Mrs Faust

SUMMARY

To begin at the beginning, Faust and I got married. We met when we were both scholars, lived together as lovers, broke up, got back together, married, borrowed money to buy a home, and thrived in our scholarship, earning Bachelor of Arts, Master of Arts, and Doctor of Philosophy degrees. We never had children. We did have two terry-cloth bathrobes, monogrammed *Hers* and *His*.

We worked hard, accumulated money, and relocated. We bought expensive cars, a sailboat, a second house (this one in Wales), and trendy products, including cell phones and home computers. We got rich and relocated yet again. My husband looked shrewd, acquisitive, and a little insane—and I was no better.

I started to relish the luxuries we shared, though not our actual marriage. He started to relish the admiration of others, though he didn't love me. He slept with sex workers. I didn't get jealous, but I did feel persistently annoyed. In order to feel better, I tried going to classes on yoga, martial arts, and home design, and getting psychotherapy and colon cleanses.

At meals with friends, Faust would brag about how much money was involved in the deals he was doing in Asian markets. Afterward, he'd hail a taxi and chase sex in the Soho district of London, talking little, driving away anxiety, losing himself among fellow predators, and preying on others.

It wasn't enough for him. One winter night, I came back to our house, hungry for dinner. Upstairs, Faust was having a meeting in his private work room. I caught the scent of cigars—awful, strangely attractive, and forbidden in our home. My husband and the person he was meeting with were laughing loudly.

Afterward, the whole world, as he put it, seemed to open up like a pair of legs (seemed to be his for the taking). First, he gained political power: a secure seat in the lower house of Parliament and a British knighthood. Next, he acquired elite offshore and overseas bank accounts and became a powerful executive, with titles like vice-chairman, chairman, owner/CEO, and "Lord" in the upper house of Parliament.

Was all *that* enough for him? No, he demanded more! He became a powerful clergyman, then the Pope himself; he accumulated more knowledge than God. He broke the sound barrier as he jetted around the world, then stopped for lunch. He flew to the moon, where he golfed (like the Apollo astronauts) and scored a hole-in-one; he flew to the sun, where he smoked a big Cuban cigar.

Then, on an intuition, he invested in guided missile technology, in violence; he became an arms dealer. He sank a lot of money into that market, then pulled his money out. He purchased farmland, where he cloned sheep through new biotechnology. He searched online for women who were as young as Little Bo Peep (the shepherdess from nursery rhymes) and thought the way he did.

Meanwhile, I did my own thing. I took a quick trip to Rome, turned straw into gold as in a fairy tale (i.e., turned a bad situation to my advantage). I had plastic surgery done on my face, breasts, and butt. I journeyed to China, Thailand, and Africa, and came back full of spiritual wisdom.

I had my 40th birthday; swore off sex, alcohol, and meat; dabbled in Buddhism; then had my 41st. I changed my hair color to blonde, then red, then brown. I adopted the local cultures of places I visited, then went out of my mind. I fled home, solo, then returned.

Faust was waiting at home and asked to speak with me. He said he'd just received sexual favors from a simulation of Helen of Troy, the mythical queen whom men started a war over (whose "face" was so beautiful that it "launched a thousand [naval] ships"). He had made out with the virtual Helen. He'd been able to do all this because he'd struck a bargain with the demon Mephistopheles, representative of the Devil himself.

Mephistopheles was coming to claim what Faust owed the Devil. The price of all Faust's pleasure, wealth, and indulgence was his immortal soul.

Just then, I heard a snake-like hissing and felt that I could smell and taste evil in the air. The Devil's reptilian hands shot up through the Italian ceramic floor tiles, grabbed my barefoot husband, and yanked him right down to Hell, even as he continued to look strangely smug.

Well, so it goes. Faust bequeathed everything we owned—our boat, our houses, our private jet, our helicopter landing platform, our money, and so on and so forth—to yours truly.

That's life. I got sick and suffered terribly, but I charged a kidney transplant to my credit card, and I recovered. I still haven't revealed my husband's secret: that cagey, calculating, insensitive jerk never had a soul to sell the Devil in the first place.

THEMES

MATERIALISM, GREED, AND DESIRE

Carol Ann Duffy's "Mrs. Faust" is a satirical retelling of the medieval Faust legend. In the classic tale, Faust is an ambitious scholar who strikes a deal with the Devil, receiving limitless knowledge, riches, and pleasure in exchange

for his soul. In Duffy's version, Faust has an equally greedy wife, who narrates his story from her own jaded perspective. Together, Mr. and Mrs. Faust lead a thoroughly materialistic "lifestyle," full of financial and sensual indulgence. When the Devil comes to claim Faust, Mrs. Faust inherits his riches—and reveals that he never had "a soul to sell." True greed, the poem implies, is worse than selling out: it's more soulless, cynical, and banal than the kind of evil traditionally represented by the "Devil."

The poem's portrait of Faust, a legendary character from folklore, is ultra-modern: he lives like a barely exaggerated version of contemporary billionaires and oligarchs. Like the original Faust, he's a scholar (as is his wife). But he's uninterested in pursuing any kind of higher wisdom; instead, he acquires his knowledge and fancy degrees as a means to wealth and power. (Again, this is a takeoff on the original Faust, who cared about worldly knowledge rather than divine truth.) In fact, Faust never stops acquiring things: houses, cars, sex (via sex workers and mistresses), powerful positions in business and politics, etc.

None of it is ever "Enough," and he bargains with the Devil to feed his desire for "more." A few of the experiences he buys are exaggerated or supernatural: at the height of his power, for example, he "kn[ows] more than God" and lights a cigar on "the Sun." But in general, he's a recognizable version of a modern tycoon: acquiring private boats and aircraft, investing in sinister military tech, and so on. In this way, the poem also critiques modern capitalistic societies, which encourage and reward men like Faust.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Faust is "as bad" as her husband: equally cunning, cynical, and greedy. She isn't interested in higher wisdom, either. She happily joins Faust in his life of trendy purchases and pursuits, always acquiring "The latest toys." She claims to "love" their wealthy, fashionable "lifestyle" (though she and Faust don't love each other). When he cheats on her, she feels "irritation" rather than romantic "jealousy," and she easily soothes herself by splurging on new fads. Even her spiritual pursuits (such as travels in search of "enlighten[ment]") are blatantly materialistic—another set of experiences bought as part of her consumer "lifestyle."

Unlike previous versions of the Faust tale, this one has no redeeming moral at the end. The poem depicts greed as irredeemable and incurable, not a moral failing so much as a total lack of morality. Though Faust technically faces consequences, they're nothing he can't handle. When the Devil (whom he's tricked) drags him off to hell, he's "oddly smirking."

His wife isn't sorry to see him go, and she gladly inherits all he's left behind. Meanwhile, her own greed goes effectively unpunished. When she contracts an "ill[ness]," it's not divine retribution or a spiritual malaise; it's just a physical problem she can solve with money ("I bought a kidney / with my credit card").

In the end, then, the poem is darker and more harshly satirical than most previous versions of the Faust legend. In the modern, secular, hyper-capitalist world, Duffy suggests, there's no real punishment for insatiable greed and lust. Ruthlessly materialistic people may not enjoy true love or satisfaction, but they don't have "soul[s]" to bargain away, so they don't suffer any meaningful consequences, either.

Where this theme appears in the poem:

- Lines 1-135

MARRIAGE, GENDER, AND POWER

"Mrs. Faust" portrays Faust and his wife as very similar characters, yet their marriage is cynical and loveless. From beginning to end, it's more like a successful business partnership than a romantic union. It's not a fully *equal* partnership, however, as Mrs. Faust is excluded from her husband's deal with the Devil. Rather than accept or openly fight this gender inequality, Mrs. Faust subverts it by letting her husband take the fall for both of them—then inheriting all they've acquired. In a patriarchal society, this miniature fable suggests, marriage is generally a bad bargain for women, but shrewd women can and do find ways to turn that bargain to their advantage.

The union between Mr. and Mrs. Faust is founded on greed rather than love. Her story of their relationship emphasizes professional advancement and material acquisition, never romance. In fact, the word "love" appears only twice in the poem. Mrs. Faust says that she "love[d] the lifestyle" rather than "the life" she shared with Faust, and that Faust "love[d] the kudos" he received from others, "not the wife" (her!). In other words, the marriage is both loveless and highly successful in material terms. Each partner uses the other to get what they want.

Dissatisfied even with this level of wealth and power, Faust schemes to acquire *more* than his wife, without letting her in on the bargain. Though satirically exaggerated, his scheme mirrors the kind of gender imbalance that plagues many traditional marriages, even between high-powered couples. When he decides "He want[s] more," Faust takes a private "meeting" and strikes a deal, which turns out to be "*a pact / with Mephistopheles, / the Devil's boy*." Though this meeting takes place in her home, Mrs. Faust isn't included. The private pact, complete with "cigar smoke," typifies the kind of lucrative deals men have historically struck with each other—and shut women out of. After the deal, Faust's wealth and power balloon to superhuman proportions; basically, he's now part of a cosmic Old Boys' Club.

Despite being both cheated on and cheated, Mrs. Faust gets the last laugh, winning ultimate power from an arrangement

designed to disempower her. After her exclusion from her husband's bargain, Mrs. Faust goes "[her] own sweet way," enjoying the fruits of Faust's newfound power without challenging him. (Or asking questions about what he's been up to.) Her marriage never becomes emotionally fulfilling, and at times it's actively distressing (she goes "bananas"), but she carves out a great deal of independence within it. In fact, she reaps the greatest reward from their partnership, as his "will" leaves everything he's acquired "to [her]." After he's dragged off to hell, she "keep[s] Faust's secret" (the fact that he never had a soul), as if honoring an unspoken bargain they've struck between themselves.

