CONVERGENCES WITH, AND DIVERGENCES FROM, THE GOETHEAN PARADIGM IN GÉRARD DE NERVAL'S TRANSLATIONS AND ADAPTATIONS OF *FAUST*

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION ........................................................................................................ 8

CHAPTER 1: CONTEXTUALISATION

1.1 NERVAL AND FAUST ........................................................................................................ 17
Introduction .................................................................................................................. 17
Nerval, Germany and German Culture ........................................................................ 19
Nerval, Women and Love ............................................................................................. 22
Nerval, Religion and Spirituality ................................................................................. 23

1.2 FAUST IN FRANCE ........................................................................................... 24
THE LITERARY ARTS ................................................................................................. 24
Introduction .................................................................................................................. 24
The Faust Chapbook in France .................................................................................... 25
Translations of Goethe’s Faust ................................................................................... 27
Other Faustian Texts in France .................................................................................... 32

THE VISUAL ARTS ................................................................................................. 36
Introduction .................................................................................................................. 36
Significant Visual Fausts: Cornelius, Delacroix, Retzsch ........................................ 38
Delacroix’s Faust Lithographs .................................................................................... 40
Delacroix’s Faust Lithographs and The Devil and Doctor Faustus ............................ 42

THE MUSICAL ARTS ............................................................................................... 43
Introduction .................................................................................................................. 43
Hector Berlioz’s La Damnation de Faust .................................................................... 44

1.3 THE WIDER LITERARY CONTEXT ........................................................................... 47
SHAKESPEARE .............................................................................................................. 47
Shakespeare in France ................................................................................................. 47
Shakespeare in Germany .............................................................................................. 52
German Translations of Shakespeare ....................................................................... 54
The Importance of Shakespearean Aesthetics to the Goethean Faustian Paradigm... 56
Beyond the Polarisation of Racine and Shakespeare? Nerval’s Impartiality .......... 58
Conclusion ................................................................................................................... 64

DANTE ....................................................................................................................... 66
Introduction .................................................................................................................. 66
French Translations of Dante ..................................................................................... 67
Dante and the Visual Arts in the Early Nineteenth Century .................................... 68
The Nervalian Perception of Dante: Romantic and Faustian .................................. 68
Conclusion ................................................................................................................... 70

SIR WALTER SCOTT ............................................................................................... 72
Introduction .................................................................................................................. 72
Visual Interpretations of Scott’s Novels ..................................................................... 74
Echoes of Scott in Nerval’s Writing ......................................................................... 75
Conclusion ................................................................................................................... 77
The Idealisation of the Principal Female Characters in Nerval’s Faustian Fragments...219
Nerval’s Portrayal of the Devil in the Faust Fragment and Nicolas Flamel .......... 224
‘Auerbachs Keller’in Paris?................................................................. 232

3.3 NERVAL’S FAUSTIAN DRAMAS IN THE LIGHT OF SYNCHRONIC
ROMANTIC CULTURAL DEVELOPMENTS IN FRANCE....................234
Nerval’s Divided Aesthetic Loyalties at the Beginning of his Literary Career....235
Conclusion............................................................................................244

3.4 NERVAL’S FINAL FAUSTIAN DRAMA: L’IMAGIER DE HARLEM (1851) 246
Introduction ..........................................................................................246
Contextualisation....................................................................................247
A Summary of L’Imagier de Harlem ....................................................................250
Printing and ‘Enlightenment’ Values.........................................................251
The Protagonists .....................................................................................255
Nerval’s Idealisation of the Female Characters...........................................260
Nerval’s Portrayal of the Devil in L’Imagier de Harlem ................................264
Echoes of Goethe’s Fausts ......................................................................266
Conclusion .............................................................................................270

CONCLUSION .......................................................................................272

BIBLIOGRAPHY .................................................................................278

WORD COUNT: 80,000
ABSTRACT
Gérard de Nerval’s French translations of Goethe’s Faust are key works in Franco-German cultural relations, but they have been mythologised; this thesis presents a nuanced view of works that continue to be the principal conveyors in France of arguably the foremost work of German literature. Less well known than his translations, Nerval’s own Faustian dramas the Faust fragment ([1827(?)], Nicolas Flamel (1831), and L’Imagier de Harlem (1851) have received little scholarly attention and yet reveal much about his, and indeed other French, interpretations of Faust. The thesis examines Nerval’s convergences with and divergences from Goethe diachronically in order to identify and then compare what may be termed Goethean and Nervalian Faustian paradigms, thereby discovering more about Nervalian aesthetics. Alongside Goethe and Nerval, two literary figures of pre-eminence, the thesis investigates intercultural relations that bear on Nerval’s Faustian writing in France during a dynamic period.
The first chapter contextualises Nerval’s Faustian writing: Nerval’s own interest in, and identification with, the figure of Faust; greater interest in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in foreign culture in France; relevant aspects of the life and work of key foreign authors and artists from disparate periods and countries who contributed significantly to the development of early Romantic aesthetics in France are discussed and analysed: the reception of Shakespeare, Dante, Scott, and Byron demonstrates salient similarities with that of Goethe. Closely related to this ascendancy of foreign literature in France is the country’s increased enthusiasm for and engagement with the German myth of Faust, especially Goethe’s retelling of it, across different media. In Chapter Two a close reading of Nerval’s 1828 and 1840 translations of Goethe’s Faust, alongside Stapfer’s and Sainte-Aulaire’s of 1823, investigates their convergences with and divergences from the German author in lexis, prosody, content, and ideology. The issue of domestication and foreignisation in translation, as expounded by Friedrich Schleiermacher; cultural tensions between lingering neoclassical and incipient Romantic aesthetic values; social constraints in France, including censorship; linguistic barriers to translating Faust into French, and the related difficulties of translating metaphor and connotation, an aspect in which Nerval displays his poetic ability in his Faust translations, are addressed in this chapter. The final section of Chapter Two identifies and analyses pervasive divergences from the Goethean Faustian paradigm in the French translations. The third chapter considers Nerval’s Faust fragment and Nicolas Flamel, identifying the principal intertextual influences on these Faustian fragments before analysing the following aspects with reference to Goethe’s Faust: the protagonists’ character; their relationships with women; the portrayal of the devil; and the transposition of ‘Auerbachs Keller’ to Paris. Similar aesthetic tensions that are found in Nerval’s translations are also discovered in these adaptations. An analysis of Nerval’s final Faustian drama, L’Imagier de Harlem (1851), brings Chapter Three to a close. Following the identification of key intertextual influences, divergences from and convergences with the Goethean Faustian paradigm are again identified and analysed.
DECLARATION

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I dedicate this thesis to my parents and take this opportunity to thank them for their support.
INTRODUCTION

Any meeting of Goethean and Nervalian poetics would be intriguing, but becomes even more compelling when the focus is an exemplary text of world literature written and translated at a time of seismic cultural shift.¹ But convergence with Goethe is only one aspect of Gérard de Nerval’s French translations of Faust; his divergences reveal much about Nerval the man and writer and the age and cultures that produced them. The socio-political and cultural contexts of the young Nerval’s beginning his literary career included vivid memories of the Revolution; the fall of Napoleon and subsequent improved international relations; the conservatism of Restoration France; a growing awareness of the staleness of traditional French aesthetics; the rise of popular theatre, entertainment and melodrama; and an increasing awareness of the theatre as business.² Nerval was talented and ambitious but had much to prove to a father disapproving of his son’s desire to become a professional writer. He was also astute, focussing on a foreign work that had already met with enormous popular success at certain théâtres des boulevards and inspired French artists across different media.

Coexistent with his ambition was a profound, if in some respects ambivalent, passion for German culture, an interest in esoteric literature, and fascination, identification even, with the figure of Faust. These unique intersections, combined of course with great poetic ability, as well as a willingness to challenge, if perhaps modestly, French prosodic and syntactic conventions in the verse sections of his Faust translations, contributed to what may be termed

¹ In conversation with Eckermann on 31 January 1827 Goethe made the following momentous comment on the advent of world literature: ‘Ich sehe immer mehr […] dass die Poesie ein Gemeingut der Menschheit ist, und dass sie überall und zu allen Zeiten in Hunderten und aber Hunderten von Menschen hervortritt. […] Ich sehe mich daher gerne bei fremden Nationen um und rate jedem, es auch seinerseits zu tun. National-Literatur will jetzt nicht viel sagen, die Epoche der Weltliteratur ist an der Zeit und jeder musst jetzt dazu wirken, diese Epoche zu beschleunigen.’ See Johann Wolfgang Goethe Sämtliche Werke nach Epochen seines Schaffens (Münchner Ausgabe), ed.by Karl Richter and others, 33 vols (Munich: BTB Verlag, 2006), xix, pp. 206-07. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

the Nervalian Faustian paradigm; throughout this thesis I use the term paradigm in the sense of ‘an exemplary pattern’. Its discovery is in fact the overarching aim of the thesis, the three areas of investigation being: the increasing influence of foreign literature in France; Nerval’s Faust translations with reference to the two other principal Faust translations of the period by Albert Stapfer and Louis Clair Beaupoil, comte de Sainte-Aulaire; and Nerval’s more original Faustian writing. His Faustian work may be conceptualised as a trajectory: from his immersion in the dynamic intercultural developments of his youth and his early active engagement with this innovative turn of events in translating Goethe’s Faust, to greater independence and appropriation of Faust. This path is reflected in the structure of this thesis: Chapter One addresses the wider cultural context that stimulated, directly or indirectly, the young writer’s passion for Goethe’s Faust; in Chapter Two a close reading of Stapfer’s, Sainte-Aulaire’s, and Nerval’s translations of Goethe’s poetic play compares and contrasts their approaches to this seminally important foreign work; Chapter Three deliberates on the question of Nerval’s achieving comparative independence from the Goethean Faustian paradigm, or Goethe’s dedication to and espousal of the complementariness of opposites as a galvanising force of progress, in his at least partly original Faustian dramas. Though Faust I is the focus of the thesis, Faust II also plays a part, particularly in Chapter Three in relation to Nerval’s L’Imagier de Harlem (1851).

The opening chapter of the thesis addresses two interrelated aspects: Faust in France and the influence of foreign literary aesthetics prior to Nerval’s engagement with Goethe’s Faust. French Romanticism was a comparatively conservative cultural movement, despite some of its claims, that was not quite free of neoclassical values. Certain key foreign writers

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were essential to the aesthetic shift in France and more indirectly to increased French interest in *Faust*. The most important of these was Shakespeare, whose name was almost synonymous with Romanticism during this period, but the influence of Dante, Scott, and Byron on new aesthetic developments was also considerable. Each of these foreign writers not only galvanised incipient French Romanticism, but also contributed, either directly or indirectly, to the passion for *Faust* and the Faustian that was at its height in France from the 1820 to the 1840s. The French Romantic enlistment of certain canonical foreign authors in the struggle against normative neoclassical values was highly selective; timidity characterises their approach, for, although Goethe, Shakespeare, Dante, Byron, and Scott served as models, many French Romantic writers’ engagement with them was filtered by their country’s neoclassical heritage. Early nineteenth-century French writers, translators, critics, artists and composers reacted in a similar way to canonical foreign texts; the more ‘Romantic’ works presented very similar challenges to a country that had not yet entirely rejected neoclassical aesthetic values. But Goethe, Shakespeare, Dante, Byron, and Scott certainly also offered new and exciting possibilities to French writers. It is in fact partly the distinctive amalgam of admiration for and caution towards foreign aesthetics that makes early to mid-nineteenth century French literature such a rich and multi-layered source of intertextual analysis.

Intertextuality is a flexible critical term that may be viewed from a structuralist or a post-structuralist perspective. My approach in this thesis is perhaps more structuralist than post-structuralist in that it assumes some degree of stability in, and communicability of, the Goethean Faustian paradigm. Owing to the flexibility of the term, some discussion of the development of the critical concept of intertextuality, and my use of it in this thesis, is necessary. Though intertextuality may be considered to have originated in the early years of
the twentieth century in Ferdinand de Saussure’s seminal linguistic theories, a more specific
form of intertextuality was developed by literary theorist Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin who
was more concerned with the social aspect of language use than Saussure. The term
intertextuality originates in France in Julia Kristeva’s essays, in particular ‘The Bounded
Text’ and ‘Word, Dialogue, Novel’. Written in the 1960s these texts engaged with the work
of Bakhtin, particularly his concept of ‘dialogism’, and began to demonstrate its intertextual
nature. Kristeva’s engagement with Bakhtin’s work occurred during a dynamic period in the
development of cultural theory, a period during which, in broad terms, post-structuralism was
beginning to supersede structuralism.

Crucial to this shift was Roland Barthes’ questioning in his essay ‘La Mort de
l’auteur’ the role of the author in the creation of meaning in literary texts: ‘L’explication de
l’œuvre est toujours cherchée du côté de celui qui l’a produite, comme si […] c’était toujours
finalement la voix d’une seule et même personne, l’auteur, qui livrait sa “confidence”’. Though Nerval’s psychodrama is highly pertinent to his engagement with Faust, his
translations and adaptations are multi-layered interpretations that show both the traditional
concept of literary influence, as well as being acted upon by the cultural, social, and political
developments discussed in Chapter One of this thesis. Pertinently, Barthes continues:

Nous savons maintenant qu’un texte n’est pas fait d’une ligne de mots, dégageant un sens
unique, en quelque sorte théologique (qui serait le ‘message’ de l’Auteur-Dieu), mais un
espace à dimensions multiples, où se marient et se contestent des écritures variées, dont
aucune n’est originelle: le texte est un tissu de citations, issues des mille foyers de la culture.

As Allen notes, ‘Barthes’s poststructuralist texts are examples of a radical form of
intertextuality rather than intertextual theory as it might exist in critical practice.’ Certain
later critics, however, demonstrate a more practical approach to intertextuality: ‘Gérard
Genette and Michael Riffaterre both employ intertextual theory to argue for critical certainty,

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6 Ibid., p. 67.
7 Allen, p. 94.
or at least for the possibility of saying definite, stable and incontrovertible things about literary texts.\(^8\) Gerald Prince contrasts Barthes’ and Kristeva’s interpretation of intertextuality with Genette’s:

In its most restricted acceptation (Genette), the term [intertextuality] designates the relation(s) between one text and other ones which are demonstrably present in it. In its most general and radical acceptation (Barthes, Kristeva), the term designates the relations between any text (in the broad sense of signifying matter) and the sum of knowledge, the potentially infinite network of codes and signifying practices that allows it to have meaning.\(^9\)

In part because he wishes to distance himself from the post-structuralist associations of intertextuality, Genette renames the concept, or at least names his very similar concept, ‘transtextuality’. It has five subtypes: intertextuality’, which is used quite differently by Genette and refers to a direct transference of language from one text to another, as in ‘quotation, plagiarism, and allusion’. Paratextuality is concerned with aspects outside the main body of the text, such as chapter headings, titles, and notes. Metatextuality encompasses the critical commentary on other texts. Hypertextuality refers to self-conscious intertextuality, such as parody and pastiche. Architextuality categorises texts according to genre.\(^10\) Genette’s is a pragmatic approach to close reading; in a sense his desire to ‘place any specific example of textuality within a viable system’ contrasts with the textual elusiveness proposed by Barthes.\(^11\) In ‘Structuralisme et critique littéraire’ Genette states, ‘L’ambition du structuralisme ne se borne pas à compter des pieds ou à relever des répétitions de phonèmes: il doit aussi s’attaquer aux phénomènes sémantiques qui […] constituent l’essentiel du langage poétique.’\(^12\) For Genette, ‘textual transcendence, or transtextuality, […] includes issues of imitation, transformation, the classification of types of discourse, along with the thematic, modal, generic and formal categories and categorizations of traditional poetics. This change in perspective allows Genette to conclude his examination of the history and

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8 Ibid., p. 4.
11 Allen, pp. 101-02.
current state of poetics by moving to what in *Palimpsests*, he will call an *open structuralism*.¹³

Il y a, dans ce domaine, deux structuralismes, l’un de la clôture du texte et du déchiffrement des structures internes […]. L’autre structuralisme, c’est par exemple celui des *Mythologiques*, où l’on voit comment un texte (un mythe) peut — si l’on veut bien l’aider — ‘en lire un autre’.¹⁴

Genette’s pragmatic approach to intertextuality, as expressed in his ‘Introduction à l’architexte’, *Palimpsests*, and *Seuils*, is closest to this thesis’s use of intertextuality as a critical tool.¹⁵

Several persistent divergences from the Goethean Faustian paradigm emerge from a close reading of Nerval’s *Faust* translations and adaptations; the problems of translating a German myth into French and the different dramaturgical, aesthetic, and prosodic traditions and conventions in the two countries are addressed throughout this thesis. Faust is an, adaptable and persistent myth that reflects the times of its various literary incarnations; it is dynamic:¹⁶

Literature often draws on myth as a direct source for events and characters, in which case the relationship is one of transcriptive retelling. […] Thus the original legend of Faust dealt with a knave, but in Goethe’s hands he becomes a figure representative of man’s aspirations.¹⁷

As Laurence Coupe states, ‘literary works may be regarded as “mythopoeic”, tending to create or recreate certain narratives which human beings take to be crucial to their understanding of their world.’¹⁸ Crucial to this thesis are the ways in which Stapfer’s, Sainte-Aulaire’s, and Nerval’s French translations may be considered ‘transcriptive retellings’ of Goethe’s *Faust*, for as Coupe continues, ‘both making myths and reading myths imply a drive towards completion, an insistence on seeing through to as near their full

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¹³ Allen, p. 100.
¹⁴ *Palimpsests*, p. 557.
¹⁵ Allen, p. 100.
¹⁸ Coupe, p. 4.
development as is practicable.'19 This sense of ‘becoming’ is also very Goethean. This thesis traces the mythopoeic transformations of Goethe’s Faust across cultural and temporal boundaries. The ways in which the French translators develop the German text are, then, both mythopoeic and intertextual; they construct, whether intentionally or not, a French version of the German myth of Faust. As Osman Durrani discerns, with reference to the myth of Faust, ‘the observation of ever-changing transplantations of the theme into successive cultures is part of the enduring fascination of the material.’20

In general, Stapfer, Sainte-Aulaire, and Nerval failed adequately to communicate through their translations the wider allegorical significance of Faust; Goethe’s idiosyncratic interpretation of the myth was perhaps too alien. Their simplified portrayals of the interactions between ‘protagonist’ and ‘antagonist’ are particularly notable. The perennial tensions between high and low culture and popular and intellectual theatre are of some consequence in this, as is the common Romantic idealisation of women, for it leads to the construction of a Marguerite that differs significantly from Goethe’s Margarete/Gretchen. Psychodrama also contributes greatly to what one might describe as the Nervalian Faustian aesthetic; in certain respects Nerval’s Faust translations should not be considered as separate from his other work: typically personalised themes and motifs are ubiquitous across his œuvre. However, his divergences from Goethe in his translations of Faust become even more pronounced in his Faust fragment ([1827] ?) and incomplete Nicolas Flamel (1831): their protagonists exhibit a degree of mundanity absent from Goethe’s principal character; their impotent suffering is emphasised; a greater sense of despair is pervasive; and, somewhat contradictorily, and in contrast to the German Faust, they are depicted in loving family relationships. A more respectful, sometimes solemn, register is often given for Goethe’s

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19 Ibid., p. 6.
20 Faust: Icon of Modern Culture, p. 4.
darkly humorous language. This is especially evident in the three French translators’ interpretations of bawdy scenes but is also discernible in their Christianising of the source text’s pagan and pantheistic elements. Yet, as will be seen in Chapter Three, Nerval demonstrates a greater insight into typically Goethean dialecticism in his later work, *L’Imagier de Harlem*.

Despite their divergences from Goethe’s play, Nerval’s *Faust* translations are often celebrated as canonical works of world literature and crucial texts in the development of Romanticism in France. Goethe himself praised Nerval’s translation of 1828 highly, according to Eckermann’s record of his conversation with Goethe on 3 January 1830: ‘Die erwähnte Übersetzung von Gérard, obgleich größtenteils in Prosa, lobte Goethe als sehr gelungen. “Im Deutschen,” sagte er, “mag ich den *Faust* nicht mehr lesen, aber in dieser französischen Übersetzung wirkt alles wieder durchaus frisch, neu und geistreich”’ (MA, XIX, 347). And yet they remain under-researched, in spite of an increased interest in Nerval’s original writing.21 His Faustian adaptations are even more neglected though they reveal much about his, and indeed other French interpretations of *Faust*, as well as the cultural and aesthetic struggles that took place in France from the 1820s to the 1840s; a comparative study of Nerval’s *Faust* translations and adaptations has never before been undertaken. Similarly, the use of the Goethean Faustian paradigm as a theoretical tool to investigate Nerval’s *Faust* translations and adaptations is innovative and proves highly rewarding. The influence of his translations in Franco-German literary relations is not limited to the nineteenth century: their longevity testifies to the importance of Nerval’s efforts as an agent of world literature, and as a crucial figure in the cross-cultural communication of Goethe’s seminal text. Perhaps most

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striking in this respect is the fact that ‘bis zum heutigen Tag gilt Nervals Übersetzung
dennoch als so wichtig und bedeutend, dass sich auch moderne Schul- und Studienausgaben
noch auf sie stützen’.22 His versions of Goethe’s Faust continue to shape French perceptions
of arguably the foremost work of German literature.

22 Lea Marquart, Goethes ‘Faust’ in Frankreich: Studien zur Dramatischen Rezeption im 19. Jahrhundert
(Heidelberg: Winter, 2009), p. 86.
CHAPTER 1
CONTEXTUALISATION

1.1 NERVAL AND FAUST

Introduction

Gérard Labrunie was born in Paris in 1808 to Étienne Labrunie and Marie Marguerite Antoinete Labrunie (née Laurent). Shortly after his birth his father, a military surgeon, served with the Grande Armée in Austria and Germany. At the time it was customary for wives to accompany their husbands on campaign; their child was left in the care of his maternal great-uncle Antoine Boucher at Mortefontaine in the Valois region of Picardy — an area that would inspire much of Nerval’s writing. His mother died at a military camp in Glogau [today Glogow in Poland] on the Rhine in 1810, probably from influenza. Nerval was just two years old. This tragic occurrence would haunt the man and his work, both original and interpretative. The great-uncle, his guardian until Dr Labrunie’s return from Russian captivity in 1814, was in possession of small library of supernatural and esoteric literature; on later frequent and long return visits to Mortefontaine the young Nerval read these voraciously: ‘j’ai tout jeune absorbé beaucoup de cette nourriture indigeste ou malsaine pour l’âme; et plus tard même, mon jugement a eu à se défendre contre ces impressions primitives.’

But such material would prove difficult to resist, as his engagement with Faust

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3 Gérard de Nerval Œuvres complètes, ed. by Guillaume, Jean and Claude Piciois, 3 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1989), II, 885-86. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.
demonstrates. Though registered in the *Bibliographie de la France* on 28 November 1827, and appearing at the close of that year, Nerval’s first published translation of Goethe’s *Faust* would bear the date of 1828. It was published in Paris by Dondéy-Dupré, the family of Théophile Dondéy, Nerval’s fellow member of the artistic confraternity known as le petit cénacle, who, under the nom de plume Philothée O’Neddy, would publish his most celebrated poetry collection, *Feu et flamme*, with the same firm. The publication of 1828 was but the first in a succession of translations of Goethe’s *Faust* by Nerval: it was republished by Dondéy-Dupré in 1835. His translation of 1840, published by Gosselin, added a synopsis and partial translation of *Faust II*. These were excised from his final translation, which was published by J. Bry Aîné in 1850. The chief differences between the translations were the integration of more prose after 1828 and the inclusion in the 1840 translation of scenes from *Faust II*.4

Much of Nerval’s fascination with *Faust* originates from his esoteric taste in literature and his interest in German culture. From an early age he was well read, having immersed himself in the disparate works of his uncle’s library (Nerval, II, 885-86). He was also an erudite cultural critic with an astonishingly esoteric breadth of knowledge, combined of course, with superlative literary ability. He had, in other words, a mastery of the intertextual threads that interlaced his œuvre. His exceptionally multi-layered work allows for the discovery of multiple influences, for Nerval was a consciously intertextual writer, quite capable of tapping into and reworking numerous sources simultaneously. He did exactly that in his Faustian work. In combination with its syntheses of intertextual influences,

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psychodrama is crucially important;\(^5\) certain elements of Goethe’s \textit{Faust} were especially attractive to Nerval and they are reflected in his translations and his more original Faustian dramas. The purpose of what follows is to investigate aspects of Nerval’s life and writing that bear most strongly on his rewriting of Goethe’s \textit{Faust} and his contributions to, and the influence on him of, burgeoning French Romanticism. The themes addressed are the significance of Germany and German culture for Nerval; his depiction of women; and the role of religion and spirituality in his work.

\textbf{Nerval, Germany and German Culture}

There is often a tension between style and content in Nerval’s writing; Claude Pichois and Michel Brix propose that he was torn between ‘le mysticisme germanique et la rationalité française’,\(^6\) the clarity and elegance of the style accentuating the often dark subject matter and vice versa.\(^7\) This apparent dissonance is in fact crucial to his versatility and originality.\(^8\) Nerval himself subscribed, to some extent, to the dichotomy of French rationalism and German mysticism in his ‘Introduction aux \textit{Poésies allemandes}’ of 1830: ‘chez nous, c’est l’homme qui gouverne son imagination […] chez les Allemands c’est l’imagination qui gouverne l’homme’ (Nerval, i, 264).

Nerval’s attraction to Germany and its culture may be partly explained by its associations with his dead mother.\(^9\) Her death on German territory left him open to various esoteric and mystical philosophies that were popular in Germany.\(^10\) Michel Collot ascribes Nerval’s predilection for the supernatural and fantastical in part to the death of his mother,

\(^{6}\) \textit{Dictionnaire Nerval} , p.23.
\(^{8}\) Macé, p. 26.
\(^{9}\) \textit{Dictionnaire Nerval} , p. 20.
\(^{10}\) Ibid., p. 22.
and considers the relative downplaying of realistic elements in his work to be linked to the lesser influence of his father.\textsuperscript{11} Thus aspects of a fantasy/reality binary opposition, associated with Nerval’s mother and father, may find expression in his \textit{Faust} translations and thereby acquire wider Franco/German and Romantic/neoclassical significance. Pichois and Brix find further significance in the death of Nerval’s mother and suggest that Germany represents not only the fantastic and the supernatural for Nerval, but death itself,\textsuperscript{12} an idea developed by Macé: ‘dans la géographie nervalienne le Rhin joue le rôle d’un Achéron, qui sépara non seulement les vivants et les morts, mais aussi l’imaginaire et le réel.’\textsuperscript{13} Alongside his admiration for and fascination with Germany and German culture, signs of wariness — a simultaneous approximation and withdrawal — are discernible.\textsuperscript{14} His choice of German authors for translation into French was influenced by what he thought would be accepted in France: he chose, for example, Goethe, Heine, and Hoffmann over writers he thought more openly or militantly Romantic.\textsuperscript{15} Germany did indeed have ‘un rôle maléfique’ in Nerval’s life: first it claimed his mother and then ‘l’Allemagne mortifière a englouti la raison du fils, puis le fils lui-même’.\textsuperscript{16} The Loreley, both seductive and deadly, was an especially apt metaphor for Germany in Nerval’s eyes,\textsuperscript{17} in the introduction, addressed to Jules Janin, of his own \textit{Loreley souvenirs d’Allemagne} (1852) his ambivalence towards the mythical figure, and to Germany, is discernible: ‘vous connaissez, comme moi, mon ami, cette Lorely. […] Sa coiffe de velours grenat, à retroussis de drap d’or, brille au loin comme la crête sanglante du vieux dragon de l’Éden’ (Nerval, III, 3). As Lieven D’hulst and Jacques Bony state, Nerval’s

\begin{footnotes}
\item[12] \textit{Dictionnaire Nerval}, p. 19.
\item[14] Ibid., p. 20.
\item[16] Ibid., pp.25-26.
\item[17] Ibid., p. 23.
\end{footnotes}
description of the Loreley has apocalyptic significance, being in part inspired by Revelation (Nerval, iii, 957).18

But Nerval was a versatile and subtle writer and though the notion of opposition between French rationality and German mysticism has some validity, he frequently exceeds this potential constraint. Léo Burckart (1839), for instance, is a fairly accurate and realistic depiction of a political crisis in Germany in 1819: the murder of Kotzebue by student Karl Sand.19 Conversely, in ‘Octavie’ there is an oneiric quality to the Valois of Nerval’s depiction: the region, contrasted with Paris, seems to represent what the Orient commonly represented to others: ‘le sol primitif, berceau de l’humanité, source encore vive des valeurs morales, sociales et religieuses reniées par l’occident.’20 These dream-like, primitive, Eastern qualities evoke mysticism and Romanticism, rather than French rationality and neoclassicism. With reference to his Faust translations, however, German irrationality and mysticism inevitably contribute a potent element to the mix. The incomplete Faustian dramas are a different matter; one might expect greater rationality in French Fausts. This is true to a degree, especially in the Faust fragment in which philanthropic Enlightenment values nuance the protagonist’s championing of printing and the dissemination of knowledge, but as will be demonstrated in Chapter Three, its disparate intertextual influences render the fragment challenging to critical categorisation.

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18 In particular, 12. 3-4, 9; and 13. 1-3.
19 Chamarat-Malandain, p. 16.
20 Ibid., p.66, p. 115.
Nerval, Women and Love

During the Romantic period in France many writers associated the idealisation of women with ‘l’amour divin’, but alongside the metaphorical use of female mythological and divine figures, such idealisation was often highly personalised in Nerval’s writing, his representations of women being traceable to his dead mother or devotion to an adored actress.22 Men’s maltreatment of women is a recurrent theme of his work; the exploitation of Margarete is also an important aspect of Goethe’s Faust.23 Once again there is autobiographical resonance: the demise of Nerval’s mother occurred as a result of the predominantly masculine activity of war, her husband’s military career having led her to Germany and death. His novella ‘Sylvie’ is a salient example of the rejection of real love for idealised love.24 Nerval was fully aware of the perils of such a disposition, as the following pronouncement from Aurélia demonstrates: ‘Quelle folie! […] d’aimer […] d’un amour platonique une femme qui ne vous aime plus. C’est la faute de mes lectures’ (Nerval, III, 696). Unattainability and idealisation are frequently concomitant; fantasy is privileged over reality and art over nature. A broadly Romantic methodology, perhaps, but the specifics of his idealisation of female characters are highly significant to what might be termed the Nervalian Faustian paradigm.

22 Collot, p.27; Chamarat-Malandain, p. 86.
Nerval, Religion and Spirituality

Nerval favoured a syncretic interpretation of religion and spirituality, emphasising the former’s cultural constructedness, seeing in the latter a fundamental, intransient truth. He recognised similarities in paganism and Christianity, particularly the maternal aspects of the goddess Isis and the Virgin Mary. The idealisation of paganism was common among French writers of the Romantic period, and Isis was often the principal deity of ‘worship’. Interest in Egyptian mythology had increased in response to a number of contemporary, or historically recent, events: the archaeological excavation of Herculaneum and Pompeii and the discovery of the shrine dedicated to the goddess; the Napoleonic campaign in Egypt; French translations of Plutarch, and The Golden Ass by Apuleius in which Isis is described as ‘la femme idéale, la mère céleste universelle’. Much of Nerval’s interest in paganism originated from his mother’s family, especially his maternal great-uncle, possessor of the esoteric book collection at Mortefontaine, whereas more Christian elements of his work stem from his father’s more conventional influence. Frederick Burwick suggests that in Christianity Nerval sought a means ‘to embrace the lost mother and reconcile with the lost father’. In other words, he created multiple metaphors of his own life from ancient myths and religions, as well as from contemporaneous cultural developments. His rewriting of Goethe’s Faust was in part an expression of these personalised tropes.

25 Dictionnaire Nerval, p. 112.
26 Ibid.
28 Ibid., p. 40.
29 Collot, pp. 19-20.
1.2 FAUST IN FRANCE

THE LITERARY ARTS

Introduction

Interest in *Faust* and the ‘Faustian’ reached its zenith in France during the 1820s and 1830s.\(^{31}\) It both contributed to and was energised by contemporary interest in the mysterious, fantastical, and supernatural.\(^{32}\) It spanned a variety of media and pervaded both popular and intellectual culture. Traditionally two aspects of Goethe’s *Faust* are considered to have beguiled and distracted French readers and audiences: the role of Mephistopheles and Faust’s seduction of Margarete.\(^{33}\) An inability fully to distinguish Goethe’s richly symbolic interpretation from the old chapbook tale was central to the prevalent divergent assessment of *Faust* in France. Consider the following, somewhat pessimistic accounts of French engagement with *Faust* during this period:

> Les Français de la Restauration ne sont pas, en général, acquis à un relativisme suffisant pour admettre qu’une œuvre dont le diable est le personnage principal puisse se distinguer de cette littérature frénétique qui menace de ruiner le goût, les mœurs et l’équilibre mental de la nation.\(^{34}\)

> Il est vrai que les Français n’ont pas la tête métaphysique; le goût des symboles, la sympathie et l’intelligence pour les abstractions personnifiées et pour le langage des choses inanimées restent chez nous le privilège de l’élite.\(^{35}\)

French insensitivity to the metaphysical aspects of Goethe’s drama seems surprising today, but one should not underestimate the effects on readers and audiences of the markedly different cultural traditions that had developed in France and Germany. A selective and quite narrow focus characterises the three French translations analysed in this thesis; so persistent, predictable even, are their divergences from Goethe’s *Faust* that a lack of intent on the part of

\(^{31}\) Marquart, p. 9.


\(^{33}\) Baldensperger, pp. 138-139.


\(^{35}\) Baldensperger, p. 150.
their creators is difficult to countenance. All have more in common with the popular melodramatic Fausts of the boulevard than has been widely recognised.

And yet some French commentators had appreciated the wider, metaphorical significance of the relationship between Faust and Mephistopheles and understood that its symbolism, its poetry in the wide sense, exceed a simplistic interpretation of good versus evil. Emile Delécluze observed in *Le Globe* (14 December 1826) that ‘la lutte entre Faust et le Diable est, chez l’Allemand, la partie la moins sérieuse de la composition’.36 A counter-narrative to the diminished and diminishing French reading of *Faust* had been expressed by the time Nerval began his translation in 1827. Prior to the 1820s three pertinent categories had an influence on the reception of *Faust*: the Faust Chapbook, Goethe’s *Faust I* and other ‘Faustian’ texts. They are addressed in turn in the following section of the thesis.

The Faust Chapbook in France

Faust is a German myth that permeated the German consciousness; from childhood memories of fairground puppet shows, to Goethe’s sublime interpretation, as Yves Cazaux notes, ‘la terre allemande fut […] imprégnée d’un mythe né chez elle et qui lui allait si bien à l’âme.’37 France could look to no such traditions. The myth was known in France prior to Goethe, however, principally through Pierre-Victor Palma-Cayet’s *L’Histoire prodigieuse du Docteur-Fauste* (1603), a French translation of the original German chapbook, *Historia von D. Johann Fausten* (1587).38 Despite its intercultural importance, Palma-Cayet’s translation has seldom been the subject of scholarly inquiry, the tendency having been to regard it as relatively insignificant to the intertextual course of the *Fauststoff*. This is belied by the

36 Cited in Milner, I, pp. 443-44.
38 Marquart, pp. 46-47.
numerous reeditions of the work (twenty between 1598 and 1798).\footnote{‘Annexe iii’ in \textit{L’Histoire prodigieuse}, pp. 45-46; Marquart, p. 46.} To French readers \textit{Faust} was exotic and often read ‘clandestinely’;\footnote{Cazaux, p. 34.} Cazaux, emphasising the great popularity in the seventeenth century of Palma-Cayet’s translation, is perplexed by the scarce evidence of this today and poses an intriguing question: ‘sous la vague d’hypocrisie que déchaîna en France la Contre-Réforme associée à l’absolutisme du pouvoir, les possesseurs de ces éditions de \textit{Faust} furent-ils conduits à procéder à une auto-censure destructrice?’\footnote{Ibid., p. 35.} Societal and cultural pressures inform and shape the French reception of the Faust myth and its literary interpretations in many ways, but the simple fact remains that there was a great deal of interest in \textit{Faust} in France prior to Goethe. As Cazaux neatly exclaims, ‘la France indifférente au mythe germano-européen de Faust? ... Ce n’est là qu’une légende!’\footnote{Ibid.}

The foreignness of the Faust myth provides a partial and not entirely satisfactory explanation for its surprising lack of development in France; the same autochthonous/foreign opposition could be applied to Germany and England and yet in the latter country Christopher Marlowe’s great dramatic poem \textit{The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus} was inspired by the old German chapbook.\footnote{Ibid., p. 34. On the complex matter of the performance and publication history of Marlowe’s play, see Christopher Marlowe, \textit{Doctor Faustus A- and B-Texts (1604, 1616)}, ed. by David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen, The Revels Plays (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), pp. 1-3.} Despite the contemporary, or near-contemporary, interest in the Faust chapbook in France, in addition to Nerval’s translations, it would require Hector Berlioz’s taking inspiration in \textit{La Damnation de Faust} (1846) from Palma-Cayet’s translation, and Nerval’s inclusion of extracts thereof in \textit{Les Veillées littéraires} (1848), for the French to rediscover it. And it was to be a short lived rekindling of interest, for ‘après la flambée du romantisme’, it would be ‘comme si la
prodigieuse existence de Jean Fauste, grand magician, n’avait jamais suscité d’intérêt.’

While Germany and England produced original literary works from the Faust legend and the chapbook, in France it was to be through translation and non-literary media that the German myth was to reach its zenith.

Translations of Goethe’s Faust

The influence of Goethe’s Faust in France has been somewhat neglected by scholars, despite the drama’s international significance. Even though Faust I was more popular, it was Die Leiden des jungen Werthers (1774) that won Goethe his reputation in France; Faust was much criticised in France for its unique ending, the consensus among contemporary French commentators being that Faust deserved to be damned.

The first, albeit incomplete, French translation of Faust I was undertaken by Madame de Staël in her De l’Allemagne. A landmark in Franco-German literary relations, her translation nonetheless initiated the prevalent divergences from the Goethean Faustian paradigm in French translations: in particular, the emphasis on Mephistopheles over Faust. From a retrospective vantage point de Staël’s approach appears paradoxical, particularly as she emphasises the diabolic aspect of Faust, contributing perhaps to the threat that ‘littérature frénétique’ represented to ‘bienséance’. Furthermore, de Staël, no uncritical acolyte of Goethe, was outspoken regarding his Faust: ‘il ne faut y chercher ni le goût, ni la mesure.’

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44 Cazaux, p.36.
45 Marquart, p. 9.
46 Ibid., pp. 57-58.
47 Ibid., p. 41.
48 Though she had begun this translation in 1808, publication was delayed by Napoleonic censorship; De l’Allemagne, including the incomplete Faust translation, was finally published in July 1813. See John Isbell, ‘The First French Faust: De l’Allemagne’s Faust Chapter, 1810-1814’, French Studies, 45 (1991), 417-34 (p.417) and Fritz Strich, Goethe und die Weltliteratur (Bern: Francke, 1946), p.228.
49 Marquart, p. 74.
50 Ibid., p.73.
51 Milner, I, p. 441.
To accord a devil the complexity of Goethe’s Mephistopheles was to go beyond the binary opposition of good and evil; a reluctance to do so provides an explanation for de Staël’s and other French critics’ distaste for aspects of Goethe’s play. Much of the early nineteenth-century French public was unable fully to take in the polysemy of *Faust* because it lacked comparative autochthonous models; it must have seemed astoundingly novel. The following pronouncement (later repeated verbatim by Nerval in his ‘Observations sur le premier *Faust*’ (1827) — Nerval, 1, 245) goes some way to explaining the contradiction of de Staël’s fascination for Mephistopheles:

Milton a fait Satan plus grand que l’homme; Michel-Ange et Le Dante lui ont donné les traits hideux [...] le Méphistophélès de Goethe est un diable civilisé.53

The oxymoronic concept of a ‘civilised devil’ recalls the strained meeting of ‘opposing’ neoclassical and Romantic aesthetics in de Staël’s translation. But a simpler explanation of her eccentric translation of *Faust* should also be borne in mind: ‘Madame de Staël connaît très mal l’allemand [...] par là sans doute s’explique un certain nombre de déformations et d’omissions [...] qui se répéteront sur les interprétations du romantisme français’.54

Stapfer’s was the first complete French translation but it is probably as the source of Eugène Delacroix’s seventeen lithographs based on *Faust* that it is now chiefly remembered.55 Largely faithful to his source text, Stapfer occasionally demonstrates an inability to convey unusual, supernatural aspects of *Faust* in a grammatically accurate manner.56 Sainte-Aulaire’s *Faust* translation is generally regarded as weaker than

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53 Ibid., p. 344.
55 Stapfer’s identity is uncertain: there has been disagreement as to whether it was Philippe Albert Stapfer (1766-1840) or his son, Frédéric-Albert-Alexandre Stapfer (1802-1892), who translated Goethe’s *Faust*. Yet as Robert Vilain asserts, the evidence is strongly in favour of the son. See Robert Vilain, ‘Faust, Part One and France: Stapfer’s Translation, Delacroix’s Lithographs, Goethe’s Responses’, *Publications of the English Goethe Society*, 81 (2012), 73-135 (pp. 76-77), and Marquart, p. 75.
56 Marquart, pp. 78-79.
Stapfer’s: there is widespread evidence of his failure fully to understand Goethe’s work and a notable weakness in rendering metaphor and connotation. Of the Faust translations discussed in this study Sainte-Aulaire’s is the most divergent from the Goethean paradigm; rather than fidelity his goal would seem to have been the rewriting of Faust to suit contemporary French tastes.

Nerval’s translation of 1828 was the most celebrated French translation of Faust, contributing greatly to the tragedy’s improved reputation in France. As Lea Marquart states, this translation is ‘bis heute die bedeutendste — wenn auch in der Forschung umstrittene — französische Fassung des Werks.’ Nerval’s later translations also divided critical opinion. For instance, in his prefatory comments on Nerval’s translation of 1840 Maurice Marache lists what he considers some of its strengths and weaknesses:

Souci de la forme, hardiesse à suivre ou à recréer la pensée du texte original, erreurs étonnantes là où la pensée du traducteur et celle de l’auteur divergent, tels sont les traits les plus saillants de la traduction de Nerval.

There has been among critics a tendency either to overestimation, or else to a blanket underestimation of the translation on account of its inaccuracies. The mistake most frequently noted, and one that Nerval never corrected, was his translation of a stage direction from the scene ‘Nacht’.

57 Sainte-Aulaire (1778-1854) was a high-ranking diplomat and member of the Académie française (1841).
58 Marquart, p.84.
59 Ibid.
60 Ibid., p. 58.
61 Ibid., p. 59.
63 In addition to the edition of Nerval’s translation of 1840 referred to above, the editions of Stapfer’s, Sainte-Aulaire’s, and Nerval’s French translations of Goethe’s Faust used in this thesis are the following: Œuvres dramatiques de J. W. Goethe, traduites de l’allemand; précédées d’une notice biographique et littéraire sur Goethe, ii–iv (Paris: Bobée, 1821–23); iv (1823). Stapfer’s Faust translation is in the fourth volume (published by Bobbé); his substantial essay ‘Notice sur la vie et les ouvrages de Goethe’, to which I will refer later, was published in volume 1 of the same series by a different publisher (Auguste Sautelet) in 1825. Goethe, Faust, trans. by Louis-Claire de Beaupoil, comte de Sainte-Aulaire (Paris: Ladvacat, 1823).
Er schlägt das Buch auf und erblickt das Zeichen des Makrokosmus. (MA vii, 547)

Il ouvre le volume et aperçoit le signe du macrocosme. (Stapfer, 1823, p. 29)

Il ouvre le livre, et fixe les yeux sur le signe du macrocosme, figure cabalistique. (Sainte-Aulaire, 1823, p. 49)

Il frappe le livre, et considère le signe du macrocosme. (Nerval 1828, p. 30; Nerval, 1840, p. 93)

Nerval’s mistranslation of ‘er schlägt das Buch auf’ would seem to have originated in his confusion of the German verbs ‘schlagen’ and ‘aufschlagen’. Stapfer and Sainte-Aulaire, in contrast, translate the phrase simply and accurately by the verb ‘ouvrir’. It is surprising that Nerval did not correct his mistake in his later translation of 1840; surely by this time he would have realised the significance of the separable verb ‘aufschlagen’ and noted his divergence from Stapfer and Sainte-Aulaire. Mistakes are of course inevitable in a work of such complexity as Faust — but that does not exclude the possibility that other divergences from Goethe’s text are intentional rewritings. Haraldo De Campos offers a pertinent explanation of the relationship between an original work and its translation: ‘la traduction de textes “créateurs” sera toujours recreation, ou création parallèle, autonome mais réciproque. Plus un texte est rempli de difficultés, plus il sera crévable, plus il offrira une possibilité de recreation.’

In fact, Nerval generally engages well with the difficult language and concepts of the original, providing a foretaste of his later great poetic achievements. Fernand Baldensperger considers Nerval’s translation of 1828 superior to its predecessors in a

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Goethe, Faust, Tragédie de Goethe: nouvelle traduction complète, en prose et en vers, par Gérard (Paris: Dondey-Dupré, 1828). Nerval’s translation of 1840 is an unabridged edition with the addition of notes and commentary. Further references to these editions are given after quotations in the text.


65 Ibid., p. 96.
significant respect:

Tandis que les deux versions antérieures avaient ambitionné de dégager simplement Faust des voiles que l’idiome étranger jetait autour de lui, la traduction en prose et en vers de Gérard souhaitait d’en faire un ouvrage classique et un vrai livre français, où le charmant poète [...] aurait transposé dans la langue de Voltaire les imaginations et les rêves d’Outre-Rhin.  

The implication of a meeting of the ‘language of Voltaire’ and oneiric German imagination is clear: Nerval’s translation represents a successful synthesis of neoclassical and Romantic aesthetics. Baldensperger perhaps overstates the case, certainly in his assessment of Stapfer’s earlier translation, to which Nerval’s interpretation owes a considerable debt, as will be discussed in Chapter Two. But even at this early stage in his literary career, Nerval does indeed blend elegance of expression and fantastic subject matter; Christine Lombez captures something of this tension in Nerval’s translations:

Atelier de lecture, laboratoire d’écriture, la traduction est tout cela pour Nerval. On ne s’étonnera donc pas qu’il demeure un traducteur assez ‘classique’ dans sa méthode. Trop poète pour être un adepte de la traduction ‘philologique’ (ses compétences en allemand ne le lui permettant sans doute pas!), il est aussi trop Français pour oser à son époque une traduction ‘décentrée’.

His translations of Goethe’s Faust are indeed nuanced by typically neoclassical aesthetic values; these influences are essential to this thesis’s investigation of Nerval’s convergences with and divergences from the Goethean Faustian paradigm, and indeed to its subsequent search for a Nervalian Faustian paradigm. But Lombez’s perceptive appraisal of Nerval’s approach to literary translation points to other pertinent aspects of his work on Faust: his translations of Goethe’s drama may indeed be described as a ‘laboratoire d’écriture’, for there is a strong connection between his translations and adaptations of Faust and his other, original writing. Furthermore, Lombez’s unequivocal description of Nerval as ‘trop Français’

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66 Baldensperger p. 130.
to attempt radical, paradigm-changing translations evokes the distinction between a foreignising and a domesticating approach to literary translation. As will be discussed in Chapter Two, from a French perspective Nerval does indeed display many conservative tendencies in his translations of *Faust*, but this by no means characterises his translational approach in its entirety.

**Other Faustian Texts in France**

The term ‘Faustian’ is to some extent subjective. However, the following texts have had an identifiable influence on the development of Goethe’s *Faust* in France: *Robert le Diable*; *L’Enchanteur Faustus* by Comte Hamilton; Jacques Cazotte’s *Le Diable amoureux*; De Saur’s and Saint-Geniès’ French translation of Klinger’s *Faust*; and a number of French *Faust* adaptations that were popular in France in the 1820s.

*Robert le Diable* is an anonymous fourteenth-century text that was initially written as a verse novel and later adapted as a mystery play. Pertinently, it is thought to have been written in either Normandy or Picardy under Philippe de Valois. Robert’s mother is childless and enters into a pact with the devil, promising him the soul of a child born to her. She conceals the pact and when Robert later discovers the truth he determines to atone by making a pilgrimage to Rome. He atones for his mother’s sin by miraculous deeds during a battle against ‘the heathen’; all his sins are forgiven and he marries the Emperor’s daughter. The pact-with-the-devil theme here serves Christian moral teaching: forgiveness is possible for the sinner. In this sense *Robert le Diable* comes closer to Goethean than chapbook values. And yet Faust’s salvation was a bugbear for many French critics who considered

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68 The work fell into obscurity until its successful adaptation as an opera in 1831 by Giacomo Meyerbeer and Eugène Scribe. See Marquart, p. 41.
69 Many of Nerval’s writings are set in the Valois. As the area in which his mother was born it held great significance for him.
70 Marquart, pp. 41-42.
71 Ibid.
damnation the only possible outcome of Faust’s dealing with the Devil.\textsuperscript{72} This is crucial to convergences with and divergences from the Goethean Faustian paradigm in France; several explanations are of course possible, among them seem to have been a failure fully to understand, insensitivity to, or intentional rewriting of the Goethean \textit{Faust}. All no doubt had a part to play, but as will be seen in Chapter Two, patterns of divergence in Stapfer’s, Sainte-Aulaire’s, and Nerval’s translations strongly suggest a deliberate recasting in certain specific areas — areas in fact that were flashpoints of neoclassical and Romantic tension.

Although based on the chapbook, Comte Antoine (or Anthony) Hamilton’s (1646-1720) short story, \textit{L’Enchanteur Faustus} (1776),\textsuperscript{73} diverges greatly from its source; it is certainly, however, ‘Faustian’.\textsuperscript{74} In Hamilton’s narrative the German magician arrives at the court of Elizabeth I and summons before the Queen, Essex, and Sidney various beautiful women from history and legend. Important to the reception and development of the \textit{Fauststoff} in France, it not only precedes Goethe, but might even have influenced the German writer’s \textit{Faust ii} in the scene in which Faust summons the shades of Helen and Paris,\textsuperscript{75} thereby providing the unique situation of a French ‘Faustian’ text influencing Goethe’s \textit{Faust}. One might also see in the French \textit{Faust} translators’ idealisation of and focus on Margarete a faint reflection of the conspicuously amorous concerns of \textit{L’Enchanteur Faustus}.

Published four years prior to Hamilton’s short story, Jacques Cazotte’s \textit{Le Diable amoureux} (1772) was also highly significant to the development of the Faust theme in

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid. P. 41.
\textsuperscript{73} Hamilton’s \textit{L’Enchanteur Faustus} was first published more than fifty years after his death. See Marquart, p. 49.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., pp. 50-51.
France. This highly innovative novel concerns the occult activities of Spanish nobleman Don Alvaro, a summoner of Satan. It takes an innovative turn when the invoked Devil falls in love with Alvaro, taking on the form of a young woman named Biondetta in an attempt to seduce the Spaniard. This is ultimately unsuccessful: Alvaro, having had a vision of his mother in Venice, embarks on a journey back to Spain, during which a coaching accident forces Alvaro and Biondetta to shelter at a farmhouse. Here Satan reveals his true identity and by repeating the question asked of Alvaro during their first encounter (‘che vuoi?’), it is evident that a pact has not been concluded. As well as providing an innovatively female-dominated Faustian narrative, the mother’s ultimately redemptive counter-influence to the seductively evil Biondetta foreshadows Nerval’s magnifying in his *Faust* translations and Faustian dramas of Goethe’s woman-as-saviour theme. Furthermore, Cazotte’s good mother/evil Biondetta opposition is much simpler than the ambivalent interrelationships of Goethe’s *Faust* and has more in common with Nerval’s more straightforward treatment of similar polarities in his *Faust* translations and Faustian fragments.

*Le Diable amoureux*, generally regarded as the first example of the fantastic tale in French, demonstrates Cazotte’s Cabbalistic knowledge. The depth of this was without doubt exaggerated by Nerval in ‘Jacques Cazotte’, one of the portraits that comprise his *Les Illuminés*. Nonetheless, Cazotte’s novel brings to a French ‘Faust’ a degree of authentic occultism that contrasts with the more poetic, allegorical purport of Goethe’s *Faust*. The literary representation of historical figures — Nicolas and Pernelle Flamel [in *Nicolas Flamel*], Peter Schoeffer [Scheffer in the *Faust* fragment], and Laurent Coster [the

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76 Marquart, p. 51.
77 ‘What do you want?’.
79 Marquart, p. 52.
80 *Dictionnaire Nerval*, p. 93.
protagonist of *L’Imagier de Harlem*, for instance — in Nerval’s Faustian work is in harmony with Cazotte’s ‘realistic’ exposition of the fantastic tale.

Joseph Henri de Saur’s and Léonard de Saint-Geniès’ translation (*Les Aventures du Docteur Faust et sa descente aux enfers* (1825)) of Friedrich Maximilian Klinger’s *Fausts Leben, Thaten und Höllenfahrt* (1791) demonstrates an awareness of the contemporary fondness among French readers for Marguerite, inserting between chapters more faithful to their source text whole chapters dedicated to her. Goethean elements not found in Klinger are also brought into their translation. In particular, Klinger’s nihilistic Faust becomes much more positive in de Saur’s and Saint-Geniès’ interpretation. This distinction is crucial to Nerval’s *Faust* fragment and *Nicolas Flamel*, as will be discussed in Chapter Three.

In 1827 the Théâtre des Nouveautés produced a three-act *Faust* melodrama, written by Emmanuel Théaulon with music by Béancourt that was hugely popular. Baldensperger underscores ‘les différences extrêmes qui séparent de l’original allemand ce mélodrame où Faust, amoureux quelconque, évoquait le diable pour lui demander l’or nécessaire à son mariage.’ This mundane aspect of Faust’s motivation for dealing with the devil has parallels in Nerval’s incomplete Faustian dramas.

Antoine Béraud’s *Faust* adaptation premiered on 29 October 1828 at the Porte-Saint-Martin theatre. Even its title page exudes mystery: ‘par M. Anthony Béraud, et

81 Friedrich Maximilian Klinger’s *Fausts Leben, Thaten und Höllenfahrt* (1791) will be analysed in the third chapter of the thesis, as its influence is at its strongest in Nerval’s incomplete Faustian dramas.

82 Milner, I, 445.

83 Ibid.

84 A contemporary reviewer identified only by the initials L.S., refers to ‘ce superbe spectacle’, stating ‘il est impossible de rien imaginer de plus magnifiques que les décorations.’ His description of the prominence of the principal female character is notable: ‘au lieu de Faust, la scène nous a d’abord montré Marguerite, simple et naïve.’ Most pertinent to Neval’s Faustian work — especially the Faustian fragments — is the use of poverty as the catalyst for a deal with the devil: Frédéric (Faust’s nephew), desperate to marry Marguerite turns to Mephistophélès to obtain the necessary financial means. L.S., ‘Théâtre des Nouveautés: première représentation de *Faust*, drame en trois actes, mêlé de musique, par M. Théaulon’, *Journal des débats politiques et littéraires*, 29 October 1827, pp. 1-4.

85 Ibid.
The names concealed by asterisks have been revealed as Jean-Toussaint Merle and Charles Nodier. Notably, Béraud’s *Faust* owed much of its success to a ‘mise en scène superbe’: the final scene, strikingly evocative of the Middle Ages, divided the stage with the ‘canonised’ Marguerite on one side, the damned Faust on the other, and angels and demons surveying all. Typically French emphases are again discernible: Faust damned without chance of salvation; further idealisation of Marguerite; a more traditional depiction of the devil, and the polarity of good and evil realised visually.

**THE VISUAL ARTS**

**Introduction**

It is a surprising fact that illustrations of Goethe’s *Faust* were known to the German public before the play, which was first performed publicly in 1829. The reciprocal influence of literary and pictorial representations of *Faust* became less easily demarcated as Goethe’s work became more widely known: a symbiotic relationship had developed between the two media. Nerval’s friend and fellow writer, Théophile Gautier, noted a similar reciprococity in France during the 1820s: ‘en ce temps-là, la peinture et la poésie fraternisaient. Les artistes lisaient les poètes et les poètes visitaient les artistes.’ Both literary and visual interpretations of Goethe’s *Faust* contributed greatly to its dissemination in France and informed the varied, and indeed conflicting, perceptions of the work there.

The language of conflict was often employed in France to describe the opposition of the neoclassical and Romantic movements in the early decades of the nineteenth century.

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86 Marquart, p. 225.
87 Ibid.
88 Baldensperger, p.133.
89 Ibid., p. 511.
This struggle is explicit in *Grand Combat entre le romantique et le classique à la porte du musée*, a lithograph from the Salon of 1827, depicting combat between a nude javelin-thrusting figure and his costumed rapier-bearing opponent.\(^9^2\) Their respective Classical and Romantic significance is unmistakable, even without reference to the title. The Salon of 1827 was to prove as crucial an event in the ‘bataille romantique’, as was the literary ‘bataille d’*Hernani*’ (1830). The Salon’s subject matter reflected that found in contemporaneous works of literature; the treatment of religious and spiritual themes increased following their unpopularity during the Revolution. Furthermore, the majority of its non-French literary themes and topics looked to British and German sources: Shakespeare and Scott accounted for the greater part of the first category; England was enjoying something of a cultural rapprochement with France at this time, the fall of the First French Empire having considerably improved Anglo-French relations.\(^9^3\) Goethe, though inspiring fewer visual artists than his British counterparts, was well represented in the second category by Delacroix’s *Le Docteur Faust dans son cabinet* and Colin’s *Faust et Marguerite au jardin*.\(^9^4\)

Delacroix found inspiration in both English and German literature. By the time he had witnessed early Shakespeare performances, along with Berlioz, Dumas, Hugo, Vigny, and Nerval, at the Odéon theatre he was already an admirer of the English playwright, for his attendance at Shakespeare performances during a visit to London in 1825 had been revelatory, inspiring a profound and lifelong interest in Shakespeare’s work.\(^9^5\) And yet the common association of Delacroix with Romanticism is somewhat misleading. He was far

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\(^9^3\) Bouillo, pp. 33-34.
\(^9^5\) Hureaux, p. 152.
from uncritical of Shakespeare, as his journal entry of 15 July 1850 attests: ‘ses comédies sont surannées […] C’est un aliment grossier qui ne convient qu’à un palais anglais ou allemand. […] On ne peut pas trouver dix vers de suite sans quelque faute de goût ou sans indécence.’

