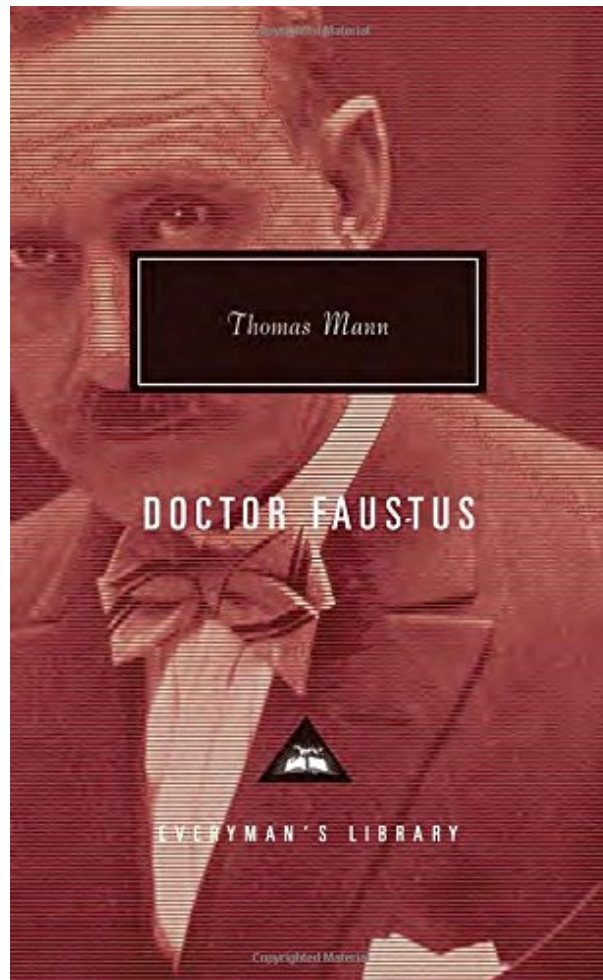
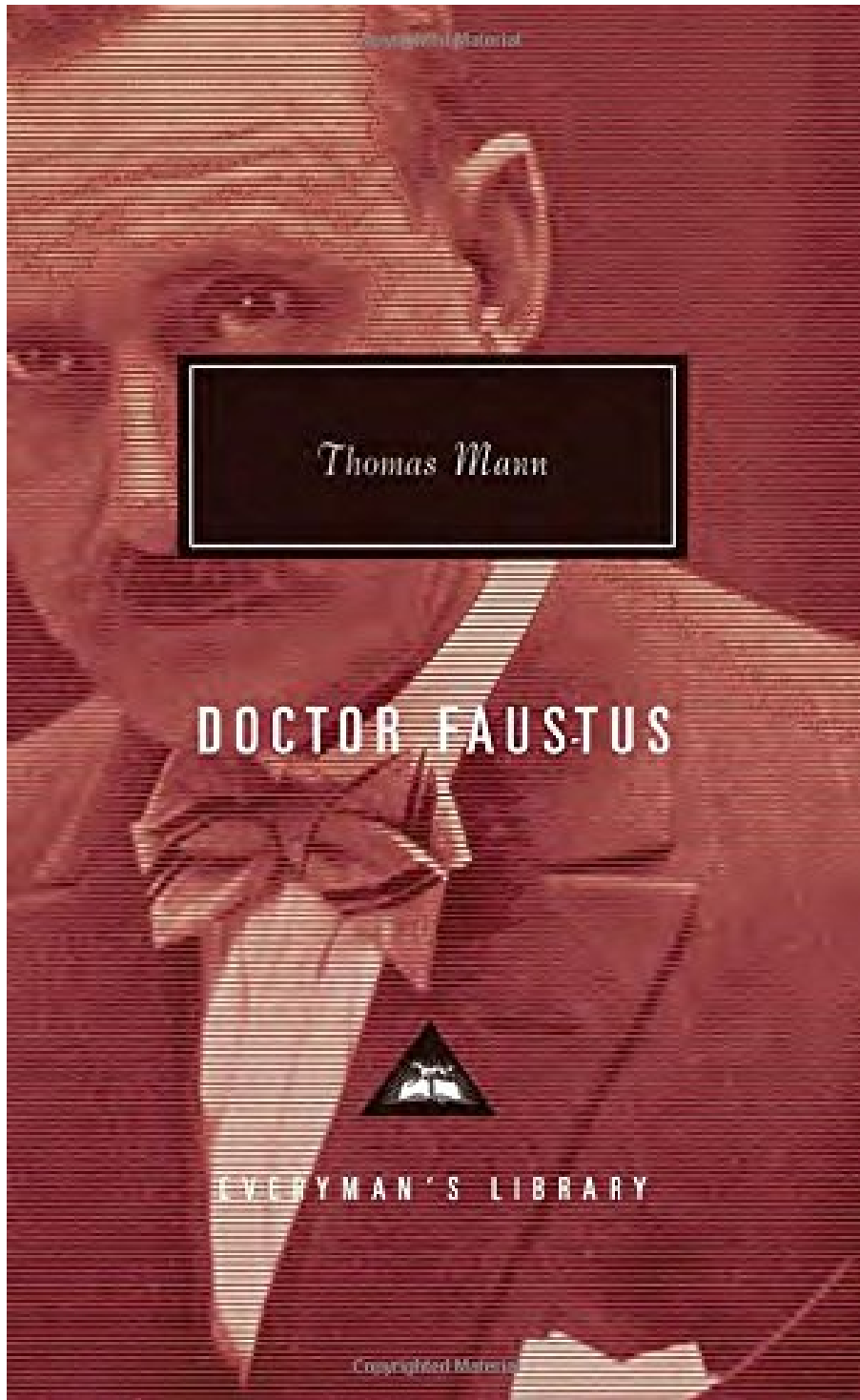


