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SOULS FOR SALE: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE MOTIF OF BARGAINING WITH THE DARK SIDE

Abstract

The concept of a pact with some representative of the dark side persists in numerous cultural narratives and it almost always includes the steps of assumption of a soul, the possibility to trade it, and the risk/benefit ratio of doing so, a constant being the longing to gain superhuman abilities and/or skills and successes. The motif of the soul-selling to dark, evil beings in terms of exchange of submission and servitude for earthly advantages and superhuman abilities and the promise of happiness in this life or the next is briefly examined, through some understandings of evil in the world (various instances of evil demons, devilish adversaries, Satan); along the need for exculpation for wrong-doing and the implications of free decision-making; via the perception of the denouncement of the mainstream belief-systems and the contract with the Devil; and by pointing out some pact-with-the-Devil foundation stories.

Keywords

pact, devil, soul, Satan

The concept of the contract between man and some representative of the imagined forces of evil or darkness persists in a variety of stories for thousands of years and is usually about an exchange of the soul for extraordinary gains, with additional conditions depending on the characteristics of the parties involved, the period, the cultural climate and the dominant belief-system.

The motif of the bargain presupposes two sides (parties): man, believing in the existence of his soul and its bargaining worth, and a representative of the dark side. The main anthropological assumption is about the belief in taking control over one's soul, although that (temporary) control is being used to be soon relinquished, often forever. The price to pay for the limited earthly advantages, pleasures, proficiencies and success is the agreement to endure long or infinite submission to a superior evil instance, or to intensely serve in devoted self-denial during the earthly life, for a reward of otherworldly happiness postmortem. The recurring pattern seems to be the belief that such an agreement gives man skills and powers he technically already possesses on his own, or at least has the independent potential to attain, but, through the

contract with the other-worldly entity/dark power they get intensified or expedited beyond (extra) ordinary human capability. These three seemingly anthropocentric stances: that man has a soul which has some bargaining value or potential leverage, is free to decide what to do with it, and uses the choice to enhance its abilities to succeed immensely on earth are countered by the severity of the outcome: the soul has value, which is not some innate immeasurable precious worth, but rather has a particular rate or cost under certain circumstances and conditions; it is traded for elements originating in the profane sphere, no matter how exaggerated or "enchanted" they get; the soul is believed to be immortal (in the sense that it does not depend on the physical carnal state of the body it briefly inhabits and animates), but its immortality is irrelevant, as the perks of having it and trading it are chiefly exhausted in the duration of the lifetime in the physical, material world. The choice is to stop choosing: by transferring power to the dark instance, all future autonomous choices cease to be a possibility; albeit the human potential for skills and successes, it is not actualised otherwise than through an exterior intervention and in exchange for future servitude (as they are believed to do the dark side's bidding, or act as liaisons between worlds) and possible suffering or even perennial doom. The bargain also presupposes some not-too-ambivalent (yet, context-dependent) understanding of right and wrong, due to a belief in good and evil, moral (often depending on ontological) dualism. One cannot bargain with the dark side if there is no concept of an evil instance full of otherworldly means of changing reality and surrendering circumstances to their will. Evil as intrinsic to the world is not merely an abstract concept, it is not seen as a creative/destructive or an executive principle, but incarnate/animated, exteriorised through a spirit, demon, some form of devil, an elaborate satanic form with theologically relevant back-story in more developed Judeo-Christian parameters, or other forms of being. The belief that such a dark presence has the powers to tempt man, up to a point where he is on board with selling his soul, in the framework of some understanding of the good-evil dichotomy, is in part a religious mechanism of sin and retribution: if selling one's soul is wrong (in belief systems where the soul is not thought of as man's to give or where selling it to the deity's adversary makes him hostile and sinful), offering to sell it is in itself a transgression of a rule, and the implications of the contract constitute a major part of what the retribution entails; if selling one's soul is dogmatically uncharted, there is no retribution for the breaking of a rule, no sin committed, and the damnation in eternity, or other form of servitude or payment, functions on its own merit¹.

