The Puritan Ethic in Marlowe’s Dr. Faustus and Goethe’s Faust

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Abstract

The Faust legend is a folk legend, which inspired generations of writers in Europe. Two of the most prominent writers who employed it are the British dramatist Christopher Marlowe in his play The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus and the German poet, dramatist and philosopher Goethe in his play Faust: A Tragedy.

Despite the temporal and intellectual differences between the two playwrights, they are similar in their employment of the puritan ethic, which were dominant when they were alive. Marlowe used it to warn against using magic and to propagate for his play, while Goethe used it to save his protagonist from damnation.

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One of the modern legends that inspired writers is the Faust legend. The legend dates back to the 8th century in Europe. However the first written record is the Historia von D. Johann Fausten, or the Faustbuch, published 1587 anonymously.

The book might refer to a historical Faust, Dr. Johann Georg Faust (approx. 1480–1540), who was a German alchemist born in the village of Knittlingen, Württemberg (it is also claimed in Roda in the province of Weimar, and also in Helmstadt near Heidelberg in 1466). He has alternatively been known by the names “Johann Sabellicus” and “Georg Faust.” He died in 1540 or 1541 and the legend says that he came to a terrible end near Wittenberg, where the devil tore him to pieces and left him on a dung heap, with his eyes glued to a wall.

The Faustbuch was speedily translated and read throughout Europe. It led to numerous works by different writers and in different genres. An English prose translation of 1592 inspired the play The Tragical History of D. Faustus (1604) by Christopher Marlowe, who, for the first time, invested the Faust legend with tragic dignity. Goethe wrote a two part verse drama, through a period of over 50 years, and made the legend “a profoundly serious but highly ironic commentary on the contradictory possibilities of Western man’s cultural heritage.” It is proposed that despite the discrepancies between the two plays, both are puritanical in spirit.

One of the common misconceptions about Marlowe is that he is irreligious and that he expresses this in the criticism he directs against the religious figures he depicts in his plays. However, Marlowe used his religious teachings at the university to provide a framework for his play The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus. The play is the tragedy of a “typical man of the Renaissance, as an explorer and adventurer, as a

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superman craving for extraordinary power, wealth, enjoyment, and worldly eminence."

The play opens with Faustus discussing and rejecting the disciplines he has studied and mastered: logic, medicine, law, and theology, for magic by which he hopes he could “gain a deity”. However, he states half-truths as the basis of his refusal. For instance, he quotes parts of two important Biblical texts as a basis for his subsequent arguments and actions. “The reward of sin is death” (1, 40), he declares, omitting, “but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. vi. 23). He continues with, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and there is no truth in us” (1, 42). Again he omits a consoling promise: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (I John i. 8-9). Elizabethan spectators would have been able to complete his quotations and thereby to discern his sophistry, thus corrupting the use of reason to undermine the basis of his faith.

True to this medieval sophistry, Faustus refuses the salutary parts of medicine and the social benefits of law, because neither science lends itself to the fulfilment of his impossible aspirations. His attitude towards ordinary studies amounts to scorn for common humanity, including its needs and potentialities. Burdened with this attitude, he fails to understand himself as an ordinary man and sloughs off his social responsibilities and sympathies.

Clarence Green further argues that by rejecting these disciplines, and choosing “metaphysics of magicians,” (1, 49) Faustus is doing more than rejecting old and honored disciplines in favor of one that is not only untried but also damned. He is choosing atomistic willfulness instead of organized control, anarchy instead of order, despair instead of blessedness. For his rejection of divinity and logic is a rejection of the hypotheses, deductions, and conclusions on which the world had hitherto been based for the Elizabethans.

But the play is not completely a Renaissance drama as it contains medieval elements. Faustus is aided by Valdes and Cornelius, two German magicians, and succeeds in conjuring the devil to appear to him. The presence of the devil is a medieval element in the play. Yet his trial of magical arts again exposes his false assumptions about the mastery of knowledge. Praising the virtues of magic, he proclaims arrogantly, “Now, Faustus, thou art conjuror laureat,/ That canst command great Mephistophilis.” (3, 33-34) Mephistophilis does come, but in answer to the question, “Did not my conjuring speeches raise thee?”, (3, 44) he replies: “That was the cause, but yet per accidens;/ For, when we hear one rack the name of God,/ Abjure the Scriptures and his Saviour Christ,/ We fly, in hope to get his glorious soul”. (3, 47ff.).

