

# THE PHILOSOPHY OF DEATH IN CH. MARLOWE'S *DR. FAUSTUS*

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## INTRODUCTION

Most of the twentieth-century critical interpretations of Christopher Marlowe's *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus* have been attracted to the numerous problems posed by the complex nature of Faustus' sin which seem to introduce damnation at the end of the play<sup>97</sup>.

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<sup>97</sup> See Th. McAlindon, "Classical mythology and Christian tradition in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*", *P.M.L.A.*, LXXI (June, 1966) 214-223, particularly pp. 221-223; Lily B. Campbell, "Doctor Faustus: a case of conscience", *P.M.L.A.*, (LXVII, 2, March, 1952), 219-239, where she studies the problems of Faustus' sin in the light of a classic case of conflict of conscience (Spira's case) which she suggests influenced Marlowe in his design of his main character's anguish; Robert Ornstein, "Marlowe and God: the tragic theology of *Doctor Faustus*", *P.M.L.A.*, (LXXXIII, no. 5, October, 1968) 1378-1385, particularly pp. 1384-5; W.W. Greg, "The damnation of Faustus", Clifford Leech (ed.), *Marlowe. A Collection of Critical Essays*, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1964) 92-107. In considering Helen a succubus, Greg is the only critic (and also the editor of the most reliable editions of the text) who has insinuated the possibility of a diabolic influence on Faustus, though he did not explore the theme further than that; for a complementary interpretation to that of Greg, see J.P. Brockbank, "The damnation of Faustus", in Leech (ed.), 112-119; for an orthodox approach to this problem see Leo Kirschbaum (ed.), *The Plays of Ch. Marlowe*, (New York: 1962) and for an heterodox approach, Irving Ribner (ed.), *The Complete Plays of Ch. Marlowe*, (New York: 1963). For more recent interpretations, see Bruce Edwin Brandt, *Ch. Marlowe and the Metaphysical Problem Play*, (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Salzburg, 1985), especially its bibliography; and Roy T. Eriksen, *The Forms of Faustus' Fortunes*, (Oslo: Solum, 1987). For moral and theological questions, see J. Pieper, *Las Virtudes Fundamentales*, (Madrid: Rialp, 1988).

Elsewhere, I have suggested that criticism of this aspect of the play systematically fails to notice and account for a factor which -in my view- requires a different approach to the nature of Faustus' sin: namely the fact that Marlowe presents the figure of Dr. Faustus as one suffering from diabolic possession<sup>98</sup>. In this paper, I intend to explore Faustus' problematic experience and intellectual apprehension of death; I will contend here that the 'secularization' of the protagonist's hope of immortality is responsible for his refusal to accept that death is a mode of being which life, when life itself begins, immediately adopts; this is the reason why Faustus rejects the licit sciences of the time. According to popular belief, as well as to the uninterrupted teaching of the Church, he is not fully responsible for many of the 'objective' sins critics have thought him to commit in the course of the play. On the contrary, no sin is committed, when the above-mentioned rejection formally occurs, because by then he is no longer really free to choose, since he is obsessed by the devil. His understanding cannot give sufficient information to his will:

Twas I, that when thou wer't i'the way to heuen,  
Damb'd vp thy passage, when thou took'st the booke,  
To view the Scriptures, then I turn'd the leaues  
And led thine eye. [...] <sup>99</sup>,

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<sup>98</sup> See my chapter "Marlowe's Faustus at the crossroads: mediaeval elements and diabolical games", Miguel Martínez (ed.), *Literature, Culture and Society of the Middle Ages*, (Barcelona: PPU, 1989) 2639-2718, particularly pp. 2681-2695, where I endeavour in a textual analysis which results in an unambiguous confirmation that "[...] Dr. Faustus is presented from the very beginning of the play under a state of diabolical influence, which develops into diabolical possession. Textual evidence for this result from semiotic and historical analysis (Faustus' split, pseudo-schizophrenic personality, the use Marlowe makes of the pronominal system [...], demonologic literature of the time [...]), to say nothing of the fact that the pact with the devil is generally regarded as implying diabolical possession, sometimes standing as one of its types" (pp. 2694-5). See also my article "The discovery of solitude and Ch. Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus*", *Il Confronto Letterario*, Padova, 1990 (in press) 14-18.

<sup>99</sup> 5. l. 1988-1992. Quotations, when it is not stated to the contrary, are taken from the B-Text, *The Tragedie of Doctor Faustus* (1616) as set by W.W. Greg, Marlowe's "*Doctor Faustus*", 1604-1616. *Parallel Texts*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1950). As I did in my Ph.D. Dissertation, (*Forms of Faustus' solitude: humanist themes and conventions of the Italian Renaissance in Ch. Marlowe's The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Dr. Faustus*, 3 vols., University of

says Mephostophilis, thus revealing how he prevented Faustus from reading the whole text<sup>100</sup>. This lies at the very core of Faustus' existential solitude and greatly helps to explain both Marlowe's secret plan for his faustian creation and our contemporaries' interest in it. Faustus' history is that of his tragic life and death, but neither of these can be understood without the other, while the text gives us much more of his death than it tells us about his life.