In the end, Faust seems to have outsmarted the Devil—and Mrs. Faust seems to have outsmarted both men. Though not a traditional feminist statement, the poem illustrates how shrewd, ambitious women in a patriarchal system are often forced to—and able to—beat men at their own game.

Where this theme appears in the poem:

- Lines 1-135

LINE-BY-LINE ANALYSIS

LINES 1-5

First things first— ...
... up, hitched up,

Lines 1-5, along with the title, establish the poem's main characters and dramatic situation. "Mrs Faust," the poem's speaker, is a character the poet has invented and written into the classic Faust legend. She is married to Faust, normally the protagonist of the tale, a scholar who sells his soul to the Devil in exchange for limitless wealth, power, knowledge, and pleasure. Dating to 16th-century Germany (where it was adapted from older tales), the Faust legend has become one of the world's best-known stories and the inspiration for several famous literary works. (For a more detailed summary of this legend, see the Literary Context section of this guide.)

In Carol Ann Duffy's poem, *Mrs.* Faust, not her husband, is the protagonist. She's the speaker of this dramatic monologue, and she's telling her side of the story.

From the start, her voice is brisk and no-nonsense, compressing a great deal of narrative information into the poem's short free verse lines. This style suits her confident, cavalier tone and the fast-paced life she describes.

After a straight-down-to-business introduction ("First things first"), she provides a capsule history of her relationship with Faust, using rapid-fire parallel clauses and epistrophe:

> [...] I married Faust.
> We met as students,
> shacked up, split up,
> made up, hitched up,

First, they dated as young scholars (an allusion to the traditional legend, in which Faust is a scholar and magician). Then, in quick succession, they moved in together, broke up, made amends, and got married.

The terse phrases and repetitions evoke a relationship that moved fast, generating a lot of conflict and drama in a short time. (The couple's early "split" foreshadows tensions to come.) They also suggest that Mrs. Faust, whose marriage soon became effectively loveless, has no sentimental feelings toward her how-we-met story and prefers not to dwell on it.

Likewise, her irreverent idioms ("shacked up" for living together, "hitched up" for getting married) convey a crisply realistic, even mocking attitude toward her past with Faust. Some previous versions of the Faust legend combined tragedy and comedy, but Duffy's version is a full-on satire.

LINES 6-9

got a mortgage ...
... bathrobes. Hers. His.

Lines 6-9 round out the first stanza with more details about the Fausts' early relationship. Soon after getting married, they became homeowners, though they couldn't yet afford to purchase their "house" outright; instead, they "got a mortgage." They finished their scholarly work, "flourish[ing] academically" and earning advanced degrees: the "BA" (Bachelor of Arts), "MA" (Master of Arts), and "Ph.D." (Doctor of Philosophy).

Notice that Mr. and Mrs. Faust are equally accomplished; they've both earned Ph.D.s, the highest graduate degree available in most fields. This detail becomes important when, despite their equal level of education, their careers diverge significantly due to gender divisions.

The Fausts have "No kids"—whether by choice or not isn't clear. This detail might suggest that, as accomplished and ambitious people, they opted to remain childless for the sake of their careers. It might have special relevance to Mrs. Faust's experience, as the burdens of childbirth, early childcare, and often parenthood in general fall disproportionately on women. (Many working women struggle to advance in their careers, or advance at the same rate as male colleagues, when they become mothers.)

The Fausts's childlessness might therefore be another sign that they remained on equal footing during this stage of their lives. Their matching "bathrobes"—monogrammed "Hers" and "His" (notice which Mrs. Faust mentions first!)—might also symbolize this seeming gender parity. However, the different labels also point to the gender *divide* that will affect their story.

The stanza ends with one of the poem's sporadic rhymes or

near-rhymes: "kids"/"His." These rhymes enhance the playfulness of Duffy's satire, often closing out stanzas with a little extra comic zing. Notice, too, how the list of actions and achievements in lines 3-8 omits conjunctions such as "and" or "then." This device, called asyndeton, occurs frequently throughout the poem. It adds to the rapid, condensed, casual quality of Mr. and Mrs. Faust's speech; these are characters who talk as fast as they live.

LINES 10-18

We worked. We ...
... was as bad.

Throughout the second stanza, the Fausts keep climbing the professional and social ladder—long before Faust's infamous deal with the Devil.

In these early years, the couple "Prosper[s]" by more traditional means: "work[ing]" and "sav[ing]." They're constantly on the "move[]"; they relocate twice in the space of six lines (lines 11 and 16) and buy a "second home in Wales." Their constant movement, accentuated by repetition, reflects their restless ambition, their inability to be satisfied with what they have. Meanwhile, they're eager to acquire symbols of wealth and status, from "Fast cars" and a sailboat to "The latest toys—computers, / mobile phones." ("Mrs Faust" was published in the 1990s, when home computers and cell phones had only recently become consumer products—for those who could afford them.) Basically, they're like many rich young couples who spend large sums to stay on trend and advertise their success.

At the time the poem was written, young, trendy professionals like Mr. and Mrs. Faust were often derisively called "yuppies." Nowadays, they might be called "bougie." Eventually, the Fausts become so filthy rich that they're more like oligarchs! Regardless, they're the targets of Duffy's satire—even if she makes the narrator sympathetic in some ways.

Mrs. Faust describes her husband's appearance during this time as "clever, greedy, slightly mad." (Once again, asyndeton keeps her speech brisk and casual.) Intelligent as he may be, he's so voraciously acquisitive that he seems a little insane. But this is another realm in which Mrs. Faust stands on equal footing with him: she confesses, "I was as bad." Unlike some of the speakers in Duffy's collection *The World's Wife*, she's more an anti-heroine than a heroine; her perspective isn't feminist in any traditional sense, and she might even be called evil. Still, she maintains an ironic kind of equality with her husband. She's as "clever" and ruthless as he is, even if she often has to play a different power game.

LINES 19-22

I grew to ...
... not the wife.

In lines 19-22, the poem slips briefly into meter:

> I grew to love the lifestyle,
> not the life.
> He grew to love the kudos,
> not the wife.

This could be written as a rhymed iambic pentameter couplet (two rhymed lines, each following a five-beat da-DUM, da-DUM rhythm): "I grew | to love | the life- | style, not | the life. / He grew | to love | the ku- | dos, not | the wife." Instead, it's broken into four lines, but the rhythm is the same. These effects help make the lines crisp and memorable as a summary of the Fausts' marriage. (If the entire poem followed this kind of traditional form, however, Mrs. Faust's voice would probably sound less casual, irreverent, and contemporary.)

Mrs. Faust distinguishes the superficial "lifestyle" she shared with Faust—in all its luxury and indulgence—from the deeper "life" she shared with him, including their emotional life. One she found thrilling, the other unfulfilling. Similarly, Faust loved the "kudos" their joint success brought him—the admiration and congratulations of others—but he didn't love *her*. He even coldly objectified her as "the wife."

Despite these fundamental problems, they stayed together. Mrs. Faust implies that she "love[d]" their outward success more than she regretted their hollow home life. Faust seems to have felt the same; ironically, shared cynicism, rather than shared affection, sustained their partnership. They could live with a loveless marriage as long as it brought fabulous perks.

LINES 23-27

He went to ...
... therapy, colonic irrigation.

After describing her marriage to Faust as loveless, Ms. Faust starts to provide the grim details of their life together. Bluntly, she reveals that he cheated on her with sex workers: "He went to whores." Since she wasn't really in love with him (or at least claims as much to the reader), she feels "chronic irritation" rather than the "jealousy" one might expect. She puts up with her husband's infidelity, but it leaves her annoyed and restless.

To soothe her "irritation," Mrs. Faust turns to a number of lifestyle trends that became popular among well-off Westerners in the late 20th century. She ticks them off briskly, again using asyndeton for greater concision (note the lack of an "and" after "therapy"):

> I went to yoga, t'ai chi,
> Feng Shui, therapy, colonic irrigation.

"Yoga" refers to relaxation and stretching exercises, fitness techniques, etc., loosely adapted from a set of ancient Indian spiritual practices. "T'ai chi" is a martial art originating in China. "Feng Shui" is a traditional Chinese practice that supposedly harnesses energy to bring people into harmony with their

environments. (In the West, it's commonly associated with interior design principles, though this is a reduction of a more complex concept.) "Therapy" might indicate any kind of mental health therapy. "Colonic irrigation," also known as a "colon cleanse," is a naturopathic (unscientific) procedure that claims to flush harmful chemicals out of the body.

There's some sad irony here, and it's not clear whether Mrs. Faust is fully aware of it. For one thing, she may be downplaying her anger at Faust, pretending that it's only "irritation." For another thing, there's reason to doubt that her new "lifestyle" practices—which were trendy, expensive, and in more than one case pseudoscientific—really filled the emotional void in her marriage. Therapy *could* have provided some genuine support, but Mrs. Faust lumps it together with *feng shui* and colon cleansing, as if these things were equally valid/invalid (or equally helpful/unhelpful). Implicitly, she was dabbling in all these practices in a superficial or desperate way. Whether she understands that now, as an older woman, is left to the reader's interpretation.

Basically, she tried spending her way out of pain, investing in fashionable therapies and distractions to compensate for a loveless home life. The stanza ends with the most outlandish rhyme in the poem—"chronic irritation"/"colonic irrigation"—as if to suggest the absurdity of these coping mechanisms.

LINES 28-36

And Faust would ...
... meet panthers, feast.

Lines 28-36 shift the focus back to Faust, who by this time has become a prosperous businessman and man about town.

