

characterize themselves.<sup>1</sup> Here, for example, is Idleness in *The Contract of a Marriage between Wit and Wisdom* (1579):

My name is Idleness, the flower of the frying-pan !  
My mother had two whelps at one litter, both born in Lent;  
So we were both put into a mussel-boat,  
And came sailing in a sow's ear over sea into Kent.<sup>2</sup>

This has an obvious resemblance to the speeches Marlowe gives to the Seven Deadly Sins.

In the late morality-play, there is a movement towards a more complex psychological configuration of moral conflict, for example, in the 'hybrid' play *Apus and Virginia* (1575), in which Apus is tempted by the Vice Haphazard to resort to trickery, then confronted with a dumbshow of Conscience and Justice, which draws from him these words: 'But out, I am wounded: how am I divided !' The Vice then remarks to him, 'Why, these are but thoughts, man: why, fie, for shame, fie !'<sup>3</sup> In another play of about the same period, *The Trial of Treasure*, there are also exceptional pangs of conscience, which are warded off by sleep and amusement. And in *Enough is as Good as a Feast*, Worldly Man is interrupted in his discussion of how to acquire an additional 'little tenement', or piece of land, by Prophet, with his ironic warning,

O thou earth, earth, earth ! hear the word of the Lord !  
Know thyself to be no better than clay or dust.

<sup>1</sup> E. R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (London, 1953), pp. 94-8, indicates the importance of a Latin lyric in the *Carmina Burana* for the development of the theme of 'The World Upside-down'.

<sup>2</sup> In John S. Farmer, ed., *Five Anonymous Plays* (London, 1908, Guildford, 1966), p. 264.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* v. 21.

God's Plague brings him a fatal illness, during which Covetous and his henchmen attempt to maintain his illusions. Even though he dreams momentarily of being in hell, his most anxious thoughts are still reserved for his property, and he is cut off before he can utter God's name. There follows the arrival of Satan on stage to cart him off, after commending him to the audience as an example of turpitude. Yet the play was considered to be a 'comedy'.

In another late play, Nathaniel Woodes' *The Conflict of Conscience* (1581), which is based on the true story of one Spira who for venal reasons recanted his Protestant faith and embraced Catholicism, and then suffered intense remorse and despair ending in suicide, one can again feel the pressure of the psychological against a more external approach to temptation. Philologus (that is, Spira) is tempted by Sensual Suggestion to put material security before fidelity to inner convictions, then after yielding hears the voices of Spirit and Conscience who remind him of his commitments. Though Conscience remains on the stage to bewail to the audience Philologus' departure with his tempter, rather as the Good Angel in *The Castell of Perseverance* had done or Heavenly Man in *Enough is as Good as a Feast*, there has been a certain interiorization. It seems as though the Protestant emphasis on the integrity of the individual conscience contributed to this admittedly still almost imperceptible shift.

It is however in its presentation of the state of despair that *The Conflict of Conscience* is at once closest to Reformation theology, to a certain kind of authentic psychological experience, and to *Doctor Faustus*. Horror suddenly seizes the hero as he boasts to his sons of how he has managed

to subdue conscience. From then on, he cannot free himself from despair of God's mercy ('for God is fully bent/In fury for to punish me with pains intolerable').<sup>1</sup> Even when Theologus (corresponding to Marlowe's Old Man) shows him that he is not rejected by God, he insists that when he speaks religious words, his heart blasphemes, and so regards himself as an exception to hope. He feels that the devils are already waiting to take him away, and foresees the moment of death, after which his soul will suffer 'the pains of utter desolation'. It is interesting that the play exists with two alternative endings, one in which Philologus is damned, and another in which he repents and is forgiven.

#### FAUSTUS AND ELIZABETHAN ENGLAND

##### WITCHCHAFT: THE DEMONIC PACT

Recent sociological studies of the trials for witchcraft which are such a problematic feature of European life from the thirteenth to the seventeenth centuries have offered certain observations which are relevant to our consideration of the Faust story. Diabolism, or worship of the devil, which might involve making a pact with him, was an accusation made at trials for witchcraft from the eleventh century onwards.<sup>2</sup> From the fourteenth century in some parts of Europe the stereotype of the witch was a person (*i*) who did

<sup>1</sup> In *A Select Collection of Old English Plays. Originally Published by Richard Dodsley, in the Year 1744, ed. W. Carew Hazlitt, 4th edn.* (London, 1874), Vol. VI, p. 121. Also ed. F. P. Wilson, *Malone Society Reprints* (Oxford, 1952).

