Chapter Five

The Predicament of Instability: Faustus' 'Hearts Desire'
THE PREDICAMENT OF INSTABILITY:

FAUSTUS' 'HEARTS DESIRE'

The heart's desire of Doctor Faustus is not the easiest thing to identify, because, on top of being too opaque in itself for a name, it is deflected and silenced by the words of Faustus at the level of the language of the play-text. In order to get to Faustus' 'hearts desire', one has to differentiate it from the mirages that in various ways represent his desire as a 'creative' one, with which Faustus himself confuses it, as well as from the names attributed to it by Faustus in an effort to replace the mark which occupies the place of, and thus eliminates, the lack that desires. If one arrives at the root of Faustus' desire in seeking to name it, then one confronts a lack that is unnameable in itself, but which, at the same time, is responsible for the existence of desire.

To begin with the desire of Faustus as it is conceived by Faustus himself, is to come to his desire to be a 'sound magician'. He visualises himself as one, the equivalent of 'a mighty god' [90], by identifying with images of towering male figures, such as, 'Musaeus' and 'Agrippa' [143-45].\(^1\) But

\(^{1}\) Musaeus is the Greek poet who appears in the underworld and is a towering figure there among the spirits, in Aeneid, VI, 666-7. Henry Cornelius Agrippa was famous for his ability to call up shadows of dead persons.
how is Faustus’ fantasy of a magician formed and what is the form of it?

Faustus wishes to be a magician in order to be able to make his own ‘dominion’ to stretch ‘as farre as doth the minde of man’, and thus, ‘exceed’ ‘emperours and kings’ who ‘are but obeyd in their seuerall provinces’. In other words, Faustus decides to be a magician because he desires to exceed some powerful male figure in terms of exposing the limit of the latter and establishing his own ‘omnipotence’ [77-83. Emphasis added].

Faustus’ wish to overpower a powerful male other who is akin to the father, leads him to identify himself with shadows of this very other, that is, with powerful masculine figures, except that the power of the shadows - even to overpower the former - is based on a trick, a falsity. The wish is aimed at, first, ‘chasing’ ‘the Prince of Parma’ from the land, and next, reigning ‘sole king of all our prouinces’ [121-22]. Thus, the object of Faustus’ desire, as what motivates him to try to overpower the father, is one that he seeks to procure entirely for himself, and which he perceives as to be entirely in the possession of the father.

When Faustus refers to this object of desire in less tacit terms, he is
thrown back to his boyish vein. He asks Mephistophilis, in the air of a child seeking a toy, for a ‘wife’. Infact, Mephistophilis’ discourse on marriage which he terms ‘a ceremoniall toy’, is the reciprocative promise of the father to bring to the son equally lovely toy-replicas of the absent object of desire, in order to pacify it:

If thou louest me, thinke no more of it.
Ile cull thee out the fairest curtezans,
And bring them eu’ry morning to thy bed:
She whome thine eie shall like, thy heart shal haue,
Be she as chaste as was Penelope,
As wise as Saba, or as beautiful
As was bright Lucifer before his fall.

Mephistophilis’ comparison of the beauty of Faustus’ mistresses to the ‘beauty’ of Lucifer is an indication of the extent to which the father-son paradigm dominates over the complementary mother-son dyad at the level of desire in the text. Rather, the father-son paradigm knots Faustus’ desire so closely that it is virtually impossible for him to completely escape it.²

² It is the essential nature of the Oedipus complex, according to Freud, that it is never present in a simple state. He writes:
The father-son paradigm predominates in Doctor Faustus. Barring Wagner who is Faustus' 'boy', and Mephistophilis on one occasion when he is addressed by the horse-courser, once again as Faustus' 'boy', most of the other significant figures in the play, including Mephistophilis in the rest of it, are father-substitutes of Faustus. The prominent father-figures of Faustus in the play-text are to be found as sharply divided into two

...One gets the impression that the simple Oedipus complex is by no means its commonest form, but rather represents a simplification or schematization which, to be sure, is often enough justified for practical purposes. Closer study usually reveals the more complete Oedipus complex, which is twofold, positive and negative, and is due to the bisexuality originally present in children: that is to say, a boy has not merely an ambivalent attitude towards his father and an affectionate object-choice towards his mother, but at the same time he also behaves like a girl and displays an affectionate feminine attitude to his father and a corresponding jealousy and hostility towards his mother.... Analytic experience then shows that in a number of cases one or the other constituent disappears, except for barely distinguishable traces; so that the result is a series with the normal positive Oedipus complex at one end and the inverted negative one at the other, while its intermediate members exhibit the complete form with one or other of its two components prepondering.