¹ In archaic primordial communities, rituals and rules are usually within the systems of limitations and forbidden actions, as part of a negative cult, the sphere of the taboo. Religious rituals and rules imply an expectation of a punishment, and while prohibitions exist elsewhere, like in the realm of magic, the punishments for transgressions differ in the two worlds. Remorse is inherent to an individual collectively conditioned to obey the community rules and orientate between suitable and unacceptable behaviour. Magical prohibitions are not as emotionally complex: breaking a rule means facing the obvious repercussions in a causal relation, through physical necessity. In breaking rules in magic the risk undertaken is much like the risk a patient undertakes when not following the recommendations of a medical professional.

The relations are pretty straightforward: whether it is sinful or just dangerous to trade with a representative of destruction, chaos or evil, and to which extent it is problematic to denounce the defining immortal part of oneself for earthly gains and perks, and to defy an object of belief by essentially becoming its adversary's accomplice depends on the belief-system. If the spiritual being/presence/deity is simultaneously good and evil, there is no need for an external instance for trade. According to scholars adhering to the animistic theory, good and evil spirits were believed in since the dawn of humanity. Primordial monism, or animatism, the belief in mana (a non-personal all-permeating, sub-standing power in the world) put aside, a multi-functional "darwinian" thesis of selection of deities/spiritual beings suggests a convergence of functions (multiple entities became multiple functions converging into one multi-functional entity), and a principle of unity can be traced as dominating, to form a more consistent and "harmonious" monism (and later monotheism). It is plausible to assume that this assumption could lead to the belief that good spirits converge into the formation of monotheism with later definitions of God as good, supremely good, pure goodness or Goodness itself, while evil spirits lead to the acceptance of a single supreme evil deity, an evil incarnate, which represents everything that is evil, bad, destructive, immoral, or a "community" of subordinate evil representatives, with appropriate functions, tasks and hierarchy. This, very loosely speaking, could be one fragment of the division between monotheism and "monodiabolism", which both seem to originate (perhaps simultaneously) in the monistic tendencies of human evolution (Carus, 1900: 3). Combined, they constitute dualism, which, given the ambivalence in the world, is still largely plausible and vastly applicable, and has persevered.

Stories about compacting with the dark side have a long and, rather stable history, from early beliefs in contracts with some sort of evil creature, to more recent episodes of selling one's soul for superhuman abilities, like the alleged pact between the Devil and Niccolò Paganini, "the devil's violinist", or between the Devil and Robert Johnson and his subsequent "devil music". According to recent research², the Indo-European roots of fairy tales show the motif of selling one's soul a long time ago: *The Smith and the Devil* may be one of the oldest European folk tales, with the basic plot stable throughout the Indo-European speaking world from India to Scandinavia, possibly being first told in Indo-European 6,000 years ago in the Bronze Age (the smith offers his soul in exchange to be able to forge metals and make the best tools)³. The "Bargain with the devil" and "Man sells soul to devil" are motif number M2010 and 211 in Stith Thompson's *Motif Index of Folk Literature* (slightly moved in the *Aarne-Thompson Index*). In folklore, the tempter is not necessarily evil, is not a demon or some sort of devil, but a trickster⁴ who gives options and leaves man to decide, which makes evil

² Phylogenetic techniques in fairy-tale analysis (Da Silva&Tehrani, 2015).

³ John Lindow doubts that the use of "smith" is justified that long ago, which would indicate that the version is not that old (Samoray, 2016).

⁴ The trickster can be a magic creature, often an animal known for its cunning, sometimes a snake or other type of reptile, sometimes anthropomorphically shown, but apparently possessing extraordinary and other-humanly powers.