<sup>2</sup> Norman Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons. An Inquiry Inspired by the Great Witch-Hunt* (London, for University of Sussex, 1975), chap. 2, for France; and Richard Kieckhefer, *European Witch Trials. Their Foundations in Popular and Learned Culture, 1300-1500* (London, 1976), chap. 2, for Italy.

harm to his neighbours by occult means, (ii) who was bound to the devil as his servant, (iii) a devourer of children, associated with wild and desolate places, (iv) perhaps the member of a society at whose meetings the Christian religion was systematically parodied and devils had sexual relations with humans.<sup>1</sup> However scholars have recently observed that this full picture was the invention of the learned; whereas village accusations tended to confine themselves to the first clause of the description—the doing of harm through magic—and to present the devil as servant rather than maleficent controller.<sup>2</sup> More than this, even the learned idea of magic in the Middle Ages was different from what it later became. Those who wrote books on magical practices also thought of the magician as someone who, far from worshipping demons, masters and commands them through the power of God. (Compare this with John Dee, below pages 38–40). The theologian Thomas Aquinas, however, represented this apparent power gained over the devil-world as illusory.<sup>3</sup> Thus in medieval thinking about magic there was already latent the tension between human and demonic power which Marlowe presents dramatically: who was really in power, magician or devil? In early records of witch-trials, the devil was considered as subservient to the witch; but in fifteenth-century accusations the accused was presented as having given himself body and

<sup>1</sup> Cohn, *op. cit.*, chap. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Cohn, *op. cit.*, chap. 9; Kieckhefer, *op. cit.*, chap. 3.

<sup>3</sup> *Contra Gentiles*, III. cvi; *Quaestiones disputatae de Potentia*, quaest. iii, art. ii. See also Paul H. Kocher, *Christopher Marlowe: A Study of his Thought, Learning, and Character* (New York, 1962), chap. 7.

soul to the devil.<sup>1</sup> In England accusations of a pact with the devil were very uncommon.<sup>2</sup>

Explanation of the phenomenon of witch-hunting is still at a speculative stage, but in the most recent work done on the subject the following significant suggestions have been made:

(1) Stories of diabolism seem to have a connection with the environment of towns rather than villages, where the simpler view of witchcraft prevailed. The urban outsider was cut off from his family, flung back on himself and the aid of potentially hostile neighbours, and might be more open to radical suspicions about any eccentric form of behaviour, round which the wilder kind of fantasy was woven.

(2) Religious communities with a strong belief in divine providence did not hunt witches with such severity as those communities which believed less strongly in the operation of God's will in everyday life. The first group (for example, Lutheran communities), tended to leave the punishment of witches to God ('hunting witches was not necessarily illicit for them, but morally distracting'<sup>3</sup>), while the second group tended to feel themselves responsible for hunting out the hidden enemies of life.

(3) The genuine evidence for the historical existence of European witch-societies is poor, and the mass witch-hunts

<sup>1</sup> Cohn, *op. cit.*, chap. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Christina Larner, 'James VI and I and Witchcraft' in Alan G.R. Smith, *The Reign of James VI and I* (London, 1973), p. 75.

<sup>3</sup> H. Erik Midelfort, *Witch-Hunting in Southwestern Germany, 1562-1684, The Social and Intellectual Foundation* (Stanford, California, 1972), chap. 3. See also *The Damned Art. Essays in the Literature of Witchcraft*, ed. Sydney Anglo (London, 1977).

reflect 'the demonological obsessions of the intelligentsia'<sup>1</sup> rather than fact. Literary accounts seem, indeed, to have increased the scare among the educated. In keeping with this observation, the sources of details about witchcraft which Marlowe added to the *Faustbuch* have been shown to be 'literary rather than oral, classical and Continental rather than English.'<sup>2</sup>