## LOVE AND DEATH.

Faustus' pathetic solitary death epitomizes well that savage death presided by unbearable feelings of horror before an oncoming Hell, which can be explained in part by referring to Renaissance individualism violently reacting against the end of man's life-time, a time that is, in turn, no longer conceived as 'passus' but as 'fractus'. Moreover, Marlowe's presentation of Faustus' death, with the paraphernalia of dramatic and macabre effects, announces the wedding between Eros and Tanatos which we find perfectly consolidated in our contemporary literature and cinematography. It is precisely by the end of the sixteenth century when Europe sees the beginning of that macabre imagination which, on the other hand, is particularly relevant in painting and literature; the chaste self-restraint of the fourteenth and fifteenth century 'dances of death' becomes a violent and erotic experience. Durer's "The Knight of the Apocalypse" is represented riding on an extremely thin horse that contrasts with the deliberately disproportionate dimension given to its genitals; in quite a similar way, as his last night approaches, Dr. Faustus seems only to care about food and sex, as preliminaries for a new and graver affair: demoniality.

The origin of Faustus' final recourse to Hellen in his useless attempt to escape damnation may be found within the second act, when he asks Mephostophilis for a wife:

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Bologna, 1988), I will now consider and quote only those lines which are unquestionably Marlowe's.

<sup>100</sup> "Stipendia enim peccati, mors. Gratia autem Dei, vita aeterna, in Christo Jesu Domino nostro". Cfr. St. Paul's *Epistle to the Romans*, 6, 23. At the end of the play, we learn that in the opening scene, Faustus is reading from St. Jerome's Latin Vulgate, but he is not allowed to learn about Grace and repentance.

[...], let me haue a wife, the fairest Maid in  
Germany, for I am wanton and lasciuious, and cannot liue  
without a wife".

(2. 1. 533-4).

As usual, Faustus quite reasonably fails to get his wife, but not because -as many believe and the text misleadingly suggests- his petition implies a sacramental union which the devil obviously abominates (which is true), but rather because a prostitute is what Faustus is asking for, since, in his explanation, he reduces the concept to the realm of mere instinctive sexual behaviour. It is not difficult to agree with Hazo in that "to be loved [...] is normally to be singled out"<sup>101</sup>; however Dr. Faustus depersonalizes the choice as far as he can and thus he cannot love. What is foreshadowed in the second act finds ulterior confirmation by the end of the play: Faustus' relation with the spirit of Helen of Troy is designed so as to negate the principle of love. As death approaches, Faustus seems to give way to a highly disordered sexual passion which, if we follow Greg, leads to necrophilia and demoniality. But the main point is not whether he did so or not; the crucial aspect of this question is the way in which Marlowe describes the situation. Under the disguise of eros, separated from sex, Marlowe cleverly presents the inhumanity of sex without eros. Helen is considered as a mere means; she is not loved in or for herself, but simply functions as a vehicle through which Faustus will find fame rather than pleasure. Helen's fame, in turn, only serves to increase Faustus' fame, as far as he is capable of raising her up; but fame, in turn, is for Faustus a mere instrument to attempt at the achievement of a minor form of immortality, precisely that which he had abominated in his first soliloquy:

Be a Phisitian Faustus, heape vp gold,  
And be eterniz'd for some wondrous cure:  
[...] Why Faustus, hast thou not attain'd that end?  
[...] Yet art thou still but Faustus, and a man.

(1. 1. 42-3; 46; 50)

However, nothing radically changes after the signing of the pact as far as Faustus' knowledge, pleasure and power are concerned<sup>102</sup>. When he kisses

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<sup>101</sup> Robert G. Hazo, *The Idea of Love* (New York: 1967).

<sup>102</sup> "Pero además, el personaje Fausto -que se anuncia trágico, como Antonio en *Antonio y Cleopatra* de Shakespeare- a la postre se revela patético. Así, casi en la

her, and a touch of passion can be finally perceived, his soul is stolen and it flies away, in the form of a prologue to his immediate and ineluctable death. This episode of Helen and Faustus is commonly thought of as being rhetorically built up around irony and also around the "soul-in-the-kiss-conceit":

Was this the face that Launcht a thousand ships,  
And burnt the toplesse Towers of Ilium?  
Sweet Hellen make me immortall with a kisse:  
Her lips sucke forth my soule, see where it flies.  
Come Hellen, come, giue me my soule againe.

(5. 1. 1874-78).