Delacroix was simultaneously attracted by the psychological depth of Shakespeare’s characters and repelled by his lack of ‘goût’. The latter point is reemphasised in his journal entry for 7 September 1854: ‘ce qui fait la supériorité de La Fontaine, de Molière, de Racine, de l’Arioste, sur des Corneille, sur des Shakespeare, sur des Michel Ange, c’est le goût.’

Ambivalence characterises Delacroix’s attitude to Romantic aesthetics; the neoclassical concept of ‘goût’ not only lingers well into the middle of the nineteenth century, but ‘haunts’ French Romanticism across different media.

**Significant Visual Fausts: Cornelius, Delacroix, Retzsch**

Key German and French illustrations of Faust that were undertaken prior to the publication of Nerval’s first translation of 1828 are Moritz Retzsch’s *Umrisse zu Goethes Faust* (1816); Peter von Cornelius’s *Bilder zu Goethes Faust* (1816); and Delacroix’s illustrations for a new edition of the French translation of Goethe’s Faust by Albert Stapfer (1828). Retzsch’s prints are significant in the development of pictorial Fausts, if in certain respects less rich than Cornelius’s interpretations, as Forster-Hahn indicates: ‘the clarity, even flatness, of these simple line drawings, their lack of any shading — literal or metaphorical — emptied the depicted events of all internal and external connotations.’

Their comparative neutrality was no hindrance to success, however; they were very popular with the German public and

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97 Hureaux, p. 158.
98 Delacroix, *Journal*, 1, 826.
99 Forster-Hahn, p. 512.
100 Ibid., p. 515.
influenced many subsequent depictions of Faust. In Cornelius’s interpretation Gretchen dominates; half of his images are devoted to her. The concentration on Gretchen is often considered typically French, but of Delacroix’s seventeen lithographs seven feature her — a lesser share than in Cornelius’s series. Delacroix focuses more on Faust and Mephistopheles. Cornelius’s depictions of Faust are eccentric in that none shows the ‘brooding old Faust in his study’. The medieval setting is emphasised; this irked Goethe who criticised the illustrations as ‘zu altdeutsch’. Cornelius in fact intentionally accentuated Faust’s German identity: ‘ich wollte ganz deutsch sein und wählte absichtlich diese Form.’ German anti-Napoleonic feeling contributed much to his departure from the Goethean Faust, as did Nazarene (Cornelius was a prominent member of this artistic group) objectives regarding the direction of German art. Cornelius politicised Faust as a great German and understated the supernatural aspects of Goethe’s work. It is unsurprising then that he was reluctant to portray the vulnerable aspects of Faust, preferring instead ‘a dynamic, taut, and virile character.’ Of course Delacroix had no such attachment to Faust as a symbol of national identity — at least directly — and this allowed him greater licence in his interpretation of Goethe’s work. The medium of lithography chosen by Delacroix complemented the interplay of the lighter and darker elements of Goethe’s drama. His focus on the dramatic, the gloomy, the irrational, and the ‘Romantic’ in the lithographs mirrors Nerval’s concerns in his Faust.

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101 Ibid.
102 Forster-Hahn, p. 513.
103 Goethes Werke (Weimarer Ausgabe), herausgegeben im Auftrag der Großherzogin Sophie von Sachsen. Four divisions, 143 vols (Weimar: Böhlau, 1887-1919), v., 8, 381. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.
105 Forster-Hahn, p. 516.
106 Ibid.
107 Ibid.
The French artist’s illustrations were the most highly praised by Goethe. In conversation with Eckermann on 29 November 1826 he states that his Faust served as a useful medium for Delacroix’s extraordinary imaginative and narrative abilities; it is a ‘food’ that might fuel wider aesthetic transformations. Delacroix’s lithographs certainly form a link in the international, intertextual, cross-media concatenation; closely conjoined on the chain are Nerval’s Faust translations. It is the very ‘wildness’ of Delacroix’s style — the quality for which many French critics reproached him — that Goethe considered essential to the appeal of the lithographs; his interest in how Delacroix would have interpreted the most supernatural events of the drama, namely the ‘Hexenküche’ and ‘Walpurgisnacht’ scenes, reflects what Goethe viewed as the most interesting aspect of Delacroix’s engagement with Faust (MA XIX, 167). He saw in Delacroix’s lithographs something truly new; these seminal visual texts certainly introduced and propagated an innovative perspective on the Fauststoff.

Delacroix began work on his Faust lithographs in 1825. Upon their completion, he was persuaded by the editor, Motte, to include the images in a new edition of Stapfer’s translation of Goethe’s Faust; it was a decision that the artist came to regret: he was unimpressed by the edition’s composition of images and text; and the strangeness of the plates excited caricature, depicting Delacroix as the ‘coryphée’ of ‘l’école du laid’. In fact, most French critics preferred Retzsch’s and Cornelius’s Faust illustrations, perceiving in

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108 Ibid., p. 514.
them ‘plus de goût’ than in Delacroix’s lithographs.\textsuperscript{111} While Cornelius and Retzsch had emphasised Gretchen, Delacroix brings Mephistopelhes to the fore; the devil even supplants Faust as principal character in his lithographs.\textsuperscript{112} This chimes with Madame de Staël’s proclamation — reinforced throughout her highly divergent, incomplete translation of Goethe’s \textit{Faust} — in \textit{De l’Allemagne} that the devil is the hero of the play.\textsuperscript{113}

The superiority of Mephistopheles over Faust is evident in the fifth plate of Delacroix’s lithographs, which depicts their first meeting. With his \textit{épée}, pointed features, and cynical assurance, Mephistopheles strikes a Don Juanesque pose. He is active and upright, whereas Faust is sedentary and passive.\textsuperscript{114} Not only does he occupy a superior position in the tableau, but he is also the larger of the two: these elements augur in favour of Mephistopheles’ victory over Faust. In this respect Delacroix certainly diverges from Goethe, whose Faust is explicitly saved from the beginning in the ‘Prolog im Himmel’ according to Der Herr’s own pronouncement: ‘so werd’ ich ihn bald in die Klarheit führen’ (MA, vi/1, 543, l. 309). Both Retzsch and Cornelius include this prologue in their depictions and thereby foretell Faust’s salvation.\textsuperscript{115} In this respect they are closer to the Goethean Faustian paradigm than Delacroix whose narrative is more pessimistic.

Mephistopheles’ presence in the centre of the first lithograph leaves little doubt as to his significance or that he will prove a formidable foe: in flight over the earth, he appears to be smiling,\textsuperscript{116} his body is drawn in a series of serpentine curves, connoting guile and slyness.

\textsuperscript{111} Doy, p. 22.
\textsuperscript{113} De Staël, \textit{De l’Allemagne}, i, 343.
\textsuperscript{114} Peter Rautmann, \textit{Delacroix}, trans. from the German by Denis-Armand Canal and Lydie Échasserieaud (Paris: Citadelles & Mazenod, 1997), pp. 54-55.
\textsuperscript{115} Rautmann, p. 54.
An enemy of progress, he looks backwards. His right hand, pointing earthwards, seems poised for capture: it is open and his sharp claws are aimed at the earth, indicating his desire to harm man. He is monstrous and traditionally diabolic. Delacroix’s iconography encompasses the etymology of both Satan and Lucifer; in his aggressive posture Mephistopheles is an adversary, in his accompanying the sun’s course, a light-carrier.

**Delacroix’s Faust Lithographs and The Devil and Doctor Faustus**

During a sojourn in London in 1825 Delacroix saw a stage adaptation of Goethe’s *Faust*; there was only one *Faust* production showing in the London theatres that coincided with his visit: a ‘mélodrame romantique’ by George Soane and Daniel Terry entitled *The Devil and Dr Faustus*. Delacroix describes it as ‘la plus diabolique qu’on puisse imaginer’ and Mephistopheles as ‘un chef-d’œuvre de caractère et d’intelligence’. He also notes its interplay of humour and darkness, a characteristic of his lithographs: ‘ils en ont fait un opéra mêlé de comique et de tout ce qu’il y a de plus noir.’

*The Devil and Doctor Faustus* made great use of visual effects: a diorama ‘projected moving images’ around the theatre, adding further dynamism to a mise-en-scene that was characterised by ‘grand spectacle’ and oriented towards wide appeal. The highly visual nature of the play and its melodramatic, popular qualities are explicit in its prologue:

The author this evening has ventured once more
Superstition’s wild reign on the stage to restore;
[...]  
‘Tis a holiday season, so he timidly stops  
At the drama’s high claims and to opera drops  
Machinery, scenery, music and song,  
And all that to melodrame muses belong,  
He culls to contribute their dazzling aid

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117 Doy, p. 18.
118 Delacroix, *Correspondance Générale*, I, 160; cited in Doy, p. 18. For Delacroix’s retrospective on *The Devil and Doctor Faustus* at Drury Lane in 1825, see Delacroix, *Journal*, I, 917-18.
119 Doy, p. 18.
And by charming your senses, your judgements evade

The eyes we’ll appeal to, if not to the mind
To open the first, with the latter be blind
Our play, just for what it pretends to — Receive
A wild sport of Romance graver thoughts to relieve
But all critical rigour, relax or restrain
And let reason for once give to fancy the rein. ¹²⁰

Reason and emotion are dichotomised in this prologue; the unsophisticated Devil and Doctor Faustus differs greatly from Goethe’s profoundly allegorical text. The prologue’s self-deprecating modesty may be faux, being in part commercial rhetoric; there is a similar note of disingenuousness in Nerval’s ‘Observations sur le premier Faust’. Though widely described by contemporaries as an unassuming and kindly man,¹²¹ his protestations of inadequacy in comparison with his predecessors, Stapfer and Sainte-Aulaire (Nerval, i, 243), are arguably only partly explainable by his natural modesty. Rather, as we shall see, he displays a greater awareness of the business of theatre than is generally acknowledged, probably on account of an exclusive perception of him as an unworldly Romantic poet.

THE MUSICAL ARTS

Introduction

The earliest musical adaptations of the Fauststoff were German: in 1797 Ignaz Walter set the legend to music but his interpretation had little in common with Goethe’s Faust; the first Faust opera was a collaboration between composer Ludwig Spohr and librettist Josef Karl Bernhard in 1813 (first performed in 1816). As far as French musical treatments of the myth are concerned, two celebrated operas predominate: La Damnation de Faust (1846) by Hector

¹²⁰ Cited in Doy, p. 18.
¹²¹ See, for example, Gautier, Histoire du romantisme (2011), p. 112, in which Nerval is described as ‘le bon Gérard’ and reference made to his frequently altruistic behaviour: ‘il semblait vraiment qu’on obligeât Gérard en lui demandant service, il vous remercierait presque d’avoir songé à lui.’
Berlioz and Charles Gounod’s *Faust* (libretto by Michel Carré and Jules Barbier) of 1859.\(^{122}\)

**Hector Berlioz’s *La Damnation de Faust***

Hector Berlioz’s *La Damnation de Faust* (1846), though of later date than Nerval’s earliest translations of Goethe’s *Faust*, is of paramount importance in the history of *Faust* in France. In the context of this study it is the most important musical adaptation of *Faust*; Nerval’s translation of 1828 was essential to the development of *La Damnation de Faust*:

Je dois encore signaler comme un des incidents remarquables de ma vie, l’impression étrange et profonde que je reçus en lisant pour la première fois le *Faust* de Goethe traduit en français par Gérard de Nerval. Le merveilleux livre me fascina de prime abord; je ne le quittai plus; je le lisais sans cesse, à table, au théâtre, dans les rues, partout.\(^{123}\)

Nerval’s translation was firmly established in Berlioz’s consciousness when he began to consider composing a Faust symphony. Moreover, he had provocative intentions, as his letter to Humbert Ferrand of 2 February 1829 reveals: ‘J’ai dans la tête, depuis longtemps, une symphonie descriptive de Faust qui fermente; quand je lui donnerai la liberté, je veux qu’elle épouvante le monde musical.’\(^{124}\) His passionate interpretation of *Faust* did not, however, meet with Goethe’s approval; the young composer had sent the score and libretto for his *Huit scènes de Faust* (the libretto used eight of Nerval’s verse translations of 1828: ‘Chant de la fête de Pâques’; ‘Paysans sous les tilleuls’; ‘Concert des sylphes’; ‘Histoire d’un rat’; ‘Histoire d’une puce’; ‘Le roi de Thulé’; ‘Romance de Marguerite’; and ‘Sérénade de Méphistophélès’) to the poet.\(^{125}\) Moved by the young Berlioz’s letter of 10 April 1829, Goethe sought the opinion of Friedrich Zelter, director of music in Berlin, on the Frenchman just over two weeks later on 28 April 1829: ‘Ein Franzose hat acht Stellen meines Faust componirt und mir die sehr schön gestochene Partitur zugeschickt; ich möchte dir sie wohl

\(^{122}\) See Marquart, pp. 301-05.


\(^{125}\) Segond, ‘*Du Faust de Goethe au Faust de Berlioz*’, p. 16.
senden, um ein freundliches Wort darüber zu hören’ (WA IV, 45, p. 259). Zelter, no admirer of Romantic developments in music, was unequivocal:

Gewisse Leute können ihre Geistesgegenwart und ihren Anteil nur durch lautes Husten, Schnauben, Krichen und Ausspeien zu verstehen geben; von diesen einer scheint Herr Hector Berlioz zu sein. Der Schwefelgeruch des Mephisto zieht ihn an, nun muß er nießen und prusten, daß sich alle Instrumente im Orchester regen und spuken — nur am Faust rührt sich kein Haar.126

Consequently Berlioz received no reply from Goethe, for which the composer never forgave him, though his high regard for Faust remained undiminished.

Pertinently, in his letter to Goethe Berlioz had expressed awareness of the distorting effects of translation: ‘je ne puisse le [Faust] voir qu’à travers les brouillards de la traduction.’127 In fact the prevalent French understating of the Faust character was taken to the extreme in Huit Scènes; he plays no part in it.128 It is noteworthy that of Berlioz’s Huit scènes half (‘Auerbachs Keller’; ‘Histoire d’un rat’; ‘Histoire d’une puce’; and ‘Paysans sous les tilleuls’) involve dancing and drinking. This provides a strongly Bacchic flavour that is also emphasised elsewhere in Nerval’s Faust translations, as will be discussed later.

From Huit scènes de Faust was developed La Damnation de Faust. About one sixth of the libretto was Nerval’s translation, the rest Berlioz’s own creation.129 Nerval’s and other French influences are strong throughout: Berlioz’s is a more pessimistic Faust than Goethe’s; there is again a greater emphasis on Mephistopheles; an increased sense of despair; and a sense that Faust deserves to be damned. The last point is evident in the first substantive of the opera’s title and unequivocally expressed in the following dialogue:

127 Simonne Serret, ‘La Damnation de ... Berlioz-Faust’, in La Damnation de Faust [see Segond above], pp. 25-39 (p. 28).
129 Berlioz, Mémoires, p. 489.
LE PRINCE DES TENEBRES  De cette âme si fière
A jamais es-tu maître
Et vainqueur, Méphisto?

MÉPHISTOPHELES J’en suis maître à jamais.

LE PRINCE DES TENEBRES Faust a donc librement signé?

MÉPHISTOPHELES Il signa librement.130

The second point is demonstrated by Faust’s opening lament in *La Damnation de Faust*. It is of a different character from his equivalent complaint in Goethe’s *Faust*:

FAUST Oh! Je souffre, je souffre! Et la nuit sans étoiles,
Qui vient d’étendre au loin son silence et ses voiles,
Ajoute encore à mes sombres douleurs.
Oh terre! Pour moi seul, tu n’as donc pas de fleurs!
Par le monde, où trouver ce qui manque à ma vie?
Je chercherais en vain, tout fuit mon âpre envie!131

Berlioz’s Faust is more pathetic, self-pitying even, than Goethe’s. As will be demonstrated in reference to Nerval’s fragmentary Faustian dramas, the *Faust* fragment and *Nicolas Flamel*, a similarly mundane, impotent, *cri de cœur* is discernible in his protagonists.

Berlioz’s grievance at Goethe’s treatment notwithstanding, he never requested permission from Nerval for the use in *Huit scènes* of his translations of *Faust*; poet and composer would first meet in December 1829 when Nerval approached Berlioz suggesting collaboration on his recent translations of Schiller’s poetry. Berlioz was not interested in the project but his description of Nerval is revealing:

Le jeune Gérard auteur de la dernière traduction de *Faust*, qui ayant assisté à mon concert vient pour me voir […] peu à peu découvrant ses opinions romantiques avec une fatuité et une assurance qui me paraissaient assez déplacées.132

This description is strikingly incongruent with epithets such as ‘modeste’, bon’, and ‘doux’ that usually precede ‘Gérard’. Significantly, the meeting described by Berlioz took place

130 Hector Berlioz, ‘*La Damnation de Faust*’, in *La Damnation de Faust* [see Segond above], pp. 81-108 (p. 106).
131 Ibid., p. 83.
when Nerval was still a very young man, just twenty-one years old: not long after the time of his first *Faust* translation in fact. His confidence is in keeping with the self-assurance he had displayed in engaging with a literary work as challenging as Goethe’s *Faust* just over a year earlier.

### 1.3 THE WIDER LITERARY CONTEXT

**SHAKESPEARE**

**Shakespeare in France**

French translations of Shakespeare are of such importance to the gradual acceptance and assimilation of foreign culture in France in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that they must inform the study of France’s reception of other foreign texts during this period.\(^\text{133}\) As we know, the socio-historical and cultural conditions in France during the 1820s that galvanised writers and artists, literary translators included, were the waning of neoclassicism, and the waxing of Romanticism.\(^\text{134}\) The works of Shakespeare served as catalysts, releasing and guiding cultural momentum that had been increasing throughout the early 1800s and perhaps earlier; Shakespearean aesthetic paradigms converged with the values of a young French cultural scene impatient for change. From these and other crucial meetings was to develop the French version of Romanticism.

Many great French Romantic writers contributed to Shakespeare’s resurgence in the early part of the nineteenth century, but the most conspicuous were Stendhal and Victor Hugo. In his preface to *Cromwell* (1827) Hugo supported the mingling of genres and opposing aesthetics, leaving no doubt as to his principal maître à penser: ‘Shakespeare, c’est

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le drame; et le drame, qui fond sous un même souffle le grotesque et le sublime’. That Hugo focused on what the neoclassicists considered inappropriate in Shakespeare’s works must have rung of intentional antagonism. Certainly the lines of battle were well and truly drawn: the French Romantics’ confrontation with their neoclassical compatriots during the performance of Hugo’s *Hernani* in 1830, and their ultimate ‘victory’, was in no small part traceable to an English acting troupe’s performances of Shakespeare in Paris in 1827. Attended by many cultural grandees, these performances by English actors, including Charles Kemble and Harriet Smithson, were crucial to the development of Romanticism in France. So strong in fact is the association between writer and movement that the adjectives Shakespearean and Romantic became almost synonymous in France. The English productions of Shakespeare in Paris had, however, been bowdlerised for French audiences, from a perception that certain aspects of *Hamlet* in particular would offend French spectators. Scenes were excised to reduce performance time; sub-plots were omitted; bawdy elements were removed or toned down; and Norway and Fortinbras played no part. And yet the performances still seemed shockingly innovative in conservative early nineteenth-century France.

Much of this conservative French attitude to foreign aesthetics in general, and Shakespeare’s plays in particular, is traceable to Voltaire (1694-1778). Voltaire was able to appreciate elements of Shakespeare’s work but regarded it as a product of an inferior age that therefore inevitably fell short of the ‘eternal truth’ and ‘universality’ of Classical values. However, he was probably being partly disingenuous when he suggested that Shakespeare

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137 Heylen, p. 46.
had little knowledge of the ‘règles’; this is highly improbable: books were available on the subject during his lifetime, much of which was spent in theatres with fellow actors and writers. He had firm ideas regarding dramatic practice in the theatre of his day, but perhaps scant care for ancient prescription. Voltaire’s normative perspective resonated well into the nineteenth century in France and accounts for much of the country’s initial aversion and later ambivalence towards translations of foreign literature without Classical provenance. He promulgated the partial translation of Shakespeare’s plays as a potential means of overcoming French aversion to their ‘baser’ elements. The assumption that this form of bowdlerisation would not only suit French tastes but would meet with a more positive reception from the French public can also be seen in the French translators’, Sainte-Aulaire’s especially, reductive approach to Goethe’s Faust. This dogmatic approach to translation reflects France’s perception of its cultural hegemony: to omit scenes from French translations of Shakespeare’s plays or Goethe’s Faust was to not to debase but to ‘improve’ them, to bring out the ‘lueurs étonnantes au milieu de cette nuit’ as Voltaire described the aspects of Shakespeare’s and other English dramatists’ work he admired in the ‘Dix-huitième’ of his Lettres philosophiques (1734) which is ‘Sur la tragédie’. If the required ‘improvements’ were not made a translation would be likely to meet with disapproval from the French public and not sell well. In early nineteenth-century France the powerful haunting of translational methodology by an earlier prescriptiveness, combined with the burgeoning of Romantic aesthetics, created tensions for translators such as Stapfer, Sainte-Aulaire, and Nerval.

140 Ibid., p. 77.
142 Lettres philosophiques, p. 127.
Voltaire’s French translation in ‘Sur la tragédie’ of Hamlet’s most famous monologue has often been cited as an example of the belle infidèle style of translation, as promulgated by François de Malherbe (1555-1628) and other French translation theorists from the early seventeenth century, in which ‘translations were expected to conform to the literary canons of the day […] [and] to provide target texts which are pleasant to read’.\textsuperscript{143} Voltaire’s transformation of Shakespeare’s iambs into alexandrines represents the contemporary ideal of formal ‘bon goût’ in poetry. And it is not only the prosody that communicates a sense of the period; this is a Hamlet for the age of Enlightenment, a prince of Denmark who rages at religious superstition and unjust power relations:\textsuperscript{144} the former is evident in his translating Shakespeare’s ‘the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune’ as ‘Dieux cruels! s’il en est’, the latter in the bringing of the vaguer societal criticism in ‘Th’oppressor’s wrong, the proud man’s contumely, | The pangs of despised love, the law’s delay, | The insolence of office’ into sharper focus (Hamlet, III. 1. 57, 70): ‘Eh! Qui pourrait sans toi supporter cette vie, | De nos prêtres menteurs bénir l’hypocrisie, | D’une indignes maîtresse encenser les erreurs, | Ramper sous un ministre, adorer ses hauteurs.’\textsuperscript{145} This change of emphasis is consistent with Voltaire’s favouring imitation over fidelity in a translation: ‘malheur aux faiseurs de traductions littérales, qui en traduisant chaque parole énervent le sens! C’est bien là qu’on peut dire que la lettre tue, et l’esprit vivifie.’\textsuperscript{146} As Frédéric Deloffre notes, in addition to the rhetorical shift to a less metaphysical, more temporal, interpretation of the soliloquy, Voltaire neglects a further crucial aspect of

\textsuperscript{144} Lechevalier, p. 905.
\textsuperscript{145} Lettres philosophiques, p. 126.
\textsuperscript{146} Ibid., pp. 126-27.
Hamlet’s *cri de cœur*: ‘l’idée des rêves’; without this oneiric aspect of the soliloquy his interpretation is simplified and denuded of the original’s mystical, supernatural connotations. This had been in part Voltaire’s aim: a reining in of Shakespeare’s ‘excesses’ rather than an attempt at fidelity and parity.

In their struggle against Voltaire’s and other neoclassical critics’ narrow interpretations of Aristotelian dramatic aesthetics the French Romantics of the 1820s ‘recruited’ the English playwright. Although a new-found French admiration for Shakespeare undoubtedly originated in part from such influential supporters as Stendhal and Hugo and their respective works *Racine et Shakespeare* (1823) and the Preface to *Cromwell* (1827), the significance of certain seminal texts and events of the 1820s and 1830s has perhaps overshadowed an equally valid but less exciting narrative; while these decades did indeed witness a shift in aesthetic allegiance among many writers, artists and musicians, it would be specious to conceive of a quick overturning of values that had held sway in France for generations; rather, more gradual and inconsistent changes are to be envisaged.

It was arguably only with the publication between 1858 and 1865 of François-Victor Hugo’s (Victor Hugo’s son) French translations of Shakespeare’s complete works that neoclassical influence was finally and comprehensively removed from French translations of the English playwright’s work. French translations of Shakespeare’s plays from the first half of the nineteenth century were often pioneering, avant-garde even, but in retrospect the aesthetic values of an earlier age had not been entirely cast off. François-Victor Hugo’s

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147 Ibid., p. 251.
150 Ibid.
great achievement notwithstanding, there is no definitive French translation of Shakespeare.\textsuperscript{151} National pride and neoclassical aesthetics were intertwined with France’s cultural self-esteem; rather than truly engaging with Shakespeare’s work, most French translators sought, to varying degrees, to Gallicize it. The advent of the Romantic period witnessed an increase in the quantity and perhaps also the quality of French Shakespeare translations, \textsuperscript{152} but many were still haunted by the values of an earlier age. French sensitivities regarding national pride and its entanglement with cultural primacy are never far below the surface when considering intercultural relations during Romanticism’s long and difficult inception in France.

Shakespeare in Germany

In many respects the German reception of Shakespeare was almost diametrically opposed to his reception in France. Once again, the very different cultural and aesthetic traditions and conventions of the two countries account for much of this; consequently, Germany’s reception of Shakespeare up to the mid-nineteenth century sheds light on important cultural differences between the two countries that are relevant to French translations of Faust during the same period. In contrast with France, Germany had had no literary golden age prior to Weimar Classicism. Though Goethe and Schiller provided a degree of cultural identity, national identity was lacking.\textsuperscript{153} In a further contrast with France, certain of Shakespeare’s plays had been performed in Germany during or close to his lifetime: in 1604 an adapted version of Romeo and Juliet was played in Nordlingen, and Titus Andronicus and Hamlet are

\textsuperscript{151} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{153} Roger Paulin, The Critical Reception of Shakespeare in German 1682-1914: Native Literature and Foreign Genius (Hildesheim: Olms, 2003), pp. 4-5.
known to have been performed by 1620. In fact the violent, blood-soaked Titus Andronicus met with particular enthusiasm in Germany. In his celebrated essay of 1773 on Shakespeare Johann Gottfried Herder acknowledged his greatness but considered his plays un-performable without modification. He proposed that altered versions be adopted for stage performance. The Sturm und Drang movement and new ideas with regard to the performance of Shakespeare on the German stage were on the horizon. Nonetheless, Herder’s is a conciliatory approach to the tensions between neoclassical and non-classical aesthetics. He emphasises that drama developed differently in the northern European countries and in Greece and that it would therefore be ill-advised to attempt to model German drama on its Greek predecessor. Herder provides a highly convincing and logical counter-argument to the French champions of neoclassical dramaturgy: ‘das künstliche ihrer [of the Greeks’] Regeln war — keine Kunst! War Natur!’ His promotion of autochthonous literary models as the most appropriate for the development of a national literature is not at odds with his selection of Shakespeare as literary model to be emulated: the English writer was Nordic and therefore suitable, according to his argument. However, the sources of German theatre should be the country’s ‘Sitten, Meinungen, Sprache, Nationalvorurtheilen, Traditionen, und Liebhabereien, wenn auch aus Fastnachts- und Marionettenspiel’. It is striking that puppet shows are cited as a potential source for national drama, their having played a significant role in the development of the Faust myth in Germany. France could invoke no such tradition.

155 Ibid., pp. 176-77.
156 Ibid.
158 Ibid., p.68.
159 Ibid., p. 75.
German Translations of Shakespeare

Many German translations of Shakespeare were undertaken in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Christoph Martin Wieland (1733-1813), Johann Joachim Eschenburg (1743-1820), Friedrich Ludwig Schröder (1744-1816), Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805), and August Wilhelm Schlegel (1767-1845) with others, endeavoured to remain true to the original English plays. The most celebrated German translations of Shakespeare, published between 1797 and 1833, were collaborations of August Wilhelm Schlegel, Tieck’s daughter Dorothea (1799-1841), and Wolf, Graf Baudissin (1789-1878), with Ludwig Tieck (1773-1853) providing editorial supervision. These interpretations of Shakespeare’s plays have achieved ‘canonical status in the German-speaking world’. They not only partly broke with contemporaneously predominant neoclassical aesthetic values, but also saw a German translation privileged internationally over French translations of Shakespeare. Nonetheless, they display some surprising characteristics: though perhaps originating from a Romantic outlook, their style is in ‘general harmony with the diction of “Classical” serious drama of the entire Goethe era and certainly doesnot lend itself to being essentially distinguished from the style of Weimar Classicism’.

The Schlegel-Tieck translations were not without competition on home territory, particularly from Eschenburg’s and Wieland’s prose translations. The latter were revised and republished between 1798 and 1806. Some commentators — Heine among them — preferred

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162 Ibid.
these earlier prose versions: ‘eine Übersetzung in Prosa, welche die prunklose, naturähnliche Keuschheit gewisser Stellen leichter reproduziert, verdient [...] gewiss den Vorzug vor der metrischen.’\textsuperscript{164} The vexed issue of prose and verse translation was once again at the forefront of intercultural debate. It is worth noting that Schlegel and Tieck, translators strongly associated with Romanticism, chose metrical rather than prose translations.

Schlegel’s critical writings on Shakespeare are a cornerstone of his Romantic aesthetic theory. He proposed that form was as important as content when translating a foreign work: ‘Ich wage zu behaupten [...] dass eine solche Übersetzung [a verse translation] in gewissem Sinne noch treuer als die treueste prosaische sein könnte.’\textsuperscript{165} Nerval admired what he considered the clarity and straightforwardness of A. W. Schlegel’s approach to aesthetics, but while reviewing a revival of \textit{Polyeucte} at the Théâtre-Français in \textit{La Presse}, 18 May 1840, he refers to what he perceives as Schlegel’s views on tensions between neoclassical and Romantic dramatic aesthetics:

Schlegel, en reconnaissant la valeur absolue des deux systèmes littéraires, se gardait avec soin de cette sorte d’éclecticisme qui tend à leur fusion. […] Vous voulez faire une tragédie, étudiez les Grecs; un drame, étudiez les grands auteurs du seizième siècle: tel était son système. (Nerval, i, 538)

Though confirming Nerval’s equitable disposition towards aesthetics, his implicit recommendation of delineating literary models is surprising; the ‘fusion’ of ‘éclectic’ and sometimes even seemingly incongruent material is a characteristic both of his original work and translations.

\textsuperscript{165} Cited in Habicht, p. 46.
The Importance of Shakespearean Aesthetics to the Goethean Faustian Paradigm

In *Faust* Goethe is arguably further from the neoclassical unities than Shakespeare ever was: forty-five scenes, often highly disparate, extraordinary spatial and temporal shifts, myriad verse forms, and the mingling of comedy and tragedy are among the work’s signally non-neoclassical characteristics. Yet, as Stephen Fennell proposes, ‘Goethe may well have been placing his trust in the same exuberance which had brought some of Shakespeare’s greatest triumphs’. Similarly, *Gotz von Berlichingen* (1773), a work strongly influenced by Shakespearean drama, represents an early example of Goethe’s favouring Shakespearean aesthetics as mediated by Herder. However, Goethe vacillated on the merits of neoclassical and ‘Romantic’ aesthetics. Broadly, he favoured the former in his later years, the latter as a young man. But the term ‘Romanticism’ is controversial here: although the French generally consider Goethe a Romantic writer, the Germans, distinguishing the *Sturm und Drang* movement from German Romanticism proper, certainly do not. Despite Goethe’s later avowed allegiance to neoclassical aesthetics, *Faust* is in many senses a most Romantic play; in its utter disregard for neoclassical dramaturgical rules the descriptor Romantic may seem as appropriate as the traditional *Sturm und Drang*. And yet the German distinction between the two cultural movements is of course theoretically useful, historically accurate, and appropriately nuanced. The persistent French view of Goethe as a Romantic writer is, nevertheless, understandable, certainly with reference to *Faust*.

Goethe’s enthusiasm for Shakespeare was of long duration: in his ‘Rede zum

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168 Gross, p. 636.
Shakespear Tag’ of 1771, he likens his first reading of Shakespeare to a blind man miraculously being given sight; it took time to adjust to the power of the light and he suffered eye pain on this account (WA I, 37, 130). Suggestive of the Road to Damascus, his metaphor of temporary blindness is apt as it demonstrates both the degree of influence that Shakespeare exerted on him and the discomfort of the new. From his earliest encounters with the English writer’s works Goethe was convinced of the superiority of Shakespearean poetics: ‘Ich zweifelte keinen Augenblick dem regelmässigen Theater zu entsagen. Es schien mir die Einheit des Orts so kerckermäsig ängstlich, die Einheiten der Handlung und der Zeit lästige Fesseln unsrer Einbildungskraft’ (WA I, 37, p. 131). Though powerfully persuasive, the ‘Rede zum Shakespear Tag’ dates from early in Goethe’s writing career when he was under Herder’s influence. Their ideas on Shakespeare were crucial to the incipient Sturm und Drang movement, but Goethe’s views on literary aesthetics underwent considerable change, indeed almost a volte-face, with regard to Classical dramaturgical dogma. It was this younger, more ‘Shakespearean’ and ‘Romantic’ Goethe that Nerval admired, certainly in his earliest translation of Faust I.

Goethe’s ‘Rede zum Shakespear Tag’ included recognisably Faustian elements, or rather elements of Goethe’s idiosyncratic interpretation of the myth:

Das was edle Philosophen von der Welt gesagt haben, gilt auch von Shakespearen, das was wir bös nennen, ist nur die andre Seite vom Guten, die so nothwendig zu seiner Existenz, und in das Ganze gehört, als Zona torrida brennen, und Lapland einfrieren muss, dass es einen gemäsigten Himmelsstrich gebe. Er führt uns durch die ganze Welt. (WA I, 37, 135)

Shakespeare, Goethe claims, demonstrates that evil is essential to good, that they are two aspects of a whole. Similarly, Mephistopheles’ ‘evil’ is ultimately transformative and ‘good’ as the devil’s self-description as ‘Ein Theil von jener Kraft, | Die stets das Böse will und stets das Gute schafft’ famously reveals (MA, v/1, 571, 1335). The omission or reduction of this
and other complementarities is pervasive in the French translations of Faust; that Goethe’s idiosyncratic and complex ideology is not thoroughly communicated gives readers familiar with the German original the impression that only part of the source text has been communicated. The neglect of the original’s equivocality in many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century French translations of Shakespeare’s plays imparts a similar disappointment.

The two great writers’ masterworks were particularly problematic; there are numerous parallels between Faust and Hamlet, as Fennel points out: ‘both men were responsible for the death of their sweetheart’s sibling and sole remaining parent, but were themselves the victims of social scandal and needed to overthrow various strictures threatening their existence’.\(^\text{170}\) Despite the difficulties they posed, it is unsurprising that Hamlet and Faust should achieve widespread popularity during the early Romantic period in France: their personification of struggle with powerful and tyrannical forces reflects that cultural movement’s battle with the established, hitherto hegemonic force of neoclassicism.

**Beyond the Polarisation of Racine and Shakespeare? Nerval’s Impartiality**

Nerval was, in general, an impartial critic, as his following reflection on ‘L’Avenir de la tragédie’ in *La Charte de 1830* (27 March 1837) reveals: ‘Shakespeare est-il plus vrai qu’Eschyle? Rubens est-il plus vrai que Raphaël’ (Nerval, i, 354)? Authors and artists should be judged on their individual merits and not according to critical categorisation comes the reply (Ibid.). For Nerval certain authors are incontestably great: Shakespeare is among them; the manner in which he wrote bears some resemblance to an aesthetic that would later be called Romantic. In his admiration for Shakespeare’s mastery of contrasting aesthetics and traditions Nerval reveals, if not quite a Shakespearean influence, perhaps a Shakespearean

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\(^{170}\) Fennell, p. 86.
aspiration. Hugo, Shakespeare proselytiser and French Romantic trailblazer, had of course also championed a similar meeting of ‘opposing’ aesthetics in his preface to *Cromwell*.

In the introduction to his *Poésies allemandes* (1830) Nerval certainly describes Shakespeare more positively than in his partisan juvenilia, lauding the English writer’s ability to reconcile dark, supernatural content and beautiful form (Nerval, i, 269) — an instructive combination for a translator of a poem about a magician and the devil. He no longer condones the polarisation of Racine and Shakespeare. Alongside the prefatory comments on his *Faust* translations, Nerval’s introductions to *Poésies allemandes* and *Choix des poésies de Ronsard* contain his richest material on foreign aesthetics. In the former he calls for a renewal of French theatre based on an ‘Anglo-Saxon’ model that includes ‘prodigieux effets shakespeariens’ (Nerval, i, 269).171 In the latter, Herder’s concerns with the reinvigoration of a stale cultural scene are evoked, but with a crucial difference: it was the German’s conviction that a national project of cultural revitalisation should draw inspiration and sustenance from autochthonous cultural history. Though one might contest the conflation of German and English culture in the description Anglo-Saxon, there is undoubtedly more affinity between the two than between French and English culture, or French and German culture. This is not necessarily disadvantageous, according to Nerval, for the chief appeal in foreign writers such as Shakespeare, Dante, Byron, Scott and Goethe would seem to have been that, despite their dissimilarities, they looked to non-Classical sources of inspiration (Nerval, i, 283).172

And yet Nerval takes a pragmatic approach to the survival of neoclassical aesthetics in French Shakespeare translations, as long they do not impede the introduction of newer

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172 Clark-Wehinger, pp.28-29.
cultural values into France. In *La Presse* (30 September 1850) he even praises Ducis’s translations: these conservative interpretations of Shakespeare’s work might begin to open neoclassically inclined French readers and audiences to more innovative possibilities (Nerval, II, 1202). Nerval demonstrates a surprising adherence to translations that accommodate the audience or reader rather than those that seek fidelity to the original work. An incremental gaining of cultural ground is to be favoured over the loss of the aesthetic arguments through a dogmatic determination to overturn deeply embedded cultural practice and traditions too quickly. Although this patient approach is at odds with the couching of cultural shifts in metaphors of battle and violence, it is in keeping with the methodology of the shrewd campaigner that is discernible in the French translations of *Faust*; here Nerval reveals himself to be a keen strategist as well as an able tactician, identifying the French public’s dramatic tastes and engaging imaginatively with the disparate linguistic challenges brought by Goethe’s German text.

Nonetheless, he was aware that such challenges varied in severity according to both essential and conventional characteristics of the receiving culture. For instance, in an article in *La Presse* (June, 1849), contrasting the reception of *Hamlet* in France and Germany, Nerval makes a broader point regarding translation between Germanic and Romance languages. That *Hamlet* instigated a revolution in German theatre he attributes to a closer cultural affinity between England and Germany, a relationship he contrasts with England’s to France (Nerval, I, 1264). Yet as Alice Clark-Wehinger points out, in the introduction to his *Poésies allemandes* Nerval cites Schiller and Shakespeare as poets ‘à suivre pour insuffler à la littérature française son ancien caractère énergique et naïf’. The descriptor ‘naïf’ is notable here; it evokes Schiller’s distinction in ‘Über Naïve und Sentimentalische Dichtung’.

between two kinds of poet: ‘der Dichter [...] ist entweder Natur, oder er wird sie suchen. Jenes macht den naiven, diesenes den sentimentalischen Dichter.’\textsuperscript{174} Essentially, the ‘naïve’ poets display instinctiveness and a degree of insensibility to the ways in which society affects their creative endeavours, while the ‘sentimental’ poets have a greater awareness of the cultural influences that shape their work. Moreover, the ‘sentimentalischen Dichter der Franzosen und auch der Deutschen, von den Jahren 1750 bis etwa 1780’ contrast with Shakespeare,\textsuperscript{175} an unambiguously ‘naïve’ poet according to Schiller’s estimation. So much so that even this pioneer of the \textit{Sturm und Drang} movement was at first repelled by his having the ‘Unempfindlichkeit [...] im höchsten Pathos zu scherzen’.\textsuperscript{176} The young Schiller’s initially negative reaction to Shakespeare was in fact not dissimilar to the objections levelled by French neoclassical critics. His opinion would change dramatically.

In the following extract from ‘Les Acteurs anglais: \textit{Hamlet}’ (published in \textit{L’Artiste}, 22 décembre 1844) Nerval spells out his particular interest in two of Shakespeare’s greatest tragedies: ‘\textit{Othello}, c’est la passion de tout le monde élevée à la plus haute puissance; \textit{Hamlet}, c’est l’éternelle et rêveuse souffrance des esprits mécontents de la vie’ (Nerval, \textsc{i}, 890). It is their vitality and dynamism even within their depiction of humanity’s suffering and sorrow that intrigues and beguiles. This galvanising aspect of Shakespeare’s writing contrasts with the more staid interpretations of life’s vicissitudes in French neoclassical drama; furthermore, Goethe’s \textit{Faust I}, in common with many of Shakespeare’s plays, also has a powerful narrative dynamism that is closely related to, and perhaps inseparable from, Faust’s ambitious striving.

\textsuperscript{175} Ibid., p. 713.
\textsuperscript{176} Ibid.
In his ‘Les Acteurs anglais: Othello’ published in *L’Artiste* in the same year, Nerval confirms that Shakespeare was popular with French audiences ‘dans les dernières années de la Restauration’, but questions spectators’ understanding of the plays’ English (Nerval, I, 885). The interest in foreign literature among French theatregoers was often superficial; for many it would seem to have been simply fashionable. But the fact that Shakespeare’s plays were being performed at all was significant and ‘une critique intelligente, et novatrice provoquait et encourageait les œuvres poétiques fondées sur l’imitation des littératures étrangères; on nous rappelait tout ce que Corneille avait dû lui-même aux Espagnols ou Molière aux Italiens’ (Nerval, I, 886). Nerval acknowledges the role of foreign literature in the rise of ‘new’ literary aesthetics in France, but is unpredictable in his pronouncements on Shakespeare in France, particularly the more popular developments.177 He is unsympathetic to this concept in ‘Théâtre italien: Les acteurs anglais’ (published in *La France musicale*, 22 December 1844), expressing concern that ‘L’Angleterre abandonnait peu à peu le culte de son vieux poète [Shakespeare]’ for ‘le goût de nos scènes inférieures’ (Nerval, I, 889). He is clearly no admirer of melodrama or the popular theatres’ offerings which he describes as ‘les sottises de nos boulevards’ (Ibid.). He was a vigilant and consistent critic of Shakespearean adaptations at these theatres, displaying an awareness of the vulnerability of the new French dramatic aesthetic to the burgeoning of popular theatre and condemning the potential diminution of the English playwright’s works. In short, he displays an awareness of the importance of foreign culture in early to mid-nineteenth-century France and the need to ensure it was not pale imitation, reduced complexity, and lowest common denominators that characterised his country’s assimilation of canonical foreign works. Although he engaged

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177 José Lambert, ‘Shakespeare en France au tournant du XVIIIe siècle’, in *European Shakespeares* (see Habicht, above), pp. 25-44 (p. 37).
with *Faust* at a time of its increasing popularity across genres and media in France, one might conclude from his appraisal of the *boulevard théâtres* that he had no ambition for his translation to popularise *Faust*: his was a literary *Faust* that was to follow Goethe’s elevated example. But this would not be a complete estimation of his aspirations, as will be discussed throughout this thesis.

Even in his critical writing on Shakespeare Nerval frequently refers to Goethe; his avowal that Goethe’s *Faust* is a ‘manie chez moi’ is certainly attested in several such texts,

for instance, in an eccentric review in *L’Artiste-Revue de Paris* (27 September 1846) of Dumas’ and Meurice’s *Hamlet* in which he provides very little information on the play — preferring instead to address the history of Saint-Germain, the location of the performance — before adding ‘il faut relire les admirables chapitres consacrés à *Hamlet* dans *Wilhelm Meister*. Ce que Goethe a rêvé, Alexandre Dumas le réalise’ (Nerval, i, 1068). Nerval displays similarly Goethean interests in a further review of Dumas’ and Meurice’s *Hamlet* at the Théâtre Historique in the same publication on 19 December 1847: ‘la représentation de l’*Hamlet* de Shakespeare traduit par MM. Alex. Dumas et Meurice a été le grand fait littéraire de la semaine’ (Nerval, i, 1264). However, he then turns his attention away from Dumas’ and Meurice’s efforts, reminding the reader again that ‘il est dans *Wilhelm Meister* qu’il faut lire ses [Goethe’s] idées sur la mise en scène d’*Hamlet*’ (Nerval, i, 1264). It is notable that Nerval’s passion for German literature is discernible in his articles on Shakespeare; he twice chooses to refer to Goethe when reviewing a French adaptation of an English play.

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178 This admission of an obsession with *Faust* is expressed by Nerval in a letter to Jules Janin (27 December 1851) and is in reference to his Faustian play *L’Imagier de Harlem* (Nerval, ii, 1296).
Conclusion

The works of Shakespeare exerted an unrivalled influence on the development of Romanticism in France. Interest in the English playwright reached its zenith in the first half of the nineteenth century; engagement with his plays represents a useful measure of the cultural climate in France during this period. While it is broadly true that there was a ‘progression’ from what may be termed neoclassical to Romantic French translations of Shakespeare, there were exceptions to this trend: some French translators and critics of Shakespeare demonstrate a dissatisfaction with the rigidities of neoclassical dramaturgy and poetics long before the advent of Romanticism in their country; others adhere to neoclassical prescriptiveness well past Romanticism’s inception. This parallels French translators’ treatment of Goethe’s *Faust*: many of Stapfer’s, Sainte-Aulaire’s, and Nerval’s divergences from the Goethean Faustian paradigm mirror the departures of French Shakespeare translations from their source: the toning down of bawdy and violent scenes, the simplification of the source text’s philosophy or ideology, a tendency to idealise female characters, an attachment to and augmentation of certain metaphors, and an increased emphasis on spectacle are common to both. Commercial considerations and constraints played no small part in French translators’ engagement with Shakespeare’s plays and Goethe’s *Faust*; the demands of the theatre business greatly restricted both: the distinct demands of the prestigious and the *boulevard* theatres, such as the need for verse or prose, the extent to which humour could be included in a translation, and the expectation that the unities be respected, all had to be taken into account by a French translator of Goethe’s *Faust* or a Shakespeare play. This level of differentiation was simply not required of English and German writers.

Alongside the influence of Nerval’s avowed obsession with Goethe’s *Faust* and his
wider interest in German culture, his translations of *Faust* are identifiably of a specific time and location. One might be tempted to describe them as French Romantic translations if it were not for the heterogeneity of the description. The presence of neoclassical, or non-Romantic, elements in a French translation produced during this culturally turbulent time does not necessarily exclude its categorisation as Romantic. Furthermore, through the study of French translations of Shakespeare one gains greater insight into the nature of Goethe’s influence on Nerval; it is predominantly the ‘Shakespearean’ Goethe, the *Sturm und Drang* Goethe still in accord with Herder on the vital importance that the rejuvenation of German culture be home-grown, and the Goethe who praised Shakespeare before the Weimar court on Shakespeare Day, that attracted the French poet. But Goethe was mercurial and his aesthetic allegiances shifted remarkably throughout his long life. Nerval was undoubtedly aware of this, but it would seem that his ‘manie’ related to a fairly narrow interpretation of Goethe and his work, an interpretation not too distant in fact from the general tendency of French literary critics to categorise Goethe as a Romantic writer.
DANTE

Introduction

Dante takes on an almost synecdochic significance for the ascent of foreign literature in France during the early nineteenth century: ‘le grand poète italien est, dans les préoccupations romantiques, le voisin et l’allié de tous les étrangers.’ For Stendhal Dante is ‘le poète romantique par excellence’; though ‘il adorait Virgile, […] il a fait La Divine Comédie, et l’épisode d’Ugolin, la chose au monde qui ressemble le moins à L’Enéide; c’est qu’il comprit que de son temps on avait peur de l’enfer.’ Stendhal emphasises that five centuries had elapsed between the publication of Dante’s masterpiece and the French Romantics’ engagement with it. Values had shifted significantly; while certain aspects of Dante’s work were attractive, others were anathema to nineteenth-century sensibilities. While Catholic orthodoxy prevailed in Dante’s time, a certain degree of syncretism and unorthodoxy characterised the French Romantics’ religious and spiritual beliefs. Furthermore, to highly prescriptive French neoclassical critics such as Chapelain, Colletet, Rapin and Ménage, Dante was a model of what should be avoided (Pitwood, p. 29).

It had not always been so: prior to the neoclassical period in France there had been at least modish interest in Italy and its culture; Dante’s works benefited from this but the focus was almost exclusively on Francesca da Rimini from ‘Inferno’. Following the decline in Dante’s popularity in the seventeenth century, a gradual resurgence of his fortunes occurred in the eighteenth century, culminating in the early nineteenth century when his reputation was at its height. This new passion for Dante coincided with an increasing attraction to ‘melodramatic’ and ‘sombre’ aesthetics — values that were also vitally important to the

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181 Stendhal, p. 41.
increasingly favourable, if limited perception of Goethe and other foreign writers in France during the same period.182

French Translations of Dante

Charles Nodier’s *petit cénacle* included Antony Deschamps (1800-1869), translator of the *Divina Commedia* (1829). Two significant figures in the assimilation of foreign literature into French culture, Nerval’s and Deschamps’ paths crossed on a number of occasions;183 it seems unlikely that they would not have discussed their similar literary interests. Many French translations and adaptations of the *Divina Commedia* coincide with those of *Faust* in the 1820s; critics made very similar objections to those levelled at Goethe’s *Faust*: the strangeness; the incongruous elements; the vulgar language and the distasteful subject matter (Pitwood, p. 41). Somewhat paradoxically, it had been Antoine de Rivarol (1753-1801), the ‘héraut de la “clarté française”’, who made arguably the greatest impact on eighteenth-century perceptions of Dante in France; it was his translation of ‘l’Enfer’ (1785) that impressed Chateaubriand and Hugo.184 For the purposes of this study, however, Deschamps is the most significant translator of the *Divina Commedia*. His translation of 1829 was responsible for an increased interest in Dante around the time of Nerval’s first *Faust* translation; not only was it poetically accomplished, capturing to some extent the style and character of the *Divina Commedia*, but it was complete, giving the French public access to all three divisions of the work for the first time (Pitwood, p. 97).185

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182 Counson, p. 3.
183 Unfortunately not always under the happiest of circumstances, for they perhaps shared a residence at Dr Blanche’s Parisian asylum during 1841. See *Dictionnaire Nerval*, p. 141.
184 Ibid.
Dante and the Visual Arts in the Early Nineteenth Century

As noted above, the visual and the literary arts had an almost symbiotic relationship in early Romantic France; those episodes of the *Divina Commedia* that had beguiled writers were equally attractive to visual artists throughout the first half of the nineteenth century. This passion for Dante recognised no boundaries of ‘artistic school’ or movement. Delacroix’s painting *Dante et Virgile aux Enfers* was a significant factor in the interest shown in Dante in the 1820s, eclipsing Ary Scheffer’s treatment of Francesca and Paolo at the Paris salon of 1822. Delacroix chose a relatively obscure scene from ‘Inferno’, namely Dante and Virgil being ferried across the Styx by Charon as the damned cling to the boat in a desperate attempt to climb on board. This was yet another influential work from the 1820s that focussed on the darker aspects of the *Divina Commedia*, in particular its hell (Pitwood, pp.89-91).

The Nervalian Perception of Dante: Romantic and Faustian

Nerval understood Italian: he ‘corrects’ poor Italian pronunciation in *Les Nuits d’octobre* (1852) (Pitwood p. 226), and there are several instances of his using Italian as a lingua franca in *Voyage en Orient* (an account of his travels during 1843 but not published until 1851). He had a profound interest in the country and its culture, as of course he had for Germany; but these two countries were ‘deux pôles d’attraction agissant sur lui à des moments différents ou par contraste’.\(^{186}\) A relevant contrast between light and dark is to be found in Nerval’s ‘Angélique’: ‘Cette admiratrice de Pétrarque quittait avec peine ce doux pays d’Italie pour les montagnes brumeuses qui cerne l’Allemagne’ (Nerval, III, 50).

Many typically Nervalian themes recur in references to Italy and Dante: the psychodramatic aspects; his idealisation of women; his interest in the Middle Ages; religious

and spiritual concerns; and dark and supernatural aspects. In *Les Nuits d’octobre* Nerval’s self-identification with Dante is evident:

Si je n’étais pas sûr d’accomplir une des missions douloureuses de l’écrivain, je m’arrêterais ici; mais mon ami me dit comme Virgile à Dante: ‘Or sie forte ed ardito; — | omai si scende per si fatte scale.’187 (Nerval, III, 328)

In addition to Nerval the poet’s association with an illustrious predecessor, a further literary echo is discernible in his quoting Virgil’s enjoining Dante to continue despite difficulties: the Goethean Faustian emphasis on striving.

Nerval’s idealisation of women is reflected in disparate references to Dante:

Je posai sur la tête d’Adrienne cet ornement, dont les feuilles lustrées éclataient sur ses cheveux blonds aux rayons pâles de la lune. Elle ressemblait à la Béatrice de Dante qui sourit au poète errant sur la lisière des saintes demeures. (Nerval, III, 542)

Quelle folie, me disais-je, d’aimer ainsi d’un amour platonique une femme. […] J’ai pris au sérieux les inventions des poètes, et je me suis fait une Laure ou une Béatrix d’une personne ordinaire de notre siècle. (Ibid., p. 696)

These extracts demonstrate a typically Nervalian form of idealisation: principal female characters as bringers of salvation.188 This has a literary provenance, from *Faust* and the *Divina Commedia* for instance, but was also very personal to him: literary saviours Beatrice and Gretchen resonate with Nerval in part because they represent Jenny Colon, the real but unattainable object of his idolisation.189 Paradoxically, Nerval’s evoking Goethe’s and Dante’s principal female characters distances him from these two great poets: the mingling of psychodramatic elements with intertextual references affords his female characters a distinct, Nervalian quality; it is often appreciable in his *Faust* translations.

Nerval occasionally misinterprets Dante tellingly: his description in *Les Nuits* 187 The following translation of the Italian is given in a footnote: ‘Sois fort et hardi: on ne descend ici que par de tels escaliers’.
188 Belleli, p. 392.
189 See *Dictionnaire Nerval*, pp. 114-18, on Nerval’s idealisation of the actress.
d’octobre of the ‘séraphin doré du Dante, qui répand un dernier éclair de poésie sur les cercles ténébreux dont la spirale immense se rétrécit toujours, pour aboutir à ce puits sombre où Lucifer est enchaîné’, is inaccurate; no such event occurs in Dante’s work (Pitwood, pp. 226-27). The episode reveals Nerval’s divergence from Dante’s Catholic orthodoxy: his angelic figure triumphs, even over eternal damnation. There is also a typically Goethean motif of Faustian salvation in Nerval’s false memory of Dante’s poem.

Nerval also exaggerates the size of Satan:
Il [Dante] prétend que son [Satan’s] corps traverse entièrement le globe de telle sorte que sa tête se trouve immédiatement au-dessous du royaume des Deux-Siciles et que ses pieds forment deux îles dans la mer de l’Océanie, aux antipodes de notre Europe. (Nerval, t, 1268)
Although the location is correct, there is nothing in the Divina Commedia to justify such a description of Satan’s size (Pitwood, p. 228). This overestimation could have been influenced by Klinger’s Leviathan in Fausts Leben Thaten und Höllenfahrt (1791), a work known to be intertextually important to Nerval’s Faustian writing (Nerval, ii, 1295-1296). It also chimes with the French Romantic focus on the devil in Faust adaptations and translations.

Conclusion

The parallels between the French reception of Dante and other foreign writers during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are too numerous to be attributed to chance. Rather, cultural, social, and political forces contributed to a course that began in ambivalence and ended in widespread but selective enthusiasm. Interest in Dante reached its zenith in the 1820s, but understanding of the Italian poet’s work was generally incomplete, and the focus of French writers, artists and translators often very narrow. The same French critics and authors who transformed Goethe’s and Shakespeare’s fortunes in France are crucial to the trajectory described above. Furthermore, French visual artists’ interpretations of scenes from the Commedia informed the literary endeavours of their compatriots in the early decades of
Dante’s fortunes in France are more broadly relevant to the decline of neoclassicism and the rise of Romanticism in the country. More specifically, it is the choice by French Romantics of certain key foreign writers that might be recruited in the promotion of a new aesthetic that is most pertinent to Stapfer’s, Sainte-Aulaire’s, and Nerval’s translations of Goethe’s *Faust*. The narrow focus in France on the sombre and supernatural aspects of Dante’s work is reflected in the French translations of *Faust*: the emphasis on and exaggeration of the devil; the inclination to see Faust damned; and a more straightforward opposition of good and evil that contravenes Goethe’s dialectical dynamism in his reinterpretation of the myth echo the French reduction of the *Divina Commedia*. The idealisation of women, a characteristic of Nerval’s *Faust* translation, is also evident in the early nineteenth-century French fascination with Francesca da Rimini. Ultimately, in the French engagement with Dante and other key foreign writers common Romantic concerns surface on close reading. In Nerval’s case psychodrama also exerts an extraordinary influence on his writing, but it is in this context of the burgeoning of French Romanticism that his *Faust* translations must be placed — a context strongly divergent from the Goethean Faustian paradigm.
SIR WALTER SCOTT

Introduction

Of the foreign writers considered in this chapter Walter Scott’s French reception was the least fraught: an extremely popular writer, he was in fact appropriated by the French. Crucially, his work did not impinge on national pride as did foreign dramatists and their breaches of long-established French dramaturgical conventions. In 1830 over a third of all the novels published in France were translations of works by Scott.190 This astonishing fact is partly attributable to his familiarity with French literature, and French culture more generally: many of his novels testify to this interest, which added to their appeal for French readers. The early decades of the nineteenth century were turbulent times in France, which allowed readers to identify with momentous historical events portrayed by Scott.191 In Les Faux Saulniers Nerval captures the last point succinctly and demonstrates his insight into Scott’s successful literary methods: ‘tout peuple est curieux de remonter, par la pensée, à ses origines et à ses souvenirs; — c’est ce qui fait le succès de Walter Scott en Angleterre’ (Nerval, II, 82). Curiosity and nostalgia, combined with a relevance to contemporary society, proved a potent cultural force: ‘Scottophilia’ reached its height in 1830, a year of upheaval in French history; as Richard Maxwell states, ‘as the present heats up, the past must be represented ever more frenetically.’192 The turmoil and terror of recent French history contributed a great deal to the spirit of Romanticism; Scott’s historical novels were certainly timely: such aesthetic concepts as ‘bienséance’ and ‘bon goût’ seemed increasingly anachronistic in the light of the horrors of recent French history.

