). This, we learn, is no mean feat.

Descent to the Mothers

> Mephistopheles: There are goddesses throned in solitude, outside of place, outside of time. It makes me uneasy even to talk about them. They are the Mothers.

> Faust, *startled*: The Mothers.
>
> Mephistopheles: Does it give you the shivers?
>
> Faust: The Mothers. The Mothers. It sounds so queer.
>
> Mephistopheles: Queer it is. Goddesses unknown to mortal men, hardly to be named by them. You'll need to dig deep to reach them.
>
> Faust: Show me the way.
>
> Mephistopheles: There is no way. You'll enter the untrodden, the untreadable, the unpermitted, the impermissible. Are you ready? There'll be no locks or bolts. You'll be pushed about from one emptiness to another. Have you any notion what emptiness is? Barrenness? . . . You won't hear the tread of your own feet. You'll find nowhere to rest your head.
>
> Faust: You talk like the biggest mystagogue that ever fooled his simple pupil. Only you're in reverse. You're sending me into nothingness, where I'm supposed to improve myself in my art. . . . In this nothing of yours I hope to find the everything.
>
> Mephistopheles: I see you understand the devil and I'll give you a word of approval before you go. Here. Take this key.
>
> Faust: That little thing.
>
> Mephistopheles: Take hold of it and don't underrate it.
>
> Faust: It's growing in my hand. It's shining, flashing.
>
> Mephistopheles: . . . This key will nose out the way for you! Follow its lead. It'll conduct you to the Mothers. . . . When you come to a glowing tripod you'll know you're as far down as you can go. By the light it throws you'll see the Mothers. Some sitting, some standing or walking about. It just depends. Formation, transformation, the eternal mind eternally communing with itself, surrounded by the forms of all creation. They won't see you. They only see ghosts. You'll be in great danger and you'll need a stout heart. Go straight up to the tripod and touch it with your key.
>
> (pp. 106–108)

In *Symbols of Transformation*, his early work, before his break from Freud, Jung responds to this amazing passage with a commentary on the symbolism of the key. I wonder, reading it, if it gives us an image of how his creative libido was leading him out of Freud's too narrow framework, into the wild chaotic world of his great-grandfather Goethe, and the collective unconscious.

> [The key] is the libido, which is not only creative and procreative, but possesses an intuitive faculty, a strange power to "smell the

> right place," almost as if it were a live creature with an independent life of its own. . . .
>
> It is purposive, like sexuality itself . . . The "realm of the Mothers" has not a few connections with the womb, with the matrix, which frequently symbolizes the creative aspect of the unconscious. This libido is a force of nature, good and bad at once, or morally neutral. Uniting himself with it, Faust succeeds in accomplishing his real life's work. . . . In the realm of the Mothers he finds the tripod, the Hermetic vessel in which the "royal marriage" is consummated. But he needs the phallic wand in order to bring off the greatest wonder of all—the creation of Paris and Helen [the *coniunctio*]. The insignificant-looking tool in Faust's hand is the dark creative power of the unconscious, which reveals itself to those who follow its dictates and is indeed capable of working miracles.
>
> (*CW* 5, pp. 125–126)

Back in *Faust* Part II we are watching a play within a play—we see Faust, watching Paris and Helen. Faust is transported by Helen's beauty.

> Faust: Do I see with my eyes? Or is it deep in my inner mind that the source of beauty is thus poured out before me? My fearful journey has brought a marvelous reward. How futile the world was, before it was opened to me. . . . The fair form that once delighted me . . . was mere froth beside this. To you I owe the springs of every action and the quintessence of passion.
>
> (pp. 32–33)

I can't imagine a more poignant description of an encounter with the anima. Overcome with passion Faust grabs Helen away from Paris, violating time's boundaries, myth's boundaries, plunging from realm to realm. *Explosion.* Mephistopheles throws him over his shoulder.

Back in Academia, Faust is unconscious. It takes major interventions by Mephistopheles and Homunculus, the loveable little creature who keeps trying to get born, to bring Faust and Helen back together again. This time Faust woos her with respect and attentiveness, and their *coniunctio* produces the child, Euphorion. But Euphorian is not long for this world. Like Icarus, he flies too high and dies. Helen, unwilling to leave him alone in the underworld, follows him. Faust, at Mephistopheles' prompting, grabs her veil.

