

浮士德

少年维特之烦恼

[德] 约翰·沃尔夫冈·冯·歌德 著



by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

*Faust*

*The Sorrows of Young Werther*

世界图书出版公司

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**The Sorrows of Young Werther**  
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# FAUST

A TRAGEDY

*by*

*Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*

## **The First Part**

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH, IN  
THE ORIGINAL METRES, BY

*Bayard Taylor*

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## PREFACE

It is twenty years since I first determined to attempt the translation of *Faust*, in the original metres. At that time, although more than a score of English translations of the First Part, and three or four of the Second Part, were in existence, the experiment had not yet been made. The prose version of Hayward seemed to have been accepted as the standard, in default of anything more satisfactory: the English critics, generally sustaining the translator in his views concerning the secondary importance of form in Poetry, practically discouraged any further attempt; and no one, familiar with rhythmical expression through the needs of his own nature, had devoted the necessary love and patience to an adequate reproduction of the great work of Goethe's life.

Mr. Brooks was the first to undertake the task, and the publication of his translation of the First Part (in 1856) induced me, for a time, to give up my own design. No previous English version exhibited such abnegation of the translator's own tastes and habits of thought, such reverent desire to present the original in its purest form. The care and conscience with which the work had been performed were so apparent, that I now state with reluctance what then seemed to me to be its only deficiencies, — a lack of the lyrical fire and fluency of the original in some passages, and an occasional lowering of the tone through the use of words which are literal, but not equivalent. The plan of translation adopted by Mr. Brooks was so entirely my own, that when further

residence in Germany and a more careful study of both parts of *Faust* had satisfied me that the field was still open, – that the means furnished by the poetical affinity of the two languages had not yet been exhausted, – nothing remained for me but to follow him in all essential particulars. His example confirmed me in the belief that there were few difficulties in the way of a nearly literal yet thoroughly rhythmical version of *Faust*, which might not be overcome by loving labor. A comparison of seventeen English translations, in the arbitrary metres adopted by the translators, sufficiently showed the danger of allowing license in this respect: the white light of Goethe's thought was thereby passed through the tinted glass of other minds, and assumed the coloring of each. Moreover, the plea of selecting different metres in the hope of producing a similar effect is unreasonable, where the identical metres are possible.

The value of form, in a poetical work, is the first question to be considered. No poet ever understood this question more thoroughly than Goethe himself, or expressed a more positive opinion in regard to it. The alternative modes of translation which he presents (reported by Riemer, quoted by Mrs. Austin, in her "Characteristics of Goethe," and accepted by Mr. Hayward),<sup>1</sup> are quite independent of his views

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<sup>1</sup> "‘There are two maxims of translation,’ says he: ‘the one requires that the author, of a foreign nation, be brought to us in such a manner that we may regard him as our own; the other, on the contrary, demands of us that we transport ourselves over to him, and adopt his situation, his mode of speaking, and his peculiarities. The advantages of both are sufficiently known to all instructed persons, from masterly examples.’”

Is it necessary, however, that there should always be this alternative? Where the languages are kindred, and equally capable of all varieties of metrical expression, may not both these "maxims" be observed in the same translation? Goethe, it is true, was of the opinion that *Faust* ought to be given, in French, in the manner of Clement Marot; but this was undoubtedly because he felt the inadequacy of modern French to express the naive, simple realism of many passages. The same objection does not apply to English. There are a few archaic expressions in *Faust*,

concerning the value of form, which we find given elsewhere, in the clearest and most emphatic manner.<sup>1</sup> Poetry is not simply a fashion of expression: it is the form of expression absolutely required by a certain class of ideas. Poetry, indeed, may be distinguished from Prose by the single circumstance, that it is the utterance of whatever in man cannot be perfectly uttered in any other than a rhythmical form: it is useless to say that the naked meaning is independent of the form: on the contrary, the form contributes essentially to the fullness of the meaning. In Poetry which endures through its own inherent vitality, there is no forced union of these two elements. They are as intimately blended, and with the same mysterious beauty, as the sexes in the ancient Hermaphroditus. To attempt to represent Poetry in Prose, is very much like attempting to translate music into speech.<sup>2</sup>

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but no more than are still allowed – nay, frequently encouraged – in the English of our day.

<sup>1</sup> “You are right,” said Goethe; “there are great and mysterious agencies included in the various forms of Poetry. If the substance of my ‘Roman Elegies’ were to be expressed in the tone and measure of Byron’s ‘Don Juan,’ it would really have an atrocious effect.” – *Eckermann*.

“The rhythm,” said Goethe, “is an unconscious result of the poetic mood. If one should stop to consider it mechanically, when about to write a poem, one would become bewildered and accomplish nothing of real poetical value.” – *Ibid*.