Nerval’s Faust translations and early fragmentary Faustian dramas were also produced under this extensive shadow. In common with Scott’s novels these works are dark,

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192 Maxwell, p. 15.
violent, and historical. Though in part reminiscent of real contemporary struggles, Scott’s novels also contain a strong element of entertainment. The same is true of Nerval’s Faustian fragments, which represents a significant departure from the profundity of Goethe’s Faustian paradigm. The enormous popularity of historical fiction in France in the 1820s and 1830s must be in no small measure attributed to Scott; his particular blend of history and entertainment finds intertextual echoes in Nerval’s *Nicolas Flamel* and *Faust* fragment.\(^\text{193}\)

The French sought in Scott an element that was missing from their own literature: his Waverley novels, for example, represent a synthesis of the ‘French model’ as practised by Lafayette, Prévost and others; ‘the remarkable intensification of the novelised particular history […] had been a French speciality for generations’; and his own methods.\(^\text{194}\)

The framing device, such as an antiquarian recounting past events, is a typically Scottian narrative technique. To French readers, accustomed to the rather rigid practices of domestic writers of historical fiction, Scott’s idiosyncratic combination of comforting familiarity and stirring innovation proved highly attractive. This partly explains why Scott did not achieve the level of success in England that he had in France: in general, the French accentuated his innovative, ‘Romantic’ credentials, whereas the English focused on his conservatism.\(^\text{195}\)

Consequently, he would arguably contribute more to the development of the French version of Romanticism than to its British counterpart.

\(^{193}\) Ibid., p. 11.
\(^{194}\) Ibid., p. 13.
\(^{195}\) Ibid.
Visual Interpretations of Scott’s Novels

Visual artists’ depictions of Scott’s novels confirm the difference of emphasis in England and France: in the former country *Ivanhoe* was by far the most popular source text for visual artists, whereas for French artists, *Quentin Durward* was by far the favoured source of visual reinterpretation. The novel’s French setting was probably a factor in its popularity; its subject, the court of Louis XI, would find further literary interpretation in Nerval’s final Faustian drama *L’Imagier de Harlem*. Furthermore, the events of *Nicolas Flamel* occur as a result of Charles VI’s expulsion of Jews from France in 1394 (Nerval, 1, 1619), and the Faust of Nerval’s fragment lives during the fifteenth century, given the innovative inclusion of the early printer Peter Schoeffer [Scheffer in Nerval’s drama] (c.1425- c.1503). The action of Nerval’s Faustian fragments takes place in France during a relatively narrow time period: under the rule of the House of Valois (1328-1589), the period of French history that most frequently inspired Scott and his visual interpreters.196

Scott’s highly dramatic narratives lent themselves well to pictorial interpretation: his prose is highly detailed, providing information on clothing, furnishings, architecture, and decor. In fact Nerval comments on this highly visual aspect of Scott’s writing, albeit indirectly, first in *Le Messager* (September 1838) and then in *L’Artiste-Revue de Paris* (October 1846) with reference to *Rapport de l’officier de France touchant le traitement de messieurs les enfants en Espagne* (first published in 1844), an early sixteenth-century account by Jean Bodin of the holding hostage in Spain of two of François I’s sons (Nerval, 1, 1879):

196 Beth S. Wright, “‘Seeing with the Painter’s Eye’: Sir Walter Scott’s Challenge to Nineteenth-Century Art”, in *Walter Scott in Europe*, (see Schaffer, above), pp. 293-312 (p. 298).
Les paysagistes littéraires sont presque tous de notre siècle. Il semble ainsi que cette faculté soit un appendice à des qualités de peinture et de poésie beaucoup plus élevées encore. Il y a dans tout grand poète un voyager sublime; mais plusieurs comme Walter Scott […] ne se servent des impressions qu’ils ont recueillies, recomposées ou devinées à l’aspect des villes et des pays, que pour poser la scène de leurs vastes compositions.
(Nerval, 1, 455)

En traduisant en style intelligible pour les lecteurs modernes ce récit à la fois si naïf et si coloré, qui semble un chapitre de Walter Scott. (Nerval, I, 1082)

Nerval’s emphasising that contemporary authors possess a ‘landscape painter’s eye’ is noteworthy, for this development broadly coincides with the rise of French Romanticism and owes much to Scott. His highly descriptive and detailed prose is easily identifiable and was much imitated. It certainly exerted a wide influence, perhaps even on Nerval in the Faust fragment and Nicolas Flamel: these incomplete dramas contain ‘naivety’ and ‘colourfulness’, the latter in the rich medieval settings, the former in the protagonists’ unusual innocence and altruism, traits seldom associated with Faust or Faustian figures.

Echoes of Scott in Nerval’s Writing

Scott exerted both a direct and an indirect influence on Nerval. Superficial references to the Scottish author are to be found in works as diffuse as Promenades et souvenirs (Nerval, III, 672) and Voyage en Orient (Nerval, II, 185, 592), but when caricature is introduced it becomes evident that a strong impression has been made, as is demonstrated in the following two extracts from Les Faux Saulniers:

Malheureusement, si je m’éloignais un instant de la ligne correcte de l’histoire, je retomberais dans le roman historique, — et les gens sèvres considéraient tout ce que je viens d’écrire comme imité d’une de ces longues préfaces où l’auteur de Waverley fait dialoguer ensemble le capitaine Clutterbuck et le révérend Jedédiah Cleisbotham. (Nerval, II, 83)

Il retrouve là, comme un héros de Walter Scott, les souvenirs de son enfance, les voûtes gothiques, les trèfles percés de vitraux, la salle d’armes, la chambre du roi. (Nerval, II, 138)

Nerval’s jocular outlining of typical Scottian motifs and narrative devices demonstrates his familiarity with the Scot’s aesthetic and narrative techniques.
Scott and Nerval shared similarly intertextual interests, the former having begun his literary career as a translator of German literature. At least one poem Scott translated was also translated by Nerval: *Lenore* (1774) by Gottfried August Bürger. In fact, ‘his [Scott’s] early predilection for German *Schauerliteratur* (Gothic literature) was well known.’

Nerval’s own taste for the supernatural conte may have been influenced by *Schauerliteratur*; he certainly translated *Lenore* and returned to it a number of times. In certain, if limited and limiting respects, *Faust* could be considered Gothic fiction.

Probably the most striking example of Scott’s influence on Nerval’s Faustian work, albeit of an indirect kind, is to be found in Paul Lacroix’s *Soirées de Walter Scott à Paris* (1829). In the guise of ‘le bibliophile Jacob’, an antiquarian who recalls a stock character of Scott’s, Lacroix recounts his fictive meeting with the Scottish author. Scott, impressed by ‘le bibliophile’s’ extensive knowledge of French literature, regales him with a night of tales, which ‘le bibliophile’ commits to paper. The tales are based on medieval and renaissance French history. *Les Soirées de Walter Scott à Paris* informed Nerval’s *Nicolas Flamel* in a manner strongly divergent from the Goethean *Faust*, as will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter Three of this thesis.

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Scott’s historical fiction was dark and violent, capturing on the one hand a troubled present and on the other offering an entertaining escapist view of the past. To some extent Goethe’s \textit{Faust} also provided such a mixture; in Stapfer’s, Sainte-Aulaire’s, and Nerval’s French translations, however, the emphasis changes and the balance shifts, arguably and of course to varying degrees in each translator’s work, more in favour of entertainment. A relevant point noted by Nerval himself is the strongly visual aspect of Scott’s writing; this is a characteristic that would be replicated in French translations of canonical foreign texts in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Its signature varies: extra description is provided; stage direction is added; explication highlights polarities; and the sense of spectacle increases in the French translation of dramatic works.

It is the differences between French and English perceptions of Scott that bear most on his pertinence to Nerval’s Faustian work: broadly, according to the former he was a volatile, histrionic writer of adventures, whereas the latter perspective foregrounds his staidness and attachment to the status quo. These distinct interpretations of Scott as a Romantic trailblazer and Scott the conservative tell us as much about the contemporaneous cultural climate in England and France as they do about Scott’s writing. Through the French perception of Scott as a daring author one begins to appreciate more the cultural climate in which Nerval was working: French Romanticism was tamer, more conservative, and more restricted than its counterparts in England and Germany.

That Nerval and the other French translators of \textit{Faust} should sometimes appear surprisingly reticent in their interpretations of Goethe’s play is to an extent unremarkable. They were, after all, working in an entirely different tradition from Goethe and other
influential foreign writers. The nature of their reticence, in contrast, is anything but
unremarkable; through the concurrent study of key texts and developments such as Nerval’s
*Faust* translations and Scott’s reception in France, one begins a process of circumscription,
the ultimate goal of which is a clearer insight into the essence of a seminal cultural
movement.
BYRON

Introduction

It would be difficult to overestimate the popularity of Byron’s work in France in the early decades of the nineteenth century; not only was he popular but he was also held in high esteem as a poet, and admired for his unorthodox lifestyle and political commitment. Artists and musicians adapted his poems, creating myriad cross-cultural and multimedia productions. And yet in France many struggled to separate his lifestyle from his work. His untimely death in 1824 was met with hysteria in France and throughout Europe. Byron’s life was mythologised; he was lionised, and appropriated according to individual needs, desires, and cultural affiliation. Byron ‘fever’ was still in the air at the time of Nerval’s first Faust translation of 1828.

Numerous French translations of Byron’s poetry were published from 1816, but for the most part in prose. Some of his metres and rhymes posed problems for French translators skilled only in that most orthodox of French verse schemes, the alexandrine. Although the preeminent French Byron translator Amédée Pichot worked in prose and toned down many of the lewder aspects of Byron’s work, his translations had the greatest impact throughout Europe. The French reluctance entirely to reject neoclassical prosodic conventions rendered Byron’s poems ‘more daring than they appeared to English readers’. His lexis caused difficulties too, there being a ‘strict demarcation between the kind of language

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201 Pichot was known to Nerval: as editor of Le Mercure from 1829 he was responsible, along with Paul Lacroix, for its inclusion of many of Nerval’s French translations of German literature. See Pichois and Brix, Gérard de Nerval, p. 57.
202 Wilkes, p. 16; Cardwell, p. 4.
203 Wilkes, p. 16.
considered proper to poetry and that allowable to prose.'

Despite the ‘Byronomania’ that swept France, the French still felt a degree of ambivalence towards the English poet. Shortly after Byron’s death in 1824 Louise Belloc’s biography was published; Don Juan in particular caused her some consternation because of its ‘different kind of daring’ as she euphemistically terms it. Similar misgivings are evident in Vigny’s assessment of Don Juan as ‘un assemblage ignoble de plaisanteries sans goût et sans légèreté’. Though Vigny was a particularly conservative French Romantic — and one must always bear in mind the heterogeneity of Romanticism — it is evident from his almost Voltairean pronouncement on Don Juan that typically neoclassical values were still influential in France during the 1820s. But by this time there was also a profound desire for a literary fulfilment that contemporary French literature did not provide.

As with Dante, there was a perception in France of Byron avenging himself on his enemies, and it is true that both writers went into exile; exiles, as outsiders, were of particular interest in Romantic France. Though Byron’s work was perhaps Romantic in its themes and content, in its form it was arguably more neoclassical than Romantic. Post-classical may more aptly describe his writing. It seems unlikely for instance that he would have sided with the aesthetic rebels at la bataille d’Hernani, being probably closer to the ‘opposing, anti-Shakespearian party’.

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204 Ibid.
Nerval refers to Byron in both his original and critical writings. In both his opinion of the English poet is generally high. The following excerpts from early works demonstrate his admiration:

Quelques-uns, il est vrai, surent loin des humains
Dans l’ombre des brouillards se tracer de chemins;
Lamartine, Biron, et leurs rimes obscures,
Iront sans trébucher jusqu’aux races futures. (Nerval, I, 21.)

M. ROGER Monsieur, quoique boiteux, on peut être un grand homme!
M. PARISET Oh! mon Dieu, libre à vous!
M. ROGER Ce Byron, qu’on renomme […] Walter Scott… (Nerval, I, 158)

In the first extract, taken from his ‘Épître seconde’, written in 1825 only two years before he began his first translation of Goethe’s *Faust*, it is notable that Nerval describes the course of Byron’s as a life lived through ‘l’ombre des brouillards’. Darkly Romantic, it suggests not only the vicissitudes of Byron’s life, but with its metaphor of striving against adversity is also strikingly Faustian; the English poet’s struggle through the ‘darkness’ clearly impressed Nerval at the outset of his literary career. The message of the dialogue, taken from *L’Académie* (1826), a ‘Comédie satirique’, is more explicit: Byron is a ‘great man’, despite his lameness. In fact his clubfoot contributes to his mystique; he is a flawed genius, a concept that would find reflection in Romantic aesthetics, both theoretical and practical, Hugo’s favoured mingling of the ‘sublime’ and the ‘grotesque’ being replicated in his followers’ original or translational literary endeavours.

In the opening stanza of his ‘Pensée de Byron’, a reworking of his earlier elegy, ‘Épître econde’, published as part of *Petits chateaux de Bohème* in 1853, Nerval’s concerns are saliently Faustian:
Par mon amour et mon constance
J’avais cru fléchir ta rigueur,
Et le souffle de l’espérance
Avait pénétré dans mon cœur;
Mais le temps qu’en vain je prolonge
M’a découvert la vérité,
L’espérance a fui comme un songe…
Et mon amour seul m’est resté!
(Nerval, III, 267, 412)

‘Amour’ and ‘constance’, essentially the two aspects that save Goethe’s Faust from Mephistopheles’ grasp, open a poem dedicated to Byron; a Faustian nuance is often discernible in Nerval’s engagement with Byron and his work. For instance, an emphasis on female intervention and support is a common point of reference. Nerval cites Byron in this context in his Voyage en orient: ‘il est donc important que je cherche quelque jolie personne qui veuille me mettre au courant du langage usuel. C’est le conseil que donnait Byron aux voyageurs’ (Nerval, II, 201). Or rather, he cites Pichot’s French translation of Don Juan: ‘il est charmant d’être initié dans une langue étrangère par les yeux et les lèvres d’une femme (Nerval, I, 1423).’208 With characteristic modesty Nerval neglects Pichot’s description of the physical attributes of this potential female tutor, but the crucial point remains that this is idealisation, perhaps even salvation — linguistic at least, in that this female figure offers access to a community and redemption from exclusion and isolation. Though Byron’s reputation as a roué and the frequently cynical attitude of his Don Juan may seem far removed from Nerval’s Romanticised idealisation of women,209 there is a valid comparison to be drawn between the two writers in this respect; in the most Faustian of Byron’s works, Manfred, the protagonist’s despair is largely driven by the loss of his love, Astarte.

Byron and Nerval share a proclivity for incorporating key personal events into their

209 Wilkes, p. 27.
writing. Many of Byron’s works are centred on an individual who seems to be a ‘projection of the poet himself.’

Similarly, Nerval projected himself onto Goethe’s Faust. The psychodramatic elements of Byron’s work, particularly those of a pessimistic, anguished nature, were received with ambivalence: this aspect of his writing ‘both appealed to and appalled thinking men across Europe.’

Existential angst is a salient aspect of Nerval’s original writing, particularly his later work, but also of his engagement with Faust. In particular, as will be demonstrated later, he consistently rejects Goethe’s optimistic retelling of the Fauststoff through dialectical resolution, emphasising instead opposition over complementarity.

The similarities between Byron and Nerval are, in fact, more numerous than might initially be supposed: neither was a Christian; both were open to esoteric ideologies and beliefs; both suffered from emotional or mental-health difficulties; and both were ultimately self-destructive. The unconventionally spiritual aspects of their work were timely; in this respect the French Romantic reception of Byron recalls that of Dante; many admirers of the Italian poet’s work were appalled by certain aspects of his medieval ideology, especially the concept of eternal damnation. Conversely, Byron challenged the dogma of rationalism. The rejection of dogma of any kind, combined with openness to the strange and the obscure, are traits that Byron and Nerval shared. Some among the French Romantics, Alfred de Musset and Lamartine in particular, were critical of Byron’s rejection of Christian orthodoxy, considering it a form of pessimism that betrayed the hopes of future generations. The polarity of optimism and pessimism is crucial to Nerval’s convergence with and divergence from the Goethean Faustian paradigm in both his translations and original Faustian dramas.

210 Ibid., p. 2.
211 Cardwell, p. 2.
Interestingly, given Nerval’s great interest in and admiration for German culture, Byron’s ‘gloominess’ and ‘pessimism’ was regarded less reproachfully in Germany than in France. This was at least in part because Byron was considered the ‘epitome of Weltschmerz’ — a concept attractive to many young German poets.\(^{212}\) Notwithstanding his earlier allegiance to *Sturm und Drang* aesthetics, including his portrayal of the desperate Werther, Goethe afforded *Weltschmerz* little place in his innovative designs for the Faust myth; such elements as are present are ultimately and emphatically negated by Faust’s striving and by the redemptive power of love.

The concept of *Weltschmerz* is more pertinent to Nerval’s Faustian writing. In his ‘Observations sur le premier *Faust*’ Nerval posits Byron’s Don Juan and Manfred as the two literary characters that bear closest resemblance to Goethe’s Faust. He acknowledges the psychodramatic element of Byron’s verse drama, and the emphasis on Manfred’s suffering, stating ‘Manfred est le remords personnifié’, and yet he regards Byron’s protagonist as inferior to Faust, chiefly because ‘tout en lui, sa force comme sa faiblesses, est au-dessus de l’humanité’ (Nerval, 1, 254). Essentially he admired Manfred’s passion but was averse to his separation from humanity. As will be demonstrated later, this critical stance is consistent with what one might describe as the Nervalian Faustian paradigm, particularly in his incomplete *Nicolas Flamel* and *Faust* fragment. More directly significant to Nerval’s own Faustian works is his comparison of the three works’ principal female characters: ‘combien Marguerite surpasse […] les amantes vulgaires de don Juan [sic], et l’imaginaire Astarté, de Manfred!’ (Ibid., 246). Astarte does indeed pale in comparison with Margarete as she appears as a discarnate spirit in just one scene, but her influence is all pervasive and drives the whole

\(^{212}\) Cochran, p. 67; Cardwell, p. 2; Wilkes, p.26; Frank Erik Pointner and Achim Geisenhanslüke,’The Reception of Byron in the German-Speaking Lands’, in *Byron in Europe* (see Wilkes, above), pp. 235-68 (p. 245).
narrative. Nerval rightly states that it is Margarete’s ‘grâce’, ‘innocence’, and ‘âme pure’ that appeal, but he goes further: ‘ce n’est vraiment qu’une femme, une femme comme il en existe beaucoup’ (Ibid.); while this is true in the sense that Goethe portrays Margarete’s as a humble, unremarkable life prior to her meeting Faust, she is also highly idealised, even in his original German text. That Nerval appears not to recognise this is instructive, for his equating idealised female characters and ‘ordinary’ women would be important to the creation of his own female characters in his Faustian writing.

Goethe and Byron

Goethe contributed greatly to Byron’s popularity in Germany, praising him as a poet of the first rank. Initially reaction to Byron had been hostile, largely in sympathy with English anger towards, and rejection of, *Cain* in 1821. However, following Goethe’s praise for the sophistication of Byron’s play, the Germans began to accept and appreciate the work in a way that the English never did.²¹³ His high opinion of the English poet is expressed tellingly in ‘An Lord Byron’ (1823): ‘Es ruft uns auf, zum Edelsten zu wandern,| Nicht ist der Geist,\[3pt\]doch ist der Fuß gebunden’: Byron is a trailblazer, calling to the rest of humanity, but yet again his physical defect is foregrounded. Like Faust he is not quite superhuman; he shares with that mythical figure a divided character and experience of great pain: ‘Ihm, der sich selbst im Innersten bestreitet, | Stark angewohnt, das tiefste Weh zu tragen’ (WA I, 4, 18).

Given this closeness between man and myth in Goethe’s poem, it is perhaps unsurprising that Byron should be represented in *Faust*. Euphorion, whom Goethe depicts as the son of Helen and Faust, was based on Byron.²¹⁴ This allegorical meeting of Classical and

²¹³ Pointner and Geisenhanslüke, pp. 239-40.
Romantic is highly significant, for it both demonstrates and informs Goethe’s enthusiasm for the English poet. It also reflects his espousal of dialectical systems, as evinced by his theory of Steigerung in his essay Polarität:

Was in die Erscheinung tritt, muß sich trennen, um nur zu erscheinen. Das Getrennte sucht sich wieder, und es kann sich wieder finden und vereinigen; im niedern Sinne, indem es sich nur mit seinem Entgegengestellten vermischt, mit demselben zusammentritt, wobei die Erscheinung Null oder wenigstens gleichgültig wird. Die Vereinigung kann aber auch im höheren Sinne geschehen, indem das Getrennte sich zuerst steigert und durch die Verbindung der gesteigerten Seiten ein Drittes, Neues, Höheres, Unerwartetes hervorbringt. (WA II, 11, 166)

Applied to the aesthetic domain, in Byron’s embracing of both Classical and modern forms there is a suggestion of a particularly French version of Romanticism: a version that displays some insecurity towards the new aesthetic while not entirely rejecting the French neoclassical heritage. The version, in fact, that encompasses Nerval’s translations of Faust.

Notwithstanding Goethe’s praise for Byron, his portrayal of Euphorion displays a similarly equivocal attitude; ultimately the character’s impulse to ‘transgress the limits of custom and law’ is ‘responsible for his doom’. Through his portrayal of Euphorion in Faust II Goethe condemns Byron’s excesses, as Faust’s reaction to his son’s directionless energy demonstrates:

**EUPHORION**
Nun laßt mich hüpfen,  
Nun laßt mich springen,  
Zu allen Lüften  
Hinauf zu dringen  
Ist mir Begierde,  
Sie faßt mich schon.

**FAUST**
Nur mäßig! mäßig!  
Nicht in’s Verwegne,  
Daß Sturz und Unfall  
Dir nicht begegne,  
Zu Grund uns richte  
Der theure Sohn.

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Restraint and moderation must counterbalance dynamism and spontaneity according to Goethe’s tenet. Once again he promulgates dialectical interaction as the most satisfactory means of achieving progress; Faust’s measured response to Euphorion here is as much a metaphoric reference to opposing poetic aesthetics as it is a critique of Byron. In at least one sense Nerval supports filial enthusiasm over fatherly restraint: in his Faust translations, as will be shown, he adheres less to Goethe’s scheme of complementarity and displays more of the Byronic predilection for clear oppositions.

The ‘Faustian’ aspects of Byron’s writing were of considerable import to his reception in Germany; Manfred’s status as ‘one of the most important foreign language plays in the history of German literary criticism’ was largely attributable to its intertextual resonances with Goethe’s work. While a number of critics denigrated Manfred as a plagiarised Faust, Goethe expressed no such concerns, as his letter [12 October, 1817] to C. L. von Knebel reveals:216 ‘die wunderbarste Erscheinung war mir diese Tage das Trauerspiel Manfred von Byron’. Closely resembling his later description of Nerval’s translation of his Faust as ‘frisch’, ‘neu’, and ‘geistreich’, Goethe emphasised that in Manfred Byron had created something new from Faust: ‘dieser seltsame geistreiche Dichter hat meinen Faust in sich aufgenommen […]. Er hat alle Motive auf seine Weise benutzt, so daß keins mehr dasselbige ist’. In conversation with Kanzler von Müller and Eckermann on 17 December 1824 Goethe questions ‘warum soll er [the poet] sich scheuen, Blumen zu nehmen, wo er sie findet? Nur durch Aneignung fremder Schätze entsteht ein Großes’ (WA v, 5, 120).

Despite Goethe’s approbation the debate on the relationship between Faust and

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216 Pointner and Geisenhanslüke, p. 244, p. 245.
Manfred and their relative merits continued. On the whole, Faust was regarded as the more accomplished of the two works. Whereas Goethe remains somewhat aloof from his Faust, Byron and Manfred are closer, particularly in their melancholy and suffering. This chimes with the protagonists of Nerval’s Faust fragment and Nicolas Flamel experiencing more mundane, quotidian suffering than the German’s Faust. In contrast with Goethe’s comparative detachment from this work, Byron and Nerval reveal a greater personal ‘presence’ in their Faustian works: the psychodramatic mask is remoulded and reimposed.

Conclusion

Along with other key foreign writers Byron served as a paradigm for new aesthetic possibilities in French literature. Though in certain formal respects he maintained his neoclassical predilections, Byron’s frequently dark subject matter and willingness to unite form and content hitherto considered incompatible are of seminal importance to the development of French Romantic literary practice. The question of his direct influence on Nerval is, however, more contentious. Certainly, Byron’s reputation was at its height at the beginning of Nerval’s literary career; even a cursory examination of Nerval’s references to Byron reveals that his opinion of the English poet was generally high. In fact, certain aspects of Byron and his work can hardly have failed to intrigue the young translator of Faust: the dark, Faustian elements of Byron’s work; his unconventional and in some respects contradictory character; the related idealisation of him as Romanticism personified; the unique combination of supreme literary ability, charisma, physical deficiency, and emotional vulnerability, all proved a heady and attractive mix to the French public, but must have been especially so to a young man with a passion for Faust whose literary career began on the cusp

217 Ibid., p. 245.
of neoclassicism and Romanticism. Moreover, the two writers’ work has much in common:
psychodrama and the integration of pivotal personal experiences, particularly of a
melancholy or haunting kind, into fiction are salient features of Byron’s and Nerval’s œuvre;
the idealisation of women, albeit nuanced quite differently, is essential to both. These two
c characteristics were of course common to many writers considered Romantic, but the
prominence afforded them by Byron and Nerval is unusual. Furthermore, these shared
literary traits often found expression in dark, supernatural, broadly Faustian, material.
Nerval’s Faust translations certainly exhibit such tendencies, his Faust fragment and Nicolas
Flamel even more so.

An intertextual path is fairly easily mapped: Goethe’s Faust greatly influenced
Byron’s Manfred, but this was no simple transposition from German to English, for Byron
made Faust his own in Manfred; in fact one might describe Manfred as a Byronic Faust. Its
influence on the Nervalian Faustian paradigm is less easily established and was perhaps more
indirect than direct. And yet the convergences between the two are significant: Manfred
seems more incontrovertibly doomed than Goethe’s Faust; so too in some respects are the
Faust of the fragment and Nicolas Flamel: from the outset they are much less powerful
figures than Goethe’s Faust; they lack the German’s self-belief, and they are even greater
outcasts from their societies. A Byronic influence on Nerval’s Faustian work may be seen in
his gloomier, more pessimistic approach to the Fauststoff; and concomitantly his reduced
faith in Goethe’s complementarity as a resolution of oppositions. But is it doubtlessly true
that Byron the man exerted at least as much influence on Nerval, and in fact the age, as his
literary work.
CHAPTER 2

A CLOSE READING OF STAPFER’S, SAINTE-AULAIRE’S, AND NERVAL’S FRENCH TRANSLATIONS OF GOETHE’S FAUST

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Having considered in the previous chapter the cultural milieu in which the French translations of Faust were undertaken, the present chapter analyses, compares, and contrasts the ways in which Stapfer, Sainte-Aulaire, and Nerval engaged with Goethe’s German text. Owing to the scope of Faust, this study focuses only on the most salient and prevalent divergences from the Goethean paradigm. In particular, my methodology is to analyse the French translations according to theme, rather than chronology. Within this framework I consider the context in which the three French translators were working, the specific linguistic difficulties they faced, and notable divergences from Goethe’s Faust in the translations. Nerval’s Faust translations of 1828 and 1840 are analysed in this thesis as they represent the most complete examples of his different approach to the use of verse and prose. For ease of comparison Stapfer’s, Sainte-Aulaire’s, and Nerval’s translations are juxtaposed, in order of publication.

The three French translators share common characteristics in their approach to Faust, but also differ greatly in other respects. Much has been written of Madame de Staël’s ambivalent and, to a certain extent, corrosive influence on the transmission of Goethe’s Faust in France. Her often-cited reduction of Mephistopheles to a more traditional devil and her incomplete appreciation of Goethe’s wider philosophical concerns are evident in her successors’ translations of Faust. Similarly significant, and indeed, problematic in this context, are Nerval’s later literary achievements, which have coloured, retrospectively, many assessments of his Faust translations. Literary celebrity exerts a potent influence and
overshadows the efforts of less noted writers. In fact, Nerval’s translations of *Faust* owe much to his predecessor, Stapfer, a debt that has seldom been acknowledged. Despite a degree of reliance on Stapfer, however, he contributes invaluable qualities to the translation of Goethe’s *Faust* in France, thanks to his poetic acuity and his adroit manipulation of metaphor and connotation. More surprising perhaps is his well-developed commercial sense: in the late 1820s, at the young age of nineteen, he was commercially astute enough to recognise the potential of the numerous *Faust* productions that enthralled Parisian theatre-audiences: ‘il était d’ailleurs difficile de saisir un moment plus favorable pour cette publication: *Faust* va être représenté successivement sur tous les théâtres de Paris’ (Nerval, 1, 243). Moreover, his translation of Goethe’s work displays more than a hint of that most popular of dramatic genres — the melodrama.

But Goethe’s *Faust* is complex and a highly problematic text from a translator’s point of view. It defies easy categorisation — it combines lyric and epic poetry; it is an adaptation of a popular myth; it is certainly a drama but in some respects a closet drama; and it is in part an allegory of Goethe’s personal philosophy, to name but a few possible descriptions of this extraordinary work. Consequently, a translator’s ‘loyalties’ are divided: are poetry-lovers, theatre-goers, or intellectuals to be the target audience? Given this potential breadth of choice, the approach taken by a translator will inevitably be unpopular with some readers. Of course, it is vital that a translator considers for whom he or she is translating, but audiences and readers are evidently heterogeneous groups. Herein lay a great difficulty for Stapfer, Sainte-Aulaire, Nerval, and indeed others who have attempted to transfer Goethe’s *Faust* into other languages; they must choose a translational strategy, and in doing so, must inevitably exclude ‘inconvenient’ aspects of the original. The translation of metaphor is a case in point; to attempt to capture the original trope is to risk the
incomprehension of the target audience; and yet to simplify figurative writing might well attract the disapproval of those well versed in the subtleties of the original.¹ Nerval’s treatment of metaphor and connotation is a notable strength of his translation; perhaps inevitably this leads to both convergence with and divergence from the Goethean Faustian paradigm. Even more significant to his neglect of Goethe’s idiosyncratic ideology in Faust, in particular the German writer’s dialectical philosophy and theories of complementarity, was a desire that his translations appeal to Parisian readers and theatre-goers who had been beguiled by Faust as popular entertainment in the théâtres des boulevards. Furthermore, Nerval’s complex Germanophilia and personal identification with the Faust legend are highly pertinent to his translations of Goethe’s work.² There is also an unusually close relationship between Nerval’s translations of Faust and his original writing; an investigation into the interaction between the two allows for a more profound understanding of Nerval and his œuvre.

An analysis of Nerval’s translations of Faust must also take account of the fundamental differences that exist between linguistic systems; inevitably, different languages exhibit numerous ‘incompatibilities’, simply on account of their different origins and conventions. Clearly, this represents a crucial concern for a translator; how to broach these linguistic and cultural discordances has been a recurrent source of debate throughout the history of translation.

2.2 CONTEXTUALISATION OF THE FRENCH TRANSLATIONS OF GOETHE’S 

FAUST

The Issue of Domestication and Foreignisation in Translation

In 1813, during a lecture on translation at the Royal Academy of Sciences in Berlin, Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) summarised the translator’s dilemma succinctly:

Entweder der Uebersezer [sic] läßt den Schriftsteller möglichst in Ruhe, und bewegt den Leser ihm entgegen; oder er läßt den Leser möglichst in Ruhe und bewegt den Schriftsteller ihm entgegen [...] Der Uebersezer muß [...] sich zum Ziel stellen, seinem Leser ein [...] Bild und einen [...] Genuß zu verschaffen, wie das Lesen des Werkes in der Ursprache dem so gebildeten Manne gewährt, den wir im besseren Sinne des Worts den Liebhaber und Kenner zu nennen pflegen, dem die fremde Sprache geläufig ist, aber doch immer fremd bleibt, der nicht mehr wie die Schüler sich erst das einzelne wieder in der Muttersprache denken muß, ehe er das Ganze fassen kann, der aber doch auch da wo er am ungestörttesten sich die Schönheiten eines Werkes erfreut, sich immer der Verschiedenheit der Sprache von seiner Muttersprache bewußt bleibt.3

Though Schleiermacher does not actually use the terms ‘domestication’ and ‘foreignisation’, his leaving ‘den Schriftsteller möglichst in Ruhe’ refers to the latter translational strategy of attempting, as much as possible, to maintain the foreignness of the source text in a translation, his leaving’den Leser möglichst in Ruhe’ to the former approach which takes greater account of cultural differences and accommodates the receiving culture.4 The preservation of the source text in the process of translation is of paramount importance to Schleiermacher.5 In practice, however, this is often difficult to achieve, especially when traditionally the opposite strategy of domestication has been privileged. Arguably a truly foreignising translator would be prepared to break rules, to disobey tradition and convention in order to allow for a greater approximation to the source language; the use of neologism, phonological, morphological, and syntactic rule-breaking might offer potential strategies to a

4 For more on the distinction between domestication and foreignisation in translation, see Lawrence Venuti, The Translator’s Invisibility: A History of Translation, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2008).
5 Susan Bernofsky, ‘What Did Don Quixote Have for Supper? Translation and Cultural Mediation in Eighteenth-Century Germany’, Monatshefte, 97 (2005), 1-17 (p. 3).
translator, and yet this would have been too radical a solution in early nineteenth-century France. Lingering conservative, neoclassical aesthetic values meant that truly foreignising translations would have been considered unacceptable. Though Nerval expressed dedication to fidelity to his source text in ‘Observations sur le premier Faust’, it should be borne in mind that as a writer he was constrained by, but also a product of, the era’s literary conventions (Nerval, I, 243). The translation process must in fact involve a degree of ‘reconciliation’ between ‘opposing’ sides: Lawrence Venuti describes a translator as ‘a resourceful imitator who rewrites it [the source text] to appeal another audience in a different language and culture’. As expressed in his ‘Observations sur le premier Faust’, this was partly Nerval’s aim: ‘il sera curieux sans doute pour ceux qui en verront la représentation [of Faust at Parisian theatres] de consulter en même temps le chef-d’œuvre allemand, d’autant plus que les théâtres n’emprunteront du sujet que ce qui convient à l’effet dramatique’ (Nerval, I, 243). Nerval’s translation was therefore inductive in the sense that it was to serve as a ‘guide’ for French readers and audiences; in this respect it domesticates Goethe’s Faust. However, underlying this rather superficial aspect of his Faust translation was the foreignisation of the French language and culture that Nerval’s communication of Goethe’s text to the French public inevitably involved; Nerval intimates that his translation is the means by which the French public will become familiar with the ‘true’ Faust, rather than a version that lends itself to the demands of the contemporary French theatre business. Implicitly, he claims even more, for his translation has become indistinguishable from the ‘chef-d’œuvre allemand’ in the above pronouncement. Nerval uses commercial rhetoric here; his translation is to introduce French audiences to Faust, while simultaneously remaining loyal to Goethe’s

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original German work. In other words, he makes an appeal both to popular Parisian theatre audiences and to more scholarly admirers of German literature.

Stapfer’s primary interest seems to have been scholarly rather than commercial or even theatrical, if one considers the following statement from his ‘avant-propos’:

Nous croyons […] rendre un service, sinon à notre littérature, à nos littérateurs du moins, en les mettant à portée de faire connaissance avec l’homme illustre qui a créé ce mouvement [the development of German poetic drama], et y a pris la part la plus grande après Schiller, dont, grâce à M. de Barante, l’œuvre est déjà dans leurs mains. Les deux principales colonnes de la scène allemande pourront donc être maintenant placées en face l’une de l’autre, et comparées entre elles. (Stapfer, Avant-propos, 1828).

His translation of Goethe and de Barante’s translation of Schiller are to be studied and compared. This contrasts with Nerval’s wish that his translations serve as a guide to Faust for Parisian theatre-goers. Interestingly Stapfer, like Nerval, also writes as if he were discussing original works rather than translations; there is no sense here that his and de Barante’s French translations might differ from Goethe’s and Schiller’s original works.

Nerval’s nominal dedication to fidelity perhaps reaches its apogee in his direct insertion of a German noun from the scene ‘Auerbachs Keller in Leipzig’ into his French translation of 1840:

SIEBEL Zum Liebsten sei ein Kobold ihr beschert! (MA, VI/I, 592, l. 2111)

SIEBEL Qu’un lutin en devienne amoureux! (Stapfer, 1823, p. 97)

SIEBEL Elle te trompera pour le diable. (Sainte-Aulaire, 1823, p. 108)

SIEBEL Qu’on lui donne un farfadet pour amoureux. (Nerval, 1828, p. 128)

SIEBEL Qu’on lui donne un Kobold pour galant. (Nerval, 1840, p. 151)

It is striking that Nerval adopts the original German word, ‘Kobold’, in his translation of 1840, despite the fact that his earlier choice of ‘farfadet’ is similar in meaning and captures a sense of the original German word. Though neither Stapfer nor Sainte-Aulaire employs a
Germanic term for the creature, they make reasonable lexical choices in ‘diable’ and ‘lutin’. The latter noun means ‘démon malicieux’ and being derived from ‘neitun’, the old French word for ‘Neptune’, originally meant ‘un monstre marin’. However, ‘Kobold’ and ‘lutin’ are not synonymous, and the comparatively simple ‘diable’ suggests an avoidance of the complexities inherent in the communication of cross-cultural folkloric traditions. ‘Kobold’ is an exclusively German word; originally it meant ‘einen guten Hausgeist’, but over time developed the sense of a ‘neckischen Geist’, capable of both good and evil. In contrast, ‘farfadet’, a noun of langue d’oc provenance, is an entirely beneficent spirit, which is closely linked to the more commonly used term, ‘fée’. An analysis of ‘Kobold’, ‘farfadet’, and ‘lutin’ reveals not only pertinent etymological differences, but also telling divergences in their respective connotative capacities. The ambivalence of ‘Kobold’ strikes a Mephistophelean note and is typically Goethean. Only Nerval demonstrates an understanding of these subtleties, in the substitution of ‘Kobold’ for ‘farfadet’ in 1840. In his choice of the latter in 1828 he provided a domesticating translation that he clearly found unsatisfactory, as indeed it is. In the absence of a suitably ambivalent French version of ‘Kobold’, Nerval reverted to the original German noun, switching from his earlier tactic of attempting to domesticate the word, to the ultimate in foreignising ‘translation’ — the insertion of an unaltered element from the source text. This seemingly paradoxical approach to ‘translation’ can be an effective means of cross-cultural communication: context allows, to a degree, for the understanding of isolated, foreign lexical items; moreover, the foreign word lends the translated work an exotic and mysterious air.

There are instances of the French translators’ displaying a foreignising approach,

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despite the above-noted pressure to domesticate foreign literary texts in early nineteenth-century France. The complexity of the translation process, however, frequently highlights the arbitrariness of the domesticating/foreignising distinction. Stapfer and Nerval employ the tactic of avoidance in their interpretations of the following song, sung by the students in ‘Auerbachs Keller’; Sainte-Aulaire departs significantly from Goethe’s lexis, but manages to converge with his source text in another manner, thus revealing that certain aspects of a translation may foreignise, while others may domesticate:

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ALLE (singen) Uns ist ganz kannibalisch wohl, 
Als wie fünfhundert Säuen! 
(MA, vi/I, 598, l. 2293)

TOUS chantent. 
Nous nous en donnons à cœur joie; 
Nous buvons, nous buvons, buvons, 
Comme cinq-cents cochons! 
(Stapfer, 1823, p. 107)

(Ils boivent à plusieurs reprises et chantent tous à la fois) 
Mille bombes! Quel plaisir! 
Buvons et faisons vacarme 
Comme cinq cents gros canons. 
(Sainte-Aulaire, 1823, p. 115)

TOUS, chantent. 
Nous buvons, buvons, buvons, 
Comme cinq cents cochons. 
(Nerval, 1828, p. 143; Nerval, 1840, p. 162)

Nerval is guided by Stapfer; both, however, avoid Goethe’s highly expressive adjective ‘kannibalisch’, a colloquial term for ‘rough’ or ‘uncouth’. Unlike the others, Nerval also omits the idea of ‘uns ist […] wohl’. There is no ‘joie’ or ‘plaisir’ in his translation, perhaps because he wanted to keep to two lines, as in the original. More intriguing though is Sainte-Aulaire’s translation of the verse: his ‘canons’ echoes ‘kannibalisch’ phonetically; similarly, in his ‘bombes’ — though absent from the original German — his translation is in keeping with the predominance of plosives in Goethe’s lines. These pleasingly reinforce the
raucous explosiveness of the lexis — ‘bombes’, ‘vacarme’, and ‘canons’. In this respect, Sainte-Aulaire demonstrates convergence with the spirit of Goethe’s text, while departing considerably from its semantic substance.

Despite Nerval’s avowed espousal of foreignisation, a domesticating approach is apparent in his interpretation of Brander’s drinking song in ‘Auerbachs Keller in Leipzig’, as indeed it is in Stapfer’s version:

**BRANDER**

Es war eine Ratt’ im Kellernest,
Lebte nur von Fett und Butter,
Hatte sich ein Ränzlein angemäst’t,
Als wie der Doctor Luther.
(MA, vii/1, 593, l. 2126)

Un rat vivait, non d’abstinence,
En un office, où le frater
De tant de lard emplit sa panse,
Qu’on l’eût prit pour le gros Luther.
(Stapfer, 1823, p. 98)

Certain rat, dans une cuisine,
Avait pris place et le frater
S’y traita si bien que sa mine
Eût fait envie au gros Luther.
(Nerval, 1828, p. 129; Nerval, 1840, p. 151)

Tellingly, Brander’s song is not included in Sainte-Aulaire’s translation. In his prefatory comments he admits to not understanding certain sections of the *Faust* (Sainte-Aulaire, 1823, p. 25). Nerval follows Stapfer in his addition of the attributive adjective, ‘gros’, to Luther. In Goethe’s German this sense of fatness is communicated by ‘Ränzlein’, a slang term for a paunch that developed from ‘Ranzen’ (school satchel).\(^9\) In their description of Luther as ‘gros’ Stapfer and Nerval domesticate the text; in fact, the former achieves a more thorough transmission of the colloquial ‘Ränzlein’ than the latter in his choice of the word ‘panse’. The adjective ‘gros’ represents an instance of translation as explication — and also

\(^9\) *Herkunftswörterbuch*, p. 651.
reinforcement in Stapfer’s case, given his use of ‘panse’ — of unfamiliar aspects of the source culture.

Nerval’s and Stapfer’s translations of the title of the scene ‘Walpurgisnacht’ (MA, vi/i, 647) are characterised by a similar approach: both ‘explain’ the German noun by ‘Nuit de sabbat’ (Stapfer, 1823, p. 188) and ‘Nuit du sabbat’ (Nerval, 1828, p. 255; Nerval, 1840, p. 243) Sainte-Aulaire omitted the ‘Walpurgisnacht’ and ‘Walpurgisnachtstruam’ scenes entirely from his generally more domesticating translation. It would seem he was not alone in his wariness of the ‘bizarre’ scene ‘Walpurgisnacht’, at least with respect to its title. Nerval again follows Stapfer’s lead here. Though not entirely approving of these scenes, in his ‘Notice sur la vie et les ouvrages de Goethe’ Stapfer was critical of Sainte-Aulaire’s omitting them in his translation of Faust:

M. Sainte-Aulaire en a fait […] une traduction nouvelle, écrite avec cette élégante facilité qui caractérise son talent, mais avec une liberté trop grande peut-être. Comme tous les produits de la nature, les œuvres de génie ont leurs aspérités, leurs défauts, que chacun remarque: mais à les en purger, lorsqu’on n’est pas l’auteur, ne risque-t-on pas de les rendre pires? (Stapfer, ‘Notice’, 1825, p. 81)

In general, Stapfer displays much more openness than Sainte-Aulaire to new aesthetic developments, as the following reference to the rise of Romanticism in France demonstrates:

Alors tombèrent les unes sur les autres toutes les règles du théâtre français, empruntées même très arbitrairement à l’imitation de l’art antique, devaient finir avec elle; et à leur place parurent les règles de cette nouvelle poétique, issue de la poésie instinctive du moyen âge, et en quelque sorte moulée sur ses formes.’ (Stapfer, ‘Notice’, 1825, pp. 50-51)

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10 According to Germanic folklore, Walpurgisnacht, or the Witches’ Sabbath, occurs on the night of 30 April, the eve of the feast of St Walpurga. Witches are said to meet on the Brocken in the Harz Mountains to pay homage to Satan. See Ulrich Gaier, Kommentar zu Goethes ‘Faust’ (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2002), p. 111.
Contemporary Cultural Tensions: Lingering Neoclassical Aesthetic Values and Incipient Romantic Values

Nineteenth-century French anxieties regarding threats to the ‘supremacy’ of their culture were not limited to original foreign works; the introduction of translated foreign literature into France was still controversial, particularly if its provenance was d’outre Rhin. Foreign cultures were categorised hierarchically, and at the time of the publication of Nerval’s first Faust translation, German literature was not assigned a high ranking. This was changing slowly; even the concurrent, late arrival of Romanticism did not dispel the French attachment to neoclassical aesthetics, and it is within the struggle between these two great cultural movements that the act of translating Goethe’s Faust into French in the first half of the nineteenth century must be considered.

The form of a translation, as well as its content, might have been redolent with neoclassical or Romantic significance in this culturally sensitive period in France; the choice of prose over verse as the means of translating foreign poetry avoided direct comparisons with, and challenges to, the French canon. Neoclassicist outrage notwithstanding, the early French Romantics’ affront to French literary traditions was generally rather tame.11 The association of verse translations with the staid traditions of neoclassical aesthetics and prose translations with an avant-gardist, revolutionary agenda in the form of French Romanticism is clearly an inadequate interpretation of contemporaneous cultural developments; this assessment does, however, have a broad validity.

Tensions between these two cultural movements are implicit in Sainte-Aulaire’s pronouncement in the preface to his Faust translation: ‘j’ai cru devoir débarasser le texte de ce jargon d’alchimie.’ His simultaneous aversion to, and admiration for, Goethe’s play

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11 La poésie allemande, p. 18.
recalls Madame de Staël’s ambivalence towards *Faust*: on the one hand she was clearly sufficiently impressed by the work to engage in a textual analysis and a partial translation of it; yet she also demonstrated an aversion to certain aspects of Goethe’s text. Interestingly, both de Staël and Sainte-Aulaire elected to use mainly prose rather than verse in their incomplete translations of *Faust*; it is surprising that the translators with the most conservative attitude to Goethe’s play should choose the more radical, ‘Romantic’ approach to translation. A somewhat conflicted attitude towards Goethe’s *Faust* is evinced by de Staël’s following declaration in *De l’Allemagne*:

Certes, il ne faut y chercher ni le goût, ni la mesure, ni l’art qui choisit et qui termine, mais si l’imagination pouvait se figurer un chaos intellectuel, tel que l’on a souvent décrit le chaos matériel, le *Faust* de Goethe devrait avoir été composé à cette époque.12

She was perplexed that an author as erudite and accomplished as Goethe should have included ‘tasteless’ scenes in his writing:

Il serait véritablement trop naïf de supposer qu’un tel homme ne sache pas toutes les fautes de goût qu’on peut reprocher à sa place; mais il est curieux de connaître les motifs qui l’ont déterminé à les y laisser, ou plutôt à les y mettre.13

De Staël is distracted by questions of ‘goût’ in *Faust*, and consequently misses the point, as indeed does Sainte-Aulaire in the introduction to his translation. They neglect the wider, sublime significance of Goethe’s ‘tasteless’ metaphors and imagery in *Faust*. Essentially, it is Goethe’s use of oppositional metaphors illustrating the dynamism of dialectical relationships, such as the interaction of lingering and striving, which poses problems for the French writers. Furthermore, this conservative distaste curtails poetic creativity, as it not only proscribes the inclusion of certain topics or material, but it also restricts their use as metaphorical communication. In a sense there is a strongly didactic aspect to Goethe’s interpretation of the Faust myth which exceeds the traditional didacticism of the cautionary

12 De Staël, *De l’Allemagne*. I, 343.
13 Ibid., p. 366.
tale, and which serves as an apposite vehicle for his ideology. In this regard de Staël and Sainte-Aulaire reveal the superficiality of their understanding of Goethean thought, or their resistance to it.

Sometimes it is the translators’ timbre that diverges from the Goethean paradigm: in Nerval’s rendering of Mephistopheles’ challenge to Der Herr, a divergent register is apparent, especially in his 1840 translation:

**MEPHISTOPHELES**

Was wettet ihr? den sollt ihr noch verlieren,
Wenn ihr mir die Erlaubnis gebt,
Ihn meine Straße sacht zu führen!

(Stapfer, 1823, p. 22)

**MEPHISTOPHELES**

Que gagez-vous? Celui-là, vous le perdrez encore! Pourvu que vous me donniez permission de le conduire tout doucement par mes voies.

(Sainte-Aulaire, 1823, p. 44)

**MEPHISTOPHELES**

Voulez-vous parier que je vous enlève encore celui-là? Laissez-moi seulement exercer sur lui mon industrie.

(Nerval, 1840, p. 88).

The structure ‘voulez-vous…’ is more polite than the direct and brusque ‘was wettet ihr…?’.

Notably, in his translation of 1840 Nerval adapts Sainte-Aulaire’s vocabulary and syntax.

While diverging from Goethe’s direct question, Nerval’s use of the imperative in his translation of 1828 approaches the spirit of the original German. One might consider Nerval’s later translation to be tamer, more polite, than his first translation of 1828. Perhaps his youth and contemporaneous cultural developments in France contributed to its being a more ‘Romantic’ translation than his revised version of 1840: the lycéen with a questionable knowledge of German somehow overcoming his linguistic limitations to produce a
masterpiece is consonant with such an interpretation.

Nonetheless, in both 1828 and 1840 Nerval occasionally omitted sections of Goethe’s original text. When faced with a particularly difficult line, a possible tactic available to a translator is simple avoidance; omissions in translations are often as informative as additions:

MEPHISTOPHELES Nun Fauste träume fort, bis wir uns wiedersehn. (MA, vi/1, 576, l. 1525)

MEPHISTOPHELES À présent, mon cher Faust, rêve tant que tu voudras: jusqu’au revoir! (Stapfer, 1823, p. 72)

Both Nerval (in 1828 and 1840) and Sainte-Aulaire omit Mephistopheles’ parting words in this scene. When working on his own translations of Faust Nerval would seem to have used Stapfer’s translation as a template more frequently than he made a similar use of Sainte-Aulaire’s version. Therefore, the above omission is surprising and intriguing, particularly as lacunae are relatively uncommon in Nerval’s translations of 1828 and 1840. Perhaps he considered Mephistopheles’ utterance merely phatic; while it is perhaps not greatly significant per se, it does contribute to the narrative in that it foretells future interactions between Faust and Mephistopheles. Its exclusion is perhaps traceable to French neoclassicism’s adherence to the three unities of time, place and action in dramatic productions: for the neoclassically inclined Sainte-Aulaire, and possibly in this instance even the more versatile Nerval, the combination of a devil, a dreaming magician, and reference to a future beyond twenty-four hours, was perhaps overwhelming.

With this in mind it is noteworthy that Nerval’s adaptation for the stage of Victor Hugo’s Han d’Islande in 1829 should reduce the depiction of events from the thirteen days of the original novel to two days in the drama. Furthermore, Nerval respected the melodramatic convention of presenting a narrative in three acts. In fact, as Jacques Bony
points out, in his adaptation of Han d’Islande, ‘Gérard s’efforce [...] de resserrer son action
dans une unité de temps acceptable même par un classique’.14 Yet in many respects Hugo’s
novel could hardly have been more incongruent with the tenets of neoclassical drama;
unsurprisingly Nerval avoided the scene in which Han decapitates his son and drinks blood
from the skull, recounting rather than depicting it in his adaptation. The mingling of what
might be considered neoclassical and Romantic aesthetics in this early stage adaptation of
Nerval’s is telling: this work was undertaken during a time of considerable cultural change
and conflict; his richly varied writing style is not, however, only attributable to the
contemporary cultural milieu but also to his personal background and esoteric reading. The
mixing, often involving the combination of a style that recollects eighteenth-century
elegance with dark subject matter, is an essential characteristic of Nerval’s work.15

Of the three French translators under consideration in this study, Sainte-Aulaire
expresses his allegiance to neoclassical aesthetics most explicitly and demonstrates it most
consistently. Besides the ‘Walpurgisnacht’ and ‘Walpurgisnachtstraum’ scenes, he omits the
whole of the ‘Hexenküche’ scene in which Faust and Mephistopheles, in search of a
rejuvenating potion, engage with the eponymous witch and bizarre animals. The language
here is often opaque, as the inhabitants of the kitchen cast spells, prepare potions, and utter
curses. His explanation of this omission in his ‘Notes sur Faust’ reveals his exasperation at
the impenetrability of Goethe’s scene; it also exudes neoclassical dogma:

J’ai dû renoncer à traduire plusieurs passages, et notamment deux scènes assez étendues,
parce qu’il m’a été impossible de les comprendre. Un grand nombre de phrases ne me
présentaient aucun sens, et l’intention générale de la scène ne pouvait me mettre sur la voie
car il m’était également impossible de la découvrir. On trouvera ces deux scènes dans les
notes: je les emprunte à la traduction d’un jeune littérateur plein de mérite, qui n’a pas été
rebuté par des difficultés contre lesquelles je n’ai pas eu le courage de lutter. J’ajouterai

15 La poésie allemande, p. 18.
même que l’essai de de M. Albert S..., a été pour moi un nouveau motif de découragement: j’ai reconnu dans sa traduction une parfaite connaissance de la langue allemande. Tout ce qui a un sens a été saisi et traduit; cependant l’ensemble ne me paraît pas beaucoup plus clair en français qu’en allemand. (Sainte-Aulaire, 1823, pp. 29-30)

Though not referring directly to *Faust*, Stapfer displays a similar inclination in the ‘Avant-propos’ to his translations entitled Goethe’s *Œuvres dramatiques*: ‘Nous avons exclu de notre recueil les pièces de circonstances, opéras, élogues dramatiques et autres bagatelles qui eussent grossi le théâtre de Goethe’ (Stapfer, 1823, Avant-propos).

Sainte-Aulaire’s antipathy towards obscurity in Goethe’s *Faust* notwithstanding, when the sense of the original is clear and unambiguous Sainte-Aulaire often provides the most literal translation of *Faust*, as his version of Valentin’s dying exclamation following his duel with Faust and Mephistopheles demonstrates:

`VALENTIN (fällt) O weh!` (MA, VI/I, 643, l. 3711)

`VALENTIN tombe. Oh!` (Stapfer, 1823, p. 181)

`VALENTIN tombe. Oh, malheur!` (Sainte-Aulaire, 1823, p. 173)

`VALENTIN tombe. O ciel!` (Nerval, 1828, p. 247; Nerval, 1840, p. 237)

There is a more neoclassical nuance to Valentin’s final exclamation in Nerval’s translation. While Stapfer avoids the translation of ‘weh’ into French, and Sainte-Aulaire chooses the more literal ‘malheur’, Nerval diverges from Goethe’s German in his addition of a religious aspect to Valentin’s dying words. Moreover, the vocative phrase ‘O ciel’ is grammatically and syntactically similar to Goethe’s German, but with the addition of ‘ciel’ Nerval strongly evokes French neoclassical vocabulary.¹⁶

Similarly evocative is the French translators’ interpretation of Gretchen’s moving

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¹⁶ Consider, for instance, its prevalence in one of the exemplary texts of French neoclassicism, *Phèdre*: Racine, *Théâtre complet*, ed. by Jean-Pierre Collinet, 2 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1982), II, 290, 291, 309, 326: *PHEDRE Ciel! que lui vais-je dire? et par où commencer?* (Act 1, Scene 3); *ŒNONE Juste ciel! tout mon sang dans mes veines se glace!* (Act 1, Scene 3); *PHEDRE Ciel! comme il m’écoutait! Par combien de détours (Act 3, Scene 1); ‘Quel coup de foudre, ô ciel! et quel funeste avis!’ (Act 4, Scene 5).
statement in the final scene of *Faust I*, ‘Kerker’:

MARGARETE Zum Blutstuhl bin ich schon entrückt. (MA, VI/I, 673, l. 4592)

MARGUERITE Me voici déjà enlevée sur l’échafaud. (Stapfer, 1823, p. 230)

MARGUERITE Déjà la hache est levée sur ma tête. (Sainte-Aulaire, 1823, p. 188)

MARGUERITE Je suis déjà enlevée sur l’échafaud. (Nerval, 1828, p. 311; Nerval, 1840, p. 280)

The translation of ‘Blut’ presented the French translators with difficulties. Goethe is evidently referring to the scaffold, but his more shocking and violent ‘Blutstuhl’ allows for no euphemistic hedging regarding Margarete’s fate. The plainer ‘Schafott’ — the equivalent of the French ‘échafaud’ — would have sufficed, but it lacks the impact of ‘Blutstuhl’; in avoiding this resonant noun Stapfer and Nerval reduce the crucial poetic quality of the original work. However, something of the orginal’s visual richness is captured by Sainte-Aulaire’s reference to the ‘hache […] levée sur ma tête’, even though he avoids ‘Blut’.