I feel that, apart from the tone, there is scarce if any irony in this passage, particularly if we consider it within an appropriate context. Instead, there is inversion and a beautiful and singularly successful Elizabethan conceit<sup>103</sup>. The most popular version of this theme in Marlowe's time was the *mors oculi*, according to which "To die was to be loved by a god, and partake through him of eternal bliss"<sup>104</sup> and "this kiss between soul and deity referred both to the soul's flight from the body to join rapturously with God during the highest stage of contemplation and to the ecstasy of a saintly death which unites the soul to God in the afterlife"<sup>105</sup>. The inversion of this

mitad de las ocasiones (42.28%), los actos de habla en que Fausto se halla involucrado no obtienen el efecto perlocucionario deseado. No consigue casi nada de lo que anhela: ni satisfactoria respuesta a sus preguntas, ni el poder que se prometiera en el primer monólogo, ni la felicidad perdida, ni la 'esposa' deseada, ni la paz de la gloria, ni el perdón de su mundo, ni la comprensión de los estudiantes, ni un lugar en el tiempo... aunque sí consigue, desde su radical negación de lo moderno, un puesto imperecedero en la historia de la cultura de Occidente". See my paper "Principales resultados de un análisis semiótico del Doctor Fausto (Texto-A, 1604) de Christopher Marlowe", presented to the *II International Symposium of the Andalusian Semiotic Association* ", Granada, 1989 (in press), 8 and 14. The above quotation is from p. 14. See also my Ph.D. Dissertation, *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 292-649 & Vol. III, pp. 765-787.

<sup>103</sup> Bruce E. Brandt has rightly seen this and discusses the conceit at some length in his article "Marlowe's Helen and Soul-in-the-kiss-conceit", *Philological Quarterly*, LXIV, 1 (Winter, 1985) 118-120.

<sup>104</sup> Edgar Wind, "Amor as a God of Death", Ch. 10 of *Pagan Mysteries of the Renaissance* (New York: Norton, 1968), 152-70, quoted by B.E. Brandt, 119.

<sup>105</sup> B.E. Brandt, 119.

doctrine works out both an explicit reference to the overall theme of death which is approaching and a metamorphosis of transcendental immortality into a minor form of immortality, the immortality produced by mankind's recollection of Faustus in the Faust myth and in those lines which carry the best-known kiss-conceit in English literature. Then, Faustus ends the Helen-affair with a poor and devalued kind of immortality: his life of search and 'pilgrimage' is a projection of a type of life which, since his time, has never ceased to exist. In Faustus' life, we forbode the rhythm of the immortal life; of course, it is a "wordly immortality", and, obviously, it does not affect Faust as a person, but rather as a character of fiction, as a symbolic 'valence'. He has sold himself and all that matters nowadays is whatever he may represent.

Besides, the most important thing for the reader is to acknowledge how Faustus literally empties himself in his filling up of Hellen, instead of filling himself, which is what he would have done, had there still been love in him. That emptying himself out, which "vomits forth his soul" constitutes the ineluctable prolegomenon to death and proves the utter failure of his attempt at somewhat sweetening his existential solitude, (the cause and, at the same time, consequence of his adherence to the devil, who is, in life and doctrine, nobody, nothing, absolute lack, utter negativity). In this respect, Marlowe magnificently links with a secular tradition which contends, in a quite orthodox way of thinking, that -as Baudelaire suggested- the most skilful of all devilish tricks consists in his convincing us that he does not exist. An engraving -inspired by the devilish visions of Breughel and Bosco- and in which the devil was presented as a character with horns and hoofs but with an invisible body, circulated widely throughout seventeenth-century England; the title of the picture was "Nobody". The devil is the being qua not-being and he is represented as such in the play: a contradicting nothingness which infects mankind.

However, Faustus seemed to honestly search for eros in Hellen; he contemplates and praises her face (5.1. 1874). It is not strange that there are no more explicit sexual references than that subtle one to the kiss and subsequent departure of both characters together. Marlowe is quite orthodox in this point too: if in eros through sex the beloved one is looked for, in sex without eros only a pure objectivity (which only apparently produces pleasure) is pursued; and this is almost completely alienated from any sense of sexual or communicative plenitude. This is Faustus' case in connection

with Hellen's kiss; her kiss -that she kisses him and not the other way round must be noticed- is completely 'peripheral'; there is no passion in it for either of the participants; it is a kiss that, instead of symbolizing life, energy, passion, and vitality, clearly announces death, symbolically and otherwise. Faustus' sexuality -to put it in modern terms- lacks any sense of joy, of happiness or pleasure. He apparently arouses Hellen solely to give satisfaction to the scholars' request, almost in order to 'show off':

Gentlemen, for y I know your friendship is vnfain'd,  
It is not Faustus custome to deny  
The iust request of those that wish him well:  
You shall behold that peerelesse dame of Greece.  
(5. 1. 1794-97).

The result is that -after the kiss- desperation seems to be the only way out. In this as in many other aspects, Dr. Faustus presents disturbing parallelisms with modern man. Moreover, the relationship between sex and the diabolic, with evil spirits coming back to time and life to produce both physical and spiritual harm to the living, which is omnipresent in horror films and literature is by no means casual and it can be traced back to the Faust myth.

#### **THE DEATH OF HOPE, I (DOCTRINAL APPROACH).**

As we have seen above in relation to love, in the faustian sin we find the first dramatization of man's drive towards 'nothingness' which is perfected in the diabolic pact. However, as long as Faustus is alive, in the 'status viatoris', everything is under the principle of revocability, but Faustus knows that, when death comes, whatever his destiny may be, the contrary principle will be consolidated once and for ever. His attitude throughout the play is that of one who tries to convince himself of the non-irrevocability of death through the very negation of temporality. Now, I shall analyze one of the main reasons why I feel Faustus is incapable of assimilating the cosmic drama of death within the personal destiny of every man.