to originate from his free will and choice. There is an early Persian belief about Eblis having made a pact with the Arabian Prince Zohar. This is later present in the *Book of Enoch*, and later entered into the Cabbala. Clear monotheism was edgy in the ancient Near East, and it took a long time to accomplish it, even with Israel's singling out of God, for it did not prevent the worship of other gods by different groups. In Zoroastrianism, Ahura Mazda is hierarchically the highest, a leader of a council divine with an entourage of angelic beings, a good god. The duality lies in the origin of evil, it emanating not from him, but from Ahriman, a wholly separate being, malignant, fiendish, an "evil spirit" (Angra Mainya), a personification of chaos and destruction, bringer of suffering and death. Humans are in constant struggle of choice-making, since a clear opposition exists between light and darkness, good and evil on an ontological level. Both Ahura Mazda and Ahriman are "original in being themselves uncreated representative of contradictory Principles", which might have influenced concepts about good-evil intricacies and oppositions in nearby and later cultural narratives (Carus, 1900: 53)⁵. Also, Ahriman has a staff of demonic helpers assigned to tempt and lure people into the path of darkness⁶. The evolution of the devil goes from a divine servant to independent intentionally malevolent being. God's negative elements or functions fade over time, or get assigned to other beings, hence the belief in the Destroyer, *Mashit*, the "smiting angel", *hammal'ak hammashit*, and the Adversary, *hassatan*, which evolves to be evil incarnate. Before Satan is a fully-fledged entity, the Adversary in the Hebrew Bible is somewhat non-malignant, a creature of God. *Satan* as a proper name comes from the term 'satan' to describe a role rather than a particular being common in the *Hebrew Bible*, where it occurs nine times. On five occasions, it refers to human beings and denotes a role as an adversary or accuser. On four occasions, it refers to celestial beings (Almond, 2014: 24-25). Satan's first appearance can be traced in one of the so-called Davidic outlaw tales, 1 Samuel 29⁷, when the Philistines apprehensively demand that David be sent away, so he doesn't become an adversary (*satan*) to them in the battle, also maybe in the sense of a stumbling block (1 Sam 29:4)⁸.

As "Satan" are labelled certain individuals, Hadad and Rezon, sent to provoke problems for Solomon (11:14, 1 Kgs 11:23; 25). The main point here is that the Lord raises them up as adversaries. Another instance is *satan* in the *Psalms* (the slander charges in Psalm 109, 1-6). However, these are all beings which pertain to the physical realm, varying in context and meaning, ranging from a legal or military figure to a violator of God's will, but there is another *satan* who appears in the heavenly realm

⁵ An interpretation of a shared origin focuses on the story about Ahura Mazda and Ahriman being created by the one creator God and gifted with God's goodness, and while Ahura Mazda remained good, Ahriman rebelled and became evil (Bulfinch&Martin, 1991: 278-79; Wray&Mobley, 2005: 85).

⁶ Wray and Mobley identify an exciting possibility in the influence of Zoroastrianism on Old Testament books as *Job*, *Zechariah* and *Chronicles*, all of them featuring a satanic figure and dated to the Persian period (Wray&Mobley, 2005: 85, Davies, 1998: 89-125).

⁷ Described by Wray and Mobley as "an Iron Age anticipation of the Wiley Coyote and Road Runner cartoons" (Wray&Mobley, 2005: 53).

⁸ In 2 Sam 19:17-24, the term "satan" is also used to indicate a human adversary.

(Wray&Mobley, 2005: 56), and this is the more abstract and highly developed later understanding which perseveres to this day. The idea of distancing evil from God is also found in two of the first Qumran scrolls, *The Rule of the Community* and the War Scroll, according to the sect's understanding of the world as an ongoing battle between good and evil, light and darkens. Unlike the fallen Watchers (from the *Book of Enoch*)⁹ as outcast havoc-wrecking former sentinels, the stance here is that the spirits of darkness were created by God from the start, as were the spirits of light, in whose deeds he took pleasure. As he loathed the spirits of darkness, a clear opposition was believed in from the beginning. The dualism is relative, as God remains an absolute sovereign, and is not opposed strictly by Belial (the evil instance) as an equal (Almond, 2014: 25-26). If we assume that the Devil does not exist in pre-exilic stories, although the story of Balaam and the ass (Num 22:22-35) might be seen as an introduction to the heavenly satan in the *Hebrew Bible* (a sword-wielding messenger of the Lord sent to convey God's anger), the important element here is that satan is depicted literally like an obstacle, which "supports the notion that Satan is always a character of opposition; indeed, this is his primary role in the Bible and beyond" (Wray&Mobley, 2005: 57). The role of hassatan (the most near "ancestor" of the biblical Satan) in the Book of Job is to tempt the righteous man in order to test his loyalty and devotion to the Lord. One day the heavenly beings came to present themselves before the Lord and Satan (hassatan) also came among them" (Job 1:6). At first glance, hassatan appears to be simply one more member of the heavenly court, one of "the sons of God," the divine courtiers assembled in the throne room of the cosmic monarch (Wray&Mobley, 2005: 59), but later it becomes apparent that he also acts on his own behalf¹⁰. Satan tells God that Job is obedient and pious and has the fear of God (in a biblical sense of fascinated and trembling awe), because being virtuous has been nothing but comfortable and profitable. Satan is not the cause of evil, he's more of an instigator or an interested catalyst of a series of events about to transpire. At first he is a member of the heavenly court, but then unleashes himself upon earth, not only as a passive obstacle, but actively worsening a pious man's life. There is even "a certain arrogance and audacity associated with this character—and if God is testing Job, one could just as easily argue that *hassatan* is testing God" (Wray&Mobley, 2005: 64). Satan appears in the fourth of the eight visions in *Zecharias* (3:1-7), as a member of a heavenly governing body, where he is tasked with testing the loyalty of the pious. If he is thought of as truly opposed to the properly divine, then a proper divergence, a cosmic and moral bifurcation can be identified. The clear enmity between the Devil and God flourishes in the Jewish and Christian literature of the intertestamental period, and that is the struggle that per-