Despite neoclassicism’s and Romanticism’s frequent elusiveness, their flavours are often discernible in the French translators’ diction. In fact, a translation offers a greater prospect of their detection than an original text, for the former’s salient divergences from the latter invite comparison and investigation. The following phrase, part of an exchange between townspeople on their way to the Easter celebrations of ‘Vor dem Tor’, demonstrates Nerval’s skill in nuancing Goethe’s language to create a desired mood or effect:

VIERTER Das beste Bier. (MA, VI/I, 557, l. 815)

UN QUATRIEME La meilleure bière. (Stapfer, 1823, p. 44)
Although this represents a further instance of Nerval’s translating a line from Goethe’s _Faust_ in the same way as Sainte-Aulaire, his preference for ‘plus forte’ with reference to alcohol is notable; it is a motif that Nerval would emphasise in his _Faust_ translations, as will be discussed below. The wilder state suggested by the adjective ‘forte’ provides a more Romantic nuance to his translation, reinforcing the sense of abandon in the scenes of revelry that follow. Sainte-Aulaire’s translation, though preceding Nerval’s, arguably does not warrant such a description for it is not consistent in its divergences from Goethe’s German. Moreover, the periphrastic language of Sainte-Aulaire’s _Faust_ translation frequently demonstrates a failure to engage adequately with the nuances and complexities of the source text. In other words, he demonstrates little in the way of a focused rewriting of Goethe’s _Faust_. On the contrary, he would seem to have lacked the poetic talent and insight to recreate it, whereas Nerval possessed these qualities in abundance; as Haskell Block states, ‘translation in the hands of gifted writers is not reproduction but creation.’\(^{17}\)

Greater alcoholic potency and increased intoxication in Nerval’s translations are not limited to the revelry of ‘Vor dem Tor’, but are also discernible in the scene ‘Nacht’. In fact this greater insobriety is not restricted to Nerval’s translation: all three of the French translators suggest this to some degree. Often it is a relatively minor lexical difference between source text and translation that conveys significantly divergent connotations:

_Faust_ Schon glüh’ ich wie von neuem Wein (MA, vi/l, 548, l. 463)

FAUST On dirait qu’une liqueur spiritueuse coule dans mes veines et me brûle. (Stapfer, 1823, p. 30)

FAUST Une vie nouvelle, jeune, pure, heureuse, circule avec mon sang. (Sainte-Aulaire, 1823, p. 4)

FAUST Déjà je pétille comme une liqueur nouvelle. (Nerval, 1828, p. 32; Nerval, 1840, p. 94)

The simile differs slightly from Goethe in Nerval’s translations. Following Stapfer’s example, in Nerval’s translations ‘Wein’ becomes a ‘liqueur’. The latter is stronger and more intoxicating than the former; consequently one might construe Nerval’s Faust as wilder and less in control than Goethe’s. At the very least, it would seem that Nerval favoured Stapfer’s divergence from Goethe. However, Goethe’s Bacchic simile contains the preposition ‘von’ which clarifies that it is wine’s effects that are being used in the trope; in contrast there is nebulosity in Nerval’s imagery: is it the visual glow of the liquor or the internal, perhaps infernal, glow from its effects to which he refers? Saint-Aulaire reduces the poetry of the line; his more prosaic metaphor involving life and blood approaches cliché.

In contrast, in his interpretation of Faust’s supercilious disdain at the beginning of the scene, ‘Hexenküche’, Nerval again displays his subtlety:

FAUST Hat die Natur und hat ein edler Geist
Nicht irgend einen Balsam ausgefunden?
(MA, vi/i, 600, l. 2345)

FAUST Le baume est-il donc une chose si rare, que la nature n’en puisse offrir, qu’un Esprit surhumain n’en puisse trouver une goutte, à verser sur mes plaies? (Stapfer, 1823, p. 111)

FAUST Se peut-il que la nature et qu’un esprit supérieur n’aient point un baume capable d’adoucir mon sort? (Nerval, 1828, p. 149; Nerval, 1840, p. 167)

Both Stapfer and Nerval bring a sense of personal despair to Faust’s frustration that is absent from the original German. The sense of the former’s ‘verser sur mes plaies’ is inherent, but not explicit, in Goethe’s metaphor ‘Balsam’. In addition to Nerval’s personalisation of Faust’s discontent, he adds a note of doom, for he seeks long-term relief from his existential angst. His fatalistic appeal contrasts with Stapfer’s more mundane ‘plaies’ as a metaphor of
Faust’s suffering. In other words Nerval displays a pessimistic resignation in his interpretation of Faust’s complaint, evoking the Romantic concept of the poète maudit.

However, the most salient divergence from the Goethean Faustian paradigm in the French translations under consideration is their failure to communicate the ‘energy’ of oppositions that drives synthesis and reconciliation in the German text. There could hardly be a clearer example of this than in Faust’s attempts to translate the opening of St John’s Gospel; tellingly, this scene was among the most problematic for Sainte-Aulaire, as he explains in appended notes on his translation: ‘Je n’ai pas pu me résoudre à mettre ce passage, celui qui précède et celui qui suit dans le corps de la traduction, parce que je n’y ai vu que du galimatias’ (Sainte-Aulaire, 1823, p. 192). This strongly worded criticism reveals more about the translator than it does about the author of the scene; the highly pejorative ‘galimatias’, applied to a scene so significantly resonant, reveals Sainte-Aulaire’s inadequate understanding of Goethe’s Faust and his inhibitions concerning its more controversial aspects.

Censorship and Self-Censorship in the French Translations of Goethe’s Faust

The French translators of Faust were working under harsher constraints than those that confronted Goethe when he wrote the original work. In his translations of the ballad ‘Bauern unter der Linde’ from the scene ‘Vor dem Tor’ Nerval converges formally with Goethe, replicating his rhyme scheme: aabccddb| aabccddb|aabccddb|aabccddb. The ballad form allowed for something of a rapprochement between French and German prosody; ballads had been largely anachronistic in both Germany and France until the early nineteenth century, though Herder’s enthusiasm for this medieval form had already instigated a reversal of
fortune in Germany. Similarly, in France there had been a recent revival of the ballad following its decline and unpopularity during neoclassicism’s predominance in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

In terms of content, however, Nerval provides consistently divergent translations of Goethe’s ballad in certain respects, as the comparison of his, Stapfer’s, and Sainte-Aulaire’s interpretations with the German poem demonstrates:

Der Schäfer putzte sich zum Tanz,
Mit bunter Jacke, Band und Kranz,
Schmuck war er angezogen.
Schon um die Linde war es voll;
Und alles tanzte schon wie toll.
Juchhe! Juchhe!
Juchheisa! Heisa! He!
So ging der Fiedelbogen.

Er drückte hastig sich heran,
Da stieß er an ein Mädchen an
Mit seinem Ellenbogen;
Die frische Dirne kehrt’ sich um
Und sagte: nun das find’ ich dumm!
Juchhe! Juchhe!
Juchheisa!! Heisa! He!
Seid nicht so ungezogen.

Doch hurtig in dem Kreise ging’s,
Sie tanzten rechts sie tanzten links
Und alle Röcke flogen.

Sie wurden rot, sie wurden warm
Und ruhten atmend Arm in Arm,
Juchhe! Juchhe!
Juchheisa! Heisa! He!
Und Hüft’ an Ellenbogen.

Und tu mir doch nicht so vertraut!
Wie mancher hat nicht seine Braut
Belogen und betrogen!
Er schmeichelte sie doch bei Seit’
Und von der Linde scholl es weit:

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Nerval’s translation of ‘Bauern unter der Linde’ is more innocent, less erotic than either Goethe’s original ballad or Stapfer’s and Sainte-Aulaire’s versions. In the original German, the lascivious shepherd approaches a ‘frische Dirne’; the dancing couples become ‘rot’ and ‘warm’; and the final stanza contains the reproof ‘Und tu mir doch nicht so vertraut!’ and a reference to sexual infidelity: ‘Wie mancher hat nicht seine Braut Belogen und betrogen!’

The equivalent French versions capture much of this sense but also differ notably in their emphases. Stapfer provides ‘Une jeune fillette’ and ‘Robes volaient en tête | Tous les fronts étaient enflammés’; ‘Allons, point de ces privautés! | — Fi! point d’épouse à mes côtés!’ (Stapfer, 1823, p.50). Sainte-Aulaire departs strikingly — giving in fact close to an antonymous translation — from Goethe in rendering ‘die frische Dirne’ as a ‘fille à l’air prude’ before embracing the ballad’s erotic sentiment: ‘L’air fait voltiger les jupons, | Le feu monte à chaque visage’; ‘—Finissez; plus d’agacerie; | Otez votre main, s’il vous plaît’ (Sainte-Aulaire, 1823, pp. 68-69). Though Nerval also conveys this sense in his translation of the final stanza ‘—Ne me touchez donc pas ainsi! | —Paix! ma femme n’est point ici.’ [these lines are identical in his translations of 1828 and 1840] and in ‘Et les robes volaient en l’air’ and ‘Le rouge leur montait au front’ [the same in both translations]’, in both 1828 and 1840 his construction of the ‘frische Dirne’ as a ‘fille’ diverges from Goethe’s German and resembles Stapfer’s earlier translation, but an even greater sense of innocence is communicated by the ‘fille’ referring to Goethe’s lecherous shepherd as ‘un garçon’ (Nerval, 1828, pp. 62-63; 1840, pp. 111-12).

In the greater restraint of Nerval’s translation there is caution; this circumspection is
a common reaction to censorship and also a typical methodology that translators employ when writing under such pressure. As Francesca Billiani points out: ‘in anticipating the censorial response the author-translator […] engage[s] in self-censorship in order to conform to the regime’s restrictions.’20 Although she refers to the more extreme censorship in Germany under National Socialism, the issue of self-censorship is relevant to all translation, even though the consequences of transgression may be in no way comparable to those under dictatorial regimes. A prophylactic approach to translation might arise from commercial considerations, as well as from ideological pressure. In the widespread omission in his Faust translation of the Goethean paradigm of dialectical, complementary interaction, Nerval perhaps anticipated a negative reaction from French audiences to the mingling of entertainment and serious thought. His reluctance to combine the two to a Goethean degree suggests a stricter adherence to the demarcation of genre than the German demonstrates in Faust.

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2.3 COMMUNICATION BARRIERS: THE DIFFICULTIES OF TRANSLATING
GOETHE’S FAUST INTO FRENCH

Linguistic Barriers to Translation: Inherent Difficulties in the Translation of German into French

The greatest hindrance to cross-cultural communication is languages’ ‘natural’ differences.

Goethe described it in conversation with Kanzler von Müller in 1827 as approaching the ‘untranslatable’:

Beim Übersetzen muß man sich nur ja nicht in unmittelbaren Kampf mit der fremden Sprache einlassen. Man muß bis an das Unübersetzbare herangehen und dieses respectieren; denn darin liegt eben der Werth und der Character einer jeden Sprache. (WA V, 6, 265)

Goethe simultaneously promulgates foreignisation in translation and acknowledges, indirectly, the inevitability of translation loss. However, he was relatively free to write as he saw fit and to break prosodic rules; such inconsistency was not an option for most French translators in the first half of the nineteenth century; they were bound by rigid aesthetic conventions. Nonetheless, Nerval does demonstrate prosodic non-conformity in his translation of Faust: Jörn Albrecht notes that, for the most part, Nerval employs verse in his Faust translations only for the utterances of extraordinary characters. While the characteristic of extraordinariness in Faust is elusive on account of its ubiquity, in citing the Erdgeist character as an example of it in Nerval’s translation, Albrecht seems to mean supernatural characters.

Both the form and content of the French translations of Faust highlight cultural differences from Germany. A comparison of the first three stanzas of Goethe’s celebrated ballad, sung by Gretchen in the scene ‘Abend’, with Stapfer’s and Nerval’s first three stanzas and Sainte-Aulaire’s first two stanzas (instead of maintaining Goethe’s quatrains, he

translates the poem into octaves) proves illuminating:

MARGARETE

Es war ein König in Thule
Gar treu bis an das Grab,
Dem sterbend seine Buhle
Einen goldnen Becher gab.

Es ging ihm nichts darüber,
Er leert’ ihn jeden Schmaus;
Die Augen gingen ihm über,
So oft er trank daraus.

Und als er kam zu sterben,
Zählt’ er seine Städt’ im Reich,
Gönnt’ alles seinem Erben,
Den Becher nicht zugleich.

(MA, vi/i, 613-14, l. 2759)

MARGARETE

Il fut un roi fidèle,
Jadis au Labrador,
A qui, mourant, sa belle
Remit un vase d’or.

Il y trouvait cent charmes,
Aux festins le vidait;
Ses yeux brillaient de larmes
Alors qu’il y buvait.

De mourir quand vint l’âge,
Ses villes il compta,
Et de son héritage
Le seul vase excepta.

(Stapfer, 1823, p. 132)

MARGARETE

On conte qu’un roi de Thulé,
Qui jusqu’au tombeau fut fidèle,
Avaït un vase ciselé,
Dernier souvenir de sa belle:
Avec soin il le conservait;
Y boire avait pour lui des charmes,
Et chaque fois qu’il y buvait,
Ses yeux se remplissaient de larmes.

Et près du terme de ses maux,
Il donne au prince héréditaire
Tout, villes, domaines, châteaux,
Tout, mais non la coupe si chère.
Il commande un banquet pompeux;
Avec lui la cour y prend place,
Dans le palais de ses aïeux,
Don’t la mer baigne la terrasse.
Autrefois un roi de Thulé
Qui jusqu’au tombeau fut fidèle,
Reçut à la mort de sa belle,
Une coupe d’or ciselé.

Comme elle ne le quittait guère,
Dans les festins les plus joyeux
Toujours une larme légère,
A sa vue humectait ses yeux.

Ce prince, à la fin de sa vie,
Lègue tout, ses villes, son or,
Excepté la coupe chérie,
Qu’à la main il conserve encore.

Nerval’s rhyme scheme diverges from that found in the source text: in Goethe’s German feminine and masculine endings alternate throughout in the pattern a,b,a,b. All stanzas maintain this ballad metre, as indeed do most of Nerval’s, but his opening quatrain has the rhyme scheme a,b,b,a. His use of *rime embrassée* rather than *rime croisée* is significant as it reflects the ballad’s theme of faithfulness. The two words that ‘embrace’ in Nerval’s rhyme scheme are ‘fidèle’ and ‘belle’; the concepts of fidelity and beauty are both essential to Goethe’s retelling of the Faust myth and to ‘Der König in Thule’, ‘a song about keeping faith, both with a loved one who is dead, and with life, without which there could be no love.’\(^{23}\) It is also noteworthy that Nerval should have employed an octosyllabic metre; this ‘oldest extant French line’ was widely used by writers of *ballades* and *rondeaux* in the medieval period and maintained its popularity until the early seventeenth century. It experienced a resurgence in the eighteenth century and many nineteenth-century Romantic poets — particularly Hugo, Gautier and Banville — displayed a ‘predilection’ for the

116

metre. Though Stapfer upholds Goethe’s rhyme-scheme in all his stanzas, he shortens his lines. This results in terseness and a failure to reproduce the fluidity of the original.

Some of Stapfer’s vocabulary also diverges strikingly from the source text: Labrador is substituted for Thule, for instance. This is perhaps an attempt at domestication in the translation; in the sixteenth century this region of Canada would have been part of *Nouvelle France*; perhaps Stapfer sought to provide French readers or audiences with a more familiar, or at least culturally closer, symbol of the far north than the Germanic Thule. More pragmatically, ‘Labrador’ also rhymes with ‘or’ and the French translators seem to have been more inclined than Goethe to maintain grammatical parity in their rhyme-schemes; in the original German stanza noun and verb are rhymed: ‘Grab [...] gab’. Similar uniformity on the translators’ part is to be found in third stanza: Stapfer gives the verbs ‘compta’ and ‘excepta’ in the second and fourth lines; Sainte-Aulaire’s divergent translation rhymes the nouns ‘maux’ and châteaux’. Only Nerval mirrors Goethe’s more flexible approach to parts of speech in his rhyme-schemes, offering noun and adjective, ‘vie’ and ‘chérie’, for the German writer’s verb and noun, ‘sterben’ and ‘Erben’. Sainte-Aulaire’s, like Nerval’s, metre remains even throughout. However, in his eight-line stanzas there is an evocation of the French ballade, despite the lack of an *envoi*, which, though often considered essential to the form, was frequently omitted. Ultimately, however, Nerval captures the original verse most satisfactorily; despite possible weaknesses throughout his translation — notably his limited knowledge of the German language and a degree of reliance on Stapfer’s earlier French version of *Faust* — his interpretation of this verse reveals his poetic ability.

In the first lines of *Faust* Goethe ‘uses the stanza (in the strict technical sense of the

24 Kastner, pp. 140-42.
word), which [he] liked to employ for solemn reflections on his art.\textsuperscript{26} In addition to these aesthetic considerations, Goethe recalls and laments dead friends and relatives in ‘Zueignung’ (MA, vi/1, 994):

\begin{quote}
Ihr naht euch wieder, schwankende Gestalten,
Die früh sich einst dem trüben Blick gezeigt.
Versuch’ ich wohl euch dießmal fest zu halten?
Fühl’ ich mein Herz noch jenem Wahn geneigt?
Ihr drängt euch zu! nun gut, so mögt ihr walten,
Wie ihr aus Dunst und Nebel um mich steigt;
Mein Busen fühlt sich jugendlich erschüttert
Vom Zauberhauch, der euren Zug umwittert.

Ihr bringt mit euch die Bilder froher Tage,
Und manche liebe Schatten steigen auf;
Gleich einer alten halbverklungnen Sage
Kommt erste Lieb’ und Freundschaft mit herauf;
Der Schmerz wird neu, es wiederholt die Klage
Des Lebens labyrinthisch irren Lauf,
Und nennt die Guten, die, um schöne Stunden
Vom Glück getäuscht, vor mir hinweggeschwunden.

Sie hören nicht die folgenden Gesänge,
Die Seelen, denen ich die ersten sang;
Zerstoben ist das freundliche Gedränge,
Verklungen ach! der erste Widerklang.
Mein Leid ertönt der unbekannten Menge,
Ihr Beifall selbst macht meinem Herzen bang,
Und was sich sonst an meinem Lied erfreuet,
Wenn es noch lebt, irrt in der Welt zerstreuet.

Und mich ergreift ein längst entwöhntes Sehnen
Nach jenem stillen ernsten Geisterreich,
Es schwebet nun in unbestimmten Tönen
Mein lispelnd Lied, der Äolsharfe gleich,
Ein Schauer faßt mich, Thräne folgt den Thränen,
Das strenge Herz es fühlt sich mild und weich;
Was ich besitze seh’ ich wie im Weiten,
Und was verschwand wird mir zu Wirklichkeiten.
\textsuperscript{(MA, vi/1, 535-36, l. 1)}
\end{quote}

Goethe maintains the traditional German form of the stanza, or \textit{ottava rima}: ‘im Deutschen sind die Kadenzen teils abwechselnd weiblich und männlich und teils durchgehend

\textsuperscript{26} Beddow, p. 23.
Goethe’s lexical choices provide ‘Zueignung’ with a dynamic tone: the words ‘steigt’, ‘erschüttert’, ‘umwittert’, ‘auf’, ‘herauf’, ‘Lauf’, ‘hinweggeschwunden’, and ‘Gedränge’ contribute a sense of energy and drive that is consistent with the play’s wider ideology. The noun ‘Äolsharfe’ is also notable, for as a symbol of ‘Naturpoesie’ it contrasts strongly with the formal order of the ottava rima, thus evoking a ‘klassisch-romantische Synthese’, as Gaier states. Let us now turn our attention to Stapfer’s and Nerval’s (Sainte-Aulaire did not translate ‘Zueignung’) handling in French of the form and content of Goethe’s first lines of verse in Faust:

Vous revenez, vacillantes images!
Vous qu’autrefois j’ai pu voir et chérir,
Est-ce bien vous? est-ce là vos visages?
Illusion, dois-je t’entretenir?

Vous m’entourez! … Eh bien, de vos nuages
Descendre donc, vers moi daignez venir.
Ah! votre haleine, haleine enchanteresse,
Mon sein flétri l’aspire avec ivresse.

Vous ramenez les beaux jours de ma vie;
Mainte ombre chère approche en souriant;
Comme un feu pâle, une lampe affaiblie,
L’amour renaît, l’amour jadis brillant!

Et ce long temps usé dans la folie
Reparaît sombre, inutile, bruyant,
Avec tous ceux qui dans d’aimables heures,
Frappés de mort, quittèrent nos demeures.

Ma lyre, hélas! ne peut être entendue
Par les témoins de ses premiers accords;
Dans le cercueil avec eux descendue,
Son triste écho retentit chez les morts.

Ma douleur parle à la foule inconnue:
Son froid éloge insulte à mes efforts;
Et qui s’égaie à mon chant solitaire,
S’il vit encore, est errant sur la terre.

Mais quel délire! … Oui, mon âme s’envole
Vers le séjour des Esprits surhumains;
Plus doux cent fois que la harpe d’Eole,
Mon chant s’égare en des tons incertains;

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Je sens couler la larme qui console;
Un calme heureux succède à mes chagrins;
Ce que je tiens m’échappe et se retire,
Ce qui n’est plus redevient mon empire.
(Stapfer, 1823, pp. 5-6)

Venez, illusions! ... au matin de ma vie,
Que j’aimais à fixer votre inconstant essor!
Le soir vient, et pourtant c’est une douce envie,
C’est une vanité qui me séduit encor.
Rapprochez-vous! … c’est bien; tout s’anime et se presse
Au-dessus des brouillards, dans un monde plus grand,
Mon cœur, qui rajeunit, aspire avec ivresse
Le soufflé de magie autour de vous errant.

Des beaux jours écoutés j’aperçois les images,
Et mainte ombre chérie a descendu des cieux;
Comme un feu ranimé, parçant la nuit des âges,
L’amour et l’amitié ne repeuplent ces lieux.
Mais le chagrin les suit: en nos tristes demeures,
Jamais la joie, hélas, n’a brillé qu’à demi …
Il vient nommer tous ceux qui, dans d’aimables heures,
Ont, par la mort frappés, quitté leur tendre ami.

Cette voix qu’ils aimait résonne plus touchante,
Mais elle ne peut plus pénétrer jusqu’aux morts;
J’ai perdu d’amitié l’oreille bienveillante,
Et mon premier orgueil, et mes premiers accords!
Mes chants ont beau parler à la foule inconnue,
Ses applaudissements ne me sont qu’un vain bruit,
Et sur moi, si la joie est parfois descendue,
Elle semblait errer sur un monde détruit.

Un désir oublié, qui pourtant veut renaître,
Vient dans sa longue paix secouer mon esprit;
Mais, inarticulés, mes nouveaux chants peut-être
Ne sont que ceux d’un luth où la bise frémit.
Ah! je sens un frisson: par de nouvelles larmes,
Le trouble de mon cœur soudain s’est adouci;
De mes jours d’autrefois naissent tous les charmes,
Et ce qui disparut pour moi revit ici.
(Nerval, 1828, pp. 3-4)

Stapfer uses ‘décasyllabe commun’ with a 4//6 caesura. Nerval employs ‘l’alexandrin classique’ with its 6//6 caesura but with a rhyme scheme that recalls ottava siciliana, rather than Goethe’s ottava rima, or ottava toscana, that is that rhymes abababab rather than abababcc. The Sicilian octave has more often been used for verse addressing ‘amorous topics
of a popular nature’ than for serious reflection, such as Goethe’s combination of reminiscence and aesthetic discourse in ‘Zueignung’. Despite his departure from the German poet’s feminine-rhymed couplets at the end of each octave, Nerval displays conservatism in conforming to the rule of alternance, which demands that ‘le changement de rime corresponde à un changement de genre métrique.’

Similarly, even though the arrival of Romanticism in France heralded greater liberty in poets’ positioning of the caesura, it is striking that Nerval uses not only the alexandrine in the first lines of his earliest translation of *Faust*, but the alexandrine in its most conservative form.


In their opening efforts the two French translators converge with and diverge from

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31 Lewis, p. 139.
their source text in different respects. Stapfer is more faithful to Goethe’s form in that he maintains the original poem’s *ottava rima*, including the feminine rhymes of its couplets. His syntax is also generally closer to Goethe’s: his first line, ‘Vous revenez, vacillantes images!’ varies only slightly from ‘Ihr naht euch wieder, schwankende Gestalten’. Nerval’s ‘Venez, illusions! ... au matin de ma vie’ changes the order of the German, as well as the grammar in replacing the present indicative with the imperative — a more theatrical, attention-gaining form of address, perhaps. Stapfer’s syntax is again closer to Goethe’s (‘Ihr bringt mit euch die Bilder froher Tage’) in the opening line of the second octave: ‘Vous ramenez les beaux jours de ma vie’; whereas Nerval again reorders the line: ‘Des beaux jours écoulés j’aperçois les images’. Nonetheless, Stapfer also diverges markedly from Goethe’s syntax, and indeed sense, in certain places, as in the opening of his third octave: ‘Ma lyre, hélas! ne peut être entendue’ is a very free translation of ‘Sie hören nicht die folgenden Gesänge’. On the whole, however, his version maintains greater fidelity than Nerval’s to the source text. As noted above, Goethe’s reference to an ‘Äolsharfe’ in this the first verse of his *Faust* is significant and it might have been that Nerval’s somewhat inconsistent approach to ‘Zueignung’ stems from a desire to suggest something of the contemporary aesthetic tensions, in particular the ‘klassisch-romantische Synthese’ referred to earlier. Nerval’s characteristic combining of what might be termed neoclassical and Romantic elements in his writing, such as elegance of style and darkness and content, is discussed throughout this thesis; one might consider his surprising use of the *Alexandrin classique* and *Ottava siciliana* such an aspect: an aspect that acknowledges both parts of Goethe’s compound noun ‘Äolsharfe’. The fact remains, however, that he never again after 1828 translated ‘Zueignung’, despite several retranslations of *Faust*. D’Hulst’s explanation for this is convincing:

Gageons que la forme surannée des alexandrins, les grandes libertés prises avec le texte original, ainsi que l’intention du traducteur de resserrer la tension dramatique de la pièce l’ont dès l’édition de 1835 déterminé à supprimer cet incipit. (Nerval, 1840, p. 408, note to p. 75)
In terms of fidelity to the source text, Stapfer’s version of ‘Zueignung’ is arguably more successful, but Nerval gives a freer translation that might be regarded as either inconsistent or attuned to Goethe’s multi-layered introduction to Faust. Certainly the trends that are discernible throughout his translations of Goethe’s play are here: formal skill, an increased theatricality, and a willingness to depart markedly from his source text, despite his claims of fidelity.

He is also formally divergent in his translation of one of the most enigmatic scenes of Goethe’s Faust, ‘Hexenküche’, in which Faust and Mephistopheles visit a witch’s kitchen in search of a rejuvenating potion. In the kitchen the Witch is assisted by various animals. For the most part, the animals use ‘Kursverse’, as does the Witch when addressing them. She uses Madrigals when speaking to Mephistopheles, who uses this verse form throughout the scene. Faust’s verse ranges between four and six stresses in ‘Hexenküche’. Heterometric verse conveys the chaos and disorder of the Witch’s Kitchen: Stapfer’s and Nerval’s translations are, however, mainly in prose, other than various songs, incantations, and spells; this is consistent with the former’s overall approach, as explained in his ‘Avertissement du traducteur’, to translating Faust:

Il ne m’a point paru impossible de transporter en prose toute cette partie de l’ouvrage [the dramatic part]; et j’ai pensé que cela se pouvait faire sans trop dénaturer, ni sa physionomie générale, ni les couleurs si diverses et si tranchées qui la nuancent. Peut-être même eut-il été plus difficile de plier les vers français au ton vulgaire de certaines passages, qu’il ne l’a été d’élever la prose au ton poétique de certains autres. Il n’en va pas ainsi de la partie lyrique, qui occupe dans Faust une place assez large. On y trouve ça et là des chansons, des romances, des chants d’Esprits célestes et d’Esprits infernaux, des chœurs de sorciers et de sorcières, des formules magiques; tous morceaux d’une poésie cadencée, et dont le principal charme consiste pour la plupart, soit dans le choix du rythme et l’arrangement des vers, soit même dans la désinence des rimes. Ici je n’eusse pu me permettre la prose sans manquer au premier des devoirs d’un traducteur, la fidélité. (Stapfer, 1823, p. iii)

Nerval makes a similar dramatic/lyric distinction in his choice of prose or verse; this means that these French translators inevitably miss many of the original work’s nuances. Goethe uses many different verse forms in the dramatic sections of Faust; they have not only formal,
but narrative significance. Probably the greatest loss in this respect is the absence of a formal ‘layer’ to the utterances of the principal characters: for instance, a ‘bumpiness’ to Faust’s despairing opening monologue that is suggested by Goethe’s use of *Knittelvers*; the association of this verse form with ‘Fastnachtspiele’ and ‘Faust-Puppenspiele’; and the looseness of the madrigal, the most common form used between Faust and Mephistopheles, to reflect their distance from ‘divine perfection’.33

An analysis of some of the sections of ‘Hexenküche’ in which Stapfer and Nerval choose verse reveals different approaches on the part of the two French translators. Consider, for instance, their translations of two opaque sections of verse uttered by the monkey, or Der Kater, of the ‘Hexenküche’.34

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**DER KATER**

macht sich herbei und schmeichelt dem Mephistopheles.

O würfe nur gleich,
Und mache mich reich,
Und laß mich gewinnen!
Gar schlecht ist’s bestellt,
Und wär’ ich bei Geld,
So wär’ ich bei Sinnen.

(MA, VI/I, 601-02, l. 2394)

**LE MALE**

(Il s’approche, et caresse Méphistophélès)

O joue avec moi,
O joue, et rends-moi
Riche, comme un roi,
Et fais que je gagne!
Pauvre moi n’ai rien:
Si j’avais du bien,
Tout irait si bien!
O fais que je gagne.

(Stapfer, 1823, p. 114)

**LE CHAT**

O jouons tous deux,
Et fais ma fortune;
Un peu de pécune,
Me rendrait heureux.
O jouons, de grâce!

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33 Beddow, p. 36; *Kommentar zu Goethes Faust*, p. 28; Wagenknecht, p. 68.
34 Both Stapfer and Nerval mistranslate Goethe’s ‘Kater’, or ‘Meerkater’.
Goethe’s dimetric sestet rhymes aabccb; lines a and c have masculine rhymes, the b lines feminine rhymes. There is a sense here that form leads meaning, or as Harold Jantz puts it, of ‘rhyme taking the place of reason’;\(^{35}\) Stapfer’s entirely pentasyllabic octave rhymes aaabcccb; \textit{alternance} is observed. Though largely pentasyllabic, lines seven and eight of Nerval’s octave (the same in 1840 as 1828, with the exception of minor changes to lines 5 and 6 in the later translation: ‘Ami, jouons, de grâce! | Pauvre je ne suis rien’ (Nerval, 1840, p. 170)) are hexasyllabic and octosyllabic respectively. Nerval’s judicious rejection here of isosyllabism captures something of the ‘topsy-turvy sense’ of the animal’s ‘formula for getting rich’.\(^{36}\)

A similar formal difference in the French translations is to be found in their versions of the second enigmatic utterance by Der Kater:

\begin{verbatim}
DER KATER
Das ist die Welt;
Sie steigt und fällt
Und rollt beständig.
Hier glänzt sie sehr,
Und hier noch mehr,
Ich bin lebendig!
Mein lieber Sohn!
Halt dich davon!
Du mußt sterben!
Sie ist von Ton,
Es gibt Scherben.
(MA, vi/i, 602, l. 2401)
\end{verbatim}

\begin{verbatim}
LE MALE
Le monde est là!
Oui, c’est cela:
Gentille boule
Qui roule, roule
Monte, descend,
\end{verbatim}


\(^{36}\) \textit{Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics}, p, 1345; Jantz, p. 112.
Goethe employs dimeter in the original German version. His rhyme scheme is aabcebddede;
masculine and feminine rhymes alternate in accordance with these changes. The German poet’s
eleven lines become eighteen in Stapfer’s translation, which rhymes aabceddceffegghhhg,
adheres to the rule of *alternance*, and maintains an isosyllabic measure, this time
tetrasyllabic. Nerval’s heterometric translations in ten lines (in 1828 and 1840) seem more
appropriate to the content: in varying the syllable count between four and six, Nerval’s measure reflects the theme of fortune’s ‘instability’, ‘temporality’, and ‘fragility’.

In their versions of the Witch’s rejuvenating spell Stapfer and Nerval capture different aspects of the original:

**DIE HEXE**

*(mit großer Emphase fängt an aus dem Buche zu declamiren)*

Du mußt verstehn!
Aus Eins mach’ Zehn,
Und Zwei laß gehn,
Und Drei mach’ gleich,
So bist du reich.
Verlier’die Vier!
Aus Fünf und Sechs,
So sagt die Hex’,
Mach’ Sieben und Acht,
So ist’s vollbracht:
Und Neun ist Eins,
Und Zehn ist keins.
Das ist das Hexen-Einmal-Eins!
(WA I, 14, 124, l. 2540)

**LA SORCIERE**

*(Se met à lire dans le livre, et déclame avec beaucoup d’emphase)*

Oui, je le dis!
D’un fais-en dix,
Otes-en six,
Puis trois encor;
Et c’est de l’or.
Le reste suit:
A sept et huit,
Vingt se réduit;
Car la sorcière
Ainsi l’a dit.
Ainsi finit
Le grand mystère.
Et neuf est un,
Dix est aucun.
De la sorcière
Tel est
L’infaillible livret.
(Stapfer, 1823, pp. 121-2)

**LA SORCIERE**, avec beaucoup d’emphase, prend le livre pour déclamer.

Ami, crois à mon système:

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37 Requadt, p. 207.
Goethe’s verse is again dimetric. His rhyme-scheme is aaabbcddddeefff. That the Witch’s stanza is thirteen lines long is surely intentional, as this unlucky number reinforces the dark nature of the sinister environment. Though on first reading this verse may seem to be nonsense, it gives, as Jantz states, the number of years that the Witch’s potion will deduct from Faust’s age:

All that we need to do is first add together the numbers 1 to 10 as they exist in the normal rational world, giving us 55, and then add together the set of numbers the witch derives from them: 10, 0, 0, 0, 7, 8, 1, 0, giving us 26. The witch’s arithmetic […] tells us that Faust was fifty-five before the event and twenty-six after drinking the potion.38

Yet both Stapfer and Nerval miss this essential aspect of the Witch’s verse, thus losing the poem’s communication of the extent of Faust’s rejuvenation and its consequent narrative significance. Stapfer does not follow Goethe’s thirteen-line stanza, giving instead seventeen lines. In his rhyme-scheme he also departs from his source, rhyming abbcceeddeff. It is tetrasyllabic with the exceptions of line three which is trisyllabic (‘Otes-en six’), line sixteen which is disyllabic (‘Tel est’) and the hexasyllabic final line (‘L’infaillible livret’). These shorter metres come closer to Goethe’s dimetric incantation than Nerval’s longer lines.

In Nerval’s translation of 1840 only the ninth, hexasyllabic line differs from his 1828 version: ‘Réussiront de même’ (p. 178). The majority of his lines are heptasyllabic, though there are also pentasyllabic (‘C’est là que finit.’), tetrasyllabic (‘Si neuf est un.’) lines. In

38 Jantz, pp. 176-77.
providing a fourteen-line translation of the Witch’s spell, Nerval also misses the significance of Goethe’s having her utter thirteen lines. Nerval’s rhymes ababaacaacdeed here, and again obeys the rule of *alternance*, even though all Goethe’s rhymes are masculine, perhaps reflecting the sex of the rejuvenating potion’s recipient. In contrast, this is an aspect of the original verse that Stapfer translates into French, providing, like Goethe, only masculine rhymes.

On the whole neither Stapfer nor Nerval is entirely successful in capturing the nuances of the unusual verses of ‘Hexenküche’. Both, however, make intelligent and perceptive choices in certain respects. Nerval arguably communicates more than Stapfer of the disorderly ‘thinking’ of Der Kater in his heterometric translations of the animal’s utterances. But Stapfer tends to be the more loyal to Goethe’s rhyme schemes, at least as far as the translation of masculine and feminine rhyme is concerned; he also employs heterosyllabic verse in his translation of the Witch’s spell. However, both maintain a dedication to the rule of *alternance*, a perhaps surprisingly prescriptive approach for translations associated with the rise of Romanticism in France.

In the scene ‘Walpurgisnacht’ Goethe captures the ascent of the Brocken by Faust, Mephistopheles and the Irrlicht both in the content and the form of the verse ‘In die Traum- und Zaubersphäre’. There is an operatic aspect to it, as all three characters participate in the song (Faust and Mephistopheles sing the first strophe, the Irrlicht the second, Faust the third and the last, and Mephistopheles the fourth) (MA, vi/i, 1031, n. 648). A dizzying rhythm matches their climb; ‘their course becomes unnaturally swift’ when the Irrlicht sings its lines. But this character lives up to its ‘poetic reputation’ as Faust and Mephistopheles are led in such a confusing and disorienting manner that the very landscape seems to be moving

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39 Beddow, p. 80.
around them. Goethe achieves this effect in a number of ways: in part by the use of three voices, but also by varying the length of his strophes, and by employing trochaic tetrameter, a metre which evokes a marching rhythm. On the whole, Nerval’s translations of this verse are more successful than Stapfer’s. The comparison of source text and translations proves illuminating:

**FAUST, MEPHISTOPHELES, IRR LICHT**

*(im Wechselgesang)*

In die Traum- und Zaubersphäre
Sind wir, scheint es, eingegangen.
Führ’ uns gut und mach’ dir Ehre!
Daß wir vorwärts bald gelangen,
In den weiten öden Räumen.

Seh’ die Bäume hinter Bäumen,
Wie sie schnell vorüber rücken,
Und die Klippen, die sich bücken,
Und die langen Felsennasen,
Wie sie schnarchen, wie sie blasen!

Durch die Steine, durch den Rasen
Eilet Bach und Bächlein nieder.
Hör’ ich Rauschen? hör’ ich Lieder?
Hör’ ich holde Liebesklage,
Stimmen jener Himmelstage?
Was wir hoffen, was wir lieben!
Und das Echo, wie die Sage
Alter Zeiten, hallet wider.

Uhu! Schuhu! tönt es näher,
Kauz und Kibitz und der Häher,
Sind sie alle wach geblieben?
Sind das Molche durch’s Gesträuche?
Lange Beine, dicke Bäuche!
Und die Wurzeln, wie die Schlangen,
Winden sich aus Fels und Sande,
Strecken wunderliche Bande,
Uns zu schrecken, uns zu fangen;
Aus belebten derben Masern
Strecken sie Polypenfasern
Nach dem WANDER. Und die Mäuse
Tausendfärbig, schaarenweise,
Durch das Moos und durch die Heide!
Und die Funkenwürmer fliegen,

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40 Requadt, pp. 290-91.
41 HA, iii, 569.
Mit gedrängten Schwärme-Zügen,
Zum verwirrenden Geleite.

Aber sag’ mir ob wir stehen,
Oder ob wir weiter gehen?
Alles, alles scheint zu drehen,
Fels und Bäume, die Gesichter
Schneiden, und die irren Lichter,
Die sich mehren, die sich blähen.
(MA, vi/1, 648-51, l. 3871)

FAUST, MEPHISTOPHELES, LE FEU FOLLET (Chantant alternativem.)
Dans la sphère des mensonges,
Des chimères, des vains songes,
Nous voici, je pense, entrés.
-Sois-nous un fidèle guide!
Effleurons le sol aride,
Foulons les rocs déchirés.

Vois-tu ces pins qui se pressent,
Et dont les trones me paraissent,
Saisis d’un long tremblement,
Se fuir si rapidement?
Et ces sommets qui s’abaissent,
Et ces nuages mouvans,
Et ces pics battus des vents,
Et ces brouillards qui se fondent,
Comme ils roulent, comme ils grondent!

A travers rocs et gazon
Fuit le torrent noir de fange
Et blanc d'écume … Qu’entends-je?
Un murmure? une chanson?
Est-ce bien la voix d’un Ange?
D’Amour est-ce bien les sons?
Sons heureux que nous aimons!
L’écho de ce doux ramage,
Comme la voix d’un autre âge,
Va mourant de monts en monts.

Ouhou! chouhou! Cris funèbres,
Retentissent près de nous:
Merles, geais, corbeaux, hibous [sic],
Veillent-ils dans les ténèbres?
Qui frappe ici mes regards?
Ventres plats, longs échines.
Scorpions, serpents, lézards,
Rampent-ils sous les épines?
De toutes parts les racines,
Comme un million de bras,
S’allongent devant nos pas.
Ici, cachent une fosse,
Raboteuses, suant l’eau,
Elles tendent un réseau
Flexible, où le pied se fausse;
Là, du tronc des arbres morts
Elles s’élancent en gerbes,
Ou bien confondent aux herbes
Leurs longs filamens retors.
Et ces taupes bigarrées,
Sur la bruyère égarées,
La mousse humide grattant,
Broutant, trottant, valetant!
Et ces mouches fugitives,
Dont l’impétueux essaim
Sème sur notre chemin
Des étincelles si vives!

Dis-moi si nous resterons?
Ou si nous avancerons?
Ici tout pend, tout menace.
Vois ces pins déracinés
Qui déchirent notre face,
Et ces rochers calcinés,
Ces eaux vertes, ces feux sombres,
Et ces brouillards, et ces ombres!
(Stapfer, 1823, pp. 189-91)

FAUST, MEPHISTOPHELES, LE FEU FOLLET.
CHŒUR ALTERNATIF.
Sur le pays des chimères
Notre vol s’est arrêté,
Fais-nous avec sûreté
Voyager dans ces bruyères,
Ces rocs, ce champ dévasté,

Vois ces arbres qui se pressent,
Se froisser rapidement;
Vois ces rochers qui s’abaissent,
Trembler dans leur fondement.
Entends-tu comme le vent
Parmi ces pics souffle et crie?

Dans ces rocs, avec furie,
Se heurtent fleuve et ruisseau;
J’entends là le bruit de l’eau,
Si cher à la rêverie;
Et du ciel les tendres chants
Qu’on espère, qu’on adore,
Et l’écho, qui gronde encore,
Comme les voix des vieux temps.
Ou hou! Chou hou! Retentissent;  
Les chats-huans, les geais unissent  
L’accord plaintif de leurs voix:  
Mais sont-ils seuls dans ces bois?  
Non; grands os, longues échines,  
Salamandres flamboyants,  
Et tortueuses racines,  
Glissent comme des serpens.  
Ces nœuds de bois qui s’enlacent,  
Comme un polype aux cent bras,  
Partout arrêtent mes pas.

Des souris courent et passent,  
Ayant soin de se cacher,  
Dans la mousse du rocher.  
Là, des mouches fugitives  
Nous précèdent par milliers,  
Et d’étincelles si vives  
Illuminent les sentiers.

Mais quels menaçans passages  
Dis-moi donc si nous restons,  
Ou bien si nous avançons:  
Là, de perfides branchages,  
Égratignent nos visages,  
Là, ce follet incertain  
Nous détournent du chemin.  
(Nerval, 1828, pp. 258-59)

FAUST, MEPHISTOPHELES, LE FEU FOLLET.  

Chœur alternatif.  

Sur le pays des chimères  
Notre vol s’est arrêté:  
Conduis-nous en sûreté  
Pour traverser ces bruyères,  
Ces rocs, ce champ dévasté,  

Vois ces arbres qui se pressent,  
Se froisser rapidement;  
Vois ces rochers qui s’abaissent  
Trembler dans leur fondement.  
Partout le vent souffle et crie!  

Dans ces rocs, avec furie,  
Se mêlent fleuve et ruisseau;  
J’entends là le bruit de l’eau,  
Si cher à la rêverie!  
Les soupirs, les vœux flottants,  
Ce qu’on plaint, ce qu’on adore …  
Et l’écho, qui résonne encore  
Comme la voix des vieux temps.
Ou hou! Chou hou! Retentissent;  
Hérons et hiboux gémissant,  
Mêlant leur triste chanson;  
On voit de chaque buisson  
Surgir d’étranges racines;  
Maigres bras, longues échines,  
Ventres roulants et rampants;  
Parmi les rocs, les ruines,  
Fourmillent vers et serpents.

A des nœuds qui s’entrelacent  
Chaque pas vient s’accrocher!  
Là des souris vont et passent  
Dans la mousse du rocher.  
Là des mouches fugitives  
Nous précèdent par milliers,  
Et d’étincelles plus vives  
Illuminent les sentiers.

Mais faut-il à cette place  
Avancer ou demeurer?  
Autour de nous tout menace,  
Tout s’émeut, luit et grimace,  
Pour frapper, pour égarer;  
Arbres et rocs sont perfides;  
Ces feux, tremblants et rapides,  
Brillent sans nous éclairer! …  
(Nerval, 1840, pp. 244-45)

Stapfer's translation differs considerably from its German source. Perhaps the most striking divergence is its increased length: Goethe’s forty-one lines and two hundred and three words become two hundred and seventy-seven words and sixty lines in Stapfer’s version. This inevitably slows the pace of the poem and its connoted quick ascent of the Brocken. In particular, Goethe’s five-line second strophe, sung by the Irrlicht, is extended to nine lines, and Mephistopheles’ strophe, the fourth of the poem, though lengthy in the original text (seventeen lines) becomes overly so in Stapfer’s twenty-seven-line interpretation, again at the expense of the vitally important pace created by Goethe. This is surprising, given the following claim in Stapfer’s ‘Avertissement du traducteur’:

Tout ce qui se chante, et en général tous les endroits du poème où le matériel de la versification entre pour beaucoup, j’ai employé ce langage pour les rendre; en conservant […] aux couplets ou stances le même nombre de vers, aux vers le même nombre de syllabes
que dans l’originel. (Stapfer, 1823, p. iv)

Furthermore, Stapfer’s second strophe tends to a tripartite rhythmical structure, which provides a different rhythm from that created by Goethe’s centrally placed caesura. French rhythms are of course ‘essentially phrasal’, rather than accentual;⁴² Stapfer’s tending to a 2+2+3 rhythm in his heptasyllabic version again produces a different effect and a ‘slower’ pace to the trio’s ascent. In contrast, Nerval, both in 1828 and 1840, has his Feu Follet sing in a rhythm that arguably comes closer to Goethe’s. Compare, for instance, the first line of each writer’s second strophe: Stapfer’s addition of ‘tu’ in his ‘Vois-tu ces pins qui se pressent’ suggests a tripartite rhythmic division, in contrast to Nerval’s two-part (4+3) rhythm ‘Vois ces arbres qui se pressent’ which is closer in this respect, and syntactically, to Goethe’s ‘Seh’ die Bäume hinter Bäumen’.

Nerval’s diction also demonstrates his poetic skill and sensitivity. In the lines ‘Dans ces rocs, avec furie, | Se heurtent fleuve et ruisseau; | J’entends là le bruit de l’eau’ the hard palatal, velar, sounds of ‘dans’, ‘rocs’ and ‘avec’ reflect phonetically the hardness of the rock to which the poem refers. Similarly, the next two lines reveal Nerval’s mastery of onomatopoeia: the combination of alveolar, labiodental, and plosive sounds makes for a good approximation of the sound of flowing water; the letter ‘s’, ‘f’, ‘b’, and ‘l’ are particularly effective in this respect. The last letter evokes a lapping, bubbling sound; it is pertinent that although he makes only minor changes to this line in his translation of 1840, he adds another letter ‘l’ in his choice of ‘mêlent’.

A further change made by Nerval in 1840 is a reduction of both lines and word count, though only from forty-four to forty-three and two hundred and one to one hundred and ninety-nine respectively, this demonstrates his ability to translate Goethe’s verse concisely: as noted above, Goethe’s original German poem is forty-one lines and two hundred and three words long, so Nerval comes very close to the number of lines, and even manages fewer

words, than are in his source text. As pointed out earlier, Stapfer exceeds both considerably in his translation. Perhaps more importantly, Nerval also reduces his second strophe from six to five lines in 1840; this matches Goethe’s treatment of a section of the poem that is essential to conveying the fast, dizzying pace of the Irrlicht going up the mountainside.

These French translations of ‘In die Traum- und Zaubersphäre’ are in keeping with the general trend that an analysis of Stapfer’s and Nerval’s interpretations of Faust reveals: though there are undoubtedly aspects of his translations for which Nerval is indebted to his predecessor, he does demonstrate in some respects the great poetic skill for which his original writing would be celebrated. Often this is subtle, such as his onomatopoeic representation of the sound of moving water, and his rhythmic structure, in other places more obvious, such as the closeness of his translation’s length to Goethe’s text. There is also further evidence of his thorough engagement with the German poem over decades; the superficially small changes, such as the phonetically resonant change from ‘heurtent’ to mêlent’, he made to ‘In die Traum- und Zaubersphäre’ in 1840 are a case in point. On close examination they reveal his artistry and his determination to provide a rich French translation of Faust.

A thorough appreciation of Goethe’s poetic technique is clearly an indispensable skill for a translator of Faust. Madame de Staël recognised that Goethe varied verse form according to the situation in Faust; she considers the German language superior to the French in its latitude. Goethe was an extraordinarily versatile poet; the German language is exploited for aural, visual, and rhetorical resonances.43 Its flexible syntax and ability to form compound nouns ease the creation of a required prosodic effect. This pliability is in evidence, for example, in Faust’s expression of affection for Margarete after she has plucked the petal from the daisy in her game of ‘he loves me, he loves me not’ in the scene ‘Garten’:

43 Mizuno, p. 31.
The morphological flexibility of the German language allows Goethe to communicate both metaphorically and concisely. The lengthy French phrases, ‘l’expression de cette fleur’, ‘la réponse de cette fleur’ and ‘la promesse de cette fleur’ by Nerval, Stapfer, and Sainte-Aulaire respectively, convey Goethe’s nominal compound ‘Blumenwort’, but only at the expense of the original’s succintness. These explicatory French phrases appear cumbersome in comparison with the pithiness of ‘Blumenwort’. Here one detects a linguistic impasse and perhaps something of what Goethe had in mind when discussing with Kanzler von Müller the importance of engaging with the ‘untranslatable’ in the translation process.

Syntactic equivalence offers one potential means of bringing a translation closer to its source text. Nerval’s alteration in 1840 of Faust’s attempt to assuage Margaret’s fear of Mephistopheles demonstrates greater fidelity to Goethe’s text than his translation of 1828:
Nerval’s superior poetic skill is again in evidence in his revised translation of 1840: his reordered syntax brings his line closer to the rhythm of Goethe’s German. The phrase ‘chère petite’ corresponds pleasingly with the German, ‘liebe Puppe’. Likewise, ‘ne crains rien’ echoes the ‘fürcht’ ihn nicht’: though at first reading Nerval’s translation of ‘ihn nicht’ by ‘ne […] rien’ appears misjudged, it does give a pleasing visual and aural parity with the original. The literal ‘ne le crains pas’ is cumbersome.

In addition to such lexical and formal difficulties, a literary translator must attempt to communicate the non-verbal significance of the source text. In this context the French translators’ handling of Mephistopheles’ offer to Faust is pertinent:
Goethe represents Mephistopheles at his most cunning in his exhortative overture to Faust; his rhetoric is suggestive of the serpent’s tempting of Adam and Eve. Goethe’s use of sibilance to capture Mephistopheles’ serpentine hissing phonically is part of his multi-layered communication of Mephistopheles’ identity and motives. Nerval’s and Stapfer’s transference of this snake-like sound to their French translations is highly accomplished; Goethe’s original German contains twenty-nine sibilants; Nerval’s and Stapfer’s twenty-one and twenty-three respectively. Sainte-Aulaire includes fewer of these sounds in his translation — eighteen, to be precise. Stapfer once again reveals his prowess as a translator. If one considers that his translation was undertaken four to five years earlier than Nerval’s; the widespread evidence of Nerval’s using Stapfer’s earlier version as the basis for his own translation; and his consistent insightfulness, it is surprising that his translation is not accorded greater recognition. Conversely, Nerval’s translation, though impressive for the precocity of its author, and its poetic virtuosity, has perhaps been overestimated for extratextual reasons, in particular the author’s later accomplishments, his literary celebrity, and his tragic, early death.

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44 Genesis 3. 5.
The Transference of Metaphor and Connotation: Evidence of Nerval’s Poetic Ability in His *Faust* Translations

The translator and the poet share many skills. In common with original creative writing, the selection of apt lexis and the communication of metaphor are vital to poetic translation. The following section investigates the French translators’ engagement with second-order meaning in *Faust* and considers the impact of Nerval’s already proven poetic ability on this aspect of the translation process; he was, after all, a published poet even prior to his work on Goethe’s *Faust* at the age of nineteen. His creative translation of metaphor and connotation is — alongside his mastery of formal technique — the most impressive feature of his *Faust* translations.

M. B. Dagut provides a relevant insight into the translation of metaphor:

> Since a metaphor in the Source Language is, by definition, a new piece of performance, a semantic novelty, it can clearly have no existing ‘equivalence’ in the Target Language: what is unique can have no counterpart. Here the translator’s bilingual competence [...] is of help to him only in the negative sense of telling him that any ‘equivalence’ in this case cannot be ‘found’ but will have to be ‘created’.45

The crucial question that arises is whether a metaphor can ever truly be translated, or whether it can only be approximated. If one concurs with Dagut’s distinction between ‘translation’ and ‘reproduction’, it is unsurprising that Nerval, a highly original and creative author, should have excelled in the communication of metaphor and connotation in his translations.

His creative virtuosity is to be found as early as Faust’s despairing monologue in the scene ‘Nacht’:

**FAUST**

Habe nun, ach! Philosophie, Juristerei und Medicin, Und leider auch Theologie! Durchaus studirt, mit heißem Bemühn. (MA, vi/1, 545, l. 354)

**FAUST**

J’ai donc tout appris; philosophie, jurisprudence, médecine, et toi aussi malheureuse

théologie! J’ai tout appris, tout étudié avec des peines infinies. (Stapfer, 1823, p. 27)

FAUST J’ai étudié la philosophie, le droit, la médecine, pour mon malheur aussi la théologie. À quoi m’ont servi tant d’efforts? (Sainte-Aulaire, 1823, p. 47)

FAUST Philosophie, jurisprudence, médecine, et toi aussi, malheureuse théologie! je vous ai donc étudiées avec grand’peine. (Nerval, 1828, p. 27)

FAUST. Philosophie, hélas! Jurisprudence, médecine, et toi aussi, triste théologie!... je vous ai donc étudiées à fond avec ardeur et patience. (Nerval, 1840, p. 91)

In contrast with Nerval, Stapfer and Sainte-Aulaire maintain Goethe’s general syntax in that the personal pronoun and auxiliary verb precede the nouns. Nerval, on the other hand, foregrounds the objects of the sentence, namely the academic disciplines, over the subject, Faust. This is consistent in his translations of 1828 and 1840; the tripartite listing of academic disciplines affords the prose a pleasing rhythm. The juxtaposition of ‘philosophie, jurisprudence, médecine’ maintains Goethe’s syntax and sibilant-heavy sounds, thus evoking once again serpentine hissing, but this time the resonant sibilance is transposed to Faust, as an echo of his negativity. With this timely and musical connotation Nerval demonstrates great insight and sensitivity; his syntactic transposition in Faust’s very first utterance is an instance of his masterly control of multisensory significance in his Faust translation of 1828. Although the syntax is slightly different in his 1840 translation, the addition of the word ‘hélas’ more closely replicating Goethe’s prosody than in the translation of 1828, its alteration only reinforces the snake-like sounds with which Faust is introduced to the reader — or even more saliently to an audience — in Nerval’s translation. It is true that Stapfer juxtaposes these same three words as Nerval, namely ‘philosophie’, ‘jurisprudence’, and ‘médecine’, but in their delay as the second idea of the first sentence the sibilant sounds are also delayed; consequently, there is not the preliminary, urgent emphasis on Faust’s closeness, both literally and metaphorically, to evil, that is to be found in Nerval’s translation.
Throughout this early scene ‘Nacht’ representations of the activity/passivity polarity recur frequently and with both microcosmic and macrocosmic points of reference. The following extract highlights the latter:

GEIST In Lebensfluten, im Tatensturm
Wall’ ich auf und ab,
Wehe hin und her!
(MA, VI/I, 549, l. 501)

L’ESPRIT Plongé dans les flots de la vie et dans le tumulte des actions, je vais et reviens, je monte et retombe sans cesse en me jouant. (Stapfer, 1823, p. 32)

L’ESPRIT Je nage dans les flots de la vie, je puise dans le vaste sein de l’éternité la mort, et toutes les actions des hommes. (Saint-Aulaire, 1823, p. 52)

L’ESPRIT Dans les vagues de l’existence,
Mon orageuse activité
Vient, ou fuit, vers les cieux s’élance,
Ou replonge avec volupté.
(Nerval, 1828, pp. 34-35)

L’ESPRIT Dans l’océan de la vie, et dans la tempête de l’action, je monte et descends, je vais et je viens! (Nerval, 1840, p. 95)

Nerval’s substitution of ‘l’océan de la vie’ for ‘les vagues de l’existence’ in his translations of 1840 and 1828 respectively is noteworthy, for he departs more markedly from Goethe’s original text in the later translation. The ‘waves’ suggest more of the dynamism, and the violence even, that is indicated by Goethe’s ‘Lebensfluten’. While undoubtedly turbulent, an ocean’s principal connotation is arguably not this aspect of its nature, as perhaps would be the case with a river, and certainly is the case with ‘flood’; rather, vastness is surely the characteristic that is commonly suggested by the word ‘ocean’. Once again, Nerval’s language in the translation of 1840 demonstrates more restraint and sobriety than the wilder, and perhaps also more energetic, lexical choices he made as a young man of nineteen in 1828. Much had changed in these twelve years; Nerval’s retranslation of Goethe’s Faust in 1840 reflects the shifting in aesthetics from the storminess of the late 1820s to the calmer cultural milieu of France in 1840. While both Sainte-Aulaire and Stapfer captured more of
the sense of Goethe’s original German in their phrase ‘les flots de la vie’, their faithful
translation is unimaginative. In contrast, Nerval attempts a more original and creative
rendering of Goethe’s text. In fact ‘océan’ communicates more of the protagonist in its
succinctness; in the vastness of the ocean Faust is alone and, most pertinently of all,
seemingly godforsaken. The poet-translator has impressed wider significance on his
translation through his adroit nuancing of a seemingly peripheral line in the poem.

