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The Faustian Deal: What is Good and Evil?

Jaclyn Elmquist

EN 373: Mephistopheles

Professor Kate Greenspan

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All devils began as angels in Heaven. Angels are an “intermediate between God and men” (Pope)—heavenly beings created by God “in a state of innocence” (Kent)—who may become “evil by their own act” (Kent). Lucifer was the first angel to fall as he said, “in your heart...I will raise my throne above the stars of God...I will make myself like the most High” (Isaiah 14:12-14). Instead of reaching God’s power, God “brought [Lucifer] down to Sheol, to the depths of the Pit” (Isaiah 14:15). Lucifer and the following fallen angels are damned to hell for eternity, never to experience Heaven again.

In contrast to angels, “God created humankind in his image” (Genesis 1:27). Hence, humanity is “like the most High” as compared to angels. Moreover, humans are on earth, a new place that is outside the divine, and thus, accessible to devils. Ergo, the devil jealously takes advantage of God’s new naive creations.

In the Garden of Eden,¹ the devil, disguised as a serpent,² tempts Eve. In Eden, God forbid Adam and Eve from one action: eating from the tree of knowledge because “you will shall die” (Genesis 2:17). Accordingly, the serpent claims, when a person eats from the tree of knowledge, “You will not die...your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:5). In this instance, the devil proposes an implicit deal with Eve. He promises Eve that, by eating the fruit, she will “be like God.” This is the same desire that caused Lucifer’s damnation. In turn, the devil knows that once Eve bites, she will be punished as he was. Hence, in the exchange, the devil receives the satisfaction of seeing God’s “image” fall from favor. Eve is so enticed by the serpent’s offer, that she disobeys God and takes a bite,

¹ The original home of all of God’s creation before Eve’s sin. In some translations, the Garden of Eden and (terrestrial) paradise are used interchangeably (Driscoll).

² “that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, who deceiver of the whole world—and he was cast unto the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him” (Revelation 12:9)

committing the first sin.³ In consequence, humankind is banned from the Garden of Eden and no longer has direct communication with God. Additionally, Adam and Eve's awareness of good and evil gives them the burden of choice as they begin to exercise their free will without God's guidance.⁴

Humans' exile from the terrestrial paradise mirrors the damnation suffered by devils. The serpent's successful deal allows him to corrupt God's "own image." Furthermore, after Eve's sin, humans are born into original sin.⁵ But, unlike immortal devils, humans have the opportunity to gain their place in Heaven by avoiding the devils' temptations. Inevitably, humankind's favor with God causes the devil to become "the tempter of the human race" as he "tries to involve them in his fall" (Pope).

The legend of Doctor Faustus continues to document the devil's dealings with humans. The *Faustbuch*, authored anonymously and translated in 1587, is the first English account of the German Faustian legend.⁶ In the *Faustbuch*, Faustus wishes to possess divine knowledge and turns to demonic means to find the answer. However, unlike Eve, Faustus is aware of eternal banishment to hell but lacks the fear that would save him. Thus, he does not learn from his predecessor.

Stories about a person making a deal with the devil have been common in Western culture for centuries. The *Faustbuch*, *Mary of Nijmegen*, and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's

³ "[T]his story is often taken by Christians as an account of 'original sin'... describing how God acts and their aftermath lead to the formation of...mortal humans...separated from animals by both bodily shame (requiring clothing) and an awareness of good and evil otherwise possessed only by God" (Coogan 15).

⁴ *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, describes exercising free will as when "we are called on to decide between right and wrong; then the consciousness that we are choosing freely, which carries with it the subsequent conviction that the act was in the strictest sense our own, and that we are responsible for it" (Maher).

⁵ "Original sin may be taken to mean...a consequence of this first sin, the hereditary stain with which we are born on account of our origin or descent from Adam" (Harent).

⁶ The *Faustbuch*'s alternative English title is *The Historie of the Damnable Life and Deserved Death of Doctor John Faustus*.

Faust are ubiquitous in media and later adaptations. For instance, the three twentieth-century films, *Rosemary's Baby*, *Wall Street*, and *Sweet Smell of Success*, emphasize a more old-fashioned idea of morality and use elements of the Faustian legend to depict the contemporary immorality that governs capitalist society.

When the Faustian legend was first popularized, it was believed to be a true story. The devil—and the damnation that would follow one's trafficking with him—was considered a real threat to people.⁷ As a result, *Doctor Faustus* was a cautionary tale, warning humanity against engaging in demonic or occult practices.

Mary of Nijmegen, a sixteenth-century Dutch play with unknown authorship, examines the miserable life of Mary as she is orphaned and mistreated by her family members. After her aunt verbally abuses her, Mary runs into the forest and cries out for help. Unfortunately, Moenen, the one-eyed devil, hears her. In his bargain, he offers Mary the knowledge of the Seven Liberal Arts and his companionship if she changes her name and never prays to God again. Mary agrees, changes her name to Emmeken, and takes the devil as a lover for seven years.

In a unique turn, Goethe's *Faust*, Part I published in 1808 and Part II in 1832 in Germany, portrays God making a deal with Mephistopheles. In the play, God is convinced that the devil will be unable to fully corrupt Faust.⁸ Faust himself is struggling with nihilistic dread as

⁷ "In the early 16th century, there was a real north German magician known as Dr Johann Georg Faust. When he died, his story was wildly embellished with tales of ancient magicians and the myth of a man who made a pact with the Devil...The *Faustbuch* was reprinted and translated throughout Europe, achieving huge notoriety" (The British Library).

⁸ Goethe's *Faust* has similar elements to the story of Job. In the book of Job, Satan or 'the Accuser,' challenges "whether Job's righteousness is for its own sake or for the reward" (Coogan 736). God allows Satan to test Job in multiple ways, including killing his entire family because he is confident he is a "blameless and upright man who fears God and turns away from evil" (Job 1:9).

he realizes he did not enjoy his life fully and can never know all the secrets of the world. Thus, Mephistopheles offers Faust his youth again, to learn all about life, for Faust's soul.

In these stories, the authors present a person who is dissatisfied and desperate for more out of life and a devil who offers just that in exchange for *only* their soul. Drenched in dramatic irony, the narratives unfold as the audience watches the Faustian figure fall into the devil's hands and become morally reprehensible themselves, despite the warning captured by the story of Eve.⁹

In the twentieth century, the deal with the devil became the archetype for many films. Present conditions make the eternal struggle between good and evil, morality and immorality, less clear. Our capitalist culture values wealth and status and regards economic and social failure as a disgrace, a kind of damnation-in-life. Despite the economic system, Christianity continues to be the leading religion in the United States.¹⁰ Amid the 70s with many American failures and political scandals,¹¹ there was a surge in the 'demonic' genre, where "tradition and authority seemed everywhere under assault" (Quinlan). By the late 70s, Americans' view on the importance of religion declined significantly.¹²

⁹ In the New Testament, Jesus presents a quintessential example of what his followers should do in the face of the devil's temptation. In Matthew 4, Jesus is tempted three times by the devil and the third time, He says "'Away with you, Satan! for it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.' Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him" (Matthew 4:10-11).

¹⁰ According to Gallop polls, throughout the 1950s and 70s, about 90% of U.S. adults consistently identified with a Christian religion (Jones, "How Religious Are Americans?"). Additionally, church membership in America was nearly 70% throughout the 1960s until the 1990s (Jones "U.S. Church Membership Falls Below Majority for First Time").