This situation is ironic. Any man can blaspheme and thereby exchange obedience to God for subservience to devils, though he possesses no magic whatever. This part of the action symbolizes a deep spiritual truth, for the devil, in the insubstantial guise of evil and temptation, will accompany any man who abjures the Holy Trinity.

This is not the only disappointment Faustus is to face in his journey with the devil. Soon after he pledges his soul to the devil, he realizes that he is deceived: “O thou art deceived!” (5, 175) The devil Mephistophilis argues with Faustus with the same logic the latter used to reject the disciplines he used to study. But the arguments
lead to an affirmation of the existence of God Faustus denies and he attempts to repent which leads to yet another disappointment: “

Faustus
Ah Christ my Saviour, seek to save
Distressed Faustus’ soul.

*Enter* Lucifer, Belzebub *and* Mephistopheles
Lucifer
Christ cannot save thy soul, for he is just.
There’s none but I have interest in the same. *(5, 257-260)*

The real issue here is between repentance and despair. It is the sin of despair which causes the catastrophe.*18* His despair of salvation leads him here to the opposite and complementary state of mind, sinful complacency.*19*

Faustus alternates between repentance and despair because, Joseph T. McCullen argues, “It is not his pact with Lucifer that constitutes his unpardonable sin, and, though he has already thought of despair, there is nothing inescapable about the hold it as yet exerts upon him; hence the exciting rhythm of his alternating moods which establish and maintain the pattern of his inner tragedy.”*20*

The arch devil decides to entertain Faustus by showing him the seven deadly sin “of their several names and/ dispositions”. *(5, 82-83)* This is clearly an element drawn from medieval morality. Marlowe retains much of the coarse humour and clownish episodes of the *Faustbuch*. This association of tragedy and buffoonery remained an inherent part of the Faust dramas and puppet plays that were popular for two centuries.*21* Faustus after the climactic appearance of Lucifer is never seen arguing again except briefly to the Duchess of Vanholt. He gives himself up to a life of “all voluptuousness” *(4, 93)* and, like a skilled circus-performer, succeeds in all his tricks, and the dominant strain sustained throughout this section of the play is one of practical joking.*22* While there is no doubt that the play is contrived around a more or less traditional morality vision – Faustus *is* damned – the play’s moral structure is constantly being displaced by comic incidents, such as Faustus’s faking dismemberment in the horse-courser scenes, for instance, confuses and deflects the horror of his possible dismemberment by the devils. The latter becomes potentially as much a parodic burlesque of the former as vice versa.*23* Whether these are Marlowe’s or another dramatist’s is unsolvable but they remain an integral part of the play.

In the last day of his life on earth, Faustus confesses his crimes to his friends, the three scholars. The old man enters and holds the key to Faustus’s salvation: “Ah Doctor Faustus, that I might prevail/ To guide thy steps unto the way of life./ By which sweet path thou may’st attain the goal/ That shall conduct thee to celestial rest.” *(12, 26-29)*

Faustus, however, fails to respond to the Old Man’s plea, and asks him to leave him alone “to ponder on my sins.” *(12, 50)* As soon as the Old Man leaves, and Mephistopheles returns and threatens Faustus, Faustus regresses to his servitude to the devil:

Mephistopheles
Thou traitor, Faustus: I arrest thy soul
For disobedience to my sovereign lord.
Revolt, or I’ll in piecemeal tear thy flesh.
Faustus
Sweet Mephastophilis, entreat thy lord
To pardon my unjust presumption;
And with my blood again I will confirm
My former vow I made to Lucifer.

*   *   *

Torment, sweet friend, that base and crooked age
That durst dissuade me from thy Lucifer.
With greatest torments that our hell affords. (12, 57-63, 66-68)

The Old Man symbolizes the integrated social result of faith in primary hypotheses. Christ and God symbolize the primary hypotheses themselves. The decrepitude of the Old Man – “that base and crooked age” – reflects Faustus’s poor opinion of the chances of survival of the society for which the Old Man stands. Therefore, Faustus does not appeal to the Old Man's Christ but to his own individualist, scapegoat Christ. 24

