

Interpretative features of the Faustus symbol in early English Faustiana

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Abstract. This article deals with the lingual-and-semiotic analysis usage in order to reveal the peculiarities of the “early-Faustus” symbol verbalization in the English play “John a Kent and John a Cumber” by Anthony Munday published in 1851. Through the analysis of cultural interpretants of the text and compared to those of the original source by Christopher Marlowe, interpretative features of the “early-Faustus” symbol are discovered.

Keywords: the “early-Faustus” symbol, interpretative features, cultural interpretant, lingual-and-semiotic analysis, the “early-Faustus” symbol verbalization.

Introduction. Symbol is an important notion in humanities. According to lingual-and-semiotic approach, the symbol sign nature is considered. Signs require understanding and symbols – interpretation. Based on a sign situation as an inseparable unity of sign, object and interpretant symbol is considered through the latter. Interpretant as a basis of lingual-and-semiotic analysis is a certain interpretation of the sign, which is deepened and modified by the perception of interpreter as a participant of a sign situation. The interpretant, which is a part of semiosis, is considered as a thought, which occurs when a potential symbol is being perceived. Thus, interpretant as a peculiar form of representation no longer binds the sign and its object, but a sign and mental sign (the sign of idea with a very idea). Each mental sign gives rise to interpretant [1].

A brief overview of the publications related to the topic. In lingual-and-semiotic studies symbol is interpreted as the unity of its “name” and “body”, the latter containing two layers: notional and symbolic ones [2]. Lingual-and-semiotic analysis provides the symbol “body” decoding through the trichotomy of the interpretants. The latter involves singling out of primary, notional and cultural interpretants [1].

The lingual-and-semiotic analysis of the English Faustiana texts is conducted by applying interpretants trichotomy of basic and lingual-and-cultural codes (further BC and LCC) [1]. Interpretants trichotomy of BC includes an interpretation which: provides codes relatedness to denotative field and their identity within a field (primary interpretant), reveals the relation of the recognized object with the notion of this object (notional interpretant) reveals ethical and evaluative ideas of native speakers (cultural interpretant), which is crucial to understand symbol [4].

Thus, symbol is a peculiar type of the verbal sign, which is an integrity of three elements: a lingual form (the symbol “name”), content (the symbol “body”, which is presented by the notional and symbolic layers) and interpretant, which serves as a content-evaluative ordering of the symbol “body”.

Research aim and objectives. The aim of the paper is to discover how interpretative features of the Faustus symbol singled out from the “Tragic history of life and death of Doctor Faustus” by Christopher Marlowe applying lingual-and-semiotic analysis, correlate with the “early-Faustus” symbol interpretative features selected from the comedy play “John a Kent and John a Cumber” by Anthony Munday. The paper fulfils the following

tasks: 1) to substantiate the effectiveness of lingual-and-semiotic approach to the analysis of artistic symbols; 2) to conduct lingual-and-semiotic analysis of Anthony Munday’s play, and to determine interpretative features of the “early-Faustus” symbol in this play; 3) to compare discovered interpretative features with those revealed in original source by Christopher Marlowe. Faustus is a symbol of sin as one of the greatest human vices. The Faustus symbol deployment allows to cover the whole depth of feelings of the protagonist soul and to understand the retribution “price” for human sins.

Materials and methods. Initially, lingual-and-semiotic analysis method was used to study the work of Christopher Marlowe “The tragic history of life and death of Dr. Faustus” [1]. Application of notional interpretant to the selected text fragments analysis of Christopher Marlowe’s drama allowed to identify the following interpretative features (further IF) of the Faustus symbol: 1) education of Faustus; 2) desire to be on par with God; 3) admiration of magic; 4) a sale of the soul to the devil in exchange for power over the world and enrichment [2], proving the fact that Faustus is actualized as a sin.