¹¹ In the article, "Demonizing the Sixties: Possession Stories and the Crisis of Religious and Medical Authority in Post-Sixties American Popular Culture," Sean Quinlan writes of the mid-1970s, "Quite simply, the US postwar dream—managed capitalism and greater equality—fell apart, worn thin by the struggles of civil rights, the Vietnam War, and political scandals. Other factors undermined the old consensus, notably the OPEC oil embargo, hyperinflation, and consumer shortages."

¹² In 1965, "70% said religion was very important. That fell to 52% in a 1978 survey -- though the percentage ticked up to near 60% between 1990 and 2005, before declining in the past 15 years" (Jones "How Religious Are Americans?").

Foreshadowing the resurgence of the demonic, *Rosemary's Baby*, released in 1968 and directed by Roman Polanski, examines a modern-day Faustian exchange.¹³ In the film, Guy Woodhouse, a struggling actor, shamelessly arranges for the devil to rape his wife in exchange for his own success. Meanwhile, his wife Rosemary plays the unassuming figure of an innocent “Eve,” unaware of the great sin committed upon her until she sees the devil’s spawn: her newborn.

The 1987 film *Wall Street*, directed and co-written by Oliver Stone, portrays a similar satanic transaction. The film’s protagonist, Bud Fox, gets involved with insider trading,¹⁴ encouraged by his idol, Gordon Gekko. Gekko plays the role of the devil, disguised, as he often is, as a glamorous human being, offering Bud money and an unattainable lifestyle. Thus, Bud agrees to sell information about his father’s labor union. Bud struggles with the conflict between morality and money as Gekko pushes him to accept money from liquidating the airline company his family relied on for decades.

Family dynamics are explored in a different sense in *Sweet Smell of Success*.¹⁵ Released in 1957 and directed by Alexander Mackdrick, the film follows the life of Sidney Falco, a press agent who will do anything to get his clients featured in J. J. Hunsecker’s very popular newspaper column. Hunsecker impersonates the devil as he offers Sid the opportunity to guest-write his column, but only if Sid puts a hit on his sister’s fiancée, Steve. In the end, despite Sid’s best attempts, the hit fails and his devil punishes him.

¹³ *Rosemary's Baby* the film is based on the best-selling novel of the same name by Ira Levin published the year before in 1967 (“Rosemary’s Baby”).

¹⁴ “a crime in which an individual trades company's stocks or other securities by accessing confidential or non-public information about the company. Taking advantage of this privileged access is considered a breach of the individual's fiduciary duty” (Legal Information Institute).

¹⁵ “*Sweet Smell of Success* was based on the short story “Tell Me About It Tomorrow” by Ernest Lehman, who co-wrote the screenplay with Clifford Odets” (Pfeiffer).

Overall, the deal with the devil is designed to examine what happens when a person tries to go beyond what society allows.¹⁶ The *Faustbuch* and its successors show the audience exactly what not to do while their Faustian figure continues to sin and becomes more indistinguishable from the devil. In *Rosemary's Baby*, *Wall Street*, and *Sweet Smell of Success*, the audience watch three New Yorkers,¹⁷ Guy, Bud, and Sid, respectively, each make a deal with their devil and achieve success at the expense of others. The stories of Guy, Bud, and Sid follow a dramatic irony similar to the original Faustus legend as the audience watches the Faustian characters face repercussions for their immoral deals. While these storylines can be understood as morality tales, present-day social norms suggest such immoral actions are often rewarded rather than punished.

A. Establishing the Faustian Character

At the beginning of *Rosemary's Baby*, the character of Guy—Rosemary's husband—is portrayed as a fun-loving but struggling actor. His personality is revealed in a series of mischievous jokes, one involving marijuana use, which at the time signaled a loose lifestyle (*Rosemary's Baby* 00:04:38).¹⁸ Guy's acting history consists of minor roles in the plays *Luther* and *Nobody Loves an Albatross* (00:02:38-40),¹⁹ and both plays question traditional morality.²⁰

¹⁶ People trying to reach beyond their capabilities could be accused of challenging God's predestined path for them. Calvinism, formed in the 16th century by John Calvin, describes predestination as "the eternal decree of God, by which he determined with himself whatever he wished to happen with regard to every man" (Calvin 770).

¹⁷ Terrence Rafferty for the *New York Times*, comments that "all cities, somewhere, have dark, scary streets that can, in noir's violent allegories of moral ambiguity, stand in for the dimmer, grubbier recesses of the soul. But New Yorkers pride themselves on having more of everything than people in other cities do" (Rafferty).

¹⁸ A year after *Rosemary's Baby's* release, at the 1969 Conference on Marijuana, Frederick M. Garfield, Assistant Director at the Federal Bureau of Narcotics highlighted "statistical evidence showing that marijuana use causes damage to individuals and society and argued... that the public should not have 'unrestrained freedom in the drug area'" (Marie). The US government at the time was pushing anti-drug materials onto their citizens, marijuana was commonly believed to be a 'gateway drug' to other drugs (Marie). Additionally, three years after *Rosemary's Baby's* release, President Nixon declared the War on Drugs.

¹⁹ *Luther* depicts a man who defies the Church, revolts, and marries a nun (Britannica).

²⁰ *Nobody Loves an Albatross* portrays a man committing fraud and becoming very successful, facing little to no consequences (Andrews).

Guy's past work experience and personality characterize him as mischievous and pleasure-loving. Thus, Guy is understood as a liberal figure, who does not adhere to traditional Christian norms, and has a looser understanding of morality.²¹

Bud, the protagonist of *Wall Street*, is introduced in a similar fashion. The film opens with Bud telling the office secretary that if he was “[d]oing any better, it’d be a sin” (*Wall Street* 00:02:47). After he reaches his cubicle, Bud asks his coworker, “Hey Chuckie. how's the woman-slayer?” and Charlie responds that he is “still looking for the right 18-year-old wife” (00:03:17-21). Bud's apparent ease in discussing “sin” forces the audience to grapple with morality upon the film's opening scenes. Moreover, the film indicates Bud's workplace operates outside of traditional Western Christian norms when his coworker claims he wants to marry an “18-year-old wife,” a person just above the age of statutory rape. The characters' casual jokes about sin and questionable morals at the film's outset set us up to witness a quick fall for the unfortunate Faustian character, Bud.

In the *Faustbuch*, Doctor Faustus is also a morally weak character which makes him vulnerable to the devil's ploys. In the Faustian legend, as a child, Faustus had “a naughty minde and otherwise adicted, applyed not his studies but tooke himselfe to other exercises” (Pfleiler Chapter 1). However, Faustus's uncle does not allow his nephew's behavior and forces Faustus to study “Divinity” or the Christian religion (Chapter 1). Like Guy and Bud, Faustus is painted as having a mischievous nature. However, Guy and Faustus's societies are not willing to reward debauchery. Instead, Guy struggles to find work and Faustus is the “mock of many, & of the

²¹ Before *Rosemary's Baby's* (novel and film) release, *Time* magazine “ran its notorious cover story on Good Friday, April 8, 1966, entitled, “Is God Dead?”... about a group of young theologians, notably Thomas Altizer and Paul von Buren, who declared that God was no longer immanent in the world. Now, they said, people must make their own spiritual and ethical values” (Quinlon), therefore ridding themselves of past standards as Guy does. *Time Magazine's* “Is God dead?” issue is also featured in the film as Rosemary waits at Dr. Sapirstein's office (*Rosemary's Baby*, 01:40:50).

most part of the Students was called the Speculator” (Chapter 1). In turn, these shared professional struggles concerning the Faustian figure lead to greater dissatisfaction in their life.