⁹ The story of the Watchers, the class of cosmic beings, angels of sorts, in *Enoch* (also in *Daniel* 4:17; 4:13-23) tells a tale of controlled disorder, in the sense that there is a hierarchy formed, a leader placed – Azazel (1 En 8:1, 9:6; 69:2), Semihazah, Satan. The leader forms a pact with the Watchers to provoke evil in the world, resurrecting magic for women, having sexual exploits and, through the nephilim, urging humans to make and use weapons, to wreak injustice and destruction in the world (Azazel).

¹⁰ See Job 1:6; Gen 6:2; 1 Kgs 22:19-23; Ps 29:1; 82; 89:5-8; Isa 6:1-8; Dan 7:7-9; 14.

sists until today. *The Book of Revelation* clearly reads about “that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan” (Rev 12:9) and “the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan” (Rev 20:2) (although the serpent as evil is probably a result of some influence by other cultural narratives)¹¹. As time progresses, Satan assumes a more commanding role, and his diabolical minions appear more than 500 times in the *New Testament*, but it is clear that the power of God’s goodness is greater, and that it is but a matter of time before Satan’s power will subside and fade. The most famous encounter of Jesus is the episode of the temptation in the wilderness (Mk 1:12-13; Mt 4:1-11; Lk 4:1-13), which, Wray and Mobley identify as a foundational Satan story, finding that though Jesus refuses to bargain with the devil, the countless stories in European and American folklore through the ages about ordinary people, magi and artists who gladly did business with the devil are a variation of it (specifically mentioning Robert Johnson and his crossroads Mississippi pact with the devil, Wray&Mobley, 2005: 120)¹². However, there are many variations, and some have religious and cautionary merit, but not all are derived from it, as many predate it by centuries.

On a cosmological scale, the existence of the devil serves as an explanation, or at least a reference point, for the existence of evil in the world, and is often used in attempts at theodicy. He can be held accountable for the imperfections and down-right catastrophes, tragedies and injustices in the world. Furthermore, if it is not only about metaphysical evil (natural disasters, chaos not caused by human actions), then it serves as an explanation for human moral deliberation which is only seemingly autonomous, and instead ruled by the conditions of evil. The devilish influence, or external motivation/temptation make men choose poorly, hence the primordial sin and the inalienable sinful nature of man, continuously repeated. However, since the Hebrew Bible, this is paired with the belief that man was created in the image of God, and has the potential to attain God’s grace through pious and righteous life. Moral perfection is something a good believer strives for, but is constantly being jeopardised by external factors and circumstances leading to sinful behaviour or impurity. This concept explains interpersonal relations and individual moral actions from the

¹¹ The concept of Satan in the Intertestamental and subsequent period, as evil incarnate is being followed by some characteristics of other diabolical figures or demonic creatures from the Hebrew Bible, like the Canaanite Molech, which are not associated previously. Later Molech (Moloch) is used for “Satan”; in Milton’s *Paradise Lost* Molech is one of Lucifer’s main officers (1:392-405).

