Damnable Lives? The Inter-Textual Relations between Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* and *the English Faust Book*

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Abstract

Christopher Marlowe's play Doctor Faustus is a problematic work in regards to the issues of its date and authorship, but one thing can be stated with certainty: it was inspired by The History of the Damnable Life and Deserved Death of Doctor John Faustus which is commonly known as the English Faust Book. The present article observes inter-textual dimensions between Marlowe's tragedy Doctor Faustus and its prose source-book – the English Faust Book. The article discusses intertextual relations both at paradigmatic and syntagmatic levels. According to the analysis, it becomes obvious that despite several similarities between the two texts, certain differences also exist which are conditioned by political and religious factors of time and social-historical factors of space.

Key words: Christopher Marlowe, Early Modern English Drama, History and Religion, British Studies, text interpretation, intertextuality.

Introduction

The following article observes inter-textual dimensions between Marlowe's tragedy *Doctor Faustus* and its prose source-book – the *English Faust Book*.

Christopher Marlowe's play *Doctor Faustus* is a problematic work in regards to the issues of its date and authorship, but one thing can be stated with certainty: it was inspired by *The History of the Damnable Life and Deserved Death of Doctor John Faustus* which is commonly known as the *English Faust Book* (hereafter referred to as the *EFB*) (Vivien 1994:171). The *EFB* is a translation of a German original, *the Historia von D. Johann Fausten* translated by an obscure translator, known only by his initials P.F. Gent. However, the *EFB* is not a mere duplication of the *German Faust Book* (Butler 1979:31-2). Like many other Elizabethan translators P.F. also "felt free to improve on the original" (Jones 1994:12-3). He rendered and modified the German source, producing a work which appeared in terms of omissions, replacements and additions in regards to its original (Bevington 1993:3-5). In turn, some of these variations allow us to state that Marlowe utilized the English translation rather than the original German text, since he alludes to specific events only appearing in the *EFB (Ibid.)*.

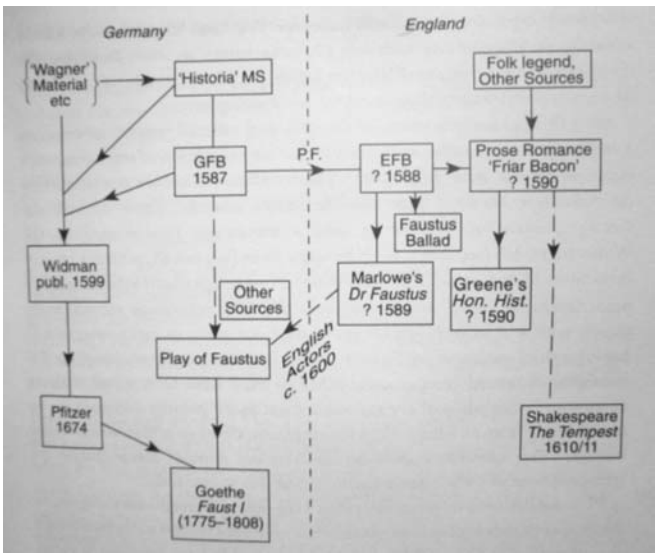
The English Faust: *a collection of stories retelling the reader about 'damnable life'*

The date of translation of the *EFB* is also of paramount importance to determine the date of *Doctor Faustus*. The earliest survived edition of the *EFB* appeared in 1592 (Fehrenbach 2001:328). The title page states this edition is "newly imprinted, and in convenient places imperfect matter amended". Hence we can postulate that there existed an

earlier, now lost edition of the work, which Marlowe might have consulted (Vivien 1994:172).

The *EFB* is a collection of stories telling the reader about the 'damnable life' of the protagonist whose "deserved death" is already predicted from the very beginning of the work. According to H. Levin the *EFB* is "a cautionary tale and a book of marvels, a jest-book and a theological tract" (Levin 1961:131), but most importantly this is a story about a man whose consequent despair in God deprives him of the power to repent. This narrative prose consists of sixty-three chapters which generally can be presented in a tripartite structure: at first Faustus's pact with the devil, followed by his adventurous and supernatural journeys, and finally his damnation and hellish end.