Sidney Falco’s employment as a press agent in *Sweet Smell of Success* causes his great dissatisfaction and unease in life. Within the first five minutes of the film, Sid is cut from Hunsecker’s newspaper gossip column for the fifth day in a row (*Sweet Smell of Success* 00:03:50-4). Shortly after, Sid speaks to a client who drops him and says, “You’re a liar, Sidney...Oh, it’s a publicity man’s nature...But also in the sense that you are a personal liar, too” (00:04:34-55). Following this, Sid’s secretary attempts to comfort him. But Sid pushes back, “You think I’m a hero. Well, I’m no hero. I’m nice to people where it pays me to be” (00:05:55-06:01), and explains, “Hunsecker is the golden ladder to the places I want to get...I’m in the big game with the big players... In brief, the best of everything is good enough for me” (00:06:28-56).

Sid, akin to Bud, has a job that functions outside Western Christian moral traditions. Hunsecker’s secretary even remarks that Sid is “immersed in the theology of making a fast buck” (00:48:56). His client suggests Sid’s employment is interchangeable with being “a liar,” and Sid admits he’s nice when “it pays.” Sid has consistently been compromising his morals and has yet to reach Hunsecker’s “golden ladder.” Furthermore, akin to the original Faustus, Sid suffers personal attacks—such as his client’s comment that he’s “a personal liar”—while trying to achieve his personal goals. In combination, Sid faces increased life dissatisfaction. He lies, breaking one of the Ten Commandments,²² to succeed in an already corrupt industry to benefit himself and his clients, and is snubbed by Hunsecker. Sid, like the other Faustian characters, is unable to succeed despite his best attempts.

²² “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor” (Exodus 20:16).

Bud's dissatisfaction stems from being in the presence of wealth while not being able to attain it for himself. In *Wall Street*, Bud is an unsuccessful stockbroker. The first of Bud's clients we see refuses to pay after a faulty deal. Bud's supervisor tells him that, if his client does not pay, Bud will have to (*Wall Street* 00:06:55). Bud protests, "You assigned me this guy, and you know he's got a history of this kind of bullshit" (00:07:09-11), but his supervisor insists. In this instance, Bud has done everything right, but he is the one that will have to pay seven-thousand dollars (00:07:27). Bud's circumstances will not allow him to succeed. Instead of making money at his job, he falls deeper into debt. Hence, Bud's lack of control in his workplace translates into his personal life.

Keith Wagner, in his articles "Giving Form to Finance Culture: Neoliberal Denizens in Wall Street (1987), Boiler Room (2000), and Margin Call (2011)," compares Bud's lifestyle to an extension of free-market capitalist tendencies, with "a state unburdened by 'excessive' intervention in the economy and social life...A free order, in this view, is incompatible with the enactment of rules which specify how people should use the means at their disposal" (46). Bud's workplace, and later his mentor Gekko, reinforce these free-market ideas, or use "at their disposal" in combination with their faulty morals. At Bud's workplace, excessive spending and earnings are celebrated, yet Bud's financial burden prevents him from acting freely.

Bud's lack of control resembles *Faustbuch's* Doctor Faustus as Bud is forced into a particular area of work—or in Faustus's case, area of study—and unfairly treated. The Faustian figure's incapacity to direct their lives causes the characters' great dissatisfaction. Goethe's Doctor Faustus also holds reservations about his life. Doctor Faustus reflects,

I am wiser, true, than your coxcomb-tribe, Your Doctor and Master, your Parson and Scribe...I know no fear of Hell or of Devil...But joy is a stranger to my seclusion...As

that I know aught worth the knowing, Or men could better my wisdom showing. And then, I own nor wealth nor land, Nor honour nor glory can command; A dog would scorn such a life to lead. (Goethe, Part I, 25-26)

In his monologue, Doctor Faustus recognizes he lacks the interpersonal skills necessary to help people and has no material wealth. He knows he is intelligent but is without life experience. As a result, he believes that “a dog would scorn such a life.” Goethe’s Faustus, in his old age, has book knowledge but knows nothing about life or beyond. Thus, he falls into nihilistic dread as he realizes it is too late to re-experience life and his youth. Like Goethe’s Faustus, Guy, Bud, and Sid wish to live another life, but their circumstances prevent them from succeeding. They have become trapped in undesirable lives and do not have a way to escape.

In *Mary of Nijmegen*, Mary is trapped in her circumstances as well. Orphaned at a young age, Mary has “managed her uncle’s household” her whole life (Davidson 93). One day, Mary’s uncle sends her to town and tells her to stay with her aunt for safety. When Mary relates what her uncle directed, her aunt accosts Mary, asking “Are you so worried about your virginity now?...dear niece, you’ve known for a long time now how you were conceived, even if you now pretend to be so coy.” (Davidson 95). Despite Mary’s pleas that she is a virgin, her aunt continues berating her, claiming “I talked with people who saw you not long ago sleeping so shamelessly with your own uncle” (Davidson 95), and denies her a place to stay.

Mary faces many of the same struggles as the contemporary and classic Faustian figure. She has little to no control over her life only doing as her uncle instructs her. Doctor Faustus in the *Faustbuch* is also forced down a path in life by his uncle. Additionally, Bud’s employment in the stock market takes control over his entire life. Furthermore, Mary suffers from personal verbal attacks as Doctor Faustus does when his interests in Necromancy and Conjurations are

revealed. Mary's aunt is convinced Mary is not a virgin because of how Mary was conceived, suggesting Mary's mother had Mary out of wedlock. Mary's aunt refuses to believe that Mary is not as sinful as her mother and so, verbally attacks Mary. Mary has done nothing to be on the receiving end of these attacks, yet is forced to endure them her aunt and uncle are her only family. Thus, Mary is confined to a miserable state of being.

The Faustian characters' struggles—a misunderstood personality, unemployment, verbal insults, financial hardship, aging, and dissatisfaction with life—are familiar to the audience. These works appeal to the audience and show the Faustian figure in sympathetic struggles regarding failure and disillusionment with their present circumstances. Naturally, the audience begins to hope the Faustian character will be lifted outside of their present circumstances. But the protagonists' aim to succeed leads to their downfall and the audience suffers with them. In each of these films, the Faustian figure is tempted by the possibility of attaining more than their life allows and makes the conscious decision to exchange their morality, or something they deem important, for success. They do not explicitly surrender their "souls" in exchange for success; however, *what* the Faustian figure is willing to give up reveals societal values of the time. Hence, it is important to consider, of course, how the "bargain" is presented.

