



Search information

Received.25/10/2021

Accepted 30/01/2022

Printed ISSN: 2352-989X

Online ISSN: 2602-6856

*The Humanist Simulacrum vs. Religious
Reality in Christopher Marlowe's Doctor
Faustus*

Amina Khalfi^{1*} Dr. Halima Benzoukh²

¹ Kasdi Merbah University Ouargla (Algeria),
amina19y@gmail.com

² Kasdi Merbah University Ouargla (Algeria),
halimabenzoukh@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The present paper is an analytic study of Jean Baudrillard's postmodern notion of simulacra and the world of the hyperreal. It attempts to analyse the ways in which Baudrillard explains his aspect of absent referentiality that loses its essence gradually when surpassed by images and copies stripping its originality and authenticity. In order to interpret this postmodern theory, the study delves into a different era from the Baudrillardian time of post-capitalism. It aims at investigating the mentalities, behaviours and inner reflections of the people during Elizabethan England (1558-1603) through exploring its revolutionary Renaissance theatre and its dramatis personae. Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* (1594) stands as the corpus for this study. The play explains the way the protagonist falls into the trap of his own ego and pride after his eagerness to prove individualistic and humanist. The final results demonstrate how Doctor Faustus's simulacrum and copied reality weave a magical world for him with no reference to his religious reality because through shaping a simulated reality, he abjures God and sells out both body and soul to the devil and ends up tormented and damned in hell with nothing to refer or to repent to.

Keywords: simulacrum, hyperreality, reference, humanism, Renaissance, religion

*Corresponding author

INTRODUCTION

In every society and in every age, most stories prove to be remedial due to their instructive tone. Regardless of the style or genre adopted to tell the narrative, writers are considered as a prodigy in their own right due to their ability to construct a story with exquisite giftedness bringing reality out of fiction or to narrativize factuality. Writers tend to employ their magical feathers to infuse a sense of morality into the reader's mind in the way s/he identifies with the text, the characters, and the language itself. Here, the reciprocity tying up the writer and reader ignites once the message is conveyed and the codes are deciphered. In Western culture in general, and in England in particular, stories diversified over time; they mutated in form and content and surpassed their social and political climates.

British literary writings developed from pagan to spiritual and then mingled in their subject matter during the Elizabethan Age (1558-1603). Elizabethan playwrights and Renaissance poets similar to Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593), for example, revolutionized the stage with their unprecedented themes. Marlowe's famous play *Doctor Faustus* (1594) explores several aspects of the humanist culture as well as the internal and external conflicts of a man in contradiction to himself and his outer nature. Moreover, it is an unconventional representation of a Renaissance scholar who makes a pact with the devil in exchange for twenty-four years of fame and power. As a humanist scholar, Doctor Faustus challenges the conventions of his days and surpasses the standards of medieval times; his lust for power led him to a tragic downfall as he opted for counterfeit of his own essence and existence. In his way to defy his nature, he unleashes inner desires and sacrifices his life to meet a hellish end.

2. Renaissance and the Humanist Culture

The constant battle between good and evil knew its way in literature in the first representation of oral tradition of the old Sumerian Culture. The Epic of Gilgamesh is famous for being the first recorded literature in the history of the world. Accordingly, Asian oral stories and Roman and Greek myths spread and formed the corner stone of culture and society that both affected and embraced them. The influence by antiquity reached its peak when the Renaissance flourished in Europe and the rising star of the paganist humanism bloomed in the late 14th century (Brotton, 2006).

The Renaissance started as a political movement in northern Europe; mainly in Italy, and it flourished in many other aspects similar to science,

The Humanist Simulacrum vs. Religious Reality in Christopher Marlowe's Doctor Faustus

Amina Khalfi & Dr. Halima Benzoukh

literature, arts and architecture (Black, 2003). Here, the medieval tradition was gradually sloughing off from the everyday life because people at the time began believing in the change and in the importance of human inventions. As far as development was concerned, science played a major role in the way thinking shifted from orthodox to unconventional. To say it in another way, the scientific developments, discoveries and innovations promoted more research paving the way to the need to understand and pose more questions about the nature of the world, the importance of the human being in the universe, and the way the former and latter affect each other. Man came to understand that he was such an appreciable creature whose intellect transcended and elevated him to the divine. Because of similar beliefs, the church considered such ideologies to be blasphemous as pagan culture and mainly a legacy of the Greeks and the Romans that encouraged a mere denial of the power of God, synthesizing the power of the man instead.

The aspect of emphasising upon human power was referred to as humanism. It highlighted human achievement which was exemplified by arts, science, philosophy and literature of the classical period (Saari & Saari, 2002). In addition to that, these Renaissance humanists believed in man's ability to better himself as God had already ordained him with the intellect to promote a better life (Kraye, 1996). In that fashion, man needed to explore into the world and attempted to find a fulfilling way to live life and prove worthy of the opportunity God granted him.