With greater success has come greater arrogance: he now "boast[s]," at the "dinner parties" he and his wife attend, about "the cost / of doing deals out East." It's not clear exactly what line of business he's in, but some sort of high-powered job in finance or corporate management is implied. "Doing deals out East" refers to deals with Asian companies or in Asian financial markets, which became a major nerve center of the global capitalist economy during the late 20th century. (Duffy's topical references again stress that her version of Faust is thoroughly *modern*, not a product of the Renaissance era.) These lines also contain some ironic foreshadowing, as Faust will soon strike his famous "deal" with the Devil, condemning himself to pay a much greater "cost."

After these parties, according to Mrs. Faust, her husband would take a "[taxi]cab" to "Soho," London's popular entertainment district, to chase sex and other pleasures. (Once again, Duffy's Faust seems thoroughly British as well as modern.) Playing on an idiom that usually implies understatement, Mrs. Faust says that Faust would go there "to say the least"—perhaps suggesting that he was literally reticent or secretive during these late-night misadventures. He would also go to Soho to "lay the ghost"—an idiom that means "put a fear to rest" or "stop worrying about something," but which here includes a sexual pun on "lay." (The implication is that Faust was using loveless sex as a form of emotional release or psychological distraction.) Finally, he used the nightlife to "get lost, meet panthers, feast"—suggesting that he shed his usual identity, including his domestic self, and became a kind of predator among other predators.

Like most of the poem's stanzas, this one is structured largely through repetition (including anaphora) and parallelism. Look at lines 33-36, for example:

> Then take his lust
> to Soho in a cab,
> to say the least,
> to lay the ghost,
> get lost, meet panthers, feast.

This creates a multi-layered, piling-on effect, as if Mrs. Faust is trying to top one scathing description with another. Here, it might also suggest the excessive, compulsive nature of Faust's late-night pursuits.

LINES 37-45

He wanted more. ...
... laugh aloud.

Lines 37-45 allude to the central incident in the Faust legend: Faust's deal with the Devil. Mrs. Faust narrates this incident indirectly, from an outsider's perspective—because her husband literally shuts her out of the deal.

In Duffy's version of the tale, Faust already has plenty of wealth and power by the time he strikes his famous bargain. It just isn't enough for him: "He want[s] more." Not only does he want more than he has, he wants more than his *wife* has. She arrives home "late" (due to work? affairs or other secret doings of her own?) and finds that Faust is taking a private "meeting" in his "study." She "ha[s]n't eaten," perhaps because of her busy schedule, or perhaps because her unhappy marriage is taking a psychological toll (e.g., in the form of depression). Faust certainly hasn't made dinner for her. It's a "winter's evening," and he's leaving her out in the cold. In fact, he's "laugh[ing]" and smoking a "cigar" with the "other" figure in the meeting: a hint that they're celebrating a deal they've just struck.

For readers unfamiliar with the Faust legend, the poem spells out this allusion later, in lines 97-99: "*I've made a pact / with Mephistopheles, / the Devil's boy.*" In the classic Faust legend, Mephistopheles is the demon who acts as the Devil's representative, offering Faust vast power, knowledge, etc. in exchange for his soul. Duffy's poem imagines him as a contemporary businessman, sealing this deal with Faust and celebrating with a cigar—a classic phallic symbol and an item associated with male business culture in particular.

Mrs. Faust seems both repelled by and drawn to the cigar smoke; she finds it "hellish," yet "oddly sexy." (Or maybe hellish *and* sexy.) Symbolically, this suggests that she's both drawn to and repelled by a male culture that excludes her—both from this meeting and from other kinds of opportunities and experiences. (Remember, Faust doesn't bring her along on his nighttime visits to Soho.) She protests that cigar smoke is "not allowed" in her home, but ironically, *she's* the one not allowed in the smoke-filled room where this deal is happening. (If the no-cigar rule is hers, these two men are cheerfully breaking it—another sign of her disempowerment.)

In short, the poem adapts the familiar plot point of the Faustian bargain to make a satirical point from a feminist perspective. Mr. and Mrs. Faust may both be awful people, the poem implies, but gender inequality exists even in the realm of evil.

Notice how each of the sentences in this stanza begins with either "He"/"Faust" or "I." After the shared perspective ("We") that dominates the first two stanzas, the narration often juxtaposes, and contrasts, the different experiences of Mr. and Mrs. Faust. This effect highlights the widening, gender-based divide within their marriage.

LINES 46-54

Next thing, the ...
... Chairman. Owner. Lord.

Lines 46-54 narrate the immediate aftereffects of Faust's deal with the Devil.

Faust gloats over his limitless power with a crude, macho metaphor: "Next thing, the world [...] spread its legs." That is, the world seemed to offer all its pleasures to him, like a woman he had seduced. In "politics," personal finance, and "business," his status increased dramatically. He was elected as an "MP" (Member of Parliament) in the UK's House of Commons, gaining a "Safe seat" (a position to which he could be re-elected easily and repeatedly). He was knighted as a member of the UK's Order of the Garter, gaining the title "Right Hon[ourable] K[night of the] G[arter]." He acquired the kind of "offshore" and foreign "bank[]" accounts many rich people use to avoid paying taxes in their home countries. Finally, he leapt up the executive ladder, gaining the titles "Vice-chairman," "Chairman," and "Owner" of one or more companies, as well as "Lord" in the *other* house of Parliament (the House of Lords).

Basically, after striking his bargain, Faust goes from rich to mega-rich, from power player to global oligarch. That he imagines his worldly success as the sexual conquest of a woman further underlines how *Mrs.* Faust must navigate a sexist, male-dominated world.

LINES 55-63

Enough? ...
... on the Sun.

In lines 55-63, Faust's power expands even further, becoming fantastical and superhuman. By the end of the previous stanza, he was an oligarch; here, he's more like an evil deity.

Mrs. Faust asks, rhetorically, whether oligarch-level power and wealth were "Enough" for Faust. She answers her own rhetorical question with "*Encore!*"—implying that they weren't; like an audience member excited by a performance, Faust craves more. The Devil grants his wish, making him a "Cardinal" (high clergyman) in the Catholic Church, then the "Pope" himself. (In Catholic tradition, the Pope is supposed to be *God's* chosen representative, but Duffy's irreverent poem suggests that the Devil might have a hand in the choice.)

Faust gets some other new perks as well. He "fl[ies] faster than the speed of sound / around the globe," a possible reference to the supersonic Concorde airliner (1976-2003) that used to carry passengers on transoceanic journeys. (Concorde flights were a luxury for the rich.) He pauses for "lunch[]" after his flight, then takes a voyage to "the moon," where he "golf[s]" (like astronaut Alan Shepard of the Apollo 14 mission) and scores a "hole[] in one." Lunar visits aren't an adventure non-military astronauts can buy (just yet), but at least they're theoretically possible.

To top it all off, Faust exceeds human capabilities entirely by landing "on the Sun"—where he celebrates by lighting another phallic cigar. (Alternatively, "lit a fat Havana on the Sun" might mean that he uses the Sun to light his Cuban cigar while still standing on the moon. Either way, it's cartoonishly impossible.)

What ties all these adventures together is a spirit of arrogant, macho adventurism. Notice that, so far in human history, only men have been allowed to serve as cardinals and Popes, and to walk on the moon as astronauts. Meanwhile, business lunches and golfing are strongly associated with "old boys' club" culture. Faust's pact with the Devil seems to make him a reigning member of that club. As he basks smugly on top of the world (or moon, or sun), Mrs. Faust can only watch from the sidelines.

LINES 64-72

Then backed a ...
... like-minded Bo Peep.

Whereas the previous two stanzas showed Faust's power increasing, lines 64-72 mainly show his evil deepening. Having visited the moon and sun, he decides that his next adventure will be investing in weapons technology. "Back[ing] a hunch" (following his intuition as an investor), he becomes an arms dealer and funds "smart bombs" (computer-guided missile systems). He's either indifferent to or thrilled by the "harms" they cause; having dealt with the Devil, he seems to be turning into a Devil-like figure himself.

Faust also purchases "farms," where he "clone[s] sheep" with the latest biotechnology. These lines allude to a famous event from the 1990s: the birth of Dolly the sheep, the first mammal

ever cloned from an adult somatic (vegetal) cell. This event made global headlines, and some observers saw it as heralding a sinister technological future.

Once he's in the sheep-cloning business, Faust also "surf[s] the Internet / for like-minded Bo Peep." This line alludes to the nursery-rhyme character Little Bo Peep, a young shepherdess. In other words, Faust pursues young women online, hoping to find one who shares his outlook and might want to partner with him in business and romance. Once again, his behavior here echoes previous versions of the Faust story—notably Goethe's play *Faust*, in which the protagonist seduces an innocent young woman named Gretchen.

By implication, Faust is looking for a younger woman to replace Mrs. Faust. But the two Fausts never separate or divorce, and Mrs. Faust seems to observe her husband's infidelity with wary patience (or the restrained "irritation" mentioned in line 25).

LINES 73-81

As for me, ...
... returned, enlightened.

After a full three stanzas about Faust, lines 73-81 return to narrating Mrs. Faust's experience. Again the poem juxtaposes the (increasingly) separate activities of the two spouses, inviting readers to compare and contrast them.

As Faust pursues his power trips and infidelities, Mrs. Faust goes "[her] own sweet way," staking out independence within a marriage that has gone south. She, too, indulges herself, partly through travel "around the globe." But while Faust prefers swaggering space adventures, risky investments, and sexual conquests, Mrs. Faust's main indulgences are cosmetic surgery and shallow spiritual tourism. For example, she visits "Rome," Italy—a major arts capital and historical site, as well as the spiritual center of Catholicism—but she claims to see it "in a day." In other words, she experiences it only in a hurried, superficial way rather than truly immersing herself. (She's riffing on the idiom "Rome wasn't built in a day," however, so she may be aware of the irony.)