Jung comments on Faust's action in grabbing Helen in *Psychology and Alchemy:*

> By identifying with Paris, Faust brings the *coniunctio* back from its projected state into the sphere of personal psychological experience and thus into consciousness. This crucial step means nothing less than the solution of the alchemical riddle, and at the same time the redemption of a previously unconscious part of the personality. But every increase in consciousness harbours the danger of inflation, as is shown very clearly in Faust's superhuman powers. (p. 479)

Though we have seen real psychological development in Faust, as he is able to woo and win Helen, his inflation and mad power drive turn him into a robber baron and land developer. When we meet him toward the end of the play, and toward the end of his life, he is busy controlling the deep blue sea, stealing its territory for housing developments. He wants all the land he can see, including the small cottage belonging to Baucis and Philemon. He gives Mephistopheles the task of clearing the old couple out. By accident, they are killed in a fire. Jung tells it this way in *Psychology and Alchemy*:

> In his blind urge for superhuman power, Faust brought about the murder of Philemon and Baucis. Who are these two humble old people? When the world had become godless and no longer offered a hospitable retreat to the divine strangers Jupiter and Mercury, it was Philemon and Baucis who received the superhuman guests. (p. 480)

You'd think, with so much sin on Faust's soul, that Mephistopheles' long servitude would be rewarded at Faust's death. But something very mysterious happens at the end of Goethe's *Faust*—as Faust is dying, Mephistopheles, the ultimate trickster, gets tricked by a chorus of pretty boy angels. He, the magician and enchanter, finds himself enchanted.

> I like the look of them, these darling boys. . . . So lovely, so kissable. . . . You're so enticing, you're getting prettier all the time. (p. 199)

And while he ogles them, and suffers pangs of desire and love, thus becoming more human, those boy angels make off with Faust's immortal part. Faust is transformed into Doctor Marianus, who Jung tells us was a famous alchemist (*CW* 18, par. 1699). The spirit of Gretchen welcomes him to the heights of eternity; he is blessed by the feminine in all her forms, including the spirit of the prostitute, Mary of Egypt (Edinger p. 89), and the *Mater*

Gloriosa, the mother of us all. The Chorus Mystica chants the famous final words:

> *Alles Vergangliche*
> *Ist mir ein Gleichnis;*
> *Das Unzulängliche*
> *Hier wirds Ereignis;*
> *Das Unbeschreibliche*
> *Hier ist es getan*
> *Das Ewig-Weibliche*
> *Zieht uns hinan.*
>
> (Edinger, p. 89)

Another word about translation. In this instance the Barker Fairley version doesn't do justice to the poetry. Edinger agrees and provides his own translation, which I don't like either. I can hear my father saying: "Translate it yourself!" And so I did:

> What is ephemeral
> Is only images;
> What's not been realized
> Comes at last into being.
> The indescribable
> Is happening now—
> The eternal feminine
> Carries us home.

Jung writes:

> Faust's redemption began at his death. The divine, Promethean character he has preserved all his life fell away from him only at death, with his rebirth. Psychologically, this means that the Faustian attitude must be abandoned before the individual can become an integrated whole. (*CW* 6, p. 188)

The *numinosum* that greets Faust's "immortal part" in heaven was foreshadowed by the earlier symbol of the *coniunctio*, "the divine images of Paris and Helen [as they] float up from the tripod of the Mothers" (*CW* 6, p. 125). Jung continues:

> The symbol [of the *coniunctio*] is a pointer to the onward course of life, beckoning the libido toward a still distant goal—but a goal

> that henceforth will burn unquenchably within him, so that his life, kindled as by a flame, moves steadily towards the far-off beacon. (*CW* 6, p. 125)

What a beautiful description of individuation.