#### EXORCISM AND DIALOGUE WITH THE DEVIL

As the English public were giving attention to the Faust story, a controversy was brewing between Puritans and Moderates in the Anglican Church over the legitimacy of exorcising devils who had apparently possessed the minds of victims, and publicity was given to certain astonishing cases. One was that of a law student called Briggs, who in 1574 was afflicted by melancholia after hearing a religious lecture on unforgivable sin. He fell into a trance, and

from his lips came forth his part of a dialogue between himself and the Devil, which was eagerly recorded by the godly onlookers. The Devil assaulted him with a combination of threats and promises. On the one hand he assured him that there were no pains in hell, that there was no God, that Christ was not the Son of God, that Christ's parents were unmarried, that the Scripture was false, and that everything happened by mere nature. On the other, he urged that he was damned anyway, and that he would do better to settle for his offers of a cupboard of plate, and a seductive 'painted woman' (who temptingly sang and danced before him). This discussion continued at intervals for over a fortnight.... In the end Foxe, called in to conduct a special prayer-meeting,...engaged the spirit in fluent argument....

<sup>1</sup> Cohn, *op. cit.*, p. xiii.

<sup>2</sup> Kocher, *op. cit.*, pp. 169-72.

Ultimately the patient himself was prevailed upon to command the Devil to depart in God's name, and his troubles were over.<sup>1</sup>

The exorcist in this case was the famous Puritan writer, John Foxe, from whose writings comes the story of Pope Bruno in *Doctor Faustus*, Act III. But by the 1580s the custom of exorcism was spreading among Puritans, and in 1589 an exorcist was prosecuted by the High Commission for fraud.<sup>2</sup> There is also evidence of the practice of exorcism in Roman Catholic circles in England in the 1580s.<sup>3</sup> It looks as though an atmosphere of intellectual crisis and religious persecution in Europe and in England was particularly favourable to a belief in the possibility of league with the devil-world. It certainly suggests that the case of Faustus would be anything but academic to an English audience of the time.

The Dutch humanist Erasmus, in his little book *On Preparing to Die* (*De Praeparatione ad Mortem*, 1532), had presented three vivid dialogues with the devil as part of his discussion of doubt and despair. It is Satan's special tactics with dying men to tempt them to doubt God's mercy when they think of the sins they have committed. Erasmus illustrates this in dialogue with the case of two men, one a philosopher, the other a poor simple man: it is the philosopher who succumbs to Satan, while the simple soul appeals to the Creed of the church for support and is saved. Good men are not free of temptation—he instances

<sup>1</sup> Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic. Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England* (London, 1971; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), pp. 574-5.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 575-80.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 582-83.

St Anthony—but whereas a self-righteous man confident in his own virtue may become Satan's victim (here there is a dialogue between a presumptuous man and the devil), a man like Cyprian, once a magician, may become a saint.

The idea that the devil may persuade a man to despair was developed by Luther: 'He can fashion the strangest syllogisms. "You have sinned; God is wrathful towards sinners; therefore despair."' <sup>1</sup> From Luther it passed into English Protestant writing, for example, a sermon of Latimer ('So will he reason with thee . . .'), and Becon's 'Dialogue between the Christian Knight and Satan'. Scholars<sup>2</sup> have pointed out the resemblance between this dialogue and Marlowe's use of 'the devil's syllogism', as Luther called it. Like Erasmus, Becon recognized how familiarity with the New Testament might meet Satanic half-truths; so his knight counters Scripture with Scripture.

Erasmus's dialogues were apparently known to William Perkins, the powerful Puritan preacher at Cambridge in Marlowe's day (he had dabbled in magic before his religious conversion), since in his discussion of faith and despair in *A Discourse of Conscience* (1596) he also presents a dialogue between Satan and a man whom he tempts to lose his faith. Perkins argues that faith, to be effective, must be more than a general inherited belief: it must be realized personally. Both Erasmus and Perkins were interested in the psychology of faith and hope, but Perkins emphasized more the sincerity of the individual heart, for his believer

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Susan Snyder, 'The Left Hand of God: Despair in Medieval and Renaissance Tradition', *Studies in the Renaissance*, XII (1965), p. 30.

<sup>2</sup> Kocher, *op. cit.*, pp. 106-7; Snyder, *op. cit.*, p. 31, referring to *Doctor Faustus*, I. i. 39-45; V. ii. 92-100.