Dr. Faustus lacks both natural and supernatural hope. Instead, he epitomizes to perfection the two basic forms of negative hope: 'praesumptio' and 'desperatio'. I am talking about the classical concept of 'presumption'

which is closer to anticipation, or, at least, it is a form of it. Presumption is the unnatural anticipation of 'plenitude'. The concept should not pass unnoticed, since the Chorus advances it, if in disguise, at the very beginning of the play, when Faustus' 'history' is being summarized:

"And glutted now with learning golden gifts,  
He surfets vpon cursed Necromancie".  
(1. Prol. 24-5. The underlining is mine)

Desperation is also anticipation, furthermore, unnatural anticipation; but it is the unnatural anticipation of the lack of plenitude; to despair is, in short, a rather premature descent into hell, and Faustus does this from the first monologue's truncated quotation from St. Paul. With his desperation - which runs parallel to his progressive isolation as the play evolves, (his drive towards the devil, i.e., his drive towards 'nobody', towards absolute vacuum), Faustus destroys the very bases of the 'status viatoris' ("I repent, and yet I doe despaire" (V, i, 1831); the sense of petrification, the feeling of moral and intellectual stagnancy, of lack of progress which we perceive in Faustus' life is precisely derived from that despair which anticipates the final tragic end, whether presumption or desperation proper. This is the main weapon used by Mephostophilis against Faustus, and we tend to be particularly indifferent towards it nowadays; we are accustomed to judging human 'despair' as an inevitable disease that affects the will of a human being; however, despair in the case of Faustus was surely, though probably before the temporal reference of the first monologue -this play begins in media res- a rather voluntary decision. He who hopes as well as he who despairs adheres to hope or to despair with his own will. But there is a not unimportant qualification to be made here: despair is to believe that 'we' and 'I' myself will end badly, but Faustus, when in despair, despairs solely about himself and obliges the scholars to save themselves. Finally, he has for an instant broken his terrible isolation and detachment from all that is human and says:

Talke not of me, but saue your selues and depart.  
(5.2. 1972)

Faustus, in his final attempt to go back to a sort of 'natural non-Christian man' (5. 2) is trying to avoid the terrible end of Christian despair. Indeed, whereas despair, for the pagan searcher, only implies the vacuum of inexistence, the return to nothingness which either makes history become absurd or the sense of progress has to be made relative (metempsychosis) -it



is irrelevant when you begin to 'progress'-, despair, for the Christian soul, brings in eternal damnation. This is the reason why the idea of 'via-tor' sounds unattainable: the way to Heaven can be glimpsed in the distance and there is Christ's ransoming blood:

See see where Christs blood streames in the firmamen.<sup>106</sup>

By now, Faustus is already a possessed man and cannot even control his own movements<sup>107</sup> ("who puls me downe", 5.2. 2048). Despair could be considered to be his sin because he negates reality and he negates reality, (falling onto the nothingness of the devil), because he is deaf in the face of Mephostophilis' pretexts and lack of minimally satisfactory answers<sup>108</sup>.

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<sup>106</sup> 5.1. 1. 1463 of the A-Text; this line is missing from the B-Text, though it appears again in B2 as "See where Christs blood streames in the Firmament", which lacks strength because of the elimination of the repetition of 'see'.

<sup>107</sup> My contention that Faustus, from the very beginning of the play is obsessed by the devil rests, among others, on the following pieces of evidence: 1. He sees devils -in both forms, ugly and pleasant (1. 3. & ff.). 2. He hears the voices of devils and converses with them. 3. His first monologue shows no hints of a rational way of thinking, but rather, an attack of logorrhea, a symbolic formula, according to which his journey through the arts is merely rhetorical, for his *idée fixe* is to deprecate them all and to take up magic. 4. God's permission seems here fully justified, according to the theological background of the time, regardless of the fact that Faustus is finally saved (then it is for 'his chiefest bliss') or, in case he is damned, for us to 'regard his hellish fall / Whose fiendfull fortune may exhort the wise [...] (5. 2. 2117-8). 5. Faustus' imprudence has led him to sign a pact with the devil. 6. The pastime of the seven deadly sins delights him. 7. Faustus is physically threatened by the devil several times. 8. The alienating "thou Faustus" stands for a split personality of the type of the schizophrenic. 9. Faustus is supposed to be able to use five different languages (Greek, Latin, Hebrew, Italian and English), a quite uncommon thing in a young Doctor of Divinity. 10. Faustus himself admits to being obsessed in I, ii, 136, and his 'other self' fights and rebels against the devilish attack with the "homo fuge" inscription on his skin in 2.1. 465. Lines 1950-3 within Act V, scene ii are also overtly explicit in this sense. For a more detailed analysis about these and other points, see my above-cited dissertation (Vols. I & II) and chapter in M. Martínez (ed.), 2681-2691.