I think Goethe's *Faust* burnt in Jung like a flame, guiding the development of his psychology, his companion through all his long opus, his myth. Edinger tells us that "*Mysterium Coniunctionis* can . . . be considered an exhaustive commentary on Goethe's *Faust*" (p. 67). In case you haven't been keeping track, we've meandered through Jung's writings and have found references to Goethe's *Faust* in *Symbols of Transformation, The Type Problem in Poetry, The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche, The Symbolic Life, Aion, Psychology and Alchemy, Mysterium Coniunctionis*, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections,* and his *Letters.* Had we time we could go on and on.

Our Myth

> Goethe became, in my eyes, a prophet.
>
> —C. G. Jung, *MDR*, p. 60

If Goethe is a prophet of our time, what is it he prophesied? Edinger gives us a way of orienting ourselves in the great flow of the cultural unconscious when he writes:

> In the sixteenth century the God-image fell out of heaven . . . and landed in the human psyche. In the course of this transition from heaven to earth it undergoes an enantiodromia from Christ to Antichrist. This event paves the way for Faust's encounter with Mephistopheles. (p. 14)

Edinger is referring here to the Faust legend, of which there are many versions. It all began with a historical person, a Dr. John Faustus, who lived from 1480 to 1540 (Edinger, p. 13). Dr. Faustus was said to be a sorcerer, a black magician, an astrologer, a shyster, a seducer of young boys. A chapbook published some fifty years after his death, called, *"Historia von D. Johann Faustus, the notorious Sorcerer and Nigromancer,"* achieved instantaneous popular success. The chapbook contains references to Faust's deal with the devil, his journey to hell, and his conjuring up of Helen of Troy (Ziolkowski, pp. 52–58).

When the God-image fell into the human psyche, we began to confuse ourselves with the gods, we wanted to control the natural world and the deep blue sea, we wanted to penetrate all the mysteries. Goethe's *Faust* . . . is a prophesy of our ethical dilemma.

Edinger points out that Dr. Faustus' life was roughly contemporary to the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Scientific Revolution, and to the lives of Leonardo, Columbus, Machiavelli, Erasmus, Copernicus, Luther, and Paracelsus. The early Faust legend is about a thoroughly despicable character who gets his just punishment. Goethe's Faust, as we have seen, is much more complicated. He snaps his "fingers at heaven and hell" (p. 8), isn't concerned about traditional notions of good and evil, thinks maybe he's a god. He's rather like us.

When the God-image fell into the human psyche, we began to confuse ourselves with the gods, we wanted to control the natural world and the deep blue sea, we wanted to penetrate all the mysteries. Goethe's *Faust* is a prophesy of our collective hubris, our restless desire to explore all the worlds and to feed our hungry egos. It is a prophesy of our ethical dilemma.

We want to touch the moon and bring back moon dust. We zoom around Mars and connive to scoop up its ice, its gases, for our investigations. What used to be the subject of myth and of poetry is now the object of rockets and scientific study. As we know from Goethe and from Jung, there is something marvelous about all this exploration, something that widens consciousness, frees us from the old gods. We know this also from the powerful experience of the astronauts who first landed on the moon—they saw our planet's fragile beauty. That image of a delicate blue globe in a dark sky pervades our collective consciousness.

But we also know from Goethe and Jung the terrible danger of inflation, of hubris, in the accumulation of such power and knowledge.

In a fascinating book the Princeton professor of German and comparative literature, Theodore Ziolkowski, argues that the myths of Adam, Prometheus, and Faust have in common what he calls "The Sin of Knowledge," which is how he names his book. He writes:

> "Faustian," thanks to Oswald Spengler, designates not simply an individual who makes a compromise with evil forces in order to

> achieve his ends, but also an entire technological age that applies intellect often destructively to the subordination of nature. (p. 45)

Ziolkowski quotes the *Confessions* of Augustine as referring to "a form of temptation that is even more dangerous than the temptations of the flesh: the desire for experience and knowledge . . . that he calls *curiositas* (p. 56). In our time we highly value *curiositas,* but we pay dearly for it.

One of the ways we've understood the myth of Faust in our time has been in connection with the atomic bomb. Ziolkowski refers to the frequency with which the physicist "Oppenheimer was portrayed as the Faustian figure who made a bargain with the devil" in order to create the first atomic bomb (p. 150). This theme is background to John Adams' powerful opera, *Dr. Atomic.*

The earth is not our servant, not our resource—she is our only home. . . . Our Faustian guilt is about rising sea levels, the fate of the polar bear, the fate of the salmon, the fate of the honey bee.