An old folklore motif – to make a bargain with the devil – was taken seriously in a time when everyone believed in the reality of devils [6]. Its first skillful English interpretation belongs to the dramatic masterpiece of Christopher Marlowe, and, thus, it serves as an original source for the further English Faustiana. With the manifestation of the Faustus motif, there are two plays in English literature, which were published soon afterwards the original source, and they are regarded as the early English Faustiana [5]. One of them is “John a Kent and John a Cumber” by Anthony Munday published in 1851. What concerns the exact date of the comedy play, it was supposedly written in between 1590-1594 [5; 8]. However, it is stated that “there is no known edition of the play before that prepared in 1851 by J.P. Collier for the Old Shakespeare Society” [9].

In this paper, lingual-and-semiotic analysis of Anthony Munday’s play “John a Kent and John a Cumber” is conducted. Two magicians-protagonists – John a Kent and John a Cumber – are considered to be associated with Faustus.

At the first stage of lingual-and-semiotic analysis, those text fragments that suggest Faustus thoughts and actions are chosen. In the fragments previously singled out, BC, which are crucial to identify all Faustus intentions, are underlined.

John a Kent, the first magician, is fond of his talents and, simultaneously, he misses his magic abilities in his

early years: *Lady, in youth I studied ¹hidden artes / And proifted in Chiromancie much ² / If sight be not obscurde, through nature's weaknesse, / I can, for once I could discourse, by favour / And rules of palmestrie, ensuing chaunces [7]. John a Kent was addicted to the black Arts from his youth and he cherished hopes to reach a proper level in that sphere.*

John a Cumber also praises him: *No, my good Lord. Knowe ye one John a Kent, / A man whom all this Brittithe Isle admires / For his rare knowledge in the deepest artes? / By pollicye he traynd them from this place [7]. John a Kent became known due to his "notorious career" all over the world.*

But there is another magician, who practised more in magic and, therefore, achieved the greatest success: *There's one in Scotland, tearmed John a Cumber, / That overwatchte the Devill by his skill [7]. John a Cumber was devoted to the hidden Arts more than John a Kent, thus, surpassed evn the Devil.*

A main issue these magicians are going to examine is the contest between them – who will develop more power: *When rayse the very powerfull strength ye can / Yet all's too weak to deale with that one man / Had ye a freend could equall him in Arte, / Controll his cunning, which he boasts so on [7].*

The contest of two Johns for the master in magical Arts: *What he hath doone for many dayes together / By Arte I knowe, as you have scene some prooffe / He make no brakes, but we two Johns together / Will tug for maistrise : therfore came I hither. John, I myselve have oft times heard thee wishe / That thou mightst buckle with this John a Cumber / Come is he now, to all our deep disgrace. / Except thou help it ere he scape this place [7].*

In the following textual fragment a proof from one of the characters – Morton – about genuine magical abilities of John a Cumber is found: *lie poste to Scotland for brave John a Cumber, / The only man renownde for magick skill / Oft have I heard he once beguyld the Devill, / And in his Arte could never finde his matche / Come he with me, I dare say John a Kent, / And all the rest shall this foule fact repent [7].*

Both Johns are mentioned and their equality is in their fame all around the world: *He save my Lord that labour / Heer's John a Cumber, / Entiste to England by the wondrous fame / That every where is spread of John a Kent. And seeing occasion falleth out so well, / I may doo service to my Lord heerby / I make him my protectour in this case [7].* The equality of the two contestants is obvious, still, they both want to be the best masters of all magic trades.

Other traits of John a Kent are listed in the following textual fragment: *Let John a Kent with all the witte he hath, / Kestore thee Marian, if he can, from me / Heere, Earle of Pembroke ; take her, she is thine, / And thank kinde John, whose canning is divine [7].*

John a Cumber once won the Devil, thus, showed his superiority over another magician: *Maister, what! he that went beyond the Devill, / And made him serve him*

seaven yeares prentiship? / Ist possible for me to conquer him? / Tis better take this foyle, and so to end [7].

But the rest of the play's characters, for example, Hugh, is of relatively the same deserving opinion concerning John a Kent: *...maister John a Kent. He never goes abroad without / a bushell of devilles about him, that if one speak but an ill woord of him, he knowes it by and by, and it is no / more but send out one of these devilles, and wheres / the man then? Nay, God blesse me from him [7].* The magical traits of both magicians are harsh that even the Devil was subjected to one of them.