Nerval displays similar subtlety in his translation of Faust’s acceptance of a drink
from an ‘alter Bauer’ in ‘Vor dem Tor’:

FAUST Ich nehme den Erquickungs-Trank. (MA, vi/i, 562, l. 991)

FAUST J’accepte, votre offre. (Stapfer, 1823, p. 51)

FAUST J’accepte avec plaisir. (Sainte-Aulaire, 1823, p. 69)

FAUST J’accepte ces rafraîchissements. (Nerval, 1828, p. 64; Nerval, 1840, p. 112)

The inclusion of a sense of ‘refreshment’ is essential in a translation of this line, if the
translator is to capture the wider sense of Goethe’s German word. In many respects ‘Vor dem
Tor’ represents an opposition to the preceding scene, ‘Nacht’; whereas the latter is centred on
darkness and despair, the former focuses on light and renewal. Alongside the ultimate
symbol of revival, Easter, there are numerous motifs of rebirth and reinvigoration; the
Eucharistic ‘refreshing drink’ is a clear example of this. Furthermore, the light and life
represented by ‘Vor dem Tor’ s’ revivifying draught is the antithesis of the darkness and
death of ‘Nacht’ s’ ‘Schlummersäfte’ (MA, vi/i, 554, l. 693). Goethe advances nature and
human interaction as the true ‘refreshments’ or revivers in ‘Vor dem Tor’; by using the plural
‘ces refraîchissements’, Nerval once again reveals his poetic acuity.
Further evidence of Nerval’s skilled communication of metaphor is discernible in ‘Studierzimmer II’, the scene in which Mephistopheles disguises himself as Faust and cynically misadvises, to comic effect, a naïve young student on the relative worth of various academic disciplines. Stapfer’s and Nerval’s translation of the student’s seemingly phatic comment demonstrates the successful transference — and indeed intensification — of Goethe’s original metaphor into French:

*SCHÜLER* Es ist ein gar beschränkter Raum. (MA, VI/I, 586, l. 1884)

*L’ECOLIER* C’est un espace étranglé. (Stapfer, 1823, p. 86)

*L’ECOLIER* Ce lieu-ci ne me plaît guère, je me trouve trop à l’étroit entre ces murailles. (Sainte-Aulaire, 1823, p. 98)

*l’ECOLIER* C’est un espace bien étranglé. (Nerval, 1828, p. 113; Nerval, 1840, p. 141)

In the context of Faust’s study, Stapfer’s and Nerval’s adjective ‘étranglé’ is apt. In earlier scenes the reader has learned of Faust’s despair at his cloistered lifestyle. In his opening lament he likens his study to a tomb; this metaphor is continued when he leaves its darkness and enters the light of Easter Day in the scene ‘Vor dem Tor’. Consequently, ‘étranglé’ was a perceptive choice of word on Stapfer’s part; as the earlier translator of Goethe’s *Faust* the credit for this perspicacious description of Faust’s study lies with him rather than with Nerval. However, Nerval had the good poetic sense to use the word in his translations. Furthermore, French and German grammatical rules notwithstanding, the syntax is similar to Goethe’s in Nerval’s and Stapfer’s version of the line. Although Sainte-Aulaire is successful in communicating the claustrophobic aspect of Faust’s study, his prolixity mars his translation.

Stapfer and Nerval demonstrate their perceptiveness again in their translations of Gretchen’s actions in the scene ‘Garten’:
In this stage direction the French translators’ decision to Gallicize the name Margarete or Gretchen proves fortunate; it allows for greater polysemic communication than the original German. The German ‘Sternblume’ signifies a specific variety of daisy — the Michaelmas daisy. In Gretchen’s plucking of the petals from a ‘star’ flower a sense of her tempting fate — or ‘the stars’ — is surely suggested. In Gallicizing Margarete to Marguerite the French translators maintain Goethe’s reference to fate and make the metaphor more explicit. In her plucking the petals from a daisy — in French ‘une marguerite’ — the suggestion of self-destruction is strong; this destruction by her own hand of the aptly-named flower communicates a sense of Gretchen as an active, albeit manipulated, participant in her ‘downfall’. Surprisingly, Sainte-Aulaire does not opt for this resonant noun, preferring instead to render ‘Sternblume’ as the generic and less pertinently suggestive ‘fleur’. Once again Nerval is indebted to Stapfer; besides the former’s addition of the pronoun ‘en’, which is also in Sainte-Aulaire’s translation, their lines are identical.

The issue of connotative transference between languages is also evident in this statement by Faust in the scene ‘Studierzimmer’:

**FAUST** Erst zu begegnen dem Tiere. (MA, vi/i, 569, l. 1271)

**FAUST** Premièrement, pour aborder le monstre. (Stapfer, 1823, p. 62)

**FAUST** Voltigeons autour de lui, prenons garde. (Sainte-Aulaire, 1823, p. 77)
In the original German, Goethe exploits the ambiguity of the word ‘Tier’: Faust is able to refer to the devil and his previous incarnation, the black dog, simultaneously. Stapfer’s and Nerval’s translations allow for no such wordplay; while ‘monstre’ is a viable choice of word for the devil, it does not provide a convincing description of a black dog. Certainly, a black dog that transforms itself into a devil might be so called, but its generality denies ‘monstre’ the acuity of Goethe’s ‘Tier’. Once again, Nerval chose to follow Stapfer’s interpretation of Goethe’s text. However, in the pleasing internal rhyme ‘D’abord [...] aborder’ Nerval’s formal skill surpasses that of his rivals. Sainte-Aulaire’s translation of the line captures something of the German original, but represents the greatest departure from it. Interestingly, this is one of the lines of Faust that is given an alternative translation by Sainte-Aulaire in notes to his translation; here, like Nerval and Stapfer he uses the noun ‘monstre’, albeit with the greater degree of aggression that ‘attaquer’ conveys.

In the following plea from ‘Hexenküche’, a scene not translated by Sainte-Aulaire, a similarly uninspired choice of word results in only the partial communication of a vital aspect of the source text:

FAUST Pour attaquer le monstre. (Sainte-Aulaire, 1823, p. 192 [Notes])

FAUST D’abord, pour aborder le monstre. (Nerval, 1828, p. 80; Nerval, 1840, p. 121)

FAUST O Liebe, leihe mir den schnellsten deiner Flügel,
Und führe mich in ihr Gefild!
(MA, VI/I, 603, l. 2431)

FAUST Ô amour! Prête-moi la plus rapide de tes ailes, et transporte-moi dans la région qu’elle habite. (Stapfer, 1823, p. 116)

FAUST Ô amour! Prête-moi la plus rapide de tes ailes, et transporte-moi dans sa région.
(Nerval, 1828, p. 155; Nerval, 1840, p. 172)

Nerval copies Stapfer’s translation here but makes minor changes. Their translations lack
Goethe’s concision; the word ‘Gefild’ has strong connotations of paradise or heaven, for instance in the phrases ‘die Gefilde der Seligen’, or ‘die Elysischen Gefilde’. Given Goethe’s admiration for Homer, it seems unlikely that this connotation was unintentional. The translators’ use of the mundane ‘région’ is facile and disappointing; though ‘ailes’, the translation of Goethe’s ‘Flügel’, gives a sense of ascent and thereby perhaps also an intimation that the object of Faust’s desire — Gretchen, referred to here, albeit indirectly, for the first time in the text — is metaphorically above Faust, an explicit reference to ‘Gefild’ is needed in the French translations, if the angelic, salvational aspect of this beguiling figure is to be communicated. In Faust Goethe often hints at wider themes through subtle and seemingly insignificant words or short phrases. In other words, much of his poetry originates in lexical economy. The ability to communicate complex ideas or images succinctly is an essence of poetic language; herein lies a great difficulty for a translator of poetry; if his or her goal is fidelity to the original work — and Nerval expressed such an aim in his ‘préface de mon Faust’— one might expect an attempt to mirror the connotative nuances of the original. However, the translation of second-order meaning is often problematic; a cross-cultural impasse is frequently encountered. Consequently, comparative ‘fidelity’ results from simplification, rather than from the complexities of equivalence. In this sense, the unambitious ‘région’ serves its purpose.

2.4 PERVERSIVE DIVERGENCES FROM THE GOETHEAN FAUSTIAN PARADIGM
IN THE FRENCH TRANSLATIONS OF FAUST

The Reduction of Goethean Ideology in the French Translations of Faust

Whether intentionally or not, all three of the French translators of Faust either ignored or diminished the significance of a vital and essentially Goethean element of Faust: the dynamism of dialectical relationships, or the complementarity of opposites.

Jean Malaplate emphasises Nerval’s desire to remain faithful to Goethe’s original text in his French translation of Faust; he attributes the young French translator’s inclusion of even the most challenging of scenes in his translation to this methodology. This supports the view of Nerval as an important cultural mediator between France and Germany: ‘ne fallait-il pas [...] lui être reconnaissant de la clarté relative, voire de l’élégance qu’il avait réussi à jeter sur bien d’autres endroits de l’œuvre qu’on avait quelque raison de soupçonner peu intelligibles en allemand.’47 Yet, despite Nerval’s objective of fidelity to Goethe’s text, there are many examples of his diverging from the Goethean paradigm, especially when Goethe represents the complementarity of oppositions metaphorically. Gautier describes his friend’s French translation of Faust thus: ‘le style de Gérard était une lampe qui apportait la lumière dans les ténèbres de la pensée et du mot. Avec lui, l’allemand, sans rien perdre de sa couleur et de sa profondeur, devenait français par la clarté.’48 However, the clarity of Nerval’s translation is in fact won partly at the expense of the profundity of the German original. A shibboleth of French neoclassical aesthetics, the fetishisation of ‘clarté’ could be limiting to a writer engaged in the translation of Goethe’s Faust in the first half of the nineteenth century.

48 Cited in Malaplate, p. 11.
Sainte-Aulaire’s comments in the introduction to his *Faust* translation, quoted above, demonstrate the difficulty that Goethe’s extraordinary work might cause a conservative, neoclassically inclined translator; in effect, Sainte-Aulaire concedes his inability to engage entirely satisfactorily with Goethe’s *Faust*. This lack of understanding is particularly evident in his engagement with Goethe’s dialectical philosophy. Inadequacy in this respect is a characteristic of the three French translations under discussion. And yet in his ‘Observations sur le premier *Faust*’ Nerval criticises Sainte-Aulaire for the omissions from his translation: ‘on peut […] lui reprocher les suppressions nombreuses’, before proposing that ‘il vaut mieux […] s’exposer à laisser quelques passages singuliers ou incompréhensibles, que de mutiler un chef-d’œuvre’ (Nerval, I, 243-44). Nerval’s use of the adjectives ‘singuliers’ and ‘incompréhensibles’ to describe certain scenes is noteworthy, if ambiguous: does he consider the original German scenes in such terms, or does he refer to the French translators’ attempts to translate them? For Malaplate Nerval refers here to the work of the author rather than the translator.49 As mentioned earlier, it is probable that there was an element of disingenuousness in this French misapprehension of the spirit of Goethe’s *Faust*, particularly in Nerval’s case.

The French translators’ avoidance, or perhaps ignorance, of Goethe’s dialectical symbolism is discernible from the earliest scenes of *Faust*, as their interpretations of an essential aspect of Der Herr’s final pronouncement in the ‘Prolog im Himmel’ reveal: Goethe’s ‘Das Werdende, das ewig wirkt und lebt’ (MA, vi/1, 544, l. 346) is translated as: ‘la puissance qui crée et conserve éternellement’ (Stapfer, 1823, p. 23); ‘votre activité créatrice’ (Saint-Aulaire, 1823, p. 45); ‘Dieu, qui vous a créés, toujours vous aimera’ (Nerval, 1828, p. 22); and ‘la puissance qui vit et opère éternellement’ (Nerval, 1840, p. 49).

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49 Malaplate, p. 10.
89). Stapfer’s and Nerval’s ‘la puissance’ lacks the dynamism of ‘das Werdende’ in Goethe’s German. In his translation of 1828 Nerval completely omits any reference to the crucial Goethean concept of ‘becoming’. Nonetheless, all three translators capture something of this dynamism, for instance in the words ‘vivante’, ‘crée’, and ‘activité créatrice’, albeit in a verbose, indirect manner. In his earliest translation’s lack of a sense of ‘becoming’, however, Nerval diverges from the Goethean Faustian paradigm and displays the oversimplified interpretation of the work that is often found in the French melodramatic adaptations of Faust that filled Parisian theatres in the early nineteenth century.

The following extract from Faust’s opening monologue in the scene ‘Nacht’ further demonstrates this failure to capture Goethe’s dialecticism:

FAUST Wie alles sich zum Ganzen webt,
Eins in dem andern wirkt und lebt!
(MA, vi/1, 547, l. 447)

FAUST Quel mouvement au sein de l’univers! Comme toutes les choses concourent à une même fin, et vivent l’une dans l’autre d’une même vie! (Stapfer, 1823, p. 30)

FAUST Comme tout se meut, s’agite réciproquement et concourt à l’harmonie! (Saint-Aulaire, 1823, p. 49)

FAUST Comme dans l’univers tout s’agit! Comme tout l’un dans l’autre vit et opère! (Nerval, 1828, p. 31)

FAUST Comme tout se meut dans l’univers! Comme tout, l’un dans l’autre, agit et vit de la même existence! (Nerval, 1840, p. 93)

None of the French translators wholly appreciate — or at least capture satisfactorily — the emphasis on complementarity that is essential to this pronouncement; they do express a sense of movement, and perhaps even dynamism, but they neglect or obscure the sense of destination that is in the first part of Faust’s pronouncement, ‘wie alles sich zum Ganzen webt’. This sense of development is essentially Goethean. Furthermore, Faust and
Mephistopheles are metonymic representations of complementariness; their interactions ultimately galvanise the protagonist. To an extent ‘wie alles sich zum Ganzen webt’ recalls the Lord’s explanation in the ‘Prolog Im Himmel’ that ‘wenn er [Faust] mir jetzt nur verworren dient[,] so werd’ ich ihn bald in die Klarheit führen’ (MA, vi/i, 543, l. 308). In ‘zum Ganzen’ there is a sense of the wholeness and interrelatedness of the universe, but also a sense of return, of movement towards ‘God’, and in its underlying interactions and developments an intimation of ‘providence’, or as close as the pantheistic Goethe comes to these concepts. Nerval’s 1840 retranslation captures something of this: ‘tout […] agit et vit de la même existence’. But it is vague; Stapfer’s ‘à une même fin’ is promising but is undermined somewhat by the ambiguity of the preceding verb, ‘concourent’, which is inadequate if understood as ‘concur’, or more apt — though not wholly so as it lacks the necessary cooperative aspect — if considered in the sense of ‘compete’. Once again, Sainte-Aulaire fails to demonstrate a satisfactory understanding of the metaphysical discourse that is the quintessence of Goethe’s reworking of the Fauststoff: typically Goethean interactions are far from harmonious; it is often their disharmony that is galvanising.

The French translators’ simplifying approach is often to be found in the subtext; Faust’s interrogating Mephistopheles regarding his identity in ‘Studierzimmer I’ is a prime example:

FAUST Bist du Geselle
Ein Flüchtling der Hölle?
(MA, vi/i, 570, l. 1298)

FAUST Mon ami, es-tu un échappé de l’enfer? (Stapfer, 1823, p. 62)

FAUST Es-tu un échappé de l’enfer? (Sainte-Aulaire, 1823, p. 78)
Once again Nerval adheres to Stapfer’s translation with only minor changes, perhaps to avoid word-for-word copying, but also to reproduce Goethe’s syntax in French. The French translators’ lexis is also noteworthy in that the French noun, ‘ami’, only partly captures the sense of the German word, ‘Geselle’. In his addressing Mephistopheles as ‘Geselle’, Goethe’s Faust evokes complementarity and closeness; this word’s etymology is particularly pertinent: ‘[Geselle] bedeutet eigentlich “der mit jemandem denselben Saal teilt”’. This word is entirely appropriate in the scene ‘Studierzimmer’. Given that the earlier scene, ‘Vor dem Tor’, had Faust experiencing a metaphorical rebirth, his sharing the womb-like space of his study with Mephistopheles is telling. In addition to this image of shared identity and complementarity, one also notes the closeness of the last two syllables of ‘Geselle’ to the word ‘Seele’, which suggests commonality. Despite the evocation of ‘âme’ by ‘ami’, it does not carry the richer significance of ‘Geselle’. In his omission of any sense of relationship between Faust and Mephistopheles, Sainte-Aulaire is again the most divergent translator.

Even further removed from the Goethean Faustian paradigm is Nerval’s translation of Mephistopheles’ self-description in ‘Studierzimmer I’:

**Mephistopheles**

Ein Teil von jener Kraft,
Die stets das Böse will und stets das Gute schafft.
(MA, vi/1, 571, l. 1335)

**Mephistopheles**

Une partie de cette puissance qui veut toujours le mal et fait toujours le bien.
(Stapfer, 1823, p. 64)

**Mephistopheles**

Je suis une partie de cette puissance qui toujours veut le mal, et cependant concourt au bien.
(Sainte-Aulaire, 1823, p. 79)

**Mephistopheles**

Une partie de cette force qui tantôt veut le mal, et tantôt fait le bien.
(Nerval, 1828, p. 83; Nerval, 1840, p. 123)

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50 *Herkunftswörterbuch*, p. 272.
In terms of the communication of Goethe’s philosophy to French readers and audiences, the translation of this line by Nerval is the least satisfactory of the three translations under consideration. It may be simply a mistranslation. Perhaps he misunderstood ‘stets’, but his choice of word again neglects the dynamism of oppositional interaction. At this early stage of the relationship between Faust and Mephistopheles, Goethe presages a happy outcome for Faust. Despite Mephistopheles’ maleficence and bitterness, the adverb ‘stets’ reveals his impotency; his evil intentions are not sufficiently powerful to bring about the negative consequences he desires. He will always be defeated. This is evident in Goethe’s German: Faust’s guarantee of salvation is expressed by Der Herr during his wager with Mephistopheles (MA, vi/i, 543, l. 308). Stapfer gives a satisfactory, literal translation; though Sainte-Aulaire provides an eccentric word in the context, his ‘concourt’ is accurate in the sense that Mephistopheles does indeed — albeit unintentionally — contribute to the positive outcomes that he so regrets.

In the next example the translators stray from the Goethean Faustian paradigm by neglecting Goethe’s embedded symbols of activity and dynamism in a seemingly functional stage direction indicating the appearance of Der Geist, a spirit summoned by Faust in the scene ‘Nacht’:

Es zuckt eine rötliche Flamme, der Geist erscheint in der Flamme. (MA, vi/i, 548)
Une flamme rouge s’allume tout-à-coup: L’ESPRIT paraît dans la flamme. (Stapfer, 1823, p.31)
Une flamme s’élève, l’esprit paraît dans la flamme. (Saint-Aulaire, 1823, p. 50)
Il s’allume une flamme rouge, l’Esprit apparaît dans la flamme. (Nerval, 1828, p.33; Nerval, 1840, p. 94)

The question of dynamism is once again pertinent in the French translations of this stage direction. The German verb ‘zucken’ signifies a movement that is not satisfactorily
conveyed by the French verb ‘s’allumer’; inevitably the act of illuminating involves movement of sorts but it does not extend to the ‘twitching’, ‘fluttering’, ‘dancing’, ‘flickering’ significance of ‘zucken’. Goethe’s word suggests nervous energy and provides a microcosmic expression of the tenet of his play, namely the centrality of action or striving in the quest for salvation. Of course the manipulation of connotation is an essential task of poet and translator alike, but in this instance two of the French translators of Faust fail to nuance appropriately what might have seemed to them a relatively inconsequent word.

Sainte-Aulaire’s ‘s’élèver’ arguably better captures the dynamic aspect of ‘zucken’, but as his translation is generally far from incisive it seems unlikely that his choice of word represents insight into Goethe’s wider philosophy.

In the original German text a single word often speaks volumes; in Faust’s description of Wagner Goethe compresses much pertinent information:

FAUST    O Tod! Ich kenn’s — das ist mein Famulus —
Es wird mein schönstes Glück zunichte!
Daß diese Fülle der Gesichte
Der trockne Schleicher stören muß!
(MA, vi/1, 549, l. 518)

FAUST    C’est mon domestique; tout mon bonheur retourne à rien. Dieu! Qu’une vision si belle, un malheureux valet la fasse évanouir! (Stapfer, 1823, p. 33)

FAUST    Malédiction! C’est sans doute Wagner mon élève: il vient anéantir mes plus chères espérances. Faut-il que ce misérable sot me prive de la plus riche vision? (Saint-Aulaire, 1823, p. 52)

FAUST    O mort! Je m’en doute; c’est mon serviteur — Et voilà tout l’éclat de ma félicité réduit à rien!... Faut-il qu’une vision aussi sublime, un misérable valet la puisse anéantir! (Nerval, 1828, pp, 35-36)

FAUST    Faut-il qu’une vision aussi sublime se trouve anéantie par un misérable valet! (Nerval, 1840, p. 96)

A failure to capture the theme of dynamism is again evinced by the ways in which the translators interpret the phrase ‘der trockne Schleicher’ to describe Faust’s famulus. The
attributive adjective ‘trockne’ is essential as it signals the polarity of living/dead that
pervades Goethe’s *Faust*. Wagner is in part a symbol of dry pedantry and a contrast with the
fecundity and dynamism of life itself. Faust’s opening monologue refers to this distinction:

FAUST        Ach! Könnt’ ich doch auf Berges-Höh’n,
             In deinem lieben Lichte gehn,
             Um Bergeshöhle mit Geistern schweben,
             Auf Wiesen in deinem Dämmer weben,
             Von allem Wissensqualm entladen
             In deinem Tau gesund mich baden!

             Weh! Steck’ ich in dem Kerker noch?
             Verfluchtes, dumpfes Mauerloch!
             Beschränkt mit diesem Bücherhauf,
             Den Würme nagen, Staub bedeckt.
             (MA, VI/I, 546, l. 392)

The dewiness of mountain peaks contrasts with the dustiness of Faust’s study; the ‘dry’
Wagner is associated with Faust’s stale, restricted life. Nerval’s ‘un misérable valet’ ignores
this symbolic value of Wagner, as indeed do Stapfer’s and Sainte-Aulaire’s plain
translations. The latter gets closer to Goethe in his use of the pejorative ‘sot’, although this
word differs considerably from ‘Schleicher’ (approximately ‘toady’ or ‘creep’ in English). In
their use of the neutral term ‘valet’ Nerval and Stapfer neglect the depth of Goethe’s
denigration of Faust’s assistant.

Goethe’s ability to communicate wider thematic significance with great concision is
again evident in his scene title, ‘Vor dem Thor’ (MA, VI/I, 557); the French translators’
success in conveying its polysemy varies:

‘Devant la Porte’. (Stapfer, 1823, p. 44)

‘Place devant la porte de la ville’. (Sainte-Aulaire, 1823, p. 62)

‘Devant la porte de la ville’. (Nerval, 1828, p. 53; Nerval, 1840, p. 105)

Nerval’s translation of this section title is surprisingly prosaic and uninspired, whereas
Goethe’s German is both polysemic and prescient. To be before a door or gate is redolent with possible signification; in the text it clearly indicates not only the physical town walls, but also a metaphorical threshold. Certainly Faust is on the verge of astounding and new experiences; he is also about to leave the natural world and enter into a supernatural domain. In a sense he is also closer to the ‘gates’ of hell, that aspect of Dante’s *Divina Commedia* that beguiled the French Romantics. That Faust’s crossing — or transgression, in both a literal and metaphorical sense — should be symbolised by a passageway is apt; there are also connotations of the womb and consequently new life. Though this aspect of the scene is more evident in Faust’s leaving the town at Easter, it is also applicable to his re-entering his gloomy study, this return representing a darker and more sinister ‘rebirth’ than his earlier excursion. To specify that a scene takes place ‘devant la porte de la ville’ is to deprive oneself of the richly connotative possibilities that are to be found in Goethe’s non-specific title. Whereas Stapfer’s translation is literal, thus maintaining Goethe’s powerful symbolic potential, Sainte-Aulaire adds further unnecessary detail to his title and thereby reduces its connotative capacity. Such a mundane treatment of Goethe’s work is perplexing. It is unlikely that a poet of Nerval’s sensitivity and skill would have failed to discern the richness of Goethe’s language in these three words. Rather, it is more probable that his divergence from the German writer was intentional. Once again, one may conjecture that his objective in privileging clarity over polysemy was the communication of *Faust* to French audiences and readers: a degree of poetic richness and philosophical complexity was sacrificed to more pragmatic concerns. Marilyn Gaddis Rose makes a relevant point: ‘bad translations usually result when a translator is merely translating words and does not understand what he is translating’.  

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must understand the entirety of the source text. However, Gaddis Rose refers to unintentional misunderstanding, rather than intentional rewriting. Ideological factors and commercial considerations are potent influences on translators’ misrepresentations; they played a considerable role in Nerval’s deliberate divergences from Goethe in his Faust translations.

Nonetheless, he avoids the directness that might have appealed to audiences in the following line:

FAUST Der alte Winter, in seiner Schwäche,  
Zog sich in rauhe Berge zurück.  
(MA, VI/I, 560, l. 906)

FAUST Le vieil hiver va cacher sa faiblesse aux sommets escarpés des montagnes. (Stapfer, 1823, p. 48)

FAUST Le vieil hiver va cacher sa faiblesse dans le cœur des montagnes. (Sainte-Aulaire, 1823 p. 66)

FAUST Le vieil hiver, qui s’affaiblit de jour en jour, se retire peu à peu vers les montagnes escarpées. (Nerval, 1828, p. 59; Nerval, 1840, p. 109)

Goethe employs personification succinctly in this line; his metaphorical representation of winter’s recession is achieved in eleven words. Nerval uses eighteen words in his version; Stapfer and Sainte-Aulaire equal Goethe’s word-count and capture the metaphorical sense of the original satisfactorily with the word ‘faiblesse’. This verbosity on Nerval’s part is surprising. It would suggest that Nerval was seeking to clarify the line for his readers or audience. This explicatory approach might serve to illuminate distinctions and parallels that Goethe frequently makes between Faust and the natural world. Such an approach is also evident two lines earlier in Nerval’s translation:

FAUST Vom Eise befreit sind Strom und Bäche. (MA, VI/I, 560, l. 903)

FAUST Les glaçons ne retiennent plus captive l’onde des ruisseaux et des torrens [sic]. (Stapfer, 1823, p. 48)

(see Straight, above), pp. 1-7 (p. 1).
The Faust character is often used as a metonymic representation of natural processes in Goethe's version of the myth; in this example Faust’s ‘release’ from his dark study is mirrored by the streams’ freedom from the icy hold of winter. Even more pertinently, it is the movement of the water that represents activity and life, in opposition to the passivity and moribundity of ice and winter. All three French translators fail to equal Goethe’s succinctness in their translations of this line; their circumlocution recalls neoclassical periphrasis and seems, once again, to indicate explanation or clarification, but could, of course, signify a failure fully to understand these Goethean metonymic relationships.

A similarly divergent interpretation of Goethean symbolism is evident in the following extract:

Nerval neglects Goethe’s explicit reference to striving, but conveys some of the German’s dynamism with ‘la vie’. However, his word does not encompass the philosophical aspect that is crucial to Goethe’s *Faust*. Stapfer comes closer by including ‘le mouvement’ alongside ‘la vie’ but this too is insufficient. Similarly, Sainte-Aulaire’s use of the verb ‘s’émouvoir’
partly captures Goethe’s emphasis on dynamism but is lacking the sense of purpose that ‘Streben’ conveys. The French noun ‘effort’ would arguably be the best approximation to the essential concept of ‘Streben’. Furthermore, the typically Goethean concept of ‘Bildung’ is not communicated in the French translations. Though quite common nouns in German, ‘Streben’ and ‘Bildung’ have a specific and extraordinary meaning in Goethe’s work. They are ubiquitous in both his literary and scientific writing; without an understanding of their significance readers and audiences would be unable to appreciate fully his innovative approach to the *Fauststoff*.

A further example, taken from the scene ‘Nacht’, of the French translators’ engagement with Goethe’s dialectical metaphors supports the proposal that they tended to either simplify or avoid such challenging aspects of *Faust*:

*FAUST* Ich fasse dich, das Streben wird gemindert. (MA, vi/1, 554, l. 697)

*FAUST* En te saisissant, mon agitation se calme et disparaît. (Stapfer, 1823, p. 39)

*FAUST* Je te saisis, mon agitation se calme. (Saint-Aulaire, 1823, p. 58)

*FAUST* Je te saisis et mon agitation diminue. (Nerval, 1828, p. 47; Nerval, 1840, p. 101)

In this scene in which the desperate Faust considers taking poison there is again a failure to capture the importance of dynamism to Goethe’s philosophy; ‘das Streben’, a concept at the heart of Faust’s ontological struggles, is not a pejorative term, in contrast with the French translators’ ‘agitation’. Goethe employs the term to describe man’s efforts, ambitions, and productivity, which though often thwarted or unsuccessful, are never futile. Inevitably, one must accord the phrase a more negative interpretation in a potential suicide scene, and yet
even here, Goethe exploits the ambivalence of Faust’s ending his ‘striving’; his death might bring a peace of sorts, but it would also be wasteful and nihilistic. Conversely, the word ‘agitation’ allows for no such complex discourse; it confines Faust as surely as his narrow Gothic chamber. It reduces him and connotes almost animal suffering, whereas ‘striving’ elevates him and indicates that he is a part of humanity with all its foibles and triumphs. All three French translators translate ‘Streben’ as ‘agitation’, and given the similarity of the phrasing in their lines this would seem to have been an instance of successive translators making use of their predecessors’ work. If so, their ignorance — or perhaps intentional neglect — of Goethe’s adherence to dialectical interactions in Faust, in particular the synthesis of activity and passivity as an aspect of salvation, is once again apparent.

Sometimes divergences and omissions from the source text might serve a purpose, or contribute to one’s impression of the translator’s intent, as the following description of Mephistopheles demonstrates: ‘gekleidet wie ein fahrender Scholastikus’ (MA, vi/1, 570); ‘sous l’habit d’un étudiant ambulant’ (Stapfer, 1823, p. 63); ‘vêtu comme un étudiant en tournée’ (Saint-Aulaire, 1823, p. 78); ‘en habit d’étudiant’ (Nerval, 1828, p. 81; Nerval, 1840, p. 122). In omitting a sense of travel or movement in his description of Mephistopheles, Nerval diverges most from Goethe’s text. Stapfer and Sainte-Aulaire capture this aspect in ‘ambulant’ and ‘en tournée’ respectively. Nerval’s ‘étudiant’ indicates, perhaps, a desire for simplification and, moreover, an attempt to use the clear and concise language that would have appealed to theatregoers, especially in the théâtres des boulevards. In this respect, Nerval provided a domesticating translation of the line; ‘étudiant’ is clearly understandable to French readers or to a French audience, but could the same have been stated in the early nineteenth century of ‘étudiant ambulant’ or ‘étudiant en tournée’? Erich Trunz proffers a useful definition of the German phrase: ‘fahrender Skolast’: ‘ein Student,
A binary opposition of activity and passivity is likewise essential to Faust’s pact with Mephistopheles. The French translators, however, fail to convey the full significance of Faust’s terms for entering into a bargain:

FAUST Werd’ ich beruhigt je mich auf ein Faulbett legen. (MA, VI/I, 581, l. 1692)

FAUST Si jamais je puis goûter le repos en m’étendant sur un lit de plume. (Stapfer, 1823, p. 79)

FAUST Si jamais je m’étends en repos sur un lit de délices. (Sainte-Aulaire, 1823, p. 91)

FAUST Si jamais je puis m’étendre sur un lit de plume pour y reposer. (Nerval, 1828, p.102; Nerval, 1840, p. 133)

Once again Nerval follows Stapfer’s example in translating Goethe’s ‘Faulbett’ as ‘lit de plume’. Sainte-Aulaire’s ‘lit de délices’, though vague, comes closer to the German phrase. All three French translators, however, misconstrue the significance of ‘Faulbett’; this term is essential to the polarity of activity and passivity that both permeates and informs Goethe’s Faust. While they communicate something of Goethe’s philosophy in either ‘repos’ or ‘reposer’, they fail to impart an adequate sense of ‘Faulbett’, the rejection of which reinforces the importance of dynamism to Faust. ‘Lit de plume’ and ‘lit de délices’ do convey an aspect of the German ‘Faulbett’ in that they all communicate temptation, but an explicit reference to indolence is required here; after all, in the German compound noun this sense is explicit. Nerval’s and Stapfer’s choice, ‘lit de plume’ is particularly problematic as it suggests the temptation of luxury, rather than inactivity or rest.

Occasionally mistranslations are consistent with the narrative or its subtext:

FAUST Rast nicht die Welt in allen Strömen fort. (MA, VI/I, 581, l. 1720)

52 HA, III, 533.
It is possible that Nerval misunderstood ‘Strom’ as ‘Sturm’ here. However, his translation maintains much of the source text’s meaning, while adding a wilder, more stirring nuance. Stapfer’s ‘flux’ is more faithful to Goethe’s original ‘Strom’, but somewhat uninspired and insipid. Similarly, Saint-Aulaire’s version is mundane and unpoetic. As Nerval preceded ‘orages’ with the verb ‘s’agite’ he demonstrably grasped the sense of dynamism that is vital to Goethe’s expression; his departure from the German in this extract adds to, rather than detracts from, the vitality of the original.

Conversely, in the following question by Mephistopheles a skilled transference of metaphor is lacking in the French translations; a sense of damnation was required in his questioning of the animals in the ‘Hexenküche’, and yet it is notably absent from the French translators’ versions:

Mephistopheles (Zu den Tieren) So sagt mir doch, verfluchte Puppen! Was quirlt ihr in dem Brei herum? (MA, vi/i, 601, l. 2390)

Mephistopheles (aux animaux) Apprenez-moi, grotesque troupe, Ce qu’avec votre moulinet Vous brassez là, dans cette coupe? (Stapfer, 1823, p. 113)

Mephistopheles (aux animaux) Au moins, dites-moi, malhonnêtes Qu’est-ce que vous brassez ainsi? (Nerval, 1828, p. 152)

Mephistopheles Dites-moi, drôles, que vous êtes, Qu’est-ce que vous brassez ainsi? (Nerval, 1840, p. 170)

Neither Nerval nor Stapfer captures Goethe’s ‘verfluchte Puppen’. The noun communicates much; in its denotation of ‘chrysalis’ it reflects Goethe’s promulgation in Faust of activity
and dynamism as a means by which ‘salvation’ is achieved. In describing the animals as ‘verfluchte Puppen’ he indicates their lack of potential for development or change. ‘Puppe’ also means ‘puppet’ or ‘doll’; this sense reinforces their ‘lifelessness’ and again an inability to grow. Such skilled compression of complex ideas is characteristic of Goethe’s *Faust* and of his retelling of the Faust myth; the substitution of this eloquent lexis for the bland terms ‘malhonnêtes’, ‘drôles’, and ‘grotesque troupe’, reveals a surprisingly unimaginative linguistic engagement with the source text on the part of the French translators.

Closely related to Goethe’s incorporation of wider metaphors of dynamism into the text is the energy, and agency, that are ascribed to the protagonist by writer and translator; there is a further synecdochic relationship between Faust and the natural world in that his vitality ebbs and flows in a manner that resonates with the dynamics of physical phenomena. Consider the following descriptions of Faust’s evocation of the Geist from ‘Nacht’:

**Geist**

Du flehst eratmend mich zu schauen
[...]
Mich neigt dein mächtig Seelenfleh'n.
(MA, VI/I, 548, l. 486, 488)

**L’Esprit**

Je me rends au vœu pressant de ton cœur, me voici! (Stapfer, 1823, p. 31)

L’Esprit J’ai cédé aux vœux de ton cœur, me voici. (Sainte-Aulaire, 1823, p. 51)

L’Esprit Eh bien! en ce moment,
Qu’à tes voeux je puis condescendre,
Craîns-tu de me voir, de m’entendre?...
Faust, que me veux-tu? Me voici —
O surhumaine créature.
(Nerval, 1828, pp. 33-34)

L’Esprit Tu aspirais si fortement vers moi! [...] Je cède au désir de ton cœur. — Me voici. (Nerval, 1840, p. 95)

In the spirit’s reproachful tone Goethe places more emphasis on the extremes of Faust’s hubris and humiliation than the French translators. In his use of the verb ‘flehen’ he depicts
Faust as humble and servile, whereas Nerval’s ‘vœux’ in the translation of 1828 does not carry a sense of such demeaning despair. Rather, in ascribing to his summoning of the spirit a desire or a wish, he is presented in a stronger and more confident light. This difference is maintained in his 1840 translation, despite the change of lexis: ‘aspirer’ does not diverge significantly from the earlier ‘vœu’, for Faust is still portrayed as in possession of a strong will which is brought to the evocation of this powerful, elemental spirit. Although the adverb ‘fortement’ reinforces this sentiment, it provides no further information on the origin or nature of his desire. In Goethe’s German Faust’s sense of despair is given greater emphasis. In fact, this difference is not reserved to this single utterance; Goethe has the Spirit describe Faust’s summoning of him as a ‘mächtig Seelenflehn’, while Nerval gives the plainer ‘désir de ton cœur’. Without the adjective one is left to speculate on the urgency of this ‘desire’.

Both Stapfer and Sainte-Aulaire fail to capture Goethe’s more nuanced presentation of the protagonist in this respect. In adding the adjective ‘pressant’, the latter colours Faust’s utterances more appropriately than the former, but as with Nerval’s use of ‘fortement’, this represents elaboration without specificity. The French translators allow for less subtlety than Goethe here in their portrayal of Faust.

Earlier in the scene ‘Nacht’, a difference of tone in Goethe’s Faust and the French translations is evident in Faust’s embittered soliloquy:

**FAUST**  
Zwar bin ich gescheiter als alle die Laffen, Doktoren, Magister, Schreiber und Pfaffen.  
(MA, VI/I, 545, l. 366)

**FAUST**  
Cependant il n’est pas au monde un seul homme, maître, docteur, clerc ou moine, qui en sache aussi long que moi. (Stapfer, 1823, p. 27)

**FAUST**  
Je suis, il est vrai, plus avise que la plupart des cuistres, des docteurs, des maîtres, des clercs ou des moines. (Saint-Aulaire, 1823, p. 47)

**FAUST**  
Je suis, il est vrai, plus instruit que tout ce qu’il y a de sots, de docteurs, de maîtres,
d’écrivains et de moines. (Nerval, 1828, p. 27; Nerval 1840, p. 91)

There is a striking contrast here between Goethe’s original text and the French translations with respect to the people with whom Faust compares himself: Goethe’s choice of ‘Pfaffen’ is a somewhat pejorative term for a cleric; it is also jocular. None of the French translators captures this humorous aspect, preferring the more respectful ‘moines’. This difference in register suggests a more solemn approach to Faust than is to be found in Goethe’s witty and playful original. This less sophisticated interpretation on the part of the French translators is compatible with the argument that Madame de Staël’s simplified translation of, and commentary on, Goethe’s Faust established a precedent that was to prove enduring in France. Certainly, it is understandable that a straightforwardly supernatural construction of the conflict between good and evil should find less opportunity for humour and irony than a work which makes use of this conflict as a metaphor for wider ontological concerns.

Moreover, if one considers the issue of the reception of the French translations — and it should be recalled that the 1820s saw Parisian theatregoers beguiled by several stage adaptations of Faust — there might have been another motivation for avoiding the philosophical complexities of relativism and the complementarity of good and evil that informed Goethe’s Faust: remuneration, or rather the increased likelihood thereof, if difficult aspects of the work were avoided or downplayed and the popular, straightforward elements emphasised.

A similar avoidance of a coarse or popular register by the French translators is discernible in the following statement by Mephistopheles:

MEPHISTOPHELES

Da die? Sie kam von ihrem Pfaffen.
Der sprach sie aller Sünden frei;
Ich schlich mich hart am Stuhl vorbei.
(MA, vi/1, 609, l. 2621)
MEPHISTOPHELES Celle-là? Elle venait de chez son prêtre. (Stapfer, 1823, p. 126)

MEPHISTOPHELES Celle-là? Elle sort de l’église où elle a reçu l’absolution. Je m’étais glissé près du confessionnal; j’ai tout entendu. (Sainte-Aulaire, 1823, p. 119)

MEPHISTOPHELES Celle-là! Elle sort de chez son confesseur. (Nerval, 1828, p. 170; Nerval, 1840, p. 184)

The French translators’ interpretations of ‘Pfaffen’, whose origins lie in the Greek for ‘(niedriger) Geistlicher: papas’, is telling. Following the Reformation the noun was primarily used pejoratively in Germany.53 Nerval’s ‘confesseur’, Stapfer’s ‘prêtre’, and Sainte-Aulaire’s ‘elle a reçu l’absolution’ are all far more respectful than Goethe’s ‘Pfaffen’.

The capturing of the German register would, however, have been problematic for the three translators: the pejorative diminutives of ‘curé’, ‘curaillon’ and ‘cureton’, had not yet been coined, and although first attested in 1725, ‘ratichon’ is too derogatory a translation of ‘Pfaffe’.54 Perhaps the least unsatisfactory approach would have been the addition of a qualifying adjective, such as ‘modeste’ or ‘petit’ to ‘prêtre’ and ‘confesseur’, for instance.

Furthermore, the word is uttered by Mephistopheles, an unlikely source of respect for the clergy.

The French translators, conversely, would have been far more likely to avoid such irreverence, given the erratic and stringent censorship laws of Restoration France and the July Monarchy: though some loosening in this respect had occurred in 1827 — to the dismay of many in the Chambre des Pairs — by 1840 severe restrictions had been imposed, partly on account of an attempt to assassinate Louis-Philippe in 1835. Writers risked prison for minor infringements of the regime’s censorship laws and the pettiest of objections on the part of the censor sufficed to cancel a play; outrageously, Balzac’s Vautrin (1840) was banned.

53 Herkunftswörterbuch, pp. 600-01.
because one of the characters wore a toupee similar to that of the king’s.55

This considerable constraint on the French translators aside, these seemingly minor divergences from the original German are more significant than one might suspect; not only does the more elevated vocabulary alter the reader’s view of Mephistophiles, but it also communicates a more humourless and solemn *Faust* than is true of Goethe’s original German work. The use of humour is, after all, a crucial aspect of Goethe’s reinterpretation of the myth; his Mephistophiles in particular exudes a dark and bitter humour. As Jane K. Brown states, ‘the devil and the clown [...] [are] combined in Goethe’s own Mephistophiles’.56 In reductive translations of words such as ‘Pfaffen’ one discerns an affirmation of a common accusation levelled at French versions of *Faust*: a tendency to present a more traditional devil and a straightforward conflict between good and evil. It is often in a translator’s seemingly minor divergences from a source text that one acquires the flavour of a foreign translation; such words are often culturally loaded; pertinently, it would seem that for a translator the devil really is in the detail.

My final example of the French translators’ prevalent misinterpretation, or perhaps rewriting, of Goethe’s philosophical approach to the Faust myth is taken from the scene ‘Vor dem Tor’:

*FAUST*  Doch ist es jedem eingeboren,  Daß sein Gefühl hinauf und vorwärts dringt,  Wenn über uns, im blauen Raum verloren,  Ihr schmetternd Lied die Lerche singt.  
(MA, vi/1, 564, l. 1092)

*FAUST*  Pourtant il n’est personne qui ne sente battre son cœur, quand au-dessus de nous,  perdue dans les espaces azurés, l’alouette fait entendre les éclats de son chant matinal.  
(Stapfer, 1823, p. 55)

All three translators again downplay the urgency of Goethe’s language. The Fauststoff provided Goethe with a convenient metaphor to express his espousal, albeit tempered by certain caveats, of activity and endeavour, and the complementarity of opposites as forces of ‘progress’. Consequently, a loyal translation of his Faust must include this aspect of Goethe’s Faustian paradigm. And yet the terms which have no equivalent in the translations are words of movement, direction, and energy: ‘hinaus’, ‘vorwärts’, and ‘dringt’. In Goethe’s line man’s restless urge is ‘eingeboren’; in Nerval’s translation, however, this innate desire has been reduced to ‘un sentiment profond’. In accentuating this inborn drive in man Goethe refers to the Lord’s pronouncement in the ‘Prolog im Himmel’: ‘Ein guter Mensch, in seinem dunklen Drange| Ist sich des rechten Weges wohl bewusst’ (MA, vi/1, 544, l. 328). Thus Goethe’s intratextual signals are lost through the omission, or downplaying, of individual words. Similarly reductive are Stapfer’s ‘il n’est personne qui ne sente battre son cœur’ and Sainte-Aulaire’s’ ‘tout mortel sent de tels désirs agiter son cœur’. Taken individually, such departures from Goethe’s Faust might be regarded as minor or as eccentricities. However, if the same or similar divergences are repeated throughout a translation, they become highly significant.
Theatricality and Commercial Considerations in the French Translations of Faust

In the avoidance of Goethe’s more complex philosophical discourse Nerval perhaps had in mind the popular and lucrative Fausts that were being performed throughout Paris at the time of, and prior to, his earliest Faust translation. Since Gautier’s Histoire du romantisme there has been a persistent and deeply entrenched view of Nerval as an eccentric, naïve, and mystical writer; he has often been considered the French Romantic poet par excellence. While it is undoubtedly true that his interests were esoteric and his lifestyle unconventional, even the most cursory readings of his work and correspondence reveals this to be a misleading — or at the very least incomplete — assessment of the man. He was shrewder, more commercially aware, and more ambitious for his Faust translations than is usually conceded. Even in his earliest writings he was far from the dreamy, unworldly writer of popular imagination; there is evidence of his choosing popular and topical subject matter for his poetry, ‘Adieux de Napoléon, à la France’, written as a student at the Collège Charlemagne, for example; in his later years he assiduously pursued theatrical success, often working on popular, and even melodramatic topics (Nerval, i, 3-4). It is not implausible, therefore, that the young translator attempted a task that, in some respects, was beyond his capabilities, not only out of admiration for Goethe’s play, but also from an ambition to see his version of Faust performed. Furthermore, throughout his life he displayed insecurity with regard to his literary ability; this possibly originated from a need to live up to the very exacting standards of his father, a rather cold and distant physician. As Pichois and Brix state:

Son père […] imaginait pour son fils une carrière analogue à la sienne, et voulait le voir

étudier la médecine. L’auteur […] montre peu de goût pour la voie tracée par le docteur Labrunie, et abandonne définitivement l’École de médecine en 1833. Le désaccord fut très grave; la ‘trahison’ jamais pardonnée. Toutes les lettres de Gérard à son père, jusqu’aux derniers mois de l’écrivain, voient celui-ci s’excuser d’avoir adopté la profession de son choix. \[59\]

In addition to the traditional motivations for achieving literary success, Nerval was driven by a desire to demonstrate to his conservative father that literature was a worthwhile pursuit from which one might earn a living. Consequently, in his youth he worked on popular subjects and adapted the works of authors who had had commercial as well as critical success; the fact that after his translation of Goethe’s *Faust* in 1827 he adapted for the stage in 1829 the work of a very popular and successful writer, *Han D’Islande* by Victor Hugo, demonstrates his commercial awareness. \[60\]

In a similarly pertinent reference to Nerval’s literary career, it is noteworthy that Bony does not discriminate between Nerval’s translation of *Faust* and his original, dramatic work:

Du début à la fin de sa carrière, Nerval n’a cessé d’écrire pour le théâtre: l’un de ses premiers ouvrages — il a dix-huit ans — est une comédie, *L’Académie ou les membres introuvables*, deux ans plus tard, ce sera la traduction de *Faust*. \[61\]

Although Goethe’s *Faust* is evidently in the format of a play and has, of course, been performed many times, there has been, understandably, considerable debate and dispute over the appropriate literary nomenclature for this extraordinary work. As noted earlier, in certain respects it would be accurate to categorise it as a closet drama; in others both epic and lyric poem would not seem misplaced. Such difficulties aside, Nerval’s motivation for translating *Faust* are not as transparent as Bony seems to suggest. Rather, his interest in the German cultural icon was spurred by a complex amalgam of personal, cultural, and, perhaps,
commercial factors. In stating that one might ‘contester le talent, mais non l’exactitude’ of his 1828 translation Nerval was perhaps being disingenuous (Nerval, I, 243); he did, however, propose that his work might serve as an accompaniment to the various Faustian dramas that were then being performed across Paris. While Bony’s lack of differentiation between Nerval’s original dramatic work and his Faust translation would seem to be sound in terms of the French poet’s ambitions, it must be acknowledged that Nerval did not express, explicitly at least, a desire to see his translation of Goethe’s work performed on stage.

Implicit ambition for such an eventuality, however, is strongly indicated in a variety of ways. In his simplification of Goethe’s Faust in his translation Nerval echoes contemporaneous, Staëlian, French perceptions of Germany, and yet the extent to which he concurred with such limited notions is debatable. Nevertheless, the 1820s — a period in which simplified French adaptations of Goethe’s drama were achieving success on the stage — would arguably not have been the time to introduce philosophical complexity and subtlety, were a translator to have desired popular acclaim and success.

Tellingly, Nerval’s translating Goethe’s Faust during 1827 coincided with a shift in his literary output: previously his focus had been on lyric poetry, but 1827 saw him working on numerous theatrical projects of extraordinary heterogeneity. Included therein were tragedies, comedies, French and Spanish satires, operas, gothic mysteries, and melodramas. Within these varied endeavours, Bony describes Nerval’s Faust translation as a ‘point culminant’. A gradual, but purposeful, striving for recognition and success is indeed discernible in these early dramatic projects.

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63 Nerval, Han d’Island, p. 9.
Nerval had no particular attachment to melodrama *per se*, but it would seem to have been a form that he sometimes found useful, particularly as a young man, despite occasional protestations to the contrary. Writing in *L’Artiste-Revue de Paris* in 1845, he was evidently still cognizant of the commercial benefits that melodramas and popular dramas might bring: ‘le mélodrame est une nécessité partout. Il faut permettre à l’Odéon de le cultiver au moins de deux jours l’un, si nous voulons jouir dans l’intervalle d’un aliment plus littéraire’ (Nerval, 1, 1035). Nerval reveals only a grudging acceptance of melodrama here; however, the lapse of time between his beginning work on Goethe’s *Faust* and 1845 is significant. Not only was melodrama’s heyday long past, but Nerval was writing from the perspective of an established author, rather than from the point of view of an ambitious, but generally unknown writer, as was the case in 1827.

There were certainly aspects of melodrama that would have appealed to the young Nerval in the 1820s; in his introduction to Nerval’s dramatic adaptation of Hugo’s *Han d’Islande* Bony provides a description of this form of drama that is highly pertinent to the French translations of Goethe’s *Faust*: ‘le mélodrame fonctionne d’ordinaire sur une typologie simple qui oppose le Mal, incarné par un traître, à l’innocence persécutée.’64 This chimes with the tendency of the French translators of *Faust*, beginning with de Staël, to reduce Goethe’s complex masterpiece to a more straightforward struggle between good and evil.

Alongside linguistic and cultural obstacles, commercial factors influence translations: Venuti states that ‘publishers, copyeditors, reviewers have trained us, in effect, to prefer translations with an easy readability which enables them to appear untranslated’. 65

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64 Ibid., p. 13.
65 *Translation Changes Everything*, p. 110.
Such commercial pressure promulgates imitation, rather than the fidelity often broadly associated with the translation practices of Romantic France. It also offers a potential explanation of the French translators’ simplification of the Goethean Faustian paradigm, for publishers are, after all, ‘the gatekeepers who decisively exercise the power to admit or exclude foreign works’.

Reaching a large audience or readership is also culturally important to a translator, and indeed the original author; Goethe’s lauding of Nerval’s Faust translation to Eckermann might in part originate from his privileging the simplification of ideas as a means of reaching the greatest number of people. In Aus meinem Leben: Dichtung und Wahrheit (1811-33), Goethe expresses his preference clearly: ‘für die Menge [...] bleibt eine schlichte Übertragung immer die beste. Jene kritischen Übersetzungen, die mit dem Original wetteifern, dienen eigentlich nur zur Unterhaltung der Gelehrten unter einander.’

Sometimes the merits of this sort of popular rewriting by translators are not immediately apparent, however, as comparison of the following divergent interpretations of a statement made by an Easter reveller in the scene ‘Vor dem Tor’ reveals:

**ANDRE** Der Krauskopf, sagt er, würde bei ihm sein. (MA, VI/1, 557, l. 827)

**SECONDE SERVANTE** Le blondin, m’a-t-il dit, doit être avec lui. (Stapfer, 1823, p. 45)

**LA SECONDE** Le beau brun devait l’accompagner. (Sainte-Aulaire, 1823, p. 63)

**L’AUTRE** Le blondin, m’a-t-il dit, doit venir avec lui. (Nerval, 1828, p. 55; Nerval, 1840, p. 106)

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66 Salama-Carr, p. 408.
67 *Translation Changes Everything*, p. 114.
68 Cited in *Translation Changes Everything*, p. 130.
The translation of ‘Krauskopf’ as ‘le blondin’ by Stapfer and Nerval is understandable, if somewhat uninspired. Sainte-Aulaire’s attempt is neither accurate nor, it would seem, justified by cross-cultural considerations. The blond hair connotes Germanness and thus it is difficult to fathom Sainte-Aulaire’s choice of brown hair. With hindsight, blondness might be considered a facile means of drawing attention to the Germanness of the work, and yet it must to be borne in mind that prior to the 1820s Franco-German cultural interactions had been limited. To modern readers and audiences such clichéd representations of identity stray uncomfortably close to stereotype; they would, perhaps, have seemed more novel and exotic to their early nineteenth-century counterparts. In fact, in this highly visual scene in which German peasants and shepherds indulge in country-dancing and beer-drinking, this does not seem so misplaced, given that the translators were attempting to imbue their language with a flavour of the folksiness (sensu lato) that is in Goethe’s construction of the scene. But the French translators neglect another aspect of the phrase: Goethe’s humour. For in addition to its sense of ‘frizzy head’, ‘Krauskopf’ also means ‘muddle head’; this — and indeed the tone of jocularity throughout the scene — is surely gentle parody and indicates Goethe’s wry interpretation of such idylls. Humour and irony are difficult aspects of cross-cultural communication; this short phrase highlights the complex tensions in the process of translation: Stapfer and Nerval have provided a perceptive interpretation in the context of a German/French translation, and yet they have also missed an important nuance of the source text. Though Nerval failed to comply with his stated determination to remain loyal to Goethe’s original text, he succeeded in making the scene slightly more exotic, and consequently perhaps more attractive to French audiences and readers. While the credit for this must go to Stapfer as the earlier translator of the phrase, Nerval’s use of the phrase once again demonstrates his sound intercultural sensibility, and perhaps also his commercial
The latter, rather than the former, would seem to be a more likely explanation for Nerval’s divergence from the source text in the following exclamation in ‘Vor dem Tor’ in which he renders Goethe’s vaguer phrase as explicitly Satanic:

DRITTER BÜRGER Mag alles durch einander gehn. (MA, vi/i, 559, l. 870)

TROISIÈME BOURGEOIS Que tout aille sens dessus dessous chez eux. (Stapfer, 1823, p. 47)

TROISIÈME BOURGEOIS Que loin de nous tout aille sens-dessus-dessous. (Sainte-Aulaire, 1823, p. 65)

TROISIÈME BOURGEOIS Tout peut bien aller au diable. (Nerval, 1828, p. 57)

TROISIÈME BOURGEOIS Que tout aille au diable. (Nerval, 1840, p. 108)

It is noteworthy that Nerval should choose the idiomatic locution ‘aller au diable’, both in 1828 and 1840. This is perhaps an apt and playful interpretation of the confusion denoted by the German phrase, ‘durcheinandergehen’; Goethe’s phrase, and the other two French translators’ versions of it, presage unspecified, and imminent adversity. In contrast, Nerval is unequivocal as to the source of these future troubles. The French overemphasis on the devil in Faust is discernible even in idiomatic choices.

In the following extract from ‘Vor dem Tor’, Nerval once again provides a more theatrical translation of Goethe’s text than the other French translators:

WAGNER Das Fiedeln, Schreien, Kegelschieben, Ist mir ein gar verhasster Klang. (MA, vi/i, 561, l. 945)

WAGNER Les violons, les cris, les passe-temps bruyans de ces gens-là me font un mal!... (Stapfer, 1823, p. 49)

WAGNER Ces violons, ces cris, ces jeux de quille, sont pour moi un odieux vacarme. (Sainte-Aulaire, 1823, p. 67)
WAGNER Leurs violons, leurs cris, leurs amusemens bruyans, je hais tout cela à la mort. (Nerval, 1828, p. 61; Nerval, 1840, p. 110)

Wagner’s repulsion at the peasants’ ‘vulgarity’ is more melodramatic in Nerval’s vehement and hyperbolic translations of 1828 and 1840 than in either Goethe’s original German or in Stapfer’s and Sainte-Aulaire’s French translations. This can be seen, firstly, in the introduction of the word ‘mort’, any intimation of which is absent from Goethe’s text; and secondly, in Wagner’s protest one detects an exaggeratedly emotional response to the revelry. Goethe communicates the latter point by ‘verhasster’, but this is expanded upon and given greater emphasis by Nerval. Such melodramatic divergences notwithstanding, Nerval’s aesthetic allegiances were complex; as Bony states, in reference to another adaptation undertaken by Nerval in the 1820s:

Dès cette œuvre de jeunesse [Han d’Island] apparaît donc une caractèreistique de l’attitude de Nerval envers le spectacle, la mesure; il refuse de jouer jusqu’au bout le jeu du mélodrame frénétique, sans refuser pour autant le grand spectacle qui est l’une des tendances majeures de la scène de son temps. 69

A greater theatricality is also evident in Stapfer’s and Sainte-Aulaire’s interpretation of Faust’s lament in the scene ‘Studierzimmer’:

FAUST Aber warum muß der Strom so bald versiegen, Und wir wieder im Durste liegen? (MA, VI/I, 568, l. 1212)

FAUST Pourquoi donc faut-il que le fleuve tarisse si tôt, et nous laisse en proie à notre soif dévorante? … (Stapfer, 1823, p. 60)

FAUST Pourquoi sa source est-elle sitôt tarie? Pourquoi suis-je encore dévoré d’une soif ardente? (Sainte-Aulaire, 1823, p. 77)

FAUST Mais pourquoi le fleuve doit-il sitôt tarir, et nous replonger dans notre soif éternelle? (Nerval, 1828, p. 77; Nerval, 1840, p. 119)

Nerval’s translation of this line is the most pessimistic and displays a Romantic Weltenschmerz: his thirst is ‘éternelle’ and will never be satisfied. This sense is absent from the

69 Bony, ‘Nerval et les aspects matériels du spectacle’, p. 129.
German line; one might argue that Nerval’s choice of word was influenced by Goethe’s ‘wieder’; this of course denotes repetition, but not necessarily eternity. Both Stapfer and Sainte-Aulaire intensify Goethe’s ‘Durst’ with ‘dévorante’ and ‘ardente’ respectively, but they do not extend its duration. In their prolonging and intensifying of the suffering in Goethe’s original metaphor, the French translators afford the line a more theatrical, perhaps melodramatic — and in Nerval’s case, a more Romantic, perhaps even Byronic — gloominess.