“*All that is poetic in character should be rhythmically treated!* Such is my conviction; and if even a sort of poetic prose should be gradually introduced, it would only show that the distinction between prose and poetry had been completely lost sight of.” – *Goethe to Schiller*, 1797.

Tycho Mommsen, in his excellent essay, *Die Kunst des Deutschen Uebersetzers aus neueren Sprachen*, goes so far as to say: “The metrical or rhymed modelling of a poetical work is so essentially the germ of its being, that, rather than by giving it up, we might hope to construct a similar work of art before the eyes of our countrymen, by giving up or changing the substance. The immeasurable result which has followed works wherein the form has been retained – such as the Homer of Voss, and the Shakespeare of Tieck and Schlegel – is an incontrovertible evidence of the vitality of the endeavor.”

<sup>2</sup> “Goethe’s poems exercise a great sway over me, not only by their meaning, but also by their rhythm. It is a language which stimulates me to composition.” –

The various theories of translation from the Greek and Latin poets have been admirably stated by Dryden in his Preface to the "Translations from Ovid's Epistles," and I do not wish to continue the endless discussion, – especially as our literature needs examples, not opinions. A recent expression, however, carries with it so much authority, that I feel bound to present some considerations which the accomplished scholar seems to have overlooked. Mr. Lewes<sup>1</sup> justly says: "The effect of poetry is a compound of music and suggestion; this music and this suggestion are intermingled in words, which to alter is to alter the effect. For words in poetry are not, as in prose, simple representatives of objects and ideas: they are parts of an organic whole, – they are tones in the harmony." He thereupon illustrates the effect of translation by changing certain well-known English stanzas into others, equivalent in meaning, but lacking their felicity of words, their grace and melody. I cannot accept this illustration as valid, because Mr. Lewes purposely omits the very quality which an honest translator should exhaust his skill in endeavoring to reproduce. He turns away from the *one best* word or phrase in the English lines he quotes, whereas the translator seeks precisely that one best word or phrase (having *all* the resources of his language at command), to represent what is said in *another* language. More than this, his task is not simply mechanical: he must feel, and be guided by, a secondary inspiration. Surrendering himself to the full possession of the spirit which shall speak through him, he receives, also, a portion of the same creative power. Mr. Lewes reaches this conclusion: "If, therefore, we reflect

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Beethoven.

<sup>1</sup> Life of Goethe (Book VI.).

what a poem *Faust* is, and that it contains almost every variety of style and metre, it will be tolerably evident that no one unacquainted with the original can form an adequate idea of it from translation,"<sup>1</sup> which is certainly correct of any translation wherein something of the rhythmical variety and beauty of the original is not retained. That very much of the rhythmical character may be retained in English, was long ago shown by Mr. Carlyle,<sup>2</sup> in the passages which he translated, both literally and rhythmically, from the *Helena* (Part Second). In fact, we have so many instances of the possibility of reciprocally transferring the finest qualities of English and German poetry, that there is no sufficient excuse for an unmetrical translation of *Faust*. I refer especially to such subtle and melodious lyrics as "The Castle by the Sea," of Uhland, and the "Silent Land" of Salis, translated by Mr. Longfellow; Goethe's "Minstrel" and "Coptic Song," by Dr. Hedge; Heine's "Two Grenadiers," by Dr. Furness and many of Heine's songs by Mr Leland; and also to the German translations of English lyrics, by Freiligrath and Strodtmann.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mr. Lewes gives the following advice: "The English reader would perhaps best succeed who should first read Dr. Anster's brilliant paraphrase, and then carefully go through Hayward's prose translation." This is singularly at variance with the view he has just expressed. Dr. Anster's version is an almost incredible dilution of the original, written in *other* metres; while Hayward's entirely omits the element of poetry.

<sup>2</sup> Foreign Review, 1828.

<sup>3</sup> When Freiligrath can thus give us Walter Scott: —

"Kommt, wie der Wind kommt,  
Wenn Wälder erzittern!  
Kommt, wie die Brandung  
Wenn Flotten zersplittern!  
Schnell heran, schnell herab,  
Schneller kommt Alle  
Häuptling und Bub' und Knapp,  
Herr und Vasalle!"

or Strodtmann thus reproduce Tennyson: —

"Es fällt der Strahl auf Burg und Thal,  
Und schneeige Gipfel, reich an Sagen;  
Viel' Lichter wehn auf blauen Seen,  
Bergab die Wasserstürze jagen!"