Similarly, she claims to achieve spiritual "enlighten[ment]" by visiting two countries and a continent, which she rattles off briskly: "China, Thailand, Africa." It's implied that these journeys are as hasty and superficial as her spin around Rome. Her assumption that mere tourism to Asia and Africa has "enlightened" her reeks of Western/colonial arrogance. She's no holier or wiser than Faust is when he becomes "Cardinal" and "Pope." (Incidentally, his stint as Pope would have brought him to Rome, which encompasses the Vatican, so the two of them might have crossed paths on their supposed spiritual journeys!) Again, she may or may not be partly aware of these ironies.

Between travels, she metaphorically "spun gold from hay": an allusion to the fairy tale of Rumpelstiltskin. She's implying that, like the imp in the tale, who magically turns straw into gold, she made the best of an unpleasant situation. She's also implying that she beautified herself, because she goes on to list her plastic surgeries: "a facelift," a "breast[] enlarge[ment]," and a "buttocks tighten[ing]." In other words, her own body is the "hay" she turned to "gold."

By placing the surgeries and the spiritual journeys in parallel, the poem implies that both serve Mrs. Faust's vanity. She wants to make herself more beautiful on the outside *and* inside, but in both cases, the changes are merely cosmetic. Read more sympathetically, however, her actions might suggest a desperate mid-life search for confidence and meaning. She may remember this time as "sweet," but it's arguably sad as well.

LINES 82-90

Turned 40, celibate, ...
... went home.

In lines 82-90, Mrs. Faust recounts a full-blown mid-life crisis.

When she "Turn[s] 40" (a milestone often linked with middle age), she immediately makes several drastic lifestyle changes. She turns "celibate, / teetotal, vegan, / [and] Buddhist" all at once. In other words, she swears off sex, alcohol, meat, and worldly attachments and cravings in general (since Buddhism involves transcending the self and its desires). She does all of this before she turns "41"—and doesn't seem to maintain these commitments beyond that age. Rather, they seem to be fleeting, faddish, desperate attempts to improve her self-image.

As if to reinforce that point, she then makes a series of superficial changes to her hair color: "Went blonde, / redhead, brunette." Again, she's casting about frantically for ways to feel better about herself, and perhaps trying to win back Faust's attention or affection. As her crisis deepens, she "[goes] native"—that is, mimics the local culture of one of the places she visits (perhaps with the condescending idea of adopting a simpler lifestyle). Then she simply goes "ape, / berserk, bananas"—has a mental breakdown. She "run[s]" away, "alone," from her unhappy life with Faust; then, still unhappy, she goes back "home" to him.

Two verbs, "Turned" and "Went," cover all the actions in this stanza, highlighting the rapid change and movement that dominate this phase of the speaker's life. Ms. Faust seems to be constantly revising and "run[ning]" away from herself, as if hoping to escape her persistent misery. Finally, she's forced to go "home" and confront the source of that misery head-on.

LINES 91-99

Faust was in. ...
... the Devil's boy.

Lines 91-99 are dense with allusions to the traditional Faust legend, including its previous literary adaptations.

When Mrs. Faust finally returns home after her travels, her

husband is there to greet her. He asks to have "*A word*" with her, and over the course of this stanza and the next, Mrs. Faust quotes what he tells her. He informs her that he's just "*spent the night being pleasured / by a virtual Helen of Troy*"—in other words, receiving sexual favors from a simulation of the legendary queen from Greek myth, supposedly the most beautiful woman who ever lived. He calls her the "*Face that launched a thousand ships*," echoing a famous description of Helen from Christopher Marlowe's 16th-century play *Doctor Faustus*. In the play, also based on the Faust legend, Doctor Faustus conjures Helen's spirit for a group of scholars with the help of the demon Mephistopheles. He then asks Mephistopheles to bring her back and make her his (Faustus's) lover. When she reappears, he exclaims:

> FAUSTUS. Was this the face that launch'd a thousand ships,
> And burnt the topless towers of Ilium—
> Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss. [Kisses her]

According to ancient Greek myth, the abduction of beautiful Helen sparked the Trojan War and therefore caused the "launch[ing]" of Greek naval "ships" and the burning of Troy ("Ilium"). In Duffy's poem, as in Marlowe's play, Faust summons up the spirit of this beautiful woman and kisses her. The poem's modern language, which alludes to online pornography ("*being pleasured / by a virtual Helen of Troy*"), makes the incident sound especially seedy and exploitative.

Faust then reveals—to his wife, if not the reader—the key plot point of the Faust legend: "*I've made a pact / with Mephistopheles, / the Devil's boy.*" In other words, he's struck a kind of business deal with Mephistopheles, who's working on behalf of the Devil. Mephistopheles was the previously unnamed "other" who, in lines 40-45, met with Faust and smoked a cigar with him to seal their pact.

LINES 100-108

He's on his ...
... sold my soul.

Faust's quoted speech continues in lines 100-108, as he explains the "*pact*" he's made with the Devil. He reveals that "*I've sold my soul*" in exchange for a lifetime of mindless pleasure, relentless ambition, and limitless wealth—or, as he puts it, "*For all these years of / gagging for it, / going for it, / rolling in it.*" He lived like a king for a time, but he's about to pay the ultimate price: eternal damnation. Notice how Faust's use of slangy idioms, parallel phrasing, and asyndeton echoes Mrs. Faust's speaking style. Despite their unhappy marriage and the gender divide between them, they're more alike than different.

Now that the Devil's held up his side of the bargain, he's come to claim his reward: "*to take away / what's owed, / reap what I sowed.*" Like his wife, Faust uses a lot of clichés, perhaps suggesting that *he* is a cliché: a stereotypically greedy plutocrat and the kind of person who strains to keep up with others. Here, however, he subtly alters the saying "*reap what I sowed.*" Normally, to reap what you sow means to get what you deserve—and that's certainly part of what's happening here. But in Faust's phrasing, it's the *Devil* who's coming to reap what *Faust* sowed. In other words, everything Faust "[went] for" and "roll[ed] in" for will ultimately belong to his hellish debt collector.

LINES 109-117

At this, I ...
... down to Hell.

In lines 109-117, the Devil finally comes for Faust.

After Faust reveals his secret, Mrs. Faust suddenly hears a "hiss" like that of a "serpent[]" or snake, a creature traditionally associated with the Devil in Christian tradition. She can physically "taste[]" and "smell" pure evil in the air around her. A pair of "scaly devil hands" breaks through "the terracotta Tuscan tiles" of the floor, physically reaching up from the depths of "Hell." (Notice that, as a spoiled rich lady, Mrs. Faust seems pained that the devil dares to break her expensive ceramic tiles, which resemble those from the "Tuscan[y]" region of Italy. Or perhaps she and Faust share an actual Tuscan villa as one of their many homes. Regardless, the lush alliteration of "terracotta Tuscan tiles" sounds straight out of some fancy realtor's listing.)

The devil grabs Faust by his "bare feet" and drags him "straight down to Hell"—not kicking and screaming, as one might expect, but "oddly smirking." His bare feet might symbolize his vulnerability, or they might just illustrate his idle, carefree lifestyle (including sexual adventures with Helen of Troy the night before). His smug look might suggest that he knows something the Devil doesn't, that he's actually looking forward to hell, or both. The final lines of the poem will reveal more context here.

LINES 118-126

Oh, well. ...
... to me.

The next-to-last stanza begins with Mrs. Faust's unsentimental, two-word eulogy for her husband: "Oh, well." Their marriage was loveless and he treated her badly, so she greets his death with a shrug. In fact, she takes some barely disguised pleasure in his death, because it brings her a major financial windfall. It turns out that Faust's last "will" and testament bequeathed everything he owned to his wife, as she explains in an anaphora-filled list:

> [It] left everything—
> the yacht,

the several homes,
the Lear jet, the helipad,
the loot, et cet, et cet,
the lot—
to me.

With each repetition of "the ___," you can practically hear her ticking off her possessions on her fingers. She's inherited everything from a "yacht" to a private "Lear jet" to a "helipad" (landing platform) for private helicopters. The bounty is so vast that she finally has to summarize it with vague catch-all phrases: "et cet" (meaning *et cetera*) and "the lot" (meaning *all of it*).

Did Faust *intend* to leave her everything in his will, or did she arrange it that way? The poem leaves this point up for interpretation! Either she's outplayed the man who outplayed the Devil (as line 135 reveals), or else, despite his many failings as a husband, he left her their fortune as a final gesture of respect for their shared achievements. His gesture might imply, too, that she ended up being the only meaningful person in his otherwise shallow life.

LINES 127-132

C'est la vie. ...
... I got well.

Lines 127-132 add another original twist to Duffy's adaptation of the Faust tale. Mrs. Faust isn't dragged down to Hell like along with husband, but she does, initially, seem to face a sort of divine punishment for her greed and manipulation. However, it turns out to be no big deal—because in the world of the poem, money takes care of everything.

After inheriting "everything" from Faust, she cheerfully shrugs, "C'est la vie" (French for "That's life"). This is normally an idiom one would use after a *mis*fortune; ironically, she uses it after receiving the ultimate fortune. But then she reports falling "ill" with a disease that "hurt like hell." That word "hell" is a clever hint: is the Devil now attempting to punish her, too? If so, she's unfazed: with just a swipe of her "credit card," she obtains a "kidney" transplant and quickly "g[ets] well." Mrs. Faust wasn't included in her husband's bargain with the Devil, so she's now reaped the rewards of it without facing any of the consequences.

