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Marlowe's Doctor Faustus Finds Reality: In the Comic Mask

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MARLOWE'S DOCTOR FAUSTUS FINDS REALITY:

IN THE COMIC MASK

(TITLE)

BY

EVA MARIE ENIS

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

1981

YEAR

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MARLOWE'S DOCTOR FAUSTUS
FINDS REALITY:
IN THE COMIC MASK

BY

EVA MARIE ENIS
B.A. in Eng., College of St. Francis, 1968

ABSTRACT OF A THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in English at the Graduate School of Eastern Illinois University

CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

1981
Scholars have considered the protagonist of Christopher Marlowe's *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus* from nearly every perspective, but, at the same time, they have been hesitant to recognize the humorous incidents, particularly the so-called clownish scenes, as having a legitimate place even though much comic incident appears in Marlowe's source. Though scholars have acknowledged Marlowe's play to be a morality, they have not viewed Faustus as a morality character whose comic mask is his reality.

An examination of the morality tradition, with Marlowe's debt to the morality in mind, justifies the inclusion of much humorous matter in a play often assumed to be tragic. The original morality was a *Psychomachia*—an allegorical conflict of man's soul between good and evil—whose outcome was a triumph for good. Its dramatis personae—personifications of good and evil forces—show that the comic characters were always tied to evil effects. These comic-evil characters satirized the protagonist's sins through burlesque techniques. Thus exaggeration and distortion made his sins appear absurdly funny. After the Reformation, a new "hybrid" form—a homiletic tragedy—emerged. It provided for comic scenes that were longer and more vivid than the serious and, now emphasizing mankind's failings, reversed the usually triumphant ending. Also, a fusion of the good and the evil forces into one character created the "Vice," a protagonist with a dualistic personality comparable to mankind.

When stage impersonations became a popular means for propaganda, the developed Vice—basically an abstraction—could be adapted by the playwright to variable situations when clothed with a proper name and matching costume. Marlowe's ingenuity enabled him to weave historical and philosophical ideas into the script of *Doctor Faustus*, whose protagonist of the same name was modelled in part on the Vice character.
Marlowe disguised his protagonist as a scholar who rejected the traditional culture (i.e., white magic) and selected the counter-culture (i.e., black magic) in an attempt to overcome his existential dilemma. Marlowe made Faustus represent two aspects of humanity. First, dressed in the scholar's robe, Faustus represents the intellectual with his "cool tranquil idealism," who is good. Second, when he rejects all known knowledge and accepts the unknown, he discards the scholar's robe, ironically declares his own doom "Consummatum est," and unwittingly becomes a representation of the clown with "bestial impulses" in the "figure of a fool," who is evil. Realizing his mistake, Faustus seeks an anodyne for his fears while he vacillates between thoughts of good and evil. The insidious corruption of Faustus' mind creates his downfall; his clownishness is a frivolous aftermath of self-deception which creates his hell on earth and causes him to conclude his life as a coward, dismembered psychologically and literally.

In the play, humorous elements work as an anodyne, as evocation of the hybrid "Vice," and as a means to convey Faustus' psychological state after his "fall." The rollicking rhythms of the clowns in the first part of the play and the low humor with matching antics of Faustus himself in the second part successfully lull the consciousness of the audience--up to a point--and it comes as a shock that Faustus is actually damned in a reversal of the simple morality. As Vice, whose reality is the comic mask, Faustus is only a metaphorical figure, a personification of an abstraction, hence an amoral non-being capable of performing exaggerated absurdities to please his audience while displaying through speech and actions the absurdity of mankind's aspirations, whether for "belly cheer" or infinite power and knowledge.
Wer fertig ist, dem ist nichts recht zu machen,  
Ein Werdender wird immer dankbar sein.

vom Vorspiel auf dem Theater  
in Goethe's FAUST
Scholars have considered the protagonist of Christopher Marlowe's *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus* from nearly every perspective; but, at the same time, they have been hesitant to recognize the humorous incidents, particularly the so-called clownish scenes, as belonging to the original drama. Through an examination of Marlowe's play, I hope to show that both the comical scenes in the main plot and the low characters' antics in the subplot are an integral part of Marlowe's means to characterize the absurdity of an aspiring scholar who wishes to evade mankind's existential dilemma and who unwittingly becomes a clown.

Among critics who neglect or deplore the comic "intrusions" are John Addington Symonds, U. M. Ellis-Fermor, John Bakeless, Paul Kocher, Harry Levin, and Wilbur Sanders. Symonds analyses the "perplexities" of Faustus' "divided spirit,"¹ but nowhere considers the low humor that is also part of it.² It is rather obvious that Ellis-Fermor does not consider the middle part of the play as belonging to it originally because he states that:

The form of Faustus is a little like that of all ruins—the design is not obvious, but it can be perceived. If the roof of a cathedral were broken in several places and patched with rococo work and frivolous, degenerate ornaments, no architect would be deceived. Rather, his first thought would take the form of Goethe's exclamation: "Wie gross ist alles angelegt!" The ribs of the original arches can be discerned, though their continuity is broken and their surface deformed.³
Evidently, she recognizes the clowning to be the work of an interpolator.

It is somewhat difficult to assess John Bakeless' opinion of the comical scenes in Faustus. In his earlier book, Christopher Marlowe: the Man in His Time (1937), Bakeless says that there is "not any doubt" that Doctor Faustus is a "re-writing of the English Faustbook," noting also that Marlowe "hardly troubles to adapt its material but copies it almost verbatim." Five years later, Bakeless discusses the clownish scenes and wonders specifically whether or not Marlowe "had anything to do with them . . . ." Paul Kocher takes an even less humorless view. Because, for him, Marlovian heroes are "projections of one man, one spirit . . . Christopher Marlowe" and because he parallels the apostasy and despair of Faustus with a possibly dark hour in the life of Marlowe, Kocher can only see Faustus' "sense of the loss of God, his agonized despair" as "the gist of the play."

Harry Levin also fails to consider the play's comic aspects. Though he presents in graceful prose critical insights for nearly every important serious scene, Levin is not concerned with the middle section. He does not consider these scenes to be the work of Marlowe, and he is ready to dismiss them as "unquestionably weak." In the same vein, Wilbur Sanders notes that the comic scenes are merely "the vein of undirected frivolity."

Other critics have made room for some treatment of comedy when considering the character of Doctor Faustus. In particular, Robert Ornstein presents an argument quite relevant to the view which I expect to take of Faustus. After stating that the "ironist often deals in elemental absurdities--the absurdity of eating children to cure poverty or of mortgaging one's immortal soul for a piece of mutton (if it be
well roasted)," Ornstein argues that Marlowe's interest in providing clownish entertainment may be to reflect mankind's ridiculous situation within life's "comedy of futility."\textsuperscript{11} Marlowe's creation "depicts the corruption of the mind that destroys the soul,"\textsuperscript{12} according to Ornstein. For he views Faustus' contract for "infinite power" to be as ridiculous as the Clown's contract for "belly cheer"; both result in damnation. In his discussion of comedy at both the main and subplot levels, Ornstein shows how their eventual coalescing produces a different Faustus, no longer the exalted Scholar of the first part of the play, but now "the figure of a fool," whose only difference from the "clown is one of degree, not of kind."\textsuperscript{13} Only a few years later, Bernard Spivak examined some enigmatic figures which appear in Elizabethan drama and discovered at their core the conventional morality Vice character.\textsuperscript{14} Spivak's dissatisfaction with the usual evasive criticism relating to Shakespeare's villains provoked his correlation of the ambiguous "intriguers" (i.e., Iago) with the evolution of the morality's personifications.\textsuperscript{15} His study thoroughly explains the fusion of both the virtues and the vices from the old morality into one figure called the "Vice" in the developed morality. If we measure Marlowe's Faustus by Spivak's rule, numerous parallels will be discovered: a virtuous Faustus is first presented to the audience in the disguise of a towering intellectual and after much vacillation a Faustus is then shown who indulges in life's vices; Faustus is both a passive and an active personality; he displays sadness and mirth; through his constant vacillation and indecision concerning repentance, he becomes the intriguer who weaves continuity; and, with the fusion of both virtues
and vices in his character, Faustus clearly portrays the many facets of mankind. The discovery that Faustus incorporates Vice characteristics ultimately lessens his tragic stature and places him more properly as a close relative to Falstaff. When Marlowe contrasts Faustus' early intellectual achievements with his later gluttonous and sensual desires, Faustus reveals himself as a comedian of low humor similar to Falstaff.