<sup>108</sup> See, for example, Mephostophilis' answers about Heaven and hell:

*Faust.* Tell me, where is the place that men call Hell?  
*Meph.* Vnder the heauens.

Few texts present so clearly as this how despair anticipates damnation; and despair means, up to a point, desire, or better, "yearning for". Thus, that which we do not long for can be neither object of hope nor of desperation<sup>109</sup>. In fact, Faustus longs for his own salvation and fulfils -as I have discussed elsewhere<sup>110</sup>- all the necessary stages according to the main treatises on repentance. Therefore, when I have discussed the process of satanic possession, I have had to admit with W. Ostrowski<sup>111</sup> that the door of salvation for Dr. Faustus is finally left, to say the least, half open. Let us analyze this question in the light of the Church's teaching, which -against the common belief that tends automatically to cast those sinners into hell- is less definite about the so-called sin against the Holy Ghost or sin of despair. When St. Thomas Aquinas comments on Matthew, 12, 32<sup>112</sup>, he seems to be implementing St. Augustine's and St. Atanasio's suggestion in favour of a non-restrictive interpretation of this Biblical passage: they contend that the passage does not mean that sin against the Holy Ghost is absolutely unforgivable (as critics on Dr. Faustus have always believed), but rather that this sin will not be easily forgiven, since it often presupposes impenitence which closes the way to any possible benefit from Redemption. Obviously this is the source of Faustus' final distorted monologue, where he sees and yearns for goodness without being capable of reaching it. A brief analysis of the final act as far as the theme of death and afterlife is concerned will throw some light upon this question.

It has to be admitted that Faustus has twinges of conscience when he feels death approaching and that God the Judge is substituted by Faustus himself:

[...] I gaue them my soule for my cunning.

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*Faust.* I, so are all things else [...] (5. 1. 509-10).

<sup>109</sup> See St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 1-2, 40, 4 ad 3.

<sup>110</sup> See my above-quoted dissertation, Vols. I & III.

<sup>111</sup> See Witold Ostrowski, "The interplay of the subjective and the objective in Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus*", in *Studies in Language in Honour of Margaret Schlauch* (Warsaw: 1966) 293-305.

<sup>112</sup> "Et quicumque dixerit verbum contra filium hominis, remittetur ei: qui autem dixerit contra Spiritum Sanctum, non remittetur ei neque in hoc seculo neque in futuro" (*Mat.*, 12, 32). St. Thomas Aquinas' commentary is to be found in *Quaestiones disputatae de malo*, 3, 15.

[...] for the vaine pleasure of foure and twenty yeares  
 hath Faustus lost eternall ioy and felicitie.  
 (5. 2. 1960-1961)

It is interesting to notice how Marlowe closely adheres here to the popular iconography of the *ars moriendi*, which present the dying man as the protagonist of his own death. According to A. Tenenti<sup>113</sup>, there takes place a battle between two supernatural 'armies' and the dying man himself can do little to escape from it; however, his freedom is always respected. God ceases to be judge because the very dying-man takes up that rôle and judges and confesses himself before God the Son. He -like Dimas- has now the final power, in *hora mortis*, to gain or to lose everything. This is exactly the case for Dr. Faustus: he confesses his grave sins and -when the moment arrives- he even repents<sup>114</sup>. It is true, however, that he asks that time should stop so that death might never come ("That time may cease, and midnight neuer come" (5.2. 2040), but this is in order that "Faustus may repent, and saue his soul" (5.2. 2044). Finally, it is no less true that Faustus appeals to the doctrine of metempsychosis. Faustus continues to reject any transcendence from the 'status viatoris' to the 'status comprehensoris' or 'status termini', but that is only because he has suddenly realized that the dilettantism which has permeated all his life has prevented his successfully living it in time, and now he wants to do it all at once, or, if not, he wants hell to be finite or Grace to operate in hell...anything that might help to save his soul.

Impose some end to my incessant paine:  
 Let Faustus liue in hell a thousand yeares,  
 [...]  
 Ah Pythagoras Metempsychosis; were that true,  
 This soule should flie from me and I be chang'd  
 Into some brutish beast.  
 (5. 2. 2068-69; 2074-76)

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<sup>113</sup> A. Tenenti, *La Vie et la Mort à travers l'art du XVe siècle* (Paris: A. Collin, 1952) 98 & ff.

<sup>114</sup> His final words ("Ile burne my bookes") constitute a standard as well as crucial sign of repentance; I have discussed this in connection with one of the mediaeval sources of Marlowe's Dr. Faustus, (the legend of Simon Magus) in my paper "A mediaeval source and a forgotten game in Ch. Marlowe's Doctor Faustus", presented to the *II International Conference of SELIM*, Córdoba, 1989 (in press).