A greater theatricality, or at least an increase in audience involvement, is perhaps discernible in Faust’s instruction to Wagner in ‘Vor dem Tor’; his use of a grammatically ambiguous structure might indicate communication between actors and audience:

FAUST Kehre dich um, von diesen Höhen
Nach der Stadt zurück zu sehen.
(MA, v/1, 560, l. 916)

FAUST Détournons nos yeux de ces collines. (Stapfer, 1823, p. 48)

FAUST Retourne-toi, Wagner, et de cette hauteur jette tes regards sur la ville. (Sainte-Aulaire, 1823, p. 67)

FAUST Détournons-nous donc de ces collines. (Nerval, 1828, p. 60; Nerval, 1840, p. 110)

The change from Goethe’s second-person singular to the first-person-plural imperative in Nerval’s and Stapfer’s translations is noteworthy; while Faust’s including himself in the instruction to ‘turn around’ is not greatly significant per se, it does provide the utterance with a greater theatricality. In Stapfer’s and Nerval’s versions the first-person plural becomes inclusive not only of the two interlocutors, but also of an audience. As Bony states, ‘il paraît bien certain que Nerval était naturellement porté à écrire pour être lu, et que, s’il cherche à se faire représenter, c’est avant tout par nécessité matérielle.’

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70 Bony, ‘Nerval et les aspects matériels du spectacle’, p. 137.
Nerval’s original writing, it does not seem unreasonable to extrapolate the poet’s ambition to his translations. Furthermore, as George E. Wellwarth discerns, ‘the dramatic translator faces two principal problems in his work [...] “speakability” and style. [...] The playwright [...] is by definition a man of the theatre [...] the dramatic translator, on the other hand, is primarily a linguist.’\(^{71}\) This was truer of Nerval in 1827 than in 1840; by the later date he had had considerable experience of writing original and collaborative works for the stage. Moreover, he was, at various times in his life, both a keen theatre-goer and a professional drama critic. In the example above, Nerval follows Stapfer in his grammatical divergence from the original dialogue. He could have maintained Goethe’s linguistic structure as this would not have required a more advanced knowledge of German grammar. His choice is in keeping with his ambitions for his translations.

The Closeness of Nerval’s *Faust* Translations to Stapfer’s Earlier Translation

There has been much mythologising of Nerval’s translation of Goethe’s *Faust*.\(^{72}\) Notwithstanding the translator’s own modest assessment of his work, it has often been lauded as the finest of all the French translations of Goethe’s *Faust*.\(^{72}\) His translation of 1828 was indeed praised by Goethe, but so too was Stapfer’s: as Vilain notes,\(^{73}\) probably echoing Goethe’s opinion of Stapfer’s translation of *Faust*, on 3 May 1827 Eckermann describes it as ‘höchst gelungen’ (MA, XIX, 563). As discussed earlier, it was not only the literary quality of Nerval’s translation that was taken into account; the privileging of Nerval’s translation over those of the other French translators has become deeply embedded and is seldom challenged; furthermore, the myth of the prodigy is a powerful one. Nerval’s translating *Faust* at nineteen was an impressive and praiseworthy accomplishment. But it is certainly true that later tragedies in Nerval’s life have coloured opinion of the man and the artist; one struggles to

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\(^{71}\) George E. Wellwarth, ‘Special Considerations in Drama Translation’, in *Translation Spectrum* (see Straight, above), pp. 140-146 (pp. 140-41).

\(^{72}\) Malaplate, p. 9.

\(^{73}\) Vilain, p. 122.
think of another male writer who is commonly referred to by his first name in scholarly writing,\(^7^4\) or whose name is so often bound to such attributive adjectives as ‘bon’, ‘doux’, and ‘gentil’. Such sympathy for, and adulation of, a writer would have been grist to the cultural industries’ mill.\(^7^5\) In short, tragedy sells. These factors perhaps also bear on the ‘rediscovery’ of Nerval in more recent times and his relatively late acceptance by the French literary establishment.\(^7^6\) They do not, however, account for the popularity of Nerval’s translations during his lifetime.

Given the great complexity of *Faust*, it is perhaps unsurprising that Nerval should have made some use of Stapfer’s earlier translation. An accusation of plagiarism would, however, be contentious, as Marilla Marchetti discerns: ‘la pratique du plagiat de la part de Nerval n’est que l’aspect le plus évident d’une intertextualité toujours manifeste, intertextualité qui va de la traduction à la citation, de l’allusion au plagiat, de l’auto-plagiat à l’auto-pastiche.’\(^7^7\) Nerval’s developing of Stapfer’s earlier work does not in fact detract from his achievements in his *Faust* translations. The essential task of a literary translator — and the mark of his or her skill — is the communication of the source text’s literariness: its metaphors, form, imagery, and allusions, for example; in this respect Nerval’s translations of *Faust* are largely successful and display originality.

Nonetheless, the degree of indebtedness owed to Stapfer by Nerval ought to be more widely acknowledged; this neglect is ultimately unfavourable to both translators, distorting much of the scholarly debate on the French translations of *Faust*, as Lombez points out: ‘en cantonnant Nerval traducteur à la catégorie des écrivains et en le dissociant ainsi de ses pairs,

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\(^7^4\) Some female German Romantics are, or used to be, so described: Bettina (von Arnim), Caroline (Schlegel-Schelling), wife of A W Schlegel, then of the philosopher Schelling.

\(^7^5\) Malaplate, p. 9.

\(^7^6\) As Frank Bowman indicates, ‘Nerval was not considered a major writer until the twentieth century, when Barrès, then Proust and the Surrealists moved him into the literary canon’. *The New Companion to Literature in French*, p. 565.

\(^7^7\) Marilla Marchetti, ‘Inventer au fond c’est se ressouvenir’, *Cahiers Gérard de Nerval*, 10 (1987), 36-40 (p. 36).
on dissimulerait mal à quel point ces derniers étaient également porteurs d’une poétique créatrice de la traduction’; close analysis of earlier French translations of Faust demonstrates that Nerval took much from his predecessors. In other words, he was pragmatic and made sensible use of available resources.

A return to Faust’s opening monologue from the scene ‘Nacht’ demonstrates the closeness of Nerval’s translation to Stapfer’s earlier version from the outset:

\[
\text{FAUST} \quad \begin{align*}
\text{Habe nun, ach! Philosophie,} \\
\text{Juristerei und Medicin,} \\
\text{Und leider auch Theologie!} \\
\text{Durchaus studirt, mit heißem Bemühn.}
\end{align*}
\] (MA, VI/I, 545, l. 354)

\[
\text{FAUST} \\
\text{J’ai donc tout appris; philosophie, jurisprudence, médecine, et toi aussi malheureuse théologie! J’ai tout appris, tout étudié avec des peines infinies. (Stapfer, 1823, p. 27)}
\]

\[
\text{FAUST} \\
\text{J’ai étudié la philosophie, le droit, la médecine, pour mon malheur aussi la théologie, A quoi m’ont servi tant d’efforts? (Sainte-Aulaire, 1823, p. 47)}
\]

\[
\text{FAUST} \\
\text{Philosophie, jurisprudence, médecine, et toi aussi, malheureuse théologie! je vous ai donc étudiées avec grand’peine. (Nerval, 1828, p. 29)}
\]

\[
\text{FAUST} \\
\text{Philosophie, hélas! Jurisprudence, médecine, et toi aussi, triste théologie! je vous ai donc étudiées à fond avec ardeur et patience. (Nerval, 1840, p. 91)}
\]

Nerval’s translation recalls Stapfer’s. But if Nerval’s divergence in 1828 from Goethe’s German is pessimistic, then Stapfer’s construction of the protagonist in this line suggests desperation, as Faust’s ‘mit heißem Bemühn’ has become ‘peines infinies’ in his translation. Moreover, Nerval’s ‘grand’ peine’ of 1828 is closer than Stapfer’s excessive, melodramatic even, ‘peines infinies’ to Goethe’s ‘heißem Bemühn’. The quality of Nerval’s revision of 1840 is arguably mixed: though ‘ardeur’ conveys something of Goethe’s ‘heißem’, ‘patience’ is almost the antithesis of ‘Bemühn’. In this later translation Nerval does, however, bring the rhythm of the line closer to Goethe’s German. The addition of ‘hélas’ as a

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translation of ‘ach’ also renders this version more convergent with the source text.

Sainte-Aulaire’s ‘tant d’efforts’ is the least imaginative, but also the most faithful translation of Faust’s anguished exclamation.

In the following scene-setting Nerval seems to replicate an error by Stapfer:

Harzgebirg. Gegend von Schirke und Elend. (MA, vi/1, 647)

Montagne de Harz: vallée de Schirke et désert. (Stapfer, 1823, p. 188)

Montagne de Harz. Vallée de Schirk, et désert. (Nerval, 1828, p. 255)

Montagne de Harz (région de Schirke et d’Elend). (Nerval, 1840, p. 243)

In this subtitle to ‘Walpurgusnacht’ d’Hulst proposes that Nerval’s translation in 1828 of d’Elend as ‘désert […] résulte peut-être d’une mauvaise transcription’ (Nerval, 1840, p. 243). However, the ‘mistake’ originates in Stapfer’s earlier translation; clearly, Nerval made use of his predecessor’s version, for in addition to this divergence from Goethe’s German, he also adopts Stapfer’s translation of ‘Gegend’ as ‘vallée’. While this is reasonable, as Faust and Mephistopheles begin the scene at the foot of the Brocken around the villages of Schirke and Elend, this sense is not explicit in Goethe’s text. Given the sinister-sounding toponyms, Stapfer’s choice of ‘vallée’ reveals his creative skill: it connotes ‘la vallée de l’ombre de la mort’ from Psalm 23. This is a further instance of Nerval’s reliance on Stapfer’s earlier translation; it is notable, however, that in 1840 Nerval rejected Stapfer’s darker version, providing a more literal translation of Goethe’s subtitle.
The French Translators’ Treatment of Religious and Spiritual Aspects of Goethe’s *Faust*

The three French translators manifest a prevalent and recurrent unwillingness to adopt Goethe’s frequent lightness of tone on religious matters. Often they shy away from his irreverent humour, providing a sanitised and solemn translation, especially of Mephistopheles’ witty and caustic utterances; they also frequently Christianise what is evidently pagan in Goethe’s German.

From the outset the Mephistopheles of Goethe’s *Faust* is irreverent towards God: he does not use the word ‘Herr’; referring instead to ‘den Alten’ (MA, vi/1, 544, l. 350), a disparaging and appropriately resentful phrase, translated by Stapfer, Sainte-Aulaire, and Nerval as ‘le vieux maître’ (Stapfer, 1823, p. 23), ‘le bon vieillard’ (Saint-Aulaire, 1823, p. 45), ‘le vieux Père Éternel’ (Nerval, 1828, p. 23) and ‘le vieux Seigneur’ (Nerval, 1840, p. 89) respectively. Nerval’s translation of 1840 has a Christian nuance. This sense is not as strong in his translation of 1828 in which the vaguer ‘le vieux Père Éternel’ is employed. While departing from Goethe’s disrespectful, jocular description, this comes closer to the German’s familiar register than the more conventional translation of 1840. Stapfer’s phrase is respectfully vague; only Sainte-Aulaire communicates the tone of the original.

This difference in register between the French translations and Goethe’s *Faust* is further evinced by the varied interpretations of Faust’s recollection, in ‘Vor dem Tor’, of the helplessness and exasperation that he felt as a young man before the outbreak of plague:

*FAUST*  Dacht’ ich das Ende jener Pest
          Vom Herrn des Himmels zu erzwingen.
          (MA, vi/1, 563, l. 1028)

*FAUST*  Obtenir la fin de cette contagion du Maître des cieux. (Stapfer, 1823, p. 52)

*FAUST*  Arracher au Seigneur ses bienfaits, en obtenir la fin de l’épidémie. (Sainte-Aulaire, 1823 p. 70)

*FAUST*  Obtenir du maître des cieux la fin de cette peste cruelle. (Nerval, 1828, p. 66; Nerval,
Nerval and Stapfer display a similarly cautious register in their interpretation of Goethe’s ‘Vom Herrn des Himmels zu erzwingen.’ Their use of the verb ‘obtenir’ is far more reverent in that it avoids the sense of hubris that is communicated by ‘erzwingen’. Sainte-Aulaire’s verb, ‘arracher’ is closest to the original German, though tempered by ‘ses bienfaits’, which accords greater respect to Der Herr’s beneficence.

The French translators display a similarly divergent approach to Faust’s despondent cry in the scene ‘Nacht’; in this case superficially minor grammatical differences between the translations and the original line communicate contrasting spiritual traditions:

**FAUST**

\*Den Göttern gleich’ ich nicht! (MA, VI/1, 553, l, 652)\*

\*Je ne ressemble pas à un Dieu. (Stapfer, 1823, p. 37)\*

\*Je ne ressemble pas aux esprits célestes. (Sainte-Aulaire, 1823, p. 57)\*

\*Je n’égale pas Dieu! (Nerval, 1828, p. 44; Nerval, 1840, p. 100)\*

Nerval’s expression of Faust’s anguish differs only slightly from Goethe’s German, and yet this disparity is significant; with his omission of the definite article and his use of a singular noun rather than a plural noun, the pagan ‘den Göttern’ takes on a distinctly Christian, or at any rate, monotheistic nuance in his French ‘Dieu’. Stapfer capitalises the noun but his insertion of the indefinite article ‘un’ avoids this Christian colouring to his translation; thus, despite his use of the singular noun, he converges with Goethe in his communication of a pagan rather than a Christian god. Sainte-Aulaire’s phrase ‘esprits célestes’ is vague and bland; moreover, it is inaccurate, for ‘spirits’, even heavenly ones, are surely quite distinct
The Christianising of Goethe’s language is also discernible in the following example taken from the ‘Prolog im Himmel’. Neither Sainte-Aulaire nor Nerval in 1840 captures the surprising secularity that Goethe affords Der Herr’s pronouncement during his wager with Mephistopheles. In his earlier translation of 1828 Nerval had remained loyal to the sense of the original text. Of the three translators, Stapfer, despite a major mistranslation (‘jusque dans les rangs de la foule aveugle’), demonstrates the greatest fidelity to Goethe’s phrase:

**DER HERR**

Nun gut, es sei dir überlassen!
Zieh diesen Geist von seinem Urquell ab,
Und führ ihn, kannst du ihn erfassen,
Auf deinem Wege mit herab,
Und steh beschämt, wenn du bekennen mußt:
Ein guter Mensch in seinem dunklen Drange
Ist sich des rechten Weges wohl bewußt.

(MA, VI/I, 544, l. 323)

**LE SEIGNEUR**

Hé bien, tu le peux. Éloigne cet esprit de sa source première; et si tu réussis à t’en emparer, conduis-le avec toi sur le chemin de l’abîme. Et sois confondu, si tu es obligé de reconnaître qu’un homme de bien, jusque dans les rangs de la foule aveugle, peut discerner le droit chemin. (Stapfer, 1823, p. 22)

LE SEIGNEUR

Et bien, soit, je te le permets. Enlève, si tu le peux, cette âme à son créateur; entraîne-la sur tes pas dans l’abîme. Honte à toi, si tu es forcé de reconnaître qu’un homme de bien abandonné au vague de son instinct peut encore reconnaître et garder les voies du Seigneur. (Saint-Aulaire, 1823, p. 44)

**LE SEIGNEUR**

C’est bien, tu peux agir;
Entraîne-le dans ta chatière,
Écarte cet esprit de sa source première:
Mais si tu perds, tu devras bien rougir,
En voyant qu’un mortel, parmi la foule obscure,
Peut discerner le droit chemin.

(Nerval, 1828, p. 22)

LE SEIGNEUR

C’est bien, je le permets. Écarte cet esprit de sa source, et conduis-le dans ton chemin, si tu peux; mais sois confondu, s’il te faut reconnaître qu’un homme de bien, dans la tendance confuse de sa raison, sait distinguer et suivre la voie étroite du Seigneur. (Nerval, 1840, p. 88)

Nerval moves towards Sainte-Aulaire’s translation in 1840: his ‘le droit chemin’ of 1828
becomes ‘la voie étroite du Seigneur’ in the later translation. This is more overtly Christian than Goethe’s ‘des rechten Weges’. The use of Sainte-Aulaire’s translation is a discernible trend in the translation of 1840. However, Nerval does not simply copy Sainte-Aulaire in the above example: arguably he finds a better translation for ‘in seinem dunklen Drange’. He also corrects Stapfer’s error, and his own of 1828, in respect of this phrase. Once again, Nerval is closer to Goethe in his translation of 1828.

A similar Christianisation of Goethe’s language is again discernible in the French translations of the Alter Bauer’s praise for Faust’s and his father’s efforts to aid plague victims in the town some years earlier:

**ALTER BAUER** Dem Helfer half der Helfer droben. (MA, VI/1, 562, l. 1006)

**LE VIEUX PAYSAN** L’homme qui secourait ses semblables, Celui qui est là-haut l’a secouru à son tour. (Stapfer, 1823, p. 51)

**LE VIEUX PAYSAN** Le Seigneur a béni vos soins. (Sainte-Aulaire, 1823, p. 70)

**LE VIEUX PAYSAN** Le Sauveur secourut celui qui nous a sauvés. (Nerval, 1828, p. 64; Nerval, 1840, p. 112)

In his capitalisation of ‘Sauveur’ Nerval gives a more Christian translation of Goethe’s ‘Helfer’. Sainte-Aulaire’s ‘Seigneur’ is even more explicitly Christian and thereby fails to communicate the ambiguities of Goethe’s ‘Helfer’ in a satisfactory manner. Stapfer hedges with ‘Celui qui est là-haut’. This more conventional or non-committal language demonstrates the French translators’ avoidance of Goethe’s potentially controversial tone with regard to religious and metaphysical aspects of his *Faust*.

Within this common reverent and restrained approach to *Faust*, a distinctive ‘voice’  

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79 Nerval’s translation of this line recalls Matthew 7.14: ‘Mais étroite est la porte, resserré le chemin qui mènent à la vie, et il y en a peu qui les trouvent.’
is inevitably discernible in each of the French *Faust* translations, as comparison of their rendering of the following pronouncements, made by Faust prior to his attempt to translate St John’s Gospel, reveals:

**FAUST** Wenn ich vom Geiste recht erleuchtet bin. (MA, vi/1, 568, l. 1228)

**FAUST** Si l’Esprit daigne m’éclairer. (Stapfer, 1823, p. 60)

**FAUST** Dieu, touché des désirs de nos cœurs, nous a lui-même révélé ces biens, et sa parole brille d’un pur éclat dans les saintes écritures. (Sainte-Aulaire, 1823, p. 77)

**FAUST** Si l’esprit daigne m’éclairer. (Nerval, 1828, p. 78; Nerval, 1840, p. 120)

Stapfer and Nerval construct a more cynical Faust in this line; although Goethe’s Faust expresses a desire, the character does not demonstrate the bitterness that is evident in Stapfer’s and Nerval’s world-weary sarcasm. In contrast, Sainte-Aulaire’s Faust allows for no conditionality: in his use of the perfect tense he presents God’s enlightening communication as both complete and certain. Furthermore, he diverges from Goethe’s equivocal ‘Geiste’ in his choice of ‘Dieu’, thus Christianising Faust’s pronouncement. Nerval’s ‘esprit’ best approximates the ambiguous German word. Stapfer’s ‘l’Esprit’ falls between Nerval’s accuracy and Sainte-Aulaire’s deviation; while his choice of word is appropriate to Goethe’s German, his capitalisation of it suggests hedging. One might argue for the use of upper case for the purpose of orthographic consistency, but its Christian significance surely overrides such aesthetic considerations.

The following example provides further evidence of the French translators’ tendency to Christianise Goethe’s text:

**SCHULER** Und eine Magd im Putz das ist nun mein Geschmack. (MA, vi/1, 558, l. 831)

**PREMIER ECOLIER** Une servante en toilette, voilà mes goûts favoris. (Stapfer, 1823, p. 45)

**UN ECOLIER** Une grisette en toilette, c’est tout ce que j’aime. (Sainte-Aulaire, 1823, p. 63)
UN ECOLIER Une fille endimanchée; c’est là mon goût favori. (Nerval, 1828, p. 55; Nerval, 1840, p. 106)

Nerval’s choice of the adjective ‘endimanchée’ is noteworthy; Goethe’s equivalent, the now dated German noun ‘Putz’, does not refer directly to Sunday. While ‘endimanchée’ is a reasonable translation, it is also more loaded in that it gives the phrase a Christian nuance.

The festivities depicted in this scene, ‘Vor dem Tor’, are of course for Easter Day, but this French adjective accentuates this aspect of the scene, which also addresses more worldly and hedonistic concerns with sexual comments, drinking, and smoking. Unlike Nerval, both Stapfer and Sainte-Aulaire misunderstand Goethe’s use of ‘Magd’ here: the former interprets it as domestic servant; the latter’s choice of ‘grisette’ makes reference to the girl’s lowly social status; this is arguably not the principal sense in which Goethe uses ‘Magd’ in this line.80

Sometimes respect for religious tradition is demonstrated through an avoidance of its association with more worldly concerns:

ALTER BAUER Fürwahr es ist sehr wohl getan, Daß ihr am frohen Tag erscheint. (MA, VI/I, 562, l. 993)

LE VIEUX PAYSAN Assurément vous faites bien de reparaître chez nous un jour de fête. (Stapfer, 1823, p. 51)

LE VIEUX PAYSAN Vous avez raison, monsieur le docteur, de venir au milieu de nous un jour de fête. (Sainte-Aulaire, 1823, p. 69)

LE VIEUX PAYSAN C’est vraiment fort bien fait à vous de reparaître ici un jour de gaîté. (Nerval, 1828, p. 64; Nerval, 1840, p. 112)

The three French translators diverge slightly, but tellingly, from Goethe in this line. In using the indefinite rather than the definite article in their translations of ‘am frohen Tag’, they

80 Though ‘Magd’ may mean ‘dienendes Mädchen’, in the context of the young revellers’ hedonistic and lascivious comments in ‘Vor dem Tor’ the sense of ‘Jungfrau’ seems closer to Goethe’s meaning. See, Herkunftswörterbuch, p. 500.
avoid the association of the wild and sexually-charged revelry of the scene with Easter day. While ‘am frohen Tag’ is strongly suggestive of the of the Christian feast, the phrases ‘un jour de gaîté’, ‘un jour de fête’, used by Nerval, Stapfer, and Sainte-Aulaire are unspecific. As noted earlier, French theatres and publishers in Restoration France and during the July Monarchy were under greater censorial constraint than was experienced by Goethe in the Duchy of Saxe-Weimar.

**A More Traditional Devil in France**

The identity and purpose of Goethe’s Mephistopheles have long excited debate among scholars. Goethe certainly presents a more complex and enigmatic figure than the traditional devil of chapbook and legend; the German author’s dedication to the metaphorical representation of the dynamic interaction of oppositions was well served by the old German Faust myth with its unequivocal depiction of good and evil, but he altered it considerably. The French translators’ interpretation of Mephistopheles often approaches the more simplistic portrayal of the ‘antagonist’ found in the old myth; all three offer little of Goethe’s nuanced, witty, and evasive devil.

These characteristics are evident in Goethe’s ‘Prolog im Himmel’; however, in the French translations thereof, Mephistopheles’ complexity is less apparent:

**DER HERR**
Du darfst auch da nur frei erscheinen;
Ich habe deines gleichen nie gehaßt.
Von allen Geistern die verneinen
Ist mir der Schalk am wenigsten zur Last.
(MA, VI/I, 544, l. 336)

**LE SEIGNEUR**
Tu peux te montrer en liberté sur la terre; je n’ai jamais haï tes pareils. De tous les Esprits qui nient, le malicieux m’est le moins à charge. (Stapfer, 1823, pp. 22-23)

**LE SEIGNEUR**
Tu pourras toujours te présenter librement ici, je n’ai point de haine pour tes pareils. De tous les esprits des ténèbres, l’esprit de ruse et de malice est celui qui m’importune le moins. (Saint-Aulaire, 1823, p. 45)

**LE SEIGNEUR**
Va mon fils, et remplis ta tâche.
C’est, de tous les démons, toi que je hais le moins.  
(Nerval, 1828, p. 22)

LE SEIGNEUR  
Tu pourras toujours te présenter ici librement. Je n’ai jamais haï tes pareils. Entre les esprits qui nient, l’esprit de ruse et de malice me déplait le moins de tous. (Nerval, 1840, p. 89)

Goethe’s ‘Schalk’ is playful and denotes mischief and trickery. In contrast, Stapfer’s ‘malicieux’ and Nerval’s ‘malice’ in his translation of 1840 are much closer to a sense of evil than ‘Schalk’. The same is true of Nerval’s choice in 1828 of ‘démons’. However, in 1840 Nerval prevaricates by countering this more traditionally diabolic interpretation with the more Goethean ‘l’esprit de ruse’. His ‘loyalties’ are divided; the influence of both Goethe’s nuanced portrayal of Mephistopheles and the traditional French attachment to the straightforward morality tale are discernible. Nerval once again adopts Sainte-Aulaire’s choice of vocabulary in his revised translation of 1840.

Sometimes it is the French translators’ supplementary, rather than incomplete, material that gives a different flavour to a translation, as is seen in the manner in which Die Tiere of the ‘Hexenküche’ address Mephistopheles:

DIE TIERE  
O sei doch so gut,  
Mit Schweiß und mit Blut  
Die Krone zu leimen!  
(MA, vi/1, 603, l. 2450)

LES ANIMAUX  
O daigne, daigne prendre  
Cette couronne-là!  
Et raccommode-la.  
Il suffit d’y répandre  
Des sueurs et du sang.  
(Stapfer, 1823, p. 117)

LES ANIMAUX  
Daigne la prendre, mon maître,  
En voici tous les éclats,  
Avec du sang tu pourras  
La raccommoder peut-être.  
(Nerval, 1828, p. 156; Nerval, 1840, p. 173)

Neither Goethe’s original nor Stapfer’s translation contains an equivalent of Nerval’s ‘mon
maître’, although the register and tone of the animals’ entreating of Mephistopheles is, of course, respectful to the point of obsequiousness. Only Nerval provides an explicit reference to Mephistopheles’ diabolic identity: he is the ‘maître’ of the creatures in the witch’s kitchen. This elaboration of Goethe’s text suggests an intentional foregrounding for readers and audiences, which is in keeping with the nineteenth-century French tendency to construct Mephistopheles along more traditionally diabolic lines.

Within the binary opposition of good and evil, the French translators accord Mephistopheles the most extreme position in a hierarchical representation of evil, once again undermining the lability of Goethe’s Mephistopheles:

Mephistopheles Ich möcht’ mich gleich dem Teufel übergeben,
Wenn ich nur selbst kein Teufel wär’!
(MA, VI/I, 615, l. 2809)

Mephistopheles Je me donnerais au Diable tout à l’heure, si je ne l’étais moi-même! (Stapfer, 1823, p. 134)

Mephistopheles Je me donnerais au diable, si je n’étais le diable moi-même. (Sainte-Aulaire, 1823, p. 128)

Mephistopheles Je me donnerais volontiers au diable, si je ne l’étais moi-même. (Nerval, 1828, p. 182; Nerval, 1840, p. 192)

The translation of this ironic utterance further highlights the French translators’ reduction of Goethe’s complex Mephistopheles. In using the definite article in the phrases ‘si je ne l’étais moi-même’ and ‘le diable moi-même’ all three translators portray Mephistopheles as The Devil, rather than a devil, which is at odds with Goethe’s ‘kein Teufel’; the German phrase depicts him as one devil among an unspecified number. Durrani proffers the following suggestion regarding Mephistopheles’ identity: ‘it is convenient to see in him a companion figure or “alter ego” to the doctor [Faust] whose latent amoral and selfish desires he
Despite Nerval’s willingness to challenge certain conventions of French translation, his experimental approach did not extend to his depiction of Mephistopheles, which bears closer resemblance to the moral certainties of the Faust chapbook than to Goethe’s equivocality:

\[
\text{Mephistopheles} \quad \begin{align*}
&\text{Wenn wir uns \textit{drüben} wieder finden,} \\
&\text{So sollst du mir das Gleiche tun.}
\end{align*}
\]

(MA, vi/t, 580, l. 1658)

\[
\text{Mephistopheles} \quad \begin{align*}
&\text{Quand nous nous retrouverons là-bas, tu dois me rendre la pareille. (Stapfer, 1823, p. 78)} \\
&\text{Quand ensuite nous nous rencontreronats là-bas, alors nous pourrons changer de rôle. (Sainte-Aulaire, 1823, p. 90)} \\
&\text{Quand nous nous reverrons là-dessous tu devras me rendre la pareille. (Nerval, 1828, p. 100; Nerval, 1840, p. 133)}
\end{align*}
\]

Goethe’s ‘wenn’ is intentionally ambiguous; the French translators are unanimous in rendering it as ‘quand’, which denies Mephistopheles the necessary deviousness. In the German text the devil’s offer does not inevitably entail Faust’s damnation. At least that is what the artful Mephistopheles would have Faust believe. It is the possibility of ‘wenn’ signifying ‘if’ that he exploits. This evasiveness is entirely in keeping with Mephistopheles’ use of the euphemism ‘drüben’ to describe hell. This means ‘in the next world’, without specifying a downward direction as the translations do. Moreover, any convincing devil would surely possess more trickery and rhetorical power than an explicit promise of certain damnation.

While a simplified translation of a text may have certain advantages, the potential pitfalls of such an attempt at clarity are numerous. The French translators’ interpretation of

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Mephistopheles’ offering his service to Faust is a case in point:

**MEPHISTOPHELES**  
Verbinde dich; du sollst, in diesen Tagen,  
Mit Freuden meine Künste sehn.  
(MA, vi/1, 580, l. 1672)

**MEPHISTOPHELES**  
Engage-toi, et mon art te fait passer dans l’ivresse de la joie des jours délicieux. (Stapfer, 1823, p. 78)

**MEPHISTOPHELES**  
Je vous répondez que sous peu de jours vous serez satisfait de mes petits talens [sic]. (Sainte-Aulaire, 1823, p. 90)

**MEPHISTOPHELES**  
Engage-toi; tu verras ces jours-ci tout ce que mon art peut procurer de plaisir. (Nerval, 1828, p. 101; Nerval, 1840, p. 133)

Both Nerval and Sainte-Aulaire present a more traditional devil than Stapfer in this extract; they reject Goethe’s construction of a rhetorically skilled Mephistopheles. In the original text he is manipulative and seductive, persuading Faust that he will see the results of a pact ‘mit Freuden’. In contrast, the offer made by Nerval’s and Saint-Aulaire’s Mephistopheles is less compelling: the former’s use of the verb ‘pouvoir’ and his diminution of ‘Freude’ to mere ‘plaisir’ makes for a less enticing proposition; the latter’s ‘mes petits talens’ is also unattractive. Only Stapfer’s ‘l’ivresse de la joie’ captures Goethe’s level of intensity. One might argue that Nerval and Sainte-Aulaire portray Mephistopheles’ cynicism in their understated language, but at this juncture in the drama, the devil is attempting to ensnare Faust and any downplaying of his offer seems misplaced.
French Constructions of Margarete

As with their depictions of Mephistopheles, the translators allow for less subtlety and complexity of character in their constructions of Margarete. There is also a reverence for her that recalls their caution and reluctance to reflect Goethe’s lightness of touch with regard to Der Herr. Not only does this simplify the wider themes of love and redemption, but it also impedes the accurate communication of Goethe’s narrative by representing Margarete as an entirely innocent victim of Faust’s and Mephistopheles’ machinations. In this hagiographic approach to her character the French translators provide a characteristically Romantic flavour to their Fausts: the idealisation of women.

Faust’s entreaty to Mephistopheles in the scene ‘Straße’ demonstrates their deference towards Margarete:

**FAUST** Hör’, du mußt mir die Dirne schaffen! (MA, vi/1, 609, l. 2619)

**FAUST** Ecoute, il faut que tu me procures la jeune fille. (Stapfer, 1823, p. 125)

**FAUST** Écoute; amène-moi sur-le-champ cette fille. (Sainte-Aulaire, 1823, p. 119)

**FAUST** Écoute, il faut me faire avoir la jeune fille. (Nerval, 1828, p. 170; Nerval, 1840, p. 184)

There is a coarseness to the word ‘Dirne’ that is absent from the translators’ ‘jeune fille’. Though derogatory, the German noun is more colourful — and in a sense more informative — than the bland French phrase; the disrespectful tone is congruent with its motivation. At this stage in the play, Faust’s desire for Margarete is based on lust, and consequently she represents little more than a new experience for him, another possession to be acquired. As ‘Dirne’ acquired the sense of ‘prostitute’ in the sixteenth century Goethe would have been familiar with this meaning and would perhaps have known something of its
etymology. Ulrich Gaier contests the association of ‘Dirne’ with ‘prostitute’, giving the following definition: ‘Mädchen niederen Standes (nicht: Hure), galt bei Angehörigen höherer Stände für leichter zugänglich.’ Regardless of the word’s provenance and official meaning, it is notable that Gaier sees the need to explain what ‘Dirne’ does not mean, thereby confirming the popular meaning that he denies. Besides, the use of ‘la jeune fille’ is simply unrealistic in this context. It is possible that an attempt to convey the seamier aspect of ‘Dirne’ would have been met with criticism, especially in the 1820s, a tumultuous period during which strict censorship laws introduced by Charles X’s government were vehemently contested by Parisian liberals. Moreover, the lingering of neoclassical aesthetic values in France might have contributed to this toning down of vulgar language.

The adoption of a formal register instead of Goethe’s more unconstrained, and frequently colloquial tone, is in fact a prevalent tendency among the three French translators; the following extracts serve as further examples of this tendency:

**FAUST**

Und das sag’ ich ihm kurz und gut,
Wenn nicht das süße junge Blut
Heut’ Nacht in meinen Armen ruht;
So sind wir um Mitternacht geschieden.
(MA, vi/1, 609-10, l. 2635)

**FAUST**

Je ne dis plus qu’un mot: si la charmante fille n’est pas ce soir même dans mes bras, à minuit nous nous séparons. (Stapfer, 1823, p. 126)

**FAUST**

Je vous le dis clair et net, si cette belle enfant ne passe pas la nuit dans mes bras, avant minuit vous aurez votre congé. (Sainte-Aulaire, 1823, p. 120)

**FAUST**

Je vous le dis bref et bien, si la douce jeune fille ne repose pas ce soir dans mes bras, à minuit nous sommes séparés. (Nerval, 1828, p. 171; Nerval, 1840, p. 185)

As Trunz states in his notes to Goethe’s *Faust*, the phrase ‘junge Blut’ was ‘in der Sprache des sechzehnten Jahrhunderts und des Volksliedes formelhaft für einen jungen Menschen,

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82 *Herkunftswörterbuch*, p. 148.
83 *Kommentar zu Goethes ‘Faust’*, p. 85.
84 Mansel, pp. 217-19.
Für Jugend. There is an earthiness and vitality to the metaphor; a difference in register is again evident in the French translations of ‘süße junge Blut’: ‘la douce jeune fille’, ‘la charmante fille’, and ‘cette belle enfant’, by Nerval, Stapfer, and Sainte-Aulaire respectively, mostly avoid the metaphor ‘Blut’ with its connotations of liveliness and passion, preferring instead more straightforwardly denotive descriptions. Nerval’s is the most successful of the three versions; he captures something of the passion and energy of Goethe’s language by keeping the sense of youth and sweetness. Though ‘fille’ is somewhat uninspired, it is at least an appropriate translation. Similarly, Stapfer is partly successful in that he translates a sense of youth and vitality in ‘fille’, but this is not reinforced in a manner that is achieved by Nerval’s ‘jeune’. In contrast, Sainte-Aulaire’s choices are difficult to fathom: ‘belle’ is too divergent from the German ‘süße’, and ‘enfant’ seems entirely inappropriate in the context of a seduction.

Goethe also describes Margarete as ‘das Blut’ in the scene ‘Wald und Höhle’; this time there is unanimity among the translators:

Mephistopheles Das arme affenjunge Blut. (MA, VI/I, 631, l. 3313)

Mephistopheles Cette pauvre jeune fille. (Stapfer, 1823, p. 162)

Mephistopheles Cette pauvre jeune fille. (Sainte-Aulaire, 1823, p. 155)

Mephistopheles La pauvre jeune fille. (Nerval, 1828, p. 221; Nerval, 1840, p. 220)

Yet again they make no attempt to convey this sense, preferring instead the pedestrian, ‘pauvre jeune fille’, which, as previously discussed, communicates the German phrase’s denotation but lacks its connotative richness. For Gaier, the purpose of Goethe’s phrase, ‘affenjunge Blut’, which he interprets as ‘kindlich unselbständig’, is two-fold: it emphasises Margarete’s youth and inexperience and therewith Faust’s culpability, and it appropriates

85 HA, III, 552.
Gretchen as a part of the ‘Sathanherrschaft’. The first aspect is of course captured by the French translators’ plain phrase, but there is no sense of the latter aspect; all three French translators simplify Goethe’s description of Margarete.

A literary character’s identity has narrative significance, and yet Stapfer, Sainte-Aulaire, and Nerval miss a relatively simple method of capturing a vital aspect of Margarete’s complexity:

**FAUST Und Gretchen?** (MA, VI/1, 616, l. 2849)

**FAUST Et Marguerite?** (Stapfer, 1823, p. 135)

**FAUST Et Marguerite?** (Sainte-Aulaire, 1823, p. 129)

**FAUST Et Marguerite?** (Nerval, 1828, p. 184; Nerval, 1840, p. 193)

They do not use the German diminutive form of Margarete; rather they Gallicized the name as Marguerite — a domesticating translation tactic. The use of the original name would have given the translation a foreign nuance, without the myriad difficulties involved in providing cross-cultural equivalence in more substantial and complex linguistic structures. This domestication of the German name is incongruent with a Romantic embracing of foreign culture; it is in fact closer to the neoclassical espousal of appropriation and imitation.

Furthermore, Goethe’s use of both names, Gretchen and Margarete, has narrative significance in *Faust*, as Gaier notes:


This precise significance is inevitably lost in the French translations but that is insufficient

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87 *Kommentar zu Goethes Faust*, p. 100.
reason to ignore Goethe’s distinction. Perceptive French readers or audience members might have gleaned something of the difference between Margarete and Gretchen, for as Gaier notes, Goethe varies the name according to context. The French translators’ Gallicizing of Margarete as Marguerite, and the maintenance of this form in all contexts, simplifies and domesticates this aspect of Goethe’s Faust.

A simplified construction of Margarete is created in the French translations of a crucial event in the scene ‘Abend’ in which they do not capture her ambivalent attitude towards Faust’s gift of jewellery:

MARGARETE Wie sollte mir die Kette stehn? (MA, VI/I, 614, l. 2794)

MARGUERITE Comme elle m’irait bien, cette chaîne! (Stapfer, 1823, p. 133)

MARGUERITE Je crois que cette chaîne ne m’irait pas mal. (Sainte-Aulaire, 1823, p. 127)

MARGUERITE Comme cette chaîne m’irait bien. (Nerval, 1828, p. 181; Nerval, 1840, p. 191)

In changing Margarete’s question to an exclamation, Nerval — again using Stapfer’s line with only minor syntactic alterations — constructs a less nuanced character than Goethe; in the latter’s German her doubts and anxieties about the mysterious gift, and its wider significance to her relationship with Faust, are underscored by her expressing her thoughts as a question. In contrast, in Nerval’s and Stapfer’s translations Marguerite exudes confidence and certainty in this line. There is no sense of the wariness expressed in the original. Furthermore, the use of exclamation has a melodramatic nuance that is absent from the more complex original line, but is in keeping with de Staël’s neoclassically inclined translation of Faust.88 The fearful and cautious aspect of Margarete’s character is vital to Goethe’s Faust;

88 Vilain, p. 87.
she is, after all, a naïve and innocent girl and these qualities are evident throughout the original work: though she is clearly tempted by the offering, her ambivalence towards this ostentatious gift should be apparent. Its ambiguity is suggested by Goethe’s ‘Kette’: the noun denotes the jewellery but also connotes imprisonment; Margarete is ultimately placed in chains as a result of her relationship with Faust, a relationship traceable in no small measure to this gift. Although Sainte-Aulaire’s translation of this line is verbose, he does provide the requisite sense of doubt by having Marguerite introduce her thoughts on the gift with the words ‘Je crois’.

No doubt is to be found in the translators’ interpretations of Mephistopheles’ description of Gretchen in ‘Am Brunnen’:

Mephistopheles Der Grasaff’! ist er weg? (MA, VI/1, 637, l. 3521)

Mephistopheles La brebis est-elle partie? (Stapfer, 1823, p. 171)

Mephistopheles L’innocente brebis est-elle partie? (Sainte-Aulaire, 1823, p. 164)

Mephistopheles La brebis est-elle-partie? (Nerval, 1828, p. 234; Nerval, 1840, p. 228)

The difference between ‘Grasaff’ and ‘brebis’ is significant to the author’s and the translators’ construction of Margarete. ‘Grasaff’ was a common term for ‘unreifes Mädchen’ in Goethe’s home city of Frankfurt, though this word implicates Faust as the instigator of an exploitative relationship with a young, immature woman, it is not as condemnatory as the French translators’ ‘brebis’, whose animal metaphor surely suggests the sacrificing of innocence and also the biblical ‘brebis égarée’. The wider significance is that the French posit Margarete as an innocent victim of Mephistopheles and Faust, whereas in Goethe’s

89 Kommentar zu Goethes ‘Faust’, p. 102.
original text she is presented as immature and perhaps also rash. Consequently she bears a degree of responsibility for the course of events. Alternatively, one might see in the French constructions of Mephistopheles a more traditionally diabolic desire to destroy a wholly innocent ‘brebis’.

2.5 CONCLUSION

The translation process is complex; inevitably analyses and comparisons of a source text and a translation uncover numerous trends, and at times, seemingly contradictory approaches on the part of a translator. The consideration of different translations of a particular text only increases this intricacy. Nonetheless, such a methodology offers several advantages, not least of which is the comparative element. In the case of Stapfer’s, Sainte-Aulaire’s, and Nerval’s translations of Goethe’s Faust, their juxtaposition with Goethe’s original German poem provides a framework within which each translation illuminates aspects of the others. This chapter has shed light on the work of the three French translators and has discovered some of Nerval’s convergences with, and divergences from, the Goethean Faustian paradigm. As noted above, these are salient and persistent trends in the translations.

In summary, Nerval simplified Goethe’s complex text, as indeed did both Stapfer and Sainte-Aulaire; he demonstrated greater commercial awareness than has been widely acknowledged; closely related to this, he presented a more theatrical, melodramatic even, version of Faust than Goethe; though much indebted to Stapfer’s, and occasionally Sainte-Aulaire’s, earlier French translations of Faust, Nerval improved on these translations in certain respects, principally through his superior poetic ability.

His poetic skill is discernible in various ways, for instance in his changing the rhyme scheme to rime embrassée in his translation of ‘Es war ein König in Thule’ to reflect the theme of faithfulness in Goethe’s ballad. Nerval combines prosodic conservatism and
experimentation in his *Faust* translations: he uses the ‘alexandrin classique’ in his translation of ‘Zueignung’ and usually conforms to the rule of ‘alternance’ in his rhyme schemes, but he also uses heterosyllabic verse to translate sections of ‘Hexenküche’. Stapfer generally maintains isosyllabism, even for the most bizarre sections of verse in *Faust*. Nerval also demonstrates a greater understanding of Goethe’s uses of rhythm, particularly in his translation of Faust’s and Mephistopheles’ ascent of the Brocken, making very skilful and sensitive use of onomatopoeia to reinforce the content of his verse, as my analysis of his translation of ‘In die Traum- und Zaubersphäre’ reveals. He is similarly adroit in his syntactic arrangements; this is discernible in his reordering of words in his later translation of 1840 to bring his lines closer to Goethe’s.

These successes notwithstanding, it must be borne in mind that his translations often mirror Stapfer’s. It would seem that Nerval’s later literary successes have coloured critical opinion of his *Faust* translations. Conversely, it is undoubtedly true that Stapfer’s relative literary obscurity has nuanced retrospective appraisals of his translation of *Faust*. Of the three translators, Sainte-Aulaire is often the weakest; not only does he omit entire sections of Goethe’s play that do not accord with his aesthetic tastes, but his avowed aversion to what one might broadly consider the more Romantic aspects of *Faust*, such as the ‘Hexenküche’ and ‘Walpurgisnacht’ scenes, together with frequently erroneous, circumlocutory interpretations of the original work, mar his translation in comparison with those of Stapfer and Nerval.

Despite the aforementioned faults, Nerval’s translations of Goethe’s *Faust* represent a truly impressive achievement. His earliest translation of 1828 in particular, undertaken at the age of nineteen, presages his later literary achievements and originality; to translate as complex and subtle a piece of literature as Goethe’s *Faust* from a foreign language, of which
he had but a limited knowledge, and to succeed in capturing many of the metaphoric and
formal elements of the work — and in this respect often surpass his exemplar, Stapfer— is an
achievement that validates the description of Nerval as a prodigy, and possibly even as that
most contentious of descriptions — a great writer.
CHAPTER 3

NERVAL’S ORIGINAL FAUSTIAN DRAMAS: THE *FAUST* FRAGMENT,
*NICOLAS FLAMEL*, AND *L’IMAGIER DE HARLEM*

3.1 NERVAL’S *FAUST* FRAGMENT AND *NICOLAS FLAMEL*: INTRODUCTION
AND CONTEXTUALISATION

Both the incompleteness and brevity of these texts — the *Faust* fragment accounts for just
fourteen pages of its author’s *Œuvres complètes*, *Nicolas Flamel* a mere twelve pages of the
same work (Nerval, I, 248-62; Ibid., 319-31) — go some way towards explaining the
comparative lack of scholarly interest in them. Yet as texts that coincide with the beginning
of Nerval’s literary career and with the stirrings of significant cultural shifts in France, they
repay close reading. An analysis of an incomplete literary work is inevitably problematic: to
be ignorant of the denouement is ordinarily to have but a tantalising glimpse of what might
have been; however, the comparatist’s frustration is somewhat assuaged if the text under
investigation has a well-established provenance. That the richly intertextual *Faust* fragment
(1827?) and *Nicolas Flamel* (1831) are such texts facilitates the identification of their
influences and borrowings. It is more difficult, however, to ascertain the extent to which
Nerval’s fragmentary dramas represent an innovative contribution to the *Fauststoff*; the
influence of Goethe’s *Faust t* (1808) and Klinger’s *Fausts Leben, Thaten und Höllenfahrt*
(1791) is pervasive in the *Faust* fragment. *Nicolas Flamel* also owes much to the former text,
but Nerval’s principal source was acknowledged in the first instalment of this Faustian
drama:¹ ‘l’idée première de ce drame est imité d’une scène du premier volume des *Soirées
de Walter Scott* publiées par le Bibliophile Jacob’ (Nerval, I, 1617). As noted earlier, ‘Le
Bibliophile Jacob’ was a *nom de plume* of Paul Lacroix; he was co-editor with Amédée
Pichot of *Le Mercure de France au xixe siècle* at the time of its publication of Nerval’s

¹ Though Nerval’s manuscript is not dated, Lieven d’Hulst suggests that the *Faust* fragment was written in
1827, around the time of Nerval’s translating Goethe’s *Faust*; *Nicolas Flamel* was published in two instalments
Nicolas Flamel (Nerval, I, 1617). In his introductory comments to a reissue of Nicolas Flamel just months after Nerval’s death, Lacroix illustrates the importance of the work to his friend:

Gérard de Nerval, dont je suis le plus ancien ami, puisque notre connaissance remonte à l’année 1824, m’avait remis en 1830 le manuscrit des premières scènes d’un drame-chronique intitulé Nicolas Flamel qu’il n’avait jamais achevé, mais qu’il proposait toujours de continuer, puisque, dans une note autographe contenant la liste de ses ouvrages et dressée au mois de janvier dernier, on voit figurer parmi les drames et opéras en préparation: ‘Nicolas Flamel, 3 actes, commencé’ (Nerval, i, 1618).²

It is interesting to discover that Nerval had recommenced work on Nicolas Flamel, the note in Lacroix’s possession having been signed by Nerval within days of his death on 26 January 1855. Clearly he considered it an important work, his youth and relative literary inexperience at the time of its writing in no way tarnishing the mature author’s retrospective opinion of one of his earliest publications. Therefore, it is not surprising that the creation of a French ‘Faust’ — or a French Faustian drama at the very least — alongside his acclaimed French translations of Goethe’s Faust should have been a literary ambition of Nerval’s.

He was certainly dedicated to his goal, borrowing Étienne Villain’s Histoire critique de Nicolas Flamel et de Pernelle sa femme from the Bibliothèque Nationale on 26 May 1831,³ just weeks prior to the publication of Nicolas Flamel, and demonstrating a thorough engagement with this text in the plot of his incomplete drama.⁴ However, he also constructed Flamel and his wife Pernelle in a manner that diverges from both Villain’s account of their lives and from Goethe’s portrayal of their counterparts, Faust and Margarete. The comparison of the literary characters of Nerval’s fragments, an eighteenth-century French biography of relatively obscure, mythologised figures, and a

² Lacroix’s comments introduced Nerval’s Nicolas Flamel, which was republished in numbers 20 and 21 of L’Abeille impériale in June 1855.
³ Huguette Brunet and Jean Ziegler, Gérard de Nerval et la bibliothèque nationale, ed. by Jean Guillaume and Claude Pichois, Études nervaliennes et romantiques, 4 (Namur: Presses Universitaires de Namur, 1982), p. 44.
⁴ Étienne Villain, Histoire critique de Nicolas Flamel et de Pernelle sa femme (Paris: Desprez, 1761).
German literary text of unrivalled renown requires a strong degree of commensurability.

And yet the evidence supports the validity of this juxtaposition: not only did Nerval withdraw Villain’s study of Flamel and his wife from the library, but he also studied it in some depth; its influence permeates his *Nicolas Flamel*. The comparison of Goethe’s *Faust* with Nerval’s *Nicolas Flamel* is more controversial; but again it is reinforced by textual evidence from both works. In Nerval’s creation in *Nicolas Flamel* of a despairing alchemist who deals with the Devil there is justification of the adjective ‘Faustian’.

As both of Nerval’s fragments and the works that influenced them, with the exception of Goethe’s *Faust* of course, are relatively obscure, further contextualisation is called for before comparisons and analyses are undertaken. Brief pertinent biographical information on Paul Lacroix and Friedrich Maximilian Klinger is given here because of the importance of the *Soirées de Walter Scott à Paris* and *Fausts Leben, Thaten und Höllenfahrt* to the *Faust* fragment and to *Nicolas Flamel*, but also on account of the former’s friendship with Nerval and the latter’s with Goethe. The significance of melodrama to the fragments is then addressed, with particular emphasis on René-Charles Guilbert Pixerécourt, whose extraordinary productivity, commercial success, and influence has become exemplary of, and perhaps widely synonymous with, the melodrama in France during the first half of the nineteenth century. Building on this foundation, a close reading of the *Faust* fragment and *Nicolas Flamel* follows; owing to the similarities between the two works they are juxtaposed and analysed together according to common themes. Ultimately the purpose of this chapter is to disembroil something of their essence from the complex intertextual weft from which they were partly composed. Many of their significant divergences from the Goethean Faustian paradigm are shared with Nerval’s translations of Goethe’s *Faust*: a consistently
different portrayal of the protagonists; the idealisation of the principal female characters; and the dissimilar depiction of the diabolic ‘antagonist’. In addition to these shared variances an individual deviation from Goethe’s text is to be found in Nicolas Flamel: the transposition of ‘Auerbachs Keller in Leipzig’ to a Parisian ‘Cabaret de la Cité’. As will be demonstrated, in this cross-cultural scene Nerval ingeniously draws parallels between the compromised perception of the hostelry’s habitués and the imprecision of cultural transference. The fragments are then considered with reference to the particularly tumultuous French cultural scene during the 1820s and 1830s. The main focus is the struggle between proponents of neoclassical aesthetic values and supporters of burgeoning Romanticism, not only on account of the great historical, social, and cultural importance of this interaction, but also because the conflict is evident in Nerval’s fragments.

Paul Lacroix, ‘le bibliophile Jacob’, and his Soirées de Walter Scott à Paris (1829)

A contemporary and close friend of Nerval’s, Paul Lacroix’s (1806-84) enormous literary output is seldom read today. Nonetheless his contribution to the development of French Romanticism should not be underestimated; he collaborated with Alexandre Dumas père on several projects, and in 1855 was appointed curator of the Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal. Lacroix is significant to this investigation of Nerval’s Faust fragment and Nicolas Flamel in at least two respects: his publication in 1829 of Les Soirées de Walter Scott à Paris and his editorship of Le Mercure de France at the time of its acceptance and publication of Nicolas Flamel.5

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5 Maurice Parturier, ‘Prosper Mérimée et le bibliophile Jacob (Lettres inédites)’, Revue d’Histoire littéraire de la France, 4 (1937), 517-32 (pp. 517-18); Maxwell, p. 14; Dictionnaire Nerval, p. 274.
Friedrich Maximilian Klinger and his *Fausts Leben, Thaten und Höllenfahrt* (1791)

Friedrich Maximilian Klinger was born in 1752 in Frankfurt-am-Main. In the early 1770s Klinger met Goethe in Frankfurt; Klinger’s modest family home became a meeting place for members of the incipient *Sturm und Drang* movement. In *Dichtung und Wahrheit* Goethe gives a description of Klinger that is pertinent to the content of *Fausts Leben, Thaten und Höllenfahrt*: ‘Alles was an ihm war, hatte er selbst verschafft und geschaffen’ (WA i, 28, 253). Klinger overcame great difficulties to achieve literary success, but Goethe was a supportive and generous friend. However, tensions began to develop following Klinger’s relocation to the Weimar court in spring 1776. The quarrel between the two writers has been much discussed with two explanations being commonly offered: Klinger upset Goethe by using his [Goethe’s] portrait as a target for shooting practice; Goethe felt threatened by Klinger as a literary rival and was jealous of the popularity of Klinger’s works with the younger members of Weimar society. It seems probable, however, that the real source of the conflict lay in the writers’ diverging aesthetic loyalties; while Klinger was still convinced by *Sturm und Drang* values, Goethe had moved on and the movement that had been vital to his early literary success now held little attraction for him. In 1782 Klinger settled in Russia where he pursued a varied career. He died in Dorpat in present-day Estonia in 1831.6

Klinger’s literary career may usefully be viewed as comprising two main periods: the first produced his early dramas, the most celebrated being *Sturm und Drang* (1776) and *Die Zwillinge* (1776), the second his philosophical novels, the most significant of which is *Fausts Leben, Thaten und Höllenfahrt*, published anonymously in St. Petersburg by Johann

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Friedrich Krile in 1791, one year after the appearance of Goethe’s *Urfaust*, published in 1790 as *Faust. Ein Fragment*. Late Enlightenment values provide no more than a partial explanation of Klinger’s eccentric, pessimistic interpretation of *Faust*. His novels seem in some respects out of time, reactionary even. Though they reflect many of the concerns of the Enlightenment, it would be specious to describe them as belonging to that cultural development, even with the addition of the caveat ‘Late’ Enlightenment. Too many aspects of Klinger’s novel run counter to typical Enlightenment ideology, particularly his opposition to the optimistic conviction that man is fundamentally good and progress is assured.

In certain respects, however, the novel does communicate Enlightenment values. Although Klinger’s text challenges the typical dedication to, and exaltation of, progress, it is not on the grounds that such a philosophy is potentially misplaced and even dangerous, but rather because individual experience frequently belies it. This egotistical perspective evokes a Romantic trait — the primacy of subjectivity and emotion. In Klinger’s case the ‘Romantic’ aspects of his *Faust* may have developed from his earlier, more celebrated *Sturm und Drang* writings. However, Klinger’s novel is also socially engaged in the sense that it addresses, and indeed rages at, societal inequality. The author’s admiration for Rousseau is evident here. In addition to difficulties experienced during an impoverished childhood, the system of literary patronage and his painful experiences at Weimar probably also inform Klinger’s anger and rancour at contemporary society’s unfairness.

Goethe’s and Klinger’s *Fausts* are certainly very different. In Goethe’s drama Faust...
gradually learns to experience guilt and shame and in this sense the work has a strongly didactic tone. However, the nature of Faust’s Bildung becomes clearer in the second part of the work. Klinger’s drama, in contrast, depicts ever escalating suffering and misery without the sense of development that is vital to Goethe’s Faust. There is little evidence of Enlightenment optimism here. The issues of providence and agency are essential aspects of any telling of the Faust story: is Faust the ‘Wurm’ that the Erdgeist suggests? Is this spirit’s assertion that ‘Du gleichst dem Geist den du begreifst’ (MA, vi/1, 549, l. 498, l. 512) accurate? Of course the answer to these questions varies depending upon which version of Faust is under consideration: Klinger’s Faust is a hopeless wanderer, part of a corrupt, desperate humanity, whereas the Faust of Goethe’s creation is never really without divine support.13

On a related note, as Olga Smoljan points out, ‘ein tiefer Haß gegen die Klerikalen und gegen alles, was direkt oder indirekt mit dem Klerikalismus zusammenhängt, durchzieht den Roman.’14 This aspect of Klinger’s novel lends yet another Enlightenment flavour to the work. In this respect Klinger’s Faust contrasts strongly with Nerval’s fragments — and his translations of Goethe’s Faust for that matter — which display some sympathy for Christian values.

13 Hill, p. 57.
14 Smoljan, p. 151.
René-Charles Guilbert de Pixerécourt and Melodrama

Melodramas were very popular in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century France, a particularly prolific author being René-Charles Guilbert de Pixerécourt (1773-1844), creator of ninety-four melodramas which received thirty thousand performances on the contemporary French stage. An impressive record certainly, especially in the eyes of an ambitious young playwright: we know that Nerval withdrew the third volume of Pixerécourt’s *Chefs d’œuvre du répertoire des mélodrames* from the Bibliothèque Nationale on 8 June 1831, just over a week after having borrowed Villain’s *Histoire critique de Nicolas Flamel* and only two weeks prior to the publication of his *Nicolas Flamel* in *Le Mercure de France au XIXe siècle*.

Part of the ‘secret’ of Pixerécourt’s great commercial success was simplification; he popularised and adapted material to make it understandable to unsophisticated audiences at the théâtres des boulevards. Nerval and Pixerécourt were both acolytes of a common literary mentor: Charles Nodier, a writer who did not view melodrama pejoratively, noting its strong influence on the development of Romantic drama; as Pichois and Brix state, Nodier ‘a été incontestablement un modèle de Nerval’.

Nerval himself expresses as much when reminiscing in *Les Faux saulniers* about former librarians of the Bibliothèque de

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16 Brunet and Ziegler, p. 44.