The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Trs. and Eds. James Strachey, Anna Freud, Alix Strachey and Alan Tyson (London : The Hogarth Press, 1953-74), xix pp. 33-34. The subject’s attitude to the father is largely influenced by his position in the complete Oedipus complex. Thus, love and admiration for the father is the expression of an inverted love for the mother experienced in the form of hatred towards her sustained by viewing the mother as an interference in his admiration for the father. That is how desire for the father is the inversion of the negative desire for the mother, justifying Freud's description of it as the 'inverted negative Oedipus complex'.

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camps. On the one hand there is Pope Adrian and the Old Man, who represent the father by virtue of their very names; and, on the other, there is Lucifer and Mephistophilis, by virtue of their ability to extract 'service' from 'boy' Faustus. Such clear-cut profusion of paternalistic figures in *Doctor Faustus* indicates that the prepondering constituent in the play is Faustus' desire for the father.

But the division of the father figure into camps suggest that Faustus' father, at the level of his notion of him, is not a seamless figure. Rather, 'he' is eternally split into two sharply opposite halves - the fearful father and the merciful father. While Lucifer and Mephistophilis embody the fearful father - Mephistophilis is 'ugly' [259], Lucifer, 'terrible' [699] - Pope Adrian and the 'sweet' Old Man embody the merciful father.\(^3\) The 'wavering' of Faustus for which he is notorious, stems from his compulsory identification with this essentially bipolarised figure of the father.

Before writing the deed, Faustus is a supremely confident person. So much so that the Good Angel and the Evil Angel have little or no effect

\(^3\) While the merciless father successfully extracts obedience from him, the benevolent father, himself obedient to the core, succeeds in evoking nothing save Faustus' disobedience.
on his decision-making in course of their first two appearances with the intention to do so. Faustus is resolved to be a magician even if that meant serving the terrible father, and he goes to the extent of admonishing, even leading, Mephistophilis, when the latter is in need of conviction. But he shows signs of wavering for the first time during his writing the deed, although the sign is not prominent enough for him to notice it.

Faustus' inner resistance to the act of writing is manifest in the clotting of his blood, and further, in the mysterious appearance and disappearance of the words 'Homo fuge' on and off his arm respectively - a phenomenon for which Faustus does not seem to have a proper explanation. Here, Faustus' wavering is constituted by an oscillation between the two opposite halves of the complete imaginary father, most potently represented in the play-text by the figures of God and Lucifer.4 The Good

4 'It does not need much analytic perspicacity', writes Freud:

to see that God and the Devil were originally identical - were a single figure which was later split into two figures with opposite attributes. In the earliest ages of religion God himself still possessed all the terrifying features which are afterwards combined to form a counterpart of him. Hence, the contradictions in the original nature of God are, however, a reflection of the ambivalence which governs the relation of the individual to his personal father. If the benevolent and righteous God is a substitute for his father, it is not to be wondered at that his hostile attitude to his father, too, which is one of hating and fearing him and of making complaints against him, should have come to expression in the creation of Satan.... But we should
Angel and the Evil Angel who come back again and again, voicing more or less the same set of oppositions each time, represent the voice of the father as split into two sets of mutually self-opposing commands. The Good Angel says, read the Scriptures, shun black magic and repent, whereas, the Evil Angel says, read books on black magic, blaspheme and despair.

In *Doctor Faustus*, the imaginary father's being a person of 'unlimited evil - a being less like God than the Devil' - is not all that significant, because Faustus, completely failing to separate the two, allows neither God nor the Devil to predominate. Faustus fails to keep God and Lucifer/Belzebub separate, because he recognises the two to be inseparable. That is the reason why Faustus, who thinks that the 'holy shape becomes a diuell best' [261], asks Mephistophilis to appear in the outfit of a Franciscan friar, or, without his realising why, 'confounds' 'hell in Elyzium' [295].

expect religions to bear ineffaceable marks of the fact that the primitive primal father was a being of unlimited evil - a being less like God than the Devil. 

(P.F.L., xiv, pp. 400-401).