J. B. Steane has noticed Faustus' ambiguity and, specifically, the incongruity of the play's subject matter:

Instability is fundamental in the play, as a theme and a characteristic. Faustus is a play of violent contrasts within a rigorous structural unity. Hilarity and agony, seriousness and irresponsibility: even on the most cautious theories of authorship, Marlowe is responsible at times for all these extremes.16

Here, Steane significantly considers the opposing polarities which alternate throughout the play: the "hilarity" as opposed to "agony" and the "seriousness" as opposed to "irresponsibility," further stating that Marlowe is responsible for the radical changes. Apparently, Steane accepts the humor as part of the original play.

Another major step toward seeing humor as integral to the role of Faustus has been made by David Bevington, who claims that misunderstanding of Faustus results from an inadequate knowledge of the Christian homiletic tragedy's functional burlesque humor.17 The original Christian homiletic morality play consistently shows mankind's ultimate spiritual triumph over evil, whereas the later developed homiletic tragedy shows his defeat in keeping with the Calvinist doctrine of
retribution. Bevington notes that the earliest drama in England "contained in its phases of comic and grotesque degeneracy the materials for a tragic solution." Discussing the history of the Psychomachia—the allegorical conflict of man's soul between personified good and evil forces—Bevington says that above all else it was "composed of a mixture of the serious and the grotesque." Then, speaking particularly of the comedy in Faustus, he says that the play's "comic scenes are not placed haphazardly"; they are part of an "established pattern of alternation between edification and amusement." Within the comic scenes, Marlowe presents burlesque humor which "treats Faustus' heinous sins satirically, by exposing them to grotesque exaggeration and caricature. Things terrible in themselves are made absurdly funny," Bevington says, because "we are meant to laugh at evil as well as fear it." Bevington notes that there is a "trace of the Vice in his [Faustus'] universalized acquaintance with evil and his penchant for practical humor." I wish to go beyond Bevington and show that Faustus is the Vice; he is both his own tempter and his own worst enemy.

Michael Goldman, Stephen Greenblatt, and Edward A. Snow present evidence which I think supports the idea that Faustus is a Vice character. Goldman claims Faustus is a dissembler in the first part of the play who tells himself to "be a divine in show," but that Faustus is impatient to discard his disguise—his "mask"—to allow "forbidden sensations and thoughts" to completely ravish him. This brief description is characteristic of the Vice who serves didactically
while charging his "moral instruction with humor and theatrical excitement."25 As a "composite of farce and high moral seriousness,"26 the Vice is always anxious to be done with the serious and to delve into mirth and mischief. Goldman interestingly perceives the irony of Marlowe's moral warning (to the playgoer and reader) not "to practice" but "to wonder" only "at unlawful things" after the vicarious empathy of the audience and of the reader has already been actualized by means of the stage action.27 Greenblatt considers the Marlovian hero as a physical being whose restless activity in time and space creates a mockery of the abstract being so that the final cumulative effect is "not so much heroic as grotesquely comic, if we accept Bergson's classic definition of the comic as the mechanical imposed upon the living."28 Greenblatt then describes Faustus as fashioning himself when repeating Christ's final words: "Consummatum est." Faustus, by positing himself "as God, then as dying man" now culminates "his fantasies of making an end"; and it makes a "decisive boundary in his life."29 Relative to the Vice, we might say that Bergson's "sia e vital of the Vice is, of course, a personification of both virtues and vices but it is the action of the vices who provide the energy. Similar to the Vice in the hybrid morality plays who represented only the virtues in the exposition and only the vices in the remainder of the play, Faustus will take upon himself a new Gestalt—form. Just as the Vice character of the old morality deceitfully employed evil by insinuation into the "innocent" heart of mankind, so also has Faustus deluded himself into thinking that he can gain power over
his own limitations. Playing the part of the Vice, Faustus now tempts himself toward another direction: the "forbidden." The passive, inactive, "non-being" good scholar disguise is replaced by an active, "evil" entertainer. Speaking Platonically, Greenblatt says Christ is the Idea, but Faustus is neither an Idea nor a form of the Idea, he is only an illusion. Greenblatt, like Ornstein, sees a deeper level in the comedy of Marlowe, whose plays "spurn and subvert his culture's metaphysical and ethical certainties." For E. A. Snow, it is merely a matter of semantics to explain the plight of Faustus: a word like "end" presents a different connotation to persons of different beliefs but taken in "Faustian discourse" depicts a Faustus who has a "blind spot" at his center. Snow traces words like "end" and its cognates throughout the play to show Faustus' failures to posit "ends" as a means to project himself into death and survival beyond it. Snow uses "end" to explore Faustus' consciousness of externals as "trash" and his inner sense of "isolation, dislocation, and abstraction," which causes Faustus to write a contract covering every conceivable point (body, soul, and spirit) because Faustus cannot locate himself. Cognizant of Marlowe's intent to portray a "nothingness at the heart," and interpreting "O Faustus, they are come to fetch away thy soule" as a cowardly cry, Snow claims we miss the point unless we recognize the "gentle laughter" that should issue from this dramatization of "childlikeness," while Faustus simultaneously aims at and dreads the end.

Critic W. L. Godshalk has shown the degeneration of Faustus the Scholar to Faustus the Clown. Godshalk contends that "Faustus is in
the main a simple trickster," a "virtually harmless" figure who,
through self-delusion, sells "his immortal jewel to become a comedi-
an." Turning his critical searchlight on Marlowe's play, Godshalk
finds ironic parallels between both the main and the subplots, and
the high and the low characters. Godshalk states that

The Master and the servants are one, for in
a sense, Faustus's pretensions are as comic
as the clowns'. What he performs with his
magic does not seriously affect the world.
He is an entertainer and a cheater of in-
competents. His tragedy is that he sells
his soul to become less than he was—a clown.
In the end, Faustus reaches tragic reality
through the comic mask.37

Focusing on salient points regarding Faustus' clownish actions, God-
shalk leaves unexplored the fact that the "mask" itself may be the
reality.

It is my contention that Marlowe's Doctor Faustus has suffered
too long as a "tragic" character, and I hope at least to decrease
the emphasis on his tragic stature to allow for recognition of the
integral humor. I agree with Godshalk that Faustus becomes a clown,
though my interpretation of the cause creating the effect differs
from his. Ornstein's view of Faustus, as a "figure of a fool" in
scholarly disguise, parallels my interpretation of Faustus as a
hybrid morality Vice character. I first see Faustus as a mental
giant who has attained more than his university colleagues, having
mastered not one but all four disciplines offered at that time. While
seeking more knowledge, the admirable but restless Faustus impulsively
rejects all known knowledge (in itself a foreshadowing of the "figure of a fool") for that which is unknown, thus propelling himself into an expansive time and space where there are no controls. This happens once he pronounces his "self-fashioning" decree: "Consummatum est." Now taking a different direction evokes a behavioral change. When his intellectual "wings," i.e., his "spirit of enquiry, which was regarded as fatal to the soul," melt, Faustus falls and becomes a practical joker. Perhaps we could or should specifically say his "idealistic" wings melt because Faustus continues to play the role of a scholar—ever interested in the field of metaphysics, etc., etc., but now he becomes more able to face reality, to accept both principles—the better and the worse—inherent in mankind's nature. His passive "goodness" is combined with his active "badness" to create a character that is at once admirable though depraved. When the legal contract is consummated between Faustus and Mephostophilis, it becomes incumbent upon Faustus to become a character in low comedy because within the morality tradition comic effects are always tied in with the devil.

Much comic incident appears in Marlowe's play because it was in his source. But the fact that he allowed it to remain may indicate that it served his purpose well and "meshed" with the elements from the morality tradition. Although Marlowe borrows the motifs from his source, The History of the Damnable Life and Deserved Death of Doctor John Faustus, he usually uses only the germ of an idea and puts it into another context than used in the source; the comedy of dismemberment appears to be the same, but Marlowe manipulates this device metaphorically,
cumulatively to add ironic dimensions, finally, to the fate of Faustus. The Faustbook was basically a serious moral narrative of a Doctor of Divinity who refused repentance and was consequently damned.\( ^{110} \) Marlowe appears to use this same pattern of repentance-refusal and damnation, but, actually, it is only an "appearance." Accepting the serious ideas, Marlowe changed them to suit his own purpose. He did this also with the comedy routines which appear seemingly without change. F. P. Wilson reminds us that the "jests about the Pope's buffet, the courtier's horns, the horse-corsers [sic] who pulled Faustus' leg from his body, the forty-dollar horse that vanished when ridden into the water, and the consumption of the load of hay\( ^{41} \) were all available. Marlowe alternates scenes of good and evil in which dismemberment incidents prepare cumulatively for a not-so-tragic outcome.