In order to keep his pledge to the devil, Faustus asks Mephistopheles to bring him “That heavenly Helen which I saw of late”. (12, 75) Helen’s is that essentially destructive beauty which has “burnt the topless towers of Ilium”; (12, 82) the “immortality” she provides with her kiss is the absolute antithesis of all truth, morality, and religion. 25 When Faustus says: “Her lips sucks forth my soul, see where it flies!/ Come Helen, come, give me my soul again./ Here will I dwell, for heaven be in these lips, /And all is dross that is not Helena!”, (12, 84-87) Faustus speaks of heaven, yet we know that it is really hell he speaks about, though unaware. He asks that Helen make him “immortal with a kiss,” (12, 83) but in reality he is asking for the coup de grace that will irrevocably damn him. Helen is a devil in female guise, a succuba, and Faustus, in receiving her “immortal kiss,” “commits the sin of demoniality”. 26

The Old Man aptly describes Faustus as a “miserable man” (12, 101) because, “though a real heaven is ‘all about him where to choose,’ (sic.) he seeks it rather in a phantasm”. 27 He also spends his last hour in prospection of damnation and phantasms of salvation which cannot be realized because he lacks the faith and trust in God necessary to achieve them. He is constitutionally incapable of hearing both sides of faith’s paradox; he can hear only the premise of Sin, not the conclusion of Redemption: 28

Faustus
But Faustus’ offence can ne’er be pardoned! The serpent that tempted Eve may be saved, but not Faustus. …

3 scholar
Yet Faustus, call on God.

Faustus
On God, whom Faustus hath abjured? On God, whom Faustus hath blasphemed? Ah my God – I would weep, but the devil draws in my tears! (13, 15-16, 27-30)

McCloskey argues that Faustus cannot repent because of the sin of despair. 29 It is his own Medusa, his Gorgon of Despair, lurking within the dark alleys of his ambition and pride which has changed his heart into stone and made him unable to repent and ask forgiveness. Faustus cannot see God as the merciful and benevolent creator and giver of life, but rather a vengeful deity bent on punishing him:
see where God
Stretcheth out his arm, and bends his ireful brows!
Mountains and hills, come, come and fall on me,
And hide me from the heavy wrath of God. ...

My God, my God, look not so fierce on me! (13, 76-77; 112)

The last soliloquy reverses the first. The proud scholar who had fretted at the restrictions imposed by the human condition and longed for the immortality of a god
now seeks to avoid an eternity of damnation. Like a trapped animal he lashes out against the mesh he has woven for himself, and becomes more entangled. To be physically absorbed, to be ‘a creature wanting soul’, ‘some brutish beast’, even, at the last, to be no more than ‘little water drops’ – this is the final hope of the pride of Wittenberg. The play ends with Faustus dragged to hell alive by devils.

The fact that what is arguably Marlowe’s most important work survives only in questionable form, the A Text (1604) and the B Text (1616), need not, though, be such a loss to literature as it first appears, because it can in fact guide us to uncovering some of the play’s meanings and resonances. In the first place, what stands out in both texts is the general shape and conception of the play. Goethe said of Doctor Faustus “How greatly it is all planned!”, and that is indeed perhaps the most striking aspect of the play: the story has a simplicity that is quite astonishing in its starkness.

Goethe’s magnum opus, Faust is written in intervals between other works over a period of more than fifty years. It reflects the evolution of Goethe’s own thinking and character, from youth to age. The two parts that comprise the complete drama, Faust: A Tragedy, are as dissimilar as the influences under which they were written, the first being romantic, the second classical in form and content.

Restless endeavor, incessant striving from lower spheres of life to higher ones, from the sensuous to the spiritual, from enjoyment to work, from creed to deed, from self to humanity is the moving thought of Goethe’s completed drama. The keynote is struck in the “Prologue in Heaven.” Faust, so we hear, the daring idealist, the servant of God, is to be tempted by Mephistopheles, the despiser of reason, the materialistic scoffer. But we also hear, and we hear it from God’s own lips, that the tempter will not succeed. God allows the devil free play, because he knows that he will frustrate his own ends. Faust will be led astray but he will not abandon his higher aspirations; through aberration and sin he will find the true way toward which his inner nature instinctively guides him.