In Freudian parlance, therefore, the 'personal father' is the 'individual prototype' of both 'God and the Devil' of whom the latter is 'primal'.
Later on, when Faustus, nearing an emotional crisis in the second scene of the second act, begs to Christ to save his soul, instead of Christ enters Lucifer, Christ's 'other'. This is so because Faustus is not in a position to call God and not to call Lucifer at the same time. Lucifer enters the scene because he has been called for by Faustus. At the level of Faustus' spoken words, God and Belzebub are contemporaneous and freely substitutable for one another. Hence, 'God', Faustus' 'appetite', is occupied by 'the loue of Belsabub'. To this Godly Belzebub, Faustus makes his twofold vow to offer 'luke warme blood of new borne babes' as well as dedicate 'an altare and a church' [443-46].

Apparently, there is a paradox involved in Faustus' signing of the deed, because it caused him to surrender his body and soul to Lucifer even though he always identified with towering figures like Agrippa and Masaeus. A closer look reveals that Faustus' reason for the surrender of his body and soul to Lucifer is that the latter allowed, even encouraged, an unlimited sexual liberty and a greater 'cunning' in exchange for it, which is what had attracted Faustus to figures such as Agrippa and Masaeus in the first place, namely, for their being more 'potent' than the others surrounding them.
Faustus wishes to be omnipotent. He does not waver on that at all. But, led by the demands of Lucifer who will grant it to him, Faustus' desire is deflected to something else regarding which he is no more resolute. The fact that the two halves of the father are inseparable leads one to understand that Faustus' wavering, in effect, bears testimony to an ingenuous stroke of his unconscious, in terms of which he could allow himself to love as well as serve the complete imaginary father, merciful as well as fearful, at one and the same time. By never invoking God without Lucifer or Lucifer without God, the wavering Faustus makes it possible to invoke his doubly single imaginary father.

In this register, the traces of Faustus' infantile oral desire are overshadowed by his desire for the father. By conceiving the father as split into opposites, Faustus is able to serve God without supressing his sexual desire. Rather, Faustus, who is 'wanton and lasciuous' [573], is paternally encouraged to think of the devil's mother [706]. Sexuality is fundamental to his desire at this level, and it is manifest in Faustus' creative bent.

All the time Faustus imagines himself to be the other of another, he is also, though not consciously, 'making inroads into another order as the subject of it. The new order is radically different from the one in which
he, by mistake, imagines himself to be. Faustus manifestly enters the other order, the one of language, by making a pact. As far as Faustus’ own point of view is concerned, he decides to make the pact simply because he wanted to be a sound magician. But, that is not all, for the pact has to be made in writing. By writing the pact, Faustus binds himself to the order of writing that is sustained and governed by the law of the infernal father in his case. In spite of the drama, down to the detail of the ritual in terms of which Faustus is initiated to language, he himself knows nothing of its meaning. In the play-text, the insistence of what Faustus does not know is always dramatic, because what is not known to him constantly seeks to be recognised by him. Thus, in spite of his twofold association with the father, Faustus does not recognise him, not even when he is reminded of him by Carolus, when the latter remembered his debt to his own fore-fathers, in most dramatic terms in the play.

The Rome episode is a prelude to this drama of symbolic recognition, in that it brings out the relation between the recognition of the dead-father and castration as the precondition of it. All that Faustus does at Rome is to ‘snatch’ his ‘meat’ from the Pope. At the level of snatching the ‘dishes’, Faustus expresses only one half of his wish, namely, to defeat the father. The other half of the wish that is dramatised in the episode involving the Dutchess and Duke of Vanholt is indicative of the purpose of the victory
over the father, namely, to offer the benefit reaped from the victory to the mother-substitute. The loss of meat is equivalent to the Pope’s unsexing, which forms the outer boundary to the son’s dream of the father as the dead father.

The dream is hatched at Innsbruck, replacing the imaginary father or the father as a double, a God-cum-Lucifer, by the symbolic father or the desire of the dead father. In between Rome and Innsbruck, Faustus had briefly returned home in order to meet his friends and companions, reports the Chorus. At the Presence Chamber in the Emperor’s court at Innsbruck, Carolus V, the Emperor of Germany, reminds Faustus of the symbolic debt to the dead father incurred at the point of replacing him in the symbolic chain, by voicing the symbolic desire in its fundamental form, that is, in the form of the one and only desire of the dead-father, namely, the dead-father’s desire to be recognised by the living son.