On the other hand, Faustus at the last minute appeals to a doctrine that has always tempted mankind to project onto it the experiences man observes in nature (the endless succession of seasons, death and rebirth, etc.); life is always followed by death and viceversa. Whenever man feels himself as part of a common nature, he soon convinces himself of the continuous return of his own life. Schleirmacher introduces some elements of these theories of transmigration and metamorphosis into the protestant domain. As for Dr. Faustus, life also behaves like a pendulum and the extremes are the terms of the dualistic 'good' and 'evil', 'God' and 'devil', etc. This partially explains Faustus' terrible lazyness, which has already been mentioned above: if our soul comes back to any sort of life, after death, it is indifferent that we begin working, making efforts now or after one thousand years. (Faustus very much resembles modern man in this as well). This, we may conclude, after this brief textual analysis of Faustus' facing death, that it is far too simplistic to say that Faustus is condemned in the end because he despairs. St. Thomas Aquinas applies Matthew's text only when there is the case of a persistent and blasphemous resistance against Grace, and, about despair, he simply says that there is some special difficulty in its being forgiven<sup>115</sup>. Faustus' philosophy of death is then doubtlessly orthodox in that it tells us of an order restored at the end of the tragedy, precisely through the ambiguity of doubt that leaving as at a deep level it does leave, the door of salvation half open, it does so without giving up to any of its moral and didactic teachings.

## THE DEATH OF HOPE, II (ANTHROPOLOGICAL APPROACH)

If we analyze Faustus' despair from a purely anthropological point of view, I feel reasonably sure that we will not fail to notice that it takes its deepest roots in 'acedy' -a M.E. term which dates from 1623- or 'accedie' (M.E.), the sin of 'torpor' or 'sloth' a word already mentioned by Chaucer. Faustus' acedia is particularly close to Petrarch's 'accidia', and it is precisely in the light of this that Faustus' philosophy of death can be best understood<sup>116</sup>. Petrarch, like Faustus, is a solitary man; retired in Valchiusa, Petrarch -like Fasutus in his study- talks with the great spirits of the past, to

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<sup>115</sup> See St. Thomas Aquinas, *De Malo*, 3, 15.

<sup>116</sup> I have compared at length the three figures (Marlowe, Petrarch and Faustus) in my Ph. D. Dissertation, Vol. III, 653-788.

himself, to some friends, to the world and to God; nevertheless, Faustus also talks to the devil, and the isolating drive acquires, for the latter a more tragic bent. Both are condemned to lead a secular and contemplative life: for them, the concepts of space and time are space and time of illusion. In Petrarch's 'dèssidia' ('accidia'), as happens with Dr. Faustus, we easily acknowledge the violent crash between the two cultures -Mediaeval and Renaissance-. Petrarch, like Faustus (his cosmology is completely old fashioned<sup>117</sup>), is not interested in the new scientific thought but rather he is obsessed by the moral sciences, by the drama of sin and Redemption within the individual conscience. His models, as is the case for Faustus<sup>118</sup>, are The Gospel, the Fathers (particularly Augustine) and the great Latin writers (Virgil, Cicero,...). In the *Secretum*, Petrarch's talk with St. Augustine, the former cannot win in the end and he proves unable to change his life. However, in the *Trionfi*, particularly in his "Trionfo dell'eternità", the permanently tormenting thoughts of Petrarch are sweetened in the expectation of an eternity when and where earthly loves will not be negated but transformed and sublimed into God's supreme peace. Petrarch announces here the things he most desires, and these largely coincide with those of Faustus: the death of time, that time which makes us live in anguish with its continuous mutations of our most beloved feelings, hopes and pleasures; now, Petrarch, like Faustus, dreams with a Paradise whose love, fame, knowledge -our essential humanity- meet in an everlasting spring<sup>119</sup>:

*Trionfo dell'eternità*

Quasi spianati dietro e 'nnanzi i poggi  
 ch'occupavan la vista, non fia in cui  
 vostro sperare e rimembrar s'appoggi;  
 la qual varietà fa spesso altrui  
 vaneggiar sí che 'l viver pare un gioco,  
 pensando pur: "Che sarò io? che fui?".

<sup>117</sup> See M. Nicholson, *Science and Imagination* (Now York: Cornell U.P., 1962).

<sup>118</sup> For a complete account of Marlowe's use of the Bible, together with a splendid and coherent as well as unfortunately quite unknown interpretation of Marlowe's works in the light of the Bible, see R.M. Cornelius, *Marlowe's Use of the Bible* (Frankfurt & New York: The American U. P.-Peter Lang, 1984).

<sup>119</sup> Mario Pazzaglia, *Letteratura Italiana*, 2nd ed., (rpt. 1989; Bologna: Zanichelli, 1985), 547. The text that follows "Trionfo dell'eternità" is taken from: F. Petrarca, *Trionfi*, a cura di C. Calcaterra, (Turin: UTET, 1923).