John a Cumber is sure that he will manage to conquer John a Kent: *Why, this is excellent ! you fit me now / Come in with me, Be give you apt instructions / According to the purpose I entend, / That John a Kent was nere so court before / Our time is short; come, lette us in about it / But John a Cumber is more wise then so; / He will doo nothing but shall take successe / This walke I made to see this wondrous man: / Now, having seene him, I am satisfied / I know not what this play of his will proove [7].*

Johns are ready to struggle but some rules of their game were changed for the victory to be more fair: *But his intent, to deale with shaddowes only, / I meane to alter; weele have the substauce: / And least he should want Actors in his play / Prince Griffin, Lord Powesse, and my merrie maister / He introduce as I shall finde due cause / And if it chaunce as some of us doo looke / One of us Johns must play besyde the booke [7].*

John a Cumber is expected to win this game: *To John a Cumber, so he will bestowe / His very deepest skill / To make it sure / But if he fayle, and be my luck to speed / To cease contention, and confesse him foyld / As I will doo the lyke if he prevayle [7].* No matter which kind of magic stunt they will stick to, the fact remains that they both belong not to the power of God, but to the spirit power.

Unfortunately, John a Kent is left powerless and he is recognized as the one who failed the contest: *John, Goe on, and feare not. Now, John, we shall see / If ye can help your eyes infirmitie. / Chester. O I heere they be / Fye, Lordes ! why stay ye so? / The others would have made more haste, I knowe. Cumber. Be you their guyde. / Goe, quickly make an end. / And then let John a Kent my skill commend [7].*

The last speech of John a Cumber is regarded as his victory due to the John a Cumber's infirmity: *O, rare magitian I that hast not the power / To beat asyde a sillie dazeling mist, / Which a meere abce scholler in the arte / Can doo it with the least facilitie / But I will ease them when the other come / To see how then he will bestirre him selfe! [7].*

And the last textual fragment resembles that John a Cumber was the one who outdid the Devil: *overmatchde the Devill [7].* Due to the nature's disaster, one of the magicians failed to win the contest without having realized that thus God rescued him.

The underlined BC in the analyzed fragments form repetitive ties between themselves that are regarded as LCC. The first of these codes: **magic skills** → **fame** → **unrivalled abilities**. Each component of this code is represented by the number of tokens that form denotative fields:

• **magic skills**: *hidden artes, Chiromancie, discourse, rules of palmestrie, traynd them [arts], rayse the very*

¹The text fragments are taken from the original play written by Anthony Munday in old English

² Those parts of the tetx fragments that are in bold and underlined refer to BC, and those that are underlined but not in bold allow to form LCC.

powerfulst strength, renownde for magick skill; a bushell of devilles about him, that if one speak but an ill woord of him, he knowes it by and by send out one of these devilles; John a Kent was nere so courst before, bestowe his very deepest skill, rare magitian [7];

• **fame:** man whom all this Brittische Isle admires for his rare knowledge in the deepest artes, cunning, brave John a Cumber, John a Kent with all the witte he hath, kinde John, whose canning is divine, Maister, went beyond the Devill, maister John a Kent, wondrous man [7];

• **unrivalled abilities:** overwatchte the Devill by his skill, all's too weak to deale with that one man, equall him in Arte, beguyld the Devill, in his Arte could never finde his matche, John a Cumber, entiste to England by the wondrous fame that every where is spread of John a Kent, made him serve him seaven yeares prentiship, conquer him, John a Cumber is more wise [7].

The second LCC: **contest between magicians** →

outcomes of magic stunts. The BC that form this LCC are presented in the text by the following units:

• **contest between magicians:** tug for maistrie, buckle with this John a Cumber, play of his will proove, will doo nothing but shall take successe, deale with shaddowes only, to alter, want Actors in his play, play besyde the booke, buckle with this John a Cumber [7];

• **outcomes of magic stunts:** your eyes infirmitie, let John a Kent my skill commend, nature's weaknesse, hast not the power to beat asyde a sillie dazeling mist, a meere abce scholler in the arte can doo it with the least facilitie, overmatchde the Devill [7].