B. The Deal

In *Rosemary's Baby*, Guy is introduced to the devil through his neighbors: the Castevets. Later in the film, the Castevets and their elite friends in New York form a satanic cult that sacrifices people in exchange for the devil's intervention in their lives. This intervention, as implied, brings the cult members material success. Upon meeting Guy, Mr. Castevet recalls seeing Guy in his minor role in a play and claims, "My father was a theatrical producer.... You

have a most interesting inner quality, Guy. It appears in your television work too, and it should carry you very far indeed provided...you get those initial breaks” (*Rosemary’s Baby* 00:27:30-48). Here, Mr. Castevet plays to Guy’s ego to gain his favor by casually including his connections in the entertainment industry intermixed with praise is used to manipulate Guy into friendship. Mr. Castevet’s object, however, is not Guy’s friendship. Rather, it is Rosemary’s womb—for the devil’s spawn. Guy’s mischievous personality and his dissatisfaction with life point to feeble morals and make him an easy target for the devil. Guy’s deal with the devil happens off-screen, but we surmise that it occurs shortly after this scene as Guy’s competitor for a breakout television role goes blind in an accident and Guy receives the part.

In the *Faustbuch*, Doctor Faustus is also easy to persuade. The demon he summons, Mephistopheles, addresses all of Doctor Faustus’s wants and presents him with the following contractual obligations: write his signature blood, give his soul to Lucifer, be an enemy of the Christian people, and deny all Christian belief (Pfieler Chapter 3). The devil concludes that Faustus will have all his “heart would wish or desire” and will “perceiue himself to be a spirit in all manner of actions” (Chapter 3). Because of what Mephistopheles’s powers offer, Doctor Faustus agrees to take the deal, believing “the Deuill was not blacke as they vse to paint him, nor hell so hote as the people say” (Chapter 3).

Guy and Doctor Faustus both succumb to the devil—Guy trades his wife; Faustus trades his soul—in exchange for achieving their dreams. Guy will gain fame and the career he has been denied. Meanwhile, Doctor Faustus will gain the knowledge of the devil and the autonomy of a spirit. The consequences—namely, Doctor Faustus must surrender his soul in twenty-four years, and Guy must see his wife give birth to the devil’s spawn in nine months—seem unimportant to them in comparison to the benefits they will immediately receive. Ultimately, Faustus decides

that the new world Mephistopheles presents is too good to deny; likewise, the modern-day Faustian figure, Guy, quickly betrays his wife for a life of fame and wealth. Doctor Faustus's deal, whereby he attains knowledge, is more like Eve's with the devil. In contrast, the modern-day figure is more focused on material wealth and recognition. This steep diversion from the story of Genesis and the Faustian tale in popular twentieth-century Faustian stories suggests a great change in society's moral code and values. No longer focused on the great divine, the world turns to fame and fortune for validation.

Like Guy, Bud in *Wall Street* is also preoccupied with success, specifically measured by wealth. Bud is determined to free himself from financial ruin by taking on the cold-blooded businessman Gordon Gekko as a client. Bud summons Gekko by calling his office fifty-nine days in a row and showing up at Gekko's office with a box of Cuban cigars on his birthday (*Wall Street* 00:15:00, 00:16:29). Gekko asks Bud to “[t]ell me something I don't know” and Bud impresses Gekko with the not-yet-public ruling about a lawsuit with Bluestar Airlines (00:19:19-57). After Gekko makes money off of the airline's stock, he pushes Bud to spy on Sir Lawrence Wildman to learn about his next business venture.²³ At first, Bud rejects the idea but then Gekko says, “I'm talking liquid. Rich enough to fly in your own jet. Rich enough not to waste time. 50, 100 million” (00:35:41-36:04). Following this, Bud decides to take him up on his offer of millions.

In this scene, Bud decides to involve himself further in insider trading crimes, whereby he and Gekko rig the stock market for individual gain. When fixated on the numbers, the consequence seems minimal.²⁴ Additionally, financialization—“frequently portrayed as an elite

²³ Wildman is another investor who “stole RDL Pharmaceuticals right out from under [Gekko]” (*Wall Street* 00:25:54-59).

²⁴ Wagner writes that the workplace rationale of the stock market “rewards the rush,” makes “illegal activities...seem less severe when capital is quickly acquired” (Wagner 52).

exercise, the means by which the international rentier class redistributes profits to itself” (Wagner 49)—adds to Bud’s skewed perception. Stocks and company stockholders can affect the employment of thousands.²⁵ And so, insider trading can have massive negative effects on people while making a select few rich. However, “the labor force has increasingly sought riskier modes of doing work that can be attributed to behavior brought on by... money-making schemes endorsed under [free-market capitalism]” (Wagner 47). Given Bud’s background, his family’s work in the union,²⁶ the free-market capitalist ideas spread in the workplace, and the normalization of financialization and moneymaking schemes through Gekko, Bud cannot deny the devil's deal. The echo chamber Bud is immersed in blinds him from the immorality of his actions and causes him to fixate on immediate potential monetary gain.

In the first Faustian account, Mephistopheles’s offer is too tempting for Doctor Faustus to refuse. Faustus is extremely educated with sixteen masters (Pfieler Chapter 1). Yet, Mephistopheles, like the serpent in the Garden of Eden, presents Faustus with the promise of inaccessible knowledge. Gekko offers Bud a similar deal: “50-100 million” in riches, an otherwise unreachable sum for Bud. In Guy’s deal, he secures the fame he has dreamed of. The Faustian figure cannot resist the fruit and bites, forgetting his soul and the consequences in the years to come. Instead, he focuses on the pleasures the devil presents. No longer an outcast, the Faustian figure finds that a new world opens up to him. The audience sees this reenactment of

²⁵ Wildman makes this point in *Wall Street* when confronting Gekko. He claims, “I’m going to turn it around...I’m not the only one who pays here Gordon. We’re talking about lives and jobs; three and four generations of steel workers,” (*Wall Street*, 00:50:03-18). However, Gekko quickly discredits Wildman, “Correct me if I’m wrong, but when you took CNX Electronics, you laid off, what, 6,000 workers. Jesmond Fruit –4,000” (*Wall Street*, 00:50:18-28).

²⁶ Furthermore, Wagner cites that “the vaporization of public resources, the rupturing of the social contract...have accompanied the emergence of...preference for corporations” (Wagner 47). Bud represents a generational turn to corporate means of making money as he and his family relied on working-class salaries their entire lives.

the original sin with a new interest; what would they give to have their dreams become an immediate reality?

For Sid, in *Sweet Smell of Success*, the answer comes quickly. Sid's devil figure takes form via the sly columnist: J.J. Hunsecker. Hunsecker's role for Sid is kindred to Gekko's for Bud. Sid goes to great lengths to appease Hunsecker and Hunsecker tasks him with breaking up his sister (Susie) and her boyfriend (Steve), for a spot in his column. Hunsecker's preoccupation with Susie is suggested as an unnatural or incestual affection for his sister. Nevertheless, Sid continues to act on Hunsecker's will. Sid devises a successful plan that includes blackmail, prostitution, lies, and marijuana and ends with Hunsecker playing the hero; Susie breaking up with Steve; Steve insulting Hunsecker and his audience (*Sweet Smell of Success* 00:30:36-01:10:36). Sid tries to celebrate the couple's separation, but Steve's insult causes Hunsecker to fume, eventually commenting, "I want that boy taken apart... You just handle the boy. Preferably tonight" (01:13:37-58). Then, Hunsecker writes on a napkin, "Get Harry Kello Tonight" (01:14:06). Kello is an abusive, crooked police officer who also works for Hunsecker. In this instant, Hunsecker is suggesting that Sid set up Steve for a murderous run-in with Officer Kello. At first, Sid is against it, "J.J., I swear to you on my mother's life, I won't do it... If you gave me your COLUMN, I wouldn't do a thing like that..." (01:15:17-23). After a tense silence, Hunsecker asks, "And who do you suppose writes the column while Susie and I are away for three months?" and Sid accepts his deal (01:15:34-43).

