

Mason, Eudo C., Goethe's Faust: Its Genesis and Purport (University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles) 1967

p. 105 This is Scherer's one great definite and impressive argument, and it certainly does prove something, though not what it is meant to prove and is widely accepted as proving. It proves that Scherer was not only incapable of really appreciating the Storm and Stress Goethe, but also that he had nothing more than a superficial knowledge of him. If he had studied him only a little more carefully, he would have known that, although the hyperbolic "big numbers" were much pruned in the 1773 revision of Götz von Berlichingen, they were by no means completely eliminated, that Goethe allowed them to stand in no fewer than eight cases, and that he went on employing them with no restraint at all in his work and correspondence of the succeeding years, particularly in Werther and Clavigo in 1774 and in Stella in 1775. Thus Werther "netzt" Lotte's hand "mit tausend Tränen" (bedews [Lotte's hand] with a thousand tears), and "kusst ihre Hand mit tausend Freuden" (kisses her hand with a thousand ecstasies), and Stella says that "ein Jahrtausend von Tränen und Schmerzen" (a thousand years of tears and sufferings) could not counterbalance the first happiness of love, and describes how she fell into the arms of the nurse of her dead child "mit tausend Tränen" (with a thousand tears). Countless examples of these hyperbolic "big numbers" could be cited from Goethe's writings of the years 1773-1775, when he had, according to Scherer, forsworn the use of them for ever. So much for the keystone of Scherer's demonstration that "Trüber Tag. Feld" must have been written in winter, 1771-1772. This is an excellent example of the fallibility of experts and of the impossibility of solving delicate problems in such infinitely complex fields as the language of genius by professorial rules of thumb.

p. 73 Certain vestigiary rudiments of the authentic Faust theme are indeed already present in the first four scenes of the Urfaust, above all in the opening one, but we cannot set about estimating or interpreting them without making up our minds whether they were produced before or after Goethe allowed himself to be diverted from that authentic Faust theme into the cul-de-sac of the Gretchen tragedy. Here, however, during the last twenty-five years or so, the Higher Critics and the hunters after autobiographical sources of inspiration with their theories, which could otherwise be disregarded as at least innocuous, have in a loose but formidable alliance //p.74// with one another made themselves masters of the field. For anybody who looks at the Urfaust openmindedly in all its bearings, that is, in its relationship to the Faust legend and idea and to what we know of Goethe as a personality and an artist, it must seem extremely improbable that he should have embarked on the Gretchen tragedy before he had written the opening scene with the invocation of the Erdgeist. It is in that scene alone of the entire Urfaust that Faust really does appear as Faust; here and here alone, the youthful Goethe is, so to speak, truly on the rails in his treatment of the Faust theme, and he had to be on them, before he could go off them. This is the view of Emil Staiger, who wrote in 1952 with special reference to Beutler's discoveries about Susanna Brandt . . . Staiger, as one of the greatest living critics, can afford thus simply to defy the academic disintegrationists; but not even his authority can empower the rest of us to do so. If we do, we shall have such taunts levelled at us as that "die vornehmst Beweisführung des Philologen, die philologische nämlich," seems to us "bedeutungslos oder ungangbar zu sein" (the paramount line of reasoning of the scholar, namely the scholarly line, [] seems to us] meaningless or impracticable),³⁶ or that we are "unscrupulous amateurs."³⁷ Unless these disintegrationists can be met and coped with fairly on their own ground, even an Emil Staiger is theoretically in danger of being dismissed as unscholarly and amateurish.

Ftn. 36 Maier, p. 128 . . .

37 See above, p. 43