

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

p. 93 The natural assumption is that the opening monologue with the invocation of the Erdgeist was already in existence when the scene "Trüber Tag. Feld" was written, or at least that the two scenes, whichever was the earlier of them, were written with no great interval of time between them, that they belong together, have a common conception underlying them and therefore throw light upon one another. Only on these assumptions, which were generally accepted up to thirty or so years ago, can the Urfaust be seen as a genuine, though fragmentary work of art, with a comprehensive intention at the back of it, and not as a mere patchwork of disjointed "scraps."

p. 97 Representative modern Faust scholarship refuses to recognize this principle of restraint in the devising and multiplying of hypotheses. What it believes in instead is, as Roethe puts it, "kühne Konjekturealkritik grossen Stils" (bold conjectural criticism in the grand style),³ indulged in for its own sake, and the bolder and the more conjectural the better. Neither qualitatively nor quantitatively can such critics postulate enough changes in Goethe's Faust plans, and they consequently make things far too easy for themselves in their attempts to demonstrate that the difficulties and problems arising out of the scene "Trüber Tag. Feld" are quite insoluble in any natural, simple, straightforward way. They attach no importance to the circumstance that Goethe himself in 1806 incorporated that scene in the final text of Faust, without seeing any need to eliminate from it allusions to events that have never occurred in the preceding parts of the play, and some of which are even inconsistent with what does occur in it. They would apparently prefer to assume that Goethe only acted as he did on that occasion because he was too indolent or too bored to do anything else, hoping nobody would notice anything amiss, or even that he was too muddleheaded to notice anything amiss himself, rather than that he knew what he was about. They do not admit that what was evidently consistent enough for Goethe should be consistent enough for us. They do not take into consideration that the world of Faust is - by Goethe's own definition - a "Nebelwelt" (a nebulous world),⁴ a "Traum" (a dream),⁵ and that in such a nebulous dream-world the strict laws of consistency and cause and effect, which dominate such a clearly focussed waking world as that, say, of Hermann und Dorothea, do not obtain and would indeed be out of place. Nine tenths of the "contradictions" in Faust so triumphantly exposed by the "Higher Critics" are due simply to Goethe's being engaged on a work that was meant by its inmost laws to have something of the incoherency and inconsistency of dreams.

Ftn 3 Gustav Roethe, "Die Entstehung des Urfaust," in Goethe - Gesammelt Vorträge und Aufsätze. Berlin, 1932. (First Published, 1920) p.50 p. 380

Ftn 4 Letter to Schiller of June 24, 1797 p. 380

p. 107 In fact, Scherer's argument that "Trüber Tag. Feld" must have been written about the same time as the first version of Gotz von Berlichingen proves as ill-founded as his argument that the opening Invocation scene could not have been written in the form known to us before spring, 1773, because it was not till then that Goethe came to know the Knittel verse of Hans Sachs.²¹ All that remains of the vast complex of higher critical hypotheses based upon these arguments of Scherer's, if we do not allow the prestige of the experts to deter us from scrutinizing it open-mindedly, is the obvious fact that the one scene is in prose and the other in verse, which in itself proves nothing. Even if Scherer's argumentation were sounder than it is, it would at most prove that the prose scenes were written some time before February, 1773, possibly as late as autumn, 1772; Beutler himself would date the²² "Kerker" scene much later than "Trüber Tag. Feld," not till after September, 1772.

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Ftn. 22 Beutler, p. 684

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