¹² An associated motif is that of the ontological significance of crossroads: the obvious symbolism of a merger or overlap between the profane and the sacred sphere, and the ordinary and spiritual beings at play. Crossroads mythology is as widespread as are crossroads. The typical ancient Greek representative, for example, is the triplicate or trimorphic goddess Hecate, associated, among many things, with magic, entrances, thresholds, necromancy, and three-way crossroads (Trivia in Roman mythology). In Guatemala, the old Mayan underworld Lord Maam, under his folk saint guise of Maximon or Saint Simon, is generally depicted seated at a crossroads in a chair, just outside a church. It is believed that he saves the soul by allowing it to atone in this world. The idea of the crossroad is apparent in the legend about Papa Legba, which is a good example of how African paganism is reinterpreted through the prism of compacting with the devil. The idea of selling the soul on a crossroad (usually in a crepuscular setting) is a transformed worship of Eshu/Legba, the Yoruba deity of crossroads.

performatives of custom law to the intricacies of communicating faith in the modern world, in an attempt at generalisation or finding a suitable framework. The devil conceived as particularised or singularised is yet another level - in this instance it is about individual experiences of temptations, or human longing for richness and success filtered through the promise of servitude in a *do ut des* mechanism. Man's soul cannot be seen as too pure for such trades, as it is deemed fit to interact (and hopefully even cheat and outsmart) the supernatural evil creature. The good-evil dichotomy within a religious cult or system is unlike, but dependent upon the sacred-profane dichotomy. The cosmogonical idea of opposed principles (constructive-destructive, penetrator-receptacle, good-evil) in myth-making, cultural narratives, ritualisation and social interaction, and in the subsequent reactualisation of narrative units is later reintegrated and re-interpreted in monotheism as an opposition between divine, angelic, deity-approved forces and a dark side of mischief and mayhem. In archaic religions based on the belief in the sacred and in contemporary numinous experiences alike, the dominant elements of the sacred in religious sentiments and cult practices are its ambivalence, dialectics, the definition only through dichotomies or approximate apophatic parentheses or profane analogies, its elements of simultaneous overwhelming frightening power and fascinating attraction, the provocation of awe, fearful trembling and a strong desire for rapprochement, for assimilation. In a religious system based on the belief of the sacred, the phenomenon of faith requires a collective endeavor and an adherence to the social and moral rules dictated by the cult. The sacred-profane dichotomy is unlike any other – the sphere of the sacred is believed to be ontologically and axiologically superior, capable of determining rules for a controlled interaction in the group, with the rest of the world, and in the ways the individual understands one's place and role. The sacred sphere supplies and controls the moral prohibitions. This, however, does not make it good – partly because, as was mentioned, it is beyond the profane good-evil division, and partly because it has the power to regulate, punish, intimidate, tempt, attract, exert vengeance (these personifications borrowed from human emotional experience are some of the aforementioned profane analogies and approximations), which, in itself, is not necessarily good. The soul, as a moral agent, pertains to this realm of ambivalence.

The devil as a tempter is both a bearer of sin (but not a sin-eater), and a facilitator of sin in *Old Testament* stories and the apocalyptic authors, and perfectly aligned with the tendency of flight from freedom, a means for self-apology and guilt-alleviation. Good creatures, like angels and such, do not have much to offer in terms of measurable, palpable merit in the profane world, what they offer are delayed gratification and happiness, if any, depending on one's earthly deeds. Instant gratification, debauchery, myriad of skills and pleasures seem to be more appealing than the idea of a blessed state of being, following a period of suffering, even if it is eternal servitude and possible suffering in exchange for temporary gains versus eternal bliss in exchange for earthly devotion to right-doing, piousness and self-sacrifice. The association of the sinner and the devil is not taken to easily exculpate man's choosing capacities, and yet the accusation of the devil for a committed sin is as common as the admonitions

