Individual Paper description (300 words maximum):
My paper analyzes literary time in Fedor Dostoevsky’s late novella “The Meek One” (Krotkaia, 1876) in its relation to Faust (1808-1832) by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. In Faust, the focus will be on eternity and moment in “The Prelude in the Theatre” and “Marthe’s Garden” (Part 1) as well as Faust’s final monologue in Part 2. Given Goethe’s preference for Pindaric tempics of presentism, it is my contention that the eternal moments of especially significant kairos time are intended in Dostoevsky’s narrative to represent the silent presence of the divine, which may only be contiguous with the human for a brief time in the present. It is by this means, I argue, that he introduces the notion of the divine into a narrative recounted by an atheist protagonist.

Time, expressed through Goethean tropes of eternity and moment, is the key to “The Meek One”’s message, inspired by the German tragedy, of good intentions resulting in evil. The Mephistophelian traits of the pawnbroker hero in Dostoevsky’s story are revealed through his attempts to gain control over time, thus endeavouring to usurp the role of the divine, the “G’terhand” of Faust. Dostoevsky takes Goethe’s play – “a distinctive emblem of Romanticism” (Durrani) – as his main intertext in “The Meek One,” demonstrating his abiding interest in German literature of the Romantic period during a stage of his career (that of the Writer’s Diary) normally associated with the author’s semi-fictional and non-fictional criticisms of Western Europe.