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Language Notes

Text: English (translation)

Original Language: German

From the Inside Flap

Introduction by T. J. Reed; Translation by H. T. Lowe-Porter

From the Back Cover

This book is about Adrian Leverkühn, a former theological student who has become a composer, who enters symbolically into a pact with the devil.

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DOCTOR FAUSTUS (EVERYMAN'S LIBRARY) BY THOMAS MANN PDF

Thomas Mann wrote his last great novel, *Doctor Faustus*, during his exile from Nazi Germany. Although he already had a long string of masterpieces to his name, in retrospect this seems to be the novel he was born to write.

A modern reworking of the Faust legend in which a twentieth-century composer sells his soul to the devil for the artistic power he craves, the story brilliantly interweaves music, philosophy, theology, and politics. Adrian Leverkühn is a talented young composer who is willing to go to any lengths to reach greater heights of achievement. What he gets is twenty-four years of genius—years of increasingly extraordinary musical innovation intertwined with progressive and destructive madness.

A scathing allegory of Germany's renunciation of its own humanity and its embrace of ambition and nihilism, *Doctor Faustus* is also a profound meditation on artistic genius. Obsessively exploring the evil into which his country had fallen, Mann succeeds as only he could have in charting the dimensions of that evil; his novel has both the pertinence of history and the universality of myth.

Translated from the German by H. T. Lowe-Porter

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Most helpful customer reviews

112 of 121 people found the following review helpful.

Thomas Mann at his tragic best!

By D. Roberts

For those of you who have not done so already, I would highly recommend reading Marlowe's "Doctor Faustus" and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's "Faust" before taking this one on. It will make more sense that way and will also provide a remarkable opportunity to see the evolution of a wonderful myth. Now, to attempt to summarize a masterpiece like this in a few words is absurd, but I will do my best. Marlowe's Faust is the most straightforward of the three (not that it is not a great work of literature itself, mind you). Faust is an absolutely brilliant character who is so brilliant, in fact, that he is bored with life. So he makes a deal with Mephistopheles (one of Satan's demons) that he will have 25 years of almost omnipotence, being able to do anything and possessing almost god-like powers. However, when the 25 years are up, his soul will belong to the devil. Goethe's Faust is one of the top 5 or so greatest exemplars of literature ever written. It is, quite simply, astounding. In short, the plot is kinda/sorta the same, only in Goethe there is no time limit in the agreement with Mephistopheles. Rather, at the point when Faust ceases to press on and becomes sedentary, the devil has him. It is the moment in which Faust utters "Stay, moment, stay....thou art so fair" that he will be doomed. I do not want to say anything more about Goethe's Faust so that I can refrain from giving anything away. At any rate, enter Thomas Mann with a 20th century twist on the myth. Adrian Leverkuhn sells his soul to the devil for a new form of music. Satan grants his wish and gives him Schoenberg's 12 tone. (Of course, it is Leverkuhn's 12 tone in the novel). For Mann, this was symbolically a representative of how 20th century man sells his soul to the devil; it is thru the trivialization of art. The 12 tone, although a brilliant conception, is none-the-less something other than music for Mann (and for myself, if I may add). Mirrored to Leverkuhn's fate is the seduction of the German people by Adolf Hitler. Hitler promised them great glories and a feeling of invincibility. For a brief time (like in a Faustian pact) he delivered on his promise. However, in the end, the Germans paid dearly for their hubris. The end of the war brought along with it the destruction of Her Dresden China; Dresden, the very cultural and artistic heart and soul of Germany, was all but destroyed. This book is truly an epic and is not for leisure or light reading. However, it is a must for anyone interested in the Faustian myth, World War II, German history, Thomas Mann or any combination thereof. A tremendous novel.