The outer boundary of this crucial scene of recognition of desire, beginning with the Pope episode, is linked to the Carolus episode in terms of the figure of the insolent Knight. In the Emperor’s court, external to the drama of recognition, Faustus is interrupted by the Knight, whom, the vexed Faustus vows to punish and does so in the end. What links the Pope to the Knight is the symbolic unsexing of both at the hands of
Faustus. The punishment inflicted on the Knight involves, exactly as Faustus had promised him in terms of an allusion to Acteon's 'hornes'[1069-70], investing him with a pair of horns. Immediately, the Emperor greets the Knight in horns with a sexual pun on the word horns: 'How now, sir Knight! why, I had thought thou hadst beene a batcheler, but now I see thou hast a wife, that not only giues thee hornes, but makes thee weare them'[1083-86]. As far as 'horn' signifies the male sexual organ, the removal of them by Faustus corresponds to the symbolic unsexing of the Knight, and signifies the completion of the outer boundary within which the drama of recognition is staged in the playtext.5

Long before meeting Carolus, Faustus had alluded on two occasions to the position of the 'emperor'. In the first scene of the first act, while commenting on the 'might' of a 'sound magician', Faustus compared the extent of the 'dominion' of a magician to the extent of dominion of an 'emperor', and declared that the dominion of the magician, stretching 'as far as doth the minde of man', 'exceeded' that of the Emperor who was but obeyed in a few 'prouinces'. In the third scene of the first act, however, Faustus' allusion is directly aimed at the Emperor of Germany.

5 In the B text the punishment is presented in greater detail.
There, too, the Emperor has been introduced in association with his empire, specially the extent of it, together with the additional detail that the Emperor lived by Faustus’ leave:

Ile ioyne the hils that binde the Affricke shore,
And make that land continent to Spaine,
And both contributory to my crowne:
The Emprour shal not liue but by my leaue.

[343-46].

At the Presence Chamber, the Emperor ‘requests’ Faustus to let him ‘see some proofe’ of his skill so that he could ‘confirme’ the admirable ‘reports’ of it already received by him. There is no question of fantasy here, rather, there is the question of ‘proofe’[1007-13]. It is in a similar vein that Carolus desires to witness Alexander the great, his ancestor, of whose greatness he had only heard. The Emperor’s apparently forthright desire to ‘see’ what he had only ‘heard’, is not really what the Emperor himself makes out of it, that is, the desire to witness the confirmation of reports of his skill by Faustus through demonstration, but leads to his deeper desire to recognize the desire for recognition of the dead ancestors, which is expressed in terms of his desire to see his own long-dead ancestor, with his paramour, in the exact physical shape in which they had once existed. What is significant about this desire is that as the
desirer of it the Emperor is not unlike Faustus. As a matter of fact, both of them are characterised by their being the site of a similar desire to recognise.

Carolus the Fifth, from whatever little we know of him, appears to be very much similar to Faustus. In the first place, he dislikes what is 'seruile and illiberall' [64] as much as Faustus does, which is why he assures Faustus: ‘whateuer thou doest, thou shalt be no wayes prejudiced or indamaged’ [1016-17]. Also, he is as much eager, as is Faustus, to witness what is absent or what is not possible to witness, for the assurance of freedom that such spectacles bring with them. In this, the skill of Faustus, and hence his 'dominion', far exceeded the Emperor's, because it is Faustus who conjures the spectacle to which the Emperor is no more than an ordinary spectator. Moreover, as far as the origin of the Emperor's desire to witness his dead forefather is concerned, it is completely akin to Faustus' own desire to 'raise' dead men 'to life againe' [53]. Finally, just like the origin of the desire of Faustus, the origin of Carolus' desire too, is not known. The desire is, as if, already there from the beginning:

As I was sometime solitary set,
Within my Closet, sundry thoughts arose,
About the honour of mine auncestors...

[1026-28].
Textually, Carolus' desire is Faustus' desire desired by Carolus, simply because the desire to make the dead to live again belongs primarily to Faustus. By desiring Faustus' desire, Carolus recalls to Faustus' mind the latter's desire to make men to live eternally - that he himself appears to have forgotten in course of the action. However, Carolus is also Faustus' father-substitute, to whom Faustus is bound by 'loue and duety' [1022], in which sense it is Carolus who makes Faustus recognise the desire of the dead father.