Hunsecker, Gekko, Guy's devil, and Mephistopheles give their Faustian figure exactly what they want. Hunsecker asks Sid to sacrifice his morals for the opportunity to write Hunsecker's column.²⁷ The "golden ladder" is so close that Sid cannot refuse, and as Guy and

²⁷ "You shall not murder" (Exodus 20:13).

Bud do, Sid makes a deal with the devil. In his dedication to Hunsecker, Sid outcasts himself from the rest of society. His story echoes the original Doctor Faustus as Sid is already known and disliked by the majority of Manhattan because of his excessive lying and scheming for Hunsecker. Doctor Faustus and Sid are disliked by the society around them for their preoccupations—Doctor Faustus’s in Conjugation & Necromancy and Sid spreading false stories for his career progression. Thus, the deeper betrayal of the Manhattan elite is not a far leap for Sid, mirroring Faustus and the Christian people. The Faustian figure in each film commits a different betrayal to fulfill their deal. Their betrayal led each to commit more immoral actions, or sins, as they forget themselves and lean into pleasure. Consequently, the Faustian figure begins to develop characteristics mirroring the devils’.

C. Becoming like the Devil

Unlike Guy and Doctor Faustus, Rosemary unknowingly enters into a pact with the devil as her husband, Guy, offers Rosemary to the devil to rape, breaking the sacred oath of marriage by betraying his own flesh.²⁸ Upon breaking this oath, there is a question as to what an unholy matrimony may look like.²⁹ Bud’s betrayal is also familial when he betrays his father for financial gain. In *Sweet Smell of Success*, Sid is willing to betray his morals by potentially arranging a murder in exchange for a shot at writing Hunsecker’s column. Unsurprisingly, the Faustian characters become more willing over time to compromise their morality in exchange for

²⁸ In Genesis 2:24, marriage is described as “a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh.”

²⁹ In the 1970s and 80s, when the novel and movie were being created and produced, the traditional family was being challenged and “de-traditionalized” with the “increases in divorce rates and the age of first marriage, and decreases in male breadwinner families and birth rates” (Coontz 976).

more of their desires. In consequence, the men become more devilish themselves and lose and/or damage their personal relationships.

In *Wall Street*, after Bud helps Gekko gain information about Sir Lawrence Wildman's business plans, Gekko makes millions of dollars and shares his wealth with Bud. Immediately after, Bud adopts a life similar to Gekko's. He rents a nice apartment with his new girlfriend (Gekko's ex-girlfriend) and travels with Gekko in his private jet to luxurious locations. As a way to continue making money for himself and Gekko, Bud sneaks into his college friend's corporate law office to learn about confidential court cases, thus, using another personal relationship for financial gain. After living a rich life, Bud returns home to pay his father, Carl, the money owed and then some. Carl rejects the money and Bud promises to take his parents out to dinner soon. The father and son do not see each other again until Gekko tries to buy Bluestar Airlines.

Just as Bud forgets about his father, Goethe's Faustus discards his past lover, Gretchen, while she is pregnant with Faust's child. After getting swept in Mephistopheles' schemes, Faustus and Mephistopheles show up on Gretchen's street, digging in their bags for anything to present to her. Eventually, Mephistopheles scrounges up "a string of pearls" (Goethe, Part I, 176) and sings mockingly, "Love is but brief! / To no fond thief / Be overleaf, / But it be ring on finger" (Goethe, Part I, 176). Hearing Mephistopheles's words, Gretchen's brother Valentino confronts the pair and strikes Mephistopheles. The devil tells Faust, "'I'll guide your hand, here at your elbow. Come briskly, now!...Lunge you! Let me along to parry" (Part I, 177). Finally, Mephistopheles directs Faustus to "Thrust home!" stabbing and killing Valentino (Part I, 177).

Bud and Faust leave their lives behind once they become entranced by their devils. The two travel with their devils and when they find themselves back where they began, they try to offer material goods in substitution for a genuine apology for their absences. Thus, when Bud's

gift is rejected, he retreats to Gekko and does not return home. Bud's inability to relate to his father on financial matters disrupts their relationship as Gekko taught him that "[g]reed... is good," (*Wall Street* 01:18:04-8).³⁰ In contrast, Faust never asks Gretchen to accept his pearls. Instead, Faust murders Gretchen's brother and runs away. Faust does not apologize to his lover for murdering her brother, rather he flees showing the superficial nature of his love. The two men, corrupted by their respective devils, lose touch with genuine connection, and seek to resolve it through the material as shown by their gifts. Mephistopheles acts as Faust's servant; however, Faust becomes so corrupted by the devil and his whims that he follows Mephistopheles's instructions and murders a man. In the same vein, Gekko becomes a mentor for Bud, only to further his obsession with materiality over morality. In this instance, the Faustian figure becomes overtaken by the devil's world of materiality and pleasure that he forgets the life he led before. Thus we see how the characters become more self-involved and less invested in their relationships.

In *Rosemary's Baby*, Guy uses his relationship with Rosemary to manipulate her for Guy's success. Shortly after Rosemary and Guy agree to have a baby, Mrs. Castevet delivers chocolate mousse to the couple. Rosemary is not a fan, saying, "A chalky under taste" (*Rosemary's Baby* 00:40:03). Guy pushes against Rosemary's opinion, telling her, "That's silly honey," "It's delicious," and finally, "All right, don't eat it. There's always something wrong" (*Rosemary's Baby* 00:40:07-00:40:21). Rosemary then eats a spoonful and throws the rest away when Guy is turned around. That night, Rosemary wakes up while the devil is raping her; however, Guy insists they had sex the night before and persuades Rosemary that it was just a

³⁰ In "Thoughts on Greed and Envy," written for the *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, Kenneth Winarick writes of Gekko, "there is never enough, the hunger never disappears, and is insatiable, made all the more so by the need to sustain defensive omnipotent fantasies that depend on accumulating more and more wealth and power" (325).

nightmare. On the same night Guy tells Rosemary he wants a baby and guilts her into eating the mousse, Guy trafficks Rosemary to the devil. Guy utilizes manipulation tactics so Rosemary is complicit in the devil's scheme.³¹ Up until this point, Rosemary has been completely ignorant of the dealings with the devil, as she has no reason to question her husband. Rosemary continues to be lied to and suffers. In comparison, Guy becomes increasingly like the devil himself, selling his wife for fame and manipulating her to play her part.

A similar authoritarian and manipulative devil can be seen in *Mary of Nijmegen*. After six years of living with the devil, Emmeken, formally Mary, asks the devil Moenen to visit her aunt or uncle whom she has not seen "for six or seven years" (Davidson 109). Moenen is quick to agree, despite driving Emmeken's Aunt to suicide six years earlier (103). Moenen mumbles to himself, "The prayers of that hypocrite [Emmeken's Uncle] have thwarted me often whenever I wanted to crush every bone in her body. I would have broken her neck long ago, but his prayers ...always let her escape from me, over and over" (110). Moenen encourages Emmeken to visit her friends, but not because Moenen cares for Emmeken. Instead, Moenen has been actively misleading Emmeken; Moenen knows Emmeken's aunt is dead. Moenen wants to visit Emmeken's hometown in hopes of finding her uncle—whose prayers have been preventing Moenen from receiving the one thing he truly wants: Emmeken's soul.