Following Bevington's lead, we must look at the morality tradition that existed before Marlowe to see whether there is anything present in it that would account for the structure and tone and the effects of Marlowe's Doctor Faustus. Strangely enough the morality play—for the most part, a serious form of drama—employed several conventions which provided humor for its audience. One of the conventions, comic digressions, seems to have originated from the essence of the morality, which culminates in victory for the good. Because the same actors played in both the good and the evil roles, and because the Tudor itinerant troupes were economically limited in number, the device called "doubling\( ^{41} \) resulted. With the same actor portraying both a good and an evil force, the doubling necessarily caused the dramatist to create a scenario alter-
nating the scenes between the two polarities. Thus, the playwrights traditionally utilized a scenic pattern portraying the passively good, or serious, intent, alternating with the actively bad, or comical, intent. Both devices, doubling and alternating, used originally from necessity, became firmly established ingredients of the morality tradition, and they were used by dramatists even after the increased size of the troupes made them unnecessary. It was, then, through the essence of the morality with its symmetrical portrayal of both good and evil that it was established that evil forces had to follow good forces, on stage, and this eventuated in the comical digressions. These comic digressions then became important subplots to mirror the activity of the main plot. The evil comedy in the comic digressions was made "absurdly funny" to provide a satirical treatment of the sins of the drama's hero by "exposing them to grotesque exaggeration and caricature." As Spivak succinctly reminds us, "While the virtues talked, the vices acted, and by their physical exuberance and verbal pungency transmuted the pious monotony of the homily into the profane excitement of the play."

Another convention of the morality, dramatis personae allegorically representing the vices, provided humor for the audience. The morality's personifications for humor were forces of evil: the Seven Deadly Sins, and the many cohorts of the Devil. Particularly comical was the dramatization of the vices, often in the guise of the Seven Deadly Sins, who created humor by exaggerating the protagonist's heinous sins to the point of absurdity. The Seven Deadly Sins were "moral
personifications in allegorical competition for the human soul.\textsuperscript{166}

These sins were in man's nature; consequently, they usually provided the greatest caricature of the hero's degradation. Dangerous to mankind,\textsuperscript{177} they caused him to become bawdy in his speech and actions.\textsuperscript{1\textsuperscript{166}}

In turn, the audience experienced comic relief—tension was reduced and greater comical irony realized when the audience consciously participated through laughter allowing the "unconscious" level to be "less deeply stirred."\textsuperscript{169} A thorough analysis by Spivak explains the purpose of the Seven Deadly Sins in their "comic portrayal of evil" as

the degradation by caricature of a dangerous enemy, and an anodyne, therefore, applied to fear and pain. And the method of this degradation is at least twofold: as an image of frustration it expressed the essential impotence and vulnerability of evil, comforting the Christian with the pleasing vision of its defeat by God's will and its subjection to His purpose; as an image of baseness it allowed him contempt and laughter for the nature of evil by depicting it as rudely physical and bestial, a mirror of what is lowest, because least spiritual, in human nature and in the universe.\textsuperscript{50}

It was generally true that the Seven Deadly Sins were given expression in the actions and speech of the declining hero so much the more as he sought relief from his frustration and pain while he progressively became more degraded. In actuality, the sins became the hero's anodyne, or relief.

The Devil, too, was among those who presented humor in the morality play. In the "Christian mythos" as the "father of evil,"\textsuperscript{51} he became an "historical figure . . . a fallen arch-angel, the anthropomorphic Adversary."\textsuperscript{52} According to Hartnoll, he had become a figure of comic
stature when the interpolation of comic scenes was presented during the liturgical drama of the Middle Ages: the "greatest comic character was Satan himself, with attendant devils, who after the last scene of the Last Judgment gleefully shovelled the lost souls into the Hell-Mouth.\textsuperscript{53} Because the audience liked "comic byplay," it was not uncommon for the devils to wander about on stage intruding on many a scene that they "had no business to be in."\textsuperscript{54} A. M. Nagler relates some rubrics from the \textit{Jeu d'Adam} describing the antics of the devils with Adam and Eve: "certain ones shall push them on, others shall drag them" while "other devils" perform a "great dancing and jubilation ... shout ... and dash together their pots and kettles," followed by running "to and fro."\textsuperscript{55} Such chaos on the stage continually attributed to the evil forces was certain to create laughter when the Devil and his cohorts appeared.

The most important personage among the dramatis personae who became the focal point of humor in the later moralities was the "Vice" character. He is such an important personage in the English drama that we must give greater attention to him than to any other convention. Older scholars have not been in agreement in defining the Vice. According to E. K. Chambers, the interludes had a fool who was a dramatic character also known as the "Vice"; thus, the terms "fool" and "Vice" may be used synonymously.\textsuperscript{56} On the other hand, L. W. Cushman states that the Vice is "distinct from the clown and the fool."\textsuperscript{57} However, both Cushman and Chambers\textsuperscript{58} seem to agree in recognizing the Vice as the character later called the "buffoon." About the buffoon, Susanne
Langer writes that he has "absurd expectations" and he "is neither a good man nor a bad one, but is genuinely amoral. . . ." 59 Spivak resolves this confusion by stating that the Vice

springs, by a century-long process of doctrinal emphasis and dramatic specialization, from the numerous vices, including the Deadly Sins, who came upon the morality stage out of the diffuse homiletic allegory of medieval Christianity. 60

All human weaknesses, or vices, were fused into the vice character, according to Spivak. These vices, however, were not coequal. That vice which was most dominant, having exercised itself first and more strongly than the others, was known as the radix malorum—the vice to which all other vices were subjected. 61 In the sixteenth century, we recognize the radix malorum as the vice who was "offered homiletically to the audience as ... preceding all others in the destructive assault of evil upon the heart of man, the true religion, or the structure of society, depending on the didactic focus of the play," 62 as the anti-Protestant Vice during the reign of Mary Stuart, and as the anti-papal Vice during the time of Elizabeth. The Vice was a personification, according to Spivak, and, as such, he was totally exempt from punishment and passion. The humor of the Vice springs from the fact that he was both a personification and amoral—that is "free"—and could "supply the craving of the popular audience for something besides high seriousness." 63 This character then was the "leader and governor" 64 who was found on the stage during the sixteenth century. After the Reformation, this important character wore many different costumes to
satisfy the audience. It was probably no small delight to a Protestant audience to see the Devil appear in the garb usually identified with a Franciscan Friar or a Roman Pope.

Regardless of the costume, the Vice character can always be recognized as the leading character whose personality regales the audience with both joy and sorrow. His role when "sad" always included the compensating counterpart of joy. He was full of mirth with "his laughter, his songs, his jests, his fustian gabble, his uninhibited vulgarity, and his rallying familiarity with the women in the audience." His rapport with the audience was one of the important dramaturgic effects that create humor. According to Spivak,

His role, in consequence, opens itself up to an expanding variety of comic motifs. He appears as a practical joker and clever fool, delighting his audience by his satirical wit, his frequent grossness, his antics (both physical and verbal), and above all by his consummate artistry in deceit.

As the leading character in the later "hybrid" morality—a development following the Reformation which deals with secular matter—the Vice is the comic who intimately addresses his audience with

asides and monologues—witty, ironic, satiric, and . . . who reveals through his behavior his allegorical origin and motivation, and who is still sufficiently a homiletic figure so that his actions are intended to demonstrate his name and nature.

He has a combination of both sadness and mirth; and the latter degenerates finally, in the hybrid morality, to comic depravity. According to
Levington, the Vice is "intended to be both admirable and yet depraved." He is a metaphorical figure as long as he acts in allegorical drama. When his "dramatic world is no longer a metaphor," the Vice will change to meet the needs of the time.

It has been noted that the Vice character had changed in the "hybrid" morality, which had developed after the Reformation when the morality plays became an important political and religious propaganda voice. The dramatic formula for this new hybrid, or homiletic tragedy, provided for comic scenes that were longer and more vivid than the serious, and they contained more varied characters, which resulted in a "mounting emphasis upon the failings of mankind, rather than the triumphs," with a predominant satiric tone. Thus, we can see that the drama form changed and developed according to the needs of a new generation.