In terms of desiring each other's desire as their very own, Faustus and the Emperor introduce the question of the desire of the dead Father for recognition, in the play. In the play-text the desire of the dead ancestors to exist is sustained in the form of the desire of the living survivors to sustain it. Accordingly, Alexander and his paramour⁶ are made to live again, magically. By recognising desire right up to the signifier 'wart or moale' on the neck of Alexander's parmour, Faustus and Carolus deliver, bring forth, a new presence in the world of the play, by introducing presence as such. However, by the same token, absence as such is hollowed out as well.⁷ That is the point where the desire of Faustus is

⁶ Most probably Thais.

joined to the ultimate real.

Towards the end of the scene, Faustus says to the Knight who had asked him to undo what he had done: 'O not so fast sir, theres no haste' [1091]. The question of 'haste' is the literal connector of this scene to the next, which opens with Faustus speaking to Mephistophilis thus:

Now, Mephastophilis, the restless course
That time doth runne with calme and silent foote,
Shortning my dayes and thred of vitall life,
Calls for the payment of my latest yeares :
Therefore, sweet Mephastophilis, let vs
Make haste to Wertenberge.

[1106-11].

'Haste' is naturally associated with time in both the excerpts. But, in this scene, the immanent association of haste with 'foote' is highly significant. Immediately after this, Mephistophilis asks Faustus whether he will 'go on horse-back or on foote', to which Faustus replies - 'ile walke on foote' [1114]. Even though Faustus desires to walk on foot at the beginning of the Horse-courser episode, he allows the Horse-courser to pull his leg away for a ridiculous forty dollars more, at the end of the episode. The
'legge' being the metonymy of Faustus in the present context of his desire to 'walke on foote', as much as the 'horse' is to the horse-courser, Faustus' sense of humour, with his 'foote' and the 'horse' is inexplicably grotesque, that is, unless one examines it in the context of his real wish. Faustus' real wish, unknown to him, have started to direct his power of magic against him. Hence, the earlier games involving unsexing the other is replaced by a new one involving wilful self-dismemberment.

In the episode of the Duke and Dutchess of Vanholt, Faustus gets to express his love for the latter in spite of the former. The expression is completed in terms of Faustus' presenting the Dutchess of Vanholt with a 'rare dish'. The Duke of Vanholt, like the Pope from whom Faustus had snatched the 'dishes', are reduced to mere spectators, to be either outraged or wonderstruck by the magical performance, whereas the Dutchess is the one to benifit exclusively and out of proportion from it. However, Faustus' desire for the Dutchess is the desire of the Dutchess to be desired, because Faustus' wish to please her is conditioned by the Dutchess' own desire to have 'ripe grapes' in the 'dead time of the winter' [1209-11].

At the end of the episode, Faustus is 'glad' at having fed the feeder to her 'content' [1229], because it allowed him to fulfil the desire for oral
pleasure of one who is usually the provider of it, precisely in terms of exposing the limit of the father by reminding him with a display of the power of Faustus' spirits, that he was already in his 'winter'. The role of the provider and snatcher of 'dishes' that Faustus plays here, is informed by a wish, namely, the wish to snatch power from the father, by deceit, and employ the same to fulfil his own oral wish or the oral wish of the mother. The shaping of his desire by figures such as the Dutchess, however, is too tenuous, and culminates at this point, from where onwards it is his real wish that speaks in the words and actions of the protagonist. That is not to suggest that the real wish is absent in the text prior to this point. A closer look at the text will suggest that it has always been there, although it has been mostly unrecognised or misrecognised by Faustus.

As the Chorus withdraws the curtains from Faustus' study, points to Faustus and says - 'this the man in his study sits' [28], the reader enters the imaginary world of Faustus.

At this point of his life, Doctor Faustus is in the act of choosing a self-image. After weighing every discipline, Faustus opts for the image of the magician and offers to study necromancy. After the decision has been made, while 'speculating' on his new found self-image, Faustus identifies
himself with figures standing head and shoulders above the rest, such as 'Musaeus' in hell, or 'Agrippa' in 'all Europe'. That is why, in the first scene, while Valdes in particular talks about 'us three', Faustus' references never go beyond the singular 'I'. The question is, why should Faustus identify with such superbly powerful images unless he felt threatened by some power so formidable that he had to be equipped thus in order to be able to combat it?