19 *Dictionnaire Nerval*, p. 349.
l’Arsenal: ‘le second [Nodier], si spirituel et si bon […] fut un de mes tuteurs littéraires’ (Nerval, II, 20). Nodier’s influence on Nerval is further highlighted by Arsène Houssaye’s comment in *Le Moniteur universel* on 18 May 1850: ‘Nodier n’est pas tout à fait mort, puisque M. Gérard de Nerval est parmi nous.’20 In the light of these affinities, it is unsurprising that Nerval’s fragments have melodramatic elements. In fact, these early works were produced at the intersection of, and indeed confrontation between, several cultural movements; alongside the more famous struggle between the proponents of neoclassicism and Romanticism, the interaction of the well-established, popular French melodrama and the burgeoning French Romantic drama exerted a potent influence on Nerval’s *Faust* fragment and *Nicolas Flamel*.

Pixerécourt’s strategy of depicting a straightforward struggle between good and evil on the stage was replicated by Nerval in the *Faust* fragment and *Nicolas Flamel*. Pixerécourt was at pains to avoid complexity in his dramas as it was a threat to his foremost concern — popularity.21 Simplicity was also important to Pixerécourt on a stylistic level; this largely explains his choice of prose over verse in his plays. Prose was expected by his many admirers and to a certain extent became a marker of melodrama. As Adèle Hugo states, Victor Hugo was highly conscious of the repercussions of choosing verse over prose for a drama, noting that ‘les vers étaient impossibles au boulevard’.22 In keeping with this delineation it may be argued that the uncomplicatedness of Nerval’s fragments originates in part from a desire for popular success; with the exception of several rowdy songs, they were written in prose, indicating perhaps that the young writer sought popular success for the

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20 Cited in *Dictionnaire Nerval*, p. 349.
21 Marsan, p. 209.
Faust fragment and Nicolas Flamel.

For many critics of French drama the adjectives ‘popular’ and ‘melodramatic’ are pejorative terms;23 while the works of Pixerécourt and other writers of melodramas were often formulaic, their resonances cannot be denied. As Jules Marsan states, ‘la préface de Cromwell […] n’aurait pas renouvelé le théâtre, si certaines œuvres n’eussent déjà préparé à le comprendre une partie du public.’24 Furthermore, as Lacey points out, melodrama ‘provided theatres where new forms of drama were welcomed. It helped to acclimatise foreign drama in France. It spread the influence of foreign writers, among them Scott, Shakespeare and Schiller.’25 However, together with this cosmopolitanism Pixerécourt displayed a degree of prejudice towards certain foreign writers; the foreign works he admired include the novels of Walter Scott and, more surprisingly, the translations of Sainte-Aulaire. Yet ‘il ne touche ni a Goethe, ni a Schiller, ni a Shakespeare;’26 despite a shared admiration for Scott and to some extent Sainte-Aulaire, and the possible influence that Pixerécourt’s work had on the young Nerval, the two men differed greatly in their literary tastes.

24 Marsan, p. 216.
26 Marsan, p. 206.
3.2 AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE ORIGINALITY OF NERVAL’S FAUST FRAGMENT AND NICOLAS FLAMEL

The intertextual dynamics of Nerval’s development of the Fauststoff in his Faust fragment and Nicolas Flamel underpin the analyses of this chapter. And yet it is in those aspects of the incomplete dramas in which the influence of other texts is either absent or reduced that most may be learned about the characteristics of Nerval’s Faustian writing. Consequently, following brief synopses of the two fragmentary works, this section of the thesis analyses their originality in areas in which they diverge strikingly from Faust I, Fausts Leben, Thaten und Höllenfahrt, Histoire critique de Nicolas Flamel et de Pernelle sa femme, and the Soirées de Walter Scott a Paris, namely, the protagonists’ character and relationships; the idealisation of the principal female characters; and the portrayal of the devil, including the pacts. Subsequently, the innovatory contribution that Nerval made to the Faustian tradition in the fragments is discussed.

The Faust fragment comprises just one act of five scenes and a one-scene second act. It opens with an anxious Faust awaiting the return of his servant, Scheffer, who has been to the Frankfurt Senate to discover whether or not his master’s newly invented printing machine is to be funded. Faust’s early monologue reveals that he is in love with Marguerite; he longs for the wealth that the Senate’s support might bring, not as an end in itself, but as a possible means of making her happy. Scheffer returns to inform Faust that the Senators are still deliberating. Presently Le Bourgmestre arrives at Faust’s house with bad news: the Senators have rejected the printing machine. In despair, Faust considers suicide by drinking poison, but changes his mind when he hears a choir singing hymns. In a conflation of scenes
from Goethe’s *Faust*,\(^{27}\) he then receives a visit from Méphistophélès, a devil disguised as a scholar. Faust is understandably suspicious when Méphistophélès transforms some mud into a crown and admits that he is really a demon on a mission to lead him astray. After much debate a pact of sorts is agreed upon. However, no fixed time period is given; Méphistophélès is to serve Faust until the latter tires of the arrangement (Nerval, I, 248-262).

*Nicolas Flamel* consists of three scenes: ‘Le laboratoire de Flamel’; ‘La tour Saint-Jacques-la-Boucherie’; and ‘Un cabaret de la Cité’. The first scene opens with Flamel and his wife bemoaning their poverty. Flamel was a copyist prior to becoming an alchemist. He feels he receives no support because people do not approve of his work. Their conversation is interrupted by a knock on the door; it is a Jew called Manassé. He explains that religious persecution has forced him to flee France. He offers Flamel half of his riches if he will keep them safe until his return. An astonishing event leads to Flamel’s realisation that something is amiss: the stranger’s parchment turns yellow upon contact with a Bible. Manassé admits that he is Satan and that he has come to tempt Flamel. He flatters him by saying he would normally send a subordinate on such a mission, but he has made a personal appearance out of respect for Flamel’s impressive knowledge. Satan concedes that he does not have the power to disclose what is hidden from man. He can, however, offer ‘des richesses, de longs jours, les plus rares beautés de l’univers...’ (Nerval, I, 322). Flamel rejects this. Satan instructs Flamel to meet him at night at the top of the Tour Saint Jacques, should he change his mind. Upon Satan’s departure, Flamel’s creditors arrive, demanding payment of his debts. They are about to take his books and equipment, as he has few other possessions. Flamel begs for

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\(^{27}\) Namely ‘Nacht’ which sees the desperate Faust contemplating a phial of poison with suicidal intent: ‘Ich sehe dich, es wird der Schmerz gelindert | Ich fasse dich, das Streben wird gemindert’ (MA, v/i, 554, l. 696), and ‘Studierzimmer I’ in which Mephistopheles is described as ‘gekleidet wie ein fahrender Scholasticus’ (MA, v/i, 570).
more time. He meets Satan at the tower, but there is no agreement as Satan wants Pernelle, Flamel’s wife, as part of the bargain. Flamel drives back Satan by making the sign of the cross. In an adaptation of Goethe’s ‘Auerbachs Keller in Leipzig’ (MA, vi/i, 591-99), the final scene of Nicolas Flamel, ‘Un cabaret de la Cité’, sees the protagonist drinking with singing students in a Parisian hostelry. He adds a powder to the poor-quality wine, transforming it into various vintages (Nerval, i, 319-31).

The Character of the Protagonists in the Faust Fragment and Nicolas Flamel

The protagonists of both fragments possess characteristics that are either not discernible in their counterparts in Nerval’s acknowledged source texts, or are merely ancillary to their more salient features. Their concerns are more mundane and they display greater modesty, decency, and politeness. Furthermore, both the Faust of the fragment and Nicolas Flamel have a propensity for philanthropy, and an attachment to Christianity that runs counter to the Fausts of Goethe and Klinger. Goethe’s Faust often displays arrogance and hubris, as his self-proclaimed greatness in the opening monologue of ‘Nacht’ and his engagement with the Erdgeist demonstrate (MA, vi/i, 545, l. 366; MA, vi/i, 549, l. 499). This Faust contrasts with the Faust of Nerval’s fragment in which he is desperate for his printing machine to be accepted by the Frankfurt Senate, and laments his predicament:

**FAUST** Mon père m’avait laissé quelque fortune; mais qu’elle s’est vite écoulée! L’homme généreux, comme le dissipateur, ne connaît pas le prix de l’or: le mien a été employé à mettre en œuvre des inventions utiles, à secourir les malheureux, et il m’a fui sans retour, comme s’il eût été prodigué à des débauches et à des fêtes. (Nerval, i, 250)

Similar pragmatic concerns are also expressed by Klinger’s Faust: ‘ihre [people’s] Laulichkeit und Kälte überzeugten ihn bald, daß er, der größte Erfinder seines Jahrhunderts,
mit seinem jungen Weibe und seinen Kindern, Hungers sterben könnte.' In his reduced financial and social circumstances the Faust of Nerval’s fragment has more in common with Klinger’s Faust than Goethe’s; nevertheless, there is also considerable divergence from Klinger as the dissipation of an inheritance does not feature in his novel. It has been conjectured that this aspect might have been taken from Nerval’s own life: in 1834 he received an inheritance from a great-uncle and invested it in the short-lived periodical *Le Monde dramatique*. Klinger’s Faust and Nerval’s Faust and Flamel are more downtrodden than Goethe’s protagonist. But rather than the *Erdgeist* of Goethe’s text, it is society in the form of the Frankfurt Senate that rejects Nerval’s Faust and his invention, thereby driving him to contemplate suicide (Nerval, 1, 255). It is noteworthy that such differences are discernible at the beginning of these texts: their primacy, both sequentially and thematically, highlights the intermingling of personal concerns and the Faust tradition.

Further divergence from the Goethean Faustian paradigm is evident in Nerval’s portrayal in his *Faust* fragment of Faust as the inventor of printing. This is traceable to Klinger’s *Fausts Leben, Thaten und Höllenfahrt*, but is given far greater emphasis in De Saur’s and Saint-Geniès’ French translation (1825) thereof in which Faust is ‘often referred to as a great inventor’. In Klinger’s novel Faust is depicted as an inventor of printing, but relatively little is made of this other than his travelling from Mainz to Frankfurt to sell his Latin Bible; a scene in Hell in which Satan praises the invention and its potential to harm humanity; and Leviathan’s influencing the *Bürgermeister’s*
decision to offer Faust four hundred guilders for the Bible.\textsuperscript{31} Nerval departs from Klinger’s text in his avoidance of a supernatural explanation for the invention of printing: the Faust of the fragment has not yet encountered Méphistophélès and is simply an inventor awaiting news of the Frankfurt Senate’s decision on his invention (Nerval, I, 248-49), whereas Klinger’s Faust ‘warf [...] sich in die dunklen Gefilde der Magie [and] sein erster Gewinn war die merkwürdige Erfindung der Buchdruckerey’.\textsuperscript{32} Once again, a tendency to reduce the fantastical elements and to present a more ‘ordinary’, almost realistic, retelling of the narrative characterises Nerval’s fragment.

That it is societal rejection that embitters Nerval’s Faust is reinforced by the following invective: ‘ces merveilles que j’avais accomplies, celles que je méditais encore, qu’elles s’ensevelissent avec moi-même! Les malheureux seront assez punis!’ (Nerval, I, 255). This desire for revenge on society is closer to Klinger’s cynical protagonist than to Goethe’s Faust; with perverse logic the former considers diabolical assistance to be a ‘Werkzeug der Rache’, and a measure ‘gegen [...] die Verachtung der Menschen’.\textsuperscript{33} Nerval’s divergence from Klinger here lies in the dynamics of character development: his Faust changes and grows. He experiences the gamut of emotions; he behaves both philanthropically and misanthropically, whereas Klinger’s protagonist is static, capable only of pessimism and cynicism.

It is not only the protagonist of the \textit{Faust} fragment that differs considerably from his Goethean counterpart. Nerval’s famulus is called Scheffer, rather than Wagner. The historical Scheffer [Peter Schoeffer] was an assistant to both Gutenberg and Fust, who

\textsuperscript{31} Klinger, Werke, p. 7, p. 25, pp. 52-54.  
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., p. 7.  
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., p. 116, p. 14.
married the latter’s daughter (Nerval, iii, 995). In contrast to Wagner, ‘der trockne
Schleicher’ of Goethe’s creation (MA, vi/i, 549, l. 521), the famulus of Nerval’s fragment is
pragmatic and down-to-earth, perhaps to a fault, as the advice he offers to Faust on hearing
him confess his love for Marguerite demonstrates:

Voilà encore une de vos chimères; c’est ma [foi?] une belle alliance pour vous que celle
d’une paysanne; je sais bien que votre philosophie vous mettrait au-dessus [des?] plaisanteries des hommes, mais votre situation aurait [dû?] vous faire penser davantage à la
dot des femmes. Par exemple, quelque riche douairière à qui votre figure aurait plu. (Nerval,
i, 250-51)

He is similarly pragmatic and opportunistic regarding Faust’s invention: ‘au lieu de
présenter votre invention comme glorieuse et pouvant faire le bonheur des hommes, il fallait
la faire envisager comme une opération lucrative, une mine d’or ouverte aux premiers qui
l’exploiteraient’ (Nerval, i, 251). Scheffer certainly strikes a different note from the
deferential Wagner, as the following example of the latter’s register demonstrates:

WAGNER  Mit Euch, Herr Doktor, zu spazieren
Ist ehrenvoll und ist Gewinn;
Doch würd’ ich nicht allein mich her verlieren,
Weil ich ein Feind von allem Rohen bin.
(MA, vi/i, 560-61, l. 941)

In both name and conduct, Nerval’s Scheffer is original; the character contributes to the
worldly quality that typifies the Faust fragment. In his directness Scheffer is arguably a
more Romantic character than Goethe’s decorous Wagner.

Traditionally Faust’s motives for entering into a pact with the Devil have been
largely selfish and hedonistic: ‘Genuß und Wissen sind seine Götter’,34 as Klinger’s devil
states succinctly. However, these ambitions need not be entirely negative and may in fact
be of great benefit to humanity. In both of Nerval’s Faustian fragments the philanthropic
aspect of acquiring knowledge is foregrounded. These discrete, yet consonant, extracts

34 Klinger, Werke, p. 46.
from both fragments highlight this philanthropic tendency on Nerval’s part:

FAUST Je ne prétends pas enrichir le monde, mais l’éclairer. (Nerval, I, 249)

FAUST Si je fais quelques démarches auprès des hommes [...] c’est pour toi [Marguerite] seule, c’est pour t’offrir [...] le bonheur. (Ibid.)

FAUST Si la découverte de l’Amérique y [le monde] répand de l’or, celle de l’imprimerie y répandra l’instruction et le bonheur qui toujours l’accompagne. (Ibid.)

PERNELLE Ces instruments d’alchimie [...] qui sait si [...] ces instruments ne sont point fabriqués par l’esprit du mal [...] oh non! C’est faire injure à [...] lui, si plein de vertu, de piété. (Ibid., 319)

Pernelle’s description of Flamel as virtuous is at odds with the traditional view of Faust, or Faustian characters, as selfishly ambitious. And yet evidence of Faust’s benevolence resurfaces periodically throughout Goethe’s work, beginning — and in a sense ending, given the origin of the pronouncement — with Der Herr stating that man is inherently conscious of the right ‘path’ (MA, vi/1, 544, l. 329) and developing throughout the drama in scenes such as Faust’s confiding to Wagner his regret over his failed attempt to cure plague victims by supernatural means, and the misplaced praise of an Alter Bauer for their efforts: ‘Wie wenig Vater und Sohn | Solch eines Ruhmes werth gewesen!’ (MA, vi/1, 563, l. 1032); and ultimately of course in the transformation of his relationship with Margarete from one characterised by exploitation to one of compassion and finally love. In fact this personal progress is in many respects the essence of Goethe’s Faust. Crucially, however, the protagonist’s improvement is incremental in the German text; his Bildung is acquired in a typically Goethean dialectical interaction of pleasure and suffering. These two experiences work symbiotically; to ignore either aspect is to depart from Goethe’s dynamic interpretation of the Faust myth.

The historical Nicolas Flamel displayed little of this duality; he was not as charitable and philanthropic as Nerval depicts him. Villain proposes that his motivation for marrying
Pernelle might not have been entirely honourable: ‘jeune et adroit, il [...] se ménager pour épouse Pernelle, qui, quoique déjà [sic] d’un certain âge, et veuve de deux maris, étoit riche.’ It seems unlikely that Flamel was ever as poor as Nerval’s depiction of him would suggest; his shrewd commercial sense is noted several times by both Villain and Lacroix:

L’Art de l’écriture, [is] bien loin d’être un métier peu lucratif.

‘Pernelle, reprit l’écrivain en riant, ne t’ai-je pas dit mainte fois que j’avais été prédestiné dès le ventre de ma mère, et que mon étoile avait couleur argentine. Je veux que tu vêtes robes de velours semé de figures d’oiselets en or fin, puis des patins à la poulaine, puis des merveilles d’orfèvrerie...’. While the first extract makes the point prosaically, the symbolism of the second captures an essential aspect of Flamel’s character: being born under a ‘silver star’ communicates his commercial acumen and motivation succinctly. Moreover, his enumeration of the luxury goods that he desires for his wife displays rapaciousness or social vanity.

Nicolas Flamel’s marriage to Pernelle produces further distancing from the Faustian tradition in Nerval’s text: evidently he is not a bachelor. That the historical Flamel was indeed married to a woman called Pernelle, provides only a partial explanation for this deviation. Flamel’s love for his wife and Faust’s for his fiancée in Nerval’s fragments represent a stark contrast with the manipulation and seduction of Margarete by Faust in Goethe’s work. Klinger’s Faust is also married, but his promiscuity belies any serious comparison with the caring relationships depicted in Nerval’s Faust fragment and Nicolas Flamel. However, this contrast may be largely attributable to differences between Klinger’s original German novel and de Saur’s and Saint-Geniès’ very free French translation of 1825,

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35 Villain, p. 6.
36 Ibid., p. 8.
37 Lacroix, p. 44.
38 Fujita, p. 68.
which depicts Faust as a happily married man.\textsuperscript{39}

**The Idealisation of the Principal Female Characters in Nerval’s Faustian Fragments**

In both fragments the principal, idealised female characters represent opposition to diabolic influence; similarly, in Goethe’s *Faust* Margarete is explicit in her mistrust of Mephistopheles:

\begin{quote}
|MARGARETE| Der Mensch, den du da bei dir hast, 
| |   Ist mir in tiefer inn’rer Seele verhaßt: 
| |   Es hat mir in meinem Leben 
| |   So nichts einen Stich ins Herz gegeben, 
| |   Als des Menschen widrig Gesicht. 

(MA, vi/1, 636, l. 3471)
\end{quote}

However, this assessment of Mephistopheles is to be found towards the end of *Faust*; as early as the opening monologue of *Nicolas Flamel* Pernelle strikes a cautionary, pre-emptive note with reference to the dangers of diabolic influence: ‘qui sait si cette science n’est pas coupable, si ces instruments ne sont point fabriqués par l’esprit du mal et propres seulement à nous ouvrir l’Enfer?’ (Nerval, i, 319) Such foregrounding of Pernelle’s awareness, concern, and prescience hints at her potential to save Flamel and is in keeping with Nerval’s respectful, idealised treatment of the Margarete character in his translations of *Faust*. As Michel Brix points out, the idealisation of women, common among French Romantic writers, has its origin in Platonism which venerated woman as an ‘instrument du salut de l’homme’ and as ‘la représentante sur terre de la grande déesse’.\textsuperscript{40}

Moreover, Nerval’s innovative approach to the Margarete figure (Pernelle) of this Faustian drama emphasises, at the earliest possible stage of the narrative, the redemptive

\textsuperscript{39} Fujita, p. 63; Klinger’s novel, translated by Joseph Henri de Saur and Léonard de Saint-Geniès, was published as *Les Aventures du Docteur Faust et sa descente aux enfers* (Paris: Bertrand, 1825); Marquart, p. 55, p. 391.

capacity of love that is ultimately essential to the salvation of Goethe’s Faust:

ENGEL       Und hat an ihm die Liebe gar
Von oben Teil genommen,
Begegnet ihm die selige Schaar
Mit herzlichem Willkommen.
(MA, XVIII/I, 346, l. 11938)

However, the second part of Goethe’s Faust had not yet been published when Nerval began work on his French translation of the first part in 1827.41 One might argue that a perceptive reader of Faust I would have grasped the redemptive significance of Margarete’s love for Faust, particularly in Goethe’s presentation of her final, pathetic actions and utterances. She is ‘gerettet’, for a seemingly divine voice expresses as much in the final lines of Faust I (MA, vi/I, 673, l. 4611). In her final cry of ‘Heinrich! Heinrich!’ (Ibid., l. 4612) there is the suggestion that ‘Margarete beginnt [...] ihr Rettungswerk an Faust’.42

Similar emphasis on the redemptive power of a woman’s love is also evident in Nerval’s Faust fragment; whereas Goethe’s Faust rejects suicide on hearing a choir’s Easter songs (MA, vi/I, 555, l. 737), it is Marguerite who saves Nerval’s Faust from suicide: ‘Ô Marguerite! Il faut que l’injustice des hommes ait produit sur mon cœur une impression bien profonde pour qu’il ait un instant cessé de palpiter pour toi’ (Nerval, 1, 255-56). Nerval’s construction of Flamel’s and Faust’s relationship with Pernelle and Marguerite respectively, especially the purity of their love and the early demonstration of the redemptive capacity of love, is tellingly divergent from the Goethean Faustian paradigm.

Not only does Nerval depart from this model in Pernelle’s and Nicolas Flamel’s

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41 The second part was published posthumously in 1832. See Siegfried Unseld, Goethe and his Publishers, trans. by Kenneth J. Northcott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 335-36 for an insight into the mixed reception that greeted Faust II on its publication.
loving relationship, but he also deviates considerably from his known French sources. Villain provides an ambivalent portrayal of Pernelle; she is neither idealised nor vilified in his eighteenth-century ‘biography’ of the married couple. Flamel’s spouse was certainly presented as a less Romantic figure in Villain’s text than in Nerval’s incomplete drama, having been ‘mariée deux fois avant d’épouser Flamel.’ In Nerval’s idealised portrayal of Pernelle no mention is made of Flamel being her third husband. Furthermore, in Villain’s account Pernelle’s acquisitiveness is noted: she had two valets and the luxuriousness of her wardrobe was remarkable.

In contrast with Nerval’s Pernelle she would appear to have been worldly and rather materialistic, at least according to Villain. Her delight at an expensive gift from Flamel — ‘les yeux de la femme en sont frappés […] elle en fut autant amoureuse que moi-même, dit encore le mari’ — bears some resemblance to Goethe’s portrayal of Margarete’s difficulty in resisting the jewellery box:

MARGARETE

Wie kommt das schöne Kästchen hier herein?
[...]
Ein Schmuck! Mit dem könnt’ eine Edelfrau
Am höchsten Feiertage gehn.
Wie sollte mir die Kette stehn?
Wem mag die Herrlichkeit gehören?
Wenn nur die Ohrring’ meine wären!
Man sieht doch gleich ganz anders drein.
Was hilft euch Schönheit, junges Blut?
Das ist wohl alles schön und gut,
Allein man läßt’s auch alles sein;
Man lobt euch halb mit Erbarmen.
Nach Golde drängt,
Am Golde hängt
Doch alles. Ach wir Armen!
(MA, vi/1, 614-15, l. 2783)

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43 Villain, p. 2.
44 Ibid., p. 3.
But Goethe tempers Margarete’s covetousness with pathos; in the poor peasant girl’s longing for the better life she associates with wealth the reader or audience has perhaps a degree of sympathy for her. There is little sense of this in Villain’s describing Pernelle’s love for the purchase as equal to her love for her husband. In contrast, Nerval’s Pernelle is pious, caring, and modest. Lacroix’s Pernelle, however, is quite the opposite. While in Villain’s text she is, in general, presented equivocally, in the *Soirées de Walter Scott à Paris* such irresolution regarding her character is seldom evident; Pernelle is often harsher, more opportunistic and intolerant here. The last characteristic is amply demonstrated in her assertion that ‘Juif est Antéchrist’. On the arrival of Manassès at the Flamels’ home, her language becomes even more hateful: ‘Juif damné! Que le feu Saint-Antoine l’arde! Que la lèpre le ronge jusqu’à la moelle des os!’ Anti-Semitism would undoubtedly have been more overt in fourteenth-century France than in Nerval’s day and one might argue therefore that Pernelle’s prejudices bear little on her love for her husband. Nonetheless, the violent tone and the baleful register of the above curse are entirely absent from Nerval’s Pernelle. In fact her venomous outburst brings Lacroix’s Pernelle closer to Mephistopheles than to the angelic, redemptive women of certain Romantic traditions.

However, the Pernelle of Lacroix’s novel does demonstrate an inclination to save her husband, but it should be noted that her goodwill is not limited to Flamel; an element of self-preservation is also evident in her fear of his dealings with Manassès:

‘Sainte Vierge! […] vous nous damnez comme des serpents; faut que vous ayez fait pacte avec le grand diable d’enfer, pour être devenu si bien fourni en pécune, que l’argentier du roi de France n’est qu’un gueux auprès. J’ai peur que par châtiment la terre nous abîme en la géhenne, comme jadis Dathan et Abiron.’

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46 Lacroix, pp. 36-37.
48 Ibid., p. 43.
Pernelle does not know the exact nature of the deal that Flamel has struck with Manassès, and yet she employs the metaphor of ‘dealing with the Devil’. In fact, it was perhaps her turn of phrase here that contributed to Nerval’s transformation of Manassès from a desperate Jewish fugitive from Charles VI’s persecution into Satan in disguise in *Nicolas Flamel*. Given Nerval’s great interest in Goethe’s *Faust* and his predilection for multiple intertextual references, it is surprising that he would appear to have missed a highly resonant aspect of Flamel’s life that is explicit in Villain’s chronicle: ‘après la mort de Pernelle, Flamel vécut dans un autre goût: plus concentré chez lui avec sa servant Marguerite.’

Perhaps he avoided the inclusion of the servant Marguerite to avoid anachronism, for Villain does describe Marguerite as living with Flamel after Pernelle’s death. And yet this possible explanation is not wholly satisfactory; in many other instances — the transformation of Lacroix’s Manassès into Satan in *Nicolas Flamel* being the most salient — Nerval is far from faithful to earlier narratives. Alternatively, perhaps he regarded the inclusion of a character called Marguerite in his own Faustian drama as too reminiscent of Goethe’s *Faust*. Clearly in other ways he did not shy away from the German writer’s influence in *Nicolas Flamel*; perhaps he considered the use of the name Marguerite unsubtle and unimaginitative. A subtler intertextual echo is Pernelle’s reference to their being damned ‘comme des serpents’; this evokes Mephistophs’ cursing of Faust in Goethe’s drama: ‘Staub soll er fressen, und mit Lust,| Wie meine Muhme, die berühmte Schlange’ (MA, vi/i, 544, l. 334).

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49 Villain, p. 3.
Nerval’s Portrayal of the Devil in the *Faust* Fragment and Nicolas Flamel

In the devil of the *Faust* fragment both Goethe’s and Klinger’s influence is discernible: he is called Méphistophélès, rather than Leviathan as in Klinger’s novel, and yet he combines traits of both characters. Additionally, Nerval uses sections of his own translation of Goethe’s *Faust* throughout the *Faust* fragment. For instance, Méphistophélès’ first conversation with Faust differs little in the works, as the following extracts from Goethe’s *Faust*, Nerval’s translation thereof, and his *Faust* fragment respectively, demonstrate:

**FAUST** Wie nennst du dich?

**MEPHISTOPHELES** Die Frage scheint mir klein
Für einen der das Wort so sehr verachtet,
Der, weit entfernt von allem Schein,
Nur in der Wesen Tiefe trachtet.
(MA, vi/1, 571, l. 1327)

**FAUST** Quel est ton nom?

**MEPHISTOPHELES** La demande me paraît bien frivole, pour quelqu’un qui a tant de mépris pour les mots; qui toujours s’écarte des apparences, et regarde surtout le fond des êtres.
(Nerval, 1828, p. 82; Nerval, 1840, p. 123)

**FAUST** Quel est votre nom?

**MEPHISTOPHELES** La demande me paraît bien frivole, pour quelqu’un qui a tant de mépris pour les mots et qui ne s’attache qu’au fond des choses.
(Nerval, I, 257)

These short exchanges also highlight an inherent difficulty in forming a coherent work from several sources: the risks of inconsequence and confusion. In mentioning Faust’s ‘mépris pour les mots’, Méphistophélès is not merely avoiding a direct reply to the question; the remark refers to the earlier part of the scene in Goethe’s drama in which Faust attempts to translate St. John’s Gospel into German, but is dissatisfied with what he considers an overly passive pronouncement in ‘im Anfang war das Wort’; after a number of ‘corrections’ he
finally settles on the more active ‘im Anfang war die Tat’ (MA, vi/i, 568, l. 1237). Without this vital context and its relevance to Faust’s striving and privileging of activity over passivity, Nerval’s Méphistophélès lacks the insight into Faust’s character that is revealed to Goethe’s devil. Consequently, his words do not communicate the arch polysemy of the German writer’s wittier ‘antagonist’. In his analysis of Nerval’s Faust fragment Max Milner makes a similar, apposite point:

Il [Nerval] mélange [...] les réminiscences goethéennes et les réminiscences klingeriennes. Les inconvénients d’une telle méthode sont particulièrement sensibles en ce qui concerne le personnage du diable. Il n’a ni la hauteur dédaigneuse de Léviathan, dont il lui arrive cependant de tenir le langage plein de morgue, ni le cynisme et la bassesse insinuante du démon de Goethe, auquel il emprunte un certain nombre de répliques et d’attitudes.

These weaknesses notwithstanding, Nerval evokes aspects of Goethe’s Mephistopheles and Klinger’s Leviathan successfully, providing innovative syntheses. The question of a diabolical hierarchy is a case in point: as noted above, one is aware from as early as the ‘Prolog im Himmel’ that Mephistopheles is likely a devil, rather than the Devil (MA, vi/i, 544, l. 338). In Fausts Leben, Thaten und Höllenfahrt Leviathan is Satan’s favourite demon and his emissary. This is also evident in the Méphistophélès of Nerval’s Faust fragment; alongside his humorous tone, this devil displays a servile desire to please his master:

‘l’instant est favorable...c’est ici qu’il faut gagner mes éperons et justifier la confiance dont l’enfer m’honore aujourd’hui (Nerval, i, 256).’ Together with these intertextual influences Nerval strikes an original note in his description of his devil as ‘le second des archanges déchus’ (Ibid., 257). Though certainly a departure from Goethe’s ‘Schalk’ and the lackey of Klinger’s novel, the infernal order created by both writers is broadly maintained by Nerval’s Méphistophélès being a fallen angel, rather than the fallen angel.

50 While Faust is working on the translation, Mephistopheles is, of course, in the room in the form of a black dog.
51 Milner, ii, 278.
52 Klinger, Werke, p. 17, p. 32.
In *Nicolas Flamel* the reader is left in no doubt as to the identity of the mysterious visitor:

**FLAMEL** Qui êtes-vous?

**L’INCONNU** Satan. (Nerval, 1, 321)

Such a terse admission contrasts with the evasiveness of Goethe’s Mephistopheles when the same question is put to him: ‘Ein Teil von jener Kraft| Die stets das Böse will und stets das Gute schafft’ (MA, vii, 571, l. 1336). This cryptic reply reinforces the point made above that Mephistopheles’ ambiguities are crucial to the richness and complexity of Goethe’s work, and the oxymoronic concept of an honest devil — whilst flagging the unequivocal good/evil opposition in Nerval’s text, and providing immediate shock value — does little for dramatic development. In this straightforwardness regarding his diabolic figure in *Nicolas Flamel* one discerns Nerval’s contemporaneous admiration for both de Staël and Goethe — the former reflected in his literary style, the latter evinced by the Faustian content. At the time of writing *Nicolas Flamel* Nerval was already an accomplished, published poet and his reduction of the language used by such a potential source of creative experimentation as Satan is certainly surprising. The most likely explanation of Nerval’s bald, prosaic statement is a search for increased theatricality; though sinister and mysterious in certain respects, Lacroix’s Mannassès is neither Satan nor a demon. Likewise, Villain makes no reference to the visitor being a devil in his *Histoire de Nicolas Flamel et de Pernelle sa femme*. This melodramatic aspect of Nerval’s incomplete drama mirrors the concerns of the popular interpretations of *Faust* at the théâtres des boulevards. The overall structure of Nerval’s incomplete dramas supports this comparison; as Lacey notes, in melodrama ‘sensational thrills, produced by alternating periods of suspense and violent physical contact, take the
place of the true “emotional response” which accompanies a dramatic conflict.\textsuperscript{54} Such a pattern is discernible in Nerval’s fragments: in \textit{Nicolas Flamel} the arrival of a mysterious visitor results in violent conflict on La Tour Saint Jacques-la-Boucherie; the \textit{Faust} fragment opens with Faust anxiously awaiting word from the Frankfurt Senate and continues with a scene of attempted suicide.

Closely related to melodrama’s predictable use of suspense is its similarly formulaic employment of pathos and sentimentality to move spectators. In contrast with the use of suspense, however, the pervasive arousal of pity did not develop entirely from commercial considerations; rather, this kind of emotional appeal to theatre-goers continued the tradition of ‘sensibilité’ that was prevalent in eighteenth-century \textit{drames bourgeois}.\textsuperscript{55} Here the concatenation between Enlightenment drama and Romantic drama is discernible; the link is the melodrama. Consequently, it is unsurprising that Nerval’s fragments should demonstrate an adherence to an ideology usually associated with the Enlightenment, alongside the more Romantic aspects of his fragments. In general, increased sentimentality — specifically, the introduction of, and concentration on, family affection that is absent from the Goethean Faustian paradigm — is very much in evidence in Nerval’s \textit{Faust} fragment and \textit{Nicolas Flamel}. Inevitably the ascription of the designations ‘melodramatic’ and ‘Romantic’ to a theatrical work is, to a degree, arbitrary, but the prevalence and persistence of elements that might warrant the description ‘sentimental’ or ‘pathetic’ is arguably more measurable; with regard to their protagonists, Nerval’s \textit{Faust} fragment and \textit{Nicolas Flamel} would probably be more arousing of pity in an audience than Goethe’s \textit{Faust}. This originates chiefly from Nerval’s Faust and Nicolas Flamel being weaker and more downtrodden than Goethe’s

\textsuperscript{54} Lacey, p. 10.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., p. 17.
protagonist. However, aspects of the Goethean interpretation of the Faust myth are of course devastatingly moving. The German writer displays a skilful reticence in the narrative’s unfolding, a masterly control of his principal characters’ ambivalence, and ultimately portrays thoroughly convincing, dignified fortitude and deserved sorrow in Gretchen and Faust respectively. This combination of skill and sensitivity steers Goethe’s Faust I away from a potentially melodramatic course and brings it securely into the category of tragedy.

A further difficult meeting of influences in Nicolas Flamel leads to a more controversial aspect of Nerval’s Faustian innovations in the incomplete drama: in his transformation of a Jewish character into Satan he makes a novel, if controversial, contribution to the development of the Fauststoff. Moreover, Manassé’s flight from France and resultant homelessness also evoke the myth of the Wandering Jew, a prevalent theme in European culture during the first half of the nineteenth century. Edgar Quinet’s Les Tablettes du juif errant (1823), was published prior to Nerval’s Nicolas Flamel, his Ahasévrus (1833) shortly thereafter, and Eugène Sue’s roman-feuilleton, Le Juif errant appeared in Le Constitutionnel from 1844 to 1845. It is noteworthy that in Quinet’s Ahasévrus ‘there are numerous echoes and imitations of the first part of Goethe’s Faust’. The figure of the Wandering Jew shares many similarities with Faust: the experience of suffering or despair; the seeking of knowledge; and the quest for salvation. In fact several archetypal myths informed Goethe’s reinterpretation of the Fauststoff. Particularly

56 Ibid., p. 16.
57 For more on the literary and visual representation of the myth of the Wandering Jew, see Le Juif errant: un témoin du temps, ed. by Pierre Birnbaum and others (Paris: Musée d’art et d’histoire du judaïsme, 2001).
significant to his development of the Faust myth was the late eighteenth- and early
nineteenth-century interest in the Prometheus myth and a wider trend towards Titanism in
the culture of the period.\footnote{Élise Radix, *L’Homme-Prométhée vainqueur au xixe siècle* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2006), p. 21.} The flourishing, and retelling, of both the Prometheus and the
Faust myths in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries reflects an increased emphasis on
human endeavour over divine assistance; the Goethean addition of striving as potentially an
element of Faust’s salvation, and the message of mankind’s independence contained in the
Prometheus myth chimed with the age’s belief in the certainty of progress as concurrent with
man’s increasing knowledge and skill. Furthermore, in the later period the two mythical
figures served as useful metaphorical representations of a sharpened focus on the subjective
class of human existence, the egotistical concerns of humanity living in insecurity.\footnote{Radix, p. 11.}

The parallels between Goethe’s Faust and Prometheus are most salient in the defiance Faust
demonstrates towards the *Erdgeist* in the early scene, ‘Nacht’: in addition to Faust’s
confident equating of himself with this supernatural manifestation, it is notable that the spirit
appears as a flame, a motif strongly evocative of Prometheus, donor of fire to mankind.\footnote{Ibid., p. 31.}

Goethe engaged with the Prometheus myth but never completed his work: in 1773 he began
a drama, *Prometheus*, to which was added in 1774 a lyric poem, ‘Prometheus’. This poem
was intended as an introduction to the drama’s third act.\footnote{Jacqueline Duchemin, *Prométhée: histoire du mythe, de ses origines orientales à ses incarnations modernes* (Paris: Société d’édition ‘les belles lettres’, 1974), p. 119.} In the following indignant
questions, the first from Goethe’s poem ‘Prometheus’, the second from his *Faust*, the
similarities between Prometheus’ challenging of Zeus and Faust’s encounter with the

*Erdgeist* are unmistakable:

Ich dich ehren? Wofür? (WA 1, 2, 76-78)
There are many similarities, but also important differences, between the myths of Prometheus and Faust, especially Goethe’s *Faust*; as Élise Radix points out, ‘son Faust est un être admirable en un certain sens. Il est toujours puni […] parce qu’il est trop grand pour cette société médiocre.’ Yet Goethe’s Faust is also a despicable character in many ways, the most striking of which is his treatment of Margarete; indeed he must be at least partly so in order for his ultimate salvation to make sense. Nerval’s fragments are less nuanced: the Faust of his *Faust* fragment and the Faustian Nicolas Flamel are more clearly ‘good’.

An analysis of the devil’s or the Devil’s, and Faust’s or Flamel’s, negotiation of terms reveals a similar lack of complexity. In the *Faust* fragment a mundaneness is once again apparent: Méphistophélès makes no attempt to disguise the limitations of what he has to offer; Faust’s request for ‘cette divine révélation que nul mortel n’a pénétrée’ is met with remarkable candour: ‘une telle connaissance, ce n’est pas de l’enfer qu’elle [émane?], n’attends de nous que des secrets!’ (Nerval, I, 259); in contrast, Goethe’s Mephistopheles replies to Faust’s mockery of his limited, illusory offerings, and his desire for the devil to ‘Zeig mir die Frucht, die fault, eh’ man sie bricht’, with confidence: ‘Ein solcher Auftrag schreckt mich nicht,| Mit solchen Schätzen kann ich dienen’ (MA, vi/1, 580, l. 1688).

Nerval’s Méphistophélès is portrayed as less powerful than Goethe’s Mephistopheles and displays fewer supernatural qualities.

A reductive approach is also evident in *Nicolas Flamel*. There is a directness to Satan’s admission to Flamel that ‘je viens te séduire’ and a decidedly worldly request from Flamel: ‘j’ai besoin d’argent, voilà tout. — Écoute, je ne puis me décider à vendre mon âme,

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64 Radix., pp. 261-62.
mais je l’engagerai volontiers. Prête-moi sur cette garantie; je te rendrai plus tard ton argent et les intérêts’ (Nerval, i, 321, 325-26). Satan then proposes an open-ended contract in which the agreement runs its course when Flamel says ‘partons; j’en ai assez’ (Ibid., 326). This represents a reversal of Goethe’s *Faust* in which the contract is set to end when Faust utters the words ‘verweile doch! du bist so schön’ (MA, vii, 581, l. 1700), indicating that he is so content with Mephistopheles’ conjurations that he does not want the moment to pass. Of course there is irony in Faust’s words in that he doubts Mephistopheles’ ability to offer such pleasures. While Nerval’s Satan is also being disingenuous in offering such a facile end to the pact, an avoidance of the wider philosophical significance associated with the concept of *Streben* in Goethe’s play is evident. In other words, the crucial activity/passivity binary opposition as represented by Faust’s striving energy and Mephistopheles’s restraining cynicism is lacking.

Ultimately Flamel and Satan are unable to conclude the pact; the reason being in part Nerval’s portrayal of Flamel as a loving husband: ‘*lisant le pacte*: Que vois-je! ... *Flamel et Pernelle sa femme*... — Raye ce dernier nom: je ne suis pas assez cruel pour vouloir l’entraîner dans ma chute!’ (Nerval, i, 327). This concern would seem to have originated, at least partly, from the fact that the historical Nicolas Flamel did indeed have a wife called Pernelle, but also from the influence of De Saur’s and Saint Geniès’ 1825 translation of Klinger’s *Fausts Leben, Thaten und Höllenfahrt* in which Faust is transformed from the licentious figure of the German original into a man with a wife he loves (Nerval, i, 1618). Nevertheless, the inclusion of another person in the proposed pact, and the ultimate failure to agree terms, are noteworthy innovations on Nerval’s part.

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65 Fujita, p. 63.
‘Auerbachs Keller’ in Paris?

The final scene of Nicolas Flamel, ‘Un cabaret de la Cité’, is arguably the most intertextually reminiscent of Faust I. It represents an intriguing cross-cultural transformation of the crapulous revelry portrayed by Goethe. In fact, in this scene Nerval provides readers or audiences with many references not only to ‘Auerbachs Keller’, but also to the ballad ‘Bauern unter der Linde’ from ‘Vor dem Tor’; these are communicated with a knowing humour that could only be achieved by one well-versed in the original work. These intertextual ‘nods’ are particularly numerous in the reveller’s song which opens ‘Un Cabaret de la Cité’:

UN COMPAGNON

Lorsque je bois ce vin beaunois
Si vous savez ce que je vois:
Paris et ses blanches maisons
Semblent un troupeau de moutons,
Et ses clochers
Sont les bergers
Qui les conduisent par la plaine
Boire à la Seine. (Nerval, I, 328)

The drunken vision of ‘Un Compagnon’ is entirely in keeping with Nerval’s accentuating and extending the Bacchic elements of Goethe’s Faust. Most striking, however, is the metalinguistic reflection that forms a subtext of Nerval’s song; the intoxication of ‘Un Compagnon’ reflects the difficulty of intercultural translation: ‘Paris et ses blanches maisons’ becomes ‘un troupeau de moutons’ and ‘ses clochers’ are transformed into ‘bergers’. Much of this lexis — certainly ‘troupeau’, ‘mouton’, and ‘berger’ — is to be found in Nerval’s translation of Goethe’s ballad, ‘Bauern unter der Linde’, which is entitled ‘Paysans sous les tilleuls’ in both translations (Nerval, 1828, p. 62; Nerval, 1840, p. 111).

Goethe’s original German ballad either contains this vocabulary or communicates it implicitly: in its opening line, ‘Der Schäfer putzte sich zum Tanz’ (MA, vi/1, 561, l. 949),
one immediately finds the source of Nerval’s ‘berger’ in ‘Schäfer’ and from it also the sense of the associated nouns ‘troupeau’ and ‘mouton’. Consequently, it seems unlikely that the resonances are unintentional; drunken confusion proves a pertinent metaphor for the frequently clumsy processes of trans-lingual communication and intercultural transposition.
3.3 Nerval’s Faustian Fragments in the Light of Synchronic Romantic Cultural Developments in France

If Nerval’s early, incomplete dramas, the *Faust* fragment and *Nicolas Flamel*, remain somewhat neglected by scholars, the same can hardly be stated of the years that produced them, 1827 and 1831 being especially significant in the development of Romanticism in France (Nerval, I, 1565, 1617). Therefore, it is essential to investigate the influence of pertinent synchronic French culture on the young Nerval, alongside his avowed enthusiasm for Goethe’s *Faust*. This section of the thesis considers those divergences from the Goethean Faustian paradigm that might have their origin in the French writer’s cultural milieu, first by examining those general aspects of the burgeoning French Romanticism that might bear on the fragments, and then by analysing specific departures from Goethe’s *Faust* in the fragments in the light of synchronic French Romantic culture.

Evidently, a definition of a literary movement is problematic and probably undesirable, and yet certain themes and motifs recur in Romantic texts, many of which are to be found in the *Faust* fragment and in *Nicolas Flamel*; Guy Michaud and Ph. Van Tieghem capture several: ‘sentiment de la nature, culte du moi, religiosité, goût du passé, des ruines, du surnaturel.’

Much of this also applies to Goethe’s *Faust*, and yet Nerval’s fragments often diverge significantly from the German text in these and other areas. The ways in which they diverge will be addressed and demonstrated to be relevant to the development of French Romanticism.

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Nerval’s Divided Aesthetic Loyalties at the Beginning of his Literary Career

Nascent French Romanticism was far from a homogeneous movement; tensions existed in France throughout the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries not only between Classicists and Romantics, but also between Catholics and Liberals, Royalists and Republicans. Nonetheless, such divisions and oppositions are seldom instructive, primarily on account of vacillating loyalties on the part of the cultural movement’s vanguard.67

Moreover, perhaps on account of Nerval’s admiration of German culture, a further aspect of his work has frequently been overlooked; as Gautier intimates: ‘malgré son commerce assidu avec l’Allemagne et sa familiarité avec Goethe, [il] restait beaucoup plus Français qu’aucun de nous; de race, de tempérament et d’esprit.’68 Furthermore, Nerval showed no enthusiasm in his early years for Romanticism’s foreign influence and favoured works of French neoclassicism.69 Consider the following extracts, expressive of perhaps rather surprising sentiments; the first poem ‘Épître seconde’, dedicated to Nerval’s school friend at the Collège Charlemagne, Alexandre Duponchel, dates from 1825:

Admirateur zélé du pur et beau classique,
Fuis surtout, fuis toujours le style romantique;
Ah! Fuis, il en est temps, ces vers éblouissants
Où tout est pour l’éclat, où rien n’est pour le sens;

Que le talent au moins reste national,
Laissons dans leurs marais les héros de Fingal70
[...]
Français, soyons Français, soyons indépendans...
...En vain depuis longtemps on prône l’Angleterre,

67 The Contours of European Romanticism, p. 7.
70 Nerval is alluding to the popularity of Ossian, the supposed Gaelic bard quoted also in Werther. As Nicholas Boyle states, ‘James Macpherson’s purported translations of the Gaelic poetry of Ossian (1762 onwards) […] seemed, particularly in Germany, to be the authentic remains of a Nordic Bard.’ In fact Goethe, a great admirer of the Ossian poems, translated them into German in 1770/71. See Nicholas Boyle, Goethe: The Poet and the Age, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 1 (The Poetry of Desire (1749-1790)), 97, 99.
Quel Auteur pourrait-elle égaler à Voltaire?
Qui pourrait à Rousseau préférer Richardson,
Shakespeare au grand Racine, à Corneille Thomson,
À Jean Rousseau Dryden et Milton à Delille?
La parallèle entre eux serait trop difficile...
(Nerval, t, 21-22, 1469)

In the second satirical extract, taken from his one-act drama *Le Nouveau genre* (1827), adapted from *La Comedia neuva* (1792) by a Spanish disciple of Molière, Leandro Fernández de Moratín (Nerval, t, 1540), Nerval is similarly partisan:

La pièce de ce soir [...] sera, sur ma parole,
Un triomphe complet pour la nouvelle école.
Rien pour cela n’y manque: effets, atrocités,
Contrastes, changements, mépris des unités,
Une exécution; trois ou quatre tempêtes,
Quelques assassinats, des danses et des fêtes...
(Nerval, t, 226-27)

Pertinently, with the exception of the tempests, in the second extract the young adherent of neoclassical aesthetic values might have been providing a synopsis of Goethe’s *Faust*. However, his sneering description of ‘la nouvelle école’ is Voltairean in tone. That the young Nerval’s aesthetic loyalties were divided at the beginning of his literary career is borne out by an analysis of the style of the *Faust* fragment and *Nicolas Flamel*; it is often strained, as if the tensions between neoclassicism and Romanticism, the contradictions within French Romanticism, and the simultaneous attraction of French and foreign cultural traditions, were weighing heavily on the young and relatively inexperienced writer.

In fact, 1827 — the probable year of Nerval’s writing the *Faust* fragment — was to bring a degree of harmony to the divided French Romantic movement: Victor Hugo’s role in this was crucial in that his *Cénacle* was an important factor in the reconciliation between conservatives and liberals, and his seminal *Préface de Cromwell* became the acknowledged
manifesto of the new literary movement.\textsuperscript{71} The momentous cultural events that occurred in France in 1827 probably contributed to the young Nerval’s loss of interest in \textit{Le Nouveau genre}, a work surpassed by these new aesthetic developments (Nerval, I,1541).

Although Nerval was certainly a great admirer of Hugo and ‘jouissait bien justement de toute la confiance du maître, car jamais nature ne fut plus [...] dévouée et plus loyale’,\textsuperscript{72} it should be noted that he was a latecomer to the \textit{Cénacle}. In fact it is also likely that Nerval, as a member of the \textit{Petit Cénacle}, was at ‘un peu de distance du couronnement hugolien’;\textsuperscript{73} of this minor \textit{cénacle} comparatively little is known beyond its membership including Nerval, Jean Duseigneur, Théophile Gautier, Napoléon Thom [Thomas], Jules Vabre, Théophile Dondey, Joseph Bouchardy, Alphonse Brot, Auguste Maquet, Léon Clopet, Célestin Nanteuil, and Eugène Bion.\textsuperscript{74} While Nerval did express fondness for \textit{Le Petit Cénacle}, his consciousness of its inferiority to the more celebrated \textit{Cénacle} is evident in the following extract from a letter to Sainte-Beuve, dated summer 1832:

\begin{quote}
Il n’a pas été formé dans l’intention de parodier l’autre, le glorieux \textit{cénacle} […] mais seulement pour être une \textit{association} utile […] où l’on puisse essayer ses ouvrages d’avance et satisfaire jusqu’à un certain point ce besoin de publication. (Nerval, I, 1285)
\end{quote}

For Nerval \textit{Le Petit Cénacle} served a very practical purpose; in 1832, just a year after the publication of \textit{Nicolas Flamel}, he was pragmatic: his joining \textit{Le Petit Cénacle} is described in terms of developing his literary career.

Fellow member of \textit{Le Petit Cénacle} Joseph Bouchardy (1810-1870) wrote a number of highly successful melodramas throughout the 1830s that were performed at the Théâtre de

\textsuperscript{71} Michaud and Van Tieghem, p.60, p. 43.
\textsuperscript{74} \textit{Dictionnaire Nerval}, pp. 95-96.
l’Ambigu-Comique, the Théâtre de la Gaîté, and the Théâtre de la Porte-Saint-Martin. The most successful of his melodramas were *Gaspardo le pêcheur* (1837) and *Le Sonneur de St. Paul* (1838). Gautier states that Bouchardy lacked lyrical skill but showed for dramatic art ‘une puissance incontestable’. The extent to which he and Nerval discussed this craft during meetings of the *Petit Cénacle* is unknown, but Bouchardy’s description in a nostalgic letter sent to Gautier long after this most collaborative of societies had been disbanded suggests that such an exchange was likely: ‘réunion plus belle […] où chacun de nous offrait de prêter son épaule au pied de celui qui voulait tenter de gravir.’

It is striking that in the late 1820s and early 1830s, just as Nerval was beginning to establish a literary reputation, several different and powerful influences came to the fore. However, Gautier considered the Classical/Romantic dichotomy to be significant to Nerval’s writing beyond these early years: ‘l’étrangeté la plus inouïe se revêt chez Gérard de Nerval, de formes pour ainsi dire classiques; il a des pâleurs tendres, des tons amortis à dessein, des teintes passées, comme dans les tapisseries de vieux châteaux.’ In the fragments discordance is discernible between Nerval’s clear, elegant style, his avoidance or reduction of gruesome elements, and the necessarily dark content of the Faustian dramas. In fact Nerval makes ironic reference to these tensions in the *Faust* fragment itself, circumventing on-stage violence in the following exchange between Faust and Méphistophélès:

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75 See Lacey, p. 30.
77 Ibid., p. 124.
Mephistopheles Ah! C’est inutile; entre honnêtes gens la parole suffit. (Nerval, i, 260)

Goethe’s Faust expresses disdain for this melodramatic act but agrees to it (MA, vi/i, 582, l. 1738). As Trunz states, ‘Faust empfindet den schriftlichen Kontrakt mit Blut als etwas seinem Wesen Widersprechendes, Groteskes, Karikaturartiges, geht aber dennoch darauf ein.’

In this regard Goethe’s Faust displays a knowing and sophisticated attitude towards this theatrical means of agreeing terms. Nerval’s protagonist, in contrast, manifests an eager credulity on the matter.

In Méphistophélès’ eschewing the signing in blood of a contract with Faust the neoclassical concept of bon goût is surely less compromised than if the proposed cutting had actually occurred on stage. Scenes of violence were likely to offend the neoclassical sense of bienséance. Prior to the early seventeenth century, battle scenes of the Shakespearean kind had been commonplace in French dramatic productions, but under the influence of Richelieu they became increasingly rare, the greatest transgression of neoclassical aesthetic values in this respect being to ‘ensanglanter la scène’.

Given the cultural volatility of the period, it seems unlikely that Nerval’s indirect reference to neoclassical aesthetic practice was unintentional. In the absence, or rather avoidance, of a contract signed in blood Nerval’s Faust fragment contradicts the expectation that Romantic drama would reject neoclassical dogma on the depiction of violence. The suggestion of blood-letting on stage, its frustration, and the playful reference to theatrical conventions, would surely not have gone unnoticed by contemporary audiences, had the play been completed and performed.

79 HA, iii, 541-42.
81 Arch references and indirect criticism are in fact often found in Nerval’s writing, the most striking example being his Les Faux saulniers in which Nerval evades a new law forbidding the publication of fiction in serial form. (Nerval, ii, 3); Gérard de Nerval, The Salt Smugglers: History of the Abbé de Bucquoy, trans. by Richard Sieburth ([n.p.]: Archipelago Books, 2009), second cover.
Though closely associated with the *Sturm und Drang* movement rather than Romanticism, Klinger displays a dedication to innovation in the preface to his *Faust* novel, claiming, in referring to Faust as the inventor of printing, that ‘der Verfasser dieses Buches hat von allem, was bisher über Fausten gedichtet und geschrieben worden, nichts genutzt, noch nicht nutzen wollen’.83 Yet he adds a note stating ‘so die Tradition, welcher man hier allein folgt’.84 This ‘tradition’ originates from the confusion of Johann Fust, a pioneer of printing who was accused of sorcery, with Faust.85 More rational considerations in fact lay behind this accusation: contemporary monks were afraid that printing would take away their work as producers of manuscripts (Nerval, iii, 995). This negative consequence of the development of printing is addressed by the Bourgmestre in Nerval’s *Faust* fragment: ‘vous convenez donc que votre invention va ôter le pain à dix mille honnêtes gens qui n’ont que cet état pour vivre’ (Nerval, i, 253). In his pessimistic view of printing the Bourgmestre recalls Satan’s assessment in Klinger’s novel: ‘bald wird sich das gefährliche Gift des Wissens und Forschens allen Ständen mitteilen.’86 That it is man that thwarts Faust’s ambitions, rather than The Devil as in Klinger’s novel, reveals a bleak, despondent aspect of the fragment that certainly runs counter to Goethe’s faith in dynamism and progress. This darker tone of Nerval’s fragment challenges Enlightenment optimism and in his suffering and powerlessness affords its Faust a Romantic nuance. Although Faust’s invention is initially rejected by officials in Mainz and Frankfurt in Klinger’s novel, the sense that the rebuff

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84 Ibid., p. 7.
85 Lieven D’Hulst cites Gabriel Naudé’s *Apologie pour tous les grands personnages qui ont été faussement soupçonnés de magie* (Paris: [n. pub.], 1625) as a source of the legend. (Nerval, iii, 995) In the chapter ‘Souvenirs de Thuringe’ of *Lorely* Nerval proposes that ‘Faust, pour un grand nombre d’érudits, est le même que Johann Fust, dont le nom brille entre ceux de Gutenberg et Faust Schoeffer, autour du célèbre médaillon des éditions stéréotypes. Il y a trois têtes barbues qu’on a réunies, ne sachant au juste laquelle des trois avait réellement inventé cette terrible machine de guerre appelée la presse’ (Nerval, iii, 48).
originates from conservatism or fear of progress is absent. In Nerval’s fragment when Faust accuses the Bourgmestre of rejecting his invention ‘parce qu’elle est utile, vous la refusez, parce qu’elle rendrait les hommes plus éclairés et que vous avez des raisons à craindre la lumière’ there are clear references to key values of the Enlightenment, not only in Faust’s argument but also in Nerval’s choice of words, namely ‘utile’, ‘éclairés’, and ‘lumière’. Furthermore, echoes of the monks’ fear of the development of printing are discernible, as is a hint of Mephistophelean values in the transposition to man of his cynicism and dedication to stagnation (Nerval, I, 253). In other words, Nerval once again emphasised worldly rather than supernatural elements: in his Faust fragment it is man rather than the devil that, in the words of Goethe’s Mephistopheles, ‘stets verneint’ (MA, VI/I, 571, l. 1338). In this Nerval diverges not only from the Goethean Faustian paradigm, but also from a wider narrative of humanity’s sure progress.

If their style is self-consciously hybrid, the subject matter of Nerval’s Faustian fragments is more clearly Romantic, and Michaud’s and Van Tieghem’s identification of the main influences on, and characteristics of, Romanticism have resonances with the Faust fragment and Nicolas Flamel: ‘le mélodrame et le drame historique [...] le moyen âge et le roman historique [...] le goût du fantastique [...] le mal du siècle’. As discussed above, melodrama tends to polarise characters as good or evil, to allow for little subtlety or ambiguity, and to privilege sentiment in an attempt to elicit an emotional response from an audience — usually through fear and pity. Setting also plays its part, with ‘forests, caves, subterranean rooms, and castles’ proving particularly popular. Both of Nerval’s fragments

87 It is more from indifference and an unwillingness to pay for it. See Klinger, Werke, p. 9; p. 14.
88 Michaud and Van Tieghem, pp. 35-37.
are coloured by similarly melodramatic characteristics. Nicolas Flamel in particular unfolds in typically melodramatic settings: an alchemist’s laboratory and a gothic tower. The construction of a more straightforwardly good and evil relationship is evident in the fragments; Milner notes Nerval’s divergence from Goethe in that ‘rien en lui [Satan in Nicolas Flamel] rappelle le cynisme et la servilité de Mephistopheles’.90 Furthermore, the Devil of Nicolas Flamel does not engage in the parrying, witty dialogue that allows Goethe’s Mephistopheles a degree of evasiveness and ambiguity. Rather, as discussed above, when asked his identity he bluntly answers ‘Satan’ (Nerval, I, 321). There could scarcely be a more direct declaration that Flamel is dealing with evil; in an unusual departure from the Faustian tradition, it is notable that Nerval uses the name Satan, or ‘adversary’, a choice which reinforces the antagonist’s bald, oppositional statement at an etymological level.