The Middle Ages; also known as the Dark Ages in Europe; were grim and primitive. The way the church controlled ordinary people's minds led to social as well as intellectual decay; it tricked them into believing that their only mission on earth was to secure a heavenly status and prove a good Christian by obeying churchly commandments and rules (Black, 2003). At that point, questioning the church was considered high treason because clerks, clergies and ministers were ordained to rule by divine power. The way the church was challenged took place in a defiant manner as Renaissance founders rediscovered ancient political and philosophical treatises as well as literary writings which belonged to the classical times and began reading them as a way to learn and develop their lives apart from religious and theological matters.

The Renaissance was rooted in its humanist culture and traditions. In this regard, the church considered similar ideologies and practices to be pagan, especially in Italy (Hathaway, 2003). For example, philosophy was banned from schools and from the intellectual life as it encouraged secular beliefs, and the way scholasticism was subordinated to humanist education was decried by church officials because it was leading people astray (Black, 2003). Yet,

The Humanist Simulacrum vs. Religious Reality in Christopher Marlowe's Doctor Faustus

Amina Khalfi & Dr. Halima Benzoukh

secularism, in particular, was attached to the non-religious aspects similar to politics, arts, economics and literature. In other words, defying God was never outlined during the Renaissance era as it was basically a period of rebirth that glorified classical texts, promoted and emphasised upon the importance of education and learning; a matter that was to a larger extent denied by the Medieval church as it aided them to blind people to social, political as well as religious realities (Hunt, 1999).

Humanism characterised the set of subjects that scholars, tutors and students of the era embodied. In that fashion, humanists showed a keen interest in history, art, literature, and political and religious philosophies as well as grammar. In its way to prove its modernity, the Renaissance extended to architectural designs, visual arts and sculptures. The most domineering features of its burst originated in Florence, Italy (Black, 2003). With all those daring ideas, a schizophrenic interculturality of the old and the new interknit depicting a dazzling celebration of the modern age and a modern man on an equal footing.

The discovery of the ancient Greek and Roman texts accentuated the fact that man was no longer tethered to church practices and rules. Better, it fortified a different kind of reality where youth in particular, and people in general began to grasp the notion of secularism in social and cultural lives and were highly aware of how politics, religion and the state were separate bodies from one another in spite of their entangled nature (Kraye, 1996). Besides, it celebrated the importance of man and his power of belief over the conservative, primitive ideologies established by the ecclesiastics. Renaissance humanism advocated to a larger extent the revolution of mankind where “the ambitious Pythagorean ideal that man is the measure of all things, and they saw the human individual as a chameleon-like creature who has the power either to descend to the level of beast or to rise to the status of an angel was promoted” (Hattaway, 2003, p.52).

The way the Renaissance marked its presence was merely artistic and intellectual. Renaissance artists, thinkers and scholars appreciated education and promoted school establishments, fine arts and paintings through kingly patronage. In her *The Renaissance* (1999), Jocelyn Hunt asserts that:

Rulers were prepared to spend money on enhancing their own status in all kind of ways, and the new developments in the arts gave them every opportunity. Formal courts ceremonial was matched by sumptuous clothing and embellishments to demonstrate the status of the monarch who reveals his wealth in fabric, jewels and furnishing. They built fine palaces and surrounded themselves with the best musicians and scholars

(p. 34).

In England, France and Italy for example, the leading monarchical figures of the high Renaissance were Henry VIII (1491-1547), Frances I (1515-1547) and the House of the Medici (1434- 1737) respectively; sovereigns were celebrating the modern arts and literature and they were patronising the most exquisite artists and painters from all over Europe (Saari&Saari, 2002). Patronising and sponsoring arts and literature reflected a Humanist reality and showed that the country was prosperous and worthy of rivalry with the other powerful nations (Hunt, 1999). As far as Britain was concerned, the Renaissance it celebrated was a distinctive one. The neighbouring nations focused upon enriching their architecture and economics as it was a major leap for them from the Dark Ages. Hence, they were occupied, unlike England, with bettering their nation and throwing back of their own humaneness in the visual arts.

The distinctiveness of the British Renaissance laid in its literary tradition along with its theatrical revolution. In other words, the theatre played an appreciable role in launching and synthesizing unprecedented themes and subjects as it was highly inflamed by the Greek tradition and the way the latter transformed the orthodox thinking (Hunt, 1999). Switching back from the medieval primitiveness, the humanist theatre came to reflect a social reality which was blinded by the misleading commandments of the church. Therefore, the so-called Renaissance theatre flourished in order to project the human thinking, behaviour and beliefs on stage. Unlike medieval drama which focused on allegorical representations symbolizing good and evil in its miracle and morality plays, Renaissance drama actualized and energized the stage not only via its novice ideas and performances, but also via the daring actors and performers who challenged the norms of the day through defying religious beliefs and promoting the role of women on stage as depicted to be vivid, dynamic and bursting with passion and intellectual strength rivaling men as well as crossing the limits to overly discuss and display hellish themes and novice aspects.