Non sarà più diviso a poco a poco, ma tutto  
 insieme, e non più state o verno,  
 ma morto il tempo e variato il loco;  
 e non avranno in man li anni 'l governo  
 de le fame mortali, anzi chi fia  
 chiaro una volta fia chiaro in eterno.  
 O felici quelle anime che 'n via  
 sono e seranno di venire al fine  
 di ch'io ragiono, quadunque e'si sia!  
 E tra láltre leggiadre e pellegrine  
 beatissima lei che Morte occise  
 assai di qua del natural confine!  
 Parranno allor l'angeliche divise  
 e l'oneste parole e i pensier casti  
 che nel cor giovenil Natura mise.  
 Tanti volti, che Morte e l'Tempo ha guasti/  
 torneranno al suo più fiorito stato,  
 e vedrassi ove, Amor, tu mi legasti,  
 ond'io a dito ne sarò mostrato:  
 "Ecco chi pianse sempre, e nel suo pianto  
 sovra 'l riso d'ogni altro fu beato!".  
 E quella di ch'anchor piangendo canto  
 avrà gran meraviglia di se stessa  
 vedendosi fra tutte dar il vanto.

.....  
 Questi Trionfi, i cinque in terra giuso  
 avem veduto, ed alla fine il sesto,  
 Dio permettente, vederem lassuso.  
 E 'l Tempo a disfar tutto così presto,  
 e Morte in sua ragion cotanto avara,  
 morti insieme saranno e quella e questo.  
 E quei che Fama meritaron chiara,  
 che 'l Tempo spense, e i be' visi leggiadri  
 che 'mpallidir fe' 'l Tempo e Morte amara,  
 l'oblivion, gli aspetti oscuri ed adri,  
 più che mai bei tornando, lasceranno  
 a Morte impetuosa, a' Giorni ladri;  
 ne l'età più fiorita e verde avranno  
 con immortal bellezza eterna fama.  
 Ma innanzi a tutte ch'a rifar si vanno,  
 è quella che piangendo il mondo chiama  
 con la mia lingua e con la stanca penna;  
 ma 'l ciel pur di vederla intera brama.  
 A riva un fiume che nasce in Gebenna

amor mi diè per lei sí lunga guerra  
 che la memoria ancora il cor accenna.  
 Felice sasso che 'l bel viso serra!  
 ché, poi ch'avrà ripreso il suo bel velo,  
 se fu beato chi la vide in terra,  
 or che fia dunque a rivederla in cielo?.

This Renaissance 'acedy' is born in the first Italian Renaissance and constitutes one of the most effective anaesthetics -prologue to both a physical and spiritual death- of human conscience. Faustus is presented after his signing the pact as an idle being dominated by 'dessidia'. The pact itself (apart from being a futile attempt at an artificial advance of the 'status termini' and apart from the dogmatic inversions which it carries along with it) rather consists of a means to save the effort inherent to any human enterprise. Sloth and acedy soon contradict the impression created by the opening Chorus and by Faustus' first address. What Faustus really want is:

How am I glutted with concept of this?  
 Shall I make spirits fetch me what I please?  
 Resolue me of all ambiguities?

(1. 1. 105-7).

Faustus wants the ends, and wants them now, but he can not bear the means. Acedy, for the traditional teaching of the Church, is, above all, species tristitia<sup>120</sup>. This goes straight to the point: Faustus is a sad man; in Dr. Faustus we acknowledge the truth of St. Paul's teachings when he contended that the acedia is tristitia saeculi, the sorrow of this world which introduces death<sup>121</sup>. The feeling of isolation and moral paralysis which we acknowledge in Dr. Faustus after the pact is rhetorically foreshadowed by the pendular movement and by a dilettantism which are incapable of transcending an eternal return which leaves no way out<sup>122</sup>. I have often

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<sup>120</sup> See St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 1-2, 35, 8.

<sup>121</sup> Saeculi autem tristitia mortem operatur". Cfr. in St. Paul, *Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 7, 10.

<sup>122</sup> For further details about these two questions see: Phoebe S. Spinrad, "The dilettante's lie in Doctor Faustus", *Texas Studies in Literature and Language (TSL)*, XXIV, no. 3, Fall, 1982, 243-254; F. de A. Carreres de Calatayud, "El movimiento pendular en el Fausto de Marlowe", *Filología Moderna*, XIII, no. 49, November, 1973, 29-64.

contended that Faustus' problem is originally of a psychological bent, and that, later, this is mainly due to the process and state of diabolic possession he undergoes; this is why -when referring to Faustus- I have always talked about peccatum in causa in the deeds of his life before he appears on stage in media res. Marlowe surely intended this precisely to produce that clever ambiguity<sup>123</sup>. But the critical point is precisely the presumably psychological disease that prepared Faustus for the pact<sup>124</sup>. Thus, we see Faustus severely affected by acedy: his will, his diseased capacity to want increasingly reduces the moral stature of the protagonist who does his best to escape from God, to find and hide himself in an untrodden corner of the universe -which does not exist- where he may temporarily remove his duties and rights as a son of God. His weakness, his horror when facing pain or contradiction leads him to a rather unconscious detestation of divinity which forces him to recognize that death is the ineluctable bridge towards perfection. Kierkegaard has said in his book *Disease and Death* that acedy is the "despair of frailty", a preliminary stage towards existential despair; the man who despairs does not want to be the same man; Faustus hides himself in the same way as Adam and Eve hid themselves after their Fall; Faustus blames others (his parents, Mephostophilis, ...) as Adam blames Eve, and Eve blames the Snake.

