

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

p. 108 (cont'd) By then, at the latest, however, Goethe must have begun experimenting with Knittel verse for serious poetic purposes, and the two supposed distinct phases of Goethe's early work on Faust, that in which he employed prose and that in which he employed Knittel verse, instead of being separated by an interval of about a year, turn out, even by higher critical postulates, to overlap and merge indistinguishably into one another.

p. 109 There is nothing then in all the arguments and constructions of modern criticism that need deter us from assuming at least tentatively that we have before us in the opening scene of the Urfaust Goethe's inward point of departure, anterior to the irruption of the extraneous Gretchen theme, and quite possibly also the first scene to be written in point of time.

p. 113 The second section seemed to Scherer so very much maturer than the first that he was inclined to date it as late as 1788,² an untenable hypothesis of which nothing more has been heard, since the discovery of the Urfaust transcript a year after Scherer's death proved that the passage in question must have been written before November, 1775, at the latest. Scherer's explanation of how so many incoherent fragments came to be sketchily patched together to form the monologue as we know it is that Goethe "gewiss darauf rechnete, dass das Publikum es nicht so genau nehmen würde" (certainly counted on the public's not being so particular about it).³ Thanks to Scherer it is still very widely assumed that the first thirty-two lines, because they are so primitive and comparatively prosaic, must have been written very much earlier than the rest of the monologue, with which they have no essential connexion, and that they probably belong to some early plan of Goethe's, in which he would have adhered closely to the puppet play and aimed at little more than a dramatization of the chapbooks.

p. 130 When Faust opens his book of magic he does not, as we might well expect him to do, proceed immediately to invoke the Erdgeist. Instead he sinks into a long, intensive contemplation of the Sign of the Makrokosmos, about which no more is heard. Poetically this Makrokosmos passage is one of the finest in Faust, but it is widely regarded as only obscuring the purport of the play, without in any way furthering the action, and the question arises, how it comes to be there at all. Here too the favourite higher critical hypothesis of a later plan having been negligently superimposed upon an earlier one with which it is incompatible has been resorted to.

p. 259 Some of the higher critics have argued that the "Wald und Höhle" scene was meant in its original form to stand before the beginning of the Gretchen tragedy and to refer not to her at all, but to some other woman or to the image Faust had seen in the magic mirror in the "Hexenküche."

p. 277 Some have wondered why Goethe did not for the sake of consistency eliminate the Erdgeist scene altogether. If there had not been other considerations that were more important to him than mere consistency, this is indeed what he would have felt obliged to do. But he was not going to sacrifice the best part of the Urfaust just for consistency's sake, or even to tinker about with it, and so he allowed it to remain as a kind of erratic block, unrelated to what had now become the supernatural structure underlying and framing the multifarious action of the play. One can think of various ways in which he could have smoothed out this inconsistency.

Ats 2 Scherer p. 321
 Ats 3 Scherer p. 324

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