Most previous versions of the Faust story take the idea of divine punishment seriously, whether or not they portray Faust as condemned to hell. But Duffy's satire is set in an ultra-modern world where money solves everything—even the wrath of God or Satan.

LINES 133-135

I keep Faust's ...
... soul to sell.

The poem ends with a final ironic twist:

I keep Faust's secret still—
the clever, cunning, callous bastard
didn't have a soul to sell.

In other words, the Devil didn't strike such a great bargain after all. Faust never had a soul to begin with; he was rotten to the core and destined for damnation anyway. Pretending to sell himself out to the Devil was just one more sin in a long, evil life. Mrs. Faust has no illusions about him anymore, if she ever did: she accurately sums him up as a "clever" but heartless "bastard." Yet whether out of grudging respect, gratitude for her lavish inheritance, or a warped form of love—or all three at once—Mrs. Faust "keep[s] Faust's secret" from the Devil "still." If their marriage was like a sordid business partnership, she remains a loyal partner to the end.

Whereas the previous stanzas contained occasional rhyme, the final stanza contains full rhymes ("ill"/"still," "hell"/"well"/"sell") or light rhymes ("vie"/"kidney," "card"/"bastard") in every line. The last three lines are also full of sibilance and alliteration ("secret still," "clever, cunning, callous," "soul"/"sell"). All these rich, playful sound effects help bring the poem to a resounding close. There's an audible relish to the language as Mrs. Faust gloats in Faust's triumph over the Devil—and her own triumph over both.

SYMBOLS

CIGARS

Cigars are often phallic symbols (in fact, they're popularly associated with the famous psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud, who discussed phallic symbols a lot in his work). They're also associated with male culture, especially business culture, and the patriarchy more generally. They're often smoked in the context of a celebration—for example, when a deal has been struck.

Duffy seems to have all these associations in mind when she depicts Faust and Mephistopheles ("*the Devil's boy*") smoking cigars to seal their devil's bargain. Theirs is a private, male-only meeting from which Mrs. Faust is pointedly excluded. They've become favor-trading members of what's often known as "the old boys' club." Mrs. Faust describes the cigar smoke as "hellish, oddly sexy, [and] not allowed": in other words, she perceives it as awful in a way, tempting in another way, and charged with the lure of the forbidden. She wants the kind of power that men have historically tried to reserve for themselves.

A cigar also appears in line 63, as Faust lights "a fat Havana on the Sun." A Havana is another name for a Cuban cigar, long considered a luxury product (and, again, one associated with high-powered men). By smoking this cigar on the Sun—an impossible feat for mere mortals—Faust seems to celebrate a

kind of ultimate masculine triumph, as if his power had promoted him from man to god. It's an image of unbridled male arrogance, and Duffy deliberately portrays it as absurd.

Where this symbol appears in the poem:

- **Lines 42-43:** "I smelled cigar smoke, / hellish, oddly sexy, not allowed."
- **Line 63:** "lit a fat Havana on the Sun."

POETIC DEVICES

ALLUSION

In a way, "Mrs Faust" is one long allusion. It satirizes the Faust legend, a tale from German folklore, as well as other famous literary works inspired by that legend.

A detailed history of the Faust legend can be found here, as well as in the Literary Context section of this guide. The tale got started in the 16th century, when the anonymously authored *Faustbuch* (1587) combined older stories about wizards and necromancers with rumors about a historical Faust (a scholar and magician) who had died a few decades earlier. Christopher Marlowe's play *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* (c. 1592, published 1604) then popularized the tale in English. Over two centuries later, J. W. Goethe wrote the two-part, German-language play *Faust* (1808, 1832), considered a classic of world literature. In all of these versions, Faust is a scholar/magician who makes a pact with the Devil (or his representative, the demon Mephistopheles), offering his immortal soul in exchange for knowledge, pleasure, wealth, and/or power.

Duffy's poem adapts this tale into a turn-of-the-21st century context and adds the character of "Mrs Faust," not present in earlier versions. Her version imagines the Fausts as a rich, trendy, greedy couple determined to acquire the best life has to offer (from houses to yachts to "toys" that were new in the 1990s, such as "mobile phones" and "Internet"-connected home "computers").

Along with the general story, she also modernizes some specific details from previous versions. For example, in Marlowe's and Goethe's versions, Faust magically conjures Helen of Troy—the most beautiful woman ever, according to Greek myth—from the underworld and falls in love with her. (Goethe's Faust has a child with her.) By contrast, Duffy's Faust is "*pleasured / by a virtual Helen of Troy*"—apparently some sort of pornographic digital simulation. Marlowe's Doctor Faustus also peppers Mephistopheles with questions about the solar system and universe; in the poem, this curiosity about astronomy is reflected in Faust's voyages to the "moon" and "Sun" (lines 61-63).

It's also significant that Duffy's Faust, as in the Marlowe play and other older adaptations, goes to hell in the end—unlike Goethe's more sympathetic Faust, who is spared and goes to heaven. Anyone adapting the story in the modern day has a choice of classic endings, and Duffy chooses to make her Faust as villainous as possible.

Duffy alludes to other literary works throughout the poem as well. The line "spun gold from hay," for example, references the fairy tale Rumplestiltskin, in which the titular character weaves straw into gold. Rumpelstiltskin is able to perform the task only with the help of magic. Here, the implication is that Mrs Faust's money—like magic—makes the impossible possible.

"Bo Beep" in line 72 alludes to the famous English nursery rhyme "Little Bo-Peep." The implication is that Faust is cruising Internet dating sites for innocent young women to seduce (and perhaps bring into his sheep-cloning business). This marks another parallel with J. W. Goethe's version of the Faust story, in which Faust seduces a virtuous young woman named Gretchen.

Where Allusion appears in the poem:

- **Line 2:** "I married Faust."
- **Lines 69-72:** "Bought farms, / cloned sheep. / Faust surfed the Internet / for like-minded Bo Peep."
- **Lines 75-76:** "saw Rome in a day, / spun gold from hay,"
- **Lines 92-95:** "I spent the night being pleasured / by a virtual Helen of Troy. / Face that launched a thousand ships. / I kissed its lips."
- **Lines 96-99:** "Thing is— / I've made a pact / with Mephistopheles, / the Devil's boy."
- **Lines 100-117:** "He's on his way / to take away / what's owed, / reap what I sowed. / For all these years of / gagging for it, / going for it, / rolling in it, / I've sold my soul. / At this, I heard / a serpent's hiss, / tasted evil, knew its smell, / as scaly devil hands / poked up / right through the terracotta Tuscan tiles / at Faust's bare feet / and dragged him, oddly smirking, there and then / straight down to Hell."
- **Lines 133-135:** "I keep Faust's secret still— / the clever, cunning, callous bastard / didn't have a soul to sell."

IRONY

As a satire on the Faust legend, the poem is laced with biting irony. Sometimes the irony seems intentional on Mrs. Faust's part; sometimes it's more like dramatic irony, in that Mrs. Faust may not fully realize how she sounds to the reader. Other ironies here are situational; they subvert the reader's expectations about what will happen (especially if the reader is familiar with the Faust legend).

An example of intentional irony comes when Mrs. Faust says "C'est la vie" ("That's life") after inheriting all the "loot" she and Faust have accumulated. First of all, it's a little ghoulishly ironic to say your husband's death is just part of "life." (Not *his* life!) Second, people usually say "C'est la vie" after some negative

event, as if to say misfortune and disappointment happen to everyone. But Mrs. Faust is saying it after she's become fabulously rich! (Or richer.) That kind of good fortune *isn't* "life" for most people. Mrs. Faust is using irony to gloat in her triumph.

However, it's less clear that she's being ironic when she claims to have seen "Rome in a day" or to have "returned, enlightened" from self-indulgent travels abroad. She may be poking fun at the superficiality of her cultural and spiritual tourism, or she may be so hyper-privileged and clueless that she doesn't understand how superficial it is. It's up for interpretation! Either way, she clearly *didn't* see all Rome has to offer "in a day," nor was she really "enlightened" by traveling briefly to Africa (where in Africa, she doesn't bother to specify).

The poem's ending contains multiple layers of irony when read beside previous versions of the Faust tale. In most previous versions, Faust pays the price for his deal with the Devil; he's damned to hell forever. Goethe's play *Faust* changed this tradition by depicting Faust more sympathetically and sending him to heaven after all.

But in Duffy's poem, Faust cheats the Devil, and Mrs. Faust gets the better of both. Faust goes to hell, but with a "smirk[]" on his face, while Mrs. Faust—who is "as bad" as her husband (see line 18)—receives the worldly reward of the couple's full inheritance. Duffy's poem, then, is set in a more secular, jaded, modern world; it suggests, ironically, that "evil" still exists (line 111), but that divine rewards and punishments no longer apply, at least not in the same way. For one thing, it's possible not to have a "soul" at all (line 135).

Where Irony appears in the poem:

- **Lines 24-27:** "I felt, not jealousy, / but chronic irritation. / I went to yoga, t'ai chi, / Feng Shui, therapy, colonic irrigation."
- **Lines 42-43:** "I smelled cigar smoke, / hellish, oddly sexy, not allowed."
- **Lines 75-76:** "saw Rome in a day, / spun gold from hay,"
- **Lines 80-81:** "went to China, Thailand, Africa, / returned, enlightened."
- **Lines 116-117:** "and dragged him, oddly smirking, there and then / straight down to Hell."
- **Lines 118-135:** "Oh, well. / Faust's will / left everything— / the yacht, / the several homes, / the Lear jet, the helipad, / the loot, et cet, et cet, / the lot— / to me. / C'est la vie. / When I got ill / it hurt like hell. / I bought a kidney / with my credit card, / then I got well. / I keep Faust's secret still— / the clever, cunning, callous bastard / didn't have a soul to sell."