Especially during the 1560's and the 1570's, the homiletic tragedy with its concept of mixed drama takes on new meaning. It is drama with "vicious behavior" that "is at once funny and terrifying as a spectacle, admirable and yet grotesque, amusing but also edifying as a perverse distortion of moral behavior" wherein the comic licentiousness produced its own catastrophe. This drama presented a gamut of situations from the extremely acceptable good to the extremely unacceptable evil encountered by mankind from birth to death. Playwrights developed scenarios requiring two protagonists to represent each segment, and these two were later fused into one protagonist—the Vice—with a dual personality. The factor which determined the content of these dramas
was audience approval, and the audience had a preference for humor. This helps to explain the above noted statement that these dramas have longer and more varied comic scenes than those in the past. It also brings us again to the important humorous figure, the Vice character.

During the latter part of the sixteenth century, the Vice character was still "on stage" while most of the other dramatis personae and the entire apparatus of the "old" morality had disappeared; the new drama incorporated the already mentioned political and religious themes and needed a protagonist to act out its propaganda. So the Vice character robed himself in the latest costume of the Court dandies, took upon himself a man's name, and stepped upon the boards, to become a character who was difficult to explain: whether a figure who had on a uniform of the soldier, of royalty, of historical fame, or of legendary fame. No longer was the protagonist fought over by the vices and the virtues because they were incorporated into this one "intriguer" whose "protean nature and devious history" allowed him to portray both the good and the evil found in the human nature of all mankind. According to Bevington, this character was a figure of eternal damnation, after the Calvinist doctrine of determinism was spread. But, in actuality, the Vice character was a composite of so many variables that it is best not to designate him, perhaps, as a particular figure unless to say that he was a figure of ambiguity.

In addition to the items already mentioned, certain conventions of presentation helped to create an atmosphere of humor in the morality.
Sounds were important: music and thunder accompanied the descent of gods; the striking of a clock aroused suspense and denoted passage of time. Devils appeared on stage with the fireworks which were a regular part of their performance. Stage properties and equipment were used to evoke humor: separate parts of the human anatomy when an actor was dismembered—"the property head was overworked;" special costumes worn as a disguise for invisibility; mechanized equipment to open the jaws of the Hell-Mouth, allow thrones to descend, and convey dragons through the air.

Although many critics have commented on Marlowe’s use of the morality play or morality play traditions, they have neglected to note that this tradition contains much comic event or characterization. Looking at Marlowe’s play with this in mind, we can find a justification for the inclusion of the comic interludes and, indeed, for the preeminence of comic antics on the part of the "tragic" hero. Indeed, the comic behavior—even clowning—of Faustus finds a thematic justification as part of the portrayal of the Vice character.

As we continue to look at the morality tradition we find Marlowe’s justification for the "Gargantuan" amount of comedy in a play that is "tragic." The old conventional morality was an allegorical presentation, as has already been noted. The roles presented in this older tradition were staged in a metaphorical dramatic world. This meant the roles were not characterizations of real persons; they were merely personifications. As a personification, the hero had a freedom not possessed by characters in later drama who portrayed real persons.
Already alluded to in regard to their exemption from punishment, these heroes of the old convention were without the passions of joy, anger, sorrow, etc., which are realized by actual beings. The heroes in this old convention could "express themselves as moved by resentment, ambition, hatred, professional and sexual jealousy, but they do not behave as if they were so moved." Thus, the heroes from this old tradition were untouched by the situations in which they found themselves even though they appear to have some feeling about a particular incident. These heroes do not become desperate when their aspirations are not fulfilled; the appearances which they present can be most deceiving in such cases and are seldom—if ever, followed by any drastic action. Seeking high ambitions and failing to attain them is not a hindrance to the attitude of these heroes. They are easily gratified. If they despair, they find it easy to regain composure.

Marlowe uses the old morality tradition as a dramatic frame for his play and uses the protagonist from the same tradition whom he paints as an innocent Scholar mastering all the disciplines which are offered at the university. Only after becoming a master of logic, medicine, law, and theology, does Marlowe's Faustus receive his Doctorate in Divinity. Though Marlowe aggrandizes his Faustus by these intellectual achievements, he also undercuts the Scholar's accomplishments through humor.

Marlowe's creation will stage both principles of mankind's nature and we hear the chorus recite a foreshadowing of another aspect of the Doctor:
This allusion to Icarus is a mocking comparison that creates a humorous image (as well as the usually cited rebellious image). Juxtaposing the image of a wise scholar "excelling all" (Prologue.B-18) with the image of a foolish boy whose "waxen wings" first helped him to "mount," but, soon "melting," caused him to fall through the air, undermines the central character's dignity immediately. Like Icarus, borne by wings which failed him, Faustus has ascended and is destined to fall. Through the dramatic irony of the Prologue, the playgoer is made aware of Faustus' future "damnation," but the aspiring Faustus is unaware of the situation. Marlowe has implanted a contradictory image in the minds of the audience: an intellectual type and, evidently, a humorous type.

Marlowe makes Faustus the representative for two aspects of humanity: the intellectual with his "cool tranquil idealism," who is good, and the clown with his "bestial impulses," who is evil. Faustus' dualistic tendencies are comparable to those of the already-mentioned Vice character in the developed Psychomachia. This character also had a dual personality because he had been imbued with both virtues and vices when he incorporated all of mankind's characteristics. Thus, we have within the character of Faustus a "good," lofty-minded individual and a "bad," sensuous individual. However, his entire life up to this
point has been centered upon the intellectual sphere to the exclusion of all else.

His first soliloquy, though usually considered a serious piece of poetry by Marlovian scholars, may seem to paint a caricature of a flighty Faustus who frivolously rejects all collected knowledge. Imagine the Lord Admiral's Men's chief actor, Edward Alleyn, broadly exaggerating as he says:

Sweet Analitikes, tis thou hast rauisht me. (I.i.B-34)

The word "rauisht," used by Greg in both the A and the B texts, connotes one's delight with the physical. This choice of words—in a section which is definitely designated as Marlovian—presents a man who can be seduced by what is normally thought to be one of the most arid sections of Aristotle's works. It is ironical that Faustus thinks his ability to dispute logically has achieved its full potential; it is just this inadequacy which will cause his downfall. But he thinks that "a greater subject fitteth Faustus wit," [sic] and bids the subject of being and non-being "farewell" (I.i.B-39-41). According to Michael Goldman, Faustus is successful in his attempt to bid "being farewell, but not nonbeing."90

Then in the next few lines, Faustus boasts of the "bills" that are "hung-up as monuments / Whereby whole Cities haue escap'd the plague / And thousand desperate maladies beene cur'd" (I.i.B-46-48). Yet, he decides that the profession of medicine is not "to be esteem'd" (I.i.B-25), simply because he can not raise men from the dead as Jesus did Lazarus. Humor—absurd humor—has been created because Faustus' reasoning is so
absurd. Faustus now turns to the legal profession for consideration, but just as quickly decides that it "fits a drudge, / Who aims at nothing but external trash" (I.i.60-61). It is ironical that Faustus takes such a radical attitude in designating "externals" as "trash" since he has, in the past, dedicated himself to the study of externals, and, in the future, will continue to abandon himself to that which is external, foreshadowing his end when he himself will be nothing but the "mere external trash he scorned." Faustus then impulsively decides that Divinity is best, and continues:

Stipendium peccati, mors est: ha, stipendium,
The reward of sin is death? that's hard:
Si peccasse, negamus, fallimur, nulla est in nobis veritas:
If we say that we have no sinne
We deceive our selues, and there is no truth in vs.
Why then belike we must sinne,
And so consequently die,
I, we must die, an everlasting death.
What doctrine call you this? Che sera, sera:
What will be, shall be; Divinitie adeiw. (I.i.B-66-76)

Faustus bids divinity "adeiw" just eleven lines after he has declared that divinity is best. One need not see this enacted to realize the humor arising from such an uncertain, indecisive, vacillating man. Like Humpty Dumpty, he leans first one way, then another. Having chosen divinity, or "white magic" as best, only a few lines later he leaves it for that which is its opposite, necromancy, or "black magic." Faustus formulates a logical fallacy deleting from his premises God's love and mercy, therefore arriving at a false conclusion that he must sin because he is eliminating all possibilities of God's love and God's mercy from his life. Because Faustus has created a syllogistic error,
he will now intensely follow the steps to his personal "danse macabre" and the idea that either way--with or without repentance--he will die; Faustus is incapable of transcending mankind's existential dilemma. Even though "bills" have been hung as "monuments" to his fame, his "Renaissance melancholy"--the idea of life's futility--will continue to haunt Faustus and to thrust him ever forward toward an anodyne which will alleviate his fear of death. Recall that Marlowe has informed the audience that Faustus is "glutted ... with learnings golden gifts" (Prologue.B-23). The only knowledge that Faustus has not acquired is the "Metaphysics of Magicians" (I.i.B-75), which he immediately equates with "heavenly" (B-76) information. His determination to fulfill his desires through the practice of necromancy propels Faustus to a frivolous rejection of knowledge that he has learned in the past.