Guy and Bud both resemble Moenen. Guy takes advantage of his relationship with Rosemary to encourage behavior that appeals to the devil. Likewise, Bud uses his relationships with others to rig the stock market in his and Gekko's favor. The Faustian characters become so

³¹ In the essay "*Rosemary's Baby: 'It's Alive,'*" for *The Criterion Collection*, Ed Park remarks, "For Guy, the only performance that counts is the one in which he plays a caring husband...and Rosemary is his most important audience" (Park).

engrossed in themselves that they take advantage of their personal relationships without considering the harm they could cause their loved ones. Their devils encourage their selfish behavior as it benefits themselves as well. Guy continues to receive roles and Rosemary plays surrogate for the devil. Bud earns money, but Gekko earns even more. The devil figures know and celebrate the harmful actions of their Faustian figure by rewarding them. And so, the Faustian characters begin to embody more devilish personas.

In contrast, in *Sweet Smell of Success*, Sid does not have any close or intimate relationships.³² From the start of the film, it is implied that Sid has been in his devil's, Hunsecker's, grasp for a period already,³³ who is admittedly only nice for the money. Yet Sid lacks the wealth to make up for the unredeemable qualities he acquired through Hunsecker. Therefore, Sid has already lost all his relationships, which is the path Guy and Bud are making their way toward. Still, after Sid leaves Officer Kello to assault Steve, Sid manages to plunge deeper into his immoral ways. He buys rounds of alcohol for everyone at the bar and toasts "to the thing we always dreamed about, it makes you cool in the summertime, it keeps you warm in the wintertime...Gentleman, I'm toasting my favorite new perfume - Success" (*Sweet Smell of Success* 01:24:38-53). Shortly after, Sid's potential client tries to follow up with him. Instead of responding to the client, Sid directs his answer to the other men at the bar, "Uh, one of you guys want a bread-and-butter account?" (01:25:15-17).

Sid does not reflect on the fact he just arranged a man's death. Instead, Sid buys friends through alcohol and toasts to what he believes he just gained by conspiring to murder a man:

³² Sid's relationship with women consist of verbally abusing his secretary to take out his frustrations, flirting with Hunsecker's secretary to see the Hunsecker's draft of the column, and prostituting his lover to another columnist to spread a lie for Hunsecker.

³³ Director and screenwriter Franc Roddam commented that from the start of the film, "Falco and Hunsecker are readily absorbed and consciously at ease in their corrupt and morally bereft world" (Roddam).

“Success.” His language suggests he found the answer to daily struggles, i.e., “Success,” never mind how he received it. This behavior is similar to Emmeken’s in *Mary of Nijmegen*. Moreover, Emmeken has no other close relationship other than with the devil Moenen. In turn, Emmeken reflects on her life of sin with Moenen:

‘I know well that it’s this Moenen who’s the plague...he is not the best of men. I feel...that he must be a devil, or not much better...How shall I repent? Just look at my life, judge for yourself, it’s gone too far for repentance. Aha, I spy two others over there whom I invited for dinner and drinks. There I’ll go and raise a glass with them’ After this she again went drinking with her companions, at which time Moenen so contrived it that another person died. (Davidson 108)

In her monologue, she recognizes that Moenen “must be a devil, or not much better,” and that sin and death seem to follow them. Yet Emmeken decides to stay with Moenen and ignore it.

Sid and Emmeken choose to ignore the immoral actions they are committing when they are with or helping their respective devil or devil figure. They both turn to bodily pleasures for comfort and drown any potential pain or empathy their actions may cause them. As a consequence, they continue to bring pain to those around them and live sinfully. For instance, Sid speaks harmfully to a potential client because he believes Steve’s death will lead him to the wealth he desires. Emmeken’s belief that she has “gone too far for repentance” allows her to enable Moenen’s behavior while continuing to live immorally. Emmeken and Sid find solace from their sins in the success that Moenen and Hunsecker have the potential to give them. The two have spent more time with their devils than Guy, Bud, or Goethe’s Faust, so each learned to numb their conscience to live immorally. Consequently, Emmeken and Sid have no outside

intimate relationships or communication with their past friends and family. The sinful behavior learned from the devil affects their abilities to connect with others.

In the twentieth-century films *Rosemary's Baby*, *Wall Street*, and *Sweet Smell of Success*, Guy, Bud, and Sid focus on their careers instead of their relationships. Goethe's Faust also falls into this category, allowing Mephistopheles to direct him to murder his lover's brother and run from the consequences instead of parenting his bastard child. The Faustian figure, upon receiving the life they desired, happily succumbs to the bodily pleasures presented to them. As a result, they become attached to the life acquired. Thus, they begin to act like the devil himself, using others to keep their lifestyle sustained. In summation, the devil figures in contemporary films reinforce their belief systems until the inevitable disaster strikes.

D. Damnation

In *Sweet Smell of Success*, Sid believes he accomplished Hunsecker's instructions and will be rewarded. While celebrating the impending death of Steve at a bar, Sid receives a message that Hunsecker wants him to come to his apartment; however, only Susie is there. Susie accuses Sid and Hunsecker of putting Steve in the hospital, threatens to commit suicide in consequence, and locks herself in her room. Sid denies her accusations and says,

Come around some night when I'm not writing your brother's column and I'll revise that delicate outlook of life. To give credit where credit is due, Susie, that body of yours deserves a better fate than tumbling off some terrace (*Sweet Smell of Success* 01:29:12-26).

After Susie does not respond, Sid rushes in from the terrace to save Susie. Hunsecker comes home and Sid tries to explain himself but Susie does not corroborate his story. Consequently,

Hunsecker begins to assault Sid and Sid blurts out, “You're defending your sister? You big phony! Didn't you tell me to get Kello?” (01:32:48-33:03). Hunsecker responds, talking to Susie, “Just as I know he's lying about your attempted suicide, you know he's lying about me. But we can't leave it like this, can we?” (01:33:16-24). Hunsecker then calls Officer Kello and tells him Sid set Steve up out of jealousy. Ultimately, the movie ends with Sid beat up and left for dead, Susie choosing Steve over her brother, and Hunsecker looking over his terrace onto the city.

Sid's unfortunate tale is most like the damnation depicted in the *Faustbuch*. After his twenty-four years with Mephistopheles, Doctor Faustus is taken by the devil. Doctor Faustus invites his students over to warn them against the devil, and inform them of his imminent damnation. Outside his bedroom, his students “heard a mighty noise and hissing, as if the hall had beene full of Snakes and Adders...he began to crie for help, saying: murther, murther, but it came foorth with halfe a voice, hollowly: shortly after, they heard him no more” (Pfieler Chapter 63). The next morning, they went in the hall and “found not Faustus, but all the hall lay desprinkled with blood, his braines cleauing to the wall, for the deuill had beaten him from one wall against another: In one corner lay his eyes, in an other his téeth” (Chapter 63). Here, Faustus accepts fate and does not believe he can still receive God's grace, so he does not try.