for it¹³. The logic is, also, that when a man has made a pact with God's adversary, cursing the adversary entails cursing one's very soul¹⁴. In Augustinian lines, this trend of non-exoneration of man continued: man corrupts his soul with devilish matters, they don't just come from outside of him. The pact between the Devil and the sorcerer (witch or warlock) was perceived as a precondition for the endowment and exteriorisation of magical powers. Following Augustine, superstitious practices in general, and witchcraft and sorcery in particular, were viewed as originating in a compact, explicit or implicit, between men and evil spirits/demons. According to St. Thomas Aquinas, a pact was explicit when the sorcerer invoked demonic assistance, and tacit when, without acts of conjuration of demons, a person performed an act with the aim of effecting something which either did not naturally follow, or which was not expected as the result of the direct intervention of God (Almond, 2014: 79)¹⁵. According to him, if a sorcerer invokes demons, they come to him - any human being who accepts help from a demon, in the hope of accomplishing something which transcends the powers of nature, has entered into a pact with that demon, and this is problematic, because of the sin committed: a man offers worship to the enemy of God. Such a pact, therefore, has "... the same inner meaning as the ancient conception that a man may sell his soul to the Devil to gain power for himself" (O'Grady, 1989: 71). From the thirteenth century belief in the existence of magic and in the sorcerers' powers to invoke demons was universal among the people and among Church leaders (which was expected, since witchcraft was acknowledged from the earliest of times in Mosaic Law, and condemned). The unacceptability of witchcraft was due to the forming of pacts with evil. St. Augustine laid down (*De Doct Chr.* 11.22) that witchcraft depended on a pact with the Devil, and throughout the Middle Ages the Church looked with great severity on any form of magical art that appeared to involve the idea of a pact (O'Grady, 1989: 67). The encounters with nefarious agents of havoc and doom were quite expected in a climate where they were believed to go about their ways to tempt and corrupt souls. In many respects, premodern Europe was bristling with demons, remark Raiswell and Dendle. Thus, Tertullian noted that "Satan and his angels have filled the entire world" (Tertullian, *De spectaculis liber* (Migne PL 1.0640B); Eusebius of Caesaria worried that "every house is full of them"; John Cassian argued that "the atmosphere which extends between heaven and earth is ever filled with a thick crowd of spirits" (*Conlationes*, 227-228); Richalm of Schönthal thought they rode like motes on the sunbeam, scattered everywhere like dust and that their multitude fills the whole world, making the whole air just a mass of devils (Richalm of Schönthal, *Liber revelationum* as translated in Coulton, *Five Centuries of Religion*, 1.41, in Raiswell&Dendle, 2012), all these perhaps being,

¹³ See, for instance, Sir 21:27;

¹⁴ See the idea of sin created by man in En 98:4 (even so sin has not been sent upon the earth, but man of himself has created it).

¹⁵ The 1398 University of Paris articles against ritual magic, further established this distinction, which condemned entering into an implicit or explicit pact with demons, defining the former as any superstitious ritual, whose effects cannot be reasonably traced to God or nature. This distinction blurred the boundaries between popular superstitions and sorcery and witchcraft.

Raiswell and Dendle note, some of the more extreme articulations of the underlying principle, but they render that principle vividly: the devil and his demons are real, they are present, and they surround humanity far more intimately than humanity's mundane sensory experience of the world would suggest¹⁶. The motifs of soul-selling retain their initial pagan forms through dominantly Christian surroundings, only interpreted and sanctioned through Christian filters. The didactic role of cautionary episodes in Christianity is on the levels of understanding of the concept of betrayal, for example, in terms of selling out, or betraying someone for a certain amount/gain, like Judas betrays Jesus for pieces of silver, for example (in the Thomson Index the motif of betrayal is in the context of exchange of stolen goods or the betrayal of a friend or lover for either ephemeral gain or self-preservation or avoidance of loss).

The selling of the soul was sometimes considered to be a complex ceremony, and believed to leave a trace, whilst sometimes it was imagined as quite simple, a mere speech acts or promise being enough¹⁷. As per analogy with the covenantal relationship between God and man in protestant theology, in Calvinist demonology, the emphasis was put on the covenant made between the Devil and the witch. The sorcerer would, according to Lambert Daneau, henceforth always bear the mark of the Devil (Lambert Daneau, *A Dialogue of Witches*, 1575 in Almond, 2014: 85), and yet no such references are made in the *Malleus Maleficarum* (Russel, 1972: 242-243) before being revisited by catholic demonologists, like Nicholas Remy (*Demonolatriy*, 1595). In continental Europe witches were demonic lovers, and in England the devil's mark had a more motherly side to it, it was a witch's mark. Still, given that actions were prosecuted more than marks, the devil's brand lost significance. The distinctive feature of English witchcraft - the keeping of familiar spirits (familiaris in animal or human

¹⁶ Following Robert Muchembled's precaution against importing a single, universal definition on an imaginary and varied concept, a reflection of generations of experience lived, but known only through a refraction in contemporary religious and legal paradigms (Muchembled, 2003: 13), Raiswell and Dendle, in their *Epilogue: Inscribing the Devil in Cultural Contexts*, (Raiswell&Dendle, 2012), note that the premodern understanding of the devil can be construed as a series of negotiations between two hierarchical scales, one in terms of potency, and one in the terms of malice, which allows, imagining a simple graph on the orthogonal axes, to locate devils in four quadrants, as devils who are powerful, but agents of God; powerful but hostile to God; impotent and hostile to God; and impotent, but agents of God.