The first four scenes of the human drama, a unified sequence spanning one night and two days, show how the impatient, frustrated idealist is induced to enter into an association with the “spirit of negation,” that is destined to cast its shadow over the rest of his earthly life. Like Marlowe’s Faustus, Faust is revealed in Act One, Scene One, sitting in his study lamenting the time he spent studying philosophy, jurisprudence, medicine, and theology:

Ah! Now I’ve done Philosophy, I’ve finished Law and Medicine
And sadly even Theology:
Taken fierce pains, from end to end.
Now here I am, a fool for sure!
No wiser than I was before:
Master, Doctor’s what they call me
And I’ve been ten years, already,
Crosswise, arcing, to and fro,
Leading my students by the nose,
And see that we can know - nothing!
It almost sets my heart burning. (354-365)

Faust is interested primarily in his emotions, and his narrow gothic room, emblem of his dry intellectual world, offers no space for them to overflow.

In the next scene Faust walks around with Wagner. A dog follows Faust as the latter returns to his study. Faust begins reading and arguing when suddenly the dog grows into a fearful shape. (1271 ff.) Faust traps the spirit so that it does not harm him.
Faust also manages to make the spirit reveal itself. It is Mephistopheles in the shape of a travelling scholar. (1322)

The first interchange establishes Faust as master of the situation. Assuming a condescending tone, he displays active curiosity without a trace of nervousness: 

**Faust**

What meaning to these riddling words applies?

**Mephistopheles**

I am the spirit, ever, that denies!

And rightly so: since everything created,

In turn deserves to be annihilated:

Better if nothing came to be.

So all that you call Sin, you see,

Destruction, in short, what you’ve meant

By Evil is my true element.

**Faust**

You call yourself a part, yet seem complete to me? (1338-1345). He listens to the riddling answers, the boasts and tantrums of his visitor with grave concern and mild amusement. To the spirit of negation he opposes his deep, positive reverence for the eternal mysteries of Nature's creative workings. The professor even lectures the devil on the folly of his impotent negativism and admonishes him to mend his ways. (1413-5)

To his surprise, Faust discovers that the devil has allowed himself to be caught in a trap. The handling of this all but incredible situation (against the background of the folk image of the devil as an essentially stupid fellow, easily tricked) shows a most ingenious interplay of chance and design: The poodle, evidently bent on no more than a bit of preliminary reconnoitering, has been forced to show his hand prematurely. Faust's self-confidence is heightened by the discovery that he has the visitor in his power. When his prodding questions bring out the fact that demons who invade the human realm are governed by strict rules of behavior, it is Faust who takes the initiative in broaching the idea of a pact, and it is Mephistopheles, caught off guard, who has to resort to a delaying action: “So you still have laws in Hell, in fact?/ That’s good, since it allows a pact./ And one with you gentlemen truly binds?” (1656-9)

Eventually Mephistopheles, apparently resigned to the situation, puts his captor to sleep by a ruse and makes his escape. Faust awakens in a state of redoubled frustration.

The next day, Mephistopheles returns and agrees to be Faust’s slave on condition that “I’ll be your servant here, and I’ll/ Not stop or rest, at your decree:/ When we’re together, on the other side,/ You’ll do the same for me.” (1698-1702) Mephistopheles would serve Faust until the latter says:

And quickly!

When, to the Moment then, I say:

‘Ah, stay a while! You are so lovely!

Then you can grasp me: then you may,

Then, to my ruin, I’ll go gladly! (1698-1702)

The next scene is a deliberate anticlimax. A flying carpet can do no better than to take the two to Auerbach’s Tavern in Leipzig, because Mephistopheles wants to take Faust “First of all, I had to bring you here./ Where cheerful friends sup together,” (2158-9) of some happy-go-lucky drinking cronies. There Mephistopheles amuses himself, but not Faust: he remains distant; and later he says, “I’d like to leave here now.” (2296). The next scene, “Witch’s Kitchen,” is comic in a more macabre way; it serves the important dramatic purpose of giving Faust back his youth, as thirty from
his fifty years are taken away. Faust is disgusted, and says “I’m in the dark, the hag babbles with fever.” (2553), but the witch’s conjuration works, and Mephistopheles promises Faust a splendid sexual rejuvenation, saying, “With that drink in your body, well then./All women will look to you like Helen.” (2603-4) replying to what Faust says, “Let me look quickly in the glass, once more!/ How lovely that woman’s form, I descried!”, (2599-600) after he sees Helen in the mirror.

In this scene, Faust asks why he needs to work through witches, Mephistopheles answers saying: “It’s true the Devil taught it: The Devil can’t make it though.” (2376-7) The devil cannot operate alone, but needs to do so through human conduits because his real object is the human mind. Mephistopheles answers to Faust’s scorn saying:

Faust (To Mephistopheles.)
Tell me, now, what’s happening?
These wild gestures, crazy things,
All of this tasteless trickery,
Is known, and hateful enough to me.