The main factor which rendered Renaissance theatre very distinctive and popular was the way it was maven and adept by focusing on the aspect of "skillful writing to engage the audience" (Hackett, 2013, p.2). Accordingly, Hackett asserts that Renaissance drama was poetic in the sense that it highly celebrated verse and respected unity and coherence in both theme and form creating, in so doing, coherent artistic masterpieces that aroused and captivated the audience.

In this regard, the way Renaissance drama tackled diverse topics was

merely targeted to meet people's conceptions about life and society as it reshaped itself to metamorphose from the allegorical representations and abstract meanings into vivid stagecraft helping the audience to better identify with the text being performed. Renaissance theatre was considered as a humanist one because it emphasised upon the notion of individualism. It helped the spectators to scrutinize and evaluate life through identifying with the performances which were staged to express the players' feelings, emotions and views about society openly. On an equal footing, individualism as well as humanism fortified the notion of limitlessness and fullness explaining that one should make use of his potential and capacities as being the "all-sided man" (Hattaway, 2003, p.35). The different astronomical and land discoveries around the world culminated a social and a spiritual upheaval questioning in this regard man's position in the universe (Hunt, 1999). During this time, a new psychology of learning appeared strengthening the notion that "individuals were inescapably shaped by cultural institutions, such as the family, religion, and the state, and those social constructs brought a new set of relations between state and citizen, body and soul, language and meaning" (ibid. p.7). All these notions were mainly considered especially when the reformation in England took place, and when a group of humanist thinkers started critiquing and correcting the medieval church.

During the Renaissance, religion was paramount as it was related to people's identity and essence of themselves. Religion meant politics, and the way people expressed their allegiance to a given doctrine determined their identities. In theatres, for example, performing or tackling religious or political topics needed to be rhetorically delivered. In other words, playwrights were forced to cleverly write their actors' speeches to hide their political and religious affiliations. Several times during the reign of Elizabeth I, theatres were claimed to spread the plague and were closed to ban gatherings. Yet, theatres were considered inciting as they promoted rebellion and encouraged people to proclaim or protest.

3. *Doctor Faustus* as a Divergent Play between Religious and Secular Doctrines

By the 1590s, England grew mature and began exploiting outside its territories. The theatre travelled the audience into diverse antipodes and sloughed them off from the blinkered ideas of the Middle Ages. With the openness of the Renaissance, thoughts blossomed and stretched fiercely to fit dauntless dimensions of thinking. The polemic of the performed themes somehow deconstructed the canon of the Royal propaganda which dictated that

the performances “should feature patriotic representations of English history with wholesome Protestant morals” (Braunmuller&Hattaway, 2003, p. 85). With that in mind, a group of playwrights emerged to change the spectrum and challenge the stage and the authorities with promethean topics.

Amongst the dramatists who provoked the regime by his unprecedented and most daring representations on the stage was Christopher Marlowe. As being a university wit and a Cambridge graduate, he outlined a different type of drama; a drama that reflected the malaise of his day on the one hand and exposed the maliciousness of human kind on the other (Bartels & Smith, 2013). Particularly, Marlovian drama was a mirror to the inner side of the playwright himself, and a stamp of the way he viewed and perceived the world around him. Marlowe was known for his best tragedies which evoked the audiences and shaped new dimensions of their ideologies of life, society, politics and religion. Bartels & Smith (2013) believe that Marlowe’s plays inaugurate “the mature period of Tudor drama” (p. 90) by providing diverse fields of study which combine rich repertoire of topics and ideas from the classics to the religious and didactic themes.

As a play, *Doctor Faustus* was not originally invented by Marlowe himself. It was an adaptation of a German Myth of the German physicist John Faust whose thirst for power destroyed him. In her *A Short History of English Renaissance Drama* (2013), Helen Hackett maintains that Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus* is “a subversive intellectual critique of Christian dogma, but this is unlikely to convert the audience to atheism since it is patently based on selective and distorting quotations from Scripture” (p.81). Marlowe’s character is a mere representation of Atheism and a secular misinterpretation of godly power. Because of his extreme philosophy, some of his contemporary writers similar to William Vaughan saw that Marlowe’s death was “divine retribution for scurrilous writings and blasphemous opinions” (ibid. p.75). With that being considered, Marlowe’s gruesome death was deeply interpreted as punishment as he was against the Royal advocacy.