But it is not just Oppenheimer who is Faust. We are all Faust. We have made a bargain with the devil for enormous power over the earth. We have committed crimes against nature and humanity for the sake of more land, more energy, more destructive capacity. We have taken too much out of the sea and put into it toxic waste: mercury, PCPs, oil spills. These come back in the fish we eat and poison us. We are Faust in our lust for speed and power, for bigger houses, bigger cars, more wealth—in our greed, our insatiable appetite for material goods. We want to understand everything, to split the atom, to change the DNA of seeds and of animals. We are addicted to growth, to the crazy idea that our economy is only healthy if it keeps getting bigger and bigger.

We have lost our connection to the sacred, the numinous, the mysteries. We have lost awe and gratitude for the Spirit of the Earth. We are soiling our nest. The Earth Spirit responds with earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, fires, floods, cyclones, tsunamis—every way she can slap us about, wake us up, remind us we are not gods, but small creatures entirely dependant on her. The earth is not our servant, not our resource—she is our only home. We have murdered that humble old couple Baucis and Philemon, we have killed off their connection to the divine. Our Faustian guilt is about rising sea

levels, the fate of the polar bear, the fate of the salmon, the fate of the honey bee.

Like Jung we need to create a shrine to Philemon and Baucis, a way to atone for our guilt. The bad news is that we're getting painfully conscious of the damage we've done. The good news is that we're getting painfully conscious of the damage we've done. Faust needs to die in us, or maybe to get curious about sustainability; we need to find a humbler way of life.

I was tickled to read in *The New Yorker* (May 19th, 2008) that Gaia, the earth spirit, showed up on TV during the 90s, on Ted Turner's environmental kids' show "Captain Planet and the Planeteers." I do find it heartening how much ecological consciousness I hear from my grandchildren.

The whole cornucopia of life is in *Faust*: love, war, carnival, empire, academia, the church, the Witches' Sabbath. As Heine says, "*Faust* . . . is really as spacious as the Bible, and like it, embraces heaven and earth" (The Norton Critical Edition, p. 442). I find much solace in its wild chaotic life, the promiscuity of its imagery that breaks categories, mixes up myths from various cultures and times, gives voice to everyone: the Furies, the Fates, the Graces, gnomes, satyrs, witches, an Olive Branch with Fruits, a Wreath of Golden Ripe Corn. It is the *anima mundi.* In the outermost frame story, before we get to the Lord, his angels, and the devil making their bet about Faust, the director, the poet and the clown argue about how best to put on the show. The poet longs to be young again. The clown believes that "old age brings out the true child in us all." The director wants to get the show on the road. He's concerned with scenery. He wants lots of it:

> You have sun and moon at your disposal and stars in plenty. Water, fire, rocks, beasts, birds. . . . So on this little stage of ours we can run through the whole of creation, and with fair speed make your say from heaven through the world to hell. (*Faust*, p. 5)

All this dramatic capacity, all this chaos and wild fertility of the imagination, is ours too, if we can experience the world we live in as alive. And yet the play hinges on a single simple moment. As they bargain for Faust's soul in Part I, Faust says:

> If ever the passing moment is such that I wish it not to pass, and I say to it "You are beautiful, stay awhile," then let that be the finish. The clock can stop. You can put me in chains and ring the death-bell. (*Faust*, p. 25)

At the end of his life, Faust is approached by Care, who wonders if he has ever experienced her before (p. 194). Faust has a rare moment of

self-reflection: "I've just raced through the world, seizing what I fancied by the hair of its head. . . . I've simply desired and fulfilled my desire and desired again."