The imaginary wish of Faustus is articulated by him directly. Faustus looks for a 'greater myracle' than what, especially, 'Physic' could 'affoord' in the end - in the end, according to Faustus, Physic afforded none - because he thinks that his desire is to let men 'liue eternally'. His wish would not have been specifically this had he not been specifically tormented by thoughts of death. The real wish of Faustus, to which his imaginary wish to be 'potent' is an effect moving in the most un-real direction, is what he is lead to encounter at the end of the symbolic itenary. It is Faustus' death wish.

The death-wish of Faustus informs every desire of his in the play. In the first place, in order to have access to knowledge that is necessary for making life eternal, Faustus must, paradoxically, set a limit to his own existence. This indicates that Faustus' existence, his purchase of life for
twenty-four years, is the antithetical fulfilment of death's return to itself. Faustus' wish to know is brought about by his ever returning death-wish, his choice of the magician's profession being the effect and not the cause of it.

The Chorus indicates in the prologue to the play, that Faustus' death-wish is given. Even before Faustus has figured in the play, the Chorus refers to Faustus' destiny in terms of the word 'fortune'[8]. The rise and 'fall' that is the theme of the last sentence of the Prologue charts out the innate tendency of Faustus' life. In the sentence, first, progressively, Faustus 'profites in Diuinitie', is 'grac't with Doctors name' and excells all 'whose sweete delight disputes'; and then, regressively, he is 'swolne with cunning, of a selfe conceit', which makes him will to 'mount aboue his reach', which in turn leads to his being 'ouerthrown' by God. The overthrowing of Faustus is the result of a 'conspiracy' against him by powers that are beyond his reckoning. Faustus certainly wants to make men 'to liue eternally', but at the same time, the more powerful real wish will lead him to fly close to 'melting heauens' in spite of his being a creature with 'waxen wings' [1-29].

In the prologue to the third act, the Chorus points to the desire that makes one to wish to fly close to the sun, in spite of - or, probably
because of - one's having wings of wax. It does so by alluding to the disastrous flight of Phaeton, son of Phoebus, in the description of Faustus as studying the 'secrets of astronomy' while seated in a dragon-drawn chariot 'burning bright' [792-96]. The flight towards something so blazing that it could destroy the flying creature completely, contains the desire of self-destruction as is typified by the desire of the moth for fire. That the Chorus has to say this repeatedly implies the fact that Faustus never recognized this radically different origin of his desire. Rather, manifestly, Faustus is led by the mis-recognition of this desire to decide to be a 'magician' - more out of a boyish fascination for a self-image powerful enough to vanquish the father, than for recognition of his desire - and to sign a pact with Lucifer and live and die in terms of it, in the whole of which his endeavour is solely directed to resisting his real wish.

Faustus' real wish is based neither on his private 'fantasy' nor on his public 'performances'. It is the wish which will come back in 'full force after Faustus' term as a magician has ended, that is, after the four-and-twenty years' commitment with Lucifer has terminated. Faustus expresses his real wish before the spectacle of 'Helen' as real, and sets into motion the beginning of his end.
The desire to recognise the desire of the dead father, that characterises Faustus and Carolus, is replaced by a curiosity on part of the scholars and a sensuous desire on part of Faustus, leading to the twin appearances of Helen as the common object of desire of all.

It is because the encounter with Helen is special that Faustus' address to her is an heightened one. It has always been described by critics as a purple passage that stands out in the play-text. It does not belong to the same level of the rest of the text, for the address is an apostrophe. An 'apostrophe' is defined by Beckson and Ganz as 'a figure of speech in which a person not present or a personified abstraction is addressed'.

It involves, as Bose and Sterling records, a 'change' in the 'course of [the author's] theme'. What is special about an address that is an apostrophe is that it receives a heightening from the brevity and the primarily 'impassioned' nature of the address. As a result of the heightening, the apostrophe, as Lemon puts it, 'temporarily interrupts the surrounding discourse.'

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9 R.R.N. Bose Bahadur and T.S. Sterling, Op Cit., p. 34.

Regarding 'encountering' the real Lacan writes: ‘It is not remarkable that... the real should... present itself in the form of that which is unassimilable in it’. It is significant in its difference from the rest of the text in which it, nevertheless, is founded. In the Helen apostrophe, Faustus articulates his real wish in the form of an ultimate fantasy, although he himself is not adequately attentive to his own words.

Faustus has the first glimpse of his real wish in the ultimate phantasy of Helen’s face. Helen of Greece who defies all description, is not physically described in the play, indicating that she is to be assessed only in terms of her effect on Faustus. She is too ‘bright’ to be described, but too much so to be inconsequential.