In the next scene, Marlowe intensifies the vacillation of Faustus by presenting the Good and the Bad Angels which he borrowed from the morality tradition. As the Daimon--conscience--of Faustus, they make visible the two polarities of Faustus' personality. The solemn and "theatrically inert" virtuous preacher, the Good Angel, attempts to dissuade Faustus, but he hears his contrasting personification, the Bad Angel, outspokenly declaim: "Go forward, Faustus" (I.i.B-100); and Faustus chooses to follow his Bad Angel. The vacillation in Faustus' mind occurs because he desires more knowledge, and the Good Angel could only mouth what was acceptable for that period in time. Robert Ornstein reminds us that we "see the world through the lenses of custom: when
false values pass current, even elemental truths appear distorted, naive, or absurd."94

In the prologue, Marlowe described an intellectual who had acquired all known knowledge and who was still seeking for knowledge to fulfill—or satisfy, his desires, even if he must seek that which was the unknown or forbidden "Magicke." The important point to be considered is that almost any UNKNOWN was believed to be "evil," and "regarded as fatal to the soul,"95 that is, unless it was an unknown acceptable to those in authority (in the church). The "Magicke" that was performed by the church was "good." Knowledge or "magicke" that would hinder the traditional beliefs was all "evil." Given the spiritual and intellectual capacity of Doctor Faustus, one can sympathize with his earnest desire to seek the *summum bonum*. Thus far, he seems to have been a victim of "ever learning and never [being] able to come to the knowledge of the truth."96 He has never reached the sublimity and serenity of truth which he thinks that he will find in magic. A true Renaissance man, Faustus is seeking his individual fulfillment. During the period when Marlowe wrote *Doctor Faustus*, a marked delineation between magic and science had not yet occurred.

Faustus, having found religion meaningless and without hope, now selects another direction. By his own ambition, by his own free choice, Faustus has decided on a career in the "forbidden" area. Faustus had previously talked about it with his two friends and now he tells them: "Gentle friends aid me in this attempt" (I.i.B-133). He is serious when he succumbs to the study of black magic for a greater
learning experience; but it is a hubristic personality which we
realize bursting into full bloom when he says:

And I . . . Will be as cunning as Agrippa was,
Whose shadow made all Europe honour him. (I.i.B-134-140)

This self-comparison with the famous historical figure shows Faustus' movement from a seeker of more truth to a seeker of fame and renown. According to Ellis-Fermor,

Partly in the recklessness which is the natural reaction from his former patience, partly in the desire for consolation, he abandons the systematic search for that final understanding the desire for which has led him forward, yet eluded him, all his life, and plunges defiantly into the practice of magic.98

To embrace evil, Faustus had to do "comic" things, given the tradition of the morality. The sensual aspect has already begun to emerge from Faustus' stage personality and will soon overshadow the intellectual. It should be noted that from the moment Faustus rejected traditional theological theories, there has been a decided change in his thought processes. In lines omitted from the Quarto B-1616 text, the audience has heard Faustus say:

Diuinitie is basest of the three,
Unpleasant, harsh, contemptible and wilde... (A-112-113)

Marlowe has hinted through lines such as these the subconscious aspect of Faustus that now emerges in the third scene when Faustus openly invokes the appearance of the devils.
In recalling that the Vice character of the morality tradition was connected always with comic effects, one begins to see the extrinsic change in Faustus. Before Marlowe's incantation scene begins, we hear the sound of thunder. This is usually symbolical of the "descent of the gods"; but whenever Marlowe has the sound of thunder in his Faustus stage directions, it is symbolic of the presence of devils. Marlowe does not have just one devil, but he writes a stage direction for five: The devils are on stage, and the audience now knows that this means something comical is about to take place. This is what they have been waiting for, and with relish they watch Faustus draw the magic circle that is supposed to protect the magician from evil. The scene is full of irony. The devils are already perched above the "heavens" as Faustus prepares to invoke their presence; Faustus believes that his drawn "characters" will enforce the spirits "to rise;" he steels himself to "fear not," to "be resolute;" he is using names of saints and figures of heaven to invoke the presence of a devil; and, the thorough-going irony is the sight of this towering intellectual going through all the rigamarole to conjure a devil only to demand that (when appearing) he leave and return in the guise of a Franciscan Friar.

The spectacular merriment on stage is superabundant: when the drummers sound the thunder, Mephistophilis appears, followed by the devils who begin to make more noise with their squibs as they run back and forth, in and out, creating a merry time for everyone on stage and in the audience. Instead of showing any exhilaration at
the sight of Mephostophilis, Faustus immediately rebukes him:

I charge thee to returne, and change thy shape. (I.ii.B-250)

and presumptuous Faustus gloats:

I see there's vertue in my heavenly words.
Who would not be proficient in this Art?
How pliant is this Mephostophilis?
Full of obedience and humility,
Such is the force of Magicke, and my spells. (I.iii.B-255-259)

Faustus has become enamoured of his own tricks and actually believes that he is in charge of Mephostophilis, ignoring for a while the truth that the conjuring was not the sole reason of his appearance. When Faustus uttered "Valeat numen triplex Jehovae!" ("Away with the three-fold spirit of Jehovah"), he had blasphemed against the Trinity; and this automatically invoked the presence of devils, it was believed. Since the presence of devils on stage was tied to comic effects, the action seems to imply an attempt by Marlowe to lampoon traditional religion. Also, since the magic helps to create Faustus' downfall, Marlowe seems to lampoon the counter-culture, i.e., black magic.

To cry "away" with the dogma of Trinity lampoons traditional religion. Though this dogma could not be proven, it had gripped the minds of men and women and hindered their "free" thoughts of God's majesty.

Using so-called saints' names and figures of heaven to invoke the presence of devils and comedy is a further lampoon on traditional religion. Likewise, Marlowe's ironical fashioning of Faustus' voicing a belief in the "vertue" of his words (e.g., the ability to create a
"pliant" attitude in Mephostophilis and to command his "obedience and humility"), lampoons the counter-culture and helps to show the fallacy of placing faith in the counter-culture. But Marlowe never lampoons Faustus' desire to learn; throughout the play, Marlowe allows the spirit of inquiry complete and uninhibited license. Marlowe presents Faustus and Mephostophilis in a continuous dialectic regarding hell; they are often heard discussing astronomical theories of the universe; they do not reach definite conclusions since answering all Faustus' questions was an impossibility—Marlowe did not know the answers (and even "today no one understands how the world functions"[100]).

But Marlowe was concerned with metaphysical questions which traditional culture answered with absolutes. Kenneth Burke reminds us that "myths are grounded in beliefs. And beliefs are 'myths' to whoever doesn't believe them."[101] Using this idea as a basis to explore some of the subtle relationships between the beliefs postulated by Faustus and the actions performed by him on stage, we can formulate a Faustian "theology," or "mythology." His doctrine includes a belief in the magician as a "Demi-god" (I.1.B-88); he holds the principle that Beelzebub is the Prince (I.iii.B-280-283); he declares that hell is "in Elizium" (B-285) and "mens [sic] soules" are vain trifles (B-287); he contracts to "be a spirit in forme and substance" (II.i.B-488), so he believes in a spiritual world; he thinks "Hel's a fable" (II.i.B-519); he believes in joys of heaven but he does not particularly believe heaven—the universe—was made for man; he says: "IF heaven was made for man ..." (B-580). He believes God was the
creator of the world (II.ii.B-643) and we know that his God has been
divested of love and mercy. Therefore, with little or no internal
joy, Faustus is eager to be through with the first part of his life,
to "make an end immediately" (II.i.B-460). His final words when
signing a twenty-four-year contract with Mephostophilis are:
"Consummatum est" (II.i.B-462). His imagination has seen words on
his arm and his blood has congealed, but Faustus determines to "go
forward," to throw off his disguise and to live. Arriving at his
first day of life to commence formerly unknown experiences, Faustus
believes that he exists in time-space, at least, for twenty-four
years, during which Marlowe will—in the play—"contain him, con-
centrate him, 'dramatize' him."102 According to E. A. Snow,