4. Humanist Simulacrum and Religious Reality in *Doctor Faustus*

The humanist culture that spread during the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries led to tremendous changes. Grasping those meanings of humanism created the need to self-actualize and prove themselves as universal and virtuous characters. Nonetheless, it is dangerous when considering the ways via which such men might pursue power. Man, in particular, can reach ultimate glory through virtue or wicked schemes. For Doctor Faustus for example, his intentions and methods to power led him to resort supernatural means. Hence,

The Humanist Simulacrum vs. Religious Reality in Christopher Marlowe's Doctor Faustus

Amina Khalfi & Dr. Halima Benzoukh

he preferred to compromise his education and social stature in exchange of earthly desires.

In his *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981), French philosopher and sociologist Jean Baudrillard (1929-2007) explains that the simulation means “the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal where the territory no longer precedes the map, nor does it survive it” (p.3). To say it in another way, the distinction between the image, the counterfeit and reality is no longer apparent because the simulation, which is the map that duplicates the territory as an original, does no longer match. The image, in this regard, cannot have a copy to duplicate as it is itself the only surviving version of itself. For example, Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* personifies a version of the humanist scholar whose characteristics precede the norm of humanism itself and stand as a referential entity to an illusion.

Jean Baudrillard emphasises upon the idea of the difference between reality and fantasy which disappears as the former cannot be specular (Lane, 2000). The idea might seem quite unconvincing to fathom; an object without its concept or a concept without the referent can be daunting. What renders things more abstract is the way Baudrillard demonstrates how reality can be reproduced and reinvented by mere miniaturization of objects and cells (Baudrillard, 1981). In other words, the real vanishes gradually in the process of the simulacra which is “nuclear and genetic” (ibid.p.3), or rather radical and basic. Here, the transformation of reality is rooted in its absorption of falseness and fantasy. As an entity, the simulacrum snaps and breaks apart the real to disguise and deputize in its position. Meanwhile, the real renders hidden as it fades away to simulacrum, and decomposes instead of being mirrored back as a shadow of itself. With this being considered, reality is replaced by a fantastical, imaginative world which exists as hyperreal; the concept of the hyperreal in this manner stands as a virtuality of the real where “No more mirror of being and appearances, of the real and its concept and no more imaginary coextensively” (ibid.p.3). Particularly, the parallelism is denied especially when the simulacrum is rampant, and the truth is stained by the models that are basically socially constructed.

In his opinion, Baudrillard (1981) believes that the relationship between the real and the image is:

No longer a question of imitation, or duplication or even parody. It is a question of substituting the signs of the real for the real, that is to say of an operation of deterring every real process via its operational double, a programmatic, metastable, perfectly descriptive machine that offers all the signs of the real and short-circuits all its vicissitudes.(p. 4)

Unlike the semiotic aspect of signs which explains ideas and their meanings in relation to one another, the theory of simulacra inaugurates itself “by liquidation of all referentials” (ibid. p.3). Hence, with no reference to claim upon itself, reality fails to be represented in its reflection because the image overwhelms and dominates the scene and “when the real is no longer what it was, nostalgia assumes its full meaning” (ibid, p.3). Baudrillard highlights that man lives in excess where everything is transformed into “a plethora of truth” (p.6); a hyperreality which reshapes the originality of life and beings on an equal footing. The detachment from reality takes place as the simulacrum destroys the system of the real and retains its place not by falseness, but through the belief of the simulacrum as real and genuine.

As a humanist scholar, Doctor Faustus enters the labyrinth of his fantasies. In other words, he misbelieves that his education grants him power and strength to challenge his social and religious norms. In his pride, Doctor Faustus challenges the rules and decides to pact with the devil as he considers that he is denying the religious dogmas of his day. He wants to show himself as a humanist scholar by sloughing off from every religious ideology. Here, Doctor Faustus gets enchanted by his glorious education believing that he will be immortal through arguing with the devil and he denies his nature and his vulnerability as a human being. He masters necromancy which is the practice of magic that summons the dead and communicates with them. Doctor Faustus's reading and access to different books in different fields enable him to universalize himself and claim his individualism and his distinction from his peer scholars. Thus, practicing black magic and witchcraft transcends him to position himself in the level of divine power. In spite of the fact that he is aware of the crime he committed as an atheist, he ignores and challenges God because he wants to see beyond the theoretical learning; he puts into practice all the skills he understood from books. The humanist simulacrum which Doctor Faustus believes in lies in the way he denies and abjures the scriptures to gain earthly pleasures. To say it differently, his humanistic beliefs as a scholar of necromancy maintain that he should conform to “the ideas of the cultivated Renaissance man in whom all the faculties were harmoniously developed” (Jump, 2005, p.24). Accordingly, he believes that he is able to challenge God and prove himself arrogantly privileged as an equal to the divine.