To Faustus, Helen is the reverse of the devil. The devils are ugly and terrible, while the ‘peerless dame of Greece’ - in the words of the Scholars with which Faustus would not have disagreed - was the ‘beutifulst’ and ‘admirablest Lady’ ‘that euer lived’ [1246-53]. But Helen is, first of all, not the reverse of a devil but a devil in disguise, and the Helen-apostrophe suggests the rigour that is necessary for Faustus to deceive himself.

The face of Helen is ridden by the ultimate duality of creation and destruction, of life and death. This Helen, who is responsible for the launching of thousand warships and the destruction of prestigious towers, is invited by Faustus to make him 'immortall with a kisse' [1330]. It is somewhat paradoxical that Faustus asks the spirit whose existence is entirely dependant on his magic, to make him 'immortall' with a kiss. The paradox is consistent, for Helen, in reply to what is Faustus' plea for immortality, has his soul 'sucked forth', signifying the, real nature of immortality that Faustus craves for.

Faustus states he will be Paris, and for his 'loue' of Helen, let his own city, instead of Troy, be ravaged. He compares his communion with Helen to the embracing of Arethusa by the 'monarch of the sky' and to the appearance of 'flaming Jupiter' before the 'haplesse' girl, Semele, who had dared to ask Jupiter to appear before her in his divine glory and was reduced to ashes for so wishing. Like Semele, who was consumed by the fire of Jupiter's glory, Faustus desires to be consumed by the 'kisse' of 'burning' Helen. The nature of this desire is essentially self-destructive. Why else should a lover's language turn to a series of imageries of destruction? That is, why else, for instance, should Helen's beauty - that separated her from the other devils - be viewed in terms of a major naval exercise, or the burning down of high towers?
This Helen could command allegiance of a thousand men even though she destroyed men in thousands. The words of the apostrophe clearly indicate that Faustus does not accept Helen but submits himself to her. The gender reversal in terms of which it is done brings out the articulation of his wish to be unsexed, best. Since Faustus' 'hearts desire' is essentially that of self-destruction, none but Helen could be his parmour [1328-47].

Faustus has this glimpse of Helen towards the end of his alloted time, and it marks the beginning of a series of direct expressions of his real wish. All that is left for Faustus after the Helen episode, is to recognise his desire that has always spoken in him and to him even as he sought to escape it completely, not in the form of a sexual fantasy any more, but in the form of a trauma. After Faustus has lived his four and twenty years completely, he will come to name his real wish. He will do so when he will encounter a traumatic sight that fundamentally structured all his desire.

When Faustus is about to encounter the ultimate real, the real of his desire, his self, mysteriously, begins to disintegrate. To begin with, towards the beginning of the final scene, the magician's self is dissolved by Faustus as he wishes he were a student like the Scholar friends of his. Gone is the desire to become one towering Masaeus or Agrippa. Rather,
Faustus disperses himself among the multitude by wishing that he stayed with them [1359-61]. In course of his discourse with the Scholars, Faustus appears to have started to lose his support in the symbolic order and slipping into the hollow of the real. His expressions center around an excess of guilt, and suddenly, shows clear signs of self-disintegration in his inability to weep, pray or even lift his hand to make a sign [1385-90]. Having regressed to the equally vulnerable second childhood, Faustus encounters what lies behind the drama of the passage into existence, behind the law of the dead father behind all sexual craving and craving to be unsexed.

It seems at first sight that his dying speech bears witness to a desperate resistance to death by the dying Faustus. As far as Faustus' understanding of himself is concerned, that is certainly it. But, a closer study of the material in terms of which Faustus articulates his resistance to damnation reveals that at the moment of paying the last chip of his symbolic debt he articulates nothing but his real wish.

If life is time, then the real wish behind the plea 'that time may cease'[1423] is not an expression of the wish that the fatal hour never arrived but the wish that the 'clocke' stopped ticking and his life with it, for, he is afraid that 'the clocke wil strike' [1429] and bring down hell on
his life. Also, he prays to the sun, much like the moth, asking it to shine ‘perpetually’ [1424-25].