I have a more serious objection, however, to urge against Mr. Hayward's prose translation. Where all the restraints of verse are flung aside, we should expect, at least, as accurate a reproduction of the sense, spirit, and tone of the original, as the genius of our language will permit. So far from having given us such a reproduction, Mr. Hayward not only occasionally mistakes the exact meaning of the German text,<sup>1</sup> but, wherever two phrases may be used to express the meaning with equal fidelity, he very frequently selects that which has the less grace, strength, or beauty.<sup>2</sup>

For there are few things which may not be said, in English, in a twofold manner, – one poetic, and the other prosaic. In German, equally, a word which in ordinary use has a bare prosaic character may receive a fairer and finer quality from its place in verse. The prose

Blas, Hüfthorn, blas, in Wiederhall erschallend:

Blas, Horn – antwortet, Echos, hallend, hallend!"

– it must be a dull ear which would be satisfied with the omission of rhythm and rhyme.

<sup>1</sup> On his second page, the line *Mein Lied ertönt der unbekannten Menge*, "My song sounds to the unknown multitude," is translated: "My sorrow voices itself to the strange throng." Other English translators, I notice, have followed Mr. Hayward in mistaking *Lied* for *Leid*.

<sup>2</sup> I take but one out of numerous instances, for the sake of illustration. The close of the Soldier's Song (Part I. Scene II.) is: –

"Kühn is das Mühen,  
Herrlich der Lohn!  
Und die Soldaten  
Ziehen davon."

Literally:

Bold is the endeavor,  
Splendid the pay!  
And the soldiers  
March away.

This Mr. Hayward translates: –

Bold the adventure,  
Noble the reward –  
And the soldiers  
Are off.

translator should certainly be able to feel the manifestation of this law in both languages, and should so choose his words as to meet their reciprocal requirements. A man, however, who is not keenly sensible to the power and beauty and value of rhythm, is likely to overlook these delicate yet most necessary distinctions. The author's thought is stripped of a last grace in passing through his mind, and frequently presents very much the same resemblance to the original as an unhewn shaft to the fluted column. Mr. Hayward unconsciously illustrates his lack of a refined appreciation of verse, "in giving," as he says, "*a sort of rhythmical arrangement* to the lyrical parts," his object being "to convey some notion of the variety of versification which forms one great charm of the poem." A literal translation is always possible in the unrhymed passages; but even here Mr. Hayward's ear did not dictate to him the necessity of preserving the original rhythm.

While, therefore, I heartily recognize his lofty appreciation of *Faust*, – while I honor him for the patient and conscientious labor he has bestowed upon his translation, – I cannot but feel that he has himself illustrated the unsoundness of his argument. Nevertheless, the circumstance that his prose translation of *Faust* has received so much acceptance proves those qualities of the original work which cannot be destroyed by a test so violent. From the cold bare outline thus produced, the reader unacquainted with the German language would scarcely guess what glow of color, what richness of changeful life, what fluent grace and energy of movement have been lost in the process. We must, of course, gratefully receive such an outline, where a nearer approach to the form of the original is impossible, but, until the latter has been demonstrated, we are wrong to remain content with the cheaper substitute.

It seems to me that in all discussions upon this subject the capacities



of the English language have received but scanty justice. The intellectual tendencies of our race have always been somewhat conservative, and its standards of literary taste or belief, once set up, are not varied without a struggle. The English ear is suspicious of new metres and unaccustomed forms of expression: there are critical detectives on the track of every author, and a violation of the accepted canons is followed by a summons to judgment. Thus the tendency is to contract rather than to expand the acknowledged excellences of the language.<sup>1</sup> The difficulties in the way of a nearly literal translation of *Faust* in the original metres have been exaggerated, because certain affinities between the two languages have not been properly considered. With all the splendor of versification in the work, it contains but few metres of which the English tongue is not equally capable. Hood has familiarized us with dactylic (triple) rhymes, and they are remarkably abundant and skillful in Mr. Lowell's "Fable for the Critics": even the unrhymed iambic hexameter of the *Helena* occurs now and then in

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<sup>1</sup> I cannot resist the temptation of quoting the following passage from Jacob Grimm: "No one of all the modern languages has acquired a greater force and strength than the English, through the derangement and relinquishment of its ancient laws of sound. The unteachable (nevertheless *learnable*) profusion of its middle-tones has conferred upon it an intrinsic power of expression, such as no other human tongue ever possessed. Its entire, thoroughly intellectual and wonderfully successful foundation and perfected development issued from a marvelous union of the two noblest tongues of Europe, the Germanic and the Romanic. Their mutual relation in the English language is well known, since the former furnished chiefly the material basis, while the latter added the intellectual conceptions. The English language, by and through which the greatest and most eminent poet of modern times – as contrasted with ancient classical poetry – (of course I can refer only to Shakespeare) was begotten and nourished, has a just claim to be called a language of the world; and it appears to be destined, like the English race, to a higher and broader sway in all quarters of the earth. For in richness, in compact adjustment of parts, and in pure intelligence, none of the living languages can be compared with it, – not even our German, which is divided even as we are divided, and which must cast off many imperfections before it can boldly enter on its career." – *Ueber den Ursprung der Sprache*.