The *EFB* greatly influenced the transmission of the Faust legend and its further development in England. Presumably, it also captured Marlowe's attention and provided him with rich and unique material for his play, serving as a chief source for it. However, the relationship between Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* and its prose source is complicated: the former exists in two separate versions the A-text (1604) and the B-text (1616) (Bevington 1993:63). The A-text contains a few short passages that do not appear in the B-text, also presenting a number of verbal changes.



The following figure presents the transmission process of the Faust theme in Germany and England (Jones 1994:11).

Intertextual Relations: *Doctor Faustus* and the *EFB*

The B-text contains a number of episodes which cannot to be found in the A-text. It is regarded as a combination of both authorial and theatrical provenances including revision from 1602 onwards (Ibid.). W. Greg argued that the A-text was a 'bad quarto' declaring that it was memorially reconstructed (Dump 1976:xxvi). For a long period of time this was

a disputable question. However, recent studies have shown that the A-text stands much closer to Marlowe's original and, moreover, that it is set from an authorial manuscript, composed of scenes by dramatists (Jones 1994:17). However, the issue of authorship of the B-text still remains disputable. Besides the above mentioned facts, the A-text provides a more reliable account than the B-text does in relation to Marlowe's source-book, the *EFB*. This becomes particularly clear in those scenes where the existing two versions deal with identical episodes. Since the A-text is considered to be more accurate than the B-text, all the citations in this essay refer to the A-text unless otherwise specified.

Marlowe's play *Doctor Faustus* exists with obvious detailed changes in relation to its prose source. Already in the Prologue Marlowe uses an implicit allusion to the fall of Icarus (Gatti 1989:81-83), comparing Faustus's action with the one 'who mounted above his reach, who flew too near the sun on the waxen wings and then fell into the Aegean, an element not occurring in the source-book.

> Chorus: *His waxen wings did mount above his reach,*
> *And melting heavens conspired his overthrow.*
> *For, falling to a devilish exercise.*
> (Ch. Marlowe "Doctor Faustus", Prologue, p.20-23)

This might be considered but a subtle difference between the two works. Nevertheless, this variation enables Marlowe to introduce and develop a new type of character in his play: an 'overreacher' and a disobedient figure, that greatly varies from the one presented in the source. Moreover, Faustus's transgressive character is emphasized more and more within the subsequent scenes throughout the whole play. The following lines provide the audience with information on Faustus's necromantic activity:

> Chorus: *And glutted more with learning's golden gifts,*
> *He surfeits upon cursed necromancy;*
> *Nothing so sweet as magic to him.*
> (Ch. Marlowe "Doctor Faustus", Prologue, p. 24-26)
> .

The source-book does not provide these details, and neither is it concerned greatly with the process of the protagonist's decision to conjure. The only thing the *EFB* reveals is the following, more ominous information on the topic:

> *Faustus being of a naughty mind and otherwise addicted, applied not his studies, but took himself to other exercises…*
> (EFB, Chapter I, p. 26-28)

Gradually within the next episodes of the play disobedient character of Faustus becomes more obvious, as he expresses his explicit desire to see the devils as obedient spirits under his control:

Faustus: *Faustus, begin thine incantations,*
And try if devils will obey thy hest…
(Ch. Marlowe "Doctor Faustus" I.iii.5-6)

In the source the entry of the dragon is succeeded by Mephistopheles in the guise of a friar, and only later Faustus requests the spirit to appear in that shape. Moreover, when Faustus sees the devil he is so terrified that he wants 'to leave his circle and depart.' In contrast, Marlovian Faustus immediately orders Mephistopheles to reshape into a friar in order to demonstrate his power over the devil:

[Faustus sprinkles holy water and makes a sign of the cross.]
Enter a Devil [Mephistopheles]
Faustus: *I charge thee to return and change thy shape.*
Thou art too ugly to attend on me.
Go, and return an old Franciscan friar;
That holy shape becomes a devil best.
Exit Devil [Mephistopheles]
I see there's virtue in my heavenly words.
Who would not be proficient in this art?
How pliant is this Mephistopheles,
Full of obedience and humility!
Such is the force of magic and my spells.
Now, Faustus, thou art conjurer laureate,
That canst command great Mephistopheles.
(Ch. Marlowe "Doctor Faustus" I.iii.23-33)

Faustus: *Having thee ever to attend on me,*
To give me whatsoever I shall ask,
To tell me whatsoever I demand,
To slay mine enemies and aid my friends,
And always be obedient to my will.
(Ch. Marlowe "Doctor Faustus" I.iii.94-98)

It is noteworthy that even on the linguistic level the choices of the word *command* in the play and of the word *request* in the equivalent episode in the *EFB* clearly reveal the difference between the characters of the protagonists:

> *Presently not three fathom above his head fell a flame in manner of a lightning and changed itself into a globe: yet Faustus feared it not, but did persuade himself that the devil should give him his request before he would leave.*
> (*EFB*, Chapter II, p.102-105)

> *This pleasant beast ran about the circle a great while, and lastly appeared in the manner of a grey friar, asking Faustus what was his request.*
>
> (*EFB*, Chapter II, p.117-119)

The use of the word *request* does not show Faustus' power-striving, overreaching, "willfully and aggressively competitive" character in the source-book (Cox 2000:110). These are features typical for the protagonist of the play who seeks for titanic power over "All things that move between the quiet poles."

Faustus' dissatisfaction with traditional learning is expressed within the episodes where he rejects the subjects of the university curriculum one by one:

> Faustus: *Philosophy is odious and obscure;*
> *Both law and physic are for petty wits;*
> *Divinity is basest of the three;*
> *Unpleasant, harsh, contemptible, and vile.*
>
> (Ch. Marlowe "Doctor Faustus" I.i.108-111)

However, this episode does not appear in the source-book and is the result of Marlowe's brilliant elaboration, which enabled the playwright to create a new character, a character of a Renaissance period with humanist aspirations.

Marlovian Faustus' disobedient character becomes more visible within the scene where he takes initiative and offers his soul to Lucifer:

> Faustus: *Go bear these tidings to great Lucifer:*
> *Seeing Faustus hath incurred eternal death*
> *By desp'rate thoughts against Jove's deity,*
> *Say he surrenders up to him (Lucifer) his soul,*
> *So he will spare him four-and-twenty years.*
>
> (Ch. Marlowe "Doctor Faustus" I.iii.89-92)

Whereas in the source it is Mephistopheles who becomes a proposer:

> *Upon these points the spirit answered Doctor Faustus, that all this should be granted him and fulfilled, and more, if he would agree unto him upon certain articles as followeth:*
>
> *First, that Doctor Faustus should give himself to his lord Lucifer, body and soul*.
>
> (*EFB*, Chapter IV, p.189-193)

The play also portrays inner conflict in a way that is largely missing in the source-book. This conflict is presented in terms of a strict opposition between the Good Angel and the Evil Angel that derive from the tradition of morality plays (Vivien 1994:177).

These angels do not appear in the source-book. Interestingly, the *EFB*'s Faustus is initially unwilling to accept the terms of the contract proposed by Mephistopheles, but he does not show much sign of inner conflict until signing the pact, while the dramatic embodiment of Marlovian Faustus' promptings of his conscience are presented from the very beginning through the Good and the Evil Angels' appearance. These two characters do not only portray the inner conflict but also add some additional tension and keep the rhythm throughout the whole play. In fact, their regular entries do not allow the audience to know exactly how the play is going to end; whether Faustus will be able to repent and be saved or whether he will be damned:

Good Angel: *Faustus, repent, yet, God will pity thee.*
Evil Angel: *Thou art a spirit. God cannot pity thee.*
Faustus: *Who buzzeth in mine ears I am a spirit?*
Be I a devil, yet God may pity me;
Ay, God will pity me if I repent.
Evil Angel: *Ay, but Faustus never shall repent.*

(Ch. Marlowe "Doctor Faustus" II.iii.12-17)

The opposition between good and evil also presents problems of free will and predestination in the play. The Marlovian protagonist gets warnings about hell and damnation before making a pact with the devil, but he ignores this willfully and consciously. In the source-book the discussion about hell and damnation follows the act of signing the pact. Being aware in advance of the issues of damnation and hell stresses Faustus' responsibility of his free choice of bad and evil, as well "the inevitable consequences of that choice." The theme of conscience is prominent in the pact signing process where the Good and Evil Angels appear again, which again stresses the inner conflict in the play (Ch. Marlowe "Doctor Faustus" II.i.15-20). In the play Faustus' responsibility of free choice and conscience is also present in the scene when Mephistopheles seems powerless uttering: "His faith is great. I cannot touch his." (Ch. Marlowe "Doctor Faustus" V.i.78).

The notion of hell is presented in the *EFB* as the one of folkloristic background full of fireworks and gruesome tortures and of colorful beasts and animal-devils, but at the same time it is a place of physical torment:

> *Hell is the nurse of death, the heat of all fire… the dwellings of devils, dragons, serpents, adders, toads, crocodiles… the puddle of sin… the end of whose miseries was never purposed by God.*
>
> (*EFB*, Chapter VI, p. 635-642)

The 'two sorts of torments in hell' – *Paena damni* and *Paena sensus*, i.e. the Pain of Loss and the Pain of Sense, were widely discussed and spread approaches among many writers and Protestant theologians of the time. Marlowe also applied this Protestant extension of the traditional "two sorts of torments in hell" in *Doctor Faustus* where he presents hell on the assumption of the spiritual idea of hell as separation from God:

Faustus: *Where are you damned?*
Mephistopheles: *In hell.*
Faustus: *How comes it then that thou art out of hell?*
Mephistopheles: *Why, this is hell, nor I am out of it.*
Think'st thou that I, who saw the face of God
And tasted the eternal joys of heaven,
Am not tormented with ten thousand hells
In being deprived of everlasting bliss?
(Ch. Marlowe "Doctor Faustus" I.iii.74-81)

In Christian tradition despair is one of the mortal sins as it presents lack of faith in Divine mercy and, therefore, in salvation as well (Kott 1985:15). It is the consciousness of being damned to hell which is eternal. *OED* defines despair as "the action of condition of despairing or losing hope; a state of mind in which there is entire want of hope; hopelessness." Hence despair is another central issue omnipresent in *Doctor Faustus*. Even Marlowe's play is often called a tragedy of despair. Despair and its derivatives appear thirteen times throughout the play, reaching its climax in Act Five:

Faustus: *Damned art thou, Faustus, damned: despair and die!*
Hell claims his right...
(Ch. Marlowe "Doctor Faustus" V.i.48-49)

Faustus: *Why wert thou not a creature wanting soul?*
Or why is this immortal that thou hast?
Ah, Pythagoras' metempsychosis, were that true
This soul should fly from me, and I be changed
Unto some brutish beast.
All beasts are happy, for when they die,
Their souls are so dissolved in elements.
But mine must live still to be plagued in hell.
(Ch. Marlowe "Doctor Faustus" V.ii.97-104)

However, the notion of despair is still rarely presented in the *EFB* and is interpreted from a Lutheran viewpoint:

The devil had so blinded him, and taken such deep root in his heart, that he could never think to crave God's mercy.
(*EFB*, Chapter VI, p.703-704)

Marlowe, however, puts the issue of choice of free will and reprobation at the centre of his concerns, revealing this through Faustus' struggle to repent. If interpreted in Calvinist terms, Faustus is damned because he is an unredeemed sinner, a person who has been predestined by God to eternal damnation. Faustus thinks that he cannot repent

because his heart is hardened but at the same time he appeals to God to save his soul. The Good Angel and the Evil Angel explicitly show Faustus' struggle to repent; the Good Angel states that God will forgive him, while the Evil Angel reminds Faustus that it is "too late" (Ch. Marlowe "Doctor Faustus" II.iii.77-80).