Adding some other parameters would allow for a plotting of evil's power in relation to the lapse of time and the fluctuation of beliefs in cultures, which would come in handy in mapping out elements of demonology. If the understanding of the nature of God is added, along with explanations about the nature of the soul, the graph would become quite cluttered, but also very informative in terms of positioning of incidence of bargains with the dark side, and of probabilities for dominance of either evil or good.

¹⁷ When someone would claim in writing in medieval times to be a sorcerer of some kind, though, it was prudent to deny that they had anything to do with the Devil, affirming that demons were conquered and controlled by a sorcerer to do their bidding, and not the other way around, and that they would not perform acts of evil in allegiance to the Devil. Since the thirteenth century, the Church had equated the practice of magic with heresy. By doing so, every type of ritual magic was assumed to have connection with a devil-pact, which implied an apostasy from God, and was thus, considered utterly heretic, so, not advertising a hand in his the Devil's activities and projects would have been a wise approach.

form) subtly changed the mark, and witches paid the price for their familiars. This meant that the European search for the sign of the demonic pact in England was transformed into the search for the place from which the familiar was nurtured by the witch's blood, thus making marks and their meaning fluid and ambiguous (Almond, 2014: 84-5; Dalton, 1630: 273).

The proliferating fear from dark influences came together with the belief in an obligation to commit acts of destruction or cruelty in the world, hence, some beliefs in the relations with a succubus/incubus, and participation in witches Sabbath¹⁸. The Jewish connection can be found in Hegemonius' portrayal of Mani, according to which the devil god which created the world was the Jewish Jahve. Hegemonius reports that Mani said "It is the Prince of Darkness who spoke with Moses, the Jews and their priests. Thus the Christians, the Jews, and the Pagans are involved in the same error when they worship this God. For he leads them astray in the lusts he taught them" (Reyes, 2014: 118). The Yiddish word "schlemiel" and its Hebrew cognate "shlumiel" are used to describe a hopelessly incompetent person. Peter Schlemihl is the title character in Adelbert von Chamisso's *Peter Schlemihls wundersame Geschichte* (1813-14), possibly from the Shelumiel (Num. 1:6). The name is a synonym of one who makes a desperate or silly bargain. Originally the name meant friend of God, Theophilus. The western European origin of the deal with the devil is the story from *A Miracle of the Virgin Mary Concerning Theophilus the Penitent* (*Miraculum Sancte Marie de Theophilo penitente*), a ninth century translation from Greek into Latin by Paul, a deacon of Naples. Theophilus of Adana, a priest from Asia Minor, is considered to be the classic predecessor of doctor Faustus. Disappointed by being demoted from his position by the new bishop, unhappy with his earthly carrier, and having been urged (by the devil) to think perverse thoughts and feel jealousy of the steward who got the position instead, as well as a strong desire of honour (Mason Palmer&Pattison More, 1936: 61). He therefore went to the Jewish¹⁹ magician in town, a practitioner of the diabolical arts (Mason Palmer&Pattison More, 1936: 62) and asked for his

¹⁸ The high rates of neonatal mortality were blamed on the midwives who would, statistically, have had contact with newborns, explaining that they must have consorted with evil presences and were given the task to kill babies. Many accounts exist in the *Lesser Key of Solomon* and the classic *Malleus Maleficarum. The Compendium Maleficarum* (1608) by Francesco Maria Guaccio (sometimes "Guazzo") contains some illustrations of what he imagined could be a Sabbath, including examples of riding flying goats, trampling Christian artefacts, like the cross, denouncing Christ and pledging allegiance to the Devil (Guaccio, 1992: 51-70).

Elements of this motif, supplemented by parts of the Molochian children sacrifice galore and fantastic stories supplied by the ever-growing sci-fi culture, persist in twentieth and twenty-first-century stories, focused in accounts of women giving birth to demonic children, in X-files-like stories about humans coupling with aliens, and in folkloric rumours about women "breeders" taken by satanic cults to procreate for ritual purposes.