As if it were a family, acedy is accompanied by a whole family of symptoms of death which I have dealt with in my semiotic analysis of the A-Text of *Doctor Faustus* (see above, note no. 6). First of all, 'acedy' gives birth to a sort of 'wandering' spiritual uneasiness generally called 'evagatio mentis'.

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<sup>123</sup> See M. Martínez (ed.), 2691-95.

<sup>124</sup> I have dealt with this theoretical question in my chapter "Lbertad vs. obediencia" and in "Lenguaje apetitivo, economía social y libertad: una perspectiva pragmática", in A. Polaino-Lorente & M. Martínez, *La Agonía del Hombre Libertario* (Madrid: Universidad de Piura, 1987), 181-244 & 129-156. "La libertad es un modo de ser, pues es lo que explica cómo son los actos; habla de las formas en que la sustancia del ser se proyecta y actúa [...] La libertad es un modo de ser de la voluntad [...] A la voluntad lo que le es inherente es el querer, y, lógicamente no se puede querer lo que no se conoce [...] La inteligencia conoce y presenta a la voluntad aquellos actos u objetos que son susceptibles de ser elegidos, los malos como malos, los buenos como buenos y en tanto que buenos bienes que la voluntad procede a desear" (p. 212). As Faustus' intelligence has been obsessed since Mephostophilis passed the leaves of the Bible, his decision to sign the pact may not be completely free nor free enough to stand as a sole cause for damnation.



Since no man can base his whole life solely upon sadness, Dr. Faustus, who is -we learn- just a man condemned to die, 'does his best' to avoid and/or escape pain. In short, the main symptoms of the *evagatio mentis* are the following<sup>125</sup>: a) *Verbositas* (Faustus' attacks of logorrhea -see 1.1 & 2-). b) *Curiositas* (i.e., an insatiable desire to know new things -2.1. & 1-). c) *Importunitas* (disorder which leads away from the things of the spirit and throws the human being to mundane objects). d) *Inquietudo*, inner lack of peace (2.1.). e) *Instabilitas loci vel propositi* (pendular movement, permanent doubts and contradictions -1.1. & 2-). Apart from the symptoms related to the *evagatio mentis*, we have a third member for this 'satanic family': Marlowe's text advances it at the very beginning, connects it with the history of Dr. Faustus, a paratextual and almost contextual element, and repeats it throughout the play: the sense of 'glutted' in the sense of fed-up indifference or as torpor, two typical consequences of the extremely individualistic search. For the sake of brevity and because they are so obvious that they can easily be felt even after a superficial reading of the text, I shall not here analyze the three basic characteristics commonly attached to 'torpor': *pusillanimitas*, i.e., lack of strength and will to decide for oneself as well as to assume responsibilities; special forgetfulness about God and God's things; and *malitia*, i.e., straightforward and open hate against the divine side of man. To conclude this chapter, it has to be noted that we find in Dr. Faustus simultaneously both 'presumption' and 'despair', and that they cohabit in a sort of complex and problematic synthesis of senile desperation with a tragic tenor, and childish presumption with a comic tone.

## CONCLUSION

We have left Faustus' body destroyed by the devils in the same study where we saw him first, but we have learned that his limbs are "all torn asunder by the hand of death"; the scholar is quite right. Faustus has been defeated solely by death, the perishable and contingent nature of the humane which -with so little, if any, success- he had so much endeavoured to negate; and though his body has been destroyed, the question about the ultimate destiny of his soul is left unanswered. Faustus most desires an immortality

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<sup>125</sup> For a full list and commentary, see St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 2-2, 35, 4 ad 3; see also *De Malo*, 3, 14 ad 8.

without the previous passage of death (1.2. 10). Death is portrayed in Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus* according to the orthodox catholic thought of Marlowe's time (a religious dogma which has come down to us from Trent, 5th session, 1456), as a direct consequence of sin (Rom., 6, 23). Marlowe teaches us that life is a straight line, not a circle (from status viatoris to status termini); if one does not advance one goes back, and Faustus, with his pendular movement goes and returns in an endless move, without hope and direction. Suddenly time remains silent; the hands of the clock overlap and it is midnight, the beginning and the end of time -perfectly represented in the play- the time of spirits and ghosts. Faustus, facing the oncoming end of his days and the birth of a definitive state of being, falls into doubt and horror. He wanted to live -as many do today- as if death did not exist and comes to discover that 'nothing', 'nobody' was with the devil instead. Faustus' philosophy of death is brilliantly summed up by one of the scholars: "He is not well with being ouersolitary". The forms of Faustus' fortunes are the forms of Faustus' solitude: he gravely sinned and deeply felt repentance. The answer to the question "Where did Faustus go?" is up to a point irrelevant; he is here with us, in the form of a myth, in our literary memory, in recollection, and, in a quite different manner, in one way or another as we shall all be with him one day, come un vano desiderio di fuga.