Doctor Faustus compromises his well-being and scholarly position hoping that the devil will be pleased with him that he renounces God and His commandments to enjoy lavishness and earthly pleasures. In his arrogance, he becomes ignorant and encloses himself within the falseness that Lucifer and his servant Mephistopheles enchant him to see. With Mephistopheles obeying his

order, Doctor Faustus is beguiled with his supremacy over all creatures because of his necromantic skills:

O, what a world of profit and delight,
Of power, of honour, of omnipotence,
Is promis'd to the studious artisan!
All things that move between the quiet poles
Shall be at my command:
[...]

A sound magician is a demi-god (*Doctor Faustus*, 1,1, L. 52-62, p.

6)

Doctor Faustus celebrates his freedom and gloriousness trying to enjoy the earthly pleasures. His misunderstanding of the humanist ideologies in his time leads to him bargaining his life to the devil. In other words, he grasps the secular thinking which combined the irreligious nature of this dogma along with the didactic principles of the morality plays. In this consummate attachment of ideas, he manages to forge the ties between blasphemy and learning in his way to uncover everything forbidden. In his simulation of the divine, he replaces the mercy of God by the damnation of the devil which sucks his energy, power, time, talent and youth. He attempts his hand at necromancy and tries to see the world through magic. For him, black magic enables him to prove his power and demonstrate the level of his education. Doctor Faustus depreciates the other fields of learning as they are insufficient to him:

Philosophy is odious and obscure,
Both law and physic are for petty wits,
Divinity is basest of the three,
Unpleasant, harsh, contemptible, and vile;

'Tis magic, magic, that hath ravish'd me (*Doctor Faustus*, 1, 1, L.105-109, p.8)

Doctor Faustus simulates the divinity and truthfulness of God with the devilish, illusive life that Lucifer and his servants provide him. Further, he starts searching for a reflective image of his own analysis and interpretation of religion from the practice of necromancy. To him, God cannot provide him with power and wealth not because He is impotent in comparison to Lucifer, but because His gifts and pleasures are real, concrete and permanent, and consequently He never tricks His creatures into loving or glorifying Him because he is the mightiest whose clemency is above all circumstances and all others. Doctor Faustus's readings and mastery of black magic transform him from a plain scholar who aims at realizing himself into a Satanist character whose premium goal is to reach fame regardless of the consequences. One

The Humanist Simulacrum vs. Religious Reality in Christopher Marlowe's Doctor Faustus

Amina Khalfi & Dr. Halima Benzoukh

might consider that Doctor Faustus is Machiavellian in essence especially when considering that he knits an egocentric formula to self-slaughter. He condemns himself with his own blood when signing the pact and selling his souls and body to the devil.

Doctor Faustus is allured and blurred into the devilish world he comes to encounter to the extent to which he becomes enslaved by his own ego. Here, he is subjugated and enchained to serve his greed and lust for the terrestrial world he exchanges for God's mercy. The simulacrum which is created in this fashion comes to be embedded within the lavishness he enjoyed for a short period of time. He is hypnotised by the images and fantasies he sees before him. Moreover, the reason behind him compromising heaven by the hellish fire is engendered from the protestant Calvinist dogma in which he believes. Calvinism lies on the premise that man is predestined and that "the all-knowing and ever-present God had determined, from the beginning of time, who was to be saved and who was to be damned." (Saari, 2002, p.236). Because of his conviction by the Calvinist belief of predestination, Doctor Faustus decides to renounce God and simulate Him with mere illusion.

Doctor Faustus blasphemes and chooses his own path because he believes that God has already discarded him from his elected few in heaven in spite of the fact that he knows that God exists and He created the earth and creatures: "Now tell me who made the world" (*Doctor Faustus*, 2, 2, L 67, p.37). Doctor Faustus is aware that Lucifer and his servant Mephistopheles have fallen from God's grace and are considered powerless when contradicted to Him as a higher being. Thus, He wants to remind Mephistopheles that he is vulnerable and unable to eventually rescue himself from hell. Doctor Faustus's reality is deterred via the counterfeit which is characterized in the appearance of Lucifer on the one hand and the fantasies that metamorphose to him as reality:

FAU: Nor will I henceforth; pardon me in this,

And Faustus vows never to look to heaven,

Never to name God or to pray to him,

To burn his scriptures, slay his ministers,

And make my spirits pull his churches down (*Doctor Faustus*, 2, 2, L95-99, p.28).

His religious reality is transformed and reduced to imagination. The true God for Doctor Faustus is replaced by Lucifer, and God's mightiest power is denied because Lucifer enchants his soul and mind that the humanist books he read and via which he learnt necromancy have granted him massive strength and power to practice magic and be a devil and a spirit with no essence.