The components **fame** and **mercy** are the additional BC that deepen the understanding of the second identified LCC, but unlike the additional BC of the original source [1], they are only implications that cannot be proved using textual fragments, instead, they are revealed by applying cultural interpretant to the last play's episodes (Fig. 1).

1. **magic skills** → **fame** → **unrivalled abilities**

2. **contest between magicians** → **outcomes of magic stunts**

fame



mercy



Fig. 1. The lingual-and-cultural codes in Anthony Munday's "John a Kent and John a Cumber"

Both existing LCC are consecutive as they represent the "events" of the play the way they develop in the text: endowed with magic skills, John a Kent and John a Cumber both are famous for their unrivalled abilities (surpassing the Devil due to divine cunning), and, therefore, they are eager to conquer each other in order to outdo evil spirits. The "events" are revealed having applied a notional interpretant to the text since it is clear which "processes" are within the play as well as the notion of sin is formed that is presented in the text as thoughts and deeds of Faustus.

Moreover, a way in which "events" in the play are treated – a negative assessment of Faustus immorality – is the result of cultural interpretant. We assess magicians negatively as they both rejected God and chose a wrong way that turned to be fatal to their souls. However, actually, we may refer to one of them – who failed during the contest – hopefully, because he did not manage not only to surpass any evil spirit but also to come closer to the road of disgraceful fame and fortune.

If we compare this notional and cultural interpretants of both magicians in this play with the Faustus of the original source [1], we will make the following conclusion: as these magicians reflect Faustus complementing each other, Faustus is considered to be the embodiment of John a Kent, who strives for power and fame, and John a Cumber, who is not managed to this magic trial. Through the results of notional and cultural interpretants the "early-Faustus" symbol is verbalized (Fig. 2).

Thus, the analysis of lingual-and-cultural coding of the text, that was previously studied, demonstrates that the "early-Faustus" transformation into a symbol is provided

on the cultural interpretant level of LCC, as it appears in each LCC component: having his own **magical skills**, John a Cumber is tempted with the power of evil spirits that took his soul forever due to the everlasting **fame**, simultaneously, he sorrows that all his **unrivalled abilities** brought no **outcomes of magic stunts** during the **contest between magicians**. However, he does not realize how lucky he is to remain defeated as it is due to it that he obtained mercy.

Research results. Application of notional interpretant to the selected text fragments analysis of Anthony Munday's play allowed to identify the following IF of the "early-Faustus" symbol: 1) education of "early-Faustus"; 2) admiration of magic; 3) soul torments 4) desire to surpass the Devil, proving the fact that Faustus is actualized as a sin. If to compare these IF with the ones of the original source [2], there are slight differences but some of them remained unchanged. Concerning IF Education it is the same as John a Cumber was "meere abce scholler in the arte", the same concerns Admiration of magic as John a Cumber "rayse[d] the very powerfulst strength renownde for magick skill". However, the last two IF totally differ from those of original source: soul torments includes two-facedness of "early-Faustus" (unrivalled abilities of both magicians) to achieve fame, which is ended up with surpassing the Devil on the hand, and with pleading for mercy on the other. Each stage of "early-Faustus" "transition" is condemned and acknowledged as a sin. "Early-Faustus" becomes a symbol of sin (Fig. 3).