The play suggests an end similar to that of the *EFB*'s one where the protagonists have a *hellish fall*. At the same time, however, these two works have quite different ways of depicting the final episodes. In the last chapter the prose sourcebook presents Christian moral condemnation of a life from which "All Christian may take an example and warning" and ends with long Christian sermon-like lines (*EFB*, Ch. Lxiii). The same moralizing end, but in its condensed and dramatic version, is presented in the Epilogue of the play, where the Epilogue fixes the status of *Doctor Faustus* as a heroic and moral play:

Chorus: *Cut is the branch that might have grown full straight,*
And burnèd is Apollo's laurel bough
That sometime grew within this learnèd man.
Faustus is gone. Regard this hellish fall,
Whose fiendful fortune may exhort the wise
Only to wonder at unlawful things,
Whose deepens doth entice such forward wits
To practice more than heavenly power permits.
(Ch. Marlowe "Doctor Faustus" Epilogue, p.1-8)

In the case of the sourcebook Faustus's hellish end is described in great detail:

> *"They (students) found no Faustus, but all the hall lay besprinkled with blood, his brains cleaving to*
> *the wall: for the devil had beaten him from one wall against another, in one corner lay his eyes…"*
> *(EFB*, Chapter LXIII, p. 2925-2928.)

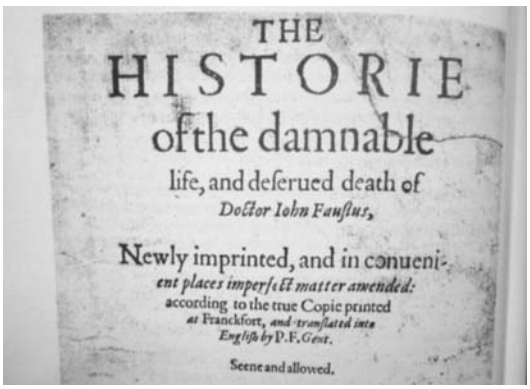
In contrast, the A-text of the play retains its audience in anticipation of what happened to Faustus and does not provide a parallel to the grotesque scene like the one mentioned in its source-book. Only the B-text of *Doctor Faustus* is a reminiscent of the scene in the *EFB* where the students find Faustus' dismembered body ("Doctor Faustus" the B-text, V.iii.1-12).

Conclusion

The *EFB* was an invaluable source upon which Christopher Marlowe based his tragedy. Yet Marlowe presents his work in a more rhythmical way, compressing the sixty-three chapters of the source-book into five acts in his play. He creates a character that is quite different from its archetype. In several chapters in the *EFB,* Faustus is depicted as a trickster; for example, he deceives a horse-courser, borrows money from a Jew, and

robs the bishop of Salzburg. In the play Faustus is presented as a power-striving, transgressive and overreaching character and a sinner.

The *EFB* tells its reader about the history of the damnable life and deserved death of its protagonist. Marlowe shows his audience a play which is also about the damnation of the protagonist, Doctor Faustus. In contrast to its archetype, Marlovian Faustus' damnation is not clearly shown from the very beginning of the play. In the case of the *EFB* the reader already knows from the title of the work that the protagonist is damned and will die. Moreover, it can be seen from the title of the source-book that the main character's death is considered to be a deserved one. One of the most important differences between the *EFB* and the play lies in the attitude towards the protagonist. In the *EFB*, the protagonist is rejected, whereas in the Epilogue of the play the chorus laments the tragic downfall of 'the branch that might have grown full straight'. The play is also full of moments of Faustus' hesitation and struggle to repent, for instance, when Faustus thinks about his possible salvation, or when he tells the scholars: "If I live till morning, I'll visit you; if not, Faustus is gone to hell." Thus, up to the end of the play the audience does not know exactly whether this tragic hero will be saved or damned.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Facsimile of title page of the Orwin 1592 edition of the EFB (Jones, 1994: 90).