Doctor Faustus's humanist reality has collapsed as he detaches himself

The Humanist Simulacrum vs. Religious Reality in Christopher Marlowe's Doctor Faustus

Amina Khalfi & Dr. Halima Benzoukh

from all the learning of humanism which should have inspired him to maintain virtue and beneficial knowledge (Jump, 2005). In other words, he focuses upon the human centeredness by placing himself in alliance with the devil. He surrounds himself with bad spirits to obtain illusive power and respect. Doctor Faustus fails to understand that his body and soul were exchanged to Lucifer and that he died the moment he accepted a similar offer. The forbidden knowledge he embraces contaminates his humanist learning and thus fades it away. Still, Doctor Faustus believes himself to be a humanist scholar; a man who manages to study everything to the extent of practicing black magic. His dishonesty and greed to acquire and pose questions about the prohibitions of knowledge and the forbidden world around him handicap him to use his potential and mind to benefit him and others:

GOOD ANG. Faustus, repent; yet God will pity thee.

BAD ANG. Thou art a spirit; God cannot pity thee. (*Doctor Faustus*, 2,2, L 13-14, p.15)

Doctor Faustus is transfigured into an image of the Renaissance man he thinks he is. By changing his field of studies from theology into necromancy, he has transformed into a mere simulacrum; a copy of an original which does not exist. He has denied and simulated God in the way he considers Him absent and abstract, and that His scriptures are worthless and inferior to the books Lucifer offer Faustus to learn from:

FAU. Did not my conjuring speeches raise thee? Speak.

MEPH. That was the cause, but yet per accidens:

For when we hear one rack the name of God,

Abjure the scriptures and his saviour Christ,

We fly, in hope to get his glorious soul;

Nor will we come unless he use such means

Whereby he is in danger to be damn'd.

Therefore the shortest cut for conjuring

Is stoutly to abjure the Trinity

And pray devoutly to the prince of hell. (*Dr Faustus*, 1, 3, L 45-54, p.13)

God's simulation is certified by the Lucifer's serving agents. With this in mind, Faustus is persuaded to metamorphose reality and live in a hyperreal where everything around him is too real to believe. Religion for him is subordinated to the humanist blasphemy he constructs. The simulation of God "stems from the Utopia of the principle of equivalence, from the radical negation of the sign as value, from the sign as the reversion and death sentence of every reference" (Baudrillard, 1981, p.6). Hence, God and religion as a

The Humanist Simulacrum vs. Religious Reality in Christopher Marlowe's Doctor Faustus

Amina Khalfi & Dr. Halima Benzoukh

whole are ignored and substituted to the nothingness that evil shows him. Faustus negates the value by its utopian equivalent where he denies and abjures any reference to God's mercy and puissance over him. His world becomes a pure simulacrum as he transits from "signs that dissimulate something to signs that dissimulate that there is nothing" (ibid. p.6).

Doctor Faustus's humanistic learning is based on learning the arts and sciences as well as tapping knowledge from books and treatises. The reason behind him denying religion resides in the fact that he enters the hyperreal and enjoys a virtual happiness. Doctor Faustus's "escalation of the truth" (Baudrillard, 1981, p.6) leads him to enter the third level of simulation; a level of a reality of no original. Faustus is subjugated by the virtuality by which he becomes overwhelmed. Through his necromantic practices and engagements with Lucifer and Mephistopheles, he finds himself in "the third level which produces a reality of its own without being based upon any particular bit of the real world" (Lane, 2000, p.30). Faustus is hypnotised by the amount of magic he witnesses and the amount of wishes he sees realizing in front of him. Thus, he wishes to truly recreate other souls to sell to the devil and enjoy more time in the fabricated atmosphere Mephistopheles wants him to see:

FAU. Had I as many souls as there be stars,
I'd give them all for Mephistopheles.
By him I'll be great emperor of the world,
And make a bridge thorough the moving air
To pass the ocean with a band of men;
I'll join the hills that bind the Afric shore

And make that country continent to Spain (*Doctor Faustus*, 1, 3, L 102-08, p.15)

The hyperreal which overturns reality for Doctor Faustus is summed up in the way he generates his understanding of Lucifer as being the hype-realistic aspect he to which admits to. He assumes that Lucifer, his agents and the imaginative world blind him to believe that God exists, and that hell itself is heavenly shaped for the devil and his villains. For Doctor Faustus, God is simulated to other different gods (Lane, 2000). The difference is apparent as God and Lucifer are immutable; they are two different entities where one cannot replace the other. In fact, as being two diverse senses in forming one's beliefs, the credence in one denies and negates the other. Doctor Faustus cannot align both deities in his heart because he needs to falsify the religious reality of his time to believe what his ego dictates upon him:

FAUS: Thou needs be damn'd, and canst thou not be sav'd.
What boots it then to think of God or heaven?