Mephistopheles
A farce! You should be laughing:
Don’t be such a serious fellow!
This hocus-pocus she, the doctor’s, making,
So you’ll be aided by the juice to follow. (2531-9)

The witch’s incantations and gestures do not cause the potion’s magical effect. What they do is make her believe that they cause this effect to her satisfaction. They induce in her the belief that signs can do things, and this belief is necessary and sufficient for the devil to achieve his purpose, which is to make it appear to human beings that signs are performative, by performing their alleged effects himself. (This is similar to Faustus’s confession before the Emperor that he cannot bring “the true substantial bodies” (9, 43) and that he can bring grapes for the Duchess “by means of a swift spirit that I have” (9, 22-3) noting that while Mephistopheles in Faust is clear about it, his counterpart in Faustus does not, and Faustus, the false logician, does not realize that he does not have any real powers until well-nigh his end.)

Brown argues that mirrors are common images of subjectivity; yet this magic mirror reflects not the self, but the vision projected by that self. Here is an explicit image of Faust projecting his vision of ideal beauty – or of the Ideal per se – onto something outside of himself; and the something onto which he projects it is a framed image. All that follows, namely the Gretchen tragedy, is effectively transformed into a play within the play. Now the fact that Gretchen is the mirror onto which Faust continues to project his own vision reflects not only his subjectivity but also his creativity. Thus Gretchen disappears as an individual in the plethora of emotions and ideals Faust projects onto her; her tragedy is that she does not really exist in the face of Faust’s subjectivity.

Part One of Faust ends with the scene of the attempted rescue, an overwhelming finale. The personality of the wretched girl in the prison cell is completely shattered, but every fractured piece suggests the one-time perfection now irretrievably destroyed. Instinctively she senses the sinister aura of her one-time lover, who is supposedly comes to her rescue, and shrinks from his touch: “Let me alone! No, no force! Don’t grip me so murderously, oh,/ I’ve done all else to please you so.” (4576) In a final flash of lucidity she throws herself upon the merciful judgment of God, and a voice from the Beyond proclaims her salvation, while Faustus leaves with Mephistopheles whose remark “She is judged!” (4611) is revoked by the same voice proclaiming her salvation with “She is saved!” (4612)
Part one ends with the Gretchen episode which was the first stage of Faust's career in the world of man outside the confining walls of the study. For Faust, the pure love of Gretchen will be forever imbedded in his memory as the deepest spiritual blessing vouchsafed to him by a kindly Providence, and as the ineradicable reminder of his darkest hour. When he finally departs from the earthly stage the intercession of Gretchen will weigh the scales in the achievement of his redemption.  

One significant alteration of the classical Faust myth, and a point of departure from Faustus, is that the bond is changed into a bet by Goethe. As a text that encompasses the different epistemologies, philosophies, and cultural changes of Europe then, the shift from pact to bet thus advances the idealist critique of the possibilities and dangers of the now virtually complete secularization of European culture: the grounding of identity exclusively in the self on the one hand allows Faust the full development of his inherent capacities, but on the other hand leaves him to seek a basis for a knowledge of the non-self and for a morality grounded outside of the self.

The second part of Faust deals with Faust's recovery of Helen, his marriage to her, the birth and death of their son, and his land reclamation project which occupies him till his death. Brown argues that Faust II repeats structures and episodes from Faust I, but simultaneously broadens them as it unfolds their implications. The simplest way to recognize the analogies to Part I is to think of Part II as consisting of two parts: Acts I–III deal with Faust’s recovery of Helen, his subsequent ‘marriage’ to her, and the birth and death of their son Euphorion; in Acts IV and V Faust returns to modern Germany and engages in the land reclamation schemes in which he completes his career. As Part I divides into the tragedy of the scholar (in which Faust renounces words for deeds) and the Gretchen tragedy, so Part II divides (symmetrically, we note) into the Helen tragedy and the tragedy of the man of deeds who finds his way back at the very end to the power of the master’s word [“The master’s word alone declares what’s right.” (11502)].