REPETITION

The poem contains many examples of repetition, but it's especially full of anaphora and epistrophe. Notice the anaphora in lines 10-11, for instance:

> We worked. We saved.
> We moved again.

And the epistrophe in lines 4-5:

> shacked up, split up,
> made up, hitched up,

Together, these devices appear in eleven out of the poem's fifteen stanzas. They add a fair amount of structure to the poem, despite its lack of a regular meter or rhyme scheme. They help make the free verse punchy, witty, and easy to follow, while capturing the narrator's brisk, staccato speaking style. (*We did this. We did that.*) In passages like lines 85-90, anaphora also evokes a rapid or cascading series of events:

> Went blonde,
> redhead, brunette,
> went native, ape,
> berserk, bananas;
> went on the run, alone;
> went home.

The rapid-fire repetition of "went" helps suggest that Mrs. Faust was going all over the place—both geographically and emotionally.

By contrast, the anaphora in lines 121-125 illustrates an accumulation of *things* rather than events:

> the yacht,
> the several homes,
> the Lear jet, the helipad,
> the loot, et cet, et cet,
> the lot—

As she repeats "the ___" over and over, she's casually ticking off the list of items she's inherited—which are so numerous that she finally has to resort to vague catch-all terms ("the lot"). In general, the poem's abundant (or over-the-top) repetition helps portray the Fausts' lifestyle as one of *excess*.

Where Repetition appears in the poem:

- **Line 1:** "First," "first"
- **Line 4:** "up," "up"
- **Line 5:** "up," "up"
- **Line 10:** "We," "We"
- **Line 11:** "We"
- **Line 12:** "A"
- **Line 13:** "A"

- **Line 18:** "I"
- **Line 19:** "I," "grew to love the"
- **Line 20:** "not the"
- **Line 21:** "He," "grew to love the"
- **Line 22:** "not the"
- **Line 23:** "He"
- **Line 24:** "I"
- **Line 26:** "I"
- **Line 30:** "of"
- **Line 31:** "of"
- **Line 33:** "to"
- **Line 34:** "to," "the"
- **Line 35:** "to," "the"
- **Line 42:** "I"
- **Line 44:** "I"
- **Line 67:** "Faust"
- **Line 68:** "Faust," "got," "got"
- **Line 77:** "had"
- **Line 78:** "had," "my"
- **Line 79:** "my"
- **Line 85:** "Went"
- **Line 87:** "went"
- **Line 89:** "went"
- **Line 90:** "went"
- **Line 105:** "for it"
- **Line 106:** "for it"
- **Line 107:** "it"
- **Line 121:** "the"
- **Line 122:** "the"
- **Line 123:** "the," "the"
- **Line 124:** "the," "et cet, et cet,"
- **Line 125:** "the"
- **Line 130:** "I"
- **Line 133:** "I"

ASYNDETON

The poem makes frequent use of asyndeton, or the omission of coordinating conjunctions like "and" in sentences where they would normally appear. Look at the long, list-like sentence in lines 3-8, for example:

> We met as students,
> shacked up, split up,
> made up, hitched up,
> got a mortgage on a house,
> flourished academically,
> BA. MA. Ph.D.

Readers might expect an "and" somewhere in this pile-up of parallel clauses—after "house," for example—but there's none to be found. Asyndeton can also occur in parallel sentences, like those in lines 10-11:

> We worked. We saved.
> We moved again.

Again, something like "We worked, we saved, then we moved again" would be more standard. The omission of "then" or "and" makes the phrasing more staccato and concise.

People sometimes use asyndeton in everyday conversation, so this device helps Mrs. Faust's monologue (as well as her husband's quoted speech) sound casual and natural. But she uses the device *so* often that it also becomes a kind of character tic. It makes her narration sound brisk and clipped, a style that suits her jaunty, fast-paced "lifestyle." It's as if she doesn't have *time* for little things like conjunctions as she's jetting around the world. The concision of asyndeton also helps her condense a complex tale—and a whole busy life—into 15 stanzas.

Where Asyndeton appears in the poem:

- **Lines 3-8:** "We met as students, / shacked up, split up, / made up, hitched up, / got a mortgage on a house, / flourished academically, / BA. MA. Ph.D."
- **Lines 10-11:** "We worked. We saved. / We moved again."
- **Lines 14-15:** "The latest toys—computers, / mobile phones."
- **Lines 16-17:** "Faust's face / was clever, greedy, slightly mad."
- **Lines 26-27:** "I went to yoga, t'ai chi, / Feng Shui, therapy, colonic irrigation."
- **Lines 32-36:** "Then take his lust / to Soho in a cab, / to say the least, / to lay the ghost, / get lost, meet panthers, feast."
- **Lines 42-43:** "I smelled cigar smoke, / hellish, oddly sexy, not allowed."
- **Lines 56-63:** "Faust was Cardinal, Pope, / knew more than God; / flew faster than the speed of sound / around the globe, / lunched; / walked on the moon, / golfed, holed in one; / lit a fat Havana on the Sun."
- **Lines 68-70:** "Faust got in deep, got out. / Bought farms, / cloned sheep."
- **Lines 74-81:** "I went my own sweet way, / saw Rome in a day, / spun gold from hay, / had a facelift, / had my breasts enlarged, / my buttocks tightened; / went to China, Thailand, Africa, / returned, enlightened."
- **Lines 82-84:** "Turned 40, celibate, / teetotal, vegan, / Buddhist, 41."
- **Lines 85-90:** "Went blonde, / redhead, brunette, / went native, ape, / berserk, bananas; / went on the run, alone; / went home."
- **Lines 101-103:** "to take away / what's owed, / reap what I sowed."
- **Lines 105-107:** "gagging for it, / going for it, / rolling in it,"
- **Lines 109-111:** "At this, I heard / a serpent's hiss, / tasted evil, knew its smell,"

IDIOM

Both Mrs. Faust and Faust frequently resort to idioms and clichés in their speech. Mrs. Faust actually begins her monologue with a cliché ("First things first"), and she continues to use stock expressions like "shacked up," "got in deep," "went native," etc. throughout the poem. Faust, too, uses idioms like "*gagging for it*" (as in wanting something—especially sex—badly) and "*rolling in it*" (as in being rich).

Why all these clichés, when cliché is something poems usually try to avoid? For one thing, all the idioms help establish the poem's casual, irreverent tone. Mr. and Mrs. Faust are much too jaded to speak in a lofty, poetic style; they may not be admirable people, but they're blunt.

For another thing, their verbal clichés reflect the way they *themselves* are clichés. In many respects, they live the typical lifestyle of the rich and powerful (private jets, offshore bank accounts, etc.). In fact, they invest heavily in keeping up with the latest trends (buying "The latest toys"). More broadly, the poem combines age-old literary characters and archetypes—Faust, the deal with the Devil, etc.—with the social stereotype of the trendy urban professional (the kind of person commonly called a "yuppie" around the time the poem was written). In other words, the poem is satirizing the Fausts and their trite "lifestyle," which extends to the way they talk as well as live.

Finally, the poem adds original or unexpected twists to some of these clichés. For example, Mrs. Faust says that her husband chases women in Soho in order "to lay the ghost." This idiom means to get rid of a source of anxiety or fear, but here there's also a sexual pun on "lay." (By implication, Faust's womanizing may be an attempt to escape some inner fear.)

Another example is line 75, in which Mrs. Faust claims that she "saw Rome in a day." This phrase plays on the idiom "Rome wasn't built in a day," meaning that important and complicated projects can't be rushed. Ironically, Mrs. Faust believes that her rushed tour of Rome *was* the full Rome experience—or, at least, as much of the Rome experience as she cared about. (She's too superficial to be actually interested in beauty and culture.)

A final example comes when Mrs. Faust shrugs, "C'est la vie" (French for "That's life") upon inheriting all of Faust's wealth. Normally, one would say this cliché after something disappointing happens, but ironically, Mrs. Faust says it after becoming *even richer*. Yachts and private jets aren't "life" for most people, but for Mrs. Faust, they're pretty much the usual!

Where Idiom appears in the poem:

- **Line 1:** "First things first—"
- **Lines 4-5:** "shacked up, split up, / made up, hitched up,"
- **Line 34:** "to say the least,"
- **Line 35:** "to lay the ghost,"
- **Line 57:** "knew more than God;"
- **Line 68:** "got in deep"
- **Line 75:** "Rome in a day"
- **Lines 87-88:** "went native, ape, / berserk, bananas;"
- **Line 103:** "reap what I sowed."
- **Line 105:** "gagging for it,"
- **Line 106:** "going for it,"
- **Line 107:** "rolling in it,"
- **Line 127:** "C'est la vie."

VOCABULARY

Faust (Line 2, Lines 16-17, Lines 28-29, Lines 40-41, Lines 46-48, Lines 56-57, Lines 67-68, Lines 71-72, Lines 91-91, Line 115, Lines 119-120, Line 133) - The protagonist of a German folktale that has been adapted into several famous literary works. An ambitious scholar, Faust (a.k.a. Faustus or Doctor Faustus) sells his soul to the Devil (strikes a "Faustian bargain") in exchange for unlimited wealth, power, and knowledge.

Shacked up (Lines 3-4) - A slang term meaning "lived together as lovers."

Hitched up (Line 5) - Slang for "got married."