Based on the text fragments analysis of Anthony Munday's play it is confirmed that the "early-Faustus"

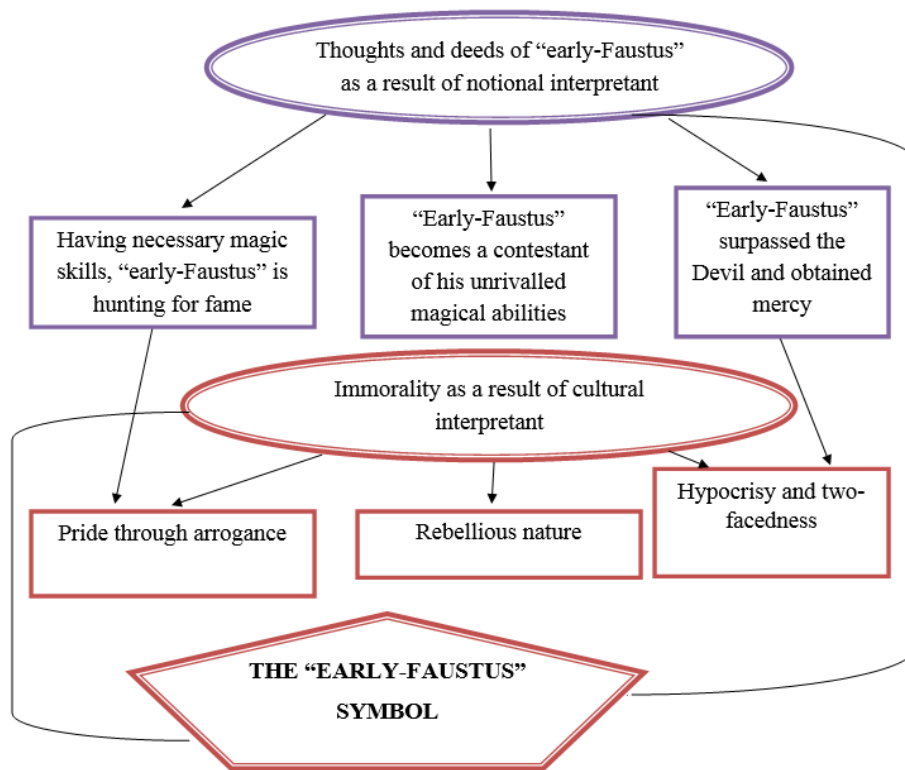


Fig. 2. The “early-Faustus” symbol verbalization

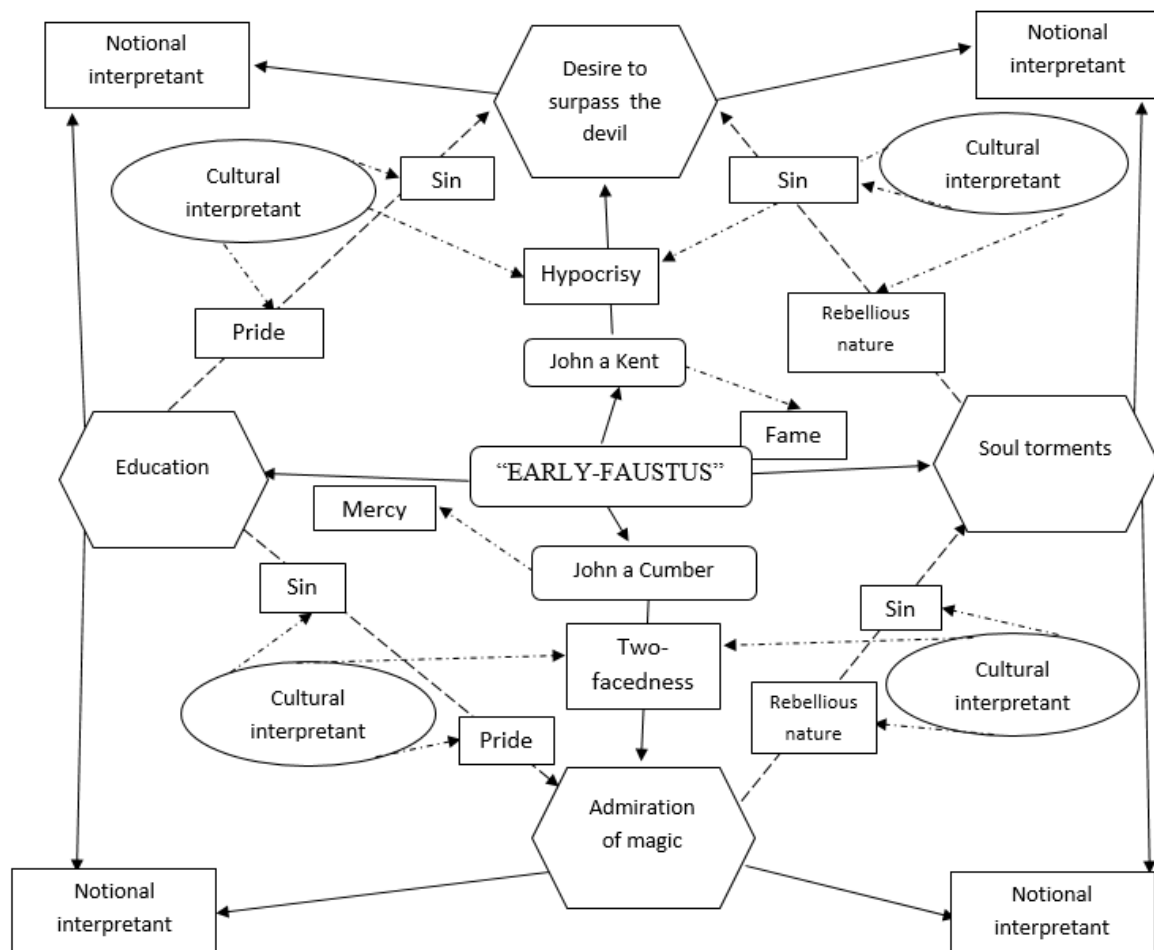


Fig. 3. The “early-Faustus” symbol in Anthony Munday’s “John a Kent and John a Cumber”

symbol is revealed through the other last two IF than through those applied to the original source of Christopher Marlowe. But it is motivated that the IF singled out in both images of magicians then cumulatively “compose” in the Faustus symbol in Christopher Marlowe’s drama: his Faustus well-educated, got interested in magic skills and aspired for devilish power and fame similar to John a Kent and John a Cumber; afterwards, Faustus decided to be on par with God as John a Kent surpassed the Devil; finally, Faustus repented, but it was too late for his sold soul, instead, John a Cumber does not care for his soul as he had been already cursed, he just surrenders without having realized that God’s mercy was shown to him.

Conclusions and aspects of further research. The peculiarity of the selected for analysis work is that different literary characters (magicians John a Kent and John a Cumber) are only associated with the Faustus symbol. It is claimed that the application of lingual-and-semiotic