¹⁹ In the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, the Jew appears in the narrative off-stage, advising Theophilus to enter into the pact, and then disappears, leaving Theophilus and Virgin Mary to act as the principle agents in his penitence and salvation. The verbalisation there may be scarce, but the illustration is quite elaborate, the Jew plays a central role in two of the six panels of the story, being depicted as hook-nosed, thickly bearded, heavily hooded, in contrast with the neat, clearly "Christian" Theophilus (Patton, 2008: 233-256).

help. The sorcerer agreed to take him to his master, and the next evening, he showed him a creature clad in white robes, the devil's minions, and the devil himself. The devil offered Theophilus to make him rule over all if he were to become his servant, which he accepted gladly. He then, as per standard procedure, denied everything saint and Christ-related and signed a written contract. Theophilus was immediately reappointed steward, given more responsibilities, and enjoyed everyone's apprehension and awe. However, he soon repented, and started to fast, pray and hold vigils. He felt remorseful about his deal with the Devil, repenting his sins he gave himself upon the mercy of the Virgin Mary, who appeared to him after 40 days of fasting. He now renounced his renouncing of Christ, made a new confession of dedicated faith and had Mary act as mediator between him and God, who forgave him (60-75 for the transl.). Mary gave the parchment of the agreement to Theophilus, who cast it into the fire – as it was considered perfectly acceptable to cheat the Devil (since it was believed that the Devil had no obligations whatsoever to uphold and promises to fulfil), and so Theophilus did public penance for having trafficked with the Evil One, and died in peace (O'Grady, 71-72)²⁰. The story of Theophilus is both an extension of some and a predecessor of many instances of the take on the history on witchcraft, the aforementioned pacts between Devil and sorcerer, and a fragment of the rich western European history of magic.

Through the passing of time, Fortunatus²¹, the lucky person who gets hold of an ever-refilling pouch of gold amalgamates with many different characters, many from *Gesta Romanorum*²². In the Von Chamisso tale, Schlemiel sells his soul to the devil in exchange for a bottomless pouch or wallet (the self-regenerating treasure of Fortunatus). Or, it can be summarised that the legend of Theophilus combines itself with the figure of the fascinating "diabolical" Simon Magus, to result in the legend of doctor Faust, a necromancer believed to have sold his soul to the Devil. The character of Faust has become archetypal for people who have sold their soul to the Devil, and for bargains with dark instances in general²³. The exemplary form of the legend can be

²⁰ In the tenth century, the poet nun Hroswitha of Gandersheim adapted the text of Paulus Diaconus for a narrative poem that elaborates Theophilus' essential goodness and internalises the seduction of good and evil, in which the devil is *magus*, a necromancer.

For a comprehensive take on the Theophilus character and story, see Lazar, 1972.

²¹ From accounts on the life of Augustine it is known that in city of Hippo at this time the plague of the Manichaeans had infected and permeated very many, both citizens and strangers, who were seduced and deceived by a certain presbyter of that heresy, Fortunatus by name (St. Possidius, 2008: 9-10) who dwelt there, and that Christians asked Augustine to meet up with him to discuss the Law.

²² *Gesta Romanorum* is a Latin collection of anecdotes and tales that was probably compiled about the end of the 13th or the beginning of the 14th century. It is considered the source, directly or indirectly of later topics by authors like Chaucer, Boccaccio, Hoccleve, Shakespeare and many more.

²³ It is supposed that Faust(us) was a historical person in Germany in the beginning of the sixteenth century, known as a wandering witty charlatan, a self-proclaimed seer and astrologer, but also described as supernaturally evil and capable of necromancy, due to his allegiance with the Devil.

dated to 1587, the year of the German *Historia von D. Johann Fausten*, published by Johann Spies. The numerous instances of diabolical bargains have inspired Christopher Marlowe for the *Tragedy of Doctor Faustus* (1604). The legend then found its way back to Germany, making Goethe's Faust the most famous one.

The idea that the soul is for trade and the hope for short-cuts to human enhancement are integral elements of the motif of bargaining with the dark side. The present text focused more on concepts of evil agents and offered a short overview of the understanding of the concept of compacting with the devil/demons/evil spirits. The area is vast, and thus presents a very fruitful field for research of what was only hinted, namely, the incorporation of the Faustian legend in recent times, and as it contemporarily progresses, the fluctuation of the understanding of some independent evil that tempts humans, as opposed to the evil within, as well as the pleasure-servitude and sacrifice-gratification mechanisms.

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