Contingency and flux are transformed into "thy
fattall time," death from one moment among many
into "thine houre," the "finall ende" toward
which all points and rushes.
"Endlessness" is thus a matter of crucial
ambivalence for Faustus: if it is the goal that
he pursues, it often seems in turn precisely what
he is fleeing from. "O no end is limited to damned
soules" can be taken as a phenomenological definition
of damnation for Faustian consciousness, and not
just as an article of faith concerning the nature
of existence in hell. The form of the expression
makes ends and limitedness feel like things that
are bestowed upon you, like grace.... Without
the imposition of limits, real or imaginary, there
could be no striving, straining, aspiring, trans-
gressing, or overreaching—and this would surely
be hell for the Faustian sensibility.103

For a while then, through means of the contract, Faustus has posited
for himself a "consciousness"—a self; and, after this self-induced
action, he has hopes that he will live endlessly, i.e., through his
damnation.
Marlowe has shown a Faustus of serious mien during the first part of the play who had been "acted upon" in spite of his attempt to induce the action himself. Presumably, his entire environment and education precluded a total freedom of choice since it was customarily oriented toward predeterminism, a view that binds one to a self-destructive obedience. In his impatient determination to "level at the end," we saw in Faustus "a growing awareness of static self-imprisonment; the gestures of an insatiable thirst for the profound gradually betray the existence of a grasp that turns everything it touches into 'external trash.'" His training has propelled Faustus to view the world as "trash" and his physical being as sinful. In his flight of fantasy to overcome temptation of his appetitive nature, he first fell prey to logic. Faustus the Scholar was first "seduced" ("rauisht" I.i.B-35) by logic; then he was seduced ("rauisht" I.i. B-132) by the thought of studying magic; and now we will see him seduced by his own nature. He is his own worst enemy as he tempts himself and desires to feed upon the gluttonous spirits of the Seven Deadly Sins.

Marlowe exposes the comic character of Faustus during his examination of the Seven Deadly Sins "in their owne proper shapes and likenesse" (II.ii.B-671). Faustus announces that this "sight will be as pleasant ... as paradise was to Adam the first day of his creation" (8-673-674). Since the viewing of sins in their true hideous shapes will be pleasant to Faustus, this dialogue is a clue to two things: it previews the forthcoming comedy, and the simile implies
that this is the first day of Faustus' creation. What does this mean? It means that Faustus is going to remove his scholarly disguise and expose another aspect of himself: —not only is he a solemn, studious scholar; he is also a joyful, mirthful mischief-maker. He is a Vice character out of the old morality tradition, and it has been with impatience that he has worn his "mask" of "exalted appearance."\(^{105}\) Even though there have been no stage directions or dialogue indicating that Faustus has changed either his "shape" or his costume, a change will soon be evident to the playgoer. Having left the lofty heights of the ivory tower, this intellectual now finds time to listen to the absurd wants and complaints of the Sins. As he queries the first Sin in the parade, Pride discovers her disposition to Faustus. Like Pride, Faustus, too, would enjoy the itinerary of Ovid's flea. After Pride, Covetousness, Envy, and Wrath tell their insipid little tales to Faustus, Gluttony requests a dinner invitation. Faustus' refusal provokes Gluttony to say: "The deuill chooke thee." The audience hears Faustus say: "Choke thyself Glutton" (II.ii. B-723). Certainly, this is not the speech of a scholar "graced with Doctor's name."

The appearance of the Sins and Faustus on stage together means that the main plot has reached its "symbolic center,"\(^{106}\) according to Zucker. Faustus now "'feeds' . . . and jests with . . . bogies of the superstitious mind," according to Ornstein, and he is "entranced by Lucifer's vaudeville show."\(^{107}\) Faustus reacts to the "silliness" with the "naive, egocentric delight of a child," according to E. A.
Snow, who senses a "nothingness" at the heart of the "Faustian egotism." This is the point at which Faustus' inner being is now reflected openly on stage by the Sins who relate their "bitter and petty frustrations"—each by a foolish, absurd, nonsensical speech which "suggests Faustus' own futility." Their fatuousness is acceptable to Faustus; their stupidity provides a risible situation through the cooperation of Faustus. Faustus has changed his shape, and he is not only on stage with the low comedians, he is acting with them and talking with them; more specifically he is losing his admirable qualities and declining to their level. After the Pageant of the Seven Deadly Sins, Faustus claims "this sight doth delight my soule (II.i.11.B-731). Is this the noble-minded Scholar speaking? Yes, he is still in the scholar's costume when he speaks this line; but, after accepting a book from Lucifer, Faustus informs the audience that he will be able to turn himself into what shape (B-737) he might desire—another lampoon on the counter-culture because we will find that Faustus cannot change his shape when he wishes to turn his body into air (B-218). However, he does change shape when he dons the red robe of the Cardinal and, later, "becomes" invisible.

In most of the clowning scenes we can see two patterns or motifs intermittently recurring: one is the parallel action which parodies Faustus' conjuring in the main plot; the other is recurring incidents involving dismemberment. Marlowe's dramatic handling of clownishness for presentation on the stage is carefully woven into both the main plot and subplot. Wagner's function in the subplot is to parody Faustus
in the main plot. The dramatic handling allows the playgoer to hear Wagner parodying Faustus and attempting to speak logically with the "schollers" who "wonder what's become of Faustus that was wont to make our schooles ring, with sic proba" (I.i.i.B-190-191). Thus, the earlier "Silllogisms" (I.1.B-133) of Faustus are mocked by Wagner, who fails as miserably as does Faustus. Again parodying the main plot, Wagner attempts to coerce the Clowne into being his servant. The ribald language and jests of the Clowne entertain the audience while Wagner begins to threaten that he will tear the Clowne "in peeces" (I.iv.B-360). It is the same threat given by Mephistophilis to Faustus. Wagner's ability to conjure successfully two devils (I.iv.B-374) is a dramatic means used by Marlowe to show that anyone can conjure a devil if he is evil; and Wagner's threat of dismemberment is a foreshadowing of Faustus' future. These relatively short comical digressions have been alternating with the "scholarly" serious scenes and have provided the audience with a relief from the tension caused by Faustus' conflict.

In the third scene of the second act, Robin and Dick's clowning is important for several reasons. It functions first as a parody of Faustus' forfeiture of his previous achievements to acquire the magician's power to conjure. Robin has somehow managed to procure a magician's book; we see him draw the magic circle and begin an incantation, slowly—since he has difficulty reading the instructions. Marlowe reminds the audience through Dick's dialogue that Robin is an illiterate rustic. Nevertheless, his conjuration later (in III.ii.B-150)
successfully brings Mephostophilis from Constantinople to turn Robin and Dick into an ape and a dog, respectively. We hear, too, Robin jokingly promise Dick "a paire of hornes" (II.iii.B-760), which is a foreshadowing of Faustus' future actions. Reiteration of Pride's previous description of Ovid's flea becomes a confession when Robin confesses to Dick that he, Robin, already has caused Dick to wear those horns. Another important function of this scene is to include the usual comedy fare so common to the morality in its grotesque and base form. Marlowe is simply following the normal pattern that had become a tradition in English drama. Last, but perhaps not least, Robin's promise will occur in the future, and they will have a free "Tauerne" (II.iii.B-771) trek when they will "not pay one peny for it" (II.iii.B-773), afforded through the magical art of Faustus (in IV.vii.B-1763-1769).

The dramatization of a not-so-tragic central figure takes place first in the episodes depicting travels. Faustus' curiosity to see "bright resplendent Rome" (III.i.B-850-851) provides an unexpected and unseen audience with the Pope. First, Faustus dons the red robe of the usually fat Cardinals and succeeds in his comically ironic impersonation. Faustus now parodies his own actions in the first part of the play. It is "travestie of a high order," according to Ornstein, who states that

more correctly, as Faustus changes shape the tragic - comic contrast begins to coalesce. Scene by scene the apposing [sic] images approach one another until at last we discover
beneath the exalted appearance of the fearless rebel the figure of a fool. When Faustus steals the Pope's cup and Robin steals the Vintner's goblet the tragic and comic images nearly merge.\textsuperscript{110}

Further, the "difference between hero and clown is one of degree, not of kind."\textsuperscript{111} In Faustus then we have simultaneously a scholar and a clown but the clown emerges only after he has succumbed to his own "temptation" through the Angels--his Daimon. After his deceptive role as Cardinal--deception being a typical trait of the Vice character--wherein he "seduced" the Pope through his dissimulation, Faustus changes costumes for the robe of "invisibility" and participates mischievously in Peter's feast. Faustus takes the Pope's food, steals his wine, threatens--then boxes his ears, and, in general, makes a fool of the Pope and himself. Another successful seduction! Here again Faustus seems to have all the characteristics of the Vice: he is successful in dissimulation, seduction, and intrigue, capable of providing both sadness and mirth for his audience. He has indeed AND in deed become a clown. There is no other way to describe such antics as he has performed in the presence of the Pope.