However, Part II is more epic in its scale and “[i]nstead of a forward movement focused [sic.] upon the outcome of Faust’s association with the forces of Evil, the scenes are crowded with pageantry and spectacles in many of which Faust’s presence is unobserved or he is off stage altogether…” while the time … ranges over half a century.

Scene One depicts Faust asleep with a host of elves singing to him. He wakes up and adopts, under the influence of the glory of the new day, a new approach to life in which the “barren quest of the absolute is renounced in favor of the more profitable pursuit of exploring the infinite variety of the world of phenomena.” The next scene moves to the Emperor’s palace. The emperor requests that Faust conjures Helen and Paris. The outcome of this, already begun in Part I in the “Witch's Kitchen” when Faust sees Helen in the mirror, is his marriage to Helen and the birth of their son, Euphorion. Euphorion dies jumping from a cliff to try his wings, like Icarus. Helen slips from Faust back to the underworld to rejoin her son, and Faust moves on to a more sublime quest, the welfare of humanity through his land reclamation project.

If Acts One to Three were focused upon the experience of beauty – the aesthetic sphere – as a momentous enrichment of Faust’s (and mankind’s) expanding development, Act Four introduces a new theme to engage man’s restless imagination. It is the challenge of the physical environment, the will to understand and control the forces of nature. It is man’s will to power in the face of the inert or hostile elements. But Faust’s project is marred by Faust’s rash command to Mephistopheles to buy a small cottage in the middle of Faust’s project owned by an old couple who
refuse to relinquish their abode. Mephistopheles’s cronies barge into the house and the couple dies. Faust is displeased: “Were you deaf to what I said? I wanted them moved, not dead.

This mindless, and savage blow,\ Earns my curse: share it, and go!” (11370-3) Faust says, after dismissing Mephistopheles and his cronies: “Quickly said, too quickly done, I fear!” (11382) Hermann J. Weigand argues that this is a sign for Faust’s repentance, a fact emphasized by the fact that Faust does not use magic to dismiss Care (“Faust (First angered, then composed, addressing himself.) Take care: of magic spells show not a trace. (11423)) and what he says in his last soliloquy in Act Five, Scene Five: “The master’s word alone declares what’s right.” (11502)

The final two scenes depict Faust’s death, burial and salvation. Weigand aptly summarizes the action leading to Faust’s death in the following:

On this last night of his life, Faust has again been carried away by an excess of impatience to the perpetration of a highhanded act of injustice that resulted in destruction and murder. He has subsequently repented of this abuse of his power. Then, when assailed by the spectral demon of Anxiety [or Care], he had, in the nick of time, remembered to check his impatience. The hypnotic crooning had prompted him to pass his life in review and, in full acknowledgment of early decisions irrevocably made, he had deeply repented of his cardinal sin of impatience that led to his all-embracing curse and his involvement with the powers of darkness. In this he had successfully countered the Demon’s assault, but the victory that left his personality whole has left its mark on his body. The curtain now rises on the scene of Faust’s death.

Although Goethe’s Faust does not trouble himself with the ramifications of his acts and the “fate of his soul” like Marlowe’s Faustus, and does not “waste his energies in morbid brooding over an act that cannot be undone”, Goethe’s Faust is saved and carried away to Heaven through the intervention of Gretchen. Angels chant the divine precepts of Faust’s salvation:

He’s escaped, this noble member
Of the spirit world, from evil,
Whoever strives, in his endeavour,
We can rescue from the devil.
And if he has Love within,
Granted from above,
The sacred crowd will meet him,
With welcome, and with love. (11934-41)

Faust is propelled by love and longing for restoration, thus by the lack of and the need for a complement. It is from activity that he is saved - from the frenzy of a life of loneliness and longing, confusedly underway toward joy. Joy cannot be found close at hand or at once, which is why the Lord greets Mephistopheles as provocateur at the play’s beginning. The goal is rest, ecstasis, release- love and death. But love is a gift and cannot be earned, whether through striving or in any other way. In Faust love is a female donation, embodied in the transfigured Gretchen, who intercedes on Faust’s behalf.

But love is not the only reason behind Faust’s salvation. Activity is another. Ian Watt argues that the earlier Faust tradition stood for the idea of the Fall having occurred because man yielded to the temptation to eat of the fruit of forbidden knowledge of good and evil. But according to the Romantics and Goethe a secular salvation is apparently available for anyone who keeps active and keeps on looking. The order and plenitude which had in previous centuries been ascribed to the Great Chain of Being is now, in the usual Romantic style, being sought only in the
individual’s personal life; there are no fixed virtues and vices, no fixed standards. The only operative principle of value is endless motion, a quality it shares with not only the Protestant ethic, but with modern physics as well. Faust, despite the fact that he loses the bet, as he views the land reclamation project as his greatest achievements, he is saved because he repents, he is active, a keynote struck in the “Prologue in Heaven”.