analysis to Anthony Munday’s “John a Kent and John a Cumber” provides the “early-Faustus” lingual symbol disclosure. The analysis of notional interpretant allowed to reveal desire to surpass the Devil and, simultaneously, God’s mercy, and the analysis of cultural interpretant allowed to assess magicians’ acts and thoughts that is determined as hypocrisy and two-facedness. “Early-Faustus” as in the original source of Christopher Marlowe is a symbol of sin.

Application of the lingual-and-semiotic interpretation method allowed to distinguish four IF of the Faustus symbol, the last two differ from those of the original source: 1) education of Faustus; 2) admiration of magic; 3) soul torments; 4) desire to surpass the Devil. However, the combination of IF of “early-Faustus” symbol is included into the Faustus symbol, thus, affirming that the play of early English Faustiana preserved an affiliation to the heritage of world literature as its symbol reveals the “eternal” theme of struggle with Good and Evil within a Man.

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Интерпретативные признаки символа Фауст в ранней английской Фаустяне

С. М. Альбота

Аннотация. В этой статье рассматривается использование лингвoseміотического анализа с целью выявления особенностей вербализации “раннего” символа “Фауст” в английской пьесе “Джон а Кент и Джон а Камбер” Энтони Мандея, изданной в 1851 году. Через анализ культурных интерпретант текста и по сравнению с теми культурными интерпретантами, которые были исследованы в оригинальном источнике Кристофера Марло, обнаружены особенности толкования “раннего” символа “Фауст”.

Ключевые слова: “ранней” символ “Фауст”, интерпретативные признаки, культурная интерпретанта, лінгвoseміотический аналіз, вербалізація “раннего” символа “Фауст”