Though the play and its source have the same moralizing end, from which every Christian should learn; however, each of them suggests its own way of depiction of that end. As it has already been shown previously, the *EFB* gives every single detail of what happened to Faustus, thus uncovering every single detail to its reader, whereas in the play the audience is left in anticipation.

Marlowe stages a compulsive and ambitious character who sells his soul for knowledge and power in order to go beyond the limits of the possible. Marlowe's protagonist is deeply inspired by a characteristically Renaissance humanist aspiration to push the boundaries of human knowledge. Marlowe also puts the issues of free will and predestination at the centre of discussion . John Calvin, an influential theologian of the time, emphasized the doctrine of predestination and man's loss of free-will except to do evil. He believed that a man is initially inclined towards evil, and that any good deeds a man may perform is derived directly from God. According to this doctrine, God has already

chosen those who will be saved and those who will be damned (Honderich 1973:12-13). The Calvinist doctrine of predestination and free will to choose evil is obviously present in the play. Through the use of Calvinist conceptions of spiritual destiny, Marlowe endowed his play with a remarkable degree of dramatic tension and tragic intensity. Meanwhile in the *EFB,* the Lutheran approach is more emphasized: the sinner's heart is hardened, he is damned and he has no salvation, and gets the 'devil's reward', i.e. his deserved death.

Notes:

1. *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the noun *command* as 'the act of commanding; the utterance or expression of an authoritative order or injunction; bidding.' See *Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford University Press. Available at: <http://www.oed.com/search?searchType=dictionary&q=command&_searchBtn=Search> [Accessed February 2014].
2. *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the noun *request* as 'an instance of asking for something, esp. in a polite or formal manner; a petition or expression of wish; a document expressing such a wish; (also) the thing which is asked for. See *Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford University Press. Available at: <http://www.oed.com/search?searchType=dictionary&q=request+&_searchBtn=Search> [Accessed February 2014].

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Անիծված կյանքե՞ր. միջտեքստային հարաբերությունները Մարլոյի «Դոկտոր Ֆաուստ» պիեսի և «Ֆաուստ. անգլիական տարբերակ» պատմաղբյուրի միջև

Սույն հոդվածն ուսումնասիրում է Քրիստոֆեր Մարլոյի «Դոկտոր Ֆաուստ» պիեսի և նրա պատմաղբյուրը հանդիսացող «Ֆաուստ. անգլիական տարբերակ» (The English Faust Book) ստեղծագործության միջև առկա միջտեքստային բարդ հարաբերությունները՝ կառուցվածքային և բովանդակային մակարդակներում: Եվ չնայած երկու տեքստերն ունեն մի շարք բովանդակային նմանություններ, այնուամենայնիվ, երկերի համատեքստային վերլուծությունը թույլ է տալիս վեր հանել նաև որոշակի տարբերություններ, որոնք պատմա-կրոնական կարևորություն ունեն: Եվ հենց այս տարբերությունների միջոցով էլ ստեղծվում են դարաշրջանի հակասական ֆաուստյան անգլիական երկու կերպարները:

Проклятые жизни? Интертекстуальность в пьесе Кристофера Марло “*Доктор Фауст*” и в книге *“Доктор Фауст: Английская версия”*

В статье рассматриваются проблемы интертекстуальности в пьесе Кристофера Марло “*Доктор Фауст*” и в книге *“Доктор Фауст: Английская версия*” (The English Faust Book). Считается, что Марло написал свою пьесу в 1592, а книга *“Доктор Фауст: Английская версия*” была переведена с немецкого приблизительно в 1591. И несмотря на сходства между этими произведениями, есть также конкретные детали с чем и эти два произведения отличаются друг от друга, и как показывает анализ материала, для этого имелись резкие исторические и социально-политические причины.