Mortgage (Line 6) - A type of loan used to facilitate the purchase of a home. (The mortgage lender holds the deed to the home and lends money to the borrower at interest; as soon as the debt is paid down, the borrower owns the home outright. If the borrower cannot pay, the lender forecloses and takes possession of the home.)

BA. MA. Ph.D. (Line 8) - Types of undergraduate and graduate degrees. BA = Bachelor of Arts (undergraduate), MA = Master of Arts (graduate), Ph.D. = Doctor of Philosophy (graduate).

Toweled bathrobes (Line 9) - Bathrobes made of terry cloth, a material also found in bath towels. ("Hers" and "His" refer to inscriptions commonly monogrammed on robes and other articles belonging to male-female couples.)

Prospered (Lines 14-15) - Thrived financially; grew rich.

Mad (Lines 16-17) - Mentally unbalanced or disturbed.

Kudos (Lines 21-22) - Congratulations, praise, and other forms of acclaim.

Chronic (Lines 24-25) - Sustained or consistent, like a long-term affliction.

Yoga, t'ai chi, Feng Shui, therapy, colonic irrigation (Lines 26-27) - Refers to a variety of lifestyle trends that had become popular with affluent Westerners in the last few decades of the 20th century (or somewhat earlier, in the case of "therapy").

- Yoga is a set of ancient physical and spiritual practices originating in Southeast Asia (modern India). As adapted in the West, it usually refers to a set of relaxation and

stretching exercises, fitness techniques, and the like.
- T'ai chi is a Chinese martial art often practiced in the West for physical fitness and/or self-defense training purposes.
- Feng Shui (usually lowercase, *feng shui*) is a traditional Chinese practice that purports to harmonize people with their physical environments. In the West, it's often simplified to an interior design principle.
- Therapy, in this context, refers to any form of mental health therapy, such as psychoanalysis.
- Colonic irrigation, or "colon cleansing," is a procedure offered by some practitioners of alternative medicine. It purportedly removes harmful toxins from the body, though there's no scientific evidence for its validity.

Out East (Lines 30-31) - Likely refers to Asian markets, such as Japan and South Korea. (The Japanese economy, in particular, soared in the late 20th century, positioning the country as a vital hub of business and finance.)

To lay the ghost (Lines 32-35) - An idiom meaning to do something that gets rid of anxiety, stress, fear, etc. (as if exorcising a ghost and laying it to rest). Here, there's a double entendre on "lay," suggesting that Faust is using sex to reduce stress or distract himself from fear.

To say the least (Lines 32-34) - Normally, an idiom implying understatement. Here, the phrase perhaps suggests that Faust is literally talking less than those around him (because he's more powerful, or because he's busy satisfying his "lust").

Soho (Lines 32-33) - A famous entertainment district in London, known for its fine dining, theaters, nightclubs, etc.

Panthers (Line 36) - A metaphor for powerful, predatory people like Faust (playing on the conventional idea of "big cats" in the "urban jungle").

Study (Line 40) - A private room for working, reading, etc. in the home.

The Other (Lines 44-45) - "The other" member of the meeting is later identified as "*Mephistopheles, / the Devil's boy*" (lines 98-99). In the traditional Faust legend, Faust sells his soul to the demon Mephistopheles (and, by extension, to the Devil).

Safe seat, MP (Line 50) - Refers to a secure seat as a Member of Parliament (MP) in the UK. Such a position may be "safe" (nearly impossible to lose in elections) due to the historical leanings of the constituency, the popularity of the incumbent, or other factors.

Right Hon. KG (Line 50) - That is, a Right Honourable Knight of the Garter, a member of the UK chivalric order called the Most Noble Order of the Garter. (Basically, Faust has picked up a British knighthood as one of his fancy titles.)

Vice-chairman, Chairman, Owner, Lord (Line 54) - Senior titles in business and UK politics. A "Vice-chairman" or "Chairman" is a senior company executive; an "Owner" here means the owner of a company; a "Lord" is a member of the upper house of British Parliament (the House of Lords).

Cardinal, Pope (Lines 56-57) - Cardinals are high-ranking clergy in the Catholic Church; the Pope is the head of the Church, as well as the leader of the Vatican City State.

Holed in one (Line 62) - Scored a *hole in one* in golf; sank the ball into the cup directly from the tee. (A rare feat even for professional golfers.)

Havana (Line 63) - A Cuban cigar (regarded as a top-of-the-line cigar).

Backed a hunch (Line 64) - That is, invested money based on an intuition (hunch).

Smart bombs (Lines 65-67) - Bombs guided by computer and satellite systems for greater precision.

Cloned sheep (Lines 69-70) - That is, bred genetic replicas of existing sheep (as in the case of Dolly, born as the world's first cloned animal in 1996).

Like-minded Bo Peep (Lines 71-72) - An allusion to the nursery rhyme character Little Bo-Peep, a young shepherdess.

Saw Rome in a day (Line 75) - An allusion to the idiom "You can't build Rome in a day" (meaning that complex projects take time). As a busy tourist, Mrs. Faust decides that she *can* get the full Rome *experience* in a single day.

Spun gold from hay (Line 76) - An allusion to the fairy tale "Rumpelstiltskin," in which a young girl is given the impossible task of spinning straw into gold.

Enlightened (Lines 80-81) - Here meaning wiser or more advanced in a spiritual sense. (Mrs. Faust has traveled to "China, Thailand, Africa" in order to seek out spiritual/religious wisdom.)

Vegan (Lines 82-83) - Abstaining from meat consumption; maintaining an entirely plant-based diet.

Teetotal (Lines 82-83) - Abstaining from alcohol consumption (a *teetotaler* is a non-drinker).

Celibate (Line 82) - Abstaining from sex.

Went native (Lines 87-88) - Began to behave like the locals in the places one visited. (This phrase sometimes implies the condescending, colonial attitude that one has adopted a "wild" or "primitive" lifestyle. Mrs. Faust's subsequent claims—that she went "ape," etc.—suggest this kind of attitude.)

A virtual Helen of Troy (Lines 92-93) - That is, a digital avatar or simulation of Helen of Troy (a figure from Greek mythology, said to be the most beautiful woman in all of history).

Face that launched a thousand ships (Lines 94-95) - An allusion to a previous version of the Faust tale, Christopher Marlowe's play *Doctor Faustus* (c. 1592), in which Faust calls Helen of Troy "the face that launch'd a thousand ships." This phrase, in turn, alludes to the myth that a quarrel over Helen—in which she was carried off from Greece to

Troy—caused the Trojan War (and hence the "launch[ing]" of the Greek navy).

Mephistopheles (Lines 97-99) - The demon who, in most versions of the Faust legend, strikes a "pact" with Faust, granting him unlimited worldly knowledge, pleasure, and power in exchange for his immortal soul.

Reap what I sowed (Lines 100-103) - "Reap what you sow" is an idiom meaning to get what you bargained for. (Literally, it means to harvest the crops you've planted.)

Gagging for it (Lines 104-108) - Three slang phrases describing Faust's greed and lust. "Gagging for it" means wanting something badly (usually sex). "Going for it" implies taking big risks. "Rolling in it" means making tons of money.

Terracotta Tuscan tiles (Line 114) - *Terracotta tiles* are ceramic floor tiles. *Tuscan* means "from Tuscany" (a region in central Italy). Mrs. Faust is referring to expensive ceramic flooring, possibly in an actual Italian house or villa.

Lear jet (Line 123) - A brand of private jet (usually one word: "Learjet").

Helipad (Line 123) - A landing space for helicopters.

Et cet (Line 124) - A slangy way of saying "et cetera" (meaning "and so on").

The loot (Line 124) - The fortune; all the money and assets they've acquired.

The lot (Lines 124-126) - A mainly British slang term meaning "all of it" or "everything."

C'est la vie (Line 127) - A French idiom meaning "That's life."

Callous (Line 134) - Unfeeling; heartless.

FORM, METER, & RHYME

FORM

The poem contains fifteen stanzas of nine lines each. It doesn't follow a consistent meter, and it has no regular rhyme scheme, though it does contain rhymes in each stanza. Many of these rhymes include the final words of their respective stanzas, giving these stanzas a sense of strong closure—like a punchline. Readers can hear this effect in lines 16-18, for example:

> [...] Faust's face
> was clever, greedy, slightly mad.
> I was as bad.

In general, the combination of irregular rhythm and occasional rhyme makes this satirical monologue sound loose and playful. There's a sense that "Mrs Faust," the comically heartless speaker, is free-associating a bit as she leaps from detail to detail, rhyme to rhyme.

Meanwhile, the nine-line stanzas are an unusual feature. Unlike with quatrains (four-line stanzas), cinquains (five-line stanzas), and so on, there's no special name for them. It's possible that Duffy chose them as an allusion—not to the Faust legend, but to another famous story about hell and damnation. In Dante's *Inferno*, part of the 14th-century epic called the *Divine Comedy*, hell is famously depicted as having nine circles, or layers. Perhaps, then, these nine-"layered" stanzas are a very subtle Dante reference!

METER

The poem contains no regular meter. It's written in free verse (with occasional rhyme) and grouped into nine-line stanzas.

The lack of meter fits the breezy, slangy quality of this comic monologue. A strict meter would have made Mrs. Faust's voice sound somewhat formal, in contrast with the brisk, casual tone of phrases like "First things first" and "Oh, well." It would also have made her voice sound more *traditional*, since meter was once a standard feature of English-language verse. Instead, the Fausts seem to pride themselves on being ultra-modern—investing in "The latest toys" and so on.

Still, Duffy writes with a strong sense of rhythm, and some passages of the poem fall into traditional metrical patterns. Listen to the rhythm of lines 19-22, for example:

> I grew to love the lifestyle,
> not the life.
> He grew to love the kudos,
> not the wife.