Here, Marlowe begins to show us shades of the comic-evil magician appearing in greater depth with each progressive episode. Later, Marlowe uses the Benvolio episode to reveal fully the depravity of Faustus, who has become well-known in his career and visits as a performer before the court of Charles V at Innsbruck. During his performance, Faustus encounters a Knight, Benvolio, who disbelieves the magician's power. Something more than comedy is inherent in the
attitude of Faustus in relation to Benvolio who, rather jokingly says:

I, I, and I am content too; and thou bring
Alexander and his Paramour before the Emperor,
Il' he be Acteon, and turne my selfe to a Stagge.

(IV.ii.B-1286-1288)

Glarin at Benvolio, Faustus replies: "And Il' e play Diana, and
send you hornes presently" (IV.ii.B-1290-1291). Faustus out of re-
venge for Benvolio's scepticism places horns on Benvolio and leaves
them there for an indefinite period. Especially humorous is Faustus' denial when asked Benvolio:

Zounds Doctor, is this your villainy?

Faust. O say not so sir: the Doctor has no skill,
No Art, no cunning, to present these Lords,
Or bring before this royall Emperor
The mightie Monarch, warlike Alexander.
If Faustus do it, you are strait resolu'd,
In bold Actons shape to turne a Stagge,
And therefore my Lord, so please your Maister,
Il' e raise a kennell of Hounds shall hunt him so,
As all his footmanship shall scarce preuaile,
To keepe his Carkease from their bludy phangs.

(IV.ii.B-1338-1347)

Benvolio has been seduced by Faustus, and he has been made a believer in Faustus' magic; so, he hollers "hold, hold" to Faustus when he begins to call up the devils. The Empreur attempts to entreat Faustus to re-
move the horns, while being at the same time delighted for such a mirth-
ful performance. But the horns remain. Faustus reprimands Benvolio to
"looke you speake well of Schollers" (IV.ii.B-1360). But angry Ben-
volio plots revenge, a complication which leads to the partial dismem-
berment of Faustus.
As has already been noted in the discussion of the morality play's conventions, dismemberment is a comical effect; it has been used by Marlowe to good advantage. Marlowe uses this separation of a character's head, arm, or leg to show the gradual build-up to the finale when Faustus is completely dismembered. Marlowe allows the idea of dismemberment to grow slowly. Beginning with only a stab in the arm (B-420), Faustus proves his love to Mephostophilis. Next, Benvolio plots revenge to "haue his Faustus' head" (IV.iii.B-1411), and boasts that "this blow ends all" (IV.iii.B-1414). In a spectacular scene, Benvolio and his friends knock off the head of Faustus and are wholly amazed to realize he is alive "agen" (IV.iii.B-1415). When Frederick wants the head returned, Faustus demurs, saying, "Nay, keep it" (IV.iii.B-1415). Faustus himself gives us a clue to his limited existence, as he continues:

Knew you not Traytors, I was limitted
For foure and twenty yeares, to breathe on earth?
And had you cut my body with swords,
Or hew'd this flesh and bones as small as sand,
Yet in a minute had my spirit returned
And I had breath'd a man made free from harme.

(And the phrase "free from harme" is also a direct explanation of his final act of dismemberment as Vice.) The ambush by the Knights against Faustus' life is a wild scene with soldiers on stage while the drums are beating and the devils are running around shooting off fireworks. All the soldiers and Benvolio have "faces bloudy, and besmear'd with mud and durt; all hav'ing horns on their heads" (IV.iv.B-1489-1491).
An event that started out as a mere joke by Benvolio has turned into a really bloody farce. The revenge theme certainly seems out of proportion to the deed, but it has been a lively effect to keep the attention of his audience—one of Marlowe's objectives. Tied in with this objective, of course, is his character's degeneration. The former admirable Scholar has turned into a corrupt fellow whose schadenfreude—a malicious joy in response to the discomfiture of others—has become apparent. But having fulfilled this assignment in his role of Vice, Faustus returns to the lighter side of mischief, leaving the Knights with horns on their heads as they retreat in shame to the country. Without the depth of real passion peculiar only to human beings, Faustus totally forgets them and the terrible threats to his life.

There is only mirth as Faustus finds another victim to seduce. This time it is the Horse-courser from whom Faustus received forty dollars for a horse which turned into hay. The Horse-courser who wishes reimbursement finds Faustus sleeping, and, in an attempt to awaken him, pulls off his leg—another case of dismemberment. Faustus hollers: "O help, help, the villaine hath murder'd me... Stop him, stop him, stop him—ha, ha, ha, Faustus hath his leg againe, and the Horse-courser a bundle or hay" (IV.v.B-1563-1568). The final dismemberment of Faustus is once again foreshadowed.

Still entertaining, Faustus is now at the Duke of Anholt's where he builds castles in the air and supplies a dish of "sweetest grapes" (IV.vii.B-1673) for the Duchess, when suddenly the Clown and other
minor vice characters are knocking and calling for Faustus. Finally, Faustus is in an ordinary tavern again seducing by casting spells to charm the Clowns and the Horse-courser as each attempt to accuse him. When the hostess requests remuneration for the service and she too is spell-bound, it seems that Faustus has turned into an ordinary cheat.

The dismemberment motif is mentioned again after Faustus encounters the old man, and Faustus repents. This causes Mephostophilis to threaten Faustus with dismemberment of his flesh "in piece-meale" for "disobedience" (V.i.B-1848-1849). Therefore, it appears that either Faustus is to be tortured (i.e. by the devils) if he repents, or he will be damned (i.e. by the traditional religion, both Roman Catholic and Protestant) if he does not. Either alternative embodies futility—a sense that Faustus has all along been doomed to expire (i.e. since his decision to reject the traditional culture and to accept the counter-culture). Yet Faustus has seemed to have a choice whenever the Good Angel and the Bad Angel have appeared. Through their appearances which have masked the reality of Faustus' doom, Marlowe seems to be satirizing the prominent Calvinist doctrine of determinism. What seems also to surface is the absurdity of mankind's preoccupation with the end of life, rather than devoting his intelligence to present being. We have already noted Faustus' concern about his ability to "leuell" at the end, which is an ironical foreshadowing of the play's conclusion.

Marlowe has entertained with clowns and even allowed his Doctor Faustus to act the part of a clown to show his psychological descent
to the ridiculous. When we might have become critical of the admirable—become depraved Faustus, we have been disarmed of criticism by the "nuances of Marlowe's own attitude toward this Faustian egotism and the nothingness at the heart of it," and we have been moved, instead, to "gentle laughter." Ornstein, recalling the absurdities used by ironists, reminds us that we smile because "we know that no man, however foolish, would damn his soul to satisfy his belly—to gain infinite power, yes, but we consider such aspiration heroic." Ornstein shows the ridiculousness of both desires and points to the ironic fate of Faustus who "dreamed of commanding the powers" of the universe but who could not evade death.

With magnificent insight into mankind's psychological struggle with the presumably discrete entities of "good" and "evil," Marlowe contrasts the stoical Faustus who resolutely pursues his anodyne—enjoying belly cheer during his final hours—with a frenetic, cowardly Faustus crying wildly when his existential dilemma can no longer be ignored. The fifth act begins nobly enough: all substance has been willed to Wagner, a party in his home finds Faustus using his magic to entertain his friends, while the devils hustle and bustle back and forth as they carry covered dishes to the study and shoot off their fire-crackers. The merriment comes to an abrupt halt when Faustus reveals his plight to the Scholars: a contract that needs fulfillment. His nemesis has from the Prologue been an absolute. Neither faith nor repentance can now help Faustus. The entire play seems to be ironical at this point, for Faustus with his magic skill
still can not overcome death. All that Faustus had earlier accomplished as a scholar—the honors, the "monuments"—and all that he managed to encompass in his life as a magician have finally come to naught. He craves to be turned into a rain drop. Even such limited reincarnation would be satisfactory, but his magic excludes actualization of the Pythagorean theory of metempsychosis. Faustus is powerless before and because of his final "end." (The damned were at least damned forever.) Unsuccessful in his earlier attempt to bid his non-being farewell, he will attain surcease only as soon as Marlowe pens the final line. Twice, Faustus calls himself a wretch and has his thoughts drawn away from suicide by the Old Man's intercession. Fearful, yet, of death, Faustus cries:

I do repent, and yet I doe despaire,
Hell striveth with grace for conquest in my breast:
What shall I doe to shun the snares of death?