Sid is also stuck in his ways as demonstrated by his sexualization Susie after she admits to suicidal thoughts. Instead of comforting Susie, Sid continues to harm her in hopes to bully her out of committing the act. Subsequently, Hunsecker turns Sid into the police, ensuring Steve's redemption in the media and Sid's downfall, if he survives Officer Kello. Hunsecker betrays Sid to punish him for failing as Steve does not die, and Sid reveals the truth to Susie. Mephistopheles similarly betrays Doctor Faustus, acting like his friendly servant for twenty-four years, and then beating him “from one wall against another,” until he dies.

In Sid's and Doctor Faustus's damnations, some balance is restored after extreme violence. Doctor Faustus lived out his life sinfully; thus, he had a violent death and was damned to hell. Similarly, Sid consistently lied and blackmailed until he caused deadly harm, and so his career was destroyed and he received a beating himself. Mephistopheles and Hunsecker walk away from the interaction virtually unharmed and unchanged from the interaction. Hunsecker does lose his sister but faces no professional or financial repercussions.³⁴ The film's ending indicates that once one is powerful enough, as in connected, wealthy, and respected, they do not have to suffer professional or financial consequences for their actions. In contrast, Sid did not reach the "golden ladder" of success and is left for dead because of his actions. Overall, the stories reveal the ever-present temptation and evil in the world while their protagonists face the consequences of their actions. Sid and Doctor Faustus serve as the perfect examples of what *not* to be.

Nevertheless, not all Faustian characters suffer damnation. In *Wall Street*, after Bud discovers Gekko's plans to liquidate Bluestar Airlines, Bud manipulates the airline's stock and convinces Sir Lawrence Woodman to buy the majority of stocks and save the airline. Amid his planning, Bud breaks up with Darien as she refuses to go after Gekko, stating, "When I was down and had nothing, it was Gordon who helped me...when you've had money and lost it, it's worse than never having had it at all" (*Wall Street* 01:41:33-47). Afterward, Bud is arrested for insider trading and fraud. He trades in Gekko for a lesser sentence and in the end, Bud arrives at the courthouse. The movie ends with Bud's father saying, "It's gonna be hard on you...but maybe...it's the best thing that could have happened to you. You stop going for the easy buck and produce something with your life. Create instead of living off the buying and selling of

³⁴ Susie tells Hunsecker, "I'd rather be dead than living with you" (*Sweet Smell of Success* 1:34:53-55)

others” (01:59:31-47). Bud’s time in prison is a serious punishment and serves as part of Bud’s penance for his sins. His good deed, turning in Gekko, completes Bud’s penance as it shows he recognizes his actions were wrong. Hence, Bud does not suffer from damnation.

Mary of Nijmegen has a similar, unexpected redemption arc. After watching a religious play, Emmeken realizes her wrongs and wants to be forgiven. Moenen, her lover and the devil, then attempts to murder her by flying up and throwing her from the sky. However, the grace of God saves her and she is unharmed in the fall. Afterward, Moenen accepts failure and continues to search for the next soul. Meanwhile, Emmeken and her uncle visit the Pope and her penance is to be locked in three iron rings until they fall off, at which point “her sins will be completely forgiven. Not before will she be pure and free” (Davidson 120). Emmeken then moves to a nunnery where she “lived for another two years after her bonds fell off...always doing penance and making an effort to please the King of Kings” (122).

Emmeken and Bud lose their freedom for a time, but get a second chance at life in return. Additionally, they lose toxic lovers—Darien, who values money first, and Moenen, who wanted Emmeken’s soul. Bud redeems himself partially by betraying Gekko and needs to go to jail to further learn from his actions. Carl’s words ending the movie suggest Bud will learn from his actions and time in jail and will “produce something with [his] life.” After losing her devil lover, Emmeken spends most of her life serving penance but will receive an eternity in paradise at the end. Therefore, the Faustian characters save themselves by recognizing their wrongs and facing the consequences of their sins.

In Goethe’s *Faust*, Faust also is redeemed. He retains his sense of good and evil, has regret, and thus, has not been fully corrupted by Mephistopheles. When Angels come to retrieve Faust’s soul, Mephistopheles cries out, “How is’t with me? Like Job amidst the embers The

whole man boil on boil, until he loath Himself...I've bungled it in scurvy fashion, Great outlay shamefully have flung away. To vulgar lust, to silly mawkish passion" (Goethe, Part II, 332). Mephistopheles and Gekko both "bungled" their dealings with Faust and Bud. Consequently, Mephistopheles suffers from physical wounds and mental wounds; this is true for Gekko as well as he faces prison and a ruined reputation.

Failing to handle their Faustian figures shatters their egos. However, Bud and Faust receive a second chance because they have a moral reckoning. Here, the devil figures face stronger damnation than Faustian figures. This is in stark contrast with the original Faustian legend and *Sweet Smell of Success* where the figures do suffer damnation. *Wall Street*, *Mary of Nijmegen*, and Goethe's *Faust* all portray a peaceful balance where the Faustian figure is saved and the devil remains damned. While Sid and Doctor Faustus exemplify how *not* to behave, Bud, Emmeken, and Goethe's Faust show that redemption *is* possible for all.

Rosemary's Baby's Faustian figure takes a unique path. After Rosemary gives birth, Guy and Dr. Saperstein tell her the baby died at birth. Guy "comforts" Rosemary,

let's face it, darling, you had the prepartum crazies...I know this is the worst thing that ever happened to you but from now on everything is going to be roses. Paramount is within an inch of where we want them, and suddenly Universal is interested too. We're going to blow this town and be in the beautiful hills of Beverly...And the kids, too, Roo. Scouts honor....Now, I've got to run now and get 'famous.' (*Rosemary's Baby* 02:01:22-02:01:22)

Following her stillbirth, Rosemary is constantly monitored by the Casteverts and other members of the cult in their apartment. Next, the television informs the audience there is a heatwave (02:02:42).

For a couple of days, Rosemary hears a baby crying; eventually, she follows the noise to a secret hallway that attaches to her and the Castevets' apartments. There, she finds Guy and the rest of the cult, including a photographer snapping photos of the event, surrounding a black bassinet. Rosemary discovers she was raped by the devil in Mr. Castevet's announcement, "Satan is His Father...He came up from Hell and begat a Son of mortal woman!... He shall overthrow the might...He shall redeem the despised and wreak vengeance in the name of the burned and the tortured!...God is dead! Satan lives! This is year one!" (02:10:32-02:11:27). Then, Guy goes to Rosemary and pleads, "They promised me you wouldn't be hurt, and you haven't been. I mean, suppose you'd had a baby and lost it; wouldn't it be the same? And we're getting so much in return, Ro" (02:12:41-02:12:56). In response, Rosemary spits in Guy's face. The movie closes with the cult surrounding Rosemary as she rocks the devil's spawn, her baby, and the photographer circles them.

In the final scenes of *Rosemary's Baby*, Guy begs for Rosemary's love and is rejected. Right after Rosemary gives birth, Guy quickly dismisses all Rosemary's previous concerns as "prepartum crazies," and barely acknowledges their supposed stillborn baby. Instead, Guy pushes his dreams of success on Rosemary, adding on, "And the kids, too, Ro." Guy's selfish behavior continues as he tries to justify his actions to Rosemary, reminding her that "we're getting so much in return," and not apologizing for his actions. Rosemary rejects him, however, and there is no further damnation for Guy implied. Instead, the heatwave, Mr. Castevet's speech, and the photographer suggest a new age of evil reigning in the world as a result of Guy's actions. The words, "He shall redeem the despised and wreak vengeance in the name of the burned and the tortured," suggest overturning the current order— i.e., the Reckoning or the war between

Heaven and Hell.³⁵ This event mirrors Anton Lavey's inauguration of his Church of Satan, christened in "Year One" on April 30, 1966 (Quinlan), one year before the novel's publication and two years before the film's release.³⁶ Given the apparent similarities, the film foreshadows the start of a new world order. Thus, Guy's actions suggest much greater consequences than his Faustian relatives as he enables the birth of the anti-Christ.