With different line breaks, this could be an iambic pentameter couplet (two five-beat lines following a da-DUM, da-DUM rhythm):

> I grew | to love | the life- | style, not | the life.
> He grew | to love | the ku- | dos, not | the wife.

In other words, the poem preserves hints of traditional form within its "modern" free verse. This style fits "Mrs Faust" well—after all, it's a modern adaptation of a traditional legend.

RHYME SCHEME

As a (mostly) free verse poem, "Mrs Faust" has no regular rhyme scheme. However, it does feature a number of rhymes, which often include the final word of a given stanza.

These stanza-ending rhymes have a forceful, punchline-like quality, and they can be quite inventive, as when "chronic irritation" (line 25) rhymes with "colonic irrigation" (line 27). Most are perfect rhymes, but a few are imperfect (e.g., "kids"/"His" in lines 8-9), and one is a rich rhyme, involving homophones ("allowed"/"aloud" in lines 43 and 45).

Rhyme adds a playful element to an already mischievous,

satirical poem. The inconsistency of the rhyme pattern and rhyme types fits the poem's casual tone. Rhyme can also have a free-associative quality (one word makes you think of a similar-sounding word, etc.), so it provides a kind of connecting thread through the twists and turns of Mrs. Faust's story. The rhymes, slant rhymes, and light rhymes become especially dense in the final stanza ("ill"/"hell"/"well"/"still"/"sell," plus "vie"/"kidney" and "card"/"bastard"), as if to give the poem's ending a little extra punch.

SPEAKER

The speaker, identified in the title as "Mrs Faust," is a character invented by the poet; she's not part of the original Faust legend. (Note that UK spelling conventions prefer "Mrs" to "Mrs." with a period.)

In most versions of the Faust story, Faust, or Doctor Faustus, is an aging bachelor scholar who seduces a beautiful young woman after making his bargain with the Devil. In Duffy's version, he's married to an equally clever, accomplished, ambitious, and greedy wife both before and after his bargain. (However, he cheats on her throughout his marriage, as revealed in lines like "He went to whores" and "Faust surfed the Internet / for like-minded Bo Peep").

Although Mrs. Faust is every bit as cynical and amoral as her husband, she's excluded from his deal with the Devil, and this allows her to prevail in the end. When his debt comes due and he's dragged off to Hell, she remains behind and inherits everything (because he's left her "the lot" in his "will"). There are other, subtler differences, too: for example, they have slightly different vices beyond selfishness and greed. Mrs. Faust seems to invest more in vanity (cosmetic surgeries, cheesy journeys of "enlighten[ment]," etc.), whereas Faust seems to invest more in lust and violence. In general, though, the two Fausts make a well-matched pair; they're a satirically exaggerated version of a ruthless modern power couple.

SETTING

The poem encompasses a variety of settings, because its main characters (Mrs. Faust and Faust) lead a fast-paced, jet-setting "lifestyle." They're members of the modern power elite, zipping around the world for business, pleasure, or supposed "enlighten[ment]."

The poem's many UK references indicate that the Fausts, like the poet, are primarily based in the UK. The couple buys "A second home in Wales"; Faust chases sex in "Soho" (the London entertainment district); and Faust becomes a member of British Parliament (an "MP") as well as a knight of the realm ("Right Hon. KG"). At the same time, they never stop "mov[ing]" and traveling. For example, Mrs. Faust goes to "China, Thailand, [and] Africa," while Faust, granted superhuman power, not only flies "around the globe" but visits "the moon" and "the Sun"! Mrs. Faust also mentions the digital realm, or "the Internet," which was still extremely new and cutting-edge when the poem was published.

The poem's satirical point is clear: being rich and powerful allows you to go wherever you want, whenever you want. Still, the Fausts never *appreciate* their destinations in any kind of depth; for instance, Mrs. Faust is breezily confident that she's seen all of Rome "in a day." And Faust's final destination—which opens up beneath the "Tuscan tiles" of one of their homes—is "Hell."

CONTEXT

LITERARY CONTEXT

The Scottish-born Carol Ann Duffy (1955-present) is the first (and so far, the only) woman to serve as Poet Laureate of the UK. A working-class writer and an out lesbian, she brought fresh air and new perspectives to a laureateship historically dominated by (mostly) straight, white, middle-class men.

"Mrs Faust" appears in her collection *The World's Wife* (1999), which reflects on the joys and difficulties of being a woman in a sexist world. The poems in *The World's Wife* are monologues in the voices of mythical and historical women from Medusa to Mrs. Midas. By giving these largely silent figures their own say, Duffy offers feminist critiques of myth, history, and literature.

"Mrs Faust" alludes to the German legend of Faust, a scholar who sells his soul to the Devil (or his emissary, the demon "Mephistopheles") in return for some combination of knowledge, wealth, pleasure, and power. The legend originated with the *Faustbuch* (1587), an anonymously authored story collection that grafted older tales about magicians and wizards onto the reputation of a real-life Faust who had died around 1540. Faust has often been depicted as an older bachelor who, once corrupted, seduces an innocent young woman, but in Duffy's telling, he has a wife who shares his ambition and greed.

The Faust legend is the source of the idiom "Faustian bargain," meaning a corrupt deal with a very steep price. It has also inspired such famous literary works as Christopher Marlowe's 16th-century play *Doctor Faustus* (c. 1592, published 1604) and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's 19th-century play *Faust* (1808, 1832). Duffy's poem adapts details from both of these dramas. For example, both Marlowe and Goethe depict Faust's encounter with the mythical Helen of Troy, supposedly the most beautiful woman of all time and the "cause" of the Trojan War. Duffy's poem presents a salacious, modernized version of this encounter and echoes a famous quote from Marlowe's play (line 94):

FAUSTUS. Was this the face that launch'd a thousand

ships,
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium—
Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss.

In most versions of the story, Faust suffers eternal damnation as the price for his greed, lust, and ambition. Goethe notably broke from this tradition; his Faust ascends to Heaven thanks to the intervention of the girl he seduced (Gretchen). But in Duffy's poem, Faust is not only damned, he's gleefully and unrepentantly damned. He goes down to Hell with a "smirk[]" on his face, and his equally corrupt wife lives to tell the tale.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Carol Ann Duffy uses a number of contemporary details to bring the Faust legend up to date. However, she published the poem in 1999, and what seemed ultra-modern at the turn of the 21st century now seems somewhat "historical" as well!

At the time, personal "computers" and "mobile phones" were very much "The latest toys" (lines 14-15); they were only just becoming common consumer products. Mrs. Faust also splurges on a number of Western "lifestyle" trends from that decades and the decades prior: "yoga, t'ai chi, / Feng Shui, therapy, colonic irrigation" (lines 19, 26-27). These practices—several of them adapted, or appropriated, from Asian cultures and commercialized for affluent Westerners—are still part of contemporary life, but they're no longer quite so new and chic.

Likewise, Faust's "clon[ing] of sheep" and "surf[ing] the Internet" for a lover (a "like-minded Bo Peep") would have placed him on the cutting edge of the 1990s. The world's first cloned animal was a sheep named Dolly, born to global media attention in 1996; the first online dating services, such as Match.com, emerged in the middle of the same decade.

Duffy's poetic career took off during the age of Margaret Thatcher, whose long tenure as Prime Minister of the UK (1979-1990) was marked by class struggle, poverty, and the dismantling of post-war welfare institutions. Thatcher's libertarian economics and conservative social policies, as well as her prominent role as the first woman Prime Minister of the UK, made her a divisive and much-reviled figure. But in response to growing social conservatism, the '70s and '80s in England also saw a rise in feminist consciousness. Books like Susan Faludi's *Backlash* examined the subtle (and not-so-subtle) ways in which society was reacting against the women's movement, and third-wave feminism, focused on identity and political power, began to emerge out of the second-wave feminism of the '60s.

Duffy's poetry, with its interest in women's inner lives and areas of female experience often neglected by the literary world, reflects the tumultuous political world in which she came of age.

MORE RESOURCES

EXTERNAL RESOURCES

- The Poem Aloud — Listen to a reading of "Mrs Faust." (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HqY9JhO_LXo)
- A Conversation with the Poet — Watch a discussion between two former UK and U.S. Poets Laureate: Carol Ann Duffy and the late Philip Levine. (https://www.poetryfoundation.org/video/77388/us-uk-poets-laureate-on-being-public-face-for-solitary-act)
- "Mrs Faust" with Intro — The poet reads "Mrs Faust" with a brief introduction (20:20), as well as other poems from The World's Wife. (https://youtu.be/iSyii8Sp-pk?t=1220)
- On Faust — Learn more about the legendary figure who inspired Duffy's poem. (https://www.britannica.com/topic/Faust-literary-character)
- The Poet's Life and Career — Read a brief biography of Carol Ann Duffy at the Poetry Foundation. (https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/carol-ann-duffy)

LITCHARTS ON OTHER CAROL ANN DUFFY POEMS

- A Child's Sleep
- Anne Hathaway
- Before You Were Mine
- Circe
- Death of a Teacher
- Demeter
- Education For Leisure
- Eurydice
- Foreign
- Head of English
- In Mrs Tilscher's Class
- In Your Mind
- Little Red Cap
- Medusa
- Mrs Aesop
- Mrs Darwin
- Mrs Lazarus
- Mrs Midas
- Mrs Sisyphus
- Originally
- Penelope
- Pilate's Wife
- Prayer
- Quickdraw
- Recognition
- Stealing
- The Darling Letters
- The Good Teachers
- Valentine

- Warming Her Pearls
- War Photographer
- We Remember Your Childhood Well
- Work

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