(V.i.B-1831-1833)

Still a humorous character, still vacillating, Faustus is here plagued by his lack of intellectual integrity. A person of indecision all of his life, he exemplifies a childish nature even yet. The cowardly shriek, "What shall I do . . . ?" substantiates Marlowe's thesis of the absurd Faustus whose mind is in chaos. His mind torments him even in his egotistical final hour when he knows that "Faustus [sic] offence can nere be pardoned" (V.ii.B-1937). But his fear, of that unknown quality called death, remains. Soon he will come to his "end." And then it happens! The clock strikes,
the drums beat out the sound of thunder, and the devils swarm onto
the stage firing their squibs and dancing about; finally, dancing
around and picking up Faustus bodily, they leave with him riding on
one of their backs, as the Vice was wont to do. Noise from fireworks
and thunderous drums reverberates in combination with phenomenal
spectacle which, in itself, rises to a crescendo when Faustus' limbs
are strewn all over the stage as a reminder of his devilish fall.
The finale for the audience is to see, again, those same limbs of
Faustus which had often been strewn across the stage in one hilar­
ious scene after another. Once more gracing the boards, these limbs
of Faustus call forth the Scholar's words: "... see here are Faustus
[sic] limbs, / All torne asunder by the hand of death" (V.iii.2-2099-
2100) and give the audience another occasion for "gentle laughter."
The audience has been as conditioned to laugh when presented with
Faustus' dismemberment of limbs as Pavlov's dog to salivate. This
ending, with the strewn limbs scattered everywhere, thus leaves the
audience with more ridicule and contempt than sympathy for the absurd
Faustus.

It is possible now to see the dismemberment motif throughout the
play as Marlowe's metaphorical manipulation of the comic events he
found in his source, the Faustbook. The situation of Faustus becomes
symbolic. The humorous staged decapitation of the hero tells us that
the hero has lost his intellectual capacity to reason well through
giving himself to Lucifer, to black magic, and the limbs strewn about
the stage in the alternate ending illustrate a metaphysical idea that
the devils did not keep him in "hell" where his body would feel the
torture of fire and brimstone, that Faustus has already felt the
torments of hell, and that the fate of mankind is finally nothingness
following his danse macabre.

Taking an overview of Marlowe's play, we realize there is con­
siderable historical and artistic and philosophical justification for
inclusion of so much humorous matter. We can now enumerate various
reasons for its presence in a play often assumed to be tragic. First,
the humor works here much as Spivak saw it working in the old simple
morality. Specifically, it provides an anodyne reassuring the Chris­
tian audience that evil, subject after all to an omnipotent God's
will, will finally be defeated. The audience accepts the stern sermon
that the wages of sin is death, but the play seemingly prepares for a
more hopeful outcome than we get. The rollicking rhythms of the clowns
in the first part and the low humor with matching antics of Faustus
himself in the second part successfully lull the consciousness of the
audience—up to a point. Hence, it comes as a shock that Faustus is
actually damned in an ending unlike that of the simple morality, but
the only possible conclusion in Marlowe's sixteenth century world.

Second, the humor works to evoke a figure representative of hybrid
mankind, a compound of seriousness and foolishness like the Vice in the
hybrid morality. Incorporating both serious and comical characteristics,
Faustus portrays what is generally conceived to be two separable aspects
of mankind's nature, embracing the "evil" which custom dictates should
be partially masked or disguised. Faustus displays all the attributes
of the Vice character—sorrow/mirth, passivity/activity, elevated
humanity/low humanity. As Vice, however, he is only a metaphorical figure, a personification of an abstraction, hence an amoral non-being, capable of performing exaggerated absurdities to please his audience. To the extent that we recognize his status as a disembodied artistic creation, which can not exist beyond the limitations ascribed to him by the artist, we can laugh at this scholar-become-fool without worrying about his potential damnation.

Third, the more particularly absurd humor involving the central character, taking on the quality of nightmare or hysteria, conveys Faustus' psychological status after his "fall," namely the hell of an unquiet mind. Thus it shows Faustus experiencing--during his lifetime--the truth of Mephostophilis' statement, "Why this is hell: nor am I out of it" (I.iii.B-301). From the moment of sealing his involvement with black magic, when Faustus himself pronounced his doom ("Consummatum est"), he has sought extrinsic pleasure and satisfaction and thus ever increased his hellish torture. Later, Faustus runs the gamut from foolish mischievousness (e.g., snatching the Pope's wine) to plain viciousness (e.g., the Benvolio episode). Throughout, his intellect appears to have perverted itself in the cause of diversion; but the intellectual activity, however debased as prankishness, provides an anodyne for his own pain and fear. It appears that Faustus may have departed from his search for "infinite riches" because of his fear. This caused him to act impulsively, to reason later, and to conclude his life as a coward, dismembered psychologically and literally. Whenever Mephostophilis threatens Faustus with dismemberment, Faustus grovels in fear and acquiesces, in spite of his former advice to Mephos-
tophilis "Learne thou of Faustus manly fortitude" (I.iii.310).
The insidious corruption of Faustus' mind creates his downfall; his
clownishness is a significant aftermath of self-deception. His
frenetic pursuit of the anodyne culminates in his final absurd pos-
ture as a clown. His bravura plunge into black magic thus leads
him to a hell he could not envision when he spoke of hell as a fable.

Hence Faustus faces an existential dilemma: the search for
satisfaction involves him in a hell of his own creation, and the
attempt to escape from this hell provokes him to further antics,
which in turn heighten his sense of being in hell. Perhaps through
this defeat Marlowe offers a philosophical view of the absurdity of
mankind's aspirations, whether for "belly cheer" or infinite power
and knowledge.
NOTES


2 Ibid., pp. 505-519.


5 Ibid.


8 Ibid., pp. vi-xiii.


15 Ibid., pp. 131-151.


18 Ibid., p. 162. 19 Ibid., p. 247. 20 Ibid., p. 252.

21 Ibid., p. 253. 22 Ibid., p. 253. 23 Ibid., p. 256.

25 Spivak, p. 120. 26 Ibid., p. 202.

27 Goldman, p. 39.


29 Ibid., p. 57. 30 Ibid., p. 58. 31 Ibid., p. 64.


33 Ibid., p. 94. 34 Ibid., pp. 96-101.


38 Greenblatt, p. 57.


40 Ibid., pp. 65-208.


42 Ibid., p. 118. 43 Ibid., p. 106. 44 Ibid., p. 253.

45 Spivak, p. 123. 46 Ibid., p. 60.

47 Bevington, p. 125.

49 Ibid.

50 Spivak, p. 121. 51 Ibid., p. 130. 52 Ibid., p. 132.


54 Ibid.


60 Spivak, p. 135. 61 Ibid., p. 142. 62 Ibid. 63 Ibid., p. 198.

64 Ibid., p. 142. 65 Ibid., p. 201. 66 Ibid., 198.

67 Ibid., p. 227. 68 Ibid., p. 148. 69 Ibid.


72 Bevington, p. 156. 73 Ibid., p. 162. 74 Ibid., p. 161.

75 Ibid., pp. 152-169.

76 Spivak, p. 59. 77 Ibid., p. 95.

78 Bevington, p. 162.

Cushman, p. 40.

Bradbrook, p. 18.  

Bradbrook, p. 18.

Ibid., p. 15.  

Ibid., p. 18. 

Ibid., p. 18.  

Ibid., p. 18.  

Nagler, pp. 46-47.  

Nagler, p. 18.  

Spivak, p. 35.  


Quarto B-1616 will be the standard text used for references in this paper unless otherwise indicated. It appears to be the general consensus of Marlovian scholars that Quarto B-1616 most nearly represents what might have been Marlowe’s original city performance of Doctor Faustus. Quarto A, the shorter text, seems probably to have been the text used by the itinerary troupes in the more provincial areas.


Ibid.  

Goldman, p. 34.  

Ibid., pp. 34-37.  

Chambers, p. 203.  

Spivak, p. 178.  

Ornstein, p. 167.  


II Timothy 3:7.  

Ellis-Fermor, p. 70.

Ibid., p. 64.  

Bradbrook, p. 19.


Ibid.  


Ibid., pp. 101-102.  

Ibid., p. 79.

Ornstein, p. 170.


Ornstein, p. 168.  

Snow, pp. 96-97.  

Ornstein, p. 168.

Ibid., p. 170.  

Ibid.  

Snow, p. 96.  

Ornstein, p. 167.

Ibid., p. 170.

WORKS CITED