The Humanist Simulacrum vs. Religious Reality in Christopher Marlowe's Doctor Faustus

Amina Khalfi & Dr. Halima Benzoukh

Away with such vain fancies, and despair;
Despair in God, and trust in Beelzebub.
Now go not backward; no, Faustus, be resolute:
Why waver'st thou? O, something soundeth in mine ears,
'Abjure this magic, turn to God again!'
Ay, and Faustus will turn to God again.
To God? He loves thee not;
The god thou serv'st is thine own appetite,
Wherein is fix'd the love of Beelzebub:
To him I'll build an altar and a church
And offer lukewarm blood of new-born babe (*Dr Faustus*, 2, 1, L 1-13, p.17-8)

Doctor Faustus is torn between two identities and two different realities where one stands as a copy of no original. He is mesmerized by the magic and the blurs he witnesses and the way his mind and thinking are conditioned to believe in the symbolic world he lives in. According to Baudrillard, Faustus is surrounded by icons where "the faculty simulacra have of effacing God from the conscience of man, and the destructive, annihilating truth that they allow to appear – that deep down God never existed, that only the simulacrum ever existed, even that God himself was never anything but his own simulacrum" (Baudrillard, 1981. p.5). He denies God as a reality not because He does not exist, but because a similar reality prevents him from rejoicing his life. To actualize his fantasies, he tips the scales and locks himself in a humanist simulacrum, considering necromancy as a secular practice of theology. The pact with the devil, in this regard, transcends him to manipulate knowledge and refuse religion as being an icon or a simulacrum of a deity which is perplexing and bewildering. As apparent, religious studies could not suffice him and his ambition; he was "enacting his (God's) death and his disappearance in the epiphany of his representations knowing also that it is dangerous to unmask images, since they dissimulate the fact that there is nothing behind them." (p.5). Dr Faustus falls into the maze of images where every notion of the religious life becomes falsely represented "in which there is no longer a God to recognize his own, no longer a Last Judgment to separate the false from the true, the real from its artificial resurrection, as everything is already dead and resurrected in advance." (Lane, 2000). In other words, as Doctor Faustus's time is consumed, he starts begging for mercy and forgiveness. Yet, he is well aware that he is no longer shrouded in God's mercy because he denied it and decided to worship his ego and his imaginary which reflected a short life of pleasures wasting his intellectual legacy, his theological studies and philosophical

The Humanist Simulacrum vs. Religious Reality in Christopher Marlowe's Doctor Faustus

Amina Khalfi & Dr. Halima Benzoukh

analyses to the imaginative, fantasies Mephistopheles tricked him to see and believe in as magic.

It is rather daunting if one attempts to understand the reasons behind Doctor Faustus choosing a similar fate for himself; he decides to sign out his body and soul and get them metamorphosed into a spirit in shape and substance in order to prove himself a better scholar. Therefore, he is never referred to as a doctor as he was swept of the title the moment he signed out his soul. Rather, he is a marionette in the hands of Mephistopheles and the other demonic spirits; a point which needs to be strengthened regarding the way his humanist education and learning render disadvantageous and worthless in value once exchanged by the art of the black magic.

Throughout the play, Doctor Faustus is reminded by the seven deadly sins; the cardinal vices which are personified to speak and reflect upon his inner side, and pinpoint the extent to which his soul is rotten with greed, pride and lust inspiring other evils to form within him. Here, Doctor Faustus fashions himself "not in loving submission to an absolute authority but in self-conscious opposition" (Greenblatt, 1980, p.156). He is determined that life in abstraction will help him hold a better understanding of the one he has already been stuck in. He wants to experience the joy of travelling in time and space and to violate the rules of humanness by transforming himself into a demonic spirit. In transfiguring from a virtuous humanist into an immoral incredulous, he removes the cloak of piety wearing the garment of ungodliness and atheism instead. In his way to mere disbelief, he commits adulterous acts asking Mephistopheles to provide him with a wife. Yet, the devil convinces him otherwise:

FAU. Here's a hot whore indeed! No, I'll no wife.

MEPH. Marriage is but a ceremonial toy;

And if thou lov'st me, think no more of it.

I'll cull thee out the fairest courtesans

And bring them every morning to thy bed (*Doctor Faustus*, 2,1, L 148-52, p.23)

In his pride, Doctor Faustus asks for Helen of troy to be his companion as he raises her from the dead. Faustus is negligent of the evil he is committing because he is in a state of denial. Rather, he is in a mere simulacrum believing that all the magic he is experiencing and witnessing with Mephistopheles and his agents is real. Unfortunately, he misses the signs of value and moral related to the seven cardinals. Doctor Faustus's life has transformed into a copy with no original, a sample of life he always imagines and dreams of having. Owing to the ways he decides for his destiny, he wakes up from his hypnosis to

discover that his fortunate twenty-four years have expired and that Lucifer has the right to claim his soul:

MEPH. Ay, Faustus, now thou hast no hope of heaven;

Therefore despair, think only upon hell,

For that must be thy mansion, there to dwell.