Care, disrespected by Faust, blinds him. But in the dark his "inner light shines clear." And that is when he says to the passing moment: "*Bleib einmal, du bit so schön.*" Stay awhile, you are so beautiful. This moment is what the great religions teach: satori, enlightenment, grace. It is the moment of epiphany of which the poet writes. It comes in contrast to the great confusion and profusion of life that Faust has known, and it foreshadows his salvation by the grace of the eternal feminine. Moments like this, when we hold the world sacred, when things slow down and are filled with light, fill our lives with the numinous. But we also crave the wild ride of indulging our senses, exploring the fertility of life and the imagination. This pair of opposites is hard to hold, but we need them both to make it through our Faustian dilemmas. For the solution, as Jung says, is religious.

One day I was in my car, about to drive across the bridge to meet my husband Dan for dinner in San Francisco, when I heard on the news that the bridge was closed. A man was threatening suicide. In the mysterious ways that poems happen, this experience began a poem, "Faust on the Bridge." I knew nothing about this man except that he was driving a red BMW, and that he was suicidal, but he became Everyman, or Every Faust, to me. Here is the poem:

Faust on the Bridge

Bleib einmal, du bist so schön!
(Stay a moment, you are so beautiful!)

—Goethe's *Faust*

don't know your name don't know your story just know
you got out of your red BMW on the western side of treasure
island leapt to the edge of the bridge
and threatened to jump
there are those who are angry those who wish you'd just
get it over with but i who was planning to drive
that very bridge whose traffic you've snarled up for hours
i who was forced to abandon my car take bart can
see thanks to you
this sudden glimpse of loveliness before the train
descends into the dark and i say to you who are so certain
you can't take another moment of whatever your agony is

you who've slashed your face with a razor who stand there bleeding:

stay a moment uncover your face look!
the bay is a glittering opal in a setting of gray
blue hills
there are towers pyramids a shining city
even faust
who wanted everything traded in his poison cup for such
a moment i ask you when you were a child
was there a lake?
did pieces of light dance on the water? was there a tree you'd climb
up to the perfect branch that let the wind sway you?
let it sway
you again let the holy light on the water
enter the ache in your heart a whole city
has slowed down
around you brother cannot get across the bridge
to meet brother lovers are late for their dates
i climb stone steps
out of the underground to meet my Dan at a small
cafe white blossoms
toss in the breeze gold gleams in our chardonnay
we speak of you

My Myth

I want to end with a few remarks about *Faust* as my own myth. Until recently, I've thought of it as mine in a collective sense, as part of the cultural complex I share with all the rest of us in the West. But it seemed to me a masculine story. Although much is made of the feminine in *Faust*, it is the feminine as experienced by males. They are the ones who have agency, not the females. Gretchen is seduced and ruined. The witches, who are an interesting bunch, are nevertheless ruled by Mephistopheles; Helen gets seized and carried off time and again. Goethe does give her a wonderful speech about her fate:

> Helen, the much admired, the much maligned, I am that Helen. . . . From the day I crossed this threshold with a light heart to visit the temple on Cythera, as a sacred duty bade, and the Phrygian brigand seized me, much has happened that people far

> and wide love to relate, but she of whom the story and the legend grew has little joy. . . .
>
> Truly the immortals gave me a dubious name and a dubious fate as companions of my beauty. (*Faust*, p. 146)

That Phrygian brigand, by the way, is Theseus, who seized her when she was, in her words, "a slender fawn, at ten years old" (p. 151). Faust's problem seemed a male problem, until my unconscious informed me otherwise. I was given a dream a couple of years ago, one of those that keeps demanding attention and contemplation, in which I witness a woman in long flowing skirts, from the sixteenth or seventeenth century, entering the Sanctuario at Chimayo in New Mexico. A voice informs me that she is a "Faust Woman."

Faust Woman? What does that mean? When I invoke her she appears in her long gray skirts, wearing a mauve shawl. She has a baby. She tells me she is associated with witches and the ancient pagan religion. Then suddenly she's a modern woman in high heels and a red suit, who describes herself as "the female spirit of my age." I came to consciousness in the midst of the women's movement. These two forms of "Faust Woman" are the opposites that have defined my being: the women's movement, which opened up opportunities for knowledge and worldly power, for sexual freedom and agency, and the ancient goddess religion that has come back to consciousness during my lifetime. Like Faust, we women have been liberated from a dusty old institution—the kind of marriage that has rigidly defined gender roles. Like Faust we women lost our innocence and did a lot of damage while running around the world in the company of our shadows, following our desires. Like Faust many of us got inflated, at risk of losing our souls. And yet women's liberation opened the possibility for living an authentic life.