Marlowe’s Faustus is written along the same Protestant lines. Genevieve Guenther argues that Marlow used the then popular “Protestant anxiety about salvation and popular desire for entertainment converged to produce historically contingent aesthetic effects.” Arieh Sachs (and, somewhat briefly, Lily B. Campbell) argues that Faustus is offered salvation and is damned to hell on Protestant terms. Sachs says:

The Old Man’s appearance is quite enlightening, from our point of view, for he is a man of superior knowledge. His sermon, which follows the conventional extreme Protestant line in that it dwells on human depravity in order to show that only Grace can wash sin away, produces the opposite effect in Faustus and underlines what one increasingly comes to consider Faustus’ predetermined reprobation. Faustus is not thrown by the sermon into “temporal despair” …, a conviction of sin that is an essential first step towards repentance, but into “final despair,” a conviction of sin so great that it precludes all belief in Mercy, hence all belief in God’s power.

Faustus can be saved only if God has chosen to save him, and he must therefore hope that God has indeed chosen to save him. Faustus’s reaction is “damn’d are thou, Faustus, damn;d; despair and die!/ Hell calls for right. ...” (12, 38-40) He is constitutionally incapable of hearing both sides of faith’s paradox; he can hear only the premise of Sin, not the conclusion of Redemption.

Despite all the differences between Marlowe, the playwright, and Goethe, the poet, playwright, and philosopher, both have written their own versions of the Faust myth on Protestant lines. One main difference is obvious: while Marlowe condemns Faustus to warn theatregoers of the evils of magic and use the widespread interest in Witchcraft at that time to popularize his play, Goethe saves his Faust because he toiled until the end of his days for the good of humanity.

Notes:

2 Ibid.
5 The Hutchinson Encyclopedia of Literature. 2006, s.v. “Goethe”.
6 Britanica, op. cit.
7 The researcher has noticed that some Iraqi academics believe in this. One of the aims of this paper is addressing this misconception.
8 See Lisa Hopkins, *A Christopher Marlowe Chronology* (Hampshire and NY: Palgrave, 2005), x-xi: “He did not stay at the King’s School long, because by December 1580 he had arrived as a scholar at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge to study divinity. He was the beneficiary of a scholarship set up by Archbishop Matthew Parker, which was bestowed on students who were considered likely to study divinity and take Holy Orders.”

10 Christopher Marlowe, *Dr Faustus* (London: A & C Black, 2002), (1, 63). All quotations are from this editions and will be given parenthetically henceforward.


12 Ibid., 10.

13 Ibid.


16 McCullen, 11.

17 Ibid.

18 McCloskey, 112.


20 McCullen, 13.

21 *Encyclopedia Britannica*, ibid.

22 Sachs, 638.


24 Green, 281.

25 Sachs, 642.

26 Ibid.

27 Green, 282-283; Sachs, 642.

28 Sachs, 641.

29 McCloskey, 113.


32 Hopkins, 28, 29-30.


34 *The Hutchinson Encyclopedia of Literature*, ibid.

35 Franke, ibid, 10.


37 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust*, translated by A. S. Kline <http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/German/Fausthome.htm> (accessed...
2/2/2013). All quotations are from this editions and line numbers will be given parenthetically henceforward.

39 Weigand, ibid, 478.
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.
42 Ian Watt, Myths of Modern Individualism Faust Don Quixote Don Juan Robinson Crusoe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 197.
44 Ibid., 150.
45 Watt, 94, 92.
46 Weigand, ibid, 486.
47 Ibid.
48 Brown, 96-7.
49 Ibid., 97-8.
51 Weigand, (Part II), 2.
52 Ibid., 5.
53 Ibid., 7.
54 Ibid., 10-11.
55 Watt, 205.
56 Weigand, (Part II) ibid., 7.
58 Watt, 206, 202-3.
59 Tantillo, 459.
61 Sachs, ibid., 640-1.
63 Sachs, 640.
64 Ibid., 641.

Bibliography