56 of 60 people found the following review helpful.

A dream without a soul is a nightmare

By Joanna D.

I found "Dr. Faustus" the most challenging of all Mann's novels to read. It is dense with symbolism, history, philosophy and digressions into frank editorializing by the author, who interjects his voice into the story in a disconcerting way.

The philosophical ramblings of "The Magic Mountain" are similar--the Dionysian Weltanschauung of the Jesuit (Naphta) and The Voluptuary (Peeperkorn) versus the Apollonian (Settembrini) are used as metaphors for a debauched and dying Old Europe versus the New Europe to be reborn after the convulsions of World War I. And they are also symbolic of the failure of "pure reason" and politically correct Art to save a society with no soul, where human lives are scored on a worth-scale and have no intrinsic value as endowed by their Creator. In "Dr. Faustus", Mann revisits the German split personality (order versus bloody chaos) and makes it more intimate; he desperately wants to unearth what is it about the German Soul that gave us both World War I and then its offspring World War II and Hitler. Mann spends the rest of the book examining the German soul in the character of Adrian Leverkuehn and the forces influencing his life.

This is a brilliant book in that it takes the favorite Faust theme so loved by the Germans and re-tells it in a compelling fashion. Where the reader will have difficulty is that they will miss many of the character names

that are sly jokes (if you are not a German speaker), and in following Mann's dense prose, followed by digressions into his own musings. And then you need to be somewhat familiar with European history and cultural icons.

Leverkuehn sells his soul to the Devil for the ability to compose the world's most perfect musical work. Here is the meeting of Apollo and Dionysus; the music is modeled on Schoenberg's astringent 12 tone scale of systematic composition based on his constructed rules of music; the Devil seeks Chaos and destruction of God's creation and Man's immortal soul. Leverkuehn gets his wish from the Devil; he creates his immortal music, but he loses the most human of abilities; that to love and be loved. As he tries to escape the deal he made, he is struck down and the objects of his love are similarly destroyed. The devices Mann employs --a stroke following a bout of venereal disease, are realistic and are incredibly clever; these things COULD happen to a man in real life, though we are reading a fable about selling one's soul to a Devil made into an actual character. One of Mann's very early short stories (The Wardrobe) employs this same duality in storytelling; a sick man takes a train ride. Does he arrive at his destination, does he stop at a hotel where he meets a mysterious woman in his wardrobe, or does he die in transit? What is reality and what is fable here?

On its own merits, "Dr. Faustus" is not Mann's best book but it is perhaps his most personal. The author is telling a story to the willing reader as if he were almost reading it aloud, and taking asides to discourse on his deepest feelings as an exile from his homeland. If you are a Thomas Mann fan, it's worth reading after "Magic Mountain" prepares you for Mann's characteristic style and themes.

37 of 39 people found the following review helpful.

Nearly flawless

By A Customer

There are certain myths that seem to center a culture, stories that define and create a nation's heritage. The Great Gatsby defines the central American mythos. The Brothers Karamazov centers the Russian canon; and without a doubt the Faust legend is at the heart of Germany's entire history, both political and cultural. Thomas Mann's retelling of the Faust legend for the twentieth century rarely misses a beat in its probing inquiry into the nature of Aesthetics, Sexuality, and Politics. And while the central questions on the role of power in relation to morality and the limits of artistic freedom that are the center of the Faust legend are here, Mann also manages to bring originality and his literary gifts to this retelling. What is remarkable about this narrative is that it tells you as much about the narrator as our Faust himself. The narrator, Dr. Serenus Zeitblom, is just as central to this tale. His relation to our Faustian composer provides much of the dramatic tension as well as a human element in the esoteric wars over the nature of artistic power. Mann is among the greatest novelists of our century, and this is an unflinching novel that strives for meaning while within the echo of the Nazi guns that are the testament to the power of Faust and the darkness that the human soul must resist.

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