FAU. O thou bewitching fiend, it was thy temptation

Hath robb'd me of eternal happiness.

MEPH. I do confess it, Faustus and rejoice.

'Twas I that, when thou wert i' the way to heaven,

Damm'd up thy passage; when thou took'st the book

To view the scriptures, then I turn'd the leaves

And led thine eye.

What, weep'st thou? 'tis too late, despair, farewell!

Fools that will laugh on earth must weep in hell (*Doctor Faustus*, 5,2, L 85-96, p.75-6)

Doctor Faustus awakens from the dreamy hellishness he used to experience as a devil. As the hour strikes twelve, his world collapses and all the images of magical beauty, power and puissance collapse as the respect he thinks he has received as a necromancer disappears. As the mode of simulacrum dominates, the image that precedes envelopes and surpasses the truth where reality is transmuted into a hyperreal and things become more real than real life itself. Unfortunately, Doctor Faustus's fortune and fame can no longer save him and everything that magic constructs to trick his mind and soul fades away.

When virtuality resides and the humanist simulacrum proves deceiving, the only remaining reality for Doctor Faustus characterises itself in God Himself and His deadly punishment. Though he does his best to ignore godly power and truthiness through devilish practices, God remains the almighty, the most powerful and the only reality in Faustus' simulated world. His arrogance absorbs him and his pride as a fraud humanist consumes his intellect. This made it easy for Lucifer and his servants to feed on his weakness and ignorance.

5. Conclusion

As a morality play, *Doctor Faustus* teaches one about religion, virtues of life and the vices of the soul. It describes the battle between body and soul; and between the rational side of man and his emotional nature; a battle that can either make or break mankind in general. As for Doctor Faustus, it was all about proving his identity and trying to prove himself as a secular scholar. Religion and all the sciences are seen as insignificant, and the only matter which concerns him was the way to prove his distinctiveness in the world. In

doing so, he allowed his inner conflict to control him as he felt superior and special in his individualism. As a promethean character, Doctor Faustus defies all the conventions of his time and that of all time. His pact with the devil destroys him, and in his journey to enjoy the simulacrum Mephistopheles falsely constructed for him, he loses the reference to his own identity, to the years he spent in learning and tapping on knowledge, to reason and to the real world around him. Thus, his hyperreality is eventually the only simulated reality he wanted to have; a copy with no referential. After twenty-four years of unlimited fortune, he realizes that he lived inside an image where all his potency, magic and power were fake, and that all the abilities he once acquired as a supernatural creature were in fact controlled by Mephistopheles. Rather, the fame and puissance that Doctor Faustus enjoyed for twenty-four years were an imaginary and an embodiment of fake images and copies of a life that only existed in his memories and was operational and constructed as segments out of reality and logic, and that led to his tragic down fall.

6. Bibliography List

- Bartels, E. C & Smith, S. (2013). *Christopher Marlowe in Context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Baudrillard, J. (1981). *Simulacra and Simulation*. Michigan: Michigan University Press.
- Black, R. (2003). *Humanism and Education in Medieval and Renaissance Italy: Tradition and Innovation in Latin Schools from the Twelfth to the Fifteenth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Braunmuller, A. R. & Hattaway, M. (2003). *The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Drama*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Brotton, J. (2006). *The Renaissance: A Very Short Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Greenblatt, S. (1980). *Renaissance Self-fashioning from More to Shakespeare*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Hackett, H. (2013). *A Short History of English Renaissance Drama*. London: B. Tauris & Co Ltd.
- Hattaway, M. (2003). *A Companion to English Renaissance Literature and Culture*. USA: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- Hunt, J. (1999). *The Renaissance: Questions and Analysis in History*. London: Routledge.
- Jump, J. (2005). *Doctor Faustus by Christopher Marlowe*. New York: Routledge.
- Kraye, J. (1996). *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

The Humanist Simulacrum vs. Religious Reality in Christopher Marlowe's Doctor Faustus

Amina Khalfi & Dr. Halima Benzoukh

- Lane, R. J. (2000). *Jean Baudrillard*. New York: Routledge.
- Marlowe, C. (1594). *Doctor Faustus* (2005). York: York Press.
- Saari, P. & Saari, A.M. Eds. (2002). *Renaissance and Reformation: Almanac*. USA: The Gale Group, Inc.