Faust Woman . . . is also a part of our culture that needs to be healed by contact with our own earth, our own dirt, our own sacred place.

What is the Faust Woman doing at the Sanctuario of Chimayo? I'm not entirely sure. I am in the early stages of working with this dream that I suspect will be guiding me for a long time. But I think the "Faust Woman" needs to integrate the Christian myth, and the healing power of that lovely little church, built at a site that was sacred to Native Americans. She needs to heal her Faustian nature in the religious tradition that belongs to this land, to its oldest church, to its native people. Those of you who have been to the

Sanctuario know that it has a beautiful altar painted by Native Americans, and that beyond the chapel is a little room with a hole in it, like the *sipapu*, the hole in the ground, which in the Native American myth is where we humans climbed out of the underworld. There is dirt in that hole, healing dirt, it is said. People touch it and are healed! The walls are festooned with crutches, eyeglasses, and other signs of ailments that were cured by this earth.

Faust Woman is certainly a part of me. But she is also a part of our culture that needs to be healed by contact with our own earth, our own dirt, our own sacred place. The Sanctuario at Chimayo is, for me, a shrine for Baucis and Philemon. That is one meaning of the dream. My atonement involves becoming conscious of my own Faustian nature; I do this by writing poems. A series began with the Faust Woman dream. Here is a poem from that series:

The Visitor

> *There are goddesses throned in solitude, outside of place,*
> *Outside of time. . . . They are the Mothers.*
>
> —Goethe's *Faust*

She didn't know the taste
of her own honey, didn't know
willow thighs, delta song,

until that cast out She
materialized in her kitchen—a dazzle of dust
ridden light, a voice, a hand—
offering her the world:

Did she want power among city towers, purses of gold, flashy transport?
Would she prefer a country lane, green glow of vineyards, summer breasts?
What about lovers? A stormy character playing the flute?
A silent guy with dreads? Maybe a talkative lover who'd promise
to publish her, if only she'd break out
of her kitchen cage, take a hammer

to the dishes, an axe to the door!

This is not your elegant traveling scholar, Grandfather Goethe.

But She's from your own realm;
you've handed her down to me—
daughter of Mothers who've been treading
the untrod untreadable,
empty of voice, empty of prayer,
since Troy fell ...

That visitor from our ancient history, that carrier of "The Forgotten Feminine" has sparked much creative energy, much Faustian drama, much "Sturm und Drang" among the women of my generation. We can no longer blame it all on men. We need to confront our own Faustian nature.

It is hard to imagine how we can reconcile these opposites: *curiositas,* the desire for knowledge and experience, and the work of protecting Baucis and Philemon; hard to imagine how our children and grandchildren will reconcile them. What Jung wrote continues to be true: "We cannot meditate enough about Faust" (*Letters*, p. 89).

I want to end with one more poem from the Faust Woman series. I think it speaks to our current Faustian dilemma.

Sisters of My Time

What became of our fierce flowering? Don't you remember
how that Old Black Magic revealed Herself to us—
gave us the fever, the crazy nerve,
to burn bras, leave husbands, grow animal hair
under our arms? We knew Her belly laugh, Her circle dance,
Her multiple orgasms with wandering lovers. It was Our Period.
We painted our nipples with menstrual blood.
The Oracle spoke in our dreams.
Listen to me! Though Our Period is long gone; though the air is stale
with the unwept unsayable; though magic no longer frequents
the land; She lives
in our bellies still. Bestir yourselves in Her! Sing Her devotions!
Call back
Her rain forests, Her tigers, Her Ivory Billed Woodpecker. Invoke
Her as wind
in windowless offices, as rain in traffic-jammed minds; as quake
that breaks the shell
of our days. Beg Her forgiveness, Her blessing
on the loins of the sons of our grandsons,
on the bellies of our daughters' daughters

May they know circle dance
belly laugh, fierce
flowering . . .

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