Faustus’ vision is now reduced to torn ‘images’ of the past, primarily of the father, such as of the father as ‘stretching out his arm’ in invitation, or angrily bending his ‘irefull browes’. The language of his dying speech too, is broken off by heavy caesuras and irregular pauses. Regressing all the way back, Faustus begins to articulate the real wish: ‘Mountaines and hilles, come, come, and fall on me’. The self rejects it by denying it promptly. But ultimately, Faustus submits himself to his wish of self-destruction, saying, ‘earth, gape’.

With that, Faustus comes to the end of the symbolic network where it opens out into the real register. Faustus prays to the stars to have him ‘drawn vp’ into the ‘intrailes’ of the clouds and have his limbs ‘vomitted forth’ and dispersed into the air. He bids his body to change into ‘ayre’ and disappear from view. Reiterating his wish to be like Arethusa - a figure evoked in the Helen apostrophe in association with Semele - who was transformed into rippling water to evade the clutch of lust of Alpheus, Faustus urges his soul to be transformed into drops of water and be lost in the ocean. The last glance is most horrific of all. There are devils, fierce looking and venomous, all around Faustus, as he encounters
the ultimate real in the form of the ugly hell opening widely to receive him [1476].

The wording of the Epilogue brings out the transition from a metaphorical expression of real to a blunt statement of it, that too with an abruptness that makes the transition unmistakably poignant:

Cut is the branch that might haue growne ful straight,
And burned is Apolloes Laurel bough,
That sometime grew within this learned man:
Faustus is gone,...

[Epilogue,1-4].

The whole of Faustus' creative desire, magical as well as sexual - in a word his desire for 'omnipotence' - is aimed at an endlessness. But his creative desire is only an expression in reverse of the destructive desire that is fundamental. In Doctor Faustus, the real desire of Faustus is his death-wish, misconceived by him as his desire to defy death and be immortal. Faustus' desire for immortality is really his death-wish, which relentlessly stages its return in the play-text so as to insist on being realised by him in whom it resounds and who is stubbornly deaf to it.

12 In the B Text the Scholars return after the death of Faustus, only to discover Faustus' 'limbs, / All torn asunder by the hand of death'.

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Death-wish is an insistence which Faustus never fails to bear witness to, although, at the same time, he never gets to know what the insistence is all about. At the beginning, the insistence is manifest beneath Faustus' aim to transcend death. On this, however, he remains similarly naive throughout the play, in spite of the fact that he apparently does enough in course of the play to come to terms with it. He departs to practise magic, from the question that he asks himself in act I, scene i: 'Wouldst thou make man to live eternally?'[52-53] In act IV, scene iv, he is still found asking himself: 'What art thou, Faustus, but a man condemned to die?'[1142-43] Even in act V, scene iii, he repents - 'Ah my sweete chamber-fellow had I liued with thee, then had I liued stil, but now I die eternally' [1359-60].

As long as one does not take into account the real wish of Faustus by allowing a name to emerge in its place out of his own words, one risks losing the thread of interpretation of Faustus' words and actions in the same instability that Faustus, by not realising his real wish, is a victim of. For example, Faustus asks the spirit whose formal existence depended entirely on his will, to make him immortal with a kiss, but, paradoxically, has his soul 'sucked forth' by it in reply. It is paradoxical unless one considers what Faustus really means by 'immortality'. He really does not mean what he thinks he means by the word, rather, he really means the
exact opposite of it, which is why in order to know how to make men immortal, Faustus had but pledged his own body and soul to Lucifer.

An apprehension of the destructive desire takes place in course of the being's passage to existence, when the being recognises in terms of his desire that is born in course of the passage, that he is no more than being of the lack of being. It is the misrecognition of a fully destructive desire as a highly creative one that makes the expression of Faustus' 'hearts desire' a radically unstable one. The predicament underlying the instability, which Faustus both wills at one level and resists at another all his life, is a predicament in the sense of an announcement that the manifestation of the real wish is. It is the bases of the instability manifest in the play, an instability that renders, in *The Tragicall Historie of Doctor Faustus*, the endlessly 'potent' desire of the protagonist, as the shadow of an essentially destructive wish underlying it all the time.

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13 The word 'predicament' usually means a situation involving a difficult or unpleasant choice. Although confronting the real wish is always an unpleasant task, the word predicament could be primarily regarded as the English equivalent of the Latin *Praedicamentum*, derived from *Predicare*, meaning, 'to declare', for the real wish is always a declaration that stands out of the symbolic texture in which it is manifest. (Oxford’s *Concise Etymological Dictionary of the English Language* and *Webster’s Dictionary of the English Language*.)