What might be considered a further melodramatic aspect of the fragments is to be found in the emphasis of love over lust. At least in the beginning the conduct of Goethe’s Faust towards Margarete is motivated by lust rather than love; she is ruined by Faust’s seduction. In contrast, the Faust of Nerval’s fragment and Nicolas Flamel are in loving relationships. An extract from each fragment demonstrates Nerval’s divergence from the Goethean model in this respect:

FAUST Aurais-je pu supporter une telle existence si l’amour n’en eût quelquefois adouci les peines? Ô Marguerite, toi seule as su me comprendre, toi seule m’as souvent réconcilié avec le Ciel, que le désespoir m’avait fait maudire […] si je fais quelques démarches auprès des hommes […] c’est pour toi seule. (Nerval, I, 249)

FLAMEL La [Pernelle] damner avec moi… elle! si pieuse, si bonne — non!… je n’y consentirai jamais. (Ibid., 327)

The polarisation ‘them/us’ is melodramatic, but quite understandable in the second extract as Flamel is, after all, dealing with Satan. Yet even here the description of his wife’s goodness

90 Milner, I, 587.
is heavy-handed and has a hint of melodrama’s fondness for facile good/evil oppositions. In the first extract, taken from the *Faust* fragment, the melodramatic polarity ‘good/evil’ has been transposed to familial and societal relationships. Nonetheless, the protagonists’ love is clearly of much greater import than its significance as an oppositional strategy; Gengembre provides a relevant interpretation of the symbolism of love in Romanticism: ‘l’amour devient un principe divin, qui acquiert des droits imprescriptibles, supérieurs aux lois [...] l’amour s’impose comme une valeur absolue, opposée aux mensonges sociaux et à la médiocrité bourgeoise.’

The redemptive capacity of love is also evidently essential to Goethe’s *Faust*; while it is true that Goethe’s Margarete adheres to traditional Christianity in *Faust*, Nerval extends this faith beyond Marguerite and Pernelle, ascribing to the protagonists of the fragments a devotion to Christianity that is absent from Goethe’s Faust. Several references are made to Nicolas Flamel’s seemingly genuine Christian faith: his wife describes him as ‘si plein de vertu, de piété’ (Nerval, i, 319); when attempting to escape Satan, Flamel makes the sign of the cross before falling to his knees in prayer (Ibid., 327-28). The confrontation between Flamel and Satan at the top of La Tour Saint-Jacques-la-Boucherie alludes to Satan’s temptation of Christ, and is presaged in the first scene of the fragment by Flamel’s wife opening his Bible and reading ‘et duxit illum diabolus in montem excelsum et ostendit illi omnia regna orbis terrae’ (Ibid., 319). It would seem that the contemporary cultural climate in France, in particular Romanticism’s increasing momentum and attachment to Christianity as a literary theme, played no small part in Nerval’s innovations in this area. But his own philosophy and beliefs were far from conventional; though written almost twenty

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91 Gengembre, p. 23.
92 Luke 4. 5 and Matthew 4. 8; Milner, i, 588-89.
years after *Nicolas Flamel*, the following assertion in *Voyage en orient* typifies his esoteric and syncretic outlook: ‘je suis suffisamment sceptique pour ne repousser aucune superstition’ (Nerval, II, 330).

**Conclusion**

This chapter began by regretting that the *Faust* fragment and *Nicolas Flamel* were never completed. Unfortunately, the tragic aspects of Nerval’s life played no small part in their incompletion; their lack of narrative closure becomes even more poignant when one discovers that the author regarded the works highly and always intended to complete them, but was often beset by personal difficulties that prevented this from happening. They are not simply minor works or mere juvenilia: their intersection of personal, cultural, and societal issues is of interest to Nerval scholars and beyond.

Furthermore, these Faustian fragments have a well-established provenance, facilitating their analysis, at least to a degree. It would be naïve to assume that the literary, or indeed more broadly cultural, influences on Nerval’s *Faust* fragment and *Nicolas Flamel* are limited to those texts to which an explicit debt has been acknowledged by the author, or to those intertextual resonances that have been discovered by research. Nevertheless, comparison of the Faustian fragments with these established source texts provides a useful starting point for discovering more about Nerval’s writing and the cultural milieu that influenced it.

The principal objective of this chapter is a search for what might be termed a Nervalian Faustian paradigm. Nerval’s most significant divergences from Goethe in the fragments lie in the protagonists’ character and relationships; the idealisation of the principal female characters; the portrayal of the devil or the Devil, including the pacts; and the transposition of identifiably German scenes to a French cultural milieu. With the exception
of depictions of the diabolic figure these issues are also highly significant to Nerval’s original, non-Faustian writing. So much so that one might see the Faust fragment and Nicolas Flamel as a representation in microcosm of Nerval’s œuvre.

Many of the tensions and contradictions within Nerval’s Faust fragment and Nicolas Flamel offer much scope for investigation. As they were written in the early years of French Romanticism, a period during which neoclassicism, though on the wane, was still influential, Nerval’s fragmentary texts are informative sources of research into the interaction of these two cultural movements. They deserve greater scholarly attention than they have hitherto enjoyed.
3.4 NERVAL’S FINAL FAUSTIAN DRAMA: *L’IMAGIER DE HARLEM* (1851)

**Introduction**

In many respects *L’Imagier de Harlem* (1851) represents the continuation of the *Faust* fragment and *Nicolas Flamel*. Many of the ways in which these two dramas diverged from the Goethean Faustian paradigm are again discernible in Nerval’s later play: printing is essential to the narrative, and indeed to the symbolism of the work; the protagonists are similar in spite of changes of name and location; there is much evidence, once again, of the idealisation of the female characters; Nerval’s fondness for intertextual references has not diminished. It is also, of course, more than this; *L’Imagier de Harlem* is far more complex than either Faustian fragment; in keeping with this complexity Nerval demonstrates a greater maturity with regard to the treatment of good and evil: there is little sense of an easy dichotomy between the two as was the case in his Faustian fragments; his devil is a more nuanced and ambivalent figure, which brings the character closer to Goethe’s Mephistopheles; and this increase in complexity is reflected in Nerval’s frequent use of a dialecticism that is highly reminiscent of Goethe’s reinterpretation of the *Fauststoff*. These are also the principal areas that are investigated in this section of the thesis, following the contextualisation and summary of *L’Imagier de Harlem*. Conclusions are then drawn regarding the intertextual significance of the play.
Contextualisation

*L’Imagier de Harlem* premiered at the Porte-Saint-Martin theatre on 27 December 1851. Its opening night had been delayed by several weeks as a result of a legal dispute about the reopening of the theatre. In the first publication of the drama it was originally credited to Nerval, Joseph de Méry, and Bernard Lopez but in the second edition Lopez’s name was omitted. Méry (1797-1867) was born in Marseilles. Though today largely forgotten, he enjoyed considerable literary success during his lifetime. His output was broad and included novels, plays, libretti, and poetry. He was renowned as ‘un homme d’esprit’, his ‘verve caustique’ and ‘dons d’improvisateur’ being particularly respected. Though the circumstances of his first meeting Nerval are uncertain, it seems probable that this occurred at Hugo’s home around 1830. Méry hosted Nerval in Marseilles at the beginning of his *Voyage en orient* in 1842 and a year later welcomed him back to France from this journey at the same port. The two writers collaborated on four projects between 1849 and 1851: *De Paris à Pékin, Une nuit blanche, Le Chariot d’enfant,* and *L’Imagier de Harlem.* None of these works was a commercial success.94

Bernard Lopez (1817-1896) was a native of Cadiz. His contribution to *L’Imagier de Harlem* is more difficult to ascertain: his principal role was perhaps as an intermediary between collaborators Nerval and Méry and Marc Fournier, director of the Porte-Saint-Martin theatre.95 The collaborators soon received the good news that Fournier had commissioned them to produce a new drama to mark the theatre’s reopening under new

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93 *Dictionnaire Nerval,* p. 248.  
94 Ibid., p. 316.  
95 Ibid., p. 293; Pichois and Brix, *Gérard de Nerval,* p. 315.
Guillaume and Pichois propose the following division of labour between the creators of *L’Imagier de Harlem*: ‘on peut conclure que la pièce fut conçue par Nerval, élaborée par Lopez et surtout par lui, enfin plaquée de vers par Méry’ (Guillaume and Pichois, ‘Introduction’, Nerval, II, p. xvii).

The initial reception of *L’Imagier de Harlem* was encouraging, but within a short period of time a number of criticisms came to the fore, principal among these being its length of five hours. Critics scorned its historical inaccuracies: for instance, in his ‘Compte rendu’ published in *Le Pays* on 29 December 1851, Paul de Saint-Victor, writes:

Nous reprocherons ici en passant aux auteurs la physionomie d’ogre sournois et rabougri qu’ils ont donné à leur Louis XI qui ressemble un peu trop peut-être au Croquemitaine couronné des Crimes des rois et des reines (Nerval, II, xxix).

The reviewer, Paul de Saint-Victor, criticises Nerval’s and Méry’s depiction of Louis XI principally because he considers it disrespectful to a ‘mystérieuse et redoubtable figure’, to whom France ‘doit ses plus belles provinces’ (Ibid.). Their portrayal of this French king does indeed lack nuance and thereby contributes a melodramatic, heavily demarcated opposition of good and evil in *L’Imagier de Harlem*. It also indicates, yet again, the constraints under which dramatists were working in France in the middle of the nineteenth century; fictional depictions of French royalty were evidently controversial during this conservative period.

Significantly, Jules Janin, writing in the *Journal des débats*, took exception to the mingling of verse and prose in the play — as late as January 1852 the longstanding aesthetic disagreement over formal propriety was alive in France. Within a month of its successful opening night *L’Imagier de Harlem* had fallen from critical and popular favour. Ultimately, it became financially unviable, closing on 30 January 1852. Its curtailment was to have a

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profound effect on the already vulnerable Nerval; Méry provides the following moving account of the poet’s learning in writing of the withdrawal of their play from the Porte-Saint-Martin: ‘Gérard lut, et porta les deux mains à son front, comme pour retenir la raison qui s’échappait. Puis un éclat de rire nerveux contracta son visage, mais les yeux gardaient une tristesse sombre, et se mouillaient de pleurs.’97 Nerval was hospitalised on 23 January. Three years later, on 26 January 1855, he would be found dead in the squalid Rue de la Vieille Laterne.98

The closure of L’Imagier de Harlem certainly had a profound and negative effect on Nerval, contributing to his increasing sense of despair and untimely death. It represents the end of his theatrical ambitions (Guillaume and Pichois, ‘Introduction’, Nerval, ii, p. xxiii). Several explanations of the drama’s failure have been offered, ranging from the incompatibility of Nerval and Méry as collaborators and the unsuitability of a popular theatre for the performance of a serious literary work, to simply bad luck. Nerval’s dramatic works are usually omitted from editions of his works, principally because many were created in collaboration with other writers. This was customary practice during Nerval’s lifetime; the Catalogue général of works written prior to 1859 reveals that two thirds of the dramatic works produced in France were created collaboratively.99

98 Dictionnaire Nerval, p. 250.
99 Gérard de Nerval, Léo Burckart (en collaboration avec Alexandre Dumas) / L’Imagier de Harlem (en collaboration avec Joseph Méry) ed. by Jacques Bony ([Paris]: Flammarion, 1996), p. 10. Further references to L’Imagier de Harlem are given after quotations in the text.
A Summary of *L’Imagier de Harlem*

Its diffuseness of location and multiplicity of characters, including several in different incarnations, renders a précis of the play’s narrative problematic. Essentially, Laurent Coster and his three associates, Gutenberg, Jacob Faust, and Schaeffer, have invented a printing machine; in order to develop the machine commercially a patent is required. As this is expensive Coster applies for financial support from the council of Harlem. He is informed by Le Bourgmestre that his request has been denied. A mysterious figure, Le Comte de Bloksberg, is keen to help and as chamberlain to the Archduke of Austria suggests they visit the court to request the support of his master. Though initially enthusiastic about the invention, the Archduke is really only interested in using the machine to print money. De Bloksberg offers gold, which Coster accepts. Immediately his workshop is magically transformed into an ornate and splendid room. It soon transpires that de Bloksberg is Satan in disguise and his only genuine interest in the printing machine is its destruction. Under the influence of Aspasie, a shade who has been summoned by Satan, Coster attempts to kill de Bloksberg [Satan]. Inevitably this fails and Satan now has a hold over him. Coster’s wife Catherine prays for divine assistance. We next see Coster at the court of King Louis XI of France, whose works Coster has printed. The king is flattered and shows Coster favour. This is soon withdrawn, however, as Satan, now incarnated as Olivier le Daim, conspires to associate Coster with a disparaging document relating to the king. Coster is then depicted in an enchanted garden at the feet of Aspasie. Satan appears again, this time the guise of Le Dieu Pan. When Coster awakens from sleep he is twelve years older. His wife has died, but her shade keeps vigil over her husband; it was she who rescued Coster from the garden. The protagonist then finds himself in Spain at the court of Queen Isabella. He once again
attempts to sell his printing machine, but falls foul of the Inquisition. Satan is again present, this time as an executioner, who attempts to have Coster and his daughter Lucie burnt at the stake for heresy. Satan offers to save their lives if Coster agrees to sell his soul. The inventor agrees, chiefly as a means of saving his daughter. He is now in servitude to the devil, who takes him to the palace of the Borgias in Rome. In this location Satan becomes Machiavelli. Aspasie, transformed by Satan into Imperia, is imprisoned and forced to become Cesare Borgia’s mistress. Imperia rebels against Satan by falling in love with Coster. Just as Satan is about to seize Coster’s soul, Lucie intervenes, retrieving him from Satan’s clutches and thus saving her father from damnation. Impéria is also saved through love, this time Coster’s.100

Printing and ‘Enlightenment’ Values

The drama opens very similarly to Nerval’s Faust fragment: the protagonist is working in his laboratory; the room is described as poor, its interior gothic. It is striking that these are the first two adjectives that Nerval associates with his Faustian figure. While Goethe depicts a ‘gotischen Zimmer’ in Faust (MA, VI/1, 545), there is no description, or sense, of poverty, despite the narrowness of the chamber. On the contrary, by describing Faust’s room as ‘hochgewolbt’ (Ibid.), Goethe captures not only the loftiness of his endeavours and an early indication of his character’s hubris, but also suggests a degree of affluence and prestige.

As in the Faust fragment the protagonist is desperate for financial support for his newly invented printing machine (L’Imagier de Harlem, p. 273). Not only does the invention of printing provide an apt metaphor for the struggle between the modern and the medieval that is essential to the Faust narrative, but it also bears directly on Nerval’s own life. Printing held an interest for him throughout his life. In fact he registered a patent in the

100 Pichois and Brix, Gérard de Nerval, p. 311.
autumn of 1844 for his own ‘machine à composer’, described in the following terms:
‘nouvelle machine à imprimer au moyen de rangées alphabétiques mobiles, nommée
Stéréographe’ (Nerval, I, 1415). His machine was never produced, but it seems to have been
the design of one well-versed in the relevant technology.101

In both dramas it is a Bourgmestre who rejects the inventor’s application for
financial assistance. In *L’Imagier* this official personifies societal ignorance and corruption.
Medieval society as personified by ‘Le Bourgmestre’ is Mephistophelean in the sense that it
favours lingering above Coster’s striving. As in Goethe’s *Faust* Nerval’s drama takes place
on the cusp of a significant cultural shift: the old, medieval values are giving way to those of
the early modern period. The reactionary perspective of the Bourgmestre is encapsulated by
his retort to Coster’s appeal for support:

LE BOURGMESTRE Toute invention est une folie. La Hollande est bien comme elle est, ne la
dérangez pas. (*L’Imagier de Harlem*, p. 296)

Further objection to the patenting of a printing press raised by this character comes even
closer to the sentiments of his counterpart in the *Faust* fragment, as the juxtaposition of
the two relevant extracts demonstrates:

LE BOURGMESTRE Vous convenez donc que votre invention va ôter le pain à dix mille
honnêtes gens qui n’ont que cet état pour vivre. (Nerval, I, 253)

LE BOURGMESTRE Remplacez les manuscrits? … Et bien! Et les copistes? … L’honorable
corporation des copistes? … Qu’en ferez-vous, s’il vous plaît, monsieur l’imagier? …
(*L’Imagier de Harlem*, p. 295)

The most salient difference between the two characters is that in the later play *Le
Bourgmestre* has become more unreasonable, corrupt, and a darker, more sinister figure; his
‘misunderstanding’ of Faust’s invention is telling:

101 *Dictionnaire Nerval*, p. 251, pp. 443-44.
LE BOURGMESTRE Est-ce que c’est un nouveau genre d’arquebuse? Puisque vous parlez […]
d’utilité publique, et d’une machine qui doit battre en brèche … toutes sortes de choses!
(L’Imagier de Harlem, pp. 293-94)

In L’Imagier de Harlem officialdom is further criticised, and indeed satirised, by this
character’s equating of usefulness and weaponry. In 1851 the political climate in France was
turbulent and printing was a crucial issue: the press, greatly restricted by new laws in July
1850, was subjected to further regulation in July 1852, just months after the première of
L’Imagier de Harlem. With the increased conservatism of Le Bourgmestre in L’Imagier
Nerval was perhaps making a political comment on the turn of events in France (L’Imagier
de Harlem, pp. 270-71). In fact the opposition of reaction and progress, highly pertinent to
the political milieu in which Nerval was working on L’Imagier, are essential to Coster’s
travails in late fifteenth-century Holland. As in the incomplete Faustian dramas, there is a
pervasive tension between what might be termed ‘Enlightenment’ and ‘medieval’ values.
Nowhere in the drama is this more salient than in Coster’s early encounters with Le
Bourgmestre, as the following interaction demonstrates:

LE BOURGMESTRE Vous voulez donc, maître Coster, bouleverser le pays? …

COSTER Je veux l’éclairer! (L’Imagier de Harlem, p. 296)

Coster’s pronouncement is expressed by Faust in very similar terms in Nerval’s Faust
fragment. Once again Le Bourgmestre represents forces of reaction, Coster progress. But
more than this, they personify the binary opposition of lingering and striving that is crucial to
Goethe’s retelling of the Faust myth.

Coster’s espousal of ‘Enlightenment’ values is reflected in the lexical choices made
by Nerval; the verb ‘éclairer’ in his above pronouncement connotes this and such
associations are, in fact, ubiquitous in L’Imagier. The following extract demonstrates the
The language strongly intimates Coster’s adherence to Enlightenment ideology.

Specifically, the words ‘feu’, ‘clarté’, ‘raison’, ‘brille’, ‘étincelle’ convey a sense of illumination, literally or metaphorically. Coster’s description of printing as a ‘second soleil [...] un rayon pour l’avenir’ reinforces this sense (L’Imagier de Harlem, p. 288). In the repetition of these images of radiance there is surely reference to Les Lumières. Though lacking such explicitly luminous references, a similar ideology is evoked by Coster’s assessment of his colleagues’ work on the printing press:

COSTER Écoute Catherine, ce bruit que tu entends … c’est le bélier qui va battre en brèche le vieux monde, c’est l’imprimerie qui prend sa source dans ce caveau, comme un fleuve qui fécondera l’univers! Et de même que tout tremble ici sous nos pieds et autour de nous, tout va frémir, trembler, s’émoiver sur la terre au bruit de ce merveilleux instrument. (L’Imagier de Harlem, p. 284)

Coster again describes the invention of printing in a manner reminiscent of Enlightenment ideology: it heralds the advent of a new, better world which will be sustained by the dissemination of knowledge and wider access to learning. However, it is notable that this marvel originates underground in a ‘caveau’; Nerval tempers Coster’s optimism with a note of ambivalence here, as this subterranean location connotes hell and thereby points to printing’s potential for evil as well as good. In general L’Imagier de Harlem comes closer than either of Nerval’s earlier fragments to the complexity and sophistication of Goethe’s Faust; this equivocal treatment of the invention of printing is consistent with this move from the simplicity of the Faust fragment and Nicolas Flamel. Furthermore, the sense of
Goethean dynamism that was largely absent from these incomplete dramas is discernible in Coster’s enthusiasm for his invention. This is communicated both explicitly and by connotations of activity in Nerval’s diction: ‘bruit’, ‘battre’, ‘un fleuve’, ‘fécondera’, ‘tremble’, ‘frémir’.

The Protagonists

Nerval’s use of Laurent Coster rather than Faust was a tactic to allow the integration of aspects not usually found in Faustian dramas. To have called the protagonist of L’Imagier de Harlem Faust would perhaps have detracted from the important family scenes, as these are not present in the traditional myth or in Goethe’s Faust (L’Imagier de Harlem, p. 266). While it is true that Faust was married in Nerval’s fragment, he did not have children, and on account of the brevity of this incomplete work we do not know the direction it would have taken. Though Coster has replaced Faust in L’Imagier, Nerval does include a character called Faust in the work. This is largely to emphasise that it is a Faustian drama (Guillaume and Pichois, ‘Introduction’, Nerval, II, p. xix). This character’s inclusion may stem from commercial considerations; it links the play with a character that was well known and popular and also reminds the public of Nerval’s prior achievements in translating Faust.

The greatest divergence from either Goethe’s Faust or the protagonists of Nerval’s incomplete Faustian dramas in L’Imagier de Harlem is Coster’s naivety. This trait is evident throughout the drama but is most pronounced in his dealings with Satan. Consider his equivocation regarding de Bloksberg:

COSTER Cet homme étrange exerce une fascination qui me lie à ses pas; m’attire-t-il vers le bien ou le mal? (L’Imagier de Harlem, p. 315)

Coster demonstrates a degree of naivety here that approaches obtuseness. Goethe’s Faust
and the protagonists of Nerval’s earlier incomplete Faustian works display greater sophistication which conveys a sense that they are a match for the devil’s guile. Moreover, Coster’s fatalism also exceeds anything in these other texts, as his answer to the above question reveals: ‘N’importe, marchons à l’inconnu’ (Ibid.). In Goethe’s drama Faust is tempted to abandon himself to nihilism, particularly in his suicide attempt, but this is transitory; he does not deal with Mephistopheles with an insecure sense of the pact’s outcome. Rather, he considers himself more than equal to the challenge; he will use Mephistopheles for his own purposes and emerge from their contract victorious. The reader or audience is of course greatly influenced by the pronouncements of ‘Der Herr’ in the ‘Prolog im Himmel’, but Faust takes on the devil without this reassurance. The struggle between Faust and Mephistopheles signifies allegorically the meeting of the emotionality and superstition of the Middle Ages and the rationality and certainty of the Enlightenment. As Goethe demonstrates in Faust ii certainty is as dangerous as superstition — an essential lesson that Faust learns gradually. It is unsurprising then that in the early scenes of the work Faust is at his most arrogant. More difficult to explain, however, is Coster’s willingness to risk all without knowing the identity of the man he decides to trust. Audiences at the Porte-Saint-Martin would probably have appreciated Coster’s adventurous outlook. Nevertheless, the contest between Coster and Satan in L’Imagier is unequal; even Satan, in an uncharacteristically honest statement, expresses as much in commenting on Coster’s credulity regarding financial aid for the printing machine: ‘DE BLOKSBERG Coster, vous êtes un enfant!’ (L’Imagier de Harlem, p. 303). His inability to grasp that Satan’s proposal of free food and drink for the town’s influential citizens is in fact bribery does indeed demonstrate a child-like naivety (Ibid.).
However, one might ascribe Coster’s unfamiliarity with such machinations to his benevolence. This is certainly in evidence throughout the play and is often closely related to his subscription to the ‘Enlightenment’ values of progress and fairness noted above. Bony captures this aspect of the character succinctly:

Laurent Coster n’est pas seulement l’homme insatisfait des limites de la condition humaine, il est […] un bienfaiteur de l’humanité, un facteur de progrès et de perfectionnement de l’homme, […] un nouveau Prométhée. (L’Imagier de Harlem, p. 269)

Ultimately Coster’s philanthropy contributes to his salvation. His altruism is at its strongest in his willingness to sacrifice himself for his daughter Lucie: ‘Tu peux la sauver? … ma damnation pour le salut de de ma fille! Parle!’ (L’Imagier de Harlem, p. 399). He is prepared to suffer eternal damnation for the love of his daughter. In common with Goethe’s Faust it is the ability to love that is at least partly responsible for Coster’s ultimate defeat of the devil.

An emphasis on family is common to all of Nerval’s dramatic works, as Bony points out:

Toujours est-il qu’on voit paraître dans tous les drames, alors qu’on ne les trouve dans aucun récit, un héros marié, un couple légitime et même, dans L’Imagier, un enfant qui sera pour finir l’élément salvateur. Est-ce […] que, par l’intermédiaire de personnages qui lui sont en principe étrangers, le théâtre permet au créateur de livrer plus explicitement ses obsessions que dans un récit, à plus forte raison dans un récit à la première personne? (L’Imagier de Harlem, p. 34)

There is much of Nerval in his protagonists: the addition of familial relationship and tensions to his Faustian dramas perhaps originates from his own difficult relationship with his father (Ibid., pp. 33-34). We know that Nerval patented a printing machine, and that he idealised women — the actress Jenny Colon particularly. These autobiographical aspects of his Faustian dramas are inevitably innovative and contribute strongly to divergences from the Goethean Faustian paradigm in L’Imagier de Harlem.
Further departure from this model lies in Coster’s explicitly Christian redemption, as Satan’s assessment of his quarry reveals:

SATAN  
Des pièges infernaux, j’épuiserai l’amorce;  
Car c’est au ciel chrétien que Coster prend sa force.  
Et par lui nous verrons décider en ce lieu  
Qui doit régner ici, de Satan ou de Dieu.  
( _L’Imagier de Harlem_, p. 416)

The Faustian figure of _L’Imagier de Harlem_ is explicitly Christian; his potential salvation is described as originating from a ‘ciel chrétien’. In Goethe’s _Faust_ it is clear that Faust has the protection of ‘Derr Herr’ who is ‘im Himmel’ and in this respect his salvation is ultimately of a divine provenance. As Goethe’s narrative progresses, however, the true nature of Faust’s redemption becomes less clear; it originates partly from his striving and partly from Gretchen’s love for him. These two elements allow for the possibility of salvation, as communicated by the use of a modal verb by the Engel: ‘den können wir erlösen’ (MA, xviii/i, 346, l. 11937). The fact that it is an angel that utters these celebrated lines of course gives them a religious significance, but its nature is never quite clarified by Goethe. One of its great strengths lies in its multivalence: nowhere in Goethe’s play is there such an unambiguously Christian explanation of Faust’s salvation.

Furthermore, when Satan identifies Coster’s vulnerability he uses Christian doctrine against him:

DE BLOKSBURG Je reconnais en vous un homme industrieux qui aurait pu inventer quelque chose, si tout n’était pas inventé depuis longtemps … (à lui-même) excepté le huitième péché capital! … ( _L’Imagier de Harlem_, p. 301)

The eighth deadly sin was despond or acedia; Coster’s response to the lack of societal support for his invention suggests this transgression. The protagonists of the _Faust_ fragment and _Nicolas Flamel_ are similarly culpable; Goethe’s Faust also falls prey to this sin, but only
temporarily. He is tempted by the possible relief of suicide, but rallies, displaying a more powerful, confrontational attitude in reply to the mockery of the Erdgeist (MA, vi/i, 549, l. 499). On the whole Goethe’s Faust is a stronger, more confident character than the Faustian figures of Nerval’s creation.

His motivation for dealing with the devil is also more positive and adventurous, if partly selfish. Coster’s hedging fails to convince and creates an impression of greater insecurity than is discernible in Faust:

COSTER Et moi, dans le désespoir où je suis, au fond de l’abîme où je viens de tomber, si le vieux démon de l’Enfer me demandait de signer un pacte avec lui! … Oh! non! … l’homme n’a pas le besoin de donner son âme pour vaincre son infortune; l’homme a trois protecteurs puissants qui habitent avec lui, le Génie, la Patience et le Travail! … avec ces trois auxiliaires, l’homme ne se brouille pas avec Dieu, et il est plus fort que le Démon!

(L’Imagier de Harlem, p. 299)

Coster’s considering a deal with the Devil stems chiefly from despair. This is part of the reason that Goethe’s Faust engages with Mephistopheles, but a yearning for greater experience and a desire for knowledge are stronger motives in the German drama. Even in the more confident sentiments of the above extract Coster seems to be attempting to convince himself that ‘l’homme […] est plus fort que le Démon’ without truly believing it. The prevalence of the exclamation mark here is also noteworthy: Coster’s emotional pronouncements communicate a greater sense of melodrama, as indeed does such close juxtaposition of dejection and triumph.
Nerval’s Idealisation of the Female Characters

Nerval’s idealisation of the principal female characters in his incomplete Faustian dramas continues in *L’Imagier de Harlem*, as Catherine’s assessment of her life with Coster demonstrates:

_CATHERINE_ Est-il possible d’être plus heureux que nous le sommes? … Nous avons tout ce qui fait le charme de l’existence, une pauvreté honorable que le travail peut enrichir [...] et le ciel n’a-t-il pas bénì notre union par la naissance d’un ange? (*L’Imagier de Harlem*, p. 281)

As in the fragments the Faustian figure is poor; once again the female character offers a stability that presages her role as saviour. The idealisation of women is further emphasised by Coster’s having a daughter whom Catherine describes as ‘un ange’, a noun with unmistakable intercessional and salvational significance. This addition of a daughter who can also save Coster amplifies the idealisation of women in the play.

Catherine is not fooled by Satan’s transformation of her home and cannot be corrupted by offers of material wealth:

_CATHERINE_ Mais c’est plus beau ici qu’à la maison des échevins! … Et notre chambre? … Et le poêle? Mais ça m’épouvante, moi! (*L’Imagier de Harlem*, p. 309)

It is again the principal female character who recognises the dangers of diabolic assistance. In *L’Imagier de Harlem* Catherine’s early wariness of de Bloksberg recalls Margarete’s perceptive assessment of Mephistopheles: ‘Der Mensch, den du da bei dir hast[,] ist mir in tiefer inrer Seele verhaßt’ (*MA*, vi/1, 636, l. 3472). However, whereas Catherine is consistent in her repulsion at de Bloksberg and her rejection of his offerings, Margarete is tempted by the jewels proffered by Mephistopheles. Catherine cannot be swayed by the offer of similar riches:

_DE BLOKSBERG_ Voulez-vous un assortiment de pierreries et des couronnes de fleurs, au choix?
_CATHERINE_ Pierreries à moi! Vous voulez rire, monsieur. C’est ainsi que Laurent m’a aimée
et m’aimera toujours. (L’Imagier de Harlem, p. 309)

Catherine demonstrates greater resolution than Goethe’s Margarete. She is stronger, more honest, and less vulnerable to flattery and coercion. She is also more mature, which perhaps partly accounts for her steadfastness. However, in her invulnerability and unrelenting determination she perhaps lacks the credibility of Goethe’s Margarete. In the latter’s failings one detects wider human frailty; this makes her downfall all the more moving. Catherine’s unflagging strength in the face of adversity might be ascribed to Nerval’s idealisation of female characters but in her total confidence in her convictions one also discerns that most melodramatic of tendencies: the facile demarcation of good and evil.

This contrast is evident in the scene in which Catherine implores Coster to leave de Bloksberg’s house [hell magically transformed by Satan to ensnare Coster]:

CATHERINE    Viens, suis-moi, ne crains rien, Coster et tu vas voir
             Que tu peux être libre; il n’est aucun pouvoir
             Qui puisse t’opposer sa fatale barrière,
             Quand ma bouche est encore tiède de ma prière,
             Et que Dieu même écoute encore en ce moment,
             Le saint vœu que mon cœur envoie au firmament!
             (L’Imagier de Harlem , p. 344)

Catherine rescues Coster from Satan through her religious faith. Her role of saviour is more explicit than Margarete’s in Goethe’s play. This again demonstrates Nerval’s idealisation of female characters, but its directness may originate in his considering audience reception at the Porte-Saint-Martin theatre. The subtlety of Goethe’s drama may have seemed inappropriate for the popular theatre: that it is Coster’s wife who offers salvation is repeatedly emphasised in L’Imagier de Harlem.

Catherine is not the only idealised female character in the drama; nor is the Faustian figure’s having a wife in L’Imagier de Harlem the play’s only matrimonial innovation in
De Bloksberg: Je vous présente ma femme, la comtesse Aspasie de Bloksberg! (L’Imagier de Harlem, p. 334)

Intertextually this short statement is very dense: Aspasie, the shade summoned in Hamilton’s L’Enchanteur Faustus, has become the wife of a devil possessing a title that is the alternative name for the Brocken, the scene of ‘Walpurgisnacht’ (See for instance MA, vi/1, 592, l. 2113, 660, l. 4221, 663, l. 4329). Moreover, this union of Classical beauty and medieval myth recalls Faust’s marriage to Helen in Faust II. But Nerval has provided a distorted, darker version of this union: the German sorcerer has been replaced by the ultimate transgressor, Satan, and the more dubious charms of a prostitute from antiquity have been substituted for Helen’s Classical beauty. This more shocking meeting of the Classical and the medieval suggests intentional sensationalisation.

In the letter to Janin on his passion for Faust referred to earlier, Nerval emphasised the significance of the female characters in L’Imagier de Harlem:

L’inventeur a auprès de lui deux femmes: la femme bourgeoise qui ne le comprend pas et le fait souffrir, mais qui le sauve par le sentiment religieux — et la femme idéale, son rêve, le rêve éternel du génie dominé par l’amour-propre et que l’auteur de Faust avait symbolisé par Hélène, ici c’est Alilah, c’est-à-dire Lilith, la femme éternellement condamnée de la tradition arabe, et dont le Démon se sert pour séduire tous les grands hommes et leur faire manquer leur but. (Nerval, II, 1296)

Catherine is essentially a version of Marguerite, but as Bony notes, in Aspasie Nerval ‘dépasse même l’Hélène gothéenne’. The two characters display a typically Romantic duality: ‘ange-courtisane’. And there is also more than this common duality in L’Imagier, while Alilah is in part a traditional seductress, tempting Coster with carnal pleasure, she also represents an ‘idéal de beauté et d’amour absolu’ (L’Imagier de Harlem, p. 268). In this play Nerval’s idealisation of the female characters has become much more complex than was the case in his earlier Faustian fragments.
Although the two principal female characters display characteristics of the typically Romantic polarisation ‘ange/courtisane’, they also complement one another: Aspasie, a shade, becomes a living woman who contributes to Coster’s salvation; Catherine, a flesh-and-blood woman, is transformed into a spirit and is therefore able to intervene in the spirit world on Coster’s behalf. As Ross Chambers points out, Aspasie becomes a ‘second Catherine’, Catherine a ‘second Aspasie’. This depiction of synthesis as resolution is particularly Goethean, recalling the way in which it is Faust’s and Mephistopheles’ interactions in the German drama that ultimately bring about — at least in part — Faust’s redemption. It also accentuates Nerval’s idealisation of the female characters; not only are two women the saviours of Coster, but in fact a third is vital to his redemption: his daughter Lucie who is in effect the reincarnation of his wife Catherine. She has petitioned Queen Isabella of Spain on behalf of her father who has been imprisoned, along with Gutenberg and Schaeffer, and sentenced to burn at the stake for heresy; the Queen is inclined to show clemency after Lucie shows her that a book printed by Coster is a work of piety (L’Imagier de Harlem, pp. 385-87). In her desire to show Coster mercy and save him from the flames — a symbol of hell — Isabella represents a further instance of the protagonist’s being saved by a female character. She achieves this twice in fact, though the second time her influence is indirect:

LUCIE Ce livre que la reine Isabelle a sauvé des flammes, ce livre va s’ouvrir et me parler! (Elle l’ouvre et lit) ‘Éclairez ceux qui sont assis dans les ténèbres et dans l’ombre de la mort, et conduisez leurs pas sur le chemin du salut.’ Au nom de ces paroles divines que votre art et votre génie ont reproduites, ô mon père! Levez-vous et marchez!

COSTER, comme sortant d’un sommeil profond, se lève et écoute. (L’Imagier de Harlem, p. 415)

In these few lines Nerval’s depiction of Coster’s salvation mirrors that of Goethe’s Faust.

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This is achieved with concision; in addition to the contribution made by Lucie’s love for her father, there is also an element of Faustian striving: Coster’s industry and continual work on the new invention of printing has brought deliverance. Note also the dyadic language used by Lucie: light has conquered darkness; life is victorious over death. This carries both Christian and Enlightenment significance. Once again, a remarkable feature of Nerval’s writing is the masterly manipulation of polysemy.

**Nerval’s Portrayal of the Devil in *L’Imagier de Harlem***

If the devil’s identity is too easily revealed in Nerval’s *Nicolas Flamel*, the same is hardly true in his *L’Imagier de Harlem*; seven incarnations of Satan appear in the play: Le Comte de Bloksberg, Olivier le Daim, Le Dieu Pan, L’Alcade Major, Le Bourreau, Machiavel, and L’Esclave. Each incarnation displays malevolent conduct, committing a cardinal sin in several instances. In Machiavelli’s duplicity and ambition the sins of greed, pride, and lust are discernible. The last sin is also clearly attributable to Le Dieu Pan. In the course of their careers L’Alcade Major, Le Bourreau, and Olivier le Daim are prepared to kill, either for monetary gain or to win further power and influence. In other words they are greedy, lustful for power, murderous and proud.

In the third act Satan’s becoming Olivier le Daim is noteworthy from an intertextual perspective: this historical figure appeared in Hugo’s *Notre Dame de Paris* of 1831 (the same year in which Nerval’s *Nicolas Flamel* was published in instalments) as Olivier le Mauvais. Hugo also refers to Nicolas Flamel several times in the novel. A further literary connection that would have resonated with audiences in 1851 is to be found in an apparent *lapsus linguae* by the French king:

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103 Hugo, Romans I, p. 806.
104 Ibid. See for example, p. 573, pp. 607-08.
LOUIS XI Tenez ça, Olivier le Diable. (*L’Imagier de Harlem*, p. 368)

The king makes an explicit reference to the true identity of Olivier le Daim. His ‘mistake’ brings the name closer to Hugo’s character, Olivier le Mauvais. It also evokes the similarly entitled *Robert le Diable*, Meyerbeer’s opera that had achieved great success in Paris in the early 1830s. With adroit concision Nerval includes at least two intertextual references that would have been recognised by his audience in 1851 on account of their popularity and success.

In fact Nerval’s sources for *L’Imagier de Harlem* extend far beyond traditional theatre and opera, as his choice of first name for de Bloksberg reveals:

DE BLOKSBERG Je suis Caspar, comte de Bloksberg. (*L’Imagier de Harlem*, p. 300)

Bony notes that Caspar was a ‘nom porté par le diable dans de nombreuses légendes allemandes’ (*L’Imagier de Harlem*, p. 424, note 4), and Nerval refers to this tradition in *Lorely*: ‘dans le *Faust* primitif qui se joue en Allemagne, sur les théâtres de marionnettes […] le diable s’appelle Caspar’ (Nerval, III, 51). This integration into the drama of a comparatively obscure detail is typical of Nerval’s writing and further evidence of the often unacknowledged richness of his Faustian dramas; as Chambers notes, ‘apart from the literary sources in Klinger and Goethe […] Nerval knew the folk-plays which were Goethe’s own source-material in *Faust.*’

*L’Imagier de Harlem* converges with the Goethean Faustian paradigm in another respect: Nerval’s devil is witty and humorous, as his following utterances reveal:

COSTER Oh! mon Dieu!

DE BLOKSBERG Trève à ces exclamations puériles qui m’offensent! (*L’Imagier de Harlem*, p. 301)

In this respect the devil of this later work comes closer to Goethe’s Mephistopheles; in the

105 Chambers, p. 201.
following extract Nerval’s devil captures much of Mephistopheles’ dark humour:

SATAN Tu vas voir [….] le plus cher de mes élèves, César Borgia, un jeune orphelin bien intéressant! Son père est mort le mois dernier; mort, comme on meurt dans sa famille, empoisonné au dessert. — C’est un usage des Borgia, ils ne dinent jamais autrement. 

(L’Imagier de Harlem, p. 403)

Despite its title, with respect to its devil the Faust fragment is more divergent from the Goethean model than L’Imagier de Harlem; the latter play’s dark humour brings it closer to the spirit of Goethe’s Faust, resembling ‘diese sehr ernsten Scherze’ as Goethe described Faust II in a letter of 17 March 1832 to Wilhelm von Humboldt (WA iv, 49, 283).

Echoes of Goethe’s Fausts

Quite often in L’Imagier Nerval comes so close to Goethe’s Faust, while maintaining a degree of difference, that the reader is immediately struck by the similarities between the German and French texts. Satan’s enigmatic proclamation of identity is just such a case:

MACHIAVEL Le bien que je fais engendre le mal, et tous ceux que je sauve sont perdus.

(L’Imagier de Harlem, p. 413)

Though pessimistic, this mirrors the sense of Mephistopheles’ self-identification in Goethe’s Faust as ‘Ein Teil von jener Kraft,| Die stets das Böse will und stets das Gute schafft’ (MA, vii, 571, l. 1335). Yet he fails, or chooses not, to communicate a sense of this paradox in his translations of Faust. The first translation of 1828 was written almost a quarter of a century earlier than L’Imagier de Harlem and this considerable lapse of time may partly explain these differences. But even in the later translation of 1840 the issue of undesired consequences is inadequately addressed: ‘[I am] une partie de cette force qui tantôt veut le mal et tantôt fait le bien’ (Nerval, 1840, p. 123). As noted earlier, Nerval may simply have made an error in translation here, but it is in keeping with his avoidance of certain complex aspects of Goethe’s play.

Despite its diffuseness, or perhaps because of it, in L’Imagier de Harlem, as Nerval
explains, ‘il y a beaucoup du Faust […] et même du second Faust’ (Nerval, ii, 1296). The second part of Goethe’s Faust is also notoriously complex, even opaque in places. This is a trait it shares with L’Imagier de Harlem, but the two works have much more than this in common. As Nerval indicates above, the second part of Faust influenced his drama significantly; resonances from Goethe’s last great work are evident, in various ways, in the following examples:

CATHERINE Coster ... ma vie s’est éteinte avant ton retour, mais je te laisse notre fille. Elle t’aimera sur la terre, pendant que je prierez dans le ciel. (L’Imagier de Harlem, p. 378)

In having the daughter and mother protect Coster in this manner, Nerval again idealises his female characters: salvation is obtained through their love. In addition to this accentuation of a common Romantic theme, Goethe’s influence is discernible: as with Margarete at the end of Faust II Catherine intercedes in a celestial realm on behalf of the man she loves.

While most of Act two, Scene two of L’Imagier de Harlem bears some resemblance to the first Act of Faust II, ‘Kaiserliche Pfalz’, in that the Faustian figure is depicted at a medieval imperial court at which spirits are conjured and reference is made to the printing of money, certain linguistic elements are very similar in the two texts. For instance, the incident referred to by the l’Archiduc below echoes a similar occurrence in Faust II:

L’ARCHDUC Caspar […] on m’avait affirmé que tu étais brisé le cou, la nuit, en cherchant une bonne fortune dans un escalier dérobé.

DE BLOKSBERG L’accident est vrai […] peut-être suis-je le diable qui a pris la forme de votre fou défunt! (L’Imagier de Harlem, p. 316)

This is strongly reminiscent of the opening scene at the Emperor’s court in Faust II in which we learn of the death of the fool:

KAISER Wo ist der Narr geblieben?
Moreover, the scenes at the archduke’s court suggest a continuance of the meeting of Faust and Mephistopheles with the Kaiser in Faust II. This connection is discernible in the devil’s attempting to convince the rulers of both dramas that he is able to bring them great wealth:

**Mephistopheles**

Wo fehlt’s nicht irgendwo auf dieser Welt?
Dem dieß, dem das, hier aber fehlt das Geld.

[...]

In Bergesadern, Mauergründen
Ist Gold gemünzt und ungemünzt zu finden,
Und fragt ihr mich wer es zu Tage schafft:
Begabten Manns Natur - und Geisteskraft.

(MA, XVIII/I, 113, l. 4889)

In a similarly persuasive speech in Nerval’s play reference is made to the earlier money-making strategy:

**De Bloksberg**

Nous fondons une chose immense et qui se nommera le crédit! Le monde n’a plus besoin d’argent et d’or; le premier des métaux c’est le papier. (L’Imagier de Harlem, p. 322)

Most explicit of all is the archduke’s reference to Faustus’s earlier visit to the German court:

**L’archduc**

J’imite en cela [credit] l’empereur d’Allemagne qui a daigné accorder la même récompense à Paul Faustus, celui qui évoqua devant toute la cour les fantômes d’Alexandre, de César et de Périclès! (L’Imagier de Harlem, p. 323)

Though the details are inaccurate, the essence of the archduke’s account is close enough to suggest Nerval’s intentional linking of the narrative events in Faust II and L’Imagier de Harlem. Initially the use of the name Paul Faustus may seem mysterious, or perhaps an innovation on Nerval’s part. It is certainly that, but its purpose would seem to have been to highlight the unreliability of memory and the retelling of events. There is a further distorted
inter textual reference to \textit{Faust II}: the summoning of the shades of Paris and Helen. However, Nerval has the devil summon Aspasie; consequently \textit{L’Imagier de Harlem} makes intertextual reference to Hamilton’s \textit{L’Enchanteur Faustus} as well as to \textit{Faust II}: 

DE BLOKSBERG 
Triomphe de ta mort, immortelle Aspasie! 
Quitte le blanc suaire où dorment tes attraits, 
Toi que tous les sculpteurs pour Vénus ont choisie, 
Sors du sépulcre sombre et devant nous parais! 
(\textit{L’Imagier de Harlem}, p. 325)

Intertextual references to \textit{Faust I} are even more prevalent in \textit{L’imagier de Harlem}. The principal female character of Nerval’s play again offers a chance of salvation from Satan, but Catherine’s exclamation of repugnance towards de Bloksberg — ‘Cet homme m’est odieux!’ (\textit{L’Imagier de Harlem}, p. 332) also comes very close, both in sentiment and syntax, to Margarete’s repugnance towards Mephistopheles (MA, vi/i, 636, l. 3472).

The provenance of the following extract from \textit{L’Imagier de Harlem} is also unmistakable: 

IMPERIA 
Il est sauvé! J’entends 
Les cloches et les cris et le canon qui tonne! 
Le Saint-Père bénit le monde! 
(\textit{L’Imagier de Harlem}, p. 420)

Not only is Coster’s salvation described in explicitly Christian terms, but it also recalls Faust’s recovery from his suicide attempt by poison in Goethe’s play. Following the ringing of bells the following hymn is sung by the Chor der Engel:

Christ ist erstanden! 
Freude dem Sterblichen, 
Den die verderblichen, 
Schleichenden, erblichen 
Mängel umwandten. 
(\textit{MA}, vi/i, 555-56, l. 757)

In the final scene of \textit{L’Imagier de Harlem} Nerval seems to be bringing the play to a melodramatic conclusion: Satan is vanquished; Coster and Impéria are saved; and the scene
of heaven as a Roman triumph is lavish. However, the last word is given to Satan:

Tout soleil rayonnant a son éclipse sombre!
Et tout char triomphal, son insulteur dans l’ombre!

(L’Imagier de Harlem, p. 422)

If audiences at the Porte-Saint-Martin were expecting a facile, melodramatic victory of good over evil, they were to be disappointed. Satan’s distich affords the play’s ending an intelligent, equivocal metaphor for an ontological dilemma that cannot be convincingly resolved.

Conclusion

In certain respects L’Imagier de Harlem represents the development of the Faust fragment and Nicolas Flamel: many of the themes and motifs of these incomplete dramas are repeated; sometimes the connection is evident, at other times implicit. The invention of printing again serves as a metaphor for the advent of the modern world and the decline of medieval values; the principal female characters are again idealised, perhaps even more strongly than in the Faustian fragments; aspects of Nerval’s own life are again incorporated into his fiction; and melodramatic elements are still in evidence many years after this genre’s heyday.

Goethe’s influence too remains strong in L’Imagier de Harlem; one finds numerous examples of Nerval’s use of the German writer’s Faust in his play. This includes Faust II and, in common with this ambitious work, L’Imagier de Harlem has a very broad sweep. Though its extent was denounced by several contemporary critics, it reveals the play’s importance to Nerval. His ambition is unsurprising; his theatrical works had hitherto received a disappointing reception. In fact, with this work Neval came tantalisingly close to theatrical success; with the support of a trusted and admired collaborator in Méry, the
backing of his friend Fournier as the director of the Porte-Saint-Martin, and audiences’ initial enthusiasm for the play, it must have seemed that his desire to create an original French Faustian drama had been fulfilled. As noted above, the play’s subsequent reversal of fortune had a huge impact on Nerval, contributing to his decline and perhaps even to his death.

Such tragic associations notwithstanding, it has many strengths, not least of which is Nerval’s portrayal of the devil; in this respect the play converges with the Goethean Faustian paradigm: gone are the one-dimensional figures of the Faust fragment and Nicolas Flamel and in their place are seven sophisticated and witty incarnations of Satan. It is notable that Nerval captures much of the Goethean sense of dialectical progress in his drama’s ambiguities and yet did not do so in his translations of Faust, even in later revisions. On the whole, L’Imagier de Harlem demonstrates a more convincing and skilful engagement with the legend of Faust than his earlier Faustian works. It provides glimpses of Nerval’s potential, albeit unrealised, to create a truly great and original theatrical French Faustian drama.
CONCLUSION

The trajectory of this thesis has allowed for a diachronic investigation of Nerval’s work on the Faust theme. From the outset of a literary career begun during the ascendancy in France of Romantic aesthetics, and the closely associated greater acceptance of certain key canonical foreign works of literature, to his final Faustian enterprise, *L’Imagier de Harlem*, Nerval never ceased to engage with the Faust myth. His treatment of it mirrors his wider literary output in that both may be regarded to a certain extent as the metaphorisation of crucial personal experiences and events. This is true of the creative writing process in general, but it is the degree to which Nerval is thus inspired that is unusual; a comparative narrowness of reference, a focus on and reappearance of certain key events and experiences are in fact characteristics of Nerval’s *œuvre*. It is notable in his *Faust* translations: the extent of his personalising, psychodramatic propensities represents a salient divergence from the Goethean Faustian paradigm.

In addition to his own highly idiosyncratic psychodrama, great poetic talent, and vast knowledge of obscure and esoteric literature, Nerval was a master of intertextual manipulation as his own original, richly dense work demonstrates. He made use of foreign, such as Shakespearean, Byronic, Scottian, Dantesque, and of course Goethean, aesthetics in his translations and adaptations of *Faust*. Seldom has the descriptor intertextual writer seemed more apt: in his *Faust* translations and adaptations he wove together many threads to create innovative texts. This study has in part attempted to disembroil these intertextual strands that contribute to Nerval’s Faustian work; the foreign writers discussed in this thesis were well received in France because they provided something generally lacking in the work of French writers at this time, on account of neoclassicism’s long and powerful influence in
the country. A normative approach to translation was still influential when Nerval began work on his *Faust* translation; the *belle-infidèle* favouring of imitation over loyalty to the source text is most evident in Sainte-Aulaire’s translation but is not entirely absent from Stapfer’s and Nerval’s versions.

Similarly, since France had no Faust myth Goethe’s play was a particularly difficult source text for French translators. Yet in the early to mid-nineteenth century the French were attracted by the exoticism both of the legend of Faust and certain foreign writers. Apart from their otherness, there is a further significant parallel to be drawn between those foreign writers popular with French Romantic writers and the figure of Faust: as with the mythical figure these writers were often outsiders, exiles, or rebels: the greater anguish and despair of Nerval’s Faustian protagonists in relation to Goethe’s has a Byronic nuance; Byron was hugely popular across Europe when Nerval first translated Faust in 1827. Though perhaps not directly influential on Nerval’s Faustian work, Byron’s work shares many characteristics with Nerval’s, not the least of which is pessimism, a characteristic strongly divergent from Goethe’s pervasive optimism in *Faust*. Sometimes it is Nerval’s perception of a key foreign author that is crucial to his Faustian work: for instance, his inaccurate recollections of Dante’s Satan from the *Divina Commedia* are highly pertinent to his divergences from Goethe in his translations and adaptations of *Faust*. In both the devil is exaggerated. The French reception of Dante’s *Divina Commedia* in the eighteenth century had involved the promulgation of the Italian poet’s work as a vehicle of Christian values. In the nineteenth century French Romantic critics and authors maintained, and in fact increased, the interest in Dante in their homeland, but with a very narrow focus; Nerval’s Christian nuancing — representative of his adherence to the common French Romantic attachment to Christianity
as a literary theme rather than his dedication to the religion — of aspects of Goethe’s *Faust*, parallels their selective interest in Dante’s masterpiece: the emphasis on ‘Inferno’, especially, is relevant not only to the medieval Christianity of Dante, but also to the French translators’ and adaptors’ emphasis on the devil and dedication to Faust’s damnation in their rewritings of Goethe’s play.

Despite their possible faults, Nerval’s translations bear the mark of the great poet; his mastery of metaphor, creative manipulation of connotation, and formal skill testify to his superlative poetic ability. Though he claimed loyalty to his source text, Nerval’s *Faust* translations deviated from Goethe’s play in order to accommodate French readers and audiences. This is partly attributable to the cultural milieu, but one can detect clear and persistent signs that even as a very young man Nerval displayed greater ambition and commercial acuity with regard to the translations than is usually acknowledged. It is in keeping with this ambition that popular French *Faust* adaptations in the first half of the nineteenth century represent a significant alternative source of influence on Nerval to Goethe’s profoundly allegorical masterpiece; his Faustian dramas place a greater emphasis on popular entertainment than the German’s *Faust*. Their combination of historical fact and entertainment is a trait they share with Scott’s novels. Goethe’s *Faust*, though entertaining in certain respects, such as Mephistopheles’ dark humour, is a much more profound work. The influence of the théâtre des boulevards and melodrama exerted more of an influence here than Nerval’s occasional protestations to the contrary would suggest. They certainly had an influence on his Faustian work: his protagonists in the *Faust* fragment and *Nicolas Flamel* possess a greater bourgeois sensibility than the more unconventional character of Goethe’s creation.
The pervasive divergences from the Goethean Faustian paradigm in Nerval’s translations are also found in his more original Faustian adaptations; in *L’Imagier de Harlem* his idealisation of female characters becomes both more pronounced and more intertextually complex: his earlier Faustian works, together with his repeated engagement with Goethe’s *Faust*, contributed much to these later portrayals. In a sense the fragmentary dramas were prototypes in Nerval’s ever-developing Faustian project; in some respects he demonstrates a greater understanding of Goethe’s idiosyncratic reinterpretation of the *Fauststoff* towards the end of his life in *L’Imagier de Harlem*. Nerval’s portrayal of the devil in *L’Imagier de Harlem* is much more nuanced than in either his *Faust* translations or his incomplete Faustian dramas. The subtlety and humour of Goethe’s Mephistopheles is in evidence there. One might argue that this greater complexity was achieved in collaboration with Méry, but this proposition is ultimately unconvincing; the richly intertextual references, such as reference to Caspar, a traditional name for the devil in early German puppet shows, and nods to Hugo’s *Notre Dame de Paris* in Satan’s incarnation as Olivier le Daim, originate from Nerval’s thorough grasp of his material. This raises the issue of his simplification of Mephistopheles and other diabolic figures in his Faustian works: his youth and inexperience when first engaging with Goethe’s idiosyncratic and complex construction of his ‘antagonist’ offer only an incomplete and not entirely satisfactory explanation for the difference. Rather, Nerval’s attitude to the somewhat arbitrary categorisations of translation, adaptation, and original work is revealed. His incomplete Faustian dramas, combining aspects of Goethe’s *Faust*, other intertextual influences, and elements of his own invention, may be regarded as occupying intermediate ground between the translations and *L’Imagier de Harlem*; this final Faustian drama, though intertextually rich, was freer still from the
demands of communicating a complex canonical foreign text to a French public imbued with narrow aesthetic values. Somewhat paradoxically, this meant that his devil could partly converge with Goethe’s nuanced and witty Mephistopheles.

In summary, though assessment of Nerval’s translations and adaptations of Goethe’s *Faust* has undoubtedly been coloured by his later literary fame, and though his use of Stapfer’s earlier translation should be more widely acknowledged, they nevertheless remain great achievements, not only because of the remarkable feat of a nineteen year old with questionable knowledge of the German language producing an effective and in places beautiful translation of a work of immense complexity, but also on account of their intertextual resonance across time and media; a symbiotic relationship between different cultural media is in fact especially characteristic of the Faustian theme. The contrasting tonalities of Delacroix’s Faust illustrations, emanating from the new technology of lithography, combined with the facile polarities of melodrama (we have seen that it was *The Devil and Doctor Faustus*, a popular interpretation of *Faust*, that most strongly influenced his lithographs) perhaps influenced, and certainly reflected, the development of the Faust theme in France, particularly with regard to the greater pessimism often found in French interpretations of *Faust*, such as a more dominant and powerful Mephistopheles, and Faust’s damnation in Berlioz’s opera. But Madame de Staël’s incomplete and reductive translation and critique of Goethe’s play in *De L’Allemagne* was arguably the most directly influential in terms of the framing of *Faust* as a straightforward struggle between good and evil. In such respects Nerval’s *Faust* translations conform to, and are exemplary of, the typically French retelling of Goethe’s magnum opus. But Nerval’s translations and adaptations of *Faust* also possess broader cultural significance: a more profound
understanding of the development of French Romanticism and its poetics, together with
greater insight into early nineteenth-century dramaturgy, translation practice, and
cross-cultural aesthetics, may be gained from studying these renowned yet somewhat
neglected texts. They also shed light on the increasing commercialisation of the arts in
general, and the theatre in particular, in Nerval’s day, as well as the perennial tensions
between low and high culture in France. Nerval’s Faustian works, translations and
adaptations, remain, however, both seminally important and underresearched. The intention
of this thesis has been to improve our understanding of them.
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