Conclusion

In 1968, *Rosemary's Baby* predicted a new world order ruled by Satan's son. While it is hard to know what such a world would look like, *Rosemary's Baby*, *Wall Street*, and *Sweet Smell of Success* depict evil embodied by the hungry, rapacious, successful, respected, and prominent man. Guy, Bud, and Sid represent the average American man in capitalistic New York City, trying to become successful. They encounter other men, more successful than themselves, who present opportunities. Unbeknownst to them, these are "Mephistophelean" figures, who are offering success in exchange for their souls. Success will come at a cost, of course, and not a small one.

The films' plotlines mirror the original Faustian bargain with the devil and its relevant successors. Doctor Faustus struggles to find his place in society and ultimately is ostracized, despite his wealth of knowledge. Thus, he seeks the devil to learn more. Mephistopheles offers

³⁵ In the Book of Revelation, it does not distinctly mention the devil having a child. However, in Genesis before the flood, it is written that "the sons of God went in on the daughters of humans, who bore children to them. These were the heroes that were of the old, warriors of the renown" (Genesis 6:4). The "sons of God" not being humans, or Jesus, is implied to be angels. Thus, if angels bore warrior children with women in the past, it is not outside the realm of possibilities for Satan to impregnate Rosemary with the demonic anti-Christ.

³⁶ Anton Lavey was rumored to have played the Devil in *Rosemary's Baby*. Many reputable news sources, including the *Washington Post* and *Variety*, falsely reported that Lavey did play the Devil in the film in articles covering his life and death. *Vanity Fair* commented he was "falsely credited with working as a consultant" (Jacob 2018). Lavey has no official accreditation working for *Rosemary's Baby* and on the IMBD page for *Rosemary's Baby*, Clay Tanner is listed as the uncredited actor who plays the Devil ("Rosemary's Baby").

Doctor Faustus all he could ever want, the devil's knowledge and autonomy of a spirit, for *only* his soul.

When the everyday man (i.e., Guy, Bud, or Sid) is Faustus, the devil is a wealthy man (i.e., Mr. Castevet, Gekko, or Hunsecker); the temptation is money; and evil becomes a product of success. Guy continues to sin by lying to his wife and deliberately confusing and drugging her into submission. Bud sins by exploiting his relationships to manipulate the stock market, and possibly jeopardizing millions of jobs to his benefit. Sid's sins stack up in blackmail, prostitution, lies, and attempted murder. They do it all for success. While the endings of the films diverge, the films consistently agree on what represents evil today.

The serpent came to Eve and prompted her to eat—"be like God, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:5). The devils in the aforementioned texts and films offer something slightly different. They say, "Come be like *me*," and each offers their victims their greatest desires. The devil's temptation, the invitation to be "*me*," breeds evil. The desperate everyday man wants wealth and status; *Rosemary's Baby*, *Wall Street*, and *Sweet Smell of Success* asks the everyday man how far they will go for their version of success.³⁷

These films may seem far removed from our world, but they are not. In a review for *Sweet Smell of Success*, Rodham claims Hunsecker sees "himself as almost God-like...He controls the hearts and minds of his 60 million readers: he...wants to control everything" (Rodham). Moreover, Hunsecker was based on Walter Winchell, one of the "big columnists" that

³⁷ The Faustian figure's fall is the film depicting what they believe the consequences should be. In the case of *Rosemary's Baby*, the ending suggests society has digressed too far. For instance, as the devil's child gains followers, soon many devils like Guy will walk among us, worshiping wealth and success. *Wall Street* and *Sweet Smell of Success* follow that line of thinking as well as Bud and Sid conduct Gekko and Hunsecker's bidding in exchange for success.

was “more powerful than presidents” (Kashner).³⁸ As a result, the greatest twist in the *Sweet Smell of Success* is the realization that “the corrupt are in control of destiny” (Rodham). In a 2010-piece revisiting *Wall Street* for the *New Statesman*, Ryan Gilbey wrote that it was a “popular myth” that Gekko, Hunsecker’s counterpart, “was the villain of the piece” (Gilbey 72). Gilbey claims the movie ends without showing Gekko in jail because “[s]entimentality wins out” and it “remains too awful to be envisaged anywhere but in our imagination” (Gilbey 73). Shortly thereafter, an interview with the director Oliver Stone is featured, where Stone states ““Gekko is ruthless and impossible to stop and had no morals”” (Raphael 73).

Hunsecker does not garner many fans, however, the *power* that both he and Gekko wield tends to be admired rather than detested. The attachment to Gekko that Gilbey and many others feel can be attributed to the rise of free-market capitalism in modern days. Wagner compares “the roughneck” stockbrokers of the *Boiler Room* (2000) and their focus on being “cash rich...to compensate for the second rate status as stockbrokers and the dreams they have of being the next Gordan Gekko” (Wagner 56). In “Thoughts on Greed and Envy,” Winarick comments that nobody is immune of the temptation Gekko (and Hunsecker) present, the “fantasies of unlimited power and wealth,” or, “the realization that...actualization of such fantasies undermines, rather than supports, the evolutionary process and brings untold harm” (Winarick 326). Thus, it is up to the individual to reward or condemn the Gekkos and Hunseckers of the world. The free-market ideology in America’s capitalist society enables many to justify and idolize behavior like Gekko and Hunsecker’s.

³⁸ “The writer Michael Herr called Winchell ‘the wizard of the American vicarious: gossip columnist, failed vaudevillian, power broker, and journalistic demagogue, one of the most powerful and famous men of his time...’ An insecure man, he was quick to perceive slights and avenged them ruthlessly” (Kashner).

Rosemary's Baby is similar in its depiction as it questions the fall of Western morality in exchange for wealth and success. Unlike Gekko and Hunsecker, the devil himself has trouble gaining sympathy from his audience. However, Guy's liberalism allows him to justify his immoral actions. Rosemary and Guy represent a young all-American couple in Manhattan; they are attractive and likable, but not religious. In turn, *Rosemary's Baby* illustrates how the traditional moral authority is falling apart. In its wake, the film moves to accept Satan as its savior and wealth and fame as the ultimate goal through Rosemary's acceptance of her baby and Guy's success.

The three films turn "the American dream into a living hell" (Quinlan) when the Faustian figures face the repercussions of their deals. The evil shown is wrapped in a bow, or clean-cut in a suit, promising wealth and success. In a society run by capitalism, where wealth rules and the poor are exploited for the wealthy's gain, these films critique America's money-first mentality. In reality, the world continues to function on materialistic means, often trading morality for success. The audience watches in either horror or admiration as the everyday man either climbs his way to the top or dramatically tumbles down. In the films' varying endings, the Faustian figure asks the audience to turn inward and ask: "Do you remember the difference between good and evil?"

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